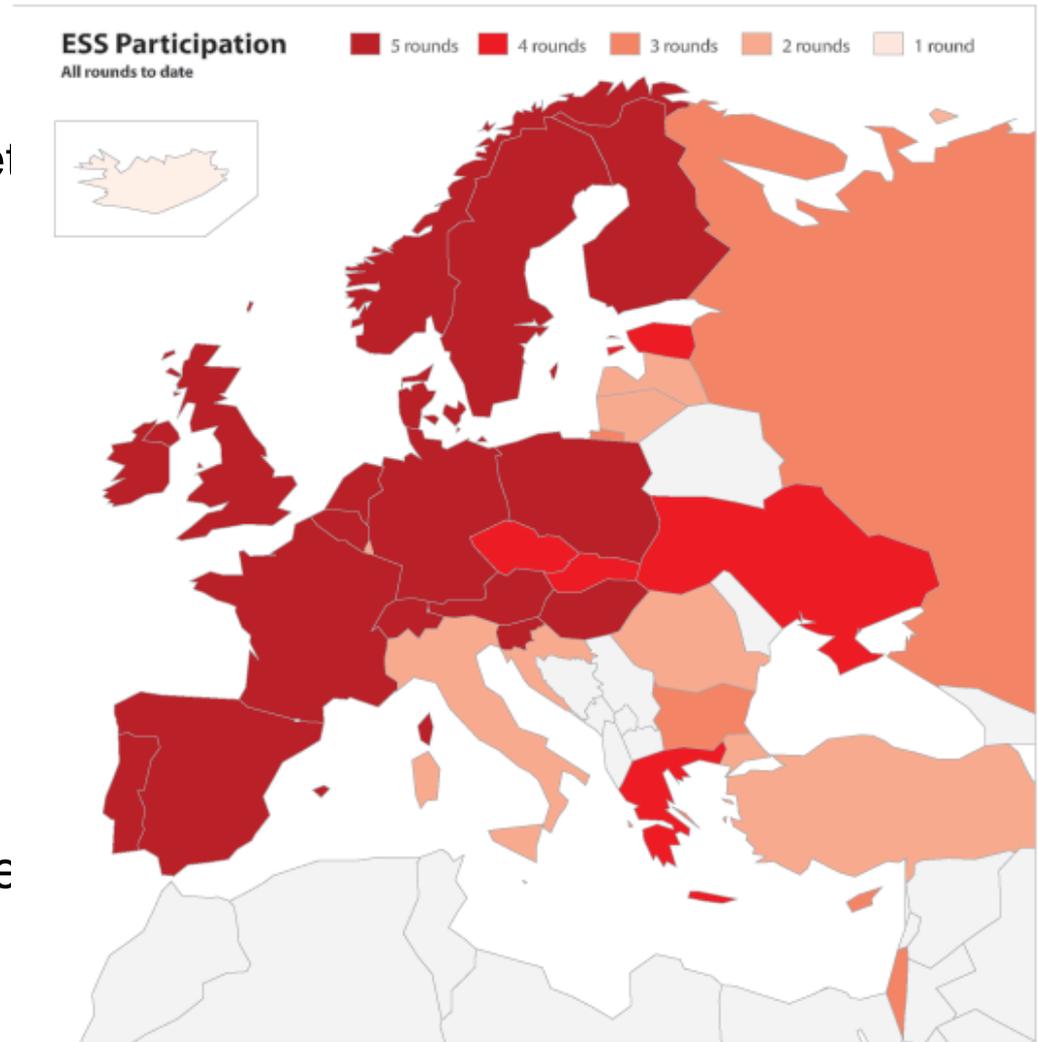


Nonresponse strategies in a cross-national survey

Ineke Stoop (SCP-Netherlands)

Aims ESS

- To monitor and interpret **public attitudes and values** within Europe and to investigate how they interact with **Europe's changing institutions**
- To advance and consolidate **improved methods** of cross-national survey measurement in Europe and beyond



