

# **Implementation of Medicare CAHPS® Fee-For-Service Survey**

## **Data Collection Final Report for the 2003 Survey**

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## Table of Contents

	<b>Page</b>
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Modifications to the 2003 MFFS.....	2
3. Data Collection Method.....	3
3.1 The Mail Survey.....	3
3.2 Inbound Respondent Calls.....	7
3.3 Nonresponse Follow-up.....	8
4. Data Collection Results.....	13
5. Recommendations for the 2004 MFFS.....	19

## List of Tables

	<b>Page</b>
Table 1. 2003 MFFS Data Collection Schedule.....	3
Table 2. Case Disposition Codes.....	6
Table 3. Source of Telephone Numbers for 2003 MFFS.....	10
Table 4. Source of Telephone Numbers for Complete Cases in 2003.....	11
Table 5. Eligibility Status and Case Disposition of 2003 MFFS Sample Members.....	14
Table 6. 2003 MFFS Survey Response Rates.....	15
Table 7. 2003 Summary Results by Wave.....	17
Table 8. 2002 Summary Results by Wave.....	17
Table 9. 2001 Summary Results by Wave.....	17
Table 10. 2000 Summary Results by Wave.....	18

## 1. Introduction

This report describes the data collection protocol and results for the 2003 Medicare CAHPS® Fee for Service (MFSS) Survey. The MFSS represents the third part of the CAHPS program, which also includes the Medicare CAHPS Managed Care Survey and the Medicare CAHPS Disenrollment Survey. To ensure that beneficiaries are able to make informed choices among available options, it is essential that comparative information materials, such as the *Medicare & You* handbook and Medicare Compare web site, include measures of the performance of the FFS system. Complementary FFS performance measures are also needed by CMS, Medicare + Choice (M+C) plans, providers, and peer review organizations for two important uses. First, more than four out of five Medicare beneficiaries use the FFS system. Quality improvement and performance measurements that are limited to the managed care sector would, over time, lose value and credibility if they represent only one segment of the Medicare population. Second, because it accounts for the majority of beneficiaries, the FFS system represents a benchmark against which M+C plans may be compared. Trends in performance based on data collected from the MFSS population serve both purposes. This report describes the data collection procedures and results from the 2003 MFSS, discusses the effectiveness of changes made to the data collection protocol for 2003 based on the lessons learned from 2002, and provides recommendations for future years of data collection.

## **2. Modifications to the 2003 MFFS**

One of the benefits of conducting an annual survey is that future years of data collection can be informed by “lessons learned” from earlier years of data collection. For example, the decision to use a special delivery courier for the third wave mailing was based on the results of the experiment conducted during the 2001 MFFS<sup>1</sup> that showed a significant increase in response to the survey when it was delivered via special delivery than by either US Priority Mail or first class delivery. We also attribute some of the increase in response to better access to resources for contacting and locating beneficiaries. One of those resources provided telephone numbers for a significant proportion of the sample through the Social Security Administration (SSA). This increased the number of non-respondents that RTI could contact by telephone during the follow-up phase of the survey and reduced the number of cases that RTI would have to direct to the third wave mail follow-up.

There were four modifications made to the MFFS Survey in 2003. First, 700 beneficiaries from the U.S. Virgin Islands were added to the sample. Second, the third wave mailing was sent via a special delivery carrier for two-day delivery, instead of overnight delivery. Third, an additional ‘thank you/reminder’ postcard was mailed to all survey nonrespondents following the third wave questionnaire mailing. Finally, to allow the extra postcard adequate time to have an effect, the data collection period was extended an additional two weeks. Even with these modifications to methodology, the response rate among eligible sample members was 69.3 percent for the 2003 MFFS, which was 1.3 percent lower than the 2002 MFFS response rate of 70.6 percent.

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<sup>1</sup> The experiment compared response to a third wave survey sent by first class, US priority mail or special delivery courier. The results showed that respondents were 2.7 times more likely to return the survey when it was mailed via overnight courier than when it was mailed by either of the other two methods.

### 3. Data Collection Method

The CAHPS Medicare Fee-for Service Survey is a self-administered mail survey that offers sample members the option of calling a toll-free number and completing the survey over the telephone. There is strong evidence that providing multiple modes of responding improves overall response (Dillman, 2000). The follow-up data collection effort for nonrespondents to the mail survey includes a telephone follow-up of nonrespondents for whom RTI had a telephone number and a third wave survey package mailed to nonrespondents for whom RTI did not have a telephone number.

The data collection period for the 2003 MFFS started with the mailout of the prenotification letter on September 10, 2003, and ended with the close of the telephone follow-up on February 21, 2004. The overall data collection schedule is shown in *Table 1*.

