

INED SURVEYS

ELFE

FRENCH LONGITUDINAL STUDY FROM BIRTH
(ETUDE LONGITUDINALE FRANÇAISE DEPUIS L'ENFANCE)

[www.elfe-france.fr /index.php/en/](http://www.elfe-france.fr/index.php/en/)



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Elfe is the first nationwide longitudinal study in France to follow a cohort of children from birth to adulthood. All the children were born in metropolitan France in 2011. The study focuses on several aspects of their lives from social science, health and environmental perspectives.

Observing children born the same year throughout the first twenty years of their lives is a unique way of understanding what influences their development and how they find their place in society.

One hundred and fifty researchers are involved in the project, studying children's health, schooling, family and social life, what they eat, and their environment.



THE TEAM

The *ELFE* mixed unit (Ined-Inserm-EFS) is composed by researchers issued from a wide range of disciplines. It is headed by INSERM physician and epidemiologist Marie-Aline Charles; sociology professor Bertrand Geay from the University of Picardie is assistant director.

More than 150 researchers throughout France are collaborating on the *ELFE* study by way of over 80 research projects.



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SCIENTIFIC OBJECTIVES AND ISSUES

Research conducted in the framework of the *ELFE* study will provide French policymakers with the indicators they need to design well adapted family and health policies. Its longitudinal dimension makes it well suited to answer a wide range of questions raised by parents and scientists on children's well-being and development, including:

- At what age should children start being fed a more diverse diet? What influence does this have on the child's later food preferences and health?
- How does type of early childcare affect a child's relations with other children, integration into preschool, and language acquisition?
- How do information technology use, sports, and cultural activities impact on a child's physical and intellectual development?
- What family, economic and sociocultural factors condition success throughout schooling?
- Do today's children grow at the same pace as those of previous generations?

METHODOLOGY

The *ELFE* cohort is made up of 18,336 children born in 2011—from 1 to 4 April, 27 June to 4 July, 27 September to 4 October, and 28 November to 5 December. All randomly selected children born on those dates in one of metropolitan France's 344 maternity hospitals or clinics was eligible to participate on condition of parental consent. 51 % of mothers asked agreed to do so. A minimum of information was collected from mothers who declined to participate in order to weight the sample.

Most of the data was collected through interviews with parents (telephone surveys, mail and internet questionnaires). The children themselves were brought in from age 3 and a half via a home visit and questionnaires in the form of internet games. At key stages of development, biological samples were collected from a sub-sample of consenting families, and environmental conditions were measured in some households.

The different research stage surveys were carried out by professional interviewers. Some specific data collections are done by professionals in the relevant

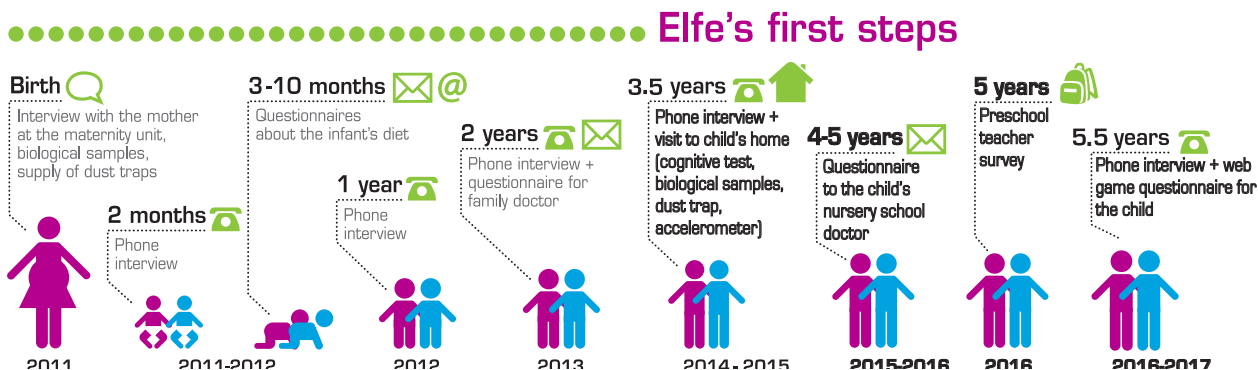
field: caregivers for observation in preschool, physicians during the collection of more technical information on children's growth, vaccinations, psychomotor development, etc., and teachers for observation of child learning.

Data access

ELFE study data are available to any public or private French or foreign research team on condition of working on an established research project and in compliance with the conditions specified in the data access charter.

Requests for data should be filed on Pandora, a secure internet platform providing all necessary information on the survey and database:

<https://pandora.vjf.inserm.fr/public/>





INITIALS FINDINGS

Findings from *ELFE* cohort data have been published in scientific journals and presented by researchers at conferences. See:

<http://www.elfe-france.fr/index.php/fr/cote-recherche/publications>

IN THE AREA OF HEALTH

- The survey shows that 70% of mothers in France breastfeed at the maternity hospital, one of the lowest figures for Europe, though it has risen considerably since the 1970s.

Kersuzan C., Gojard S., Tichit C., Thierry X., Wagner S., Nicklaus S., Geay B., Charles M.-A., Lioret S., Lauzon-Guillain B. (de). "Prévalence de l'allaitement à la maternité selon les caractéristiques des parents et les conditions de l'accouchement. Résultats de l'enquête Elfe maternité, France métropolitaine, 2011", *BEH* 27, pp. 440-449, October 2014.

- In accordance with recommendations, BCG vaccination before the age of 3 months is higher in Île de France (59.5%) than for children at risk outside that region (46.7%).

Guthmann J.-P., Ragot M., Ben Boutieb M., Bois C., Dufourg M.-N., Levy Bruhl D., « Couverture vaccinale et déterminants socioéconomiques de la vaccination BCG chez l'enfant avant 3 mois : résultats de la cohorte Elfe, 2011 », *Revue d'Epidémiologie et de Santé Publique*, volume 64, n° 4, septembre 2016.

IN THE ENVIRONMENT

- The 3,000 *ELFE* children's bedrooms in which dust-collectors were installed resulted in six different

profiles of microorganism contamination in the first months of children's lives, profiles that vary by geographical location, type of housing, number of occupants, and presence of pets.

Rocchi S., Reboux G., Frossard V., Scherer E., Valot B., Laboissiere A., Zaros C., Vacheyrou M., Gillet F., Roussel S., Raherison C., Millon L., and the Elfe team. "Microbiological characterization of 3193 French dwellings of Elfe cohort children", *The Science of the Total Environment*, 505C, pp. 1026-1035, February 2015.

IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

- Researchers have observed that certain socio-economic factors, particularly mother's educational attainment, are related to low birthweight.

Panico L., Tô M., Thévenon O., «What is the link between mothers' level of education and low birthweight?», *Population & Societies* 523, June 2015.

AT THE INTERSECTION OF SEVERAL FIELDS

- The number of formulas for infants available on the market is very high but little information is provided on how to choose. Formula use was analysed for *ELFE* cohort children aged 2 months in connection with family characteristics, child's health, and socio-demographic factors.

Lauzon-Guillain B.(de), Davaisse-Paturet C., Lioret S., et al., "Use of infant formula in the *ELFE* study: The association with social and health-related factors", *Maternal & Child Nutrition*, 2017.