

# UnderStandingAmericaStudy

UAS 139: SOCIAL SECURITY SPOUSAL BENEFIT UNDERSTANDING



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Fielded June 26, 2018 - August 22, 2018

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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This UAS panel survey titled "UAS 139: Social Security Spousal Benefit Understanding " asks about respondents' understanding of Social Security spousal benefits. This survey is no longer in the field. Respondents were paid \$3 to complete the survey.

This survey is funded by a grant from the Social Security Administration, Michigan Retirement Research Consortium. RAND researchers Angela Hung and Katherine Carman received funding to look at spousal retirement benefit awareness and understanding.

## 1.1 Topics

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This survey contains questions (among others) on the following topics: Retirement And Pensions. A complete survey topic categorization for the UAS can be found [here](#).

## 1.2 Experiments

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This survey did not include any experiments. A complete survey experiment categorization for the UAS can be found [here](#).

## 1.3 Citation

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Each publication, press release or other document that cites results from this survey must include an acknowledgment of UAS as the data source and a disclaimer such as, 'The project described in this paper relies on data from survey(s) administered by the Understanding America Study, which is maintained by the Center for Economic and Social Research (CESR) at the University of Southern California. The content of this paper is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of USC or UAS.' For any questions or more information about the UAS, contact Tania Gutsche, Project and Panel Manager, Center for Economic and Social Research, University of Southern California, at [tgutsche@usc.edu](mailto:tgutsche@usc.edu).

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## 2 SURVEY RESPONSE AND DATA

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### 2.1 Sample selection and response rate

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The sample selection for this survey was:

All active English speaking respondents who are married or partnered AND not currently claiming Social Security benefits.

As such, this survey was made available to 2000 UAS participants. Of those 2000 participants, 1652 completed the survey and are counted as respondents. Of those who are not counted as respondents, 12 started the survey without completing and 336 did not start the survey. The overall response rate was 82.6%.

Note: We are unable to provide sample weights for a small number of UAS members (see the Sample and weighting section below for details). If they completed the survey, these members are included in the data set with a weight of zero, but accounted for in the computation of total sample size and survey response rate.%.

The detailed survey response rate is as follows:

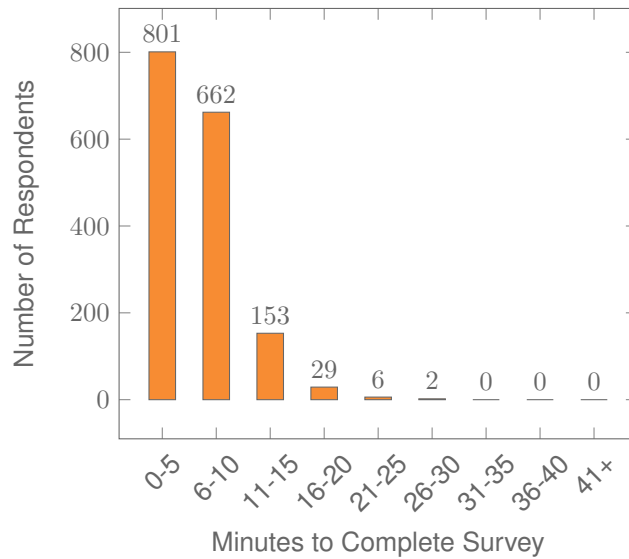
UAS139 - Response Overview	
Size of selected sample	2000
Completed the survey	1652
Started but did not complete the survey	12
Did not start the survey	336
Response rate	82.6%

### 2.2 Timings

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The survey took respondents an average of 6 minutes, and the full distribution of survey response times is available in the figure below. Times per question are available upon request.

Distribution of Respondents' Survey Response Times



## 2.3 Sample & Weighting

Weights are included in the data set for this survey. This survey dataset may contain respondents with a weight of zero. These respondents belong to a small group of UAS members for whom sample weights cannot be computed due to non-probability recruitment for special projects. Hence, while they are accounted for in the total number of survey respondents, they do not contribute to any statistics using sample weights. For more details on the UAS weighing procedures please refer to the UAS Weighting Procedures V1. Please contact UAS staff with any questions.

