



**Midlife in the United States (MIDUS)  
Field Report**

**For the  
MIDUS Refresher 2  
Telephone Interview, and  
Self-Administered Questionnaire  
(P1703 / P1704)**

**FINAL REPORT**

**University of Wisconsin Survey Center  
475 North Charter Street  
Madison, WI 53706**

**Prepared by Karen Zoladz  
UWSC Project Director  
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## OVERVIEW OF PROJECT

The University of Wisconsin Survey Center (UWSC) was hired by Professor Carol Ryff, Director of the University of Wisconsin Institute on Aging (UW-IOA), to conduct the second wave of the Midlife in the United States (MIDUS) study with the refresher sample. This multidisciplinary investigation, led by researchers from across the United States, seeks to understand how factors in the lives of American adults such as working conditions, relationships, health, finances, personal outlooks and individual choices impact health and well-being as individuals age from early adulthood to later life. This second wave of the study with the refresher sample—known as MIDUS R2--also sought to shed light on how U.S. adults have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and how these experiences are linked with their health, broadly defined.

Funded by the National Institute on Aging, the MIDUS R2 initiative returns to the 3247 living longitudinal sample who participated in MIDUS R1. Participants were recruited into MIDUS R2 via an initial 45-minute telephone interview and were then invited to complete a 100-page mail questionnaire and a 35-minute cognitive interview via telephone.

From October 2022, through December 2024, 2,154 respondents completed the initial telephone interviews, 1,711 returned self-administered questionnaires (SAQs), and 1,700 participated in the cognitive interviews. In addition, family members of 24 respondents, who were deceased, participated in a brief mortality cognitive closeout interview.

The response rate for the MIDUS R2 telephone interview was 68%. The response rate for the MIDUS R2 self-administered questionnaire was 80%. The response rate for the MIDUS R2 cognitive interview was 79%.

See Appendix A for a timeline showing field dates of each protocol. See Appendix B for a full discussion of response by protocol. All Appendices are available by request from the MIDUS Administrative Core.

See the MIDUS R2 Cognitive Interview Field Report for a full discussion of cognitive interview protocols and response.

## **The University of Wisconsin Survey Center**

Founded in 1987, the UW Survey Center (UWSC) serves the survey research needs of a wide variety of clients including faculty, staff, and administration at the University of Wisconsin; faculty and staff at other universities; federal, state, and local governmental agencies; and not-for-profit organizations. A department in the College of Letters and Science of the University of Wisconsin—Madison, the UWSC provides a complete range of survey research capabilities. The mission of the Survey Center is to assist researchers by providing the highest quality survey research services.

Associate Professor Jennifer Dykema is the Faculty Director of the UWSC. Kelly Elver is the Associate Director, Karen Zoladz is the Director of Project Management, and Steven Coombs is the Field Director. Karen Zoladz also served as senior project director on the MIDUS Refresher 2 project. She oversaw data collection in both telephone interviews and served as project director for the questionnaire data collection. Other key UWSC staff included:

### **Programming Staff**

- Eric White, Technology Director. General oversight of all programming and technology programming staff. Responsible for setting up a secure file transfer protocol for daily delivery of MIDUS cognitive interview audio files.
- August Salick, MIDUS CASES programmer. Responsible for initial recruit telephone instrument and cognitive telephone instrument programming, project management system development, and sample management database development.
- Brendan Day MYSQL and CASES programmer. Responsible for creation of occupation and industry coding database.
- Marie Nitschke, CASES programmer. Responsible for programming the questionnaire data entry database.

### **Tracking and Locating**

- Thomas Francis, Tracking and Locating Supervisor. General oversight of tracking locating operations.
- Diana Zarate, Tracking and Locating.

### **Field Staff, Call Center**

- Meghan Eubanks and Cory Schmidt, Call Center Supervisors. Responsible for hiring, training and supervising interviewers and shift leaders in the Call Center. General oversight of calling on projects conducted by telephone.
- Andrew Fox, Abram Hopp, David Marquez Gil, Hunter Weber, Alejandra Pavon Guajardo, Joanna Wilson, Nikole Jaramillo, Hannah Kennedy,

Merlynn Pierre, and Elizabeth Soellner. MIDUS Call Center Shift leaders. Responsible for monitoring interviewers, finalizing cases, responding to respondent questions and referring issues for review by supervisors or project directors.

- Over 52 interviewers trained to call MIDUS R2.

#### Field Staff, Mail and Data Entry Center

- Leo Shultz, UWSC Mail and Data Entry Center supervisor. Responsible for staffing and training of all Mail and Data Entry Center staff and creating protocols unique to MIDUS data entry.
- Phoebe Miller, Ben Hefko, Andrew Hanson, and Lewis Peterson, Mail and Data Entry Center coordinators. Responsible for coordinating the preparation of all mailings of payments, questionnaire packets and letters to MIDUS respondents.
- Over 18 MIDUS-trained mail and data entry staff.

### **CASES Instruments**

#### *CASES CATI System*

Recruitment and Cognitive interviews were conducted over the telephone using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) technology. The CATI system used by the UW Survey Center was CASES 5.6. CASES is copyrighted by the University of California-Berkeley's Computer-Assisted Survey Methods Program or CSM.

