

## Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) Module 5: Cognitive Pretest

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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Arbeitspapier / working paper

**Zur Verfügung gestellt in Kooperation mit / provided in cooperation with:**

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### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Lenzner, T., Otto, W., Neuert, C., Beitz, C., Schmidt, R., & Stiegler, A. (2016). *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) Module 5: Cognitive Pretest*. (GESIS-Projektbericht, 2016/05). Mannheim: GESIS - Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften. <https://doi.org/10.17173/pretest27>

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## Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) Module 5

Cognitive Pretest  
June 2016

*Timo Lenzner, Wanda Otto, Cornelia Neuert,  
Clara Beitz, Robin Schmidt & Angelika Stiegler*



GESIS-Projektbericht 2016|05

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## GESIS-Projektberichte

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DOI: [10.17173/pretest27](https://doi.org/10.17173/pretest27)

### *Zitierweise*

Lenzner, T.; Otto, W.; Neuert, C.; Beitz, C.; Schmidt, R.; Stiegler, A. (2016): Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) Module 5. Cognitive Pretest. GESIS Projektbericht. Version: 1.0. GESIS – Pretestlabor. Text. <http://doi.org/10.17173/pretest27>

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## 1 Aims of the Pretest

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The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) is a collaborative program of research among election study teams from around the world. Participating countries and provinces include a common module of survey questions in their post-election studies. The resulting data are deposited along with voting, demographic, district and macro/electoral system variables. The studies are then merged into a single, free, public dataset for use in comparative study and cross-level analysis.

In preparation of the 2016 Plenary Session in August 2016, at which the project foresees the official adaption of the questionnaire for Module 5, the purpose of this task is to provide the projects secretariat, planning committee, and collaborators with detailed results from cognitive pretest of selected questions. This is to ensure that these questions are of the best quality before they are fielded in national election studies of participating countries.

For that purpose, the GESIS Pretest lab was assigned the task to conduct a cognitive pretest by Dr. Stephen Quinlan of GESIS.

## 2 Sample

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Number of cognitive interviews: 16

Selection of target population: Quota sample.

Quotas: The selection of the target population was based on the following quota scheme. All respondents were German citizens.

Age	Education	Female	Male	Total
18 - 40	Less than Abitur	2	2	4
18 - 40	Fachhochschulreife/Abitur	2	2	4
41 +	Less than Abitur	2	2	4
41 +	Fachhochschulreife/Abitur	2	2	4
TOTAL		8	8	16

## Key characteristics of the respondents:

Respondent No.	Age in years	Sex	Education*
01	38	Female	B
02	32	Female	C
03	35	Male	C
04	36	Male	B
05	23	Female	G
06	34	Female	G
07	30	Male	G
08	31	Male	G
09	52	Female	B
10	63	Female	B
11	47	Male	B
12	58	Male	C
13	67	Female	G
14	53	Female	F
15	52	Male	G
16	65	Male	G

- \* Codes:
- A - Left school without any degree  
(Von der Schule abgegangen ohne Hauptschulabschluss/Volksschulabschluss)
  - B - Certificate after 9 years of school/ Certificate of Lower Secondary Education  
(Hauptschulabschluss (Volksschulabschluss))
  - C - Certificate after 10 years of school/ General Certificate of Higher Secondary Education (Realschulabschluss (Mittlere Reife))
  - D - Polytechnic school of the former German Democratic Republic with a certificate after the 8th or 9th grade  
(Polytechnische Oberschule der DDR mit Abschluss der 8. oder 9. Klasse)
  - E - Polytechnic school of the former German Democratic Republic with a certificate after the 10th grade  
(Polytechnische Oberschule der DDR mit Abschluss der 10. Klasse)
  - F - Advanced technical college entrance qualification (subject-specific)  
(Fachhochschulreife, Abschluss einer Fachoberschule)
  - G - Advanced general qualification for university entrance  
[Allgemeine oder fachgebundene Hochschulreife/Abitur (Gymnasium bzw. EOS, auch EOS mit Lehre)]

### 3 Methods

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<b>Field time:</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> of April to 11 <sup>th</sup> of May 2016
<b>Number of Cognitive Interviewers:</b>	4
<b>Number of interviews conducted at the GESIS pretest lab (video-recorded):</b>	16
<b>Procedure:</b>	Application of a cognitive interview protocol
<b>Survey mode:</b>	CAPI
<b>Cognitive techniques:</b>	General Probing, Specific Probing, Comprehension Probing, Confidence Rating, Emergent Probing.
<b>Incentive for respondents:</b>	30 Euro

## 4 Results

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### Tested question:

1. Wie interessiert sind Sie im Allgemeinen an Politik?  
 [How interested would you say you are in politics?]

Very interested  
 Somewhat interested  
 Not very interested  
 Not at all interested  
 *Volunteered: Refused*  
 *Volunteered: Don't know*

### Frequency distribution (N=16)

Answer	No. of respondents
Very interested	5
Somewhat interested	8
Not very interested	2
Not at all interested	1
<i>Volunteered: Refused</i>	-
<i>Volunteered: Don't know</i>	-

### Cognitive techniques:

Emergent Probing.

### Findings:

Two respondents (ID 06, 14) note that the question lacks a middle category ("Hm, I would say partly so and partly so"<sup>1</sup>, ID 14). After a few moments' consideration, both respondents decide on the answer "fairly interested" and are therefore able to conform to the given set of answer categories without too much difficulty.

### Recommendations:

Question: No changes recommended.

Answer categories: No changes recommended.

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<sup>1</sup> „Hm, ich würde sagen teils/teils" (TP 14)

## Tested question:

2. Und wie aufmerksam verfolgen Sie Politik im Fernsehen, im Radio, in den Zeitungen oder im Internet?

*INT.: Antwortkategorien vorlesen.*

[And how closely do you follow politics on TV, radio, newspapers, or the Internet?]

*INT.: Read answer categories aloud*

- Very closely
- Fairly closely
- Not very closely
- Not at all
- Volunteered: Refused*
- Volunteered: Don't know*

## Frequency distribution (N=16)

Answer	No. of respondents
Very closely	5
Fairly closely	8
Not very closely	2
Not at all	1
<i>Volunteered: Refused</i>	-
<i>Volunteered: Don't know</i>	-

## Cognitive techniques:

General Probing, Specific Probing.

## Findings:

The majority of respondents claims to follow politics "very closely" (n=5) or "fairly closely" (n=8). Two respondents follow politics "not very closely" (ID 04, 07) and one respondent "not at all" (ID 01).

