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THE SWISS HOUSEHOLD PANEL 1999-2003: DATA FOR RESEARCH ON MICRO-SOCIAL CHANGE

*MONICA BUDOWSKI, ROBIN TILLMANN, ERWIN ZIMMERMANN, BORIS
WERNLI, ANNETTE SCHERPENZEEL & ALEXIS GABADINHO*

Die Umfrage Leben in der Schweiz des Schweizer Haushalt Panels (SHP) bietet eine einzigartige longitudinale Datenbasis an. 1999 wurden 7.799 Personen von 5.074 Haushalten über ihre Lebensbedingungen befragt. Sämtliche 14-jährigen und älteren Personen, die in diesen Haushalten wohnen, sollen fortan während zehn bis fünfzehn Jahren in jährlichem Abstand befragt werden. Die Erhebung wird mittels computerunterstützten Telefoninterviews (CATI: Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) durchgeführt. Mittlerweile konnten die ersten zwei Befragungswellen erfolgreich realisiert werden. Anders als bei den vorwiegend auf sozioökonomischen Bedingungen ausgerichteten Panels - wie dem SOEP in Deutschland und dem BHPS in England - deckt das SHP ein breites Spektrum von Themen und sozialwissenschaftlichen Forschungsansätzen ab. Das Faktenmaterial wird ergänzt durch „subjektive“ Beurteilungen. Die Trägerschaft des SHPs besteht aus dem Schwerpunktprogramm SPP „Zukunft Schweiz“, dem Bundesamt für Statistik und der Universität Neuchâtel.

The Living in Switzerland survey of the Swiss Household Panel (SHP) provides a unique longitudinal database in Switzerland. In 1999, 7,799 members of 5,074 households – from a stratified random sample of the permanent resident population of Switzerland – were interviewed about their living conditions. All household members aged 14 years and older are to be interviewed annually for 10 to 15 years. The SHP survey is conducted using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). To date, the first two waves have been carried out successfully. In comparison with panels such as the SOEP in Germany and the BHPS in Britain concentrating on socio-economic conditions, the SHP covers a broader range of topics and approaches in the social sciences. Subjective assessments complement the factual information. The SHP

is a joint project run by the Swiss Priority Programme (SPP) „Switzerland Towards the Future”, the Swiss Federal Statistical Office and the University of Neuchâtel.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to publicise a unique Swiss database that was set up recently based on the Swiss Household Panel survey. Its main characteristics are as follows: 1) it is a comprehensive survey covering a broad range of social fields and a variety of topics; 2) all members of the households in the panel aged 14 years and older are interviewed; 3) the database offers opportunities for analysing gross social change and 4) it enables research on social trajectories of the individuals and groups comprising the resident population of Switzerland.

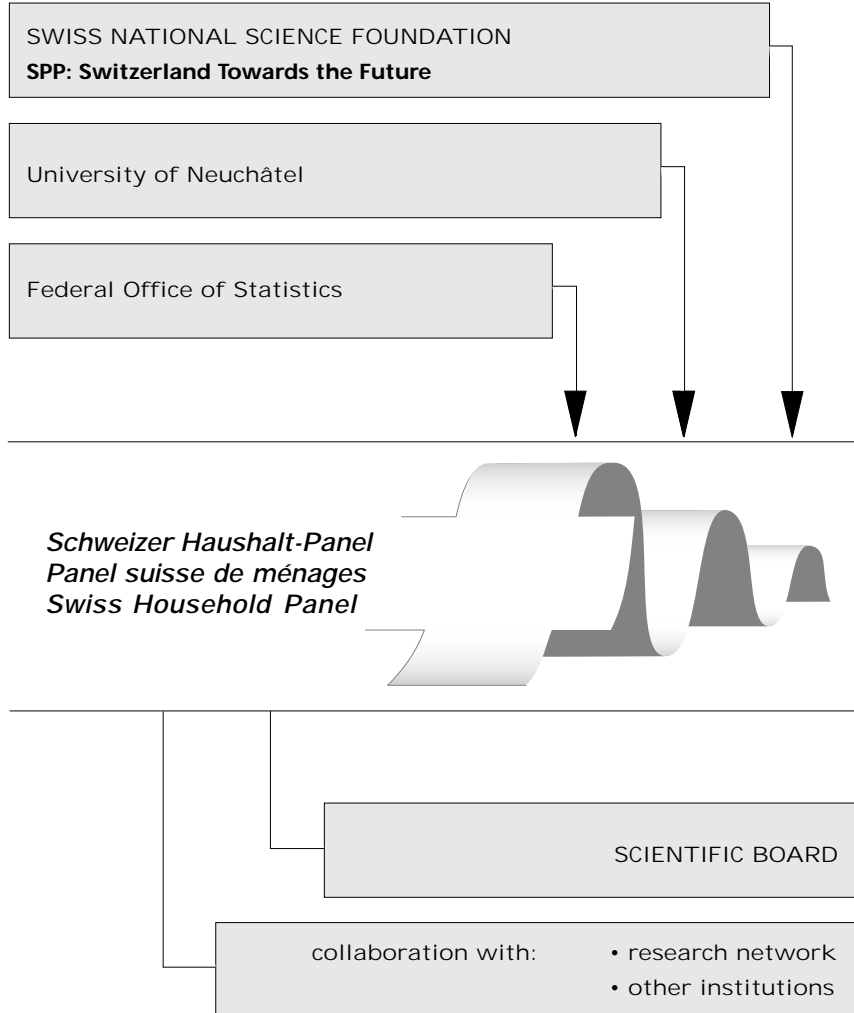
The SHP represents one element of the structural measures undertaken by the Swiss Priority Programme (SPP) „Switzerland Towards the Future“ for collecting basic data. Its purpose is to contribute to improving the situation for the social sciences in terms of quantitative data, to act as a reliable barometer of social change and provide an in-depth analysis of social dynamics in Switzerland. To date, it represents the largest financial investment ever made in a single social sciences project in Switzerland.

