Reglab Methodology Manual

reglab
center for strategy
& regulation

Table of Contents

Interactive Table of Contets

Introduction

The **Reglab Methodology Manual** is a guide designed to standardize, clarify, and strengthen the methodological practices across our studies. It reflects our commitment to rigorous, transparent, and evidence-based research.

Reglab is a research center specializing in consulting and applied research.
How we conduct our work matters, which is why we approach our studies with methodological rigor to highlight a core aspect of our mission:

> our commitment to evidence-based research.

Our goal is to produce knowledge that can meaningfully inform decisions - whether in the private sector or in public policy. For this reason, we consider it both our duty and part of our core mission to adopt three essential guidelines across all our activities:

- The use of a structured and replicable research method;
- Methodological transparency, including clear communication of research limitations; and
- Credibility, supported by bias-reduction procedures and established methodological standards.

Replicability	Methodologically rigorous structures, data collection, and data analysis
Transparency	An open and publicly available methodology table
Credibility	Bias-reduction procedures and source-verification protocols

In the following pages, we outline how these guidelines are applied in practice. This guide is organized as follows:

- **What are our research formats?**
- **How do we conduct our research?**
- **How do we ensure transparency regarding our methods?**

Finally, the purpose of publishing this document is also to serve as **an internal reference and an invitation for other organizations, companies, and think tanks to adopt similar practices,** fostering a culture of excellence and transparency in research.

← Back to contents

What are our research formats?

Our research initiatives are organized as follows:

By type of publication

Public

Research publicly released on our website. The goal is to share relevant findings - whether original or not - that may have practical impact for society.

Private

Studies commission ned by specific clients and kept confidential due to the strategic or sensitive nature of the information involved. Examples include:

- a benchmark analysis assessing market conditions and competitors;
- a regulatory impact report tailored to a company's operations;
- a jurimetric data assessment conducted for a client's litigation strategy.

By contract

Commissioned Studies

Custom research projects with scope and deliverables defined by the contracting party, conducted under strict quality standards that include, at minimum, the following practices:

- autonomy in the analysis of final results (the client may contribute to problem definition, research questions, and methodological choices, but does not influence the study's conclusions);
- transparency regarding funding sources, methodology, and bias-reduction procedures.

Digital Policy Hub

Studies in which Reglab maintains methodological control within a sponsored research line. Reglab defines the scope, objectives, and methodology, while sponsoring companies play a limited role. This format differs from commissioned studies due to its stronger editorial independence.

Institutional

Independent research developed by Reglab or invited researchers on strategic and public-interest topics. These initiatives are funded internally, ensuring full editorial and methodological autonomy.

Per format

Reglab Radar
presents visual reports that combine qualitative and quantitative data, offering a contextualized view of specific phenomena. The Reglab Radar aims to synthesize complex information in an accessible way, using visual resources and graphic design to facilitate the understanding of trends and emerging issues.

Policy Briefs
studies that assess existing or proposed public policies to inform and guide strategic decision-making. These briefs synthesize complex issues in an accessible format, highlighting key analytical points, impacts, and potential recommendations.

Discussion Papers
preliminary documents presenting early findings from research under development, whether by Reglab or external authors. They must include a "Research Questions and Provocations" section to encourage feedback and constructive critique, even if they do not fully adhere to all Reglab methodological standards.

Reglab Context
Concise summaries that synthesize specific topics or emerging trends. They are designed to present information clearly and accessibly, incorporating visual elements such as charts, tables, and infographics, combining analytical rigor with practicality.

Reglab Essays
articles written by invited authors exploring topics in digital governance. They synthesize research, present empirical evidence, or introduce new insights into ongoing debates. The texts follow Reglab's methodological transparency standards and remain the responsibility of the authors.

Special Formats
Deliverables (usually commissioned) that do not fit into the categories above and represent customized solutions for specific clients, where Reglab's expertise provides distinctive value. Examples include:

- Sector-specific "Doing Business" guides or comparative legislative analyses.
- Customized regulatory compliance manuals for specific industries.
- International regulatory mapping reports for companies entering new markets.
- Regulatory risk-assessment frameworks for emerging technologies.
- Practical guides for implementing new regulations.
- International benchmark reports.