The frequency distribution of question 2 is identical to the frequency distribution of question 1. Only two respondents respond differently to the two questions (ID 02: question 1 = not very interested, question 2 = fairly closely; ID 07: question 1 = fairly interested, question 2 = not very closely). Respondent 02, who follows politics "fairly closely", tries to watch the news regularly, however does not actively seek out information on political matters in the media: *"I try to keep up with the news. But I don't explicitly and actively search for information on politics."*<sup>2</sup> Respondent 07 explains his answer as

<sup>2</sup> „Also das was so in den Nachrichten kommt, versuche ich mitzubekommen. So dass man sich politisch etwas merkt. Ich gehe jetzt aber nicht explizit aktiv darauf zu um mir irgendwelche Sachen anzugucken.“ (TP 02)

follows: *"In the morning I browse some websites such as zeit.de or spiegel.de and quickly skim the articles that interest me. But I don't really get deeper into the matter<sup>3</sup>".*

The answers of the remaining 14 respondents to the general probe ("Could you further illustrate your answer?"<sup>4</sup>) indicate that the respondents understand and answer the question in the intended way. Overall, these answer patterns emerge:

- Very closely: Respondents selecting this answer category have a broad interest in political matters and strive to actively inform and further educate themselves via different types of media (newspapers, political magazines, talk shows on TV, Internet, and news on the radio).
- Fairly closely: The respondents are interested in some specific political issues and seek out information both actively and consciously. The extent to which they engage in political issues, however, depends on the topic.
- Not very closely: The respondents catch up on contemporary political events sporadically, but do not show a special interest in certain topics. They follow politics in the media in a rather passive way, such as listening to the news on the radio when they come on, but not intentionally turning on the radio for this exact purpose.
- Not at all: The respondent is not interested in politics in the slightest and finds political matters to be too complex. Therefore, the respondent does not follow politics at all through any medium.

Lastly, the respondents were asked to state the channels of media they mainly use for political information. No respondent named a different channel than the ones mentioned in the question.

#### Recommendations:

Question: No changes recommended.

Answer categories: No changes recommended.

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<sup>3</sup> „Man surft morgens mal eine Seite an, z.B. zeit.de oder spiegel.de und liest da kurz durch, was einen interessiert. Aber wirklich tief in die Materie eindringen tue ich nicht.“ (TP 07)

<sup>4</sup> „Können Sie Ihre Antwort bitte noch etwas näher erläutern?“



## Tested question:

<p>3. Inwieweit stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu?</p> <p><i>INT.: Antwortkategorien für die ersten 3 Items jedes Mal vorlesen, danach nur bei Bedarf!</i></p> <p>[Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements:]</p> <p><i>INT.: Read answer categories aloud for the first three items, then as required.</i></p>
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## Frequency distribution (N=16)

	Stimme voll und ganz zu <sup>5</sup>	Stimme eher zu	Weder noch	Stimme eher nicht zu	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	<i>verwei- wei- gert</i>	<i>weiß nicht</i>
a) Ich glaube, dass ich die wichtigsten politischen Themen in diesem Land verstehe. [You feel that you understand the most important political issues of this country.]	3	11	-	1	1	-	-
b) In einer Demokratie ist es wichtig, Kompromisse zwischen verschiedenen Ansichten zu suchen. [In a democracy it is important to seek compromise among different viewpoints.]	11	5	-	-	-	-	-
c) Die meisten Politikerinnen und Politiker kümmern sich nicht um das Volk. [Most politicians do not care about the people.]	3	3	3	5	-	-	2
d) Die meisten Politikerinnen und Politiker sind vertrauenswürdig. [Most politicians are trustworthy.]	-	3	3	6	2	-	2
e) Die Politikerinnen und Politiker sind das Hauptproblem in Deutschland. [Politicians are the main problem in Germany.]	1	2	4	2	7	-	-

<sup>5</sup> Strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, strongly, disagree, volunteered: refused, volunteered: don't know.

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f) Eine starke Führungspersonlichkeit in der Regierung zu haben ist gut für Deutschland, auch wenn diese sich nicht so genau an die Regeln hält um Dinge Vorwärts zu bringen.	2	4	4	2	3	-	1
[Having a strong leader in government is good for Germany even if the leader bends the rules to get things done.]							
g) Das Volk, und nicht die Politikerinnen und Politiker, sollte unsere wichtigsten politischen Entscheidungen treffen.	2	3	3	4	4	-	-
[The people, and not politicians, should make our most important policy decisions.]							
h) Die meisten Politikerinnen und Politiker kümmern sich nur um die Interessen der Reichen und Mächtigen.	1	5	-	7	3	-	-
[Most politicians care only about the interests of the rich and powerful.]							
i) Arme Menschen sollten in der Politik mehr Mitspracherecht haben.	1	2	1	8	4	-	-
[Poor people should have a greater voice in politics.]							

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**Cognitive techniques:**

General Probing, Specific Probing, Comprehension Probing.

**Findings:**

Items a), c), e), f) and i) were systematically tested. For all other items, we received only spontaneous comments from the respondents.

**Item a): You feel that you understand the most important political issues of this country.**

14 respondents "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" with this statement, while only two respondents (ID 01, 07) "strongly disagree" or "somewhat disagree".

Those who agree with the statement believe they are sufficiently informed on most important political matters to be able, for example, to discuss them competently:

- "I believe that when it comes to most topics, or those topics that are most important to me, I know what I am talking about. For example, the refugee crisis or the emission scandal. I have my own opinion on those topics and would be able to discuss them<sup>6</sup>." (ID 04)
- "After all, I have been following political events for 55 years, reading the newspaper. I understand domestic policy with ease, and am also well informed on foreign policy. It is also my ambition to be able to understand this<sup>7</sup>." (ID 16)

The respondents mainly think of topics such as the refugee crisis, the environment, pension policy and TTIP while answering this item.

Both respondents who disagree with the item (ID 01, 07) explain that they have no interest in political matters and often find them to be too complex to talk about.

The respondents were also asked how they understood the answer option „weder noch“ (“neither agree nor disagree”). Seven respondents think it is a sort of evasive option for those respondents who don't care about the topic, do not have an opinion on it or cannot decide. Hence, they view it as a kind of “don't know”-category. The remaining respondents interpret “weder noch” as “teils/teils” (“partially agree/partially disagree”), that is, as the answer option that those respondents would pick who partially agree and disagree with the statement. Two respondents (ID 05, 06) explicitly state that they would prefer the phrasing “teils/teils”, because “weder noch” would not fit in this context: *“Weder noch is not correct here. Maybe partially understand? It is partially correct or I partially agree, something like that would be nice here. I know what 'weder noch' is supposed to mean, but it just does not sound right here.”* (ID 06).<sup>8 9</sup>

#### Item c): Most politicians do not care about the people.

Six respondents “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree”, while five respondents “somewhat disagree” with this item. Three respondents “neither disagree nor agree” (ID 03, 08, 11) and two respondents (ID 01, 13) answer “don't know”.

Respondent 01 explains her answer of “don't know” with her lack of interest in politics and because she doesn't know any politicians personally – and therefore cannot judge them. For this very same reason she also answers “don't know” on item d). Respondent 13 would answer this item differently depending on whether the item is about politicians on the communal or federal level. As this is not specified in the item, she cannot answer this item (as well as item d)).

