



the learner panel

learning from you

Panel Book

May 2010

Panel Information

What is The Learner Panel?

The Learner Panel is a new platform for online research, which is managed by the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) and co-funded with the Skills Funding Agency and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) to help organisations in the FE sector improve their access to learners for conducting quantitative and qualitative research.

What types of research can The Learner Panel be used for?

The Learner Panel is suitable for a wide range of online research methods:

- Ad hoc quantitative surveys
- Omnibus surveys
- Longitudinal studies
- Evaluating products or services
- Recruitment for face-to-face or online qualitative studies

Due to its relatively small size *The Learner Panel* will not be capable of creating 'league tables' of providers but it will be invaluable when helping policy makers and learning providers quickly and efficiently access regionally and nationally representative views.

What are the benefits of using The Learner Panel for research?

Using *The Learner Panel* to conduct research will significantly reduce data collection costs and turnaround times on research projects.

It is a safe, secure, continuous and accessible way for learners in Schools, Sixth Forms, Further Education, Work Based Learning, and Adult Community Learning to get involved in surveys and make their opinions count. It also helps those learners who are in part time/full time employment to get their views across as they can fill in the surveys in full or bit by bit, anytime they want.



Panel Recruitment

How is The Learner Panel recruited?

Members of the Learner Panel have been recruited via a range of recruitment methods, which include telephone, Facebook, posters in schools and colleges, school and college websites, email campaign run by the National Union of Students and direct hits on The Learner Panel website.

Using a variety of recruitment methods is essential for achieving a balanced panel and ensuring that learners from all social and educational backgrounds become members.

Who are members of The Learner Panel?

The Learner Panel is comprised of people aged 14 and over enrolled at schools, colleges and other training providers in England.

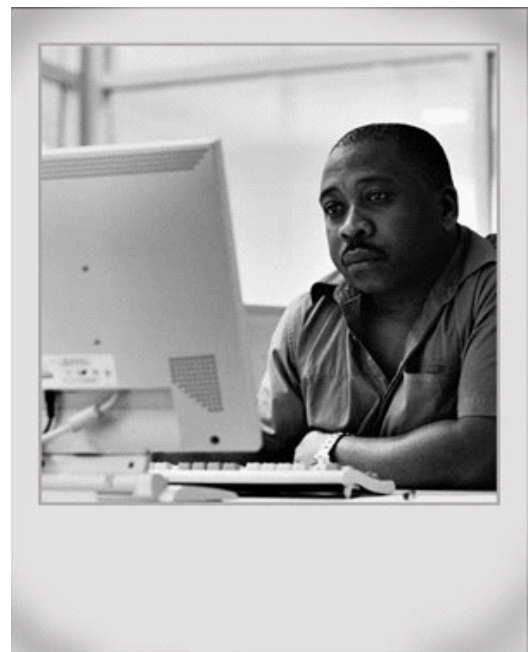
When learners join the panel they complete a recruitment questionnaire which collects profiling data including details of their current and previous studies, how their learning is financed, demographics and future plans.

Using a joining questionnaire has the advantage that this data needs only to be collected from learners once, rather than each time they complete a survey. Data collected on the joining questionnaire can also be used to assign sample quotas for surveys.

What's in it for the learners?

The Learner Panel is a safe, secure and accessible way for learners in FE, WBL and ACL to get involved in surveys making their opinions count.

Many learners received a £4 high street gift voucher for joining the panel (depending on how they were recruited). For each survey they complete, all learners will be thanked with a £1 voucher.

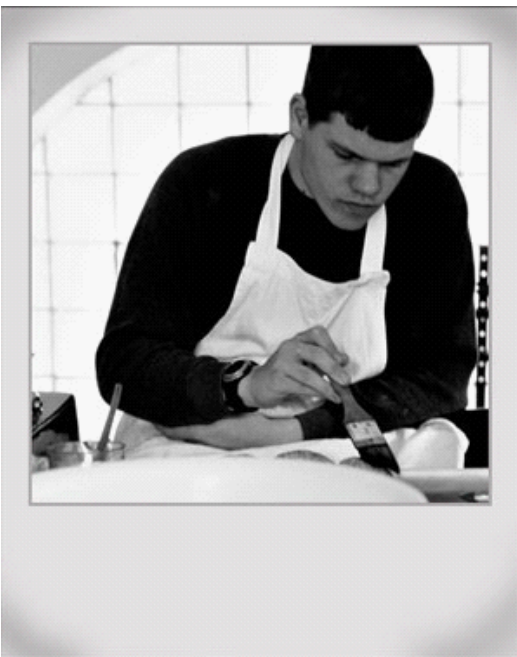


Panel Security

How secure is The Learner panel?

