ISSP Background Variables Questionnaire (BVQ)

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Introduction

While ISSP module variables change every year due to the actual module topic, there has always been a set of compulsory background variables (BVs) in the ISSP dealing mainly with demographic issues that stays constant over the different modules. These BVs underwent a profound revision in 2009 and 2010. In the "ISSP Background Variables Guidelines" (BVG) this revision is carefully documented. These guidelines provide comprehensive information, such as measurement goals and coding frames.

In the course of the revision, the ISSP demographic methods group also compiled the "ISSP Background Variables Questionnaire" (BVQ) that you have at hand right now. This questionnaire proposes precise wording and order of the ISSP BV questions, formulated in a self-completion format. For ISSP members using non-self-completion interview modes, the necessary changes of question texts, interviewer instructions, and layout should be straightforward.

The questionnaire should be seen as a tool for those countries that are free to collect the ISSP BVs as they want. In these countries, the BVQ ideally can be treated the same way as the ISSP module source questionnaire. This approach helps achieve the highest possible level of comparability for the BVs.

Those countries that, for various reasons, are not free to use the question texts as they are proposed here should use the BV-Guidelines document as a reference to ensure that the ISSP BVs are correctly coded from the national variables to the ISSP standards. The BVG contain the same question texts as the BVQ. They may serve to underline the intended meaning of the BVs and therefore still support our efforts to reach a high level of comparability.[1]

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[1] Please note that some compulsory ISSP BVs are not transferred into questions. These BVs are mainly technical (see overview below). However, they are mandatory and must be included in the national ISSP data files.

Overview on all ISSP Background Variables

SEX "Sex of respondent"	BVQ_01	
BIRTH "Year of birth"	BVQ_02	
AGE "Age of respondent"	There is no question for AGE. The preferred question to ask is BIRTH. AGE however can be calculated from DATE and BIRTH.	
EDUCYRS "Years of schooling"	BVQ_03	
nat_ISCD "Country-specific labels: highest completed degree of education"	BVQ_04	
ISCED "ISCED 2011: highest completed degree of education"	There is no question for ISCED in the BVQ! It is the merged nat_ISCD variable.	
EDULEVEL "ISCED 2011 simplified: highest completed degree of education"	There is no question for EDULEVEL in the BVQ! Variable is derived from "ISCED".	
WORK "Currently, formerly, or never in paid work"	BVQ_05	
WRKHRS "Hours worked weekly"	BVQ_06	
EMPREL "Employment relationship"	BVQ_07	
WRKSUP "Supervise other employees" NSUP "Number of other employees supervised"	BVQ_08 BVQ_09	The two variables are asked in one question with two parts.
TYPORG1 "Type of organisation, for-profit/non-profit"	BVQ_10	
TYPORG2 "Type of organisation, public/private"	BVQ_11	
ISCO08 "Occupation ISCO 2008"	BVQ_12	
MAINSTAT "Main status"	BVQ_13	
PARTLIV "Living in steady partnership"	BVQ_14	
SPWORK "Spouse, partner: currently, formerly or never in paid work"	BVQ_15	
SPWRKHRS "Spouse, partner: hours worked weekly"	BVQ_16	
SPEMPREL "Spouse, partner: employment relationship"	BVQ_17	
SPWRKSUP "Spouse, partner: supervise other employees"	BVQ_18	
SPISCO08 "Spouse, partner: occupation ISCO 2008"	BVQ_19	
SPMAINST "Spouse, partner: main status"	BVQ_20	
UNION "Trade union membership"	BVQ_21	
nat_RELIG "Country-specific religious affiliation"	BVQ_22	
RELIGGRP "Groups of religious affiliations"	There is no question for RELIGGRP in the BVQ! Variable is derived from "nat_RELIG".	
ATTEND "Attendance of religious services"	BVQ_23	
TOPBOT "Top-Bottom self-placement"	BVQ_24	
VOTE_LE "Did respondent vote in last general election?"	BVQ_25	
nat_PRTY "Party respondent voted for in last general election"	BVQ_26	
PARTY_LR "Party respondent voted for in last general election: left – right scale"	There is no question for PARTY_LR in the BVQ! Variable is derived from "nat_PRTY".	
nat_ETHN1 "Country-specificethnic group 1" nat_ETHN2 "Country-specific: ethnic group 2"	BVQ_27	

