



## Survey methods in migration research: design, implementation, and analysis

This PhD-level course provides broad training on survey research methods, with an emphasis on applications in migration research. It spans all stages of survey research, from research design to communication of results, reflecting the view that each step is potentially decisive for overall quality and impact.

The course is designed to suit participants with diverse levels of previous knowledge and different needs in their own research. Under each topic, participants will be sensitized to the considerations, dilemmas, and options that will enable them to pursue relevant topics in greater depth on their own. The course draws upon the two lecturers' research experience over the past two decades.

Teaching will take place in person at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) in Norway. The course was first taught in 2022 and received excellent student evaluations.

### Course details

*Dates:*  
18–20 October 2023

*Venue:*  
PRIO, Hausmanns gate 3,  
Oslo, Norway

*Organizer:*  
Jørgen Jensehaugen, Research  
School on Peace and Conflict  
([jorjen@prio.org](mailto:jorjen@prio.org))

*Credits:*  
5 ECTS (with approved essay)

*Contact:*  
Jørgen Carling  
([jorgen@prio.org](mailto:jorgen@prio.org))

*Application deadline:*  
31 May 2023



## Lecturers

[Jørgen Carling](#) is Research Professor at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) and co-director of the PRIO Migration Centre. His research covers global migration, immobility and transnationalism, seeking to explain how migration arises, and how it affects societies, families and individuals. He holds a PhD in Human Geography and combines ethnographic and statistical methods, often in mixed-methods research designs. He currently leads MIGNEX, a large 10-country project on migration and development, as well as the ERC-funded project Future Migration as Present Fact (FUMI).’

[Jessica Hagen-Zanker](#) is a Senior Research Fellow at ODI, an independent, global development think tank based in London. Her research focuses on migration and development, migration decision-making, the links between migration and social protection, the humanitarian-development nexus as well as the analysis of social protection programmes and policies. She leads the survey component of the MIGNEX project. Jessica holds a PhD in Public Policy from Maastricht University and is affiliated with PRIO as a PRIO Global Fellow.

## Course description

This course spans all the stages of survey research, with an emphasis on studies of migration, displacement, ethnicity and transnationalism. It is designed to be relevant to PhD candidates who carry out their own surveys as well as to those that work with pre-existing survey data. In addition, the course provides a foundation for planning survey-based migration research after the PhD. The sessions address research design, approaches to sampling, development of survey instruments, technical solutions, management of data collection, quality assurance, data cleaning, analysis, and communication of results. The course also includes a session on combining survey data with ethnographic data in mixed-methods projects. The lecturers draw upon experience from survey research at different scales, from one-person projects to large-scale international research. Under each topic in the course, a key objective is to sensitize participants to the considerations, dilemmas, and options that will enable them to pursue relevant topics in-depth on their own. The course will use examples of data collection with SurveyCTO and analysis with Stata, but familiarity with specific software is not a prerequisite. Participants may benefit from also pursuing courses on the specific statistical analyses they plan to use, either before or after completing this course.

## Selected participant evaluations from 2022

*A tremendous compact course that starts with the 101 survey methods and adds depth through discussions on how to tailor survey methods based on the intricacies of migration research. I left the course confident in my ability that I could design, conduct, and analyse my own surveys.*

*The lecturers brought their extensive experience with large-scale surveys into the classroom with numerous practical examples, including discussions on methodological choices and ethical dilemmas that are not usually addressed thoroughly in this type of course. I learnt a lot and wished I had discovered it earlier in my academic training.*

*The course truly stood out because of the rich experiences of the lecturers which were generously shared with the participants. Quantitative methodologies often tend to be intimidating but the approach discussed in this course made me eager to continue learning by doing.*

# Sessions

## 1. Introduction

Brief presentation of lecturers, participants and their research. Introduction to the course. Presentation of our approach to ethics as a cross-cutting dimension of research.

## 2. Research design

What kinds of research questions are best suited for survey research? How should research objectives inform the definition of populations, samples, and units of analysis? What are the options for designing surveys to analyse migration processes? How should your available resources (time and money) shape design choices? How can you plan for a respondent centred survey? What are the key ethical dimensions of survey research design?

## 3. Combining survey research with ethnography

What should survey researchers know about ethnography and other qualitative methods? How can survey research and ethnography be combined in mixed-methods research designs? At which stages of the survey research process are connections with ethnography most valuable? What are possibilities for using ethnographic data or methods to strengthen survey research without a comprehensive mixed-methods design?

## 4. Approaches to sampling

What is important about sampling? What are key choices in defining populations and deciding on sampling levels, sampling frames, sampling methods and sample size? How should sampling incorporate informed consent and other ethics-related concerns? What might be sound approaches to flexibility and adaptation when sampling theory meets real-world complications?

