

# Health & Retirement Study: Mail Survey Response by Age-Cohort

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**Survey Research Operations**

Survey Research Center · Institute for Social Research

# Health and Retirement Study Background

- Large, longitudinal panel study began in 1992
- Household survey representative of age 50+ population
- Goal: to produce high quality public-use data for researchers, policy makers, and program managers
- Funding: National Institutes of Health – National Institute on Aging, Social Security Administration
- Core areas: Health, Health Services, Labor Force, Economic Status and Family Structure
- 20,000+ biennial, CATI or CAPI IWs, includes health measures and biomarkers



# Sample Characteristics

- **English and Spanish Speaking**
- **Cohort Based on birth year**

**AHEAD cohort born prior to 1923**

**CODA cohort born 1924-1930**

**HRS cohort born 1931-1941**

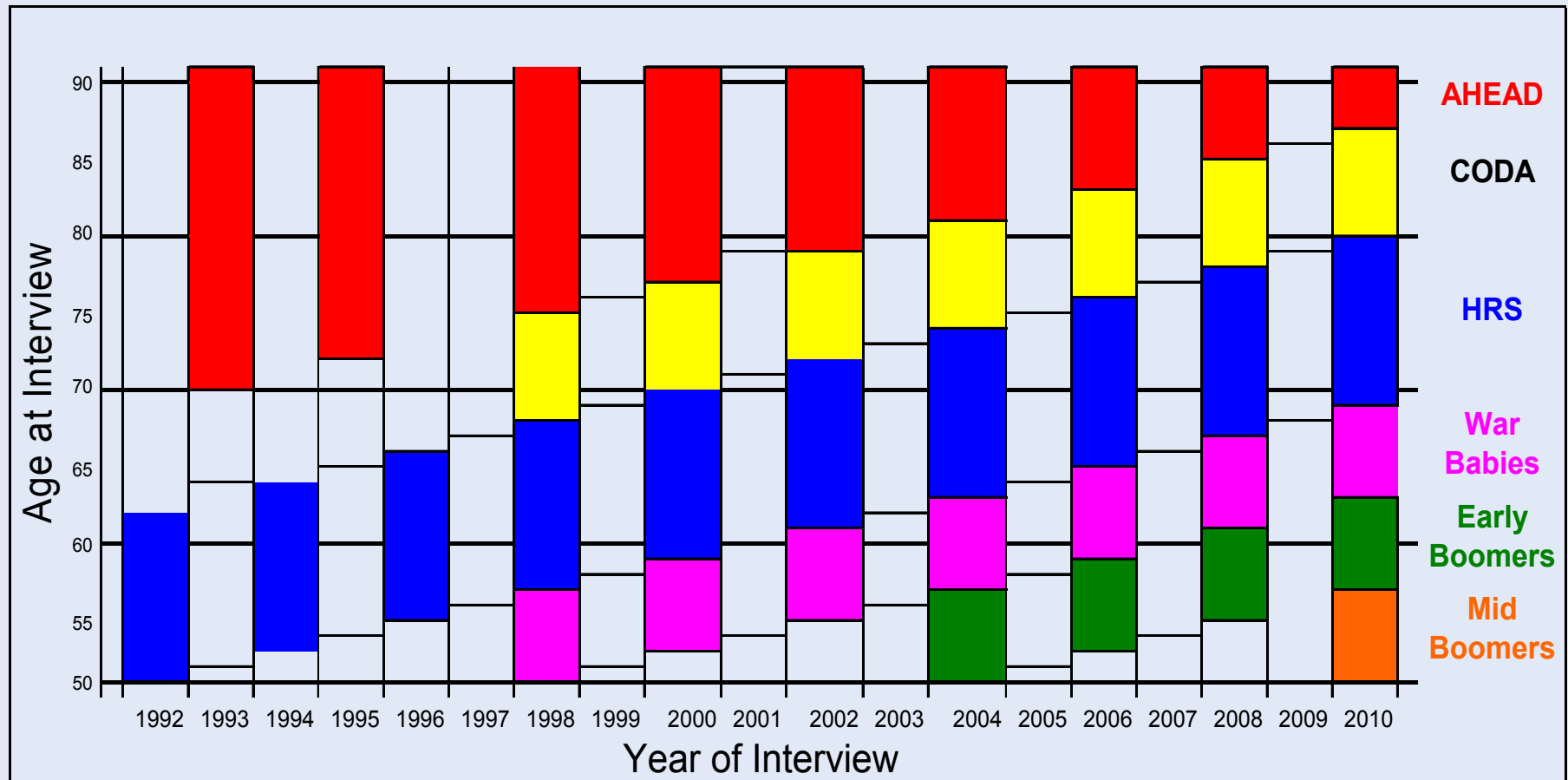
**War Baby cohort born 1942-1947**

**Early Baby Boomer cohort born 1948-1953**

- **Includes spouse/partner of selected individual**
- **Add new cohort every six years**



