Determinants of the Wife
Being the Financially Knowledgeable Spouse

Suzanne Lindamood[1]
Sherman D. Hanna[2]

Presented at the Academy of Financial Services Meeting, October, 2005

Abstract

The Survey of Consumer Finances attempts to interview the financially more knowledgeable partner in couple households. An analysis of married couple households in the 1992 to 2001 Surveys shows that 47% of the respondents were wives, and the proportion was about the same in 2001 as 1992. The wife is less likely to be the respondent if the husband has more education, and the chance of the wife being the respondent decreases as income and assets increase. Both the husband and wife were present in 35% of the interviews, and the husband was more likely to be the respondent if both were present.

Keywords: Gender, Survey of Consumer Finances, Financial planning, Financial counseling, Family decision-making

Introduction

The role of husbands and wives in family financial decision-making has long been considered important in understanding familial structure and power as well as the types of financial decisions families make. Making the financial decisions in a household is a source of power and control. Traditionally, the higher earner, the husband, has been seen as financially more knowledgeable and assumed to have the role of financial manager. In an era characterized by increasing labor force participation of wives and attention to financial education of women, one would expect wives to be the financial decision-maker more often than in the past. Knowledge of who is the decision maker is important to financial service firms, which have to decide whether to direct marketing efforts to husbands, wives, or both. Financial educators need to understand household decision-making among couple households to better focus educational programs. Financial planners working with married couple households should take into account who is financially more knowledgeable, especially if the planner can interact with only one spouse.

This research examines the question of who is the financially more knowledgeable spouse among husband-wife households. The research employs logit regression analysis using data from the four most recent Surveys of Consumer Finances (SCF) conducted by the Federal Reserve Board (Aizcorbe, Kennickell, & Moore, 2003) to investigate determinants of whether

---

[1] Suzanne Lindamood, PhD, JD, Attorney, Columbus, Ohio. E-mail: suzanne@lindamood.com

[2] Sherman D. Hanna, Professor, Consumer Sciences Department, Ohio State University. E-mail: hanna.1@osu.edu

The Certified Financial Planner Board provided financial support for this research.

the wife or husband is the financially more knowledgeable spouse. The Survey of Consumer Finances is particularly suited to this research because the interviews specifically are scheduled with the person the household indicates is more knowledgeable about the family's finances. The SCF takes great efforts to assure that the survey is conducted with the more knowledgeable person, who is not necessarily the person SCF designates as the household head. With the SCF surveys, it is possible to identify both the respondent and the household head, as well as whether the respondent's spouse was present during the interview.

This is the first research to analyze the determinants of whether the wife or the husband is the respondent in SCF interviews. Most previous studies based on the SCF have reported findings in terms of the household head. Many researchers have assumed that the head is the same person as the respondent and erroneously attributed the respondent's attitudes and characteristics to the head.

The SCF interviews only one member of each household. Therefore, in performing analyses on the basis of households, researchers must assume that one person can speak for the entire household in both statements of fact (e.g., income, investments) and for attitudes (e.g., risk tolerance, credit use). When differences in responses are divided on the basis of the sex of the respondent, the question arises – is the difference due to gender, or are there basic differences in the types of households in which the female, versus the male, is the respondent and presumably the financially more knowledgeable spouse.

This research investigates the question of whether households in which the wife is the more knowledgeable spouse are different from households in which the husband is the more knowledgeable spouse. The findings are important for financial planners, who may consult with both the husband and wife or who may have to consult with just one person, and educators responsible for developing effective financial management programs. It is also important for researchers who use and interpret the data in the SCF and can serve as a basis for helping to explain differences when a husband, as opposed to a wife, is the respondent.

Literature Review

Financial Decision-making by Married Couples

Ferber and Lee (1974) used the term "family financial officer" (FFO) to designate the person with the main responsibility for financial decision-making and execution of financial tasks. They applied the concept in their study of recently married couples under the age of 30 to determine the extent to which husbands and wives influence the family's financial behavior. They found that during the second year of marriage, wives increasingly were more likely to be the FFO than the husband, taking over the payment of bills and keeping track of expenditures. They also looked at factors related to which spouse served as the FFO, using multiple regression analysis, and determinants of whether the FFO is an individual or the couple acting as a unit. They concluded that neither education nor employment status of the wife affects whether the couple or one person acts as the FFO. In explaining whether the wife or the husband is the FFO where an individual serves as FFO, they found that differences in education or employment status of the husband and wife were not determinative, but attitudes were. The most important variable, however, was the percent of income saved. The higher the proportion saved, the more likely the husband is the FFO. They also found that if the husband is the FFO, the couple is likely to be more "venturesome" in savings, having more savings in variable dollar form than if the wife is the FFO.

Elder and Rudolph (2003) looked at the decision making of respondents in the Health and Retirement Study (HRS) conducted for the National Institute on Aging in 1992. Respondents who were age 51 to 61 and in couple households (with a spouse or partner who could be of any age) were asked "who makes the decisions" and were to indicate the male, female, or the couple. The authors sought to explain whether a unitary model or a bargaining model of financial decision making is more likely. They theorized that in a unitary model of decision making, the primary decision maker would be the partner with the lower wage, because of that person's lower opportunity cost. In a bargaining model, the person with higher power, related to higher income, would be more likely the decision maker. They concluded that their results are consistent with the bargaining model, that "financial decisions are thought to be more likely to be made by the male when the male is financially knowledgeable, has more education, and has a higher wage." They suggested that the female would play a bigger role when she is financially knowledgeable, better educated, and has a higher wage than the male. The respondents indicated the male was the financially knowledgeable partner in about 65% of the households. The male was more likely to be identified as the decision-maker if he had more education and if he was identified as the financially knowledgeable partner. Neither age nor health status of either partner were significant in affecting who was the primary decision-maker, although the respondents represented a generally limited age range.

