

Institute for Social and Economic Research



Taking the long view: the ISER Report 2000/1

Contents

1. Director's introduction
3. ISER Centres
4. Focus on family
6. Focus on income dynamics
7. A birthday party
8. Focus on work and unemployment
10. Focus on Europe
12. UK longitudinal surveys
14. Further information
15. ISER staff groups
16. Research specialisms

Director's introduction

Survey evidence that provides a 'snapshot' picture of the current state of a population is commonplace. But many of the most pressing questions facing policy-makers and academic researchers concern changes in states, or sequences of successive states, or durations in particular states. What are the defining characteristics of people who experience repeated spells of unemployment? Does previous experience of unemployment increase the length of a current spell? What is the impact of both parents working on children's subsequent development? Finding answers to questions like these requires evidence of a different sort: data describing the same people repeatedly at successive points in their lives.

The Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) specialises in the production and analysis of these complex 'longitudinal' data sets, ranging from panel studies of general samples of the population to cohort studies following groups of people within specific age ranges. ISER is a department of the University of Essex and is core-funded by the University and the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). It contains two ESRC Centres, a number of large and small projects funded by the UK government, other national governments and the European Union (EU), foundations and a growing range of programmes funded by private industry.

'ISER research takes the long view. It focuses on the sociological, economic and demographic dimensions of individuals' and households' changing circumstances and behaviour over time'

As an interdisciplinary institute, we bring together experts in the statistical analysis of longitudinal data, in survey management and in the data management techniques necessary to study individuals over extended periods of time. ISER's staff of 52 (including 30 researchers, of whom ten are University Professors working full-time in the Institute) focus on the sociological, economic and demographic dimensions of individuals' and households' changing circumstances and behaviour.

In 1989, the ESRC set up the Research Centre for Micro-social Change (MISOC), at the University of Essex, with responsibilities for designing, collecting and analysing the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS, see pages 12-13). During its first ten years, the new Centre built up a strong reputation as one of the leading international institutions in a research area that is itself at the leading edge of modern empirical social science. The report of the ESRC's formal review at the end of this first funding period described the Centre as 'a world class research resource', and proposed that its work should continue in an enhanced form. The Institute was established as an umbrella organisation to cover the burgeoning activities of the original ESRC Centre.

ISER has recently won two national competitions for large scale ESRC funding. The originally named MISOC continues as a research centre now focussing on social policy issues. And our responsibility for the BHPS has been broadened to include overall responsibility for the ESRC's national strategy for the provision of longitudinal data (see page 12), in the new UK Centre for Longitudinal Studies (ULSC), which is also within ISER.

ISER researchers publish in the leading international journals, but our work extends naturally from the academic sphere into that of public policy. A number of UK government departments use our data and analysis in the development of new programmes. For example, our BHPS analysis features strongly in Treasury and Department of Social Security presentations of policies for the elimination of child poverty. And increasingly ISER's expertise in longitudinal studies is being used by commercial companies as, for example, in a programme funded at ISER by British Telecommunications plc (BT) to establish a special panel study to investigate the use of information technology in private households.

'ISER's expertise in longitudinal studies is increasingly used by UK government departments in the development of new programmes as well as by commercial companies'

The Institute is now entering its second decade (see 'A birthday party' on page 7). And it also necessarily enters a new phase of its development, with less emphasis on growth and more on consolidation. But we still have new horizons for our research. In particular, the emphasis on international comparative research - as, to take some particular examples, we start to take fuller advantage of ISER's role as the British contributor to the European Community Household Panel study, our participation in the 'Cross National Equivalent File' of panel studies (including studies from the US and Canada as well as the BHPS and the German Socio-economic Panel Study), and our contribution to the new European Harmonised Time-diary Study - will certainly begin to show some substantial results. Our recognition as a training site for the prestigious Marie Curie Awards, providing scholarships that allow PhD students from continental Europe to spend six-month periods working at ISER also contributes to our aim of internationalising our research. Our objective for the next decade is simple: to be recognised as the leading European institute specialising in longitudinal studies.



