

# ESS USER TESTING: REPORT

V5

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# Insight Key:

## Colour Insight Key:



Higher severity findings / disruptions



Lower severity findings / inconveniences



Good findings / strengths



Neutral findings / useful observations

## Key

**All:** 13 participants

**Most/Many:** 9-12 participants

**Half:** 6-7 participants

**Some:** 3-4 participants

**Few:** 1-2 participants

**None:** 0 participants

# RESEARCH OVERVIEW

# 01

- The European Social Survey
- Background and objectives
- Methodology

# The European Social Survey

The European Social Survey (ESS) is an academically driven cross-national survey that has been conducted across Europe since its establishment in 2001, run by the ESS European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ESS ERIC). The survey measures the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of diverse populations in more than thirty nations.

The ESS aims to achieve high methodological standards, striving for optimal comparability in the data collected across all countries. This is only possible through the use of high-quality questions that are designed to ensure that they are as comparable as possible across countries.



# Study Background and Objectives

The ESS is transitioning to a self-completion (web and paper) approach for data collection. Its 12<sup>th</sup> round, due to take place in 2025-26, will be evenly split between face-to-face and self-completion data collection. From its 13<sup>th</sup> round (2027-28), it will take an entirely self-completion approach.

The self-completion approach will comprise a web and paper questionnaire. The paper questionnaire has been the subject of previous user testing, but no user testing had so far been carried out on the web questionnaire. The current study was carried out by Ipsos UK UX team, commissioned by the ESS. The objectives of this study were:

1. To conduct user testing of the full ESS web questionnaire
2. To identify usability issues with questions or formats that may increase the risk of break-offs or nonresponse
3. To identify recommendations for changes to the questionnaire to address the usability issues

Note : the questions in the ESS web questionnaire were taken from the pre-existing ESS questionnaire. The focus was usability testing for the web. In-depth cognitive testing and re-design of the question wording was not a focus of this research.



# Methodology : Participant Recruitment

## Recruitment Approach:

Participants were recruited via an external recruitment agency.

During the screening process, they were notified that the interview would involve completing a survey, and that the survey itself aims to capture a range of attitudinal and socio-demographic information, but the aim of the interview is to focus on the overall experience of taking part in the survey, not to measure or analyse their responses to the survey.

They were also notified that the survey would contain questions considered to be personal or sensitive in nature.

## Sample:

Adults 18+ across Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) were recruited:

- n = 13 completes + 4 spares

Ages :

- 3 x 18 - 25-year-olds
- 4 x 26 - 45-year-olds
- 6 x 46+

Mix of GB General Population:

- 11 x persons without disabilities
- 2 x persons with disabilities
  - 1 x Person with attention difficulties
  - 1 x Person with low vision, who uses magnification and high contrast

# Methodology (Cont.)

Testing consisted of 4 days of UX testing the survey platform during In-depth Interviews, with 13 GB adults (18+) who chose to take part in our interviews:

## Approach:

Participants were sent via Post or presented with in the session an 'Invitation letter' asking them to complete the ESS survey. They were then asked to follow the instructions on the letter and complete the full ESS survey.

- **Session Dates:** 14<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024
- **Session Length:** 90 Minutes
- **Location:**
  - 4 x In person at a research facility in London
  - 9 x Online, Remote via Zoom
- **Devices:**
  - 7 x Mobile (Split iOS/Android)
  - 4 x Desktop (Split iOS/PC)
  - 2 x Tablet (Split iOS/Android)

## Discussion guide outline:

### Introduction (3 minutes)

- Information about how the session will run is explained to participants, including that they should let the moderator know if they feel uncomfortable answering any questions and that their data will be kept confidential
- Participants are told the purpose of the study, which is to gather feedback on their experience accessing and completing a web questionnaire

### Warm up Questions (3 minutes)

- Introductions and understanding users' previous experiences with web questionnaires, and types of accessibility software used

### Web Questionnaire Completion (50-60 minutes)

- Participants are asked to follow instructions on their invitation letter and complete the web questionnaire as naturally as they can, and to think aloud when encountering any issues, or if they have concerns or questions

### Web Questionnaire Deep dive (Up to 20-25 minutes)

- Participants are asked to give their overall thoughts on the questionnaire, followed by a deep dive into specific areas of the questionnaire they experienced friction to identify the root cause. They are then taken through specific question types to get their thoughts on these

### Wrap Up (2 minutes)

- Final remarks on their experiences and how they might improve the questionnaire

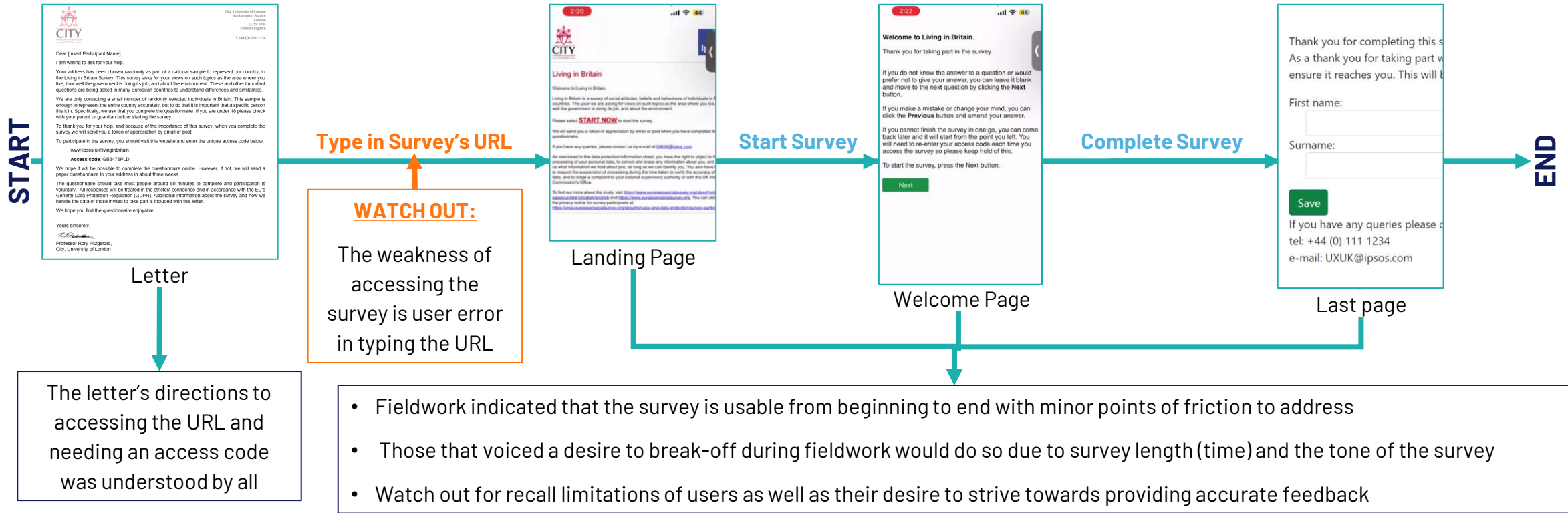


# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# 02

- Executive Summary
- High level UX principles

# The ESS survey experience from letter to end was usable by fieldwork participants with minor frictions points



## Recommendations

- There are areas to improve in the user experience to prevent break-offs that focus on elements of time and tone (see [final recommendation table](#) for how to improve time and tone), our UX testing indicated that our participants could access the survey through their letter and complete the ESS survey in terms of the platform's User Interface (UI)

# Overarching Usability Principles for Survey Design

Four values emerged through observed patterns during fieldwork sessions that impacted users' experience completing their surveys:



## 1. Time

A consistently important element for all users is time: Fatigue and boredom sometimes set in as minutes tick on when completing a survey

**Make adjustments to the survey to both inform users of their progress to keep them motivated and to shorten the length wherever possible**



## 2. Tone

Wording is a key element. A smaller set of questions were on sensitive topics that felt provocative and inflammatory to many, creating discomfort that led to neutral responses, skipping and a few that said they might stop the survey in real life

**Provide enough context throughout the experience to reassure those users who are turned off by strong overtones in survey wording**



## 3. Accuracy

Users strove to provide accurate information about themselves regardless of question tone or insufficient information

**Ensure that answer options/format facilitate the ability to provide accurate answers to minimise user frustration and increase data accuracy**



