



सत्यमेव जयते

**NITI Aayog**



DEVELOPMENT MONITORING AND EVALUATION OFFICE

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# **Comparative Assessment of Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) Software Applications**

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## **Disclaimer**

The document primarily relies on information available in the public domain on various CAPI tools and their features. The authors also reached out to some of the CAPI developers clarifying the presence of certain features. Though every effort is made to ensure an accurate representation on comparison of several CAPI tools, the authors do not guarantee the same owing to limited information in the public domain on features of several CAPI tools. However, we encourage you to write to us on 'contact-dmeo@gov.in' in case of any discrepancy and help us strengthen the document further.

## 1. Purpose of the Document

With Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) becoming a popular alternative to the Paper and Pencil Interviewing (PAPI) method for data collection in survey research, a wide array of options of CAPI software applications are now available.

This document aims to provide a brief introduction to CAPI and serve as a reference for researchers to aid in selecting the CAPI tool that would be appropriate for their survey. As part of this documentation, 18 CAPI software applications have been compared, four of which are open license tools. While this particular document provides information on how these four open license tools fare against each other, the information on the results of 18 CAPI software applications is shared in a separate document for the interest of the audience of this document.

## 2. Introduction to CAPI

### 2.1. Introduction About Survey

A survey is one of the standard methods of conducting primary research. Survey research is defined as "the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions" (J. Check, R. K. Schutt, 2012). Survey research uses a quantitative research approach (like questionnaires with numerically rated items), qualitative research approach (e.g., using open-ended questions), or both, i.e., mixed methods. Surveys are frequently used in social and psychological research to describe and explore human behaviour (Singleton R. A., Straits B. C., 2009).

### 2.2. History of CAPI

Computer-Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI) is a face-to-face data collection method for a survey. The interviewer uses a tablet, mobile phone, or computer to record answers given during the interview (World Bank, 2021).

Computer-Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI) is a relatively new interviewing technique developed in the survey research area that was made possible due to the personal computer revolution in the 1980s. By the late 1980s, all the major survey organizations in the western world conducting face-to-face surveys looked to establish a CAPI facility. Willem Saris of the Netherlands did the first application of CAPI for a less complex market survey. In the USA in 1989, NLS was the first longitudinal survey to be conducted through CAPI (Lavrakas, 2008). In India, in the mid-2010s (2014-15), the Indian Government started replacing Paper Assisted Personal Interviews (PAPI) with CAPI. In 2016 the first Periodic Labor Force Survey (PLFS) was conducted using CAPI (Suneja, 2016).

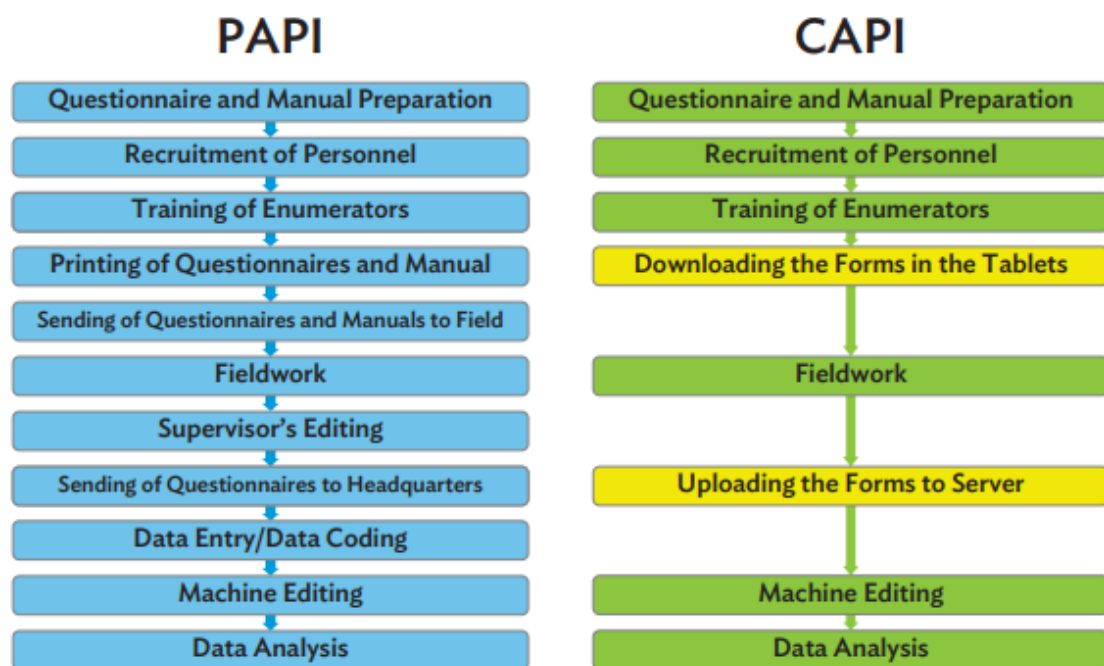


Figure 1: Census being conducted in India through PAPI. (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, 2021)

