

# UnderStandingAmericaStudy

RECRUITMENT DATA



USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research

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## INTRODUCTION

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All UAS recruitment is done through address-based sampling (ABS) in which samples are acquired based on postal records. UAS recruitment follows a standardized protocol (as described in the “UAS Recruitment Protocol”) during which a variety of data is collected. These data are described in the sections below, and fall into four distinct categories:

- Status information: provides details of the status of the people targeted during recruitment, e.g. whether they became a member, are active, which recruitment batch they are from, and etcetera.
- Initial recruitment survey: contains answers to the questions asked during the initial survey filled out by people targeted during recruitment. This data will only be present for those people who filled out the initial survey.
- Experiments: gives indicators on whether people were targeted through one or more experiments or not.
- Communication: details on the efforts undertaken during recruitment to encourage people to sign up.
- Sleepers: describes activities made to encourage people to start doing surveys again after having been inactive for a prolonged period of time.

For any additional information and/or questions, contact us at [uas-l@mymailists.usc.edu](mailto:uas-l@mymailists.usc.edu).

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## ENROLLMENT STATUS INFORMATION

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The recruitment data file contains current enrollment status for all potential UAS participants selected in the different recruitment samples (also referred to within this document as recruitment batches). The following variables are included:

### *General*

- uasid: the identifier of the participant. This identifier is assigned at recruitment to the first person in a household to enroll in the UAS (primary respondent), and stays with the person throughout each and every survey he/she participates in. Each additional member of the household who joins the UAS is provided with their own unique uasaid.
- uashhid: the household identifier. Every household in the sample is assigned a household identifier, stored in the variable 'uashhid'. For the primary respondent (that is, the first person from the household to enroll) this identifier is identical to the 'uasid'. All other household members 18 or older who become UAS panel participants receive the 'uasid' of the primary respondent as their household identifier. The identifier 'uashhid' remains constant over time for all respondents.
- 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 years (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
  2. Areas high concentration Nat Ame: 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. Los Angeles County: recruited through ABS within Los Angeles County.
  4. California: recruited through ABS within California.

More information about the recruitment procedures of the UAS is found in the UAS recruitment protocol.

- 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. Prob Sample, ASDE 2014/01
2. Prob Sample, ASDE 2014/01
3. Prob Sample, ASDE 2014/11
4. Non-Prob Sample, 2015/05
5. Prob Sample, MSG 2015/07
6. Prob Sample, MSG 2016/01
7. Prob Sample, MSG 2016/01
8. Prob Sample, MSG 2016/01
9. Prob Sample, MSG 2016/02
10. Prob Sample, MSG 2016/03
11. Prob Sample, MSG 2016/04
12. Prob Sample, MSG 2016/05
13. Prob Sample, MSG 2016/08
14. Prob Sample, MSG 2017/03
15. Prob Sample, MSG 2017/11
16. Prob Sample, MSG 2018/02
17. Prob Sample, MSG 2018/08
18. Prob Sample, MSG 2019/04
19. Prob Sample, MSG 2019/05

20. Prob Sample, MSG 2019/11
  21. Prob Sample, MSG 2020/08
  22. Prob Sample, MSG 2020/10
  23. Prob Sample, MSG 2021/02
  24. Prob Sample, MSG 2021/08
  25. Prob Sample, MSG 2021/08
  26. Prob Sample, MSG 2022/02
  27. Prob Sample, MSG 2022/02
  28. Prob Sample, MSG 2022/08
  29. Prob Sample, MSG 2022/11
  30. Prob Sample, MSG 2022/11
  31. Prob Sample, MSG 2023/01
  32. Prob Sample, MSG 2023/06
  33. Non-Prob Sample, MSG 2023/09
  34. Prob Sample, MSG 2023/10
- primary\_respondent: this variable has the value of 1 if the respondent was the the first person from the household to enroll. A household in this regard is broadly defined as anyone living together at the selected address with the primary respondent. The variable has a value of 0 for all members of the primary respondent's household who join the panel.

