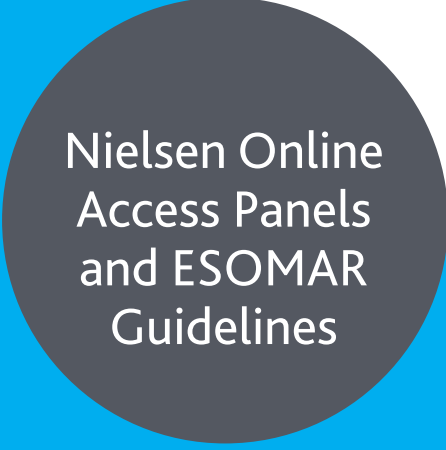


The ESOMAR logo is a large white circle containing the word "ESOMAR" in a bold, uppercase, sans-serif font.

ESOMAR

The Nielsen Online Access Panels and ESOMAR Guidelines logo is a dark grey circle containing the text "Nielsen Online Access Panels and ESOMAR Guidelines" in a white, sans-serif font.

Nielsen Online  
Access Panels  
and ESOMAR  
Guidelines

## Contents:

Panels map	3
Company overview	4
Sample source	4
Panel recruitment	6
Panel and sample management	8
Policies and compliance	9
Partnerships and multiple panel membership	10
Data quality and validation	10

## Nielsen Online Access Panels and ESOMAR 26 Questions

ESOMAR has formulated 26 questions intended to provide insight into the quality and transparency of online sampling sources to help existing and future clients.

Nielsen fully recognises the necessity to develop standards and best practices when managing online sample.

This document aims to answer ESOMAR questions in relation to Nielsen's approach to managing its branded online access panels, designed and managed to support Nielsen research. The Nielsen Company also has detailed information on procedures specifically related to its branded products, specialist projects and core research issues.

All panels are managed with the same guiding principles and incorporate local adaptation as appropriate to cater for local consumer contexts.



# 26 questions to help research buyers

## Company Overview

1. What experience does your company have with providing online sample for market research?

Nielsen has extensively leveraged new technology and the web platform to connect with survey participants for its proprietary research since 1999. To date, Nielsen has experience working with online sample from over 60 countries around the world through Nielsen's 27 proprietary online access panels or accredited partners.

Nielsen's branded online access panels provide online sample exclusively for The Nielsen Company's proprietary market research purposes. To augment sample needs in growing markets or markets where a proprietary panel doesn't exist we source sample from accredited external sample providers. Nielsen has a unique understanding of quality sample, drawn from our extensive experience as panel managers, online sample buyers and researchers.

Nielsen's branded online access panels are locally managed, aligning to global protocols and strategies. This structure provides support at every step of the online research process, combining local insights with global operational strength. At the same time, Nielsen's local client consultants are connected to regional and global online research experts.

## SAMPLE SOURCE

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

All Nielsen branded online access panels are actively managed where individual participation is monitored. Communication pathways are established that link the panel member with the panel spokesperson. Participation is monitored via a tiered non-compliance system for tracking and communicating with panellists about their status. Following several warning steps, panellists are removed if activity falls below a certain level within a 12-month timeframe. Nielsen also understands the complexity of people: our panels feature a number of membership benefits and procedures to create a positive panellist experience and ensure greater authenticity of responses while balancing research and quality needs.

- **Global reach with local relevance:** Panels in 27 countries have their own website provided in local language and a culturally appropriate brand name. Each website is supported by local offices with a helpline available. Local managers share the same culture as the panellists. Panel member engagement strategies are constantly reviewed and enhanced by global and local panel management specialists to ensure a quality online community of respondents.
- **Personalised account management:** Panel members log into personalised web pages to access available surveys, view their survey history and their total number of entries for the next prize draw, and view and redeem their e-points. Panel members are regularly invited to visit their local site for news updates, publicly available research insights, mini polls, competitions and newsletters. Members also receive birthday and anniversary emails.
- **Sampling relevance:** Nielsen local panel sampling managers know it is vital to understand and respect members. Panel registration processes, welcome surveys and contact information updates provide researchers with profiling information to allow better targeting and sampling to improve response rates. Local managers help refine issues with language, lifestyle, logic or length. Managers also pre-test questions and screen respondents in advance.

Actively managed online access panels that comply with ESOMAR standards are a pre-requisite for any accredited panel provider, with a few exceptions driven by specific research needs. Nielsen also has experience with projects that require river sampling techniques and web intercept methods. These methods are only used for clients that have highly unique sample needs. Clients are actively involved with these plans. Furthermore, clients can use their own database when appropriate, for example a customer satisfaction study. However, direct marketing lists are never recommended as an online sample source.

