PILOT STUDY



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Start small. Improve before you scale.

A pilot study is a preliminary check before the main study.

THE PRE-TEST



PLAN → TEST → REFINE

A preliminary study

Conducted on a small sample before the main study to identify potential issues that may affect the findings.

Review the questionnaire

Review question wording and gather information from open-ended questions so multiple-choice response formats can be designed for the final questionnaire.

Select respondents randomly

Pilot respondents should be selected randomly, not through "convenience sampling".

What the pilot study checks

Use a small-scale rehearsal to detect issues and refine the instrument before launch.



SIMILAR SAMPLE → FIX ISSUES

Respondents resemble the actual study

Conduct the pilot with respondents who resemble those in the actual study.

Detect weaknesses in questioning

Find weaknesses in the questions and correct them before the main survey.

Revise to reduce response errors

Revisions can help maximise the response rate and minimise response errors.

Check item reliability

The pilot study is intended to determine the reliability of the items only.

Additional benefits of a pilot study

The pilot can also surface practical, measurement, and fieldwork issues.

01
Provides information on possible ethical issues that may have been overlooked.

02
Helps determine whether questionnaire items are appropriate.

03
Determines whether the level of measurement is appropriate for the selected variables.

04
Provides a check that the population has been properly defined.

05
Provides information on the feasibility and suitability of the sampling method.

06
Helps determine the sample size.

07
Provides additional training for interviewers, instrument administrators, testers, coders, and data editors.

08
Helps determine the length of the questionnaire.

These are additional checks to consider during questionnaire development and pilot administration.

Number of respondents for the pilot study

The recommended minimum depends on whether you plan to reduce the questionnaire items.

ITEM REDUCTION

Factor Analysis

If the aim is to reduce the number of questionnaire items, Factor Analysis is recommended.

Do not select specific items from the original set without conducting a systematic analysis.

100 respondents

minimum sample size

RELIABILITY TESTING ONLY

No reduction of items

If the researcher is only conducting reliability testing without reducing the number of items, use the recommendation below.

The item count remains unchanged; the pilot is focused on reliability testing.

30 respondents

minimum sample size

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Thank you