Interview

Interviews are a flexible method for exploring people's opinions, experiences, needs, and perspectives. They are particularly useful for gaining a deeper understanding of individual viewpoints and collecting detailed qualitative information. Interviews can be conducted in person, by telephone, or online.
Depending on the objective, interviews may be highly structured or more open-ended. Semi-structured interviews are the most commonly used format, as they combine a prepared interview guide with enough flexibility for open responses and spontaneous follow-up questions.

Participation Depth	Inform
Project Phase	Onboarding
Goals	Understanding & Gathering Perspectives
Format	Analogue, Digital
Duration	Up to 1 Hour
Target Group	Directly Affected, Hard-to-Reach Groups
Group Size	Small Group up to 15
Characteristics	Simple, Structured

GOAL OF THE METHOD

The goal of an interview is to gain a deeper understanding of people's experiences, perceptions, and needs. Open conversations often reveal issues that would not emerge in larger group discussions. Interviews provide valuable insights into everyday realities, challenges, and perspectives that can inform future planning and participatory processes.

PROCEDURE

Preparation

1. Define the objective and topic
Begin by considering:

- What information should be collected?
- Who should be interviewed?
- Which topics are most important?

Also determine:

- whether the interviews should be structured, semi-structured, or open-ended
- how the results will be used afterwards

2. Prepare the interview guide

Develop an interview guide with clear and easy-to-understand questions.

Open-ended questions work particularly well, for example:

- "How do you currently experience this situation?"
- "What challenges do you encounter in your daily life?"
- "What changes would you like to see?"

Avoid:

- leading questions such as *"Don't you agree that...?"*
- simple yes/no questions

Also prepare:

- introductory questions
- possible follow-up questions
- a clear and appropriate way to conclude the interview

3. Organise the interview setting
Provide:

- a quiet and comfortable location
- a confidential atmosphere
- sufficient time for the conversation

If conducting interviews online:

- test the technology in advance
- be prepared to provide technical support if needed

Execution

1. Welcome and introduction
At the beginning of the interview, explain:

- the purpose of the interview
-

the expected duration

- how the information will be used
- whether the interview will be documented or audio-recorded

Ensure that participants have given informed consent before making any audio recordings.

Important:

Participants should know that their responses will be treated confidentially.

2. Conduct the interview
The interview should follow the interview guide while remaining natural and conversational.

The interviewer should:

- listen actively
- avoid interrupting
- ask open follow-up questions
- allow space for new topics to emerge

Helpful follow-up questions include:

- "Could you describe that in more detail?"
- "How does this affect your daily life?"
- "Why is this important to you?"

It is perfectly acceptable to move beyond the interview guide when relevant topics arise. Personal stories often provide valuable insights into participants' everyday lives. However, the interviewer should always ensure that the conversation remains connected to the overall topic.

3. Closing the interview
Towards the end of the interview, ask:

- whether the participant would like to add anything else
- which topics they consider most important

Thank the participant for their time and briefly explain the next steps in the process.

Evaluation

1. Document the results
Record the key statements and themes as soon as possible after the interview.

Documentation may include:

- interview notes
- transcripts
- written summaries

2. Analyse the results
Analyse:

- recurring themes
- differences between participants' perspectives
- conflicts or unmet needs
- frequently mentioned wishes or concerns

The findings can then:

- inform planning processes
- provide the basis for workshops
- be explored further in other participatory methods

Source: https://mobilitaetsplanung-hessen.de/methodenkoffer-partizipative-planung/

WHEN USEFUL?

- personal experiences or perspectives are important
- sensitive topics need to be discussed
- needs and opinions should be explored in greater depth
- preparing for larger participation processes
- specific individuals or stakeholder groups should be consulted

WHEN NOT USEFUL?

- large numbers of people need to participate simultaneously
- rapid, purely quantitative results are required
- a confidential and protected interview setting cannot be provided

TIPS

- Ask open, clear, and easy-to-understand questions.
- Create a trusting and confidential atmosphere.
- Allow enough space for spontaneous topics and personal experiences.
- Careful listening is often more valuable than asking many questions.
- Allow sufficient time for documentation and analysis after each interview.

NOT SUITABLE FOR

- large group events
- rapid voting or decision-making processes
- topics where only statistical or quantitative data is required

View online: https://methoden.urbankit.de/en/methods/interview