



How to become an ISSP member

ISSP membership

The International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) is a voluntary association of organizations that decided to build up a continuous research network which conducts annual social surveys. The members may be universities, academic or private survey institutes. ISSP membership is institutional and country-specific. Each country can be either represented by one organisation or by a partnership of organisations.

Benefits of ISSP membership

- Global, continuous and professional scientific network:
The ISSP is the oldest non-commercial, academic programme that continuously runs joint social surveys in all five continents. The ISSP was founded in 1984 by four countries with existing national social surveys. Nowadays it covers more than 40 members. Over the years, over sixty different countries have participated in the ISSP.
- More than 30 years of cross-national collaboration and survey experience:
The ISSP started with its first survey in 1985 on the Role of Government. By 2019 there are 33 surveys fielded. The themes covered in those surveys are diverse, ranging from attitudes to the environment to social inequality.
- Extensive information on social and political aspects:
An ISSP source questionnaire contains 60 items. Some of them are items asked in previous ISSP questionnaires, others are asked for the first time. Thus there is a balance between replication and innovation which allows cross-national analyses in depth and discovering attitudinal trends over time.
- Investment of one national survey and benefits of comparable survey data from all other ISSP members.
- Early ISSP data access for ISSP members:
ISSP international data sets are published and free for download for the scientific community two years after the year of the ISSP module. ISSP principle investigators, after submitting their own national data, have access to other already submitted national data—even before the publication of the integrated international ISSP data sets.
- Regular exchange with ISSP members at the annual General Meeting.
- Equal rights for members:
Decisions on the ISSP are taken democratically in many areas, such as the setting of methodological standards, decisions about the question programme or election of ISSP management committees.
 - Methodological issues are discussed by working groups and committees and decisions are taken by the ISSP in common.
 - ISSP members have voting rights from the very beginning of the drafting process: they determine the themes of overall ISSP survey modules and prioritise the topics within the modules. During the two-year development process of the questionnaire, ISSP members participate in the drafts either as members of the multicultural questionnaire drafting groups or through proposals, comments, and reviews of the drafts. After detailed discussion and before finalisation, the ISSP

source questionnaires are put to vote item by item with one vote for each ISSP member.

- Supervisory and management committees to handle ISSP matters and monitor quality are nominated in the General Meeting and elected by majority vote.
- Gain from high publicity of the survey programme:
Over 9,000 publications use ISSP data in comparative analyses which demonstrates both the need and the use for this special kind of comparative data.
- Resource efficient survey organisation possible:
While there are high ISSP methodological requirements, ISSP also offers some flexibility to invest resources in an efficient way:
 - ISSP surveys can be either run as stand-alone survey or can be integrated into another survey such as a national general social survey.
 - It is also possible to run two ISSP modules in one combined survey.
 - ISSP allows for several interview modes and national surveys can be fielded either face-to-face or in self-completion mode.

Membership requirements

Members agree to conduct ISSP surveys in accordance with ISSP requirements as spelled out in its Working Principles. These requirements in particular are:

- Continuous commitment to the ISSP which ensures the development of expertise in comparative surveys, in particular in the ISSP, as well as in questionnaire development. Membership for only a specific ISSP survey is not intended.
- Regular participation in the annual General Meeting which is the basis for global networking opportunities and gain in expertise both for the individual member and the ISSP.
- Implementation of annual ISSP surveys: The ISSP intends to continuously field its surveys in all ISSP member countries in order to have survey data on a variety of topics.
- Provision of a national representative probability sample of the adult population. This means that the probability to select a respondent is known. Substitution or quota samples are not allowed. Research in comparing the quality of surveys has indicated that probability samples are the best you can invest your resources in. There are no detailed rules about what exactly can be accepted due to the diversity of member countries' particularities. Thus, there is some freedom in adaptations to the local realities.
- The target sample size per country is 1,400 cases. The minimum sample size is 1,000 cases. These sample sizes allow for a variety of analyses.
- Acceptable modes: ISSP source questionnaires are designed for self-administration mode, but can also be administered in a face-to-face interview. Telephone surveys are not accepted. Online surveys are allowed if the sample is a national representative probability sample of the adult population without substitution.
- ISSP source questionnaires consist of 60 substantive items not including the compulsory demographic variables. Items and their order must not be changed since wording and question order are carefully considered during the drafting process.

ISSP background variables is a standard set of demographic variables on the respondent's and his/her partner's economic, religious and ethnic background. This set of variables is obligatory to deliver as part of the national ISSP data deposit. ISSP allows members to implement their own background variables subject to national context and needs as long as they can produce output harmonized data according to ISSP standards.

<https://www.gesis.org/en/issp/data-and-documentation/issp-background-variables>

- Translation requirements for each national questionnaire following best practice approaches in translation ask, as a minimum rule, for at least two individuals with expertise from the areas of translation and survey methodology/questionnaire design who should collaborate in the translation process. The ISSP does not have fixed rules about which languages a country uses for its surveys.
- New ISSP members obtain voting rights after successfully depositing the first data set within three years and attending the ISSP General Meeting for the first time within two years of membership.

For more details on requirements please see the ISSP Working Principles:

https://issp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ISSP-WP_final_2022.pdf

How to apply for ISSP membership

An application process consists of several steps:

1. Applicants answer a standard list of questions and hand in a description of the sample design.
2. The ISSP Methodology Committee (MC) will review the application for compliance with ISSP methodological rules and provide a recommendation to the ISSP Standing Committee. If necessary, the MC will ask for additional information and clarification and communicate with the applicant until all questions are answered and potential concerns have been addressed.
3. On MC's recommendation, the application is referred to the ISSP Standing Committee (SC). The SC in particular reviews the application to determine whether the applying institute is in a position to conduct the annual ISSP surveys on an ongoing basis while maintaining high methodological standards.
4. Finally the application will be brought to a vote at the ISSP General Assembly.

Applications should contain:

- Full answers to the standard questions and description of sample design.
Please find the questionnaire here:
[https://issp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Standard Questions for applicants-1.docx](https://issp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Standard_Questions_for_applicants-1.docx)
- A letter of application, details and examples of research carried out by the institute(s).
- An organisational profile for each applying institute.

Funding

- ISSP does not collect membership fees.
- Member institutes have to fund their national ISSP survey and all travel expenses for ISSP meetings (e.g. General Meeting).
- Resources (e.g. travel expenses) for ISSP committee memberships and memberships in working groups are to the account of the member institutes.

Further information

- <http://www.issp.org>
- <https://www.gesis.org/issp>
- https://issp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Issp-flyer_2024.06.17.pdf

Please direct any queries about membership and the ISSP in general to the ISSP Secretariat:
issp.sec@gmail.com

