



The Health and Retirement Study

<http://hrsparticipants.isr.umich.edu>

University of Michigan

Institute for Social Research

Survey Research Center



Welcome Back to the HRS

The Health and Retirement Study (HRS) is a national study that has been conducted every two years since 1992. The HRS is conducted by the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center (SRC), one of the largest research organizations in the world. We have been conducting highly regarded national surveys for over 50 years.

Although we recruit new members, the HRS depends on the participation of its established panel members. As life situations change, the information shared by participants changes. By following our participants throughout their lives, the HRS provides a broad picture of how adults in the U.S. are faring as they head into and through their retirement years.

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Our Participants

In 2006, people aged 50 and older will make up about 30 percent of the US population. The HRS is the nation's leading source of information on the health and economic circumstances of this population.

Every six years a new group of adults age 50 and older is invited into the HRS in order to obtain a national sample of pre-retirement aged adults. In 2004, earliest members of the "Baby Boomer" generation were incorporated into the study to learn more about the lives of this distinct American generation.

Issues Affecting our Future

The picture presented by HRS provides information about a number of issues facing U.S. policymakers, such as:

- How will health care and financial needs be met as people move into later years of life?
- How are potential reforms to Social Security and Medicare likely to affect the situation of older people in the U.S.?
- What are the major trends in health and economic circumstances among older people in the U.S.?



By participating in the HRS, you have the opportunity to tell us how these issues affect your life.



What's New in 2006?

- Studies similar to HRS will be conducted across the world allowing for international comparisons.
- Additional health measures have been incorporated into the interview.
- Every four years you may be invited to participate in these health measurements.
- The HRS has gained valuable baseline data to measure the impact of the new Medicare Drug Laws.



Why is the Health and Retirement Study so important?

People who are about to reach or have reached retirement age make up one of the fastest-growing segments of the U.S. population. At the same time, their lifestyles and needs have changed dramatically over the years and continue to change. As policymakers consider recently proposed reforms to the U.S. health care, pension and Social Security systems, it is important that they have access to current and accurate information about adults aged 50 and older in the United States.

Do I have to participate?

Participation is completely voluntary. Even once you agree to be interviewed, you may refuse to answer any question you are asked during the study. Once you are selected, you represent hundreds of people like yourself. We cannot replace your unique contribution.

As an HRS participant, you have a rare opportunity to inform policymakers about your thoughts on important issues by

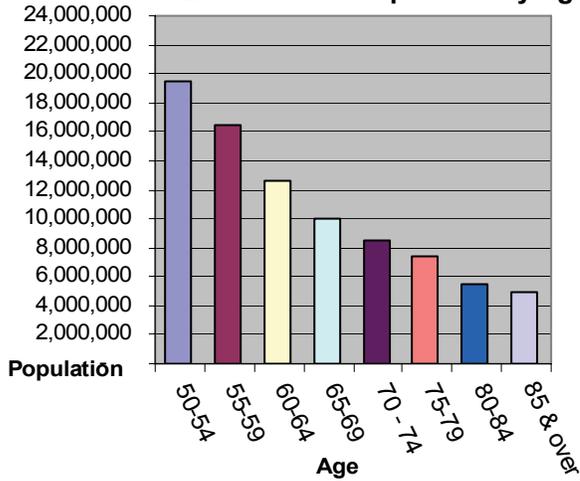
Why are you asking me to participate again?

Because everyone's health and economic situations can change over time, it is important to provide up-to-date information on how changes in the economic, health care and political arenas affect older people in the United States. Because of the continued participation of people like you, the HRS remains a unique and highly regarded study. By interviewing HRS participants like you every two years, we are able to continue to provide policymakers with just this kind of current information.

We hope that you will again choose to participate in the HRS this year so that we can continue to keep policymakers updated on the situation of adults aged 50 and older throughout the United States.

Primary support for the HRS comes from the National Institute on Aging at the National Institutes of Health, with additional support from the Social Security Administration.

2004 Estimated US Population by Age



U.S. Census, Population Projection Project

Your Voice Is Being Heard

- The HRS was part of the White House Conference on Aging which is held every ten years. In past years, important policy decisions immediately followed this conference.
- At the House Committee on Appropriations, HRS was cited as a valuable resource for discussions on Social Security Reform.
- HRS held a congressional briefing “Growing Old in an Aging America: The Health and Retirement Study’s Window into the Future”.

What about Privacy and Identity Protection?

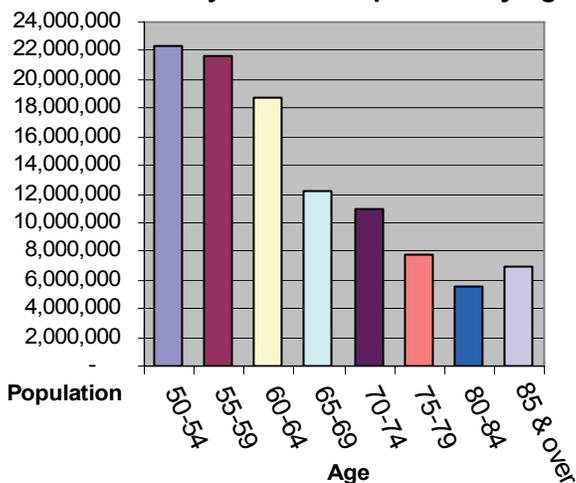
We highly value the information participants give us. We also value your privacy and will keep your identity strictly confidential. The answers to our questions are stripped of information that might link it back to a specific participant. After being combined with others’ responses, the results are then made available to researchers and policymakers around the world. The identity of participants is not released to *anyone* – not to any government agency or anyone else.

We go to great lengths to ensure that we will never break your trust:

- Our information is protected by complex passwords and firewalls.
- Information collected by our field representatives is encrypted and sent to a central office, then deleted from their laptops.
- All staff members must sign and adhere to statements of confidentiality.

The Survey Research Center has never had a breach of respondent confidentiality!

2015 Projected US Population by Age



U.S. Census, Population Projection Project

How will the interviews be conducted?

A professional interviewer from the University of Michigan’s Survey Research Center will conduct each interview. Participants will first be contacted in writing and may be interviewed either in person or by telephone. You may set an appointment to be interviewed at a time that is convenient for you.

HRS Co-Investigators

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Results from the HRS are frequently cited in the news media and professional journals.

“Eighty percent (80%) of those age 55 and older spend time working, volunteering for an organization, taking care of family members, or helping people outside their own households.”

Civic Ventures Newsletter, August 2005

“Adults age 55 and older contribute \$162 billion worth of volunteering and unpaid caregiving annually.”

The Urban Institute, September 2005

“The findings (from the HRS) are the first to show real harm to health over time from restricting prescriptions due to cost.”

Senior Journal.com, August 2005

“Already, an estimated one-third to one-half of older workers are taking part in “bridge employment,” which is transitional work between a full-time career of 10 or more years and full-time retirement with no paid employment.”

Wall Street Journal, December 2003

“Workers covered by 401(K) plans stay in the workforce longer than if they had traditional pension plans.”

Boston College Center for Retirement Research, September 2003



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