**Table 1. 2003 MFFS Data Collection Schedule**

Activity	Date
<b>Mail Survey</b>	
Prenotification Letters Sent	09/10/2003
Toll-free Line Opened	09/10/2003
Inbound Telephone Center Opened	09/11/2003
First Survey Mailed	09/15/2003
First Thank You/Reminder Letter Sent	09/22/2003
Cutoff Date for Wave 1	10/20/2003
Second Survey Mailed	11/05/2003
Second Thank You/Reminder Letter Sent	11/10/2003
Cutoff Date for Wave 2 for Telephone Follow-up	11/26/2003
Cutoff Date for Wave 2 for Third Wave Mailing	12/12/2003
<b>Follow-up Data Collection</b>	
Telephone Follow-up Began	12/03/2003
Third Survey Sent (FedEx)	01/05/2004
Third Thank You/Reminder Letter Sent	01/29/2004
Cutoff date for Returned Mail Surveys	02/21/2004
Toll-free Line Closed Down	02/21/2004
Telephone Follow-up Ended	02/21/2004

#### 3.1 The Mail Survey

The data collection plan for the mail survey followed the traditional method of making five contacts: 1) advance letter; 2) first survey package; 3) thank you/reminder postcard; 4) second

'replacement' package; and, 5) second thank you/reminder postcard. In addition, there was a third survey package, which for the first time this year was followed by a third thank you/reminder postcard sent to all remaining sample members.

### **Sample File Preparation**

RTI selected a stratified random sample of 178,650 non-institutionalized Fee-for-Service beneficiaries from the CMS Enrollment Database (EDB). The sample was drawn from 277 geographically distinct areas ("geounits") in the United States, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Sample sizes in geounits ranged from 506 to 2,000. RTI delivered the sample file containing 178,650 beneficiary names, mailing addresses, and other information to Pearson NCS in September 2003. Pearson prepared the file using their "mailstreaming" program. Once the file was prepared, the address file was run through the National Change of Address (NCOA) database, which updates the addresses for those respondents who have moved since the sample was drawn. This process yielded 6,089 new addresses this year, which is higher than the number found in the 2002 MFFS (3,835). All records that were returned with a new address from NCOA were mailed using the new address. In addition to updating addresses for those who have moved or changed addresses, the NCOA database also standardizes the mailing addresses to conform to standard post office formats. Sample file addresses that conformed to the standard postal format were pre-sorted using the mailstream process, which allowed RTI to take advantage of a reduced postage rate. Sample file addresses that did not conform to the standard postal format could not be pre-sorted or mailstreamed and had to be metered separately and mailed first class.

Any sample file address that was not updated through NCOA was mailed using the original CMS-provided address, which was modified by Pearson to conform to the standard postal format. The standard format used three lines of address (name, street address, and city, state, zip code), whereas the CMS-provided address file used a six-line format that allowed two lines of address prior to the city, state, zip code field and combined city/state into one field. The modification performed by Pearson separated city from state and combined the two CMS address fields immediately preceding the city/state field. For the mailing of prenotification letters and reminder letters to non-NCOA, Pearson-modified addresses, only these two address fields (combined) were used in the mailing address. However, for the survey mailings using non-NCOA, Pearson-modified addresses, the full CMS-provided address was used (up to six lines), since the 9x12 window envelope used for the survey allows more lines of address to be shown.

## **Preparation and Processing of Survey Materials**

Pearson printed all materials and processed and scanned the returned questionnaires. RTI provided oversight to Pearson to ensure that the correct survey procedures were implemented. Pearson submitted proofs of all materials prior to printing, and all survey materials were reviewed and approved by CMS and RTI before being sent to sample members.

## **Quality Control of Mailing Process**

There are a number of quality control procedures in place to ensure that errors during the mail process are minimized. A supervisor is assigned to the project mailing for each shift, and one or two people operate the mail insertion machine. If there is any malfunction in the envelope insertion process, the mail insertion machine stops until the problem is corrected. Another person batches the sealed questionnaire packages by zip code and checks to ensure that the name and address on the back of the questionnaire show through the window on the envelope. Staff members are cross-trained to take on different roles. There is also a quality control specialist who performs spot checks once an hour. This person opens and examines a random series of questionnaire packages, checking that the inside name matches the name that shows through the address window and that the name and address show through the window. In addition, a postal staff person spot checks the mail once it has been batched and put in containers prior to delivery to the post office. Similar quality control checks are performed for the third wave Federal Express mailing. Federal Express labels with the respondent's address are printed in an order that matches the order of the surveys (which is by ID number). The survey ID number is also printed on the Federal Express mailing label. Staff members match the Federal Express label to the address on the back of the questionnaire. The Federal Express packages are put in crates, and every tenth one is checked by the quality control specialist.

## **Processing Returned Questionnaires and Completed Interviews**

The flow of the cases through this complex data collection was monitored via two sets of disposition codes that were assigned to cases as they progressed through the data collection activities. These codes allowed staff to track and monitor production and to create status reports. The set of disposition codes used for the 2003 mail survey is shown in *Table 2*, in the columns marked Wave 1, Wave 2 and Wave 3.

