



Understanding Society

THE UK HOUSEHOLD LONGITUDINAL STUDY

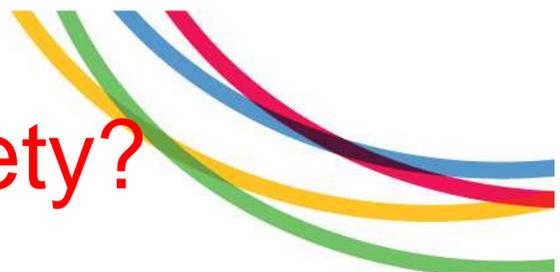
Understanding Society

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A study funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, with scientific leadership by the Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex, and survey delivery by TNS-BMRB

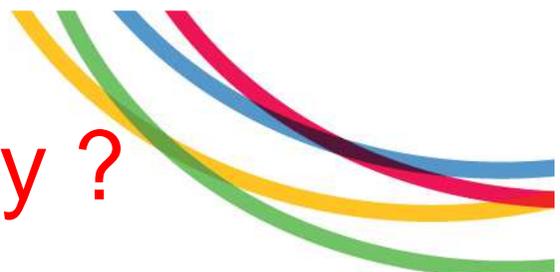


What is Understanding Society?



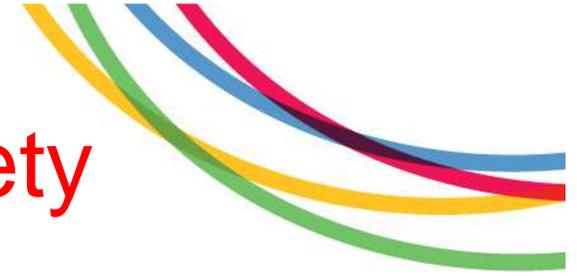
- *Understanding Society: the UK Household Longitudinal Study* : longitudinal household panel survey of all ages, designed to track and analyse change at individual and household level by examining
 - what people are experiencing: circumstances and key events in their lives as they happen
 - attitudes, identity and subjective well-being
 - how individuals and households respond to policies and key events

What is Understanding Society ?



- Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), and supported by a range of government departments; delivered by [Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Essex](#)
- Began in January 2009, and builds on the long running [British Household Panel Survey \(BHPS\)](#) established in 1991
- Major investment with funding for methods, outreach, Policy Unit. Part of the diverse portfolio of the UK longitudinal and cohort studies

Value of Understanding Society



- Understand how things are changing (or not) as society is becoming more complex, diverse and dynamic and less cohesive and equal
- Brings together information on many life course domains, to allow for interdisciplinary research - both within social sciences and between social and biomedical sciences
- Very large sample size allows analysis of subgroups
- Wide geographical spread allows regional analyses
- Innovative features: innovation panel/ methods innovations, ethnic minority focus, biomarkers and genetics data, administrative data linkage.

The value of Understanding Society



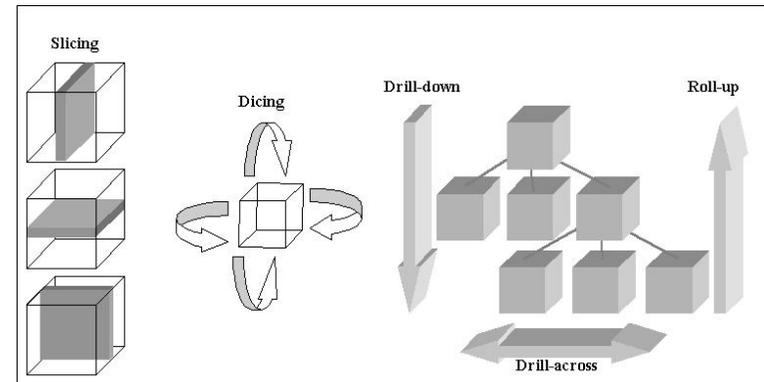
Long-term - answer questions that are inherently longitudinal, e.g.:

- The impact of early interventions
- Social/geographical mobility and managing places
- Formation of health outcomes
- Changing patterns of economic opportunity
- Impact of long-term policies, e.g. child poverty



Multi-purpose & multi-topic
- develop a broader view:

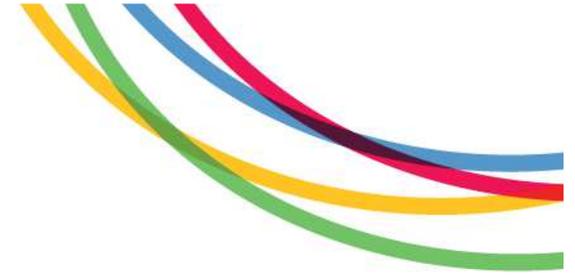
- Link factors
- Examine relationships
- Bio-social research
- Ethnic boost
- Joined-up thinking



Large sample - get more granular evidence:

- Higher resolution of events
- Group and cohort analysis
- Regional and spatial analysis