# The Evolution of the HRS Longitudinal Steady-State Design



# Health and Retirement Study: Steady State Design and Data System

A. Core Survey	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
HRS: 1931-41	→		→		→		→		→		→		→	
AHEAD: <1923	→		→		→		→		→		→		→	
CODA: 1923-30	→		→		→		→		→		→		→	
WB: 1942-47	→		→		→		→		→		→		→	
EBB: 1948-53							→		→		→		→	
MBB: 1954-59													→	

B. Sub-Studies	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
ADAMS					ADAMS									
Pension Plans	EPPS						EPPS Update				EPPS		EPPS Continuous Sample	
Mail Surveys	MAIL		CAMS	HUMS	CAMS	Diabetes	CAMS	PDS		CAMS	PDS	DVS	CAMS	PDS
HRS Internet					Internet		Internet1		Internet2					

**Sub-Study Acronyms:**

ADAMS - Aging, Demographics & Memory Study

DVS - Disability Vignettes Study

HUMS - Human Capital & Educational Expenses

CAMS - Consumption & Activities Study

EPPS - Employer Pension Provider

PDS - Prescription Drug Study



# Health and Retirement 2006 Data Collection

- **2006 ≈20,000 sample**
  - **CATI or CAPI IWs (39% of these with Physical Measures)**
  - **5% in Spanish**
  - **Ave IW length 106 min**
  - **SSA, pension, Medicare, leave-behind questionnaire**
  - **2006 response rates: IW 88%, Physical Measures 94%, Saliva (DNA) 83% Blood 80%**
  - **10% in tracking/tracing, found 95%, IWed 85%**
- **Ability to collect and provide data depends on panel member retention**



# Additional Requests in 2007

- **Aging Demographics and Memory Study (ADAMS)**
  - **FTF 2 hr cognitive measures**
- **Cognition Study**
  - **Telephone 40 min screener**
  - **FTF 1.5 hr cognitive measures**
- **Internet Phase 2**
  - **Web based, 45 min, health & expenditures**
- **Prescription Drug Study (PDS)**
  - **¾ to 1 hr, Self-administered questionnaire (SAQ)**
- **Consumption & Activities Mail Survey (CAMS)**
  - **20 to 45 min SAQ**
- **Disability Vignettes Survey (DVS)**
  - **20 – 30 min SAQ**



# Additional Survey Request Questions

- Can we ask our panel members to complete additional interviews between main data collection periods?
- Will multiple requests negatively impact participation in ancillary studies?
- Will multiple requests negatively impact participation in the next wave of the main study?



# CAMS 2007 Sample Design

- Original 2001 CAMS respondent randomly selected from HRS sample
- Spouse/partner was added in 2005
- Completed a base IW in any main data collection
- 2006 never located for IW were included this wave
- Monitored participation by cohort, language, and cross-participation in Internet2 or ADAMS



# CAMS Protocol

- Paper and pencil, 23 page request for amounts spent on different items and hours spent on specific activities
- Spouse asked to complete only the 7 page activities section
- Advance Letter – explained study
- Questionnaire 1 mail-out – 1 wk after advance letter
  - \$25 incentive check for main questionnaire,
  - \$10 incentive check for spouse questionnaire
- 2<sup>nd</sup> questionnaire mail-out – 1 month after 1<sup>st</sup> questionnaire
- Reminder/thank you postcard – 2 weeks after 2<sup>nd</sup> questionnaire
- 3<sup>rd</sup> mail-out via Priority Mail – 1 month after 2<sup>nd</sup> questionnaire
- Small batch tracking effort on returned mail



