

Youth self-completion questionnaire: revisions and content updates

The youth self-completion content consists of core modules which are asked annually (with extensions in alternative waves), and additional modules which have a biennial rotation pattern, so we can collect key data annually while not over-burdening the youth respondents with an over-long questionnaire. In 2015 a review of content review was conducted of the youth questionnaire and the ways in which it coalesces with the adult questionnaire. This involved an online consultation enabling a wide range of data users and stakeholders to take part, and a face-to-face user consultation workshop at the 2015 Understanding Society Scientific Conference.

The content review and consultation raised concerns in three main areas:

- Concerns about existing questions, for example the need to bring certain topics up to date (e.g. the need to add a question about e-cigarettes, and “future-proofing” the social media use questions); and needing greater differentiation within questions (for example in diet and nutrition, there was a conflation of various consumption practices, e.g. lack of differentiation between sugary foods, fatty foods and vegetables);
- Suggestions to extend existing content in order to provide greater detail in the resulting data (for example including cyber-bullying questions, and questions on the use of different modes of transport to visit family and friends); the existing questions asked about time spent watching TV and gaming but not about the number of hours spent in active pursuits. Young Adults were already being asked about careers advice/job aspirations but this was not at the time extended to 10-15 year olds, a key age in career planning. Given issues around youth unemployment, questions about work experience/ internships were also thought to be useful.
- Suggestions for new topic areas (for example risky behaviours; and better measurement of health, subjective wellbeing and satisfaction, where we were missing important domains such as health, ‘the things you have (like money and the things you own’, time-use and the local area). Other suggestions for new topic areas included: the impact of mental health issues and access to needed services; sleeping habits; the role of social networks in job-seeking; and experiences of youth justice system.

At the workshop there was an interesting debate about the purpose of the youth questionnaire and whether its primary aim was to help understand youth in the UK today or to develop an understanding of early life predictors of adult experiences. If the latter then the response rate as respondents move from the youth to adult surveys is crucial. Overall, it was felt there should be a balance between the two but the primary rationale for topics in the youth questionnaire should be that they exploit the unique features of the study for youth and youth-to-adult research, namely the household and longitudinal nature of the Study (for example understanding sibling relationships, parent-child relationships and following child experiences into adulthood).

The four key priorities for developing the questionnaire emerging from the consultation exercises therefore were:

- Identifying child outcomes
- Identifying predictors of adult outcomes
- Harmonising adult and youth questionnaire content and rotation patterns
- Filling thematic gaps, especially in relation to family and issues above.

A few simple changes were made at wave 8 to update social media items, and e-cigarettes questions etc. More substantive revisions were then developed in Waves 9 and 10. These mainly involved moving content from one wave to another to match the adult questionnaire more effectively, and introducing additional content where possible. At wave 9, some questions originally scheduled to be in wave 10 were brought forward to fit in better with the wave 9 adult questionnaire – these were around nutrition and dieting, exercise, travel to school mode, and homework/ tutoring, and SF12 was moved to annual collection. To make space for these questions, some content scheduled to be in wave 9 was moved to wave 10 – on computers/gaming, religion, future intentions, anti-social behaviour. New content was also added at wave 9, on smartphones, long-term disability and the number of days per week that breakfast is usually eaten. At wave 10, new content was added on cognition. In general, the changes in rotation typically involved transferring from even to odd wave rotation (or vice versa) but some now operate on a 3-year rotation to match that in the adult questionnaire. The rotation patterns and how they changed in waves 9 and 10 are summarised in the table below, and full details of all the new question items are available in the respective questionnaires (<https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/documentation/mainstage/questionnaires>).

Two other issues were raised in the workshop:

- The lack of awareness of the youth questionnaire among people who do research in relevant fields:

With the new website we are trying to increase awareness of youth data and research with a theme page and clearer signposting to the youth questionnaire. We are considering a webinar on analysing the youth data longitudinally and potentially expanding our Topic Champions to include youth research.

- The need to improve response (as people move to adulthood especially) and that perhaps having a web version of the youth questionnaire might help with this:

During wave 8 we developed a web version of the youth self-completion questionnaire, partly in response to the above and partly due to lower take up in web first households. However, the take-up of the online version of the youth questionnaire has been very poor and we are currently reviewing whether to continue with this or not (as it has high development costs for each wave). But, we have improved the response in web first households with extra reminders.

Topic area	Rotation up to W8	Rotation W9 onwards	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8	W9	W10	W11	W12	W13	W14	W15
Leisure activities																	
TV viewing	Annual	Annual															
On-line social networks	Annual	Annual															
Computer use at home	Odd waves	Even waves															
Leisure time/activities outside school	Even waves	Even waves															
Mobile phone/smartphone	Odd waves	Odd waves															
Family																	
Family meals	Annual	Annual															
Parental supervision (staying out late)	Annual	Annual															
Talking/quarrelling with parents	Odd waves	Odd waves															
Family support	Odd waves	Odd waves															
Household chores/division of labour	Even waves	Even waves															
Caring for parents or siblings	Odd waves	Odd waves															
Friends																	
Friends (short)	Annual	Annual															
Boy/girlfriend	Even waves	Even waves															
Friendship networks	Odd waves	Odd waves															
Behaviour and personality																	
SDQ	Odd waves	Odd waves															
Bullying at school	Odd waves	Odd waves															
Bullying at home	Odd waves	Odd waves															
Education																	
Educational aspirations	Annual	Annual															
Truancy	Annual	Annual															
Homework	Even waves	Odd waves															
Parental involvement with school	Odd waves	Odd waves															
Misbehaviour at school	Odd waves	Odd waves															
Happiness and self-esteem																	
Life/domain happiness	Annual	Annual															
Self-esteem and efficacy	Even waves	Even waves															
Health																	
Smoking	Annual	Annual															
Alcohol	Annual	Annual															
Self-rated health	Even waves	Annual															
Nutrition	Odd/even waves	Odd waves															
Exercise	Even waves	Odd waves															
Obesity	Even waves	Odd waves															
Height and weight (self-report)	Even waves	n/a (dropped)															
Cognition																	
	n/a	W10															
Risky, illicit and anti-social behaviour																	
Drugs/alcohol/binge drinking	Even waves	Even waves															
Vandalism/fighting	Odd waves	Even waves															
Finances																	
Savings behaviour	Odd waves	Odd waves															
Pocket money and earnings	Odd waves	Odd waves															
Local neighbourhood																	
Views of neighbourhood	Odd waves	3 yr (to match adult q're)															
Fear of crime	Odd waves	3 yr (to match adult q're)															
Values and Attitudes																	
Social and political attitudes/behaviour	Odd waves	3 yr (to match adult q're)															
Environmental attitudes/behaviour	Odd waves	3 yr (to match adult q're)															
Identity																	
Religion	Odd waves	Even waves															
Ethnicity	Odd waves	Even waves (post W9)															
Future intentions																	
Age wants to leave home	Odd waves	Even waves															
Future job wanted	Odd waves	Even waves															
Marriage and children	Even waves	Even waves															