Outline



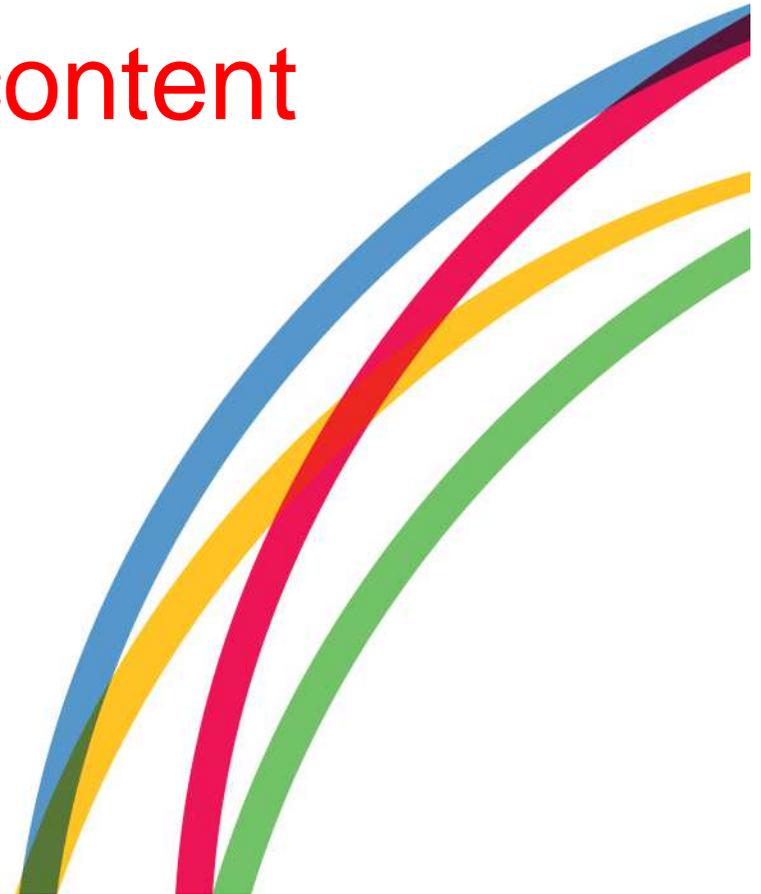
- Design features and content
- Highlights/innovations
- Data sharing and communication



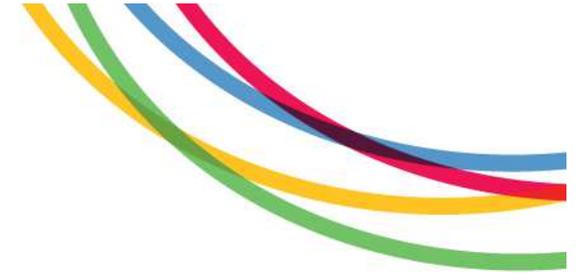
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Design features and content

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Household panel design



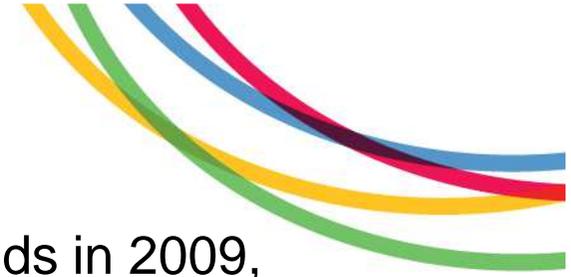
Understanding Society is a longitudinal sample of individuals representing the whole UK population, and interviewed within a household context:

- starts with randomly selected addresses (> dwellings > households)
- collects information about all residents at selected households
- follows the sample members' life courses over time, collecting data also from people living with them



Basic design similar to BHPS and household panel studies in other countries (e.g., SOEP, HILDA, PSID, SoFIE)

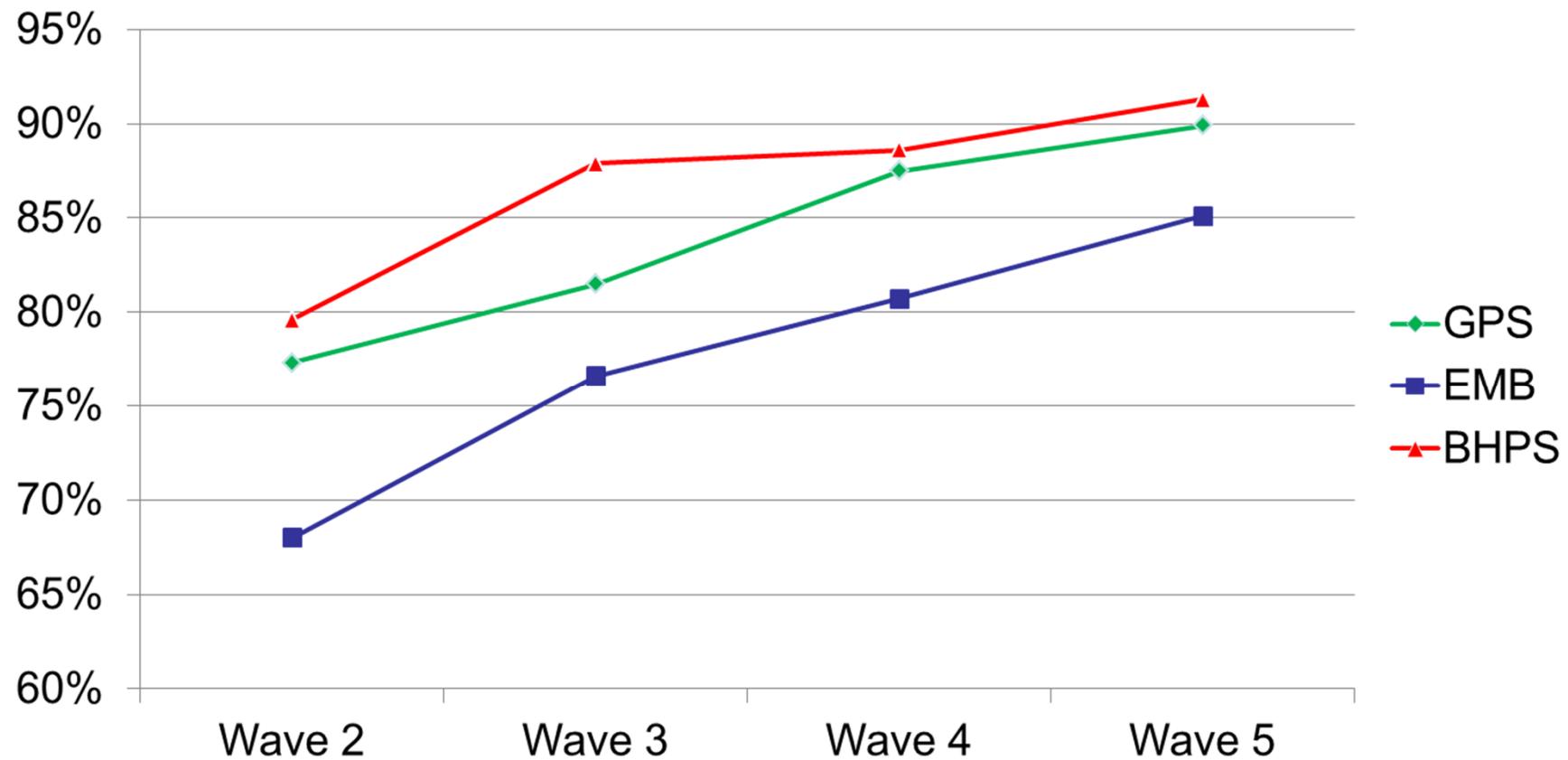
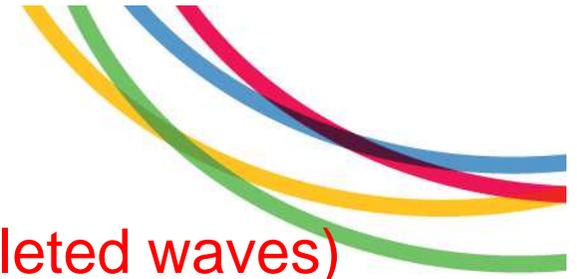
Initial sample consists of:



