The German Internet Panel: Method and Results

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Abstract

The German Internet Panel (GIP) studies political and economic attitudes and reform preferences through a longitudinal online survey of individuals. The GIP is based on a random probability sample that is recruited offline and representative of both the online and offline population aged 16 to 75 in Germany. This paper looks into the processes and outcomes of recruiting and maintaining such a panel. The results presented here demonstrate that a carefully designed and implemented online panel can do similarly well as existing offline panels at lower marginal costs. Analyses into the representativeness of the online sample showed no major coverage or nonresponse biases. Furthermore, including offline households in the panel ameliorates the representation of the older, female and less educated segments of the population.

Keywords: Online panel, probability sample, representativeness, attrition, Germany

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1. Introduction

Recent years have seen a surge of surveys that are administered online. The majority of these data collection efforts are devoted to online access panels which are not based on a probability sample of the population of interest. In this paper, we describe the design, sampling, recruitment and maintenance for a probability-based longitudinal online survey, the German Internet Panel (GIP). The foundation of the GIP is a random probability sample offline recruited and representative of both the online and offline population aged 16 to 75 in Germany. The survey is part of the Collaborative Research Centre "Political Economy of Reforms" based at the University of Mannheim which studies the determinants and perceptions of political reforms and their consequences for the economy. An important substantive goal of the GIP is therefore to obtain high-quality data on individual preferences, expectations and attitudes and how these change over time.

The design and recruitment of the German Internet Panel (GIP) combines several unique and novel features to make it a reliable resource for researchers in the social sciences and related disciplines. First of all, the GIP aims to be representative of the German speaking population aged 16 to 75. For this purpose, a random probability sample of households was drawn, initially approached offline by an interviewer for a face-to-face interview and then invited to participate in the regular online surveys. Unlike existing non-probability panels and telephone recruited online panels, the GIP covers both the online and offline population in Germany. Offline households can participate in the panel because they are provided with internet access and a special computer, called the *BenPC*. Extensive fieldwork efforts, including re-issuing of nonrespondents, reminder letters and phone calls, were undertaken to minimize nonresponse error at the recruitment stage.

A second unique feature of the German Internet Panel is that it takes both the household context and longitudinal dimension into account. GIP surveys all adult members aged 16 to 75 at a household address which allows researchers to study how individual preferences, attitudes and expectations vary between partners or across generations living in the same household. Furthermore, each individual is surveyed repeatedly over time. Every year, for instance, key socio-demographic and attitudinal characteristics of respondents are surveyed in the core interview. Hence, researchers can track changes in individual preferences, expectations and political attitudes and how these are related to current socio-economic characteristics and changes in the economic, social or political environment. In contrast, most existing surveys of political attitudes and preferences, like the European Social Survey (ESS, www.europeansocialsurvey.org) or the European Value Study (EVS, www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu), are repeated cross-sections in which different individuals are surveyed each round.

A third important advantage of GIP is that the online fielding of the questionnaires allows for substantial time and costs savings. Measured in terms of costs per minute of question time, a self-administered online panel is substantially cheaper than existing face-to-face panel surveys (Dillman and Bowker, 2001). Comparing the costs per minute of the GIP to cross-sectional surveys like the ESS, the German Internet Panel pays off within a year, after about two hours of data have been collected from respondents. Furthermore, first data sets of each wave can be made available for internal use as early as one month after data collection, although the publication of the data for external users takes longer due to detailed mandatory anonymization procedures. And the short survey intervals (every two months)

open up the opportunity to provide a scientific perspective on emerging public debates and respond quickly to current political events.

2. Probability-based online panels

Internationally, the GIP is one among very few online panels based on a gross sample of the general population and including individuals who previously had no or little access to the internet, i.e. who would not have been represented in any other online panel. To our knowledge, only three other online panels recruited through similar approaches and including offline households are currently operating with another one currently in preparation.

The first of these was the LISS panel in the Netherlands. The LISS panel (www.lissdata.nl) is an omnibus panel for the social and economic sciences in the Netherlands and abroad and started recruitment in 2007. For this longitudinal online survey a random sample of households was drawn from the national registers. Households were approached by telephone, where phone numbers could be matched to the sample and face-to-face if households had no listed phone number or were not reached by phone. Households without a computer or access to the internet were provided with broadband internet access and a special user-friendly PC called the *SimPC* (Scherpenzeel and Toepoel, 2012).

The second online panel study covering the general population was the FFRISP study (Krosnick, 2011) recruited in 2008. FFRISP drew a random probability sample of households by means of an area sample with listing. After an initial face-to-face interview one randomly selected adult in each household was invited to join the panel and complete one 30-minute questionnaire per month for the duration of a year. All sampled individuals were offered a notebook (or the cash equivalent of its value) with internet service (if the household did not have that already) for their participation in the regular online interviews. After the end of the FFRISP project the panel was integrated into the American Life Panel (https://mmicdata.rand.org/alp) at the RAND Corporation.

In France, the ELIPSS panel (www.elipss.fr) is part of larger infrastructure project for the humanities and social sciences. In 2012, ELIPSS started the recruitment of individuals aged 18 to 75 through face-to-face and phone interviews. All recruited sample members receive a tablet PC with 3G internet connection equipped with an applet through which the bi-monthly interviews can be completed.

Currently, the recruitment and design of another high-quality online panel in Germany, the GESIS Online Panel conducted by GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences (www. gesis.org/unser-angebot/daten-erheben), is under way. The sample of individuals aged 18 to 70 was drawn from municipal registers and will be approached by means of face-to-face interviews. Respondents who have a computer and internet access are invited to participate online; offline respondents are invited to participate via postal questionnaires. In contrast to the GIP, this panel serves as a general research infrastructure and will have open calls for questionnaire contributions from the scientific community.

