

Comparative Public Opinion

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE STUDY GROUP ON COMPARATIVE PUBLIC OPINION
OF THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Edgardo Catterberg
Argentina

Ijaz Gilani
Pakistan

Seymour Martin Lipset
U.S.A.

Rafael López Pintor
Spain

Willy Martinussen
Norway

Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann
Federal Republic of Germany

Frederick C. Turner
U.S.A.

Robert M. Worcester
United Kingdom

Volume 4, Number 1

1987

Contents

The International Social Survey Program, by Tom W. Smith	2
Our First Publication	4
Plans for the Washington Congress	6
Membership Information	8

The International Social Survey Program

by

Tom W. Smith
National Opinion Research Center
University of Chicago

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

ISSP grew out of a bilateral collaboration between the Allgemeinen Bevölkerungsumfrage der Sozialwissenschaften (ALLBUS) of the Zentrum fuer Umfragen, Methoden, und Analysen (ZUMA) in Mannheim, West 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. 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 (the British Social Attitudes Survey) similar to the GSS and ALLBUS, secured funds from the Nuffield Foundation to hold meetings to further international collaboration. A meeting was held in London in June, 1984 with representatives from ZUMA, NORC, SCPR, and the Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University. This group, soon to be christened as ISSP, agreed (1) jointly to develop topical modules dealing with important areas of social science, (2) to field this module as a fifteen-minute supplement to the regular national surveys (or as a special survey if necessary), (3) to include an extensive common core of background variables, and (4) to make the data available to the social science community as soon as practical. Each nation funds its own data collection and collaborative costs.

Since its initial meeting in 1984, ISSP has grown to nine

nations, the original four--Germany, the United States, Britain, and Australia--plus Austria, Italy, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Hungary. The affiliated institutions are:

Tarkai, Tarsadalomkutatasi Informatikai Tarsulas, Budapest
RSSS, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National
University
ZUMA, Zentrum fuer Umfragen, Methoden, und Analysen, Mannheim
Eurisko, Milan
SCPR, Social and Community Planning Research, London
NORC, National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago
IS, Institut fuer Soziologie, Graz University, Austria
SCP, Social en Cultureel Planbureau, Rijswijk, The Netherlands
SSUC, Department of Social Science, University College, Dublin

In addition, other countries are currently applying for membership.

For its first theme ISSP selected the role of government. This covered attitudes towards (a) civil liberties and law enforcement, (b) education and parenting, (c) the economy, and (d) welfare and social equality. The second theme was social networks and support systems. This consisted of a detailed account of contact with various relatives and friends 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, is now being developed. It focuses on equality of income, wealth, and opportunity. It covers perception of the extent of present inequality, explanations for inequality, and support for government programs to reduce inequality. The fourth module (1988) will deal with working women and the family and the fifth (1989) with work and leisure.

Then in 1990 ISSP will repeat the role of government theme. By replicating substantial parts of earlier modules, ISSP will not only have a crossnational perspective but also have an over time perspective. We will be able to compare nations and test whether similar social science models operate across societies and also be able to see if there are similar international trends and whether equivalent models of social change operate across nations.

ISSP marks several new departures in the area of crossnational research. The collaboration between organizations is not special or intermittent but routine and continual. While necessarily more circumscribed than collaboration dedicated solely to crossnational research on a special subject, ISSP makes crossnational research a basic part of the national research agenda of each country. For further details contact the ISSP secretariat, Roger Jowell, SCPR, 35 Northampton Square, London EC1V OAX, England.