## 5. Development of survey instruments

How can the process of developing a high-quality survey instrument be organized? What are the most important aspects of the survey instrument design for ensuring data quality? What is an optimode instrument? How can different types of survey items be used? What are the options for obtaining high-quality data on migration histories, migration aspirations, migrant networks and other migration-related topics? How should survey instruments reflect ethical concerns? How can you design a survey instrument that works across contexts and languages? What are common pitfalls in survey instruments?

## 6. Technical solutions

How do self-administered and interview-based data collection compare? What are the pros and cons of the most common data collection modes (PAPI, CATI, CAPI and web-based)? Which considerations are important in selecting a technical solution, such as a software platform? What are the implications of data protection issues and GDPR for survey data collection?

## 7. Management of data collection

How does the institutional setup of survey data collection matter? How can you define and allocate roles and responsibilities? What is a realistic timeline for developing and implementing a survey? How can the translation process for multi-language surveys be organised and quality-assured? How should ethical concerns be reflected in the management of data collection?

## 8. Quality assurance

What is 'quality' in survey research? How are weaknesses in quality at different stages of survey research reflected in the final data and publications? What are the key choices in planning a survey pilot? What is important in enumerator training? How can quality assurance be applied at different levels? Which specific techniques for quality assurance are available?

## 9. Data management

How can a data management plan (DMP) be a useful tool and not just a formality? What are the greatest threats to survey data? Where do data protection and research ethics overlap and when is there a tension between the two? Who should have access to the data, at what stage and in which form? How can you ensure anonymity if data is made public?

## 10. Data cleaning and preparation

How can you ensure replicability in data cleaning and data preparation (and why is it so important)? What does data cleaning entail at different stages? Which kinds of automated and manual checks can be applied? How should full-text specifications of 'other' responses be treated? How should weights be calculated and applied? How should survey items be transformed to variables for analysis?

## 11. Analysis

How do you decide on an analytical strategy? What are the challenges related to endogeneity and bias, and how can they be addressed? How should the limitations of survey data inform analyses? How can analyses engage with the spatial and temporal dimensions of migration? How should the details of the survey instrument inform analyses and writing?

## 12. Communication of results

How can analyses of survey data be used in communication with different audiences? What are the challenges and opportunities for using survey analyses in different publishing formats, including journal articles? What are common weaknesses in publications based on survey data? How can survey results be presented visually? How should results on politically charged issues be presented responsibly?

## Schedule

### Wednesday 18 October

08:30–09:30	1. Introduction
09:30–11:45	2. Research design
11:45–12:45	<i>Lunch</i>
12:45–13:45	3. Combining survey and ethnographic data
13:45–16:00	4. Approaches to sampling
16:00–16:30	5. Development of survey instruments
19:00	<i>Dinner</i>

### Thursday 19 October

08:30–12:15	5. Development of survey instruments ( <i>continued</i> )
12:15–13:15	<i>Lunch</i>
13:15–14:15	6. Technical solutions
14:15–15:15	7. Management of data collection
15:30–16:30	8. Quality assurance

### Friday 20 October

08:30–10:30	9. Data management
10:30–12:15	10. Data cleaning and preparations
12:15–13:15	<i>Lunch</i>
13:15–14:45	11. Analysis
15:30–16:30	12. Communications of results
16:30–17:00	13. Wrap-up

## Evaluation

In order to obtain credits for the course, participants must submit a paper of 3000–8000 words related to survey research methodology. (Deadline to be confirmed.) Depending on the nature and current stage of the participant's own research, the paper can be an account of survey methodology already employed, a plan for a survey to be executed, a general discussion of any aspect of survey methodology, or a substantive paper with analysis of survey data.

## Readings

The two books are available as e-books or paperbacks from bookshops. The other readings are made available to participants as PDF files. *The reading list may be adjusted ahead of the course.*

### Books

Fowler, F.J. (2014) *Survey Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Wilson, L. and Dickinson, E. (2021) *Respondent Centred Surveys: Stop, Listen and Then Design*. London: SAGE Publications.

### Discussions of methodology and design

Agadjanian, V., and Zotova, N. (2012) 'Sampling and surveying hard-to-reach populations for demographic research: A study of female labor migrants in Moscow, Russia.' *Demographic Research* 26: 131-150.

Beauchemin, C. (2014) 'A Manifesto for Quantitative Multi-sited Approaches to International Migration.' *International Migration Review*, 48(4):921-938.

Beauchemin, C. (2015) 'Migration between Africa and Europe (MAFE): Advantages and limitations of a multi-site survey design.' *Population*, 70(1):13-37.

Bilsborrow, R.E. (2018) 'Household surveys: A key potential source of data on migration.' Posted in *Migration Data Portal*. 31 May ([www.migrationdataportal.org](http://www.migrationdataportal.org)).

