

INCOME DISTRIBUTION DATA REVIEW – SWITZERLAND

1. Available data sources used for reporting on income inequality and poverty

1.1. OECD reporting:

The OECD is using the two types of sources:

- From 2002 to 2005, the OECD were provided data from the Income and Consumption Survey which was computed by the Federal Statistical Office. Please, note that income year surveys are labelled as 2000-2001 and 2004-2005 because income data refer to averages of two consecutive years (data have been merged in order to increase significance of results). For the purpose of this study and to enable more comparisons, please note that the OECD data for years 2000-2001 and 2004-2005 have been respectively reported as 2000 and 2004.
- From 2008 onwards, the OECD has been using the EU-Survey of Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) under the supervision of Eurostat.

In the OECD database, income inequality and poverty rates are currently available only for 2000-2001, 2004-2005 and 2008. The change of survey in 2008 (from the Income Consumption Survey to EU-SILC one) is considered as a strict break. It means that the OECD data cannot be strictly compared before and since 2008.

1.2. National reporting and reporting in other international agencies:

1.2.1 National reporting:

In addition to the OECD time-series, the following reportings are available on income inequalities and poverty for Switzerland at a national level:

- The Income and Consumption Survey (= Enquête sur les Revenus et la Consommation – ERC) is the main survey in Switzerland to find data on income distribution and poverty. The *Swiss Federal Statistical Office* launched the first Survey on Income and Consumption in 1990 and the second one took place in 1998. Since 2000, this Survey has been taking place on an annually basis. This survey changed name in 2008 and became “Household Budget Survey” (“Enquête sur le budget des ménages” (EBM/HBS)).

Please, note that there was a change in the weighting model in 2003 which led to a recalculation of the indicators estimated in the ERC for the years 2000, 2002 and 2003 which enable to compensate for a possible bias in the selection of households. The HBS results are therefore based on a household structure which accurately represents the permanent resident population in Switzerland.

The below template present the main differences between the previous and the new weighting model in 2003⁴¹:

⁴¹ Anne Cornali Schweingruber, Ruedi Epple, Ueli Oetliker, Sylvie Rochat, « Une nouvelle méthode pour l’Enquête sur les Revenus et la Consommation (ERC) », dans la série « Statistique de la Suisse », Office Fédéral de la Statistique, Neuchatel 2007.

T1.3* Les étapes dans l'ancienne et la nouvelle pondération de l'ERC

Etapes		Ancienne pondération	Nouvelle pondération
Etape 1a	probabilité d'inclusion	Oui	Oui
Etape 1b	probabilité de réponse au 1 ^{er} niveau	Oui	Oui
Etape 2	post stratification	Non	Oui
Etape 3	selon la taille des strates probabilités de réponse au 2 ^e niveau	Oui (les variables dépendent de l'année et les coefficients sont calculés pour chaque mois)	Oui (variables identiques chaque année et «mois» utilisé comme variable du modèle)
Etape 4	calage	Non	Oui
Etape 5	winsorisation des poids	Non	Oui

In 2006, there was also a contents and process optimisation⁴².

The main differences between the EU-SILC survey and EBM (formerly ERC) can be resumed as follows:

- Description : Statistique sur les revenus et conditions de vie (SILC) ; Enquête sur le budget des ménages (EBM anciennement ERC)
- Type de questionnaire : CATI ménage et individuel ; Questionnaire papier accompagné de CATI. Ménage soutenu par un enquêteur pour remplir le questionnaire.
- Nature de l'enquête : Panel de ménages rotatif sur 4 ans ; Echantillon mensuel de ménages
- Période de référence du revenu Annuel (t-1 pour enquête SILC t) ; Mensuel pour les revenus réguliers et annuel pour les revenus ponctuels (primes, 13^{ème} mois, ...)
- Période d'enquête : De février à juillet ; Au cours de toute l'année
- Nombre de ménages participant par année : 6500 ; 3300
- Taux de participation : Plus de 65% ; Moins que 35%
- Utilisation de registres administratifs : Pour la consolidation des revenus et la réduction de non-réponse ; Non

1.2.2 International reporting:

In addition to the OECD time-series, the following reportings are available on income inequalities and poverty for Switzerland at an international level:

- EUROSTAT has been computing indicators on inequalities and poverty for Switzerland from 2008 (income year: 2007) onwards. Switzerland signed the bilateral agreement on statistics with the EU in 2007 and started taking part in the annual statistics program of the European Union together with all members of the Union. This explains why Eurostat data are not available before

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With the revision of the Household Budget Survey in 2006, the definitions of gross household income and disposable income were adapted to meet new international standards. For example, sporadic income is no longer included in gross income (nor in disposable income).

this year for Switzerland. In 2010 Switzerland became a full member of the European Statistical system (ESS).

