



Understanding Society Innovation Panel Wave 13

Technical report

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Introduction

The UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS) is known to sample members as *Understanding Society*. This major longitudinal household panel survey started in 2009, and is the largest study of its kind, with around 40,000 households interviewed at Wave 1. The study collects data from household members aged 10 and above on an annual basis.

It is commissioned by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and led by the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) at the University of Essex.

Main fieldwork is complemented by an Innovation Panel which tests significant innovations in methods of data collection and study delivery such as mixed-mode interviewing, differential incentives, question layout and question wording experiments.

This report provides an account of the thirteenth wave of the Innovation Panel (IP13) of Understanding Society, which was undertaken by Kantar, Public Division, and NatCen Social Research, working in consortium.

Overview of methodology

From the outset, the intention was for IP13 households to be issued to one of two modes:

- CAWI first
- CAPI first

However, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, all face-to-face fieldwork in the UK was put on hold in March 2020 and remained on-hold throughout the fieldwork period.

All anticipated face-to-face (CAPI) interviews were therefore switched to telephone (CATI), with all respondents moved to a CAWI first methodology as a further consequence of this. As a result, some of the standard Innovation Panel analysis has not been possible during IP13.

Despite this change, the different elements to the study were broadly consistent with previous waves:

- A household enumeration questionnaire, completed once per household to confirm who is currently living there
- A household questionnaire, completed once per household to gather some household level information
- An individual questionnaire, completed by anyone aged 16 or more in each household
- A paper self-completion questionnaire, completed by children aged 10 to 15

Outputs

Data from Understanding Society is deposited at the UK Data Archive after each wave is completed.

1. Sample composition

1.1 The IP sample

The sample for the Innovation Panel is entirely separate from that of the main study. Originally selected from the Postcode Address File (PAF), the IP sample is representative of households in Britain. Unlike the main study it does not cover Northern Ireland.

There have been refreshment samples at several previous IP waves to increase the overall sample size: IP4, IP7, IP10 and IP11, and the sample for IP13 included a mixture of households from the original (wave 1) IP sample and each of these refreshment samples.

In total, 2,000 'active' households were issued at IP13. This included:

- 605 households from the original (wave 1) IP sample
- 280 households from the IP4 refreshment sample
- 339 households from the IP7 refreshment sample
- 255 households from the IP10 refreshment sample
- 521 households from the IP11 refreshment sample.

The number of individuals in the issued sample is shown in table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Number of individuals in the issued sample, by sample type

	Adults (16+)	10 – 15s	Under 10s
Original IP sample	1,316	100	107
IP4 refreshment sample	618	67	49
IP7 refreshment sample	792	66	99
IP10 refreshment sample	602	48	79
IP11 refreshment sample	1,003	90	143

2. Fieldwork design

2.1 Fieldwork structure

Fieldwork took place between 14th July and 11th November 2020. As mentioned in Section 1, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, all households were issued to CAWI first for IP13.

Fieldwork for all respondents therefore followed a consistent sequential mixed mode design. Households were initially invited to take part online, but at the end of the initial web fieldwork period any individuals or whole households that had not taken part online were issued to an interviewer. From this point on the majority of interviewing was completed via telephone, although the web survey remained available for sample members to complete that way. Towards the end of fieldwork (13th October) a 'mop up' phase was also completed via telephone to try to complete with any remaining individuals that had not taken part previously.

2.1.1 Fieldwork timings

All respondents had an initial CAWI first fieldwork period of five weeks. At the end of the five weeks any households that had not completed online were issued to an interviewer to contact via the telephone. As a result of the pandemic, the time allowed for interviewer (CATI) fieldwork was consistent for all respondents in IP13. Details are included in table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1 Fieldwork timing

CAWI first
Web only fieldwork
5 weeks
Fieldwork via telephone (web survey remains open)
8 weeks
Mop up (again via telephone)
1 week
Reissues
3 weeks

2.1.2 CATI mop up fieldwork

Despite the lack of face-to-face fieldwork, outstanding cases continued to be contacted by telephone during the mop up phase. Cases to be included in the CATI mop up were issued to a separate group of Kantar interviewers to try to convert these cases.

2.2 Contact with sample members

Understanding Society puts much effort into contacting respondents and keeping them engaged with the study. As well as contact for each year's interview, there are also between wave mailings and emails to sample members to feedback findings from the study and encourage people to keep their contact details up to date. This section describes the contact strategy for IP13.

