

# BHPS UPDATE

Spring 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

Welcome!

This BHPS UPDATE is new! Our aim is to provide data users with information about the data together with some news on events, recent papers, training and other items. We intend to produce two updates a year – one shortly after the release of data in the spring and one after data collection commences in the autumn. We hope you find it a useful summary of recent events and future developments for the BHPS.

### The BHPS scientific steering committee

The BHPS has a newly established Scientific Steering Committee with a remit to oversee the scientific development of the BHPS. The Committee is comprised of a mix of academic and government researchers and is chaired by Robert Walker. See <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ulsc/bhps/ssc> for details of the work of the committee.

### ESRC review of panels and cohorts

In 2005 the ESRC commissioned a review of panel and cohort surveys for the UK to take a forward look at research needs and a strategic view of what longitudinal data sources were required by the user community. Most significantly, the review concluded that a panel survey with a substantially larger sample size than the current BHPS would be beneficial for a range of analysis uses, something which would be good news for data users. The ESRC is currently discussing funding the new survey, which would run alongside the BHPS. We will keep you informed of developments and will be consulting BHPS users once the ESRC plans are further advanced.

Details of the ESRC review project and the report can be found at <http://www.longviewuk.com> and a paper by members of the Scientific Steering Committee on *The Long Term Value of the BHPS* is at <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ulsc/bhps/ssc/docs.php>

### Methodology of longitudinal surveys conference 12-14 July 2006 at the University of Essex

The Methodology of Longitudinal Surveys conference, known as MOLS, will bring together scholars and research professionals from around the world who are involved in the design, implementation and analysis of longitudinal surveys. The aim is to share methodological research findings and to discuss the state of the art in carrying out longitudinal surveys.

More information is available from the MOLS web-site at <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ulsc/mols2006>

## 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](http://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?

## BHPS data news

### Wave 14

The data for wave 14 have been deposited in the UK Data Archive. Please contact them for details of how to access the data at <http://www.data-archive.ac.uk>, or go to <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ulsc/bhps/acquiring>

The questionnaire content for wave 14 parallels wave 9, with the variable questions being primarily health related. In addition to core questions about overall health and physical ailments, the questionnaire asks:

- whether respondents have obtained treatment for any stated health conditions.
- the SF36 battery of health items, a multi-purpose, short form health survey with only 36 questions. It yields an 8-scale profile of functional health and well-being scores as well as psychometrically-based physical and mental health summary measures and a preference-based health utility index.
- self-reported measures of respondent height and weight to obtain a Body Mass Index score. This was also collected on the Youth Questionnaire for 11-15 year olds. This is the first time height and weight have been collected on the BHPS and the current plan is to collect these measures at two year intervals.
- specific questions about work stress.

Other changes at wave 14 include:

- questions on aspects of newspaper readership.
- young people aged 11 to 15 in Northern Ireland completed the Youth Questionnaire for the first time.

The wave 14 questionnaires are available at <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ulsc/bhps/doc>

### Incentive experiment

A randomised experiment on increasing the respondent incentive from £7 to £10 per individual interview was carried out at wave 14 on the original BHPS sample only. Preliminary analysis shows that the higher incentive group had an increased re-interview response rate of around 3%, that the increased incentive was effective in encouraging previous non-responders to take part, and that the effect of the increased incentive on response varied by demographic characteristics. A paper reporting the results of the experiment will be presented at the MOLS conference in July and a working paper is forthcoming.

### Wave 15

Fieldwork for wave 15 is now complete and data processing, including cleaning and release preparation are well underway. Wave 15 parallels waves 5 and 10 and collects detailed information about household and personal wealth, assets and debt. Wave 15 also includes the 'Big 5' personality trait measures in the self-completion questionnaire. These were from the winning proposal for the Free One Minute competition in 2005. See <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ulsc/bhps>

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

The wave 15 data will be released to the Data Archive in spring 2007.

### Wave 16

Questionnaire design is underway for wave 16. It will parallel wave 11 in asking about themes such as ageing, retirement, family support, health, and quality of life. Fieldwork will commence in September 2006.

We will be introducing dependent interviewing in some sections of the questionnaire at wave 16. Dependent interviewing is a method of data collection particular to panel or longitudinal studies in which respondents are reminded of previous answers and asked whether changes have occurred. Research into this method of data collection suggests, in part, that data quality is improved by reducing the likelihood of recall or coding errors creating spurious change at the boundary between waves. For details of methodological work carried out to date see <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ulsc/methods/research/ismie>

We have piloted the wave 16 questionnaire using dependent interviewing in the current employment, annual employment history, and unearned income sources sections and are now checking the pilot data to ensure the CAPI script is working correctly.

## Methodology programme

The methodology programme at ISER is continuing to expand and undertakes a range of research relevant to panel surveys and longitudinal data collection.

### BHPS quality profile

The Quality Profile contains information on all aspects of the design and implementation of the BHPS and on sources of survey error and has been updated to cover waves 1-13. Our assessment of BHPS data quality is now available for waves 1 through 13 from the ULSC web-site at <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ulsc/bhps/quality-profiles>

### Scoping study for future methodological research

The ULSC has carried out a scoping study reviewing methodological research for longitudinal studies with the aim of identifying important gaps in our knowledge of issues affecting the design and implementation of longitudinal surveys. The study is intended to inform future agendas for methodological research as well as providing a summary of current knowledge. The issues addressed relate to sample design, missing data as a result of unit and item non-response and measurement error. The study has been published as an ISER Working Paper and we would welcome comments from users on the areas you consider priorities for further work.