Jonathan Gershuny
Director

MISOC

The new **ESRC Research Centre on Micro-social Change** funded in 1999 for a five-year period, is, like the original Centre, mainly concerned with longitudinal data (and also uses evidence of longer-term change from cross-sectional data). The winning bid to the 1998 ESRC Centres competition was for a new programme of longitudinal analysis for social policy. It is founded on a central theme: the analysis of life chances. The programme takes a longitudinal perspective on people's welfare, wealth and well-being. The research covers income dynamics, employment security and mobility (and the influence of the distribution of unpaid work on these), and patterns of family and household formation and

dissolution. Other related topics include time-use and consumption, and the effects of locality and ethnicity.

MISOC's research activity has a mainly British focus, but there is also a growing body of comparative work on continental Europe and the US. We are currently engaged in a number of cross-national research collaborations, with funding from the European Union (three major research projects funded under the Fifth Framework programmes as well as an EU 'Major Research Infrastructure' facility -- see 'ECASS' below) and from North America.

ULSC

The **ESRC UK Longitudinal Studies Centre**, set up in October 1999 with a ten-year term (subject to review at five years), provides longitudinal data and data-related services to the wider academic and policy community.

This resource centre builds on ISER's experience in establishing the annual British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) as one of the main instruments for measuring social change in Britain. This requires an integrated operation from design through to fieldwork control, data cleaning and management, documentation and dissemination.

The ULSC has recently been given overall responsibility for managing the ESRC's investment in panel and cohort data, and for devising a national strategy for improving research resources in this area.

Other data collection and preparation activities include acting jointly with the Office for National Statistics as the National Data Unit for the European Community Household Panel. This study has followed a representative sample of household members and their descendants in most European Union countries annually since 1994. (A full version of this data set is available for on-site analysis by ISER members and their associates.)

In collaboration with BT, the Centre is collecting a time diary panel study of the evolution of computer and telecommunications use within households. It also maintains a cross-national harmonised time-use study covering 21 countries over the period 1960-99.

ULSC carries out methodological research on longitudinal data analysis, as well as providing international consultancy in setting up and running national panel studies.

ECASS

The **European Centre for Analysis in the Social Sciences** is a 'research hotel' facility, welcoming academic visitors carrying out non-proprietary research in the European Union or an associated state.

Designated by the EU as a 'Major Research Infrastructure', this interdisciplinary research centre has a programme that provides

fellowships and bursaries for study visits to the University of Essex campus for periods of two weeks to three months.

ISER also advertises competitions for funded senior visitors (for periods of one term to one year) on our web site: www.iser.essex.ac.uk/ecass

Focus on family

‘Family life is undergoing radical changes, notably an increase in cohabiting unions, delay in marriage and motherhood and a dramatically increasing proportion of births outside marriage’



Family life is undergoing radical changes. Analysis of new BHPS data by ISER researchers shows that:

Wedding bells usually follow ‘living in sin’

In the 1990s, seven out of ten couples in their first serious relationship cohabited before they tied the knot whereas in the 1970s, two-thirds went straight from dating to wedlock.

Most cohabitations are a postponement of marriage, rather than representing a widespread rejection of matrimony. Long-term cohabiting unions are rare. Three in five result in a wedding, while 35% dissolve within ten years. People live together for less than two years on average before either exchanging vows or splitting up.

Not only are people taking longer to partner up and move in together, but when that relationship dissolves, they are spending on average three years alone before moving in with someone else.

Rather than rush into wedlock, couples tend to wait until they are financially secure. This explains why marriage is more common among home-owners than tenants. Income rather than pregnancy determines whether a cohabiting couple legalise their union. The higher the partners’ earnings, the more likely it is that they will marry, whereas the presence of children reduces the odds. Higher earnings also reduce the risk that the cohabiting partnership will dissolve.

The dramatic shift to cohabiting unions as the mode of first partnership is primarily responsible for the major changes we are witnessing in family formation patterns: namely the delay in marriage and motherhood and the increase in the proportion of births outside marriage.

