



MRS international representation in research

Guidance to help ensure an inclusive, representative, engaging and safe approach to global research

As part of the ongoing work of the **MRS Representation in Research Steering Group**, we have created a set of guidelines to help when working internationally.

It is not practical for MRS to provide detailed and precise guidelines by country. Rather, we have identified three core areas to help practitioners address and navigate the international representation issues that need to be considered.

These MRS guidelines are intended to help with developing a well-considered brief for conducting international research in any market.

Local research organisations or other associations may have further guidance.

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Please note

- This guidance is provided for information only and is not intended to be all-encompassing.
- It is not legal advice and cannot be relied upon as such.
- Information shared here is NOT static, you will need to check individual markets for up-to-date information.
- Legal advice should be taken in relation to any specific legal concerns or issues.

Please contact codeline@mrs.org.uk if you have feedback on this guidance.



“Understanding one market does not necessarily mean you understand others.”

Trixie Cartwright
Global Lead
Diversity & Inclusion,
Ipsos



Clarifying international representation in research

Identification

Deciding on the degree and nature of inclusivity

- **Identify the parameters for achievable representation for your target communities**
From national population statistics or census data and ensure to include these at the reporting stage.
- **Diversity and inclusion at national level**
Considerations and questions which may not be included in national census data but are identified as culturally relevant and acceptable.
- **Interviewer and participant safety and ease**
Include best-fit selections, consent requirements and safeguarding considerations.
- **Ensure inclusion not intrusion**
Balance the desire to include as many options as possible with how intrusive the questions are; could the proposed questions and/or response options cause emotional distress or disengagement through 'fatigue'?
- **Methodology and mode**
Consider the most appropriate methodology and mode for participant engagement. Be mindful of the role of technology.
- **Accurately identify local languages**
Consider what languages are required to capture the required audience effectively in countries or communities where more than one language is used widely.
- **Determine need for local expertise**
Sense-check on readability, appropriateness of questions to the target community.

Risk mitigation

Identifying impact, offsetting potential pitfalls

- **Data privacy**
Legal parameters for processing, transferring and retention of personal information.
- **Limiting exposure**
Check local or national permissions for insurance requirements for global research and due care (public liability insurance, Directors' insurance, etc.).
- **Protecting reputation**
Mitigate the potential for negative impact on brand reputation and client-supplier relationships through a well-considered approach to local considerations.
- **Ensure it is appropriate to ask**
Consider participant and interviewer safety, local legalities about sensitive data and privacy controls, and if yes, how can this be done sensitively? (also see [MRS Best Practice guidance](#))
- **Challenge the hypothesis and/or design**
Link the requirement for participant characteristics to the needs of the research (data minimisation). Is it necessary to gather the data? Is the design aligned with the research objectives?
- **Legal implications**
Can questions be legally asked in the country? For example there are ~70 countries where it is against the law to have a same-sex relationship, many countries do not permit a race question.

Localisation

Improving accessibility, deepening cultural understanding

- **Lived experiences**
Centre participants' lived experiences in the design and be ready to adapt where possible.
- **Cultural context**
Consider adaptation for different target communities that appear to share a common language, for example English-speaking Australia, UK, US, India, Singapore, Spanish-speaking Spain, Latin America.
- **Inclusivity in translation**
Ensure inclusivity instructions are shared with translators, especially around sensitive data response options (race, ethnicity, gender, disability etc.).
- **Consider translatability (1)**
Minimise the use of idioms, slang and nuanced terminology. These are usually not culturally transferable concepts. Ensure simplicity of phrasing wherever possible. For example, "If you had a magic wand, what would you do?" has too many connotations to translate literally for non-UK environments.
- **Consider translatability (2)**
Avoid the use of double negatives, subjunctives and questions that accidentally measure two things. These often render incomprehensible translations, for example "To what extent do you agree you would be willing to..."
- **Consider target community terminology**
Translations may look different from the primary research language but may be the most appropriate and inclusive current terms for the target community. For example, 'physical disability' in English is usually translated as 'handicap' in French.