

# gesis

Leibniz-Institut  
für Sozialwissenschaften



## 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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- Postdoc in DRS Department at GESIS
- Ph.D. in political science
- Survey methods, hard-to-survey populations
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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** **5 ROUNDS**

- |            |              |
|------------|--------------|
| 1. Belgium | 23. Bulgaria |
| 2. Finland | 24. Cyprus   |
| 3. France  | 25. Italy    |
| 4. Germany | 26. Russia   |
| 5. Hungary | 27. Ukraine  |

- |                    |
|--------------------|
| 6. Ireland         |
| 7. The Netherlands |
| 8. Norway          |
| 9. Poland          |
| 10. Portugal       |
| 11. Slovenia       |
| 12. Spain          |
| 13. Sweden         |
| 14. Switzerland    |
| 15. United Kingdom |

**4 ROUNDS**

- |             |
|-------------|
| 28. Greece  |
| 29. Iceland |
| 30. Latvia  |

**3 ROUNDS**

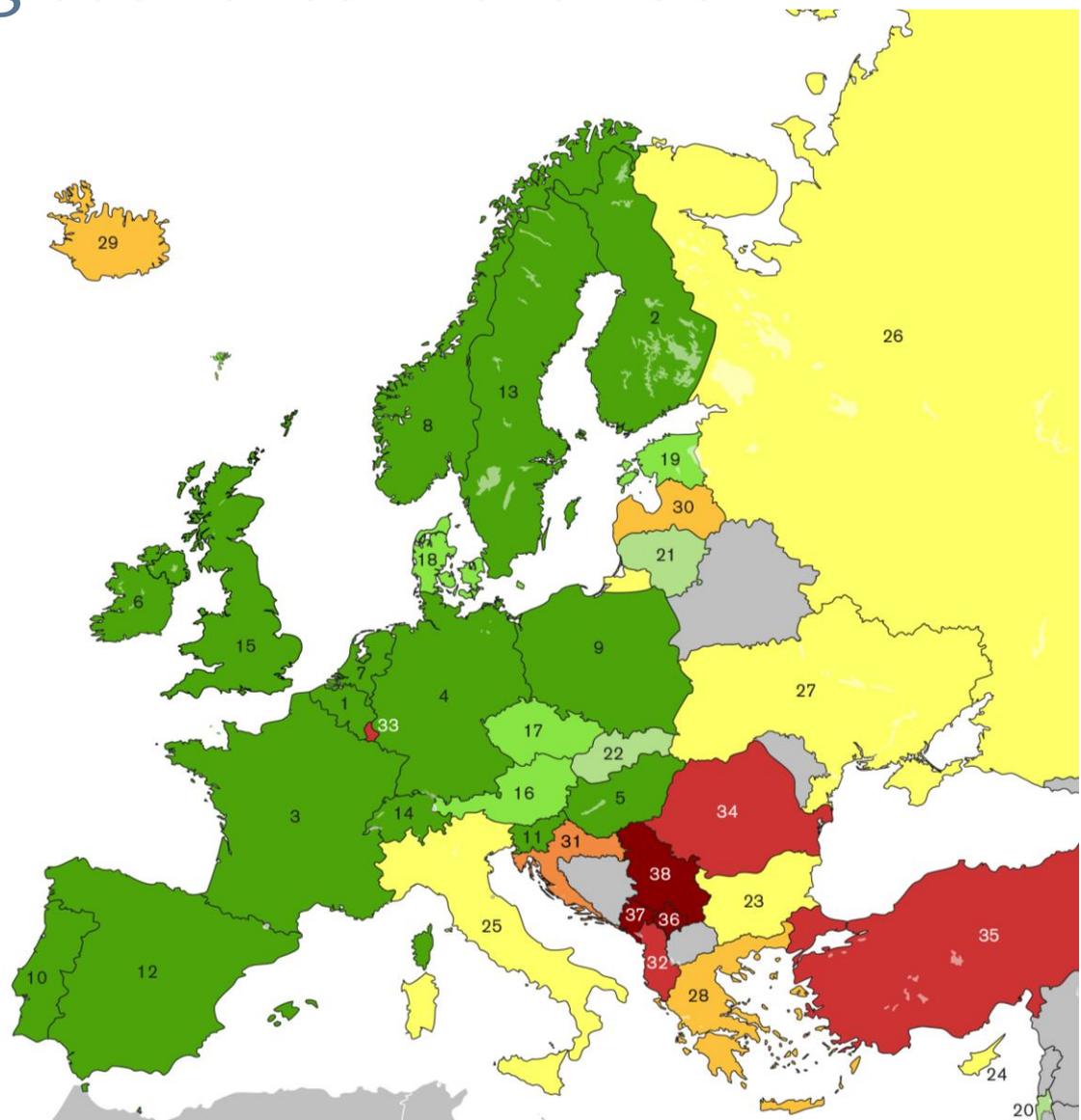
- |             |
|-------------|
| 31. Croatia |
|-------------|