How do we conduct our research?

In this section, we explain how we structure our methods. This is not a general research manual - there are excellent ones available. Rather, it outlines how we work.

Research question and research structures

> A strong research question must be clear, specific, and relevant, guiding the team's efforts toward producing meaningful answers.

The research question is the starting point that shapes the entire process, defining the problem to be addressed and the scope of our work.

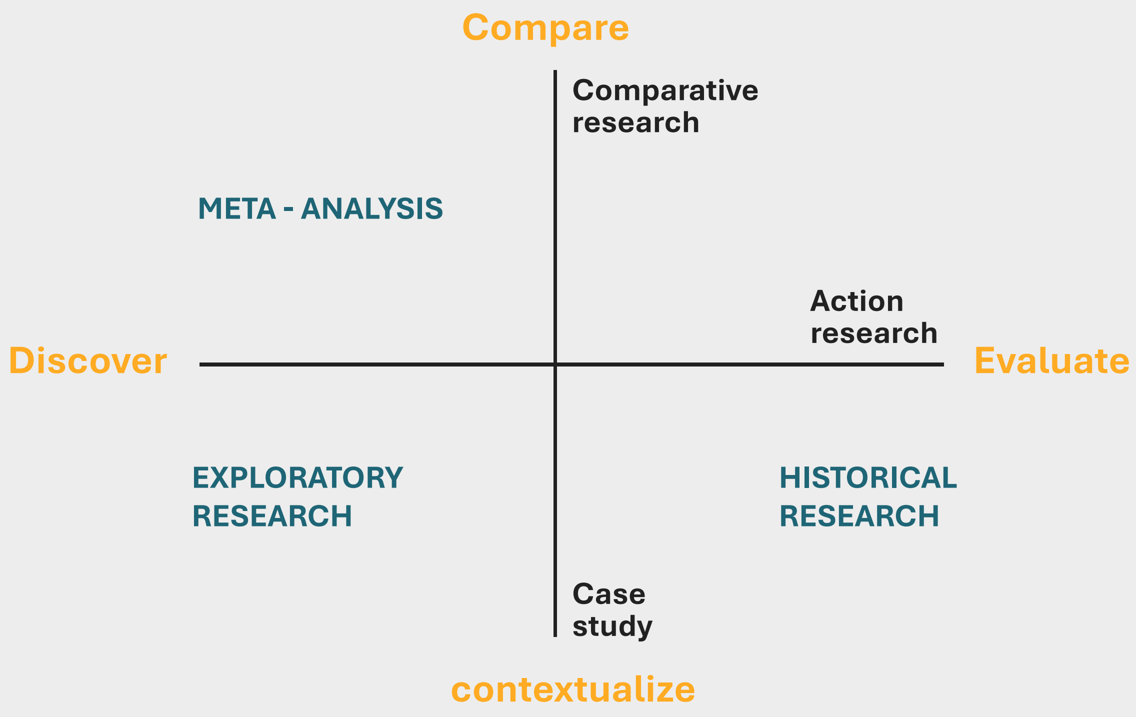
For example, in a report on technology regulation, a guiding question might be:

"What are the impacts of amendments to Brazilian Civil Rights Framework for the Internet (Marco Civil da Internet) on freedom of expression and legal certainty?"

Research questions help define the research structure and the conceptual map that connects theory, data, and methods to produce a coherent response. At Reglab, we adopt methodologies that prioritize rigor and clarity, ensuring accessibility for companies, policymakers, and the general public.

Research Structure

My research objective is to...



Below are examples of research structures and how they relate to research objectives and questions:

Exploratory research

Discover and Contextualize

Seeks to investigate little-studied or unknown phenomena, aiming to generate hypotheses, identify trends, and broaden initial understanding of a topic, without seeking definitive conclusions. Typically inductive.

