

Fair & Inclusive Compensation for Research Participants: A Guideline

GOAL

To ensure all research participants receive fair compensation that recognizes their time and expenses.

Based on our recent survey of current practices and a review of policies and literature, Wellesley Institute has identified the following good practices to support researchers and research ethics boards when making compensation decisions.

1. Compensate participants for their time by providing a standardized, prorated amount of \$25 per hour:

All participants should be compensated for their time to acknowledge their vital contributions to research. Providing a standardized amount of money for all participants limits concerns about undue influence, exploitation, or inequities that can arise when payment varies significantly for different participants and communities.

We suggest that researchers provide \$25 per hour, which is comparable to the median hourly wage for full-time workers in Ontario in 2018. This amount should be reviewed from time to time. Our survey of Toronto researchers is encouraging as it suggests that researchers already on average provide \$25 per hour.

2. Cash is ideal

Providing gift cards, particularly to participants deemed vulnerable, can result in inadequate and unfair compensation. Cash is an ideal way to recognize the contributions of participants.

3. Reimburse participants for any out-of-pocket expenses related to participation

Without reimbursement strategies, out-of-pocket costs can create financial barriers for some participants, which can produce inequities in who can participate in research and undermine the quality and generalizability of results.

In addition to paying participants for their time, reimbursement strategies should address participants' research-related expenses and be flexible and responsive to participants' varying needs. Researchers should, for example, cover travel costs, child or respite care, and food if needed. Researchers can reduce these costs by locating research near where participants live or work or by providing on-site child care.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH ON THIS TOPIC

Considerations for Compensating Research Participants Fairly & Equitably: A Think Piece, 2018

Compensating Research Participants: A Survey of Current Practices in Toronto, 2018

Available at www.wellesleyinstitute.com.

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