



ESOMAR 26

The ESOMAR Guide to Conducting Research on the Internet contains a section with 26 questions. The questions were designed to help researchers discuss online access panel research methodology by creating a framework and language for dialogue.

Company Profile

What experience does your company have with providing online samples for market research?

Since 2003, **Panel Direct** has been known for our strength in providing sample for highly specialized fields such as Business Decision Makers, IT Professionals, Ailment Sufferers, and Healthcare Professionals. We also are particularly proud of our precise, census-balanced general market Consumer and Corporate Consumer projects, regardless of the number of completes required for the project, from smaller studies to tens of thousands of completes.

Today, **Panel Direct** also supplies the largest online Community firms with highly-involved, excited, responsive panelists for both consumer and B2B market research needs. With over 500 targeted data points and specialized panel, **Panel Direct** provides clients with precision targeting to achieve fast, accurate and robust results. The quality of our panel, along with **Panel Direct's** unwavering commitment to exceeding client expectations, has built our long term relationships and is the cornerstone of our success.



Sample Source

Please describe and explain the types of source(s) for the online sample that you provide (are these databases, actively managed panels, direct marketing lists, web intercept sampling, river sampling or other)?

Our actively managed panel was grown from the ground up through participation in live focus groups and telephone surveys as well as through leveraging our previously existing qualitative database.

Panelists are currently recruited via a controlled mix of opt-in email lists, online social networking websites, twitter, targeted panel referrals, banner advertisements, newspaper classified advertisements, elite alumni networks and other media.

Our panel is more than just a database!

By providing our panelists with their own member page, they have an interactive communication tool to keep their profile robust with changes in their lifestyle as they happen. Whether they need to update their information, review the status of a check request, or contact us regarding any concerns they have, our panelists have the power to do so through the online member page.

To encourage active participation, reminder emails are sent to our panel 6 times per year, encouraging them to update their profile as well as to inform panelists of any new developments in the **Panel Direct** community.



What do you consider to be the primary advantage of your sample over other sample sources in the marketplace?

How our panel was built – focus group participants.

We built our panel from respondents who were interested in participation in live in-person focus groups and telephone surveys, not co-registration, so you are likely to find unique, validated members, not found in other online panels.

Since our panel is also used for focus group and telephone surveys, our teams have had personal contact with a large number of the members of our panel, which is really a unique factor of **Panel Direct**.

If the sample source is a panel or database, is the panel or database used solely for market research? If not, please explain.

Yes, our online panel is used exclusively and solely for paid market research.

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

Given that our panel is built a little differently than other online vendors and is also used for highly compensated qualitative research, we may already have some of those harder-to-reach segments.

If we don't have sufficient sample to supply all of the completes required for a successful project, we can phone recruit to the web survey, either from our database or lists or, in the case of physicians, from faxed invitations.

What are people told when they are recruited?

Panel members have been asked to join a voluntary community of individuals to share their thoughts and opinions on a variety of subject matters for market research purposes only. As an expression of our appreciation, they will be compensated for their time.



Panel Recruitment

If the sample comes from a panel, what is your annual panel turnover/attrition/retention rate and how is it calculated?

Our average panel turnover/attrition rate is 15% annually.

We base this average on panel opt-out requests, as well as undeliverable emails that return either a one-time hard bounce or repeated soft bounces, and purged panel members.

While we do not immediately remove non-responders within our panel since we allow panel members to select in which surveys they'd like to participate, we do flag a panel account after three months of inactivity until we can verify their continued interest in participation. The average tenure of an active panelist is just over 24 months from the date they double opt-in.

Please describe the opt-in process.

Panel members are required to double opt-in through voluntary sign-up on our website and then through a confirmation link in a follow-up email sent to the email address provided upon sign-up.

Do you have a confirmation of identity procedure? Do you have procedures to detect fraudulent respondents at the time of registration with the panel? If so, please describe.

Panel Direct takes confirmation of identity extremely seriously and has multiple procedures used to detect and purge fraudulent respondents at the time of registration. These include use of a backend algorithm to check panel members mailing addresses (which are later verified against USPS records), detection of previously registered email addresses, examination of IP addresses, placement of temporary survey cookies, and proxy server detection.



