

Belgium 1995: Survey Information

Summary table

	Initial sample	BE95
Generic		
Name of survey	Panel Study on Belgian Households - <i>Panel Studie van Belgische Huishoudens - Panel Démographie Familiale</i> (PSHB) [European Community Household Panel (ECHP)]	
Institution responsible	National level: Universiteit Antwerpen (UA) / Université de Liège (ULg) [Community level: Eurostat]	
Frequency	Annual	
Survey year / Wave	Wave 1 (1992)	Wave 5 (1996)
Collection period	June-December 1992	April-July 1996
Survey structure	Panel	
Coverage	All private households in the whole national territory (incl. collective households but excl. institutional ones)	
Geographic information	NUTS1	
Files delivered	4 cross-sectional files: the households' register file (containing register information for all household members), the households' questionnaire file, the adult individual questionnaire file and the child individual questionnaire file.	
Sample size		
Households	4,438 completed interviews out of 10,941 in initial sample	3,230 completed interviews out of 3,622 in initial sample
Individuals	11,332 individuals interviewed (of which 8,741 16+)	8,142 individuals with completed interviewed (6,812 16+)
Sampling		
Sampling design	Two-stage sampling with municipalities selected systematically within each of the 275 clusters and addresses of heads of households selected within each cluster	In successive waves, the sample includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>old households</i> (unless all members are deceased, moved to an institution or outside EU, or not contain 'initial sample person') - <i>newly generated households</i>, i.e. new/pre-existing hhds created/joined when someone from a previous wave hhd moves out
Sampling frame	National Register	
Questionnaires	Household Register, Household Questionnaire, Adult Questionnaire (16+) and Child Questionnaire	
Standard classifications		
Education	12 categories of national education levels	
Occupation	2-digit ISCO-88	
Industry	2-digit NACE/ISIC	
Income		
Reference period	1991 (whole year)	1995 (whole year)
Unit of collection	Mostly individual, excl. housing allowances, social assistance, rental income and inheritance/lottery winning.	
Period of collection	Mostly monthly income together with number of months received during reference year; some yearly income.	
Gross/net	Most variables are collected net of taxes and contributions (with the exception of self-employment earnings, and wages which are collected also gross).	
Data editing / processing		
Consistency checks	Computer checking programs to verify questionnaire routing and to carry out a limited range of plausibility checks.	
Weighting	Household level cross-sectional weights (shared weights) and individual level longitudinal weights that take into account of adjustment for sample attrition (from Wave 2 onwards) and external checks on population structure (demographic/socio-economic/social welfare)	
Imputation	None.	

This document is based upon “Methodebericht – golf 5 (1996)”, by C. Dewilde, R. Marynissen, K. Decoster and T. Jacobs, University of Antwerp (UIA), 1999, and “The European Community Household Panel (ECHP): Survey methodology and implementation”, 1996.

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A. General characteristics

Official name of the survey/data source:

Panel Study on Belgian Households - *Panel Studie van Belgische Huishoudens - Panel Démographie Familiale (PSHB)* / European Community Household Panel (ECHP)

Administrative Units responsible for the survey:

Flanders	Wallonia and Brussels
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In 1989 the Services of Programmation of Scientific Policy (now Services Fédéraux des Affaires Scientifiques, Techniques et Culturelles) commissioned the services of Family Sociology of the University of Liège and the University of Antwerp to launch a large survey, the Panel Study on Belgian Households (PSBH). Every year, the same set of questions is submitted to the same sample of individuals and households in Brussels, Wallonia and Flanders. The questionnaire elaborated by the two universities tackles different areas, such as the family structure and relationships, housing, health, children, geographical mobility, living conditions, values, opinions...

The first objective of the Panel was to offer some information on the nature, frequency and sequencing of the changes that modify the ways of living, but also to evaluate their influence on the moral and material well-being of the Belgian population.

