

Question in Project:

International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) 2015 (English Version)

Question Topic:

Job and career/ Job motivation & attitudes

Construct:

Weighting of family and career

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 [ISSP source questionnaire](#).

Question Text:

Have you ever foregone opportunities to advance your career for your family - or would you do so if necessary?

[Haben Sie schon einmal für Ihre Familie auf Möglichkeiten zum beruflichen Weiterkommen verzichtet — oder würden Sie das gegebenenfalls tun?]

Instruction:

(Only ONE cross possible!) *[(Nur EIN Kreuz möglich!)]*

Answer Categories:

Yes *[Ja]*

No, not yet, but I probably would *[Nein, bis jetzt noch nicht, aber wahrscheinlich würde ich es tun]*

No, not yet, and I probably wouldn't either *[Kann ich nicht sagen]*

Don't know *[Kann ich nicht sagen]*

Cognitive Techniques:

Think Aloud, General Probing, Specific Probing, Comprehension Probing.

Findings for Question:

Seven test persons answered this question with "yes". Six of these respondents have correctly chosen this answer category, as they have already foregone opportunities for career advancement:

- *"I have refrained from longer absences in my company, e.g. in other cities. For longer absences I said "no", because family life is already very important to me." (TP 10)*
- *"I have a daughter and that naturally meant that I had to give up professional advancement. Simply because of the smaller time commitment or also local restrictions." (TP 13)*
- *"I have a chance to get a transfer, i.e. to continue my professional training, but because of my mother, who is handicapped, I gave up." (TP 15)*

Test person 04, however, answers with "Yes", although she has not yet given up: *"I would definitely choose the family. I don't have one now, just my son. When I was on montage [...], I missed my son very much. I haven't had to give it up yet, but I would definitely do it for the family." (TP 04)*

Six test subjects stated that they had not yet given up opportunities for career advancement for their families, but would probably do so. All of these respondents correctly interpret the answer category, for example:

- *"I wouldn't do it in general, but there are certain situations where I would do it and that's why I tick this box. It can always be that parents fall ill and you have to care for them and then you can no longer just see that you get on in your career. In extreme cases I would do it, but I would also not generally do without professional advancement." (TP 05)*
- *"I haven't done it yet, but I probably would. So if it were more important to the family that I not do it." (TP 11)*

Both test persons who have chosen the answer category "No, not yet, and I probably wouldn't do it" do not interpret this category in the intended sense. Test person 03 talks about having already worked in the family business and relates her answer behavior in this and the next question to this activity in the family business, although it emerged in the course of the interview that the test person has already changed jobs and professions several times in her previous life. The respondent's understanding of the question 09 is contrary to the intended understanding: *"I wouldn't actually do that. In order to get on without the family, does that mean? So career is more important than family? No, I would not do that. Family is more important than career. No matter what your job is, even if it's your dream job." (TP 09)*. So she ticked the "wrong" answer and should actually have ticked "No, ..., but I probably would".

With regard to the question itself, there are two further anomalies. Both test person 05 and test person 14 spontaneously state that they were thinking of their respective partners when they asked the question and that it was not clear from the question whether partnerships were included in the term "family".

Test subjects 06 and 08 (both high school graduates) point out that two questions are actually asked in one, namely whether one has already given up and whether one would do so if necessary. This means that one has to take more time and read the question several times before being able to answer it. Respondents who do not do this may not grasp the complexity of the question and run the risk of choosing a (wrong) answer category prematurely.

In order to find out more about what the respondents understand by "career advancement", this was explicitly asked. The most frequent mentions related to career or professional advancement, followed by further training opportunities, as well as spatial and temporal flexibility, a higher salary or generally a more responsible job with or without management tasks.

Recommendations:

We recommend that the question be reworded in two ways. Firstly, it should be made clear whether the term "family" explicitly includes partnerships or not. If so, we recommend adding the phrase "or your partnership" to the question. On the other hand, it should be made clear that the question is not only directed into the future ("Would you possibly renounce?"), but also into the past ("Have you ever renounced?"). In order to avoid that respondents answer here exclusively with regard to their future intentions, we recommend one of two alternatives:

Alternative 1: The question could be divided into two separate questions, for example:

Question 1:

"Have you ever given up opportunities for your family (or partnership) to advance in your career?"

["Haben Sie schon einmal für Ihre Familie (oder Ihre Partnerschaft) auf Möglichkeiten zum beruflichen Weiterkommen verzichtet?"]

Yes *[Ja]*

No *[Nein]*

If "no" was answered:

Question 2:

"If necessary, would you give up opportunities for professional advancement for your family (or your partnership)?"

["Würden Sie gegebenenfalls für Ihre Familie (oder Ihre Partnerschaft) auf Möglichkeiten

zum beruflichen Weiterkommen verzichten?"

Yes, I probably would. [*Ja, wahrscheinlich würde ich das tun*]

No, I probably wouldn't do that. [*Nein, wahrscheinlich würde ich das nicht tun*]

Alternative 2: The behaviour intended in the future could be recorded by changing the response categories. A possible formulation of the question and the answer categories would be:

"Have you ever given up opportunities for professional advancement for your family (or partnership) - or would you do so if necessary?"

[*"Haben Sie schon einmal für Ihre Familie (oder Ihre Partnerschaft) auf Möglichkeiten zum beruflichen Weiterkommen verzichtet – oder würden Sie das gegebenenfalls tun?"*]

Yes, I have done that already and would probably do it again. [*Ja, das habe ich bereits getan und würde es wahrscheinlich wieder tun.*]

Yes, I did that already, but I probably wouldn't do it again. [*Ja, das habe ich bereits getan, aber würde es wahrscheinlich nicht wieder tun.*]

No, not yet, but I probably would. [*Nein, bis jetzt noch nicht, aber wahrscheinlich würde ich es tun.*]

No, not yet, and I probably wouldn't do it again. [*Nein, bis jetzt noch nicht, und wahrscheinlich würde ich es auch nicht tun.*]