- As a consequence, Switzerland had been included in the EU-SILC (Statistics on Income and Living Conditions) survey from 2008 onwards (income year: 2007). The EU-SILC is a representative survey of households in Switzerland. This instrument aims at studying poverty, social exclusion and living conditions on the basis of indicators that can be compared at the European level. Every year, both cross-sectional data (pertaining to a given time or a certain time period) and longitudinal data (pertaining to individual-level changes over time, observed periodically over a four year period) are collected.
- The Luxembourg Income Study Database (LIS) included Switzerland in 1982 and relied on statistics produced by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office. Data are available for years 1982, 1992, 2000, 2002 and 2004. For 1982, the LIS relied on the Swiss Income and Wealth Survey. In 1992, it used the Swiss Poverty Survey. Afterwards, the LIS referred to the Income and Consumption Survey (EVE/ERC) which was used for years 2000, 2002 and 2004.

Table 1 presents the main characteristics of those four datasets:

Table 36. Characteristics of datasets used for income reporting, Switzerland

Name	Luxembourg Income Study			OECD and Eurostat (EU-SILC)
	Swiss Income and Wealth Survey	National Poverty Survey	Income and Consumption Survey (Enquête sur les Revenus et la Consommation - ERC)	
Name of the responsible agency	Institute of Economics (=Volkswirtschaftliches Institut), University of Bern	Institute of Economics (=Volkswirtschaftliches Institut), University of Bern	Federal Statistical Office	Eurostat / Federal Statistical Office
Goal	To measure income distribution in Switzerland.	To 'picture' the extent of poverty and to collect information about the living conditions and income.	To provide information on patterns of consumption and income of households as well as to determine the yearly rate of price evolution. It changed name in 2008 to become the Household Budget Survey (HBS).	To study poverty, social exclusion and living conditions on the basis of indicators that can be compared at the European level.
Year	1982 and only this year	1992	1990, 1998 and every year since 2000	Since 2008
Data collecting	n/a	n/a	Annually since 2000. From January to December.	Annually. From February to July
Covered population	The main sampling frame consists of a list of registered voters (i.e. Swiss citizens). An additional sample of foreign nationals holding permanent residence was randomly selected from a central register of foreign nationals. Foreign household		The private households residing permanently within the borders of Switzerland. Border residents, foreign tourists, and collective households (e.g. prisons) are not taken into account in this survey.	Permanent resident population in private households. Social exclusion and housing condition information is collected at household level while labour, education and health information is obtained for persons aged 16 and over.

	heads without permanent residence permits and mentally disabled persons were not included in the sampling frame. Military personnel and people living in institutions were included in the sampling frame.			
Sample size	In 1982, 7036 tax units for which data was collected. 6055 of these were comprised of Swiss citizens and 981 by foreigners.	In 1996, 6301 persons.	In 2004, 3,270 households containing 7,993 individuals who completed the interview. Since 2008, when it became HSB, about 3000 households are taking part each year.	The minimum effective sample size is 4250 households. In 2010, the actual sample size was 10547 households.
Sampling method	Stratified	The sample design used for the survey was a stratified sample, in which persons with a low income and persons above 60 years of age were over represented. The sample is self-weighting.	The survey was conducted on the basis of 12 random monthly samples, stratified according to the seven grand regions of Switzerland. Sample households are chosen at random from the register of private telephone numbers. The HBS is conducted by means of telephone interviews and written questionnaires. Note: To obtain a sufficient number of households in each region, an oversampling of the Tessin region has been made.	Stratified random sampling design
Sampling unit	Tax Units	Households and Individuals	Households and Individuals	Households
Response rates	For 128 (1.8%) of the 7,036 cases income data is not available. Response rate is around 98%	Response rates correspond to a percentage of 36.7%.	The response rate over 12 months collection period was on average around 33%.	The non-response rate was 25% approx. for the total sample (wave 2010)
Remark			Remark on the weighting change model is explained in section 1.2	Annual income of the year prior to the survey
Websource	http://www.lisdatacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/our-lis-documentation-by-ch82-survey.pdf	http://www.lisdatacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/our-lis-documentation-by-ch92-survey.pdf	http://www.lisdatacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/our-lis-documentation-by-ch04-survey.pdf http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/en/index.html	http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/en/index/infothek/erhebungen_quellen/blank/blank/silc/01.html

