

When surveying a random sample of people (for example, people at a shopping mall) follow these tips:

- Avoid approaching people who are engaged in an activity or are obviously in a hurry.
- Make the survey as brief as possible to ensure minimum disruption to the people being interviewed. Restrict it to a minute or two.
- Ensure the sample of people is broad enough to include a representative cross-section.

## Sample Geography fieldwork surveys

### Pedestrian traffic surveys

Pedestrian traffic surveys are surveys conducted in urban areas to determine the extent to which pedestrian movements vary over time and in different parts of the urban area. We might, for example, be interested in finding out how pedestrian flows vary according to the time of day, prevailing weather conditions, day of the week, location and season.

Such surveys involve counting the number of people passing selected points over a predetermined period of time. The data collected can be presented in a graphical form; for example, as line, column or pie graphs.

The same method can be applied to motor vehicle traffic surveys.

### Space–time surveys

Space–time surveys involve tracking people’s movements over a period of time; for example, one week. The data gathered will allow the researcher to compare the mobility or activity patterns of different groups or individuals. They also provide an insight into the factors affecting people’s behaviour. Such factors may include income, age, physical mobility, interests, family size and cultural factors, such as ethnicity.

Asking participants to keep a diary of their travels is one way of collecting the necessary data. This can then be mapped and the travel patterns of different individuals and/or groups compared.

### Recreational surveys

Recreational surveys involve collecting information about people’s recreational activities. Recreational activities can be classified as active or passive, indoor or outdoor, formal or informal, and high impact or low impact. This type of survey can be used to gather information about the frequency of recreational facility use and variations in facility use according to the time of day, season and weather conditions. Data that allow users to be classified by age and gender can also be obtained.

### Judgment surveys

All people have attitudes, values and opinions. These play an important role in the judgments they make. In some instances, it is possible to have people attach a numerical value to a particular proposition. We might, for example, use a Likert scale to gauge the strength of people’s opinions on particular issues. A Likert scale is a type of response format used in surveys to measure attitudes, preferences and subjective reactions. Developed by Rensis Likert, the scale features items that have responses on a continuum; for example, from ‘strongly agree’, through to ‘agree’, ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’.

## Perspective surveys

A perspective is a way of viewing the world. It is a point of view. A person's perspective on an issue is shaped by a range of factors, including their age, gender, cultural background, ethnicity, education, socioeconomic status, peer group influences and the environment. On any one issue there are likely to be a range of perspectives. Surveys can be used to identify the range of perspectives held by a community on a particular issue. The data gathered in this way help to enrich the researcher's understanding of the issue.

Perspective surveys often involve a quality assessment of particular criteria. Often, the findings of such surveys result in rather crude, subjective findings that are difficult to substantiate. The validity of such surveys can be enhanced if you follow these guidelines:

- Use a good mix of criteria.
- Use **weightings** to ensure the most important criteria receive the attention they deserve.
- Endeavour to be as objective as possible when scoring criteria-based responses. These are responses that are influenced by the criteria used in the survey. Ensure you do not emphasise the findings that reflect your biases.

A sample perspective survey is provided in [1.12]. In this survey, you would average the scores arrived at by the different participants. This would allow you to use the findings to compare, and perhaps rank, different suburban areas.

[1.12] Sample perspective survey

### Perspectives of environmental amenity in a specific suburban setting

Evaluate the amenity of the built urban environment using the numerical scale provided

Criteria	Score						
	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3
<b>Streetscapes: built environment</b>							
Quality of housing: building design, level of maintenance, etc.							
Presence/absence of litter and graffiti							
Street plantings and nature strips (footpaths)							
<b>Public spaces</b>							
Extent of open space							
Level of access							
Variety of recreational facilities							
Maintenance of gardens and recreational facilities							
<b>Public infrastructure</b>							
Provision of facilities: footpaths, bus shelters, street furniture, landscaping, etc							
Schools and childcare centres							
Roads: congestion, noise, safety, parking, etc.							
<b>Amenity</b>							
Proximity to shops and other services							
Public transport accessibility							

#### weighting

the awarding of extra value to specific items

#### amenity

the characteristics of a place that make it comfortable and attractive to users



## Acknowledgements

Australian Geography Teachers Association. (2008). *Keys to Fieldwork*. Macmillan Education Australia. 14–15. Reproduced by permission of Macmillan Education Australia.