Quality, Comparability and Compliance in the European Social Survey

Sally Widdop
City University London, UK

CSDI Workshop
NORC - Bethesda, USA
27-29 March 2014
Outline of Presentation

- Very brief overview of the ESS
- Key requirements for participating countries
- Quality in the survey life cycle
- Identification of quality indicators
- Quality through enhancement meetings

www.europeansocialsurvey.org
Key points to remember

- Large scale biennial cross-national survey
- Led by a Core Scientific Team (CST), HQ at City University London
- Funding from member and observer countries of the ESS ERIC (R7 onwards)
- National coordinator (NC) – new or continuous; individual or team
- NC or funder contracts survey agency
- Input harmonisation
- Rigorous methodology leading to comparability & equivalence

www.europeansocialsurvey.org
Project Specification

- Random probability sampling; no substitution/quota sampling permitted at any stage
- Effective sample size of 1500
- Minimum target response rate of 70%
- 3% maximum non-contact rate (of all sample units)
- Minimum 30 day fieldwork period between Sept & Dec
- At least 4 personal visits per sample unit before abandoned as non-productive
- Maximum of 48 issued sample units per interviewer

www.europeansocialsurvey.org
BEFORE FIELDWORK

Quality Assurance
- CST country contact & sample expert assigned
- NC intranet available
- Sample design signed off
- Consistency cross-checks
- Interviewer briefing guidance provided
- Data protocol issued

Quality Monitoring
- Consultations on question adaptations
- Fieldwork planning questionnaire completed
- Verification (of translated items)
- SQP coding (of translated items)

www.europeansocialsurvey.org
Quality measures: Survey Life Cycle

DURING FIELDWORK

Quality Assurance
- Response enhancement guidelines
- Fieldwork monitoring guidance (CST)

Quality Monitoring
- Survey agency monitors interviewers and fieldwork
- NCs monitor survey agency using fieldwork reports
- CST Country contact oversees process and monitors contact attempts, non-contacts, ineligibles, RR

www.europeansocialsurvey.org
Quality measures: Survey Life Cycle

AFTER FIELDWORK

Quality Assurance
- Data processing & consistency checks
- National Technical Summary & Documentation report
- All data released on time – including SDDF and contact form data

Quality Monitoring
- Fieldwork summary and deviations
- CST analyses carried out – interviewer effects, response & non-response rates, achieved sample composition, question quality, compliance with Specifications

www.europeansocialsurvey.org
Improving quality – indicators

- **Country profile**
  - documents aspects of compliance across survey life cycle
  - incorporates some measures of quality assessment
  - aims to identify areas that might warrant further investigation / future improvements

- **ESS Quality Assessment**
  - Identifying indicators using existing frameworks – European Statistical System & OECD, TQM and TSE
  - create a quality *profile* evaluating the survey as a whole & a quality *report* that evaluates country-level activities
  - difficulties in prioritising and selecting indicators
  - users of data quality indicators unclear

[www.europeansocialsurvey.org](http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org)
Improving quality - meetings

- CST Meetings
- Scientific Advisory Board and Methods Advisory Board
- Meetings with National Coordination teams
  - specific teams – to give feedback on round
  - briefing for new National Coordinators - before fieldwork preparations start
  - all National Coordinators - two per round

www.europeansocialsurvey.org
Quality Enhancement Meetings
- Dedicated to a specific topic area in the ESS
- Discussions between experts, survey methodologists and CST
- Produce recommendations for improvements

1. Design effects & interviewer effects (2007)
3. Qualitative & Quantitative pre-testing (2008)
6. Measurement quality of questions (planned for 2014)
7. Mixed modes (planned for 2014)
Thank you!

Questions?

Contact: s.widdop@city.ac.uk