In the CASES CATI system, the text of the interview appears question by question on a computer screen for the interviewer to read to the respondent. Routing through the interview is based on pre-programmed skip logic. Question wording may be adapted according to answers previously given in the interview or based on pre-existing data in the sample record that has been imported into the system. The system allows for pre-coded questions, open-ended questions, and combinations of the two. In addition, the system allows only valid responses; when an invalid response is entered, the interviewer is asked to reenter the response.

The CASES system keeps track of the current status of all sample telephone numbers, automatically routes them for proper follow-up for the next attempt and maintains an elaborate set of management records.

## *CASES SAQ Data Entry System*

The self-administered questionnaire (SAQ) data entry instrument was programmed for double data entry in CASES 5.6. In CASES, the text of the questionnaire appears question by question on a computer screen and the data entry operator enters the response provided by the respondent. Skip logic is pre-programmed into the system. The system allows for pre-coded questions, open-ended questions, and combinations of the two. In addition, the system allows only valid responses; when an invalid response is entered, the computer asks the data entry operator to reenter the response.

In double-data entry, such as with MIDUS, trained editors review all SAQs and clarify ambiguous response prior to first-pass data entry. When the second-pass data entry operator enters the response, CASES monitors discrepancies between first-pass and second-pass entries, and when any exist, loads a discrepancy screen requesting the second pass data entry operator to resolve the discrepancy.

UWSC programmed the system to track data entry operator error rates and used results for targeted training efforts.

## **BACKGROUND**

**MIDUS 1** launched in 1995 and recruited over 7,100 American adults, aged 25 to 74, into a national study on health and well-being. A panel of over a dozen researchers around the country, in fields ranging from psychology, sociology and anthropology, to medicine, and health care policy were involved in the MIDUS study. In addition to a main RDD national sample, MIDUS included a large subsample of 998 pairs of twins, the largest randomly drawn sample of twins in the United States. Also included was a sample of hundreds of siblings of the Main RDD respondents, as well as over-samples of different metropolitan areas in the U.S. The study's comprehensive, multimodal protocol included a 30-minute telephone interview, and a 100-page mail questionnaire. Further, some respondents also participated in a diary study of daily stress. MIDUS 1 was conducted at Harvard University and was sponsored by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

In 2004, **MIDUS 2** returned to the original MIDUS participants with a 45-minute telephone interview, a 100-page self-administered questionnaire, but also added a 25-minute cognitive interview via telephone and repeated and expanded the daily stress project. MIDUS 2 also introduced projects that collected comprehensive biomarkers and conducted affective neuroscience assessments. Longitudinal survey data were collected on 75% of the eligible living respondents from the baseline MIDUS 1 study. MIDUS 2 also included a new African-American oversample of over 500 individuals from Milwaukee, Wisconsin,

recruited via in-home interviews. The MIDUS 2 survey and cognitive project data was collected by the UWSC and supported by funding from the National Institute on Aging.

The **MIDUS Refresher 1**, fielded in 2012, replenished the original longitudinal sample, diminished over time through attrition, with a younger cohort. New participants were American adults aged 25 to 74, mirroring the original MIDUS sample. Data collection protocols were similar to those used in the MIDUS longitudinal study, and included the cognitive, daily stress, biomarker, and neuroscience projects. MIDUS Refresher participants were recruited in a 45-minute telephone interview, then invited to complete a 108-page mail questionnaire and to participate in a 25-minute cognitive interview via telephone. Complete telephone data was obtained by 3,577 individuals. The MIDUS Refresher survey and cognitive data were collected by the UWSC and funded by the National Institute on Aging.

The **MIDUS Milwaukee Refresher 1**, also fielded in 2012, recruited 508 new participants from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, African-American adults, aged 25 to 64. The MIDUS Milwaukee protocols included an in-home interview lasting an average of 2 hours and 40 minutes, a 44-page leave-behind questionnaire, and a 25-minute cognitive interview via telephone. The Milwaukee Refresher sample also participated in the biomarker and neuroscience project data collection. The MIDUS Milwaukee Refresher was conducted by the UWSC and funded by the National Institute on Aging.

In 2013, **MIDUS 3** returned to living longitudinal respondents who had participated in MIDUS 2. Now aged 40 to 94, participants were recruited with a 45-minute telephone interview and invited to complete a 100-page self-administered questionnaire, and to participate in a 25-minute cognitive interview via telephone. MIDUS 3 was conducted at the UWSC with funding from the National Institute on Aging. Fielding in May 2013, MIDUS 3 re-interviewed 3,294 respondents. Subsequently, 2,732 returned the mail questionnaire, and 2,693 participated in the cognitive interview.

In 2022, the **MIDUS Refresher 2** returned to participants originally recruited in the MIDUS Refresher 1. Aged 35 to 84, participants were recruited with a 45-minute telephone interview, invited to complete a 108-page self-administered questionnaire, and to participate in a 35-minute cognitive interview via telephone. MR2 was conducted at the UWSC with funding from the National Institute on Aging. Fielding in October 2022, MR2 re-interviewed 2,154 respondents. Of these, 1,711 returned the mail questionnaire, and 1,700 participated in the cognitive interview.



