**What are Likert scales?**

Different types of rating scales are used in surveys to collect and understand respondent attitudes. They allow respondents to express how much they agree or disagree with a particular statement. In addition to measuring statements of agreement, Likert scales can measure other variations such as frequency, quality, importance, and likelihood, etc.

Scales tend to be easily understood, efficient to administer and enable comparisons between the attributes measured.

If you have any questions, please contact [research@essex.gov.uk](mailto:research@essex.gov.uk)

 **LIKERT-TYPE RESPONSE SCALES**

**What number of scale points should I use?**

We recommend using between five and seven points. The number to use depends on the level of detail you need, but research shows that data becomes significantly less accurate when the number of scale points is below five or above seven. Five has become the norm as it strikes a compromise between the conflicting goals of offering enough choice and making this manageable for respondents (Johns, 2010). Ideally, customer satisfaction should be explored using a 7-point scale (with a neutral midpoint), as it can spread the scores across a wide range. 5-point scales can skew results towards the positive.

**Should I use a neutral (midpoint) option?**

A neutral option avoids forcing respondents into expressing agreement or disagreement when they may lack a clear opinion (and thus decreasing data quality). Midpoint labels are typically compatible both with ambivalence (i.e. definite but mixed feelings) and indifference (i.e. no particular feeling about a statement). Including it is often standard practice. The decision whether to include or exclude a neutral option should be based on the particular question and topic matter. Majority of examples below include neutral options. Some people may use the neutral to avoid reporting what they see as less socially acceptable answers; therefore, questions on more controversial topics may capture more accurate public opinion if the neutral option is avoided (and perhaps offering ‘don’t know’).

**Should I include a ‘don’t know’ option?**

People often lack clear views but can be reluctant to use a genuine non-response option like ‘don’t know’. However, this can be a very valid answer in scenarios when the respondent genuinely does not know the answer or if they are asked to think back. However, where a ‘don’t know’ option is offered, consider whether it duplicates a potential midpoint and then decide whether to include both or just one. ‘Not applicable’ option may be more suitable. If exploring the likelihood of doing something in the future, a neutral as well as ‘don’t know’ options should be included.

**Should the scale I use be balanced?**

Balanced scales are the preferred option as it minimises bias. However, unbalanced scales can be justified where it is knows that the response will be overwhelmingly in one direction and more categories may be given in that direction to achieve better discrimination (see ‘satisfaction’ scale examples below).

**Should I label all response options?**

Fully label all options to increase the chance that the meaning of scale points will be interpreted identically by all respondents. Semantic scales (i.e. labelled) deliver much higher quality of data, rather than when verbal labels are used only on the extreme points of an otherwise numerical scale.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Recommended option** |  |
| 1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Somewhat disagree 4. Neither agree or disagree 5. Somewhat agree 6. Agree 7. Strongly agree | 1. Strongly disagree 2. Strongly agree |

**How should I analyse the responses?**

For analysis, you would often group the two negative options together (e.g. ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘disagree’) and do the same for positive (e.g. ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’). This applies to a 5 point as well as a 7 point scale. However, if for example a particularly large proportion of respondents ‘strongly disagreed’, you would report on this separately. Always look at your data!

Also keep in mind that while the response categories in Likert scales have a rank order, the intervals between values cannot be presumed equal (Likert scale is ordinal rather than interval). Therefore, the mean (and standard deviation) are inappropriate. Instead, you can use a median or a mode; the mode is probably the most suitable for easy interpretation. Display the distribution of observations in a bar chart. (McLeod, 2019).