2. Comparison of main results derived from sources used for OECD indicators with alternative sources

2.1 Income

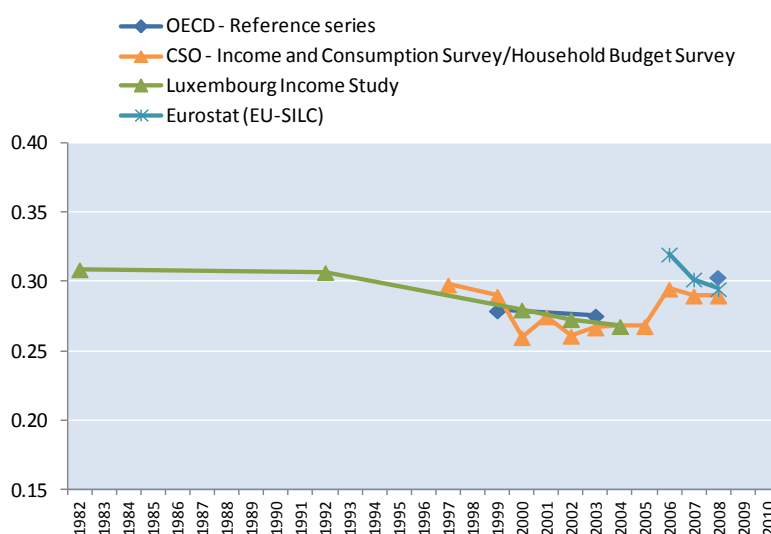
2.1.1 Time series of Gini coefficients and other inequality indicators

The Federal Office of Statistics estimated Gini coefficients for Switzerland from 1998 in the study entitled “Survey on Income and Consumption (‘Enquête sur les Revenus et la Consommation – ERC). This study calculated three types of Gini:

- The Gini coefficient based on Gross Income
- The Gini coefficient based on Disposal Income
- The Gini coefficient based on short term disposal income

In this Data Review and for the purposes of comparisons, only the Gini coefficient based on disposal income has been included. The below graph is showing the evolution of Gini coefficients since 1982 as reported by the OECD, the Luxembourg Income Survey, the national Statistical Office and Eurostat.

Figure 62. Trends in Gini coefficients, at disposable income



Over the period (1982 – 2009), income inequalities remained broadly stable with a Gini coefficient contained between 0.26 and 0.3, a coefficient which was slightly below the OECD average. More precisely, from 1982 up 2004, according to LIS data, the Gini coefficient slightly declined. A Switzerland Statistics Office’s publication⁴³ looking at the income distribution from 1998 to 2004 highlighted the fact that there was a slight decrease of inequalities over this time period and that the distribution between gross income and disposal income were pretty similar.

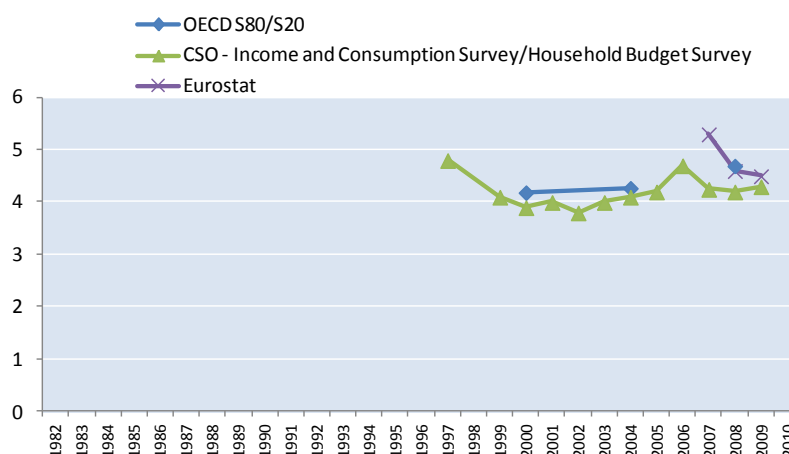
⁴³ Caterina Modetta, Bettina Müller, “Inégalité des revenus et redistribution par l’Etat - Composition, répartition et redistribution des revenus des ménages privés”, dans la série Statistique de la Suisse, Office Fédéral de la Statistique, Neuchatel 2012.

