Understanding Society
THE UK HOUSEHOLD LONGITUDINAL STUDY

# *Understanding Society*

*Meena Kumari, Professor of Biological and Social Epidemiology*
*mkumari@essex.ac.uk*
*Health Study Users Conference*
*12th July 2022*

University of Essex
ISER
UKRI Economic and Social Research Council

An initiative by the Economic and Social Research Council, with scientific leadership by the Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex, and survey delivery by NatCen Social Research and Kantar Public

# General overview

- Overview of *Understanding Society*
- Recent innovations:  COVID-19
- Next Steps

# What is Understanding Society (UK Household Longitudinal Study)

Understanding Society surveys a sample of individuals representing the UK population, who are interviewed within a household context:

- starts with randomly selected sample of households
- collects information about all residents of these households
- These residents and their off-springs form the core sample
- These core sample members are followed over their life course at 1 year intervals and within UK

Basic design is similar to household panel surveys in other countries e.g., PSID (US), SOEP (Germany), HILDA (Australia), SoFIE (New Zealand)

# Sample consists of:

- **General Population Sample (GPS):** 26,000 UK households from 2009 population (from wave 1)
- **Ethnic Minority Boost (EMB):** 4,000 households with at least one individual with an ethnic minority background across five main ethnic groups (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Caribbean, African - from wave 1)
- **British Household Panel Survey (1991 - ):** approximately 8,000 households were added to continue in UKHLS (from wave 2)
- **Innovation Panel:** 1500 households for pioneering data collection and methodological research
- **Total:** 39,805 households (from waves 1 and 2)
- **A new Immigrant and Ethnic Minority Boost (IEMB)** sample added in 2015/6 = 2500 households with at least one person born outside the UK or from an ethnic minority background (from wave 6)

# Who provides the data?

- Most of the data is collected during interviews with adult household members (aged 16 years or above)
- Data is also collected from 10-15 year olds in separate short self-completion interviews
- Data about children 0-9 year olds is collected from their parents and guardians

- Prospective survey
- … with retrospective elements – changes since last interview, initial histories
- Indefinite life (not fixed life)

# Health & wellbeing

Health data from two sources:

**1. Questionnaire i.e. individual reports it, e.g.:**

- Current prescriptions
- Currently has chronic condition
- GHQ measures mental health

**2. Objective data measured by a nurse** (in Wave 2 & 3):

- Height/weight
- Lung function, grip strength
- Blood analytes – for cholesterol, raised glucose, kidney & liver function, anaemia
- Genetic data

# Adult and children mental well-being

- Adults: Annual
  - General Health Questionnaire – 12 (continuous, categorical or caseness scales; individual items
  - Satisfaction
    - Domains: Overall life, job, leisure time, income, health
- Waves 1, 4, 7, 10
  - Edinburgh-Warwick Positive well being (short form)
- Children: Annual
  - Happiness with different aspects of life (school work, appearance, family, friends, school, life as a whole - can be combined to create an overall happiness score)
- Biennially (start at wave 1)
  - Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) - can create a total difficulties score or 5 subscales

# Extending content (whilst maintaining core longitudinal consistency)

- Harvesting and linking with other data sources, e.g. government admin data, scrapping websites, etc.
- Adapting content and ensuring relevance: gig working, use of mobile devices and apps, nutrition, food security, environmental interaction, etc.
- New ways of collecting data, e.g. via wearable technology, mobile phones, participant provided bio-measures, etc.
- Event triggered data collection, e.g. when a participant changes their job

# Covid-19 survey of panel members

- COVID-19 survey started in April 2020 as a monthly online survey till July - and bimonthly from Sept 2020 to March 2021 with a final interview in Sept 2021
- Researchers can draw on past information collected from previous Understanding Society interviews (BHPS 1991–2008, UKHLS 2009–)
- Wave 1 COVID-19 survey sample eligibility condition:
  - All Understanding Society sample members who were 16+ years old in April 2020 ***AND*** in households that participated in at least one of the last two waves of the main survey
  - Except for:
    - unknown postal addresses or addresses abroad
    - adamant refusals or mentally or physically unable to make an informed decision to take part
- For waves 2 to 4, everyone eligible in wave 1 continued to be eligible irrespective of whether they had participated in any of the previous surveys
- From the September 2020 (wave 5) survey onwards, only sample members who had completed at least one partial interview in any previous web surveys
- Children of eligible members surveyed in July (5-11 year olds and Special education needs 5-17 year olds - SDQ only), November 2020 (10-15) and March 2021

