

**European Social Survey academic impact monitoring**  
Annual report 2023

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## 1 INTRODUCTION: AIMS, METHODS AND CONTENT OF THE REPORT

To assess the academic impact of ESS both internally and externally, inform its questionnaire design and redesign, and guide its outreach and communications efforts, ESS collects continuous and detailed feedback on its academic use. Bibliographic monitoring yields the following **information, outputs, and guidance**:

- Longitudinal empirical evidence on the scope, **geographical and disciplinary patterns** of ESS academic usage, theory development and policy references;
- Empirical support for **informed decision-making** by ESS bodies (CST, SAB, and QDTs) regarding questionnaire content (item and module selection and revision), targeting training, communication strategies and similar;
- Summary **bibliographic reports**, a comprehensive **list of citations** with the option to create customized sub-lists based on various criteria (see Appendix 1) and **item usage statistics** (see Appendix 2). These documents help demonstrate ESS's academic relevance to European and national funders and users (NCs, GA);
- **Bibliographic repository** for other work packages, utilized for methodological testing, updating of ESS online bibliography, supporting ESS communication efforts, and creating relevant outreach materials.
- The source of annual **updates for the new ESS online bibliography**, providing bibliographic variables accessible to the general audience and enabling users to browse ESS publications according to various criteria. For data users, understanding which analyses have already been conducted with the dataset is crucial, and bibliographic information serves as essential contextual metadata for a study (Fear 2013; Kern 2015).

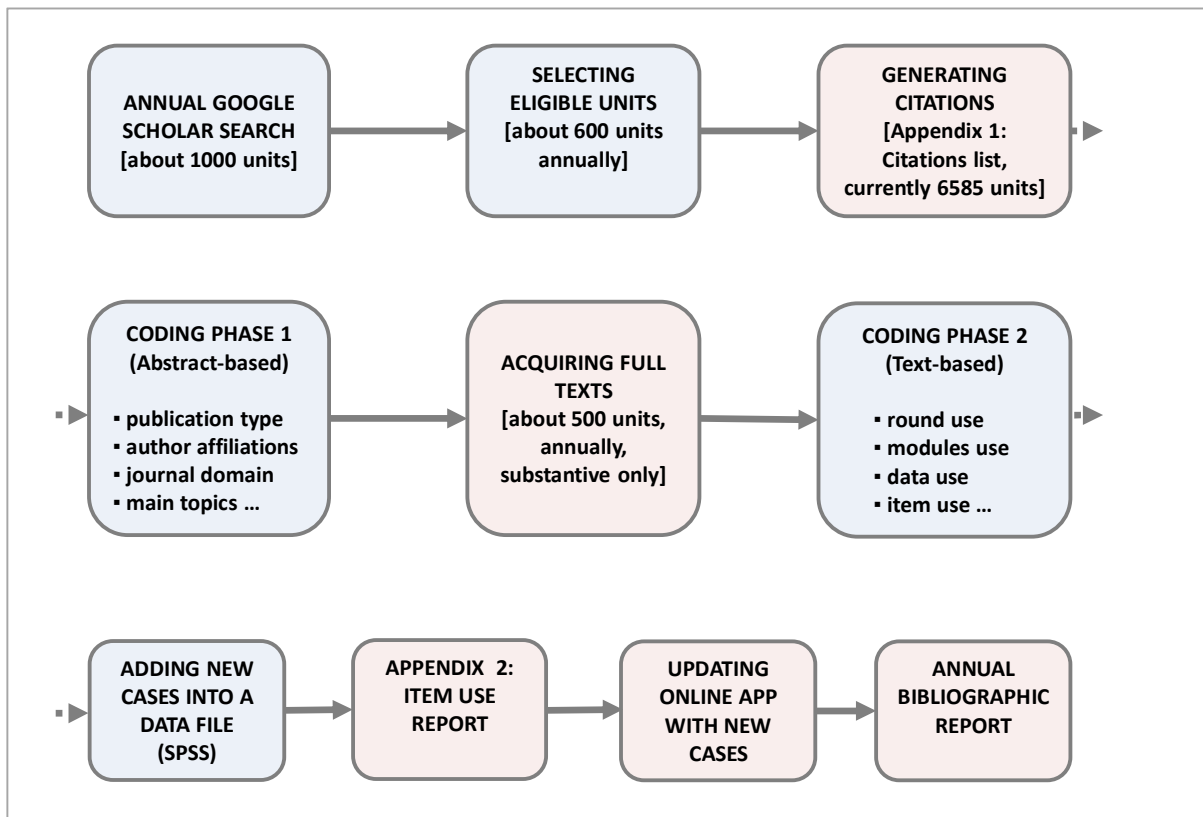
The 2023 annual bibliographic report (Deliverable 11.06) includes publications from the period **2003-2022**. An **ESS-based publication**, defined within this report, encompasses any type of academic publication in the English language, such as journal articles, books, book chapters, published conference materials, research papers, reports, or theses. These publications can be either methodological or substantive, but they must incorporate at least one ESS item in their **primary analysis**.

It is important to note that the relevant universe excludes ESS-based publications in languages other than English and substantive publications utilizing European Social Survey keywords without incorporating primary data (for example, publications that replicate ESS items, secondary citations of ESS data, and similar cases). The limitation to the English language is necessary due to the extensive coding of variables derived from the texts. To the extent that English language generates global academic visibility, the database seeks to achieve the highest possible coverage of ESS-based **international publications**.

In line with previous years, ESS-based publications were identified using the **Google Scholar** indexing tool, widely considered the most comprehensive for covering various publication

types (refer to Nederhof, 2006; Mayr and Walter, 2007; Ware and Mabe, 2012). The search focused on the key phrase 'European Social Survey' + 'round(s)' or 'wave(s)' within the texts or abstracts to pinpoint relevant publications. Publications containing these keywords were reviewed on a case-by-case basis to confirm their primary use of ESS data. Approximately 60% of the initial Google Scholar hits were discarded due to irrelevance or duplication. This process resulted in the acquisition of 619 new publications, the majority of which were published in 2022. With the addition of this latest annual batch, the total number of ESS-based publications and presentations now stands at 6,585. Full texts of 548 substantive publications were obtained for comprehensive bibliographic coding and detailed item usage analysis.

The scheme below (Figure 1) outlines the main steps in the **workflow of the annual bibliographic exercise**. The blue boxes represent the primary processes, while the red boxes indicate the key outputs of the task, including citations, publication texts, data files, and reports.



**FIGURE 1:** Overview of the annual lifecycle of the bibliographic exercise task

The 2023 ESS annual bibliographic report comprises 10 sections, the majority of which are standard.

Content of the report:

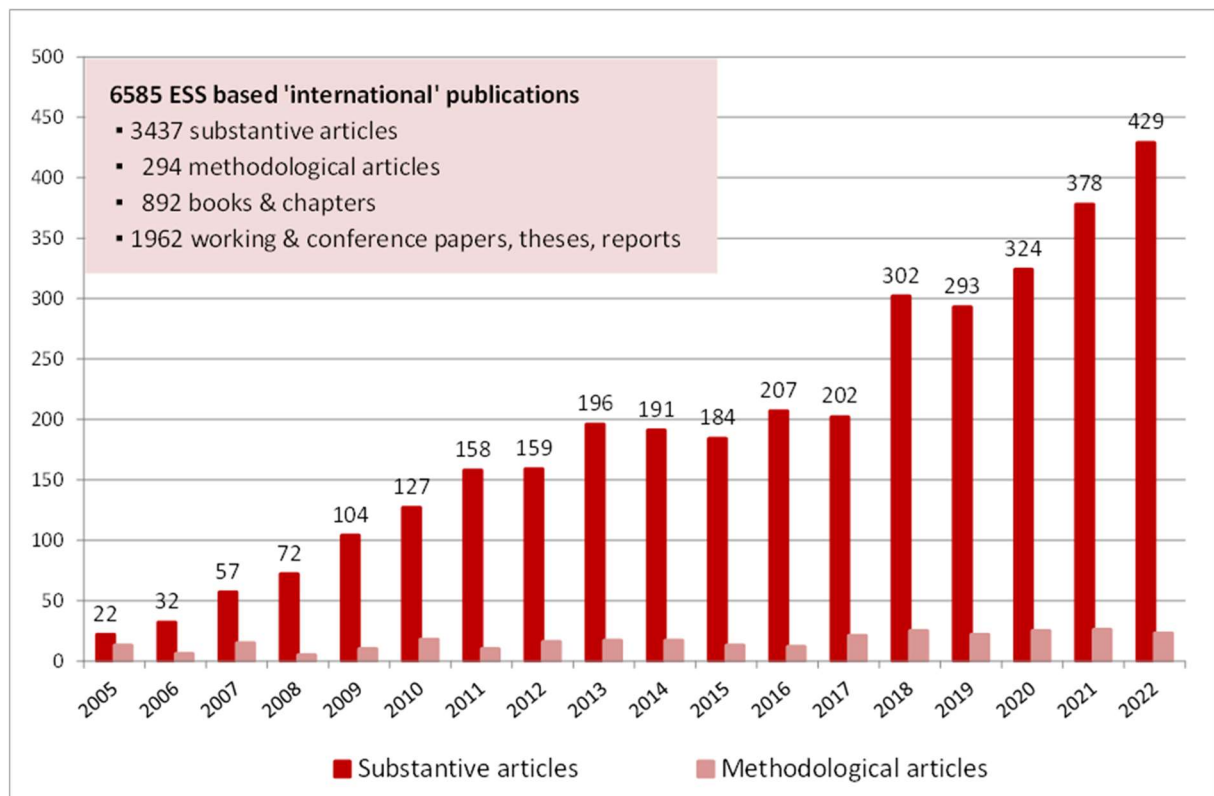
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## 2 ESS USE ACROSS ACADEMIC COMMUNITIES

### 2.1 ESS based academic and non-academic publishing

The first section explores the quantity of European Social Survey based publications and the evolving patterns observed in the publication of research studies and other materials based on the ESS data. ESS is a **multi-purpose comparative survey**, designed to be repeated at regular intervals to support monitoring and modelling of societal change and facilitate the studying of sub-groups. It was designed to provide high-quality longitudinal comparative data to a number of academic communities and support empirical analysis of societal phenomena in a variety of scientific fields. The success of any scientific infrastructure's academic mission is best reflected in the number and scope of academic publications it generates. Consequently, this aspect serves as one of the key performance indicators for European infrastructures (ERICs).

The total number of English-language ESS-based publications, referred to as 'international publications,' identified via Google Scholar, has reached **6,585**. The pool of English-language ESS-based publications continues to grow, adding approximately 550-600 units annually. **Figure 2** illustrates the dynamic acquisition of ESS international journal articles over the years using the Google Scholar application.



**FIGURE 2:** The cross-time dynamic of acquiring ESS English language publications using Google Scholar (*\*new search algorithm applied from publication year 2018*)

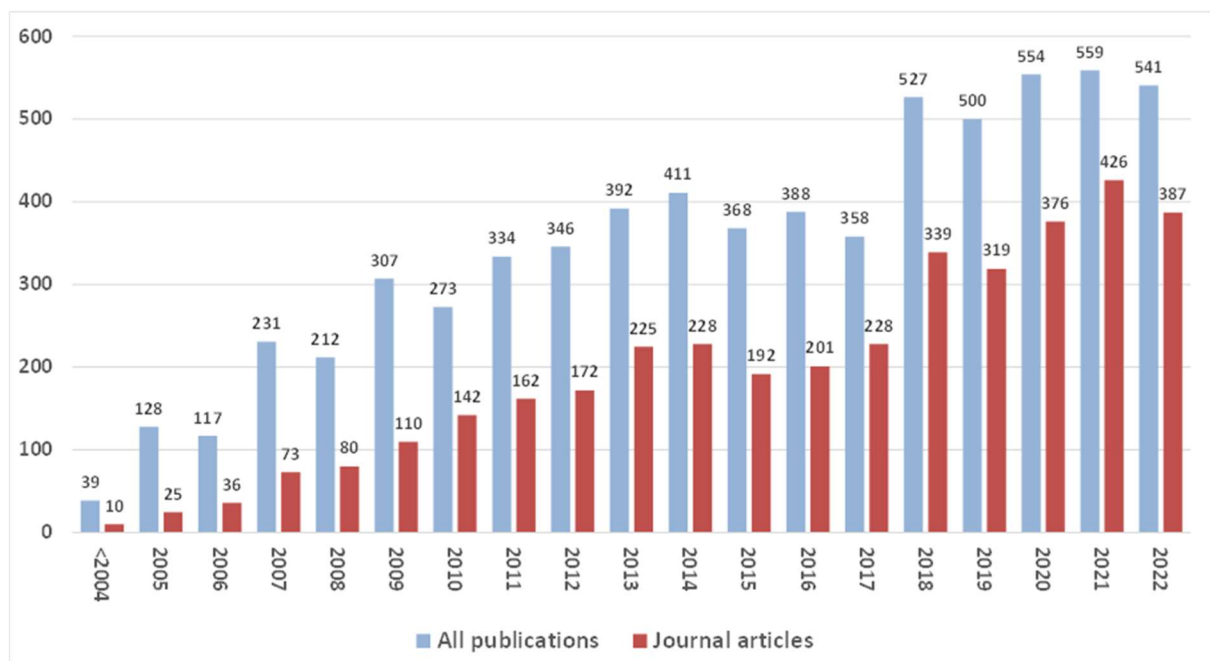
It is important to note that the **year of detection** of a publication and its actual **publishing year** do not necessarily coincide, as the search targets the previous full publication year. Additionally, when the search algorithm is improved (first in 2019 and again in 2023), it is retroactively applied to previous publishing years whenever possible. Consequently, 9% of

the 619 ESS publications identified in the 2023 Google Scholar search exercise belong to earlier years (2018-2021), while 91% pertain to the publication year 2022.

