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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 **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

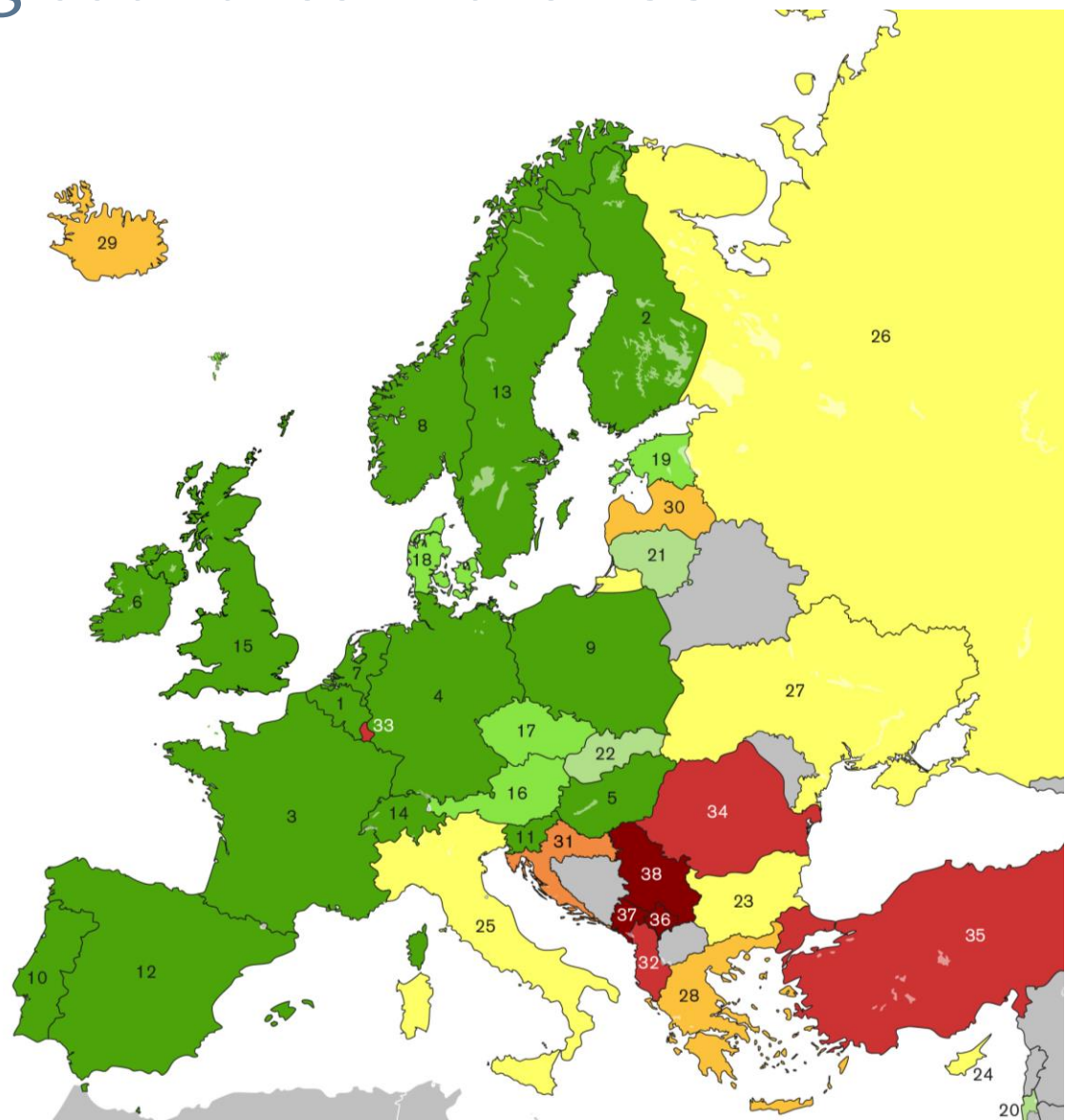
- | |
|-------------|
| 31. Croatia |
|-------------|

