verian

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Social Research that works for society

Understanding Society Innovation Panel Wave 17

Technical Report

May 2025

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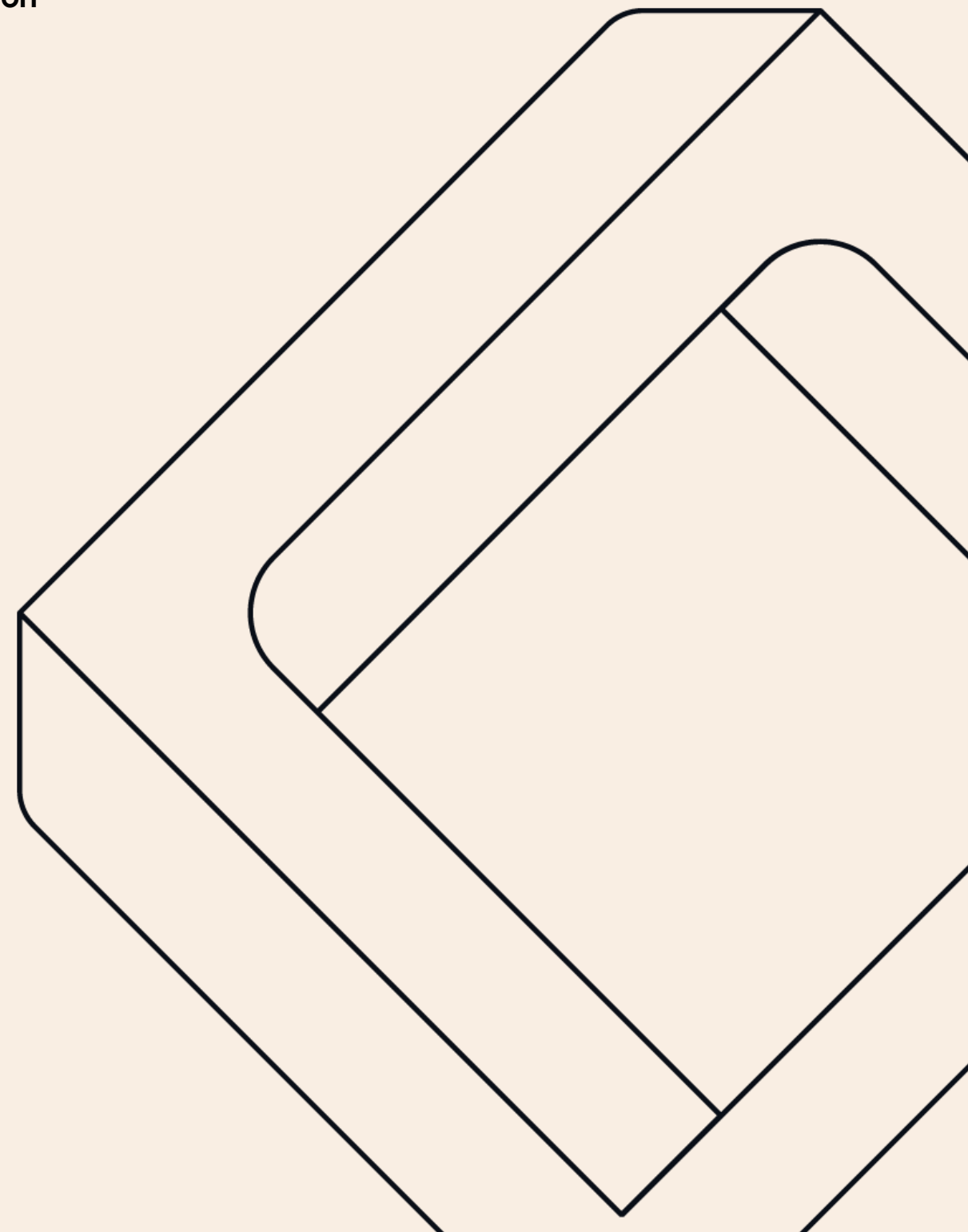


Contents

Introduction

The UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS), also referred to as Understanding Society, is a major longitudinal household panel survey that commenced in 2009. It stands as the largest study of its kind, with approximately 40,000 households taking part in the first wave. The survey gathers annual data from individuals aged 10 and above within participating households.

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

In addition to the main survey fieldwork, the study includes an Innovation Panel designed to trial key methodological developments in survey implementation, such as mixed-mode data collection, varied incentive strategies, and experiments with question wording and layout.

This report provides an account of the seventeenth wave of the Innovation Panel (IP17) of Understanding Society, which was undertaken by Verian and NatCen Social Research, working in consortium.

Overview of methodology

IP16 households were issued to one of two modes:

- CAWI first (60% of households)
- CAPI first (40% of households)

CAWI first households that did not fully complete online, were issued to interviewers for follow up by CAPI. During the CAPI stage, interviewers were able to conduct interviews by telephone if that was the preference of the respondent. The web survey also remained open throughout CAPI fieldwork.

The different elements of 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 self-completion questionnaire, completed by children aged 10 to 15 - this could be completed online or on paper.

Outputs

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

1. Sample composition

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, IP11 and IP14, and the sample for IP17 included a mixture of households from the original (wave 1) IP sample and each of these refreshment samples.