Action research

Avaluate

Engages study participants directly in the research process, seeking to solve practical problems while generating knowledge. Comparative analyses conducted before and after interventions (e.g., training programs) fall into this category.

Meta-analysis

Discover and Compare

A systematic and rigorous review of previous studies and findings, combining data to identify patterns and the consistency of evidence. Literature reviews fit within this category.

Historical research

Contextualize and Evaluate

Longitudinal studies that investigate past events to understand their evolution, causes, and consequences. Focuses on analyzing records, documents, and historical data.

Comparative research

Compare and Evaluate

Compares two or more phenomena using defined control factors, aiming to identify similarities and differences. Often used to generate knowledge about contextual variations across different scenarios. Typically deductive.

Case study

Contextualizar

A detailed, in-depth analysis of a specific phenomenon to understand its unique characteristics. Ideal for generating insights in highly complex situations.

Data collection

The **data collection** stage is one of the most important components of any research project. It is where we ensure that the information used is relevant, reliable, and aligned with the study's objectives.

At Reglab, we approach this stage with rigor and transparency, aiming to guarantee quality and methodological consistency. Before beginning any study, we always discuss **our data universe, the general approach, and the method of collection.**

The data universe

Before beginning data collection, it is essential to define the full set of data that will be analyzed. This involves identifying the types of sources and documents to be included (such as reports, studies, public records, or interviews) and establishing clear inclusion and exclusion criteria. This step ensures that data collection remains focused and that the dataset accurately reflects the scope defined by the research question.

For example, when analyzing a judicial case, procedural documents alone may not be sufficient to answer the research question. In such cases, we assess how to expand the data universe - such as by incorporating press coverage.

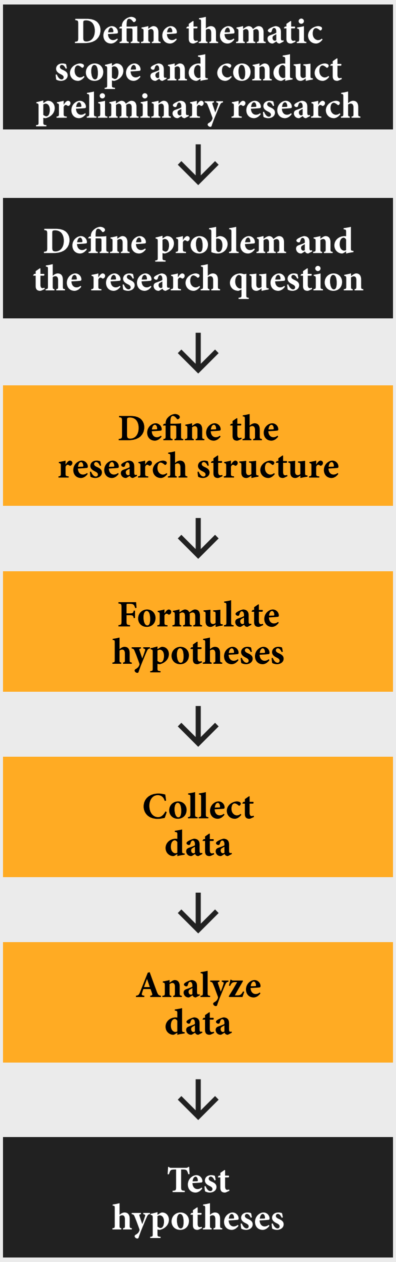
The approach: deductive or inductive?

In some studies, the volume of available data is so large that it requires a specific focus; otherwise, we risk getting lost in irrelevant information. In others, obtaining data is itself part of the challenge, and many insights emerge only through the process of exploration.

