Question in Project:

European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) (English Version)

Question Topic:

Job and career/ Job situation & professional activity

Construct:

Employment

General Information:

Note: The item was tested both in English and German.

Cognitive Interviews
Screening question 2
[Filter: asked if Screener 1= no]

Question Text:

English version: Then did you work – even if minimally, like for only an hour – for money or other payment in kind last week?

German version: Haben Sie letzte Woche - wenn auch nur minimal, wie z.B. nur für eine Stunde - für Geld oder eine sonstige Sachleistung gearbeitet?

Answer Categories:

English version:
yes
no

German version:
ja
nein

Cognitive Techniques:

Comprehension Probing.

Findings for Question:

The screening questions are asked when recruiting the sample, and are not part of the actual survey. As the sample for the cognitive interview was already recruited, it was to be assumed that all respondents would answer this question with "yes". The aim of probing was to examine the understanding of the term "job" in screening question 1 and potential differences in understanding to the term "working" in question 2. The probes aimed to discover whether certain types of work are systematically excluded by respondents, or whether respondents would use different terms to describe employment. For this purpose, respondents who answered screening question 1 with "yes" were presented screening question 2 as an alternative wording.

All but one respondent (DE03) immediately answered the first screening question with "yes". One respondent felt the need to explain that he is self-employed but correctly includes this as 'having a job' (DE08). All German respondents agree that having a job includes both full-time and part-time employment. In Poland, several respondents at first think of permanent employment [umowa o prace] only. They often refer to this as full-time employment, but mean a regular working contract with social benefits. In Poland, these contracts are traditionally full-time contracts, though respondents are aware that they can exist in part-time. The predominant association with 'having a job' is being able to make a secure living with the work.

- "For me, that means being able to live off it. That I work in order to pay my rent" (DE02)
- "A piece of security in life" (DE04)
- "Work you get paid for" (DE08)
- "I do some tasks and get paid for them" (PL02)
- "Any form of employment, or doing any kind of work which would give some income" (PL12)

Two respondents define 'having a job' strictly in terms of being employed ("doing work for someone else", DE16; "having employment", DE06). However, both of these respondents are themselves employed. As all self-employed respondents also correctly answered screening question 1 with "yes", this does not seem to cause confusion.
Especially in Germany, these task- and money-related definitions are often accompanied by associations of regularity of employment and legal payment (DE07, DE09), independence (DE12), lending structure to daily life (DE10), and, at best, being an enjoyable activity (PL04). It is a means of participating in social life (DE02), and gives meaningfulness and a sense of being useful and needed (DE03).

To gain an understanding of whether and how the second screening question differs

from the first, it was read out to respondents who had already answered that they have a job as an alternative question wording. Respondents were then asked whether this question has a substantively different meaning to them. Six respondents in Germany (DE04, DE09, DE10, DE12, DE13, DE15) and five in Poland (PL09, PL12, PL13, PL15, PL16) could not see any difference between the questions.

Across both countries, there are two main interpretations of the second question respondents make in comparison to the first, and they go in opposite directions.

The first interpretation **widens** the understanding of the term job (DE01, DE06, DE07, DE14, PL01, PL05, PL06, PL07, PL08, PL10, PL11) to include definitions of work that go beyond the idea of (generally full-time) employment. For these respondents, the first question is about "having a job" as in regular employment, whereas the second question can include any sort of work, even if it was a one-time project or temporary job (PL07). This difference was to be expected for the question wording, but was not guaranteed to be heard by German respondents as the question wordings are very similar ("having a job" and "working" have the same word stem in German: "Arbeit haben" versus "gearbeitet haben"). In Poland, one respondent describes work as meaning "every deliberate action" (PL01). Another respondent now includes other forms of payment than a salary: "any goods‘ exchange or doing favours" (PL05). Another now includes charity work and house work" (PL06), though she would still mainly associate regular work with the term.

In the second interpretation, the second question is thought to be more precise and therefore narrows the understanding of the term (DE02, DE08, DE11, DE16, PL02, PL04, PL14). Though at first counter-intuitive, this interpretation is based on the additional reference to being compensated for work. These respondents did not necessarily consider their ‘job’ to require monetary compensation in screening question 1. One respondent now insists: "it is about paid employment" (PL02). One respondent feels that the second wording takes the meaningfulness out of the activity: "it has nothing in common with my wish to work, with doing what I like" (PL04). Another explains "At first, I thought about work I do at home but the ending, the extension of this question, it made me think more about work done for money, and more about full time employment or doing some commissioned jobs – order contract or contract for a specific work" (PL14). The German word "Sachleistung" is best translated as "compensation" rather than "payment". However, in answer to probing most German respondents state that the necessity of payment made them wonder whether volunteer work and other unpaid work should not be included in both questions 1 and 2 (DE11 and DE16 state this explicitly).

Having the second question interpreted in a narrower sense than the first is certainly not the intention. However, this second interpretation is only used by respondents who do not interpret the first question to require monetary compensation.

One German respondent (DE03) was officially registered as unemployed and received unemployment benefits. This respondent answers screening question 1 with "no" and

screening question 2 with "yes". He took care of his parents, which he defines as working in the second question. He also mentions several occasional jobs (i.e. freelance photography, garden work for neighbours). DE03's case demonstrates that the second screening question helps include respondents who do not define themselves as having a job in the first question.

Recommendations:

Question: No changes recommended.
Answer categories: No changes recommended.