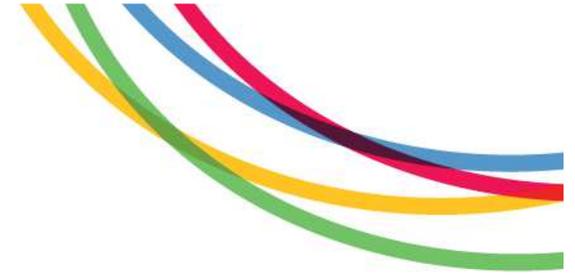
- **General Population Sample:** 30,000 UK households in 2009, 40,000 interviews
- **Ethnic Minority Boost:** Adult individuals across five main ethnic groups (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Caribbean, African) , 4,000 households, 7,000 individuals
- **British Household Panel Survey (1991 -):** approximately 8,000 households, 13,000 adults continue into UKHLS
- An **Innovation Panel:** 1,500 households, 2,500 adults for methodological research
- **TOTAL: 40,000 households: 100,000 individuals: 60,000 adults, 6,000 youths**
- **NEW: Immigrant and Ethnic Minority Boost** sample in 2015 = 4,500 households

Household response

(previous-wave responding households, completed waves)

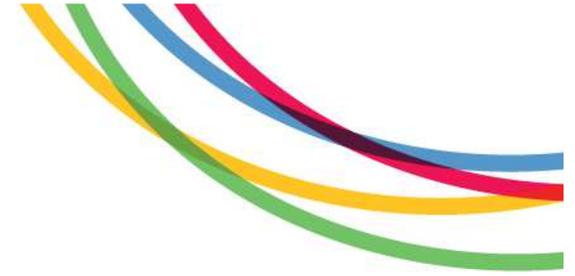


Data collection



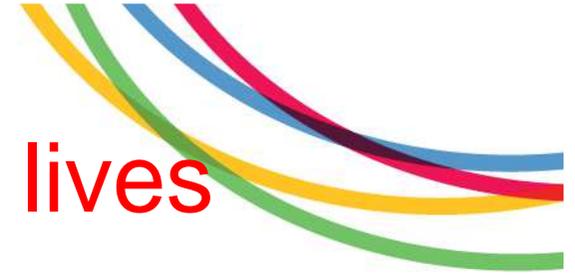
- 12 month intervals between interviews
- Waves of continuous fieldwork over 24 month field period, with second wave overlapping with first
- Sources of information are:
 - Adult household members (16+ years)
 - Children aged 10–15
 - Interviewers
 - Paradata – generated through the interview process

Main survey instruments



- **Household questionnaire** (~10 minutes)
answered by household reference person
- **Main individual questionnaire** (~33 minutes)
answered by each adult (16+), mainly face-to-face
- **Adult self-completion questionnaire** (~7 min)
- **Proxy questionnaire** for adults unable to be interviewed (~10 minutes)
- **Youth questionnaire**: A self-completion paper questionnaire for young people aged 10 to 15 (~10 min)

Measuring the full richness of lives and pressing societal issues

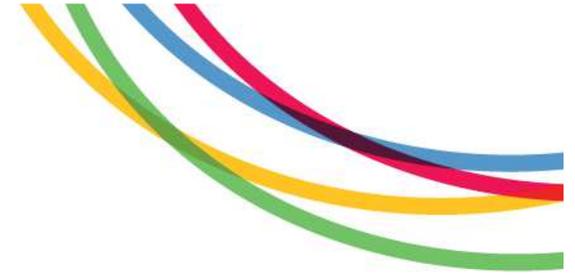


Key Topics: significant research domains

- Education
- Employment
- Family and household
- Health, health behaviours, wellbeing
- Income, wealth, expenditure & consumption

