ESOMAR 37 – RONIN International

37 questions to help buyers of online samples.

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Company profile

1. What experience does your company have in providing online samples for market research? How long have you been providing this service? Do you also provide similar services for other uses such as direct marketing? If so, what proportion of your work is for market research?

This answer might help you to form an opinion about the relevant experience of the sample provider as well as potential biases that might result from other uses such as being paid to watch ads or receiving a high volume of marketing messages.

RONIN International has been operating as an end-to-end international data collection partner to the market research and insights sector since 1998.

As of 2023, we have offices in London and Lancaster, in the UK, and a further operations centre in Hamburg, Germany, with telephone and digital recruitment teams. We also have sales and project management offices in New York and Hong Kong set up as local subsidiaries.

With more than 25 years' experience of conducting truly global online and telephone market research data collection under our belt, we pride ourselves in our ability to deliver real data from real people across the full quantitative and qualitative spectrum of methodologies.

All our work is for market research purposes. We do not offer any direct marketing services.

2. Do you have staff with responsibility for developing and monitoring the performance of the sampling algorithms and related automated functions who also have knowledge and experience in this area? What sort of training in sampling techniques do you provide to your frontline staff?

It is important to know if the provider's offerings have been designed by and are monitored by staff with knowledge of basic principles of sampling. This may be useful at the sample design stage as well as during fulfilment when quotas become difficult to fill or when weighting may be required. Ditto for any frontline staff who may serve as your main point of contact with the sample provider.

Our proprietary platform for verified market research participants, RONIN Edge, has been developed by our in-house development team. Leveraging decades of sampling and market research data collection experience combined with the latest tech in database management, our UI and UX expertise, and workflow automation, we delivered a best-in-class application to implement sound sampling strategies that meet project specifications at scale.

We have dedicated teams for ongoing development, database administration, sampling management and participant engagement that provide the backbone of our sampling operations, reviewing, challenging, and meeting the requirements of every project.

3. What other services do you offer? Do you cover sample-only, or do you offer a broad range of data collection and analysis services?

Depending on your company's capabilities, you may wish to work with a one-stop shop that can host your survey, produce basic tabulations, code open ends, and so on. There may be time and cost savings with this approach.

RONIN International is an end-to-end international market research fieldwork company.

In addition to quantitative and qualitative fieldwork services, we offer in-house scripting, hosting, translation, link testing, transcription, coding, and data processing services.

In addition, we regularly support our clients with the development of their screeners, questionnaires, discussion guide, and top line reporting

Sample sources and recruitment

ESOMAR broadly defines two models of sample sources and recruitment:

Panels

Databases of potential participants who declare that they will cooperate for future data collection if selected, generally in exchange for a reward / incentive. This includes traditional access panels and opt-in databases of individuals who agreed to complete research projects.

Intercepts

Includes intercepts from offer walls, affiliate networks, social media or other platforms to drive traffic to a survey. Intercept is an approach where potential participants are asked to take a survey for a reward while they are engaged in another, activity such as playing an online game, reading news, or some other online activity. Intercepted participants may be previously unknown to the sample provider or may have been pre-identified and profiled through a prior survey experience.

4. Using the broad classifications above, from what sources of online sample do you derive participants?

Sample providers may deliver sample from a single source, such as their own proprietary panel, or other panels. Or they may leverage a range of technologies and platforms to aggregate / blend participants from a combination of sample sources. Some providers may do both. Clarity about the sources being used will help you to understand what type of sample is being offered. This answer might differ from country to country and from project to project.

We leverage a broad range of channels to deliver online sample.

- **RONIN Edge**

  Whether it is to run feasibility checks or field projects, we can call upon c. 400,000 telephone-recruited verified participants who previously completed a study with us and consented to being contacted again for future market research purposes. This is enriched with company databases, such as the D&B Worldwide Database, WINMO, Crunchbase, and CISION.

  But every project is different—so we also specialise in providing ad hoc recruitment services to find the audience that matters to you, whether we've spoken to them before, or not.

  RONIN uses a combination of recruitment methodologies and sources to fulfil the project requirements of our clients, using telephone, digital, and desk research channels.

- **Telephone**

  RONIN can deploy up to 125 CATI seats across our London, Lancaster, and Hamburg offices to identify and recruit suitable participants using purchased sample from traditional or specialist list brokers, our own company lists, compiled over years of sampling work and regularly refreshed, or our clients' own lists or purchased lists, including end client customer lists subject to strict confidentiality requirements.

  All our telephone interviewers are trained in-house by our ISO 20252-certified trainer and conduct work in their native language, supported by in-house Supervisors and Quality Controllers to ensure we maximise the productivity of our lists.

