

Innovation Panel fieldwork procedures

This document summarises the fieldwork procedures in the Understanding Society Innovation Panel (University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research, 2025) for each wave conducted to date.

This summary of fieldwork procedures accompanies the Innovation Panel User Guide (Institute for Social and Economic Research, 2025) and refers to the relevant sections of the User Guide where necessary.

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Fieldwork procedures at Wave 1 of the Innovation Panel (IP1)

IP1 was conducted using an interviewer-administered computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) instrument, and respondents were also invited to complete a self-completion paper booklet. 128 interviewers worked on IP1. Three different versions of the advance letter (depending on the incentive group, see the User Guide 7.1 Respondent incentives to encourage participation and web response) were addressed to The Occupier. The letters refer to the study as “Living in Britain” because the branding of *Understanding Society* was still in development. All participating households later received a more detailed brochure, giving further information about the survey and thanking respondents for participating.

Fieldwork on IP1 started on 25 January and ended 21 April 2008. A minimum of six calls was made at each sampled address before it was considered a non-contact. Interviewers were encouraged to make further calls, if possible. If NatCen considered a conversion of those households which refused to participate or were non-contact worthwhile, a special conversion letter was sent by NatCen. Post-interview quality control was carried out with a telephone recall on 10% of all completed interviews.

Fieldwork procedures at Wave 2 of the Innovation Panel (IP2)

The most significant variation in IP2 was experimentation with a mixed-mode survey design (telephone and face-to-face, see the User Guide, 7.3 Mixed mode experiments: telephone and face-to-face). There were 116 CAPI interviewers and 50 computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) interviewers who worked on the survey. The advance letters were addressed to sample members by name and made use of the *Understanding Society* study title and logo.

The fieldwork period for IP2 was from 18 March to 12 June 2009. CAPI fieldwork started two weeks after the CATI start to enable an accumulation of CATI cases to become eligible to transfer to the CAPI interviewers. There were concerns that the

CAPI fieldwork would be less efficient if there were only small numbers of households to contact.

Fieldwork procedures at Wave 3 of the Innovation Panel (IP3)

IP3 returned to a CAPI-only design, with 120 interviewers working on the survey.

There were nine different types of advance letter, depending on the incentive group to which the household had been allocated and the outcome at IP2 (i.e. IP2 respondent, IP2 non-respondent, rising-16-year-old). All adults in issued households received an advance letter, which included their unconditional incentive (High Street Gift Voucher).

A minimum of six calls was made at each sampled address before it was considered a non-contact; interviewers were encouraged to make further calls, if possible. If households had

not been contacted or offered a 'soft' refusal, NatCen considered reissuing them, sometimes to a different interviewer. In these cases, a re-issue letter was sent by NatCen.

Fieldwork for IP3 started on 22 April and ended 23 July 2010. There were some delays to the start of fieldwork to deal with problems related to interviewer allocation to the showcard experiment. Post-interview quality control was carried out with a telephone recall on 10% of all completed interviews.

Fieldwork procedures at Wave 4 of the Innovation Panel (IP4)

At IP4 a refreshment sample was added to increase the total number of households interviewed. The refreshment sample added an additional 960 addresses sampled in the same areas as the original sample. If a household at one of the added addresses responded, members were defined as Original Sample members, from Wave 4 onwards. All adults in issued households received an advance letter, which included their unconditional incentive (High Street Gift Voucher).

IP4 also included the "Early Bird" experiment which modified the fieldwork period (conducted in 2011) to permit scheduling of appointments with interviewers (see the User Guide, 7.13 Early bird scheduling: encouraging respondents to call interviewer to schedule appointment). The Early Bird experiment appointment period ran from 22 February until 7 March, with the principal fieldwork period from 8 March to 18 April. There was then a re-issue period for non-contacted and soft refusal households from 10 May until 30 May. The re-issue period was extended from the original two weeks because of low response. A second re-issue then took place from 22 June until 12 July, again because of lower-than-expected response.

