The ISSP Standard Background Variables (June 2001)

(edited 2006-04-25, Markus Quandt: removed a few formatting errors; adapted RINCOME/INCOME to the current country specific definition of the Standard Setups since module 2006; added common missing value codes for the country specific variables.)

The paper sets out the ISSP core background variables agreed upon at the 2001 ISSP meeting in Umeå. The background variables are compulsory except of nat_ETHN. They should be used beginning with the ISSP module 2002 ‘Family III’.

The first part is the list of variables and gives an overview. The variable names in bold are the variable names also used in statistical packages (e.g. SPSS), the first line of text following the variable names are used as variable labels in statistical packages (e.g. SPSS).

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*(if R not working ask most recent job)*
Variables in detail:

SEX  R: sex
Sex of respondent

1. Male
2. Female
9. No answer

AGE  R: Age
Age of respondent

exact age
99. No answer

MARITAL  R: Marital status
Marital status of respondent (legal status)

1. Married
2. Widowed
3. Divorced
4. Separated (married but separated / not living with legal spouse)
5. Single, never married
9. No answer

Comment: The aim of this variable is to measure the ‘legal’ status. Cohabitation should be asked separately

Further points to consider in this context are:

- The current procedure in some countries mixes legal status and cohabitation up
- The category ‘Single’ should be ‘NEVER married’. Is this always clear in the respective languages?
- If the question just asks whether respondents are married, we still do not know if they are living with this partner. Do respondents then get asked whether they are or not?
- Are respondents really followed through these questions considering the correct filter-instructions?
- ‘Married’ should be ‘married AND living together with spouse’, otherwise ‘separated’ should be coded.

COHAB  R: Steady life-partner
(If not married and living together with spouse)
Do you live together with a partner?

1. Yes
2. No
9. No answer
0. NAP (living together with spouse - Code 1 in MARITAL)
**Comment:** This additional variable measures the dimension not included in the variable MARITAL: living together with a partner but not being married. It is still open whether what the ISSP wants is ‘living together’ or ‘having a steady life-partner’ or both. The life partner may not be someone you live with. This is one reason for the great variance in frequency-distributions for this variable. Another reason is how respondents are filtered. It must be clear that all respondents are asked this question who are not living together with their legal spouse i.e. code 1 in MARITAL.

**EDUCYRS**  
R: Education I: years in school  
Education I - years (of full time) schooling including university but not vocational training

- 95. Still at school  
- 96. Still at College/University  
- 98. Don't know  
- 99. No answer  
- 0. No formal schooling

**Comment:** It should be documented clearly whether this variable has been asked directly to the respondent or whether it has been derived from the nat_DEGREE variable. If vocational training is a substantial part of the education with some kind of every-day schooling, it should be included whereas vocational training with only a few hours in school per week should not be counted.

**DEGREE**  
R: Education II: categories  
Education II - highest education level / degree

The DEGREE of education should be ASKED country-specific, NOT using the ISSP categories in the questions to the respondents. These ISSP categories should be computed from the country-specific degrees (nat_DEGREE)

- 0. No formal qualification  
- 1. Lowest formal qualification attainable  
- 2. Qualifications which are above the lowest qualification, but below the usual entry requirement for universities (intermediary secondary completed)  
- 3. (Usual) Entry requirement for universities (higher secondary completed: the German Abitur, the French Bac, English A-level, etc.)  
- 4. Qualifications which are above the higher secondary level, but below a full university degree  
- 5. University degree completed  
- 9. No answer

**nat_DEGR**  
Country-specific degrees of education  
(Original categories should be translated into English)

- 0. not available  
- 9/99. No answer
WRKST  R: Current employment status
Current employment status, current economic position, main source of living

SPWRKST  S-P: Current employment status
Spouse / partner: current employment status, current economic position, main source of living

1. Employed - full time
2. Employed - part time
3. Employed - less than part time / temporarily out of work
4. Helping family member
5. Retired

Not in labour force

6. Unemployed
7. Student / in school / in vocational training
8. Housewife / home duties
9. Permanently disabled
10. Others not in labour force
99. No answer

only for SPWRKST:
00. INAP (no spouse, no partner - Code 2-9 in MARITAL or 2, 9 in COHAB)

