



ESOMAR 37

Questions & Answers on
the Quality of Talk Online Panels

Company Profile

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

Talk Online Panel (hereinafter referred to as "Talk") is a full-service provider of high-quality market research panels and connected digital data collection. Talk collects digital and anonymized data from computer-assisted surveys and passive data measurements collected in its own online panels throughout Europe. Talk operates online panels with a total of 1.3 million members in 24 European countries, focusing on the German-speaking region as well as Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe. The panels operated by Talk are actively maintained online access panels and serve exclusively for market research purposes.

In addition to its panels, Talk offers various services for connected data collection, such as questionnaire programming and data delivery in various formats, as well as customized customer segmentation. Furthermore, Talk builds and operates customer panels using a panel management system developed in collaboration with its sister company, Reppublika.

In the context of comprehensive and connected digital data collection, Talk provides all types of behavioral data. With passive metering, Talk offers the measurement of user internet and in-app behavior. Additionally, Talk has a geotracking tool for measuring movement data. Talk also has its own tagging technology that allows the identification of panel members who have had contact with advertising campaigns or specific websites. The identification of panel members is done in compliance with GDPR using both cookie-based and cookieless technologies. Audio listening, which involves measuring audio sequences, provides further insights into cross-media reach.

Talk draws on over 20 years of experience in online market research. All currently active proprietary online panels of the Talk group have been built, established, or implemented during this time. All panels are managed within the company's proprietary panel management system.

Thanks to a solid IT background and an in-house IT development team, Talk was one of the first companies to implement responsive designs and mobile-first interfaces across devices and its own apps. This enables participation in surveys on-the-go using smartphones.

Talk stands for high data quality, extensive expertise in panel management, and comprehensive compliance with data protection regulations, ensured through the highest standards in IT and project management and certified according to ISO 20252.

Talk has offices in Leipzig, Munich, Berlin, Vienna, Prague, Sofia, Bucharest, and Zurich. Talk operates solely as a market research service provider and does not offer any form of direct marketing.



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

Talk places a strong emphasis on the quality of the collected data. This includes ensuring that the data is collected methodically, which involves correctly sampling the participants.

The algorithms for sample selection and all associated technical functions that enable methodologically correct sampling were created by software technicians in cooperation with market researchers and analysts as part of the development of the panel management system and were tested extensively before being used in clients' projects. These algorithms have been extensively tested before being used in client projects. The composition of the algorithms is based on the current industry research standards for random sampling. In general, the sample selection is conducted within the chosen selection and quota criteria using a simple random selection method ensured by the mentioned algorithms.

Automated control procedures and regular internal audits conducted by the core development team ensure the continuous and correct functioning of the algorithms.

All survey and data collection projects are carried out by project managers who hold a relevant degree in market research (such as sociology, psychology, etc.) or have relevant additional qualifications, i.e. in statistics. During the training phase, new employees learn the proper handling of the sampling tool in the panel management system, both in terms of expertise and technology. Especially projects with complex quotas are conducted in small teams of project managers to leverage different levels of experience and to mutually review project settings.

Talk promotes regular professional exchange among its employees through its organizational and communication structure. This includes regular updates and training on methodological fundamentals.

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

Central to Talk's services are the online panels, which consist of approximately 400 profile data points per panelist. These panels serve as the foundation for data collection through surveys as well as passive measurements.

Talk offers the following services in relation to online surveys:

- Sample-only studies: Fieldwork and data collection within Talk's proprietary online panels
- Recruitment for qualitative studies (online and offline), including facial coding or eye tracking
- Translation of questionnaires into local languages where Talk has its own panels
- Scripting of online questionnaires, device-agnostic and in customized design
- Data cleaning and provision in various formats
- Customer/target group segmentation, customized profiling



At the same time, the online panels form the basis for additional possibilities of collecting behavioral data, including:

- Passive metering: Tracking internet behavior across all devices
- Cookie-based or cookieless tagging
- Geolocation: Gathering movement data for event-based surveys, etc.
- Audiolistening: Capturing audiovisual content for insights into cross-media reach for campaign measurement

Talk also provides its expertise, sometimes in collaboration with sister companies, for additional services, such as:

- Establishing and maintaining customer panels
- Licensing the panel management system
- Licensing the survey tool
- Solutions for media planning

In summary, Talk offers a holistic data collection approach across all its services, allowing for the meaningful enrichment of survey data with profiling information and behavioral data to obtain comprehensive and actionable insights.

