

SMART SURVEY INSTRUMENT GUIDELINES FOR INTERVIEWERS' TRAINING

I. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

Aim of the project:

Developing standardized comparative survey methodology on alcohol use, context on drinking, alcohol related troubles, consequences, alcohol dependence and unrecorded alcohol consumption to be later applied across Europe. Currently 10 European countries participate in the project, which is co-financed by European Commission. It is a pilot study and therefore we have to try a number of similar questions in order to eventually select the most appropriate one to be used across Europe.

Aim of the data collection:

Piloting the questionnaire elaborated in the participating countries. Emphasize is on *piloting different measurements* of alcohol consumption and other related questions. We would like to know which measurement (group of questions) describe the best the alcohol use of people living in different European countries. That is why the questionnaire contains several similar questions on the very same issues. We also would like to know the opinions of the respondents and the interviewers about different questions, and about the questionnaire, in general.

Other emphasis is on the international comparability. The data collection should take place in the very same way and very same time in all participating countries. It is crucially important to strictly follow all instructions related to data collection to assure the comparability of the survey.

We ask people about behaviours which are not always accepted or approved of. That is why it is especially important to assure them about the full anonymity of their answers. It is also very important, that interviewers remain completely neutral when listening answers.

II. GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR INTERVIEWERS

Initial steps

Factors that may improve the success in convincing respondents to participate in the survey:

- appearance: dress adequately and in a manner that will be comfortable to the target population. Appearance communicates to the respondent that you are trustworthy, honest, and non-threatening.
- behave friendly, modestly but decisively during the first contact.

The first information to the potential respondent should include:

- *WHO I AM*
- *FOR WHOM I AM WORKING*
- *WHAT I WANT FROM THE RESPONDENT*

So first state your name and the name of the organization you represent. Show your identification badge or the letter that introduces you. You want to have as legitimate an appearance as possible.

➔INTRODUCTION:

„Good afternoon, I am INTERVIEWER’S NAME. I am working as an interviewer for the INSTITUTE’S NAME. I’d like to take about 30-40 minutes of your time to interview you for a very important international study.“

After that the interviewer briefly presents the aim and its topic of the study:

➔INFORMATION ABOUT THE TOPIC AND NATURE OF THE STUDY:

„The aim of the study is to develop standardized questionnaire on alcohol to be later applied across Europe. Currently 10 European countries participate in the project, which is co-financed by European Commission. We would greatly appreciate your participation and advice.“

Then the interviewer declares the voluntary character and anonymity of participation:

➔ASSURANCE OF THE ANONYMITY:

“Your participation in the study is voluntary and the anonymity of your participation is guaranteed. Your name or any other information that identify you as a person will not be recorded or associated in any way with your responses.”

Then the interviewer may proceed and to check whether the contacted person fit with the requirements of the quota table.

“For this study I am seeking for a person who consumed beer, wine, spirits or any other alcoholic beverages during the past year and (GIVE DETAILED CHARACTERISTICS FROM YOUR QUOTA E.G. FEMALE IN AGE BETWEEN 30 AND 49 YEARS.)”

If the contacted person corresponds with these characteristics and agrees to participate, the interviewer starts arrange the interview, if not he/she asks whether some person with these characteristics lives in the given household, if not, he/she continues the random walk according to the plan.

How the response rate can be improved

Sometimes potential respondents hesitate to give an interview. Interviewer in this situation may try to emphasize the importance of the study and the participation in it. People frequently refuse participation saying they have not time for that right now. In this case the interviewer should offer a possibility to set up time when the interview is convenient to the respondent. The contacted person should not feel that is too much forced to participate. The refusal must be politely accepted, but anyway the interviewer should ask about the reasons for refusal and include this to the interviewer’s report.

This initial section must be very clear and short.

Interview begins

After these initial steps the interview may be started. Adequate conditions for carrying out the survey interview must be ensured. It is not advised to ask the questions in front of the door, or staying on the street, but if the respondent would not like to invite you to his home and prefer other place (for example MacDonal'd's restaurant), this may be accepted.

Before we start the interview itself it would be appropriate to stress again the international and pilot character of the study.

“In this international comparative pilot study we ask people about their alcohol consumption. Because we have to try often similar questions, you will be asked about your drinking in several ways and sometimes you may have a feeling, that we are asking the same again. We would like to assure you that this is intentional and part of the pilot study.”