A second objective was developed after some time. From 1994 to 2001, the Panel Survey on Belgian Households (PSBH) is, together with the CSB, the Belgian component of the European Household Panel Survey (ECHP), a standardised survey conducted in Member States of the European Union under auspices of the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat). The survey involves annual interviewing of a representative panel of households and individuals in each country, covering a wide range of topics on living conditions. It was launched in response to the increasing demand in the EU for comparable information across the Member States on income, work and employment, poverty and social exclusion, housing, health and many other diverse social indicators concerning living conditions of private households and persons.

A major aim of the survey is to provide an up-to-date and comparable data source on personal incomes. The survey provides detailed information at the individual and household levels on a variety of income sources: wage income, rent subsidies, unemployment and sickness benefits, social assistance benefits, occupational and private pensions, and so on.

Following a two-wave pilot during 1993 in all 12 Member States at the time, the full-scale survey began with Wave 1 in 1994 and ended with Wave 8 in 2001, when it was decided to drop the input-harmonised ECHP for the output-harmonised SILC (Survey of Income and Living Conditions). Although the ECHP is a household survey with a high degree of co-ordination, the collection of data takes place in each country, and consequently a degree of flexibility has been allowed so as to permit each country to adapt common procedures to its national situation. In Belgium, the University of Antwerp (for the Flanders region) and the University of Liège (for Brussels and the Wallonia region) are responsible for selecting the national sample, adapting the questionnaire to national standards and carrying out the field work, basic data processing and editing at the national level.

B. Population, sampling size and sampling methods

Sample size

The sample size for each Member State was determined on the basis of various theoretical and practical considerations and the available budget. In Belgium, the initial sample comprised 10,941 households, of which 4,438 were interviewed; additionally, 8,741 adult personal interviews were carried out.

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5
Households					
Total households	10,941	4,667	4,112	3,996	3,637
Completed households	4,438	3,853	3,490	3,366	3,232
Individuals					

N. in initial households					9,516
Eligible for adult interview	8,963				
Adults interviewed	8,741	7,505	6,715	6,461	6,182

Coverage and sampling frame

Coverage – The objective of the sample design was to obtain a representative sample of private households in the whole territory of Belgium. Persons living in communities are not covered.

Sampling frame – The frame used for the Panel Survey on Belgian Households was the National Register.

Initial sample design and selection

The total Belgian sample consists of three separate (sub)samples, one for each main region (Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels), which aim at a minimum of 2,000 interviewed households for Flanders and Wallonia, and 1,000 in Brussels. Oversampling took place in the regions of Wallonia and Brussels to allow for regional analysis.

Within each of the regions, a two-stage sampling design was applied. In the first stage, municipalities were selected proportionally to their number of inhabitants in each region. This resulted in 275 sample clusters. In the second stage, the national population register was used to draw addresses of heads of households within each cluster.

Longitudinal sample

The initial sample comprised all usual residents of the households selected as above. At any subsequent wave, the eligible population consists of:

- sample persons, i.e. all initial Wave 1 usual residents who are still alive and eligible for the ECHP, and children born subsequent to Wave 1 to sample persons; members as they become aged 16+ become eligible for the personal interview; in this way the survey population is kept up-to-date for demographic changes except for immigrants into the original population;
- non-sample persons: such persons are covered using the same procedures; these are persons who reside in the same household with one or more sample persons; however, the survey does not follow up non-sample persons who move into households not containing any sample person.

The following table identifies the households which are eligible (E) for any wave N. This depends on the outcome of the household interview at waves (N-1) and (N-2). The remaining households are dropped from the survey (D).

		Wave (N-1) household interview status		
		Completed	Not completed: 1. physical incapacity 2. non-contact 3. 'initial refusal'	Not completed: 4. definite refusal 5. ineligibility
Wave (N-2) household interview status	Completed wave (N-2) household	E	E	D
	New household in wave N-1	E	E	D
	Not completed wave N-2 household	E	D	D

To this will be added newly formed households resulting from the movement of sample members since the last wave. Additional sample households may be added to augment the ECHP. Also, persons moving to collective household are each treated as a new one-person household in its own right. Deducted will be the very few households, which at the time of wave N no longer contain a sample member (i.e. have become non-existent or contain only non-sample members).

