

# Data Collection Method Brief

*Collecting Data from Children Ages 9-13*

## APPENDIX A: TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

OCTOBER 2007



Excerpted From: *Summary Report: Collecting Data from Children Ages 9-13.*  
<http://www.lpfch.org/informed/facts/etr.html>

## Telephone Interviews

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| <p><b>How have telephone interviews been used for collecting information from children?</b></p> <p>Researchers and practitioners use telephone interviews to collect information on a range of topics for surveillance, research or evaluation. Research suggests that it can be used successfully with children ages 11 and older. Traditional telephone interviews involve having interviewers ask the survey questions by phone; the interviewers then record them on paper or on a computer (called CATI--Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing). Telephone Audio Computer-Assisted Self Interviewing, or T-ACASI, is a more recent advance in survey technology. With this mode, an interviewer is used to screen and recruit participants. After a few background and practice questions, the phone call is transferred over to a T-ACASI system in which pre-recorded questions are read to participants who give their answers by pressing keys on a touchtone phone.</p> |  |
| <p><b>What are important considerations when using telephone interviews with children?</b></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Investigators can use standard interview questions with children, but the questions must be modified to reflect children's cognitive and language abilities, address issues of confidentiality of reporting certain behaviors, and ensure they are relevant to children's main social and cultural context (e.g., home or school).</li> <li>✓ Collecting data using interviews is ideal for children with lower literacy skills.</li> <li>✓ Interviews provide an opportunity to obtain more in-depth data than written surveys because they allow interviewers and participants to ask clarifying questions.</li> <li>✓ Interviewer training is essential to ensure data quality.</li> <li>✓ T-ACASI standardizes the question-asking process by using a recorded voice.</li> <li>✓ Telephone interviews, while less expensive than in-person interviews, tend to be more expensive than written surveys.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>What are the advantages of using this approach?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data quality</li> <li>• Cost</li> </ul>   | <p><b>What the Research Says...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ With school-aged populations, telephone interview approaches allows for the inclusion of students who are frequently absent from school or who have dropped out of school.<sup>1</sup></li> <li>✓ T-ACASI may yield higher reports of risk behavior compared to CATI.<sup>1,4</sup></li> <li>✓ Data accuracy from this approach is comparable to in-person interviews.<sup>3</sup></li> <li>✓ T-ACASI is more cost-efficient than in-home or in-school surveys and a more cost-effective method for obtaining a representative sample of adolescents.<sup>1,4</sup></li> <li>✓ Telephone surveys are less expensive than in-person interviews.<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>   |

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| <p><b>What are the drawbacks of this approach?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ease of use</li> <li>• Response rate</li> <li>• Privacy</li> <li>• Data quality</li> </ul> | <p><b>What the Research Says...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ In some studies, youth reported concerns that parents or others may hear their responses.<sup>1,4</sup></li> <li>✓ Inaccurate contact information is a particular challenge with this method over other in-person methods.<sup>2</sup></li> <li>✓ Some populations (e.g., Hispanics in one study) may be more likely to respond by mail than by phone.<sup>2</sup></li> <li>✓ Response rates may be lower with telephone interviewing due to factors such as the wide use of answering machines and caller ID screening, and assumptions that calls are associated with telemarketing.<sup>4</sup></li> <li>✓ Parental presence increases the likelihood of response bias and affects the validity of the data.<sup>4</sup></li> <li>✓ The impact of privacy on responses to telephone surveys may depend on children’s demographic characteristics (e.g., gender).<sup>1</sup></li> <li>✓ Evidence is mixed on how telephone interviewing affects the rate of reporting risk behaviors--(some studies found higher rates, whereas others found lower rates).<sup>1,4</sup></li> <li>✓ This methods excludes homes without telephone service, which could bias results.<sup>4</sup></li> <li>✓ Telephone surveys may be more prone to socially desirable responses than written surveys.<sup>4</sup> For example, traditional telephone interviews (i.e., interviews in which a person asks questions over the phone) have been generally regarded as inferior for collecting data on substance abuse because of low reporting in comparison to written surveys.<sup>1</sup></li> <li>✓ T-ACASI surveys may be more prone to missing data than CATI surveys because participants can simply hang up to terminate the interview.<sup>4</sup></li> </ul> |
| <p><b>References</b></p>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Currivan, D. B., Nyman, A. L., Turner, C. F., &amp; Biener, L. (2004). Does telephone audio computer-assisted self-interviewing improve the accuracy of prevalence estimates of youth smoking? Evidence from the UMass tobacco study. <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i>, 68(4), 542-564.</li> <li>2. Gallagher, P. M., Fowler, F. J. J., &amp; Elliott, D. (2001). Collecting Information about the Health Experiences of Publicly Insured Adolescents. Paper presented at the Seventh Conference on Health Survey Research Methods (2/01).</li> <li>3. Klein, J. D., Graff, C. A., Santelli, J. S., Allan, M. J., &amp; Elster, A. B. (2001). Improving Adolescent Health Care Surveillance. Paper presented at the Seventh Conference on Health Survey Research Methods (2/01).</li> <li>4. Moskowitz, J. M. (2004). Assessment of cigarette smoking and smoking susceptibility among youth: Telephone computer-assisted self-interviews versus computer-assisted telephone interviews. <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i>, 68(4), 565-587.</li> <li>5. Scott, J. (1997). Children as respondents: Methods for improving data quality. In L. E. Lyberg, P. Biemer, M. Collins, E. D. Leeuw, C. Dippo, N. Schwarz &amp; D. Trewin (Eds.), <i>Survey Measurement and Process Quality</i> (pp. 331-350). New York: John Wiley &amp; Sons, Inc.</li> </ol>   |