



Chapter 2: Populations & Sampling

Discussion Point

The dilemma referred to in this section of the tutorial relates to being able to generate a representative sample of 10 year-olds (there are other problems you might want to think about, but it is this particular issue that can be the most troublesome).

Here are the main practical initial difficulties to be faced:

- First of all you need to identify every school that includes 10 year-olds, both in the state and the private sector (assuming the survey is inclusive of all 10 year-olds and not just those within the state system).
- Then identify every 10 year-old pupil. Of course, some may be 11 by the time you actually get to survey them! Also, of course, some 9 year-olds may have turned 10 when you get to the survey stage.
- Finally, you need to draw up your representative sample from the universal population of 10 year-olds and hope that you have adequately represented geographical range and type of community in that sample.

This does not seem to be a very sensible approach for two main reasons.

- Firstly, the sheer enormity of the task of identifying all the individuals in the population that conform to the criteria set is mind-blowing.
- Secondly, there can be no guarantee that you will achieve a good representative sample by the simple random sampling method. You probably will, but there is still the chance that you will not for reasons already discussed in the chapter and in the *progress questions* discussion. This would be a very expensive and embarrassing disaster!

The safest approach would be to undertake *multistage cluster sampling*.