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Social Cohesion

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SCP Documentation

German Social Cohesion Panel

SCP 2021_1 (Anchor) Survey Design Summary



German Social Cohesion Panel

Established in 2021, the German Social Cohesion Panel (SCP) is a wide-ranging representative longitudinal study of private households in Germany, carried out in collaboration of the Research Institute Social Cohesion (RISC) and the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP).

The aim of the SCP Documentation is to thoroughly document the survey's data collection and data processing.

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German Social Cohesion Panel 2021 – Anchor Persons

SCP 2021_1 (Anchor)

Survey Design - Summary

The German Social Cohesion Panel (SCP) is a self-administered longitudinal study in a mixed-mode design (PAPI and CAWI), jointly designed by the Research Institute Social Cohesion (RISC) and the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), and implemented by the survey institute infas. The aim of the study is to capture the diversity of social cohesion from multiple perspectives, particularly regarding the question of whether and how social cohesion changes over time. The annual surveys, which were carried out for the first time in 2021, are based on a representative population sample. A large sample of individuals was drawn from the German population registers. The selected individuals (referred to as “anchor persons” or AP) were contacted by mail and invited to participate in the regular surveys of the SCP. They were also asked to provide the names of all other household members aged 18 and above. Subsequently, all the additional household members aged 18 and above (referred to as “household members” or HM) mentioned by the anchor persons were invited to participate in the study. The following describes the survey design and the response rate of the initial survey of the anchor persons in the Cohesion Panel.

Recruitment

For the recruitment of the SCP, a two-stage random sampling process was applied, drawing a total of 37,874 anchor persons from 299 German population registers. In general, the selection of anchor persons was conducted proportional-to-size within the primary sampling units. However, in the Eastern German states, anchor persons were oversampled (i.e. drawn proportionally higher than their share of the total population) to facilitate group comparisons.

All anchor persons were contacted by mail and invited to participate in the study. The mailing included a brief invitation letter, a brochure with all the study information, a detailed data protection sheet, a 5-Euro note as an unconditional incentive to participate, and a paper questionnaire with a pre-paid return envelope for the initial

survey. In addition to the paper questionnaire, the invitation letter indicated the option to participate in the survey online (via a survey link or a QR code).

During the course of the initial recruitment survey, conducted from September 2021 to April 2022, anchor persons were asked to provide their consent to participate in regular follow-up surveys (panel consent) and to provide information about their household members. All other household members aged 18 and older (HM) were subsequently invited by mail to participate in the study. They received the same study materials as the anchor persons, but were provided with a slightly shorter questionnaire and no pre-incentive. After data collection, all participants of the initial recruitment survey (AP and HM) received a cash reward of 10 Euros by mail as a token of appreciation.

Survey Instrument

As the success of the study heavily relied on the recruitment and panel consent of the anchor persons, the goal was to construct a questionnaire that is concise, intellectually stimulating, and diverse while still capturing a solid measure of socio-demographic information beyond the thematic focus of social cohesion. Ultimately, the questionnaire for the first wave of the SCP was divided into two parts, with the second part (SCP 2021_2) being conducted approximately three months after the recruitment survey (SCP 2021_1) and including detailed information about the household. The recruitment questionnaire for anchor persons was self-administered and available in both paper (paper-assisted personal interviews or PAPI) and online formats (computer-assisted web interviews or CAWI), consisting of a maximum of 55 questions. The topics of the questionnaire are presented in Table 1. The questionnaire for household members consisted of two questions less, namely the household roster and the question about other household members aged 18 and older. The computer-assisted web interviews of anchor persons had an average duration of 33 minutes (median of 30 minutes), while those of household members lasted 28 minutes on average (median of 25 minutes). The first data release contains only the anchor person information from the recruitment survey. Subsequent data releases will integrate the information from the household members and develop a longitudinal perspective.

Table 1: Modules and instruments of the SCP 2021_1 (Anchor)

Module	Instruments
Living Together & Identification	Populism Social coexistence ideals Corona measure attitudes
Environment & Infrastructure	Climate change concern (global) Climate change stoppability (global)
Gender & Diversity	Universalism & traditionalism
Inequality & Evaluation of Own Situation	Relative deprivation Meaningfulness of life Subjective social status (social ladder) Corona restrictions Life satisfaction
Politics & Institutions	Satisfaction with democracy The idea of democracy Freedom of speech Institutional trust Political positioning Sunday poll/voting intention
Networks & Social Relationships	Social groups acquaintances Social groups sympathy Everyday cohesion experiences Generalised trust Social support potential
Socio-Demographics	Gender Age Family status & partnership Nationality & migration background Religious affiliation Education & vocational training Employment status & conditions Occupation & occupational status Individual & household income Social assistance receipt Household size Household roster Household members aged 18+

Response

A total of 13,055 Anchor Persons participated in the initial recruitment survey, representing a response rate of 35%. A majority of 62% of respondents participated

using the paper questionnaire (PAPI). Online participants (CAWI) mostly opted for portable devices instead of stationary desktop computers (only 19%) – with 37%, smartphone participation was particularly common. Table 2 provides an overview of the case numbers and survey modes or devices. Two thirds of the Anchor Persons indicated their willingness to participate in further surveys of the SCP (panel consent).

