

What is a Survey – Definition, templates, methods, characteristics, and examples

CREATE,
SEND AND ANALYZE
YOUR
ONLINE SURVEY
COMPLETELY FREE

[CREATE SURVEY NOW \(/A/SHOWENTRY.DO?SOURCEREF=BLOG\)](/A/SHOWENTRY.DO?SOURCEREF=BLOG)



[\(https://www.questionpro.com/blog/surveys/\)](https://www.questionpro.com/blog/surveys/)

What is a survey

A survey is a research method used for collecting data from a predefined group of respondents to gain information and insights into various topics of interest. They can have multiple purposes, and researchers can conduct it in many ways depending on the methodology chosen and the study’s goal. In the year 2020, research is of extreme importance, and hence it’s essential for us to understand the benefits of social research for a target population using the right survey tool.

The data is usually obtained through the use of standardized procedures to ensure that each respondent can answer the questions at a level playing field to avoid biased opinions that could influence the outcome of the research or study. The process involves asking people for information through a questionnaire, which can be either online or offline. However, with the arrival of new technologies, it is common to distribute them using digital media such as social networks, email, QR codes, or URLs.

The online survey software for efficient research | Quest..



What is an online survey?

An online survey is a set of structured questions that the respondent completes over the internet, generally through filling out a form. It is a more natural way to reach out to the respondents as it is less time consuming than the traditional way of gathering information through one to one interaction and less expensive. The data is collected and stored in a database, which is later evaluated by an expert in the field.

As an incentive for respondents to participate in such online research, businesses offer rewards like gift cards, reward points that they can redeem for goods or services later, free airline miles, discounts at gas stations, etc. Research studies

with rewards are a win-win situation for both businesses and respondents. Companies or organizations get valuable data from a controlled environment for market research.

Create a free account!

What are the advantages of an online survey?

1. **Accuracy:** In an online research study, the margin of error is low, as the respondents register their responses by easy selection buttons. Traditional methods require human interference, and according to a study, human intervention increases the margin of error by 10%.
2. **Easy and quick to analyze:** Since all the responses are registered online, it is straightforward to analyze the data in real-time. It is also ready to draw inferences and share the result.
3. **Ease of participation:** In this new age technology-oriented universe, most people on this planet have access to the internet. Respondents prefer receiving the survey over the email. Ease of participation dramatically increases as the respondents can choose a suitable time and place, according to their convenience, to register their responses.
4. **Great branding exercise:** In an online design, organizations or businesses have this opportunity to develop their questionnaire to align with their brand. Using logos and similar brand language (color and fonts) gives the companies an advantage as respondents can connect better with the brand.
5. **Respondents can be honest and flexible at the same time:** According to a study, researchers have found increased participation by respondents when deployed

with online surveys rather than answering lengthy questions. By designing questionnaires that ask relevant questions, respondents are honest with their answers and can skip the questions or respondents to a more neutral option, increasing their flexibility to respond.

6. **Survey templates:** Leading online research tools have expert-designed ready survey templates that make it easier for researchers to choose from and conduct their research study. These templates are vetted questionnaires and are specific to every industry, making the study even more efficient.

350+ Free survey templates

Good survey templates and examples

A researcher needs to conduct surveys using the right questions and the right medium to administer and track responses. QuestionPro is a platform that helps create and deploy different types and sets of questionnaires, polls, and quizzes.

We have 350+ varieties of survey templates. including:

- **Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) + Net Promoter Score (NPS) Survey:** We hear this time and again that the customer is king, which is true. A satisfied customer is a customer that helps your brand and organization grow, through direct means as well as being an advocate for your brand. This template talks about the goodwill your brand has created and how referenceable it is.
- **Employee Satisfaction Template:** This template is the perfect fit for organizations that want to measure their employees' satisfaction levels. This template will give you insights into your organizations' culture and job satisfaction of your workforce within that culture.

