WZB

Berlin Social Science Center

WZB Research Ethics Policy and Procedures

Version: March 2025

As a research institute dedicated to excellence in social science research and the principles of good scientific practice, the WZB Berlin Social Science Center (WZB) is committed to ensuring ethical research, including the ethical treatment of human research subjects and their data. This WZB Research Ethics Policy sets forth standards for ethical research practices, outlines WZB procedures for ethical review, and describes the work of the WZB Research Ethics Committee.

While upholding basic principles of justice, beneficence, and respect for persons, this policy recognizes the plurality of research methodologies and the complexity of ethical considerations. To that end, the WZB Research Ethics Policy is a dynamic, living document, intended to encourage conversations and inspire self-reflection on ethical issues. This policy aims not to hinder research, but advance it (Art. 5 III Grundgesetz).

Contents

I. Statement of Ethical Principles

These principles aim to provide a framework for considering ethical questions and to encourage reflection on the ethical implications of research. They aim to guide researchers rather than limit their academic freedom (Art. 5 III Grundgesetz). They supplement a broader commitment to good scientific practice, including ethical analysis and reporting of findings, and fair treatment of partners in research. In general, it is expected that research implemented by WZB researchers will adhere to these principles. At the same time, it is also recognized that in different contexts these principles can come into conflict with each other, calling for reflection on how to resolve such conflicts and on whether proceeding with research can be defended on ethical grounds.

(1) **Responsibilities.** The researcher has responsibilities to engage in research in ways consistent with the well-being of the planet, broader society, the disciplines, their institution, colleagues, students, the people they study, and themselves.

(2) **Autonomy.** The autonomy of the individual is to be respected and protected. All human subjects should have the right to decide whether to participate in a study, as well as the right to withdraw at any time, without any negative consequences. Individuals with diminished capacity to make these decisions must be protected.

(3) **Consent.** The highest possible degree of informed consent must be obtained from research participants. Consent helps ensure individual autonomy. Consent should not be seen as a single act of signing a form, but rather a communicative process that extends throughout the course of a research project. In general, "informed consent" should include communicating the research procedure, purpose, anticipated risks and benefits, and the use of the data to be collected. If obtaining full informed consent is not possible, for example, when informed consent would impair the research design, then it must be ensured that (1) there are no undisclosed risks that are more than minimal; and (2) subjects are debriefed whenever possible and appropriate and have the right to withdraw ex post.[1]

[1] As adapted from the *Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research.* (United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1979).

(4) **No coercion.** The decision to participate in a study shall be made freely and without coercion, whether explicit or implied (examples of implied coercion include excessively high compensation for participation or recruitment by people in positions of power).

(5) **Well-being.** Every effort must be made to secure the physical, psychological, and social well-being of research participants and others affected by the research. Research should in general minimize risks, avoid expected harms, and avoid risks of increasing inequalities.

(6) **Justice.** The benefits and burdens of research should be distributed equitably. In general, benefits should not be withheld from some individuals for the benefit of others.

(7) **Beneficence.** Research involving risks or costs to human subjects must have social or scientific value. Researchers should not expose human beings or organizations to risk, even with their consent, without some possible social or scientific benefit.

(8) **Privacy.** The researcher must respect preferences regarding privacy and anonymity. This principle extends beyond merely observing federal and European laws of data protection.

(9) **Avoid misuse.** Research results, whether theoretical or applied, should not pose an undue burden or risk to research subjects or to society at large. Researchers should anticipate the possibility of "Dual Use" of their research (e.g. for military applications) or misuse (e.g. for criminal use) and share findings in ways that minimize these risks.

(10) **Reflexivity.** Researchers should discuss ethical aspects of their research openly in their writing and public presentations.

II. Research Ethics Procedures

1. Research Ethics Applications

(1) **Scope.** This policy applies to all research projects, regardless of funding source, initiated by researchers at the WZB after 1 March 2024.