The Swiss Household Panel survey is a joint project run by the SPP „Switzerland Towards the Future“, the University of Neuchâtel and the Swiss Federal Statistical Office. These three partners are represented on the SHP steering committee and make strategic decisions as regards the content and running of the Living in Switzerland panel survey. The SHP team, based at the University of Neuchâtel, has operational responsibility for designing and managing the survey, and for appropriately distributing the data to interested researchers.

The data is collected by means of telephone interviews by M.I.S. Trend in Lausanne. Since spring 2001 the Scientific Council (comprising experts from Switzerland and abroad) have the dual role of guaranteeing the scientific quality of the collection and the analysis of the data, of providing financial support to promote projects which arise from the SHP's data analysis and of ensuring scientific publications. The SHP is also linked to a research network (Living in Switzerland), comprising all researchers using the survey in any way. The SHP team periodically organises seminars and working sessions that are to a large extent based on the contributions of the researchers themselves.



ORGANIZATION:



Before it was launched, the SHP was the subject of various preparatory steps which focused in particular on: 1) clarifying the objectives of the systematic observation of social change in Switzerland; 2) assessing European experiences, such as the Socio-economic Panel (SOEP) in Germany, the British Household Panel Study (BHPS) in Great Britain and the European Community Household Panel (ECHP) run by EUROSTAT; and 3) defining topics and indicators, and the data collection method (Farago 1996; Joye/Scherpenzeel 1997). The SHP structure reflects its main objective, which is to measure the multiple dimensions of social change as they occur in Switzerland over the next 10 to 15 years. Designed as a „data generator”, the SHP enables the changes to be analysed according to various disciplines and theoretical approaches. Household data is collected about the following domains: accommodation, standard of living, financial situation, the household, and the family; individual level data from the household and the family, health and victimisation, social origins, education, employment, income, participation, integration and networks, politics and values, and finally leisure and the media. The SHP has in addition been designed and operationalised so that international comparative analyses are possible. For this purpose, the SHP participates in the CHER programme (Consortium of Household Panels for European Socio-Economic Research).

2. Structure and Content of the SHP

2.1 Characteristics of a household panel

Household panels are considered to be tools for fine-tuning our conceptions and analyses of social dynamics (Berthoud/Gershuny 2000; Rose 1995). This general proposition can be made more specific. The dynamics (or social changes) at the macrosocial level do not directly belong to the field of observation covered by a panel survey. What panel surveys are intended to investigate, however, are the effects of changes at the macrosocial level on the living conditions of individuals and households, the manner in which these changes affect the individuals and households, and how they produce social change on a microsocial level. The main purpose of household panels is therefore to understand the processes, causes and effects of the social changes currently occurring. Of course, panel surveys are not the only tools used to measure social change. The repetition of a cross-sectional survey makes it possible to calculate, for example, *net transitions* between two dates (e.g. a drop in the proportion of the population receiving social benefits, or a rise in unemployment), but not *gross transitions* (e.g. the number of unemployed still without a job one year later). The data collected from household panels supplies unique information, allowing not only to estimate gross transitions but also providing an „understanding” of the transitions observed i.e. the circumstances (family events, a change in the activity status,

events related to the state of health, etc.) causing movements in and out of a given state (e.g. the fact that an individual or a household is living below the poverty line). In other words, by observing the same individuals over the course of time it is not only possible to study the change in numbers but also the flow of movement between the various states of being and to establish links of causality between different factors and events (temporal sequences).

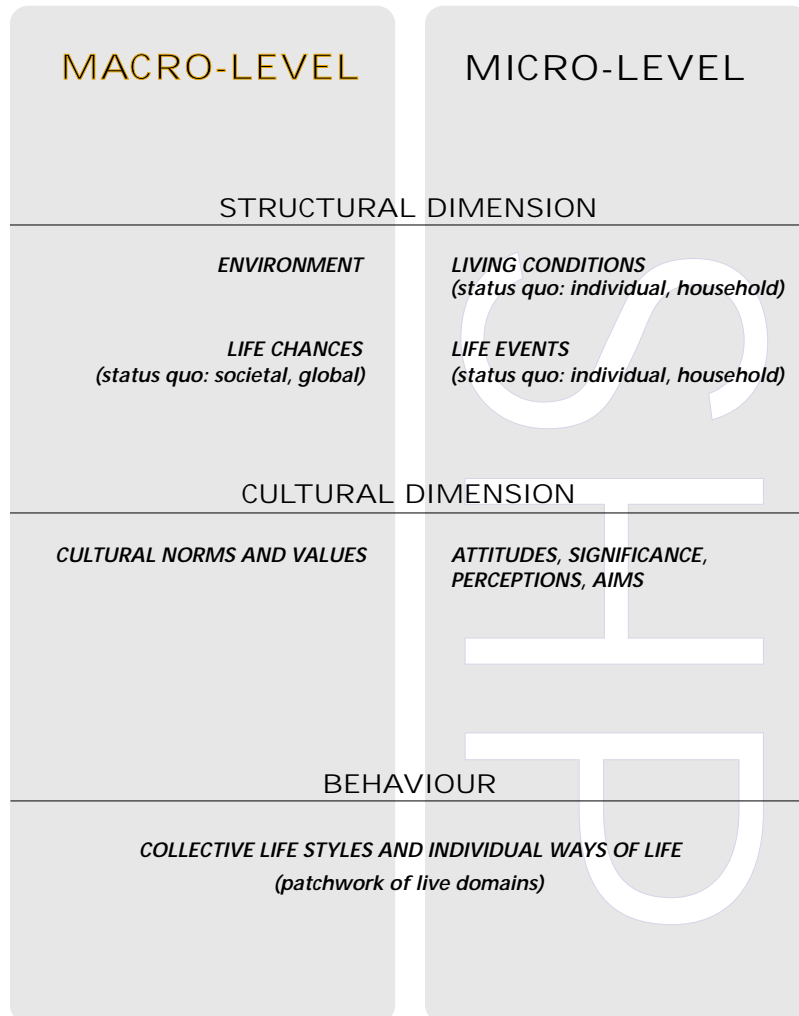
However, household panels, such as the SHP survey, are obviously not the only type of longitudinal surveys (Buck/Ermisch/Jenkins 1996). Longitudinal surveys include, notably, retrospective (biographical) surveys and other types of panels (cohort panels, rotating panels). In all cases, the main characteristic of the longitudinal survey is to provide repeated observations over a period of time for a set of variables for the group of individuals and households interviewed. Consequently these allow for richer dynamic analyses than is possible by repeating cross-sectional surveys.

