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Midlife in the United States (MIDUS Refresher), 2011-2014

MIDUS Refresher Documentation of Age

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Documentation of Age
in the MIDUS Refresher (Ages 25-75)
February, 2015

This document describes the procedures for obtaining information about MIDUS Refresher (MR) respondent age

Obtaining Age Information From Participants

Information about respondent age is obtained at multiple points in the Project 1 protocol. Reported age is obtained at the beginning of the MR Phone data collection, while respondent birthdate is requested at the end of the phone interview and again at the end of the SAQ as described below.

1. Reported Age: The MR phone data collection began by screening individuals and households (HH) for age-eligible respondents (25 – 75). Individuals who lived alone were asked their age and gender. If the HH consisted of multiple individuals, the individual who answered the phone was asked to enumerate the age and gender of all HH members, and a selection probability algorithm was invoked to choose a participant from among all HH members. Thus, participant “stated” age was obtained directly from the individual or the HH informant enumerating the HH members.
2. Full Birthdate:
 - a. Phone Interview: At the end of the phone interview participants were asked for their full birthdate.
 - b. SAQ: Because accurate age data is critical to MIDUS, participants were again asked to provide their full birthdate in the subsequent Self-Administered Questionnaire (SAQ) which was mailed to them.
 - c. Birthdates are confirmed when participants are contact by UWSC to complete the BTACT Cognitive assessment.

Creating the Age Variable (RA1PRAGE):

Based on the assumption that birth date information is more reliable than “stated” age, we recomputed respondents’ “calculated” age in years using a standard formula (the same formula was used in M1 and M2 – see “Documentation of Age in MIDUS 1 and 2):

$$Age = phone\ interview\ date - birth\ date$$

Some individuals refused to provide full birthdate information, and some individuals provided conflicting information about their “stated” age, phone birthdate, or SAQ birthdate, thus the final age variable reported in the Refresher dataset (RA1PRAGE) is a combination of “calculated” age and “stated” age. In all situations we resolved discrepancies and calculated age values based on the best available data according to the following criteria:

- If the respondent provided no birthdate, we used “stated” age.
- If the respondent provided conflicting birthdates in the phone and SAQ, we resolved the discrepancy using tracing resources provided by UWSC. Calculated ages were

rounded down to a whole number representing the participant's age as of his or her last birthday prior to the phone interview.

Age distribution in the current MR Phone data.

1. Outliers. MR intended to survey respondents aged from 25 to 75. A small number of cases exceed this range by a few years. These age data can be attributed to mistakes on the part of the interviewer, the participant, or the HH informant. In most cases these mistakes were not caught until after a participant completed the phone interview. It is left up to the individual analyst whether or not to include these age outliers in their analysis. The outlier cases can be easily identified by examining the RA1PRAGE variable.
2. Two fielding periods. The National Institute on Aging funded the MIDUS Refresher initiative with two separate grants, the first focused on younger members of the new sample, and the second focused on older respondents. This resulted in two fielding periods for the younger (25-54) and older (55-75) samples with an eight month gap separating the fielding periods. Together, both groups match the age range (25-74) of the original MIDUS baseline sample fielded in 1995, but this fielding gap had sampling and weighting consequences that resulted in a slightly different age distribution among the older sample (a small number of 55-year-olds). Full details are described in the MR sampling and weighting report.