



DATA QUALITY TRANSPARENCY CHECKLIST

Project Level Sample
Transparency Questions

March 2025





About the Global Data Quality (GDQ) initiative

This guide is designed to be a practical tool for any Buyer of sample to help inform their buying decision. It is intended to be used before commissioning a project but after the vendor onboarding process has been completed with a supplier.

All questions should be asked during the project briefing/bidding process, but some relate to different stages of the project lifecycle. It is still important to understand up front how a Supplier will act/react once a project is underway, as this may impact with whom you choose to work.

Questions should be asked of the bidding/project team. These relate to specific project details, and you should receive answers tailored to your study.

Buyers should be aware that many Supplier platforms (including panels, non-panel sources and aggregators) now heavily prioritise system-wide optimisation and minimise the amount of control offered on individual projects. If this was not already covered during the onboarding stage, then now is a good time to discuss this.

If you are working with a Do-it-Yourself (DIY) platform, please be aware that there are some specific references below for you to bear in mind. You may want to contact the Supplier Support Team in advance of launching your project.

Scenario	Questions to ask Suppliers to address this:	What is a 'good' response?	What do I do?
<p>Quality/verification checks are done by Suppliers when they onboard participants to a panel. You should already be aware of, and comfortable with, the level of checking done by the Supplier you use. But all Suppliers are different. If your Supplier outsources some/all of the sample needed to another Supplier, then you will have respondents flowing into your study who have potentially been through a very different set of verification checks.</p> <p>There are no guarantees that quality checks are put in place on sample brought in from other Suppliers. And those other Suppliers themselves could bring on board other partners which further complicates the chain of responsibility and control.</p> <p>Users of DIY Platforms: The platforms' Support Team should be able to provide you with documentation as to the quality controls used for both proprietary and non-proprietary samples. This should include the deduplication protocols they employ. Please note that the automated nature of the sample pull may result in different sampling protocols for the DIY platform then for a manually managed study</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Which providers (if any) will you use to help fulfill the study, and what is the % share of each vs proprietary sample in the intended total sample? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a Note for Users of DIY Platforms: depending on the type of study launched (i.e. ad hoc study) there may be minimal controls over the intended proportion of proprietary versus non-proprietary sample. 2. What level of oversight do you have over sample providers that your third-party sources may in turn onboard? I.e. do you know which Suppliers make up the complete supply chain? 3. For all sample being used for this project, what quality checks/measures do you have in place to ensure these participants are unique and real? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a For proprietary sample: please describe checks done at the survey level. b Users of DIY Platforms: this information should be available from the platform Support Team. 4. Do you let the Buyer control which sources of sample to include in their project? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a Users of DIY Platforms: the automated nature of the platform does not allow for this. 5. What do you do if the project proves impossible for you to complete in field? What protocols do you have in place to inform the Buyer of required sample blend adjustments? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a Users of DIY Platforms: If a study is launched with a challenging target audience, or a challenging research design, this is possible. At that time, reach out to the Support Team to understand possible next steps. 	<p>A good response should clearly tell you which Suppliers will be involved in fulfilling your study requirements.</p> <p>Suppliers should be able to tell you what measures they put in place to ensure the quality of all sample (i.e., sample they bring in to fulfil your study requirements). Even proprietary sample should be subject to survey level checks, over and above checks done when onboarding to the panel.</p> <p>Suppliers should use a de-duping tool to remove duplicate respondents when they bring in additional sources on top of proprietary sample. This tool could use IP address, and/or digital fingerprinting of participant devices to identify and stop the same respondent making multiple survey entries.</p>	<p>Buyers</p> <p>If there are particular Suppliers you know you do not want to have involved, you should clearly communicate this. Likewise, if you have directly commissioned other Suppliers, it is worth being open about this to avoid duplication.</p> <p>Buyers</p> <p>If you are buying sample from more than one source yourself then it will be your responsibility to de-duplicate. Please see further guidance on de-duplication checks here</p> <p>Suppliers</p> <p>it is important that Buyers are aware of this in case they have directly commissioned any given Supplier, and/or in case they have the Supplier on their block list.</p>