2.2 Structure of the SHP

The construction of the SHP survey is drawn from international knowledge of the social sciences and the experiences of various panel surveys in Europe and North America (Budowski et al. 1998a; Joye/Scherpenzeel 1997). The structure of the Living in Switzerland survey must satisfy its primary objective, which is to measure the multiple dimensions of social change as they occur over the next 10 to 15 years in Switzerland. Given that the survey is designed to enable analyses in different disciplines using different conceptual approaches, the design of the SHP survey is based on the one hand on theoretical work related to the structure and development of contemporary societies (Beck 1986; Bourdieu 1983; Eisenstadt 1990; Haferkamp 1990; Konietzka 1995; Leisering/Walker 1998; Mayer 1991; Müller/Schmid 1995) and on the other hand on recent analyses of Swiss society and the way it functions (Höpflinger/Charles/Debrunner 1991; Leu/Burri/ Priester 1997; Levy/Joye/Guye/Kaufmann 1997). Contemporary societies are currently undergoing profound structural changes, which are the consequence of globalisation of the economy, uneven regional developments around the world, and world-wide demographic changes. Despite the new opportunities this evolution offers for households and their members, these changes are affecting current living conditions and lifestyles as well as aspirations regarding the future.



PANEL-ARCHITECTURE:



The way individuals and households adapt to the new realities is only partially the result of their own preferences and abilities; it is also to a major extent dependent on the social structures, standards and values present in the immediate social environment and society at large. Individual behaviour patterns therefore result from a dynamic relationship between the structural and the cultural dimensions. These influence the preferences and behavioural tendencies of individuals. Collective lifestyles and perceptions mediate the impact of these two dimensions. Collective behaviour patterns, in turn, may lead to transformations in the structural and cultural dimensions. In one way the SHP survey is designed to distinguish between structural, cultural and behavioural dimensions, in another, since it essentially collects data on individuals, it distinguishes between the macrosocial and the microsocial level. The contents of the survey, i.e. the actual questions used when collecting the data, reflect as a result, the three dimensions mentioned and the microsocial level. Macrosocial information (from other sources) can be added to the panel's database.

2.3 Content

The Living in Switzerland survey is a comprehensive survey. The questionnaires (household and individual) cover a broad range of social fields and topics. They are also designed to collect both „objective” data (resources, social position, participation, etc.) and „subjective” data (satisfaction, values, evaluation, etc.). The whole constitutes an operationalisation of the different elements of the microsocial level of the panel structure: living conditions, life events, attitudes and perceptions, and lifestyles/ways of life (Budowski et al. 1998b):

2.3.1 Areas covered by the survey

By definition, a household panel collects data at two levels: the household and the individual (for all individuals in the household aged 14 and older). In the case of the SHP-survey, the interview at *the household level* covers the following areas:

1. *composition of the household*: containing basic information about all the members of the household, such as the age, sex, relations between the members of the household, nationality, level of education and occupational status;
2. *accommodation*: containing „objective” elements, such as the type and size of the accommodation, home ownership or tenancy, the cost of and/or the subsidies received for housing, as well as „subjective” elements, such as satisfaction with the accommodation, evaluation of the state of the accommodation and assessment of perceived nuisances;

3. *standard of living*: referring to a list of goods owned by the household or activities that its members can carry out, together with the reason (financial or otherwise) why goods are not owned or activities not carried out;
4. *the household's financial situation*: containing „objective” information such as the existence of financial difficulties (and the household's reactions to different situations), indebtedness and the reasons for it, the total household income, the amount of tax paid, and the social and private transfers, as well as „subjective” elements, such as satisfaction, an estimate of the minimum income the household considers necessary or an evaluation of how the household's financial situation has evolved;
5. *the household and the family*: collecting information on any external help available to the household for housework or child-care, the sharing of tasks, and decision-making within the household.