- **Digital**

  Our team of digital research experts will identify the best networks or social media platforms to engage one-on-one with your target audience at scale, using platform metrics and our understanding of your specification to identify the profiles of relevant participants before inviting them to a screener call conducted by our teams or to complete a screener link to confirm they meet the exact project requirements. This might include platforms such as LinkedIn, X, formerly known as Twitter, Reddit, Stack Overflow, and similar local versions of these sites specific to individual markets.

  Where the universe size allows it, we will also run campaigns using platform-specific targeting metrics and parameters. Profiles are checked by our digital research team using manual and automated checks against quotas and quality flags.

- **Desk**

  Our desk research team specialises in pre-field secondary research to generate relevant sample frames or lists of suitable participants and experts, sense check the universe size and how best to engage; they will then reach out across e-mail and relevant platforms, as a complimentary solution to our digital outreach methods.

We may also work closely with carefully vetted local partners with in-country expertise or specialist coverage to ensure the best possible delivery of our clients' projects.

We do not use intercepts.

5. Which of these sources are proprietary or exclusive and what is the percent share of each in the total sample provided to a buyer?

This question will help you to understand whether the vendor is 'running' the source or 'marketing' the source. Running the source implies a closer relationship with panelists and a deeper knowledge of recruitment techniques. This may also help you to understand whether the sample is exclusively available from this provider.

RONIN Edge is a proprietary platform developed, managed, and owned by RONIN—we were delighted to be announced as finalists in the 2023 MRS Operations Awards in the Best Data Solution category. It houses all past market research participants we have engaged with who have agreed to take part in future relevant market research surveys with RONIN.

Alongside this, our internal fieldwork departments across telephone, digital, and desk will be responsible for all ad hoc recruitment, to ensure we reach the specific audience that our clients have defined as their key target, if we haven't spoken to these participant types before.

Where local partners are used, this will be determined at the project level where factors such as internal capacity, coverage, or highly specialist audiences require external support. Where this is the case, RONIN remains wholly in charge of the project and its delivery to our clients.

6. What recruitment channels are you using for each of the sources you have described? Is the recruitment process 'open to all' or by invitation only? Are you using probabilistic methods? Are you using affiliate networks and referral programs and in what proportions? How does your use of these channels vary by geography?

Understanding the method of recruitment and whether the recruitment is by invitation only will help you to understand the quality of the sample and how it may be used.

The sources described above are recruitment channels.

Our recruitment process is not 'open to all' and we do not invite self-registration. Participants can only be recruited to our platform if we reached out to them for a specific project for the first time, or if we run a specific and targeted recruitment campaign for a particular audience.

We do not currently use affiliate networks or referral programmes, nor have we in the past.

The recruitment channels we use vary based on a few factors, such as the country, sector, participant type and survey type—whether it's a standard quantitative online survey, a large-scale qualitative project with in-depth interviews, or a remote focus group—and adjust how participants are asked about future participation in market research to each channel.

7. What form of validation do you use in recruitment to ensure that participants are real, unique, and are who they say they are?

Understanding the level of recruitment validation undertaken by the sample provider will help you to mitigate effects of fraud in your projects. Working with providers who have fully developed strategies and are using up to date detection technologies is recommended.

RONIN applies a broad range of fraud detection and participant validation measures.

These are deployed across our quantitative and qualitative methodologies, at various stage of the market research process: starting from our initial recruitment and screening, followed by in-survey checks, post-fieldwork checks, as well as checks performed at the incentivisation stage.

We use a combination of internal and third-party tools to assist us in this process.

We deploy yet another layer of checks, de-duplication and related technologies in RONIN Edge.

If you would like to find out more about these processes, please don't hesitate to contact us.

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8. What brand (domain) and/or app are you using with proprietary sources? Summarize, by source, the proportion of sample accessing surveys by mobile app, email or other specified means.

By understanding the domain/app and method the sample provider is using with members, you will gain an indication of the extent of activity with those members and the quality of their relationship with the sample.

All our studies are recruited under the RONIN name, no matter the recruitment channel.

Once onboarded and after they have consented to future participation in market research, participants are imported into and managed from our RONIN Edge platform.

This will be a combination of telephone recruitment, email survey invitations, and social media or professional platform messaging platform outreach. Most of our projects will rely on a combination of approaches to make sure we fulfil our client's requirements, and where applicable, carry out a telephone screener after initial contact has been made with a prospective participant. Ultimately, we tailor our approach to what suits participants best.

We do not track onboarding method as an overall metric across all projects, as this figure tends to be audience- and sector-specific. This also changes country to country. We regularly report on this information at the project level and can share this with clients upon request.

9. Which model(s) do you offer to deliver sample? Managed service, self-serve, or API integration?

Sample provision is offered through three main channels: managed service, self-serve, and API (Application Planning Interface) integrations. In a self-serve model, buyers are given access to a platform which they can use to specify the audience they want to access, and manage all the steps of a research project, from sample design to launch to fieldwork management to closing. In a managed service model, sample providers will provide that service. API integrations are the mechanics which allow sample providers, buyers and data collection platforms to automate some aspects of the process.