One in five young people will never marry

Analysis of data on marriage expectations suggests that 20% of today’s young people will never marry. A succession of cohabiting unions and partnerships in which the two people live in separate residences will replace marriage for a large minority.

Two-fifths of never married childless women aged under 35 who are neither cohabiting nor married are now in a relationship where they live separately from their partner and about 40% of these women do not plan to live together or get married to their non-resident partner.

Most childless couples who cohabit expect to wed each other at some stage, although the evidence suggests that some are likely to be disappointed. For example, while two-thirds of cohabiting childless couples (in which the woman was aged under 35 and never married) expect they will marry each other, at present only three-fifths of couples in their situation actually do wed.

Most of these couples did not perceive there to be any advantage in living together rather than being married, but of those who did regard cohabiting as advantageous, about one half regard the opportunity for a 'trial marriage' as a plus point, while another 30% cited 'no legal ties'.

'Life in a one-parent family is usually associated with disadvantageous outcomes when a child becomes a young adult, including higher risks of economic inactivity and psychological stress'

Even fewer perceived any disadvantages to living together: just 23% of never married men and 31% of never married women in a childless cohabiting union. The most commonly mentioned drawback is financial insecurity.

Nearly a quarter of children are born to couples living together, compared to 2% twenty years ago

The sharp rise in cohabitation in first partnerships has important implications for the types of families in which children grow up. Childbearing within cohabiting unions has become more common, with 22% of children being born into such unions in 1997, compared with 2% twenty years ago.

These fertile unions are about half as likely to be converted into marriage and more likely to dissolve eventually than childless unions, which themselves have high dissolution rates.

Analysis by ISER researchers suggests that 70% of children born within marriage will live their entire childhood (to their 16th birthday) with both natural parents. In contrast, only 36% of children born into a cohabiting union will live with both parents throughout their childhood. The higher risk of experiencing their parents' partnership break up for children born within cohabiting unions is a cause for concern because of the difficulties faced by parents and children when partnerships dissolve.

Children born outside a live-in partnership will spend, on average, 6.6 years with only one parent, while children born into a cohabiting union average 4.3 years with a single parent, compared with 1.7 years for children born within marriage. The rise in childbearing within cohabiting unions suggests that increasing numbers of British children will spend significant parts of their childhood in families with only one parent.

ISER research shows that experience of life in a one-parent family is usually associated with disadvantageous outcomes when the child becomes a young adult, particularly if the family disruption occurred during the child's pre-school years. Associated outcomes include lower educational attainments, a higher risk of economic inactivity as a young adult and greater likelihood of being a heavy smoker and experiencing psychological stress as a young adult. For women, this experience is also associated with a higher chance of having a child early in her life.

Focus on income dynamics

‘Pre-school children have a disproportionately high risk of experiencing repeated poverty: one in five compared to just one in ten for the population as a whole’



Shedding new light on the persistence of child poverty

Child poverty has been described by the Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown as a ‘scar on the soul of Britain’. Concern is high over the rising number of children - currently one in three - who live in a poor household. To date, policy-makers have been forced to wage war against child poverty using information about who is poor at a point in time. The children who are currently poor may include someone whose dad is newly unemployed, has fallen on hard times for a few months but will shortly bounce back with a well-paid job, as well as a child in a lone-parent family who has been poor since birth. Policy design clearly needs to recognise the persistence of poverty. The longer a child is poor, the greater the deprivation entailed. Moreover, poverty during childhood has long-term effects, reducing the chances of being successful in adult life.

An ISER project co-sponsored by UNICEF and based on the BHPS sheds light on low-income persistence among adults and children and highlights the poverty risks faced by children relative to adults.

The analysis shows that young children have a disproportionately high risk of experiencing repeated poverty. In the period 1991-6, more than one in five pre-school children lived in households where the income was below the poverty line for at least half of this period, compared to just one in ten people in the population as a whole. The poverty line used was half the middle (median) income in 1991, which in today’s prices would be £180 per week for a couple with two children, that is, close to the amount they would get from Income Support.