Table 2: Survey mode and panel consent of SCP 2021_1 (Anchor)

	N	in %
Paper questionnaire (PAPI)	8,081	61.9
Online questionnaire (CAWI)	4,974	38.1
<i>thereof via</i>		
<i>PC*</i>	932	18.7
<i>laptop*</i>	1,267	25.5
<i>smartphone*</i>	1,856	37.3
<i>tablet/other device*</i>	499	10.0
Panel consent	8,549	65.5
Total	13,055	100.0

Source: SCP 2021_1 (Anchor); *the sum of N of indicators might deviate from total N due to missing values and multiple responses.

Sample and Weighting

In scientific population surveys, it is never possible to survey all individuals who were drawn into the sample. This can lead to selective biases in the survey data, limiting the generalisability of the results. By using statistical weighting procedures, such biases can be reduced. The weights developed for the initial survey data of the anchor persons are based on base weights of the population register sample (so-called design weights, which account for the unequal selection probabilities of anchor persons into the sample), as well as survey participation probabilities (calculated using nonresponse analyses with auxiliary sample information, such as micro-geographic area data) and an extrapolation factor to the total population of German households aged 18 and above, calculated based on German official population statistics.

Table 3 displays the distribution of some socio-demographic characteristics in the survey sample. The unweighted percentages show that the diversity of the German population is already well represented in the SCP 2021_1 (Anchor) even without weighting factors. For example, individuals with a migration background and low

educational attainment, who are typically underrepresented in surveys, are comparatively well represented. Remaining biases can be mitigated through the use of the statistical weighting procedure. This is particularly true for the SCP's intended overrepresentation of people in Eastern Germany. Other noticeable adjustments include age, income, and employment status, as younger, low-income, and unemployed individuals are traditionally underrepresented in surveys.

Table 3: Sample of the SCP 2021_1 (Anchor) by socio-demographic indicators

		N*	in % un-weighted	in % weighted
Gender	Male	6,315	49.0	48.9
	Female	6,529	50.7	50.8
	Diverse	37	0.3	0.4
Age	18 – 34	2,933	22.9	24.4
	35 – 49	2,588	20.2	22.6
	50 – 64	3,780	29.5	27.2
	65+	3,529	27.5	25.8
Migration background	Yes	3,124	23.9	30.4
	No	9,931	76.1	69.6
Region	Eastern Germany	4,658	35.7	19.9
	Western Germany	8,397	64.3	80.1
Education (ISCED 11)	In school	33	0.3	0.2
	Primary	103	0.8	1.3
	Lower secondary	756	6.0	6.8
	Upper secondary	947	7.5	7.7
	Post-secondary non-tertiary	5,822	45.8	46.4
	Bachelors or equivalent	2,252	17.7	16.6
	Masters or equivalent	2,498	19.7	19.0
	Doctoral or equivalent	290	2.3	2.0
Income position (% of median)	Below 60%	1,250	13.1	17.4
	60 - 80%	1,382	14.5	15.1
	80 - 100%	1,898	19.9	18.8
	100 - 120%	1,370	14.4	13.2
	120 -150%	1,658	17.4	16.9
	150 - 200%	1,271	13.3	12.1
	More than 200%	709	7.4	6.6
Employment status	Full-time employed	5,079	40.3	41.8
	Part-time employed	2,435	19.3	18.2
	Unemployed	253	2.0	2.8
	Not employed	4,835	38.4	37.3
Total		13,055	100	100

Source: SCP 2021_1 (Anchor); *the sum of N of indicators might deviate from total N due to missing values.

Further Details

For further details on the survey design and background of the SCP, please refer to the following publications:

Gerlitz, J.-Y., Cornesse, C., Groh-Samberg, O., Kroh, M., Lengfeld, H., Liebig, S., Minkus, L., Reinecke, J., Richter, D., Teichler, N., Traunmüller, R., & Zinn, S. (FORTHCOMING). The German Social Cohesion Panel (SCP) – Theoretical Background, Survey Design, Instruments, and Analytical Potential.

Steinwede, A., Kemmerling, J., von der Burg, K. Kleudgen, M. & Aust, N. (infas) (2023). SCP 2021 - Supplement: Methodenbericht German Social Cohesion Panel - 1. Erhebungswelle 2021. *German Social Cohesion Panel 2021*. Bremen and Berlin: RDC-RISC/SOCIUM, SOEP/DIW Berlin.

Task Force FGZ-Datenzentrum (2022). *Gefährdeter Zusammenhalt? Polarisierungs- und Spaltungstendenzen in Deutschland*. Bremen: SOCIUM, Forschungsinstitut Gesellschaftlicher Zusammenhalt. doi:10.26092/elib/1739