RONIN only offers a managed services option, which can be tailored to our clients' needs.

Our preferred approach is to take on as much of the workload involved in setting up and running the study effectively, by taking ownership of our clients' exact specifications—starting from questionnaire review through to survey programming, translation, link checking, data collection, data checking, up until open-end translation and coding, and data delivery.

Of course, we understand that different clients have different needs, and so we often work with clients in a hybrid model, which can include using external links, our clients' own sample and lists or end client-supplied lists, list matching, doing initial desk research for client profile validation before the start of data collection, using our clients' translations, developing a code frame or using our clients' own code frame—and everything in between.

Similarly for our qualitative offering, we operate best when reviewing the initial screener, recruiting, screening, moderating, transcribing and, if required, providing a top line report of every interview in

English or local language—but we understand and can happily recruit for clients to moderate interviews, observe, or aim to achieve a combination of the two.

Ultimately, we believe in leveraging our decades of experience as a provider of market research data collection services to become trusted partners, adjusting our ways of working to whatever works best for our clients in providing a consistent and quality service offering.

10. If offering intercepts, or providing access to more than one source, what level of transparency do you offer over the composition of your sample (sample sources, sample providers included in the blend). Do you let buyers control which sources of sample to include in their projects, and if so how? Do you have any integration mechanisms with third-party sources offered?

It is well documented that different sources can produce different results. Consistency in source blending can be vital for tracking studies or other inter-survey comparisons. The use of a single, narrow source, such as a single supermarket's loyalty scheme, may result in unintended bias.

Our goal is to deliver quality data in line with client requirements on time and on budget.

Where this requires relying on multiple sample sources, for example to benefit for additional capacity, coverage, or niche audiences through local partners, we will do so to support the fulfilment of our clients' objectives and needs whilst retaining full control and responsibility over the quality of data that is collected and delivered on the project.

Whether or not multiple (third party) sources are used will depend on the requirements of an individual project and will be discussed with our client at proposal stage or during fieldwork.

11. Of the sample sources you have available, how would you describe the suitability of each for different research applications? For example, Is there sample suitable for product testing or other recruit/recall situations where the buyer may need to go back again to the same sample? Is the sample suitable for shorter or longer questionnaires? For mobile-only or desktop only questionnaires? Is it suitable to recruit for communities? For online focus groups?

By understanding the constraints of the sample being offered, you can understand if the actual sample available from the provider meets your particular research.

This determination cannot be made for categories as broad as specific research applications.

We will assess each request for proposal in detail before advising on the best recruitment methodology, taking into account factors such as, without limitation: country, audience type and seniority, universe size and incidence rate, time in field, duration and level of effort of the proposed market research activity, whether there are any restrictions on the nature or level of the incentive we can offer, and whether any other restrictions or factors apply.

The main objective is to deploy a recruitment methodology that is suited to your audience.

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Sampling and project management

What this section is about

Answers to the questions in this section will help you understand the processes and procedures that are undertaken to provide you with a sample of participants for your survey. You should understand what biases may be inherent in, or as a result of, the approaches taken and the likely severity of those biases.

12. Briefly describe your overall process from invitation to survey completion. What steps do you take to achieve a sample that "looks like" the target population? What demographic quota controls, if any, do you recommend?

The sampling process (i.e., how individuals are selected or allocated from the sample sources) may affect how random the sample is from within the sources proposed. Quota controls are commonly used to make samples look like the target population and, if done without thought, may be less than optimal for your particular project.

Most of the project carried out by RONIN do not require a representative sample: they need to fit the exact profile that our clients have determined and communicated as their **target audience**.

This is achieved through:

- Carefully crafted screeners that will effectively determine whether any given individual is relevant to the study based on their personal or professional characteristics. We take great care to ensure that the screener isn't leading participants to achieve bias-free recruitment.

- Targeting specific to our recruitment channel(s) to focus on the right pool within which suitable participants can be found, maximising the incidence rate of these participants within that audience with targeting designed around our client's specification.

    - This is adjusted dynamically based on quota allocation to ensure that we are focusing our efforts on the quota cells proving hardest to fill or yet to be filled.

- All recruitment efforts are one-sided: our teams will only reach out to a potential participant once we have determined they may be a fit. Potential participants have no way of accessing our surveys independently and cannot view potential survey opportunities in a survey router.

- As soon as a quota cell has been filled, our targeting is adjusted accordingly and any future participants that fall into a closed quota are prevented from completing the survey.

13. What profiling information do you hold on at least 80% of your panel members plus any intercepts known to you through prior contact? How does this differ by the sources you offer? How often is each of those data points updated? Can you supply these data points as appends to the data set? Do you collect this profiling information directly or is it supplied by a third party?