## 4. Recall

While the platform's user interface (UI) was appreciated overall, some platform features were not intuitive (see slides [22/23](#) for 'skip' and 'save and exit'). This coupled with a diminished recall of most users led to forgotten features

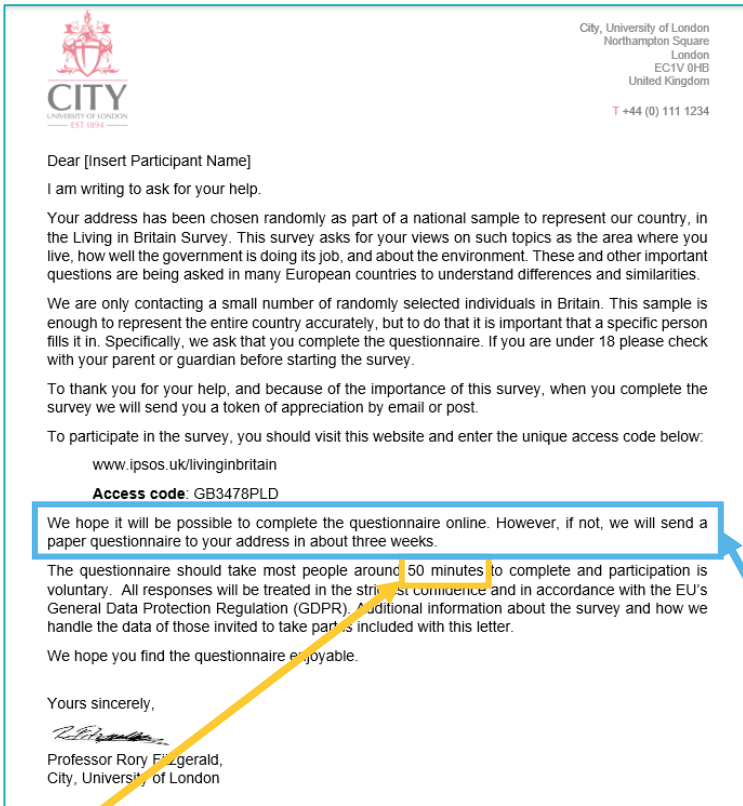
**Adjust features of the survey so that they are intuitive, and users do not need to rely on their memory**

# ARRIVING AT ESS SURVEY

# 03

- Invitation Letter
- Landing page
- Welcome page

# The purpose of the invitation letter and its instructions were comprehended by users providing clear access to the survey platform



Participants interviewed remotely received an invitation letter by post, whilst those interviewed in person were presented with an invitation letter by a researcher during their session.

While the letter was mostly skimmed by users:

- **“Visit this website and enter unique code”**: All users understood the directions for how to access the survey – *by typing in the provided URL then type in your access code*
- And most users felt confident they understood the nature and purpose of the survey



**“We will send a paper questionnaire”**: When noticed, users assumed that if they ignored the invitation letter, they would eventually receive a paper questionnaire by mail



**‘50 minutes’**: Of those that read more thoroughly, many users had trouble recalling aspects of the invitation letter, particularly the survey length. However, a few who noted the length of time considered it important in deciding whether to complete the survey immediately



**Who’s got my details...how did they get my address?.”** P9, Male, 57

## Recommendations

- Continue to ensure the letter remains skim-reader friendly:
  - Utilise white space: make the letter less cluttered and more readable; Short paragraphs: Keep paragraphs short and focused on a single idea; and Highlight key information; Use bold text to emphasize key information: Access code

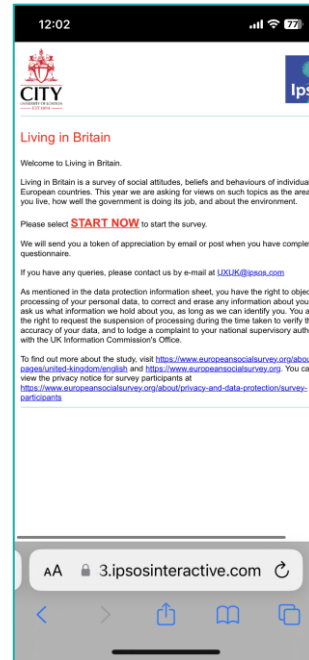
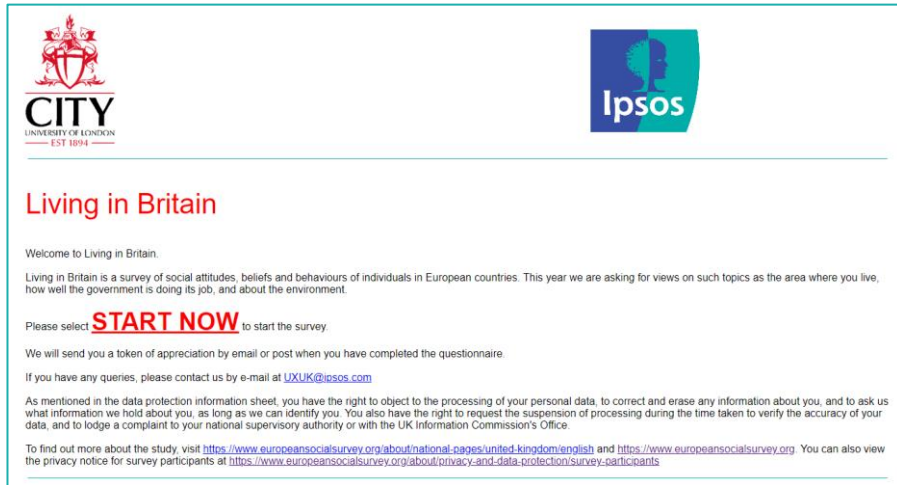


The invitation letters received mixed feedback:

- Some users found the tone off-putting, either feeling it sounded like a scam or like ‘begging’;
- A few were concerned about privacy and how their PII information was found;\*
- A few expressed concerns with the idea of being ‘randomly selected’, either wanting to know why they were selected or how; \*
- While others felt special and unique to be selected for this survey about life in Britain

# While the URL entry poses challenges to a few, the 'Start Now' Call to Action on the landing page captures attention and helps steer users on to the survey

Survey landing page (desktop left, mobile right)



**I like the 'Start Now' in bright red, easy to know where to click."** P6, Female, 22

The link you are trying to access does not exist.  
If you have a question or concern please [contact us](#).

**[After mistyping URL and getting an Ipsos error screen] I'm not going to lie, I'm a bit worried here...I think it's a scam"** P10, Male, 49



## Accessing Landing page:

- G** The majority of users were able to access the site, and most without assistance
- L** However, a few users struggled to type the URL correctly into their web browser; with one user even googling the URL leading them to incorrect Ipsos URL results

## On the Landing page:

- N** Most were immediately drawn to clicking the 'Start Now' CTA (call to action), barely skimming content of the landing page, with only a few reading the full text
- L** A single user expected to see links for all the authorities mentioned on the landing page and felt there should be a link to contact the supervisory authority

## Recommendations

- Help users avoid mistyping URL by:
  - Ensure URL is short and simple with readable words and avoid numbers and consider including a QR code to access landing page
- Ensure search engine\* results of URL produce ESS platform in top results
- Continue to use large font, bold font in different colour from the rest of the platform page for the 'Start Now' to call action to users where they can enter the survey

# The welcome page is understood but quickly skimmed, resulting in key information being missed

## Welcome to Living in Britain.

Thank you for taking part in the survey.

If you do not know the answer to a question or would prefer not to give your answer, you can leave it blank and move to the next question by clicking the **Next** button.

If you make a mistake or change your mind, you can click the **Previous** button and amend your answer.

If you cannot finish the survey in one go, you can come back later and it will start from the point you left. You will need to re-enter your access code each time you access the survey so please keep hold of this.

To start the survey, press the Next button.

