

Key decisions about social research

When undertaking research you should feel confident about answering 'yes' to the following questions:



Issue

Factors to be considered

Relevance

Does it really matter whether the research takes place?

- Does the research have significance in relation to some practical or theoretical issue?
- Will the research build upon existing knowledge about the topic?

Feasibility

Can it be done?

- Is there sufficient time for the design of the research, collection of data and analysis of results?
- Will the resources be available to cover the costs of the research (e.g. travel, printing)?
- Will it be possible and practical to gain access to necessary data (people, events, documents)?

Coverage

Are the right things included?

- Will an adequate number and suitable diversity of people, events, etc. be included?
- Will it be reasonable to make generalizations on the basis of the data collected?
- Is it likely that there will be an adequate response rate?

Accuracy

Will the research produce true and honest findings?

- Will the data be precise and detailed?
- Are respondents likely to give full and honest answers?
- Will the investigation manage to focus on the most vital issues?

Objectivity

What chance is there that the research will provide a fair and balanced picture?

- Can I avoid being biased because of my personal values, beliefs and background?
- Will the research be approached with an open mind about what the findings might show?
- Am I prepared to recognize the limitations of the research approach that is adopted?

Ethics

What about the rights and feelings of those affected by the research?

- Can I avoid any deception or misrepresentation in my dealings with the research subjects?
- Will the identities and the interests of those involved be protected?
- Can I guarantee the confidentiality of the information given to me during the research?