NatCen
National Centre for Social Research

Understanding Society
Innovation Panel Wave 1
Technical Report

Authors: Richard Boreham, Rebecca Constantine

Date: December 2008

Prepared for: ISER

Contents

1 Introduction 3
1.1 Background 3
1.2 Overview of methodology 3
2 Sample Design 4
2.1 Initial selection 4
2.2 Allocation of selected sample to random experimental groups 4
2.3 Extra sample selection for the Innovation Panel Wave 2 pilot 4
3 Fieldwork 5
3.1 Briefings 5
3.2 Materials for interviewers 5
3.3 Advance letters 6
3.4 Incentives 6
3.5 Self-completion questionnaires 6
3.6 Forms to collect consent for linkage to administrative data 7
3.7 Fieldwork progress 7
3.8 Booking in 7
4 Response 8
4.1 Household response 8
4.2 Individual response 9
4.2.1 Response to interview 9
4.2.2 Self-completions 9
Tables 10
5 Data preparation 14
5.1 Data keying and scanning 14
5.2 Data coding and editing 14
5.2.1 SIC and SOC coding 14
5.2.2 Cleaning of address information 14

Tables

Table 4.1 Household response 10
Table 4.2 Household response by GOR 11
Table 4.3 Household response by incentive type 11
Table 4.4 Reasons for refusal by incentive type 12
Table 4.5 Individual outcome 12
Table 4.6 Individual response by age and sex 13
Table 4.7 Individual response by incentive type 13

Figures

Figure 4.1 Household response by GOR 8
Figure 4.2 Individual response by age and sex 9

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

This report provides an account of the methodology used in the first wave of the Innovation Panel (IP1) of Understanding Society, a major new household panel survey which is intended to incorporate and extend the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), which began in 1991. Understanding Society is expected to be the largest household panel survey of its kind in the world, with a target sample size of 40,000 households across the United Kingdom. All households will be visited every year.

Understanding Society was designed to provide high quality longitudinal data for academic and policy research. The study is multi-topic, including questions on housing, education, health, employment, income, attitudes and opinions. It has been designed to meet the research needs of a range of disciplines across the social and bio-medical sciences.

Understanding Society is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and managed by the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) at the University of Essex. The National Centre for Social Research is responsible for carrying out the fieldwork for the study.

The Innovation Panel is a forerunner to the main Understanding Society survey. It was carried out twelve months ahead of the main survey's launch, with a target sample size of 1500 achieved households. The purpose of the Innovation Panel is to enable methodological research, primarily to conduct methods testing for the main stage of the survey.

Examples of methods testing in the Innovation Panel include:

- Comparison of different incentive types on response rate
- Testing of different question formats to inform design at Wave 1 main stage and at Wave 2 where there a sequential mixed mode design is planned
- Increased interviewer observations to obtain more information about non-responding households.

Although there is some overlap between the instruments at IP1 and Wave 1, the questions included in the Innovation Panel differ significantly from those planned for the main study. As a result, the opportunities for analysing the Innovation Panel households as part of the main dataset will be limited. Nevertheless, the Innovation Panel is conceived of as part of the larger study and the Innovation Panel sample will contribute to the total sample of 40,000 households.

1.2 Overview of methodology

The Understanding Society sample comprises addresses randomly selected from the Postcode Address File; the target sample size was 1500 households.

An initial household interview was conducted with one adult in the household using a Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) which enumerated the household, established eligibility and collected information at the household level. Individual CAPI interviews were then attempted with every adult (age 16+) in the household. Adults also completed a paper self-completion questionnaire. A separate paper self-completion was given to all young people in the household aged 10-15.

2 Sample Design

For the Innovation Panel, a standard clustered sample was used, selected from the Postcode Address File (PAF). This section designs the sample design in greater detail.

2.1 Initial selection

The Innovation Panel required a productive sample of 1500 households. A sample of 2760 addresses was issued, from 120 areas across Great Britain (with 23 addresses per postcode sector). The sample covered England, Wales and Scotland. Northern Ireland and the Scottish Islands and areas north of the Caledonian Canal were excluded although they will be included in the main survey sample. A clustered design was used with postal sectors acting as Primary Sampling Units (PSUs).

The sample was drawn from the small user Postcode Address File (PAF), a list of all addresses in the country which receive less than 25 items of mail per day. Prior to drawing the sample, existing BHPS addresses were matched onto the PAF and excluded from the universe of addresses selected for the Innovation Panel.