One of the three respondents who „neither agrees nor disagrees“ (ID 08) highlights the same argument and states that they cannot answer the item as they do not know any politicians personally. Therefore, this respondent uses the answer category of “neither agree nor disagree” as a “don't know” answer

<sup>6</sup> „Ich bin der Meinung, dass ich bei den meisten bzw. für mich wichtigsten Themen weiß, um was es geht. Zum Beispiel beim Thema Flüchtlingskrise oder auch dem Abgasskandal. Bei diesen Themen habe ich eine eigene Meinung und könnte auch darüber diskutieren.“ (TP 04)

<sup>7</sup> „Immerhin verfolge ich seit 55 Jahren das politische Geschehen, lese Tageszeitung. Die innenpolitischen Themen verstehe ich ohne weiteres, bei außenpolitischen Themen kenne ich mich auch gut aus. Es ist auch mein Anspruch, das zu verstehen.“ (TP 16)

<sup>8</sup> „Weder noch ist ja falsch, oder? Verstehe ich etwas? Weder noch passt da nicht. Trifft teilweise zu wäre schön. Man weiß ja schon was mit weder noch gemeint ist aber ich schaue halt immer nach dem Wortlaut und der passt nicht so.“ (TP 06)

<sup>9</sup> Respondent 06 notes that the answer option „weder noch“ does not sound right in some of the other items of question 3, too:

(see findings item a). The other two respondents (ID 03, 11) partially agree and partially disagree with the statement (*"At first they say they will raise the retirement pensions, and shortly after that you have to work longer. They care and then don't care after all."*<sup>10</sup>, ID 11)

Those six respondents who agree with the statement explain that they are wary of politicians, as they primarily think of their own interests and do not take into account the will of the people outside of electoral campaigns:

- "We might be allowed to vote regularly, but when it comes to topics that really are important, then groups of people decide who might not even be affected by it and there are no referendums<sup>11</sup>." (ID 02)
- "It seems to me as though first of all, they look out for themselves. Initially, it doesn't matter what the people want. They don't ask us, they deal with it among themselves."<sup>12</sup> (ID 04)
- "As of late I always think of lobbying when it comes to politicians. Or when you think of their pay raise, you get the feeling it overlooks the people and is only egoistical."<sup>13</sup> (ID 07)

On the other hand, those five respondents who do not agree with the statement have a positive attitude towards politicians and trust most of them:

- "At the moment I occasionally get the feeling that there are isolated incidents where they care more about their own interests. But I would say those are exceptions. Really, I have confidence in politics."<sup>14</sup> (ID 05)
- "I think that there are many who are very dedicated and who do care within their abilities. Of course there are some black sheep, as is always the case."<sup>15</sup> (ID 12)

Finally, the respondents were asked how they understood the phrase „sich um das Volk kümmern“ (‐care about the people‐). Two kinds of interpretations emerge: Ten respondents think ‐caring about the people‐ means taking into account the will of the people (*"Listening to the people, asking the people for their opinion. Responding to what the people want."*<sup>16</sup>, respondent 04), whereas the remaining six respondents think of the preservation and enhancement of the welfare state (*"To make sure, that the welfare state is maintained and performs as intended. For example, consider the pen-*

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<sup>10</sup> „Erst sagen sie, dass es eine Rentenerhöhung gibt und kurze Zeit später, dass man länger arbeiten muss. Sie kümmern sich und kümmern sich doch nicht.“ (TP 11)

<sup>11</sup> „Man darf zwar regelmäßig wählen, aber wenn es dann um wirklich wichtige Themen geht, dann entscheiden Personengruppen, die vielleicht gar nicht so sehr davon betroffen sind und es gibt keine Volksabstimmung.“ (TP 02)

<sup>12</sup> „Mir kommt es so vor, als ob die zuerst einmal auf sich selbst schauen. Es ist erst einmal unwichtig, was das Volk will. Wir werden ja nicht gefragt, die regeln das alles untereinander.“ (TP 04)

<sup>13</sup> „In der letzten Zeit denke ich bei Politikern immer öfter auch an so Lobbygeschichten. Oder auch wenn man an die Diätenerhöhungen denkt, da hat man immer ein bisschen das Gefühl, das geht ein bisschen am Volk vorbei und ist nur egoistisch.“ (TP 07)

<sup>14</sup> „Im Moment hat man schon manchmal das Gefühl, dass es Einzelfälle gibt, die sich mehr auf ihre eigenen Interessen beziehen. Aber ich würde sagen, das sind die Ausnahmen. Eigentlich habe ich schon Vertrauen in die Politik.“ (TP 05)

<sup>15</sup> „Ich glaube, dass sehr viele engagiert sind und sich schon kümmern im Rahmen ihrer Möglichkeiten. Sicher gibt's da auch schwarze Schafe wie überall.“ (TP 12)

<sup>16</sup> „Dem Volk zuhören, das Volk fragen. Darauf eingehen, was das Volk möchte.“ (TP 04)

sion system, where the inter-generation contract cannot be upheld. Or health insurance, taking steps to improve employee rights, and so on.<sup>17</sup>, ID 07).

**Item e): Politicians are the main problem in Germany.**

Two problems emerge:

1. Respondent 01 ("somewhat agree") misunderstands the question by assuming it means that politicians are needed in order to represent the people in taking care of the main problems.
2. Respondent 07 ("neither agree nor disagree") claims not to know what the main problem in Germany is and therefore is actually not able to answer the question. ("*I don't know what the main problem in Germany is, I wouldn't be able to settle on one.*<sup>18</sup>") Still, the respondent chooses the middle answer category instead of not answering the question (see also findings item a) and c)).

The remaining 14 respondents either state (1) that they do believe politicians to be the main problem in Germany, as they ignore the will of the people (ID 04, 09), (2) that they do not believe politicians to be the main problem in Germany as there are different, more problematic issues such as the refugee crisis (ID 02, 04, 05, 06, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16) or (3) that they cannot pass a blanket judgement as there are politicians who show misconduct, while others try to do the right thing (ID 03, 08, 10)

**Item f): Having a strong leader in government is good for Germany even if the leader bends the rules to get things done.**

Six respondents "strongly agree" (ID 10, 11) or "somewhat agree" (ID 01, 04, 07, 16) with this statement, while five respondents "somewhat disagree" (ID 02, 05) or "strongly disagree" (ID 03, 12, 15). Four respondents answer with "neither agree nor disagree" (ID 06, 08, 09, 14), while one respondent "doesn't know" (ID 13).

It is obvious that all respondents favor a strong leader in government ("*Someone with a clear-cut profile, who isn't afraid to go against the current, even if there is resistance from their own party.*<sup>19</sup>", ID 12). Some respondents (e.g. ID 07, 11) think of specific politicians, such as Angela Merkel, Helmut Schmidt or Lothar Späth, when hearing the term "strong leader".

Respondent 13, who answered "don't know" also agrees on the importance of a strong leader, however faces a "*moral dilemma*<sup>20</sup>" due to the second part of the sentence "even if the leader bends the rules to get things done".