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](#)

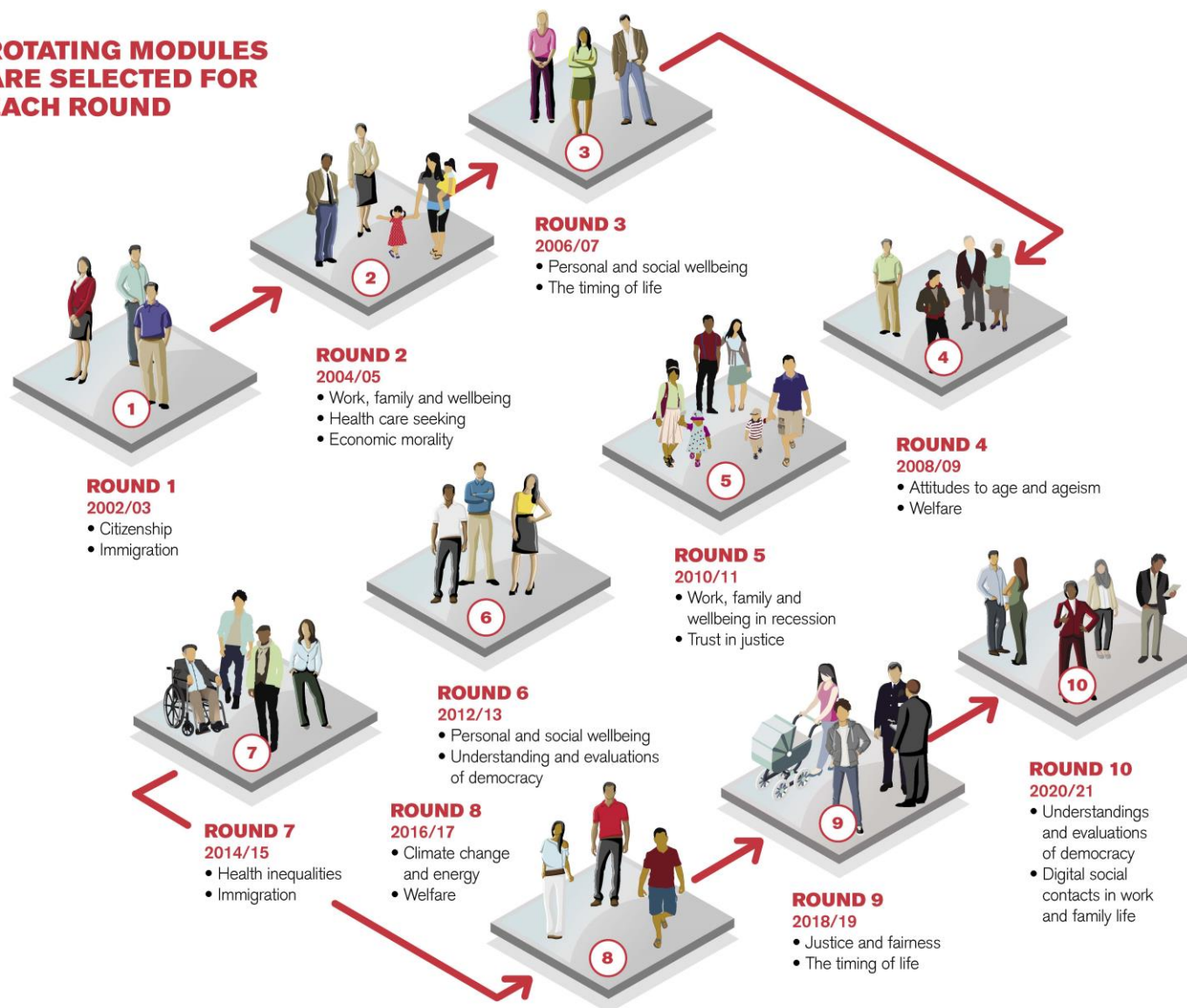
 @EssDeutschland



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?

