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UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS) Wave 3

Technical Report



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Introduction

The UK Household Longitudinal Study, also known as Understanding Society, is a longitudinal household panel study commissioned by the Economic and Social Research Council, led by the Institute for Social and Economic Research and delivered by NatCen Social Research and its partners. In its first wave almost 40,000 households were interviewed. Taken as a whole, it is the largest study of its kind in the world. This report sets out the methodology used in the third wave of mainstage data collection.

1.1 Background

With data from Wave 2 available in the Data Archive from January 2013, Understanding Society is already providing valuable new evidence about the lives, experiences, behaviours and beliefs of people across the country. In doing so, it enables an unprecedented understanding of the diversity of the population, assists with understanding the long-term effects of social and economic change and allows an assessment of policy interventions designed to improve the general well-being of the UK population. The data are designed to be used by academic researchers, researchers in the third sector, journalists, commentators and policy-makers within local and national government

1.2 Overview of methodology

The sample for the third wave comprised three key groups:

- the **General Population** (GP) sample, the result of successful interviews at Wave 1 of a Postcode Address File (PAF) sample in Great Britain (GB) and the Land and Property Services Agency (LPSA) list of domestic properties in Northern Ireland (NI);
- the **British** and **Northern Ireland Household Panel Survey** (BHPS and NIHPS) samples, which were incorporated into Understanding Society at Wave 2; and
- the **Ethnic Minority Boost** (EMB) sample, the result of oversampling in areas with a higher density of ethnic minority participants.

The study collects data from all household members aged 10 and above on an annual basis. Annual interviewing allows us to track relatively short-term or frequent changes in people's lives, and the factors that are associated with them. Interviewing all members of the household allows researchers to understand how changes in one household member's circumstances can impact on others'. As the years of the survey build up we will be able to look at longer-term outcomes for people in the sample.

As in previous waves, the Wave 3 interview consisted of a number of elements: a household questionnaire; an individual questionnaire for each household member aged 16+ (including, new for this wave, a self-completion section); a youth self-completion questionnaire for those aged 10-15; and consent for linking to administrative health records. The household and individual adult questionnaires were administered by computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI), with the self-completion section using computer-assisted self interviewing (CASI). For youths, a paper self-completion questionnaire was used.

The Wave 3 adult interview covered a range of topics, many of which carried the same questions as in previous waves to allow longitudinal comparisons. Topics covered on the individual adult questionnaire included: local neighbourhood, membership of organisations, health, caring, relationships, employment, the family, welfare benefits, politics and media consumption. A number of other modules were included specifically for the EMB sample, as well as baseline questions for new entrants. In addition, a module of cognitive tests was included. The Wave 3 youth self-completion questionnaire included questions about the use of technology, family, aspirations, education, money, health, nutrition and attitudes.

1.3 Outputs

With the dataset now available for Waves 1 and 2, a growing number of academic studies are being published making use of it. The study is also gaining widespread attention in the media. Publications, working papers and the latest news coverage are available on the Understanding Society website, www.understandingsociety.ac.uk.

2 Survey Design

This section sets out the sample issued to the field at Wave 3 and the fieldwork timetable.

2.1 Sample

The issued sample for Wave 3 consisted of 35,634 productive and unproductive (except adamant refusal) households issued in previous waves of the study¹. While there were distinct sample groups, interviewers received a mixture of households.

2.1.1 Understanding Society sample

At Wave 3, the Understanding Society sample included the General Population (GP) sample, the biggest single group of participants in the overall sample; and an Ethnic Minority Boost sample (EMB) sample, which was sampled independently at Wave 1. The EMB sample and a subset of the GP sample known as the General Population Comparison Sample (GPC) received an additional set of questions at this wave. The GPC sample allows a comparison of the additional questions asked of the EMB sample amongst the non-ethnic minority population, without burdening all GP participants with the additional questionnaire length.

2.1.2 BHPS and NIHPS samples

These samples were incorporated into the first year of fieldwork only. BHPS addresses were incorporated into assignments including Understanding Society addresses based on geographical proximity, such that an interviewer's assignment could contain a mixture of GP, EMB and BHPS cases.

2.2 Fieldwork design

Response rates for each group were monitored separately, in part due to different targets for each group. Interviewers were briefed to be conscious of the distinct participation history and composition of the sample types and to adjust their approach accordingly. The type of sample was indicated on each household's Address Record Form (ARF).

2.2.1 Fieldwork months

The sample was issued in 24 fieldwork months from January 2011 to December 2012. Households in the Understanding Society sample were issued in the same monthly sample they were issued to in Wave 1. BHPS/NIHPS households were issued in the same month they were incorporated into in Wave 2, although they were only interviewed in the first year of Wave 3. Moving households between sample months was not possible.

Each fieldwork month consisted of three periods: first issue, reissue and mop-up. In Great Britain, first issue fieldwork began on the 8th of each month, except in August

¹ Full information on the original sampling approach can be found in the UKHLS Wave 1 Technical Report

and December, when interviewers started work on the 1st because of the holiday period. In Northern Ireland, fieldwork for each sample month began on the 1st of the month. The first issue period lasted six weeks; interviewers were instructed to visit all households within the first four weeks and to use the last two weeks for appointments for those who were not able to take part in the first four weeks, and for tracing of movers (although tracing began immediately following a mover being identified). There followed a two-week break, in which cases that were not successfully traced in the field were returned to ISER for office tracing.

The reissue period started in week nine and ran until the end of week 12. This period was for interviewing traced movers, for continuing field tracing of cases not successfully located in the office tracing period, and for reissued households. Reissued households are those who were unproductive in the first issue period but for whom it was felt a productive interview might have been obtained with further effort.

The mop-up period continued for four weeks at the end of the reissue period and was for re-allocated cases following field or office tracing. In all, fieldwork for each issued month continued for four months, e.g. year 1 January fieldwork (JA1) continued until 8th May 2011.

2.2.2 CATI reissues

In order to reduce attrition as far as possible, an additional fieldwork stage was introduced from July 2012 onwards in which unproductive or partially productive households were attempted using computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). Fieldwork months AP2 – DE2 were included in the CATI reissue. GB cases were transferred to NatCen's Multi-Mode Unit (MMU) to be attempted by telephone interviewers. Criteria for inclusion in CATI reissues were: whole households that were unproductive due to non-contact, soft refusal or inability to locate; as well as partially productive households containing individuals who were recorded as non-contact, soft refusal, having broken their appointment time or being ill or away during the face-to-face fieldwork period.

CATI reissues took place in a four-week window immediately following the end of the face-to-face fieldwork period. The CATI instrument was used, which is identical to the CAPI version of the questionnaire except for edits to take account of the different mode (e.g. no references to showcards) and the removal of some CASI modules deemed too sensitive to be asked over the telephone.

