<table>
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<th>Survey Method</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
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| Mailed Surveys| - Typically lower in cost compared to telephone and face-to-face surveys.  
- Associated costs include printing, postage, staff-time for envelope-stuffing and incentives.  
- Respondents control the time they need to complete the survey.  
- People may feel more comfortable sharing sensitive information in an anonymous way.  
- Through this method, it is possible to reach more people and have a larger sample size.  
- Respondents may consult household or personal records which results in greater response accuracy.  
- Use visual aids in the survey (e.g. pictures of breast changes that the participant can circle if they have or have had in the past).  
- Increase response rates through incentives and repeated follow-up attempts.  
- An example of using a mailed survey as the preferred method in gathering data for the Community Profile: The sample is selected from a database of breast cancer survivors in County X that have higher educational and literacy levels and the questionnaire is asking specific dates of completed screening mammogram, diagnosis, treatment start and end, and follow-up appointments. With the large numbers of sample participants and choice of direct responses, mailed survey technique will work well. | - Response rates are not very high for mail surveys. Common return rates are 20-30%.  
- Questionnaire must be completely self-explanatory.  
- Respondents may not complete or answer all the questions as there is no one there to clarify confusing questions.  
- It may take a couple of weeks before receiving completed surveys.  
- May limit the number of survey respondents (response bias). Low response rates from people with low education, people who do not like to write, those who have difficulty reading, and those who are not interested in the topic.  
- Requires a follow-up plan (reminder system to return the survey) |
## Qualitative Data Toolkit: Advantages and Disadvantages of Survey Methods

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| **Internet (E-mail and Web-based)** | - Cost-effective.  
- Participant can choose when and where to participate- at home or at work- which has been linked to more honest responses.  
- Survey software can control what types of questions survey respondent can access and show additional questions if they answer a certain way (e.g. skip patterns).  
- Fast results.  
- An example of using an Internet survey as the preferred method in gathering data for the Community Profile: The sample participants are health care providers in County X that have access to and are capable of using a computer or Smartphone to answer the survey at a time convenient for them. In addition, the survey contains “skip” questions (e.g. If answer yes, continue to question 2, If answer is no, skip to question 5). | - Requires accurate and up-to-date email addresses.  
- Survey design must be to the “lowest common denominator”- those that do not have up-to-date equipment and/or slower telecommunications access.  
- May not provide a representative sample of the population of interest (e.g. those that do not use the internet or have an e-mail address).  
- Technical glitches (e.g. freezes and crashes, error messages, double entry).  
- Response rates tend to be lower than mail surveys.  
- Response bias- those with lower education levels, minimal computer use, and those with older computer equipment and low-end browsers are less likely to participate.  
- Surveys need to be relatively short and should be completed in 15 minutes or less. |
| **Telephone**               | - The trained interviewer can build rapport with respondents over the phone.  
- More people are likely to complete the survey because they have a person explaining its purpose and importance.  
- A telephone survey usually has simple questions with limited choices for answers.  
- Response rates between 40% to 80% when repeated callbacks are performed.  
- Ability to control the order in which questions are answered.  
- An example of using a telephone survey as the preferred method in gathering data for the Community Profile: The survey sample participants are uninsured women that have low educational and/or literacy levels and would need an interviewer to provide verbal clarification of the questions to assist in gathering accurate answers. | - Requires accurate and up-to-date telephone numbers of target sample.  
- No control over who answers the phone or may only get an answering machine or no answer.  
- Telephone surveys can be very expensive in terms of money and staff time.  
- Respondents may be suspicious about the legitimacy of the survey without a face-to-face interaction with the person administering it.  
- May exclude those who do not have telephones from your sample.  
- Survey must be short and simple to answer.  
- Not able to utilize visual aids (e.g. pictures, lists).  
- In ability to control the environment the responder is in (e.g. inconvenient timing of call) |
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| Face-to-face  | • Response rates are usually higher than other methods as it is harder to refuse someone face-to-face than over the phone or via mail.  
• Survey questions can be more complex because it is administered by a trained interviewer.  
• Allows use of visual aids.  
• Participant can consult records if asked questions about when services were completed (e.g. last mammogram).  
• Survey responses may be longer than those received via mail and Internet because the respondent does not have to write/type out answers. Also longer than telephone as it takes place in the participant's home (familiar environment), and the participant does not have to hold a phone.  
• Interviewer can probe for additional information to open-ended questions.  
• Record body language and environment.  
• An example of using a face-to-face survey as the preferred method in gathering data for the Community Profile: The sample participants are women in a homeless shelter. A face-to-face survey is best as the women are less likely to have a mailing address, telephone number, or easy access to the Internet. | • Very expensive to conduct compared to mailed and Internet surveys.  
• Amount of time needed to complete survey is 2.6 times longer than similar survey completed via telephone.  
• Hesitancy of respondent to report on personal types of behavior hindering accuracy or completeness.  
• Respondents more likely to provide socially desirable responses. |