

Multi-Item Scale for Project:

German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES) 2021 (English Version)

Question Text:

Now various statements follow that some people agree with, but others disagree with. What about you? For each statement, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with it.

[Nun folgen verschiedene Aussagen, denen manche Leute zustimmen, die andere aber auch ablehnen. Wie ist das bei Ihnen? Geben Sie bitte zu jeder Aussage an, inwieweit Sie ihr zustimmen oder nicht.]

Answer Categories:

Completely disagree *[stimme überhaupt nicht zu]*

Rather disagree *[stimme eher nicht zu]*

Neither agree nor disagree *[teils/teils]*

Rather agree *[stimme eher zu]*

Completely agree *[stimme voll und ganz zu]*

Findings for Multi-Item Scale:

One respondent commented on the direction of the answer scale, which she initially read and answered the wrong way around, as she had expected it to be the other way around:

"I noticed that when answering the first line I wanted to take 'rather agree', but strangely enough I now put a dot there at 'rather disagree' and corrected that afterwards. I then noticed this with the second question, because I wanted to give the same answer and saw that I had put a wrong dot. [...] I would have expected the scale to be the other way around." (TP 03)

Recommendations for Multi-Item Scale:

Question: We suggest the following rewording:

"Now a few statements follow that some people agree with, but others disagree with. How about you? How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?"

Response format: If necessary, it would be worth considering reversing the scale poles, i.e., from "completely agree" to "completely disagree". This should then be consistent across the entire survey.

Cognitive Techniques:

Comprehension Probing

Multi-Item Scale documented in ZIS (DOI):

<https://zis.gesis.org/DoiId/zis228>

All Items for Question(Question Text):

Now various statements follow that some people agree with, but others disagree with. What about you? For each statement, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with it.

[Nun folgen verschiedene Aussagen, denen manche Leute zustimmen, die andere aber auch ablehnen. Wie ist das bei Ihnen? Geben Sie bitte zu jeder Aussage an, inwieweit Sie ihr zustimmen oder nicht.]

-> Tested Items:

Item Text:

a. Troublemakers should be shown clearly that they are unwanted in society. *[Unruhe-stifter sollten deutlich zu spüren bekommen, dass sie in der Gesellschaft unerwünscht sind.]*

Recommendations:

Since the test persons understood the term "troublemakers" to mean both people who move outside the democratic rules and those who move within the democratic rules, we recommend specifying the term.

Findings:

How do respondents interpret the term "troublemaker"?

Half of the respondents agreed "rather" ($n = 3$) or "completely" ($n = 2$) with the statement, two respondents placed themselves in the middle answer category, and three respondents "rather disagreed" ($n = 2$) or "completely disagreed" ($n = 1$) with the statement, so there is a slight tendency toward agreement.

The majority ($n = 6$) of the test persons understood the term "troublemakers" to mean

criminals, delinquents, troublemakers, activists and demonstrators ready to use violence:

- *"Criminals, thugs. That's what I thought of. Or people who incite others." (TP 07)*
- *"The people who incite, panic. Or just with the lateral thinking movement. To me, those are troublemakers. Or with the Corona opponents." (TP 08)*
- *"Troublemakers to me are lawbreakers. To me, those are the people who chained themselves to any highways with bright enthusiasm today or yesterday." (TP 09)*
- *"People with revolutionary drives who take to the streets." (TP 10)*

Another part of the test persons (TP 03, 04, 06, 09) found the term "troublemakers" unclear/imprecise and had stumbled over it while answering the question themselves:

- *"Well, the term troublemaker is difficult to grasp, also the terminology that someone is undesirable is difficult to grasp. It's understood directly that maybe someone should be deported. [...] I don't know if the question really describes what it wants." (TP 03)*
- *"Exactly, that's what I stumbled upon. Troublemakers - that can be all kinds of things. It can be any kind of criminal offenders or those who only cause trouble. They can be minor offenses. [...]" (TP 06)*

For the most part, the term "troublemakers" was understood to mean people who were outside the democratic rules, but people who were within the democratic rules were also mentioned. The understanding of the term had no systematic influence on the answer to the question.

Question Topic:

Politics/ Attitudes, appraisals, & ideologies

Construct:

Authoritarianism, populism, detachment

Item Text:

b. A strong leader is good for Germany, even if he doesn't always play by the rules to move things forward. *[Ein starker Führer ist gut für Deutschland, auch wenn er sich nicht immer an die Regeln hält, um die Dinge voranzubringen.]*

Recommendations:

We suggest the following rewording:

"Having a strong leading force in government is good for Germany, even if he or she occasionally decides things on his or her own to move it forward."

Findings:

How do respondents perceive the term "strong leader"?

The majority of persons "completely disagreed" with the statement ($n = 7$) or "rather disagreed" ($n = 1$), with one subject each locating themselves in the middle answer category or "rather agreeing" with the statement.