“Gross National Product measures everything, except that which makes life worthwhile.” Robert Kennedy

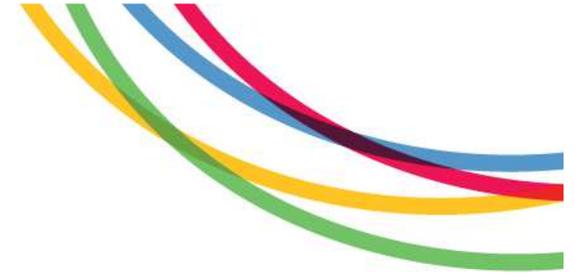
'Supporting' topics



Contextual factors & research foci in their own right:

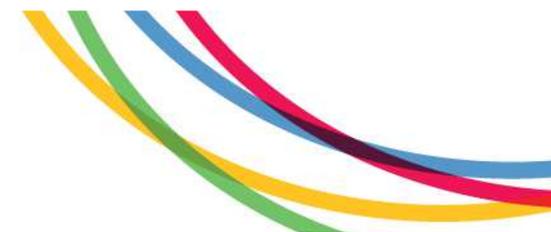
- Neighbourhood characteristics
- Preferences, expectations across topic domains
- Social networks, support, reciprocity
- Transport
- Time Use
- Traits, identity, beliefs
- Environmental & political behaviours
- Leisure activities
- Other topics

Long term content



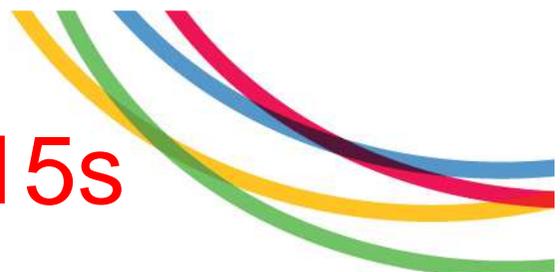
- Questions are repeated, allowing us to look at change over time.
- Not every question appears in every year
 - **Initial conditions**, e.g. education and schooling, employment and fertility history
 - **Annual repeating content**, e.g. employment, income, health
 - **Rotating modules**, e.g. child development
 - **Event triggered questions**, e.g. birth of a child, house move
 - **Age triggered questions**, e.g. approaching retirement

Long term content plan



Theme	Module name	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8	W9	W10
Employment	Non-employment	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Employment	Mothers Return to Work			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Employment	Second jobs	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Childcare	Childcare	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Income & Earnings	Unearned Income and State Benefits	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Financial behaviour & attitudes	Household Finances	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Political & Social Engagement	Politics	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Health	SF-12 (self completion)		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Mental Health & Well-being	GHQ (self completion)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Satisfaction	Life Satisfaction (self-completion)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Family Relationships	Non-resident relationships (self-completion)			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Annual modules conditional on age											
Expectations	Retirement Planning		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Young Adults	Youth questionnaire modules (self completion)			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Family Relationships	Child Development (self-completion)			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Family Relationships	Parenting Styles (self-completion)			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Rotating modules											
Stable Characteristics	Religion	x			x			x			x
Local Neighbourhood	Local Neighbourhood			x			x			x	
Social & Friendship Networks	Social Networks			x			x			x	
Political & Social Engagement	Groups and Organisations			x			x			x	
Health Behaviour	Nutrition		x			x			x		
Health Behaviour	Physical activity		x			x			x		
Health Behaviour	Smoking history		x								
Employment Conditions	Commuting Behaviour		x		x		x		x		x
	Travel behaviour				x		x		x		x
Health Behaviour	Physical Work		x			x			x		
Employment Conditions	Work Conditions		x		x		x		x		x
Time Use	Voluntary work		x		x		x		x		x
Financial behaviour & attitudes	Charitable giving		x		x		x		x		x
Family Relationships	Family networks	x		x		x		x		x	

Youth questionnaire for 10 – 15s



- Wide range of areas including (annual and rotating):
 - Relationships with family and friends / social networks
 - Behaviour: Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)
 - Happiness / self-esteem
 - Educational orientation (incl. classroom behaviour, truancy) and aspirations; bullying
 - Leisure behaviour, use of technology
 - Illicit/risky behaviour (e.g. smoking, drinking and drugs)
 - Health, diet and obesity, exercise
 - Identity measures
 - Future plans
 - Experience of harassment due to race or religion
 - (Child development module starting at Wave 3)



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Highlights and Innovations:

Biomarkers
Ethnic minority boost
Innovation panel
Data linkage

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Biomarkers and health indicators



