

Data Collection Design Part 5

# Question Wording



**Question wording:  
Why does it matter?**

# Why does it matter?

- What you ask and how you ask it could affect the answers you get back – your data could be invalid because of this
- Good question wording is easier to answer and therefore easier for the participant to take part
- Good question wording makes the participant more willing to keep going

# Poor Question Wording

Do you think STEM should form a substantial element of  
ITT in the UK?

	Jargon
Definition	The use of specialised or technical language that is only understood by those who use it regularly
Better Example	Do you think science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) should form a substantial element of training for new teachers?

# Poor Question Wording

Do you think the price of the car is not insignificant?

	Double-negative
Definition	The use of two negative words in the same sentence
Better Example	Do you think the price of the car is significant?    OR Do you think the price of the car is insignificant?

# Poor Question Wording

Did you find maths difficult or boring at school?

	<b>Double-barrel</b>
<b>Definition</b>	A question that touches upon more than one issue, yet allows for only one answer
<b>Better Example</b>	Did you find maths difficult at school? Did you find maths boring at school?

# Poor Question Wording

Is your favourite colour red, blue, green or yellow?

	<b>Non-exhaustive</b>
<b>Definition</b>	A list or scale does not cover every possible option
<b>Better Example</b>	What is your favourite colour out of red, blue, green or yellow?

# Poor Question Wording

What problems did you have with our customer service team?

	<b>Loaded</b>
<b>Definition</b>	A trick question, which presupposes at least one unverified assumption
<b>Better Example</b>	How was your experience with our customer service team today? Can you provide a reason why?

# Poor Question Wording

Do you agree that mothers who work are neglecting their children?

	<b>Leading</b>
<b>Definition</b>	A question that prompts or suggests the answer wanted
<b>Better Example</b>	What is your view on whether mothers who work are neglecting their children?

# Question Wording Essentials

## **Keep it Simple**

Each question should be clear and as simple as possible, using suitable language

## **Use more than one question**

You may need more than one question for a topic or sub-topic

## **Flow of questions**

Keep a logical flow to the questions. If jumping to a new topic then indicate that you are doing so

# Types of Question

Open Ended

Closed

# Open & Closed Questions

## Open Ended Questions

Enable participants to give a free account, in their own terms, of their actions, views, thoughts etc.

## Closed Questions

Prescribe the range of responses from which the participant may choose

# Advantages & Disadvantages

Type	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Open Ended Questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Freedom and spontaneity of the answers</li><li>▪ Opportunity to probe</li><li>▪ Useful for testing hypotheses about ideas and awareness</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Time consuming</li><li>▪ Coding – costly and slow to process, may be unreliable</li><li>▪ Demand more effort from respondent</li></ul>

# Advantages & Disadvantages

Type	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Closed Questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Require little time</li><li>▪ No extended writing</li><li>▪ Low costs, easy to process</li><li>▪ Make group comparisons easy</li><li>▪ Useful for testing specific hypotheses</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Loss of spontaneous responses</li><li>▪ Bias in answer categories</li><li>▪ Sometimes too crude, too basic</li><li>▪ May irritate respondents</li></ul>

# Types of Question

**Open Ended**

**Closed**

**Dichotomous**

**Multiple  
Choice**

**Rank  
Ordering**

**Rating Scales**

**Constant Sum**

**Ratio**

# Open Ended Question

**What have you done during lockdown to keep yourself busy?**

**What would you like to achieve in the next ten years?**

- You can use in questionnaires but may need to leave room for potentially long answers
- If you include a lot of these a questionnaire may not be the best data collection method for your study

# Dichotomous Question

## Examples

Yes

No

Up

Down

Left

Right

Ant

Dec

- Can take several forms
- Usually a “yes” or “no” question
- Compels respondent to “pick a side”
- Provides a clear, unequivocal response
- Easy to code/analyse
- Use several to gain data on the same topic

# Multiple Choice Question

**Rick Astley's never gonna?**

- Give you up
- Let you down
- Run around
- Desert you
- All of the above

- Categories must be discrete (no overlaps)
- Exhaust the possible range of responses
- Clarify if need to tick one box, two boxes, multiple boxes etc.
- Different people interpret descriptions and ideas differently
- Can add “other” at end ... but if you do this a lot then you need to question if you know enough about your topics or if you're really only interested in the options you've provided

# Rating Question

On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being low and 5/6 being high) how annoying do you find:

The ending of Game of Thrones?

1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 []

Being without WIFI?

1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 [] 6 []

Donald Trump?

