



## The measurement of social capital at international level

Tom Healy  
National Economic and Social Forum  
Ireland

### Introduction

This paper has been prepared at the invitation of the OECD and the UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) as a contribution to an International Conference on the measurement of social capital in London on 25-27 September, 2002. This conference follows from preliminary work undertaken on social capital both at OECD and in the UK Office for National Statistics<sup>1</sup>. A recent meeting of Ministers of Education in OECD endorsed continuing work in this area<sup>2</sup>. This paper is about the measurement of social capital at international level. Readers are referred to the recent OECD publication of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, *The Well-Being of Nations: the Role of Human and Social Capital* (OECD, 2001), for a more detailed consideration of the conceptual and research issues around the role of human and social capital. The *Well-Being of Nations* report has already raised the issue of international co-operation in the area of survey development and social capital measurement in the following terms:

*"Better measures of social capital are essential, and work is under way in a number of countries to develop survey instruments. One option would be for the OECD to explore the possibility of an international pooling of resources in this area – perhaps through the development of a common survey instrument, linked to the OECD's continuing work on educational indicators."* (OECD, 2001: p71)

Although there has been a rapid development in conceptual discussion of social capital in the last decade, demand for relevant empirical measures has continued to outstrip supply. Readily available indicators have been used, frequently based on single item measures such as questions on the extent to which people trust others, or questions on membership of associations or participation in voluntary or community activities. This paper presents a number of issues and options in an international context bearing in mind the desire to enhance measurement of social capital with respect to:

1. reliability and accuracy
2. coverage
3. comparability and
4. validity of measures, especially in a cross-cultural context.

Section 1 provides a brief overview of the main measurement issues in relation to the underlying concepts used in describing social capital. Some existing measurement instruments at international level are considered in section 2 followed by consideration of possible future survey modules or guidelines in Section 3.

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<sup>1</sup> For further information on recent ONS work in this area, see <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/socialcapital>

<sup>2</sup> A meeting of education ministers at OECD in 2001 mandated the OECD secretariat to "explore further relationships between human and social capital and their contributions to the sustainable development of human well-being and economic growth".

## 1 Key measurement issues

*There is a growing interest in social capital...*

Active civic engagement at the local and national levels is of concern to all. Also of interest to policy makers and others is the extent to which individuals, groups and communities work together and co-operate with others, including those who are different by reason of social, ethnic or political background<sup>3</sup>. The growing interest in social capital stems, in part, from empirical evidence about the role of networks and norms of mutual support in contributing to higher quality community governance as well as economic as well as social and personal development

*...and still some lack of clarity.*

At the same time, use of the term has been hampered by lack of consensus on its precise meaning and application – especially in empirical analysis. There is a risk that the term can be used extensively to cover many related concepts without any clear and coherent definition. Moreover, there is a growing acknowledgement that not all forms of social connection are necessarily positive, for example, networks and trust based on criminal or extremist ties may disrupt social cohesion and general trust.

*Various understandings of social capital are possible...*

The definition of social capital used in the OECD *Well-Being of Nations* report is:

*“networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups” (OECD, 2001: p. 41).*

*....but there appears to be a convergence around a number of key dimensions.*

There appears to be a convergence of views around the central importance of the following four key dimensions in guiding attempts to measure social capital:

- Political participation
- Community involvement
- Informal networks/sociability
- Trust, norms and sanctions

*Political participation* encompasses aspects of active civic engagement and interaction (e.g. lobbying politicians for improvements in the local neighbourhood). Patterns of voting are also relevant and may be obtainable from administrative data sources. Engagement may also be linked to prevalence of trust in political structures and institutions (see discussion of trust, below).

*Community participation* refers to formal networks in the community – typically in a broad “civil society” context (membership of residents’ associations, sporting, cultural, religious or special interest groups). In this context, community may refer to a geographical locality as well as communities of shared interest or identity. Some typical dimensions of community participation include frequency of involvement, time taken, number of groups involved and nature of involvement. Participation can be measured by a combination of administrative and survey-based sources. Volunteering and other types of altruistic behaviour such as donation of blood, coaching, giving of money to charitable causes may be linked to formal associational membership or not.

*Informal networks* encompass social support networks, family relationships and informal sociability. These aspects of social capital are likely to be the most difficult to measure. Networks based on the provision, receipt or exchange of unpaid help (e.g. advice, money, emotional support) involving immediate family, relatives outside the household, friends, neighbours and others also constitute forms of social capital.

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<sup>3</sup> Policy interest in the role of social capital has come to the fore in a number of OECD countries including Ireland where the *Agreed Programme* for the new coalition Government contains the following reference to social capital: “We will fund an ambitious programme of data gathering on social indicators, including consistent poverty and social capital, to ensure that policies are developed on the basis of sound information.”

*Trust* describes a belief about the good intentions and expected behaviour of others. Trust arises from experience of other people's trustworthy actions as well as innate or socially determined views about others. It should not be confused with citizen or customer satisfaction with the perceived standard of public services. Underlying trust and trustworthy behaviour are norms and sanctions associated with reciprocal behaviour. They reflect shared ethical views and cumulative inter-personal obligations and expectations. Responses to survey questions on trust in others crucially depends on which others (familiar, strangers, same ethnic group etc) and in what context (in a high trust environment or otherwise). In general, it is possible to distinguish between three types of trust:

- Willingness to trust others in general including strangers (referred to loosely as generalised inter-personal or social trust);
- Willingness to trust familiar such as those in one's family, workplace or neighbourhood; and
- Willingness to trust specific groups of people, occupations or particular institutions

... with some possibly "ready-to-use" questions in existing international surveys.

Examples of questions in a number of existing international surveys on the above four dimensions of social capital are provided in Table 2 in the annex to this paper. In practice, many of the questions and topics covered straddle more than one of the four main dimensions. Many aspects of political participation overlap with community involvement, for example. An important consideration in the measurement of social capital is that typically the unit of reporting is an individual, whereas the processes and phenomena we wish to describe are embedded in relationships and whole social group entities. Hence, measures and indicators of networks and shared norms are inferred from responses by individuals about their perceptions, understandings and reported own and other's behaviour.

