Survey Design 101

Survey Question Types

- Open-ended
  - Allows survey takers to write-in response in their own words
  - Provides more detailed information than most closed questions, but can also be more difficult to analyze
  - Example: What do you like most about your school?

- Multiple choice
  - Can allow respondent to choose multiple answers from a list or require a single answer
  - Example: Of the following types of food, which have you eaten in the past week? (Check all that apply)
    - □ Pizza  □ Hamburgers  □ Hotdogs  □ Ice cream  □ None
  - Example: What grade are you in at school? (Select one)
    - □ 6th  □ 7th  □ 8th  □ 9th  □ 10th  □ 11th

- Rank order questions
  - Respondents asked to rank a range of items from a list (e.g., in order of importance)
  - Example: Which of the major sports in the United States do you most enjoy watching? (please rank the choices from first (1) to last (5):
    - ___ Basketball  ___ Football  ___ Soccer  ___ Baseball  ___ Hockey

- Scale questions
  - Most commonly used question type on surveys
  - Scales often ask about agreement strength, likelihood or satisfaction (Likert scale)
  - Example: Please select how much you agree or disagree with the following statement: In order to achieve my goals, I must graduate from high school.
    - □ Strongly Agree  □ Agree  □ Neutral  □ Disagree  □ Strongly Disagree

Survey Question Pitfalls

Question Types to Avoid

- Leading questions (use biased words or phrases or attempt to guide the respondent’s answer)
  - Example: Given that students in many other countries attend school a full month longer than American students, would you support extending the school year in United States? (**Added background information suggests that survey takers should support extending the school year)

- Ambiguous or vague questions
  - Example: Do you consider yourself to be a good student? (**Survey takers may have widely different views on what constitutes a ‘good student’)

- Double-barrel questions (two or more issues into one)
  - Example: Do you agree or disagree that graduating high school and getting a good job should be a top priority for high school students? (**A survey taker might agree that graduating high school should be a top priority, but not agree that getting a job right after high school is a top goal)

- Questions with slang, jargon, or abbreviations
  - Example: Do youattend a vo-tech high school? (**Survey takers may or may not be familiar with the shortened abbreviation for vocational-technical school)