



Harris Interactive AG 25 Questions to help research buyers

For all questions concerning panel quality,
please contact:

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Harris Interactive AG emerged from MediaTransfer AG Netresearch & Consulting, who have been maintaining our own online panels since 1996. As the inventors of several methodological innovations such as the point based incentives and a mandatory annual re-registration, we see ESOMARs "25 Questions to help research buyers"-initiative as a great opportunity for us to showcase our efforts to maintain the online panel with the highest standards in the European market today, as well as allowing clients to differentiate between MR companies offering full-service with their own internal panels and those that buy sampling services from external providers.

1. Is it an actively managed panel (nurtured community) or just a database?

Harris Interactive AG's HI-epanel is actively managed, but not a community, because the respondents do not interact with each other (except for qualitative techniques such as online focus groups).

Actively managed means:

- Active recruitment - Respondents cannot join the panel simply by visiting our website. Registration is only possible via targeted advertisements.
- Targeted recruitment - we seek out respondents who are interested only in taking part in surveys from time to time. We avoid recruitment channels yielding bargain hunters and professional testers.
- Respondents have a legal relationship (i.e. terms of business) with us - they know we expect serious participation, we know they expect fair treatment and swift support. All support is provided by native speakers.
- Behavioural tracking of the quality / reliability of respondents. Cheating behaviour is being tracked by a multi-level scoring system. Part of the scoring process takes part before a new respondent

receives his or her first client commissioned survey - in other words we are able to remove a major part of malicious respondents before their first external interview.

- Tracking of the network addresses of respondents to exclude participants from specific companies (market research & marketing, specific industry branches etc.)

To fulfil these functions, **Harris Interactive AG** has a dedicated panel management team consisting of statisticians, database professionals and online marketing experts who take care of recruitment, sampling, quality control and panel-relations.

2. "Truthfully" how large is it? &

3. What is the percentage of "active" members and how are they defined?

Short answer:

250.000 with a response rate of ~70% including over 15.000 women aged 50+. (10/2006)

Long answer:

Ever wonder why most MR-companies actively tout their panel sizes but remain reluctant or unspecific when it comes to response rates and panel structure?

Practical use of a panel is limited by three factors-- size, responsiveness, and structure. Due to our annual re-registration process, where all respondents have to enter their demographic information once again, the response rate is around 90% after the re-registration then slowly declines to 70%-50% (depending on the country) by the end of year. Meanwhile the total size continuously

increases nurtured by ongoing recruitment efforts, which more than compensate for the declining response.

Additionally, as older women are typically the limiting factor in an online panel we specifically invest to attract this target group.

As of this writing (October 2006) our panel has the following structure:

	<i>DE</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>FR</i>	<i>IT</i>	<i>ES</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>PL</i>	<i>RU</i>	<i>JP</i>
Total	66.00	51.00	39.00	24.00	18.00	12.00	10.00	7.00	12.00
Size	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Current RR	75%	60%	60%	60%	60%	65%	55%	70%	55%
Fem.									
50+	3.750	5.800	2.400	1.600	800	600	300	250	600

According to our sources, we currently maintain Europe’s largest online panel owned by a full-service institute. Including sample providers, we consider ourselves to be among the top three.

For more details on panel structure, feel free to get in touch with us.

4. From what sources do the respondents come and how are they recruited?

We work with a diverse set of website and newsletter partners who recruit panellists for us. We have direct contracts with large suppliers and ISPs, while smaller websites are handled by affiliate



programs¹. Partners and suppliers are then selected to move the socio-demographic structure of the panel towards representativeness for the general population. We avoid recruitment partners likely to attract bargain hunters and professional testers.

We have a strict policy for acceptable recruitment channels:

- No survey portals like <http://www.thesurveypro.com> or <http://www.getpaidguides.com>
(which incidentally link to a majority of online research institutes)
- No "refer a friend" programs (which foster multiple panel membership and negatively influences the panel structure)
- No outsourcing of recruitment or recruitment deals with online marketing companies
(who often use the cheapest method of recruitment, see first bullet point)

Clear and concise standards for working with 3rd party suppliers:

- communication of 3rd party sample use to our clients
- working only with 3rd party sample providers who match our standards as close as possible

¹ Affiliate programs offer website owners small payments for referring users. In our case we pay website owners for providing leads (signups). See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Affiliate>

5. Have members clearly opted-in? If so, was this double opt-in?

After filling in the sign-up form, respondents receive an E-Mail asking to confirm their registration (double opt-in).

6. What exactly have they been asked to opt-in to?

To participate in an online panel for market research purposes.

7. What do panel members get in return for participating?

Providing a fair and adequate incentive keeps respondents motivated and loyal. **Harris Interactive AG** respondents receive points (so-called E-Points) for participation. After collecting at least 100 E-Points, respondents can redeem them for Amazon or other companies' gift certificates. One E-Point equals 0,25 EURO.