3. Recruiting the GIP: Methodology and Results

In the following, we describe how the sample for the GIP was drawn, how the recruitment was conducted, how sample members who were previously offline were included in the GIP and how, once

recruited, the panel members are interviewed online and are kept motivated. All processes were pretested on a small-scale sample and optimized according to experiences from these pretests. Finally, we provide a first description of sample composition and potential biases.

3.1. Sampling

The GIP is based on a three-stage probability sample. In the first stage, we sampled 250 Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) situated in 208 local administrative units ("Gemeinden"). The drawing of PSUs was stratified by state ("Bundesland"), governmental area ("Regierungsbezirk") and type of urban settlement ("BIK") for the gross sample to be proportionally distributed across these criteria.

During the second sampling stage interviewers listed 100 households along a random route with random starting point at each PSU. This phase took place during two weeks at the beginning of December 2011. To prevent accidental mistakes and interviewer cheating and to enable detailed checking of the listed addresses, every household along the pre-defined route was listed. Where possible, the name on the letter box or doorbell was listed; where no name was identified the household was listed empty. For all sample points different interviewers conducted the listing and the actual interviewing in the sample point. The household listing yielded a total of 25,000 households, which constituted the sampling frame in the third sampling stage.

To minimize clustering, initially every 5th address was drawn with a random start until the sample of the first fieldwork phase contained 16 addresses per PSU. Thus a total of 4,000 addresses were initially fielded. Continuing the sequence of drawing every 5th address, an additional four addresses per PSU were drawn in the second fieldwork phase, plus two additional addresses per PSU drawn randomly from the pool of remaining addresses. The second phase thus contained another 1,500 addresses. Of all fielded addresses, 562 were found to be ineligible (according to the definitions in AAPOR 2010), such as vacant or commercial housing units.

As mentioned, addresses with no name on the doorbell or letter box were part of the sample. Only in two PSUs were addresses with empty names excluded. In these cases, the PSU was situated in an area of large blocks of flats and the proportion of empty names was too high for the interviewer to identify which household within a block of flats had been sampled and the proportion of inhabited households was estimated to be very low.

Since the population of reference in the GIP is individuals, which are clustered in households, but not the households themselves, for the duration of the panel only individuals are followed. New household members do not become eligible for the GIP and, if a household splits, all original sample members are followed. Furthermore, household members that turn 16 do not become eligible to participate and panel members are also followed after the age of 75.

3.2. Recruitment in two phases

Recruitment into the GIP online panel was conducted in two phases: a face-to-face interview phase and a phase of invitations to the online panel, including sending out initial invitation letters, reminder letters, and phone reminders to households in which nobody had registered online yet. Figure 1 illustrates the complex recruitment process.



Figure 1: Recruitment process into the GIP in two phases

Face-to-face recruitment. All sampled addresses were approached by interviewers, who aimed to make contact with the household and conduct a short face-to-face interview with a household member. In total 135 interviewers worked on the GIP face-to-face recruitment. Almost all interviewers were trained face-to-face by the survey agency and the GIP team in one of three one-day training sessions between 22nd and 25th May 2012. Interviewers not trained during one of these sessions (for example due to illness) were trained in-person by their area manager. Face-to-face fieldwork started on 25th May 2012.

All sampled households received an advance letter addressed to the household or, if no household name was available, to "tenant" ("Bewohner"). The advance letter announced the face-to-face interview as part of the study "Changing Society" ("Gesellschaft im Wandel"). The letter was kept very short (Appendix A) and was accompanied by one-page colour-print with additional information (Appendix B) and a data protection leaflet (Appendix C). All materials identified the University of Mannheim as the owner of the survey and TNS Infratest Social Research as the company carrying out the interviews. Letters were sent out approximately one week before interviewers started working in the PSU. Thus, unless a letter did not reach a household, which is more likely in cases where the sampling frame contained no name for the household, the interviewers' visits had been announced.

Interviewers conducted short interviews at the household asking about the household composition (names and years of birth of each household member), general demographics, simple attitudinal

questions and whether the household had a computer and broadband internet connection. At the end of the interview, the interviewer asked the respondent for permission to have the University of Mannheim send letters with further information about the online study "Changing Society" to all household members born in the years 1937-1996, i.e. aged approximately 16 to 75. Households with at least one household member within this age-band, but without broadband internet connection and/or a computer were informed that they were invited to participate in the online study and that, if they agreed, someone would call upon them in the next week to make an appoint to install internet and, if no suitable computer was available, a *BenPC*. Interviewers carried with them materials describing the *BenPC* (the most essential materials are found in Appendix D) and the online survey (Appendix E) to use during this final phase of the interview. If the interviewer, due to an imminent refusal, saw no possibility of conducting a full interview at the household, they were allowed to conduct a short doorstep interview instead asking only five key questions.

Overall, this phase of face-to-face recruitment yielded 2,121 full interviews resulting in a response rate of 43.4% (AAPOR RR1)¹. In addition, 422 doorstep interviews were conducted. Including the doorstep interviews the response rate was 52.1% (AAPOR RR2).

Invitations to the online panel. The list of household members eligible to become members of the online panel (i.e. those born in the years 1937-1996) was processed weekly by the GIP team at the University of Mannheim. Persons eligible, who had a computer and a broadband internet connection at home, were sent an invitation letter (Appendix F) to the online panel. This letter contained further information about the study "Changing Society" together with a login name and password. In addition, it contained a small card (credit-card-sized) with the login details and hotline numbers to be easily kept. Households without internet access and/or computer were also invited to the study and sent login details. Furthermore, they were informed that someone would call on them to make an appointment to install internet and/or a *BenPC*. Households where a doorstep interview had been conducted received an invitation to the online panel addressed to the household. Upon their first online registration these households were asked about the household composition and additional personal invitations were sent to the other eligible persons in these households.

