

# **Citizen Report Cards**

***A RESOURCE KIT***



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## EVALUATING PUBLIC SERVICES

There is a growing awareness among people in government, academia and advocacy groups on the potential of evaluation for improved decision making and positively influencing the policy environment ( see Appendix for a list of major approaches to programme evaluation). Evaluations affect policy decisions through:

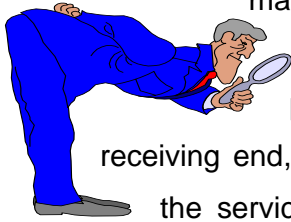
- *Developing new information about programme or policy effectiveness*
- *Explaining to the key players the implications of the new information derived through evaluation*
- *Building a reliable data base around which effective advocacy efforts can be designed*

The days when development was conceived mostly in terms of centrally planned investments with a clearly defined hierarchy of decision-making levels, are long over. Today, development is increasingly seen as a participatory process wherein governments are expected to create market-friendly regulatory environments, develop human resources and focus on capacity building. A major area where this rethinking is taking place is the public service sector where there is a definite shift in focus from investment led growth strategies to an emphasis on the role of policy, information and awareness, improved decision making and active involvement of the civil society. This means that results on the ground and sustainability are now the acid tests of performance. Issues pertaining to accessibility, effectiveness and responsiveness have become critical in this context. More attention is paid to impact assessments of the services and greater stress is laid on feedback and dissemination activities.

Public services in India, especially in urban areas, are widely believed to be unsatisfactory and deteriorating. This unfortunate trend apart from having severe consequences on the overall well-being of the economy, affects the quality of life of the ordinary citizen in an adverse way. The very fact that most of these services are

monopolistic in nature provides the beneficiary with no option to `exit', but continue to tolerate them. This monopoly power combined with lack of corrective actions by the government and low levels of collective action by the citizens have stifled the agencies' responsiveness to the public and their motivation to improve services even within the limits of available resources.

Though a lot of studies have been carried out on the public sector in general and public services in particular, the majority of them address only economic and



managerial perspectives. Seldom does one come across perceptions on the public services from the citizens' perspectives. Because, as users or beneficiaries at the receiving end, their assessments of the quality, efficiency and adequacy of the services and the problems they face in their interactions with the public agencies can provide significant inputs for the improvement of service delivery and management processes.

## Major Approaches to Programme Evaluation

Key Values Promoted	Key Audiences	Preferred Methods	Typical Questions
Efficiency, accountability, theoretical knowledge	High-level policy and decision makers	<b>Quantitative:</b> Systems Analysis, Cost Benefit Analysis etc.,	Are desired outcomes attainable and attributable to the programme? Is this the most efficient alternative ?
Management/practicality, quality control, utility	Program managers, administrators and decision makers	<b>Mixed:</b> Structured and unstructured surveys, questionnaires, interviews and observations	Which aspects of the Programme work well and which need improvement? How effective is the programme with respect to the beneficiaries' need?
Shared Understanding	Programme directors, Staff and Beneficiaries	<b>Qualitative:</b> Case Studies, interviews, observations, document review.	How do the different stakeholders find the programme?
Emancipation/ empowerment, social change	Programme beneficiaries, their communities, other 'powerless' groups	<b>Participatory:</b> Social Criticism, historical analysis, participatory appraisals	In what ways are the premises, goals, or activities of the programme serving to maintain power and resource inequities in the society?

## Citizen Surveys: Rationale & Applications

*What do citizens think about the quality of the services they receive? Are clients having trouble getting the kind of help they want? Will residents in a neighbourhood support the setting up of a Ward Committee? Do patients think they have to pay speed money to get better medical services?*

Carefully designed surveys can yield an abundance of useful information on these and a variety of other topics and issues in public service delivery. Having accurate information about what citizens think can enable decision-makers to take informed decisions and policy choices and to implement service improvements that respond to citizens, needs and preferences.

### **What is a Citizen Survey?**

There are several methods for discovering what people think. One of the best ways is to ask people directly about their opinions. But personal interviews are expensive and time consuming, especially in large populations or among difficult-to-reach groups. A more practical method is to ask a sample, or a representative subset, of citizens about their opinions, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviour. A citizen survey uses a systematic, scientific method for selecting a sample of citizens, collecting information from them, and making generalisations about a larger population that is usually too large to observe or interview directly.

Opinion surveys are an accurate, affordable way to determine what large groups of people think. Many public administrators conduct such surveys regularly to identify budget priorities; to obtain feedback from citizens, customers, or clients on services and programs; and to acquire information on a variety of issues, problems, and choices that confront their organizations.

The wide prevalence of opinion surveys is one indicator of their popularity and potential for informing a variety of decisions that relate to management, accountability, and resource allocation. However, not all surveys are equally useful. Though some meet the highest standards of scientific rigor, others are a



waste of money and efforts. The latter are those that include poorly written or misleading questions, omit important questions, or have flawed sampling designs. Only if a survey instrument is properly designed and implemented can it yield accurate information about who thinks what and why. Improperly designed and executed surveys can misrepresent respondents' views, and thus can mislead and confuse decision-making. Hence, it is imperative

**that those who conduct citizen feedback surveys understand and apply the guidelines that will produce scientifically valid and reliable survey data.**

### **How do citizen surveys help?**

Information surveys can help public officials to address issues in the delivery and maintenance of critical services. It is helpful to begin the initial task of drafting questions by deciding whether the information desired is related mainly to policy formulation, implementation, or evaluation. Though, inevitably there would be some overlap among these stages, they would provide a useful initial framework for thinking about information needs and the kinds of decisions that can be informed by survey results.

