Writing a Survey Report

Survey reports should explain the survey process and results in clear and simple terms, while providing enough technical detail to withstand critique from professionals. The report should include:

* Cover Page
* Abstract
* Summary
* Table of contents
* Purposes/Goals
* Methods and Results/Findings
* Discussion/Analysis
* Appendix (Tables and figures)
* Glossary of Terms
* Copy of all materials, including the questionnaire, which were distributed

**Cover Page** – Descriptive Title, date, list of organizations which cooperated in the process, and contact information for the organizers or authors.

**Abstract** – 150-250 words. Sample abstract:

*The City of Greenfield, working with University of Illinois Extension, conducted a survey of Hancock County residents. The online survey was open to participation during July, 2018. Of the 10,000 people living in Hancock County, 1000 responded to the survey. The purpose of the survey was to identify attitudes toward housing options and housing needs and preferences. The survey was share on high-traffic online platforms and public spaces throughout the county. Of those responding, 80% were satisfied with current housing options; 15% were unsatisfied; and 5% were neutral; with 75% of those satisfied identifying themselves as women. Younger people were less satisfied with housing options. Note that 68% of the responses were from females.*

**Summary –** 1-3 pages. The summary is a condensed version of the project’s purpose, methods, and results. Include information about the sponsoring organizations and people who worked on the project. Include tables listing major findings from the process.

*Sample table:*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Comparison between Men and Women on Satisfaction with Housing in Hancock County* | | |
| *Responses* | *Men (n= )* | *Women (n= )* |
| Satisfied with current housing |  |  |
| Satisfied with countywide housing options |  |  |

**Table of contents** – List all major sections of the report with page numbers.

**Purpose** – Describe why the survey was conducted, including the questions and decisions that the information is designed to address. Provide data to help decision-makers determine what to do, and describe how stakeholder needs and preferences were solicited and compiled.

**Methods and Findings** – How the survey was conducted and what survey data reveal. Describe:

Survey Type – telephone, mailed, online, face-to-face; and limitations of the survey type.

Questions – include the questionnaire, introductory letter, and all material distributed with the questionnaire.

Distribution – describe how were questionnaires were distributed/how questions were asked, and how responses were collected. If the project involved staff to administer questionnaires, explain how staff were trained and organized.

Design – describe how the questionnaire was developed and pilot tested. Describe the reliability of the method and limitations of the process.

Sample/Response rate/Limitations – describe how the population was defined, how the sample was selected, and the response rate. With the response rate, what are the limitations to drawing conclusions from the data? Describe any technical difficulties which were encountered, any accessibility issues, and other factors influencing the data collection process or response rate.

Findings – report the results of the survey. If the analysis is more than a simple count or frequency (percentages), use tables or graphs to depict results.

**Discussion/Analysis** – The discussion should connect the purpose with the results. Decide whether or not to use the data collected from the survey. If you have been asked to make a recommendation, plan, or program, use the data gathered. Otherwise, you may want to refrain from doing so because a survey is likely to be just one source of information that should be used to make a decision that impacts a community’s quality of life. Other sources include secondary data (i.e. census data), politics, religious beliefs, and other survey data. It is usually inappropriate for the surveyor or author to provide conclusions single-handedly.

**Report data by issue –** If the survey was designed to address one or more issues, the issue should be clearly described (including why the issue is important and how the issue was selected), then relevant data and resulting recommendations written immediately following the issue description.

**Appendix (Tables and Figures)** – List each table and figure with a title and page number.

**Glossary of Terms** – List and define all technical terms (e.g., cluster samples) and abbreviations (e.g., UIUC = University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign).