

Sampling

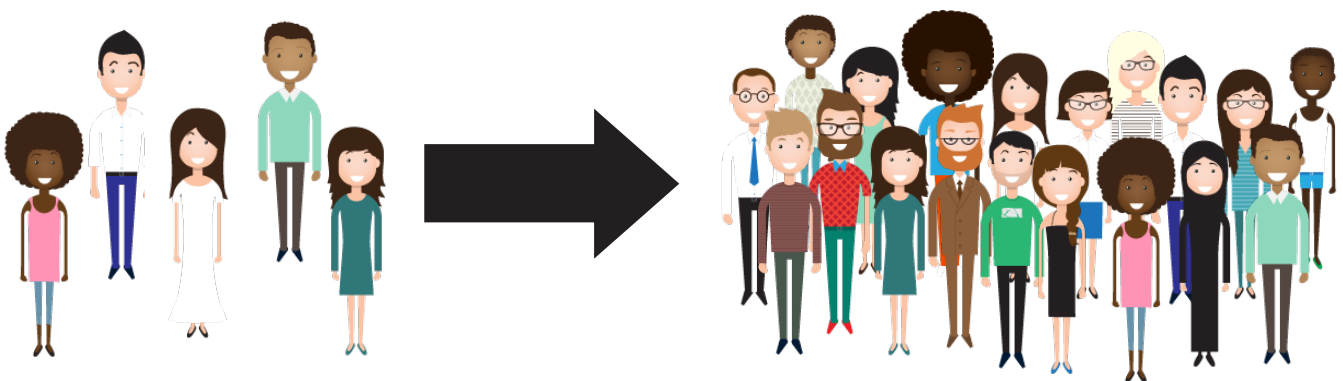
What is sampling?

When we carry out research we need people to take part. However, sociologists do not have the time or money to study everyone in the population. The population is the group of people from whom the sample is drawn. For example, unmarried mothers living in Leeds. However, the findings of such a study can only be applied to that group of people and not all unmarried mothers in the UK and certainly not all mothers in the world.



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As it is not possible to include everyone in the target population, a sociologist must use a sampling technique to choose people who are representative (typical) of the population as a whole.



If your sample is representative, you can generalise the results of your study to the wider population.