Within the 2,121 households where full face-to-face interviews had been conducted 3,775 eligible individuals were identified. This averages at 1.78 eligible persons per household. For 3,119 (83%) eligible persons we got permission to send invitations to the online survey. This includes persons living in households without internet access and/or a computer.

Of the 3,775 eligible persons identified in the face-to-face interview 1,591 followed our invitation and registered in the online panel (AAPOR RR1 42.1%). In addition, 24 persons from households that conducted a doorstep interview registered online (AAPOR RR4 3.2% assuming 1.78 eligible persons per household).

¹ All response rates presented in this paper were calculated using priority-coded final dispositions for each case (Blom *forthcoming*) for call outcomes recorded on contact forms by the interviewers (Blom et al. 2010).

3.3. Offline households in the online panel

Equipping previously offline households with a *BenPC* and/or internet is a key aspect of the GIP to ensure representativeness of the collected data. As a consequence, we implemented several measures to encourage the recruitment of offline households. First, the online panel was not mentioned in the advance letter to prevent households with little computer and internet affinity to dropout from the start. Second, interviewers were especially trained to react to the worries of offline households. They were equipped with materials about the *BenPC* (the most essential materials are found in Appendix D) to show to the respondents during the interview. Third, the installation of the *BenPC*s and/or routers was subcontracted to a company with computer engineers across all of Germany. The computer engineers were trained via a video and written materials prepared by the GIP team and the training materials pointed out the special nature of the project and their clients. Fourth, having identified offline households and their needs during the face-to-face interview, the local computer engineers made an appointment with the respondents and installed the equipment on-site. There, they showed the respondents how the equipment worked and how they could fill in the bi-monthly questionnaires. Finally, a hotline at the survey organization forwards queries from these households to the IT company and is active throughout the year.

Within the 2,121 households where full face-to-face interviews had been conducted 528 were identified as offline households (24.8%). In these 528 households 883 eligible sample members were identified of which 487 agreed to receive further information about the online panel and to be provided with the necessary equipment to participate. Ultimately, 128 previously offline respondents received equipment and registered for the online panel (AAPOR RR1 14.5%). Thus, the recruitment rate among offline households was considerably lower than among online households.

However, looking at the key socio-demographic characteristics age, gender and education our analyses showed that panel members from online and offline households significantly differ in terms of these characteristics at 1% level. Furthermore, online and offline households not only *differ* in characteristics, but including the previously offline respondents improves the representativeness of the sample when compared to German census data (Blom et al. 2013).

3.4. Incentives experiments during recruitment

Since the GIP was the first study in Germany to recruit members for an online panel based on face-toface fieldwork on a probability sample, the most effective recruitment strategies had yet to be researched. As part of the survey design of the GIP we implemented two incentives experiments to investigate which strategy maximizes response to the panel.

The first incentives experiment was conducted during the face-to-face phase. Households where the listing of addresses had yielded one or several household names, i.e. where the advance letter could be addressed directly to the household, were allocated to one of two experimental conditions. Either they received a ≤ 5 unconditional cash incentive, i.e. the advance letter contained a ≤ 5 -bill. Alternatively, they received a ≤ 10 conditional cash incentive, i.e. the advance letter contained the information that they would receive ≤ 10 in cash, if they participated in the face-to-face interview. The value of the incentives

was chosen such that the costs for the GIP research team would be independent of the incentive, assuming a 50% response rate in the face-to-face interview (including doorstep interviews).

Although in the US and in some European countries empirical evidence has shown that unconditional incentives frequently yield higher response rates than conditional incentives (e.g. studies Church 1993, Singer et al. 1999; however, Castiglioni et al. 2008, Scherpenzeel and Toepoel 2012; Singer and Ye 2013), strong scepticism prevails whether unconditional incentives also work in Germany. The GIP incentives experiment was therefore the first incentives experiment testing conditional versus unconditional cash incentives in a mainstage face-to-face survey in Germany.

With an 8.9%-points difference, the unconditional incentives yielded a significantly higher response rate in the face-to-face household interviews (t=5.14). While 50.8% of households with an unconditional incentive responded to the face-to-face recruitment interview, 41.9% of the conditionally incentivized households responded (AAPOR RR1, i.e. not counting doorstep interviews). Moreover and despite the time lag between face-to-face interviews and the invitations to the online interviews, this effect carries over to and is reinforced at individuals' online registration for the panel. While 33.8% of eligible persons registered online when the household had been incentivized for the face-to-face interview with ξ 5 unconditionally, 31.3% of eligible persons registered for the online interviews when incentivized with ξ 10 conditionally (t=2.06). Households where the name(s) of the inhabitant(s) was not identified during the listing received lower response rates than either of the two experimental groups.

In the second incentives experiment, we studied the effect of a €5 unconditional incentive in the first mail reminder versus no incentive on the individual-level registration rate to the online study. Given the special two-stage nature of the GIP, the effects of this second-stage incentive have not been empirically studied in the literature. However, given that a variety of studies has found that providing an incentive yields higher response rates than not providing any (e.g. Singer and Ye 2013), we expected a positive incentive effect in this second recruitment stage.

Our analyses showed that the €5 unconditional cash incentive in the reminder had a significant effect on the online registration rate for this subgroup. While 30.0% of the cases that received an unconditional cash incentive registered online within 2 weeks of receiving the reminder letter, 13.7% of cases without incentive registered online within this time (t=7.27).

3.5. Representativeness

As a probability-based, face-to-face recruited online panel that includes the online and offline population the GIP strives for a quality that is comparable to the quality of the established face-to-face surveys in Germany, such as the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP, www.diw.de/en/soep), the Allbus (www.gesis.org/en/allbus) or the European Social Survey (www.europeansocialsurvey.org). The literature shows that the online mode of data collection is of little concern to the data quality in terms of measurement errors but is of concern in terms of representativeness when recruited as non-probability panels (e.g. Yeager et al. 2011). To investigate GIP's representativeness we compared nonrespondents and respondents both to the face-to-face recruitment survey and to participation in the first full wave of the online panel. Data on the complete sample were available from the sampling frame and from linked auxiliary data of a commercial provider (Microm).

