

Question in Project:

PaCo - Mechanisms of panel conditioning in longitudinal surveys: Questions on social desirability, gender roles, and environment (English Version)

Question Topic:

Environment/ Environmental behavior

Construct:

Environmental behavior

General Information:

Note: This item was tested in German. This is an English translation of the original German wording.

Question Text:

How often do you throw smaller trash on the ground, in manhole covers, or flower beds when you don't see a trash can right now?

[Wie häufig werfen Sie kleinere Abfälle auf den Boden, in Kanaldeckel oder Blumenbeete, wenn Sie gerade keinen Abfalleimer sehen?]

Answer Categories:

1 Never *[Niemals]*

2

3

4

5

6

7 Very frequently *[Sehr oft]*

Don't know *[Weiß nicht]*

Cognitive Techniques:

Comprehension Probe, General Probe, Specific Probe

Findings for Question:

What do the test persons understand by "smaller waste"?

By "smaller waste", the test persons understood chewing gum (wrappers), paper tissues, cigarette butts, confectionery wrappers, small pieces of paper or coffee cups:

- *"Something like coffee mugs, you get for example at the bakery, or chewing gum paper."* (TP 01)
- *"That would be chewing gum, a piece of handkerchief that you might have lying around in your pocket, that is, an old piece of paper or something."* (TP 04)
- *"Everything that does not belong on the street. These are scraps of paper and wrappers from candy, cigarette butts."* (TP 06)
- *"Chewing gum wrappers or things like that, cigarettes."* (TP 08)

Those test persons who indicated that they "rarely" (scale item 2) threw smaller trash on the ground or in manhole covers/flower beds also mentioned fruit scraps such as an apple stalk:

- *"With me it is usually a piece of apple, so the style that remains at the end."* (TP 02)
- *"Well, I only throw biodegradable material on the ground or in a manhole cover once in a while."* (TP 10)

Do the test persons have problems understanding and/or answering the question?

None of the test persons had problems understanding the question or locating themselves on the answer scale. All test persons stated that they "never" (scale point 1; n = 7) or "rarely" (scale point 2; n = 3) did so. The test person's justifications also matched their previous answer word locations.

Those who had stated that they "rarely" do so named biodegradable products or paper tissues that they occasionally throw on the ground or into manhole covers/flower beds:

- *"My sister sometimes wears my jacket. And she uses handkerchiefs a lot and then just puts them in the jacket pockets. And I hate handkerchiefs. When I notice that on the street and I have the handkerchief in my hand and there is no waste garbage can due to it, I throw it on the ground. I hope of course that no one notices."* (TP 02)
- *"For example, when I eat an apple, the apple cores already fly into flower beds. So I sometimes drop organic things on the ground, but I don't do that often."* (TP 03)

Some of those who had indicated they "never" do it expressed anger when others do it:

- *"But I've also known this from an early age, that I throw my trash in the trash can. That's how I was taught and that's how I've kept it. And I also find it quite unnecessary that you have to throw things on the floor or somewhere where there is no trash can."* (TP 04)
- *"Everything that does not belong on the street. That's scraps of paper and candy wrappers. Cigarette butts, which I find really bad. Honestly nothing belongs on the ground."* (TP 06)
- *"I simply expect that of myself and I also expect that of others. I always get annoyed, some people throw their cigarette butts or something [on the floor], I always find that completely impossible. So I would never do [that] and it also bothers me when someone else does it."* (TP 07)

Others stated that you could put your trash in your handbag, jacket pocket, or pants pocket, for example, until you see a trash can:

- *"So, I always try to keep my smaller scraps with me until I see a trash can."* (TP 01)
- *"I just put it in the handbag."* (TP 05)
- *"If I have small papers or something, there's no need to throw them on the floor. I put it in my jacket or pants pocket and then throw it in the trash can at home."* (TP 08)

How sensitive do the test persons perceive the question to be?

The test persons were asked to indicate on a seven-point scale how unpleasant they found it to be asked the question (sample N3_F5, see Appendix). They found it either "not at all unpleasant" (scale item 1; n = 8) or "rather not unpleasant" (scale item 2; n = 2) to be asked the question.

Those who chose scale point 2 had also previously chosen scale point 2 ("rarely") for question 5. They justified their answer as follows:

- *"Because it's very human. It would be funny if there are people who have never done this before."* (TP 02)
- *"So, [that's] not really unpleasant. Probably because I'm still doing quite well with my fruit waste [laughs]."* (TP 03)

All other test persons expressed that they had a clear opinion on the subject, that it was a matter of course not to throw one's garbage on the ground, and that it was not an unpleasant subject:

- *"Because I find that this is actually a question that has not really worried me personally [...]. So, I don't find that a big issue to talk about now. And I also find that the question is asked very politely."* (TP 01)
- *"Because I don't do that. Because I have a clear attitude towards it."* (TP 06)
- *"Because I have a clear opinion on this and because I also experience that people throw away their cigarette butts from time to time, and because this also bothers me."* (TP 07)
- *"Because I take it for granted that you don't throw your waste around, and I get annoyed at others who throw their waste into my front garden, for example."* (TP 10)

Furthermore, the test persons were asked to indicate on a seven-point scale how honestly they thought respondents would answer this question in a proper survey (see Table N5_F5). Six test persons believed that this question would be answered "rather not honestly" (scale point 3) in a questionnaire, and three believed that it would be answered "rather honestly" (scale point 6; n = 1) or "very honestly" (scale point 7; n = 2). Test person 08 stated that she did not know due to not being able to see inside others.

Those who believed the question was "more likely not to be answered honestly" cited the climate crisis, feelings of shame, and doubts about anonymity as possible reasons for this:

- *"Because of the current prevailing opinion on the climate crisis. I think it's now really totally disreputable to do something like that. And due to this, people probably already have an inhibition threshold to answer this question honestly without being socially ostracized."* (TP 02)
- *"Because I think that the environment is a huge issue and some people would like to look better than they do."* (TP 05)
- *"Because people might be a bit ashamed due to this, it could be that they actually don't want to admit it."* (TP 09)

Those who believed the question was "more likely not to be answered honestly" cited the climate crisis, feelings of shame, and doubts about anonymity as possible reasons for this:

- *"Because the questionnaire or the questions are more or less anonymous later on. And I don't think that this is a topic where many people start lying now."* (TP 01)
- *"Because it just doesn't involve embarrassment or anything. I think the people who just throw their stuff away in the area, they don't worry about it and they don't feel embarrassed to admit it."* (TP 07)

Recommendations:

Question: No changes recommended.

Response format: No changes recommended.

Question documented in ZIS (DOI):

<https://zis.gesis.org/DoiId/zis168>