Questionnaires

A list of standardised questions written down in advance that are handed or posted to the respondent for self completion, producing quantitative data.

Questions can be:
- closed or ‘pre-coded’ which offer a range of fixed answers.
- open which leave a gap for the respondent to answer with any answer they wish
- scaled which ask you to rate your views/feelings
- leading questions lead the respondent towards a particular answer

Advantages:
P: cheap and easy so they are able to reach a geographically diverse sample. This increases rep and gen.
E: Minimum contact with the researcher reduces researches imposition (bias/effect). Sensitive topics can be asked about as the researcher is not presents, and anonymity can increase validity.
T: Positivist prefer this method because of the standardised nature of the questions and the rep and gen. They allow for objectivity and reliability. Statistics which are generated can be used to identify patterns/trends and social facts.

Weaknesses:
P: -Can suffer from poor question design- biased/leading questions.
-technical or difficult vocal or lack of clear operationalising (defining the concept) decreases validity.
E: -Standardised answers can be off-putting and not a ‘true’ reflection of complex social lives.
-People can lie on questionnaires and respondents can give socially desirable answers decreasing validity.
T: Interpretivists as they produce data low in validity. Standardised questions are not in depth enough for true accounts of social life. Limited verstehen and empathy.