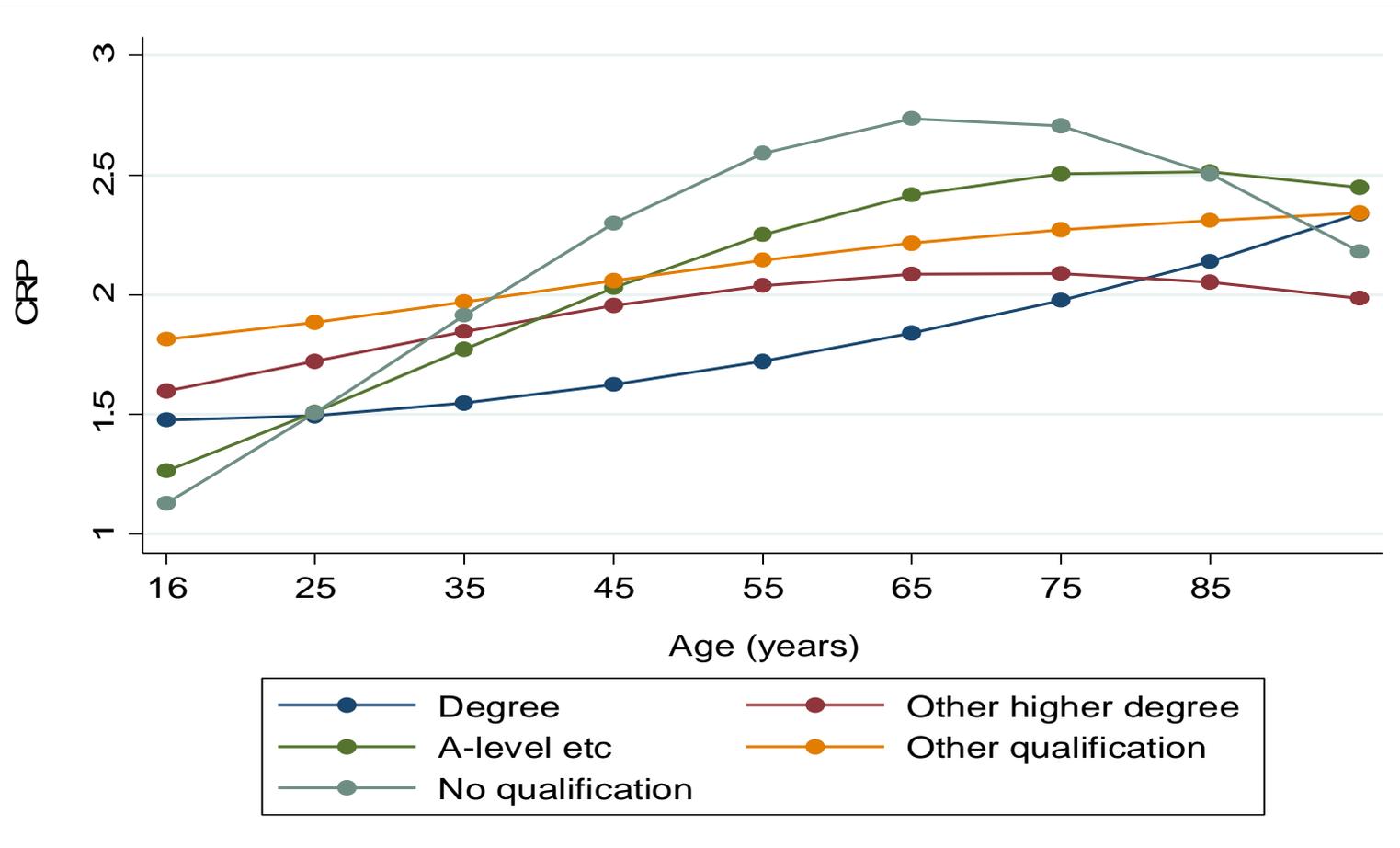
- Biomarkers are earlier, more precise measures of health and illness
- Open up prospects for advances at the interface between social science and biomedical research:
 - biological pathways between social factors and health
 - examine social determinants of health
 - better understand disease mechanisms
 - health inequalities
 - health effects on socio-economic outcomes
- Bio-marker collection started after Wave 2, with a follow-up nurse visit to households in England, Scotland and Wales
 - 20,300 adults with a productive nurse visit
 - 13,250 adults who had a blood sample taken

Nurse assessments



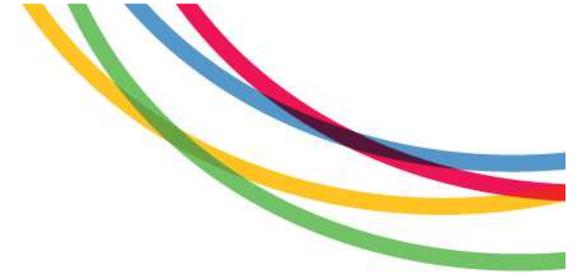
Measure	Applications
Height and weight Waist circumference Percent body-fat	BMI and assessment of excess body fat: obesity and risk factor for range of major chronic conditions and social outcomes
Respiratory function	To detect both respiratory diseases
Diastolic and systolic blood pressure, resting pulse rate	Risk factor for stroke and heart conditions Risk cardio-vascular disease
Grip strength	Indicator muscle strength. Functional limitations and disability in older ages.
Blood samples (non-fasting), 19.8ml	For the extraction of analytes and DNA
Short questionnaire on health on day of measurement, medications etc	Factors that may need to be considered in analysing physical measures and bloods

Social inequalities in inflammation



Apostolos Davillas, Society for Lifecourse and Longitudinal Studies Conference 2015

Ethnic minority boost



- Focus on issues of diversity and commonality
 - Boost sample of 4,081 households
 - $\geq 1,000$ adults in key ethnic groups: Bangladeshi; Indian; Pakistani; Black African and Black Caribbean
 - But also include other ethnic minorities identified in the screening
 - Additional '5 minute' questionnaire content within the ethnic minority boost
 - 2015: New immigrant and ethnic minority boost to be representative of more recent migration
-