2.3 BHPS CATI sample

There was also a sample of 388 households from the BHPS sample group who were issued straight to the MMU for a telephone interview. These households had previously expressed a preference for telephone, as opposed to face-to-face, interviewing. These households were split into four subsamples and issued to the MMU in the MR1, JE1, SE1 and DE1 sample months.

3 Contact and co-operation

In this section we describe the documents and procedures used for contacting participants and encouraging participation.

3.1 Between wave mailing

To keep participants informed about and engaged in the study, mailings were scheduled on a quarterly basis to a sub-sample of participants. The intention was that sample members would be mailed roughly six months after their interview at the previous wave (and therefore roughly six months before their Wave 3 interview).

The mailings were sent in branded envelopes to all adults, and included:

- A letter on Understanding Society-branded paper. The letter was tailored depending on whether the participant had registered on the participants' section of the Understanding Society website. Letters to those who were not registered included a personalised invitation code, encouraging them to register online.
- Change of address form. This form was mail-merged with participants' contact details, encouraging them to update their details if they had changed. Participants were offered a £5 voucher issued by ISER if they updated their address information.
- Freepost return envelope for the change of address form.

Tailored findings report (an example of the Generic report is included in

Figure 3:1 Generic between-wave mailing report

-). The reports were based on early analysis of data collected between January and March 2010, were A5 and up to six pages in length. They were tailored for the following groups:
 - Generic
 - Young adults
 - Workers
 - Older people
 - Ethnic minorities
 - BHPS sample members.

Figure 3:1 Generic between-wave mailing report

Participants' Update

Crunch time for jobs

The UK's unemployment rate has remained lower than it was at the same stage in the recessions of the 80s and 90s. Understanding Society collected information throughout 2009, the peak of the recession, and will continue to collect information to enable researchers to look at how people's lives are being affected by the economic crisis.

Dr Mark Taylor has taken a first look at the information collected about the current jobs market. He found that around 70% of both men and women of working age are in work. More men than women are in full-time (rather than part-time) work and in self-employment. He also found that the construction, wholesale/retail and hospital sectors have been hardest hit.

From one generation to another

On average, around 4 out of 10 adults have a higher level of education than their parents. A similar proportion of adults have around the same level of education as their parents, whilst just 2 out of 10 have a lower level – although many of these are people who have not yet completed their education.

The proportion of people who have more educational qualifications than their parents decreases with age, reflecting the expansion of university-level education since the 1960s. Education makes a difference to employment as well. One third of people with no job have more qualifications than their parents compared with more than half of the people who do have a job.

www.understandingsociety.org.uk/participants

Keep in touch

Thanks again for taking part in Understanding Society. We hope you think these early findings from the survey are as interesting as we do. If you want to know more about the survey you've joined with or about these and other findings, take a look at the website at www.understandingsociety.org.uk/participants where you can also update your details if they have changed.

We are always pleased to hear from you. You can call the Understanding Society team on 0800 252 553. Colette Lo and Sandra Jones will try to answer any questions you might have.

You can also email us at understandingsociety@essex.ac.uk

Or you can write to us at
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Understanding Society is an initiative by the Economic and Social Research Council, with scientific leadership by the Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex, and survey delivery by the National Centre for Social Research.



Participants' Update

Providing valuable new evidence about people's lives, behaviours and beliefs in the UK

www.understandingsociety.org.uk/participants

Findings from Understanding Society

What you tell us matters! To thank you for taking the time to participate in this really valuable and important survey, we want you to be the first to know about what we have found out. If you want to know more, please take a look at the special website we have created for you and all the other people who are taking part at www.understandingsociety.org.uk/participants. While you're on the website, why not log-on to check and update your details. If you have moved address and you tell us your new address details, we'll send you £5 as a thank you for keeping us up to date.

When we interviewed you recently, we asked you lots of different questions about your health, how you get on with members of your family and how much you spend on groceries. All your responses have been looked at by our specialist team of researchers at the University of Essex to see what they tell us about life in the UK today. Here are some of the things they have found so far that we thought you might find interesting.

For more details about any of the findings in this report, please go to www.understandingsociety.org.uk/participants.

Getting on with the family

One of the special aspects of Understanding Society is that we talk to everyone in your household over the age of 10. This means we are able to look at relationships such as those between partners or parents and children. We can also look at what difference it makes when someone leaves home or comes to live with you – for example if someone dies or gets married.

Our research team has found that many of us grow less and less happy with our partner over time. Women are, on average, less happy in their relationships than men. People who are married are happier with their partner than those who are simply living together.

Childless couples tend to be happiest with their relationships, and those with pre-school children are least happy – although levels of happiness rise as the youngest child grows older. This suggests that although having a child can put a strain on a relationship, this is temporary.

Children who don't quarrel with either parent more than once a week, and who discuss important matters with either parent at least occasionally tend to be happiest, as are children who eat an evening meal with their family.

Feeling ok?

The population of the UK is changing, increasing as well as getting older. Understanding Society allows researchers to follow you and others like you as you get older, as your health changes and as you experience different health issues.

Professor Amanda Sacker and Dr Cara Booker have analysed some of the health information on the survey. Around half of you rate your health as excellent or very good. There's no difference between men and women, but unsurprisingly the older we get the more likely we are to report suffering with our health.

Just over one in ten people of working age told us they had a long-term illness that had troubled them for at least a year, and almost two in ten had a long-term illness that limited what they were able to do. However, people with a long-term illness were just as likely to be working than those without – around three quarters of each group were in work. Those with a long-term illness that limited their activity, though, were much less likely to be working – with just one half being in work.

With lots of discussion going on about increasing the age at which we can retire and claim our state pension, our team of health researchers took a look at people who were above the current retirement age but below the age of 70 and found that of those who were not working, 43% had a limiting long-term illness. This suggests that whilst the majority of you who are retired could be employed, there would still be a large minority of people unable to work.

Food and drink

In 2009 we asked you about how much your household spent on food eaten at home, food bought outside the home and alcohol. In 2010, we repeated this question. This is useful for researchers who are looking at how much income people receive as well as what they spend. Asking the same question again also helps researchers see how our spending habits have changed and judge what impact the recession is having.

We asked how much your household spent every month on food and groceries from food shops or markets. The average amount was £305 in 2010. Households in England spent a little more, on average, on food shopping (£311) and Scotland (£276) and Wales (£264) spent less than average. The 2010 figure was an increase of £26 from the average in 2009.

Looking at changes between 2009 and 2010, the biggest increase was in England, where households were spending £30 more than they had been one year earlier. In Scotland and Wales, households were spending around £13-14 more. Spending in Northern Ireland hardly changed over the year.

We asked about money spent on food outside the home, such as in restaurants, cafes and takeaways. The UK average was £68 per month, but Welsh households tended to spend less, around £55 per month. Finally we asked about spending on alcohol. The UK average was around £45 per month, down £5 from 2009. The figure for England was close to the average, with Welsh and Scottish households spending less (around £38) and households in Northern Ireland spending more (£52). All areas of the UK saw less spending on alcohol in 2010 than 2009, especially Scotland where households spent on average £11.50 less per month.