HOMPOP "How many persons in household"	BVQ_28	
HHADULT "How many adults in household"	BVQ_29	The question design is highly mode-dependent.
HHCHILDR "How many children above school entry age in household"	BVQ_30	
HHTODD "How many children below school age in household"	BVQ_31	
nat_RINC "Country-specific: personal income"	BVQ_32	
nat_INC "Country-specific: household income"	BVQ_33	
MARITAL "Legal partnership status"	BVQ_34	
F_BORN "Father's country of birth"	BVQ_35	
M_BORN "Mother's country of birth"	BVQ_36	
URBRURAL "Place of living: urban – rural"	BVQ_37	
nat_REG "Country-specific: region"	There is no question for nat_REG in the BVQ!: Administrative variable	
CASEID "ID No. of respondent"	There is no question for CASEID in the BVQ!: Technical variable	
SUBSCASE "Case substitution flag"	There is no question for SUBCASE in the BVQ!: Technical variable	
DATEYR "Year of interview"	There is no question for DATEYR in the BVQ!: Technical variable	
DATEMO "Month of interview"	There is no question for DATEMO in the BVQ!: Technical variable	
DATEDY "Day of interview"	There is no question for DATEDY in the BVQ!: Technical variable	
INTLANG	There is no question for INTLANG in the BVQ!: Technical variable	
DWEIGHT_HH, DWEIGHT_TS, DWEIGHT_COM, PSWEIGHT, WEIGHT_COM	There is no question for WEIGHT variables in the BVQ!: Technical variables	
MODE "Administrative mode of data-collection"	There is no question for MODE in the BVQ!: Technical variable	
PARTIALS	There is no question for PARTIALS in the BVQ!: Technical variable	

General notes

1. All notes, which are not part of the questionnaire and intended only for members (for example, translation notes) are enclosed in pointed, angle brackets <like these>.

2. All the elements in questions, which require local adaptation are enclosed in square brackets. These instructions often relate to adding the name of the relevant country. For example, in Sweden "Did you vote in the last [country] national election in [month/year]?" would read "Did you vote in the last Swedish national election in September 2006?"

3. Notes that are important also for the respondent are enclosed in round brackets (like these).

4. In general, if translators have difficulty when translating answer codes, they should focus on translating the **concepts** expressed by the codes rather than the precise **words** used. See the BVG for measurement goals and other guidelines.

BVQ_01. SEX

Are you…

$_1$☐   Male

$_2$☐   Female

BVQ_02. BIRTH

When were you born?

Please, write in the year of your birth (use four digits for the year).

|__|__|__|__|

BVQ_03. EDUCYRS

How many years (full-time equivalent) have you been in formal education?
Include all primary and secondary schooling, university and other post-secondary education, and full-time vocational training, but do not include repeated years. If you are currently in education, count the number of years you have completed so far.

<TN: Countries where it is not common to repeat years should omit the last clause.>

Please enter number of years or tick a box as applicable.

…   years

$_0$☐   I have no formal schooling

BVQ_04. nat_ISCD

What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

Please tick one box only.

[List of country-specific categories]

THE NEXT QUESTIONS DEAL WITH YOUR WORK SITUATION.
BY WORK WE MEAN DOING INCOME-PRODUCING WORK, AS AN EMPLOYEE, SELF-EMPLOYED OR WORKING FOR YOUR OWN FAMILY'S BUSINESS, FOR AT LEAST ONE HOUR PER WEEK. IF YOU TEMPORARILY ARE NOT WORKING FOR PAY BECAUSE OF TEMPORARY ILLNESS/PARENTAL LEAVE/VACATION/STRIKE, ETC., PLEASE REFER TO YOUR NORMAL WORK SITUATION.