(2) **Project definition.** For the purposes of this policy, a "project" is defined as an undertaking that involves (1) collecting data or (2) acquiring and using secondary data or (3) implementing social manipulations for research purposes.[2] Projects are not defined in terms of the methods they use, whether more qualitative or more quantitative.[3] It is quite possible that a single project will yield multiple publications.[4]

(3) **Categories.** Projects may fall into one of three categories:

a. Exempt

b. Eligible for Simple Review

c. Requiring Full Review

(4) **Exempt projects.**

A project is considered **exempt** if either:

(1) None of the following conditions are met:

a. The research involves manipulations of social processes.

b. The research involves collection of data on living human subjects through interaction or intervention.

c. The research does access personally identifiable information (PII)[5].

[2] Point (3) is intended to cover activities beyond data collection that alter social process for research purposes, such as intervening in elections or labor markets.

[3] Projects might include (but are not limited to) experimental research, survey research, interviews, participant observation, online data, and analysis of existing data.

[4] Only one application per project is necessary. Usually projects should not be split into separate applications. Project X might depend on prior activities, such as data that has been gathered in advance for general purposes, or tools that have been developed in advance for general purposes. Such advance activities may be thought of as standalone projects if they have not been undertaken specifically to support Project X. See point (8) below on project modifications.

[5] Personally identifiable information is commonly defined as "any representation of information that permits the identity of an individual to whom the information applies to be reasonably inferred by either direct or indirect means." This condition does not pertain to data that is readily accessible and for which an individual does not have a reasonable expectation of privacy. See discussion in Section II.2.

d. The research involves re-combination or re-analysis of existing data that plausibly increases risks of re-identification of living human subjects.
e. The research does raise unusual ethical issues that plausibly contravene the research principles listed in Section I.

OR

(2) The project has received approval from another German Ethics Committee or an Institutional Review Board (IRB) accredited review board in the social or behavioral sciences.[6]

Exempt projects do not require review by the WZB Ethics Committee. Nor do they receive approval or an approval number.

If a researcher determines a study is exempt but nevertheless requires approval for publication or other reasons they should submit the proposal for Simple Review.

(5) **Simple Review.** Projects involving no more than minimal risk may be eligible for **Simple Review**. Researchers complete and submit the **Simple Review form**. The form is checked by the responsible Officer in the Presidential Department and subsequently reviewed by a member of the Ethics Committee. If, based on the information provided by the researcher, the criteria in the Simple Review form (p.16) are met and the reviewer has no cause for concern that the criteria have not been met, a final decision of approval is issued. If, based on the information provided, the reviewer has concerns that some criteria have not been met, the reviewer may request more information or a submission as Full Review.

(6) **Full Review.** Projects requiring Full Review submit the **Full Review form** to the responsible Officer in the Presidential Department, which will be reviewed at a monthly meeting of the Ethics Committee.

(7) **No retrospective approvals.** The researcher is expected to complete the Research Ethics Application before the start of activities that render projects non-exempt as defined in Paragraph II.1.(4).[7] The WZB will not provide institutional

[6] A listing of accredited IRB boards is available at Office for Human Research Protections Database (nih.gov).
[7] For instance, researchers might engage in the design of instruments or analyses or download publicly available data prior to seeking approvals, as long as these activities qualify as exempt under 1.4.

documentation of ethical approval for retrospective applications (i.e. applications submitted after data collection has begun) and does not furnish statements indicating whether an application would have been approved or not, had it been submitted.

(8) **Modifications.** In the event that changes to the research design introduce new risks of violations of the ethical principles described in Section I, the researcher is expected to submit a modification for ethical review. The researcher is encouraged to consult with the responsible Officer in the Presidential Department to determine whether a new application is necessary, but the ultimate responsibility for this decision lies with the researcher.

2. Levels of Ethical Review

(1) Researchers normally determine in the first instance whether a research project is exempt, eligible for Simple Review or requires Full Review. The following provides some guidance to help make these determinations.