### *Initial recruitment*

- `badaddress`: indicates if the address for the targeted household when sending the initial recruitment survey was not correct. This takes a value of 1 ONLY if an explicit notification was received that the initial mailing was not successful. Otherwise, it takes a value of 0.
- `returntype`: indicates how the initial recruitment survey was returned (filled out online versus returned by mail on paper). This is missing for added household members (`primary_respondent == 0`) as only the `primary_respondent` completes the recruitment survey.
- `needshardware`: indicates whether the `primary_respondent` answered in the initial recruitment survey that they would need hardware to participate in the UAS. This is missing for added household members (`primary_respondent == 0`) as only the `primary_respondent` completes the recruitment survey.
- `needsinternet`: indicates whether the `primary_respondent` answered in the initial recruitment survey that they would need internet to participate in the UAS. This is missing for added household members (`primary_respondent == 0`) as only the `primary_respondent` completes the recruitment survey.
- `willing`: indicates whether the `primary_respondent` answered in the initial recruitment survey that they are willing to join the UAS. It is based on `q28` in version 1, and `q28_r2` in version 2 (see the section on the Initial recruitment survey for more details).
- `qrcode`: indicates if the primary respondent used the QR code to start the initial recruitment survey (`value=1`) or not (`value=0`). Applicable since June 2023. Missing prior to June 2023.

### *Status*

- `member`: indicates if the person became an UAS member with values of 0 No and 1 Yes. A person is considered to be a member if they completed at least one My Household survey.
- `memberstart`: provides the date and time on which a person filled out the My Household survey, and so at which point they officially became a UAS member. It is missing for everyone who did not become a UAS member.

- memberstatus: reflects the status of a UAS member taking one of three values: 1 Active, 2 Sleeper, and 3 Stopped participating. Active and sleeper members are current UAS participants. It is missing for everyone who did not become a UAS member.
  - Active: a member is considered to be active if they completed the My Household survey within the last 3 months.
  - Sleeper: a member is considered to be a sleeper if they completed the My Household survey within the last year, but not within the last 3 months. Sleeper members are engaged via the sleeper protocol to attempt to re-activate them. The protocol finishes after 9 months (12 months of inactivity) at which stage sleeper members are considered to have stopped participating.
  - Stopped participating: a member is considered to have stopped participating if they became deceased, explicitly withdrew from the panel, did not become active during the sleeper protocol (which operates from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 12th month of inactivity by a person), could no longer be located or were deemed ineligible.
- memberend: gives the date and time on which an enrolled UAS member stopped participating. It is empty if a person is still enrolled, that is, a sleeper or active member. It is set to the date a participant withdrew from the panel, if they did so explicitly. It is set to the date UAS staff withdrew an enrolled participant by setting their status to 3=stopped participating if they became inactive (after 12 months of not having done the My Household survey), if they became deceased, or if they were found to be ineligible to participate. It is missing for enrolled members, which includes active members and sleepers who have been inactive for more than 12 months, but have not yet been set to stopped by the UAS.
- stoppedreason: identifies the reason a UAS member stopped participating. It takes one of five values: 1 Deceased, 2 Withdrew, 3 Inactivity, 4 Ineligible, and 5 Other. It is missing unless memberstatus="3 Stopped participating".
- withdrewreason: identifies the specific reason a UAS member explicitly requested to be withdrawn from the study. It takes a value of 1 Too busy, 2 Health problems, or 3 Other/unknown reasons. It is missing unless stoppedreason = "2 Withdrew".
- hastablet: has a value of 1 if the respondent currently has a UAS provided tablet with internet subscription and a value 0 if they do not. This can be different from any hardware

requests from the primary respondent in the initial recruitment survey (per variable needshardware).

- hasaccelerometer: has a value of 1 if the respondent currently has a UAS provided accelerometer and a value of 0 if they do not.
- hasatmotube: indicates if the respondent currently has an UAS provided atmotube.



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## INITIAL RECRUITMENT SURVEY

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The recruitment data file also contains responses to questions in the initial recruitment survey. This survey is answered by one person in each selected household, either returned in paper format or filled out online. The survey includes a question indicating whether the respondent would like to join the UAS and do more surveys. These are a few of the key variables:

- start\_date, start\_year, start\_month, start\_day, start\_hour, start\_min, start\_sec: the date and time on which a person started the initial survey (if signing up directly on the web site, see below) or the date and time on which the person's initial paper survey was entered through data entry (if receiving the initial survey by mail).
- end\_date, end\_year, end\_month, end\_day, end\_hour, end\_min, end\_sec: the date and time on which a person completed the initial survey (if signing up directly on the web site, see below) or the date and time on which the entry of the person's initial paper survey was completed (if receiving the initial survey by mail).

Three different versions of the survey have been administered. The first version, described in the [“UAS Initial Recruitment Survey Version 1”](#) document, was in use from January 2014 to December 9, 2019. From December 10, 2019 to the present the current version, described in the [“UAS Initial Recruitment Survey”](#) document, applies.

The key differences between the three versions are:

- 1) Questions q7, q17, and q18 are asked in version 1, and removed from version 2.
- 2) Questions q6\_r2 and q7\_r2 are asked in version 2, not in version 1.
- 3) In the data the value of 7 (no internet at home) for q8 is deduced for people responding “No” to q7\_r2s1 in version 2.