As mentioned in previous reports, the predominance of **journal articles** can be attributed to both their widespread prevalence, signifying the most prestigious form of academic output, and their ease of accessibility in publication searches. However, considering the different user groups, documenting books, chapters, and student theses offers valuable insights. Similarly, working papers, conference papers, and reports, often categorized as grey literature (research materials produced by organizations outside the traditional academic sphere), provide crucial feedback. These forms of publications may gain further significance, especially with the continuous ESFRI evaluations of Landmarks, where explicit attention to various publication types was emphasized (ESFRI 2018).

Considering the accessibility challenges associated with most non-journal types of publications, it is reasonable to assume that the actual number of ESS-based English language publications is even higher, especially in the categories of books, chapters, and theses. In contrast, the coverage of international journal articles appears to be reasonably comprehensive. Furthermore, there is an additional universe of publications in **national languages** not included in this report. However, to some extent, they are captured by the self-completion feature of the new ESS online bibliography, where approximately 18% of publications are in non-English languages.

**Figure 3** illustrates the longitudinal trend of publications based on their **actual publication year** (in contrast to the detection year). In the last five years, following the implementation of more precise Google Scholar search criteria in 2019, the number of English-language publications utilizing ESS data identified via Google Scholar has ranged between 500-560 per publishing year, with an increasing proportion of journal articles. It should be noted that the data for the latest publication year (2022) is currently incomplete. Approximately 10% of journal articles from this year will be included in next year's searches due to the time lag between advanced electronic publication and the final printed version.

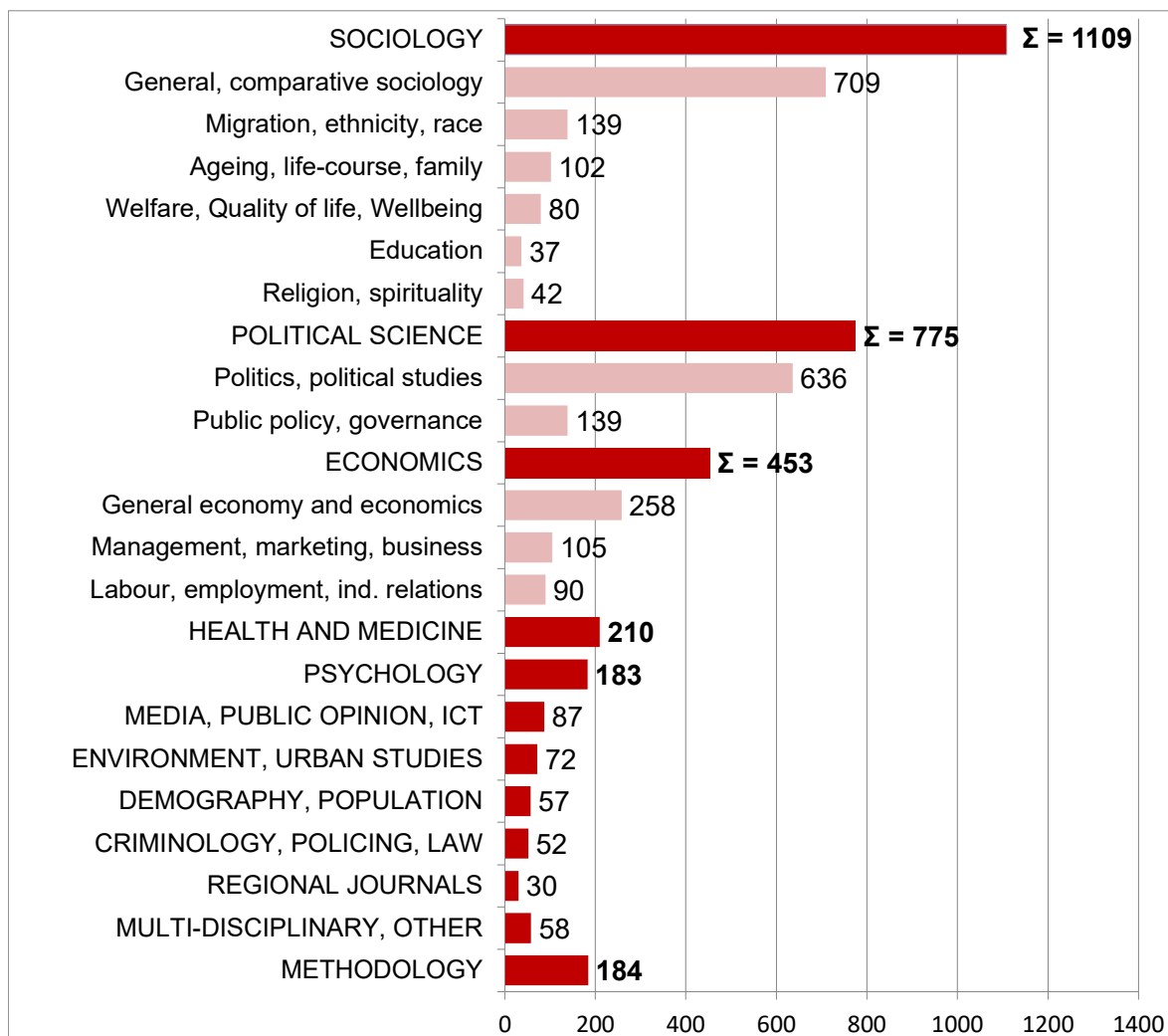


**FIGURE 3:** The longitudinal trend of ESS English language publications based on publication year

These findings highlight the dynamic nature of ESS-based publications, reflecting diverse research output and challenges in capturing the complete scholarly landscape.

## 2.2 Disciplinary profile of academic users

ESS is as a pan-European survey infrastructure, offering data to various academic fields and acting as a platform for international research teams exploring special topics. The Blueprint outlines ESS's goal to cater to a diverse clientele in social science disciplines, including political science, sociology, social psychology, mass communication, economic sciences, modern social history, and social anthropology (ESF 1998). This sub-section outlines the diverse ways in which the European Social Survey (ESS) data is utilized within various academic disciplines and **research communities**, using journal disciplinary fields as a proxy measure (Figure 4).



**FIGURE 4:** ESS outreach into academic fields in the 2003-2022 period, based on journal typology (N=3719)

ESS-based analyses are most frequently observed in **six scholarly fields**, with sociology (32.2%), political science (22.5%), and economy (13.8%) being the most prominent. This is followed by contributions in health & medicine (6.1%), psychology, and methods (both 5.3%). These figures suggest that the primary academic audiences targeted by ESS creators

during the questionnaire design phase have been effectively engaged. Additionally, the inclusion of rotating modules has allowed ESS to expand its reach to narrower academic communities, such as criminology, medicine, and environment. The overall structure of user groups is partially influenced by contextual factors, including the size of European and global academic communities, but also by the content of the ESS questionnaire and its relevance across diverse fields of research.

ESS strategic design, accommodating a wide array of disciplines, has effectively engaged academic audiences. Moreover, ESS's adaptable structure allows it to continually expand into new, narrower academic domains, ensuring its relevance and impact across diverse research communities.

### 3 RESEARCH TOPICS AND THEORETICAL APPROACHES

As a multi-purpose comparative survey, the ESS does not have a single primary application but encompasses a **wide range of topics and theoretical approaches**. Instead of focusing on advancing a specific model, multi-purpose studies like ESS allow for the exploration of numerous vital social processes (Hakim, 1982). Dedicated to serving the collective interests of their colleagues, surveys such as ESS must be cognizant of the diverse interests and developments within the field (Kim et al., 2006). The ESS core questionnaire was designed with the intention of being relevant across various thematic domains. Simultaneously, rotating modules serve as specialized tools to address research gaps in specific domains and promote the use of ESS in new areas of study.

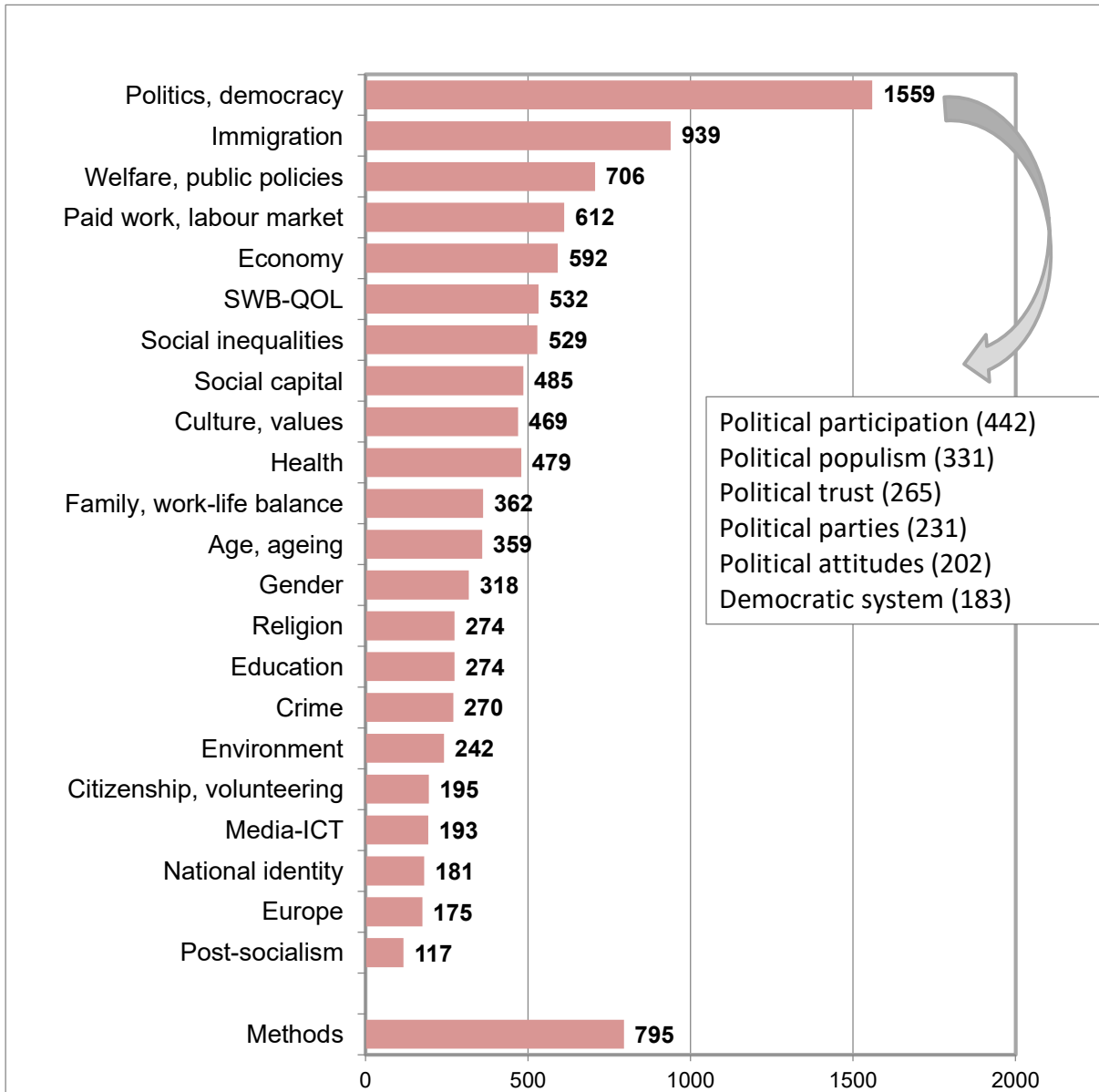
This chapter outlines the variety of topics, areas of research and theoretical frameworks adopted by scholars using the European Social Survey. It provides insights into the breadth and depth of research areas covered by scholars utilizing ESS data, the diverse theoretical lenses through which they analyse social phenomena, and the contributions made by ESS data to advancing knowledge within these academic communities. The structure of analysed topics in ESS publications reflects the content of the ESS questionnaire, the size of ESS academic user groups, and areas where key societal challenges are currently emerging.

Figure 5 provides an overview of the research topics most frequently investigated by authors using ESS data. Out of the 6,585 publications, 87.9% (5,790) are **substantive**, while 12.1% (795) are **methodological**. Given its inclusion of numerous popular political science concepts and indicators in its core module, it is not surprising that **politics** remains the most explored subject in the academic literature based on ESS data. Political topics are featured in 23.7% (1559) of ESS publications (with each publication coded for up to two topics). The most frequently referenced subjects within politics include political parties, political trust, political elites, political culture, political responsiveness, and political efficacy. In recent years, there has been a notable increase in studies focusing on (right-wing) political populism and the determinants of its support.

The second most explored subject is **immigration**, which continues to be one of the most pressing social issues facing European countries and a topic where ESS datasets feature prominently in comparative survey research. This prominence is attributed to various factors, including larger sample sizes, frequent measurements, and a plethora of relevant indicators. Many analysts utilize ESS data to test and develop theories related to inter-group relations, largely derived from psychological research, such as the intergroup contact theory,



social distance theory, and group threat theory. Numerous authors address the integration of immigrants into host societies, examining theories like (segmented) assimilation and acculturation theory. Additionally, the concept of multiculturalism, representing a non-assimilative approach to cultural diversity, is widely explored in relation to national identity. These topics are present in 14.2% (939) of ESS publications.



**FIGURE 5:** Number of ESS publications addressing individual topics (up to two topics coded per publication, 2003-2022, N=6585)

**Family research** is mostly linked to the Family & Work modules, focusing primarily on work-life balance. It enriches a longstanding tradition of research on managing paid work alongside family and other aspects of life. Within this context, closely related concepts such as gender roles, gender inequality, and gender discrimination are explored to investigate gender-based disparities, especially in the areas of education, paid work, and household responsibilities. This area of research will likely expand further, following the introduction of the new module on gender inequalities in Round 10. **Demographic issues** are another closely

linked area of research, with a particular focus on fertility and fertility decisions, often within the framework of the life course perspective. Additionally, the process of aging and its societal implications for demographic structure, workforce, party membership, the aging electorate, and welfare sustainability are explored within the context of demographic transition. Combined, these issues are present in **15.6%** (1039) of ESS publications.