The success of The Learner Panel is reliant on careful recruitment to ensure that panel members are not 'professional respondents' with multiple identities (a major problem with some online panels). The following steps have been taken to ensure a high quality panel:

Provision of a single-use unique link to join panel – learners who are recruited through all methods will be emailed a link, which when click on will route them to the panel joining questionnaire. Each unique link may only be used once. Learners cannot therefore forward the invite to others after they have joined.



Checking panel for multiple identities – the motivation for joining a panel with multiple identities is to increase the potential to earn incentives. However, as the provision of incentives requires us to collect panellists' postal address we can check on the panel whether there are multiple panellists at the same address with the same profile.

Limiting IP range – As a further guard against 'professional respondents' (who are often based abroad), we limit those taking the joining questionnaire to individuals with a local IP address.

How are learners personal details kept safe?

All panel members are covered by the YPLA's fair processing statements, the Data Protection Act 1998, Freedom of Information Act 2000, Electronic Communications Act 2003 and the Market Research Society Code of Conduct.

In practical terms, all panellist details and survey responses are stored in a guarded, physically secure web server facility with biometric local access protocols and state-of-the-art firewall technology to stop unauthorised remote access attempts. All data transferred between respondents' browsers and Opinionpanel's survey servers is encrypted, ensuring that no intercept of personal information in transit can take place.

Example Project

Project description and aims:

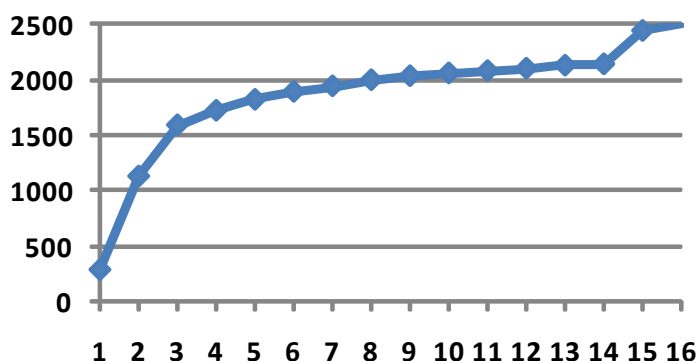
The Learner Panel was recently used for a for a project which looked at the following issues:

- How learners choose their course
- The benefits learners have gained from their course
- What encouraged learners to return to learning/training after taking a break
- Attitudes towards diplomas and apprenticeships
- Opinions on the best ways of informing people of available learning opportunities
- Learners' future plans

Members of The Learner Panel were invited to take part in an online survey lasting 10 minutes.

Sample and response:

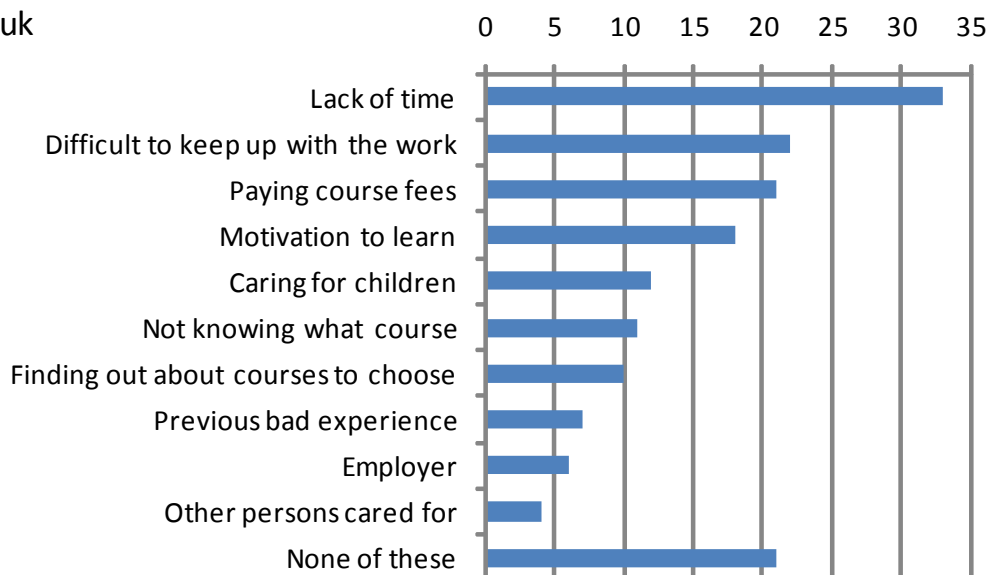
2,500 learners took part in the study over 16 days. 80% of responses were achieved within 8 days of fieldwork. A reminder sent to non-respondents after 2 weeks successfully gained the last outstanding interviews.



