**BSI Standards Publication**

# Market, opinion and social research — Vocabulary and service requirements

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**National foreword**

This British Standard is the UK implementation of ISO 20252:2012. It supersedes BS ISO 20252:2006 which is withdrawn.

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# INTERNATIONAL STANDARD

**ISO
20252**

Second edition
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# Market, opinion and social research — Vocabulary and service requirements

*Études de marché, études sociales et d'opinion — Vocabulaire et exigences de service*

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# Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

The main task of technical committees is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

ISO 20252 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 225, *Market, opinion and social research*.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO 20252:2006), which has been technically revised.

# Introduction

The principal objective of international standardization is to facilitate business development and growth, particularly between different national and regional markets. The intention of this International Standard is to follow a linear structure to ensure that its implementation leads to continual improvement of market, opinion and social research and to harmonize other national standards already available.

Market, opinion and social research is now a global industry. An increasing proportion of the expenditure of users of the industry is allocated to multi-national projects, whose objective is consistent regional and global measurement. An International Standard facilitates the achievement of this important economic and social objective by ensuring that the process elements of such research are undertaken to an appropriate standard and in a verifiable and consistent manner. This enables data arising from research studies carried out in accordance with this International Standard to be used to guide the provision of goods and services to citizens and institutions in a consistent and transparent fashion.

Subsidiary objectives in developing this International Standard include the need to define the level of requirement for service provision and common work procedures to be applied in processes, including across different countries. Requirements only apply when services are provided.

This International Standard contains extensive terms and definitions.

**INTERNATIONAL STANDARD**

# Market, opinion and social research — Vocabulary and service requirements

## 1  Scope

This International Standard establishes terms and definitions and service requirements for organizations and professionals conducting market, opinion and social research.

Non-market research activities, such as direct marketing, are outside the scope of this International Standard.

## 2  Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

**2.1**
**access panel**
sample **database** (2.16) of potential **respondents** (2.56) who declare that they will cooperate for future data collection if selected

NOTE      This does not include continuously reporting panels (e.g. TV-rating panels) and re-contact databases (asking for permission for follow-ups).

**2.2**
**accuracy**
degree of closeness between the estimate and the true parameter value

**2.3**
**ad hoc**
<research> specifically designed to address a particular objective or issue

**2.4**
**appraisal**
process of monitoring the competency of an individual or group of individuals in carrying out their work

**2.5**
**audit**
systematic, independent and documented process for obtaining evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which **audit criteria** (2.6) are fulfilled

**2.6**
**audit criteria**
set of policies, procedures or requirements used as a reference

**2.7**
**auditor**
person with the competence to conduct an **audit** (2.5)

**2.8**
**automated coding**
form of coding where manual coding is replaced, totally or in part, by various forms of computer coding or computer-assisted coding using computer-stored code lists and dictionaries

**2.9**
**bias**
systematic deviation between the estimate and the true parameter value

**2.10**
**client**
individual, organization, department or division, internal or external, that requests or commissions a research project

**2.11**
**code**
numeric or alpha character or combination of characters associated with each response category

**2.12**
**code frame**
list of categories with associated **codes** (2.11) for classifying responses

**2.13**
**computer-assisted interviewing**
**CAI**
interviews with responses keyed directly into a computer and where the administration of the interview is managed by a specifically designed program

EXAMPLES    Computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI); computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI); computer-assisted self-interviewing (CASI); computer-assisted interviewing via internet (CAWI).

**2.14**
**confidentiality**
requirement that data collected, information and materials are protected from unauthorized access

**2.15**
**continuous research**
research that involves regular and on-going data collection

**2.16**
**database**
centrally held collection of data that is accessible to users

**2.17**
**data editing**
set of methods verifying the collected data and, if necessary, correcting them

**2.18**
**data entry**
process step where data collected are converted into computer-readable form

**2.19**
**data processing**
management and converting of data from their raw state through to a required output

**2.20**
**data record**
set of data derived from a reporting or observed unit

**2.21**
**depth interview**
unstructured interview conducted to understand the underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes and feelings on a particular subject

NOTE       Discussion can vary from interview to interview, as long as all topics in a pre-defined **discussion guide** (2.23) are covered.

**2.22**
**derived data item**
data item used in analysis and/or tables derived from one or more source data items and/or categories

**2.23**
**discussion guide**
list of points or subjects which are to be covered in a **depth interview** (2.21) or **focus group** (2.28)

**2.24**
**document**
procedure, information or data which can be changed or modified

NOTE        For example, a questionnaire is a document, but once it is completed by a **respondent** (2.56) or an interviewer, it becomes a **record** (2.51).

**2.25**
**ethnographic observation**
**qualitative research** (2.47) method in which the researcher observes and/or interacts with research subjects in their natural setting as they go about normal activities

NOTE        The researcher can limit participation to observation, with limited or no questioning of the subjects, or can join in as an active member of the community being observed.

**2.26**
**fieldworker**
person involved in the collection of data for market, opinion and social research, excluding management and research staff.

NOTE        Fieldworkers include, but are not limited to, face-to-face and telephone interviewers, recruiters for qualitative or other research, "mystery shoppers" (see 2.36) and others carrying out data collection by observation, and **auditors** (2.7) collecting data from retail outlets.

**2.27**
**filter**
question or instruction in a questionnaire that restricts answers to a subgroup of **respondents** (2.56)

**2.28**
**focus group**
**group discussion**
open discussion with a small number of selected participants conducted by a **moderator** (2.35)

NOTE        Focus groups can be conducted face-to-face, by telephone, online or by a combination of these. Online focus groups can be synchronous or real-time (e.g. chat sessions), or asynchronous over an extended period of time (e.g. message and/ or bulletin boards).

**2.29**
**frequency count**
**hole count**
**marginals**
summary count of individual data items on a computer file

**2.30**
**imputation**
procedure where missing data are replaced by estimated or modelled data

**2.31**
**incentive**
gift, payment or other considerations offered to potential **respondents** (2.56) to increase respondent cooperation

**2.32**
**indexing**
numerical scale used to compare variables with one another or with a reference number

**2.33**
**intercept**
type of interviewing where **respondents** (2.56) are approached, either in person or online

**2.34**
**logic data entry**
**data entry** (2.18) processes which are programmed to check question skips and response ranges

**2.35**
**moderator**
individual responsible for facilitating the interaction of members of a **focus group** (2.28)

**2.36**
**mystery shopping**
study using **fieldworkers** (2.26) in the role of customers/users in order to evaluate a business/service performance

**2.37**
**netting**
method of treating **codes** (2.11) assigned to multiple-response questions, which can include open-ended codes, where the net refers to the total number of people responding with the same group of codes, even when each person has given more than one response within the same group of codes

**2.38**
**non-response**
failure to obtain measurements on some **sample** (2.58) or census members for all or some questions or variables

**2.39**
**observational data collection**
**observational research**
collection of data by observation of the behaviour, habits, activities, relations, expressed opinions or performance of individuals or groups, as well as phenomena, including the use of passive techniques, without the use of direct questioning

**2.40**
**omnibus survey**
**survey** (2.65) and questionnaire covering data required for more than one project and/or **client** (2.10)

**2.41**
**open-ended question**
**open-ended response**
type of question where **respondents** (2.56) are asked to answer in their own words

**2.42**
**participation rate**
number of **respondents** (2.56) providing a usable response divided by the total number of initial personal invitations requesting members to participate

**2.43**
**penetration level**
proportion of potential **respondents** (2.56) or contacts who qualify to participate in a **survey** (2.65)

**2.44**
**pre-testing**
<questionnaires> small-scale tests to check the performance of a questionnaire before embarking on full-scale fieldwork

**2.45**
**primary record**
raw data in electronic format or hard copy, including unedited completed questionnaires, recordings of **qualitative research** (2.47) and other similar items

**2.46**
**probability sampling**
**random sampling**
procedure such that each member of a **sampling frame** (2.59) has a non-zero probability of being included in the **sample** (2.58)

NOTE      For probability sampling, statistical margins of error apply.

**2.47**
**qualitative research**
analysis of motivations, patterns of thought, opinion, attitude, assessment or behaviour, via research techniques such as **focus groups** (2.28) and **depth interviews** (2.21) and qualitative **ethnographic observation** (2.25)

NOTE      A statement about the frequency and distribution of such patterns within a given population is not possible on the basis of qualitative study.

**2.48**
**quantitative research**
numerical representation of observations for the purpose of describing and explaining phenomena that those observations reflect

NOTE      This research often aims at making inference to populations. In most cases, a structured questionnaire is used with predetermined questions where most of the responses are precoded.

**2.49**
**questionnaire**
structured or partly structured tool or instrument, for collecting data, consisting of a series of questions

NOTE      Questionnaires can be self-completion or administered by an interviewer.

**2.50**
**quota sampling**
method of constructing a **sample** (2.58) so that it conforms to a predefined structure with respect to certain variables

**2.51**
**record**
special type of **document** (2.24) that provides historical evidence of an event, activity or fact

**2.52**
**recruiter**
person who identifies and invites potential **respondents** (2.56) to participate in a research project

**2.53**
**research process management**
procedures and measures focused on fulfilling quality control and quality assurance requirements

**2.54**
**research proposal**
written submission to a **client** (2.10) which includes a research design

**2.55**
**research service provider**
organization that conducts research projects or parts of research projects in market, opinion and social research

EXAMPLES      Private research institutions; academic and university research institutions; in-company research departments; local authorities, official statistics agencies or individual researchers acting in the same capacity.

**2.56**
**respondent**
person from whom data are collected

NOTE      The respondent can be a natural or legal person.