Sampling

Types of sampling

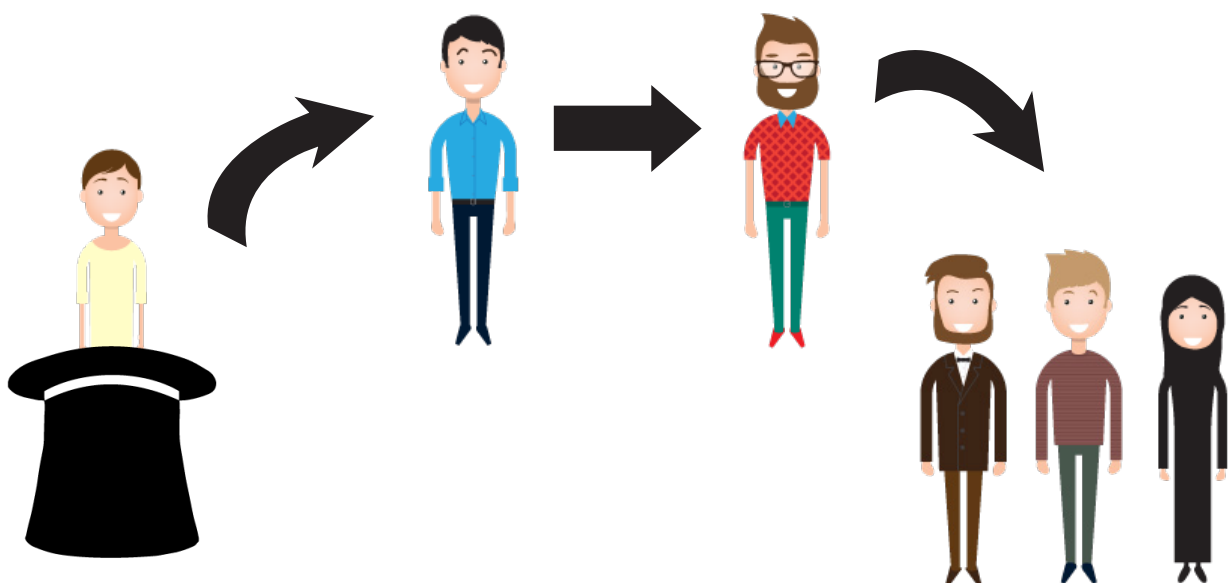
Opportunity

Opportunity sampling consists of taking the sample from people who are available at the time the study is carried out and who fit the criteria you are looking for. For example, if a teacher wanted to do research with sixth formers they may wander into the common room and use whoever is available.



Random

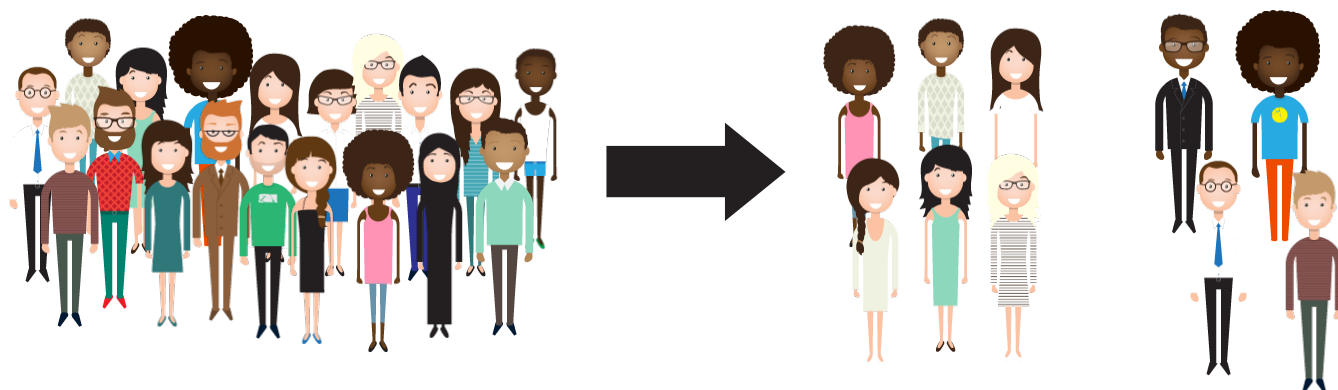
This refers to every unit in the population being studied having an equal chance of being chosen. The names of every one in the group (usually in one area) are entered into a computer and then the numbers required are picked at random. However, in order to do this, a sampling frame is needed (a list of people in the group under study).



Sampling

Stratified

Stratified sampling is a more sophisticated version of random sampling. By chance, random sampling could throw up a list of all boys. To make sure this does not happen, the researcher would divide his/her sampling frame into a separate list of boys and girls and then random sample from these.



If the population is made up of 60% of women and 40% of men...



...Your sample should contain 60% of women and 40% of men.

Volunteer (self-selected)

Self-selected sampling (or volunteer sampling) consists of people becoming part of a study because they volunteer when asked or in response to an advert.



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Sampling techniques

For each example, state the sample technique used.

Example 1	Example 2	Example 3
<p>A researcher wishes to study gender socialisation in children aged between 5 and 11. He contacted his local primary school and arranged to observe the children in the school.</p>	<p>A university department undertook a study of mobile phone use in adolescents, using a questionnaire. The questionnaire was given to a group of students in a local comprehensive school, selected by placing all the students' names in a container and drawing out 50 names.</p>	<p>A class of sociology students conduct a study on canteen facilities within the school. They put a notice in the sixth form common room asking for participants who have an hour to spare.</p>
<p>Sampling technique:</p>	<p>Sampling technique:</p>	<p>Sampling technique:</p>

Knowledge check questions

1. What is meant by sampling?

2. Why do sociologists sample?

3. What are sociologists trying to achieve when sampling?