Results:

The project revealed very interesting findings around the experience and motivations of learners. The chart below displays the barriers to returning to learning as described by respondents who have taken a break from school or college. For more detailed survey findings, contact Rob Cirin at the YPLA.

Robert.Cirin@ypla.gov.uk



Using the Panel

I'd like to use The Learner Panel for my research project, what do I need to do?

A member of the Opinionpanel team will be happy to assist you with your project. Or why not take a look at The Learner Panel Website:

www.learnerpanel.co.uk

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Panel Profile

The following tables provide information on the profile of The Learner Panel, including demographic and educational attributes. The base size of the panel 10,000 learners. Some attributes are only applicable particular sub-groups of the panel and this is noted where applicable. N.B. additional attributes (not listed here) are also available for sampling, quota and analysis purposes.

Panel size = 10,000

Demographic attributes:

Gender	Panel %	Disability	Panel %
Male	37	Learning difficulties	4
Female	63	Visual impairment	3
		Hearing impairment	1
		Disability affecting mobility	1
		Other physical disability	1
		Other medical condition	7
		Emotional/behavioural difficulties	2
		Mental ill health	2
		Temporary disability	1
		Profound complex disabilities	0
		Other	3
		Prefer not to say	2
		No learning difficulties or disabilities	74
Age	Panel %	Region	Panel %
<16	9	East Midlands	7
16-18	54	Eastern	12
19+	37	London	12
		North East	6
		North West	16
		South East	14
		South West	11
		West Midlands	11
		Yorkshire & Humber	11
Ethnicity	Panel %		
White British	81		
White other	4		
Bangladeshi	1		
Indian	2		
Pakistani	2		
Any other Asian background	1		
African	2		
Caribbean	1		
Any other Black background	0		
Chinese	1		
Mixed race	3		
Other	2		
Prefer not to say	1		

Panel Profile

Panel size = 10,000

Education attributes:

Employment/education status	Panel %	Course/programme currently studying *	Panel %
Full-time at school/college	56	GCSE	7
Part-time at school/college	12	GNVQ	1
Full-time employment	19	AVCES/GCEs/Applied A Levels	1
Part-time employment	10	A Level	15
Weekend/evening job	10	AS Level	16
Looking after family /home	5	NVQ	25
Out of work & seeking to return	4	Foundation Modern Apprenticeship / Apprenticeships	2
Out of work & not seeking to return	0.5	Advanced Modern Apprenticeship / Advanced Apprenticeships	3
Unable to work due to illness/disability	1	Access to Higher Education	1
Retired	0.5	HNC	1
		HND	1
		Diploma in Higher Education	4
		Life Skills / E2E / Preparatory learning	2
		OCN Accredited courses	1
		OCR / BTEC Nationals	8
		International Baccalaureate / Welsh Baccalaureate	0.5
		Professional qualification	4
		Other	0
		Don't know	5
		Course / programme has no qualification name	2

***N.B. does not included learners in school**

Panel Profile

Panel size = 10,000

Education attributes:

Subjects and skills studying/training in*	Panel %	Highest level of qualification held*	Panel %
Sciences and Maths	13	Entry level	6
Land based provision	0.5	Level 1 / foundation	8
Construction	4	Level 2	47
Engineering, Technology and Manufacturing	5	Level 3	24
Business administration, Management	10	Level 4	2
ICT	6	Level 5	2
Retailing, Customer Service and Transportation	3	Level 6	3
Hospitality, Sports, Leisure and Travel	4	Level 7	1
Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy	3	Level 8	0
Health, Social Care and Public Services	11	Other	3
Visual and Performing Arts and Media, Art and Design	8	No qualifications held	4
Humanities	4		
English, Languages and Communication	8		
Foundation programmes	1		
Other	20		
N.B. does not included learners in school		Grants & allowances received	Panel %
		EMA	26
		Adult Learner Grant (ALG)	2
		Care 2 Learn	0.3
		6th Form Childcare	0.2
		Dance and Drama Award	0.1
		Residential Support	0.3
		College grant or support	3
		Career Development Loan	0.1
		Training allowance	2
		Other (please specify)	4
		None of these	62
*N.B. does not included learners in school			