It is also useful to consider how opinion surveys can help to broaden the scope of citizen participation in the variety of decisions that confront officials in the public arena.

### **\* Policy Formulation**

Policy formulation involves deciding what to do. Surveys can help public officials to determine what people need, want, prefer, or demand from their government or for their rupees spent as tax. They can then use this information to make choices, set priorities, change practices, and translate popular demands into public policy. Questions that help to inform policy choices often measure the preferences, popularity, or acceptability of singular or competing ideas, actions, choices, or services.

### **\* Policy Implementation**

Citizen feedback can also help public officials decide how best to deliver or provide services. Useful questions in this area may concern the variety of activities and decisions involved in implementing a policy, programme, or service. These can be directed to one or more of the groups with a stake in the issue, such as elected functionaries, management team, employee unions, resident associations and public interest groups.

### **\* Policy Evaluation**

Citizen surveys can also provide useful feedback for evaluation of public policies and programmes. In the business of service delivery, the consumer's perception is the pertinent reality. One could safely assume that the agency responsible for a particular service is not doing its job well if citizens express dissatisfaction with various dimensions of output effectiveness, such as the quality, timeliness, level, accuracy, reliability, convenience, utility, and price of the service. Survey questions can ascertain what citizens think about the quality of services, who uses services, how frequently they use them, and where specific improvements need to be made. For instance, survey findings might suggest the need to publicize the availability of services that are under-utilized.

## **Surveys as participation Mechanisms**

Surveys can help to broaden the scope of citizens, participation in government decision making. Practitioners know that the citizens who feel they play a part or have some impact upon a policy or programme are more likely to feel they have a stake in its outcome. Citizen surveys are one means of advancing a process of deliberative democracy, where public officials address citizens' concerns up front rather than later, in court. As a method of practising the politics of inclusion, surveys have the potential to enhance the quality of democratic governance. This potential can be realized when the objectives of the survey are clear, when citizens have enough information to make choices and form opinions, and when the findings are publicized and discussed in forums of community outreach.

## Planning a Report Card Strategy

**A**s a first step in moving towards data collection, your organization should define an issue focus and a framework for your study. Several questions should be asked to help provide clarity to your research design:

- **WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?**

- What are the issues or problems that you find the most troublesome in your community (e.g., continued power shortages, lack of access to public bank loans, corruption in local government agencies, etc.)?
- What does your community have to say about those Issues/problems?
- Can this research add value to existing studies and/or current action on that issue area(s)?

- **ABOUT WHOM?**

- Do you want to focus on a single public utility or service provider?
- Do you want to gather comparative information from a wide range of utilities?

- **HOW WILL YOU USE THE INFORMATION?**

- What is the purpose of this study?
- Will it re-shape a current program in your organization?
- Will it be used to consider developing new programs?
- Who will see the results of the study (e.g., government agencies, the media, civic groups, research institutions, etc.)?

- **HOW CAN THE DATA BE OBTAINED?**

- What methods (e.g., key informant interviews, focus groups, surveys, observations) are the most effective in gathering the kind of responses you want?
- How will you identify the specific population to be measured (e.g., by locality, income, gender, age, etc.)?

- **HOW DO YOU PLAN TO COLLECT THE DATA?**

- What specific tests, measures and/or questionnaire items are needed to arrive at the desired information?
- Will you use random sampling and/or focus group methods?
- What level of skill do your staff and field-workers require?

- **WHO WILL PAY THE BILL?**

- Do you have enough resources to finance a project which will take a minimum of 12 weeks with a staff (internal or external) of about 12 people?
- Have you budgeted for unexpected changes (e.g., the need to expand your sample size to increase the reliability of results).

These questions should be discussed within your organization and cast out to a wide net of other public interest groups, donors, your board of directors and selected community residents. This collective brainstorming and strategizing can provide your organization with its own set of feedback, helping you to construct a better project and, in turn, to better serve your community. At this point, your organization will have a conceptual approach and in many ways will be past the most difficult point.

Your strategic plan might vary, but it should include the following points:

<p><b>A. The Problem:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. background</li> <li>b. importance to you and your community</li> </ul> <p><b>B. Research Purpose and Objectives</b></p> <p><b>C. Implications and Use of Findings</b></p> <p><b>D. Methodology:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. sample size           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- who are the target respondents</li> <li>- where do they live</li> </ul> </li> <li>b. questionnaire           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- focus group help to identify issue areas</li> <li>- hard information (structured questions)</li> <li>- soft information (open-ended questions)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. field workers           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- number needed</li> </ul> </li> <li>d. quality control supervision</li> <li>e. data processing</li> </ul> <p><b>E. Timetable:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. when questionnaires will be produced</li> <li>b. when field work will begin</li> <li>c. when raw data will be processed</li> <li>d. when analysis will be complete</li> </ul> <p><b>F. Costs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. pilot testing your questionnaire</li> <li>b. staff salaries</li> <li>c. outside consultant fees, if any</li> </ul>
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# A CHECK LIST ON HOW TO PLAN A SURVEY

## **Step 1: Framing the purposes & Objectives of the Survey**

### Considerations

Is the purpose chiefly to explore, describe, or explain phenomena ?