## MR2 INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

### *CATI and SAQ Instruments*

The UWSC's work on the MIDUS Refresher 2 instruments began in 2022, working off the MIDUS Refresher 1 instruments. For the MIDUS Refresher 2 the initial telephone recruitment interview, self-administered questionnaires and cognitive telephone interviewer were all reviewed in an iterative fashion and updated to reflect current best practices, however, strong consideration was given to maintaining comparability with previous MIDUS longitudinal instruments. Changes made for the MR2 included:

- Addition of new questions related to the COVID-19 pandemic to gain a better understanding of the health effects of the pandemic. Removal of some questions to maintain similar length.
- Adjustment of reference periods to account for previously collected information
- Removal of inapplicable baseline questions from the initial telephone interview and questionnaires

Skip pattern logic was reviewed, and instruments thoroughly tested and debugged. The initial telephone instrument was ready for fielding by the end of October 2022. Questionnaires, created in Microsoft Word, were converted to ready-to-print pdf format by September 2022. Questionnaires were printed at UW Printing Services.

### *Project Operations Database*

The UWSC project operations database (POD), connected to the recruitment interview instrument, the UWSC tracing database, and the cognitive interview instrument, allowed real-time review of progress of each case across all treatments throughout the entire field period. In addition, entries in the POD initiated the individualized movement of each case through the treatments.

The POD stored:

- Current and previous respondent contact information
- Dates of mailings
- Dates of participation
- Interim or final case disposition codes for each treatment
- Key variables from the recruitment and cognitive telephone interviews, including respondent age, gender, and education, call notes, and interviewer observations
- Sample variables such as sample type, priority, and batch number

Customizable queries supported refusal conversion and tracing efforts; reporting of progress by treatment by sample type, age category and gender; generation of address labels for the on-going posting of birthday greetings; and review of Cognitive Interview results.

## **MR2 SAMPLE**

In the MIDUS Refresher 2 study, UWSC sought to re-interview living MIDUS longitudinal sample who had completed the MR1 telephone interview. Prior to handing over sample to UWSC, IOA removed MR1 participants who were known to be deceased (via previous National Death Index submissions), and any MR1 participants who had either withdrawn from the study or been deemed cognitively unable to participate in future efforts.

Fielding of the MR2 sample was organized via Priority Groups by UW-IOA staff. Those cases eligible for additional follow-up projects such as Biomarker study and/or Daily Diary study were the first cases fielded by UWSC, to allow more time for them to complete other MIDUS projects for which they were eligible. Those who were not eligible for follow-up projects will be fielded at UWSC's discretion, to maintain efficient operations. See Table 1 for more details.

**Table 1: MR2 Fielded Sample, by Sample Type**

<b>Priority Groups</b>	<b>Project Eligibility</b>	<b>N</b>
A	Eligible for Daily Diary and Biomarkers Projects	314
B	Eligible for Biomarkers Project only	403
C	Eligible for Daily Diary only	408
D	Eligible for Survey only	2122
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>3,247</b>

Prior to fielding, UWSC conducted pre-tracing, seeking the most current contact information. The pre-tracing sample file included the last known name, address and telephone number for each respondent, the telephone number and address at the time of the MIDUS R2 interview, dates of previous interviews, and date of birth.

As a result of regular mailings by the UW-IOA to MIDUS participants, respondent addresses had been updated in the nine years since MIDUS R1 had fielded. With no intervening calling efforts, and an increasing move to cellular telephones, the telephone information was expected to be less current. UWSC used a conservative approach during pre-tracing, opting to retain phone numbers unless strong evidence indicated they were not good.

After pre-tracing, a “Going Forward” newsletter, created by UW-IOA staff, was mailed by UWSC in batches from around one to three months ahead of expected fielding date.

The MR2 sample was fielded in batches from October 2022 to December 2023.

**Table 2: MIDUS R2 Fielded Sample, by batch**

<b>Batch</b>	<b>Priority Groups</b>	<b>Date Fielded</b>	<b>N</b>
1	A and B	October 2022	200
2	A and B	November 2022	201
3	D	December 2022	200
4	C	January 2023	201
5	A and B	February 2023	214
6	B and C	March 2023	312
7	D	April 2023	99
8	D	May 2023	198
9	D	June 2023	200
10	D	Late June 2023	100
11	D	July 2023	300
12	D	August 2023	353
13	D	September 2023	149
14	D	October 2023	200
15	D	November 2023	200
16	D	December 2023	120
<b>Total</b>			<b>3,247</b>

### *Sample Input files*

The MIDUS R2 sample file included the dates of respondents’ previous MIDUS interviews and basic demographic information. This information was used to remind respondents of past participation and helped to verify respondent identity. Some MIDUS R2 questions used the MIDUS R1 participation date to bound the reference period of interest, for example, to ask for changes since the last interview in a specified year.

The MIDUS R1 marital status and respondent and spousal employment status was used in the creation of employment flags that triggered alternate, potentially much-abbreviated, sets of employment questions.