8. Is the panel used solely for market research?

Yes. Furthermore, **HI-epanel** respondents are only used for market research supplied by **Harris Interactive AG** to end-clients. **Harris Interactive AG** owns the **HI-epanel** and - with very few exceptions - does not supply field work to other research agencies. Exceptions are made only in cases where our clients wish for us to cooperate with a second supplier. Leasing respondents to other companies may

make some respondents feel uncomfortable with respect to who receives their personal data.

9. Is there a Privacy Policy in place? If so, what does it state?

Yes, see <http://uk.mediatransfer.com/index.php?PID=103100>

Respondents also have to actively agree to these rules to become part of the panel:

<http://uk.mediatransfer.com/index.php?PID=104100>

In a nutshell, our privacy policy covers:

- answering honestly
- respecting confidentiality of stimuli materials
- handling of personal data compliant with local data protection laws

10. What research industry standards are complied with?

Harris Interactive AG works according to Esomar Standards (specifically, "Guideline on conducting research on the Internet")

and "Interviewing Children and Young People"

<http://www.esomar.org/web/show/id=43240>) as well as the BVM / ADM

(specifically, "Standards zur Qualitätssicherung bei Online-Befragungen

"http://www.bvm.org/Richtlinien-Standards_7_0_0.html) standards.

11. 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? (Provide hotlinks for reference)

Harris Interactive AG is compliant with COPPA as we do not invite children (under 14 years of age) into our panels. EU Safe Harbour legislation does not apply to us as we are a European company. General procedures, rules and a data protection statement have been developed together with an attorney. See Q10 for applied professional standards.

12. What basic socio-demographic profile information, usership, interests data, etc. is kept on members?

A screenshot from our registration page listing the basic demographics:

In which country do you live? (main place of residence)	United Kingdom	Employment status:	please select
First Name / Surname:		Number of permanent employees in your company (including yourself):	please select
Street / House no.:		Household - Net income per month:	please select
Postal code / Town:		Do you smoke and if yes: How many cigarettes do you smoke on average per day?	please select
Telephone No.: <small>(Optional, but increases the probability of invitations to certain surveys)</small>		Do you own a car ?	please select
In which county do you live?	please select	If "Yes":	Brand:
Year and month of birth:	please select		
Gender:	please select		Model:
Marital status:	please select		Other:
Number of persons living in your household:	please select		Concept:
Number of children under the age of 15 living in your household:	please select		Year of make:
... out of these, how many children between the age of 0 and 2 :	please select	In your household, do you have a dog? <input type="radio"/> yes <input type="radio"/> no
... out of these, how many children between the age of 3 and 5 :	please select	... cat? <input type="radio"/> yes <input type="radio"/> no	
... out of these, how many children between the age of 6 and 14 :	please select	Are you already registered with any other providers of on-line market research institutes?	<input type="radio"/> Yes, with <input type="text"/>
Will you (or your partner, respectively) be having a baby in the near future?	<input type="radio"/> yes <input type="radio"/> no	E-Mail address: <small>(The address is required in order to invite you to participate in our tests, and it is also doubles up as your user name).</small>	<input type="text"/>
What is currently your highest Qualification?	please select	Password: <small>A minimum of 6 and a maximum of 12 letters (please remember, or make a note of your password)</small>	<input type="text"/>
Current job and position: <small>(The second and third boxes adjust themselves automatically to your response in the first box. Should it not be possible to make further selections, then the responses previously given are sufficient.)</small>	Current position/function please select	... and once more for safety reasons ...	<input type="text"/>
	Sector you work in:	When I am invited to participate in a survey, I would like to receive a text message in addition. <small>(Text messages containing reminders, in addition to the email invitations, will be sent out only for special projects.)</small>	<input type="radio"/> yes, mobile phone number: <input type="text"/>
	Further specification of the industry you work in:	I agree to the General terms and conditions.	<input type="radio"/> no
			<input type="radio"/> yes <input type="radio"/> no

13. How often is it updated?

At least annually. Expecting respondents to update their demographics on their own is naïve (people generally have things on their mind other than keeping their profile in an online panel up to date). At an appointed date **all** respondents have to enter **all** of their data once again. As a result, not a single record is older than 365 days. See Q3. This procedure is also part of our process to monitor respondents' trustworthiness.

14. In what other ways can users be profiled

(e.g. source of data)?

In addition to the socio-demographics mentioned above, we also use psychographic indicator items for segmentation purposes. This segmentation allows us to monitor recruitment channels for an overweight of specific segments, such as overly materialistic respondents for example.

Furthermore, for the German panel, life-style-segmentation is in place. The majority of respondents are assigned to one of 10 e-Milieus®, which are the online equivalents of the Sinus-Milieus®. Sinus-Milieu® segmentation is one of the most important segmentation systems in Germany, mapping life-styles to media consumption habits and consumer preferences and attitudes.

Upon request, we add client-specific profiling in order to directly access respondents with certain characteristics. In this case, respondents are asked for their permission to store this data along with their regular socio-demographic profile for future sampling purposes.

15. What is the (minimum and typical) turn-around time from initial request to first deployment of the emails to activate a study?