<sup>17</sup> „Dass man sich darum kümmert, dass der Sozialstaat erhalten bleibt bzw. so funktioniert, wie er sollte. Zum Beispiel bei der Rente, der Generationenvertrag funktioniert ja nicht mehr. Dass man schaut wie die Rente weiter erhalten bleiben kann. Oder auch, dass die Krankenkasse so funktioniert wie sie soll, dass etwas für die Arbeitnehmerrechte getan wird, usw.“ (TP 07)

<sup>18</sup> „Ich weiß nicht was das Hauptproblem in Deutschland ist, da könnte ich mich nicht festlegen.“ (TP 07)

<sup>19</sup> „Jemand mit einem klaren Profil, einer klaren Kante, der auch mal gegen den Widerstand der eigenen Partei was durchsetzt.“ (TP 12)

<sup>20</sup> „Moralisches Dilemma“ (TP 13)

Those respondents who agree with the statement explain that the end justifies the means:

- "If the decisions are right for the people, then sometimes they have to be made even if they are not quite within the framework. Here, the end justifies the means. If it is for the good of the country, it can be done occasionally.<sup>21</sup>" (ID 04)
- "If the end justifies the mean and is not that bad, then it's alright."<sup>22</sup> (ID 10)

In contrast, those respondents who do not agree with the statement argue that while a strong leader is of importance, abiding by the law is more important:

- "Well I am in favor of a strong leader, who is charismatic, has a certain presence and is assertive. But I think everyone needs to abide by certain rules."<sup>23</sup> (ID 02)
- "While this strong leader surely would be helpful, bending the laws at one's whim? You can see what this leads to in Turkey. I am strictly against that."<sup>24</sup> (ID 12)

Those four respondents who "neither agree nor disagree" believe that while a strong leader in the government is important, so is playing by the rules ("*I do think it is important to have a strong leader, but at what cost? Bending the rules does bother me.*"<sup>25</sup>, ID 06)

Finally, the respondents were asked to name specific examples, where a strong leader bent the rules to get things done. Merkel's refugee policy was frequently listed (ID 01, 02, 07, 08, 11). Some respondents thought of non-compliance with current laws (ID 06, 10, 12, 13, 14), while others drew comparisons to dictators (Kim Yong Un, Adolf Hitler) or "autocrats" (Erdogan, Putin) who draw up legislation to their whim (ID 03, 05, 12). It must be noted that the phrase "bend the rules to get things done" allows for a large scope of interpretation. While some respondents think of rather severe misdemeanors (i.e. breaking the law), others think of trivial offences (such as non-coordinated action with the general party opinion). In the latter case, the respondents tend to agree with the statement, whereas the respondents disagree in the former case.

#### Item i): Poor people should have a greater voice in politics.

Three respondents (ID 09, 10, 11) "somewhat agree" or "strongly agree" with this statement, twelve respondents "somewhat disagree" or "strongly disagree" and one respondent (ID 08) "neither agrees nor disagrees".

Those who agree with the statement argue that a) those affected, e.g. pensioners, should have a greater voice when it comes to pension reforms (ID 09), b) there should be more referendums in general so

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<sup>21</sup> „Wenn die Entscheidungen richtig fürs Volk sind, dann müssen auch einmal Entscheidungen getroffen werden, die vielleicht nicht ganz im Rahmen sind. Da würde der Zweck die Mittel heiligen. Wenn es gut fürs Land ist, dann kann man das ruhig einmal machen.“ (TP 04)

<sup>22</sup> „Wenn es dem Zweck, dem Endergebnis dient und nicht gar so schlimm ist, dann ist es ok.“ (TP 10)

<sup>23</sup> „Also ich bin für eine Führungspersönlichkeit, die Charisma, Ausstrahlung und Durchsetzungsvermögen hat. Aber ich finde, jeder muss sich an gewisse Regeln halten.“ (TP 02)

<sup>24</sup> „Also diese starke Führungspersönlichkeit ist sicherlich hilfreich, aber sich das Gesetz so hinzubiegen, wie man es gerne hätte? Da sieht man ja, was in der Türkei passiert. Da bin ich strikt dagegen.“ (TP 12)

<sup>25</sup> „Ich finde es schon wichtig, dass man eine starke Führungsperson hat, aber egal zu welchem Preis? Sich nicht an die Regeln halten, das stört mich schon.“ (TP 06).

that poor people can have as much of an impact as wealthy lobbyists (ID 10), and c), that the government should concentrate more on taking into account the concerns of the poor (ID 11).

Respondent 08, who „neither agrees nor disagrees“ thought of actively holding a political office when answering the question and sees no significant difference in the access opportunities to politics between the rich and the poor: *„I don't completely understand the question. Are there differences in how easy it is for the poor and the rich to enter politics? Sure, the rich may have more opportunities just because of their better education. But other than that, I think that if someone wants to start a career in politics, in Germany, he or she can do so even without being wealthy.“*<sup>26</sup> (ID 08).

Those respondents who disagree with the statement explain that poor people are also often poorly educated and therefore do not have the necessary knowledge to decide on political matters competently (ID 03, 12, 15). Others think that neither poverty, nor any other criterion, should lead to preferential treatment (ID 01, 02, 04, 05, 06, 07, 13, 14, 16):

- *“In politics, money rules. But that doesn't mean that people should be treated preferentially because they are poor. It's the same as the women's quota. Either I make it to the top through my performance or not. But not only due to my gender. It would be the same here: Simply because I don't have money, I would be elevated. I don't think that's good.“*<sup>27</sup> (ID 04)
- *“I don't think that fits into a democracy. Everyone has the same right to cast his vote, no matter whether they are poor or rich. Of course the voice of the socially deprived isn't heard as much, and their interests are not represented as much. But I don't believe it is right to override democratic principles.“*<sup>28</sup> (ID 07)

When asked who the respondents understand to be “poor people”, most name unemployed persons as well as people who are reliant on state support, such as Hartz IV recipients (16 mentions), pensioners (6 mentions), people from poorly educated social strata (4 mentions), and the homeless (3 mentions).

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<sup>26</sup> Ich kann die Frage nicht 100% nachvollziehen, weil ich nicht weiß, wo da unterschieden wird zwischen Arm und Reich in der Politik. Klar, vielleicht haben Reiche eher die Möglichkeit, in die Politik reinzukommen aufgrund eines höheren Bildungsstandes. Aber ansonsten denke ich, dass wenn in Deutschland jemand in die Politik will, aber nicht wohlhabend ist, dann kommt der trotzdem in die Politik.“ (TP 08).

<sup>27</sup> „In der Politik regiert das Geld, aber das heißt noch nicht, dass man Menschen aufgrund ihrer Armut eher bevorzugen sollte. Das ist genauso wie die Frauenquote. Entweder ich komme durch meine Leistung nach oben oder eben nicht. Aber nicht nur durch mein Geschlecht. So wäre das hier auch: Nur weil ich kein Geld habe, würde ich hier hervorgehoben. Das finde ich nicht gut.“ (TP 04)

<sup>28</sup> „Das passt meiner Meinung nach nicht in die Demokratie. Jeder hat das gleiche Recht, seine Stimme abzugeben, egal ob arm oder reich. Klar wird die Stimme der sozial Schwächeren nicht so gehört, deren Interessen nicht so vertreten. Aber ich halte es nicht für richtig, hier über demokratische Grundsätze hinweg zu agieren.“ (TP 07)