**8 ROUNDS** **2 ROUNDS**

- |                    |                |
|--------------------|----------------|
| 16. Austria        | 32. Albania    |
| 17. Czech Republic | 33. Luxembourg |
| 18. Denmark        | 34. Romania    |
| 19. Estonia        | 35. Turkey     |

**6 ROUNDS** **1 ROUND**

- |               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| 20. Israel    | 36. Kosovo     |
| 21. Lithuania | 37. Montenegro |
| 22. Slovakia  | 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)



# European Social Survey: National Coordinators

- 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
  - ▶ Translation of Topline Booklets
  - ▶ Social media

[4th ESS Conference](#)

[ESS Topline Series](#)

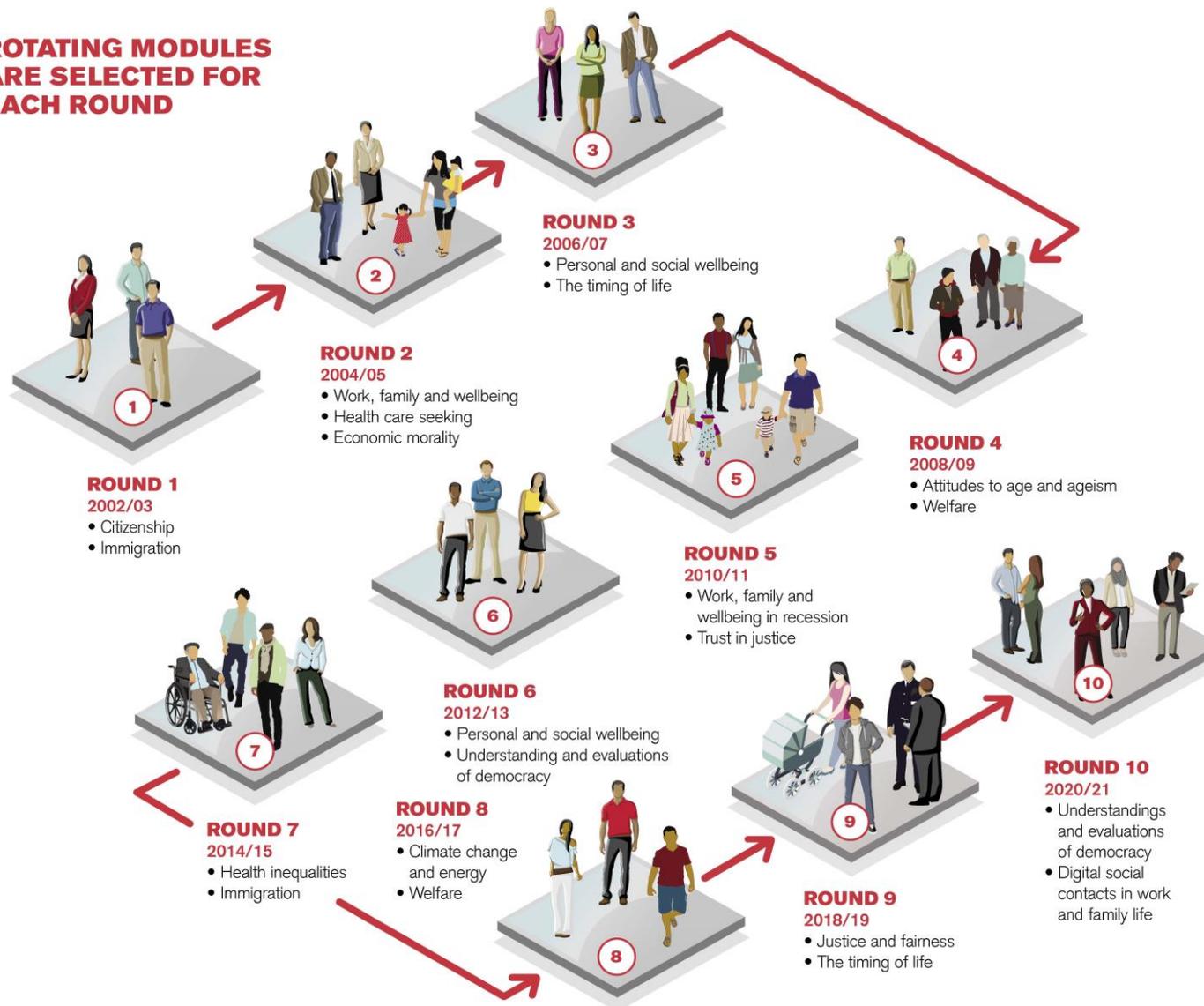
 @EssDeutschland



# 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**



# 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?

# Coronavirus Questions (Round 10)

## **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?

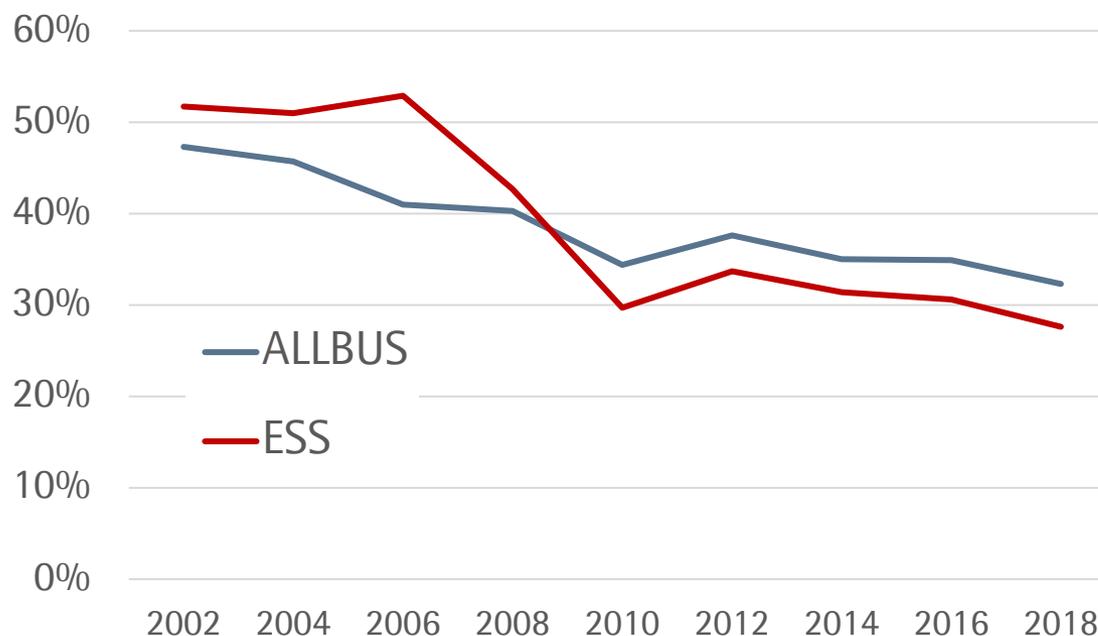
- ESS Round 10 data will be released in June and November 2022 on the [ESS homepage](#)
- Data from all previous rounds is also available online
- The [ESS Data Wizard](#) is easy to use and allows to download cumulative data from various rounds and countries
- The new [ESS Bibliography Tool](#) to find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