In ESS-based investigations of **well-being and health**, authors typically explore determinants such as age, illness, immigration status, peer comparisons, welfare regime, social capital and networks, trust levels, economic resources, and other relevant factors. One widely explored concept in the well-being domain is socially produced inequalities in health. Collectively, well-being and health-related topics are addressed in 15.3% (1011) of ESS publications.

**Culture and values** constitute yet another significant area of exploration within ESS research. Analysts typically delve into the mechanisms of social norms across various disciplines and subjects, including gender and family norms, fertility norms, volunteering norms, norms of political engagement, work and employment norms, tax morale, as well as the transmission of norms, informal control, peer pressure, and other related aspects. Cultural change serves as a major focus of research within this domain, encompassing topics such as the process of individualization and post-materialism theory. Additionally, **religion**, a sub-area of cultural change research, is theoretically dominated by the secularization theory. This notion posits that as societies progress and modernize, religious authority diminishes in all aspects of social life and governance. Combined, these culture and values-related topics are explored in approximately 11.3% (742) of ESS publications.

Another prominent topic within ESS publications is **welfare**, which is featured in 10.7% (706) of the publications, and public policies, especially among authors from northern European countries. Within the realm of public policies, the most explored concept is Esping-Andersen's theory of welfare regimes. This theory postulates that existing welfare regimes function as socializing forces, reproducing the demand for redistribution that legitimizes them. Another frequently referenced concept is welfare chauvinism, which involves the belief that immigrants are "free-riders" who receive social benefits without having contributed adequately through taxes. Publications addressing this topic are often rooted in the Welfare module of the ESS.

A further popular area of research is **citizenship and social capital**. Scholars in this field explore the association between generalized trust and various aspects of liberal democracy, including the functioning of democratic institutions, increased levels of citizens' participation, better performance in several policy areas, social cohesion, and overall societal well-being. These topics are addressed in 10.3% (680) of ESS publications.

Within the realm of paid work, a topic covered in 9.2% (612) of ESS publications, the most significant concept is the theory of human capital, which conceptualizes education and its individual and social role. Another frequently explored concept in the field of industrial relations is union membership, serving as a collective bargaining mechanism that enhances employees' bargaining power. Analysts investigate both its macro and micro determinants in their research.

Lastly, **social inequality** is also among the most frequently explored topics, centring on the unequal distribution of income or wealth and interpreted through either functionalist or conflict perspectives. The most widely studied concept is social class, while other key theoretical perspectives include social exclusion or social marginalization, as well as social mobility. These themes are addressed in 8.0% (529) of ESS publications.

In summary, the European Social Survey (ESS) serves as a crucial quantitative data source particularly in the fields of politics and citizenship, immigration, welfare, work-family balance, well-being, human values, and social inequalities.

#### 4 FINDINGS PRODUCTION ACROSS ESS COUNTRIES

This section investigates the **geographical distribution of authors** who have contributed to research findings using European Social Survey (ESS) data. It offers valuable information about the international diversity of researchers involved in ESS-related studies and provides insights into the regional and global reach of scholars using ESS data.

The extent of findings production across ESS countries is a particularly relevant aspect for national founders (ESS General Assembly) and national teams (National Coordinators Forum). The key indicator used is the number of academic publications co-produced in individual countries. It is important to note that ESS bibliographic monitoring includes only English language publications, providing only a partial view of the overall research output. However, this limited scope remains significant given the premium status of international publications, particularly journal articles, in academic evaluation exercises.

As outlined in Table 1, approximately 80% of ESS international publications were co-authored by writers affiliated with 10 advanced **Western European** countries and the USA. This observation aligns with existing literature, acknowledging such disparities. According to Zanotto et al. (2016), 24 countries with high Human Development Index (HDI) account for 83.9% of global scientific outputs, while 153 low HDI countries contribute only 1.9%. However, it is noteworthy that there are 869 (13.1%) publications co-authored by academics in Eastern Europe, representing a significant presence. Analysts from Poland are the leading force in this region with almost 200 publications. There is, in fact, a trend indicating a decreasing share of Western authors and a gradual increase in the Eastern European share of ESS authorships. This trend likely mirrors the growing number of Eastern European member countries, as analysts tend to explore their own regions. Looking forward, Eastern European regions hold substantial potential for expansion in the next decade. This expansion encompasses not only new countries joining the ESS ERIC but also maintaining uninterrupted participation—a trend that was not always consistent in the past.

With the **global links** that ESS is establishing, the map of authorships is likely to undergo further changes in the next decade. The probable growth of non-European contributors is anticipated, especially with the potential introduction of an EVS module. This addition is likely to enhance the diversity and international collaboration within ESS publications due to the large number of shared items with the World Values Survey (WVS).

**TABLE 1:** Number of ESS international publications (co)authored by at least one author affiliated in a country, 2003-2022 (N=6585)

Country of affiliation	N	Country of affiliation	N	Country of affiliation	N
UK	975	France	153	Turkey	41
Germany	865	Ireland	145	Lithuania	41
USA	721	Israel	126	Bulgaria	42
Netherlands	636	Hungary	126	Slovakia	32
Spain	435	Austria	110	Ukraine	23
Italy	401	Estonia	95	Serbia	21
Belgium	399	Greece	95	Croatia	19
Sweden	376	Canada	94	Cyprus	18
Switzerland	255	Russia	82	Iceland	12
Norway	244	Czech republic	74	Latvia	8
Poland	198	Slovenia	57	Albania	4
Portugal	191	Australia	54	Kosovo	2
Denmark	188	Luxembourg	52		
Finland	180	Romania	45		

## 5 UTILIZATION OF COUNTRY DATA

This section delves into the factors influencing the utilization of data from individual countries within the context of the research or analysis being conducted. It address aspects such as the availability and reliability of country-specific data, the relevance of the data to the research objectives, methodological considerations, and challenges faced in incorporating country-specific data into the analysis. It also discusses the impact of these determinants on the overall findings and conclusions drawn from the research.

As some authors have noted, unequal representation of countries in international surveys hampers the generalizability of research findings and introduces potential bias by excluding atypical cases, such as less-developed (low-income) and non-Western countries (Kołczyńska 2014). Certain countries are extensively researched, while others have limited survey data, skewing our insights toward prosperous regions with a high quality of life (Goerres et al. 2019). Therefore, analyzing country data using ESS as the analytical basis reveals **how well researched a country is**.

The primary objective of each national fieldwork initiative and the substantial investment behind it is to achieve scientific utilization of national ESS datasets. However, the analytical potential of national academic communities is constrained by their size and overall analytical proficiency. In contrast, the international academic community, encompassing both European and global researchers, can maximize the value of these datasets once integrated into the ESS cumulative data file. Table 3 provides an overview of the proportions of national data inclusion for all countries that participated in at least one ESS round.

**TABLE 2:** Proportions of country data included in ESS international publications

%	2003-2022 publications N=4396* A1	Round 9 publications N=421** B1		2003-2022 publications N=4396* A2	Round 9 publications N=421 B2
Germany	75,6	68,9	Greece	41,3	-
UK	73,9	63,7	Italy	40,6	55,8
Sweden	73,1	60,8	Slovakia	39,4	39,2
Netherlands	72,2	63,2	Bulgaria	32,5	41,8
Belgium	71,3	55,1	Lithuania	29,1	40,2
France	70,9	63,9	Cyprus	27,6	33,3
Spain	70,2	57,0	Russia	23,2	-
Finland	70,2	59,9	Luxembourg	23,0	-
Portugal	65,3	51,5	Israel	22,4	-
Denmark	65,0	45,1	Iceland	21,7	28,0
Ireland	64,3	53,7	Ukraine	20,1	33,3
Norway	64,1	54,4	Croatia	17,0	-
Poland	62,7	55,6	Latvia	14,5	29,0
Hungary	59,3	56,1	Romania	12,0	8,6
Switzerland	59,1	50,6	Turkey	10,6	-
Slovenia	58,4	52,3	Albania	4,5	-
Czech R.	55,8	51,8	Kosovo	4,2	-
Austria	52,2	55,6	Serbia	2,3	22,2
Estonia	50,3	46,8	Montenegro	1,5	14,1

\* The population of downloaded ESS publications with full texts where country-data inclusion can be established; \*\* Publications that used ESS round 9 (2018)

The inclusion shares for the overall period (A columns) vary significantly, ranging from 76% for Germany to less than 2% for Montenegro. This substantial gap highlights Germany's status as a much more extensively researched country compared to, for example, Kosovo or Romania. The primary reason for these significant disparities in national data inclusion is the **number of rounds each country participated in**. This can be attributed to factors such as late accession to the ESS or the consistency of participation, which are usually linked to a country's overall level of development and the associated funding challenges. Among the 39 countries that participated in the European Social Survey at least once in the first 9 rounds, only 15 of them took part in all waves, and 10 participated in four waves or fewer. Generally speaking, countries that were present in all or nearly all rounds demonstrated the highest rates of inclusion, whereas those that participated in fewer rounds had lower rates due to data being absent from ESS cumulative datasets.

Examining inclusion rates for publications using **round 9 only** for countries that participated in that round (B columns) provides an additional perspective on how participation frequency influences data inclusion shares. In this context, the availability factor is irrelevant, as all countries are equally accessible. Consequently, differences between country data inclusion rates are generally smaller, though still large. In this scenario, inclusion rates range from 68.9% for Germany to 8.6% for Romania. Particularly countries in the B2 column, with many interruptions in participation, generally struggle to 'compete' with the B1 column countries in terms of data inclusion, even if their data is

available. Italy is an exception due to its theoretical and political appeal for analysts, being an EU-15 country and among key countries for many topics, i.e. emigration. The primary reason for this disparity appears to lie in the widespread use of multiple rounds for pooling cases or cross-time examination (addressed later in the report). In such cases, analysts often omit countries that are not present in all or a significant number of measurements, a practice that favours continuous participants and penalizes those who skip rounds. The table thus illustrates how interruptions in participation, especially common in non-OECD countries, result in disparities in data inclusion, ultimately affecting the production of findings at both national and global levels.

### *The effect of data quality and compliance issues*

Another, though specific factor influencing country data inclusion rates is the presence of serious quality or compliance issues, leading to the **release of a country's data file separately** instead of integrating it into the ESS file for a specific round. Table 3 demonstrates the rather dramatic effect of a separate country data status on inclusion rates. It compares rates for countries when their data was published normally versus when it was issued as a separate file, using a set of publications that only used that particular ESS round. The exclusion of multiple-rounds publications is necessary to clearly observe the effect of a file separation, as it prevents potential confusion where authors might extract data for a specific country from another round where it was part of an integrated file.

**TABLE 3:** Inclusion shares of country data for rounds with separate status

	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5	Round 6	Round 7	Round 8	Round 9
Italy	72.1	24.8*	-	-	-	57.9	-	66.5	55.0
Latvia	-	-	17.8	54.8	-	-	-	-	31.3
Romania	-	-	23.2	55.9	-	-	-	-	2.5
Austria	70.8	68.0	64.3	14.2	9.9	-	73.6	69.8	51.2
Lithuania	-	-	-	14.9	35.0	55.2	57.5	55.1	35.4
Albania	-	-	-	-	-	34.1	-	-	1.3

*\*red cell – Round(s) when country data was issued as a separate file*

The table clearly indicates that separating a country's dataset significantly reduces its inclusion rate compared to normal rounds, often by up to five times. Such limited utilization raises doubts about the investment into extensive fieldwork, yet the separate data file status is usually unforeseen, with issues surfacing later in the fieldwork process. It remains unclear, however, to what extent the lower usage is due to methodological concerns, considering the flagged nature of this data, or practical issues related to manual data merging instead of utilizing integrated files or the Data Wizard tool. Unlike self-completion countries in Round 10, which can be seamlessly merged using the Data Wizard, this option is not available for individually separated countries from previous rounds, potentially posing a challenge for less experienced users.

On a wider scale, the table emphasizes the critical importance of consistent participation to ensure comprehensive and reliable ESS based research findings.

## 6 THE USE OF QUESTIONNAIRE SECTIONS

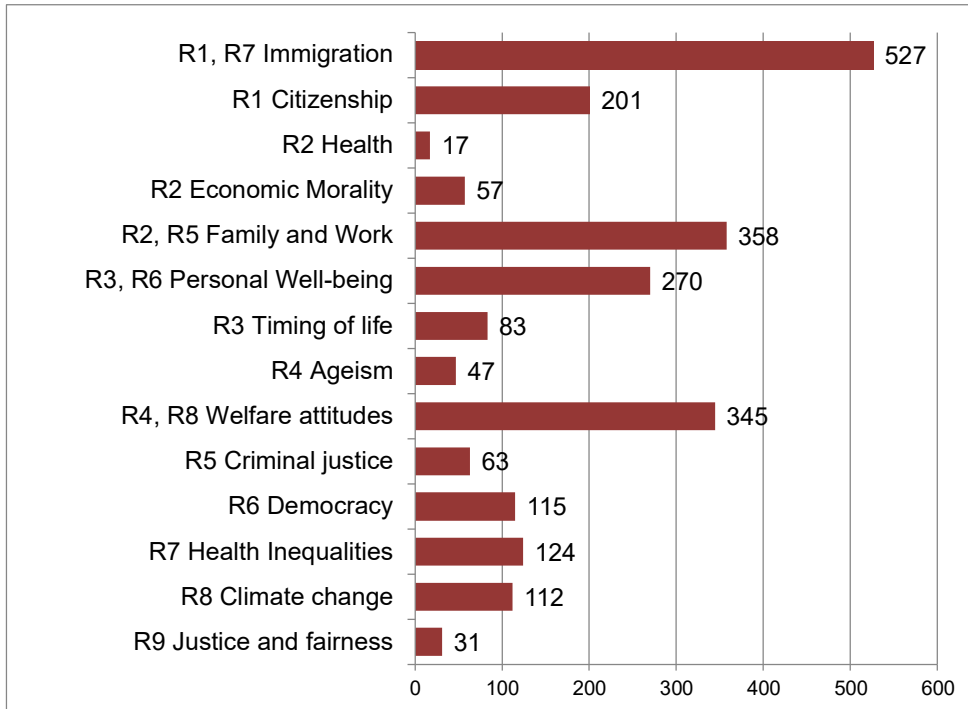
This chapter explores the specific sections within the European Social Survey (ESS) questionnaire and how researchers employ them in their studies. It examines the relevance (usage frequency) of different sections and individual items, shedding light on the areas of focus for researchers and the phenomena they aim to investigate. This assessment empowers the Core Scientific Team to track trends in the utilization of specific questionnaire sections over time, allowing them to respond effectively when implementing revisions to the questionnaire. While usage is not the sole criterion for item or section revisions, it holds significant weight in the evaluation process. Unused items or sections do not contribute to scientific findings and fail to fulfil their intended purpose, highlighting the importance of assessing their utilization in the context of research investments.

