

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 given up a professional activity with high responsibility for your family - or would you do so if necessary?

[Haben Sie schon einmal für Ihre Familie eine berufliche Tätigkeit mit hoher Verantwortung aufgegeben — 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 *[Nein, bis jetzt noch nicht, und wahrscheinlich würde ich es auch nicht tun]*

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

Cognitive Techniques:

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

Findings for Question:

Slightly more than half of the test subjects ($n = 8$) decide to answer "No, not yet, but I probably would." Test subject 05 answers "I cannot say" and justifies this as follows: *"I haven't done it yet, because I haven't had that kind of job with a lot of responsibility. [...] The question says 'give up' and I cannot say that. I also can't imagine that I'll ever get into such a high position."* (TP 05). This test person indicates that he should actually check "No, [...] but probably I would". However, the term "give up" implies that one already has a job with high responsibility. On the other hand, a formulation with "give up" - analogous to question 1 - implies, due to the choice of words alone, that in addition to a position that one already holds, one does not even aspire to a position with high responsibility.

Of the three test persons who answered "yes" to this question, two persons (TP 08, TP 14) chose this answer category without having read the other answers at all. Both test persons change their answer to "No, [...] but would probably do so" in the course of the interview, i.e. in response to the test leader's question, since they have not yet been in the situation of having given up a job with a high level of responsibility:

TP 08: *"Never had to do it, but I'm sure I would. I think about how important family is, very important, that's what comes first and before work."*

TL: *You haven't given it up yet, but would you do it?*

TP 08: *"No, I haven't had to do without it yet, so of course the answer would be wrong. Now I see it at second glance, I had not even read the remaining categories."*

TL: *"At second glance they would tick something else?"*

TP 08: *"Yes exactly, the second answer."*

■ *"I haven't done it yet, but I would."* (TP 14, Answer: "yes")

When asked how easy or difficult it was for test person 08 to answer this question, she says she found it rather difficult *"because two things are asked at once. [...] 'Have you ever' and 'would you'. So future and past."* (TP 08). This shows that the item formulation does not take into account the intuitive answering behavior of the respondents. Only test person 02 answers correctly with "yes", whereby she explains her answering behavior in the sense of "renounce" and not in the sense of "give up": *"I once had the opportunity to take over a company, to become self-employed. I gave up on that. For the reasons I've already mentioned [nursing care in the family]."* (TP 02).

Of the eight test persons who answered "No, not yet, but I probably would", seven interpret the question in the intended sense, for example:

■ *"Well, I haven't done that yet. But sure, I would if I had to. Basically, my principles are that I stand for family."* (TP 04)

- *"No, not yet. [...] If I were in a management position and my husband/child said you were rarely home, I would." (TP 07)*
- *"If there was a need for care or serious changes in the family, and I would say I need more time for the family, then I would definitely do that." (TP 10)*
- *"Probably I would do it because family comes first, no matter what it is. But I haven't been in that situation." (TP 15)*

Test person 03 thinks, as in question 1, of their professional activity in a family business and associates in this context with *"professional activity with high responsibility"* that one generally bears responsibility for every task one is given: *"Everyone bears responsibility. If I come into someone's garden and different things are to be done, then I bear the responsibility for getting them done"* (TP 03).

Two of the three test persons who state that they have not yet given up any activity with high responsibility and are unlikely to do so in the future understand the question correctly:

- *"I think I would only do it in an emergency at the very most, and I probably wouldn't do it either. If I already do this job with a high level of responsibility, then it will probably also be a job that I enjoy, that gives me something and therefore I would not want to give it up for me personally." (TP 01)*
- *"I have never had such a job with high responsibility before. Maybe I wouldn't do it, I guess it depends on the job. I think about the fact that you get offered a team leader position and decide not to take the job because you have less time for your family." (TP 06)*

Test subject 09 ticked this answer, as in question 1, although she was contrary to her attitude, as she interpreted the question in the opposite sense: *"No, I wouldn't do that either. For the same reasons as with the previous question. Family is more important than a job. Career is also important, but family is the first priority for me. I would never do that." (TP 09).*

With the exception of test person 03, who associates a certain degree of responsibility independent of the respective activity, all test persons understand a *"professional activity with high responsibility"* to be a leading position or a management position.

Recommendations:

We recommend that the question be reworded in the same way as Question 1 (i.e. Alternative 1 or Alternative 2 and a more specific definition of the term *"family"*). In addition, we recommend, depending on the interest in the findings, to use one of the two terms *"give up"* or *"renounce"* in this question. The term *"give up"* implies that one already has a professional activity with high responsibility (in order to be able to give it up). The

term "renounce", on the other hand, also implies that one might not even accept such an activity.

Alternative 1:

Question 1:

"Have you ever given up (on) a professional activity with high responsibility for your family (or your partnership)? [*"Haben Sie schon einmal für Ihre Familie (oder Ihre Partnerschaft) (auf) eine berufliche Tätigkeit mit hoher Verantwortung aufgegeben (verzichtet)?"*]

Yes [*Ja*]

No [*Nein*]

If "No" was answered:

Question 2:

"If necessary, would you give up (renounce) a professional activity with high responsibility for your family (or your partnership)? [*"Würden Sie gegebenenfalls für Ihre Familie (oder Ihre Partnerschaft) (auf) eine berufliche Tätigkeit mit hoher Verantwortung aufgeben (verzicht)?"*]

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:

"Have you ever given up (on) a professional activity with high responsibility for your family (or your partnership) - or would you possibly do so? [*"Haben Sie schon einmal für Ihre Familie (oder Ihre Partnerschaft) (auf) eine berufliche Tätigkeit mit hoher Verantwortung aufgegeben (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 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 either. [*Nein, bis jetzt noch nicht, und wahrscheinlich würde ich es auch nicht tun.*]