The aim of a basic table

Put simply, the purpose of a basic table is to report the responses to a question in the questionnaire, presenting the number of respondents who gave each response to the question. These numbers are usually expressed as percentages in order to make them easier to interpret, and are analysed against a breakdown of other key questions in order to show which types of people have given each response.

The basic table structure

Simple computer tables are constructed using three basic building blocks:

The Base: Who goes into the table
The Downbreak: What goes down the side of the table
The Crossbreaks: What goes across the top of the table

Q1 Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your present job?

Base: all

	Total (A)	Chief Executive (B)	Finance & Resources (C)	Directorate Health and Community Services (D)	Children and Young People (E)	Housing (F)	Legal, HR & Regulatory Services (G)	Scale 1 - 6 (H)	Grade SO1 - SO2 (I)	PO1 - PO3 (J)
Total	1800	116	527	647	254	32*	180	495	383	401
Very satisfied	342 19%B	13 11%	106 20%B	110 17%	49 19%	7 22%	38 21%B	88 18%	64 17%	64 16%
Fairly satisfied	848 47%HV	60 52%	252 48%	292 45%	136 54%AD	14 44%	83 46%	214 43%	190 50%	197 49%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	269 15%EGLR	19 16%E	88 17%EG	109 17%EG	23 9%	8 25%EG	17 9%	84 17%L	62 16%L	63 16%L
Fairly dissatisfied	235 13%U	18 16%	58 11%	92 14%	29 11%	1 3%	31 17%CF	67 14%	45 12%	58 14%L
Very dissatisfied	95 5%CLR	5 4%	18 3%	42 6%C	15 6%	2 6%	11 6%	38 8%AJL	19 5%	17 4%
Don't know/no opinion	8 *	1 1%	4 1%	2 *	1 *	- -	- -	3 *	3 1%	2 *
Not stated	3 *	- -	1 *	- -	1 *	- -	- -	1 *	- -	- -
Satisfied	1190 66%DHSV	73 63%	358 68%D	402 62%	185 73%AD	21 66%	121 67%	302 61%	254 66%	261 65%
Dissatisfied	330 18%CL	23 20%	76 14%	134 21%C	44 17%	3 9%	42 23%C	105 21%L	64 17%L	75 19%L
Net satisfied	860 48%DHSV	50 43%	282 54%ABDG	268 41%	141 56%ABDG	18 56%	79 44%	197 40%	190 50%H	186 46%H

For any table there are various numbers and statistics that can be generated:

Absolutes: These are the 'real' numbers, i.e. the number of respondents giving each response.

Percentages: You can have column percentages, which read down the page or row percentages, which read across the page. If there is only one percentage shown for each "absolute" number, this is almost always a column percentage. Where a single response answer is required to the question, column percentages typically sum to 100.

The downbreaks

The downbreaks will generally be the range of all possible responses to a question from the questionnaire. This will include all the pre-coded responses that were available to the respondent or the codeframe created from the verbatim responses to open-ended questions.

Combination scores are calculated to include an overall score for responses in combination. The downbreak elements are sometimes ranked according to the frequency of response, if they are not already in a particular order.

Net scores are sometimes used. These aid communication of the findings, by reducing findings to a single figure, where a bipolar scale is used (eg satisfied / dissatisfied). Usually, the net score is obtained by subtracting the negative score from the positive score. For example, if 65% agree with a statement and 20% disagree, then the "net agree" score is +45 points.

The crossbreaks

The crossbreaks will generally be a set of demographic sub-groups whose answers are of interest in their own right, e.g. different age groups, social grades and so on. Key sub-groups based on important behavioural or attitudinal data are also included on the downbreaks.

Crossbreaks are often designed with the following considerations in mind:

- Ideally, every element will have a sample size of at least 100, so as to be able to interpret the data with confidence.
- Demographic variables are often shown in combinations rather than showing them separately, e.g. the Age break is broken down to those between the ages of "16-29" and "30-39" and so on.

Significance testing

Point 1: Each column in the tables has a letter at its top (see inside the orange oblong in the figure below).

Point 2: Next to certain percentages in the tables, there also appears one or more capital letters (see the "73% AD" inside the red box below).

If a percentage has a letter next to it, it means this figure is significantly higher than the corresponding percentage in the column headed by this letter. An example is shown in the figure below. The highlighted 73% has the letters "A" and "D" next to it. This means that the "73% satisfied" in this column is significantly higher than the "66% satisfied" in Column A and the "62% satisfied" in Column D.

	Total	Chief Executive	Finance & Resources	Directorate — Health and Community Services	Children and Young People	Housing	Legal, HR & Regulatory Services	Sca...
	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)	(H
Total	1800	116	527	647	254	32*	180	49
Very satisfied	342 19%B	13 11%	106 20%B	110 17%	49 19%	7 22%	38 21%B	8 1
Fairly satisfied	848 47%HV	60 52%	252 48%	292 45%	136 54%AD	14 44%	83 46%	21 4
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	269 15%EGLR	19 16%E	88 17%EG	109 17%EG	23 9%	8 25%EG	17 9%	8
Fairly dissatisfied	235 13%U	18 16%	58 11%	92 14%	29 11%	1 3%	31 17%CF	6 1
Very dissatisfied	95 5%CLR	5 4%	18 3%	42 6%C	15 6%	2 6%	11 6%	3
Don't know/no opinion	8 *	1	4 1%	2 1%	1 *	- -	- -	
Not stated	3 *	- -	1 *	-	1	- -	- -	
Satisfied	1190 66%DHSV	73 63%	358 68%D	402 62%	185 73%AD	21 66%	121 67%	30 6
Dissatisfied	330 18%CL	23 20%	76 14%	134 21%C	44 17%	3 9%	42 23%C	10 2
Net satisfied	860 48%DHSV	50 43%	282 54%ABDG	268 41%	141 56%ABDG	18 56%	79 44%	19 4