Implementing the European Social Survey (ESS) in self-completion modes

Meet the Experts! – GESIS online talks

Jan-Lucas Schanze & Oshrat Hochman • May 16, 2022
Speakers

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Logistics

- This talk will be recorded. *We do not record* the Q&A session after the talk.
- Participants are muted during the session.
- Recording and slides will be made publicly available on the GESIS website and on our YouTube channel.
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European Social Survey: Overview

- **Academic cross-national survey**
  Measuring attitudes and behavior

- **9 rounds completed**
  Every two years since 2002/03 - in 38 participating countries
  (latest dataset for round 9 (3.1) with 29 countries)

- **Round 10 data coming soon**
  Due to COVID-19 impact on face-to-face interviews, the first data release is planned for June 2022

- **Face-to-face interviews**
  The questionnaire lasts one-hour and has been translated into 50 languages

- **Over 430,000 interviews completed**

- **Over 192,000 registered users**
  More than 65% of these are students

- **5,429 academic publications**
  Journal articles, books, working and conference papers that analyzed our data have been published (2003-2020)
Participating countries in the ESS

**9 ROUNDS**
1. Belgium
2. Finland
3. France
4. Germany
5. Hungary
6. Ireland
7. The Netherlands
8. Norway
9. Poland
10. Portugal
11. Slovenia
12. Spain
13. Sweden
14. Switzerland
15. United Kingdom

**5 ROUNDS**
23. Bulgaria
24. Cyprus
25. Italy
26. Russia
27. Ukraine

**4 ROUNDS**
28. Greece
29. Iceland
30. Latvia

**3 ROUNDS**
31. Croatia

**8 ROUNDS**
16. Austria
17. Czech Republic
18. Denmark
19. Estonia

**2 ROUNDS**
32. Albania
33. Luxembourg
34. Romania
35. Turkey

**6 ROUNDS**
20. Israel
21. Lithuania
22. Slovakia

**1 ROUND**
36. Kosovo
37. Montenegro
38. Serbia
European Social Survey: History

- **First funded in 2001**
  Funded by the European Commission

- **Won Descartes Prize (2005)**
  The first social science project to win the research prize

- **Became European Research Infrastructure Consortium (2013)**
  Currently the highest number of members (25) of any ERIC

- **Lijphart/Przeworski/Verba (LPV) Dataset Award 2020**
  Awarded the LPV by the Comparative Politics Section of the American Political Science Association (APSA)

  “When considering new policies, governments in the past were often ignorant of their citizens’ preferences and needs. Now European governments have a source for counteracting that ignorance.”

  Professor Sir Roger Jowell CBE
  Co-founder of the ESS
European Social Surveys: Aims

- Provide high quality data about stability and change in social, political, economic, and religious attitudes and behaviors of Europeans
- Advance the state of the art in comparative cross-national survey methodology and promote their implementation
- A special focus is placed on questionnaire development, translation, sampling, standards of data-collection, and data preparation and documentation
European Social Survey: Core Scientific Team (CST)

1. HQ: City, University of London (UK)
2. GESIS - Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences (Germany)
3. NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data (Norway)
4. SCP - The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (Netherlands)
5. Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Spain)
6. University of Essex (UK)
7. University of Ljubljana (Slovenia)
In each participating country, the ESS is implemented by national coordinators

ESS publishes survey specifications for each round, and we do our best to implement these, to make sure our data meet the required standards

The specifications include among other guidelines for sampling, fieldwork, translation, data preparation and its anonymization
Our job as ESS National Coordinators

- ESS Dissemination activities
  - Workshops and conferences
    - 4th ESS Conference
  - Translation of Topline Booklets
    - ESS Topline Series
  - Social media
    - @EssDeutschland
What’s in the ESS questionnaire?