*Distinguishing various types of social capital is desirable...*

A single measure approach to social capital based on, for example, numbers of associations, membership rates or generalised trust offers a very limited means for measuring the extent of social capital, let alone assessing its impact. Breadth and coverage of the relevant dimensions is desirable. At the same time, "lumping together" various types of social relations or aggregating individual observations can obscure the relevance and meaningfulness of summary measures. A desirable aim would be to develop measures of social capital which bring together important features of networks and associated norms but in a way that respects local or cultural diversity. Aggregate, cross-national measures have analytical and explanatory power to the extent that they provides a summary view of potentially important and inter-related aspects that cross different cultures.

...such as between bonding and bridging...

In the growing literature on social capital, an important distinction is made between:

- Bonding social capital
- Bridging social capital
- Linking social capital

Bonding social capital describes ties and networks among homogeneous groups (for example those based on family, ethnicity, religion, etc.). Typically, but not always, such ties are dense and predicated on high levels of inter-personal trust and may be useful for "getting by" in life. By contrast, bridging social capital refers to social ties across diverse groups (ethnic, regional, socio-economic etc.) and may be more useful for "getting ahead". Some types of bonding social capital can have a downside in the sense that close ties<sup>4</sup> and "in-group" trust can exclude "outsiders". However, other forms can be positive and complementary to bridging social capital. It is a matter of empirical evidence in any given context whether bonding social capital acts as an excluding factor or otherwise<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Bonding social capital is not synonymous with the existence of "close ties". However, in practice they often go together.

<sup>5</sup> An appropriate balance of bonding and bridging may be compared to a nutritional vitamin balance in which different quantities and types of nutrition are required for healthy living.

The implication of these distinctions is that bonding and bridging social capital need to be measured with reference to the characteristics of others in one's networks/associations or radius of trust. In practice, social ties may constitute "bonding social capital" in some respect and "bridging social capital" in another. Social ties within a given ethnic group may constitute "bonding social capital" vis-à-vis other ethnic groups. However, from other standpoints (such as social class, family, religion), these ties may be viewed as bridging diverse groups.

*...and linking social capital.*

Some writers (e.g. Woolcock, 2001) refer to a third type of social capital, viz., linking social capital. The latter refers to ties and networks within a hierarchy based on differences in social position or power. An example of linking social capital is the resources and networks embodied in the relationship of particular communities to the State or other agencies. Operationalising a distinction between bonding, bridging and linking social capital is not easy given the multiple and overlapping relationships individuals have with others. Linking social capital may be viewed as an extension of bridging social capital involving networks and ties with individuals, groups or corporate actors represented in (a) public agencies, (b) schools, (c) business interests, (d) legal institutions and (e) religious/political groups. Measurement of linking social capital is likely to be a key concern for policy makers and other groups concerned about social inclusion, realization of human rights and reduction in poverty.

*It is desirable to define the focus of interest and differentiation...*

In developing survey questions on social capital a number of key analytical differentiations and considerations are important. These include:

- Levels of social capital in the population over time;
- Distribution of social capital by age, gender, educational attainment, social class and ethnic group;
- Various types of social connection (bonding, bridging and linking) and their differential impacts; and
- Differential impacts of community-level and individual-level access to social capital.

*...and the level of analysis.*

A number of key distinctions are needed:

- Level of analysis and aggregation – for example the reference group or organisation in which the individual respondent is located and survey conducted (e.g. household, family, enterprise, school, geographical neighbourhood)
- Reported behaviour in respect of individual respondents as distinct from structural features of a network (its size, density and connection to other networks) which may be inferred from individual responses or observation of whole networks.

*Culture and context matter....*

A difficulty frequently raised in relation to measurement and research in the area of social capital is that it:

- lumps together different strands of both social behaviour and attitude, and
- uses measures which place social relations "outside" specific cultures, institutional settings, historical contexts and power structures (Fine and Green, 2000).

*..and need to be balanced against needs for a more comparative and generalisable view.*

To some extent, the above objections can, and do, arise in relation to human capital. A fuller account of the individual and local characteristics of social relations, no less than individual skill and potential, is desirable in developing a better understanding of the role of social capital. However, for comparative and analytical purposes at a more general or even cross-national level, some element of synthesis and reduction is desirable so that common features of social systems and relationships can be described and entered into an explanatory account and comparison.

*Measurement needs to take account of both generalisable as well as specific elements.*

*The Well-Being of Nations* report argues for measures of social capital which are “..as comprehensive as possible in their coverage of key dimensions (networks, values and norms); and ii) balanced between attitudinal or subjective elements on the one hand (e.g. reported levels of trust) and behavioural aspects on the other (e.g. membership of associations and extent of social ties)” (OECD, 2001: p43). The interpretation, meaning and cultural context of “networks”, “norms” and “values” vary within and across countries. Hence, any attempt to measure social capital – especially at the international level – needs to recognise the limitations as well as the analytical potential of universal and un-differentiated categories such as generalised trust, associational membership and reciprocal support and engagement both with respect to the underlying notions themselves as well as the precise measurement construct used to capture the concept. For example, Williams and Robinson (2002) explores the specifically Maori understanding of extended family relationships<sup>6</sup>.

*and consequently, a balanced set of questions is needed...*

Spellerberg (2001) emphasises the importance of reflecting organisational structure, behaviour and attitudes in any attempt to provide a conceptually driven approach to measurement effort. She suggests that attitudinal data are necessary in order to identify common goals, values, beliefs, expectations and norms linked to a sense of group identity, solidarity and belonging. In relation to participation in social networks, she indicates a range of formal institutions such as courts, parliament, local government, schools, churches, unions, clubs, societies as well as less formal institutions such as networks of neighbours, friends, family etc.

