INTERNATIONAL STANDARD

ISO 20252

Third edition
2019-02

Market, opinion and social research, including insights and data analytics — Vocabulary and service requirements

Études de marché, études sociales et d'opinion, y compris insights et analytique de données — Vocabulaire et exigences de service

COPYRIGHT PROTECTED DOCUMENT

Contents

Page

Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 225, *Market, opinion and social research*.

This third edition cancels and replaces the second edition (ISO 20252:2012), which has been technically revised, and ISO 26362:2009 whose technical content has been included in this document. The main changes to the previous edition are as follows:

— the document has been completely restructured, with a core clause (Clause 4) applicable to all service providers, regardless of methodologies provided, and six separate annexes (Annexes A to F), each covering requirements relating to one of the globally-recognized research methodologies;

— Clause 3 has been updated;

— technical content has been updated to reflect new or modified research practices and new content has been added to Annex A and Annex D.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

The principal objective of international standardization within the market, opinion and social research (henceforth referred to as "research") is the facilitation of global and consistent industry standards applicable to different national and regional markets. The intent of this document is to follow a structure to ensure that its implementation leads to continual improvement of research and to harmonize other national standards and industry codes already available.

With the emergence and general acceptance of online samples for market, opinion and social research, a primary source of online samples, online access panels, have evolved in their use and have been augmented with other online sample sources. ISO 26362:2009 has been withdrawn and incorporated into this document which now covers access panels, both online and offline.

The research business core framework is established and documented as Clause 4 of this document. The normative annexes provide the specific framework for various globally recognized research methodologies. The service provider can align their practices to the requirements as stated within each annex in order to attest conformity to the particular research methodology or functions.

The intent is to apply the requirements specified in Clause 4 as the mandatory framework for any attestation by a service provider conforming with this document, supported by at least one annex. The structure and scope of this document does not permit any attestation to this document without also meeting the requirements of at least one annex.

Regardless of whether a business undertakes research activities as an in-house or outsourced function, the service provider is ultimately responsible for ensuring that research activities meet the requirements of this document. Therefore, the scope and boundaries of the applicable disciplines need to be reflected in the statement of applicability (SoA), including the annexes with management processes in place to ensure the requirements of this document are met.

Any claim of attestation will state clearly and unambiguously which annexes conform with this document. The long-term aim is that businesses will attest the majority, if not all, of their research activities to this document.

Market, opinion and social research, including insights and data analytics — Vocabulary and service requirements

1 Scope

This document establishes terms, definitions and service requirements for service providers conducting market, opinion and social research, including insights and data analytics (hereinafter referred to as "service providers").

Non-market research activities, such as direct marketing, are outside the scope of this document.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at https://www.iso.org/obp

— IEC Electropedia: available at http://www.electropedia.org/

3.1
access panel
sample (3.86) database of potential *participants* (3.64) who declare that they will cooperate for future data collection if selected

Note 1 to entry: This does not include continuously reporting panels (e.g. TV-rating panels) or re-contact databases (asking for permission for follow-ups).

3.2
accuracy
degree of closeness between the estimate and the agreed parameter value

3.3
active panel member
panel member (3.61) who, within the last 12 months, has participated in at least one research study if requested, updated their profile data, or registered to join the *access panel* (3.1)

3.4
ad impression
display of an advertisement on a device

3.5
algorithm
process or set of rules to be followed in calculations or other problem solving operations

3.6
anonymize
remove, obscure, aggregate or alter identifiers with the aim of preventing the identification of individuals to whom data originally related

3.7
appraisal
process of monitoring the competency of an individual or group of individuals in carrying out their work

3.8
attestation
declaration of conformity by the *service provider* (3.92) related to the statement of applicability (SoA)

3.9
audit
systematic, independent and documented process for obtaining evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which a standard's requirements are fulfilled

3.10
auditor
person with the competence to conduct an *audit* (3.9)

3.11
automated coding
form of coding where manual coding is replaced, totally or in part, by various forms of computer coding or computer-assisted coding using computer-stored code lists, dictionaries, automated systems, machine learning, artificial intelligence or other technologies

3.12
bias
systematic deviation between the estimate and the agreed parameter value

3.13
bot
autonomous software that operates as an agent for a user or a program or simulates a human activity

3.14
client
individual, organization, department or division, whether it is internal or external, that requests or commissions a research project

3.15
code
character or combination of numeric, alphabetic or other types of characters associated with each response category

3.16
code frame
list of categories with associated *codes* (3.15) for classifying responses

3.17
completion rate
number of *participants* (3.62) who fully complete a research project divided by the number of participants who were invited to participate

3.18
computer-assisted interviewing
CAI
interviews where responses are keyed directly into a computer and where the administration of the interview is managed by a specifically designed program

EXAMPLE   Computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI); computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI); computer-assisted self-interviewing (CASI); computer-assisted interviewing via web/internet (CAWI).

3.19
confidentiality
requirement that information, materials and data collected are protected from unauthorized access

3.20
consent
freely given agreements based on adequate information obtained prior to the collection/use of *participant* (3.62) data

3.21
cookie
small piece of information (i.e. program code) that is stored on a browser for the purpose of identifying that browser during activities and between visits or sessions

3.22
dashboard
software application with which a number of mini-applications can be reviewed or managed and reported

EXAMPLE   Mini-applications could include app to export data or allow API access.

3.23
data cleaning
process of identifying, correcting or removing unneeded or inaccurate data for research quality purposes

3.24
data collection instrument
tool created for the purpose of gathering information from *participants* (3.62)

EXAMPLE   Questionnaire, discussion guide, biometric device, webscraping technology, camera.

3.25
data editing
set of methods for verifying the collected data and, if necessary, correcting the data

3.26
data entry
process step where data collected are converted into computer-readable form or other types of standardized forms

Note 1 to entry: Simple data entry is data entry containing no built-in logic checks.

Note 2 to entry: Logic data entry is a data entry process that uses automated checks for the logic of data on elements such as data types, filters, question skips and response options.

3.27
data processing
management and converting of data from their raw state through to a required output

3.28
data record
set of data derived from a reporting or observed unit

3.29
de-duplication
process to remove *data records* (3.28) corresponding to a *participant* (3.62) or *record* (3.76) that appears more than once in a research dataset or *access panel* (3.1)

3.30
depth interview
in-depth inverview (IDI)
semi-structured or unstructured interview conducted to understand the underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes behaviours and feelings of a *participant* (3.62)

3.31
derived data item
data item calculated or recoded from one or more sources and/or categories

3.32
device ID
device identification
machine ID
distinctive alphanumeric string associated with a computer, smartphone, tablet or other computing device

Note 1 to entry: A device can have multiple device IDs for a different purpose. These include device IDs to enable Wi-Fi or Bluetooth or identify a device on a mobile carrier network. Other device IDs, such as Apple's UDID or Android's Android ID, are used by apps, developers and other companies to identify, track and analyse devices and their users for a number of purposes, including online advertising.

Note 2 to entry: For a PC or laptop computer the MAC (Media Access Control) address can be used as a device ID.

Note 3 to entry: A device ID can be personally identifiable.

3.33
digital analytics
analysing and reporting of electronic data for the purpose of measuring and understanding people and their behaviour

3.34
digital device
mobile device
electronic device intended to be portable which can collect data, either directly or indirectly, that can be uploaded to a *third party* (3.101) either immediately or upon syncronization with appropriate software

Note 1 to entry: Digital devices include smartphones, smart watches, fitness or health tracking devices, tablets, geo-location devices and biometric data gathering devices.

3.35
digital fingerprint
device fingerprint
machine fingerprint
browser fingerprint
information collected about a computer, tablet, smartphone or other computing device for the purpose of identification of individual research participants or devices

Note 1 to entry: Digital fingerprints are typically created using web browser configuration parameters along with other device parameters that can be obtained from a device. These parameters are used to create a single string that comprises the digital fingerprint.

Note 2 to entry: A digital fingerprint may be personally identifiable.

3.36
discussion guide
list of points or topics which are to be covered in a *depth interview* (3.30), *focus group* (3.42) or other qualitative method

3.37
dongle
small piece of hardware, often a USB device, that can be connected to other electronic equipment, to enable additional services such as access to the internet

3.38
duplication
situation where a *participant* ([3.62](#)) is invited or attempts to complete more than one response for a specified research project

3.39
exclusion request
excluding a potential *participant* ([3.62](#)) from a research project based on their participation in a research project involving the same or similar product/service category and/or methodology

3.40
fieldworker
interviewer
person involved in the collection of data for market, opinion and social research

Note 1 to entry: Fieldworkers include, but are not limited to, face-to-face and telephone interviewers, recruiters for qualitative or other research, *"mystery shoppers"* ([3.54](#)) and other people carrying out data collection by observation, and persons collecting data from retail outlets, following instructions from the *service provider* ([3.92](#)).

3.41
filter
question or instruction in a data collection instrument that restricts answers to a subgroup of *participants* ([3.62](#))

3.42
focus group
group discussion
open discussion with a small number of selected *participants* ([3.62](#)) conducted by a *moderator* ([3.53](#))

Note 1 to entry: Focus groups can be conducted face-to-face, by telephone, online or by a combination of these. Online focus groups can be synchronous or real-time (e.g. chat sessions), or asynchronous over an extended period of time (e.g. message and/or bulletin boards).

3.43
fraudulent participant
participant ([3.62](#)) or *panel member* ([3.61](#)) who deliberately misrepresents their identity, profile data or responses

3.44
frequency count
hole count
marginals
summary count of individual data items on a computer file

3.45
imputation
procedure where missing data are replaced by estimated or modelled data

3.46
inattentive participant
inattentive panel member
panel member ([3.61](#)) or *participant* ([3.62](#)) who does not give an adequate level of thought to the responses they provide

Note 1 to entry: A poor quality of response is not necessarily the *panel member's* ([3.61](#)) or *participant's* ([3.62](#)) fault, and could reflect poor data collection instrument design.

3.47
incentive
gift, payment or other considerations offered to potential *participants* ([3.62](#)) to increase participant cooperation

3.48
indexing
numerical scale used to compare variables with one another or with a reference number

3.49
information security
preservation of confidentiality, integrity and availability of information

3.50
intercept
type of interviewing where *participants* (3.62) are approached, without prior consent, either in person or online

3.51
internal audit
periodic checks carried out by a company's own trained employees as to whether projects within the company have been carried out in accordance with the described procedures

3.52
machine learning
computer technology with the ability to automatically learn and improve from experience without being explicitly programmed

EXAMPLE   Speech recognition, predictive text, spam detection, artificial intelligence.

3.53
moderator
individual responsible for facilitating the interactions among *participants* (3.62) of a *focus group* (3.42) or other qualitative forum

3.54
mystery shopping
study using *fieldworkers* (3.40), researchers or *participants* (3.62) (consumers or general public) in the role of customers/users in order to evaluate a business/service performance

3.55
near field communication
NFC
wireless technology that enables communication between devices over a short distance

3.56
netting
method of treating *codes* (3.15) assigned to multiple-response questions, which can include open-ended codes, where the net refers to the total number of *participants* (3.62) responding with the same group of codes, even when each participant has given more than one response within the same group of codes

3.57
non-response
absence of measurements on some *sample* (3.86) or census members for all or some questions or variables

3.58
observational data collection
observational research
observational methodologies
collection of data by observation of the behaviour, habits, activities, relations, expressed opinions or performance of individuals or groups, as well as phenomena, including the use of passive techniques, without the use of direct questioning

Note 1 to entry: See also *passive data collection* (3.64) and *physical observational data collection* (3.66).