ISCO88  R: Occupation ISCO 1988

SPISCO88  S-P: Occupation ISCO
Spouse / partner: occupation

Ask ISCO88, SPISCO88 of most recent job (if R or Spouse has no current job)

Occupation - four digit 1988 ISCO / ILO occupation code

99997. Refused
99998. Don't know, inadequately described
99999. No answer
00000. INAP (never had a job)

Only for SPISCO:
00000. INAP (no spouse, no partner - Code 2-9 in MARITAL or 2, 9 in COHAB)

WRKTYPE  R: Working for private sector, public sector or self-employed

SPWRKTYP  Spouse: Working for private sector, public sector or self-employed

Ask WRKTYPE, SPWRKTYP of most recent job (if R has no current job)

1. Works for government
2. Works for publicly owned firm
3. Does not work for government or publicly owned firm, and not self employed
4. Self employed
9. No answer
0. INAP (Never had a job)

Only for SPWRKTYP:
0. Never had a job, INAP (no spouse, no partner - Code 2-9 in MARITAL or 2, 9 in COHAB)

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**NEMPLOY**  R: Self-employed: how many employees
(If self employed) Do you have any employees, how many?
(exact number of employees)

Ask NEMPLOY of most recent job (if R has no current job)

9999. No answer
0. INAP (Code 0, 1-3, 9 in WRKTYPE)

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**WRKHRS**  R: Hours worked weekly
Working hours - number of hours (usually) worked weekly

97. Refused
98. Don't know
99. No answer
00. INAP (currently not in labour force - Code 5-99 in WRKST)

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**WRKSUP**  R: Supervise
Supervises others at work
Do you supervise the work of any other people?

Proposal: … supervise or are you held responsible …

Ask WRKSUP of most recent job (if R has no current job)

1. Yes
2. No
7. Refused
8. Don't know
9. No answer
0. INAP (Never had a job)

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**nat_RINC**  R: Earnings – country specific
Respondent's earnings

**nat_INC**  Family income – country specific
Family income

000000. No income, (some countries: not in paid work)
999997. Refused
999998. Don't know
999999. No answer

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**ATTEND**  R: Religious services - how often
Attendance of religious services

People with 'no religion' should not be excluded from this question.

1. Several times a week
2. Once a week
3. 2 or 3 times a month
4. Once a month
5. Several times a year
6. Once a year
7. Less frequently
8. Never
97. Refused
98. Don't know
99. No answer

(If codes '2' and '3' cannot be distinguished, '2' will be coded)

RELIG R: Religious denomination

Question:
What is your religious preference?
[Alternatively: To which religious denomination do you belong?]
[Also possible: Do you belong to a religious group or community, a denomination, or a church? - 1 Yes; 2 No; If yes: Which one is that?]

Coding scheme:

0  No religion
100  ROMAN CATHOLIC

200  PROTESTANT
210  Episcopalian, Anglican, Church of England, Church of Ireland
220  Baptists
230  Congregationalists
240  European Free Church (Anabaptists)
250  Lutheran
260  Methodist
270  Pentecostal
280  Presbyterian
290  Other Protestant (no specific religion mentioned)
300  ORTHODOX
310  Greek Orthodox
320  Russian Orthodox
390  Orthodox (no specific religion mentioned)
400  OTHER CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS
401-489  Specific Christian Groups
490  Unspecified Christian Religion
500  JEWISH
510  Orthodox
520  Conservative
530  Reformist
590 Jewish Religion general (no specific group mentioned)
600 ISLAM
610 Kharijism
620 Mu'tazilism
630 Sunni
640 Shi'ism
650 Isma'ili
660-689 Other Muslim Religions
690 Muslim; Mohammedan; Islam (no specific religion mentioned)

700 BUDDHISM
701-789 Specific Buddhist Groups
790 Buddhism general (no specific group mentioned)

800 HINDUISM
810-889 Specific Groups
890 Hinduism general (no specific group mentioned)

900 OTHER ASIAN RELIGION
901-949 Specific Groups (Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism)
950 Other East Asian Religion (no specific group mentioned)

960 OTHER RELIGIONS

998. Don't know
999. Not answered

RELIGGRP

Derived Variable from the coding scheme above

1. No religion
2. ROMAN CATHOLIC
3. PROTESTANT
4. CHRISTIAN ORTHODOX
5. JEWISH
6. ISLAM
7. BUDDHISM
8. HINDUISM
9. OTHER CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS
10. OTHER EASTERN RELIGIONS
11. OTHER RELIGIONS

98. Don't know
99. Not answered

TOPBOT R: Top-Bottom self-placement

1. Lowest
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10. Highest

99. No answer

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**UNION**  
R: Trade union membership  
Is or was R member of a trade union?