Fieldwork procedures at Wave 5 of the Innovation Panel (IP5)

The fieldwork for IP5 started later than usual because of the longer development, scripting and testing required for a mixed-mode instrument which included a web survey. There were three phases to the IP5 fieldwork, conducted in 2012. First, there was a two-week period in which the web sample members were invited to participate online (11-22 May 2012). Initially, advance letters were sent to adults in the web group which included a URL and a unique log-in code. Adults in the web group for whom we had an email address were also sent an email which included a link which could be clicked through to the website. Secondly, all non-responding individuals from the web sample were allocated to face-to-face interviewers along with the one-third of households who had not been invited to participate online. The face-to-face fieldwork started on 24 May, with nonresponding web households interviewed face-to-face from 19 July to 23 August. All adults in issued households received an advance letter, which included their unconditional incentive (High Street Gift Voucher).

Subsequent to field work, a validation exercise was carried out to check the quality of enumeration data collected by web. A sub-sample of 200 households who completed the grid by web were re-administered the grid by Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing

(CATI). To avoid a tendency to confirm previous answers, interviewers did not have access to the information from the web grid. The CATI grid was asked with respect to the date at which the web grid was completed.

Fieldwork procedures at Wave 6 of the Innovation Panel (IP6)

The fieldwork for IP6 also included the same mixed-mode design as IP5, with a slightly different fieldwork design to IP5. There is no pilot sample for the Innovation Panel, so at IP6 a small number of households (around 60 households in 5 areas) were issued first (“tranche 1”). The rest of the sample (“tranche 2”) was issued one month later. This was done to ensure that the sample management system and the web and CAPI interview scripts were working properly. Similar to IP5, IP6 started with a two week ‘web-only’ period. Advance letters with incentives were sent to adults in the web group as well as email (where email address was available) which included a link which could be clicked through to the website. After those two weeks, those in the web group who had not completed their interview were issued to face-to-face interviewers. At that point, interviewers were also issued with the one-third of the sample in the “F2F-first group”. Adults in the F2F-first group also received an advance letter with an unconditional incentive.

Towards the end of fieldwork, a “mop-up” phase was conducted, where non-responding adults in the web-first group were contacted by telephone and asked to complete the online interview (which re-opened for this phase) or to be interviewed by telephone (CATI). Nonrespondents in the F2F-first group were sent letters at this reissue phase which invited them to participate online. After a few days they were contacted by telephone and encouraged to participate online, or if they were not willing to do this, they were asked if they would take part in a telephone interview.

The Tranche 1 web fieldwork started on 22 February 2013, with the CAPI fieldwork starting on 8 March. The Tranche 2 web started one month later: the web on 22 March and the CAPI on 8 April. The CATI follow-up at the reissue phase started on 4 June (Tranche 1) and 4 July (Tranche 2). Fieldwork on IP6 finished on 29 July. The face-to-face fieldwork started on 24 May and went through to 15 July. There was a re-issue period for non-responding households from 19 July to 23 August.

Fieldwork procedures at Wave 7 of the Innovation Panel (IP7)

At IP7 a new agency, TNS BMRB, conducted fieldwork. A new refreshment sample was issued at IP7 to be included with the original sample from IP1 and the IP4 refreshment sample. IP7 employed a mixed-mode design, which started in IP5 and was also employed in IP6. The IP7 refreshment sample units were all allocated to a F2F only design.

The sample was divided into two tranches to ensure proper administration of the sample management system and survey. For one tranche (Tranche 1), the fieldwork for the web group started three weeks earlier than the F2F fieldwork. For the other tranche (Tranche 2), fieldwork for the web group started five weeks earlier than the F2F fieldwork. Again, an

advance letter with incentives was sent prior to fieldwork. An experiment was carried in IP7 where some of the respondents received an unconditional incentive while other received their incentive conditional on completion of the survey (see the User Guide, 7.2 Conditional and unconditional incentives). For those in the web design, email invitations were also sent (where email addresses were available). A reminder letter was also sent just under two weeks after the initial advance letter to all adults in the web group who had not completed their interview.

At the end of three or five weeks, all adults who had not completed their interview were allocated to face-to-face interviewers, but could still enter the web survey instead if they desired within the next four weeks of fieldwork. Adults who had started their interview online, but not reached the 'partial interview' marker, were issued to face-to-face interviewers. The interviewers were able to re-start the interview at the place at which the respondent had stopped. After these seven (Tranche 1) or nine weeks (Tranche 2), fieldwork for members in the web sample group stopped until the mop-up phase, and the F2F samples were issued to interviewers. CAPI fieldwork for the F2F sample in Tranche 1 lasted 16 weeks, and lasted 14 weeks for the F2F sample in Tranche 2. After these periods, the mop-up phase started using the same design as in IP6, and only for continuing sample members (original and IP4 refreshment samples).

