

# The Health and Retirement Study

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a cooperative agreement between  
the National Institute on Aging  
and the Survey Research Center  
of the Institute for Social Research  
at the University of Michigan  
(U01AG9740)



**HRS**

# HRS

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- A nationally representative longitudinal study
- Population 50+
- Over 30,000 people interviewed 1-8 times
- Nearly 140,000 total interviews
- All data released to public, usually within a few months of being collected
- With weights, codebooks, help line for support

***HRS***

# HRS Content

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- Multi-disciplinary content (health, economics, psychology, family)
- New for 2006: physical performance measures, blood pressure, dried blood spots
- Medicare linkage
- DNA collected for repository (N=7,000 now; 13,000 by end of 2008)

# HRS and cognition

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- Basic measures of cognition (memory, mental status, numeracy)
- A stratified sub-study of N=856 (ADAMS) got very detailed neuropsychological assessment and diagnosis of dementia, CIND, or normal (team led by Brenda Plassman at Duke)
- All ADAMS data also available to public
- Will add in 2010 measures of executive function, fluid intelligence from McArdle
- Interested in cognition in real life, and the consequences of cognitive inequality

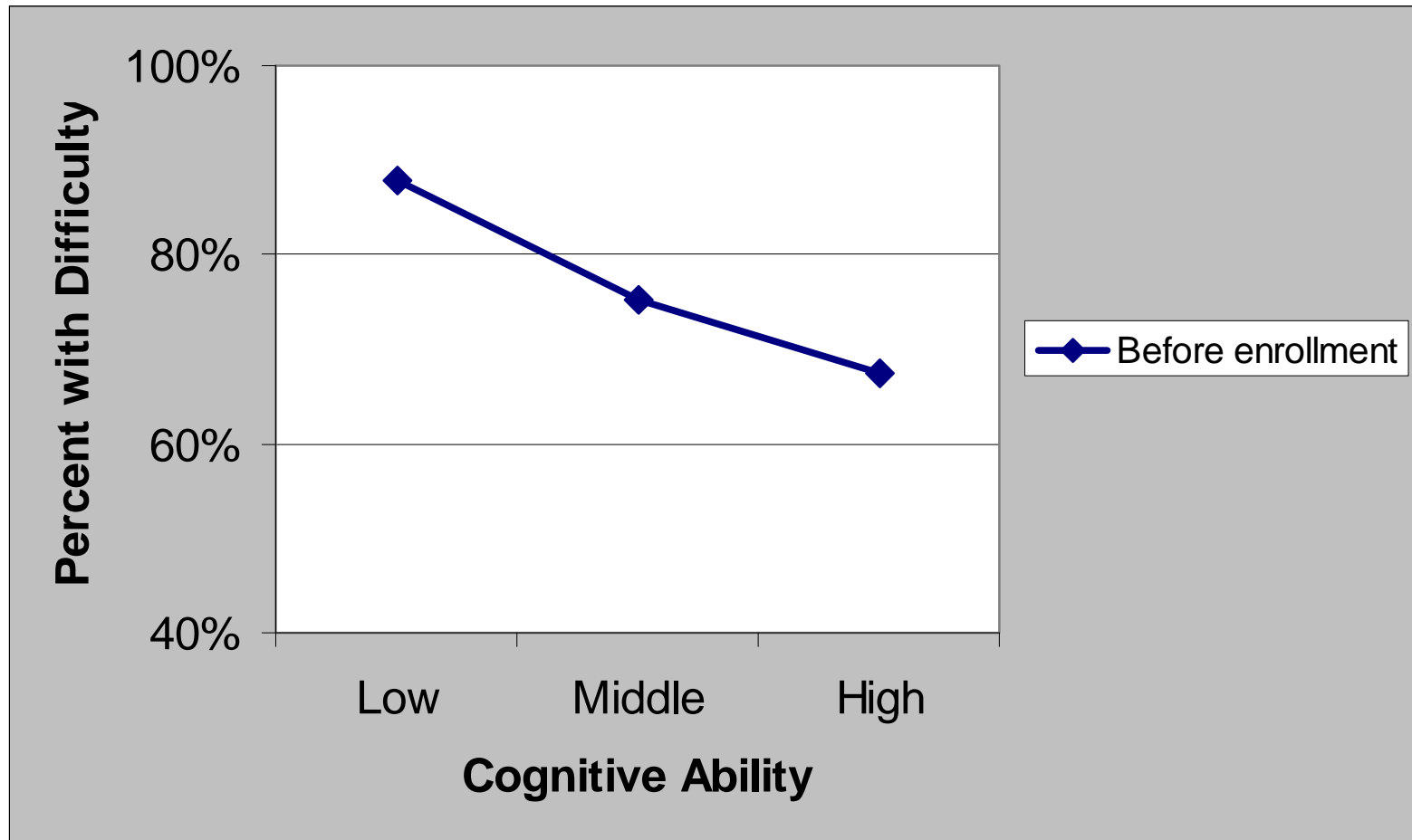
***HRS***

## An Example: Medicare Part D plan choice

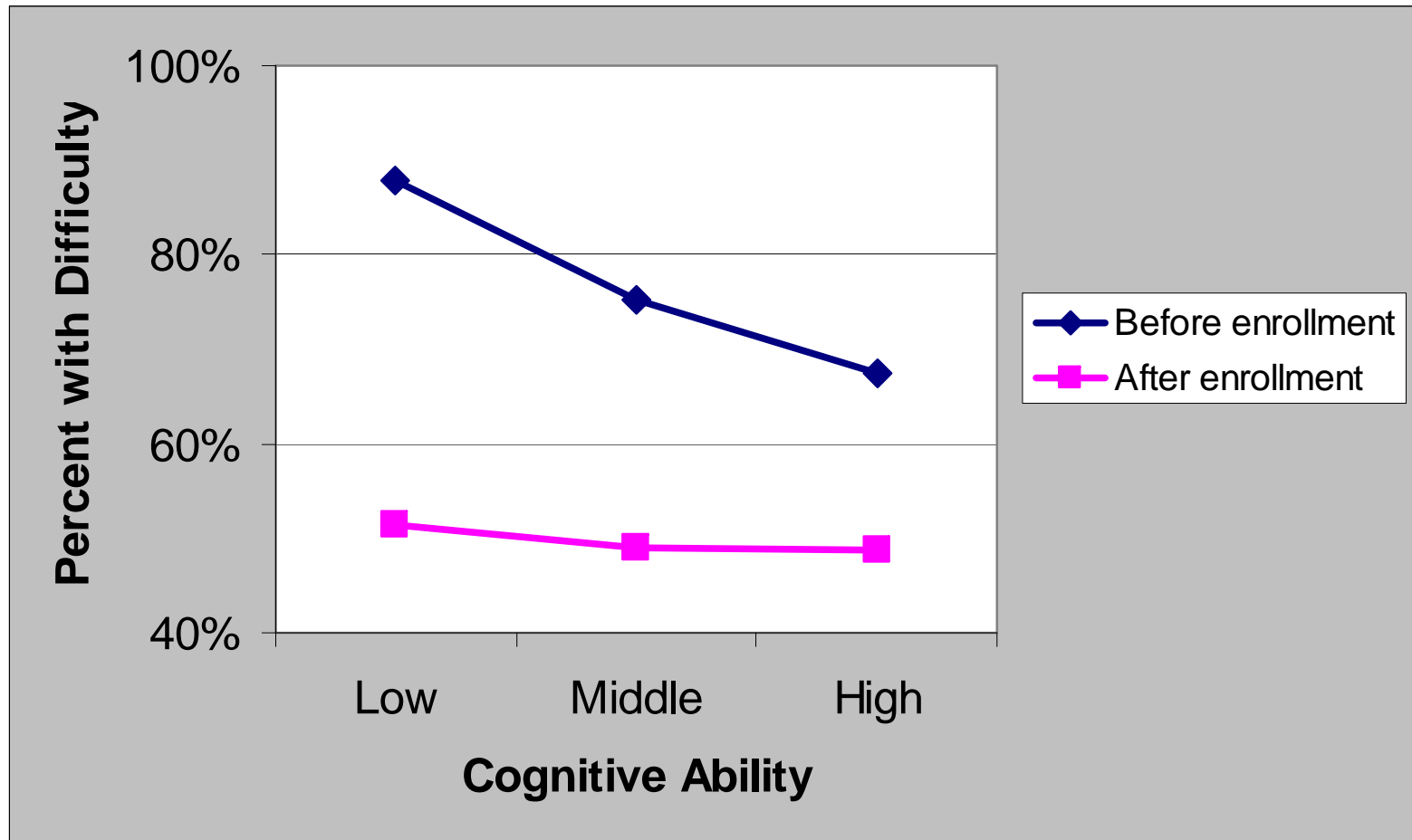
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- A cognitively demanding task
- Prior to enrollment, high levels of anxiety about decision
- Especially for groups low on cognition

