

Question in Project:

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

Question Topic:

Politics/ Attitudes, appraisals, & ideologies

Construct:

Probability of the FDP entering the Bundestag

General Information:

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

Question Text:

How likely do you think it is that the FDP will get enough votes to enter the Bundestag in the upcoming federal election?

[Für wie wahrscheinlich halten Sie es, dass die FDP bei der bevorstehenden Bundestagswahl genügend Stimmen bekommt, um in den Bundestag einzuziehen?]

Answer Categories:

definitely *[bestimmt]*

probably *[wahrscheinlich]*

maybe *[vielleicht]*

probably not *[wahrscheinlich nicht]*

definitely not *[bestimmt nicht]*

Don't know *[weiß nicht]*

Cognitive Techniques:

Comprehension Probing

Findings for Question:

1. How is the answer scale interpreted?

Most test persons understood the answer options in the sense of the question as a categorical scale, in which the answer option "maybe" represents the most open outcome:

"'Definitely' would be if it were already clear now that the FDP could move in. 'Probably' I see directly below; [that means] that one could foresee a tendency. 'Maybe' for me [...] is that both ex-its are still open. 'Probably not' [means] that there is still a small probability that it could happen, but it is more likely that the FDP will not enter the Bundestag. And 'definitely not' is when it would already be clear now that the FDP will not move in."(TP 03)

Two test persons (TP 04, 10) defined the scale points via percentage values:

"'Maybe' [is] 50% for me, so, it could be, it could not be. 'Definitely' would be 100% for me, 'definitely not' 0%. 'Probably' is at 75%." (TP 04)

However, problems with the response options became apparent. First, one respondent criticized the lack of linguistic fit of the answer scale to the question wording:

"The answer 'definitely' does not match 'how likely' [in the question text]. 'Probably' with 'how likely' does not go. 'Maybe' does not fit with 'how likely' either. The scale must [run] from 'very likely' to 'not at all likely'" (TP 09)

This respondent refused to answer based on the scale. When asked if the "don't know" option applied to her, she stated that she very much knew, but could not fit her answer into the scale.

Second, a couple of persons criticized the use of terms that were synonymous (and therefore not differentiating) for them in the response scale. One respondent criticized the non-differentiation of "definitely" and "probably". She also advocated labeling the scale from "very likely" to "very unlikely."

"I would [specify] 'very likely' and then 'likely' and not 'definitely.' [...] The answer choices are a little strange. [...] To tone down 'probably' and then still get the clear yeses and noes is difficult. [...] Maybe you could take a scale where on the left is 'very likely' and on the right is 'very unlikely'." (TP 05)

Another respondent was able to differentiate between the response options "definitely" and "probably," but did not feel there was much difference between "probably" and "maybe."

"'Definitely' [is] another word for 'in any case' they will move in. 'Probably' is that it's just likely. [...] 'Maybe' is actually almost the same thing." (TP 02)

Third, two respondents criticized the fact that a middle category was offered. This is all the more noteworthy because one of these persons vacillated between adjacent response options:

- *"I can't decide whether more 'probably' or 'probably not'. I think 'maybe' is redundant." (TP 05)*
- *"'Definitely' [means] that it's a hundred percent, so, I'm thinking there in totals that they have over 5%, yes or no. 'Definitely not' [means that] they just [get] below the 5%. 'Maybe' - I don't see any percentage points behind that, that's just a contingency. With 'definitely' and 'probably' I think of number categories, but 'maybe' is deposited without numbers. [...] I also don't understand why you write 'maybe' there. What is that supposed to be in between? [...] 'Maybe' doesn't fit in there at all, that's a completely different category." (TP 10)*

Other persons, however, saw the need for a middle category and used it. This was especially the case when the test persons assumed that the result of the FDP could be close to the 5% hurdle: *"I would say that it will be rather close, therefore 'maybe'." (TP 07)*

Finally, one respondent suggested rephrasing the question and having respondents fill in a percentage: *"On a scale of zero to 100, how likely do you think it is that the FDP will get enough votes?" Then I would say, the [respondent] opens a window and is supposed to write in a number. I think that's a reasonable solution." (TP 09)*

Recommendations:

Question: No changes recommended.

Response format: We recommend labeling the response options as follows:

- "very likely"
- "rather likely"
- "chances are 50-50"
- "rather unlikely"
- "very unlikely"
- "don't know"