ASHE-Census Research Priorities
ADR UK Research Fellowships 2022

The ASHE – 2011 Census dataset has the potential to transform our understanding of wage and employment issues from labour market entry, through job mobility and career progression to retirement decisions. Researchers can use the dataset to explore how factors such as gender, ethnicity, disability, and migration affect individual's wage levels and pay progression.

The insights provided by research using these data could be key to informing responses to crucial policy challenges facing the UK, such as reducing in-work poverty – according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, 58% of those in relative poverty now live in a working household. This demonstrates a need for better understanding of how to support people in their career and wage progression, in addition to getting more people into employment more broadly.

Priority key questions this newly linked dataset could help to address include:

- What role do employers play in wage inequality among different groups of employees?
- To what extent does wage progression depend on characteristics such as disability, ethnicity or household structure?
- What are the returns on investment from education?
- What is the relationship between migration and the labour market?

The ASHE -2011 Census data can also help to provide insights into some of the government's areas of research interest and questions that are of interest to non-departmental public bodies, for example:
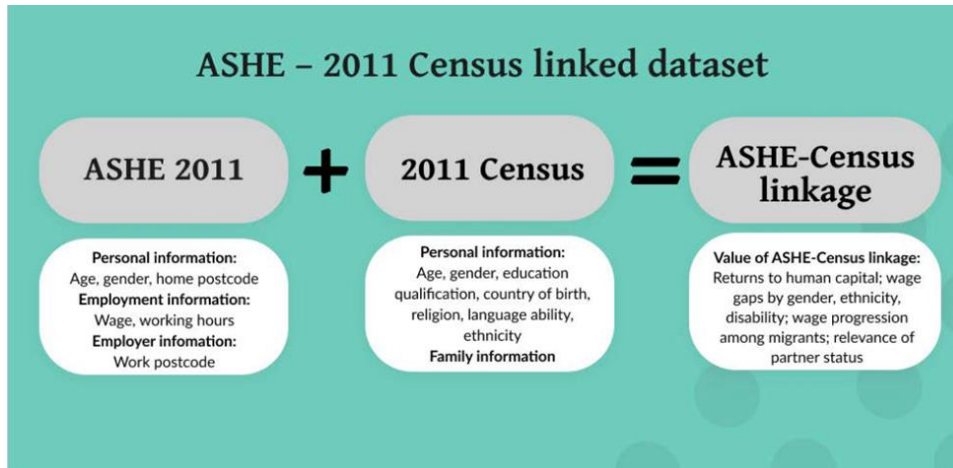
- What are the different ways to define and measure labour market progression and sustainable work? How does this vary between groups and at different times in people's lives? (Department for Work and Pensions)
- How can policy makers ensure that the lowest-paid workers continue to see pay rises without significant risks to their employment prospects? How have changes to minimum wages affected different groups of employees in the labour market? (Low Pay Commission)

About the data
The Wage and Employment Dynamics data linkage project is a collaboration led by researchers from the University of the West of England, aiming to better understand wage inequalities in Britain. Phase one of the project is made up of two parts: 1) Linkage of the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) data to 2011 Census for England and Wales;

and 2) the development of Stata code to enrich the ASHE data. This will allow for insight into the dynamics of wage and employment issues, and how characteristics such as gender, disability, and ethnicity influence these. The ASHE – 2011 Census linkage is now available for accredited researchers to use through the ONS Secure Research Service.

1) ASHE – 2011 Census linked dataset

 Timeframe: 1999-2018 (Drop 1 dataset)

Update frequency: Ad hoc. Drop 2 of the dataset is expected in Autumn 2022.

Population: ASHE population spine (attained sample is approximately 0.66% of the entire workforce)

Coverage: England and Wales*

Size: ASHE contains ~175,000 records per year. In Drop 1 of ASHE – 2011 Census, 62% of ASHE records from employees resident in England and Wales (101,000 records) have been linked to Census 2011. The linkage rate is expected to increase in Drop 2 due to improvements in the linkage process.

* Northern Ireland: The Earnings and Employees Study (EES) 2011 for Northern Ireland links together variables from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) 2011 with variables from the Census of Population and Housing 2011, and Capital Value data from the Land and Property Services. The dataset takes the form of one pre-linked table.

2) Enriched ASHE code

The Wage and Employment Dynamics team has enriched the core ASHE dataset by adding new variables such as minimum wage rates and survey dates and carrying out methodological reviews on the data and sampling. They have also created new weights which aim to address attrition and selection effects. These are available from 2004. The code created by the WED team will be available within the SRS on a shared accessible drive.

Core documentation

User guide: 1) ASHE – 2011 Census user guide 2) ASHE Quick start guide

Data dictionary: Information about the variables is available from the ONS Secure Research Service Metadata Catalogue.