
Plan Overview

A Data Management Plan created using DMPTuuli

Title: ESS European Social Survey 2026-2029

Creator: Heikki Ervasti

Affiliation: University of Turku

Funder: The Research Council of Finland (former The Academy of Finland)

Template: Data Management Plan - Research Council of Finland

Project abstract:

The European Social Survey (ESS) is an academically-driven comparative social survey designed to chart and explain the interaction between Europe's changing societies and the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour pattern of its diverse populations. The ESS forms a biennial time series data, which was started in 2002, and is now preparing for the 12th Round in 2024. Within this relatively short time period, the ESS has acquired an established position as one of the most important data sources in the field. A multidisciplinary research community consisting of almost 235.000 social and political scientists, statisticians, economists, geographers, psychologists, health researchers, etc., from all over the world use the data that covers 38 nations. The ESS employs extremely rigorous methodological standards in sampling, developing and testing indicators, translation and field-work procedures, and continuously develops and tests new survey methods and conducts methodological research. In addition to survey data, the ESS data contains macro level indicators from the participating countries combined with the individual level data. All data sets, documentation and paradata are immediately and freely available in the internet for all with no restrictions. The ESS has served as a data source for thousands of journal articles, conference papers, books and other publications and it has been used to inform policy makers, administrators and the media. In addition to serving as a research data source, the ESS organises training and education, seminars and conferences.

ID: 24827

Start date: 01-01-2026

End date: 31-12-2029

Last modified: 15-05-2024

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ESS European Social Survey 2026-2029

1. General description of data

1.1 What kinds of data is your research based on? What data will be collected, produced or reused? What file formats will the data be in? Additionally, give a rough estimate of the size of the data produced/collected.

The ESS collects three types of data, all of which are stored carefully as explained below and which are openly available for all interested users with no charges or other costs:

1) Survey data, i.e. data based on personal interviews of respondents, saved in an electronic format and to be distributed to researchers in the field immediately and free of charges.
2) Methodological and paradata for all the national surveys is available for download to ESS users. These data files include sample design data, paradata such as contact form data, interview time data and data from the interviewer questionnaire. Also test data collected to evaluate the measurement quality of selected questions using the Multitrait-Multimethod (MTMM) approach is available.

3) Multilevel data is gathered from all participating countries. Data from the surveys is connected to previously collected statistics. In other words, previously collected statistical macro level data about social, political and economic conditions in the participating countries is merged with the individual level data.

In addition to these forms of research data, the ESS publishes all managerial documents and deliverables. These documents give the full documentation of all aspects of the planning the survey, preparation work (e.g. sampling methods, pretests, pilot surveys, fieldwork preparation), fieldwork, the survey data and the paradata. Similarly, all aspects of the multilevel data are documented.

The ESS data portal offers access to data for 18.000 variables in 60 downloadable data files. Altogether, the size of all data is roughly more than 10 gigabits.

The data files are available in CSV, STATA and SPSS format.

1.2 How will the consistency and quality of data be controlled?

The ESS uses highly standardised methods in data collection and processing methods overseen by the professional team of Sikt, Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research and the CST, Core Scientific Team of the ESS ERIC. Data is available for download, but users other than members of the professional archiving team are not allowed to manipulate or edit the source data. This ensures that any technical handling, converting or transferring of data cannot distort the data accidentally or intentionally.

2. Ethical and legal compliance

2.1 What legal issues are related to your data management? (For example, GDPR and other legislation affecting data processing.)

The ESS ERIC undertakes to ensure that the ESS is conducted in a manner that is fully compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation (EU 2016/679). As the Data Controller for ESS data, ESS ERIC requires that all Members, Observers and Guests (i.e. all participating countries) comply fully with the GDPR. The compliance of the ESS with the GDPR is overseen by the data protection officer of the ESS. All countries operate on the basis of Data Protection Agreement. In addition, all national legislation is observed in each participating country.

2.2 How will you manage the rights of the data you use, produce and share?

The rights of data use are not restricted by any means. All data produced within the ESS ERIC are open for all interested users. This means that management of the rights of the data use, produce and share are not applicable.

3. Documentation and metadata

3. How will you document your data in order to make the data findable, accessible, interoperable and re-usable for you and others? What kind of metadata standards, README files or other documentation will you use to help others to understand and use your data?

The ESS fulfills completely the FAIR criteria. All ESS data and documentation, as well as metadata and paradata are available via the Internet immediately, with no application processes freely, without any costs. The data can be accessed anywhere and at any time directly via the internet. Guidance and training for the use of the ESS data are constantly available for users.

4. Storage and backup during the research project

4.1 Where will your data be stored, and how will the data be backed up?

All data, metadata and documentation are stored and backed up in the ESS archives maintained by the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research in Bergen, Norway. The professional team of the Sikt is responsible for backup and recovery of the data sets. Moreover, the Finnish data set is also stored in the Finnish Data Archives in the University of Tampere.

4.2 Who will be responsible for controlling access to your data, and how will secured access be controlled?

There are no restrictions in accessing the data so controlling does not apply to ESS data.

5. Opening, publishing and archiving the data after the research project

5.1 What part of the data can be made openly available or published? Where and when will the data, or its metadata, be made available?

All data and documentation as well as all paradata and metadata will be made openly available and published immediately after it has been finalised. Each ESS Round has its own time schedule which will be followed. There are no user privileges, no application processes, no scientific reviews, and no charges for any users. All data sets can be accessed via the internet.

5.2 Where will data with long-term value be archived, and for how long?

All data, paradata and metadata and documentation have long-term value. Therefore all data, paradata and metadata and documentation will be archived at Sikt without any time limits.

6. Data management responsibilities and resources

6.1 Who (for example role, position, and institution) will be responsible for data management?

The ESS ERIC, its GA (General Assembly) and the CST (Core Scientific Team), in cooperation with the expert teams at Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research (Sikt) will be responsible for data management.

6.2 What resources will be required for your data management procedures to ensure that the data can be opened and preserved according to FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Re-usable)?

No other resources will be needed other than the resources required to produce the data. FAIR principles are followed without any exceptions and resourced as part of the ESS ERIC.