

Sampling Design

ECO 230: Business Research and Communication

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Goals and Learning Objectives

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- Goals of this chapter:
 - Learn methods for obtaining samples from populations.
 - Learn biases that can occur when using non-probability approaches.
- Learning objectives:
 - LO2: Recognize and use the appropriate techniques to collect or use survey data to address a research problem.
 - LO2.C: Identify sources of respondent and administrative error and develop the ability to construct and administer a survey instrument that minimizes these errors.

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- Example: Every three months the Gallop poll attempts to discover the top financial concerns of households in the United States.
- Population: All U.S. households.
- Identifies top financial concerns in their sample, reports what percentage of households list each as one of their top concerns.
- With 95% confidence, report the percentages *for all U.S. households* within a 3% margin of error.
- Survey only 1000 households.
- Any doubters? Any concerns?

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Population Versus Sample

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- **Statistics:** the study of how to use data to answer interesting questions.
- **Population:** the complete collection of all elements to be studied.
- **Census:** collection of data that includes *every* member of the population.
- **Sample:** a collection of data from a subset of members from a population.
- **Statistics:** method of using *sample data* to make *statements or inferences* about a population.
 - Confidence intervals: statements concerning the degree of confidence and margin of error.
 - Hypothesis testing: using sample estimates and margins of errors to test statements *about the population*.

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Simple Random Sampling

- Sampling technique when *every member of the population* has an equal probability of being selected into a sample.
- Implies sample should be representative of population (on average, by random chance it may not be).
- Even with an infinitely large population, statistical theory can generate the accuracy seen in the Gallop poll in a sample as small as 1000 elements.

Potential Problems

- Did the sampling method truly allow all elements of the population an equal chance of being selected?
- Did the sampling method allow all subgroups a fair chance of being represented?
- All age groups? all racial and ethnic groups? all income groups?



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Sampling Frame

- Aka “working population,” list of elements from which a sample will be drawn.
- Example Population: UW-L undergraduate students.
- Sampling frame: E-mail directory of UW-L students constructed week before Fall 2017 semester.

Sampling frame error

- When sampling frame creates errors in generating samples.
- Some members of population are excluded from the sampling frame, or..
- Sampling frame includes members which are not part of the population, or..
- Sampling frame inadvertently alters the probabilities in which sample elements are chosen.



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Sampling Frame Error Examples

- UW-L Student Example:
 - Some people on the e-mail list may have dropped out of UW-L.
 - Some e-mail addresses may have a typo.
 - Some e-mail boxes may be full.
- Potential Voters for next election:
 - Sampling frame: voter registration database.
 - Some potential voters may not have registered yet.
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Multi-Stage Sampling

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- **Multi-stage sampling:** when the means of taking a sample is broken into stages
- Example: population = airline passengers
 - Stage 1: Select airline companies
 - Stage 2: Select major hub airports
 - Stage 3: Select dates to gather data
 - Stage 4: Select individual flights from each selected airline, airport, for a given date
 - Stage 5: Survey everyone on the selected flights
- **Sampling unit:** element or group of elements that is selected to a sample
 - Above example: airline flight
 - Simple random sampling: individual flier
- **Unit of observation:** the lowest level unit from which measurements are collected

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Random Sampling Error

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- Unbiased error
- Decreases with larger sample sizes
- Easy to estimate the size of the error
- We use the estimate of the error to construct confidence intervals, hypothesis tests

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- This bias is caused by the sampling frame.

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Examples of Systematic Error

- Mail surveys: it has been found that people with more education are more likely to fill out mail survey forms than people with less education.
 - End up with a sample with a higher average level of education than the population.
 - What if your outcome variable is related to education attainment?
 - Willingness to buy a product, financial concerns, etc.
- Telephone surveys:
 - Do those with unlisted numbers, or on “do-not-call lists” have shared characteristics related to the outcome?
 - Do people with only mobile phones have shared characteristics related to the outcome?

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- Mail surveys: it has been found that people with more education are more likely to fill out mail survey forms than people with less education.
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Probability vs Non-probability Sampling

- **Probability sampling:** a-priori, every member of the population has a known, non-zero, probability of being selected into the population.
- **Simple random sample:** probability sample where every member has an equal probability of being selected.
 - Suppose Gallop poll is a simple random sample. Sample size=1000. Population size=112,611,029.
 - Each household in population has a 0.000889% chance of being selected.
- **Non-probability sampling:** Sampling technique in which elements of a population are selected based on personal judgment or convenience.
 - Since probabilities are not known, cannot fully rely on statistical theory to make accurate confidence intervals, hypothesis tests.
 - Most of the time, researchers say "So what? I don't care."

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Convenience Sampling

Convenience sampling: sampling technique where most convenient elements are drawn from the population.

Examples

- Point of contact samples (grab people on their way into a store)
- Website visitor survey.
- Store receipt survey

Important to keep in mind: can you think of reasons for why a particular example can cause **systematic sampling bias**.

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- **Snowball sampling process:**

- ① Initial sample is selected,
- ② Then friends or contacts of the members in the initial sample are selected (or self-selected)
- ③ Then their friends or contacts are selected (or self-selected).
- ④ Repeat step 3 and watch your sample size snowball.

- Benefit: it may be very hard to find any members of very unique populations. Eg: harp players.

- Problems:

- Very non-random. Individuals in round i are likely to have similar characteristics as those in round $i - 1$.
- Often, every round of sampling is pure self-selection bias.

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