At the stage of the face-to-face interview, the analyses showed significant differences in response propensity for large cities (underrepresented in the GIP), East Germany (overrepresented) and purchasing power (overrepresented) (Blom and Krieger 2013). These results are not surprising and typically found in face-to-face surveys in Germany. Interestingly, the effects did not carry over to the online panel. Instead, only respondents from areas with a high proportion of immigrants are underrepresented online in the GIP (Blom and Krieger 2013). Again, this result is not surprising, as the GIP is only conducted in German. Moreover, established gold-standard face-to-face surveys in Germany battle with a similar underrepresentation of immigrants, since questionnaires are usually not translated into other languages.

4. Maintaining the GIP: Methodology and Results

As a longitudinal survey the GIP not only aspires to recruiting a representative and sizeable sample, but also aims for a high level of retention throughout the future waves. The reason for this is twofold. On the one hand, the fixed costs of recruiting a panel like the GIP are relatively high compared to the marginal costs of each additional wave. If a panel is affected by high levels of attrition, over time it may less well represent the population of inference and demand expensive refresher samples. On the other hand, the analytic potential of a longitudinal survey is multiplied with each additional wave. Thus, substantively each additional wave adds value over and above the information gained in the individual wave only. In this section, we therefore describe the measures taken in the GIP to ensure high retention rates and report retention rates during the first four waves of the GIP.

4.1. Panel maintenance

The literature on attrition typically distinguishes three main components (Lepkowski and Couper 2002): failure to locate the sample unit, failure to make contact and failure to gain cooperation. Locating the sample unit is of great concern especially in face-to-face panel surveys, where geographic mobility of all or part of a household might lead to a loss of respondents (see Fitzgerald et al. 1998 and Zabel 1998). The risk of failure to locate a sample unit is lower in online panels because the primary contact is through email addresses, which typically remain stable as people move, and because of the high frequency interviews (bi-monthly in the GIP as compared to once a year in the SOEP). Furthermore, GIP panel members can change the email address at which they receive invitations to the panel through their account on the study website and through the hotline.

Failure to make contact might, however, also be a problem in the GIP. If a sample unit's mailbox, for example, is full or if spam filters direct the invitation mail into the bin, the invitation emails might not reach a potential respondent. In the GIP these potential problems are counteracted in two ways. First of all, the email invitation is just one of two routes through which a sample unit may access the questionnaire; the other is a direct access via the study's website with login name and password. Our questionnaires are fielded regularly every two months and are always made available on the first day of the uneven months. This has been communicated to the panel members from as early onwards as the face-to-face interview and reiterated regularly. Therefore, even if the invitation email does not reach our panel members, they can find their way to the questionnaire via the study website. Second, if a panel member has failed to participate in the panel for two consecutive waves, they are called by the survey

organisation to encourage their renewed participation and to enquire whether there were any technical problems preventing them to participate in the waves.

Finally, failure to gain cooperation may well be the greatest concern for longitudinal online surveys. It can arise through so-called panel-fatigue when motivation for continued participation declines over time. In face-to-face panels interviewers have an important role in motivating panel members to participate in each wave. In the GIP we do not have interviewers for the online panel; however, several other measures are taken to maintain motivation.

In motivating sample members the survey can be made more salient to them (Groves et al 2000), for example by providing information about the survey results. While feedback from respondents (and interviewers) tends to suggest that study results are key to motivating panel members, experimental studies looking into maximising this effect have thus far been unsuccessful (for example Fumagalli et al 2012). In the GIP we feedback study results bi-monthly during even month, i.e. during those months when panel members are not interviewed. Short descriptive reports of results from previous waves are made available through the study website and respondents are alerted to these via email. At the same time we also introduce parts of the research team behind the questionnaires to the respondents, ranging from established professors to PhD students using the GIP data in their thesis. With this we aim to personalize our contact with the panel members and show them how invaluable their participation is to our research.

Another form of personalisation of our contact with the panel members is giving them several means of feeding back their experiences with each interview. The hotline can be reached via email and telephone (a toll-free number). Instances where the participant voices serious concerns are forwarded to the principal investigator of the GIP, who carefully answers each query. Furthermore, the panel members are asked for feedback at the end of each questionnaire, both in closed rating questions as well as by providing an open question for more general feedback.

Persistence is another way to gain cooperation from panel members. In face-to-face panels unsuccessful cases are usually re-issued to a more experienced interviewer. In the GIP, in addition to the initial invitation email at the start of fieldwork, we send out a first reminder email after approximately one week, a second reminder email after another week and attempt contact by phone in the fourth week if the panel member missed two consecutive waves. After each reminder we see a significant increase in the number of interviews.

Finally, we also use monetary incentives at each wave, to demonstrate to the panel members that we value their participation in our research. For each 20-25 minutes interview each respondent receives $\xi 4$ with an annual bonus of $\xi 5$, if panel member participated in all but one interviews, and a bonus of $\xi 10$, if they participated in all interviews of a year. Research shows that regarding attrition cash incentives are more effective than vouchers or incentives in kind (see Booker et al. 2011 for a review). For operational reasons, however, we are not able to send letters with cash to panel members. Instead, when registering for the panel members are asked whether they would like to receive the incentive via bank transfer, in which case we ask them for their bank details, as an Amazon gift voucher or whether they would like to donate the money. In total, 57% of panel members chose their incentives to be paid in cash via bank transfer, 31% opted for the Amazon gift voucher and 12% chose to donate the money to charitable

organizations. Furthermore, respondents who chose the bank transfer or gift voucher were more likely to participate regularly and thus receive a bonus.

