

Types of Descriptive Research	Advantages	Disadvantages	Example
All	Avoids artificiality of highly controlled experiments	Cannot demonstrate cause and effect	Observations, case studies, surveys
Naturalistic Observation	Participants act naturally—no artificial conditions	Lack of interaction between experimenter and participants may lead to erroneous results May be subject to experimenter bias	Researchers observe the hunting behaviors of coyotes living in a specified area
Case Studies (individual or group)	Collection of in-depth, detailed information Opportunity to investigate unique illnesses	May be distorted by the expectations of the researcher Cannot be generalized to the population	Researchers study how patient recovering from surgery to remove a brain tumor performs on cognitive, emotional, and physical tasks
Surveys	Quick, easy, and inexpensive collection of data Gathers information about people's opinions and beliefs	Possible low response rate Participants may be prone to demand characteristics and wording effects Respondents may lie	Researchers investigate student attitudes about gender stereotyping
Interviews	Quick, easy, and inexpensive collection of data Information directly from the participant to eliminate experimenter guessing	Possibility of subjective self-reports Participants may lie Participants may be prone to demand characteristics Possibility of researcher asking leading questions	Researchers evaluate responses after a community tragedy

Figure 2.5 Descriptive Research Methods Compared