- QuestionPro
FREE ACCOUNT (/A/SHOWENTRY.DO?SOURCEREF=BLOG)
- B2B Templates: The business to business templates are efficient modes of collecting feedback around entities that directly contribute to your business. These may include vendors, clients, their experiences, and so on.
 - Company Communications Evaluation Template: This example is essential to analyze employee perspective about the subject of internal company communications, topics to cover in the newsletter, updates on the bulletin board, the efficiency of an organization's management in conversation, etc.
 - Hardware Product Evaluation Template: Improving hardware product features isn't a straightforward proposition due to a lot of elements like raw materials, supply chain, and manufacturing lines getting affected by it. Hence, while eliciting feedback for hardware, it is essential to be as objective as possible. It helps us understand the kind of necessary product innovations.
 - Strategic Planning Survey: Innovation is essential to any organization's product or service lines. Hence, implementing customer support and making product or service tweaks when required is necessary for the sustenance and growth of an organization. This template helps organizations chalk out their business strategy.
 - Business Demographic Survey: This template aims to ask demographic questions and examples that help gain information on occupation, the primary area of business, job function and description, organization's gross income, etc.
 - Course Evaluation Survey: This template helps educational institutions conduct period feedback on their course and if students find it helpful or not if it's stimulating enough and students to see this is as value for money along with accentuated learning.

As explained before, a survey usually has its beginnings when a person, company, or organization faces a need for information, and there is no existing data that is sufficient.

Take into account the following recommendations:

- **Define objective:** The survey would have no meaning if the aim and the result unplanned before deploying it. The survey method and plan should be in the form of actionable milestones, as well as the sample planned for research. Appropriate distribution methods for these samples also have to be put in place right at the outset.
- **The number of questions:** The number of questions used in a market research study is dependent on the end objective of the research. It is essential to avoid redundant queries in every way possible. The length of the questionnaire has to be dictated only by the core data metrics that have to be collected.
- **Simple language:** One factor that can cause a high survey dropout rate is if the respondent finds the language difficult to understand. Therefore, it is imperative to use easily understandable text in the survey.
- **Question types:** There are several types of questions that can go into a survey. It is essential to use the question types that offer the most value to the research while being the easiest to understand and answer to a respondent. Using close-ended questions like the Net Promoter Score (NPS) questions or multiple-choice questions help increase the survey response rate.
- **Consistent scales:** If you use rating scale questions, make sure that the scales are consistent throughout the research study. Using scales from -5 to +5 in one question and -3 to +3 in another question may confuse a respondent.

- QuestionPro
FREE ACCOUNT (/A/SHOWENTRY.DO?SOURCEREF=BLOG)
- **Survey Logic:** Logic is one of the most critical aspects of the survey design. If the logic is flawed, respondents will not be able to continue further or the desired way. Logic has to be applied and tested to ensure that on selecting an option, only the next logical question shows up.

Characteristics of a survey

1. Sample and Sample Determination

First, a sample also referred to as the audience, is needed, which should consist of a series of survey respondents data with required demographic characteristics, who can relevantly answer your survey questions

(<https://www.questionpro.com/article/survey-question-answer-type.html>) and provide the best insights. Better the quality of your audience, better will be your response quality and insights.

The characteristics of a survey sample, are:

- **Determining sample size:** Once you have determined your sample (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/determining-sample-size/>), the total number of individuals in that particular sample is the sample size. Selecting a sample size depends on the end objective of your research study. It should consist of a series of survey respondents data with required demographic characteristics, who can relevantly answer your survey questions (<https://www.questionpro.com/article/survey-question-answer-type.html>) and provide the best insights.
- **Types of sampling:** There are two essential types of sampling methods (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/types-of-sampling-for-social-research/>); they are probability sampling and non-probability sampling. The two standard sampling methods are:

- **Probability sampling:** Probability sampling (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/probability-sampling/>) is a sampling method where the respondent is selected based on the theory of probability. The major characteristic of this method is that each individual in a population has an equal chance of being selected.
- **Non-probability sampling:** Non-probability sampling (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/non-probability-sampling/>) is a sampling method where the researcher selects a sample of respondents purely based on their discretion or gut. There is no predefined selection method.