3.2 Advance mailing

Advance mailing packs were sent to all adults in issued households and scheduled to arrive around a week before the start of fieldwork. The packs consisted of an advance letter, change of address card and freepost return envelope and £10 unconditional incentive (except in Northern Ireland, where previous wave unproductives are provided an incentive only after completing an interview).

Five versions of the advance letter were used; the specific letter a participant received depended on their sample type (Understanding Society / BHPS) and previous wave participation (productive / unproductive). Additionally, participants who had turned 16 since the previous wave ('rising 16s') were sent a letter welcoming them to the study.

All letters were sent on the Understanding Society letterhead, signed from the Director of Understanding Society, Professor Nick Buck, and sent in an Understanding Society branded envelope.

If a participant had contacted ISER to update their address since their previous interview this change was reflected in the address to which the advance mailing was sent. If, following tracing, a participant was found to have moved (and thus not have received their advance mailing), interviewers would provide them with a generic advance letter, a change of address card and freepost return envelope, and, if a productive interview was obtained, notified the office to provide a new incentive. Generic advance letters were also administered to new entrants to the study.

3.3 Incentives

3.3.1 Adults

As mentioned, an incentive was included with the advance mailing. It was unconditional, so the respondent was able to use it even if they decided not to participate in the study. All adults received £10, either in the form of a High Street Gift Voucher (HSGV) or Post Office gift voucher (from August 2010).

At the launch of the wave, all participants received HSGVs. These are paper vouchers and could be exchanged at participating stores. From August 2010, an experiment was conducted involving the use of Post Office vouchers. The sample was divided into two experimental groups – one continued receiving the HSGV as normal, while the other received a Post Office voucher.

Post Office vouchers have a number of benefits as opposed to traditional gift vouchers. They can be exchanged for cash at all branches of the Post Office, meaning that participants have more freedom in terms of how they use their incentive – for example, they can use it anywhere, as opposed to just participating stores. In addition, as the money is held centrally by the Post Office, if the voucher is not cashed for any reason (for example, it has been delivered to an incorrect address and not returned to ISER), the money is refunded minus a small administration fee; this saves a considerable amount on project budgets.

The incentive experiment ran for three fieldwork months (August – October). Despite the benefits of Post Office vouchers, the experiment showed that response was slightly lower amongst participants in the BHPS sample who received Post Office vouchers. While it is difficult to be certain, it is possible that this was due to this sample's familiarity with the previous incentive scheme during their long-standing association with the study.

As such, at the launch of Wave 4 in January 2012 the decision was taken to use Post Office vouchers for Understanding Society participants only, with BHPS participants continuing to receive the HSGV. As year 2 of all waves (including Wave 3) contains only Understanding Society participants, Post Office vouchers were used for the remainder of Wave 3.

3.3.2 Youths

Incentive amounts for youths who complete their paper questionnaire varied by sample type. For the Understanding Society sample, £3 was issued. For BHPS sample members the amount was £5. Interviewer documentation noted which sample group each participant was in and therefore how much to promise each participant.

Interviewers did not hand vouchers directly to participants. Instead they issued a promissory note and then requested via their laptop the amount to be issued to

participants by the office. Vouchers were sent to youths within ten days of being requested by an interviewer.

Promissory notes

Where a voucher was to be issued by the office, for example where a productive interview was obtained with someone who had not already received an incentive, or where a youth self-completion questionnaire was returned during the course of the interview, participants were provided a promissory note.

The promissory note set out how much the participant was to receive, the time period in which they could expect to receive it, and noted their personal identifiers so they could contact the office with any queries or problems they might have.

3.4 Address Record Forms (ARFs) and Sample Information Sheets (SISs)

Interviewers were provided with a considerable amount of information about households as part of their workpacks. This information was carried on Address Record Forms (ARFs) and Sample Information Sheets (SISs), produced for each household in their allocation. The documents enabled interviewers to plan their first contact with households and to tailor their approach on the doorstep.

As well as basic information such as address, sample type and previous wave participation, the ARF also allowed interviewers to keep a record of their attempts to contact the household during the fieldwork period and to track their progress in achieving individual interviews and self-completions.

The SIS contained more detailed information such as individual employment status, comments entered by the interviewer relating to households or individuals at the previous wave, and information about stable contacts should the interviewer be unable to contact the participant at the issued address.

3.5 First contact with sample members

The first contact was attempted via a personal visit from the interviewer at the issued address. Interviewers were instructed not to telephone households issued face-to-face to make contact in the first instance. Interviewers used other contact information – for example stable contact address details, telephone numbers etc. – if face-to-face contact at the issued address was not possible (see section 4 on movers and tracing for more information). The first contact with CATI sample members after their advance letter was by telephone.

A number of supporting documents were provided to face-to-face interviewers to assist them with gaining co-operation on the doorstep:

- Branded appointment and broken appointment cards. These allowed interviewers to confirm interview times, to leave a note where the participant was not available at the agreed time, and encouraged participants to contact the office with any messages for the interviewer.
- Laminated generic advance letter. This was an un-tailored version of the advance letters participants would have received in the advance mailing, for use with those who did not receive, or did not remember receiving, their advance mailing. Non-laminated copies were also provided to be left with the participant if necessary.

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- 'Information for Participants' leaflet. This included background to the study and more information on the interview itself. While this was primarily designed for new entrants, it was also available for continuing sample members.

4 Movers and tracing

Every effort was made to ensure that up to date contact information was held for participants, for example by providing a change of address card and incentivising address updates at each point of contact with participants. In this section we outline procedures used by interviewers and ISER in situations where participants were no longer at the address held for the household.

Three categories of mover are defined as:

- Whole household moves. All participants have moved away from the original address (to one or several new addresses).
- Split-off moves. One or more (but not all) participants have moved to another address, while some members remain at the original address.
- Moves to institutions. Where participants have moved to an ‘institution’, for example a prison or nursing home. These may be whole household (for example a single-person household) or split-off moves (for example where one member of the household has moved to a care home). People in institutions remain eligible for interview except for those who have gone to prison.

4.1 Tracing procedures

Interviewers were instructed to begin tracing as soon as they learnt of a move. A significant portion of the Wave 3 briefing was dedicated to tracing procedures, it was covered in detail in project instructions for interviewers, and a checklist was provided in the ARF.

Interviewers used the information on the ARF to:

- Call sample members, where telephone numbers were recorded.
- Where participants had provided information, to visit, call or send a letter to ‘stable contact’ – a person the sample member has nominated to provide up to date information on their current whereabouts if we were to lose in touch with them.

Interviewers also attempted to contact neighbours and the current occupants of the recorded address. Should these individuals know where the participant was, but felt uncomfortable with providing the interviewer with the new address information, a tracing letter was issued. This was designed to be sent to the participant on the interviewers’ behalf, asking for them to provide information about their current whereabouts.