(2) Examples of projects that are likely exempt for review under the five criteria in Paragraph II.1.(4) include:

- Theoretical or conceptual projects
- Historical projects based on documents or records on non-living persons
- Replications or analyses of publicly available data that do not plausibly result in re-identification of de-identified individuals
- Analyses of published speeches made by politicians (even though these involve data on identifiable individuals, there is no reasonable expectation of privacy)

(3) Examples of projects that are likely not exempt for review under the five criteria in Paragraph II.1.(4) include:

- A new experiment
- A new survey
- A combination of existing data on campaign contributions and voting behavior by identifiable individuals
- An analysis of non-anonymized patient health records shared with the researcher by a service provider

- An analysis using data on identifiable individuals that has been put on internet sites without their consent
- An analysis that uses published images of identifiable individuals to infer their health

(4) Examples of projects that are likely eligible for Simple Review include:

- Simple laboratory experiments involving no deception or risks to subjects
- Simple surveys that do not gather sensitive information on subjects or retain PII

(5) Examples of projects that likely require Full Review include:

- Studies involving less than full consent or deception
- Studies involving manipulations of social processes

(6) If the researcher is unsure whether the research is exempt, requires Simple Review or Full Review by the Ethics Committee, or if the project involves ethical issues not fully addressed by the application, the researcher is encouraged to consult with the Officer in the Presidential Department coordinating the work of the Ethics Committee.

3. Legal and Institutional Requirements

(1) Researchers must comply with German laws, particularly those concerning data protection.

(2) It is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that all financial flows (such as payments to survey firms and donations to charities) are in line with WZB policies and the respective third-party funding institutions.

(3) If research is conducted outside Germany, it is the researcher's responsibility to determine whether local ethical review is required in the host country and to secure any such required approvals. If local approvals are required but not secured, this should be communicated to the responsible Officer in the Presidential Department. If there are no local requirements for approvals, the principles of the WZB Research Ethics Policy should still be followed in developing and undertaking the research. The ethical standards that the WZB expects for research within Germany apply equally to work undertaken in other countries.

(4) It remains the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that arrangements are in place to maintain the integrity and security of research data. Researchers are urged to consult with the Research Data Management Office prior to beginning data collection or acquiring data from a secondary source. Secondary use of data sets must be given careful consideration, especially with regard to the potential risk of disclosure of sensitive information.

(5) The Ethics Committee may remind researchers of these broader responsibilities but ethics approval does not imply compliance with these other policies.

(6) The Ethics Committee is not responsible for institutional risk management. If the Ethics Committee identifies a potential institutional risk when reviewing an ethics application, it will communicate the potential risk to the applicant and their respective research manager. Researchers, together with their research managers, are responsible for ensuring that their research is consistent with other WZB policies, whether or not these are flagged by the Ethics Committee.

III. The WZB Research Ethics Committee

1. Roles and Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the WZB Research Ethics Committee are:

(1) To review Research Ethics Applications on a monthly basis and document the Committee's findings regarding ethical considerations and adherence to the statement of ethical principles in Section I.

(2) To ensure:
   a. Consistency with ethical principles described in Section I (The research protocol includes a plan for data and safety monitoring.)
   b. Subjects' privacy and confidentiality
   c. Appropriate additional safeguards for any vulnerable subjects

(3) To decide whether applications are:
   a. Approved
   b. Conditionally approved requiring modifications to secure approval
   c. Not approved

(4) To provide WZB researchers, in collaboration with the Officer in the Presidential Department, with advice on research ethics at any point in the research process.

(5) To work together with researchers to seek solutions when challenges arise.

2. Committee Membership

(1) The WZB Research Ethics Committee has six members and includes:
   a. At least four scientists
   b. One member with no affiliation with the WZB
   c. The Internal Research Data Protection Coordinator of the WZB as a permanent member ex officio

(2) A Committee member may fulfill more than one of the above roles.

(3) The Committee shall be balanced in gender and disciplinary as well as methodological expertise.

(4) A minimum of three deputies will be named to take the place of regular members as needed.

(5) The Committee shall appoint a Chair from among its members. The Chair must be a scientist and must have already served on the Committee for at least one year.

(6) The Committee shall have a Vice-Chair, who will assume the duties of the Chair in the event the Chair is unavailable.