Fieldwork was conducted in 2014. The web-only period ran from 21 May to 12 June for Tranche 1 and 21 May to 24 June for Tranche 2. The face-to-face fieldwork for the web sample started 13 June and ran until 9 July for Tranche 1 and from 25 June to 24 July for Tranche 2. The face-to-face fieldwork for the F2F sample ran from 10 July to 19 October for Tranche 1 and 25 July to 19 October for Tranche 2. The mop-up follow-up phase with those not responding in both the web and F2F versions, conducted through CATI with web available was from 20 October to 2 November for both tranches.

Fieldwork procedures at Wave 8 of the Innovation Panel (IP8)

IP8 was conducted in 2015 and was comprised of three samples: the original sample from IP1, the IP4 refreshment sample, and the IP7 refreshment sample. IP8 employed a mixed-mode design, which started in IP5 and has been used in each subsequent wave. At IP8 a subgroup of households with a very low propensity to respond via the web in the web-first group were assigned to the F2F-first group. Very low web propensity was determined by modelling web-completion using IP5, IP6, and IP7 data. The IP7 refreshment sample units were all allocated to the F2F-first design. TNS BMRB conducted fieldwork at IP7 and IP8, after the first six waves were conducted by NatCen.

There was a “soft” launch of the Web phase, consisting of 100 of the Web-first households to identify any problems, with the “main” launch consisting of the remaining households occurring one week later. Initially, advance letters were sent to adults in the Web-first group which included a URL and a unique log-in code. Adults in the Web-first group for whom we had an email address were also sent an email which included a link which could be clicked through to the website. There were two email reminders for adults with an email address who had not yet completed their interview on-line. A reminder letter was then sent

to all adults in the Web-first group who had not completed their interview. This letter was sent two weeks after the initial advance letter for the main Web launch.

After nearly three weeks of the main Web launch being in the field, all adults who had not completed their interview were allocated to face-to-face interviewers, but could still enter the web survey instead if they desired within the next four weeks of fieldwork. Adults who had started their interview on-line, but not reached the 'partial interview' marker, were issued to face-to-face interviewers. The interviewers were able to re-start the interview at the place at which the respondent had stopped. After these seven weeks (eight for the soft launch) the web survey was closed, and only CAPI surveys were conducted until the mop-up phase. The main CAPI fieldwork lasted 16 weeks, after which the mop-up phase started.

The web-only period ran from 6 May to 1 June for the soft launch households and 12 May to 1 June for the main web sample households. The face-to-face fieldwork started 2 June and ran until 16 September. Interviewers could continue to attempt CAPI surveys during the mop-up period. The mop-up follow-up phase attempted interviews with those not responding in both the web-first and F2F-first versions, through CAPI, CATI or web available. This final phase ran from 17 September October to 2 November for both tranches.

Fieldwork procedures at Wave 9 of the Innovation Panel (IP9)

IP9 employed a mixed-mode design, which is similar to the IP8 design. Compared to IP8, the only difference is in the allocation of the IP7 refreshment sample units. At IP9 a random 2/3 of IP7 refreshment sample households were allocated to the web-first group and the remainder to the face-to-face-first group. IP9 was conducted by Kantar Public (formerly TNS BMRB).

There was a “soft” launch of the Web phase, consisting of 100 of the web-first households to identify any problems, with the “main” launch consisting of the remaining households occurring one week later. Initially, advance letters were sent to adults in the web group which included a URL and a unique log-in code. Adults in the web group for whom we had an email address were also sent an email which included a link which could be clicked through to the website. There were two email reminders for adults with an email address who had not yet completed their interview on-line. A reminder letter was then sent to all adults in the web group who had not completed their interview, two weeks after the initial advance letter for the main Web launch.