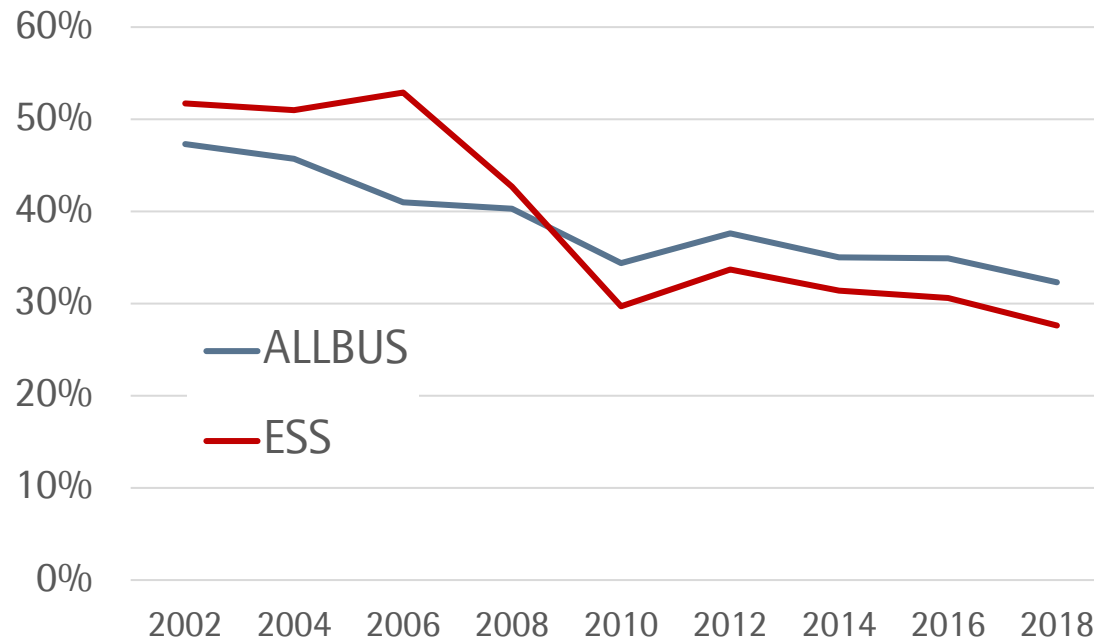
- ESS Round 10 data will be released in June and November 2022 on the [ESS homepage](#)
- Data from all previous rounds is also available online
- The [ESS Data Wizard](#) is easy to use and allows to download cumulative data from various rounds and countries
- The new [ESS Bibliography Tool](#) to find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

