



# Survey Research

Survey research is a unique area of our knowledge because its use, application and benefits cut across a range of discipline areas such as health, education, law, politics, business economics, sociology, and psychology. Surveying consists of selecting a sample of respondents and administering a questionnaire or an interview to them. Surveys

may be used for descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory purposes. A sample survey is one of an array of research methods used widely among social scientists as well as professionals in business, public health, natural resources, law, medicine, nursing, social work, and many other domains of study.

## SKILLS & ABILITIES

The range of skill, tools, and computer-based programs that are used is much the same no matter the discipline area. Professionals in the survey research field must have knowledge of concepts and procedures in statistics with the critical reasoning skills needed in understanding our quantitative world. As a crucial aid for planning and analyzing, statistics provides survey research professionals with a solid background that may be applied in the social,

behavioral, economic, natural, and health sciences as well as in humanistic research.

This guide discusses some of the characteristic skills developed by individuals in the survey research field and highlights a variety of occupational paths open to them. A sampling of representative skills and abilities follows.

### Analysis

- Applying methods to problems
- Projecting from data
- Reasoning critically
- Categorizing data
- Developing theories
- Designing systems for processing data

### Quantitative Techniques

- Programming
- Mathematical modeling
- Designing questionnaires
- Developing sample forms
- Analyzing mathematically
- Applying statistical packages
- Interpreting data from tables/charts

### Problem Solving

- Formulating problems
- Applying logic to problems
- Assessing needs
- Distinguishing relevant/extraneous information
- Interpreting data
- Understanding components of complex problems

### Research

- Writing reports/publications
- Evaluating collected data
- Identifying areas for research
- Gathering data/processing
- Presenting alternative explanations
- Planning/designing project
- Translating theory into research plans

## OCCUPATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

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A career in survey research often starts with a degree in one of the social sciences, business, statistics, or computer science. There are many opportunities to combine survey research with a specific discipline. Thus, you may wish to specialize in one of the above disciplines. However, the two major areas of the survey research field fall under statistical science or social science. Statistical science is designed for those who specialize in sample design, estimation in complex samples, variance estimation, statistical measurement error models, and statistical adjustments for

missing data. The social science area is appropriate for those who specialize in questionnaire design, design of interviewing systems, computer assistance in data collection, or field administration of surveys.

The following is a selected list of occupations compiled from information on University of Michigan graduates and from national data. For some of the occupations listed below additional skills or related training are desirable. Graduate study is generally required for many of these occupations.

<b>Government</b>	<b>Research/Education</b>	<b>Business/Industry</b>	<b>Health</b>
Economist	Survey Statistician	Opinion Pollster	Hospital Risk Management
Policy Analyst	Professor	Sales Forecaster	Program Statistician
Statistician	Research Scientist	Operations Research Analyst	Health Policy Analyst
Legislative Researcher	Research Associate	Organization Consultant	Lobbyist
Employment Specialist	Research Assistant	Marketing Research	
Census Bureau Analyst	Analyst	Media (TV, Radio, Newspaper)	
	Survey Manager		
	Research Administrator		
	Interviewer		

## TRAINING & EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

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The University of Michigan Program in Survey Methodology offers programs of study at the doctoral, master's and certificate levels. Housed within the Institute for Social Research (ISR), the PhD and MS programs prepare students for careers in private and academic survey research firms, government agencies, and corporations. The certificate program is designed to provide students with specialized knowledge in survey methodology to enhance skills in current positions and to expand career opportunities. Details can be found at the Program in Survey Methodology website: <http://www.isr.umich.edu/gradprogram>.

The Institute for Social Research hosts two programs that train and educate students and professionals in the methodology and skills of social science research: The Survey Research Center (SRC) Summer Institute in Survey Research Techniques ([www.isr.umich.edu/src/si/](http://www.isr.umich.edu/src/si/)), and the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) Summer Program in Quantitative Methods of Social Research ([www.icpsr.umich.edu/sumprog/](http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/sumprog/)).

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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For more information about choosing a career, about graduate/professional school, internships, or job descriptions; and for library resources contact:

The Career Center  
3200 Student Activities Building  
(734) 764-7460  
[www.careercenter.umich.edu](http://www.careercenter.umich.edu)

For information about career opportunities in survey research contact:

The Institute for Social Research  
426 Thompson Street  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1248  
(734) 615-4883  
[www.isr.umich.edu](http://www.isr.umich.edu)

Program in Survey Methodology  
426 Thompson Street, 4050 ISR  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1248  
(734) 647-0038  
[www.isr.umich.edu/gradprogram/](http://www.isr.umich.edu/gradprogram/)