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<sup>6</sup> In Maori culture, family and community are not distinct categories. Relationships reside in an extended family network or tribe which constitutes the actual community for an individual. The immediate family is the nucleus of all relationships. Community values arise from traditional values in the immediate family. “Place” in Maori culture is more than a geographical locality. It is defined by a sense of belonging, attachment and how one relates to others. Relationships are more frequently informal than formal.

## 2 Examples of existing measurement approaches at international level

At the international and national level, there are numerous surveys which capture one or more dimensions of social capital. Some of these surveys have been specially designed in part to measure social capital. In other cases, key questions on social capital are incidental to the main purpose of the survey. To date, no single measure of social capital has been developed at international level to capture all relevant aspects or to locate these within a uniform structure or method of data collection. It is not intended to provide a comprehensive or balanced account of existing measures of social capital in this Section. Rather, a selection of known sources of data are described.

### World Bank<sup>7</sup>

The World Bank has been to the fore in promoting discussion of social capital in the context of poverty reduction and sustainable development in developing countries. A number of detailed survey instruments have been developed “from the ground up”. For example, Narayan and Pritchett (1998) constructed a measure of social capital in rural Tanzania, using data from the *Tanzania Social Capital and Poverty Survey*. This large-scale survey asked individuals about the extent and characteristics of their associational activity, and their trust in various institutions and individuals.

The World Bank is currently developing an integrated approach to the measurement of social capital for use by developing countries. Although the aim is to develop a core set of questions for an integrated social capital survey aimed at developing countries, there may be areas of common interest and application notwithstanding the large differences between these countries and member countries of the OECD. One of the important aims of the World Bank approach on measurement is to identify patterns of bonding and bridging social capital through questions on whether other members of a group, organisations or networks to which the respondent belongs are of the same ethnic, linguistic, gender, educational, occupational or religious background. Informal social networks and mutual support is also a topic of interest in the World Bank approach. Questions are asked on the extent to which respondents can draw on the help of others outside their immediate household or extended family.

### World Values Survey<sup>8</sup>

The World Values Survey (WVS) is conducted by an international network of social scientists. The main purpose of the survey is to measure changes in basic values and beliefs of the general public in more than 65 countries including a number of intermediate developing countries. It builds on the *European Values Surveys*, first carried out in 1981 and has been continued through various waves since then (1991, 1996 and 2000). Sample size typically falls in the range of 1,000 to 2,000 per country.

WVS questions relevant to social capital mainly centre on inter-personal trust or declared trust towards given institutions. Respondents are asked: “*Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?*”. In addition, respondents are asked “*Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got a chance, or would they try to be fair?*”

One difficulty with such questionnaire measures is that it is not clear if respondents interpret the meaning of words such as “trust” or “most people” in the same way across countries, cultures and time. Also, a distinction needs to be drawn between dispositions of individuals to trust others in general and regardless of context, and the dispositions of individuals to trust persons known to them as distinct from the general “other”. Other approaches to measurement of trust involve questions about trust in specific situations or with respect to specific types of individuals (like, for example, questions about whether one would trust a shopkeeper in a locality to give correct change of money).

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<sup>7</sup> For information on the World Bank social capital initiative project, see <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/scapital/index.htm>

<sup>8</sup> For detailed information see: <http://wvs.isr.umich.edu/index.html>

In the 2000 questionnaire, respondents are asked if they spent time recently with parents, friends, work associates and others at a religious service, sporting organisation, voluntary or service organisation. In common with previous waves of the WVS, questions were asked on participation in various types of organisations as well as the extent of unpaid voluntary work. Examples of questions asked in WVS are provided in Table 2 in the annex to this paper.

The advantages of using WVS for cross-national comparisons of social capital are:

- A wide range of countries are included over various points in time
- links can be made to potentially important outcome or correlate variables such as perception of health and well-being.

The drawbacks in using WVS include:

- Possible variation in survey methodology application as well as limited sample size in each country;
- Limited range of relevant questions (essentially based on trust and associational membership);
- Changes in questions on associational membership over time; and
- Difficulties in interpreting the meaning of questions on trust (see above)

### Time Use Surveys<sup>9</sup>

Time use surveys generally approach questions on behaviour through recorded time diaries. Data from the *Multinational Time Use Study* in respect of 23 countries are stored at the *Institute for Social and Economic Research* at the University of Essex. Information is recorded on different types of activities "where and with whom" over a fixed time period. Typically, a very wide range of activities is covered including work, leisure, conversation with others, study, personal care, voluntary work, "civic duty", religious activities, visiting friends, travelling to work, etc. There is also a variable for other persons involved in the main activity. These other persons are distinguished by family member in a household, other family members, relatives, work colleagues, neighbours, strangers etc.

EUROSTAT provided a harmonised survey methodology in 1996 for a series of national pilot time-use surveys. The EUROSTAT guidelines on Time Use Surveys recommend the collection of two diaries, one on a week day and one on a weekend day. The fieldwork was recommended to last 12 months to capture activities from all times of year. Diaries were recommended to include fixed 10 minute time slots as well as secondary information on who was present and location of main activity.

While a number of countries have time-use surveys predating 1960 (notably Denmark, France, Japan, Mexico, Poland, Switzerland, UK and the USA), most surveys date from the 1960s onwards. Time-use surveys have the advantage of recording details of actual behaviour and quantifying different activities in a more rigorous way than in self-reported answers to general questions on social participation. Time-use surveys also provide a basis for comparisons over a long period of time within a country, frequently using a standard question format and survey methodology.

A possible drawback in Time-Use surveys is the extent to which subjective perceptions and attitudes are missed out. While time-use surveys record "with whom" the activity was undertaken, the data appear to be limited to general categories of other persons (family, neighbours, work associates, strangers) without distinguishing social background, ethnicity etc. This represents a potential drawback from the point of view of measuring bridging social capital<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> For detailed information see: <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/mtus/typology.php> and <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/mtus/technical.php>

<sup>10</sup> Although, the problem may be rectified to some degree by obtaining more precise information the characteristics of others with whom one spends time.

