

soSci Panel

The Noncommercial Online Access Panel

A Super Convenience Sample

Convenience samples play an indispensable role in social science: Essential chapters in the history of empirical research are based on surveying and observing students, their families, and friends. In the Internet age, users of social network sites joined the canon of easily available subjects. Such samples are beneficial whenever the study design does not require a sample representative for (typically) a country's population.

The SoSci Panel recruits its participants from samples surveyed in uncounted online studies. From such a disperse source of panelists, a super convenience sample emerges that cannot only outnumber traditional student samples, but exceeds them in heterogeneity regarding age, geographic and professional background, interests, etc.

The SoSci Panel's Uses

Lacking representativeness, the panel is useful in similar situations as convenience samples:

- Qualitative research and pilot studies
- Research on general processes (e.g., perception)
- Testing hypotheses in experimental settings

Providing extra heterogeneity and large availability, the SoSci Panel also offers some specific uses:

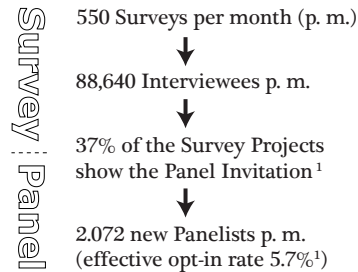
- Quasi-experimental settings (e.g., testing effects for interactions with age and gender)
- Huge experimental settings

No traditional Access Panel

Compared to a commercial panel, two differences are obvious: The SoSci Panel is free of charge and it does not provide any representativeness regarding demographic variables. But the most important difference may lie in participants' motivation.

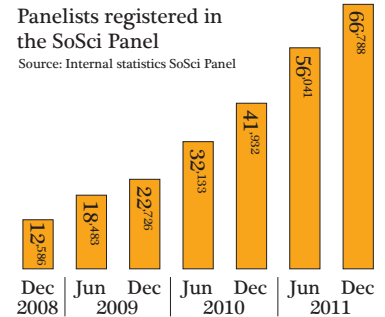
Commercial panels' participants join under the promise of getting paid for completing questionnaires. Positive effects of uncontingent incentives on return rate in random samples are well known^{2,5} and research on data quality^{3,4,9,14,15} shows only limited detrimental effects^{7,12}. This, however, cannot compensate for the lack of internationally published research regarding the effects of paying people for being available for surveys. Topic interest is one of the best predictors for data quality⁶ – and it is what motivates people to participate in the SoSci Panel and to accept invitations to specific surveys.

Solid Growth since 2009 – thanks to Thousands of Surveys



Source: Internal statistics SoSci Survey/Panel 01/2011-12/2011
¹ Measured during 10/2011-01/2012

Panelists registered in the SoSci Panel
Source: Internal statistics SoSci Panel



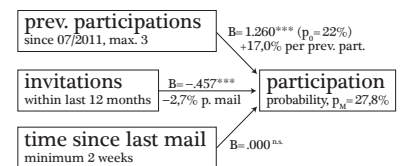
Female Online Research

Especially online convenience samples often report a surplus of women. Typically 55% to 70% of the participants are female e.g., 8.11.13. In the SoSci Panel 58% of the panelists disclosing their gender are women (students: 63% female).



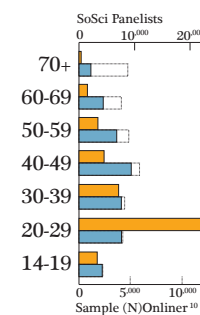
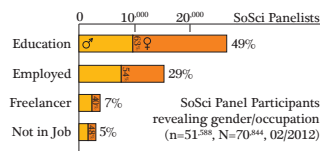
Those who actually click survey links are 60% female (n=14,363 in 09/2011-02/2012), with significant deviations between different studies and questionnaire topics.

Survey Load Limits

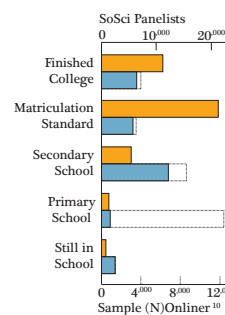


Do regular survey invitation exhaust a panel's participants? The SoSci Panel limits survey load to 4 invitations per year and a minimum lag of 2 weeks between two invitations. Logistic regression of participation (10/2011-02/2012, N=36,321 mails) shows a weak negative effect ($\Delta R^2=5\%$) of invitations sent within the last year and no effect of the time lag when controlling for previous survey participations ($R^2_1=9\%$, $R^2_2=14\%$).

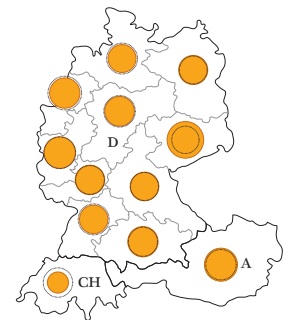
Demographic Margins



German SoSci Panel Participants (N=42⁴⁰⁰) revealing their age (n=42²⁰, 02/2012) revealing their formal education (n=39⁶⁷⁰)



(N)Onliner Sample¹⁰ representing the German Population (N=30⁷⁰⁰) Onliners¹⁰



Population: 12/2007 D, 07/2011 A, 12/2010 CH

SoSci Panel Participants D/A/CH (N=51²⁰⁰) disclosing postal code (n=40²⁰⁰, 02/2012) Population (official statistics, scale 1:2400)

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