Survey Implementation

rATA Master Training | Mitchell Loeb
SURVEY IMPLEMENTATION

There is a reason for conducting a survey – and a purpose for data collection.

These will inform the questions asked and the choice of implementation strategy.

Throughout this presentation we will ask you to consider the question:

WHY ARE WE COLLECTING THESE DATA?
ARE DATA ON AT AVAILABLE?

Today, 1 billion people need assistive technology (AT) to lead productive, inclusive, and dignified lives, but only about 1 in 10 have access to the AT they need.

Despite the urgency and the global imperative on improving access to AT, little data have been systematically collected in countries to demonstrate the need and unmet need of AT.

A resolution on improving access to AT was adopted at the 71st World Health Assembly and mandates WHO to publish the Global Report on Assistive Technology (GReAT).
WHERE DO DATA COME FROM?

Sources of Data

National Censuses
  • population census to obtain prevalence rates
  • as a screening question for a follow-up study
  • useful in preparing sampling frames

Surveys
  • extended questions on any topic of interest, for example, health or use of AT

Clinical/Administrative records
  • Registries
  • Medical and/or insurance records
  • Performance measures
Population Censuses

- Principal source of statistics on a population and its characteristics
- A nation wide activity with every person enumerated (universal enumeration)
- Provides important information on
  - demographic profile
  - economic and social data
- But limited range and depth of questions on special topics, like AT
Surveys

- are not intended to enumerate every household or individual
- are designed to be representative of the population
- most are household-based, but it is important to include the institutional population
- Major source of population health data – or other specialized data
- *Data on AT needs and use can be collected through:*
  - special survey on AT or
  - an AT module in another survey
Survey - Advantages

- Flexibility in the depth and range of topics that may be covered.
- Relatively easy to initiate, given the ability of a sampling frame and survey-taking infrastructure.
- Greater control over the conditions of observation and the interview.
- Design modifications may be tried to increase the power of the survey.
- Greater opportunity for supervision of fieldwork and pre-testing of detailed questions about disability.
- Measurement can be built in e.g. eye tests or manual dexterity.
Surveys - Limitations

• Limited ability to analyse prevalence rates for local areas due to limited sample size and subsequent sampling errors.

• Coverage of populations in unusual circumstances is typically very poor e.g. the institutionalised, the homeless, refugees, nomadic populations etc.

• A very large sample size may be required to capture an adequate number of persons identified as using AT.
Clinical/Administrative Data

Advantages:

• Access to very detailed data, e.g. medical data or data on use of AT
• Assessment of ‘true’ capacity - independent of the environment
Clinical/Administrative Data

Limitations:

• Not available in many countries
• Coverage of population may be selective and limited
• Coverage is governed by programmatic definitions
• Comparability of data is problematic since data are specific to country and context
HOW ARE DATA COLLECTED?

Modes of Data Collection

Surveys can be conducted either:

• In person / face-to-face (sometimes computer assisted: Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing - CAPI)
• By Mail
• Over the telephone (sometimes computer assisted: Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing – CATI)
• Web-based
• Multi-mode
Modes of data collection

**In person**: high cost / declining response rate / most representative and highest quality data

**Mail**: low cost / low response rate / Questionable representativeness / literacy

**Telephone**: low cost / very low response rate / high cost of inclusion of cell frames

**Web-based**: low cost / not based on random sample / low response rate if based on random sample / web not universally available

**Multi-mode**: need to address mode effects
Modes of data collection (1 of 3)

Most surveys are carried out in person. It may not always be possible to carry out face-to-face interviews, especially in times like the current Covid-19 pandemic situation. The option of delivering a survey over the telephone can be an alternative.
Modes of data collection (2 of 3)

However, a few issues should be considered when using telephone interviewing:

**General considerations for telephone surveys.** In general, simple more straightforward questions work well in phone surveys. **Sample bias.** With telephone surveys there is a chance of sample bias because not everyone has a phone. This is more of an issue in countries where fewer people/households own a telephone.
Modes of data collection (3 of 3)

Phone interviewing people with hearing difficulties and other communication difficulties.

People with hearing or communication difficulties may have problems responding over the phone which could bias the results if this excludes them from the survey.

There must be some way to interview persons who are deaf or have reduced hearing - either by using a proxy, sign interpreter, video relay service (VRS) or a mechanism where voice is transformed into written communication.
WHAT SHOULD I BE AWARE OF WHEN COLLECTING SURVEY DATA?

