

Special Note

The International Social Survey Program

by

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The International Social Survey Program (ISSP) is a continuing, annual program of cross-national collaboration. It brings together pre-existing, social science projects and coordinates research goals, thereby adding a cross-national perspective to the individual, national studies.

ISSP evolved from a bilateral collaboration between the Allgemeinen Bevölkerungsumfragen der Sozialwissenschaften (ALLBUS) of the Zentrum für Umfragen, Methoden, und Analysen (ZUMA) in Mannheim, Germany and the General Social Survey (GSS) of the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), University of Chicago. Both the ALLBUS and the GSS are replicating, time series studies. The ALLBUS has been conducted biennially since 1980 and the GSS annually (except for 1979 and 1981) since 1972. In 1982 ZUMA and NORC devoted a small segment of the ALLBUS and GSS to a common set of questions on job values, important areas of life, abortion, and feminism. (A merged data set is available from the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research – ICPSR, University of Michigan.) Again in 1984, collaboration was carried out: This time on class differences, equality, and the welfare state.

Meanwhile, in late 1983 Social and Community Planning Research (SCPR), London, which was starting a social indicators series called the British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA) similar to the ALLBUS and GSS, secured funds from the Nuffield Foundation to hold meetings to further international collaboration. Representatives from ZUMA, NORC, SCPR, and the Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University organized ISSP in 1984 and agreed to (1) jointly develop topical modules dealing with important areas of social science, (2) field the modules as a fifteen-minute supplement to the regular national surveys (or a special survey if necessary), (3) include an extensive common core of background variables, and (4) make the data available to the social science community as soon as possible.

Each research organization funds all of its own costs. There are no central funds. The merging of the data into a cross-national data set is performed by the Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung, University of Cologne.

Since 1984, ISSP has grown to 18 nations, the founding four – Germany, the United States, Great Britain, and Australia – and, Austria, Italy, Ireland, Hungary, the Nether-

Table 1

ISSP Modules							
Organizations	Countries	Role of Government	Social Support	Social Equality	Family/ Gender Roles	Work Orientation	Role of Govt II
<i>ISSP Members</i>							
RSSS	Australia	D86	D87	D88	D89	-	D90
IS	Austria	D86	D86	D88	D88	D89	P91
ITUSS	Bulgaria	-	-	-	-	-	P91
ISCAS	Canada	-	-	-	-	-	P91
ZUMA	Germany	D85	D86	D87	D88	D89	P91
SCPR	Great Britain	D85	D86	D87	D88	D89	D91
Tarkai	Hungary	-	D86	D87	D88	D89	P91
SSRC	Ireland	-	D90	D90	D88	D90	P91
TAU	Israel	-	-	-	-	D90	P91
Eurisko	Italy	D85	D87	D87	D88	D89	P91
BCRI	Japan	-	-	-	-	-	P91
SCP	The Netherlands	-	-	D87	D89	D89	P91
MU	New Zealand	-	-	-	-	-	P91
NSD	Norway	-	-	-	-	D89	D91
SWS	The Philippines	-	-	-	-	-	D91
VCIOM	Russia	-	-	-	-	-	P91
NORC	United States	D85	D86	D87	D88	D89	D91
<i>Others</i>							
SI	Switzerland	-	-	D87	-	-	-
IFS	Poland	-	-	D87	-	-	-

D = Done P = Planned
 BCRI = Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, NHK (Tokyo)
 Eurisko (Milan)
 IFS = Instytut Fiozofuu i Socjologii (Warsaw)
 IS = Institut für Soziologie, University of Graz (Graz)
 ISCAS = Institute of Sociology, Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences (Prague)
 ITUSS = Institute for Trade Union and Social Studies (Sofia)
 NORC = National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago (Chicago)
 NSD = Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datajeneste (Bergen)
 MU = Massey University (Palmerston)
 RSSS = Research School of the Social Sciences, Australian National University (Canberra)
 SC = Survey Center, Carleton University (Ottawa)
 SCP = Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau (Rijkswijk)
 SCPR = Social and Community Planning Research (London)
 SI = Soziologisches Institut, University of Zürich (Zurich)
 SSRC = Social Science Research Center, University College (Dublin)
 SWS = Social Weather Station, Philippine Social Science Center (Quezon City)
 VCIOM = The Center for Public Opinion and Market Research (Moscow)
 ZUMA = Zentrum für Umfragen, Methoden und Analysen (Mannheim)