Bilsborrow, R.E. (2018) 'Specialized migration surveys: 6 regional examples improving research.' Posted in *Migration Data Portal*. 18 September ([www.migrationdataportal.org](http://www.migrationdataportal.org)).

Bilsborrow, R.E. and Henry, S.J.F. (2012) 'The use of survey data to study migration–environment relationships in developing countries: alternative approaches to data collection.' *Population and Environment*, 34(1):113-141.

Bloch, A. (2007) 'Methodological challenges for national and multi-sited comparative survey research.' *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 20(2):230-247.

Brown, R.P.C., Carling, J., Fransen, S. and Siegel, M. (2014) 'Measuring remittances through surveys: Methodological and conceptual issues for survey designers and data analysts.' *Demographic Research*, 31:1243-1274.

Carling, J. and Mjelva, M.B. (2021) *Survey instruments and survey data on migration aspirations*. QuantMig project paper. Southampton: University of Southampton.

Carling, J. and Schewel, K. (2018) 'Revisiting aspiration and ability in international migration.' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(6):945-963.

Dolnicar, S., Grün, B. and Leisch, F. (2011) 'Quick, Simple and Reliable: Forced Binary Survey Questions.' *International Journal of Market Research*, 53(2):231-252.

- Farid, S., Bilsborrow, R. and Cantisani, G. (2019) *Mediterranean Household International Migration Survey (MED-HIMS) Model Questionnaires*. Paris: Economic and Financial Governance Department/Statistics Unit, Expertise France.
- Fausser, M. (2017) 'Mixed Methods and Multisited Migration Research: Innovations from a Transnational Perspective.' *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 12(4):394-412.
- Fawcett, J.T. and Arnold, F. (1987) 'The Role of Surveys in the Study of International Migration: An Appraisal.' *International Migration Review*, 21(4):1523-1540.
- Gibson, J. and McKenzie, D. (2017) 'How reliable are survey estimates of remittances? Evidence from a cross-reporting survey exercise.' *Migration Studies*, 5(1):97-115.
- Gillespie, B.J., Mulder, C.H. and Eggleston, C.M. (2021) 'Measuring migration motives with open-ended survey data: Methodological and conceptual issues.' *Population, Space and Place*, 27(6):e2448.
- Groenewold, G. and Bilsborrow, R. (2008) 'Design of samples for international migration surveys: Methodological considerations and lessons learned from a multi-country study in Africa and Europe.' in Simon, P., Bonifazi, C., Okólski, M. and Schoorl, J. (eds) *International Migration in Europe: New Trends and New Methods of Analysis*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 293-312.
- Hagen-Zanker, J., Hennessey, G., Carling, J. and Mehmon, R. (2020) *Survey data collection*, MIGNEX Handbook Chapter, 7. Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo.
- Hamilton, E.R. and Savinar, R. (2015) 'Two Sources of Error in Data on Migration from Mexico to the United States in Mexican Household-Based Surveys.' *Demography*, 52(4):1345-1355.
- Kohlenberger, J., Buber-Ennsner, I., Rengs, B., & Al Zalak, Z. (2017). 'A social survey on refugees in and around Vienna in fall 2015: Methodological approach and field observations.' *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 36(4), 90-109.
- Lindstrom, D.P. (2016) 'How Representative Are Snowball Samples? Using the Ethnosurvey to Study Guatemala-U.S. Migration.' *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 666(1):64-76.
- McKenzie, D.J. and Mistiaen, J. (2009) 'Surveying migrant households: a comparison of census-based, snowball and intercept point surveys.' *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society Series a-Statistics in Society*, 172:339-360.
- Müller-Funk, L. (2021) 'Research with refugees in fragile political contexts: How ethical reflections impact methodological choices' *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 34(2), 2308-2332.
- Niedomysl, T. and Malmberg, B. (2009) 'Do open-ended survey questions on migration motives create coder variability problems?' *Population, Space and Place*, 15(1):79-87.
- Rallu, J.L. (2008) 'One-way or both-ways migration surveys.' in Simon, P., Bonifazi, C., Okólski, M. and Schoorl, J. (eds) *International Migration in Europe: New Trends and New Methods of Analysis*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 273-292.
- Randall, S., Coast, E. and Leone, T. (2011) 'Cultural constructions of the concept of household in sample surveys.' *Population Studies*, 65(2):217-229.
- Riosmena, F. (2016) 'The Potential and Limitations of Cross-Context Comparative Research on Migration.' *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 666(1):28-45.

