

# Video 5 of 5: Cost of Phone Surveys and Summary

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Introduction to Phone Surveys



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# Cost of Phone Surveys

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- Total cost = fixed costs + variable costs
- Fixed costs: costs of doing survey regardless of its design
  - Telephone line charges; management; rent; insurance; technical infrastructure
- Variable costs: costs that are function of design features
  - Number of completed interviews (n size); survey length; time in field; desired response rate; cost of sample; CATI programming; telephone long distance; interviewer labor; supervisor labor; number of call backs; manual reports; interviewer training and monitoring

# Cost of Phone Surveys

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- Per-interview costs (also “cost per complete” or CPC) of telephone interviews usually depend on...
  - ...cost of interviewer time required to obtain a completed interview
  - ...cost of sample numbers used to achieve a completed interview
  - ...cost of remuneration/incentive (incl. advanced mailing) sent out
- Usually by far largest factor is interviewer time
  - Employee’s wages & benefits (incl. portion of time for supervisor)
  - Charges for phone dialing
  - Other infrastructure overheads
- Thus, goal is to increase production rate

Source: Lavrakas et al. (2010)

# Factors Influencing Production Rates

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- Dialing rate: Auto-dialer (predictive dialing) vs. manual dialing by interviewers
- Interview length: Number and type of questions asked
- Working number rate: List-assistance with identified “working” number blocks increase efficiency
- Contact rate: Depends on cultural and technical characteristics of target population and number of call attempts
- Eligibility rate: Screening for eligible sample members reduces efficiency
- Cooperation rate: Depends in general “survey climate” in population

Source: Lavrakas et al. (2010)

# Example: Costs per Interview in Phone Surveys

Country	Group	Total Cost Before Incentive	Total cost	Total Completions	Airtime Cost per Completion	Total Cost per Completion
Mozambique	No reward	\$976	\$976	670	\$1.46	\$1.46
Mozambique	Raffle	\$944	\$981	673	\$1.40	\$1.46
Mozambique	Transfer	\$931	\$1,342	664	\$1.40	\$2.02
Afghanistan	No reward	\$826	\$826	594	\$1.39	\$1.39
Afghanistan	Raffle	\$849	\$876	626	\$1.36	\$1.40
Afghanistan	Transfer	\$829	\$1,095	605	\$1.37	\$1.81
Ethiopia	No reward	\$1,303	\$1,303	639	\$2.04	\$2.04
Ethiopia	Raffle	\$1,266	\$1,340	659	\$1.92	\$2.03
Ethiopia	Transfer	\$1,221	\$2,031	658	\$1.86	\$3.09
Zimbabwe	No reward	\$1,271	\$1,271	599	\$2.12	\$2.12
Zimbabwe	Raffle	\$1,441	\$1,477	702	\$2.05	\$2.10
Zimbabwe	Transfer	\$1,476	\$1,914	730	\$2.02	\$2.62

Source: Leo et al. (2015)

# Example: Comparison to Personal Interviews

**Table 7.2 Cost Comparison, an MPPS and an LSMS Complex Multitopic Survey, Malawi**  
*U.S. dollars*

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Third Integrated Household Survey, Integrated Household Panel Survey</i>	<i>Listening to Malawi, baseline</i>	<i>Listening to Malawi, phone survey</i>	<i>Listening to Malawi, phone survey w/o a call center, phones, or chargers</i>
Total cost per survey	600,000	180,614	13,188	8,767
Sample size, number of households	4,000	1,504	1,504	1,504
Cost per household	150.00	120.00	8.80	5.80
Number of questions	2,863	923	42	42
Cost per question	0.06	0.13	0.20	0.14

Source: Dabalen et al. (2016)

# Summary

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# Module Summary

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- Phone surveys have some advantages and some disadvantages compared to other survey modes
  - Relatively fast with a wide reach
  - Low response rates and limited questionnaire length and complexity
  - In mixed-mode studies, phone used in combination with other modes to leverage advantages of modes and save costs
- When conducting phone surveys, one needs to consider influence of survey design on data quality from measurement and representation perspective
- Costs of phone interviews heavily influenced by production rate
  - Production rate can differ by sample type (LL vs. cell) and other factors



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