**Recommendations:**

- Question: No changes recommended.
- Item a): No changes recommended.
- Item c): Due to the finding that the phrase „sich um das Volk kümmern“ (‘‘care about the people’’) is interpreted differently by different respondents, we recommend to modify the item:  
 „Den meisten Politikerinnen und Politikern ist die Meinung des Volkes gleichgültig.“  
 [Most politicians are indifferent to the people's opinion.]
- Item e): No changes recommended.
- Item f): Due to the finding that the wording „auch wenn diese sich nicht so genau an Regeln hält um Dinge vorwärts zu bringen“ (‘‘bend the rules to get things done’’) leaves room for interpretation and is understood as „violating the laws“ by some respondents, we recommend to modify the item:  
 „Eine starke Führungspersönlichkeit in der Regierung zu haben ist gut für Deutschland, auch wenn diese ab und zu Dinge im Alleingang entscheidet, um sie voran zu bringen.“  
 [Having a strong leader in government is good for Germany, even if the leader now and then decides things single-handedly to get things done.]
- Item i): In order to avoid that respondents think of a preferential treatment for the poor (i.e. a „poor people quota“) when answering this question, we recommend to modify the item:  
 „Die Interessen von armen Menschen sollten in der Politik stärker vertreten werden.“  
 [The interests of poor people should better be represented in politics.]
- Answer categories: Given that the wording of the middle category („weder noch“, „neither agree nor disagree“) does not fit the context of some items, we recommend to replace it with the wording „teils/teils“ (partly agree, partly disagree).



## Tested question:

4. Und wenn Sie nun an ethnische Minderheiten denken: Inwieweit stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu?

[Now thinking about ethnic minorities. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree or disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements:]

## Frequency distribution (N=16)

	Stimme voll und ganz zu <sup>29</sup>	Stimme eher zu	Weder noch	Stimme eher nicht zu	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	verweigert	weiß nicht
a) Minderheiten sollten sich den deutschen Gepflogenheiten anpassen. [Minorities should adapt to German customs.]	4	7	1	1	1	1	1
b) Einwanderer sind im Allgemeinen gut für die deutsche Wirtschaft. [Immigrants are generally good for Germany's economy.]	4	4	3	3	2	-	-
c) Die deutsche Kultur wird durch Einwanderer bedroht. (Germany's culture is generally threatened by immigrants.)	-	2	-	7	5	-	2

## Cognitive techniques:

General Probing, Specific Probing.

## Findings:

Two respondents report problems with the question text. Respondent 01 does not understand the term "ethnic" and is therefore incapable of answering Item a) (answer: "don't know"). Respondent 06 is confused by the difference between the question text and the item text in Item a), as the question refers to "ethnic minorities", while the item is just about "minorities" ("So now it is only about *ethnic minorities* and not for example socially marginalized groups?", ID 06).

Item c) was systematically tested. For all other items, we received only spontaneous comments from the respondents.

<sup>29</sup> Strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, strongly, disagree, volunteered: refused, volunteered: don't know.

**Item a): Minorities should conform to German customs.**

Three respondents are troubled by the term "Gepflogenheiten" ("customs", ID 03, 07, 13):

- "Customs? Are they supposed to wash their car on Saturdays? What even are German customs? I do not like this term at all. It makes me think of old people, who monitor foreigners and moan about."<sup>30</sup> (ID 03, strongly disagree)
- "'Gepflogenheiten' meaning customs and traditions?" Then I would somewhat disagree. If 'Gepflogenheiten' refers to social norms and values, then I would strongly agree."<sup>31</sup> (ID 07, refused)
- "What are German customs? Punctuality? Otherwise everyone should live as they please."<sup>32</sup> (ID 13, somewhat agree)

**Item c): Germany's culture is generally threatened by immigrants.**

Two respondents (ID 12, 15) "agree somewhat" with this item, whereas seven "somewhat disagree" (ID 01, 02, 04, 10, 13, 14, 16) and five "strongly disagree" (ID 03, 05, 06, 07, 08). Two respondents (ID 09, 11) cannot answer this item as they perceive the term "threatened" as too strong in this context:

- "Threatened sounds like blood and thunder. That's too extreme."<sup>33</sup> (ID 09)
- "Threatened? That doesn't quite fit the bill, it sounds so dumb. You're threatened when there is an outbreak of war. If they threaten us with guns, then the term fits, but in this sense it is not a threat."<sup>34</sup> (ID 11)

The respondents (ID 12, 15) who „agree somewhat“ explain their answers as follows:

- "That's a major issue. When I look at all those Islamic countries where the men are princes and the women are seen as worthless. If that spills over to us and is adopted, or if a large part of the population thinks like that, I don't consider that to be good. I don't want my daughters to be forced to wear a headscarf."<sup>35</sup> (ID 12)

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<sup>30</sup> „Gepflogenheiten? Sollen sie samstags ihr Auto putzen? Was sind denn deutsche Gepflogenheiten? Der Ausdruck gefällt mir gar nicht. Da denke ich an alte Leute, die Ausländer beobachten und rumtotzen.“ (TP 03)

<sup>31</sup> „Gepflogenheiten heißt hier Sitten und Gebräuche? Dann würde ich eher nicht zustimmen. Wenn mit „Gepflogenheiten“ Werte und Normen gemeint sind, dann würde ich natürlich voll und ganz zustimmen.“ (TP 07)

<sup>32</sup> „Was sind denn die deutschen Gepflogenheiten? Pünktlichkeit? Ansonsten soll doch jeder leben, wie er mag.“ (TP 13)

<sup>33</sup> „Bedroht hört sich für mich gleich so nach Mord und Totschlag an. Das ist zu krass.“ (TP 09)

<sup>34</sup> „Bedroht? Das trifft es nicht ganz, das klingt so blöd. Bedroht wird man, wenn Krieg ausbricht. Wenn die uns mit Waffen bedrohen, dann [passt der Begriff], aber in dem Sinn ist das ja keine Bedrohung.“ (TP 11)

<sup>35</sup> „Das ist ein Riesenthema. Wenn ich mir die ganzen islamischen Länder anschau: Die Männer sind die Prinzen und die Frauen nichts wert. Wenn so etwas zu uns schwappt und das übernommen wird oder eine große Schicht der Bevölkerung so denkt, dann halte ich das nicht für gut. Ich möchte nicht, dass meine Töchter mit Kopftuch rumlaufen müssen.“ (TP 12)

- "Here is an example: It is a German custom not to hang out laundry on a Sunday. Since Albanians live alongside us, no one cares about that anymore. But because so many live here now, it can't be changed. I don't think it's right."<sup>36</sup> (ID 15)

Those respondents who „somewhat disagree“ or „strongly disagree“ argue that they perceive immigrants as an enrichment (6 respondents), that it is the Germans themselves who are responsible for the continued existence of their culture (2 respondents) or that the number of immigrants is yet too small to be considered a threat (4 respondents):

- „There are still too few immigrants for it to be considered a threat to the culture.“<sup>37</sup> (ID 04)
- „It's always up to oneself, up to the German people, whether they let this happen or not. We are ourselves responsible for our traditions.“<sup>38</sup> (ID 08)
- „No, first and foremost it is enriched.“<sup>39</sup> (ID 16)

Upon request, five respondents (ID 03, 07, 08, 13, 14) could not imagine a scenario where the German culture could be threatened by immigrants. All other respondents named Islamic influences. In particular, a different perception of gender relations (*"I don't want my daughters to be forced to wear a headscarf."*, ID 12), the marginalization of the majority religion of Christianity (*"I'm thinking of debates about the implementation of Islam lessons at school"*, ID 04) as well as extremists were classified as (potentially) threatening.