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

Nielsen proprietary online access panels are managed exclusively for Nielsen researchers, providing greater control over the type and frequency of surveys delivered to individual panellists. The panel comprises engaged, validated panellists who have actively elected to pursue research panel membership by a double opt-in process in exchange for tangible incentives in recognition of their time and effort. Numerous controls are in place to verify the legitimacy of panellists and their information. Consistency and predictability are vital to ensuring data quality, and the panels are maintained with these aspects in mind.

Drawing from Nielsen's extensive experience in sample management and quality control, Nielsen's branded online access panels provide the highest quality sample option for our clients. Nielsen has developed internal procedures for panel database management and survey-level data quality control in addition to and in line with industry standards to set best-practice benchmarks. Local panel managers are trained and accredited to ensure full compliance with these quality standards for all online sampling conducted by Nielsen.

Nielsen has a "surround-sound" approach to data quality throughout the entire online research process; an attitude that not only benefits clients but also positively impacts a panel member's experience. When members are treated with respect, they will yield higher-quality responses. Nielsen researchers and panel specialists work together to ensure questionnaires deliver appropriate, high-quality interactions with members. Survey respondents are asked to provide feedback after each survey which is benchmarked for further investigation. There are also many general feedback channels available via panellist communications.

**“[Nielsen’s panel is] the best panel I’ve come across, [the] surveys are always interesting and the topics always different”**

- Panellist testimonial

Data on panel health in Q22 demonstrates Nielsen's commitment to data quality control and panellist engagement.

Nielsen online access panels are managed by our local and global online survey engineers. They use proprietary tools that are designed to retain, share knowledge and provide operational support, offering a consistent approach to online research projects with great efficiencies. The team is highly experienced in running online research projects, having conducted over 15,000 projects and having developed disciplined processes for online research within a highly adaptable framework.

High quality sample comes from consistency and predictability delivered by experienced market researchers.

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

Nielsen's proprietary panels are used exclusively for market research. Additionally, they are used only for Nielsen projects and no external parties.

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

Nielsen adopts a mix of online and offline recruitment strategies to recruit panel members from a variety of audiences amongst the general population (broad) and target market (niche). By using a variety of strategies, Nielsen is able to both grow panels in size, as well as focus strictly on demographic deficiencies via targeted campaigns.

In order to ensure that the recruitment is as broad, diversified and exhaustive as

Recruitment Channel	Niche	Broad
<b>Offline</b>		
Telephone recruitment	X	X
Face-to-face surveys		X
Telephone surveys		X
TV ads		X
Radio ads	X	
Ads in national newspapers		X
Ads in local newspapers	X	
Ads in magazines	X	
Addressed letters/postcards	X	
Sponsorships/events	X	
Outdoor posters	X	

possible, we use a wide range of different methods and sources of recruitment. Recruitment activities also leverage Nielsen's solid offline data collection infrastructure.

Recruitment strategy is devised on an ongoing basis to ensure optimal diversity and quality and to minimize any distortions that could arise if using only one or a few methods of recruitment.

Recruitment Channel	Niche	Broad
Online		
Banners, selected websites	X	
Banner campaigns on leading networks		X
Referral program	X	X
Search Engine Strings	X	
Permission based mailing lists	X	X
Links from other websites		X
Emails from Nielsen	X	X

6. What are people told when they are recruited?

The Privacy Policy and Terms and Conditions of the panel are displayed during the registration process and members must acknowledge they have read and understood these at the outset of panel membership.

Important conditions panellists are aware of are:

- They will be a member of a panel which is only used for market research purposes
- Participation in all surveys is optional
- Their email address information as well as a range of named descriptive data items will be stored
- How they will be incentivised for surveys
- How they will receive surveys with secure access
- Confidentiality of details
- What the minimum age is for membership
- Cookies and other overt software may be used to collect information
- They can leave the panel when they wish with no consequence.

Nielsen's recruitment communications strategy supports our strategic business goals in data quality best practice. All plans aim to attract loyal, active, engaged participants who will provide high quality responses.

Creative messaging and media placement are of great importance because they can help to avoid those that may only be inappropriately motivated by their membership. One of our recent global campaign headlines, for example, was "Change your world, one answer at a time." This supports our imperative as researchers to deliver actionable insight and supports our passion for discovering truth.

PANEL RECRUITMENT

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

The average panel churn rate is monitored on a monthly basis as one of the key performance indicators. During Quarter 3, 2008, churn rate across all the panels on average was approximately five percent. This rate counts those that have resigned and those forcibly removed. The number of members that cease to be active is recorded in the inactive figures. Inactive panellists are not included in panel size or sample selection. A number of retention activities are carried out to keep members from becoming inactive and out of touch. However, if we are unable to re-engage with a panellist, they are deleted from the database.

