



Understanding Society

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You might already know about *Understanding Society* – it's the biggest study of its kind in the world, conducted by researchers from the University of Essex together with NatCen. Studies like *Understanding Society* can help us find out about issues that matter to all of us – how the credit crunch is affecting people across the country, what the facilities are like in your area, whether we are leading a healthy lifestyle. The study will help us paint a unique picture of what Britain looks like today and how it is gradually changing.

Our study asks people questions about subjects such as health, caring for others and how you spend your leisure time. This information will be used to inform policy, provide evidence for discussion in the media and provide a rich resource for social researchers in our universities and colleges.

Your point of view is important to us – it helps to ensure that the study represents all types of people across the UK. In *Understanding Society* we want to get the views and opinions from people of all ages and backgrounds to enable us to represent the diverse nature of the UK population. Your participation is completely voluntary but we hope you will be able to help us as we rely on the goodwill and voluntary co-operation of those who are selected to take part to make the study a success.

Your interviewer is carrying an identification card with their photograph and NatCen's logo. They will be able to arrange a convenient time for an interview that should last approximately 30 minutes to an hour, depending on your circumstances.

As a small thank you, you will receive a Post office voucher. This can be redeemed at any Post Office for cash or they will transfer the amount into your bank account.

If there are children aged 10-15 in your household, we hope they will be willing to complete a short questionnaire about their hobbies, friends, school life and hopes for the future. Each child will be sent a gift voucher as a thank you for completing the questionnaire.

For more information, please contact us using the details below.


Yours faithfully,



.....
Professor Nick Buck
Director, *Understanding Society*
Institute for Social and Economic Research
University of Essex

This study is being conducted in accordance with the Data Protection Act. This means your personal details will be kept strictly confidential and you and your household will not be identifiable from the data.

Info Leaflet



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.org.uk/participants, email contact@understandingsociety.org.uk, call the University of Essex on Freephone **0800 252 853** or write to **FREEPOST RRRX-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. Funding has been provided by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

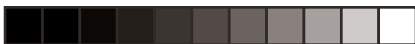




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Do you feel British?

Are you happy to be retiring?

**Who influences
children the most?**

Do we need a new political system?



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.org.uk/participants
Freephone 0800 252 853
contact@understandingsociety.org.uk



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National Centre for Social Research

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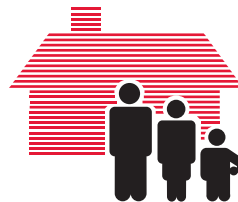
Living in Britain Leaflet

From **Living in Britain** to **Understanding Society**

What is happening to Living in Britain ?



Understanding
Society



Living in Britain has been successfully collecting information which is used by researchers all around the world for 18 years. It is the most often used data-set by academic researchers and is also used by policy-makers, charities and voluntary organisations. The value of the survey is that it collects information from the same people every year – building up a picture of our changing lives. The survey is a huge success and is rightly regarded as a jewel in the crown, providing data for high quality research. Without you, and people like you all over the country, we would not have this information to help us understand our society. We are proud to work on this survey, and hope that you feel proud of being part of this high profile and important social research project.

However, we are not the only people who know how great this survey is. The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), who fund **Living in Britain**, have been so impressed by the high quality of the survey they have provided funds to allow us to expand and grow. With this increase, comes a new name – *Understanding Society* – and a new image.

What is *Understanding Society*?

Understanding Society is the largest survey of its kind in the world, and you are a vital part of it! Many new households have been asked to join you in the study and we are collecting information from them, and will be going back to them each year to see how things have changed. You are particularly important to *Understanding Society* because of your long involvement with **Living in Britain**. We do hope you will continue with us into the future.

Who runs *Understanding Society*?

The team responsible for *Understanding Society* at the University of Essex are the same team who have been responsible for **Living in Britain** over the last 18 years.

After a competitive tender to ensure the proper use of the money available, the contract to carry out the interviewing was awarded to the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen), one of the most highly respected research companies in the UK. NatCen are a non-profit social research institute with professional, experienced and friendly interviewers committed to ensuring that quality standards are maintained on the survey.

What will happen to your information?

Just like with **Living in Britain**, the results of the survey will be used for research purposes. The results are strictly confidential and we operate under the rules of the Data Protection Act. The data made available for analysis will be anonymous and individual people or households will not be identifiable from it.

How do I find out more?

If you'd like some more information on the survey or have any concerns at all about the change to the new name and arrangements, please get in touch. You can;

- visit www.understandingsociety.org.uk/participants
- email contact@understandingsociety.org.uk
- call the University of Essex on Freephone **0800 252 853**.

We'll be really pleased to hear from you.