Rosen and Branbois (1983) looked at the roles of husbands and wives in savings and money management with a special emphasis on determining whether traditional roles were changing due to changing attitudes and increased labor participation of women. They hypothesized that family financial role structure would be a function of sex-role attitude, locus of control, wife's working status, and demographic variables. The research was based on 82 couples in a single city. They found the wife tends to be in charge of financial implementation tasks when the husband and wife have more traditional sex-role attitudes and when educational level is low. Decisions are more likely to be made separately when the wife is working for financial reasons and when family income is higher. In determining whether demographic factors or sex-role attitude is more predictive of which partner handles financial matters, they found that education is more predictive than sex-role attitude, while demographic variables other than education are less predictive that sex role attitude.

Bernasek and Bajtelsmit (2002) surveyed university faculty in couple households, and found that men are the primary decision-makers for savings and investment decisions in 26% of the households, women in 12%, and 62% of the respondents report that decisions are made jointly. Women are more likely to participate in financial decision-making as their share of household income increases.

Gender and Financial Decisions

Research on gender, risk attitudes, and investment patterns has been fairly consistent in finding that men and women differ. In studying risk tolerance, Yao, Hanna and Lindamood (2004) found that respondents who are married women are less willing to take risk than otherwise similar respondents who are married men. A study by Roszkowski, Delaney, and Cordell (2004), one of few studies to examine risk tolerance responses of husbands and wives in the same household, found that the husbands are significantly more risk tolerant than their wives. Bajtelsmit, Bernasek, and Jianakoplos (1999) found women to be more risk averse in their defined contribution portfolios than otherwise similar men.

In terms of differences in investments, a consistent research finding is that males have higher proportions of their financial assets in stocks and lower proportions in risk-free assets than otherwise similar females (Hariharan, Chapman, & Domian, 2000). Jianakoplos (2002) found that the relationship between risk (SCF measure) and the risky asset proportion of financial assets is different for men than women, with men having a higher consistency between stated preferences and actual portfolio allocation than women. Bajtelsmit and Bernasek (1996) proposed that women may invest differently from men due to differences in wealth, income, responsibilities for dependent care, differences in socialization, and genetic factors

The Research

Theoretical basis

The hypotheses in this research are based on elements of both the bargaining model and the unitary model of family financial decision making with a focus on determinants of who is the financially more knowledgeable spouse. The theoretical approach is similar to that of Elder and Rudolph (2003), who focused on whether the male or the female is the decision maker. The unitary model, with its basis in efficiency and household utility maximization, applies to both decision making and knowledge, in that the spouse who should specialize in financial management is the one who has a comparative advantage in that.

Education can increase both power and ability, thus influencing the choice of financial decision-maker under both the bargaining model and the unitary model. The person with more education might have a comparative advantage in financial management if education is assumed to result in greater financial knowledge. Controlling for time spent in the labor force, we expect that the spouse with more education should be more financially knowledgeable. Under a bargaining model, power derived from education, income, and sex roles determines who is the financial decision maker. If a person has power in a relationship, that person is more likely to exert control over finances and subsequently gain even greater experience and knowledge.

The concepts of tradition, power, and ability are woven through both the unitary and bargaining theories of family financial decision-making explored in earlier research. Elder and Ruldolph (2003) found that husbands with higher levels of education were more likely to be the decision-maker, but at lower levels of education, the wife was more likely to be the financial decision-maker. This finding is similar to the proposal by Ferber and Lee (1974), who asserted that there is a difference between financial planning tasks and financial implementation tasks. A person with higher levels of education and skill may be the planner, but the day-to-day tasks of implementation may be assigned to the less powerful or less skilled person. Even routine implementation of financial tasks, however, is likely to increase one's knowledge of details of family finances.

Another source of power and skill is age, and an older person is more likely to be a financial decision-maker due to the power that comes with age as well as more experience and higher levels of knowledge. Financial knowledge may come from education or experience (Hilgert, Hogarth, & Beverly, 2003). Employment is another factor that increases the power and the likelihood of the employed person having more power and more experience.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses in this research are, with everything else being equal:

1. The spouse with the higher level of education is more financially knowledgeable. (Consistent with both the bargaining model and the unitary model.)
2. The older spouse is more financially knowledgeable. (Consistent with both the bargaining model and the unitary model.)
3. A. If one spouse is employed and the other is not, the employed spouse is more financially knowledgeable. (Consistent with the bargaining model.)
   B. If one spouse is employed and the other is not, the spouse who is not employed is more financially knowledgeable. (Consistent with the unitary model, if the advantage of available time is more important than experience from employment.)
4. The higher the household income, the higher the likelihood the husband is more financially knowledgeable. (Consistent with the bargaining theory if sex roles dictate that investment decisions are more appropriate male roles; consistent with the unitary model if males are more likely to have experience with investment decisions.)

Models

This research uses as the dependent variable whether the wife is the financially knowledgeable spouse in married couple households. Basic demographic and financial independent variables found in previous research are hypothesized to be determinative of who makes the financial decisions in a household. These variables include age of husband, husband relative to wife's age, education, presence of a child in the home, race, and health, employment status of both spouses. The model also accounts for the year of the survey, to identify whether, all other things equal, a wife is more likely in later years to be the more knowledgeable, and controls for whether the spouse was present during the interview. In addition, financial variables including levels of financial and non financial assets, household income, and whether the family owns its home are included in the multivariate analyses.

