Netherlands 1999: Survey Information

Summary table

Generic information	
Name of survey	Dutch Socio-Economic Panel / *Sociaal-echonomisch panelonderzoek (SEP)*
Institution responsible	Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek
Frequency	Annual
Survey year / Wave	2000
Collection period	April 2000
Survey structure	Longitudinal and cross-sectional
Coverage	Private households in the whole territory
Geographic information	Collected, but not available to LIS
Files delivered	One personal level file
Sample size	
Households	5007 interviewed households EDIT
Individuals	9119 interviewed and 706 non-interviewed individuals aged 16 and over.
Sampling	
Sampling design	Two-stage sample in 1984: first stage sample of municipalities, second stage sample of addresses. The sample designed to be self-weighting. New households are added each wave to compensate for attrition
Sampling frame	Basic Geographic Register containing all post addresses.
Questionnaires	The SEP survey instruments include: computer assisted (CAPI) household questionnaires (demographics and general part on living conditions) and individual questionnaires for a maximum of six household members.
Standard classifications	
Education	7 different national categories
Occupation	national coding : Dutch standard occupational classification, 1992)
Industry	3-digit NACE-standard
Income	
Reference period	Calendar year 1999
Unit of collection	Mostly individual, some income sources at the household level
Period of collection	Yearly
Gross/net	Variables are recorded gross of taxes and contributions.
Data editing / processing	
Consistency checks	Yes
Weighting	Longitudinal individual weights only. The weight adjusts demographic and geographic characteristics of the sample to the population.
Imputation	No

This document draws extensively upon the following document: "The Socio-Economic Panel Survey: content, design and organization", Voorburg/Heerlen, Central Bureau of Statistics 1991. Very comprehensive documentation (available in Dutch language only) can further be consulted at: http://www.scp.nl/miss/sep.htm

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A. General Characteristics

Official name of the survey/data source:
Sociaal Economisch Panelonderzoek
Socio-Economic Panel Survey

Administrative unit responsible for survey

Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS)
Statistics Netherlands

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History and Purpose of the Survey

In 1984, Statistics Netherlands (CBS) started the Socio-Economic Panel (SEP) survey. In this survey around 5000 households are followed over time. For that purpose, all household members aged sixteen or over are periodically questioned about topics concerning the socio-economic situation of the household.

Until 1990 two waves were carried out annually (in April and in October). As of 1990, the households are questioned only once per year (in April). The SEP includes topics like education, income, assets, accommodation, self-reported measures of well-being, and the possession of durable goods. Depending on the topic, questions are asked to one member of the household (preferably the head of the household) or to all members of the household aged sixteen or over. Important personal information is collected for all members of the household, including those less than sixteen years old.

Main users of the survey

The main users of the data collected in the survey are: government agencies, universities, research institutes and Eurostat.

B. Population, sample size and sampling methods

Sampling Design

The April 1984 SEP sample is a two-stage address sample. In the first stage municipalities are selected with a chance proportional to the number of residents, with large municipalities being selected (chance 1). Addresses are selected within these municipalities such that the chance of eventually being selected is equal for all addresses. All the households living at one address (with a maximum of three) are included in the panel. Persons in detention, institutions and homes are not included in the sample. Since every member of a household who is 16 or more participates, the sample may also be said to be a individual sample in which every person in the Netherlands who is not in detention, an institution or a home has the same chance of being selected.

This means that the SEP may be seen as a sample of Dutch private households covering approximately 5,000 households. To achieve this end, in 1984 a gross sample of 7,500 addresses was selected initially, based on the non-response percentage obtained in the pilot study (september 1983). Account was taken of the fact that the non-response would be less because respondents are rewarded for participation in the survey itself. In view of the high non-response to the first wave (approximately 48%) and the attrition in subsequent waves it was necessary in both 1985 and 1986 to recruit additional addresses. Although there were some additions to the panel due to natural increase, this was not sufficient to keep the size of the panel continually at the level of approximately 5,000 households. Automatic growth occurs in the following cases:

– If one or some members of a household leave it to form an independent household, either alone or with others, which is also included in the panel.

– If one or some members of a household have attained the age of 16 years since the last wave, which means that they too will fill out a questionnaire.

