

Question in Project:

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

Question Topic:

Job and career/ Job situation & professional activity

Construct:

Usual working hours

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:

Which of the following statements best applies to your usual working hours?

[Welche der folgenden Aussagen trifft am ehesten auf Ihre üblichen Arbeitszeiten zu?]

Instruction:

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

Answer Categories:

I work during the day or early shift *[Ich arbeite tagsüber bzw. in Frühschicht]*

I work evening or late shifts *[Ich arbeite abends bzw. in Spätschicht]*

I work nights or night shifts *[Ich arbeite nachts bzw. in Nachtschicht]*

I work an altering schedule or shift (e.g. alternating early, late and night shifts) *[Ich arbeite nach wechselndem Zeitplan bzw. in Wechselschicht (z.B. abwechselnd Früh-, Spät- und Nachtschicht)]*

I work according to a changing schedule or in alternating shifts (e.g. alternating early, late and night shifts) *[Ich arbeite nach einem wechselnden Zeitplan oder in Wechselschichten (z.B. wechselnde Früh-, Spät- und Nachtschichten)]*

My working day is divided in time *[Mein Arbeitstag ist zeitlich geteilt]*

My daily working hours often change at short notice *[Meine täglichen Arbeitszeiten]*

ändern sich oft kurzfristig
Don't know [Kann ich nicht sagen]

Cognitive Techniques:

Think Aloud, General Probing, Comprehension Probing.

Findings for Question:

The test subjects are spread over all possible answer categories, with most of them stating "working during the day or early shift". Test person 02 cannot choose one of the answer categories because their working hours have changed from a late shift to a night shift. She therefore chooses the two answer categories "I work in the evening or late shift" and "I work at night or night shift".

Persons who have more than one job also have difficulties in choosing a single answer option. Test persons 07 and 10 solve this problem by only referring to their main job when answering. Subject 08 chooses "a split working day" for the same reason.

Three other respondents (TP 06, TP 12, TP 14) indicate that the answer categories are not mutually exclusive:

- *"The answer categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive, e.g. during the day and times often change at short notice." (TP 06)*
- *"Well, I work rotating shifts. Ah, only one answer is possible. Yeah, it's a three-shift operation. Sometimes, if someone is absent, for example, my work changes at short notice. Then you have to step in." (TP 12)*
- *"I am in the field, which means that my working hours often change at short notice. [...] But it must be said that I actually work during the day, sometimes I have to do my correspondence in the evening or at night. [...] Well, if I think about it and only have to make a cross, then I cannot say that." (TP 14)*

In particular, the answer category "My daily working hours often change at short notice" is not perceived as a separate answer category for describing "normal working hours", but as an additional feature. This can be attributed to the fact that this answer category is interpreted by the respondents primarily as "short-term replacement" or "flexible working hours" (see below).

Three test persons (TP 05, TP 11, TP 13) stumbled at the formulation "I work during the day or early shift":

- *"Oh, 'or,' okay. I didn't notice that until I read, 'I work the morning shift during the day.'" (TP 05)*

- *"I work days, but not the early shift." (TP 11)*
- *"I work during the day, but not the early shift. The 'or early shift' might be a bit confusing. Most people work during the day." (TP 13)*

In this question, a systematic investigation was carried out into what the test persons understand by "a working day divided into periods of time" and by "daily working hours that often change at short notice". In order to obtain more detailed information on the understanding of these terms, the test persons were also asked to explain their answers in more detail (general probing).

By a **"working day divided by time"** nine test persons understand a working day that is interrupted by a longer (lunch) break:

- *"As it is common in the catering trade, for example, that you go to work in the morning, take a break and then work again in the evening." (TP 04)*
- *"A few hours in the morning, a few hours in the afternoon. Divided during the day. Our cleaning crew, for example, they come for three hours in the morning and another three hours in the evening." (TP 09)*
- *"This means that you work four hours in the morning and then another four hours in the late evening, for example. [...] Maybe in the nursing service, which has to be available in the morning for the needy/disabled and then again in the evening." (TP 11)*

Two test persons (TP 08, TP 15) understand a "split working day" to mean that someone has two different jobs. Subject 08 was the only one to choose this answer category when answering the question:

- *"It comes from different jobs. I have to categorize. I'm in college once. That's a completely different work schedule, so it's during the day. And this coach thing I do, that's an evening job as a rule. [...] is temporally divided, because there are two jobs that run completely different." (TP 08)*
- *"That I have two jobs, for example. A part-time job in the morning and another part-time job in the afternoon." (TP 15)*

Two other test persons (TP 03, TP 13) can imagine both that one can pursue two different activities and that the working day is divided by a longer break:

- *"If someone has a child. That you work in the morning, come home at noon and then work another two or three hours in the evening. Or two jobs, cleaning in the morning and then mixing in the bar at night." (TP 03)*
- *"This could mean, for example, that there is a longer lunch break. In some professions there are two or three hours for lunch. Or maybe two different jobs with two different employers." (TP 13)*

Test person 12 understands a "split work day" to mean that someone is on early duty and then comes on the same day to work the night shift, e.g. at the police or fire brigade.