Data

The study uses the four most recent cross-sectional datasets for the Surveys of Consumer Finances (SCF), sponsored by the Federal Reserve Board. The sample for each survey year includes an area probability sample drawn using a random technique and a "list sample" that is drawn from the list of Internal Revenue Service records of taxpayers in each geographic region in which an area probability sample is drawn. The list sample disproportionately represents wealthier households to provide robust estimates of assets held by small proportions of the general population. To enable analyses that represent the U.S. population, the SCF provides weights that researchers may use to adjust the data for systematic differences in response rates by demographic groups and to adjust for the sample design. The actual sample sizes for the combined sample is 16,952.

Because this research includes only households that are comprised of married couples, it is of particular importance to this research to accurately identify married couples who live in the same household and share in the household's finances. The SCF takes extensive measures to assure that each unit of analysis is actually a "primary economic unit" (PEU), a grouping of people who both live in the same household and share finances. A person is not included in a PEU if that person apparently rents a room, is a roommate, or otherwise is economically independent of the person who owns or leases the housing. The SCF analyzes responses to various questions to determine if a person usually lives in the household and if the person shares in the finances. Prior to 2001, to determine if the respondent had a spouse or partner in the PEU, the SCF primarily relied on the respondent's report of living with a spouse or partner. In 2001, the SCF analyzed each case to determine if a spouse was part of the primary economic unit and did not depend on whether the respondent initially indicated a spouse was present. We include in this research all households in which the respondent indicates that he or she has a spouse of the opposite sex in the household and the SCF has established that the spouse is living in the household and is part of the PEU. Using this method, we identify 10,321 married couple households in the four survey years.

A second important consideration for this research is identifying the more financially knowledgeable spouse. The respondent in the SCF is the person identified as "more knowledgeable about the household finances." The SCF makes extensive efforts to schedule and complete an interview with that person and the interviewers for the SCF follow a set of pre-determined rules in identifying the person to serve as the respondent in a household. An initial interview is held with a household member to gain basic information including identifying the person with whom subsequent, in depth interviews, will be held. There is no effort to interview the person who provides the initial information. During that initial contact with a household, the interviewer asks a series of questions including the number of people in the household, the number of children, and the identity of each person in the household. The interviewer then asks:

> For this study, we would like to interview the head of the household or that person's spouse or partner if they are more knowledgeable about the household finances. Who would this be? (PROBE, IF NECESSARY)

Variables

We create all variables for the analysis using data in the SCF SAS files available on the Federal Reserve Board website (www.federalreserve.gov/pubs/oss/oss2/ scfindex.html). We code income and other variables to match the Excel file distributions posted on that website and weight all data using the recommended variable (X42001) to result in a sample representative of the U.S. population. The SCF imputes missing values using a "multiple imputation" method that results in five complete data sets for each survey year. The SCF calls each resulting data set an "implicate." We combine all five implicates for each survey year, which results in a sample size about five times the actual sample. We then weight the data, bringing down the sample size so that it represents the actual number of households in the survey that year. This method results in a sample the size of the actual sample but does not lose any of the data the SCF calculates for missing values (which would happen if only one implicate were used).

Dependent variables. We use whether the wife or husband is the respondent as a proxy for which one is the more financially knowledgeable respondent. The dependent variable is a dichotomous variable equal to 1 if the respondent is the wife, and equal to 0 if the respondent is the husband.

Independent variables. Demographic variables in the model include the respondent's race/ethnicity, and the husband's age. We create four dummy variables for race/ethnicity based on the possible categories in the SCF public dataset, White, Black, Hispanic, and Other.

We create variables related to differences between the husband and wife. The level of education and differences in levels of education are reflected in 10 dummy variables we create, for instance, one category is based on whether the husband's highest level of education is a high school diploma and the wife has less education. Age differences are based on three categories, the husband being more than five years older than the wife, the wife being more than five years older than the husband, and the difference in age being no more than five years. Employment status differences are based on four categories, wife employed and husband not, husband employed and wife not employed, both employed, and neither employed. Health differences are based on three categories of self-described health, both poor, neither poor, husband poor/wife not, and wife poor/husband not.

Economic variables include the household's level of income, level of non-financial assets, and level of financial assets. Incomes and assets are adjusted to 2001 dollars using the method the Federal Reserve Board describes for its published tables. Because the relationships between these monetary amounts and our dependent variable are not necessarily linear, we use the log of income, and of the level of non-financial and of financial assets. We create dummy variables to indicate whether the respondent expects to receive a substantial inheritance or transfer of assets in the future, whether the household owns its home, for the survey year to control for possible changes over time, and a dummy variable of whether the spouse of the respondent was present during the interview.

The Analyses

Cross tabulation by whether the wife is the respondent provides descriptive information. We use logistic regression (logit), which is an appropriate multivariate analysis to use with the dichotomous dependent variable of whether the wife is the respondent.

Results

Descriptive Results

Projecting from the SCF population weights, 54% of all U.S. households were married couple households in 1992, and the proportion did not change significantly over time, with 52% being married couple households in 2001. The mean net worth of married couple households was $588,277 in 2001, compared to $182,798 for other types of households. Based on the SCF population weight, married couple households had almost 33 trillion dollars of net worth in the U.S. in 2001, and other types of households had just over nine trillion dollars of net worth.

The respondent is the wife in 47% of the married couple households (Table 1). Both the husband and wife are present in 35% of the interviews, and the husband was much more likely to be designated as the respondent if both were present. Households with the wife as the respondent are different from households with the husband as respondent, especially in terms of income and assets. Married couple households with a male respondent have a higher mean income than those with a female respondent ($86,247 versus $65,910) and higher net worth ($543,729 versus $303,536). Almost 21% of married couple households with a male respondent have incomes over $100,000 while only 14% of married couple households with a female respondent have incomes that high. The rate of wives being the respondent generally decreases with income, from 53% of households with $10,000 to $24,999 income to 38% of those with incomes of $100,000 or more (Table 2).