### Methods

Workshops

Brainstorming sessions

Group discussions

## **Step 2: Specifying Information Needs**

### Considerations

Review the types of information that survey questions can measure, and use these to classify information objectives

Is the survey a one time cross-sectional effort or part of an ongoing longitudinal study?

### Methods

Focus Groups

Workshops to review drafts of information objectives and “ideal” items of information desired

## **Step 3: Identifying the Target Population**

### Considerations

Determine the unit of analysis

What kinds of screen or filter questions are needed to obtain information from knowledgeable respondents?

What population attributes are important for the study?

How difficult will it be to contact the desired population

### Methods

List the types of information needed from various population groups and the kinds of analysis required to determine who thinks what and why. Check to ensure that the intended unit of analysis corresponds with the level of information needed.

## **Step 4: Selecting the Methods of Contact**

### Considerations

Review the merits of different types of survey approaches

Determine when survey results are needed

Balance available resources with estimated costs of the desired method of contact

### Methods

Ascertain the monetary amount available for the survey project, personnel and staff and decide whether to adjust the time frame for the study and also whether to contract out some part of the project’s implementation.

## CHOOSING AN APPROACH

**T**he approach you choose for your study should reflect the kind of information you want to gather. That data, in turn, should be based on the objectives you identified in your strategic plan. If you are looking for percentages and averages, you should use quantitative research techniques. If you prefer to focus on individual case studies, qualitative techniques will be required.

The Report Card methodology is rooted in quantitative research methods, but is enhanced by qualitative findings obtained from interviews and observations. Mixing quantitative and qualitative research methods is often thought of as mixing oil and water. Some believe they do not blend. Others, however, see the value in complimenting attitudes with statistics and augmenting opinions with numbers. In fact, many of the advantages of the Report Card's quantitative survey approach are derived from prior use of qualitative methods. Initial sessions with focus groups in Bangalore and other cities provided valuable inputs for the final design of the survey.

How do qualitative and quantitative research methods differ and how do they compare?

*(See the comparative table on the next page)*

<p><b>QUALITATIVE RESEARCH</b> is a method of information gathering that conveys feeling or insights. It is based on a small sample, usually no greater than 30 people, and thus, is too small to draw valid conclusions about the opinions of an entire target population. It mainly uses observation and unstructured interviews to uncover meanings and insights to problem and issues.</p> <p><b>It is used to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generate hypotheses</li> <li>• Clarify issues prior to undertaking quantitative studies</li> <li>• Assess citizen perceptions of a public utility or service provider</li> <li>• Examine emotional responses of citizens to interaction with public service agency and/or agent</li> </ul>	<p><b>QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH</b> is based on statistical principles. It uses sampling methods, questionnaires, and computer based data processing to answer questions of how much, who, where and when. It tends to be more expensive and time-consuming than qualitative research, but provides a certain degree of reliability..</p> <p><b>It is used to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish the level of citizen satisfaction or dissatisfaction with public service providers</li> <li>• Rank order the agencies according to the level of public satisfaction or dissatisfaction ratings</li> <li>• Propose options and reform with the weight of quantitative backing</li> </ul>
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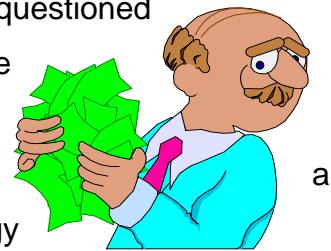
The Report Card methodology combines these two methods of research with two primary (though not exclusive) research techniques: *focus groups* and *questionnaires*. Combining these techniques can enhance the overall validity of your own study by 1) helping to reduce bias, 2) revealing errors in measurement, 3) verifying and cross-checking data, and 4) increasing response rates by producing a better questionnaire.

Basic survey research (questionnaires) is usually accompanied by some form of probability sampling when an entire population cannot be measured. With marginal resources available in both time and money, developing a small but representative data base on a specific problem can serve the interests of your city or community well. This systematic statistical sampling procedure reinforces rigor in the data collection approach. Such rigor is critical because in the world of policy, numbers are often given more importance than opinions. The survey

method can also highlight the quantitative estimates between a problem and its possible causal factors through frequency distributions and regression analysis. Once a problem's size and dimensions are identified (via the findings from the survey), researchers can begin to look at which factors are most closely related to that problem.

