

MRIA CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MARKET AND SOCIAL RESEARCH

Appendix “D” GUIDELINE ON SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY AND COMPLETENESS OF REPORTING

1. Definitions

The Definitions in the Code, to which this Appendix is attached, govern this Appendix. This Appendix further incorporates the terms reliability and validity, defined as follows:

Reliability: Reliability refers to “reproducibility” of a research result, should the research be carried out with a different sample of people or research objects in the pertinent population on a different occasion. Reliability is principally affected by sample size, the extent to which a sample is representative of the population from which it is drawn, and the level of quality control exercised over the research process.

Validity: Validity refers to the extent to which a research project measures what it sets out to measure in its stated mandate or objectives.

2. Recommended Best Practices

Section 3 below contains a compendium of recommended best practices, endorsed by MRIA.

These recommendations share the common purpose of advising researchers on perpetuating and preserving:

- ▶ Scientific research standards
- ▶ Professional client-researcher relationships

Best practice guidelines of other recognized research or research-related standards organizations may also be consulted for choices to be made in the design, implementation and reporting of market research. Where material differences exist, the MRIA guideline shall be considered the more pertinent to market research practice in Canada.

3. Compendium of MRIA's Recommended Best Practices

Accuracy

Researchers are advised to use those research methods which are appropriate to the research goals, and to avoid conducting research which would be inaccurate or misleading. Researchers must be accurate in all aspects of research and refrain from purporting or suggesting levels of accuracy that are greater than is warranted by the nature of the research. Researchers shall report and interpret their results in a manner that represents these results accurately and acknowledges such limitations on the research, which in the absence of such acknowledgement, might mislead.

In accordance with Scientific Principles:

- (a) Market research must always be carried out objectively and in accordance with established scientific principles.
- (b) Researchers must ensure the reliability and validity of research data as far as reasonably possible when designing research methodologies and instruments and in the collection, processing and analysis of research data.

Integrity of Reporting

- (a) Researchers must not knowingly allow the dissemination of conclusions from a market research project which are not adequately supported by the data. They must always be prepared to make available the technical information necessary to assess the validity of any published findings.

- (b) This entails that:
1. Researchers must recommend those techniques and methodologies which are appropriate to the objectives of the research, avoiding those which they believe may give misleading results.
 2. Researchers must not provide or allow without protest, interpretations of the research that are inconsistent with the data.
 3. Researchers must not present research results with greater confidence than the data warrants. Instead, as responsible professionals, members must point out the relevant limitations of the research. This includes but is not limited to the following guidelines:
 - i. Disclosing relevant potential sources of error, both sampling and non-sampling (e.g. response, non-response, measurement, coverage, etc.).
 - ii. Being explicit about the assumptions made about data accuracy when employing quota or stratification methods with probability samples.
 - iii. Refraining from making unqualified statements about confidence intervals or margins of sampling error on population estimates when probability samples are not used. For example, panels of repeat volunteers will not ordinarily qualify as sources of probability samples of the general population.

Detailed Reporting

- (a) Researchers must provide to their Client all appropriate technical details of any research project carried out for that Client.
- (b) Researchers must describe their methods and findings accurately and in appropriate detail in all research reports, adhering to the standards for minimal disclosure specified below.

Clients are entitled to the following information about any market research project to which the Client has subscribed

1. Background:
 - i. For whom the study was conducted;
 - ii. The purpose or given mandate for the study;
 - iii. The objectives established to interpret or operationalize the purpose
 - iv. Names of subcontractors and consultants to perform any substantial part of the work.
2. Sample:
 - i. A description of the intended and actual universe covered;
 - ii. The size, nature and geographical distribution of the sample (both planned and achieved)

- iii. Where relevant, the extent to which any of the data collected were obtained from only part of the sample;
- iv. Details of the sampling method and any weighting methods used;
- v. Where technically relevant, a statement of response rates and a discussion of any possible bias due to non-response.