Individual interviews cover the following topics:

1. *the household and the family*: comprising „objective” elements, such as the existence of children living outside the household, the sharing of housework and child-care, as well as „subjective” elements, such as satisfaction with private life and with the sharing of the housework;
2. *health and „victimisation”*: covering „objective” elements, such as general illness and health problems, visits to the doctor and hospitalisation, long-term handicaps, threats or attacks endured, together with „subjective” elements such as the self-perceived state of health, the estimated evolution of the state of health, or satisfaction with one's own health;
3. *social origins*: referring to information related to profession, professional position, educational level, and the nationality of both parents together with possible financial difficulties in the family of origin;
4. *education*: covering the various levels of achieved education, education currently being pursued, fluency in foreign languages, and participation in on-the-job training;
5. *employment*: considering four different aspects: firstly, the collection of information necessary to determine the status of the interviewee in the labour market, secondly, information covering the current main employment, thirdly, information on second jobs, and finally details about the last main job held; these modules also comprise „objective” elements, such as profession, status of the profession, the number of hours worked, work schedule, atypical work, as well as „subjective” elements such as satisfaction with various aspects of the job, the evaluation of promotion prospects or of personal qualifications;

6. *income*: including „objective” elements such as total personal income, total professional income, received social transfers, received private transfers, and other income, and „subjective” elements, such as satisfaction with the financial situation and an evaluation of changes concerning the personal financial situation;
7. *participation, integration, networks*: taking into account „objective” elements, such as frequency of social contacts, non-remunerated work outside home, participation in associations, membership of and participation in religious groups, and „subjective” elements such as the assessment of social capital by means of evaluation of potential practical help and emotional support (from various social networks);
8. *politics and values*: referring to „objective” elements such as political participation, membership, party identification, political positioning; and „subjective” elements such as satisfaction with the political system, the evaluation of issues or even political values; and finally
9. *leisure and media*: comprising „objective” elements, such as leisure activities and the use of the media as well as „subjective” elements, such as satisfaction with leisure and free time.

From the second wave on, the questionnaire also includes a „life events” module and an „occupational calendar” module (covering the 12 months prior to the interview).

2.3.2 Nomenclatures, standard variables, and comparability with other surveys

From the outset, the SHP was designed and built up in such a way as to make international comparative analyses possible. Furthermore, it was always situated in relation to the work of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (SFSO). To achieve this, the survey uses a certain number of nomenclatures and classifications and also offers a series of standard variables making comparisons possible.

On the subject of the nomenclatures and classifications, for example, the professions of the interviewees (and their parents) are classified using a uniform nomenclature drawn up by the SFSO. This means it is possible to apply the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO), which enables comparisons with the results of various surveys of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office and with various other surveys carried out in Europe. Furthermore, the interviewees give the name of the company in which they work (or used to work). The attribution of the company to one of the economic sectors of the EUROSTAT general nomenclature of economic activities is carried out by means of the Register of Enterprises drawn up by the SFSO.

The data from the Living in Switzerland survey also allows for the construction of most of the *recommended variables* on working life (status in the labour market, status of activity, level of occupation, atypical working conditions, duration of the activity, etc.), education, state of health as well as income. By means of these standardised objective variables the comparison with various surveys and analyses carried out either in Switzerland or abroad is made possible. In particular, the results of the Living in Switzerland survey can be compared or combined with results from different data sets held by the SFSO, such as the *General Census*, the *Swiss Labour Force survey*, the *Swiss Health survey* or the *Household Budget survey*, by means of variables comparable to the *standard variables* presented in Table 1. Finally, the data set contains or will contain in near future a certain number of indicators aimed at making their use easier: various household typologies (Budowski/Wanner 2001) various indices of social position (such as ISCO, CAMSIS, Wright), the yearly equivalised household income, the typology of communes, the economic sector of companies, etc.

Table 1: Standard variables in Swiss Federal Statistical Office household surveys and equivalents in the Living in Switzerland survey

SFSO standard variables	Level of data collection for the SHP survey		
	Household grid	Household questionnaire	Individual questionnaire
Household size	X		
Commune of residence	X	X	
Household income		X	
Telephone lines	X		
Home ownership, tenant or rent-free accommodation		X	
Number of rooms in accommodation		X	
Year of birth			X
Date of birth			X
Sex	X		X
Position in the household	X		
Marital status	X		X
Nationality	X		X
Type of residential permit	X		
Highest level of education completed	X		X
Current activity	X		X
Level of labour force participation	X		X
Professional situation			X
Unpaid housework		X	X

In addition to the nomenclatures, definitions and questions taken from the household surveys carried out by the official statistics, the Living in Switzerland survey has also picked up on a series of questions from surveys recently carried out in Switzerland, in particular the *Quality of Life and Poverty in Switzerland* and *The Swiss and their Society*,

(Leu/Burri/Priester 1997; Levy/Joye/Guye/ Kaufmann 1997) and abroad (notably the questionnaires of the European Community Household Panel).

3. Methodology of the Living in Switzerland survey

3.1 The reference population: the permanent resident population of Switzerland

The reference population for the Living in Switzerland survey is the population permanently resident in Switzerland. The sample must therefore be representative of the whole of Switzerland without regional imbalances. It includes households of various nationalities provided that their members live on Swiss territory throughout the year. Seasonal workers, cross-border workers, and foreign tourists are not part of the permanent resident population and are therefore not taken into account in the sample. Switzerland is divided into seven large statistical regions. The methodology section of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office drew a random sample in each of these on the basis of the SWISSCOM's electronic telephone directory, which covers over 95% of all private households. The households selected in this way are a representative sample of the various social groups in all regions of Switzerland. However, as the interviews are carried out in the three official national languages (German, French, and Italian) only, there might be a certain bias concerning how population groups who have recently migrated to Switzerland are represented.

3.2 The survey unit: private households

The concept of household refers not only to households comprising individuals or groups of individuals but also collective households (e.g. homes or prisons) and non-profit organisations (NPO) such as charitable organisations, political parties, trade unions, religious communities. Only private households are included in the Living in Switzerland survey, collective households and NPOs are excluded. The definition of a „private household” may vary. In panel surveys, such as the panels in the CHER project (Schmaus/Riebschläger 1997) or the ECHP (EUROSTAT 1996a) private households must fulfil a first criterion: the sharing of a dwelling unit. A second criterion consists in the existence of certain common living arrangements. However, the definition of „common living” is not always the same, which implies that certain choices need to be made.

