

Summary: An Investigation of the Potential for Wales-Level Analysis of the British Household Panel Survey and Understanding Society



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Research Summary

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1. This report provides a Wales perspective on the usability of the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) and its successor, Understanding Society (USoc), for analysis at the Wales level. The properties of the BHPS sample are examined via an illustrative analysis of poverty dynamics in Wales.
2. The BHPS was a panel survey that tracked individuals and households over time. At its inception in 1991, the BHPS surveyed approximately 5,500 households and interviewed 10,300 adults in Great Britain. The corresponding sample sizes in Wales were approximately 280 and 530 respectively. The Wales sample increased to over 3,000 individuals in 1999 following a boost to the survey. The BHPS sample was integrated into USoc during Wave 2 of the new study in 2010, resulting in a combined sample of more than 4,100 respondents in Wales.
3. The BHPS and USoc can be used to study a wide variety of transitions experienced by individuals and the households in which they live, such as changes in economic activity status or demographic changes. Measured broadly however, a majority of respondents do not experience changes in their circumstances from one year to the next and the sample sizes associated with particular types of transition can be small.
4. One important application of the BHPS is the availability of measures for net household income that have been derived by researchers to provide a longitudinal perspective on poverty. By using appropriate analytical techniques and where appropriate the pooling of data over year, the Wales sample of the BHPS is able to provide a range of results specific to Wales.

5. For example, within Wales, approximately 40% of those who were in poverty during one year are no longer in poverty during the following year. Job loss and partnership dissolution are both demonstrated to be associated with an increased risk of entering poverty.
6. The analysis of poverty also provided some guidance to the issues to consider when determining the feasibility of conducting certain types of analysis using the BHPS. Consideration must be given to the size of the population of interest, the incidence of the phenomena being investigated, the ability and applicability of pooling multiple years of data about the same individuals together, possible trade-offs between the timeliness of analysis versus sample sizes and whether UK level analysis that includes Wales specific parameters is a more appropriate way of identifying differences between the different parts of the UK.

Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

Author:

Rhys Davies

Wales Institute of Social & Economic Research,
Data & Methods

Contact:

Sarah Lowe

Phone: 029 2082 6229

Email: sarah.lowe@wales.gsi.gov.uk

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