- Media use; Internet use; social trust
  6 questions

- Political interest, trust in others / institutions, electoral and other forms of participation, party allegiance, socio-political orientations, immigration
  43 questions

- Subjective wellbeing, social exclusion, crime, religion, perceived discrimination, national and ethnic identity, vote intention in EU referendum
  35 questions

- Socio-demographic profile, including household composition, sex, age, marital status, type of area, education & occupation of respondent, partner, parents, union membership, income and ancestry
  35 questions

- Human Values Scale
  21 questions

- Rotating modules
  *Two sections of approx. 30 questions on a single academic and/or policy concern within Europe*
Rotating Modules Are Selected for Each Round

Round 1
2002/03
- Citizenship
- Immigration

Round 2
2004/05
- Work, family and wellbeing
- Health care seeking
- Economic morality

Round 3
2006/07
- Personal and social wellbeing
- The timing of life

Round 4
2008/09
- Attitudes to age and ageism
- Welfare

Round 5
2010/11
- Work, family and wellbeing in recession
- Trust in justice

Round 6
2012/13
- Personal and social wellbeing
- Understanding and evaluations of democracy

Round 7
2014/15
- Health inequalities
- Immigration

Round 8
2016/17
- Climate change and energy
- Welfare

Round 9
2018/19
- Justice and fairness
- The timing of life

Round 10
2020/21
- Understandings and evaluations of democracy
- Digital social contacts in work and family life
Rotating Modules (Round 10)

Understandings and Evaluations of Democracy
*Approx. 30 questions*

Repeated from Round 6 (2012/13)

- Fair elections/courts, justice system hold government to account;
- Attitudes towards political parties, minority groups, voting in referendums;
- Are political parties punished at elections?
- Government responsibility to protect against poverty/reduce income inequality.

Digital Social Contacts in Work and Family Life
*Approx. 30 questions*

*Brand new module*

- Internet access/skill and smartphone use;
- Intergenerational contact;
- Contact at work, remote working, expectations at work, job satisfaction, work-life conflict.
Evaluations of Democracy

- Obedience and respect for authority are the most important values children should learn
- What [country] needs most is loyalty towards its leaders
- How important do you think it is for democracy in general… that the views of ordinary people prevail over the views of the political elite?
Digital Social Contacts in Work and Family Life

- To what extent would you say that online and mobile communication... makes people feel close to one another?
- How often do you speak with [Parent/Child] such that you can see each other on a screen?
- How often do you communicate in writing with each other via text, email, or messaging apps?
ESS COVID-19 Module
20 questions
Brand new module
• Fielded instead of country-specific questions;
• 10 questions developed by national coordinators and the CST.

Government authority and legitimacy in the age of a pandemic
• 5 questions proposed by a team led by Marc Helbling (University of Bamberg);

COVID-19 conspiracy beliefs and government rule compliance
• 5 questions proposed by Kostas Gemenis (Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies).
Coronavirus

- Coronavirus is the result of deliberate and concealed efforts of some government or organisation
- A small secret group of people is responsible for making all major decisions in world politics
- Is it more important to prioritise public health or economic activity when fighting a pandemic?

- Overall, how satisfied are you with the German government’s handling of the coronavirus pandemic?
- Have you had coronavirus?
- Will you get vaccinated against coronavirus with the vaccine that was approved by the national regulatory authority in [country]?
How to use ESS data?

- ESS Round 10 data will be released in June and November 2022 on the ESS homepage
- Data from all previous rounds is also available online
- The ESS Data Wizard is easy to use and allows to download cumulative data from various rounds and countries
- The new ESS Bibliography Tool to find literature using ESS data also offers the function to filter by ESS items (any many more)
ESS Round 10 in Germany
Starting point in Germany

- Response rates over time

- Despite increasing fieldwork effort & costs
Covid-19 and ESS fieldwork

- Decision to postpone the fieldwork to June 2021
- Decision to switch to self-completion modes
- ESS R10 fieldwork
Switching Modes of Data Collection?

- Will target persons be willing to allow an interviewer into their home during a pandemic?
- Will interviewers be willing to contact multiple households each day?