As well as counting how often people are poor, poverty persistence is measured by looking at incomes directly. Since people’s incomes fluctuate a lot from one year to the next, some of those who were classified as poor last year will not be poor this year. If people could transfer their income from good times to bad times, then many might no longer feature in the poverty statistics.

Chronic poverty is the amount of poverty there would be even if people could smooth out their income flows over

time. Using this measure, young children again come out the worst-off relative to other groups. In 1991-6, almost three-quarters (71%) of the total poverty experienced by pre-schoolers was chronic, compared to three-fifths (60%) for all children and just over one half (56%) for the population as a whole. Even if the poverty cut-off is made somewhat higher, or somewhat lower, these patterns do not change. Children, particularly young children, are still at greater risk of experiencing persistent and chronic poverty.

ISER's child poverty research agenda is being extended to encompass cross-national comparisons. The UNICEF project research, to form part of a Cambridge University Press book (The Dynamics of Child Poverty in Industrialised Countries, forthcoming in 2001), has also compared child poverty dynamics in the early 1990s in Britain, the US, Germany, Russia, Hungary, Ireland and Spain.

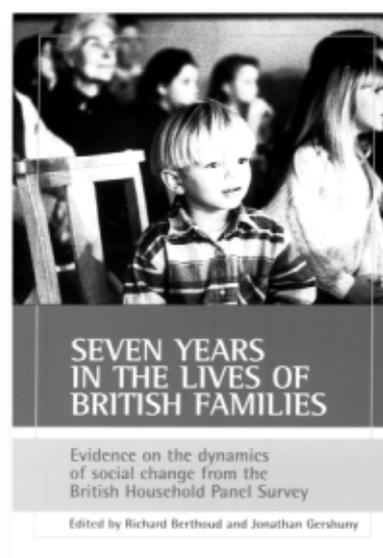
'The longer a child is poor, the greater the deprivation entailed - and childhood poverty has long-term effects, reducing the chances of being successful in adult life'

Not surprisingly, the degree of flux in children's incomes was very much greater in Russia than in the other countries, reflecting the turbulence and turmoil of economic transition there. The US also stands out as a country with a high child poverty rate. ISER research shows that this is not 'compensated for' by a greater degree of year-on-year movement in and out of poverty. No evidence was found that the less regulated US economy is associated with greater income mobility by children. Indeed, in some respects, mobility in the US appears less than in some other countries.

For example, 9% of US children were found in the poorest fifth of the income distribution in every year of a five-year observation period, compared with 6-8% of children in the same situation in Britain, Germany and Hungary. More focused research is required to go behind these statistics and explain the national differences. Current research, supported by the Anglo-German Foundation, is comparing child poverty and child poverty dynamics in Britain and Germany in greater detail.

A birthday party - and a new book

In May 1999, to celebrate the tenth anniversary of its foundation, ISER held a birthday conference with the theme "The Next Ten Years of Longitudinal Studies". Distinguished guests from outside the UK included Hans-Peter Blossfeld, Richard Burkhauser, Greg Duncan, Robert Erikson, Graham Kalton, Arie Kapteyn, Anders Klevmarken, Frank Stafford, Karl-Ulrich Mayer and Gert Wagner, most of whom presented papers.



The anniversary was also celebrated with the publication of a book by the Policy Press based on ISER researchers' analyses of the first seven years of the BHPS - Seven Years in the Lives of British Families, edited by Richard Berthoud and Jonathan Gershuny. Each chapter of the book demonstrates how a panel survey can shed new light on the processes that affect families across a range of their key activities - parenthood and partnership, employment and income, housing, health and even political affiliation. The analyses have made substantial progress towards understanding what actually happens in the real world where times moves on, as opposed to the falsely static world portrayed by the 'snapshot' picture.

For details check www.iser.essex.ac.uk/pubs/books

Focus on work and unemployment

‘Over two and a half million children live on income-based benefits because their parents are not in work’



ISER researchers have tracked the labour market experiences of various groups of key interest to policy-makers. They find that:

Education has failed to beat the jobs disadvantage for young black men

An ISER study for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation reveals major variations in the employment prospects of young men from different ethnic minorities. Although young Indian men's investment in further and higher education has enabled them to achieve jobs and earnings similar to their white counterparts, the picture is far bleaker for Caribbeans and Africans.

