

NIMLAS Pilot Project Interim Report (April 2025)
**Investigating Consent Rates for Linking Survey and Administrative Data in a Multilingual,
Multinational, and Multicultural Context**

FAIN: U24 AG077012-01

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1. What major activities have been accomplished, under each of your specific aims, with your pilot project funding?

The goals of this project (reporting period from 01.04.2024 to 31.03.2025) were to investigate consent rates for data linkage in a multilingual, multinational, and multicultural context. The pilot project pursued the following specific aims:

Aim 1: To gain comparative insights into linkage consent across countries and languages based on the national linkage consent questions implemented in SHARE up to now.

Aim 2: To collect and analyze preliminary data using a hypothetical linkage question in all SHARE countries.

Progress on Aim 1:

Through the employment of a researcher (August 2024 – March 2025) substantial progress could be made on Aim 1 as well as Aim 2. Regarding the first aim, this activity involved working on the comparative analysis of existing linkage consent data from SHARE Wave 9 and earlier. The project analyzed data on consent to data linkage from 44,446 individuals aged 50 and older. The data came from SHARE Waves 5-9, and included the following countries: Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and Finland, as well as Girona, Spain. This data had not yet been used before and was made available specifically for this project as an internal release.

Real-life consent rates at the first ask were high in the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Denmark (91% to 97.5%), while they were lower in Girona and Italy. Asking participants multiple times for consent increased consent rates in Germany and Estonia by 6.3 and 4.8 percentage points, respectively. Individuals with high or medium education levels were significantly more likely to consent than those with low education. Minority language speakers were also significantly more likely to consent. Individuals aged 66-80 were more likely to consent than those aged 50-65, while those over 80 were significantly less likely to consent. Gender had no effect on consent likelihood. A more detailed account of the results can be found in Herold et al. (2025).

Progress on Aim 2:

To address this aim, we developed the hypothetical linkage consent questions to be used in the study, carefully considering the different domains of administrative data relevant to the SHARE survey (i.e., employment, health, pensions, income and taxes). The developed hypothetical questions were then implemented into the SHARE Wave 10 Field Rehearsal questionnaire, ensuring seamless integration with the existing survey instrument. The questions were translated into all SHARE languages using the Translation, Review, Adjudication, Pretest, and Documentation (TRAPD) approach, ensuring cross-cultural comparability. Interviewers were trained in the administration of these questions by the survey agencies in their respective countries, who were themselves trained during a Train-the-Trainer session organized by SHARE's central coordination to ensure consistent data collection across countries. The Field Rehearsal fieldwork, including the administration of the hypothetical consent questions, took place between March and July 2024.

Across all SHARE countries the hypothetical consent rates were 43.7% for pensions and social security information, 43.5% for health, as well as for linkage consent, and only 35.3% for income and tax information. Like with real-life consent there was a considerable range of consent rates across countries and data domains, with the lowest being consent to employment histories in Italy (9%) to the highest being consent to health record linkage in Belgium (83%). Further results can also be found in Herold et al. (2025).

The analysis of the collected data has been performed by the hired researcher between August and December 2024. A working paper detailing the analysis of the hypothetical consent data is about to be published (04/2025). A project logo and website were developed (Spring 2025) to enhance project visibility and communication as well as introducing the project's acronym "SHARE-CoRaL" (Consent Rates Linkage).

2. How have lessons learned / research findings / analysis results from each of your specific aims been disseminated to the broader community of longitudinal researchers that might benefit from what you have learned?

The findings from this project so far have been disseminated through various channels to reach the broader research community.

- A working paper, "Cross-European Consent to Data Linkage in the Aging Population of 28 Countries," presents the cross-European comparison of consent to data linkage and is forthcoming in the SHARE Working Paper Series.
- Presentations at international conferences and meetings, including the CSDI workshop, SHARE meetings (Cyprus and Innsbruck), NIMLAS working group and plenary meetings, and the SHARE-Gateway User Conference, have shared key findings and methodological insights with fellow researchers. An abstract proposal has also been accepted for the Conference of the European Survey Research Association (ESRA) 2025.

The next steps to further disseminate the results are:

- Presentations at international conferences (e.g., ESRA in July 2025) and the NIMLAS Annual Plenary Meeting 2025.
- Finalize the manuscript for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

3. Please provide formal citations for all conference presentations, technical reports, journal articles, or data sets arising from your work. Submitted abstracts, papers, or reports that are under review should also be included.

Working Paper:

- Herold, I., Irving, J., Pettinicchi, Y., & Bethmann, A. (2025 - forthcoming). Cross-European Consent to Data Linkage in the Aging Population of 28 Countries. SHARE Working Paper Series.