Peter Lynn, Nick Buck, Jonathan Burton, Annette Jäckle, Heather Laurie (December 2005) *A Review of Methodological Research Pertinent to Longitudinal Survey Design and Data Collection*. ISER Working Paper, 2005-29 Colchester: University of Essex.  
<http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/pubs/workpaps/pdf/2005-29.pdf>

## BHPS training and user support

### BHPS FAQs

We have added a Frequently Asked Questions section to our website. This includes some key tips on how to find what you need to know if you are a new user. If you have any suggestions for other FAQs we should include please let us know. The FAQs are at

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

### Upcoming courses

11 July 2006, University of Essex – Immediately prior to the MOLS conference, two one day short courses will take place which are open to conference participants for a small fee. These are: *Handling incomplete data in longitudinal surveys*, presented by Joop Hox and Edith De Leeuw and *Multilevel modelling for longitudinal survey data* presented by Sophia Rabe-Hesketh and Anders Skrondal.

See <http://iser.essex.ac.uk/ulsc/mols2006/programme/courses> for further information on how to book for either of these courses.

8 July-18 August 2006 – 39th Essex Summer School in Social Science Data Analysis and Collection. The School consists of three two-week sessions. Each session offers a variety of courses. Courses run for either two weeks, one week, or over a weekend. Courses consist of at least one lecture and a practical session daily. Further information can be found on the Essex Summer School web-site at

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/methods>

Autumn 2006 – Introduction to the BHPS using SPSS and Stata. These two courses are designed for new users and those who have only made a limited use of the data previously. The focus will be on data re-organisation techniques which facilitate different types of cross-sectional and longitudinal research. A basic knowledge of SPSS or Stata is assumed. Materials for the SPSS and Stata courses can be downloaded from the BHPS web-site at

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

The dates for these courses will be announced on the BHPS website. The Stata course was last run on 4-5 May 2006 and

was fully subscribed. There is already a waiting list for the autumn course so if you are interested please let us have your details as soon as the dates are announced. The courses are free and places are allocated on a first come basis.

### The Hilary Doughty Research Resources Unit (RRU)

The Hilary Doughty Research Resources Unit, known as the 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/rru>

A new search facility specifically for all publications using the BHPS (non-ISER as well as ISER) has recently been added. We still have publications to add but we hope it provides a valuable tool for researchers trying to find out what has been published using the BHPS in their field. To search for BHPS publications go to

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

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>

## Conferences and seminars

### ESRC Social Science Week 2006

As part of our contribution to the ESRC Social Science Week, 2006, ISER hosted a seminar designed to illustrate the value of a long-running panel such as the BHPS called *Taking the Long View: Understanding Social and Economic Change using the British Household Panel Survey*. The seminar took place at the British Academy in London on 13 March 2006. The guest speaker was Bob Schoeni from the University of Michigan who spoke on the scientific contribution of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics after 40 years.

Presentations are available for download at

<http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ssw/2006>

## 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](mailto:judi@essex.ac.uk) or [bhps@essex.ac.uk](mailto:bhps@essex.ac.uk) with details of publications or other papers. Many thanks.

## BHPS publications

The BHPS now has over 2000 registered users and in 2005 we recorded 148 new publications and papers using BHPS data, including 67 journal articles. 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 which is not listed please send us the details. See <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ulsc/bhps/doc/vola>
- You can search our specialised catalogue at <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.

- Burchardt, T. (2005) 'Are one man's rags another man's riches? Identifying adaptive expectations using panel data', *Social Indicators Research*, 74 (1):57-102.
- Francesconi, M. (2005) 'An evaluation of the childhood family structure measures from the sixth wave of the British Household Panel Survey', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society Series A (Statistics in Society)*, 168 (3):539-566.
- Propper, C., K. Jones, A. Bolster, S. Burgess, R. Johnston, R. Sarker (2005) 'Local neighbourhood and mental health: evidence from the UK', *Social Science and Medicine*, 61 (10):2065-2083.
- Thomas, C., M. Benzeval, S.A. Stansfeld (2005) 'Employment transitions and mental health: an analysis from the British Household Panel Survey', *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 59 (3):243-249.
- Voas, D., A. Crockett (2005) 'Religion in Britain: neither believing nor belonging', *Sociology*, 39 (1):11-28.
- Ermisch, J.F., Wright, Robert E. (ed.) (2005) *Changing Scotland: evidence from the British Household Panel Survey*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Headey, Bruce, and Wooden, Mark (2005), 'The importance of wealth for subjective well-being', *Journal of Financial Transformation*, vol.15, December pp. 59-67.

## People

Stephen Jenkins took over as the new Director of ISER in April 2006. Nick Buck continues as Director of the ULSC, and Steve Pudney is Director of the Research Centre on Micro-social Change (MiSoC).

Jonathan Gershuny, who had been Director of ISER since 1994, is leaving to take up the Chair of Sociology at the University of Oxford.

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 presentation? Do you like the combination of hard copy sent by post and pdf version online? Would you prefer it to just be online?

E-mail your comments and suggestions to Noah Uhrig at [scnuhrig@essex.ac.uk](mailto: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](mailto:bricj@essex.ac.uk) and he will be happy to help. Alternatively contact us at:

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