2. Survey Questions: How to ask the right questions?

Useful questions are the cornerstone for the success of any survey and, subsequently, any research study.

(<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/what-is-research/>).

The characteristics of the survey questions are as follows:

- **Data collection:** Whether it is an email, SMS, web intercept, or a mobile app survey (<https://www.questionpro.com/mobile/>), the single common denominator that determines how effectively you can collect accurate and complete responses is your survey questions and their types.
- **Fundamental levels of measurement scales:** Four measurement scales are crucial to creating a multiple-choice question (<https://www.questionpro.com/article/multiple-choice-questions.html>) in a survey. They are nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio measurement scales without the fundamentals of which, no multiple-choice questions can be created. Hence, it is essential to understand these

levels of measurement to create a robust research framework.

- **Use of different question types:** Multiple choice questions are the most common type of survey questions, in which some of the popular question types are: dichotomous question (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/what-is-a-dichotomous-question/>), semantic differential scale question, rank order questions, and rating scale questions (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/rating-scale/>). Open-ended questions (<https://www.questionpro.com/open-ended-questions.html>) help collect in-depth qualitative data (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/qualitative-data/>).
- **Administering the survey:** It is essential to plan the type of survey (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/types-of-survey/>) to ensure the optimum number of responses required for your study. It could be a mix of interviews and questions or a questionnaire. Interviews could be telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews, online interviews, and questionnaires can be personal intercept, or web surveys.

3. Survey Logic: Skip logic and branching

The logic is one of the essential characteristics of a survey. The objective of using logic in a study is to move a respondent based on their current selection to a question. Survey skip logic and branching (<https://www.questionpro.com/features/branching.html>) provide the ability to create “intelligent” surveys, meaning respondents can answer relevant questions based on their answers to screening questions. The characteristics include:

- **Design:** In this phase, the users design their logic and set it up in a way that irrelevant questions to each respondent, don't show up as part of the survey.

- **Application:** Survey logic can be applied by using conditional branching or unconditional branching. Other parameters such that form the basis of a logic depending on the objective of the study, are piping data, question randomization, link quota, etc.

4. Survey Methods

Survey methodology studies the in-depth sampling of individual units from a population and administering data collection techniques on that sample. It includes instruments or processes that ask different question types to a predefined sample, to conduct data-collection, and increase the survey response rate (<https://www.questionpro.com/article/increase-response-rates-online-surveys.html>).

The two distinctive member types are professionals in the field that focus on empirical survey errors and others that work to design surveys and reduce them. The primary tasks of an admin while deploying a survey is to identify and create samples, validate test questions, select the mode to administer questions, and verify data collection methods, statistical analysis (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/quantitative-data/>), and data reporting.

Survey Methods based on Design

Research studies are of the following types:

- **Cross-sectional studies:** Cross-sectional study (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/cross-sectional-study/>) is an observational research type that analyzes data of variables collected at one given point of time across a sample population. Population or a predefined subset. This study type is also known as cross-sectional analysis, transverse study, or prevalence study. The data

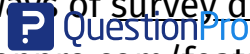
gathered in a cross-sectional study is from people who are similar in all variables except the one under study.

This variable remains constant throughout the cross-sectional study.