3. Appointment of Committee Members

(1) New Committee members and deputies may be nominated by other Committee members or other WZB colleagues.

(2) Nominations must be approved by the Academic Council, with cumulative voting in the case of multiple nominations.

(3) Committee members and deputies (except the Internal Research Data Protection Coordinator) serve a two-year term. Committee members may be reappointed for one more term, at which point they must rotate off the Committee for at least one year. Deputies are eligible for appointment as members during their term or at the end of their term.

(4) Every effort should be made to ensure that the Committee has both new and returning members in a given year.

4. Consultations

(1) The Committee can consult with experts within or outside the WZB in the event that a particular project falls outside of the group's expertise, e.g. with respect to the subject population, the research methods, data protection, or other legal concerns.

(2) External consultants do not take part in decisions.

(3) The names, advice, and nature of involvement by non-Committee consultants must be included in the Committee meeting minutes.

5. Committee Meetings

(1) The Committee should review Research Ethics Applications periodically, with no fewer than eight meetings per year.

(2) The Chair and the responsible Officer in the Presidential Department determine, whether an in-person meeting is required or whether decisions can be made by other means (e.g. Committee members submit written recommendations to the Officer, who coordinates circular resolutions, so-called off-cycle review, see Section II.2.). If necessary, members may participate via videoconference.

(3) A quorum of four out of six Committee members (or deputies) applies. The members shall rotate in their attendance (according to a "round robin" method). The details are coordinated by the responsible Officer in the Presidential Department.

(4) The quorum applies to the number of members that have not recused themselves from the applications under review.

(5) In the event that a Committee member cannot attend due to a last-minute conflict or emergency and a deputy cannot be secured, they may send a written recommendation to the Chair prior to the meeting. This recommendation does not constitute a decision, but should be taken into account during Committee deliberations.

(6) Records of all Committee decisions – be they written recommendations submitted to the Chair or in-person meetings – will be kept in German or English and remain on file with the Presidential Department for a minimum of seven years.

6. Committee Review

(1) The dates for the next Committee session and the deadlines for application should always be announced via the Committee's intranet page.

(2) Applications must be submitted via the responsible Officer in the Presidential Department (ethics@wzb.eu or via the WZB Cloud). Researchers should incorporate appropriate lead time into planning their research and ensure adequate time for review by the Committee. The Committee suggests a lead time of six to eight weeks before the start of data collection.

(3) Where a case is submitted for Full Review, the Committee will make decisions using a majority voting procedure. In the event of a split Committee, the Chair has the authority to make the final decision.

(4) The Committee may, at its discretion, request advice and guidance from colleagues with particular expertise and in addition may call upon outside experts to assist with advice and review as required (cf. Section III.4.).

(5) The Committee may, at its discretion, request additional information from the applicant and/or invite the applicant to present at the meeting. The applicant may not be present during the Committee's deliberations or decision.

(6) The Committee may decide in five categories of decisions:

a. Approval

b. Simple Conditional Approval – In some instances, a submission is determined approved but subject to a set of specified conditions or subject to particular understandings of elements of the submission. If there is a simple specific request or an "understood"-item, a simple memo by the applicant confirming agreement to the conditions or interpretations of the Committee is sufficient to secure approval.

c. Complex Conditional Approval – In some instances, specific concerns are raised and the Committee can see or request possible solutions to these. In these cases, a memo by the applicant explaining responses to conditions or concerns raised is returned to the reviewing Committee member for a new decision.

d. Not approved, with the invitation to revise and resubmit – In some cases, the Committee may decide that a proposal needs major revisions before approval is possible. In these cases, the researcher can resubmit. The resubmission should be accompanied by a memo outlining responses to the concerns raised. The resubmission and memo are reviewed by the full Committee for a new decision.

e. Not approved.

(7) In any category of decision, non-binding advice may be offered by the Committee and sent to the applicant via email.

(8) The memos to be sent back by the applicants shall indicate the requests as well as the answers by the applicants.

(9) Researchers have the right to appeal any decisions of the Committee to the WZB President.