Another set of disposition codes was used to track cases that were handled by telephone. This set of codes is shown in *Table 2*, in the columns marked Inbound and Follow Up. The telephone disposition

codes provided a means of monitoring and reporting case status and production. The codes were also used to determine next steps in the contacting process.

**Table 2. Case Disposition Codes**

<b>CAHPS-FFS 2003 National Survey Disposition Codes – All Year 4 Codes</b>					
<b>Description</b>	<b>Inbound</b>	<b>Wave 1</b>	<b>Wave 2</b>	<b>Wave 3</b>	<b>Follow Up</b>
<b><u>Pending Codes</u></b>					
Survey Mailed		100	200	300	
Returned Undeliverable - without New Address		110	210	310	
Returned Undeliverable - with New Address		120	220	320	
Questionnaire Returned Blank		130	230	330	
Request for Spanish/English	990	140	240	340	
Beneficiary will Mail	991				
Proxy will Mail Questionnaire	992				
Phone Busy	901				1
No Answer	902				2
Answering Machine, Message, Left 800 #	903				3
Spanish Language Beneficiary, Transfer to Spanish Speaker	904				4
Respondent Not Available	905				5
Sent to tracing (Wrong number, Disconnect, Computer tone, fax machine, Business)	906				6
Soft Refusal	907				7
Schedule Callback	908				8
Soft Mid-Interview Terminate (goes to refusal converter)	909				9
Respondent Will Call, Gave 800 #	910				10
Call Substitute Number	911				11
Suspended By Supervisor	951				51
<b><u>Final Codes</u></b>					
Refused /Take Name off List	912	400	400	400	12
Refused - Not on Medicare	913	500	500	500	13
Completed Survey	943	150	250	350	43
Institutionalized- proxy unavailable	914	600	600	600	14



<b>CAHPS-FFS 2003 National Survey Disposition Codes – All Year 4 Codes</b>					
<b>Description</b>	<b>Inbound</b>	<b>Wave 1</b>	<b>Wave 2</b>	<b>Wave 3</b>	<b>Follow Up</b>
Ineligible – Deceased	915	700	700	700	15
Language Barrier	916	800	800	800	16
Mental/Physical Barrier	917	850	850	850	17
Respondent Not Available for Duration/NO PROXY	918				18
Hard Mid-Interview Terminate (Follow up question, Why?) Final Break Off	919				19
Respondent already mailed the survey	920				20
Wrong number - after dialing attempt	921				21
Disconnect - after dialing attempt	922				22
Computer tone/Fax - after dialing attempt	923				23
Business/Government - after dialing attempt	924				24
Already completed phone questionnaire	925				25
Already mailed questionnaire a second time	926				26
Sample Pulled by RTI (Resp. called in after outbound started and pulled from sample)	933				33
Callback Completes	944				44
Callback Terminates	945				45
Number Over Maximum Attempts (12+ attempts)	946				46
Record over quota	947				47
Callback transferred	948				48
Area code disabled	949				49
Sample record re-inserted	950				50

### **3.2 Inbound Respondent Calls**

All survey materials sent to sample members contained the study's toll-free number for respondents to call if they had questions about the study or to request a telephone interview. The inbound telephone calls from respondents were taken at the Pearson telephone center. RTI conducted two days of in-person training at the Pearson call center. Pearson telephone interviewers were trained extensively by

RTI staff on the protocols for answering respondent queries and on how to conduct the interview. RTI trained 28 interviewers, including 4 Spanish-English bilingual interviewers. Inbound respondent calls began one day after the mailing of the prenotification letter and continued through the end of data collection, February 21, 2004.

The toll-free line was in operation 6 days a week, Monday through Friday 8:00 AM EST until 8:00 PM EST and Saturdays from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM EST. A voice mail system was used to take information from callers after hours and to prompt callers to leave their name, telephone number, and ID for later contact by Pearson staff. All voice mail messages were returned by the following day (for overnight messages) or the same day (for early morning messages). If a sample member indicated a specific time to call back, this was accommodated. At times during telephone shop hours when the telephone call-in line was busy due to high call volume, a message was put on the answering machine notifying callers that Pearson was experiencing a high volume of calls and telling them that they could stay on the line or leave their number for a call back. A maximum of 12 callback attempts was made to each respondent. Telephone number information left by respondents was captured at Pearson and delivered to RTI on a weekly basis to be incorporated into the main data base.

### **3.3 Nonresponse Follow-up**

The nonresponse follow-up included both a telephone and mail component and started approximately three weeks after the second survey was mailed. The telephone follow-up was conducted with nonrespondents for whom RTI found a telephone number; all other nonrespondents were followed-up by sending a third survey package by mail.

#### **Tracing and Locating**

RTI used a number of resources to find new address information for beneficiaries who moved and to locate telephone numbers for the sample members. First, the sample file was matched to the US Postal Service National Change of Address (NCOA) database. This process updated 6,089 sample addresses, or 3.41 percent of the sample. This percentage of updated addresses was somewhat higher than the 2.1 percent of updated addresses found in the 2002 MFPS.