The ESS core questionnaire, created collaboratively by the ESS central team and external thematic experts, includes enduring topics of interest for researchers in the social sciences and beyond, as well as a diverse array of socio-demographic variables. In contrast, the rotating modules introduce a bottom-up element to the ESS, providing a vehicle for the scientific community to address research gaps in various academic domains. This structure is a compromise between innovation and **adaptability** on one hand and **longitudinal stability** on the other (Schnaudt et al., 2014; Lindstrøm, 2017). The questionnaire, from of individual items, item blocks, and modules, frames the thematic possibilities for users, influencing the range of topics, theoretical approaches, and engagement with different academic communities.

The analysis is based on 4743 downloaded publications where individual items could be identified. The minimum criterion for documenting the use of a section was the presence of at least one item from it in a publication. The **A, B, C core** part, not depicted in the chart below, has consistently been the most utilized attitudinal section of the ESS questionnaire, featured in 84.9% (3885) of downloaded publications. The conceptual significance of this section for various scientific communities, coupled with its biennial fielding frequency resulting in a continually refreshed time-series and the potential for sample pooling, establishes the ABC core as the most pervasive component in ESS-based analyses. The **Portrait Values Questionnaire**, the ESS values battery which is also part of the core is used in 15.2% of publications.

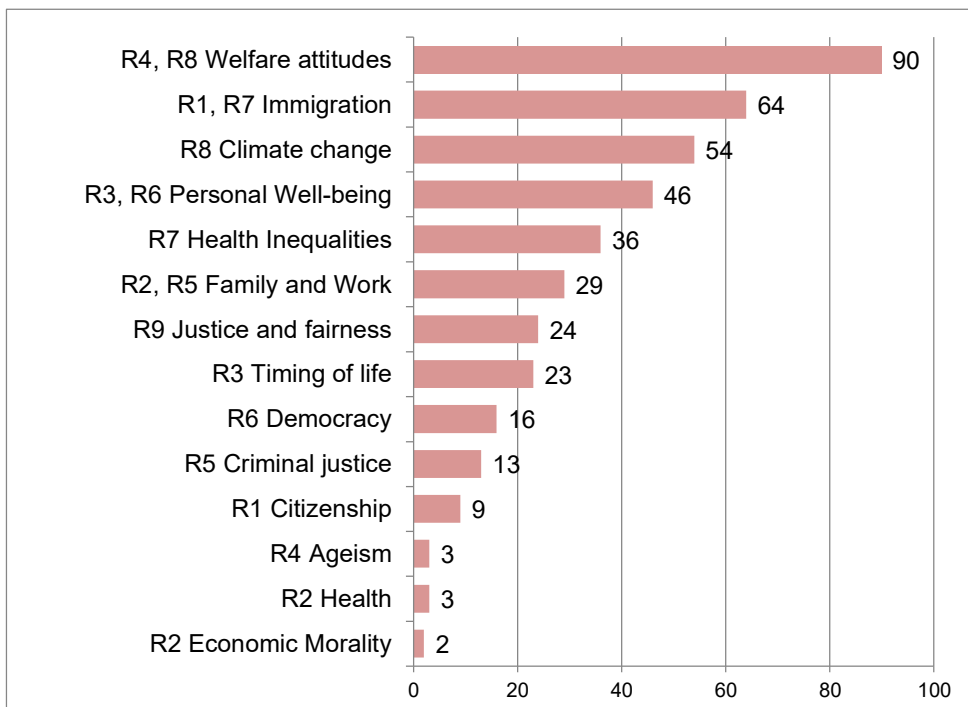
On the other hand, rotating modules, the 'project' sections of ESS questionnaires, exhibit considerably uneven usage, as depicted in Figure 6. In terms of academic publishing, these modules can be categorized into more or less popular ones, and this pattern has remained relatively stable over the past decade. The four **most frequently utilized** ESS modules are **Immigration, Work & Family, Welfare, and Wellbeing**, each garnering approximately 270-530 publications. However, **Citizenship**, which once held similar popularity due to its battery of items measuring participation in voluntary organizations, has gradually faded from this group. Its absence since 2002 has rendered its data too dated for further analysis.

The second group comprises relatively recent modules that, compared to the earlier set, see more moderate usage, ranging between 100-125 publications. These include **Democracy, Health Inequalities and Climate Change**. The remaining modules target narrower academic audiences, resulting in usage numbers below 100. It is worth noting that the Justice and Fairness module from Round 9, being relatively recent, is yet to achieve higher usage numbers at this point.



**FIGURE 6:**  
Overview of rotating modules usage (2003-2022, N=4743)

To obtain a fresh snapshot of usage, Figure 7 presents the picture of modules used for the two most recent complete publishing years. The two modules most frequently featured in the last two publishing years were Welfare and Immigration. Both benefited from recent repetitions, receiving a 'boost' with fresh data and enabling cross-time comparisons. Following closely are the popular Climate Change and Well-being modules, with other modules trailing behind. The consistent strong usage of certain modules underscores their enduring relevance for academic audiences, addressing thematic areas of broad academic and policy importance.



**FIGURE 7:**  
Overview of rotating modules usage in publication years 2021-22 (N=840)



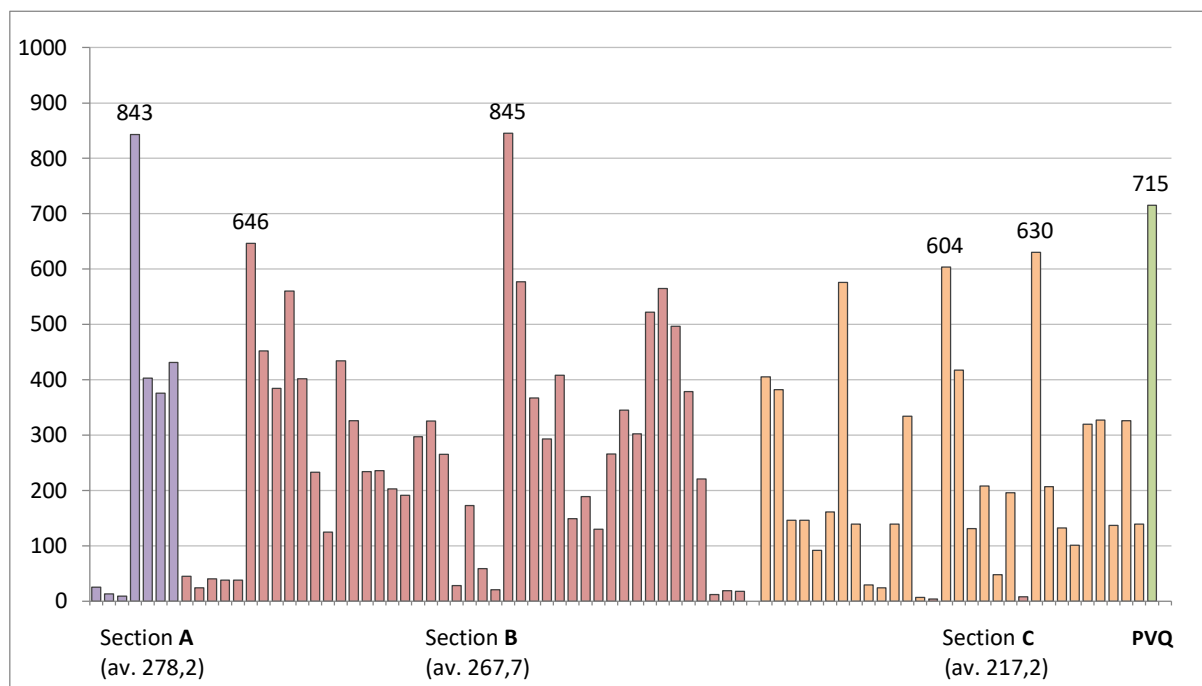
The majority of ESS-based publications predominantly utilize core items, as highlighted in the 2022 bibliographic report which examined shifts in the use of core-only and module-only items over a 15-year period in more detail. Notable fluctuations were observed, with the peak of module-only publications spanning from 2008 to 2014, primarily influenced by the two iterations of the Work & Family module which is most often employed as a standalone source. Overall, there is a trend towards an **increasing share of core-only publications**, possibly influenced by a growing preference for multiple-round use which tends to focus on the attitudinal core part of the questionnaire.

## 7 ITEM USAGE STATISTICS

Items represent the smallest and most specific units of the questionnaire monitored for usage. They serve as the basis for tracking the use of rotating modules and play a crucial role in **refining the questionnaire**, such as reviewing the Core and designing repeat modules. When revising the questionnaire, it is advisable not to discard frequently used items, as they often address pertinent issues and hold significant analytical value for academic users. Statistics on item usage provide a detailed overview of the sections within the attitudinal core and rotating modules, highlighting which parts are most and least utilized, or not used at all. For instance, the strong usage of a module may result from either a majority or a minority of its items.

The item usage count is currently based on 4743 downloaded substantive publications for the period 2003-2022. It includes statistics for **items in rounds 1-9** (A, B, C core, Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ), and rotating modules), excluding the demographic F section, i.e. rounds with active publication outputs.

Figure 8 illustrates the utilization of **items in the A, B, C core sections**. The most frequently used items revolve around six analytical concepts or research subjects that resonate with analysts across diverse academic fields. These concepts include social capital, political participation, subjective well-being, immigration, and system satisfaction.

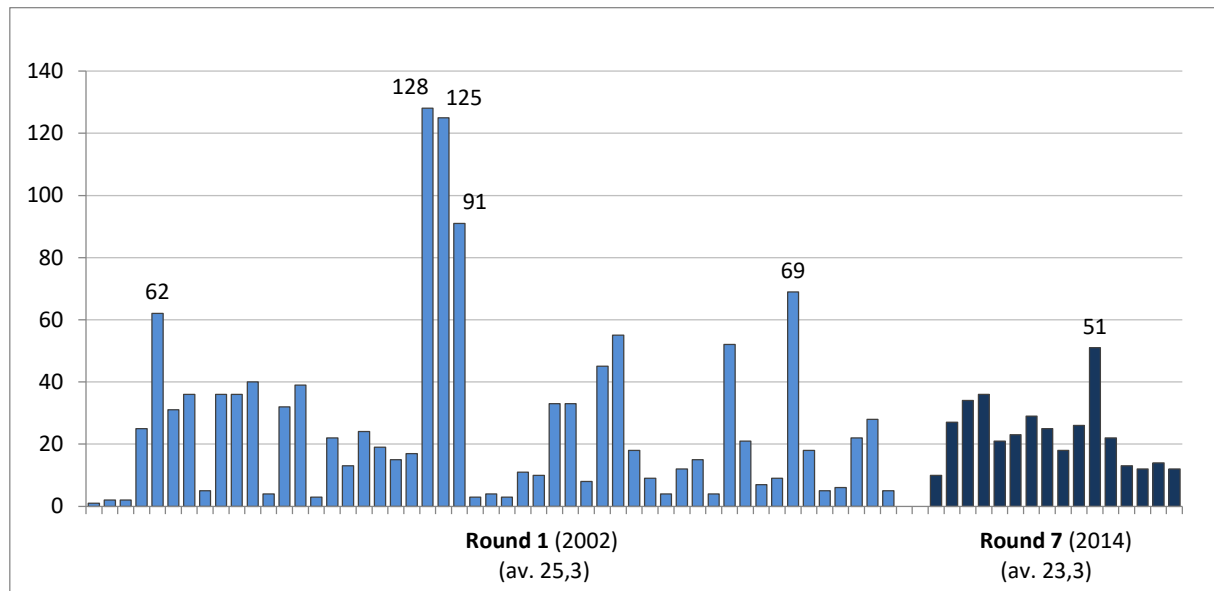


**FIGURE 8:** Usage frequencies for current A, B, C core items (2003-2022, based on 4743 publications)

The current set of 'active' 82 core items has been employed a total of 20,498 times, with an average of 250 uses per item. Notably, certain items, such as generalized trust and the left-right scale, far surpass this average, while some items, particularly those introduced in later rounds, fall below it. The two most used ESS attitudinal items are the *generalized trust* item (843 publications) and the *left-right self-placement* item (845 publications). Despite variations, the consistent and robust utilization of items from the ESS attitudinal core underscores the fundamental importance of the included concepts for conducting a comparative quantitative analysis of key societal trends and issues.

The following figures examine usage patterns across eight of the most popular ESS modules, revealing distinct patterns that contribute to the success of each module. A key aspect under scrutiny is the distribution of item usage, which varies significantly among these modules.

