

CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS USING VIDEO CONFERENCING PLATFORMS

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OVERVIEW

- Practical considerations for AHP researchers adopting digital methods
- Building rapport with the participant
- Familiarity with technology for both researcher and participant
- Scheduling in terms of time and location
- Data protection and ethical considerations

BUILDING RAPPORT

- Particularly important when exploring sensitive issues
- Difficulties making eye contact and interpreting non-verbal cues
- Consider presenting preferred names to build rapport
- Supporting participants in distress - emergent and unpredictable nature of qualitative research interviews and focus groups can lead to participants becoming upset or distressed (Jolly, 2020)
- Debrief (not recorded or included within analysis)

FAMILIARITY WITH TECHNOLOGY

- Access to technology and the internet is often cited as a barrier to adopting digital methods (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2018)
- Research design should consider the characteristics of the population
- 96% of households in Great Britain have internet access, up from 67% in 2006 (ONS, 2021a), with fewer recent users in adults of 75 years of age or living with a disability (ONS, 2021b)
- Risk of excluding perspectives and experiences of 'offline' groups – the 'digital divide'

FAMILIARITY WITH TECHNOLOGY

- Consider participant preferences
- Familiarity with chosen videoconferencing platform for both participant and researcher
- Consider an opportunity to 'meet' and test in advance – this can also help with rapport building
- Risk of poor-quality audio – another reason to test in advance!

SCHEDULING

- Offer a selection of dates/times
- Timing of the interview/focus group
- Location that the participant is in when taking part in the interview/focus groups

DATA PROTECTION AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Data storage
- Using online storage
- Confidentiality and anonymity
- Use of direct quotes and potential for identifying participants

SUMMARY

- Videoconferencing platforms offer potential advantages, in terms of geography, fiscal resources and researcher collaboration
- Avoid a 'direct swap', instead exploring methodological and practical considerations, including:
 - Building rapport
 - Familiarity with technology
 - Scheduling
 - Data protection and ethics

ANY QUESTIONS?

Strudwick, R. M. and Hadwen, H. C. (2025) 'Adopting digital methods: Conducting qualitative interviews and focus groups in the midst of a pandemic', in: Hackett, P. M. W, Hayre, C. M., Muller, D., Scherer, M. and Gordley-Smith, A. (eds). *The Future of Qualitative Research in Healthcare: The Role and Management of Digital Methods*. Cambridge University Press.

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