Prior to selection, the PSUs were sorted by Government Office Region (GOR). Within each GOR the PSUs were sorted into three bands based on the proportion of Household Reference Person's (HRPs) with non-manual occupations (i.e. with NS-SEC 1 and 2). Within each band the PSUs were then sorted by Ethnic Minority Density for six of the GORs (Inner and Outer London, West Midlands, East Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside and North West) and by population density for the remainder.

Once stratified, the PSUs (effectively postcode sectors) were selected from the PAF with probability proportional to the number of delivery points (DPs) within each sector.

The sampled addresses were flagged on NatCen's historical database, and excluded from selection for other surveys for the 3 years.

2.2 Allocation of selected sample to random experimental groups

The sample was allocated to the two-group and three-group conditions by systematically working down the list of addresses to give equal numbers in each of the six groups.

2.3 Extra sample selection for the Innovation Panel Wave 2 pilot

Although the first Innovation Panel was not piloted, it was decided that it would be sensible to hold a pilot before the second Innovation Panel (IP2). This decision was made after the fieldwork had started so, in order to gain a longitudinal sample for the IP2 pilot, half-size assignments were issued to ten interviewers who were already carrying out Innovation Panel fieldwork. This sample was identified as IPX so that it could be identified at a later stage and used as the sample for the IP2 pilot. The additional addresses were issued in the postcode sectors in which the interviewers were already working, to minimise additional travel time.

3 Fieldwork

This section outlines the content of the interviewer briefings, describes the materials used during the Innovation Panel and provides basic information about the interview period.

3.1 Briefings

Five full-day briefings were carried out by the NatCen research team, with input from the ISER team who provided background to the study on two occasions. Each briefing covered the background to the study, its main research objectives, the study timetable, sample design, an overview of the survey instruments and procedures, methods for minimising non-contact and maximising response rates, a demonstration of the CAPI instrument and a brief overview of plans for the study in future waves.

Three of the five briefings for the Innovation Panel were carried out using a 'conference style' approach. This allows a research team to brief up to 40 interviewers on one day and consists of a mixture of large lecture-style presentations, where all the interviewers are together in one room, and smaller break-out sessions, where interviewers are divided into pre-assigned groups to discuss specific aspects of a study or to carry out practical exercises under closer supervision. There were two break-out sessions of this kind for the Innovation Panel, which involved going through the CAPI interview and practise sample selection (using the Address Record Form or ARF mentioned below). The other briefings followed a more traditional pattern with all interviewers trained throughout the day as a single group.

The briefings took place between 7th January and 23rd January 2008 in London (2 briefings), Manchester, Edinburgh and Bristol. The conference style briefings were held in London and Manchester. In total 120 interviewers attended a briefing and one additional interviewer was home-briefed at a later date by an Area Manager.

The effectiveness of these different styles of briefing is being evaluated separately. To help with this evaluation, feedback forms were handed to interviewers at the end of each conference briefing to collect their views on this new approach and to gather feedback on each of the break out sessions. At the remaining, smaller size briefings, feedback was collected during informal discussion at the end of the day.

3.2 Materials for interviewers

Interviewers' materials for this survey are listed below and those marked with an asterisk are included in **Error! Reference source not found.**. All respondent-facing documents used the field name of the British Household Panel Survey, 'Living in Britiain'.

- Project instructions providing information covered in the briefing along with supplementary reference material*
- Address Record Forms (ARFs) [1]
- Advance letters (discussed further in Section 3.3)*
- Information leaflets to be posted with the advance card*
- High street vouchers to be sent as incentives with the advance card and as additional incentives (discussed in Section 3.4)

[1] The ARF is a mechanism for identifying all eligible dwelling units and households and of recording key information to do with contact and cooperation.

- Appointment cards to be used at the doorstep
- Show cards to be used as part of the CAPI interview*
- Adult self-completion questionnaires and youth self-completion questionnaires (discussed further in Section 3.5)*
- Consent forms for linkages to administrative data (discussed further in Section 3.6)*
- Feedback forms for respondents to return to ISER*
- Standard leaflet about the National Centre for Social Research to be left with the respondent

3.3 Advance letters

Three versions of the advance letter were designed, one for each of the experimental groups being given a different incentive treatment. The advance letters were printed on 'Living in Britain' letterhead, and signed by Professor Nick Buck of the Institute for Social and Economic Research. Letters were posted by interviewers, along with an information leaflet about the study and a £5 gift voucher (incentive groups A and C) or a £10 gift voucher (incentive group B). These incentives are discussed in greater detail in Section

The advance letters for all addresses in Wales were translated into Welsh and provided in both languages.