OECD data between 2000 and 2004 are totally matching with these other surveys available for this period, ie. the Luxembourg Income Survey and the Income and Consumption Survey. The spread between the different available data is below a 0.01 point of difference with Gini coefficients estimated around 2.7-2.8. After 2004, Gini coefficients slightly increased to reach level of 0.3 in 2009. OECD data consider a strict break between 2004 and 2008. The OECD is recording a level of 0.302 in 2008 which is the same as the Eurostat figure. The National Statistics Office is suggesting an increase over this period between 2004 and 2009 (mostly due to a surge in the year 2006).

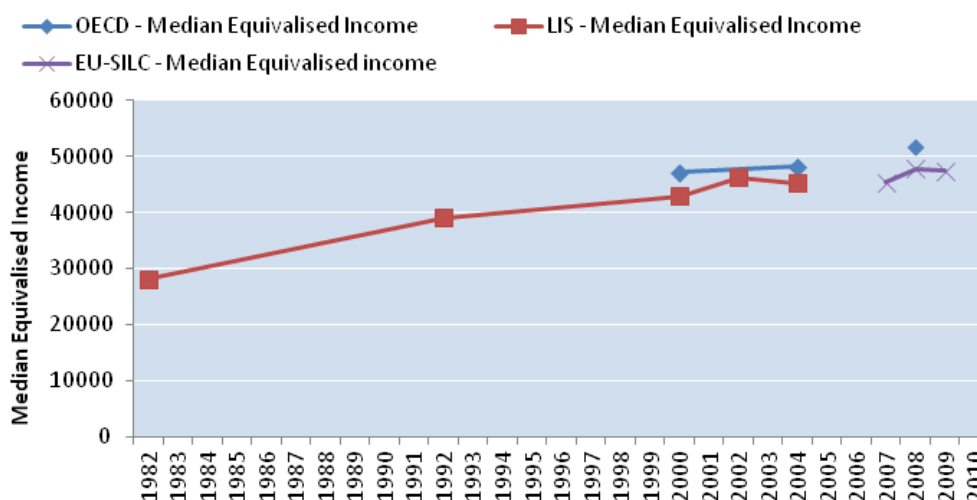
This relative steadiness of Gini coefficients is confirmed by the trend regarding the share of income ratios which are calculated below both for S80/S20 and for d90/d10.

The OECD S80/S20 ratios in 2000 and 2004 match with the ones provided by the Income and Consumption Survey while being slightly higher. These ratios remained pretty stable over the period and in 2004, the average income of those in the highest income quintile was 4.2 times that of those in the lowest quintile. In 2008, this ratio increased up to 4.6 in line with the figures from Eurostat. Indeed, the ratios estimated by Eurostat have been always a little higher than the ones calculated by the National Statistical Office.

Figure 63. Trends in S80/S20 ratios



The evolution of the median income can be compared between the OECD time-series and the EU-SILC/Eurostat and the Living Income Survey. The data are completely matching and this can be easily explained. Indeed, for years 2000 and 2004, both the OECD and the Luxembourg Income Survey used the Income and Consumption Survey from the National Statistics Office to estimate the median equivalised income. In 2008, the OECD used Eurostat/EU-SILC data so it makes sense that EU-SILC and OECD median equivalised income are alike.