### **European Household Community Panel Survey**

The *European Household Community Panel Survey* (EHCP) is a longitudinal survey carried out in 16 European countries (the current 15 EU member states plus Norway). A number of social capital related questions are asked including: membership of various associations, how often respondents talk to their neighbours, how often respondents meet with friends or relations outside the home, whether respondents have spoken over the phone or otherwise with persons who are not members of the same household. There is also a question on how people obtained employment (through various means including information from friends and relatives). Data on these aspects of sociability and networks can be compared with a wide range of socio-economic data across European countries as well as over time for a given panel.

The EHCP ended in 2001 and will be replaced over the next few years with *Statistics on Income and Living Conditions* (EU-SILC). This will be a cross sectional and longitudinal survey. The cross sectional component is likely to include similar questions on social capital in one of a series of four yearly rotating modules. They will not be included every year because of concerns about the burden on respondents who will be asked extensive questions about monetary and non-monetary deprivation.

### **Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey<sup>11</sup>**

The *Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey* (ALL) is an international survey of various skills in the adult population. It is sponsored by Statistics Canada, the National Centre for Education Statistics (US) and OECD. It builds on the previous *International Adult Literacy Survey* (IALS) which involved 20 countries conducting a standardised household survey in selected and measurable domains of literacy (prose, document and quantitative). ALL addresses a number of additional skill domains (analytical reasoning and, indirectly, use of Information, Communication, Technology and capacity for teamworking). The background questionnaire contains a series of questions on social capital which can be linked to other demographic and socio-economic characteristics of respondents as well as literacy/skill proficiency levels.

The IALS survey in the mid-1990s contained a single question asking respondents if they participated in "volunteer or community organisations" (daily, weekly, monthly, yearly). Data were also collected on level of interest and knowledge of political and civic affairs as well as readership of newspapers, use of TV etc. Data generated by the question on volunteer and community organisations were subsequently used to compare literacy levels with the level of voluntary and community participation as recorded in the background questionnaire (OECD and Statistics Canada, 2000).

The background questionnaire in the pilot survey of ALL contained a more extended social capital module than in IALS. The module covered key areas such as visiting or communicating with friends, relatives, acquaintances, access to social support networks and participation in various types of organisations and voluntary associations.

### **Eurobarometer<sup>12</sup>**

The standard Eurobarometer is an interview survey of approximately 1,000 persons in each member country carried out a number of times per year. The first survey took place in 1973. A wide range of topics is included in relation to public perceptions and opinions. Satisfaction with democracy, trust in various institutions and the extent of social engagement and commitment are some of the recent topics covered.

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<sup>11</sup> For further information, see: <http://www.ets.org/all/index.html>

<sup>12</sup> <http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg10/epo/eb.html>



### **IEA Civic Education Study<sup>13</sup>**

The *International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement* (IEA) conducted a study of civic knowledge at age fourteen in 28 countries in 1999 (following an earlier IEA study undertaken in 1971). The survey covered the following areas:

- knowledge of democratic principles;
- skills in interpreting political communication;
- concepts of democracy and citizenship;
- attitudes related to trust in institutions, the nation, opportunities for immigrants, and women's political rights; and
- expected participation in civic-related activities (including, for example, raising money for a social cause or charity)

The survey also assessed students' perceptions of classroom climate and their participation in youth organisations, as well as other background variables including educational practices in the classroom.

### **Programme for International Student Assessment<sup>14</sup>**

The *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) is an international OECD assessment of the skills and knowledge of 15-year olds. The assessment is carried out in three cycles. The first PISA assessment in 2000 covered skills in three areas: Reading, Mathematics and Science with the main focus being on Reading literacy. The PISA Student Questionnaire asks students about their backgrounds, attitudes, learning strategies and educational and occupational aspirations. Information on home background including interaction with parents is recorded. For example, students are asked how often parents discuss with them (i) political or social issues, (ii) books, films or television programmes and (iii) how well they are doing at school or whether they engage in joint activities with them such as listening to classical music, eating dinner around a table or just spending time talking to them. Support with homework is included (distinguishing by who the adult is).

### **International Social Survey Programme<sup>15</sup>**

This Programme is a trans-national network of social scientists in 38 countries carrying out a series of special focus surveys at regular intervals. The 2001 survey related to "Social Relations and Support Systems" (Social Networks II). The Social Network II questionnaire covers a wide range of social capital relevant questions from participation, involvement, trust, social support networks (whom would you turn for to seek help) to informal sociability. There is a large set of obligatory background variables covering age, marital status, educational attainment, labour force status, occupation, income, religion, subjective social class perception and religious denomination. Recent modules include Family and Changing Gender Roles III (2002), Environment II (2000), Social Inequality III (1999), Religion II (1998), Work Orientations II (1997) and Role of Government III (1996).

The 2003 module will be on National Identity II. The ISSP is developing a new module on Citizenship for 2004 with a drafting group chaired by Canada and Denmark.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.wam.umd.edu/~iea/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.pisa.oecd.org>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.issp.org>

### **Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy network<sup>16</sup>**

A number of major citizenship studies already exist in many European countries. Arising from these studies, a common approach to measuring social capital has been developed by a European network of researchers interested in examining the relationship between various aspects of social capital and the extent of political efficacy and democracy at cross-national level. A *Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy* (CID) network with support from the *European Science Foundation* was set up in 1999 with the aim of performing cross-national and longitudinal research to evaluate the opportunities for improving democratic decision-making procedures and the development of new types of citizenship in Europe. Results from the initial cross-national survey undertaken in 2000 and 2001 are currently being analysed. Countries involved were Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Portugal, Switzerland, Spain and Sweden as well as a number of non-OECD countries (Russia, Slovenia, Romania, Moldavia).