The proportion of married couple households with the wife as the respondent did not change significantly between 1992 and 2001, with no trend other than a higher rate of the wife as respondent in 1995 (51%) than in the other years (Table 3).

Logit Results

Table 4 shows the logit results for the probability that the wife is the respondent, with the logit coefficients and the marginal effects of each variable on the predicted probability.[1] None of the "survey year" variables are significant, suggesting that the chance of the wife being the respondent did not change from 1992 to 2001, when other factors are controlled.

The older the husband, the less likely the wife is the respondent. At the mean value of other variables, as age changes from 35 to 65, the predicted probability of the wife being the respondent decreases by about 10 percentage points. Figure 1 shows the effect of age on the predicted probability of the wife being the respondent, at the mean values of other variables.

A difference in ages, not just the age of each spouse, also affects whether the wife is the respondent if the wife is more than five years older than the husband. A wife who is more than five years older than her husband is nine percentage points more likely to be the respondent than in otherwise similar households where the age difference is no more than five years. However, an age difference does not have a similar impact when the husband is more than five years older than the wife. The predicted chance of the wife being the respondent is no different for households where the husband is more than five years older than the wife than for similar households with an age difference of no more than five years.

If the spouse was present during the interview, the wife is less likely to be the respondent compared to otherwise similar households where the spouse was not present.

Households with a Black respondent are not significantly different from otherwise similar households with White respondents in the likelihood of the wife being the respondent. However, households with Hispanic respondents and those in other categories, including Asian, are less likely to have the wife as respondent compared to those with White respondents.

If the husband is in poor health and the wife is not, the wife is more likely to be the respondent. If both the husband and wife are employed or if the wife is employed and the husband is not, the wife is more likely to be the respondent than in otherwise similar households where only the husband is employed (Figure 2). The employment pattern appears contrary to theory that the spouse with more time, and therefore less opportunity cost, is likely to be the respondent.

The effects of education are generally consistent with the respondent being the more financially knowledgeable spouse. There is a consistent pattern of the wife being less likely to be the respondent if she has less education than her husband (Figure 3). For instance, if the husband has some college and the wife has less education, the wife is 21 percentage points less likely to be the respondent than households with both having less than a high school diploma. However, if the wife has a high school diploma and the husband has less education, the wife has a predicted probability of being the respondent 10 percentage points higher than otherwise similar households with both having less than a high school diploma.

In higher income and higher asset households, the wife is less likely to be the respondent. The likelihood that the wife is the respondent decreases as income increases (Figure 4) and as the level of financial assets increases (Figure 4). The likelihood that the wife is the respondent also decreases as the level of non-financial assets increases. Homeownership is related to a higher chance of the wife being the respondent. Expecting a substantial inheritance is not related to the chance of the wife being the respondent.

Discussion

There has been no consistent trend in the proportion of respondents in married couple households that are wives. If the wife is more than five years older than the husband, she is more likely to be the respondent, which is consistent with expectations that experience increases knowledge. The wife is more likely to be the respondent if she has a high school diploma and the husband has less education, and is much less likely to be the respondent if the husband has a college degree and the wife has less education. The effects of education differences are consistent with Rosen and Branbois (1983) in that the wife is more likely to be the respondent when educational levels are lower, and especially when the education of the husband is lower than that of the wife.

If the wife is employed, she is more likely to be the respondent whether or not her husband is employed. Household income has an effect on the wife being the respondent. These findings are consistent with the Ferber and Lee (1974) results about factors related to being the Family Financial Officer. The effects of employment differences are not consistent with Elder and Rudolph's (2003) discussion of the bargaining model, though the education difference results are consistent with the bargaining model and their results for which spouse was the decision-maker.

Implications

Those conducting research using the Survey of Consumer Finances and other surveys in which only one person in the household is interviewed should be aware that attitudes may depend on whether the husband or wife is the respondent. Almost all past researchers using the Survey of Consumer Finances have either assumed that attitudes reflected the husband's opinions because the SCF designates the husband as the head, or assumed that attitudes reflect joint opinions of the husband and wife. Future research with the SCF should identify the actual respondent, and test whether there are systematic differences in attitudes based on whether the husband or the wife is the respondent.

Even though wives are the respondents, and thus presumably the financially more knowledgeable spouse, in almost half of married couple households, clearly husbands are still more likely to be considered the knowledgeable spouse for households in the target market for financial planners, such as households with higher incomes or with financial assets greater than $100,000. Households with incomes over $100,000 per year are very likely to use a financial advisor, with one recent study reporting that 84% of people age 55 to 70 in that income range use financial advisors ("Retirees go it alone," 2005). Although there are married couple households in higher financial status categories with the wife as the respondent, there are significant differences in the chances that the husband will be considered the more financially informed spouse.

Financial planners should consider asking whether the husband or the wife is more financially knowledgeable, and should be aware that if the wife is more educated than the husband, it is more likely that she is the more knowledgeable spouse. Obtaining accurate information about family finances is an important first step in the financial planning process, so identification of the knowledgeable spouse is crucial.

The lack of a time trend suggests that there are no generational changes developing in terms of the role of wives in family financial management decision making.