(10) Decisions will be communicated to the applicant in writing, no later than one week after the Committee meets. In the event of a conditional approval or non-approval, the precise reasons must be provided to the applicant. If a conditional approval is subsequently converted to an approval, the applicant will receive the approval in writing.

(11) All decisions will contain the following note to researchers (subject to changes of names of personnel): "General considerations for all WZB research:

a. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that his or her research is in compliance with the legal regulations of the WZB. Contact person: [Name and email address].

b. It is in the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that procedures are in compliance with WZB data protection policy. Contact person: [Name and email address].

c. It is in the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that funds are allocated in accordance with the grant notification and in accordance with the financial regulations of the WZB. Contact person for third-party funding: [Name and email address]; Contact person for financial questions: [Name and email address].

d. It is in the responsibility of the researcher to consider the current WZB regulations regarding the use of generative AI."

(12) Decisions of Full Review applications and Simple Review applications will be sent to the applicant and for information also to their respective research manager.

(13) The decision will be kept on file for a period of at least seven years.

7. Simple and Off-cycle Review

(1) Researchers can apply for Simple Review at any moment by completing the Simple Review form. If all conditions for Simple Review are satisfied, approval can be provided, generally within ten days, by a member of the Committee. If the Simple Review does not result in approval, researchers have to submit to the regular process for Full Review.

(2) In rare, exceptional circumstances, researchers may need to request an off-cycle review. Off-cycle reviews create a burden for the Committee. The decision whether to accept an application for an off-cycle review is made by the Chair of the

Committee or the Vice-Chair. Off-cycle reviews follow the same procedure as on-cycle reviews, although with deliberations generally not conducted in person.

8. Conflicts of Interest

(1) Committee members may not participate in the review of their own projects or projects they are supervising. In such cases, the Committee member should recuse themselves from the deliberations and not decide on the project. A deputy member shall take that person's place, unless they are also conflicted.

(2) Other cases of potential conflict of interest, real or apparent, should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. In some situations, it may be most appropriate for the Committee member to recuse themselves entirely; in other cases, the Committee member might participate in deliberations, while abstaining from the Committee's decision.

9. Confidentiality

(1) Unless seeking the advice of an outside expert or consulting with Officer in the Presidential Department, Committee members are not permitted to discuss project proposals with non-Committee members.

(2) Committee members and WZB staff are required to keep confidential the proceedings of a Committee meeting, including the specific details of studies under review and the contributions (and decisions) of individual Committee members.

(3) Written records of Committee decisions (including past decisions) and/or meeting minutes may be viewed only by the Committee and authorized WZB staff.

10. Information

(1) Members of the WZB Research Ethics Committee are required to document their decisions and ensure that the work of the Committee is transparent. This holds especially for the knowledge that serves to substantiate the interpretation and construction of the policy and to advance the work of the Committee.

IV. Forms

1. Simple Review Form

Instructions:

- The researcher must complete the online Research Ethics Application before the start of the project. The WZB will not provide institutional documentation of ethical approval for retrospective applications. This application may be completed in German or in English.
- All correspondence regarding this application should be sent to the responsible Officer in the Presidential Department.
- For questions regarding informed consent and data security, researchers are highly encouraged to consult with the Internal Research Data Protection Coordinator prior to submitting their application.

Please provide the following information:

1. Name of applicant:
2. Name of research manager:
3. Title of the study:
4. Short abstract (at least 200 words):
5. Location of research (brief description):
6. Who are the participants? (brief description):
7. Intended start date:
8. Intended end date:

Your project is eligible for approval by Simple Review, if you can confidently answer **ALL** of the following questions with NO. If in doubt on any of the items, please hand in an application for Full Review.