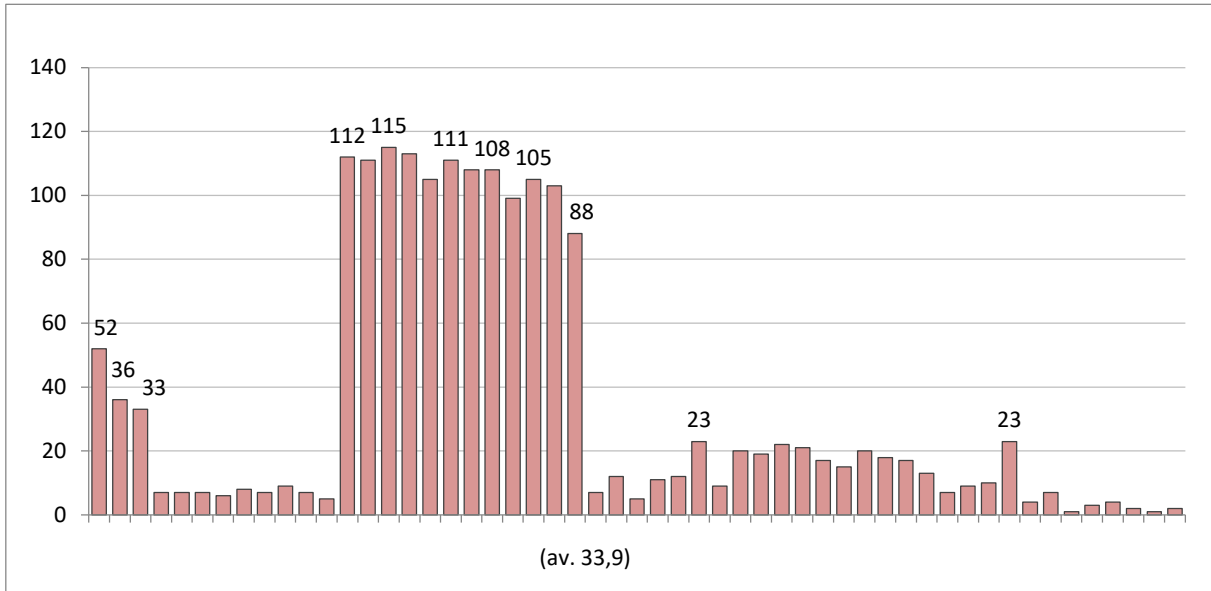
Figure 9a illustrates the utilization of items from two **immigration modules**. The majority of items demonstrate significant relevance in terms of usage, with several standout items being used particularly frequently. These include items related to welfare chauvinism, crime problems, refugee acceptance, and allowing Muslim immigration. The item asking whether *people who come to live in [country] generally take jobs away from workers or generally help to create new jobs* is the most used single-module ESS item (128 publications). Notably, the six items integrated into the longitudinal core, as seen in the previous chart, continue to be the most used items from the original Immigration module. The chart also highlights the effectiveness of the repeat module in introducing new items, which, despite having a shorter publication period, exhibit nearly the same average usage as the original items.



**FIGURE 9a:** Usage frequencies for items in Round 1 and Round 7 Immigration modules

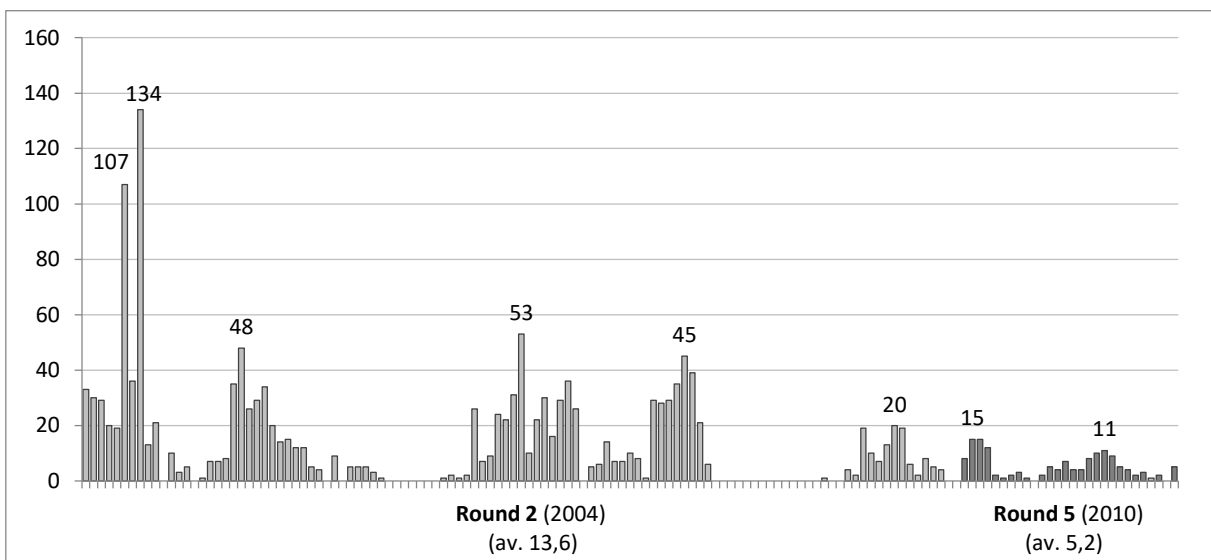
Figure 9b illustrates the usage patterns of items from the Round 1 **Citizenship module**. Unlike the Immigration module, the strong utilization of this module is predominantly based on a 12-item battery focusing on *engagement with voluntary organizations*. This battery is consistently employed as a scale, contributing to an elevated overall average usage, still the highest of all rotating modules. In contrast, the Immigration module demonstrated widespread usage across a variety of concepts and items. The Citizenship module was never

repeated, although the primary concept of volunteering remains highly popular in relation to social capital and political participation issues and the usage of most other items was not insignificant. The concept of volunteering thus represents a notable data gap within the ESS, given that the original module is now largely too aged to attract analytic use.



**FIGURE 9b:** Usage frequencies for items in Round 1 Citizenship module

The third case involves the two **Family, Work, and Wellbeing modules** from rounds 2 and 5 (Figure 9c). The module featured a high number of items due to various routing scenarios, resulting in a fairly uneven usage pattern, with some sections heavily used and others less utilized (e.g., unpaid help and family support, experience of studying). The latter sections were largely omitted in the Round 5 repeat module, which did not achieve a similar level of use as the immigration repeat module. The two most popular items addressing the concept of gender and family roles are also shared with the Welfare module, which partially explains the high usage count.

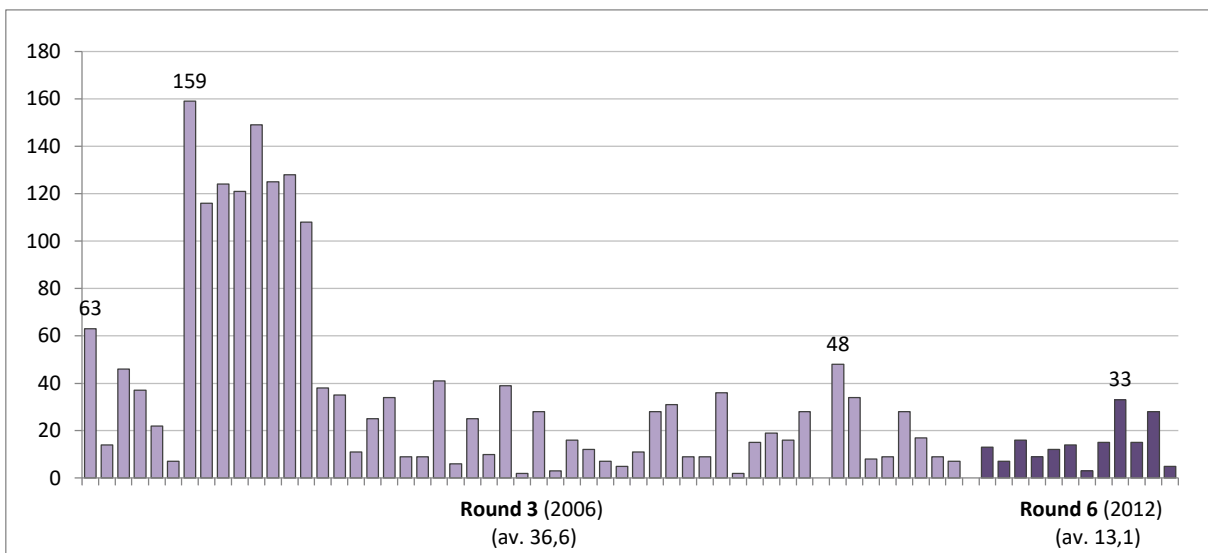


**FIGURE 9c:** Usage frequencies for items in Round 2 and Round 5 Family, work, and wellbeing modules

The item “*When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women*” is the most used ESS double-module item (134 publications). If new items were to be considered for addition to the core, this item would appear to be an excellent candidate, given the significance of (non)traditionalist family values for various social issues (e.g., labour market participation, the welfare state, general value orientation, etc.). The second extensively studied concept is the division of housework chores between women and men, addressing issues related to work-life conflict, another set of frequently employed indicators.

Interestingly, other segments that essentially address distinct or more detailed aspects of the above mentioned issues – e.g. subjective feelings about household work, disagreements between partners, inter-generational solidarity, unpaid help, childcare preferences and effects of having children on occupational career – drew comparatively little attention. It seems challenging to anticipate which particular perspective will be explored most and at what level of detail. Unless well-established concepts with high usage, like the WHO-Five Well-being index, are incorporated, some degree of relative “usage failure” should be anticipated for most new modules.

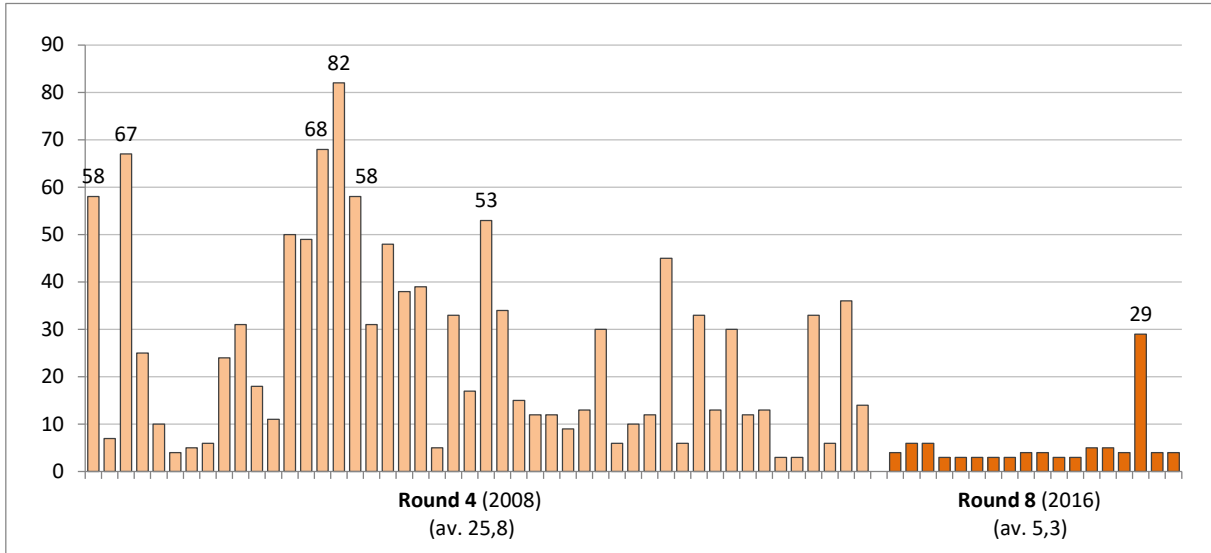
The fourth among the popular modules are rounds 3 and 6 **Personal and Social Wellbeing**. The high average usage figures for the original module are somewhat inflated, primarily due to the popularity of the established 8-item CES-D Depression scale, which the module first included. This scale was later added to the Health Inequalities module, and both uses are counted here. This Depression scale has consistently been the module’s most used section, especially the item asking whether the *respondent felt depressed during the past week*, which is often employed as a stand-alone item (159 publications). Another frequently used concept is *voluntarism*, highlighting its analytical usefulness in all modules where it is available. The third most used item is *satisfaction with the present (main) job*, shared with the Family module. Among the new items in the repeat module, the most frequently used one is whether the respondent *receives help and support from people close to them when they need it*, addressing the theme of social capital.



**FIGURE 9d:** Usage frequencies for items in Round 3 and Round 6 Wellbeing modules

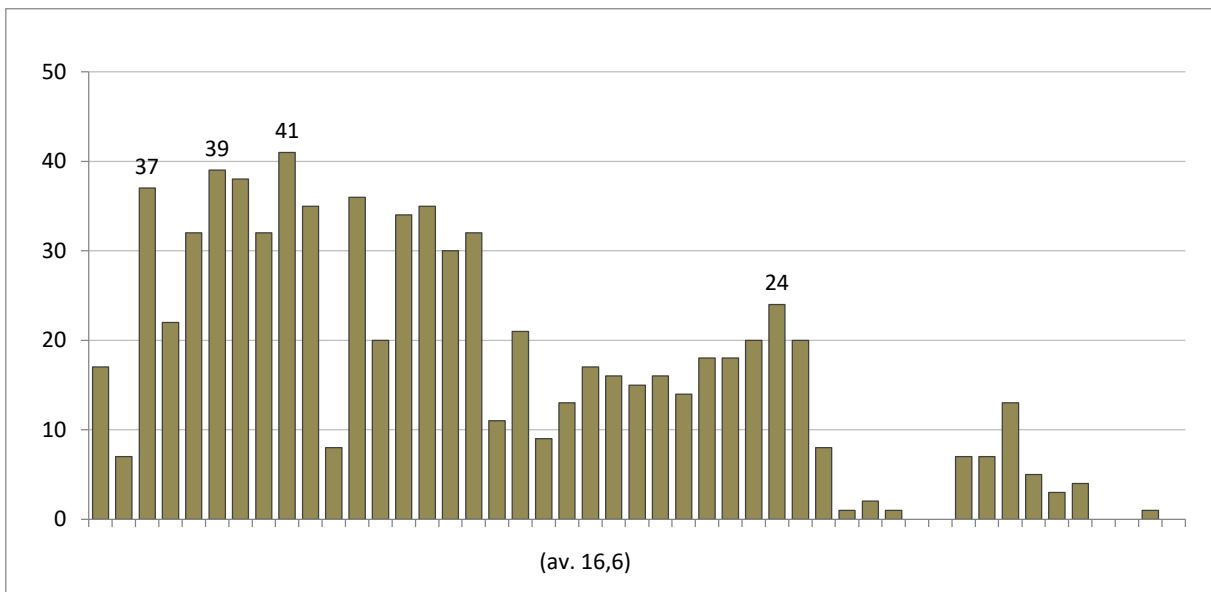
Figure 9e illustrates the utilization of **Welfare Attitudes** modules from Rounds 4 and 8. The original welfare module stands out as another successful ESS rotating module in terms of substantial per-item usage and an absence of item-level usage gaps. The module's usage

figures peak for the 'role of government' battery (up to 82 publications), measuring a divide between pro-market and pro-welfare stances at both societal and individual levels, along with questions about *income inequalities*. The majority of other items also demonstrate robust usage, averaging 25.8 times. While the repeat module introduced the highly utilized concept of *Universal Basic Income* (29 publications) the remaining new items did not attain the same level of popularity as those in the original module.