3.59
open-ended question
open-ended response
type of question where *participants* (3.62) are asked to answer in their own words

3.60
opt out
explicit request to terminate participation in a research activity

3.61
panel member
individual recruited from a documented source who has provided profile data and appropriate information for validation of identity, given explicit consent to participate in research according to the terms and conditions of panel membership, and not opted out

3.62
participant
respondent
data subject
person or organisation from whom or about whom data are collected for research

3.63
participation rate
start rate
number of *participants* (3.62) providing a usable response divided by the total number of initial personal invitations requesting members to participate

3.64
passive data collection
passive methodologies
process of data collection that avoids or minimizes active interaction with the *participant* (3.62)

3.65
personal data
information relating to a natural living person that can be used to identify an individual

Note 1 to entry: The identification can be made for example by reference to direct identifiers (e.g. name, specific geographic location, telephone number, picture, sound, video recording or biometric data) or indirectly by reference to an individual's physical, physiological, mental, economic, cultural or social characteristics.

3.66
physical observational data collection
physical observational research
collection of data through observation, whether in person or by video, including behaviour, habits, activities, relations, expressed opinions or performance of individuals or groups without the use of direct questioning and undertaken in the physical environment

Note 1 to entry: Physical observational data collection excludes online observation, such as digital behaviour.

3.67
prescreening
initial questions in a *data collection instrument* (3.24) used to establish eligibility of *participants* (3.62)

3.68
pretest
small-scale test to check the performance of a *data collection instrument* (3.24) or methodology before embarking on full-scale fieldwork

3.69
primary record
data collected directly from the source and in their original state

Note 1 to entry: This can include *survey* (3.98) data, interview transcripts, field notes, biometric measurements and recordings.

3.70
probability sample
random *sample* (3.86) from a population wherein each member has a known and non-zero probability of being included and allows for the calculation of margin of error

EXAMPLE   Simple random sampling (SRS); stratified sampling; cluster sampling; systematic sampling; and multistage sampling (in which some of the methods above are combined in stages).

3.71
profile data
descriptive characteristics of a *panel member* (3.61)

3.72
qualitative research
analysis of motivations, patterns of thought, opinion, attitude, assessment or behaviour, via research techniques such as *focus groups* (3.42), *depth interviews* (3.30), discourse content analysis and qualitative *observational research* (3.58)

3.73
quantitative research
numerical measurement of observations via research techniques such as *questionnaires* (3.74), opinion polls, *surveys* (3.98) and experimental research

3.74
questionnaire
structured or partly structured tool or instrument for collecting data, consisting of a series of questions

Note 1 to entry: Questionnaires can be self-completion or administered by a *fieldworker* (3.40).

3.75
quota sample
sample (3.86) drawn using a non-probabilistic method such that it conforms to a predefined structure with respect to certain variables

Note 1 to entry: These types of samples do not allow for a margin of error to be calculated.

Note 2 to entry: Examples of non-probability samples include convenience samples, accidental samples and river samples.

3.76
record
special type of document that provides historical evidence of an event, activity or fact

Note 1 to entry: For example, a *questionnaire* (3.74) is a document, but once it is completed by a *participant* (3.64) or a fieldworker, it becomes a record.

Note 2 to entry: Records can be physical or digital.

3.77
recruiter
person who identifies and invites potential *participants* (3.62) to take part in a research project

3.78
reliability
overall consistency among replicated measures

Note 1 to entry: In this context, measurement has a high reliability if it can be repeated with the same or similar results under the same or similar conditions.

3.79
representativeness
degree to which a *sample* (3.86) reflects the target population being studied

Note 1 to entry: A representative sample is one in which the distribution of important characteristics is approximately the same as in the target population.

Note 2 to entry: The definition of 'important characteristics' is generally a function of the research topic.

3.80
response rate
calculation of the proportion of people responding to a *survey* (3.98) based on a probability sample

3.81
retail audit
collection of data from retail outlets using documentary (e.g. paper or digital) and/or observational methods

3.82
review
determination of the suitability, adequacy or effectiveness of an object to achieve established objectives

3.83
river sampling
dynamic sampling
real-time sampling
web intercept
online sampling method that drives potential *participants* (3.62) for *surveys* (3.98) or other research activities from advertisements on *social media* (3.95) and other websites to an online portal where they are screened for research projects in real time

Note 1 to entry: Unlike access panels, river sampling *participants* (3.62) are not part of a database of people who have agreed to participate in research activities on a regular basis.

3.84
robot instruction file
file that defines how an internet search engine should interact with the pages and files of a web site and is often used to define where automated systems are not allowed to go

3.85
router
online software application that screens incoming research *participants* (3.62) and then uses those results to assign research *participants* to one of multiple available research projects

Note 1 to entry: A router can also offer *participants* (3.62) additional screeners and *surveys* (3.98) after screener qualification failure or *survey* (3.98) completion.

Note 2 to entry: It differs from "hardware router" as a communication equipment that relays data between two or more different networks.

3.86
sample
subset of the *target population* (3.99) from which data are to be collected

3.87
sample blending
practice of combining multiple, heterogeneous *sample* (3.86) sources with the aim of achieving a more consistent or more representative sample

3.88
sample provider
service provider (3.92) responsible for the provision and management of online or offline samples from relevant sources such as panels, web-intercept-based sources (including river sample sources) and email lists

3.89
sampling frame
list of population elements or other appropriate sources from which a *sample* (3.86) is to be drawn

3.90
satisficing
behaviour in which the research *participant* (3.62) gives less than necessary cognitive effort when participating in a research project

3.91
secondary data
data that have already been collected and are available from another source

3.92
service provider
organization that conducts research projects or parts of research projects in market, opinion and social research using statistical data and/or social science methods and techniques

EXAMPLE   Private research institutions; academic and university research institutions; in-company research departments; local authorities, official statistics agencies or individual researchers acting in the same capacity.

3.93
sentiment
mood associated with, for example, a sound, image or statement, usually on a continuum from positive to neutral to negative

3.94
silent call
abandoned call
telephone call generated by a dialler and answered by a *participant* (3.62) before a *fieldworker* (3.40) is made available

Note 1 to entry: A dialler (automated dialling equipment) is any equipment or software able to dial a telephone number and make the call available to the *fieldworker* (3.40).

3.95
social media
online technologies and practices that people use to share opinions, insights, experiences and perspectives with each other, transforming traditional one-to-many interactions into many-to-many interactions

3.96
spyware
devices or software that capture a *participant's* (3.62) data or behaviour without obtaining *consent* (3.20)

3.97
subcontract
outsource
engage an external organisation or individual to perform part of the *service provider's* (3.92) function or process, under the responsibility of the *service provider* (3.92)

Note 1 to entry: Self-employed individual *fieldworkers* (3.40) are not defined as subcontractors for the purposes of this document.

Note 2 to entry: Hired or otherwise outsourced services and/or assets include, for example, *participant* (3.62) panels, cloud services, computer software and hardware, other technology platforms, electronic or other secure data storage facilities and *focus group* (3.42) venues.

3.98
survey
data collection from a *sample* (3.86) of a *target population* (3.99) to which inferences can be made

3.99
target population
population of interest in the research project to which inferences are to be made

3.100
text analysis
content analysis
method used to describe the characteristics of a message

3.101
third party
independent organisation or individual not under the responsibility of the *service provider* (3.92)

3.102
unique visitor
inferred measure that signifies a distinct, unduplicated individual requesting a page from a website during a given period, regardless of how often they visit

3.103
validation
procedures to check conformity to specifications or requirements at any stage of the research process

3.104
validity
assurance that the results of a research process represent what was intended

3.105
vulnerable person
person who is permanently or temporarily unable to represent their own interests through a mental, emotional, societal or physical cause that may limit their capacity to make voluntary and informed decisions

3.106
wave
successive repetition in a continuous project in which neither the objective nor the general project design change

3.107
web analysis
analysing and reporting of behaviour, statements and *sentiments* (3.93) from users/*participants* (3.62) of online platforms

3.108
web beacon
pixel tracker
web bug
piece of *code* ([3.15](#)), often a 1 × 1 pixel, on a website used to track website activity

Note 1 to entry: This differs from a beacon, which is a low-powered transmitter that notifies nearby devices of its presence and can be used to trigger an action.

3.109
weighting
calculation process in which different units or subgroups are recalculated by assigning numerical values, as necessary, to refine and/or correct the representativeness of *sample* ([3.86](#)) estimates

Note 1 to entry: Weighting can be used to adjust for unequal selection probabilities, such as multistage sampling, coverage *bias* ([3.12](#)) and *non-response* ([3.57](#)) bias.

4   Core requirements for market, opinion and social research

4.1   Core framework

4.1.1   Statement of applicability

The service provider shall create a statement of applicability (SoA) that describes the complete scope of the services attested to as meeting the requirements of this document. The SoA defines which annexes are in conformity with this document, to the extent such services are included in the service provider systems.

NOTE   The intent is that the service provider attests the majority, if not all, of their research activities to this document.

Attestation to this document shall be achieved by the service provider when the core requirements (see [Clause 4](#)) and at least one of the following annexes, including all requirements cross-referenced to other annexes, are met:

— [Annex A](#) — Sampling including access panels;

— [Annex B](#) — Fieldwork;

— [Annex C](#) — Physical observation;

— [Annex D](#) — Digital observation;

— [Annex E](#) — Self completion;

— [Annex F](#) — Data management and processing.

For service providers who specify [Annex A](#) in the SoA, whether directly or as subcontracted services, the additional requirements specified in [Annex A](#) shall apply.

For service providers who specify [Annex B](#) in the SoA, whether directly or as subcontracted services, the additional requirements specified in [Annex B](#) shall apply.

For service providers who specify [Annex C](#) in the SoA, whether directly or as subcontracted services, the additional requirements specified in [Annex C](#) shall apply.

For service providers who specify [Annex D](#) in the SoA, whether directly or as subcontracted services, the additional requirements specified in [Annex D](#) shall apply.

For service providers who specify [Annex E](#) in the SoA, whether directly or as subcontracted services, the additional requirements specified in [Annex E](#) shall apply.

For service providers who specify <u>Annex F</u> in the SoA, whether directly or as subcontracted services, the additional requirements specified in <u>Annex F</u> shall apply.

Conformity to a particular annex is required only when that annex is specified in the SoA, or when a particular requirement is cross-referenced from an annex that is specified in the SoA.

Any communication of the attestation shall state clearly and unambiguously which annexes the service provider is in conformity with.

a)   The SoA (see <u>Figure 1</u>) shall record the attested scope by annex name and number as per this document as a clear and unambiguous declaration of which services are included and excluded from the scope.

b)   The SoA shall include all subcontracted services.

c)   The SoA shall be authorized and dated by a person in senior management representing the attested service provider.

d)   The service provider shall make the SoA available to clients and other stakeholders at all times (e.g. on a web page).

e)   The service provider's SoA shall be subject to assessment against this document.

f)   The service provider shall not use subjective, marketing or redundant phrases within the SoA, such as 'high quality', 'tremendous', 'largest global organization' or 'highly accurate'.

g)   Product names can be included in the SoA if they are integral to a service provided.

The SoA shall be reviewed at least annually to determine the need for change and to ensure the details are accurate.

XYZ (legal entity name) is a market, opinion, and social research organisation (insert brief description of the organisation).

XYZ Company delivers research services to (insert client/industry profiles) throughout (insert general geographical locations).

XYZ Company has elected to include (state research services covered) to be attested to this document in accordance with Annexes A, B, C, D, E and F (as appropriate). XYZ Company has elected to exclude (state research services not covered) from the attestation.

Details of XYZ Company attested annexes are described as follows:

For each annex, insert a descriptive statement of services provided, including any relevant technical specifications.

ANNEX	ATTESTED	EXCLUDED	EXPLANATION
Annex A — Sampling including access panels			
Annex B — Fieldwork			
Annex C — Physical observation			
Annex D — Digital observation			
Annex E — Self completion			
Annex F — Data management and processing			

Figure 1 — Example of a SoA template

4.1.2 Confidentiality of research

4.1.2.1 General

Information supplied by clients for project purposes shall only be used by service providers in the context for which it was supplied. It shall not be made available to third parties without prior authorization by clients and shall be treated in the strictest confidence in accordance with client requirements.

Identifiable participant data are confidential and all assurances given to participants shall be fulfilled.