Sample sources and Recruitment

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

Talk primarily draws samples for client projects from its own online panels. In the event that additional participants are needed, Talk has a network of trusted partners who will be taken on board. The partner network includes ISO-certified online panel providers or partners who operate according to ISO standards.

In accordance with the company's transparency policy, customers are informed if partner involvement is necessary for a project. Partner samples are only commissioned with the explicit approval of the customer.

For all data collections, including the collection of behavioral data, Talk generally relies on participants from its own online panels or, depending on the project, suitable partners. Intercept surveys are not used by Talk for data collection, or only upon explicit customer request for specific projects.



5. Which of these sources are proprietary or exclusive and what is the percent share of each in the total sample provided to a buyer? (Assume proprietary to mean that the sample provider owns the asset. Assume exclusive to mean that the sample provider has an exclusive agreement to manage/provide access to sample originally collected by another entity.)

Talk operates its own, mostly self-built online panels in 24 countries, with a total of approximately 1.3 million active panelists ("active" meaning active participation in the panel in the last 12 months according to ISO definition). Talk places great importance on a balanced recruitment process and implements various measures to maintain panel quality at a high level. One aspect, for example, is the limitation on the number of invitations that can be sent to a panelist within a specific time period or a time restriction for further invitations for a defined period after the last invitation. This is taken into account in the automated sample selection process in the panel management system.

All panelists have the option to activate additional data transmission features if available in their country. Participants who have activated additional features such as passive metering or audiolisting belong to the respective specialty panels.

Talk provides its online panels for conducting market research studies to customers with the relevant professional background through direct customer contact and sample providers.

In most cases, Talk can realize the samples for customer projects in its own online panels, thus using only one source. If the implementation of a partner panel is necessary, Talk always coordinates this with the customer. The percentage contribution of each source to the total sample depends on the specific project specifications and the project progress so far.

For planned tracking or multi-stage studies, the feasibility analysis takes into account the respective share of each source when partners are involved.

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

The panels operated by Talk are actively maintained online access panels. The online panels are generally open to all, although the registration process involves various quality verification processes to ensure that neither bots nor duplicates can become registered panel participants.

The recruitment sources and the ratio of recruitment methods used vary from country to country. The majority of panel members are recruited online through a wide mix of sources. This includes recruitment through media partners, marketing partnerships, such as social media, advertising, newsletters, or search engine marketing, as well as registrations conducted during the implementation of other surveys by affiliated research agencies. Suitable recruitment partners and sources are selected based on strict criteria regarding the quality of registered participants for each recruitment source. Additionally, a small



portion of new participants in the online panels are generated through referrals from panel members and through active registrations.

In some panel countries, partnerships exist for offline recruitment through personal or telephone interviews.

7. What form of validation do you use in recruitment to ensure that participants are real, unique, and are who they say they are? Describe this both in terms of the practical steps you take within your own organisation and the technologies you are using. Please try to be as specific and quantify as much as you can.

Registration in Talk's online panels is exclusively done through a triple opt-in process. In addition to the classic double opt-in (confirmation of registration through an email link), a participant is considered an active panelist only after providing some essential demographic profile information in a third step. Throughout the registration process, all data protection requirements are consistently followed, as in all panel management processes (e.g., user support).

During the registration process, several quality management tools are used to validate participants. They primarily serve to identify bots and multiple registrations, as well as authenticate participants.