### 2.3. Difference between PAPI and CAPI Survey Methodologies

The steps involved in PAPI and CAPI survey methodologies are shown in Figure 2. In the PAPI methodology, the questionnaire is prepared and printed as copies to be carried by enumerators to the field for gathering responses. Enumerators are trained on the questionnaire to ensure that skips, validations, and other logic checks are not missed during field interviews. The responses are recorded on the printed copies, and subsequent data quality checks by supervisors are conducted by going through the filled forms. The edited forms are then transported back to the headquarters, where the data is entered from the physical copies into the computer through data entry operators. Once the records are digitized, the data is available for machine data check and analysis.

In CAPI methodology, with questionnaires coded into the mobile/tablet applications with skip logic and validations automatically incorporated within the form design, the enumerators are trained on using CAPI software to collect data from the field. The enumerators collect data through the CAPI software, and all responses are digitized during the data collection stage itself. After the interview, the record is sent to the main server for viewing and further processing at the headquarter. Digital data collection considerably reduces time and resource investment compared to paper-based data collection. It also saves on the transportation cost and amount of paper used in paper-based surveys. Further, it has allowed recording answers in new media formats like photos, audios, videos, etc. Moreover, features like recording location details and real-time data synchronization have made on-field enumerator monitoring possible.



CAPI = computer-assisted personal interviewing, PAPI = pen and paper interviewing.

Source: Asian Development Bank.

Figure 2: Steps Required in a PAPI and CAPI Survey (Asian Development Bank, 2019)

## 2.4. Advantages and Considerations regarding CAPI

The section below summarizes the advantages and considerations to be made while selecting a CAPI tool for the survey.

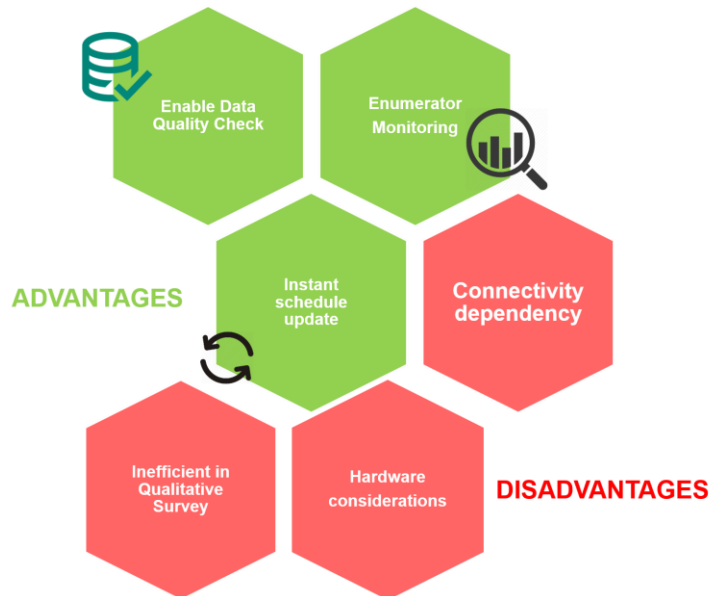


Figure 3: Advantages and disadvantages of CAPI software system

### 2.4.1. Advantages of CAPI (World Bank, 2021)<sup>1</sup>

- **Enables data quality check:** Availability of features such as logic checks, skip patterns, and validations during the interview make the survey efficient while ensuring data quality.
- **Enumerator monitoring:** CAPI allows monitoring of enumerators. It provides the facility to supervisors to review the start time, end time, and GPS location of an interview. These details help validate the presence of the enumerator at the location of the interview, the time taken by the enumerator to conduct the interview, etc.
- **Instant schedule update:** Any last-minute edits or updates to the questionnaire can instantly be reflected on the interviewers' data collection devices.

### 2.4.2. Considerations regarding CAPI (World Bank, 2021)

- Digital data collection devices like phones/tablets need electricity and power bank devices to operate. Further, for synchronization of data from data collection device to server, there is a need for internet connectivity which may not be feasible in some rural/remote areas. Many CAPI tools support offline data

<sup>1</sup> See <http://surveys.worldbank.org/capi>

collection to overcome limited internet connectivity. Data collected offline can be synchronized to a server from places where good connectivity exists.