Where databases or contact lists are provided by third parties (e.g. clients), the service provider shall request that third parties confirm that use of such sources conforms to industry codes.

4.1.2.2 Participant reassurance

Invited or recruited participants shall be informed by the service provider that participation is voluntary.

The service provider shall ensure that participant reassurance occurs:

a) during each recruitment or invitation, regarding the types of personal data, proposed uses, and retention and/or reuse of the data to be collected;

b) during direct data collection (e.g. face-to-face, telephone) regarding confidentiality principles, purposes for which the data may be used, and identity and contact details of the service provider and any subcontractors and/or client(s), as appropriate.

Where digital identifiers (e.g. cookies) are used by the service provider during data collection, this shall be communicated to participants including the purpose of the intended identifiers.

Whenever geo-location or geo-fencing methods are to be used to collect participant data, the service provider shall make participants aware of this and obtain consent.

Where there is no direct contact between the service provider and the participant/s and it is not possible to provide direct assurances, privacy obligations shall still be met.

Reasonable precautions shall be taken by the service provider to ensure that participants and observed people (including those who may not be aware they are being observed) are not identified, harmed, or adversely affected as a result of their participation.

4.1.2.3 Invitations to participate in research projects

The service provider shall provide each potential participant invited to take part in a research project with appropriate information, including:

a) a general description of the purpose of a project;

b) the estimated length of their participation time;

c) a statement of the confidentiality of each participant's responses;

d) a statement of the anonymity and/or identification of each participant's responses;

e) the closing date for completed responses (if applicable);

f) full disclosure of incentive terms and conditions related to the project;

g) information as to whether the invitation is sent out on behalf of another service provider; and

h) the opportunity to unsubscribe or opt out of the research activity.

Where participants ask for the above details of a project, if the information cannot be shared prior to participation, the service provider shall share these details after participation.

The requirements of 4.1.2.4 regarding the participation of children shall apply.

4.1.2.4 Data collection from children or vulnerable persons

When collecting data from children or participants considered to be vulnerable, the service provider shall:

a) obtain consent from a parent, guardian, or responsible adult after providing them with sufficient information about the research process;

b) exercise due care during the data collection process including the child's or vulnerable person's agreement to participate.

Due care may include additional training of fieldworkers and additional fieldworker guidelines.

Where permission to collect data from children and vulnerable persons has been obtained, the permission shall be renewed at least every 12 months or at the next invitation to participate, whichever is most frequent.

Definitions of what constitutes a child, vulnerable person, and responsible adult vary from country to country and this shall be taken into account in multinational research.

4.1.3   Documentation and records management

4.1.3.1   Documenting the systems and practices

The service provider shall determine, document, implement, and maintain the necessary organizational systems and practices to:

a)   conform with this document in accordance with the SoA;

b)   identify, assess and address the risks associated with any complexities and nature of the research undertaken;

c)   identify the needs and expectations of interested parties, and assure them that their requirements are considered (e.g. clients, participants, communities, regulators);

d)   safeguard participant confidentiality and provide any necessary assurances to participants;

e)   explain incentives, when applicable, including their nature, and make available incentive terms and conditions to participants;

f)   provide clarity, transparency, identification, and traceability to enable audit and replication of research projects;

g)   provide clarity on retention and destruction of records. Data retention practices shall be communicated to the client.

4.1.3.2   Project research activity records

Specific project research records that are required to enable project traceability and replicability shall be retained for a minimum of 24 months or as agreed by the client.

Project records traceability and replicability refers to records held by the service provider and any subcontractors used.

Additionally:

a)   primary records shall be retained for 12 months or as agreed by the client;

b)   data used to identify participants shall be retained for any necessary administration and/or quality control period or as agreed with the participant/s.

The extent and nature of documentation of individual projects and research is flexible so far as it:

—   meets the requirements of 4.6;

—   is under document and project version control;

—   is auditable.

4.1.3.3   Records management

The extent and nature of records management, including maintaining, archiving, and destruction of records for research activities undertaken by the service provider, shall be:

a)   controlled in a secure manner to the extent necessary to support the requirements of 4.3;

b)   protected from loss of confidentiality, privacy, and security as prescribed in 4.3; and

c)   protected from improper use and loss of integrity as prescribed in 4.3.

4.2 Personnel and infrastructure responsibilities

4.2.1 Personnel and organisational responsibilities

The service provider shall determine roles, responsibilities, and delegations of authority to individuals or groups to meet the needs as stated in 4.1.

As a minimum, assigned and documented roles shall include:

a) senior management who are responsible for resource provision, policy, compliance to laws and delivery of this document;

b) management who are accountable for service delivery to clients including projects or parts thereof;

c) quality control of subcontracted or outsourced services according to project needs;

d) operational personnel who are accountable for the scope of services delivered as stated in 4.1 The service provider shall have plans in place to ensure service delivery is not affected by changes in personnel, whether short-term or long-term; and

e) a single entity for each annex shall be nominated as the representative for annex conformity as claimed in the SoA.

Where technologies, (e.g. automated systems or machine learning) are used to accomplish tasks, the service provider shall ensure that service delivery conforms to this document.

The role of managing conformity to this document shall be assigned to a senior or management role.

4.2.2 Personnel — Performance management

The service provider shall review roles to determine the qualifications, competencies, and knowledge needed to deliver the requirements of the role. When recruiting personnel, the service provider shall consider applicants according to this criterion.

Training, personnel development, and annual performance reviews shall be undertaken and documented by the service provider to ensure persons holding roles or delegations are competent and remain competent. Records of applicant history, including previous experience where known, qualifications, performance reviews, training, and retraining shall be maintained.

As a minimum, training provided by the service provider shall include:

a) legal and regulatory requirements associated with each role;

b) specific research methodologies as defined in the annexes and as prescribed by the service provider procedures and standards and as appropriate to the role;

c) specific competencies for persons undertaking operational roles pertinent to data collection and other methodologies.

The service provider shall ensure that the content and scope of training for research roles is appropriate to the nature and complexity of any research work undertaken. Work supervision and feedback may be required.

4.3 Information security

4.3.1 Information security risk framework

The service provider shall identify the security risks associated with the information they process and implement an information security management framework to prevent the unauthorised access, use, modification or destruction of the information. This framework shall be appropriate to the risks

identified and shall apply to the collection, receipt, storage, transfer and deletion of information. This framework shall be inclusive of all formats and locations in which the information may be held.

4.3.2 Information handling

The service provider shall implement a process to determine how different types of information shall be handled according to their associated risks. The process shall identify any types of information which needs to be processed securely and/or to which access needs to be restricted.

4.3.3 Information security controls

The service provider shall ensure that appropriate protections or controls are in place at all times for information which must be processed securely and/or restricted. This can include:

a) administrative controls (including policies and procedures, which include backup processes);

b) technical controls (including firewalls, anti-virus software, encryption); and

c) physical controls (including physical access systems, receptionists and guards, CCTV).

4.3.4 Information security training and awareness

The service provider shall provide training to all staff about handling information appropriately and in a timely manner. The training shall:

— be in the context of the information management framework and identified risks;

— be delivered annually as a minimum or more frequently if the role requires it;

— include notification to staff regarding their responsibility for safeguarding information;

— be appropriate to the risks associated with the information handled by them or to which they have access;

— include guidance on how to identify different types of information; and

— detail how to ascertain what protection is required for the information they are handling.

4.4 Subcontracting services

4.4.1 General

The service provider shall ensure outsourced services and assets, whether hired or otherwise outsourced, conform to the requirements of this document and are fit for purpose. The service provider shall be responsible for any such work, asset or activity, and associated deliverables so far as it affects the services provided to the client and this document, as described in the SoA.

The service provider's obligations shall extend to:

a) selecting and monitoring subcontracted providers to ensure services and assets are fit for purpose and do not compromise work relating to service delivery and this document;

b) identifying any nonconforming work or activity and taking appropriate action to prevent recurrence when a failure to meet the requirement is identified;

c) keeping records for project traceability and internal or external review purposes.

NOTE 1   Examples of outsourcing or subcontracting include various data collection methodologies, data analysis, coding, venue hire, data collection instrument development, hire or lease of assets including digital devices, cloud services or other software as a service (SaaS).

NOTE 2   Nonconforming work or a nonconformity is generally a problem or significant issue such as a failure to deliver to this document or project specifications. It could also be a breach of privacy or other legislative, regulatory or code requirements.

4.4.2   Subcontracted project work

When any part of the research process is outsourced and attested as part of the business SoA, there shall be sufficient assessment undertaken by the service provider to confirm that the requirements of this document are met.

Where the subcontractor is not third party certified to this document, project work which is outsourced by the service provider shall meet at least one of the following:

a)   agreement for the work to be conducted in accordance with this document is in place and recorded;

b)   documentary evidence from the service provider confirms that checking, validation, and information security requirements of this document have been met;

c)   an audit of the project work has been undertaken to confirm conformity.

Regardless of which of the above criteria are met, service providers' work shall be traceable and replicable to project specifications. The service provider shall make every attempt to use only subcontractors (including access panels) that conform with the specific requirements of this document. Clients shall be informed of the outsourced arrangements and of subcontractor conformity status on request.

On request, the service provider shall declare to the client the nature and portion(s) of a project that has been outsourced, including the identity of all the subcontractors and their locations. Full transparency shall be given to avoid a breach of law, interest, and/or contract.

When an outsourced provider of project work is nominated by a client, the service provider shall monitor and validate the work as far as is practical to do so and shall keep a record of the findings.

NOTE   Written contractual agreements with supporting documentation can be initiated as an ongoing arrangement. The agreements need not be specific for each piece of work unless the nature of work is outside the normal scope of the agreement.

4.5   Planning, delivery and reporting on projects and research work

4.5.1   General

The service provider shall monitor critical planning, delivery of research methodologies, milestones, and reporting to ensure conformity with agreed specifications and this document.

The service provider shall keep all records to enable the replication of project or research work and traceability for the purposes of verification and/or validation by audit.

NOTE   Projects commence from initial communications regarding requests for work, through to project/ work planning, delivery and reporting to the client according to agreed arrangements.

4.5.2   Client relationship management

4.5.2.1   General

The service provider's relationship with a client commences on receipt of a request to provide research services, progressing through to proposal, project delivery, reporting, and assessment of client satisfaction.

The service provider shall monitor client relationships, seek feedback, and drive continuous improvement of services provided to clients.

The service provider shall ensure client requirements are clarified, agreed, delivered, and traceable:

a) at initial client introduction and at proposal/quotation stage for each subsequent project or work request;

b) during project or other work where milestones are outlined for client review or approval;

c) when changes to project work are being proposed;

d) when reporting or otherwise providing deliverables against agreements or arrangements, including any changed specifications.

The service provider shall have a client complaints management process which requires that the complaints shall, at a minimum:

— be investigated, documented, and actioned, including a review of the contract and a review for regulatory and industry code compliance or breach notices; and

— involve senior management for further action as appropriate and according to the significance of the complaint.

The service provider shall ensure that complaints relating to breach of contract, regulation, or industry codes are reviewed at the annual compliance review for improvement opportunities (see 4.6).

The service provider shall make clients, and other interested parties as required, aware of the relevant industry codes and legal and ethical requirements relating to the nature of the research work, including conformity to this document. Communication of these requirements to clients may be via websites, emails, proposals/quotations, agreements, terms and conditions, or other auditable mechanisms.

The service provider shall provide the client with a briefing of the work program unless already included in proposals and other schedules or as requested by the client. Regardless of the briefing format, briefings shall be traceable including any agreements or changes arising at any time.

Where identified and agreed in a briefing or specification by the service provider, clients may review and approve data collection instruments such as questionnaires, discussion guides, code frames, and data analysis tools.

Where a research project requires participant consent (e.g. live interviews or recorded events), the client shall only observe with the additional consent of the participant. This consent shall be documented by the service provider and be traceable to the actual project event.

