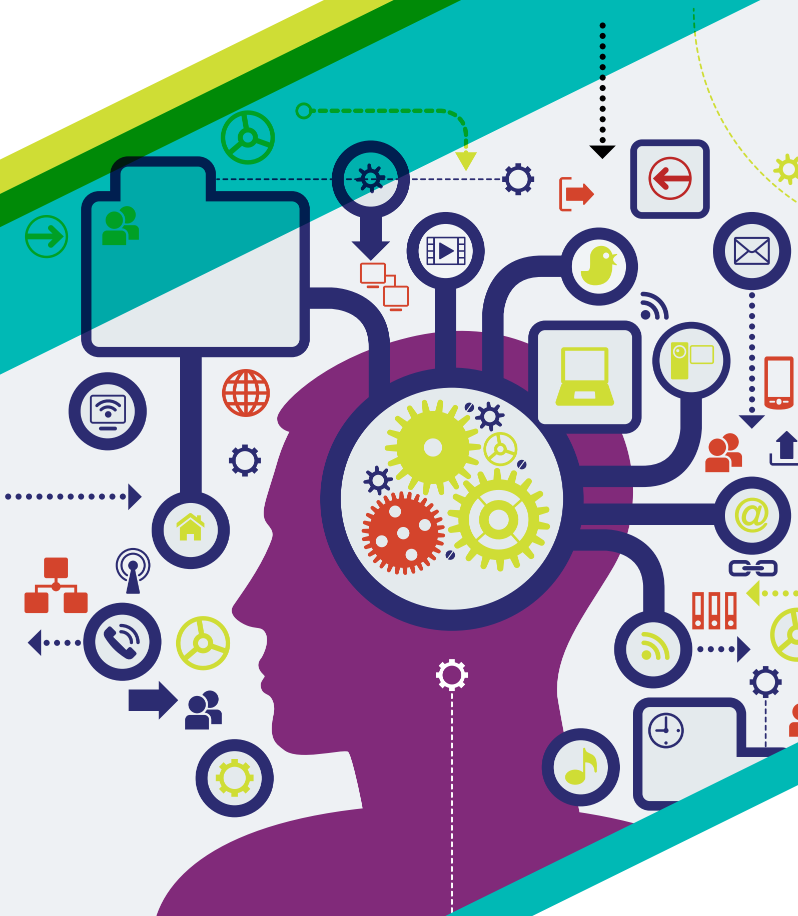
PANEL QUALITY:
OUR VALUES

ANSWERS TO ESOMAR'S 28 QUESTIONS



INTRODUCTION

The primary aim of these 28 Questions is to increase transparency and raise awareness of the key issues for researchers when considering whether an online sampling approach is fit for their purpose. A related aim is to ensure that what they receive meets their expectations.

This is an update to ESOMAR's 26 Questions to Help Research Buyers of Online Panels, which were also designed to facilitate consistent terminology use by providers when stating how they maintain quality and to enable buyers to compare the services of different suppliers.

ESOMAR has updated the text to take into account the on-going development of techniques. While some of the questions remain relevant, new questions have also been added in order to include the new techniques and technology in this area.

These 28 Questions complement ESOMAR's Guideline for Online Research, which was revised in 2011 to add updated legal and ethical guidance and new sections on privacy notices, cookies, downloadable technology and interactive mobile research.

COMPANY PROFILE

1. What experience does your company have in providing online samples for market research?

Research Now has been providing high quality, proprietary, research-only online panel samples since 2001. We are an independent single source for permission-based data collection across Europe, the Middle East, the Americas and Asia-Pacific.

We manage thousands of projects every month, for which we provide samples, survey programming, data processing and other field services, as requested.

These are executed by our industry-leading Programming and Project Management teams. We are experienced, research-literate, multi-lingual data collection specialists, servicing our clients across more than 20 offices worldwide.

SAMPLE SOURCES AND RECRUITMENT

2. Please describe and explain the type(s) of online sample sources from which you get respondents. Are these databases? Actively managed research panels? Direct marketing lists? Social networks? Web intercept (also known as river) samples?

All of our panels are actively-managed online access panels, which include the Valued Opinions® and the e-Rewards® opinion panels. The panels are proprietary and built over a decade of experience. All panels are localised, not just translated, with native language panel support and country-specific reward choices.