The individual members of sample households are eligible for an interview unless they have moved outside the EU or to an institution. Apart from members of a private household comprising one or more panel members, panel members who have moved into a collective household (non-institutional collective accommodation, e.g., boarding house, residential educational establishment, or other accommodation shared by 5 or more unrelated people, with individual responsibility for the running of the household) and outside the country of origin but within EU are also to be interviewed.

C. Data collection and acquisition

Field work

Households are contacted at different stages. Initially, they receive an introductory letter, where the framework and the objectives of the survey are explained; furthermore it announces the telephone or personal contact of the interviewer. Every year a leaflet is also edited where the main results of the previous wave are presented.

In a second stage, the interviewers contact the respondents. If the household has already been interviewed, this can be done by telephone, otherwise it happens through a face-to-face interview.

The result of these contact trials is registered on the contact sheet (or Household Register). A household is abandoned after it cannot be contacted or refuses to collaborate for 5 consecutive times.

Data collection period

Much of the information, especially on household and personal income, is collected in the ECHP for the calendar year preceding the interview. Therefore it is desirable to collect the information as soon after the end of the reference year as possible. There are also some substantive advantages in making the field work duration short, though operationally it may be necessary or even desirable to prolong this duration. However, data collection in most cases began 4-8 months after the end of the reference year, and in a number of countries extended to the very end of the following year. This applies to all waves in so far as countries try to retain their successive waves to be exactly one year apart. The duration of field work has also varied, though mostly it is in the range 3-6 months. A number of practical reasons have contributed to the delay in starting field work following the reference year. In most countries there are competing requirements from other surveys and regular operations. The second main reason has been the difficulty in completing budgetary and organisational arrangements for starting fieldwork each year.

In Belgium, most fieldwork takes place during the months of April to June, but there are regional differences (in Wallonia and Brussels, by July most households are contacted for the last time, whereas in Flanders, the fieldwork is delayed by about one month).

Questionnaire

Eurostat has sought harmonisation of the questionnaires employed in each country in terms of their structure, content and interpretation. The Community ECHP questionnaire is composed of three parts:

- *Household Register*: it has the functions of: controlling and tracing evolution of the sample over time, collecting information on non-responding cases, maintaining records of interviewers' performance, providing critical information for the linkage of households and persons over time and also collecting a few basic items of substantive information; definition and control of the sample is the basic function of the Household Register; it keeps a record of all addresses, households and individuals in the sample for each wave, and as they are carried over from one wave to the next and linked across waves; records are kept of changes in household addresses, of the outcome of all interviewing, and of reasons for non-response where the interviewing has not been completed; in the manner the HR is a basic instrument of operational control in the ECHP.
- *Household Questionnaire*: it collects information on: changes in household location, housing conditions, amenities, problems and possession of durable, housing tenure, mortgage and rent amounts paid, financial situation of the household (debt burden, etc.), sources of household income and the approximate total net monthly amount, and housing allowance, social assistance, and rental, property and other income received by the household as a whole.

- *Personal Questionnaire*: through personal interview with each member aged 16 or over the 31st December of the preceding year (household members born in 1984 or earlier for the 2001 survey), it collects detailed information on each person's economic activity and income, and on a large number of other variables.

National Questionnaires: the PSBH added to the above listed three instruments, a fourth one for children: the Child questionnaire, which collects information on the main socio-demographic characteristics, childcare, education, daily activities. Furthermore, many more questions exist in the PSBH questionnaire than in the standard ECHP one.

D. Definition of the survey units

Household

Community definition: for the purposes of the ECHP, a household is defined at the Community level in terms of two criteria: the sharing of the same dwelling and the common living arrangements. All the individuals considered by the household to form part of the household are taken into account, even if they are temporarily absent for reasons of work, study or sickness.