Any agreements to deliver work or other agreements among clients and the service provider shall be documented in a manner that is traceable to the client and/or work and shall be auditable.

4.5.2.2   Product handling

Where the client provides products or materials, the service provider shall make every effort to obtain appropriate instructions and warnings regarding handling use, storage, preservation and safekeeping/ security, and ensure that safekeeping/security is communicated to all relevant parties.

Where such products or goods are for use by participants or other interested parties, the service provider shall obtain from the client the necessary information, assurances, and specifications confirming that products are fit for purpose and do not pose a risk of harm to persons or property. The service provider shall obtain from the client confirmation that the products or goods meet all regulatory and legal requirements. The service provider shall obtain confirmation from the client as to how the return of any products or goods will be managed at project or work completion. Once arrangements are agreed and confirmed, the service provider shall record this information in the project file.

Where the product is of a digital nature, refer also to 4.3.

4.5.3   Project, work requests or other responses to offer services

4.5.3.1   General

Whether a proposal, quotation, or other response to a request for services, the service provider shall document the following minimum requirements in a traceable format as per the project/work specification:

a)   intended scope of work;

b)   intended objectives or expected deliverables;

c)   intended methodologies;

d)   intended technologies, if applicable;

e)   timelines or schedule of work or milestones;

f)   fees and/or fee schedule arrangements;

g)   intended deliverables and method of delivery;

h)   expiry date of the proposal, quotation, or response;

i)   sampling and weighting plans including, as applicable, target population, intended use of sampling frames, sample size, sample selection/recruitment, and overall reliability of the intended results;

j)   secondary data to be used, the nature of the source data, and method of inclusion in the project; and

k)   any additional documentation related to schedules including key milestones and responsibilities for supply and receipt of documentation among parties, approvals of various activities including data collection instruments, analysis specification, and overall project tracking.

For previously specified and repeat work, only changed items from the original or previous work need to be communicated to clients in a traceable format.

If the project is multi-client, this shall be clearly stated in the scope of work or intended methodologies.

4.5.3.2   Delivery of project or other work

The service provider shall monitor the most important research processes to ensure they are conducted in accordance with agreed specifications.

NOTE   The most important processes can include the sampling procedure, development of data collection tools, data collection methodologies, data processing, analysis and the production of deliverables.

Project records shall cover actions taken to address any problems that arise.

Changes and the timetable made by the client or by the research provider shall be communicated to and approved by the other contract in party in a timely manner. Any such changes shall be documented.

4.5.3.3   Conception and design of data collection instruments

The service provider shall take into account when developing data collection instruments that the content, structure and design of data collection instruments, including wording, the sequence of individual questions and other topics being researched (e.g. on an omnibus), the number of response alternatives and their order, and other factors can affect research findings.

Instructions and filter structures for self-completion data collection instruments shall be included as part of the instrument or associated material.

Where data collection instruments used for continuous projects are revised between data collection waves, the service provider shall communicate the implications for other processes (e.g. data processing) to relevant interested parties.

The service provider shall ensure that data collection instruments are adapted for each methodology and device to be used.

If data collection instruments are revised at any point, the service provider shall communicate the implications of this to the client.

4.5.3.4 Translation of data collection instruments and other project-related documents

Where translation is required, the service provider shall meet the following minimum requirements.

a) Translation shall be done by a person or persons with mother-tongue language competence or equivalent skills in the source and target languages. At least one of the translators shall have prior experience with this type of document. If automated translation is used, b) and c) shall still apply.

b) Checking and revising for suitability shall be undertaken by people other than the translator, with the appropriate competence in the source and/or target languages.

c) The checking and revision of translations shall be recorded.

In instances where secondary verification is not possible, the service provider shall have a policy in place ensuring competence of translator[s].

The client or their representative shall be given the opportunity to review the translation.

4.5.3.5 Pretesting data collection instruments

A pretest shall be carried out for all data collection instruments (including self-completion) if the client or the research service provider consider it necessary. If the same data collection instrument has previously been tested and used in a comparable situation, such testing may be of a more limited scale. If there is a pretest, the findings shall be recorded.

NOTE   Various forms of pretesting can be considered, ranging from in-house dummy interviews to full pilots with appropriate participants. The approach used is normally agreed with the client and/or covered in the proposal, together with any implications on the price.

4.5.3.6 Incentives

Incentives may be used as a means to encourage participation. Where incentives are provided, the service provider shall document the nature of incentives as part of project records.

The service provider shall select incentives that are as neutral as possible in relation to the research project and target groups in order to avoid bias.

Where incentives are offered, a documented incentive statement for participants shall include details of the rewards.

The incentive statement for participants shall detail, as appropriate:

a) the nature of the incentives (e.g. cash, vouchers, points, sweepstakes);

b) the types of participation for which incentives are offered, for example panel membership, participation in surveys (with participation defined), other research activities, loyalty;

c) how and when incentives are given or can be redeemed;

d) methods for resolving queries or disputes about incentives.

Where participants include children or vulnerable persons, the service provider shall make the parent, guardian or responsible adult aware of the incentive scheme and require that person's explicit permission to supply the incentive prior to allowing the child or vulnerable persons to participate in any research.

On request, the service provider shall inform the client when incentives will be offered to participants, and shall specify the nature of any incentives, including any variations in the incentives provided (e.g. by region, age).

4.5.4 Providing deliverables to the client

4.5.4.1 General

The service provider shall provide deliverables to the client as agreed. Deliverables may be provided in full, or in part, at the completion of work or at agreed milestones according to pre-planned arrangements.

Deliverables provided by the service provider shall be in a format agreed with the client or interested parties (in accordance with 4.3), such as and not limited to:

a) formal written report in hard copy or electronic format;

b) face-to-face presentation;

c) digital data delivery;

d) information reported to a closed group via a community website or other digital presentation;

e) video presentations or similar;

f) copies of interviews or translations;

g) dashboards.

Regardless of the method used to provide the deliverables to the client, the service provider shall ensure that the methodologies used for the project and the deliverables are available in full and are traceable for future replicability at client request within the record retention periods determined in 4.1.3.2. The service provider shall make the client aware that this documentation is available on request.

Additionally, within the reporting process, the service provider shall:

— prevent ambiguity by reporting any relative values (e.g. percentages, ratios) along with base data or in reference to base data;

— check the correctness of reported data and materials before delivery to the client.

4.5.4.2 Client reporting

Where the service provider delivers output data to the client before the completion of data collection, appropriate notifications and warnings shall be included on the limitations of data based on partial and non-validated responses.

The service provider shall not present research results with greater confidence than the data can support.

The service provider shall provide clients with sufficient information to enable them to understand the analysis, any potential sources of error and bias, and bias controls.

The service provider shall interpret research results in relation to a research problem supported by empirical findings and, where applicable, by other data. Interpretations and recommendations based on empirical research shall be distinguished from personal views and opinions.

Reporting requirements shall take into account the scope of the project and agreed reporting arrangements with the client.

Reporting, or making results available, to clients on completion of projects shall cover the following minimum requirements plus additional annex-specific requirements:

a) client name and research provider name;

b) research objectives;

c) identification of wholly or partially subcontracted services, if requested;

d) target population;

e) methods of data collection;

f) dates of fieldwork or data collection;

g) incentive types, where applicable;

h) methods of statistical analysis, where applicable;

i) margin of sampling error, where applicable;

j) where relevant, a statement of substantive limitations affecting the validity of findings.

Where practical, a statement that the research was carried out in conformity with this document should be included in the report to the client.

NOTE   See B.8, C.4, and F.7.3 for additional reporting requirements applicable for each data collection method.

Annex-specific reporting requirements shall include as a minimum:

— validation, verifications, and/or monitoring processes applied;

— reliability of findings and the resulting impact on accuracy and consistency of the data.

4.5.4.3   Publication of research results

The service provider shall not publish research deliverables unless:

a) the research was conducted at the service provider's own expense, or otherwise contractually agreed and consented to by the client, taking into account relevant legal and regulatory requirements; and

b) the service provider made every reasonable attempt to ensure that the conclusions are adequately supported by the data.

When publishing results, the service provider's presentation shall be clearly distinguished from their interpretation. The service provider shall also draw the client's attention to client responsibilities regarding the publication of research results, regardless of whether or not the service provider is identified.

4.6   Management review and improvement

4.6.1   Input

The service provider shall monitor and review at least annually service provisions, processes, internal documented systems and the SoA.

The review shall include the requirements of the core framework and each annex to which the service provider attests. The review shall provide evidence of:

a)   conformity or non-conformity to the above, including audit and assessment outcomes;

b)   actions taken where required to rectify and prevent recurrence of any non-conformity;

c)   improvements made and/or planned;

d)   senior management awareness of all breaches and non-compliance related to legal, regulatory, or industry code issues, including any actions arising;

e)   client satisfaction review;

f)   a review of complaints and complaint management (e.g. client, participants).

The service provider shall also review the SoA to ensure it remains representative of the services provided and, where this is not the case, amend it as required. The review shall include the requirements of the core framework and each annex included in the SoA.

4.6.2   Output

The outcomes of the review shall be auditable and contain evidence of agreed deliverables, including timelines where applicable.

4.7   Internal audits

An internal audit program shall be planned and carried out by the service provider at least annually to confirm conformity to this document and inform the service provider of ongoing performance and identify opportunities for improvement.

The annexes as stated in the SoA shall be incorporated in the internal audit program. As part of the internal audit program, projects or component parts of projects shall be audited.

Audits, investigations, or other test results, follow up actions, and deliverables shall be recorded by the service provider and, where appropriate, referenced to relevant client projects.

Internal auditors shall be appropriately trained by the service provider and, where its size permits, shall not audit their own work.

4.8   Legal requirements

The service provider shall establish, implement and maintain a procedure:

—   to identify the legal requirements applicable to the activities offered;

—   to determine how these requirements apply to the activities offered.

The service provider shall ensure that these applicable legal requirements are taken into account when offering its services.

Annex A
(normative)

Sampling including access panels

A.1 General

The service provider that offers sampling services, whether directly or as subcontracted services, shall conform with Annex A.

Annex A covers important requirements for access panels. There are further requirements for access panels in Annexes E and F.

Annex A shall be read in the context of Clause 4.

The service provider shall document methods and processes associated with sampling methodologies and sample sources.

The service provider shall inform clients how participants have been recruited to contribute to research, distinguishing clearly between two main types of samples:

a) probability samples; and

b) non-probability samples;

and four main types of sources:

1) access panels comprised of participants who have consented to be members for the purpose of participating in research data collection activities;

2) databases created for any purpose different than participating in research data collection activities, such as client databases for marketing purposes;

3) statistical data (e.g. national census, geographical data, postal delivery data, national identity register); and

4) other sources, including, but not limited to, river sampling.

A.2 Sampling

A.2.1 General

The service provider shall confirm with clients the research design and methods to be used to select samples for research purposes. This shall be documented to allow future replication if required. The service provider shall record and report to clients any relevant facts, such as sampling biases that might reduce the projection of a sample to a defined target population/universe.

At the time of quoting and/or project planning, the service provider shall inform the client if targeted sampling is to be used, i.e. if profiling information is to be used for targeting purposes.

The service provider shall ensure that the sample design uses a specified selection procedure (e.g. stratification, clustering, assignments) and is traceable. The service provider shall be transparent about the types of prescreening questions and their intended use. The service provider shall check characteristics of samples, including samples provided by third parties, for conformity with the research project sampling criteria. The requirement to check applies to fieldwork conducted by the service provider and/or subcontractors.

When client databases are used, the service provider shall confirm with clients on how those databases are used and address any potential limitations.

NOTE   In the case of work by subcontractors, checking can involve informing subcontractors of the required sample characteristics and verifying the achieved samples against these specifications.

A.2.2 Sample size

The service provider responsible for designing the research or analysing the data shall recommend sample sizes based on sufficiently detailed input from clients to ensure sampling variations in samples and in any subgroups relevant to the analysis are acceptable for the intended purposes. The service provider should describe the strengths and limitations of the sample sizes they recommend.

