Chapter V

DATA COLLECTION

Part 2

CONTENTS

ii) Survey agencies

The Survey organisations in each country are shown in the table below. In most cases, these were appointed following national invitations to tender.

COUNTRY	SURVEY ORGANISATION
Austria	Institute for Panel Research (ipr)
Belgium (Flemish)	Institute for Social and Political Opinion Research (ISPO), Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
Belgium (Francophone)	CLEO, University of Liège
Czech Republic	STEM
Denmark	Danish National Institute of Social Research
Finland	Statistics Finland
France	Institut de Sondage Lavialle (ISL)
Germany	Institute for Applied Social Sciences (infas)
Greece	Consortium: MRB and Opinion
Hungary	TARKI
Ireland	Economic and Social Research Institute
Israel	B.I. Cohen Institute for Public Opinion Research, Tel-Aviv University
Italy	ABACUS
Luxembourg	CEPS/INSTEAD
Netherlands	GfK Panel Services Benelux
Norway	Statistics Norway
Poland	Centre for Social Survey Research, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences
Portugal	Euroteste, Marketing e Opinião.
Slovenia	Public Opinion and Mass Communication Research Centre (CJMMK), Ljubljana University
Spain	Demoscopia
Sweden	Statistics Sweden
Switzerland	MIS Trend
Turkey	Birim Arastirma and/or Makro Arastirma
UK	National Centre for Social Research

iii) Response rate enhancement

One of the distinguishing features of the ESS is its objective to achieve high methodological standards, thereby striving for optimal comparability in the data collected across all the participating countries. Amongst these standards, one essential element is the need to achieve high response rates in all participating countries, in order to ensure that the people interviewed in each country closely represent the country's total population.

In the ESS Specification for Participating Countries a target response rate of 70% was specified for all countries. At the time this target was fixed, it was clear that certain countries were likely to exceed this figure, whereas for other countries 70% might be a very ambitious goal. In order to help to achieve this figure certain field procedures form part of the Specification for Participating Countries and, as such, should be adopted by each country. For example, to minimise the number of non-contacts, at least four personal visits by interviewers to each sampling unit were required before a unit could be abandoned as non-productive. However, there are further steps that can be taken to enhance response rates. A paper presented at the second NC meeting summarised the procedures from the Specifications for Participating Countries and gave additional recommendations and suggestions for further steps to enhance response rates. As the effectiveness of different approaches may well vary between different countries with different norms, cultural settings, geography, and so forth, the CCT encouraged NCs to discuss fieldwork procedures to be adopted individually with the CCT. The issues covered in the paper were as follows (for the full paper, see Annex):

- How might the selection, organisation and training of interviewers help to enhance response rates?

a) *Selecting interviewers to work on the study*
b) *Briefing interviewers about all aspects of the study*
c) *Interviewer assignment sizes and overall workload*
d) *Monitoring interviewers' progress*
e) *Payment of interviewers*

- What field procedures might be adopted to enhance response rates by minimising the number of non-contacts?

a) *Number, timing and mode of calls*
b) *Length of fieldwork period*

- What field procedures might be adopted to enhance response rates by minimising the number of refusals?

a) *Advance letters*
b) *Respondent incentives*
c) *Converting people who initially 'refuse' participation*

Table 1 (see next page) summarises information on the use of several procedures for response rate enhancement in the first round of ESS. It covers the issues of interviewer experience, use of advance letters and respondent incentives, and strategies for refusal conversion. Additional procedures which may have a positive effect on response rates are dealt with in different sections of this report (e.g. calling strategies of the interviewers Viv)). Since the different procedures were not compared against a control group, no firm conclusions about the effect on response rates (see the last column in Table 1) can be drawn.

Selecting experienced interviewers to work on the study

There is a considerable body of evidence to show that different interviewers achieve substantially different response rates. Although it is often difficult to distinguish between interviewer and area effects - (for instance, interviewers working in inner city areas normally face bigger challenges in obtaining good response rates than interviewers working in more rural areas) - there is evidence that more experienced interviewers tend to achieve higher response rates than those with less experience.

Therefore the recommendation of the CCT was:
Attempt to enhance response rates by the selection of experienced interviewers wherever possible.

In nine of the fourteen countries only interviewers with at least some minimal interview experience - having taken part in at least one interviewing project - were selected for the ESS. In five countries, some of the ESS interviewers had no previous interviewing experience at all. In United Kingdom 4% of all interviewers had no previous experience, in Slovenia the relevant percentage is 13%, in Norway 14%, in the Netherlands 25%, and in Switzerland 33%.