National definition: a household is composed of all the persons who live permanently in the same dwelling or who are only temporarily absent (i.e. full-time students living in a student residence but still domiciled at home, persons working in another region and living in temporary accommodation, persons hospitalized, on holiday, or absent for other reasons, such as imprisoned, disappeared, etc.). Non-family members (such as an old grandparent living with a young family or a young couple living with their parents) are considered as household members if they share household appliances (kitchen, bathroom, and especially postbox); as a general rule, subtenants are not considered as part of the household; children of divorced parents who live half with each of the parents belong to the household of the parent who has the legal responsibility; adoptive or affiliated children are considered as part of the household only if they live permanently in the dwelling; temporary guests are not part of the household.

Head of household (HoH) and reference person (RP)

Community definition: for ECHP Wave 1, both concepts were used according to the following definition: a HoH/RP must be defined at the point of data collection in order to meet 3 principal objectives:

- as a reference point for establishing the relationship of all members of the households;
- to select a respondent for the household questionnaire;
- to determine to whom certain components of household income should be attributed in the individual questionnaire.

From ECHP Wave 2 onwards, the concept of HoH was dropped, relationships between household members are recorded using a matrix in the household register and the RP has been defined for the sake of simplicity and comparability as the member who owns or is

responsible for the accommodation. The respondent to the household questionnaire is chosen according to the following list of priorities:

- the first preference is for the person who responded to the household interview of the preceding round;
- otherwise, an eligible 'panel' member, with priority in the following order: the RP; the RP's spouse or partner, another eligible 'panel' member (member of the initial sample);
- at the last resort, any eligible interviewee even though not a panel member.

National definition: the reference person is the person who assesses he/she is the best suited to answer the questions about the "household matters". It is the reference person who answers the question about the composition of the household.

E. Contents

Labour market information

The ECHP encompasses two related measures of the individual's economic activity:

Current activity status: status during the reference week, i.e the 7 (full) days preceding the interview (a moving reference period rather than a fixed period in terms of specific calendar dates is used because of the extended data collection period of the ECHP).

The categories of classification of the total population are presented below:

Total population

Working age population (16+)

Employed (at work or with job but temporarily not at work)

Normally working for 15+ hours per week

Normally working for <15 hours per week

Unemployed (not working and seeking and available for work)

Not economically active (not seeking and/or not available for work)

Population below the working age (<16)

Labour force (economically active population) = Employed + Unemployed

Population not economically active = Not economically active + Population below the working age

Labour force participation rate = Labour force / Working age population

Unemployment rate = Unemployed / Labour force

Main activity status: according to the main activity concept, persons are classified as being in job or self-employment if they presently work for at least 15 hours per week; for the remaining, the main status (including the status of being unemployed) is determined according to self-declaration, in principle on the basis of the most time spent.

Income

Eurostat's main concern was with disposable income (i.e. gross income minus compulsory deductions for tax and Social Insurance contributions) in the calendar year before the interview; however, details on both current income receipts from these sources and receipts in the previous year were collected in the Irish version of the questionnaire, allowing both current and annual income to be measured. Information on household income is obtained in two forms:

- a simple, approximate indicator of the household current total net monthly income (obtained from one single item in the household questionnaire),
- a detailed enumeration of individual components of income at the household and individual levels over the preceding year.

Individual level income comprises:

- *Income from employment (including training and apprenticeship)*: this is obtained for persons normally aged 16 and over at the 31st of December of the preceding year, who at any time during the preceding year receive a wage, salary or other form of pay for work as an employee or an apprentice; normal gross as well as net earnings (including additional payment such as from overtime, bonus, etc.) per month are asked for, along with the normal hours worked as to permit the computation of wage rates; if a person had different jobs during the reference year, not at the same time, this person had to answer on the job with the longest duration.
- *Income from self-employment*: in this case gross amount after deduction of expenses is sought; the reference period is the most recent year or similar duration for which the respondent can provide the information; in the case of partnership with persons outside the household, the respondents' own share only is recorded; in the case of partnership involving household members, the total amount is recorded in the questionnaire of the main persons responsible for the business; when actual amounts cannot be specified, approximate information in the form of a range is sought.
- *Income from casual/secondary work*: only the total net amount received during the reference year is recorded.
- *Income from private transfers and from financial assets*: only the total net amount received during the reference year is recorded; a range is asked for when the actual amounts cannot be specified.
- *Income from social and social insurance transfers*: individual components are specified in detail following the ESSPROS classification; when the normal net amounts per month and the number of months received cannot be given separately, the total net amount for the reference year is recorded.