**FIGURE 9e:** Usage frequencies for items in Round 4 and Round 8 Welfare modules

The module **Understandings of democracy** was administered in rounds 6 and 10, but the repeat round is too recent for bibliographic detection. Figure 9f, therefore, illustrates usage only for the original module.

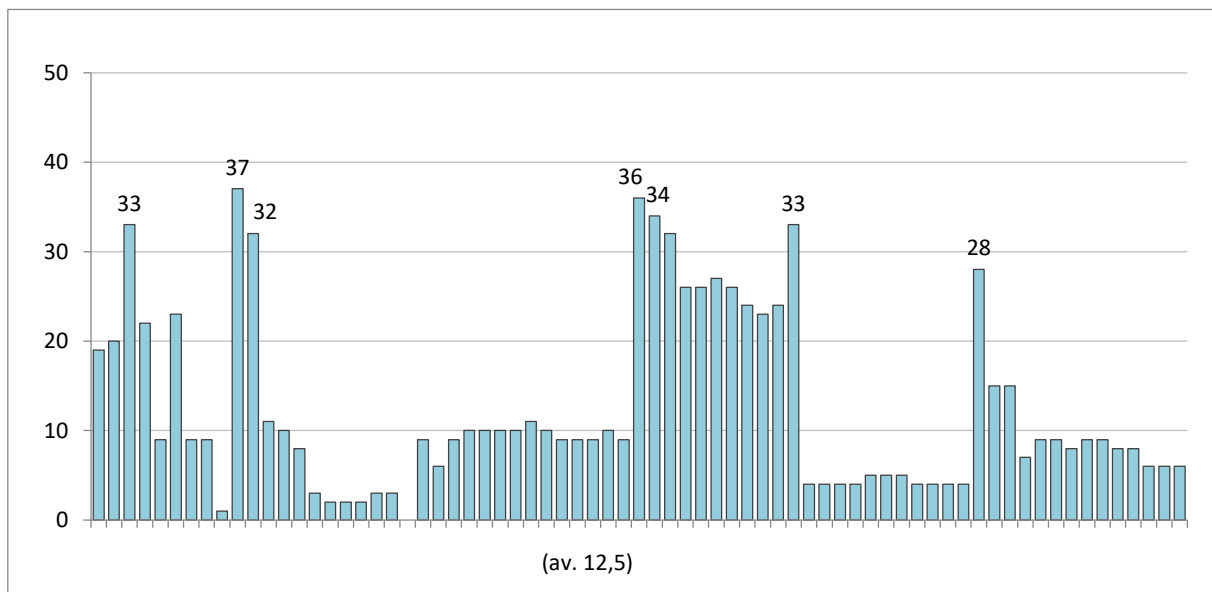


**FIGURE 9f:** Usage frequencies for items in Round 6 module Understanding of democracy

The module's most utilized section is the first half, where respondents are asked about the importance of 16 *normative features for democracy* in general (up to 41 publications),

followed by the second section inquiring how these features *apply in their countries* (up to 24 publications). Some gaps in usage are evident, most notably a battery of questions about *expressing extreme political views*. This is somewhat surprising, considering the widespread popularity of the topics of populism and radicalism, emphasizing that analysts are drawn to specific angles of these topics. In this case, they appear more interested in whether respondents hold radical views (items in B core, such as party affiliation and left-right placement) than in their attitudes about the right to express them. Nonetheless, these gaps represent a minority of items, and the module overall is well-used.

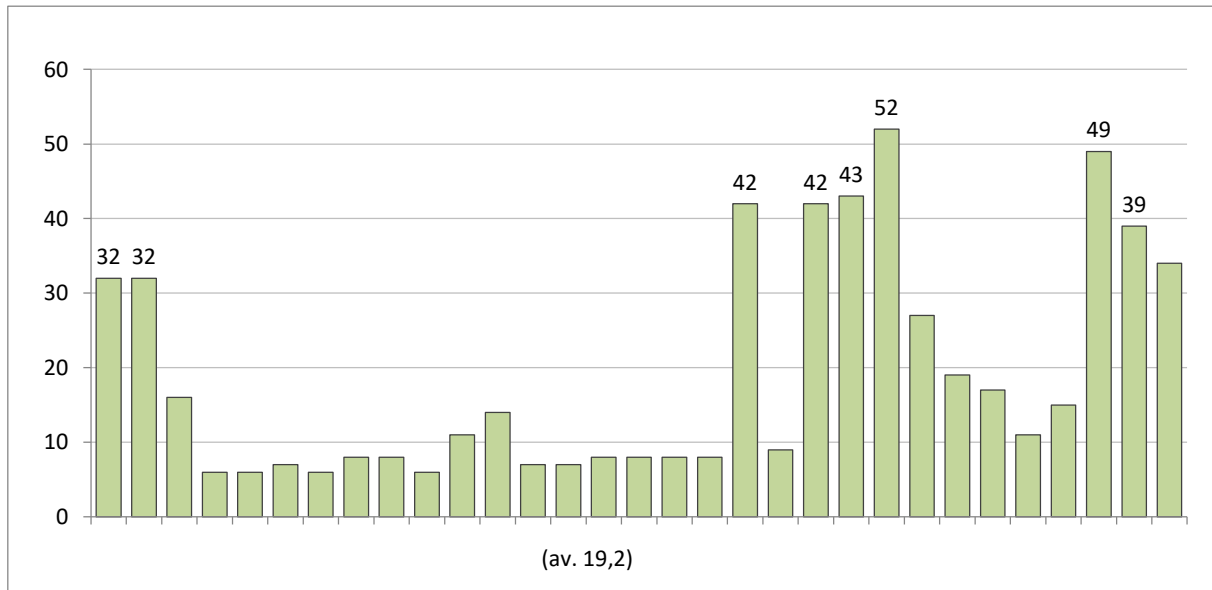
The module '**Health Inequalities**' (Figure 9b) was implemented in Round 7 (2014) and is similar to the 'Understanding of Democracy' module in terms of being constructed from several large batteries of items, typically used as a scale. Its most utilized sections are *lifestyle habits* (up to 33 publications), items employed to calculate *BMI*, and a battery of 12 *health problems* respondents may have experienced in the last 12 months. Considerably less used sets include 12 items measuring respondents' use of various alternative treatments, a 12-piece set of items asking whether the respondent was hampered by the said health issues in their daily activities, and a set of 10 health hazards respondents may be exposed to at their job. Largely due to its clustered structure, the module displays no usage gaps, as items tend to get analyzed collectively with other items pertaining to the same concept. The module is likely past the peak of its use unless a repeat module is fielded.



**FIGURE 9g:** Usage frequencies for items in Round 7 module Health inequalities

The last module we present is the much-anticipated **Climate Change module**, fielded in Round 8 (2016), covering one aspect of environmental issues, a theme ESS lacked until then (Figure 9h). With an average of 19.2 uses per item and no usage gaps, it lived up to expectations. The most used items relate to the concepts of climate change worry, attribution beliefs, and personal responsibility (up to 52 publications), with engagement levels comparable to the most used items in much earlier modules. An equally popular section is climate policy scenarios. Other well-used concepts include individual and collective efficacy beliefs and worries about power accessibility, while attitudes towards energy preferences are analyzed less. The module is likely to be utilized quite intensely for a few

more years, so the figures are expected to grow. The three items included in the core are certainly a valuable addition in the eyes of many analysts.



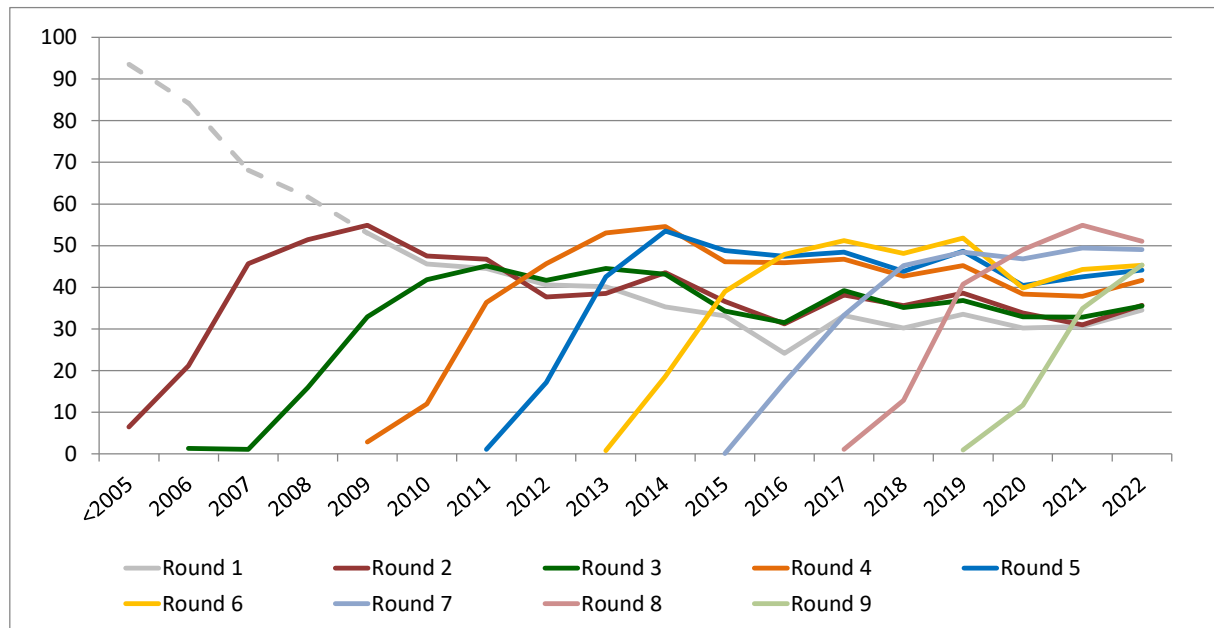
**FIGURE 9h:** Usage frequencies for items in Round 8 module Climate change

In summary, the eight most 'successful' ESS modules in terms of usage achieved this status through somewhat different approaches. Primarily, Immigration, Welfare, and Climate Change, along with Understanding of Democracy and Health Inequalities modules, exhibit a dispersed pattern of high or solid use across the majority of their items. This suggests that they include a number of relevant concepts and display no or only moderate usage gaps. While Family & Work also displays a dispersed usage pattern, it also has considerably larger usage gaps. Additionally, there are two modules, Citizenship and Wellbeing, whose very high average use is the result of a highly popular battery of items used as a scale, somewhat overshadowing the satisfactory use of other sections. Neither of the two modules has issues with usage gaps.

While the round 9 Justice and Fairness module is too recent to analyse meaningfully, the remaining five ESS modules were clearly used to a considerably lower extent than the eight we presented. These include the two half-size modules, the round 2004 Economic Morality and Health, the 2006 and 2018 Timing of Life module, the 2008 Ageism module, and the 2010 Criminal Justice module. This is far from saying these modules did not fulfil their purpose of connecting ESS with smaller, more **niche academic communities**. As such, they usually tackle themes for which there is no pre-existing widely used comparative measure or themes of more general relevance that are bound to generate more widespread usage.

## 8 THE USE OF ESS ROUNDS

This section examines how researchers utilize data from different rounds or waves of the European Social Survey (ESS), exploring whether researchers tend to focus on specific data rounds, the dynamic rounds use in publications reasons behind their choices, and the implications for their research findings. Understanding how ESS data rounds are used provides insights into the **process of data ageing** which both increases and decreases its analytical value, depending on the specific analytical goals, be it cross-section or cross-time analysis.