Poverty persistence and ethnicity

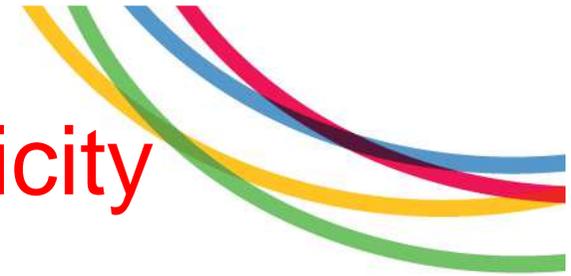
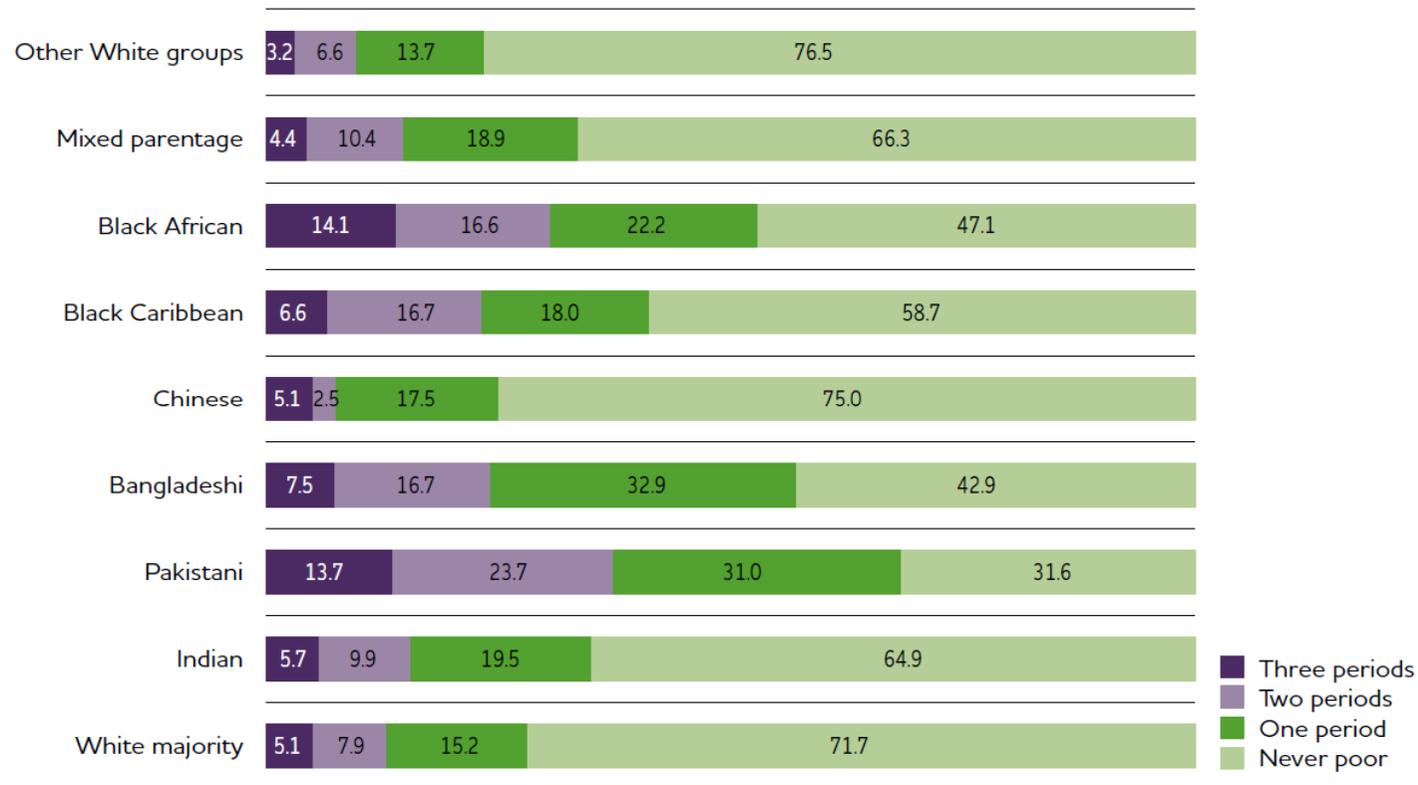


Figure 22: Persistent poverty rates by ethnic group



Dataset: *Understanding Society* waves 1–3 (2009–12).