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## RECRUITMENT EXPERIMENTS

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Within different recruitment batches of the UAS a variety of experiments have been conducted to test strategies for increasing recruitment effectiveness. Within a batch in which an experiment was implemented, the following indicators reflect whether a person was in the control group (0) or the treatment group (1). These indicators have missing values for persons recruited in batches in which the experiment did not take place.

- experiment37: persons in this experiment received an initial mailing survey in an envelope with a label listing both the person's name and the phrase 'Current resident'. This experiment only involved people from the batch *Prob Sample, MSG 2015/07* (batch = 5).
- experiment38: is a flag for *experiment37*. For 247 persons in that experiment no name was available and, therefore, the letter could only be addressed to "Current Resident." These persons have a value of 1 for experiment38. It is missing for all other persons.
- experiment39: persons in this experiment received the initial recruitment survey in an envelope with a colorful label with the UAS logo. This experiment only involved people from the batch *Prob Sample, MSG 2015/07* (batch = 5).
- experiment43: persons in this experiment were offered the option to directly join the UAS after the initial recruitment survey on the last page of the booklet. This experiment only involved people from the batch *Prob Sample, MSG 2016/01* (batch = 6).
- experiment46: persons in this experiment received the initial mailing survey in a Priority Mail envelope. This experiment only involved people from the batch *Prob Sample, MSG 2016/01* (batch = 8).
- experiment49: persons in this experiment group received a postcard, which stated \$5 would be enclosed with the initial recruitment survey. This experiment only involved people from the batch *Prob Sample, MSG 2016/02* (batch = 9).
- experiment51: persons in this experiment received a personalized postcard, which stated \$5 would be enclosed with the initial recruitment survey. The other side of the postcard contains a personalized hello. This experiment only involved people from the batch *Prob Sample, MSG 2016/03* (batch = 10).

- experiment55: persons in this experiment received a personalized postcard modified from experiment 49 and 51 prior to receiving the initial mailing survey. This postcard has reorganized/rewritten text, with the mentioning of the \$5 bill and now also the \$15 in bold black letters on a white background, between two horizontal black lines. Also, this postcard uses 80% of the space for the English text and only has a short, bold, Spanish statement mentioning the \$5 and \$15 and saying that they can do surveys both in English and Spanish. This experiment only involved people from the batch *Prob Sample, MSG 2016/04* (batch = 11).
- experiment56: persons in this experiment received a modified personalized postcard prior to receiving the initial mailing survey. It is the same postcard as described for experiment 55. This experiment only involved people from the batch *Prob Sample, MSG 2016/05* (batch = 12).
- experiment185: persons in this experiment received a revised invitation letter (value=1) versus the non-revised invitation letter. This experiment involved people from the batch *Prob Sample, MSG 2022/11* (batch = 29) and the batch *Prob Sample, MSG 2022/11* (batch = 30).
- experiment187: persons in this experiment received the invitation letter in a standard envelope with a priority mail sticker and visible cash (value=1) versus an envelope with a priority mail sticker and no visible cash (value=0). This experiment involved people from the batch *Prob Sample, MSG 2022/08* (batch = 28) and from the batch *Prob Sample, MSG 2022/02* (batch = 26).
- experiment189: persons in this experiment received a regular priority mail envelope (value=1) versus an envelope with a priority mail sticker (value=0). This experiment involved people from the batch *Prob Sample, MSG 2022/02* (batch = 27) and from the batch *Prob Sample, MSG 2022/02* (batch = 26).
- experiment190: persons in this experiment received a paper/online (value=1) versus an online-first (value=0) intake survey. This experiment involved people from the batch *Prob Sample, MSG 2021/08* (batch = 24) and from the batch *Prob Sample, MSG 2021/08* (batch = 25).
- experiment197: persons in this experiment received an envelope addressed to 'Name or Current Resident' (value=1) versus 'To the Family Living at' (value=0). This experiment

involved people from the batch *Prob Sample, MSG 2023/06* (batch = 32) and from the batch *Prob Sample, MSG 2023/10* (batch = 34). Note: due to an error a small subset of batch 32 respondents in the treatment group (value=1) received an envelope addressed with 'Name only (incorrect)' (variable error197 with value=1) versus ' Name OR Current Resident (correct)' (variable error197 with value=0).