Table 2: Resident population in Switzerland and the SHP sample characteristics

Code	Regions of the national territory (cantons)	Population in 1999 (in thousands, rounded off)	in %	Sample of Living in Switzerland 1999 (1st wave, absolute figures, eligible persons)	in %	Sample of Living in Switzerland 1999 (1st wave, absolute figures, interviewees)	in %
1	Lake Geneva region (VD, VS, GE)	1,295	18%	1,797	17%	1,366	17%
2	Mittelland (BE, FR, SO, NE, JU)	1,656	23%	2,622	25%	2,001	26%
3	North-west Switzerland (BS, BL, AG)	988	14%	1,491	14%	1,146	15%
4	Zurich	1,199	17%	1,680	16%	1,254	16%
5	Eastern Switzerland (GL, SH, AR, AI, SG, GR, TG)	1,042	15%	1,406	14%	1,012	13%
6	Central Switzerland (LU, UR, SZ, OW, NW, ZG)	677	9%	920	9%	693	9%
7	Ticino	308	4%	453	4%	327	4%
		7,164	100%	10,369	100%	7,799	100%

The Living in Switzerland survey has adopted a fairly broad definition of „household” in order not to underestimate new types of cohabitation (in particular collective non-institutionalised ways of living) as compared with the classic concept of the „household/family”. Therefore the definition of a household is based on five fundamental criteria, which must all be fulfilled: 1) sharing at least one common dwelling room; 2) sharing certain expenses; 3) taking at least one meal together per week; 4) stability (the household is considered a long-term arrangement); and 5) the individuals consider it to be their main dwelling (rather than a second home, work-related accommodation, etc.). If blood ties, marriage (in the broad sense, including the spouse’s family), adoption or stable partnerships are included in the traditional definition of household/family, the SHP definition also allows non-institutionalised forms of living to be included, provided they fulfil the above-mentioned criteria. In each household a „reference person” needs to be defined. In the Living in Switzerland survey the reference person is designated freely by the household itself. However, it is specified that this person should know the household very well. The reference person should also, as far as possible, be 1) an adult (age 18 or older), 2) a longitudinal respondent of the panel – an original sample member (OSM), and 3) the same person from one wave to the next. In the first wave, it is the reference

person who answers the questions of the grid and the household questionnaire (in addition to the individual questionnaire) as well as the proxy questionnaire.

3.3 Data collection tools

In a household panel, the information is collected at various levels (household/individual), so several questionnaires are used. There may also be many different questionnaires for any one level. For example, a complete questionnaire for adults, and a shorter questionnaire for children or adults unable to respond for themselves (for reasons of illness, disability, or absence). Most household panels use three types of questionnaires, i.e. the household grid, the household questionnaire and the individual questionnaire. This is also the case for the SHP survey.

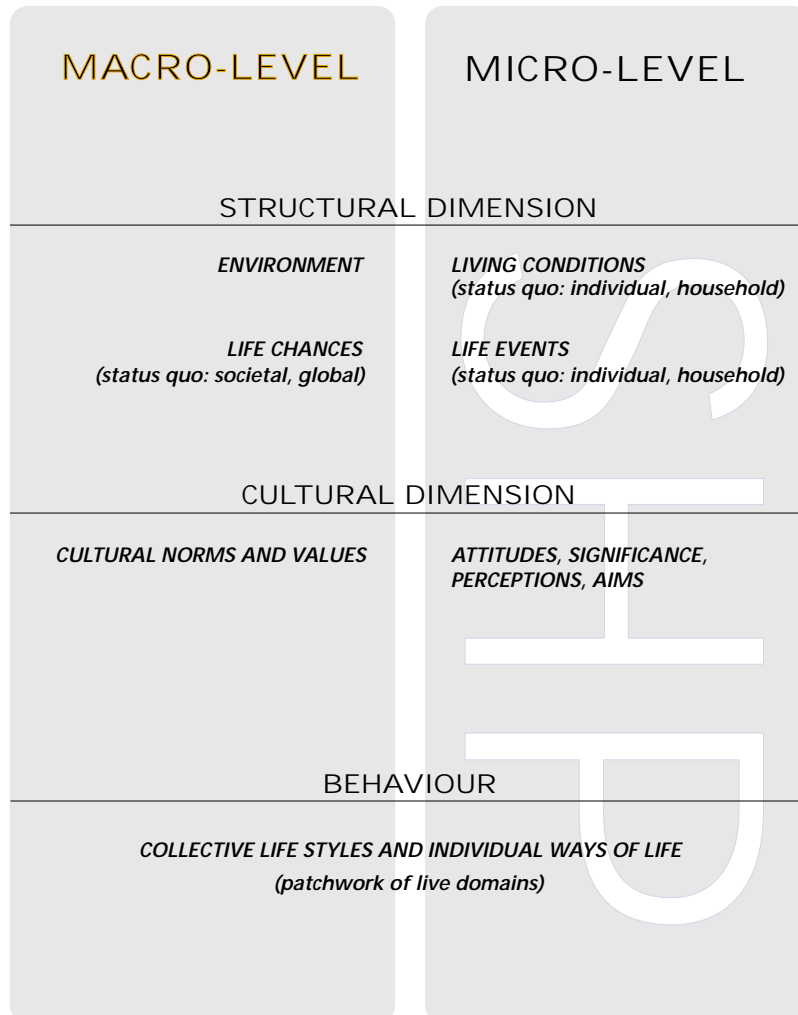
3.3.1 The household grid

The data in the household grid is not usually intended for analysis. However, as it is an operational control tool, it is absolutely crucial to keep it up to date to ensure the smooth operation of the data collection process. Every year the new grid, which is based on the previous one is updated taking into account address changes in between waves. This makes it possible to contact households and check whether their composition has changed, how many people they comprise, who must be interviewed and with which questionnaire (by personal interview or by proxy, etc.).¹ The grid's main functions are: 1) to check and trace changes within the sample (for both households and individuals) over time; 2) to collect information on the non-respondents; 3) to provide information necessary to link households and individuals over time; 4) and to collect basic data on the households and individuals.