In total, 2,411 'active' households were issued at IP17. This included:

- 572 households from the original (wave 1) IP sample
- 251 households from the IP4 refreshment sample
- 305 households from the IP7 refreshment sample
- 224 households from the IP10 refreshment sample
- 380 households from the IP11 refreshment sample
- 679 households from the IP14 refreshment sample.

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

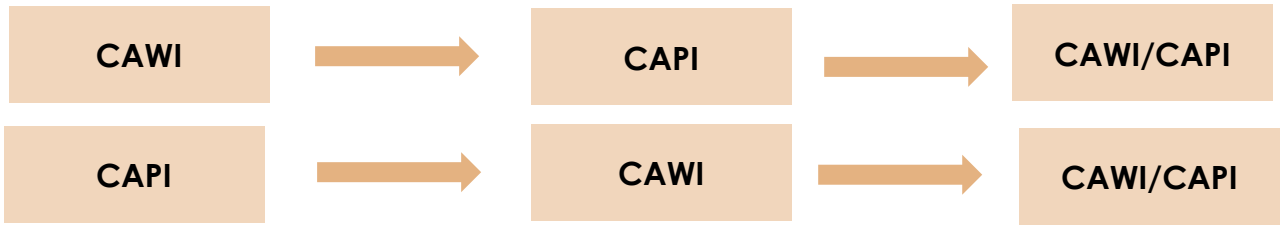
Table 1.1: Number of individuals in the issued sample, by sample type

	Adults (16+)	**10-15**	**Under 10**
Original IP sample	1122	90	106
IP4 refreshment sample	496	42	39
IP7 refreshment sample	606	56	71
IP10 refreshment sample	419	42	42
IP11 refreshment sample	736	70	80
IP14 refreshment sample	1304	112	198

2. Fieldwork design

Fieldwork structure

Fieldwork took place between 17th July and 31st December 2024. Households were allocated to one of the two modes, CAWI-first or CAPI-first, then followed the mixed mode design shown below.



Fieldwork for the CAWI-first sample followed a sequential mixed mode design. Households were initially invited to take part online. A soft launch of IP17 took place on 17th July due to the transition to Forsta, as this was the first project run on the new platform. The main launch for the CAWI-first sample followed on 24th July. At the end of the initial web fieldwork period, individuals or whole households that had not taken part online were issued to a face-to-face interviewer. From this point on, most of the interviewing was completed face-to-face, although the web survey remained available for sample members to complete via that mode. Telephone interviews were available throughout if requested by respondents. Additionally, there was a CAWI 'mop up' letter which was sent during week 14 of face-to-face fieldwork. This letter was sent to all those who had not yet completed the survey and included an additional £10 incentive if respondents completed it before the end of fieldwork. The CAWI 'mop up' letter was despatched on 16th December, ahead of the final 2.5 weeks of fieldwork.

For the CAPI-first groups, most fieldwork was conducted through face-to-face interviewing (CAPI), with a smaller proportion completed via web (CAWI) and telephone (CATI) modes. The fieldwork followed a staggered start, with interviewers beginning at different times due to the operational transition to Forsta. Although the web survey remained technically accessible throughout, it was not actively offered to these groups until the final 2.5 weeks of fieldwork. At that point, all remaining participants who had not yet responded – and whose case did not have an unproductive outcome that would make further contact inappropriate – were sent a CAWI 'mop up' letter (and email, where available) inviting them to complete the survey online.

Interviewer fieldwork in England and Wales was split between Verian and NatCen, and Verian undertook all interviewer fieldwork in Scotland.

Fieldwork timings

The CAWI-first sample had an initial web fieldwork period of five weeks for the Soft Launch sample and four weeks for the Main Launch sample. At the end of these respective periods, any households that had not completed the survey online were issued to a face-to-face interviewer. CAPI fieldwork then ran for 18.5 weeks, from 22nd August to 31st December, with a focus on using telephone and online modes to 'mop up' hard-to-reach cases during the final weeks of fieldwork.

Table 2.1: Fieldwork timings	
CAWI first	**CAPI first**
Web only fieldwork 5 weeks (Soft Launch), 4 weeks (Main Launch)	
Face-to-face fieldwork (web survey remains open) 18.5 weeks	Face-to-face fieldwork 18.5 weeks
Online mop up (week 17)	Online mop up (week 17)

Contact with sample members

Understanding Society places strong emphasis on maintaining respondent engagement and sustained participation. In addition to the annual interview invitations, participants receive interim mailings and emails between waves. These communications are used to share study findings and to prompt sample members to update their contact information. This section describes the contact strategy for IP17.

Advance mailing

The advance mailing varied a little depending on issue mode and experiment allocation.

For the CAWI-first sample, all eligible sample members aged 16 or over were sent a letter two days prior to the start of web fieldwork. These letters contained the survey web address and the individual's login details, including a QR code, encouraging them to complete the survey online. For the Soft Launch sample, the letter would have arrived as interviewing began; for the Main Launch sample, letters typically arrived during the following week. The letters also explained that if respondents were unable to take part online, they would later be contacted by an interviewer. A change of address card and freepost return envelope were included. Where an email address was held, sample members also received an email with a personalised link to access the web survey.