- **Deduplication System:** Automated duplicate check directly in the registration process.
- **Anti-Bot Measures:** "Invisible Captchas" are set up at all participant interaction points influenced by Talk (panel registration, surveys through proprietary survey tools, redirect pages). The functionality of a traditional captcha is implemented without requiring active distracting inputs.
- **SMS Verification:** Two-factor authentication for registration and modification of essential profile data. A code is sent to the participant's mobile number via SMS, which needs to be entered for authentication during form submission.
- **Identity Verification** (implementation planned for 2nd half of 2023): User-device data collected during the registration and profiling process is assigned an identity ranking and participants with insufficient ranking are excluded from the panel.
- **Quality Control:** Automated verification of various inputs and technical information provided by participants using predefined algorithms to assess their plausibility and detect duplicate entries (address, name, IP address, implausible profile data changes). Entries identified as suspicious are temporarily blocked and made available in the workflow for manual evaluation. This manual review is performed by trained staff who are familiar with local peculiarities (e.g., frequent combinations of first and last names).
- **Identity verification procedure (via post) or telephone validation:** For some of the online panels, supplementary random post or telephone checks are used to verify user data.
- **Extensions to the tools** are constantly being implemented. New technical possibilities for quality assurance are continuously examined and, if feasible, implemented. Regular general security audits of the panel data are conducted to optimize anti-fraud measures.

The quality of the panel is ensured through control measures such as random post or telephone checks to verify user data, limiting the number of surveys, and ongoing requests for profile updates.



Additional quality assurance checks to verify panelists and identify fraudulent participants take place at almost all contact points with participants. Talk relies on coordinated automated and manual controls for this purpose.

8. What brand (domain) and/or app are you using with proprietary sources?

Summarise, by source, the proportion of sample accessing surveys by mobile app, email or other specified means.

In all countries where Talk operates proprietary online panels, they can be accessed under the domain talkonlinepanel.com. Additionally, Talk operates additional panels in some countries. In the DACH region, these are the online panels keypanel.eu and bonopolis.de. In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Talk runs another panel under ivyzkumy.cz/ivyzkumy.sk. These panels function as independent entities but adhere to the same panel management and quality control measures. Furthermore, all panels undergo continuous checks for duplicates across all panels.

In addition to the respective panel websites, Talk offers its own app for the Talk Online Panels. This app allows participants to conveniently take surveys on mobile devices and also enables the collection of behavioral data, such as movement data across the participant's internet-connected devices. This form of data collection only occurs with the explicit consent of the panelists. Participants always have the option to view which data is being transmitted through the app and can pause or disable the functions at any time.

All surveys are accessible to Talk panelists through the website and the app on all devices. Surveys that are not suitable for mobile use will not be displayed in the app and will include an appropriate notice.

Panelists are generally notified about new surveys through invitation emails. These surveys can be opened directly from the email, the website, or the app. In some cases, push notifications may also be sent. Most surveys are launched directly from the invitation email. The ratio of survey participation through the browser or the app varies depending on the country, panel, and project specifications.

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

Talk sees itself as a service provider. A team of experienced and qualified project managers conducts fieldwork on behalf of the customer.

Talk can support its clients with projects ranging from questionnaire programming to field management, data cleaning, and delivery. Alternatively, Talk can take over the field management for questionnaires already provided by the customer. In this case, Talk is flexible and adapts to the client's preferences and project specifications.

Additionally, Talk can provide samples through API interfaces. Considering various technical and qualitative aspects, Talk offers interfaces for long-term collaborations.



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

Talk primarily utilizes online access panels for data collection and relies on its network of ISO-compliant partners when additional sample sources are required for conducting studies (refer to question 4).

Talk's commitment to fostering trusted collaboration with clients and its dedication to ISO certification encompass transparent and comprehensive handling of sample selection information. Talk promptly informs its clients when partner involvement is necessary. This communication occurs during the proposal stage as well as during the fieldwork phase if project specifications deviate from initial expectations. Partner panels are only included after coordination and explicit approval from the client. During this coordination process, the specific approach, source ratios, and considerations such as quota plans are discussed and defined.

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

Talk implements diverse measures to maintain the quality of the panel and ensure data reliability for surveys at a consistently high level. These measures include initiatives to sustain participant engagement and involvement within the panel. As a result, the Talk Online Panels serve as a structurally stable sample source, suitable not only for conducting traditional online surveys but also for unique study approaches, multi-stage studies, and recruitment for qualitative studies such as diaries, product testing, communities, and similar endeavors.

With its comprehensive approach to data collection, including the capture of behavioral data and cross-device interactions, Talk is an excellent partner for studies with a holistic methodology.