Figure 64. Trends in median equivalised income

2.1.2 Time series of poverty rates

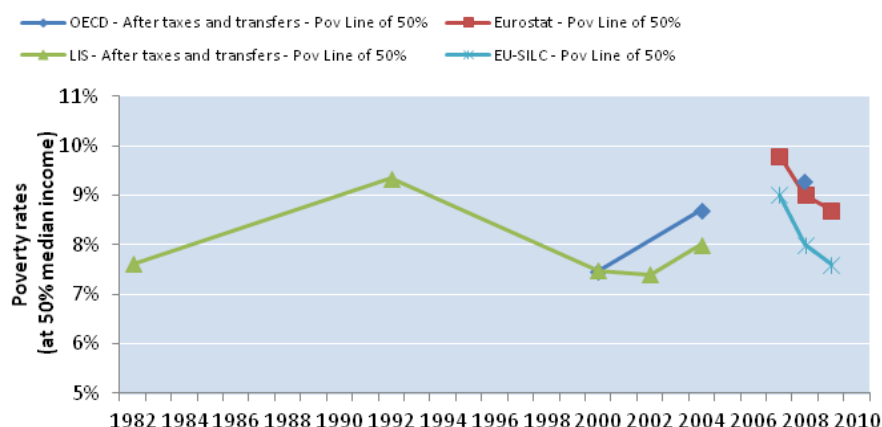
From 1982 to 2009, poverty rates remained pretty stable in Switzerland in line with the findings mentioned in the previous income distribution part. OECD time-series between 2000 and 2004 can be compared with the Luxembourg Income Survey whereas OECD data in 2008 can only be compared with Eurostat.

According to the OECD, the poverty rates with a 50% threshold slightly increased from 2000 (7.5%) to 2004 (8.7%) while remaining always below the OECD average (11% in the mid-2000s⁴⁴). The OECD figures are broadly matching with the Luxembourg Income Study data for these years.

In 2008, the poverty rate with a 50% threshold was recorded to a higher level at 9.26% but we cannot conclude to an increase of poverty in Switzerland given the fact that there is a change of survey in 2008 for the OECD dataset and that figures are not provided by the National Statistical Office (Households Budget Survey do not provide this data).

The below graph shows the change in poverty rates for the Swiss population living with less than 50% of the median equivalised income over the given period.

⁴⁴ "Growing Unequal? Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries (2008)", OECD, Paris.

Figure 65. Trends in poverty rates at 50% median income threshold

The patterns of the graph regarding poverty rates with a 60% median income threshold are similar to the one hereabove. According to the Luxembourg Income Study, poverty rates remained pretty stable from 1982 to 2000 and increased between 2000 and 2004. Both the OECD and the Luxembourg Income Survey are confirming this trend as the share of the Swiss population living with less than 60% of the median equivalised income rose from 13.34% to 15.22% (OECD figures). Even though the Luxembourg Income Study data is recording a smaller increase than the OECD one, the trend is similar between the both datasets. Despite this increase, the poverty rates in Switzerland remained below the average of the OECD member states which was estimated at 17% in the mid-2000s⁴⁵.

The poverty rates provided by Eurostat for the period 2007-2009 are slightly higher than those estimated by national CSO on the same data. However, it is hazardous to do any comparison since the Luxembourg Income Survey and EU-SILC/Eurostat did not calculate poverty rates for any years in common. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, OECD data between 2004 and 2008 cannot be compared neither. In 2008, according to the OECD, the share of the population living with less than 60% of the median income was estimated at 16.07%.

In 2009 (year of survey: 2010), 14.2% of the Swiss population lives in relative poverty with a 60% threshold according to Eurostat data. Some types of households are more vulnerable than others, especially individuals living alone with an equivalised disposal income below 2400CHF per month or households with two children with an equivalised disposal income below 5000 CHF per month⁴⁶.

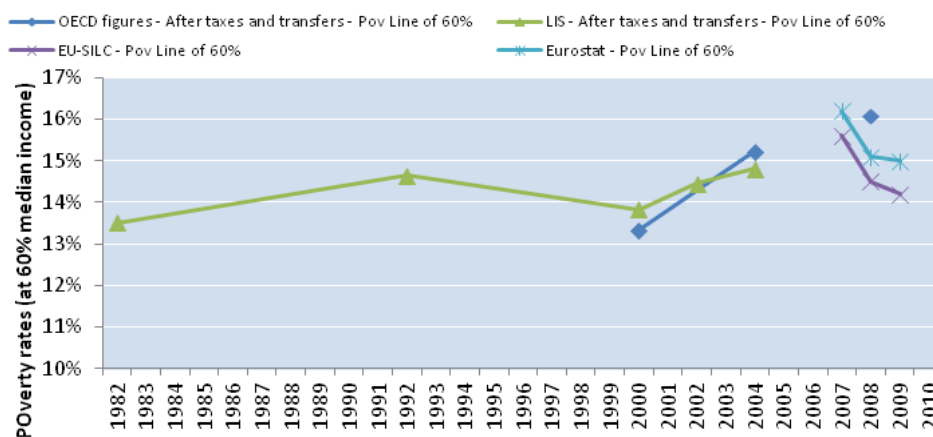
In 2009 and according to EU-SILC, it is interesting to note that the share of Swiss population living with 50% of the equivalised median income is estimated at 7.6% whereas this rate is nearly doubled to 14.2% when the threshold is fixed at 60%. This means that a significant number of people are between the 50% and the 60% threshold and could be out of the at-risk-of poverty if they could get slightly higher earnings⁴⁷.