Best Practices for Interviewing and Data Collection
Administration Issues to Consider

When adopting existing tools in data collections, a number of considerations are important:

- Translation & Cultural appropriateness
- Comparable testing
- Administration of questionnaire
- Interviewer training
Translation

When translation is required, it is important to ensure:

• Cultural appropriateness
• Question constructs are adequately captured

Translation and cultural appropriateness are closely related. If a question written in the source language uses words or terms that are foreign to the target language and culture, steps should be taken to address this situation. (See validation and cognitive testing later in this lesson.)

Proper translation into the primary language(s) of the country:

• Reduces differences in question interpretation
• Increases reliability and validity of data collected
Things that Translators Must Consider:

• Will respondents understand this translated question? Is the type of language appropriate for the intended audience?
• Are the nuances of the original question text maintained in the translation?
• Does the wording of the question feel natural?
• Are the response choices likely to be understood and used as in the original question?
Translation Methods

Forward/Backward translation: this is a literal, word-for-word approach to translation

TRAPD method (recommended): this is a non-literal, concept-based approach that is based on team translation and consensus. Involves: Translation, Review, Adjudication, Pretesting and Documentation.

Computer based, like Google Translate: No, Never!
Translation

Both questions AND answer categories need to be carefully translated.
Example: Response Options

• The 4 response options describe a **continuum of difficulty**.
• The endpoints *no difficulty* and *cannot do at all* anchor the continuum and are probably easier to translate.
• The spread of the continuum is further defined through categories *some difficulty* and *a lot of difficulty*.
• It will be important for the translators to select descriptors that divides the continuum into **approximately 3 equal pieces** so as to capture the maximum amount of variation in functioning. This is depicted in the next slide.
Visualizations of Translations:

A correct translation:

A poor translation:
Translation

Translators requirements:

• Very good knowledge of the source language
• An excellent command of the target language
• Familiarity with the subject matter and the intent of the questions

A competent translator is not only bilingual but bicultural.
Validation of the Translation

When the translation is complete, it should be cognitively tested

• to ensure comparability to the source language, and
• to fix any problems with translated versions of the questions.

The goal of cognitive testing of new translations is to assess whether the translated version of the survey questions accurately captures the intent of the question and the answer categories as in the original source language version.

This testing of a translated questionnaire should not be overlooked.
Cognitive testing will:

• Uncover translation mistakes and expressions that might be unnatural in the target language.

• Uncover regional variation in terms since languages are sometimes spoken in different varieties (dialects/colloquialisms) depending on regional differences.

• Uncover any lack of familiarity with terms used or the use of culturally unknown or irrelevant concepts.

• Uncover questions that are complex and cognitively difficult to understand and answer. In general, it is best to keep questions (in both source and target languages) as simple and concise as possible.
Interviewer Training & Instructions

• It is essential that interviewers are:
  • carefully selected, *and*
  • undergo thorough training (in basic question/response techniques as well as in the relationship between functioning, disability and AT).
Ask the questions as they are written. (1 of 2)

Do not improvise.

Minor variations in question wording can lead to a significant response variation, that is, responses that do not meet the intent of the question.

An interviewer might feel foolish asking a question that they know the answer to (asking a deaf person if they cannot hear at all or asking a person who has demonstrated hearing ability if they cannot hear at all).
Ask the questions as they are written. (2 of 2)

There are standard techniques for dealing with these situations, such as allowing interviewers to tell the respondents at the beginning that they are instructed to ask all questions and read the response options.

[Examples will follow…]
Respondent must answer all questions (1 of 3)

Don’t assume a response by observation.

The interviewer may be tempted to skip questions or make comments such as “I know this probably doesn’t apply to you, but...”. This should never be done.

An interviewer may be asking questions of a person who is in a wheelchair and might feel awkward asking this person if they have difficulty walking. It might seem simplest to just mark the response ‘cannot do at all’. This shouldn’t be done.
Respondent must answer all questions (2 of 3)

While a wheelchair does offer mobility assistance, it doesn’t preclude that the person cannot walk at all. They may be able to walk short distances without problem.

If the response to a question seems obvious and the interviewer feels uncomfortable asking it, they might say:

“I need to ask all questions to every respondent to verify all information.”