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### 3 STANDARD VARIABLES

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Each Understanding America Study data contains a series of standard variables, consisting of individual, household and sample identifiers, language indicator, time stamps and a rating by the respondent of how much he or she liked the survey:

- **uasid**: the identifier of the respondent. This identifier is assigned to a respondent at recruitment and stays with the respondent throughout each and every survey he/she participates in. When analyzing data from multiple surveys, the 'uasid' can be used to merge data sets.
- **uashhid**: the household identifier of the respondent. Every member is assigned a household identifier, stored in the variable  $j_{em_i}uashhid_i/em_i$ . For the primary respondent this identifier is his or her 'uasid'. All other eligible members of the primary respondent's household (everyone who is 18 or older in the household) who become UAS respondents receive the uasid of the primary respondent as their household identifier. The uashhid remains constant over time for all respondents. Thus it is always possible to find the original UAS household of an UAS panel member (even after they, for example, have moved out to form another household).
- **uashhid<sub>current</sub>**: the current household identifier of the respondent. Uniquely identifies the household a UAS panel member belongs to in a given survey INDEPENDENT of the exact composition of the household in terms of who else in the household are UAS members. Missing (.n) for respondents who are in a single-UAS member household. Available on request in data sets prior to September 3, 2025.
- **survhhid**: uniquely identifies the household a UAS panel member belongs to in a given survey DEPENDENT on the exact composition of the household in terms of who else in the household are UAS members. Is set to missing (.n) if no other household members are UAS panel members at the time of the survey. Is set to unknown (.u) for respondents who last participated in the My Household survey prior to January 21, 2015.
- **uasmembers**: is the number of other household members who are also UAS panel members at the time of the survey. Since individuals can answer the same survey at different points in time (which can be relatively far apart is the survey is kept in the field for a prolonged time), it may be possible that, within the same data set, the primary respondent of a household has a value of '0', whereas the second UAS household respondent has a value of '1'. Therefore 'uasmembers' should be interpreted as the number of household and UAS panel members at the time the respondent answers the survey. Note: in the My Household survey 'uasmembers' is set to unknown (.u) for respondents who last participated in the My Household survey prior to January 21, 2015.
- **sampleframe**: indicates the sampling frame from which the household of the respondent was recruited. All UAS recruitment is done through address based sampling

(ABS) in which samples are acquired based on postal records. Currently, the variable 'sampleframe' takes on four values reflecting four distinct sample frames used by the UAS over the year (in future data sets the number of sample frames used for recruitment may increase if additional specific populations are targeted in future recruitment batches):

1. U.S. National Territory: recruited through ABS within the entire U.S.
2. Areas high concentration Nat Ame: recruited through ABS in areas with a high concentration of Native Americans in the zip-code. Within these batches, individuals who are not Native Americans are not invited to join the UAS.
3. Los Angeles County: recruited through ABS within Los Angeles County.
4. California: recruited through ABS within California.

Note: prior to March 6, 2024 this variable was called sampletype and had the following value labels for the above list in UAS data sets:

1. Nationally Representative Sample: recruited through ABS within the entire U.S.
2. Native Americans: recruited through ABS in areas with a high concentration of Native Americans. Within these batches, individuals who are not Native Americans are not invited to join the UAS.
3. LA County: recruited through ABS within Los Angeles County.
4. California: recruited through ABS within California.

- **batch:** indicates the batch from which the respondent was recruited. Currently, this variable takes the following values (in future data sets the number of batches may increase as new recruitment batches are added to the UAS):

1. ASDE 2014/01
2. ASDE 2014/01
3. ASDE 2014/01
4. Public records 2015/05
5. MSG 2015/07
6. MSG 2016/01
7. MSG 2016/01
8. MSG 2016/01
9. MSG 2016/02
10. MSG 2016/03
11. MSG 2016/04
12. MSG 2016/05
13. MSG 2016/08
14. MSG 2017/03

15. MSG 2017/11
16. MSG 2018/02
17. MSG 2018/08
18. MSG 2019/04
19. MSG 2019/05
20. MSG 2019/11
21. MSG 2020/08
22. MSG 2020/10
23. MSG 2021/02
24. MSG 2021/08
25. MSG 2021/08
26. MSG 2022/02
27. MSG 2022/02
28. MSG 2022/08
29. MSG 2022/11
30. MSG 2022/11
31. MSG 2023/01
32. MSG 2023/06
33. MSG 2023/09
34. MSG 2023/10
35. MSG 2025/02

Note: prior to March 6, 2024 this variable had the following value labels for the above list in UAS data sets:

1. ASDE 2014/01 Nat.Rep.
2. ASDE 2014/01 Native Am.
3. ASDE 2014/11 Native Am.
4. LA County 2015/05 List Sample
5. MSG 2015/07 Nat.Rep.
6. MSG 2016/01 Nat.Rep. Batch 2
7. MSG 2016/01 Nat.Rep. Batch 3
8. MSG 2016/01 Nat.Rep. Batch 4
9. MSG 2016/02 Nat.Rep. Batch 5
10. MSG 2016/03 Nat.Rep. Batch 6
11. MSG 2016/04 Nat.Rep. Batch 7

12. MSG 2016/05 Nat.Rep. Batch 8
13. MSG 2016/08 LA County Batch 2
14. MSG 2017/03 LA County Batch 3
15. MSG 2017/11 California Batch 1
16. MSG 2018/02 California Batch 2
17. MSG 2018/08 Nat.Rep. Batch 9
18. MSG 2019/04 LA County Batch 4
19. MSG 2019/05 LA County Batch 5
20. MSG 2019/11 Nat. Rep. Batch 10
21. MSG 2020/08 Nat. Rep. Batch 11
22. MSG 2020/10 Nat. Rep. Batch 12
23. MSG 2021/02 Nat. Rep. Batch 13
24. MSG 2021/08 Nat. Rep. Batch 15
25. MSG 2021/08 Nat. Rep. Batch 16
26. MSG 2022/02 Nat. Rep. Batch 17 (priority)
27. MSG 2022/02 Nat. Rep. Batch 17 (regular)
28. MSG 2022/08 Nat. Rep. Batch 18
29. MSG 2022/11 LA County Batch 6
30. MSG 2022/11 Nat. Rep. Batch 20
31. MSG 2023/01 Nat. Rep. Batch 21
32. MSG 2023/06 Nat. Rep. Batch 22
33. MSG 2023-09 Native Am. Batch 3
34. MSG 2023-10 Nat. Rep. Batch 23

- **primary\_respondent**: indicates if the respondent was the first person within the household (i.e. to become a member or whether s/he was added as a subsequent member. A household in this regard is broadly defined as anyone living together with the primary respondent. That is, a household comprises individuals who live together, e.g. as part of a family relationship (like a spouse/child/parent) or in context of some other relationship (like a roommate or tenant).
- **hardware**: indicates whether the respondent ever received hardware or not. Note: this variable should not be used to determine whether a respondent received hardware at a given point in time and/or whether s/he used the hardware to participate in a survey. Rather, it indicates whether hardware was ever provided:
  1. None
  2. Tablet (includes Internet)

- **language**: the language in which the survey was conducted. This variable takes a value of 1 for English and a value of 2 for Spanish.
- **start\_date (start\_year, start\_month, start\_day, start\_hour, start\_min, start\_sec)**: indicates the time at which the respondent started the survey.
- **end\_date (end\_year, end\_month, end\_day, end\_hour, end\_min, end\_sec)**: indicates the time at which the respondent completed the survey.
- **cs\_001**: indicates how interesting the respondent found the survey.

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## 4 BACKGROUND DEMOGRAPHICS

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Every UAS survey data set includes demographic variables, which provide background information about the respondent and his/her household. Demographic information such as age, ethnicity, education, marital status, work status, state of residence, family structure is elicited every quarter through the “My Household” survey. The demographic variables provided with each survey are taken from the most recent ‘MyHousehold’ survey answered by the respondent. If at the time of a survey, the information in “My Household” is more than three months old, a respondent is required to check and update his or her information before being able to take the survey.

The following variables are available in each survey data set:

- **gender**: the gender of the respondent.
- **dateofbirth\_year**: the year of birth of the respondent.
- **age**: the age of the respondent at the start of the survey.
- **agerange**: if the respondent’s age cannot be calculate due to missing information, ‘agerange’ indicates the approximate age. Should a value for both the ‘age’ and ‘agerange’ be present, then ‘age’ takes precedence over ‘agerange’.
- **citizenus**: indicates whether the respondent is a U.S. citizen.
- **bornus**: indicates whether the respondent was born in the U.S.
- **stateborn**: indicates the state in which the respondent was born. This is set to missing (.) if the respondent was not born in the U.S.
- **countryborn**: indicates the country in which the respondent was born. This is set to missing (.) if the respondent was born in the U.S.
- **countryborn\_other**: indicates the country of birth if that country is not on the drop down list of countries shown to the respondent’.
- **statereside**: the state in which the respondent is living.
- **immigration\_status**: indicates whether the respondent is an immigrant. It takes one of the following values: 0 Non-immigrant, 1 First generation immigrant (immigrant who migrated to the U.S), 2 Second generation immigrant (U.S.-born children of at least one foreign-born parent), 3 Third generation immigrant (U.S.-born children of at least one U.S.-born parent, where at least one grandparent is foreign-born), or 4 Unknown immigrant status.
- **maritalstatus**: the marital status of the respondent.
- **livewithpartner**: indicates whether the respondent lives with a partner.