Targeting samples based on pre-existing profiles increases efficiency. Some bias may result depending on the precise questions asked, when they were asked, and to how many people. Appending existing information reduces the burden on the panelists in the survey itself.

We hold the following information on at least 80% of our RONIN Edge members:

- First name and last name
- E-mail address
- Phone number
- Job title or medical specialty
- Seniority
- Country
- Language(s) spoken

- Organisation information, including:
  - Ownership type
  - Employee count
  - Revenue
  - Sector/Industry
  - Address

- Study participation history

This data is updated every time we speak to participants.

We combine participant information collected directly from them with third-party sources, including secondary research and purchased company lists from list brokers and databases.

14. What information do you need about a project in order to provide an estimate of feasibility? What, if anything, do you do to give upper or lower boundaries around these estimates?

A sample provider failing to meet your sample requirements may require use of additional sample providers, adding time and complexity to the project. Trackers should be assessed in the light of any exclusion periods you may want to introduce that will reduce the available sample for subsequent waves.

At minimum, we need the following information to provide out clients with a proposal:

- Your **target specification** – who is your target audience?
  - What will determine whether a given participant can take part?
- **Number of completes required** – how many completed interviews are needed?
- The **estimated survey duration** – how long will participants take to complete?
- Any applicable **quotas** – Do have hard, monitoring, or interlocking quotas?
- **Incidence rate** (if known, or we can advise) – what percentage of people within a given, targeted population are likely to meet the qualification (screening) criteria?

The following information will help in refining the proposal:

- What is the **topic** of the survey?
- What kind of **deliverables** do you require? This can range from "sample only" where we recruit participants to your survey through to end-to-end data collection from survey programming through to data delivery in your format of choice, including tables.

15. What do you do if the project proves impossible for you to complete in field? Do you inform the sample buyer as to who you would use to complete the project? In such circumstances, how do you maintain and certify third party sources/subcontractors?

There may be good reasons why certain sample providers should not be used. For example, the provider may not have experience of operating in the geography relevant to your project.

We will only bid on and commit to delivering work we know can be delivered.

However, the nature of market research means that our best assumptions will not always hold when the project is running—a myriad of factors may come into play, including unknown unknowns. Our focus is on monitoring every metric that can impact the progress of a project and working collaboratively with our clients to take meaningful corrective action.

It is exceedingly rare that a project is 'impossible' to complete, and we pride ourselves in our resourcefulness and ability to deploy creative solutions to even the most difficult specs. Where we hit a wall, we will always communicate with our clients about these challenges and identify, based on your needs and our experience, the most appropriate solution available.

Where part of that solution includes using subcontractors, this is managed by our dedicated outsourcing department who are responsible for the sourcing, vetting and management of our trusted partners to ensure that your requirements are communicated and met, and that we supplement our internal efforts with providers that adhere to our own stringent guidelines.

16. Do you employ a survey router or any yield management techniques? If yes, please describe how you go about allocating participants to surveys. How are potential participants asked to participate in a study? Please specify how this is done for each of the sources you offer.

Biases of varying severity may arise from prioritization in the order in which surveys are presented to participants or the methods used to allocate a participant to one of the various surveys for which they may appear to qualify.

RONIN does not use a survey router.

17. Do you set limits on the amount of time a participant can be in the router before they qualify for a survey?

An excessive amount of time spent in a router answering screening questions may cause a participant to be become fatigued, potentially impacting data quality.

RONIN does not use a survey router.

18. What information about a project is given to potential participants before they choose whether to take the survey or not? How does this differ by the sources you offer?

The information about the survey (and associated rewards) may influence the type of people who agree to take part, creating the potential for bias.

The following information will be shared with potential participants during the recruitment stage, which is layered between first contact up until just before the start of the survey.

Project information

- Our internal project reference number
- A general description of the purpose of the survey
- The estimated survey length
- The date on which the survey will close (if applicable)
- The nature and value of the incentive we will offer participants, including a link to applicable terms and conditions attached to the incentive
- The name of our client

Company information

- Our company name
- Company contact details
- Who to contact with queries about the project
- Our physical office address and company number

Reassurances and opt-out

- Reassurances that:
    - Their answers will remain confidential
    - Their answers will remain anonymous, or where this is not the case, that we need their consent for their responses to be identifiable in the reporting
    - That their participation is voluntary and that they withdraw at any time
- A link to the relevant privacy notice
- A link to opt out from the survey

19. Do you allow participants to choose a survey from a selection of available surveys? If so, what are they told about each survey that helps them to make that choice?

The level of detail and the nature of the information given about a project may influence who responds, creating the potential for bias.

No, RONIN does not allow participants to choose surveys from a selection of surveys.

20. What ability do you have to increase (or decrease) incentives being offered to potential participants (or sub-groups of participants) during the course of a survey? If so, can this be flagged at the participant level in the dataset?