## TRACING

### *Tracing POD*

Tracking and Locating staff used the UWSC POD to update and track contact information for respondents across protocols. The POD retains a record of all past and current addresses, names, and phone numbers. The POD interacted with the recruitment telephone interview instrument, and the cognitive interview telephone instrument to ensure the most up-to-date contact information was collected and used as cases flowed through the protocols. All new contact information collected during interviews was imported into the POD, then cleaned and traced. Tracking and Locating staff entered the date tracing was conducted, a “tracing code” indicating current status, and notes as needed.

MIDUS pre-tracing was conducted in the POD to ensure all historical information could be returned to the UW-IOA. the original untraced contact information for fielded cases was loaded into the POD prior to the start of the pre-tracing effort.

### *Tracing Protocols*

During the initial telephone interview, cases were sent for tracing when calls resulted in wrong numbers, disconnected numbers, faxes, or when an informant reported a known respondent was no longer living at the number. After 20 calls without contact, cases were sent for tracing. If the Tracking and Locating department could not find a better number, a phone request letter was sent to the respondent, noting the contact information on file and requesting updates. If the respondent did not reply with a better number, the case was put on hold for a month, and retraced. This process was repeated as necessary throughout the field period. If the phone number looked good, a hard-to-contact letter was sent to the respondent, indicating that the UWSC was having difficulty reaching them, and requesting respondents to call in at their convenience to participate. The case was put on hold for a month, and then retraced if the respondent had not yet called.

All undeliverable MIDUS mailings were also sent for tracing. If no better address was identified, up to five phone calls were placed to the respondent in an attempt to collect a new address or to confirm the existing one. Updated address information was entered in the Tracer.

If after multiple rounds of tracing, respondents still could not be located, calls were placed to people respondents had previously indicated would know how to reach them. To avoid respondent confusion, siblings and twins who were also in the study were not called for information until their participation was complete. See UWSC Tracing Manual highlighting tracing methods in Appendix C.

## **FIELD PROCEDURES**

### *A Toll-Free Respondent Line*

To maximize opportunities to make contact with respondents, UWSC utilized the toll-free number that rings to the CATI Lab. This line was staffed by CATI shift leaders during all hours the CATI Lab is open. The toll-free number was included in advance letters sent to all MIDUS participants. During the field period, the toll-free number was given out by interviewers trying to reach respondents and left on answering machines to encourage difficult to reach respondents to call in.

### *Advance Letters*

To emphasize the importance of every respondent's participation, one week prior to being contacted by a telephone interviewer each MIDUS respondent was sent a personalized mailing that included a cover letter, a \$5 bill as a pre-incentive, and a MIDUS R2 brochure. The letter explained the purpose of the study and informed respondents that a new wave of MIDUS calling was about to begin. The brochure highlighted the reasons for the study, emphasizing the ongoing importance of MIDUS research and reacquainted respondents with the MIDUS study. It explained that the initial MIDUS R2 interview would take place over the telephone, and that the study would also include a questionnaire, a cognitive interview, and the potential to participate in other MIDUS research. The respondent's current phone number was prominently displayed atop the letter, and respondents were asked to call UWSC's toll-free number to update any information or to indicate preferences on the best times to reach them. Both the letter and the brochure included the UWSC's toll-free number. (See Appendix D.)

### *CATI Autoscheduler*

The CATI autoscheduling system allowed anyone accessing a case to read the call notes of all previous attempts to reach the respondent, and administrative notes indicating when a case was sent for tracing, and the results of the tracing effort. The autoscheduler kept track of all sample telephone numbers, automatically routing cases for proper follow-up for the next call attempt or for review and maintained an elaborate set of management records.

### *Verifying Identity via Telephone*

Information from a respondent's previous MIDUS interview was displayed at the start of the programmed instrument and in the POD to help interviewers and tracers confirm respondent identity. This information included respondent name,

date of birth, address during MIDUS R1, previous participation status, and current phone numbers.

A set of questions was programmed into the instrument for interviewers to verify respondent identity, by first confirming birth date or age, and if that verification failed, by confirming a respondent's address during MIDUS R1. If these questions failed to verify that a respondent was the one previously interviewed, the interview was exited. The respondent was told that they would be called back once the UWSC verified that they were the correct respondent. This system was most helpful in identifying cases where an incorrect person had been identified as the respondent during tracing. It also helped in situations where family members lived in the same household, such as a junior and a senior with the same name and ensured the UWSC interviewed the correct respondent.

### *Verifying Identity via Questionnaire*

The questionnaire contained a question requesting the respondent's date of birth. The response to this question was compared to the date of birth provided during the initial recruitment telephone interview. Discrepancies identified cases where someone other than the recruited respondent may have completed the questionnaires. Cases with such discrepancies received further review and tracing, including personal calls to the respondent to verify information.

### *Study Protocols*

The MIDUS R2 initial telephone interview, the mail questionnaire, and the cognitive telephone interview were all in the field simultaneously. Cases flowed through the protocols on an individualized timeline. Some respondents completed the mail questionnaire within days of finishing the phone interview, while others took months to complete the mail questionnaires.

The UWSC sent an **initial newsletter** in at least one month before fielding the case for the initial telephone interview. The newsletter alerted longitudinal participants of the new round of data collection. Thereafter, the basic fielding protocol was as follows.

