

BHPS UPDATE

Autumn 2006



The British Household Panel Survey

The British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) has interviewed members of the same sample of households every year since 1991. The main objective of the study is to further our understanding of the dynamics of social and economic change in Britain – across the whole age range of the population. The data supports analysis of both short-term processes – such as year-to-year changes in people's experience of poverty – and longer-term life course mobility. It also places individual change within the context of the household.

The BHPS had an original sample size in 1991 of 5,500 households, covering England, Scotland and Wales. Additional samples in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have been available in recent years. The total sample size is now around 9,000 households across the UK, providing annual interviews with some 15,000 individuals.

The core questionnaire covers a broad range of social science and policy interests and supports interdisciplinary research in many subject areas. The data are available from the UK Data Archive at the University of Essex. *BHPS Update* is mainly aimed at researchers who analyse the data, or who are interested in doing so.

The survey is designed, managed and distributed by the *ESRC UK Longitudinal Studies Centre (ULSC)* one of the component parts of the *Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER)* at the University of Essex.

Headlines

Methodology of longitudinal surveys conference (MOLS)

Over 300 scholars and research professionals gathered at the University of Essex on 12-14 July 2006 for the Methodology of Longitudinal Surveys conference. The conference focused on the design, implementation and analysis of longitudinal surveys and an opportunity to meet researchers from a range of fields and organisations who are responsible for the design, implementation and evaluation of such surveys. Topics discussed included: sampling and sample rotation; sample management; the use of dependent interviewing; methods of minimising sample attrition; assessments of non-response bias; imputation and other methods for dealing with item missing data; modal variation across waves; incentives; amongst other items.

An edited monograph book of selected papers from the conference will be published by John Wiley and Sons in their Survey Methodology series in 2007. The papers can be found on the MOLS conference scientific programme web-page:

<http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ulsc/mols2006/programme/papers.php>.

Additionally, authors of contributed papers to the conference have been invited to submit their papers to the *Journal of Official Statistics* for possible inclusion in a special issue.

BHPS research conference 2007

The next BHPS Research Conference is scheduled for the summer of 2007. Papers will be invited on all aspects of BHPS-based research and from any discipline, including economics, sociology, political science, psychology, and survey methodology. The conference provides an opportunity for BHPS users to exchange ideas and explore new ways of using the data. The conference will take place in Colchester in the UK and the exact dates and location are currently being finalised. A call for papers will be issued in November 2006. Full details will be available from the ISER web-site <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk> soon.

Plans for the UK longitudinal household study (UKLHS)

Recently, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) concluded that a household panel survey with a substantially larger sample size than the current BHPS would be beneficial for a range of analytical uses. The ESRC gained funding for the new survey from the Office of Science and Innovation and has commissioned four focussed studies as part of the development work for the UKLHS. ULSC researchers have prepared two

BHPS UPDATE *online*

BHPS UPDATE provides a guide to information about the BHPS, most of which is available on the Web. The easiest way to access this information is to go to www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ulsc/bhps/update and connect to the online PDF version of BHPS UPDATE. It is laid out identically to this paper version. Then just click on the links you want to follow. Why not bookmark BHPS UPDATE for easy reference?

of these consultation documents, the first on the thematic coverage and design options for a new, expanded household panel survey, and the second on sample design and data collection strategies. The two remaining reports focus on (a) options for collecting additional health measures and biomarkers from sample members and (b) options for incorporating the Longitudinal Study of Ethnic Minorities as part of the UKLHS. Following consultation with the user community the ESRC anticipates that it will begin to commission the study in late 2006. For further information see the ESRC website at

<http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/opportunities/forthcoming%5Fopportunities/>

BHPS data news

Wave 14

The wave 14 data have been released to the Data Archive. Analytic weights for youth respondents aged 11-15 years on the NYOUTH record were not deposited with the wave 14 data in the Data Archive in error. Please contact John Brice bricj@essex.ac.uk if you require these weights.

Local authority district codes (the variable wLADISTC) were not released with the wave 14 data and have been removed from all waves of data with this release. This is due to concerns over potential disclosure risk. Special access licence arrangements are being put in place with the Data Archive but are not yet finalised. In the meantime, if you require this variable for your analysis please contact Heather Laurie laurh@essex.ac.uk

Please note there was an error in the wave 14 (N) release for some of the wave 12 (L) income variables due to a problem with one of the imputation routines. The error affects some derived variables on the LINDRESP and LHHRESP records. The change makes a large difference to LFIYRL and LFIYR, LFIHHYL and LFIHHYR, and smaller differences to LPAYNU, LPAYGTY, LPAYNTY. If you require the corrected version of these variables please contact John Brice bricj@essex.ac.uk

Wave 15

Data cleaning and the user database preparation is now firmly underway with an estimated early Spring 2007 release date. Wave 15 parallels waves 5 and 10 in that it collects detailed information about household and personal wealth, assets and debt.