- In qualitative surveys (where a large amount of qualitative data needs to be collected), PAPI is found to be more effective than CAPI (World Bank, 2021).
- For a detailed list of considerations regarding CAPI, check the list of features available in Annexure I.

### 3. Comparative Assessment of Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) Software Applications

#### 3.1. Methodology

The following steps were followed for the creation of the CAPI software application comparative matrix:

##### Step 1: Feature Selection

A list of features are listed to capture the performance of each application:

- License and System Requirements
- Tutorials and Documentation
- Questionnaire Design
- Design Features
- Data Quality Control
- Data Security/Encryption
- Role-based Access Rights
- Export Options
- Support Service

The complete list of shortlisted features is attached at Annexure-I. The list of features is validated with survey experts.

##### Step 2: Shortlisting of CAPI tools

Based on secondary research and field experience, CAPI software applications popular for conducting surveys were selected for the analysis. The list of CAPI software applications analysed is attached in Annexure-II.

##### Step 3: Secondary Research

For the software applications shortlisted in Step 2, the information on each of the features identified in Step 1 was identified through secondary research. The resources covered through secondary research included the software application website, user reviews, documentation, training material, introductory/training videos, etc.

The comparative matrix developed has been attached in Annexure-III.

### 3.2. Comparative Evaluation of Shortlisted Open License CAPI Software Applications

Four open license applications, namely Survey Solutions, Open Data Kit (ODK), CSPro (Census and Survey Processing System), and KoBo Toolbox, were compared across select features.

The comparison is detailed in the table below:

	Features, Software Name		Survey Solutions	CSPro	Open Data Kit (ODK)	KoBo Toolbox
	<b>General Information</b>					
	Developer		World Bank	US Census Bureau	Get ODK	KoBo
	Software License	Cost (Free/Paid)	Free (Server cost not included)	Free	Free	Free
	Hardware requirement	Minimum requirements	Hardware Requirement for Server: 1. CPU: 4 physical cores, 64-bit 2. RAM: 16GB 3. DISK: 500GB SSD (Survey Solutions, 2021)	1. Pentium processor 2. 512MB of RAM 3. SVGA monitor 4. Mouse 5. 100MB of free hard drive space 6. Microsoft Windows Vista, 7, 8, or 10 (CSPro, 2021)	Aggregate can be hosted on cloud providers such as DigitalOcean, Amazon Web Services, or local/cloud servers. There's also a pre-configured virtual machine image that is ready to deploy on any computer (ODK, 2021)	There is no software to be installed on your computer when using the free public servers provided by KoBo toolbox.
	Data Collection Device Requirements	Devices/OS Supported	Android (Android 5.0 or better is required)	Android (Android 5.0 or better is required; earlier versions require SD card)	Android	Android
	Source Code Open Distribution	Is the code available in the public domain?	No	No	Yes	Yes
	<b>Training and Documentation</b>					
1	Mode of Training	Mode of training	Self-learning through Portal (videos, articles) User Forum	1. E-learning videos 2. Training manual	Documentation	Documentation



	Features, Software Name		Survey Solutions	CSPro	Open Data Kit (ODK)	KoBo Toolbox
				3. User Forum		
		Areas covered in training	1. Questionnaire Designer (Web) (Survey Solutions, 2021) 2. Tester Headquarter (Web) 3. Supervisor 4. Interviewer	1. Questionnaire Design 2. Data Entry Application 3. Tabulating Data 4. Synchronize Data	1. ODK Collect 2. ODK Central 3. Creating ODK forms 4. ODK Briefcase 5 ODK Aggregate (ODK, 2021)	1. Getting started 2. Creating forms 3. Collecting data 4. Managing projects and data
	<b>Questionnaire Design</b>					
2	Question types supported	Categorical (Single-select, multi-select)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		Numeric	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		Text	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		Date	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		GPS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		Image part of the question	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		Image part of the answer	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		Audio	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		Spatial/IoT data	Yes	Covered in Para Data	No	No
3	Languages in which questionnaire can be developed	Indian Languages	Languages in Unicode	Languages in Unicode	Languages supported as listed in the link (iana, 2021)	English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Hindi, Kurdish, and Chinese. Possibility of volunteering to add language to the interface
4	Offline Editing of Questionnaires	Feature Available (Yes/No)	No	Yes	Yes	No
5	Batch Editing	Feature Available (Yes/No)	No	Yes	No	Yes
6	Collaborative questionnaire development: Multiple users	Feature Available (Yes/No)	Yes (online)	Yes (offline)	No	Yes (online)