Only 414 surveys were returned undeliverable with no new address by the end of the 2003 survey. In 2000, there were 2,597 packages returned undeliverable, and in 2001, there were 1,316 such packages. The smaller number of undeliverable packages can be attributed, for the most part, to the extended schedule.

Since the sample file drawn from the EDB does not include telephone numbers, and because telephone numbers are critical to success in the telephone follow-up, it is necessary to begin the search for telephone numbers as early as possible in the process. In the 2000 and 2001 MFFS, RTI used two outside vendors (Telematch and First Data) and the Tracing Operations Unit at RTI (TOPS) as resources for telephone numbers. In 2002 and 2003, the project team was able to access additional telephone numbers from the Social Security Administration (SSA).

The tracing for MFFS is done in an iterative process. In past years, the sample file was first processed through Telematch, a vendor with access to national databases that can match name and address with corresponding telephone numbers. Cases that were returned without a telephone number were then processed through First Data, another vendor. The CMS office in Puerto Rico has been instrumental in getting telephone numbers for sample members residing in Puerto Rico. All remaining cases were sent to TOPS for more extensive case-by-case tracing. Starting in 2002, telephone numbers were also obtained from SSA.

In the 2002 MFFS, the sample file was processed through SSA *after* Telematch, First Data and CMS for Puerto Rico, but in 2003 this order was changed. Because the numbers acquired from the SSA in 2002 proved to be quite accurate, it was decided to process the sample this year through the SSA database *before* Telematch, First Data, and CMS for Puerto Rico. All remaining cases were sent to TOPS for more extensive case-by-case tracing. **Table 3** shows the number and percent of telephone numbers found by each source in 2003. TOPS was the source for 6.17 percent of telephone numbers, SSA provided 71.42 percent, Telematch yielded 17.97 percent, First Data provided 0.19 percent, and CMS provided 0.15 percent (telephone numbers for Puerto Rico only). No telephone number could be found for 4 percent of the sample (7,311 sample members). Because the order in which the sample was processed through these databases changed, it is difficult to make comparisons with previous years in which the order was different. However, as a result of this change in 2003, SSA was the most productive source of telephone numbers (127,599), compared with Telematch in 2002 (111,274). It should be noted that Tables 4 and 5 are set up so that the counts will sum to the full sample. Therefore, they do not display all telephone numbers found. The tables are set up based on the priority of listing the number that Discovery Research Group (DRG) used in the telephone follow-up or, if there was no contact, the number we would give to DRG. In 2003, the total number of telephone numbers that the SSA file matched was 140,101 sample members or 78.42 percent of the sample. More importantly, the SSA was the sole source of numbers for 40,059 sample members or 22.42 percent of the sample.

Having the SSA file of telephone numbers was the main factor contributing to the overall increase in the number of sample member telephone numbers found in both 2002 and 2003. Overall, the

2003 MFFS tracing effort produced telephone numbers for 95.91 percent of the sample, which represents an increase of 1.62 percent over that of 2002.

**Table 3. Source of Telephone Numbers for 2003 MFFS**

<b>Source</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
TOPS	11,028	6.17%
SSA	127,599	71.42%
Telematch	32,111	17.97%
First Data	340	0.19%
Puerto Rico	261	0.15%
No phone number found	7,311	4.09%
	178,650	100.00%
<b>Total valid phone numbers found by SSA</b>	140,101	78.42%

### **Telephone Follow-up**

The non-response follow-up by telephone began on December 3, 2003 with 68,591 cases that had not responded to either of the first two mailings by November 26, 2003. Telephone interviewing was conducted 7 days a week (with the exception of December 24, 25, and 31, 2003, and January 1, 2004). RTI trained 215 interviewers, including 19 bilingual Spanish-English interviewers.

The telephone sample file contained two or more unique telephone numbers for 25,960 of the follow-up cases (14.53 percent). If a case had two telephone numbers associated with it, the interviewers dialed the telephone number received from the SSA first. If after 6 attempts at the first number no contact was made, the second number was attempted. This procedure represents a change from 2002, where the RTI-provided number was dialed first because we did not know how the SSA numbers would perform. This change was made in 2003 based on our experience in 2002, where the highest percentage of completed cases was obtained from the SSA number. When contact was made with Spanish-speaking households, the calls were routed to Spanish-speaking interviewers. Initial soft refusals were reinserted in the calling queue and directed to interviewers who specialized in refusal conversion techniques. In the 2003 MFFS (as in 2002), refusals were called back within 48 hours of the original attempt, not 5 days later as they were in 2000 and 2001. Interviewers were instructed to contact Directory Assistance if they called numbers that were disconnected or incorrect. If no new number was provided by directory assistance, the call was recorded as “Disconnected – No Directory Assistance Listing.” These cases were then sent back to RTI for tracing on a flow basis. Cases for which RTI’s tracing unit (TOPS) found a correct telephone number were returned to DRG, where further attempts were made to conduct a telephone interview with the sample member.

