

Chapter 3 Research Methods

Topic 4 Questionnaires

Answers to QuickCheck Questions on page 120

1. Data is easy to quantify and it can be processed quickly by computer to reveal the relationships between different variables.
2. Because once the questionnaire has been finalised, the researcher is stuck with the questions they have decided to ask and cannot explore any new areas of interest should they come up during the research.
3. Questionnaires produce reliable data (others can replicate the research). Pre-coded responses allow us to produce quantitative data, identify and measure behaviour patterns, and establish cause-and-effect relationships. They are often large-scale and thus more representative, so generalisations can be made.
4. Because the sociologist's personal involvement with their respondents is kept to a minimum; e.g. the researcher is not present when a postal questionnaire is being completed.
5. One of the following: can't get close to subjects and access share their meanings; can't clarify meaning of questions and deal with misunderstandings; can't know whether researcher and respondent both interpret questions or answers in the same way.
6. Because only those with an interest in the topic or time to fill it in may complete and return it; because it may get lost in the post/not reach the intended respondent; because of faulty questionnaire design (e.g. using difficult language).
7. By choosing which questions to ask, the researcher has already decided what is important. If closed-ended questions are used, respondents must try to fit their views into the ones the researcher has decided to offer them.