**2.57**
**retail audit**
collection of data from retail outlets using documentary (e.g. paper or digital) and/or observational methods

**2.58**
**sample**
subset of the **target population** (2.66) from which data are to be collected

**2.59**
**sampling frame**
list of population elements or other appropriate sources from which a **sample** (2.58) is to be drawn

**2.60**
**screening**
initial questions in a questionnaire used to establish eligibility of **respondents** (2.56)

**2.61**
**secondary data**
**desk research**
data that have already been collected and are available from another source

**2.62**
**simple data entry**
**data entry** (2.18) containing no built-in logic checks

**2.63**
**social media**
online technologies and practices that people use to share opinions, insights, experiences and perspectives with each other, transforming traditional one-to-many interactions into many-to-many interactions

**2.64**
**subcontracting**
**outsourcing**
passing responsibility for executing an element of the research project to a third-party **research service provider** (2.55)

NOTE      Self-employed individual **fieldworkers** (2.26) are not defined as subcontractors for the purposes of this International Standard.

**2.65**
**survey**
systematic data collection from a **sample** (2.58) of a **target population** (2.66) from which inferences can be made

**2.66**
**target population**
population of interest in the research project to which inferences are to be made

**2.67**
**validation**
procedures to check conformity to specification or requirement

**2.68**
**wave**
successive repetition in a continuous project in which neither the objective nor the general project design change

**2.69**
**weighting**
calculation process in which different units or subgroups are recalculated by assigning numerical values, as necessary, to correct and/or improve the representativeness of **sample** (2.58) estimates

NOTE      Weighting can be used to adjust for unequal selection probabilities, such as multistage sampling, coverage **bias** (2.9) and **non-response** (2.38) bias.

# 3 Research process management system requirements

## 3.1 Organization and responsibilities

### 3.1.1 The research process management system

The research service provider shall apply a research process management system which covers all the requirements of this International Standard, including the scope of the system in relation to the research service provider's business.

The research process management system shall be a documented system that can differ from one organization to another due to the following:

— the size of the organization and type of activities;

— complexity of and risks associated with processes and their interactions;

— the competence of personnel.

Procedures, instructions and methods required for completing the different tasks in accordance with the requirements of this International Standard shall be documented, implemented, monitored, maintained and auditable.

Documents may address the requirements for one or more procedures. A requirement for a documented procedure may be covered by more than one document. The documentation can be in any form or type of media.

### 3.1.2 Senior management responsibilities

Senior management of the research service provider shall take responsibility for the following:

— committing to quality of client service (including a statement of quality policy) appropriate to the purpose of the organization;

— documenting the organizational structure of the research service provider, including the responsibilities of the people involved in the delivery of the service;

— reviewing and improving the research process management system;

— ensuring the provision of adequate and appropriate resources and information for the system, including the appointment of a quality manager;

— ensuring that everyone involved in the provision of the research service is familiar with the applicable national and international ethical and professional codes, requirements of relevant legislation and documented procedures and methods which specifically affect their work.

### 3.1.3 Appointment of a quality manager

A quality manager shall be appointed who has enough authority to be responsible for the administration of the whole research process management system and who is responsible for organizing internal audits in order to ensure that this International Standard is applied.

NOTE      In some circumstances, the quality manager could be a part-time role, and in other circumstances, it could be more effective to appoint more than one quality manager (i.e. share the role).

## 3.2 Confidentiality of research

All information supplied to the research service provider by the client in order to conduct a research project shall be treated in the strictest confidence. It shall only be used in this context and shall not be made available to third parties without the client's authorization. Confidential information shall be stored securely (see also 4.9.3).

The research results relating to a specific client, obtained by a research service provider as a result of carrying out a particular research project, shall not be used in research projects for other clients without authorization of the original client and shall be treated in the strictest confidence.

Data provided by respondents, as well as their identity (e.g. completed questionnaires), shall be treated in the strictest confidence and all assurances given to respondents shall be fulfilled.

### 3.3    Documentation requirements

#### 3.3.1    General

Records and documents (which may be paper based and/or electronic) shall be established and maintained to provide evidence of traceability.

All electronic files shall be checked for viruses by up-to-date virus detection software.

#### 3.3.2    Control of documents (other than project-related documents)

Documents required by the research process management system shall be controlled.

Documents shall be subject to a version control procedure that allows the current version to be clearly identified.

#### 3.3.3    Control of project documents

Each project shall have a project file (which may be in electronic format) that contains or references the location of a project specification showing the basic requirements of the project.

In addition to the requirements of 3.3.2 and unique project identification, documents shall be uniquely identified to allow traceability and to ensure they can be located.

#### 3.3.4    Control of records

Records established to provide evidence of conformity to research process management system and project requirements shall be kept secure from unauthorized access, useable and retained for defined periods (e.g. by computer file back-up). See also 4.9.2.

### 3.4    Competence and training

The research service provider shall:

— determine the necessary competence for personnel performing work affecting project requirements;

— provide training or take other actions to achieve the necessary competence;

— maintain appropriate records of education, training, skills and experience;

— periodically review the effectiveness of company training and competence standards.

### 3.5    Subcontracting/outsourcing

The research service provider shall remain entirely responsible for all services carried out in connection with the project, including any part of the work relating to this International Standard which may be subcontracted and/or outsourced, except where the choice of the subcontractor is beyond the control of the research service provider.

The research service provider shall define procedures to select subcontractors, establish contractual relations and control the quality of the service provided.

The research service provider shall ensure that subcontractors understand the requirements of this International Standard in relation to the processes subcontracted to them by providing a written specification of such requirements.

NOTE      The level of detail of the specification considered appropriate can depend on whether the subcontractor has carried out similar work before for the research service provider, and whether or not the subcontractor is able to provide evidence of conformity to this International Standard.

The research service provider shall obtain confirmation from the subcontractor that work is undertaken in conformity with this International Standard. Appropriate confirmation shall include one or more of the following:

— a written contractual agreement to work to the requirements of this International Standard;

— third-party assessment and certification to this International Standard;

— documentary evidence from the subcontractor of appropriate checking and validation of requirements;

— appropriate checking and validation by the research service provider.

The research service provider shall maintain relevant records, including records of any unsatisfactory service received from a subcontractor and actions taken. These records shall be traceable to the project.

## 3.6   Reviewing the effectiveness of the research process management system

### 3.6.1   Management review

The research service provider shall monitor and manage the agreed research process and its research process management system by means of the following:

— reviewing the functioning of the research process management system against policy, and system monitoring (e.g. internal audits);

— reviewing research projects and outcomes against agreed client specifications;

— monitoring and reviewing client satisfaction at regular intervals, at least every year, in order to improve the quality of the service.

Records shall be kept as specified in 4.9.2.

### 3.6.2   Problems and complaints management

When problems and complaints are identified (either in the process or its outcome), they shall be rectified and steps shall be taken to prevent recurrence.

Records shall be maintained, including details of problems, causes, actions and solutions.

### 3.6.3   Internal audits

The research service provider shall carry out, at pre-planned intervals, internal audits to establish compliance with the following:

— the research process management system;

— project specifications agreed with clients, including documented amendments throughout the project.

The system of auditing shall include an audit schedule, scope and methodology. The quality manager is responsible for organizing this system (see 3.1.3).

All internal auditors shall be trained and, where the size of the organization permits, shall not audit their own work.

Records of audits, follow up actions and outcomes shall be recorded and, where appropriate, referenced to client projects.

# 4 Managing the executive elements of research

## 4.1 Responding to research requests

### 4.1.1 General

The research service provider shall have in place defined methods for checking the availability of the necessary resources and internal and external expertise before responding to a research request.

The research service provider shall be responsible for ensuring that the client's requirements are understood at each stage of the research process. This may involve one or more meetings or communications. Any agreements between the research service provider and the client shall be documented. When responding to requests, research service providers shall explicitly point out if parts of the intended research project have not been adequately specified or if any uncertainties have not been adequately resolved.

If this is not already apparent from the request itself, it shall be established whether the client requires a research proposal or a price quotation.

NOTE      A price quotation (as opposed to a proposal) gives the price of conducting a research project in accordance with a predetermined and defined methodology, which is referenced or documented by either the research service provider or the client. The requirements for price quotations are specified in 4.1.2.

Where a research proposal is required, the client and the research service provider shall agree the objectives to be met and the research service provider should have the opportunity to modify or improve the research approach proposed by the client. Proposals contain an adequate description of all relevant steps of the planned research project as well as a timetable (see 4.2). Prices are included as part of a research proposal (see also 4.1.4).

If specific aspects of data protection, respondent confidentiality or professional codes need to be taken into account with the chosen research design, the research service provider shall give a detailed account of the problem and the proposed solution.

If research proposals or price quotations deal with multi-client studies in any form, or an omnibus survey is used to collect any data, this shall be explicitly stated in the research proposal or price quotation.

If the research service provider is unable to meet the deadline for the research proposal or price quotation, the client shall be informed of this before the deadline.

### 4.1.2 Contents of price quotations

A price quotation shall specify at least the following:

— the price (see also 4.1.4);

— execution times of the research project;

— the technical specifications and/or methodology and all elements having an influence on the price (e.g. sampling, fieldwork, coding, data entry, analysis, reporting, number of presentations);

— the deliverables (e.g. reports, data tables).

NOTE      Specification of all or some of the elements in the list above can include reference to other documents available to the client, including the client's own briefing and/or specification and previous projects.

### 4.1.3   Contents of research proposals

#### 4.1.3.1   General

Unless otherwise agreed to by the client and the research service provider, the components described in 4.1.3.2 to 4.1.3.10 shall be addressed, as appropriate, in the research proposal.

NOTE      The decision as to which components are appropriate depends on the scope and type of research carried out and the agreed needs of the client. It might be appropriate to have checklists available of proposal coverage or templates tailored to the types of research generally undertaken.

#### 4.1.3.2   Objectives and methodology of the research project

The research proposal shall define which requirements of the client can be met by means of the proposed research project and which can only be met by follow-up research or by a different type of research.

The research objectives and methods shall be described and shall be fit for the purposes for which the research findings are to be used.

#### 4.1.3.3   Scope of services

The topic areas of the questionnaire or discussion guide to be used, approaches to analysis and the scope of analysis shall be included in the proposal where relevant.

#### 4.1.3.4   Sampling and weighting

The target population and the sampling procedure shall be adequately described in the research proposal. An estimate of the proportion of the target population in the total population shall be mentioned if there is a chance that it might influence the price.