NOTE 1   Where a sample provider does not design the research or analyse the data, this requirement does not apply.

NOTE 2   Input from clients can include the degree of risk with which they are comfortable, expectations of effect sizes and specific subsamples they are interested in.

A.2.3 Sample selection and design

The service provider shall ensure:

a) completed interviews contained in final data sets represent the target populations and the objectives of any research designs; and

b) quotas or targeting criteria used in sample selections are traceable. This includes providing information about sample source blending, the use of sample routing technology, and incentives offered to participants.

A.2.4 Sample transparency

A.2.4.1 Sample provider transparency

The service provider shall make available information about any sample development processes to the clients, if requested. Depending on the specific sampling approach used, this shall include:

a) a description of sampling frames or sources from which samples are drawn, including:

— the type of sample sources used (e.g. an access panel, river sample, dynamic sample, internet traffic, customer, association lists);

— how new samples are integrated into the sample frame, how samples are constructed or acquired including any subcontractors used;

— validation methods, and how many cases have been excluded as a result of data validation, including methods used to replace the missing cases so that the data reflects the target populations (in the case of non-probability samples);

b) procedures used to recruit prospective participants to panels, communities, or ongoing research programs;

c) participation invitation(s), reminders, and data collection instrument(s) used;

d) procedures used to clean and update the sample including any monitoring of individual research participation performance, quality controls to minimize satisficing or fraud, and the steps taken when such behaviour is identified;

e) participant support procedures (e.g. survey or panel helpdesk);

f) the type(s) of incentives offered to participants, and how those incentives are administered;

g) the sampling methods used to select potential participants from sampling frames or equivalent, and the methods used to ensure that samples represent or describe (in the case of non-probability samples) target populations, including any quotas or sample blending methods used;

NOTE Sample providers can offer some or all of the following services:

— access panels;

— sample brokerage (the practice of purchasing and reselling samples);

— sample aggregation (the practice of combining or aggregating multiple sample sources); and

— routing technology or access to routing technology.

h) the specific criteria used in sample selections, such as quotas or other filtering criteria;

i) any procedures in place to maximize sample consistency for tracking or follow-up projects;

j) if appropriate, sampling error information or other information that can be used to describe sample quality;

k) where samples of participants are invited:

— counts of the number of sample units drawn and solicited;

— the number of bounced emails (which may alternatively be counted and removed at panel level);

— the number of partial interviews; and

— the number of full, completed interviews and reasons for any difference in planned and achieved samples and how any problems in this respect were dealt with;

l) where samples of participants are invited, participation rates, including the definition and calculation method for non-probability samples, or response rates, including the definition and calculation method for probability samples;

m) where routers or similar methods are used:

— counts of the number of potential participants screened;

— any specific criteria used;

— the number of participants qualifying;

— the rules with respect to the number of research projects participants are exposed to; and

— time spent in routers;

n) documentation about methods that are known or suspected to produce bias in participant selections;

o) a statement regarding the ability of panels or samples to accurately represent or describe (in the case of non-probability samples) any intended target populations and, as applicable, the type and extent of errors associated with the use of probability and non-probability samples;

p) statements about possible sampling errors.

A.2.4.2 Sample user transparency

The service provider shall inform the client that the following information is available and make available on request:

a) sampling frames or equivalent, sources, and sampling methods used;

b) dates of fieldwork;

c) average or median questionnaire or interview length;

d) total number of interviews completed;

e) any quotas or other specifications used in sample selection;

f) screeners, questionnaires, discussion guides, and other relevant data collection instruments and documents;

g) counts of the number of participants whose identity was successfully validated, when identity validation is used;

h) descriptions of any de-duplication methods used, the number of responses deleted as a result, as well as the measures taken to replace deleted responses;

i) measures of participant engagement used and an anonymized account of any participants removed or replaced because of poor research behaviour;

j) exclusion information;

k) participation rates (where possible) and methods used to calculate them;

l) completion rates; and

m) on request, whether any part of the project was subcontracted and, if so, to which organisations.

A.3 Probability samples

The service provider shall ensure that the particular sampling approach used ensures that each person or unit within a target population or sampling frame has a calculable non-zero probability of being included in a sample. The sources of data used for selecting sample points and/or individual persons or units shall be documented. The service provider may use subsequent weighting of participant records to counteract biases in structure due to non-response, under coverage, and other causes. This shall be traceable for purposes of future replication.

A.4 Non-probability samples

A.4.1 General

Non-probability samples can include, but are not limited to, the following:

a) access panels (online or offline);

b) intercepts (online or offline);

c) social media (online or offline);

d) lists or other sources of unknown coverage (online or offline);

e) blending of multiple sources, including interviewing across multiple modes (e.g. combining online and offline samples, access panels, online intercepts); and

f) router technology (online).

A.4.2 Quality criteria for non-probability samples

When non-probability sources are used for drawing samples for research projects, the sample provider shall document and make available to clients:

a) descriptions of sampling frames or other sources and methods from which samples were drawn, constructed and/or acquired, and the target populations the samples are intended to represent;

b) sampling methods used, i.e. the procedure used to select potential participants from sampling frames or equivalent, and the methods used to ensure that samples represent target populations, including any quotas used;

c) criteria used in sample selection, including any information related to sample non-response;

d) counts of the number of sample units drawn;

e) descriptions of any problems encountered in sample selections and how problem resolution was addressed;

f) weighting and projection methods;

g) methods of data collection for samples;

h) appropriateness of samples for the purpose;

i) assessment of how well samples represent target populations and any associated implications for data quality;

j) if available, relevant data from other sources that may be used to assess potential bias; and

k) information required for access panels when an access panel is used.

In the case of quota samples, the service provider shall know and define the intended target populations in terms of the relevant criteria. The service provider shall include characteristics relevant to overall populations, number of interviews, and sources and dates of origin of quota controls in quota plans.

A.4.3 Sample duplication, device ID, cookies and similar objects

A.4.3.1 General

The service provider shall take reasonable efforts to remove duplicate participants, some of whom may result from the use of multiple sources (e.g. panels, social networks, river sample) to develop samples.

A.4.3.2 Device ID

If device ID is used to remove duplicated participants from samples, the service provider shall use a device ID technology that is capable of supporting geo-location identification, and both duplicate and proxy server identification where possible. The service provider shall be transparent regarding the accuracy of their technique and inform users of its limitations.

The service provider shall inform users about data protection requirements associated with the use, transfer, and storage of device IDs.

A.4.3.3 Cookies and other similar objects

The service provider shall only use or cooperate with third parties that use cookies and other similar objects, including local shared objects (e.g. "flash cookies") and web beacons (including transparent or clear gifs) for legitimate research purposes. These purposes include:

a) identification of participants or panellists as required for services requested by participants (i.e. to participate in panels and research);

b)   validation and fraud prevention, including legitimate use in device ID technologies; and

c)   tracking activities such as advertising evaluation research and other appropriate research uses.

When cookies and other similar objects are used, the service provider shall conform with applicable industry codes, including the separation of research and marketing activities. In some jurisdictions, this includes obtaining participant consent to place cookies and other similar objects on devices for the first time and placing cookie notices on any associated websites.

The service provider shall inform participants about the nature, presence, and purpose of cookies and other similar objects. This information shall be presented in plain language to allow participants and panellists to give consent.

A.4.3.4   Other methods

Where the service provider uses alternatives to device ID technology, cookies, and other similar objects, those alternatives shall accomplish the equivalent functions at the same or a better level of accuracy and effectiveness. These methods include other technology solutions as well as process-based solutions.

The service provider shall fully document the results of the de-duplication process, which shall be provided to clients upon request in anonymised form.

A.4.4   Sample blending

The service provider shall be transparent about using sample blending, including sources, the percentages, and the methods used for sample blending.

Whenever the service provider conducts sample source blending, including computer-assisted name identification, they should take careful consideration not to share panel member personal data with a third party without participant consent.

NOTE   This practice sometimes uses balancing techniques at sample selection and can use sample profiling, scoring or matching techniques.

A.4.5   Sampling automation

The service provider using or operating technology for automated sampling processes (including routers and sample source exchanges) shall be fully transparent about the sampling automation process, the sources included, and the technologies deployed.

The service provider using routers shall provide or have available the following information:

a)   whether routers use a serial or parallel design;

b)   counts of potential participants screened;

c)   specific criteria used, the numbers of participants qualifying; and

d)   rules used with respect to the number of research requests participants are exposed to.

When use of specific routers is known to produce bias in participant selections, the service provider shall document this information and provide it to clients.

NOTE   Routers are generally defined as serial or parallel:

—   a serial router generally uses a process whereby a participant is screened sequentially for the available studies in the routing environment;

—   a parallel router generally uses a process in which a participant is exposed to a set of prescreening questions from all or a subset of the research projects running in the routing environment.

A.4.6 Sample blending, sampling automation, technology-based solutions and personal data

The service provider shall ensure that personal data are not shared whenever sample blending, survey and sample automation, or technology-based solutions for quality measures are used, unless participant consent is obtained.

A.4.7 Fraudulent and inattentive responding

The service provider shall have a procedure in place to identify fraudulent or inattentive participation and minimize its impact on research data and quality, which may include any of the following:

a) questionnaire completion time, if applicable;

b) proportion of unanswered questions and, if relevant, whether specific core questions are unanswered;

c) a comparison between at least one item of the profile data (e.g. age, physical address) of participants and data from other sources;

d) cross references and cross validation to external data (e.g. usage and attitude data);

e) extent of selections of non-substantive answers such as "Don't Know" or "Refused";

f) patterned responses in matrix or grid questions (e.g. straight lining, random responding);

g) detection of inconsistent responses (e.g. comparing responses to both positively and negatively worded questions in the same attribute battery);

h) questions including low probability or fictitious answer categories;

i) trap questions such as "Check the box on the far right" in matrices or skill questions;

j) appropriate responses to open-ended questions; and

k) digital fingerprints.

The service provider shall work with clients to determine the measures to use.

A.4.8 Special considerations

A.4.8.1 Mobile

A.4.8.1.1 Unintended mobile participants

The service provider shall disclose whether participants were allowed to respond using mobile devices on a research project not designed for a mobile device.

a) In addition, the service provider shall, if requested, disclose the number of completes or attempts on mobile devices and the implications for representativeness of samples to target populations.

b) The service provider shall aim to optimize online research such that it renders well on any digital device.

A.4.8.1.2 New sample sources for mobile market research

The service provider shall be transparent about sample sources for mobile research and provide the reporting specified in A.2.4.1.

A.4.8.2 Category and other types of exclusions

When responding to a category or method exclusion request, the service provider shall disclose the specific method(s) being used.

A.5 Access panels

A.5.1 General requirements for access panels

The service provider shall actively manage access panels. Such management shall include ongoing communication between the service provider and panel members.

At the recruitment stage, the service provider shall obtain agreement from panel members to participate in research projects.

Access panels shall contain a set of profile data of panel members (see A.5.5.3).

The service provider shall ensure that active panel members meet the following criteria:

a) they are recruited from documented sources;

b) they have provided appropriate information for initial confirmation of identities;

c) they have provided profile data at recruitment; and

d) they have given explicit consent to participate in research according to the terms and conditions of panel membership.

In order to remain an active panel member, the service provider shall ensure that at least one of the following criteria is met:

— the panel member has completed at least one research project, if requested, within the last 12 months, including qualified completion, being terminated due to not qualifying, or being terminated due to quotas being full;

— the panel member has updated their profile data within the last 12 months.

A.5.2 Recruitment of new panel members

A.5.2.1 Confidentiality and transparency for access panels

During and after the recruitment process, the service provider shall communicate to and be transparent with panel members about the general purposes of access panels, the modes of operation, and the nature of how data collected from panel members may be used.

The service provider shall prepare and make readily available documented privacy statements for panel members during and after recruitment.

The service provider shall only add to the panel people who consent to the terms and conditions of membership and agree to future participation in research projects.

