

Preventing Fraudulent Responses

1. Add Captcha Verification

To prevent spam and bots, include a Captcha verification question, especially if using Qualtrics.

2. Add Domain-Specific Questions

Ask questions relevant to the specific subject matter of the study. For example, in a pregnancy study, try asking, “At which hospital did you give birth?” Responses naming hospitals without maternity services or lacking specificity could indicate false participants.

3. Check for Multiple Entries

Implement an IP address check to flag duplicate or potentially fraudulent responses from the same or similar IP addresses.

4. Capture Survey Completion Time

Record the time taken by participants to complete the survey and analyze it for inconsistencies or rushed responses.

5. Update Your Informed Consent Language

In your informed consent, be sure to address the accuracy of participant information directly. A suggested statement to include is: “If the research team discovers that participants falsified their identity to meet eligibility criteria, the team reserves the right to dismiss the participant from the study and to not pay them for participation.” This ensures that participants understand the consequences of providing false information and clarifies that the study team is not liable to compensate those who falsify their information.

6. Include Free-Text Questions

Incorporate open-ended questions to assess response quality and authenticity.

7. Repeat Questions with Different Wording

Ask the same question in different ways to identify inconsistencies in responses.

8. Conduct a General Reasonableness Test

Review responses to identify outliers or unreasonable answers that may indicate fraudulent entries.

9. Consistency Checks

Check for consistency in responses across different questions, looking for discrepancies that might indicate fraudulent entries.

10. Randomize Question Order

Randomize question order or response options to deter guessing and ensure authentic responses.

11. Consent via Zoom

Incorporate a Zoom session to handle the consent process. This can be a practical way to visually confirm a participant’s identity and make sure they’re equipped for any digital aspects of the study. Note, this may not be applicable to all studies.

Please note: Anonymous surveys can be more difficult to prevent fraudulent responses. It is recommended to make changes that are within your control as a Researcher as listed above.