The proposal shall describe the sampling frame, where applicable, and state the extent to which the sampling frame is representative of the target population. The extent and detail of the description will depend on available data, on the methodological approach and on the client's requirements.

The sample size, the method of drawing the sample, the recruitment or selection of respondents and any planned weighting procedures shall be described. When stating the size of the sample, an indication shall be made not only of the total number of cases but also of the extent to which the results obtained for subgroups will be reliable.

NOTE      See 5.7.2 for sampling issues in observational research which might need to be covered in a proposal.

Proposals for qualitative research projects shall make clear how respondents will be recruited (e.g. from a pre-recruited panel or by some other means). The method used to control the length of time that must have elapsed since participants last took part, if ever, in a qualitative research project (e.g. group discussion, individual depth interview) shall be indicated. The number of individuals to be interviewed and/or the number of groups and intended number of participants in each shall be specified.

#### 4.1.3.5   Description of data collection and data processing

The research proposal shall describe the relevant aspects of data collection. The anticipated length of the questionnaire and/or interviews or group discussions shall be stated in the research proposal.

The research proposal shall describe the relevant aspects of data processing.

In qualitative research projects, the type of venue (and equivalent for online groups, etc.) and any viewing or monitoring facilities to be used for interviews or group discussion shall be specified.

#### 4.1.3.6 Secondary analysis

When secondary data analysis is to be used, the nature of the sources and how they are to be used and integrated shall be described.

NOTE       Secondary data analysis is referred to as desk research in some countries.

#### 4.1.3.7 Reporting and presentation of results

Proposals shall define all deliverables, including their format and means of delivery.

Especially in qualitative research projects, the proposal shall state if verbatim comments from interviews and/or group discussions will be included in the report. The proposal shall also state if records of the interviews and/or group discussions will be available as well as their format, subject to meeting assurances of confidentiality given to respondents.

#### 4.1.3.8 Subcontracting individual research steps

The research proposal shall describe any individual research steps which are to be or might be subcontracted to other external research service providers.

Upon request, clients shall be told the identity of any subcontractor.

#### 4.1.3.9 Compliance with relevant law and professional and ethical codes

The research proposal shall refer to relevant codes of ethics in market, opinion and social research.

Relevant legal and ethical requirements shall be met.

#### 4.1.3.10 Compliance with this International Standard

The proposal shall state that the research service provider complies with this International Standard.

NOTE       Certification is one way of providing evidence of compliance with this International Standard.

#### 4.1.4 Price

The research proposal or price quotation shall specify the price of the proposed research approach and the services provided. It shall also specify the terms of payment, the currency and if taxes are included in accordance with local laws. The time period shall be specified during which the calculated prices are valid.

Key factors, which can lead to a change in the price and which can reasonably be anticipated at the time of issuing the proposal or price quotation, shall be clearly identified. The client shall be advised that any changes in the project planning may influence the price.

#### 4.1.5 Research contracts

The agreement between the research service provider and the client shall be documented in writing by either party. It is acceptable to use the final version of the proposal and a written acceptance for this purpose.

NOTE       When the research service is of a complex or long-term nature, there might be a need for a specific service-level agreement, where deliverables and responsibilities are set out in detail.

### 4.2 Project schedule

Unless already included in the research proposal or price quotation, the client shall receive the schedule of the research project, including all relevant timings and responsibilities. This project schedule shall include the following timings, where relevant:

— when client-supplied documents, materials and products should be delivered to the research service provider;

— when the client should approve the questionnaire or discussion guide, if such approval has been agreed (see 4.3.4);

— when data collection must take place at a specific period of time;

— when the client should approve the analysis specification, if such approval has been agreed (see 4.3.6);

— delivery time for the research results and/or other deliverables.

Changes in the timetable made by the client or by the research service provider shall be communicated to and approved by the other contracting party as soon as possible. Any such changes shall be documented.

## 4.3   Assistance by and cooperation with clients

### 4.3.1   Client briefing for research service provider

If the research objectives and/or other requirements do not appear to be described fully enough in the client's documents, the research service provider shall request a more detailed briefing from the client.

Any briefing shall be documented so that client needs can be met and be subsequently checked.

NOTE       For many research projects, a briefing of the research service provider by the client is essential in order for the research problem to be approached with an adequate research design. This kind of briefing can be advisable for each step in the research process, from the submission of the research proposal to the presentation of the results.

### 4.3.2   Subcontractors to be used

Upon request, the client shall be informed of which subcontractors (if any) will be used, for any part of the research process. If particular subcontractors are specified to the client, any subsequent changes in subcontractors to be used shall also be communicated to the client.

NOTE       In some countries, identification of subcontractors is a requirement of local codes.

### 4.3.3   Changes in the specification of work

The research service provider shall be responsible for agreeing and confirming in writing with the client any changes that will affect client requirements, which may include the price, timing and any other agreements stated in the research proposal, price quotation or contract.

### 4.3.4   Client review of questionnaires and discussion guides

The client shall be given the opportunity to participate in the design and/or the review of the questionnaire or discussion guide. Client approval of the questionnaire or discussion guide is required, unless review and approval are waived by the client. This approval, or waiver of approval, shall be documented.

### 4.3.5   Observing and checking data collection

The client may be permitted to observe the collection of data if the respondents taking part in the research project have agreed with this beforehand and their identity will be protected within the requirements of the applicable law and the professional codes. These requirements also apply if the client receives transcripts or recordings of group discussions or individual interviews and/or where interviews or group discussions are monitored in real time, including remotely. The research service provider shall take adequate steps to ensure that the identity of respondents is protected and that clients agree to respect this principle. Such client agreement shall be documented.

Clients shall be informed if their observation could affect the quality of the data collected.

All reasonable precautions shall be taken to ensure that respondents and observed subjects (including those who may not be aware they are being observed) are not harmed or adversely affected as a result of participating in a research project.

### 4.3.6   Code frame and data analysis

At the client's request, the research service provider shall make available to the client the code frame and the methods used to analyse the data.

### 4.3.7   Presentation of results to the client

The client shall be consulted on the way the research results are presented.

NOTE        Consultation with the client on the way research results will be presented might already have been covered at the proposal stage.

## 4.4   Questionnaires and discussion guides

### 4.4.1   Conception and design of questionnaires

The content, structure and design of the questionnaire can affect the research findings. The possible effects of the wording, the sequence of individual questions and other topics being researched (e.g. on an omnibus), as well as the number of response alternatives and their order, shall be taken into account when developing the questionnaire. Instructions for self-completion questionnaires shall be included as part of the questionnaire or associated material.

NOTE        In addition to the above, a clear filter structure and clear instructions are important features of questionnaires.

Where questionnaires used for continuous projects are revised between data collection waves the implications for other processes (e.g. data processing) shall be communicated.

### 4.4.2   Translation of questionnaires and discussion guides or any other project-related documents

Translation shall be done by a person or persons with language skills comparable to mother-tongue competence in the source and target languages. At least one of the translators shall have prior experience with the wording of this type of document.

Checking and revision shall be performed by a person or persons, other than the translator, with the appropriate competence in the source and/or target languages to examine the translation for its suitability for purpose.

The client or their representative shall be given the opportunity to review the translation.

The checking and revision of translations shall be recorded.

### 4.4.3   Pre-testing questionnaires

A pre-test shall be carried out for all questionnaires (including self-completion) if the client or the research service provider consider it necessary. If the same questionnaire has previously been tested and used in a comparable situation, such testing may be of a more limited scale. If there is a pre-test, the findings shall be recorded.

NOTE        Various forms of pre-testing can be considered, ranging from in-house dummy interviews to full pilots with appropriate respondents. The approach used is normally agreed with the client and/or covered in the proposal, together with any implications on the price.

### 4.4.4   Project-related briefing and training of interviewers and moderators

The research service provider shall ensure that both the fieldworkers and any associated subcontractors are adequately briefed and issued with appropriate instructions for using questionnaires and discussion guides. Any briefing shall be documented (and included as electronic records), irrespective of the manner of briefing (e.g. written or verbal). See also 5.3.4.

If the methodological requirements for interviewers conducting a research project go beyond the scope of the skills taught in the basic training program, appropriate project-related training shall be carried out.

The moderators of group discussions and depth interviews shall be briefed in the specific topic areas.

### 4.4.5 Electronic questionnaires

The research service provider shall ensure that data entry or capture specifications for CATI and/or CAPI, as well as for online projects, are correct as specified.

The research service provider shall establish and maintain procedures to test both the design and the implementation of the electronic forms of questionnaires. The type of tests and the persons involved shall be documented.

Confirmation of the client's acceptance of the electronic script of the questionnaire (where this is agreed with the client) shall be documented.

Changes to electronic questionnaires shall be clearly documented and version control shall be implemented.

If interviewing is undertaken at several locations, there should be only one point at which the questionnaire can be amended, tested and distributed.

NOTE    See 4.4.1 for questionnaire design.

## 4.5   Managing sampling and data processing

### 4.5.1   Managing sampling and weighting

#### 4.5.1.1   Sampling requirements

Sample design shall be based on the chosen selection procedure (e.g. stratification, clustering, assignments). The approach used in drawing up the sample shall be documented.

The characteristics of the sample, including samples provided by third parties (e.g. bought-in from other suppliers or by the client), shall be checked by the research service provider on the basis of the sampling criteria specific to the research project, in order to meet legal requirements and relevant research codes of conduct. This applies equally to fieldwork conducted by the research service provider and to work conducted by subcontractors.

NOTE 1    In the case of work by subcontractors, checking can involve specifying the required sample characteristics to the subcontractor and verifying the achieved sample against this specification.

NOTE 2    For qualitative requirements, see 5.5.2.

#### 4.5.1.2   Size of sample

The size of the sample shall be chosen in such a way that the sampling variation achieved both in the overall sample and in the subgroups relevant to the analysis is acceptable for the purposes of the research project.

#### 4.5.1.3   Quality criteria for probability samples

The particular sampling approach shall ensure that each person or unit within the target population or sampling frame has a calculable probability of being included in the sample. The source of data used for selecting sample points and/or individual persons or units shall be documented. Subsequent weighting of the respondent records may be used to counteract biases in structure due to non-responses, undercoverage and other causes.