The service provider shall explain the types of research to be undertaken to parents or legal guardians in order to gain consent for children or vulnerable persons to be added to panels.

A.5.2.2 Access panel recruitment

At the recruitment stage, the service provider shall obtain from panel members their agreement to participate in research projects.

The service provider shall inform panel members about the general conditions of participation, including:

a) privacy and confidentiality;

b) incentives and rewards policies;

c) modes of operation (e.g. home use tests, online communities);

d) general nature of how data are collected from panel members during recruitment or via panel research projects;

e) how data may be communicated.

During recruitment, the service provider shall ensure that potential panel members are informed that cooperation and membership of access panels is voluntary and that, upon request, at any time after recruitment they can be removed from access panels.

A.5.2.3 Methods of recruitment

The service provider shall disclose to clients, upon request, the methods of recruitment used. The service provider shall inform clients whether open or closed recruitment is used. An access panel is said to be closed if new panel members cannot sign up on their own initiative (e.g. people cannot sign up on a public website).

NOTE   Using an existing database can generate bias in panels (e.g. recruitment from a database of buyers of a specific car brand might create bias in a future research on car brand engagement). Therefore, it is important to understand the sources of databases and recruitment methodologies used.

A.5.2.4 Source of recruitment

To evaluate the appropriateness of recruiting sources and to determine whether those sources can cause any issues of bias or validity, the service provider shall disclose to clients, upon request:

a) the types of sources used for recruitment to access panels;

b) whether recruitment is from representative samples of target populations; and

c) the number and nature of sources.

A.5.3 Validation of identity

A.5.3.1 General

The service provider shall validate the claimed identities of new panel members (see A.5.3.2).

The service provider shall:

a) document the process of validating panel members' identities;

b) record any results and actions taken; and

c) make the process, anonymized results, and actions taken available to clients upon request.

A.5.3.2 Validation of identity at the recruitment stage

The service provider shall ensure that identities of potential panel members are validated during recruitment. See E.3.2 for specific variables that can be used in validation.

A.5.3.3   Subsequent validation of identity

The service provider shall validate identities, using appropriate documented methods, every time panel members participate in research.

Working with clients, the service provider shall implement processes to identify and remove fraudulent and inattentive participants, documenting these procedures and actions taken. Responsibilities in this matter may be shared among the service provider, clients, and/or sub-contractors, as they might not be able to cover this requirement in full alone.

Depending on the nature of the project and access panel usage, the service provider shall include one or more of the validation methods specified in E.3.2.

A.5.4   Request to unsubscribe or opt out of the access panel

The service provider shall provide panel members with a straightforward method for removal from access panels if they choose. The service provider shall complete a request for removal as soon as is practical but no later than 30 days after the request. The service provider shall not select such panel members for future research studies from any relevant access panels unless new acceptances are obtained by the service provider from former panel members to recommence participation in future recruitments or research.

A.5.5   Access panel structure and size

A.5.5.1   Access panel structure

The service provider shall describe the structure of access panels and make this information available to clients upon request and as far as is relevant for specific research projects. The description shall include:

a)   population groups included and/or excluded from access panels (e.g. domestic consumers, professional practitioners, a business group); and

b)   any sub-groups within access panels from which specific samples or sub-samples can be selected, as well as the size relative to the total size of any access panel.

Where the objective of recruitment for access panels is to mirror population profiles (e.g. by age or socio-economic class), the service provider shall demonstrate this via relevant supporting data.

A.5.5.2   Access panel size

A.5.5.2.1   General requirements

The service provider shall define and make transparent to clients the size and capacities of the access panel, taking into account that:

a)   only active panel members shall be included;

b)   other members of the panel members' household shall not be included, although estimates of total household numbers may also be provided;

c)   typical participation rates (and calculation methods) shall only be included for projects conducted within the last 12 months;

d)   access panel sizes shall be given for a specific date since panel members may leave and join continuously.

NOTE 1   The quality of an access panel, and hence also the quality of samples drawn from it, is mainly determined by the recruitment and selection procedure for panel members, the structure of the access panel, and the maintenance and usage of the access panel, rather than by the number of panel members.

NOTE 2   If the service provider, in addition to sourcing from its panel, uses techniques such as river sampling, routing, or other techniques, additional measures of assessing capacity of the panel might be more appropriate.

A.5.5.2.2   Re-contacts

If requested, the service provider shall specify their capacity to deliver access to the same panel members more than once in order to help clients to evaluate the service provider's ability to perform re-contacts as well as effectively source tracking projects. This shall be calculated as the percentage of panellists who have completed the first research project of a set who subsequently also complete the second research project of a set within a 30-day period. Other time frames deemed appropriate shall be calculated in the same manner.

A.5.5.3   Profile data of panel members

The service provider shall ensure that panel-based profiling variables to be used in analysis are appropriately validated.

During recruitment, as well as at any time throughout participants' panel memberships, the service provider shall collect and update profile data from all panel members. Not all types of profiling information need to be collected from all panel members by the service provider. The service provider shall make available profile data definitions to clients. Relevant panel member data definitions may include:

a)   contact details, (e.g. email address, home address, telephone number);

b)   demographic and socio-economic variables, (e.g. gender, age, marital status, educational level attained, socio-economic group); and

c)   product and service usage or ownership, as well as other behavioural data.

For specialist access panels, other equivalent classifications may be appropriate.

NOTE   Profile data are collected for a variety of purposes, such as to verify active panel membership; to provide information for use in the validation and auditing of the panel members; to provide relevant stratification data for use in the sample design; to better target research opportunities to panellists; and to avoid contacting panel members who do not match the specifications defined by the sample design.

A.5.6   Access panel management

A.5.6.1   General

The service provider shall document access panel management procedures and a summary of these procedures shall be made available to clients upon request.

A.5.6.2   Incentives

The service provider shall ensure that panel members are able to check incentives which they have accumulated.

A.5.6.3   Maintenance

The service provider shall interact with panel members at least once every 12 months, whether as part of research project participation, updating of profile data, or otherwise. Such interaction by the service provider shall entail two-way communication between the service provider and panel members, and shall be documented.

The service provider shall maintain data on the panel members' participation history. Relevant variables of panel member participation may include:

a)   the length of time on an access panel;

b) the number and duration of research projects to which panel members have been invited to participate, as well as the number of projects where responses have been provided;

c) the topics of projects to which panel members have responded;

d) when the profile data were last updated.

The service provider shall inform clients, upon request, of policies relating to access panel maintenance, including the variables available for access panel participation analysis.

At least once every 12 months, the service provider shall identify panel members who no longer meet the requirements of being an active panel member. The service provider shall define those panellists as inactive according to a clear policy based on their cooperation history (e.g. number of consecutive research invitations without participation).

The service provider shall keep a record of panel members' participation history for a minimum of two years.

A.5.6.4 Updating profile data of panel members

The service provider shall ask panel members to update their profile information at least once every 12 months and allow panellists to update their information (e.g. email address, telephone, address) if they request it at other times.

If no changes are needed to profiles, the service provider can consider this as an update and confirm it by recording the confirmation date. In this situation, the service provider shall record that panel members have had the opportunity to update their profile.

A.5.6.5 System requirements

The service provider shall have available effective systems (computer-based or otherwise) to implement requirements of this document and to provide the relevant data on access panel recruitment, structure and size, panel member profiles, access panel management, and research participation (e.g. response patterns and behaviour).

A.5.6.6 Panel member support

The service provider shall make available a technical support/helpdesk service to panel members by email, web, mail, telephone, or other means. The service provider shall acknowledge and address requests within a reasonable period of time and record these communications. The service provider helpdesk shall take the form of one of the following, including at least one that does not require panellists to incur additional costs:

a) email support;

b) telephone support; or

c) interactive chat via panel provider's website or any other digital channel.

A.5.7 Access panel usage and frequency of participation

The service provider shall monitor the frequency of participation of panel members, and shall implement methods to:

a) identify which panel members have taken part in which research projects; and

b) calculate the average number of participations per panel member.

The service provider shall make available to clients the average number of participations per panel member, upon request, both for access panels and specific samples that have participated in client projects.

Detailed records, including the date, of research participation shall be stored for each panel member, including:

— which research projects they were invited to participate in (e.g. type of questionnaire, product category); and

— responses to invitations (e.g. attempted participation such as a disqualification, termination, screen-out, abandonment, or similar).

The service provider shall have a policy regarding the number of reminders panel members may receive related to each research invitation. This policy shall specify a number which is not perceived as being excessive.

NOTE   The frequency of participation of panel members might impact the type and magnitude of error in certain types of research.

Annex B
(normative)

Fieldwork

B.1　General

The service provider that offers data collection using fieldwork methodologies, whether directly or as subcontracted services, shall conform with Annex B.

Annex B of this document shall be read in the context of Clause 4.

B.2　Management, recruitment and training of fieldworkers

B.2.1　Fieldworker recruitment

The service provider shall evaluate the suitability of potential fieldworkers on the basis of their previous work experience and qualifications, project-specific requirements and a recruitment interview, and/or references from previous employment.

Applicants' levels of relevant experience, if any, shall be established for work to be undertaken, including for specific projects. Evaluation shall include language competency, including the ability to follow instructions in languages to be used for data collection, and competence equivalent to mother tongue.

The service provider shall document relevant information relating to fieldworkers obtained during recruitment or subsequently (e.g. training records, results of validation). This documentation shall be retained as long as fieldworkers carry out work for the service provider and for a minimum of one year thereafter.

Where fieldworkers are recruited through an employment agency, recruitment records held by the service provider may be less detailed but shall show any relevant skills and previous experience.

B.2.2　Basic training for new fieldworkers

The content and scope of basic training shall be appropriate to the nature and complexity of the work to be carried out by the service provider (e.g. face-to-face interviewing, telephone interviewing, qualitative participant recruiting, observational research). If fieldworkers are used subsequently for different types of work (i.e. different than the type covered in the basic training already received), including the use of computer-assisted interviewing (CAI), the service provider shall give appropriate additional basic training.

As a minimum, basic training provided by the service provider shall include the following:

a)　the general principles of market, opinion, and social research;

b)　ethical and legal requirements including participant safeguards and data protection issues;

c)　the relevant requirements of any national or international codes adhered to by the service provider;

d)　the treatment of children or vulnerable persons;

e)　interviewing skills and/or other relevant techniques;

f)　where relevant, the use of technology (e.g. CAI);

g) role playing and trials for interviews, or appropriate types of training for other data collection methods.

The service provider data collection management staff should accompany or monitor, as appropriate, fieldworkers on their first day of work (e.g. monitor telephone interviews). In addition, the service provider should validate fieldworkers' first assignments after basic training including providing feedback. If the service provider does not undertake such monitoring or accompaniment, work from the first assignment shall be validated.

The service provider shall record basic training given to fieldworkers, including content, duration, and the identities of trainers. The service provider shall ensure that the trainees and trainers authenticate the training records by signature or in an equivalent manner.

NOTE 1   When the data are collected by participants, the requirements related to basic training and continuing training and appraisal are not applicable.

NOTE 2   Participants are not fieldworkers.

B.2.3   Continuing training and appraisal of fieldworkers

The service provider shall undertake a performance appraisal at least annually for fieldworkers who are regularly used by the service provider (e.g. for five projects/waves or more in a calendar year or other comparable work allocations). The service provider shall appraise less frequently used fieldworkers at intervals as deemed appropriate by the service provider, and that policy shall be documented.

In addition, the service provider shall provide ongoing feedback to fieldworkers throughout the year, as required.

Any appraisals undertaken by the service provider shall allow dialogue between fieldworkers and the service provider's data collection management staff (e.g. face-to-face, telephone, other digital methods) and shall include feedback from validation of work.

Appraisals undertaken by the service provider shall identify the need for further training of individual fieldworkers, where necessary. The need for training can be identified in different ways, for example. As a result of questionnaire editing, fieldwork validation, or accompanied or monitored interviews.

