

Chapter 3

Topic 1 Quantitative research methods

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Activity: Discussion

Which quantitative method?

Learning objectives

At the end of this activity you should be able to:

- Identify key features of a range of quantitative methods.
- Compare and contrast the relative strengths of these methods.
- Evaluate the usefulness of different primary quantitative methods in sociological research.

- A. Divide into four groups. Each group will be given a primary quantitative method: laboratory experiments, field experiments, questionnaires or structured interviews.

Read the relevant section of Topic 1 for your method.

- B. Your group will write a research proposal on how you would use your method to investigate the following issue: 'Who is more likely to commit crime: men or women?'

Prepare a 10-minute presentation on your proposal, using a poster, highlighting the strengths of your method as a way of researching this issue.

Here are some points to help you. Add as many others as you can:

1. What practical issues are associated with your method?
2. What ethical issues are associated with your method?
3. How likely would your method be to produce representative data?
4. How reliable is your method?
5. Would your method be likely to produce valid data?

- C. Each group should deliver their presentation to the class. When you have finished, display your poster on the wall.

- D. Use the displays as the basis for a class discussion: 'Which quantitative method?'

- E. As a class, you need to vote on which method is most convincing. When deciding which way to vote, you must only consider the evidence presented during the presentations and discussion.