

# Primary and Secondary Market Research

You can conduct market research no matter what stage of business you are at. Think about doing some research before you start your business, or as you introduce new products or services to your established business. Anytime there is a change in your business or industry, market research may provide helpful insights before moving forward. Depending on the questions you are trying to answer, primary and/or secondary market research may be useful.

	Primary Market Research	Secondary Market Research
<b>Definition</b>	Individual or group personal information or research you gather yourself. Usually involves going to a DIRECT source or group within your target market. First-hand information gathering about the needs of the market or consumers. Also called "field research".	Data or information that has been gathered or compiled and published by others. It is OUTSIDE or external information that has been collected by the government, published academic papers, or statistical databases. Also called "desk research".
<b>Purpose</b>	Usually completed after conducting secondary market research to gather detailed information about specific needs and wants of customer groups. To gain insight on authentic thoughts, feelings, or opinions.	Usually conducted first to provide insight into the knowledge gaps related to customer, industry, or competition. Forms the "need to know" for primary research.
<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data is recent</li> <li>• You can be very specific in your information gathering</li> <li>• You can gain customers or follow up lists from the research</li> <li>• You can conduct yourself or use a service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally, less time consuming</li> <li>• You can complete it anonymously</li> <li>• Low cost or free</li> <li>• You can conduct yourself or use a service</li> </ul>
<b>Limitations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys and focus groups can be time consuming</li> <li>• Low response rates</li> <li>• You have to know who your target market is and be able to locate and connect with them in their preferred way</li> <li>• Monetary or time costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data can sometimes be outdated</li> <li>• You may not be able to find the exact details you want</li> <li>• Results can be broad instead of specific</li> </ul>
<b>Research Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Social media questions</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Sample sharing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Link paid research</li> <li>• Industry statistical databases</li> <li>• NAICS code industry searches</li> <li>• Censuses</li> <li>• Postal code demographic searches (PRIZM5)</li> </ul>

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<b>Tips</b>	Primary research questions cannot be misleading or directive. When talking to customers, ask questions about the product or service in general terms. Get details on their thoughts, feelings, or opinions on price, quality, customer service, etc.	Secondary research questions can be tricky. They need to be specific enough to match what you need to find out, but not so specific that the data won't be available. If you aren't finding any or much relevant secondary information, make your search broader or use different search terms.
<b>Examples: Service Business (Plumbing Company)</b>	How often do you use plumbing services?	What is the industry growth rate?
	How do you find plumbing services?	What are the emerging trends and/or gaps in my area?
	The last time you used plumbing services, what could have been improved?	How many competitors are in my area as opposed to other areas?
	What are the most important aspects when choosing a plumber: cost, ease of use, customer service?	How many target households are in my postal region?
<b>Examples: Product Business (Specialty Bakery)</b>	Set up an area of your location with free small samples and ask for feedback on quality, size, etc.	Who else is selling this product or something similar in my region?
	How many times a month do you purchase specialty baking?	How much do people spend on baked goods?
	What do you look for in your baking purchases? Gluten free, local ingredients, custom orders?	What are the average financials (revenue) for a bakery business?

## Primary and Secondary Market Research

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Now that you have reviewed the table above, take some time to create a few primary and secondary research questions that apply to your business. Determine if you are a service business or a product business and list your questions. For additional help creating primary market research questions, refer to [Survey Monkey's guide to writing good survey questions](#).

My Business Description:

	Primary Market Research	Secondary Market Research
Question 1		
Question 2		
Question 3		
Question 4		
Question 5		