After nearly three weeks of the main Web launch being in the field, all adults who had not completed their interview were allocated to face-to-face interviewers, but could still enter the web survey instead if they desired within the next four weeks of fieldwork. Adults who had started their interview on-line, but not reached the 'partial interview' marker, were issued to face-to-face interviewers. The interviewers were able to re-start the interview at the place at which the respondent had stopped. After these seven weeks (eight for the soft launch) the Web survey was closed, and only CAPI surveys were conducted until the mop-up phase. The main CAPI fieldwork lasted 16 weeks, after which the mop-up phase started.

The Web-only period ran from 4 May to 7 June 2016 for the soft launch households and 11 May to 8 June for the main Web sample households. The face-to-face fieldwork started 7 June and ran until 16 September 2016. Interviewers could continue to attempt CAPI surveys during the mop-up period. The mop-up follow-up phase attempted interviews with those not responding in both the Web and F2F versions, through CAPI, CATI or Web available. This final phase ran from 16 September to 30 September for both tranches.

Prior to the survey going into the field there were eight half-day briefings for the interviewers. The briefings were conducted by Kantar Public researchers, with staff from ISER contributing to provide information about the study and to talk in more detail about the experiments. The locations of the briefings gave a wide geographic spread across Great Britain. The briefings took place between 10 May and 26 May 2016, with a total of 109 interviewers attending the briefings. All interviewers working on the survey were provided with feedback forms and were asked to fill and return them to the Kantar Public research team at the end of fieldwork.

Fieldwork procedures at Wave 10 of the Innovation Panel (IP10)

At IP10, fieldwork was split between Kantar Public (formerly TNS BMRB) and NatCen Social Research. In England and Wales, face-to-face interviewing assignments were evenly split between Kantar (the lead contractor) and NatCen. Kantar conducted all the face-to-face interviewing assignments in Scotland.

A new refreshment sample was issued at IP10 to be included with the original sample from IP1 and the refreshment samples taken at IP4 and IP7. IP10 employed a mixed-mode design, which started in IP5. IP1 and IP4 samples were allocated to different mode conditions at IP5, while the IP7 refreshment sample units were first allocated to different modes at IP9. The IP10 refreshment sample were all allocated to a F2F.

A soft launch, comprising 10% of all web-first households, took place on 9 May 2017, with the full launch for the remaining web-first households on 18 May 2017. Initially, advance letters were sent to adults in the web group which included a URL and a unique log-in code. Adults in the web group for whom we had an email address were also sent an email which included a link which could be clicked through to the website. There were two email reminders for adults with an email address who had not yet completed their interview on-line. A reminder letter was then sent to all adults in the web group who had not completed their interview, three weeks after the initial advance letter was sent.

Four days after the main launch of the web survey (22 May 2017), the IP10 refreshment sample was issued to interviewers to begin fieldwork. On 15 June 2017, all CAPI-only and adults in the web-first design who had not completed their interview were allocated to face-to-face interviewers for fieldwork. Those in the web-first design could still enter the web survey and complete during the entirety of the fieldwork period. Additionally, some adults in the longitudinal CAPI-first sample group requested to complete the survey online. In these cases, sample members were given their login details by interviewers and allowed to take part online. Adults who had started their interview on-line, but not reached the 'partial

interview' marker, were also issued to face-to-face interviewers. The interviewers were able to re-start the interview at the place at which the respondent had stopped.

The main fieldwork period for all samples and modes ended on 26 September 2017. From this point until 8 October, the mop-up phase commenced. Interviewers could continue to attempt CAPI surveys during the mop-up period. The mop-up follow-up phase attempted interviews with those not responding in both the Web and F2F versions, through CAPI, CATI or Web available.

Prior to the survey going into the field there were eleven half-day briefings carried out by the Kantar Public and NatCen research teams (seven by Kantar Public and four by NatCen), with input from the ISER team who provided background to the experimental nature of the study and described previous findings. The locations of the briefings gave a wide geographic spread across Great Britain. The briefings took place between 13 April and 5 May 2017. All interviewers working on the survey were provided with feedback forms and were asked to fill and return them to the research team at the end of fieldwork. Additionally, Kantar Public and NatCen each held an interviewer debrief session towards the end of the fieldwork period, with a selection of interviewers from different areas.