The reward or incentive system may have an impact on the reasons people participate in a specific project and these effects can result in bias in the sample.

RONIN can adjust the incentive level offered to participants at any time, including to specific sub-groups, including at various stages of the survey if the incentive level we are offering will vary depending on the answers provided by the participant during the screening process.

21. Do you measure participant satisfaction at the individual project level? If so, can you provide normative data for similar projects (by length, by type, by subject, by target group)?

Participant satisfaction may be an indicator of willingness to take future surveys. Participant reactions to your survey from self-reported feedback or from an analysis of the points where participants drop out of the survey may enhance your understanding of the survey results and lead to improvements in questionnaire design for future surveys.

We do not systematically capture participant satisfaction at the individual project level.

22. Do you provide a debrief report about a project after it has completed? If yes, can you provide an example?

You should expect a full sample debrief report. Sample providers should be able to list the standard reports and metrics that they make available.

RONIN provides project reports at various stages during the project, to give our clients full visibility over our progress, which is typically sent weekly or as otherwise agreed. We also performs a final job review at the end of every project to ensure that key learnings are documented for future projects and so we can share knowledge across the business.

We can provide end of project reports to clients tailored to specific requirements.

Data quality and validation

What this section is about

This section focuses on the quality of the in-survey data. In-survey data quality includes project level data validity and representativeness, survey-taking behaviours, sample blends, participant characteristics, and project level data health and audit practices.

23. How often can the same individual participate in a survey? How does this vary across your sample sources? What is the mean and maximum amount of time a person may have already been taking surveys before they entered this survey? How do you manage this?

Answers to this question may alert you to about the potential for bias due to the participation of professional participants, simply survey fatigue, or category bias.

RONIN Edge members will be paused for a period of 3 months from all surveys once they have been invited to take part in a survey. Depending on the outcome of their participation, this may be reset when the record is imported back into RONIN Edge, for example if they screened out.

All participation metrics are controlled by built-in RONIN Edge features.

24. What data do you maintain on individual participants such as recent participation history, date(s) of entry, source/channel, etc.? Are you able to supply buyers with a project analysis of such individual level data? Are you able to append such data points to your participant records?

You may wish to append data that enables you to analyse and trend data to look for potential biases based on participation levels, sources, tenure, and other data the provider may hold.

We capture and track extensive information on individual participants who have been onboarded to our platform, RONIN Edge, including contact and participation history.

We will track information including, without limitation:

- Onboarding date and methodology
- Consent history
- Participation history (including the project ID, outcome, and method)
- Country and language

Project analysis can be provided on a per-project basis, depending on what our clients' requirements are for reporting purposes, provided separately from our platform.

Where we are required to append certain information to participant records from their survey participant, this is typically subject to participant consent and local privacy regulations.

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25. Please describe your procedures for confirmation of participant identity at the project level. Please describe these procedures as they are implemented at the point of entry to a survey or router.

Given the widely acknowledged risk of fraud in online research, buyers should understand identity and fraud controls, not just at recruitment, but at the point of survey entry. It is essential that there be measures in place to ensure that participants are who they say they are and that the member or email account has not been hacked, is not a duplicate with other accounts from other channels or panels, and whether or not the account is shared by other members of the household.

All participants invited to a survey by RONIN have been specifically recruited against our client's specification based the exact requirements we have agreed for the target audience.

Participants cannot access surveys through a router or any other way than if our teams have reviewed their profile and selected them as potential participants.

26. How do you manage source consistency and blend at the project level? Regarding trackers, how do you ensure that the nature and composition of sample sources remain the same over time? Do you have reports on blends and sources that can be provided to buyers? Can source be appended to the participant data records?

Participant source is a known contributor to data representativeness. Knowing all the sources used for the project, especially for tracking and longitudinal research, and that the proportions from each source are known and reportable over time, will allow you to understand any population biases that might exist.

The sample blend on any given project is driven by our clients' specification.

Using survey quotas (which include source quotas) to carefully monitor and control source consistency between our internal recruitment sources (and partners, if applicable).

27. Please describe your participant/member quality tracking, along with any health metrics you maintain on members/participants, and how those metrics are used to invite, track, quarantine, and block people from entering the platform, router, or a survey. What processes do you have in place to compare profiled and known data to in-survey responses?

Buyers and providers often work together to track individual survey response quality, so buyers should understand what data the provider uses to confirm survey answers, block or remove a member, and how to enable that information exchange.

We have a range of tracking capabilities built into our RONIN Edge platform.

We will invite based on targeting characteristics, previous survey participation (including outcomes), consent status, validation status, and how much of a fit the participant is.

