ESOMAR 28 Questions

COMPANY PROFILE

1. **What experience does your company have in providing online samples for market research?**
    Context: This answer might help you to form an opinion about the relevant experience of the sample provider. How long has the sample provider been providing this service and do they have for example a market research, direct marketing, or more technological background? Are the samples solely provided for third party research, or does the company also conduct proprietary work using their panels?

    With a focus on quality online data, QRS undertakes in excess of 50,000 surveys per annum. We have an enviable reputation for conducting: Customer satisfaction & experience, Brand awareness & evaluation, Proof of concept, Tracking surveys, Hard to reach & niche participants, Online qualitative studies (OLFG, Bulletin Boards, Mobile Ethnography), Recruitment and management of online communities.

    Kaboodle MR is an established online panel managed by QRS Market Research, giving access to participants for focus group discussions, interviews, product testing, mystery shopping and other research studies.

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?**
    Context: The description of the types of sources a provider uses for delivering an online sample will provide insight into the quality of the sample.

    The primary source for QRS Business Professionals panellists is individuals who have taken part in B2B telephone market research surveys and have opted in to join the panel on the back of the research. We believe this focussed source of recruitment sets us apart, as we know that these panellists are genuine businesspeople who are engaged in the research process.

    To further build our network of professionals, we also offer an incentivised referral scheme, which encourages our panellists to recommend like-minded colleagues or contacts to register. The referral contacts are subject to rigorous validation checks, alongside their referees (discussed below).

3. **If you provide samples from more than one 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?**
    Context: The variation in data coming from different sources has been well documented.

Overlap between different panel providers can be significant in some cases and deduplication removes this source of error, and frustration for respondents.

The QRS Business Professionals panel is continuously monitored for potential duplicate registrations, with email address validation in conjunction with business demographics. A further layer of checks is undertaken with validation of survey responses and IP address duplication.

4. **Are your sample source(s) used solely for market research? If not, what other purposes are they used for?**
Context: Combining respondents from sources set up primarily for different purposes (like direct marketing for example) may cause undesirable survey effects.

QRS panels are used for the sole purpose of market research.

5. **How do you source groups that may be hard to reach on the internet?**
Context: Ensuring the inclusion of hard-to-reach groups on the internet (like ethnic minority groups, young people, seniors etc.) may increase population coverage and improve the quality of the sample provided.

Our recruitment methods are offline.

6. **If, on a particular project, you need to supplement your sample(s) with sample(s) 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?**
Context: Many providers work with third parties. This means that the quality of the sample is also dependent on the quality of sample providers that the buyer did not select. Transparency is essential in this situation. Overlap between different providers can be significant in some cases and de-duplication removes this source of error, and frustration for respondents. Providers who observe process standards like the ISO standards are required to give you this information.

If a project requires the involvement of a third-party panel provider to complete, QRS have a network of panel partners to call upon. All QRS's panel partners are trusted and renowned within the industry and we have years of experience of working together. This network of panel partners all fulfil QRS's expectations of quality and operational excellence.

SAMPLING & PROJECTS MANAGEMENT

7. **What steps do you take to achieve a representative sample of the target population?**
Context: The sampling processes (ex. how individuals are selected or allocated from the sample sources?) used are the main factor in sample provision. A systematic approach based on market research fundamentals may increase sample quality.

For certain target populations, we have the ability to generate representative quotas based on a sub-sample of the panel, and then use these quotas to obtain a balanced sample of the target population.

We select potential respondents that balance according to the quotas (based on an estimated response rate) and randomly sort the panellists in Excel. We then examine the quota variables and select the number of panellists who satisfy each target. We endeavour to maintain a sample representative of the general population whilst doing so.

We will exclude panellists from surveys based on level of engagement. We do not want to survey the same participants repeatedly. This exclusion is flexible based on industry and subject matter.

Sample is deployed/contacted randomly using our data collection software.

Quotas are set as define by the survey sponsor for each survey. Once the desired volume of responses is reached for a certain quota, the survey will thank and close anyone else that fulfils that criteria.

8. **Do you employ a survey router?**
   Context: A survey router is a software system that allocates willing respondents to surveys for which they are likely to qualify. Respondents will have been directed to the router for different reasons, perhaps after not qualifying for another survey in which they had been directly invited to participate, or maybe as a result of a general invitation from the router itself. There is no consensus at present about whether and how the use of a router affects the responses that individuals give to survey questions.

   QRS do not use a survey router.

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?**
   Context: Biases of varying severity may arise from the prioritization in choices of surveys to present to respondents and the method of allocation.

   QRS do not use a survey router.

