

Understanding Society Innovation Panel Wave 14

Technical report

March 2022

JN 40316405

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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 fourteenth wave of the Innovation Panel (IP14) of Understanding Society, which was undertaken by Kantar Public and NatCen Social Research, working in consortium.

Overview of methodology

Originally, the intention was for IP14 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 IP14.

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 continuing 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 continuing sample for IP14 included a mixture of households from the original (wave 1) IP sample and each of these refreshment samples.

In total, 1,921 'active' households were issued at IP14. This included:

- 584 households from the original (wave 1) IP sample
- 270 households from the IP4 refreshment sample
- 340 households from the IP7 refreshment sample
- 257 households from the IP10 refreshment sample
- 470 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	1,169	89	103
IP4 refreshment sample	534	54	44
IP7 refreshment sample	670	59	83
IP10 refreshment sample	489	42	63
IP11 refreshment sample	883	91	124

1.2 Refreshment sample

In addition to this continuing sample, a refreshment sample was added at IP14. Unlike previous refreshment samples, this was recruited by web only. Addresses were selected from the Postcode Address File (PAF), clustered in 32 areas. These addresses were then contacted by post and invited to complete an online survey. 6,047 addresses were issued for this refreshment sample.

2. Fieldwork design

2.1 Fieldwork structure

Fieldwork took place between 19th May and 29th September 2021. As mentioned in Section 1, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, all households were issued to CAWI first for IP14.

Fieldwork for all household in the longitudinal sample 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.

For the refreshment sample, the fieldwork period was shorter as there was no interviewer fieldwork. Households and individuals could only complete online. Fieldwork took place between the 3rd September and 3rd October 2021.

2.1.1 Fieldwork timings

For the longitudinal sample, there was 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. 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
Reissue fieldwork (again via telephone)
(web survey still remains open)
6 weeks

2.2 Contact with sample members – continuing sample

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 IP14.

2.2.1 Advance mailing

The Covid-19 pandemic meant that there was less variation in the advance mailing strategy for IP14.

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 by telephone. 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 10 different types of advance letter. This number was required because of the various different incentive amounts and conditions 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 IP14 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 Interviewer contact attempt with sample members

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, all contact attempts with households made by interviewers were via the telephone.

2.3 Contact with refreshment households

The refreshment sample for IP14 was part of a trial designed to test the recruitment of households by web ahead of a new sample being recruited to the main Understanding Society study. Three different approaches to invitations and reminders were used. Details are included in table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Invite and reminder approach for refreshment sample

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Prenotification letter	Prenotification letter	
Invitation letter	Invitation letter	Invitation letter
First reminder letter	First reminder letter	First reminder letter
Second reminder letter	Second reminder letter	Second reminder letter
	Third reminder letter	Third reminder letter

No details were known about the individuals in selected households, so prenotification and invitation letters were addressed to 'The resident'. For reminder letters, where the household had already completed a household enumeration online, names of residents were known and so reminders were sent at individual level to any adults in the household who had not yet completed an individual interview. For households where no online interviewing had been completed, reminder letters were sent at household level and addressed to 'The resident'.

3. Experiments

IP14 contained the following new experiments:

- LinkedIn consent
- Individual's intentions to prepare for automation
- Comparison of the ReQoL-10 scale to other scales
- Asking for details of partners living apart
- Proxy nomination

In addition to this, there was the incentive experiment which had continued across multiple waves of the Innovation Panel, although this was largely brought to a close at IP14. Instead, most respondents received a £20 incentive, with just those that had previously been in the £30 incentive group continuing to receive £30.

Each of the experiments is described below.

3.1 LinkedIn consent

At IP14 sample members were asked for permission to link information available from their LinkedIn profile (if they had one) to their survey data. There were two experimental variations in how this was asked: firstly, whether it was asked early or late in the questionnaire; and secondly, whether a motivational statement was included prior to the consent question. The motivational statement was "The data you would provide is key to this study. This data will enhance the understanding of your survey responses."

