

# SURVEY DESIGN AND ANALYSIS

## FACT SHEET

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### SERVICES

Telephone Surveys

Mail-out, Mail-back Surveys

Personal Interviews

Focus Groups

There are times when information about a specific topic or a certain group of people is needed to help make more informed decisions. Surveys are a good way to collect timely information tailored to your specific needs. Among other uses, surveys allow you to explore opinions and perceptions regarding a specific service or issue such as public transportation or crime. Gaining a greater understanding of your target population's attitudes and opinions provides valuable insight into ways to successfully address issues and concerns.

The four primary types of surveys, each with advantages and disadvantages, are summarized below:

- » **Telephone surveys** have several advantages, including good coverage (through land lines and mobile numbers); results can be obtained more quickly than with other methods; and skilled interviewers can often elicit more complete answers than people will provide in written form. Disadvantages include the proliferation of voicemail, caller ID, and answering machines that allow people to screen calls; and there is a general wariness that someone is trying to sell something rather than conduct legitimate research.
- » **Mail-out, mail-back surveys** may be the only option if an address list is available, but no telephone numbers. Mail-out surveys allow respondents to complete their questionnaires at a time that is convenient for them, and graphics such as maps and pictures can

be included. The major disadvantages are the amount of time it takes to mail the surveys out and wait for responses and the fact that without extensive countermeasures, the response rate can be very low.

- » **Personal interviews** are face-to-face encounters that typically take place where concentrations of the target population are likely to be. For example, interviews could be conducted at transit stations to get information from transit riders or at shopping malls to learn about the buying habits of shoppers. This strategy makes it easier to locate appropriate respondents, and more visual aids can be used. On the downside, personal interviews are generally the most costly to conduct.
- » **Focus groups** are discussions with a small group of people to gather qualitative information about a product, topic, or service. Focus groups can provide valuable information to help plan and design new programs, evaluate existing programs and services, and develop outreach strategies. Focus group results can't be generalized to represent a larger group of people.

The SANDAG Service Bureau works closely with clients on all phases of the survey process, including:

- » Establishing the goals of the study
- » Determining the most appropriate survey and sampling methodologies

*(Continued on reverse)*



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- » Selecting the target population (sample)
  - » Designing questions that minimize bias
  - » Implementing procedures to maximize the rate of response
  - » Conducting the survey, including pretesting the questionnaire
  - » Processing the survey data
  - » Preparing a report describing, illustrating, and analyzing the results of the study
- » Transit passenger characteristics and opinions
  - » Parking space occupancy and demand characteristics
  - » Perceptions about public safety

**For More Information**

To discuss your survey needs, please contact Senior Applied Research Analyst Darlanne Hoctor Mulmat at (619) 699-7326 or [darlanne.mulmat@sandag.org](mailto:darlanne.mulmat@sandag.org).

Why not let the Service Bureau survey team help you plan your next survey? We've helped many individuals and organizations with a wide range of surveys, including those that address:

- » Public opinion and perceptions
- » General/Community Plan updates
- » Employee and customer satisfaction

**Below is an example of research conducted by the Service Bureau.**