The research uses data from the Labour Force Survey to create the largest sample of young men of minority ethnic origin ever assembled in Britain. It shows that while young men of African origin are especially likely to stay on in education and obtain good qualifications, their chances of unemployment are higher than for any other group studied. African graduates in their twenties are seven times as likely to be unemployed as their white counterparts. Among Caribbeans, in contrast, graduates obtain quite a good return for their investment in education and are almost as successful in the job market as young whites with degrees. Yet their participation in higher education has been falling behind other ethnic groups.

Although the number of young Bangladeshi and Pakistani men obtaining 'A' levels has been rising, they still have above average levels of unemployment and exceptionally low earnings. Overall, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis have little more than half the earning power of Indians and whites.

Two jobs are often needed to keep low-income families off benefits

Over two and a half million children live on income-based benefits because their parents are not in work. ISER research commissioned and published by the Department of Social Security analyses the rate at which families move into employment from one year to the next, and the incomes of those who do so. The study also shows how long families with children tend to remain on benefit.

Based on data from interviews with low-income families conducted in consecutive years between 1991-7, the research finds that only a quarter of non-working couples with children and just one tenth of non-working lone parents are in work a year later. But those who do move into work have a high chance of staying there.

Although those who find work are usually better off than if they had been on benefit, it often requires two jobs to lift a family clear of the low-income zone. Moving from no job to two jobs is uncommon. Nevertheless, both men and women are twice as likely to find work in the course of a year if their partner does so.

Taking a part-time job, even for a few hours a week, can improve people's future chances of moving up the income ladder. A 'mini-job' appears to provide more of a boost to prospects than going on a training course.

One in five unemployed men who find work are jobless again within a year

The experience of unemployment can damage people's chances of keeping a job once they find one. ISER analysis of the work histories of over 7,000 workers using BHPS data from 1991-7 reveals that individuals who find work after being unemployed are four times more likely to be laid off and three times more likely to become unemployed, compared to workers who enter a new job from another job. One in five men and one in five women re-enter unemployment within 12 months of starting a job.

The research finds that less than half of the jobs that follow unemployment last for 12 months or more. There are two main causes of such short job tenure: those who have previously been unemployed are more likely to take up temporary jobs; and they are also more likely to be laid off. Nearly 25% of the jobs that unemployed men enter are temporary jobs ending within a year. Another 22% terminate within 12 months through layoffs (for example, redundancies, dismissals and self-employment bankruptcies) and 14% end because the employees choose to leave.

The picture is similar for women, although women who have previously been unemployed are more likely than men to

leave their new-found job by choice (perhaps for health reasons, to retire or to have a baby) than to be laid off. The relatively high layoff rate among previously unemployed men suggests that they accept poor-quality jobs that are likely to disappear (for example, because the firm goes out of business or the job is replaced by new technology).

'The experience of unemployment can damage people's chances of keeping a job once they find one'

Job tenure partly depends on the length of the preceding unemployment spell. Each additional month spent unemployed results in longer job tenure on average, provided the time unemployed is not more than two years. For men, each month of unemployment up to two years reduces the probability of re-entering unemployment once they have found a job by 8%. This suggests that individuals who spend more time unemployed and searching for work are rewarded with a better worker-firm match, unless they have spent a lengthy period out of the labour market.

Temporary workers suffer a wage penalty

Temporary workers are generally less satisfied with their jobs, receive less work-related training and are paid less than employees on permanent contracts, according to ISER research funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) as part of its programme on 'The Future of Work'. Analysis of nationally representative data from the BHPS over the period 1991-7 reveals that for men, permanent work always provides higher wages. Workers who start their careers in temporary jobs generally suffer an income loss, with the exception of women who start on fixed-term contracts. Workers in seasonal and casual jobs experience the worst wage growth penalty. After the first ten years of working, men who have had a seasonal or casual job in the first year before moving to a permanent job will have earned 12% less than men who have always been on a permanent contract. The equivalent wage penalty for women is 5%.