28. For work where you program, host, and deliver the survey data, what processes do you have in place to reduce or eliminate undesired in-survey behaviours, such as (a) random responding, (b) Illogical or inconsistent responding, (c) overuse of item nonresponse (e.g., "Don't Know") (d) inaccurate or inconsistent responding, (e) incomplete responding, or (f) too rapid survey completion?

Data cleansing methods are often built into survey programs and platforms. Some of those methods are set up to automatically remove responses, while others are optional or manual. Understanding what tools will be used will aid buyers in understanding how much cleaning they should plan to do once they receive the final dataset, and what biases might be introduced by automated cleaning practices.

RONIN has in-house survey programming, link checking, and data validation teams.

We have a range of checks performed before, during, and after data collection to ensure that we deliver data of the highest standard and quality, by identifying issues with both the script and questionnaire, if applicable, and with poor participant or fraudulent behaviour.

The following checks are in place when participants click on a survey link:

- Misalignment between IP checks, browser checks and device checks;
- A single device trying to access multiple links;
- Checks for clicks from public VPNs or VPNs with a poor reputation;
- If the survey-selected country is different from their current location;
- ReCAPTCHA on link access (if applicable to the recruitment methodology)

The following checks are in place during or after the survey:

- "**Speeder**" check

  This refers to the length of interview (LOI) between shorter than the median LOI for the survey, which is also assessed against the expected LOI for the survey. Any participants that fall below our internal threshold for a speeder check is flagged.

- "**Flat liner**" or "**straight liner**" check

This refers to questions in grid questions being given the exact same score multiple times in a row, suggesting that little (insufficient) attention was given to a question, and that the participant simply rushed through the grid to get to the next question.

- "**Pattern response**" check

  This is an alternative version of the flat liner, which refers to consistent answer patterns in close-ended data, suggesting that a participant is looking to evade standard checks by sticking to a pattern instead (sometimes called the Christmas Tree Pattern).

- "**Bad open-ended data**" check

  This means we will check individual open-ended responses to check for sense, grammar, syntax, and quality. We will flag participants once for each open-ended which does not meet our expectations because it is nonsensical gibberish, meaningless in the context of the question, contains profanity, or too short where long answers are expected (for example, where we expect or requested a few sentences in the survey).

- "**Inconsistent**" or "**unrealistic**" response check

  This refers to open-ended or close-ended responses which make no sense in the context of the survey (by cross-referencing certain data points) or by comparing our background knowledge on the participant against in-survey responses. A simple example of this would be to cross-reference the "age" and "experience in role" questions, if someone says they are between 18 and 24 but claim to have more than 10 years of experience in their current role. These checks are specific to the survey.

- "**Attention**" or "**knowledge**" check

  We will also include certain questions which any participant paying attention to the survey, or any participant who works in the specific role they say they do, would be able to answer. For example, we might ask a technical question in a survey with hosting engineers or developers. The most effective kind will be to insert a 'trick' option in an otherwise legitimate question, for example in relation to brand awareness of usage, to check how attentive participants are being when reviewing the brand list.

We typically steer clear from obvious "red herring" questions, which tend to be relatively ineffective at preventing bad behaviour from participants and can come across as disingenuous to genuine participants and result in their disengagement from the survey.

Ultimately, we believe that the responsibility does not solely rest on the participant, and that market researchers need to make a genuine effort to make surveys engaging, respectful of people's time and a good user experience, with a modern look and feel.

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Policies and compliance

What this section is about

Sample providers, buyers, and their clients are subject to data protection and related information security requirements imposed by data protection laws and regulations. In addition, they may be subject to laws and regulations that may impact incentives paid to participants.

These laws and regulations vary by jurisdiction with different laws and regulations applying in different countries or states within countries and are generally interpreted based on where the participant resides.

Applicable data protection laws and regulations include, but are not limited to: the Act on the Protection of Personal Information or APPI (Japan); the Australian Privacy Act (Australia); the California Consumer Protection Act or CCPA (state of California in the United States); the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act or COPPA (United States); the Data Protection Act (United Kingdom); amendments regarding data localisation requirements to the Data Protection Act (Russian Federation); the General Data Protection Law (Brazil); the EU General Data Protection Regulation or EU-GDPR (EU/ EEA); the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act or HIPAA (United States); the Graham-Leach Bliley Act or GLBA (United States); and PIPEDA (Canada). AB 2257 (the state of California in the United States) is an example of law and regulation related to employment which may impact incentives paid to participants.

Information security frameworks and standards include, but are not limited to COBIT, HITRUST, ISO 27001, the NIST Cybersecurity Framework and SOC 2.

Answers to the questions in this section can help you understand the data protection, information security and compliance policies, procedures and practices that a sample provider has implemented.

29. Please provide the link to your participant privacy notice (sometimes referred to as a privacy policy) as well as a summary of the key concepts it addresses. (Note: If your company uses different privacy notices for different products or services, please provide an example relevant to the products or services covered in your response to this question).