More than 2,000 addresses were added for the October 1985 SEP and a total of more than 3,100 for April and October 1986. The new addresses were distributed on each occasion over the sample municipalities in proportion to the number of addresses in the basic sample. In principle the sample municipalities remain the same, but it has become evident in practice that municipalities other than the original sample ones have a number of sample addresses within their borders. This is caused by the fact that persons that move to municipalities other than those in the original sample are followed and continue to participate.

In order to maintain the panel size at the level of 5,000 households after 1986, new addresses must be added continually. This too was done using the Basic Geographic Register, GBR ("Geografisch Basis Register"), which contains all the postal (PTT) addresses as at January 1st of a particular year. For the SEP waves for April 1987, April 1988, April 1989 and 1990 no new addresses were added (the net sample size would have risen above the 5,000 mark). An extra 570 addresses were added for October 1987, 400 for October 1988 and for October 1989 slightly less than 400 additional were required.

In the following years, the dropout was each time compensated by drawing and adding new additional households.

Weighting procedure

The SEP data are the result of a net sample of originally 4000 and as of April 1986 around 5000 private households in the Netherlands. Of those households, all persons aged 16 and over are interviewed. Due to non-response (48%) at the start of the survey in 1984 and due to a larger attrition than growth in the number of respondents in later waves, households have regularly been added to the sample to keep the sample at the desired size of 5000 households. As a result of this, the representativeness of the sample with respect to the target population has decreased. To correct for this effect, the SEP data need to be weighted at the basis of population data from the population statistics. As the SEP sample does not include people living in institutions, the population statistics have been corrected for this. Data from the Socio-Economic Panel Survey may be used for both cross-sectional and longitudinal research (when two or more waves are used). For the sake of convenience, a set of weights have been constructed that may be used for both cross-sectional and longitudinal research purposes. To do the re-weighting, the following variables are used: size of municipality, age, sex, and marital status. The categories that are constructed for each variable are:

Size of municipality:
- less than 100,000 inhabitants
- 100,000 - 200,000 inhabitants
- 200,000 inhabitants and more

Age:

- age 0 thru 15
- age 16 thru 24
- age 25 thru 34
- age 35 thru 49
- age 50 thru 64
- age 65 or over

Sex:
- males
- females

Marital status:
- married
- not married.

A two-way table has been composed of the variables age, sex, and marital status, which consists of 24 categories (6 x 2 x 2). In the weighting procedure, all panel members who have participated in at least one of the April waves are re-weighted simultaneously. Thus, each separate April cross section has the correct marginal distribution of the re-weighting variables mentioned above. Following the same procedure, the sample has also been re-weighted with respect to longitudinal populations of every two consecutive years. Thus, the number of longitudinal populations is equal to N-1 cross-sectional April waves. Taking the availability of population data into account, the longitudinal panel sub samples have only been weighted with respect to the situation at the end of each period. So, for longitudinal populations of two consecutive years t and t+1, people aged 0 at t+1 have been removed from the data set. Accordingly, for the longitudinal population of April 1984 up to the Nth April wave, the age categories that could not be part of the population of April 1984 because they were not yet born are removed from the data set. In this way, eventually, the same number of cross-sectional sub samples is constructed, as there are panel sub samples. When using the weights, these panel sub samples also have the correct marginal distribution with respect to the re-weighting variables used. The SEP data concern the situation on 1 April. For the population tables used, the situation on 1 January of the year in question has been taken as a starting point. The weights of both the cross-sectional sub samples and the panel sub samples have an average value of 1.

C. Data Collection and Acquisition

The data collection for the 1999 survey took place in April and was completed in September 2000. The data was collected through a face-to-face interview using a computer-assisted questionnaire (CAPI); there was however also a possibility to use PAPI questionnaire for the income questions.

The questionnaire is organized by household and consists of three parts:

A. Household box for demographic variables
B. General part on living conditions (household questionnaire)

C. Personal questionnaire for all household members of 16 years and over, up to a maximum of 6 members.

Participation in the survey was voluntarily and the participants' privacy protected. All data files released by CBS are liable to privacy regulations. Contracts for users also contain privacy regulations for the use of data.

Every household member was required to answer the questions him/her self. Proxy answers are not allowed. Respondents were asked to consult or use pay records, tax returns, etc. to help provide accurate information and 80-85% of the respondents used records to help them answer the income questions.

D. Definition of the survey units

Basic unit of aggregation
The household is the basic unit of aggregation, but the micro data files are organized on a personal level. Household variables such as household composition or income are added to the record of each household member. A household is defined as a group of two or more persons who live together in a domestic situation and conduct a joint household, as well as a person who conducts an independent household on his own account.