# ESS Round 10 in Germany



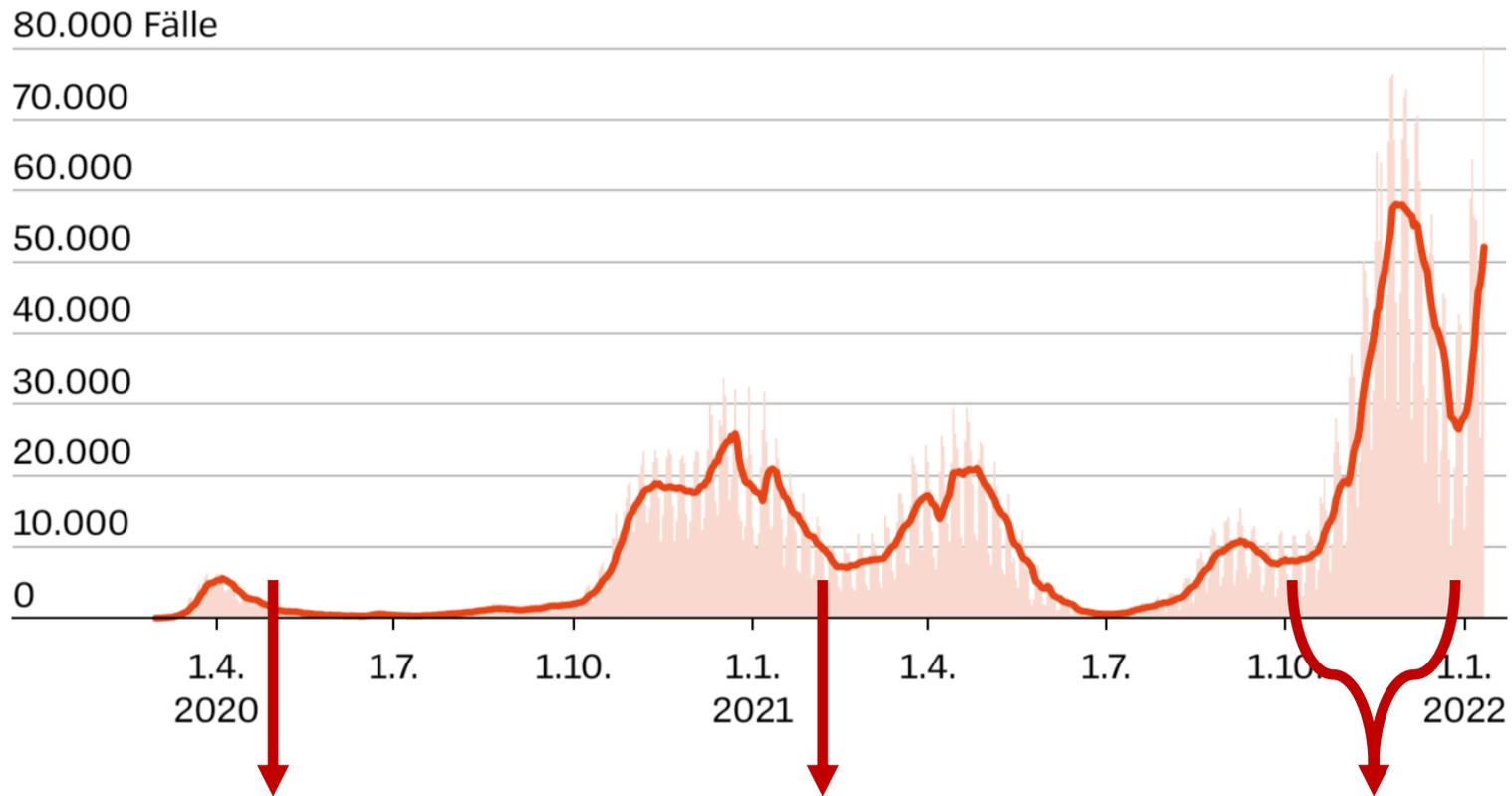
## Starting point in Germany

- 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

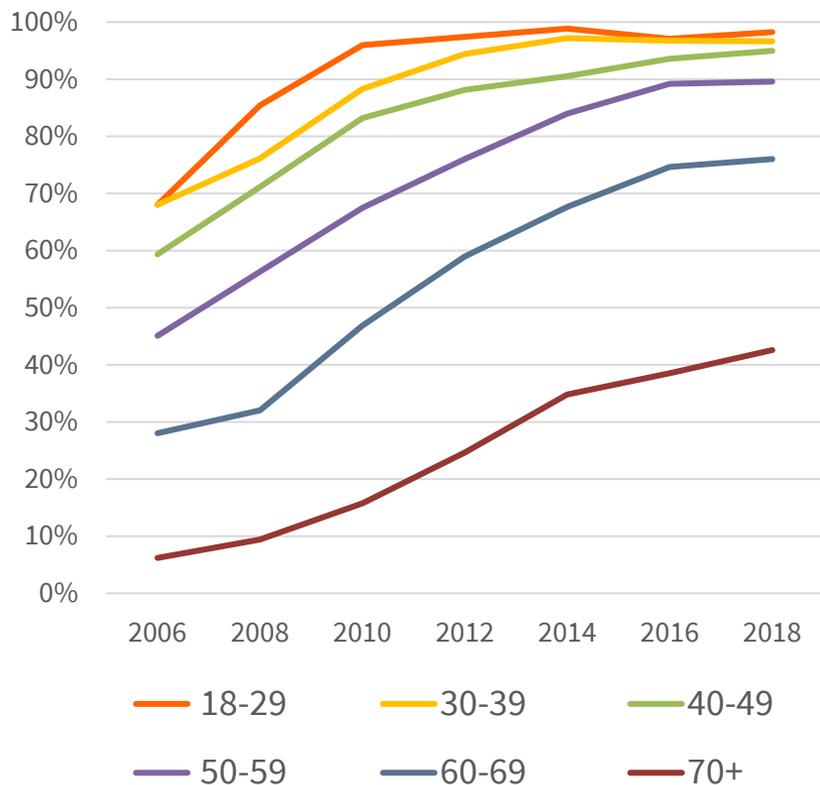
ESS R10 fieldwork

## Switching Modes of Data Collection?

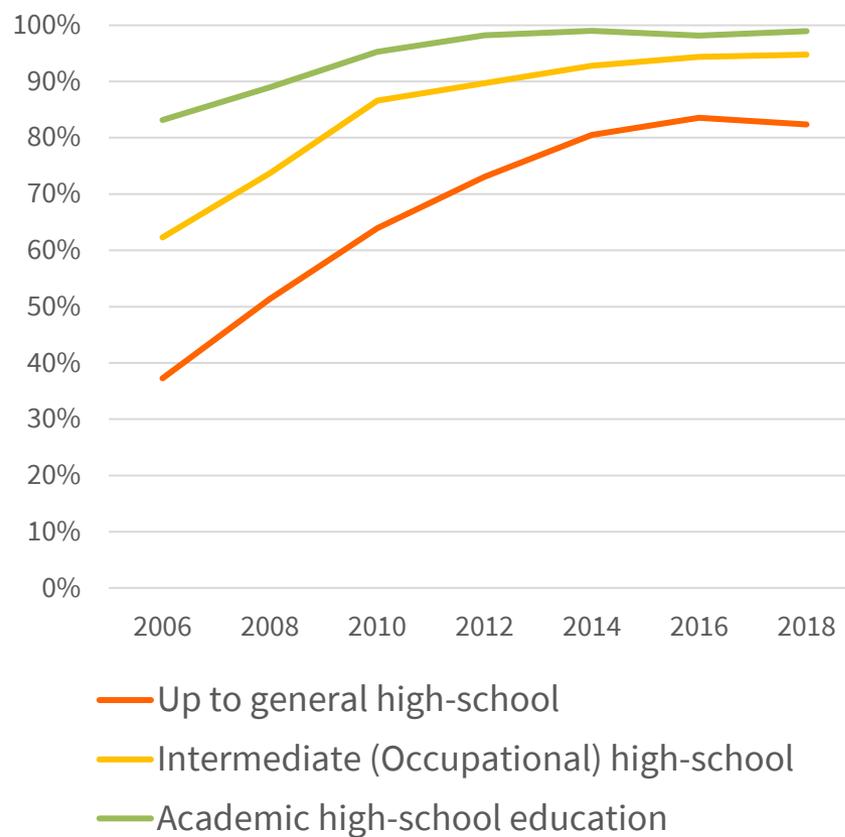
- Will target persons be willing to allow an interviewer into their home during a pandemic?
- Will interviewers be willing to contact multiple households each day?
- Can we reach a similar sample composition with a self-administered data collection?
- Will target persons be willing to complete a 50-minutes 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)



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



# 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

Wolf, C., Christmann, P., Gummer, T., Schnaudt, C., & Verhoeven, S. (2021). Conducting general social surveys as self-administered mixed-mode surveys. *POQ*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfab039>

# 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

**A74** Apart from when you are at religious services, how often, if at all, do you pray?

- Every day
- More than once a week
- Once a week
- At least once a month
- Only on special holy days
- Less often
- Never

**A75** Would you describe yourself as being a member of a group that is discriminated against in this country?

- Yes → Continue to A76 below
- No → Skip to A77 below

**A76** On what grounds is your group discriminated against?

Tick **all** that apply.

- Colour or race
- Nationality
- Religion
- Language
- Ethnic group
- Age
- Gender
- Sexuality
- Disability
- Other: *Please write in*

**A77** Are you a citizen of [Country]?

- Yes
- No

**A78** Were you born in [Country]?

- Yes → Skip to A81 across
- No → Continue to A79 below

**A79** In which country were you born?

**A80** What year did you first come to live in [Country]?

Y	Y	Y	Y
---	---	---	---

**A81** What language or languages do you speak most often at home? Write in a maximum of 2 languages. Include [Country's main language] if this is spoken.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**A82** Do you feel you are part of the same race or ethnic group as most people in [Country]?