Fieldwork procedures at Wave 11 of the Innovation Panel (IP11)

At IP11, fieldwork was split between Kantar Public (formerly TNS BMRB) and NatCen Social Research. In England and Wales, face-to-face interviewing assignments were evenly split between Kantar (the lead contractor) and NatCen. Kantar conducted all the face-to-face interviewing assignments in Scotland.

A new refreshment sample was issued at IP11 to be included with the original sample from IP1 and the refreshment samples taken at IP4, IP7, and IP10 to ensure a larger sample size for the upcoming IP12, which will focus on health data collection. IP11 employed a mixed-mode design, which started in IP5. IP1 and IP4 samples were allocated to different mode conditions at IP5, while the IP7 refreshment sample units were first allocated to different modes at IP9. The IP10 refreshment sample was allocated to this design at IP11. Unlike previous refreshment samples, the IP11 sampled households were allocated to either face-to-face or web-first recruitment as part of an experiment (see User Guide 7.16 Invitation letters for mixed mode survey).

A soft launch, comprising 10% of all web-first households, took place on 24 May 2018 with the full launch for the remaining web-first households on 30 May 2018. Initially, advance letters were sent to adults in the web group which included a URL and a unique log-in code. Adults in the web group for whom we had an email address were also sent an email which included a link which could be clicked through to the website. Sample members who had turned 16 since IP10 were sent a slightly different invitation letter, informing them that they were now eligible to take part in the adult survey. There were two email reminders for adults with an email address who had not yet completed their interview on-line. A single reminder letter was then sent to all adults in the web group who had not completed their interview for continuing sample members on June 6. For IP11 refreshment sample members

in the web-first group, two reminder letters were sent to non-responding households, the first on 6 June 2018 and if still no response, the second on 14 June 2018.

CAPI-field work began on 27 June 2018. All CAPI-only households and adults in the web-first design who had not completed their interview were allocated to face-to-face interviewers for fieldwork. Those in the web-first design could still enter the web survey and complete during the entirety of the fieldwork period. Additionally, some adults in the longitudinal CAPI-first sample group requested to complete the survey online. In these cases, sample members were given their login details by interviewers and allowed to take part online. Adults who had started their interview on-line, but not reached the 'partial interview' marker, were also issued to face-to-face interviewers. The interviewers were able to re-start the interview at the place at which the respondent had stopped.

The main fieldwork period for all samples and modes ended in early October 2018. Beginning 10 October, the mop-up phase commenced. Interviewers could continue to attempt CAPI surveys during the mop-up period. The mop-up follow-up phase attempted interviews with those not responding in both the Web and F2F versions, through CAPI, CATI or Web available. Fieldwork ended on 21 October 2018.

Prior to the survey going into the field there were seventeen total briefings carried out by the Kantar Public and NatCen research teams. Ten half-day briefings were carried out for interviewers working on the continuing sample, while seven half-day briefings were held for interviewers working on the IP11 refreshment sample. These briefings were designed with input from the ISER team who provided background to the experimental nature of the study and described previous findings. The locations of the briefings gave a wide geographic spread across Great Britain. The briefings took place between 24 May and 12 June 2018. All interviewers working on the survey were provided with feedback forms and were asked to fill and return them to the research team at the end of fieldwork. Additionally, Kantar Public and NatCen each held an interviewer debrief session towards the end of the fieldwork period, with a selection of interviewers from different areas.

Fieldwork procedures at Wave 12 of the Innovation Panel (IP12)

At Wave 12, fieldwork was split between Kantar Public and NatCen Social Research. IP12 had a focus on health, and for comparisons of biomarkers collected in interview, three types of interviews were conducted: by nurse face-to-face first, interviewer face-to-face first, or web first sequential mixed-mode designs similar to past wave (see User Guide 7.4 Mixed mode experiments: web and face-to-face). Nurse fieldwork was undertaken by NatCen. Interviewer fieldwork in England and Wales was split between Kantar and NatCen, and Kantar undertook all interviewer fieldwork in Scotland.

IP12 consisted of five samples: the original sample from IP and refreshment samples included at IP4, IP7, IP10, and IP11. Due to the change in design and focus at IP12, all sample households were reallocated to one of the three interview designs, independent of the household's past mode allocation. This new allocation at IP12 assigned households in equal proportion to the three modes. Fieldwork took place between 11 July and 24 November

2019. The first six weeks were devoted to web-only data collection. In addition to inter-wave mailings and communication, advance letters were sent to adults in the web group that included a URL and a unique log-in code. Adults in the web group for whom we had an email address were also sent an email that included a link that could be clicked through to the website. Sample members who had turned 16 since IP11 were sent a slightly different invitation letter, informing them that they were now eligible to take part in the adult survey. There were two email reminders for adults with an email address who had not yet completed their interview on-line.