A privacy notice is required by various data protection laws and regulations as well as other laws and regulations as well some market research industry codes. A privacy notice discloses information about the personal data that a sample provider collects and processes and the way that that personal data is used, disclosed, and managed. A review of a sample provider's privacy notice can help you understand their procedures and practices related to personal data and the degree to which they comply with applicable laws, regulations, and industry codes.

Our general market research privacy notice is available from: https://www.ronin.com/privacy-notice.

This will apply to most of our market research projects.

It is communicated to participants whenever we reach out: it is available at the bottom of e-mails or messages we send, communicated to them by our telephone interviewers when first making contact, and/or on the introduction screen of our online studies for self-administered studies.

We take a layered approach to how privacy information is communicated to participants:

- Project-specific information in our initial outreach;
- Our general market research privacy notice;
- Additional privacy information, or confirmation of the above, in other documents (including, for example, consent forms for qualitative research, supplementary notices for certain geographies or requirements, or end client credential letters)

On some occasions, for specific market research activities or requirements, we will prepare a custom privacy notice that lifts from our main notice to communicate with participants in a more targeted manner about the requirements of a project. For example, where specific data processing needs will be required not currently covered in our general privacy notice.

Example of custom activities include:

- Creating and managing custom panels or communities for clients;
- Ad hoc customer satisfaction projects using end client lists where the privacy notice is tailored and agreed with our client to address those exact requirements;
- Innovative activities and projects

Using this blended and layered approach, we ensure that participants are communicated the full range of information required under the right of individuals to be informed, and for us to rely on their informed consent for market research purposes.

30. How do you comply with key data protection laws and regulations that apply in the various jurisdictions in which you operate? How do you address requirements regarding consent or other legal bases for the processing personal data? How do you address requirements for data breach response, cross-border transfer, and data retention? Have you appointed a data protection officer?

As noted above, buyers and sample providers are subject to data protection and related information security requirements imposed by data protection laws and regulations, other laws and regulations as well as clients. Understanding a sample provider's compliance position with these laws and regulations is essential.

RONIN is compliant with all applicable data protection laws and privacy regulations.

Our internal Privacy and Data Protection Policy governs out use of personal data across the organisation, including for market research purposes. It was published to address the requirements of the EU GDPR and it is updated at least annually, or more often as necessary, to ensure it remains aligned to changes in the privacy regulatory framework.

We have developed and implemented specific processes and procedures to sit alongside this policy, to ensure we can deliver consistently on these requirements across the business, including, where applicable, how to triage, manage, and respond to data breaches.

We appointed an internal Data Protection Officer (DPO) responsible for our compliance to these requirements across the UK, EU, and other territories where RONIN is established or otherwise subject to applicable privacy laws and regulations when running projects.

As an ISO 20252- and ISO 27001-certified organisation, we also apply strict technical and organisational controls to ensure that personal data we process is kept securely, only for as long as necessary for the purpose for which it was collected and protected from harm.

We rely exclusively on informed consent as our legal basis when participants take part in market research. We seek and document participants' consent consistent across all recruitment methodologies, inform them about their rights in relation to their personal data, and share at least the following information, for each purpose, when asking for consent:

- The identity of the controller(s) responsible for the data processing;
- Information about our organisation and contact details of our Data Protection Officer;
- The purpose of the processing activity;
- A clear statement that they we are seeking their informed consent;
- What personal data we will process about them;
- Who may receive personal data that relates to them;
- Whether their personal data will be transferred to any third countries;
- For how long we will retain their personal data;
- What rights are available to them in relation to their personal data;
- How to exercise these rights or lodge a complaint with a supervisory authority;
- How to withdraw consent;
- If applicable, where their personal data was originated from;
- If applicable, whether any automated decision-making will apply to their personal data;
- If applicable, what would be the consequences of not providing their personal data.

Where we will transfer the personal data of participants to countries that have not been found adequate by the European Commission or the UK's ICO (as applicable) in the performance of our services, we ensure that appropriate safeguards are applied by entering into Data Processing Agreements (DPA) that include Standard Contractual Clauses (SCC) and/or The UK's international data transfer agreement (IDTA) or the addendum to the SCC (as applicable).

31. How can participants provide, manage and revise consent for the processing of their personal data? What support channels do you provide for participants? In your response, please address the sample sources you wholly own, as well as those owned by other parties to whom you provide access.

Consent for the collection and processing of personal data has long been required by market research industry codes. It is also explicitly required by some data protection laws and regulations. Some data protection laws and regulations, including EU-GDPR and CCPA as examples, also provide for access rights for participants to correct, update, or delete their data. Implementation of a participant support channel is also required by ISO 20252 (ISO 20252:2019: Market, Opinion and Social Research, Including Insights and Data Analytics - Vocabulary and Service Requirements).