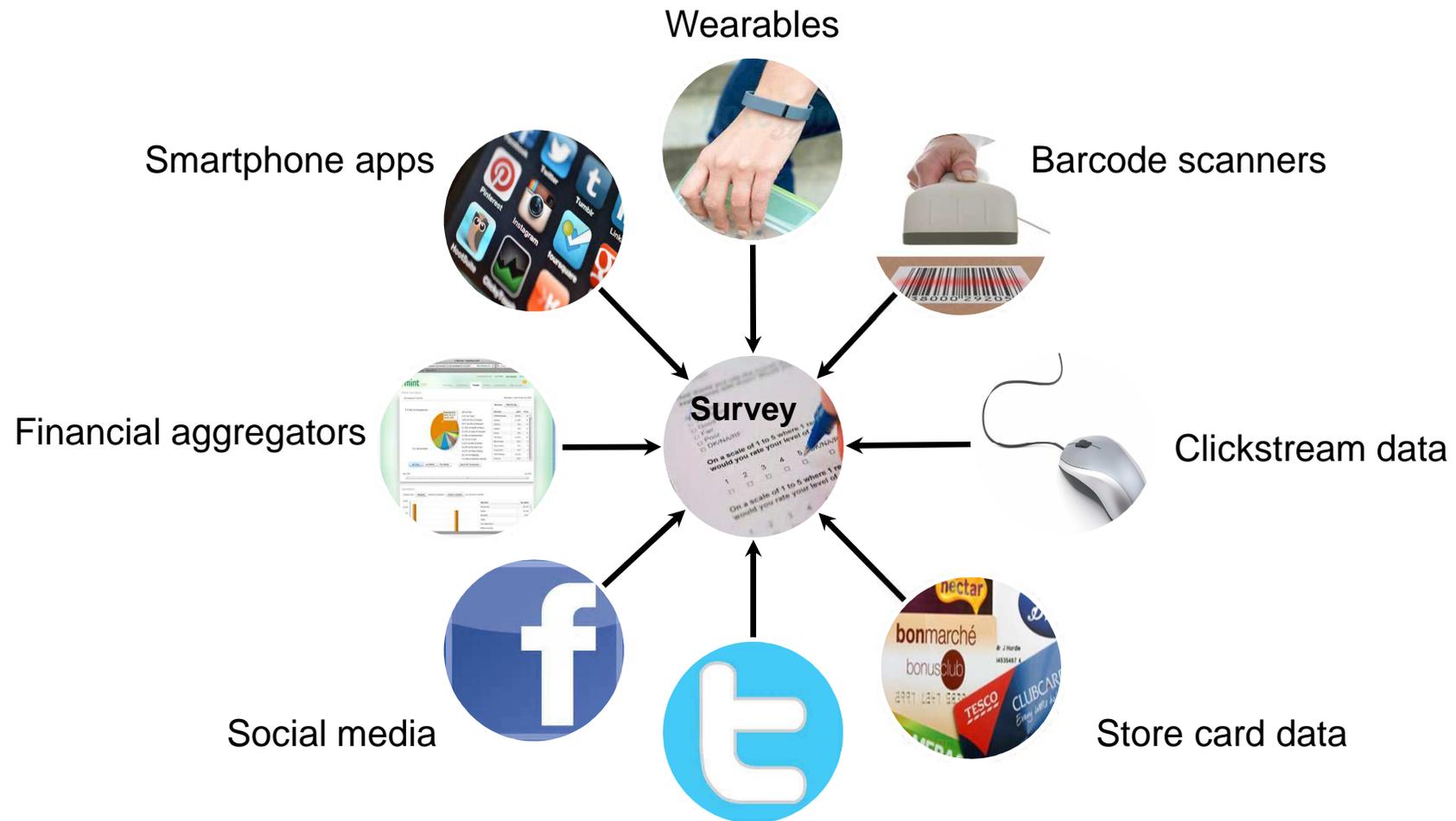
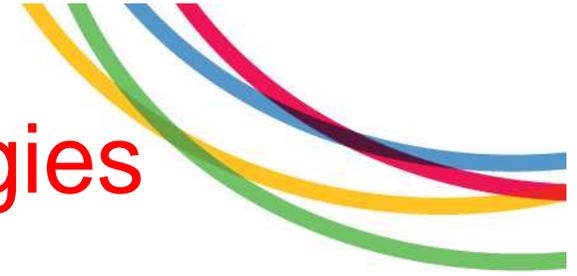
Note: Longitudinal sample restricted to GB residents who responded in all three waves.

Innovation Panel



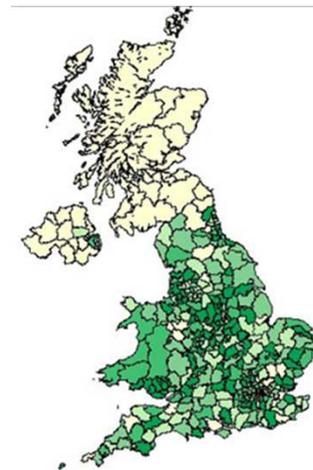
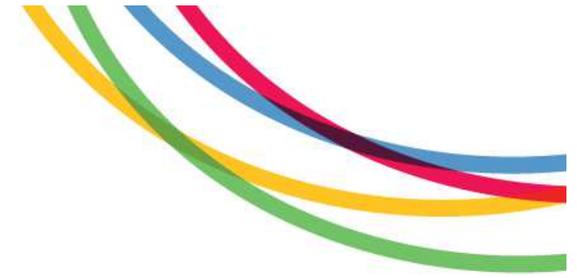
- Annual panel survey of approximately 1,500 households
 - Interviewed one year prior to the main survey, similar questionnaires to main study
 - Test innovative ways of collecting data
 - Develop design of content/questionnaire
 - Develop new areas of research/experiments
 - Annual competition for inclusion of ideas
-

New data collection technologies



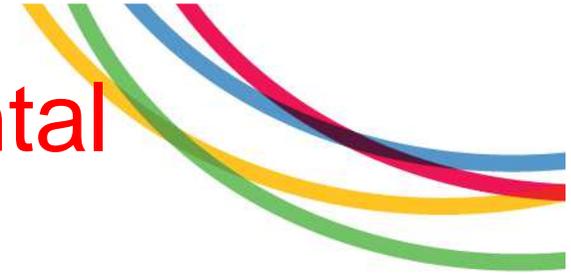
Data linkage

- Make use of information available in external data sources, especially administrative records.
- **Geographical identifiers** allow merging in contextual area-level information collected by others
- **Organisations**: school codes. Allow linking in school-level information
- **Administrative linkage**: education, health, taxes & benefits, car ownership, energy use
- To date: school attainment and data on school absences and exclusions linked and released



Geographical linkage

School inspections and parental investments into children



- Use school codes to merge data on school inspections
- Compare help with homework of parents who were interviewed before or after receiving quality information.



