



## ESOMAR 28

### 28 Questions to Help Research Buyers of Online Sample

The primary aim of these 28 Questions is to increase transparency and raise awareness of the key issues for researchers to consider when deciding whether an online sampling approach is fit for their purpose. Put another way, the aim is to help researchers to ensure that what they receive meets their expectations. The questions are also designed to introduce consistent terminology for providers to state how they maintain quality, to enable buyers to compare the services of different sample suppliers. Notes on the context of the questions explain why the questions should be asked and which issues researchers should expect to be covered in the answer.

These 28 Questions focus on the questions that need to be asked by those buying online samples. If the sample provider is also hosting the data collection, you will need to ask additional questions to ensure that your project is carried out in a way that satisfies your quality requirements.

<https://www.esomar.org/what-we-do/code-guidelines/28-questions-to-help-buyers-of-online-samples>

## NORC AmeriSpeak Profile

### 1. **What experience does your company have in providing online samples for market research?**

*Context: This answer might help you to form an opinion about the relevant experience of the sample provider. How long has the sample provider been providing this service and do they have, for example, a market research, direct marketing or more technological background? Are the samples solely provided for third party research, or does the company also conduct proprietary work using their panels?*

Since its start more than 75 years ago, NORC at the University of Chicago, an objective, non-partisan research institution, has shaped the questions, gathered and analyzed the data, and derived the insights that have helped governments, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and citizens around the world to make more informed public and personal decisions. In the process, NORC has also been one of the leading innovators in research methodology and the adoption of new technologies that have helped shape the field of modern market research.

AmeriSpeak® is NORC's breakthrough panel-based research platform – the first U.S. multi-client household panel to combine the affordability and speed of panel surveys with the accuracy, response rates, and sample quality typical of more traditional survey methods.

Through AmeriSpeak, NORC clients can access a more accurate representation of the U.S. population, tapping a probability-based sample of 30,000 households who have agreed to participate in periodic surveys. This prescreened panel can provide data on a wide variety of topics, including government policies and programs; communications research; health services and policy; health outcomes and prevalence measurement; economic, political and social attitudes, opinions, and behaviors; financial services; and consumer products and services.

What makes AmeriSpeak unique is its use of the most scientifically advanced methodology available, providing more accurate data for commercial, non-profit, and public-sector polling than any other panel platform. Added to this is an AAPOR response rate that is the highest of all U.S. panels, and the distinction of being the only commercially available panel that uses face-to-face, in-person interviewers to recruit participants.

- **Representative Sampling:** Using NORC's National Sample Frame, the industry leader in sample coverage, AmeriSpeak provides you with a panel that is representative of the entire U.S. population. The National Sample Frame uses area probability sampling and includes additional coverage of hard-to-survey population segments such as rural and low-income households that are underrepresented in surveys relying on address-based sampling.
- **Response Rate:** AmeriSpeak's rigorous approach to panel recruitment helps achieve the highest response rate of any multi-client panel solution on the market. Key to this process is the use of NORC field interviewers who conduct face-to-face recruitment sessions, enhancing the representativeness and response rate of the panel.
- **Transparency in Sampling:** Transparency is a core value of NORC. To that end, AmeriSpeak provides clients with a report card on sample quality for each project. The NORC Card delivers a quantitative measurement of sample quality, response rates, and other metrics, providing NORC's clients with objective data on sample representation.

## Sample Sources and Recruitment

### 2. Please describe and explain the type(s) of online sample sources from which you get participants. Are these databases? Actively managed research panels? Direct marketing lists? Social networks? Web intercept (also known as river) samples?

*Context: The description of the types of sources a provider uses for delivering an online sample will provide insight into the quality of the sample.*

AmeriSpeak's primary source for sample participants is the NORC National Sample Frame which uses area probability sampling as the basis for an equal probability, multi-state sample of U.S. households. By using this frame, AmeriSpeak is able to provide researchers with measurable advantages in population coverage:

- Higher population coverage than standard address-based sampling
- Higher population coverage than standard cellular and landline phone sampling
- Higher population coverage than standard mail survey sampling
- Estimated 97% coverage of the U.S. residential population (compared to approximately 92% using address-based sampling)

For the few states where the National Sample Frame lacks presence, AmeriSpeak uses address-based sampling (ABS) to add addresses and ensure sample representation for all U.S. States. As of 2017, 99.1% of AmeriSpeak adult panel participants were sourced from the National Sample Frame; 0.9% were sourced from ABS. Proper weights allow the full use of the combined sample.

