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**Managing Time Use for Virtual Phone Banks**

Case Study: Uganda, Consumer Protection Consumer Survey

COVID-19 motivated a rapid shift to remote data collection. In addition to technical hurdles associated with computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI), survey implementation may require more comprehensive productivity management to ensure that samples are representative and that calls are made during different times of the day and days of the week, to ensure that individuals are not systematically excluded based on the schedules they keep (e.g. farmers or night-shift workers). IPA Uganda conducted a random digit dialing (RDD) survey on financial fraud with a completely virtual phone bank and protocols that specified extended call hours to ensure that a wide variety of respondents could be reached. To monitor performance effectively, the team integrated daily call time monitoring into high-frequency checks of survey data using the IPA-developed sctotimeuse Stata command.

#### Motivation

The clearest threat to the validity of phone surveys is coverage bias. This means that the survey will not be statistically representative of the population of interest because it may systematically exclude individuals. This is especially a concern in RDD surveys. Some survey protocols can be used to work against this concern, for example by scheduling enumerator call times over specific hours to ensure that the team effectively covers all planned blocks of time.

In virtual phone banks, there are also concerns about employee productivity. Employees are often making calls from their own home and may be unwilling to report problems out of their control such as issues with IPA provided tablets or phone connectivity problems for fear of losing employment.

#### Using Stata to Track Time Coverage

The IPA Uganda team used the sctottimeuse Stata command to ensure that time block assignments were followed. In the example output, below, each entry from the text audit, which tracks the duration of each item in the survey, is displayed on a graph of the workday, starting from the time each survey started. Different survey outcomes are displayed with different colors. This is aggregated across all submitted surveys at the end of each day. Team leaders used this output to ensure assigned time block were covered. The example verifies that Annmarrie and Lillian made calls after normal working hours for respondents, between 5 and 7 pm.

This command can be used on any SurveyCTO data with two requirements: (1) attempt-level submissions are submitted daily and (2) text audits are included in the SurveyCTO form, which reports the path that each submission follows through the survey as well as the duration of each item.

It can be tempting to use this tool to evaluate enumerators' performance. However, this information may not fully reflect working time due to connectivity problems, time errors on tablets, or other issues associated with remote surveying. sctottimeuse is most useful to ensure that survey teams are making calls during the specified coverage blocks.

**Example Output of the sctottimeuse Stata Command**

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