Where these tracing methods failed to obtain an updated address, the case was passed to ISER, along with information about tracing activities carried out, for further tracing activities. Where ISER were successful in tracing, information was passed to NatCen’s Operations unit, logged in the system, and passed on to the interviewer, or reallocated to another interviewer in another area of the country, so that an interview could be attempted at the new address.

For the BHPS CATI sample, the stable contact and any additional phone numbers recorded for the household were called and a software package which includes publicly-available records for up-to-date information was consulted.

4.2 Split-off households

In some situations interviewers had pre-notification on the ARF of a participant that had split-off from the original household. In these situations participants were still listed in the original household and interviewers were instructed to visit that household first to confirm that the participant in question did not live there any more.

When a move was confirmed, interviewers opened a new household on their laptop and coded that the participant was now resident in another address.

4.3 Institutions

Sample members who have moved to an institution remain eligible for interview at their new address, except for those who were in prison. In this latter, if a split-off mover had gone to prison they would be coded as 'temporarily absent' from the household if the household indicated that they were likely to return to the household after release. Single-person households and split-off movers not returning to the household would be coded out as ineligible in the event that the respondent went to prison.

In all other institutional situations, interviewers were instructed to attempt to interview participants where possible, bearing in mind sensitivities relating to, for example, the reason for a participant being moved to a nursing home, and the potential difficulty with negotiating access to an institution via gatekeepers.

5 Translations

A key aim of the ULHLS study is to capture the experiences and attitudes of those usually excluded from participation in social research projects. This section describes how those who were unable to complete an interview in English were interviewed.

5.1 Formal translations

In these interviews, both the CAPI programme and survey materials were translated into particular languages. The interviews were then conducted by accredited bi-lingual interviewers or, where a bi-lingual interviewer was unavailable, an English-speaking interviewer accompanied by an interpreter.

The questionnaire was translated into the following nine languages: Arabic, Bengali, Cantonese, Gujarati, Punjabi Gurmukhi, Punjabi Urdu, Somali, Urdu and Welsh.

These languages (except for Welsh) were chosen having been identified as the most widely spoken by the ethnic minority groups within the sample, and where English may also not be spoken readily by these ethnic groups. For example, Hindi is one of the most widely spoken languages in the UK, but as the majority of Hindi speakers also speak English it was not one of the nine nominated languages.

5.1.1 Translation process

All core survey materials, as well as the full questionnaire, were translated into each of the languages listed above. This included advance materials. Participants received a letter translated into their language in advance of the interviewer attending where they had given a translated interview at the previous wave or where a request for a translated interview had been recorded.

Where no translated interview was undertaken at the previous wave and/or no translation request was noted, interviewers used a translation card to find out which language the participant required translation into. Arrangements were then made by the office for these to be carried out.

Translation of materials and the questionnaire was undertaken in the first instance by a translation agency that specialised in multi-language services such as translations, proof reading and type setting. Once translated, the text was checked by a separate translation agency to ensure accuracy. Checkers logged any comments or concerns and passed these back to the original agency.

For materials, once the translated text had been signed off it was then typeset into the Understanding Society design templates and proofread a final time by the original translators to ensure that the sentence structure was correct.

For the CAPI questionnaire, the same process as described above was used but this took place using NatCen's bespoke Language Management Utility (LMU), an online platform for survey translation developed for NatCen by CentERdata. Within the LMU, individual user accounts were set up for translators, checkers and administrators for each of the nine languages, which allowed access to different levels of functionality within the LMU. The translation process was controlled by assigning a status to each question that required translation. The different statuses were:

-
1. Awaiting translation
 2. Translated – ready for proofreading
 3. Proofread – ready for checking
 4. Checked – comments to review
 5. Translation completed

Following this process both the questionnaire and survey documentation was ready to be used in the field.

5.1.2 Accredited bi-lingual interviewers and interpreters

For formal translation requests, only NatCen accredited bi-lingual interviewers or interpreters were permitted to conduct the actual interview. Interviewers undertook a robust accreditation process involving a number of tests and were assessed by a panel of independent agency interpreters. Each interviewer was required to complete oral and reading tests, a comprehension test in both English and the language they were being assessed for, followed by a dummy interview where they translated the English text and answers verbatim into the language being assessed and vice versa.

Bilingual NatCen interviewers were trained to manage the CAPI and so were able to conduct the interview themselves without additional support. The NatCen interpreters did not have experience of using a CAPI and so they were accompanied by an English-speaking NatCen interviewer to help manage the technical aspects of the questionnaire. Furthermore, the accompanying interviewer could use their doorstep and interview skills in building rapport, and provide a level of quality assurance. If a NatCen bilingual interviewer or interpreter was not available to cover the appointment, an agency interpreter accompanied the English speaking NatCen interviewer.

5.2 Informal translations

Where the questionnaire was not translated into a language the participant required, informal translations were allowed for people who spoke these other languages. These translations were dealt with by family members, neighbours, or close friends. Interviewers were asked to ensure they had confidence in the ability of informal translators to understand and interpret the questionnaire content sufficiently well.

6 The interview

The principal data collection instrument at wave 3, as in previous waves, was a detailed CAI interview administered either face-to-face or over the telephone to household members aged 16+. In addition, a self-completion questionnaire was administered using computer-assisted self interviewing (CASI) to adults and a paper questionnaire to participants aged 10-15. This was the first wave at which the adult self-completion was in CASI mode, rather than a paper questionnaire.

6.1 CAI questionnaire

The main CAI questionnaire had a number of constituent parts. These were:

- Household questionnaire (9.4 minutes) (including the enumeration of the household – approximately 5 min).
- Individual Adult CAI questionnaire (39.5 minutes) for all aged 16+ (general population sample).
- Individual Adult CAI questionnaire (38.4 minutes) for all aged 16+ (ethnic boost sample and general population comparison sample).
- Individual CASI questionnaire (11.6 minutes) for all aged 16+ (general population sample).
- Individual CASI questionnaire (13.7 minutes) for all aged 16+ (ethnic boost sample and general population comparison sample).
- CAI proxy questionnaire (4.6 minutes) for use when the named participant is unable to take part.

Timings shown above are median averages. The adult questionnaire contains extensive routing; individual interview lengths therefore varied considerably. The main factors affecting routing, and therefore interview length, were employment status, number of children in the household, whether the participant receives benefits and whether the participant is a new entrant or a previous participant.

As in previous waves, CAI instruments were programmed using Blaise software. Blaise was well suited to the necessarily complex and sophisticated nature of the Understanding Society questionnaire. The same instrument was used for both CAPI and CATI versions of the questionnaire, with appropriate adjustments to account for mode-type.

The CAPI structure for the main questionnaire consisted of 5 parallel blocks, as indicated below:

- Household questionnaire
- Individual questionnaire (one block per adult, aged 16+)
- CASI
- Youth self-completion
- Consent Help
- Admin

More information on the topics covered in the Wave 3 questionnaire can be found on the Understanding Society website.