- 1) An **advance letter** was sent which included a brochure explaining the three portions of study, and a \$5 pre-incentive.
- 2) Cases were **fielded for the initial telephone interview** a week after the advance letter posted.
- 3) A **CATI post-incentive check** for \$40 and a thank you letter was sent to the respondent within a week of completion of the telephone interview.

- 4) An **SAQ packet** was sent to the respondent at the same time the CATI post-incentive was sent. The SAQ packet contained:
  - a. A cover letter explaining how to fill out the SAQ booklets
  - b. Two SAQ booklets
  - c. A \$5 pre-incentive to complete the SAQ booklets
  - d. A pen with the MIDUS logo
  - e. A tape measure, for use in taking requested body measurements
  - f. A re-contact information form, requesting contact information of friends or family who might know how to find the respondent in the future.
  - g. A large, stamped envelope, for returning completed questionnaires
  - h. A letter-sized stamped envelope, for separately returning the re-contact information form.
- 5) An **SAQ reminder postcard** was sent two weeks after the SAQ packet was mailed. It encouraged respondents to complete and return the SAQs as soon as possible.
- 6) *For SAQ non-responders:*  
A **second SAQ packet** was sent, similar to the first but without the pre-incentive and pen, 4 weeks after the first SAQ packet postdate. A **second reminder postcard** was sent to non-responders in another 4 weeks that served as advance notice for the Cognitive Interview.
- 7) *For SAQ responders:*  
An **SAQ post-incentive** check for \$40 and a thank you note was sent within one week of receipt of the completed SAQ booklets.
- 8) Cases were **fielded for the Cognitive Interview** two weeks after either the SAQ post-incentive OR the second SAQ reminder postcard was sent. No additional incentives were sent for completed Cognitive Interviews.
- 9) At the end of the Cognitive Interview, SAQ non-responders were again prompted to return their questionnaires.

Special protocols, used as needed, consisted of:

- 1) An additional copy of the **advance letter** and brochure were sent upon request to respondents who reported they had not received the advance letter.
- 2) A copy of the **Certificate of Confidentiality**, obtained from the federal government for the MIDUS study, was sent upon request to respondents who expressed concern about confidentiality issues.

- 3) A **hard-to-contact letter** was sent to respondents who did not answer their phone for the initial telephone interview. The letter asked respondents to call the UWSC to schedule an interview or to update contact information if it had changed.
- 4) **Refusal letters** were sent to reluctant respondents, explaining the importance of their participation. Two weeks after this letter was sent, a specially trained refusal converter would attempt to conduct the interview with the respondent. If the respondent again refused, calling was suspended for that respondent.
- 5) When, during the initial interview, an informant reported that a **respondent was deceased**, a **Mortality Cognitive Closeout (MCC) interview** was attempted. The MCC interview collected details about the death and the respondent's cognition prior to death. Informants lacking knowledge about the death were asked for referrals to someone who did know more about the respondent's death. Contact information was collected for return calls. UWSC Tracking and Locating staff attempted to find corroborating evidence of deaths and added death dates to the project management database.
- 6) Respondents expressing other concerns were contacted by the UWSC project director, Karen Zoladz.

See Appendix E for examples of mailing materials.

#### *CATI Refusal Protocol*

Standard protocol at the UW Survey Center is to hold a case that has refused for at least two weeks before attempting a conversion. This strategy was applied to and expanded upon for MIDUS R2. Cases continued to be called if refusals occurred directly after the phone was answered, before respondents knew the purpose of the call, or if an informant refused on behalf of a respondent with little information about the purpose of the call. When respondents or informants who knew the purpose of the call expressed reluctance to participate, the case was held for at least two weeks, and a letter reminding respondents of their past participation, and the importance of the study was sent to encourage participation. Two weeks later, interviewers attempted to convert reluctant respondents. If respondents again expressed reluctance to participate, cases were placed on hold. A Call Center shift leader, trained as a refusal expert, reviewed all such cases. Cases might be finalized, or they might be sent for further treatments. For example, if a respondent refused because they were currently too busy, but they expected to have time in several months, the case might be put on long-term hold to be called again in four to six months. Some cases were referred to the project director for possible follow up. The project



director called respondents to address specific concerns and reassuring gatekeepers of the study's legitimacy and the respondent's previous participation. If, after concerns were addressed, a respondent was still reluctant to participate, the case was finalized as a refusal.

### *Respondent Payments*

As mentioned in the study protocol, respondents received a post-incentive check of \$40 after completing the main recruitment telephone interview. They were then sent \$5 in pre-incentive along with the initial mail questionnaire packet. After the completed questionnaires were received, respondents were sent another post-incentive check of \$40. An additional \$40 incentive check was sent for the cognitive phone interview.

### *Non-Response Efforts*

In an effort to reduce non-response, the post-incentives were increased mid-field period. In April 2024, a **non-response letter**, containing a \$10 pre-incentive, was mailed to all non-responders in an attempt to address their concerns about participating and to let them know that the post-incentive for the main telephone interview increased to \$100. In addition, respondents would receive another \$100 check for completing the questionnaire booklets and an additional \$50 check for the cognitive phone interview.

