

ESF Exploratory Workshop on

**Surveying Immigrant Population in Studies of Social and Political
Participation: Methodological and Technical Challenges**

Madrid (Spain), 16-18 October 2008

Convened by:

Joan Font Fábregas ^① and Mónica Méndez Lago ^②

SCIENTIFIC REPORT

^① Instituto de Políticas y Bienes Públicos, CSIC, Madrid, ES



^② Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, Madrid, ES



1. Executive summary

Knowing more about the characteristics, attitudes and behaviour of immigrants in social and political terms is becoming a central concern because of the increasing ethnic and cultural heterogeneity of current European societies. Surveys are key tools to acquire such knowledge.

The main aim of the workshop was to review the methodological challenges involved in carrying out surveys of ethnic minorities/immigrant communities. Carrying out surveys specifically devised to cover immigrant populations, or populations with a significant presence of ethnic minorities/immigrant communities, involves unique challenges such as identifying a sample in circumstances in which a sample frame is often not available, reaching a population that is often more mobile than the "autochthonous" population (especially if they are recently arrived immigrants), designing multilingual (and multicultural) questionnaires and recruiting/training personnel to do the field work.

The workshop brought together scholars from nine different countries who had all participated in the organisation of several surveys addressed to immigrant communities/ethnic minorities. The fact that all participants in the workshop had been involved in one way or another in organising surveys addressed to ethnic/migrant minorities proved to be a key point for the success of the workshop. Everyone had learned from their own experience and the workshop was a good forum to learn also from the experience of the others and to discuss what the best practices are in each circumstance.

The two main outcomes expected were fully achieved. First, to acquire a better knowledge of the different surveys that have been carried out that have immigrants as their main target population, especially those that deal with topics related to social and political integration. The second important outcome expected was to have a better understanding of the methodological challenges involved in

carrying out surveys of ethnic/cultural minorities/immigrant communities and the need to take these into account not only in specific studies but also in national surveys, given the greater numerical relevance of some of these groups.

The group of participants considered that the workshop was very interesting and that its results could be very helpful for other researchers working in the same field.

2. Scientific contents

The workshop was organised around three main topics: 1) Sampling; 2) Fieldwork organisation and outcomes, and 3) Immigrants/ethnic minorities as part of general population surveys.

2.1. Sampling

Sampling is a key consideration for achieving good survey data of immigrant/minority populations. Nearly half of the contributions to the workshop addressed sampling techniques, strategies and outcomes.

The general diagnosis was that, although sampling procedures of minority surveys have generally improved over the years, there is still a long way to go. Whereas some years ago the lack of appropriate sampling frames in many countries forced the researchers to use different types of non-probabilistic strategies to produce some data that could at least reflect the main traits of these populations, today official data has become better in some cases, and/or more accessible for independent research.

However, there are still important shortcomings. The situation is very different across countries: whereas in some countries there are good data available and researchers "only" need sufficient resources, knowledge and imagination to produce a good sample, in other countries researchers/institutions need to devote most of their efforts to build some kind of sampling frame, since they only have

very limited information to start with (either because this does not exist, or because it is not available for researchers).

Thus, with good data to start working, as Bob Erens presented in his contribution on the British case, the LSEM (Longitudinal Survey of Ethnic Minorities) or the Spanish team from the National Statistics Institute in their presentation of ENI (Encuesta Nacional a Inmigrantes, National Survey of Immigrants), have produced good quality samples, something that can only be reached with very large resources. With a much worse point of departure for the goals of the survey, given the aim to locate second generation migrants, this was the case also of the French, "Rapport au politique des français issus de l'immigration", presented by Vincent Tiberj.

At the other end of the spectrum, there continue to exist many surveys to immigrant populations that do not fulfil any minimum requirements from the point of view of high quality sampling, using completely non-probability samples or inappropriate screening methods that leave substantial parts of the universe out of the sampling frame.