- Sana, M. (2019) 'Binational migration surveys: Representativeness, standardization, and the ethnosurvey model.' in Gold, S.J. and Nawyn, S.J. (eds) *Routledge International Handbook of Migration Studies*. Abingdon: Routledge, 553-564.
- Schachter, J.P. (2008) *Enhancing Data on Migration in West and Central Africa: The Utilization of Household Surveys for the Measurement of Migration in West and Central Africa: Past, Present, and Future*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration.
- Singh, G. and Clark, B.D. (2013) 'Creating a frame: A spatial approach to random sampling of immigrant households in inner city Johannesburg' *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 26(1), pp.126-144.
- United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics (2020) *Standard questions on international migration: Guidance note for the use in population censuses and household surveys*. New York: Statistics Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA).
- Vigneswaran, D. (2009) 'Residential Sampling and Johannesburg's Forced Migrants' *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 22(4), pp.439-459.
- Vujcich, D., Roberts, M., Brown, G., Durham, J., Gu, Z., Hartley, L., Lobo, R., Mao, L., Moro, P., Mullens, A.B., Offord, B., Oudih, E. and Reid, A. (2021) 'Are sexual health survey items understood as intended by African and Asian migrants to Australia? Methods, results and recommendations for qualitative pretesting.' *BMJ Open*, 11(12).
- Applications of survey data in research on migration**
- Auer, D. and Ruedin, D. (2019) 'Who Feels Disadvantaged? Reporting Discrimination in Surveys.' *Migrants and Expats: The Swiss Migration and Mobility Nexus*, 221-242.
- Carling, J. (2016) 'Making and breaking a chain: Migrants' decisions about helping others migrate.' in Bakewell, O., Engbersen, G., Fonseca, M.L. and Horst, C. (eds) *Beyond Networks: Feedback in International Migration*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 156-182.
- Carling, J. and Jolivet, D. (2016) 'Exploring 12 Migration Corridors: Rationale, Methodology and Overview.' in Bakewell, O., Engbersen, G., Fonseca, M.L. and Horst, C. (eds) *Beyond Networks: Feedback in International Migration*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 18-46.
- Carling, J. and Pettersen, S.V. (2014) 'Return Migration Intentions in the Integration–Transnationalism Matrix.' *International Migration*, 52(6):13-30.
- Carling, J. and Tønnessen, M. (2013) 'Fathers' whereabouts and children's welfare in Malawi.' *Development Southern Africa*, 30(6):724-724.
- Clemens, M.A. and Mendola, M. (2020) *Migration from Developing Countries: Selection, Income Elasticity, and Simpson's Paradox*, Working paper, 539. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development.
- Drinkwater, S. and Garapich, M.P. (2015) 'Migration Strategies of Polish Migrants: Do They Have Any at All?' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 41(12):1909-1931.
- Düvell, F., Schiefer, D., Sağıroğlu, A.Z. and Mann, L. (2021) *How Many Syrian Refugees in Turkey Want to Migrate to Europe and Can Actually Do So? Results of a Survey Among 1,900 Syrians*, DeZIM Research Notes, 5. Berlin: DeZIM Institute.
- Garip, F. and Asad, A.L. (2016) 'Network Effects in Mexico-US Migration: Disentangling the Underlying Social Mechanisms.' *American Behavioral Scientist*, 60(10):1168-1193.
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Madhavan, S. and Landau, L.B. (2011) 'Bridges to Nowhere: Hosts, Migrants, and the Chimera of Social Capital in Three African Cities.' *Population and Development Review*, 37(3):473-497.

Mbaye, L.M. (2014) "'Barcelona or die": understanding illegal migration from Senegal.' *IZA Journal of Migration*, 3(1):21.

McAuliffe, M. and Jayasuriya, D. (2016) 'Do asylum seekers and refugees choose destination countries? Evidence from large-scale surveys in Australia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka' *International Migration*, 54(4), pp.44-59.

McConnell, E.D., 2008. The US Destinations of Contemporary Mexican Immigrants. *International Migration Review*, 42(4), pp.767-802.

Steiner, I. (2019) 'Immigrants' Intentions – Leaning Towards Remigration or Naturalization?' *Migrants and Expats: The Swiss Migration and Mobility Nexus*, 293-314.

Steiner, I. and Landös, A. (2019) 'Surveying Migrants in Europe. Experiences of the Swiss Migration-Mobility Survey.' *Migrants and Expats: The Swiss Migration and Mobility Nexus*, 21-54.

Suen, Y.T. and Chan, R.C. (2021) "'Gay Brain Drain": Hong Kong Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual People's Consideration of Emigration Because of Non-inclusive Social Policies.' *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 18(3):739-752.

Willekens, F., Zinn, S. and Leuchter, M. (2017) 'Emigration Rates from Sample Surveys: An Application to Senegal.' *Demography*, 54(6):2159-2179.