The wave 15 questionnaires are available at <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ulsc/bhps/doc>

Wave 16

Fieldwork for wave 16 commenced 1 September 2006. Wave 16 parallels wave 11 in asking about themes such as ageing, retirement, family support, health, and quality of life.

Wave 16 sees the introduction of dependent interviewing (DI). DI uses data gathered at prior waves to phrase questions and route respondents through the current wave's instrument.

Current Employment – Respondents are presented with their verbatim job title and description, employer, and industry description as reported at the previous interview and asked if these are still accurate for their circumstances. Additionally, last year's employment/self-employment status, managerial duties, job sector and number of workplace employees are also fed-back to respondents for confirmation.

Income Check – Approximately 10 percent of employed respondents report a significantly large drop or increase in their income over the prior year's reported income. Such respondents are asked to check that the new reported incomes are correct; and if so, they are asked to explain the difference.

Employment History – DI allows us to gather employment histories chronologically rather than reverse-chronologically. Respondents confirm their employment activity at the date of their last interview and provide information about any spells of employment or non-employment in chronological order until the current date. Respondents in the same status continuously since the prior interview are not asked the annual employment history.

Income Sources – We remind respondents of any income source they previously reported but did not mention at wave 16 and ask whether they are still receiving income from the given source. If so, we gather information about that source.

Private Personal Pensions – Respondents often do not remember the year they start a private personal pension to which they routinely make contributions. If the respondent indicates that they have contributed to a PPP, we remind them of the year they previously reported this and ask if their current contribution was to the same PPP.

Given these innovations in formulating survey questions, we will, as far as possible provide users with the same variables as in prior releases. We will also release any new variables occasioned by the introduction of DI.

Additional BHPS data records

Available from the UK Data Archive are several auxiliary data files created from the standard released records. While full details of these supplementary files are available from the Data Archive at <http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/findingData/bhpsTitles.asp>, a brief description of these files is included here.

Derived Current and Annual Net Household Income Variables, 1991-2003

This dataset contains a set of derived variables to accompany BHPS Waves 1-12. The variables, available for each wave, are of three types: estimates of (1) current household net income and (2) annual household net income and some of their components, together with (3) variables which classify persons according to family type and economic status of the family to which they belong. An updated version with data to 2004 (Wave 14) will be available shortly. These variables are designed to be consistent with the Department of Work and Pensions 'Households Below Average Income' (HBAI) series.

BHPS Combined Work-Life History Data, 1990-2002

This file is recommended to be used in conjunction with the main BHPS data. The directly derived files for the Combined Work-Life History are: panel-derived employment status and occupational histories; processed retrospective job history; processed retrospective employment history; extended job history; and extended employment status history.

BHPS Teaching/Sampler Data Sets, 1991-2002

Two BHPS teaching/sampler datasets are available – covering “Work, Family and Health” and “Social and Political Attitudes”. Eleven waves of data for wave one respondents are included, selecting broadly the same variables at each wave. The data sets contain some (fixed) variables, a few variables appearing intermittently, and some introduced later in the panel. The datasets also contain both original and derived variables. The data are in rectangular format to make them more accessible to inexperienced users, thus users need not undertake record/file merges in order to analyse the data longitudinally.

Guide to constructing consistent work life histories

Complementing the BHPS Work-Life History files available through the UK Data Archive, described above, David Maré discusses some of the practical and conceptual challenges in deriving consistent work histories from the BHPS data in a new ISER Working Paper (No. 2006-39). It is intended to assist BHPS users to make a well-informed judgement about strengths and weaknesses of the Data Archive files for any specific form of analysis and provides guidance for enthusiastic users who wish to derive their own versions. The paper can be downloaded from the ISER web-site at:

<http://iser.essex.ac.uk/pubs/workpaps/pdf/2006-39.pdf>:

Maré, David C (August 2006) ‘Constructing Consistent Work-life Histories: A guide for users of the British Household Panel Survey’, ISER Working Paper 2006-39. Colchester: University of Essex.

Consolidated marital, cohabitation and fertility histories

We are currently in the process of generating a consolidated marital, cohabitation and fertility file including the retrospective lifetime histories and subsequent panel data. We expect to release this file shortly. Please look out for details on the BHPS data documentation web-pages:

<http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ulsc/bhps/>

BHPS training and user support

Courses

ULSC runs regular short courses on using BHPS data. Please watch the ULSC web-site for details of upcoming courses:

<http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ulsc/bhps/courses/>

Survey link scheme

The Survey Link Scheme, supported by the ESRC Training and Development Board, provides anyone interested in learning more about specific surveys, including the BHPS, to attend a one-day overview lecture as well as have an opportunity to observe interviewing in-field. Further details of the programme can be found at the Survey Link Scheme web-site: <http://qb.soc.surrey.ac.uk/sls.htm>.