Advance letter

A letter sent in advance of an interviewer visit usually has a positive effect on the response rate. It can serve several purposes, addressing a variety of issues known to affect survey participation. The advance letter can be used to –

- Explain the purpose of the survey,
- Identify the sponsor and the survey organisation,
- Include any gifts or incentives, or information about them,
- Alert the respondent, or household, to expect a call from an interviewer.

Table 1: Use of some procedures for response rate enhancement - ESS 2002[1]

	Country	Only experienced interviewers (A3.4.1)	Use of advance letter (A3.4.6)	Use of respondent incentives (A3.4.8)	Training in refusal conversion (A3.4.2)	Specific strategies for refusal conversion (A3.4.9)	Response rate (%) (A4.1)
AT	Austria	no	yes	no	no	yes	60.4
BE	Belgium	no	yes	no	yes	yes	59.2
CH	Switzerland	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	33.5
CZ	Czech Republic	no	yes	no	no	no	43.3
DK	Denmark	yes	yes	no	yes	no answer	67.6
DE	Germany	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	57.1
ES	Spain	yes	yes	yes	no	no	53.2
FI	Finland	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	73.2
FR	France						
GR	Greece	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	80.0
HU	Hungary	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	69.9
IE	Ireland	yes	no	no	no	no	64.5
IL	Israel	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	71.0
IT	Italy	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	43.7
Lu	Luxembourg	yes	yes	no	yes	no	43.9
NL	Netherlands	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	67.9
NO	Norway	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	65.0
PL	Poland	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	73.2
PT	Portugal	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	68.8
SE	Sweden	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	69.5
SL	Slovenia	no	yes	no	yes	yes	72.1
UK	United Kingdom	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	55.5

[1] All information in the table according to National Technical Summaries, with the exception of Luxembourg from latest progress report (Aug 8).

When using an advance letter, care should be taken to ensure that the time span between the arrival of the letter and the interviewer's visit is not too long. Sometimes the best way to do this is to instruct interviewers to send the letters in a way that matches their planned work pattern (rather than send the letters centrally at the start of the fieldwork period).

Therefore the recommendation from the CCT was:

Use an advance letter, personalised with the individual name if possible, or the address. Include the letters in interviewer workpacks, and instruct them to organise posting them a few days before they intend to call at the address.

Table 1 shows that most countries followed this advice. Thirteen of the fourteen countries used an advance letter. On the other hand, Ireland did not, because their experience in the past had been that advance letters affected respondent participation adversely.

Respondent incentives

Numerous examples of studies show that even modest 'rewards' help to improve the response rate. In deciding to go down this route, there is a decision to make whether

- to give the incentive to all sampled individuals prior to them agreeing or not to take part in the survey, or
- to make the incentive conditional on them agreeing to participate in the survey.

According to the existing literature, unconditional prepaid incentives seem to be more effective than conditional incentives paid upon completion of the interview. Thus, eliciting feelings of obligation with an unconditional incentive is more effective than rewarding participation.

The recommendation of the CCT was:

Consider using an incentive to raise response rates. To come to a decision, you have to judge the relative time and cost advantages of using an incentive versus not. Incentives may mean less interviewer time in persuading respondents to participate, less time in refusal conversions. The reduction in interviewer time – and thus costs – must be weighed against the cost of providing incentives.

Seven of the fourteen countries used an incentive. The type of incentive and the way it was administered differed between the countries. In Norway and Sweden a lottery ticket was sent to all sampled individuals, regardless of whether they agreed to participate. In United Kingdom a £5 gift voucher was mentioned in the advance letter and handed out by the interviewer only when an interview took place. In Spain every respondent received a T-shirt and a cap. In Greece, a bag with a set of pens and pencils and discount coupons for food were used. Switzerland used a special edition of ten priority stamps. In the Netherlands every respondent had the choice between three presents (to the value of 2,50 €). In the course of field work, respondents were encouraged with donations (to the value of 5 €) plus a quiz with a prize to win (1 x 250 €, 3 x 100 €).

Refusal conversion

In order to maximise response rates and minimise refusal rates, repeated attempts to persuade initially reluctant persons ("refusals") to reconsider the survey request are usually required. As refusals are often influenced by the circumstances and the mood of the potential respondent at the time of the initial survey request, refusal conversion attempts can be quite successful. Amongst so-called "soft" refusals, it is possible to obtain interviews with a considerable portion of initially reluctant individuals. Not surprisingly, attempts to convert so-called "hard" refusals have lower success rates. However, such individuals normally account for only a small fraction of all refusals.

