

Health and Retirement Study

Employer Pension Tracker File
Final, Version 1.0
June 2005

Data Description and Usage

1. Overview

The *Employer Pension Tracker File* (Final, Version 1.0) consists of information derived from the Health and Retirement Study (HRS), a national longitudinal study of the economic, health, marital, family status, and public and private support systems of older Americans. The National Institute on Aging provided funding (NIH U01 AGO9740), 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 data, which have been freely provided, you agree to use them for research and statistical purposes only and make no effort to identify the respondents. In addition, you agree to send HRS a copy of any publications you produce based on the data. See [Obtaining the Data](#) for additional details.

The *Employer Pension Data Tracker* file is constructed to help users in identifying employees with self-reported pension coverage and employer pension plan descriptions data from the 1993 and/or 1999 employer survey(s). This file is a respondent level file that contains one record for every respondent among HRS and War Baby cohorts who participated in the core survey in 1992 and/or 1998. There are 15615 observations in the data file.

The data file contains variables indicating whether respondents had pension coverage in 1992 and/or 1998 from current, last, and/or previous jobs, whether respondents worked for an employer with 25 or more employees at all locations in the 1998 survey, whether respondents' employer contact information was available in the 1998 survey¹, and whether respondents had matched plan descriptions from the 1993 and/or 1999 employer survey(s). For the 1998 survey, two additional variables are included: whether or not the respondents' employer was interviewed, and whether or not matched plans were obtained through an interview and are available for the respondent.

2. Background

The Health and Retirement Study (HRS) collects detailed information about pensions from current, last, and previous jobs for each respondent. Respondents are asked about their pension coverage through their current employer/business if they are working, and a detailed set of questions about their pensions if they have changed their job since the last interview or are being freshly interviewed as a new cohort member. In addition, they are asked a number of questions to update findings if they report working for the same employer and indicate that their pension rules did not change. When first interviewed, respondents are also asked about up to three previous jobs with pensions if they worked at least five years at those jobs. We refer to those pension benefit jobs as *previous jobs*. Respondents are also asked about the pension from their last job held if they report not working at their first interview. That job is referred to as *last job*.

The HRS collected Summary Plan Descriptions (SPDs) in 1993 and 1999 from employers and the United States Department of Labor. Summary Plan Descriptions are detailed descriptions of

¹ The record of this information is not readily available for the 1992 survey.

the rules determining eligibility for relevant benefits and contain the formulas determining the level of benefits at alternative ages of retirement. These rules are coded into a template, and run through a specially designed program that estimates pension benefits at alternative retirement ages. In the 1999 employer survey, employers were less willing to provide their plan descriptions than in 1993; as a result, the HRS has gone through a process of collecting missing SPDs through other means. The more recently obtained SPDs are currently being updated.

The SPDs collected in the employer surveys are for eligible respondents with a pension from current, previous, and last jobs. There also was another sample in 1999 called "Release 7". The sample for Release 7 included those respondents who had a pension in the base year (1992) worked after 1992 at the same employment in 1994, or if not interviewed in 1994 worked at the same employment in 1996, but left that job before 1998. By definition, there was no Release 7 sample in the 1992 survey. Respondents who were employees (not self-employed), had pension coverage through their employment, and worked in firms with 25 or more employees at all locations were eligible to be in the 1999 employer survey.

In the 1999 employer survey, employers were not only asked to submit relevant SPDs, but were also interviewed (by phone). They were asked a detailed set of questions about the plans they offered to their employees, including criteria by which an employee could qualify to participate in those plans. The data from the employer survey are matched with HRS respondents and are referred to as the *EPPS (Employer Pension Provider Study)* data. These data can be used in conjunction with, or in the absence of, SPD data.

3. Distribution Files and Directory Structure

3a. Distribution Files

The Employer Pension Tracker File is packaged for distribution in a ZIP file, *PenTrackE.zip*, which contains seven files:

- *PenTrkE.da* - ASCII data file
- *PenTrkE.sas* - SAS data descriptors
- *PenTrkE.sps* - SPSS data descriptors
- *PenTrkE.dct* - Stata data descriptors
- *PenTrkE.do* - Stata "do" file
- *PenTrkE.txt* - codebook information
- *PenTrackE.pdf* - data description (this file)

The data file is provided in ASCII format, with fixed-length records. Use associated SAS, SPSS or State program statements to read the data into the analysis package of your choice.

3b. Directory Structure

While a particular setup is not required for using HRS files, we have traditionally suggested a directory structure. By using this directory structure, you will not have to change the path name in your data descriptor files. If you use a different structure, just change the directory references in the program statement files.