Verification of Field

- (a) Researchers must, on request, allow their Clients to arrange for checks on the quality of fieldwork and data preparation provided that the Client pays any additional costs involved in this undertaking. Any such checks must conform to the following requirements:
 - 1. Researchers must ensure that any information which might identify Respondents is stored securely and separately from the other information they have provided, and that access to such material is restricted to authorized research personnel within the Researcher's own organization for specific research purposes (e.g. field administration, data processing, panel or longitudinal studies or other forms of research involving recall interviews).
 - 2. To preserve Respondents' anonymity, not only must their names and contact information be safeguarded, but also any other information provided or about them which could in practice identify them (e.g. the name of the organization that employs them and their job title).
 - 3. These anonymity requirements may be relaxed only under the following safeguards:
 - i. Where the Respondent has given consent;
 - ii. Where disclosure of names and other identifying information to a third party is essential for any research purpose, such as data processing or further interviews (e.g. an independent fieldwork quality check) or for further follow-up research. The original Researcher is responsible for ensuring that any such third party agrees, in writing, to observe the requirements of this Code, if the third party has not already formally subscribed to it.
- (b) For quantitative research projects where information is collected by interviewers interacting directly with respondents, Researchers must arrange for real-time monitoring ("monitoring") or post-interview verification ("verification") of a portion of each Interviewer's work. When monitoring, a minimum of 5% of each Interviewer's completed interviews must be monitored. In order to ensure adequate quality checks, 75% of the whole interview must be monitored to count towards the 5% monitoring requirement. When verifying, a minimum of 10% of each Interviewer's completed interviews must be verified.
- (c) Where post-interview verification identifies a recurring discrepancy or problem with an individual interviewer, 100% of an Interviewer's interviews shall be verified, and all invalid and non-validated interviews shall be rejected.
- (d) For quantitative research projects, where Respondents communicate their information digitally, such as by Internet survey or interactive voice recording, Researchers should verify a minimum of 10% of the recorded interviews, by contacting these Respondents, and validating their identity and qualifications to participate. In cases where the verification process produces information inconsistent with that previously given digitally (a "failed validation"), the interview must be replaced. The verification

procedure, just described, should be continued until failed validations are fewer than 10% of the portion of interviews subjected to the verification process.

- (e) 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' interests. In such cases, project records shall explain why this is the case and what other steps (e.g. checking internal consistency of data records, or linking sample statistics to publicly available benchmarks) have been taken to validate respondent identities and qualifications to participate. The steps taken to validate identities and qualifications should be such that they could be re-administered or confirmed by an independent third party.

Client Property

- (a) The following records remain the property of the Client and must not be disclosed by the Researcher to any third party without the Client's permission:
 1. Market research briefs, specifications and other information provided by the Client;
 2. The research data and findings from a market research project (except in the case of syndicated or multi-client projects or services where the same data are available to more than one Client).
- (b) Researcher specifications, such as background, objectives and technical approaches or ideas provided by a Client or potential Client, remain the property of the Client and the contents must not be revealed to third parties without the Client's permission.
- (c) Client supplied lists provided for specific projects must not be used for any other projects or for adding names to the Researcher's databases. Those lists should be returned to the Client or destroyed upon completion of the project.

Researcher's Property

- (a) The following records remain the property of the Researcher unless the Researcher and the Client, in writing, specifically agree otherwise:
 1. Market research proposals and cost quotations (unless these have been paid for by the Client). Proposals and cost quotations must not be disclosed by the Client to any third party, other than to a consultant working for the Client on that project--with the exception of any consultant working also for a competitor of the Researcher. In particular, they must not be used by the Client to influence research proposals or cost quotations from other Researchers.
 2. The Researcher's proprietary techniques, software and technologies. They may not be copied or duplicated, in whole or in part, by the Client, nor disclosed to any third party.
 3. The contents of a report in the case of syndicated research and/or multi-Client projects or services where the same data are available to more than one Client and where it is clearly understood that the resulting reports are available for general purchase or subscription. The Client may not disclose the findings of such research to any third party (other than his own consultants and advisors for use in connection with his business) without the permission of the Researcher.
- (b) All other research records prepared by the Researcher (with the exception of non-syndicated projects of the report to the Client.).

Publishing Results to Wider Audience

- (a) Where any of the findings of a research project are published by the Client, the Client has a responsibility to ensure that these are not misleading. The Researcher must be consulted and agree in advance to the form and content of publication. If the Client does not consult with the Researcher in advance and the former makes misleading statements about the research and its findings, the latter has the right to correct the misleading statements publicly.

- (b) Subject to paragraph (b) under “Researcher’s Property above”, reports provided by a Researcher are the property of the Client and are normally for use within the Client company or associated companies (including the Client’s agents). If a wider circulation of the results of the study is intended, either in whole or in part, the following minimum standards of disclosure should be adhered to, in order that there be an adequate basis for judging the reliability and validity of the results reported.
 - 1. If a Researcher’s name is to be used, the Researcher must be consulted prior to dissemination of findings and is entitled to refuse permission for his/her or its name to be used in connection with the study until the Researcher has approved the exact form and contents of the dissemination.

 - 2. For all reports of research results the Client has released to the public, the Client must be prepared to release the following details on request: sponsorship of the survey; dates of interviewing; methods of obtaining the interviews (telephone, Internet, in-person, interactive voice-recording, etc); population that was sampled; size description and nature of sample; size of the sample upon which the report is being released; exact wording of questions upon which the release is based; and an indication of what allowance should be made for sampling and non-sampling error.

 - 3. In the case of research commissioned by the media for publication or broadcasting, all of the preceding information must be reported on the media organization’s website or, failing that, on the research organization’s website to which the media organization’s website should have a hyperlink. Where the media organization does not have a website, its news reporting must include mention of the research organization that carried out the research, whose website must carry the requisite information.