



Cross Sectional Study ^[1]

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The cross sectional study looks at a different aspect than the standard longitudinal study.

The longitudinal study ^[3] uses time as the main variable ^[4], and tries to make an in depth study of how a small sample changes and fluctuates over time.

A cross sectional study ^[5], on the other hand, takes a snapshot of a population at a certain time, allowing conclusions ^[6] about phenomena across a wide population to be drawn.

An example of a cross-sectional study would be a medical study looking at the prevalence of breast cancer in a population. The researcher can look at a wide range of ages, ethnicities and social backgrounds. If a significant ^[7] number of women from a certain social background are found to have the disease, then the researcher can investigate further.

This is a relatively easy way to perform a preliminary experiment, allowing the researcher to focus on certain population groups and understand the wider picture.

Of course, researchers often use both methods, using a cross section to take the snapshot and isolate potential areas of interest, and then conducting a longitudinal study to find the reason behind the trend.

This is called panel data, or time series cross-sectional data, but is generally a complicated and expensive type of research ^[8], notoriously difficult to analyze.

Such programs are rare, but can give excellent data, allowing a long-term picture of phenomena to be ascertained.

Source URL: <https://explorable.com/cross-sectional-study?gid=1582>

Links

[1] <https://explorable.com/cross-sectional-study>

[2] <https://explorable.com/users/martyn>

[3] <https://explorable.com/longitudinal-study>

[4] <https://explorable.com/research-variables>

[5] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cross-sectional_study

[6] <https://explorable.com/drawing-conclusions>

[7] <https://explorable.com/significance-test>

[8] <https://explorable.com/what-is-research>