Now, the survey interview will be carried out according the questionnaire

How to ask questions¹

→USE QUESTIONNAIRE CAREFULLY, BUT INFORMALLY

The questionnaire is your friend. It was developed with a lot of care and thoughtfulness. While you have to be ready to adapt to the needs of the setting, your first instinct should always be to trust the instrument that was designed. But you also need to establish a rapport with the respondent. If you have your face in the instrument and you read the questions, you'll appear unprofessional and disinterested. Even though you may be nervous, you need to recognize that your respondent is most likely even more nervous. If you memorize the first few questions, you can refer to the instrument only occasionally, using eye contact and a confident manner to set the tone for the interview and help the respondent get comfortable.

→ASK QUESTIONS EXACTLY AS WRITTEN

Sometimes an interviewer will think that they could improve on the tone of a question by altering a few words to make it simpler or more "friendly." DON'T. You should ask the

¹ The following principles were copied from internet. I suppose, it is a public domain, so we can use this for instructions of our interviewers. I left this part as I copied this from the internet, in hope this part may be especially useful for those who do not use professionally trained interviewers.

questions as they are on the instrument. If you had a problem with a question, the time to raise it was during the training and rehearsals, not during the actual interview. It is important that the interview be as standardized as possible across respondents. You may think the change you made was inconsequential when, in fact, it may change the entire meaning of the question or response.

→ FOLLOW THE ORDER GIVEN

Once you know an interview well, you may see a respondent bring up a topic that you know will come up later in the interview. You may be tempted to jump to that section of the interview while you're on the topic. DON'T. You are more likely to lose your place. You may omit questions that build a foundation for later questions.

→ ASK EVERY QUESTION

Sometimes you'll be tempted to omit a question because you thought you already heard what the respondent will say. Don't assume that. For example, let's say you were conducting an interview with college age women about the topic of date rape. In an earlier question, the respondent mentioned that she knew of a woman on her dormitory floor who had been raped on a date within the past year. A few questions later, you are supposed to ask "Do you know of anyone personally who was raped on a date?" You figure you already know that the answer is yes, so you decide to skip the question. Instead, you might say something like "I know you may have already mentioned this, but do you know of anyone personally who was raped on a date?" At this point, the respondent may say something like "Well, in addition to the woman who lived down the hall in my dorm, I know of a friend from high school who experienced date rape." If you hadn't asked the question, you would never have discovered this detail.

→ DON'T FINISH SENTENCES OF RESPONDENTS

I don't know about you, but I'm one of those people who just hates to be left hanging. I like to keep a conversation moving. Once I know where a sentence seems to be heading, I'm aching to get to the next sentence. I finish people's sentences all the time. If you're like me, you should practice the art of patience (and silence) before doing any interviewing. As you'll see below, silence is one of the most effective devices for encouraging a respondent to talk. If you finish their sentence for them, you imply that what they had to say is transparent or obvious, or that you don't want to give them the time to express themselves in their own language.

III. SAMPLING

Ideally, a quota sample of the respondents will be selected in the random walk. Twenty random walk starting points have to be sampled considering social differentiation of the area: ten for urban and ten rural areas. Each interviewer gets her/his starting point for random walk: street, number, direction of the random walk. Gender and age will constitute two major quota criteria.

Gender

Men – 1/2

Women – 1/2

Age:

18-29 - 1/3

30-49 - 1/3

50-74 - 1/3

A special table for quota for each interviewer would facilitate selection of the respondents. Below is an example of working table prepared for an interviewer whose task is to interview ten persons.

	Men	Women
18-29	2	1
30-49	2	2
50-74	1	2

Hundred eighty respondents will be selected in the random walk. In addition, a sample of twenty purposively selected “heavy drinkers” will have to be interviewed to have large enough representation to test questions on problems related to drinking. Two ways are suggested to select “heavy drinkers”:

- to ask a respondent to nominate a neighbour or relative or friend who “drinks heavily” allowing respondent’s definition of heavy drinker,
- to ask other key informants (e.g. GP, welfare agency, community leader, the police) to facilitate your contact with someone who “drinks heavily” allowing informant’s definition of a heavy drinker.

Interviewers have to note each person who refused participation (by gender and age group), and when it is possible, the reason of refusal (because of the subject of the questionnaire, because of the length of the questionnaire, abstainer, drunken, just no/other reason). Following table can be used as an example.

Number	Date of refusal	Time of refusal	Gender	Approx. age	Reason of refusal
1.	10 Nov. 2009	10:45	Male	45-50	Subject of interview
2..					

IV. DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS ON INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS

F - Frequency

This question refers to general frequency of drinking of any alcohol beverages, that means beer, wine and spirits treated equally, even in small amounts (e.g. 30 millilitres of spirits or 100 millilitres of wine or 250 millilitres of beer). Make sure that respondent doesn't report frequency of drinking of one alcoholic beverage only, for example spirits.

BSQF – Beverage specific quantity frequency method

This section refers to beer, wine and spirits drinking considering each type of beverage separately.