- **education**: the highest level of education attained by the respondent.
- **hisplatin**: indicates whether the respondent identifies him or herself as being Hispanic or Latino. This variable is asked separately from race.
- **hisplatinogroup**: indicates which Hispanic or Latino group a respondent identifies him or herself with. This is set to missing (.) if the respondent does not identify him or herself as being Hispanic or Latino.
- **white**: indicates whether the respondent identifies him or herself as white (Caucasian).
- **black**: indicates whether the respondent identifies him or herself as black (African-American).
- **nativeamer**: indicates whether the respondent identifies him or herself as Native American (American Indian or Alaska Native).
- **asian**: indicates whether the respondent identifies him or herself as Asian (Asian-American).
- **pacific**: indicates whether the respondent identifies him or herself as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.
- **race**: indicates the race of the respondent as singular (e.g., '1 White' or '2 Black') or as mixed (in case the respondent identifies with two or more races). The value '6 Mixed' that the respondent answered 'Yes' to at least two of the single race categories. This variable is generated based on the values of the different race variables (white, black, nativeamer, asian, pacific). This composite measure is not conditional on hisplatin, so an individual may identify as Hispanic or Latino, and also as a member of one or more racial groups.
- **working**: indicates whether the respondent is working for pay.
- **sick\_leave**: indicates whether the respondent is not working because sick or on leave.
- **unemp\_layoff**: indicates whether the respondent is unemployed or on lay off.
- **unemp\_look**: indicates whether the respondent is unemployed and looking for a job.
- **retired**: indicates whether the respondent is retired.
- **disabled**: indicates whether the respondent has a disability.
- **If\_other**: specifies other labor force status.
- **laborstatus**: indicates the labor force status of the respondent as singular (e.g., '1 Working for pay' or '2 On sick or other leave') or as mixed (in case the respondent selects two or more labor statuses). The value '8 Mixed' indicates that the respondent answered 'Yes' to at least two of the single labor force status variables. This variable is generated based on the values of the different labor status variables (working, sick\_leave, unempl\_layoff, unempl\_look, retired, disabled, If\_other).

- **employmenttype**: indicates the employment type of the respondent (employed by the government, by a private company, a nonprofit organization, or self-employed). This is set to missing (.) if the respondent is not currently working or currently on sick or other leave.
- **workfullpart**: indicates whether the respondent works full or part-time. This is set to missing (.) if the respondent is not currently working or currently on sick or other leave.
- **hourswork**: indicates the number of hours the respondent works per week. This is set to missing (.) if the respondent is not currently working or currently on sick or other leave.
- **hhincome**: is the total combined income of all members of the respondent's household (living in their household) during the past 12 months.
- **anyhhmember**: indicates whether there were any members in the respondent's household at the time he/she answered the survey as reported by the respondent.
- **hhmembernumber**: indicates the number of household members in the respondent's household at the time of the survey as reported by the respondent. It may be that 'anyhhmember' is 'Yes', but 'hhmembernumber' is missing if the respondent did not provide the number of household members at the time of the survey.
- **hhmemberin\_#**: indicates whether a household member is currently in the household as reported by the respondent. Household members are never removed from the stored household roster and their information is always included in survey data sets. The order of the roster is the same order in which household members were specified by the respondent in the 'MyHousehold' survey. The order is identified by the suffix \_# (e.g., \_1 indicates the first household member, \_2 the second household member, etc.).

As an example, if the first household member is in the household at the time of the survey, 'hhmemberin\_1' is set to '1 HH Member 1 is in the HH'; if he/she has moved out, 'hhmemberin\_1' is set to '0 HH member 1 is no longer in the HH'. Since information of other household members (stored in the variables listed below) is always included in survey data sets, information about 'hhmemberin\_1' is available whether this person is still in the household or has moved out.

- **hhmembergen\_#**: indicates the gender of another household member as reported by the respondent.
- **hhmemberage\_#**: indicates the age of another household member. The age is derived from the month and year of birth of the household member as reported by the respondent.
- **hhmemberrel\_#**: indicates the relationship of the respondent to the other household member as reported by the respondent.