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<p>Sometimes Buyers of sample will need to dig through data on the participants within a survey to manually review whether they deem them to be fraudulent or not.</p> <p>If fraud is identified within a project then it may be that it is coming particularly from one source more than others. It can often be easier - for Buyers and Suppliers - to have certain data points automatically appended to the survey dataset to avoid having to manually spend time tracking down this information post-field. Even if each sub-Supplier is simply given their own code within the data, this is a big help in identifying where fraud originates.</p> <p>Users of DIY Platforms: If fraud is detected within a DIY project, please contact the Support Team. Depending on the policies of the platform, it may be possible to append information in a static way to help support further investigations.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> From what sources of online sample do you derive participants for this project? Further guidance can be found on the online ecosystem here [please link to Chris's document]. Are there data points on sample source, and/or panellist that you can share as standard? If data points can be shared, can those be appended to the survey link? If not, then- this can be appended onto the data in a static way, during/after fieldwork. This should be done in a reasonable time frame – a matter of days. <p>(Please note that Suppliers are often understandably wary of appending demographic information which they may have gathered on their side as it can quickly become out of date. Buyers should always ask such questions in-survey).</p>	<p>Generally, the more metadata that can be gathered/shared the better (although Buyers and Suppliers should be mindful of the Privacy/GDPR implications of sharing any data deemed to be personal information, which includes IP address). This could include data points such as: Supplier/sub-Supplier, recruitment wave/source, length of time on panel, etc.</p>	<p>Having information included automatically from the start of a project helps Buyers and Suppliers better understand where issues are coming from. In turn this can help both parties make more informed choices on the sample they include in future studies.</p>

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<p>The impact of study design and suitability of sample on data quality</p> <p>If the study design is poor (e.g. boring, repetitive), or does not fit well with the intended audience (e.g. expecting mothers of babies to take 45 min surveys on PC), you do increase the risk of fraud/reduced data quality.</p> <p>It ultimately helps both Buyers and Suppliers to know if the sample is suitable for the study in question.</p> <p>Users of DIY Platforms: It is recommended that studies be simple in nature and/or that they target a broad online target. Standardized products may also be available whereby there should be established protocols as to which audiences are possible in a DIY manner.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Given the project specification/s, how suitable is the sample & why? What criteria has been used to select proprietary and third-party participants? How much does the online sample cover the population of the research, and what is the evidence for this? As a Supplier, will you assess the risks associated with the design and consult with the Buyer to address/mitigate/make aware of said risks? We note that such conversations are not relevant/appropriate in many cases, but there are instances where it can be extremely valuable for Buyer & Supplier to work together in tailoring a project to ensure it is as successful as possible. <p>Users of DIY Platforms: If you are uncertain as to the answers of Q.1-3, it is highly recommended that you reach out to your agency contacts for assistance in launching a manual project, or a researcher-assisted DIY project.</p>	<p>Suppliers should know enough about their panels and sample to know if there is a good fit with any intended research project.</p> <p>Not every study will require a lengthy conversation and in many cases the response from a Supplier may simply be: 'Yes, this will work'. But, for more complex studies, a good response will carefully consider the requirements of your survey and will give a considered assessment of whether this will be a good fit for the panel in question. Advice may be given on changes that could be made to improve the likelihood of success during field.</p>	<p>Buyers should always be open and honest with Suppliers about what the survey will involve, including any unique or non-standard quality checks that may be involved, and which would impact data cleaning. This will enable them to best assess if they can meet your needs.</p> <p>Survey design can have a big impact on the success of a project in field. It is important Buyers thoroughly test the survey and – when answering as a 'real' person vs simply clicking to test - are able to get through the logic to register a test complete.</p>