

IDENTITY FRAUD - DRAFT Q&A DOCUMENT

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How can respondents recognise bona fide market researchers?

Market research interviewers from MRS-recognised organisations carry an MRS identity card which they must show to respondents at the start of interviews. This card exists to reassure respondents that they are being interviewed by a bona fide market researcher and as a means of protection for the public against providing confidential details to unknown parties.

What legal frameworks are in place to protect members of the public from bogus market researchers?

The market research profession is regulated by The Market Research Society (MRS). All members of the MRS agree to abide by The MRS' strict Code of Conduct. This Code exists to ensure that research is conducted honestly, objectively, without unwelcome intrusion and without harm to respondents.

What are the principles of the Code and how does it ensure respondents' confidentiality?

The principles of the Code are:

- The purpose of market research is to collect and analyse information, and not directly to create sales nor to influence the opinions of anyone participating in it.
- The information supplied by respondents will not be used for any purposes other than is stated by the researcher.
- All personal data collected during the course of an interview is treated confidentially.

Are market researchers and fundraisers one and the same thing?

No, they are not. Equating market researchers with fundraisers is to confuse very contrasting work ethics and aims. Research is founded upon the willing co-operation of the public and of business organisations. Its purpose is to collect and analyse information, and not directly to create sales nor to influence the opinions of anyone participating in it.

What should respondents do if they have concerns about a survey they have participated in?

The MRS has a dedicated respondent freephone telephone service which can verify an organisation or consultancy which has members of the Society. This service provides respondents with an independent means to verify the legitimacy of organisations conducting market research (call The MRS on 020 7490 4911 for more details of this service). Professional market researcher interviewers working for organisations with members of The MRS carry an ID card identifying them as such, and also a document setting out their obligations under The MRS Code of Conduct.

What role does The MRS play in the Market Research industry?

The Market Research Society is the world's largest professional body for individuals employed in market research or with an interest in it.

It exists to set and enforce the ethical standards to be observed by research practitioners, and to provide a framework of qualifications and membership grades reflecting the education, knowledge and competence required for the effective conduct of market research. The UK government's Qualifications and Curriculum Authority officially recognises The MRS as the awarding body for qualifications in market research.

The Society also provides its members with a comprehensive range of publications, information and advisory services, training courses, conferences, seminars and networking opportunities.

It has a diverse membership of individual researchers covering all levels of seniority and job functions from within agencies and independent consultancies, as well as client-side organisations.

All members agree to comply with The MRS Code of Conduct, which is supported by the Codeline advisory service and a range of specialist guidelines on best practice.

The MRS is 'the voice of the profession' in its media relations and public affairs activities on behalf of professional research practitioners, and aims to achieve the most favourable climate of opinions and legislative environment for research.

Further information about The MRS, its membership and remit is available on its website at www.mrs.org.uk.