Blaise 5

What Blaise 5 can offer you

For Survey Sponsors

- Blaise is Commercial Off-the-Shelf (COTS) Software.
- Blaise is produced by Statistics Netherlands, a leading National Statistical Institute that uses Blaise for its own work.
- Blaise has been a leading solution for governmental and scientific surveys for 30 years.
- The world-wide Blaise community is making many intellectual contributions towards system improvements, carrying out incredibly challenging surveys that demonstrate the value of Blaise.
- Blaise instruments can be shared between contractors, e.g. in subsequent rounds of a survey.
- Blaise is native on Windows, works on all major browsers and apps for iOS and Android platforms.
- Blaise works on smartphones, tablets, laptops and desktop computers.

For 30 years, Statistics Netherlands has been a reliable producer of Blaise, the world-class survey data collection and survey processing software. The system has been redesigned from the ground up in order to completely handle the modern-day survey world. The many years of investment in the conceptual underpinnings of Blaise 5 are now coming to fruition.

Statistics Netherlands is uniquely positioned to produce this software. It draws upon the resources of its own methodology and operational departments and must meet the needs of its own demanding survey program. Additionally, Team Blaise has supported users to design hundreds of complex questionnaires around the world and has adapted the system to meet other users' requirements. A corporate governance structure has been created to oversee the development of Blaise 5. Statistics Netherlands has added development resources in order to bring Blaise 5 to its users.

For Survey Institutes

- Statistics Netherlands and Westat (USA) provide full training and system support.
- There is a thriving Blaise community in addition to an International Blaise Users Group and Blaise Corporate License Users Group. Blaise users hold a world-wide conference every 18 months.
- Blaise handles incredible complexity and offers enormous capacity, fast performance and a highly advanced programming language.
- Blaise's unique selective checking mechanism provides unmatched navigation while ensuring complete data integrity and high speed.
- Unimode specification yields one multi-mode, multi-device questionnaire.

- One specification provides a variety of user interfaces including full-screen and split-screen interfaces for all sizes of screen.
- One questionnaire – one database; respondents move seamlessly between modes.
- Blaise handles all human languages including left-to-right, right-to-left and Asian scripts.
- You can adapt or design templates according to your institute's own presentation standards.
- There are numerous multi-mode features and device appropriate settings and layouts.
- Blaise implements accessibility mandates, e.g. the US Section 508 standards.
- Blaise works both online and offline.

No other system has the track record Blaise has. It is used for personal, household and economic surveys and can cover a wide range of subjects including agriculture, business, crime, expenditure, health, labour force, living conditions, nutrition, social policy, time allocation, transportation and so on.

For the Principal Investigator

- Concentrate on questions, flow and edits.
- Specify only once for all modes or specify differently for each mode: your choice.
- Blaise handles widely different data collection structures; from single questions to complex grids.
- Non-linear interviewing is possible.
- Powerful code-frame features implement hierarchical and trigram searches.

While staying up-to-date on the modern survey-taking world and its multi-mode and multi-device nature, you should not have to worry about all the technical details.

For IT and Security

- The native Blaise database is the SQLite database.
- Blaise also writes to Oracle, MySQL, PostgreSQL, and MS SQL Server relational databases.
- APIs enable Blaise to blend in with your IT infrastructure.
- Blaise data can be encrypted.
- A Blaise instrument can preload a large number of variables.

Blaise is meant to blend into your secure IT infrastructure. It works in FISMA standard and other secure environments. You have already invested heavily into networks, secure web hosting, time-keeping and staffing systems, data analysis systems, sample frame systems and survey management systems. There is no need to modify these. Through Blaise APIs, you can integrate the Blaise survey system, seamlessly, with all these other systems.

Survey data can be separated from Personally Identifiable Information (PII), even during data collection. This way the data analysts see only the data intended for statistical production, while PII is transferred separately to update sample frames or to provide for respondent payments.

For Data Analysts

— Tens of thousands of variables per case are possible.
— Depending on the survey, Blaise works with flat-file, hierarchical and relational databases.
— Powerful metadata capabilities provide connections to SAS®, SPSS®, Stata® and other down-stream systems.