We run a multitude of recruitment campaigns, from email and online marketing channels with hundreds of diverse online affiliate partners and targeted websites to our various panels, supporting both “open enrolment” and “by-invitation-only” models.

“By-invitation-only” is a method of exclusively inviting pre-validated individuals, or individuals who share known characteristics, to enrol in our market research panels, partnering with a diverse set of globally recognised consumer and business-facing brands.

3. If you provide more than one type of sample source: How are the different sample sources blended together to ensure validity? How can this be replicated over time to provide reliability? How do you deal with the possibility of duplication of respondents across sources?

Research Now works to optimally blend our proprietary sample sources, according to guidelines provided by independent research advisors Marketing Inc.

We ensure transparency for our clients by informing them should an external panel partner be required to complete quotas.

To exclude duplication we assess the panel sources during the project set-up and apply Browser Fingerprinting technology. Browser Fingerprinting is centralised for all projects using a combination of our sample sources.

4. Are your sample source(s) used solely for market research? If not, what other purposes are they used for?

Yes, absolutely. *Research Now's* panels are used for market research purposes only. This applies to all of our proprietary panels across the world without exception.

This is done to prevent response biases and, therefore, the validity of the sample delivered.

5. How do you source groups that may be hard to reach on the internet?

We design recruitment campaigns to specifically target hard-to-reach population segments by selecting unique sources and applying tailored campaigns.

In order to guarantee our detailed knowledge of the specificities of our panellists, we employ hundreds of profiling attributes on our panels.

Due to the size of our panels we can drill down to incidence rates sub 1-2%. To facilitate this process, we have deeply profiled our panels and deploy carefully designed pre-screeners to collect information for niche sample targets, such as Finance, IT decision makers and ailments.

6. If, on a particular project, you need to supplement your samples with samples from other providers, how do you select those partners? Is it your policy to notify a client in advance when using a third party provider?

We ensure transparency for our clients by informing them should an external panel partner be required to complete quotas.

If a further source is required to complete quotas, we use external panel providers.

We only use trusted panel partners and operate on the basis of a preferred supplier list. We will always communicate to our clients in the event of using a non-proprietary panel.

Our dedicated team has thoroughly sourced and built a global database of panel suppliers. Before employing third-party sample, external providers must comply with a pre-identified set of questions and provide credentials. We would, for example, ask them whether they have specialty panels, which countries they can cover, their panel book and whether they have a set minimum incidence or a maximum Length Of Interview (LOI), etc.

SAMPLING AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

7. What steps do you take to achieve a representative sample of the target population?

Sample selection is based on the sample needs and client requirements for each individual survey. Ideally, a pre-profiled sample is used to minimise screen-outs and provide a better quality panellist experience. Customised sampling, e.g. nationally representative outgo, is also available.

Research Now balances the sample for clients on outbound, inbound, and completes quotas, using a wide range of targeting criteria from simple demographics to more complex behavioural and attitudinal profiling.

Once the sample has been selected, email invites are automatically randomised so as not to induce bias.

Sample can also be subject to category restrictions. This is a process whereby all projects are coded with subject tags so that respondents who have taken part in surveys on one of the pre-coded subjects over a stated time period can be excluded, e.g. a survey on alcohol in the last 3 months. As a rule, we apply major category exclusions to surveys on a three month basis. Criteria can be more restrictive on demand.

8. Do you employ a survey router?

Yes, in select countries with sufficient volumes of surveys and members to support proper randomisation, and only with client approval. *Research Now* has two router platforms, both of which use "second chance" routing technology. They are employed solely to redirect respondents who were terminated from a survey they had been invited to take in order to direct them to another survey. *Research Now* does not currently employ routers that initially assign respondents to surveys.

9. If you use a router: Please describe the allocation process within your router. How do you decide which surveys might be considered for a respondent? On what priority basis are respondents allocated to surveys?

We use routers to redirect members who did not match the qualifying criteria for the survey they were taking to one that corresponds to their demographic information. To be eligible, the invited members must not have exceeded panel participation limits.

10. If you use a router: What measures do you take to guard against, or mitigate, any bias arising from employing a router? How do you measure and report any bias?

Research Now only employs routers that reassign disqualified members to surveys, and does so randomly, without prioritisation or weighting. Total usage is less than one-third of all globally completed surveys.