For the CAPI-first sample, eligible individuals aged 16 or over were sent a letter shortly before the start of face-to-face fieldwork, informing them that an interviewer would visit soon. The mailing included a change of address card attached to the letter, along with a freepost return envelope for returning updated contact details.

Both CAWI-first and CAPI-first letters also included an information leaflet providing further details about the study and the annual interview. For adults who had responded at the previous wave, the advance letters also included information about their incentive, either £20 or £30, provided as a standard Love2Shop gift card. This represented a change for some participants who may have received an online voucher at IP16, where experimental conditions applied different incentive formats. For adults who did not respond at the last wave, advance letters did not contain an incentive.

There were 12 different types of advance letters. This number was required because of the various allocations included in 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.

New entrant letters

For the households issued CAWI-first at IP17, 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.

Reminder letters and emails

Adults who had not completed the survey online received up to four reminder emails (where an email address was available) and two reminder letters. These reminders were sent during the initial five-week CAWI fieldwork period, prior to households being issued to an interviewer. In addition, a CAWI 'mop up' reminder letter was sent in week 17 of fieldwork to all remaining participants who had neither completed the survey nor explicitly refused.

Interviewer contact attempt with sample members

For households that had participated at the previous wave, interviewers were advised to make initial contact by telephone in order to arrange a convenient time to complete the survey. This approach tends to be both more respondent-friendly and time-efficient for interviewers.

In contrast, for households that had not taken part in the previous wave, the first contact attempt was made face-to-face. These households are generally less likely to participate, and an in-person visit is typically more effective at avoiding an outright refusal versus a phone call. If multiple face-to-face contact attempts were unsuccessful, interviewers then switched to attempting contact by telephone.

3. Experiments

On IP17, there were a total of nine different experiments. Of these, there were four procedural experiments:

- Mixed modes (CAWI-CAPI-CATI)
- Incentives (£20/£30)
- Youth survey invite mailing
- Youth online survey

Additionally, there were five questionnaire experiments:

- Perceptions of what constitutes successful ageing
- Consent decision process
- Identification of informal caregiving
- Labour market expectations
- Indoor residential environment and energy use: Consents

There was also some non-experimental new content which was added to IP17. This new content covered:

- Adaptation of eco-climate emergency
- Indoor residential environment and energy use

Most of the experiments at IP17 were contained within the questionnaire and did not require any additional work from respondents or interviewers. The primary exception was the youth survey invite mailing which meant half of the households received a special youth invite with the main outer envelope and the cover letter addressed to the responsible adult but inside the adult's envelope there was another sealed envelope with the child's name on it and the letter inside addressed to the child. This inner letter contained the login details to complete the youth survey.

Similarly, the indoor residential environment and energy use was part of an overarching project investigating people's indoor residential environment and energy use. This involved collection of questionnaire responses about people's homes and associated factors related to their energy use, as well as data collection via placing sensors in consenting respondent's homes and collecting information from their smart meters, if they have them and consent to the data collection.

Mixed Modes (CAWI/CAPI/CATI)

IP17 was the same as IP16 with one-third of households allocated to the CAPI-first design, with the other two-thirds allocated to the WEB-first design. At IP17, all households in samples taken prior to the IP14 refreshment sample maintained the allocations made at IP13.

Incentives

The incentives' experiment has been running since IP1. At IP17, most respondents received a £20 incentive, with just those that had previously been in the £30 incentive group continuing to receive £30, as a reduction to their incentive could adversely impact response rates.

Youth survey invite mailing

This experiment tested whether addressing youth survey letters directly to children aged 10–15 would increase completion rates. Traditionally, youth invitations were sent to the responsible adult in the household, each containing login details for the child and a paper copy of the questionnaire. In IP17, half of the eligible households continued to receive this standard approach, while the other half received a revised mailing. In the revised version, a sealed envelope addressed to the child was enclosed within the adult's envelope, containing a personalised letter and login details. For households with multiple eligible children, separate letters were sent for each child in both conditions.

Youth online survey

This experiment explored whether promoting a redesigned online version of the youth survey would increase uptake. In households where the household grid and at least one parent completed the survey online, the youth invitation included both the standard paper questionnaire and a link to a new online version, described as "redesigned" and "more fun," with a request for feedback to help improve it further. If the youth survey had not been completed within one month, a reminder letter was sent containing the same motivating message and a link to the online version. Uptake of the online survey is then compared with the default paper-only design used in IP16.

Perceptions of what constitutes successful ageing

This experiment, a repeat of one previously run in IP9, investigated how respondents assess 'successful ageing' based on different personal characteristics. Participants were shown a series of vignettes describing older individuals, each varying across six dimensions with either favourable or unfavourable outcomes. After each vignette, respondents rated how successfully the person was ageing on a scale from 0 (not successfully) to 10 (very successfully), allowing them to implicitly assign weight to different aspects of ageing. The dimensions included long-term illness, mobility, memory, and volunteering. Vignettes were randomly assigned to respondents within the script.

Consent decision process

The 'Consent decision process' experiment assessed whether prompting respondents to reflect more carefully on a consent request would influence their decision and related measures of effort and understanding. The consent in question was for linking Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) data to survey responses.

CAPI participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups, while web participants were allocated across five groups. All modes included:
(a) a **standard** version of the consent question used in previous waves (most recently IP10);
(b) a version highlighting personal **benefits/risks**; and
(c) a version emphasising the **scientific value** and policy value of data linkage.