8. Please describe the opt-in process.

To ensure validity of responses, registration requires a double opt-in process. Advertising promoting panel membership leads to a campaign landing page which explains how membership works, expectations of members and information about Nielsen including detailed links to our terms and conditions and privacy policy. Visitors to this campaign landing page can choose to join the online research panel by clicking on the 'join now' button and completing the first part of the double opt-in process, called a member 'Registration Survey,' which collects contact information and a few personal details. Our panel management team then contacts these potential members via email. This email re-iterates membership requirements and invites respondents to click on a link to the website to verify their existence/consent and log-in to their own personalised account using the username and password they provided in the Registration Survey. Once new members have logged into their account, a 'Welcome Survey' is waiting for them, which collects further information on each panellist to assist with more targeted sampling.

This double opt-in process not only ensures the panel member re-confirms their interest in joining, but it also means the member cannot join the panel without providing a valid email address and sufficient details for profiling.

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

Multi-dimensional criteria are used to identify fraudulent respondents at the time of registration and on a continuous basis.

Following submission of the registration survey an automated process is run to scan duplicates. Panellist information is also manually scanned on a regular basis to detect suspicious patterns that may have escaped computerised searches.

We also conduct regular mandatory database cleaning to ensure fraudulent panellists are caught and blacklisted from the panel. Blacklisted members are filtered to disable their ability to join again.

- a. Panellists with invalid data in key data fields are flagged for individual censoring and aren't invited to participate in surveys until the identification is confirmed. Essentially, if invalid data is found, the panellist is contacted to follow up. If the member is not contactable on the first attempt, the status of the member is confined to the non-active list and handled systematically through the appropriate re-contact communications. If status is not rectified after two months, the record is deleted from the system.
- b. Panel managers conduct regular panel-wide cleaning and validation to remove any double registration including variables such as contact, physical and delivery address details, IP address etc.

Other mechanisms that avoid fraudulent respondents include the very nature of the double opt-in joining process which requires a valid email address. In addition, the registration survey is adequately long and not incentivised.

The rewards for survey participation are also tailored to the 'loyal' or typical market research respondent because they can only be redeemed after a fixed number of surveys, over a set period of time due to our contact restrictions. Rewards are managed at a level to balance acknowledgment of panellist's time and opinion but not attract fraudulent respondents. Rewards are street address deliverable and are checked visually before being processed again to ensure legitimacy.

In addition, panel managers investigate email bounce backs from all communications, have systematic procedures to handling inactive panellists and there is a parental consent process built into the registration process for members under the national legal age.

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

Panel membership records contain information regarding the following:

- Personal demographics
- Household demographics
- Income and banking information
- Employment characteristics
- Internet behaviour and computer setup

Other types of information are stored on panel members, and this varies by market with up to 50 background levels of data available on members.

Members are requested to update their household data as it changes. Panel members are also encouraged to update their profile on a regular basis, and whenever Nielsen believes a panel member's details may have changed.

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

Nielsen only includes active panellists available and willing to participate in research surveys in disclosed panel sizes.

The size and composition of a panel changes daily, therefore precise details are not published in this document. Nielsen assesses sample feasibility with clients before each project, ensuring a realistic understanding of the effective panel size needed. While a panel's total size appears to be the top of mind question on any online access panel, Nielsen places emphasis on the quality of the panel and how the sample can deliver the research need. There are a number of important factors that have an

impact on the quality of the panel including representativeness of the sample to the target universe, effective size of the panel the client needs in order to fill quota, and the relevancy of panel composition and response rates.

Nielsen has over 800,000 active panellists across all proprietary owned panels.

For up-to-date panel counts in local markets and sample feasibility please contact your representative at Nielsen.

An active panel member is defined as someone who has successfully joined the panel or co-operated by clicking into a survey, updated their profile details, completed an annual "descriptive information" survey or redeemed e-points in the last 12 months. Nielsen monitors the activity of members on a regular basis to ensure an effective and active panel. Panellists who are invalid or inactive are systematically removed from the panel.

All recruitment promotions require campaign landing pages with a unique joining URL which captures the source of their invitation to join the panel, which can be provided to researchers and clients when necessary.

## PANEL AND SAMPLE MANAGEMENT

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

The sample is selected for each survey in accordance with the study specifications, quotas and screeners. For projects where a target respondent definition is not specified, our default sample selection is to match the online population in each market.