6.1.1 Cognitive ability module

The cognitive module was designed to assess the memory, concentration, numeracy and literacy of participants. It contained the following tests:

- Word recall
- Subtraction
- Number sequences
- Verbal fluency
- Numeric ability

Consistency and accuracy is important in these kinds of tests so that results can be compared both within the Understanding Society sample and against other studies that carry these tests. Interviewers were given detailed written instructions as well as face-to-face briefing on how to conduct the tests in this module.

Interviewers were asked to, wherever possible, ensure that the environment in which the tests were being conducted was as private and quiet as possible – to ensure that there was no distraction or assistance. During the tests, interviewers were encouraging towards participants but did not give any specific feedback or assistance beyond what was specified in the instructions. Supportive but brief phrases such as ‘Just keep trying’ and ‘You can do it’ were used but participants were not informed of their score.

At the end of each test section, interviewers coded if there was anyone else present during the test and, if so, whether it was a household member or not. They were also asked whether anyone present gave assistance to the participant, whether there were any problems (e.g. technical difficulties, difficulty hearing the words) when administering the test, or whether the participant used any aids (such as a pen and paper) where they were not allowed. Finally, if the test was stopped or refused, the reason was noted. More information on the background to the Cognitive Ability tests and their thorough testing in NatCen’s Questionnaire Development and Testing Hub can be found on the Understanding Society website².

6.1.2 CASI

In previous waves, a paper self-completion was used for adults. However, testing on the Innovation Panel had shown that computer-assisted self interviewing was likely to increase response rates and reduce item non-response. As such, from Wave 3, the adult self-completion was administered via the laptop.

6.2 Youth self-completions

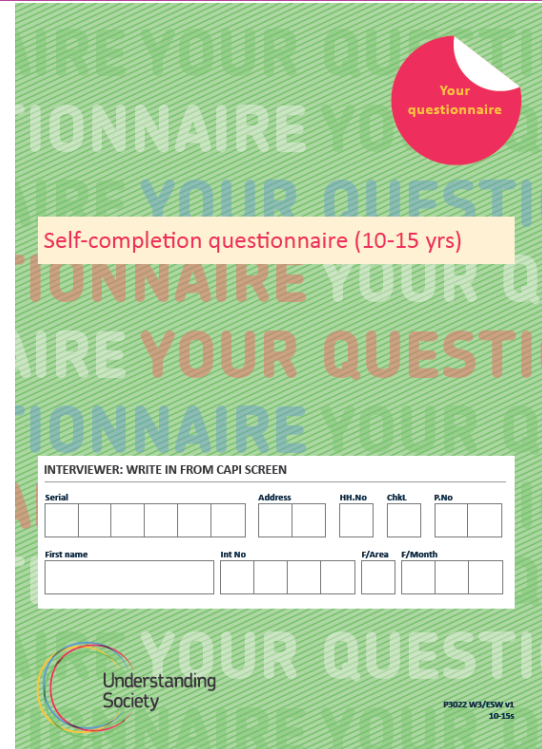
² Gray et al, Cognitive testing of Understanding Society: the UK household longitudinal study questionnaire, Understanding Society Working Paper 2008-04.

<https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/publications/working-papers/understanding-society/2008-04>

The self-completion for participants aged 10-15 continued to be administered on paper on Wave 3. Interviewers were encouraged to ask the respondents to complete the questionnaires while they were still at the address, or to collect the questionnaires when they returned for a second or subsequent visit. This was to ensure that we secured a high response rate for this element of the study. As a last resort, interviewers were able to leave a questionnaire, together with a reply-paid envelope, for participants to complete at a later time.

Interviewers asked a parent or responsible adult for verbal consent or assent before giving a self-completion questionnaire to a young person. Parents were not permitted to help the young people complete the questionnaire; though they were anxious about its content they were shown a blank questionnaire so that they could assess the nature of the questions. If the young person needed help with the questionnaire, they were encouraged to ask the interviewer for assistance. Blank envelopes were given to the young people so that they could seal the questionnaires before returning them to the interviewer, preserving confidentiality within the household.

Figure 6:1 Youth self-completion



or
if
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for

6.2.1 Welsh translation

The youth self-completion was translated into Welsh, but no other language. The process used to translate the document is the same as set out above (section 5.1.1).

In setting up translations for a later wave of the study, an error in the Welsh version of the questionnaire was identified: at question 38 one answer category was missing from the Welsh version.

After investigating the practical implications of this error, NatCen's Data Unit checked the actual scanned youth self-completions for the young people (seven in total) whose language was coded as 'Welsh' in CAPI. In fact each of these young people had completed an English version of the self-completion questionnaire. Therefore, among the group of young people where we would expect a Welsh version to be used, there are no actual implications of this error.

7 Briefings and interviewer documents

7.1 Briefings

Many of the interviewers working on Wave 3 would have worked on previous waves of the study, including the Innovation Panel. This led us to design a briefing strategy that delivered three types of briefing. For the most part, briefings were delivered by a member of NatCen’s research team with, in many cases, the assistance of ISER staff. In some cases, for experienced interviewers, briefings were led by NatCen’s field staff who themselves had received specific training on how to brief Wave 3. The content and structure of the Wave 3 briefing evolved compared to previous waves and is set out below. In total, around 675 interviewers were briefed in 85 full-day briefings.

Two styles of briefing were designed. For interviewers who had not worked on Understanding Society before, a significant part of the morning included the background to the study, including its objectives, history and design. For experienced interviewers, less information was included on the background to the study. Topics covered in both types of briefing included:

- Sample members: contact and co-operation, who to interview
- ARFs, split households, tracing and movers
- Translations
- Interview process
- CAPI
- Cognitive ability
- Admin tasks

7.2 Interviewer documents

- Generic Advance letters (laminated and non-laminated)
- Information leaflets: ‘Understanding Society: Information for Participants’ and ‘From Living in Britain to Understanding Society’
- Living in Britain leaflet
- Youth self-completion
- Pre-franked envelopes for returning self-completions
- Tracing and Stable Contact letters
- Change of address (COA) cards
- Free post envelopes for COA cards, tracing letters and stable contact letters
- Appointment and Broken Appointment cards
- Showcards
- Doorstep flyer
- Understanding Society pens
- Participants’ Update 2

8 Response

In this section we describe the response rates to the third wave of Understanding Society.

8.1 Household level response

A total of 35,634 households were issued to interviewers in Wave 3. Of these, 24,612 households were in the GP sample; 3,445 were in the EMB sample; 7,189 were in the BHPS sample and 388 were issued to the Multi-Mode Unit as CATI cases.