Web-only participants could also be assigned to:
(d) a condition requiring them to list **reasons for and against consenting** before answering the question; or
(e) a condition that included **objective understanding** using knowledge-check questions about the data linkage prior to the consent request.

CATI respondents were not included in this experiment. Randomisation occurred at the individual level within households.

All participants, except those in Group (e), were asked follow-up questions to measure subjective understanding, confidence, effort, and perceptions of the consent process. These were adapted from follow-up items used in earlier waves (IP11 and IP15) related to HMRC data linkage. Group (e) respondents were not asked about these follow-up items again, as they had already completed similar questions before the consent decision.

Identification of informal caregiving

This experiment tested whether an activity-based approach to measuring informal caregiving could identify additional carers or more accurately capture time spent caring compared to the existing general questions.

All respondents were asked both question sets: the standard general-care items and a new series of activity-based questions that broke down care tasks by type and time spent weekly. A question-order experiment was used, with respondents randomly assigned to receive one version earlier and the other later in the questionnaire to allow within-person comparison while minimising repetition effects.

Labour market expectations

A module was included to assess how respondents report labour market expectations, focusing on whether responses differ when anchored to current earnings versus a 'market wage' based on their skills and experience.

All employed respondents were asked to estimate the probability of receiving a job offer within the next year—from their current employer and from another—as well as the likelihood of remaining in, quitting, or being laid off from their job (totalling 100%). They also reported their current earnings, expected offer ranges, and minimum acceptable pay. Those in the market wage group additionally estimated what a typical offer might be.

Respondents then rated the probability that their earnings in a year would fall within one of six buckets relative to the anchor value:

- Less than 85%
- 85%–95%
- 95%–100%
- 100%–105%
- 105%–115%
- Greater than 115%

Monetary values for each range were generated by the script based on the anchor provided. Respondents expecting a high chance of receiving a job offer were also asked to rate the expected range for their best offer.

The questions were asked online or via CASI and were limited to those in paid employment. CATI respondents were excluded.

Indoor residential environment and energy use: Consents

As part of a wider study on indoor environments and energy use, an experiment was conducted to test how different versions of consent questions influenced respondents' willingness to agree to in-home sensor placement and smart meter data sharing.

For smart meter consent, respondents were randomly assigned to one of three conditions varying in how the information was presented:

- Full information in bullet-point format
- Full information in paragraph format
- Key information in bullet points, with additional detail in help text

For the in-home sensor consent, two experimental conditions varied the information layout: either full information was provided directly in the question, or only key information was shown with further detail placed in help text.

Respondents were also randomly assigned to different stated sensor duration periods—ranging from 6 months to 2 years—as well as to whether they were told they would receive feedback from the sensor data or not.

Follow-up questions were used to assess the impact of these experimental conditions. For smart meter consent, knowledge-check items measured respondent understanding. For sensor consent, debrief questions explored reasons for consenting or declining, depending on their decision.

All randomisations were conducted at the household level and stratified by pre-defined sample characteristics.

Adaptation of eco-climate emergency

Non-experimental new content was also added. This included introducing content to examine the relationship between respondents' emotional responses to climate change and their support for related policy measures.

Respondents were asked how strongly they felt a range of emotions when thinking about climate change, including worry, disappointment, interest, hope, fear, and calm. They were also asked to indicate their level of support or opposition to several policy proposals: ending the sale of petrol and diesel vehicles, halting fossil fuel expansion, investing in research and development (including green innovations), and increasing offshore wind capacity.

Indoor residential environment and energy use

Additional non-experimental content was included in the household questionnaire to capture information on home conditions and energy use. This involved a combination of newly developed questions and updates to existing items.

New questions covered topics such as types of heating controls, the presence of hot water taps and showers, perceived effort to reduce energy use, the presence of household energy meters, and whether the living room stays warm during winter.

Existing questions were also adapted. The item on household heating was revised, and the question on consumer durables was updated with new response options. Guidance was also amended to instruct respondents to include rented or gifted items, which had previously been excluded.

4. Fieldwork documents

The setup of IP17 meant that there were a few additional documents to support fieldwork.

Advance letters

As covered in section 2, the advanced letters sent to respondents varied depending on issue mode and incentive amount. All adults were sent an advance letter notifying them that fieldwork for the study was about to begin.

For both the CAWI-first and CAPI-first samples, fewer conditions were used to determine which version of the advance letter participants received compared to earlier iterations of IP. Each letter was accompanied by a participant information leaflet providing details about the study.

Interviewer materials

For IP17, a comprehensive set of materials was provided to support interviewers during fieldwork. Ahead of starting interviews, all interviewers received a work pack containing documents designed to assist with key fieldwork processes, including respondent tracing, addressing queries, and maximising response rates. The pack included both core guidance applicable across waves of Understanding Society and project-specific materials relevant to IP17.