2.2.1 Advance mailing

The Covid-19 pandemic meant that there was less variation in the advance mailing strategy for IP13.

All eligible sample members aged 16 or over were sent a letter on the first day of web fieldwork asking them to complete the survey online and providing the web address and their login details for doing so. The letter also explained that, if they were unable to complete the survey online, an interviewer would contact them as usual. The letters also included a change of address card and freepost return envelope. If an email address was available, these sample members were also sent an email with a unique link to start the web survey.

There were 72 different types of advance letter. This number was required because of the various different experiments included on the study. For all addresses in Wales, the letter was sent in both Welsh and English. All letters were designed with Understanding Society branding and were signed by the Director of Understanding Society.

2.2.2 New entrant letters

For all IP13 households it was necessary to have a mechanism to contact individuals who had been added to households during household grids done on the web. Letters were sent to these individuals to provide them with their web login details and ask them to take part in the study online. These letters also included a change of address card and freepost return envelope.

2.2.3 Reminder letters and emails

Adults were sent four reminder emails (if an email address was available) and two reminder letters if they had not completed online by the time these reminder mailings were being prepared. These reminders were sent during the initial five week CAWI fieldwork period before households were issued to an interviewer.

2.2.4 First contact attempt with sample members

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, first contact with all households (productive and unproductive at the previous wave) was via the telephone.

3. Experiments

IP13 contained the following new experiments:

- Fieldwork compression experiment
- Well-being App consent
- Panel conditioning
- Asking for details of partner living apart
- Event triggered data collection

In addition to this, there was the incentive experiment which has continued across multiple waves of the Innovation Panel.

Each of the experiments is described in detail below.

3.1 Fieldwork compression experiment

A number of modules currently work on rotation, but this experiment looked at the potential to ask most rotating modules in a single interview.

Households were allocated at random to one of five groups as shown below:

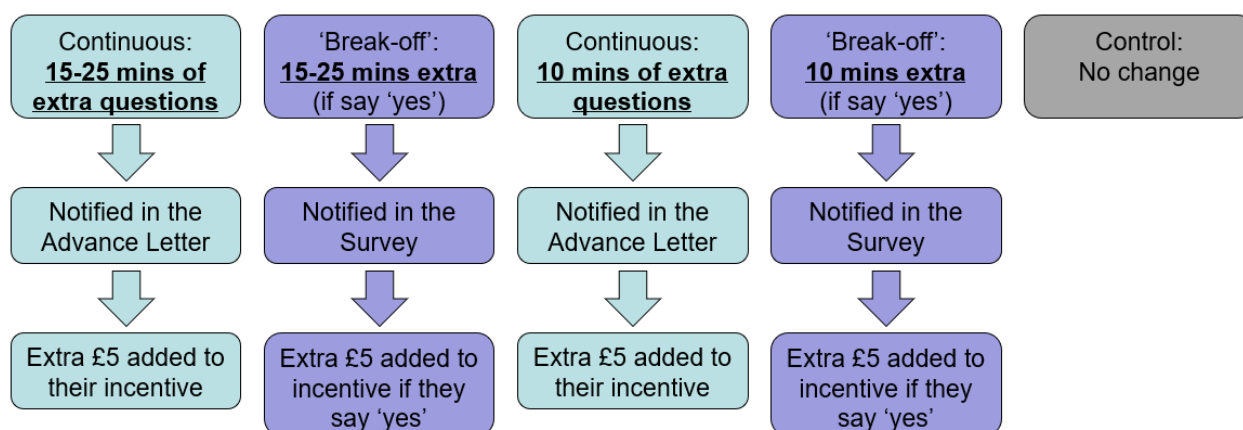


Figure 3.1: How the fieldwork compression experiment worked

20% of the sample were allocated to the Control group (Figure 3.1 on the top right, above). There were no changes to the standard IP13 script for this group.

40% were notified of the longer interview in their advance letter (the 'Continuous' group), with half of these being shown extra questions taking an additional 15-25 minutes to complete (20% of the total) and half being

shown a reduced set of (extra) questions, taking an additional 10 minutes to complete (20% of the total). As part of the advance letter, they were told that they would receive an extra £5 to reflect their longer interview.

