

Appendix A

Online Research Validation

The TNSSR Online Panel

TNSSR Australia and TNSSR New Zealand have set up a community of people who are willing to participate in online research. In Australia, we have over 350,000 active members (and a further 300,000 lapsed members), and more than 110,000 active members in New Zealand. The size of our panel is our key advantage – having this many willing participants means that virtually any subgroup of the population is represented in the membership community.

An active member is a member who has responded to any email or visited the website in the past three months, not just the number of respondent emails that TNSSR has access to at any one time, an important factor when using online panels.

The TNSSR Online Panel is consistently used by both private and government organisations and, because of its size, is capable of enabling the conduct of a significant number of interviews per month, without the need to contact respondents more than once within a specified period.

A representative panel

Given the size, the ability to proportionally sample, the recruitment strategies used, and results from validation tests, the TNSSR Online Panel can be considered to produce results that are generalisable to Australian and New Zealand residents and consumers. Essentially, the size of the TNSSR Online Panel underpins its ability to be representative of the Australian community. Samples can either be proportionally selected in line with ABS figures (and as such, be representative of the population being studied) on key demographics, or data can be post-weighted to be representative on these demographics.

In addition, more than 70% of the population (according to our latest Omnibus study) now access the internet regularly and, while there may be differences in terms of internet use by specific demographics (particularly age), the size of the TNSSR Online Panel and the ability to post weight any research to ABS population proportions negates any negative impact on data quality.

Validation of the panel

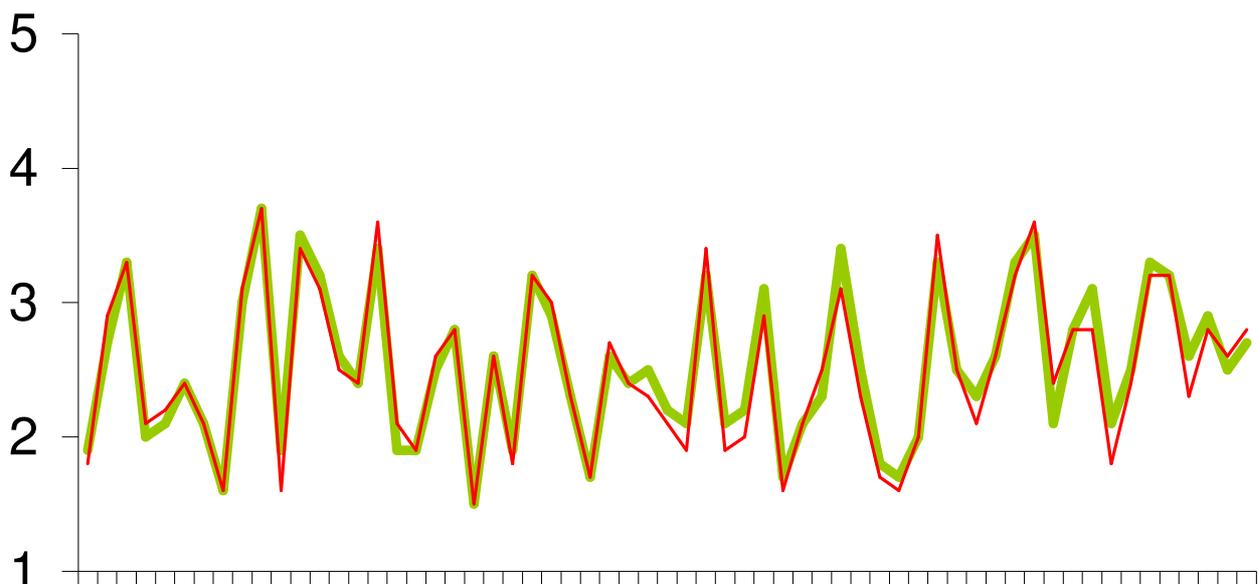
While statistical validity and representativeness is essential (and an important attribute of the TNSSR Online Panel), a valid panel needs to ensure a diversity of attitudes and motivations, not just a statistical comparability. The TNSSR Online Panel set-up and management (see below) ensures that this is the case to a greater degree than any other panels currently available.

In addition to statistical and attitudinal validity, a panel needs to be supported by evidence to show that the panel produces the same results as those gained from other recruitment methodologies. Underpinning the quality and representativeness of the TNSSR Online Panel, validation tests are continually conducted to ensure that the results are representative of the population. Validation tests are

undertaken using parallel studies, utilising the TNSSR Online Panel and other sampling frames. The comparability of findings are then reviewed and results indicate that there is little variation in findings utilising the TNSSR Online Panel and other methods of recruitment – underscoring the validity of the panel as a reliable and accurate sample frame. This is a process which no other panels currently undergo.

The following figure shows the attitudinal similarities between respondents to different methodologies. The survey asked respondents, via both Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) recruitment and Online recruitment, their level of agreement with 61 attitudinal statements. As can be seen in the figure below, respondents in both surveys were very similar attitudinally, with no significant differences. This is an important factor, as it is vital respondents to online research are not only representative demographically of the population, but also attitudinally.

Figure A1: Level of agreement with attitudinal statements



Panel set up and management

Our recruitment strategy ensures that we recruit panellists from as wide a background as possible, not just those who are more internet savvy. A panel only recruited online has value, but is not as representative as a panel recruited via offline and online sources. The recruitment strategy needs to ensure that we continue to reach members of the population who may not be regular users of the internet or internet savvy per se – therefore increasing the spectrum of the panel. This reduces any possible skews and ensures that the panel is as representative as possible. Panels that are recruiting using only online methods tend to only attract high level online users, which limits the demographic and attitudinal diversity of respondents.

For the TNSSR Online Panel, panellists are recruited via:

- online banners;
- opt-in email invitations;
- online opt in referrals from partners;
- rewards for recruiting friends via word of mouth;
- from TNSSR's existing telephone and face-to-face business via direct invitation;
- press advertisements;
- television advertisements; and
- television infomercials (e.g. *Bright Ideas*).

Underpinning these recruitment efforts to maintain diversity and the representativeness of the panel, currently more than 50% of the panel are recruited using off-line methods.

Upon visiting the panel website and becoming a member of the panel, members are obliged to complete a registration form which contains information such as:

- gender;
- age;
- household size;
- income;
- location by postcode;
- marital status;
- education;
- profession;
- race / ethnicity; and
- interests and hobbies.

This information is then used to ensure that any sample drawn from the panel can be matched to be representative of population figures on key demographics.

The TNSSR Online Panel also differs from all other panels as it is an online community, not just a panel recruited to conduct survey work. Those signed up to the TNSSR Online Panel are also involved in other activities (such as online bulletin boards etc), and as a result are not solely motivated to be members to be involved in survey work. This means that issues which plague other panels, such as respondent groupies and multiple email addresses (for one respondent) are reduced – resulting in data that is more accurate and less prone to error than panels where participants are only involved in completing questionnaires.

To ensure the exclusion of *research groupies* and *educated respondents* TNSSR excludes any respondent from the sample who has completed any questionnaire within the last three months. In

addition, the panel excludes any respondent from participating in a research project for the same organisation more than once.

Security and technology

There are comprehensive online security measures in place to maintain the integrity of the panel. Some of the measures in place include:

- high levels of systems monitoring around the globe 24 hours a day;
- secure off-site hosting with security protection;
- state of the art firewall protection;
- multiple high speed servers allowing handling of 100,000+ interviews per day;
- dedicated IT support professionals; and
- software to protect copying of any images/concepts shown during course of interview