**Table 4**, below, shows all the single and combined sources of the telephone numbers of completed cases in 2003. Of the 17,204 completed cases, 11,403 (66.28 percent) were attributed to the SSA number, either from SSA alone or from multiple sources where SSA was one of the sources. By contrast, of 18,249 cases completed by DRG in the previous year, 63.51 percent were attributed to an SSA provided telephone number. The results from the 2003 MFFS represent an increase in productivity of the SSA telephone numbers of 2.77 percent. However, having the second telephone number increased the time it took to get through the caseload.

**Table 4. Source of Telephone Numbers for Complete Cases in 2003**

<b>Single Source for Telephone Number for Complete Case</b>	
TOPS only	672
SSA only	4,197
Telematch only	4,166
First Data only	32
Puerto Rico only	40
Directory Assistance	767
<b>Multiple Sources for Telephone Number for Complete Case</b>	
TOPS and SSA	59
TOPS and First Data	1
TOPS and Telematch	123
TOPS and SSA and Telematch	206
SSA and Telematch	6,867
SSA and Puerto Rico	74

**Third Wave Mailing to Nonrespondents**

A final, or third wave, survey package was sent to nonrespondents for whom RTI did not have a telephone number. The third wave mailing was sent approximately five weeks after the second wave mailing to allow for returned surveys from the second wave to be processed. This year, the third wave questionnaire mailing was followed by a third thank you/reminder postcard. This postcard was different from the wave one and wave two thank you/reminder postcards, which were mailed only to those sample members who received the first and second wave questionnaire mailings. The new wave three thank

you/reminder postcard was mailed not just to 2,666 sample members who received the third wave express mail questionnaire packet. It was mailed to all remaining sample members—35,014 sample members. The postcard was mailed on January 29 and 30, 2004. The purpose of the extra postcard was to boost response rates.

The acquisition of the telephone numbers from SSA helped to reduce the number of cases requiring a third wave mailing by more than fifty percent between the 2001 and 2002 MFFS, and even further reduced that number in 2003. In the 2002 MFFS, 8,342 cases were eligible for the wave three mailing because they had not responded and we did not have a telephone number for them, compared with 17,961 cases in the previous year. In 2003, only 2,666 cases were eligible for the third wave, a reduction of over two thirds. The third wave mailing was sent using special 2-day delivery. This differed from the previous year in that the 2002 third wave mailing used overnight delivery. Use of special delivery was based on the findings of the experiment conducted in 2001, which showed that sample members were 2.7 times more likely to return the completed survey if it was delivered by a special delivery overnight courier rather than by US Priority mail or first class. In 2003, the third wave mailing realized a rate of return of completed surveys of 12.7 percent, less than in 2002 (18.6 percent) but more than in 2001 (10.5 percent).

#### **4. Data Collection Results**

The response rate among eligible sample members for 2003 is 69.3 percent, which is 1.3 percent lower than the 70.6 percent response rate achieved during 2002. The response rate varied somewhat among the specific geographic areas from which randomized sub-samples were drawn, but response in each area was sufficient (300 completed cases per geographic unit) to provide measures of CAHPS composites and ratings for all 277 distinct areas, and for each of the 50 US States, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia.

RTI received 466 requests for Spanish language surveys from the 177,450 respondents who had received the English language version of the survey. This number of requests was slightly lower than in 2002, when we received 569 requests for the Spanish survey, but the numbers are so low that the difference is not likely to be significant. As noted earlier, the English version of the survey was sent to all sample members, excluding the 1,200 sample members in Puerto Rico, each of whom received a Spanish survey package. RTI received 2,404 completed Spanish mail surveys, and another 700 Spanish surveys were completed by telephone (inbound or outbound). Of those completing a Spanish survey, 605 (19.49 percent) were known to live in Puerto Rico. The number of completed Spanish surveys was significantly higher in 2003 than in 2002. In 2002, we received only 1,059 Spanish completes, 554 by mail and 505 by telephone. The reason for the increase is unknown.

##### **Eligibility**

The only sample members considered to be ineligible for the survey are those found to be deceased during the data collection period of performance. Eligibility as defined in *Table 5* includes all mentally or physically incapacitated individuals and individuals with a known language barrier. For 2003, the deceased accounted for only 2.2 percent of the sample.