Next



Most skimmed the content of the welcome page, with only a few taking the time to read the full text



When shown the welcome page at the end of survey, a few felt there was information about survey length and number of questions was missing on this page



Of the few that read the welcome in more detail, some had difficulty recalling information such as:

- Ability to skip question
- Ability to save progress and exit



**I lack patience, I'd rather just do it all and get on with it.** P1, Female, 31

**I probably didn't read it.... I completely skimmed.... it made sense to me, but I have the memory of Dory from Nemo.** P3, Female, 52



**I would say something about the time, or how many questions I have to answer.** P3, Female, 52

## Recommendations

- Support the ability to skim key feature information through white space, short paragraphs and bolding ([see appendix for potential example](#))
- Reinforce key information on welcome page by adding estimated length of time for survey as many will likely skim this key information in their letter
- See Slide [19](#), [22](#) and [23](#) for aiding the recall of key info *i.e. Skipping questions, save and progress*

# ESS SURVEY UX FINDINGS

# 04

- General Findings
- Question Specific Findings



# GENERAL FINDINGS

## Contents:

1. [Cognitive load](#)
2. [Time](#)
3. [Tone](#)
4. [Survey Section influence on user effort](#)
5. [Skip Feature](#)
6. [Previous button and Save Feature](#)
7. [Error messages](#)
8. [Look and feel](#)
9. [Devices](#)

# There were increased errors on questions involving complex tasks and high information load, indicative of cognitive overload

User behaviour in response to certain questions are indicative of 'Cognitive overload', which occurs when the amount of information or complexity of tasks presented to the user puts a high burden on their working memory. This impacts their capacity to complete particular questions efficiently and may result in more time, errors, frustration and friction.

## Reasons of occurrence included:



### Large amount of text

Questions and response answers with a lot of copy overwhelmed users at times, and meant they spent more time



**[B14A/B] was quite involved...I did think there was quite a lot of answers...it was like 'oh my gosh, where do I go here?'"** P08, Female, 56



### Complex question types

Question types that were atypical (e.g. *ranking questions, questions requiring digit input*) took longer to complete and were more error-prone



**[QD19] There is a lot of information...for me it's too much information."** P03, Female, 52



### Recalling information

Questions that involved recalling instructions, such as those in Section E, resulted in more time taken and friction as users needed to tap the 'previous' button to find required information

Additionally, most users did not recall key information about platform features e.g. *the ability to skip questions, ability to save questions*

## Recommendations

- Ensure key information is provided across survey so users do not have to attempt to recall e.g. a 'skip' button ([slide 22](#)), 'save' reminders ([slide 23](#)) and questionnaire length ([slide 19](#))
- Wherever possible, simplify text

# While the platform is usable, a few voiced a desire to break-off from survey completion because of time and tone



## Time

- The biggest pain point voiced about survey experiences was length of time it took to complete
  - Equally, some of the ESS survey's questions felt repetitive with similarly worded questions\* on topics throughout the survey compounding the feeling of time dragging on
  - However, many voiced that their potential willingness to continue was dependent on the survey's incentive amount – creating a formula in users' heads about the value of their time already spent on the survey

\*see Q A53/54, A55/56, B1/2, B31/B33/B34 as examples

### Recommendations

- When possible, front-load most important question groupings as some will break-off partway through
- Encourage users throughout the survey experience with indication of progress:
  - Save reminders: animation on next button, a 'save and exit button' (see [slide 23](#))
  - Page breaks: use page breaks to encourage survey continuation with context-setting of upcoming question sets as well as provide information of user progress e.g. ('Section 1 out of 6')
    - Consider using break-off data on back end of survey to map out where the page breaks would be most valuable
  - A progress bar: indicating how much progress made and how much is left\*\* ([see appendix](#))

\*\*Note: Progress bars need to be carefully designed to work effectively and can be counterproductive ([see appendix](#)), and there are other ways to indicate progress e.g. section introductions as above

# While the platform is usable, a few voiced a desire to break-off from survey completion because of time and tone (Cont.)

## Tone/Topics

- Many users voiced frustrations over questions that they felt were provocative or inflammatory, e.g. QA47, D26
- Some users were reassured by the context provided in the letter with wording like: *'Living in Britain Survey'* and *'topics as the area where you live, how well the government is doing its job, and about the environment'*
- While others struggled to see what life in Britain had to do with attitudes on the LGBT community, mental health, immigration, etc.
- For some, there was some concern around data collection of sensitive topics causing a desire to break-off survey. This concern was linked to the potential for other people (e.g. employers) to find out opinions expressed in the survey
- A few indicated that some questions felt intrusive and personal e.g., questions about their workplace, income, political activities (e.g., QA32, A33)



**Why would you need to know if I view someone of a different race as more intelligent than me or not?"**  
P01, Female, 31

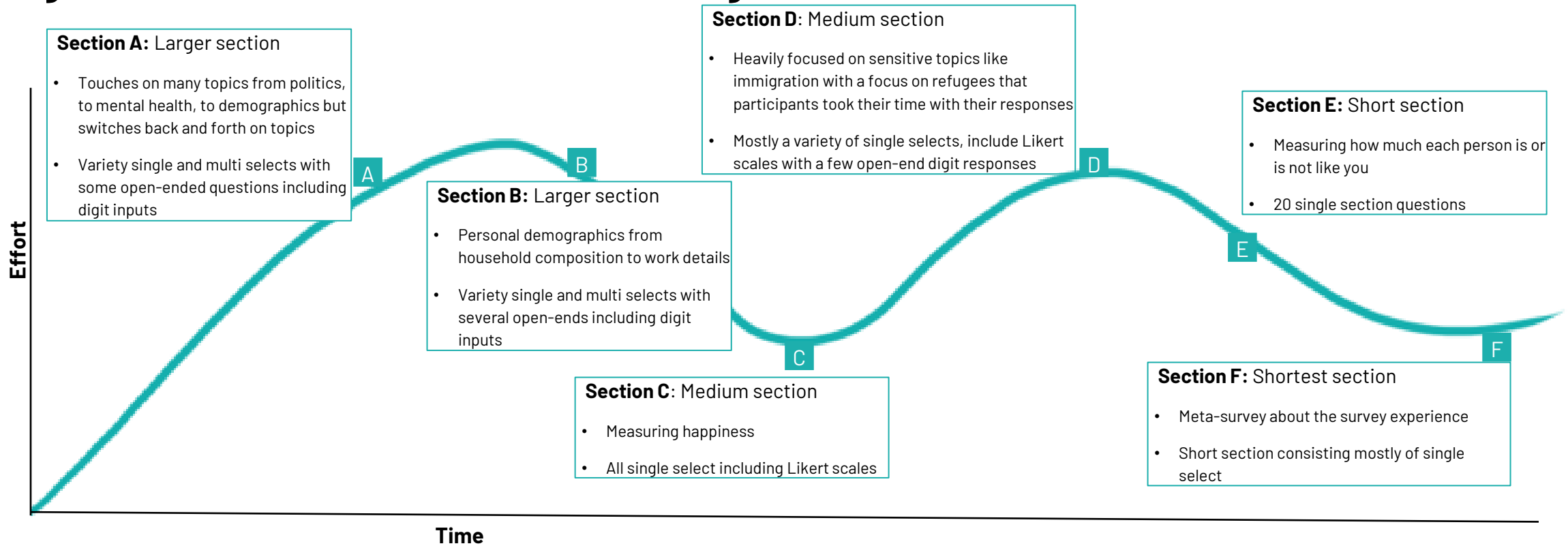


**What is it they want to know from me? I know it's a survey about Britain and where I'm living... but some of these questions are now going into quite personal"** P03, Female, 52



**[At QA33] These are quite personal...people aren't going to admit to any of this... it's like, 'Have you done this, Have you done that?'"** P02, Male, 27

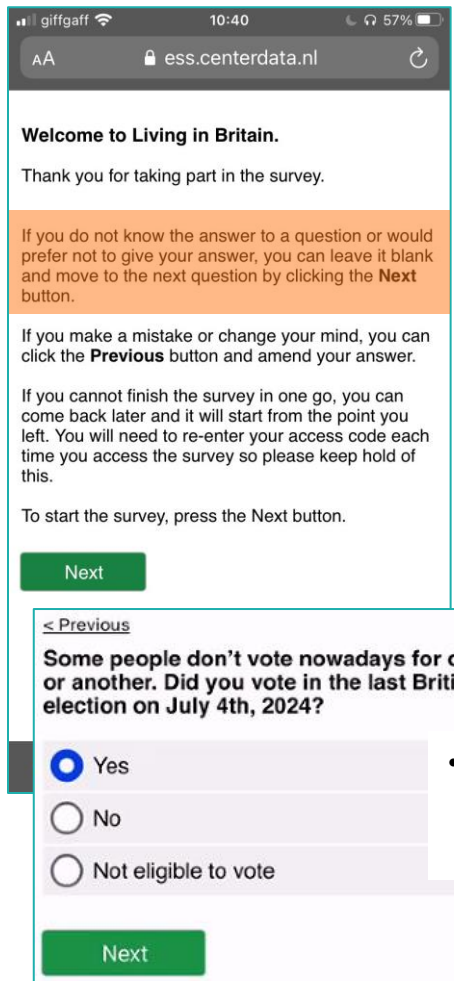
# Another small contributing factor to time on survey was varying rhythms of the six internal survey sections



