

## **Free-lists, Sample Size, & Saturation**

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Currently sample size recommendations for open-ended interviewing tend to be based primarily on expert opinion. Open-ended questions are used to collect new information and explore processes, and are an essential part of mixed-methods research. Sample size recommendations for using open-ended questions suggest that about a dozen interviews are needed to reach saturation. Saturation is the point at which little or no new information is obtained. Guest et al (2006) presented an empirical example of saturation that also suggested a sample size of 12 may be sufficient. Recent work (Galvin 2015, Fugard et al 2015) suggests that the problem may be framed as a binomial sampling problem. Free-lists are open-ended questions that elicit exhaustive lists of responses rather than a single response, collecting much more information per person. This paper discusses current evidence, frameworks, domain size, and examples to develop evidence-based guidelines on sample size requirements for open-ended and free-listing interviewing.