Sampling And Project Management

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

After the project is commissioned, the project-specific criteria for sample selection are defined within the panel management system during the setup phase. The sample generally relies on parameters and quotas that determine the representativeness for the respective project. These quotas are typically set by the client or researched in statistical offices. For example, if a client requires a representative sample for a country, the quotas are determined based on data from local statistical offices.

The selection of quotas depends on the study specifications. The most commonly specified quotas include age, gender, region, education, and may vary depending on the study design. Country-specific (online) population-representative or target group-representative quotas can be distinguished based on the project requirements.

During the setup, profile data is also selected to categorize panelists into specific target groups, allowing for targeted invitations to niche audiences. The appropriate profile data is selected in consideration of the screening and quota specifications.

The size of the sample to be drawn is determined by the desired size of the net sample and other factors such as the average response rate.

The panel management system then selects the sample from the Talk panel based on the defined profile data and quotas using a random algorithm. These panelists receive a short email with a standardized invitation text that includes the essential information according to ISO guidelines, enabling the panelist to decide whether they want to participate in the survey or not. It is crucial for Talk that the information provided in the invitation is as general and unbiased as possible and does not contain any specific details about the target audience to prevent response bias. It is also emphasized that participation in the survey is completely voluntary and unrelated to panel membership.

In general, Talk panel members are invited to surveys to express their opinions so that companies can improve their products. However, participants are rewarded through a points-based incentive system to compensate for their efforts. Each invitation also includes a link, in accordance with data protection and ISO guidelines, through which panelists can manage their user account, such as updating their personal information or deleting their profile.

Panelists are free to click on the link in the invitation email or in their user profile to participate in the survey. If the panelist accepts the invitation and participates in the survey, they will be directed to the survey page. In most cases, there is a brief screening process. If the panelist does not match the target audience despite preselection or if the corresponding quota cell is already filled, they will be screened out and redirected to the panel website. If the participant completes the survey, they will be redirected back to the panel website as a "Complete" response. In both cases, participants receive real-time rewards in the form of panel points credited to their user account.



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

To offer targeted surveys to its clients, Talk collects detailed information on various criteria of a person's sociodemographic profile (such as household situation, education, work, and finances), as well as data on a variety of consumption and lifestyle habits, from smoking to the use of product categories.

These data form the basis of a filtering system that allows for surveys to be conducted with customized samples: Depending on the client's needs, participants can be selected based on one or a combination of the criteria mentioned above.

The provision of basic data such as gender, age, and location is mandatory to become a member of the Talk panel, while all other profile data is voluntary. The completion rates for individual profiles in the Talk panels average around 70%.

All profile surveys can be updated by panelists at any time in their profiles. In accordance with the ISO 20252 guidelines, all profile data is also updated at least once a year. For this purpose, all panel members are actively invited, up to four times per year depending on the profile category. Both the collection and storage of profile data comply with data protection regulations.

At the end of a project, Talk can supplement the survey data with profile data from study participants. In order to comply with data protection requirements, profile information of participants must be stored and processed separately from survey data. This matching process is carried out by the panel management team after the completion of a project.

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

In general, the essential parameters needed for feasibility calculations are the specific target group description, ideally defined by screening criteria and/or incidence rate. Required quotas and the planned interview duration are additional necessary criteria. If requested by the client, Talk can provide the exact population-representative distribution for each country and also assist in estimating the incidence rates. Based on these estimates, Talk calculates the feasibility of the project and determines the price.

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

If it becomes apparent during the course of the project that it cannot be completed as planned, the client is promptly informed of this situation. Talk proposes possible alternatives and collaborates with the client to determine solution options. One possible alternative is to involve a partner who can assist with data collection.

Talk places high value on the quality of partners involved in such projects and maintains transparent communication with its clients. If additional sample is needed, Talk will work with carefully selected long-term partners. The partner network includes ISO-certified online panel providers or partners operating according to ISO standards. Before entering into a long-term collaboration with a partner, a series of test projects are conducted, and the decision to form a partnership is based on the results. Furthermore, the quality of the delivered samples is continuously monitored to address any issues with the partner as quickly as possible and find solutions. Using a digital fingerprint system, it is also possible to detect and exclude duplicate participation that may occur due to the involvement of multiple panels.