#### Recommendations:

- Question: The terminology in the question text should be consistent with the terminology used in the items. Therefore, we recommend to replace the (rather complex) term "ethnische Minderheiten" ("ethnic minorities") with the term "Einwanderer" ("immigrants"). The question text could be worded as follows:
- „Und wenn Sie nun an Einwanderer denken: Inwieweit stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu?“
- [Now thinking about immigrants. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?]
- Item a): For the sake of consistency, the term „Minderheiten“ ("minorities") should be replaced with the term „Einwanderer“ ("immigrants"):
- „Einwanderer sollten sich den deutschen Gepflogenheiten anpassen.“
- [Immigrants should conform to German customs.]

<sup>36</sup> „Ein Beispiel: Die deutsche Tradition ist, dass man sonntags keine Wäsche raushängt. Seit bei uns Albaner wohnen interessiert das keinen mehr. Weil da jetzt schon so viele wohnen, kann man da jetzt nichts mehr dagegen machen. Richtig finde ich das nicht.“ (TP 15)

<sup>37</sup> "Dafür sind es noch zu wenige Einwanderer, als dass dadurch die Kultur bedroht wird." (TP 04)

<sup>38</sup> „Es liegt immer an einem selber, an dem Volk selbst, inwiefern es das zulässt oder nicht. Wir sind für unsere eigenen Traditionen verantwortlich.“ (TP 08)

<sup>39</sup> „Nein, in erster Linie wird sie überwiegend bereichert.“ (TP 16)

Item c):

Due to the finding that the term „bedrohen“ („threatens“) is sometimes perceived as too strong in this context, it could be replaced with a term such as „untergraben“ (“undermined”). This (or rather a very similar) wording was tested in an earlier Pretest (ISSP 2013/2014, [dx.doi.org/10.17173/pretest10](https://dx.doi.org/10.17173/pretest10)) and found to be comprehensible:

„Die deutsche Kultur wird von Einwanderern untergraben.“?

[Germany's culture is undermined by immigrants.]

## Tested question:

5. Manche Leute sind der Ansicht, die folgenden Punkte seien wichtig, um eine richtige Deutsche/ein richtiger Deutscher zu sein. Andere sagen, diese seien nicht wichtig. Wie wichtig schätzen Sie die folgenden Punkte ein?
- [Some people say that the following things are important for being truly German. Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is... very important, fairly important, not very important, or not important at all?]

## Frequency distribution (N=16)

	Sehr wichtig <sup>40</sup>	Ziemlich wichtig	Nicht sehr wichtig	Überhaupt nicht wichtig	<i>verweigert</i>	<i>weiß nicht</i>
a) In Deutschland geboren zu sein. [To have been born in Germany.]	2	1	5	8	-	-
b) Einen Großteil des Lebens in Deutschland gelebt zu haben. [To have lived in Germany for most of one's life.]	1	5	5	5	-	-
c) Die politischen Institutionen und Gesetze Deutschlands zu respektieren. [To respect German political institutions and laws.]	12	4	-	-	-	-
d) Deutsche Vorfahren zu haben. [To have German ancestry.]	1	1	5	9	-	-

## Cognitive techniques:

Comprehension Probing, General Probing.

## Findings:

In total, six respondents point out problems concerning the question text. In particular, the respondents take issue with the phrase „ein richtiger Deutscher zu sein“ (“being a genuine German”). Four respondents are unsure, what this is supposed to mean:

<sup>40</sup> Very important, fairly important, not very important, not important at all, *volunteered: refused*, *volunteered: don't know*.

- „What is a ‚genuine‘ German? I do not understand that term.“<sup>41</sup> (ID 05)
- „I am having difficulty with the phrase ‚a genuine German‘. What is genuine and what not? I would find it better if the term ‚genuine‘ were deleted. There are also a lot of Germans who are not „true hearted“ – for instance all those Pegida-people.“<sup>42</sup> (ID 12)
- „That’s the question that immediately came up in my head. What is a ‚genuine‘ German?“<sup>43</sup> (ID 13)
- „Empty phrases like these make my hackles rise. What is this item about? What is legally required from someone to become German? Or what the average German is supposed to be like? Depending on the question focus, I would answer the item differently.“<sup>44</sup> (ID 16)

Respondent 06 states that this term holds a negative connotation to her: *„When it is said like that, „ein richtiger Deutscher“, it makes me think of someone who doesn’t just feel a connection to the country but full-fledged devotion. An overeager patriot. This has a negative touch.“*<sup>45</sup> (ID 06).

At first, respondent 10 misunderstands the question and gives her answers not according to her own opinion but rather as a non-German person holding very negative stereotypes of Germans: *“That is something negative, because we make a bad impression in many countries. A typical German has a “beer belly”, lederhosen, Adidas sandals with his socks sticking out – that’s what others think of Germans. A typical German, that’s no compliment. He is stubborn and dogmatic.“*<sup>46</sup> (ID 10).

The remaining respondents list the following criteria, that make someone „truly German“: obeying the German law (5 mentions), being integrated in the German society with its values and norms (3 mentions), having a command of the German language (3 mentions), possessing German virtues such as diligence and punctuality (2 mentions), being born in Germany (1 mention), and having German parents (1 mention).

Items a) and d) were systematically tested. For all other items, we received only spontaneous comments from the respondents.

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<sup>41</sup> „Was ist ein ‚richtiger‘ Deutscher? Ich kann damit nichts anfangen.“ (TP 05)

<sup>42</sup> „Mit dem ‚richtigen‘ Deutschen tue ich mich schon schwer. Was ist richtig, was ist falsch? Wenn man das ‚richtig‘ streichen würde, fände ich es besser. Es gibt ja auch jede Menge Deutsche, die finde ich falsch – wenn ich z.B. an diese ganzen Pegida-Leute denke.“ (TP 12)

<sup>43</sup> „Das ist die Frage, die mir sofort in den Kopf kam. Was ist ein ‚richtiger‘ Deutscher?“ (TP 13)

<sup>44</sup> „Bei solchen floskelhaften Begriffen sträuben sich mir immer die Nackenhaare. Geht es hier um die juristische Position, wann man ein Deutscher ist, oder um das Durchschnitts-Normal-Bürgertum? Je nachdem muss man die Frage unterschiedlich beantworten.“ (TP 16)

<sup>45</sup> „Wenn das so gesagt wird ‚ein richtiger Deutscher‘, dann denke ich da an jemanden, der nicht nur dem Land verbunden ist, sondern sich ihm richtiggehend verschrieben fühlt. Ein sehr übereifriger Patriot. Da kam gleich etwas Negatives mit.“ (TP 06)

