NEED FOR SYSTEMATIC, COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENTS

- Case studies reveal heterogeneity in survey design decisions underlying excess mortality estimates
- Need for **comparative assessments** to gauge sensitivity of estimates to **key survey design decisions**: Critical for formulating recommendations for NSOs – Best done through randomized survey experiments
  - **Phone survey sampling frame**
    - Random digit dialing (RDD)
      - Concerns with use in populations with lower rates of cell phone ownership
      - Not assured that ex-post calibration of sampling weights to match known population totals for demographic and socio-economic outcomes leads to unbiased excess mortality estimates – particularly a concern in contexts with significant scope for cell phone coverage bias
    - Using administrative records or cell phone registers (from service providers) as sampling frames
      - Context-specific – not always possible
      - General population coverage not always assured – depends on the database and inherent coverage limitations
    - Using existing surveys and censuses as sampling frames
      - Evidence from other phone surveys conducted during COVID-19 by NSOs, including LSMS-HFPS, reveals potential to counteract significant coverage and non-response bias in contexts with lower rates of cell phone ownership (Ambel et al., 2021) – and with much higher response rates (Gourlay et al. 2021)
      - ISWGHS Paper “Positioning Household Surveys for the Next Decade” (2022) and Gourlay et al. (2021) expand on the requirements for NSOs to scale up this approach – both in response to crises and as part of routine monitoring
      - Routine monitoring aspirations can be realized through sustained investments in NSO technical capacity and technological infrastructure, and concerted efforts to collect phone numbers in surveys and censuses
  - **Survey mode**
    - CATI, IVR but also Face-to-Face CAPI needs to be part of the mix
    - Mortality is a rare event: Power calculations may reveal large required samples under each mode to discern differences
    - Good news: We now have several data points for sampling simulations to understand the requirements
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- Need for **comparative assessments** to gauge sensitivity of estimates to **key survey design decisions**: Critical for formulating recommendations for NSOs – Best done through randomized survey experiments
  - **Questionnaire design**
    - Questionnaires used across different case studies and pre-COVID-19 face-to-face surveys reveal differences (e.g., ref. period)
    - Need to converge on the alternative questionnaire modules to compare to one another
  - **Respondent selection**
    - Women are less likely to own a cell phone – both in Sub-Saharan Africa and in India (GSMA, 2021; Hasanbasri et al. 2021)
    - Would mortality estimates be sensitive to whether we interview a man or a woman? What do the DHS-based evidence say (where full sibling histories are collected from both men and women)?

- **Cross-cutting issues**
  - **Cognitive interviewing**
    - Were any of the tools cognitively tested prior to deployment? If no, this should be done in future studies
  - **Gold-standard**
    - What would be the gold-standard in a comparative assessment?
    - In contexts with limited vital registration, would this be based on face-to-face CAPI? Would it be eliciting full sibling survival history or survival histories of household members? Appropriate reference period? Who would be interviewed?
    - Where CRVS exists, under what conditions could it be deemed as a gold standard?