- Yes
- No

**A83** Was your father born in [Country]?

- Yes → Skip to A85 below
- No → Continue to A84 below

**A84** In which country was your father born?

\_\_\_\_\_

**A85** Was your mother born in [Country]?

- Yes → Skip to A87 below
- No → Continue to A86 below

**A86** In which country was your mother born?

\_\_\_\_\_

► Thank you for answering our questions so far. Now some questions on different topics.

**A87** Do you think that climate change is caused by natural processes, human activity, or both?

- Entirely by natural processes
- Mainly by natural processes
- About equally by natural processes and human activity → Continue to A88 on page 10
- Mainly by human activity
- Entirely by human activity
- I don't think climate change is happening → Skip to A90 on page 10

# 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

We are very grateful that you are taking the time to complete our questionnaire.

Please complete the questionnaire using **BLACK** or **BLUE INK**

If you do not know the answer to a question or would prefer not to give an answer, you may leave the question blank.

If you make a mistake or change your mind, please completely fill the box or circle  to show the mistake and then tick the correct answer.

### ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS FIRST:

Are you the person aged 15 or over in your household who has the next birthday?

- Yes
- No

**IF ‘NO’:** Please ask the person aged 15 or over who has the next birthday to complete the survey. When they start, they should change the answer here to ‘Yes’.

**A2** Is it more important for go<sup>vt</sup> monitor and track the public or t<sup>o</sup> public privacy when fighting a p<sup>andemic</sup>

Much more important to monitor and track the public N



**A3** Is it more important for you follow government rules or to m<sup>ake</sup> decisions when fighting a pande<sup>m</sup>

Much more important to follow government rules N



**A4** How important is it for [Co<sup>untry</sup>] its borders when fighting a panc<sup>emic</sup>

Not at all important



# Experimental conditions in Germany

A) Mode

Sequential

Simultaneous  
(50% of 60yrs.+)

# Experimental conditions in Germany

A) Mode	B) Leaflet in first letter
Sequential	ESS info leaflet
	No leaflet
Simultaneous (50% of 60yrs.+)	ESS info leaflet
	No leaflet

# Experimental conditions in Germany

A) Mode	B) Leaflet in first letter	C) Incentive		
		5€ prepaid	5€ prepaid + 10€ postpaid	5€ pre + 10€ post (delayed)
Sequential	ESS info leaflet			
	No leaflet			
Simultaneous (50% of 60yrs.+)	ESS info leaflet			
	No leaflet			

# Experimental conditions in Germany

A) Mode	B) Leaflet in first letter	C) Incentive			
		5€ prepaid	5€ prepaid + 10€ postpaid	5€ pre + 10€ post (delayed)	
Sequential	ESS info leaflet	13,98%	13,98%	13,98%	83,85%
	No leaflet	13,98%	13,98%	13,98%	
Simultaneous (50% of 60yrs.+)	ESS info leaflet	2,69%	2,69%	2,69%	16,15%
	No leaflet	2,69%	2,69%	2,69%	
		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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- Check out the [GESIS blog](#) "Growing Knowledge in the Social Sciences" for topics, methods and discussions from the GESIS cosmos – and beyond.
- Keep up with GESIS activities and subscribe to the monthly [newsletter](#).
- Book a [training](#) in social science research methods.

## More from DRS Experts in the Series

- Mar 10 Andrea Löther: CEWS-Hochschulranking nach Gleichstellungsaspekten
- Mar 24 Insa Bechert: **Meet the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP)**
- May 04 Steve Quinlan, Klara Dentler: **Introducing the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) project: Making Electoral Research Global and Comparative**
- 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 04 Joscha Bäuerle, L. Constantin Wurthmann: **Eine:r von uns? – Kandidierende und Wählende zur Bundestagswahl 2021 im Vergleich**
- Jul 18 Adrian Stanciu: **Value Measurement in ALLBUS: between Innovation and Replication**
- Sep 15 Pablo Christmann, Nina Schumann: **Das familiendemografische Panel (FRoDA): Nutzungspotentiale für die Forschung**
- Sep 22 Axel Burger, Alina Dippel, Lukas Hetzer: **Links oder rechts? Die ideologische Selbstverortung von Wähler:innen und ihre Wahrnehmung von Parteien in Deutschland**

Thank you for participating!