What profile data is kept on panel members? For how many members is this data collected and how often is this data updated?

In addition to all mandatory fields in the sign up process which include basic socio-demographic information such as gender, age, ethnicity, location, level of education, household income, etc., we also maintain over 500 unique voluntary data points. These include number of employees at company, position, industry, decision making authority, car make/model, and many more.

Panel members are allowed to update their data at any time via their own unique member profile page and are reminded to do so 6 times per year via email.

We typically update our panel targeting capabilities twice per year unless a trend has developed within our industry with a growing or pressing need for profiling. When this is the case, we immediately revise our profiling to accommodate the necessary data points.

What is the size and/or the capacity of the panel, based on active panel members on a given date? Can you provide an overview of active panelists by type of source?

Our panel contains just over 550,000 US based panelists.

Panel Direct defines an active panelist as one who participates in studies for which they would qualify by giving open and honest answers and in-depth open ended responses. These members should have attempted a survey in the past 12 months and have fully completed the double-opt in process. Currently, 90%+ of our panel is considered “active”.



PANEL AND SAMPLE MANAGEMENT

Please describe your sampling process including your exclusion procedures, if applicable. Can samples be deployed as batches/replicates, by time zones, geography, etc? If so, how is this controlled?

Our sampling process begins with a client call to confirm their specific needs as they may differ depending upon individual project specifications. Once discussed, we'll target specific data points that are relevant to qualify for their survey. There are numerous approaches we can deploy such as response-based randomized sample, targeted sample or pre-screened sample.

Samples are always deployed in waves, usually beginning with a soft launch of about 10% of entire available sample. Waves can be controlled by time zone, geography (regions, DMAs, zip codes, etc.), and by other means as available and requested by the client. This is controlled manually by the Project Director and team in charge of managing the invitations as well as by internal processes responsible for sending the invitations in controlled batches.

Explain how people are invited to take part in a survey. What does a typical invitation look like?

Panel members are invited to take part in a survey via an email invitation. Typical invitations are very generic, indicating the length of the survey and the incentive for completion. It is extremely important to maintain generic email invitations to never create bias based on interest of topic.

Mindful of the panelist's experience, every survey invitation contains instructions on how to claim incentive payment, an easy opt-out link and an email link for questions or concerns.



Please describe the nature of your incentive system(s). How does this vary by length of interview, respondent characteristics, or other factors you may consider?

Panel members are paid either a cash incentive upon completion of any online survey or are awarded entries into a monthly raffle/sweepstakes.

Cash incentives begin at \$1 and increase depending on the incidence, length of survey, and other qualifying criteria.

Raffle/sweepstakes entries are determined by whether a panel member successfully qualifies and completes the survey or is disqualified prior to completion.

All incentives are built into the cost-per-complete (CPC) provided in the original bid. Once a respondent has earned an account balance of \$20.00, they may request a check from us sent to their verified mailing address on file.

How often are individual members contacted for online surveys within a given time period? Do you keep data on panelist participation history and are limits placed on the frequency that members are contacted and asked to participate in a survey?

Our panel members may complete no more than 2 surveys in any given month and receive a maximum of 4 survey invitations/reminders for the same study. Our standard 2 survey per month rule can be relaxed for a client upon request if additional sample is required.

We do maintain panel member's participation history.



POLICIES AND COMPLIANCE

Is there a privacy policy in place? If so, what does it state? Is the panel compliant with all regional, national and local laws with respect to privacy, data protection and children e.g. EU Safe Harbour, and COPPA in the US? What other research industry standards do you comply with e.g. ICC/ESOMAR International Code on Market and Social Research, CASRO guidelines etc.?

Yes, we have a privacy policy in place stating our collection of a panel member's private, personal information, the direction to third-party sites for survey taking purposes only, collection of aggregate information, the possibility of "cookie" placement, the ability to opt-out of our panel, the in-ability for children under the age of 13 to sign-up, site security, and the ability to contact us at any time. A link to our privacy policy is provided below:
http://www.focusfwdonline.com/privacy_policy.html

To the best of our ability, Panel Direct is compliant with all laws in respect to privacy, data protection, and children. This is spelled out in our privacy policy above. Specific mention is made to COPPA and, because our panel is U.S. only, EU requirements are not applicable.