Some issues, however, are better addressed through open-ended, exploratory inquiries where factors might not be easily laid out in a predetermined survey-response format. The Bangalore study of slum dwellers, for example, balanced its large-scale survey with focus groups and individual case studies. The unique characteristic of the slum populations required a softer approach to the Report Card study. That is, establishing degrees of awareness, attitudes and beliefs about the quality of public services in the Project Voice survey was as important to the survey outcomes as determining degrees of satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Although the Report Card methodology is adaptable, it must still abide by statistical conventions. Throwing a questionnaire together quickly and asking nearby residents or passers-by on a "first come, first questioned basis" is not survey research, although it can be quite functional in building good programs starts and cases for action in a community. This method is less rigorous than sample survey research approach. The trade-off is energy versus rigor.



In mounting the Report Card approach itself, your organization needs to set general parameters related to *sampling units* (e.g. households, bus rides, hospital users), *sample size*, and *the method of interviewing* (by mail, telephone, or in person). Due to the erratic nature of the very services you may be measuring, interviewing may be the only viable data collecting method in most developing countries. It is important to remember that each of the decisions has

cost implications. Sample location necessarily follows from the intentions of one's survey, but sample size and methods often derive principally from financial resources available and how close your organization wants to get to the target community in conducting the project.

<b>HOUSEHOLD INTERVIEWING</b>	
<b>PROS</b>	<b>CONS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By being physically present, the interviewer may convince the person to participate.</li> <li>• Visual materials may be used</li> <li>• Long questionnaires have a better chance of completion (vs. Mailed surveys)</li> <li>• Interviewer may help clarify questions the respondent is having trouble understanding</li> <li>• Selection of sample can be more precise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel time and expense to locate the respondents is high</li> <li>• Interviewer's presence and mannerisms may bias responses</li> <li>• Anonymity is lost; respondents might fear later identification</li> <li>• Field work control and supervision is difficult</li> <li>• Staffing capable interviewers, especially when your study is in distant places, is difficult.</li> </ul>

# SAMPLING

**S**ampling is the science of selecting cases in a way that enables the researcher to make accurate inferences about a larger population.

## TWO MAJOR DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN IN SAMPLING

- About the kind/ method of sample.
- About the size of sample.

The above decisions are in turn governed by:

- Information needs
- Desired **level of confidence** and precision
- Available resources

## IMPORTANCE OF SAMPLING/ LOGIC OF SAMPLING

Main uses of samples are in:

- Making inferences about the population based on information from a sample.
- Estimation
- Testing of Hypotheses

Sample selection affects precision and accuracy of survey results.

## MAJOR STEPS OF SAMPLING

Irrespective of the type of sampling done, this remains a constant. The **7 major steps** in sampling are:



1. **Defining the population:** Population means the group you want to generalize the results of your survey to; hence, the group you would sample from. An important distinction that needs to be made here is between the theoretical population and the accessible population. **Theoretical**: Population you would like to generalize to and **Accessible**: Population that is actually accessible to you.

The **3 core parts of population definition** are: (1) which elements (i.e. the units of analysis, like individuals, households, institutions, etc.) to include, (2) where,

and, (3) when. The “which” question is important because from a research point of view, it is important to clearly understand which unit can give us the best information set. The “where” and “when” represent dimensions that are designed to define the population more precisely in terms of its extent and time. It is clear that the population should be defined as precisely as possible. One useful approach is to **first define the population as the ideal one** that would meet the study objectives. Practical constraints then enter to **define the study population**. The advantage of starting with an ideal population is that exclusions are made explicit.

Dangers of over-defining the population: Over-defining should be avoided unless it is completely necessary. Over-defining can limit the extent to which findings can be generalized and operationally greatly increase the cost and difficulty of finding population elements.

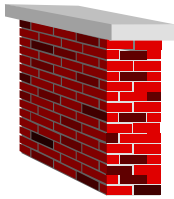
**2. Census or sample:** Once the population has been defined, the investigator must decide whether the survey is to be conducted among the whole population (**a census**) or only a subset of it (**a sample**). A census may just not be feasible in most cases. Hence, in most instances, samples are used.

Two main advantages of using a sample are: **speed** and **timeliness**. Firstly, a survey based on a sample, takes much less time to complete than one based on a census. Secondly, in certain instances a complete count may require so much time that, by the time it is completed and is made available for use, it becomes dated. Another consideration in whether to use sampling is the **relative cost and effort** involved.

### **3. Sample Design:**

Operationally, sample design is the heart of sample planning, involving both theoretical and practical (e.g., time, cost, labor involved and organization) considerations. Typically, questions to be answered include:

- Type of sample
- Sampling unit: This is the unit that we sample (usually people). The sampling unit forms the basis of the actual sampling procedure. The sampling unit may consist of one or more population elements, i.e. these units may be individual elements or aggregates of individual elements. For example, for a Report Card survey, we generally select entire households as sampling units.
- Sample frame: The **physical listing of the accessible population** from which you will draw your sample is called the sampling frame. (e.g., citizens of a city, visitors to a hospital etc)
- Refusals and Non-Response: The sample plan must include provision for how refusals and non-response are to be handled. Of concern is whether additional sampling units are to be chosen as replacements and, if so, how these are to be selected.



