

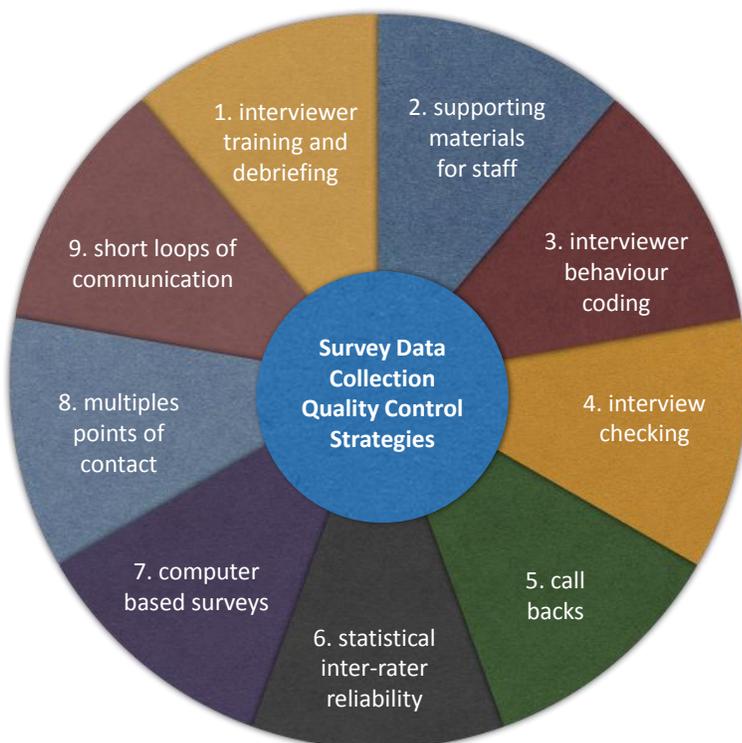
A Quality Framework for Survey Data Collection

It is important to think about survey quality during all research phases (e.g. survey design, sample selection, data collection, data analysis and knowledge dissemination). Since resources are usually limited, personnel and funds need to be strategically allocated to maximize the relevance and quality of your data. Here we describe core strategies you can use to ensure and monitor data quality during the survey data collection phase.

1. Interviewer training and debriefing

A comprehensive and consistent training and interviewer-debriefing strategy is essential. Initial training sessions will vary from project to project. They can include: project objectives and methodology, quantitative and qualitative interviewing skills, data quality, administration of the survey instrument, utilization of the survey instrument guide, administration of the consent form, administration of translated interviews, mode related training (e.g. phone), safety protocols, suicide ideation and crisis intervention, anti-oppression practices, as well as human resources protocols.

In addition, ongoing project updates and debriefing sessions either in group or individually help to make sure the team is working with similar assumptions, problems are dealt with in a timely matter and interviewers have the support they need.



2. Supporting materials for all staff

Precise supporting materials will help bring confidence and accountability to the research staff (e.g. recruiters, interviewers, data entry personnel). These materials can include: training manuals, safety protocols, data entry protocols, and a 'question-by-question' guide to the interview administration. It is very important to distribute these documents as they are updated. It is also good practice to get feedback from staff on how the materials are being utilized and what needs to be reviewed.

3. Interviewer Behaviour Coding

A standardized interviewer feedback process is an effective way to keep quality in check. It is good practice to send a trained quality control staff member to interviews to do an assessment early in the process and keep reassessing in fixed intervals and as needed. The way you implement the behaviour coding is very important. This is supposed to be an opportunity for staff to learn and improve.

4. Interview checking

An interview checking practice can include checking all or a percentage of surveys. If you have a solid interviewer support structure, checking 10% of the surveys in their entirety and monitoring all surveys for complicated questions might be sufficient. The interview checking process will inform the necessity to perform call backs and/or give feedback to the interviewers.

5. Call backs

Call backs can be conducted to verify inconsistent and/or missing data. They can also be used to monitor interviewer conduct and participant satisfaction.

6. Statistical inter-rater reliability

Statistical testing of survey responses by interviewer is a useful method to identify training gaps.



7. Computer-based surveys

Computer-based surveys can have built-in automatic skip patterns and consistency checks, which will help minimize interviewer error. They also can provide automatic paradata information (e.g. interview date, time and mode).

8. Multiple points of contact

When possible, management, co-ordination, recruitment, interviewing and quality check roles should be occupied by different staff members, allowing for multiple opportunities to assess quality.

9. Short loops of communication

Aim for short loops of communication between research phases/tasks. Information collected during data collection can help redefine the survey design and inform data cleaning and analysis protocols. For example: [1] data outputs should be provided to data cleaning and analysis personnel on a regular basis and feedback provided to data collection personnel in a timely manner, [2] participant feedback should be reviewed on a regular basis and incorporated in the research design when appropriate.

CRICH Survey Research Unit – Providing high quality and efficient research and evaluation services to the health and social sciences community.

Contact information:
<http://sru.crich.ca>
SRU@smh.ca



© Attributions are to be made to:
Dowbor, T - CRICH Survey Research
Unit - Methodology Bits, 2014 (1)

CRICH
Centre for Research on Inner City Health
Survey Research Unit