

Sociologists use three main methods when carrying out research. These are participant observation, unstructured interviews and questionnaires. Each method is associated with its own
..... and weaknesses.

Participant observation is where a researcher people. It can be
..... where the group are aware they are being watched or where the group
are unaware. If the group know they are being watched they may their behaviour.
However, if the group do not know they are being watched it is seen as as they are
being deceived. One of the main strengths of participant observation is that it is high in
..... This is because the researcher is able to observe people in their natural setting and see life how it
is actually lived. It is particularly useful when researching groups. A weakness of
participant observation is that it is not This is because it involves small samples
and takes a long time. Therefore it would be difficult for another sociologist to repeat and get the same
results.

Another method used by sociologists is the unstructured interview. This is described as being like an open-
ended informal chat or The researcher encourages the respondent to talk in depth
and freely about their opinions and views. This enables the collection of data. For
this reason the method is seen as being high in validity. This method is also useful when exploring
..... issues. However, like participant observation, such interviews can take a long time and
include small samples. Therefore the method is not reliable and will be unique to the respondents so not
..... to others.

The final method used by sociologists is the questionnaire. This method collects mainly data through questions. This method is reliable as it is easily repeatable by other sociologists and all respondents answer the exact same questions. The method is also quick and cheap so large samples can be included. This makes the method more Questionnaires are not usually as they do not explore issues in detail, however this can be addressed by including some questions. Often a study will be carried out first on a small number of people to test the questions.

Sociologists conduct research on a carefully selected This is to ensure that their findings can be representative of the target population and generalizable to it. One technique they use is the sample. This is where everyone in the population has an equal chance of being selected for research. Sometimes sociologists will select a sample for convenience, this is referred to as sampling.

Sometimes sociologists will choose not to carry out any new research and instead use existing data. This is known as data, as opposed to data. These sources can be such as the official statistics, or qualitative which can include or diaries.

opportunity / strengths / watches / overt / letters / unethical / validity
 / conversation / deviant / valid / qualitative secondary / change /
 quantitative / closed / sensitive / representative / reliable / open / pilot
 / sample / random / covert / quantitative / generalizable / primary