



Understanding Society: Information for Participants





Understanding Society...

is a very special study that follows the lives of tens of thousands of people who live in the UK, collecting information about the events and people that affect them.

This information is used by social scientists, policy makers and economists to help make better decisions about things that affect people's lives. In the past, studies like this have contributed to changes in the law, given insights into human psychology, and helped doctors treat illnesses more effectively.

You are important to us

Households were chosen to take part in this study to represent thousands of other people living in the UK. If you live in one of those households, or with someone who has taken part in *Understanding Society* before, you can take part in the study.

By taking part, you are helping to create a record of how life in the UK is changing and what impact those changes have on you and the other people you live with, for example, how a new job or baby affects your health and well-being, your financial circumstances and personal relationships a year or two years later.

What do I have to do?

To join in, all you have to do is answer some questions about your life and your opinions. If you are already a member of the study you will be familiar with most aspects of the interview. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes to an hour, depending on your circumstances. It will cover some of the key areas of your life such as health, employment, retirement, personal relationships, friends and family, childcare, and leisure activities.

Do you just want to talk to me?

We would like to talk to everyone aged 16 and over who lives in your home. With parents' consent, we would also like young people aged 10-15 to fill in a short questionnaire.

Are you new to this household?

You are being asked to take part because you are now living in the household of someone who has previously taken part in the study.

Without your input, we won't be able to gain a complete understanding of how household and family circumstances may be changing.

How do I find out more?

If you'd like some more information on the study: visit www.understandingsociety.ac.uk, email contact@understandingsociety.ac.uk, call the University of Essex on Freephone 0800 252 853 or write to **FREEPOST RRXX-KEKJ-JGKS, Understanding Society, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, CO4 3SQ**. We'll be really pleased to hear from you.

What do I get out of it?

Each person in the household who takes part will receive a Post Office voucher that they can redeem at any Post Office, including young people aged 10-15 who complete a self-completion questionnaire. As a member of *Understanding Society* you will also have access to study findings and research updates.

Is the study confidential?

Yes, we always take great care to protect the confidentiality of the information you give us, in accordance with the Data Protection Act. The results of the study will be used for research purposes only. You can ask to see your details at any time or to have them removed from our database. The data is and will remain anonymous – it will be impossible for anyone to identify you or your household from the study's results.

Who is doing the research?

Researchers at the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) at the University of Essex are running *Understanding Society* together with NatCen Social Research. Funding has been provided by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).



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