

BHPS UPDATE

Autumn 2007



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. This 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 Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) at the University of Essex. It is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

Headlines

UKHLS underway

As announced in the last BHPS Update, ISER have been awarded the contract to carry out the UK Household Longitudinal Survey (UKHLS). Since that announcement work has been progressing on the survey. The consultation for Wave 1 started mid-May, leading up to a Consultation Launch meeting at the Royal Statistical Society on June 19th. This meeting was very well attended with around one hundred academics, policy-makers and social campaigners from the UK and Europe who listened to, challenged and extended the existing proposals.

Professor Nick Buck, the Principal Investigator of the UKHLS, opened the day with an overview of the objectives and ambitions of UKHLS, as well as its constraints, and was followed by presentations on the overarching ethnicity strand and the ten, topic-specific areas into which development of UKHLS content was divided. These ten strands, plus the ethnicity strand, were then taken forward by conveners from ISER, the universities of Warwick and Cambridge and the Institute of Education.

Topic-specific consultation meetings:

<http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ukhls/consult1/meetings/>

Plans for the topic content to be covered at Wave 1, and an outline of the first five years of the survey, have been circulated to those who have registered their interest in the survey and are available on the website:

<http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ukhls/consult1/topic-content-proposals/>

On January 10th 2008 a Consultative Conference will take place at the University of Essex. This is a free one-day conference which will:

- provide an update on progress with the UKHLS and the design decisions made for the survey,
- provide details of the content for wave 1 of the study arising from the consultation process to date and
- provide an opportunity to discuss plans for the content of the study over waves 2 and beyond.

The consultation process will be on-going, with advice and suggestions for content of future waves being sought by the UKHLS team. For more details about the January conference, and to register, please see:

<http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ukhls/conference/>

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 these links is to connect to the online PDF version of the UPDATE at www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ulsc/bhps/update/. It is laid out identically to this paper version. Then just click on the links you want to follow. Why not bookmark the BHPS UPDATE for easy reference?

BHPS data news

Wave 15 was deposited with the UK Data Archive this Spring, and has so far been downloaded 255 times, over half of these downloads by new users of the BHPS. Wave 16, which asked about themes such as ageing, retirement, family support, health and quality of life, is being cleaned and is on schedule for release in Spring 2008.

Wave 17

Wave 17 is now in the field, most of the fieldwork is expected to have been completed by Christmas. Wave 17 continues the use of dependent interviewing (DI) which was introduced at Wave 16. Feedback from respondents and interviewers suggested that the use of DI was popular, made the survey flow more naturally and made the interview less of a burden for the respondent to answer and easier for the interviewer to administer. The quality of the data collected by dependent interviewing is being assessed and analysed at ISER by Annette Jäckle.

Wave 17 includes the core longitudinal element of the BHPS, and also a range of other topic areas which were last asked at Wave 12 (2002). Respondents are asked about their worry of being a victim of crime, how safe they feel walking in their area after dark and the state of their neighbourhood with respect to crime and anti-social behaviour. Computer use is also explored with questions on what respondents use computers for and how often they are used at home. Wave 17 also includes questions asked of 16-20 year olds about the aspects of jobs which are most important to them (such as high income, job security, making a contribution to society) and how likely they think it is for various events to happen in their life (such as being self-employed, working abroad, marrying or becoming long-term unemployed). The focus on the future is continued as respondents are asked whether they are planning to have any (more) children in the future and, if so, how many. Parents are asked questions about schooling and their aspirations for their children in the household, any contact their children may have with a non-resident parent and any contact that they themselves have with any children they have not living with them. Respondents in Scotland and Wales are also asked about the 2007 elections, attitudes to devolution and the trust they have in the UK Parliament.

Wave 18

Wave 18 will go into the field in September 2008. This will be the last wave of data which are collected under the "BHPS" banner. From October 2009 the BHPS sample will be integrated into the UK Household Longitudinal Survey (UKHLS). In addition to the core longitudinal components, Wave 18 of the BHPS will contain questions which were last carried at Wave 13 (2003). These questions include asking about the expectations people have for relationships and marriage in the future. Views on the advantages and disadvantages of cohabiting will also be asked. Questions will also be asked about how the respondent feels about their neighbourhood; trust in the people in their area, the facilities and services in the local area, what the neighbourhood is like as a place to

bring up children and how close they feel they belong to, and interact with, the neighbourhood.

Data available for download at the UK Data Archive:

<http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/>.

Information on how to acquire the data is also available from the ISER web-site at:

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

The questionnaires are all available at:

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

There is also a detailed user documentation available on the BHPS web-site:

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

BHPS training and user support

ISER runs regular short courses on using BHPS data. These have a practical orientation and are designed to introduce users to both data manipulation and statistical analysis techniques. Separate courses are run using both SPSS and STATA statistical software. For further information, please see

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

Survey link scheme

The Survey Link Scheme, supported by the ESRC Training and Development Board, exists to give academic social scientists the opportunity to acquaint themselves with professional social survey research. The scheme provides an opportunity to anyone interested in learning more about specific studies, including the BHPS, to attend a one-day overview lecture as well as 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>.

