

2020 HRS COVID-19 PROJECT  
Early, Version 1.0  
February, 2021

Data Description and Usage



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# Data Description and Usage

## 1. Overview

The 2020 HRS COVID-19 Project (Early, Version 1.0) data release consists of data obtained as part of the Health and Retirement Study (HRS), a national longitudinal study of the economic, health, marital, and family status, as well as public and private support systems, of older Americans. The National Institute on Aging provided funding (NIA U01 AG009740), with supplemental support from the Social Security Administration. The Institute for Social Research (ISR) Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Michigan conducted the survey.

By receiving the dataset, you agree to use it for research and statistical purposes only and to make no effort to identify respondents. In addition, you agree to send us a copy of publications you produce based on the data. See Registration and Downloading the Data at the end of this document for additional details.

### 1A. The COVID-19 Sample

The COVID-19 module of HRS 2020 is being administered to the 50% random subsample of households who were originally assigned to enhanced face-to-face interviewing (EFTF). Due to the restrictions on social contact during the fieldwork period, all interviews were conducted via telephone. This EFTF subsample was further split into two random subsamples. The first one, the EFTF1 sample was released to fieldwork on June 11, 2020; the second one, EFTF2, was released to fieldwork on September 24, 2020. This release includes 3,266 respondents from the EFTF1 sample, which is an approximately 25% random sample of the original HRS sample. The field work for EFTF1 respondents is still under way; the response rate was 62% at the time this dataset was created. The EFTF samples also receive (by mail, following their core interview) the self-administered leavebehind questionnaire or SAQ. The SAQ also has additional COVID-related content. **The COVID-19 data was originally released in November 2020. In February 2021, we updated the psychosocial data (section LB) to add additional data from psychosocial questionnaires received since the original data release.** Updates may be made in the future for additional cases and additional psychosocial questionnaire returns.

## **2. HRS COVID-19 Project Data and Documentation**

Data from the 2020 HRS COVID-19 Project were produced under an accelerated time frame to facilitate rapid access to HRS research data while the 2020 HRS data collection is still underway. Users should note that the data have not had all the processing typical of an early release. They are subject to change based on any corrections deemed necessary in the future.

### **2A. Preliminary Weight**

Preliminary weights are provided that adjust for selection and non-response into the special release. Because 2020 ACS data are not yet available the post-stratification is only approximate. Respondents born 1966 or later, or who did not give an interview prior to 2020, do not have weights. The preliminary weight variable is CVWGTR.

### **2B. Important Notes about Using the Data**

While using the data, it is important to keep in mind the following:

#### **2B1. Respondent Level**

**The data are at the respondent level.** Respondent-level files contain questions that were asked of all respondents about themselves (or asked of a proxy about the respondent if the respondent was not able to give an interview). Since the data are at the respondent-level, we have not provided the sub-household identifier (RSUBHH) or the family (RFAMR) or financial (RFINR) respondent designations.

In HRS, sub-households are identified uniquely by the same household ID (HHID) and sub-household ID (xSUBHH), and are usually regarded as the unit of household level analysis. Thus, RSUBHH indicates whether two respondents are still in the same household for the 2020 wave of the study. This variable is under development and will be available in the 2020 HRS Core Early data release which is expected to be available late summer 2021.

HRS respondents provide information at an individual level and, for some questions, at a household level. Many questions about family or about income and wealth are asked of only one respondent in a household. The respondent providing family information in a given wave is called the Family Respondent (or Family R) in that wave, and the

respondent providing financial data in a wave is called the Financial Respondent (or Financial R) in the wave.

**Household level data will be included in the 2020 HRS Core Early data release which is expected to be available late summer 2021.**

### **2B2. Household Member/Child Analysis**

Typically, the children and household member data for the PR\_MC file are released at the household level but in this release they are at the respondent level. While this file may still be merged with other files, users are advised not to perform any household level analysis when there are two PNs associated with a single HHID.

The RSUBHH variable was not finalized at the time of this release and as a result, we did not create Other Person Number (OPN) values for any newly added children or household members. The OPN is a unique value assigned to a child or household member when first mentioned by a respondent. This variable is used to identify that child or household member for all subsequent waves of the study and is also used to perform file merges. Given that the variable will not have data for newly added people, data users should perform merges using the HHID, PN, and RX054\_MC variables.

### **2C. Data Content**

Most of the standard sections included in a HRS Core data release are included in the 2020 HRS COVID-19 Project data. The table that follows lists the available sections and corresponding content.

