

Comparing Questionnaire Tools: Qualtrics and Survalyzer

The VU has a contract and processing agreement with the questionnaire tool Qualtrics; additionally, FGB has a contract and processing agreement with another questionnaire tool Survalyzer. Both tools may be used to collect personal and/or sensitive data, however if your research subjects are very vulnerable and/or the research topics are highly sensitive, you may want to use one questionnaire tool for collecting name, contact information and consent, and the other tool for collecting your research data¹. You may also want to choose one tool over the other because it's already in use for a longitudinal study. Lastly, although we have a processing agreement in place with Qualtrics (which is now owned by the German company SAP), you may experience resistance from participants if you use Qualtrics because of it was formerly an American company. Whichever tool you choose is up to you, but bear in mind that there are far fewer accounts available for Survalyzer than for Qualtrics². If you choose Qualtrics and are later requested to provide information about the agreements we have in place with Qualtrics, you can refer the inquiring party to the Qualtrics [Terms of Service](#), which includes the text for the Data Processing Agreement.

	Qualtrics	Survalyzer
Technical features		
Questionnaire design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User friendly • Large variety question options • Very flexible • Routing is intuitively programmed • Questions and response codes can be exported as a Word doc • Responses can be exported into SPSS, CSV, TDF or XML files • Data exported into SPSS are automatically labelled and coded³ (note: codes for missing data are not automatically defined, i.e. no distinction between “missing, not answered” vs. “missing due to routing”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User friendly • Fewer question options • Less flexible • Routing is intuitively programmed • Questions and response codes can be exported as a Word doc • Responses can be exported into Excel or SPSS files • Responses exported as an Excel file include separate tabs: one with the question variable labels and response codes³, and one which describes the filters and routing used in the questionnaire • Responses exported into SPSS are automatically labelled and coded³
Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several options for questionnaire distribution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer options for questionnaire distribution
Data storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data are stored on EU servers • Data are backed up and stored for 90 days; after 90 days any data deletions are permanent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data are stored on EU servers • Data are backed-up for 90 days. When data are deleted, they are first flagged for deletion for 90 days and then deleted. A back-up of this data is maintained for another 90 days. After this 180-day period, data deletion is permanent

¹ For assistance with assessing how sensitive the information is or how vulnerable your subjects are, contact the FGB Privacy Champion (research.data.fgb@vu.nl)

² To set up access to either survey tool, FGB researchers can contact the [Faculty Survey Administrator](#) for both Qualtrics and Survalyzer. For other staff: if you do not know who your faculty administrator is, contact the [RDM Support Desk](#).

³ Labelling means that for every question variable there is a label provided with the text of the question posed to the respondent; response codes are the values given to the various answers the respondent can choose from in the case of multiple-choice questions.

Secure Use of Questionnaire Tools

The following information provides tips to ensure safe use of Qualtrics and/or Survalyzer. Even though we have contracts and agreements in place for these tools, there are additional steps you can take to minimize the risk to participant privacy, avoid unnecessary information being collected, ensure that the information we are collecting is accurate and avoid loss of data.

Qualtrics	Survalyzer
Data confidentiality/ Privacy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If sending out personalized links to participants, follow the instructions in this manual so that you can send these personalized links without uploading participant e-mail addresses into Qualtrics⁴ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NB: This is not a requirement, but a good practice you can do to avoid too much personal information being stored in one system. This <i>is</i> highly recommended when collecting data that are very sensitive and/or from vulnerable subjects¹ ➤ For all methods of survey distribution, even if you aren't using personalized links: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under "Survey Options" ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "Prevent Indexing" is selected (default is selected) ▪ "Secure Participants' Files" is selected (default is selected) ▪ "Anonymize Response" is selected • In "Survey Flow" add an "End of Survey" block and under "Customize" for this block, select "Do NOT record any personal information and remove panel association" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There are a couple of variables which are automatically collected in Survalyzer. These are the IP-address of the respondent and User Agent, which is essentially the browser used by the respondent. Ideally, you should not collect User Agent nor IP-address of your respondents, unless you have a specific reason to do so and you have the informed consent of the participants to collect this information. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At FGB, the System Administrator automatically turns off the collection of IP-addresses and User Agent, so you don't need to worry about any extra steps, unless you require this information. If you need to collect these variables, contact the Faculty Survey Administrator. You should also contact the FGB Privacy Champion to make sure that the collection of these variables is appropriate. ➤ If sending out personalized links to participants, follow the instructions in this manual so that you can send these personalized links without uploading participant e-mail addresses into Survalyzer⁴ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NB: This is not a requirement, but a good practice you can do to avoid too much personal information being stored in one system. This <i>is</i> highly recommended when collecting data that are very sensitive and/or from vulnerable subjects¹

⁴ If you opt to collect name, contact information and consent simultaneously with your other research data, it is advised, as soon as possible (e.g. once you've completed data collection), to export these data from Qualtrics/Survalyzer, store them in an appropriate VU storage solution and then delete them from Qualtrics/Survalyzer

Data integrity

- If completing a longitudinal study with multiple follow-up questionnaires, do not use the default question names; give each question a unique name
 - This is a good practice in general, but especially important with follow-up questionnaires
 - Test the survey flow before sending the questionnaire to respondents
 - Before sending out the survey, test the exported data for any issues, such as incorrect response coding or issues with how questions are labeled (particularly if your questionnaire has complex routing depending on the respondents' answers). If randomization of blocks or questions was applied to your survey make sure when exporting data to select "Export viewing order data for randomized surveys" (under "Export Data">"More options")
 - Download and save a copy of the questionnaire you created to maintain documentation of response codes and question labels/descriptions
 - When you are ready to extract your data, it is preferable (from a data management perspective) to export a non-propriety copy of the data. You can do this by exporting a .csv file. If you uncomfortable working with .csv files, you can also export an SPSS or Excel file. The .csv file should be saved with your other archived data as a non-proprietary back-up of your raw data.
- If completing a longitudinal study with multiple follow-up questionnaires, do not use the default question names; give each question a unique name
 - This is a good practice in general, but especially important with follow-up questionnaires
 - Test the survey flow before sending the questionnaire out to respondents
 - Before sending out the survey, test the exported data for any issues, such as incorrect response coding or issues with how questions are labeled (particularly if your questionnaire has complex routing depending on the respondents' answers).
 - Download and save a copy of the questionnaire you created to maintain documentation of response codes and question labels/descriptions

Data availability

- If data need to be deleted from Qualtrics, ensure they are complete and correct prior to deletion, and that they will be backed-up on the VU storage solution you are using. Once the back-ups that Qualtrics created for your data are deleted from their servers (after 90 days), the data cannot be restored.
- If data need to be deleted from Survalyzer, ensure that they are complete and correct prior to deletion, and that they will be backed-up on the VU storage solution you are using. Data deleted on Survalyzer are recoverable up to 180 days after deletion; after this period, the data cannot be restored.