

Sampling

Dr. Paromita Chakraborty, Surendranath College

Sampling is a technique of selecting individual members or a subset of the population to make statistical inferences from them. Different sampling methods are widely used by researchers in market research so that they do not need to research the entire population to collect actionable insights.

It is also a time-convenient and a cost-effective method and hence forms the basis of any research design. For example, if a drug manufacturer would like to research the adverse side effects of a drug on the country's population, it is almost impossible to conduct a research study that involves everyone. In this case, the researcher decides a sample of people from each demographic and then researches them, giving him/her indicative feedback on the drug's behavior.

Types of sampling: sampling methods

Sampling in market research is of two types – probability sampling and non-probability sampling.

Probability sampling: Probability sampling is a sampling technique where a researcher sets a selection of a few criteria and chooses members of a population randomly. All the members have an equal opportunity to be a part of the sample with this selection parameter.

There are various types of probability sampling techniques:

Types of probability sampling

Simple random sampling: One of the best probability sampling techniques that helps in saving time and resources, is the Simple Random Sampling method. It is a reliable method of obtaining information where every single member of a population is chosen randomly, merely by chance. Each individual has the same probability of being chosen to be a part of a sample.

Cluster sampling: Cluster sampling is a method where the researchers divide the entire population into sections or clusters that represent a population. Clusters are identified and included in a sample based on demographic parameters like age, sex, location, etc. This makes it very simple for a survey creator to derive effective inference from the feedback.

Non-probability sampling

In non-probability sampling, the researcher chooses members for research at random. This sampling method is not a fixed or predefined selection process. This makes it difficult for all elements of a population to have equal opportunities to be included in a sample.

In most situations, the output of a survey conducted with a non-probable sample leads to skewed results, which may not represent the desired target population.

Types of non-probability sampling

Convenience sampling: This method is dependent on the ease of access to subjects such as surveying customers at a mall or passers-by on a busy street. It is usually termed as convenience sampling, because of the researcher's ease of carrying it out and getting in touch with the

subjects. Researchers have nearly no authority to select the sample elements, and it's purely done based on proximity. For example, startups and NGOs usually conduct convenience sampling at a mall to distribute leaflets of upcoming events or promotion of a cause – they do that by standing at the mall entrance and giving out pamphlets randomly.

Snowball sampling: Snowball sampling is a sampling method that researchers apply when the subjects are difficult to trace. For example, it will be extremely challenging to survey shelterless people or illegal immigrants. Still, researchers can contact people they might know or volunteers associated with the cause to get in touch with the people and collect information.

Uses of non-probability sampling

Create a hypothesis: Researchers use the non-probability sampling method to create an assumption when limited to no prior information is available. This method helps with the immediate return of data and builds a base for further research.

Budget and time constraints: The non-probability method when there are budget and time constraints, and some preliminary data must be collected. Since the survey design is not rigid, it is easier to pick respondents at random and have them take the survey or questionnaire.