1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 []

- Likert scale is a classic example
- Odd number of options (usually has a neutral option in the centre)
- Even number of options = no neutral option
- Can include a specific option for 'not applicable' (usually at the far end of the scale)
- Size of scale – 3, 5, 6, 10 etc.

*Note: you would always use the same number of points on scales when presented together – the use of a 5 and a 6 point scale here are provided as an example*



# Ranking Question

**After paying bills, food etc.  
what do you prefer to spend  
your money on?**

Please give each item a ranking  
with 1 being the most preferred  
and 5 being the least

- [ ] Socialising
- [ ] Travel
- [ ] Clothes and Accessories
- [ ] Hobbies e.g. crafts, reading
- [ ] Education/Learning

- Identifies options but enables a relative degree of preference, priority etc. to be extracted
- Variables considered as a whole by the respondent, not independently, provides greater value
- Can variables genuinely be considered on the same scale, within the same family?
- Too many options may create difficulties

# Constant Sum Question

**After paying bills, food etc. what do you prefer to spend your money on?**

Please distribute a total of 10 points among the options reflecting the strength of your preferences

- Socialising
- Travel
- Clothes and Accessories
- Hobbies e.g. crafts, reading
- Education/Learning

- Enables priorities to be identified
- Comparison of highs and lows rather than just yes or no
- Respondent has to assess the relationship between each option as well as their view of each option
- Too few or too many options causes issues for the respondent

# Ratio Question

How much money do you have in the bank? \_\_\_\_\_

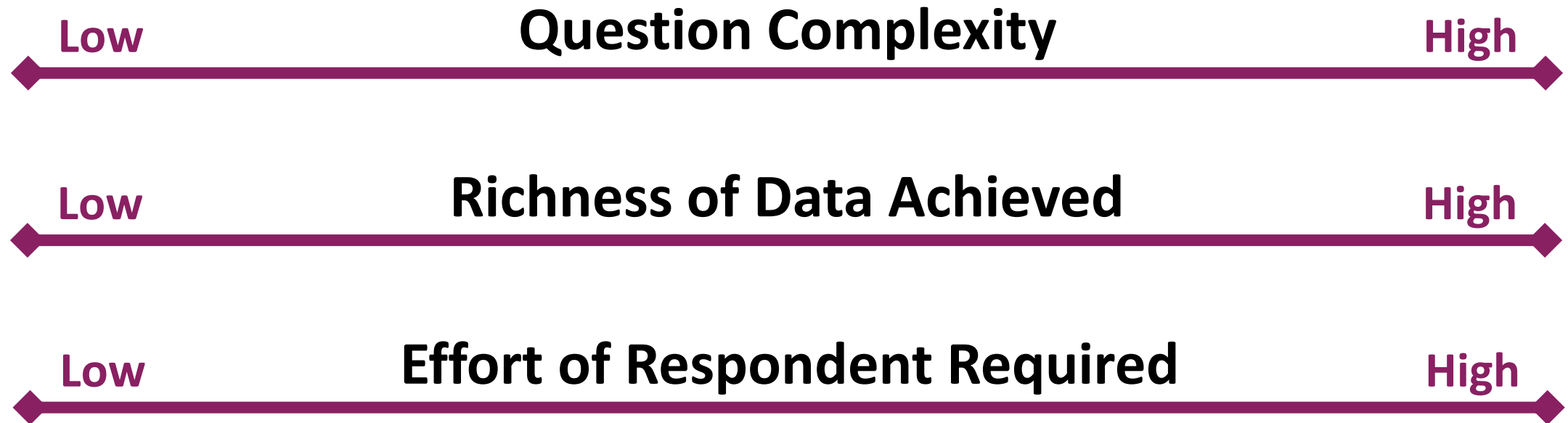
How many times have you been late to work? \_\_\_\_\_

What percentage did you get in your last assignment? \_\_\_\_\_

What age are you (in years)? \_\_\_\_\_

- Continuous variables where there is a true zero
- No fixed answer or category is provided
- Answer given in numerical form exactly as fits the respondent
- Enables averages, standard deviation, range etc. to be calculated

# As A General Rule



# How many questions do you need?

It depends!

- A quick questionnaire about how you found your coffee/a service today may only need two yes/no questions
- A questionnaire about people's life experiences may have fifty questions or more
- An interview about people's reactions to something in the news may only have three definite questions but there may be others once you've heard the answers

You need as many questions as will give you the answers you **need**.



# Checklist

Do you need all your questions?

Is each question simple and clear?

Do any questions need explaining?

Have you used the right kind of question?

Will you get the right kind of data back?