



Chapter 2: Populations & Sampling

Assignment

A number of different survey design approaches may be taken, but the issue that cannot be ignored if you want the work to be taken seriously is that of being able to show that your sample is representative of the population being studied. A list of all schools in your county can be obtained from your local library.

Simple Random Sampling

There is the risk that your sample does not truly reflect the nature of your population of primary schools. By assigning all primary schools in the county an identification number and then drawing a 20% sample using a random numbers table, you will achieve randomness. However, if you are making a comparison between urban and rural schools, you cannot guarantee that your sample will reflect the distribution of schools between community types, or that it represents a reasonable geographical spread across the county. However, the technique is simple to use and is probably acceptable in most circumstances, but there is a risk that you do not select enough of one or other type of school to be able to make reliable comparisons.

Stratified Random Sampling

Stratification will help to ensure that your sample is representative of some key feature of your population. Since the key factor in this survey is the comparison between urban and rural schools, you could stratify the population on this basis and draw a 20% random sample from each of the two groups. While this will ensure that the proportions of each type of school are properly represented within the sample, there is still the risk of there being geographical clusters of schools. This may not matter if location is not an issue for consideration, but it may be a factor you want to consider.

Multistage Cluster Sampling

If you want to ensure that there is a good county wide distribution within your sample, you could adopt a simple multistage cluster sampling approach.