One test person (TP 06) claims not to know what is meant by this: *"What is meant by 'my working day is split'? [...] Hm, changing shifts, like with nurses? But that would be more like 'alternating shifts', would that also be 'divided by time'? I don't know."* (TP 06)

With regard to the definition of **"working times that change at short notice"**, a very heterogeneous picture can be observed among the test persons:

One third of the test persons (TP 03, TP 08, TP 09, TP 10, TP 12) understand this to mean when one has to fill in for colleagues at short notice due to staff absence, e.g. due to illness, or when days have to be changed because of this:

- *"If you have to be flexible. Like me, when two or three people are absent, that you start a few hours earlier."* (TP 03)
- *"I also sometimes have that two days before they call if I can change a day. Or trade a shift. If a colleague is sick and I have to fill in. I work at the cash register."* (TP 09)
- *"This can be, for example, in the event of illness, when someone is absent, i.e. loss of personnel. If something changes in the company in the short term. In the bakery it often happens that a colleague is ill and then the situation changes in the short term."* (TP 10)

Three test persons (TP 01, TP 02, TP 07) connect temporary or contract workers with it, who are requested or assigned shifts/companies as required. Test person 07 has chosen this answer option when answering the question.

- *"Temporary staff, where they say you have to work today and then you have to leave."* (TP 01)
- *"Temporary employment agencies, where you are called in the evening and are told that today this company is on the night shift and tomorrow another company on the late shift."* (TP 02)
- *"[...] At about 13 o'clock, you always have a forecast of how many call-off forces will be needed. And then they call you. Whether it's Monday, Wednesday and Friday, it can always change from week to week."* (TP 07)

Another three test persons (TP 06, TP 14, TP 15) associate flexible working hours with "working hours that change at short notice". The test subjects 14 and 15 both work as sales representatives and state that this applies to their working times for this reason:

- *"Does this mean having flexible working hours?"* (TP 06)

■ *"I am in the field, which means that my working hours often change at short notice. [...] But it must be said that I actually work during the day, sometimes I have to do my correspondence in the evening or at night. [...] Well, if I think about it and only have to make a cross, then I cannot say that."* (TP 14)

■ *"I'm in the field. I'm flexible in my work, so I can manage my time."* (TP 15)

Two test subjects (TP 05, TP 13) think of on-call duty, another of courier drivers (TP 11) and one test subject (TP 04) associates "working hours that change at short notice" with the time when the work is finally completed.

When asked how easy or difficult it was for them to answer this question, twelve subjects state that they found it "very easy" (8 TPs) or "rather easy" (4 TPs). Three people found the answer rather difficult, which they explain as follows:

■ *"Because there are many answers, which are also quite similar."* (TP 01)

■ *"I found this a little difficult now because of my personal situation, because I had to consider which job I was referring to."* (TP 07)

Subject 14 felt torn between two possible answers (*"My working hours often change at short notice"* and *"I work during the day or early shift"*), which made it difficult for her to answer.

Recommendations:

Question:

We recommend that the question be supplemented with instructions for the respondents. This should make it clear that people who have several professional activities should only refer to their main occupation. A possible formulation would be:

"Which of the following statements best applies to your normal working hours? If you currently have more than one job, please answer the question for your full-time job only."
["Welche der folgenden Aussagen trifft am ehesten auf Ihre üblichen Arbeitszeiten zu? Falls Sie derzeit mehr als einer beruflichen Tätigkeit nachgehen, beantworten Sie die Frage bitte nur für Ihre hauptberufliche Tätigkeit."]

Response Options:

We recommend that the answer category "My daily working hours change often short-term" in order to avoid this being understood as including 'flexible working hours'. It should also be explained what is meant by the category "My working day is split".

In addition, we recommend querying the working hours of shift workers separately from those of other employees in order to avoid the term "shift" being perceived too dominantly in the answer categories and thus leading to confusion. A possible alternative would be to add a question about shift work and then offer specific answer categories:

Question 1:

"Do you work in shifts?" (filter question) [*"Arbeiten Sie im Schichtdienst?" (Filterfrage)*]

Yes [*Ja*]

No [*Nein*]

Question 2:

"Which of the following statements best applies to your normal working hours?" [*"Welche der folgenden Aussagen trifft am ehesten auf Ihre üblichen Arbeitszeiten zu?"*]

If "No" to question 1:

I work during the day [*Ich arbeite tagsüber*]

I work in the evenings [*Ich arbeite abends*]

I work at night [*Ich arbeite nachts*]

I work on a changing schedule [*Ich arbeite nach wechselndem Zeitplan*]

My working day is divided [*Mein Arbeitstag ist zeitlich geteilt*]

I usually get my daily working hours at short notice [*Ich bekomme meine täglichen Arbeitszeiten meist kurzfristig mitgeteilt.*]

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

If "Yes" to question 1:

I work the early shift [*Ich arbeite in Frühschicht*]

I work the late shift [*Ich arbeite in Spätschicht*]

I work the night shift [*Ich arbeite in Nachtschicht*]

I work alternating shifts (e.g. alternating early, late, and night shift) [*Ich arbeite in Wechselschicht (z. B. abwechselnd Früh-, Spät- und Nachtschicht)*]

My working day is divided [*Mein Arbeitstag ist zeitlich geteilt*]

I usually get my daily working hours at short notice [*Ich bekomme meine täglichen Arbeitszeiten meist kurzfristig mitgeteilt.*]

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