

On-line Survey Research and Fraudulent Compensation Claims

1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for researchers who plan to offer compensation to human participants for completing on-line survey's research. For additional guidance on incentives please refer to the document titled Incentive Guidelines for Human Participant Research, which is posted on the GREB website.

1.1 On-line Surveys and Fraudulent Compensation Claims

- 1.1.1 On-line surveys are a cost effective method for recruiting large sample sizes of participants, while allowing for distance to be maintained between the researcher(s) and participant(s). Researchers have flagged some additional areas of concern when conducting online survey research:
- Eligible participants taking a survey twice, not necessarily with malicious intent,
 - Eligible participants taking a survey repeatedly to receive additional compensation, and,
 - Ineligible participants taking a survey once or repeatedly to profit from compensation;
- 1.1.2 It is up to the researcher(s) to implement processes to identify potential fraudulent claims to withhold incentives from those participants suspected of fraud;
- 1.1.3 Such activities can include:
- IP addresses tracking (collection of IP addresses must be disclosed in the letter of information/Informed consent form); however some limitations may include multiple participants completing the survey from the same computer (e.g., roommates), or the survey being conducted on a large campus where participants may acquire the same IP addresses at different points in time,
 - Looking at time to complete the survey and/or time to complete specific questions,
 - Looking at deletions or changes in participant answers,
 - Reviewing the data for inconsistent answers,

- Looking for participants who have similar user names/email addresses,
- 1.1.4 Suggestions to Prevent Fraud for Researchers:
- Modify the study design (alter the amount, type, and/or timing of incentives),
 - Ask participants not to participate more than once and/or provide a link to participate without the responses counting towards the data set,
 - Include a 'good faith clause' indicating that participants will not be compensated if they have submitted duplicate and/or ineligible entries,
 - Require participants to contact the researcher directly to receive compensation (e.g., email, phone),
 - Only distribute the link to the survey via email and/or ensure there is no external link to a compensation page that can be copied and circulated,
 - Track the survey URL or search for the survey URL to determine if the enrollment site has been posted in another location (e.g., paysurveysonline.com, ranksurveys.com and swagbucks.com).

2.0 REFERENCES

1. Detecting, Preventing, and Responding to "Fraudsters" in Internet Research: Ethics and Tradeoffs, Jennifer E. F. Teitcher, Walter O. Bockting, Ph.D., José A. Bauermeister, M.P.H., Ph.D., Chris J. Hoefler, Michael H. Miner, Ph.D., and Robert L. Klitzman, M.D.: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4669957/>.