

Multi-Item Scale for Project:

European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) (English Version)

Question Text:

English version: Regarding your business, do you...?

German version: Stimmen Sie in Bezug auf Ihre Firma den folgenden Aussagen zu?

Answer Categories:

English version:

Yes

No

Don't know

Refusal

German version:

Ja

Nein

Weiß nicht

Verweigert

Findings for Multi-Item Scale:

Online Probing:

Only respondents who reported being self-employed received this question. Item C was used to set the quota for self-employed respondents with or without employees. Per country, at least 20 respondents with employees should be in the sample to achieve heterogeneity within the group of self-employed.

In question 10a, Item A and Item C were probed to discriminate the group of self-employed respondents further.

Cognitive Interviews:

Question 10 is asked to all respondents who identify as self-employed in their main paid job. This applies to six respondents in the German and to six respondents in the Polish pretest. In the cognitive pretest, the question was additionally asked to respondents who identified as employed in their main paid job, but as self-employed in an additional job. This applies to five respondents in the German and to one respondent in the Polish pretest. For these respondents, the question was asked at the end of the questionnaire to avoid confusion by switching between questions about the main paid job and additional

job.

Respondents whose main paid job is self-employed are marked in orange in the tables to provide distinction between respondents who are mainly self-employed, and those who work in self-employment on the side.

Recommendations for Multi-Item Scale:

Question: The German translation of this question uses a different grammatical structure than the English original. Only the German question text is a full sentence. This should be made consistent.

Answer categories: No changes recommended.

Cognitive Techniques:

General Probing, Specific Probing. (OP)

General/Elaborative Probing, Comprehension Probing. (CI)

All Items for Question(Question Text):

English version: Regarding your business, do you...?

German version: Stimmen Sie in Bezug auf Ihre Firma den folgenden Aussagen zu?

-> Tested Items:

Item Text:

English version:

A. Have the authority to hire or dismiss employees.

German version:

A. Ich bin befugt, Mitarbeiter einzustellen und zu entlassen.

Recommendations:

The quality and benefit of this item are difficult to assess. On the one hand, most respondents demonstrate a correct understanding of the item. However, both studies show that in practice, the necessity of hiring employees is much more accessible than

the theoretical option to hire. Consequently, some respondents confound the item with Item C (having employees). Omitting this item is an option.

Findings:

Online Probing:

With regard to Item A, across the three countries between 62% and 82% of the respondents say they have the authority to hire or dismiss employees. In response to a general probe asking them to explain their answer further, 86% of these respondents note that they are the owner (or one of the co-owners) of their company, have the authority to hire or dismiss employees, and (in many cases) have done so in the past:

- "I am the owner of the company, so I hire people and if necessary also dismiss them." (R319DE)
- "I am the managing director of this business and it's a small one so I do pretty much most of the things including hiring or dismissing." (R248UK)

The remaining 14% argue that, in principle, they would have the authority to do so; however, they did not yet have the necessity or the financial means to do so:

- "If I had any I would because I am the owner. But I don't have any and I didn't have adequate options in the previous question." (R19UK)
- "If I wanted to, I could hire and dismiss employees. But there is no need to do so." (R330PL)

Those respondents who said they did not have the authority to hire or dismiss employees received the following specific probe: "Does that mean that you do not have the authority or that you do not have the necessity to hire or dismiss employees (e.g. because you are working on your own and you do not need to employ co-workers)?" The answers to this probe can be divided into two groups. The first group (14%) explains that they simply do not have the authority to hire or dismiss employees (e.g., R454UK: "I don't have the authority."). The other group (86%) states that they solely work on their own and do not need to or want to employ co-workers:

- "I work on my own. I don't want to employ anybody else." (R43UK)
- "No necessity as working alone." (R623PL)

This latter group thus strongly resembles those respondents who answered "yes" to Q9, Item A but argue that they do not have the necessity to hire/dismiss employees (even though they would have the authority to do so). In conclusion, Item A does not differentiate well between self-employed who actually do hire/dismiss employees and those who do not have the authority (vs. necessity) to do so.