#### 4.5.1.4   Quality criteria for non-probability samples

Non-probability samples can include, but are not limited to, the following:

— access panels (see also ISO 26362);

— intercepts (online or offline);

— social media;

— lists (of unknown coverage, online or offline);

— other sources of unknown coverage;

— blending of multiple sources, including interviewing across multiple modes (e.g. combining online and offline samples, access panels, online intercepts).

When such sources are used for drawing samples for a research project, the research service provider shall document and make available to the client (see also 4.8.3 and Clause 7):

a) a description of the sampling frame or other sources and methods from which the sample was drawn, how it was constructed or acquired and the target population it is meant to represent;

b) the sampling method used, i.e. the procedure used to select potential respondents from the sampling frame or equivalent and the means employed to ensure that the sample represents the target population, including any quotas used;

c) criteria used in sample selection, including any information related to sample non-response;

d) a count of the number of sample units drawn;

e) a description of any problems encountered in sample selection and how they were resolved;

f) weighting and projection methods;

g) method of data collection for the sample;

h) appropriateness of the sample for the purpose;

i) assessment of how well the sample represents the target population and the associated implications for data quality;

j) if available, relevant data from other sources that may be used to assess potential bias.

In the case of a quota sample, the intended target population shall be known and defined in terms of the relevant criteria. The characteristics relevant to the overall population shall be included in the quota plan. The source and date of the origin of the quota controls shall be provided. The number of interviews required for each characteristic to be controlled shall be specified in a quota plan.

### 4.5.1.5 Documentation of data weighting

If a weighting process is used, it shall be appropriately documented together with the weighting variables applied. The source and reference date of weighting target data shall be available to the client upon request. The weighted and unweighted sample structures shall be documented.

### 4.5.2 Coding, editing and other data processing

In the case of quantitative research projects, the research service provider shall ensure that the data processing is performed in a way to minimize errors, the coding of the open-ended questions is checked for errors and the analyses and tabulations are correct. Standardized quality controls for this purpose shall be established and documented.

NOTE     For full requirements, see Clause 6.

## 4.6   Monitoring the execution of research

The research service provider shall monitor the most important research processes so that they are conducted in accordance with agreed specifications (see 4.1.2 and 4.1.3). The most important processes include the sampling procedure, questionnaire or discussion guide development, data collection, data processing, analysis and the production of deliverables.

Project records shall cover action taken to address any problems that arise.

NOTE     This is a requirement for project control and management, and can be met through general procedures and specific project instructions.

## 4.7   Research documents, materials and products

### 4.7.1   Handling and storage of project related materials and documents

The research service provider shall request the client to provide the relevant instructions for handling, storage and keeping materials and products provided by the client. What is to happen to client materials at the end of the project shall be agreed with the client.

The research service provider shall take suitable measures in order to handle, store and carefully protect research documents, materials and products entrusted to its care in accordance with the client's instructions and/or internal procedures. If the research service provider transports or dispatches materials or products, it shall ensure that secure forms of packaging and suitable methods of transport are employed. Such measures may vary depending on the nature of the materials (e.g. manual data and digital data would require different measures to be taken).

Where documents, materials and products are presented to respondents, or where those respondents are to be given the opportunity to use them, the research service provider shall ensure that the research conditions are the same for all persons and that the products are not damaged, soiled or altered in the course of the research project, in a way that might affect the results. The research service provider shall ensure that suitable information on the safe use and handling of products used in the research project is given to respondents and/or interviewers.

NOTE      General procedures can be adequate for commonly used materials, products, etc., but in other cases, a project-specific handling, storage and usage documented plan can be required.

### 4.7.2   Safe keeping of research materials

The research service provider shall ensure that any documents, materials, products and databases of confidential or sensitive nature provided by the client are treated confidentially both inside and outside the control of the research service provider. The research service provider shall store documents, materials, products and databases belonging to the client, in a manner which does not permit unauthorized persons access to them. Access should be confined to those persons directly involved in the research project.

At the client's request, the research service provider shall give details of the specific measures taken to safeguard confidentiality.

NOTE      Where the client requires special measures to protect confidentiality (i.e. beyond the normal practice of the research service provider), additional charges can be agreed and documented between the two parties. Examples of such measures are described in ISO/IEC 27001.

## 4.8   Reporting of research results

### 4.8.1   Presentation of research results

The results relevant to the aim of the research shall be available in full.

When relative values are quoted, it shall be possible to deduce the absolute figures directly from these. For this reason, the base shall always be included when percentages are quoted.

If the data have been weighted, the results of the research project shall be reported in a weighted form together with both weighted and unweighted bases. If the client is receiving a data record, the weighting factors for individual respondents shall be included in the data record. In addition, the research service provider shall, upon request, make available to the client a description of the weighting process and how sample selection impacts weighting.

The accuracy of all reported data and material shall be checked by the research service provider before delivery to the client.

### 4.8.2 Interpretation

The interpretation of the results of research shall pertain to the research problem and shall be supported by the empirical findings of the research project and, where applicable, by other data.

Interpretations and recommendations based on empirical research shall be distinguished from personal views and opinions.

### 4.8.3 Documentation

The research results shall be delivered to the client in the form and with the content already described in the research proposal (or price quotation), or agreed at a later time.

As a minimum, reports shall include the sample size, period of data collection and method of data collection. The research service provider shall also document the full methodology of the project in sufficient detail to allow the project to be replicated at a later date. This documentation shall be available to the client and the client shall be made aware of its availability (e.g. in reporting documents or the research proposal) (see also 7.1).

NOTE 1    Replication of the project can involve the use of proprietary techniques (normally identified in methodology documentation) that are available only from a specific service provider and are not fully transparent.

NOTE 2    See 7.2 and 7.3 for relevant methodological and other details that need to be documented.

For continuous research, the research service provider shall document and agree with the client the content and frequency of reporting.

In reporting to clients, it shall be stated that the project was carried out in compliance with this International Standard.

NOTE 3    Certification is one way of providing evidence of compliance with this International Standard.

### 4.8.4   Oral presentation of results

To ensure that the client's questions regarding both content and method can be answered satisfactorily, oral presentation of the research results shall involve persons who are familiar with the subject matter of the research project and who are also familiar with the way in which the research project was carried out.

### 4.8.5   Publication

The research service provider may publish or present research results for research or other purposes if the project has been conducted at their own expense, or if such publication has been contractually agreed with the client commissioning the project, or if the latter has consented to such publication.

When publishing research results, their presentation shall be clearly distinguished from their interpretation. The research service provider shall also draw the client's attention to client responsibilities regarding the publication of research results, regardless of whether or not the research service provider is identified.

## 4.9   Research records

### 4.9.1   Identification

Research records shall be adequately labelled for identification and retrieval purposes and be traceable to a specific research project. Research records shall include the following:

— the research proposal and/or price quotation;

— a copy of the final version of the questionnaire, discussion guide and stimulus material;

— the primary records (raw data, including unedited completed questionnaires and recordings of qualitative research);

— the data processing specifications, coding sheets, edit records and other significant material relating to data processing;

— copies of delivery material (e.g. reports) passed to the client, excluding the primary records;

— full methodological details of the research (see 4.8.3 and Clause 7);

— quality records related to monitoring the research.

### 4.9.2 Retention

To allow questions to be answered about how the research was conducted or about the results, including after the research project has been completed, primary records (e.g. completed questionnaire, data files, group recordings) and copies of the final versions of all project documents or other records (e.g. analysis programs) shall be retained for a defined period as follows:

— primary records: 12 months;

— a copy of all other final versions of documents related to the research project: 24 months.

If the research is later repeated, or further research is later carried out within the same project, before the end of the required storage period(s), then the storage period(s) shall be said to begin again upon conclusion of the entire research project.

The research service provider shall inform the client about the retention periods (e.g. stated in the proposal). The research service provider and the client can agree on a longer or shorter retention period, but such agreement shall be documented.

NOTE        Consideration is also given to the need to retain records for longer periods than above, for auditing purposes and/or to meet national legal requirements.

All project records shall be kept securely, with special care taken of records with respondent identifiers.

### 4.9.3 Storage and disposal

Records shall be stored in a manner adequate to ensure that they do not deteriorate, that they can be retrieved and that their confidential nature is not compromised. Procedures shall be in place to ensure that project records kept in electronic form are backed up with at least a second copy of files kept off site.

The research service provider shall ensure the secure and confidential disposal of primary records, particularly those with respondent identifiers.

### 4.9.4 Safe keeping

Unless otherwise agreed, all research records shall only be available for quality audit purposes.

The research service provider shall ensure that the research results and the report are protected by appropriate measures against unauthorized access while being stored in the research service provider's archives. This includes the protection of results and reports stored on digital media against unauthorized access or alteration.

### 4.9.5 Supplying electronically stored data to the client

Before being handed over to the client, electronically stored data shall be checked for completeness. More specifically, it shall be verified that the data records passed on are complete in terms of the number of cases (e.g. the number of respondents, completed questionnaires) and the variables measured, and whether they contain any additional, contractually agreed information.

Data shall be passed on to the client in the format described in the research proposal or agreed upon at a later time.

# 5   Data collection

## 5.1   General

The research service provider shall implement procedures to safeguard respondent confidentiality and to provide respondent reassurances (see also 5.3.2).

Unless the respondent agrees otherwise, respondent identifiers on data records (e.g. questionnaires) shall be used for purposes of research administration and quality control only, and shall be retained only for as long as is needed for these purposes.

When fieldwork is subcontracted, including by research service providers that carry out some fieldwork in-house, the requirements of 3.5 shall be followed to ensure that the outsourced company follows the practices and standards in this clause.

## 5.2   Management, recruitment and training of fieldworkers

### 5.2.1   Data collection management staff

Data collection management staff shall be appropriately trained for the tasks they undertake, including allocation of work, progress control, training and appraisal of fieldworkers and validation of field work. Data collection management staff shall also be regularly appraised and continuing training given as required. The training given to and the competencies of data collection management staff shall be documented by the research service provider. See also 3.4.

