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The Social Study

A scientific panel to measure citizens' beliefs and behaviours



Context...

- During the covid pandemic, a clear need to monitor beliefs and behaviours of population became apparent
- Useful initiatives were set up, but core elements of data quality (representativeness) were forgotten
- Increasing difficulty to secure cooperation of respondents – negative survey climate
- Technological innovations create new opportunities for data collection
- Initiative of all Belgian universities to set up an infrastructure to address these needs
 - Supported by Flemish government and STATBEL

What is The Social Study (TSS)?

- New **research infrastructure** that gives the opportunity to **efficiently collect high-quality survey data** for researchers in Belgium and abroad
- Key features:
 - Pool of panelists that are surveyed 6 to 10 times per year
 - High quality data at a fraction of the cost of setting up a stand-alone survey
 - Representativeness: probability-based sample that allows drawing conclusions on population level
 - Previously collected information can be linked to your own survey data
 - Possibilities to link the collected data to administrative data sources
 - Collected data is made available to the research community (open science)

Data quality & representativeness

- At least 3000 panel members (2000 Dutch-speaking and 1000 Francophone)
- **Target population:**
 - Persons aged 16 and above
 - Resident within private households in Belgium
 - Regardless of nationality or citizenship
- Recruited on the basis of a **probability-based sample** from the national register
- High level of investment in recruitment
 - Recruited via a combination of push-to-web and face-to-face strategies to maximize response rates
 - Attractive incentive scheme for respondents
 - Online as well as offline data collection (paper-and-pencil questionnaires)
- Extensive weighting strategy based on administrative data to enhance representativeness

Data collection

- Respondents participate in 6 to 10 **surveys of 15-20 minutes** per year
- Mixed-mode data collection: online (ca. 90% of panelists) and paper-and-pencil (10%)
- TSS collects and updates **core information** on respondents:
 - Topics covered: *Economic situation, household, health and well-being, work and education, social and cultural capital, media use, religiosity and ethnicity, values, politics, and personality*
- The remaining questionnaire space is available for not-for-profit research. Possibilities include:
 - Survey experiments (*among onliners only*)
 - Longitudinal data collection
 - Rapid data collection (fieldwork period of 30 days)

Practicalities

- You can propose a questionnaire module to be included in TSS (continuous open call)
 - Questionnaires between 5 and 20 minutes
 - For the whole panel or parts of it (e.g. Flemish vs. Francophone respondents)
- Proposals are evaluated by the TSS Scientific Committee
 - Prioritization of proposals based on suitability and scientific relevance
 - Ethical considerations – impact on sustainability of the panel
- Selected proposals are implemented by the TSS team. This includes:
 - Guidance on questionnaire design
 - Questionnaire programming
 - Data cleaning (including pseudonymization) and delivery
- Cost: 50 euro per respondent for 15 minutes questionnaire space
 - Covers respondent incentives and a contribution to the maintenance of the infrastructure
 - More cost-effective than setting up a stand-alone probability-based survey
 - Contact us for exact cost estimates for your project

Why make use of TSS?

- **High data quality.** We have a good view on non-response (and correct for bias as much as possible) vs. the black-box approach of commercial panels.
- **Efficiency.** All previously asked questions can be linked to your survey. You only pay for the specific questions you want to include
- **Linkage with administrative data.** TSS is the only panel in Belgium that offers the unique opportunity to link survey responses to administrative data (*e.g. labour market, family & cohabitation, migration, geographical data,...*)
- **Open Science.** Contribute to what will become the largest multidisciplinary datahub in Belgium
- Until the end of the recruitment of the panel (end of 2024) we offer an **early-bird discount**: 15 instead of 50 euro per respondent for 15 minutes
 - Sample sizes may be smaller

State of affairs

- Planning recruitment of panel
 - October 2023 – January 2025
 - Gross sample: N=10,000 Flanders; N=5,700 Wallonia; N=2,350 Brussels
- State of affairs recruitment
 - Every month a set of 1,600 addresses will be fielded
 - Up until now: 1,213 recruited respondents (N=712 Flanders; N=412 Wallonia; and N=89 Brussels)
- Response rate
 - Pilot: overall response rate in Belgium 30%
 - Main recruitment in Flanders: push-to-web 24%, face-to-face 17%; overall response rate=37%
- Data collection among panel members
 - Core Study Questionnaires (started in December 2023)
 - Completion rate = 80%
 - Data collection commissioned by Statistics Flanders: December 2024



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More information can be found on

www.thesocialstudy.be

Stay in touch with us

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