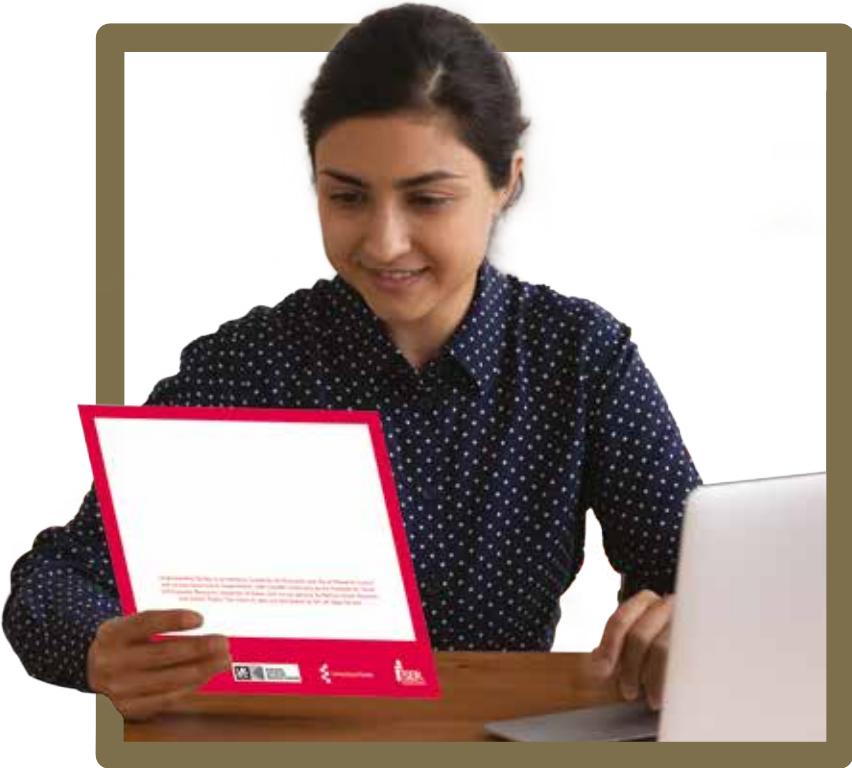Understanding Society

2023
ANNUAL REPORT

Welcome to our 2023 Annual Report.

We hope you enjoy reading about a selection of Understanding Society's achievements, research and policy for the last year.

To find out more about our work, see all the research that uses the Study, or learn how to use the dataset yourself, please visit our website:
www.understandingsociety.ac.uk

"Producing high quality data is at the core of our Study"

Professor Michaela Benzeval, Director of Understanding Society

Contents

Foreword

by Simon Briscoe

The last year has been one which has cemented Understanding Society's position as a key source of data for the UK.

The significant financial investment in the Study by UK Research and Innovation and the Economic and Social Research Council is a great endorsement of the work of Understanding Society. This new grant allows the Understanding Society team to carry on with ten more waves of data collection, as well as invest in research and survey methods experimentation that helps longitudinal studies world-wide.

Understanding Society is a fantastic resource for expanding scientific knowledge in the UK. It's heartening to see continued growth in the number of data users and the number of researchers and analysts who are seeking training to start using the datasets.

A significant task for the team this year has been preparing for the biological data collection that is now in the field. My fellow board members and I have been following the pilot programmes for collecting new health data and it's been exciting to see this work go out to participants in early 2024. We hope that this data will encourage new biosocial research and give vital insights into how our health and our social circumstances interact.

In the UK this has been a year of challenges for many people. Recovering from the pandemic, dealing with the cost of living crisis, and struggles with health are affecting many of our participants. One of the great challenges in a long-term study is asking people to share their lives through the bad times, as well as the good. As you'll see in this report, Understanding Society response rates have remained high, even in this difficult year. The whole study team is hugely grateful for the commitment our participants have to the Study – to all our participants, thank you.

Simon Briscoe is Chair of Understanding Society's Strategic Oversight Board

> "Understanding Society is a fantastic resource for expanding scientific knowledge in the UK"
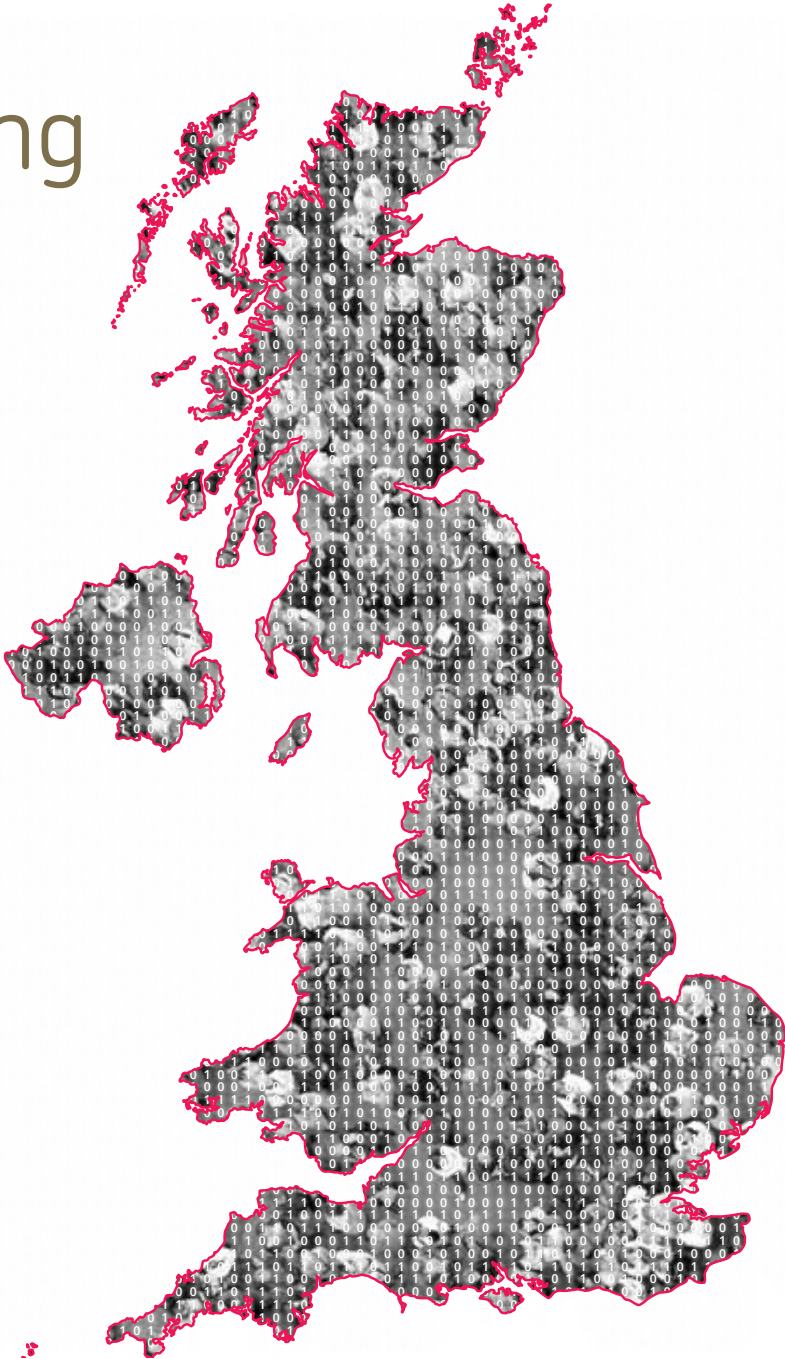
Introduction

by the Director, Professor Michaela Benzeval

One of the highlights of 2023 for me was our scientific conference – not only was it a success, with over 200 delegates attending 32 topic sessions and 121 paper presentations over three days. It was also symbolic: the first one we've held since 2019. In an ordinary period, there would have been a conference two years ago, but COVID-19 meant that 2021 had seen us hosting a series of mini-conferences online. The 2023 event showed that things were back to 'normal' – which for us means nothing standing still.

Continuity and change

It's been another year of continuity and change, of regular data gathering and data releases, and of innovation. In November, we released Wave 13 of the main survey and Waves 14 and 15 of the Innovation Panel – and our new PEACH data file. This brings together the data reported by parents for all children under 10, plus information on pregnancy and parenting styles, from all waves of the main survey to make it easy to explore children's development.

Waves 14 and 15 of the main survey were in the field, with response rates continuing to be healthy. At the same time, we were planning for Wave 16, which began this January, and will include another round of biological data collection. We also carried out the Wave 14 boost, which has seen 5,500 new households joining the survey.

New developments

Other new developments included our new data dashboard on material deprivation. This follows an earlier dashboard showcasing our COVID-19 data. Both are designed to help people who aren't experienced in using data to carry out exploratory analysis. The new dashboard allows new users to see, for example, which population groups are most affected by the rising cost of living. A new wellbeing data dashboard, produced in collaboration with the What Works Centre for Wellbeing, has followed since, in March 2024.

On top of all this, more experienced data scientists can now run UKMOD, the freely accessible, open-source tax/benefit microsimulation model, using Understanding Society data. Microsimulation allows researchers to look at changes in taxes and benefits, and to compare the effects of current policy with proposed new policies, to see how they affect public spending and the distribution of income.

We have also launched a Data User Group, giving experienced researchers and lecturers early access to the main survey data in order to give us extra user insights on the data before they are released. They will meet once a year to discuss new developments, and will also make suggestions to improve usability, and carry out quality checks.

In a similar vein, we have also launched three new training courses – on the PEACH data, on mixed modes, and introducing linear panel data methods. There is also a new online training hub, giving data users a 'one stop shop' for all available training – and a new online 'user pathway' to help new users explore the data.

Policy and partnerships

Our Policy and Partnerships team has been working to increase our influence on policy. A 'research springboard' – a series of workshops across spring 2023 – brought together researchers from different sectors to encourage new collaborative research on, for example, mental health, disability, and job insecurity. The team has also submitted evidence to committees in the House of Lords and House of Commons – and produced a new guide for researchers on how to shape their findings to make them accessible to policy audiences.

Other news

We have illustrated how our data have been used for policy evaluation and other research with impact on public life on pages 51 to 63, and different users' achievements in other areas of research on pages 65 to 75.

Perhaps most importantly, we heard in 2023 that we would be getting funding from the Economic and Social Research Council until 2032, covering six more waves of data collection, which will eventually give researchers access to more than 40 years of data on how we live in the UK. This is a very gratifying recognition of the value of the Study, which becomes greater the longer it continues.

As ever, all of us at Understanding Society are grateful to the participants who generously share their time and data with us, and make all this possible.

40 YEARS OF DATA

The benefits of Understanding Society

The Economic and Social Research Council established Understanding Society with nine key benefits which informed the design of the Study. These benefits are used to measure the success of Understanding Society as a whole, how users interact with the Study datasets and how Understanding Society is used by researchers and policymakers.

BENEFIT 1

### Promotes new waves of inter- and multi-disciplinary research

A wide range of disciplines make use of data from Understanding Society. Table 1 shows the number of higher education users since the start of the Study, broken down by areas of research. Researchers from economics, sociology, and health continue to lead the use of the datasets, as they have in previous years, but Understanding Society continues to attract a significant number of researchers from the wider social and health sciences, humanities, and arts.

Table 1: Understanding Society annual higher education users by area of research, 2011–2023

Discipline	Annual users
Economics and Econometrics	20724
Sociology and Social Policy	9899
Health Sciences	3623
Geography and Environment	2022
Business and Finance	2021
Political Studies	2009
Statistics and Maths	1909
Education	434
Computer Sciences	345
Other	239
Biological Sciences	201
Law	127
General Engineering	82
Art and Design	78
Civil Engineering	74
History and Cultural Studies	71
Physical Sciences	48
Language and Literature	29
Philosophy	29
Total	**43964**

Data users continue to be predominantly drawn from higher education. Figure 1 shows the data downloads for Understanding Society by sector.

Figure 1: Data downloads by sector, 2023

⬛	Higher education	94%
🟩	Government	3%
🟦	Third sector	2%
🟨	Commercial	1%
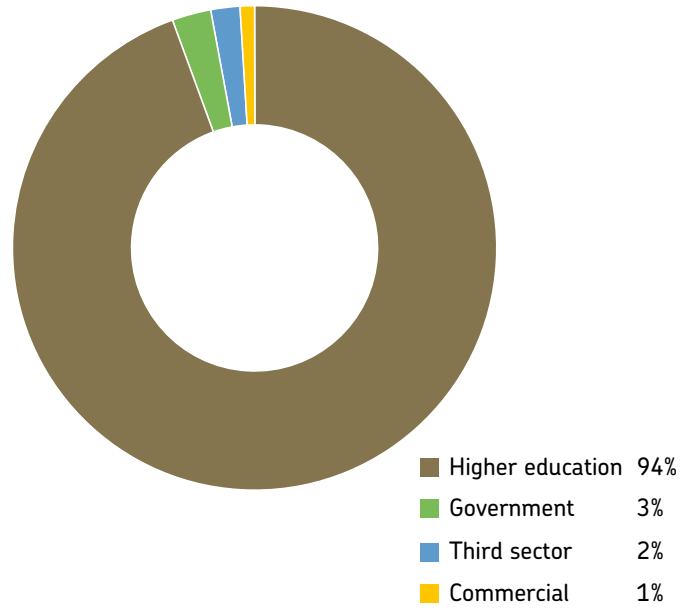
BENEFIT 2

Promotes and develops new forms of methodology

Understanding Society is underpinned by a comprehensive programme of survey methods research and innovation. The Innovation Panel provides a test-bed for experiments on data collection and survey development, and where appropriate successful results are implemented on the main survey.

Collecting health data was the focus for experimental work in 2023, to prepare for the biomarker collection on the main survey going into the field in early 2024. Through the Innovation Panel, piloting, and qualitative research, the Understanding Society team developed and tested fieldwork protocols for collecting blood and microbiome samples, using an app to collect body mass measures, self-collecting blood pressure, hip and waist circumference, and measuring spatial awareness using an online game. Where effective, these measures have been included in Wave 16.