### Other Sample Sources and Solutions

**AmeriSpeak Latino** provides a multifaceted, scientifically rigorous, and cost-effective platform for research on U.S. Hispanic and Latino populations, including Spanish-language dominant households. Key benefits include extensive sample coverage and superior response rates. Panelists can complete surveys by web or phone, an option that provides better sample coverage and representation than online-only panels. By using face-to-face, in-person recruitment for contacting households, AmeriSpeak is able to reach less acculturated segments of the Latino population.

Our English- and Spanish-speaking support team provides strong customer service to panelists, assures cultural sensitivity and privacy, and allows clients to conduct their research in both English and Spanish. In addition, when panelists register, they are asked to provide demographic information that is particularly useful to clients conducting research on Hispanic and Latino populations including: country or area of origin (e.g., Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, South America), overall acculturation level, level of literacy and fluency in English, primary language spoken at home, and primary language for using media.

**AmeriSpeak Young Adult** offers representative sampling of young adults, age 18-30. As with our core AmeriSpeak Panel, recruitment is a probability-based selection from a database for the entire U.S., including Alaska and Hawaii. Sampled households are contacted with bilingual materials (in English and Spanish) and sent a recruitment package by U.S. mail. Since phone numbers are only available for about 60% of participants, we use mail as well as phone to reach out to them, again both in English and in Spanish. Sampled households are provided with information to register online at the panel portal or by calling a toll-free phone number. All young adult panelists are invited to participate in a maximum of two surveys a month.

**AmeriSpeak Teen** provides clients with the opportunity to conduct nationally representative studies with teenagers age 13-17. This panel has the same probability-based design as our regular panel, and is similarly representative of the U.S. population. To recruit participants, we start by reaching out to parents for their consent to contact the teenagers living in their home. Teens who agree to join the panel become regular members, providing us with basic profile information and taking surveys when invited. We can survey up to 1,000 nationally-representative 13-17 year-olds per panel, and can expand a study even further to include young adults age 18 or older from our AmeriSpeak Young Adult participants.

**3. If you provide samples from more than one source: How are the different sample sources blended together to ensure validity? How can this be replicated over time to provide reliability? How do you deal with the possibility of duplication of respondents across sources?**

*Context: The variation in data coming from different sources has been well documented. Overlap between different panel providers can be significant in some cases and de-duplication removes this source of error and frustration for respondents.*

While the AmeriSpeak Panel sample is obtained through NORC'S National Sample Frame, we can also combine samples for client surveys from more than one source when there is a need (e.g., cost-considerations, targeted geographical locations, hard-to-reach populations). For studies that require large sample sizes and/or are surveying a rare population, we use a calibration approach that integrates probability-based sample from the AmeriSpeak Panel with non-probability, opt-in web sample in order to achieve the target goal of completed interviews. The AmeriSpeak Calibration approach combines the validity and reliability of the probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel with the scale of the non-probability, opt-in web sample.

The key to AmeriSpeak Calibration is identifying and utilizing characteristics tightly tied to measures of interest. The AmeriSpeak Panel collects extensive profile information from participants on a variety of topics such as health, public affairs, finances, and demographics. These characteristics are then calibrated into the survey instrument using the AmeriSpeak sample as the benchmark to adjust the non-probability, opt-in sample weights.