As outlined at Question 30, every participant is informed about the specific and general privacy information relating to any given project, and that we require their informed consent to process their personal data for this purpose. Every consent agreement, in whichever format, will always make it clear that they are free to withdraw their consent at any time (and how to do so).

The right to withdraw their consent can apply to different processing activities, and as such that information is tailored to the specific purpose that we are contacting them about.

We maintain a dedicated inbox and team responsible for these requests, to ensure they are processed swiftly, and that participants can withdraw consent easily.

32. How do you track and comply with other applicable laws and regulations, such as those that might impact the incentives paid to participants?

As stated above, buyers and sample providers are subject to laws and regulations such as those that may impact incentives paid to participants.

We are proud members of the world's leading market research, insights, and data analytics trade associations, including the UK's Market Research Society (MRS), ESOMAR, Insights Association, the BHBIA and the IQCS. We rely on these associations as our first port of call for guidance on how relevant laws and regulations, including any impacting the administration and payment of incentives to market research participants, may impact us and our clients.

To review the full list of trade associations that we are members of, see Memberships.

In addition to guidance issued by these organisations, our Group Compliance Director and wider compliance team is specifically responsible for regulatory horizon scanning to ensure we stay on top of developments that may impact us by imposing new requirements or amending existing requirements to how market research is conducted. We maintain a Legal and Contractual Compliance Policy, which includes a register of applicable laws, regulations and statutes applicable to us, reviewed annually or more frequently as necessary, to assist our teams with this review process where laws and regulations have changed.

33. What is your approach to collecting and processing the personal data of children and young people? Do you adhere to standards and guidelines provided by ESOMAR or GRBN member associations? How do you comply with applicable data protection laws and regulations?

Some data protection laws and regulations (for example COPPA and EU-GDPR) impose specific requirements with the respect to the collection and processing of the personal data of children and young people. These requirements include specific age definitions as well as a requirement for verifiable parental consent. See the ESOMAR & GRBN Guideline on Research and Data Analytics with Children, Young People, and Other Vulnerable Individuals for further discussion.

RONIN does not conduct research with children, as defined in local markets.

34. Do you implement "data protection by design" (sometimes referred to as "privacy by design") in your systems and processes? If so, please describe how.

Data protection by design "(which may also be referred to as "privacy by design") is an approach that requires the consideration of privacy and data protection issues at the design phase of any system, service, product or process and then throughout the lifecycle. Understanding a sample provider use or lack of use of" data protection by design" can help you understand its data protection compliance posture.

RONIN puts the rights and freedoms of participants, including their right to privacy, at the heart of its ethos and mission statement, to promote better market research outcomes.

This is achieved in a variety of ways, including, without limitation:

- A Register of Processing Activities (RoPA) to clearly document how we process personal data, as controllers or processors, our legal basis for doing so, and whether, for each processing activity, safeguards are required to manage privacy risks;

- Conducting Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) prior to processing certain processing activities where we have determined that we must document the proposed processing activities and consult with appropriate stakeholders to mitigate any risks to participants, consider how participants will exercise their rights, and what technical or organisational steps we can take to further secure our processing of persona data;

- Auditing our processes and procedures against our requirements, to ensure that data minimisation and purpose limitation principles are applied across the organisation, and making appropriate adjustments where these areas can be improved over time.

35. What are the key elements of your information security compliance program? Please specify the framework(s) or auditing procedure(s) you comply with or certify to. Does your program include an asset-based risk assessment and internal audit process?

Information security frameworks such as ISO 27001 or SOC 2 are accepted and recognized frameworks for information security compliance. Understanding which framework(s) a sample provider uses or if a sample provider doesn't use such a framework can help you understand the sample provider's information security compliance posture.

RONIN is certified to ISO 27001:2013.

To find out more about ISO 27001 and our certification, please visit ISO 27001.

36. Do you certify to or comply with a quality framework such as ISO 20252?

ISO 20252 is an international quality standard recognized by many market research industry associations. In addition to requirement for a system to manage research processes, it explicitly addresses requirements for data protection and information security compliance.

RONIN is certified to ISO 20252:2019.

To find out more about ISO 20252 and our certification, please visit ISO 20252.

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Metrics

What this section is about

This section lists common sample and data health metrics. Reviewing metrics periodically can serve as the basis for a conversation with sample providers about consistency and reliability, as well as whether the sample is appropriate for the population and business question being examined. Unexpected or unexplained shifts in metrics may also indicate the potential for bias or error. While not all of these metrics are required and there are no benchmarks on the "right answers," providing transparency over time will create a meaningful dialogue about quality and utility.

37. Which of the following are you able to provide to buyers, in aggregate and by country and source? Please include a link or attach a file of a sample report for each of the metrics you use.

Upon request, RONIN will be pleased to provide clients with metrics on our market research operations broken down by relevant data points, as required and relevant.