- **Longitudinal studies:** Longitudinal study (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/longitudinal-study/>) is an observational study employing continuous or repeated measures to follow particular individuals over a prolonged period, often years or decades. The longitudinal research collects data that is either qualitative (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/qualitative-data/>) or quantitative (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/quantitative-data/>). In a longitudinal study, respondents are under observation over a period, ranging from months to decades, to observe any changes in them or their attitude. For example, a researcher wants to find out which disease affects young boys (in the age group of 10-15). Then, the researcher will observe the individuals over that period to collect meaningful data.
- **Correlational studies:** Correlational study (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/correlational-research/>) is a non-experimental type of research design where two distinct variables are studied. Statistical analysis helps to examine the relationship between them without the interference of external “variables.” This study aims to understand the change and level of change in one of the two variables in the study if the other variable changes. For example, if an ice-cream truck has a jingle that can be loudly heard, people start to understand which ice-cream truck is in the neighborhood and how far it is from the person’s location.

Survey Methods based on the distribution

There are different ways of survey distribution



FREE ACCOUNT (</A/SHOWENTRY.DO?SOURCEREF=BLOG>)

(<https://www.questionpro.com/features/distributed-via-QRcodes.html>). Some of the most commonly used methods are:

- **Email:** Sending out an email is the easiest way of conducting a survey. The respondents are targeted, and there is a higher chance of response due to the respondents already knowing about your brand. You can use the [QuestionPro email management \(<https://www.questionpro.com/features/email-your-survey.html>\)](https://www.questionpro.com/features/email-your-survey.html) feature to send out and collect responses.
- **Buy respondents:** Buying a sample helps achieve a lot of the response criteria because the people who are being asked to respond have signed up to do so. The qualifying criteria for the research study are met.
- **Embedding on the website:** [Embedding a survey \(<https://www.questionpro.com/help/website-embed.html>\)](https://www.questionpro.com/help/website-embed.html) on a site ensures that the number of responses is very high. Embedding a survey can be done while the person enters the website or is exiting it. A non-intrusive method of collecting feedback is essential to achieve a higher number of responses. The responses received are also honest due to the top brand recall value, and the answers are quick to collect and analyze due to them being in a digital format.
- **Post to the social network:** [Posting on social networks \(<https://www.questionpro.com/features/social-network.html>\)](https://www.questionpro.com/features/social-network.html) is another effective way of receiving responses. The survey is published as a link on social media, and people that follow the brand can be the set of audiences or respondents. There is no upper cap on the number of survey responses required and is the easiest and fastest way of eliciting responses.

- **QR code:** QuestionPro QR codes store the URL for the survey. You can [print/publish this code](#) (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/lets-code-in-qr/>) in magazines, on signs, business cards, or on just about any object/medium. Users with a camera phone equipped with the correct reader application can scan the QR Code's image to open the survey in the phone's browser.
- **QuestionPro App:** The [QuestionPro App](#) (<https://www.questionpro.com/mobile/>) allows to circulate surveys quickly, and the responses can be collected both online and offline.
- **API:** You can use the [API integration](#) (<https://www.questionpro.com/api/>) of the QuestionPro platform for potential respondents to take your survey.
- **SMS:** Using [SMS surveys](#) (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/sms-survey-software-tools-india/>) are another quick way to collect feedback. This method can be used in quick responses and when the survey is simple, straightforward, and not too long. This method is used to increase the open and response rate of collecting feedback.

Distribution allows using one or a mix of the above methods, depending on the research objective and the resources being used for any particular survey. Many factors play a part in the mode of distribution of surveys like cost, research study type, the flexibility of questions, time to collect responses, statistical analysis to be run on data, and willingness of the respondent to take part in the study.

You can conduct a telephone or email survey and then select respondents for a face-to-face interview. Survey data are sometimes also obtained through questionnaires filled out by respondents in groups, for example, a school class or a group of shoppers in a shopping center.

You can also classify these by their content, using open or closed questions to know, for example, opinions, attitudes, details of a fact, habits, experiences for a later classification, and analysis of the obtained results.

In the same way, you can use some sample survey questions (<https://www.questionpro.com/tour/sample-questions.html>); ask for the classification of different alternatives. You can do a concise survey with items that can take five minutes or less to answer, or it can be a very long survey that requires one hour or more of the interviewee's time. For example, those who need to know in-depth behavior or attitudes of people prefer to use, in addition to surveys, a panel, or an online community.