In 2023 Understanding Society was used in **37 research papers** on survey methods. These included research on using mobile apps for data collection, the representativeness of Understanding Society, the harmonization of data across world-wide household panel studies, and the impact of conditional and unconditional incentives.

All survey methods research can be found on the Understanding Society website:
www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/research/publications/subject/survey-methodology/

Alongside research publications, Understanding Society produces a Working Paper series, focusing on methodological work. In 2023 there were **15 Working Papers** published on topics including biomarker data collection, the quality of spending data collected via an app, consent to data linkage, and recruiting and retaining young people in longitudinal studies.

All Working Papers can be found on the Understanding Society website:
https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/research/publications/type/understanding-society-working-paper-series/

In addition to published outputs, staff from Understanding Society provide expert advice on survey design, question design and survey implementation. In 2023 staff provided guidance for:

- Department for Work and Pensions – on new official poverty measures and measuring material deprivation
- European Social Survey – contributing to the design of the first mixed-mode round of the survey
- CRONOS2 – contributing expertise in longitudinal survey weighting for the first European online panel survey
- ESRC Survey Futures – leading the consortium
- EU Next Generations programmes
- Government Statistical Service Harmonisation Network
- HMRC review on considerations for conducting longitudinal research

BENEFIT 3

The number and breadth of data users increases over time

Understanding Society saw a rise in data users during the pandemic period of 2020 and 2021, with numbers in 2022 falling back a little. 2023 saw a growth in user numbers again (Figure 2), with **2,544 annual users of the main survey** – an increase above the numbers seen during Covid.

Figure 2: Understanding Society annual users for the main survey
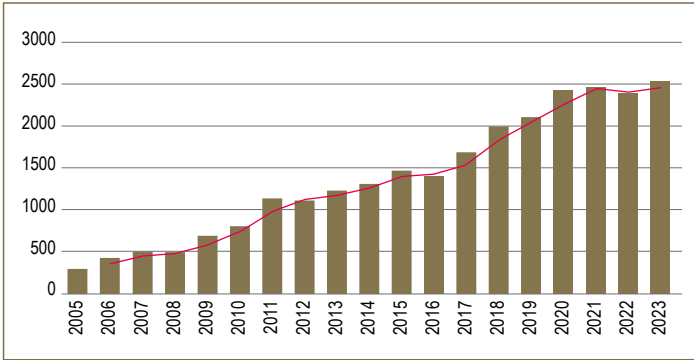
When looking at the number of new users, compared to existing users, in 2023 we recorded **1,868 new users of the main survey data**. This is the largest number of new users since the start of the Study.

Understanding Society continues to be a study that researchers return to and use multiple times. In 2023, when looking at all the datasets available, the Study had **1,184 repeat users**, compared to 2,686 new users (Figure 3). Repeating user numbers have stabilised over the past four years, suggesting that this core group of researchers are benefiting from the repeat measures available in the Study.

Figure 3: New and repeating users for all datasets
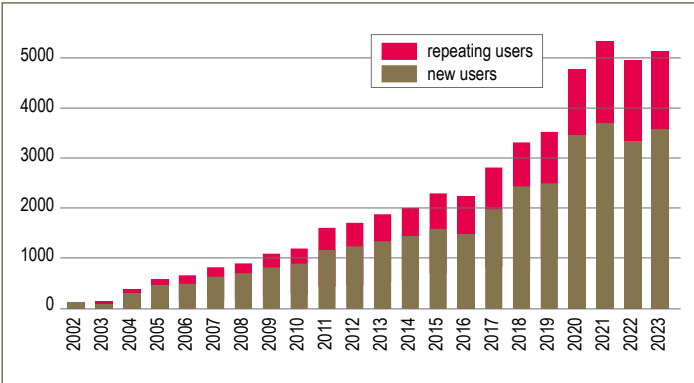
Understanding Society has invested in producing **'value added' datasets** to facilitate research in particular areas or time periods. These datasets include calendar year data, a pregnancy and early childhood (PEACH) data file, partnership and cohabitation histories, and teaching datasets. We are pleased to see that use of these datasets is growing (Figure 4), with **628 annual users** in 2023, an increase on the previous year.

Figure 4: Value added datasets annual users
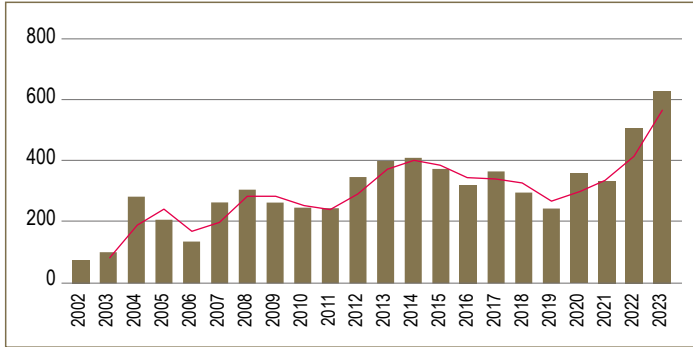
Secure and Special Licence datasets also saw growth in 2023 (Figures 5 and 6). Special Licence data contains more disclosive variables that are excluded in the End User Licence version of the dataset. Researchers wishing to use this dataset have to apply via the UK Data Service. In 2023, **487 researchers used Special Licence data**.

Secure Licence datasets are available to researchers who need data with very high levels of disclosure risk. This type of data can only be accessed by approved researchers in the secure settings of the UK Data Service Secure Lab or ONS Secure Research Service. In the last year, **124 researchers used Secure data**.

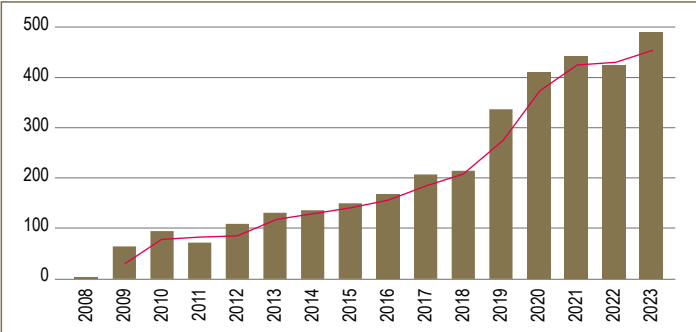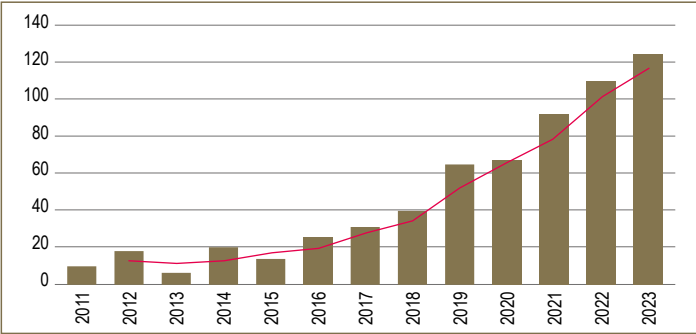Understanding Society annual users for Special Licence data

Figure 5: Understanding Society annual users for Special Licence data

Figure 6: Understanding Society annual users for Secure data

Figure 6: Understanding Society annual users for Secure data

BENEFIT 4

Recognition of the UK's reputation as an international centre of social science excellence

Understanding Society is an international data resource, attracting data users worldwide. Over the lifetime of the Study, 85% of data users have been based in the UK, 8.8% based in Europe, 3.4% based in the USA, and 1.4% in Asia. Researchers from Africa and South America also use the datasets. Looking specifically at 2023, the Study saw an increase in researchers from Asia using the data, with **120 data downloads from Asia** compared to 86 in 2022. European data user numbers remain relatively stable, with **515 data downloads from Europe** in 2023, compared to 497 in the previous year.

Website use also shows the international use of Understanding Society. Over the course of 2023, the Understanding Society website had **128,418 unique users** from every continent on the planet. Over 88,000 web users came from Europe, 22,000 from North America, 12,000 from Asia and 2,500 from Africa.

Understanding Society events and training attract an international audience, with 14.4% of all attendees coming from outside the UK.

Staff from Understanding Society also worked with, and presented at, a range of international organisations. In 2023 these included:

- European Survey Research Association
- International Panel Survey Methods Workshop
- Society for Longitudinal and Lifecourse Studies
- COORDINATE – Cohort Community Research and Development Infrastructure Network Access Throughout Europe
- International Health and Economics Association
- Swiss Household Panel Survey Scientific Commission

BENEFIT 5

Contributes to capability in quantitative methods and use of interdisciplinary data

Alongside our datasets, Understanding Society provides a year-round programme of training and events. The two-day course 'Introduction to Understanding Society' is the foundation for researchers wanting to get started with using the datasets and is taught in SPSS, R, SAS and Stata. Further courses expand knowledge on specific aspects of the Study, such as using the pregnancy and early childhood data or linking to geographical identifiers. This year the user support team also delivered more advanced courses teaching panel data methods, calculating mixed-mode effects, and on creating tailored weights. In 2023 **training was delivered to 327 data users**, with **339 accessing the online training** available via MoodleX.

Understanding Society events bring together academic researchers, with policymakers and non-profit organisations. Events are particularly popular with government and policy stakeholders and in 2023 **81 government representatives attend an event** hosted by the Study. In 2023 user support and the policy and partnerships unit delivered an invitation-only roundtable focusing on trade union use of Understanding Society. Our annual Insights event, showcasing policy relevant research, continues to attract a large and diverse audience, with 305 attending this year.

To support the development of new social science researchers, Understanding Society produces a series of teaching datasets. These cut-down versions of the main survey focus on a particular topic and allow students to successfully get started with using the dataset. Use of teaching datasets remains strong (Figure 7), with a rise in use from the last year. Three teaching datasets are available: one designed to teach longitudinal methods, one exploring ethnicity and health, and one using the COVID-19 dataset.

Figure 7: Understanding Society annual users for teaching datasets

Figure 7: Understanding Society annual users for teaching datasets
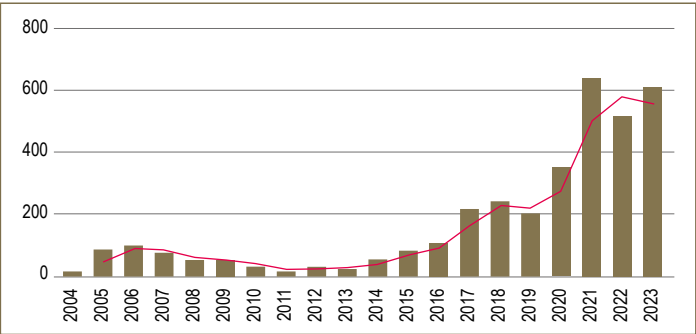
BENEFIT 6

New insights into interactions between social and biological data

By collecting data about social and economic circumstances, and information about health, Understanding Society data is ideal for exploring the links between social and biological aspects of people's lives. The last year has been spent preparing for new biodata collection, going into the field in 2024. In 2023 new epigenetic clock data was released, along with updated editions of proteomic panels for cardiometabolic health and neurological processes, and nurse health assessment data.

Examples of recent published research on the interactions between health and social circumstances has included papers on:

- The intergenerational transmission of mental and physical health
- Partnership status and DNA methylation age
- The role of private house renting on cellular aging
- Exposure to air pollution and the association with GP visits and hospital admissions
- Gig working and mental health
- Associations between COVID-19 infection and economic inactivity

Table 2: Publications based on Understanding Society, 2009–2023

Subject Group	Publications
Health and Health Behaviours, Wellbeing	2351
Household Finances	1709
Family Households	1671
Employment	1447
Political Beliefs, Attitudes and Civic Engagement	1067
Social Stratification and Mobility	626
Neighbourhoods	490
Survey Methods and Statistics	466
Education	427
Ethnicity and Migration	422
Social Networks and Relations	313
Housing and Residential Mobility	282
Policy Relevant	241
Statistics	225
Technology and Computing	202
Time Use, Leisure and Arts	172
Business and Marketing	137
Environmental Behaviours	96
Genetics	95
Transport	90
Total	**12529**

BENEFIT 7

Enables new forms of science over time

Understanding Society is used in hundreds of publications each year. Table 2 gives a breakdown of the publications tracked by the Study, with the key domains for research. Since the start of the Study, **12,529 publications** have been identified that use data from Understanding Society. Health and health behaviours continues to be the area with the largest number of publications, followed by research on household finances and families and households. Three areas of research have shown notable growth this year – we recorded 89 new papers on political beliefs and civic engagement, 71 new papers for neighbourhood research, and 112 new papers on employment. Survey methods research, another key area for the Study, has also developed this year with 37 papers being published in 2023.

Looking at research publications in high impact journals (Table 3), public health and epidemiology, sociology and political science, and social psychology have the highest proportion of papers published in these journals. Multidisciplinary papers also rank highly for high impact journals. Overall, 52.3% of papers using Understanding Society are published in high impact journals.

Papers using Understanding Society data are also highly cited. From 2018 to 2023, we have identified 21,622 citations. Academic publications using Understanding Society data are more highly cited than expected for their subject field, receiving 2.82 times the rate of expected citation.

Our citation tracking shows that 39.7% of academic papers involve international collaboration and 30% are in the top 10% of most cited publications world-wide.

Table 3: BHPS and Understanding Society papers in high impact journals by subject area, 1991–2023

| Discipline Group	Low	High	Grand Total	% HI
Economics	373	155	528	29.4
Sociology and Political Science	79	233	312	74.7
Survey Methods	100	160	260	61.5
Medicine	188	49	237	20.7
Health and Social Science	54	120	174	69.0
Public Policy	47	114	161	70.8
Psychiatry, Mental Health, Psychology and Neuroscience	60	87	147	59.2
Demography	48	91	139	65.5
Public Health and Epidemiology	7	118	125	94.4
Environmental Science	32	54	86	62.8
Business, Management and Accounting	67	1	68	1.5
Life Span and Lifecourse	45	19	64	29.7
Multidisciplinary	16	46	62	74.2
Biology and Genetics	22	38	60	63.3
Statistical Methods	41	5	46	10.9
Geography	17	27	44	61.4
Education	27	7	34	20.6
Humanities	6	11	17	64.7
Other	3	12	15	80.0
Social Psychology		4	4	100.0
Total	**1232**	**1351**	**2583**	**52.3**

BENEFIT 8

Informs development of new policy over time

Government use of Understanding Society appears to have stabilised in 2023, after a peak of use during the COVID-19 pandemic years (Figure 8). In 2023 we recorded **134 data downloads from government users**, up slightly on 2022.