Notes

1. The probability of the wife being the respondent is calculated by the following formula:

$P = e^{BX}/(1+e^{BX})$

Where B is a vector of coefficients from the logit, and X is a vector of values of the independent variables. The marginal effect, e.g., of being a homeowner, represents the difference in the predicted probability for renters and the predicted probability for homeowners, at the mean values of other variables. For continuous variables such as age and the log of income, the “marginal” effects shown are really the effect of a change in a range of each variable, as a one unit change would not be very informative.

References

Aizcorbe, A. M., Kennickell, A. B., & Moore, K. B. (2003). Recent changes in U.S. family finances: Results from the 1998 and 2001 Survey of Consumer Finances. *Federal Reserve Bulletin, 89,* 1-32.

Bajtelsmit, V. L., & Bernasek, A. (1996). Why do women invest differently than men? *Financial Counseling and Planning, 7,* 1-10.

Bajtelsmit, V. L., Bernasek, A., & Jianakoplos, N. A. (1999). Gender differences in defined contribution pension decisions. *Financial Services Review*, *8* (1), 1-10.

Bernasek, A., & Bajtelsmit, V. L. (2002). Predictors of women's involvement in household financial decision-making. *Financial Counseling and Planning* , 13(2), 39-47.

Elder, H. W., & Rudolph, P. M. (2003). Who makes the financial decisions in the households of older Americans? *Financial Services Review, 12(4),* 293-308.

Ferber, R., & Lee, L. C. (1974). Husband-wife influences in family purchasing behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 1, 43-50.

Hariharan, G., Chapman, K. S., & Domian, D. L. (2000). Risk tolerance and asset allocations for investors nearing retirement. *Financial Services Review, 9*(2), 159-170.

Hilgert, M.A. , Hogarth, J.M., & Beverly, S.G. (2003). Household financial management: The connection between knowledge and behavior. *Federal Reserve Bulletin, 89,* 310-322.

Jianakoplos, N. A. (2002). Invest as I say, not as I do? Gender differences in financial risk preferences. *International Business and Economics Research Journal*, *1*(1), 1-8.

Retirees go it alone on 401(k) rollovers. (2005, March 1). The Wall Street Journal, p. D5.

Rosen, D.L., & Granbois, D.H. (1983). Determinants of role structure in family financial management. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *10*, 253-258.

Roszkowski, M. J., Delaney, M. M., & Cordell, D. M. (2004). The comparability of husbands and wives on financial risk tolerance. *Journal of Personal Finance*, *3*, 129-144.

Yao, R., Hanna, S. D., & Lindamood, S. (2004). Changes in financial risk tolerance, 1983-2001. *Financial Services Review*, *13* (4), 249-266.

Table 1. Characteristics by Whether Wife or Husband was Respondent

Characteristic		Wife respondent	Husband respondent
Weighted % of all husband-wife couples		47.2%	52.8%
Mean household income	†	65,910	86,247
Income > $100,000	†	14.4%	20.9%
Mean net worth	†	303,536	543,934
Mean value of financial assets	†	122,659	249,305
Financial assets > $100,000	†	22.5%	34.8%
Mean value of non-financial assets	†	240,549	369,434
Mean age of husband	†	47.1	50.0
Mean age of wife	†	44.6	47.4
Husband more than 5 years older than Wife		19.8%	20.5%
Wife more than 5 years older than Husband	†	4.1%	2.3%
Husband has college degree	†	30.3%	43.3%
Wife has college degree	*	32.0%	34.2%
Own home	*	79.6%	81.6%
Respondent White		82.0%	81.4%
Respondent Hispanic		7.5%	7.6%
Respondent Black	†	7.8%	6.2%
Respondent Asian or other race	†	2.8%	4.8%
Husband in poor health, wife not in poor health	†	4.7%	3.0%
Spouse present during interview	†	28.6%	41.3%
Actual number		4,177	6,143

All dollar amounts are adjusted to 2001 dollars. Analyses are weighted, based on 1992, 1995, 1998, and 2001 SCF datasets.

*Significant difference at 0.05 level between households with wife as respondent and households with husband as respondent

†Significant difference at 0.01 level between households with wife as respondent and households with husband as respondent

Table 2. Whether the Wife Was the Respondent by Household Income Category

Income less than $10,000	56%
Income between $10,000 and $24,999	53%
Income between $25,000 and $49,999	49%
Income between $50,000 and $99,999	47%
Income between $100,000 and over	38%

Estimated by authors based on weighted analysis of all five implicates in 1992, 1995, 1998, and 2001 Surveys of Consumer Finances. Income is adjusted by the Consumer Price Index in 2001.

Table 3. Whether the Wife Was the Respondent by Survey Year

	1992	1995	1998	2001
Wife respondent	47%	51%	45%	46%
Weighted number of cases	2,104	2,244	2,212	2,334

Calculated by authors. Weighted, based on all five implicates in 1992, 1995, 1998, and 2001 SCF datasets.