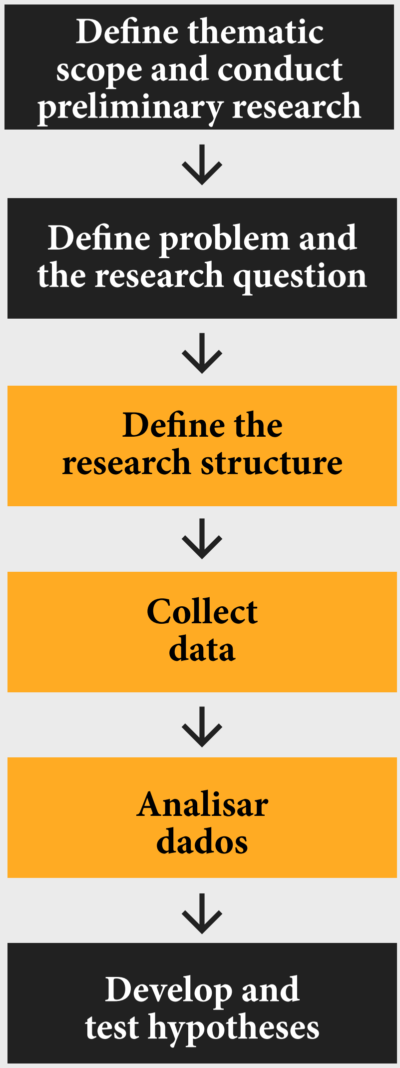
For this reason, we always pause to reflect: **are my research objectives already clear, or will the research process itself help me discover them?**

- **If my objectives are already well defined,** you likely need a deductive approach. We start from an established hypothesis and seek specific data to test it. It is similar to having a detailed map before beginning a journey - you know what you are looking for and where you expect to arrive, even though your interpretation may change along the way. Creating predefined categories in a table to analyze a legal case, for example, is a typical deductive approach.
- • **When my objectives are not yet clear and the topic is unfamiliar,** you likely need an inductive approach. You begin by exploring the available data to identify patterns and later formulate hypotheses. For instance, when studying the impact of a new technology on society, we may collect different types of data (interviews, documents, statistics) and only afterward identify trends and draw conclusions about its effects.

Deductive Approach



Inductive Approach



This distinction between approaches is important because it defines the method and shapes how we engage with clients and partners. Commissioned studies generally use a deductive approach to validate pre-established hypotheses, while research on emerging technologies relies on inductive methods to identify new patterns.

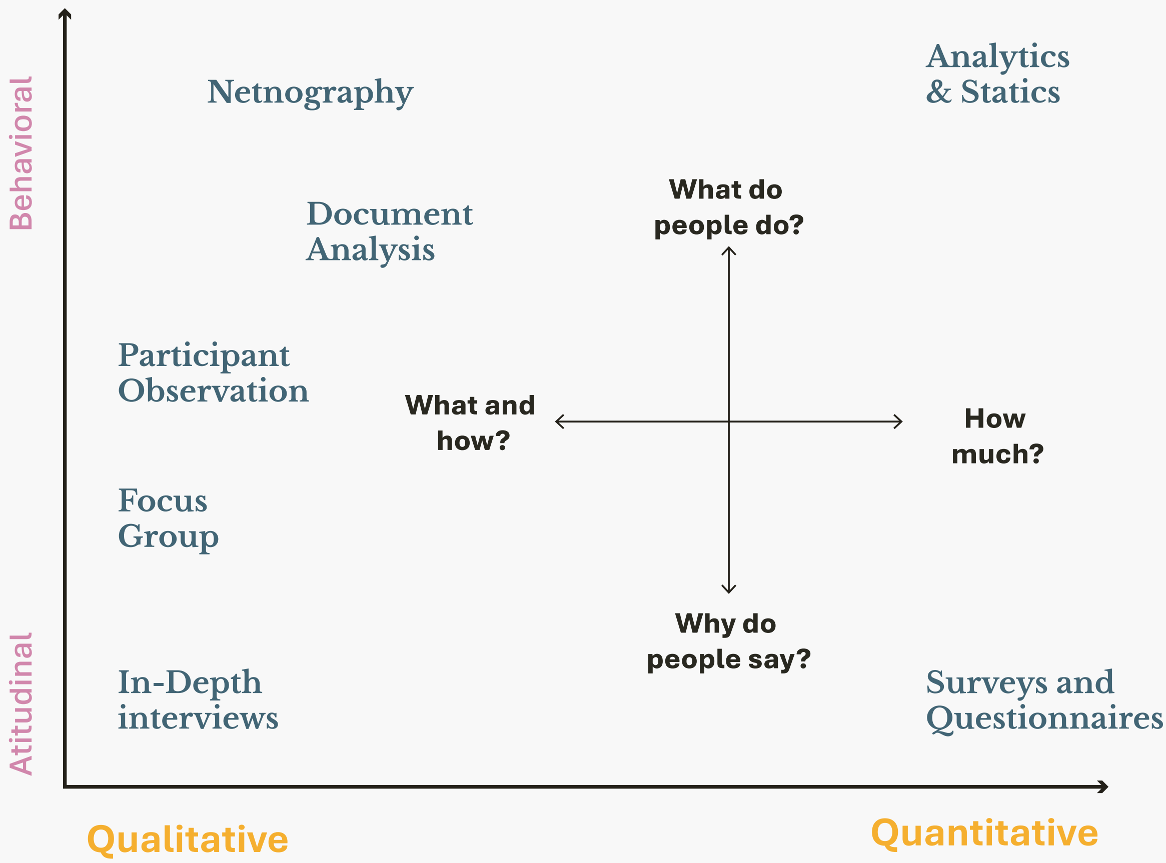
Clarifying the approach also helps align expectations: deductive projects allow for fixed timelines, whereas inductive ones require greater flexibility.

