



Understanding Society

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Advance Letter



Dear

You may have already heard about Understanding Society – it's the biggest study of its kind in the world.

Understanding Society is important as it gives you a voice on issues that matter, like how the recession is affecting people in different parts of the country, or whether we are leading a healthy lifestyle. Your point of view is vital. It ensures that the study represents people of all ages and backgrounds across the UK. No-one else can take your place as no-one else has your particular mix of circumstances.

Understanding Society asks about subjects such as health, caring for others and how you spend your leisure time.

If you have any questions at all about Understanding Society and your involvement in it, please don't hesitate to call us on **01206 872957**.

Results from previous years have generated widespread interest. You can read more about what has been found so far, and where the study has featured in newspapers and on TV, at www.understandingsociety.ac.uk. You can also follow us on Twitter [@usociety](https://twitter.com/usociety).

We'd like to send you updates about how the information you give in Understanding Society is being used, so please either give your interviewer your email address or write to contact@understandingsociety.ac.uk

Understanding Society makes your voice heard and your help is always much appreciated.

Many thanks for taking part,

Professor Nick Buck

Director, Understanding Society
Institute for Social and Economic Research
University of Essex

To say "Thank You"
for taking part, we'll
send you a £10 voucher.

Contact us:

Web:
understandingsociety.ac.uk
Email:
contact@understandingsociety.ac.uk
Phone:
01206 872 957

Why are you important?

Without your unique input, the survey will be less complete. We can't simply replace you with someone else as the people taking part were selected scientifically to represent the whole population. No-one else has your unique combination of circumstances and in a very real way you are personally vital to the success of the study. The strength of Understanding Society is that it talks to the same people each year so we can see how things like the economic situation and the way our society is changing affects your life. The study is your study and is about issues that affect you and everyone in our diverse society.

About the study.

Long-term studies like Understanding Society help us find out about issues that matter to all of us – how the recession is affecting people in different parts of the country, what standard of facilities you have – or don't have – in your area, our attitudes towards health and the environment. The information collected can inform Government policy and is used by academics, policy-makers and researchers working for charities and the voluntary sector in this country and abroad.

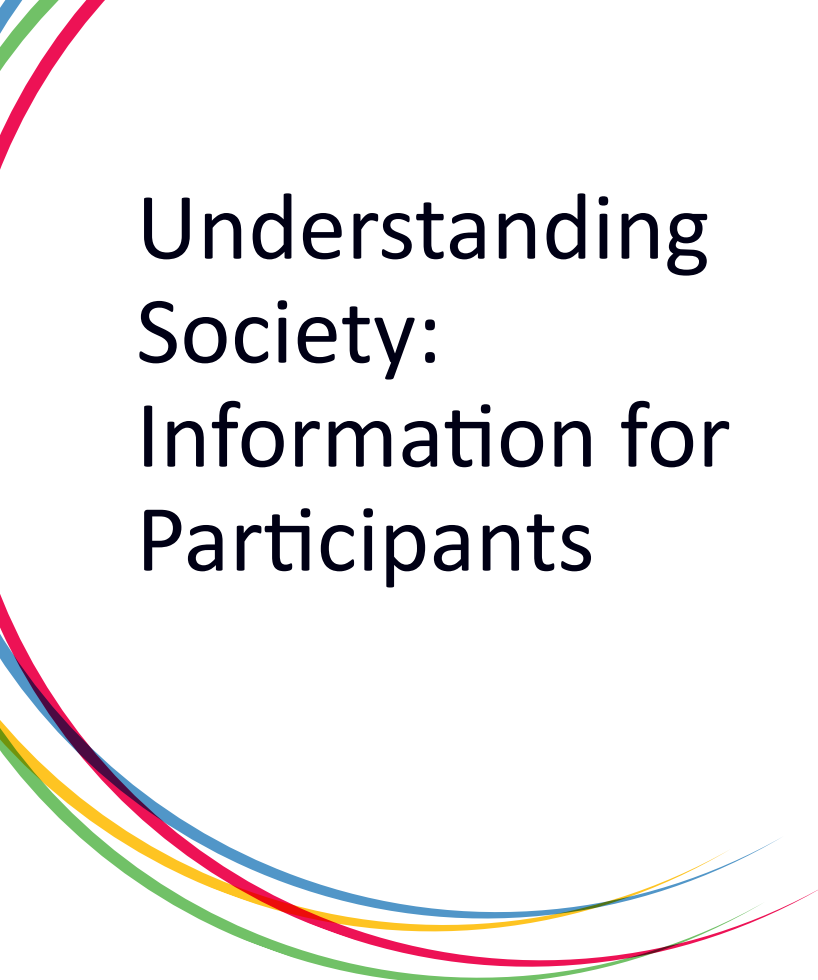
The interview.