Table 4: Logistic Analysis of the Respondent Being the Wife

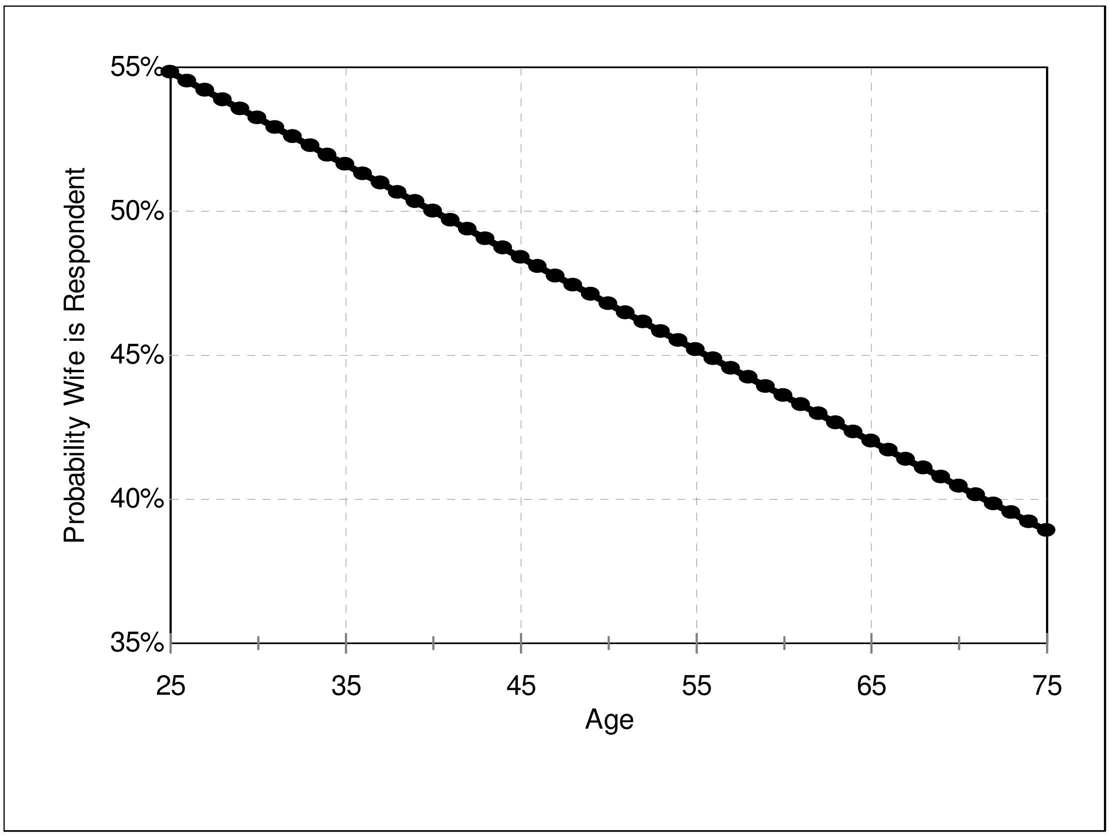
	coefficient	Marginal effect on predicted probability[1]
Year of survey: reference category = 1998		
Year 1992	-0.1197	-3.0%
Year 1995	0.0858	2.1%
Year 2001	0.0780	1.9%
Age of husband	-0.0129‡	-9.6% (35 to 65)
Age of husband relative to age of wife: reference category is 5 year difference or less		
Husband more than 5 years older	-0.0283	-0.7%
Wife more than 5 years older	0.3557†	8.9%
Spouse present during interview	-0.5181‡	-12.8%
Racial/ethnic group of respondent: reference category = white		
Black	-0.0437	-1.1%
Hispanic	-0.3833‡	-9.4%
Other race, including Asian	-0.3582†	-8.8%
Health: reference category = neither in poor health		
Husband in poor health, wife not	0.4673‡	11.6%
Wife in poor health, husband not	-0.2260	-5.6%
Both in poor health	-0.0301	0.8%
Employment status: reference category is only husband employed		
Neither employed	-0.0990	5.6%
Only wife employed	0.2309*	3.3%
Both employed	0.3237‡	-2.5%
Highest education of husband and wife: reference category is both less than high school diploma		
Wife has H.S. diploma, husband less	0.4092†	9.9%
Husband has H.S. diploma, wife less	-0.3040	-7.6%
Both have H.S. diploma	-0.0675	-1.7%
Wife has some college, husband less	0.3027*	7.4%
Husband has some college, wife less	-0.8739‡	-21.0%
Both have some college	-0.1763	-4.4%
Wife has BS degree, husband less	0.1065	2.6%
Husband has BS degree, wife less	-0.6333‡	-15.6%
Both have BS degree	-0.4243‡	-10.5%

	coefficient	Marginal effect on predicted probability[1]
Log(Non-financial Assets)	-0.0228*	-3.5% $1,000 to $500,000
Log (Annual household income)	-0.0633‡	-2.8% $20,000 to $120,000
Log (Financial Assets)	-0.0737‡	-12.7% $500 to $500,000
Homeowner (versus renter)	0.3132‡	7.7%
Expect to inherit a substantial amount in the future	0.0607	1.5%
Intercept	2.0663‡	
Concordance Ratio	68.5%	

Note: * $p<0.05$, † $p<0.01$, ‡ $p<0.001$. Multivariate analyses are unweighted, using RII.
Estimated by authors based on analysis of 1992, 1995, 1998, and 2001 Surveys of Consumer Finances.

1. Marginal effects calculated at the mean values of all other variables, and represent percentage point differences in the predicted probability of the wife being the respondent.