⁴⁵ "Growing Unequal? Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries (2008)", OECD, Paris.

⁴⁶ Swiss Statistics Office, Press Release n° 0351-1112-80, « Les ménages avec enfants ont plus de difficultés à faire face à une dépense imprévue », 15-12-2011, in French only,

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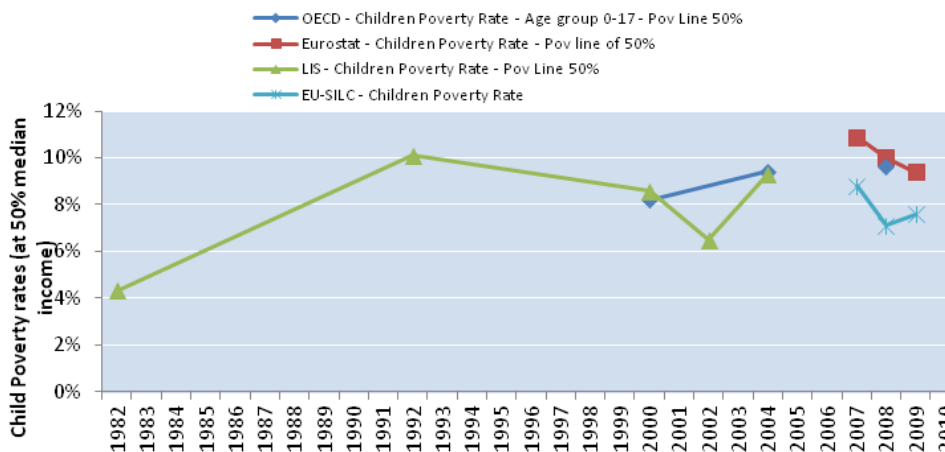
Figure 66. Trends in poverty rates at 60% median income threshold



Child poverty rates are a little higher than those for the total population. The below graph is presenting children poverty rates from 1982 to 2009. However, the trend is similar than for the poverty rates for the total population.

For the period 2000-2004, the OECD children poverty rates are similar with the ones estimated by the Luxembourg Income Survey. In 2004, the children poverty rate was estimated at 9.43% according to the OECD, one percentage point higher than for the total population. In 2008, this rate rose to 9.26% but, as explained previously, comparisons are not possible between 2004 and 2008. This OECD rate is very similar than the rates calculated by Eurostat and EU-SILC.

Figure 67. Trends in Child poverty rates (50% median income threshold)



2.2 Wages

See Part II of the present Quality Review.

3. Consistency of income components shares with alternative data sources

3.1. Comparison of main aggregates: earnings, self-employment income, capital income, transfers and direct taxes

Table 2 shows shares of income components for the latest available year, according to the OECD benchmark series. Unfortunately, such information is not available for the other data sources described in table 1.

Table 2. Shares of income components in total disposable income, OECD reference series

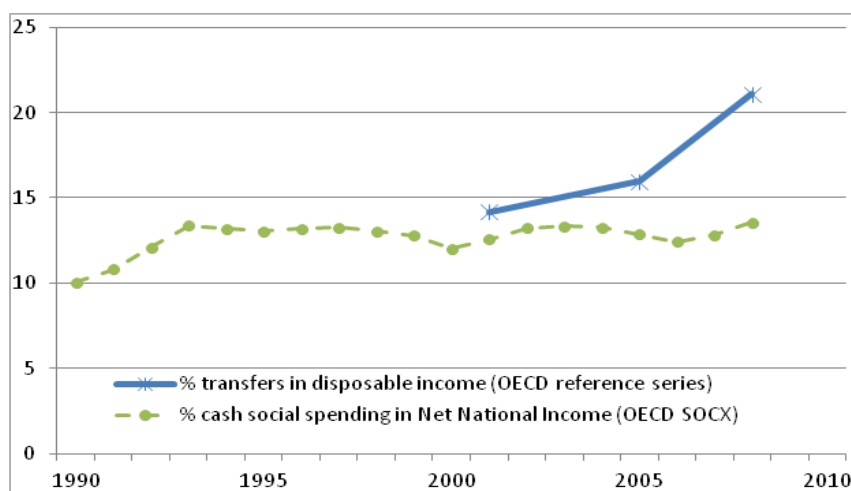
	Survey	Year	Unit	Average income			Average income		K	SE	TR	TA	HDI
				EH	ES	EO	Wages	Capital	Self Employment	Transfers	Taxes	Disposable income (HDI)	
OECD reference survey		2008	natcur	43265	11052	4442	58760	3793	6676	12662	-21833	60058	
			% av HDI	72.0%			97.8%	6.3%	11.1%	21.1%	-36.4%		