ESS Round 10 in Germany



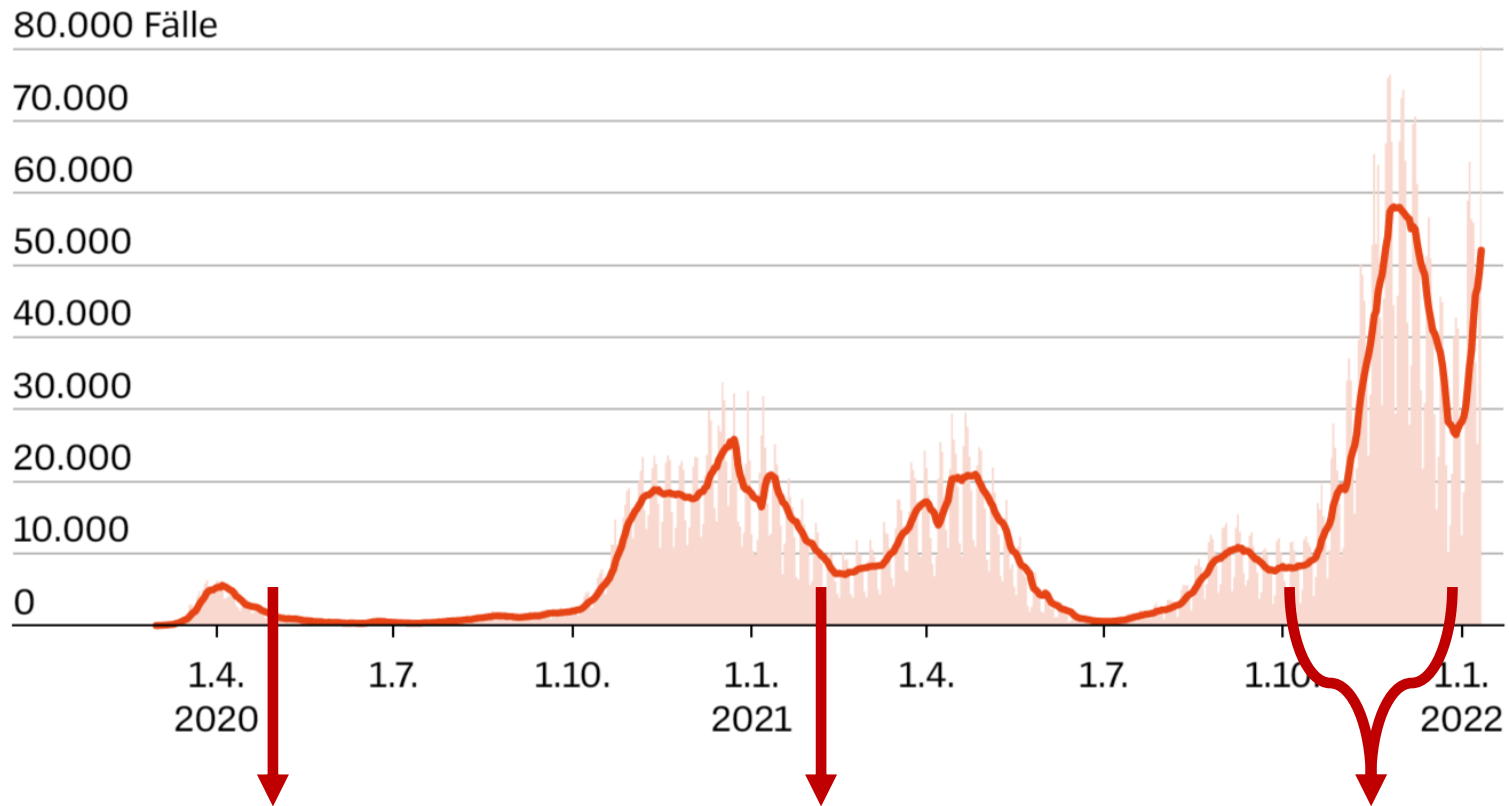
Starting point in Germany

- 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

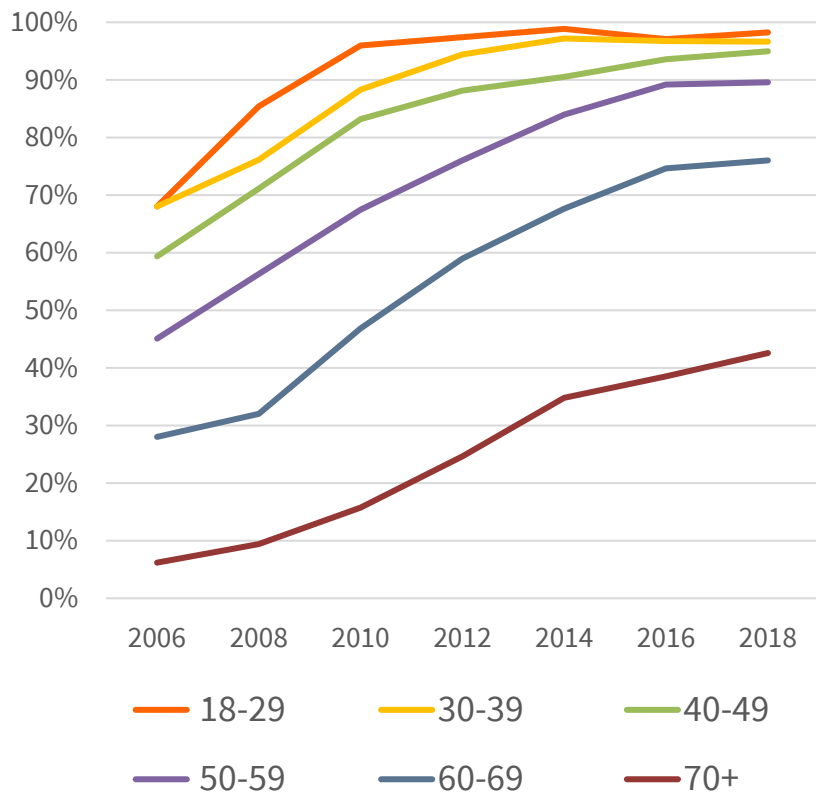
ESS R10 fieldwork

Switching Modes of Data Collection?

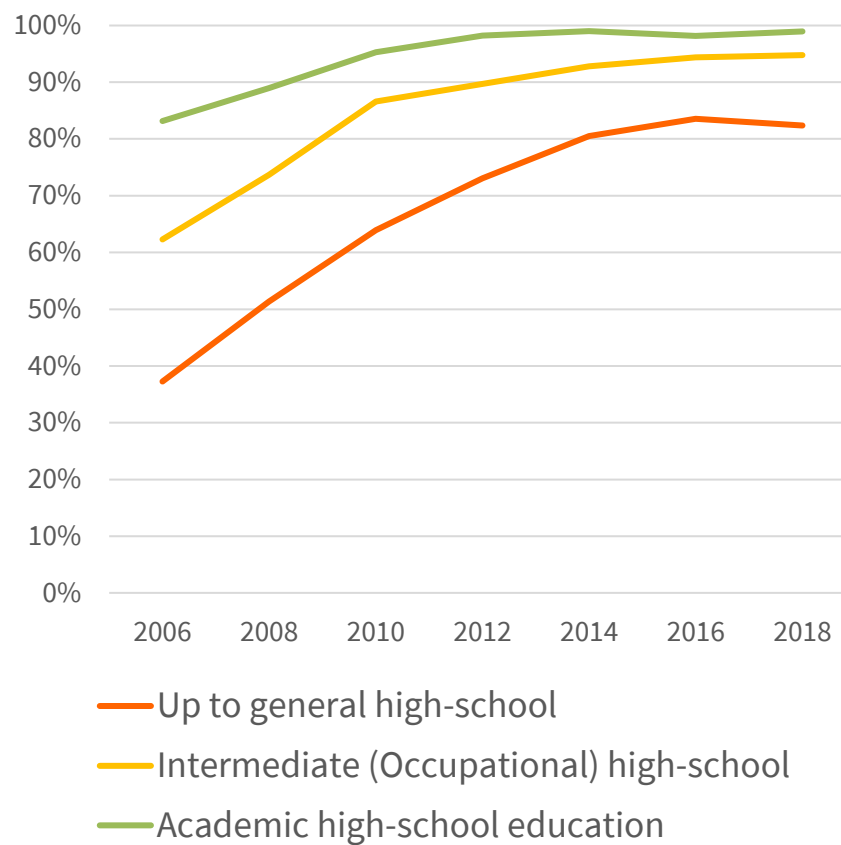
- Will target persons be willing to allow an interviewer into their home during a pandemic?
- Will interviewers be willing to contact multiple households each day?
- Can we reach a similar sample composition with a self-administered data collection?
- Will target persons be willing to complete a 50-minutes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

- 1 Yes
- 2 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^{vt} monitor and track the public or t^o public privacy when fighting a p^{andemic}

Much more important to monitor and track the public N



A3 Is it more important for you follow government rules or to m^{ake} decisions when fighting a pande^m

Much more important to follow government rules N



A4 How important is it for [Co^{untry}] its borders when fighting a panc^{emic}

Not at all important N



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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- Keep up with GESIS activities and subscribe to the monthly [newsletter](#).
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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!