Remote/Virtual Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is not limited to in-person interviews or groups. Amazing depth of context for many of your objectives can be efficiently achieved by conducting qualitative research remotely via popular virtual platforms, such as:

- Zoom
- RingCentral
- GoToMeeting
- Skype
- Webex Meetings

Remote/virtual qualitative research is often an excellent alternative to in-person research and can provide cost and timeline benefits without sacrificing insights.

Consider conducting remote/virtual qualitative research for your upcoming in-depth interview, ethnography, shop-along, concept test, and more!

Some occasions when in-person research is more appropriate than virtual:

- When the research objective is to observe respondents in person as they interact with and respond to a physical product or device.
- When the cost of a wrong decision is huge and the need to get it right is paramount (such as a multimillion-dollar integrated advertising campaign) or new product launch.
- When the client’s team has never seen their customers in a research environment.
- For special objectives, such as jury selection.
- When it is easy/easier to gather targeted respondents and clients together in a centrally-located venue.
- When study is highly visible and needs video verification for promotional or reporting purposes.
# Remote/Virtual Interviews

## ADVANTAGES

- **Lower cost than in-person**: No moderator, participant, or observer travel costs, no facility costs, lower incentive costs
- **Geographical reach**: Unlimited
- **Improved feasibility**: Lack of geographical boundaries allows maximum flexibility for low incidence recruits
- **Better response/show rates**: Respondent sessions are scheduled based on their own availability, versus predetermined onsite session times
- **Live video feed**: Allows for live, virtual face-to-face moderator-participant interaction, and enables observers to view same interactions
- **More organic respondent experience**: Potential to be more relaxed/comfortable or willing to communicate freely in their own space
- **Real-time communication**: Client observers can privately message moderator in real time
- **Limitless observers**: No limitations to number or geographical dispersion of client observers
- **Expedited project timelines**: Potential to complete project faster than in-person qualitative, due to maximized scheduling flexibility
- **Digital stimuli**: Stimuli such as static images, videos, etc., can be presented during session
- **Unobtrusive note-taking**: Off-camera clients and suppliers can take notes totally unnoticed by research participants
- **Omits “group think”**: One-on-one interaction avoids potential for “group think” commonly observed in traditional focus group settings
- **Unlimited recording/transcribing**: Limitless recording/transcription services, which are often less expensive (and quicker!) than in-person sessions

## DISADVANTAGES

- **Stimuli**: Unless shipped directly to participants, observable interaction with some stimuli, such as physical products or devices, can be limited
- **Body language**: Partially limited visibility of nonverbal cues
- **Webcam requirement**: While most participants own a video camera-enabled device, screening is required to confirm ownership
- **Technology issues**: Potential for technology issues such as participant comfort level with platform, or Internet, site, or device crashes
- **Distractions**: Potential for respondents to be distracted by environment
- **Environmental and demographic cues**: Limited ability for moderator to read demographic/environmental cues (age, race, etc.) if not covered in screening profile
# Overview: In Person vs. Remote/Virtual Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>IN PERSON</strong></th>
<th><strong>REMOTE/VIRTUAL</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>COST &amp; TIMING</strong></td>
<td>Usually intensive; travel may add to costs</td>
<td>Can be less time intensive than F2F; lower costs (no travel or facility rental)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GEOGRAPHY</strong></td>
<td>Often limited geographically to local area</td>
<td>National and international access possible and easier</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SENSITIVE TOPICS</strong></td>
<td>May be difficult; potentially embarrassing or awkward</td>
<td>May be less awkward than F2F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BODY LANGUAGE</strong></td>
<td>Very rich; includes dress, body language, mannerisms, hygiene; more data to be interpreted</td>
<td>Some body cues unavailable; can note pauses, hesitations, voice pitch, sighs/gasps, etc.; less info, but less potential bias and misinterpretation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TECH ISSUES</strong></td>
<td>Less likely to have problems, except with recording device</td>
<td>Calls can be dropped; possible recording problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTERVIEWER SAFETY</strong></td>
<td>Can be endangered depending upon session location/time</td>
<td>Low danger; interviews can be made from office, home, or other location</td>
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Sources:
- [https://interq-research.com/online-versus-in-person-focus-groups/](https://interq-research.com/online-versus-in-person-focus-groups/)