European Values Study, Great Britain, 4th wave

Background

The European Values Study (EVS) is a large-scale, cross-national, longitudinal survey research programme on basic human values. It provides insights into the ideas, beliefs, preferences, attitudes, values and opinions of citizens all over Europe. It is a unique investigation into how Europeans think about life, family, work, religion, politics and society.

The EVS started in 1981 and has been repeated every nine years in an increasing number of countries. The fourth wave in 2008/2009 covered 46 European countries, from Ireland to Azerbaijan and from Portugal to Norway. In total, about 70,000 people were interviewed.

The central research question is whether values are changing in modern European society, to what extent and in what direction. The researchers have been particularly concerned with the key domains mentioned above (such as the family, religion, work and politics). Other topics include national identity, tolerance, social solidarity and life satisfaction. The questionnaires also contain items on issues of personal and civic ethics (from smoking indoors to suicide).

Many of the questions posed replicate previous surveys, thus enabling analysis of change over time on the key dimensions of the EVS. With the addition of the fourth wave, the EVS is a unique source of trend data for the past three decades. The range of potential research questions is very wide, involving any of the topics mentioned above, using either this dataset on its own or in conjunction with previous waves, and looking either at Britain alone or in comparison with other European countries.

National Programme Director

At the end of 2008, David Voas, Simon Professor of Population Studies at the University of Manchester, was appointed National Programme Director for Great Britain by the European Values Study organisation. He subsequently obtain a grant (RES-000-22-3690) from the Economic and Social Research Council to fund the data collection.

Data collection

The Principal Investigator solicited bids from several survey firms for conducting the fieldwork. A detailed specification (based on requirements laid down by the European organisation) was circulated to the main companies in this area. The contract was awarded to the firm that had been worked on the previous EVS survey in 1999, Quality Fieldwork and Research Services.

The sample was drawn by UK Geographics Ltd. It was a multistage cluster sample using the Postcode Address File. The first stage sampling unit was the local authority district, and
the second was Super Output Areas Level 1. These sampling units were selected with probability proportionate to size.

In addition, the list of local authorities was sorted by Government Office Region (Scotland and Wales were treated as regions for this purpose) and then by population density. This sorting ensures proportionate representation of regions. Within each selected district, super OAs were sorted by Index of Multiple Deprivation. In total, 7,200 addresses were selected. Further details are given below in the section on sampling. Interviewers randomly selected (using a Kish grid) an adult in the household for the survey.

Fieldwork extended from August 2009 to March 2010. The team of 151 interviewers from across the country made a total of 15,606 visits to the addresses sampled, of which more than 6,000 were in the evening or at weekends. Scheduling 70 minute interviews with the individuals selected at each address sampled was challenging, and multiple call-backs were often needed. Many people declined to participate, but the target of 1,500 interviews was achieved. (The final number was 1,561.)

The dataset has been prepared by the Principal Investigator and by technical groups at the University of Tilburg (where the EVS is based) and the GESIS data archive in Germany (which is repository for all EVS data and documentation). The data deposited with the Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS) via the UK Data Archive contains the British records from the merged international dataset available through GESIS.

**Sampling Design**

1. **SURVEY AREA:** Great Britain

2. **SAMPLING METHODOLOGY:** Multistage cluster sample.

3. **SAMPLING FRAMES:** First stage sampling frame: List of Local Authorities (LA) in GB; Second stage sampling frame: Office for National Statistics Super Output Areas Level 1 (super OA); Third stage sampling frame: Postcode Address File (PAF) of residential addresses.

4. **SAMPLING UNITS:** First stage sampling unit: LA; Second stage sampling unit: super OA; Third stage sampling unit: Residential address.

5. **MEASURE OF SIZE:** Number of residential addresses.

6. **SAMPLE SELECTION:** First and second stage sampling units were selected with probability proportionate to estimated size. In the third stage a systematic sample (with fixed interval and a random start) of addresses was selected within each second stage sampling unit. If the second stage sampling unit (super OA) is in rural area and its size was greater than 5 square kilometres then this super OA was replaced by a randomly selected constituent "super PSU".
7. STRATIFICATION/SORTING: First stage sampling units (LAs) were sorted by Government Office Region (Scotland and Wales were treated as regions for this purpose) and then by population density. This sorting ensures proportionate representation of regions. Within each selected LA, super OAs were sorted by Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Within selected second stage sampling units, residential addresses were sorted in postcode order prior to selection.

8. SAMPLE SIZES: [Initial sample] => Sample size = 3,600. First stage sampling units =60; Second stage sampling units = 120 (2 per selected first stage sampling unit); Third stage sampling units: 30 issued residential addresses within second stage sampling units. [Additional sample] => as above. Total sample = 7,190 (because one super OA was selected in both the initial sample and the additional sample, and ten of the addresses drawn were duplicates).

9. EXCLUDED AREAS: All Scottish islands (including islands that belong to Argyll and Bute) and all of the Highlands council area apart from the area around Inverness. From the total of 26,215,568 addresses in the whole of Great Britain, 0.43467% have been excluded.

10. IMPLEMENTATION: Of the total sample of 7,190, the fieldwork company issued 6,720 addresses to its interviewers.

The sample was drawn by a specialist firm:

UK Geographics Ltd
47 Preston Drove
Brighton
East Sussex
BN1 6LA

The addresses selected were then passed to the data collection company:

Quality Fieldwork & Research Services
86 Aldridge Road
Perry Barr
Birmingham
B42 2TP

**Fieldwork**

The introductory letter gave contact details (including e-mail address and telephone number) for the national programme director, who answered questions following initial contact. Reference was made to the EVS website when appropriate.

A £10.00 ‘High Street shopping voucher’ was posted to each respondent within 10 working days of the questionnaire being received from the interviewer.
Responses were recorded on paper; data entry and processing were done centrally.

A. Total number of issued sample units (addresses, households or individuals): 6,720
B. Refusal by respondent: 445
C. Refusal by proxy (or household or address refusal): 2,163
D. No contact (after at least 4 visits): 1,796
E. Language barrier: 54
F. Respondent mentally or physically unable to co-operate throughout fieldwork period: 29
G. Respondent unavailable throughout the fieldwork period for other reasons: 115
H. Address not residential (institution, business/industrial purpose): 81
I. Address not occupied (not occupied, demolished, not yet built): 218
J. Address not traceable: 84
K. Other ineligible address: 60
Y. Invalid interviews [not received from interviewers – reported as lost]: 114
Z. Number of valid interviews: 1,561

Weighting

Weights were added to the completed dataset by the EVS organisation to make the sample reflect the age/sex distribution of the adult population.