

Types of data				Types of data (cont)				Stages of research			
Primary data	Data collected by the researcher themselves i.e. experiments / surveys / observations.	- Relevant Information - Can Control methodology	- Time Consuming - Can be costly dependant on the methods used	Qualitative data	Type of data that is focused around opinion, feelings and why something is happening.	- Detailed information that explores reasonings - Based on human experience which gives better validity	- Longer process to analyse the data as it all varies due to subjective nature If not careful, researcher can have a negative impact on the results - behaviour	1. Choice of topic	Deciding whether the research will focus on • social problems • sociological problems	They need to know what they're studying	
Secondary data	Data collected by other people & organisations	- Already gathered so quicker - Usually cheaper to access	- Information may be old and inaccurate - Questionable whether it can be applied	Complex data and harder to analyse. Subjective Data.				2. Aim	Considering the main research goal in their study	It is important to have a research goal	
Quantitative data	Numerical, statistical information that is objective. Answers factual questions instead of giving reasonings.	- Best for representativeness and generalisability - Broader study - greater number of subjects	- Harder to analyse and give reasonings - Can't explore why	Positivism vs interpretivism POSITIVISM - Theory approach based on natural and factual causes - idea surrounds objectivity and positivists want statistical, quantitative data that reveals the truth. Preferred research methods: Quantitative, Official Statistics, Social Surveys, / Unstructured Interviews / Questionnaires				INTERPRETIVISM - Approach which tries to see explanations from subjects perspective. They want Verstehen (Meaning) and qualitative data with reasons as to why something happened. Preferred research methods: Qualitative, Personal Documents, Participant Observation, Unstructured Interviews			
								3. Operationalise research values	Breaking down the hypothesis or aim into concrete values that can be measured	Precise measurement of social phenomena cannot occur without it and it allows others to replicate your research	
								4. Choose target population	Choosing people with the characteristics you want to research	It is important to have a defined research population	
								Stages of research (cont) 5. Choose sampling method Choosing between random and non-random sampling The sampling method is crucial to ensure the sample is generalisable			



Stages of research (cont) (cont)

6. Choose research method	Choosing between qualitative and quantitative methods	It is important to choose the correct research method for your aims
7. Conduct research	Carry out your chosen method on your sample	Carrying out the method correctly improves the validity of your data
8. Analyse data	Looking for patterns in the data	Spotting patterns correctly can allow for new discoveries

Ethics and access

1. Informed consent – research subjects should be fully aware of the study and its aims
 2. No deceit – sociologists should not keep information or lie about the purpose of the study
 3. Privacy is kept – the privacy of the research subjects should be safeguarded as much as possible
 4. Protection from harm – protection from physical harm, emotional harm and professional harm
 5. No illegal or immoral behaviour – sociologists need to avoid situations where they could be drawn into illegal behaviour
- Access – some groups have the power to resist sociologists such as the rich and powerful therefore, data on these groups is usually secondary data using statistics.
- Gatekeeping – A gatekeeper has contact with the research subjects and will check any interview for sensitive subjects

Ethics and access (cont)

Funding – This may affect the research method, if lots of funding is available the researcher may employ a team and be able to complete in-depth interviews, if funding is low the researcher may need to choose a cheaper option such as postal questionnaires.

Triangulation strengths and weaknesses

- The methods cancel out the disadvantages and allow sociologists to guarantee validity
- Can be expensive and time-consuming depending on the methods chosen
- Can reveal new information and hypotheses
- The methods have to complement one another and cancel out the disadvantages
- Provides a better understanding of the problem
- More skills are needed to analyse the vast amounts of data

Sampling methods

- Random:
- Lack of bias as it is randomly chosen
 - Simplicity as there are no additional steps
 - Time-consuming and expensive due to the information needed
 - Sample selection bias can occur when a sample chosen is not representative

Sampling methods (cont)

- Systematic: randomly choosing a number and picking every 10th e.g. 7,17,27 e.c.t
- Most representative as it relies in statistical odds
 - It is easy to execute and understand
 - Provides control
 - Relatively small sample can be used with confidence that it's still representative
 - Requires a smaller sample than random sampling
 - Large sample needed to ensure that statistically it is likely to be representative
 - Not truly random
 - by chance might get same results.
 - Requires sampling frame which includes details of significant characteristics of population being studied
 - Timely
 - May take a lot of researchers
- Stratified: dividing the population into sampling frames and using systematic sampling



Sampling methods (cont)

Snowball: • Used • Very unlikely to
When mainly be truly represent-
one with ative since based
person groups on people who
leads you who are have contact with
to hard to one another •
another identify or Representati-
access veness of the
(e.g. sample is not
criminals) guaranteed. The
• The researcher has no
process is idea of the true
cheap, distribution of the
simple population and of
and cost- the sample. •
efficient. • Sampling bias is
This also a fear of
sampling researchers when
technique using this
needs sampling
little technique. Initial
planning subjects tend to
and fewer nominate people
workforce that they know
compared well. Because of
to other this, it is highly
sampling possible that the
techni- subjects share the
ques. same traits and
characteristics,
thus, it is possible
that the sample
that the
researcher will
obtain is only a
small subgroup of
the entire popula-
tion.