Figure 8: Annual data downloads for UK government users
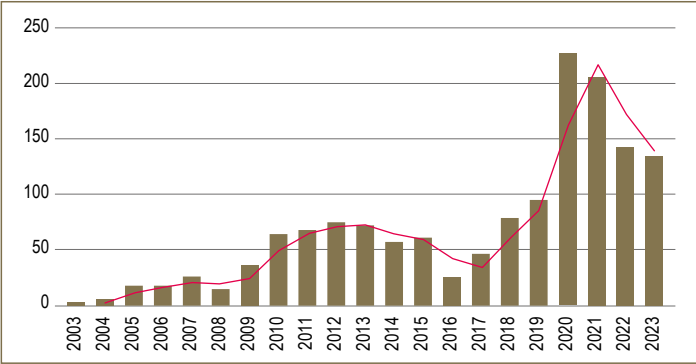
Government use of the Study is also tracked through the impact Understanding Society has on policy. Data and research from Understanding Society is widely used by government departments, in 2023 this use included:

- **Review of the evidence on numeracy skills interventions for adults**, Department for Education, January 2023, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-the-evidence-on-the-numeracy-skills-interventions-for-adults

- **COVID-19, physical activity, inequalities evidence review**, Public Health Scotland, March 2023, https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/covid-19-physical-activity-inequalities-evidence-review/covid-19-physical-activity-inequalities-evidence-review/

- **Labour Market Enforcement Strategy**, Department for Business and Trade, March 2023, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/labour-market-enforcement-strategy-2023-to-2024

- **Improving Lives: Helping Workless Families indicators 2023**, Department for Work and Pensions, March 2023, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-lives-helping-workless-families-indicators-2023/improving-lives-helping-workless-families-indicators-2023-data-for-2005-to-2022

- **State Pension Age Independent Review 2022: final report**, Department for Work and Pensions, March 2023, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-pension-age-independent-review-2022-final-report

- **Emerging diseases and learnings from covid-19**, House of Commons Science, Innovation and Technology Committee, May 2023, https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7167/emerging-diseases-and-learnings-from-covid19/

- **The impact of parental leave policies on labour market outcomes**, Northern Ireland Department for the Economy, July 2023, https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/impact-parental-leave-policies-labour-market-outcomes

- **Social welfare information and advice services in Wales**, Welsh Government, December 2023, https://www.gov.wales/social-welfare-information-and-advice-services-wales

- **Income Dynamics: 2010 – 2021,** Department for Work and Pensions, March 2023, https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-dynamics-2010-to-2021

- **Care data matters: a roadmap for better adult social care data**, Department of Health and Social Care, December 2023, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-data-matters-a-roadmap-for-better-adult-social-care-data

- **Shared Parental Leave evaluation**, Department for Business and Trade, June 2023, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/shared-parental-leave-spl-evaluation

BENEFIT 9

Informs development of business practice in private and non-profit sectors

As with government use of Understanding Society, much of the use of the Study by business and non-profit organisation is through the research produced by other data users. These sectors use some data from Understanding Society themselves, and in 2023 there were **79 downloads of the data from non-profit organisations** (Figure 9) and **64 downloads from commercial companies** (Figure 10).

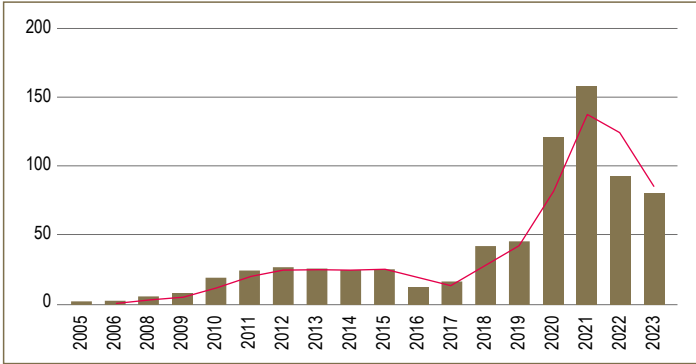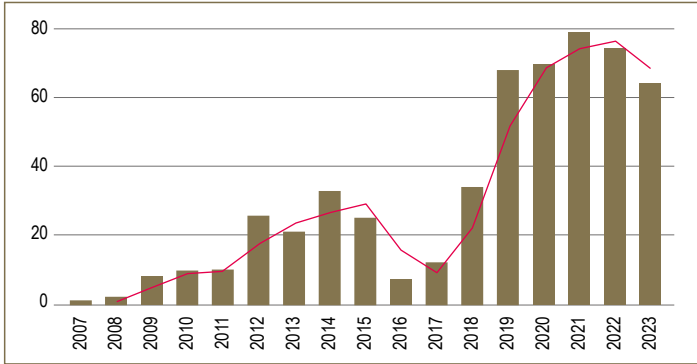**Figure 9:** Annual downloads for non-profit organisations

Figure 10: Annual downloads for commercial companies

When looking at the impact Understanding Society has for commercial and non-profit sectors, in addition to data downloads, use of the Study in 2023 has included:

- **Retaining Talent at All Ages**, OECD, January 2023, https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/retaining-talent-at-all-ages_00dbdd06-en

- **Caught in the gap – the role of employers in enabling women to build better pensions**, Institute for Employment Studies, January 2023, https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/resource/caught-gap-%E2%80%93-role-employers-enabling-women-build-better-pensions

- **UK Poverty 2023**, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, January 2023, https://www.jrf.org.uk/uk-poverty-2023-the-essential-guide-to-understanding-poverty-in-the-uk

- **The societal and economic burden of insomnia in adults**, RAND Corporation, March 2023, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA2166-1.html

- **Dear Stephen: Race and belonging 30 years on,** the Runnymede Trust, June 2023, https://www.runnymedetrust.org/publications/dear-stephen-race-and-belonging-30-years-on

- **The Value of Giving 2022**, Benefact Group, June 2023, https://benefactgroup.com/fundraising-resources/charity-fundraising-articles/value-of-giving-report/

- **Culture and Democracy, the evidence**, European Commission Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, June 2023, https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/07370fba-110d-11ee-b12e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF

Data Creation and Innovation

New £100 million investment

In October 2023, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) announced £100 million of funding for Understanding Society.

The new funding will support a further six waves of data collection on the main survey and innovation panel, extending the Study to the year 2032 and eventually giving researchers access to more than 40 years of data on the changing nature of UK society across generations. The ESRC have also committed to a regular cycle of new boost samples and biomarker collection, future-proofing Understanding Society as a key data resource for the UK. At the same time, UKRI also announced further investment in the UK Data Service, where researchers can access a wide range of social science data, including Understanding Society.

George Freeman, Minister of State at the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, at the time of the announcement, said:

❝ By investing £138m towards continued gathering of key household data, we are enabling decision-making that benefits us all, while laying the groundwork for new discoveries that enhance our lives. ❞

Director of Understanding Society, Professor Michaela Benzeval, said:

❝ The value of the Study becomes greater the longer it goes on. This long-term support helps us build knowledge and provide vital evidence on life in the UK. ❞

The Study started in 2009, with 100,000 people living in 40,000 households across the UK participating, building on the successful British Household Panel Survey which ran from 1991 to 2008. To date, 13 waves of Understanding Society data have been released.

CBE for Director

In January 2024, Professor Michaela Benzeval, Director of Understanding Society, was awarded a CBE for services to social science in the King's New Year's Honours.

Alongside her role at the Institute for Social and Economic Research, the home of Understanding Society, Michaela is Visiting Professor at the Institute of Health and Wellbeing at the University of Glasgow. Before joining ISER, Michaela was a Programme Leader, and Research Project Director of the West of Scotland Twenty-07 Study, at the MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, Glasgow. She has also worked at Queen Mary University of London, East London and City Health Authority, the London School of Economics and the King's Fund. In 2022 she was elected as a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences.

Michaela called the honour **"a highlight of my social science career"**, adding: **"I see this honour as something that reflects the value of Understanding Society as an internationally important study, and the skills and enthusiasm of all the people working on it, who make it such a success. High-quality, long-term data is vital for good decision making – I'm incredibly proud of everything that Understanding Society is achieving now and the data we're building for future generations of social scientists."**

Understanding Society Scientific Conference 2023

Understanding Society held its biennial scientific conference in July 2023.

The three day conference, held at the University of Essex, featured 32 different topic sessions, and 121 papers. The subjects covered included health, the labour market, gender roles, discrimination, education, housing, life course analysis, and survey methods. There were also lunchtime talks on subjects such as communicating with policy audiences – and two workshops the day before the conference on geographical data linkage for Understanding Society, and using Cross-National Equivalent File panel data.

The Scientific Conference was attended by 217 people, with a mix of delegates from higher education, government, and non-profit organisations. The keynote speakers were Professor Heejung Chung, from the University of Kent, who spoke on flexible working, Professor Annette Jäckle, from the University of Essex, who shared research on innovations in data collection methods, and Dr Rory Coulter, from UCL, who presented on housing and neighbourhood dynamics.

Awesome event! Fruitful discussions, great feedback, amazing presentations, cool people!

It was really great to hear the huge variety of research being undertaken on the data, from such a variety of different disciplines, and the atmosphere was very constructive and supportive.

I enjoyed my two days in Colchester – even with the rainy BBQ... The panel and presentations were well organised, with a keen cohort of audience who engaged and gave quality comments.

The next Understanding Society Scientific Conference will be held in July 2025.

Response rates, attrition, and weighting

Response rates remain stable across all the Understanding Society samples.

The chart below shows the response rates for people who completed a survey for the different parts of Understanding Society in the previous wave – the General Population Sample, the Ethnic Minority Boost, British Household Panel Survey, and Immigrant and Ethnic Minority Boost.

In 2023, Waves 14 and 15 were still in the field. For both Waves 14 and 15, around 50% of households completed their interview online, without having to be issued to an interviewer to follow up. The General Population Sample and the British Household Panel Survey sample retained steady response rates of around 90%, and the Immigrant and Ethnic Minority Boost, which showed an increase in response rate in Wave 13, held steady at that rate of over 80%.

Fig 11: Household response rates for households completing in the previous wave

Legend:
- GPS
- EMB
- BHPS
- IEMB
- W14B
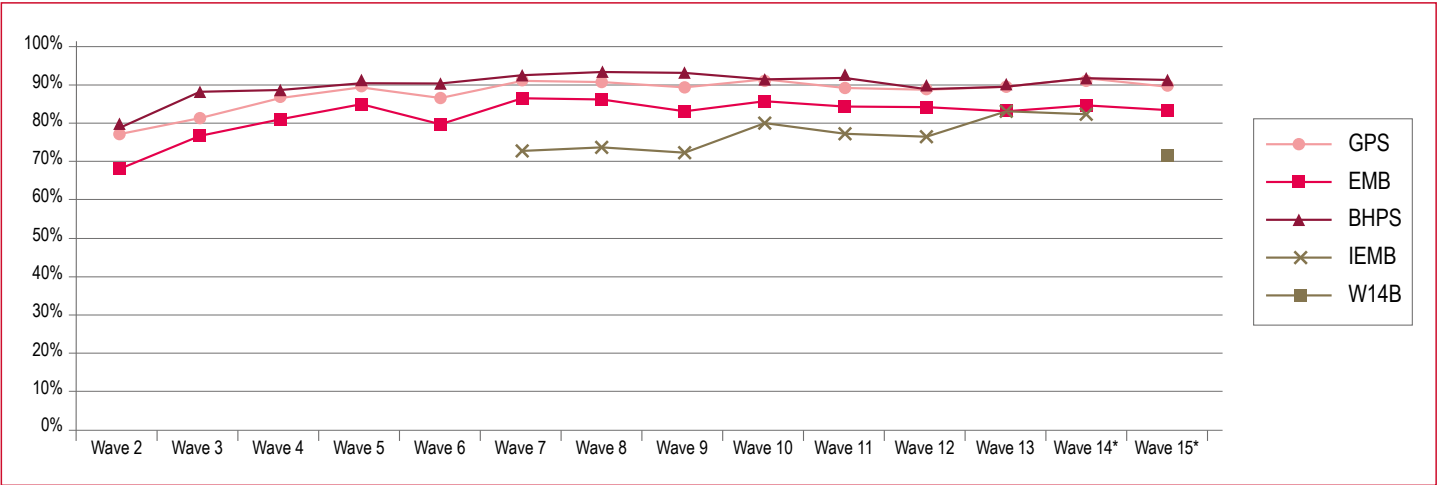
Wave 14 Boost

Understanding Society periodically increases the number of households taking part in the Study by introducing boost samples. These households are completely new to the Study and it can be challenging to encourage them to take part. The Wave 14 boost started in 2022 and carried on into 2023. Working with Verian and NatCen, our fieldwork partners, we trialled a number of strategies to encourage people to take part. Boost invitation letters included a QR code to take people directly to their survey, and the UK HM Government logo and the logos of the devolved Governments in countries outside of England were used on envelopes and letters to give new participants confidence that the survey was genuine. Interviewers were encouraged to take extra time talking to potential boost participants and were given materials designed just for the boost, explaining what Understanding Society is.

Fieldwork for the boost was difficult during the first year, particularly as this coincided with the country recovering from the Covid pandemic, but has improved in the second year. Over 5,500 new households have joined Understanding Society via the boost.

Find information about all our response rates for each wave of the Study in our user guide: www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/documentation/mainstage/user-guides/main-survey-user-guide/response-rates/

Experiments to improve response

We have been testing ways to increase response rates since the Study began, and last year was no exception. In August 2023, we published a Working Paper on 'early bird' incentives to encourage participants to complete their interviews online. Their results showed a positive effect on response rates when the incentive was higher (£20, compared to £10), but not for panel members who were offered it the first time – they were invited to move from a face-to-face interview to online.