- **hhmemberuasid\_#**: is the 'uasid' of the other household member if this person is also a UAS panel member. It is set to missing (.) if this person is not a UAS panel member at the time of the survey. Since this identifier is directly reported by the respondent (chosen from a preloaded list), it may differ from the actual (correct) 'uasid' of the UAS member it refers to because of reporting error. Also, this variable should not be used to identify UAS members in a given household at the time of the survey. This is because the variables 'hhmemberuasid\_#' are taken from the most recent 'My Household' and changes in household composition involving UAS members may have occurred between the time of the respondent answered 'My Household' and the time the respondent answers the survey. To follow UAS members of a given household, it is advised to use the identifiers 'uashhid' and 'survhhid'.
- **lastmyhh\_date**: the date on which the demographics variables were collected through the 'My Household' survey.

In addition, data sets created after May 8, 2025 include an urbanicity variable. It is based on panel members' current census tract of residence and the 2010 Rural-Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) codes released by the US Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service. To preserve confidentiality, the UAS collapses the 10 primary RUCA codes to 4 levels: Metropolitan, Micropolitan, Small/Rural, and Unknown. The Metropolitan level corresponds to primary RUCA codes 1-3, the Micropolitan level corresponds to RUCA codes 4-6, and the Small/Rural UAS classification corresponds to RUCA codes 7-10.

For detailed information and definitions of the 10 primary RUCA codes, please visit the USDA ERS Rural-Urban Commuting Area Codes site. Surveys conducted completely prior to May 8, 2025 will have an urbanicity data set available on request.

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## 5 MISSING DATA CONVENTIONS

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Data files provide so-called clean data, that is, answers given to questions that are not applicable anymore at survey completion (for example because a respondent went back in the survey and skipped over a previously answered question) are treated as if the questions were never asked. In the data files all questions that were asked, but not answered by the respondent are marked with (.e). All questions never seen by the respondent (or any dirty data) are marked with (.a). The latter may mean that a respondent did not view the question because s/he skipped over it; or alternatively that s/he never reached that question due to a break off. If a respondent did not complete a survey, the variables representing survey end date and time are marked with (.c). Household member variables are marked with (.m) if the respondent has less household members (e.g. if the number of household members is 2, any variables for household member 3 and up are marked with (.m)).

UAS provides data in STATA and CSV format. Stata data sets come with include variable labels that are not available in the CSV files. Value labels are provided for single-response answer option. In STATA these labels will include the labels 'Not asked' and 'Not answered' for (.a) and (.e), and will show in tabulations such as 'tab q1, missing'. For multiple-response questions a binary variable is created for each answer option indicating whether the option was selected or not. A summary variable is also provided in string format reflecting which options were selected and in which order. For example, if a question asked about favorite animals with options cat, dog, and horse, then if a respondent selected horse and then cat, the binary variables for horse and cat will be set to yes, while the overall variable would have a string value of '3-1'. If no answer was given, all binary variables and the summary variable will be marked with '.e'.

Questions that are asked multiple times are often implemented as so-called array questions. Supposing the name of such question was Q1 and it was asked in 6 different instances, your data set would contain the variables Q1\_1\_ to Q1\_6\_. To illustrate, if a survey asked the names of all children, then child\_1\_ would contain the name of the first child the respondent named and so on.

More information about the UAS data in general can be found on the UAS Data Pages web site.

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## 6 ROUTING SYNTAX

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The survey with routing presented in the next section includes all of the questions that make up this survey, the question answers when choices were provided, and the question routing. The routing includes descriptions of when questions are grouped, conditional logic that determines when questions are presented to the respondent, randomization of questions and answers, and fills of answers from one question to another.

If you are unfamiliar with conditional logic statements, they are typically formatted so that **if** the respondent fulfills some condition (e.g. they have a cellphone or a checking account), **then** they are presented with some other question or the value of some variable is changed. If the respondent does not fulfill the condition (e.g. they are not a cellphone adopter or they do not have a checking account), something **else** happens such as skipping the next question or changing the variable to some other value. Some of the logic involved in the randomization of questions or answers being presented to the respondent is quite complex, and in these instances there is documentation to clarify the process being represented by the routing.

Because logic syntax standards vary, here is a brief introduction to our syntax standards. The syntax used in the conditional statements is as follows: '=' is equal to, '<' is less than, '>' is greater than, and '!= ' is used for does not equal. When a variable is set to some number N, the statement looks like 'variable := N'.

