

Question in Project:

European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) (English Version)

Question Topic:

Job and career/ Job situation & professional activity

Construct:

Immediate boss

General Information:

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

Cognitive Interviews

Introduction:

English version: I would now like you to think about your immediate boss, who you may also refer to as your immediate manager or supervisor.

German version: Bitte denken Sie nun an Ihren unmittelbaren Chef, den Sie möglicherweise auch als Ihren unmittelbaren Manager oder Vorgesetzten bezeichnen.

Question Text:

English version: Is your immediate boss a man or a woman?

German version: Ist Ihr unmittelbarer Vorgesetzter ein Mann oder eine Frau?

Answer Categories:

English version:

A man

A woman

Not applicable

Don't know/no opinion

Refusal

German version:

Ein Mann

Eine Frau

Trifft nicht zu

Weiß nicht/keine Meinung

Verweigert

Cognitive Techniques:

Comprehension Probing, Specific Probing.

Findings for Question:

In the EWCS survey, this question is only asked to respondents who are employed in their main paid job. For pretesting purposes, this question was asked to all respondents. Results of the German respondents show that all respondents who are employed answered the question, while all respondents who are self-employed in their main paid job chose "not applicable". This is a strong indicator that having not a boss is the defining element of being self-employed in Germany.

In Poland, results are a little more complex. All but one employed respondent immediately found their answer. The other respondent chose "not applicable" because she has two bosses, of which one is male and one is female (PL04). More striking is that three self-employed Polish respondents answered this question. One of these respondents is referring to himself (PL01), the second explains that this could mean himself or his boss in his additional employed job, but in both cases the answer is "a man" (PL07), and the third is referring to her boss in her additional employment (PL10). The other self-employed respondents either chose "not applicable" (PL09, PL13) or refused to answer (PL08).

Probing was used to examine the understanding of the term "immediate boss". The immediate boss is defined by being responsible for work- or task-related issues. Often, this is the same person who is responsible for work contracts and holidays. But when these roles are assigned to different people, respondents correctly refer their answers to their immediate, task-related superior.

- "The immediate boss is a person who has more authority to decide than oneself" (DE01)
- "Someone with disciplinary and/or professional authority" (DE11)
- "The person who is allowed to tell me what to do" (DE03)
- "The person ONE step above me in hierarchy" (DE06)
- "The person that you deal with on a task-related level" (DE16)

- "The person who is always there to discuss issues with you" (DE12)
- "The person who gives praise or critical feedback" (DE02)
- "A person who organizes my job. Who defines the order of duties" (PL01)
- "First of all responsible for supervision and co-ordination of employees from my level. This person must be my immediate supervisor. And they must have the right competence to manage people from my level, my position. They must have the knowledge about the job I do" (PL06)
- "As for the university, my immediate boss does what is expected on his position, supervising, describing and I sign a contract with him [...] he is a leader, he offers help and advice, I can always call him, he explains some aspects and defines my scope of duties" (PL07)
- "A person who has a higher position in the company hierarchy" (PL16)

Among the ten respondents in an employed working situation, seven respondents (DE04, DE05, DE06, DE07, DE11, DE14, DE15) have only one immediate boss, who is generally responsible for work-related and personnel matters.

- "My immediate boss is the person I directly work for, who signs the work contract or signs off on my holidays" (DE01)
- "The person I am accountable to, with whom I discuss my tasks and who is exactly one level further up in the hierarchy than I am" (DE07)

For four respondents there is a second (DE16, PL04) or even third (DE01, DE12) person they could consider their main boss. However, they all explain that the person they referred to while answering the question is their task-related boss or team leader. The other people they took into consideration shortly were their boss's immediate boss (DE16), so when it is someone else who is responsible for personnel issues, or other team leaders they regularly work for (DE12).

Results show that the current filter for this question is correct and necessary. Respondents who are self-employed should not be asked the question, as they react irritated or re-interpret the question to find a suitable answer.

Recommendations:

Question: No changes recommended.

Translation note for German: the term immediate boss is usually translated with "direkter Vorgesetzter".

Answer categories: No changes recommended.