Key elements of the CID common core questionnaire include:

- Extent of active participation in various organisations and associations including voluntary donations of time and money;
- Estimates of the amount of time spent in active associational membership as well as informal social activity not connected to organisations or societies;
- Level of perceived attachment to neighbourhood, region and country;
- Sense of attachment to members of "other groups" (different social class, language, ethnicity, religion etc);
- Extent of active interest in political affairs, engagement in civic and political activity in support of particular causes;
- Extent of informal contacts, mutual help and social support both arising from organisational membership as well as beyond;
- Levels of tolerance and inclusion with respect to members of "other groups";
- Trust (modelled on the WVS question);
- Trust in relation to governmental, law enforcement and other public agencies;
- Extent of TV watching;
- Use of internet to obtain information about politics and current affairs;
- Attitudes, values and perceptions regarding "good citizenship";
- Attitudes, values and perceptions with regards to the "ideal society" within which one would ideally like to live in; and
- Perception of political efficacy or ability to change quality of public service (e.g. education, health) and evaluation of various strategies to bring about change.

Other variables in the common questionnaire include life satisfaction, work satisfaction, income, sector of employment, marital status and level of education. The extent to which respondents interact with members of "other groups" (bridging social capital) is not addressed except indirectly through the question on perceived attachment.

In addition, a city-based organisational study based on two common core questionnaires, one for organisations and one for volunteers, has been carried out in a number of European cities. Data have already collected and an integrated data set is being created.

*European Social Survey<sup>17</sup>*

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/projekte/cid/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.esf.org/ess>

The European Social Survey (ESS) has been developed in 15 European countries arising from collaboration among European research institutions. The aim is to build a common approach to an internationally comparable and high-quality social survey across Europe. The main research focus is on monitoring the political and social beliefs of Europeans. Specific topics include social inequality, values, national identity, quality of life, political and economic orientations, "Europeanisation" and mass media behaviour.

The first wave data collection takes place in Autumn, 2002. The ESS questionnaire consists of a fixed part and an open part for changing topics. Although ESS is separate from the CID survey, mentioned above, the changing part of the first wave ESS this Autumn will contain a social capital module similar to the CID questionnaire. It might be desirable to build on cross-national co-operation at the European level and link these efforts to on-going work in national statistical offices including Eurostat.

*European Foundation survey of quality of life*<sup>18</sup>

An agency of the European Commission – the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions - is preparing a European-wide survey of quality of life, satisfaction with public services, social capital, work-life balance, standard of living and subjective well-being and social participation including barriers to participation following a review of existing international and national data sets.

### **3 Possible future international measures**<sup>19</sup>

Arriving at a more harmonised approach to the measurement of social capital at international level will entail a process of clarification and some minimum acceptable level of consensus on what the key components and concepts are. The discussion, so far, has emphasised the need for balance among the following aspects:

- Survey context (household/enterprise/organisation, school, neighbourhood);
- Attitudes and behaviour
- Formal/informal networks
- Bonding/bridging/linking networks

Tradeoffs and choices are involved depending on the policy or research interest in measurement. Four broad, strategic options at international level are suggested in a discussion paper of the OECD Secretariat for the forthcoming international conference on the measurement of social capital. These are summarised as follows (extract from the OECD discussion paper)

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.eurofound.ie/living/monitor.htm>

<sup>19</sup> This section draws heavily on suggestions and ideas and provided by staff at the OECD Secretariat and the UK Office for National Statistics.

**OECD discussion paper (extract)**

*(“Note prepared by the OECD Secretariat to invite comments by email in advance of the conference”)*

**Option 1 Questions list.** A short module of social capital questions would be agreed internationally. There would be an expectation that the module would be used, in its entirety, in household surveys where social capital is relevant.

**Option 2 Flexible question list.** As in option 1 a module of social capital questions would again be agreed internationally. However under this option it would be recognised that because of the varying objectives of different surveys, the extent to which questions drawn from the module are included would vary. Thus for example, if international comparability were the paramount consideration, the agreed module could be included in its entirety. Where locally determined issues of comparability are more prominent, only part of the module might be included.

**Option 3. Guidelines.** Under this option, there would be international agreement not on specific survey questions (as in options 1 and 2) but on guidelines for the collection of social capital indicators. Such guidelines would be designed to improve comparability, while allowing survey instruments to be adapted to local circumstances. Such guidelines could cover:

- Defined indicators. For example ‘the proportion of the population over the age of 16 who take part in the activities of a club, or group at least once a month’.
- The dimensions of social capital which should be measured, such as those listed above.
- Agreed definitions and categorisations. For example, the subdivision of groups and associations into sporting, charitable, cultural etc..
- Guidelines on sampling methodology, response rates and other data quality issues.

Although such guidelines might in some respects represent a more permissive version of options 1 and 2 in that they leave discretion as to question formulation, they are in another respect more general. They would have application not only to household surveys, but also to other forms of survey, such as surveys of firms or organisations, and even to case study approaches to social capital.

**Option 4. No agreement.** Under this option no international agreement would be sought on either questions or guidelines for the measurement of social capital.

*A standardised international module offers the possibility of relative comparability...*

A standardised international module (option 1) offers the possibility of a comparable and ready-to-use set of questions on social capital in a range of survey contexts internationally. Such a module could set aside the vagaries of different question-wording, reference period and definitions to provide a relatively simple and summary benchmark for comparison of trends. However, a short module is considerably limited in its scope for covering anything but a very partial coverage of attitude and behaviour relevant to social capital. For example, it is likely to be very difficult to detail the many different types of formal membership and active engagement in associations.

*...but may be limited in scope and feasibility.*

Some degree of international comparability is possible and desirable, especially in large-scale international surveys where the aim is one of trying to relate aggregate or proxy measures of social capital with some other social outcomes or correlates such as health, literacy, student achievement, etc. However, care is needed to avoid loading common questions on to different cultural and institutional contexts. Likewise, removing “noisy” items or questions to arrive at “cultural equivalence in measurement” may risk removing some of the most telling and valuable information about social capital in a specific cultural context.