4.2. Retention

Figure 2 displays the proportion of respondents participating in waves 1 through 5, based on whether they had completed the welcome questionnaire, i.e. were registered sample members.² While 96% of sample members participated in wave 1, this drops to 73-80% in waves 2 through 5. Note that these rates are based on the full registered sample. Since panel members can omit one or more waves and then return to the panel again, a wave-on-wave retention rate – as reported by some other panel studies – is less informative for the GIP (see Cheshire et al. 2011 for different types of attrition and retention rates in longitudinal surveys). These participation rates are high for any longitudinal survey and in particular for an online panel. And with the panel maintenance measures outlined we aim to maintain these high rates in future waves.



Figure 2: Retention rates for the first five waves of the GIP; % of the registered sample at each wave

5. Conclusion

The GIP in many ways combines the advantages of high-quality offline surveys in Germany with the benefits of an online format. The recruitment stage and first waves of data collection have demonstrated that a high-quality online panel survey based on a probability sample and face-to-face recruitment can be successfully established and maintained in Germany. The response and retention rate achieved so far are comparable or higher than existing offline data collections. Furthermore, analyses into the

² Note that registration for the panel was possible until 16th April 2013. Late registrants first received the core questionnaire (wave 1) before they could continue with the respective wave. Persons who registered after November 2012 were thus never invited to wave 2, persons who registered after January 2013 were never invited to wave 2 and 3 and persons who registered after March 2013 were never invited to wave 2, 3 and 4.

representativeness of the online sample showed no major coverage or nonresponse biases. Only immigrant groups tend to be underrepresented. Yet, this is the case for any large-scale social survey in Germany, since minority languages are not typically provided for. Including offline households turned out to be important for the data quality, since it ameliorates the representation of the older, female and less educated segments of the population.

Two incentives experiments conducted in the context of the GIP showed that, keeping costs constant, unconditional incentives during face-to-face recruitment yielded significantly higher response rates, both to the recruitment interview and to the online panel. Furthermore, including a small unconditional incentive in the first reminder letter, significantly improved online registration rates.

Now in full operation, the GIP provides many opportunities for future social and economic research. In the area of survey methodology, the online format of GIP facilitates, for example, the randomization of questions and their sequence across respondents to test for framing or order effects. Furthermore, the German Internet Panel will be an important reference point to evaluate selection bias and develop corrective weights for online access panels in Germany.

As part of the Collaborative Research Center "Political Economy of Reforms", an important substantive goal of the GIP is to obtain high-quality data on individual preferences, attitudes and expectations about existing policies and reform proposals. A major aim is to study the feasibility of and potential obstacles to political reforms in areas like the labour market, health care and pensions, public finances and debt or the process of political decision-making. In eliciting these preferences, the GIP combines commonly used items on political attitudes with new question formats. For example, in several questions respondents have traded off the costs and benefits of certain policy proposals, such as more redistribution, or the potential consequences of public debt and higher taxes. Existing surveys of political attitudes do not typically address the cost and benefit side of policy proposals simultaneously. In addition, several questions looked into the type of information respondents use in forming and communicating their political preferences and attitudes.

In the near future, the GIP aims to cooperate more closely with other high-quality online panels in the Netherlands, the United States and France generating a database of cross-national longitudinal research into political and economic attitudes.

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Appendix A: Advance letter in two versions

conditional incentive

UNIVERSITÄT MANNHEIM

Universität Mannheim | Schloss | 68163 Mannheim

Familie Musterfrau Musterstraße 123 12345 Musterstadt

Mannheim, Mai 2012

Gesellschaft im Wandel

Sehr geehrte Familie Mustermann,

ein Brief von der Universität Mannheim? Anlass dafür ist unsere Studie "Gesellschaft im Wandel", die Wir zuzreit in ganz Deutschland durchführen. Wir möchten Sie mit diesem Schreiben herzlich bitten, uns zu unterstützen und an dieser Studie teilzunehmen, denn ihre Meinung zählt !

In den nächsten Tagen wird Sie ein/e Interviewer/in von TNS Infratest Sozialforschung in unserem Auftrag aufsuchen. Ihre Teilnahme ist aber selbstverständlich freiwillig. Als kleines Dankeschön wird Ihnen der/idle Interviewer/in 10 Euro überreichen.

Herzlichen Dank für Ihre Unterstützung!

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,

anstin 1

Prof. Christina Gathmann Projektleiterin "Gesellschaft im Wandel" Günter Steinacker Projektleiter TNS Infratest Sozialforschung

P.S.: Kostenfreie Hotline für Rückfragen: 0800/1001425 (TNS Infratest Sozialforschung)

unconditional incentive

UNIVERSITÄT MANNHEIM

Universität Mannheim | Schloss | 68163 Mannheim

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Mannheim, Mai 2012

Gesellschaft im Wandel

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Herzlichen Dank für Ihre Unterstützung!

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,

distingt

Prof. Christina Gathmann Projektleiterin "Gesellschaft im Wandel"

Günter Steinacker Projektleiter TNS Infratest Sozialforschung

P.S.: Kostenfreie Hotline für Rückfragen: 0800/1001425 (TNS Infratest Sozialforschung)









Appendix B: Additional information accompanying the advance letter

Gesellschaft im Wandel

Informationsblatt zur Studie

▶ Warum gerade Sie ?

Alle Haushalte, die wir um Teilnahme bitten, wurden durch ein wissenschaftliches Zufallsverfahren ausgewählt. Ihre Teilnahme an der Studie ist natürlich freiwillig, aber sehr wichtig, weil nur durch die Beteiligung möglichst aller ausgewählten Haushalte aussagekräftige Ergebnisse erzielt werden.