Directory	Contents
=====	=====
c:\ptrke	ZIP File downloaded from Web site
c:\ptrke\codebook	codebook and documentation files
c:\ptrke\data	data files
c:\ptrke\sas	SAS command files
c:\ptrke\spss	SPSS command files
c:\ptrke\stata	Stata command files

Decompress the .zip file into the appropriate subdirectories. You will need less than 1 MB of free space on your storage device to store the files.

4. Identification Variables

Identification variables for the Employer Pension Tracker File are stored in character format. The file contains HHID, PN, and xSUBHH identifiers, which can be used for merging with other HRS data files.

4a. HHID – Household Identifier

In the initial wave of data collection (in 1992 for the HRS sub-sample, in 1993 for the AHEAD sub-sample, and in 1998 for the WB and CODA sub-samples) each sample household was assigned a Household Identifier. HHID is stable across waves of data collection and uniquely identifies the original household and any households derived from that household in subsequent waves of data collection. HHID has six digits.

4b. PN – Person Number

In combination with HHID, PN uniquely identifies a respondent or respondent's spouse or partner. PNs are unique within an original household (HHID). The PN assigned to a particular respondent does not change across waves. PN has three digits.

4c. xSUBHH – Sub-household Identifier

In combination with HHID, xSUBHH uniquely identifies a household for a given wage. Sub-household identifiers can be different at each wave. xSUBHH has one digit..

5. Program Statements

The Employer Pension Tracker File comes with associated SPSS, SAS, or Stata program statements to read the data. Files containing SPSS statements are named with a .SPS extension, those with SAS statements with a .SAS extension, and those with Stata statements with .DO and .DCT extensions.

5a. Using the Files with SAS

To create a SAS system file for a particular data set, two file types must be present for that data set -- .SAS program statement files and .DA data files. To create a SAS system file, load the *.SAS file into the SAS Program Editor.

If the *.SAS file is located in "c:\ptrke\sas" and the data file is located in "c:\ptrke\data", you can run the file as is. A SAS system file (*.SD2 or *.SAS7BDAT) will be saved to directory "c:\ptrke\sas".

If the files are not located in the specified directories, you will need to edit the *.SAS file to reflect the proper path names prior to running the file.

5b. Using the Files with SPSS

To create an SPSS system file for a particular data set, two file types must be present for that data set -- .SPS program statement files and .DA data files. To create an SPSS system file, you must first open the *.SPS file in SPSS as an SPSS Syntax File.

If the *.SPS file is located in "c:\ptrke\spss" and the data file is located in "c:\ptrke\data", you can run the file as is. An SPSS system file (*.SAV) will be saved to directory "c:\ptrke\spss".

If the files are not located in the specified directories, you will need to edit the *.SPS file to reflect the proper path names prior to running the file.

5c. Using the Files with Stata

To use Stata with a particular data set, the following three file types must be present for that data set -- .DCT files, .DO files, and .DA data files.

Files with the suffix .DA contain the raw data for Stata to read. Files with the suffix .DCT are Stata dictionaries used by Stata to describe the data. Files with the suffix .DO are short Stata programs ("do files") which you may use to read in the data. Load the .DO file into Stata and then submit it.

If the *.DO and *.DCT files are located in "c:\ptrke\stata" and the data file is located in "c:\ptrke\data", you can run the .DO file as is.

If the files are not located in these directories, you must edit the *.DO and *.DCT files to reflect the proper path names before you run the files.

Note that the variable names provided in the .DCT files are uppercase. If you prefer lowercase variable names, you may wish to convert the .DCT files to lowercase prior to use. You may do this by reading the .DCT file into a text or word processing program and changing the case. For instance in Microsoft Word, Edit, Select All, Format, Change Case, lowercase.

6. Obtaining the Data

6a. Registration and Downloading the Data

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.

6b. Conditions of Use

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

- not to attempt to identify respondents
- not to transfer data to third parties except as specified
- not to share your username and password
- to include specified citations in work based on HRS data
- to provide information to us about publications based on HRS data
- to report apparent errors in the HRS data or documentation files
- to notify us ([via our Web site](#)) 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* in the Public File Download Area of the HRS Web site.

6c. 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 3050
P.O. Box 1248
Ann Arbor, MI (USA) 48106-1248

Alternately, you may contact us by e-mail at hrsquest@isr.umich.edu with “Attn: Papers and Publications” in the subject line.

7. If You Need to Know More

This document is intended to serve as a brief overview and to provide guidelines to using the *Employer Pension Tracker File*. If you have questions or concerns that are not adequately covered here or on our Web site, or if you have any comments, please contact us. We will do our best to provide answers.

7a. 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/>

7b. 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: hrsquest@isr.umich.edu

Postal service:

Health and Retirement Study
The Institute for Social Research, Room 3050
The University of Michigan
P.O. Box 1248
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1248

FAX: (734) 647-1186