Question in Project:

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

Question Topic:

Digitalization/ Use of digital systems

Construct:

Frequency of internet use for private purposes

General Information:

*Note: The item was tested in German. This is an English translation of the original German wording.

Question Text:

How often do you use the Internet for private purposes, whether by means of a computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone?
[Wie häufig nutzen Sie das Internet für private Zwecke, sei es mittels eines Computers, Laptops, Tablets oder Smartphones?]

Answer Categories:

several times a day *[mehrmals täglich]*
once a day *[einmal täglich]*
several times a week *[mehrmals in der Woche]*
never *[nie]*
Don't know [Weiß nicht]

Cognitive Techniques:

General Probing, Specific Probing, Difficulty Probing, Comprehension Probing

Findings for Question:

1.What types of use do the respondents have in mind when answering?
Apart from one respondent (TP 07), all of them referred to using their smartphone,

computer, laptop or tablet several times a day. When asked how easy or difficult it was for the test persons to assign themselves to an answer category, eight answered "very easy" and two "rather easy". None of the test persons had problems distinguishing between the answer categories "once a day" and "several times a day". When asked about the purposes of internet use, the test persons named social media, games, searching for information or watching series:

- *"Social media, games, looking up train connections, I'll say now, so, for a lot of things, not just one thing."* (TP 02)

- *"Mainly for information purposes, research for work. Quite a lot also via [the] smartphone, via apps, Facebook, social media."* (TP 03)

- *"For example, social media, messenger. Mainly social media and googling things, like how long has store XY been open, or googling Christmas presents."* (TP 04)

When asked, three of the ten test persons (TP 06, 07, 09) stated that they had not thought about using apps on their smartphones or reading and writing messages via messengers such as WhatsApp when answering the question. Since persons 06 and 09 selected the answer category "several times a day" even without considering their smartphone use, not considering it did not affect their answer to the question. And test person 07's answer ("once a day") also seemed appropriate, since she stated that she had not thought about smartphone use, but that she used the internet mainly via her laptop.

2. Are the terms laptop, tablet and smartphone sufficiently familiar?
All persons provided correct definitions of each term, which referred to the laptop as a "movable" and "mobile" device, the tablet as a portable device for internet use, and the smartphone as a cell phone with Internet access.

3. Should "Internet-enabled TVs" or "smart TVs" be included?
When asked whether internet-enabled TVs or smart TVs were used by the test persons, six test persons answered "yes" and the rest "no". Only one of the test persons who used these devices had taken them into account in their answer. The remaining five had not done so. The reason most often given for this was that they had *"only thought about the four specifications that are in the first sentence"* (TP 02) and that they had *"not thought about what other devices there are."* (TP 03). Now in retrospect, it would occur to respondent 03, for example, that Alexa also permanently used the Internet, and respondent 05 noted, *"If indeed [Internet-enabled TVs and] smart TVs are also meant by that, then maybe that should be listed."*

4. How easy is it for respondents to differentiate between private and non-private use?
Almost all respondents ($n = 9$) referred mainly to private use of the Internet when answering the question. In some cases, use in a work context was also taken into account,

but this had no influence on the answer to the question (i.e., in all cases, the Internet was used several times a day both privately and in a work context):

- *"Private use for me means[,] [...] when I am at home and want to watch something on my TV via Netflix, for example. That's what I understand by 'private purposes'. When I'm on Face-book, that's private purposes."* (TP 01)

- *"I had to jump right back because I think I [...] overread 'private purposes.' I sort of just registered, internet and computer, laptop, smartphone, then had to think for a moment, [...] because I thought about my work life for a moment, [...] read [the question then] again, [saw] 'private purposes' and was able to think about the follow-up question again because of that."* (TP 03)

- *"I thought about my normal daily routine, what one does. It starts with, how do I get to work, which route is currently the most favorable, so to speak, in terms of traffic jams, to quickly checking messages, to - yes, it's not separable, the business and private mails, they all come to [the] same account."* (TP 09)

One respondent (TP 06) had mainly thought of Internet use in a work context when answering the question. However, since this respondent stated that he was self-employed in the online industry, it stands to reason that the boundaries between personal and business use may become blurred. This also became clear in the further course of the interview:

"Well, I also watch a lot of videos, so that adds up. It's hard to say, but I think it's difficult, it's parallel. I'm self-employed and watch videos in the background while I'm working. So I have to take that into account as well. [...] I would still say that it is then for private purposes."

Recommendations:

Question: We recommend listing "Internet-enabled TVs or smart TVs" as further examples, if these are to be included. In addition, the term "private purposes" could be underlined to distinguish the question more clearly from Internet use in a work context.

Response format: No changes recommended.