*Hence, some flexibility in terms of which dimension is covered is needed*

Under option 2 some common core questions could be used. For example, there might be a nested hierarchy of questions within each of the main dimensions providing varying levels of detail and distinction. However, countries would not be constrained in terms of their capacity to add questions of particular national interest. For different dimensions, different options might be considered. For example, political or community participation might be approached through options 3 or 4 while issues to do with trust (based on the WVS question) might be approached through option 1 or 2. However, it should be noted that such an approach would limit the ability to examine the interactions between the different dimensions.

*Option 3 would allow for greater flexibility – but with possibly diminished international comparability*

International guidelines in option 3 would represent a more flexible and permissive version of options 1 and 2 with regards to question formulation. International guidelines could provide a more general framework for household, enterprise, organisational and neighbourhood surveys as well as inform more qualitative and specific case-study approaches. This approach might be analogous, but possibly more detailed, than the existing ILO guidelines for statistics on unemployment. There would be agreement on guidelines for the collection of data in the construction of social capital indicators. There would be no agreement on specific survey questions (as in options 1 and 2, above).

*The International Standard Classification of Education provides a possible template/model*

Existing guidelines in relation to comparisons of enrolment, spending or educational attainment (e.g. ISCED) also provide an example of this approach. All of these guidelines allow for some flexibility and diversity in instrumentation and data collection strategies at local and national level. Under option 3 (or 4), comprehensive data would not necessarily be available from every country which might limit the comparability of analyses which could be subsequently conducted. In its favour, it recognises that the case for including social capital questions in social surveys needs to be made in each country separately, taking account of the institutional environment in which surveys are commissioned. It also, implicitly, recognises that different countries will be at different stages in their recognition of the relevance of collecting social capital data for analytical or policy-related purposes.

*There is a need to adapt agreed questions and guidelines over time*

An important consideration with respect to options 1, 2 or 3, above, is that over time, any agreed set of questions or guidelines would require review and development, testing out measures against experience of their use and developments in the understanding of social capital. Gaps in the questions or guidelines might be filled in, and detail filled out. Clearly this process of review and development will require a mechanism to manage it. Cognitive testing in relation to given test items or questions will be needed. International pooling of experience in this regard would be useful especially as work progresses in relation to questions on trust and norms of reciprocity.

*What other characteristics could be measured alongside social capital?*

Research findings indicate the importance of

- key background and demographic characteristics in explaining social capital; and
- outcomes related back to social capital and other factors.

Outcomes such as health, life satisfaction and literacy may be considered for inclusion in any survey on social capital. Depending on the analytical purpose of collecting data on social capital, it is desirable to establish some link between social capital measures and candidate outcome variables as well as demographic and socio-economic characteristics of individuals or communities in which they live. Alternatively, if the aim is very simply to provide benchmark measures of social capital over time and cross-nationally, then making links to other variables is less important. Background variables may include some or all of the following:

- Age
- Gender
- Educational attainment
- Social and economic background
- Disability
- Regional/urban status/neighbourhood type
- Marital status/household composition/children in the household

- Stability of residence/home ownership
- Ethnicity/linguistic/religious status
- Use of media (including TV)
- Time use (working and commuting)

*Measuring bonding and bridging social capital*

Questions on bonding and bridging might require an extensive series of questions depending on which aspect of inter-group difference is under consideration. If questions on bonding/bridging/linking are to be considered, it may be desirable to select only a few key questions and leave flexibility in relation to others. For example, in the case of efforts to measure social capital by different religious groups in Northern Ireland, social, cultural, sporting and informal socializing activities are cross-classified by whether they took place in (i) own neighbourhood, (ii) other neighbourhood, (iii) Protestant neighbourhood, (iv) Catholic neighbourhood and (v) "mixed" area (Murtagh, 2002)

In general, questions on bonding and bridging might refer to the extent to which individuals relate to others who share different characteristics according to one or more of the following: (a) neighbourhood, (b) religion, (c) gender, (d) age, (e) social background/income, (f) educational attainment, (g) ethnic/linguistic group, and (h) political outlook. The nature of the relationship might be considered according to a number of aspects including: membership of the same organization/team/network, exchange of help/advice/gifts or presence of mutual trust/reciprocity. In some cases, questions on tolerance (e.g. inter-ethnic) may serve as proxy measures of bridging social capital.

*Using ancillary data to test policy hypotheses*

There are limits to the extent to which detailed questions about social capital as well as other associated variables can be included in budget and time-constrained household surveys. Nevertheless, different policy interventions or incentives could be assessed by the use of ancillary data. For example, questions about social engagement and trust could be complemented by questions on respondents' willingness to participate or get more involved socially in their neighbourhoods or societies if various incentives or circumstance were changed. While these questions may be unreliable from the point of view of likely outcome as distinct from aspiration, they may provide some clues to policy makers about what is likely to work in terms of enhancing social capital (just as perceived barriers to higher participation in lifelong learning can be useful items of information to education policy makers).

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**ANNEX**

**Table 1**

**Overview of International Options for the measurement of social capital**

	Less flexibility	More flexibility
Higher comparability	OPTION 1 Standardised questions	OPTION2 Flexible question list
Lower comparability	OPTION 3 International Guidelines	OPTION4 No international agreement



**Table 2**  
**Examples and selections of questions on**  
**social capital from some international surveys**

**Political participation**

**Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy Common Core Questionnaire (CID) and World Values Survey (WVS) provide the main sources of international comparative data under this heading. Examples of questions asked are provided below.**

*"When you get together with your friends, would you say you discuss political matters frequently, occasionally or never?"* Response categories are: (i) frequently; (ii) occasionally; (iii) never and (iv) don't know (World Values Survey 2000). A similar, but not identical, question is asked in the CID common core questionnaire. The CID questionnaire also asks about frequency of political discussions at home when the respondent was growing up. Frequency of discussion of political issues with friends is also asked in ISSP Social Networks module II ISSP. The IEA study of civic education among 14 year olds also covers this area.

