Survey

A Survey is a participation method used to systematically collect opinions, experiences, needs, or assessments from a large number of people. It is particularly useful for gathering feedback efficiently and identifying trends, priorities, or public sentiment.
Surveys can be conducted in person, online, or through a combination of both. Questions may be closed-ended, using predefined response options, or open-ended, allowing participants to provide their own answers. While closed-ended questions enable straightforward and comparable analysis, open-ended questions often provide richer insights and more personal perspectives.

Participation Depth	Inform
Project Phase	Onboarding
Goals	Understanding & Gathering Perspectives
Format	Analogue, Digital
Duration	Up to 1 Hour
Target Group	Directly Affected, Interested Public, Hard-to-Reach Groups
Group Size	As Many as Possible
Characteristics	Simple, Structured

GOAL OF THE METHOD

The goal of a Survey is to collect feedback from as many people as possible in order to better understand opinions, needs, experiences, and priorities. The method helps create a broad picture of public views and provides a stronger evidence base for planning and decision-making processes.

PROCEDURE

Preparation

1. Define the survey objective
Begin by considering:

- What information should be collected?
- Which questions need to be answered?
- How will the results be used?

Important:

The objectives should be as specific as possible.

Examples include:

- "How satisfied are residents with local public spaces?"

- "Which mobility challenges do residents experience?"
- "Which measures should be prioritised?"

2. Identify the target group
Consider:

- Who should be reached?
- Who is most directly affected?
- Should the survey target the general public or specific groups?

Examples include:

- local residents
- commuters
- young people
- older adults
- local businesses

The target group should influence both the language and length of the survey, as well as the distribution channels and survey format.

3. Develop the questions
Questions should be:

- clear
- concise
- unambiguous
- neutral

Avoid:

- technical terminology
- double-barrelled questions
- leading questions

For example: "Don't you think the square urgently needs improvement?"

Better example: "How would you rate the current situation in the public square?"

4. Choose open or closed questions
Closed-ended questions are useful for:

- rapid analysis
- comparisons
- voting or rating

Examples include:

- rating scales
- yes/no questions
- multiple-choice questions

Open-ended questions are useful for:

- personal opinions
- new ideas
- detailed feedback

A combination of both types is often the most effective approach.

5. Select the format and distribution channels
Decide whether the survey will be:

- online
- paper-based
- both

Possible distribution methods include:

- QR codes
- websites
- printed questionnaires
- social media
- postal mail
- public events

Important:

The survey should be easy for participants to access.

6. Ensure accessibility
Consider:

- using plain language
- providing translations where appropriate
- ensuring mobile compatibility
- using readable font sizes

Important:

The survey should be accessible to as many people as possible.

7. Promote participation
Use communication channels such as:

- social media
- newsletters
- local media
- community organisations
- schools
- public notices

- local events

Clearly explain:

- why the survey is important
- how long it takes to complete
- how the results will be used

Execution

1. Launch the survey
Publish the survey online or distribute printed questionnaires.

Important:

Participation should be as simple and straightforward as possible.

2. Provide support
Participants should be able to:

- ask questions
- receive assistance with technical issues
- access information about data protection

Providing this support helps build trust.

3. Encourage participation
During the survey period, remind people regularly that the survey is available.

For longer survey periods, participation can be encouraged through:

- reminder messages
- small incentives
- personal invitations

4. Protect personal data
Clearly explain:

- which data are being collected
-

how the data will be stored

- whether responses are anonymous
- who will have access to the data

Important:

Only collect personal data when it is genuinely necessary.

Evaluation

1. Analyse the results
Responses can be analysed:

- quantitatively
- qualitatively
- using a combination of both approaches

The analysis may reveal:

- frequently expressed opinions
- priorities
- conflicts
- differences between participant groups

2. Visualise the findings
Present the results in a clear and accessible format.

Examples include:

- charts
- maps
- tables
- quotations
- summary reports

Important:

The findings should be easy for a broad audience to understand.

3. Share the results
Inform participants about:

- the main findings
- possible implications
- the next steps in the process

This demonstrates that participation has had a meaningful impact.

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

WHEN USEFUL?

- reaching a large number of people
- systematically collecting opinions or needs
- introducing a participation process
- identifying priorities
- producing results that can be easily compared
- addressing short and clearly defined questions

WHEN NOT USEFUL?

- in-depth discussion or collaborative problem-solving is required
- addressing highly complex topics that require extensive explanation
- personal conversations are the primary objective

TIPS

- Pilot the survey with a small group before launching it.
- Short, clear surveys generally achieve higher response rates.
- Too many open-ended questions significantly increase the workload required for analysis.
- Use a variety of distribution channels to reach different target groups.

- Transparent communication increases trust and encourages participation.

NOT SUITABLE FOR

- complex conflict resolution
- intensive discussions or collaborative solution development
- topics that require extensive explanation
- small groups that benefit more from direct personal interaction

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