The formatting of the questions and routing are designed to make it easier to interpret what is occurring at any given point in the survey. Question ID is the bold text at the top of a question block, followed by the question text and the answer selections. When a question or variable has associated data, the name links to the appropriate data page, so you can easily get directly to the data. Text color is used to indicate the routing: **red** is conditional logic, **gold** is question grouping, **green** is looping, and **orange** is used to document randomization and other complex conditional logic processes. The routing is written for a computer to parse rather than a human to read, so when the routing diverges significantly from what is displayed to the respondent, a screenshot of what the respondent saw is included.

The name of the randomization variables are defined in proximity to where they are put into play, and like the question ID the names of the randomization variables can be used to link directly to the associated data page.

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## 7 SURVEY WITH ROUTING

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### Start of section **Decisions**

#### **introduction1** (Section Decisions)

Thank you for participating in this survey. In this survey we will ask you questions about Social Security benefits for you and your family.

#### **maritalstatus** (R MARITAL STATUS in section Demographics)

Are you now married, widowed, divorced, separated or never married?

- 1 Married (Spouse lives with me)
- 2 Married (Spouse lives elsewhere)
- 3 Separated
- 4 Divorced
- 5 Widowed
- 6 Never Married

**IF not(maritalstatus IN (1,2)) THEN**

#### **livewithpartner** (R LIVES WITH PARTNER in section Demographics)

Are you currently living with a boyfriend, girlfriend or partner?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

**END OF IF**

**IF maritalstatus IN (1,2) OR livewithpartner = 1 THEN**

**|**

**ELSE**

#### **earlyexit** (Section Decisions)

Thank you for your interest in this survey! You were offered this survey based on information you had submitted in prior surveys, but unfortunately, based on the information you provided today, you are not eligible to participate.

Exit the survey

**END OF IF**

#### **ss000a** (receive social security benefits in section Decisions)

Do you currently receive Social Security benefits?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

**IF maritalstatus IN (1,2) THEN**

**ss000b** (spouse receive social security benefits in section Decisions)

Does your spouse currently receive Social Security benefits?

1 Yes

2 No

**IF ss000a = 1 OR ss000b = 1 THEN**

**earlyexit** (Section Decisions)

Thank you for your interest in this survey! You were offered this survey based on information you had submitted in prior surveys, but unfortunately, based on the information you provided today, you are not eligible to participate.

Exit the survey

**END OF IF**

**ELSE**

**IF ss000a = 1 THEN**

**earlyexit** (Section Decisions)

Thank you for your interest in this survey! You were offered this survey based on information you had submitted in prior surveys, but unfortunately, based on the information you provided today, you are not eligible to participate.

Exit the survey

**END OF IF**

**END OF IF**

Fill code of question FLSpouse executed

**ss001** (primary earner in section Decisions)

Up to now, how do the total earnings over your lifetime compare to your (spouse/partner)'s total lifetime earnings? Or, if you are retired, how did the total lifetime earnings compare to your (spouse/partner)'s total lifetime earnings?

1 My lifetime earnings are much higher than my (spouse/partner)'s lifetime earnings

2 My lifetime earnings are a little bit higher than my (spouse/partner)'s lifetime earnings

3 Our lifetime earnings are about the same

4 My (spouse/partner)'s lifetime earnings are a little bit higher than my lifetime earnings

5 My (spouse/partner)'s career earnings are much higher than my career earnings

6 Don't know

**ss002** (confidence SS provide with same level as under current law in section Decisions)

How confident are you that, when you retire, the Social Security system will be able to provide you with the same level of benefits you are entitled to under current law?

1 Very confident

2 Somewhat confident

3 Not too confident

4 Not at all confident

## GROUP OF QUESTIONS PRESENTED ON THE SAME SCREEN

**ss003a** (worker's spouse can receive Social Security retirement benefits, even if the spouse never worked in section Decisions)

Do you think the following statements are true or false?

A worker's spouse can receive Social Security retirement benefits, even if the spouse never worked.

- 1 True
- 2 False
- 3 Don't Know

**ss003b** (in some cases, a worker may receive greater Social Security retirement benefits based on his/her spouse's lifetime earnings. in section Decisions)

In some cases, a worker may receive greater Social Security retirement benefits based on his/her spouse's lifetime earnings.

