
Contents

CHAPTER 1 ■ About Polls	1
1.1 THE WHEAT AND THE CHAFF	1
1.2 WHAT IS A POLL?	3
1.3 CONDUCTING A POLL	5
1.3.1 The Target Population	5
1.3.2 The Variables	5
1.3.3 The Population Characteristics	5
1.3.4 The Questionnaire	6
1.3.5 The Mode of Data Collection	6
1.3.6 The Sampling Frame	7
1.3.7 The Sampling Design	7
1.3.8 The Sample Size	8
1.3.9 Data Collection	8
1.3.10 Analysis	8
1.3.11 Nonresponse Correction	9
1.3.12 Publication	9
1.4 EXAMPLES OF POLLS	9
1.4.1 The American Community Survey	9
1.4.2 The Eurobarometer	10
1.5 SUMMARY	12

CHAPTER 2 ■ Some History	15
2.1 THE ORIGINS OF STATISTICAL DATA COLLECTION	15
2.2 THE CENSUS ERA	16
2.3 THE RISE OF SURVEY SAMPLING	19
2.4 OPINION POLLS	20
2.5 FROM TRADITIONAL TO COMPUTER-ASSISTED INTERVIEWING	23
2.6 ONLINE POLLS	27
2.7 SUMMARY	29
CHAPTER 3 ■ The Questionnaire	31
3.1 ASKING QUESTIONS	31
3.2 ASKING FACTUAL AND NONFACTUAL QUESTIONS	34
3.3 THE TEXT OF THE QUESTION	35
3.3.1 Is Familiar Wording Used in the Text?	35
3.3.2 Is the Question Ambiguous?	36
3.3.3 Is the Question Text Too Long?	37
3.3.4 Is It a Recall Question?	38
3.3.5 Is It a Leading Question?	39
3.3.6 Does the Question Ask Things People Don't Know?	40
3.3.7 Is It a Sensitive Question?	41
3.3.8 Is It a Double Question (Also Called a Double-Barreled Question)?	41
3.3.9 Is It a Negative Question?	42
3.3.10 Is It a Hypothetical Question?	42
3.4 QUESTION TYPES	43
3.4.1 Open Questions	43
3.4.2 Closed Question, One Answer	44
3.4.3 Closed Question, More Than One Answer	48
3.4.4 Numerical Question	49
3.4.5 Grid Question	51
3.5 THE ORDER OF THE QUESTIONS	53

3.6	TESTING THE QUESTIONNAIRE	56
3.7	SUMMARY	60
CHAPTER 4 ■ Data Collection		63
4.1	MODES OF DATA COLLECTION	63
4.2	MAIL POLLS	64
4.3	FACE-TO-FACE POLLS	65
4.4	TELEPHONE POLLS	68
4.5	ONLINE POLLS	70
4.6	THE CHOICE OF THE MODE OF DATA COLLECTION	71
4.7	SUMMARY	74
CHAPTER 5 ■ Sampling		75
5.1	BY A SAMPLE WE MAY JUDGE THE WHOLE PIECE	75
5.2	A REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE?	77
5.3	THE SAMPLING FRAME	79
5.4	HOW NOT TO SELECT A SAMPLE	81
5.4.1	A Poll in a Shopping Mall	82
5.4.2	A Poll in a Magazine	82
5.4.3	A Poll about Singles	82
5.4.4	A Household Poll	83
5.5	RANDOM NUMBERS	83
5.6	SIMPLE RANDOM SAMPLING	88
5.7	SYSTEMATIC SAMPLING	91
5.8	TWO-STAGE SAMPLING	93
5.9	QUOTA SAMPLING	95
5.10	SELF-SELECTION	96
5.11	SUMMARY	99
CHAPTER 6 ■ Estimation		101
6.1	ESTIMATOR AND ESTIMATE	101
6.2	AN EXAMPLE OF A POLL	103

6.3	ESTIMATING A POPULATION PERCENTAGE	105
6.4	ESTIMATING A POPULATION MEAN	109
6.5	HOW LARGE SHOULD THE SAMPLE BE?	114
6.5.1	The Sample Size for Estimating a Percentage	114
6.5.2	The Sample Size for Estimating a Mean	117
6.6	SUMMARY	118
CHAPTER 7 ■ Nonresponse		119
7.1	THE NONRESPONSE PROBLEM	119
7.2	CONSEQUENCES OF NONRESPONSE	121
7.3	NONRESPONSE ANALYSIS	130
7.4	NONRESPONSE CORRECTION	134
7.5	SUMMARY	139
CHAPTER 8 ■ Online Polls		143
8.1	THE RISE OF ONLINE POLLS	143
8.2	UNDERCOVERAGE IN ONLINE POLLS	145
8.3	SAMPLE SELECTION FOR AN ONLINE POLL	149
8.4	NONRESPONSE IN ONLINE POLLS	153
8.5	ADJUSTMENT WEIGHTING	155
8.6	MEASUREMENT ERRORS	159
8.6.1	Response Order Effects	160
8.6.2	Endorsing the Status Quo	163
8.6.3	Selecting the Middle Option	163
8.6.4	Straight-Lining	164
8.6.5	Don't Know	165
8.6.6	Arbitrary Answer	166
8.6.7	Other Aspects	167
8.7	ONLINE PANELS	167
8.8	EXAMPLE: THE UK POLLING DISASTER	172
8.9	SUMMARY	175

