

UnderStandingAmericaStudy

RECRUITMENT PROTOCOL VERSION 1



USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research

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RECRUITMENT PROTOCOL

All UAS recruitment is done through address based sampling (ABS) in which samples are acquired based on postal records. The recruiting procedure has the following stages:

- a. Draw zip-codes; buy post office delivery sequence files from a commercial vendor.
- b. Send an advance notification letter (English/Spanish) to the selected households; whenever possible these letters have a named addressee; Letters to “current resident” are only used in cases where we only have an address but no other information.¹
- c. One week later the named respondent in the selected household (or the “current resident”) receives by Priority Mail a 10 minute mail survey (English/Spanish) with a \$5 prepaid incentive and a promise of \$15 upon the return of a completed questionnaire via the enclosed postage paid envelope. The survey asks about labor market status; computer use; educational attainment; various questions about the household’s financial situation and the respondent’s assessment of the economy as a whole; health and health insurance; life satisfaction. At the end of the questionnaire, the survey asks for interest in study participation in other research projects. Those who express an interest in study participation are asked for contact information (name, telephone, email address).
- d. 2 weeks after the survey mailing, non-respondents are mailed a reminder postcard.
- e. 2 weeks after the reminder postcard has been mailed, a second copy of the survey is mailed by regular mail to all sample members who have not returned a completed survey, with the option to now complete the same survey online (a web address is given.) The letter also mentions the possibility that a different household member completes the survey.
- f. 3 weeks after the second copy of the survey is mailed, follow-up phone calls are initiated for all households for whom a phone number is available with up to 15 attempts. Again, if a respondent refuses to answer the survey, the option is mentioned that a different household member answers the survey.
- g. Households who have returned their mail survey and agree to be contacted again receive:
 1. Welcome brochure
 2. Prepaid card with \$15 loaded
 3. Welcome letter with login information and a notice we will accept all household members 18+ into study if we are provided with their contact information (preferably name, telephone number, and email address); the letter notices that the first time they log in and answer the first brief survey (“My Household”, asking for basic demographic and socio-economic information), they will get a bonus of \$20. The letter also notices that any other household member who would join the panel and answers “My Household” will also receive \$20.
 4. If no email was given in the written survey, their letter includes a request for email address or offer to assist in setting up and email account.

¹ The LA County sample was the exception to this case, in that we were not interested in following residents outside of LA county. Additionally, we only had the mother’s name from the birth records. As a result, LA County sample mailings were addressed to “First Last OR Current Resident.”

5. If internet is needed (we will know that from the brief written survey), a consent form and return envelope is included so we can set up a tablet plus broadband internet for respondent, one per household
6. A form for additional household members to provide their name and email address and a return envelope
- h. If respondent was not interested in participating in future research, a \$15 payment and thank you letter is mailed.² The letter includes the offer for other household members to join UAS, even if the primary respondent refuses. A form for the other household members to provide their contact information and a return envelope are included.
- i. Households who log into the UAS web-site are asked to agree to an online consent before they take the first survey (“My Household”). Households with at least one member who has answered “My Household” are considered UAS panel members. Respondents are reminded once again that other household members 18 and older are also eligible to become panel members. The respondent’s log-in page has a “other household member may be interested” button they may click on to enter the other household member’s email address. This triggers an automatic email invitation to the other household member to become a UAS panel member. Participating household members get paid for the surveys they take at a rate of \$20 per 30 minutes (and proportionately less if a survey is shorter). All UAS panel members receive a prepaid debit card, to which new money is added every month depending on how many surveys they have taken.
- j. Household respondents who have agreed to become panel members, but next fail to log on to the UAS web-site, are contacted by email if we have their email address or mail if they refuse to give us their email. If they don’t respond (or if their email address is not available/valid) they are contacted by phone (whenever possible) to encourage them to log on, and to offer help if there are any barriers to logging on (such as a user name and password that may have been lost). They are told once again they will receive \$20 upon finishing the first brief survey (“My Household”).
- k. The final stage is an “end-game”, whereby the households who have internet access, who have not logged in four weeks after last contact (either the My Household email/letter reminder or the phone follow-up where that was feasible), receive a FedEx envelope (or Priority Mail envelope if we are delivering to a post office box) with an offer of \$40 for logging in and answering “My Household. We have a one-week deadline printed in the endgame letter with a due date.

² Native American samples were screened for ethnicity. Welcome Letters were only sent to appropriate ethnic groups, while other respondents are sent a letter thanking them for their interest, and mentioning we may contact them in the future should opportunities arise.

The table below summarizes the recruiting steps:

Step	Timing
1. Draw addresses	
2. Advance notification letters	Week 0
3. Send written questionnaire with \$5 included (and promise of \$15) via priority mail	Week 1
4. Send postcards to respondents (to thank them) and non-respondents (to remind them)	Week 3
5. Second copy of survey sent to non-respondents, plus option to finish survey online and mention that it is OK if another household member fills out the survey	Week 5
6. Phone calls to non-respondents to written survey	Week 8
7. The questionnaire asks for interest in future projects	
8. Households willing to participate in future projects are sent (by regular mail) information on how to log on (along with their \$15 payment); if their responses to the written survey have indicated that they don't have internet, we offer internet and enclose a consent form. Reminder that all 18+ households are invited; promise \$20 for completing "My Household"	Immediately after receipt of the written questionnaire
9. Tablet and internet provided upon return of consent form	Order immediately after receipt of consent form-delivery ranges between 1-2 weeks
10. Emails to households with valid email addresses who have failed to log on and answer "My Household" (if email address is available) or Letters if not	Two weeks after we have mailed the material under 8.
11. Phone calls to households without valid email addresses who have failed to log on and answer "My Household"	Two weeks after we have mailed the material under 8
12. Phone calls to households with valid email addresses who don't respond to the email under 10.	Two weeks after sending the email under 11. if the household has not responded
13. End-game: Households that indicated they were willing to participate but never completed the first survey ("My Household") online, receive a FedEx letter with a promise of \$40 for completing "My Household".	Three weeks after last contact