

Simultaneous Survey

Simultaneous Survey is a highly participatory way of getting through a long agenda. Pairs or small groups specialise in one of the agenda items (possibly one of their own) and work separately during the survey. At the end of the survey period they meet back together, collate results and report back to the whole group. It is carried out in the spirit of a street survey and works well outdoors

What	'Sim Survey' is a survey process designed for high participation throughout.
When	During a walk, or when there is a lot to review, or when 'hands up' is too shallow.
Why	To review a lot in a short time in a way that is very busy and engaging
Where	Anywhere. Laminated cards with ready-made questions can help save time.
How	Give out question cards - one per pair or subgroup.
Time	2-5 minutes for the survey + more time if you want the results to be shared.
Tips	Have (or generate) a good variety of questions. When reviewing it is useful to have a balance of questions about emotions, opinions, evaluations, predictions etc.
Variations	Brief Encounters: if they are not going to report back, then have pairs swap question cards after they have answered each other's question.
👍	Fast-paced with everyone asking or answering questions all of the time.
👎	Individuals may feel their views are not represented in the report back – so ask 'Does anyone feel that their views or ideas are not represented in the summary?'
Interesting	Indoors, it is easier for participants to create their own questions. Outdoors, this is a great way of keeping a group together on a walk and making it more sociable.

Democracy in action

Simultaneous Survey allows for everyone to be consulted on all issues, it involves everyone in responsible roles, and everyone gets to hear the result of each survey. It is difficult not to take everyone's views into account in any discussion that follows.

Do the maths

Work out how many survey questions would suit the group size and the time available (for the survey, collation, report back and any subsequent discussion). If you want to have discussion arising from the sharing stage, allow even more time.

Reporting back

With big groups, or when there are lots of questions, the collation of results and reporting back can become a slow process, so consider alternative means of sharing such as a poster exhibition – for example with graphs, pie charts or other visual presentation methods.

Anonymity

Participants may assume that a "survey" is anonymous and should be warned if it is not. My preference is to stay within the frame of a survey and to ask for the report back to be anonymous eg "70% agreed, one of the 30% said '*I refuse to answer such a pathetic question*' ". If the report back is followed by a discussion, participants are clearly entitled to step out from their anonymity and speak for themselves to the whole group.