Table 3 below lists the detailed income components which have been included in the OECD series for Switzerland 2000 and 2004.

Table 3. Definition and classification of income components from ERC/EBM

EH	<i>Revenus issus d'activités salariées de la personne de référence</i>	
ES	<i>Revenus issus d'activités salariées du partenaire de la personne de référence</i>	
EO	<i>Revenus issus d'activités salariées des autres personnes du ménage</i>	
	1	Salaires (mois 1 à 12) des employés, sans suppléments, avant déductions (brut)
	2	Salaires (13 et 14ème) des employés, sans suppléments, avant déductions sociales (brut)
	3	Participations aux bénéfices, tantièmes (bruts)
	4	Indemnités de résidence (brut)
	5	Gratifications, primes de fidélité et au rendement (brut)
	7	Pourboires encaissés (nets)
	8	Indemnités pour travail irrégulier ou pénible et jetons de présence à tout employé (brut)
	9	Revenus des membres des autorités de la Confédération, des cantons et des communes (brut)
	10	Indemnités de départ, de vacances ou pour jours fériés (brut)
	11	Prestations en nature de l'employeur
K	<i>Revenus de la fortune</i>	
	22	Recettes (nettes) issues de la location de terrains
	23	Intérêts, dividendes
	24	Rentes issues d'assurances-vie (fortune)
	42	Rentes supplémentaires privées, issues de transferts
	50	Indemnités des assurances privées non obligatoires
SE	<i>Revenus issus d'activités indépendantes et revenus de la location</i>	
	6	Salaires des employés de leur propre entreprise, sans suppléments, avant déductions (brut)
	12	Prélèvements dans la caisse de l'entreprise propre, utilisés pour les besoins du ménage (net)
	13	Paiements directs d'acquisitions du ménage par la caisse/les comptes de l'entreprise propre
	15	Revenus (nets) issus d'activités économiques informelles du ménage
	16	Autoproduction du ménage pour sa propre consommation (jardin, clapier, entreprise propre, etc.)
	17	Sous-location (brute) du logement principal loué, à des tiers
	18	Sous-location (brute) des résidences secondaires louées, à des tiers
	19	Location (brute) du logement principal en propriété, à des tiers
	20	Location (brute) des résidences secondaires en propriété, à des tiers
	21	Location (nette) de biens immobiliers en possession du ménage, uniquement destinés à l'usage par des tiers
TR	<i>Prestations sociales</i>	
odsb	25	Rentes ordinaires de l'AVS/AI
odsb	26	Prestations complémentaires de l'AVS/AI
odsb	27	Rentes extraordinaires de l'AVS/AI
odsb	28	Allocations pour imputés de l'AVS/AI
odsb	29	Rentes de caisses de pension (PP)
UB	30	Indemnités de l'assurance-chômage (IAC)
OIDB	31	Indemnités journalières des assurances accidents et maladie professionnelles (PM AAMP)
OIDB	32	Indemnités journalières des caisses maladie et accidents privées (PM AM)
FCB	33	Allocations familiales fédérales, pour les agriculteurs (AFf)
FCB	34	Allocations familiales liées au besoin (Afc)(allocations de maternité, de naissance, pour enfant)
UB	36	Indemnités pour chômeurs en fin de droit
OCB	37	Subsides pour le paiement des primes de l'assurance-maladie (SPAM)
HB	38	Subsides pour le paiement du loyer (SPL)
OTH	39	Indemnités pour perte de gain durant le service militaire et de protection civile (APG)
OTH	40	Prestations monétaires de l'assurance militaire (PM AMil)
OTH	41	Autres prestations cantonales et communales: assistance sociale (ASS), aide aux victimes d'infractions, prestations supp
OTH	47	Bourses d'études, subsides à la formation
OTH	49	Pensions alimentaires
TA		
	821	Assurances-veillesse et survivants (AVS)/-invalidité (AI)/-perte de gain (APG)
	822	Assurance-chômage (AC)
	823	Assurance-accidents professionnelle (LAA)
	824	Caisse de pension (LPP)
	825	Autres assurances sociales des personnes actives
	829	Assurance-maladie de base
	830	Assurance hospitalière complémentaire
	831	Autres assurances-maladie et -accidents complémentaires
	843	Impôt fédéral direct
	844	Impôts cantonaux sur le revenu et la fortune
	845	Impôts communaux, paroissiaux et autres sur le revenu et la fortune
	846	Impôts cantonaux, communaux, paroissiaux et autres confondus
	847	Impôts à la source