The service provider shall distinguish further training, as described above, from the need for additional training when fieldworkers are allocated to new types of work or responsibilities (e.g. specialist interviewing, supervisory work).

The service provider shall document appraisal reports and details of any additional training, and retain those records with fieldworkers' personnel records.

B.3   Fieldworker identity document (ID)

The service provider shall issue fieldworkers conducting face-to-face interviewing with an identity document (ID), preferably including a photograph. The ID shall include the validity period (e.g. the date of issue and the expiry date, year during which the ID is valid), and the name and contact details of the entity (e.g. the service provider, the fieldworker) to whom it belongs.

B.4   Project briefing

B.4.1   General

The service provider shall give a briefing and/or instructions for each project (or the specifics for each wave of a project) to fieldworkers, even if they begin work after fieldwork has already started. The briefing and/or instructions shall be the responsibility of a person from the service provider who has a full understanding of requirements for each project.

B.4.2 Quantitative projects

In the briefings and/or instructions for quantitative projects, the service provider shall include, as appropriate, the following information:

a) fieldwork dates and times;

b) sampling procedures;

c) required quotas;

d) data collection techniques;

e) instructions for administration of questionnaires or other data collection instruments and incentives;

f) acceptable and unacceptable methods of recruitment;

g) specific exclusions and restrictions applicable to participants;

h) any special requirements.

B.4.3 Qualitative projects

In the briefings and/or instructions for qualitative projects, the service provider shall include, as appropriate, the following information:

a) fieldwork dates and times;

b) key recruitment criteria;

c) required quotas;

d) numbers of participants to be recruited for each group discussion or in-depth interview;

e) acceptable and unacceptable methods of recruitment;

f) specific exclusions and restrictions applicable to participants;

g) whether observation equipment is to be used;

h) whether client observation is to happen;

i) instructions for the administration of questionnaires or other data collection instruments and incentives;

j) any special requirements.

B.5 Telephone data collection/CATI

B.5.1 General

The service provider shall define a maximum number of call attempts to individual telephone numbers within one day, one week, and in total for a project and ensure this is not exceeded.

The service provider shall define and ensure that CATI systems have a minimum timeout to each call before the telephone number called is treated as a no answer/call attempt.

NOTE   In many countries, there are precise requirements for the maximum number of call attempts. These figures are either legislative figures or they are defined by standards/industry codes.

Where CATI projects are conducted in a country or countries where no-call lists are mandatory, the service provider shall incorporate these lists into the systems prior to starting fieldwork.

B.5.2   Landline and mobile telephone numbers

In advance of commencing work on a project the service provider shall inform the client how landline and mobile telephone numbers will be mixed.

B.5.3   Predictive dialling and silent calls

When predictive dialling equipment is used, the service provider shall ensure they strictly adhere to standards and industry codes. As a minimum, the service provider shall establish:

a)   the minimum wait time from receiving a calling tone from a participant's telephone number and terminating the call due to non-response. This wait time shall be defined and documented;

b)   an acceptable time for available fieldworkers to begin to carry out interviews with participants who have responded to a call. The service provider shall define and document acceptable times for the termination of "silent calls" where calls are terminated if no fieldworkers are available;

c)   programming of predictive dialling systems to ensure that silent calls are a minimal fraction of calls made.

NOTE   In many countries, there are precise rules related to silent calls, such as the maximum amount of silent calls allowed within one research project. This amount can even be zero.

When the service provider research projects generate silent calls, the following shall be recorded:

—   installation configuration of any automatic dialling equipment;

—   control methods used for any silent calls generated;

—   procedures for handling complaints about silent calls. These procedures shall include informing receivers of silent calls of the telephone numbers from where calls were generated.

B.5.4   Complaints and call backs

The service provider shall establish and document procedures for handling complaints. This shall include informing call receivers of the telephone number from which calls were generated.

The service provider shall ensure that participants who call back are given the option to connect to a live person or a recording where they are informed of the following:

a)   the identity of research entities that made the call;

b)   assurances that calls were generated for research purposes.

B.6   Qualitative data collection

B.6.1   General

This section covers the collection of qualitative data from participants who have agreed to participate by specially trained moderators or fieldworkers.

In online qualitative data collection, the interaction between participant and moderator or fieldworker can occur via a variety of digital interfaces. Digital qualitative techniques may be conducted in real time or over an extended period of time (asynchronous) during which participants and moderators/fieldworkers have flexibility in when they log in to view, participate in, and/or post content (e.g. bulletin board sessions).

B.6.2 Qualitative participant recruitment

The service provider shall make available to moderators details of participants, how participants are recruited, and from what sources they are recruited (e.g. recruiter databases, access panels). These details are subject to participant confidentiality.

B.6.3 Qualitative participant recruitment validation

The service provider shall ensure that the primary aim of validation of participant recruitment is to confirm demographic and other recruitment criteria of participants and the work of fieldworkers, and to avoid participant participation in excess of what is specified in research proposals.

Where participants are recruited by fieldworkers (e.g. face-to-face, telephone), the service provider shall validate their work as specified in B.7, according to the required validation levels. The service provider shall ensure that validation methods include re-contact or monitoring (e.g. for telephone recruitment from central locations). The service provider shall ensure that validation is carried out; this can be before, during, or after qualitative data collection. The service provider shall take action where discrepancies are found.

NOTE 1   Validation by re-contact can be conducted during qualitative data collection. In such cases, self-complete or self-administered validation questionnaires can be used provided they are administered by individuals who were not involved in the original recruitment.

NOTE 2   In some cases, the only criterion for recruitment is that the participant is included in a recruitment list (e.g. customer lists). In such cases, validation can be limited to ensuring that recruited participants were indeed on the list, and re-contact or monitoring can be considered unnecessary.

Where participants are recruited online, including from access panels, the service provider shall ensure that validation is carried out as specified in Annex E. In online situations where recruitment and validation are conducted by the same people, the service provider shall ensure that validation records are available to moderators.

The service provider shall confirm identities and exclude "professional" participants at qualitative interviews/group discussions by using appropriate participant documentation. Moderators shall also confirm participants meet relevant recruitment criteria.

The service provider shall determine how identities are confirmed and how moderators are to confirm they match to recruitment criteria.

B.6.4 Qualitative moderation

The service provider shall ensure that moderators are briefed and fully prepared including in the use of any techniques not explicit in discussion guides.

The service provider shall ensure that moderators familiarize themselves with the objectives of any given research project, the issues to be explored, the stimulus materials, and the particular techniques to be used prior to the commencement of fieldwork.

The service provider shall ensure that moderators provide feedback related to any issues found during groups or interviews, including with respect to the following:

a)   match of participants to recruitment criteria;

b)   suitability of facilities in which groups or interviews are conducted (e.g. physical rooms, functionality of an online hosting facility), audio-visual services, or technical support;

c)   performance of hosts or individuals who received groups, or how online facilities managed participants arriving for sessions.

The service provider shall ensure this feedback is traceable.

B.6.5 Recording of qualitative research interviews and participant confidentiality

See 4.1.2, 4.1.3 and 4.5.3.

The service provider shall ensure that recordings of groups or depth interview responses are only conducted with consent and only used for the purposes for which the consent was given.

Recordings are usually audio, video, or transcripts of typed or uploaded content in online sessions, but may include others. The service provider shall ensure that participants are made aware of and have given their consent to recordings as well as any intended uses of the information (e.g. use by third parties) and any transfers of data (e.g. to clients).

The service provider shall ensure that recordings are labelled to identify projects, participants (including by cross-reference to other records) and data collection dates.

If recordings are transferred to clients, the service provider shall ensure that clients sign agreements that they will only use recordings internally for research purposes, unless otherwise agreed with the participant.

NOTE   The agreement can be part of the proposal.

Where third parties (including clients) are to observe qualitative data collection exercises, the service provider shall ensure that participants are made aware of and agree to this during recruitment and prior to any observations or recordings.

The service provider should make clients aware, either in proposals or via specific agreements that clients are not allowed to use any personal data about any individual participants in any observation tasks.

B.7   Validation of data

B.7.1   General

The service provider shall carry out validation as soon as practical during or after the fieldwork period (and not more than six weeks afterwards) and wherever possible before the resulting data are processed and/or reported to clients.

The service provider shall ensure that data validation is conducted by an independent person (i.e. someone other than the fieldworker whose work is being validated).

The service provider shall validate data collection of each project (or wave) using methods in accordance with B.7.2, taking into account:

a)   the need for the work of recently recruited fieldworkers to be validated on their first project;

b)   the need for frequently validating the work of regularly used fieldworkers, but not necessarily for each project (positive or negative validation results may influence the frequency of subsequent validations).

Where validation identifies discrepancies or problems, the service provider shall take corrective action at two levels:

—   project level (e.g. replacement of interviews, validation of additional work, qualifying the use of data);

—   fieldworker level (e.g. retraining, future work allocation). In cases of serious discrepancies (e.g. risk of fraudulent activity), recent or concurrent work by individuals shall be subjected to rechecking and validation.

B.7.2   Validation methods

B.7.2.1   Checking of data records

Depending on the type of data collection concerned, the service provider shall undertake validation as specified in B.7.2.2 to B.7.2.3, by means of checking the data records produced (e.g. questionnaires, CAI data files) and/or participant re-contact and/or monitoring.

NOTE   Checking of data records can incorporate other methods but, in some types of data collection, this could be the only practical form of validation (e.g. observational research such as mystery shopping and retail audits). Checking of data records by the service provider can include, as appropriate, completeness of the data records, keeping to samples and/or quotas, consistency of responses, and comparison of responses against normative data or among fieldworkers. This can be linked by the service provider to the checking of associated records (e.g. receipts of purchases from mystery shopping).

B.7.2.2   Participant re-contact (back-checking)

The service provider shall ensure that participant re-contact shall include confirmation that interviews or equivalent took place, that instructions were followed, of the length of interviews and responses to key questions including demographics, and other qualifying questions related to quotas. Re-contact may be by any medium involving direct communication with participants, for example face-to-face, telephone, postal mail, email, GPS trackers or remote listening tools on devices (e.g. tablets, recording devices).

B.7.2.3   Monitoring for quality control purposes

The service provider shall ensure that monitoring involves listening to or observing interviews at the time they are being carried out, listening to recordings of interviews after they have taken place, or accompanying supervisors for face-to-face interviews. Where technically possible, the service provider can also monitor from remote locations. In such instances, interviewers and participants shall be clearly audible to the service provider.

The service provider shall inform fieldworkers that any interview may be monitored. Fieldworkers shall not know whether a specific interview is being monitored (except for supervisor accompaniment) by the service provider.

Where interviewing is multilingual, the service provider shall ensure staff have mother tongue competency or equivalent in the relevant languages to carry out monitoring.

B.7.3   Validation levels

The service provider shall ensure that validation is carried out at least to the levels specified in this clause, depending on the type of validation. The service provider shall calculate validation levels on the basis of the total sample achieved.

Where checking of data records is the only method of validation that the service provider can use (e.g. observational research, retail audits), the required level shall be 100 %. No precise level is specified where checking of data records is used in conjunction with other methods.

For all projects where data collection is carried out by interviews, the service provider shall conduct validation either by re-contact or by monitoring to the following levels, regardless of whether data records are also checked:

a)   the minimum re-contact validation level shall be 10 % of interviews or cases;

b)   the minimum monitoring validation level shall be 5 % of interviews or cases, with approximately 75 % of the entire interview being monitored or listened to. Monitoring can be selected across the length of the interview;

c) the service provider shall have a procedure in place to respond to and resolve any identified issues with a fieldworker's interviews on a specific project.

In exceptional cases, it can be organizationally impossible for the service provider to undertake re-contact or monitoring to the required levels or at all, or it may be considered contrary to participants' interest. In such cases, the service provider shall retain file notes explaining why such cases occurred and what other steps (e.g. checking data records) have been taken to validate data collection.

