

# Collecting surveys in-person: Quick guide

## Why do we collect surveys?

Surveys can tell us who our current audience are, and what impact our work has on them. We can check whether they are getting the outcomes that we want them to, find out if anyone is being left out, and what we can do to reach more people.

## What happens to the information we collect?

Surveys are collected anonymously, so we can't identify people in the responses. We use the data we collect and analyse it carefully, to monitor what we're doing, inform our strategy to deliver a great service to the people who need it, and to learn and improve in our everyday work. Everyone who works with us and who helps us by taking the survey should benefit from it.

## What can we do to make sure our survey is accurate and rigorous?

The first thing we can do is to make sure we are **sampling** our survey well. Sampling means making sure that you get a good mix of people to take the survey so that our results reflect our whole audience as accurately as possible.

It's almost impossible to do this perfectly, so what we can do is try to work with two key principles:

- **Different types of people visit at different times and on different days.** We can spread out the survey collection as much as you can, but in proportion to the number of visitors. So if one particular event, time or day has more visitors than others, you should try to collect more surveys – trying to roughly keep it in proportion. Getting a mix of weekends, school holidays and times of day is important too.
- **We can sometimes have a bias in who we approach.** When you're conducting a survey, you might approach people who you think look more likely to help you. To remedy this, professional interviewers will usually use a 'counting method'. Draw an invisible square on the ground, and choose a number, say 3. Then, count people and **always approach the specific person** you've chosen. This makes it a random choice and removes any element of selection by the interviewer.

Finally, if you're asking people the questions – you should be careful to read the questions as they are written, consistently, and avoid paraphrasing them.

It's important to use neutral language and tone of voice to **avoid 'leading' the respondent** to be more positive or negative, or to choose particular answers – let them decide for themselves!

It's also important to avoid commenting on people's answers, as this might 'lead' them as well – for example, supporting them and agreeing, or disagreeing with their answers and opinions. You don't want to sound like a robot, so you can still be chatty, funny and friendly, but try to be discreet and careful about your own opinions.

## How should I approach people?

Everyone who collects surveys finds it scary and difficult at first. We're not all naturally outgoing and many interviewers aren't either. It's also important to know why the survey is being used so you can be confident in what you're doing. Be kind to yourself, and don't be disheartened as you will likely struggle to start with. It gets easier and you'll get much more comfortable with it with practice – with perseverance you will get people to stop!

People are generally fairly nice. They might not be keen to do a survey, but if you're genuine and tell them that it helps you, **usually 25% or more are happy to help**.

- **Keep it simple:** Just say hi, you're doing a short survey, and if they want to help.
- Don't sound like you're reading a script – **be yourself!** This will help you come across much better and you'll sound more genuine and human.
- You can add that it **really helps** your organisation and that you need to collect the surveys to put on good programming and get funding to continue your work.

You should consider accessibility requirements and also offer people a chance to sit down if they'd like – but reassure them about the length of the survey so they don't think they'll be there forever.

Families with young children might not be able to stop for more than a couple of minutes so if you have a QR code or link to the survey that they can scan and take away, this might be the best way for parents to participate at a more convenient moment.

## How do I explain any personal questions?

Some people may be confused why you're asking questions about them, or find them intrusive or suspicious. It may feel to some people like it's unrelated to the experience they've had, and that you should be asking questions about that.

Typically these questions come later in the survey so that you've had a chance to warm up your respondent a bit.

To reassure people, you can touch on a few things:

- It's all anonymous and confidential – people can't and won't be identified. Their answers are usually looked at as a group – not individually.
- The reason that personal questions are asked is to find out who is in the current audience. Then, we can work out if anyone isn't attending and is missing out – so that we can do better for them.
- When charity funders or public money is used to support an organisation or its programming, funders and the government need to make sure that it's reaching the people who need it most, and having positive impacts for everyone in society.

You can acknowledge that these questions are annoying, and reassure people that they don't have to answer them – but that they do help make sure good things happen.