

ESS Round 8 Question Design Template – New Core Items

Concept: Attitudes toward homosexuality

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Aim							
To develop two additional items measuring attitudes to homosexuality to supplement the existing item in the ESS core questionnaire:							
Using this card, please say to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. READ OUT EACH STATEMENT AND CODE IN GRID.							
	Agree strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree strongly	(Re-fused)	(Don't know)
B34. Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish.	1	2	3	4	5	7	8

SECTION A. Theoretical rationale
Why is the topic important? How will including items on this topic in the ESS enhance our understanding of public attitudes and behaviours across Europe?
<p>The importance of measuring attitudes towards homosexuality</p> <p>The political, societal and scientific attention directed towards lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) individuals is sharply increasing. In these debates, reliable figures about the public opinion on LGB individuals play an important role. There are several reasons why studying attitudes towards homosexuality is important:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The topic is of interest in its own right. With many legal changes in LGB policies and laws currently taking place in Europe, population acceptance or rejection of homosexuality (i.e., individuals approving or disapproving homosexuality, same-sex marriage and adoption, or LGB individuals in various social roles) is one of the major topics in the current societal and political debates. Many national governments, but also the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, The Fundamental Rights Agency, and the European Commission all addressed LGB issues in recent statements, resolutions, and directives. The policies and laws - and their justification - are often informed by fact and figures about the recent attitudes towards homosexuality in Europe; • Attitudes towards homosexuality are not only of interest in their own right, but are also relevant in studying broader value orientations such as gender-belief systems, social trust issues and society's view of minority groups. While these values are partly related (see

Kuyper, Iedema, & Keuzenkamp, 2013), they also develop in different ways. For example, Takács and Szalma (2014) showed that post-socialist countries became more and more similar to Western European countries in various attitudes and value orientations, but differences remain significant in attitudes towards homosexuality;

- Attitudes towards homosexuality play a role in explaining anti-gay and discriminatory behaviours (Bernat, Calhoun, Adams, & Zeichner, 2001; Patel, Long, McCammon, & Wuensch, 1995; Parrott, 2008) and can play a role in explaining the levels of anti-gay aggression in certain countries or certain geographic areas;
- Population attitudes towards homosexuality are interconnected with (the change of) policies and laws in this area (Lax & Phillips, 2009);
- Attitudes towards homosexuality at macro-level are related to the well-being of LGB individuals. For example, a study in the U.S. shows that negative attitudes towards homosexuality are associated with premature mortality among LGB and heterosexual individuals, and that the association is stronger among LGB individuals (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2014). At micro-level, Bachmann and Simon (2014) showed that the well-known relationship between victimization and wellbeing among gay men is mediated by a perceived lack of social recognition.

The additional value of including more items in the ESS

The most reliable pan-European source for the public opinion on homosexuality is the European Social Survey (ESS). The ESS data on attitudes towards homosexuality are frequently used amongst academics (e.g., Denny, 2011; Hooghe & Meeusen, 2013; Meeusen & Hooghe, 2012a; Meeusen & Hooghe, 2012b; Takács & Szalma, 2011; Takács & Szalma, 2012; Takács & Szalma, 2013; Van den Akker, Van der Ploeg, & Scheepers, 2012) and applied research aimed at policy makers or the civil society (e.g., Keuzenkamp & Kuyper, 2013; Kuhar, Salamon, Humer, & Maljevac, 2011; Kuyper et al., 2013; Takács, Mocsonaki, & Tóth, 2007; Takács & Szalma, 2014). The ESS allows for a pan-European perspective and a comparison over time of these attitudes. Additionally, it is often the only reliable source of data on the attitudes towards homosexuality in relatively intolerant countries where no governmental or academic research attention is devoted to the topic.

Adding more items about the attitudes towards homosexuality would solve the limitation of the ESS that attitudes towards homosexuality are only measured by a single item ('Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish'). The main reasons for elaboration are:

- the multidimensional nature of the attitudes towards homosexuality asks for more items which would allow assessment of more dimensions;
- adding more items to the attitudes towards homosexuality measure allows for more reliable scale construction;
- adding items about the attitudes towards civil rights for LGB individuals allows for an examination of the interplay between policies and public opinions;
- social desirability and limited variation might be a problem with the current item within relatively tolerant countries.

Assessment of more dimensions

Attitudes towards homosexuality are a multidimensional construct. While different authors distinguish different dimensions (for example, see Adolfsen, Iedema, & Keuzenkamp, 2010; Davies, 2004), the landmark meta-analysis of Kite and Whitley (1996) distinguishes three dimensions: attitudes towards homosexual behaviours (i.e., homosexuality as a lifestyle or the morality of it), attitudes towards homosexual individuals (i.e., to homosexual individuals close to participants or homosexual strangers), and attitudes towards LGB civil rights (i.e., free speech, marriage, housing, or adoption). The current ESS item is a reflection of the first dimension. Adding items about the second and third dimension would enhance our understanding of possible

differences between these three dimensions in changes over time, between European countries, and between associations each of these dimensions with other constructs.