The Hilary Doughty Research Library

The Hilary Doughty Research Library, formerly known as the Research Resources Unit (RRU) is a library collection that includes grey literature and other publications with a focus on longitudinal research, analysis and methodology. The collection is searchable through the web at

<http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/reslib/>

A new search facility specifically for all publications using the BHPS (non-ISER as well as ISER) has recently been added. To search for BHPS publications go to http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/reslib/bhps_cat.php

Keeping Track. A guide to longitudinal resources Keeping Track is a database of all longitudinal datasets in the UK and around the world. This provides an up-to-date guide to major longitudinal sources of data, allowing users to see what kinds of longitudinal data are available and to locate information about studies which may provide data useful to their research interests. Keeping Track can be accessed at <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ulsc/keeptrack>

ULSC methodology programme

The UK Longitudinal Studies Centre (ULSC) is the division of ISER responsible for the design, management and distribution of the BHPS and the UKHLS. It also undertakes a programme of methodological research. More information about the work carried out by ULSC researchers is available at:

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

Panel survey methods workshop

Annette Jäckle, Peter Lynn, Emanuela Sala (ISER) and Mick Couper (Michigan) are organising a workshop to foster discussion and initiate methodological research specific to the collection of panel survey data. This will take place at the University of Essex in Colchester on the 14th and 15th of July, 2008. The organising committee are inviting submissions for papers which address important methodological topics that are unique to the design and implementation of panel surveys. For more information, please see

<http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ulsc/methods/psmw2008/>

UKHLS innovation panel

One component of the UK Household Longitudinal Survey is an Innovation Panel. This is a random survey of 1,500 households. The Innovation Panel will be used to explore innovative ways of asking questions, collecting measurements and administering the survey. The first wave of the Innovation Panel will go into the field in January 2008, one year ahead of the main sample. For most of the interview, the questionnaire will be the same for everyone. However, some questions will be asked in different ways of different randomly-selected groups of respondents. This will be used to test the effect of different question wording, response categories or way of asking the question on the response given.

It is expected that some – if not most – of the sample members at Wave 2 of the UKHLS will be interviewed over the telephone. An important role of the Innovation Panel is to assess alternative ways of introducing telephone interviewing and the effects on outcomes such as response rate and costs. Also, some procedures used when interviewing a respondent in person cannot be used in a telephone interview. One task of the Innovation Panel is to test the difference in asking questions face-to-face with a visual cue, such as a showcard, compared to no visual cue.

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>

BHPS in the news

Housework for boys *The Sunday Times*, 8 Jul 2007. Refers to Pia Schober, *Inequality or total workload? How domestic work matters to childbearing among British dual earner couples*

It's a live-in thing *Telegraph.co.uk*, 7 Jul 2007.

Marriage is back in fashion with three out of four saying they'll do it – one day by Steve Doughty. *Dailymail.co.uk*, 6 Jul 2007. Refers to; Ernestina Coast, *Currently cohabiting: relationship attitudes, intentions and behaviour*

A sound case for taxing top pay by Tom Clark. *Guardian Unlimited*, 26 Sep 2007. Refers to; Ray Pahl, David Rose, Liz Spencer, *Inequality and quiescence: a continuing conundrum*

Switching to self-employment *The Times*, 26 Jul 2007. Refers to; Andrew Henley, *Switching costs and occupational transition into self-employment: a duration modelling approach*

Warning on effect of house prices by Nicholas Timmins, *FT.com*, 17 Sep 2007. Refers to; Richard Boreham, James Lloyd, *Asset accumulation across the life course*

Women are still the biggest losers from divorce by Steve Doughty, *Daily Mail*, 6 Jul 2007. Refers to Mieke Jansen, *Repartnering and (re-)employment: strategies to cope with the economic consequences of partnership dissolution*

Women 'form more lasting friendships than men' by Nigel Bunyan, *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 Mar 2007. Refers to; Gindo Tampubolon, Mike Savage, *The social structuring of closest friendships: a creative assembly?*

BHPS publications

The BHPS now has well over 3,000 registered users with 500 joining since October 2006. So far in 2007 we have recorded approximately 165 new publications and papers. 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/reslib/bhps_cat.php
- Or you can see ISER Working Papers at <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/pubs>

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 with details of publications or other papers. Many thanks.

Recent publications

The following are just a few recent publications using the BHPS since Spring 2007.

Ballas, Dimitris, Dorling, Danny (2007) 'Measuring the impact of major life events upon happiness', *International Journal Of Epidemiology*

Boheim, Rene, Taylor, Mark P. (2007) 'From the dark end of the street to the bright side of the road? The wage returns to migration in Britain', *Labour Economics*, 14 (1):99-117.

Brewer, Mike, Browne, James, Emmerson, Carl, Goodman, Alissa, Muriel, Alastair, Tetlow, Gemma (2007) 'Pensioner poverty over the next decade: what role for tax and benefit reform?', London: Institute for Fiscal Studies.

Campbell, John Y., Cocco, Joao, F (2007) 'How do house prices affect consumption? Evidence from micro data', *Journal Of Monetary Economics*, 54 (3):591-621.

Chan, Tak Wing, Goldthorpe, John H. (2007) 'Social status and newspaper readership', *American Journal Of Sociology*, 112 (4):1095-1134.

Gardner, Jonathan, Oswald, Andrew J. (2007) 'Money and mental wellbeing: a longitudinal study of medium-sized lottery wins', *Journal Of Health Economics*, 26 (1):49-60.

Heitmueller, Axel, Inglis, Kirsty (2007) 'The earnings of informal carers: wage differentials and opportunity costs', *Journal Of Health Economics*, 26 (4):821-841.

Johnston, Ron, Jones, Kelvyn, Propper, Carol, Burgess, Simon (2007) 'Region, local context, and voting at the 1997 General Election in England', *American Journal Of Political Science*, 51 (3):640-654.

Jones, Richard J., Sloane, Peter J. (2007) 'Low pay, higher pay and job satisfaction in Wales', *Spatial Economic Analysis*, 2 (2):197-214.

Popham, Frank, Mitchell, Richard (2007) 'Self-rated life expectancy and lifetime socio-economic position: cross-sectional analysis of the British Household Panel Survey', *International Journal Of Epidemiology*, 36 (1):58-65.

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 Jon Burton at jburton@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:

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