Focus on Europe

‘ISER researchers have mapped the changing patterns of family formation in northern and southern Europe’



ISER contributes BHPS data to a Europe-wide harmonised series of national panel surveys, known collectively as the European Community Household Panel (ECHP). This allows us to make direct comparisons among up to 15 different countries, using the same questions and the same sampling methods.

ISER has joined Danish, Dutch, German, Irish and Italian research teams to form the European Panel Analysis Group (EPAG). The group, which is co-ordinated by ISER, specialises in longitudinal analysis, and has been supported by the Commission of the European Communities to exploit the growing opportunities for comparative research based on the ECHP. In 2000, EPAG was contracted to initiate a three-year programme on ‘The Dynamics of Social Change in Europe’. One of the themes of the work will be the changing relationships between family structures, employment and income.

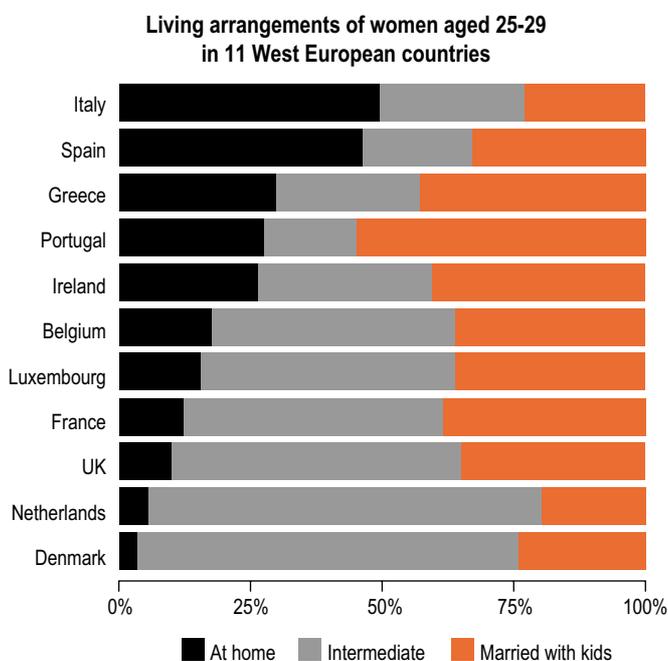
ISER researchers have already used the ECHP to map the patterns of family formation in northern and southern Europe. A generation or two ago, there was a standard trajectory of family formation in many countries whereby young people completed their education, got married, had children - and stayed that way until their own children left home. For example, in Britain in 1973, two-thirds of all women in their late twenties were formally married and had children. Almost all of the remainder were in the two states that usually preceded married-with-children - single and living at home; or married with no children yet.

‘In many European countries, particularly the ‘northern/protestant’ ones, the standard trajectory of family formation - education, marriage, childbearing - has been transformed’

In some countries, this previously standard sequence has been transformed. By 1997, less than one third of British women in their late twenties were formally married and had children. While the number who were single and living with their parents had hardly changed, there had been big increases in the number living in what might be called

‘intermediate’ states: single but living away from their parents; one-parent families; cohabiting; or married but without children.

This increasing diversity of family forms for men and women in their twenties and thirties suggests a much wider range of options than was available and socially acceptable in the past. For many, it will have offered a greater degree of flexibility and perhaps choice, though not everyone would necessarily have chosen the positions they found themselves in. It has also led to a substantial degree of economic polarisation, as the gap has widened between DINKYs (‘Dual Income No Kids Yet’) at one extreme and non-working lone parents at the other.



These changes have not been occurring at the same pace in all countries. Whereas nearly half of women in their late twenties continue to live with their parents in Italy and Spain, the proportion falls to hardly any in Denmark and the Netherlands. Among those who have left home, the great majority are married and have children in countries such as Portugal, but ‘intermediate’ family forms predominate in Denmark and the Netherlands. ‘Southern and/or catholic’ countries - Italy, Spain, Greece, Portugal and Ireland - have ‘traditional’ patterns whereby young men and women live with their parents until they get married; and they have children soon after that. In ‘northern/protestant’ countries - Denmark, the Netherlands, the UK, France, Luxembourg and

Belgium - few people live with their parents, and many adopt intermediate living arrangements before (or perhaps instead of) getting married and starting a family.