If questions seem repetitive, the interviewer might say:

“You told me that before…but I still need to ask you this question as it is written.”
Respondent must answer all questions (3 of 3)
Finally, do not change the order of the questions.
Use an approved translation.

Do not translate ‘on the fly’.

As mentioned earlier, it is important to have an approved and tested version of the survey questionnaire in the common languages in use in the country where the survey is taking place. Often there are many minor languages also.

In these cases, it is be recommended that interviewers going into the field in these areas gather and form a small team to discuss and agree upon a common translation that all could use. This will reduce variability among interviewers and improve overall data quality.
Practice interviews before going into the field.

Prepare!
If the **interviewer** is uncomfortable, the respondent will be so too – so they **need to be familiar with the material** – and relax.

It is recommended that interviewers are very familiar with the contents of the survey before they go into the field. They should make eye contact with the respondent and be able to conduct the interview smoothly in a conversational manner.
A few Practical Considerations

• Length survey questionnaire – Make sure that the respondent is willing to give adequate time for completing the interview.

• It may be difficult to interview the illiterate or semi-literate persons, or persons with developmental or intellectual difficulties – Consider a proxy respondent.
Is size important?

How do I know if my sample is large enough?
Sample size considerations

• What is the overall objective of the data collection?
• Prevalence determination?
• Disaggregation? For example, examining the correlation between access to AT and various outcomes – alone or by demographic or socio-economic characteristics such as sex, age, employment status or income level, regions, urban/non-urban, etc. (or by any combination of above)
Sample design

The National Data Coordinator (NDC) is responsible for obtaining a sample that is sufficient for the purpose of rATA.

- The sample will be a two-stage random sampling of first small geographical units (Enumeration areas or Primary sampling units) and in the second stage households within the sampled areas.
- Sample determination should be done with support from the country’s National Statistical Office. The statistical office administers the National sampling frame which is based on the most recent Census and will be able to provide a national representative sample of households.
Sample size

The sample size depends on several parameters, including the research questions to be answered, the prevalence of the phenomenon under study and statistical requirements. Specific contextual conditions also play a role in the estimation of sample size, such as how easy it is to reach the target population and whether they are inclined to volunteer for data collection or not.
Does it matter HOW data are collected?

Guidelines for conducting data collection ‘in the field’…

• Standardised Information and Administration
• Role of the Interviewer
• Approaching a Household
• Informed Consent
• General Guidelines for a Successful Interview
• Interviewing by Proxy
• How to deal with unclear responses and non-response (due to declining or absence).
Standard Administration (1 of 2)

A standard interview administration means that every interviewer must conduct the interview the same way with each respondent. This is done to minimize differences in responses that might occur if formatting conventions or interviewing techniques are changed with every respondent. Respondents might answer very differently if the question wording in an interview is changed or asked in different ways. Similarly, the environment in which the interview is conducted will impact the quality of data collected, such as if the interview is conducted while other people are in the room.
Standard Administration (2 of 2)

The *interviewer’s manner*, such as a rushed interview or lack of interest may greatly affect responses.

Research has shown that the interviewer can have an effect on the data collection because of four factors: socioeconomic background, unconventional administration of the questionnaire, wording and intonation, and reaction to respondent’s difficulties in understanding the questionnaire.

Except for the interviewer’s background, the other three factors can be addressed in training.
Role of the Interviewer (1 of 2)

The interviewer is responsible for asking questions, answering the respondent’s queries and recording answers following standard interviewing procedures. The interviewer must ensure that the respondent understands the questions by using interviewing techniques, such as neutral probes, clarification and appropriate feedback, and determining whether the answer given is appropriate. Listening to what the respondent is communicating, both verbally and non-verbally, will ensure that the information is correct.
Role of the Interviewer (2 of 2)

The interviewer must also set the pace of the interview and keep the respondent focused and interested. The atmosphere should be comfortable and pleasant at all times.

Before going to the field, the interviewer must know both the content of the questionnaire as well as how the questionnaire is to be administered.

A thorough preparation, as well as extensive practice, will guarantee that this is achieved.
Approaching a Household

In each sampled household you visit, you should begin by interviewing a knowledgeable adult member of the household to fill in the questionnaire.

For the purposes of the rATA Survey, an adult is defined as someone aged 18 years and over.

The Enumerator’s Manual provides guidance on interviewing those under 18; in particular children below the age of 12 years, those 12-15 and those 16-18 years of age.

