Doing Questionnaire Surveys

Decide on an aim
What is the general question you want to answer? Which attitudes, qualities or behaviours do you wish to investigate?

This should be derived from a theory of some kind

Decide on variables
What specifically do you want to measure with your questionnaire?

Each variable needs its own set of questions; so don't try to measure too many things

Formulate a hypothesis
What specific prediction can you make about the trends or tendencies you expect to find?

This should be an exact statement of the expected results.

Decide on question types

Decide in advance what sort of data you want

Option List
The respondents select one from a number of responses

Likert Scale
The respondents agree/disagree with a series of statements by selecting a number between 1 and 5.

Yes/No
The respondents answer yes or no to a series of questions.

Generate as many questions as you can think of

Long surveys are boring, so don't use too many

Select questions
From your pool of questions, select the ones you think are best for your survey.

Draw up the questionnaire

Make sure it's clearly laid out and legible

Rewrite or exclude problem questions

Pilot the questionnaire
Test the questionnaire out on a small sample. Did they all understand the questions as you intended?

no

Check test-retest reliability
Test the questionnaire by giving it to the same people twice. Did they produce similar scores both times?

no

This process helps to ensure you get accurate and valid results

Collect data
Distribute questionnaires for completion

Plan in advance where you will gather your data

Score questionnaires
Turn participants' responses into numerical scores according to a pre-prepared scoring scheme

With lots of questionnaire data, it's easier to use a spreadsheet program

Analyse data
Use statistics to make sense of the data you have obtained.

Graphs and charts are useful here

Accept or reject hypothesis
Decide whether your data are in line with the prediction you made in your hypothesis.

Now you need to evaluate your methodology to see whether you can trust your results.

Contributed by Aidan Sammons