NOTE        Data collection management staff include, for example, head office and area managers (including those in charge of recruiting), local supervisors, telephone unit supervisors, fieldworker team leaders and support staff involved in data collection.

### 5.2.2   Fieldworker recruitment

The research service provider shall evaluate the competence of potential fieldworkers on the basis of their previous work experience and qualifications, and/or a recruitment interview and/or references from previous employment.

The applicant's level of relevant experience, if any, shall be established for the work to be undertaken, including for specific projects. Evaluation includes competency in language skills, including the ability to follow instructions in the languages to be used for data collection, and competence equivalent to mother tongue.

All relevant information relating to fieldworkers, obtained in the recruitment process or subsequently (e.g. training records, results of validation), shall be documented and retained while the individual carries out work for the research service provider and for one year thereafter.

Where fieldworkers are recruited through an employment agency, recruitment records may be less detailed but shall show relevant skills and previous experience.

### 5.2.3   Basic training for new fieldworkers

#### 5.2.3.1   General

All fieldworkers shall be given basic training to the level specified in 5.2.3.2 to 5.2.3.4. This training shall be provided by the research service provider, except where confirmation is received that relevant basic training meeting the requirements of this International Standard (for the tasks to be undertaken) has already been provided. The training methods shall be chosen by the research service provider in accordance with the requirements of 5.2.3.2 to 5.2.3.4.

NOTE        It is generally considered good practice to make available to another research service provider, upon request, confirmation of the basic training given to individuals.

### 5.2.3.2 Content

The content and scope of basic training shall be appropriate to the nature and complexity of the work to be carried out (e.g. face-to-face interviewing, telephone interviewing, qualitative respondent recruiting, observational research). If the fieldworker is used subsequently for different types of work (i.e. different to the type covered in the basic training already received), including the use of computer-assisted interviewing (CAI), appropriate additional basic training shall be given.

As a minimum, basic training shall include the following:

— the general principles of market, opinion and social research;

— ethical requirements (see bibliography for applicable international codes), including respondent safeguards and data protection issues;

— the treatment of children or vulnerable respondents;

— interviewing skills and/or other relevant techniques;

— where relevant, the use of computers (e.g. for CAI);

— interview role playing and trial interviews (or other forms of data collection methods).

Fieldworkers should be accompanied by data collection management staff on their first day's work (or their work otherwise monitored, e.g. for telephone interviewing), and their first assignment after basic training should be validated (see 5.4. and 5.5.3), with feedback provided to the fieldworker. If such monitoring or accompaniment is not undertaken, all work from the first assignment shall be validated in accordance with 5.4 and 5.5.

### 5.2.3.3 Duration

The minimum duration for basic training for face-to-face and telephone interviewing and qualitative recruitment interviewing (excluding additional organizational training, see 5.2.4) shall be six hours. Approximately half of the training shall be interactive in order to allow dialogue between trainer and trainee.

Exceptionally, where the data collection tasks are considered to be very simple, the minimum duration of basic training may be shorter than specified above and may be combined with project briefing. Reasons for such shorter training shall be documented and if the fieldworker is subsequently to be used in another project, full basic training shall be given.

For observational research, no minimum duration is specified for basic training. The duration of training should be appropriate for the amount of skill and knowledge required for the task.

The durations specified for basic training should be regarded as minimum levels and, depending on the nature of work to be allocated, fuller training may be required.

### 5.2.3.4 Training documentation

The basic training given to fieldworkers shall be recorded, including content, duration and the identity of the trainer. The trainee and trainer shall authenticate the training records by signature or in an equivalent manner.

NOTE    When a research service provider first implements this International Standard, the organization's existing fieldworkers can be regarded as already being trained if adequate training content and documentation is available. This applies if no records are available of the training of individual fieldworkers.

### 5.2.4 Fieldworker organizational training

In addition to basic training in accordance with 5.2.3, the research service provider shall train all fieldworkers, regardless of any training given by other organizations, in the specific requirements of the research service provider including how data collection is organized and managed. The methods of delivering this type of

training and its content can be a matter for the research service provider but fieldworker personnel records shall show the organizational training given and how it is delivered.

NOTE    Organizational training can be linked to basic training, or to briefing for the first assignment.

Key requirements and general instructions to fieldworkers shall also be included in a document made available to all fieldworkers by the research service provider.

### 5.2.5    Continuing training and appraisal of fieldworkers

Fieldworkers who are regularly used by the research service provider (i.e. for five projects/waves or more in a calendar year or other comparable work allocations) shall be appraised at least once a year. Less frequently used fieldworkers shall be appraised at appropriate intervals.

NOTE 1    It is the responsibility of the research service provider to decide what is appropriate for interviewers who are used less frequently, and to document the policy.

Any such appraisal shall allow dialogue between the fieldworker and the research service provider's data collection management staff (face-to-face or by telephone) and shall include feedback from validation of work.

The appraisal should be based, for example, on the result of questionnaire editing, fieldwork validation or accompanied or monitored interviews. Appraisals can identify the need for further training of individual fieldworkers, or the need for such training can be identified in other ways.

Further training, as described above, shall be distinguished from the need for additional training when a fieldworker is allocated to new types of work or new responsibilities (e.g. specialist interviewing, supervisory work) (see 5.2.3).

NOTE 2    Effective appraisal can be continuous, with fieldworkers given feedback by data collection management staff after work is validated (e.g. by monitoring telephone interviewers, mystery shoppers), in which case further formal annual appraisals can be considered unnecessary.

Appraisal reports (including continuous appraisal as outlined in Note 2 above) and details of any additional training provided shall be documented and retained with fieldworkers' personnel records.

## 5.3    Conducting data collection by fieldwork

### 5.3.1    Fieldworker identity document (ID)

Fieldworkers, except those working only by telephone, shall be issued by the research service provider with an ID, preferably including a photograph. The ID shall include the validity period (e.g. the date of issue and the expiry date, or year during which the ID is valid), and the name and contact details of the research service provider to whom it belongs. Records shall be kept showing to whom IDs have been issued and their validity period.

### 5.3.2    Respondent reassurance

All approaches to respondents shall include a brief description of the principles of respondent confidentiality, the general research purposes for which the data may be used and the name of the research service provider, subcontracting agency and/or the client(s), as appropriate. The respondents should be informed that cooperation is voluntary.

Documented respondent reassurance shall be offered to face-to-face respondents. This shall include contact details of the research service provider. Telephone respondents shall be offered contact details of the research service provider upon request.

### 5.3.3    Data collection from children or vulnerable respondents

Special care shall be exercised where respondents are children (legally defined as minors in the area where data collection is carried out) or where respondents are considered to be otherwise vulnerable, and this may include additional training of interviewers. In these cases, appropriate steps shall be taken to ensure that

parents, guardians, other responsible adults, or equivalent, as well as the respondents themselves, understand what is entailed and give their consent based on adequate information. Records shall be kept (e.g. as part of the questionnaire) to show that this requirement has been met.

NOTE    Definitions of what constitutes children and vulnerable adults vary from country to country, and this is taken into account in multi-national research.

Where research is carried out amongst specialized samples that are likely to contain a significant proportion of children or vulnerable respondents (e.g. medical patients), specific guidelines and instructions for the project may be needed and shall be followed.

### 5.3.4   Project briefing

Fieldworkers shall be given a briefing and/or instructions for each project (or the specifics for each wave of a project), even if they start to take part after fieldwork has already started. The briefing and/or instructions shall be the responsibility of a member of staff with a full understanding of requirements for the project.

Records shall be kept to show the coverage of the briefing and instructions, and to show that all fieldworkers allocated to the project have been briefed and/or instructed.

The briefing and/or instructions for a quantitative project shall include, as appropriate, the following information:

— the fieldwork dates;

— the sampling procedures;

— quotas to be covered;

— data collection techniques;

— other special requirements of the project;

— instructions for administration of the questionnaire.

The briefing and/or instructions for a qualitative project shall include, as appropriate, the following information:

a) the fieldwork dates and times;

b) key recruitment criteria;

c) required quotas;

d) the number of respondents to be recruited for each group discussion or in-depth interviews;

e) acceptable and unacceptable methods of recruitment;

f) specific exclusions and restrictions applicable to respondents;

g) whether observation equipment is to be used.

### 5.3.5   Date and duration of fieldwork

The date and duration of each interview and the identity of the fieldworker responsible, for example, for collecting the data or for observation shall be recorded.

NOTE    The elements above are relevant to the validation of the interview (see 5.4 and 5.5.3).

### 5.3.6   Respondent incentives

Where incentives are given to respondents, the nature of these incentives shall be documented as part of project records.

## 5.4 Fieldworker validation of quantitative research

### 5.4.1 General

Validation shall be carried out as soon as practical during or after the fieldwork period (and not more than six weeks after the date of the interview) and, wherever possible, before the resulting data are processed and/or reported to clients.

Validation shall be carried out by a second person (i.e. other than the fieldworker whose work is being validated).

All data collection of each project (or wave) shall be validated using methods in accordance with 5.4.2. Validation shall take account of:

— the need for the work of all recently recruited fieldworkers to be validated on their first project;

— the need for validation of regularly used fieldworkers so that their work is frequently validated but not necessarily for each project (results of validation may influence the frequency of subsequently validating an individual's work).

Documented records for fieldworkers used by the research service provider shall identify the validation, including dates and projects, of each individual's work.

Where validation identifies discrepancies or problems, corrective action shall be taken at two levels:

a) at the project level (e.g. replacement of interviews, further validation, qualifying of data produced);

b) at the fieldworker level (e.g. retraining, future work allocation). In the case of serious discrepancies (e.g. fabricated interviews), recent or concurrent work by the individual shall be subjected to rechecking and validation.

NOTE     The purpose of validation is to establish that data collection by fieldworkers has been carried out in accordance with project instructions, including the number of interviews, respondent selection, following questionnaire instructions and general requirements (e.g. as covered in fieldworker training).