Many of the surveys that were presented throughout the workshop had to develop in a situation where initial information was limited, and resources to build the sampling frame were far from unlimited. This was the case in Italy, the NEPIA survey, in Hungary or in the Localmultidem project, to mention just a few. Several imaginative research strategies to build an appropriate sampling frame were developed in those cases. In some of them, "spatial" techniques (for example, centre-based sampling), were often useful starting points from where a sample could be identified. The following paragraphs list some of the procedures that were used by one or several of those surveys to improve the quality or efficiency of their samples.

Sampling issues have to be considered in the context of the most important conclusion of this part of the workshop: the conditions under which each minority survey takes place are so diverse that there are no common rules that can be

proposed to fit every possible situation. Several factors influence how easy it is to obtain a representative sample and the amount of resources that have to be used in such an endeavour: whether we are dealing with a geographically concentrated or dispersed community, whether our goal is a local or a national sample, whether second generation of immigrants are a priority for the research goals, whether we want a survey covering all minorities or only specific groups, and so on.

Issues to keep in mind when designing a sample of immigrants/ethnic minorities are:

1. It is crucial to decide which groups are to be represented. Since doing a survey that includes all immigrant/minority groups often will not be feasible, stratification and grouping among them may help to exclude the smallest possible number of them.
2. How do we identify who counts as an immigrant? Given that all possible objective solutions (citizenship, place of birth, etc...) are often problematic, subjective categories like ethnic self-identification are also used. Clearly, they are not unproblematic in many cases (especially to match survey with census data in a rigorous way), but there is often no better alternative, except for some "easy" specific groups.
3. When official statistics are not a sufficient point of departure, other sampling strategies (including non-probability designs) may need to be explored. One of the presentations in the workshop focused on the "centre-sample method" developed by Giancarlo Blangiardo and Gianluca Baio, based on the assumption that migrants visit at least one local centre of aggregation (institutions, places of worship, entertainment, care centres, meeting points, call centre, etc.). The kinds of public places that are most appropriate for fieldwork should be explored in each case. Special fieldwork protocols and adequate weights must be considered in these cases, as well as the consequences it has for questionnaire length. The method may have clear shortcomings and be more appropriate for local than for national samples, but it can be a point of departure when other strategies are not available.

4. Over sampling in areas with higher concentrations of migrant populations and under sampling or excluding areas with very low proportions of migrants can lead to much more cost effective probability sample designs; the cost, however, is that some bias may be introduced by not sampling migrants in the excluded areas. Adequate weights are needed to adjust for the different sampling probabilities, and if possible some areas with small immigrant populations should be included. A technique called "focused enumeration" has been used in the UK to sample non-white migrants: this involves asking residents if any of their neighbours (usually 2 dwellings on either side) are ethnic minorities.

5. Individual probability samples, which are often a very good option for the general population, are more problematic for reaching immigrants, who tend to be a more mobile population. This problem is at least substantially reduced by selecting addresses (*dwellings*).

2.2. Fieldwork

Several aspects related to fieldwork organisation were addressed in the different presentations. Some of them were closely linked with the sampling strategies, especially when the final stages of sampling were developed "in the field" (such as in the case of "centre-based" or "snowball" samples).

As several of the participants pointed out, especially Anja van Heelsum in her presentation on this topic, there is no universally proven rule with respect to the ethnic composition of the fieldwork team and ethnic matching between interviewers and interviewees. Ethnic matching may be necessary in cases of very high mistrust towards the interview and may often help to increase response rates. However, for some topics it may have consequences on answers through the social norms of the ethnic group. It can also impose a heavy burden on the logistics and costs of fieldwork organisation. Thus, the final decision on the composition of the field work team will depend on issues such as the topic of the survey and the degree of trust of the interviewees on researchers. Language skills might also be a

relevant factor. Whatever the final decision, these are issues that have to be considered when designing a survey addressed to immigrants.

-The working conditions of the fieldwork team have proven to be important. Since they often face a difficult task, experience, motivation and supervision are crucial: reasonable work assignments, adequate training and appropriate supervision were highlighted as important factors by the speakers that talked about their experience in this type of survey.

-The survey design has to be sensitive to potential bias due to language skills of migrant populations. Often, a fully plural multilanguage team is difficult to build and manage, so the need to do so has to be evaluated. There are other mid-way solutions such as translating questionnaires or having the support of native-speakers only for cases in which it is needed to carry out an interview. In any case, questionnaires should be translated by central research teams and not left to ad-hoc translations to be made by individual interviewers.