Conference Presentations:

- Herold, I., Bethmann, A., Pettinicchi, Y. (January 2024). Investigating Consent Rates for Linking Survey and Administrative Data in a Multilingual, Multinational, and Multicultural Context Presented at NIMLAS Plenary Meeting, online. https://nimlas.isr.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/NIMLAS_2023Pilot_HeroldEtAl.pdf.
- Bethmann, A. (March 2024). Comparative analyses of consent rates in SHARE. Presented at CSDI Workshop, Berlin. <https://zenodo.org/records/11064217>.
- Pettinicchi, Y., Herold, I. (May 2024). SHARE-CoRaL. Presented at SHARE Meeting, Cyprus.
- Herold, I., Irving, J. (September 2024). SHARE-CoRaL. Presented at NIMLAS Working Group Meeting, online. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qfU4Zomxg1SLMF50mbUNp5Y8E2wAATX_M2LETnZwruc.
- Irving, J. (November 2024). SHARE-CoRaL. Poster presented at the SHARE-Gateway User Conference, Berlin. ([Attachment 1](#)).
- Herold, I., (December 2024). SHARE-CoRaL. Presented at SHARE Meeting, Innsbruck.
- Herold, I., Irving, J. (December 2024). Cross-European Attitudes to Data Linkage: Who Consents? Presented at NIMLAS Plenary Meeting, online. <https://nimlas.isr.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/NIMLAS-Dec.-2024-Harold-Imke.pdf>.

Attachment 1: Irving, J. (November 2024). SHARE-CoRaL. Poster presented at the SHARE-Gateway User Conference, Berlin.



SHARE-CORAL



INVESTIGATING CONSENT RATES FOR LINKING SURVEY AND ADMINISTRATIVE DATA IN A MULTILINGUAL, MULTINATIONAL, AND MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT

TEAM: ARNE BETHMANN, IMKE HEROLD, JESSICA IRVING, YURI PETTINICCHI

There are population differences in hypothetical data linkage consent across countries and languages

Introduction

- Which factors make individuals and populations more likely to consent to data linkage?
- Some countries are polylingual, some languages are poly-country → harness this to explore impact of question language
- We are investigating hypothetical willingness (28 countries) and existing linkage rates (seven countries) in Europe

Method

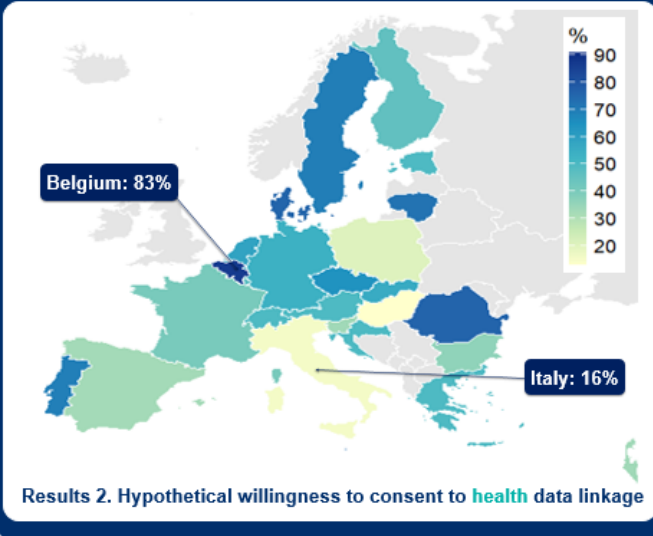
- Hypothetical questions added to Wave 10 Field Rehearsal for 27 European countries and Israel, referencing four different types of administrative data (Results 1)

“Given the conditions of absolute confidentiality, anonymity and academic use only, in case that SHARE would invite you to link your interview responses to administrative information on [data domain] in the future, would you be willing to give your consent?”
Yes | No

- Descriptive statistics for rates of existing linkages and hypothetical consent willingness
- Regression modelling to unpick demographic, linguistic, and cultural aspects to consent

Results 1. Average hypothetical consent rates across countries

Domain	Consent given (%)
Employment history	52.3%
Health	52.2%
Pensions and social security	50.6%
Income and taxes	44.4%



Results 3. (N = 1,957)

- Men 1.30-1.35x more likely to consent than women (sensitivity analysis found this is driven by Israel, Slovenia, Switzerland)
- No effect of age or education years

Next steps

Identify between-country differences by linking to SHARE and Eurostat data

- trust in institutions,
- personality traits,
- other socio-demographics.

Acknowledgements

NIMLAS Award (R24 AG077012-01)
Thanks also to the SHARE Country Teams for ensuring question relevance and cross-language / legal comparability

Results 4. Health data linkage hypothetical consent willingness rates vary by language