*"In general, how interested in politics are you? Would you say you are very interested, fairly interested, not very interested, or not at all interested?"* CID questionnaire. Response categories are: (i) very interested, (ii) fairly interested, (iii) not very interested and (iv) not at all interested. CID goes on to ask about level of interest in local, national, European and international politics.

*"There are different ways of attempting to bring about improvements or counteract deterioration in society. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following?"* (CID). A list of examples follows including contacting a politician, civil servant or association, working in a political party, signed a petition, taken part in a public demonstration, strike, boycott of products, donated money, raise funds, contacted or appeared in the media, attended a political meeting, etc. A similar, but less detailed, question to the above is asked in WVS 2000.

*"Suppose you wanted the local government to bring about some improvement in your local community. How likely is it that you would be able to do something about it?"* ( International Social Survey Programme Social Networks Module II, ISSP)

☞ Other questions not covered above:

- a) nature of involvement (attending meetings, subscription membership only, office held, meetings attended per month)
- b) *"Do you feel that you can influence decisions that affect your area?"* (UK General Household Survey Social Capital module – UK GHS)
- c) *"By working together, people in my neighbourhood can influence decisions that affect the neighbourhood"* (UK GHS)
- d)

### **Community participation**

Most of the relevant questions under this heading may be found in the Common Core questionnaire of the Citizenship, Involvement and Democracy survey (CID). Questions on whether individuals (i) were members of specific types of organisations or associations, (ii) participated in specific activities of these organisations in the last 12 months (e.g. chairing a meeting, taking part in decision-making, preparing a speech in front of a meeting, etc), (iii) how often they took part in meetings or other activities in the last 12 months, (iv) undertook volunteer work in the last 12 months, and (v) gave money on a voluntary basis (apart from membership fee) in the last 12 months:

- Sports clubs or outdoor activities club
- Youth association (for example, scouts, youth clubs)
- Environmental organisation
- Association for animal rights/protection
- Peace organisation
- Humanitarian aid or human rights organisation
- Charity or social-welfare organisation
- Association for medical patients, specific illnesses or addictions
- Association for disabled
- Pensioners' or retired persons' organisation
- Lodge or service clubs
- Political party
- Trade Union
- Farmers' organisation
- Business or employers' organisation
- Investment club
- Professional organisation
- Consumer association
- Parents' association
- Cultural, musical, dancing or theatre society
- Other hobby club/society
- Automobile organisation
- Residents', housing or neighbourhood association
- Immigrants' organisation
- Religious or church organisation

- Women's organisation
- Association for war victims, veterans, or ex-servicemen
- Other club or association

The above list is taken from the CID common core questionnaire. It is similar, but more comprehensive, than the list of associations used in the World Values Survey (WVS) questionnaire. The latter refers only to membership and the undertaking of unpaid volunteering work (omitting questions asked on the giving of money or the nature of participation in terms of meetings etc.). Although CID is more comprehensive and detailed in its list of organisations, WVS includes the following categories:

- Religious or church organisations
- Education, arts, music or cultural activities

Apart from the above, it might be desirable to include more specific categories of associations of particular policy or local interest such as:

- Care of the elderly
- Childcare or reciprocal child-minding
- Parent-teacher associations
- Ethnic-based community group/network
- Community time banks

As distinct from participation, volunteering and giving of money over the previous 12 months, the corresponding questions in the WVS relate to current volunteering and participation only.

*"During the last month, approximately how much time did you spend on all these activities, that is in clubs, associations, groups, networks or on supporting other persons?"* CID

☞ Other questions not covered above:

1. extent of willingness to give more voluntary time or money in a local community or other setting,
2. perceived barriers to involvement in local organisations,
3. involvement in specific initiatives such as community time banks or local non-monetary based exchange and trading systems
4. giving money to charity/social causes
5. voluntary donations to blood banks
6. questions on bonding/bridging - this issue could be approached through a question on the extent to which others in the same group, organisation or network as the respondent share the same or different religious, cultural, social, linguistic or gender backgrounds.

### **Informal networks/sociability**

#### Caring and giving time in informal networks

*“Do you actively provide any support for ill people, elderly neighbours, acquaintances or other people without doing it through an organization or club?” CID*

*“During the last month, approximately how much time did you spend on all these activities, that is in clubs, associations, groups, networks or on supporting other persons?” CID*

A list of possible response categories could be used (e.g. from the UK National Survey of Voluntary Activity, 1991): visiting the elderly, shopping for someone, baby-sitting, transporting someone, picking up litter, giving advice, looking after a pet for someone, etc.)

#### Personal contact/visiting/socialising/friendship

*“Of your adult brothers and sisters <son/daughter/father/mother >, with whom do you have the most contact?”*

*“How often do you see or visit this brother or sister?” ISSP*

*“Please indicate how often you have been in contact with any of the following relatives in the last four weeks? “ (list provided) ISSP*

*“Thinking about people at your work place <Thinking now of people who live near you in your neighbourhood or district> ... how many of them are close friends of yours?” ISSP*

*“How many other close friends do you have – apart from those at work, in your neighbourhood, or family members?” ISSP*

*“During the past 12 months, how often have you done any of the following things for people you know personally, such as relatives, friends, neighbours or other acquaintances? (list of examples given: help with housework, money, job search or talking with someone over a problem) ISSP*

*“Apart from the formal organisations we have just talked about, do you belong to any group or network of friends or acquaintances with whom you have contact on a regular basis?” CID*

#### Access to support networks for practical help/advice

*“... suppose you had the flu and had to stay in bed for a few days and needed help around the house, with shopping and so on ... Who would you turn to first <second> for help?” (list from husband, wife, partner to various types of relatives to work associates to social service agency is given) ISSP*

*“... suppose you needed to borrow a large sum of money ... Who would you turn to first <second> for help?” (list from husband, wife, partner to various types of relatives to work associates to credit agency is given) ISSP*

*“... suppose you felt just a bit down or depressed, and you wanted to talk about it ... Who would you turn to first <second> for help?” (list from husband, wife, partner to various types of relatives to neighbours, doctor, work associates to self-help group) ISSP*

*“There are many ways people hear about jobs – from other people, from advertisements or employment agencies, and so on. Please indicate how you first found out about work at your present employer?” ISSP*

#### Bonding/Bridging informal networks

*“...how attached you feel to different groups of people?” CID*

Network extent/size/structure/density

Multiplex social networks exist when individuals are typically members of many overlapping networks. The resources of one relationship can be appropriated by others. The CID questionnaire asks respondents if they have “personal friends” in specific organizations of which they are members.