**Table 5. Eligibility Status and Case Disposition of 2003 MFFS Sample Members**

<b>Eligibility Status and Case Disposition</b>	<b>Sample member count</b>	<b>Percentage of sample</b>
<b>Completed Questionnaire</b>	120,974	67.7%
Proxy respondent	7,898	4.4%
Beneficiary received help with survey	13,616	7.6%
Beneficiary respondent	99,460	55.7%
<b>Refused</b>	13,982	7.8%
<b>Mental/Physical Barrier</b>	1,999	1.1%
<b>Language Barrier</b>	714	0.4%
<b>Other nonrespondents</b>		
Deliverable address w/telephone	34,407	19.3%
Deliverable address w/no telephone	2,169	1.2%
Undeliverable address w/telephone	12	0.0%
Undeliverable address w/no telephone	391	0.2%
<b>Total of Eligible Sample Members</b>	174,648	97.8%
<b>Survey ineligible deceased</b>	4,002	2.2%
<b>Total Ineligibles</b>	4,002	2.2%
<b>Total Sample</b>	178,650	100.0%

*Table 6* provides a summary of the results of data collection from 2003 by a number of demographic variables and provides a comparison to the response rates among eligible beneficiaries from 2000 through 2003. In 2003, the response rate among eligible beneficiaries was lower by one to two percent in almost all categories of respondents than it was in 2002. This corresponded to the overall decrease in response rate among eligible beneficiaries from 70.6 percent to 69.3 percent, a drop of 1.3 percentage points.

The biggest drop was almost a 25 percent decrease in the percentage of respondents who categorized themselves as “other or unknown” race. Up until this year, the number of respondents categorizing themselves as “other or unknown” race had risen. In 2003, the sample for this category was 7,882 (only 4.4 percent of the entire sample), and a total of 3,849 respondents selected this race category. The response rate among sample members in this category jumped from 49.2 percent in 2000 to 66.5 percent in 2001, and rose to 74.2 in 2002, then fell to just 50.09 in 2003. Another decrease was in the percentage of sample members in the age category of 44 or younger, a decrease from 50.3 in 2002 to 46.5 percent in 2003. Also, in past years there was a steady increase in the number of people responding



**Table 6. 2003 MFFS Survey Response Rates**

	2003 Sample		2003 Respondents		Response Rates Among Eligibles			
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	2003	2002	2001	2000
<b>Overall</b>	178,650	100.00%	120,974	100.00%	69.3%	70.6%	68.0%	63.9%
<b>Telephone Status</b>								
No Number Found	7,311	4.09%	4,349	3.59%	62.8%	63.2%	64.7%	56.4%
Number Found	171,339	95.91%	116,625	96.41%	69.5%	71.1%	69.1%	67.5%
<b>Gender (EDB)</b>								
Male	76,888	43.04%	51,916	42.92%	69.2%	70.8%	68.5%	65.0%
Female	101,762	56.96%	69,058	57.08%	69.3%	70.5%	67.7%	63.0%
<b>Age group (EDB)</b>								
44 or younger	5,046	2.82%	2,318	1.92%	46.5%	50.3%		
45 - 64	17,513	9.80%	10,655	8.81%	61.8%	63.9%	56.8%	51.3%
65 - 69	38,850	21.75%	27,380	22.63%	71.2%	73.1%	70.0%	67.7%
70 - 74	38,200	21.38%	27,391	22.64%	72.7%	74.7%	71.8%	69.1%
75 - 79	33,670	18.85%	24,070	19.90%	72.9%	73.8%	71.2%	67.8%
80 - 84	24,526	13.73%	16,932	14.00%	71.1%	71.1%	69.9%	
85 or older	20,845	11.67%	12,228	10.11%	62.8%	62.9%	60.7%	59.5%
<b>Race (EDB)</b>								
White	154,548	86.51%	107,828	89.13%	71.30%	71.5%	69.4%	66.0%
Black	16,220	9.08%	9,297	7.69%	59.13%	59.1%	55.6%	51.0%
Other	7,882	4.41%	3,849	3.18%	50.09%	74.2%	66.5%	49.2%
<b>Dually eligible (EDB)</b>								
Yes	24,447	13.68%	14,243	11.77%	60.49%	61.3%	56.9%	50.5%
No	154,203	86.32%	106,731	88.23%	70.64%	72.0%	69.6%	66.1%
<b>Beale code*</b>								
Central metro counties 1 million pop +	54,547	30.86%	34,080	28.41%	64.00%	64.7%	61.8%	58.4%
Fringe metro counties 1 million pop +	6,809	3.85%	4,688	3.91%	70.30%	72.6%	70.1%	65.9%
Metro counties of 250K to 1 million pop	42,058	23.80%	28,489	23.75%	69.28%	70.5%	68.7%	63.5%
Metro counties of <250K pop	19,525	11.05%	13,801	11.50%	72.25%	74.3%	71.3%	67.4%
Urban pop of 20K +, adjacent to metro area	9,130	5.17%	6,436	5.36%	71.83%	74.2%	70.9%	68.1%
Urban pop of 20K +, not adjacent to metro area	6,470	3.66%	4,633	3.86%	73.16%	75.5%	72.6%	67.0%
Urban pop of 2,500 to 19,999, adjacent metro area	16,294	9.22%	11,710	9.76%	73.60%	74.7%	72.0%	68.4%
Urban pop of 2,500 to 19,999, not adjacent metro area	14,368	8.13%	10,564	8.81%	75.14%	76.1%	73.8%	68.9%
Completely rural adjacent metro area	2,612	1.48%	1,905	1.59%	74.44%	76.2%	72.6%	69.2%
Completely rural not adjacent metro area	4,827	2.73%	3,574	2.98%	75.75%	77.6%	74.9%	70.1%
<b>Census division</b>								
New England	12,532	7.01%	8,402	6.95%	68.48%	69.8%	67.5%	62.7%
Middle Atlantic	23,204	12.99%	14,433	11.93%	63.81%	64.8%	62.8%	59.7%
East South Central	13,866	7.76%	9,620	7.95%	71.09%	72.1%	70.8%	64.9%
West South Central	17,720	9.92%	12,016	9.93%	69.44%	70.3%	66.0%	63.8%
South Atlantic	36,901	20.66%	24,738	20.45%	68.61%	70.6%	67.7%	63.9%
East North Central	27,713	15.51%	19,492	16.11%	71.84%	72.9%	70.7%	65.9%
West North Central	17,357	9.72%	12,710	10.51%	74.86%	76.4%	74.7%	70.5%
Pacific	16,647	9.32%	10,814	8.94%	66.39%	68.1%	64.4%	61.9%
Mountain	10,810	6.05%	7,742	6.40%	72.97%	73.8%	72.5%	67.4%
Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands**	1,900	1.06%	1,007	0.83%	54.23%	59.2%	57.5%	45.6%