# Sample size & response rates

| Survey | Sample | Issued N | Respondents Full | Respondents Full + partial | Response Rate (%) Full | Response Rate (%) Full + partial |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| April 2020 web | All | 42,330 | 16,379 | 17,452 | 38.7 | 41.2 |
| | W9 Rs | 32,596 | 14,985 | 15,835 | 46.0 | 48.6 |
| May 2020 web | All | 36,811 | 14,607 | 14,811 | 39.7 | 40.2 |
| | W9 Rs | 27,924 | 13,535 | 13,706 | 48.5 | 49.1 |

Notes: 'W9 Rs' = sample members who gave a full adult interview in wave 9 of the annual survey.

- Non-respondents: Never participated in the web survey, or dropped out before the end of the coronavirus module
- Partial Interview: Completed the survey only up to the finance module
- Full Interview: Completed survey up to and beyond the finance module

**Covid-19 survey content**: taken from mainstage survey but also new pandemic specific questions

# Main stage data collection in the COVID era

| | 2020 | | | | | | | | | | 2021 | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S |
| Wave 10 | x | x | X | | | | | | | D | | | | | | | | | |
| Wave 11 | X | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | | | |
| Wave 12 | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | X |
| Wave 13 | | | | | | | | | | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Interview | | * | * | * | * | | * | | * | | * | | * | | | | | | * |
| lockdown | * | * | * | * | | EOTHO | | | * | | * | * | | | | ‘freedom’ | | | |

- Wave 11 (2019-2021) - Deposited in Dec 2021
- Wave 12 (2020-2022) - Deposited in Dec 2022

# COVID Dashboard

https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/topic/covid-19/data-dashboard

## Data dashboard: COVID-19

Who has been affected by the pandemic? Use this tool to build charts to show trends over time and to compare different population groups. The dashboard uses variables from the Understanding Society COVID-19 study – a series of short, online surveys carried out between April 2020 and September 2021. You can find out more about the COVID-19 study on the topic page. The COVID-19 study was funded by the ESRC and the Health Foundation.

Variables of interest

Treated for covid-19 (cv19treat)

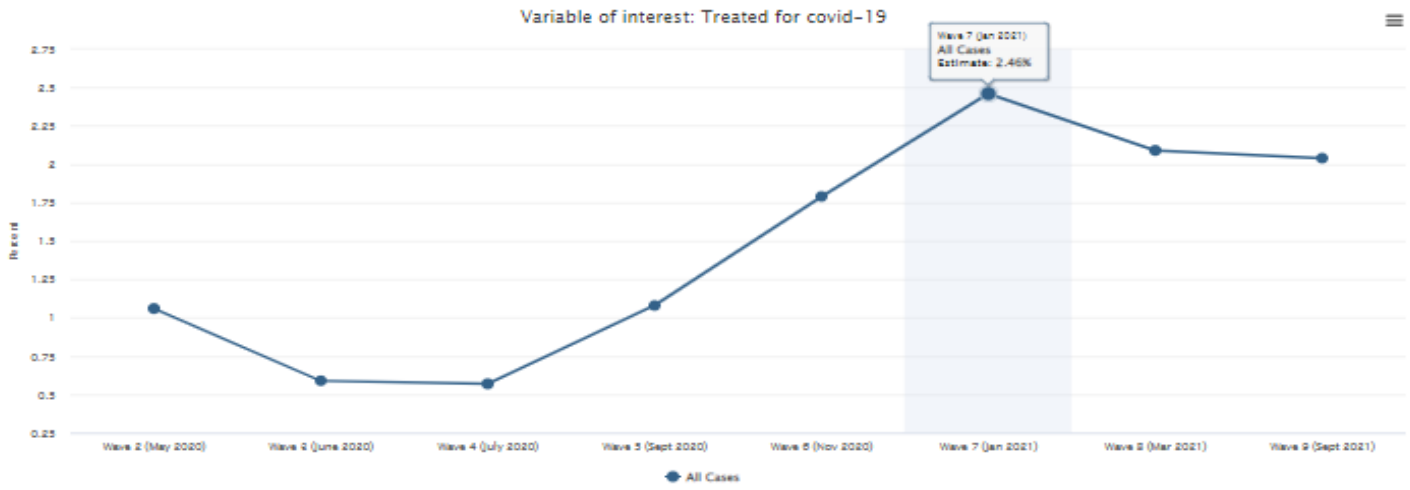
Plot against

Select plot options (max 2)