It is generally agreed that such conversion attempts should not be made by the interviewer who previously received the refusal. Instead, these cases should be reissued to another interviewer. It is common – and good – practice to reassign this case to a more senior interviewer or to a supervisor ("refusal converters"). When planning such conversion attempts, of course, data protection laws in the different countries have to be taken into account.

The recommendation of the CCT was:

Reissue all soft refusals and as many hard refusals as feasible to a senior interviewer to attempt to convert.

Eleven of the fourteen countries claimed that the interviewers had received training in refusal conversion - either as part of ESS specific personal briefings or otherwise. Only Spain, Ireland, and Sweden did not report such training. Eleven of the fourteen countries reported that they used specific strategies for refusal conversions (Spain, Ireland, and Denmark are the exceptions). The reported strategies range from repeated contacts (Sweden), additional follow-up letters (Slovenia), providing the phone number of the NC in the advance letter (Greece), an ESS website with additional information for respondents (The Netherlands), to the re-issuing of reluctant cases to senior interviewers (Switzerland, Greece, Slovenia, United Kingdom).

ANNEX

Copy of document sent to all National Coordinators

Field Procedures in the European Social Survey: Enhancing Response Rates

I Introduction

One of the distinguishing features of the ESS is its objective to achieve high methodological standards, thereby striving for optimal comparability in the data collected across all the participating countries. Amongst these standards, one essential element is the need to achieve high response rates in all participating countries, in order to ensure that the people interviewed in each country closely represent the country's total population.

As a result, **an effective response rate of 70 per cent** in each country has been specified -

"... The minimum target response rate - after discounting ineligibles - should be 70%. This figure is likely to be exceeded in certain countries and the ESS as a whole would be damaged if major national variations in response rates were to occur. Survey organisations should thus cost their surveys with this response rate in mind and consider what steps may be required to achieve it. ... All potential survey organisations must be invited to suggest a range of techniques that they believe would enhance the final response rate. Such techniques may include advance letters, toll-free telephone numbers for potential respondents to contact, extra training of interviewers in response-maximisation techniques and doorstep interactions, implementing refusal avoidance and conversion techniques, re-issuing of 'soft' refusals and 'indecisive' non-contacts, and many others. These suggestions will be forwarded to the CCT both for comment and for possible transmission to other nations for consideration locally."
[ESS Specifications for participating countries]

This paper outlines how certain fieldwork procedures may enhance response rates. Some procedures form part of the Specification for participating countries and, as such, should be adopted by each country. However, other issues discussed in this paper are recommendations or suggestions. We are aware that the procedures covered here are not new; many of the National Co-ordinators (and the survey organisations) will be familiar with them. The paper should thus be seen simply as a summary and reminder of issues which should be considered in targeting maximally good response rates.

The effectiveness of different approaches may well vary between different countries, with different norms, cultural settings, geography, and so forth. The CCT is therefore very happy to discuss or advise on fieldwork procedures to be adopted within particular countries.

Before going through some of the more detailed issues, it is worth noting the following general points:

1. One of the main difficulties with non-response is the difference in characteristics between respondents and non-respondents. Data quality and comparability are compromised by the extent to which those interviewed differ from those not interviewed. In attempts to enhance response rates, **you should be mindful of the need to boost levels of response amongst all groups of the population and to bring response rates to a more consistent level across subgroups, if possible**. This is, for instance, why the ESS allows no substitution of addresses or individuals.

2. **Close monitoring of response rates** – among the entire sample and, if possible, among some important subgroups – during fieldwork will provide an early warning of any response rate difficulties. Detailed guidance will be given on the design and content of forms for interviewers to record all contacting details. These will be designed to aid the identification of such response rate difficulties, which will thus allow decisions to be made on remedial action.

3. **Certain elements of the survey design may differentially affect the likelihood of participation among different groups of the population.** For instance, a monetary incentive may be more likely to encourage the participation of people with low incomes rather than those with high incomes. Measures to reduce non-response should take account of such issues, targeting groups who are disproportionately underrepresented as a result of design issues.

4. There are **three basic types of non-responders** –
   - ***Non-contacts*** - those who cannot be contacted during the field work period;
   - ***Refusals*** - those who are contacted, but refuse to participate;
   - ***Other non-responders*** - those who are contacted and might be willing to participate, but cannot do so, for example because of illness or language problems.

