LIS

What is LIS?
The Luxembourg Income Study Database
The Luxembourg Wealth Study Database

Janet Gornick, LIS Director

Workshop
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Who's who at LIS?

Abroad:

- Janet Gornick   Director (US – City University of New York))
- Markus Jäntti   Research Director (Sweden – Stockholm University)
- Caroline Batzdorf   Assistant Office Director & Research Associate (US)

In Luxembourg:

- Caroline de Tombeur   Administrative Assistant
- Thierry Kruten   Technical Director and Office Director
- Paul Alkemade   Microdata Expert and Statistician
- Helen Connolly   Data Expert and Research Associate
- Julieta Perez-Amador   Data Expert and Research Associate
- Teresa Munzi   Data Team Coordinator and Research Associate
- Piotr Paradowski   Microdata Expert and Research Associate

History

LIS was founded in 1983 by two US academics (Timothy Smeeding and Lee Rainwater) and a team of multi-disciplinary researchers in Europe. It began as a "study", which later grew and was institutionalized as "LIS".

For nearly 20 years, LIS was part of a local research institute, CEPS (Centre d'Etudes de Populations, de Pauvreté et de Politiques Socio-Economiques). In 2002, LIS became an independent non-profit institution.

LIS is supported by the Luxembourg government and by the national science foundations and other funders in many of the participating countries.

We are building a growing partnership with the new University of Luxembourg, as well as a pre-doc and a post-doc program.

LIS' goals

- to harmonize ("lissify") cross-national microdatasets that have been collected from participating countries on income/wealth, and their components, along with demographic and labor market data;

- to provide a secure method that allows researchers to access data that would otherwise be unavailable due to country-specific privacy restrictions;

- to create and maintain a remote-access system that receives research requests and returns results to users at off-site locations; and

- to promote cross-national research on the economic and social wellbeing of persons and households.

The Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) Database
since 1983

The LIS Database now includes microdata from nearly 40 countries, mostly in Europe and North America, but also including Australia, Israel and Taiwan – and, as of last year, five Latin American countries.

We recently added Korea, and we will add Iceland soon. The next major addition will be a group of middle-income countries (I will come back to this).

The LIS database contains over 200 datasets, organized into six time periods (known as waves) spanning the years 1968 to 2006.

The Luxembourg Wealth Study (LWS) Database
since 2007

We established a network of producers of microdata on household wealth and, modeled on the LIS Database, we harmonized country-specific microdata into a common template, including measures of net worth and its components.

Data from 10 countries (Austria, Canada, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Italy, Norway, Sweden, UK, US) were made available to registered users via remote access in December 2007.

In January 2011, we added microdata from an 11th country: Japan.

Over the next 2-3 years, we will work with several international organizations to set guidelines for wealth data collection and measurement, as LIS has done with income data.

First: Remote-access system

This is the primary means of access; it uses a software system that was designed specifically for LIS.

Researchers write programs (in SPSS, SAS, or Stata) and send them via email directly to the LIS server; results are returned to the researcher, with an average processing time of under two minutes.

This is LIS' "claim to fame." Access is granted to non-commercial researchers in financially-contributing countries (which includes Japan).

Other pathways to the data*

Second: Web Tabulator ("the WebTab")

The WebTab allows registered users to make tables on-line, using keywords. Users can generate research-specific cross-national comparisons without the need for programming.

An upgraded version was initiated last summer.

Third: Key Figures

Our website provides two sets of Key Figures. One set includes national indicators of poverty and inequality (all Waves).
The other includes indicators of economic status, focused on employment and disaggregated by gender (now, Wave V, soon Wave VI).

* Currently, these two tools include data only from the Luxembourg Income Study Database.

Training and other services

LIS Summer Introductory Workshops

LIS conducts annual training workshops that introduce researchers to the LIS and LWS databases and, more generally, to cross-national research on income, wealth, employment, and social policy. Since 1988, nearly 600 scholars have attended the workshops. **Next workshop: 3-9 July 2011.**

LIS Local Workshops

LIS staff also travel to participating countries to introduce policy makers, academics and researchers to the data, on-site. In the last 4 years, we have held local workshops in Belgium, France, Denmark, Spain, Italy, Korea – and now Japan.

LIS Visiting Scholars Program (VSP)

The VSP makes it possible to access a subset of the LIS and LWS datasets on a non-networked computer in the Luxembourg office. Access to the microdata under the VSP is subject to a separate application and is an option if the researcher's needs cannot be met within the three main access pathways, e.g., if special software is needed.

Use of LIS/LWS Datasets

The LIS Database includes (mainly) income, employment, and demographic data, at the person and household levels.

The LWS Database includes (mainly) wealth, debt, income, employment, and demographic data, at the household level.

Researchers who use these data come from diverse disciplines, including economics, sociology and – increasingly – political science and the policy sciences. Since the founding of LIS, our microdata have been used by nearly 2500 researchers.

Many researchers use the data to analyze variation in socio-economic outcomes within and across countries.

The LIS/LWS data are often used to study the effects of economic and social policies on outcomes -- including income poverty, income inequality, employment status, wage patterns, wealth levels and portfolios, gender inequality, family formation, child-wellbeing, health status, immigration, political behavior and public opinion.

Distribution of research

Research based on the LIS/LWS data:

● is catalogued in the LIS Working Paper* series, which currently includes:
-- 557 papers based on the LIS Database
-- 10 papers based on the LWS Database
-- 22 papers based on the (former) LES Database
-- 3 papers in a new LIS Technical Paper series.

● has appeared in many policy reports, graduate dissertations, journal articles, and books;

● is often featured in the popular media.

* The LIS website contains a Working Papers search engine, a complete set of abstracts, and full-text versions of the papers. Papers are searchable by author, year, country [data], and/or keyword.

What's next?

- Inauguration of new LIS website; launched February 2011.
  www.lisdatacenter.org

- Completion of LIS Database Wave VI (centered on 2004).
  Thirty datasets are now up.

- Acquisition and harmonization of LIS Database Wave VII (centered on 2008). Introduction of revised template.

- Continued expansion of LWS Database.
  Soon we will add Luxembourg and Spain.

Extending the universe of countries – a high priority

- The great majority of countries now included in the LIS and LWS Databases are high-income countries.

- Eleven are middle-income countries: Hungary, Slovak Republic, Mexico, Poland, Romania, Russia, and the new Latin American countries.

- Over the next 3-5 years, we will add 15-20 middle-income countries.