

# QUANTITATIVE SOCIAL SCIENCE WITH DR ALITA NANDI AND NICOLE D. JAMES

## TALKING POINTS

### KNOWLEDGE

1. What is quantitative social science?
2. What is qualitative social science?

### COMPREHENSION

3. What is the difference between causality and correlation? Use an original example to illustrate this.
4. Why does the Understanding Society project have such a large sample size, including people from diverse backgrounds?
5. Why is it important to ensure the project's data are anonymised?

### APPLICATION

6. What sort of national policies do you think might be influenced by Alita's findings on racism and mental health?
7. Alita mentions that survey methodologists ensure questions are clear and easily understood. What other traits do you think define a high-quality survey question?

### ANALYSIS

8. Nicole mentions that families change over time. In what ways do you think families change and relationships 'evolve'?
9. What skills do you think Nicole learned in her degree in criminology that helped prepare her for joining the Understanding Society project?

### SYNTHESIS

10. What questions would you ask project participants to assess impacts to quality of life during the Covid-19 pandemic? Remember, data for Understanding Society must be quantitative.

### EVALUATION

11. Based on Alita's predictions for the future of social science (environmental values, changing jobs, diversifying societies), what extra topics do you think future Understanding Society surveys might explore?

## ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO AT HOME OR IN THE CLASSROOM

Imagine you are creating a longitudinal survey similar to the Understanding Society project.

1. Read this article from the Pew Research Center about good questionnaire design:

[www.pewresearch.org/methods/u-s-survey-research/questionnaire-design/](http://www.pewresearch.org/methods/u-s-survey-research/questionnaire-design/)

Write questions to ask participants about the following topics:

- a. The area they live in (e.g. rural/urban, access to services)
  - b. The type of property and household they live in (e.g. house or apartment, rented or owned)
  - c. What they do for a living (e.g. part or full time work, income)
  - d. Quality of life (e.g. physical health, mental health, perceived wellbeing)
2. Think about how the respondents' answers could be used to support or weaken the following hypotheses:
    - a. People with higher salaries tend to live in cities.
    - b. People with larger houses tend to have more children.
    - c. Access to green spaces leads to better physical and mental health.
    - d. Retired people have a better quality of life than working people.
    - e. Financial security leads to better mental health.
  3. What caveats might there be within your conclusions?  
Think about:
    - a. Cause and effect
    - b. Unrecorded variables
    - c. Representative samples
    - d. Possible differences between participants' responses and the real world
    - e. Converting qualitative information to quantitative data
  4. How could you reduce these caveats to make your data more robust? What extra information or resources might you need?

## MORE RESOURCES

- The Understanding Society website goes into much more detail on the project, including what variables it is measuring and the results that the project has produced so far: [www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/](http://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/)
- Nicole recommends the Understanding Society's YouTube channel. Go to YouTube and search for: Understanding Society: UKHLS