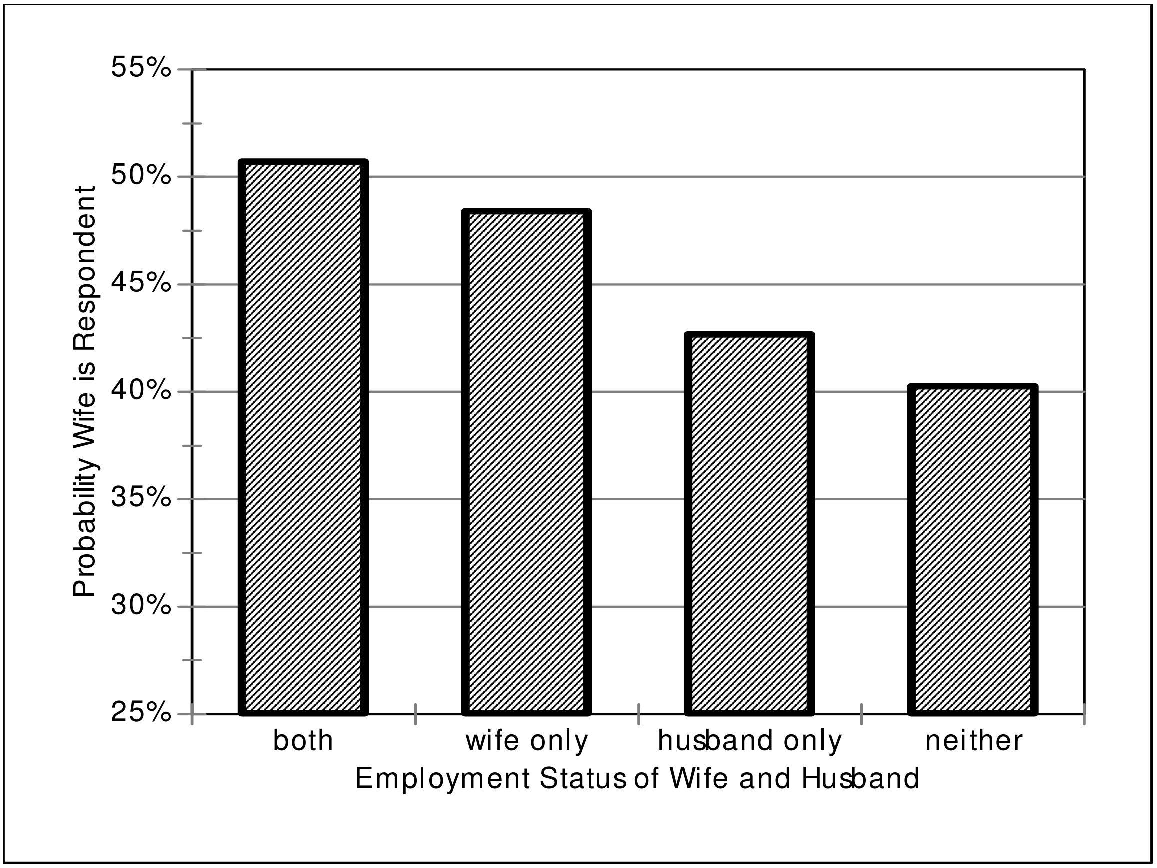
Figure 1.
Predicted Probability That Wife is the Respondent by Age of Husband, at Mean Values of Other Variables



Based on Table 4.

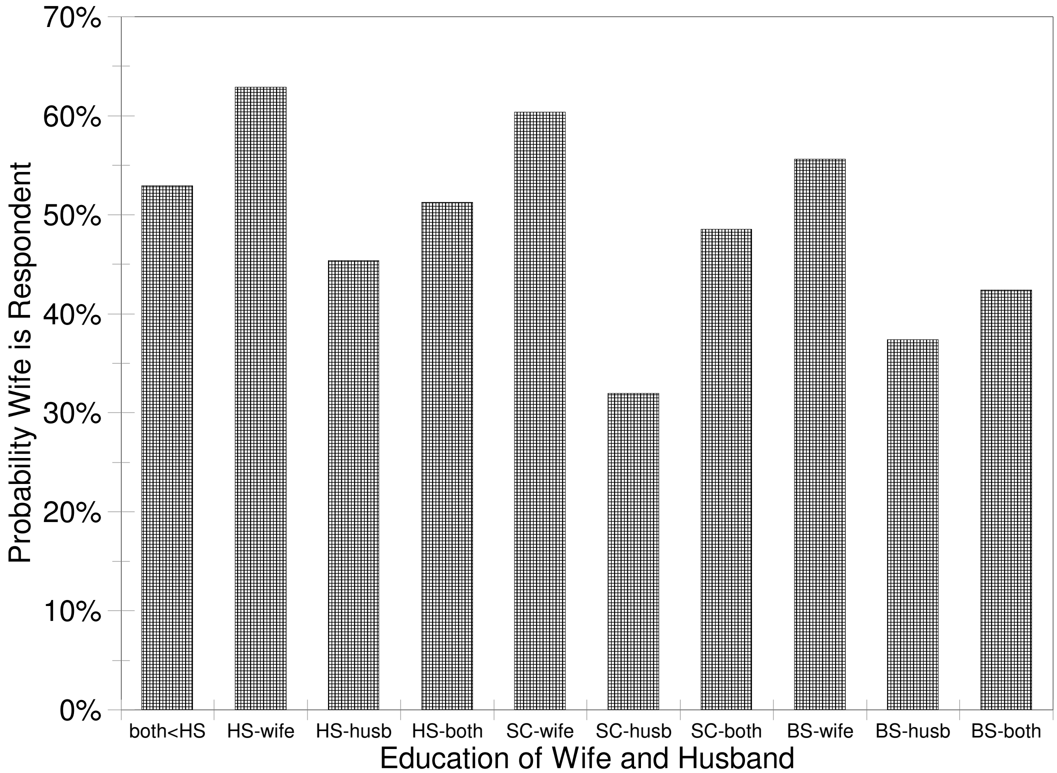
Figure 2

Predicted Probability That Wife is the Respondent by Employment Status of Wife and Husband , at Mean Values of Other Variables,