¹ In the first wave, the grid was completed by the household's reference person. From the second wave onwards, this grid is amended in accordance with information from the first contact with any adult in the household.



PANEL-ARCHITECTURE:



In terms of the data collected, the household grid includes a list of all the household members and a series of basic details about them, such as: surname, Christian name, age, sex, date of birth, marital status, nationality, exact relationship among all the household members (not just in relation to the reference person), the highest level of education achieved, and finally the occupational status. The grid therefore provides information on the composition of the households and any changes concerning the structure of the households' „resources" (education, work, nationality, etc.). Given that much of this information is subject to data protection laws, researchers receive access to it in the form of aggregate variables (such as the relationship of the interviewee with the reference person or household typologies). It is furthermore important information for the calculation of the weights.

3.3.2 The household questionnaire

In the first wave, the household questionnaire was answered by the household's reference person. As far as possible, this questionnaire follows the household grid, to reduce the number of contacts and increase the response rate. From the second wave on, it can, if necessary, be completed by any adult member of the household. The household questionnaire contains questions about accommodation, living standards, the household's financial situation, the household's organisation, and the family. The Living in Switzerland survey has opted for a single version of the household questionnaire but adapts the wording and the questions depending on the type of household (i.e. households comprising a single adult or households with more than one adult).

3.3.3 The individual questionnaire

To collect data from individuals various questionnaire forms are used. Alongside the complete questionnaire, the CHER and ECHP panels have a variety of other instruments such as a specific questionnaire for children (to be filled in by an adult or the adolescent or pre-adolescent concerned). Sometimes a self-administered questionnaire is used when dealing with more delicate issues that are susceptible to the influence of another person in the usual face-to-face interview setting. Such questionnaires are also used for people who refuse to answer questions by telephone, or who are difficult to reach. Finally, there is a general proxy questionnaire for those who are absent for a long period or who are handicapped or too ill to respond.

The Living in Switzerland survey utilises only two questionnaires for the individual. The „standard" questionnaire contains all the questions in various sections: family, health, social origins, education, employment, income, networks, religion, leisure, media, politics and values. The „proxy" questionnaire comprises a limited number of

questions and is intended for ineligible candidates (children under 14 years), those unable to respond (handicapped, too old, etc.) or temporarily absent. Unlike the „standard“ questionnaire, it only contains factual questions about health, education, professional activity and income. The household's reference person answers the proxy questionnaire in the first wave. In the following waves the same adult in the household who responds to the household questionnaire can answer the proxy questionnaires. For ethical reasons, the proxy questionnaire is not carried out with those who are eligible but refuse to be interviewed individually. From the second wave on, the various questionnaires use a filter system to take account of the status of the interviewees: those who are already members of the panel and the newcomers (the cohabitants and children born to first wave members).

3.4 Decision to use CATI as the data collection mode

In the original project proposal, data was to be collected by the CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviews) mode similar to the mode (face-to-face interviewing) used by most other European household panel studies (BHPS, SOEP, EURO-STAT). However, during the practical set-up of the project in spring and summer 1998, doubts first arose in terms of the sample size and the costs, followed by concerns about the quality of the interview situation and the monitoring of the interviewers if the CATI-mode were to be used. Therefore, the SHP decided to use CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing). As no previous major household panel had started off with the CATI data collection mode, the SHP-team decided to carry out a method study jointly with the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (Scherpenzeel/Eichenberger 1998; Scherpenzeel/ Eichenberger 2000) in order to compare the „real life“ data collection procedures, that is: to study the *overall* effects of the two data collection modes CAPI and CATI². A methodological experiment was then designed in which the two data collection strategies were compared. The experimental design was a combination of the split-ballot design and the Multitrait-Multimethod approach. The Multitrait-Multimethod design is somewhat related to the test-retest approach. It also consists of repeating the same questions to the same people, but in addition, one aspect of the repeated questions is systematically varied. In this way, random variance can be distinguished from systematic method variance and estimates of both reliability as the complement of random error variance and validity the complement of systematic method variance are obtained. The criteria for comparison of the data collection strategies provided by the split-ballot design were the classical ones: costs, speed,

² The significance of a mere experimental study of the marginal effect of the medium of communication was considered to be very limited for survey practitioners.

response rates, answer distributions and summary statistics. The criteria for comparison provided by the Multitrait-Multimethod design were the reliability and validity of the data obtained (Andrews 1984; Saris/Andrews 1991; Scherpenzeel/Saris 1995; Scherpenzeel/Saris 1997). The experiment was carried out in the Swiss (German speaking) agglomeration of Bern between January 25 and April 13, 1999. The result of the experiment was: CATI saves time and costs in comparison with CAPI and should not be regarded a second choice among data collection techniques. The response rates and data obtained by CATI are at least as good as those by CAPI. The response rates on the household level are in fact somewhat better with CATI, although this difference is compensated for by a slightly lower individual response rate. Very similar in both modes of interviewing are most answer distributions, as are the overall validity and reliability of the data.

The only reason to select CAPI over CATI is when many sensitive questions or questions that require a good memory are asked. Indeed, interaction effects of data collection mode and these types of questions were found. However, strategies exist that help to overcome this shortcoming, such as stimulating confidentiality between interviewer and respondent, avoiding to formulate questions in a way that provokes socially desirable answers, introducing memory aids and stimulating respondents to take their time to think³.