NORC uses a weighting technique to create a single weight so that the combined probability-based and non-probability survey interviews can be analyzed in one coherent flat file. Similar to conventional post-stratification weighting, calibration weighting is used to correct for demographic imbalances in the interviewed sample [combined probability and non-probability interviews] and correct for sample non-coverage and non-response bias that is present in the interviewed sample. The probability and non-probability samples are combined based on minimizing bias and variance associated with the probability and non-probability samples for key variables of interest. These adjustments account for and try to minimize any other potential bias in the opt-in sample that has not been previously accounted for. Model-based methods are also used to estimate the bias associated with the non-probability sample.

**How can this process be replicated over time to provide reliability?**

Once identified, the set of calibration variables and model-based methods would remain fixed. This allows for a similar methodology when combining probability and non-probability samples across time.

**How do you deal with the possibility of duplication of respondents across sources?**

For our probability sample sources (AmeriSpeak Panel as well as Latino, Young Adult, and Teen panels), we de-duplicate addresses so the same address is not sampled twice. If a non-probability sample is being added to the AmeriSpeak sample, we prefer to work with a single third-party vendor so they can control the sample being included as part of the study. If multiple opt-in vendors or other non-probability sample sources are being included, we use RelevantID® – a digital fingerprint

technology -- to highlight entries from duplicate computers and stop duplicate respondents from completing the survey. NORC reserves the right to use an alternative to RelevantID based on our on-going evaluation of de-duplication technology.

#### **4. Are your sample source(s) used solely for market research? If not, what other purposes are they used for?**

*Context: Combining respondents from sources set up primarily for different purposes (like direct marketing, for example) may cause undesirable survey effects.*

The AmeriSpeak Panel sample is used exclusively for research and not for direct marketing. The AmeriSpeak Panel as well as Latino, Young Adult, and Teen panels are designed for research studies including marketing, academic, and publicly funded research. These panels enable researchers to survey a representative, probability-based sample of pre-recruited participants who have agreed to take part in regular online and telephone surveys on a wide variety of research topics, including:

- government policies and programs
- communications research
- consumer products and services
- academic research
- policy and advocacy research
- health outcomes and prevalence measurement
- aggregate statistics for public dissemination
- economic, political, and social attitudes, opinions, and behaviors

NORC strictly prohibits the use of the AmeriSpeak Panel and its sub-panels for direct marketing or sales purposes.

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

*Context: Ensuring the inclusion of hard-to-reach groups on the internet (like ethnic minority groups, young people, seniors, etc.) may increase population coverage and improve the quality of the sample provided.*

One feature that sets the AmeriSpeak Panel apart from other probability-based research panels is our in-person, face-to-face recruitment using professional NORC interviewers. The aim is to bring into the panel households and persons who are underrepresented by the initial mail and phone recruitment process, including households or groups that may be hard to reach on the internet. We use multiple tools to actively recruit hard-to-reach potential panelists, including U.S. mail and telephone interviewers for initial recruitment; overnight express mail and field interviewers for face-to-face follow-up with non-respondents. Additionally, we oversample addresses associated with hard-to-reach populations and use customized bilingual recruitment materials and interviewers to engage with them.



## Other strategies used in AmeriSpeak studies to construct a sampling frame for hard-to-reach or specialized populations:

AmeriSpeak is experienced in network sampling and creating sampling frames for rare or hard-to-reach populations. This type of specialized frame incorporates a multi-level sampling methodology that relies on nominations from one type of sample (e.g., panel households) to construct sample frames for a second type of sample (e.g., hard-to-reach populations). One such study included construction of a sampling frame through network sampling where the eligible panelists nominated their congregation and provided information about the congregation's location and staff. After that, individuals were recruited and interviewed by phone or in person. The same technique can be applied to build sampling frames for individuals living in assisted living facilities, social organizations, political movements, etcetera.

