

## Evaluation Framework: Surveys

This evaluation framework will give you a hands-on guide to carry out a simple ‘before and after’ (Pre/Post) survey to evaluate your local Arts on Prescription (AoP) programme. Surveys are a great evaluation method if you want to assess

- How participants’ mental health and wellbeing change over time.
- Participants’ satisfaction with program activities.

Survey evaluations should be planned carefully **before** your AoP programme begins. Therefore, complete **Steps 1-3** before the first AoP workshop/activity, and **step 4** after the last workshop/activity.

If your programme is already running, you can still collect feedback from participants using a Post questionnaire only, to learn about participants’ experiences and satisfaction with the programme.

### Contents

<b>Four steps: Pre/Post survey in practice</b> .....	2
<b>1. Plan and prepare your questionnaire</b> .....	2
<b>2. Preparing the survey to your context</b> .....	3
<b>3. Collect data</b> .....	3
<b>4. Summarize findings</b> .....	5
<b>LEARN MORE</b> .....	5

## Four steps: Pre/Post survey in practice

### 1. Plan and prepare your questionnaire

Start by deciding what you want to learn. There are several measures that can be relevant to include in an AoP evaluation. Choose your survey questions to reflect the outcomes you hope to influence. For example, if your program is aimed at reducing loneliness, you should include questions capturing loneliness or aspects of it. The chosen measures are included in both Pre- and Post questionnaires.

**Think carefully about who will complete the questionnaire.** Questions should be understandable, relevant and appropriate for your target group. Avoid or carefully frame sensitive items (such as suicidal thoughts), as these may trigger discomfort or distress. Common measures for **mental health and wellbeing** used in AoP programmes include:

- Mental wellbeing - [SWEMWBS](#)
- Symptoms of depression - [PHQ-2](#)
- Symptoms of anxiety – [GAD-2](#)
- Loneliness - [T-ILS](#) (UCLA 3-item)
- Life satisfaction - Single item Life Satisfaction (example below)

**B20 CARD 9** All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays? Please answer using this card, where 0 means extremely<sup>12</sup> dissatisfied and 10 means extremely satisfied.

Extremely dissatisfied											Extremely satisfied	(Don't Know)
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10		88

It can be valuable to ask participants about their satisfaction with the programme. Such questions are included in questionnaires that are distributed after program activities, such as **the Post questionnaire**.

You can use a mix of scales and open-ended questions, for example:

- Satisfaction with AoP
  - o On a scale from 1–10, how satisfied are you with the activities/workshops that are part of Arts on Prescription? (1–10)
  - o Please elaborate your answer (*open-ended, text field*)
- Feedback on the programme

- Which aspects of the activities/workshops did you find most valuable? Please explain why. (*open-ended, text field*)
- Which aspects of Arts on Prescription would you change or improve? Please suggest possible changes or improvements (*open-ended, text field*)
- Recommendation of AoP to others
  - Would you recommend Arts on Prescription to others? (*Yes/No*)
  - Please elaborate your answer (*open-ended, text field*).

**Aim for short and easy to complete questionnaires!** Try to limit the number of questions to what you really need. Too many items can feel overwhelming and lead to lower response rates. A short, focused questionnaire increases the chance that participants complete both pre- and post-surveys, giving you better and more reliable data overall.

## 2. Preparing the survey to your context

When you have chosen which questions you would like to include, make sure that they are adapted to your local setting:

- Translate the questions into local language(s)
- Keep only those questions that are understandable among your participants.
- Include questions on specific symptoms relevant for your target group (e.g. questions on dementia symptoms, if participants are having dementia).
- Format the questions to fit with your chosen method of distribution, see next step.
- Even a quick “pilot test with one or two people” can avoid misunderstandings.
- Avoid complex scoring systems you cannot manage.

**Include an identification field** (e.g. participant name or ID number) in both pre- and post-questionnaires to allow matching data for before-after comparison. Importantly, only do this if it is permitted under local data protection regulations.

## 3. Collect data

Once your questionnaires are prepared, decide how you will distribute and collect them. Consider both your available resources (time, staff, tools) and what participants have access to (digital devices, stable internet, comfort with technology). Choose the method that fits your setting best. The most practical option is usually the most successful.

Common distribution formats include:

## Evaluation framework

### Surveys for evaluating your AoP program

- **Digital surveys** (e.g., via phone, tablet, computer): good when participants have easy access to devices and are comfortable using them.
- **Paper surveys**: suitable in settings where digital access is limited, or when in-person delivery feels more natural.

**Consider whether participants should complete the questionnaire themselves or be interviewed.** For some target groups, assisted completion or interviews may be more appropriate than self-administered surveys. However, this approach can make it harder to ensure anonymity and may introduce bias. For example, if participants adjust their answers to please the interviewer. Balance accessibility with data quality when deciding.

We recommend that:

- The pre-questionnaire is completed at the start of the first AoP workshop or activity
- The post-questionnaire is completed at the end of the final AoP workshop or activity

It is our experience that this timing increases the likelihood that participants complete both surveys and ensures that support is available if needed. It also provides a natural moment for facilitators to remind participants that:

- Participation is voluntary
- They can skip any questions they prefer not to answer
- There are no right or wrong responses

We further suggest briefly explaining the purpose of the survey on the first page of your questionnaire, including the points above. This may help participants understand that their honest feedback is important and may be used to improve the programme. If the answers will be handled anonymously, please also note this on the first page.

#### **Keeping response rates up!**

- Keep the survey short
- Remind participants at the right time
- Encourage facilitators to explain *why* the survey matters
- Send out reminders if using digital surveys

#### 4. Summarize findings

After you have collected both pre- and post-questionnaires, store completed questionnaires securely and delete identifiable data when no longer needed, following your local data protection rules.

Transfer data into **Excel or another simple spreadsheet tool**. This will allow you to:

- Compare average scores before and after the programme
- Count how many participants improved, stayed the same or worsened
- Look through comments to understand experiences, satisfaction and suggestions

Even basic functions in Excel are enough for this type of before–after evaluation. You do not need advanced software to get useful insights.

***Remember that before–after surveys cannot show whether the AoP programme caused the changes.*** They show how participants changed during the programme period, but not what caused change – which still provides valuable insights.

## LEARN MORE

Visit the section on evaluation in the online AoP guide for more tips on planning and conducting your evaluation: <https://aop.ndphs.org/themes/evaluation/how/?cat=1>

### Authors

Stine Arp & Carsten Hinrichsen  
University of Southern Denmark

**Interreg**  
Baltic Sea Region



Co-funded by  
the European Union



RESPONSIVE PUBLIC SERVICES

**Arts on Prescription**

**SDU**   
University of  
Southern Denmark