

Question in Project:

PIAAC-Longitudinal (PIAAC-L) 2014 (English Version)

Question Topic:

Digitalization/ Use of digital systems

Construct:

Age at first computer use

General Information:

***Note:** The item was tested in German. This is an English translation of the original German wording. The translation does not correspond exactly to the wording in the English [PIAAC source questionnaire](#).*

Introduction:

Now we come to a question about computer use.

[Kommen wir nun noch zu einer Frage zur Computernutzung.]

Question Text:

How old were you when you first used a computer?

[Wie alt waren Sie, als Sie zum ersten Mal einen Computer benutzt haben?]

Answer Categories:

Open answer *[offene Antwort]*

Cognitive Techniques:

Information Retrieval Probing, Confidence Rating, Specific Probing

Findings for Question:

All 20 test persons can remember when they first used a computer and give an approximate age:

- *"So I guess I was 7, I just know I was young and I always wanted to go because it was always my brother's turn."*(TP 02, statement: 7 years)
- *"So we moved. If I think about it now, it could have been even earlier, maybe at the age of 12."*(TP 10, statement: 12-14 years)

When asked, nine test persons (TP 03, 07, 08, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19) are "very sure" and seven test persons (TP 01, 04, 09, 13, 14, 16, 20) are "rather sure" that they have used a computer for the first time at the given age. Test persons 02, 05, 06 and 10 are "rather unsure" when answering:

- *"Because it's been too long. I don't know if I was 6, 7, 8."*(TP 02, statement: 7 years)
- *"Could also have been 10. At least in the '80s."*(TP 05, statement: 12 years)
- *"We had a family computer. Come to think of it, it could have been even earlier...9 or 10. But I can't consciously say what age."*(TP 06, statement: 11 years)

Test person 08 spontaneously expresses a difficulty in formulating the question: *"Used or needed? This is not understandable. There is a difference. I used it in the beginning for solitaire etc., I used it later."* However, the test person can still give an answer and chooses the answer 13 years.

Similar abnormalities were observed in test persons 06 and 07. They relate their statements to the point in time when they worked on a computer for the first time, even though they had previously used a computer to play games:

- *"That must have been in 5th grade, so 11th. I just remembered when I got my first computer. We also had a family computer at home in elementary school, and I used to play there too."* (TP 06, statement: 11 years)
- *"When I was a kid I had a computer and there were games on it. No, that's not meant here. The first time I worked on a computer was when I was old. 15, 16. It was a computer science course at school."* (TP 07, statement: 15 years)

When asked about the make or model of the first computer they used, seven test persons (TP 01, 03, 07, 09, 13, 14, 16) state that they cannot remember it. In some cases they can only remember the software or operating system and not the exact brand or model. Test person 11 does not provide any information on this as he has never used a computer. The other twelve test persons (TP 02, 04, 05, 06, 08, 10, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20) can remember the brand and/or model. From this it can be concluded that the latter group can remember back very precisely.

Recommendations:

Question: We recommend to define the time of the first use of a computer more precisely by making clear whether the first work on a computer, in the sense of doing tasks, or the

general first use of a computer, in the sense of e.g. playing on the computer, is meant and should be included, e.g. as follows:

"How old were you when you first used a computer? It doesn't matter whether you used the computer for school, work, or just for games."

["Wie alt waren Sie, als Sie zum ersten Mal einen Computer benutzt haben? Es ist dabei unerheblich, ob Sie den Computer für Ihre Schule, Arbeit oder einfach für Spiele nutzten."]

Response options: Leave open questions, since the answers can be unfavorably categorized and each of the test persons can give an exact age indication.