

European Social Survey Round 12

Data collection update January 2026

Background

Round 12 of the ESS is a 'bridge' wave; half of the sample is being interviewed using the traditional face-to-face approach and half is being undertaken using a push-to-web or paper self-completion. The self-completion approach comprises an initial invitation with a link to the survey, followed by a reminder letter a week later. After a further two weeks, those who have not responded are sent a further reminder with a copy of the paper version of the questionnaire. A further reminder letter is sent two weeks later. At that point interviewers are asked to make up to two visits to those addresses who have not yet participated to make a final request to participate and provide a further copy of the paper questionnaire (but they do not interview). The face-to-face approach incorporated a traditional advance letter sent ahead of interviewers visiting to attempt to persuade people to participate.

Both components are based on a random probability sample (from the Postcode Address File) with one adult eligible to take part at each address, selected using the 'next-birthday' method.

Planned sample size and fieldwork targets

Target sample sizes are agreed with the ESS ERIC in advance of fieldwork based on various components of the survey design; for both approaches, a target achieved sample of 1,113 interviews was agreed (i.e. a total of 2,226 across both components). For the face-to-face approach, an estimated response rate of 28% was agreed, which necessitated a total starting (gross) sample of 4,275 addresses after allowing for ineligible addresses. For the self-completion approach, an estimated response rate of 30% was assumed, which necessitates a total starting sample of 3,990 addresses after allowing for ineligible addresses.

Fieldwork progress

Fieldwork is ongoing, due to finish at the end of March 2026, so it is not possible to provide definitive response rates. However, for the self-completion sample, as at the end of January, response rate stood at 39%. For the face-to-face component, at the end of January, response rate was 28%.