	Features, Software Name		Survey Solutions	CSPRO	Open Data Kit (ODK)	KoBo Toolbox
	can collaboratively work on the same questionnaire					
7	Logical Skips, Loops	Feature Available (Yes/No)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
8	Data Quality Control: Query Management (Throw error while submitting out of range data)	Feature Available (Yes/No)	Yes (Not available by default but can add code to throw an error on question skips/logic checks)	Yes	Yes	Yes
9	Questionnaire Testing	Feature Available (Yes/No)	Yes (Tester app available)	Yes	Yes	Yes
10	Provision for customised development (user-defined functions)	Feature Available (Yes/No)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Data Transfer and Export</b>						
11	Data Transfer	Data can be transferred to	Server; Bluetooth (Interviewer App to Supervisor App)	CSWeb, Dropbox, FTP, Bluetooth	1. Bulk publishing to other services 2. Through APIs	Available for download in supported export formats
12	Export data formats supported		SPSS, Stata, Tabular	Txt, CSV, SPSS, SAS, Stata, R	CSV, JSON, KML, SPSS	Excel, CSV, KML, ZIP (for media) and SPSS
<b>Design Features</b>						
13	Data Visualisation and Analysis	Dashboard (real-time monitoring - online)	Yes	No (offline) and Using CSWeb	No	Yes
14	Data Visualisation and Analysis	Provision for analysing the data	No	Yes	No (Data can be exported in a format easily readable in visualisation tools such as PowerBI etc.)	Yes
15	Location Tracking	Feature Available (Yes/No)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		If Yes:				

	Features, Software Name		Survey Solutions	CSPro	Open Data Kit (ODK)	KoBo Toolbox
		GPS Enabled (Yes/No)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		Internet Required (Yes/No)	No	No	No	No
16	Offline-data collection	Feature Available (Yes/No)	Yes (Interview App)	Yes	Yes	Yes
17	Data Synchronization to Server	Internet Required (Yes/No)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Data Security</b>						
18	Data encryption during data transfer from device to a server	Feature Available (Yes/No)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
19	Data encryption during data transfer from device to device (except server)	Feature Available (Yes/No)	No (This feature is only available for supervisor roles via Bluetooth)	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Role-Based Access Rights</b>						
20	Role-Based Access Rights	Feature Available (Yes/No)	Yes	No	No	Yes

#### 4. A Brief Introduction to Remote Surveys

With the travel restrictions and social distancing norms being practised to contain the spread of COVID-19, remote surveys have gained popularity due to the unique challenges faced in organising field visits for enumerators (Hensen B. et al., 2021). Remote surveys are typically conducted through telephone calls/virtual conferences, Interactive Voice Response (IVR) services, SMS, or the web (where the respondent is shared with a link of the programmed questionnaire to fill and submit).

In the context of phone surveys, Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) software systems provide the functionality to undertake surveys through telephonic interviews remotely. CATI software systems not only help in maintaining the database of the samples and dialling calls, but it also offers sophisticated features like call-backs, auto-dialling, and managing interviews.

One of the free, open-source CATI software system available in the market is the queXS (queXS, 2021). queXS was developed by the Australian Consortium for Social and Political Research Inc. (ACSPRI). The software allows integrating CATI into LimeSurvey web-based questionnaires. It also facilitates the automatic dialling of numbers through a web browser with an Asterisk VoIP server (an open-source communications toolkit) (Asterisk, 2021). The

software also makes it easy to import sample information (e.g., name, phone number, etc.) through the CSV file import feature. CATI software systems are also developed by Voxco, Conconfirm, IdSurvey, NIPO, and Survey System.

The significant advantage of phone interviews is cost and time effectiveness, as the delays and costs associated with the travelling of enumerators are eliminated (LEAD at Krea University, 2020). However, there are multiple challenges that phone surveys face. It is challenging to engage the respondents for a long time over telephonic calls, which is much easier to do in physical surveys (Sheetal R. et al, 2021). While telephonic surveys may gather more participation than IVR/SMS/web surveys, it is less engaging than a physical interview. The enumerator cannot establish a connection with the respondent and effectively build a tie with the respondent, in contrast to physical interviews (IFPRI South Asia, 2020).

