The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on Understanding Society: The UK Household Longitudinal Study

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Understanding Society: The UK Household Longitudinal Study

- Representative of UK population
  - Began 2009, incorporates BHPS sample (1991-)
  - Wave 10 (2018-19): approx. 20,000 responding households
- Includes ethnic minority and immigrant boost samples
- Annual interviews with the same people over time
  - All members of original households and their descendants form the core sample and are followed every year as long as they are living in the UK
  - Household questionnaire
  - Individual interviews: all aged 16+
  - Youth self-completion: 10-15 years
  - Information collected about 0-9 years from parent/guardian
Impact of COVID-19

- Suspension of face-to-face interviewing mid-March 2020
- 3 waves in the field
- One advantage – already used mixed-mode data collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wave</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wave 9</td>
<td>![Red Bar]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wave 10</td>
<td>![Blue Bar]</td>
<td>![Blue Bar]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wave 11</td>
<td>![Green Bar]</td>
<td>![Green Bar]</td>
<td>![Green Bar]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wave 12</td>
<td>![Yellow Bar]</td>
<td>![Yellow Bar]</td>
<td>![Yellow Bar]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wave 13</td>
<td></td>
<td>![Purple Bar]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Mid-March 2020 changes

• For Waves in the field, we already had a CAPI, a Web, and a CATI version of the script
• Letters sent to all ‘active’ sample members allocated to interviewers
  • Notify that the interviewer won’t be visiting (and why)
  • Link and password to online interview
• Interviewers switch to CATI script and follow-up web non-responders
Mid-March 2020 changes

- April sample:
  - All adults issued web-first
  - Invitation letter/email with log-in details
  - Former CAPI-first sample, letter also includes note that interviewer can telephone them

- Seamless transition in data collection – multiple modes available and responsive and agile fieldwork agencies
Effect on response rates

• Slight decline of response with the replacement of face-to-face with telephone
• 30% of sample being invited to complete online for the first time ever
  • Including the 10% of the sample with lowest propensity to complete online
• Relatively long interview for telephone surveys (40-45 minutes+)
• Despite annual collection, some individuals did not have a (working) telephone number on record
General Population Sample – individual re-interview rate

Understanding Society: The UK Household Longitudinal Study
https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/
Immigrant & Ethnic Minority Boost sample (IEMB)
Summary of response – completed sample months

-4%  -4%  -1%  -5%

GPS  BHPS  EMB  IEMB

Wave 11 (compared to W10)  Wave 12 (compared to W11)
Response

- Overall – in Wave 12 April-December 2020 samples we have 92.4% of the adult interviews we had in the same sample one year earlier
- But higher proportion of interviews are being done online

![Graph: % of adult interviews in each mode](https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020 (Q2-3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
<td>81.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-Face</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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But… who are we missing?

- (using unweighted data)
- Older people
- Those with lower levels of education
- Those without a mobile computing device
- Those who use the internet less often
A switch to telephone saw an increase in item non-response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Wave 11</th>
<th>Wave 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FTF-CATI</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web-CATI</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTF-web</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web-web</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wave 11 / Wave 12 balanced panel
UKHLS COVID-19 Study

- 20 min survey
  - Invitations by SMS, email, post + email/SMS reminders (days 2, 3, 6)
- £2 incentive (conditional) most months (some experimentation)
- **Web** surveys (Ipsos MORI)
  - April, May, June, July, September, November 2020, January & March 2021
- **Telephone** surveys (Kantar)
  - Sample – those who did not respond to the April web survey AND live in a household with no regular web users: older, more health problems, higher proportion of ethnic minorities
  - May and November
- **Youth** surveys
  - Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) in July 2020 & March 2021 (Ipsos MORI)
  - Full self-completion booklet in November (Kantar)
- **Antibody testing** – Serology to test for COVID-19 antibodies (March 2021)
Questionnaire - core content

• Household composition and relationships
• Coronavirus illness
  • Symptoms, tests, contact with Test & Trace, shielding, vaccinations (from Jan.)
• Long-term health conditions and access to health care
  • Able to access different NHS, community and social care services
  • Whether health treatment had been planned – and effect of COVID-19 on access
• Employment
  • Include “baseline” questions (situation Jan/Feb) & current employment/hours/WAH/earnings
• Finance, financial security
  • Include “baseline” questions (situation Jan/Feb) & current benefits (inc. UC), financial transfers, mortgage holidays, subjective financial well-being…
• Loneliness
• Mental health (GHQ)
Questionnaire - rotating & occasional modules

- Home schooling/return to school (child-level) – April, Sept., Nov., Jan.
- Diet
- Food banks and food insecurity
- Alcohol consumption
- Smoking
- Exercise
- Children’s mental health (SDQ)
- Partner relations
- Parent-child relations
- Domestic division of labour
- Time use
- Caring responsibilities
- Couples living apart together
- Grand-parenting
- Contact friends & family out HH
- Young adults aspirations/ expectations
- Transport
- Working conditions/productivity
- Training
- Job search
- Neighbourhood cohesion
- Life satisfaction
- Non-resident parents & children
COVID-19 response among Wave 9 participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Nonresponse</th>
<th>Opt-out/not issued</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-April</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-May</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-June</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-July</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-Sept.</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Nov.</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-Jan. 2021</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-March</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total adult participants:
- 1 – 17,761
- 2 – 14,811
- 3 – 14,123
- 4 – 13,754
- 5 – 12,876
- 6 – 12,035
- 7 – 11,968
- 8 – 12,680
Summary of evaluation of weighting performance

- There is selection bias into the web survey
- The use of the telephone follow-up increases dataset quality compared to web-only
  - Reduced variability of weights – improves precision and reduces bias (less trimming)
- Inviting non-regular web users to web survey does not increase quality
  - Reduces weighted estimates biases, but also reduces precision

Presentation: “Bias prevention and bias reduction in a national longitudinal Covid-19 survey”, Jamie Moore
Session: “Longitudinal studies in times of COVID-19”, Friday 16 July, 16:45 - 18:00
COVID-19: Data

- End User License COVID-19 Study
  https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=8644
  - April, May, June, July, September, November 2020, January & March 2021 web surveys
  - May & November telephone survey
  - July 2020 & March 2021 youth SDQ survey & November youth self-completion
  - Pre-pandemic - 2019 mainstage data (Wave 10 yr 2 / Wave 11 yr 1)
  - Soon to come – serology (antibody) test results for COVID-19
Summary

- Understanding Society was fortunate in that it was already a mixed-mode study
  - Swift transition to Web-CATI
- Some decrease in response – but signs that Wave 13 (2021) is back to 2019 levels of response for GPS/BHPS sample
- Need extra effort when face-to-face interviewing can resume to “bring back” those missed during lockdown
- Possible to quickly roll-out high quality web-only survey drawing on longitudinal sample
  - Can weight back to a representative sample
  - Additional telephone survey can improve weights, but at a high financial cost
  - Collection of valuable information during an important period in peoples lives that may have long-lasting effects