

Five impacts of a long survey



Lydia McKay
Research Executive



More questions, more insight - *right?*

Perhaps – but survey length can be an important balancing act.

Too few questions and the objectives may not be met, but too many – and everything from respondent experience to data quality can be impacted.

Here are five key impacts of long surveys...

#1

Respondent fatigue

The lessening engagement of respondents as the survey progresses can lead to less thoughtful answers to latter questions.

It can stem from a range of questionnaire design flaws, including dense question text and over-use of open-text questions, however arguably the biggest is the long questionnaire.

#2

Declining data quality

The impact of longer surveys and respondent fatigue can be seen in the data in a number of tangible ways; most notably, less variance of answers in grids (known as “straight lining”) and shorter answers to open-text questions as the survey progresses.

#3

Slower fieldwork

For those who do brave the long survey, high fatigue can lead to attrition (respondents abandoning surveys part-way through) slowing fieldwork progress.

#4

Bias

This occurs when potential respondents who refuse to take part, or who drop out before completion, are fundamentally 'different' in characteristics from those who choose to participate. Respondents deterred by a long survey may introduce this kind of bias into your data.

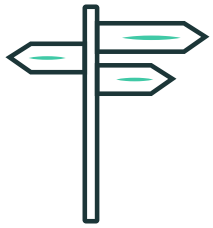
#5

Cost

Long questionnaires can also have a financial implication, both at the design stage with research agencies, and at the fieldwork stage with sample suppliers. Respondents will need to be rewarded with higher incentives for their time, and this is typically reflected in an increased cost per interview.

How can we mitigate against these impacts?

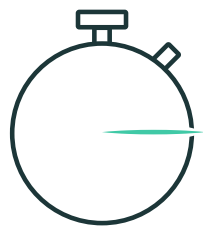
Here are some recommendations...



To reduce respondent fatigue, aim to **keep respondents engaged by varying question types and styles**



Reduce non-response bias by **making surveys device-agnostic, and (cost-permitting), incentivising well**



Minimise labour-intensive questions such as open-texts and grids, and where possible **use them earlier in the survey**

Awaken your insights.

**Whatever your research goals -
from content marketing to brand
awareness, message testing to
market insight - we can help you
design a survey that delivers.**

Talk to us today.

enquiries@vansonbourne.com