CAPI fieldwork lasted 10 weeks for web-first households, 12.5 weeks for interviewer allocated households, and 15 weeks for nurse allocated households. All CAPI-first households and adults in the web-first design who had not completed their interview were allocated to interviewers for fieldwork (none were allocated to nurses). Those in the web-first design could still enter the web survey and complete during the entirety of the fieldwork period. Additionally, some adults in the CAPI-first sample group requested to complete the survey online and were given login details by interviewers. Adults who had started their interview on-line but not reached the 'partial interview' marker were also issued to face-to-face interviewers. The interviewers were able to restart the interview where the respondent stopped.

For the CAPI-first sample, all eligible sample members aged 16 or over were sent a letter shortly before the start of face-to-face fieldwork. The letter explained that an interviewer or nurse would call soon. Both CAPI-first and web-first letters also included an information leaflet that gave details about the health focus of IP12. This told sample members about the hair and blood samples they would be asked for as part of IP12 and informed them that this sample collection was voluntary, how the samples would be stored and used, and how their data would be kept confidential.

In the last 3 weeks of fieldwork when anyone who had not yet taken part (and did not have an unproductive outcome that would make it inappropriate) was sent a letter (and email, if an email address was available) inviting them to take part online. In the last three weeks of fieldwork, outstanding cases could also be contacted by telephone. Not all live sample was transferred to the CATI mop-up; some face-to-face interviewing was still carried out during these last three weeks. Fieldwork ended on 24 November 2019.

All interviewers and nurses working on the study were fully briefed, at face-to-face briefings, before the start of fieldwork. All interviewers who worked on IP12 were already 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 covered the health aspects of IP12, including gaining accreditations for measuring height, weight and blood pressure. Accreditations involved observing each interviewer complete the full blood pressure, height and weight measuring procedures (using another interviewer as a respondent). As the tasks for nurses included tasks usually undertaken by an interviewer, and as nurses did not have prior knowledge of the study, all nurses attended a different, longer briefing which also covered an introduction to Understanding Society and general fieldwork procedures.

Fieldwork procedures at Wave 13 of the Innovation Panel (IP13)

Due to Covid-19, all households were issued to web-first at IP13. Fieldwork took place between 14 July and 11 November 2020. Households were initially invited to take part online only for the first five weeks of fieldwork. At the end of these five weeks, any households and individuals that had not completed online were issued to an interviewer for contact via the telephone, although the web survey remained open for respondents to complete. At the end of this eight-week period (13 October), the 'mop up' phase began for the remainder of fieldwork, with interviews conducted via the telephone. Both Kantar Public and NatCen Social Research conducted telephone interviews during all fieldwork periods.

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. 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 web-only fieldwork period before households were issued to an interviewer.

Prior to the survey going into the field there were four interviewer briefings carried out by the Kantar Public and NatCen research teams. The Kantar briefings were held on 5, 11 and 13 August, while the only NatCen briefing was also held on the 5 August. Each session was scheduled for about 2.5 hours and covered the experiments carried in IP13, the overall fieldwork design, and survey documents.

Fieldwork procedures at Wave 14 of the Innovation Panel (IP14)

Due to Covid-19, all households were issued to web-first at IP14. Fieldwork took place between 19 May and 29 September 2021. Households were initially invited to take part online only for the first five weeks of fieldwork. At the end of these five weeks, any households and individuals that had not completed online were issued to an interviewer for contact via the telephone, although the web survey remained open for respondents to complete. At the end of the eight-week telephone period, the 'mop up' phase began for the remainder of fieldwork, with interviews conducted via the telephone. Both Kantar Public and NatCen Social Research conducted telephone interviews during all fieldwork periods. The IP14 refreshment sample was only invited to the online survey. Since there was no telephone follow-up for this sample, the fieldwork period was shorter and took place between the 3 September and 3 October 2021.