ESS structure

Central organisation

- Core Scientific Team
- Central specifications
- Monitoring
- Evaluation outcomes
- Sampling panel
- Fieldwork questionnaire

National implementation

- National funding
- National coordinator team
- National survey agency
 - Different types
 - Different experience
- National training and briefing

Nonresponse specifications and guidelines

Specifications

- Strict probability sampling
 - No proxy
 - No substitution
 - Different sample frames
- Face-to-face only
 - Limited telephone recruitment
- Response targets
 - Target noncontact rate: 3%
 - Target response rate: 70%
- Call schedule
 - Number of calls
 - Timing of calls
- Detailed contact forms

Guidelines

- Refusal conversion
- Incentives
- Advance letters, brochure
- Interviewer training and briefing

Positive effective of 70% target response rates

■ ERIC review

- *sustained focus on achieving satisfactory response rates across the widest range of countries possible*

■ Easy to communicate

- Survey characteristic
- Tender process

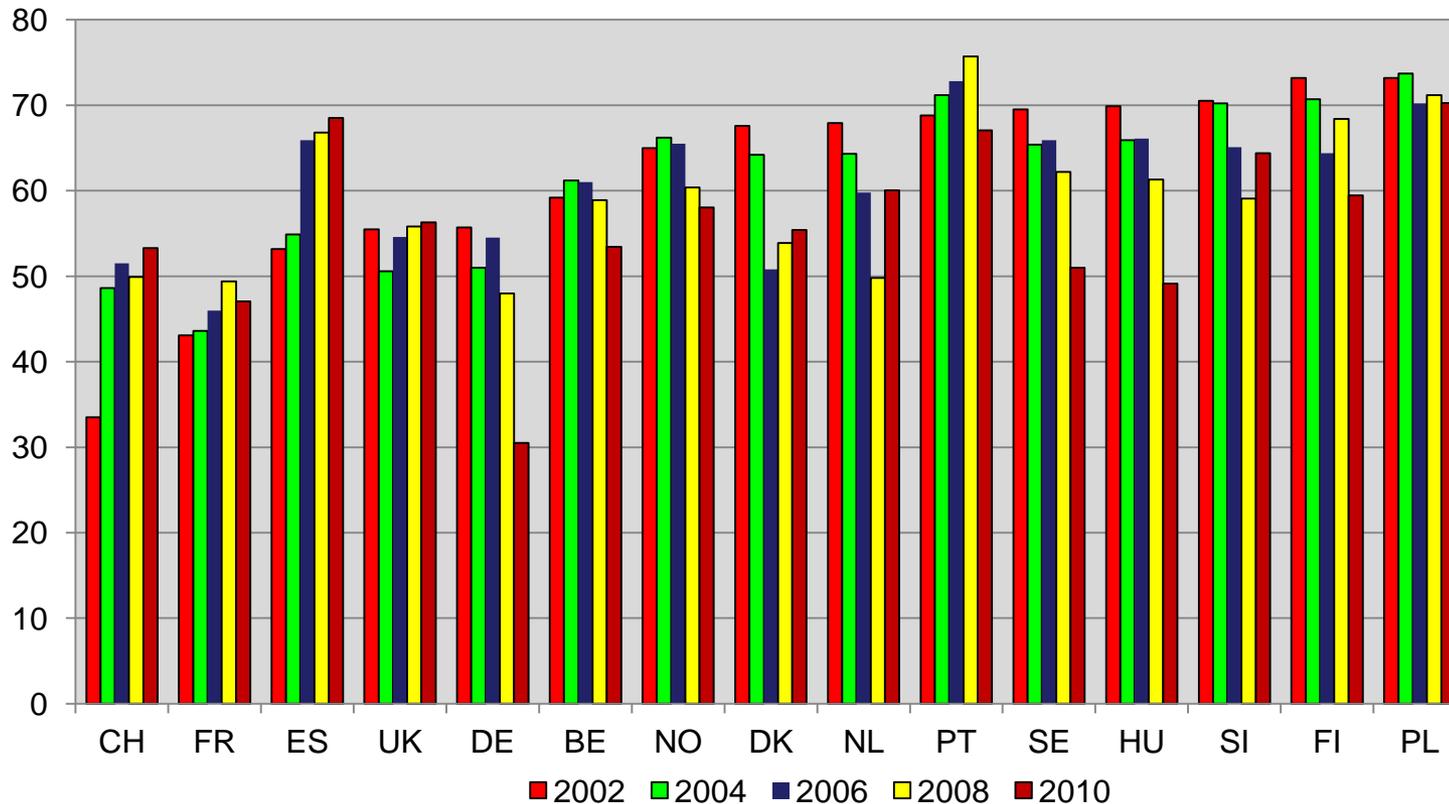
■ Easy to check (penalty clause)

