

Social Research – Definition and Types

Social Research: Definition

Social Research is a method used by social scientists and researchers to learn about people and societies so that they can design products/services that cater to various needs of the people. Different socio-economic groups belonging to different parts of a country think differently. Various aspects of human behaviour need to be addressed to understand their thoughts and feedback about the social world, which can be done using Social Research. Any topic can trigger social research – new feature, new market trend or an upgrade in old technology.

Social Research is conducted by following a systematic plan of action which includes qualitative and quantitative observation methods.

- Qualitative methods rely on direct communication with members of a market, observation, text analysis. The results of this method are focused more on being accurate rather than generalizing to the entire population.
- Quantitative methods use statistical analysis techniques to evaluate data collected via surveys, polls or questionnaires.

Social Research contains elements of both these methods to analyze a range of social occurrences such as an investigation of historical sites, census of the country, detailed analysis of research conducted to understand reasons for increased reports of molestation in the country etc.

A survey to monitor happiness in a respondent population is one of the most widely used applications of social research. The happiness survey template can be used by researchers and organizations to gauge how happy a respondent is and the things that can be done to increase happiness in that respondent.

Types of Social Research

There are four main types of Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Research, Primary and Secondary Research.

Qualitative Research is defined as a method to collect data via open-ended and conversational discussions. There are five main qualitative research methods - *ethnographic research, focus groups, one-on-one online interview, content analysis* and *case study research*. Usually, participants are not taken out of their ecosystem for qualitative data collection to gather information in real-time which helps in building trust. Researchers depend on multiple methods to gather qualitative data for complex issues.

Quantitative Research is an extremely informative source of data collection conducted via mediums such as surveys, polls, and questionnaires. The gathered data can be analyzed to conclude numerical or statistical results. There are four distinct quantitative research methods: *survey research, correlational research, causal-comparative research* and *experimental research*. This research is carried out on a sample that is representative of the target market usually using close-ended questions and data is presented in tables, charts, graphs etc.

For example, a survey can be conducted to understand climate change awareness among the general population. Such a survey will give in-depth information about people's perception about climate change and also the behaviours that impact positive behaviour. Such a questionnaire will enable the researcher to understand what needs to be done to create more awareness among the public.

Primary Research is conducted by the researchers themselves. There is a list of questions that a researcher intends to ask which need to be customized according to the target market. These questions are sent to the respondents via surveys, polls or questionnaires so that analyzing them becomes convenient for the researcher. Since data is collected first-hand, it's highly accurate according to the requirement of research.

For example: There are tens of thousands of deaths and injuries related to gun violence in the United States. We keep hearing about people carrying weapons attacking general public in the news. There is quite a debate in the American public as to understand if possession of guns is the cause to this. Institutions related to public health or governmental organizations are carrying out studies to find the cause. A lot of policies are also influenced by the opinion of the general population and gun control policies are no different. Hence a gun control questionnaire can be carried out to gather data to understand what people think about gun violence, gun control, factors and effects of possession of firearms. Such a survey can help these institutions to make valid reforms on the basis of the data gathered.

Secondary Research is a method where information has already been collected by research organizations or marketers. Newspapers, online communities, reports, audio-visual evidence etc. fall under the category of secondary data. After identifying the topic of research and research sources, a researcher can collect existing information available from the noted sources. They can then combine all the information to compare and analyze it to derive conclusions.