*“Some people have a lot of contact with other members of their organisations and clubs. Others have only little contact. How about you? How often do you do any of the following with other members of the organisations or clubs to which you belong?”*

- *Help each other with practical matters outside organisational life*
- *Visit each other privately*
- *Talk about problems concerning the organisation or its goals*
- *Argue or quarrel” CID*

☞ Other questions not covered above:

- a) Work-based networks, friendships or sense of belonging and participation in voluntary schemes connected with employment.
- b) Extent of mutual exchange of voluntary giving
- c) Familiarity/attachment with neighbourhood (e.g. how many people do you know/do you feel part of this neighbourhood?)
- d) How many people do you know in your neighbourhood (a lot, few, many etc)
- e) Coaching, mentoring, informal teaching of others (one-to-one or small group) outside formal education/training context
- f) How many close friends <relatives/acquaintances/work associates> or acquaintances do you have (with whom you feel at ease, can talk to about personal matters, share a confidence, seek advice or call upon for practical help)
- g) Sociability networks and contact distinguished by purpose – e.g. specifically leisure or culture such as pub, sport, restaurant, family picnic or cinema.
- h) Proximity of friends/relatives (e.g. walking/driving distance)
- i) Participation in some community event, celebration, parade or local arts event in recent 12 months.
- j) Frequency of communication by phone, letter, internet with friends, relatives, neighbours or acquaintances
- k) Playing sport as distinct from sports spectatorship
- l) Engaging in leisure or cultural activities “in solo” as distinct from in a group (e.g. bowling alone and bowling in leagues)
- m) Extent to which involvement in a group derived from membership of another
- n) Extent to which respondent meets the same person in different contexts
- o) Friendships or co-operation which is incidental to the main purpose of initial relationships or links
- p) Extent to which respondents share common informal social networks (of support, giving, reciprocity) with others not in the same social, political, ethnic, etc. group (bonding/bridging)

### **Trust, norms and sanctions**

*"Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?"* World Values Survey / CID

Response categories are:

(i) most people can be trusted; (ii) need to be very careful; and (iii) don't know (WVS)

(the same question is asked in the CID common questionnaire but instead of three response categories a scale from 0 to 10 is used).

*"Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got a chance, or would they try to be fair?"*

Response categories are:

(i) would take advantage, (ii) would try to be fair; and (iii) don't know (WVS)

(the above question is also asked in the CID common questionnaire but instead of three response categories a scale from 0 to 10 is used).

*"Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves?"* CID

International Social Survey Programme (Social Networks module II):

Respondents are asked whether they (i) agree strongly, (ii) agree, (iii) neither agree nor disagree, (iv) disagree strongly and (v) can't choose in relation to each of the following statements:

*"There are only a few people I can trust completely"*

*"Most of the time you can be sure that other people want the best for you"*

*"If you are not careful, other people will take advantage of you"*

*"I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?"* (WVS) A list of organisations follows (ranging from international organisations to national government, media, churches and various NGOs). The CID questionnaire contains a similar question as follows: *"Please tell me how strongly you personally trust each of these institutions?"* (a list follows)

*"Please tell me for each of the following statements whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between.."*

- a) *Claiming government benefits to which you are not entitled*
- b) *Avoiding a fare on public transport*
- c) *Cheating on taxes if you have a chance*
- d) *Someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties" (WVS)*

*"As you know, there are different opinions as to what it takes to be a good citizen. I would therefore like to ask you to examine the characteristics listed on the card. Looking at what you personally think, how important is it?":*

- e) *To show solidarity with people who are worse off than yourself*
- f) *To vote in public elections*
- g) *Never to try to evade taxes*
- h) *To form your own opinion, independently of others*
- i) *Always to obey laws and regulations*
- j) *To be active in organizations*
- k) *To think of others more than yourself*
- l) *To subject your own opinions to critical examination" CID.*

☞ Other questions not covered above:

- a) Question on willingness to give time or money in local community even if benefits are mainly for others
- b) Trust in “familiar” (distinguishing family, neighbours, friends, work colleagues) and trust in “strangers”. Alternatively, the UK General Household Social Capital Module asks: “Would you say that you trust most <many/few/not at all) of the people in your neighbourhood. The US *Community Benchmark Survey*<sup>20</sup> asks respondents if they trust various stated groups (people in the same neighbourhood, work associates, people of the same denomination, people who work in the stores where they shop, local news media, police, various ethnic groups)
- c) Trust in specific occupations and social groups (doctors, lawyers, politicians, clergy, journalists etc.) – as distinct from institutions (which is covered in WVS and CID).
- d) Perception of shared values, reliability (e.g. perceived likelihood of having a lost wallet returned or reported or assisting a stranger, or do others act as if they think you are dishonest?)
- e) Attitudes, values and perceptions regarding “good citizenship” or the “ideal society” within which one would ideally like to live in (e.g. identifying norms of behaviour, standards of tolerance and societal control vs self-determination)
- f) Likelihood of someone being criticized/fined for failing to conform to specific types of social engagement? (sanctions)
- g) The Canadian *Equality, Security and Citizenship Survey* asks a range of social capital type questions. A question is asked on the perceived likelihood of having a lost wallet returned by various types of persons – strangers, police officer, grocery, store clerk.

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<sup>20</sup> [http://www.cfsv.org/communitysurvey/docs/survey\\_instrument.pdf](http://www.cfsv.org/communitysurvey/docs/survey_instrument.pdf)

