



V. 1.0, 3 March 2014

Surveys on individuals and households (SRPH)

FAQ survey framework for surveys on individuals and households (SRPH)

1 How did the FSO obtain my address?

Since 1st November 2010, the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) has used a new sampling frame in which its survey samples are obtained. This frame is built from the data which must be provided by the official registers of persons, notably the communal and cantonal population registers, in the context of the new Federal Population Census system. The data are updated every trimester and include the basic data of all persons living in Switzerland. The FSO has your address thanks to these data.

2 How did the FSO obtain my telephone number?

According to article 10, para. 3^{quater} of the Federal Statistics Act (RS 431.01), all public telephone service providers active in the Swiss market are obliged to furnish to the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) data about their customers which are required to conduct sample surveys. Consequently, the scope of the sample currently used by the FSO comprises all fixed-line telephone numbers in Switzerland, regardless of whether they are listed in a telephone directory. The Act stipulates that these may only be used for federal statistical surveys. Private individuals may not use this register, unless they are officially mandated to carry out a statistical survey by the Confederation. In this case, these private companies only receive the telephone numbers required to carry out the survey.

3 If I change my fixed-line telephone operator, will my number be better protected?

The FSO would like to specify that the regulation on the sample register which came into force on 10.2.2008 links all of the key players in the Swiss fixed-line telephone market. This thus means that not only Swisscom shall be subject to these provisions, but also all of the telecom companies which provide fixed-line telephone services. The legal basis is founded on article 10, para. 3^{quater} of the Federal Statistics Act (RS 431.01)

4 What data/information concerning me does the FSO hold in the sample register?

The sample frame which serves as the survey sampling basis is partly made up of data provided by the official registers of persons (notably the communal and cantonal population registers) in the context of the new Federal Population Census and data on fixed-line telephone subscribers. It contains the following data:

- AVS-insurance number
- FSO number and name of commune
- EGID, EWID (federal building and accommodation identifiers)
- surname(s), first name(s)
- place of residence and postal address
- date and place of birth
- sex
- civil status
- nationality
- foreign national category (residence permit)
- commune of establishment, commune of residence
- fixed-line telephone number
- language of correspondence (if known)

5 Can I obtain a copy of the sampling frame data?

Every person has the right to request a copy of any held data relating to him or her (see article 8 of the Federal Act on Data Protection (RS 235.1) of 19 June 1992.). To do so, a written request must be made along with a copy of his or her identity card or passport to the following address:

Federal Statistical Office FSO
POP Section
Espace de l'Europe 10
2010 Neuchâtel

However, the request for information should not be for a third party.

6 Who has the right to use the data from this sampling frame?

The sampling frame is only used to carry out statistical surveys regulated by the legislation on federal statistics. On the one hand,

- this concerns surveys carried out by the Federal Statistical Office (FSO). Without exception, these surveys are regulated by the Ordinance on statistical surveys (RS 431.012.1).
- On the other hand, this also concerns surveys carried out outside the FSO but which fulfil the very strict criteria provided for in this same Ordinance (article 13c, RS 431.012.1). In other words, this notably includes surveys carried out by other federal offices which are provided for in the multi-year programme for federal statistics or which have been ordered by the Federal Council as well as surveys carried out in the scope of important national research projects financed by the Swiss National Science Foundation.

The use of the frame is thus limited and strictly controlled.

7 Is data protection guaranteed?

The protection of data is guaranteed in application of the law on the Federal Statistics Act (RS 431.01), the Ordinance on the Conduct of Federal Statistical Surveys (RS 431.012.1) as well as the federal law on data protection (RS 235.1). The use of the FSO sample frame is subject to regulations which have been approved by the federal data protection officials. Only few, duly identified persons have access to the sampling frame data for the selection and production of samples.

Once the samples have been obtained, the units charged with carrying out the survey are responsible for the samples. If the surveys are carried out by external bodies, the FSO arranges specific contracts with these bodies to guarantee the correct application of the data protection regulations. Once the survey is finished, the external bodies must confirm in writing to the FSO the complete destruction of all data submitted in the sample.

[Federal Statistics Act \(RS 431.01\) of 9 October 1992](#)

[Ordinance on the Conduct of Federal Statistical Surveys \(RS 431.012.1\) of 30 June 1993](#)

[Federal Act on Data Protection \(RS 235.1\) of 19 June 1992](#)

8 Why have I been chosen for an FSO survey?

The samples are taken from the FSO sample register at random. You are therefore selected by chance. To avoid households being selected multiple times, the FSO has put in place an equitable distribution system for its surveys. Sooner or later, all households in Switzerland may therefore be sampled in a federal statistical survey. If a household has participated in an FSO survey, in principle, it enjoys immunity from being sampled again for a few years. However, this protection is not absolute, particularly if the household composition changes during the interval.

9 Why have I/we been chosen again for an FSO survey?

Normally, this situation should not occur because the FSO has put in place a system which enables the burden of the surveys to be equally distributed across the entire population. However, this system is not infallible. You may be selected for a second time, for instance, due to a move, residence abroad or by a large household size. These are rare cases and the FSO does everything possible to avoid these.

10 Which law applies to which question?

How did the FSO obtain my address? According to the [law on the harmonisation of registers](#) (RS 431.02), the official registers of persons, notably the communal and cantonal population registers, are bound to provide us the data defined in article 6.

According to article 16.3 of this same law:

It may use data listed in Article letters a-h, j, k and m as a directory of addresses for the conduct of statistical surveys.

How did the FSO obtain my telephone number? According to the [Federal Statistics Act](#) (431.01) article 10³quater.

The Federal Office maintains a Random Sample Register used as an aid for surveys of households and persons. Providers of public telephone services are obliged to provide the Federal Office with the required customer data, as far as this data is available.

What data/information concerning me does the FSO hold in the sample register? The [law on the harmonisation of registers](#) (RS 431.02) article 6 a-u and article 10^{3quater} lists the data that the FSO uses for its sampling frame. They are completed by fixed-line telephone numbers as well as the correspondence language of users.

Can I obtain a copy of the sampling frame data? According to the [Federal Act on Data Protection](#) (RS 235.1), article 8.1-2a:

Right to information

1 Any person may request information from the controller of a data file as to whether data concerning them is being processed.

2 The controller of a data file must notify the data subject:

a. of all available data concerning the subject in the data file

Who has the right to use the data from this sampling frame? According to the [Ordinance on the Conduct of Federal Statistical Surveys](#) (431.012.1), article 13c, the paragraph concerning the transmission of samples clearly defines the potential users of the data mentioned above as well as the restrictions concerning these.