■ Incentive to try hard

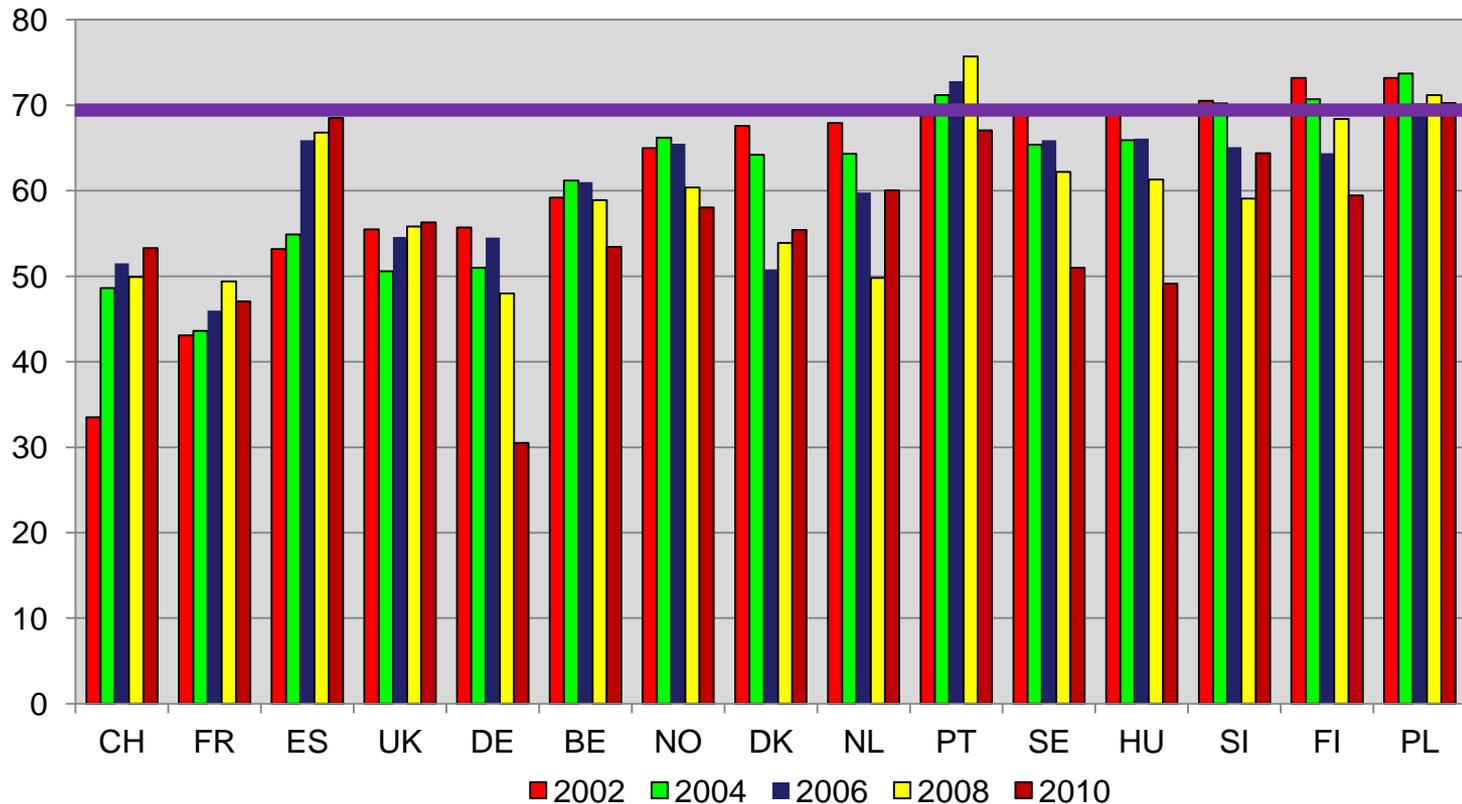
■ Incentive to improve

■ Sets limit to