Confidence intervals

Show confidence intervals

Submit Reset



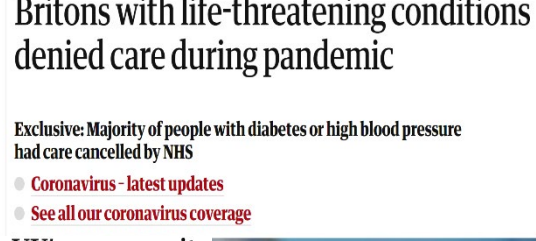

Treated for Covid-19 indicates whether a participant sought medical attention for Covid symptoms experienced. It is based on cv19treat .

This graph uses data from the Understanding Society COVID-19 study.
The outputs presented here are designed for exploratory analysis. Users wishing to produce their own results for publication should use the full dataset available via the UK Data Service.
The COVID-19 study is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and the Health Foundation.
Serology testing was funded by the COVID-19 Longitudinal Health and Wealth – National Core Study.

# COVID-19 output

- 239 papers/reports

eg


Britons with life-threatening conditions denied care during pandemic

Exclusive: Majority of people with diabetes or high blood pressure had care cancelled by NHS

Coronavirus - latest updates

See all our coronavirus coverage

Good neighbours? No, UK's community spirit fell in summer Covid lockdown

Despite feelgood stories such as Captain Tom Moore, people actually felt more estranged during restrictions, says report

Coronavirus - latest updates

See all our coronavirus coverage

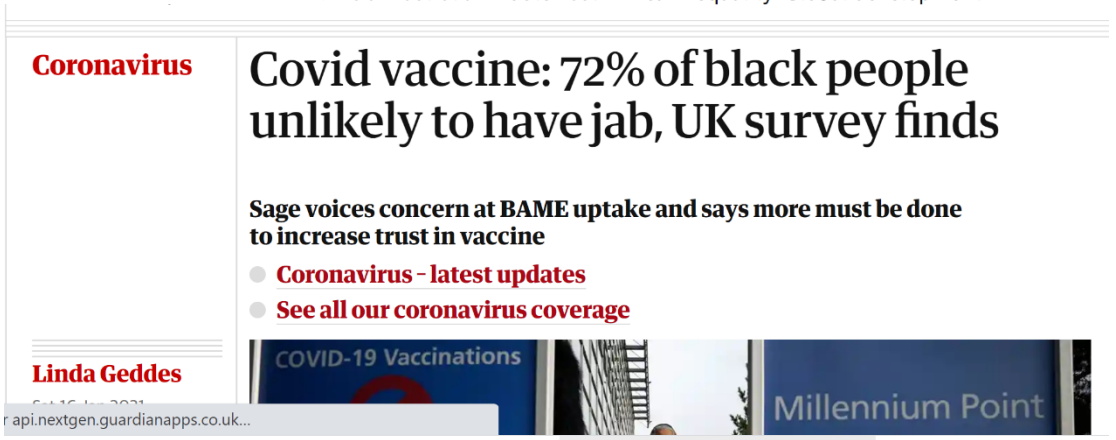
BAME and single-parent families worst hit financially by Covid-19

Survey highlights discrepancies in earnings compared with white two-parent households

Coronavirus - latest updates

See all our coronavirus coverage

- Evidence to SAGE, eg


; Asia Australia Middle East Africa Inequality Global development

Coronavirus

Covid vaccine: 72% of black people unlikely to have jab, UK survey finds

Sage voices concern at BAME uptake and says more must be done to increase trust in vaccine

Coronavirus - latest updates

See all our coronavirus coverage

Linda Geddes

COVID-19 Vaccinations

Millennium Point

api.nextgen.guardianapps.co.uk...

LLC: consortium

# Websites

- www.data-archive.ac.uk
- Understandingsociety.ac.uk
- //covid-19.closer.ac.uk
- genetics@understandingsociety.ac.uk
- mkumari@essex.ac.uk