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

When implementing projects for direct clients in its proprietary online panels, Talk does not utilize survey routers and does not employ yield management techniques in data collection.

Panelists are individually invited to participate in surveys for client projects. The arrangement of surveys in the user profile is based on the order of field start time or activation and invitation to the survey.

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

N/A



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

The panelists of the sample for a project are invited to the survey project via email. The email contains a standardized text that includes all relevant information according to ISO regulations. This information includes:

- The general survey topic
- The survey duration
- The expected length of the survey's availability
- Compatible devices for participating in the survey
- The number of points awarded upon survey completion
- The direct survey link

It is crucial that the information provided in the invitation email is as general and unbiased as possible, without specifying the target audience, in order to prevent biased response behavior. It is also emphasized that all survey data is collected anonymously and that participation in the survey is entirely voluntary and not related to membership in the panel.

All the aforementioned requirements are defined as relevant information by ISO standards, which must be provided to potential participants in a study as part of the invitation. In accordance with data protection regulations, the email also includes direct links to the user profile, where panelists can adjust their profile settings or delete their entire profile from the panel.

In addition to the invitation email, each survey can be accessed through the user profile on the panel website or app. The most important information is included in the list of available surveys for the participant.

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

All surveys currently available to the panelist are visible in their personal user profile on the website or in the app. For each survey, the information provided in question 18 is listed similarly and by default, on the basis of which every panelist can freely decide whether to accept the survey invitation or not.

An invitation email refers to a single survey, allowing the panelist to independently decide whether to participate in the survey now or at a later time, regardless of the availability of other surveys.

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

Panel members earn a certain number of points for each completed survey, with the points primarily based on the survey duration and occasionally on the complexity of the questionnaire. As a gesture of goodwill, points are also awarded to participants who did not fit the target group, in order to reward them for their time and effort.

Once panelists have reached certain point thresholds (e.g., 2,000 points), they can redeem their points in the rewards shop or continue to accumulate points. Talk offers a variety of rewards tailored to local interests and compliant with local laws, such as cash, shopping vouchers for physical stores or online shops, magazine and newspaper subscriptions, and donations to charitable causes. The diverse range of options for redeeming accumulated points caters to different types of motivation.

It is important for Talk to appropriately reward participants for their engagement. When incentivizing, Talk takes care not to set the incentive value too high or too low. An excessively high incentive could lead to response bias, while Talk also wants to adequately thank participants for their time and effort. The point value is adjusted based on the living standards and purchasing power in each country. Transparent, continuous, and fair incentivization also positively impacts participant involvement and loyalty to the panel.

During the course of a project, the incentive amount can be adjusted if necessary. The disbursed incentive per project is recorded in a history for each panelist and can be added as additional data upon request.

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

Talk places great value on the experiences of its panel members and actively seeks their feedback on the content and presentation of each survey. This is sometimes done through separate questionnaires, but mostly through a feedback question at the end of the survey. This feedback question typically includes a request to rate the survey using a numerical scale and an open-ended field for providing justification for the rating. These results are made available in coordination with the client.

In addition, panel members can provide feedback and suggestions for improvement on all aspects of the platform and surveys at any time, independent of specific surveys. They can do so through a feedback form available in the language of their respective panel on each country-specific website of talkonlinepanel.com.



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

As part of the standard project planning, the scope and content of the reporting, as well as any interim reports, are coordinated with the client and scheduled accordingly if requested. Depending on the client's preference and in accordance with our ISO certification obligations, an extensive report containing information on all aspects of the survey can be agreed upon. This final report may include information on the gross sample, participation rate, dropout rate, invitation email, and a description of the sampling method. It may also provide further details about the sample, such as breakdowns by profile attributes (e.g., age, location, etc.).

Upon completion of the project, clients will always receive information on key study specifications, such as incidence rate, interview duration, number of interviews, and quotas, if applicable.

Data quality and Validation

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

Each panelist is invited to participate in surveys a maximum of six times per month. Taking into account screen-outs, ignored invitations, or delayed responses, an average respondent completes approximately 1.5 surveys per month. These limitations aim to minimize the commercialization of the panel by "professional" survey participants who solely seek to profit from the bonus points system.

