

## Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing

Over the past three decades, RTI has used state-of-the-art, computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) systems to conduct hundreds of telephone surveys, involving interviews with hundreds of thousands of individuals from households and establishments. We have extensive experience in conducting random-digit-dial (RDD) and list-sample surveys. Our CATI system is augmented by several other complex software systems that integrate tracing and locating, call scheduling, and case management.

- **Telephone Facility:** RTI's Telephone and Internet Operation department (TIO) operates two state-of-the-art telephone operations centers located in Raleigh, NC and Greenville, NC. The facility in Raleigh is located only 18 minutes from the Raleigh Durham International airport and occupies 10,313 square feet of space, with 80 PC interviewing stations, 12 supervisor stations, and 10 dedicated monitoring stations. A separate on-site training room is equipped with an additional 30 training stations. Our Greenville telephone facility occupies 5,600 square feet and is equipped with 72 CATI interviewing stations, 8 supervisor stations, and 8 monitoring stations. An 18 station training room is located right off the interviewing production floor. All of the workstations at each facility are integrated into RTI's campus network, with dedicated PC servers reserved solely for CATI use for improved performance. Additionally, both facilities are located in controlled-access environments, ensuring the strict security of all survey operations.
- **Data Quality:** RTI is committed to ensuring data quality, placing particular emphasis on the recruitment and selection of highly trained supervisors and interviewers. All new supervisors undergo special training on supervisory techniques and must have extensive telephone interviewing experience. Newly hired interviewers must successfully complete a thorough training program on interviewing techniques and the use of CATI technology. RTI also uses silent monitoring equipment that allows for audiovisual monitoring of the interviewing process.
- **CATI Software:** We offer our clients expertise in a variety of software packages to program CATI data collection instruments of varying length and complexity. We are currently using BLAISE, developed by the Netherlands Central Bureau of Statistics; ACS-Query, developed by the Analytical Group; CATI CMS, an RTI-developed proprietary software product that allows us to launch any number of other commercial software including web applications, and CASES, developed by the University of California at Berkeley. Our flexibility with respect to available CATI software allows us to evaluate our client's specific data collection requirements and select the most appropriate package for that application.
- **Tracing and Locating:** Our CATI tracing module is a specialized software component used when sample members must be located before they can be interviewed. The module uses a rostering capability to maintain a history of calls to all potential contact persons. It also includes a convenient comment feature, which allows interviewers to record notes for subsequent calls made by themselves or other interviewers. Our CATI system is also integrated with that of RTI's Tracing Operations Unit (TOPS). These centralized tracing specialists use an array of interactive databases to assist with locating sample members' addresses, telephone numbers, and other locating information. These include consumer databases, state Department of Motor Vehicle records,

National Change of Address and new mover files, criss-cross directories, catalog mailing lists, death indices, Social Security Number files, and online directory assistance.

- **Call Scheduling:** To supplement our CATI interviewing package, we use a fully integrated call scheduling system that reduces the number of callbacks needed to reach a respondent. We have developed a robust set of call-scheduling algorithms to allocate pending cases to interviewers in a priority order based on the case status and call history to date. This ensures that cases are routinely and equally worked throughout the data collection period. Our call-scheduling system also includes logic to ensure that appointment times fall within the operating hours of our telephone facilities.
- **Case Management:** We develop and maintain CATI case status and interviewer performance databases to produce status and production reports for all CATI surveys. This system produces timely status reports for client staff and project managers at various levels of interest (e.g., telephone numbers, households, and sample members). It also provides instant updates on response rates.
- **Types of Surveys:** We have the experience and technology to conduct a wide variety of telephone surveys. Some recent studies of national significance include:
  - *State Demand and Needs Assessment Studies*—The purpose of these projects is to enhance and expand the state information systems currently in place and to develop a comprehensive and more fully integrated approach for assessing populations at risk for the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Estimates of treatment needs will help states make optimal use of their limited resources in the area of drug abuse treatment programming. These projects are sponsored by the Center for Substance

Abuse Treatment via contracts to the states. RTI has conducted a series of surveys for the states of Georgia, Louisiana, Maine, Missouri, North Carolina, South Dakota, and Vermont, interviewing more than 29,000 households.

- *National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS)*—This study is the only periodic, nationally representative survey of student financial aid. NPSAS collects financial aid, enrollment, and demographic information from approximately 70,000 students randomly selected from nearly 1,000 post-secondary institutions in the United States and Puerto Rico. Sponsored by the National Center for Education of the U.S. Department of Education, RTI conducted this survey in 1993, 1996, and 2000.
- *Consumer Assessment of Health Plans*—The Agency for Health Care Policy and Research awarded a 5-year cooperative agreement to RTI to implement a Consumer Assessment of Health Plans Study (CAHPS). This initiative will assist consumers in selecting health care plans and services appropriate for their needs. RTI has conducted over 6,000 consumer assessment telephone surveys during the development and testing of the CAHPS survey instruments.
- *Kinsey Institute Survey of Sexual Well-Being of Women in Heterosexual Relationships*—The purpose of this study was to gather data on factors that influence whether or not a woman is satisfied with her sexual life and sexual relationship with her male partner. To answer the sensitive questions, RTI developed a T-ACASI interview and administered it to over 1,000 women between the ages of 20 and 65.