Figure 8 compares the trend in shares of public cash transfers in equivalised disposable income from the OECD reference series with the share of total cash social spending in net national income, reported from the OECD Social Expenditure database (OECD SOCX). OECD SOCX series include pensions, incapacity, family, unemployment, social assistance. Both series show somewhat different trend, with the OECD SOCX data suggesting more stability.

Figure 8 Trends in shares of public social transfers

4. Metadata of data sources which could explain differences and inconsistencies

Definitions, methodology, data treatment

Only minor differences appear between the OECD reference series and the results from different other data sources for Switzerland. Some data between the Eurostat database and the nationally published EU-SILC results can be slightly different but the variations remain small.

One remaining issue to resolve can be found in the way pension benefits from the second and third pillar are classified between either public transfers or private transfers/savings/capital income. Currently, pension benefits are treated only as public transfers when they are provided by the state (i.e. the first pillar), while they are considered as private transfer/capital income when provided by the second or third pillar. Consequently, contributions to the second and third pillar are not counted (and deducted) as “direct taxes” (income taxes and social security contributions). This raises an issue as the second-pillar pensions in Switzerland are compulsory and considered part of the public redistribution system in the country. Also, the series provided by Eurostat seemingly includes occupational pensions in “public transfers”. On the other hand, benefits from obligatory and the completely private part of the pension pillar cannot be separated in the data. Furthermore, in other data provisions to the OECD (e.g. Taxing Wages, see Taxing Wages 2009/10, p. 521-522 (www.oecd.org/ctp/taxingwages), the Swiss authorities do not include the contributions paid to the second pillar as social security contributions.

This issue does not impede on the indicators for disposable income but has effects on calculated redistributive effects when comparing pre- and post tax/transfer estimates as table 4 shows.

Table 4 Pre- and post tax/transfer poverty rates according to different classification of 2nd pillar pensions

Threshold = 50% of the current median income (relative poverty)		2 nd pillar as capital	2 nd pillar as transfers
Before taxes and transfers	headcount ratio	7.4%	10.2%
	median pov gap	48.2%	64.9%
After taxes and transfers	headcount ratio	6.7%	6.7%
	median pov gap	21.2%	21.2%

5. Summary evaluation

Overall, the OECD time-series for Switzerland match very well with the other available time series. This is particularly relevant when comparing Gini coefficients and poverty rates.

However, the main concern is the lack of time span between the different time-series which prevent from deepening data comparisons. The reasons can be summarised as the following:

- First, the OECD data for Switzerland are only available for three years: 2000, 2004 and 2008;
- Second, the OECD data estimated in 2008 cannot be compared with the 2000-2004 because of the break in the series. General trends over a long time period cannot be drawn due to this break.
- Third, from the period 2000-2004, the OECD is referring to the Income and Consumption Survey handled by the Swiss Federal Statistics Office. The Luxembourg Income Survey is the only survey where data can be found over this period and it is also based on the national Income and Consumption Survey.
- Fourth, the OECD data calculated in 2008 is based on EU-SILC. Therefore, doing comparisons with EU-SILC and Eurostat is somewhat biased given the fact that data on poverty and income inequalities have been only estimated at the European level, in collaboration with the Federal Statistics Office, since 2008 (income year: 2007).

References

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