11. If you use a router: Who in your company sets the parameters of the router? Is it a dedicated team or individual project managers?

Our Panel Operations and Research Standards teams are primarily responsible for router practices, configuration and settings. Their leaders also head a global team of sampling and research experts who assist with thought leadership and 'research on research'.

12. What profiling data is held on respondents? How is it done? How does this differ across sample sources? How is it kept up-to-date? If no relevant profiling data is held, how are low incidence projects dealt with?

We profile our proprietary samples (Valued Opinions® and e-Rewards®) using the same criteria. The collection and updating of this profiling is ensured via various approaches.

Basic demographic information (e.g. age, gender, region, household demographics) is collected at registration. A verification email and short survey are immediately sent to collect further profiling data. Panellists also have the option to enter profile information via their member page at any point.

Specific screeners or profiling surveys are run when *Research Now* is building a particular sub-panel (e.g. automotive, mobile phone habits or financial services etc.) or for a particular project. If the data collected as part of this process is re-useable, it becomes part of the member profile.

Profiling data is constantly updated. Panellists are regularly prompted to re-enter profiling criteria in order to ensure accuracy of segmentation and respondents.

13. Please describe your survey invitation process. What is the proposition people are offered to take part in individual surveys? What information about the project itself is given in the process? Apart from direct invitations to specific surveys (or to a router), what other means of invitation to surveys are respondents exposed to? You should note that not all invitations to participate take the form of emails.

At the time of enrolment, new panellists are asked to join an online market research panel. At this point, it is made clear that it is for research purposes only and that this is not part of a sales process.

In each survey invite, panellists are informed about the survey topic, in a topline, non-leading way, before participation. Panellists are rewarded for taking part in surveys with a structured incentive scheme, reflecting the length of the survey and the nature of the sample. Panellists are supported by a dedicated team and have the option to unsubscribe at any time. Panel Management is compliant with market research industry standards, data protection and privacy laws.

For examples of our Terms and conditions in individual markets, please refer to:

- http://www.valuedopinions.co.uk/terms-and-conditions/

- http://www.e-rewards.co.uk/memberagreement.do.

14. Please describe the (various) incentives that respondents are offered for taking part in your surveys. How does this differ by sample source, by interview length, by respondent characteristics?

Research Now uses an incentive scale, which is based on set time increments and the panellist's profile. For example, a medical practitioner would generally be paid a significantly higher incentive per completed survey than the average consumer.

The incentives to be awarded for these "specialist" opinions are discussed with the client, so that they are attractive enough to make cash rich/time poor individuals want to participate. All incentives are only awarded once the survey has been completed.

The incentive options allow panellists to select from a large range of gift cards, points programmes and partner products/services.

15. What information about a project do you need in order to give an accurate estimate of feasibility using your own resources?

In order to accurately assess whether we will be able to help with a particular project, we require the following information:

- Target country
- Profile of the target audience
- Desired sample size
- Expected incidence on targeted sample and/or incidence on general population;
- Presence of sub-quotas
- Length of the interview (as this can affect response and abandon rates)

With this data available, we will then be able to accurately measure the extent to which we will be able to deliver on a certain target or find solutions to help our clients collect the data they need.

16. Do you measure respondent satisfaction? Is this made available to clients?

We conduct member satisfaction surveys and project feedback studies.

We regularly measure panellist satisfaction with elements, such as frequency of invitations, value and diversity of incentives and redemption choices, their willingness to complete various lengths of surveys and our level of responsiveness to any questions or concerns they share with our Member Services team.

Additionally, at the end of selected completed surveys, we gather feedback from participants about their experience. This data is available to clients on an aggregate basis, as a benchmark for each of the surveys they run.

17. What information do you provide to debrief your client after the project has finished?

For projects where *Research Now* provides programming and hosting services, we capture all participation history, the date of entry and panel recruitment source for each member. Provided this does not involve the disclosure of personally identifiable information, *Research Now* is able to provide this to clients as a report on request.

For full service projects where *Research Now* hosts the survey, it is also possible to see a full survey activity report for each project.