The following list shows what the initial pack contained, with items in bold unique to IP17:

- Change of address Card
- Project instructions
- Laminated generic advance letter
- Research case studies
- Thank you card
- MRS leaflet
- Sample Information Sheet
- Interviewer briefing slides
- Interviewer feedback form
- Contact us screenshot
- FAQs screenshot
- Stable contact letter
- Tracing letter
- Stable contact leaflet
- Information leaflet
- Interviewer card Verian/NatCen
- Showcards
- GDPR showcards
- Youth questionnaire
- Maps
- **Parent leaflet and Child letter**
- **Consent Leaflet on Adding Economic Records**
- **In Home Sensors Leaflet**
- **Smart Data Linkage Leaflet**

Consent documents

At IP17, all consent was collected verbally. Interviewers were instructed to read the relevant text from the CAPI script and then hand the relevant leaflet to the respondent. Thereafter, finally confirming in the script that this had been done.

As per each wave, for the Youth Questionnaire – interviewers were required to obtain parental permission for any 10–15-year-olds to complete the questionnaire. Additionally, consent from the 10–15-year-old was also required.

Interviewers were provided with the consent flowcharts which were to be referenced if the respondent had any questions.

Parents Leaflet and Child Letter

As part of the Youth survey invite mailing experiment a covering letter addressed to the parent, with an enclosed leaflet for the parent; with an enclosed envelope addressed to the child containing a letter addressed to the child with a QR code, URL and access code to complete the survey online, with an enclosed youth questionnaire booklet and an unconditional voucher. Interviewers were provided with a copy of the Parent leaflet and Child letter to use if they felt it was appropriate.

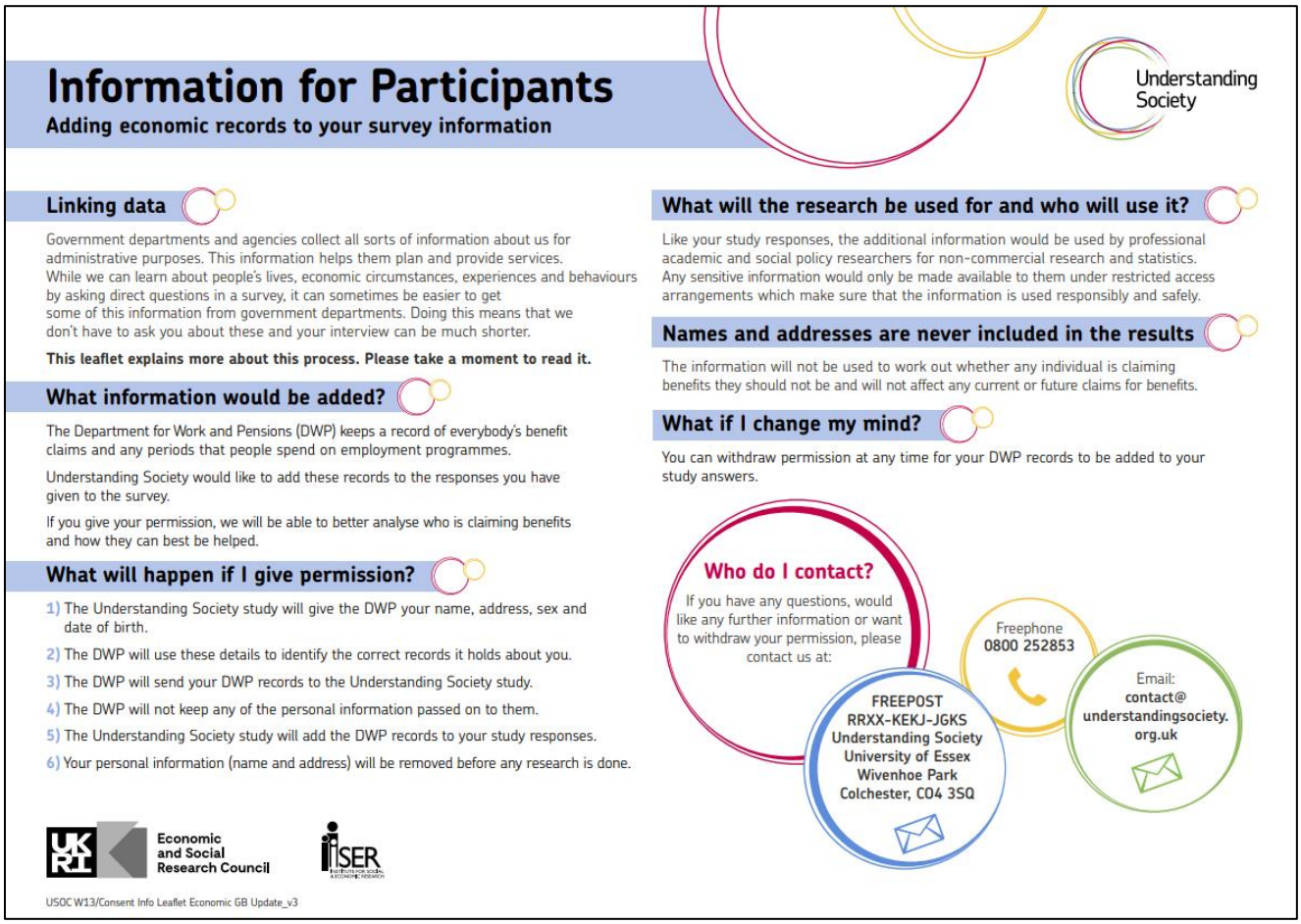
Figure 4.1: Parent Leaflet (1/2)

Figure 4.2: Parent Leaflet (2/2)

Consent Leaflet for Adding Economic Records

This leaflet was introduced in IP17 and was referred to in the script. Interviewers were prompted to show this to the participant during the benefits module in the individual interview. The leaflet explains how information provided will be used by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) if they consent to having their data shared.

