

SAMPLE TYPES & DEFINITIONS

In market research the participants in a given study are only a sample, or small group, of the population we are trying to understand. You can gather different types of samples depending on what your research requires. Below are sample types and examples.

PROBABILITY SAMPLE

TERM	DEFINITION
Probability Sample	A probability sample includes individuals that are selected knowing their probability of selection. Another way to think of it is all who could be in the sample have the same probability of being selected. These samples are more representative, but more difficult to obtain due to cost and convenience. Also called random samples.
Types of Probability Samples	
Simple Random Sample	Also known as probability sampling, where participants are chosen at random from the entire population of interest in order to accurately represent the population of interest.
Stratified Sample	A type of probability sampling, a stratified sample takes a sample of each subpopulation (stratum) within the overall population of interest. For example, in a statewide survey, you may randomly select participants within each county (with the counties serving as strata). The number of participants from each county will match the proportion of each county within the state.
Cluster Sampling	This type of probability sampling groups the desired population into clusters and the researcher randomly selects participants from each cluster. For example, we are interested in studying high school teachers in the state of Illinois, with each school being a cluster. The schools are then randomly sampled instead of selecting individual teachers.

NON-PROBABILITY SAMPLE

TERM	DEFINITION
Non-Probability Sample	Individuals are selected without knowing their probabilities of selection. Another way to think of it is as: all who could be in the sample do not have the same probability of being selected. Non-probability sampling may be more convenient and less expensive than probability sampling but leaves the potential for selection bias which can create a lack of accuracy.

Types of Non-Probability Samples

Convenience Sample

Convenience sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling that selects participants who are conveniently available. This sample is easy to get but makes it difficult to know if the data is skewed or by how much.

For example, in consumer research, doing a survey of people who filled out product registration forms would be a convenience sample.

Judgment Sample

In this type of nonprobability sampling, the researcher selects participants based on the idea that their characteristics (e.g., demographics/attitudes/behavior) represent the desired population.

For example, if we are interested in people who shop at stores selling beauty products, a judgment sample might sample women between the ages of 18-30 years old.

Quota Sample

This type of nonprobability sampling is similar to Stratified Sampling but uses judgment to determine the number of respondents from each stratum.

For example, we might choose to have quotas from a population of 50% female and 50% male to be 200 females and 100 males. One reason to have a larger quota of females is to enable more reliable analysis among subgroups of females.

Volunteer Sample

Another common type of nonprobability sampling, a volunteer sample relies on individuals who volunteer to participate. This has the potential to return skewed data.

For example, a link to a survey at the bottom of a sales receipt generates a volunteer sample. Though every customer has the potential to participate in the survey, only customers who choose to participate become part of the sample.