<u>Section</u>	<u>Content</u>
PR	Preload
A	Coverscreen
B	Demographics
C	Physical Health
D	Cognition
COV	COVID
E	Family Structure
F	Parents, Siblings and Transfers
G	Functional Limitations and Helpers
H	Housing
J	Employment
J2	Pensions
J3	Retirement and Social Security

M Disability

(continued on next page)

<u>Section</u>	<u>Content</u>
N	Health Services and Insurance
P	Expectations
Q	Assets and Income
R	Asset Change
S	Widowhood and Divorce
T	Wills and Life Insurance
W	Event History, Internet Use & Social Security

## **2D. Masked Variables**

To protect the confidentiality of the information that respondents provide, a number of variables have been masked or are simply not included in public dataset including data containing names, addresses and detailed geography. The names of variables that were masked for confidentiality end in the capital letter "M"; for example, variable RH153M (STATE OF SECOND HOME - MASKED).

## **2E. File Naming Conventions and ID Variables**

Files are named beginning with "H20" for HRS 2020, followed by "cov" for COVID-19 followed by letter(s) designating the questionnaire section. For example, the file H20cova\_r includes variables from Section A (coverscreen) at the respondent level.

## **2F. Identification Variables**

The primary Identification variables (IDs) are:

HHID	HOUSEHOLD IDENTIFIER
PN	PERSON NUMBER

Records in the data files are sorted in order by HHID and PN. Identification variables in the 2020 HRS COVID-19 Project data are stored in character format.

## **2G. Data Documentation**

The available documentation includes codebooks, frequency outputs, this data description and questionnaires.

Codebooks: a series of plain text files, one for each data file, that include the variable name, type (numeric/character), and variable label.

Frequencies: as a series of plain text files, one for each data file, that list the frequencies for numeric variable in the file.

Questionnaires: a series of PDF documents that list the questions asked in the interview, the instruction given to the interviewer, variable names, variable labels and value labels. While the questionnaire describes every question in the survey, the codebook describes only those that have a corresponding variable in the data. The 2020 questionnaire is available on the HRS Website: <https://hrs.isr.umich.edu/documentation/questionnaires>.

### **3. Distribution Files**

The 2020 HRS COVID-19 Project data are provided in SAS, SPSS and Stata format. The documentation is available in plain text format. The following extensions are used for the different types of distribution files:

SAS (.sas7bdat)  
SPSS (.sav)  
Stata (.dta)  
Codebook (.txt)  
Frequencies (.txt)

### **4. Registration and Downloading the Data**

#### **4A. Registration**

HRS data are available for free to researchers and analysts at the HRS Web site. In order to obtain public release data, you must first register at our Web site. Once you have completed the registration process, your username and password will be sent to you via e-mail. Your username and password are required to download any data files.

By registering all users, we are able to document for our sponsors the size and diversity of our user community allowing us to continue to collect these important data. Registered users receive user support, information related to errors in the data, future releases, workshops, and publication lists. The information you provide will not be used for any commercial use, and will not be redistributed to third parties.

#### **4B. Conditions of Use**

By registering, you agree to the Conditions of Use governing access to Health and Retirement public release data. You must agree to

- not attempt to identify respondents
- not transfer data to third parties except as specified
- not share your username and password
- include specified citations in work based on HRS data
- provide information to us about publications based on HRS data
- report apparent errors in the HRS data or documentation files
- notify us of changes in your contact information

For more information concerning privacy issues and conditions of use, please read "Conditions of Use for Public Data Files" and "Privacy and Security Notice" at the Public File Download Area of the HRS Web site.

#### **4C. Publications Based on Data**

As part of the data registration process, you agree to include specified citations and to inform HRS of any papers, publications, or presentations based on HRS data. Please send a copy of any publications you produce based on HRS data, with a bibliographical reference, if appropriate, to the address below.

Health and Retirement Study  
Attn: Papers and Publications  
The Institute for Social Research, Room 3410  
P.O. Box 1248  
Ann Arbor, MI (USA) 48106-1248

Alternately, you may contact us by e-mail at [hqsquestions@umich.edu](mailto:hqsquestions@umich.edu) with "Attn: Papers and Publications" in the subject line.

#### **5. If You Need to Know More**

This document is intended to serve as a brief overview and to provide guidelines for using the 2020 HRS COVID-19 Project (Version 1.0) data. If you have questions or concerns that are not adequately covered here or on our Web site, please contact us. We will do our best to provide answers.

**5A. HRS Internet Site**

Health and Retirement Study public release data and additional information about the study are available on the Internet. To access the data and other relevant information, point your Web browser to the HRS Web site.

<http://hrsonline.isr.umich.edu/>

**5B. Contact Information**

If you need to contact us, you may do so by one of the methods listed below.

Internet: Help Desk at our Web site  
E-mail: [hqsquestions@umich.edu](mailto:hqsquestions@umich.edu)

Postal service:  
Health and Retirement Study  
The Institute for Social Research  
The University of Michigan  
P.O. Box 1248  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1248

FAX: (734) 647-1186