### **6. If, on a particular project, you need to supplement your sample(s) with sample(s) from other providers, how do you select those partners? Is it your policy to notify a client in advance when using a third-party provider?**

*Context: Many providers work with third parties. This means that the quality of the sample is also dependent on the quality of sample providers that the buyer did not select. Transparency is essential in this situation. Overlap between different providers can be significant in some cases and de-duplication removes this source of error and frustration for respondents. Providers who observe process standards like the ISO standards are required to give you this information.*

If an additional sample beyond AmeriSpeak is required for a study, we will notify the client at the study design phase and work with them to determine the best supplemental sample source for their project. These samples can include fresh address-based sampling recruitment using mail-to-web and mail-to-phone techniques, traditional phone samples using RDD or list-assisted frames, non-probability panel samples (such as the Research Now SSI online panel), custom non-probability recruitments through search-based ads (e.g., Google AdWords or Google Display Network), social media ads (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, or Snapchat), or respondent-driven sampling (RDS). In addition, we have worked with another probability-based online panel company on several studies where a sample from another probability-based panel is required to obtain sufficient sample size for a client.

## Sampling and Project Management

### **7. What steps do you take to achieve a representative sample of the target population?**

*Context: The sampling processes (i.e., how individuals are selected or allocated from the sample sources) used are the main factor in sample provision. A systematic approach based on market research fundamentals may increase sample quality.*

For any client survey, sampling begins by constructing a study-specific sample frame from all active panelists eligible for the survey. Then, a stratified random sample is selected from the AmeriSpeak Panel based on panelist profile data for race/ethnicity, age, gender, and education. Benchmarks from official statistics, such as the Current Population Survey, are used to determine the sample sizes by strata for client studies.

Please see *AmeriSpeak Technical Overview* ([amerispeak.norc.org/research](http://amerispeak.norc.org/research)) for information about the panel methodology used to achieve a representative sample of the general U.S. population.

**8. Do you employ a survey router?**

*Context: A survey router is a software system that allocates willing respondents to surveys for which they are likely to qualify. Respondents will have been directed to the router for different reasons, perhaps after not qualifying for another survey in which they had been directly invited to participate, or maybe as a result of a general invitation from the router itself. There is no consensus at present about whether and how the use of a router affects the responses that individuals give to survey questions.*

NORC does not use a survey router to construct the AmeriSpeak Panel sample frame. As a probability-based panel, representative samples of households are chosen with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame.

**9. If you use a router: Please describe the allocation process within your router. How do you decide which surveys might be considered for a respondent? On what priority basis are respondents allocated to surveys?**

*Context: Biases of varying severity may arise from the prioritization in choices of surveys to present to respondents and the method of allocation.*

N/A

**10. If you use a router: What measures do you take to guard against or mitigate any bias arising from employing a router? How do you measure and report any bias?**

*Context: If Person A is allocated to Survey X on the basis of some characteristic then they may not be allowed to also do Survey Y. The sample for Survey Y is potentially biased by the absence of people like Person A.*

N/A

**11. If you use a router: Who in your company sets the parameters of the router? Is it a dedicated team or individual project managers?**

*Context: It may be necessary to try to replicate your project in the future with as many of the parameters as possible set to the same values. How difficult or easy will this be?*

N/A

**12. What profiling data is held on respondents? How is it done? How does this differ across sample sources? How is it kept up-to-date? If no relevant profiling data is held, how are low incidence projects dealt with?**

*Context: The usefulness to your project of pre-profiled information will depend on the precise question asked and may also depend on when it was asked. If real-time profiling is used, what control do you have over what question is actually asked?*

When panelists enroll, AmeriSpeak utilizes a recruitment survey to collect detailed data on socio-demographic and household composition, contact information, voting behavior, party identification,

religious preference, language skill, social media usage, media consumption, and shopping behaviors. After recruitment, AmeriSpeak assigns panelists to three profile surveys (Public Affairs, Health, and Financial) to enrich our panel data.

The Public Affairs Survey collects information on topics such as political trust, political interests, political knowledge, political participation, voting history, and citizenship. The Health Survey collects information on physical health, functional limitations, alcohol use and smoking, physical measures, health insurance coverage, and access to health services. The Financial Survey collects information on consumer sentiment, income source, assets and liabilities, access to financial institutions, financial technology usage, financial attitudes, and financial literacy. Data from the completed profile surveys helps us target low-incidence populations and can be supplemented as needed with screenings as part of a custom survey.