The key statistics from such a report detail:

- Fieldwork dates
- Total number of survey invitations sent
- Number of surveys started
- Number of screen-outs/quota-fulls and survey drop-outs
- Number of completes

Additionally, we collect our panellists' feedback about their survey experience in order to measure their satisfaction. We can provide this data on demand. It can be helpful to spot strong points and weaknesses in the research design itself.

DATA QUALITY AND VALIDATION

18. Who is responsible for data quality checks? If it is you, do you have procedures in place to reduce or eliminate undesired within survey behaviours, such as (a) random responding, (b) illogical or inconsistent responding, (c) overuse of item non-response (e.g. "Don't Know"), or (d) speeding (too overly rapid quick survey completion). Please describe these procedures.

Data quality is at the forefront of *Research Now's* role as a provider of digital data so, for surveys where *Research Now* provides the programming and hosting, we will run a series of quality checks on the data collected.

We monitor the quality of our data as follows:

a. **Random responding** - Review of the data to ensure that answers are logical; we also have additional logic checks built into the script to ensure respondents cannot continue if they try to submit an illogical answer.

b. **Illogical or inconsistent responding** - This is monitored and detected by use of logic checks that are programmed into the script. To ensure that these are fully activated, the project manager completes the survey and attempts to bypass the logic. The Quality Assurance team will also re-check the link to ensure that the logic that has been programmed is operating correctly prior to the survey going live.

c. **Overuse of item non-response (e.g. 'Don't Know)** – *Research Now* refers to these respondents as flatliners. They are captured and removed from the final data during our quality checks.

d. **Speeding (overly quick survey completion)** - Responses where the completion time is less than 30% of the median length of the survey are identified across the entire sample. The project manager checks the route that the respondent followed to ensure they have not bypassed a significant section of the survey, along with a sense check of any verbatim. If this is found to be the case, they are classified as speeders and removed from the final data.

We work closely with our clients in order to reduce occurrences of survey offending and monitor offenders, employing different techniques to address the behaviour of respondents who regularly provide poor quality data.

A well-designed survey has often proven to be the best way to reduce data quality issues. *Research Now* can help clients and provide feedback based on their rich experience and industry best practice.

19. What limits, if any, do you place on solicitation for surveys? i.e. how often can any individual be contacted to take part in a survey whether they respond to the contact or not? How does this vary across your sample sources?

Each panellist is assigned an individual ID, so that we can record their entire survey participation history. This means that we can carefully select panel members for each survey to ensure that they are not only relevant, but also not over-contacted.

We therefore have limits on how many survey invitations panellists are sent. These limits vary depending on country and sample source, from a maximum of one invite every 24 hours to one every 8 hours for our B2C panellists, with a much lower limit applied to our most hard-to-reach respondents, such as C-Level panellists, in order to protect them from excessive pressure. For an additional level of protection, we also impose cumulative weekly and monthly limits on participations.

Upon request, we can exclude respondents who have participated in either a survey on the same topic or for the same client from being re-invited. The timeframe on these limits can be stipulated by the client.

20. What limits, if any, do you place on survey participation, i.e. how often can any individual take part in a survey? How does this vary across your sample sources? How do you manage this within categories and/or time periods?

In order to avoid "professional" panellists, we limit survey participation. This avoids excessive survey participation, which would otherwise create survey fatigue and potential bias.

We place a limit on both the number of invites available to all our members and on the number of qualified completes. B2B respondents have additional levels of protection from being overused.

21. Do you maintain individual level data such as recent participation history, date of entry, source, etc., on your survey respondents? Are you able to supply your client with a per-job analysis of such individual level data?

We hold the entire survey participation history of every respondent on our panel.

Each panellist is assigned an individual ID number – this stays with them throughout their panel membership and allows us to track their history, date of entry, source, etc.

We can also provide per-job analysis to clients.

22. Do you have a confirmation of respondent identity procedure? Do you have procedures to detect fraudulent respondents? Please describe these procedures as they are implemented at sample source registration or at the point of entry to a survey or router. If you offer B2B samples, what are the procedures there, if any?

We have a series of defined processes in place to ensure the high quality of our respondents. It includes checking for duplicate respondents by looking at variables, such as email address, matches across several forms of demographic data, as well as device-related data through our use of Imperium's Relevant ID .

Over the course of their membership, our Quality Management systems help us confirm the identities of all our panels. Additionally, the nature of our "by-invitation only" panellists allows us to be fully confident in their demographic details.