Before answering these questions, ensure that you are familiar with the statement of ethical principles of the WZB Research Ethics Policy.

a.	The project involves data collected on living human subjects who are members of vulnerable populations (e.g. children <18, prison populations, disabled populations, refugees).	Yes	No
b.	It is plausible that individuals feel compelled to participate in the study, for instance due to pressure from others, such as management, works council,	Yes	No

	teachers, traditional or religious leaders, parents, or spouses.		
c.	Individuals plausibly feel compelled to participate, for instance out of fear of loss of benefits or because of excessive payments for participation.	Yes	No
d.	The project involves data collected on living human subjects who would have difficulty giving meaningful informed consent.	Yes	No
e.	The project involves data collected on living human subjects through interaction or intervention and consent will not be sought.	Yes	No
f.	The research involves deception (elements likely to mislead participants about the nature of the research).	Yes	No
g.	The study risks causing physical discomfort or pain (to humans or animals).	Yes	No
h.	The research involves physical exercises or the manipulation of temperature, sound or light, the ingestion of food or beverages.	Yes	No
i.	The study may plausibly induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause social harm beyond the risks encountered in normal life.	Yes	No
j.	The study asks participants to watch or listen to materials that could plausibly be seen as threatening or offensive or triggering traumatic events.	Yes	No
k.	The study concerns illegal activities that are liable to prosecution (e.g. illegal immigration, illegal protest forms, use of illegal drugs).	Yes	No
l.	The research delves into personal experience or sensitive topics (e.g. health, sex life or sexual orientation, ethnic origin, religious beliefs).	Yes	No

m.	Individuals participate in research as a primary or secondary job.[8]	Yes	No
n.	There are no options to address queries or concerns raised by participants during or after the study.	Yes	No
o.	Being identified as a subject in this research plausibly poses a risk or burden to the research subject (e.g. domestic abuse victims, illegal immigrants).	Yes	No
p.	The project plausibly poses risks to the health and safety of the researchers (e.g. travel, health, evacuation insurance).	Yes	No
q.	The implementation of the study plausibly has impacts on social processes (such as elections, policies, employment).	Yes	No
r.	There are plausible risks regarding the confidentiality of the research subject that are not addressed by the research design (e.g. employers, or other "gatekeepers" become aware of individual subjects' data/statements, or participants become aware of each other's personal identifiable answers/statements, or data cannot be fully pseudonymized or anonymized, or other unresolved issues regarding compliance with data protection regulations).[9]	Yes	No
s.	Research is to be undertaken outside Germany *and* there is no formal clearance to carry out this work, either from the government or a formal ethics board in the host country *and* researchers have not established that approvals are not required.	Yes	No
t.	Does this research have potential for Dual Use (e.g. military applications)?	Yes	No

[8] This item refers primarily to platforms that subjects might work on regularly in order to meet basic needs. Participation in ad hoc surveys and lab experiments do not automatically trigger this item.

[9] The mere fact of knowing that others are participating in a study – such as is often the case in lab experiments – does not trigger this item.

Signature

I declare that I have read the statement of ethical principles of the WZB Research Ethics Policy and attest that the answers provided are correct to the best of my knowledge.

Researcher signature:

Name (please print):

Date:

Project advisor/supervisor signature (required for doctoral candidates)[10]:

[10] By signing here, the project advisor/supervisor confirms that the doctoral candidate has been advised in relation to any ethical issues raised by their research; these have to the best of the supervisor's understanding been adequately addressed in the research design; and the student has been made aware of their responsibilities for the ethical conduct of their research.

2. Full Review Form

Instructions:

- The researcher must complete the online Research Ethics Application before the start of the project. The WZB will not provide institutional documentation of ethical approval for retrospective applications. This application may be completed in German or in English.
- Relevant supporting documents should be attached to the application, e.g. informed consent form, survey questionnaire, or an overview of the topics covered in the survey. Please use the checklist to outline your attachments. Please refer to the information and templates for informed consent in Section IV.3. of the WZB Research Ethics Policy.
- All correspondence regarding this application should be sent to the responsible Officer in the Presidential Department.
- For questions regarding informed consent and data security, researchers are highly encouraged to consult with the Internal Research Data Protection Coordinator prior to submitting their application.