Figure 4.3: Consent Leaflet for Adding Economic Records



Information for Participants

Adding economic records to your survey information

Understanding Society

Linking data

Government departments and agencies collect all sorts of information about us for administrative purposes. This information helps them plan and provide services. While we can learn about people's lives, economic circumstances, experiences and behaviours by asking direct questions in a survey, it can sometimes be easier to get some of this information from government departments. Doing this means that we don't have to ask you about these and your interview can be much shorter.

This leaflet explains more about this process. Please take a moment to read it.

What information would be added?

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) keeps a record of everybody's benefit claims and any periods that people spend on employment programmes.

Understanding Society would like to add these records to the responses you have given to the survey.

If you give your permission, we will be able to better analyse who is claiming benefits and how they can best be helped.

What will happen if I give permission?

1) The Understanding Society study will give the DWP your name, address, sex and date of birth.
2) The DWP will use these details to identify the correct records it holds about you.
3) The DWP will send your DWP records to the Understanding Society study.
4) The DWP will not keep any of the personal information passed on to them.
5) The Understanding Society study will add the DWP records to your study responses.
6) Your personal information (name and address) will be removed before any research is done.

What will the research be used for and who will use it?

Like your study responses, the additional information would be used by professional academic and social policy researchers for non-commercial research and statistics. Any sensitive information would only be made available to them under restricted access arrangements which make sure that the information is used responsibly and safely.

Names and addresses are never included in the results

The information will not be used to work out whether any individual is claiming benefits they should not be and will not affect any current or future claims for benefits.

What if I change my mind?

You can withdraw permission at any time for your DWP records to be added to your study answers.

Who do I contact?

If you have any questions, would like any further information or want to withdraw your permission, please contact us at:

Freephone
0800 252853

Email:
contact@
understandingsociety.
org.uk

FREEPOST
RRXX-KEKJ-JGKS
Understanding Society
University of Essex
Wivenhoe Park
Colchester, CO4 3SQ

Economic and Social Research Council

ISER

USOC W13/Consent Info Leaflet Economic GB Update_v3

In-Home Sensor Leaflet

The in-home sensor leaflet was also introduced for the first time in IP17 and referred to in the script. Interviewers prompted to show this to the participant during the household questionnaire. The leaflet explained the type of data that would be collected by the in-home sensors.

Figure 4.4: In-Home Sensor Leaflet (1/2)

Figure 4.5: In-Home Sensor Leaflet (2/2)

Smart Data Linkage Leaflet

This leaflet was introduced in IP17 and also referred to in the script. Interviewers were prompted to show this to respondents during the household questionnaire. The smart data linkage leaflet highlighted how data would be collected and used from their smart meter if they elected to use it and opt-in.

Figure 4.6: Smart Meter Data Linkage Leaflet (1/2)

Figure 4.6: Smart Meter Data Linkage Leaflet (2/2)

Core and project instructions

As in all Understanding Society waves, interviewers were provided with the Core Instructions and the wave specific (IP17) Project Instructions that covered all IP17 specific information. This was also updated to include technical information as interviewers would be using Forsta for the first time and utilising new CAPI machines (Android/Windows).

5. The interview

The main component of the IP17 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. Most interviews were conducted online (76%), with the remainder completed by CAPI (21%) and a small proportion by CATI (3%).

Other elements of the IP17 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 or online)
- A proxy interview for adults that were unable or unwilling to complete a full interview

Interview length

Median interview lengths are given separately for different modes in table 5.1.

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

	CAWI interviews	**CAPI interviews**	**CATI interviews**
Household questionnaire (including enumeration)	0:13:16	0:15:50	0:10:59
Individual adult questionnaire – total (CAI + CASI)	0:35:05	0:38:28	0:33:16
CAI proxy questionnaire	-	0:04:23	-

Questionnaire programming

The survey was programmed using Forsta, which is able to handle the complexity of the Understanding Society questionnaire. The Understanding Society script was previously in Unicom Intelligence software (previously known as IBM Data Collection). At IP17, the Understanding Society questionnaire was programmed for the first time in Forsta – this included creating and updating existing conventions in-line with Understanding Society requirements. The same script was used for CAWI, CAPI and CATI as Forsta Plus provides seamless, integrated, single-platform mixed mode interviewing and sample management with data from all modes held in one place. The scripting language used is JavaScript rather than previous Visual Basic used by Unicom.

Youth self completion questionnaire

Youth questionnaires for sample members aged 10 to 15 were completed on paper and online. These were sent by Verian's head office to respondents along with a £10 voucher.

Where the household completed the survey online or by telephone, questionnaires were posted to a parent (who had completed it online) with a request to ask their child to complete and return the paper questionnaire. For face-to-face interviews, interviewers provided 10-15-year-olds the paper questionnaire, a £10 incentive and a blank self-addressed envelope to seal the completed questionnaire within.

As noted in earlier sections, the youth questionnaire was also available for completion online which was on a different server as ISER setup and maintained the online youth survey. To access the youth

questionnaire online, 10-15-year-olds could either scan the QR code in the letter or access via the URL and input their username and password. Those eligible for the youth questionnaire were sent their login information directly from the office alongside their paper questionnaire and incentive.