- 1 True
- 2 False
- 3 Don't Know

## END OF GROUP

**ss004** (heard of SS spousal benefits in section Decisions)

In the next set of questions, we are going to ask about Social Security retirement spousal benefits. These are retirement benefits available to the spouse of a worker who is eligible to receive Social Security retirement benefits. Have you heard about these benefits?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 98 Not sure

**ss005\_intro** (Section Decisions)

Please answer the next set of five questions on spousal retirement benefits to the best of your ability. If you are unsure, please just give us your best guess. For these questions, we'll use *primary beneficiary* to describe an individual who will receive retirement benefits based on his/her *own* earnings.

**ss005** (current spouses social Security spousal retirement benefits are available to whom in section Decisions)

Among current spouses and partners, which statement best describes who is eligible for Social Security spousal retirement benefits? Social Security spousal retirement benefits are available to:

- 1 The current spouse of the primary beneficiary, for couples who have been married for at least one year.
- 2 The current spouse of the primary beneficiary, for couples who have been married for at

least ten years.

3 The current spouse or partner of the primary beneficiary, for couples who have lived together for at least one year.

4 The current spouse or partner of the primary beneficiary, for couples who have lived together for at least ten years.

5 None of the above

6 Don't know

**ss006** (divorced spouses benefits available to whom in section Decisions)

Among divorced spouses, which statement best describes who may be eligible for Social Security spousal retirement benefits? Social Security spousal retirement benefits may be available to:

1 The former spouse of the primary beneficiary, for couples who were married for at least one year.

2 The former spouse of the primary beneficiary, for couples who were married for at least ten years.

3 The former spouse of the primary beneficiary is never eligible.

4 None of the above

5 Don't know

**ss007** (spouse claims what happens benefits primary beneficiary in section Decisions)

If a primary beneficiary's spouse claims Social Security spousal benefits, then does the primary beneficiary's own Social Security retirement benefits increase, decrease, or stay the same?

1 Increase

2 Decrease

3 Stay the same

4 Don't know

**ss008** (spousal benefits can be claimed before the primary beneficiary claims in section Decisions)

Current spouses can claim spousal retirement benefits before the primary beneficiary claims his/her own benefits.

1 True

2 False

3 Don't know

**ss009** (maximum social security benefit spouse can receive in section Decisions)

The maximum Social Security retirement benefit that a spouse can receive is equivalent to:

1 The spouse's retirement benefit PLUS one-half the primary beneficiary's retirement benefit at Full Retirement Age

2 The spouse's retirement benefit OR one-half the primary beneficiary's retirement benefit at Full Retirement Age, whichever is higher

3 Don't know

## GROUP OF QUESTIONS PRESENTED ON THE SAME SCREEN

### **ss010\_intro** (Section Decisions)

For the previous five questions on spousal benefits, you could have answered between zero and five correctly. We would like to know how many you think you got correct.

Please tell us the percent chance that you got:

### SUBGROUP OF QUESTIONS

#### **ss010a** (five correct in section Decisions)

All five correct:

NUMBER (NO DECIMALS ALLOWED)

#### **ss010b** (four correct in section Decisions)

Exactly four correct:

RANGE 0..100

#### **ss010c** (three correct in section Decisions)

Exactly three correct:

NUMBER (NO DECIMALS ALLOWED)

#### **ss010d** (two correct in section Decisions)

Exactly two correct:

NUMBER (NO DECIMALS ALLOWED)

#### **ss010e** (one correct in section Decisions)

Exactly one correct:

NUMBER (NO DECIMALS ALLOWED)

#### **ss010f** (none correct in section Decisions)

No correct answers:

NUMBER (NO DECIMALS ALLOWED)

#### **ss010\_total** (Total in section Decisions)

Total:

NUMBER (NO DECIMALS ALLOWED)

### END OF SUBGROUP

#### **ss010\_dk** (don't know how many correct in section Decisions)

OR

1 Don't know

#### **ss010\_warning** (Section Decisions)

Please make sure that you only entered percentages between 0 and 100 and that the total equals 100% OR that you checked the "Don't know" box.

## END OF GROUP

### **ss011** (factors influence social security spousal retirement benefits in section Decisions)

Please indicate which factors you think could influence Social Security spousal retirement benefits. Select all that apply.

- 1 The primary beneficiary's earnings over his/her lifetime
- 2 The primary beneficiary's age of claiming Social Security retirement benefits
- 3 The spouse's age of claiming Social Security spousal retirement benefits
- 4 The spouse's earnings over his/her lifetime
- 5 Don't know

### **ss012** (benefits will increase based on spouse earnings' in section Decisions)

Which do you think best describes how spousal benefits will impact the Social Security retirement benefits that *you* receive?

