Understanding Society: Information for Participants

Understanding Society

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 ilnesses more effectively.

You are important to us

Households were specially chosen to take part in this study to represent hundreds of other people living in the UK. If you live in one of those special 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 birth of a new 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 45 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 survey. Without your input, we won't be able to gain a complete understanding of how household and family circumstances may be changing.

What do I get out of it?

Each person in the household who takes part will receive a gift voucher, 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 survey 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, with funding provided by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

How do I find out more?

If you'd like some more information on the survey: visit **www.understandingsociety.org.uk/participants**, email **contact@understandingsociety.org.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.

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Do you feel British?

Are you happy to be retiring?

Who influences children the most?

Do we need a new political system?

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We would really like you and your household to take part in *Understanding Society*, the biggest study of its kind in the world. With your help we can paint a unique picture of life in the UK and how it's changing.

To take part you just need to answer some questions about your day-to-day life - your family, job, education, health, interests and opinions. With your help we can understand the impact of the changing world around us. For instance, how has the credit crunch really affected people across the UK? Are people leading a healthy lifestyle?

You can make a real difference by taking part. The results of the study will help decision makers to design policies to improve everyone's lives, as well as fuel debate in universities, colleges and media across the world.

People often tell us they enjoy taking part in the study.
We very much hope you'll join in.

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Freephone 0800 252 853
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