

The Social Study Panel

The Social Study (TSS) is an advanced data collection infrastructure built on an online probability-based panel in Belgium. The TSS panel comprises a representative cohort of 5,000 randomly selected Belgian citizens aged 16 and above. TSS is co-owned by all Belgian universities and intended to boost and integrate interdisciplinary research in behavioral and social sciences.

To achieve the desired representativeness of Belgian residents, the research panel used the Belgian National Register of Natural Persons. By using this comprehensive sampling frame, the research panel ensures that its composition accurately mirrors the diverse demographics of the Belgian population.

To obtain a random sample a stratified, two-stage cluster sampling method was employed. At the first stage, 800 sampling points were randomly selected, clustered within boroughs. The selection of the municipal districts is explicitly stratified by regions and provinces, and implicitly stratified by target population size. At the second stage, within each of the primary sampling points, individuals were randomly selected by a systematic random sampling procedure with equal inclusion probabilities. The number of selected persons per primary sampling unit is adjusted according to the expected response rates, which tend to be lower in urban areas. For this reason, we oversampled based on urbanicity class, by drawing larger (gross) sampling points in more urban areas and smaller (gross) sampling points in rural areas.

Recruitment was executed through an initial push-to-web phase, followed by a face-to-face interviewing phase in case of non-response. Participants were engaged via brochures and invitation letters in the push-to-web phase, where they were prompted to complete a recruitment questionnaire to join TSS. If no response was received, the second phase involved face-to-face interviews using the recruitment questionnaire administered via Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI).

TSS panel members participate in 6 to 10 short surveys (15-20 minutes) per year, either online or offline with paper and pencil. Annually, a core study questionnaire is fielded by the TSS Scientific Committee to longitudinally collect data among all panelists that are crucially relevant across different research disciplines (e.g., socio-demographic characteristics, values, family composition). The remaining questionnaire space is made available (for a fee) to researchers from various fields in the behavioral and social sciences.

The primary aim of TSS is to facilitate researchers and policymakers in deriving pivotal insights across a wide range of topics in the behavioral and social sciences. TSS offers an invaluable platform to investigate and understand the living conditions, attitudes, and behaviors of the general Belgian population. TSS stands out and plays a crucial role in advancing innovation within Belgium's research landscape due to its ability for accommodating both longitudinal and experimental research.

In the spirit of open science, TSS is fully committed to transparency and accessibility. All the collected data is made available to the research community upon registration, strictly for scientific purposes. By adhering to these principles, TSS fosters collaboration and knowledge sharing among researchers, further enhancing the impact and potential of research in the social and behavioral sciences.