Please provide the following information:

1. Name of applicant:	
2. Position (doctoral candidate, postdoc, other):	
3. Division/Group:	
4. For doctoral candidates, name of project supervisor:	
5. Names of all investigators and assistants who will be working on the project and who are known at the time of application:	
6. Preferred email address and telephone number for correspondence relating to submission:	
7. Name of research manager:	
8. Date of submission of application:	
9. Project title:	
10. Funding sources, both approved and pending:	
11. Funding period (start and end date):	
12. Location(s) of research:	
13. Will you be collecting new data?	
14. Anticipated start and end dates of data collection or analysis of secondary data:	
15. Describe the social and/or scientific value of the proposed research (max 200 words):	
16. Abstract (max. 500 words) describing project methods, research questions, and purpose:	
17. Would you like to potentially receive comments on your research design and methodology by the Committee?	

Reasons for review

Please indicate which of the following reasons for review are met by your project:

Condition	Flag if the reason for review is met
The research involves manipulations of social processes.	☐
The research involves collection of new data on living human subjects through interaction or intervention.	☐
The research accesses personally identifiable information.	☐
The research involves re-combination or re-analysis of existing data that plausibly increases risks of re-identification of living human subjects.	☐
The research raises unusual ethical issues that plausibly contravene the research principles listed in Section I.	☐
The project has not received approval from another German Ethics Committee or an IRB accredited review board in the social or behavioral sciences.	☐

Recruitment and selection of research subjects

1. Describe the subject population, research participants and/or interview partners. Who will be included or excluded and approximately how many people will take part in the research?		
2. Cultural, social, gender-based characteristics: Comment on any cultural, social, or gender-based characteristics of the research participants that affect the project design.		
3. How will subjects and research participants be recruited (e.g. flyer, email)? *Please attach a copy of the flyer, announcement, script for in-person recruitment, etc. If using an external survey organization or outside contractor, summarize their recruitment methods.*		
4. Is it plausible that individuals feel compelled to participate in the study, for instance due to pressure from others, such as management, works council, teachers, traditional or religious leaders, parents, or spouses? *If yes, describe the steps taken to communicate that participation is voluntary and that there will be no negative consequences of non-participation or withdrawal from the study.*	Yes	No
5. Will compensation exceed what is reasonable for time investment and	Yes	No

expenses? *If yes, justify the need for additional compensation.*		
6. Is participation a primary or secondary job for subjects (e.g. with Amazon Mechanical Turk or as a clickworker)? *If yes, please describe and justify compensation.*	Yes	No

Consent (Note: Please include a copy of the consent form, if applicable.)

7. Are participants to be enlisted in the study without their knowledge or consent? *If yes, briefly explain why this is required by the research design.*	Yes	No
8. Will research subjects be fully informed about the study design, purpose, risks, and benefits prior to participation? *If not, briefly explain why the study design precludes a consent process.*	Yes	No
9. How will consent be documented? (Examples may include a signed consent form, oral consent, an information sheet included with a questionnaire, online consent, or use of field notes.)		
10. Does the research involve individuals who would have difficulty giving meaningful informed consent? *If yes, how and from whom will consent be obtained?*	Yes	No

11. In the event that the project involves deception, will subjects be debriefed at the end of the study? *If not, briefly explain why this is unnecessary or impossible.*	Yes	No
12. What provisions have been made to respond to queries or concerns raised by participants in the course of the project or after the project concludes?		

Activities

13. Describe in brief the primary activities that involve subjects or research participants, highlighting any manipulations, treatments, or sensitive items. Provide references to details in supplementary materials (instruments and protocols).	