The Data Collection Methodology

The data collection methodology describes how data will be obtained. It is more than simply gathering information — it is about building a robust foundation for evidence-based analysis.

Clarity and systematization at this stage are essential for the quality, credibility, and practical impact of the research. Carefully documenting each step — from defining sources to specifying selection criteria and the tools used — creates a roadmap that enables other researchers to understand and replicate our process.

At Reglab, we consider a well-documented data collection process essential for producing robust analyses and reliable recommendations. Defining the data collection method involves identifying the overall approach, the data universe, and the research objectives and questions.



Some of the methods we use include:

Qualitative interviews

What do you think.../ In your opinion, how does it work... A format that explores individual perceptions in depth, gathering detailed data about experiences. Ideal for complex topics (Expert Interviews) or audience perceptions (Reception Studies).

Focus groups

What do you think... / In your view, how does it work... Group discussions used to understand collective opinions on a specific topic and to stimulate interaction. They help confront attitudes and deepen insights about behaviors.

Participant observation

What is happening.../ How is it happening... A method in which the researcher becomes embedded in the studied environment, observing behaviors in their natural context. Ideal for legislative processes, stakeholder analysis, and “in-motion” discussions (e.g., social media).

Analytics and statistics

How much does it happen... Analysis of numerical data to identify patterns, trends, and correlations, generating objective insights.

Netnography

How do people actually do things in practice A structured analysis - quantitative or sample-based - of behavior, interactions, and culture within online platforms such as social networks and forums. It explores shared practices and meanings in digital environments.

Surveys and questionnaires

How much do people say it happens... A structured tool for collecting quantitative data used to measure opinions or behaviors at scale. Not recommended for complex topics.

Document analysis

What does the person do... / How does the person do it... Systematic examination of texts and records to identify patterns and generate insights about the object of study. Ideal for regulatory and judicial analysis, comparative assessments, press discourse, and stakeholder positioning.

Data Analysis

The **data analysis** stage is the interpretive core of any research project, where collected data is processed and transformed into meaningful findings.

Despite its importance, this stage is often neglected in legal studies. Legal education rarely includes training in data analysis methods, and this phase frequently becomes an exercise in "*cherry-picking*" - a problematic practice in which data is selectively filtered or interpreted according to convenience, a predetermined thesis (in a reversed process where the conclusion precedes the analysis), or the researcher's personal or ideological biases.