Minimum is ~1 hour, assuming a survey is already programmed (e.g. if a tracking study is being repeated in identical form). The typical case for custom studies (assuming the availability of a finalised questionnaire) is 2-3 working days. This is all possible as a result of having project and panel management, native speakers and programming all within the same office.

Essentially, we find that turn-around time is typically driven by the amount of communication and consulting and **not** by the technical part of the online survey.

16. What are likely response rates and how is response rate calculated?

Response rate is calculated by dividing interview participation (screened out, dropped out or completed surveys) by total

invitations sent out to respondents. Respondents are given at least three days to respond.

As explained in Q2, response rates are very high at the beginning of the year (~90%) and decline to a minimum of 50% over the course of the year. In times of exceptionally high panel load, the six-week exclusion (explained in Q19) can reduce the response rate by excluding active panellists, consequently leaving a higher number of non-responders in the available pool.

Assuming normal load conditions, **Harris Interactive AG** guarantees response rates of at least 50%.

17. Are or can panel members who have recently participated in a survey on the same subject be excluded from a new sample?

Yes. The exclusion interval is 6 weeks after every completed interview and three months within the same category. This policy is "must" not "can".

These are as far as we know the highest standards in the industry.

18. Is a response rate (over and above screening) guaranteed?

See Q16. We can not guarantee incidence levels estimated by the client unless we have historical data or have performed an incidence screener to assess the actual incidence within the panel.

19. How often are individual members contacted for market research or anything else in a given time period?

Respondents are excluded across categories for a minimum of six weeks after participating in a full survey and for three months within the same category. This policy can only be changed in agreement with the client for certain methods like diaries (higher contact frequency, in such cases respondents are blocked from all other activities) or tracking studies (lower contact frequency - e.g., brand awareness tracking).

20. How is the sample selection process for a particular survey undertaken?

Based on the target group definition, all eligible persons are selected. A random sample is taken from the initial set of eligible respondents (eligibility takes into account the previously mentioned six-week / three-month exclusion). The size of the sample is determined based on the number of net interviews to be provided and the expected response rate. If response is considerably lower than expected, a second sample is taken. If stratified samples are

requested (e.g. specific distribution according to age, gender etc.) each cell of the design is treated as a random sample.

For population representative sampling, we break the sample down into cells for each combination and populate those cells according to census data. This procedure is currently only available for the European Big 5.

21. Can samples be deployed as batches/replicates, by time zones, geography, etc? If so, how is this controlled?

Yes, deployment as batches / replicates is possible. This is also possible based on regional information. See Q23.

22. Is the sample randomized before deployment?

Yes. The system picks all eligible respondents and draws a random sample from them.

See Q20.

23. Can the time of sample deployment be controlled and, if so, how?

Time of sample deployment will be set by the project management team according to the clients' needs and target countries involved. Fieldwork is controlled by the panel management unit.

24. Can panel members be directed to specific sites for the survey questionnaire to be undertaken?

Yes, technically it is possible. As a general rule however, **Harris Interactive AG** does not provide panellists / samples to other research agencies.

25. What guarantees are there to guard against bad data i.e. respondent cheating or not concentrating / caring about their responses (e.g. click happy)?

First of all, there is no guarantee against "bad data" in any research mode, be it CATI, CAPI, CAWI or face to face. This is the reason why the cooperation and honesty of the respondents is the most important condition for quality data. For this reason, we take great care to maintain a fair and transparent relationship with our panellists.

It is an acknowledged fact that psychometric personality inventories of even the highest measurement quality (e.g., interviewer-

administered (online) suffer from varying response styles and sets (such as social desirability, impression management, lack of knowledge or plain dishonesty) which influence the "true scores". Highly reputed, scientifically constructed and validated diagnostic inventories for clinical psychology / psychiatry such as the MMPI (Minnesota Multiphasic Inventory) contain so-called "lie-scales", which have ultimately proven not to serve their purpose of cleaning (technically speaking, "partialling out") variance not related to the measured construct from the true score. Nevertheless personality inventories have been in use for almost a century, supporting important decisions of all kinds.

On the other hand, attempts to control such unwanted influences on a more technical / behavioural level by measuring response times, response patterns in attitude item batteries etc. have proven to be more effective. These measures can only be taken in and when a test / survey is computer-administered.

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Harris Interactive AG has implemented the following approach:

Respondents are invited to a mock concept test that in fact measures behavioural variables and aggregates them into a score. This score (Directscore) and a longitudinal score (calculated from behaviour during membership) are powerful tools for detecting and removing respondents who frequently fake responses, as well as for increasing general data quality.

A paper published at Esomar Panel Conference 2006 on this topic will be available early December 2006 on our website www.harrisinteractive.de

Further quality control methods:

- IP checks (several registrations from the same IP within a short time)
- Password checks (several accounts using same passwords)
- Final data cleaning on survey level. All data is checked manually before entering data analysis. Obvious cheating behaviour increases the longitudinal score of the respondent having cheated.