

**Pretesting survey questions via
web probing:
Does it produce similar results to
f2f cognitive interviewing?**

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Research Questions

- Does **web probing** produce similar results to **f2f cognitive interviewing**? Can it be used to *pretest* survey questions?

 GesellschaftsMonitor

Im Folgenden würden wir gerne von Ihnen wissen, wie Sie die Entwicklung Ihres Lebens in den letzten 12 Monaten bewerten.

Frage 1

Hat sich Ihr Leben Ihrer Meinung nach in den letzten 12 Monaten insgesamt verbessert oder verschlechtert?
Bewerten Sie die Veränderungen aus heutiger Sicht.

deutlich verbessert
 leicht verbessert
 gleich geblieben
 leicht verschlechtert
 deutlich verschlechtert
 weiß nicht

 GesellschaftsMonitor

Wir möchten zu der vorherigen Frage gerne noch nähere Informationen erhalten.

Die Frage war:
"Hat sich Ihr Leben Ihrer Meinung nach in den letzten 12 Monaten insgesamt verbessert oder verschlechtert?"

Ihre Antwort auf diese Frage lautete: „**leicht verschlechtert**“.

Können Sie Ihre Antwort bitte noch etwas näher erläutern? Warum haben Sie sich für diese Antwort entschieden?

Open Probing Question




Research Questions

- How should online probes be implemented into a web survey to get the maximum amount of useful responses?
 - How many probes per question?
 - How many probes per page?
- Does it make sense to implement non-response probes if respondents provide unsatisfactory (e.g., very short) answers to the probing questions?

Experimental Design

- 4 questions from the ISSP 2013/2014 implemented in a 25min online questionnaire
- Questions had been tested previously via f2f cognitive interviewing in the GESIS Pretest Lab
- Three experimental conditions:

Condition	No. of probes	No. of non-response probes	No. of probes per survey page
1	4	4	1
2	7	4	1 or 2
3	7	7	1




Condition 1

Wir möchten zu einer der vorherigen Fragen gerne noch etwas nähere Informationen erhalten.

Die Frage war: "Wie wichtig ist es für Sie, dass Bürger die Möglichkeit des zivilen Ungehorsams haben, um ihre deutliche Ablehnung gegenüber Regierungsentscheidungen zum Ausdruck zu bringen?"


Was verbinden Sie in dieser Frage mit dem Begriff "zivilen Ungehorsam"? Bitte nennen Sie Beispiele.



Bei dieser Frage haben Sie auf einer Skala von 1 (überhaupt nicht wichtig) bis 7 (sehr wichtig) **den Wert "-77" vergeben.**

Können Sie Ihre Antwort bitte noch etwas näher erläutern?

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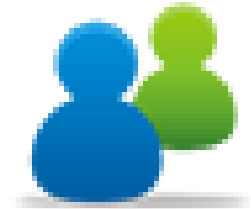
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Condition 2

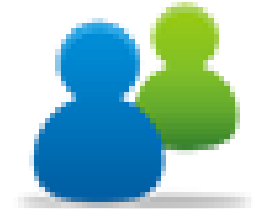
Condition 3



Respondents

- Drawn from the non-probability panel „GESIS Online Panel Pilot“

Invited	897
E-Mail undeliverable	40 (4.5%)
Participants	534 (59.5%)
Drop-Outs	26
Completes	508 (56.6%)



Respondents

	Web Survey	F2F Cognitive Interview
Sex		
- female	227 (45%)	11 (55%)
- male	281 (55%)	9 (45%)
Age		
- 18-40	187 (37%)	9 (45%)
- 41+	321 (63%)	11 (55%)
Education		
- less than college	178 (35%)	11 (55%)
- college+	330 (65%)	9 (45%)
N	508	20

Results: Evaluation by Panelists I

- Closed question: *How would you rate this survey overall?*

	Overall	Condition 1	Condition 2	Condition 3
Very poor	0.6%	0.6%	0%	1.2%
Poor	3.5%	1.7%	2.4%	6.7%
Neutral	26.4%	29.5%	22.9%	26.7%
Good	56.1%	55.5%	60.0%	52.7%
Very good	13.4%	12.7%	14.7%	12.7%