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?**
    Context: If Person A is allocated to Survey X on the basis of some characteristics then they may not be allowed to also do Survey Y. The sample for Survey Y is potentially biased by the absence of people like Person A.

    QRS do not use a survey router.

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?**
Context: It may be necessary to try to replicate your project in the future with as many of the parameters as possible set to the same values. How difficult or easy will this be?

QRS do not use a survey router.

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?**
Context: The usefulness to your project of pre-profiled information will depend on the precise question asked and may also depend on when it was asked. If real time profiling is used, what control do you have over what question is actually asked?

Upon registration to QRS Business Professionals, registrants will be asked to provide the following information:

- Name
- Email Address
- Telephone Number
- Postcode
- Job title
- Job responsibility
- Industry
- Company turnover
- Company employee size

13. **Please describe your survey invitation process. What is the proposition that 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.**
Context: The type of proposition (and associated rewards) could influence the type of people who agree to take part in specific projects and can therefore influence sample quality. The level of detail given about the project may also influence response.

On each survey, panellists will be invited by email and will receive the following information:
- Length of the survey
- Incentive level
- A unique URL for the survey
- A link to the QRS Business Professionals website
- Link to QRS privacy policy
- Opt-out information

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

Context: The reward or incentive system may impact on the reasons why people participate in a specific project and these effects can cause bias to the sample.

Panellists receive incentives for participating in our research, typically cash or retail vouchers. Incentives vary by type and size according to survey length, longitudinal involvement, audience, and survey complexity.

Incentives are dispatched on a weekly basis or at the close of fieldwork, whichever is soonest.

15. **What information about a project do you need in order to give an accurate estimate of feasibility using your own resources?**
Context: The "size" of any panel or source may not necessarily be an accurate indicator that your specific project can be completed or completed within your desired time frame.

Feasibility can be estimated using the following information. This information informs whether QRS can complete the project in line with the client brief.
- Survey length
- Sample size
- Fieldwork length
- Incidence rate (if known)
- Quota profile, and if this deviates from the general population
- Screening criteria
- Survey channels (i.e. PC, Tablet and/or Mobile)
- Survey stimuli

16. **Do you measure respondent satisfaction? Is this information made available to clients?**
Context: Respondent satisfaction may be an indicator of willingness to take future surveys. Respondent reactions to your survey from self-reported feedback or from an analysis of suspend points might be very valuable to help understand survey results.

QRS has a well established 360° feedback platform (QRSi), where we measure and report on client, project manager, interviewer, and participant feedback. At the end of each completed survey, each participant is presented with optional satisfaction questions. These results inform operational actions and improvements. The results are made available for clients on request.

17. **What information do you provide to debrief your client after the project has finished?**
Context: One should expect a full sample provider debrief report, including gross sample, start rate, participation rate, drop-out rate, the invitation/contact text, a description of the field work process, and so on. Sample providers should be able to list the standard reports and metrics that they make available.

QRS provide the following information (in the form of expected metrics) prior to fieldwork and, if requested, in a fieldwork summary once data collection is closed:
- Fieldwork dates

- Incidence rate
- Survey length
- Quota breakdown
- Average length
- Incidence rate (broken down by quota if required

DATA QUALITY & VALIDATION

18. **Who is responsible for data quality checks? If it is you, do you have procedures to reduce or eliminate undesired within survey behaviours, such as (a) random responding, (b) Illogical or inconsistent responding, (c) overuse of item non-response (ex. "Don't Know") or (d) speeding (too rapid survey completion)?**
Context: The use of such procedures may increase the reliability and validity of survey data.

The quality of the responses gathered from the QRS Business Professionals is paramount. As such, continuous and rigorous quality checks are made on the data throughout fieldwork, so that the final output can be trusted:

- Participants are de-duplicated, so that the same participant cannot complete a survey twice. Our data collection software collects the participants IP address, browser version and type of device, and this is analysed to identify duplicates.
- Survey length is analysed. After 10% of the interviews, a median length is identified, and any responses that are below 40% of the median will be automatically excluded.
- The full data set is analysed for participants giving repeated mid-point responses or selecting the same code. Those that repeatedly select 'DK or N/A' responses will also be analysed and potentially removed.
- Participants who have not engaged with the survey by giving inattentive or nonsense free-text responses will have their responses analysed and potentially removed from the data set.
- To reduce the inclusion of bots in the data set, we include trap questions in the survey that only a human can correctly and cognitively answer. Those that answer incorrectly are not allowed to continue. These questions are updated during fieldwork so that bots cannot 'learn' the correct response.