### 5.4.2 Validation methods

#### 5.4.2.1 General

Depending on the type of data collection concerned, validation shall be undertaken as specified in 5.4.2.2 to 5.4.2.4, by means of checking the data records produced (e.g. questionnaires, CAI data files) and/or respondent re-contact (also termed back-checking) and/or monitoring.

#### 5.4.2.2 Checking of data records

Checking of data records can be used in conjunction with other methods but in some types of data collection this may be the only practical form of validation (e.g. observational research such as mystery shopping and retail audits). Checking of data records may include, as appropriate, completeness of the data records, keeping to samples and/or quotas, consistency of responses and comparison of responses against normal data or between fieldworkers. Checks may be made manually or by computer. This may be linked to the checking of associated records (e.g. receipts of purchases from mystery shopping).

#### 5.4.2.3 Respondent re-contact (back-checking)

Respondent re-contact shall include confirmation that the interview or equivalent took place and that instructions were followed, the length of the interview and responses to key questions, including demographics and other qualifying questions related to quotas. Re-contact may be by any medium involving direct communication with the respondent (e.g. face-to-face, by telephone, by post or by e-mail).

Re-contact may be an appropriate method of validation for all types of interviewing, especially face-to-face interviewing, including that carried out at central locations (where face-to-face re-contact may immediately follow the interview).

### 5.4.2.4 Monitoring

Monitoring shall involve listening to interviews at the time they are being carried out, using appropriate equipment, or by listening to recordings of the interviews afterwards, or by accompanying supervisors for face-to-face interviews. With the appropriate network connections, monitoring can also be carried out from remote locations. Both interviewer and respondent shall be audible. Interviewers shall be aware that any interview may be monitored but shall not know whether a specific interview is being monitored (except for supervisor accompaniment). Where interviewing is multilingual, staff fluent in the relevant languages shall carry out monitoring.

### 5.4.3 Validation levels

Validation shall be carried out to at least the levels specified in this subclause (depending on the type of validation). Validation levels shall be calculated on the basis of total sample achieved.

Where checking of data records is the only method of validation that can be used (e.g. observational research, retail audits) the required level shall be 100 %. No specific level is specified where checking of data records is used in conjunction with other methods.

For all projects where data collection is carried out by interview, validation shall be done either by re-contact or by monitoring to the following levels, whether or not data records are also checked:

— the minimum re-contact validation level shall be 10 % of the interviews or cases;

— the minimum monitoring validation level shall be 5 % of the interviews or cases, with approximately 75 % of the whole interview monitored or listened to.

In exceptional cases it can be organizationally impossible to carry out re-contact or monitoring to the required level, or at all, or it may be considered contrary to respondents' interest. In such cases project records shall explain why this is the case and what other steps (e.g. checking data records) have been taken to validate data collection.

Where the project sample size is adequate, every fieldworker should be validated or monitored.

### 5.4.4 Validation reports

Reports shall be prepared on the validation carried out for each project or wave of project. The reports shall include the following:

— the identity of the person who carried out the validation;

— a description of the methods of validation used including what was covered in respondent re-contact, if applicable;

— the identity of the fieldworker whose work has been validated;

— a description of any discrepancies found;

— a record of corrective action or preventive action taken or planned at both the project level and fieldworker level;

— a confirmation that the required validation level has been attained (e.g. number of interviews in total and number validated).

Validation reports shall be retrievable by both project and/or wave and by individual fieldworker.

## 5.5 Qualitative data collection

### 5.5.1 General

This subclause covers the collection of qualitative data by specially trained moderators or interviewers from respondents who have agreed to participate.

Qualitative data collection can include, but is not limited to, focus groups, depth interviews and ethnographic observation conducted in person, by telephone or online.

In online qualitative data collection, the interaction between respondent and moderator or interviewer occurs via a variety of digital interfaces. Online focus groups or depth interviews may be conducted in real-time (e.g. chat sessions), or over an extended period of time (asynchronous) in which the respondent(s) and moderator/interviewer have flexibility in when they log in to view and/or post content (e.g. bulletin board sessions).

### 5.5.2 Respondent recruitment

Details of respondents, how they were recruited and from what sources (e.g. random, recruiter databases, access panels) shall be recorded on recruitment questionnaires or equivalent records, and these shall be made available to moderators and retained as project records subject to respondent confidentiality (see 5.1).

NOTE    Recruitment of respondents for qualitative research is commonly a separate stage from qualitative moderation of groups or depth interviews. Recruitment is commonly carried out by fieldworkers (e.g. by face-to-face or telephone contact) or the online panel or hosting organization, rather than by the research staff involved at the moderation stage.

### 5.5.3 Respondent recruitment validation

The primary aim of validation of respondent recruitment shall be to confirm the demographic and other recruitment criteria of respondents and the work of fieldworkers.

NOTE 1    Another aim of validation can be to avoid respondent participation in excess of what is specified in the research proposal (see 4.1.3.4). Cooperative initiatives by research service providers can also be employed to prevent excess respondent participation.

Where respondents are recruited by fieldworkers (face-to-face or by telephone), their work shall be validated as specified in 5.4, including the required validation levels specified in 5.4.3. Validation methods may include re-contact or monitoring (e.g. for telephone recruitment from a central location). Such validation may be carried out before, during or after the qualitative data collection. The need for action to be taken where discrepancies are found applies as specified in 5.4.1. Validation records shall be prepared in accordance with 5.4.4.

NOTE 2    Validation by re-contact can be conducted during qualitative data collection. In this case, a self-completion or administered validation questionnaire can be used provided it is administered by someone other than the original recruiter.

NOTE 3    In some cases, the only criterion for recruitment can be that the respondent is included in a list from which respondents will be recruited (e.g. a customer list). In this case, validation can be limited to ensuring that recruited respondents were on the list and re-contact or monitoring can be considered unnecessary.

Where respondents are recruited online, including from access panels, validation shall be carried out as specified in 5.6.5. In online situations where both recruitment and validation are conducted by the same person in the online hosting firm, records of the validation shall be available to the moderator for review.

At the interview/group discussion, the respondents' identities shall be confirmed to exclude "professional" respondents. The moderator shall also confirm that the respondents attending meet the recruitment criteria.

NOTE 4    It is the role of the research service provider to determine how identity is confirmed and how the moderator confirms the match to recruitment criteria. Confirming identity from the respondents' ID documentation is often the best approach, but this can be considered inappropriate in some situations. Moderator confirmation of respondent match to recruitment criteria can involve the use of self-completion questionnaires or formal questioning of respondents, or can be based on the judgement of the moderator (the latter is likely to be an integral part of moderating, although it is important to bear in mind its subjective nature).

### 5.5.4 Qualitative moderation

Groups and depth moderation shall be carried out by appropriately skilled and trained staff.

Fieldworker training requirements as specified in 5.2 are not applicable to qualitative moderators.

Moderators shall be briefed and fully prepared including in the use of any techniques not explicit in the discussion guide.

Moderators shall familiarize themselves with the objectives of the research project, the issues to be explored, the stimulus material and the particular techniques to be used prior to the commencement of fieldwork.

Moderators shall prepare a written report of any problems or issues found in groups or interviews, including with respect to the following:

— the match of respondents to the recruitment criteria;

— the suitability of the facilities in which the groups or interviews were conducted (e.g. physical rooms or functionality of an online hosting facility), and their audiovisual services or technical support;

— the performance of the host or individual who received the group, or how an online facility handled respondents arriving for a session.

### 5.5.5   Recording of qualitative research and respondent confidentiality

Full records shall be made of group or depth interview responses, normally by recording (e.g. audio, video, transcripts of typed or uploaded content in online sessions). Respondents shall be made aware of and give their consent to the recording itself, the intended use of the recordings (including use by any third parties) and any transfer of data (e.g. to clients). The consent of the respondents shall be appropriately recorded.

The use and transfer of research recordings shall be for research purposes only.

Where third parties (including the client of the research service provider) are to observe the group or depth interviews, respondents shall be made aware of this (see 4.3.5).

Recordings shall be labelled to identify the project and types of respondents (including by cross-reference to other records) and the date of the group or depth interview.

## 5.6   Self-completion data collection

### 5.6.1   General

This subclause covers data collection where the respondent, at the time of providing data and/or responses, has no direct dialogue (face-to-face, by telephone or digitally) with a fieldworker or other representative of the research service provider. Self-completion can include, but is not limited to, the following:

— postal research, such as mail surveys or other situations, in which hard copy questionnaires are left for self-completion;

— surveys where the respondent completes and returns the questionnaire online;

— surveys in which the respondent uses a mobile device;

— diary surveys;

— touch-tone data entry, where the respondent uses the telephone keypad to answer questions asked by a computer;

— voice recognition entry (also known as interactive voice response), where the respondent provides oral responses to questions asked by a computer and the computer applies voice recognition technology to record the answers.

### 5.6.2   Invitation to participate in research projects

Each respondent invited to participate in a project (i.e. a member of the selected sample) shall be provided with appropriate information, including the following:

— a general description of the purpose of the project;

— the estimated length of interview;

— a statement of the confidentiality and anonymity of each respondent's responses (see also 5.6.4);

— the closing date for completed responses (if applicable);

— access to full disclosure of incentive terms and conditions applying to the project (see also 5.6.3);

— an explanation if the invitation is sent out on behalf of another research service provider;

— for panel members, the opportunity to unsubscribe or opt out of future research;

— an appropriate privacy policy or statement.

NOTE    The requirements of 5.3.3 apply regarding the participation of children and other vulnerable respondents.

### 5.6.3   Incentives

Where incentives are to be offered to respondents, the nature of these incentives shall be documented as part of project records and researchers shall have a documented incentive statement.

The incentive statement shall cover, as relevant, the following:

— the nature of the incentives (e.g. cash, vouchers, points) and redemption process;

— how and when incentives are given or redeemed;

— fair and equitable treatment of all respondents;

— methods of resolving incentives queries or disputes.

The incentive statement shall be made available to all potential respondents, either as part of the questionnaire and/or associated material, or by reference and access to a separate statement on the incentives offered in the project. Respondents shall have the opportunity to be able to check the incentives owed to them.

