

Call for early-stage researcher awards

The Social Study is a research infrastructure that enables the collection of high-quality survey data. It is funded by the FNRS, the FWO and Statistics Flanders and co-owned by all 10 Belgian universities. TSS consists of a probability-based panel of about 5000 Belgian residents aged 16+ and surveyed every eight weeks. Each survey is about 15 minutes-long: either a single-study survey or a combination of several survey modules. Panelists can complete surveys online or on paper. TSS is a valuable tool for all researchers interested in Belgian survey data.

TWO AWARDS

In 2026, two early-stage researchers, one PhD student and one PhD graduate, will receive the opportunity to field their own survey **free of charge** with the probability panel of The Social Study.

What can you win?

- 5 minutes-long survey module (survey experiments are welcome)
- Questionnaire fielded among the entire panel of TSS (about 5000 respondents in Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels)
- Fieldwork in 2027, in agreement with the award winners and taking into account the existing survey planning of TSS

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The following researchers can apply for the award:

- 1) PhD students
- 2) Researchers with maximum 7 years of experience after the doctoral defense, regardless of the status (postdoctoral researcher, assistant professor, etc.)

Researchers must be affiliated to an institution that is part of the consortium of The Social Study: UCLouvain, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Université de Liège, Université de Mons, Université de Namur, KU Leuven, Universiteit Gent, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Universiteit Antwerpen and Universiteit Hasselt.

Former award winners are not allowed to apply for a second time for the same award category.

SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

Researchers must submit their proposals **by 30 September 2026 (12:00 noon)** by filling in a form on the TSS website: <https://thesocialstudy.be/tss-early-stage-researcher-awards/>

The proposal should include:

1. Details on the research: research objective(s), rationale of research, research question(s), hypotheses, research concepts and their operationalisation, type of analytical model(s) envisaged, list of variables to be included in the analyses, differences in interventions (if experiment), power calculations
2. Details on the survey: survey design, full (preliminary) list of survey instruments in English and possibly also in French and/or Dutch, changes made in the survey in case of resubmission (if similar proposal submitted in 2025)
3. Details on the candidate: (expected) time of PhD defense, type of contract, experience with survey research, importance of the survey proposal for the candidate's own research, list of scientific publications
4. Details on the research team (if applicable): name and position of researchers collaborating to the proposal (if any)

EVALUATION PROCEDURE

The proposals will be evaluated by the Scientific Committee of The Social Study in October 2026. In preparation of the fieldwork, award winners will receive feedback from the Scientific Committee to improve their proposal. The award winners are invited to present their research and survey design at the **second The Social Study conference** on Friday 4 December 2026 in Brussels (Hoek 38).

The following three criteria are identified by the Scientific Committee as very important and will be taken into account in the evaluation of proposals:

Content of proposal

- Are the research questions innovative and embedded in a literature review that provides a rationale for this innovative nature?
- Are the research concepts described and operationalized in the survey questions?

Ethical standards

- Does the survey comply with TSS's ethical standards? Does it potentially affect the trust relationship between the panel members and TSS or runs the risk of engendering an excessive attrition?
- Are the themes handled not too intrusive or complicated for panel members?

Methodological quality

- Is the research method fully described and validly argued for answering the research questions including hypotheses?
- Are the data analysis methods and steps transparently explained?
- Is the planned data analysis strategy appropriate to answer the research questions?
- Does the questionnaire meet quality standards (question wording, question clarity, questions order,...)? Is the experimental design (if any) appropriate?

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Do not hesitate to contact communication@thesocialstudy.be