-Wording and translation issues were not fully discussed during the workshop. In any case, it is clear that there are concepts from the host societies that are difficult to understand by newcomers (this was clear, for example, in the Swedish experience) and that the regular need for colloquial wording is even more accentuated in many of these surveys.

-Pilot studies (as well as other pre-testing procedures) are especially important in difficult surveys, as most of the surveys addressed to immigrants are. They can be helpful not only for questionnaire development, but also to test fieldwork procedures, composition of the interviewer team and language problems.

-The effects of the mode of administration were not fully explored during the workshop. The sampling procedures have required face-to-face interviews in most cases, but a lack of trust has not allowed it in others. These potential effects should be more fully explored in the future.

Though there was consensus that organising surveys addressed to immigrants/ethnic minorities generally requires a greater effort than surveys addressed to the general population, one should not assume that dealing with this population group necessarily means that everything will be problematic. For example, Laura Morales and Michael Blohm in their presentation reported lower contact rates, but higher cooperation rates among immigrants than among native respondents.

2.3. Migrants in general population surveys/ non-migrants in "immigrant surveys"

Participants in the workshop drew attention to surveys which combined immigrant/ethnic minorities with the rest of the population. The results of surveys to immigrants per se are important, but even if migrants are the main concern of a research project, the results often need a reference point, so that their meaning and relevance can be assessed.

This can be achieved through two different processes that often are combined: 1) ensuring minority surveys are fully comparable with general population surveys, or including as a control group a sample of the native population along with an the minority group sample, 2) including minority groups (and often oversampling them to produce a large enough sample) in general population surveys. Final substantive comparisons should be made, in either case, not with the full general population, but with groups that share their most basic socio-economic characteristics to capture the differences produced by ethnicity/migration processes.

There is an additional reason to have immigrants in general population surveys. Both in long standing immigration countries and in new "immigration" countries, non-national residents (and their descendants) are becoming a significant percentage of the total population. As a result of this, one cannot really refer to the "public opinion" of these countries without making an effort to include

immigrants in the “picture”. This involves developing surveys that are specifically addressed to these populations, as well as making sure that they are part of samples of general population surveys.

Finally, participants in the workshop shared the view that, in a global and multiethnic world, it is necessary that all surveys of the general population on social and political issues include a few questions that help place them in their ethnic and cultural settings. In the same way that the questionnaire of any international or comparative surveys includes questions on age, gender or occupation, it should also include at least (comparable) questions on: place of birth (their own or their parents), nationality, first language and ethnic identity.

3. Assessment of the results, contribution to the future direction of the field

There was a general feeling of satisfaction with the results of the workshop. Participants considered that it had been a good idea to organise a workshop that concentrated on the methodological aspects rather than on the substantive results of surveys of immigrants/ethnic minorities, which is the most common approach.

Reflecting upon these methodological challenges and learning how different research teams have confronted them is a must in order to improve the quality of the data on these populations. This is not only a goal in itself, to be able to produce good research, but a necessary condition in order to have a better knowledge and understanding of the situation of ethnic and cultural minorities in Western countries. Having a good diagnosis of the situation is, in turn, a key point in the design of the most appropriate policies addressed to these populations. Though the contents and directions on policies depend on preferences and political goals, no effective policy of any type can be developed from an erroneous picture of what the situation is.

The discussions during the workshop did not lead to a set of common rules on how to survey immigrants that can fit every possible situation, research needs and contexts. Rather, the main results of the workshop are a sort of “check list” of issues to be concerned about when designing such a survey, as well as a set of already proven choices and strategies that others have followed in similar situations. Knowing how other people have dealt with these issues and what available strategies there are around is helpful to start with.

Although we are still far from the ideal situation, the knowledge about the situation of immigrant/ethnic minorities in most European countries has generally improved. In some cases this has been achieved through the improvement of official statistics but also through *ad-hoc* projects developed to gather data on these populations.

