

Question in Project:

European Working Conditions Survey 2024

Question Topic:

Job and career/ Job situation & professional activity

Construct:

Gender of immediate boss

General Information:

Note: The item was tested in English, German and Polish.

Question Text:

English version:

What is the gender of your immediate boss?

German version:

Welches Geschlecht hat Ihr/e direkte/r Vorgesetzte/r?

Instruction:

English version:

If you have more than one boss, please consider the one who has most responsibility for your work or tasks.

German version:

Falls Sie mehr als eine/n direkte/n Vorgesetzte/n haben, denken Sie bitte an die Person, die für Ihre Arbeit oder Tätigkeiten hauptverantwortlich ist.

Answer Categories:

English version:

Male

Female

Other

I have no boss

German version:

Männlich

Weiblich

Anderes

Ich habe keine/n Vorgesetzte/n

Cognitive Techniques:

Web probing: Category Selection Probing

Cognitive interviews: Specific Probing

Findings for Question:

Findings Web Probing:

Question 62 was only shown to employed respondents. With one exception, all respondents answered the question on their immediate boss' gender (see Table 60). In all three countries, the majority of bosses was male (65%, $n = 322$), though there were no significant differences between countries. In total, nine respondents indicated that they had no boss. These respondents were asked to explain the reason for this response in an open-ended probing question (P1_Q63). Four respondents did not give a substantive reason, simply repeating that they had no boss or leaving the text field empty. Of the other five, one explained that he/she worked in an "*independent position reporting directly to the company director*", three explained that they were part of the management board or the director of a company, and one claimed to be self-employed (in contradiction to the respondent's answer to Q7).

Findings Cognitive Interviews:

In Germany, none of the cognitive interview respondents who self-identified as being employed indicated having no boss while in Poland, two respondents (PL07, PL10) indicated having no boss (see Table 61). Both explained that they were co-owners of a company with limited liability and that no one was superior to them:

- *"I do not have any boss, because I am one of the company owners. We signed an employment contract with each other – my husband [and I]."*
- *"I am a finance director of a foundation where I am also a vice-president. There is a president, but we are on equal terms. And there is no hierarchy for us. Although, in fact, because the employment contract is signed with me, the president signs it, because I could not sign it with myself."*

How did respondents react to the gender-inclusive wording of the question text?

In Germany, eight of the nine respondents receiving question 62 stated that they found the gender-inclusive wording "(rather) good" and one respondent answered that it "doesn't matter" whether both or only one gender was mentioned. In Poland, seven respondents stated that they found the gender-inclusive wording "(rather) good", two respondents answered with "doesn't matter" and one respondent found it "(rather) bad". Most respondents argued that the gender-inclusive wording did not discriminate against any gender and that it has moved with time because people are already used to this kind of wording:

- *"It would be discriminatory if you had a female boss and only the masculine form would be given"* (DE08)
- *"We are used to reading it like this by now, and I think it's good that it's formulated like this"* (DE10)
- *"Bosses are not only men, they are also women, and I think that the use of both forms is absolutely correct."* (PL12, "Rather good")

The respondent who stated that he found the gender-inclusive wording "(rather) bad" explained that he believed that using both forms at the same time artificially lengthened the question.

How did respondents react to the non-binary response option?

Regarding the non-binary response option, six German respondents stated that they found the non-binary response option "(rather) appropriate", one participant found it "(rather) inappropriate" and two indicated that it "doesn't matter" whether a third response options was provided or not. In Poland, four respondents stated that they found the non-binary response option "(rather) appropriate", two participants found it "(rather) inappropriate" and the remaining four indicated that it "doesn't matter" whether a third response options was provided or not.

Those finding the non-binary response option appropriate or being indifferent argued that the answer option "other" would not bother them and that it was possible that the gender of the boss could not be clearly assigned. Therefore, the option should be available:

- *"It doesn't hurt me. When your boss is 'other', you do not have to make a decision."* (DE06)
- *"I find it appropriate because one's boss could be neither male nor female. Otherwise, you couldn't select it if it applied."* (DE10)

One respondent (PL03), who was against showing a non-binary response option in question 62, explained that for him there were only two genders, namely men and women.

Additionally, one respondent (PL16), who answered that it "doesn't matter" also explained that there are only two genders. One respondent (PL01) did not understand what the third gender "other" meant. Another respondent who was against showing a non-binary response option in question 62 (DE02) explained that she found it inappropriate to describe someone else's gender as "other":

"I think it's strange because everyone can decide for themselves. I would find it strange to call someone else 'other'. Normally you don't know that. The person can say that about themselves, but I find it strange to be called that by a third party."
(DE02)

Summary:

- Based on the findings from web probing and the cognitive interviews, the answer category "I have no boss" is a response option that is rarely selected, but an important category to maintain even when this question is only presented to employed respondents.
- Based on the cognitive interviews, most respondents either found it appropriate to use a gender-inclusive wording in the question text and to provide a non-binary response option or were indifferent to it.

Recommendations:

No changes recommended.