In addition, for the AmeriSpeak Teen Panel, a recruitment survey is also used to collect data related to detailed socio-demographic information, contact information, education status, health status, language skills, social media usage, media consumption, and technology access. After recruitment, teen panelists are given two different engagement surveys to help us better understand them as panelists and improve our work with them. The two surveys cover topics like hobbies and interests, political trust, political interests, political knowledge, financial literacy, assets and liabilities, work history, saving habits, religious preference, and life expectation.

AmeriSpeak annually updates the content of the profile survey questionnaires to ensure that the survey questions are current and comparable to other national surveys. Since NORC owns all profile data, AmeriSpeak researchers can easily access the profile items and update them as they change over time.

For studies that require large sample sizes and/or are surveying a low-incidence population, NORC uses AmeriSpeak Calibration (blending a probability-based AmeriSpeak sample with non-probability samples from third party vendors). NORC works with a variety of different vendors depending on the specific study design (please see responses to items #3 and #6 for more information).

**13. Please describe your survey invitation process. What is the proposition that people are offered to take part in individual surveys? What information about the project itself is given in the process? Apart from direct invitations to specific surveys (or to a router), what other means of invitation to surveys are respondents exposed to? You should note that not all invitations to participate take the form of emails.**

*Context: The type of proposition (and associated rewards) could influence the type of people who agree to take part in specific projects and can therefore influence sample quality. The level of detail given about the project may also influence response.*

When a new survey is available, we send email reminders to the sampled web-mode AmeriSpeak panelists and call sampled phone-mode panelists throughout the field period. In some cases, we also encourage study cooperation using SMS reminder(s). In addition, for the panelists with AmeriSpeak online member accounts, survey invitations can also be viewed at the online member portal ([amerispeak.org](http://amerispeak.org)) or on the AmeriSpeak app. A typical recruitment reminder provides the survey link and the information about the study incentive(s); however, no survey topic or survey length are mentioned within the reminder materials.



**14. Please describe the incentives that respondents are offered for taking part in your surveys. How does this differ by sample source, by interview length, by respondent characteristics?**

*Context: The reward or incentive system may have an impact on the reasons why people participate in a specific project and these effects can cause bias to the sample.*

NORC rewards AmeriSpeak panelists for their time through “AmeriPoints” – a cash-equivalent system to reward completion of a survey. The amount of the incentive corresponds to the interview length (i.e., longer interviews = greater incentives) and survey-specific factors such as the length of the field period and the required survey completion rate. Typical respondent incentives range from \$1 to \$10 cash equivalent.

For some client studies, the project management team may find it beneficial to offer certain targeted groups a larger incentive amount. For example, the team may decide to provide a higher incentive amount to certain race/ethnicity groups or younger age groups associated with lower survey participation rates in order to boost cooperation among these groups.

For studies where we combine the AmeriSpeak sample with another sample, the incentive is determined by the type of sample. Address-based sample respondents typically receive checks mailed to their residential address; web respondents from a non-probability, opt-in panel receive points through their panel provider.

**15. What information about a project do you need in order to give an accurate estimate of feasibility using your own resources?**

*Context: The “size” of any panel or source may not necessarily be an accurate indicator that your specific project can be completed or completed within your desired time frame.*

In order to give an accurate estimate, information is needed on the population group(s) to be surveyed, number of qualified interviews required, project timeline, and the length of the survey interview. If an incidence rate (percent of a general population sample of qualifying adults age 18+) for the population(s) of interest can be provided, that is preferable, especially for unique populations. Additional surveys are available upon request, such as coding of open-ended responses, banner tables, annotated questionnaires and topline reporting, in-depth interviews and focus groups, questionnaire design, analytics (such as market simulators), public affairs and corporate communications consulting, and media dissemination.

**16. Do you measure respondent satisfaction? Is this information made available to clients?**

*Context: Respondent satisfaction may be an indicator of willingness to take future surveys. Respondent reactions to your survey from self-reported feedback or from an analysis of suspend points might be very valuable to help understand survey results.*

AmeriSpeak measures respondent satisfaction with three standard questions at the end of each survey: (1) rating the survey overall from poor to excellent, (2) whether respondent experienced any technical issues, and (3) any general comments or feedback. The project management team reviews the answers to these questions during and after the field period. Necessary action is taken if an anomaly is detected.