‘In the Mediterranean countries and Ireland, up to half of elderly people live in the same household as one of their children. Help with child care is *provided* by the younger old; help with personal care is *received* by the older old’

There are also big differences in family patterns at the other end of the life course, again between ‘northern/protestant’ and ‘southern/catholic’ countries. In the Mediterranean countries and Ireland, up to half of elderly people live in the same household as one of their children – often their married sons. Elsewhere, few elderly people live with their children – and if they do, it is often with an unmarried daughter. This has implications for family care, especially in Southern Europe: help with child care is *provided* by the ‘younger old’; help with personal care is *received* by the ‘older old’. However this reciprocity of care holds only in the case of women: older men living with their adult children provide very little child care, while receiving the same amount of personal care as older women.

Although this note has focussed on family issues in Europe, ISER’s research interests in employment and poverty are also reflected in the work of the Europe Panel Analysis Group.

More information about the European Panel Analysis Group, including a list of publications, is accessible on EPAG’s website at www.iser.essex.ac.uk/epag.

UK longitudinal surveys: taking the long view on social and economic change



‘The British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) comprises a nationally representative sample of around 5,500 households and a total of over 10,000 individuals’

The National Strategy

A major part of the mission of ULSC is the formulation and implementation of a National Strategy for Longitudinal Data on behalf of the ESRC’s Research Resources Board (RRB). The objective is to produce a long-term plan for ESRC’s investment in these very expensive data collection and management activities, rationalising the production of the existing ESRC studies and promoting new ones. We have set up a formal consultation about academic needs for UK longitudinal data, organised a meeting of the Royal Statistical Society to discuss the plan, and commissioned a Quality Audit on the three existing ESRC studies. The draft Plan will be discussed by the RRB early in 2001.

But ISER’s role goes beyond merely planning and evaluation. It takes direct responsibility for designing, collecting and managing the BHPS. And it also collaborates closely with the principal investigators for the birth cohort studies.

British Household Panel Survey

Since 1991, this panel survey (known as the Living in Britain survey to respondents) has comprised a nationally representative sample of about 5,500 households, containing a total of over 10,000 individuals. These same individuals are re-interviewed each successive year. If they split-off from their original households to form new households, all adult members of these households are also interviewed. Children in original households are interviewed as they reach the age of 16.

The BHPS covers six broad topic areas:

Household organisation

This component of the questionnaire includes information on the household division of labour and on household economic organisation, in particular the control of money and access to goods. It enables new longitudinal research to be conducted on patterns and processes of household formation and dissolution.

The labour market

Data collected on this topic facilitate research on patterns of individual mobility, either by comparing jobs and labour market position at successive waves, or by analysing the detailed work histories collected over the course of the panel.

Career patterns can be related to other components of panel data, such as education, income, health or household organisation. To facilitate this type of analysis, the BHPS collects relatively detailed information on job characteristics, covering promotion within jobs, job security, training and fringe benefits. It also collects data on how individual labour market participation decisions relate to the household context, helping to support economic research on household labour supply models and sociological research on married women's labour market participation.

Housing

Information is collected on housing costs and conditions, perceptions of residential neighbourhoods and migration decisions. Distinctively longitudinal concerns include housing and tenure mobility and the accumulation of wealth through housing.

Income and wealth

Data on this topic provide the basis for research on transitions into and out of poverty, on life cycle models of income, on the relationships between changes in income and family composition, and on lifetime patterns of wealth accumulation and savings.

Health

The data allow for both the analysis of the impact of health and illness on other aspects of behaviour and of social explanations of health and illness. A particular focus is on measures of psychological well-being and data are also collected on patterns of health service usage over time.

Socio-economic values

By focusing on political values and social participation, this component permits the exploration of how changes in values are affected by changing individual and household situations; how values themselves can be seen to influence behaviour; and the stability of values over time.