Our research professionals create a sample frame for each project which is usually modelled after the online population. The sampling administrators use this frame to randomly select panellists from the database. Panellists are randomly selected from the 'active pool' and filters are applied based on the project specifications (such as location, age, gender, occupation, other demographic information, etc).

Our stepped broadcasting plan allows us to have a good initial read on the response pattern and verify our invitation deployment to balance quality and panellist experience. As a result, fewer panellists are turned away from the survey due to full quotas.

Sample can be deployed in any number of ways. Each geographic location has its own database facilitating this. The times and dates of sample deployment are always scheduled to maximise return rates without compromising research requirements or a client's timeline. Survey invitations are sent to the member's email address with either a unique, direct link to the survey or link to the website, requesting the member to log into their account where the survey can be accessed.

Exclusion procedures:

1. Members with an incomplete survey in the last seven days
2. Members that were invited but didn't start a survey within seven days
3. Similar or like projects after six months, tracking projects after 12 months

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

A selected respondent is sent an email invitation, inviting them to log into their password-protected membership account on the website and click on their unique survey URL to participate in a survey. The email invite contains a clear, short introduction to the survey, setting out:

- the survey topic (without disclosing the purpose of the study)
- expected time to complete the survey
- the closing date
- incentive to be paid
- a unique link to log into their account

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

**“It is a well planned scheme with a good range of rewards.”**

- Panellist testimonial

In exchange for completing surveys, panel members receive 'e-points' and enter into prize draws.

The number of e-points awarded is based on the length and complexity of the survey. The e-points are then redeemable for rewards listed on the website. Exact rewards vary by market but are appealing and appropriate for all demographics. In addition to redeemable rewards, members are entered into a quarterly prize draw which aims to reward participants who fail to qualify for certain surveys.

Even though incentives are offered, panellists are unlikely to net any significant amount of money in the aggregate during the year based on limited frequency of participation.

**“Real rewards. It's great.”**

- Panellist testimonial

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

The number of times members are contacted depends on how panel members respond to survey invitations, the panellist's segment and occasionally, market.

The contact approach is based on responses to invitations:

- No response members are invitation-eligible after one week
- Survey completes and incompletes are invitation eligible after one week.

As a guide, members are limited to completing a few surveys per month. These limitations are in place to reduce overtiring, discourage professional respondents from joining the panel and reduce conditioning of members.

Panel members are only recruited and contacted for Nielsen's own market research purposes. Members are never used for any additional marketing or sales activities, nor are third party research companies given access to the panel.

## POLICIES AND COMPLIANCE

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

The Nielsen Privacy Policy states that personally identifiable information will not be used to advertise, promote, or market goods or services to panel members. This Policy and Terms and Conditions of the panel are displayed during the registration process and members must acknowledge they have read and understood these. They are also accessible on all surveys sent to members and from the website at any time.

Nielsen attaches great importance to compliance with market research standards, including those of ESOMAR. Nielsen personnel have multiple memberships to relevant market research and marketing societies and associations. We encourage ESOMAR membership of at least one member per country, ideally within the Consumer Research group.

Nielsen complies with all local Market Research Society online panel policies in addition to local and regional regulations. Nielsen Online Panels were originally designed to meet the AMSRS (Australian Market and Social Research Society) online panel policy.

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

Nielsen data collection is conducted on secured servers hosted by Nielsen behind firewalls. These have a double layer of protection within an area behind the firewall to minimize the possibility of breaking into the database. All surveys are conducted in this manner. Panellists are sent an email that provides location of the survey. Only those whose name is on the list for entry are permitted to sign in. Each unique sign-in may only submit one survey. Multiple submissions are not possible with the online interviewing software used, preventing questionnaires and visual stimulus from being forwarded to other parties. In addition, web pages are viewable only; there are no execute or write permissions for people browsing the site and 128-bit encryption for collecting and displaying data is used for all surveys.

18. Do you apply a quality management system? Please describe it.

The panel's quality management system is supported by the Nielsen WatchBuilder standards for conducting online surveys. These provide staff with best practice benchmarks and employees are accountable for compliance on a regular basis. In addition, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are monitored monthly measuring panel performance and are linked to statistics in question 22.

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

Anyone under the national legal age is required to receive parental/guardian consent to participate. A verification telephone call may be conducted as a follow up but the majority of the consent process is performed via email and all consent records are stored. Registration is refused to minors.

**PARTNERSHIPS AND MULTIPLE PANEL MEMBERSHIP**

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

Nielsen's branded online access panel sample feasibility checks are conducted separately to third party panels.