\*PR and VI have been excluded from percentage calculations because Beale codes are not assigned in these regions

\*\*VI included in the 2003 sample only

among the Puerto Rican beneficiaries. In 2000, the response rate was 45.6 percent; in 2001, it was 57.5 percent; and in 2002, it was 59.2 percent. This year, however, there was a decrease in the number responding. This was the first year that the Virgin Island beneficiaries were included in the sample. *Table 6* places the respondents from both Puerto Rican and the Virgin Islands into the same category. For the purpose of comparison, it is helpful to break out the Puerto Rican and Virgin Islands respondents and examine their response rates separately. This year, 55.8 percent (670 of the 1,200) beneficiaries sampled

in Puerto Rico responded to the survey, and only 48.1 percent (337 of the 700) of sampled beneficiaries from the Virgin Islands responded to the survey.

*Table 7* provides a summary of the 2003 results by wave of data collection. *Tables 8, 9* and *10* provide summaries of the three previous years of results by wave of data collection. The tables show the effect of the longer schedule used in 2001, 2002, and 2003 on the ability to process returns and reduce duplications. Comparison of the four tables also shows the effect of more intense locating in 2001 through 2003, and the effects of having the second telephone number from SSA in 2002 and 2003. For the 2003 MFFS, the overall survey response rate (unadjusted for eligibility) was 67.72 percent. This was a drop from that in 2002, where the overall response rate was 69.10 percent, but it was higher than those in 2001 (66.2 percent) and in 2000 (61.6 percent).

In 2003, there was a decrease in response rate in the first wave mailing, the third wave mailing, and the outbound telephone component, but slight increases in the response rate in the second wave mailing and the inbound telephone component. For 2003, the first wave mailing was a little larger (178,650) than in 2002 (177,950). The first wave mailing response rate was 43.37 percent, compared to 44.86 in 2002. The wave two mailing in 2003 was sent to 56.3 percent of the sample, a few points more than in 2001 and 2002 (54 percent each), but about 18 percentage points fewer than in 2000 (74 percent). The 2003 second wave response rate was 12.76, up from 11.79 percent in 2002.

In the 2003 MFFS, there were many fewer nonrespondents for whom we could not find telephone numbers, making them eligible for the third wave mailing. The 2003 third wave mailing was sent to only 2,666 beneficiaries for whom we had no telephone number, compared with 8,342 in 2002 and 17,961 in 2001. The reason for this decrease is due to the fact that we were able to trace more telephone numbers this year. We found telephone numbers for 95.91 percent of the entire sample in 2003, compared with 94.29 percent in 2002. SSA, for example, found 6,000 more telephone numbers this year than in 2002, when the SSA file matched 134,046 sample members, or 75 percent of the sample. This year, the file matched 140,101 sample members, or 78.42 percent of the sample.