Life event data

In June, we published a Working Paper on the findings of an Innovation Panel experiment to test monthly data collection. Participants were asked if they had experienced particular life events – including pregnancy, moving home, and changing job – and invited to a web survey by email and SMS (text messages). The results were encouraging, with response rates stable across the 12 months at between 52% and 56%, not diminishing across the monthly waves. Questions we asked following the experiment suggested that participants liked the monthly life events survey and the email or SMS invitations with links leading directly to their personal survey, without having to enter login details. There will be more testing of this approach in the future.

The data from phase one of this project has been released via the UK Data Service: Innovation Panel Life Events Study, 2020, SN8990 https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=8990#!/details

Read the research: Trialling Event-Triggered Data Collection in the Understanding Society Innovation Panel: Response and Measurement Quality, Understanding Society Working Paper, 2023-09, https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/research/publications/working-paper/understanding-society/2023-09/

Attrition and the role of weighting

A December Working Paper looked at attrition rates, which all longitudinal surveys experience, and found that Understanding Society's longitudinal weights are effective in tackling bias due to attrition and restoring the sample profile. However, some subgroups, such as people on lower incomes, are slightly underrepresented even after applying the longitudinal weights.

Read the research: Trends in panel attrition in Understanding Society; Waves 1 to 13, Understanding Society Working Paper, 2023-16, https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/research/publications/working-paper/understanding-society/2023-16/

Wave 16 development

Collecting health measures is part of the latest wave of Understanding Society. Collection protocols have been developed during 2023.

Wave 16 has gone into the field at the beginning of 2024. The wave has a focus on health, with participants being asked to collect several health measures. The last time health measures were collected was in Waves 2 and 3, where a nurse visited participants to take the measures. In Wave 16 it's no longer feasible to send a nurse to every household, so the pilot programme tested during 2023 aimed to find out whether participants could take their own measures.

The biomarker data that we are collecting in Wave 16 are:

- a blood sample
- anthropometric measures – height, weight, hip and waist circumference
- blood pressure.

In the pilot, some participants were asked to take these measures themselves, while some were allocated an interviewer to take the anthropometric measures and blood pressure. Interviewers did not take blood samples, but asked participants for consent for a kit to be sent to them.

Blood samples

During their annual interview participants are asked if they would consent to receiving a blood sample collection kit. The kit is sent from and returned to Thriva, where the samples are analysed for a range of measures including cholesterol, iron levels, and C-reactive protein (a marker of allostatic load). The pilot study showed that participants were willing to receive the sample kit, both via their online interview and in a face-to-face interview. The kits seemed straightforward for participants to use and produced viable results. Participants are given feedback on three of the results from the blood test – HDL and Total Cholesterol, and HbA1c (a marker for diabetes).

Hip and waist circumference

Participants were sent a tape measure and a card to record their measurements on, so they could do this before they started their interview. As with the blood samples, participants did not appear to have any problems providing these measure and a large percentage of the pilot sent their measures to us.

Microbiome

The pilot also tested whether participants would be willing to send a small poo sample, to analyse their microbiome. This sample collection has not been included in Wave 16, as the pilot showed a marked drop in response for participants who were asked to complete this element, even when it was made clear that the sample was entirely voluntary. The other biomarker collection requests did not affect response.

Read the research: Understanding Society Wave 16 pilot: biomarker data collection in the UK Household Longitudinal Study, Understanding Society Working Paper, 202304, https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/research/publications/working-paper/understanding-society/2023-04/

> ❝ Participants did not appear to have any problems providing these measure and a large percentage of the pilot sent their measures to us ❞

New work on survey methods

A variety of research has been conducted this year, looking at different aspects of survey design, response and data linkage.

Linking to Twitter/X data

Linking social media and survey data at an individual level has the potential to add evidence to a variety of research questions. Respondents can be followed over time, real-time 'observed' data can be collected, or new measures generated. In order to do this type of linkage, consent is needed from participants. Previous research has looked at the effect of demographic factors such as age, race, and sex on consent, but produced inconsistent results.

This research explored the consent decisions using the Understanding Society Innovation Panel and other data, looking at how smartphone use affects consent decisions.

The researchers found that the numbers of people who will allow their Twitter data to be linked to survey data are low – between 27% and 37% – and that face-to-face surveys have higher consent rates than web versions.

Privacy concerns are known to be an important factor in decisions on consent, and these concerns are affected by demographics. Among people with lower privacy worries, young people were less likely to consent than middle-aged and older people – perhaps because, having grown up in the digital age, they are more adept at managing online privacy. Older people may place more trust in public bodies, such as a university, collecting data.

This research also examined whether how people use their smartphones – and how often – can affect consent rates. The wider the variety of things people do on their phones, the more likely they are to say yes to linking. However, the more often people used their phone, the more likely they were to be concerned about privacy.

It may be that people who use smartphones for a wider range of activities tend to be more open to new experiences and practices, and the more we use our phones, the more likely we are to come across privacy and security risks, such as data breaches or attempted hacking. But it may also be that self-reported frequent use is linked to heightened anxiety and stress, which could amplify concerns over privacy and security. People who use their phone for a wider variety of activities may be more used to sharing personal information in different places.

The data from this project has been released via the UK Data Service. It includes user-level data based on platform-based behaviour and derived data at the tweet-level, mostly based on natural language processing and quantitative text analysis, without disclosing the content of the tweet. Innovation Panel Twitter Study, 2007–2023, SN9208. https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=9208

Read the research: Shujun Liu, Luke Sloan, Tarek Al Baghal, Matthew Williams, Curtis Jessop and Paulo Serôdio. Linking survey with Twitter data: examining associations among smartphone usage, privacy concern and Twitter linkage consent. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 2024. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2023.2299482

Recruiting and retaining young people in longitudinal surveys

As response rates in surveys have been declining world-wide, young people seem to be especially hard-to-reach and retain in longitudinal studies. Most of the research to date focuses on raising response among the adult population, while there is little research into what facilitates or hinders survey response among children, teenagers and young people, especially in the longitudinal context.

To try to find out some of the reasons children and young people drop out of studies, Understanding Society developed a small qualitative study talking to young adults who had been part of the Study, but had stopped participating.

The participants were asked about what motivated them to take part in the Study in the past and what would motivate them to respond now. Young interviewees indicated some useful strategies for recruitment and retention in surveys that focus on participation mode, incentives, study materials, the role of their mother in taking part, and other factors affecting retention.

They reported that doing their survey online provides them with the anonymity, flexibility and convenience that is needed to be able to include survey participation into their already busy lives.

Incentives were cited as the main motivator for young people to take part in the survey. In terms of the survey documents, young people advised to have a short invitation letter which would mention the survey incentive, the time commitment needed, log in details and emphasize that the questions are easy to answer. Their mother figure was often mentioned by the young people as the motivator to respond to a survey, especially for children, but also for young adults.

The interviewees also spoke at length about the barriers to staying in the survey through the transition period to young adulthood which involves leaving the parental home, going to college, university or starting employment. This extremely busy period of life means that survey participation is dropped.

Understanding Society will be doing more work to improve the retention of teenagers and young adults, building on the findings of this research.

Read the research: Recruiting and retaining young people in longitudinal surveys: lessons from Understanding Society, UK Household Longitudinal Study, Understanding Society Working Paper, 2023-15 https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/research/publications/working-paper/understanding-society/2023-15

Consent to data linkage

To maximize the value of the data while minimizing participant burden, survey data are increasingly linked to administrative records. Record linkage often requires the informed consent of participants, and failure to obtain consent reduces sample size and may mean the linked data is not representative of all kinds of participants.

Relatively little is known about how best to word and format consent requests in surveys to ensure that participants have understood the consent question and can make an informed decision. To try to understand more about this process a series of experiments was carried out in the Innovation Panel.

The research experimentally varied: (i) the readability of the consent request, (ii) placement of the consent request in the survey, (iii) consent as default versus the standard opt-in consent question, (iv) offering additional information, and (v) a priming treatment focusing on trust in the data holder.

For each experiment, the researchers examine its effects on consent rates, objective understanding of the consent request (measured with knowledge test questions), subjective understanding (how well respondents felt they understood the request), confidence in their decision, response times to answer the consent questions, and whether they read any of the additional information materials.

They found that the default wording and offering additional information do not increase consent rates. Improving the readability of the consent question increases objective understanding, but does not increase the consent rate. However, asking for consent early in the survey and priming respondents to consider their trust in the administrative data holder both increase consent rates without negatively affecting understanding of the request.

Read the research: Annette Jäckle, Jonathan Burton, Mick P Couper, Thomas F Crossley, Sandra Walzenbach, Survey Consent to Administrative Data Linkage: Five Experiments on Wording and Format, *Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology*, 2023: https://doi.org/10.1093/jssam/smad019

> " To maximize the value of the data while minimizing respondent burden, survey data are increasingly linked to administrative records "

Data released in 2023

Main Survey, Innovation Panel, and linked pension data were new this year.

Wave 13 data came out in November 2023, with new modules on mental health, job searching, other work, and gambling. Also in this wave, the questionnaire was redeveloped in three areas: employment, wealth and retirement. Employment questions now better capture responses from people who have more than one job and take into account non-standard working. The retirement planning module has been updated – replacing questions about the benefits and disadvantages of retirement with questions about expected working patterns and timings in older age.

Rotating content for Wave 13, which was last carried in Waves 10 and 11, includes questions on family networks, child maintenance, nutrition, social care, and sleep quality.

Innovation Panel

Innovation Panel (IP) data was also released in November 2023. The IP runs alongside the main Understanding Society study, carrying out experimental and methodological research to improve longitudinal studies. Waves 14 and 15 contained experiments on subjects such as:

- incentives to increase participation
- consent to survey questions via text message
- consent for linkage to LinkedIn and to Twitter data
- body volume and body measurements, collected using an online app
- questions on alcohol consumption, comparing whether asking about 'drinks' or 'units' alters response.

New linked data

Also in 2023, data from Nest auto-enrolment pensions was linked to Understanding Society and made available to researchers.

Nest (the National Employment Savings Trust) is a large workplace pension provider set up by the UK government to accept enrolments from workers who are eligible for enrolment into a workplace pension, under the UK's national programme of pensions auto-enrolment. The Nest linked dataset provides data from the Nest pensions accounts of 1,672 Understanding Society participants who gave their permission to have these data linked and made available for research.

Find information about all data releases on the Understanding Society website: www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/documentation/data-releases/
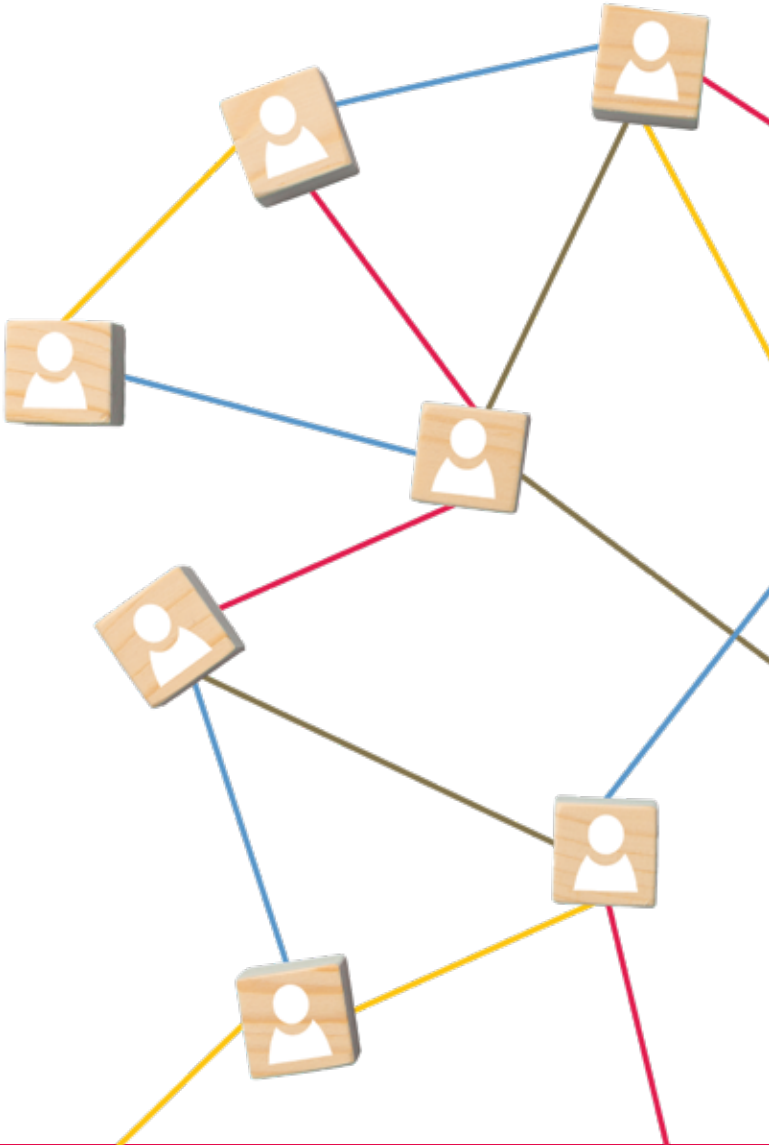
New pregnancy and childhood data file

PEACH is a single cross-wave file that brings together the main data reported by parents for all children aged under 10, plus information on pregnancy and parenting styles, from all waves of the main survey.

Understanding Society collects information across a wide range of topics before and after childbirth, coupled with data on the entire family, so the study makes it easy to track different aspects of child development over time. Children are Understanding Society participants from birth, with parents providing information on their child's health and development until the age of 10. When they turn 10 years old, children complete their own survey.

