



Consortium to Perform
Human Biomonitoring on a
European scale



Face to face interviews

Kerstin Becker and UBA-Team

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Definitions

We will use a standardized questionnaire.

Trained interviewers ask fixed questions in a consistent format.

Mainly specific and closed questions will be used.

Comparison of questioning methods

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Face to face	Longer questionnaires possible (up to 1,5 h)	Interviewer bias
Telephone	Cost effective	Must be short (max. 45 min), no visual aids
Self-completion	Cost effective, visual aids possible	Low response rates, responder bias, easy questions only

Comparison of methods

	face-to-face	telephone	postal
costs	high	medium	low
Sample size	medium	high	very high
control	medium/high	very high (CATI)	none
influence	high	medium	none
complexity	high	low	medium
response rate	high	medium/high	medium
length	Long (-90min)	medium/long (-45min)	short/medium

Advantages of a face to face interview

Certainty about who answered the questions, personal contact, interviewer is a motivation source

Interviewer can help the participant to understand the question

Employment of different techniques possible – open-ended questions, visual aids, answer scales, etc.

Longer interviews are tolerated, higher reluctance to quit

Convenient for the respondent, especially in their home

Additional questions can be used to collect detailed information

Body language and reaction can guide the interviewer

Validity can be roughly checked (income, etc....)

Disadvantages of face to face interviews

costs time (duration of fieldwork) and money

stage fright of interviewers and respondents

risk to give advice during the interview

unknowingly manipulation possible

respondents might feel uneasy about the anonymity of
their responses

validity of sensitive questions?



Face to face interviews are usually more accurate than other data collection methods (Jack Rabin*)

Telephone respondents were more suspicious about the interview process and more likely to present themselves in a socially desirable way than were face-to-face respondents (Holbrook et al. 2003).

Social desirable: generally accepted norms are used as guidelines, e.g., alcohol intake, medical check-ups, etc.

*: taken from. Face to face interviews, a guide to research tools. Web.viu.ca/rtri/Face%20to%20Face.pdf

Time

Families might be reached best in the evening or at weekends

Place

In the home, away from other obligations of life

Quiet and comfortable

Face-to-face, a table in between

No third party?



General behaviour and attitude

respect the respondents and take their questions and answers seriously

be organized and knowledgeable in the materiel presented

be aware of the impact of your behaviour

use a clear language

do not assess the answers



General rules for asking questions in interviews (1)

- Read the questions exactly as they are worded in the questionnaire
- Read each question slowly
- Use correct intonation and emphasis
- Ask the questions in the order that they are presented in the questionnaire
- Ask every questions that applies to the respondent

General rules for asking questions in interviews (2)

- Use response cards when provided
- Repeat full questions that are misheard or misunderstood
- Use only allowable additional questions and comments
- Read all linking statements exactly as they are printed
- Do not add apologies or explanations unless they are printed in the questionnaire

(Taken from Amstrong et al. (2000): Principles of exposure measurement..., Oxford Press)

Allowable additional questions and comments?

- Repeat the question: *„I am not sure I understood you, let me just ask the question again so that I can be sure to get your answer right...“*
- The expectant pause (tells that you are waiting for more information)
- Repeat the reply (to stimulate more answers)
- Neutral questions and comments:
Anything else? What do you mean exactly? Feedback (I see, ok, all right)
- „every answer is ok“

Rules for recording responses

- make sure that you understand each response
- make sure each response is adequate
- do not answer for the respondent
- record all responses during the interview
- begin writing as soon as the respondent begins talking
- do not erase anything, find a rule to mark the correct cross or answer
- if no answer is given to a question (rare event) write „refused“ beside the question and put a note into the log-book

(adapted from Armstrong et al. (2000): Principles of exposure measurement.., Oxford Press)

Additional recommendations

- Explain the purpose of the research to respondents in the same manner
- Make the effort to ensure that each question is understood in the same way
- Try to extract correct information without bias
- Be aware of the impact of your behaviour
- Avoid over-familiarity



Quality control measures (personal interviews)

Before field work:

Training about study background and objectives, training interviews with supervision of the study leader

During field work:

Feed back after the first day of field work and in certain time intervals (in bigger studies every 6 months).

Regular meetings, field visits of supervisors

DEMOCOPHES

Demonstration of a study to
coordinate and perform
human biomonitoring
on a European Scale



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Human Biomonitoring on a
European scale

Umwelt
Bundes
Amt 
Für Mensch und Umwelt

Thank you for attention!

Questions, comments, something to add?