The advance letter introduced the study, gave an overview of the components of the interview, and explained NatCen's role.

3.4 Incentives

One of the aims of the Innovation Panel was to determine whether different levels of incentive affect the overall response rates, at both a household and individual level. The incentives used in the Innovation Panel were High Street Vouchers. The sample was divided into three groups at random, with each group receiving a different incentive condition:

- Group 1: £5 per adult interviewed
- Group 2: £10 per adult interviewed
- Group 3: £5 per adult interviewed, rising to £10 per adult if all adults in the household completed their CAPI interviews in person.

In each condition, a £3 voucher was also given for each young person who filled in a self-completion questionnaire.

The vouchers (with the exception of the voucher they had already received with the advance letter) were sent to respondents after the interview, together with a thank you letter.

3.5 Self-completion questionnaires

There were two paper self-completion questionnaires: one for adults and one for young people aged 10-15. Interviewers were asked to encourage respondents to complete the questionnaires while they were still at the address or to collect the questionnaires when they returned for a second or subsequent visit. This was to ensure that we secured a high response rate for this important element of the study. As a last resort, interviewers were able to leave a questionnaire, together with a reply-paid envelope, for respondents to complete at a later time.

Interviewers asked a parent or responsible adult for verbal consent or assent before giving a self-completion questionnaire to a young person. Parents were not permitted to help the young people complete the questionnaire; though if they were anxious about its content they were shown a blank questionnaire so that they could assess the nature of the questions. If the young person needed help with the questionnaire, they were encouraged to ask the interviewer for assistance. Blank envelopes were given to the young people so that they could seal the questionnaires before returning them to the interviewer, preserving confidentiality within the household.

The adult questionnaire contained questions on feelings and behaviours, sleeping habits, neighbourhood and friendships. The youth questionnaire contained questions on health, behaviours, school, neighbourhood, families, hopes and concerns.

3.6 Forms to collect consent for linkage to administrative data

Three different consent forms were used for the study:

- Consent form A: this form was for adults aged 16-23 who went to school in England. It asked for permission to link to records about National Insurance Contributions, benefits, employment and earnings, savings and pensions, participation in any government schemes, all from data held by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). It also asked for permission to link to education data held by the Department for Children, Schools and Families

- Consent form B: this form was for adults aged 23+, or 16-23 who did not go to school in England. This consent form asked for permission to link to the same details as consent form A, but did not request education data

- Consent form C: this form was given to adults who were responsible for any children or young people in the household. It asked permission to release educational records held by the Department for Children, Schools and Families for these children or young people.

Consent forms were given to two-thirds of the sample, in order to test whether being asked to give consent to link to administrative data would affect response rates in the second or later stages of the Innovation Panel.

3.7 Fieldwork progress

As noted, five briefings were conducted, between 7th and 23rd January. The fieldwork period lasted from 25th January to 21st April 2008.

3.8 Booking in

On completion of the data collection in each household, all elements were 'booked in' to the NatCen operations department in Brentwood and were reconciled.

4 Response

4.1 Household response

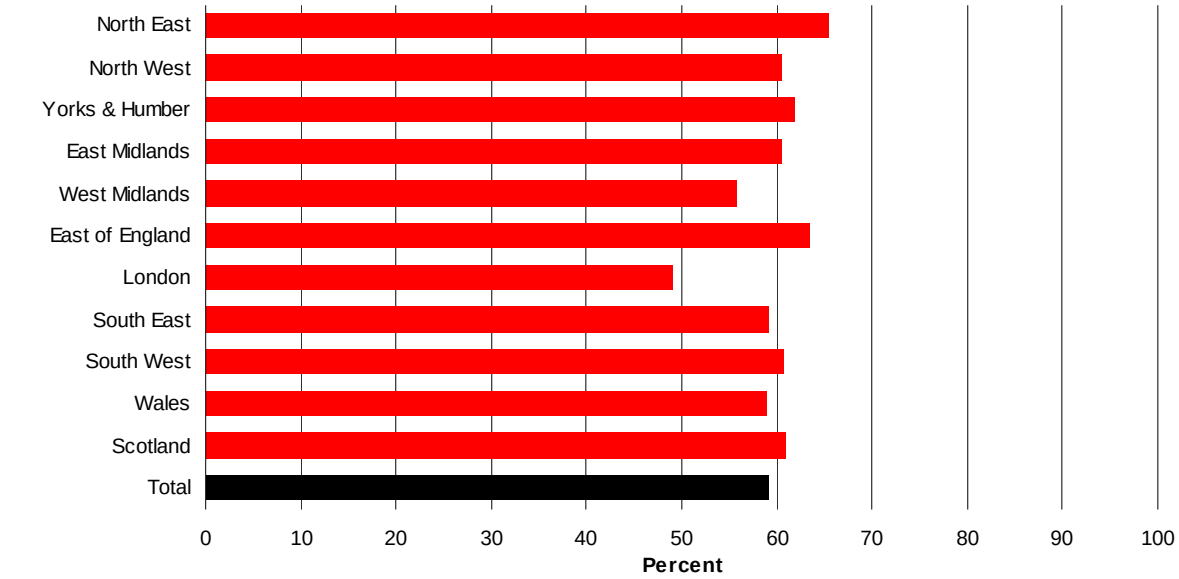
2760 addresses were issued to interviewers, of which 263 (10%) were classed as ineligible. An extra 26 households were identified at eligible addresses[2], making the total number of eligible households 2523. Interviews were achieved at 1489 households, a response rate of 59%. A detailed breakdown of household response is provided in Table 4.1 on Page 10. This shows, for example, that 4.5% were not contacted and 27.6% of household refused to participate and provides a detailed breakdown in each category.