At Reglab, we seek systematic, replicable, and transparent approaches to data analysis. To do this, we draw on established methods from other disciplines and select among them according to the dataset and research objectives. Examples include:

Statistical analysis

I have quantitative and qualitative data, and I want to explore a phenomenon through correlations and trends. Qualitative examination of numerical or large-scale datasets to identify patterns or correlations.

Social cost & benefit analysis

I have quantitative and qualitative data, and I want to study the broad impact of a policy. Assesses the overall impact of a project or policy by considering all social and economic costs and benefits (including tangible and intangible elements), as well as externalities (e.g., fundamental rights).

Regulatory impact analysis

I have quantitative and qualitative data, and I want to study the specific impact of a policy on those affected. Examines the specific effects of a proposed regulation, focusing on feasibility and direct consequences for regulated entities. It generally does not assess externalities or indirect effects on other stakeholders.

Content analysis

I have qualitative data, and I want to describe findings through textual mapping. Used to examine large volumes of textual data - such as documents, reports, or media - to identify the frequency of words, concepts, or categories and to formulate hypotheses.

Stakeholder analysis

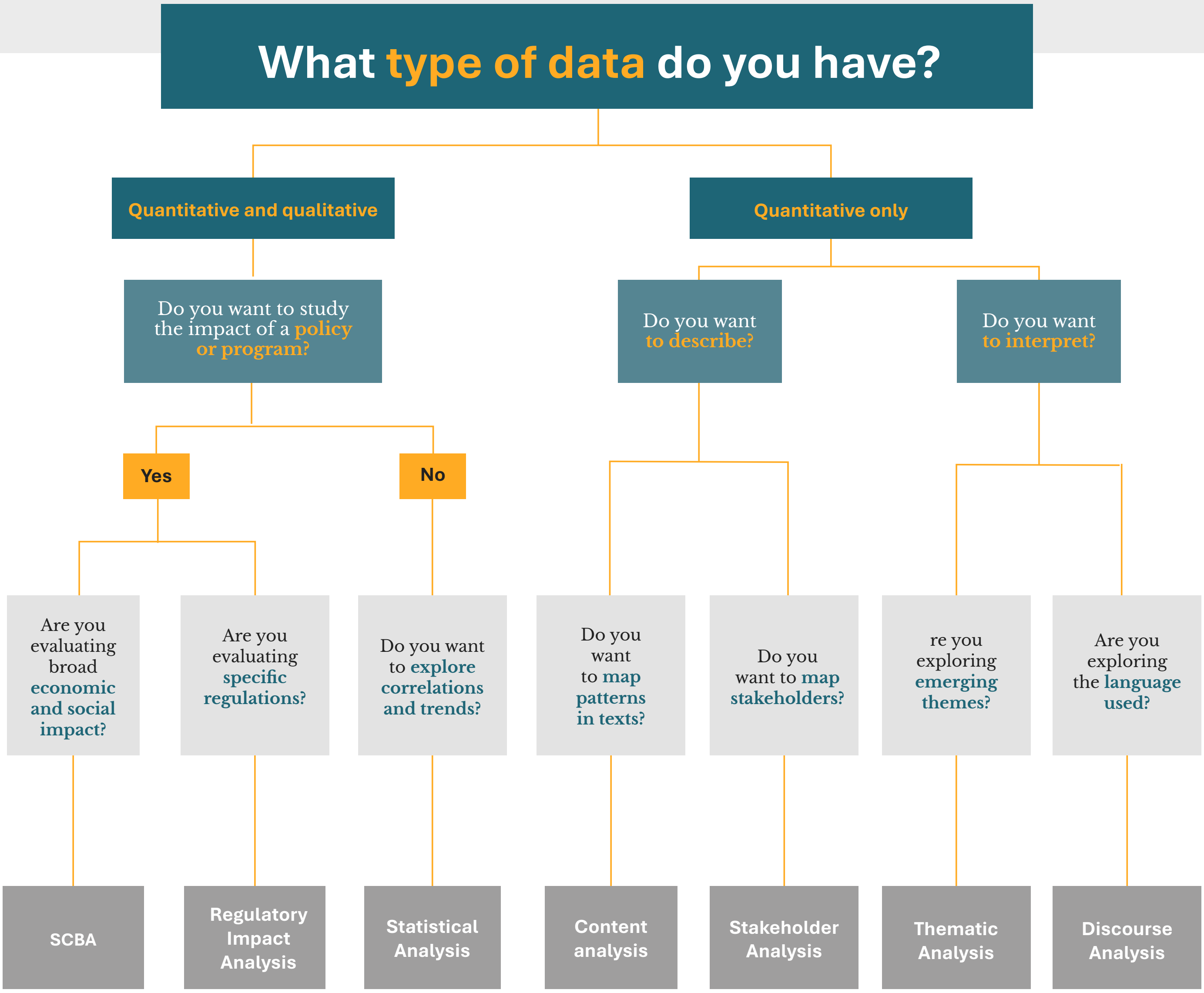
I have qualitative data, and I want to describe findings through stakeholder mapping. Ideal for mapping the interests and influence of social groups within a process, identifying areas of consensus and conflict on strategic issues.

