# Qualitative Data Toolkit: Advantages and Disadvantages of Sampling Techniques

## Probability Sampling - Every person in a group has the same chance of being chosen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Simple Random     | Random sample from whole population in which every individual has an equal chance of being selected. | • High degree of representativeness if all subjects participate as long as there is limited missing data.  
• Make generalizations from the sample to the population.  
• Reduces bias.                                                                 | • Time and resources consuming.  
• Not possible without complete list of population members.  
• Must ensure that an adequate proportion of the sample participates. |
| Systematic Random | Variation of simple random in which participants are selected in an ordered way (e.g. every 9th person). | • High degree of representativeness if all subjects participate as long as there is limited missing data.  
• Make generalizations from the sample to the population.  
• Reduces bias.  
• Allows selection of sample to be more evenly spread throughout the population. | • Time and resources consuming.  
• Not possible without complete list of population members.  
• Must ensure that an adequate proportion of the sample participates.  
• Less random than simple random sampling. |
| Stratified Random | Population is first divided into mutually exclusive, homogenous groups according to a criterion, and then random samples are drawn from each group. | • High degree of representativeness if all subjects participate as long as there is limited missing data.  
• Make generalizations from the sample to the population.  
• Reduces bias.  
• Allows selection of sample to be more evenly spread throughout the population.  
• Improves representation of particular groups within the population and ensuring that these groups are not over-represented. | • Time and resources consuming.  
• Not possible without complete list of population members.  
• Must ensure that an adequate proportion of the sample participates.  
• The list must provide information that allows the participants to be delineated in an exclusive strata/group (e.g. survivor, or not a survivor). |
Non-Probability Sampling- Individuals are selected based on characteristics, not random.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quota</td>
<td>Select individuals as they come to fill a quota by characteristics proportional to populations.</td>
<td>• Ensures selection of adequate numbers of subjects with appropriate characteristics. &lt;br&gt;• Reduces possibility of over-representation of a particular group.</td>
<td>• Not possible to prove that the sample is representative of designated population. &lt;br&gt;• Each individual from the population must only belong to one stratum/group (i.e. male/female).</td>
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<td>Snowball</td>
<td>Subjects with desired traits or characteristics give names of further appropriate subjects.</td>
<td>• Reaches hidden or hard to reach populations that may be less likely to come forward to participate. &lt;br&gt;• Include members of groups where no lists or identifiable clusters even exist (e.g., drug abusers, criminals).</td>
<td>• Not possible to know whether the sample is representative of the population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>Individuals are selected to participate because they are the easiest to access.</td>
<td>• Inexpensive way of ensuring sufficient numbers of a study. &lt;br&gt;• Help gather data/information that would not be possible using probability techniques.</td>
<td>• Potential to be highly biased leading to over-representation or under-representation of groups. &lt;br&gt;• Unlikely to be representative of the population.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purposive</td>
<td>Group of non-probability sampling techniques that relies on the judgment of the investigator in selecting participants to be studied based on specific characteristics.</td>
<td>• Multiple techniques to choose from depending on purpose of qualitative inquiry (e.g. maximum variation, homogenous, typical case, extreme case and critical case). &lt;br&gt;• Make generalizations from the sample being studied. &lt;br&gt;• Ensures balance of group sizes when multiple groups are to be selected.</td>
<td>• Samples are not easily defensible as being representative of the population due to potential subjectivity/bias of investigator.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source:  
- Institute for the Study of Social Change at the University of California- Berkley. Prevention by Design: Working Together for Effective Outcomes: Evaluation Methods Tip Sheet 5-3-2006. Accessed on 05/01/2013:  
  http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~pbd/planning_guide.html#planning_guide