A significant amount of effort was put into raising the response rate and the achieved number of interviews (which ultimately fell 11 short of the target of 1500). Many cases that were initially returned as unproductive were reissued – for example because a householder could not be contacted or because they refused to participate. In total 814 addresses were reissued (29% of the 2786 total addresses including multiple dwelling units and multiple households). The fieldwork period was also extended by 3 weeks to provide interviewers with more time to secure interviews.

As might be expected, response varied by region. It was lowest in London (49%), and elsewhere ranged between 56% and 65% for the other regions. Additional detail, breaking down the nature of response in each area, is provided in Table 4.2 on Page 11. This shows that in the two areas with lowest response, London and the West Midlands (49% and 56% respectively), the level of non contacts was particularly high (11% and 7%).

Figure 4.1 Household response by GOR

Base: All eligible addresses



[2] Additional households are identified when one address on the PAF sample contains more than one dwelling unit (for example where a property has been split into flats) and/or a dwelling unit contains more than one household (for example where the interviewer identifies a lodger who does not share a living room or meal with others living in the same dwelling unit).

It is noteable that household response varied by incentive type with the £5 per adult condition obtaining the lowest response rate (56%), whereas the £10 and £5 rising to £10 conditions both achieved a response rate of 61%. Further detail about this can be seen in Table 4.3 on Page 11 which shows the lower non-contact rate among those who received a £10 incentive and Table 4.4 on Page 12 which shows the reasons given for refusal by incentive type. These experimental findings drew attention to the importance of the incentive strategy for the mainstage.

