

UNSD Time Sprint UN Friends of Chair Group: Social & Demographic Statistics webinar: "Data on time" – to Strengthen Social and Demographic Statistics

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What is the ONS Longitudinal Study?

- Linked sample from census and other sources
- Enabled by 1971 shift from 'age' as a census question to 'date of birth'
 - Sample selected by four undisclosed birth dates
 - 4/365 days = c. 1.1% sample
 - Census is mandatory, cannot opt out of sample
- Census is decennial; LS covers a long period



1971

1981

2001

2011

2021



What is the ONS Longitudinal Study?

- Individual level data, over multiple time points
 - Census data for sample members
 - Census data for others in household
 - Scope: England and Wales
- Linked admin data
 - Has linked life event data
 - Potential for wider linkage
- Two sibling studies in the UK
 - SLS: Scotland; NILS: Northern Ireland



Census – patterns of presence

197	198	199		20		
1	1	1	2001	11	Count	
~	~	~	~	~	203,000	Present at all five timepoints
						Descent of stills and formation and inte
~	~	~	~		262,000	Present at at least four timepoints
	~	~	~	~	263,000	
~	~	~			334,000	
	~	~	~		333,000	
		~	~	~	335,000	
~	~				418,000	
	~	~			422,000	
		~	~		419,000	
			V	~	422,000	
						Source: ONS Longitudinal Study



ONS Longitudinal Study

- LS content
 - All responses (exc. name etc)
 - Imputed values included and flagged
 - Some variables have additional access limitations

'Recent' additions to census include

2011

Main language / English proficiency Date of arrival in the UK Passports held National identity Use of second residence

2021 Sexual orientation Gender identity Veteran Status



Thoughts on time in the LS

- Decennial census data
- Annual aggregates of admin data etc
- Time references in direct and derived variables
 - One-year migration question (1971-)
 - Five-year migration question (1971)
 - Occupation one year ago (1971)
 - Other references to past dates
 - First arrival in the UK (1971)
 - Most recent arrival in the UK (2011-)
 - Dates of qualifications (1971-1991)
 - Ten year comparison derived variables



Life course transition examples

- Sacker et al (2024): transitions to adulthood
 - Compared transitions to adulthood for:
 - Children living with a foster child (n=2,656)
 - Children not living with a foster child (n=209,453)
 - Transitions
 - Finishing school; leaving home; finding work and becoming financially independent; getting married; having children
 - Earlier transitions (small effect) for those living with a foster child in all apart from leaving home



https://doi.org/10.1177/03085759231216069



NS-SEC

Life course transition examples

 Brook et al (2022): social mobility

prevalence of

- Compared

Gender

working in creative Industries by various characteristics including parental social class

Ethnicity

3

Region

- Persistent inequality in access



https://doi.org/10.1177/00380385221129953



Life course transition examples

- Shuttleworth & Champion (2016): migration
 - Compared successive decades and propensity to move by distance
 - Propensity to move short distances has declined
 - Decline in propensity of longer distance moves less marked







Use of ONS LS for lifecourse transitions

- Large absolute sample size allows for specific groups to be studied, at least at national level
- Data for those co-resident with sample member allow for long term social mobility to be explored
- Length of study means lifetime effects can be studied



- The permission of the Office for National Statistics to use the Longitudinal Study is gratefully acknowledged, as is the help provided by staff of the Centre for Longitudinal Study Information & User Support (CeLSIUS). CeLSIUS is supported by the ESRC under project ES/V003488/1. The authors alone are responsible for the interpretation of the data.
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