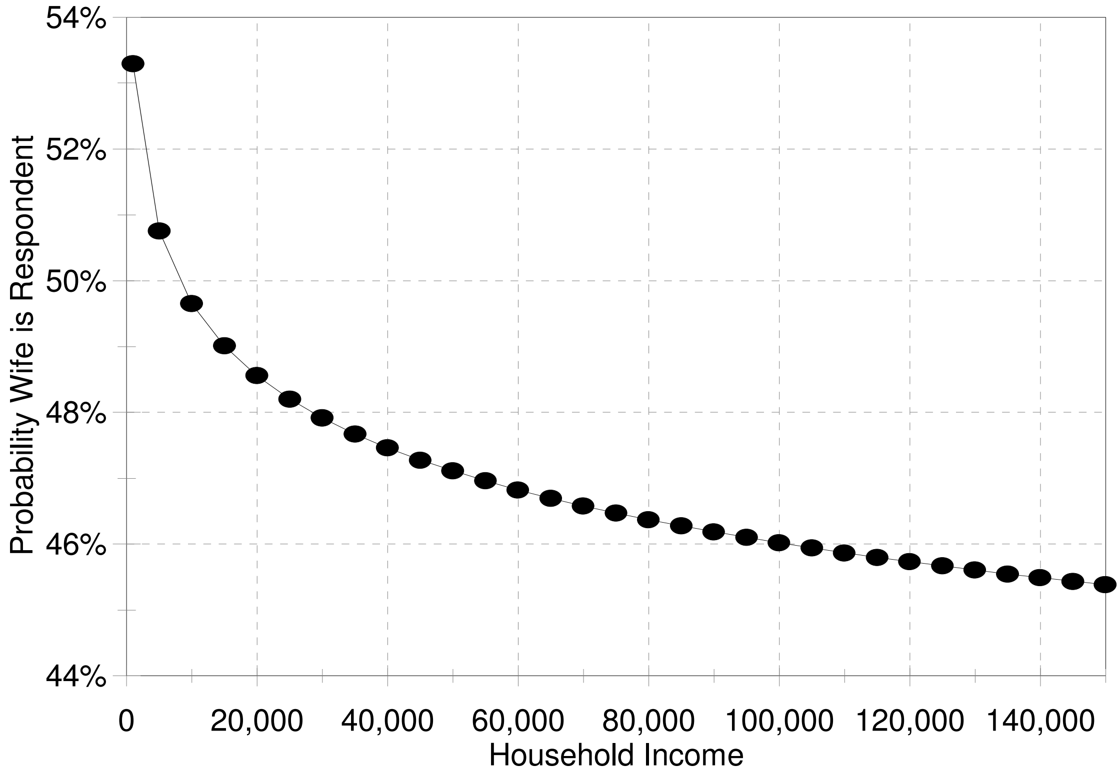
Based on results in Table 4.

Figure 3
Predicted Probability That Wife is the Respondent by Education of Wife and Husband, at Mean Values of Other Variables.



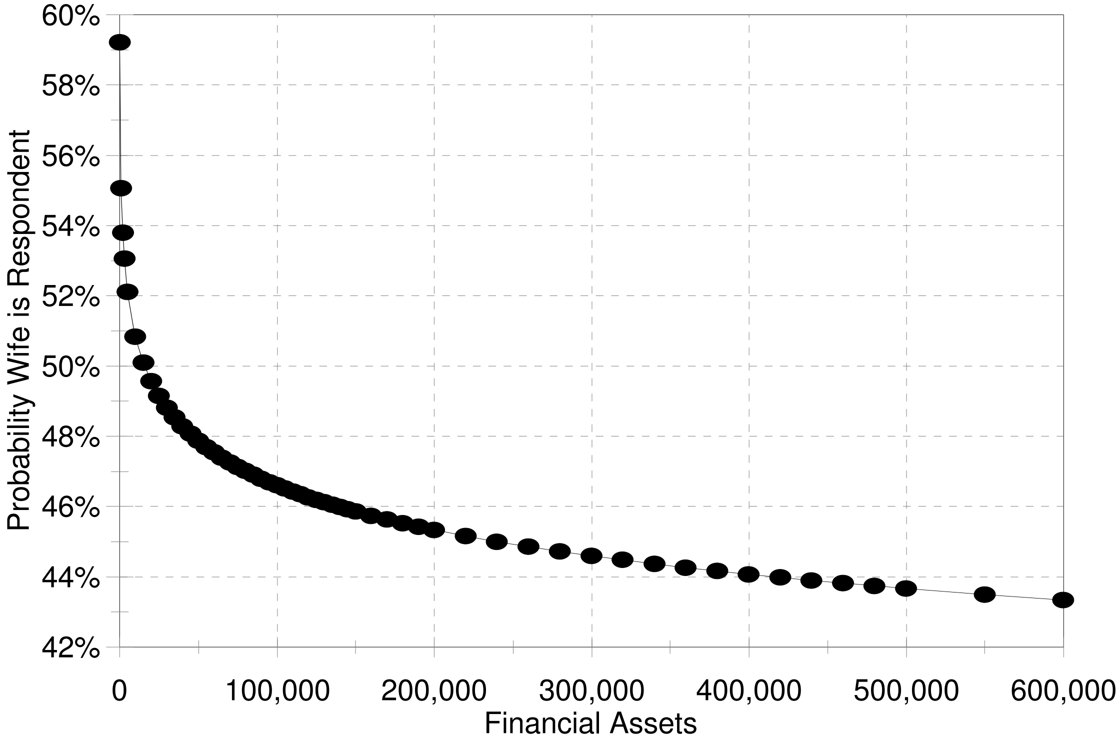
Based on Table 4.

Figure 4
Predicted Probability That Wife is the Respondent by Household Income, at Mean Values of Other Variables.



Based on results in Table 4.

Figure 5
Predicted Probability That Wife is the Respondent by Level of Financial Assets, at Mean Values of Other Variables.



Based on results in Table 4.