BVQ_05. WORK

Are you currently working for pay, did you work for pay in the past, or have you never been in paid work?

Please tick one box only.

$_1\square$ I am currently in paid work → *Please continue with BVQ_06*

$_2\square$ I am currently not in paid work but I had paid work in the past
→ *Please continue with BVQ_07*

$_3\square$ I have never had paid work → *Please continue with BVQ_13*

BVQ_06. WRKHRS

How many hours, on average, do you usually work for pay in a normal week, including overtime?

If you work for more than one employer, or if you are both employed and self-employed, please count the total number of working hours that you do.

Please write in.

On average, I work……………………hours a week, overtime included.

THE NEXT QUESTIONS DEAL WITH SOME MORE DETAILS ON YOUR WORK SITUATION.
IF YOU WORK FOR MORE THAN ONE EMPLOYER, OR IF YOU ARE BOTH EMPLOYED AND SELF-EMPLOYED, PLEASE REFER TO YOUR MAIN JOB.
IF YOU ARE RETIRED OR NOT CURRENTLY WORKING, PLEASE REFER TO YOUR LAST MAIN JOB.

BVQ_07. EMPREL

Are/were you an employee, self-employed, or working for your own family's business?

<TN: Country-specific terms such as 'wage employee' or 'wage worker' may be used here to clarify the meaning of "employee". Self-employed includes terms such as 'freelancers', 'independent professionals', and other respondents working on their own account.>

Please tick one box only.

- $_1$☐ An employee
- $_2$☐ Self-employed without employees
- $_3$☐ Self-employed with 1 to 9 employees
- $_4$☐ Self-employed with 10 employees or more
- $_5$☐ Working for your own family's business

BVQ_08. WRKSUP

BVQ_09. NSUP

Do/did you supervise other employees?

<TN: Supervision is to be understood as a leadership function of monitoring and being responsible for the work of others.>

Please tick one box only.

1☐ Yes → How many other employees do/did you supervise?
Please write in. …………. employees

2☐ No

BVQ_10. TYPORG1

Do/did you work for a for-profit organisation or for a non-profit organisation?

<TN: If necessary, clarify for-profit or non-profit organisation by giving examples typical for your country.>

Please tick one box only.

1☐ I work/ed for a for-profit organisation

2☐ I work/ed for a non-profit organisation

BVQ_11. TYPORG2

Do/did you work for a public or a private employer?

<TN: If necessary, clarify public or private employer by giving examples typical for your country.>

Please tick one box only.

₁☐ Public employer

₂☐ Private employer

BVQ_12. ISCO08

a. What is/was your occupation – i.e., what is/was the name or title of your main job?

Please write in and describe as clearly as possible.
My occupation is/was: ……..…………………………………….
…………………….………………………………………………….

b. In your main job, what kind of activities do/did you do most of the time?

Please write in and describe as clearly as possible.
 …………………………….………………………………………….
…………………………….………………………………………….

c. What does/did the firm/organisation you work/worked for mainly make or do – i.e., what kind of production/function is/was performed at your workplace?

Please write in and describe as clearly as possible.
 …………………………….………………………………………….
…………………………….………………………………………….

BVQ_13. MAINSTAT

Which of the following <u>best</u> describes your current situation?

<TN: If there is no such thing as compulsory military or community service in your country, please omit category 8.>

If you temporarily are not working because of <u>temporary</u> illness/parental leave/vacation/strike etc., please refer to your normal work situation.

Please tick one box only.

