

A Guide to Best Practice Data Collection

Introduction

Congratulations on your successful Hub supported project!
We wish you the best of luck.

As you know from the scheme criteria, we need to collect evidence on our activities to assess whether they are diversifying audiences and enhancing the quality and cultural depth of their experience; and to report to the National Lottery that their funds are being used in the best possible way.

To do this we need to collect data from your audiences.

Your data will be used by the BFI to evaluate the impact of the entire Film Audience Network and by us to evaluate our work and improve future programmes. We also hope collecting the data will help you learn more about your audiences – who they are and how they behave.

What data to collect

We've designed a standard audience survey for you to use to collect data on your audiences and their experience at your event/film screening.

You can add additional questions if wished, but must as a minimum use the questions on the standard survey.

A note on data and marketing

You MUST NOT use data collected for marketing purposes. This has always been good practice but with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) coming into force in May 2018, it is now illegal.

You CAN use the opportunity of your research to ask people if they want to go on your email list, but you MUST:

- Do so separately to your research
- Clearly request an 'opt in' rather than 'opt out' of communications
- Clearly explain how personal details will be used and who (if anyone) they will be shared with
- Store any data captured for marketing purposes securely and separately from your research data

For full details on GDPR and its implications, [click here](#).

For info on its implications for the cultural sector [click here](#).

How to collect it

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Identify the events at which you will collect data

You should select different events, places and times of day (if applicable) to choose for your surveying. This is called a 'sample frame'.

If your project is relatively small, you could try to survey every single person who attended each of your events, but if it involves a number of different events across different times and locations, it's more realistic to select a 'representative sample' covering all event variations.

Examples:

- Screening at libraries and village halls? Ensure you survey audiences at both types of venue
- Screening the same film on Friday, Saturday and Sunday? Ensure you survey audiences on each different day

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Collecting your data

Try to engage your audience in your research. Most people are happy to complete surveys if they think the information they provide will be genuinely useful, so how you introduce your survey is key to maximising your response rate.

ENSURE YOU

- Clearly present why you need the information and how it will be used, perhaps via a poster at box office or a slide before films
- Fully brief ALL staff (but especially front of house) so they can clearly explain why you're collecting the data
- Consider offering incentives to increase your response rate – particularly if you don't have an established relationship with your audience. Remember they must NOT be allied to your organisation (e.g. free tickets) – cash/shopping vouchers are best
- If you're tasking particular staff members/volunteers with data collection, choose confident, friendly, accurate and reliable people who are keen to interact with customers and able to respond to unexpected questions
- Consider feeding back to your audience to build engagement – for example, sharing '5 things we discovered about our audience' or 'How your feedback helped us get support for xxx' demonstrates gratitude and that their contributions were worthwhile.

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Choose your method

We recommend two methods: either online surveys or printed surveys, handed out and collected. There are pros and cons to both, and it's worth considering which will generate the best response rate from your audience.

PRINTED SURVEYS

- **PROS:** good opportunity for audience engagement, good response rate
- **CONS:** requires more resources, greater possibility of bias

Tips for avoiding audience bias:

- **DO:** Give surveys to a random selection of audience members (e.g. every second person who walks past) to ensure everyone has an equal chance of being included
- **DON'T:** Leave surveys out for people to help themselves, as this tends to restrict the type of responses you receive
- **DON'T:** Hand surveys only to familiar or smiling faces, as this will inaccurately skew your results

ONLINE SURVEYS

- **PROS:** low cost, requires fewer resources, surveys can be longer
- **CONS:** timing is crucial

Tips for avoiding audience bias:

- **DO:** Ensure you only email people who actually attended the event (not just people on your general email list)
- **DO:** Be aware you may miss out on audience members who aren't online and consider in advance if this will inaccurately skew your results
- **DO:** Send your survey within 24 hours of the event to ensure the highest possible response rate

Online survey/form providers include: [Survey Monkey](#), [KwikSurveys](#), [Poll Daddy](#), [Survey Gizmo](#) and [Google Forms](#) (all of which offer free basic options).

How to collect it

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How many surveys to collect

Collecting enough surveys is vital for meaningful results.

The table below shows the suggested number of surveys you should be aiming to collect. For the best results you should be aiming to have only a 5% margin of error.

Anticipated audience size (population)	No. surveys completed		
	5% margin	8% margin	10% margin
50	45	38	34
75	63	51	43
100	80	60	50
250	152	95	70
500	218	116	81

Example:

If you have a programme of 5 screenings and estimate 100 people will attend each, your total population is 500 and you'll need to collect approx. 218 surveys to achieve a 5% margin of error.

If you are anticipating having a larger total audience size (population) than 500 across all of your events, there are lots of free online tools available to calculate how many people need to take your survey – for example Survey Monkey's [Sample Size Calculator](#) and [Margin of Error Calculator](#).

KEY TERMS

- **Population** – the total number of people attending the events you are surveying (your total audience)
- **Margin of error** – how accurate you want your results to be. The lower the margin of error, the more accurate your results. A 5% margin of error means that for any results from your survey, the 'real' answer could be 5% higher or lower. For example, if your results say 30% of the audience attended your venue for the first time, the 'real' answer could be between 25 and 35%. You should aim to keep this at around 5%
- **Confidence level** – your confidence in your ability to collect accurate data. When using an online calculator, keep the confidence at 95%.

What next?

Once you've completed surveying, collate the information and enter the totals into your Excel project log. You should then submit this with your other reporting to your Hub.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- The Market Research Society offers practical tips including a detailed [Code of Conduct](#)
- The [CultureHive](#) database contains toolkits and guides for the cultural sector (search under 'research')