Results: Evaluation by Panelists II

- Open question: *Any more comments on this survey?*

	Overall	Condition 1	Condition 2	Condition 3
Positive (in general)	32%	41%	30%	28%
Negative (in general)	35%	36%	25%	44%
Probes positive	16%	14%	24%	9%
Probes negative	17%	9%	21%	19%
Interpretable comments (N)	87	22	33	32

Results: Quantitative Analysis I

- Number of drop-outs

	Absolute numbers	%
During questions on media	13	50%
During questions on values	1	4%
During experiment	12	46%
<i>Condition 1 (n=175)</i>	2	17%
<i>Condition 2 (n=174)</i>	4	33%
<i>Condition 3 (n=171)</i>	6	50%
Overall	26	100%

Results: Quantitative Analysis II

- Time to complete survey (in min)

	Overall	Experiment
Condition 1	23,03	11,92
Condition 2	27,34	15,42
Condition 3	26,16	14,49
Overall	26,67	14,92

Results: Quantitative Analysis III

- Productivity of probes and non-response probes (NRPs) in %

	No answer	Unusable	Repeats	Sensible	Interpretable	NRPs needed
Probes only	11.1	0.7	1.0	87.2	84.9	16.5
NRPs only	47.0	3.5	9.5	40.0	77.0	-
Overall	27.4	2.0	4.9	65.8	85.9	16.5
<i>Condition 1</i>	29.8	2.8	3.4	64.0	82.8	15.9
<i>Condition 2</i>	23.8	0.1	5.1	71.1	88.3	11.3
<i>Condition 3</i>	28.8	3.0	5.7	62.6	86.7	19.2

Results: Qualitative Analysis Q1

Q1: *How important is it that citizens may engage in acts of **civil disobedience** when they strictly oppose government actions?*

- Probes: What does the term „civil disobedience“ mean to you?/
Can you explain your answer a little further?
- Problems identified:
 - 10% of respondents equate civil disobedience with acts of violence
 - 2% interpret the scale as if it was reaching from non-violent to violent behavior
 - 7% of respondents arrive at (obviously wrong) interpretations of the question (e.g., crime, freedom of speech)

Results: Qualitative Analysis Q2

Q2: *How important is it that long-term residents of a country, who are not citizens, have the right to vote in that country's **national election**?*

- Probes: What elections did you think of when answering the question? Please give examples.
- Problems identified:
 - Only 13% of respondents interpret the question in the way intended (elections at the *national level* only).
 - 18% do not specify their answers and 35% mention various elections (including elections at the national level).
 - 23% of respondents do not include elections at the national level.

Results: Comparison to f2f results

- $N = 508$ vs. $N = 20$
- Results of the f2f laboratory pretest were basically replicated
- Some more potential problems/interpretations were found
 - Reasons unclear: More people or more inferences because of the limited interactivity (no interviewer)?
- More difficult to interpret the answers and to sort them into categories because:
 - Respondents often do not directly answer the probing questions
 - Respondents often keep their answers very short

Conclusions

- Web probing can produce similar results to f2f cognitive interviewing (→ promising pretesting method)
- It is possible to ask more than one (i.e., at least two) probing questions per survey page and per question
(→ Most sensible/ interpretable answers to probing questions in condition 2 with two probing question per page)
- It is advisable to implement non-response probes to the probing questions as it increases the number of interpretable answers (albeit to a small extent)

Future Research

- How many survey questions can be tested in a web probing pretest? What is the maximum duration for web probing pretests?
- How many probes per survey page and survey question? (2, 3, or more?)
- If additional problems to the ones identified via f2f cognitive interviewing are detected:
 - Is this due to the larger samples or to the absence of an interviewer, which requires more interpretation by researchers?
 - Are the additional problems found „real problems“ or „false alarms“?
- Is it possible/necessary to implement other cognitive pretesting techniques, such as paraphrasing or thinking aloud?

Thanks for your attention!

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