3.5 Periodicity of the survey

Like other household panels, the SHP chose to interview the households and individuals annually. Due to memory lapses, answers to questions covering a longer period may be significantly biased. In a study focusing on such problems, Bailer (1989) showed that the longer a reference period gets, the greater the likelihood that the interviewees' memories are random. It further showed that certain phenomena studied are minimised, leading to significant underreporting. In addition, a prolonged reference period has been shown to pose major problems of telescoping and omissions (Cantor 1989). Owing to a long time span under review, interviewees tend to lose the dimension of time, with the risk of that they might either quote the same event twice in the same period or, forget it altogether. The periodicity of the panel surveys also has repercussions on the response rate, because of the greater probability of respondents moving and the difficulties encountered in finding them again for the following wave. Finally, problems can arise with regard to the motivation of respondents to continue in the panel when the periodicity is extended to 24 months between waves. The in-

3 For more details see: Scherpenzeel (2000c).

interviewees need to feel that they are part of an „experiment” which is of use to society and that the panel „lives” through them. For this feeling to be maintained they must stay in regular contact with the survey institute and the panel team. This is less feasible if the periodicity increases.

3.6 Follow-up rules

Follow-up rules make it possible to determine which people must be interviewed in the first wave and which people must be interviewed again in subsequent waves. The following rules were chosen for the Living in Switzerland survey. At the *household level*, in the first wave, all the households from the sample drawn are to be interviewed. A household becomes an *original sample member* (OSM) if the household questionnaire is completed together with at least one individual questionnaire. From the second wave on, the households are screened according to whether they satisfy the conditions for becoming original sample members. Among the original sample members the households which do not meet the following criteria are dropped: 1) those which do not respond to two subsequent waves; 2) those which have given a „refusal” considered as final; 3) those which move out of national territory; 4) those whose members are totally and „definitively” institutionalised. At the *individual level*, a distinction is made between individuals that are *original sample members* and those considered *cohabitants*. Those persons stemming from the first wave households are defined as original sample members or longitudinal members. Children born to original sample members after the first wave of the study also become such. The original sample members (OSM) defined in this way are followed constantly.⁴ Individuals joining or living in a household of at least one ordinary sample member in the second or any consecutive wave of the survey are defined as cohabitants. Cohabitants are, however, only followed while they continue to live with an ordinary sample member.

4. Development and phases of the project

4.1 Launching the SHP

In January 1998 the Swiss National Science Foundation took the final decision to fund the SHP. Thanks to a close collaboration with the SIDOS⁵, all researchers in Switzerland were contacted to participate and roughly 80 researchers stated their

⁴ In principal therefore until they die or are definitively institutionalised.

⁵ Swiss Information and Data Archive Service for the Social Sciences, Neuchâtel.

interest in certain topics and methodologies. These became the core of the Living in Switzerland research network. In tandem with establishing the scientific basis, defining the relevant indicators and drawing up the questionnaires, an important decision was made: that telephone interviewing would be used. The decision to carry out the successive surveys using CATI (computer-assisted telephone interviewing) rather than face-to-face using CAPI (computer-assisted personal interviewing) was based on dual considerations of quality and cost (Scherpenzeel 2000c; Scherpenzeel/Wernli/Eichenberger 1999). A call for tenders was launched in early September 1998 among institutes that are members of the nation-wide survey research association called SWISS-Interview. It contained the specific requirements for this type of survey such as sufficient CATI capacity to carry out 8,000 interviews each year in a pre-determined time frame, high quality of interviewers, capacity for management and updating of addresses of panel households, ability to maintain the loyalty of participants by applying an appropriate communication strategy, and a long-term commitment by the institute. After a detailed examination of the tender from interested parties, and discussions and negotiations with the various institutes, M.I.S. Trend in Lausanne was chosen in mid-December 1998.

In January 1999, the household and individual questionnaires were submitted to the Living in Switzerland research network for consultation then passed to the Steering Committee for approval. Over 50 researchers provided valuable comments and suggestions, which were systematically evaluated according to various criteria: compatibility with the panel structure, necessity of a longitudinal perspective, and implications for the questionnaire in the long term. In the light of these criteria, however, it was not possible to take all the remarks into account. A series of qualitative and quantitative pre-tests were conducted from February to the end of June 1999 in order to fine-tune the questionnaires and the survey procedure (the computerised management of appointments, the training of interviewers, the CATI interview procedure, and the data extraction) as well as to improve communication with the households and the interviewees (covering letter and explanatory brochure).

4.2 The first two waves of the survey

The first wave was carried out from September 1999 to February 2000. Out of the 14,174 addresses receiving an invitation to participate in the survey, telephone contact was possible with 12,084 households (85%). At the household level, the net response rate was 61%. To obtain reliable extrapolations for the whole resident population of Switzerland and a panel of about 4,000 households and 6,600 individuals for the second wave, it was necessary to request the participation of at least 5,000 households

in the first wave. This goal was achieved, as the first wave yielded valid data for 5,074 households and 7,799 individuals.⁶

Table 3: Breakdown of households and individuals into major regions, first wave

Regions of the national territory	Number of households	Number of people in the household	Number of eligible persons (14 years +)	Number of interviewees	Interviewees as % of eligible persons
Lake Geneva region	907	2,260	1,797	1,366	76
Mittelland	1,281	3,286	2,622	2,001	76
North-West Switzerland	726	1,826	1,491	1,146	77
Zurich	865	2,069	1,680	1,254	75
Western Switzerland	716	1,787	1,406	1,012	72
Central Switzerland	357	1,149	920	693	75
Ticino	222	554	453	327	72
Total	5,074	12,931	10,369	7,799	75

The households interviewed are single-person households (27%), couples without children (29%), couples with children (36%), single parents with children (6%) and 2% of other households. The household interviews lasted an average of 12 minutes and individual interviews an average of 55 minutes. In total, slightly fewer than 8,500 hours of telephone interviews were carried out. The first set of provisional data was provided in August 2000. The finalised set, with transversal weighting and constructed variables, was available in spring 2001.⁷

The data from the first wave of the SHP is very similar to that obtained in other household surveys carried out periodically by the SFSSO. For example, in Table 4 the distribution of the population according to status within the labour market is compared.