**Table 7. 2003 Summary Results by Wave**

<b>2003 Summary Results by Wave</b>						
	<b>First Wave</b>	<b>Second Wave</b>	<b>Third Wave</b>	<b>Inbound Phone</b>	<b>Outbound Phone</b>	<b>Total Activity</b>
<b>Initial Cases</b>	178,650	100,717	2,666	3,663	68,591	178,650
<b>Completed Cases</b>	77,475	22,796	338	3,161	17,204	120,974
<b>Response Rate</b>	43.37%	12.76%	0.19%	1.77%	9.63%	67.72%*

\*unadjusted for eligibility

**Table 8. 2002 Summary Results by Wave**

<b>2002 Summary Results by Wave</b>						
	<b>First Wave</b>	<b>Second Wave</b>	<b>Third Wave</b>	<b>Inbound Phone</b>	<b>Outbound Phone</b>	<b>Total Activity</b>
<b>Initial Cases</b>	177,950	96,517	8,342	3,093	62,727	177,950
<b>Completed Cases</b>	79,831	20,972	1,559	2,344	18,249	122,955
<b>Response Rate</b>	44.86%	11.79%	0.88%	1.32%	10.26%	69.10%*

\*unadjusted for eligibility

**Table 9. 2001 Summary Results by Wave**

<b>2001 Summary Results by Wave</b>						
	<b>First Wave</b>	<b>Second Wave</b>	<b>Third Wave</b>	<b>Inbound Phone</b>	<b>Outbound Phone</b>	<b>Total Activity</b>
<b>Initial Cases</b>	177,950	96,082	17,961	2,911	54,664	177,950
<b>Completed Cases</b>	81,127	18,475	1,888	2,074	14,272	117,836
<b>Response Rate</b>	45.59%	10.38%	1.06%	1.17%	8.02%	66.22%*

\*unadjusted for eligibility

**Table 10. 2000 Summary Results by Wave**

	<b>First Wave</b>	<b>Second Wave</b>	<b>Third Wave</b>	<b>Inbound Phone</b>	<b>Outbound Phone</b>	<b>Total Activity</b>
<b>Initial Cases</b>	167,993	124,503	7,773**	2,191	48,471	167,993
<b>Completed Cases</b>	66,137	23,788	1,168	1,232	11,226	103,551
<b>Response Rate</b>	39.37%	14.16%	0.70%	0.73%	6.68%	61.64%*

\* Unadjusted for eligibility.

\*\* Approximately 33,000 cases were eligible for the third wave in the 2000 MFFS. A sample of 7,773 was selected.

The percentage of surveys completed by inbound telephone rose slightly to 1.77 percent in 2003, from 1.32 percent in 2002. This increase is the result of streamlining the procedures so that the inbound telephone agents could administer the survey immediately while the caller was on the line instead of having to arrange a call back at a later time to complete the interview, as was the process in 2000. This change was implemented in 2001.

In 2003, the percent of sample sent to the outbound nonresponse follow-up rose to 38.4 percent, from 35.2 percent in 2002, and 30.7 percent in 2001. Outbound telephone response rates had increased from 2000 to 2002, consistent with the overall increase in response rates observed in those years. However, the outbound telephone response rate dropped to 9.63 percent of all respondents in 2003, compared with 10.26 in 2002. It is likely that the recent implementation of the Federal “Do Not Call Registry” and all the publicity surrounding it have had a negative impact on the outbound telephone response rates. RTI and DRG have noted similar decreases in response rates in other outbound calling projects since the implementation of the Registry. In the case of the MFFS, sample members may not have understood that surveys are exempt from the prohibition of calling people who have listed their names on the Do Not Call Registry. In fact, when sample members told interviewers that they could not be called because they were on the Registry, interviewers explained to them that surveys are exempt from the prohibition since they are not selling anything. It is likely that many more people who had put their names on the Registry simply hung up the telephone without saying anything to the interviewers.

## **5. Recommendations for the 2004 MFFS**

We have made a number of improvements and adjustments to the data collection plan over the years and we have seen variable results. In 2001 and 2002, we saw modest increases in the response rate. In 2000, we achieved an overall response rate of 61.6%. In 2001 and 2002, we were able to increase the overall response rates to 66.2% and 69.1%, respectively. We can account for the increase in the 2001 response rate by the addition of 4 weeks to the schedule in that year. The additional time allowed us to fully process receipts from the wave 1 mailing before preparing the wave two mailing, thereby reducing the overlap in mailing and allowing more time to track undeliverable addresses and telephone numbers. In 2003, we experienced a slight decline in response rate to 67.7%. We do not believe that this indicates a shortcoming of the methodology, but rather is a reflection of a natural fluctuation in response. The lag in response was evident from the outset of the data collection period. In an effort to bolster the rates, we added an additional two weeks to the schedule to allow time for the telephone interviewers to work all telephone numbers completely through 12 call attempts. Typically, we see diminishing returns after six call attempts to one telephone number. However, a research study that we conducted on the fee-for-service population showed that the number of completed cases yielded by the additional call attempts stayed constant after 10 attempts rather than falling off to almost zero, as in other surveys conducted on the general population. In addition to the methodological changes noted here, we have gained access to telephone numbers from the SSA, which has proved to be a significant resource that has enabled us to direct more cases away from the third wave mailing into the less costly telephone follow-up. RTI recommends continuing to follow the same set of data collection procedures for the 2004 MFFS implementation.