- Can we reach a similar sample composition with a self-administered data collection?
- Will target persons be willing to complete a 50-minutes survey like the ESS on their own?
- Are responses affected by the mode of data collection?
Internet Use in Germany

Internet use by age groups (ALLBUS Data)

- 18-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70+

Internet use among respondents aged <60 and education (ALLBUS data)

- Up to general high-school
- Intermediate (Occupational) high-school
- Academic high-school education
Previous Findings in Germany

EVS 2017/2018: Comparing F2F and Mixed Mode

- Mixed-Mode: Good response rate (35%) even with the full questionnaire
- Similar sample composition with F2F having a slight edge → similar risk of nonresponse bias
- Underrepresentation of young populations as well as immigrants
- Strong overrepresentation of the highly educated
- Less item nonresponse in F2F
- Very few differences in substantive key variables

ESS Pilot Study (2020)

- Testing a push-to-web design in AT, HU, and RS to prepare the self-completion specifications
  - 2 reminders, unconditional + conditional incentives
- Response rates between 36% to 41%
- Reasonable sample composition when comparing it to F2F
- Comparable level of item nonresponse, some worry about more missing values in key items (household composition, sex)
- Respondents using the PAPI were older and less educated

City University Webinar | Responding to the pandemic: a 3 country self-completion push to web experiment (R. Fitzgerald)
ESS ERIC self-completion design

- Mixed-mode push-to-web design
- PAPI questionnaires sent with 2nd reminder
- 3 standardized reminders sent in total (after week 1, week 3, and week 5)
- Small unconditional prepaid incentives were mandatory (+ conditional incentives recommended)
- CAWI softlaunch with small fraction of target persons 2 weeks ahead of the start of fieldwork
Differences compared to F2F ESS

- Less capacity to motivate target persons during the fieldwork via trained interviewers
  - much more emphasis on letters (first letter + reminders) and incentives
- Less control over ineligibility, non-contacts, reasons for refusal, whether the right person takes part
- Respondents see/read all our questions
Questionnaire

- Shortened ESS questionnaire of approximately 50 minutes
- NC Teams filled in their adapted translations
- Mobile-optimized CAWI layout
Changes in questionnaire

- No Schwarz value scale
- No parental education
- No MTMM questions
- Changing the open questions to increase motivation among participants

News | European Social Survey (ESS)
Item nonresponse

- Answer options “don’t know” or “refusal” were not shown

- First page: Instruction to leave questions blank
Experimental conditions in Germany

A) Mode

Sequential

Simultaneous (50% of 60yrs.+)
## Experimental conditions in Germany

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<th>A) Mode</th>
<th>B) Leaflet in first letter</th>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Simultaneous (50% of 60yrs.+)</td>
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## Experimental conditions in Germany

<table>
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<th>B) Leaflet in first letter</th>
<th>C) Incentive</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No leaflet</td>
<td>5€ prepaid + 10€ postpaid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simultaneous (50% of 60yrs.+)</td>
<td>ESS info leaflet</td>
<td>5€ pre + 10€ post (delayed)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No leaflet</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5€ prepaid</td>
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<td>No leaflet</td>
<td>2,69%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Sequential            | 83,85%                     |
| Simultaneous (50% of 60yrs.+)| 16,15%         |

33,33% 33,33% 33,33% 100%
Conclusion

- Switching modes requires a lot of decisions and hard work
- It is possible to run the ESS in self-completion modes in Germany
- Preliminary findings from the data look very promising (response rate, sample composition, data quality)
- ESS ERIC is considering the issue of mode of data collection for the medium and long-term future – *but* many aspects to consider
Thank you!
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Expert Contact & Data Access

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May 16  Jan-Lucas Schanze, Anja Böller, Oshrat Hochman: Implementing the European Social Survey (ESS) in self-completion modes

May 30  Andrea Lengerer: Familienforschung mit dem Mikrozensus


Jul 18  Adrian Stanciu: Value Measurement in ALLBUS: between Innovation and Replication

Sep 15  Pablo Christmann, Nina Schumann: Das familiendemografische Panel (FReDA): Nutzungspotentiale für die Forschung

Thank you for participating!