## Ipsos UX's point of view:

- Grouping questions by type can make a survey process more efficient. Respondents spend less time figuring out the context of each question, leading to faster completion times and potentially higher response rates (*i.e. put Likert scale questions together*)
- Grouping questions by topic could help to create a logical flow, making the survey easier to follow. When questions are thematically related, respondents can stay focused on a specific subject, reducing cognitive load and improving the accuracy of responses. For example, Ipsos surveys often categorize questions under specific themes such as economic conditions, public views on AI, and experiences of inequality. This reflects a structured approach to capture coherent and focused data on each subject

# While skipping questions was a welcomed feature for all, most users did not realise skipping was an option without prompting



- Regardless of reading through the welcome page, most users had to guess how to move forward without answering; when pushed to guess on how to skip, all guessed the 'Next' Button:
  - Only a few proactively tried to skip forward during the UX test; a few wanted to skip but were hesitant and when probed unsure where they were allowed to skip
  - Others observed not skipping were probed during post-UX test deep dive and they expressed that they assumed all questions had to be answered to move forward
- One problem with an unintuitive skip feature is that when repetitive questions and/or uncomfortable questions are presented, some users may feel compelled to break-off when wanting to refuse to answer
  - However, when people were uncomfortable answering a question or were unsure, they tend to answer as neutrally as possible – like *answering '5' on Likert 10-point scale question*
- Another issue uncovered with skipping was the inability to take back an answer and move forward on questions with single code answers. Once an item was selected, it cannot be unselected – issues for those that do not feel comfortable with disclosure

## Recommendations

- Provide more context throughout platform to reduce the need for recall of welcome page information
  - Include reminders throughout the session about skipping ability during page breaks,
  - Consider using break-off data on back end of survey to map out where the page breaks (with reminders) would be most valuable
  - Add a 'Skip' button alongside 'previous' button\*
- Allow the ability to de-select after answer selection on questions with single code- answers
- Strongly recommend adding more response options like 'don't know/refuse to answer' to empower users to answer comfortably without skipping questions or misrepresenting their attitudes/beliefs/etc.



**I'm happy to answer it, but I'm sort of like, if there was a skip at the bottom. I'd probably push 'skip'.**  
P02, male, 27

# Whilst the 'Previous' button is self-explanatory, it is less obvious to users that survey progress will be saved, creating uncertainty

## < Previous

- The meaning of the 'previous' CTA is clear and intuitive for users to navigate to previous questions
  - However, some did not notice the button during their survey experience
- Reasons for tapping previous included:
  1. The desire to check the previous question, in particular for questions with similar wording
  2. Wanting to reread intermediary text screens to remind themselves of context
  3. To test how the button worked



**I actually went back a couple of times when I wanted to double check something...I know I could probably change [answers]."** P13, Female, 36

If you cannot finish the survey in one go, you can come back later and it will start from the point you left. You will need to re-enter your access code each time you access the survey so please keep hold of this.

To start the survey, press the Next button.

Next



**If I exited out, I would want there to be a button that saying ... 'Exit and come back to later so I know it's officially saved what I've done.'** P01, Female, 31

## Save and Exit

- It was not clear to all that their progress was being saved at each question
  - For the few that thought their progress would save, it was based on intuition or welcome page recall
  - Others were either on the fence or thought their progress might be lost if they exited and returned



**It would delete as it wasn't finished?...I would like it to save my answers."** P11, Female, 23

## Recommendations

- Adjust 'Previous' Call to Action to make more noticeable font size and/or colour
- Keep users informed by reminding them their answer has been saved:
  - Include some type of animation to indicate saving like a green tick animation on the 'Next' button with 'Saved' or; Include an 'Exit and Save' Button

# Error messages were generally effective at calling users' attention and prompting an answer edit accordingly that created a pathway forward

Please enter as two digits for month (e.g. 01 for January) and four digits for year.

**Month**  
→ Please enter a valid month of birth (01-12).

**Year**  
1967



The current error messaging style with bolded red text was noticeable and aided users in fixing their errors

- The errors' wording mostly aided in quick fixes of errors to prompt a smooth transition to next question

Please enter an amount of time that is less than or equal to one day, e.g. 2

**Hours**  
24

**Minutes**  
25

**What are your total 'basic' or contracted hours each week in your main job, excluding any paid and unpaid overtime?**

If it is a zero hours contract, please answer with '0'. Round up or down to whole hours.

Please enter a valid value. The two nearest valid values are 37 and 38.



However, a few users also received pop-up errors during their process of responding

- This different style was noticed as well and was appreciated for aiding users mid-response as opposed to post-answer



**I preferred the other one that popped up.... This is much more helpful, because whilst you're actually populate in the box [it helps you]."** P09, Male, 57

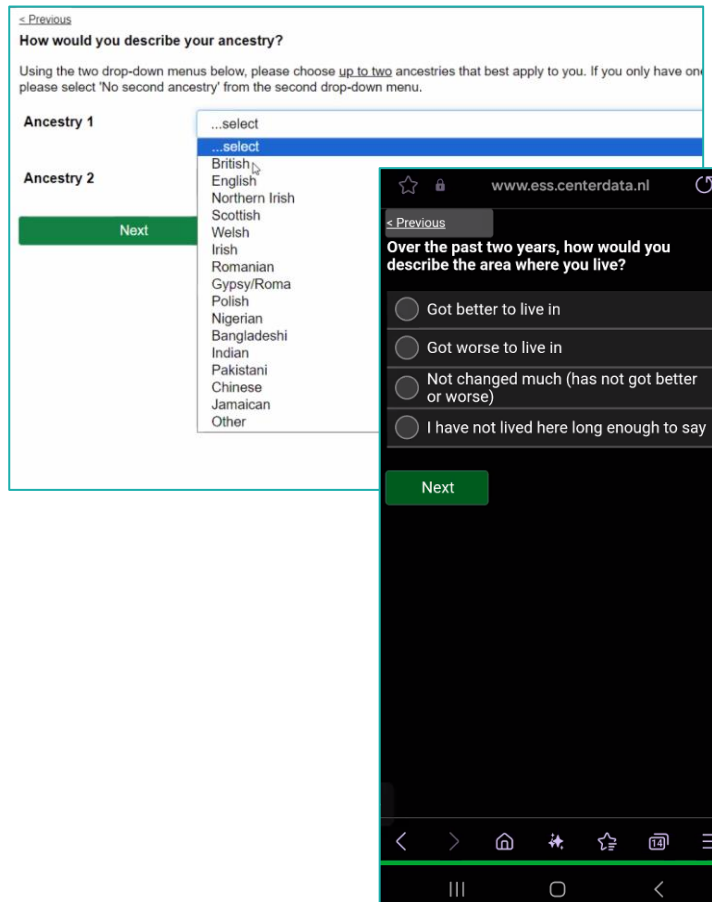
**TO NOTE:** While error messaging worked, it is important to note that throughout fieldwork 7 users created responses that produced error messages ([see question specific findings for more information](#))

## Recommendations

- Consider providing pop-up errors in addition to red text error messaging style. This helps pre-empt errors before they are made while 'red text' errors help post-error
  - Regardless of error message style, stay consistent with style of error messages



# The look and feel of the survey platform is appreciated in its simple and clean design



- Many voiced that the platform's aesthetic felt like a 'standard' survey which matched expectations for a survey that covers serious topics
- Two users specially mentioned that it felt like a UK government website; adding to the sentiment that the survey results were for the British government
  - For one of these users with deep concerns around personally identifiable data collection this 'UK government' aesthetic added to their worries
- Others did not have strong opinions on the survey's UI
- There were a handful of appreciative mentions for the paging design of the platform as well

## Recommendations

- Continue being consistent with simple and clean UI of survey platform



**It's clear it looks professional, especially since it's like, I wouldn't exactly expect it to be bubbly right? And talking about like immigration. So, it's appropriate to what it's talking about...and it looks like it's an important survey. And it's not just like, Oh, do you like this product? We can sell you this."**  
P06, Female, 22



**The look and feel of this reminds me of the gov.uk websites, government gateway...So now I would worry that this is basically going. I mean, I know it's not worry. But I know this is all going to the Government,....."**  
P01, Female, 31