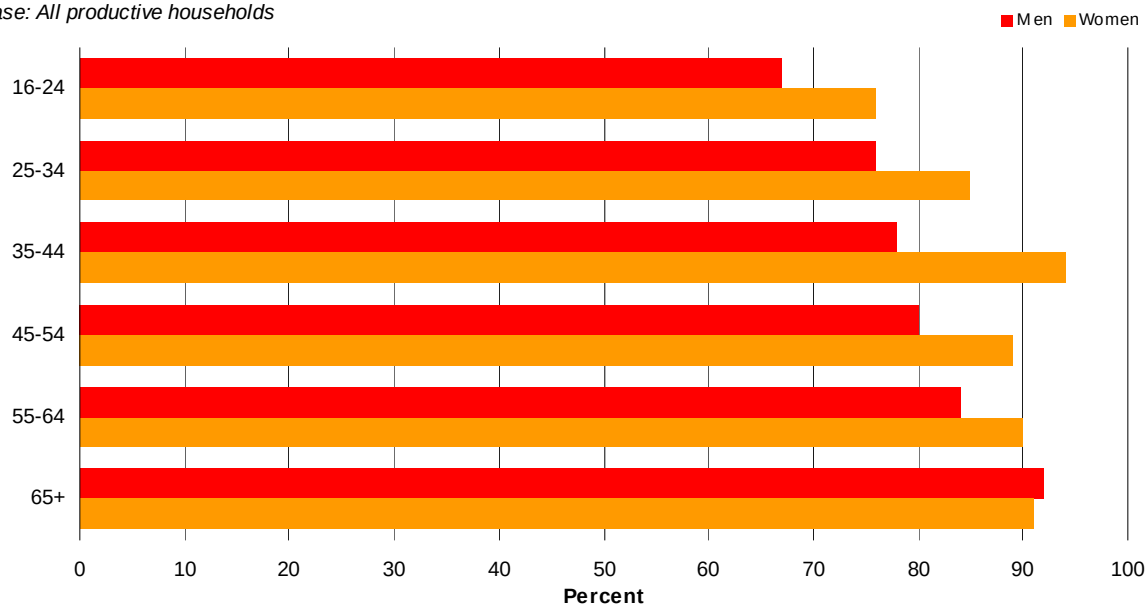
4.2 Individual response

4.2.1 Response to interview

Within productive households, the overall co-operation rate for adults aged 16 and over was 84%. Of those who did not respond in person, a further 6% were collected by proxy interview (see Table 4.5 on Page 12). Table 4.7 on Page 13 provide further details about the way that individual response varied by age and sex and by incentive group. This shows that response was higher among women (89%) than men (80%), and response increased with age from 71% among 16-24 year olds to 91% among those aged 65 and over.

Figure 4.2 Individual response by age and sex

Base: All productive households



4.2.2 Self-completions

All adults completing an individual interview administered by CAPI were also asked to complete a 7 minute self-completion questionnaire. Of those completing an individual questionnaire, 92% (2205) also completed a self-completion questionnaire. Women were more likely to do the self-completion than men with 55% being done by women and 45% by men.

Tables

Table 4.1 Household response

Base: All issued addresses *IP1*

Outcome	N	%
Issued	2760	
Not eligible	263	9.5
Not yet built/under construction	3	0.1
Demolished/derelict	5	0.2
Vacant/empty housing unit	157	5.7
Non-residential address	34	1.2
Address occupied - no resident household	46	1.7
Communal establishment/institution	6	0.2
Other ineligible	12	0.4
Eligible	2497	90.5
Additional households	26	
Total Eligible	2523	
Productive	1489	59.0
Refusal	697	27.6
Office refusal	85	3.4
Information refused on no. of Dus	21	0.8
Contact made but all information refused	85	3.4
Full refusal of information about household	24	1.0
Refusal before interview: by selected respondent	426	16.9
Proxy refusal	11	0.4
Refusal during interview (unproductive partial)	5	0.2
Broken appointment, no re-contact	40	1.6
Non-contact	114	4.5
No contact with anyone in hhold after 4+ calls	68	2.7
No contact with anyone at address after 4+ calls	29	1.1
Contact made but not with household member	14	0.6
Contact at hhold but not with responsible adult	3	0.1
Unknown eligibility (contacted)	13	0.5
Information refused about whether residential	9	0.4
Contact not able to confirm presence of household	1	0.0
Unable to confirm eligibility - language barrier	3	0.1
Unknown eligibility (uncontacted)	115	4.6
Issued, but not attempted	2	0.1
Inaccessible	4	0.2
Unable to locate address	8	0.3
Unknown whether residential: no contact 4+ calls	36	1.4
Residential but unknown eligibility: no contact	53	2.1
Other unknown eligibility	12	0.5
Other unproductive	95	3.8
Ill at home during survey period	24	1.0
Away or in hospital all survey period	19	0.8
Physically or mentally unable/incompetent	29	1.1
Language difficulties with hhold as a whole	12	0.5
Lost productive	3	0.1
Interview achieved but resp requested data deleted	1	0.0
Other unproductive	7	0.3

Table 4.2 Household response by GOR

Base: All eligible households *IP1*

	GOR											
	North East	North West	Yorks & Humber	East Midlands	West Midlands	East of England	London	South East	South West	Wales	Scotland	Total
Outcome	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Productive	65	61	62	60	56	63	49	59	61	59	61	59
Refusal	22	30	26	26	33	32	30	27	23	23	26	28
Non-contact	4	4	4	3	7	3	11	3	2	3	4	5
Unknown eligibility, contacted	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	1
Unknown eligibility, non-contact	3	2	2	5	1	0	7	5	10	11	4	5
Other non-response	6	3	6	4	3	1	3	3	5	3	5	4
Bases	*104*	*294*	*225*	*202*	*219*	*238*	*318*	*343*	*237*	*136*	*207*	*2523*

Table 4.3 Household response by incentive type

Base: All eligible households *IP1*

	Incentive			
	£5	£10	£5 rising to £10	Total
Outcome	%	%	%	%
Productive	56	61	61	59
Refusal	28	28	28	28
Non-contact	6	3	5	5
Unknown eligibility, contacted	1	0	0	1
Unknown eligibility, non-contact	5	5	4	5
Other non-response	5	4	3	4
Bases	*843*	*842*	*838*	*2523*