Please find below inclusion/exclusion criteria:

beer: include all types of beer, but don't include low (less than 2%) alcohol content or alcohol free beers

wine: includes grape and fruit wines, also champagne, sekt, prosecco, porto, sherry, vermouths, etc.

spirits: include whisky, brandy, vodka, gin, palinka, liquors, shot drinks, other local specialities (more than 30% alcohol). In case of cocktail take into account spirits contained only.

Firstly ask about frequency of drinking then about quantity drunken usually per drinking day. The quantity may be reported in number of glasses (volume of standard glass provided in the questionnaire), millilitres, decilitres and other volume measures if appropriate.

GF – Graduated frequency method

The questions from this section take all alcohol beverages together using concept of standard drink. Equivalent of one drink is 250 millilitres of beer, or 100 millilitres of wine or 30 millilitres of spirits. It should be explained to the respondent what one standard drink means. Make sure, that it is properly understood by respondent.

This section starts with a question on the maximum number of drinks, which respondent had during one day over the past 12 months (GF_1). First question from among questions GF_2 – GF_6 to be asked is dependent on response to the question GF_1. If respondent had 12 drinks or more in one day during past 12 months we start with question GF_2 and continue to the end of this set of questions. If the maximum number of drinks reported by respondent is between 8 and 11 drinks we skip question GF_2 and start with question GF_3. If the maximum number of drinks reported by respondent is between 5 and 7 drinks we skip questions GF_2 and GF_3 and start with question GF_4. Et cetera.

When the section is completed please check for consistency. The sum of days reported in response to questions GF_2 – GF_6 cannot exceed 365 taking into account the lowest borders of ranges. Please find below the table that is to help you in making calculations.

Every day or almost every day	3 - 4 times a week	1 - 2 times a week	2 - 3 times a month	Once a month	6 - 11 times a year	2 - 5 times a year	Once a year	I've never drink last 12 months
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
260 days	156 days	52 days	24 days	12 days	6 days	2 days	1 days	0 days

If you identify inconsistency please discuss it with respondent to find better assessment of his/her drinking.

LO – Last occasion method

This set of questions again treat the alcoholic beverages, that means beer , wine and spirits, separately. The inclusion/exclusion criteria for beer, wine and spirits are the same as by BSQF (see previous page).

The questions on last occasions drinking should be asked column by column. Firstly you ask about beer (LO_1). If respondent had not any beer, even small amount, during past 12 months circle answer “1) No” and go to the question about wine (second column – again LO_1 but related to wine).

If respondent drank beer ask LO_2: “How many days ago did you drink beer lastly?” Put number of days in relevant cell. The number of days means the results of subtraction between current date and date of last beer drinking. There is only one exception, if last drinking was today please put “1” like in case of drinking yesterday. If respondent doesn’t remember exact date of last beer drinking, please ask about estimation, how many days ago it could happened. Better is to put even rough estimation than “don’t know” answer.

Next question LO_3 is about quantity of beer drunk last time. Please put number of standard glasses in relevant cell. If respondent is not able to answer in standard glasses please assist him/her in recalculation of amount used into standard glasses. At this point only beer drunk on last occasion of beer drinking should be reported regardless other possible alcohol beverages drunk on the same occasion.

Question LO_4 and LO_5 are related to exact time when drinking started and then ended. Please put hour and minutes if possible. If respondent doesn’t remember exact time, please ask for estimation.

The questions about place of drinking (LO_6) is multi-response one because one occasion can take place in several consecutive places. Please circle “1” in all relevant answers and keep in mind that “2” should be circled always when the answer is not chosen by respondent.

The questions about company of drinking (LO_7) is also multi-response one. Please circle “1” in all relevant answers and keep in mind that “2” should be circled always when the answer is not chosen by respondent.

The questions on wine and spirits drinking (second and third column) should be asked in the same way like questions on spirit drinking.

DR – Drunkenness

Make sure that respondent apply definition of drunkenness provided in question.

Equivalent of one drink is 250 millilitres of beer, or 100 millilitres of wine or 30 millilitres of spirits.

RSOD – Risky Single Occasion Drinking

Six drinks equals to six 250 ml. glasses of beer (1.5 liter) or six 100 ml. glasses of wine (0.6 liter) or six 30 ml. glasses of spirits (180 ml.)

UP – Unrecorded purchasing

This section consists of two sets of questions. First one includes questions about bringing spirits, wine or beer from abroad after travelling to another country. The second set asks about purchasing alcoholic beverages outside of regular market inside the country.

The questions on bringing alcohol beverages from abroad begins with question-filter about travelling abroad during past 12 months (UP_1). The questions UP_2 to UP_7 are applicable only for respondents who select answer “1” for UP_1.