Cognitive Interviews:

In the German pretest, six respondents answered that they have the authority to hire or dismiss employees, of which five are self-employed as their main job. Four respondents answered that they do not have the authority, of which three are self-employed in their additional job. These respondents all work as one-man freelancers for mainly one company, and do not consider themselves to be "running a business" in that sense (DE11, DE14). The mainly self-employed who answered that he does not have the authority to hire or dismiss is the respondent who mainly takes care of his parents (DE03). One respondent wasn't certain from a legal point of view as she is running a "microenterprise" and chose "Don't know" (DE16).

Having the authority to hire or dismiss employees is correctly understood by all respondents, regardless of whether or not they themselves have this authority. It is associated with having the right to sign binding contracts (DE01), having the responsibility of deciding whether personnel is necessary (DE02), being responsible for reaching a decision on whom to hire and justifying this decision (DE09). Not needing someone else's permission to hire is also essential for several respondents (DE08, DE13).

In the Polish pretest, six respondents answered that they have the authority to hire or dismiss employees, of which four are self-employed as their main job. With one exception, all respondents understand the term "Having the authority to hire or dismiss employees" correctly. This respondent, who is self-employed as his main paid job, answered that he does not have the authority. He justifies his answer with the fact that he does not have any employees. When further probed whether he could employ people being the business owner, he replied: *"Theoretically yes, I guess so, yet I never considered that in this situation, I did not think about it"* (PL09).

Question Topic:

Job and career/ Job situation & professional activity

Construct:

Details on self-employment

Item Text:

English version:

B. Get paid an agreed fee on a weekly or monthly basis.

German version:

B. Mir wird wöchentlich oder monatlich eine vereinbarte Vergütung gezahlt.

Recommendations:

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Findings:

Cognitive Interviews:

DE05 voices confusion about the item: "This is about my self-employed work? Well, no, how could I? I have day's takings from my self-employed work. How could I speak of an agreed fee? There is no fee, there's the money in my cash register, and I have to pay the business and myself from that, period. You can't ask me about my salary or something as a self-employed. Well, maybe if it's a big enterprise, then you might have a regular salary. I think that could work."

Question Topic:

Job and career/ Job situation & professional activity

Construct:

Details on self-employment

Item Text:

English version:

C. Have employees (working for you).

German version:

C. Ich habe Mitarbeiter (die für mich arbeiten).

Recommendations:

Remove brackets in question text.

Findings:

Online Probing:

When answering Item C, the majority of respondents in all three countries (between 56% and 65%) say they do not have employees working for them. Those who have employees

working for them received a general probe and described the responsibilities of these employees as well as how many they employed, for example:

- "Five employees. Two lawyers and three legal assistants." (R319 DE)
- "Five employees. Two lawyers and three legal assistants." (R319 DE)

Cognitive Interviews:

In the German pretest, a similar distribution can be seen as with item A. Of the five respondents who have employees working for them, four are self-employed in their main paid job. In contrast, of the six respondents who do not have employees, only two are mainly self-employed – and of these one is his parent's caretaker (DE03).

In the Polish pretest, three respondents answered that they have employees. All of those are self-employed in their main paid job. Four respondents do not have employees, of which three are self-employed as their main paid job.

In both countries, all respondents give plausible answers, either explaining whom they have hired for their business, or explaining that they cannot afford to hire, and therefore do not have employees. The doctor (DE10) names her receptionists. One respondent explains that they are two founders, with three employees and several freelancers (DE09). One respondent differentiates that although he sometimes leads and trains colleagues, this does not make them his employees (DE01).

Question Topic:

Job and career/ Job situation & professional activity

Construct:

Details on self-employment

Item Text:

English version:

D. Generally have more than one client or customer.

German version:

D. Generell hat meine Firma mehr als einen Kunden oder Klienten.

Recommendations:

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Findings:**Cognitive Interviews:**

DE09 points out that this question could be sensitive for some freelancers, as answering with "no" may seem like disguised employment and thus semi-legal.

Question Topic:

Job and career/ Job situation & professional activity

Construct:

Details on self-employment