3.2 Individual's intentions to prepare for automation

For people that were in work, the questionnaire asked about the impact of new technology and automation on their work and their intentions to upskill. The experiment intended to measure whether the manner in which these questions were introduced impacted responses on individuals' re/upskilling attitudes and behaviours.

The questions were introduced with a vignette about the prospected severity of technological developments (severe threat vs. minor threat) and the prospected timeframe of such developments (short-term vs. long-term). The sample was split into 5 groups and the text of the vignette varied accordingly:

1. Major severity, long term
2. Major severity, short term
3. Minor severity, long term
4. Minor severity, short term
5. Control group

3.3 Comparison of the ReQoL-10 scale to other scales

This experiment compared the 10-item Recovering Quality of Life questionnaire (ReQoL-10) to two other health quality of life scales: EQ-5D-3L; and the 12-item General Health Questionnaire (GHQ).

To test for ordering effects, half of respondents were presented with ReQoL-10 and EQ-5D-3L earlier in the survey and the GHQ later on, with the other half receiving the reverse, with the GHQ coming earlier in the survey and ReQoL-10 and EQ-5D-3L later.

3.4 Asking for details of partner living apart

The survey already asks participants about any partner who is not living with them. For IP14, those identified as having a partner who lives apart were asked for their partner's contact details, so their partner could be asked to complete a short one-off survey.

The experiment involved asking for these details in two different ways, and half of households in the sample were assigned to each condition.

The first condition was to ask for the contact details of partners during the survey. The second was to ask for these details in a follow up mailing, a few months after fieldwork.

3.5 Proxy nomination

Understanding Society uses a short proxy questionnaire for adults that are unable to complete the survey themselves. At IP14 adults were asked whether they were willing for someone to answer questions about them on their behalf in the future and, if so, who would be the best person to act as their proxy. The experiment varied the wording of the consent question, and also where in the questionnaire consent was asked (before or after the stable contact details module).

4. Fieldwork documents

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, fewer documents were required for IP14 than are usually used when fieldwork is conducted face-to-face.

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.

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. 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 IP14 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. For the continuing sample, the majority of interviews (87%) were conducted online, with the remaining 13% conducted by telephone. All interviews were conducted online for the refreshment sample.

Other elements of the IP14 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

Median interview lengths are given separately for the continuing and refreshment samples in table 5.1.

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

Questionnaire element	CATI interviews	CAWI interviews	CAWI interviews – refreshment sample
Household questionnaire (including enumeration)	0:10:26	0:12:28	0:16:11
Individual adult questionnaire – total (CAI +CASI)	0:35:15	0:31:42	0:38:45
CAI proxy questionnaire	0:05:33	n/a	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.

For the refreshment sample, a slightly different script was used. It mostly replicated the CAWI script used for the continuing sample, but with some modifications around the way households logged in to the survey. Also, because this was part of a pilot to test recruiting a new sample to Understanding Society by web, there were a small number of experiments included to test the best way of doing this (e.g., at what point households were informed it

was a longitudinal study, and at what point they were told all adults in the household could take part).

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 along with a £10 voucher.

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

No youth questionnaires were used for the refreshment sample.

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 IP14 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 IP14
- Overall fieldwork design
- Survey documents

Briefings were held shortly before the start of telephone fieldwork.