Sampling methods (cont)

Volunteer: • More • Could take a
Partic- ethical long time to
ipants because get enough
becoming participants people to do
part of a have experiment •
study approached Rules out
because researcher • certain
they May have occupations
volunteer an interest and types of
when in the people -
asked or subject so unrepresentative •
in they are Expensive to
response less likely to place advert
to an give biased
advert information • Easy to do

Quota: • • Accessibility
Like Advantages of potential
stratified of stratified respondents
sampling random affects their
but the sampling chances of
researcher but can be being included
decides conducted in the sample.
how many without • May be less
people in variables representative
each being than random
group are available and stratified
involved from sampling •
sampling Results may
frame • be distorted
Useful for and not
groups with representative
no sampling
frame •
Common in
opinion polls

Sampling methods (cont) (cont)

Purposive: • Tends to • Makes no
Involves be easiest attempt to be
researchers and truly repres-
choosing quickest entative, so
individuals or way of can't
cases from a collecting generalise
particular a sample • from the
place that may lead findings • Is
reflect the to a good open to bias •
nature of response It is
their rate • Is vulnerable to
research affordable researcher
judgement

Opportunity: • Less • Biased •
Taking the time Cannot be
sample from consuming generalised •
people who • Easy to Researcher
are available use • has control
at the time Cheap over selection
the study is so may be
being carried subjective to
out and fit the their views
criteria you're
looking for

Statistics strengths and weaknesses

• They are often extremely easy and cheap to access as they are usually online

• They may not be representative of the wider population as they are collected by independent bodies



Statistics strengths and weaknesses (cont)

- They are often up-to-date so give sociologists an understanding of modern behaviour
- They can be politically massaged to make a country look better
- They often form the basis of hypotheses that motivate research
- They tell us very little about the human stories that underpin them so are disliked by interpretivists

Questionnaire strengths and weaknesses

- Used for reaching larger and more representative samples as it can be given to hundreds of people
- Many people do not respond to questionnaires which can cause low response or no response and can undermine validity
- Postal questionnaires are useful when the research population is geographically spread out
- The questions can be biased or leading
- They are cheaper and less time-consuming than other methods
- It is difficult to motivate people to return postal questionnaires

Structured interviews strengths and weaknesses

- Positivists regard the method as scientific as it primarily produces qualitative data
- They are artificial and not in everyday life so may give false information as they are suspicious

Structured interviews strengths and weaknesses (cont)

- The use of closed questions creates lots of quantitative data which can be converted into charts
- They are inflexible so sociologists cannot focus on other things if they hear something interesting
- Because of the interview schedule, structured interviews are quick and can allow for a larger sample
- Interpretivists believe they do not produce true data

Unstructured interviews strengths and weaknesses

- They allow the researcher to build rapport which allows the participants to open up more which can enrich data
- Unstructured interviews create a lot of data and require the researcher to be selective of what they publish
- Unstructured interviews allow the researcher to explain more about the research so they are useful for researching unknown groups
- The qualitative data is difficult to analyse as there are no pre-coded answers
- They provide richer, more detailed data which is highly valid
- Studies that use unstructured interviews use less participants which undermines the representativeness to positivists

Semi-structured interview

- Allows the researcher to explain the research and gain informed consent so is ethical
- It is time consuming and expensive compared to other methods
- Interpretivists see the data as valid as it allows the researcher to understand the world through the participants eyes
- Not reliable as it is hard to replicate
- Feminists argue this method gives women an opportunity to express how they really feel
- Positivists reject this see it as unscientific this method lacks objectivity and reliability and fails to produce representative data that can be generalised to the wider population.

Observations strengths and weaknesses

- The researcher sees things through the eyes of the group so the researcher experiences 'verstehen' or empathy which results in highly valid data
- Overt forms of research are subject to the researcher effect which may result in the group acting less naturally as the researcher is there which undermines validity



Observations strengths and weaknesses (cont)

- Often what people say and what they do is different, people may lie or not be aware of their actions in interviews
- Some observers get too attached to the research group and show bias towards them reporting the data incorrectly and losing objectivity
- Observation can be supplemented with unstructured interviews to add to the validity
- Covert observation is highly unethical

Ethnography strengths and weaknesses

- Ethnography is usually long-term and in-depth as well as qualitative so produces lots of rich data
- It usually is a study of a specific group and is therefore not representative of wider society
- It allows the researcher to achieve verstehen with the group they study which means they are more likely to open up
- It is subjective to the researcher's opinions so could be biased
- The rapport built means it is high in validity
- Positivists dislike the data as it is not reliable or analysable

Content analysis strengths and weaknesses

- It is very cheap as all that is needed is media products
- It can be very time-consuming
- It is a comparative analysis that can be longitudinal
- It is very subjective as the categories depend on what the researcher thinks is important
- Quantitative content analysis is reliable as it can be repeated by other sociologists
- Sociologists have been accused of analysing text out of context

