Health and Retirement Study (HRS)

Key Personnel
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URLs
http://hrsonline.isr.umich.edu/index.php

Type of Data
Public

Availability of Data Set
Public. More detailed data with approved application, access to restricted data with documentation only.

Activity Measured
April 1992 – April 2013

Data Collected
April 1992 – April 2013

Number of Observations
37,000 persons
200,000 interviews

Date of Overview Update
22 January 2015

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OVERVIEW

The University of Michigan Health and Retirement Study (HRS) is a longitudinal panel study that surveys a representative sample of more than 20,000 Americans over the age of 50 every two years. Supported by the National Institute on Aging (NIA U01AG009740) and the Social Security Administration, the HRS explores the changes in labor force participation and the health transitions that individuals undergo toward the end of their work lives and in the years that follow.

Since its launch in 1992, the study has collected information about income, work, assets, pension plans, health insurance, disability, physical health and functioning, cognitive functioning, and health care expenditures. Through its unique and in-depth interviews, the HRS provides an invaluable and growing body of multidisciplinary data that researchers can use to address important questions about the challenges and opportunities of aging.

More information about the Health and Retirement Study (HRS) is available at http://hrsonline.isr.umich.edu/index.php.

PROCEDURES FOR ACCESSING THE DATA SET

Data releases are ongoing; see the What's Available page for an up-to-date list of Biennial Datasets, Longitudinal Datasets, Off-Year Studies, Sensitive Health Studies, and Researcher Contributions. To download the public release datasets, you must first obtain a username and password. Remember to check the Data Alerts page for errata, notes, and corrections before beginning any data management or analysis project.

Restricted Data Products: To maintain respondent confidentiality, certain HRS data sets such as Medicare Claims and Summary Data and Respondent Geographic Information are only available to qualified researchers under specific contractual conditions. Visit the Restricted Data page for more information.

User Guides are designed to provide analysts with documentation about the concepts, measures and questions in the HRS surveys. These reports expand upon the information found in codebooks, questionnaires and data descriptions. They also provide comprehensive descriptions of created measures (including their origin), changes made across waves, variable distributions, results from data quality analysis, information about the data structure of individual HRS surveys, and information on special data manipulation topics. Researchers who wish to use HRS family data should also review the Resources for Analysis of Family Data page. This section of the Web site brings together reference materials pertaining to HRS data content related to family issues. It contains direct links to relevant questionnaire areas, codebook content and bibliographic materials, as well as other associated information.

METHODOLOGY

The Health and Retirement Study includes the "original" HRS study (data collection in 1992, 1994, and 1996) and the "AHEAD" study (data collections in 1993 and 1995). These studies were merged in 1998. Two

new cohorts were added in 1998: the Children of the Depression (1924-1930) and the War Babies (1942-1947) to fully represent the U.S. population over age 50 in 1998.. A fourth cohort, Early Baby Boomers (1948-1953), was added in 2004 and a fifth cohort, Mid Boomers (1954-1959), was added in 2010. For a visual display of HRS data collection efforts, past, present and future, visit the Data Collection Path page.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT(S)

Information for all publically released data products is available on the Documentation page. This includes Questionnaires, Data Descriptions, and Codebooks as well as other items of interest. To determine the specific data items that you need for your analytical tasks, search all questions using the Question Concordance.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Visit the HRS online bibliography to find publications based on HRS data. There are currently more than 2,500 publications, including over 1,500 peer-reviewed journal articles.