An illustration: The Netherlands

Three items reflecting the three attitude components were included in a Dutch online survey among non-self-selected panel-members ($N = 989$) (Kuyper, 2014; data collected in 2014). They were also included in a population study on attitudes of young adults (18-25 years old, $N = 252$; data collected in 2012) (Kuyper, 2015). The inter-correlations provide some preliminary insight in the relationships and overlap between them. They are displayed in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1. Intercorrelations among the proposed dimensions and items (adult panel members, $N = 989$)

	free to live	adoption	own child
free to live their own life as they wish	-		
same rights regarding adoption	.55	-	
unacceptable if own son/daughter same-sex partner	.61	.47	-

Table 2. Intercorrelations among the proposed dimensions and items (young adults, $N = 252$)

	free to live	adoption	own child
free to live their own life as they wish	-		
same rights regarding adoption	.61	-	
unacceptable if own son/daughter same-sex partner	.53	.53	-

The intercorrelations in the various samples show that although the items are related (which is to be expected), they do not overlap in a too considerable degree which serves as an indication of their measurement of different dimensions.

Scale construction

Although attitudes towards homosexuality are a multidimensional construct, there is common ground among the different dimensions. Therefore, it is likely that a reliable scale can be constructed based on the several items. A concept is often better measured with more than one item, amongst others since this reduces the level of error. A valid scale for attitudes towards homosexuality would enhance the quality of studies examining the relationships between these attitudes and other constructs of the ESS or with other datasets (see Section B for examples).

An illustration: The Netherlands

The same data as was described for the analyses on intercorrelations was used to calculate the Cronbach's alpha of a scale of the three items as well as the alpha if the item was deleted. The results are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. Internal reliability of the scales of the proposed dimensions and items

	panel members	young people
Cronbach's alpha	.70	.77
alpha if adoption item is deleted	.57	.66
alpha if own child item is deleted	.63	.72
<i>N</i>	989	252

The analyses show that the items do form a reliable scale together and that removing one of the proposed additional item would lower the internal reliability.

Shedding light on the interplay between laws, policies, and public attitudes

Public attitudes play an important role in the development of laws and policies. Public attitudes, policies and laws related to LGB issues seem to be interconnected (Lax and Phillips 2009; Loftus 2001; Meeusen & Hooghe, 2012; Riggle et al., 2010; Takács & Szalma, 2011). Lax and Phillips (2009) show that more supportive public opinions are associated with higher probabilities of LGB policy adoption by the state, especially when an issue is prominent in the public debate. On the other hand, other authors have argued that the way in which policies and laws are designed and framed can shape public opinions and behaviours (Bröer, 2006; Pierson, 1993). Policies and laws shape the dominant public discourse which exerts influence on everyday life. Shifts in policies on certain issues can lead to shifts in perception, attitudes and experiences of citizens. The interplay between policies and laws varies between countries, changes over time and is likely to depend on the political system and configuration of political parties within a country.

Measuring the attitudes towards same-sex legislation can shed light on the relationship between policies and attitudes. The debate between researchers claiming that shifts in attitudes towards civil rights for LGB individuals will lead to shifts in policies (for an example, see Lax & Phillips 2009) or that changing policies will lead to shifts in attitudes (for an example, see Takács & Szalma, 2011) has not been solved yet. The frequency with which the ESS is conducted, together with the rapid changes that currently take place in the legal position of LGB individuals in various countries regarding issues such as marriage and adoption (ILGA-Europe, 2014), offer the opportunity to examine this association in depth. This is not only relevant for LGB issues, but also informs the broader debate about the primacy of laws, policies, and public opinions.

More variation in relatively tolerant countries

The current ESS item on attitudes towards homosexuality does not allow for more much differentiation in the attitudes within certain countries. This might be related to a phenomenon which is called, in line with modern sexism and modern racism, 'modern homonegativity': in tolerant countries, levels of direct negative attitudes are uncommon due to the societal debates and norms, but more subtle forms of negative attitudes still exist in these countries (Conn et al., 1995; McConahay et al., 1981; Morrison & Morrison, 2002; Morrison, 2003; Raja & Stokes, 1998; Swim et al., 1995). Adding more items about other aspects of the attitudes towards homosexuality provides information about the reach and depth of the tolerant attitudes in (Western) European countries. It also allows for studies examining whether differences between these various dimensions differ in size between countries and over time.