# Accessing URL and survey completion were not impacted by device type\*



## Laptop/Computer

- 4 users used their laptop to complete their survey with a mix of operating systems
- There was an appreciation for laptops as they have a large screen. They often stated that a long survey was suitable for laptop use



**I would probably do this on my laptop...because from time they've said to me that the survey is going to take me 50 minutes [and] I can already tell that this is going to be something that's got a lot of information."** P01, Female, 31



## Phone

- 7 users used their phone to complete their survey with a mix of operating systems
- Phone users did not voice issues with screen size. However, there was more scrolling necessary when completing the survey
- Many mentioned they complete surveys more often on their phones



**I do just generally tend to do as much as I can on my phone. And because the experience was pretty good on my phone..[I] probably would."** P05, Female, 41



## Tablet

- 2 users used their tablet to complete their survey with a mix of operating systems
- The two tablet users were the only users that voiced a desire to use another type of device to complete the ESS survey but tend to be ok with either laptop or phone to take this survey



**Just I wouldn't do it on the tablet. If I do things online on the tablet, it seems to take longer."** P13, Female, 36

## Recommendations

- Since there is no indication that device type impacts survey usability, offer users to use a personal device they feel most comfortable with
- Continue to test and check for varying screen sizes when updating the platform to ensure positive usability across devices
- **\*Continue to monitor response rates, break-offs and device type patterns. Where necessary, conduct contextual user research (e.g. via ethnographic user research methods) to understand real-world factors that may influence device usage and response behaviours**

© \*Rationale for recommendation: In real life usage, there may be contextual factors that impact behaviour, e.g. people multi-tasking or being distracted when using mobiles in public places. These real-world factors were not present in the artificial environment used for this study. Therefore, the findings relating to devices are offered tentatively, with the recommendation to monitor.

# QUESTION SPECIFIC FINDINGS

## Contents:

1. [Scale Questions](#)
2. [QD19](#)
3. [Q14A/B](#)
4. [QB2](#)
5. [QA8/A10](#)
6. [B4](#)
7. [A55/A56](#)
8. [B29](#)
9. [Visually Impaired User findings](#)

# Users understood how scale questions worked, but spent longer on, or skipped questions with unfamiliar terminology

< Previous  
In politics people sometimes talk of “left” and “right”. Where would you place yourself on this scale, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?

0 - Left  
 1  
 2  
 3  
 4  
 5  
 6  
 7  
 8  
 9  
 10

Next

< Previous  
Now thinking about the European Union, some say European unification should go further. Others say it has already gone too far. Which number on this scale best describes your position?

0 - Unification has already gone too far  
 1  
 2  
 3  
 4  
 5  
 6  
 7  
 8  
 9  
 10 - Unification should go further

Next



Some found QA39 difficult to answer as they were not entirely sure of the meanings of ‘left’ and ‘right’



For question QA50, some were not entirely sure what ‘European unification’ meant, making them hesitant to answer



When unsure how to answer questions like these, users tended to either skip the question or answer neutrally (i.e. ‘5’) as they did not want to provide inaccurate information, skewing data

- One user mentioned they research the meanings of unfamiliar terms before answering survey questions

## Recommendations for Q39/50

- Consider using mouseover tooltips to give users more information / definitions of terminology for questions like QA39 and QA50 ([see appendix for examples](#))

I wish there was a hover button to explain the meanings of ‘left’ vs ‘right’ wing.” P01, Female, 31

It could give an explanation of ‘left’ and ‘right’...I’m not fully into the political scenario...I don’t want to give the wrong answer, so I’m going to go to next.” P03, Female, 52

“Having that little ‘i’ button where you can hover over certain terms...put in layman’s terms... for reassurance.” P13, Female, 36

# QD19'S task is understood but some felt a lack of freedom in the way they can rank items, leading to forced inaccurate answers

< Previous

• Each ranking 1, 2, 3, or 4 can only be used once.

There are different reasons why people may leave their country and apply to enter Britain as a refugee.

Please rank the reasons in order of what you think is the most important to least important reason for accepting them. '1' is the most important reason, '2' is the second most important reason, '3' is the third most important reason and '4' is the least important reason.

If you think that none of these should be a reason for accepting them or all of these reasons should have equal priority, please select one of these options below and leave the rankings blank.

Persecution

• Please enter a number between 1 and 4.

Natural disaster

• Please enter a number between 1 and 4.

Climate change

War

None of these should be a reason for accepting them

All of these reasons for accepting them should have equal priority

Next



The error message effectively helped them understand what went wrong, prompting them to rethink their answers, indicating a strive for accuracy but also resulted in more time spent on this question



Some users wished to rank certain items equally, but felt compelled to rank all items or used the 'equal priority' tick box e.g. a user might have felt 'Natural disaster' and 'Climate change' were of equal priority, but were unable to express this as each ranking number could only be used once

- While some users wished to not rank certain items at all



And a few ranked all items AND selected 'All...equal priority' believing they HAD to enter digits but wanted to only select 'All...equal priority'



**I had to select all of these reasons have equal priority, even though I don't think they have equal priority... I don't feel like it's capturing my views correctly."** P01, Female, 31

## Recommendations for QD19:

- Allow users to rank certain items equally to capture nuance of ranking e.g. 'war' and 'persecution can both be rank '1'
- Consider rewording question to reduce amount of text to reduce cognitive load

# In Q14A/B, users typically skim the answer list for education level but end up spending more time if their level is not found initially

[← Previous](#)

The next two questions are about educational qualifications you may have achieved.

From this first list, which is the highest educational qualification you have achieved?

If you are currently in education, select the highest level/qualification completed so far. If you completed your education abroad, select the most similar education in the UK.

2 or more A levels

5 or more GCSEs or other qualifications

GCSEs, O levels

None of these

None of these

None of these

[Next](#)

---

[← Previous](#)

And now from this second list, which is the highest educational qualification you have achieved?

If you are currently in education, select the highest level/qualification completed so far. If you completed your education abroad, select the most similar education in the UK.

Postgraduate degree e.g. Masters or PhD, 5-year University degree

3 or 4 year University degree (BA, BSc. etc)

NVQ/SVQ Level 5 or equivalent, e.g. HND, Nursing certificate, Teacher training, HE Diploma, Foundation Degree (FdA, FdSc etc)

NVQ/SVQ Level 4 or equivalent, e.g. HNC, Certificate of Higher Education, City and Guilds Level 4

NVQ/SVQ Level 3 or equivalent, e.g. BTEC National, ONC/OND, City & Guilds Advanced craft, Modern/Advanced Apprenticeship

NVQ/SVQ levels 1 or 2 or equivalent, e.g. BTEC General, City & Guilds Craft, Intermediate Apprenticeship

None of these

[Next](#)



Most were able to progress through the questions without hesitation



However, some paused longer at the first list with a few stating their hesitation was due to not finding their highest level of education



Many users were unsure why a question on education is split into two and stated that they ideally would prefer one combined question for education



It looks like it was a bit wordy...and I was surprised to not see [postgrad education qualification] there further up... You're asking what's the highest qualification, you're not saying what's your highest at school level and what's your highest post school level." P13, Female, 36

I have a higher level of education...I was checking there wasn't something else with a higher level of education." P07, Male, 25



## Recommendations for B14A/B:

- Consider combining lists into one question with shortened response options as this will help lessen the repetitive feeling of the survey
- If keeping both questions/pages, amend the wording and underline key information to aid comprehension, emphasising there are 2 questions on education, **e.g:**
  - Question 1 of 2 on educational qualifications** [space break]
  - 'From this first list, which is the highest educational qualifications you have achieved?'**

# QB2 can be easily skimmed causing a mistake, and the current error message supports users in self-correction

A single user misread the question causing an error in their answer



However, upon noticing and reading the error message, the user was able to correct their mistake promptly



[during survey session] oh, age! Sorry I read that wrong. Let me see if I did the other [uses previous button reread B1]....I thought it was 15, and under...." P01, Female, 31

< Previous

Including yourself, how many people aged 15 or older live here regularly as members of this household?  
→ Your answer should be greater than zero and less than or equal to the answer you gave in the previous question

Next

## Recommendations For QB2:

- Retain the current error message for QB2 as this as shown to be effective
- Consider adding a pop-up error box reminding people that they need to focus on members of household 15 and over



[during deep dive] You're basically essentially asking me the same question. Maybe put that in the 1st question, saying, how many adults over 18 are in your household, and how many children under 15 around your household? Because you're essentially asking me the same question." P01, Female, 31

# QA8/QA10 experienced the highest number of user errors, indicating question format creates high mental workload

[< Previous](#)

**On a typical day, about how much time do you spend watching, reading or listening to news about politics and current affairs?**

Please give your answer in hours (0-24) and minutes (0-59).  
If you spent no time, please enter 0 hours and 0 minutes. For answers less than 10, only enter one digit (e.g. type 5 instead of 05).