Interviewing the household head is not a requirement for the survey.
Approaching a Household

• The interviewer and the respondent are strangers to each other.
• One of the main tasks of the interviewer is to establish rapport with the respondent.
• The respondent’s first impression will influence their willingness to participate in the survey, so make sure that your appearance is neat.
• You should begin by introducing yourself, stating your name, the organization you are working for, the objectives of the survey, and what you want the respondent to do for you.
• You should avoid long discussions on issues which are not related to the survey and which may consume a lot of your time.
Informed Consent

Before beginning the survey interview make sure that you inform the respondent that the survey is anonymous and confidential and that no individual will be identified in the data collected.

Make sure that you obtain and record their consent to participate in the survey.
General Guidelines for a Successful Interview: 1

Make a good first impression

Gain rapport with the respondent
  • If the respondent refuses to be interviewed, note the reasons on the questionnaire, if possible.
  • Remain calm and polite at all times.

Have a positive approach
  • Never adopt an apologetic manner, and never approach with such words as “Are you too busy?” or “If you are not too busy?” or “If you don’t mind ...” Such questions will invite refusal before you even start. Rather, tell the respondent “I would like to ask you a few questions, please.”
General Guidelines for a Successful Interview: 2

Emphasize the confidentiality of any information collected

- Always stress confidentiality of the information you obtain from the respondent. Explain to the respondent that the information you collect will remain strictly confidential and that no individual names will be used without their consent, and that all information will be grouped together and made anonymous when writing the report.
General Guidelines for a Successful Interview: 3

Probe for adequate responses

• You should phrase the question as it is in the questionnaire.
• Pause and wait if the respondent is trying to remember difficult items.
• Probing should be kept to a minimum.
• If a respondent has difficulty answering, then simply repeating the question (as written) is a good way of moving forward.
• If a respondent asks what a question means – the interviewer might ask: “What do you think the question means.”
• Ask the respondent to clarify his/her answer if necessary, as you may have misunderstood the response.
General Guidelines for a Successful Interview: 4

Answering questions from the respondent

• The respondent may ask you some questions about the survey or how he/she was selected to be interviewed or how the survey is going to help him/her, before agreeing to be interviewed. Be direct and pleasant when you answer.

• The respondent may also be concerned about the length of the interview. Please be frank to tell him/her how long you are likely to take to administer the questionnaire.
Interview the respondent alone

• The presence of a third person during the interview can prevent you from getting frank and honest answers from the respondent.
• It is therefore very important that the interviews are conducted privately and that all the questions are answered by the respondent only.
• If other people are present, request to talk to him/her privately.
General Guidelines for a Successful Interview: 6

Handling hesitant respondents

• There may be situations where the respondent simply says “I don’t know“, or gives an irrelevant answer or acts in a manner suggesting he/she is bored or contradicts earlier answers.

• In all these cases, try your best to encourage him/her to become interested in the question – and the survey. Spending a few moments to talk about things unrelated to the interview (e.g. his/her town or village, the weather, his/her daily activities etc.) may be useful. But don’t stray too far from the survey interview.
Proxy Respondents

The respondent may be the head of a household who is familiar with all household members, or the selected individual(s) within the households themselves. Respondents do not need to be literate, although, depending on age, maturity and cognitive ability, respondents may find some questions or concepts more difficult to understand than others.

When a respondent cannot answer questions for any of the reasons listed above, a proxy respondent for that person can be interviewed.
Uncertainty about the respondent’s answer

As mentioned earlier, if the interviewer is uncertain about a respondent’s answer they should ask the question again, repeating the response options and prompting the respondent to select the appropriate response option.

Again, probing should be kept to a minimum.
Non-response

Generally, it is not possible to miss a question – and each question must be asked and answered in order to proceed to the next.

To certain questions a respondents may be unwilling, unable or simply refuse to provide an answer.

While these response options are NOT read aloud to the respondent, they must be recorded accordingly.
Wrapping up

At the conclusion of the interview, if an enumerator is in any doubt about the conduct of the survey, or perhaps there are several missing responses, they should answer Yes to question i.2: Should this data be checked, verified, or discussed by survey coordinators?, and then offer a written explanation in i.3.
Additional Resources


ALSO: additional tips and guidance can be found from UNICEF: https://data.unicef.org/resources/module-on-child-functioning-manual-for-interviewers/