When asked what they understood by a "strong leader," eight respondents mentioned the reference to the Nazi era and Hitler:

- *"Now I would have thought of Adolf Hitler." (TP 02)*
- *"When you hear the term 'Führer,' I think you can't help but think of the Third Reich." (TP 04)*
- *"'Strong leader' is a bit of a problem in Germany. With that, you immediately slide into the right-wing corner. But that can just as well be a strong left-wing leader." (TP 09)*

Furthermore, the test persons understood a "strong leader" to mean a leader or an (un-democratic) leader, especially in politics, but also in general:

- *"Someone who is particularly good at leading [and] guiding a group of people or institution and all sorts of other things." (TP 03)*
- *"You can also understand it as a leader. [...] When it says 'leader' and then 'even if he doesn't always follow the rules to move things forward,' I think directly of a leader, like [a] chancellor who doesn't follow the basic laws [...] [or] constitution." (TP 04)*
- *"It is directly explained what is meant by a strong leader, in the context. Meaning, that rules can also be broken. Therefore, it is an undemocratic leader." (TP 05)*

Four persons also expressed a desire for a different wording:

- *"Maybe you could change that with the 'leader'. Something with a 'strong leading force' perhaps, because when you see 'Führer for Germany' now, you just think directly of Hitler." (TP 01)*

- *"I don't like that expression so much. A strong leader is already good for Germany, if [...] [he] really takes things into his own hands, whether that's climate change or that [...] the middle and lower classes are better off [...]. If he doesn't always play by the rules, that's okay too, if he can really move things forward. [...] But in that case it's too general for me, because it can also go the other way."* (TP 08)

Question Topic:

Politics/ Attitudes, appraisals, & ideologies

Construct:

Authoritarianism, populism, detachment

Item Text:

c. The values of people like me are becoming less and less important in society. [*Die Wertvorstellungen von Leuten wie mir werden in der Gesellschaft immer unwichtiger.*]

Recommendations:

No changes recommended.

Findings:

What do respondents mean by "people like me"?

All respondents selected, relatively evenly, one of the three middle response categories. One third "rather agreed" with the statement ($n = 3$), the second third chose the answer category "neither agree nor disagree" ($n = 3$) and the last third "rather disagreed" with the statement ($n = 4$). Under "people like me" the majority of the test persons understood the average Joe, who comes from the middle class, with average income:

- *"Someone who comes from the social middle [...]. Funnily enough, you relatively quickly relate that to the salary range you're in, I think. Whereby, depending on the life situation, I would perhaps also refer to other things. [...] Now currently, I would have put that, the group I come from, under that."* (TP 03)
- *"Normal citizens, quite simply average citizens, normal earners."* (TP 07)
- *"People like me. I'm going to assume that I'm middle class, a normal citizen, a blameless citizen. People who are as blameless as I am. Going about their business, earning their wages and making the best of it."* (TP 08)

In addition, some of the persons summarized the same world political attitudes as well as their age group among them:

- *"[People] who have roughly my values. Also in a broader sense. People, from 20 to 40, who are politically left-wing and concerned about the climate."* (TP 04)
- *"'People like me' then tend to be people like me who are more liberal-minded and care about solidarity."* (TP 05)

Two persons expressed their ambiguity about what was meant by values and the statement itself:

- *"I'm not sure if everyone can relate to the term value concepts that much if that's not listed. I could imagine that there are many different ideas about what values mean in today's society. And that also concerns the term 'equal values', even if it is difficult to put it under a different term."*(TP 03)
- *"I find it a funny question. Because I have the feeling that value concepts are becoming more and more important in the individual-political society and opinions are, after all, more and more polarized. I would ask myself, for what. I can't really answer the question. I don't know what is meant by unimportant. Because I would already say that the values I have are more and more important for society and other opinions are also important, but whether they then make a difference in society or how the other people in society see it, I don't know."* (TP 04)

Question Topic:

Politics/ Attitudes, appraisals, & ideologies

Construct:

Authoritarianism, populism, detachment

Item Text:

d. Ordinary citizens share the same values and interests. [*Gewöhnliche Bürger teilen dieselben Werte und Interessen.*]

Recommendations:

We propose the following rewording:

"The majority of society shares the same values and interests in Germany."

Findings:

What do respondents mean by "ordinary citizens"?

Four respondents "rather disagreed" ($n = 3$) or "completely disagreed" ($n = 1$) with the statement, four others "neither disagreed nor agreed", one respondent selected "rather agree" and another said she could not specify: *"The normal citizens' - [...] that's just stupid. I can't answer that because I don't know what is meant by 'normal' in that case."* (TP 05) Three other test persons (TP 01, 06, 09) also stated that they had had problems with the question or wording:

- *"Can't do anything with it. I don't know what a 'normal citizen' is. I don't know, probably kind of the typical working class, not necessarily educated citizen. I can't do that much with the [question]. They can't [have] the same value[s] for me because they are individual people, they can't be the same at all."* (TP 01)
- *"There are adjectives missing. The same political values maybe, or the same sporting values. [...] They have the same basic consensus when it comes to social values, but how they live them out is a world of difference. It's about democracy or freedom, for example. Freedom is important to me; I live it out differently than someone else. One person says freedom is being able to cheat, the other says freedom for me is being able to express my political opinion. [...] I think the fourth question is nonsense. Nothing can come out of that."* (TP 09)

Under "normal citizen" the test persons understood again above all the normal consumer, the average citizen from the working class group:

- *"The average, so to speak, normal citizen, the law-abiding, the worker, the normal society."* (TP 06)
- *"Normal citizens, who just don't stand out with any agitation or nasty stuff, who go about their work normally and don't exactly stand out."* (TP 08)

Other test persons generally included all German citizens and democratically minded people:

- *"For me, normal citizens are all people with [a] citizenship in Germany, that is, [with] German citizenship."* (TP 03)
- *"Citizens, oh wonder, who stand on the free, democratic basic order, that is, on the constitutional state."* (TP 10)

Question Topic:

Politics/ Attitudes, appraisals, & ideologies

Construct:

Authoritarianism, populism, detachment