The progress that has been made both in “substantive” and in “methodological” terms means that, before designing a new survey, it becomes crucial to explore what has already been done, for two reasons: First, to look out for the possibility that the research question has been already explored. In a topic where producing new data is so difficult and expensive, the full exploitation of existing resources should be exhausted before deciding to collect new data. Second, the methodological challenges and research strategies adopted by others, with their successes and failures, will be very useful for planning a new survey involving data collecting.

A final issue concerns the potential involvement of the ethnic communities themselves in the planning of those surveys. The pressure to move in this direction has started to build in a few countries, and its full advantages and consequences should be more fully explored in the future.

4. Further collaboration

The group discussed several possibilities to continue the collaboration, given that there was a shared perception that closer and continued cooperation would be fruitful for both the group itself and for the research and policy community working in this field. Several possibilities will be examined through e-mail exchanges, but some were suggested during the workshop:

1) The continuation and enlargement of the group through a more stable network, using funding from sources like the COST Actions or ESF Research Networking Programmes, to deal with methodological issues in immigrant/minority surveys. A more limited possibility would be to propose a policy paper using also the ESF Policy Briefings series that would make possible to pursue and clarify the most important recommendations to be followed in immigrant/minority surveys. In these cases, cooperation with other groups and initiatives working on related problems will be examined, for example with the team working on the homogenisation of migration statistics at the European level.

2) The organisation of a more focussed research initiative, to be presented for example to the VII Framework program, dealing with substantive issues on the social and political integration of immigrants. This kind of collaboration already exists among several of the people and institutions present at the meeting.

3) The lack of published materials around this issue, convinced the group to pursue the idea of a common publication, including all or most of the materials presented at the workshop. Contact with the Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies has been made to discuss an edited volume of the Journal, and a proposal will be presented to the Journal by the end of 2008.

4. Final program

Thursday 16 October 2008

- Morning *Arrival*
- 13.00-14.15 *Lunch at the meeting venue*
- 14.30-15.30 Introduction to the topic and structure of the workshop by the convenors
Joan Font and **Mónica Méndez**
- Presentation of the European Science Foundation (ESF)
Henk Stronkhorst (ESF Standing Committee for Social Sciences)
- 15.30-17.00 **Sampling Issues I**
- The centre sampling technique in surveys of foreign migrants
Giancarlo Blangiardo and **GianLuca Baio** (Università de Milano, IT)
- Sampling strategies in migrant surveys: the “tricky” case of France
Vincent Tiberj (Centre de Recherches Politiques - CEVIPOF, Paris, FR)
- 17.00-17.30 *Coffee break*
- 17.30-19.30 **Sampling Issues II**
- Enhancing representativeness in a highly dynamic setting: the NEPIA survey
Sebastian Rinken (Institute for Advanced Social Studies - IESA, Cordoba, ES)
- Probability Samples of Minority Ethnic Groups in Britain
Bob Erens (National Center for Social Research - NATCEN, London, UK)
- The 2007 National Immigrants Survey of Spain: sampling from *Padrón* Population Register
Carlos Ballano Fernández, **Francisco Hernández Jiménez** and **Ignacio Duque** (National Statistics Institute - INE, Madrid, ES)
- 21.00 *Dinner*

Friday 17 October 2008

- 09.30-11.00 **Questionnaire design and fieldwork organisation**
- Snowball sampling techniques and fieldwork organization in Hungary
Orkeny Antal (Eotvos Lorand University, Budapest, HU)

	Methodological issues in surveys among Surinamese in the Netherlands Anja van Heelsum (IMES, University of Amsterdam, NL)
11.00-11.30	<i>Coffee break</i>
11.30-13.30	Fieldwork outcomes: response rates Interviewing immigrants in Stockholm: lessons from two recent surveys Gunnar Myrberg (Uppsala University, SE) Comparing response rate of autochthonous and migrant populations in nominal sampling surveys: the Localmultidem study in Barcelona and Madrid Laura Morales (University of Manchester, UK)
13.30-15.15	<i>Lunch</i>
15.15-17.00	Including migrants in general population social attitude surveys What is immigrant integration? Why a migrant survey also needs a control sample of non-immigrants Dirk Jacobs (Free University Brussels - ULB, BE) Survey participation of migrants in the German General Social Survey (ALLBUS) Michael Blohm (Centre for Survey Research and Methodology - ZUMA, Mannheim, DE)
17.00-17.30	<i>Tea and Coffee</i>
17.30-19.00	Wrap up session by the convenors Mónica Méndez and Joan Font Further collaboration and publication plans
21.00	<i>Dinner</i>
Saturday 18 October 2008	
Morning	<i>Departure</i>