- 1 ☐ In paid work (as an employee, self-employed, or working for your own family's business)
- 2 ☐ Unemployed and looking for a job
- 3 ☐ In education (not paid for by employer), in school/student/pupil even if on vacation
- 4 ☐ Apprentice or trainee
- 5 ☐ Permanently sick or disabled
- 6 ☐ Retired
- 7 ☐ Doing housework, looking after the home, children or other persons
- 8 ☐ In compulsory military service or community service
- 9 ☐ Other

BVQ_14. PARTLIV

Do you have a spouse or a steady partner and, if yes, do you share the same household?

<TN: Country-specific terms such as 'common-law spouse' (GB) or 'Lebensgefährte' (DE) may be used here to clarify the meaning of "steady partner".>

Please tick one box only.

1☐ Yes, I have a spouse/partner   → *Please continue with BVQ_15*
      and we share the same household

2☐ Yes, I have a spouse/partner   → *Please continue with BVQ_15*
      but we don't share the same household

3☐ No, I don't have a spouse/partner   → *Please continue with BVQ_21*

THE NEXT QUESTIONS DEAL WITH THE WORK SITUATION OF YOUR SPOUSE/PARTNER. BY WORK WE MEAN DOING INCOME-PRODUCING WORK, AS AN EMPLOYEE, SELF-EMPLOYED OR WORKING FOR HIS/HER OWN FAMILY'S BUSINESS, FOR AT LEAST ONE HOUR PER WEEK. IF HE/SHE TEMPORARILY IS NOT WORKING FOR PAY BECAUSE OF <u>TEMPORARY</u> ILLNESS/PARENTAL LEAVE/VACATION/STRIKE, ETC., PLEASE REFER TO HIS/HER NORMAL WORK SITUATION.

BVQ_15. SPWORK

Is your spouse/partner currently working for pay, did he/she work for pay in the past, or has he/she never been in paid work?

Please tick one box only.

1☐ He/she is currently in paid work   → *Please continue with BVQ_16*

2☐ He/she is currently not in paid work but   → *Please continue with BVQ_17*
      he/she had paid work in the past

3☐ He/she has never had paid work   → *Please continue with BVQ_20*

BVQ_16. SPWRKHRS

How many hours, on average, does your spouse/partner usually work for pay in a normal week, including overtime?

If he/she works for more than one employer, or if he/she is both employed and self-employed, please count the total number of working hours that he/she does.

Please write in.

On average, he/she works……………………hours a week, overtime included.

THE NEXT QUESTIONS DEAL WITH SOME MORE DETAILS ON YOUR SPOUSE'S/PARTNER'S WORK SITUATION.
IF HE/SHE WORKS FOR MORE THAN ONE EMPLOYER, OR IF HE/SHE IS BOTH EMPLOYED AND SELF-EMPLOYED, PLEASE REFER TO HIS/HER <u>MAIN</u> JOB.
IF HE/SHE IS RETIRED OR NOT CURRENTLY WORKING, PLEASE REFER TO HIS/HER LAST MAIN JOB.

BVQ_17. SPEMPREL

Is/was your spouse/partner an employee, self-employed, or working for his/her own family's business?

<TN: Country-specific terms such as 'wage employee' or 'wage worker' may be used here to clarify the meaning of "employee".>

Please tick one box only.

1 ☐ An employee
2 ☐ Self-employed without employees
3 ☐ Self-employed with 1 to 9 employees
4 ☐ Self-employed with 10 employees or more
5 ☐ Working for his/her own family's business

BVQ_18. SPWRKSUP

Does/did your spouse/partner supervise other employees?

<TN: Supervision is to be understood as a leadership function of monitoring and being responsible for the work of others.>

Please tick one box only.

₁☐ Yes

₂☐ No

BVQ_19. SPISCO08

a. What is/was your spouse's/partner's occupation – i.e., what is/was the name or title of his/her main job?

Please write in and describe as clearly as possible.

His/her occupation is/was: ……..………………………………….
...……………………………………………………………………

b. In his/her main job, what kind of activities does/did he/she do most of the time?