Questions about quantity of spirits (UP_3), wine (UP_5) and beer (UP_7) brought back from abroad are related to total sum of particular type of beverages brought during all travels out of the country during past 12 months. The amount should be reported in litres of beverage. Please assist respondents in recalculation into litres if needed.

The questions UP_8 – UP_13 are related to all cases of purchasing alcohol beverages outside of regular market, that means acquiring or producing for own use home made alcohol beverages, purchasing smuggled alcohol, purchasing beer, wine or spirits directly from farmers or other producers.

Questions about quantity of spirits (UP_9), wine (UP_10) and beer (UP_11) purchased outside of regular market are related to total sum of particular type of beverages get during past 12 months. The amount should be reported in litres of beverage. Please assist respondents in recalculation into litres if needed.

If a concept of regular market is not culturally appropriate application of more specific term can be considered, e.g. “how many times did you acquire spirit outside of [FILL IN COUNTRY-SPECIFIC WORDS FOR LEGAL PURCHASE PLACES].

DSM IV – Dependence

All DSM questions are copied from an US Diagnostic and Statistical Manual. Read all questions slowly to make a respondent understand long questions aimed to be used in clinical contexts.

AUDIT

The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test is recommended to be used for screening purposes. It may, however, be also used as an epidemiological tool.

RAPS

The Rapid Alcohol Problems Screen was elaborated as brief instrument that may replace or substitute for longer screens or diagnostic tools for screening purposes.

ASC – Adverse consequences of own alcohol use

Five simple questions deal with negative consequences of respondent's drinking, caused by the *own* alcohol use of the respondent. Please note, that in these questions we are not inquiring about problems or harms caused by the alcohol use of others. As always, be neutral and avoid any personal assessments, neither condemnation nor sympathy.

HD – Heavy drinkers in your life

Two questions only ask about significant others who are heavy drinkers who may be a source of serious concern or even trauma. We are inquiring about persons who are considered heavy drinker *by the respondent*. Please don't influence him/her with your own opinion on heavy drinking, don't explain him who is a heavy drinker, allow respondent's own definition of heavy drinker.

COM – Impact of others drinking in the community

This set of questions relate to problems and disturbances caused *to the respondent* by others' drinking. In these questions "other people" means those, whom respondent might have seen in different public places (street, parks, public transport, restaurant, neighbourhood etc.), been affected by their behaviour but who are not known to him personally.

AP – Attitudes to alcohol policy

In this section we are inquiring again about the personal opinions of the respondent. Please, don't influence him/her in any way. Be as neutral as possible. When asked by respondent for advice, please emphasize that people may think about these questions in a very different way and we would like to know his/her personal opinion. There are not good and bad answers.

V. ASSESSMENT OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE BY THE RESPONDENT

After completing the questionnaire and expressing thanks to respondent you are about to ask him another favour to evaluate some sections of the interview. Five sections have been distinguished for this purpose and only one will be randomly assigned by an interviewer to each individual respondent:

1. Consumption (F, BSQF, GF, LO),
2. Drinking pattern (DR, RSOD),
3. Unrecorded purchasing (UP),
4. Standard instruments (DSM, AUDIT, RAPS,)
5. Consequences (ASC, HD, COM) and opinions (AT)

To facilitate analyses of respondent's opinions a special short form was elaborated which is attached to the main questionnaire.

VI. INVITING RESPONDENT FOR A FOCUS GROUP

After finishing the interview and the assessment procedure but before leaving, the interviewer invites a respondent to participate in a focus group.

“As you well remember you participate in piloting of an international questionnaire. Your participation and advice are crucial for a success of this project. The country research team would like to talk about the topics of the questionnaire in a less formal way.. Researchers would like to invite some of the participants of the data collection for a discourse within a few weeks. Would you be interested and willing to participate in such a discussion?”

IF AGREED

To communicate with you in the future we would like you to give us some contact details: your name (it could be a nick name, just to know if we will telephone the right person), mobile phone, regular phone, address. Once more I would like to assure you that your participation will strictly be confidential and nobody except me and few people from the research team in charge of assessment.

CONTACT DETAILS OF THE RESPONDENT SHOULD BE RECORDED ON SEPARATE PAGE TOGETHER WITH HIS/HER GENDER AND AGE.

VII. INTERVIEWER'S ASSESSMENT

The interviewer's assessment form is attached to the main questionnaire (to be filled shortly after the interview). In addition to filling-in these forms after each interview, the interviewer is expected to provide a report from the pilot study composed of general assessment and assessment of individual sections and questions. Recommendations for improvements, including re-formulation of some questions are welcome.