Where respondents are children (see 5.3.3), the child's parent, legal guardian or responsible adult shall be made aware of the incentive scheme and give their permission prior to research being carried out with the children.

### 5.6.4   Respondent safeguards

For all self-completion data collection, procedures shall be implemented to ensure the security and confidentiality of respondents and of the data they provide. Such procedures shall take account of the services provided by any suppliers used by the research service provider in carrying out this type of data collection.

Assurances of security and confidentiality shall be given to respondents including by means of a statement forming an integral part of the questionnaire or associated material, or by reference and access to a separate privacy policy, or by a general statement on security and confidentiality.

### 5.6.5   Respondent and data validation

#### 5.6.5.1   General

At the proposal or research design stage, or in reporting to clients, details shall be documented on how respondents have been or are to be validated, including how to deal with the issue of lack of control of who provided the responses in self-completion and internet data collection. As in the case of sampling, the impact of these issues on the quality of resulting data shall be discussed.

#### 5.6.5.2   Validation of identity

The researcher shall validate the claimed identity of respondents where this is feasible.

Appropriate methods shall be used to avoid individuals being included more than once in the project (e.g. de-duplication).

The researcher shall document the process of validating the identity of respondents and record the results and any actions taken. This documented process shall be available to the client upon request.

Techniques and variables can include, but are not limited to the following:

— telephone number;

— name and postal address;

— bank details;

— official ID number.

NOTE 1    An e-mail address alone is not sufficient to validate identity.

NOTE 2    Respondent identity is not necessarily collected in all types of self-completion surveys. If this is the case, 5.6.5.2 does not apply.

### 5.6.5.3   Validation of response data

Where validation is feasible, the researcher shall implement procedures to identify and remove fraudulent and inattentive respondents. These procedures and actions taken shall be documented.

Relevant validation data shall include the following:

a)   questionnaire completion time, if applicable;

b)   the number of questions unanswered and, if relevant, whether specific core questions are unanswered;

c)   where available, comparison between at least one item of the profile data of the respondents and data from another source (e.g. age, postal code).

In addition to this, relevant validation data may include the following:

— cross reference and cross validation to external data (e.g. usage and attitude data);

— a consistency check within data set or consistency check on an individual data set basis, with either external data or certain scores of overall data file;

— responses given to open-ended questions.

A description shall be provided to the client, upon request, of any cleaning or editing, either of the sample file or of the research data file, undertaken to eliminate fraudulent or inattentive or otherwise undesirable respondents.

## 5.7   Observational data collection

### 5.7.1   General

This subclause covers the collection of data by observation of the opinions, habits, activities or performance of individuals or groups, without the use of direct questioning, questionnaires, or discussion guides. The subjects may or may not know that they are being observed. Observation data collection can include, but is not limited to, the following:

— physical observation of activities (e.g. traffic counts, shopping behaviour);

— collecting comments and/or frequencies from online social media;

— observing or tracking of online behaviour using cookies and other methods.

NOTE    For physical observation, the requirements for fieldworkers are covered in 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4.

### 5.7.2 Observational data collection methodology

The research service provider shall document the details of the methodology used. This shall include the following:

a)  for physical observation:

— the population of interest;

— how individuals or observation points were selected for inclusion in the research;

— the size of the sample;

b)  for collecting comments from social media:

— the universe of websites and other social media forums included;

— how the sites, individuals or authors within them and their comments or posts were selected for inclusion in the research;

— how the comments and/or posts were collected (e.g. from questionnaires or user-generated content);

— where appropriate, a description of the search algorithm(s);

— the number of sites, authors and comments, or posts included in the analysis;

c)  for observation and/or tracking of online behaviour:

— the population of interest;

— how individuals or units were selected and recruited for inclusion in the research (requirements for recruiting in 5.6.2 shall apply where appropriate);

— definition of the units studied (e.g. cookies, browsers, individuals);

— how the data were collected;

— the number of units included in the analysis.

For all methods, an explanation shall be given of how potential sampling problems have been addressed. The extent to which the findings can or cannot be generalized to larger populations shall also be discussed.

### 5.7.3 Validation of data collection process

The details shall be documented on how the data collection process is monitored to ensure it is carried out as intended, and the resulting impact on accuracy and consistency of the data shall be discussed.

### 5.7.4 Respondent safeguards

Where respondents have been recruited and agreed to the observation process, the requirements of 5.3.2 and 5.6.4 shall apply, as appropriate.

Where individuals or groups may not be aware that they are being observed, reasonable precautions shall be taken to ensure they are not harmed or adversely affected in any way as a result of being a subject in a research project.

NOTE    Observation site locations can include, but are not limited to, websites, blogs, online chat rooms, retail parks and shopping centres.

## 5.8   Data collection from secondary sources

The sources of secondary data (e.g. published material, databases, expert interviews), as well as their nature and reliability, shall be recorded. Where the data are used in client reporting, these sources shall be acknowledged.

## 5.9 Data collection records

Complete records (including electronic files) shall be made of the data collection stage, including what was planned and what was actually achieved.

NOTE    It is not necessary to keep these records separate from other records of the project, i.e. they do not need to be kept specifically by the data collection department. At least some of the data collection records will include the details required to replicate research, as specified in 4.8.3.

Where relevant to the project, records, including those held by subcontractors, shall include the following:

— copies of all data collection materials used in the project, including questionnaires, discussion guides and stimulus material (or a listing of this material when it cannot be retained), fieldworker briefing material and interview quota sheets;

— the sampling methods used, including sampling frames and other sources, selection and quotas;

— the identity of all fieldworkers or moderators, the volume of work (e.g. number of interviews) and the type of work (e.g. face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, quantitative or qualitative, individual or group) allocated to and achieved by them;

— full records of data collection validation and of any corrective action taken (see also 5.4.1, 5.5.3 and 5.6.5);

— response rates and penetration levels or equivalent measure;

— a summary of variations between the planned data collection process and what was actually completed including sample sizes in total and by significant subgroups (these variations and their implications may need to be reported to the client);

— in the case of interviews or group discussions that are recorded, clear labelling of recordings with the date and project identification (the duration shall be clear from the recording);

— the identity of data collection management staff involved in the project;

— any other project records specifically required in Clause 5, including as specified for self-completion data collection (see 5.6) and observational research (see 5.7);

— a statement as to whether all or some data collection processes have been subcontracted, and the identity of any subcontractors concerned.

# 6  Data management and processing

## 6.1  General

The research service provider shall have in place documented procedures covering data entry, coding, editing, weighting, file preparation and tabulation, and all other aspects of data management and processing. Evidence shall be available that these requirements have been met.

## 6.2  Hard copy data entry

### 6.2.1  Specifications

Where logic data entry is used, the in-built checks shall be documented and tested prior to use. The nature of the tests used and the results obtained shall be documented. Irresolvable attempted entries (which are not accepted because of the in-built logic checks) shall be referred to the project manager or executive responsible for the project for a decision and resolution, with a record kept of any changes made to the data.

Unless otherwise specified, where simple data entry is used, data shall be keyed in as recorded on the questionnaire. A record of any instructions shall be kept on file.

NOTE    Documentation of logic data entry checks, or of other data processing, can be adequately achieved by retention of the final version of the program used, the objective being to ensure processes can be replicated.

### 6.2.2  Data entry validation for paper documents

A systematic method of validating a minimum percentage of data entry work shall be carried out on a project or stage or wave. In the case of logic data entry, the minimum total percentage validation per project shall be 5 % of entries, and for simple data entry, it shall be 10 % of entries. Procedures shall ensure that there is a systematic method of validation, with adequate records maintained of each operator's work, and the validation shall be undertaken by a second person.

If an individual operator's work contains frequent errors, that individual's work (on the project) shall be 100 % validated and, if required, re-worked. If necessary, appropriate retraining shall be given to that operator until error rates are acceptable. The effectiveness of the retraining shall be reviewed and recorded.

The research service provider shall define the meaning of frequent errors and document that definition.

## 6.3   Accuracy of databases not requiring manual data entry

The research service provider shall have in place defined processes to ensure the accuracy of data sets created by means other than hard copy manual data entry. These may include, but are not limited to, data sets created via the following:

— scanning;

— electronic data collection (e.g. interactive voice recognition surveys, online surveys, web based surveys);

— CAI databases;

— databases created by importing or merging data from one source or program into another.

The process of automatic data entry (e.g. scanning) shall be validated at each project or stage. The research service provider shall establish and maintain procedures to test both the design and the implementation of the automatic data entry process. The type of tests used and the staff involved shall be documented.

If scanning procedures are used, rejection and substitution rates shall be estimated. The procedures for handling rejected entries or substitution rates shall be recorded.

NOTE    See 4.4.5 for electronic questionnaires.

## 6.4   Coding

### 6.4.1   General

If automated coding software is used, the error rate shall be estimated. If the error rate is unacceptable, revisions to the dictionary shall be made.

### 6.4.2   Developing code frames for manual and semi-automated coding

The research service provider shall ensure that coders working on the project are provided with instructions that shall include, as a minimum, the following:

— an overview of the project;

— identification of questions or variables to be coded;

— an overview on the material shown to the respondents (video, concept) when applicable;

— the minimum proportion or number of a sample (and its make-up) used to produce code frames;

— where necessary or appropriate, specific subgroups required to develop code frames (e.g. by region, user or non-user);

— guidelines for the inclusion of codes in the code frame;

— any use to be made of code frames from a previous project or stage;

— any other requirements or special instructions specific to the project;

— where "don't know" and "no answer" responses have been collected as different answers, these shall be distinguishable from each other.

NOTE    For some variables, the research service provider can use existing established classifications, such as those for industry, occupation and education.

### 6.4.3   Code frame approval

The project manager or executive responsible for the project shall approve the code frame prior to the commencement of coding and shall record this approval. This approval shall also cover, where relevant, the netting, abbreviating, rewording, recoding or deletion of codes.

### 6.4.4   Coding briefing

The coder(s) shall be briefed on how to use the code frame (e.g. through awareness of decisions or rules regarding what should be included or excluded from a given code).