4. **Sample Size:** Somewhat related to sample design, but in many ways a separate decision area for the investigator, is the determination of the sample size. In general, size of the sample is directly related to precision. There are 4 general traditional approaches to this determination. The first 3 are: (1) **arbitrary** or **judgmental**, (2) **minimum cell size** needed for analysis, and (3) **budget-based** (particularly when a huge, cost-intensive study is being launched). The fourth approach involves the opposite procedure. That is, by **specifying a desired precision in advance**, sample size can be arrived at.

**An objection the researchers very frequently face is that “the sample size was too small to lead to any meaningful inferences”, but the question to be asked is: does adding more respondents to the sample necessarily add value to the results.**

**5. Costs of Sampling:** The sample plan must take into consideration the estimated costs of sampling. Such costs are two **types**: (1) **Overhead Costs**: these are relatively fixed for a sampling procedure, and (2) **Variable Costs**: these depend on the scope of the study. In reality, it is difficult, and perhaps not even reasonable, to separate sampling costs from overall study costs. Consequently, in a typical study, costs from all aspects of the study are usually considered together.

**6. Execution of Sampling Process:** This is the last step in sample planning. Here, in short, the sample is actually chosen. There are 2 basic requirements for the sampling process to fulfill. These are:

The sample must be **representative** and **adequate**. A **representative** sample is a relatively small piece of the population that mirrors the various patterns and sub-classes of the population. A sample is **adequate** when it is of sufficient size to provide confidence in the stability of its characteristics.

## **WHY PROBABILITY SAMPLING?**

Probability sampling is a method of sampling that utilizes a process that ensures for the different units in your population, an equal probability of being chosen. It is preferred because such a sample is most likely to be representative.

The various types of Probability Sampling are:

- **Simple Random**: This is the **best known type** of probability sampling. In such a sample, each sample element has a known and equal probability of selection. Here, we use a table of random numbers, a computer random number generator, or a mechanical device to select the sample. A mechanical device may, however, fail to mix the whole set of accessible elements

thoroughly and thus limit the randomness of selection. Computer programs, apart from being more perfect, are also less expensive.

The **benefit** of simple random sampling is that it is easy to accomplish and easy to explain to others. Because simple random sampling is a fair way to select a sample, it is reasonable to generalize the results from the sample back to the population.



However, on the **negative side**, it is not the most statistically efficient method of sampling and you may, just because of the luck of the draw, not get good representation of sub-groups in a population. To deal with these issues, we have to turn to other sampling methods.

- **Systematic Random Sampling**: To use systematic sampling in drawing a sample of size of say, 20, the population (say, 100 people) must be listed in a random order. The sampling fraction would be  $f = 20\%$ . In this case, the interval size,  $k$ , is equal to  $100/20 = 5$ . Now, select a random integer from 1 to 5. In our example, imagine that you chose 4. Now, to select the sample, start with the 4<sup>th</sup> unit in the list and take every  $k$ 'th unit (i.e., every 5<sup>th</sup> unit). You would be sampling units 4, 9, 14, 19 and so on to 100 and you would wind up with 20 units in your sample.

The **benefits** of this system are:

- (1) you only have to select a single random number to start things off,
- (2) it may also be more precise than simple random sampling, and,
- (3) in cases where the population is too large or the time available for the survey too limited, it is more feasible to draw a systematic random sample.

- **Stratified Random Sampling (also called Proportionate Random Sampling<sup>1</sup> or Quota Random Sampling):** This method involves dividing the population into homogenous sub-groups and then taking a simple random sample in each sub-group.

There are several reasons **why this method is preferable to simple random sampling**. **First**, if one wants to be able to talk about all key sub-groups, especially small ones, this may be the only way to effectively assure one will be able to. **Second**, stratified random sampling generally has more statistical precision than simple random sampling. This will only be true if the strata or groups are homogenous. If they are, we expect that the variability-within-groups is lower than the variability for the population as a whole. Stratified random sampling capitalizes on this fact.

In the Millenium Survey recently taken up by Public Affairs Centre, a variant of the stratified random sampling was used. Here, while selecting the sample, a four-stage procedure was followed. In the first stage, 6 districts were selected from all over the state. The subsequent stages were:

## **II. Block Selection**

On an average, the districts have 9-10 blocks. Under the study, 5 blocks were randomly selected in each district.

## **III. Village Selection**

In each of the selected blocks, 5 villages were randomly selected.

## **IV. Household Selection**

Two options were considered:

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<sup>1</sup> When we use the same sampling fraction within strata, we are conducting proportionate stratified random sampling. When we use different sampling fractions in the strata, we call this disproportionate stratified random sampling.

Six districts (30% of the total districts in the state) will provide the universe for the survey. Five blocks in each district, five villages in each block and 20 households in each village will be randomly selected.

No. of sample districts	No. of sample blocks	No. of sample villages	No. of sample households
6	30	150	3000

### ***Option II***

- **Cluster (Area) Sampling:** This method was invented to overcome the difficulties in doing a random sampling of a population spread over a large area. It is used primarily for **efficiency of administration** and **lower interviewing costs**. However, the **reliability of results in this case may not be any better** than in a simple random sampling.