   As the last group is usually much smaller than the other two, this paper concentrates on minimising the non-contacts and refusals. Obviously, different measures are required to deal with each of these two groups. After discussing broader issues of interviewer selection, training, workload, monitoring and payment (Section II), the paper focuses separately on possible ways of minimising non-contacts (Section III) and refusals (Section IV).

5. Interviewing and field procedures must be closely monitored via **quality control back-checks.** It is specified that these back-checks (in person, by telephone or by post) must be carried out and documented on at least 5 per cent of respondents, 10 per cent of refusals and 10 per cent of non-contacts.

II How might the selection, organisation and training of <u>interviewers</u> help to enhance response rates?

a) Selecting interviewers to work on the study

There is a considerable body of evidence to show that different interviewers achieve substantially different response rates. Although it is often difficult to distinguish between interviewer and area effects - (for instance, interviewers working in inner city areas normally face bigger challenges in obtaining good response rates than interviewers working in more rural areas) - there is evidence that **more experienced interviewers tend to achieve higher response rates** than those with less experience. Furthermore, there is some evidence that **interviewers who are confident about their ability to elicit co-operation tend to achieve the higher response rates**. On the other hand, once other variables have been controlled, socio-demographic characteristics of interviewers - like age and gender – do not seem to play a major role in affecting response rates.

<u>Recommendations:</u>
Attempt to enhance response rates by -
- *The selection of experienced interviewers wherever possible;*
- *Boosting interviewers confidence about their ability to 'sell' the survey (see below).*

b) Briefing interviewers about all aspects of the study

Personal briefing of all interviewers working on the study has been specified -
"All interviewers will be personally briefed by the National Co-ordinator and others before carrying out an assignment, drawing on detailed interviewer instructions prepared by the CCT."

It is important that the personal briefings – and accompanying written instructions – do not focus purely on the content of the questionnaire and the conduct of the actual interview. It will be essential to brief interviewers fully on the contacting (and selection, where appropriate) procedure. Interviewers should be briefed on a broad repertoire of approaches to enhance their response rates, in a way that allows them to tailor their approach to the specific situation. This will be of particular importance where less experienced interviewers are being employed on the study.

In time for the 3rd meeting of the National Co-ordinators in June, the ESS Central Co-ordinating Team will prepare a paper on issues to include within the personal briefings and written instructions.

<u>Recommendations:</u>
- *One day or half day personal briefing sessions of all interviewers by the National Co-ordinator and survey organisation, covering all aspects of the field procedures and the interview.*
- *Include a session on doorstep introduction and discussions on encouraging participation.*

c) Interviewer assignment sizes and overall workload

A maximum assignment size per interviewer has been specified -
"Interviewers' assignment sizes should not exceed 24 issued sampling units and no interviewer should carry out more than two assignments."

Response rates can be affected by the amount of work allocated to each interviewer. The assignment size will affect the amount of effort an interviewer can apply to attempting contact and securing co-operation from each sampled individual (and household where relevant). For instance, if an interviewer's workload is large relative to the length of the fieldwork period, it can place limits on the possible number of calls and their spread, in terms of days and times of the day.

Beyond the assignment sizes on this particular study, you should **make sure that interviewers are not overloaded with work from other surveys**. Not only would this have the potential to depress response rates generally (for the reasons above), it may lead to interviewers having to prioritise one survey over another, in terms of completing work on time or putting in the effort to maximise their response rates.

<u>*Recommendation:*</u>

- *Discuss the workload of interviewers with the survey organisation, to avoid such conflict of interest. (However, deciding on priorities may be more difficult if interviewers are working for more than one organisation during the fieldwork period.)*

d) Monitoring interviewers' progress

Close monitoring of interviewers' progress will allow for the early identification of difficulties, both about the work of individual interviewers and about response rates as a whole.

It has been specified –

"Fieldwork progress must be closely monitored, including producing a fortnightly report on response, broken down into similar categories to those listed in section 5.8 but distinguishing between decisive refusals and 'soft' refusals, as well as between primary issued addresses and re-issued ones."

In line with this, **fortnightly or – even better - weekly updates** should be provided by the survey organisation on progress, appraising overall response rates, as well as response rates by region and by interviewer. To facilitate these updates, interviewers must return promptly all interviews and all records of refusals and other non-response to the survey organisation.

Monitoring information at the level of the individual interviewer will quickly highlight problems with individual interviewers, in terms of a lack of progress (which may threaten the fieldwork timetable) or a poor response rate, either because of high numbers of non-contacts or high numbers of refusals. Early diagnosis of such problems will make them easier to remedy, within the allocated fieldwork period.