5. Survey data collection

The methods used to collect survey data (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/survey-data-collection/>) have evolved with time. Researchers have increasingly moved away from paper surveys to using quick, online questionnaires for survey data collection method has its pros and cons, and the researcher has to, in most cases, use different ways to collect the requisite data from a sample.

The survey response rates of each of these methods vary as multiple factors like time, interest, incentive, etc. play a role in the data collection (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/data-collection/>) process.

In the section above, we have looked at survey data collection methods (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/survey-data-collection/>) based on design, cross-sectional research, and longitudinal surveys. In this method, we will look at the four main survey data collection methods based on their actual implementation. They are:

- QuestionPro** FREE ACCOUNT (/A/SHOWENTRY.DO?SOURCEREF=BLOG)
- **Online:** Online surveys have now become the most widely used survey data collection method. There is a wide variety of advanced and straightforward question types that are available in online surveys. The data collection and data analysis (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/data-analysis-101-metric/>) are now structured and easy to manage. The survey response online is very high compared to other research options.
 - **Telephone:** Telephone surveys are a cheaper method than face-to-face surveys and less-time consuming too. Contacting respondents via the telephonic medium requires less effort and human resources. Still, the survey response rate could be debatable as respondents aren't very trusting to give out information on the call. In this survey data collection method, the researcher also has less scope to digress from the survey flow.
 - **Face-to-face:** Face-to-face surveys are on the most widely used methods of survey data collection. The survey response rate in this survey data collection method is always higher because the respondent trusts the researcher since it is in-person. The survey design in this research method (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/what-is-research/>) is planned well in advance, but there is so scope to digress to collect in-depth data.
 - **Paper or print:** The least used survey data collection method that is now being used mostly in field research (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/field-research/>) is paper surveys. Researchers and organizations are moving away from using this method since they are logistically tough to manage and tough to analyze. These can be used where laptops, computers, and tablets cannot go, and hence they use the age-old method of data collection; pen and paper.

When you conduct a survey, you must have access to its analytics. While manual surveys based on pen and paper or excel sheets require the additional workforce to be analyzed by experienced data analysts, it becomes much simpler when using an online survey platform.

Statistical analysis can be conducted on this survey data to make sense of all the data that has been collected. There are multiple methods of survey data analysis (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/survey-data-collection/>), mostly for what is quantitative data (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/quantitative-data/>). Most of the commonly used types are:

- Cross-tabulation (<https://www.questionpro.com/cross-tabulation.html>) is one of the most straightforward statistical analysis tools that use a basic tabulation framework to make sense of data. Raw survey data can be daunting, but structuring that data into a table helps draw parallels between different research (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/what-is-research/>) parameters. It involves data that is mutually exclusive to each other.
- Trend analysis (<https://www.questionpro.com/features/trend-analysis.html>) provides the ability to look at survey-data over a long period. This method of statistical analysis of survey data helps plot aggregated response data over time, which helps to conclude the change in respondent perception over time.
- MaxDiff analysis (<https://www.questionpro.com/max-diff/>) is a research technique to help understand customer preferences across multiple parameters. For example, a product's pricing, features, marketing, etc.

become the basis for Maxdiff analysis. In a simplistic form, this method is also called the “best-worst” method. This method is similar to conjoint analysis, but it is much easier to implement.