Translations

The CAPI questionnaire and documents were translated into Welsh. One individual completed their online interview in Welsh.

6. Briefings

All interviewers working on the study were fully briefed in virtual briefings before the start of fieldwork. In addition to the standard briefing, the annotated version of the briefing slides was also made available to interviewers. Lastly, there were additional Technical Briefing sessions for interviewers to familiarise themselves with Forsta and new CAPI machines.

Interviewer briefings

Although most interviewers who worked on IP17 had prior experience working on Understanding Society, the briefings covered all aspects of general fieldwork procedures. However, briefings were primarily focused on elements that were new or unique to the study. Briefings lasted for an average of 4 hours and covered:

- Information on the Innovation Panel
- Overview of IP16 experiments results
- Overview of IP17 experiments
- Interviewer task for IP17
- Working with Forsta CAPI App
- Interviewer materials
- Practice script setup
- Maximising response
- Field admin
- ECS on Forsta+ Technical Session

The agenda for the technical sessions covered:

- Changing Screen Timeout
- Forsta Home Page Process
- ECS Part 1 – CheckSerial, WhatFunction1, Look At HouseholdInfo, Complete Observation Questions, Update Telephone Numbers.
- ECS Part 2 – Recording a Contact Attempt.
- ECS Part 3 – Outcome Codes
- ECS Part 4 – Updates to the ECS
- Questions

Interviewers were also provided with drop-in sessions during the early stages of fieldwork to ease them through the process.

7. Response

Household level response rate

Of the 2,411 households issued for IP17, 9 were ineligible but an additional 70 eligible 'split off' households were created during fieldwork[1], meaning there were 2,472 eligible households in total. Of eligible households, 57% 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	IP14 refresh	Total
Any productive	**63%**	**62%**	**57%**	**56%**	**46%**	**56%**	**57%**
Fully productive	47%	47%	38%	40%	34%	40%	41%
Partially productive	15%	15%	20%	16%	12%	15%	15%
Any unproductive	**37%**	**38%**	**43%**	**44%**	**54%**	**44%**	**43%**
HH element(s) only	2%	2%	3%	1%	2%	3%	3%
Refusal	13%	10%	18%	18%	24%	16%	16%
Non-contact	11%	12%	10%	15%	14%	14%	13%
Other unproductive	11%	14%	12%	10%	14%	11%	12%
Base	*590*	*256*	*310*	*230*	*386*	*700*	*2472*

[1] 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: 71% of households that had been productive at IP16 were productive again at IP17, but only 19% of households that had not been productive at IP16 were productive at IP17. 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	**71%**	**19%**	**57%**
Fully productive	53%	12%	41%
Partially productive	19%	7%	15%
Any unproductive	**29%**	**81%**	**43%**
HH element(s) only	3%	2%	3%
Refusal	9%	35%	16%
Non-contact	7%	29%	13%
Other unproductive	11%	14%	12%
Base	*1786*	*686*	*2472*

Response was lower at IP17 than at IP16, with the main different being more "non-contact" and "other unproductive" households at IP17. "Other unproductive" includes cases where the interviewer managed to make contact but not to arrange an interview (but sample members did not refuse) and also cases where household interviewing done on the web was lost (see CAWI-CAPI overwrite issue in section 8) and interviewers did not manage to do another grid by CAPI. The increase in non-contacts and households where interviews could not be arranged (but sample members did not refuse) is likely attributable to a late fieldwork start for some cases, meaning fieldwork was compressed and interviewers didn't have time to fully work on their issued sample. The delay was caused by a planned late staggered start for NatCen interviewers (so that their systems could be updated to work with new interviewing software used by Verian). There was also a short delay to starting CAWI first cases due to a vulnerability that was picked up right at the start of CAPI fieldwork which showed it might be possible for CAPI interviewing to overwrite CAWI data. This was fixed within four weeks. This was a separate issue to the CAWI-CAPI overwrite issue which caused grid data to be lost for 156 household (described in section 8).

Individual level response rate

There were 4,630 eligible adults issued for IP17 (including new entrants). Of these, 2,395 (52%) completed a full adult interview and a further 65 partially completed an adult interview. There were also 27 proxy interviews (0.6%). The response rate was again much higher for adults that had taken part at the previous wave (75%, including partial interviews) than those that had not (18%). 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	73%	17%	52%
Partial adult interview	2%	1%	1%
Proxy interview	0%	1%	1%
Unproductive	25%	81%	46%
Base	*2847*	*1783*	*4630*

In households where at least one adult took part in the survey, there were 207 eligible 10- to 15-year-olds. Of these, 84 (41%) completed a youth paper questionnaire.

8. Data

CAWI and CAPI data

At IP17 there was a single source of CAI data. However, as this was the first iteration of a longitudinal study on Forsta, there were a few data transformations required to ensure it was in-line with standard data delivery. Unlike previous waves, it was not possible for respondents to have direct duplicates as Forsta Plus is a single instrument. Data was passed between CAPI and CAWI systems throughout which meant the transfer of information to and from CAPI 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. In these cases, the CAPI data would overwrite the CAWI data with the exception of completions.

Data scanning and reconciliation

Most Understanding Society data was collected using the CAI script. The script 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 many of 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 paper 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.