We also analyze all survey satisfaction questions to evaluate and improve the panelist experience. AmeriSpeak staff respond back to panelists when necessary as part of panel engagement and maintenance. This information can be made available to clients on request without any personally identifiable information (PII).

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

*Context: One should expect a full sample provider debrief report, including gross sample, start rate, participation rate, drop-out rate, the invitations/contact text, a description of the field work process and so on. Sample providers should be able to list the standard reports and metrics that they make available.*

In addition to the data files, AmeriSpeak also provides clients with a field report and NORC Card (Sample Quality Report Card). The field report includes study-specific details on sampling, data collection methodology and procedures, survey completion rates, survey response rate, data processing, statistical weighting, design effect and sampling margin of error calculations, and deliverables.

Additionally, the NORC Card gives clients a quantitative measurement of sample quality, providing an objective measure of sample representation. Specifically, the card documents numerous measures of sample quality, including: AAPOR response rate, representativeness of the interviewed sample compared to population benchmarks, quantitative assessment of self-selection bias, custom bias measurements specific to the survey topic (consumer, health services, medical conditions, social attitudes, political behavior, etc.), and other measures such as design effect, sampling margin of error, interview survey length, interview break-off rate, etcetera.

## Data Quality and Validation

**18. Who is responsible for data quality checks? If it is you, do you have in place procedures to reduce or eliminate undesired survey behaviors, such as (a) random responding, (b) illogical or inconsistent responding, (c) overuse of item non-response (“Don’t Know”) or (d) speeding (too rapid survey completion)? Please describe these procedures.**

*Context: The use of such procedures may increase the reliability and validity of the survey data.*

Our probability-based sampling design prevents the inclusion of self-selected panelists and professional respondents in AmeriSpeak Panel surveys. As a result, AmeriSpeak experiences fewer undesired survey behaviors than non-probability based panels, with less than 1% of respondents exhibiting undesired behaviors. Nevertheless, as part of panel maintenance, we examine data issues such as frequent item skips, illogical or inconsistent responding, and duplicates in recruitment survey and profile survey data collection. We also regularly compare recruitment and profile data with client survey responses to identify inconsistent responding.

However, unless otherwise specified by the client, we do not offer “don’t know” or refusal response options in client surveys. The level of data cleaning depends on the client request and budget. For instance, per request, NORC has removed from the analysis data file interviews from panelists who skipped/refused at least 1/3 of the questionnaire. If the questionnaires have long blocks of questions vulnerable to straight-lining, the NORC data cleaning staff looks to see if there are any straight-liner

panelists. Our staff would then review the data for those straight-liners to see if there are telltale characteristics such as skips/refusals, speeding, or straight-lining elsewhere.

**19. How often can the same individual be contacted to take part in a survey within a specified period whether they respond to the contact or not? How does this vary across your sample sources?**

*Context: Over-solicitation may have an impact on respondent engagement or on self-selection and non-response bias.*

Typically, to keep panelist burden low and reduce the risk of panel conditioning, a panelist is assigned no more than 4 surveys a month. We use a version of Permanent Random Number sampling to control the assignment of surveys so that, within a given demographic subgroup, survey assignments are distributed as equally as possible.

**20. How often can the same individual take part in a survey within a specified period? How does this vary across your sample sources? How do you manage this within categories and/or time periods?**

*Context: Frequency of survey participation may increase the risk of undesirable conditioning effects or other potential biases.*

AmeriSpeak does not limit the number of surveys a panelist can take part in within a specified period since the number of assigned surveys is controlled and the majority of surveys expire in three weeks. On average, we offer panelists the opportunity to complete up to one survey a week. Panelists typically complete an average of two surveys a month.