" the child's development can be seen in the context of their broader family circumstances "

The PEACH file pulls all the data collected in childhood into one file to make it easy to explore children's development, it includes variables on:

- pregnancy outcomes
- fertility treatment
- smoking and drinking during pregnancy
- birth weight
- baby behaviour, including sleeping, feeding, fussing and crying
- young child development, including learning to talk, becoming independent, developing relationships with others
- strengths and difficulties
- using technology, such as TV and game consoles
- parenting style.

The file was designed to be linked to the main Understanding Society datasets, so the child's development can be seen in the context of their broader family circumstances. The information is at the child-level, using each child's unique person identifier number, to make them identifiable across all waves.

The PEACH data can be downloaded from the UK Data Service. Find the dataset here: https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=9075

DATA CREATION AND INNOVATION
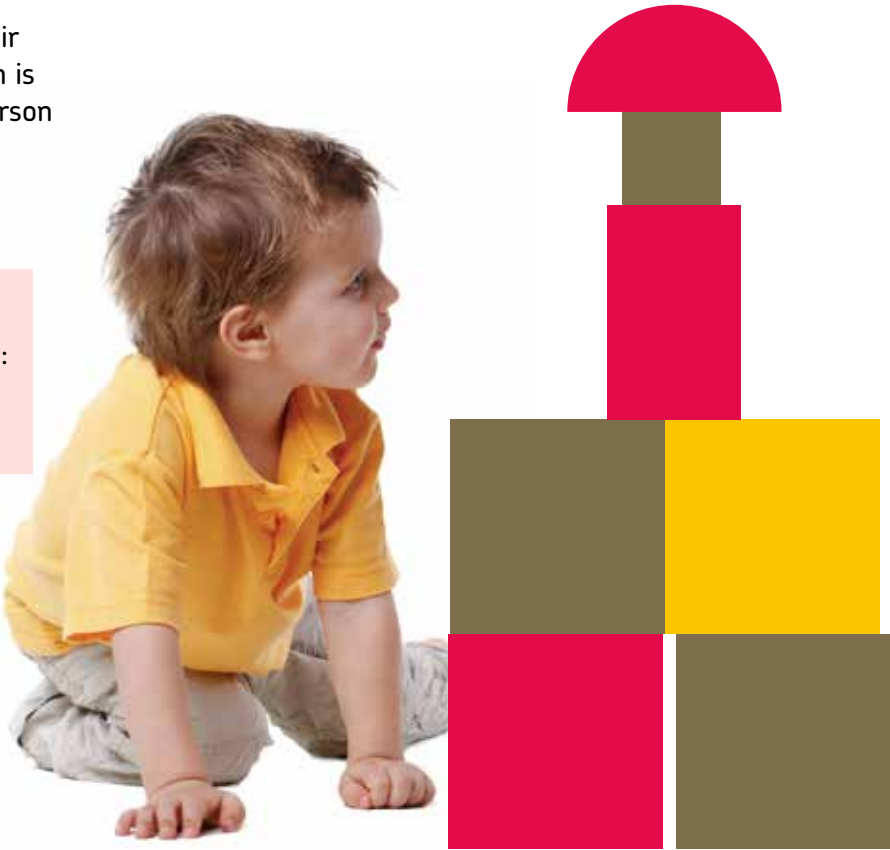
Material deprivation dashboard

A new dashboard shows which population groups are most affected by material deprivation – and what changes over time.

Understanding Society captures a wide range of information on income, expenditure, wealth and poverty, allowing researchers to consider questions such as where our income comes from, how much it is, and what we spend it on. The new data dashboard allows users to build charts that show trends over time and compare different groups. The data in the dashboard comes from the main Understanding Society survey and will be updated when each new wave is released.
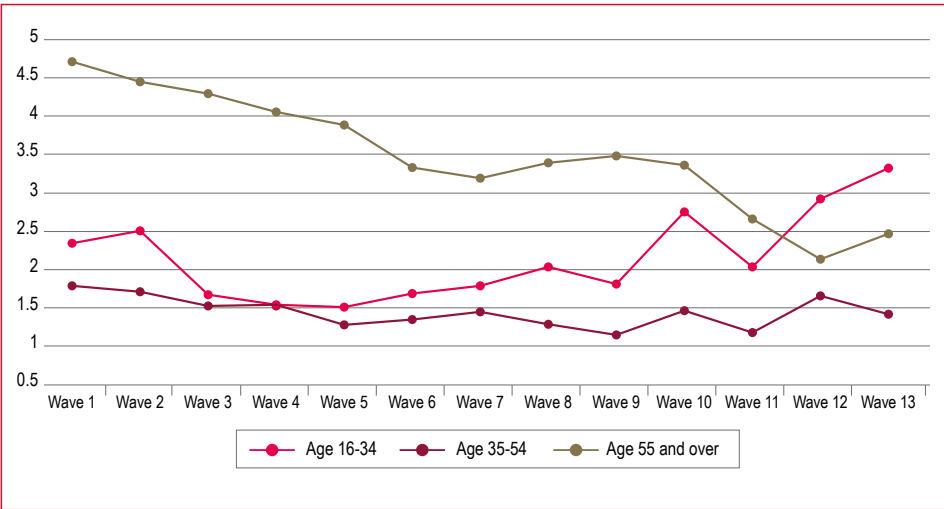
The dashboard includes variables on ownership of various household goods, like televisions and washing machines, and whether the household can afford certain things for their children, such as school trips or a warm winter coat. Also included are variables on food bank use and savings. Outputs are based on weighted cross-sectional results and are designed primarily for exploratory analysis.

The example below shows the percentage of people who don't have a washing machine in their home, broken down into three age groups – 16–34, 35–54 and age 55 and over.

The new dashboard has been of particular relevance since the beginning of the 'cost of living' crisis.

Fig 12: Percentage of people who don't have a washing machine

The new dashboard is on the Understanding Society website: www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/cost-of-living-dashboard

UKMOD using Understanding Society

UKMOD, the freely accessible, open-source tax/benefit microsimulation model can now be run using Understanding Society data.

The standard version of UKMOD is based on the Family Resources Survey (FRS), an annual cross-sectional survey of the living standards and circumstances of people living in the UK. The new version, launched in October 2023, can now be run with Understanding Society.

Microsimulation models help researchers understand how changes in taxes and cash benefits may affect the distribution of disposable income and public spending and revenues in the short term. UKMOD enables researchers to compare the current policy system with counterfactual policy systems, to explore proposed policy reforms or alternative policy ideas. For example, UKMOD can model the introduction of a tax or benefit, or see the effects of amending existing tax/benefit parameters. When running policy simulations, users now have an option of running UKMOD either with the FRS dataset or with the Understanding Society dataset.

UKMOD can also be used to produce harmonised outputs based on Understanding Society and FRS, and cross-validate estimates based on different sources.

The Understanding Society version can also analyse the tax-benefits system and policy reforms among immigrant and ethnic minority groups, well represented in Understanding Society thanks to boost samples.

Find out more about UKMOD on the Centre for Microsimulation and Policy Analysis website: www.microsimulation.ac.uk/ukmod/

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Engaging and supporting users and policy organisations

Training developments

Hundreds of data users have made use of the training and support materials available from Understanding Society.

A new online training hub has been launched, which gives data users a 'one stop shop' for all training available, both in person and online. The training hub enables data users to see what level training is at, so they can pick the course most suitable for them. In the last year, 327 people have attended a face-to-face training course and 339 have completed an online course. Training courses are used by academic researchers, data users from the policy and non-profit sectors.

Fig 13: Training course attendance by sector

- ■ Higher education 82%
- ■ Government 10%
- ■ Non-profit 6%
- ■ Commercial 2%
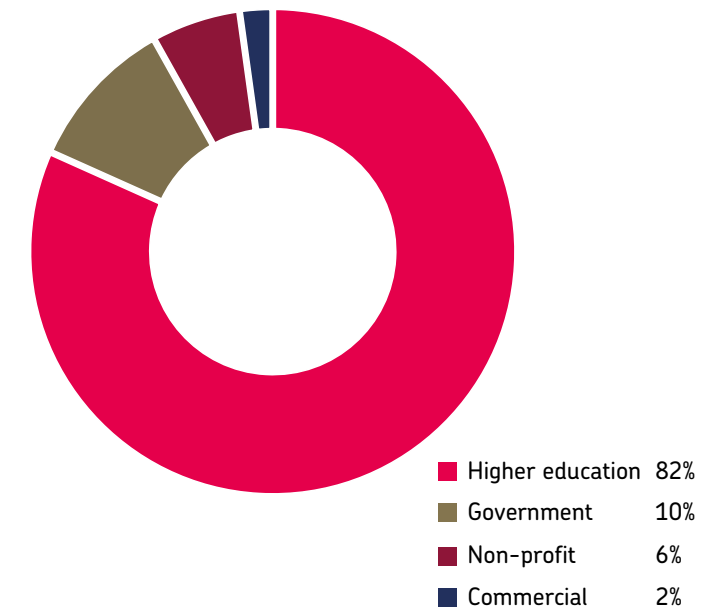
" A brilliant dataset – it was invaluable as an economist at DWP "

New training courses

In 2023, Understanding Society launched three new training courses. The children's data training goes alongside the new data file and is aimed at new users of the PEACH and youth datasets.

In June, a new online course began on mixed modes. We developed this for Understanding Society users who are already familiar with the Study's data structure and with running statistical analysis using Stata. The new course takes them through the mixed mode design in Understanding Society and how to assess the impact of the move to web on estimates based on the data (mode effects), as well as the challenges and opportunities a mixed methods approach brings to a survey.

For advanced data users, there is also a new course introducing linear panel data methods. This intensive one-day workshop is for quantitative researchers who are familiar with cross-sectional data analysis methods and would like to move on to analysing longitudinal panel data.

Online support and resources

In 2023 we launched a new online 'user pathway' to introduce new users to Understanding Society and help them explore the dataset. The web page highlights the various online resources we provide – including videos on variables and weighting, and a guide to our training courses.

Also new to our web resources this year, the user support team have made available syntax files for the majority of our derived variables. These are in addition to the syntax for basic data management tasks, such as merging individual files across waves and matching individuals in a household.

Our online resources continue to be heavily used by data users. The online user guides received 14,051 views on our website in 2023 and the index terms were viewed 6,880 times.

All our syntax can be found on our website: www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/documentation/mainstage/syntax/

User Support Forum

For data users with a specific query, the User Support Forum provides a direct link to the user support team and gives users the opportunity to share knowledge and tips for using the datasets with each other. In 2023, just over 100 new users registered to use the forum and user support staff responded to over 230 queries.
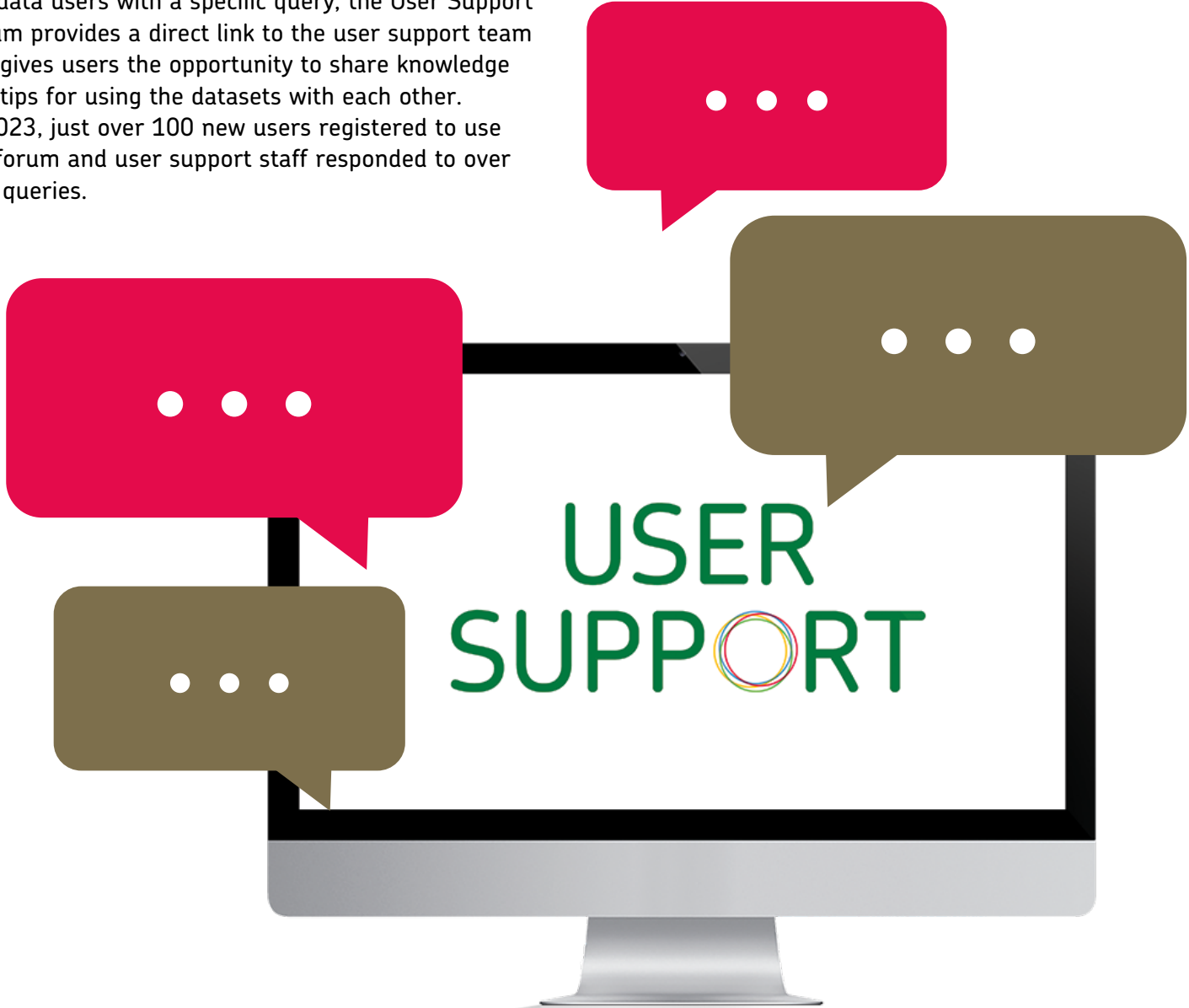
Data User Group

In June 2023, we launched our new Data User Group to give us a user's perspective on datasets before they are released.