<sup>46</sup> „Das ist aber auch etwas Negatives, weil wir ja in vielen Ländern unangenehm auffallen. Ein typischer Deutscher hat einen Bierbauch, Lederhose, Socken mit Adidas-Sandalen, vor dem dicken Bauch eine Kamera – das verstehen andere unter Deutschen. Ein typischer Deutscher, das ist kein Kompliment. Der ist stur und rechthaberisch.“ (TP 10)

#### Item a): To have been born in Germany.

Only three respondents think it is „very important“ (ID 04, 09) or “fairly important” (ID 12) to have been born in Germany to be truly German. While respondent 09 does not further elaborate on her answer, the two other respondents stress the strong influence of one’s surroundings during socialization:

- “I think it is important to grow into German customs starting from a young age to be a real German.”<sup>47</sup> (ID 04)
- “I think at the age of 1 to 15, the surrounding environment is very formative. [...] You can also see this in the Turks who have been born here – there are many who have been socialized entirely here and who are just as German as others, even if they have a different background.”<sup>48</sup> (ID 12)

Five respondents (ID 05, 06, 10, 15, 16) state that it is „not very important“, eight (ID 01, 02, 03, 07, 08, 11, 13, 14), that it is “not important at all” to have been born in Germany to be truly German. These respondents instead offer a number of different characteristics that make someone “truly German”, such as mastery of the German language, being respectful of German legislation and institutions or possessing German virtues.

#### Item d): To have German ancestry.

To have German ancestry is, according to most respondents “not very important” (ID 04, 06, 09, 10, 16) or “not important at all” (ID 01, 02, 03, 05, 07, 08, 12, 13, 14) for being truly German. Respondent 15 thinks it is „fairly important“, while respondent 11 thinks it is “very important”. Both do not explicitly explain their answer choice, respondent 11 however had earlier stated that a true German had German parents.

The other respondents explain that having German ancestry is not an essential criterion and instead name those characteristics that they had also listed when asked to describe what made one *truly German* (Item a).

#### Comments of the cognitive interviewers:

An instruction for the interviewers should be inserted pointing out that while reading aloud the answer options, the interviewer should explicitly mention again, that the question is about the importance of the items *for being truly German*: “Is this very important, fairly important, not very important, or not important at all for being truly German?” Otherwise, the respondent might misunderstand and answer whether the items are important in general and not in reference to being truly German.

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<sup>47</sup> „Ich denke, dass es wichtig ist, von klein auf in die deutschen Gegebenheiten hineinzuwachsen, um ein richtiger Deutscher zu sein.“ (TP 04)

<sup>48</sup> „Ich denke, dass die Jahre von 1 bis 15 sehr prägend sind für einen Menschen bezüglich der Umgebung, in der er aufwächst. [...] Das sieht man auch an den Türken, die hier geboren sind – da sind viele, die sich hier komplett sozialisiert haben, die genauso deutsch sind wie alle anderen auch, obwohl sie einen anderen Hintergrund haben.“ (TP 12)

**Recommendations:**

- Question:** Due to the finding that many respondents are confused by the term „ein richtiger Deutscher“, we recommend to replace it with „um wirklich eine Deutsche/ein Deutscher zu sein“ („for being truly German“). This (or rather a very similar) wording was tested in an earlier Pretest (CICOM 2, [dx.doi.org/10.17173/pretest7](https://dx.doi.org/10.17173/pretest7)) and found to be comprehensible:
- „Manche Leute sind der Ansicht, dass die folgenden Punkte wichtig sind, um wirklich eine Deutsche/ein Deutscher zu sein. Andere sagen, diese seien nicht wichtig. Wie wichtig schätzen Sie die folgenden Punkte ein?“
- [Some people say the following things are important for being truly German. Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is?]
- Instruction:** An instruction for the interviewers should be inserted pointing out that while reading aloud the answer options, the interviewer should explicitly mention again, that the question is about the importance of the items *for being truly German*:
- INT.: Antwortkategorien wie folgt vorlesen: „Ist das sehr wichtig, ziemlich wichtig, nicht sehr wichtig oder überhaupt nicht wichtig, *um wirklich eine Deutsche/ein Deutscher zu sein*.“
- [INT.: Read answer categories aloud as follows: „Is it very important, fairly important, not very important or not at all important *for being truly German*.]
- Item a):** No changes recommended.
- Item d):** No changes recommended.
- Answer categories:** No changes recommended.



## Tested question:

6. Manche Leute meinen, dass die Regierung Steuern senken sollte, auch wenn dies bedeutet, weniger für Sozialleistungen, z.B. im Gesundheits- oder Bildungsbereich, auszugeben. Andere Leute meinen, dass die Regierung mehr für Sozialleistungen wie z.B. im Bildungs- oder Gesundheitsbereich ausgeben sollte, auch wenn dies bedeutet, dass die Steuern erhöht werden. Wo würden Sie sich selbst auf der folgenden Skala einordnen, wobei 0 bedeutet „Regierung sollte Steuern senken und weniger für Sozialleistungen ausgeben“ und 10 bedeutet „Regierung sollte Steuern erhöhen und mehr für Sozialleistungen ausgeben“?

[Some people think that the government should cut taxes even if it means spending less on social services such as health and education. Other people feel that the government should spend more on social services such as health and education even if it means raising taxes. Where would you place yourself on this scale where 0 is "*Governments should decrease taxes and spend less on services*" and 10 is "*Governments should increase taxes and spend more on services*"?]

## Frequency distribution (N=16):

Governments should decrease taxes and spend less on services											Governments should decrease taxes and spend less on services	refused	don't know
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
-	1	-	2	-	4	2	-	1	1	2		1	2

## Cognitive techniques:

Specific Probing, General Probing, Comprehension Probing, Confidence Rating.

## Findings:

More than a third of the respondents (n=6) answered with a number on the right side of the answer scale, therefore stating that they favour an increase in taxation coupled with an increase in social services. The answers of three respondents (ID 01, 04, 16) fell on the left half of the scale, declaring that they would prefer tax cuts along with cuts in social services. Four respondents chose the middle category of 5 (ID 02, 08, 09, 14), two respondents "don't know" and one respondent refused to answer (ID 11).

Those respondents (ID 11, 13, 15) who were not able to or did not want to choose an answer on the given scale, believe that taxes should be lowered, but that this should not be accompanied by fewer social services. Rather, taxes should be redistributed differently ("*The taxes should simply be lowered and the missing money should be taken from other sources, i.e. by reducing the Bundeswehr's mis-*

sions abroad"<sup>49</sup>, ID 11; "Tax revenues should be redistributed differently. But that's not expressible here."<sup>50</sup>, ID 13). This opinion however cannot be expressed on the given answer scale, as it assigns a direct link between increases or decreases in taxes and social services, respectively.