Collect data the way you prefer: set the mode of collection for all variables. For unanswered questions it is possible to establish whether the item was off-route, skipped, or received a Don't Know, Refusal, or any other self-defined attribute e.g. Not Applicable. Institutes can also implement their own codes for unanswered fields.

For Methodologists

— Audit trails and other paradata allow insights into the survey process.
— Blaise wil offer Computer Audio Recorded Interviewing (CARI) and Audio Computer Assisted Self Interviewing (ACASI) in the near term.
— Blaise promotes Unimode design but allows generalised mode design. Which one (or which combination) is used depends on the institute and on the survey.
— Randomisation is possible for experiments.

The arrival of many more survey devices and platforms has opened up many avenues of methodological investigation. Blaise 5 will provide you with unprecedented insights. You can specify which level of detail is captured on audit trails. Explore the history of attempted contacts across modes. Use the paradata to improve multi-mode instrument design or to make your survey management more efficient.

There is the important question as to how each mode should operate; for example, whether a web respondent should be presented with a DK or RF option, be allowed to skip a question or be prompted for a DK or RF when trying to skip a question. Also, how this choice matches the typical CATI/CAPI practice, where DK and RF are available to the interviewer but not offered to the respondent. Then there are all kinds of device-related issues such as how to offer a DK/RF option for an enumerated (code-one) field that is presented by a spinner on some devices but not on others. Find out what it is like to be a survey methodologist for Blaise 5!

For Survey Operations

— Combine self- and interviewer-administered survey modes.
— Integrate CATI, CAPI and Web into one instrument and one database.
— For CATI, Blaise provides a powerful Call scheduler that allow you to customise case delivery the way your institute needs it.
— A CATI specification module provides interviewer groups, time zones, time slices, various kinds of appointments, treatments and other priority schemes that make calling more efficient.
— There is an internationally recognised multi-mode outcome code set available, or you can modify this scheme to implement your own outcome codes.

Two main multi-mode survey management schemes are (1) sequential staging of modes and (2) simultaneous staging of modes (aka racehorse). You can also devise a mixture of both. Conduct surveys your way, based on the survey itself, the population, the modes you employ and the frame information you have available. For example, you can withhold cases from the scheduler while sending out invitations to complete the survey on paper or on the web while allowing CATI call-in at the same time.

The fact that you can use one instrument to work on one database makes integration of modes easier. In situations where the respondent logs in and starts a case but leaves it untouched for several days, you can switch the case to CATI and complete the collection from there.

For Blaise Developers

— The always-powerful Blaise language has been updated with key features and capabilities.
— There is a state-of-the-art Control Centre for instrument development.
— The Layout designer allows you to see screens without running the instrument.
— Three metadata views allow you to inspect the instrument in various ways.

Blaise provides an even more powerful programming interface with enhanced source code, metadata, settings and layout interfaces. The source code editor matches those of all modern programming systems with Intellisense, snippets, keyword highlighting, and many other efficiency features. New keywords such as ROLES, MODES, SPECIALANSWERS, SPECIALANSWERSETS, FIELDPROPERTIES and ATTRIBUTE make it far easier to handle multi-mode surveys. This includes explicitly allowing for mode-specific differences that define modern practice. Continuous source code parsing identifies syntactical mistakes without you having to prepare the instrument.

A superb aspect of *The Blaise 5 Way* is how keywords connect to layout and operational settings. For example, modes that are defined in the source code (MODES = Self, Interview) connect to Layout Set Groups (also Self and Interview) and each of these groups contains layout definitions for screen size and orientation. Moreover, it is possible to attach different operational settings to each platform and mode. As you develop in *The Blaise 5 Way*, you will find an incredible unique capability that allows you to provide for multimode by mixing and matching all aspects of instrument developing.

For Respondents and Interviewers

— Blaise provides highly usable and fast interfaces that adapt to the size of screen and the platform.
— Unmatched navigational capability and language switching are available.
— There is question-by-question help, hints, screen-reader texts, and other field-specific features.

Respondents and interviewers concentrate on providing and gathering data. The interfaces are easy and intuitive. Question statement can change by mode; this is often how these multimode instruments are specified. An interview can start in one language and be completed in another. An instrument can recognise the country of administration and the country of response and adapt accordingly. For example, an interviewer in the Netherlands can collect data from a respondent in Great Britain and correctly use the £ (pound) symbol and word when collecting monetary information.