In time for the 3rd meeting of the National Co-ordinators in June, the ESS Central Coordinating Team will give more detailed recommendations on the information to be covered in the progress reports of the survey organisation.

<u>*Recommendation:*</u>

- *The progress reports to be provided by the survey organisation should not only appraise overall response rates, but response rates by region and by interviewer as well.*

e) Payment of interviewers

Levels of interviewer pay and the pay structure may both affect interviewers' incentive to work hard to enhance their response rates. The pay rate for the study should be set in relation to the length and complexity of the interview, the expected difficulties of obtaining co-operation, and the amount of record keeping demanded of the interviewer. Of course, it is always advantageous if the pay rate is attractive in relation to pay on other studies.

'Bonus' payments for interviews achieved above a certain response rate target may have a positive effect. However, any bonus system must be perceived as being fair. Different areas in which the interviewers work can vary considerably – often in a unknown way – in the challenges they pose to the interviewers.

It is usual for survey organisations to have a standard policy concerning pay arrangements, which they are unlikely to differ for particular studies. The two standard policies are to pay interviewers an **hourly rate** or to pay **per completed interview**. The former may make fieldwork costs very hard to control (and make them more expensive as a result). Whereas the latter may provide less incentive for interviewers to enhance their response rates amongst individuals who are hard to reach, or hard to persuade to participate.

<u>*Recommendation:*</u>

- *Discuss the interviewer pay arrangement with the survey organization. The pay rates for ESS should be attractive for interviewers, both with respect to the study difficulty and with respect to the pay on other studies.*

III What field procedures might be adopted to enhance response rates by minimising the number of <u>non-contacts</u>?

A maximum non-contact rate of 3 per cent of all sampled units has been specified – *"The proportion of non-contacts should not exceed 3 per cent of all sampled units."*

This will involve considerable efforts on the part of the interviewers, and the specification for participating countries already details some ways of minimising non-contacts.

a) Number, timing and mode of calls

There is a considerable body of evidence to show that surveys which insist on several calls, at different times of day, on different days of the week, and over an extended period of time, have lower non-contact rates.

For the ESS, the following call schedule is specified -
"They include at least four personal visits by interviewers to each sampling unit before it is abandoned as non-productive, including at least one call in the evening and at least one at the weekend. These calls should be spread over at least two different weeks. ...
The first contact with potential respondents, following a possible advance letter, will be face-to-face. Once in contact with a household, however, interviewers will be permitted to make (or change) appointments, though not to conduct interviews, by telephone. "

In order to ensure that the above call schedule is adhered to, (because interviewer preferences sometimes would not mirror these requirements), control and checking of the call scheduling may be necessary.

Since the specifications were drawn up, there has been a change regarding the issue of an initial face-to-face contact (soon to be distributed to all National Co-ordinators in an Information Note). There is evidence to show that, in some countries, it is preferable to make the first contact by telephone. The ESS will therefore allow countries with suitable registers of individuals (rather than households) to make the initial contact by telephone, where a phone number is available. However, all individuals without an available phone number, plus all non-contacts and refusals by telephone should still be visited in person.

<u>Recommendation:</u>
- *In particular, when the progress reports on fieldwork (see Section II) reveal a high non-contact rate, participating countries should check whether the interviewers adhered to the specified call schedule or not. This may require that contact forms are checked on site at the survey organisation.*

b) Length of fieldwork period

A minimum and maximum fieldwork period has been specified -
" The main fieldwork period will last for at least one month within a four-month period between 1 September and end December 2002. ... To allow difficult-to-contact people to be located, the fieldwork period should not be less than 30 days."

Truncated fieldwork periods lead to a higher proportion of non-contacts. Thus, the ESS is allowing a fieldwork period of up to 4 months in order to counter this potential problem, and achieve a maximum non-contact rate of 3 per cent. The length of the fieldwork period also allows for more conversion attempts on refusals (see Section IV).

<u>Recommendation:</u>
- *Ensure that optimal use is made of the stipulated fieldwork period. In particular, try to ensure that interviewers will work on <u>all</u> PSUs (Primary Sampling Units) from the very beginning of the fieldwork period.*

IV What field procedures might be adopted to enhance response rates by minimising the number of refusals?

a) Advance letters

A letter sent in advance of an interviewer call usually has a positive effect on the response rate. It can serve several purposes, addressing a variety of issues known to affect survey participation. The advance letter can be used to –
- Explain the purpose of the survey,
- Identify the sponsor and the survey organisation,
- Include any gifts or incentives, or information about them,
- Alert the respondent, or household, to expect a call from an interviewer.