Thematic analysis

I have qualitative data, and I want to interpret findings by exploring emerging themes. A systematic examination of qualitative (often subjective) data through the grouping of codes into macro-categories (themes), identifying emerging topics.

Discourse analysis

I have qualitative data, and I want to interpret meanings through the language used. Examines how language — including its multimodal expressions — constructs meaning and shapes social reality. Focuses on the implicit relationships and interests embedded in communication.


What type of data do you have?
Quantitative and qualitative
Quantitative only
Do you want to study the impact of a policy or program?
Do you want to describe?
Do you want to interpret?
Yes
No
Are you evaluating broad economic and social impact?
Are you evaluating specific regulations?
Do you want to explore correlations and trends?
Do you want to map patterns in texts?
Do you want to map stakeholders?
re you exploring emerging themes?
Are you exploring the language used?
SCBA
Regulatory Impact Analysis
Statistical Analysis
Content analysis
Stakeholder Analysis
Thematic Analysis
Discourse Analysis

← Back to contents

Bias Reduction Procedures

Let's be frank:

every research project contains biases. We can work to minimize them, but eliminating them entirely is unlikely.

Biases may be conscious or unconscious, stemming from methodological choices, data interpretation, or human limitations. For this reason, we consider transparency about the existence of our own biases essential — it helps readers interpret our findings and reflects a more honest and professional approach than simply concealing them.

This does not mean we should stop trying to reduce the impact of biases on research outcomes. On the contrary. Bias-reduction procedures are essential in our work and reinforce our commitment to the credibility of our analyses.

To that end, we provide training so that each researcher can recognize and question their own biases, reflecting on neutrality and impartiality. Depending on the research structure, one or more reduction methods may be applied:

Method Triangulation:

Combines different data collection techniques (interviews, observations, document analysis) to compare and validate information.

Established Theoretical - Methodological References:

Whenever possible, we rely on methods already recognized and validated in prior research and by the academic community.

Participant Review:

Presents preliminary results to participants to confirm whether the interpretations accurately reflect their experiences or views.

Open Coding:

Useful in inductive research, allowing categories to emerge from the data without imposing prior concepts, thereby minimizing interpretative bias.

Predefined Criteria:

In deductive research, criteria are established before the classification process begins. Adjustments are made only if categories prove insufficient.

Dual Validation:

Two or more researchers analyze qualitative data or subjective stages of the study.

Scientific Panel:

One or more external researchers are engaged to review the process before, during, or after data analysis.

Coding Process Log:

During coding, we maintain detailed records of all file versions, preserving the full history and enabling systematic verification.

How do we ensure transparency in our methods?

Although methodological rigor has long been discussed in academia — and is increasingly emphasized in applied social sciences such as Law — there is a growing debate on how to make this rigor transparent. The academic community is concerned not only with the importance of methodological transparency, but also with the most effective ways to document and communicate it.

