

Snowball Survey Instructions

The snowball survey can be done with groups as small as 25, though as the number of participants gets smaller the risk of non-representative results increases. You may include all the following suggested activities, which would take twenty to thirty minutes, or you may omit parts to suit your time requirements.

The survey is normally given within the context of a briefing or discussion about perceived norms versus actual norms regarding drinking among peers. The goal is to correct misperceptions regarding drinking norms so that participants realize the actual drinking norms are considerably more conservative than they may have thought. The assumption is they will tend to drink less once they realize the norm for their group is drinking considerably fewer drinks (or less often, or that they disapprove of heavy drinking, etc.) than they thought.

Hand out the survey (preferably a brief survey such as the attached six question survey) while thoroughly explaining the process:

“This is called a snowball survey. Most people are more comfortable with a survey like this and consequently tend to be more honest with their responses. Please do not put your name on the survey, and we will not be collecting them afterwards. Use a black pen only so that your questionnaire can't be identified. Cover your survey as you complete it, and be sure not to look at your neighbor's survey. Your answers are for you to see and you alone. No one else will know how you answered the questions unless you choose to tell them. Once everyone has completed the survey we will wad them up into a 'snowball' and we'll have a 'snowball fight'. Everyone should throw at least three snowballs to ensure that none of them can be identified. Once I say 'stop', please hold on to your snowball if you have one. Here's one very important note: if you by chance wind up with your own survey, simply hold on to it and don't tell anyone that it's yours. That way your answers remain anonymous. Any questions before we begin? Okay, then go ahead and answer the questions on the survey”.

You may want to remind them not to wad up their surveys until you tell them to do so; this will help those who take longer on the survey to feel less anxious about being the last to finish. Have them stand up and remind them of safety concerns (i.e. don't throw toward anyone's face; as your Mom may have told you: 'you'll put someone's eye out!'), then let the games begin...

There are at least two ways to tabulate the results. Some prefer to have participants raise their hands while counting how many answered in each category and writing totals on the board. This method has the advantage of increased organization, less chaos, and you have the numbers on the board for all the questions at once.

The other method is to designate different areas in the classroom as “a”, “b”, etc. and have them move to the area representing the answer their sheet indicates for each item. This method tends to increase the energy in the room, sometimes more than you may

want (people tend to talk more when in smaller discreet groups around the room). It also offers a visual representation of the numbers (“you can see that everyone on that side of the room represents the number of people in this group who would choose to drink two or less; how many of you are surprised by that?”). Solicit ideas from participants throughout the exercise so that they are drawing conclusions about the data, rather than you telling them what it means.

Some suggested discussion topics as time allows:

- How do we know whether information is true and accurate?
- How does the news media and advertising industry affect our perceived norms?
- Things are not always as they first appear (One option to demonstrate this point is to use a short clip from, or refer to the movie “Jaws” where panic ensues on the beach as everyone rushes to get away from the “shark”—you may remember the “shark” turns out to be two kids in a “shark” float).

The survey seems to be most effective when discussion is allowed and encouraged throughout the process. Keep in mind that the “nay-sayers” tend to be the most vocal, so you may have the sense that few or none of the participants were convinced of the norming message. A satisfaction survey is a good way to assess how many of them changed their thinking about the norm. You may be surprised at how many participants comment that their thinking about drinking norms changes as a result of the survey.

Social Norms Questionnaire

- a. Never; don't drink
- b. Less than once per year
- c. A few times per year
- d. Once per month
- e. Once per week
- f. 2-3 times per week
- g. 4 or more times per week

On average, how often do you think Air Force members in the following categories drink alcohol? Please select your best estimate from the choices above.

- ___ 1. Yourself
 - ___ 2. Most Airmen at _____ Air Force Base.
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- a. Drinking is never (or almost never) a good thing to do.
- b. Drinking is all right, but a person should never get "smashed".
- c. An occasional "drunk" is okay as long as it doesn't interfere with academics or other responsibilities.
- d. An occasional "drunk" is okay even if it does interfere with academics or other responsibilities.
- e. A frequent "drunk" is okay if that's what the individual wants to do.

Which of the above statements about drinking alcoholic beverages do you feel best represents Air Force members in the following categories?

- ___ 3. Your own attitude.
 - ___ 4. The attitude of most Air Force members at _____ Air Force Base.
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- a. None; I don't drink (or very rarely)
- b. 1 or 2 drinks
- c. 3 or 4 drinks
- d. 5 or 6 drinks
- e. 7 or 8 drinks
- f. 9 or more drinks

Selecting from the choices above, on average, how many drinks do Airmen in the following categories drink when they party or go out?

- ___ 5. Yourself
- ___ 6. Most Air Force members at _____ Air Force Base