- 1 I will receive higher Social Security retirement benefits because of spousal benefits
- 2 Spousal benefits will not impact my Social Security retirement benefits
- 3 Don't know

### **ss013** (spouse benefits will increase based on your earnings' in section Decisions)

Which do you think best describes how spousal benefits will impact the Social Security retirement benefits that *your (spouse/partner)* receives?

- 1 My (spouse/partner) will receive higher Social Security retirement benefits because of spousal benefits
- 2 Spousal benefits will not impact my (spouse/partner)'s Social Security retirement benefits
- 3 Don't know

### **ss014** (heard of survivor benefits in section Decisions)

In the next set of questions, we are going to ask about Social Security survivors benefits. These are benefits available to the spouse or family of a worker who is eligible to receive Social Security retirement benefits, in the event of the worker's death. Have you heard about these benefits?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 98 Not sure

### **ss015.intro** (Section Decisions)

Please answer the next set of five questions on survivor benefits to the best of your ability. If you are unsure, please just give us your best guess.

### **ss015** (married at least 9 months, widow eligible for survivor benefits in section Decisions)

If the deceased had been married for at least 9 months prior to death, then his/her widow/widower may be eligible for survivors benefits.

- 1 True
- 2 False
- 3 Don't know

**ss016** (widow remarries, no longer eligible survivor benefits in section Decisions)

If the deceased's widow/widower ever remarries, then the widow/widower is no longer eligible for survivors benefits.

- 1 True
- 2 False
- 3 Don't know

**ss017** (partner for ten years, survivor may be eligible survivor benefits in section Decisions)

If the deceased had been living with a partner for at least ten years, then the surviving partner may be eligible for survivor benefits.

- 1 True
- 2 False
- 3 Don't know

**ss018** (deceased former spouse may be eligible if married ten years in section Decisions)

If the deceased had ever been divorced, then the deceased's surviving former spouse may be eligible for survivors benefits, if they were married for at least ten years before they divorced.

- 1 True
- 2 False
- 3 Don't know

**ss019** (no dependents at death, maximum widow can receive in section Decisions)

If the deceased did not have any dependents at the time of death, the maximum Social Security retirement benefit that a widow/widower can receive is equivalent to:

- 1 The widow's/widower's retirement benefit PLUS a benefit based on what the deceased would have been eligible to receive had he/she survived
- 2 The widow's/widower's retirement benefit OR a benefit based on what the deceased would have been eligible to receive had he/she survived
- 3 Don't know

#### GROUP OF QUESTIONS PRESENTED ON THE SAME SCREEN

**ss020\_intro** (Section Decisions)

For the previous five questions on survivor benefits, you could have answered between zero and five correctly. We would like to know how many you think you got correct.

Please tell us the percent chance that you got:

#### SUBGROUP OF QUESTIONS

**ss020a** (five correct in section Decisions)

All five correct:

NUMBER (NO DECIMALS ALLOWED)

**ss020b** (four correct in section Decisions)

Exactly four correct:

RANGE 0..100

**ss020c** (three correct in section Decisions)

Exactly three correct:

RANGE 0..100

**ss020d** (two correct in section Decisions)

Exactly two correct:

NUMBER (NO DECIMALS ALLOWED)

**ss020e** (one correct in section Decisions)

Exactly one correct:

NUMBER (NO DECIMALS ALLOWED)

**ss020f** (none correct in section Decisions)

No correct answers:

NUMBER (NO DECIMALS ALLOWED)

**ss020\_total** (Total in section Decisions)

Total:

NUMBER (NO DECIMALS ALLOWED)

#### END OF SUBGROUP

**ss020.dk** (don't know how many correct in section Decisions)

OR

1 Don't know

**ss010.warning** (Section Decisions)

Please make sure that you only entered percentages between 0 and 100 and that the total equals 100% OR that you checked the "Don't know" box.

#### END OF GROUP

End of section **Decisions**

Start of section **Closing**

**CS\_001** (HOW PLEASANT INTERVIEW in section Closing)

Could you tell us how interesting or uninteresting you found the questions in this interview?

- 1 Very interesting
- 2 Interesting
- 3 Neither interesting nor uninteresting
- 4 Uninteresting
- 5 Very uninteresting

**CS\_003** (comments in section Closing)

Do you have any other comments on the interview? Please type these in the box below.(If you have no comments, please click next to complete this survey.)

STRING

End of section **Closing**

/\* Please note that although question CS\_003 is listed in the routing, the answers are not included in the microdata in the event identifiable information is captured. Cleaned responses are available by request. \*/