- Conjoint analysis (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/what-is-conjoint-analysis/>) is an advanced statistical research method that aims to understand the choices a person makes in selecting a product or service. This method offers in-depth insights into what is vital to a customer and what parameters sway their purchasing decisions.
- TURF Analysis (<https://www.questionpro.com/article/turf-analysis.html>) or Total Unduplicated Reach and Frequency Analysis is a statistical research methodology that assesses the total market reach of a product or service or a mix of both. This method is widely used by organizations to understand at what frequency is their messaging reaching the audience and if that needs tweaking. TURF Analysis is widely used to formulate and measure the success of go-to-market strategies.
- Gap analysis (<https://www.questionpro.com/features/gap-analysis.html>) uses a side-by-side matrix question type that helps regulate the difference between expected performance and actual performance. This statistical method for survey data helps understand what has to move production from practical to planned performance.
- SWOT analysis (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/swot-analysis-example/>), another widely used statistical way organizes survey data into data that represents strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of an organization or product or service that provides a holistic picture about competition. This method helps to create effective business strategies.

- [Text analysis \(https://www.questionpro.com/tour/text-analysis.html\)](https://www.questionpro.com/tour/text-analysis.html) is an advanced statistical method where intelligent tools make sense of and quantify or fashion qualitative and open-ended data into easily understandable data. This method applied to unstructured data.

Learn More: [MaxDiff Analysis vs Conjoint Analysis \(https://www.questionpro.com/blog/maxdiff-vs-conjoint/\)](https://www.questionpro.com/blog/maxdiff-vs-conjoint/)

RELATED POSTS



[\(https://www.questionpro.com/blog/loop-through-block-of-questions/\)](https://www.questionpro.com/blog/loop-through-block-of-questions/)



[\(https://www.questionpro.com/blog/distribute-your-surveys-in-multiple-languages/\)](https://www.questionpro.com/blog/distribute-your-surveys-in-multiple-languages/)

[Now loop through a block of questions without rewriting them](https://www.questionpro.com/blog/loop-through-block-of-questions/)

[\(https://www.questionpro.com/blog/loop-through-block-of-questions/\)](https://www.questionpro.com/blog/loop-through-block-of-questions/)

[Now distribute your surveys in multiple languages](https://www.questionpro.com/blog/distribute-your-surveys-in-multiple-languages/)

[\(https://www.questionpro.com/blog/distribute-your-surveys-in-multiple-languages/\)](https://www.questionpro.com/blog/distribute-your-surveys-in-multiple-languages/)




[\(https://www.questionpro.com/blog/contactless-health-screening/\)](https://www.questionpro.com/blog/contactless-health-screening/)

[Contactless health screening – A how-to guide, use-cases, and free templates](https://www.questionpro.com/blog/contactless-health-screening/)

[\(https://www.questionpro.com/blog/contactless-health-screening/\)](https://www.questionpro.com/blog/contactless-health-screening/)

[...](#) [\(/\)](#) [f\(https://www.facebook.com/questionpro\)](https://www.facebook.com/questionpro) [t\(https://twitter.com/questionpro\)](https://twitter.com/questionpro)

[in\(https://www.linkedin.com/company/questionpro\)](https://www.linkedin.com/company/questionpro) [yt\(https://www.youtube.com/user/QuestionPro\)](https://www.youtube.com/user/QuestionPro)

 [Help center \(https://www.questionpro.com/help/\)](https://www.questionpro.com/help/) [Live Chat \(https://www.questionpro.com/chat/\)](https://www.questionpro.com/chat/)

[FREE ACCOUNT \(/A/SHOWENTRY.DO?SOURCEREF=HOME\)](/A/SHOWENTRY.DO?SOURCEREF=HOME)

Tour	+
Products	+
Resources	+
Pricing	+
Features Comparison	+
Solutions	+
Company	+

QuestionPro in your language

[Encuestas Online \(/es/\)](/es/)

[Pesquisa Online \(/pt-br/\)](/pt-br/)

[Umfrage Software \(https://www.questionpro.de/\)](https://www.questionpro.de/)

[برامج للمسح \(/ar/\)](/ar/)

[調査ソフトウェア \(/ja/\)](/ja/)

[Logiciel d'enquête \(https://www.questionpro.fr\)](https://www.questionpro.fr/)

Awards & certificates

