

GESIS Survey Guidelines

Version 2.1

Mannheim, April 2019

GESIS Survey Guidelines

In its research and service activities, GESIS addresses methods of social science survey research. The staff are acknowledged experts in different areas of survey design, sampling, and data collection. One of GESIS' key offerings to the social science research community is an advisory service for scientists on methodological aspects of the organisation and implementation of survey projects. The web offering GESIS Survey Guidelines presents the main topics of GESIS' advisory service in the form of contributions that address certain methodological aspects of the implementation of surveys or topics on which written documentation is frequently requested during individual consultations. As GESIS provides research-based services, the contributions reflect the state of the art in survey design methodology. The GESIS Survey Guidelines are regularly assessed and updated to take new developments in research into account.

The organisation of the GESIS Survey Guidelines follows the "Total Survey Error" approach (Groves et al. 2009),¹ which is a conceptual framework for describing the quality of survey data (Figure 1).

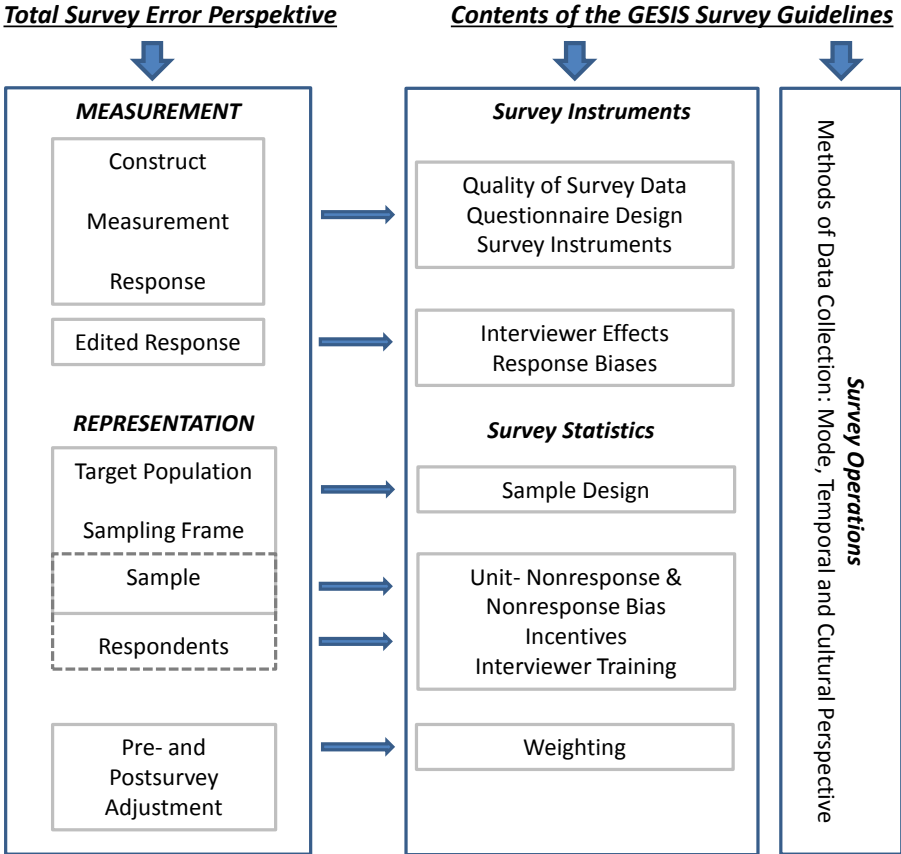


Figure 1. Contents of the Survey Guidelines following the Total Survey Error approach proposed by Groves et al. (2009)

In the context of the Total Survey Error approach, the term *measurement* refers to the extent to which substantiated statements about the issues of interest are possible on the basis of survey data (Figure 1). The "Survey Instruments" section of the GESIS Survey Guidelines comprises contributions on methods for assuring the quality of measurement instruments – for example, cognitive pretesting and methods for assessing the reliability of instruments. Another relevant aspect of measurement that is addressed

¹ Groves, R. M., Fowler, F. J., Couper, M. P., Lepkowski, J. M., Singer, E., & Tourangeau, R. (2009). *Survey Methodology*. 2nd edition, John Wiley & Sons: Hoboken, New Jersey.

is questionnaire design. The contributions on this topic deal with question wording, response formats, response biases, and specific characteristics of questionnaire construction in cross-culturally comparative surveys. And finally, in the measurement context it is important to enable researchers to access tried-and-tested measurement instruments and to address the surveying of issues that are of relevance to the social sciences. Accordingly, the "Survey Instruments" section presents ways of searching for existing instruments for the measurement of social science concepts in the GESIS handbook of items and questions, ZIS (Handbook of Social Science Items and Scales).

In the context of the Total Survey Error approach, *representation* refers to the quality of the realised sample, which should enable the results to be generalised as accurately as possible to the target population (Figure 1). The "Survey Statistics" section of the GESIS Survey Guidelines deals, for example, with sample design and methods of data weighting. Other contributions to this section address nonresponse bias, incentives, and interviewer training. The focus here is on increasing the willingness of target persons to participate in the survey and on possible biases as a result of non-participation.

When conducting surveys, numerous decisions must be made that influence both the quality of measurement and the quality of representation. The contributions to the "Survey Operations" section of the GESIS Survey Guidelines describe what must be taken into account when planning and implementing surveys in different data collection modes (Figure 1). The current contributions address face-to-face, postal, and online surveys, and, as one aspect of longitudinal investigations, panel studies.

You can access the contents of the "Survey Operations," "Survey Instruments," and "Survey Statistics" sections of the GESIS Survey Guidelines via the upper menu bar of the website. Via alphabetically ordered keywords, the glossary provides a further access route to the individual contributions. The website is updated at regular intervals and substantively extended in a demand-oriented way.

If you have any questions regarding the GESIS Survey Guidelines website, please contact surveyguidelines@gesis.org.

Editor and Publisher

Editor

GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences
B2, 1, 68159 Mannheim
Germany
www.gesis.org

Editors

Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Henning Silber (Survey Operations)
Associate Editors: Jessica Daikeler
Dr. Tobias Heycke
Dr. Cornelia Neuert
Angelika Stiegler

Website

The GESIS Survey Guidelines web address is <http://www.gesis.org/gesis-survey-guidelines>. There, the individual contributions to the GESIS Survey Guidelines can be downloaded free of charge.

Referencing

Each contribution is registered with the Registration Agency for Social Economic Data (da|ra) and assigned a digital object identifier (DOI). Moreover, each contribution is recorded in the Social Science Open Access Repository (SSOAR).

Review Process

Each contribution to the GESIS Survey Guidelines has undergone peer review.

Licence

The GESIS Survey Guidelines are provided under the terms of a *Creative Commons – Attribution, Non-Commercial 4.0 licence (CC BY-NC)*. This licence allows users to reproduce, distribute, and publicly perform the work under the following conditions: The author or the editor must be named. The content may not be used for commercial purposes. Moreover, the work may not be altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

Citation of the Contributions

A citation format is specified for each contribution, which includes the DOI.