- Parents increase help with homework in response to an unexpected rise in school quality
- home and school investments are complements in the production of child quality



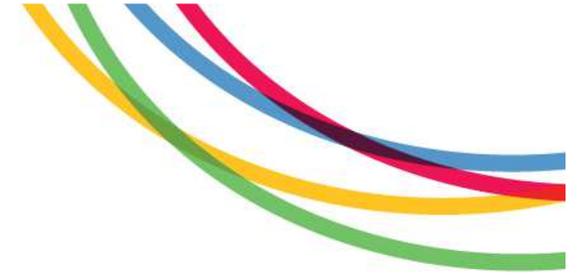
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Data sharing and Communication

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Data access



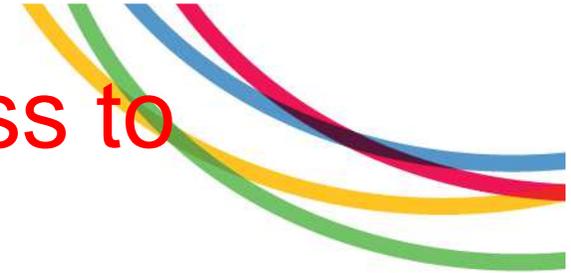
Access data at UK Data Service: <http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/>

- Waves 1-5
- Innovation Panel data waves 1-7
- Health assessment data & biomarkers
- Linked education data
- Geographical identifiers

Access levels:

- End user license
- Special License
- Secure Access

Easy to use website and access to information



Innovation Panel Competition 2016

The competition gives academics and researchers the chance to submit proposals for studies to be incorporated on the Innovation Panel from Wave 10 onwards.

Apply by: 11 April 2016



Informing policy

- Projects
- Get involved
- People

Participants

- Get in touch
- Your stories
- FAQ

Research and findings

- Publications search
- Working papers
- Case studies

Data and documentation

- Getting started
- Main survey
- Training



01 Mar 2016

Personality and gender can affect our reactions to retirement

Drawing on data from Understanding Society and the British Household Panel Survey, a new study discusses how personality traits can impact retirees' well-being levels.

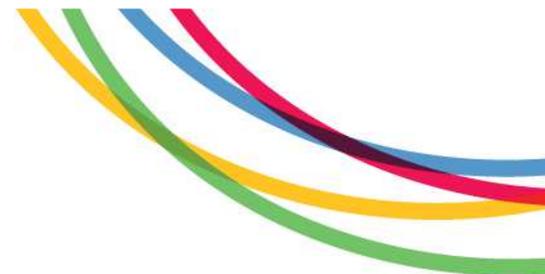
Events

14 Apr Introduction to Understanding Society using Stata

17 Introduction to Understanding

Data Documentation

<https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/documentation>



[Home](#) → [Documentation](#)

Data and documentation

User guides, fieldwork documents, questionnaires, technical reports

Data collected from the survey's thousands of participants is securely stored by the [UK Data Service](#), from where researchers can access it online. All of the associated documentation is available here.

Main survey

Documentation relating to all households interviewed for the survey

- [User guide](#)
- [Dataset documentation](#)
- [Questionnaires](#)
- [Technical reports](#)
- [Fieldwork documents](#)

Health assessment

Documentation relating to Health assessment Survey Data

- [User guide](#)
- [Dataset documentation](#)
- [Questionnaires](#)
- [Fieldwork documents](#)
- [Pilot reports](#)

Innovation panel

Documentation for households in the Innovation Panel

- [User guide](#)
- [Dataset documentation](#)
- [Questionnaires](#)
- [Technical reports](#)
- [Fieldwork documents](#)

Getting started

Access the documentation and data

Help and support

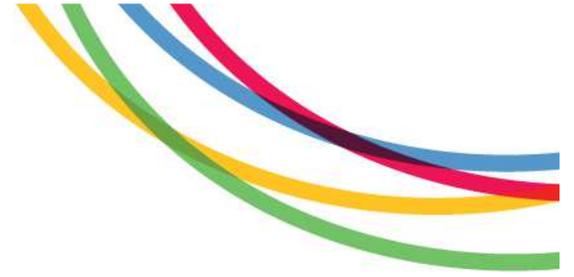
Data user support forum and training

Citation

Bibliographic citations and acknowledgements

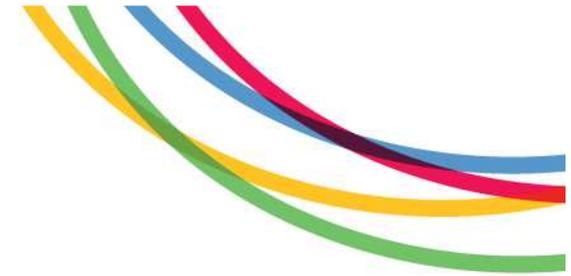
FAQ

Quick answers to common queries



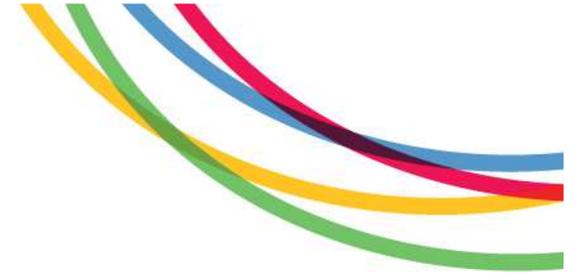
Thank you!
Thanks to my colleagues who supplied slides

Questionnaire content



Demographic background	family background, migration history, fertility and children, job history, educational attainment, smoking history
Finances	Taxes and benefits, money worries and debt, bills and consumer durables, wealth, pensions and savings, deprivation, charitable giving
Expectation and aspiration	Retirement, education, leaving home, children and marriage
Employment	Unemployment, type of job, working conditions, job satisfaction, commuting, harassment and discrimination
Family and friends	Family relationships and networks, child development, parenting and childcare, friends social networks, partnerships
Other	Time use, politics and religion, environmental attitudes, neighbourhoods

Questionnaire content (cont.)



Health	Disability and chronic health conditions, cared or cared for
Well-being	current physical and mental health functioning, life satisfaction, well-being
Health behaviours	Smoking, drinking, drug taking, diet, exercise, sleep
Consents	Hospital episode statistics School records Benefit records