⁶ The number of panel households in the first wave is similar to those in the main comparable panels: 5,000 households in the PSID (Panel Study of Income Dynamics), 5,500 households in the BHPS (British Household Panel Survey) and 5,900 households in the GSOEP (German Socio-Economic Panel).

⁷ The Living in Switzerland survey was weighted by scientific specialists at the SFSSO.

Table 4: Status in the labour market according to sex (percentages, weighted results)

Status	SLFS 1999			ERC98 Living conditions			Living in Switzerland 1999		
	men	women	total	men	women	total	men	women	total
Working employed	74.4	55.5	64.7	76.4	56.7	66.2	74.4	55.1	64.4
Unemployed	3.7	2.6	3.1	1.9	2.3	2.1	1.4	2.3	1.9
Non-working	21.9	41.8	32.2	21.7	40.9	31.6	24.2	42.6	33.7

The second wave started in September 2000 and ended in February 2001. Valid data was collected for approximately 4,300 households and 7,000 individuals. The longitudinal sample (individuals interviewed in the first and second waves) comprises approximately 6,000 individuals. The data is likely to be made available to researchers in the autumn 2001.

Future plans envision a survey with a self-administered, written „biographical“ questionnaire to be completed by the panel interviewees after the third wave, to re-constitute their life trajectory since childhood, fundamentally of the living arrangements/family and professional life.⁸

5. Diffusion and exploitation of the data

5.1 Diffusion of data

By and large, there are no restrictions on the use of SHP data. However, interested parties must sign a contract with the SHP undertaking to 1) use the data only for predefined research purposes; 2) inform the SHP of their experiences and their publications; 3) refrain from transmitting the data to third parties; and 4) play an active role in the Living in Switzerland research network. The topics being analysed and the identity of members of the network are listed on the SHP website <http://www.unine.ch/psm>. On signature of the contract, the data is provided in a labelled

⁸ During May and June 2001 a pretest was conducted in a random subsample of 600 households in order to evaluate (i) response rates to the self-administered questionnaire with and without incentives and (ii) the repercussions on the participation rate in the annual panel interview (the third wave). Depending on the results, the survey will be carried out after the third wave or not. This decision will be taken by the Steering Committee in March 2002.

SPSS format and a SAS format together with the codebook⁹ and other information on a CD-ROM for PC or Mac.

5.2 The analysts

The considerable effort and financial resources invested in the SHP can only be justified if the data is used by a large number of analysts. It is mainly researchers in the field of the social sciences interested in the study of social change and relations of causality who need panel data. Nevertheless, this type of scientific perspective is new in Switzerland and there are few researchers actually trained in the methods and techniques of longitudinal analysis. To enhance such skills, the SPP „Switzerland Towards the Future“ launched a course on the analysis of longitudinal data at its summer school in 1999. A second group that can benefit from panel data is the staff of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office since analysis of SHP data complements the official statistics and the major surveys conducted by the SFSSO, mainly by supplying an estimation of the magnitude of gross transitions.

5.3 Types of publications

The diffusion of results through appropriate channels is essential to ensure their scientific and political impact, which is the true measure of the „return on investment“. Although the authors of the analyses may well be in the best position to choose an appropriate publication depending on the type of results and their own personal interests, the SHP considers that socially and politically pertinent results must not remain confined to scientific publications (journals, books, etc.) or specialised reports (publications by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office, Swiss Social Report, etc.) that are intended for a limited audience. Instead they should be communicated, via print or the broadcasting media, to target audiences defined by their profession or their socio-political role as well as to the general public. In other words, they should be used to stimulate public debate and serve as a basis for political decision-making.

6. Conclusion

The Swiss Household Panel was launched in 1998 and the first two waves have been carried out successfully. The first wave (1999) yielded valid data for 5,074 households and 7,799 individuals, with a net participation rate among the households of 61%. In

⁹ The documentation system and the code-book are a product of the close collaboration between the SHP and SIDOS, the Swiss Information and Data Archive Service for the Social Sciences.

the second wave (2000), approximately 4,300 households and 7,000 individuals were interviewed. The longitudinal sample comprises approximately 6,000 individuals.

Interdisciplinary collaboration is now emerging on topics such as the composition of households and the new forms of shared lifestyles, the phenomena of social insecurity and poverty, connections between living conditions and health, the influences of the context on political values and behaviour patterns, the multiple approaches and dimensions of social position, intergenerational aspects of the acquisition of Swiss nationality, etc.

Since the SHP data is representative of the resident population in Switzerland, it is a necessary complement to official statistics and will be used in the various publications of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office.

Since the beginning of 2001, the SHP's Scientific Board guarantees the quality of the work for collection and analysis of the data. The financial resources recently available to the board make it possible to support the scientific analyses and promote publications in which these appear.

The SHP has a stable institutional and financial basis, which guarantees the completion of five yearly waves of data collection. The management of SPP „Switzerland Towards the Future“ is currently exploring the possible ways of guaranteeing the future of the SHP beyond 2003.

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