An illustration: The Netherlands

The Netherlands are known for the relatively tolerant attitudes towards homosexuality and the legal equality of LGB and heterosexual citizens. Several studies examining various dimensions of the attitudes towards homosexuality among the general populations and specific subgroups exist and support the hypothesis that the current ESS item leads to high levels of acceptance, while other items show lower levels of positive attitudes. For example, Keuzenkamp (2011) examined various dimensions of the attitudes towards homosexuality among the general population. While in 2012 87% of the Dutch population agreed with the statement that gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish (the current ESS item), only 60% agreed with same-sex couples rights for adoption. A study among Dutch youth can also serve as an illustration of differences between levels of positive attitudes towards various dimensions: while 91% of the Dutch young adults believe that gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish, 17% would consider it unacceptable if their own child would be living together with a same-

sex partner (Kuyper, 2015). Studies amongst different ethnic groups in the Netherlands show that relatively positive and negative groups differ in the 'degree of their disagreement' between the dimensions. While citizens with a Surinam background and those with a Dutch background do not differ much in their attitudes on whether gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish (Surinam: 86%; Native Dutch: 91%), the levels of negative attitudes towards a child that is LGB are twice as high among individuals with a Surinam background (Surinam: 34%; Native Dutch: 17%) (Huijnk, 2014).

SECTION B. Relationship with other variables in ESS questionnaire

Are the items intended to be used primarily as explanatory/background variables or is the topic primarily of interest as a dependent variable?

Relation with other variables

Including more dimensions and items in the ESS would allow for an examination of the possible country, gender and period differences in various dimensions of attitudes towards homosexuality. Additionally, it would provide the opportunity to examine possible differences in associations between the various dimensions of attitudes and other constructs. The dimensions of attitudes are based on different sources of information, norms and beliefs. Therefore, differences might exist between these attitudes in their relation with other items such as gender, age, educational levels, religion, ethnicity, social trust, political view, satisfaction with democracy, immigrants background, value-orientations, social-economic factors and attitudes towards gender or ethnic minorities - which all have been shown to be related to attitudes towards homosexuality (for a recent overview, see Kuyper et al., 2013 and for empirical studies on these associations, see Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009; Anderson & Fetner, 2008a; Anderson & Fetner, 2008b; Fitzgerald et al., 2014; Gerhards, 2010; Hadler 2012; Hooghe & Meeusen 2013; Loftus, 2001; Kuyper et al., 2013; Nierman et al., 2007; Steffens & Wagner, 2004; Stulhofer & Rimac, 2009; Van den Akker et al., 2012). There may also be cross-national differences or differences between tolerant and less tolerant countries in these relationships.

To provide an example of a possible difference: while attitudes towards homosexual behaviours might be based on gender beliefs and religious convictions, attitudes towards civil rights for LGB individuals might be based on more global beliefs about civil liberties, equality, and social trust. Therefore, general attitudes (of which the current ESS item is an example) might be more heavily related to religious factors and gender indicators (ranging from micro-level individual gender and religious service visits to macro-level indicators such as the Gender Equality Index and dominant religious denomination of a certain country), while the second dimension might be more related to politics and other value orientations (ranging from micro-level voting behaviour and value attitudes to macro-level political past of a country and the majority's value orientation). Indeed, based on a review of 112 studies conducted in the US or Canada, Kite and Whitley (1996) show that gender differences in attitudes are larger with regard to attitudes towards LGB individuals or behaviour than towards civil rights of LGB people. In addition, attitudes towards civil rights were relatively unaffected by attitudes about gender-associated beliefs, while attitudes towards homosexual individuals or behaviours are strongly related to this. General attitudes towards homosexuality (of which the current ESS item is a reflection) are based on gender-belief systems, while civil rights attitudes are based on equality beliefs. It is also possible that within certain countries or socio-demographic groups (such as religious groups), civil rights attitudes are based on family values, while general attitudes are related to other values.

It is also important to note that while the ESS in itself contains many relevant constructs for exploring factors related to the attitudes towards homosexuality, the analyses might also be enhanced by using macro-level data from other studies relevant for explaining the attitudes. Examples are measures such as GDP, GINI of Gender Equality Index. This is also true to other way around: attitudes towards homosexuality can be taken from the ESS at country level and used as a predictor for other outcomes such as wellbeing of LGB individuals and the adaptation of LGB laws and policies (for an example, see Hatzenbuehler et al., 2014).

Explanatory versus dependent variable

The topic is primary of interest as a dependent variable, but could also serve as an explanatory variable (see above).

New measurement versus improvement

Including more items on the attitudes towards homosexuality serve as an improvement and broadening of the current ESS item on this issue (see section A).

SECTION C. Potential methodological or practical difficulties

Provide brief details of any potential methodological or practical difficulties associated with asking about this topic on a face to face cross-national survey

In countries with a relatively negative social climate and restrictive legislation, the items might encounter some resistance. On the other hand, the current ESS item has been tested and used in participating countries during the 7 previous rounds. And the advisory team of experts consists of various nationalities - both from more tolerant countries (e.g., the Netherlands, Germany) as well as from countries which are known for their negative attitudes (e.g., Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia). They all consider it possible and feasible to include these items or address these issues in survey in their countries.