maximum nonresponse bias

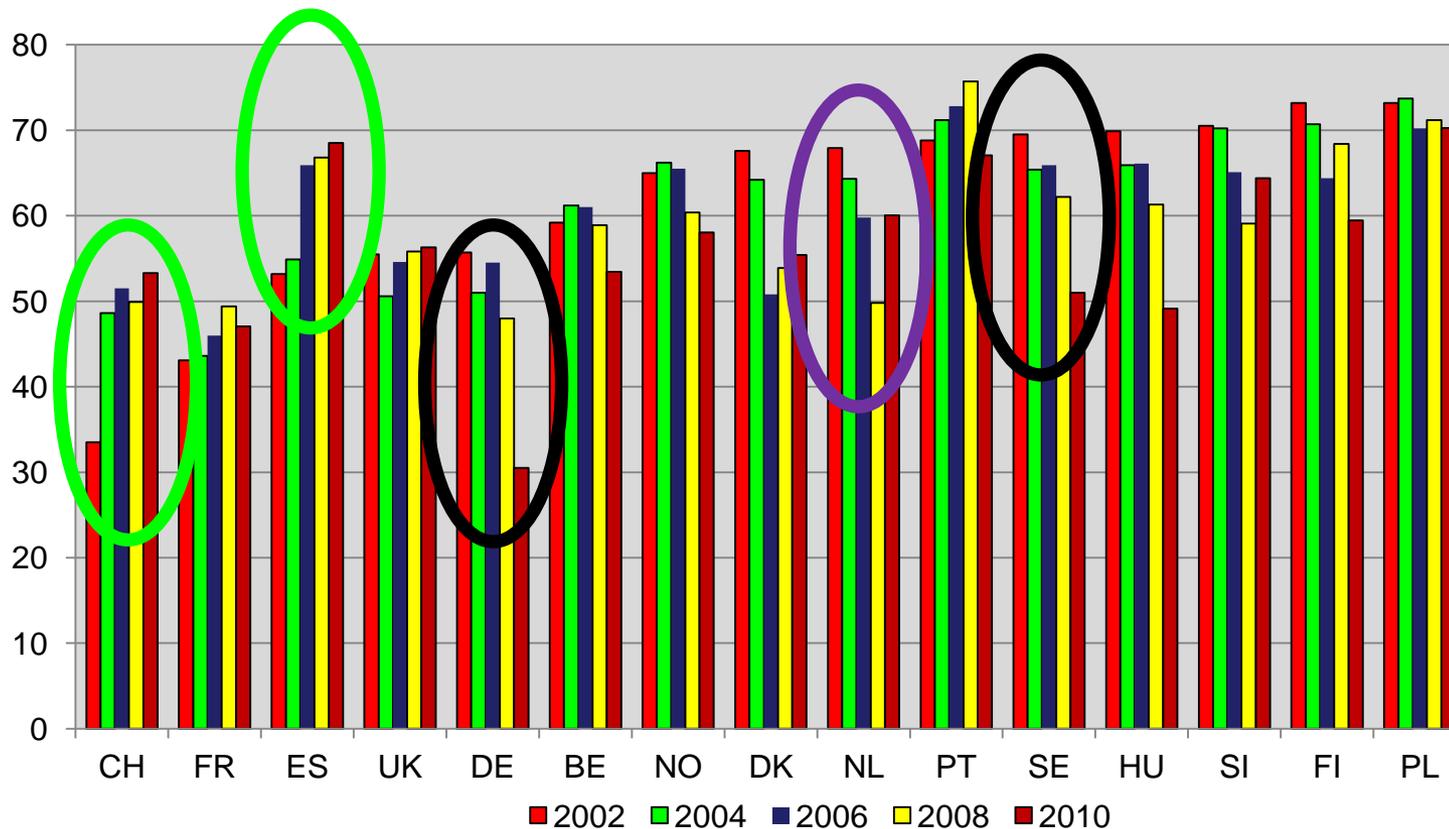
Response rates ESS (selection all rounds)