7. Response

7.1 Household level response rate – continuing sample

Of the 1,921 households issued for IP14, 7 were ineligible but an additional 75 eligible ‘split off’ households were created during fieldwork², meaning there were 1,989 eligible households in total. Of eligible households, 66% 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	77.5%	70.4%	62.7%	57.2%	57.9%	66.5%
Fully productive	54.4%	48.9%	44.9%	36.7%	40.8%	46.4%
Partially productive	23.0%	21.5%	17.8%	20.5%	17.1%	20.1%
Any unproductive	22.5%	29.6%	37.3%	42.8%	42.1%	33.5%
HH element(s) only	1.8%	0.7%	1.4%	3.4%	1.3%	1.7%
Refusal	9.5%	12.3%	15.5%	15.9%	19.4%	14.2%
Non-contact	7.4%	9.9%	11.6%	17.0%	16.4%	11.9%
Other unproductive	3.9%	6.7%	8.8%	6.4%	5.1%	5.8%
<i>Base</i>	<i>612</i>	<i>284</i>	<i>354</i>	<i>264</i>	<i>475</i>	<i>1,989</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 had been productive at IP13 were productive again at IP14, but only 14% of households that had not been productive at IP13 were productive at IP14. 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%	14.5%	66.5%
Fully productive	59.4%	8.1%	46.4%
Partially productive	24.8%	6.3%	20.1%
Any unproductive	15.8%	85.5%	33.5%
HH element(s) only	1.7%	1.6%	1.7%
Refusal	7.6%	33.5%	14.2%
Non-contact	3.4%	37.0%	11.9%
Other unproductive	3.2%	13.5%	5.8%
<i>Base</i>	<i>1,484</i>	<i>505</i>	<i>1,989</i>

7.2 Household level response rate – refreshment sample

The refreshment sample was only contacted by letter and asked to take part online. This means that, aside from a few households that pro-actively contacted either ISER or Kantar to say they did not wish to take part, the only possible outcomes were that at least some online interviewing was completed, or no interviewing was completed. Unlike previous refreshment samples 'deadwood'³ could not be identified. However, we know that, on average around 9% of addresses on the Postcode Address File do not contain a household.

The outcomes for the 6,047 addresses issued for the refreshment sample are shown in table 7.3. As this shows 11.1% of issued addresses were productive (at least one adult interview was completed). If we assume 9% of addresses will have been ineligible due to not containing a household then the response rate can be estimated as 12.2% of households being productive.

³ 'Deadwood' are addresses that are not eligible for the study as they do not contain a household. For example addresses that are used as short term holiday lets, or are derelict/empty, or are business premises.

Table 7.3 Household level response rate for the refreshment sample

	No.	%
Any productive	670	11.1%
Fully productive	425	7.0%
Partially productive	245	4.1%
Any unproductive	5377	88.9%
HH element(s) only	103	1.7%
Refusal	59	1.0%
Other unproductive	5215	86.2%
<i>Base</i>	<i>6,047</i>	<i>6,047</i>

7.3 Individual level response rate – continuing sample

There were 3,767 eligible adults issued for IP14 (including new entrants). Of these, 2,051 (54%) completed a full adult interview and a further 44 partially completed an adult interview. There were also 3 proxy interviews (0.1%). 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 (15%). This is shown in table 7.4.

Table 7.4 Individual level response rate, by previous wave participation

	Adults productive last wave	Adults not productive last wave	Total
Full adult interview	81.3%	14.5%	54.4%
Partial adult interview	1.6%	0.5%	1.2%
Proxy interview	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Unproductive	17.0%	84.9%	44.3%
<i>Base</i>	<i>2,254</i>	<i>1,513</i>	<i>3,767</i>

In households where at least one adult took part in the survey, there were 213 eligible 10 to 15 year olds. Of these, 102 (48%) completed a youth paper questionnaire.

7.4 Individual level response rate – refreshment sample

As the refreshment sample was addresses selected from the Postcode Address File, nothing was known about who lived at those addresses until a household enumeration was completed. We can therefore only look at individual response rate amongst households that completed the enumeration, this was 773 households.

In these 773 households, 1440 adults were identified during the enumeration. Of these 957 (66.5%) completed a full adult interview online, and a further 10 (0.7%) partially completed an online interview. Another 54 adults (3.8%) started an individual interview, but did not get far enough through for it to be counted as a usable partial interview.

8. Data

8.1 Combining CAWI and CATI data

For the continuing sample at IP14 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 IP14 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 Combining data for continuing and refreshment samples

As mentioned in section 5.2, whilst the CAI script for the refreshment sample was based on the main IP14 script, there were some modifications because the refreshment sample was part of a pilot to test how best to recruit new households to the study with an online survey. This meant there was a further combining stage required at IP14 to merge the refreshment sample data (CAWI only) with the data from the continuing sample.

8.3 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.

8.4 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.

8.5 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.