A second non-response effort was launched in September 2024. This time, respondents were sent a **non-response postcard** notifying them of the incentive increase. For completing the main telephone interview, respondents were sent a \$200 check. For completing the questionnaire booklets, respondents were sent an additional \$200 check. The post-incentive for the cognitive phone interview remained \$50.

### *Interviewer Training*

New interviewers at the UWSC receive over 20 hours of training. In addition to the general training and previous experience, MIDUS interviewers received 4 hours of training specific to MIDUS sample and the MIDUS instrument. Interviewers were trained on how cases would be fielded, how to verify respondent identity using information preloaded into the instrument, and how to conduct mortality closeout interviews if respondents were discovered to be deceased. They learned about MIDUS R2 calling protocols for refusals and received focused training on occupational items. As MIDUS R2 sample ranged from age 35 to age 84, interviewers were trained in interviewing older respondents, including how to conduct effective interviews in the face of respondent illness and mental or physical challenges related to aging.

Interviewers completed a “walk-through” of the entire telephone instrument and participated in demonstrations of occupational probing.

The UWSC project director, Karen Zoladz, also presented on the importance of MIDUS, the purpose and design of the study, results from previous waves of data collection, and goals of MIDUS R2. The project director shared information about other MIDUS projects, to ground interviewers in the entire MIDUS study, to help interviewers understand how their work fit into the whole, and to prepare them for questions from longitudinal respondents who may have participated in these projects in past rounds of data collection. The presentation provided background information that helped interviewers inform and persuade potential MIDUS respondents.

After the training, interviewers were given time to practice on their own, pairing up to practice industry and occupation probing, and then completing at least two practice cases in their entirety before calling potential respondents.

In addition to project-specific training, all UWSC interviewers are regularly monitored during calls to respondents to ensure that they are following protocol and adhering to standardized interviewing techniques. UWSC uses a blind monitoring system, where a supervisor sits in a room not visible to the interviewer and uses a monitoring system that allows them to hear interviews (both the respondent and the interviewer), see the same screens the interviewer is seeing during the interview, and see the answers that the interviewer enters as they are being entered. All interviewers have their work monitored on a monthly basis and are provided feedback critiquing their work and offering suggestions for improvement. The interviews were also audio-recorded in case monitoring could not be conducted live.

If there are special issues that require attention, interviewers are monitored more frequently. This system of monitoring interviewers allows for constant improvement of staff abilities. If there is a larger training issue that all interviewers would benefit from learning about, monitoring makes the issue apparent very quickly.

See Appendix E for interviewer training materials.

### *Data Entry Protocol and Staff Training*

Double data entry for the MIDUS questionnaire began in November 2022. The two SAQ booklets that make up the MIDUS R2 questionnaire were 48- and 56-pages in length respectively. They include every possible type of formatted question, making them quite complex to enter. Given all of these facts, each booklet was first reviewed by an “editor” to uncover any issues that could cause data entry confusion. Editors resolved issues before questionnaires moved on for

data entry. All data entry operators were eligible to become editors if they passed the certification process. Editor protocols were included in the Data Entry Specifications Manual. Editors were trained on how to resolve the most common problems, such as respondents who gave multiple answers, selected answers that fell between actual response categories, or followed skip patterns incorrectly.

Data entry staff were given two hours of MIDUS-specific training to familiarize them with the instrument, train them in the specific protocols set for the project, and give them an opportunity to practice and ask questions about the data entry process. (See Data Entry Specifications Manual in Appendix F.) Each questionnaire booklet was double-data entered; blind entered by two different data entry staff members. When a discrepancy between the first pass and the second was found by the CASES system, the second data entry person was alerted to the difference in responses, determined the correct answer (with help from an editor if needed) and made the appropriate corrections.

## **EFFORT REQUIRED**

### *Recruitment Interview Call Attempts*

Overall, UWSC placed 46,866 telephone calls on 3,247 cases during the MIDUS R2 telephone interview. The number of call attempts per case ranged from 0 (cases with no working telephone number) to 90, with an average of 14 call attempts per case overall - 8 call attempts for cases with completed interviews, and 16 call attempts for cases without a completed interview. Call attempts included calls to numbers that were later found to be inaccurate. Some respondents had provided multiple numbers; if no one answered at the home number, subsequent numbers were called until a message could be left or the numbers were called through. See Table 3 for details of calling efforts and results.

**Table 3: MIDUS R2 CATI Interview, Call Attempts**

<b>Number of Call Attempts</b>	<b>Number of Completes</b>	<b>Percent of Completes</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent of Completes</b>
1-2 calls	645	30%	30%
3-5 calls	626	29%	59%
6-10 calls	338	16%	75%
11-20 calls	310	14%	89%
21-30 calls	147	7%	96%
30+ calls	88	4%	100%
All calls	2154	100%	

Of the 3,247 MIDUS R2 longitudinal cases, 475 had refused at some point during the recruitment interview, either by a respondent themselves or an informant. UWSC interviewers successfully converted 139 of these refusals (29%) into completed interviews.

### *Mailings*

UWSC sent 17,444 pieces of mail over the course of the MIDUS R2 field period, including 3,136 advance letters, 5,565 post-incentive checks, 3,024 questionnaire packets, and 2,366 reminder cards. See Table 4. Undeliverable items were resent whenever better address information was located. All mailings were resent upon request.