**Hours**

**Minutes**  
**Please enter a number of minutes that is less than 60.**



A few entered '0' in front of single digit answers, indicating they did not notice/retain some information in the unbolded text



A few users felt it was mandatory to enter information in the minutes box, prompting them to enter '0'



**I could've just put nothing in it...but I thought it would be accurate to put zero in it...If I left it blank... I don't think I'd be able to move on."** P10, Male, 49



When asked most users correctly identified how to enter '90 minutes' but all understood why the error message appeared



One user misread the question therefore providing an estimate of hours per week not per day. They were confused by the error message about digits less than '25' until they reread the question

**Hours**

**Minutes**



A single user wrote the word 'X hours' in the first text box

## Recommendations for QA8/QA10:

- Consider reformatting question:
  - Single select from a range of time e.g. 0 - 1 hours, 2-3 hours... or a drop-down box of 0-24 and 0-60
- If sticking with current format:
  - Support error prevention by preventing alphabetical data entry (only allowing numerical data) to be entered; allow '05' and '5' to be entered, as they mean the same thing
  - On mobile, only allow numerical keyboard



# In QB4\*, entering digits for birth month is not natural for some users, but error message is quickly understood

< Previous

In which month and year were you born?

Please enter as two digits for month (e.g. 01 for January) and four digits for year

Month

Dece

Year

Next

< Previous

In which month and year were you born?

Please enter as two digits for month (e.g. 01 for January) and four digits for year.

Month

→Please enter a valid month of birth (01-12).



A few users attempted to enter the name of their birth month rather than the digits



However, the error message helped in quickly rectifying their mistake



When it said month, I presumed it meant write the month of your birth...[the error] is bold, red clear... and then again telling you an example in the brackets." P08, Female, 56



It's asking me to put in the month...I didn't read it properly; it needs the number instead of the actual word." P06, Female, 22

In which month and year was [redacted] born?

Month

→Please enter a valid month of birth (01-12).

17



A single user put their sibling's birthdate instead of month

## Recommendations for QB4, 5-7:

- Consider [maintaining consistency with other user entered data formats](#) on calendar inputs by allowing users to select their birth month and year via a date picker widget or drop-down list
- However, [typing the date is basic option for further away dates like birthdays](#): If keeping this data entry style, consider allowing for text entry of month along month numbers

# Underlining the same words in a series of questions can lead to confusion for some users, especially when skim reading

< Previous

To what extent do you think Britain should allow people from poorer countries in Europe to come and live here?

Allow many to come and live here

Allow some

Allow a few

Allow none

< Previous

To what extent do you think Britain should allow people from poorer countries outside Europe to come and live here?

Allow many to come and live here

Allow some

Allow a few

Allow none

Next



- After answering QA55, one user became confused as they thought QA56 was an identical question
- This may indicate the underlining of the same words across each question results in confusion and lack of focus of the main difference between questions *i.e.* 'in Europe' vs 'outside Europe'

## **Recommendations for QA55/56:**

- Consider underlining key contextual differences across similar questions, avoiding emphasis on the same words



**I think I read the last one too quickly...even though its underlined and shows the distinction. I think I skipped the 'in Europe'...I was like 'hang on, what did I just answer?'"**  
P07, Male, 25

# QB29 has the potential for misinterpretation due to skim reading and lack of understanding of key phrases

[< Previous](#)

What were your **total 'basic' or contracted** hours each week in your main job, **excluding** any paid and unpaid overtime?

If it is a zero hours contract, please answer with '0'. Round up or down to whole hours.

  
 No set 'basic' or contracted number of hours

- Recommendations for QB29:**
- Consider reformatting QB29, to prevent users from reading the word 'overtime' immediately:  
*E.g. 'What were your **total 'basic' or contracted** hours each week in your main job? Please **exclude any paid and unpaid overtime.***
  - Ensure that digit input and check tick box are mutually exclusive with an error message indicating only one input allowed
  - Consider adding a mouseover tooltips with information about meaning of 'No set 'basic' or 'contracted number of hours'



A user misread QB29, thinking she had to enter the number of hours overtime she completes



**It asked me how many hours a week I do paid and unpaid overtime."** P11, Female, 23



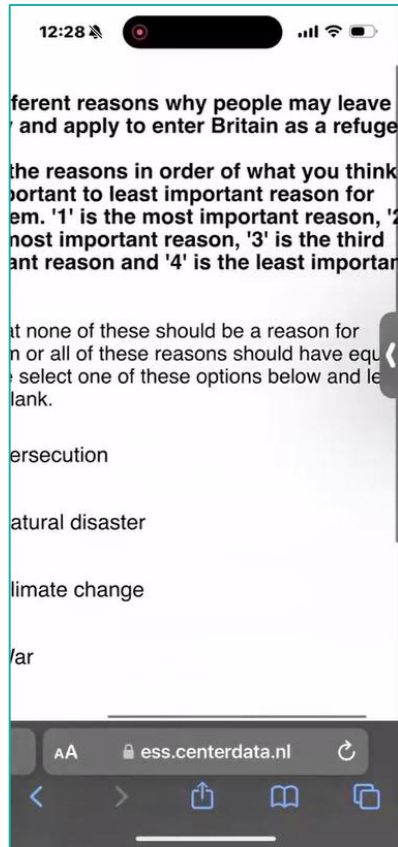
Another user felt there was no difference between a 'zero-hour contract' and 'No set 'basic' or contracted number of hours

- Despite his confusion, he decided to enter '0' and was able to progress at QB29



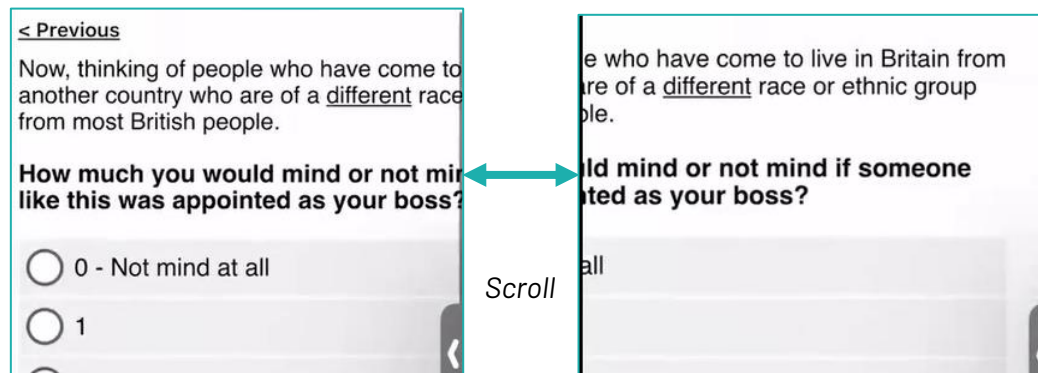
**I'm not sure what this second option here means, to me that sounds like a zero-hour contract..."** P07, Male, 25

# The user with a visual impairment could navigate questions effectively using built-in mobile accessibility software



**G** The single user with a visual impairment was able to complete the survey with relative ease

**I was able to zoom in - I was quite satisfied with the fonts and layouts on the questions on the mobile screen."** P15, Female, 41, Vision Impairment



**N** Typical behaviour involved scrolling right and left to read the question, before giving her answer

## Built in iOS accessibility software used:

- 'Zoom'

## User typically uses:

- Enlarged text
- Dark mode (when needed)

**It's a lot clearer [on laptop] as it's a bigger screen. That said I do tend to do as much as can on my phone, and because the experience was good, I would probably complete on my phone."** P15, Female, 41, Vision Impairment

# RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

# 05

# Recommendations Summary

No.	Severity	Need to re-test UX to validate*	Principle	Recommendation
1	Long term	High	Recall	Ensure key information is provided across survey so users do not have to attempt to recall e.g. a 'skip' button ( <a href="#">slide 22</a> ), 'save' reminders ( <a href="#">slide 23</a> ) and questionnaire length ( <a href="#">slide 19</a> )
2	Quick Win	Low	Recall	Help users avoid mistyping URL by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure URL is short and simple with readable words and avoid numbers and consider including a QR code to access landing page</li> </ul>
3	Quick Win	Low	Other	Ensure search engine results of URL produce ESS platform in top results (ensure that search engines beyond Google also produce results that support navigation journey )
4	Quick Win	Low	Time	Reinforce key information on welcome page by adding estimated length of time for survey as many will likely skim this key information in their letter
5	Quick Win	Low	Recall/ Time	Wherever possible, simplify text
6	Quick Win	Low	Time	When possible, front-load most important question groupings as some will break-off partway through
7	Quick Win	Low	Recall	Adjust 'Previous' Call to Action to make more noticeable font size and/or colour

\***Need to re-test:** Our judgement of whether this user interface change has 'low' or 'high' need for validation, i.e to check that the more complex UI changes have had the desired effect- due to the potential for unforeseen user behaviours.