5. Final list of participants

Convenor:

1. **Joan FONT-FABREGAS**
Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas
Institute of Public Goods and Policies
(CCHS)
CSIC
Albasanz 26
28037 Madrid
Spain
joan.font@cchs.csic.es

Co-Convenor:

2. **Monica MÉNDEZ LAGO**
Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas
Montalban 8
28014 Madrid
Spain
mmendez@cis.es

ESF Representative:

3. **Henk STRONKHORST**
Senior Research Facilitator
Institute of Sociology
City University London
Rhiender Es 28
6971 GZ Brummen
The Netherlands
stronkhorst@xs4all.nl

Participants:

4. **Giancarlo BLANGIARDO**
Dipartimento di Statistica
Università degli Studi di Milano
Via Bicocca degli Arcimboldi 8
20136 Milano
Italy
Giancarlo.blangiardo@unimib.it
5. **Michael BLOHM**
German Social Science Infrastructure
Services
Quadrat B2, 1
Postfach 12 21 55
68159 Mannheim
Germany
michael.blohm@gesis.org

6. **Carlos BALLANO**
National Statistics Institute (INE)
Paseo de la Castellana 183
28071 Madrid
Spain
iduque@ine.es
7. **Ignacio DUQUE**
National Statistics Institute (INE)
Paseo de la Castellana 183
28071 Madrid
Spain
iduque@ine.es
8. **Natalia García-Pardo**
Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas
(CIS)
Montalbán 8
28014 Madrid
Spain
ngarcia-pardo@cis.es
9. **Bob ERENS**
National Center for Social Research
(NATCEN)
35 Northampton Square
London EC1V 0AX
United Kingdom
b.erens@natcen.ac.uk
10. **Dirk JACOBS**
Free University Brussels
44 Avenue Jeanne
Campus Solbosch
1050 Bruxelles
Belgium
Dirk.Jacobs@ulb.ac.be
11. **Laura MORALES**
Institute for Social Change
University of Manchester
4th floor, Arthur Lewis Building
Oxford road
Manchester M13 9PL
United Kingdom
Laura.Morales@manchester.ac.uk

12. **Gunnar MYRBERG**
Department of Government
Uppsala University
P.O. Box 514
751 20 Uppsala
Sweden
gunnar.myrberg@statsvet.uu.se
13. **Antal ORKENY**
Eotvos Lorand University
11 Gerlóczy utca
1052 Budapest
Hungary
orkeny@ludens.elte.hu
14. **Carlos PÉREZ**
National Statistics Institute (INE)
Paseo de la Castellana 183
28071 Madrid
Spain
iduque@ine.es
15. **Sebastian RINKEN**
Institute for Advance Social Studies
(IESA)
Campo Santo de los Mártires 7
14004 Córdoba
Spain
srinken@iesa.csic.es
16. **Vincent TIBERJ**
Centre de Recherches Politiques
(CEVIPOF)
98 Rue de l'Université
75007 Paris
France
vincent.tiberj@sciences-po.fr
17. **Anja VAN HEELSUM**
Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies
University of Amsterdam
Oudezijds Achterburgwal 237
1012 DL Amsterdam
Netherlands
a.j.vanheelsun@uva.nl

6. Statistical information on participants

6.1 Gender

Male: 13

Women: 4

6.2. Age

25-40: 6

41-55: 6

56 and more: 5

6.3. Country of origin:

a) Convenors and ESF representative

Spain: 2

Netherlands: 1

Participants:

Belgium: 1

France: 1

Germany: 1

Hungary: 1

Italy: 1

Netherlands: 1

Spain: 5

Sweden: 1

United Kingdom: 2