

Bad survey key

Lack of introduction (whose research, into what, assurances of anonymity or confidentiality, expected time to complete). Comic Sans!

Item 1

- Where do I write?
- Free entry not usually appropriate. People are sensitive about their age, and about identifying information: you'll get a higher response rate if this is put in bands.
- Boring or sensitive stuff, all else being equal, should come at the end.
 - People have already invested time and are less likely to break off.
 - If people do break off, you've already got most of their information.

Item 2

- Inadequately defined question.
 - Income before or after tax? What sources are included? Individual or household?
- Overlapping ranges!
 - What if my income is £5,000 p.a.?
 - Plus it looks sloppy.
- Top category too low. In analysis, you'll probably use category midpoints, and you'll have to assume a value for the top category. It's not at all obvious what assumption you should make in this case, plus loads of your respondents will be in this category, so your results will be very sensitive to your assumptions.
- Might want a 'prefer not to say' category?
- Might want to explain why income information is really important in your research (if it is).

Item 3

- Incomplete categories!
 - If I'm a widow or widower, I'm not going to like this.
 - People who are cohabiting may also not feel catered for, even if they're technically single according to this classification (even though you may not care, you need to allow people to express themselves).

Item 4

- Potentially very sensitive, without justification/entreaty or assurances of confidentiality/anonymity. At *least* give a 'prefer not to answer' option.
- Totally out of flow.
- May offend people who've had dates with the same sex.
- Poorly defined: what is a date? When does it stop being a date and start being a relationship? Second, third, *n*th dates?
- Fails to distinguish zero as special case: could be a qualitative difference here.
- Scale is likely to make many people feel inadequate! And not pick up a lot of variation.
- Not a useful time frame for the analysis (unless we also ask how long they've been here).
- Could be too long a period for people to recall with any accuracy, unless they've just arrived.

Item 5

- Context effects!
 - This question should definitely go first.
 - Plus research specifically shows that people just asked about their dating report being more miserable!
- Inconsistent styling (font & size).

Item 6

- Difficult question with no 'not sure' or 'don't know' option.
 - People may feel stupid.
 - They may feel obliged to pick something at random (garbage data).
 - They may *be* obliged to pick something at random (especially online).

Item 7

- Inconsistent response categories between sub-questions. Plus...
 - a) What's carbon offsetting? People may feel stupid.
Lack of opt-out (don't know, not sure, no opinion, etc.)
Spelling and grammar (principal, misplaced apostrophe).
Split across page break.
 - b) Highly leading question.
Confusing alignment of tick-boxes for middle options.
Lack of opt-out option.
 - c) Asking for agreement with a negative may cause confusion: rephrase in the positive ("Only certified offsets...").
Unbalanced response scale (Disagree – Agree strongly).
'No opinion' looks too much like 'Neither agree nor disagree': 'Don't know' is probably better.
 - d) Only ask one thing at a time / don't ask overload your questions: what if I think it's *cheap* and over-rated?
'Don't know' option looks like part of the scale, and should be differentiated (e.g. by spacing, or italics)

Item 8

- Silly instructions: how do I choose 3 if I've heard of 5?
- What does Other mean? Other research areas that vaguely seem to be driving at the same kind of thing as those in the list? Why only one? Where do I specify it? Etc.

Item 9

- What is an adult? 16+? 18+?
- Do I include myself (and do I remember to)?
- Not with the other demographic questions.
- Zero??