- **burden\_level**: persons in the burden level experiment are invited to UAS core surveys on a fixed interval schedule. One group is invited to core surveys on a 2 week interval (value=1); the other group is invited in a slower, 4 week interval (value=2). This experiment involved people from the batch *Prob Sample, MSG 2023/10* (batch = 34).
- **burden\_level\_flag**: added members to UAS households that are part of the burden level experiment follow the same fixed interval schedule as the primary respondent in those households. The exception is a small group of added members who are not part of the experiment. For this group the **burden\_level\_flag** variable takes a value of 1, for all other added members in the batch *Prob Sample, MSG 2023/10* (batch = 34) it takes a value of 0.

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## RECRUITMENT COMMUNICATION

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To maximize recruitment rates into the UAS panel, a multi-phase recruitment protocol is followed. In the recruitment data file, the following variables indicate which steps of that protocol were undertaken (a value of 1 denotes the action was taken, a value of 0 denotes the action was not taken):

- action13: indicates whether a second mailing of the invitation letter and survey booklet were mailed after no response to the initial invitation packet.
- action21: indicates whether there was no response to the initial invitation packet, but a household member completed the recruitment survey on the phone after being called.
- action22: indicates whether the person was sent a reminder letter after they had indicated that they were willing to participate on the recruitment survey but never completed the My Household survey.
- action23: indicates whether the person was sent a reminder email after they had indicated that they were willing to participate on the recruitment survey but never completed the My Household survey.
- action25: indicates whether the person started but did not complete My Household and received a “Finish My Household” reminder email/contact.
- action30: indicates whether the person received a letter via Priority mail or FedEx offering either \$40 or \$80 if they would log in and complete the My Household survey. The letter was sent to people who completed the initial recruitment survey and indicated they were willing to participate, but then never completed the My Household survey online. The result of their response is captured in the endgame variable.
- action60: indicates whether the person received a one-time \$15 payment on a ClinCard after filling out the initial recruitment survey, but declined to become an UAS member.
- action74: indicates whether the person received a pre-notification postcard/letter informing them they have been selected to participate in the Understanding America Study. The mailing of the actual initial recruitment survey typically follows within 2-3 weeks after the pre-notification.

- action80: indicates whether the person received a pre-notification postcard/letter informing them they have been selected to participate in the Understanding America Study. The mailing of the actual initial recruitment survey typically follows within 2-3 weeks after the pre-notification. This postcard/letter only went to the MSG 2017/11 California Batch 1 (batch = 15) and MSG 2018/02 California Batch 2 (batch = 16).
- action91: indicates whether the person received a letter with a \$20 bonus incentive after taking the My Household survey but not completing additional surveys. The incentive is intended to encourage them to complete additional UAS surveys.
- endgame: indicates whether the person received an endgame reward to encourage them to become an UAS member. It takes one of four values: 1 \$40, 2 \$80, 3 Offered, not used, and 4 Not offered.

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## SLEEPERS

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The Understanding America Study has adopted a protocol for when panel members become so-called “sleepers”. In the UAS, a sleeper is a person who has not completed a survey for three months or more when during this period there have been at least two surveys offered in addition to the My Household quarterly update. The exact protocol is described in the “UAS Sleeper Protocol”. In context of the recruitment data this is reflected in the following action variables (a value of 1 denotes the action was taken):

- action65: indicates whether the person received a letter by Priority Mail asking them to start taking surveys again. This 3-month letter is send to people who did not do a survey for 3 months and who can not be reached by phone. They are offered a one-time \$10 bonus incentive for completing a survey by the end of the month. Priority mail was only used the first time the sleeper protocol was executed.
- action70: indicates whether the person received a letter by normal mail (or an email) asking them to start taking surveys again. This 3-month letter is send to people who did not do a survey for 3 months and who can not be reached by phone. They are offered a one-time \$10 bonus incentive for completing a survey by the end of the month.
- action67: indicates whether the person received a letter (or an email) thanking them for starting to take surveys again after they had indicated their intent to do so during the phone call. To express gratitude they are offered a one-time \$10 bonus incentive for completing a survey by the end of the month.
- action68: indicates whether the person received a follow-up letter (or an email) asking why they did not start taking surveys again, even though they had indicated they would do so when reached by phone or letter (action65). They are offered a one-time \$10 bonus incentive after completing a survey. This 4-month letter is send after 4 months of a person not having done a survey.
- action69: indicates whether the person received a final thank you letter (or an email) after they indicated they do not want to participate in the UAS anymore. This letter is send once the person expressed their desire to stop taking surveys.
- action81: indicates whether the person received a letter (or an email) asking them to start taking surveys again. They are offered a \$25 bonus after completing a survey. This 10-month letter is send after 10 months of a person not having done a survey.

- action106: indicates whether the person received a termination letter (or an email) informing them that their UAS membership has been ended. It is send approximately 6 weeks after the 10-month letter is send.