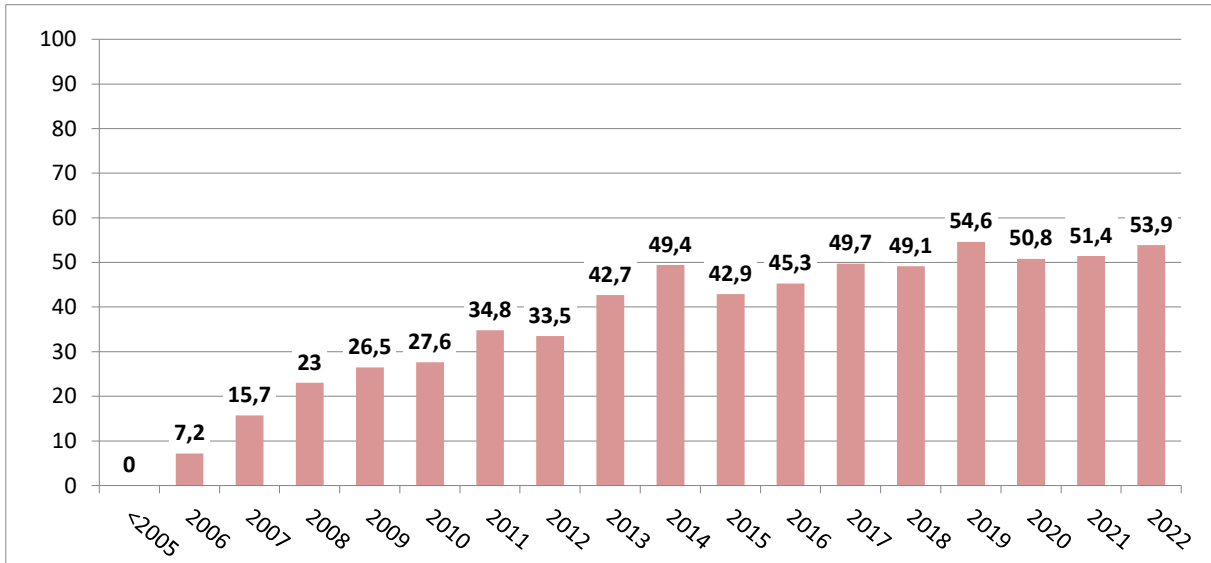


**FIGURE 10:** The cycle of rounds use in ESS publications, 2003-2022 (% shares, N=4660)

In this annual report, information about the utilization of individual rounds was obtained from 4660 downloaded publications where specific rounds could be identified. Figure 10 illustrates the cycle and magnitude of the **use of individual rounds**, indicating that each new dataset reaches its peak use in academic publications approximately 4-5 years after its initial publication. This pattern of round usage statistics displayed an almost perfectly steady pattern until the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in a delay in the ESS R10 fieldwork.

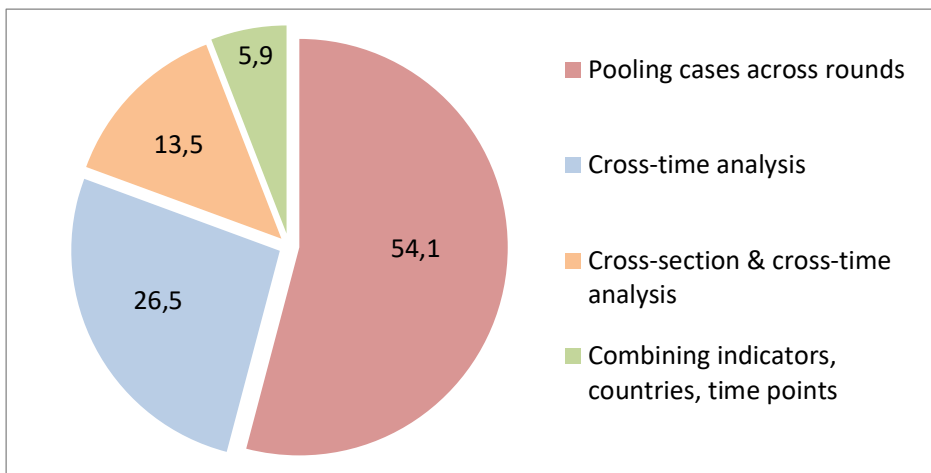
Following the peak, the usage of each round stabilizes at approximately 35-55%, as previous rounds continue to see robust utilization, primarily driven by the popularity of cross-round use (Figure 11). In the latest observed publication year, 2022, over 53.9% of publications combined **data from multiple ESS rounds**. This trend is anticipated to persist. While expanding samples through the utilization of multiple rounds may benefit more recent datasets, which are more comparable in terms of social context and surveyed population, the significance of earlier rounds will continue to rise, particularly in cross-time analysis.





**FIGURE 11:** Multiple rounds usage in ESS Publications, 2003-2022 (N=4649)

Figure 12 illustrates the analytical rationales driving the use of multiple rounds. The motivations for merging rounds were coded for a total of 1381 downloaded publications as this code was introduced later than other bibliographic codes. Nonetheless, the number is substantial enough to obtain a robust estimate. As evident from the chart, the most prevalent rationale for employing multiple rounds is **cross-section analysis**, primarily aimed at increasing sample sizes for general populations, and more frequently, for specific **sub-populations**. This approach is evident in 70% of the observed publications. The second significant motivation is to conduct cross-time analysis, a strategy present in 40% of publications, with 15% of publications falling into both categories. This picture aligns with the literature, which underscores that multi-purpose surveys are designed for regular repetition, facilitating the monitoring and modelling of societal change and the study of sub-groups through case pooling (Kim et al., 2006). The common practice of merging data from several years is often employed to either Achieve a sufficiently large sample for the study of a minority group or to enable the use of detailed classifications, such as occupation (Hakim, 1982).



**FIGURE 12:** Reasons for the use of multiple rounds use in ESS publications 2003-2022 (N=1381 publications coded for reasons)

The 2022 report explored in more detail the factors influencing the **selection of specific rounds** in the European Social Survey. Six clusters of reasons emerged: data recency, focus on round-specific individual items, country coverage considerations, alignment with other data sources and social events, and analytical reasons. Recency and topic specificity primarily drive single or selective round use, but country coverage, alignment with external data, and social events also play crucial roles.

The anticipated **mode switch** in round 13 might also impact the choice of rounds, particularly for core-focused topics and smaller sub-groups. The so-far 'unproblematic' practice of widespread cross-round use may become more precarious with the introduction of potential mode effects. Strategies to mitigate these effects and enhance the attractiveness of web-based rounds include augmenting sample sizes, maximizing country participation, and integrating popular items from rotating modules. In terms of anticipating user reactions, future bibliographic monitoring exercises will aim to benefit from insights from the delayed and mixed-mode ESS round 10, first released in June 2022. Monitoring analysts' reaction to this dataset should offer indications of their sensitivity to the upcoming mode change and will be part of the agenda for WP11 Task 4 in the next reporting period. According to literature **users' reaction to ESS switching mode** should probably not be overestimated. The majority of analysts using the European Social Survey (ESS) data seem to rely on pre-established data quality and don't engage deeply in quality checks, assuming the endorsed status of ESS ensures reliability (see Friedrich 2020; Faniel 2015, Yoon 2017). However, potential challenges might arise if the mode switch affects the ease of data use, leading to decreased user-friendliness, in which case it could impact data usage.

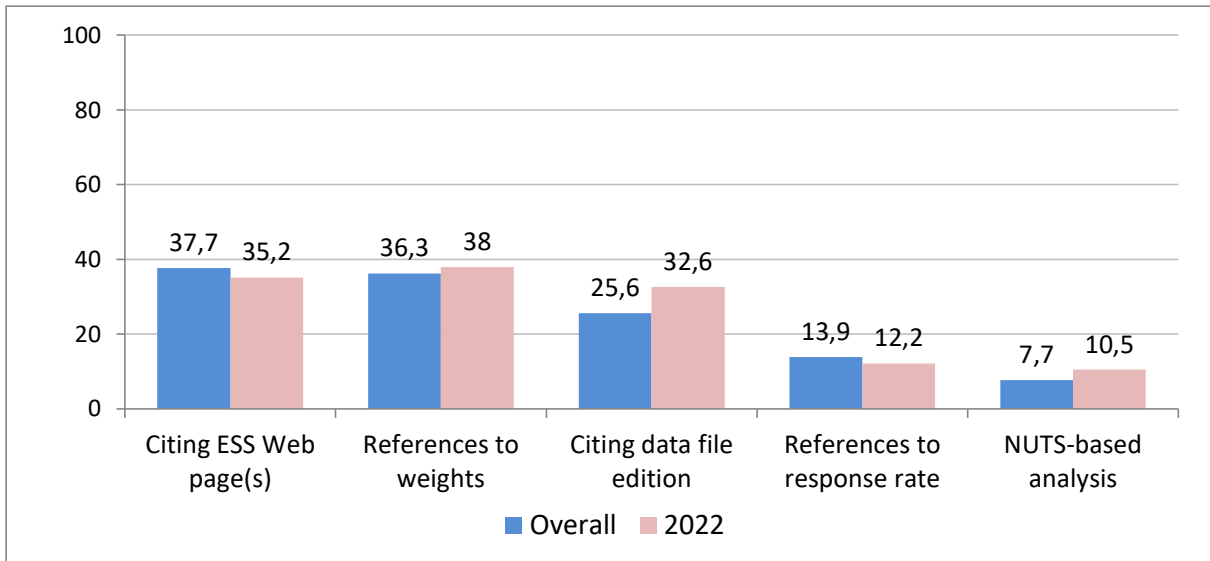
## 9 ANALYTICAL FEEDBACK

This section offers feedback on para-bibliographic variables, primarily reflecting the level of **methodological awareness** among authors using ESS, citation styles and, to some extent, their utilization of ESS web resources. The ESS was specifically designed to address longstanding methodological deficiencies in comparative research, making the detection of authors' methodological concerns a relevant aspect of our feedback.

Figure 13 illustrates the presence of elements indicating methodological awareness throughout the 2003–2022 period and specifically for the last publication year. Notably, almost 40% of publications cite some element of **ESS web pages**, be it in a general sense or specific documents like sampling or weighting guidelines. References to the use (or non-use) of **weights** are found in nearly 38% of ESS publications in 2022, surpassing the overall period average. This trend is more pronounced when citing the ESS data file edition—using the recommended ESS citation format—which appeared in 32% of last year's publications. However, this share remains relatively small, considering the essential nature of this information for replication purposes.

References to the ESS **response rate** were present in approximately 12% of publications in 2022, showing a relatively stable share over the years. This may imply, on one hand, that analysts and journals may not deem this information as an essential component of data description, perhaps due to emerging concerns regarding its status as a key quality indicator. On the other hand, this relatively low share might indicate the proportion of authors with heightened methodological awareness, who could also be more sensitive to factors such as the anticipated future ESS mode shift. Furthermore, there is a discernible

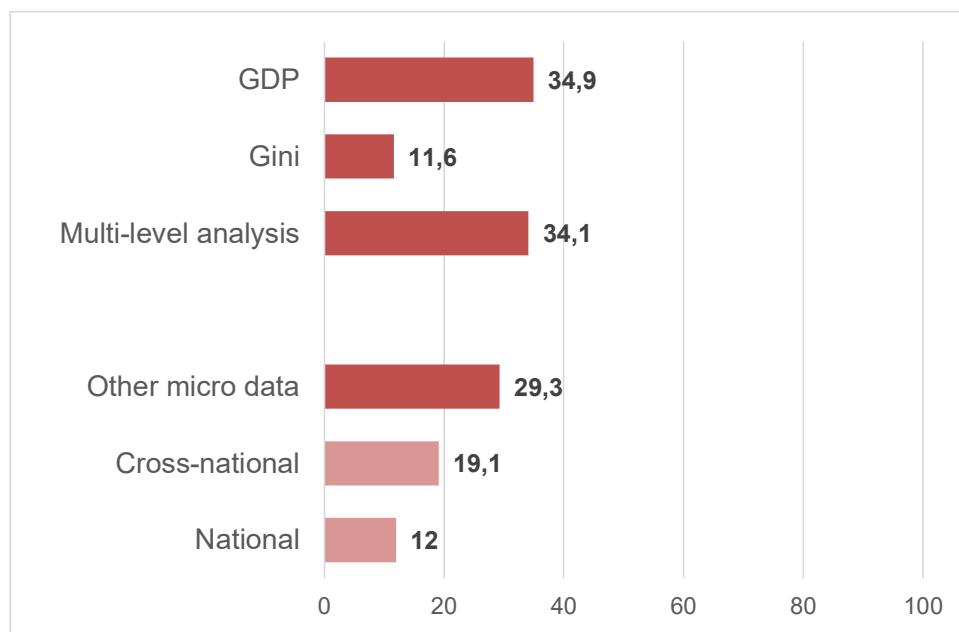
increase in the use of NUTS regions, consistently comprising about 10% of publications in recent years, suggesting a growing interest in regional-level analysis.



**FIGURE 13:** References to methodological elements and ESS analytical resources in publications (% shares, N=4743)

In terms of **replication** possibilities, the majority of ESS-based publications, though not universally, provide details on the survey years utilized. However, there is a notable prevalence of missing information regarding the countries included in the analysis, as well as the specific items used. For instance, in 2022, there were 55 instances where the countries included could not be identified from the publication texts, 13 cases where the ESS round was unidentifiable, and 4 publications where ESS data was evidently employed, yet no specific item could be identified due to inadequate description. Moreover, in several other publications, only some of the included items or countries were identifiable.

The second set of para-bibliographic variables relates to ESS within the wider **data ecosystem**, illustrating to what extent other data sources are used along with the ESS micro data (Figure 14). This aspect is observed within a sub-population of journal articles. Approximately one-third of ESS-based publications incorporate **multi-level analysis**, which requires macro data at the country or regional level from external sources. Predominantly, GDP serves as the most prevalent macro indicator, followed by Gini, HDI, and many others. The convenient availability of Multilevel Data resources on the ESS web page likely contributes to the prevalence of multi-level publications. Beyond macro sources, ESS data is frequently combined with other survey data (found in 29% of all publications), whether cross-national or national, or a combination of both. As detailed elsewhere (Malnar & Ryan 2022), these amalgamations support a diverse range of analytical strategies.