B.7.4 Validation reports

The service provider shall keep records on the validation carried out for each project or wave of projects. The records shall include the following:

a) the identity of persons who carried out any validation;

b) a description of the validation methods used, including what was covered in participant re-contacts, if applicable;

c) the identities of fieldworkers whose work has been validated;

d) descriptions of any discrepancies found;

e) records of corrective actions taken or planned at both project level and fieldworker level;

f) a confirmation that the required validation levels have been attained (e.g. number of interviews in total and number validated).

B.8 Client reporting for fieldwork methodologies

B.8.1 Quantitative research

In addition to the minimum information specified in 4.5.4.2, the following additional information shall be available to clients on quantitative research conducted by fieldwork:

a) the fieldwork method (e.g. in-person, door-to-door, mall intercept, CAPI, telephone, CATI);

b) sampling details, including:

— description of the sampling frame or equivalent and how the sample was selected from it;

— assessment of how well the sample represents the target population and implications of this;

— size of the planned and achieved sample and reasons for any difference in planned and achieved samples and how any problems in this respect were dealt with;

— response rate where probability samples were used and its definition and calculation method, or participation rate where non-probability samples were used;

c) the number of fieldworkers, if applicable;

d) the fieldworker validation methods, if applicable;

e) the questionnaires, any visual exhibits or show cards, and other relevant data collection documents;

f) the weighting procedures, if applicable;

g) the estimating and imputation procedures, if applicable;

h) the number of cases used in subgroup analysis;

i) the reliability of the findings, including (when probability samples are used) estimates of sampling variance and estimates of non-sampling errors.

B.8.2 Qualitative research

In addition to the minimum information specified in 4.5.4.2, the following additional information shall be available to clients on qualitative research conducted by fieldwork:

a) the fieldwork method (e.g. in-person, telephone or online, individual or group interviews, synchronous or asynchronous);

b) the recruitment method or methods (e.g. mall intercepts, telephone, online, telephone to web);

c) the number of fieldworkers or moderators, if applicable;

d) the fieldworker or moderator validation methods, if applicable;

e) the documents, materials or products used in the research, if applicable;

f) the interview or discussion guide;

g) a statement that the results of qualitative research cannot be projected onto the overall population due to sample selection, interviewing methods, and sample size.

Annex C
(normative)

Physical observation

C.1   General

The service provider that offers data collection using physical observational methodologies, whether directly or as subcontracted services, shall conform with Annex C.

Annex C of this document shall be read in the context of Clause 4.

The service provider shall document the methods and records associated with the use of physical observation data collection techniques, whether conducted in-house or outsourced. Physical observational data collection can include activities such as traffic counts, shopping behaviour, and in-home observation.

In the case of physical observation done by fieldworkers, the service provider shall conform with the relevant requirements of Annex B.

C.2   Physical observational data collection methodology

The service provider shall document the details of the methodology used. This shall include the following:

a)   the population of interest;

b)   how participants or observation points were selected for inclusion in the research;

c)   the sample criteria;

d)   whether participants knew they were being observed;

e)   whether recording equipment was used;

f)   whether observers where physically present.

For all methods, the service provider shall give an explanation of how potential sampling biases have been addressed. The extent to which the findings can or cannot be generalized to larger populations shall also be discussed.

C.3   Project briefing

If fieldworkers have experience with physical observational data collection projects, they shall be given a briefing and/or instructions for each project (or the specifics for each wave of a project), even if they commence after physical observational data collection has already started. The briefing and/or instructions shall be the responsibility of a person with a full understanding of requirements for the project.

The briefing and/or instructions for a fieldworker-led physical observation project shall include, where applicable and appropriate, the following information:

a)   the physical observational data collection dates and times;

b)   key recruitment criteria;

c) focus of the observation;

d) required quotas;

e) acceptable and unacceptable observation methods and behaviour including instructions for avoiding observation bias;

f) specific exclusions and restrictions applicable to participants;

g) whether observation equipment is to be used;

h) instructions for the administration of incentives;

i) any other special requirements.

C.4 Client reporting for physical observational methodologies

In addition to the minimum information specified in 4.5.4.2, the following additional information shall be available to clients on physical observational research:

a) the population of interest;

b) how participants or observation points were selected for inclusion in the research;

c) the sample criteria;

d) an explanation of how potential sampling problems have been addressed and the extent to which the findings can or cannot be generalized to larger populations;

e) details of how the data collection process has been monitored to ensure it was carried out as intended and resulting impact on accuracy and consistency of the data.

Annex D
(normative)

Digital observation

D.1 General

The service provider that offers data collection using passive methodologies, whether directly or as subcontracted services, shall conform with Annex D.

Annex D of this document shall be read in the context of Clause 4.

The requirements for data collection using passive methodologies as discussed in Annex D are equal to the requirements specified in ISO 19731:2017, 5.1 to 6.5.

D.2 Proposals and tenders

D.2.1 Proposals and tenders from service provider to clients

Proposals and tenders shall be issued in written form, online or offline.

In the event of uncertainties in the briefing, the service provider shall contact the client regarding these.

Proposals and tenders shall clearly describe the responsibilities of the client and of the service provider with regard to the tools used and the implementation of the results.

In proposals and tenders, as a minimum the following topics shall be covered.

a) The client's information requirements.

    NOTE   It is possible that certain information needs can only be concretely defined during the execution of a project.

b) The digital analytics or web analysis methods or techniques recommended by the service provider.

c) The digital sources to be analysed, as well as the criteria that are to be employed in the selection of the sources. In so far as the service provider and subcontractors employ differing definitions with respect to the digital sources, the proposal or tender shall clarify which definitions are being used.

d) A clear statement of the technical and sampling dimensions that are connected with the source to be analysed and which can determine the data quality.

e) The exact period(s) of time which the digital analytics or web analyses will encompass.

f) The scope, type and frequency of supply of the results.

g) The manner in which data are to be stored by the party collecting the data, and the duration of storage.

h) The ownership of the findings made available after conducting the project.

i) The costs of the activities to be carried out, including a statement of any possible variable costs whose amount can only be determined after the execution of the analysis. The manner and time of invoicing shall be specified.

j)   Any individual steps which are to be or might be subcontracted to other external service providers. On request clients shall be told the identity of any subcontractor. If it transpires that, subsequent to the granting of the commission, certain services need to be purchased from subcontractors, without this having been specified in the proposal or tender, the service provider shall immediately notify the client of this.

k)   The relevant legislation and regulations as well as the applicable professional code of conduct.

l)   The declaration that in the execution of digital analytics and web analyses projects the service provider conforms with this document.

The issuance of a proposal or tender requested by a potential client is an activity which shall be classified as 'confidential', even in the event that the proposal or tender does not lead to a commission.

D.2.2   Other aspects to be established by the service providers

D.2.2.1   General

To facilitate transparency and understanding of the project and its capabilities and/or limitations, the service provider shall prepare and have readily available for discussion (if requested) with clients, the information in D.2.2.2, D.2.2.3 and D.2.2.4.

D.2.2.2   Data cleaning and editing

The service provider shall document and have readily available the data cleaning processes relevant to the research purpose.

Depending on the objectives, data to be cleaned can include:

a)   homonyms (e.g. apple pie versus apple computer, target practice versus target store);

b)   data sourced from clients and their competitors as opposed to that sourced from consumers (e.g. tweets by a client);

c)   advertisements, coupons and promotional material, through third parties (e.g. a shoe store advertising their own sale for a shoe brand);

d)   spam (e.g. a blog comment might say "buy sneakers buy sneakers buy sneakers buy sneakers"), fake social media accounts;

e)   data originating from news channels (e.g. a tweet linking to a magazine article).

Where appropriate, the service provider shall specify whether their processes will identify and remove invalid/non-human traffic such as:

—   bots and spiders;

—   invalid browsers;

—   internal traffic;

—   incentivized browsing for the purpose of defrauding advertisers/publishers;

—   other sources of invalid traffic.

The service provider shall prepare and have readily available for discussion (if requested) with clients the following information:

1)   details of the degree to which data cleaning takes place manually, using automated algorithms, or some combination of the two;

2) explanation of the expected effects of the intended data cleaning strategy, degree and processes by which inappropriate records can be identified and cleaned, as well as who can do such tasks;

3) criteria for removal of data from the active data set;

4) criteria governing how to handle data with missing values filled in (e.g. "0" fill, "data neutralization", inferring).

NOTE   There are innumerable ways to collect and clean data. Some methods can result in millions of records, low validity and high false positive rates, while others result in thousands of records, high validity and high false negative rates.

D.2.2.3   Sentiment and/or text analysis

Where applicable, the service provider shall prepare and have readily available for discussion (if requested) with clients the following information:

a) whether the sentiment and/or text analysis is conducted manually (including coding assisted by software), automated using algorithms (whereby a human does not personally code every piece of data), or some combination (e.g. machine learning);

b) an explanation of the type and method of sentiment analysis conducted;

c) an explanation of the type and method of text analysis conducted;

d) the types of data that will be analysed (e.g. short sentences, long sentences, non-sentences, emoticons, slang, profanity, sarcasm, acronyms, words with spelling errors);

e) the frequency and process for evaluating the reliability, accuracy, and validity of the analysis (e.g. weekly or yearly, number and type of records validated, whether blind coding is used), including up-front validations;

f) whether analysis is fine-tuned on a job-by-job basis;

g) whether it is possible to identify possible coding errors and/or who will do the recoding of data;

h) the languages included or excluded, multilingual messages;

i) the results of any quality measures with regards to sentiment or text analysis, such as inter-coder reliability scores/indices (in the case of manual coding) as well as manual recoding of originally automated coding.

D.2.2.4   Website usage and measurement analytics

The service provider shall prepare and have readily available for discussion (if requested) with clients, the following information:

a) the type of data that is collected (e.g. IP address, operating system, browser user agent, cookie unique identifier, geo-location, data/time stamps for events recorded);

b) whether data reflects:

— unique cookies (unduplicated cookies that represent visits to internet content during a measurement period and can include multiple users on a machine using the same account);

— unique browsers (result from count of unique cookies after adjusting for cookie deletion);

— unique devices (result from count of unique browsers after multiple browser usage on an individual computer is accounted for); or

— unique visitors (3.102);

c) basis of reporting (e.g. daily, weekly, monthly), time zones as applicable and how visits/time spent are defined;

d) where coding takes place, what rules are used to address, for example, abandonment, handling multiple tags, and improper tags, determinations of usage duration and support for such data adjustment;

e) whether data collected is from the available universe or a projection from a sample, its composition, the level of demographic data that is available and if data matching/enrichment is offered;

f) whether cookie sharing, deletion, or rejection is addressed and, if so, how;

g) any limitations on data provided and/or ability to validate or audit, such as restrictions on data retention and/or accumulation periods.

D.3 Execution of projects

D.3.1 Digital analytics and web analysis data collection

D.3.1.1 Data collection methodology

The service provider shall document the details of the methodology used. This shall include:

a) methodology for collecting online comments from sites and/or social media, for example:

— the universe of websites and other social media forums included;

— how the sites, individuals or authors within them, and their comments or posts were selected for inclusion in the research;

— how the comments and/or posts were collected (e.g. from questionnaires or user-generated content);

— where appropriate, a description of the search algorithm(s);

— the number of sites, authors and comments, or posts included in the analysis;

b) methodology for observation and/or measurement of behaviour by digital means:

— the population of interest;

— how individuals or units were selected and recruited for inclusion in the research;

— definition of the units studied (e.g. devices, sites, individuals);

— how the data were collected (e.g. cookies, web beacons, browsers, near field communication);

— the number of units included in the analysis.

When carrying out data cleaning, the requirements of D.2.2.2 shall apply.

For all methods, the extent to which the findings can or cannot be generalized to larger populations shall be discussed.

D.3.1.2 Validation of data collection process

The details shall be documented on how the data collection process is monitored to ensure it is carried out as intended, and the resulting impact on accuracy and consistency of the data shall be discussed. Monitoring may include translation checks and consistency checks.