**21. Do you maintain individual level data such as recent participation history, date of entry, source, etc., on your survey respondents? Are you able to supply your client with a project analysis of such individual level data?**

*Context: This type of data per respondent, including how the total population is defined and how the sample was selected and drawn, may increase the possibilities for analysis of data quality.*

AmeriSpeak maintains auxiliary individual-level data on response process such as the total number of assigned, started, and completed surveys per panelist, the time and date each survey was started and completed, the cumulative response rate, and the last survey completion date on AmeriSpeak panelists. In addition, we collect auxiliary data such as the device used for the survey and the actual survey length for each panelist. Some of this data is analyzed for panel maintenance and monitoring purposes and, if a client requests it, we can provide them with the results.

**22. Do you have a confirmation of respondent identity procedure? Do you have procedures to detect fraudulent respondents? Please describe these procedures as they are implemented at sample source registration and/or at the point of entry to a survey or router. If you offer B2B samples, what are the procedures there, if any?**

*Context: Confirmation of identity can increase quality by decreasing multiple entries, fraudulent panelists, etc.*

AmeriSpeak uses an address-based sampling methodology that is supplemented by an in-person listing of households through visual inspections (see [www.norc.org/Research/Projects/Pages/2010-national-sample-frame.aspx](http://www.norc.org/Research/Projects/Pages/2010-national-sample-frame.aspx)). Since we have the address and even the name and phone number for each potential panelist before contacting them, AmeriSpeak confirms that the panelist is living in the sampled address before recruiting them. After recruitment, we assign surveys via the contact information the recruited panelist provided in the recruitment survey. We also confirm the name of the panelist at the start of the survey. Additional checks are conducted to further ensure the data quality. For example, we compare the basic demographic information such as gender and age reported in the current survey with previous information. Problematic panelists — those who repeatedly use undesired survey behaviors, such as straight-lining, random responding, illogical or inconsistent responding, overuse of item non-response — are contacted and may be removed from the panel for quality control purposes (see item #18 for more information).

## Policies and Compliance

**23. Please describe the ‘opt-in for market research’ processes for all your online sample sources.**

*Context: The opt-in process indicates the respondents’ relationship with the sample source provider. The market generally makes a distinction between single and double opt-in. Double opt-in refers to the process by which a check is made to confirm that the person joining a panel or database wishes to be a member and understands what to expect (in advance of participating in an actual survey for a paying client).*

AmeriSpeak client surveys do not have a specialized informed consent for each survey. Instead, panelists provide informed consent to participate when they join the panel. The AmeriSpeak Privacy Statement is available at [AmeriSpeak.org](http://AmeriSpeak.org) (which is the panel member web portal).

**24. Please provide a link to your Privacy Policy. How is your Privacy Policy provided to your respondents?**

*Context: Not complying with local and international privacy laws might mean the sample provider is operating illegally. An example privacy policy is given in the ESOMAR Guideline for Online Research.*

AmeriSpeak’s privacy policy is publicly available on our panel member portal:

<https://www.amerispeak.org/privacy>. An abbreviated version of the policy is included in all panel recruitment materials sent by US mail and a link to the unabridged version is also available to all panel participants.

**25. Please describe the measures you take to ensure data protection and data security.**

*Context: The sample provider usually stores sensitive and confidential information on panelists and clients in databases. These data need to be properly secured and backed-up, as does any confidential information provided by the client. The sample provider should be able to provide you with the latest date at which their security has been evaluated by a credible third-party.*

AmeriSpeak delivers only anonymized survey response data to clients (unless the respondent has given us explicit permission to share PII or data that could be analyzed to reveal personal identity). Direct identifier data is kept secure through NORC's data security policies and procedures which stores the information in separate panel and survey databases. Linkage between study code numbers and direct identifiers is kept to maintain a complete history of panel member activities, incentives, and to support any inquiries from panel members. The data is kept for as long as a panelist is participating in the panel and up to 7 years after their participation ends. As mentioned in our Privacy Policy, a panelist can request the removal of their data at any time by contacting the NORC Privacy Compliance Office.