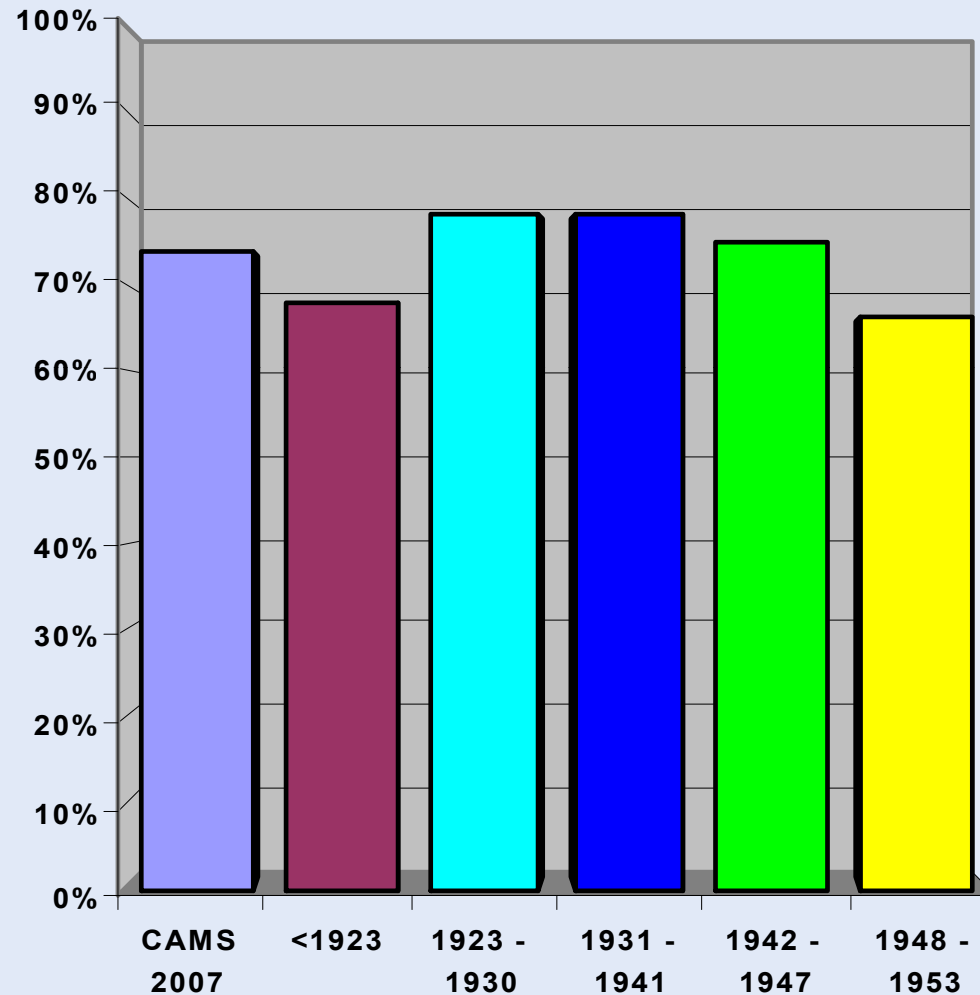
# CAMS 2007

## Preliminary Unweighted Response Rates

<b>Cohort</b>	<b>Birth Year</b>	<b>Total Sample</b>	<b>Response Rate</b>
<i>All</i>		<b>7752</b>	<b>0.74</b>
AHEAD	1923 or earlier	946	0.68
CODA	1924 - 1930	657	0.78
HRS	1931 - 1941	3758	0.78
WB	1942 - 1947	1036	0.75
EBB	1948 - 1953	1355	0.66