Zusammen mit den Personen in weiteren 2.500 Haushalten stehen Sie stellvertretend für die Bevölkerung in Deutschland.

• Worum geht es?

In der Studie geht es um Ihre Meinungen, Einstellungen und Erwartungen zu verschiedenen Themen wie Familie und Freunde, Arbeit und Freizeit, Wirtschaft und Politik, kurzum: Es geht um das Leben in Deutschland.

Diese Befragung ist Teil einer längerfristig angelegten Studie, die auf Dauer Wissenschaftlern verschiedener Fachrichtungen die Grundlage für ihre Arbeit liefert.

Was haben Sie davon ?
 Sie helfen uns, das Zusammenleben in unserer

Gesellschaft besser zu verstehen und Lösungs-

möglichkeiten für einige der drängenden

Als kleines Dankeschön wird Ihnen der/die Interviewer/in 10 Euro überreichen.

Für Rückfragen haben wir die kostenfreie

gesellschaftlichen Probleme zu erarbeiten.

▶ Wie funktioniert es ?

In den nächsten Tagen wird sich ein Interviewer von TNS Infratest Sozialforschung bei Ihnen melden und einen Termin für ein kurzes Gespräch mit Ihnen vereinbaren.

Ihre Angaben werden selbstverständlich vertraulich behandelt, Bundes- und Landesdatenschutzgesetze werden genauestens eingehalten.

Unsere Studie wird von der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft gefördert und dient keinerlei kommerziellen Zwecken.







Appendix C: Data protection leaflet

Erklärung zu Ihr	um Datenschutz und zu rer Angaben bei persön	r absoluten Vertraulichkeit ichen Interviews	
Die TNS Infratest Fo Infratest Institute) a schungsinstitute e.V. Mannheim bilden für nach den Vorschrifte datenschutzrechtliche Wandel" werden kein keinerlei Verpflichtung	rschung GmbH und die TNS als Mitglieder des Arbeitskre (ADM) und der Sonderforsch diese Untersuchung eine Fr n der Bundes- und Landesr n Bestimmungen. Mit der wis e gewerblichen Interessen w gen ein.	Infratest Sozialforschung GmbH (TNS ises Deutscher Markt- und Sozialfor- ungsbereich SFB 884 der Universität rschungsgemeinschaft. Beide arbeiten latenschutzgesetze und allen anderen senschaftlichen Studie "Gesellschaft im irfolgt und die Teilnehmer/innen gehen	
Die Ergebnisse diese stellt. Das bedeutet: /	r Befragung werden ausschli Aus den Ergebnissen kann macht worden sind.	eßlich in anonymisierter Form darge- niemand erkennen, von welcher Per-	
son ale Angaben ge			
Das gilt auch bei Fol bestimmten Zeit noch auf Angaben aus der vorzunehmen, dass o also ohne Namen und	ge- oder Wiederholungs-Befr einmal ein Interview mit d m Erstinterview zurückzugrei lie Angaben aus mehreren B I Adresse, miteinander verknü	agungen, wo es wichtig ist, nach einer erselben Person durchzuführen, dabei en und die statistische Auswertung so efragungen durch eine Code-Nummer, pft werden.	
Das gilt auch bei Fol pestimmten Zeit noch auf Angaben aus der vorzunehmen, dass o also ohne Namen und Falls Sie noch nicht 1 Sie dieses Merkblatt a	ge- oder Wiederholungs-Befr e einmal ein Interview mit d m Erstinterview zurückzugrei lie Angaben aus mehreren B I Adresse, miteinander verkni 8 Jahre alt und zurzeit kein B auch Ihren Eltern mit der Bitte	agungen, wo es wichtig ist, nach einer erselben Person durchzuführen, dabei en und die statistische Auswertung so efragungen durch eine Code-Nummer, ipft werden. inwachsener anwesend ist: Bitte zeigen es billigend zur Kenntnis zu nehmen.	
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Das gilt auch bei Fol bestimmten Zeit noch auf Angaben aus der vorzunehmen, dass o also ohne Namen und Falls Sie noch nicht 1 Sie dieses Merkblatt a Für die Einhaltung de führer TNS Infratest Sozialforschung Gmb reich 884, Universitä	ge- oder Wiederholungs-Befr n einmal ein Interview mit d m Erstinterview zurückzugrei ile Angaben aus mehreren B il Adresse, miteinander verkni 8 Jahre alt und zurzeit kein B auch Ihren Eltern mit der Bitte er Datenschutzbestimmungen Forschung GmbH, Harald Bi H und Prof. Christina Gati t Mannheim verantwortlich. Anschrift Universität Mannheim Bonderfonschungsbereich 884	agungen, wo es wichtig ist, nach einer erselben Person durchzuführen, dabei en und die statistische Auswertung so efragungen durch eine Code-Nummer, pft werden. Erwachsener anwesend ist: Bitte zeigen es billigend zur Kenntnis zu nehmen. sind Winfried Hagenhoff, Geschäfts- elenski, Geschäftsführer TNS Infratest amann, Ph.D., Sonderforschungsbe- Fragen zum Datenschutz beantwortet der betriebliche Datenschutzbeauftragte von TNS Infratest:	
Das gilt auch bei Fol bestimmten Zeit noch auf Angaben aus der vorzunehmen, dass o also ohne Namen und Falls Sie noch nicht 1 Sie dieses Merkblatt a Für die Einhaltung de ührer TNS Infratest I Sozialforschung Gmb reich 884, Universitä Anschritt der INB Infratest Institute Lenduberger Studie 294 6867 Mächten Teiefun (680) 59:00 - 0	ge- oder Wiederholungs-Befr n einmal ein Interview mit d m Erstinterview zurückzugrei ie Angaben aus mehreren B i Adresse, miteinander verkni 8 Jahre alt und zurzeit kein E auch Ihren Eltern mit der Bitte er Datenschutzbestimmungen Forschung GmbH, Harald Bi H und Prof. Christina Gati it Mannheim verantwortlich. Anschrift Universität Mannheim Bonderforschungsbereich 894 Piergadnit L19, 15-17 det 31 Mannheim Tierfon (9621) 181-3871 Tierfon (9621) 181-3871	agungen, wo es wichtig ist, nach einer erselben Person durchzuführen, dabei en und die statistische Auswertung so efragungen durch eine Code-Nummer, pft werden. inwachsener anwesend ist: Bitte zeigen , es billigend zur Kenntnis zu nehmen. sind Winfried Hagenhoff, Geschäfts- elenski, Geschäftsführer TNS Infratest immann, Ph.D., Sonderforschungsbe- Fragen zum Datenschutz beantwortet der betriebliche Datenschutzbeauftragte von TNS Infratest: Dr. Aimut Pfläger Teiefen (086) 56 03 - 1780 Teiefen (086) 56 03 - 1780 Teiefen (086) 56 03 - 1780	