lands, Israel, Norway, the Phillipines, New Zealand, Russia, Japan, Bulgaria, Canada, and Czechoslovakia. In addition, former East Germany was added to the German sample upon reunification. The affiliated organizations are listed in Table 1. Several other nations have replicated particular modules (Yugoslavia, Poland, and Switzerland).

The annual topics for ISSP are developed over several years by a sub-committee and pretested in various countries. The annual plenary meeting of ISSP then adopts the final questionnaire. The ISSP researchers especially concentrate on developing the questions that are (1) meaningful and relevant to all countries and (2) can be expressed in an equivalent manner in all relevant languages. The questionnaire is originally drafted in British English and then translated to other languages using standard back translation procedures.

The themes covered in the ISSP module and the nations collecting data are listed in Table 1. The first theme on the role of government covered attitudes towards (a) civil liberties, (b) education and parenting, (c) welfare and social equality, and (d) the economy. The second theme was on social networks and support systems. It contained detailed behavioral reports on contacts with various friends and relatives and then a series of questions about where one would turn for help when faced with various situations such as financial need, minor illness, career advice, and emotional distress. The third module, on social equality, concerned beliefs about what factors affect one's chances for social mobility (e.g., parental status, education, contacts, race, etc.), explanations for inequality, assessments of social conflicts, and related questions. It also asked people to estimate the average earnings of various occupations (e.g., farm laborer and doctor) and what the

average earnings of these occupations should be. The fourth module covered the effect on the family of the changing labor force participation of women. It included attitudes on marriage and cohabitation, divorce, children, and child care and special demographics on labor force status, child care, and earnings of husband and wife. The fifth module on orientations towards work dealt with motivations to work, desired characteristics of a job, problems relating to unemployment, satisfaction with one's own job (if employed), and working conditions (if employed).

The sixth module in 1990 repeats the role of government theme. By replicating substantial parts of earlier modules, ISSP will not only have a cross-national perspective, but also an over time perspective. We will not only be able to compare nations and test whether similar social science models operate across societies, but also able to see whether there are similar international trends and whether parallel models of social change operate across nations. The seventh module covers the effect of religious beliefs and behaviors on social, political, and moral attitudes. It includes questions on religious upbringing, current religious activities, traditional Christian beliefs, and existential beliefs. The non-religious items concern such topics as personal morality, sex roles, crime and punishment, and abortion. The eighth module in 1992 replicates and extends the 1987 social equality module. Future modules on ethnic conflict and inter-group relations and on the environment are under design.

ISSP marks several new departures in the area of cross-national research. First, the collaboration between organizations is not special or intermittent, but routine and continual. Second, while necessarily more circumscribed than collaboration dedicated solely to cross-national research on a single

topic, ISSP makes cross-national research a basic part of the national research agenda of each participating country. Third, by combining a cross-time with a cross-national perspective, two powerful research designs are being used to study societal processes.

Data from the first five modules on role of government, social networks and support systems, social equality, the family, and work orientation are presently available from the Zentralarchiv and various national archives such as Essex in Britain and ICPSR in the United States. The module replicating the role of government study first conducted in 1985 will be available shortly and the other modules will be released periodically as soon as the data can be processed.

Publications based on the ISSP are listed in a bibliography available from the

Secretariat. Two collections of ISSP research are (1) Roger Jowell, Sharon Witherspoon, and Lindsay Brook, eds., *British Social Attitudes: Special International Report*. (Aldershot: Gower, 1989) and (2) J.W. Becker, James A. Davis, Peter Ester, and Peter P. Mohler, eds., *Attitudes to Inequality and the Role of Government*. (Rijkswijk, The Netherlands: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 1990).

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