# CAMS 2007 Response Rates by Age Cohort



# CAMS 2007

## Preliminary Unweighted Non-response Rates

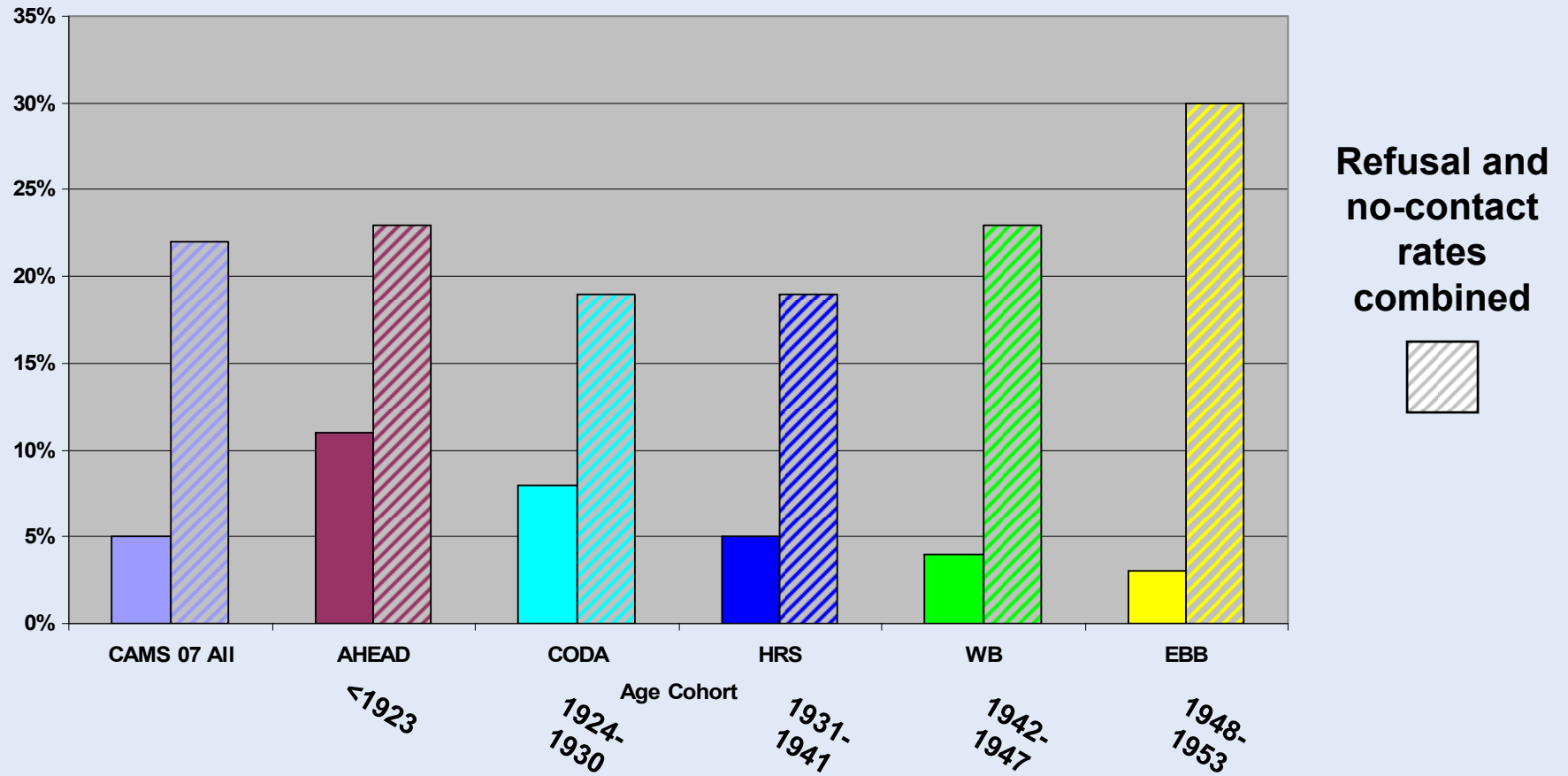
Non-response by  
category



Birth Year	Total Sample	Non-Response Rate	Deceased	Unable	Lost (no valid address)	Refused	No Contact
<b>All</b>	<b>7752</b>	<b>29%</b>	2%	1%	3%	5%	18%
1923 or earlier	946	38%	9%	3%	4%	11%	11%
1924-1930	657	25%	3%	1%	2%	8%	11%
1931-1941	3758	26%	2%	0%	4%	5%	13%
1942-1947	1036	25%	1%	0%	2%	4%	18%
1948-1953	1355	34%	<1%	0%	2%	3%	28%



# CAMS Refusal Rates by Age Cohort



## Discussion: CAMS 2007 Results

- CAMS 2007 RR up slightly from 2005's 73% RR
- Stronger early response, more similar to 2001 & 2003
- CAMS 2007 rates varied by cohort, as in past
- 2007 Initial refusal rates seemed more correlated with age than in earlier waves
- When non-response added in, created inverse of response rates as would be expected
- Oldest and youngest cohorts participated at a lower rate



# CAMS Refusal/Non-response Discussion

- Possible reasons for oldest cohort lack of participation
  - Infirmity
  - Vision impairment
  - Cognitive impairment
  - Children handling finances so don't have access to records
  - Protective (gatekeeper) family members
  - Literacy
- Offer telephone alternative?



# CAMS Refusal/Non-response Discussion

- Possible reasons for youngest cohort lack of participation
  - Too busy!
  - Same issues during main data collection
  - Not necessarily resistant, hard to contact and get appointment commitment
- Offer web-based alternative?



# Further Information

- **HRS Website:**

- Register to use HRS data
- <http://hrsonline.isr.umich.edu/>

- **NIH Publication:**

- *Growing Older in America: The Health and Retirement Study*
- History, methodology, findings
- <http://hrsonline.isr.umich.edu/news/>