Please write in and describe as clearly as possible.
………………………………………………………………….
………………………………………………………………….
c. What does/did the firm/organisation he/she work/worked for mainly make or do – i.e., what kind of production/function is/was performed at his/her workplace?

Please write in and describe as clearly as possible.
………………………………………………………………….
………………………………………………………………….

BVQ_20. SPMAINST

Which of the following <u>best</u> describes your spouse's/partner's current situation?

<TN: If there is no such thing as compulsory military or community service in your country, please omit category 8.>

If he/she temporarily is not working because of <u>temporary</u> illness/parental leave/vacation/strike etc., please refer to his/her normal work situation.

Please tick one box only.

1☐ In paid work (as an employee, self-employed, or working for his/her own family's business)

2☐ Unemployed and looking for a job

3☐ In education (not paid for by employer), in school/student/pupil even if on vacation

4☐ Apprentice or trainee

5☐ Permanently sick or disabled

6☐ Retired

7☐ Doing housework, looking after the home, children or other persons

8☐ In compulsory military service or community service

9☐ Other

BVQ_21. UNION

Are you or have you ever been a member of a trade union or similar organisation?
If yes: is that currently or only previously?

<TN: Country-specific terms may be used here to clarify the meaning of "union membership".>

Please tick one box only.

1☐   Yes, currently

2☐   Yes, previously but not currently

3☐   No, never

BVQ_22. nat_RELIG

Do you belong to a religion and, if yes, which religion do you belong to?

<TN: At a minimum, all categories of the ISSP list on religious groups (shown below) should always be collected with the national survey, even if some categories may apply only to very small minorities in a particular country. Note that, for this reason, it is necessary to include even the rare categories in the national questionnaire.>

[List of country-specific categories]
[Minimum requirements of collected information on religion listed below]

Please tick one box only.

- 0 ☐ No religion
- 1 ☐ Catholic
- 2 ☐ Protestant
- 3 ☐ Orthodox
- 4 ☐ Other Christian
- 5 ☐ Jewish
- 6 ☐ Islamic
- 7 ☐ Buddhist
- 8 ☐ Hindu
- 9 ☐ Other Asian religions
- 10 ☐ Other religions

BVQ_23. ATTEND

Apart from such special occasions as weddings, funerals, etc., how often do you attend religious services?
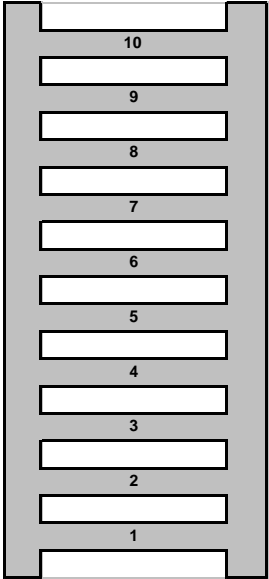
Please tick one box only.

- 1 ☐ Several times a week or more often
- 2 ☐ Once a week
- 3 ☐ 2 or 3 times a month
- 4 ☐ Once a month
- 5 ☐ Several times a year
- 6 ☐ Once a year
- 7 ☐ Less frequently than once a year
- 8 ☐ Never

BVQ_24. TOPBOT

In our society, there are groups which tend to be towards the top and groups which tend to be towards the bottom. Below is a scale that runs from the top to the bottom.
Where would you put yourself on this scale?

Please tick one box only.

10	TOP	$\square_{10}$	TOP
9		$\square_{9}$	
8		$\square_{8}$	
7		$\square_{7}$	
6		$\square_{6}$	
5		$\square_{5}$	
4		$\square_{4}$	
3		$\square_{3}$	
2		$\square_{2}$	
1	BOTTOM	$\square_{1}$	BOTTOM

BVQ_25. VOTE_LE

Some people don't vote nowadays for one reason or another. Did you vote in the last [country] national election in [month/year]?

Please tick one box only.