The steps involved in cluster sampling are:

1. Divide population into clusters (usually along geographic boundaries)
2. Random sample the clusters
3. Measure all units within sampled clusters

- **Multi-Stage Sampling:** In cluster sampling, only one level of sampling takes place (e.g., a sampling of blocks) before the basic elements are sampled (e.g., the households). However, if one or more successive samples within the larger area are taken before settling on the final clusters, the resulting design is usually referred to as a multi-stage area sample. That is, even within sampled blocks, households are sampled and only selected households are finally interviewed.

## NON-PROBABILITY SAMPLING

Sometimes, non-probability sampling may be needed. Non-probability sampling is different in the sense that it does not involve random selection.

The various types of non-probability sampling are:

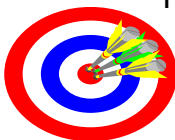
### **Accidental, Haphazard or Convenience & Purposive**

Accidental, Haphazard or Convenience:

This is a generic term covering a wide variety of *ad hoc* procedures used for selecting respondents. It includes the traditional man-on-the-street interviews. Convenience sampling means that the sampling units are **accessible, convenient** and **easy to measure, cooperative** or **articulate** and a relatively large number of interviews **can be obtained quickly**. There is no evidence that such samples are representative of the populations one wants to generalize to.

In relation to Report Cards, such sampling is not used except for in those cases where an in-depth case study is being attempted.

### **Purposive Sampling:**



This implies “sampling with a purpose in mind”. We usually would have one or more specific pre-defined groups we are seeking. So, when we check before interviewing someone whether he meets the predefined criteria that we have set, we are being purposive. This method can be **useful when** we need to reach a targeted group quickly. But the **downside** is that we are also likely to overweigh the sub-groups in our population that are more readily accessible. Purposive sampling was done by PAC while conducting a study in which the target group was the property tax-payers.

## DESIGNING QUESTIONNAIRES

**D**esigning questions that elicit accurate responses from the respondents could turn out to be a challenging job. Clear, coherent questions with interesting and appropriate response choices prompt accurate and consistent responses. The major challenge is to frame questions that are valid and reliable measures of what you want to know and to avoid things that diminish these qualities.

### A Checklist of the Basics

Which structure or format is best for a question? What kind of response choices should be offered? What variations should be incorporated so that the respondent wouldn't be bored? What type of question is best for the kind of information needed? Here are some suggestions:

- Specify and rank order, from most to least important, the information objectives of the survey.
- Enumerate the kinds of information needed from respondents that relate to each information objective. Are they opinions, attitudes, beliefs, or attributes?
- Rank the items in each topical group in the order of their importance to the study.
- For each item in each group, try to answer these questions:
  - Why ask this? (How is it linked to the purpose of the study)
  - Who in the target population knows about it, and are likely to have an opinion about it?
  - How will the responses to this item be coded?
  - What kind of statistical analysis will be performed with this variable?
- Place the most interesting item(s) in the most important battery of questions at the beginning of the questionnaire.

## Question Type

The two basic question types are open-ended and closed-ended. The respondents answer open ended questions in their own words. For closed-ended questions, the researcher offers limited response choices. The following chart lists out the major advantages and disadvantages associated with each type.

<b>Question Type</b>	<b>Applications</b>
Open-ended	Allows respondents to answer in their own words. Useful for exploratory research questions that need to probe people's preferences, priorities, and positions. Appropriate when mutually exclusive and exhaustive response choices are difficult to devise or when such a list increases the complexity.
Partially closed-ended	The most probable or likely choices are presented but the list cannot be exhaustive because there is reason to suspect that opinion delivery exists among a small segment of the population. The question type permits respondents to offer their own answers.
Close ended with ordered choices	Especially useful for determining frequency of participation, intensity of feeling, or degree of involvement or contact. A scale that represents a gradation of a single concept distinguishes this question type. This format is especially useful for a series of attitude and belief questions.
Close ended with unordered choices	Used to help establish priorities, decide on alternative policies, or enumerate behaviours as long as the choices are exhaustive and mutually exclusive.

## How to Avoid Bias in Questionnaire Design

A bias is said to exist whenever some feature of the survey instrument or interview process leads to a response that is not a genuine measure of the respondent's true opinion, attitude, belief, or attribute. The bias can occur in the

instructions, question wording, question order, response choices, or the format of the instrument. Some common biases are given below:

*Instrumentation Bias:* The major sources of instrumentation bias are unclear or vague vocabulary, poor grammar, excessively demanding questions, loaded questions, unbalanced or overlapping response choices, and reliance on a single question to measure complex concepts. Interviewers may also induce a bias through voice inflection that suggests preferred responses or by inconsistently phrasing questions.

*Acquiescence Response Set Bias:* Sometimes, there is a tendency for people to answer questions in a specific direction. Respondents become bored quickly when they encounter too many questions with the same format, and they may superficially scan for answers they think apply, to end the ordeal quickly.

*Straight-Line Response Set Bias:* This may occur when a long series of questions or statements with identical answer choices appears on a page. Use of the same “agree-disagree” scale for a long list of items is a recipe for disaster. The respondent may mark the first few items accurately and thereafter, finding the process boring, speed through the rest of the items by marking the same response for subsequent statements. Varying the arrangement, structure, and format of questions, and selecting different types of questions, eliminates straight line response bias.

