

American Lung Association Tip Sheet: Data Collection Instruments

Instrument	Pros	Cons
<p>Mail Survey</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to obtain individual, written information within several days or weeks of program activity to obtain primarily closed-ended responses on a range of issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> time-efficient lower unit cost easy to implement less staff intensive good for sensitive topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> generally low response rates slow data collection few open-ended questions may require additional incentives literacy issues need to be addressed
<p>In-Person Written Survey</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to obtain immediate written, individual information to obtain primarily closed-ended responses on a range of issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> immediate responses less staff intensive good for sensitive topics specific written responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> people may rush to complete it at the end of a training, etc. literacy issues
<p>E-mail Survey</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to obtain individual, written information electronically almost immediately after program activity to obtain primarily closed-ended responses on a range of issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> time-efficient lower unit cost easy to implement less staff intensive electronic responses for easier data entry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> may not be option for all being surveyed possible low response rate few open-ended questions may require additional incentives literacy issues need to be addressed possible concerns about anonymity
<p>Face-to-Face Interview</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to have individual, open-ended discussion on a range of issues to obtain in-depth information on an individual basis about perceptions and concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> immediate responses high flexibility reach diverse populations high response rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not anonymous interviewee may alter responses to “please interviewer” relies on accuracy of interviewers’ recording of answers
<p>Telephone Survey</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to have individual conversations on a range of issues to obtain information on individual basis on both open- and closed-ended topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speed of data collection potential for high responses rates good for long or detailed answers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> role of interviewer in eliciting responses cost
<p>Focus Groups</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to have an open-ended group discussion on a range of issues to obtain in-depth information about perceptions and concerns from a group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gather information from several people at once individual responses can stimulate additional ideas from others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> individual responses influenced by group transcription can be expensive participants choose to attend and may not be representative of target population participants may give “politically correct” answers, due to group pressure harder to coordinate than individual interviews