Some studies with very low incidence may be conducted that cannot be accommodated by the internal panels or occur in a country where there is no internal panel and then would be outsourced. In these cases the client is informed and researchers work closely with clients to develop the sampling mix for augmented sample to ensure transparency. In most instances, the internal panel data is not combined with external panel data in the same study. Therefore there is no need for de-duplication. Selection of outsourced providers is conducted using similar guidelines to the internal panel requirements.

Nielsen has been involved with a number of river sampling/web intercept samples which require staff specialized in marketing communications to execute well-planned and adaptive fielding. Case studies are available for clients with these unique needs, looking to understand more about our capabilities in handling projects of this nature.

All third party panels have been accredited with the relationship managed through a head office team, executed on a study level locally. When sample feasibility is possible, Nielsen's proprietary owned panels are always the recommended resource.

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

Unless there is a central databank, it is not possible to verify with certainty the number of panels a member belongs to. Recruiting offline helps to communicate to new audiences or via strategically integrated online avenues. Avoiding direct marketing list brokers that are typically used by 3rd party panel suppliers and/or recruiting via 3rd party panel providers also reduces multi-panel membership. In more competitive markets like Australia, Nielsen conducts a significant percentage of recruitment offline and the majority of online is done via strategic alliances with high quality placements.

Nielsen regularly conducts parallel testing and other research on research with the information being shared with clients in learning presentations.

**DATA QUALITY AND VALIDATION**

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

The average return rate for Nielsen proprietary online access panels is currently 38 percent across all the panels. This calculation includes bounce-backs so this calculation is conservative. Nielsen uses what's called a 'return rate' to measure the effective response to surveys. The 'return rate' for surveys is calculated by taking the number of panellists who attempt a survey and dividing that by the total number of panellists invited to participate in the survey.

Nielsen believes several measurements provide insight into data quality controls and reports for each are continuously monitored and linked to Key Performance Indicators.

The average statistics from early 2008 across all the panels are as follows:

Rates	Low (%)	High (%)	Average (%)
Start	21	48	39
Drop out	2	6	4
Participation	26	71	45
Quota full	7	23	14
Invitation	72	98	83

The participation rate is affected by how high the screening is, so this is only an indication of the types of surveys a panel is running.

A low quota full rate, perhaps one of the best indicators of sampling and panel quality, shows that Nielsen's sampling technique is accurate (i.e. enough time in field for stepped broadcasting and accurate prediction of click through, completion and incomplete rates).

Nielsen collects a range of additional information which provides expert insight into individual member performance and the panel as a whole.

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

Records for each panel member:

- Recruitment source
- Date stamp and click consent of agreement to join the panel
- Surveys which they have been sampled
- Nature of panellists response to each survey
  - When a panellist was last selected for a survey
  - When a panellist last clicked into a survey
  - Number of surveys a panellist has completed
  - Number of times a panellist has provided low quality data

This information is kept for each member on the entire history of their membership with the panel. This information is only removed from the database in accordance with our member resignation procedure.

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

Data quality is of the utmost importance and procedures are outlined in Q9. Checking is an on-going development process to keep pace with market and technology change.

Nielsen regularly implements systematic checks on survey data to generate flags. These flags are then followed up and included in the panellists' profiles. A panellist with a pre-determined number of flags is contacted for verification and follow up or exclusion.

Feedback is also collected at the end of each survey to determine if inattention is caused by the topic at hand and/or questionnaire design versus the lack of interest in the survey process overall.

The great majority of BASES studies conducted on the panels are compared to databased past studies within the category so changes in data are readily recognized. This research and development conducted on Nielsen online access panels provides extra quality checks and insights into the impacts on forecasting etc.

### 25. Do you measure respondent satisfaction?

Post hoc reports are recorded for each project, recording time and effort required to complete the survey, questionnaire design comments, incentive comments, sampling success and open ended comments.

In addition, yearly satisfaction surveys are conducted and results made available for review alongside aggregated data collected from survey feedback questions recorded after each project.

2008 Panel Satisfaction Survey Highlights:

- 80% of members responded positively about survey content and range of topics
- 77% were satisfied or above with the range and quality of our rewards scheme
- 84% responded positively about panel websites

**“Excellent survey content, I get to give my opinion on nearly everything”**

- Panellist testimonial

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

A description of the fieldwork process is provided during proposal stage. This together with a final field report is centrally maintained and available to researcher and clients. The field report includes in-depth information on survey performance and results, including gross sample, start rate, participation rate, drop-out rate, the invitation text and so on. Such reports are kept for at least 2 years after survey close.

For more information, please contact your local Nielsen representative, or visit [www.nielsen.com](http://www.nielsen.com)

Copyright 2008 The Nielsen Company. All rights reserved.  
Nielsen and the Nielsen logo are trademarks of The Nielsen Company.

