

NIHPS USER GROUP INAUGURAL MEETING

The first meeting of the NIHPS User Group was held on Wednesday 10 December 2003 at Queen's University Belfast. For the benefit of those who were unable to attend, a short report of the meeting is presented below. If you have any comments or suggestions relating to the proceedings of the meeting, please contact [Katrina Lloyd](#) or [Pat McKee](#).

After an opening welcome to the members of the User Group, Katrina Lloyd explained the rationale for establishing the group and what were perceived to be the benefits for users of the NIHPS. She stressed the need for researchers in Northern Ireland to make use of the survey and explained that ARK was committed to ensuring that help and advice were available to users when undertaking analyses of the NIHPS.

Pat McKee outlined the work undertaken by the ARK researchers from Wave 1 of the survey for a variety of individuals and organisations across Northern Ireland. The major areas were:

- A comparison of the NIHPS with the Census, the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the Family Expenditure Survey (FES).
- The uptake of Income Support by pensioners in Northern Ireland.
- The circumstances of older households, households with children and households in poverty.
- An exploration of potential 'winners and losers' in the proposed new rating system for Northern Ireland.
- A profile of carers in Northern Ireland, including their mental health (using the GHQ-12 instrument).

Users of the survey also outlined some of the work they were undertaking using both the NIHPS and the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS). These included:

- An analysis of Wave 1 self-reported health data - published as an Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) working paper.
- A comparison of the Wave 1 self-reported health data with similar data from the Living in Ireland Survey in conjunction with Brian Nolan and Anne Nolan at ESRI.

Wave 2

An update on Wave 2 was presented and users were told that the data were presently being cleaned, validated and weighted by the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER). Once this process has been completed, users will be able to access the Northern Ireland data through ARK but will have to wait for the full UK-wide Wave 12 data to be made available on the UK Data Archive if they are interested in carrying out comparative analyses.

A workshop introducing users to the Wave 2 data, and on how to carry out longitudinal analysis of Waves 1 and 2, will be held next year and possible dates were discussed among the group. The consensus of opinion was that September was the best time to hold the workshop, as this would give users time to get access to the data and to become familiar with the 16 files that make up Wave 2.

As well as the core files that were available in Wave 1, there are new files in Wave 2 on marital, fertility and work histories, and files containing information about responses across waves – leavers, joiners and split households. The job, marital and fertility histories are kept up to date by asking respondents what they have been doing over the past year and so a record is kept of this information for each respondent throughout the lifetime of the panel.

Copies of the Wave 2 and Wave 3 questionnaires will be sent out to users, once we receive an

electronic copy of them from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) who are responsible for the survey fieldwork

Response rates to the survey for Waves 1 and 2 will be posted on the NIHPS website.

Wave 3

The fieldwork for Wave 3 is underway and should be completed early in the New Year. As well as the core questionnaire, the rotating core component for Wave 3 of the NIHPS is on parenting. This differs from the rotating core component included in the 2003 BHPS (Wave 13), which is on neighbourhood and family relations.

Format of Future User Group Meetings

NIHPS users were asked for their preferred format of future User Group meetings. They were also asked what other activities they would be interested in attending if organised by ARK as part of the dissemination of the NIHPS.

Size and Frequency of User Group Meetings

- A preference was expressed for informal User Group meetings as they allowed for discussion and problem solving within a more cordial environment than might be the case if a formal and structured format was adopted.
- Other possible activities could be seminars at which users could present their work and ask/receive advice and help within a supportive environment.
- Users would be interested in attending a conference next year on comparative aspects of the NIHPS, the BHPS and the Southern Irish equivalent, the Living in Ireland survey.
- In terms of frequency, a preference was expressed for meeting physically bi-annually with email contact on a more frequent basis.

Dissemination of Information to Users

- Communication between ARK and users should be mainly via the ARK website, with information posted on the NIHPS pages. It was agreed that the notes for this and future User Group meetings should be placed on the web as emails can go astray or be deleted accidentally.
- It was agreed that a useful addition to the NIHPS web site would be a section giving brief details of what analyses were being carried out by ARK researchers and users. Contact details of the analysts could also be included so that users who were interested in the work would be able to communicate directly with each other.

Training

In terms of future training for NIHPS users, in addition to the planned longitudinal workshop in September 2004, it was agreed that we would investigate whether we should hold a second workshop on the cross-sectional Wave 1 data for those who are not competent SPSS users. This would be a one-day event incorporating a basic introduction to SPSS using the NIHPS Wave 1 data. There was interest in this from the users who were present at the meeting and Pat and Katrina will follow this up to assess the feasibility of running this before the Wave 2 workshop in September, perhaps at Easter when students are off for their break and rooms within the Universities are available.

Users expressed an interest in having an annotated NIHPS questionnaire available on the ARK website. It is difficult to match questions on the questionnaire with SPSS variable names although the full, annotated questionnaire is available on the ISER web site. Pat and Katrina will discuss with the ARK computer analyst how much work would be involved in downloading the ISER version and adapting it for the NIHPS.

Any Other Business

Users would like to have some geographic variables appended to the NIHPS dataset so that they can disaggregate information below the Northern Ireland level. Particular interest was expressed in having health boards and urban/rural indicators. With regard to the urban/rural issue, NISRA has established an inter-departmental urban-rural definition group to agree a classification and delineation of settlements within Northern Ireland and, once an agreed definition of urban and rural has been established, will provide an urban/rural marker to be attached to the NIHPS dataset. NISRA has also agreed to provide a health board indicator and this will be available for researchers to attach to their NIHPS SPSS dataset.

Date of the next User Group Meeting

The date of the next meeting will be in June 2004. Information about the date and venue will be posted on the NIHPS web site.