**Table 4: MIDUS R2 Mailings**

<b>Mailing Type</b>	<b>Number Sent</b>
CATI advance letter	3136
Refusal letters	279
Hard-to-contact letters	602
Tracing letters	653
Non-response letters	1078
Non-response postcards	741
CATI post-incentive	2154
SAQ, first packet with pre-incentive*	2154
SAQ, reminder postcard	1769
SAQ, second packet, to non-responders	870
SAQ, second reminder to non-responders	597
SAQ post-incentive	1711
Cog post-incentive	1700
<b>TOTAL Mailings</b>	<b>17,444</b>

## RESULTS

See Appendix B for a more detailed presentation of response.

### *MIDUS R2 CATI Recruitment*

The UWSC interviewers successfully recruited 2,154 longitudinal participants into the second round of the MIDUS longitudinal study – refresher sample, via the initial MIDUS telephone interview. See Table 7.

**Table 7: MIDUS R2 CATI Case Disposition by Priority Group**

Case Disposition	A	B	C	D	Total
Completed interview	300	370	327	1157	2154
Partial Interview	0	0	2	16	18
Refusal, respondent or informant	1	2	10	164	177
Withdrew from study	0	0	2	5	7
Respondent never available	3	11	30	237	281
Respondent not located	5	12	30	472	519
Confirmed deceased	3	1	6	50	60
Mortality closeout complete <sup>1</sup>	1	0	0	23	24
Suspected deceased	1	2	0	9	12
Physically or cognitively unable	1	4	0	9	14
Incarcerated during field period	0	1	1	2	4
R living outside of U.S.	0	0	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>2122</b>	<b>3247</b>

<sup>1</sup>Mortality closeout completes are a subset of the confirmed deceased cases and are therefore excluded from the total.

In the response rates calculated in Table 8, below, respondents who were confirmed deceased, incarcerated, physically or cognitively unable to participate, or living outside of the United States were counted ineligible, and removed from the denominator.

**Table 8: MIDUS R2 CATI Response Rate by Priority Group**

Status	A	B	C	D	Total
<b>Completed interviews</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>1157</b>	<b>2154</b>
Partial interviews	0	0	2	16	18
Sample fielded	314	403	408	2122	3247
- Ineligible: confirmed deceased, incarcerated or physically/cognitively unable	4	6	7	62	79
<b>Eligible sample</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>2060</b>	<b>3168</b>
<b>CATI Response Rate</b> (Completes / Eligible Sample)	<b>96.8%</b>	<b>93.2%</b>	<b>81.5%</b>	<b>56.2%</b>	<b>68.0%</b>

### *MIDUS R2 Questionnaires*

All recruited participants who completed the initial telephone interview were invited to complete the SAQs. All phone respondents were invited to participate in the cognitive interview via telephone, whether they completed the SAQ or not.

Out of 2,154 participants sent the MIDUS R2 questionnaires, 1,711 respondents returned it with at least some portion completed. See Table 9.

**Table 9: MIDUS R2 SAQ Results by Priority Group**

Case Disposition	A	B	C	D	Total
Completed questionnaires	285	331	273	822	1711
Refusal	2	3	2	9	16
Nothing returned	13	36	50	316	415
Undeliverable	0	0	1	6	7
Deceased	0	0	0	1	1
Physically or cognitively unable	0	0	1	3	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>1157</b>	<b>2154</b>

In the response rates calculated in Table 10, below, respondents who were deceased or physically or cognitively unable to participate were counted ineligible and removed from the denominator.

**Table 10: MIDUS R2 SAQ Response Rate by Sample Group**

Status	A	B	C	D	Total
<b>Completed questionnaires</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>822</b>	<b>1711</b>
Sample fielded	300	370	327	1157	2154
- Ineligible, deceased or unable	0	0	1	4	5
<b>Eligible sample</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>1153</b>	<b>2149</b>
<b>SAQ Response Rate</b> (Completes / Eligible Sample)	<b>95.0%</b>	<b>89.5%</b>	<b>83.7%</b>	<b>71.3%</b>	<b>79.6%</b>
<b>Compounded Response Rate</b> (CATI RR * SAQ RR)	<b>92.0%</b>	<b>83.4%</b>	<b>68.2%</b>	<b>40.1%</b>	<b>54.1%</b>

#### *MIDUS R2 Cognitive Interview*

Out of 2,154 cases fielded, 1,700 participated in the cognitive interview, completed interviews, and 16 had partial interviews. See Table 11.

**Table 11: MIDUS R2 COG Results by Sample Type**

Case Disposition	A	B	C	D	Total
Completed interview	283	324	278	815	1700
Partial interview	0	3	0	13	16
Refusal, respondent or informant	4	6	4	56	70
Withdrew from study	0	0	1	2	3
Respondent never available	12	33	38	254	337
Respondent not located	1	3	5	12	21
Deceased	0	1	0	1	2
Suspected Deceased	0	0	1	1	2
Physically or cognitively unable	0	0	0	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>1157</b>	<b>2,154</b>

In the response rates calculated in Table 12, below, respondents who were confirmed deceased or physically or cognitively unable to participate were counted ineligible and removed from the denominator.