We also comply with all CASRO and MRA rules and regulations and proudly display the CASRO verification seal on our website to ensure clients we do meet industry standards.



What data protection/security measures do you have in place?

Panel Direct stores all respondent information within secure password protected data storage areas. Our storage areas are secured by industry standard firewalls and stringent IT security policy framework.

Regarding data security, **Panel Direct** uses IP address detection, determining of proxy servers, profile scanning, and other internal measures to protect data and silently purge professional and fraudulent respondents. We also rely on survey programming to guard against straight-lining and loss of concentration, and regularly advise our clients on implanting these verification measures within the survey programming.

We also suggest client feedback on each and every study in order to remove panel members not providing legitimate data so as to never again use these members for future survey invitations, ensuring our panel is consistently kept fresh, authentic, and responsive.

Do you apply a management system? Please describe it.

We are always dedicated to increasing the quality of our internal processes. Our management team is trained to continuously recommend and carry out better ways to improve the quality of our systems.

Do you conduct online surveys with children and young people? If so, please describe the process for obtaining permission.

Yes, we do field surveys requiring the participation of children and/or young people. We contact the parents, informing them the study is for their child and then they can make the decision as to whether their child can participate or not.



PARTNERSHIPS AND MULTIPLE PANEL MEMBERSHIP

Do you supplement your samples with samples from other providers? How do you select these partners? Is it your policy to notify a client in advance when using a third party provider? Do you de-duplicate the sample when using multiple sample providers?

Only when required, and with permission from our client, will **Panel Direct** supplement with sample from other providers. When this is the case, our partner providers must pass our data quality process to ensure elimination of duplicates, speeders, and cheaters. All of our partners are verified to ensure they abide by the standards of conduct prescribed by the leading market research associations. They all must have an excellent reputation within the industry and are held to the same standards to which our clients hold us, in terms of data quality and customer service.

Do you have a policy regarding multi-panel membership? What efforts do you undertake to ensure that survey results are unbiased given that some individuals belong to multiple panels?

This is obviously an issue we frown upon and to which we prefer our panelists do not take part. However, it is also something that can not be easily monitored unless all panel providers shared panel information. We make every effort to ensure we recruit only the highest quality panel members and our recruiting methods are chosen based on this very issue. For example, we do not recruit via co-registration websites in order to ensure we are not recruiting panel members already registered with other market research firms. When we do find a “professional” or multi-panel member within our panel, we flag them as such and do not continue to recruit them going forward.



DATA QUALITY AND VALIDATION

What are likely survey start rates, drop-out and participation rates in connection with a provided sample? How are these computed?

Response rates can vary based on the metric used in the calculation of the response rate and whether they are computed based on the number of panelists who are sent invitations, click on a given survey link, and reach an end-page or they include the panelist who drops off from the interview before it is completed. Our response rates vary from 20% to 40% based on 5 days in field and one message reminder. Other factors such as topic, incentive provided, population being studied, and credibility of study sponsor when allowed to use their name and subject matter and the length of the interview all have impacts on response rates.

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

Yes, we maintain participant and project level data on all panel members and are able to provide this to our clients as requested.



Do you use data quality analysis and validation techniques to identify inattentive and fraudulent respondents? If yes, what techniques are used and at what point in the process are they applied?

Panel Direct institutes a variety of validation techniques commencing from the very first moment a panel member registers with us. Beginning with our double opt-in recruitment process, and continuing with checks including proxy server detection, IP address verification, past survey participation history, survey time testing, and use of unique survey links on each and every survey, **Panel Direct** silently purges fraudulent respondents to constantly ensure fresh, authentic panel members. **Panel Direct** also validates all panelist's first name, last name and physical address against 3rd party databases

Do you measure respondent satisfaction?

We make a very strong effort to keep our panel members satisfied to the best of our ability. Even though we can not control their experience within a particular survey, we respond promptly to all panelists help email and telephone requests.

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

We are able to provide any information that is relevant to the study at the request of the client.