### **Framing Effective Questions: The Report Card Strategy**

The Report Card questionnaire follows a flow of five basic types of questions to arrive at optimal interviewing efforts:

- **LEAD IN QUESTION(S)**

These serve as an introduction of your interview, starts the flow of responses, and establishes rapport with the respondent.

Example. Greetings! *I am ..... from ..... organization. We are currently trying to understand problems experienced with organizations which provide important public services to you... Could I please talk to the head of the household?*

- **QUALIFYING QUESTIONS**

These are used to determine the eligibility of the respondent to provide the desired information.

Ex. For a study on users of the Corporation maternity home, *Could you please tell me the if any member of your household has been to a Corporation maternity Home in the past one year?* If, for example, the respondent answers in the negative the interview is terminated there.

- **WARM-UP QUESTIONS**

These are used to focus thinking and memory.

Ex. *The agencies listed on this card provide services to the public. Which agency's services have you used in the last 6 months?* In the Report Card survey, this type of question establishes the respondent's contact with a particular agency.

- **SPECIFICS**

These questions extract the information on service quality and satisfaction sought by the study.

Ex. *On an overall basis, how satisfied are you with this agency after your experience with it? How satisfied were you with the behaviour of the staff towards you? Did you have to pay anything extra to people in the agency to get your work done?* The Report Card survey uses these questions to focus on 1) overall satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels, and 2) service dimensions which contribute to those levels.

- **DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS**

These describe the person and/or household who responded.

Ex. *Could you please tell me your occupation? What is your educational background?* This information is especially important when looking at the socio-economic variables that might influence the quality of public services provided.

Each of the example questions listed above are closed questions. These offer the respondent a choice of answers. They may be simple yes/no questions or multiple choice. With the latter, be cautious about the choices you provide; piloting your questionnaire will hopefully reveal unexpected responses. Closed questions often use scales to measure qualitative attitudes about your problems.

The Report Card survey initially operated with a seven-point scale ranging from *very dissatisfied* to *very satisfied* as can be seen in the table below.

<b>Very Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Somewhat Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Somewhat Satisfied</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>Very Satisfied</b>

However, the question has now been modified to a two step process. The respondent is first asked if he/she is satisfied or dissatisfied or cant say, then those who say they are satisfied are asked to specify the level of their satisfaction.

## PILOTING, CODING & ANALYSIS

### *Piloting*

Pre-testing the questionnaire in the form of a 'Pilot Survey' is a critical quality control strategy. Piloting facilitates the identification and correction of problems with question wording, questionnaire structure, or administration. **Remember ! the time spent on planning and pre-testing your questionnaire has a direct effect on the quality of the final results.**

What should you keep in mind when doing a pre-test? Three criteria are usually indicated :

- How easily the respondent can understand the questions as worded
- Whether the respondent can understand the question consistently
- Whether the respondent answer the question accurately with the response choices provided

Problems arise when interviewers do not read each question as worded, respondents regularly ask for clarification of questions' meanings or give inadequate or inappropriate answers. A simple "problem-no problem" rating can be used to evaluate questions. If problems occur for given questions in more than 15% of the pilot interviews, it can be safely assumed that the questions are highly likely to produce distorted data or distinctively susceptible to interviewer effects. Interviewer debriefings and the recorded or observed difficulties should indicate which questions need to be revised, relocated, or deleted.

### *Coding*

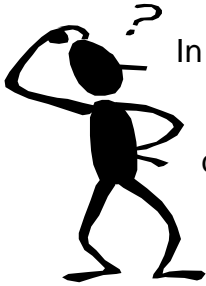
The object of coding is to give each answer a number which can than be processed by computer. Many quantitative questions can be pre-coded and can be completed by the field worker at the time of the interview. Open-ended responses must be analyzed and each response given a number. It is also recommend that one person completes the coding task to maintain consistency in response interpretation.

## ***FIELD WORK***

Regardless of how finely tuned your questionnaire becomes, it is the actual collection of the data that largely determines the validity of your study. Strict guidelines for data collection must be outlined and clearly articulated to each of your field staff. Group training and/or manuals are a good way to reinforce uniformity between field workers. One supervisor should oversee this stage of the Report Card study. This person should enforce rigid adherence to the data collection process through close supervision. He or she should also perform periodic quality checks to ensure the reliability of the data submitted by each of the field workers. This can be done by randomly selecting completed surveys and doing follow-up interviews with the respondents, either over the phone or in person, to confirm their original answers.

The importance of conducting a truly random sample cannot be understated. All of your work rests on the assumption that those interviewed are a random, and thus, representative sample of your city's entire population. To ensure randomness, your household selection process should be well thought out and drilled into the routines of each of the field workers. Once you have selected the localities you wish to survey, establish a starting point (e.g., the post office) and then follow a consistent pattern. For example, the interviewer will stop at every third house. If a complete questionnaire cannot be fully administered, he or she will continue to the very next house and resume the original pattern. Do not forget to include directional instructions (e.g., turn right at the end of each lane.)

