



Recent developments in Understanding Society



What is Understanding Society?

the UK Household Longitudinal Study

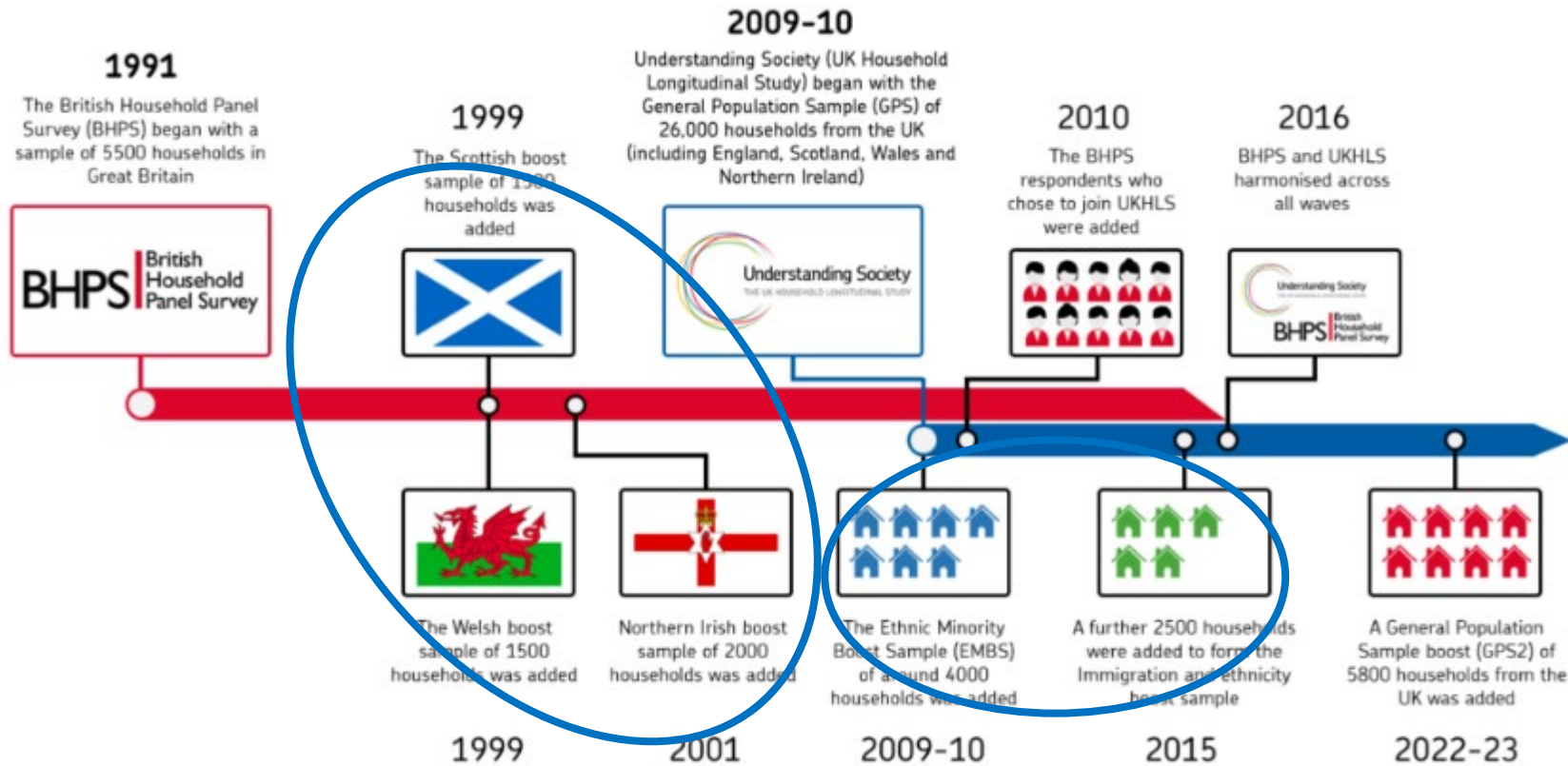
- Study surveys a sample of individuals representing the UK population, interviewed within **a household context**
 - starts with randomly selected sample of households
 - collects information about all residents of these households
 - these residents and their offspring form the core sample
 - these core sample members are followed over their life course at 1-year intervals for as long they are within UK

To know more about the survey and the data see

About the Study section: <https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/about>

User Guide: <https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/documentation/mainstage/user-guides/main-survey-user-guide/>

Sub-samples



The sample comprises different sub-samples most of which had a **clustered** and **stratified** design

Some sub-populations (some ethnic groups, some regional residents) were selected with a **higher selection probability**

What information is collected?