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.

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.

Data issues at IP17

During fieldwork for IP17, there were two notable issues that arose that had implications for the final data and questionnaire routing. Each of these is detailed below.

CAWI-CAPI overwrite issue

A data issue was identified during the data processing stage of IP17, in which household grid data completed via CAWI was, in some cases, overwritten by blank data from CAPI. This occurred when a household grid was completed online, but further interviewing was carried out via CAPI. If the CAWI completion occurred after the case had already been downloaded for CAPI, syncing would result in the CAWI grid being lost and replaced by the (blank) CAPI version.

The issue was not apparent during fieldwork and only became clear during data processing, when inconsistencies were found in cases thought to have complete household data. This problem was particularly relevant for households that were not fully completed via CAWI (e.g. where individual interviews remained outstanding). Fully complete households were automatically 'locked' by the script which prevented overwriting, but this was not done for partially completed households as access to the household record was necessary for interviewers to complete follow-up work via CAPI. In total, 156 households (5.3% of the issued sample) were affected and are marked with a data lost outcome.

Missing health condition feedforward variable

The feedforward variable ff_prevhcondstil, used to identify health conditions reported at the previous interview, was omitted from the sample load. This resulted in the Annual Health Conditions module being skipped for affected respondents.

The issue was identified during post-fieldwork checks. Future sample load processes have been amended to ensure all required feedforward variables are correctly included.

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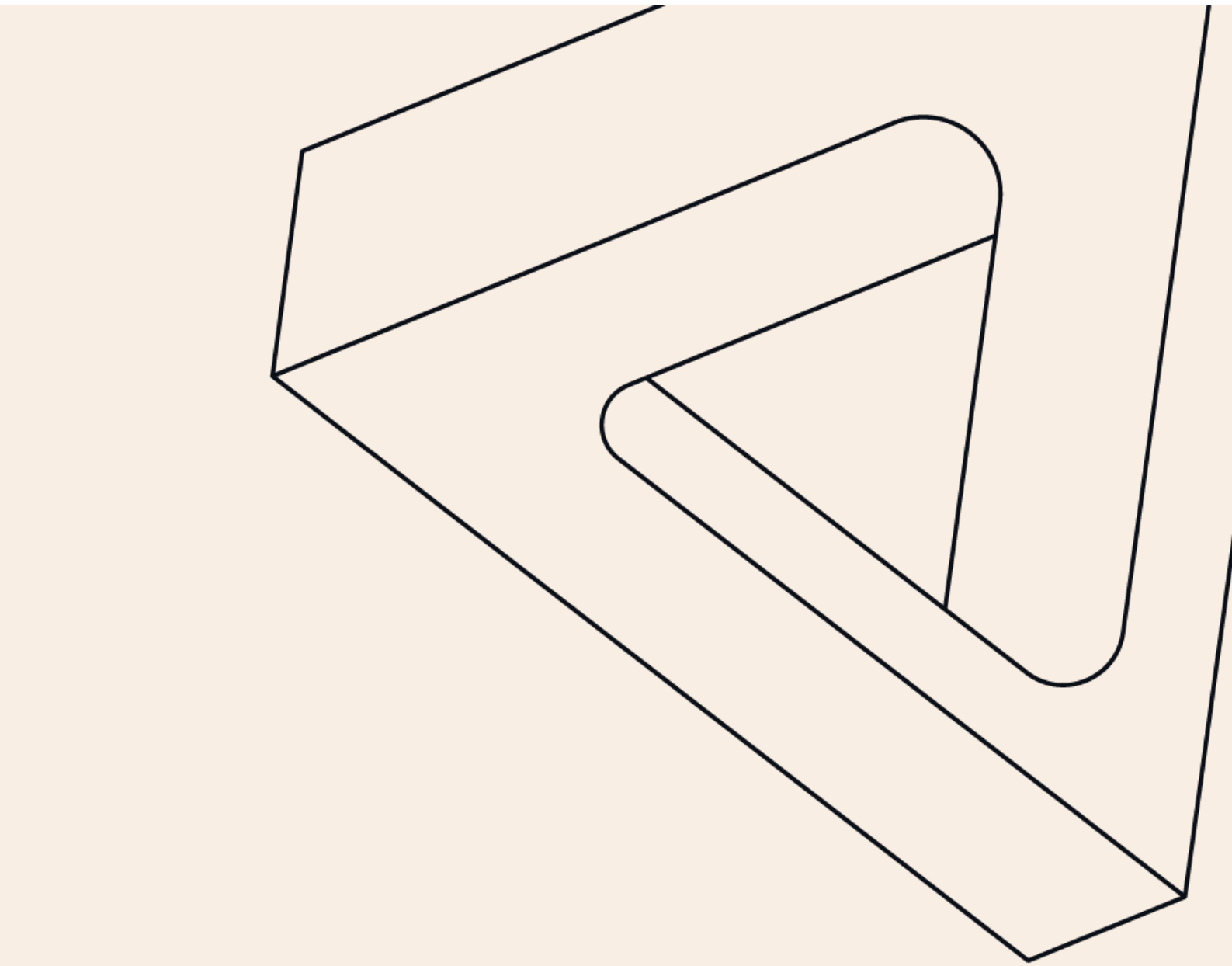

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