Figure 8:1 % Distribution of sample types within issued sample



Within the **General Population (GP) sample**:

- 1,395 additional households were generated as a result of households splitting from the previous wave, and 1,346 households were ineligible (for example through death or leaving the UK). This left a total of 24,661 GP households who were eligible for interview.
- Of the 21,667 households that were productive at Wave 2, 83 per cent were productive (64 per cent fully productive); below the target of 86 per cent for this sample group. This is despite reissuing 2,805 households (13 per cent of the eligible sample).
- Of the 2,994 that were not productive at Wave 2, 32 per cent were productive (20 per cent fully productive); above the target of 25 per cent for sample that was unproductive at the previous wave. 889 households (30 per cent of the eligible sample) were reissued from this sample group.

Within the **Ethnic Minority Boost (EMB) sample**:

- 294 additional households were generated as a result of household splits, and 183 households were ineligible. This created a total of 3,556 Ethnic Minority Boost households that were eligible for interview.
- Amongst the 2,836 of these that were productive at Wave 2, 79 per cent were productive (50 per cent were fully productive), below the target response rate of 82 per cent. 597 households (21 per cent of the eligible sample) were reissued.
- Of the 720 EMB cases that were not productive at Wave 2, 40 per cent were productive (20 per cent fully productive), higher than the equivalent GP and BHPS/NIHPS sample. 270 households (38 per cent of the sample) were reissued.

Within the **BHPS and NIHPS samples**:

- 438 additional households were generated through household splits, and 431 households were ineligible, leaving 7,196 households eligible for an interview.
- The response rate for the 6,540 cases that were productive at Wave 2 was 89 per cent (73 per cent were fully productive) against a target of 92 per cent. 515 cases (8 per cent of the sample) were reissued.
- 656 BHPS/NIHPS households were not productive at Wave 2. Of these, 30 per cent were productive (20 per cent fully productive). 149 cases were reissued (23 per cent of the sample).

Within the **CATI sample**:

- 18 additional household were generated and 7 households were classed as ineligible, leading to 399 households eligible for an interview.
- The CATI household response rate for the 291 that were productive at Wave 2 was 71 per cent (33 per cent were fully productive). The target response rate for this sample group was 87 per cent.
- 108 CATI households were unproductive at Wave 2. Of these, 22 per cent were productive (13 per cent fully productive). This was the only sample group not to reach the 25 per cent target for cases that were unproductive at Wave 2.

8.2 Individual level response

Amongst productive households in the General Population sample, 83 per cent of eligible adults aged 16+ completed an individual interview (of which 0.4 per cent were partial interviews). Information was collected for a further seven per cent of those eligible through a proxy interview if the participant was unable to take part. On average 1.6 adults were interviewed within each participating household out of a resident 1.9 adults.

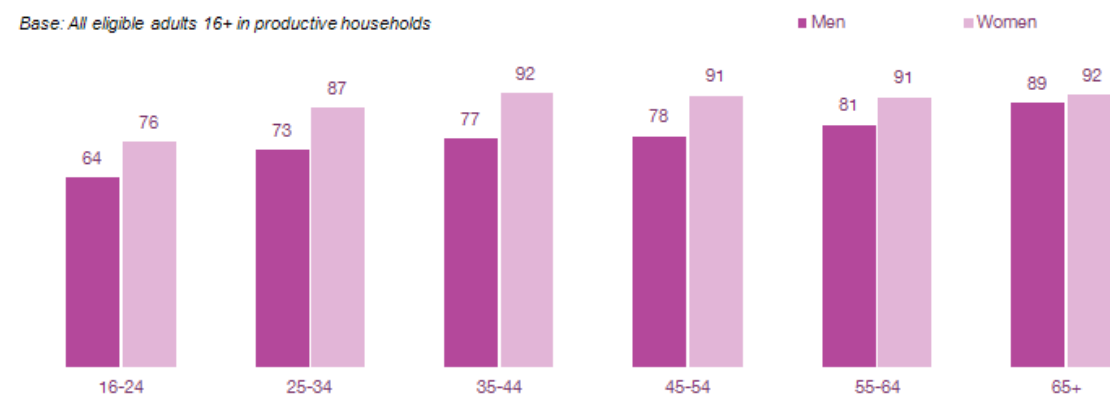
Within the EMB sample, the individual response rate was lower; 74 per cent of eligible adults in productive households completed an individual interview (0.9 per cent of which were partial interviews). Proxy interviews accounted for an additional 11 per cent of individuals. On average 1.8 interviews were obtained out of 2.4 individuals within the household.

The individual response rate for the BHPS sample was 88 per cent, of which 0.3 per cent were partials. Additional information for five per cent of individuals was collected by proxy. 1.7 interviews, on average, were collected while the average household size was 2.

Finally, the CATI sample provided the lowest individual response rate, with 67 per cent of eligible adults completing the interview, of which 6 per cent were partial. No proxy data was collected for CATI participants.

As in Wave 2, Figure 8:2 shows that response tends to increase along with age (particularly among men).

Figure 8:2 Adult individual response by sex and age



For eligible sample within productive households, 64 per cent of men aged 16-24 completed an individual interview, rising steadily to 89 per cent amongst men aged 65+. There was less of an age gradient among women; like men, those aged 16-24 had the lowest response rate (76 per cent), rising to 87 per cent for those aged 25-34. The response rate for women aged 35+ was between 91-92 per cent. Overall, then, there continues to be a significant difference between response for men (77 per cent) and women (89 per cent), representing a challenge to panel representativeness over the lifetime of the study.

8.2.1 Self-completions

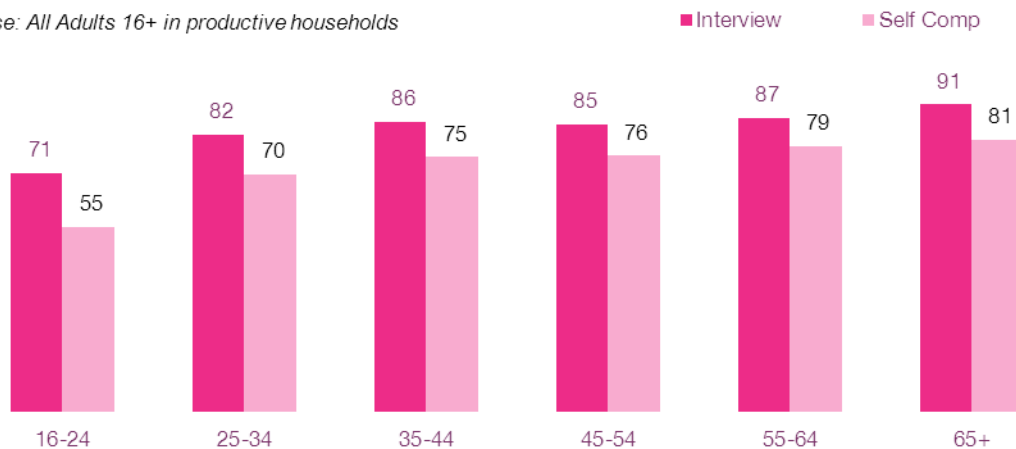
CASI vs paper³

In previous waves adults completed a paper self-completion which led to disappointing response rates for this element of the survey. On average, the self-completion response rate was ten percentage points lower than the interview response rate. Figure 8:3 shows how this differed among age groups.

