

Question in Project:

European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) (English Version)

Question Topic:

Job and career/ Job situation & professional activity

Construct:

Working situation

General Information:

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

Cognitive Interviews

Question Text:

English version: Please look at this card and tell me which of these categories describes your current situation the best?

German version: Bitte schauen Sie auf diese Liste und sagen Sie mir, welche dieser Kategorien Ihre derzeitige Situation am besten beschreibt.

Answer Categories:

English version:

at work as employee or employer/ self-employed */relative assisting on family farm or business **

unemployed

unable to work due to long-term illness or disability

at work and on child-care leave or other leave

retired

full time homemaker/ responsible for ordinary shopping and looking after the home

in full time education (at school, university, etc.) / student

other

Don't know/No opinion

Refusal

German version:

berufstätig, als Mitarbeiter/in oder Arbeitgeber/in oder Selbständige/r* / als Verwandte/r auf dem Bauernhof der Familie oder im Familienbetrieb**

arbeitslos

arbeitsunfähig aufgrund von Langzeiterkrankung oder Behinderung

berufstätig und im Erziehungsurlaub oder sonstiger Beurlaubung

im Ruhestand/Vorruhestand

Hausmann/Hausfrau/verantwortlich für die alltäglichen Einkäufe und die Organisation des Haushalts

in Ausbildung (Schule, Universität usw.) /Schüler/in / Student/in

Sonstiges

Weiß nicht

verweigert

Cognitive Techniques:

General/Elaborative Probing, Category Selection Probing.

Findings for Question:

As the sample for the cognitive interviews consists only of working people, and respondents were additionally asked the screening question directly beforehand, the only correct answer can be the first answer option, "at work". Due to the fact that all respondents were sampled to choose the first answer category as the correct answer, the other answer options cannot be evaluated based on the pretest findings. Probing this question therefore aims to examine whether atypical groups of workers correctly identify themselves as working. Where there are different conceptions, the terminology respondents use when referring to their working situation should be examined.

In Germany, 14 of 16 participants classify themselves into the first answer category. However, ten of these respondents spontaneously commented on uncertainty selecting the first category. Five of them voice their confusion as to whether this category includes people who are 'normally employed' or only those working in a family business or on a farm (DE01, DE02, DE04, DE07, DE14). In several cases, respondents did not reach certainty as to what to answer until the interviewer provided additional explanations:

- "Have I over-read something – is there no category for people who are normally employed, like, without all of these additional remarks?" (DE07)
- "So, this first answer, does that refer to whether I work in a family business, or does that apply to me working in general?" (DE14)

One participant, who was initially confused about the mention of the family business in the first answer category, additionally had difficulties due to the fact that he is in

multi-activity (DE14). Although the interviewer explains that the first category refers to all respondents who are "at work", the respondent eventually chooses the answer category "other". He feels that this category refers to people having one job. He admits that he may be misinterpreting ("I'm working but not in a family business. Possibly, I understand that in the wrong way"), but consciously resorts to survey satisficing in light of the complicated answer options. The cognitive interview is continued, and in subsequent questions the respondent correctly refers to his main paid job.

Apart from this issue, once respondents found their answer, most gave correct explanations as to their category selection. They explain that they are generally in employment (DE01), report how their employment is arranged (DE02, DE05), indicate their job title (DE08, DE09, DE13) or exclude other categories due to the fact that they are working (DE06, DE12).

An exception to this is a respondent who is temporarily incapable of working (DE11). This respondent cannot choose between two categories ("At work as employee or employer/self-employed/relative assisting on family farm or business" and "Unable to work due to long-term illness or disability"). As he is not long-term disabled, and has a running contract that he will take up again in due time, he neither feels belonging to one category or the other. The cognitive interview is continued, with the respondent referring to his usual employment.

The same response patterns and difficulties are found in Poland. Although all respondents except of one classify themselves into the first category, only four respondents were able to select it without hesitation. All others struggled with choosing the right answer for their working situation:

- "Difficult, because these options do not show my situation exactly [...] I am self-employed, I have a registered company, but I do not work as a relative in family farm or business but I have a company of my own" (PL08)
- "It is very long and it consists of several components. [...] I first understood it as three in one. [...] It should be [...] specified somehow. Just employed" (PL02)

One Polish respondent chose "other" because she thought that she must meet all the working conditions included in category one: *"Because I am employed full time and I have my company. I do not really fit in here. I am employed as an employee but what I do is not related to farming. I do not help in a family business either. I have something of my own, something different."* (PL15)

Two respondents which are employed on order contract or contract for a specific work found it difficult to answer the question because there was no answer option corresponding to their specific employment status (PL02, PL12). In Poland, many people offer their services based on civil law contracts (order contract or contract for a specific work). Some of them consider themselves as employees, while others do not.

- "None of them fits me, the first two answers apply. I am unemployed sometimes, so I could mark this as well, as I am unemployed occasionally." (PL02)
- "It is not easy or clear, the first point which would be fine is the first one 'employee or employer / self-employed'. Yet, if you have an order contract, this is not really a form of employment, so I have doubts here, but this is the only answer which fits. From what I understand and know about the topic, an employee is only a person with a (usually full-time) employment contract, according to the Polish labour code. Someone who works on short term contract basis, like order contract, contract for a specific work, is not an employee. So, in this understanding of the question I am not an employee." (PL12)

The translation of the phrase "at work" is "zatrudniony" [English employed] leads to confusion. "Zatrudniony" [employed] is a term used in the context of work contracts under the Polish Labor Code. The Polish labor market offers a wide range of working situations under the Civil Law which use a different terminology, and do not always classify themselves as being employed. They rather use phrases as "I have my own business", "I am an employer", "I work based on agreement for a result" or "I work based on order contract". It is recommended to change the translation of "at work" - "zatrudniony" [English "employed"] into "pracujący" [English "working"]. Please also refer to the detailed explanation of the Polish work contracts in Q7.

Recommendations:

Question: No changes recommended.

Answer categories: We strongly suggest reviewing the first answer category and its depiction on the show card. While including less typical examples, such as people working on a farm or family business is certainly important, this must be designed in a way that does not cause confusion.

The different facets mentioned in the first answer category should be separated using the word "or" and not with slashes. This would possibly eliminate respondent problems, but should be tested before implementation.

For Poland, we recommend to add "order contracts", e.g. "na umowę zlecenie lub dzieło", to the list of specifications in the first answer option.

Miscellaneous:

* Even in cases where the business fails to deliver any profit or any income yet

** In the case of unpaid family members, they should be included in this status even in case when the remuneration is not monetary and /or the person does not receive any formal pay.