 **LIKERT-TYPE RESPONSE SCALES**

 **LIKERT-TYPE RESPONSE SCALES**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Agreement** | | |
| * Strongly disagree * Disagree * Neither agree or disagree   (OR Neutral)  (OR Undecided)   * Agree * Strongly agree | * Strongly disagree * Disagree * Somewhat disagree * Neither agree or disagree * Somewhat agree * Agree * Strongly agree | The 7-point scale has the benefit of giving you more detail. For the work done at ECC, it offers the least biased option. It shows a clear decision by the respondent, whereas the middle three options can be selected by those undecided or who may change their mind. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Satisfaction** | | |
| * Very dissatisfied * Dissatisfied * Unsure   (OR Neither satisfied or dissatisfied)   * Satisfied * Very satisfied | * Very dissatisfied * Slightly dissatisfied * Slightly satisfied * Very satisfied * Delighted   (1) | * Dissatisfied * Slightly dissatisfied * Slightly satisfied * Satisfied * Extremely satisfied |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Quality** | | |
| * Very poor * Poor * Average (OR OK) (2) * Good * Excellent | * Very bad * Bad * Average * Good * Very good | * Poor * Average * Good * Very good (OR Excellent) |



Source: https://www.formpl.us/blog/likert-scale-template

**Notes**

**Do I need to use only the scales used in this example?**

No, however the examples have been carefully selected.

Precise wording of the scales can very, provided that the response options cover a dimension from negative to positive. Terms such as ‘extremely’ can be swapped for ‘very’, ‘somewhat’ for ‘moderately’.

Be consistent in the scales you use – within your survey, as well as other data sources you may wish to compare your data to.

(1) Scale used by IpsosMORI; ‘delighted’ and ‘very satisfied’ capture actual excellent experiences.

‘Slightly satisfied’ captures the standard experiences.

(2) ‘Fair’ has too many positive connotations – we recommend using ‘average’ or ‘ok’ instead

You may wish to use a visual scale, too.

 **LIKERT-TYPE RESPONSE SCALES**

**Notes**



(4) Better suited when you are interested in the extremes, i.e. ‘never’ and ‘always’

(5) Better suited when you are interested in the extremes, i.e. ‘never’ and ‘always’.

(6) More sensitive as it does not have the same extremes

(7) You may wish to be more specific by giving more time-bound options.

Make these relevant to your question.

(8) ‘Somewhat’ and ‘moderately’ are very similar, but we suggest using ‘somewhat’.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Frequency / Occurrences** | | |
| * Never * Rarely * Sometimes * Often * Always   (4) | * Never * Rarely * Sometimes * Often * Always   (5) | * Hardly ever * Occasionally * Sometimes * Frequently * Almost always   (6) |
| * Daily * 2 – 3 times per week * Weekly * Fortnightly * Monthly * Every 2 – 3 months * 6 months – 1 year | (7) | |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Satisfaction** | | |
| * Extremely unlikely * Unlikely * Neutral   (OR Don’t know)  (OR Possibly)   * Likely * Extremely likely | * Extremely unlikely * Very unlikely * Quite unlikely * Neither likely or unlikely * Quite likely * Very likely * Extremely likely | * Definitely not * Probably not * Might or might not * Probably * Definitely |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Difficulty** | **Effectiveness (3)** | **Importance** |
| * Very difficult * Difficult * Neutral (OR Neither easy or difficult) * Easy * Very easy | * Very ineffective * Ineffective * Average * Effective * Very effective | * Not at all important * Slightly important * Moderately important   (OR Somewhat important)   * Very important * Extremely important   (8) |

**Notes**



(9) The question could be phrased as: ‘Which one of the following best describes x/service x?’

(10) ‘Awareness’ is binary– either you know about something, or you don’t. Create your own options, relevant to your example. You may wish to use the following for inspiration:

**Sources**



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|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Concern** | **How true …** | **Priority level** |
| * Not at all concerned * Somewhat unconcerned   (OR Slightly unconcerned)   * Somewhat concerned   (OR Slightly concerned)   * Concerned * Extremely concerned | * Almost never true * Usually not true * Occasionally true * Usually true * Almost always true   (9) | * Not a priority * Low priority * Medium priority * High priority * Essential |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Concern** | **How true …** | **Understanding/ clarity** |
| (10) | |
| How much do you know about…’   * I have never heard of it * I know a little * I know a lot | Have you ever heard about…’   * No, I have never heard of it * Yes, but I have not used it * Yes, and I have used it | * Very clear * Clear * Somewhat clear * Not clear * Not at all clear |

 **LIKERT-TYPE RESPONSE SCALES**