# Recommendations Summary

No.	Severity	Need to re-test UX to validate	Principle	Recommendation
8	Quick Win	High	Recall	Keep users informed by reminding them their answer has been saved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include some type of animation to indicate saving like a green tick animation on the 'Next' button with 'Saved' or; Include an 'Exit and Save' Button</li> </ul>
9	Quick Win	Low	Accuracy/ Time	Consider providing pop-up errors messages in addition to red text error messaging style. This helps pre-empt errors before they are made while 'red text' errors help post-error <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regardless of error message style, stay consistent with style of error messages</li> </ul>
10	Quick Win	Low	Other - Skim Reading	Continue to ensure the letter remains skim-reader friendly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilise white space: make the letter less cluttered and more readable;</li> <li>• Short paragraphs: Keep paragraphs short and focused on a single idea; and</li> <li>• Highlight key information: Use bold text to emphasize key information: Access code</li> </ul>
11	Quick Win	Low	Other - Clarity	Continue being consistent with simple and clean UI of survey platform
12	Quick Win	Low	Other - Skim Reading	Support the ability to skim key feature information through white space, short paragraphs and bolding ( <a href="#">see appendix for potential example</a> ) Including adding estimated length of time for survey
13	Quick Win	Low	Other - Comfort	Since there is no indication that device type impacts survey usability, offer users to use a personal device they feel most comfortable with

# Recommendations Summary

No.	Severity	Need to re-test UX to validate	Principle	Recommendation
14	Long Term	**High/ *Low	Recall/Time	<p>Encourage users throughout the survey experience with indication of progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Save reminders</u>: animation on next button, a 'save and exit button' (see <a href="#">slide 23</a>)</li> <li>• <u>Page breaks</u>: use page breaks to encourage survey continuation with context-setting of upcoming question sets as well as provide information of user progress e.g. ('Section 1 out of 6') <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider using break-off data on back end of survey to map out where the page breaks would be most valuable</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <u>A progress bar</u>: indicating how much progress made and how much is left* (<a href="#">see appendix</a>)</li> </ul> <p>*Note: Progress bars need to be carefully designed to work effectively and can be counterproductive (<a href="#">see appendix</a>), and there are other ways to indicate progress e.g. section introductions as above</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide more context throughout platform to reduce the need for recall of welcome page information</li> </ul>
15	Long Term	High	Recall/ time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include reminders throughout the session about skipping ability during page breaks,</li> <li>• Consider using break-off data on back end of survey to map out where the page breaks (with reminders) would be most valuable</li> <li>• Add a 'Skip' button alongside 'previous' button (UX test to check risk of increase in nonresponse)</li> </ul>
16	Quick Win	Low	Accuracy	Allow the ability to de-select after answer selection on questions with single code- answers



# Recommendations Summary

No.	Severity	Need to re-test UX to validate	Principle	Recommendation
17	Long Term	Low	Accuracy	Strongly recommend adding more response options like 'don't know/refuse to answer' to empower users to answer comfortably without skipping questions or misrepresenting their attitudes/beliefs/etc.
18	Long Term	High	Other - General Device Usability	Continue to test and check for varying screen sizes when updating the platform to ensure positive usability across devices
19	Quick Win	Low	Accuracy	Continue to use large font, bold font in different colour from the rest of the platform page for the 'Start Now' to call action to users where they can enter survey
20	Long term	Low	General	Continue to monitor response rates, break-offs and device type patterns. Where necessary, conduct contextual user research (e.g. via ethnographic user research methods) to understand real-world factors that may influence device usage and response behaviours
21	Quick Win	Low	B14A/B	<p>If keeping both questions/pages (14A/B), amend the wording and underline key information to aid comprehension, emphasising there are 2 questions on education, <b>e.g</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Question 1 of 2 on educational qualifications</b> [space break]</li> <li>• <b>'From this first list, which is the highest educational qualifications you have achieved?'</b></li> </ul>

# Recommendations Summary – Question Specific

No.	Severity	Need to re-test UX to validate	Q#	Recommendation
22	Quick Win	Low	A55/A56	Consider underlining key contextual differences across similar questions, avoiding emphasis on the same words
23	Quick Win	**High/ *Low	A8/A10	<p>**Consider reformatting question (see <a href="#">slide 32</a>). *If sticking with current format:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support error prevention by preventing alphabetical data entry (only allowing numerical data) to be entered; allow '05' and '5' to be entered, as they mean the same thing</li> <li>• On mobile, only allow numerical keyboard</li> </ul>
24	Quick Win	Low	B2	Retain the current error message for QB2 as this as shown to be effective
25	Quick Win	Low	B2	Consider adding a pop-up error box reminding people that they need to focus on members of household 15 and over
26	Quick Win	Low	B29	<p>Consider reformatting QB29, to prevent users from reading the word 'overtime' immediately:</p> <p><b><i>E.g. 'What were your <u>total 'basic' or contracted</u> hours each week in your main job?</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Please <u>exclude any paid and unpaid overtime.</u></i></b></p>
27	Quick Win	Low	B29	Ensure that digit input and check tick box are mutually exclusive with an error message indicating only one input allowed

# Recommendations Summary – Question Specific

No.	Severity	Need to re-test UX to validate	Q#	Recommendation
28	Quick Win	Low	D19	Consider rewording question to reduce amount of text to reduce cognitive load
29	Long Term	High	B14A/B	Consider combining lists into one question with shortened response options as this will help lessen the repetitive feeling of the survey
30	Long Term	High	A39/A50	Consider using mouseover tooltips to give users more information / definitions of terminology for questions like QA39 and QA50 ( <a href="#">see appendix for examples</a> )
31	Long term	High	D19	Allow users to rank certain items equally to capture nuance of ranking
32	Long term	High	B29	Consider adding a mouseover tooltips with information about meaning of 'No set 'basic' or 'contracted number of hours'
33	Long term	High	B4/B5 – B7	Consider <a href="#">maintaining consistency with other user entered data formats</a> on calendar inputs by allowing users to select their birth month and year via a date picker widget or drop-down list; However, <a href="#">typing the date is basic option for further away dates like birthdays</a> : If keeping this data entry style, consider allowing for text entry of month along month numbers

# THANK YOU

## IPSOS UK UX TEAM:

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# Ipsos Standards & Accreditations

Ipsos's standards & accreditations provide our clients with the peace of mind that they can always depend on us to deliver reliable, sustainable findings. Moreover, our focus on quality and continuous improvement means we have embedded a 'right first time' approach throughout our organisation.



**ISO 20252** – is the international specific standard for market, opinion and social research, including insights and data analytics. Ipsos in the UK was the first company in the world to gain this accreditation.



**MRS Company Partnership** – By being an MRS Company Partner, Ipsos UK endorse and support the core MRS brand values of professionalism, research excellence and business effectiveness, and commit to comply with the MRS Code of Conduct throughout the organisation & we were the first company to sign our organisation up to the requirements & self-regulation of the MRS Code; more than 350 companies have followed our lead.



**ISO 9001** – International general company standard with a focus on continual improvement through quality management systems. In 1994 we became one of the early adopters of the ISO 9001 business standard.



**ISO 27001** – International standard for information security designed to ensure the selection of adequate and proportionate security controls. Ipsos UK was the first research company in the UK to be awarded this in August 2008.



