

11.1 Influencing factors

Bias	Does the question show preference for a specific outcome?
use of language	Do people understand the question?
Ethics	Does the question refer to inappropriate behaviour?
Cost	Does the cost outweigh the benefits?
Time & Timing	Does the time the data was collected influence the results? Is the timing appropriate?
Privacy	Do people have the right to refuse to answer? Are responses confidential?
Cultural Sensitivity	Could the question offend people from different cultures?

11.1 Influencing factors

Example 1: Identify Factors Affecting Data Collection
For each situation identify any influencing factors.

A sales representative stands in front of a display of different kinds of toothpaste. He asks every person buying toothpaste the following question. "What is your favourite brand of toothpaste? For what reason(s)?"

No influencing factors.

Free samples of sunscreen are sent to every home in fall and winter. A mail reply card asks people if they would use the product again.

Time - people are less likely to use
Cost - sending sunscreen at a time there might not be much response.

A grocery store employee conducts a telephone survey of people living within 10 km of the store. To help determine what meat products to sell, she asks what type of red meat people prefer.

Cultural sensitivity - not all eat meat
Bias - only asking about red meat.

A sales representative conducts a telephone survey. As she poses the question, a person receiving the call says, "I am not interested, thank you." The sales representative responds, "Why not? Your input provides useful information." She begins to repeat the survey question.

Privacy - no right to refuse

Your school is under construction and is quite dusty and dirty. A survey is conducted about the environmental health of your school. The survey is done every four years.

Time - poorly timed survey.

A sales representative sets up an online survey. The survey offers a free MP3 file of a song that was downloaded from the Internet to everyone who completes the survey. The company has not bought the rights to the song.

Ethics - they don't have the rights to the song.

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SYK 1

Show You Know

A marketing firm displayed two sports shirts at a grades 7 to 12 school with 800 students. The first ten grade 12 students who entered the school were asked the following question.

Which one of these two sports shirts would you buy?

A week later, the firm gave this flyer to the student council.

What factors might have affected the data collected and the company's conclusions? Explain.

Over 78% of students at Central High will buy Shirt B.



Example 2: Write Survey Questions Free of Influencing Factors

A steel milling company conducts a survey.

- Does the survey question influence the results? Explain.
- Rewrite the question so that it is free of influencing factors.

The proposed mill will produce 250 jobs and economic benefits for your community. Are you in favour of having a ~~forward-thinking~~ steel mill in your community? YES NO

a) positive parts only.
cultural sensitivity
SYK 2 "yes" "No" bias

b) include negatives as well?
"Are you in favour of having a steel mill in your community?"

Show You Know

For each situation, explain whether the question has influencing factors. If it does, rewrite the question.

- Daniel is studying the population of polar bears in eastern Hudson Bay. He drafts the following question.

Do you think the senseless slaughter of polar bears should be stopped? YES NO

- A recent study shows that 45% of Canadians are using the Internet to shop. Amy develops the following question for a class survey.

What kinds of products and services do you buy online?