Response rates ESS (selection all rounds)



Response rates ESS (selection all rounds)



Response rates over time

- Some countries keep a high stable response rate
 - Great efforts
- Some low response countries improve steadily
- Some high response countries go down steadily
- Strange shocks

- Within countries: response rates related to field efforts

Underlying factors

- Sampling frame
- At home behaviour
- Survey scarcity
- Survey agency
 - Type
 - Experience with f2f
 - Experience with random sampling
 - Training and remuneration interviewers

Problems 70% response rate

- Not feasible in all countries
 - Population, survey agency
- Should we try to enhance response rates by a few percentage points if we have
 - The additional respondents are more of the same?
 - We have to extend fieldwork by a few months?
 - We have to spend substantial sums of money that we cannot use for other purposes?
- Artificial boosting

Nonresponse rate and bias

- Relationship response rates and nonresponse bias not linear
- Nonresponse bias characteristic variables
- Over time and across countries
 - Nonresponse bias Switzerland smaller?
 - Nonresponse bias Sweden larger?
 - In R5 nonresponse bias Sweden and Switzerland equal?

What really happens on the doorstep

- 0 noncontacts
- 0 not able
- 0 language problems
- “Other” nonresponse
- Most interviews at first contact
- High rate of women in household samples

Nonresponse strategy expert group

- Review ESS procedures, literature, theory, aims
- Recommend strategies to set challenging, feasible, and sound nonresponse targets
- Composition
 - Frauke Kreuter (chair), Lars Lyberg, and Barry Schouten (independent)
 - Alice Ramos, Michèle Ernst Staehli (NCs)
 - Geert Loosveldt, Achim Koch, Ineke Stoop, Verena Halbherr, Lizzy Gatrell & Ana Villar (CST)
- Time table
 - Meetings in April and December 2012
 - Invite more NCs to last meeting: QEM

Challenges: final aim

- Minimise total survey error
- Minimise nonresponse bias
 - Assess nonresponse bias
- Represent the populations

Nonresponse strategies

- Blind pursuit of high response rates
- Closer control and monitoring fieldwork
- Analyse and adjust for nonresponse bias
 - More paradata
 - Doorstep questionnaire
 - Follow-up survey
 - Sampling frame data and register data
- Balanced response rates
 - Responsive design
 - Adaptive design
 - Targeted approach
 - Tailored approach

ESS alternatives to 70% target response rate

Balanced response rate

■ Boosting response across subgroups

- One of the main difficulties with non-response is the difference in characteristics between respondents and non-respondents. Data quality and comparability are compromised by the extent to which those interviewed differ from those not interviewed. In attempts to enhance response rates, ***you should be mindful of the need to boost levels of response amongst all groups of the population and to bring response rates to a more consistent level across subgroups***, if possible. This is, for instance, why the ESS allows no substitution of addresses or individuals.

ESS alternatives to 70% target response rate

Balanced response rate

- Response enhancing measures can affect population differentially
 - Certain elements of the survey design may differentially affect the likelihood of participation among different groups of the population. For instance, a monetary incentive may be more likely to encourage the participation of people with low incomes rather than those with high incomes. ***Measures to reduce non-response should take account of such issues, targeting groups who are disproportionately underrepresented as a result of design issues.*** When reissuing refusals in order to convert them into productive interviews, you might, for example, consider trying also to convert some of those who appear to be the more reluctant, since less reluctant people often tend to be more similar to those who have already agreed to be respondents.

