Survey Research

Three Components

- Sampling
- Question wording
- Administration

Sampling
- Representative sample
- Size of sample determines accuracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Sampling Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>+/- 7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600</td>
<td>+/- 4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800</td>
<td>+/- 3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>+/- 3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>+/- 2.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample size = 1000
Sampling error = 3.2 percentage points

Population
True value = 35%

Sample 1 32%
Sample 2 35%
Sample 3 38%

Gallup Poll

• “These results are based on telephone interviews with a randomly selected national sample of 1,003 adults, aged 18 years and older, conducted Jan. 6-8, 2006. For results based on this sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum error attributable to sampling and other random effects is ±3 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.”

Range

• Samuel Alito: support 49%, oppose 30%, no opinion 21%
• Sample support Alito = 49% +/- 3%
• Sample oppose Alito = 30% +/- 3%
True Change in Opinion Over Time

- Bush approval rating in Gallup polls
  - Jan 6, 43%
  - Dec. 16, 41%
  - Dec. 9, 42%
  - Nov. 17, 38%

Adjustments to Random Sampling

- Stratifying
- Clustering
- Multistage
- Each adjustment changes sampling error
- Weighting of cases

Sampling Types that Don’t Work

- Quotas
- Voluntary
- Haphazard
- Sampling from lists
Question Wording

• Unbiased questions
• Understandable to all respondents
• Socially desirable/undesirable answers
• Respondent fatigue

Biased Question

• In the upcoming election, will you vote for President Bush or John Kerry?

Biased Question

• Do you approve or disapprove of President Bush’s plan to privatize Social Security?
Biased Question

• Do you feel that the U.S. government should begin more favorable trade policies with Communist China?

Biased Question

• Some people say that the U.S. government spends too much money on the poor. Do you agree or disagree?

Misperceived Question

• Do you believe the Electoral College will influence the outcome of this year’s election?
Misperceived Question

• Do you approve or disapprove of President Bush’s farm policy?

Misperceived Question

• Do you agree or disagree that there is no situation in which the FBI is not justified in breaking laws in order to protect our national security?

Misperceived Question

• Have you taken any bunny courses here at the University of Arizona?
Ambiguous Question

- How many courses did you take last year at the University of Arizona?
- Did you vote in the last election?

Ambiguous Questions

- What was your income last year?

Socially Acceptable Answers

- Did you vote in this November's election?
Socially Undesirable Answers

• How often do you drink alcoholic beverages in an average week: never, once or twice a week, three or four times a week, five or more times a week?

Reluctant Answers

• How much money did you personally earn in 2008?

Question Formats

• Closed-ended
  – “Which of the following issues was the most important for your vote decision today?”
    • A) The economy
    • B) Iraq war
    • C) Health care

• Open-ended
  – “What do you believe is the most important issue facing the U.S. today?”
    • Coding
Question Ordering

Administration: Formats

Administration: Interviewing
Summary

• Three parts to survey research
  – Sampling
  – Question Wording
  – Administration

• Surveys
  – Time bound
  – Average American opinion