



OpinionRoute

# Q4 Online Survey Survival Guide

Dear Colleague:

It's that most wonderful time of the year. Kids are back to school, retailers and eCommerce are gearing up for the holiday season, and businesses have started planning for the next fiscal year.

Meanwhile, in the world of market research, the fourth quarter looms large. Customers enter the 'use it or lose it' budget stage. An already busy online survey ecosystem gets intense. Demand goes up while survey taker availability goes down. Researchers are left to manage their way through the most demanding quarter of the year while tackling declining data quality, lack of staff, and increasing operational demands.

We want to do our part to help you prep for the madness by distilling proactive insights and thoughtful strategies in an easy-to-use playbook. Our goal is to help you navigate the madness and flourish.

Deploying changes in sourcing strategy, supplier management, and back-office processes can make it possible to stay ahead, reap the benefits of higher data quality and save precious time in operations that will make everyone's life easier.





# Key Plays & Strategies

## Section One

**Participants** are your most precious commodity

## Section Two

**Data** quality is only as good as its foundation

## Section Three

Increased **labor** demand means less time for deeper insights





## **Section One: Participants are your most precious asset**

It seems strange to categorize panel participants as a commodity, but it's an apt description. Similar to oil, availability and prices rise and fall based on demand. Participant availability and engagement impacts survey completion, data quality, and ultimately, insights.

Fortunately, there are ways to proactively manage the participant supply chain to minimize potential disruptions in the insight production process.

# Section One: Participants



## Consider Respondent Burden

When focused on building the best data set to generate analysis, it is instinct to use traditional techniques to drive quality. The rub is that by introducing more complexity, red herrings, and gates the participant must navigate, the greater the risk that engagement issues or inattentiveness will pop up.

It is also worth noting that while addressing quality, these practices can create more work when evaluating completes, resulting in even more review after discarding responses. The outcome is a heavy back-end lift which may ultimately defeat the desired impact of the upstream work.



# Section One: Participants

## Acknowledge Potential Past Participant Screen Outs



Instinct is to think of supply as a continuous source (like a water tap). Conceptually, that approach works great in the first or second quarter, but by the waning months of a calendar year, many standard category participation screen-outs spike 10-15% across panels.

As IR declines, this can lead to insufficient budget and/or longer field time to get to complete field. By managing budgets and schedules proactively, delays can be anticipated and accommodated.

## Section One: Participants

### **Expect that high-demand demos will be harder to reach**

Desirable targets like generational cohorts (Millennials and Gen Z) or specific ethnicity targets that are already in high demand see even greater demand at the end of the year.

By anticipating this demand and building a plan to get around the realities of your target segments, there's a higher likelihood you'll be meeting deadlines without any strain.