Options: nonresponse and communication

- Set achievable goals for participating countries
 - Understandable
 - Can be incorporated in fieldwork
 - Doable
- Explain why countries have to do things
- Prove that things countries have to do are worth the time and effort
- Provide evidence on relationship paradata, response behaviour and substantive variables

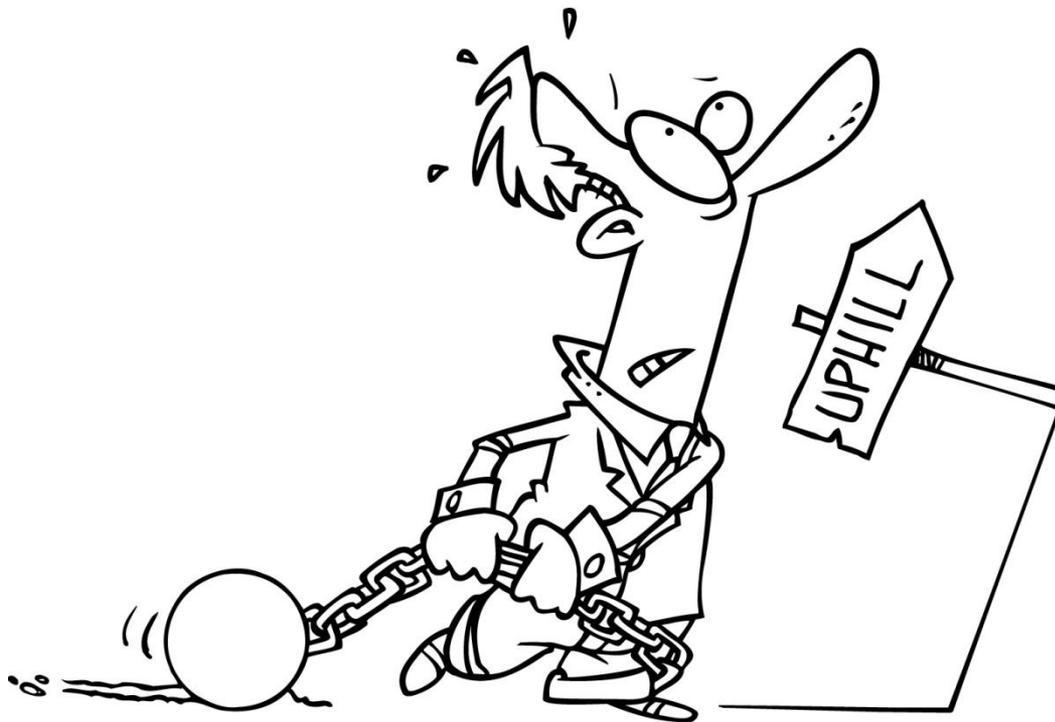
Options: fieldwork as a scientific process

- Find out if fieldwork is carried out according to the specifications
- Make sure fieldwork is carried out according to the specifications
- Provide country specific feedback in time for next round
- Every country should prove they did the job right and try to assess nonresponse bias (even when response rates were high)
- ISO standards fieldwork organisations