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. If an email address was known, sample members were also sent an email with a unique link to start the

web survey. 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 web-only fieldwork period before households were issued to an interviewer.

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. Group 1 were sent a prenotification letter, plus two reminder letters; Group 2 were sent a prenotification letter, invitation letter, plus three reminder letters; Group 3 were sent an invitation letter plus three reminder letters. 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'.

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 £5 voucher. The youth questionnaires were posted to a parent who had completed the adult interview, with a request to ask their child to complete and return the paper questionnaire. No youth questionnaires were used for the refreshment sample.

All interviewers who worked on IP14 already had prior experience working on *Understanding Society*. The interviewer briefings therefore focused on the elements of the study that were new to interviewers. The briefings were held shortly before the start of the telephone fieldwork and held by the Kantar Public and NatCen research teams. Each session was scheduled for about 2.5 hours and covered the experiments carried in IP14, the overall fieldwork design, and survey documents.

Fieldwork procedures at Wave 15 of the Innovation Panel (IP15)

Fieldwork for IP15 was undertaken by Kantar Public and NatCen Social Research, working in consortium. Fieldwork took place between 15 June and 25 November 2022. In total, 2966 households were issued at IP15, of which 2578 were 'active' sample households.

Households were allocated to one of the two modes, web-first or CAPI-first, with non-respondents followed up in CAPI, web and CATI. Fieldwork for the web-first sample followed a sequential mixed mode design. Households were initially invited to take part online. At the end of the initial web fieldwork period any 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 that way. A small amount of telephone interviewing (CATI) was also undertaken to 'mop up' any remaining individuals that had not taken part towards the end of fieldwork.

For the CAPI-first groups the majority of fieldwork was completed using face-to-face interviewing (CAPI), supplemented by a small amount of web interviewing and telephone interviewing (CATI) later in fieldwork to 'mop up' individuals and households that had not taken part. During face-to-face fieldwork the web survey was technically available to these groups (and some sample members requested web login information so they could complete online), but was not offered until the last 3 weeks of fieldwork when anyone who had not yet taken part (and did not have an unproductive outcome that would make it inappropriate) was sent a letter (and email, if an email address was available) inviting them to take part online.

The web-first sample had an initial web only fieldwork period of five weeks. At the end of this period any households that had not completed online were issued to a face-to-face interviewer. The time allowed for face-to-face fieldwork was 17 weeks, with a focus on using telephone to 'mop up' any hard-to-reach cases in the last three of these weeks.

For IP15, all health-related measurements were undertaken by interviewers who had been accredited in how to take these measurements. Interviewer fieldwork in England and Wales was split between Kantar Public and NatCen, and Kantar Public undertook all interviewer fieldwork in Scotland.

The advance mailing varied a little depending on issue mode and experiment allocation. For the CAPI-first sample, all eligible sample members aged 16 or over were sent a letter shortly before the start of face-to-face fieldwork. The letter explained that an interviewer would visit soon and would take their height and weight measurements. Additionally, participants were also provided a tape measure and were asked in the advanced letter to undertake their own waist and hip measurements. The advanced letter requested that, once participants had undertaken the measurement, they were to write down their results in a leaflet that accompanied the letter. A change of address card was attached to the bottom of the letter, and the mailing also included a freepost return envelope for the change of address card.

For the web-first sample, 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. Additionally, the web-first sample were also provided a tape measure and asked to record their hip and waist measurements in a leaflet. They were later asked to enter these measurements during their interview. 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.

Both CAPI-first and web-first letters also included an information leaflet that gave more details about their annual interview. Information regarding the focus on health for IP15 was highlighted in the advanced letter. Lastly, there was a COVID leaflet which highlighted how the study was working in-line with Government and Market Research Society guidelines to minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

There were 44 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.

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 web fieldwork period before households were issued to an interviewer.

Fieldwork procedures at Wave 16 of the Innovation Panel (IP16)

Fieldwork took place between 21 June and 8 December 2023. Interviewer fieldwork in England and Wales was split between Verian (formerly Kantar) and NatCen, and Verian undertook all interviewer fieldwork in Scotland. Households were allocated to one of the two modes, web-first or CAPI-first.