Head of survey unit
For married couples the husband is deemed to be the head of the household and in one-parent families the parent. In other cases the head of the household is the person who is considered to be such by the members of the household. If this is still unclear, the owner or person renting the dwelling, the cost winner or the oldest member of the household are deemed, in that order, to be the head of the household.

Children
Natural offspring, adopted- and stepchildren are coded as "child", provided they are never married or do not have children of their own. In those instances they are coded as "married or formerly married child". It is possible to distinguish between the children of the survey unit head or spouse and a child of other members of the household (see coding list above).

Spouse
A spouse is legally married to the head of unit. Cohabitation receives a separate code, but these groups may be combined if necessary.

E. Contents

The SEP provides information on the following subjects:

a. Demographic data
b. Time use

c. Income
d. Consumption
e. Savings, wealth and debts
f. Perception of prosperity.

The degree of detail in which information is sought varies. Not all the SEP waves ask questions on the same information.

Since 1990 the SEP has been organised around a number of blocks of so-called "key variables". These key variables are selected from the variables included in the survey in the 1984–1985 period. The SEP questionnaire may include incidental questions on subjects, which may not have been included earlier, or additional questions on existing topics. This option was employed, for instance, for the topic of Saving and Debts and in the project "Social insecurity and the effectiveness of the social security system" conducted by the Social Science Research Institute, IVA ("Instituut voor sociaal-wetenschappelijk onderzoek").

Demographic data

Each wave determines the following data for all members of the household:
– position in the household
– sex
– date of birth
– marital status
– number of persons in the household
– the municipality in which the household lives.

A number of household variables can be derived from these data, including:
– the age of the members in years,
– the composition of the household,
– the stage of development of any nuclear family living in the household,
– regional classification, such as degree of urbanisation, province, district and so on.

Time use

Two forms of time use, which may be deemed to constitute production are of interest for the SEP, namely paid work and domestic production.

For many individuals paid work is the main source of income. The time devoted to this, working time, is thus an important variable in the survey. The information obtained to date from the SEP about time use is restricted to paid work and travel to and from work. In principle it is possible for questions to be included on productive time use, which is not classified as paid work. An example would be time spent on so-called domestic production in the form of do-it-yourself activities and other activities in the home.

Income

The SEP is one of the sources of information in the field of social security. It can provide up-to-date information on the use made of social security provisions and the income mutations arising from this, and it can furnish information, which is only available from surveys (relationships between benefit, household and living situations, education, occupation and so on). The SEP is particularly suitable for information where the longitudinal aspect is essential (length of the period in which benefit is received, the chance of recidivism and the incidence of the simultaneous use of different schemes).

The SEP can also be used to measure transfers of income which are not normally covered by the usual CBS statistics on personal income distribution, but which contribute to the redistribution of wealth. These transfers are usually between and within households (for instance, allowances for children who are studying, alimony payments (including for children), maintenance of close relatives, gifts and inheritances, board and lodging payments and contributions to the common "kitty" for household expenses. In this field the SEP is the only source of information available in the Netherlands. The information obtained on money flows within one household can be used to categorize households according to the degree to which they "share", i.e. the degree to which within the household income can be considered as a collective or as an individual good. This information is important in determining which income unit is the most suitable for analysis and the extent to which the consumption ability of the various members of the household differs from one to the other. Lemmens (1988b) discusses a number of these transfers between and within households.

Consumption

Integrated measurement of the scope of expenditure and its detailed breakdown is not possible with the SEP. Information on total consumption can in principle be obtained by subtracting savings (including capital gains) from income.
Indicators for household consumption can in principle be derived from data on household conveniences. The SEP provides information for this purpose on the purchase and possession of durables and on the housing situation.

Savings, wealth and debts

The sums associated with saving and use of credit schemes (wealth mutations, interest and repayments) form, together with income, the financial money flows of the household. General information on this subject is gathered in all SEP waves. The April 1987 wave in particular looked in some depth at wealth levels, the 1988 wave at saving (mutations in wealth as a result of net savings and exchange fluctuations) and the April 1989 wave at debt situations.
The financial transactions of households can be studied, particularly with regard to the relationship between income, income development, age and stage of family development, and so on.