Research Now offers True Sample in the US, UK, Canada and Germany. With TrueSample, panellist identity is validated using 3rd party databases.

A second series of processes help us identify invalid responses and, consequently, eliminate the offenders.

POLICIES AND COMPLIANCE

23. Please describe the 'opt-in for market research' processes for all your online sample sources.

All our panellists are required to double opt-in.

New panellists who enrol complete our website panel registration form. An email is then deployed to further confirm that they consent to opt-in to the panel.

New panellists who re-confirm their opt-in become a part of the active panel and are eligible to be invited to participate in surveys.

Panellists who do not re-confirm their opt-in will not be activated or contacted to participate in a survey.

24. Please provide a link to your Privacy Policy. How is your Privacy Policy provided to your respondents?

We follow all regional, national and local laws with respect to privacy and data protection. As such, the privacy policy for each panel adheres to local law.

We ensure our panels comply with all applicable industry standards set by ESOMAR, MRS (UK), AMSRS (Australia), BVM (Germany), CASRO (US), MRA (US), MRIA (Canada), etc.

This includes, adhering to the following guidelines:

- Voluntary cooperation of panellists
- Protection of researchers' and respondents' identities
- Terms & Conditions and Privacy Policies compliant with local laws
- State-of-the-art data security policies and measures
- Reliable and validated data procedures
- Strict adherence to rules governing the interviewing of children and young people

In our main markets, panel privacy policies are audited and approved by Trust-e, the online privacy trust mark.

For examples of our privacy policies in individual markets, please refer to:

- http://www.valuedopinions.co.uk/privacy-policy/
- http://www.e-rewards.com/privacypolicy.do

25. Please describe the measures you take to ensure data protection and data security.

Data Protection

Research Now follows all local data protection regulations. Our Training teams conduct extensive training on Data Protection with client-facing staff, highlighting industry (MRS, CASRO, etc.) and legal recommendations. Our in-house legal team is available for advice in any situation. As a sign of our dedication to data privacy, our largest country panels are all approved by TRUSTe, the industry's most widely recognised and respected privacy seal. Our Australian branch is ISO 20252 accredited, further proof of our commitment to quality.

Data Security

We have secure servers to carry out the collection of survey data. Sampling is undertaken using highly encrypted links to the database servers. Personal information is fully protected and can only be communicated following a strict procedure. We also use randomisation procedures to ensure that there is no preferential treatment of certain parts of the database. Our sampling teams do not have direct access to the database to reveal the identity of users.

Survey data remains anonymous and is linked to the panel database using numeric IDs, so the identity of the end-user (panellist) is always protected.

26. What practices do you follow to decide whether online research should be used to present commercially sensitive client data or materials to survey respondents?

Once fieldwork is commissioned, we will make sure the client is comfortable with any commercially sensitive material being presented or discussed in the course of the project.

During sign-up, our panellists agree that they will treat the information they are shown in the strictest confidence.

There are two levels of security features for scripting: standard security is applied by default to all projects, while premium security is only enabled on request and may incur an additional charge to the client.

Among the solutions developed by our scripting teams, we have, for example, tools to disable screenshots and copy-pasting, circumvent video buffering and use streaming, so that the web browser cannot store the content. We also have ways to watermark an image with our respondent's ID number.

27. Are you certified to any specific quality system? If so, which one(s)?

Research Now has established a defined project management process for each of the thousands of projects managed around the world each month. This is supported by a carefully documented procedure form, which is managed and maintained by our project managers from project kick-off to delivery.

In APAC, our Australian office complies with ISO 20252 management system standards.

28. Do you conduct online surveys with children and young people? If so, do you adhere to the standards that ESOMAR provides? What other rules or standards, for example COPPA in the United States, do you comply with?

We occasionally conduct online surveys with children and young adults.

In these instances, we adhere to ESOMAR standards and all applicable local regulatory and legal requirements, including COPPA in the US.

When we target respondents that are below the legal age to participate, they are recruited via their parent/guardian and only interviewed with parental permission.

Parents are provided with full details about each survey and its objectives. They can also view the survey prior to the child, should they wish.

/ResearchNowUK
@ResearchNowUK
company/Research-Now
www.researchnow.com
London: +44 (0) 207 084 3000
infoIE@researchnow.com