New questions engendered by changing policy and research issues are also included in the questionnaire as well as questions to elicit retrospective data on panel members' life histories. For example, in 1999, respondents' views were sought on Britain's membership of the European Union and those in Scotland and Wales were asked how they voted in the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly elections.

The British Birth Cohort Studies

Whereas the panel survey has traced families' experiences across the 1990s, the British birth cohort surveys have interviewed their respondents at intervals over a much longer period. The NCDS, for example, will soon provide data about the same people from birth to age 41.

ISER, in a consortium with the Centre for Longitudinal Studies (CLS) at the University of London's Institute of Education, is jointly responsible for the British birth cohort studies' future development within the context of the National Strategy for Longitudinal Studies.

The National Child Development Study (NCDS) is a continuing longitudinal study of all children born in Britain in a single week in March 1958 conducted by the CLS. Originally designed to examine the social and obstetric factors associated with stillbirth and death in early infancy, the study has since provided data on the physical, educational and social development of members of the birth cohort.

The 1970 British Cohort Study (BCS70), also managed by the CLS, is a similar longitudinal study of all children born in Britain in a single week in April 1970. Since 1970, there have been four major sweeps of the cohort members at ages 5, 10, 16 and 26. The research scope has broadened from a medical focus at birth to encompass physical, educational, social and economic development as the birth cohort has matured.

'Whereas the panel survey has traced families' experiences across the 1990s, the British birth cohort surveys have interviewed their respondents at intervals over a much longer period'

A new sweep of data collection for the two older cohorts has been completed. ISER is working with the London group to provide improved user access to all the cohort materials. A new birth study of children born during 2000/1, the Millennium Cohort, also funded by ESRC, is in the early stages of preparation.

Further information

Details of the research discussed in this report may be found in:

Focus on family

Cohabitation in Great Britain: not for long, but here to stay

by John Ermisch and Marco Francesconi, ISER Working Paper 98-1, May 1998

Personal Relationships and Marriage Expectations: evidence from the 1998 British Household Panel Study

by John Ermisch, ISER Working Paper 2000-27, August 2000

The Effects of Parents' Employment on Children's Educational Attainment,

by John Ermisch and Marco Francesconi, ISER Working Paper 2000-31, September 2000

Focus on income dynamics

Poverty among British Children: chronic or transitory?

by Martha Hill and Stephen Jenkins, ISER Working Paper 99-23, December 1999

The Dynamics of Child Poverty in Industrialised Countries

edited by John Micklewright and Stephen Jenkins, Cambridge University Press, forthcoming in 2001

Focus on work and unemployment

Young Caribbean Men and the Labour Market: a comparison with other ethnic groups

by Richard Berthoud, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1999

Parents and Employment: an analysis of low income families in the British Household Panel Survey

by Maria Iacovou and Richard Berthoud, DSS Research Report no.107, 2000

The Search for Success: do the unemployed find stable employment?

by René Böheim and Mark Taylor, ISER Working Paper 2000 - 5 February 2000

Temporary Jobs: who gets them, what are they worth, and do they lead anywhere?

by Alison Booth, Marco Francesconi and Jeff Frank, ISER Working Paper 2000-13, April 2000

Focus on Europe

Young People in Europe: two models of household formation

by Maria Iacovou, EPAG Working Paper 6, October 1999

The Living Arrangements of Elderly Europeans

by Maria Iacovou, EPAG Working Paper 9, February 2000

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www.iser.essex.ac.uk

BHPS data

BHPS data is released through the Data Archive at the University of Essex (www.data-archive.ac.uk/) and is available online at Manchester Information and Associated Services (MIMAS) (www.mimas.ac.uk). The data from each wave is deposited in the Data Archive within a year of the completion of fieldwork.

BHPS documentation is available on-line: www.iser.essex.ac.uk/bhps/doc

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Location, urban issues and housing:

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Minority ethnic groups:

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Political values:

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Jon Burton, Muriel Egerton

Young people, education and training:

Malcolm Brynin

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