To avoid inviting panelists too frequently within a short time period, a cooldown period is implemented in the panel management system. This means that once a participant has received an invitation, they cannot be invited again for a defined period of time.

The invitation and participation in surveys are automatically recorded in the system for each panel member. This allows Talk to accommodate client requests and apply time/category restrictions, for example, if a client requires a "fresh sample" - either generally or in terms of the survey's thematic category - for a project. In particular, for tracking studies, the exclusion of participants from previous waves can be ensured by agreement.

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

Relevant information for project work, such as join date or referral source, recruited friends, survey invitations, survey participation, and profile data, will be provided upon request and in accordance with data protection regulations in an anonymized form.

Further information about panelists, especially sensitive data or personally identifiable information, is restricted exclusively for the respective panel management and user support teams in accordance with data protection regulations.

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

Talk has versatile quality checks in place to verify users identity at the moment of registration and exclude duplicates. This includes automated duplicate checks, anti-bot measures, SMS verifications, and a quality control tool implemented in the panel management system.

Additionally, Talk conducts manual checks at all relevant touchpoints with panelists. These checks are done on a random basis and can be conducted multiple times for each panelist. This includes integrating feedback from projects regarding bad quality IDs.

As a result of these comprehensive quality management measures, panelists are assigned a quality status. Participants who exhibit certain profile data patterns or engage in fraudulent behavior are blocked and no longer considered for invitations by the system. This precludes participation of potentially fraudulent participants from the invitation process.

Some of the aforementioned measures are not only employed during registration but also at the project level. An "Invisible Captcha" is implemented at the start of a survey to identify and block bots without requiring active inputs.

Embedded quality questions in the survey questionnaire help screen out click-throughs or inattentive participants prematurely.



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

Talk operates exclusively with its online panels which use a triple opt-in process as the data source for collecting survey data collection. If a partner panel needs to be included during the course of a project, Talk aligns the approach, particularly regarding quotas, with the client to ensure the best possible composition of the sample for the project.

For tracking studies, a balanced distribution can be planned as needed during the planning phase when multiple panels are used for the project. Through quota control in field management, a structurally equivalent distribution across all waves is ensured, if required for the project design.

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

Panelists undergo continuous examination processes through a combination of automated and manual identification and evaluation procedures. The quality assessment per participant is not a one-time event but depends on participant behavior at all touchpoints, from the registration moment to profile updates, survey participation, and the incentive redemption booking process.

In addition to the quality checks mentioned in question 7 during the registration process, the following examinations of panelists take place:

- **SMS verification:** Two-factor authentication is used during both registration and changes to essential profile data and when booking incentives.
- **Survey response quality checks:** Regular surveys are conducted in all panels solely for the purpose of assessing response quality. Participants are assigned a status based on their response quality, taking into account pattern answers as well as the quality of responses in open-ended questions. This assessment can also be employed in client surveys.
- **Bad quality process:** Participants identified as "bad quality" during data analysis in survey projects are automatically logged into the panel management system. The system marks participants accordingly and sends automated notifications to participants based on an escalation scheme. The number of marks is counted per participant. After being marked as "bad quality" three times, the participant is sent a final message and is blocked from further surveys and activities in the panel (blacklisted).
- **Quality control:** Panelists exhibiting inconsistent behavior at participant touchpoints are identified through an automated control tool in the panel management system and supplemented with manual random checks. They undergo an individual quality control process, which includes



verifying the panelist's identity through personal contact via email or phone and confirmation through ID verification.

Examination processes and results are recorded and stored directly in the panel management system without any gaps. An overall status per participant is generated from all individual examinations, indicating the participant's quality level. This status serves as the basis for further examination processes and the blocking of participants who do not pass the quality checks. The system ensures that these participants cannot participate in surveys anymore.

In addition to these quality checks, panelists are regularly prompted to update their profile data. The answers and changes made to essential demographic criteria are checked for plausibility within the system. However, there is no live comparison with survey data.

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

There is no single survey method, whether direct, telephone-based, or online, that definitively eliminates undesired response behavior. Talk is aware of the challenges that come with dealing with something as volatile and complex as human opinion and strives to filter out inappropriate influences.