ULSC methodology programme

The UK Longitudinal Studies Centre (ULSC) is the division of ISER responsible for the design, management and distribution of the BHPS. It also undertakes a programme of methodological research relevant to panel surveys.

Dependent interviewing framework

In a paper by Annette Jäckle, a framework for DI is used to evaluate the effects of different designs in the ‘Improving Survey Measurement of Income and Employment’ study. She clarifies the causes of longitudinal inconsistencies in repeated panel surveys (seam effects) and discusses the extent to which DI can reduce these. The paper can be downloaded from <http://iser.essex.ac.uk/pubs/workpaps/pdf/2006-32.pdf>.

Jäckle, Annette (June 2006) ‘Dependent Interviewing: A Framework and Application to Current Research’, ISER Working Paper 2006-32. Colchester: University of Essex.

Mixed modes

ULSC researchers, in association with researchers from City University, have evaluated telephone and face-to-face interviewing on the European Social Survey. Annette Jäckle, Caroline Roberts and Peter Lynn establish that administration mode affects response distributions for certain survey items, but that overall relationships between variables are not affected by mode. Although telephone respondents were likely to provide accurate answers, they were more likely to give socially

BHPS User Group

The BHPS User Group is a liaison channel between ISER and the users of BHPS data. It provides a forum for the exchange of ideas, problems and solutions for data users and provides feedback to the survey designers and managers. Users also benefit from the opportunity to put their ideas for future data collection and from keeping in touch with developments on the survey. Interested researchers can join the User Group via the web at <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ulsc/bhps/group>

Tell us about your working papers and publications using BHPS data please! It is important we know how people are using the data and these are important performance indicators. If you use “BHPS” as a keyword and/or in the abstract on your papers, this will help us pick them up with automated searches. You can email judi@essex.ac.uk or bhps@essex.ac.uk with details of publications or other papers. Many thanks.

desirable responses than face-to-face respondents. This implies that the advantages of trust and rapport built in the face-to-face interviewing context outweigh any disadvantages from anonymity in phone interviews. The paper can be downloaded from <http://iser.essex.ac.uk/pubs/workpaps/pdf/2006-41.pdf>.
 Jäckle, Annette, Caroline Roberts and Peter Lynn (August 2006) 'Telephone versus Face-to-Face Interviewing: Mode Effects on Data Quality and Likely Causes. Report on Phase II of the ESS-Gallup Mixed Mode Methodology Project', ISER Working Paper 2006-41. Colchester: University of Essex.

BHPS publications

You can find publications using the BHPS in three main ways:

- The on-line documentation has a full list of all publications we are aware of in Vol A, Appendix 5. If you have a paper or publication which is not listed please send us the details. See <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ulsc/bhps/doc>
- You can search our specialised catalogue <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ulsc/bhps/pubs>
- Or you can see ISER Working Papers at <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/pubs>

The following are just a few recent publications using the BHPS in 2006:

Postal-Vinay, F., H. Turon (2006) 'Britain's public-private pay gap', *Research in Public Policy*, (2) Summer: 14-15.

Gardner, J., A. Oswald (2006) 'Do divorcing couples become happier by breaking up?', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 169(2): 319-336.

Mangalore, R (2006) 'Income, health and health care utilization in the UK', *Applied Economics*, 38(6): 605-617.

Kan, M-Y, A. Heath (2006) 'The political values and choices of husbands and wives', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 68(1): 70-86.

Smith, S. (2006) 'The retirement-consumption puzzle and involuntary early retirement: evidence from the British Household Panel Survey', *Economic Journal*, 116(510): 130-148.

Weich, S., L. Twigg, G. Lewis (2006) 'Rural/non-rural differences in rates of common mental disorders in Britain', *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 188: 51-57.

People

If you want to contact someone with a particular area of expertise within ISER but don't know who is best placed to help you, try looking at <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/search/expertise.php>

What do you think of this BHPS UPDATE?

Any comments on the content or the presentation? Do you like the combination of hard copy sent by post and pdf version online? Would you prefer us to send it by e-mail?

E-mail your comments and suggestions to Noah Uhrig at scnuhrig@essex.ac.uk

Questions? Comments? Project or paper to share?

Please do let us know if you are working on a project using BHPS data, are using the data for teaching, or have given a conference paper or published using the data. And if you have comments about any aspect of the BHPS please get in touch and give us your feedback.

If you have specific questions about using the BHPS data or data problems to report please feel free to contact us.

You can email John Brice at bricj@essex.ac.uk and he will be happy to help. Alternatively contact us at:

British Household Panel Survey (BHPS)
 Institute for Social and Economic Research
 University of Essex
 Colchester
 Essex CO4 3SQ
 UK

Tel: +44 (0)1206 873543
 Fax: +44 (0)1206 873151
 Email: bhps@essex.ac.uk