A further problem in answering this question is that respondents cannot express if they want taxes to only be raised (or lowered) for certain segments of the population (such as an increase in taxation of the rich). This causes three respondents (ID 02, 08, 09) to choose the middle category of 5, therefore answering the question incorrectly:

- "For me it is not about lowering or raising the taxes, but about redistribution. It is about closing the gap between rich and poor. Therefore, 5 is the middle value of this question. I understand it like this: I can't really give an answer to this question, that's why I chose 5."<sup>51</sup> (ID 08)
- "It depends. If you're paid an hourly wage of €8,50, you can't pay a bunch of taxes. If the wage is higher, you could also pay more taxes."<sup>52</sup> (ID 09)

Similarly, respondent 03 draws attention to this issue: She explains that her answer of 10 is only valid "if the right taxes are raised, like the inheritance tax or the luxury tax. So those who have more money pay more taxes".<sup>53</sup>

All in all, the question seems to be phrased in a too general manner to truly and adequately reflect the complex nature of the topic. The respondents' differentiated opinions cannot be expressed through the given answer options.

Additionally, it was analyzed whether the respondents primarily thought of taxes used for social services directed at people in need (such as the socially disadvantaged) or of taxes used for the general public (e.g. for financing the healthcare system) while answering. Nine respondents primarily thought of aid for those in need and understood the term "social services"<sup>54</sup> to encompass unemployment pay (Hartz IV), retirement pensions/old-age poverty as well as child or housing benefits. The remaining seven respondents thought of taxes used for the general public and interpreted the term „social services" to refer to things such as financing the healthcare system or investments into the education system. A total of seven respondents did not think of social services in the field of healthcare or education, even though these were explicitly mentioned in the question text.

Finally, the respondents were asked about the length of question text and the width of the answer scale. Two respondents (ID 05, 11) found the answer text to be too long, while the other respondents did not. Concerning the width of the scale, six respondents stated that they could just as well have

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<sup>49</sup> „Man sollte einfach die Steuern senken und das fehlende Geld aus anderen Töpfen holen, z.B. die Auslandseinsätze der Bundeswehr reduzieren." (TP 11)

<sup>50</sup> „Die Steuern, die eingenommen werden, sollten anders verteilt werden. Aber das ist hier ja nicht vorgesehen." (TP 13)

<sup>51</sup> „Es geht mir nicht um eine Steuererhöhung oder -senkung, sondern um eine Umverteilung. Es geht mir darum, dass die Lücke zwischen Arm und Reich ein bisschen verkleinert werden kann. Dementsprechend ist die 5 bei der Frage der Mittelwert. Ich verstehe das so, dass ich keine Antwort direkt treffen kann auf diese Frage, deshalb habe ich mich für die 5 entschieden." (TP 08)

<sup>52</sup> „Das hängt vom Geld ab. Also mit 8,50€ pro Stunde kann man nicht noch einen Haufen Steuern bezahlen. Wenn der Lohn höher wäre, könnte man auch mehr Steuern bezahlen." (TP 09)

<sup>53</sup> "Wenn die richtigen Steuern erhöht werden, wie die Erbschaftssteuer oder die Luxussteuer. Dass die mehr Steuern bezahlen, die mehr Geld haben." (TP 03)

<sup>54</sup> Sozialleistungen

expressed their opinion on a scale with fewer response options (like a 5-point scale) and three respondents (ID 05, 07, 14) remarked that they would have preferred this. On the other hand, four respondents (ID 04, 06, 09, 10) prefer the used scale which allows them to state their opinion in a more nuanced manner.

### Recommendations:

**Question:** We recommend to shorten and thereby to simplify the question text. In addition, the relationship between an increase/decrease in taxes and cuts/expansions of social services should be made clearer. Finally, we recommend to replace the term "Sozialleistungen" with "Gelder für öffentliche Ausgaben" in order to avoid that respondents primarily think about the support for people in need (such as Hartz IV recipients) when answering this question and not about government spending in general. The wording "Gelder für öffentliche Ausgaben" seems to be closer to the wording in the English source questionnaire ("social services"). Hence, we recommend the following wording:

"Nun zum Thema Steuern und öffentliche Ausgaben:

Sind Sie dafür, dass die Regierung die Steuern senkt, auch wenn damit Gelder für öffentlichen Ausgaben, z.B. im Gesundheits- oder Bildungsbereich, gekürzt werden oder sind Sie dafür dass die Regierung mehr Geld für öffentliche Ausgaben bereitstellt und dafür die Steuern erhöht?

Bitte ordnen Sie sich auf der folgenden Skala ein, wobei 0 bedeutet „Regierung sollte Steuern senken und öffentliche Ausgaben kürzen“, 5 bedeutet „Steuern und öffentliche Ausgaben sollten so bleiben wie sie sind“ und 10 bedeutet „Regierung sollte Steuern erhöhen und mehr Geld für öffentliche Ausgaben bereitstellen?“

[Now thinking about taxes and social services:

Do you prefer that the government cuts taxes even if this means spending less on social services such as health and education, or do you prefer that the government should spend more on social services even if it means raising taxes?

Where would you place yourself on this scale where 0 is "Government should decrease taxes and spend less on services", 5 is "Taxes and spending on social services should be kept as they are", and 10 is "Government should increase taxes and spend more on services"?)

**Answer categories:** In order to avoid that respondents use the middle category („5“) as an evasive option ("don't know"), we recommend to explicitly refer to this scale point as reflecting the status quo:

"Steuern und öffentliche Ausgaben sollten so bleiben wie sie sind."

[Taxes and spending on social services should be kept as they are.]

In order to further simplify the response process, it could also be worth considering to adapt the numeric scale points to the content of the verbal labels, resulting in a bipolar scale ranging from -5 to +5 with 0 as middle category: "0" as midpoint of the scale means "Taxes and spending on social services should be kept as they are", "-5" means "Government should de-

crease taxes and spend less on services" and "+5" means "Government should increase taxes and spend more on services". In this case, the bipolar scale corresponds more directly to the content of the question.

In addition, answering this question might be further simplified for respondents if the scale is shortened from 11 categories to 3 answer categories, namely:

- Bin für Erhöhung von Steuern und öffentlichen Ausgaben  
[I prefer increasing taxes and spending more on social services]
- Bin für Senkung von Steuern und öffentlichen Ausgaben  
[I prefer decreasing taxes and spending less on social services]
- Nichts davon, Steuern und Ausgaben für Sozialleistungen sollten gleichbleiben  
[None of that, taxes and spending on social services should be kept as they are]

## 5 Glossary: Cognitive Techniques

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Think Aloud	<i>„Please vocalize everything that comes to your mind while you answer the following question. Please also vocalize things that seem unimportant to you. The question is...“.</i>
Comprehension Probing	<i>„What would you say is a ‚representative democracy‘?“</i>
Category Selection Probing	<i>„You have just said that you strongly agree with this statement. Why did you select this answer?“</i>
Information Retrieval Probing	<i>„How did you remember that you went to the doctor [...] times in the past 12 months?“</i>
General/Elaborative Probing	<i>„Can you please explain your answer a little further?“</i>
Specific Probing	<i>„You have just answered ‚yes‘ to this question. Does that mean that you have already done [...] or that you principally would do [...] if required, but have not yet done [...]?“</i>
Emergent Probing	<i>„I noticed that you frowned when I read out the answer categories to you. Could you please tell me why you did that?“</i>
Paraphrasing	<i>„Please repeat the question that I have just read out to you in your own words.“</i>
Confidence Rating	<i>„How sure are you that you went to the doctor [...] times in the past 12 months?“</i>