The Data User Group includes data analysts who are already familiar with the Study and who have experience of using the data for research and teaching. They are given early access to the main survey data in order to give us extra user insights on the data before release.

The idea is that members of the group can carry out varying checks on the data before the data are released. The group will make suggestions for improvements to the usability of data such as new derived variables or datasets, training workshops, user support resources.

We have recruited 12 people to the group, and they will be members for three years, meeting once a year to discuss new developments and proposed changes to the Study. They have also committed to spend up to five days a year carrying out in-depth quality checks from their perspective on our pre-release data. Because of the vast coverage of Understanding Society data, group members can select topic areas they would like to focus on.

> The first project I did with Understanding Society I treated it more like a cross-sectional, but now I use it mainly as a panel, making use of the longitudinal aspect
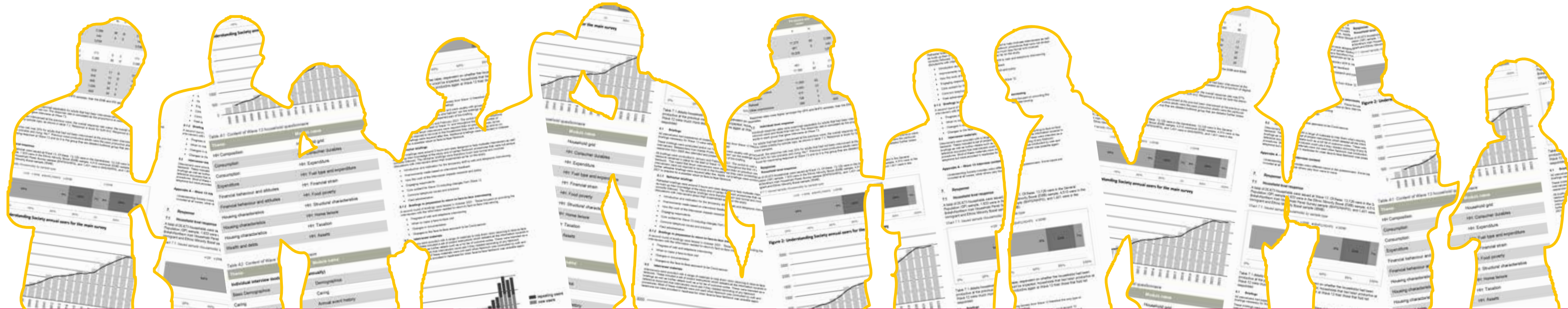
Health challenge research springboard

In spring 2023, the Policy and Partnerships team ran a health challenge 'research springboard' to bring together established researchers and analysts to harness knowledge and skills from different sectors, and prompt ideas for collaboration and research.

The springboard consisted of three full-day workshops spread over five weeks, with a further month at the end for completing analysis and to plan further work. Twenty-nine people came to the workshops to explore four topic areas: young people and health; work and health; money, finance and health; and disability and health.

Eight teams formed around these topics, and on the third day presented their results to a policy panel of experts who offered feedback and suggestions for how to develop further outputs targeted at influencing policy.

Their high-level findings were:

- people's mental health benefits significantly from not being behind with bills or not being under financial strain

- poor mental health is associated with worse financial outcomes; and possibly with subsequent job loss and increased likelihood of experiencing material deprivation

- disabled people were retained in work at lower rates than non-disabled people, which was most pronounced in the accommodation and food sectors

- no single measure of economic precarity uniformly predicted all aspects of health, but subjective job insecurity was significantly associated with poor mental health

- to identify which subjective experiences of a range of local services were 'protective' of economic inequalities

- there is a U-shaped relationship for reported loneliness and age, with levels high for those aged over 55 years but highest among those aged 16 to 19

- there is U-shaped cohort relationship for reported disability, with the oldest cohort (born pre-1936) and youngest cohort (born since 1996) having higher rates

- austerity policies were found to be significantly associated with a decrease in mental health for young people in Scotland, the South East, London, and the North East.

Four teams intended to submit their research to an academic journal, three to produce other reports and three to present their results at conferences or other events. Six of the eight teams reported an intention to continue some activities after the final day. Further springboards are planned, with one on the Future of Childcare happening in 2024.

Young people and health

Work and health

Money, finance and health

Disability and health

Policy work

Our Policy and Partnerships team has submitted evidence to several inquiries by committees in the House of Lords and the House of Commons.

Five of these committees published our evidence alongside their eventual report, including the Commons Environmental Audit Committee as part of its inquiry into outdoor and indoor air quality targets, and the Commons Education Select Committee for its inquiry, Screen time: impacts on education and wellbeing.

In addition, we saw evidence from other organisations, which also cited Understanding Society, being published on a further twelve occasions – including:

- the Commons Education Select Committee publishing evidence submitted by the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Cambridge to its inquiry into persistent absence and support for disadvantaged pupils

- the Work and Pensions Committee publishing evidence from both the Royal National Institute for the Blind and the Fabian Society to its inquiry into benefit levels in the UK.

Our data, and research using our data, has also been cited in publications and reports during the year by bodies as diverse as the Social Mobility Commission, Northern Ireland's Department for the Economy, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the House of Commons Library, Public Health Scotland, the UK Health Security Agency, and the Department for Business and Trade.

Guidance for researchers on engaging with policy

We also published a guide to writing for a policy audience, designed to take researchers through the process of how and why to shape research in a way that's accessible to audiences such as ministers, civil servants, think tanks, charities, and other bodies. This was launched with a presentation at our scientific conference, and is now being rolled out to new employees and other data users.

In March, our Associate Director of Policy and Partnerships, Raj Patel, published a working paper, How does the Study as data infrastructure generate benefits for science, policy, and society? This outlines the range of activities Understanding Society and our users carry out, and how these are designed to generate the benefits the Study was set up to deliver.

It sets out:

- the activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts which make up our operational framework

- our collaborations with partners such as the ESRC, CLOSER (a partnership of leading social and biomedical longitudinal population studies), and the National Centre for Research Methods to share the benefits of the Study

- our efforts to attract new users, carry out methodological experiments to aid research, provide training and fellowships, and to pioneer collaborations between academia and policy organisations.

The idea behind sharing this working model is to help stakeholders – who range from staff and data users to policy makers and funders – to understand how data infrastructure works and how what we do benefits science, policy and society.

Read the Working Paper: Understanding Society: how does the study as data infrastructure generate benefits for science, policy, and society? Understanding Society Working Paper, 2023-06, https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/research/publications/working-paper/understanding-society/2023-06/

Policy use and impact

Black people and homelessness

Researchers at Heriot-Watt University used our data to write a report with Race on the Agenda about disproportionate levels of homelessness among ethnic minorities in the UK, and found that Black people are over three times more likely to experience homelessness than their White counterparts.

Homelessness and Black and Minoritised Ethnic Communities in the UK: A Statistical Report on the State of the Nation found that a history of discrimination is associated with elevated risks of homelessness. About a third of Black people who had experienced homelessness reported previous discrimination from a social or private landlord.

It also found:

- In England the highest risk of homelessness is experienced by people from Black and Mixed ethnic groups

- Asian people in England are more likely to experience 'hidden homelessness', such as living in over-crowded housing or 'doubling up' with other households

- The greater risk of homelessness faced by Black and minoritised ethnic communities can't be fully explained by economic, social, or other factors.

The report used data from Understanding Society and other sources such as the English Housing Survey, the Scottish Household Survey, the Labour Force Survey, and the 1970 British Cohort Study, as well as official statistics on homelessness.

Understanding Society provided data on overcrowded and 'concealed' households (the latter referring to people or families living in someone else's household), and showed that households headed by people from Black and minoritised ethnic communities were almost five times more likely than White-headed households to live in overcrowded accommodation. Pakistani- and Bangladeshi-led households fared worst in the concealed households category, with Indian and Black-led households not far behind.

Our data also showed which groups were most at risk of becoming homeless. This included people who couldn't afford their housing, but also those with any housing need, which may mean that their home was unsuitable or in poor condition.

The report was part of a three-year programme to give a full statistical picture of homelessness among people from Black and minority ethnic communities.

Glen Bramley, Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Jill McIntyre, and Sarah Johnsen, *Homelessness and Black and Minoritised Ethnic Communities in the UK*, Heriot-Watt University, 2023:
https://www.hw.ac.uk/news/articles/2022/black-people-are-over-three-times-more.htm

UK 'poorer and sicker'

A report from IPPR, the Institute for Public Policy Research, using Understanding Society, said the UK was "getting poorer and sicker" while also facing challenging economic times.

The report, *Healthy People, Prosperous Lives*, published in April 2023, said the UK economy was expected to shrink in 2023, with inflation high and household spending power falling. It added that

> At the same time, population health is going backwards. After rapid progress on life expectancy in the 20th century, the UK has rising rates of death and impairment.

The report was the first from IPPR's Commission on Health and Prosperity, set up in April 2022 "to explore how good health can be the foundation for a fair and prosperous economy" after the Covid pandemic.

It used Understanding Society data to look at issues such as:

- the impact of physical and mental ill health on earnings
- illness and job satisfaction
- leaving work due to poor health
- regional differences
- how better health could help to tackle inequalities.

IPPR proposed that the government should introduce a Health and Prosperity Act and invest:

- to make the UK the healthiest country in the world, and increase life expectancy
- to generate evidence on improving public health through a 'what works' centre
- to encourage innovation and put evidence into practice.

Chris Thomas, Carsten Jung, Rachel Statham and Harry Quilter-Pinner, *Healthy People, Prosperous Lives*, IPPR, 2023:
https://www.ippr.org/articles/healthy-people-prosperous-lives

Pension campaign for the terminally ill

End of life charity Marie Curie used Understanding Society data in a report and campaign calling on the government to pay state pensions early for people who are diagnosed with a terminal illness.

The campaign began in 2023, following a report in 2022 which showed that:

- 6% of people who were dying fell into poverty in the last year or two years of their life
- 13% of working age parents who die have recently fallen into poverty.

The report, *Poverty at the end of life in the UK,* was written by Juliet Stone and Donald Hirsch at the Centre for Research in Social Policy at Loughborough University. It said more than 90,000 people a year experienced poverty during the last year of their lives, using the Social Metrics Commission's definition of poverty.

The authors worked out the relationship between poverty and mortality, and examined pathways into poverty at the end of life, using Understanding Society data covering 2009–19. They divided the sample into four age groups – 20-44, 45-64, 65-79 and 80+ – and calculated the proportion of people who were in poverty. Because Understanding Society follows people over time, they were also able to see if those in poverty had been so in the last 12 months of their life.

Marie Curie said its proposals to help would cost £114m a year, which is 0.1% of the annual state pension bill.

Juliet Stone and Donald Hirsch, *Poverty at the end of life in the UK,* Centre for Research in Social Policy, Loughborough University, 2023: https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/globalassets/media/documents/policy/dying-in-poverty/h420-poverty-at-the-end-of-life-in-the-uk-2nd-pp.pdf

Girlguiding boost for wellbeing

Research by Girlguiding has shown that girls' confidence drops during adolescence, but that Girlguiding's work helps mitigate this – and can even raise girls' confidence higher, on average, than that of boys.

Girlguiding used Understanding Society and its own survey data to show that:

- there is no statistically significant difference in girls' and boys' confidence between the ages of 10 and 11
- from 12 to 15, there is a noticeable and often increasing gap between boys' and girls' confidence
- girls who have experienced Girlguiding have higher levels of confidence than girls who have not
- Girlguiding raises its members' confidence of beyond the UK youth average.

Existing research on girls' wellbeing has suggested that girls' confidence drops during adolescence due to gendered expectations, particularly around their academic success and body image. Girlguiding surveyed over 13,000 of its 370,000 members, and used Understanding Society's youth survey to look at four measures of different aspects of confidence:

- confidence and nervousness
- two measures of self-efficacy (our belief in our ability to achieve tasks we set ourselves)
- self-worth.

When the researchers compared their own data with Understanding Society figures, they found that those in guiding experienced less significant drops in confidence compared to UK girls as a whole – and their confidence could even exceed the levels reported by UK boys. Compared to UK boys and girls combined, being in Girlguiding is associated with being 3-7% more likely to report high self-efficacy and 3% more likely to report high self-worth.

Girlguiding suggested that the length of time girls spend in guiding could be a factor – that the higher scores were due to the cumulative long-term effect of having a supportive community and trusting relationships with adults. Both factors correlated positively with better girls' wellbeing outcomes in Girlguiding's wider impact evaluation.

