

A cross-sectional survey is a type of [observational study](#) that collects data from a population or a representative subset at a single point in time (or over a very short period). It is used to assess the prevalence of an outcome, condition, behavior, or characteristic within that population.

Key features:

- Snapshot in time — not longitudinal.
- Descriptive — often used to estimate prevalence.
- Associations — can explore relationships between variables but cannot establish causality.
- Population-based — often aims for a representative sample.

Example:

A 2025 survey of neurosurgeons in Europe asking about their preferred treatment for type II odontoid fractures in elderly patients would be a cross-sectional survey <sup>1)</sup>.

<sup>1)</sup>

Schär RT, Wilson JR, Ivanov M, Barbagallo G, Petrova Y, Reizinho C, Gandia González ML, Tessitore E, Maciejczak A, Gabrovsky N, Depreitre B, Shibani E, Demetriades AK, Ringel F. Treatment practices for geriatric type II odontoid fractures - A survey by the European Association of Neurosurgical Societies Spine Section. Brain Spine. 2025 Jun 14;5:104295. doi: 10.1016/j.bas.2025.104295. PMID: 40599220; PMCID: PMC12210293.

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