Perception of prosperity

The measurement of attitudes in the SEP is primarily directed towards the individual situation in the past, present and future (expectations) concerning work, unemployment, income, purchasing power and time use. It also includes information on planned expenditure, reactions of the consumer in terms of expenditure to income mutations, and savings and credit intentions. Another major aspect of consumer behaviour is financial management within the household; this is concerned chiefly with how the process of weighing up the pros and cons leads to decision making about the choice between buying consumer articles and saving, and how decisions are taken concerning the scope and composition of so-called household production. The value assigned to leisure time, income transfer in the social security framework (contributions and benefit), and taxation are not yet included in the SEP. This could provide insight into the relationship between the individual utility function and the value assigned to the (institutionalised) process of redistributing income.

F. Quality of the data

Non-response

Several forms of non-response occur in the SEP. Firstly, there is the initial non-response, when households are approached initially for the survey; for the SEP this figure is around 50%.

The second form of non-response is what is known as panel attrition: respondents from a previous wave are no longer willing to participate in the survey. For the SEP, there is a large permanent core of persons who are willing to participate in the survey on a regular basis.

A third form of non-response is the "temporary" non-response. This refers to households or individuals who usually do not respond to one, or sometimes more, waves but subsequently participate in further waves. This temporary non-response is specific to panel research. In households this may occur where the canvassers found no one at home on three occasions, or because of personal circumstances. In the event of illness there may not be anyone in the household who is free to receive the canvasser. Circumstances such as this may also be the cause of temporary non-response on the part of individuals. If a household refuses to continue with the panel it is never approached again to participate.

A fourth type of non-response is that where respondents (either consciously or unconsciously) complete only part of the questionnaire, which means that certain data (not necessarily the same data in each wave) remain unknown: this is known as partial non-response. If this relates to questions on income, an imputation is carried out which enables figures for the net income of households and individuals to be determined.

In the SEP a higher degree of willingness to participate is obtained by giving respondents the assurance that no individually recognisable information will be published or furnished to persons or bodies requesting information. Moreover, households that participate receive a gift at the end of the survey. Particularly for a panel survey such as the SEP, it is essential to minimise attrition between waves because then the reliability of the data increases if more than one wave is included in an analysis.

Item and Group non- response rates

Because the sample is drawn from a list of addresses, nothing is known of the sampled but not interviewed households that are not already in the panel. Information of panel attrition can be obtained from previous waves.

Overall response rates

SEP'85	
Fieldwork during	oktober 1985
Respons	11.838 persons; 4.343 households
SEP'87	
Fieldwork during	oktober 1987
Respons	13.875 persons; 5.208 households
SEP'89	
Fieldwork during	oktober 1989
Respons	13.716 persons; 5.319 households
SEP'91	
Fieldwork during	april 1991
Respons	11.278 persons; 4.825 households
SEP'92	
Fieldwork during	april 1992
Respons	13.426 persons; 5.347 households
SEP'93	
Fieldwork during	april 1993
Respons	13.078 persons; 5.184 households
SEP'94	
Fieldwork during	april 1994

Respons	13.029 persons; 5.187 households
SEP'95	
Fieldwork during	april 1995
Respons	12.791 persons; 5.109 households
SEP'96	
Fieldwork during	april 1996
Respons	12.897 persons; 5.179 households
SEP'97	
Fieldwork during	april 1997
Respons	12.584 persons; 5.050 households
SEP'98	
Fieldwork during	april 1998
Respons	12.373 persons; 4.963 households
SEP'99	
Fieldwork during	april 1999
Respons	12.516 persons; 5.023 households
SEP'00	
Fieldwork during	2000
Respons	12.445 persons; 5008 households

Sub-group non-response

Persons may not be willing to fill in the personal questionnaire, in which case all information from that specific person is lacking. This lack of information is indicated in the survey. It is specified if the head of household or another adult aged 16 or over is entirely missing from the household.

Item non-response

Item non-response is present, and is coded as system missing.

Internal checks

Internal checks for consistency errors for data have been made.

Other

Hot deck or cold deck imputation for income variables have not been conducted, neither was other adjustments made for non-response. There was no top or bottom coding.

Data on education, labour market and household variables are obtained through open questions, while coding is done to a large extent automatically through word-recognition coding of education is based on a retrospective of all courses since primary school. Panel members are asked to report additional courses since the previous wave. This information is added to a database of former information to detect changes in the highest level of education obtained. Questions with regard to labour market variables are repeated each year with comparison between waves internally. In a panel box movements in or out of the household since the previous wave are obtained.