## **MAKING SENSE OF NUMBERS**



In many ways, the analysis process is the easiest stage of your survey. Yet, even in its relative simplicity, thorough analysis requires a degree of expertise. It is best if the person assigned to this works independently to maintain continuity.

Data can be analyzed using several techniques. These include simple techniques of averages, data ranges, frequency and mid-point, as well as more technical analytical tools. Be certain to use only the techniques that match your objectives. Several computer programs which deal specifically with statistical analysis, such as *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)* and *Statistical Analysis System (SAS)* are widely available. Before you invest in one, determine the complexity of the results you expect, and then decide if the investment in a software package is necessary. With basic spreadsheet programs like *Microsoft Excel* and *Lotus 1-2-3*, you can easily generate basic linear regression models. The results from these simple tools of analysis often provide adequate statistical insight into your issue or problem.

Processed data will be presented as a series of tables. These will show the number and percentage of respondents who gave a particular answer to a particular question. Tables will be provided for the sample as a whole and for sub-samples (e.g., by age, occupation, or gender, etc)

The interpretation process, in contrast, can be undertaken by any number of people who possess a good understanding of the problem. In fact, the inclusion of multiple perspectives at this stage can greatly enrich the overall impact of your Report Card. There are some basic points you should keep in mind when interpreting your findings:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not be a slave to techniques</li> <li>- select the appropriate technique for the task in hand</li> <li>• Be clear on your norms for interpretation</li> <li>- link them back to your original objectives</li> <li>• Keep your eyes open for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- typical patterns</li> <li>- unusual patterns</li> <li>- significant differences</li> <li>- significant relationships</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a mix of analytical tools</li> <li>• Remember that the results are only as good as the data from which they are obtained</li> <li>• Results must be understood by the public even if sophisticated research techniques have been used</li> <li>• Analysis provides the basis for interpretation, decisions and action</li> <li>- technical skills are not a substitute for experience and judgement</li> </ul>
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The interpretation stage is also significant because it is when the Report Card becomes tangible. At this point, a report or extensive summary of the findings should be written. Determine who you want your audience(s) to be beforehand and prepare a Report Card suitable to its comprehension level. In-depth statistical analysis of the findings may be better suited for academics or government agencies than for local citizen groups. Your report should be well organized, readable and supported by your data.

## DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS

**T**he utilization of the research effort is of paramount importance since it helps us to understand the processes better and thereby enhance the quality of life. Utilization occurs when the research is of *high quality*, the findings lead to *practical interventions*, the findings *conforms with the users expectations* and whether and how much the findings *challenged current practices*. Some other factors which enhance the utilization are the client's information needs, decision characteristics, the political climate, and the availability of competing information.

The research findings could be categorised as follows :

- *Knowledge driven* or conducted to gain knowledge
- *Problem solving* or providing evidence to help solve policy problems
- *Interactive* or combining with experience to provide solutions to problems
- *Political* or supporting predetermined positions or advocating
- *Tactical* or supporting immediate needs
- Enlightenment or helping to make better sense of the environment

### Communicating the Research Findings

A carefully planned and well-executed survey is a fruitless exercise unless the final report clearly communicates what was done, how it was done and what was found. The final package has to explain these factors so that the citizens can judge the accuracy of the research and the utility of the findings. A good and effective way to disseminate the findings are media releases. These releases help to minimise reportorial misinterpretations and helps in facilitating a broad public discourse about what citizens think and what administrators should do in response. Since the audience for the official report and press releases are different, the design and content of these vary.

## ***The Survey Report***

An effective report is well organized, clearly written, and concise. It should include the following:

- **The Executive Summary:** The executive summary is the leadoff for the report. It highlights in one or two pages the contents of the report and presents a highly condensed version of the project's purpose, methodology, and major findings. It should also contain a list of recommended actions suggested by the findings.
- **Survey Objectives:** This section should relate the reasons for doing the survey, what information was needed and why, and how this information was expected to inform specific types of deliberations, decisions, or actions by various actors.
- **Methodology:** This section should explain how the information was gathered, when it was collected, the response rate, and what the confidence level and margin of error mean in the context of the response rate to the sample. The objective here is to present a thorough, accurate, and honest description of what he or she did and how. Remember! The quality of the research effort is distinguished by the methods employed.
- **Major Findings:** This section should summarize the results and review them in order of their importance or interest to the audience. Tables should be used to summarise the main findings, and the most interesting results should be highlighted with appropriate graphic illustrations.
- **Implications of the Findings:** This section should answer the "So what?" question and discuss the deductions that are possible from the findings that relate to the objectives of the survey. The findings should have implications concerning what is being done right, what is not, and how particular changes may improve, enhance, or otherwise affect the service or policy. Whatever is gleaned from the results, the inferences must be based on the evidence obtained, tempered by an understanding of the limits of survey research.

## ***Media Releases***

Media releases are effective conduits to disseminate accurate information about the survey and its findings. The executive summary of the final report should provide a good starting point to draft a release. To enable a non-technical audience to assess the accuracy of the findings, the release should stress the following points

- Who was surveyed, when they were contacted, the method of contact, and the size of the sample
- The response rate
- What were the major issues that were explored
- Analysis of the responses
- Identifying problem areas
- Suggest areas for improvements