

# Using Surveys to Gain Insights

This resource provides advice for designing surveys that reach the desired number of people, generate high response rates and gain useful information. Surveys are a key method for doing market research with a new potential audience or vital feedback from an existing participant.



## A survey is:

- **A tool to gain quantitative and/or qualitative data**
- **A set of questions that can be paper based, or online via a computer, laptop or smart phone**
- **A useful way to engage a large number of people**

Some of the drawbacks of surveys include:

- It can be a challenge to recruit the right people to respond if you are engaging a new target market
- Responses to open-ended questions are often brief
- You don't have the ability to immediately follow up and prompt for deeper insights

Online surveys can be created through several different platforms. While there are free services available, some will require a monthly fee. If your organisation does not already have an account with Survey Monkey or an equivalent platform you may need to do some research and sign up. Some platforms like Google Forms are available for free to not-for-profit organisations through their G-suite business tools.

Make sure you consider your obligations under Australian privacy laws when collecting people's personal information. This should include:

- Advising people how you will be using their personal data (i.e. this might simply be to contact them for a follow up discussion relevant to your research)
- Having a plan for how you will store the data
- Having a plan for when you will destroy the data
- For more information about the Australian privacy principles, [click here](#).

## Tips for designing the survey

Here are some of the steps to consider when conducting a survey.

### 1. Set the goal

### 2. Design the questions

### 3. Promoting the survey

### 4. Analyse and confirm insights

## 1. Set the goal

Make sure you have a clear goal for what you want to achieve through the survey. Generally, that's about:

- market research for the design of a new product or to reach a new target audience
- gaining feedback on the quality of your existing product (or an element of it) to improve

## 2. Design the questions

Develop a draft of the questions you want to ask. There are two key considerations here:

- The information you want to collect
- The overall length of the survey

You will also need to:

- Decide what type of data do you want: quantitative and/or qualitative?
- Ask some demographic questions on any survey – at a minimum ask for age and gender. Consider if the following are relevant, language spoken at home, disability status, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status, LGBTQIA+ status, income level etc.

## 2. Design the questions continued



If your survey is for market research purposes, think about the following questions:

- Who is your target audience?
- What information do you know about them?  
You may like to ask about:
  - Interests
  - Motivations for sport participation
  - Barriers to sport participation
  - Past experiences (in relation to the sport, activity or area you are investigating)
  - Do you have any hypothesis you want to test?
- What are the market trends that you want to explore further with the target audience?

If your survey is for feedback on your product, you may like to ask about:

- Overall customer satisfaction
- An element of the experience you want feedback on, such as:
  - the coach or deliverer
  - how the person was welcomed
  - whether the participant is considering returning
  - favourite part of the experience
  - least favourite part of the experience
  - suggestions for improvement
- Specific information required by a funding partner
- Information for internal reporting (such as KPIs for the Board)

Keep the length short, focus on the most vital questions. *Research by Survey Monkey has found the longer the survey is, the more likely it will be that people do not complete it. Completion rates have been found to dip for surveys longer than 7-8 minutes.* Moreover, the more questions the survey has, the less time people will spend responding to each question. You can read more about the ideal survey length [here](#). Overall, you need to balance the length of the survey with your data collection goals.

If you understand the size of the target market, you might set a goal for the sample size you want to collect. Survey Monkey has a useful online sample size calculator [here](#).

### Survey design tip – the user experience

In addition to the survey questions and length it is good to consider the experience people will have completing the survey. Consider the following:

- What questions can you ask early on to draw out passionate responses?
- How can you let people 'tell their story' through the flow of questions?
- Which questions will lead to more honest answers?
- Is the language easy to understand?
- Are the questions clear? Ambiguous questions will impact your ability to draw conclusions (and gain or confirm insights). Avoid asking double-barrelled questions. This means avoid asking two questions in one.
- For important topics you may need to ask the question in different ways to be sure of the results.

Most survey platforms have features to display the percentage completed so the users know how long they have left. Through survey design, you want to maintain the interest the person has demonstrated by opening the survey and foster feelings of motivation and interest the whole way through. Do this by considering how the likely responses to each question will be a natural flow from previous questions.



### Customer satisfaction score

A customer satisfaction score is a good option to gain feedback on the quality of the product.

To generate a customer satisfaction score you could ask a question like “how would you rate your experience with (product/program)?” or “Overall, how satisfied were you with your experience during (product/program)?”

The rating scale can be 1-3, 1-5 or 1-10. You can add your own description of the scale, e.g. 1=“Very Unsatisfied” and 5=“Very Satisfied”.

The result will be an average score up to 3, 5 or 10 which you can use to:

- Assess whether the program is meeting the participant’s experience expectations
- Track changes in the score over time
- Assess whether tweaks made based on feedback are increasing overall satisfaction levels

Consider asking specific satisfaction score questions about different elements of the product or experience, e.g. “how satisfied were you with:

- The location?
- The timing of the program?
- The communication style of the deliverer?
- The activities?”

### 3. Promoting the survey



The way you promote the survey is just as important as the survey design. Consider the following:

- If researching a new market, your membership database and social media channels are **highly unlikely** to reach the right people, because your database contains people already engaged in your sport.
- You could reach a new market by sharing the survey through personal or professional networks, to the databases of partner organisations, or by paying for the recruitment of participants via a panel using a market research company.
- Consider offering incentives. These should be general incentives that most people would use, like a retail voucher. In a community sport context, it is unlikely you would have the resources to reward every respondent, so consider offering a prize draw.
- Ensure the messaging you put out to promote the survey clearly communicates the aims of the research and targets the motivations of potential respondents.
- Think about some of the motivations you could tap into – people might be happy to respond if they feel they are helping out a community organisation, if the research could lead to new products for them, fix issues they have with products and if they are passionate about sharing their experiences.
- You may like to explain if the results will be shared (in consolidated form) with respondents. If you do share responses, you may like to demonstrate actions you will take based on feedback.



## 4. Analyse and confirm insights



Analysing surveys can be tricky work, especially if you get a large number of responses. Consider the following:

- Most online survey platforms have in-built analysis tools which will give you basic summaries and graphics, making it easier to analyse the results.
- If you collect a lot of quantitative data, does your team have someone capable of using excel or Google Sheet pivot tables and data analysis features?
- If you collect a lot of qualitative data, it will take time to read through the responses and sort through the key themes. You might be able to use key word searches to identify themes, but in some cases, you may need to read through hundreds of responses to identify key themes.

Considering the above is a good way to keep the survey short and succinct!

**Preparation Tip** – Before you finalise the survey, get a few people to complete test runs and offer feedback. Consider each question and ask yourself “are the questions easy to understand and answer?”, “do we really need this question?” or “how will we use this data?”



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