19. **How often can the same individual be contacted to take part in a survey within a specified period whether they respond to the contact or not? How does this vary across your sample sources?**
Context: Over solicitation may have an impact on respondent engagement or on self-selection and non-response bias.

QRS would only contact an individual up to twice in any month.

20. **How often can the same individual take part in a survey within a specified period? How does this vary across your sample sources? How do you manage this within categories and/or time periods?**

Context: Frequency of survey participation may increase the risk of undesirable conditioning effects or other potential biases.

QRS would only contact an individual up to twice in any month.

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 project analysis of such individual level data?**
Context: This type of data per respondent including how the total population is defined and how the sample was selected and drawn, may increase the possibilities for analysis of data quality.

We store data of a panellist's recent survey activity, pertaining to which surveys they have taken part in, the date they joined the panel, their demographic profile, and their invite history. We can supply this information to clients, at their request, in aggregate form.

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 and/or at the point of entry to a survey or router. If you offer B2B samples what are their procedures, if any?**
Context: Confirmation of identity can increase quality by decreasing multiple entries, fraudulent panelists etc.

QRS has a number of validation checks during registration and during the panellist's tenure with QRS Business Professionals to identify and remove fraudulent registrants:

- Panellists cannot sign up with duplicate contact details. Allied to this, new registrants' email addresses, telephone numbers and postcodes will also be analysed against current panellists for similarities.
- IP addresses of new registrants will be analysed to ensure they match the native country specified during sign up.
- Panellists who have been flagged as poor-quality responders across multiple surveys will be deactivated from the panel.

POLICIES & COMPLIANCE

23. **Please describe the 'opt-in for market research' processes for all your online sample sources.**
Context: The opt-in process indicates the respondents' relationship with the sample source provider. The market generally makes a distinction between single and double opt-in. Double opt-in refers to the process by which a check is made to confirm that the person joining a panel or database wishes to be a member and understands what to expect (in advance of participating in an actual survey for a paying client).

To opt in to receiving invitations to market research surveys with QRS Business Professionals, panellists will complete the online registration and accept the terms and conditions of the membership. We will inform panellists of where and how we store their personal information and that it is confidential and only to be used for QRS Business Professionals research. Panellists are also requested to keep the research that they participate in confidential.

Panellists can opt out via any invite email that they receive. There is also an opt out/unsubscribe link in their member login.

24. **Please provide a link to your Privacy Policy. How is your Privacy Policy provided to your respondents?**
Context: Not complying with local and international privacy laws might mean the sample provider is operating illegally. An example privacy policy is given in the ESOMAR Guideline for Online Research.

https://www.qrs-research.co.uk/privacy-policy

This is available on the main QRS website, on the QRS Business Professionals website and on every invite, email sent to panellists.

25. **Please describe the measures you take to ensure data protection and data security.**
Context: The sample provider usually stores sensitive and confidential information on panellists and clients in databases. These data need to be properly secured and backed-up, as does any confidential information provided by the client. The sample provider should be able to provide you with the latest date at which their security has been evaluated by a credible third-party.

All data is encrypted during electronic transfer using Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure (*HTTPS*). Data is backed up nightly. QRS has Cyber Essentials Plus certification.

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?**
Context: There are no fool proof methods for protecting audio, video, still images or concept descriptions in online surveys. In today's social media world, clients should be aware that the combination of technology solutions and respondent confidentiality agreements are "speed bumps" that mitigate but cannot guarantee that a client's stimuli will not be shared or described in social media.

Data shared is held in a secure environment on the survey servers. If stimulus is particularly sensitive, then at the client's request participants are provided with the text of an NDA in the survey which they have to tick that they agree to abide by. Those taking part in qualitative research are required to sign an Honesty Agreement prior to taking part.

27. **Are you certified to any specific quality system? If so, which one(s)?**
Context: Being certified may require the supplier to perform tasks in a pre-determined manner and document procedures that should be followed.

QRS complies with all its requirements under UK Data Protection legislation. All work is conducted in compliance with the MRS Code of Conduct. QRS is certified to ISO 27001:2017 and ISO 20252:2019 and all work is undertaken in accordance with their quality control requirements.

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?**
Context: The ICC/ESOMAR International Code requires special permissions for interviewing children. These are described in the ESOMAR Online Research Guideline. In the USA researchers must adhere to the requirements of the Children's Online Privacy Act (COPPA). Further information on legislation and codes of practice can be found in Section 6 of ESOMAR's Guideline for Online Research.

Please see the following document on QRS's Child and Vulnerable Person policy:
https://www.qrs-research.co.uk/files/2020-07/child-vulnerable-adult-policy.pdf