An interviewer will be in touch soon to arrange a convenient time to interview you and other members of your household. The interview will last around an hour. The interviewer will be carrying a photo ID. If it's not convenient when your interviewer calls, please feel free to choose a day and time which is easier for you.

Young people in the house?

If there are any young people aged 10-15 in your household, I hope they will be willing to complete a short questionnaire about their hobbies, friends, school life and hopes for the future. Each one will receive a voucher as a thank you for completing the questionnaire.

Information Leaflet GB



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-KEKU-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).

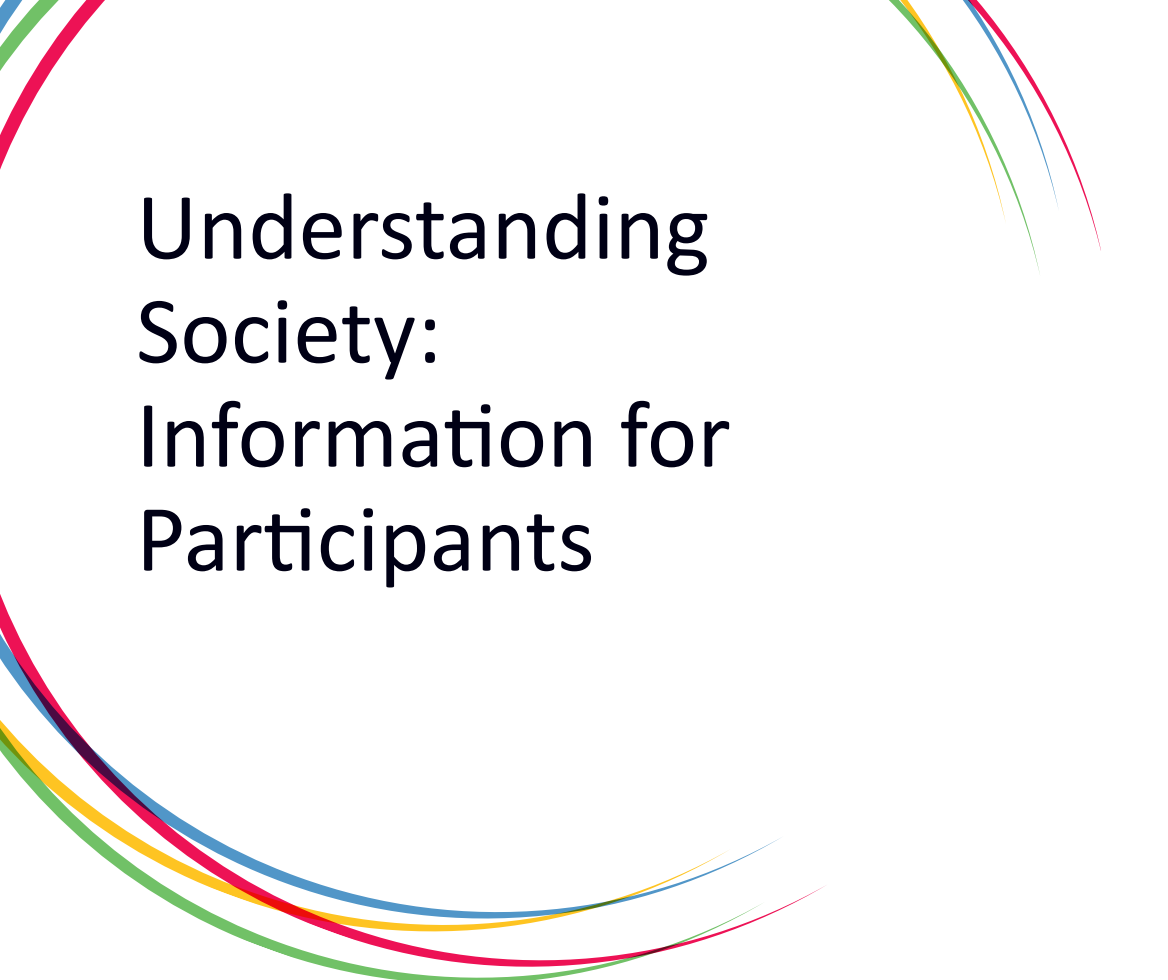


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Information Leaflet NI



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Participation Leaflet



Do you feel British?


**Do you participate in
your local community?**

**Has the Olympics inspired
you to take up sport?**

**How has the recession
affected you?**



Understanding
Society



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.

www.understandingsociety.ac.uk
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Freephone: 0800 252 853



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