The remaining 40% were notified in the script and had the option to answer the extra questions at their own discretion. Anyone who said 'yes' and completed the longer interview received a further £5 on top of the incentive they were originally due. As with those notified in the advance letter, half of these were assigned an additional 15-25 minutes' worth of questions (20% of the total) and half to a reduced set of extra questions, taking an additional 10 minutes to complete (20% of the total).

3.2 Well-being App consent

Respondents were asked to download an app called "Stress Tracker" and to complete a task every evening for 14 days. There were 12 variations on the app experiment within the design, although each interview only presented the relevant version for that household. New joiners were not asked to take part in this experiment.

The experiment varied by:

- **Placement in the survey:** half were asked for their consent at the beginning, half were asked for their consent at the end
- **Length of daily task:** half were asked for 2 minutes involvement each day, half were asked for 10 minutes involvement each day
- **Incentive offered:** There were three different levels of incentive offered –
 - one-third were offered a flat £1 a day (up to £14 overall)
 - one-third were offered the initial £14 and a *guaranteed* £10 if all 14 days were completed
 - one-third were offered the initial £14 and a *possible (additional)* £10 if all days were completed. For this third group, four random days out of the 14 were selected and they got a bonus of £2.50 if they completed the survey on each of these designated days.

The username and password for each respondent appeared in the script at the appropriate time and interviewers asked respondents to write these details down if they agreed to take part. Respondents then downloaded the app, either from the App Store (Apple) or from the Google Play Store (Android). Respondents also received an email (if we held an email address for them) with their username and password, alongside more detailed download information and included a bespoke email address specifically for the app if they have any further queries. Interviewers were not asked to guide respondents through the download process over the phone.

If the respondent did not own a smartphone or tablet capable of downloading apps, interviewers were instructed to select "*I do not want to download the app*" at the question Appoutc1 and then "*No smartphone or tablet which can download apps*" at Welldebrief1 (if the module was placed early in the survey) or at questions Appoutc2 and Welldebrief2 (if the module was placed late in the survey).

3.3 Panel conditioning

To measure potential changes to the way respondents think or behave as a result of being part of Understanding Society, those that have taken the survey before were asked about how the study affected the way they think, their behaviours, and their attitudes. This module was included in the fieldwork compression experiment set of modules, both longer and shorter sets, but was only asked in the CAWI

survey. Other than the routing from being in the fieldwork compression experiment and past survey participation, there were no other controlling variables.

3.4 Asking for details of partner living apart

The survey already asks participants about any partner who is not living with them. For IP13, those identified as having a partner who lives apart were asked for their partner's contact details.

The partner details were collected in a similar manner to the Stable Contact module and the participant was told that the information would potentially be used to invite partners to answer a survey. They were also told that no further information about the respondent would be given to the partner, other than to confirm that they (the respondent) gave the partner's original contact details.

3.5 Event triggered data collection

This experiment sees data collected on a more continuous basis. While the survey has collected mobile numbers in previous waves, it is not currently possible to ask survey questions via SMS without additional permissions being granted.

The initial groundwork for this experiment was laid down at the start of 2020, but all respondents saying they used a mobile phone during IP13 were asked for their consent to be sent additional questions via SMS.

While the main scope of the experiment was outside of the survey itself, half were asked for consent in the Demographics module (in the early stages of the survey) and the other half were asked for their consent in the Contact Details module (in the latter stages of the interview).

3.6 Incentive experiment

There has been an incentive experiment running on the Innovation Panel since Wave 1. It assesses the impact of incentives on response rates, efficiency of fieldwork, and costs. As part of this experiment there were four different incentive amounts that were either sent to sample members unconditionally or promised as a conditional incentive. Incentives were unconditional for adults that took part at the previous wave, and conditional for those that did not take part at the previous wave (including new entrants to households). The amounts sent or offered were:

- £10
- £20
- £30
- £10 but with an additional £20 offered if the sample member took part online before face-to-face fieldwork began.

Moreover, as discussed in section 3.1, some respondents were offered another £5 on top of their regular incentive due to the fieldwork compression experiment. The incentive experiment was at household level so that all members of a household were offered the same amount. Households stay in the same experimental group at each wave so that the amount they were offered did not change from wave-to-wave.

4. Fieldwork documents

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, fewer documents were required for IP13 than originally planned.

4.1 Advance letters

As covered in section 2.2.1, all adults were sent an advance letter to inform them that fieldwork was starting for the study. The advance letter also mentioned the longer length of the interview for 40% of the sample, as referenced in section 3.1.