### 6.4.5   Code updating

After code frame approval, when further codes become appropriate in the process of coding, all copies of the code frame shall be updated and any questionnaires that are already coded, and which form part of the data for the current project or the current wave being processed, shall be amended accordingly.

### 6.4.6   Other categories

The research service provider shall have clear rules or guidelines for the treatment of responses in "other" or catch-all categories. If the "other" or catch-all category exceeds 10 % of responses to be coded, the responses shall be reviewed with a view to reducing the size of the group.

### 6.4.7   Validation

The research service provider shall have defined procedures, with adequate records maintained, for the validation of the coding for each project. Procedures shall ensure that there is a systematic method of validating a minimum of 5 % of questionnaires coded per project and the validation shall be undertaken by a second person.

NOTE    There are two basic approaches to validation: dependent and independent. Dependent validation means that the second person has access to the original coding. Independent validation means that the second person does not have access to the original coding. In independent validation, the original coding and the validation coding are compared and, if they differ, the correct code is decided by an adjudication process. Independent validation detects more errors than dependent validation.

If a coder's work contains frequent errors, that coder's work (on the project) shall be 100 % validated and, if required, re-worked. If necessary, appropriate retraining shall be given to that coder until error rates are acceptable. The effectiveness of the retraining shall be reviewed and recorded.

The research service provider shall define the meaning of frequent errors and document that definition.

## 6.5 Data editing

### 6.5.1 Pre-entry data editing

Where paper documents are edited by hand prior to data entry, it shall be possible to distinguish the original answers of the respondent or interviewer from the codes or answers allocated by the person(s) carrying out the editing.

When this type of editing is used, the logic and rules being applied shall be documented and any staff working on this element of the project shall be briefed as to the types of checks and corrections they may carry out.

### 6.5.2 Post-entry data editing

A record of any changes made to the original data set shall be kept. No data shall be assumed or imputed without the knowledge and approval of the project manager. The original data source shall be retained (e.g. to compare against edited data set). Any imputation processes shall be documented and available to the client upon request. All edit specifications shall be documented.

Where forced editing is used, the logic of the forcing shall be documented and test runs carried out, with the results recorded to show that the forcing has the desired effect.

NOTE      Open-ended responses and similar data are often revised to correct, for example, spelling and punctuation. Such processes are not regarded as editing in the context of this subclause.

## 6.6 Data file management

Care shall be taken in file management to ensure that:

— files or records within a file are not duplicated;

— the latest valid version is used;

— original and cleaned data sets are clearly identifiable;

— frequency counts or other checks are made before and after data editing, in order to allow comparisons to be made.

## 6.7 Data analysis

### 6.7.1 Specifications for data analysis

Where appropriate, the analyst or researcher shall undertake data analysis in accordance with the specifications provided.

### 6.7.2 Analysis records

The research service provider shall keep accurate and descriptive records of the analysis process in order to ensure that any analysis undertaken can be replicated at a later date.

NOTE      Some analysis software programs can facilitate this process.

### 6.7.3 Data analysis validation

The research service provider shall have in place procedures to ensure the tabulations and other outputs have been checked. The research service provider shall record the checking (e.g. using checklists to ensure that all appropriate data analysis validation checks are adequately completed).

These checks shall validate the following:

— completeness, i.e. that all tables are present as specified;

— that any abbreviations for headings or open-ended responses accurately reflect the full content;

— that the base for each table is correct against other tables or against frequency counts;

— that standard breaks and/or banner points are checked against source questions;

— that all derived data items are checked against their source;

— that the figures for subgroups and nets are correct;

— that there are no blank tables (i.e. with no data), unless this can be logically expected;

— any weighting processes (e.g. by test tables);

— spelling and legibility;

— that any statistical analysis used is appropriate and correct.

NOTE    Frequency counts prior to running tables, in order both to ensure the accuracy of data and to determine base sizes for subgroups, are a recommended checking tool.

For any subsequent outputs, appropriate checks shall be applied.

### 6.7.4   Data tables

When data are reported to the client in the form of tables, regardless of whether the tables are presented as a stand-alone report or part of a fuller report, the following shall be provided, as appropriate:

— reference to the actual source question to which the data pertain;

— inclusion of a description of any weighting method applied to the data;

— availability of both weighted and unweighted bases;

— clear identification of any subgroups used;

— availability of the bases for each question so that the number of respondents who have actually answered the question is identifiable;

— the number or proportion of respondents who replied "don't know" or gave "no answer", when these are different responses;

— clear and complete definition and explanation of all variables used in the analysis of the data, including any significance testing, indexing, scoring, scaling and calculations of means, median, modes and standard deviations;

— types of statistical tests used;

— information on cell suppression and other measures to ensure confidentiality;

— warnings on results which are unreliable due to very small sample sizes.

### 6.8   Electronic data delivery

If data are delivered to the client in electronic format directly, the following shall be checked prior to data release:

— compatibility of the file format with the software specification agreed with the client;

— completeness (i.e. the correct number of files and records are in each file);

— where applicable, inclusion of a structural description of the file layout;

— where applicable, labelling of the contents of the file and inclusion of instructions on limitations of use;

— encryption of files upon request;

— the presence of viruses in the file.

## 6.9 Back up, retention and security of data

All data shall be held securely to prevent unwarranted access, damage or accidental loss.

The research service provider shall ensure that all data are stored and retained in accordance with professional codes (see Bibliography), the applicable law and legislative regulations, and any negotiated agreement with the client. This shall include data held by subcontractors on behalf of the research service provider.

Data pertaining to data processing and analysis may include, but is not limited to the following:

— raw data files;

— other electronic files;

— hard copy questionnaires and show materials;

— code frames;

— project files including project management information;

— e-mails and other correspondence.

The research service provider shall establish and maintain procedures to ensure that data processing computer files are clearly identified.

Where data have been edited, cleaned, recoded or changed in any other way from the format, content and layout of its original form, the original data, final data and program files that change the data (as a minimum) shall be kept so that the final data set can be easily reconstructed.

Extra analyses may be requested after the main processing and such analyses shall conform to the data processing requirements of this International Standard.

For any proposed release of tables or data, procedures shall be in place to minimize the risk of disclosure of respondent-identifiable information, except when respondents have consented.

## 7  Report on research projects

### 7.1  General

The research service provider shall record the full methodology and other details of the project in sufficient detail to allow the project to be replicated at a later date. This documentation shall be available to the client and the client shall be made aware of its availability (see 4.8.3).

Depending on the type of research carried out and the methodology of reporting, the documentation shall be in accordance with 7.2, 7.3 or 7.4.

### 7.2  Quantitative research

In quantitative research, the following details shall be recorded:

a)   the name of the client;

b)   the name of the research service provider;

c)   the details of any research processes that were wholly or partially subcontracted;

d)   the objectives of the research project;

e)   the target population for the research project;

f)   sampling details, including the following:

1)   a description of the sampling frame or equivalent and how the sample was selected from it;

2)   an assessment of how well the sample represents the target population and implications of this;

3)   the size of the planned and achieved sample, reasons for any difference in planned and achieved samples, and how any problems in this respect were dealt with;

4)   where probability samples are used, the response rate, its definition and its calculation method, or, where non-probability samples are used, the participation rate;

g)   the date of fieldwork;

h)   the data collection method;

i)   the type of incentives, if applicable;

j)   the number of interviewers, if applicable;

k)   the interviewer or self-completion questionnaire validation methods, if applicable;

l)   the questionnaires, any visual exhibits or show cards, and other relevant data collection documents;

m)   the weighting procedures, if applicable;

n)   the estimating and imputation procedures, if applicable;

o)   the number of cases used in subgroup analysis;

p)   the reliability of the findings, including, where probability samples are used, estimates of sampling variance and estimates of non-sampling errors;

q)   a statement that the project was carried out in compliance with this International Standard.

## 7.3   Qualitative research

In qualitative research, the following details shall be recorded:

a)   the name of the client;

b)   the name of the research service provider;

c)   the details of any research processes that were wholly or partially subcontracted;

d)   the objectives of the research project;

e)   the target group for the research project;

f)   the number of persons interviewed or number of groups and participants within the groups;

g)   the date of fieldwork;

h)   the fieldwork method (e.g. in person, telephone or online, individual or group interviews, synchronous or asynchronous);

i)   the recruitment method or methods (e.g. mall intercepts, telephone, online, telephone to web);

j)   the type of incentives, if applicable;

k)   the number of interviewers or moderators, if applicable;

l)   the interviewer or moderator validation methods, if applicable;

m) the documents, materials or products used in the research, if applicable;

n) the interview or discussion guide;

o) a statement noting that the results of qualitative research cannot be projected onto the overall population, due to sample selection, interviewing methods and sample size;

p) a statement that the project was carried out in compliance with this International Standard.

## 7.4 Observational research

In observational research projects, the following details shall be documented:

a) for physical observation:

   1) the population of interest;

   2) how individuals or observation points were selected for inclusion in the research;

   3) the size of the sample;

b) for collecting comments from social media:

   1) the universe of websites and other social media included;

   2) the number of sites, authors and comments and/or posts included in the analysis;

   3) how the sites, individuals or authors within them and their comments or posts were selected for inclusion in the research;

   4) how the comments and/or posts were collected (e.g. questionnaires or user-generated content) and, where appropriate, the search algorithm(s) used;

c) for observation and/or tracking of online behaviour:

   1) the population of interest;

   2) the number of units included in the analysis;

   3) how individuals or units were selected and recruited for inclusion in the research;

   4) definition of the units studied (e.g. cookies, browsers, individuals);

   5) how the data were collected;

d) for all methods:

   1) an explanation of how potential sampling problems have been addressed and the extent to which the findings can or cannot be generalized to larger populations;

   2) details of how the data collection process has been monitored to ensure it was carried out as intended, and the resulting impact on accuracy and consistency of the data;

   3) a statement that the project was carried out in compliance with this International Standard.

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[4]     ISO/IEC 27001, *Information technology — Security techniques — Information security management systems — Requirements*

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**BSI Group Headquarters**

389 Chiswick High Road London W4 4AL UK

**bsi.**

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