

Participant Retention Within a High-Risk Population

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Introduction

The Rochester Youth Development Study is a multigenerational longitudinal study that examines the causes, correlates and consequences of delinquency and drug use.

The sample originally consisted of 1,000 seventh and eighth grade students from Rochester public schools during the 1987-1988 academic year. They were chosen in order to over-represent youth who were high-risk for delinquency and drug use.

Currently, Wave 16 of the study is occurring, with the original G2 participants, the original sample, being interviewed once again. The interviews conducted with each participant ask about social class position, family structure, education, peer relationships, their neighborhood, psychological functioning, social networks, support systems, and involvements in antisocial behaviors.

The main focus of this poster is participation, including the contact methods used and non-responsiveness. Within a high-risk population there is a lot of mobility and changing of phone numbers between each wave of participation. The research question addresses the challenges associated with the retention of participants in a high-risk population as well as the best methods to increase contact and participation in longitudinal studies with a high-risk population.

Methods

Sample - 67 participants from the G2 generation, the focal participants, 44 of which were men and 23 of which were women.

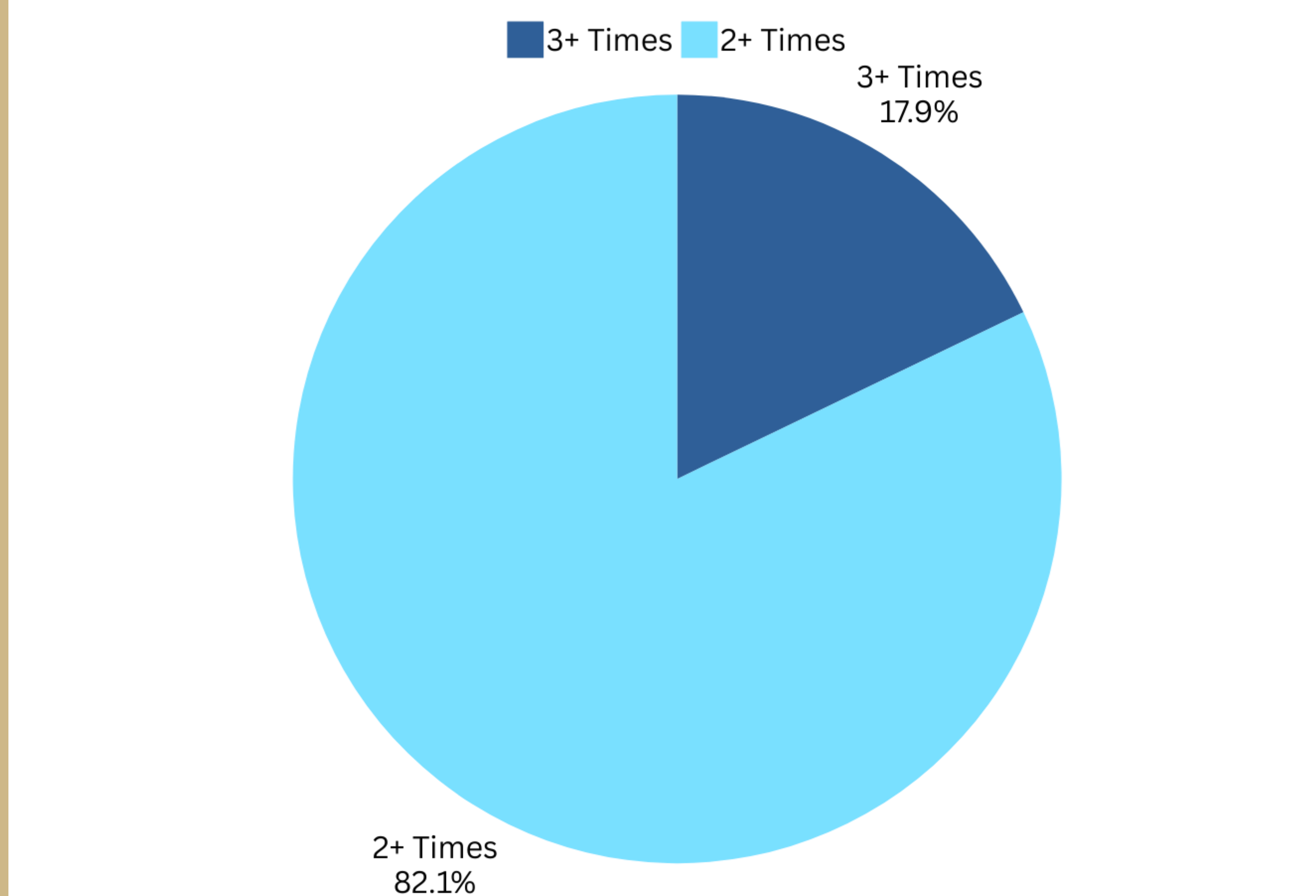
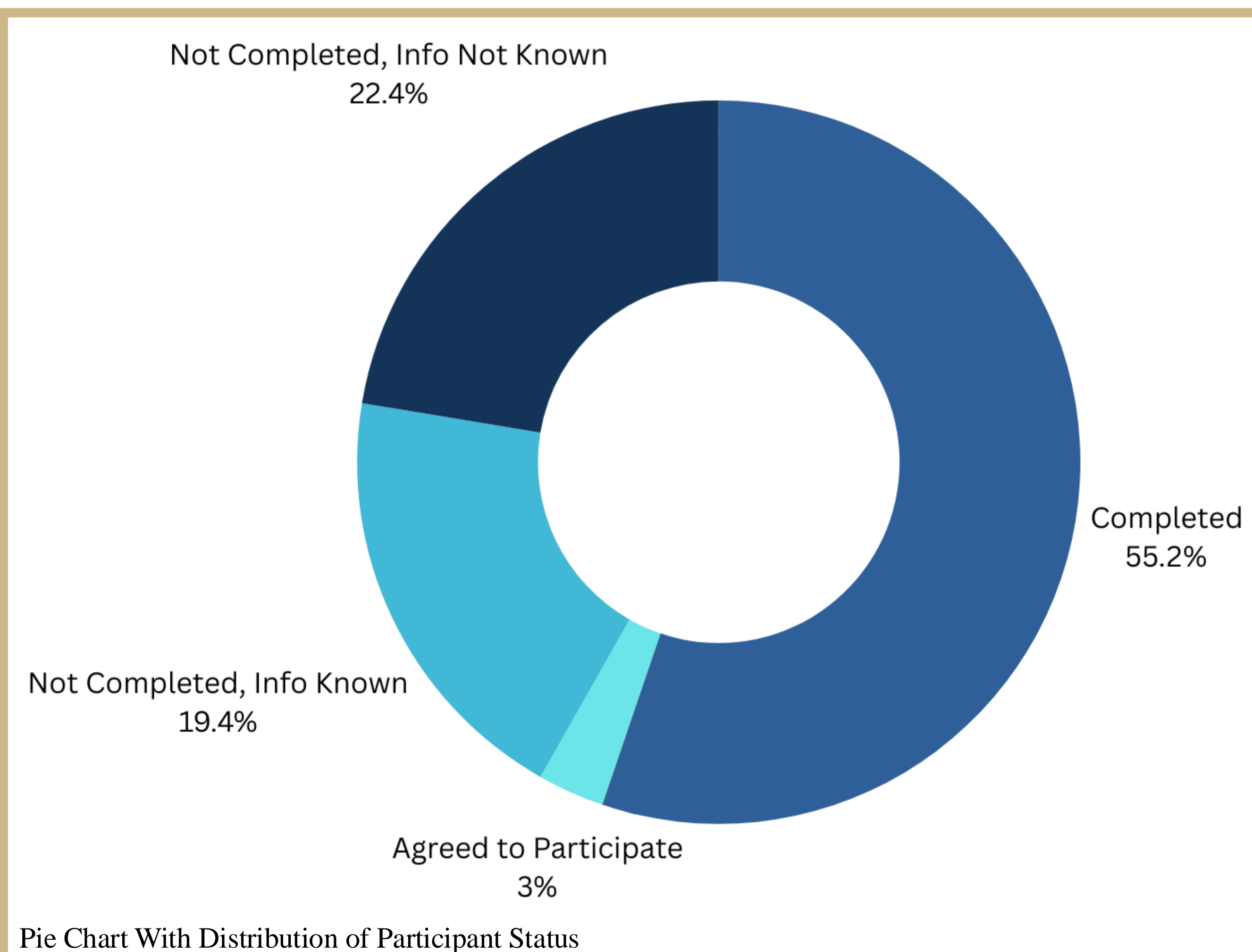
Participants were classified in the following ways:

- The amount of participants that have completed the interview.
 - The amount of contacts taken to have the participants complete the interview.
- The amount of participants that have agreed to participate but have not yet completed the interview process.
- The amount that have not completed the interview process.
- The amount that do not have confirmed contact information.

The sample in this research consists of three groups: the amount who completed the interview or agreed to participate, the amount that did not respond to any contact, and the amount that do not have confirmed contact information

The data analyses that follow consist of calculations and percentages regarding the number of participants that fall into each category above.

Results



Pie Chart with Distribution of # of Contacts for Participants Who Have Not Completed the Interview

Additional strategies have been employed to assist with participant outreach including a RYDSLetter to the last known mailing address. Four replied to the RYDSLetter and have completed the interview, and searches for contact information on Truthfinder and LexisNexis have been conducted on every participant whose contact information is not known.

Discussion

This research project focused on participation and strategies to increase participant retention in high-risk populations. Based on the data, a key part of this research includes lessons learned from these efforts such as flexibility, multiple modalities for interview completion, subsequent contacts, third-party information platforms, and contacting the children of participants.

- “Acknowledging and expressing appreciation for their consistent participation over the years has been helpful for building rapport with participants and encouraging continued involvement.” - Alyssa, Research Coordinator
- “The participants like to be treated as people, not automatons.” - Dr. Augustyn, Program Director
- “I use the participant response and tone to guide mine. If they want it to be a quick conversation – I just quickly give them the basics and emphasize how they can participate quickly. If they are more interested in a conversation – I give them that. If they seem to be unwilling to talk, I let them know that I can call back. No two participants are the same, so you have to be respond accordingly.” - Dr. Augustyn, Program Director
- “They usually do not know the number we are using to contact them so we have to have the patience for them to know we are not spammers or going to take advantage of them.” - Dr. Augustyn, Program Director
- “Drawing on the history of the study and the good it is has done so many youth is really helpful.” - Dr. Augustyn, Program Director

The limitations of this study include a very specific sample of middle-aged participants from New York. Furthermore, there may be better databases to locate information. However, these results allow future researchers to implement these methods when contacting participants who may be a part of a high-risk population. If these techniques are known, researchers, including this team, can continue to build off the study in the future, creating new and improved ones.

References