In most cases, interviewers value the use of an advance letter, as their first contact with the sample person or the sample household is then not totally "cold".

If the sample frame is one of named individuals, the advance letter can be addressed personally to the selected individual. If using a sampling frame of addresses or households, the effect of an advance letter may be diluted, as the individual to be selected may not receive or read the letter.

Consideration should be given to ensure that the time span between the arrival of the letter and the call of the interviewer is not too long. Sometimes the best way to do this is to instruct interviewers to send the letters in a way that matches their planned work pattern (rather than send the letters centrally at the start of the fieldwork period).

Recommendation:
- *Use an advance letter, personalised with the individual name if possible, or the address. Include the letters in interviewer workpacks, and instruct them to organise posting them a few days before they intend to call at the address.*

b) Respondent incentives

There are numerous examples of studies that show that – even modest – **'rewards' help to improve the response rate.** If deciding to go down this route, there is a decision to make whether
- to give the incentive to all sampled individuals prior to them agreeing or not to take part in the survey, or
- to make the incentive conditional on them agreeing to participate in the survey.

According to the existing literature, unconditional prepaid incentives seem to be more effective than conditional incentives paid upon completion of the interview. Thus, eliciting feelings of obligation from the unconditional incentive is more effective than rewarding participation.

Also, cash incentives appear to work better than non-monetary incentives.
It may be necessary to monitor the extent to which monetary incentives disproportionately encourage the participation of people with low incomes compared to those with high incomes.

Sometimes, the use of incentives is restricted to individuals who initially refuse to participate. While this procedure is apparently cost-effective, it raises the concern that initially co-operative respondents would perceive this as unfair.

<u>*Recommendation:*</u>

- *Consider using an incentive to raise response rates. To come to a decision, you have to judge the relative time and cost advantages of using an incentive versus not. Incentives may mean less interviewer time in persuading respondents to participate, less time in refusal conversions. The reduction in interviewer time – and thus costs – must be weighed against the cost of providing incentives.*

c) Converting people who initially 'refuse' participation[2]

In order to maximise response rates, and minimise refusal rates, (nearly) **all participating countries will need to try to 'convert' people who initially refuse to participate in the survey**, by persuading them to reconsider.

It is generally agreed that such conversion attempts should **not** be made by the interviewer who previously received the refusal. Instead, **these cases should be reissued to another interviewer.** It is common – and good – practice to reassign this case to a more senior interviewer or to a supervisor ("refusal converters").

When reassigning a case to a different interviewer, it is worth considering gender or age matching the converter to the refuser. Besides changing interviewers, (personalised) persuasion letters or incentives for refusal conversion (see above) can be helpful.

As refusals are often influenced by the circumstances and the mood of the potential respondent at the time of the initial survey request, refusal conversion attempts can be quite successful. Amongst so-called "soft" refusals, it is possible to obtain interviews with a considerable portion of initially reluctant individuals. Not surprisingly, attempts to convert so-called "hard" refusals have lower success rates. However, such individuals normally account for only a small fraction of all refusals.

In some countries, such conversion attempts are restricted by data protection laws.[3]

<u>*Recommendation:*</u>

- *Reissue all soft refusals, and as many hard refusals as feasible, to a senior interviewer to attempt to convert.*

This paper draws heavily on the following literature:

*Groves, Robert M. and Couper, Mick P. (1998): **Nonresponse in Household Interview Surveys**. New York: Wiley.*

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[2] We use the term "refusal conversion" because it is widely used in the methodological literature. This is not intended in a legal sense of "refusal". It could perhaps be more appropriate to talk about "repeated attempts to persuade initially reluctant persons to reconsider the survey request".

[3] Another issue where the legal situation in the country has to be considered is interviewing minors (such as the younger people in the ESS frames). In some countries, in this instance, not only the targeted respondent but also his/her parents have to consent to the survey request.

Journal of Official Statistics (1999): ***Special issue on Survey Nonresponse****. Vol. 15, No. 2, June 1999.*

Morton-Williams, Jean (1993): ***Interviewer Approaches****. Aldershot: Dartmouth.*

Lyberg, Lars and Dean, Patricia (1992): ***Methods for Reducing Nonresponse Rates: A Review.*** *Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association for Public Opinon Research, St. Petersburg, FL, May 16-19, 1992.*