**Table 12: MIDUS R2 COG Response Rate by Sample Type**

Status	A	B	C	D	Total
<b>Completed interviews</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>815</b>	<b>1700</b>
Partial interviews	0	3	0	13	16
Sample fielded	300	370	327	1157	2,154
- Ineligible: confirmed deceased, incarcerated or physically/cognitively unable	0	1	0	4	5
<b>Eligible sample</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>1153</b>	<b>2,149</b>
<b>COG Response Rate</b> (Completes / Eligible Sample)	<b>94.3%</b>	<b>87.8%</b>	<b>85.0%</b>	<b>70.7%</b>	<b>79.1%</b>
<b>Compounded Response Rate</b> (CATI RR * COG RR)	<b>91.3%</b>	<b>81.2%</b>	<b>69.3%</b>	<b>39.7%</b>	<b>53.8%</b>

## INTERIM AND FINAL DATA DELIVERIES

### *Delivery of Contact Information*

UWSC staff worked with UW-IOA staff to establish a system for delivering contact information. Contact information from the tracing, and information collected during the recruitment telephone interview and the cognitive telephone interview all fed into the POD. The POD included respondent contact information, demographic variables, interviewer assessments, call notes, and mailing and completion dates. The UWSC monitored progress, identified eligible participants, and delivered case information to the UW-IOA on a monthly basis.

The delivery included:

- Contact information – Names, addresses, phone numbers, and previous contact information for each respondent.
- Interviewer Assessments - After the initial interview and the cognitive interview, interviewers rated respondent cooperativeness and competency



and recorded anecdotal information respondents may have shared that might help future recruitment efforts.

- Dates – Field dates were recorded, including the initial interview completion date, questionnaires mailing and completion dates, and the cognitive interview completion date.

### *Delivery of CATI Data*

On November 10, 2022, UWSC delivered for UW-IOA review an interim data set of the first 67 completed interviews. UW-IOA staff reviewed recruitment data cleaning scripts and confirmed that all data was being collected in the desired format.

On November 29, 2023, an interim delivery of 1,779 completed interviews was delivered to UW-IOA.

Final telephone interview data on all 3,247 cases, completes and non-completes, was delivered on May 5, 2025.

### *Delivery of Occupation (IO) Codes*

In a series of open-ended questions in the MIDUS R2 telephone interview, the UWSC collected employment information for the respondent and their spouse or partner. Collected information was exported verbatim into the UWSC coding database, a system used by trained coders to convert open-ended response into job titles and occupation codes. Prior to fielding MIDUS R2, UW-IOA made the decision to no longer code industry of employment. As such, only occupations were coded.

UWSC coders are trained to use hard-copies of the Alphabetic Index of Industries and Occupations, the Alphabetic Index of Military Occupations, and the Production Coder Manual published by the Bureau of the Census, but the majority of coding is done using software developed by UWSC staff. The software searches a database of occupation titles and returns all titles that match the search parameters. The resulting titles and codes are sorted by group and displayed in a hierarchical list, allowing coders to quickly review all variations on a given title. The software records the codes and titles assigned to each response, along with a detailed history of coder searches.

MIDUS coders work in pairs, double-coding each case. Supervisors review all codes that do not agree, and later meet with individual coders to review discrepancies. MIDUS coded to the 2018 Alphabetic Index of Industries and Occupations distributed by the US Census Bureau. Codes assigned with the Alphabetic Index were then converted to their 2018 SOC counterparts.

All IO codes were delivered in March 2025. Coded variables included occupation for jobs reported by the respondent for their own current or former occupation, and for the current occupation of the respondents' spouse.

#### *Delivery of SAQ Data*

In March 2023, UWSC delivered an interim data set of the first 100 completed MIDUS R2 questionnaires data entered. IOA staff reviewed the SAQ data cleaning scripts and approved continuing data entry.

In December 2023, an interim delivery of 1,020 completed questionnaires was delivered to UW-IOA.

MIDUS R2 SAQ final data was delivered on May 13, 2025, and included 1,711 cases.

#### *Delivery of Cognitive Interview Data*

An additional data delivery that took place involved the Cognitive interview. MIDUS R2 Cognitive Interview interim data was delivered to researchers at Brandeis regularly throughout the field period. Data deliveries usually occurred biweekly, and consisted of a data file, open ended response, and interviewer notes. MIDUS R2 Cognitive Interview data interim deliveries ran from January 2023 through February 2025.

In addition to the data itself, full audio recordings of cognitive interviews were delivered daily via a secure shared drive. Five key demographic variables were delivered regularly for all completed interviews, in addition to interviewer notes on respondent cooperativeness, and interviewer assessments of respondent physical or mental health issues that may have made the interview difficult for the respondent. This information was used by Brandeis to begin scoring the tasks conducted in the interview and to assess the quality of the data.

MIDUS R2 Cognitive interview final data was delivered on March 11, 2025, and included 1,700 completed and 16 usable partial interviews.

All Appendices are available upon request from the MIDUS Administrative Core. Please contact [midus\\_help@aging.wisc.edu](mailto:midus_help@aging.wisc.edu).