Household level income comprises components of income which are normally received by the household as a whole, rather than by members individually; this includes:

- housing allowance received by owners or tenants (in the interest of simplifying the question sequence, the current monthly amount and number of months received during reference year is asked for households who report receiving such an allowance at the time of the interview)
- social assistance: for both cash and non-cash assistance, the specific months of receipt are recorded (rather than simply the total number of months during the reference year), along with the normal monthly amount in the case of cash assistance

- rental income: total for the reference year; a range is sought if the actual amount cannot be specified.
- lump sum receipts: approximate ranges.

Gross versus net distinction: for certain components, the questionnaire does not attempt to make a sharp distinction between gross and net amounts in order to limit response burden; in the main, however, the overall amount obtained can be taken to approximate the concept of net income, i.e. net of income tax and social insurance deductions at source; note that this is not always the same as disposable income, normally defined as net of final tax settlement (direct additional payment or refund) on the income; such information on tax is not included in the ECHP questionnaire.

In addition to the detailed enumeration of the income components for the preceding year, some information collected is relating to the current situation:

- current gross and net monthly income from employment (including training and apprenticeship) for persons normally working 15 hours or more a week;
- current gross and net monthly income for persons normally working less than 15 hours a week but having worked for at least one hour during the seven days preceding the interview.

F. Quality of data

Response rates

The total number of households successfully interviewed in 1991 was 4,438, representing 40.6 per cent of the valid sample. In 1996, 405 households of the initial valid sample of 3,637 did not participate to the survey, implying a response rate of 88.9 per cent.

Data checking

Each wave the data are checked as thoroughly as possible, both at the micro and the aggregate level, and longitudinally against the previous (and where possible, the following) wave. The checks are carried out at the national level in the first instance, then centrally by Eurostat. The checks comprise range and routine checks, followed by structural, cross-sectional and longitudinal consistency and plausibility checks.

Imputation

Imputations are confined to missing income components and are done centrally by Eurostat, hence are not included in this survey.

G. Uses of survey

Several studies have used the PSBH data. For a complete bibliography, see http://www.ulg.ac.be/psbh/pages/utlil_biblio.htm (French studies) and <http://www.psbh.be/publicaties.html> (Dutch studies). A report with several studies using all the eleven waves of the PSBH has been published recently: “Elf jaar uit het leven in België – Socio-economische analyses op het Gezinsdemografisch Panel PSBH”, by D. Mortelmans, M.T. Casman, R. Dutrelepoint (eds.), 2004.

Once integrated into the ECHP, the entire dataset becomes a unique source of information on household income and living conditions in the European Union because of the comparability of the data generated as well as the multi-dimensional coverage and the longitudinal design of the instrument which allows the study of changes over time at the micro level. These specific features made it possible to respond to the increasing demand for comparable information on income, labour, and various social indicators. Numerous ECHP data requests originating from the Commission (DGII, DGV, DGXXII) and the OECD have been answered. Various National Data Collection Units (NDUs) have also extensively used ECHP data. Eurostat publications drawing on ECHP results include to date 7 “Statistics in Focus”, 5 “horizontal” publications, 2 methodological volumes, and over 100 technical and methodological documents. Wide use of ECHP data has been made in the context of two major Commission reports: the annual *Employment in Europe* report and the biennial *Social Protection in Europe* report.

Poverty

The above mentioned book (Eleven years of life in Belgium – Socio-economic analyses based on the PSBH) reports household poverty rates for the 11 years of the PSBH. The rates are calculated as the percentage of households having a “declared total household income” (this is a question of the household questionnaire; the amount differs from the sum over individuals in the household of the different income sources) lower than 50% of the median equivalised income (whereby the standard OECD equivalence scale is used), and this gives a rate of 5.6% for the year 1995.