**26. What practices do you follow to decide whether online research should be used to present commercially sensitive client data or materials to survey respondents?**

*Context: There are no foolproof methods for protecting audio, video, still images or concept descriptions in online surveys. In today's social media world, clients should be aware that the combination of technology solutions and respondent confidentiality agreements are "speed bumps" that mitigate but cannot guarantee that a client's stimuli will not be shared or described in social media.*

NORC has extensive experience supporting research projects with sensitive data and has procedures in place to decrease risk. However, no marketing survey firm can guarantee complete confidentiality for data that is sent over the internet. The restrictions on content and unauthorized use are listed in AmeriSpeak's terms and conditions documents provided to panelists: <https://www.amerispeak.org/terms-conditions>.

**27. Are you certified to any specific quality system? If so, which one(s)?**

*Context: Being certified may require the supplier to perform tasks in a pre-determined manner and document procedures that should be followed.*

NORC maintains strict internal procedures for compliance with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Special Publication 800-53 Revision 4 recommendations. We have many government projects that require similar regulatory compliance (e.g., IRS Publication 4812) and recent audits have certified that our systems meet or exceed the applicable requirements. Accordingly, NORC has received an Authorization to Operate (ATO) certification from the following government agencies:

- HHS/Office of Minority Health
- Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Centers for Disease Control
- Department of Labor
- National Institutes of Health

- U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census

Additionally, we maintain project quality by following strict guidelines for sample selection; survey programming; quality control review; data management, monitoring, and reporting; as well as post-data-collection adjustment techniques and weighting.

We also strongly encourage clients to permit NORC to pretest survey instruments to allow for additional review of the questionnaire and data prior to launching the main study.

**28. Do you conduct online surveys with children and young people? If so, do you adhere to the standards that ESOMAR provides? What other rules or standards, for example COPPA in the United States, do you comply with?**

*Context: The ICC/ESOMAR International Code requires special permissions for interviewing children. These are described in the ESOMAR Guideline for Online Research. In the USA, researchers must adhere to the requirements of the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). Further information on legislation and codes of practice can be found in Section 6 of the ESOMAR Guideline for Online Research.*

The AmeriSpeak Teen Panel collects data from minors (defined as persons age 13-18) following consent from parents or legal guardians. This panel complies with Section 7.1 of the *ESOMAR Guideline for Online Research*. Our policy regarding data collection from minors is deliberately more restrictive than our overall privacy policy to provide additional protection for minors. We adhere to all applicable laws and codes pertaining to the protection of minors' privacy including, without limitation, the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998 in the United States (as amended). We carefully consider both privacy issues and parental concerns in connection with all surveys involving individuals under the age of eighteen (18).

There are two different types of consent for the AmeriSpeak Teen Panel. The initial consent and assent process is for teens to join the panel and includes both the parent's consent and the teen's. As part of our Parental Consent Survey, an adult AmeriSpeak panelist is asked if they are the parent or legal guardian of any eligible teens living in their household. If they say "yes," they are provided with information about the AmeriSpeak Teen Panel and asked to consent to their teen(s) participating in the panel. A teen with consent will then be assigned the Teen Recruitment Survey, where potential panelists learn about the AmeriSpeak Teen Panel; i.e., what is expected of them, their rights with regard to participation, that their parent will receive notification when they are invited to take a new survey, that their parent will be able to see their completed survey and reward redemption history, and their parent will never be able to access their responses to the surveys.

The second type of consent is for client surveys. For surveys with sensitive topics, a full Institutional Review Board (IRB) is required and a relevant Certificate of Confidentiality is included. Once we receive parental consent, we ask for the teen's consent, walking them through assent language covering survey topics, the risks of participation, and their rights as a research subject. For surveys without sensitive topics, if the IRB agrees that the survey contains no sensitive items, no further parental consent and teen assent questions are asked.



Teens have the option to decline participation in any survey and still remain part of the AmeriSpeak Teen Panel. For surveys with or without sensitive topics, parents or legal guardians will be notified that their teen has received an invitation to participate. They will be able to view the survey questions but will not be able to see their teen's answers. (For more information on child and young adult surveys, see AmeriSpeak's privacy policy: <https://www.amerispeak.org/privacy>).