These efforts begin with the recruitment process and the targeted selection of recruitment sources. Talk caters to those who are genuinely interested in expressing honest opinions and shaping the market. Additionally, continuous automated quality checks are conducted for all participant input processes to maintain panel quality and minimize the presence of cheaters and speeders.

When Talk programs and hosts the survey for the client, quality checks related to surveys are performed as part of the data cleansing process. Data cleansing follows specific combined criteria that allow for the identification of random responses, inconsistent answering behavior, and excessive use of non-response elements and speeding by examining response patterns, the quality of open-ended responses, and response time according to specific procedures.

Furthermore, Talk has an automated escalation process for participants who exhibit inappropriate response behavior. Suspicious respondents are flagged and warned gradually via email. As a last resort, these participants are excluded from the automated invitation process through a blacklist. Feedback from sample-only clients regarding data quality is handled in the same manner.

Talk also conducts its own surveys to assess the response quality of panelists. Participants are assigned a status based on their response quality, taking into account response patterns as well as the quality of responses in open-ended questions. This assessment can also be utilized in client surveys.



Policies And Compliance

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

In addition to comprehensive terms and conditions, Talk has a Privacy Policy and a separate Cookie Policy for its panelists. All policies are accessible during the registration process and must be acknowledged. Additionally, the policies can be reviewed at any time when visiting our website. They are prominently displayed in the footer of the website and are available in the local language of each respective panel. Talk emphasizes the importance of explaining all information in easily understandable language.

The Privacy Policy explains what information is collected, for what purposes, and how it is collected. It provides details about data retention and possible data sharing. It outlines security measures and explicitly highlights the rights of panelists regarding their data. It also explains the specific features of the panel and the data used in those features.

The Cookie Policy explicitly explains all cookies used by Talk and their functionality.

Compliance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and all national data protection laws is of utmost importance to Talk. The guidelines are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are up to date, and new legal requirements are incorporated.

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

Talk is committed to handling personal data responsibly and respectfully in accordance with European data protection regulations, as well as the strict guidelines of the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (ESOMAR) and national market research associations in all countries where Talk operates its Online Panels. The certification according to ISO 20252 confirms compliance with all applicable legal requirements.

As part of internal organizational measures for IT security, the multi-layered IT structure ensures that panel staff only have access to data that is absolutely necessary for their work. The system architecture of the panel management and survey software ensures separate storage of panelists' profile data and



survey data, among other measures. All employees have signed data protection agreements, are familiar with Talk's technical and organizational measures, and receive annual training on data protection regulations and the careful handling of participant data. Compliance with data protection regulations is continuously monitored in everyday work.

For each project, the collection of personal data in the questionnaire and the use of cookies are clarified with the client before the project starts, and appropriate measures are planned if necessary. This may include implementing a consent request before the survey begins or providing additional information to participants in the invitation text. All questionnaires are also reviewed before the fieldwork starts, specifically regarding the collection of sensitive or personal data, the use of cookies, and the corresponding privacy-compliant measures.

Panelists have the opportunity to contact Talk's data protection officer at any time if they suspect that their personal information is not being processed in accordance with data protection regulations or the policy, or if they wish to gain insight into how their data is stored and processed. The contact details of the data protection officer are available in the Privacy Policy at all times.

31. How can participants provide, manage and revise consent for the processing of their personal data? What support channels do you provide for participants?

In your response, please address the sample sources you wholly own, as well as those owned by other parties to whom you provide access.

Panelists can view their personal user profile at any time to see which personal data is stored. Additionally, they can access an overview of all cookies used by Talk. Individual profile information can be adjusted in the user profile, and consent for the use of cookies can be managed there as well.

Consent to the general privacy policy is a prerequisite for membership in the Online Panel. Participants are informed about this during the registration process. Participants can terminate their membership at any time if they no longer agree to the privacy policy. This can be done directly in the user profile.

If additional personal or particularly sensitive data is collected for specific surveys, participants are explicitly informed about this in the invitation email or at the beginning of the survey, and their consent is requested. Such data collection is always survey-specific, and the data collected in this context is not linked to the profile data in accordance with data protection regulations.

In general, a support team is available to panelists at any time via email and, in some cases, by phone to address any questions they may have. Questions and suggestions of all kinds, particularly regarding data protection, are received and answered by native speakers. The employees are mostly located in the respective panel countries, are familiar with the cultural and legal peculiarities of their country and can provide individualized responses to panelists' questions.