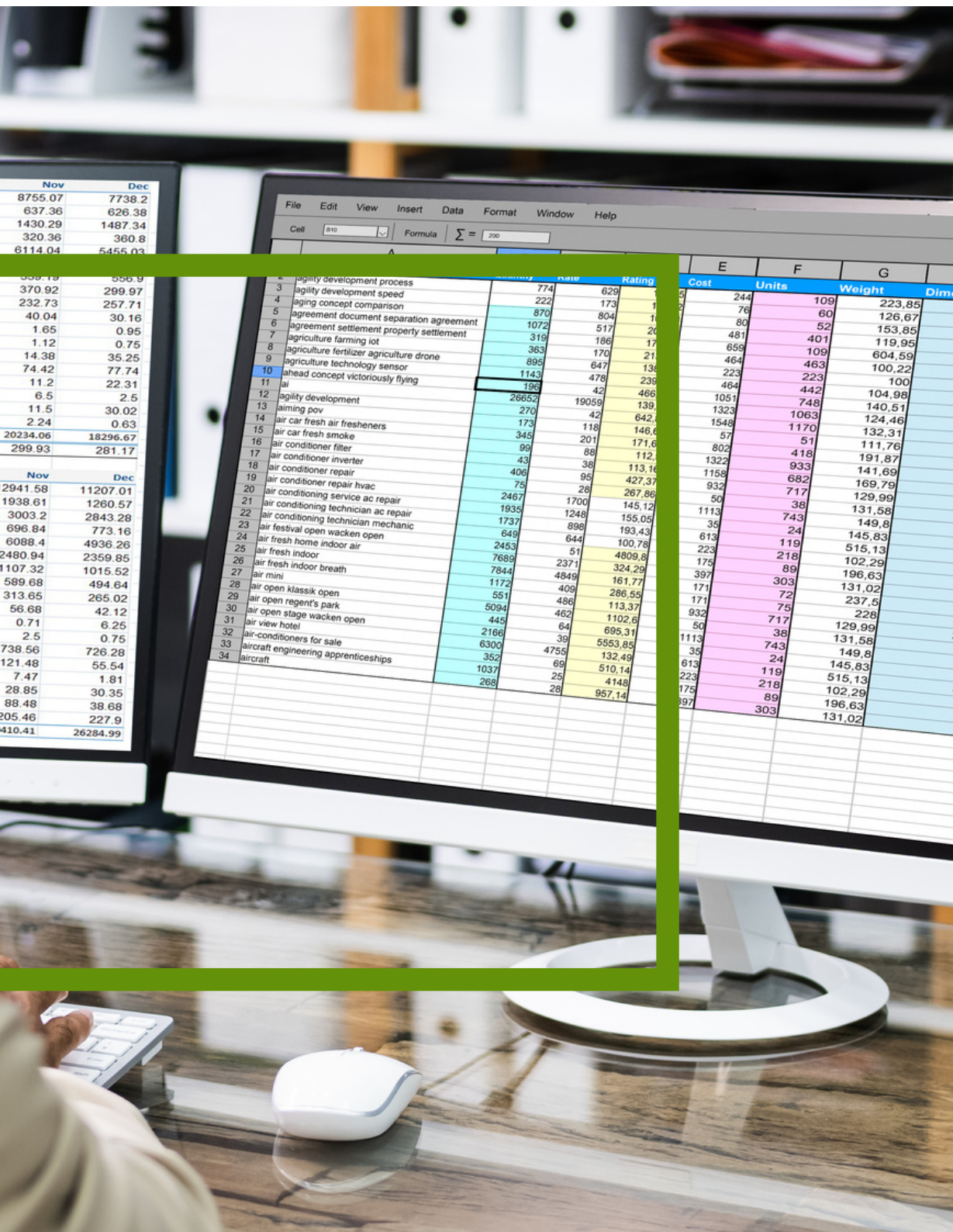
# Section One: Participants

**Know that  
respondent mix  
will take a hit**



It's important to note that respondent mix can vary significantly by season at a supplier level. Availability takes a hit, and suppliers fill the gap by relying heavily on third-party providers to augment availability in their proprietary panels. This practice can negatively impact the ability to reach quotas by infusing unqualified participants. It also affects the quality of data collected, placing a more significant burden on a researcher to clean and remove inadequate responses.





## Section Two: Data quality is only as good as its foundation

While the OpinionRoute point of view is that quality and efficiency matter, data quality will always be a byproduct of the selected participant pool. Building a solid respondent base with high-integrity inputs is critical to any quantitative research project.

Understanding how data quality fits into sample and field strategy will help build a trustworthy data set and minimize the headaches in preparing for analysis.



## Section Two: Data

### Device fraud peaks as demand spikes



Last spring, there was a massive spike in online surveys as researchers rushed to build insights that reflected the changes of 2020. As the demand for participants rose, so did the fraudulent behavior as bad actors flooded the ecosystem.

Very simply, every field plan must include proactive fraud prevention strategies.

Anticipating seasonal influxes by deploying a plan and mitigating strategies will eliminate the need to field stoppages and truncates data cleaning timing.

## Section Two: Data



### **Supplier profit targets can impact quality**

There are outside forces at play that can significantly impact data collection. With increased demand, proprietary sample providers may augment with third-party participants who do not receive advanced vetting. Researchers can manage this by knowing their supplier partner policies and holding them accountable to those standards throughout the year.

Working with partners who optimize for double-opt-ins and invest in back-end technology solutions to clean out fraudulent responses can minimize QC rates and reduce the number of removals due to unqualified participants.



## Section Two: Data

**Brand is not  
reflective of  
quality**



Historically, researchers made selections based on supplier brand, trusting that supply was consistently high quality at any point in the year. As programmatic sample and technology have evolved, that consistency has taken a hit. Sample suppliers experience waves of attacks or compromised sample pools, which vary month to month or quarter to quarter. Due to the dynamic nature of the fraud ecosystem, understanding that there are no consistently good or bad suppliers changes the mix that goes into each project. Leveraging mitigating technology solutions can also protect the integrity of the data collected.



## **Section Three: Increased labor demand means less time for insights**

As programmatic survey sampling has grown in adoption, new trends in labor demand have forced a shift in where researchers spend their time. This can potentially decrease associate satisfaction while taking away from the ability to drive meaningful insights. Fortunately, proactive strategies can help address these issues and get the research team back to what they care about most – driving powerful insights.

## Section Three: Labor

### **Expect that peak demand will impact project management**

In some ways, this is a good problem. Everyone is looking to use up their budget by the end of the year, which means projects are flowing in. While this is great for the bottom line, it overloads project managers and can lead to short-cuts in the process: the downhill impact is a greater risk to the core sample design and reduction of data quality.





## Section Three: Labor

### **A smaller labor market means more open job recs**



While backfilling or staffing new roles is a part of day-to-day business, the added pressure of hiring in a competitive economy is at an all-time high. In fact, in a recent analysis of 100 market research firms, 80% of mid and large providers are actively looking to fill open roles. This presents an opportunity to learn from small or boutique shops that lean into contract labor or partners to manage specialized areas and minimize seasonal staffing strains.

## Section Three: Labor

### Greater demand for data cleansing slows down the speed to analysis



Some cleanup work is necessary to get to a healthy dataset. Unfortunately, a waterfall of bad respondents and poor recruitment or sourcing practices inevitably lead to a significant cleanup effort before starting any analysis.

If current trends hold, researchers spend up to 20% of their time cleaning data. This stresses an already busy team and can negatively impact associate satisfaction and retention. For firms that are short-staffed and have a glut of projects, it is critical to lighten the cleanup load fast.



## Software & Services for the Modern Market Researcher

OpinionRoute provides best-in-class solutions to optimize the data collection process for online quantitative surveys. Built by experts in market research, OpinionRoute software and services provides a novel approach to managing programmatic research's challenges and complexities.



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**Don't let Q4 overwhelm you. Contact us to discuss proactive strategies and solutions to make it your best quarter ever.**

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