4.2 Interviewer materials

As a result of the pandemic and the switch over from CAPI fieldwork to CATI, many of the standard interviewer materials used during face-to-face fieldwork became redundant. As a result, only a small number of key documents were required for telephone interviews:

- Sample information sheets (SIS) – one per household, including a few details about that household and who lived there¹
- A set of project instructions covering all aspects of fieldwork
- Spare copy of the advance letter – for reference/ as an aid when calling participants
- Case studies – again for reference/ as an aid when calling participants

¹ The SIS included details such as incentive type, outcomes at previous wave, age and gender of household members, and whether the household was in the feedback or no feedback experimental group. Full sample information (names, addresses, telephone numbers etc) was held electronically on laptops, and not included on the SIS.

5. The interview

The main component of the IP13 interview was the individual adult questionnaire. This was administered using a CAI script, and interviews were attempted with all individuals aged 16 or more in the household. Two-in-ten interviews (19%) were conducted by interviewers via telephone; eight-in-ten interviews (81%) were conducted online.

Other elements of the IP13 interview were:

- The household enumeration grid and household questionnaire (completed once per household)
- The youth self-completion questionnaire for 10-15 year olds (on paper)
- A proxy interview for adults that were unable or unwilling to complete a full interview

5.1 Interview length

Table 5.1: Median interview lengths (hours, minutes and seconds) by interview type

Questionnaire element	CATI interviews	CAWI interviews
Household questionnaire (including enumeration)	0:06:41	0:09:18
Individual adult questionnaire – total (CAI +CASI)	0:35:46	0:37:57
CAI proxy questionnaire	0:05:35	n/a

5.2 Questionnaire programming

The CAI instrument was programmed using Unicom Intelligence software (previously known as IBM Data Collection), which is able to handle the complexity of the Understanding Society questionnaire. The same script was used for CAWI and CATI, with some minor modifications to allow for mode type. Two scripts were created, the first was at household level and included the household enumeration grid, the household questionnaire and administrative content such as call records. The second was the individual level script which included the adult interview, proxy interview and administration of the youth self-completion questionnaire.

5.3 Youth self-completion questionnaire

Youth questionnaires for sample members aged 10 to 15 were completed on paper. These were sent by Kantar's head office to respondents alongside a £5 voucher.

Where the household completed the survey online, questionnaires were posted to a parent (who had completed online) with a request to ask their child to complete and return the paper questionnaire.

5.4 Translations

The CATI questionnaire and documents were translated into Welsh. However, no respondents required a Welsh interview.

6. Briefings

All interviewers working on the study were fully briefed in virtual briefings before the start of fieldwork.

6.1 Interviewer briefings

All interviewers who worked on IP13 already had prior experience working on Understanding Society, so the briefings did not need to cover general fieldwork procedures, but were focused on the elements of the study that were new to interviewers. Briefings were scheduled to last around 2.5 hours and covered:

- An overview of the experiments included in IP13
- Overall fieldwork design
- Survey documents

The Kantar briefings were held on the 5th, 11th and 13th August, while the only NatCen briefing was also held on the 5th August.

7. Response

7.1 Household level response rates

Of the 2,000 households issued for IP13, 62 were ineligible but an additional 87 eligible 'split off' households were created during fieldwork², meaning there were 2,025 eligible households in total. Of eligible households, 68% were productive, but this varied for the different samples included, as shown in table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1 Household level response rate, by sample type

	Original IP	IP4 refresh	IP7 refresh	IP10 refresh	IP11 refresh	Total
Any productive	79.5%	73.2%	69.0%	66.2%	53.3%	68.3%
Fully productive	58.2%	50.4%	49.1%	42.7%	35.9%	47.8%
Partially productive	21.3%	22.9%	19.8%	23.5%	17.4%	20.5%
Any unproductive	20.5%	26.8%	31.0%	33.8%	46.7%	31.7%
HH element(s) only	1.3%	1.4%	4.0%	2.7%	3.4%	2.5%
Refusal	8.4%	12.0%	12.1%	13.8%	21.8%	13.7%
Non-contact	6.2%	7.4%	7.8%	10.8%	15.5%	9.6%
Other unproductive	4.6%	6.0%	7.2%	6.5%	5.9%	5.8%
<i>Base</i>	<i>610</i>	<i>284</i>	<i>348</i>	<i>260</i>	<i>523</i>	<i>2,025</i>

² A split off household is created when an original sample member moves out of the household they had been living in.

