

Question in Project:

European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) (English Version)

Question Topic:

Job and career/ Job situation & professional activity

Construct:

Main paid job

General Information:

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

Cognitive Interviews

Introduction:

English version: I'm now going to ask you a few basic questions about your job.

German version: Ich werde Ihnen nun einige grundlegende Fragen zu Ihrer beruflichen Tätigkeit stellen.

Question Text:

English version: What is the title of your main paid job? By main paid job, we mean the one where you spend most hours.

German version: Welchen Beruf üben Sie zur Zeit hauptsächlich aus? Mit dem Beruf, den Sie hauptsächlich ausüben, meinen wir die Tätigkeit, bei der Sie am meisten Zeit verbringen.

Answer Categories:

Open question

Cognitive Techniques:

Comprehension Probing, Specific Probing.

Findings for Question:

This question introduces the concept of the main paid job. The pretest does not examine in how far respondents' answers are suitable to be transformed into ISCO. Instead, the aim of the probes was to understand how respondents in multi-activity define their main paid job. Do they use the instructions referring to the most hours, or do they use their own criteria, i.e. pay, steadiness of income, legality of job?

Respondents with one job, regardless of whether employed or self-employed, show absolutely no difficulty with this question. The majority automatically begins relating not only their job title but the content of their job. This active reciting of not only job title but also content may be increased in the pretesting situation, which continually calls on respondents to explain their answers.

Of the respondents in multi-activity or other atypical working situations, the majority have little or no difficulty deciding on their main job. For instance, a respondent with several small jobs (DE15, category V) defines the job that takes up the most time within his part-time employment as his main paid job. Similarly, Polish respondents with atypical employment status did not differ from other respondents. They referred to occupations which give them the highest income and where they spend most time working. No differences between the answers were found.

Confusion generally occurs when the respondent does not have one job that clearly dominates across number of hours, amount of pay, and personal relevance. This results in two settings in which respondents have difficulty defining their main paid job. The first scenario is when both jobs are equal across all categories. The second is when one job dominates in one of the categories, but the other job in another category, for instance when one job takes up more hours, but the other pays better or requires higher qualification. These issues were only found in the German sample.

DE05 is an example of a respondent with two jobs of **equal relevance**. Instead of answering the question, she explains that she is employed and self-employed, each with the same number of hours per week (20 hours), and approximately equal pay. Although the jobs are very different, both are equally important to her. She feels she cannot give a proper account of her working conditions without telling about both jobs. Only when the interviewer insists on a choice, does she eventually refer to her employment as the main paid job, because she assumes that her hours in this job will increase in future, and the hours in the self-employed job will diminish. However, she calls the decision arbitrary.

An example of **conflicting dimensions of relevance** is DE16. She, too, has two jobs, both as employed. She quickly decides that her main paid job is the one with more hours, a 50% job. However, she expresses a bit of discomfort with this, because the 35% job is currently more work than the 50% job. She prefers this job, and at the time of the interview, she is spending more hours with this job than the other. She feels that this

"working reality" should somehow be documented. However, she clearly decides to relate to her contractual working hours when answering this and subsequent survey questions.

In the course of the survey, both respondents repeatedly, and seemingly subconsciously, refer to both of their jobs. The report goes into more detail on this for the respective questions.

In general, similar response patterns are found in Poland, while the difficulties of the respondents tend to differ. PL06 for instance, required clarification whether to speak about the job he does or the job he is trained to do. Two people employed in full-time jobs (employee only) found it difficult to name their occupation, because the title in their work contract does not mirror their typical duties. PL16 stated that the duties of his job exceeded the name used in the work contract. PL14 remarks that "office worker" would better describe the tasks she performs than the name of her position in the work contract, which is "monitoring specialist".

Recommendations:

Question Order: Problems with this question do not arise from the question itself, but from respondents' urge to communicate their multi-activity. We therefore recommend having respondents first indicate the number of jobs they have (similar to Q27), and employment status (Q7) and number of hours for each job (Q24, Q26, Q28). After this is done, questions such as Q5 can focus on the main paid job.

Question: No changes recommended.

Answer categories: Does not apply.