

Background Questionnaires for National Assessment

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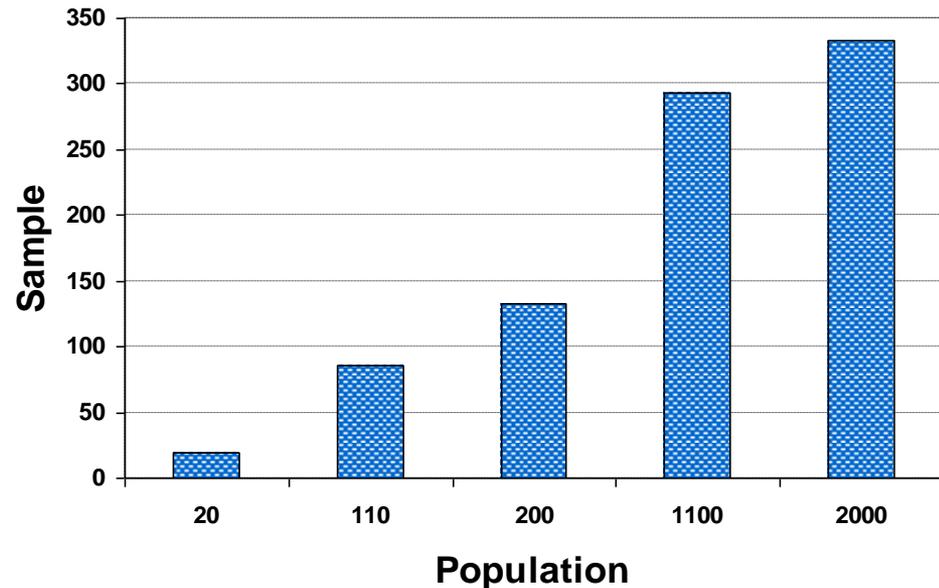
Background Questionnaires

- What are background questionnaires for?
 - To gather relevant information about students and schools that is not yet available in another way.
- What is relevant information?
 - Variables that are known or expected to have an effect on test-scores of students.
 - Variables that investigate the attitudes of students and school principals about the educational system.
 - Variables that explain the choices made by schools.
- The respondents (population and sample):
 - Take into mind the kind of respondents (age, IQ, etc.) when constructing questions. They will have to be able to answer the questions.
 - Take a large enough sample (students and schools) for the conclusions you want to be able to draw.



Sample versus Population

- Sample size
- Distribution
- Stratification
- Weighting



Unambiguous Questions

- All respondents should be able to interpret the question the same.
- All possible choice-options have to be present.
- Avoid overlapping choice-options.
- Use the same format for every choice-option.
- Avoid (double) negatives.
- Avoid leading questions that push respondents in a certain direction (for example, 'Don't you think . . .').
- Always have the data-analysis and interpretation in mind when constructing a questionnaire.



Frequently made errors (1)

Do you ever use Excel and do you think it works well?

- Yes
- No



Two questions in one



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Frequently made errors (2)

Do you prefer coffee in the morning?

- Yes
- No



Reference is missing (prefer to what?)



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Kinds of Questions

Closed questions. *Advantages:*

- Directive
- Easy
- It takes less time filling in
- It takes less time analysing the data

Multiple response questions (*check list*)

Open questions. *Problematic because:*

- Time consuming
- Error-prone
- Expensive

Half-Open questions (*a compromise*)



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Socially Desirable Answers

Questions for which respondents think that they know what the researcher wants to hear provoke “socially desirable” answers. This is especially true for questions about behaviour.

For example, when you ask parents whether they help their children with their schoolwork (yes/no), they will all answer ‘yes’. In this case it is better to split-up the question into several questions about the amount of time spend on concrete behaviour, for example ‘explaining science-subjects’.

