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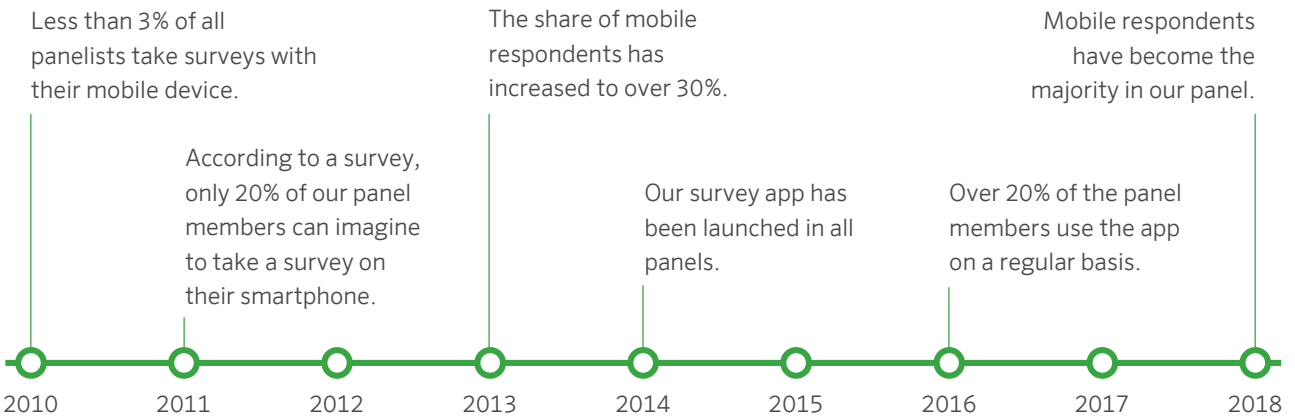
MOBILE RESEARCH



During the last decade, mobile research has emancipated from a niche method and become mainstream.

Today, the vast majority of our panellists possess a mobile device and most of them use it to participate in surveys on a regular basis.

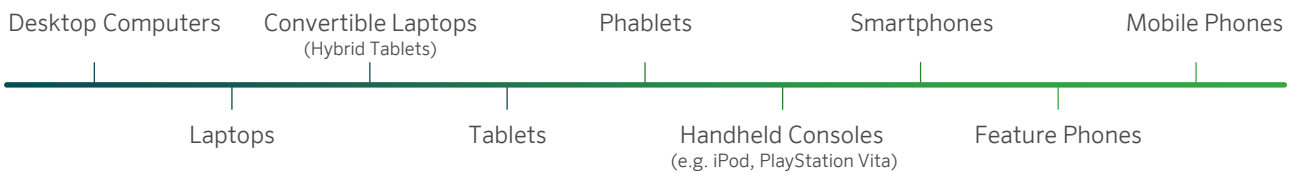
This white paper aims to give an overview over central issues related to the prevalence of mobile respondents in online samples.



WHAT DOES “MOBILE” MEAN?

One may think that mobile is a coherent concept with a defining characteristic for all mobile devices. Unfortunately, it isn't that simple. Mobile has become a general term for thousands of different devices like tablets, handheld consoles, smartphones and a wide

range of hybrid devices. In addition, we see new devices coming to the market that can be equipped with a multitude of different sensors, interfaces and software features.



Device Agnostic Online Research

To be prepared for any new device, most web developers started to follow the paradigm of **device agnosticism**, meaning that all content is designed to be accessible regardless of the device in use. Our survey template, for example, detects the available space on the screen and displays all elements in the best

possible way. In contrast, if survey questions are not displayed properly, the collected data may be skewed or it even might be impossible for the respondent to complete the interview. This is why it's so important to be prepared for all kinds of devices when conducting online interviews.

MOBILE SAMPLES

During the last years, we have seen a rapid development of technology. Mobile devices have become affordable for large parts of the general population. For some target groups smartphones have even become the main medium of communication, foremost the younger generations.

It's especially this part of the population you don't want to systematically exclude from your sample due to poor questionnaire usability or technical restrictions on mobile devices. In most cases, representativeness for online samples implies mobile friendly questionnaires.

In fact, as all people from the general populations should be equally represented in the panel, the registration process needs to be mobile friendly in the first place. This is of special importance to us, as we are using SMS invitations when recruiting via our CATI facilities.

Unfortunately, it's not enough to have mobile users adequately represented in the panel. Over half of all emails are read on mobile devices already. And while email is the only mode of invitation on stationary devices, mobile devices allow us to contact the respondent also via SMS or app.

All in all, it's more likely that a respondent is reached on his mobile than on his desktop PC. Therefore, every invite and every survey should be mobile friendly to make sure everyone in the target group can participate regardless of the device at hand.



DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR MOBILE FRIENDLY SURVEYS

Every survey we launch in our panels is classified with the following scheme.

- \\ **Red** means the survey isn't mobile ready from a technical perspective.
- \\ **Yellow** means it is mobile ready, but not optimized for mobile respondents.
- \\ **Green** means the survey is optimized for mobile respondents.

Modern Web Technology

Modern survey engines typically apply the latest technological standards by default (e.g. HTML5, CSS3) and don't rely on outdated technology anymore (e.g. Flash). However, having a responsive layout or meeting the minimum button sizes for interactive elements on touchscreens are also basic technological requirements for mobile friendly questionnaire design.

You should always test your survey with different mobile browsers to detect possible faults, pitfalls and problems early on. If necessary, you should embed a device check at the beginning of your survey and hide question types for mobile users that are not supported by their device. In any case, we recommend to keep an eye on the respondents' satisfaction to detect whether users of mobile devices have a different user experience or not.

Questionnaire Design for Mobile Devices

When it comes to the concept of the questionnaire, it is recommended to keep the survey as short as possible. As mobile respondents may have a more restless context, it's likely that they have less time in total and experience more unexpected interruptions. Short questionnaires will help to keep their motivation high and to complete the survey.

To account for the smaller screen sizes, question texts should be kept short. As a rule of thumb, texts should not be longer than 140 characters (think Twitter). The same is true for the amount of statements and items. As screen sizes are considerably smaller, it may become a problem, if relevant options are hidden in the non-visible part of the screen. If this cannot be avoided answering options should be randomized, at least.

Utilizing Sensors for Contextual Data

Last but not least, mobile research doesn't have to be a limitation. There are endless opportunities to make standard question types mobile friendly and to create outstanding mobile surveys that meet your methodological requirements and keep the respondent engaged. What's even more important, the smartphones' sensors can be a welcome source for additional contextual data, e.g. geo-location or camera. We'll be happy to discuss the best solutions for your specific needs!

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