Question in Project:

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

Question Topic:

Digitalization/ Use of digital systems

Construct:

Duration of Internet use for private purposes (open vs. closed)

General Information:

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

Question Text:

Version a. For how long approximately do you use the Internet for private purposes on a usual day? Please provide the time in hours and minutes.
[Wie lange ungefähr nutzen Sie an einem gewöhnlichen Tag das Internet für private Zwecke? Bitte geben Sie die Zeit in Stunden und Minuten an.]

Version b.On average, how long per day do you use the Internet for personal purposes? Please estimate the time in hours and minutes .
[Wie lange pro Tag nutzen Sie das Internet im Durchschnitt für private Zwecke? Bitte schätzen Sie die Zeit in Stunden und Minuten.]

Instruction:

Note if no information is given:
Please give an answer. If you are unsure, please estimate. *[Hinweistext, wenn keine Angabe gemacht wird: Bitte machen Sie eine Angabe. Wenn Sie unsicher sind, schätzen Sie bitte.]*

Answer Categories:

Hours: *[Stunden:]*
Minutes: *[Minuten:]*

Cognitive Techniques:

General Probing, Difficulty Probing, Comprehension Probing

Findings for Question:

Questions 2a and 2b assess private Internet usage time. While question 2a asks about the time spent using the Internet on an average day, question 2b asks about the average time spent using the Internet per day.

1. How do respondents answer the question?
Most respondents ($n = 7$) reported that they had made a rough estimate of how long they would use the device:

- *"I was thinking about approximately how long you could be on the cell phone [...]. You're on the smartphone for about half the day, it feels like. [...] Because everything you do on the smartphone by now only works with Internet."* (TP 02, response: 6 hours)

- *"So, on average [...] I come there, all in all, to the two to three hours, [...]. [That] can be an hour or a few minutes longer [on] one day and [on] another day, if you're out a lot or go out in the evening, it's probably less."* (TP 08, response: 2 hours and 45 minutes).

Three of the ten test persons explained that they were shown the usage time by their smartphone or with the help of an app on the smartphone and had oriented themselves to this value.

2. How difficult is it for the respondents to state the estimated value?
Since all test persons stated that they used the Internet on a daily basis, they were all able to explain how they arrived at their answer. When asked how easy or difficult it was for them to determine the time of use, eight respondents said they found it "very easy" or "rather easy". Only two persons found it "rather difficult" to arrive at an exact time.
Five test persons (TP 02, 03, 05, 06, 07) left it at the indication of a number of hours. Test person 06, for example, justified this by saying that *"[the minutes] can't be defined so precisely."* She could only specify it by the hour.
The other half of the test persons gave a number of minutes on their own initiative in addition to the number of hours. One test person (TP 08) explained this, for example, by saying that she would come to two to three hours depending on the day of the week and in this case would write down two hours and 45 minutes.

3. What is understood by "an ordinary day"?
In general, the test persons understood "an ordinary day" to mean a working day or a

normal working day from Monday to Friday. Only test person 09, who is self-employed, additionally (partially) included the weekend:

"I am self-employed, for me every day is an ordinary day. I'll put it this way, there are also times on Sunday when you research something on eBay for two or three hours. I would describe an ordinary day as a working day, Monday to Saturday." (TP 09)

4. Which of the two alternatives 2a and 2b is more understandable or easier to answer?

The majority of the test persons ($n = 8$) answered both questions in the same way. Only two test persons (TP 05, 08) provided longer usage times for question 2b, since they included weekend usage here:

- *"What was the difference from before?"* [looks at question 2a again] *"Ah O. K., now I understand the difference - 'on average'. Yes, that's where the weekend comes in, so to speak."* (TP 05, response 2a: 1 hour, response 2b: 1 hour 15 minutes)

- *"What, again?"* [repeats the question] *"Per day is then no longer everyday, but every day? [...] [By] 'per day' I include the weekend and now just take the average from the workday and weekend."* (TP 08, answer 2a: 2 hours 45 minutes, answer 2b: 4 hours).

When asked which of the two questions had been more understandable or easier to an answer, a rather heterogeneous opinion emerged. Half of the test persons voted for "both equally well", three for the second question (2b) being easier (TP 04, 08, 10), and two test persons answered that the first question (2a) was easier (TP 06, 09).

The three persons who found the second question easier gave different reasons for this. Subject 04 justified her answer by saying that question 2b was more general. Subject 08 felt that the phrase "per day" was more comprehensive because it included the workday and everyday life as well as the weekend. Subject 10 justified her choice by saying, among other things, that the wording in question 2b was more appropriate for the question about private purposes.

The two persons who preferred Question 2a also had different reasons for doing so. Subject 06 explained that she found it difficult to calculate the average per day because each day was different. Subject 09 stated that she did not like the sentence structure in question 2b; the sentence wording was simpler shortened ("How long per day do you use the Internet?"), but no longer with the addition of "on average."

Recommendations:

Question: To ensure that an average of use across all days is thought of (including the weekend), we recommend using question 2b in a slightly modified form:
"On average, how long per day do you use the Internet for personal purposes?"

Response format: No changes recommended.