**FIGURE 14:** Co-use of ESS and other data sources in journal articles, 2003-2022 (% shares, N=3197)

## 10 INFORMING POLICY

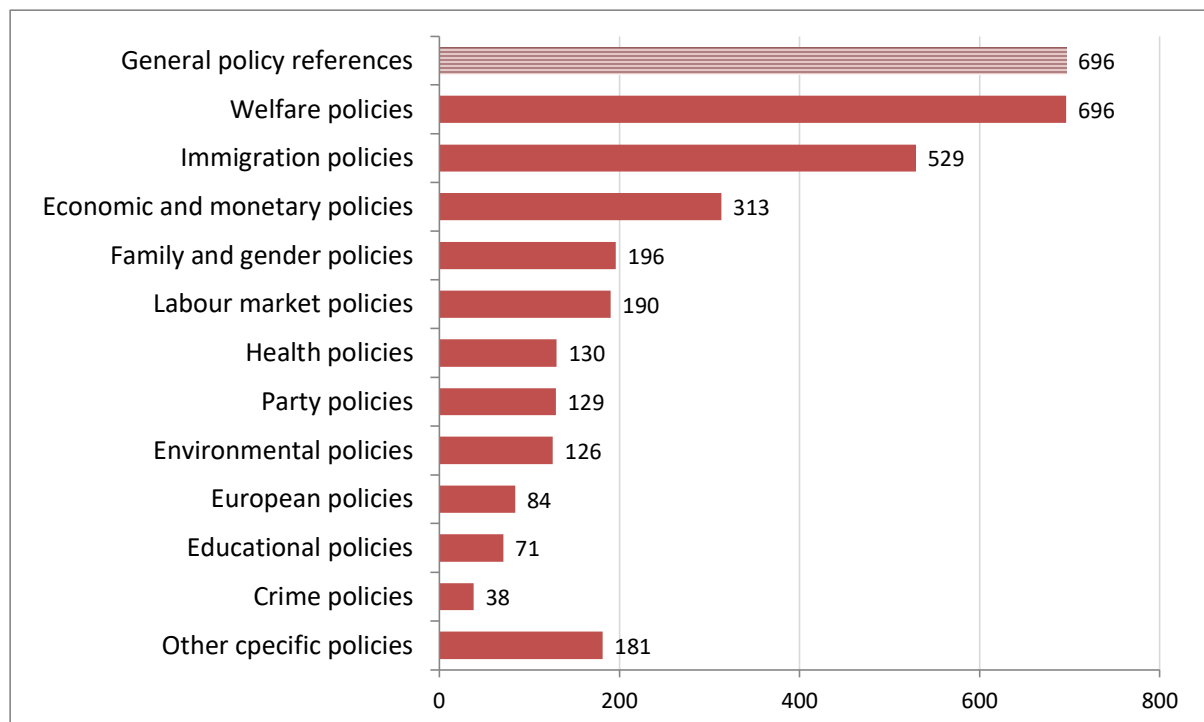
In addition to the generation of scientific findings, the European Social Survey shares another fundamental objective with similar publicly funded research programs in the social sciences: informing policies. While under academic control, surveys funded by national research councils are expected to cover both theoretical and disciplinary interests of academic researchers, as well as broader policy issues i.e. provide **general policy returns** (Hakim, 1982). This section discusses the utilization of European Social Survey (ESS) data for informing policy decisions.

ESS annual bibliographic reports include two general yet robust indicators of this component. The first one is the number of keywords 'policy' or 'policies' in the body of publications' text, indicating the 'intensity' of authors' policy orientation. The second is the type of policy mentioned. According to these indicators, **references to policies** are made in 80% of ESS publications. Most of them refer to specific policy domains (Figure 15), notably in welfare, immigration, labour market, family, and macroeconomic policies.

Policy areas with a consistently strong presence in ESS articles include welfare and immigration, and more recently, the environment, with the Climate Change module strongly oriented toward policy. Other areas demonstrating a substantial policy component are macroeconomics and the labour market, particularly during periods of global crisis—a situation that might re-emerge after the pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

While ESS's primary objective is to provide high-quality comparative data, it has also actively synthesized findings through Findings booklets and Topline results series. Considering the benefits of summarizing findings, a key point for future discussion is whether survey research infrastructures like ESS ERIC and similar programs should continue to leave the task of summarization solely to external academic users or gradually expand their operations to provide resources that encourage the **summarization of findings**. This dilemma, which might pose legitimacy issues for research infrastructures concerning funders

and the public, is relevant for survey management teams, funders, and science policy makers alike.



**Figure 15:** Domain structure of policy references in ESS based publications, 2003-2022 (N=3379, sum of two possible codes)

## 11 THE USE OF ESS BIBLIOGRAPHIC APP

The concluding section provides insights into the utilization of the recently introduced ESS Online bibliography and its associated online application. In 2021, NSD and UL collaborated on an initiative aimed at creating an integrated solution to replace the previous ESS online bibliography, merging its old records with the Google Scholar repository. The UL researcher-programmer synchronized the Google Scholar database with the former NSD format and imported the database, previously housed on NSD servers, into the new, easily **searchable bibliographic application**.

The application is undergoing continuous improvement, incorporating enhancements such as the addition of extra search criteria and the inclusion of missing DOI identifiers. These refinements, among others, mitigate the occurrence of duplicates arising from the merger of the Google Scholar database with the prior online bibliography. Presently, the combined ESS bibliographic repository comprises **9,173 records** sourced from both platforms. Following the annual Google Scholar-based search, the system incorporates approximately 500-600 new bibliographic entries. Moreover, a **self-completion feature** enables authors to contribute their publications. Notably, in 2023, a **17 articles** were user-added, underscoring the need for National Coordinators to encourage domestic users, particularly those publishing in national languages, to actively contribute publications.

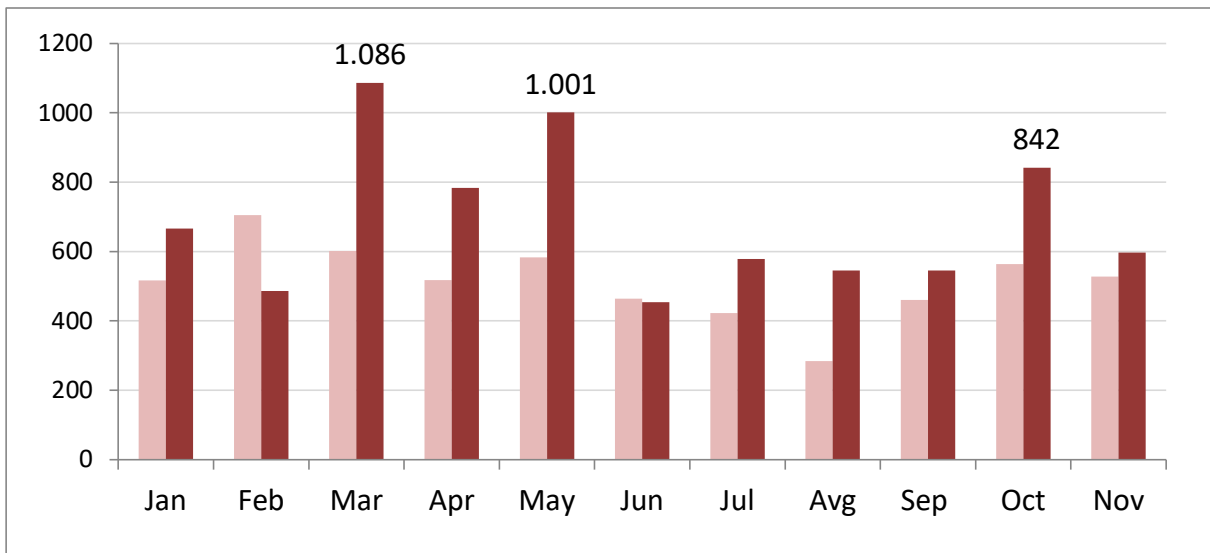
In terms of users, the main target groups include analysts from various academic communities, as well as National Coordinators (NCs) and other ESS bodies. Generally, the new online bibliography and its associated app have been well-received, attracting 7,580

visitors (5,476 unique) in the first 11 months of 2023, as shown in Figure 16. Visitors come from diverse countries, with the majority originating from ESS participating countries. The majority of the visitors (57.5%) access the website directly either typing the url address or using bookmarks and links provided in e-mail. The number of visitors is larger than in 2022, indicating a growing user base and heightened visibility.

Regarding other sources of visitors, 81% originate from the europeansocialsurvey.com main website. Under 0.5% of visitors arrive via ESS X (ex Twitter) posts, and 9,6% of visitors are referred from search engines, which is a significant improvement from previous reporting periods (5%). This further underscores the importance of enhancing the app's presence on these platforms, particularly through improved keywords and an increased number of links leading to the site, such as placing links on national ESS web pages.

In the initial two years of the app's operation (2022-2023), visitors to the page conducted **12699 searches (6283 during Jan – Nov 2023)**. In 2023, the most frequently searched terms were significantly different than in 2022: while the most searched terms in 2022 were “wellbeing”, “food”, “gender” and “human values”, most searched terms in 2023 were: “climate” / “climate change” (337 searches), “loneliness” (152 searches), and (again on 3<sup>rd</sup> place) “gender” (144 searches).

It is important to highlight that the bibliography search currently functions as a specialized search engine, limited to items within the ESS pool. Despite this, a noteworthy number of organic searches—comprising complete sentences—have been observed. To enhance user experience, an organic search engine will be integrated into the app in the future.



**FIGURE 16:** Monthly visits to the ESS Online bibliography in 2022 and 2023

Another popular feature is **browsing across ESS bibliographic records**. Visitors primarily sought publications from specific countries, likely for reporting purposes to quantify the number of units per country. Moreover, there were instances of recurrent browsing patterns across different survey rounds, indicating a search for publications that facilitate longitudinal data comparison. While a significant portion of browsing queries lacked a specific topic selection, when users did specify, their primary areas of interest were *Environment/Climate change, age groups, and social capital*.

Additionally, there were a notable number of unsuccessful attempts to hack the web app. While the frequency of such attempts has reduced compared to the previous reporting period (4607 requests), there are still hundreds of such requests each month. This underscores the imperative of ongoing efforts to enhance the speed, security, and reliability of the application. UL remains committed to performing regular server maintenance, implementing application security updates, and making minor usability improvements informed by user feedback and analytics.

## 12 KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The analysis of ESS-based publications reflects a **dynamic scholarly landscape**, with 6,585 English-language publications, growing annually. Journal articles predominate, while acknowledging the importance of diverse publication types. The consistent growth over five years highlights evolving publication patterns and demonstrates multifaceted nature of ESS-based scholarly output.
- The analysis of ESS data utilization showcases robust **engagement across diverse academic disciplines**, with sociology, political science, and economics as primary domains. The strategic design successfully reaches intended audiences, and the inclusion of rotating modules extends impact into narrower academic communities. ESS's adaptable structure positions it for continuous expansion into new domains (e.g. environment), highlighting ongoing relevance and influence across diverse research communities.
- The analysis of ESS data highlights its extensive coverage across **key research areas**, including politics, immigration, family research, demographic issues, well-being and health, culture and values, welfare and public policies, citizenship and social capital, paid work, and social inequality. These themes align with the ESS questionnaire content, user group size, and societal challenges, affirming ESS's pivotal role as a quantitative data source.
- Statistics on **geographical distribution of authors** shows that 80% come from advanced Western European countries and the USA, Eastern European countries, contributing 13.1%, are gaining significance. This trend, along with potential expansion in Eastern European regions, demonstrates evolving authorship dynamics..
- The analysis of **country-specific data utilization** within the European Social Survey (ESS) reveals significant disparities in research representation, with some countries extensively researched, while others have limited inclusion. These disparities stem from factors like late accession, inconsistent participation, and overall development levels affecting funding challenges.
- The analysis reveals that **separating a country's dataset**, often due to serious quality or compliance issues, significantly reduces its inclusion rate compared to normal rounds, sometimes by up to five times. The lower usage may be attributed to methodological concerns, flagged nature of the data, or practical issues related to manual data merging.
- The analysis of **questionnaire sections** reveals that the **ABC core**, the most utilized attitudinal section, is featured in 84.9% of downloaded publications. Due to its conceptual significance for various scientific communities, biennial fielding frequency, and the potential for sample pooling, it remains the most pervasive component in ESS-based analyses. **Rotating modules** exhibit considerably uneven usage, with some accumulating higher publication numbers (e.g. Immigration, Work



& Family, Welfare, Wellbeing) compared to others targeting narrower academic audiences.

- The analysis of **item usage** reveals the robust utilization of attitudinal core items, addressing concepts like social capital, political participation, subjective well-being, immigration, and system satisfaction. In contrast, the usage patterns of items in rotating modules vary, with some modules exhibiting widespread and consistent use across multiple items. Continuous monitoring and potential adjustments are crucial to address emerging research needs.
- The pattern of **round usage** statistics remained steady until the COVID-19 pandemic, causing a delay in ESS R10 fieldwork. Over 53.9% of publications in 2022 combined data from multiple ESS rounds, with cross-section analysis being the most prevalent rationale (70% of observed publications). The analysis highlights the continued importance of earlier rounds, both for cross-time and cross-section analysis.
- The analysis of **para-bibliographic variables** reveals a substantial level of methodological awareness among authors using the ESS. Notably, almost 40% of publications in 2022 cite some element of ESS web pages and references to the use of weights have increased to 38% of publications. However, some publications still lack details regarding the countries included in the analysis and specific items used, affecting transparency and replicability of ESS-based research.
- The review of ESS publications highlights a significant emphasis on **informing policy** decisions, aligning with the survey's goal to contribute to academic research and broader policy discussions. Notable policy areas include welfare, immigration, macroeconomics, the labour market, family policies and climate change. In the light of growing publication numbers, which now remain rather fragmented, ESS and other research infrastructures could consider expanding their role in distilling and disseminating key insights in a more efficient way.
- The **bibliographic application**, targeting analysts and National Coordinators, has seen positive reception with 5,476 unique visitors in 2023 so far. Users conducted 6283 searches, with popular terms including “climate change”, “loneliness” and “gender”. Browsing patterns revealed interest in country-specific publications and data from different survey rounds. Despite security challenges, ongoing maintenance and improvements are underway to enhance speed, security, and overall reliability of the app.

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