³ As CASI can only be completed in face-to-face interviews, this section refers only to households issued face-to-face.

Figure 8:3 Wave 2 interview and self-completion response rate

Base: All Adults 16+ in productive households

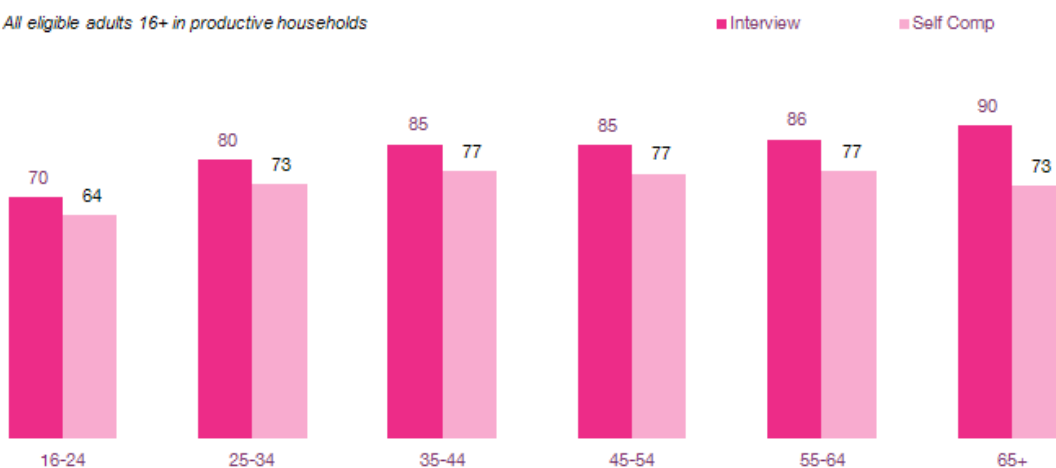


CASI was introduced from Wave 3 onwards, in part as an attempt to address the issue of disappointing response rates at previous waves. The overall difference in response rate between CASI and the interview was nine points, just one point less than Wave 2.

While the overall response rate is not vastly different, Figure 8:4 shows how the distribution of response between age groups has changed between waves. In Wave 2, the largest difference in response was among those aged 16-24 (16 percentage points) while amongst the oldest age group the difference was in line with the average (10 percentage points). At Wave 3, however, those aged 16-24 have the smallest difference in response (five percentage points); the self-completion response rate for those aged 65+ is 18 percentage points lower than the interview response rate.

Figure 8:4 Wave 3 interview and self-completion response rate

Base: All eligible adults 16+ in productive households

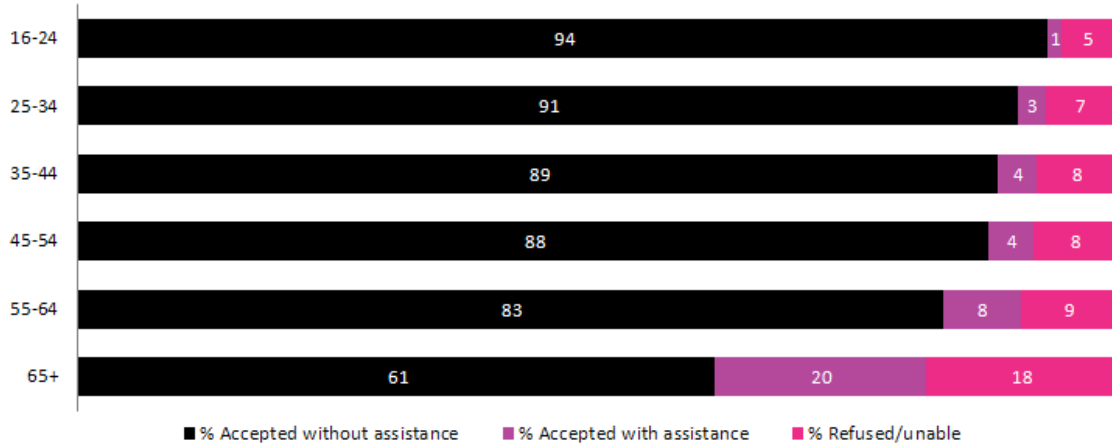


Of those who completed an individual interview, 90 per cent agreed to the CASI section (83 per cent unaided; seven per cent interviewer completion; one per cent completed with the aid of someone else (numbers do not sum to 90 per cent due to rounding)). Seven per cent of those who completed an individual interview refused the CASI section and three per cent were unable to attempt the section.

Figure 8:5 shows, amongst those who completed an individual interview, whether the CASI section was accepted and completed by the participant, accepted & completed with assistance or refused/not completed because the participant was unable to.

Figure 8:5 CASI acceptance by age

Base: Fully or partially productive adults issued face-to-face (n=45039)



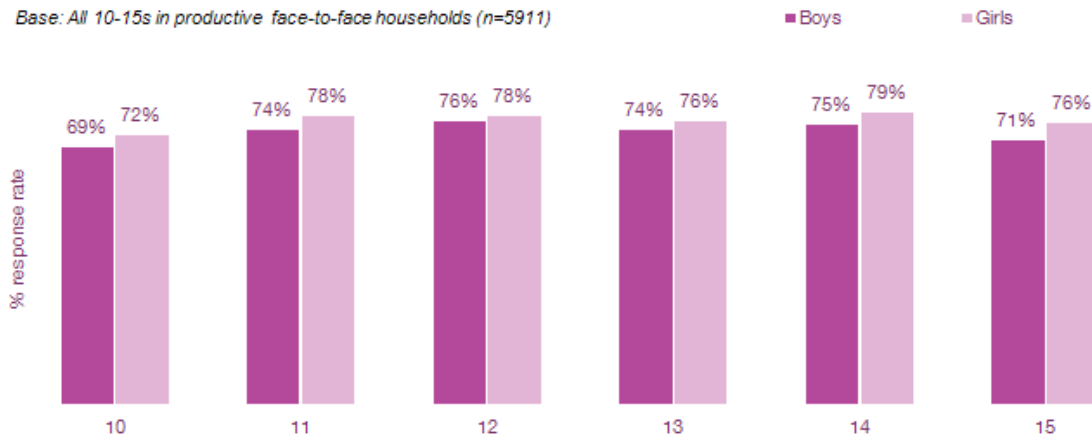
Around nine in ten participants aged under-55 were able to complete the CASI without assistance, although the proportion of these groups requiring assistance or refusing does grow along with age, even for under-55s. While the proportion of those refusing or unable to complete only increases by one percentage point between those aged 45-54 and 55-64, those requiring assistance doubles from four to eight per cent.