Key topics

- Education
- Employment
- Family and household
- Health and well-being
- Income, wealth and expenditure

Civics/participation & other activities

- Environmental attitudes & behaviours
- Political attitudes & participation
- Mode of travel
- Housework & leisure activities
- (un) healthy behaviours
- Neighbourhood & social cohesion
- Volunteering, caring, social networks
- Computer & internet use

Attitudes, beliefs and expectations

- Preferences, expectations & aspirations
- Personality traits
- Strength of identities
- Gender role attitudes

Focus on health



- **Health, biomarkers, genetics and epigenetics data**
 - health and well-being covered in the annual questionnaire
 - bio measures (blood pressure, weight, height, waist measurement, body fat, grip strength and lung function, etc) collected from around 20,000 *adults* during Waves 2/3 (2010-13) through health assessment visits from registered nurses
 - range of blood analytes available from same Waves 2/3 bio collection
 - another biomarker survey at Wave 16 (2024-26) currently completing
 - **Covid survey data**
 - short (20min) online surveys about their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - from April 2020 to September 2021 (monthly initially, then less frequently)
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Focus on linked NHS records

Since 2020, we have been part of the UK Longitudinal Linkage Collaboration (UK LLC) – the national TRE for data linkage in longitudinal population studies

UK LLC was born in the pandemic as a rapid Covid response. Now extended to cover wider research priorities and not only administrative health linkages

Initially, only our Covid survey consenters (~8.5k) were linked to their NHS records

From Summer 2026, this number will be boosted for the first time by consenters from Waves 1, 4 and 16 of the main survey, taking the total linked N to ~38k. Additionally, data from the Waves 2/3 nurse visit have been added to the resource

NHS records available via UK LLC

Linked data

NHS England datasets

- Demographics Registration Data (England & Wales)
- Civil Registrations of Death (England & Wales)
- Cancer Registration Data
- Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) Accident and Emergency
- HES Outpatients
- HES Admitted Patient Care, including Critical Care, Maternity and Augmented Care Periods
- Emergency Care Data Set (ECDS)
- Mental Health Services Data Set (MHSDS)
- NHS Talking Therapies for Anxiety and Depression
- Community Services Data Set (CSDS)
- Medicines Dispensed in Primary Care NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) dataset – also known as Primary Care Medicines
- Maternity Services Data Set (MSDS)
- COVID-19 Second Generation Surveillance System (SGSS)
- COVID-19 UK Non-hospital Antibody Testing Results (Pillar 3) – also known as Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay (IELISA)
- COVID-19 UK Non-hospital Antigen Testing Results (Pillar 2) – also known as National Pathology Exchange (NPEX)
- COVID-19 Hospitalisation in England Surveillance System (CHESS) – also known as Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI-Watch) surveillance system
- COVID-19 General Practice Extraction Service (GPES) Data for Pandemic Planning and Research (GDPPR)
- COVID-19 Vaccination Status
- COVID-19 Vaccination Adverse Reactions

All the above are England only, other than where indicated.

New opportunities for research via the UK LLC

- Deaths, cancer registrations, coded health service data provide users with 'hard' outcomes
- Linking these data with individual and household survey responses allows for the investigation of the social, economic, environmental and behavioural precursors to illness
- Additionally, UK LLC will allow for 'multi-linkages' across the lifecourse:

survey responses <> NHS records <> benefits history <> education

Other data linkages and health



CRA credit histories – work done on personal finance of carers; impacts of debt on mental health



Nest pensions histories – wealth > health



Property-level data (only on Innovation Panel for now) – EPCs; smartmeter consumption > health



Available via the UKDS Secure Lab