Three Components of a Survey

- Defined population
- Systematic sample
- Ask questions

Strengths of surveys

- Can generalize to a large population
- It is somewhat objective if done properly—researcher does not interact with respondent
- Well-suited for quantitative analysis
- Ethically advantageous—respondents decide whether to participate.
- No deceit

Weaknesses

- Expensive
- Time consuming
- Rigid
- If it’s a cross-sectional survey (as most are), it is almost impossible to talk about causation, rather than correlation
Step 1: Define your population

- Population: Group of people whose opinions you are interested in.

Step 2: Take a sample

- Systematic or random sample: Must give each and every person in the population an equal chance of being selected
- We will return to this later this semester

Step 3: Decide on the mode

- Mail
- Telephone
- Internet
- In-person

Focusing on Mail surveys

- Pros
  - Low costs (relatively)
  - Convenience
  - Highly motivated individuals can look up answers and write detailed answers

- Cons
  - Low response rate
  - Slow turnaround
  - Can be difficult for poorly educated or elderly
Mail survey package
- Outer envelope
- Cover letter
- Survey instrument (avoid the term survey)
- Mail back envelope

Most important rule
- Personalize!!!!!!

How much does it cost?
- 489 Surveys
- 489 x $.60 (mail out) = 293.40
- 489 x $.49 (return) = 239.61
- 20% return = 391 receive postcard
- 391 x $.23 (postcard) = 89.93
- 5% more back
- 367 x $1.09 (mail & return) = 400.03
- $1022.97—JUST FOR POSTAGE!!!!!!

Focusing on telephone surveys
- Most popular kind of survey
- Not good for elite populations
Pros and Cons of Telephone Surveys

- **Pros**
  - Quick turnaround time
  - Avoids biases from respondents reading ahead
  - Minimizes mistakes (bad skips, etc.)

- **Cons**
  - High Costs
  - Intrusive

Internet Surveys

- Usually done poorly
- Can be done well—how?
  - Defined population?
  - Systematic sample?

In-Person Interviewing

- **Pros**
  - Good for long surveys

- **Cons**
  - Interviewer effects are multiplied
  - Very expensive!

Response Rates

- Average response rate for media surveys=22%
- Average response rate for government surveys=46%