

Pre-survey scoping considerations

The Queensland Government Statistician's Office (QGSO) offers statistical advisory services to inform Queensland Government agencies on the most effective and efficient methods to collect and analyse information.

When determining the need for a survey, first check that the required information is not already available (for example, conduct library searches, check Open Data, refer to Queensland Government Statistician's Office (QGSO)).

The option of collecting the required information using existing administrative records should also be explored. Using existing data or records provides considerable advantages in terms of cost, time, and the absence of respondent burden. The major disadvantage is the lack of control over the data collected.

If existing data are not available or suitable, a number of factors must then be considered when determining which type of survey, if any, is appropriate.

QGSO can provide assistance to agencies needing to conduct quantitative surveys, by:

- **conducting all or part of the survey**
In consultation with departmental/agency staff, QGSO can assist in designing the survey and associated questionnaire. We can conduct all aspects fieldwork and analysis including pilot testing, the training of interviewers for telephone surveys, data cleaning and processing, analysis and reporting.
- **assisting in selection or evaluation of a consultant**
Agencies may prefer to engage specialised consultants, or QGSO may not be able to conduct the survey due to conflicting priorities. In such cases, QGSO can assist with all aspects of engaging consultants, including assistance with preparing briefs, selecting consultants and evaluating their work.
- **assisting agencies to conduct their own surveys**
Budgetary or other constraints may require agencies to conduct their own surveys. QGSO can still provide advice on all aspects of conducting a sample survey.

The aim of the questions posed below is to assist agencies to focus on their information requirements prior to engaging with QGSO's statistical advisory service.

Overall objective of the project

- What are the objectives of the project?
- Are any existing data collections, research outputs or sources of information related to the objectives already available?
- Are any of the objectives measurable through the process of asking questions?
- Can any of the objectives be met by gathering information using a quantitative survey?

Ethical consideration

- Do you need identifiable information (for example, names, addresses, telephone numbers) relating to respondents for follow-up research or matching with other data? If so, you will need to clearly explain why you need such details and obtain the respondents' consent.
- Will respondents be adversely affected or harmed as a direct result of participating in the survey?
- Are procedures in place for respondents to check the identity and bona fides of the researchers?
- Is the survey to be conducted on a voluntary basis?
- Is it necessary to interview children under 14 years? If so, the consent of their parent/guardian/responsible adult must be obtained.

Survey design and target population

- Are responses likely to be varied and diverse? If so, qualitative research may be required first, to inform the design of quantitative questions.
- Is the survey likely to be repeated, to measure change over time?
- Is the target population for the survey clearly identified or identifiable? What contact information is available?
- What particular respondent characteristics need to be quantified?



Legislative powers

- Do you have authority to collect the information through either a compulsory or voluntary survey? (See [Legislative framework](#) on the QGSO website.)

Data collection

- How complex and how sensitive is the topic?
- Do respondents have access to the required information?
- Will they be willing to supply the information?
- What is the most appropriate mode of delivery for survey questions (e.g. telephone, mail, web, face-to-face, observation, or a combination), with regard to data quality requirements and cost-effectiveness?

Each mode of administration has strengths and weaknesses when asking about specific topics. They may be associated with very different response rates and potential for bias, so expert advice is desirable.

- How important is it to have information collected:
 - by an independent source to capture both positive and negative responses?
 - securely or under legislation which protects confidentiality?
 - efficiently and effectively by professional statisticians?
 - by an organisation with rigorous quality assurance processes, certified to international standards?

Expected outputs

- How will the data and information derived from the survey be used?
- What level of error can be tolerated? This will depend on how you intend to use the survey results.
- Who is the target audience for the survey results?
- How might the survey results be best presented to the intended audience (e.g. commentary, tables, graphs etc.) to ensure that they're understood?

Timing and cost

- Are the necessary financial, staff, computer, or other resources available to conduct the survey, and have the results analysed and reported?
- When is the best time to conduct the survey? (For example, need to allow for seasonality, impact of school holiday periods etc.)
- When are the outputs required? A quantitative survey takes a certain, irreducible amount of time to be developed and carried out in order to produce results which can be analysed and reported. Is enough time available to ensure that data of sufficient quality can be collected and analysed?
- Is the survey to be repeated? How often?

Further information

For more information, please

- visit the QGSO website, see Surveys (www.qgso.qld.gov.au/about-us/our-services/surveys/) and Survey methods (www.qgso.qld.gov.au/about-statistics/survey-methods/)

- or contact QGSO at:

Queensland Government Statistician's Office
Queensland Treasury
PO Box 15037
CITY EAST QLD 4002
Telephone: +61 7 3035 6421
Email: govstat@treasury.qld.gov.au