Table 4.4 Reasons for refusal by incentive type

Base: All households who refused *IP1*

	Incentive			
	£5	£10	£5 rising to £10	Total
Outcome	%	%	%	%
Too busy	26	24	26	25
Looking after ill/elderly	3	1	3	2
Looking after child(ren)	1	2	2	2
Respondent almost never home	4	3	5	4
Respondent is temporarily absent	0	-	-	0
Stressful family situation	3	4	4	4
Too busy (not elsewhere specified)	14	13	12	13
Personal reasons	10	9	7	9
Unhappy about confidentiality	6	5	5	5
Questions too personal	4	4	2	3
Attitudes to the survey	32	32	31	31
Respondent does not want to be bothered	27	25	22	25
Nothing ever changes	1	2	1	1
Survey is too long	0	2	2	1
Survey is waste of time	2	2	3	2
Previous bad experience with surveys	1	1	4	2
Family pressure	4	2	3	3
Other family member opposes respondent participating	3	1	2	2
Someone has convinced respondent to refuse	1	1	1	1
Other hhold member refuses on behalf of respondent	0	0	0	0
No reason given	14	16	19	16
Other reason	14	17	14	15
Bases	*273*	*259*	*257*	*789*

Table 4.5 Individual outcome

Base: All aged 16 and over in productive households *IP1*

	Total
Outcome	
Fully productive interview	84%
Full proxy interview	6%
Partially productive interview	0%
Partial proxy interview	0%
No contact	2%
Refusal before interview	5%
Refusal during interview (unproductive partial	0%
Broken appointment - No recontact	0%
Ill at home during survey period	0%
Away or in hospital all survey period	0%
Physically or mentally unable/incompetent	0%
Language difficulties	0%
Too elderly	0%
Other reason for no interview	1%
Bases	2838

Table 4.6 Individual response by age and sex

Base: All aged 16 and over in productive households *IP1*

	Age						
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65=	Total
Outcome	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Men							
Productive	67	76	78	80	84	92	80
Proxy	10	9	10	7	10	4	8
Refusal	9	6	6	7	4	2	5
No contact	8	6	4	3	1	1	3
Other unproductive	6	4	3	3	2	1	3
Women							
Productive	76	85	94	89	90	91	89
Proxy	9	4	2	3	4	5	4
Refusal	8	5	2	5	4	2	4
No contact	3	2	1	0	1	1	1
Other unproductive	4	3	1	2	0	2	2
Total							
Productive	71	81	86	85	87	91	85
Proxy	9	6	6	5	7	4	6
Refusal	9	5	4	6	4	2	5
No contact	6	4	2	2	1	1	2
Other unproductive	5	4	2	3	1	1	2
Bases							
Men	*180*	*180*	*277*	*235*	*195*	*279*	*1346*
Women	*169*	*214*	*298*	*257*	*229*	*324*	*1491*
Total	*349*	*394*	*575*	*492*	*424*	*604*	*2838*

Table 4.7 Individual response by incentive type

Base All aged 16 and over in productive households *IP1*

	Incentive			
	£5	£10	£5 rising to £10	Total
Outcome	%	%	%	%
Productive	82	86	86	85
Proxy	7	6	5	6
Refusal	6	4	4	5
No contact	3	2	2	2
Other unproductive	2	2	3	2
Bases	*909*	*978*	*951*	*2838*

5 Data preparation

5.1 Data keying and scanning

Self-completion data was keyed by an external agency.

5.2 Data coding and editing

Most of the data validation of CAPI surveys is carried out in the field. Extensive range and consistency checks were included in the CAPI program, and prompt interviewers to clarify and query any data discrepancies directly with the respondent in real time.

5.2.1 SIC and SOC coding

Two-digit SIC coding and four-digit SOC coding was carried out in the employment and proxy sections of the questionnaire. Each coder's initial batch of work was 'blind coded', i.e. a second coder independently coded respondent's answers to SIC and SOC without seeing how they had initially been coded. Any discrepancies between the initial coder's work and the blind coding by the second coder were resolved by a coding supervisor and feedback was given to correct errors or resolve any misunderstandings.

5.2.2 Cleaning of address information

Each respondent was asked to provide information about a stable contact that could be approached in the event of the individual or household having moved. These addresses were checked, with a software program called Matchcode, which checks and where necessary corrects postcode for each address.