

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The purpose of this study is to learn about adult cognition, that is, what adults know, what they remember, and how they use their thinking skills in real life. It is believed that cognition is not a single general ability, but a collection of abilities. This becomes clear when different people show that they are good at different abilities—each person may have their own “cognitive signature.” The National Institute on Aging (NIA) has funded this study to develop new ways to measure these abilities. Whatever new measurements work in this study will then be used in the Health and Retirement Study (HRS), a large, national survey of over 30,000 people all over the USA.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS STUDY

People who are about to reach or have reached retirement age make up one of the fastest-growing segments of the US population. At the same time, their lifestyles and needs have changed dramatically over the years. As US policy makers consider reforms to the US health care, pension, and Social Security systems, it is important that they have access to current and accurate information. This new study and the improved cognitive measures in the HRS will provide up-to-date information about cognition and how it is related to health status and the decisions people make.

## IN CLOSING...

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We hope you are as excited about this important study as we are. By participating, you will be making a major contribution to the better understanding of cognition, health, and retirement.

If you are not sure whether you would like to participate, you may want to seek advice from a family member, friend, or other trusted person. Project staff will be glad to talk with you or others about the study. We always welcome your questions or comments.

As a member in the Cognition and Aging in the USA Study, you will be donating some of your time and energy to this important study. Everyone’s participation is equally important and valued by the study team. Joining this study offers an opportunity to be of service to the health and welfare of millions of Americans. We look forward to meeting you.

**A Member of the  
University of Michigan’s  
Survey Research Center  
may contact you by phone.  
We hope that you will  
participate in this important  
and valuable study.**

**PLEASE FEEL FREE TO  
CONTACT US FOR MORE  
INFORMATION:**

**Toll-Free Number  
1-800-759-7947**

**The University of Michigan  
Survey Research Center  
Surveys on Social Relations  
P.O. Box 1248  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106**

UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA  
John J. McArdle, Ph.D.



UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN  
Willard L. Rodgers, Ph.D.

# COGNITION AND AGING IN THE USA

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A COLLABORATION OF

The National Growth  
and Change Study



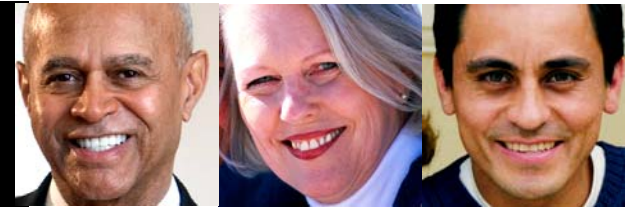
and



The Health and  
Retirement Study



# Top 10 Questions Asked by Research Participants



## 10 - Who is Asked to Participate?

Adults born prior to 1957 from a scientifically chosen sample of households in the US are being asked to participate in this study. Your contribution to this project is very valuable. The only way for this project to succeed is to speak with people like you.

## 9 - How Will the Interviews Be Conducted?

All interviewers are members of the staff of the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center (SRC). SRC is one of the largest and most respected academic survey research organizations in the world. It maintains a national staff of over 300 trained interviewers. An interviewer will call and you may choose to be interviewed right away or schedule an appointment for a more convenient time. Interviews will be conducted over the phone. At the end of the telephone interview, you will be invited to participate in a face-to-face interview.

## 8 - Do I Have a Choice about Participating in this Study?

Yes. Participation is completely voluntary. Participants may refuse to answer any or all questions. However, we have found that people enjoy the interview.

## 7 - What Kind of Questions Will Be Asked?

Questions will cover a wide range of topics including assessments of cognitive abilities as well as questions about your general background and health.

## 6 - What Happens if I Don't Know the Answer?

Nothing at all. Some of our questions are designed to be difficult, so this happens all the time. We will simply move on to the next question.

## 5 - How Will I Know if I Have Passed?

These measures are new, so there are really no passing or failing scores. We would like to make sure we provide the kind of setting where you can do your best, and this is certainly good enough for us.

## 4 - Will Anyone Else Know How I Did on These Tasks?

Absolutely not. The information you provide is totally confidential. Completed interviews are sent to our data processing facility in Ann Arbor where identifying information is removed. Unidentified survey responses are stored on a computer and reported only in summary statistical fashion.

## 3 - Will I be Paid for My Time?

Yes. We recognize that your time is important. You will be paid \$20 for a telephone interview and \$60 for a face-to-face interview. We are aware that scientific research studies do not pay enough, but we hope you will find that your time on this project offers an important contribution to scientific and social progress.

## 2 - How Will I Know if I am Losing My Memory?

Memory loss is probably the most common mental problem associated with aging. It is likely that you will be the first to notice that you cannot remember where you left something (often your glasses) or why you went somewhere (into the kitchen). It is also likely that others will notice and let you know that you seem to have changed. While this may not be a happy event, you might feel better to know these same kinds of losses are happening to many others your age.

## 1 - Is There Anything I Can Do to Stop Losing My Mind as I Get Older?

We do not know for sure what you as an individual can do to effect positive changes. Lots of recent research seems to show that improved health is associated with a healthy lifestyle -- including eating well, avoiding excessive uses of alcohol and smoking, lots of physical and social activities, and avoiding stressful situations. Since good physical health has a big impact on cognitive health, these are all logical routes to consider.