



Designing Research Questions

First of all, clarify what your overall research purpose is and the key questions that you want to explore.

Work as a group to come up with about 3-5 sub-questions that will help to explore the topic in more detail.

In the research, we want to explore **what would it be like if we had food security for all and how could we get to this position**, addressing the following research questions:

1. **What would/could food security look like and mean for people?**
2. **How would this be different from where they are now?**
3. **What would need to happen in people's communities to achieve food security for all?**

Sub-questions:

- what does eating well mean for you?
- do you generally eat what you would like every week?
- if not, what are the main challenges that prevent you?
- what hints or tips would you give to someone who is struggling to help them cope better?

Open or closed questions?

Qualitative or quantitative data?

A mix of both?

Decide what type of questions will provide the type of data that best fits your research purpose.

DESIGNING QUESTIONS

OPEN QUESTIONS

- This type of question provides you with qualitative information – words, written and spoken, pictures etc.
- Person answering is encouraged to give a full answer. For example:
What do you think of the local shopping facilities?
- Generates more detail of the person's views and opinions.

- ✓ Good for getting a more developed and longer response.
- More difficult to analyse.
- Difficult for demonstrating how many people have said what.

CLOSED QUESTIONS

- These are the quantitative questions – the numbers e.g. how many ...
- People are given options to choose from and tick or circle their answers. For example:
Do you think that the local shopping facilities are adequate for community needs? YES / NO

- ✓ Good for easy analysis for getting numbers and percentages.
- Drawback is that the responses don't answer the question 'why'.
- You might need to ask supplementary questions to get more detail.

Some examples:

What do you think of the local shopping facilities? Circle the response that best represents your view.

very poor

poor

average

good

very good

Supplementary questions to explore the 'why' question:

'Open' example: *'Why do you say that?'*

'Closed' example: *Is it because: (tick all that apply)*

- a) They are too expensive*
- b) There are not many choices of shops*
- c) They don't open at the right times*
- d) They don't sell the right kind of products*
- e) They are difficult to get to by public transport*
- f) Other. Please state _____*

For your research think about:

Is it the right type of question?

Is it going to be possible to answer?

Is it too broad or too narrow?