CHAPTER 9 ■ Election Polls	177
9.1 VOTING AND POLLING	177
9.2 PREELECTION POLLS	180
9.2.1 Asking for Voting Intentions	180
9.2.2 Data Collection	184
9.2.3 Representativity	188
9.2.4 Single-Question Polls	192
9.2.5 An Example: The U.S. Presidential Election in 2016	194
9.3 EXIT POLLS	197
9.3.1 The First Exit Poll	198
9.3.2 The Basics of Exit Polls	200
9.3.3 Examples of Exit Polls	203
9.4 SUMMARY	204
CHAPTER 10 ■ Analysis	207
10.1 THE ANALYSIS OF POLL DATA	207
10.2 ANALYSIS OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF A QUANTITATIVE VARIABLE	211
10.3 ANALYSIS OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF A QUALITATIVE VARIABLE	216
10.4 ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TWO QUANTITATIVE VARIABLES	218
10.5 ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TWO QUALITATIVE VARIABLES	221
10.6 ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A QUANTITATIVE AND A QUALITATIVE VARIABLE	226
10.7 SUMMARY	229

CHAPTER 11 ■ Publication	231
11.1 THE RESEARCH REPORT	231
11.2 THE STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH REPORT	232
11.2.1 The Executive Summary	232
11.2.2 The Methodological Account	233
11.2.3 The Outcomes of the Analysis	236
11.2.4 The Conclusions	237
11.2.5 Literature	237
11.2.6 Appendices	237
11.3 USE OF GRAPHS	238
11.3.1 Pie Chart	239
11.3.2 Bar Chart	241
11.3.3 Dot Plot	243
11.3.4 Grouped and Stacked Bar Chart	243
11.3.5 Showing Developments over Time	245
11.4 GUIDELINES FOR DESIGNING GRAPHS	247
11.4.1 Guideline 1: Do Not Mess with the Scales	247
11.4.2 Guideline 2: Put the Data in the Proper Context	249
11.4.3 Guideline 3: Be Careful with the Use of Symbols	253
11.4.4 Guideline 4: No Three-Dimensional Perspective	255
11.4.5 Guideline 5: No Chart Junk	257
11.5 SUMMARY	259
CHAPTER 12 ■ A Checklist for Polls	261
12.1 SEPARATING THE CHAFF FROM THE WHEAT	261
12.2 THE NINE QUESTIONS	263
12.2.1 Is There a Research Report?	263
12.2.2 Is the Poll Commissioned or Sponsored by an Organization That Has No Interest in Its Outcomes?	264
12.2.3 Is the Target Population Clearly Defined?	264
12.2.4 Is the Questionnaire Available?	265
12.2.5 Is the Sample a Random Sample?	265

12.2.6	Are the Initial Sample Size and Realized Sample Size Reported?	266
12.2.7	Is the Response Rate Sufficiently High, Say Higher than 50%?	267
12.2.8	Have the Outcomes Been Corrected for Selective Nonresponse?	269
12.2.9	Are the Margins of Error Specified?	270
12.3	AN EXAMPLE: SOCIAL MEDIA STRESS	271
12.3.1	Is There a Research Report?	272
12.3.2	Is the Poll Commissioned or Sponsored by an Organization That Has No Interest in Its Outcomes?	273
12.3.3	Is the Target Population Clearly Defined?	273
12.3.4	Is the Questionnaire Included in the Research Report?	273
12.3.5	Is the Sample a Random Sample for Which Each Person in the Target Population Has a Positive Probability of Selection?	274
12.3.6	Are the Initial Sample Size and the Realized Sample Size (Number of Respondents) Reported?	274
12.3.7	Is the Response Rate Sufficiently High, Say Higher than 50%?	275
12.3.8	Have the Outcomes Been Corrected (By Adjustment Weighting) for Selective Nonresponse?	275
12.3.9	Are the Margins of Error Specified?	275
12.4	SUMMARY	276