In addition to transparency, there is an important conversation about standardization, which provides clear and consistent reference points. Such standardization is essential for ensuring research replicability, allowing other researchers to verify, validate, and build upon the results presented — thereby strengthening the credibility of the work.

This movement has gained momentum across several fields of knowledge and is discussed in high-impact publications. Journals such as Nature, Science, and the Journal of Communication have established rigorous guidelines to ensure replicability, standardization, and methodological transparency.

In our work, we adopt two standardized practices to meet these criteria: a detailed section of guidance for future studies and our methodology table.

Guidance for future studies

No theory or study is definitive. There is no universal framework capable of explaining all phenomena. Every study reflects a specific slice of reality and must acknowledge its limitations and the possibility of alternative interpretations.

Including this section is a mandatory and essential exercise in research: the critical reflection on one's methodological limitations. This process demonstrates academic maturity and creates a collaborative space for other researchers to build on the work — whether to validate or to challenge its findings through new methods and perspectives.

This approach reinforces Reglab's role as a think tank that goes beyond consultancy, actively contributing to the development of practical and relevant solutions to contemporary challenges.

This section is mandatory for all Reglab research formats, except Special Formats.

← Back to contents

Methodological Appendix

At Reglab, our principal studies use a standardized *methodological appendix*. This approach is more than a technical choice — it reflects our commitment to clarity and replicability.

Standardization makes our reports more accessible to frequent readers such as companies, regulators, and journalists. With a predictable structure, readers know exactly where to find the information they need, increasing engagement and the practical value of the studies.

Standardization also helps prevent methodological inconsistencies, ensuring that all relevant aspects are addressed in each study. When there is a clear structure to follow, elements such as ethical criteria, study limitations, and analytical tools are not overlooked.

Our methodological appendices are mandatory for the **Radar, Policy Brief, and Essays series.** For **Discussion Papers** and **Special Formats**, the appendix is not required because it may be unnecessary at that stage of the work or incompatible with the nature of the format. In the **Context** series, the appendix is not used due to the shorter length of the document, but methodological rigor is maintained through references and explanatory notes when needed.

← Back to contents

Elements of the Methodological Appendix

The standardized Reglab methodological appendix must include:

General Information:

Title of the study, authors, research question, and a methodological summary, including research structure and approaches..

Data Collection:

Collection method, sample delineation, collection period, and caveats.

Data Analysis:

Method of analysis, classification categories, coding process (if applicable), analysis period, and caveats.

Bias-Reduction Procedures:

description of the procedures adopted.

Additional information:

- **Other technical limitations:** in addition to the limitations and caveats already presented, this section should include — when applicable — limitations related to temporal scope, external data sources, or other constraints relevant to data collection or analysis.
- **Research Ethics:** this section must disclose any direct funding and the role of the sponsoring entity in the study. Authors must also declare adherence to the following ethical principles: (i) respect for privacy and confidentiality; (ii) responsible use of public data; (iii) methodological transparency; and (iv) non-discrimination and respect for diversity.
- **Personal Data Protection:** the ifstudy involves the direct collection of personal data, it is necessary to explain the methodological safeguards taken to comply with applicable legislation, including the General Data Protection Law (LGPD).
- **Use of Software:** all technological tools used in the research must be described, including how they were applied.

Conclusion:

Reglab’s commitment to methodological excellence

At Reglab, our methodological choices reflect our mission to elevate the public policy debate in Brazil. This is not merely about meeting academic or institutional expectations, but about ensuring that our work generates real and lasting impact.

We believe that productive discussions about a study should not rely on opinions or superficial critiques of its results, but rather on a critical examination of its methods and their application. This is only possible when our research is presented with clarity and transparency.

Our goal is to ensure that our studies serve as useful and impactful tools for everyone facing regulatory challenges in the media and technology sectors. The more people understand our choices, critique them, and suggest improvements, the more we foster a constructive dialogue among different stakeholders — encouraging collaborations that can lead to new perspectives and meaningful advances.

reglab

center for strategy
& regulation