

Question in Project:

European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) (English Version)

Question Topic:

Job and career/ Job situation & professional activity

Construct:

Full part or part time employment

General Information:

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

Cognitive Interviews

Question Text:

English version: And do you work part time or full time?

German version: Und arbeiten Sie Teilzeit oder Vollzeit?

Answer Categories:

English version:

Part time

Full time

Don't know

Refusal

German version:

Teilzeit

Vollzeit

Weiß nicht

Verweigert

Cognitive Techniques:

Comprehension Probing, Specific Probing, Difficulty Probing.

Findings for Question:

The question asks whether a respondent is working full- or part-time. Aim of the probing is to understand whether respondents can clearly distinguish the two categories, and how they define full- and part-time. For respondents with multiple jobs, the aim is to understand whether they take all of their jobs into account or only the main paid job. For respondents in atypical working situations, especially those with irregular working hours, the aim is to understand whether and how they choose their answer.

In Germany, full-time is usually defined by the hours per week, with respondents usually citing 35-40 hours, and many of them aware that different companies define full-time slightly differently. Therefore, several respondents explicitly state that full-time is when an employment contract says that someone works 100% of the working time as per contract, regardless of whether this means 35, 39 or 40 hours. Several respondents are even more precise, explaining that a full-time job should generally cover 8 hours a day on at least 5 working days, possibly 6 working days in some industries.

Self-employed respondents share this definition of full-time, and most of them can clearly state for themselves whether their work load compares to full- or part-time, though several respondents state that they simply work "however many hours are necessary".

In Poland, 15 out of 16 respondents refer to the legal full-time equivalent which is 40 hours in a 5-day working week. This definition of full-time is shared by respondents regardless of their employment status. Only one respondent working on civil law contracts (order contracts) defines full-time as "48 hours a week" on a regular, weekly basis ("For me, full-time employment means the weekly standard"; PL 02).

Of the German sample, five respondents have multiple employments. Of these, three (DE02 ,DE05, DE14) were referring to all of their jobs while answering the question. They did not consider this a wrong choice even in the course of the probing. DE02 (self-employed & employed) answers full-time, explaining that several part-time jobs add up to a full-time working schedule. DE14 (employed and self-employed) goes back and forth between categories, but after adding up the hours in both jobs decides that he still works less than 40 hours in total and chooses part-time. One respondent in multi-employment (DE05) then reflects that perhaps she should have stated part-time, as each of her jobs is part-time. But she chooses not to change her answer, as for her the question is asking how much she works in total. One respondent (DE01) states that he was referring to his actual working hours and not his contractual ones.

Of the Polish sample, five respondents have multiple employments. Of these, four referred to their contract and being an "employee" (PL03, PL07, PL10, PL15). Respondent 03 has multiple jobs, however, as the additional jobs to his full-time employment are irregular, he doesn't count them in this question. Respondent 07 is both employed and self-employed, but his answer refers only to his employed work, which is part-time. The fifth Polish respondent works at two places and both jobs add up to a full-time position

(measured by numbers of hours worked). Although she considers both, she selects part-time because both individual jobs are part-time jobs.

In both countries, two respondents reported difficulties when selecting an answer (DE06, DE13, PL07, PL08). Respondent DE06 (employed) with a $\frac{3}{4}$ time job of 30 hours correctly chooses part-time. However, he first has to consider whether this is correct, as the term part-time is closely associated with half-time or about 20 hours a week. DE13 (self-employed) finds it difficult to choose an answer, asking whether she can choose both. She goes on to explain that her self-employed status makes it hard to describe. She works seasonally when possible, working full-time for about half of the year, and at most part-time the rest of the time. She realizes that this is an unusual situation and cannot think of a better or missing answer category. Respondent PL07 runs his own business and is employed part-time at a university. He is unsure which form of employment the question referred to and decided to focus his answer on his contract work when answering the question. He treated the wording as a hint [full/part-time working hours] and working hours for him is related to contractual work. Respondent 08 (self-employed) finds it difficult to choose an answer, because she does not need to document working hours and no one checks her working hours or expects her to work 40 hours or more or less than 40 hours.

Recommendations:

Question: The question text should state whether the question refers to actual working hours, or (for employed respondents) contractual ones.

More important, in the current form it is unclear whether respondents in multi-activity should refer to all jobs or only the main paid job. We suggest omitting this question, and instead asking about the typical number of hours per week in each job and in total. Please refer to recommendations at Q7 and Q27.

Answer categories: If the differentiation between full-time and part-time is maintained, an alternative category "irregular / varies strongly" would help respondents with atypical working hours.

In Polish, the wording of the answer category implies working only based on work contract, i.e. "full/ part time working hours". The translation should therefore be reconsidered.