# Percent having difficulty prior to enrollment, by cognitive status



# Percent having difficulty prior to enrollment, and after enrollment, by cognitive status

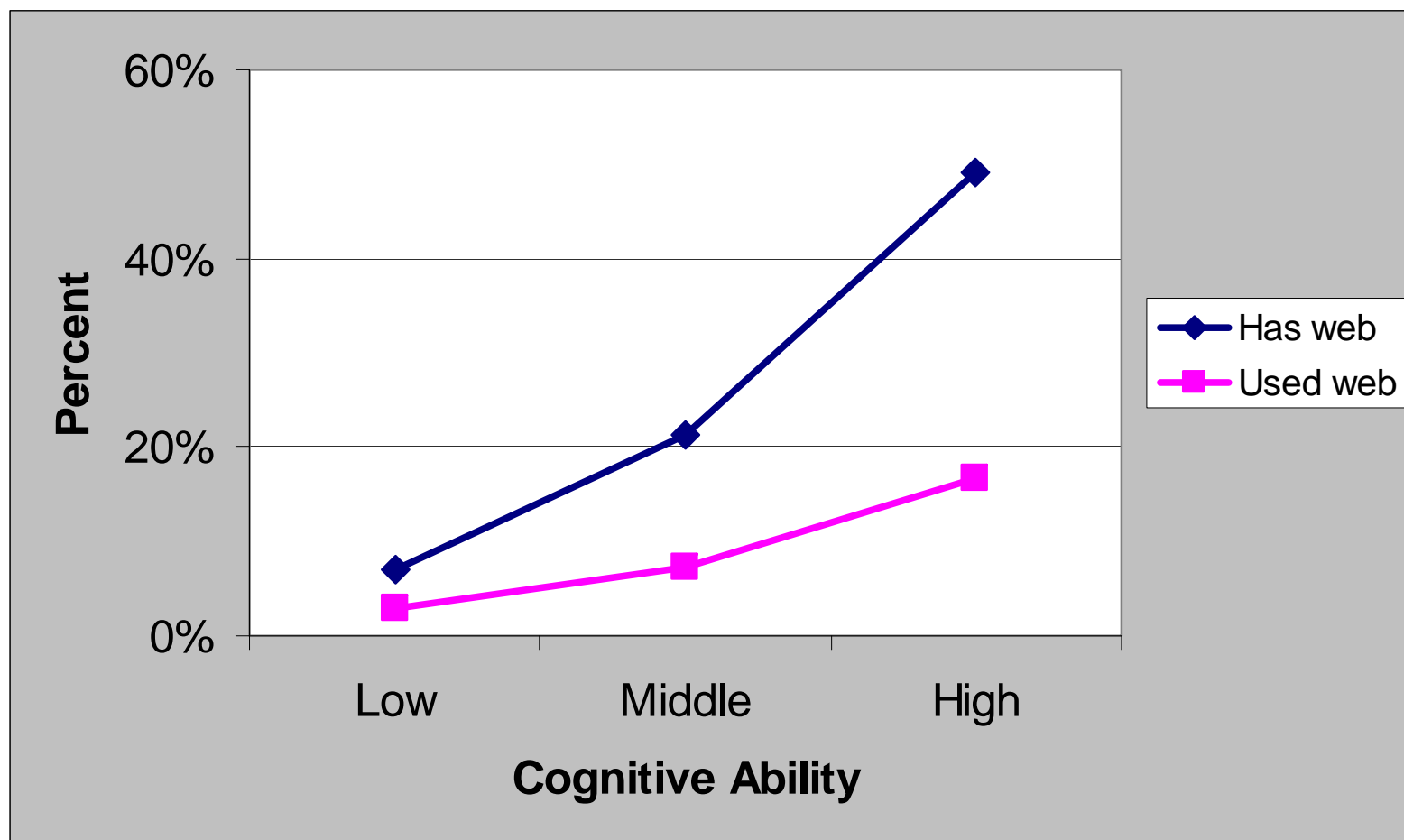


# What happened?

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- It's the network!
- Not the 'net
  - ❖ The internet magnifies cognitive inequality
- We're not alone in the water maze
- Adaptive strategies in real life typically involve social networks
  - ❖ Use of social contacts reduces impact of cognitive inequality

# Percent with web access, and using web for Part D choice, by cognitive ability



# Percent getting help with Part D plan choice from another person, by cognitive status

