



ISO 26362 certification

netquest 

ISO 26362 certification:

A quality standard for research-panel management

One of our panel's superpowers is that, for years now, it has held the ISO 26362 certification, which is specific for online access panels.

This standard establishes the criteria by which access-panel providers can be evaluated and by which the panels themselves can be assessed.

But what does this mean? What did we do to deserve this recognition?

These 10 facts tell you everything you need to know.

1. Panel recruitment

Fact: ISO 26362 compliant providers tell their customers how their recruitment process works.

What this means...

- Panelists must actively consent to register.
- Panelists must come from documented sources, not purchased databases of uncertain origin.
- Panelists must provide identification information during registration to be considered members.
- The incentive policy must be communicated to panelists at the time of registration.
- Minors under 14 are not allowed to register as panelists. In those cases where they are part of a survey, parental consent and supervision is required.
- Only registered sources may be used to recruit panelists, and customers may request information about these sources and the degree of dispersion between them.
- The panel must have methods for validating sociodemographic data authenticity.
- The client must be notified of key aspects such as: Is the panel open (anyone can register) or closed (by invitation only)? Is there some proof of identity for the new panelist? How are duplicate registrations avoided?
- It must be easy for the panelists to voluntarily unregister or even delete their records.

2. Panel size

Fact: ISO 26362 counts only active panelists as valid.

What this means...

- An active panelist is someone who has participated in some research or has updated their profile over the past 12 months.
- Profiling information on the panel shall be available to customers.

3. Panel management

Fact: The provider complies with the ISO quality policy, which ensures project timing and a transparent relationship with the customer.

What this means...

- A provider must have a documented quality policy that is accessible to the client.
- Records must be kept on all panelists: invitations, participation in studies by topic, and so on.
- The client must be notified if the sample is outsourced and, if so, the contracted provider must comply with quality processes.
- Panelists' personal data may never be given to third parties unless explicit consent is obtained
- Cookie use must be communicated to panelists together with specific permission requirement as well as the possibility to reject its use.
- The provider must have specific staff responsible for panel management, as well as clear procedures on how to perform tasks that require management.
- The provider must keep a record of all studies conducted on each of its members. This should include information such as: duration, number of calls, issues related to equality in the survey and a final update of data profiling.
- Panelists must be asked to update their profile information at least once a year.

4. Panelists incentives

Fact: ISO 26362 encourages fair and balanced rewards for panelists.

What this means...

- The incentive system must be public and documented.
- The incentive system must be as neutral as possible to avoid introducing bias into project results.

5. Requirements

Fact: ISO 26362-certified panel providers possess the technology to ensure data security and to provide panelists with all necessary support.

What this means...

- Technical resources for panel management, including backups to ensure data security, are required.
- The panel must offer a “Help Desk” service to assist panelists participating in research.

6. Sampling

Fact: ISO-26362 panel providers carefully select samples to be used in projects.

What this means...

- The provider must brief its customers on the methods used to select sample for projects. These methods cannot introduce bias into the studies.
- The frequency with which each panelist is interviewed must be registered. ISO 26362 does not require this data be sent to customers, but Netquest nevertheless provides it upon request.

7. Questionnaires

Fact: ISO 26362-certified panel providers use validated questionnaires for panelists and clients alike.

What this means...

- If the provider is responsible for translating questionnaires, it must do so in accordance with standard 20252. For example, translations must be double-validated.
- Panelists must be properly informed on survey features. Invitations to participate should include information on the general purpose of the project, its estimated duration, confidentiality and anonymity policies, participation time, the incentive policy, and how to unregister from the panel.
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8. Data validation

Fact: Data collected via questionnaires must be verified.

What this means...

- The provider must establish means of validating information provided by panelists through surveys to ensure the reliability of the information and to establish mechanisms for removing fraudulent panelists.

- The following criteria should be applied when assessing potentially fraudulent responses:
 - The time taken to complete the survey.
 - Participation in open-ended questions, if the survey includes such questions.
- Additional checks on participation in easy answers and open-ended questions are recommended, as a means of testing consistency within the research. Netquest has programmed controls for both by including “trap questions” in lengthy research and by analyzing responses to open-ended questions in all Netquest programmed questionnaires.

9. Reporting

Fact: ISO 26362-certified panels offer customers detailed information about the project.

- Panel data will be available to customers upon request. This data may include invitations and questionnaires used, panel-sampling methods, field periods, validation methods and response rates. Factors that may affect the representativeness, performance of subcontracts and consistency with the ISO 26362 standard must be considered.

10. Data delivery

- Netquest will inform you that the project has been carried out in compliance with the ISO 26362 standard, and the data mentioned above will be available following delivery of the study's definitive results.

This might seem like a lot of information, but remember: with great power comes great responsibility, and as a researcher, it's your responsibility to use your powers for good.

Ask your online access-panel provider if they comply with this norm before you launch your next study, or contact a Netquest sales specialist who can give you more information on how we've built our own ISO 26362 panels.

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