Between those aged 55-64 and 65+, the level of refusals/unable to complete doubles from nine to eighteen per cent while one in five participants in the oldest age group requires assistance to complete the CASI section. High levels of refusals and requests for assistance amongst this older age group suggest that the change in mode, requiring participants to use a laptop unaided, may be having a negative effect on completion of this module amongst older age groups.

Youth self-completions

There was no change to the administration of youth self-completions at this wave (see Section 6.2). Within a productive face-to-face household, each youth aged 10-15 was asked to complete a self-completion booklet. Figure 8: shows the overall response rates by age.

Figure 8:6 Youth self-completion response rate



The overall response rate for boys is 73 per cent, three points lower than the girls' response rate (76 per cent). This continues a pattern of higher female response seen in Wave 2.

8.3 Response tables

Table 8.1 Household Response by Sample Type and Previous Wave Outcome

<i>Base: All issued sample</i>	GP - productive last wave		GP - unproductive last wave		EMB - productive last wave		EMB - unproductive last wave		BHPS - productive last wave		BHPS unproductive last wave		CATI - productive last wave		CATI - unproductive last wave	
Issued	21603		3009		2740		705		6498		691		281		107	
Additional Households	1243	6%	152	5%	244	9%	50	7%	393	6%	45	7%	17	6%	1	1%
Total Households	22846		3161		2984		755		6891		736		298		108	
Ineligible	1179	5%	167	5%	148	5%	35	5%	351	5%	80	11%	7	2%	0	0%
Eligible	21667		2994		2836		720		6540		656		291		108	
Productive	18006	83%	973	32%	2243	79%	285	40%	5852	89%	196	30%	206	71%	24	22%
No Contact	1035	5%	569	19%	233	8%	169	23%	206	3%	116	18%	23	8%	32	30%
Refusal	2282	11%	1314	44%	308	11%	242	34%	384	6%	300	46%	52	18%	35	32%
Other Unproductive	344	2%	138	5%	52	2%	24	3%	98	1%	44	7%	10	3%	17	16%

Table 8.2 Household Response by Country

<i>Base: Eligible households</i>	England	Wales	Scotland	N Ireland	Total
Productive	77%	80%	76%	83%	78%
No Contact	7%	6%	6%	4%	7%
Refusal	14%	13%	15%	8%	14%
Other Unproductive	2%	1%	4%	4%	2%
<i>Bases</i>	27249	2666	3432	2465	35812

Table 8.3 Adult Individual Response by Sample Type					
<i>Base: All Adults 16+ in productive households</i>	GP	EMB	BHPS FTF	BHPS CATI	Total
Productive	83%	73%	87%	63%	83%
Proxy	7%	11%	5%	0%	7%
Partial	0%	1%	0%	4%	0%
No Contact	1%	3%	1%	4%	2%
Refusal	6%	9%	5%	23%	7%
Other Unproductive	2%	4%	1%	6%	2%
<i>Bases</i>	<i>36762</i>	<i>6027</i>	<i>11949</i>	<i>466</i>	<i>55204</i>

Table 8.4 Adult Individual Response by Sex and Age							
<i>Base: All Adults 16+ in productive households</i>	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Total
Men	64%	73%	77%	78%	81%	89%	77%
Women	76%	87%	92%	91%	91%	92%	89%
Total	70%	80%	85%	85%	86%	90%	83%
<i>Bases</i>							
<i>Men</i>	<i>4165</i>	<i>3873</i>	<i>4656</i>	<i>4683</i>	<i>3875</i>	<i>4931</i>	<i>26183</i>
<i>Women</i>	<i>4238</i>	<i>4436</i>	<i>5270</i>	<i>5099</i>	<i>4285</i>	<i>5693</i>	<i>29021</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>8403</i>	<i>8309</i>	<i>9926</i>	<i>9782</i>	<i>8160</i>	<i>10624</i>	<i>55204</i>

Table 8.5 Adult & Youth Self Completion by Sample Type				
<i>Base: All aged 10+ in productive face-to-face households</i>	GP	EMB	BHPS	Total
Adults	75%	58%	81%	74%
10-15s	76%	64%	81%	75%
<i>Bases</i>				
<i>Adults</i>	<i>36762</i>	<i>6027</i>	<i>11949</i>	<i>54738</i>
<i>10-15s</i>	<i>3702</i>	<i>964</i>	<i>1245</i>	<i>5911</i>

Table 8.6 Adult Interview and Self Completion Response by Age							
<i>Base: All Adults 16+ in productive households</i>	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Total
Interview	70%	80%	85%	85%	86%	90%	83%
Self-Completion	64%	73%	77%	77%	77%	73%	74%
<i>Bases</i>	<i>8403</i>	<i>8309</i>	<i>9926</i>	<i>9782</i>	<i>8160</i>	<i>10624</i>	<i>55204</i>

Table 8.7 Youth Self Completion Response by Sex and Age							
<i>Base: All 10-15s in productive face-to-face households</i>	10	11	12	13	14	15	Total
Boys	69%	74%	76%	74%	75%	71%	73%
Girls	72%	78%	78%	76%	79%	76%	77%
Total	71%	76%	77%	75%	77%	74%	75%
<i>Bases</i>							
<i>Boys</i>	511	474	532	492	527	489	3025
<i>Girls</i>	504	430	481	479	482	510	2886
<i>Total</i>	1015	904	1013	971	1009	999	5911

9 Data Preparation

9.1 Data keying and scanning

Youth self-completions were scanned and processed by an external agency. A dataset with responses as well as images of the completed questionnaires were provided to NatCen.

9.2 Data coding and editing

Most of the data validation of CAPI surveys is carried out in the field. Extensive range and consistency checks were included in the CAPI program in order to prompt interviewers to clarify and query any data discrepancies directly with the participant in real time. However, all cases were also passed through an in-house edit to identify any further interviewer issues. All self-completion data was passed through an edit to check for any participant routing and coding errors. There is therefore a small amount item data loss due to post-interview office data fixes. Consent forms were also reconciled with the CAPI data during the edit stage.

At the data checking stage, a routing error in the Parents & Children module was identified. A block of questions on school details should have been asked of all those who had not given consent to link their children's data to education records. However, this was only applied to those who had previously explicitly refused consent for data linkage, rather than those who had not previously consented. This affected a total of 50 households.

Four-digit SIC and SOC coding was carried out in the employment and proxy sections of the questionnaire. Each coder's initial batch of work was 'blind coded', i.e. a second coder independently coded participant's answers to SIC and SOC without seeing how they had initially been coded. Any discrepancies between the initial coder's work and the blind coding by the second coder were resolved by a coding supervisor and feedback was given to correct errors or resolve any misunderstandings.

Each participant was asked to provide information about a stable contact that could be approached in the event of the individual or household having moved. These addresses, along with any amended or new household addresses, were checked with a software program called Matchcode, which checks and where necessary corrects postcode for each address.