There was a big difference in response rates dependent on whether the household had taken part at the previous wave: 84% of households that has been productive at IP12 were productive again at IP13, but only 34% of households that had not been productive at IP12 were productive at IP13. This is shown in table 7.2.

Table 7.2 Household level response rate, by previous wave participation

	Households productive last wave	Households not productive last wave	Total
Any productive	84.2%	34.3%	68.3%
Fully productive	61.7%	17.8%	47.8%
Partially productive	22.4%	16.5%	20.5%
Any unproductive	15.8%	65.7%	31.7%
HH element(s) only	2.0%	3.7%	2.5%
Refusal	5.1%	32.1%	13.7%
Non-contact	4.4%	20.9%	9.6%
Other unproductive	4.3%	9.0%	5.8%
<i>Base</i>	<i>1,383</i>	<i>642</i>	<i>2,025</i>

7.2 Individual level response rates

There were 3,922 eligible adults issued for IP13 (including new entrants). Of these, 2,195 (56%) completed a full adult interview and a further 57 partially completed an adult interview. There were also 15 proxy interviews (0.4%). The response rate was again much higher for adults that had taken part at the previous wave (83%, including partial interviews) than those that had not (27%). This is shown in table 7.3.

Table 7.3 Individual level response rate, by previous wave participation

	Adults productive last wave	Adults not productive last wave	Total
Full adult interview	81.3%	25.5%	56.0%
Partial adult interview	1.9%	1.0%	1.5%
Proxy interview	0.1%	0.7%	0.4%
Unproductive	16.7%	72.8%	42.2%
<i>Base</i>	<i>2,140</i>	<i>1,782</i>	<i>3,922</i>

In households where at least one adult took part in the survey, there were 232 eligible 10 to 15 year olds. Of these, 108 (47%) completed a youth paper questionnaire.

8. Data

8.1 Combining CAWI and CATI data

At IP13 there were two sources of CAI data to be merged – CATI and CAWI. This meant the first stage of data processing was combining the CATI and CAWI data together.

There were measures in place within the electronic sample management system to minimise the chances of duplicate interviews being conducted on CATI and CAWI. Data was passed between the CATI and CAWI systems daily but the transfer of information to and from CATI was reliant on interviewers synchronising their laptops. In general, interviewers would synchronise each day that they worked on Understanding Society, but there could be circumstances under which they did not. There were therefore a very small number of duplicate interviews across CATI and CAWI and the data merging process needed to take account of these. If both interviews were fully complete, then the more recent interview was usually selected.

While IP13 used the same CAI script across modes (with routing to tailor question wording depending on the mode), there were some questions which had to be scripted separately for different modes because different question layouts were used. For example, at some questions the CAWI script made use of drop down lists rather than standard response lists. In raw data there would be two versions of the question, one for CATI and one for CAWI so the formatted data needed to draw data from both of these.

8.2 Data scanning and reconciliation

The vast majority of Understanding Society data was collected using CAI scripts. The scripts made use of consistency checks and range checks to clarify any data discrepancies with respondents as they arose. This meant there was little need for any cleaning or editing of the data after fieldwork.

The exception to this was the data from the youth self-completion questionnaires.

As these were completed on paper there could be data inconsistencies such as missing data, routing errors, multiple answers at single choice questions, and values out of range. Questionnaires were scanned to capture the data, and then a series of checks were undertaken to find any inconsistencies. Rules were agreed for how to handle data inconsistencies and edits applied in accordance with these rules.

Scanned data from youth self-completion questionnaires needed to be reconciled against CAI data to ensure data was attributed to the correct sample member. This was done using serial number, name, date of birth and gender.

8.3 SIC and SOC coding

Questions from the employment and proxy sections of the questionnaire were coded to 4 digit SIC and SOC codes. The codes and verbatims were included in the data.

8.4 Data checking

Once data from all sources had been combined and formatted, a series of checks were undertaken to validate the data and ensure consistency of format. Three rounds of checking were employed:

- Administrative checks on individuals and households – these were to ensure that all households and individuals were included in the data with a final outcome, that individuals were finally located in one household, that outcomes were consistent with the presence of raw data, and that joiners added to the household grid were accounted for.
- Structural checks on all files – these checked the format of files, and also that the right households and individuals were included in each file.
- Routing checks – these checked, for every variable, that a response was present when there should be a response, and not present where there should not be a response, according to questionnaire routing.