Was geschieht mit Ihren Angaben?

 Ihre Antworten zu den Fragen werden vom Interviewer oder von Ihnen selbst in die Antwortfelder eingetragen bzw. eingenehen z. B. so: 	Weichen Schulabschluss haben Sie?	Volksschule Mittlere Reife Abitur
engegeben, z.b. so.		

- 2. Bei den TNS Infratest Instituten wird der Fragenteil durchgesehen und von der Adresse getrennt; eventuelle Unklarheiten in den Antworten einzelner Befragter werden vorher telefonisch geklärt. Daten und Adresse erhalten eine Code-Nummer. Wer danach Ihre Antworten sieht, weiß also nicht, von wem sie gegeben wurden. Die Adresse verbleibt bei den TNS Infratest Instituten und der Universität Mannheim, jedoch nur bis zum Abschluss der Gesamtuntersuchung. Sie dient nur für Interviewer-Kontrollen (z.B. durch einen Telefonanruf oder Zusendung einer Postkarte mit der Bitte, die Durchführung des Interviews zu bestätigen) und dazu, Sie gegebenenfalls später mit der Bitte um ein Folge- oder Wiederholungsinterview noch einmal aufzusuchen, anzuschreiben oder anzurufen.
- 3. Bei Interviews mit einem Papierfragebogen werden Ihre Angaben in Zahlen umgesetzt und ohne Ihren Namen und ohne Ihre Adresse (also anonymisiert) auf einen Datenträger (digitales Speichermedium) gebracht. Bei PC-/Laptop-Interviews, wo die Fragentexte auf einem Bildschirm erscheinen, geschieht das bereits während des Interviews.
- Anschließend werden die Interviewdaten (ohne Namen und Adresse) von einem Computer ausgewertet. Der Computer z\u00e4hlt z.B. alle Antworten nach dem Schulabschluss und errechnet die Prozentergebnisse.

Das Gesamtergebnis und die Ergebnisse	Schulabschluss	Gesamt	Arbeiter	Angestellte
von Teilanungen (z.B. Arbeiter und Ange-	Volksschule	44	50	39
von reigruppen (z.b. Arbeiter und Ange-	Mittlere Relfe	34	41	29
stellte) werden in Tabellen ausgegeben.	Abitur	22	9	32

- 6. Auch bei Folge-Befragungen oder Wiederholungs-Befragungen werden Ihr Name und Ihre Anschrift stets von den Daten des Fragenteils getrennt. Bei der Auswertung vergleicht der Computer - während er rechnet - pro Person, aber er tut das über die Code-Nummer (also niemals über Namen!), und gibt dann die Ergebnisse genauso anonymisiert aus wie bei der Einmal-Befragung.
- 7. In jedem Fall gilt: Ihre Teilnahme ist freiwillig. Bei Nicht-Teilnahme entstehen Ihnen keine Nachteile. Es ist selbstverständlich, dass die TNS Infratest Institute und die Universität Mannheim alle Vorschriften des Datenschutzes einhalten.

Sie können absolut sicher sein, dass die TNS Infratest Institute und die Universität Mannheim Ihren Namen und Ihre Anschrift nach Abschluss der Gesamtuntersuchung nicht wieder mit den Interviewdaten zusammenführen, so dass niemand erfährt, welche Antworten Sie gegeben haben.

Wir danken Ihnen für Ihr Mitwirken und Ihr Vertrauen in unsere Arbeit!

GIP 124088 11/2011

Appendix D: Leaflet about the BenPC used during the face-to-face interview

Der BenPC

Der Bildschirm

Die Bedienung erfolgt ganz einfach mit dem Finger.







Appendix E: Leaflet about the study used during the face-to-face interview

Gesellschaft im Wandel **KYYY**

Was ist "Gesellschaft im Wandel"? "Geellschaft im Wandel" ist eine wissenschaftliche aufleic, die im Auftrag der Universitä Mannheum vom LINK Institut für Matk- und Sozialionschung giet das Internet durchgefählt, wird in der Sudie giett es um Ihre Matuugen, Einstellungen und Fawartungen au verschiedenen Thernen wie Familie Einwartungen au verschiedenen Thernen wie Familie Bath. Die Untersuchung dient keinerlei kommerzielle Zwecken. Ihre Angaben werden selbstverständlic vertraulich behandelt und die Bundes- und Landes datenschutzgesetze genauestens eingehalten.

