TIP SHEET: Comparing Survey Types for Measuring Youth Skills and Beliefs

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| **Survey Type** | **What it is** | **Pros** | **Cons** |
| **End of Program/Post- Only Surveys** | Participants are asked questions at the end of a program only  **Sample item:** “Doing well in school is important to me (Not true at all – Somewhat true – Mostly true – Completely true)” | * Simplest to administer * Least intrusive as it is usually anonymous * Can provide an overall snapshot of program participants | * Cannot capture change unless pre-program status is known * Not considered a rigorous design |
| **Pre-/Post- Surveys** | Asks about a topic at the beginning of a program (pre-program) and the end (post-program); responses of individual participants are matched  **Sample item:** “Doing well in school is important to me (Not true at all – Somewhat true – Mostly true – Completely true),” asked at the beginning and end of a program or intervention | * Considered most rigorous design * Capable of capturing change in participants’ skills, attitudes, or behaviors | * Can underestimate program effects due to response shift bias * Matching requires non-anonymous surveying * Can be hard to have enough “matches” due to attrition * Most resource-intensive |
| **Retrospective Pre-/Post- Surveys** | Asks about a topic “then” (pre-program) and “now” (post-program); administered at the end of a program only  **Sample item:**   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | Item | Before this program | After this program | | I can handle stress | \_Not true at all  \_Somewhat true  \_ Mostly true  \_Completely True | \_Not true at all  \_Somewhat true  \_ Mostly true  \_Completely True | | * Allows for participant reflection * Measures participant perceived change due to program attendance * Addresses response-shift bias | * Can overestimate program effects * Complex; can be hard for younger participants to understand * Not considered as rigorous as matched pre-/post- |
| **Reflective Post- Program Surveys** | Asks participants to reflect on the effect that a program has had on their skills, beliefs or behaviors  **Sample item:** “This program has helped me to do a better job on my homework (Not true at all – Somewhat true – Mostly true – Completely true)” | * Simplest way to get at perceived program impact * May be more appropriate for young people than retrospective pre-/post- designs | * Will not *quantify* or show the magnitude of changes in skills, beliefs or behaviors * Not considered rigorous (not “hard” data) |