

Anonymous vs. Confidential

	Anonymous	Confidential
Definitions	<p>When data is collected and held anonymously, it indicates that there are no identifying values that can link the information to the participant.</p> <p>When an investigator promises anonymity, even the investigator him/herself cannot link the research data collected with the individual from whom it was collected.</p>	<p>When data is collected and held confidentially, the researcher can identify the subjects. Thus, any survey/interview that takes place in face to face environment is automatically labeled as confidential, as the researcher could know who provided the data.</p>
Example	<p>It is commonly believed that data is anonymous if the investigator has not collected direct identifiers, <u>such as name, social security number, or student ID number</u>. It should be understood, however, that indirect and demographic variables, such as age, race, or sex, could, in some circumstances, be used to identify subjects, particularly when a number of them are being collected.</p> <p>Examples Include:</p> <p>A researcher is analyzing student outcome data from a university. All identifiers were removed from the data before it was delivered to the researcher.</p> <p>Online studies using survey software (e.g., Qualtrics) can generally be completed with anonymity. However, this is not always the case as Qualtrics has a setting to collect IP (Internet Protocol) addresses. In order to be considered anonymous, the researcher must report in their protocol that the survey software will be set so that it does not collect IP addresses which could identify the computer user.</p>	<p>The participant is asked to supply information that could potentially identify that participant (name, place of work, school, audio and video recording)</p> <p>Surveys conducted in-person may be considered confidential rather than anonymous, as the investigator can place the subject, even if the investigator has collected no other identifying information.</p>

<p>Responsibility of the researcher to protect data</p>	<p>Even conducting a survey online does not guarantee anonymity: computers have IP (internet protocol) addresses by which a user may be identified. The investigator, therefore, must ensure s/he uses survey software that does not track IP addresses.</p> <p>Let the participant know that data will be analyzed at the group level in order to de-identify participants. Identifying numbers will not be presented in the results of the analyses.</p>	<p>Limit access to the data to as few individuals as possible</p> <p>Code the data whenever feasible</p> <p>Store hard copies of the data in locked cabinets in locked rooms</p> <p>Store the data, master code list, and informed consent forms in separate locations.</p> <p>Store electronic data on an encrypted computer or server. Upload data on an encrypted server promptly (do not wait until all data is collected)</p> <p>Transfer (from person to person, place to place) the data (field notes, recorded interviews, informed consent forms) promptly and securely</p> <p>Transcribe recorded data as soon as possible and destroy original recordings</p> <p>Delete identifiers as soon as is feasible</p>
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