Further, designing an effective phone survey questionnaire is a challenging task. The questionnaire must be easy to follow and short enough to capture responses within the respondent's attention span (Wallace Foundation, n.d.). There is also a challenge of the respondent not answering the telephone call leading to the need for multiple redials or someone else from the respondent's house picking up the call. Further, some targets cannot be reached through phone interviews due to the unavailability of telephone devices with the target (DJS Research Ltd., 2008).

## **5. Conclusion**

Based on the assessment of open license CAPI software applications on 20 features, it is observed that each of the software has its strengths and limitations. The note is meant to aid this document's audience in deciding which CAPI software to use based on their requirement.

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## 7. Annexures

### 7.1. Annexure I – List of Features Evaluated

S.No.	Feature	Description
<b>A. License and System Requirements</b>		
a	Developer	
b	Software License	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whether the Software is Free/Paid.</li> <li>If paid, the details of license type and its cost</li> <li>Limit on users and forms</li> </ul>
c	System requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hardware and software requirements, if any</li> </ul>
d	Data Collection Device Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devices supported (e.g., tablets, mobile phones, etc.)</li> <li>OS Supported (android, iOS, etc.)</li> </ul>
e	Source Code Open Distribution	Yes/No
<b>B. Training and Documentation</b>		
1	CAPI Training Cost	Cost
2	Mode of Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mode of training</li> <li>Learning Curve</li> </ul>
3	Areas Covered in Training	Areas for Training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Software Setup</li> <li>Form/questionnaire design</li> <li>Availability Role Based training and content (e.g., Training for Administrator, Supervisor, Project Manager, Interviewer)</li> <li>Training on Exporting Data</li> <li>Training on Data Visualisations</li> </ul>
4	Language(s) in which training provided	
<b>C. Questionnaire Design</b>		
5	Question types supported	Whether the following question types are supported: Categorical (Single-select, Multi-select), Numeric, Text, Date, Image, Audio, Video, GPS, Barcode, Device Sensor Data, List, Signature, Rank, File, Upload, Range, Note
6	Languages in which questionnaire can be developed	
7	Multiple users can collaboratively work on the same questionnaire	Feature Available (Yes/No)
8	Adding Comment against questions while taking response	Feature Available (Yes/No)
9	Questionnaire Testing	Feature Available (Yes/No) If Yes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whether it is paid/free</li> <li>Testing Platforms available</li> </ul>
<b>D. Design Features</b>		
10	Data Visualisation	Feature Available (Yes/No)
11	Location Tracking	Feature Available (Yes/No) If Yes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GPS Enabled (Yes/No)</li> <li>Internet Required (Yes/No)</li> </ul>
12	Offline-data collection	Feature Available (Yes/No)
13	Data Synchronization to Server	Internet Required (Yes/No)

<b>E. Data Quality Control</b>		
14	Data Quality Control: Query Management (Throw error while submitting out of range data)	
15	Logical Skips, Loops	Feature Available (Yes/No)
16	Case Management	Feature Available (Yes/No)
<b>F. Data Security</b>		
17	Data encryption during data transfer from device to a server	Feature Available (Yes/No)
<b>G. Role-Based Access Rights</b>		
18	Task Management	Separate access rights are available for different user roles (like administrator, project supervisor, etc.)
<b>H. Export Options</b>		
19	Export data formats supported	
<b>I. Support Service</b>		
20	Support Services Availability	Available (Yes/No) If yes, then details of services available



## **7.2. Annexure II – List of Software Applications Evaluated**

The following CAPI software applications were evaluated:

1. Survey Solutions
2. Open Data Kit (ODK)
3. CSPro
4. KoBo Toolbox
5. Survey CTO
6. Blaise
7. Dooblo
8. Collect
9. Conformat
10. IdSurvey
11. Pendragon Forms
12. CADAS
13. CASES
14. Rotator Survey
15. NIPO's Nfield
16. Voxco
17. The Survey System
18. Teamscope

### **7.3. Annexure III – Detailed Comparative Analysis Matrix**

[Detailed Comparative Analysis Matrix](#)

## ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

This document aims to provide a brief introduction to CAPI and to serve as a reference for researchers to aid in the selection of the CAPI tool that would be appropriate for their survey.

## ABOUT DMEO, NITI AAYOG

The Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office (DMEO), attached to NITI Aayog, is the apex monitoring & evaluation (M&E) office in the country, with a mandate to drive evidence-based policy making through M&E of government policies and programmes. Since its inception in 2015, the Office aims to shift the discourse of public policy towards rigorous, data-driven, citizen-centric, and decentralized policymaking, to improve governance and facilitate the formation of a New India.

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