**The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) & the UK Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA)** – Ipsos UK is required to comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the UK Data Protection Act; it covers the processing of personal data and the protection of privacy.



**HMG Cyber Essentials** – A government backed and key deliverable of the UK's National Cyber Security Programme. Ipsos UK was assessment validated for certification in 2016. Cyber Essentials defines a set of controls which, when properly implemented, provide organisations with basic protection from the most prevalent forms of threat coming from the internet.



**Fair Data** – Ipsos UK is signed up as a 'Fair Data' Company by agreeing to adhere to twelve core principles. The principles support and complement other standards such as ISOs, and the requirements of Data Protection legislation.

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**This work was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the international quality standard for market research, ISO 20252.**

# APPENDICES

# 06

# Participant Grid

#	Age	Gender	Segment	User type*	Device	Location
01	31	Female	Non - Accessibility	Thoughtful Terry	Laptop : MacBook	Remote : Zoom
02	27	Male	Non - Accessibility	Thoughtful Terry	Phone : Android	Remote : Zoom
03	52	Female	Non - Accessibility	Thoughtful Terry	Laptop : Windows	Remote : Zoom
04	47	Male	Accessibility : Cognitive	Thoughtful Terry	Phone : iOS	In -Person : Lab
05	41	Female	Accessibility : Vision	Rapid Robin	Phone : iOS	In -Person : Lab
06	22	Female	Non - Accessibility	Thoughtful Terry	Phone : iOS	In -Person : Lab
07	25	Male	Non - Accessibility	Thoughtful Terry	Phone : iOS	In -Person : Lab
08	56	Female	Non - Accessibility	Rapid Robin	Phone : Android	Remote : Zoom
09	57	Male	Non - Accessibility	Rapid Robin	Phone : Android	Remote : Zoom
10	49	Male	Non - Accessibility	Thoughtful Terry	Laptop : MacBook	Remote : Zoom
11	23	Female	Non - Accessibility	Rapid Robin	Tablet : iOS	Remote : Zoom
12	47	Male	Non - Accessibility	Rapid Robin	Tablet : Android	Remote : Zoom
13	36	Female	Non - Accessibility	Thoughtful Terry	Laptop : Windows	Remote : Zoom

# Time needed to complete was impacted more by personality type than device used and even age

During fieldwork, users generally fell into two buckets of survey taking style. This variation in style impacted users' length of time to complete their survey. However, this user type did not follow patterns around age or tech-savviness but seemed to be related to personality type:



## Rapid Robin

Rapid Robins are survey-takers that are quick to make decisions on answers to what they are being asked, even tougher questions about their attitudes, behaviours and beliefs

- For example, Robins are fast to finish their survey by clicking through questions with thoughts processes like:



**EXAMPLE\*:** "[READING QUESTIONS] While it's important to me to be kind so I will just pick 'totally important'"



## Thoughtful Terry

Thoughtful Terrys take their time to answer questions asked of them. They skimmed less and spent more time per page. They are prone to taking time to decide

- For example, Terrys are slower to finish their survey, often not having enough time to finish during their interview as they ponder of how-to best answer questions particularly around attitudes, behaviours and beliefs:



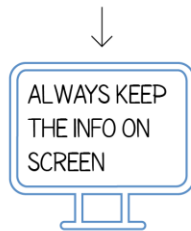
**EXAMPLE\*:** "[READING QUESTIONS] While it's important to me to be kind...but maybe I should I pick 'totally important' or 'probably important' hmmmmmm..."



# Mouseover Tooltips Examples

## Illustration for deciding what information to include in page text versus what to put in tooltip

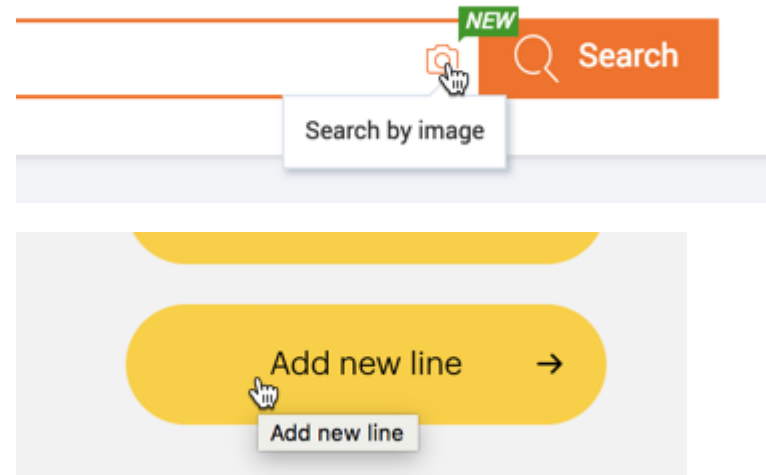
IS THIS INFORMATION NECESSARY FOR A USER TO COMPLETE A TASK?



NNGROUP.COM NN/g

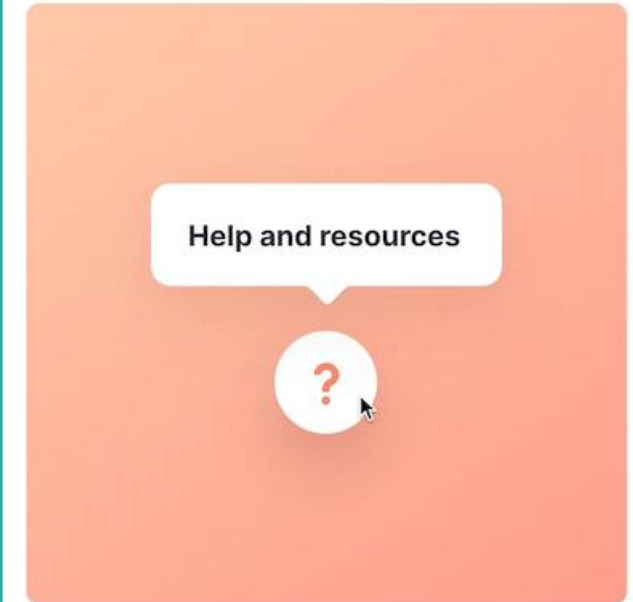
<https://www.nngroup.com/articles/tooltip-guidelines/>

## Examples of how it looks



<https://www.nngroup.com/articles/tooltip-guidelines/>

## Video of how mouseover explanations work



<https://www.protopie.io/blog/how-to-display-a-tooltip-on-mouse-hover>  
<https://www.appcues.com/blog/tooltips-mobile-apps>

# Potential Copy Edit For Welcome Page

## Original Version

Welcome to Living in Britain.

Thank you for taking part in the survey.

If you do not know the answer to a question or would prefer not to give your answer, you can leave it blank and move to the next question by clicking the **Next** button.

If you make a mistake or change your mind, you can click the **Previous** button and amend your answer.

If you cannot finish the survey in one go, you can come back later and it will start from the point you left. You will need to re-enter your access code each time you access the survey so please keep hold of this.

To start the survey, press the Next button.

Next

## Potential Copy update

Welcome to Living in Britain.

Thank you for taking part in the survey.

Here are some key things to keep in mind while taking this survey:

**Time:** The questionnaire should take most people around **50 minutes** to complete and participation is voluntary.

**Skip:** If you do not know the answer to a question or would prefer not to give your answer, you can leave it blank and move to the next question by clicking the **Next** button

**Saving progress:** if you cannot finish the survey in one go, you can come back later, and it will start from the point you left. You will need to re-enter your access code each time you access the survey so please keep hold of this.

To start survey, press Next Button.

Next

# Literature on the use of Progress Bars in survey design

- Galesic, M., & Bosnjak, M. (2009). Effects of progress indicators on completion rates in web surveys. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 46(1), 100-108. doi:10.1509/jmkr.46.1.100.
- Conrad, F. G., Couper, M. P., Tourangeau, R., & Peytchev, A. (2010). The impact of progress indicators on task completion. *Interacting with Computers*, 22(5), 417-427. doi:10.1016/j.intcom.2010.03.001.
- Yan, T., Conrad, F. G., Tourangeau, R., & Couper, M. P. (2011). Should I stay or should I go: The effects of progress feedback, promised task duration, and length of questionnaire on completing web surveys. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 23(2), 131-147. doi:10.1093/ijpor/edq046.
- Callegaro, M. Lozar Manfreda, K. & Vehovar, V. (2015). *Web Survey Methodology* (pp. 94 – 95). Sage, London, UK.