Die Studie wird von Prof. Christina Gathman geletet. Sie wird durch ein Team von Mitarbeiter und Mitarbeiterinnen an der Universität Mannheir unteretiert

Warum wurden Sie ausgewählt? Ihr Haushaltwurdedurch ein wissenschaftliches Zu-fallrverfahren ausgewäht. Die Teilnahme möglichst aller Migdeder Ihre Haushalts im Alter won 16 bis 25 Jahren ist wichtig, um ein repräsentatives und aus-segerättiges Bild der Gesellschaft zu erhalten. jeder Teilnehmer und jede Teilnehmerin ist für uns unersetzlich und nur die ausgewählten Personen können an der Studie teilnehmen. Warum soliten Sie teilnehmen ? Damit die Ergebnisse für Deutschland aussgebräftig sind, ist es entschiedend, dass alle ausgewählten Personen teilnehmen – denhalb ist auch füre Teilnah-me besonders wichtig.

Ganz egal ob alt oder jung, berufsfälig oder nicht: Uns geht es um finte personalinet achtannag, dem die Vieläht in unseer Gesellschaft soll sich auch bei "Gesellschaft m Wande" wicherspehn, Substver-ständlichts die Teilnahme an diese Studie freiwilig. Sie können aber maßesblich www.r.c.

Zudem bekommen Sie von uns für jede abgesch ne Befragung fanne und einen Bouns von bis zu Euro pro Jahr, wenn Sie regelnaßfig an den Befrag gen teitnehmen. Sie können wählen, ob Sie di Adrivandesnischaftigung in Porm von Gentscher oder als Überweisung auf In: Konto erhalten woll Sie können sie aber auch spenden.

Wie läuft die Studie ab ? Alle zwei Monate werden Sie zu einer kurzen Online-Befragung eingeladen. Sie haben kein Internet? Oder kennen sich mit Computern nicht aus? Kein Problem. Wir sorgen für die geignete Ausstitung und Unterstützung. Für Sie fallen keine Kosten an.

Cb Ste an einer Befragung teilnehmen, und wann Ste das tun, können Ste jedes Mal æelbst entschel-Lan Dabei gehand Scheinreller Verpfüchtungen ein. Selbstreständlich berminen wir ums, die Befragung so einfach wie möglich zu gestalten.

Wie können Sie teilnehmen ?

Damit Sie an unserer Studie teilnehmen können, erhätten Sie einen Brief mit allen wichtigen införmationen. Darin finden Sie fihre Zugangedaren in fre Kennung und ein Passwort - und naftrilch die Internetatesse, unter der Ihr Pragebogen bereitigestellt wird.

jede Person in Ihrem Haushalt bekom solchen Brief mit eigenen Zugangsdaten.

Sobald Sie den Brief erhalten haben, können Sie sich auf umserer Internetseite anmelden und Ihren eten Fragebogen bearhworten. Über alle folgen-den Befragungen werden Sie in Zukunft von uns per E-Mall informiert.

KAAAN

Appendix F: Invitation letter to the online panel with login details

	UNIVERSITAT MANNHEIM
Universität Mannheim Schloss	s168131 Manuheim
	Mannhoim «Datum»
Gesellschaft im Wandel	COMPACTATION CONTRACTOR
«Sehr geehrte(r) Frmi/Herr»,	
vor ein paar Wochen war in in Ihrem Haushalt. Heute mö Wandel" einladen.	unserem Auftrag ein(e) Interviewer(in) für ein kurzes Interview ichten wir Sie gerne zur Fortsetzung der Studie "Gesellschaft im
Bitte registrieren Sie sich mög	glichst bis zum «Datum + 2 Wochen» unter
www.gesellschaft-im-wande	cLide
damit Sie dann schon an ur erfolgt Ihrer persönlichen Ker	nserer nächsten Umfrage teilnehmen können. Die Anmeldung nnung und Ihrem Passwort.
Kennung:	
Passwort:	
lhre Zugangsdaten finden Sie tie Zukunft gut auf.	e auch im beigelegten Klirtehen. Bitte bewahren Sie diese für
Vielen Dank für Ihre Teilnahn	me an unserem Projekt.
Mit freundlichen Grüßen,	
anstringfort	
Prof. Christina Gathmann Projektleiterin Gewellschuft i	im Wandel ^{an}
торемненский "снежамлица 1	in manager
	Bitte beachten Sie wach die Rückkeite

Gesellschaft im Wandel

Worum geht es?

In "Gesellschaft im Wandel" geht es um Ihre Meinungen, Einstellungen und Erwartungen zu verschiedenen Themen wie Familie und Freunde, Artbeit und Freizeit, Wirtschaft und Politik. Die Befragungen werden alle 2 Monate über das Internet durch das LINK Institut für Marktund Sozialforschung durchgeführt. Diese Befragungen sind Teil einer langfristigen wissenschaftlichen Studie der Universität Mannheim, die durch die Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) gefördert wird. Die Studie dient keinerlei kommerziellen Zwecken.

Was haben Sie davon?

Mit Ihrer Teilnahme leisten Sie einen wertvollen Beitrag zur Wissenschaft und Sie helfen uns, das Zusammenleben in unserer Gesellschaft besser zu verstehen. Jeder Teilnehmer und jede Teilnehmerin ist für uns unersetzlich, und nur die von uns persönlich angeschriebersen Personen können an der Studie teilnehmen. Als Dankeschön bekommen Sie von uns für jede abgeschlossene Befragung 4 Euro und einem Bonus von bis zu 10 Euro, wenn Sie regelmäßig un den Befragungen teilgenommen haben.

Freiwilligkeit und Anonymität

Die Teilnahme an jeder einzelnen Online Umfrage, zu der wir Sie nach Ihrer Registrierung per Email einladen, ist freiwillig. Sie gehen mit der Registrierung keine dauerhafte Verpflichtung ein. Und nufürlich erfolgen alle Auswertungen anonym gemäß den Vorgaben der Datenschutzgesetz.

Haben Sie Fragen oder Anregungen?

Internet: www.gesellschaft-im-wandel.de E-Mail: info@gesellschaft-im-wandel.de Telefon: 0800/5892604 (kostenlos aus dem dt. Fest- und Mobilnetz)



+ LINK Institut