

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING COGNITIVE INTERVIEWING STUDIES

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Standards for Federal Statistical Programs

- Document the principles and practices Federal agencies are required to adhere to
 - Level of quality and expected effort
- Present best practices to fill the goals of the standards
- Ensures that data users are provided details on the methods employed by cognitive interviewing studies
 - design, conduct, analysis, and reporting of cognitive interviewing studies

Standards are not...

- Intended to substitute extensive literature
 - Agency should engage knowledgeable and experienced practitioners
 - Survey design and methodology
 - Cognitive interviewing methods
 - Qualitative research methodology
- Fixed, Timeless
 - Agencies are encouraged to conduct empirical research to strengthen guidelines

Standards and Guidelines

- *Standards*: Denotes a methodological requirement necessary for the study to be considered accurate and trustworthy
- *Guidelines*: Intended as best practices in how to interpret and fulfill the standards
 - (Not intended as necessities or requirements)

Standards for Cognitive Interviewing Studies

Standard 1: Methodological plan

Standard 2: Sample

Standard 3: Protocol for interview

Standard 4: Analysis

Standard 5: Transparency

Standard 6: Reporting

Standard 7: Public accessibility

Standard 1

A methodological plan must be developed prior to conducting a cognitive interviewing study.

This includes (but is not limited to) articulation of:

- study objective
- sampling plan
- recruitment of respondents
- location of interviews
- development of an interview guide
- type of analysis to be conducted

Standard 2

Sample selection for a cognitive interviewing study must be done in a purposeful way to ensure that the respondents have the characteristics necessary to provide data required to meet the study objectives.

Guidelines:

2a. Sample Size

2b. Sample Characteristics

2c. Recruitment Plan

Standard 3

An interview protocol is required and must be designed to collect the processes by which a respondent interprets and responds to a question as well as any difficulties experienced by a respondent in providing an answer....

Guidelines:

3a. Iterative Process

3b. Interviewer as analyst

3c. Mode and context effects

Standard 4

The data produced must undergo a systematic analysis. A systematic analysis ensures that no particular case is overemphasized and that findings represent the full range of responses....

Guidelines:

4a. Empirical evidence

4b. Process for conducting analysis

Standard 5

Analysis of cognitive interviews must be transparent such that study findings can be traced to original data collected in the cognitive interviews.

The analytic process should be transparent so that an outsider can understand and assess the legitimacy of study findings. Each step in the analytic process must be documented in a clear and accessible way, such that the findings can be traced directly back to the raw data. The level of detail at which the analytic process is described must be such that an outside researcher could replicate the analysis.

By making analytic processes transparent, readers can understand, cross-examine and judge the quality of the cognitive interview data as well as the way in which the analysis was conducted. Transparency allows the reader to trust the findings and their reputability.

Guidelines:

5a. Audit trail and Maintenance of raw data

Standard 6

The methods used, results obtained, and conclusions drawn must be documented in a final report.

Complete reporting improves both the rigor and the credibility of a study, maximizes the transparency of the analyses, and is essential for evaluating study quality. A final report offers clear and conceptually adequate descriptions of all aspects of the study and its execution.

Guidelines:

6a. Issues addressed in report

6b. Contents of a report

Standard 7

Final reports must be made available to the public if cognitive study results are referenced in publications or data collection documentation.

Guidelines:

7a. How to make accessible