

# Creating Meaningful Surveys: Best Practices

Dr. Dongkyu Kim

Dr. Mi-son Kim

Center for Survey Research  
& Policy Analysis



# Center for Survey Research & Policy Analysis (CSRPA)

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- Selected Projects
  - 2020 UTRGV Faculty Language Survey, UTRGV B3 Institute
  - 2021 UTRGV AmeriCorps Evaluation Project, UTRGV Financial Aid
  - NSF Improving Undergraduate Science Education (IUSE), 5-year project
  - 2022 Texas Food Desert Survey, Texas Department of Agriculture
  - 2022 RGV Voice II Survey, University of Iowa & UTRGV
  - 2023 Cameron County Survey, George Mason University & UTRGV
  - 2023-2024 Translation & Transcription, Evident Change & UTRGV
  - 2024 La Joya Survey, UTRGV School of Earth, Environmental, and Marine Sciences
  - 2024 Texas Workers Compensation Survey, Texas Department of Insurance
  - 2024 Evaluation Project for the NASA Office of STEM Engagement
  - 2024 RGV Farmer Survey, UTRGV SEEMS
  - 2025 Texas Demographic Center Survey (Planned)
  - 2025 NASA RAISE Project Evaluation Team (Submitted)

**How to create a survey that will help you collect the information you seek?**

# The Challenges of Survey Today

## The Respondents are:

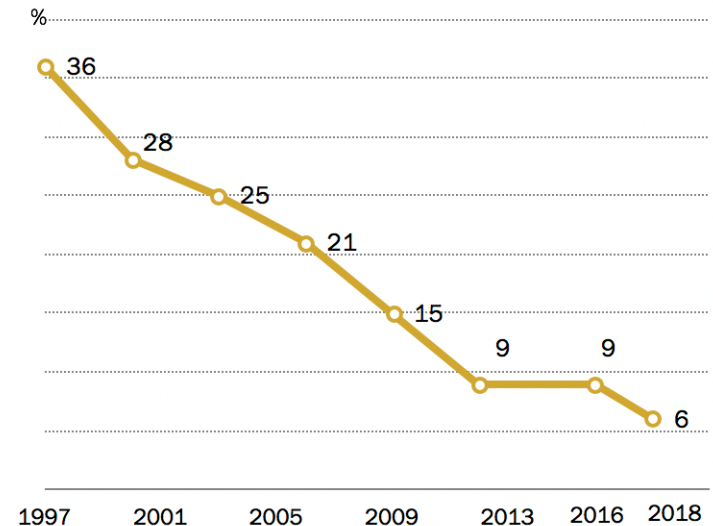
- Not answering their phone/email!
- Suspicious!
- Hanging up fast!

## A Survey should:

- Make them answer!
- Give the respondents confidence!
- Please be short & sweet!

### After brief plateau, telephone survey response rates have fallen again

Response rate by year (%)



Note: Response rate is AAPOR RR3. Only landlines sampled 1997-2006. Rates are typical for surveys conducted in each year.

Source: Pew Research Center telephone surveys conducted 1997-2018.

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# 1. How to Make Them Answer the Survey?

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- **Use authority:**
  - Federal Communications Commission
  - US Telecom Call labeling Services
  - USPS National Change of Address Program
- **The Point is to let them know in advance!**
  - Email, mail, postcards, etc.
  - Let them know your phone number or email address.
- **Multiple entry points may help!**
  - Mail & Email
  - Postcard & SMS
  - Phone & online & SMS
  - SMS message + anonymous survey + PIN number

## 2. How to Provide Confidence?

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- **Let them come to you!**
  - A survey site
  - Given them a PIN number to enter
  - Don't send them the link!
- **You need well-trained surveyors.**
- **Do not use a personal email address.**



# 3. An Effective Survey: Objectives

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- **Defining Objectives & Specifying the kind of answers needed to meet the objective**
  - A good, detailed list of question objectives and an analysis plan!
- **Defining Specific kind of data!**
  - Seeking knowledge/facts?
  - Measuring satisfaction?
  - Evaluating impact?
- **EX. Impact evaluation? – Pre-Post survey**
- **EX. Seeking facts – Be aware of memory issue/bias**

### 3. An Effective Survey: Good Questions

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- **Question Goal:** I want to measure well-being of the person.
  - Current salary?
  - Annual income?
  - Household income?
- **Measuring income**
  - Quality or status of the job:
    - “What is your current salary?”
  - Resources available to the person:
    - “How much money did you make in the last twelve months from paid jobs?”
  - How well off the person is:
    - “What was the household income for all people residing in your household?”



### 3. An Effective Survey: Good Questions

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- **Otherwise**, we may end up having interview-like questions!
  - “What’s the problem with a program?”
  - “Do you have any suggestions?”
- **Otherwise**, we may end up having data that you will never use.

# 3. An Effective Survey: Taking Facts from Survey

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- **Personal Identifiers + survey**
  - Verifiable facts with ID:
    - Program participation history
    - Locations
    - Other personal information
    - Confidentiality is the key
  - After survey, merge data into the survey
  - By asking them about program participation
    - We can check the memory bias in survey.

### 3. An Effective Survey: Critical Concepts

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- People will always ask, “What do you mean by that?”

“How many times have you been hospitalized in the past years?”



### 3. An Effective Survey: Concepts

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- Build needed definitions into the question.

“In the **past twelve years**, since **a year ago**, how many different times have you been **admitted** to a hospital **as a patient overnight or longer**?”

VS

“How many times have you been hospitalized in the past years?”

### 3. An Effective Survey: Expected Answers

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- Ask a question that provides consistent perception of what constitutes an adequate answer.
  - “How long have you lived in your current location?”



I will send you the data later. Please share your email in the survey.

### 3. An Effective Survey: Expected Answers

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“How **many years** have you lived in your current location?”

VS.

“How long have you lived in your current location?”

### 3. An Effective Survey: Language, Survey Setting

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- Language translation
- Professionally-translated Spanish vs Local Spanish
- Face-to-face survey vs Non-face-to-face survey

Ex) To what extent do you agree with the following statement?  
“Abortion is a private matter that should be left to the woman to decide without government intervention.”

- Verbal survey vs Computer-assisted survey

# Conclusion:

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- **PI – Evaluator Collaboration**
- **Survey design is critical**
- **Short & sweet survey**
- **Compensation!**



# Q & A

Contact:

Dr. Dongkyu Kim ([dongkyu.kim@utrgv.edu](mailto:dongkyu.kim@utrgv.edu))

Dr. Mi-son Kim ([mison.kim@utrgv.edu](mailto:mison.kim@utrgv.edu))

CSRPA ([csr@utrgv.edu](mailto:csr@utrgv.edu))