An illustration: The Netherlands

While the Netherlands are known as a country with relatively positive attitudes toward homosexuality, several ethnic groups in the Netherlands hold other beliefs (Huijnk, 2014). In 2012, Huijnk and Dagevos conducted a study about attitudes and values among the four major ethnic minority groups in the Netherlands: Turkish, Moroccan, Surinam, and Antillean inhabitants ($N \sim 1000$ in each group). Three items on the attitudes toward homosexuality were included: the current ESS item (free to live life), an item about same-sex marriage and an item about what if one's own child would be gay or lesbian.

Based on the ESS item, the Turkish group was the most negative about homosexuality; 54% indicated that gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish. The attitude of the Dutch Turkish inhabitants is comparable to the attitude of, for example, the Polish (48% free to live life in ESS'10), Bulgarian (55% in ESS'10), Slovenian (53% in ESS'10), Hungarian (49% in ESS'10) population. For the item about the sexual orientation of one's own child, the item non-response of the Turkish group was 5.2%. Although this is higher than the item non-response in the control group of native Dutch participants (0.2%) the item non-response in the most negative group on the newly proposed item for the ESS measure (see section D) is not disturbingly high.

SECTION D. Measurement

It may be possible to measure the proposed concept with a single item. If so please complete box i) below.
 If two or more items i.e. sub concepts are proposed to measure the overall concept please complete box ii) for each sub-concept proposed

i) SUB CONCEPT NAME: Attitudes towards lesbian and gay behaviour (REPEAT)

Describe the second sub concept in detail

Since Round 1 ESS has included an item measuring attitudes towards homosexuality. More specifically the existing item measures attitudes towards homosexual behaviours – that is homosexuality as a lifestyle and the morality thereof.

Expected relationship with other sub concepts

Section B describes the expected association with socio-demographics, political viewpoints, educational levels, religiosity, and other belief systems.

The two new sub concepts are intended to capture distinct dimensions of attitudes to homosexuality but are also expected to combine with the existing item to form a valid attitudes scale.

Question item wording

Using this card, please say to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. **READ OUT EACH STATEMENT AND CODE IN GRID**

	Agree strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
B34 Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish	1	2	3	4	5

ii) SUB CONCEPT NAME: Attitudes towards lesbian and gay equal rights (NEW)

Describe the second sub concept in detail

Attitudes towards same-sex equal rights measures the attitudes of participants towards the legal equality of gay and lesbian individuals. More specifically, we focus on attitudes toward the legal possibility of gay and lesbian couples to adopt children.

The proposed item is based on an item from the US General Social Survey: *“Do you think that homosexual couples should be legally permitted to adopt children?”* Adjustments are made since statement framing is in line with other ESS items allowing for better scale construction and the term ‘homosexual’ has a strong male-male connotation.

While many topics could have served as a rights indicator, adoption was chosen since it is part of the current debate (while for example, equal opportunities for housing are not), countries differ in their legislation regarding same-sex adoption (while for example, employment discrimination is forbidding EU wide by a horizontal directive), laws and policies regarding same-sex adoption are

on the move in Europe, and no ceiling effects are expected in relatively tolerant countries (where, for example, same-sex marriage is highly accepted).

Expected relationship with other sub concepts

Section B describes the expected association with socio-demographics, political viewpoints, educational levels, religiosity, and other belief systems.

The two new sub concepts are intended to capture distinct dimensions of attitudes to homosexuality but are also expected to combine with the existing item to form a valid attitudes scale.

Question item wording

Using this card, please say to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. **READ OUT EACH STATEMENT AND CODE IN GRID**

	Agree strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
B36 Gay male and lesbian couples should have the same rights to adopt children as straight couples.	1	2	3	4	5

iii) SUB CONCEPT NAME: Attitudes towards lesbian and gay individuals (NEW)

Describe the third sub concept in detail

Attitudes toward lesbian and gay individuals measures whether participants would accept a lesbian or gay person in their own personal environment. More specifically, it measures whether participants would feel ashamed if a close family member was gay or lesbian.

Expected relationship with other sub concepts

Section B describes the expected association with socio-demographics, political viewpoints, educational levels, religiosity, and other belief systems.

The two new sub concepts are intended to capture distinct dimensions of attitudes to homosexuality but are also expected to combine with the existing item to form a valid attitudes scale.

Question item wording

Using this card, please say to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. **READ OUT EACH STATEMENT AND CODE IN GRID**

	Agree strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
B35 If a close family member was a gay man or a lesbian, I would feel ashamed.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION E. References

Please provide full references for any studies mentioned in the template below

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