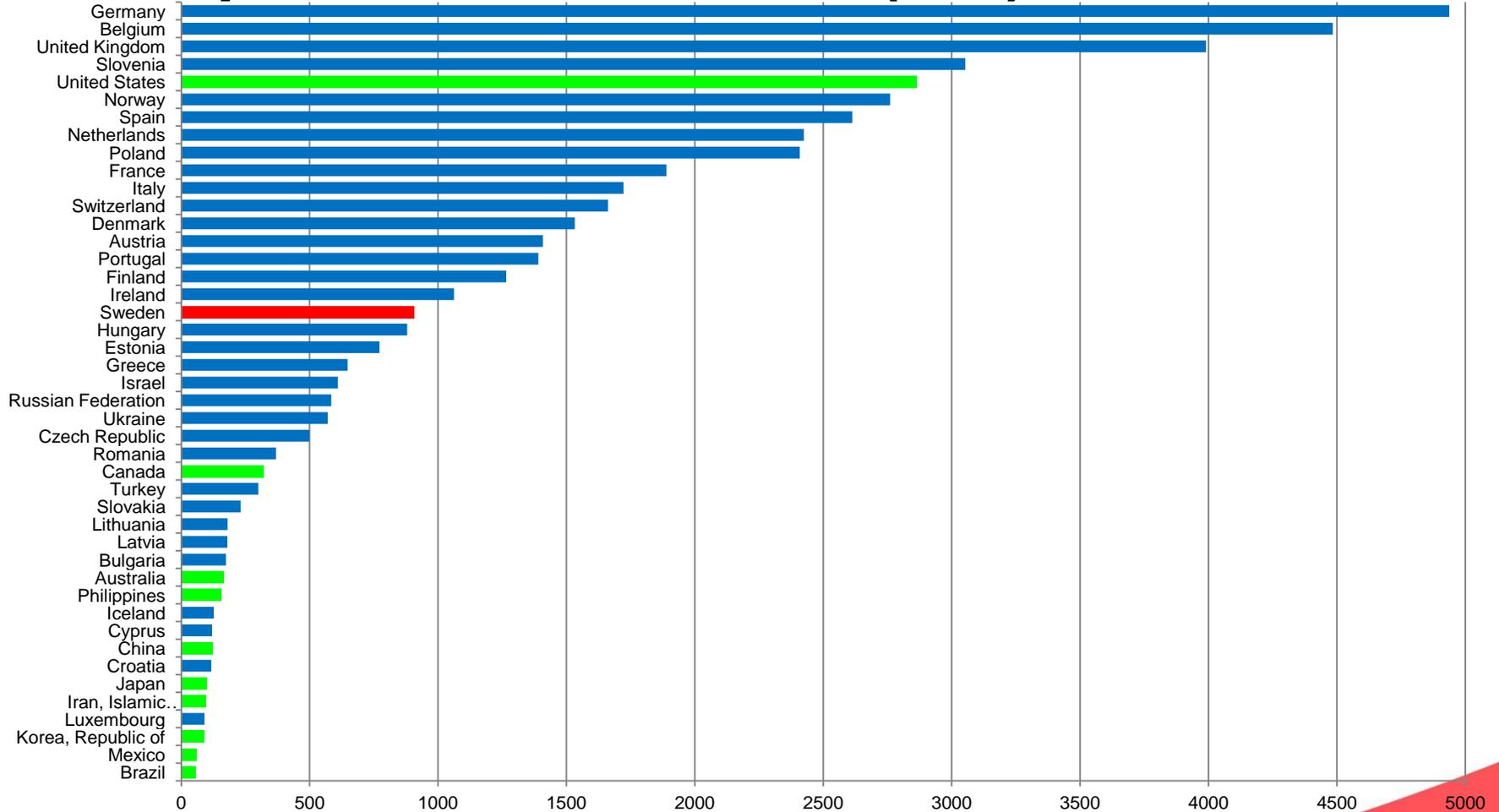
Options: info and training

- Help with analysis nonresponse bias
- Facilitate sharing of interviewer training
- Share information on the use of auxiliary data
- Set up webinars for NCs and field directors

Thank you for your attention



ESS top data user countries (>50) (2 November 2012) (N=51,302)



Use contact forms information

- Monitor fieldwork
- Find out if fieldwork has been carried out according to specifications
 - Number of calls
 - Timing of calls
- Calculate response rates
- Detect fraud
- Give recommendations for next wave
- Analyse nonresponse
 - Compare early and late contacts
 - Compare easy and difficult respondents
 - Reasons for refusal