1. Currently member  
2. Once member, not now  
3. Never member  
9. No answer

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**PARTY_LR**  
R: party affiliation: left - right  
Party affiliation – to be ASKED country-specific, NOT using the ISSP categories. These should be computed from the country-specific parties (nat_PRTY) into the scheme below by the data-producer.

1. Far left (communist etc.)  
2. Left / centre left  
3. Centre / liberal  
4. Right / conservative  
5. Far right (fascist etc.)  
6. Other  
7. No party, no preference  
8. Don't know  
9. No answer

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**nat_PRTY**  
R: party affiliation – country-specific  
National parties mentioned are coded country-specific. Names and abbreviations for parties should be supplied in original language and also in English. The position of Parties in the left-right-scheme should be supplied as well for the construction of PRTY_LR.

0. Not available  
9/99. No answer

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**VOTE_LE**  
Did R vote in last general election?

1. Yes  
2. No  
9. No answer

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**HOMPOP**  
How many persons in household
Number of people in household

01. One person
02. Two persons

99. No answer

HHCYCLE Household cycle
Household composition: adults and children (less than 18 years)

01. Single
02. One adult and one child
03. One adult and two children
04. One adult and three or more children
05. Two adults
06. Two adults and one child
07. Two adults and two children
08. Two adults and three or more children
09. Three adults
10. Three adults with children
11. Four adults
12. Four adults with children
13. Five adults
14. Five adults with children
15. Six adults
16. Six adults with children
17. Seven adults
18. Seven adults with children
19. Eight adults
20. Eight adults with children
21. Nine adults
22. Nine adults with children
23. Ten adults
24. Ten adults with children
25. Eleven adults
26. Eleven adults with children
27. Twelve adults
28. Twelve adults with children
95. Otherwise
99. No answer

URBRURAL Urban - Rural
Type of community: urban / rural - self-assessed by R

1. a big city
2. the suburbs or outskirts of a big city
3. a town or a small city
4. a country village
5. a farm or home in the country
9. No answer
nat_SIZE    Size of community - country-specific

0. not available
9/99. No answer

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nat_REG    Region

0. not available
9/99. No answer

Country specific - codes should be supplied together with data and further documentation.

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WEIGHT    Weighting factor

1. No weighting

Comment: Details about construction of the weight are necessary

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MODE    Administrative mode of data-collection (OR data collection method)

The scheme developed in discussions between members of the, the modes demographics group, the archive and the secretariat covers both data collection methods permitted in the ISSP and methods not currently permitted.

If we keep the entire scheme we will therefore regularly have categories no one in the ISSP uses, nor is allowed to use. The methods permitted in the ISSP context run from numbers 1.0 to 3.4 below. Further data collection methods are described in 4.0 to 6.3.

We propose to drop those from 4.0 to 6.3 in the ISSP compulsory background variables set-up.

Notes should be attached as necessary to remind members what one or the other category actually refers to (e.g. 1.1 and 1.2 below).

10-19 Face-to-face, paper and pencil

10 No visuals
11 Visuals
12 Respondent reading questionnaire
13 Interpreter or translator - no visuals
14 Interpreter or translator – visuals

20-29 Face-to-face, computer-assisted

20 No visuals
21 Visuals
22 Respondent reading questionnaire (paper or on monitor)
23 Interpreter or translator - no visuals
24 Interpreter or translator – visuals

30-39 Self-completion, paper and pencil
30 Arrives with interviewer, interviewer attending
31 Arrives with interviewer, drops-off, picks up later
32 Arrives with interviewer, drops off, mailed back by R
33 Mailed to, complete and hold for pick up
34 Mailed to, mailed back by R

Optional variable:

**nat_ETHN**  Origin country / ethnic group / ethnic identity / family origin

0. not available
9/99. No answer