The Insight team at Girlguiding plans further research, working with Understanding Society and others, to learn more about how they can – in the organisation's own words –

" help girls know they can do anything "

Girlguiding impact report 2023: https://girlguiding.foleon.com/girlguiding-impact-report/girlguidingimpactreport/
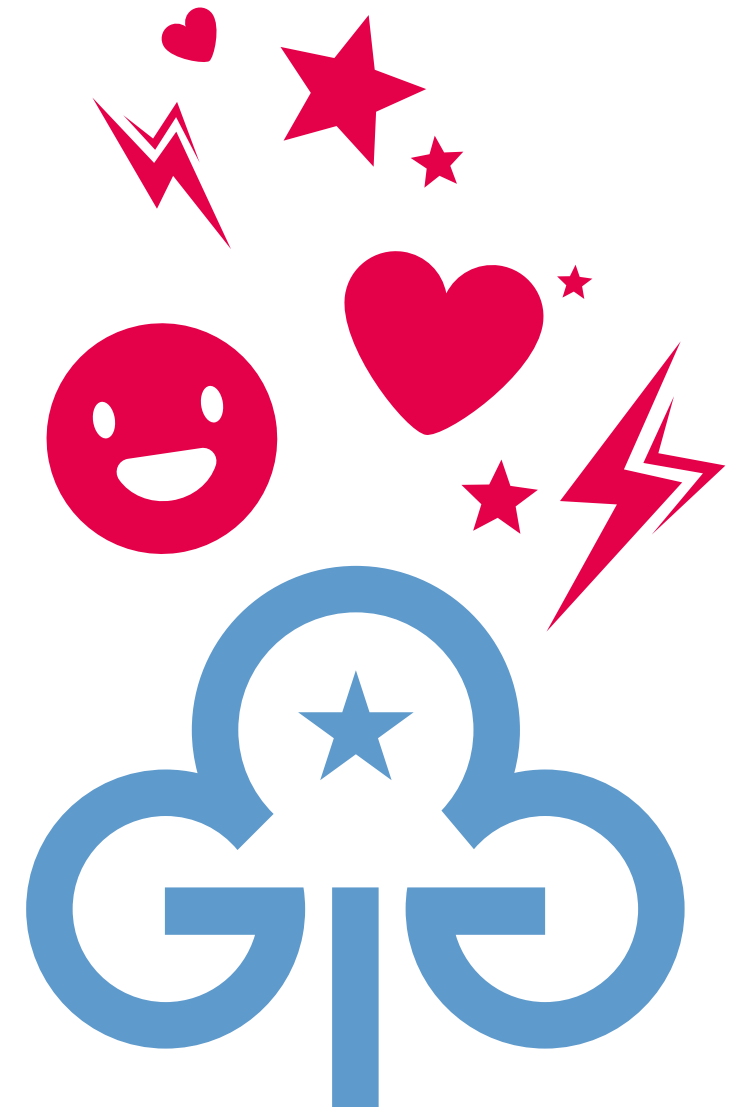
Social mobility

The government's Social Mobility Commission used Understanding Society as one of several datasets for its *State of the Nation 2023: People and Places* policy paper.

This looks at people's social mobility from birth to adulthood, broken down by geography and protected characteristics such as gender and ethnicity.
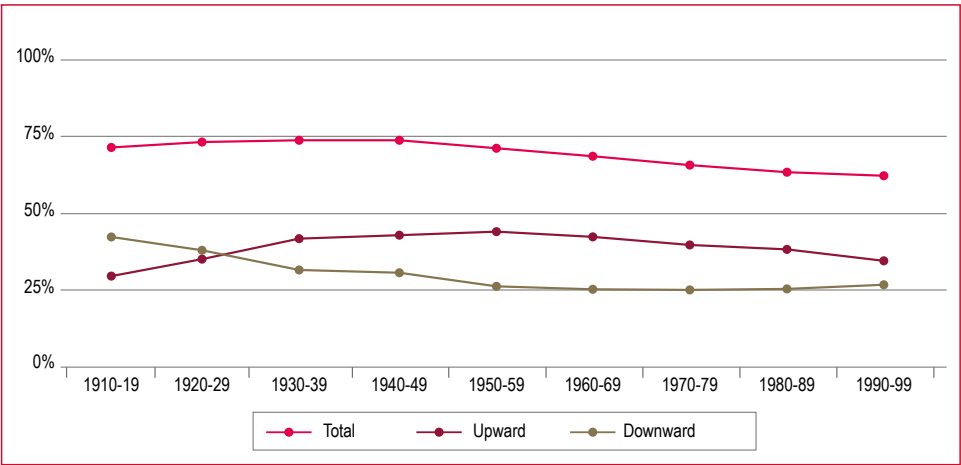
The paper found that

> For absolute mobility, the most common pattern is to find more upward than downward mobility, although the contrast was more marked in previous decades than it is today.

The Commission used Understanding Society to examine occupational mobility – the link between parents' occupational class and their children's, and whether people have moved up or down relative to their parents.

For men, there was more upward than downward mobility, but "the size of the surplus has been shrinking in recent decades and chances of long-range upward mobility have been declining". The same was true for women – and here, the total percentage who were socially mobile had fallen, too.

Understanding Society was also used alongside other datasets to look at income mobility – whether children earn more than their parents did at the same age. This showed that intergenerational income persistence increased between 1991 and 2004 and has probably remained at a similar level in the 21st century.

On a similar subject, our data was also used in a House of Commons Library briefing, *Poverty in the UK: statistics*, showing that

> between 2017/18 and 2020/21, 9% of individuals were in persistent low income before housing costs and 12% were in persistent low income after housing costs.

Fig 13: Percentages of women experiencing occupational mobility (upward, downward and total), by birth cohort, UK, data collected from 1972 to 2022

100%
75%
50%
25%
0%

1910-19 1920-29 1930-39 1940-49 1950-59 1960-69 1970-79 1980-89 1990-99

● Total   ● Upward   ● Downward

Source: The General Household Survey (1972 to 2005), British Household Panel Survey (1991 to 2009), Taking Part Survey (2005 to 2006), Understanding Society (2010 to 2019) and Labour Force Survey (2014 to 2022), female respondents aged 25 to 65 years.

State of the Nation 2023: People and Places, Social Mobility Commission, 2023: **https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-nation-2023-people-and-places** and *Poverty in the UK: statistics*, House of Commons Library, 2023: **https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn07096/**

Basic income and health

A team of researchers from across the UK used Understanding Society to measure the potential impact of Basic Income on public health and the economy.

The report, *Treating causes not symptoms: Basic Income as a public health measure*, was published by the think tank Compass, and used economic and health modelling to provide evidence on the idea of regular, secure, predictable payments to all the UK's adult permanent residents to support their basic needs. It was one output from Basic Income Health, a long-term interdisciplinary project based at Northumbria University to find out whether the policy is politically and financially feasible, and assessing its possible health, social and economic benefits.

> "those living in the poorest households have a greater probability of mental health problems than the richest"
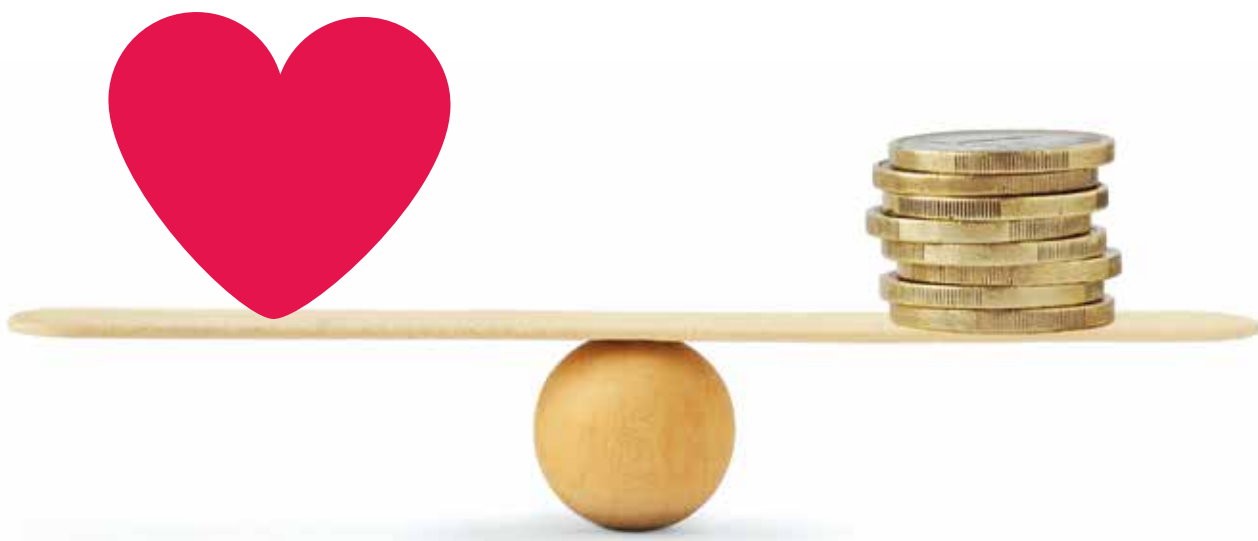
The team's research has shown that:

- being in a higher income group is linked to a lower likelihood of clinically significant depressive symptoms

- those living in the poorest households have a greater probability of mental health problems than the richest

- increases in income over the course of childhood and adolescence are associated with reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety

- based on depressive disorders, NHS and personal social service costs, basic income could save between £125 million and £1.03 billion over 20 years if 50% of cases are diagnosed and treated.

The project has produced reports for other organisations, including the Royal Society of Arts, making recommendations for policymakers, including:

- committing to trials of Basic Income

- explaining the health and economic benefits to voters

- more microsimulation modelling to cover all age groups and major health conditions

- working with researchers and stakeholders to work out ways of funding Basic Income.

Elliott Johnson, Howard Reed, Daniel Nettle et al., *Treating causes not symptoms: Basic Income as a public health measure*, Compass, 2023: https://www.compassonline.org.uk/publications/treating-causes-not-symptoms-basic-income-as-a-public-health-measure/

Understanding insomnia

Global policy think tank RAND Corporation used Understanding Society in a report on the societal and economic burden of insomnia in high-income countries.

Among the findings were that about 8% of adults suffer from chronic insomnia, and that people with the condition would be willing to trade around 14% of their annual per capita household income to avoid its negative consequences. In addition, the report says: "Chronic insomnia is associated with an average loss of 45-54 days in workplace productivity, resulting in estimated annual losses in national gross-domestic product ranging from 0.64% to 1.31%, or approximately $1.8 to $207.5 billion."

Chronic insomnia was defined as difficulty falling or staying asleep or non-restorative sleep experienced at least three times per week for at least three months, with daytime impairment. The researchers used Understanding Society data to quantify the wellbeing costs of insomnia, and as a data source in estimating the amount of income a person would need to counteract or compensate for the reduced subjective wellbeing from their insomnia.

Our data also showed that people with insomnia were more likely to be female, and more frequently had poorer health status, poorer wellbeing and were more likely to report sleeping less than six hours per night. Insomnia was also associated with lower self-rated life satisfaction, and losses to GDP.

" Given the substantial societal and economic effects of insomnia,

RAND Corporation says,

" strategies are needed to better mitigate its burden to positively impact the health, wellbeing and productivity of individuals and society, as a whole. "

Marco Hafner, Robert J. Romanelli, Erez Yerushalmi, Wendy M. Troxel, *The societal and economic burden of insomnia in adults – An international study,* RAND Corporation, 2023: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA2166-1.html

Stephen Lawrence's legacy

The Runnymede Trust used data from the British Social Attitudes Survey and Understanding Society in its report, *Dear Stephen: Race and belonging 30 years on.*

The report marked 30 years since the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993, and set out "to explore long-term trends in people's attitudes towards their multicultural communities, and how they relate to them". It also looked specifically at 10-15-year-olds' experiences of education, views of their communities, and career aspirations.

Understanding Society's youth survey allowed the Trust to find that:

- young people's happiness with their school and schoolwork fell between 2010-11 and 2020-21
- happiness with their school fell from 86% to 79%
- happiness with schoolwork fell from 83% to 74%.

However, around three quarters of young people were still happy at school, and this was true for young people from minority ethnic backgrounds – in 2020-21, 76% were happy with their school, and 73% with their schoolwork.

Although the desire to go into higher education has fallen among minority ethnic young people, it is still high – going from 98% in 2011-12 to 93% in 2020-21. Also, young people – especially minority ethnic young people – are increasingly interested in pursuing a career in a higher management or a higher professional role. In addition, while young people in general are unlikely to volunteer or do community work, participation by minority ethnic young people rose from 19% to 27% between 2010-11 and 2020-21.

Baroness Doreen Lawrence:

" Data is crucial to tackling discrimination. This report provides a detailed analysis of the progress that has been made in our society over the past 30 years in relation to attitudes towards race, ethnicity, and identity, as well as highlighting the persistent problems that still exist. "

Shabna Begum and Maxwell Williams, *Dear Stephen: Race and belonging 30 years on,* Runnymede Trust, 2023: https://www.runnymedetrust.org/publications/dear-stephen-race-and-belonging-30-years-on

Users' achievements

Putting the planet before parenthood?

Fears over the climate emergency may be deterring people from having children, according to a study using Understanding Society.

The paper looked at evidence of increased 'green' behaviour, and how this might affect decisions that childless people are making about having children. It was the first research to look at this idea from a longitudinal perspective, and found that people committed to a green lifestyle were less likely to become parents. In contrast, a person who was entirely unconcerned about environmental behaviour was approximately 60% more likely to have a child in the future, compared to deeply committed environmentalists.

The research used a number of questions related to environmental actions to assess the green credentials of the people in the Study. These include questions on taking flights, using public transport instead of a car, recycling, and not buying items with a lot of packaging. The data collected allowed the researchers to analyse both opinions and actual behaviours.

" People who are strong environmentalists are less likely to have children. That may be because they fear those children will have a bleak future or because the act is consistent with a pro-environmental lifestyle. "

Ben Lockwood, Nattavudh Powdthavee and Andrew J. Oswald, Are Environmental Concerns Deterring People from Having Children?, IZA, 2023: **https://docs.iza.org/dp15620.pdf**

'Boomerang' adult children

Research at the Institute for Social and Economic Research showed that 'boomerang' adults experience a boost in mental health, despite the loss of independence.

The group of adults who moved back in with their parents experienced improved mental health. Previous studies looked at the impact on parents and found that their mental health dips when their adult children return, but this was the first UK research to look at the impact on the returnees.

In 2021, the UK Census found the total number of adult children living with their parents was 4.9 million, a 14.7% increase from 4.2m in 2011. Using data from Understanding Society, the research found that 15% of young adults aged 21-35 had moved back to their parents' home at some point during the years 2009-2020. Many made the move because they could not afford to rent, their relationship had broken down, or they wanted to save for mortgage deposits. The researchers were surprised to find that, rather than a dip following a loss of independence, adult children experienced a lift in mental health after the move.

They suggested this may be because they are escaping the stress of poor living conditions in the UK's under-regulated rental housing sector.

> " It could be that the comfort and security of the parental home is a sanctuary to young adults worn down by the struggles of living in high-cost and poor-quality rented accommodation. "

Jiawei Wu and Emily Grundy, 'Boomerang' moves and young adults' mental well-being in the United Kingdom, *Advances in Life Course Research*, 2023: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.alcr.2023.100531

Later pension, less time for caring?