Risks to participants

14. Is physical pain more than mild discomfort likely to result from participation? *If yes, describe the use of pain and summarize the steps taken to minimize such effects.*	Yes	No
15. Could the study induce unacceptable psychological stress or anxiety or cause psychological or social harm beyond the risks encountered in normal life? *If yes,*	Yes	No

summarize the steps taken to minimize such effects.		
16. Will identification with the research group pose a risk or burden to the research subject (e.g. domestic abuse victims, illegal immigrants)? *If yes, describe the steps taken to preserve their safety and confidentiality.*	Yes	No
17. Will the study involve discussion of sensitive topics or illegal activities? *If yes, summarize the measures taken to preserve confidentiality and minimize psychological stress.*	Yes	No

Protection of others

18. Will this project pose any risks to the health and safety of the researchers? *If yes, describe the risks and precautions being taken (e.g. travel, health, evacuation insurance).*	Yes	No
19. Will this project pose any risks to workers beyond the research team (e.g. translators, guides, community partners)? *If yes, describe the risks and precautions being taken.*	Yes	No

Data and confidentiality

20. How will the data be collected and analyzed?	

21. How will the data be stored and who will have access to the data?		
22. Will research involve saving images or audio data from which respondents may be identified?	Yes	No
23. Does the study involve methods in which individual responses will be known to others in a group (e.g. focus group research)? *If yes, please describe the steps taken to preserve privacy and confidentiality among group members.*	Yes	No
24. What steps will be taken to maintain the confidentiality of the research subject and comply with data protection requirements (e.g. data will be fully anonymized, "linked" data files)?		
25. Will you require access to data on research participants held by a third party (e.g. physician, school)? *If yes, describe arrangements you will make to obtain this information.*	Yes	No
26. How will the data be used or made available for future research?		

Multisite research

27. Will any part of the research take place outside of Germany? *If yes, please indicate where.*	Yes	No
27a. If you are undertaking research outside Germany, have you received formal clearance to carry out this work,	Yes	No

either from the government or a formal ethics board in the host country? *If yes, please include correspondence with this questionnaire. If not, explain why this is unnecessary.*		

Dissemination

28. Are there any groups likely to be harmed by the dissemination of research results? *If yes, describe the potential harm and steps being taken to minimize it.*	Yes	No
29. Does this research have potential for Dual Use (i.e. military applications)?	Yes	No
30. Does this research have potential for misuse (i.e. abuse by criminal or terrorist groups)?	Yes	No

Other ethical issues

31. Does the research raise other ethical issues not covered by this questionnaire? *If yes, describe the ethical issues or concerns you would like to have reviewed by the WZB Research Ethics Committee.*	Yes	No

Signature

I have read and understood the WZB Research Ethics Policy and the questions contained in the questionnaire above and I confirm that the information I have offered constitutes, to the best of my ability, an accurate assessment of the ethical implications of the proposed project. Furthermore, I confirm that I have undertaken training and/or have significant experience in research ethics over the course of my career.

Researcher signature:

Name (please print):

Date:

Project advisor/supervisor signature (required for doctoral candidates)[11]:

Attachments

Directions: Please provide an outline of the attachments enclosed with the application.

☐ Approval from an external ethics board (for applications exempt from review)
☐ Survey questionnaire
☐ Topics/topic blocks covered
☐ Informed consent form
☐ Experimental design
☐ Click here to enter text

[11] By signing here, the project advisor/supervisor confirms that the doctoral candidate has been advised in relation to any ethical issues raised by their research; these have to the best of the supervisor's understanding been adequately addressed in the research design; and the student has been made aware of their responsibilities for the ethical conduct of their research.

3. WZB Consent Forms

Please find all information about the WZB consent forms in the Wiki.

Please use the WZB consent forms provided in the Wiki.

4. Tips for Streamlining Applications

- Anticipate possible concerns. Please ensure that you draw attention to ethical issues in Section 13 of the application and provide your reasoning behind the choices you have made.
- Be sure to provide context around key items. For instance, if a survey includes text manipulation, please provide the full description showing how the material is presented to subjects.
- If a third party is providing compensation to subjects, please inform yourself and report what that compensation is.
- If recruitment or compensation schemes are described in documents by third parties, please be sure to identify relevant segments in those documents when you complete the application form.
- Please provide translations (may be automated) of consent forms and survey items, if these are delivered in a language other than German or English.
- Provide all documents together. Besides the application form, the most important documents are typically survey instruments, interview guides, experimental designs, recruiting material, and consent forms.
- Please ensure that the documents you submit are clean final documents, with no track changes or comments.