$_1\square$ Yes, I did vote → *Please continue with BVQ_26*

$_2\square$ No, I did not vote → *Please continue with BVQ_27*

$_0\square$ I was not eligible to vote in the last election → *Please continue with BVQ_27*

BVQ_26. nat_PRTY

[Thinking back to the last general election in [month/year].] Which party did you vote for?

Please tick one box only.

[Closed list of country-specific political parties plus open 'other' option]

BVQ_27. nat_ETHN

Please indicate which of the following group or groups you consider yourself to belong to.

Please select one or two groups.

[Closed list of country-specific ethnic groups plus open 'other' option, use multiple-response format for up to two responses. See the BV guidelines!]

BVQ_28. HOMPOP
BVQ_29. HHADULT
BVQ_30. HHCHILDR
BVQ_31. HHTODD

Depending on interview mode, different options for presenting the questions would be preferable. One option is a household grid that can easily be presented in self-administered modes:

Including yourself, how many people – including children – usually live in your household?

<TN: The school age threshold – the numbers in square brackets – is determined by the start of compulsory schooling in your country. In a country where the compulsory school starts at age 7, the age categories in the question should be: "Children between 7-17 years of age" and "Children up to the age of 6".>

Please write in.

	Number
Adults of 18 years and older	
Children between [school entry age] to 17 years of age	
Children below [school entry age]	
This makes a total of how many people?	

In a face to face interview, the interviewer has the chance to ask for the different groups of household members separately and discuss possible inconsistencies, so the above grid can be broken up into individual questions.

Including yourself, how many people usually live in your household?
Again including yourself, how many adults of 18 years and older live in your household?
And how many children between [school entry age] and 17 usually live in your household?
How many children below [school entry age] live in your household?

The order of the questions here is interchangeable.
Internal filters can be applied: Respondents identified to live in a single-household by the first question do not need to answer to the subsequent questions. The number of "other adults" and both age categories of children have to be coded "0" then.
See BV guidelines for coding instructions!

BVQ_32. nat_RINC

Before taxes and other deductions, what on average is your own total monthly income?

<TN: Explanatory notes can be added to remind respondents of country-specific deductions.>

Please write in.

My total monthly income is on average .... [national currency]

If you live in a single household → Please continue with BVQ_34

BVQ_33. nat_INC

Before taxes and other deductions, what on average is the total monthly income of your household?

<TN: Explanatory notes can be added to remind respondents of country-specific deductions.>

Please write in.

The total monthly income of my household is on average .... [national currency]

BVQ_34. MARITAL

What is your current legal marital status?

<TN: "Civil partnership" is a formally legalised partnership without being married. Principle investigators: Please give some guidelines in the introduction of the question to clarify what "civil partnership" means in your country. Please use the country-specific legal term. In Germany, for example, for homosexual couples an officially registered partnership is called "Eingetragene Lebenspartnerschaft".
Countries without a legal civil partnership option, please omit category 2 and adjust text of categories 3 to 6.>

Please tick one box only.

- 1☐ Married
- 2☐ [Civil partnership]
- 3☐ Separated from my spouse/civil partner
  (but still legally married/still legally in a civil partnership)
- 4☐ Divorced from spouse/legally separated from my civil partner
- 5☐ Widowed/my civil partner died
- 6☐ I have never been married/never been in a civil partnership

BVQ_35. F_BORN

In which country was your father born?

<TN: "Country" refers here to states only, not to sub-national regions or areas. If the father's country of birth does not exist anymore under the former name, please, write in the current term of the country where the birthplace is located.>

Please write in.

BVQ_36. M_BORN

In which country was your mother born?

<TN: "Country" refers here to states only, not to sub-national regions or areas. If the mother's country of birth does not exist anymore under the former name, please, write in the current term of the country where the birthplace is located.>

Please write in.

BVQ_37. URBRURAL

Would you describe the place where you live as…

Please tick one box only.

1☐ A big city
2☐ The suburbs or outskirts of a big city
3☐ A small city or town
4☐ A country village
5☐ A farm or home in the country