The increase in older women working has affected the informal care they were providing to their older parents, according to a study by the ESRC Centre for Society and Mental Health at King's College London.

The research suggests that the six-year increase in women's state pension age means that many are now working for longer and don't have the time they would previously have had to provide informal care to older relatives. Understanding Society data showed that an average increase of 10 hours work per week reduced the provision of informal care by 2.1 hours a week.

The reduction in caregiving is found mainly among women with physically or mentally demanding jobs, as well as the 'sandwich generation' – people who have a parent alive, and at least one grandchild. The study also found that the reduction of care received from family was not compensated by an increase in formal care, or by other sources of support. This may lead to reduced functioning and higher healthcare costs for older people. It can also have implications for wider society if they increase their demand for formal care provision to compensate for the reduction in their adult children's involvement in their care.

Ludovico Carrino, Vahé Nafilyan, and Mauricio Avendano, Should I Care or Should I Work? The Impact of Work on Informal Care, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 2022: https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.22457

Social mobility and ageing better

Research using Understanding Society has shown that having a disadvantaged socio-economic position throughout one's life is linked to having a biological age greater than one's chronological age.

The research used biological data from Waves 2 and 3 of the Study, in which nurses took blood samples from around 20,000 adults. With consent, DNA was extracted and analysed from some of the samples for a process known as methylation, which predicts a person's biological age. Although this 'biological age' is usually close to people's actual age, some people come in 'older', and some 'younger'. The former are said to show 'age acceleration', which is linked to illness and a shorter life.

Research has shown a link between the conditions of our early lives and age acceleration – especially in those with disadvantaged lives. This new research wanted to understand the role of social mobility, and whether being upwardly or downwardly mobile significantly changed people's age acceleration.

The results showed that social position in early life was linked to age acceleration in adulthood, and that age acceleration was linked to social position in early and later life – with both stages contributing equally.

Meena Kumari, Understanding Society's Associate Director, Health, Biomarkers and Genetics:

66 Social mobility, though, was not a particularly important factor, so disadvantage throughout life is important for our long-term health 99

Bao, Y., Gorrie-Stone, T., Hannon, E. et al, Social mobility across the lifecourse and DNA methylation age acceleration in adults in the UK, Nature – Scientific Reports, 2022: https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-26433-2

Sleeping like a baby – or not

Women's sleep is reduced by an average of 0.7 hours (42 min) on becoming a mother, according to research using Understanding Society.

Previous studies have looked at sleep across the lifecourse, but before this paper, few had investigated sleep around the birth of a child – one of the most important life events which causes sleep deprivation. The researchers followed about 1,000 participants as they transitioned into parenthood in a three-year window, analysing changes in sleep hours and sleep quality.

The results showed that before parenthood women sleep more than men, but after childbirth women and men sleep similar amounts. Cohabiting men experience a greater reduction in sleep by around 0.5 hours (30 min) than married men, suggesting that new cohabiting fathers may experience more sleep disturbances.

When the researchers looked at the quality of sleep people reported, they found that the odds of having good sleep before becoming parents did not differ by gender or partnership status. After having a baby, both women and men experienced a significant decline in sleep quality, but women were particularly affected by needing to feed their child during the night or by other childcare responsibilities. Sleep quality was particularly poor for women in their baby's early life.

Shih-Yi Chao, Brienna Perelli-Harris, Ann Berrington, and Niels Blom, Sleep hours and quality before and after baby: Inequalities by gender and partnership, *Advances in Life Course Research*, 2023: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.alcr.2022.100518

Healthcare disrupted by Covid

People who experienced disruption in accessing healthcare during COVID-19 were more likely to be hospitalised for potentially preventable reasons.

The pandemic made it more difficult to get appointments and many medical procedures were cancelled. The researchers used seven longitudinal studies in the UK, including Understanding Society and, with their consent, linked data from over 29,000 people in England to their NHS electronic health records. They looked at who struggled to get healthcare during the pandemic and how this affected avoidable emergency hospital admissions – that is hospitalisation for conditions that can, in theory, be treated through community care.

The findings showed that:

- 1 in 4 had problems with appointments, either in seeing their GP or in attending an outpatient department
- 1 in 5 people had procedures such as surgery or cancer treatment disrupted.

The researchers found that people whose healthcare was disrupted were older, had poorer health and were more likely to live in the most deprived areas. They were:

- 80% more likely to have been admitted to hospital for preventable conditions
- 68% more likely to be admitted for an urgent preventable condition
- 93% more likely to be admitted for a long-term preventable condition.

The researchers said their findings

66 highlight the need to increase healthcare investment to tackle the short and long term implications of the pandemic, and to protect treatments and procedures during future pandemics. 99

Mark Green et al, Associations between self-reported healthcare disruption due to covid-19 and avoidable hospital admission: evidence from seven linked longitudinal studies for England *British Medical Journal*, 2023: https://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj-2023-075133

Has NHS staff 'burnout' got worse?

Research using NHS monthly workforce statistics and Understanding Society has shown that work-life balance and satisfaction levels for healthcare workers have fallen over the past decade, more than in the private sector – and dissatisfied healthcare workers are becoming more likely to leave the sector.

Looking at the two sources of longitudinal data – the NHS monthly workforce statistics covering 2011-22, and our data covering 2009-21 – the research showed:

- three times as many workers left the NHS in 2021 for work-life balance reasons than in 2011
- healthcare workers' estimated satisfaction with their amount of leisure for fell by three times the amount that it fell for non-healthcare workers
- satisfaction with amount of leisure time and satisfaction with income have remained lower for healthcare workers than for other public sector workers.

Overall, working conditions in UK healthcare deteriorated between 2010 and 2020, especially compared to the private sector. However, overall job satisfaction has fallen faster in other areas of the public sector than it has in healthcare, which may indicate wider issues within the UK public sector as a whole.

The authors said the results suggest

66 There needs to be a focus on improving working conditions within UK healthcare if we want to prevent a mass exodus of healthcare workers in the near future. 99

Neel Ocean and Caroline Meyer, Satisfaction and attrition in the UK healthcare sector over the past decade, *PLOS ONE*, 2023: https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0284516

Does flexible working reinforce gender roles?

Research using Understanding Society suggests that some flexible working arrangements such as homeworking, that allow more blurring of the home/work boundary, can reinforce gender roles, and see women both working and taking on more domestic chores.

Using Waves 2, 4, 6, and 8 of Understanding Society, the researchers looked at couples' flexible working arrangements and the distribution of housework. They found that women did more routine domestic chores than men, and spent more time doing them (13+ hours a week, compared to 5.5). More women than men used flexitime (15% vs. 11%), while more men (7% vs. 5%) worked from home.

Women were more likely to say they had no control over their schedules, and men were more likely to report 'a lot' of schedule control. Being able to control their schedule increased women's involvement in care and housework, while working from home (surprisingly) reduced the amount of housework they did. In contrast, men tended to reduce their childcare responsibilities when working from home.

The researchers suggested that couples in lower-paid jobs may favour a traditional division of labour along gender lines, but can't achieve this because of limited resources – and that higher-paid couples may have more egalitarian aims, but can't make them happen because of their career commitments. They suggested that to improve gender equality policy makers need to introduce measures to change the culture around gender and work, such as more generous paternity leave, and reduced working hours.

> Heejung Chung and Cara Booker, Flexible Working and the Division of Housework and Childcare: Examining Divisions across Arrangement and Occupational Lines, *Work, Employment and Society*, 2022: https://doi.org/10.1177/09500170221096586

Job loss and pregnancy loss

Women who lose a job during pregnancy are at greater risk of losing the pregnancy, according to research using Understanding Society.

Looking at 8,142 pregnancies in Waves 1–12 of the Study, covering 2009–21, the research found that women who lost a job during pregnancy saw their risk of pregnancy loss increase – from around 12% usually, to between 19 and 21% if they lost a job. However, when the end of a job was voluntary – or at least not involuntary – it didn't have the same consequences for pregnancy loss as an involuntary job loss.

The researchers also examined whether the woman lost her job, her partner lost a job, or neither did. The results here showed that both women's and their partners' loss of work were associated with an increased risk of pregnancy loss.

The researchers suggested that, because Britain's welfare state is designed to keep people out of poverty, rather than to replace income completely, unemployment benefits here are relatively low compared to the rest of Europe. If the research was replicated in other countries, with different levels of benefit, it might establish whether more generous welfare regimes have better outcomes for pregnancy.

> Alessandro Di Nallo, Selin Köksal Job loss during pregnancy and the risk of miscarriage and stillbirth, *Human Reproduction*, 2023: https://doi.org/10.1093/humrep/dead183

Child mental health in the pandemic

All children's mental health worsened during the pandemic, but the steepest decline was seen in those from wealthier families, according to research using Understanding Society.

The results went against the expectation that disadvantaged children would be hardest hit – but their mental health remains worse than those from better-off families. The research looked at child mental health from 2011-19, before the pandemic, and at ages 5-11 in July and September 2020 and in March 2021. The researchers examined parents' answers to questions about their children, and took sex, ethnicity, family structure, parental education, employment, household income and area deprivation into account.

Children with highly educated, employed parents, who lived together and had higher household income experienced steeper declines in their mental health during the pandemic than more disadvantaged children. The disadvantaged children tended to have lower mental health to begin with, causing a narrowing of inequalities in children's mental health, but still leaving disadvantaged children worse off.

The researchers suggested that

> Social isolation and reduced access to services during the pandemic brought the experiences of traditionally advantaged groups closer to those already faced by children from disadvantaged backgrounds,

and that

> emergency income support measures during the pandemic may have eased the economic burden for disadvantaged families.

It may also be that when working parents were balancing childcare and their jobs, this may have contributed to the poorer mental health of children with employed parents.

Naomi Miall et al, Inequalities in children's mental health before and during the COVID-19 pandemic: findings from the UK Household Longitudinal Study, *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 2023: https://doi.org/10.1136/jech-2022-220188

Renting ages you faster

Living in a privately rented home is associated with faster biological ageing, according to research using Understanding Society's biosocial data.

The researchers used information on people's housing and life situation, plus data on biological ageing captured through measuring DNA methylation in blood samples. They considered the type of housing people lived in, whether they had central heating, their housing costs, how overcrowded their home was, and whether they were rural or urban. They also accounted for other potentially influential factors, such as sex, education level, socioeconomic status, and diet.

The results showed that the impact on biological age of renting in the private sector, as opposed to outright ownership (with no mortgage), was almost double that of being out of work rather than being employed. It was also 50% greater than having been a former smoker, as opposed to never having smoked.

When historical housing circumstances were added to the model, repeated housing arrears, and exposure to pollution/environmental problems were also associated with faster biological ageing. Living in social housing, however, with its lower cost and greater security of tenure, was no different to outright ownership once additional housing variables were included.

> Challenging housing circumstances negatively affect health through faster biological ageing. However, biological ageing is reversible, highlighting the significant potential for housing policy changes to improve health.

Amy Clair, Emma Baker and Meena Kumari, Are housing circumstances associated with faster epigenetic ageing?, *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 2023: https://doi.org/10.1136/jech-2023-220523

Key data

Main survey Waves 1–13: www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/documentation/mainstage

Innovation Panel Waves 1–16: www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/documentation/innovation-panel

Health, biomarker, genetics and epigenetics data: www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/documentation/health-assessment

COVID-19 Study Waves 1–9: www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/documentation/covid-19

Teaching datasets: www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/documentation/teaching-datasets

For more information on the work of Understanding Society see our website.

About the Study: www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/about/about-the-study

Survey methods publications: www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/research/publications/subject/survey-methodology

User Support: www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/help/contact-user-support

Our impact: www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/impact

Research publications: www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/research/publications

Previous Annual Reports: www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/about/annual-report

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Understanding Society Team

Co-Investigators
(at University of Essex unless otherwise stated)

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Professor Vittal Katikireddi	Co-Investigator, Public Health, University of Glasgow
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Becky Parsons	Associate Director, Communications and Engagement
Raj Patel	Associate Director, Policy and Partnerships
John Payne	Associate Director, Data
Professor Brienna Perelli-Harris	Co-Investigator, Demography, University of Southampton
Professor Lucinda Platt	Co-Investigator, Sociology, LSE

Dr Edith Aguirre	Senior Research Officer
Amir Avarzamani	Software Developer
George Bennett	Survey Data Officer
Dr Cara Booker	Senior Research Fellow
Hannah Brightman	Participant Engagement and Communications Officer
Dr Pablo Cabrera Alvarez	Senior Research Officer
Dr Roberto Cavazos	Senior Data Analyst and Training Officer
Chris Coates	Research Impact and Project Manager
Giacomo De Santis	UKHLS PhD student
Emily Dix	Survey Officer
Glenn Dunn	Survey Database Manager
Paul Garcia Hinojosa	Senior Data Analyst and Training Officer
Kristijan Garic	Survey Data Linkage Officer
Dipanwita Ghatak	UKHLS PhD student
Kelly Goodyear	Participant Engagement and Communications Officer
Dr Karon Gush	Senior Research and Content Development Officer
Isobel Hibbard	Participant Engagement and Communications Officer
Ryan Holmes	Survey Officer

Hannah Howman	Survey Officer
Omar Hussein	Research Assistant (Income Data)
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Graham Jolliffe	Research Data Manager
Dr Olena Kaminska	Survey Statistician
Eirini Koraki	Survey Data Officer
Joanne Maher	Research Assistant (Questionnaire Development)
Dr Piotr Marzec	Senior Data Analyst and Training Officer
Memory Mhembere	Research Data Manager
Louise Miles	Senior Web and Communications Officer
Jasmine Mitchell	UKHLS PhD student
Lewis Mitchell	Survey Officer
Dr Jamie Moore	Research Fellow
Tiago Nascimento	Research Assistant (Ethnicity)
Jonathan Nears	Web Developer
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Catherine Yuen	Survey Applications Manager

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