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

Panelists are rewarded with points for participating in surveys. These points have a country-specific fixed monetary value and can be redeemed for rewards in the panel's online rewards shop. The selection of available rewards varies by country and complies with relevant legal requirements. Generally, points can be redeemed for cash (via bank transfer), online shop vouchers, magazine and newspaper subscriptions, or donations to charitable organizations, depending on the local regulations of each country.

The allocation and redemption of points are described and regulated in detail in the terms and conditions for panelists. Participants are also informed about the need to comply with local tax laws, which may require reporting cash payouts to the tax authorities.

The legal requirements in this regard are continuously reviewed and taken into account by Talk's legal department.

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

The minimum age for registration in our online panels is determined by the applicable laws in each country. 16 years old is a general legal minimum age in several European countries, although in some countries, the minimum age may be slightly lower. Talk's legal department regularly reviews updates to legislation, and any legal changes are promptly implemented in the registration process. The registration process always complies with local laws, ensuring that individuals below the legal age in their country are not technically allowed to join the panel. If they attempt to register with fraudulent intent, they will be identified and excluded during the identity verification process as part of quality control.

Typically, online surveys are not directly conducted with children. If direct input from children is required for a survey, it would only be done in collaboration with their parents. The invitation would be sent to the parents, who would then need to explicitly consent to their child's participation in the survey.

These measures align with the guidelines and standards set by ESOMAR and GRBN, as well as the ISO regulations for ISO 20252 certification.

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

Within the panel management process, Talk processes millions of data points and keeps track of participant activities for the purpose of traceability. Talk is highly aware of this particular responsibility.

The panel management and survey systems used by Talk have been developed internally by software developers in collaboration with market researchers and analysts. They serve solely for the management



of online panels and the collection of data for market research purposes. From the beginning, a system architecture was developed and established to ensure seamless data processing in compliance with industry-specific requirements and data protection laws.

One aspect is securing the collected data against external access. IT security measures, including access management, firewalls, rights and roles management, and more, are implemented according to the latest technical standards. Regular audits take place to identify and address any potential vulnerabilities.

Data protection regulations, as well as ISO and other industry standards, demand a strict separation of participant profile data and survey data. The system architecture of the software used by Talk enables the strict separation and processing of these data sets, and through role-based access management, it restricts the access of respective employees. Only employees who require access for their job responsibilities, such as answering panelists' questions or processing incentive bookings, have access to participants' personal data.

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

Both panel management and administration at Talk have information security management systems in place that comply with the ISO 27001 requirements. Talk implements these requirements in collaboration with its software partners.

The security systems include comprehensive risk analyses, an appropriate system architecture, and corresponding physical and technical system controls, such as firewalls and role management. Additionally, the overall concept includes methods for persistent data storage and other data protection measures. Regular audits, including penetration tests, are conducted to ensure the effectiveness of these security measures. All processes and systems are documented in the technical and organizational measures and serve as guidelines for Talk's employees.

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

Since the introduction of its Online Panels, Talk has been adhering to all ESOMAR principles as part of its fundamental company philosophy as a market research company.

Talk has been ISO 20252 certified since 2019. Regular re-audits are conducted by an independent auditor, in addition to internal audits. The ISO requirements, particularly regarding transparency and the privacy-compliant handling of panelist data, are omnipresent in the daily work of all employees. ISO regulations are considered during the conceptualization phase when introducing new services and processes.

The ISO certification confirms compliance with all legal requirements, a responsible approach to panel members, and the highest level of transparency towards clients.



Metrics

37. Which of the following are you able to provide to buyers, in aggregate and by country and source?

Please include a link or attach a file of a sample report for each of the metrics you use.

Talk continuously monitors all quality-related metrics of its online panels using tracked information from quality control processes and survey statistics within the system. The metrics may vary by country and panel. At the same time, participant behavior within the panel, as represented by these metrics, is influenced by many external factors.

Due to the dynamic nature of these metrics, a static listing is not provided here. Talk values transparent communication with clients and interested parties and is always available for a direct exchange regarding quality-related metrics of the panels.