Fieldwork for the web-first sample followed a sequential mixed mode design. Households were initially invited to take part online. At the end of the initial web fieldwork period any 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 that way. Telephone interviews were available throughout if requested by respondents. Additionally, there was a web '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 it and included an additional £10 incentive if respondents completed it before the end of fieldwork.

For the CAPI-first group the majority of fieldwork was completed using face-to-face interviewing (CAPI), supplemented by a small amount of web interviewing and telephone interviewing (CATI). During face-to-face fieldwork the web survey was technically available to these groups (and some sample members requested web login information so they could complete online), but it was not offered until the last 3 weeks of fieldwork when anyone who had not yet taken part (and did not have an unproductive outcome that would make it inappropriate) was sent a letter (and email, if an email address was available) inviting them to take part online.

For IP16, there was also a mini survey related to a Red Book experiment which took place before the main survey launched. This mini survey took place between May and June 2023. For this survey, we used IP15 data on household composition to determine who would be eligible for the Red Book experiment (i.e., respondents who had children under the age of 16 in the household). Half of those eligible for the red book experiment were asked to provide details (i.e., a photo or information on their child's Red Book) online ahead of the interview and the other half during the interview. Those in the pre-interview group that did not provide the photo or information were asked to do so in the interview along with the second group. Those eligible for the mini survey were invited via a letter and email which provided an explanation and instructions on how to take part. The letter and email also

mentioned there was a £2 incentive for providing for each child's Red Book information provided. There were no reminders for this mini survey.

Timelines were such that the web-first sample had an initial web fieldwork period of five weeks. At the end of this period any households that had not completed online were issued to a face-to-face interviewer. The time allowed for face-to-face fieldwork was 18 weeks, with a focus on using telephone and online options to 'mop up' any hard-to-reach cases in the final weeks.

There were 70 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.

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 web fieldwork period before households were issued to an interviewer. Additionally, there was a web mop-up reminder letter sent during week 14 of fieldwork to all those who had not completed or refused.

Fieldwork procedures at Wave 17 of the Innovation Panel (IP17)

Fieldwork took place from 17 July 2024 to 31 December 2024. Interviewer fieldwork in England and Wales was split between Verian (formerly Kantar) and NatCen. Verian undertook all interviewer fieldwork in Scotland. Households were allocated to one of the two modes, web-first or CAPI-first.

Fieldwork for the web-first sample followed a sequential mixed mode design. Households were initially invited to take part online. As this was the first time Verian had used the Forsta platform for a survey, the web fieldwork was soft launched on 17 July 2024, with the main launch following on 24 July. At the end of the initial web fieldwork period any 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 web '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 web 'mop up' letter was despatched on 16 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 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 web ‘mop up’ letter (and email, where available) inviting them to complete the survey online.

The web-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. Face-to-face fieldwork then ran for 18.5 weeks, from 22 August to 31 December, with a focus on using telephone and online modes to ‘mop up’ hard-to-reach cases during the final weeks of fieldwork.

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.

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 web fieldwork period, prior to households being issued to an interviewer. In addition, a web ‘mop up’ reminder letter was sent in week 17 of fieldwork to all remaining participants who had neither completed the survey nor explicitly refused.

Fieldwork problems at Wave 17 resulting in under-worked households

Response was lower **at Wave 17** than at Wave 16, with the main difference being more “non-contact” and “other unproductive” households at Wave 17. “Other unproductive” includes cases where the interviewer managed to make contact but not to arrange an interview (but sample members did not refuse). It also includes the cases where household interviewing completed on the web was lost where interviewers did not manage to re-complete the grid face-to-face (see the section of the User Guide on known data issues at Wave 17 for more information).

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 did not have time to fully work on their issued sample. Fieldwork at Wave 17 was conducted by two organisations, with the primary fieldwork agency also being responsible for creation of the interview script. Interviewers working for the other fieldwork agency had a planned late staggered start, to allow time for their systems to be updated to work with new interviewing software used by the primary fieldwork agency.

There was also a short delay to starting web-first cases due to a vulnerability that was picked up at the start of CAPI fieldwork which showed it might be possible for CAPI interviewing to overwrite web response data. This was fixed within four weeks. This was a

separate issue to the web-CAPI overwrite issue that caused grid data to be lost for 156 household (described in the User Guide section on known data issues at Wave 17).

References

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