

GESIS Panel Survey Style Guide

The GESIS Panel Team provides a [template](#) of a Unipark-questionnaire preprogrammed with the GESIS Panel layout. The template contains examples of all the question types described in this Style Guide. Researchers submitting proposals via the [GESIS Panel Submission website](#) should use the template provided.

Table of Contents:

1. General remarks	2
2. General structure of questions	3
3. Accepted question types	4
3.1. Single-choice questions (vertical) [Unipark question type: 111]	4
3.2. Matrix questions implemented as multiple single item questions [Unipark question type: 998 + 111].....	7
3.3. Multiple-response questions [Unipark question type: 121]	11
3.4. Open-ended questions (fields for text input) [Unipark question types: 141, 142].....	12
3.5. Advanced questions – User defined [Unipark question type: 911]	14
4. Programming remarks.....	14
5. Implementation of the “don’t know” category.....	15

GESIS Panel Website: <http://www.gesis-panel.org>

Contact E-Mail: info@gesis-panel.org

GESIS Panel in Social Media:

<https://www.facebook.com/GESISPanel>

https://twitter.com/GESIS_Panel

1. General remarks

The GESIS Panel is a mixed-mode panel that implements online and paper-and-pencil questionnaires. Following the methodological principles of a unified mode design, the questionnaire should appear as similar as possible on all devices and modes to maximize cross-sectional and longitudinal comparability. The layout of the GESIS Panel is developed for the device with the most restrictions, which is a smartphone with a small vertical display and touch screen operation. This mobile first layout strategy requires that the question types and scale directions in the GESIS Panel are restricted to vertical scales and an item-by-item question design. The paper questionnaire is divided into two columns to match the vertical layout. The offline mode further limits the style and technical possibilities of the questionnaire.

These restrictions have several implications:

- Not all question types and scale directions that can be implemented in Unipark are accepted in the GESIS Panel (see section 3).
- As a matter of principle, we do not force respondents to provide an answer. Moreover, they may skip a question without further probing.
- A “back-button” is included by default.
- A “don’t know” category is not offered by default. However, it may be included if it is a substantive answer (e.g., in the case of knowledge questions) or if the researcher has other reasons for including it (e.g., comparability; for details of implementation, see section 5).
- Generally, we apply a one-page-per-question design. However, if multiple questions are logically related, it is possible to implement more than one question per page. Matrix questions that are converted into multiple single-items with a superordinate question, to match the restrictions of the mobile first layout, should be placed on one page as well. The number of questions/items per page is restricted to five. If there are more than five items, the items will be divided equally on multiple pages.
- To emphasize a word within an introduction, question or remark, underlining should be used.
- Randomization of either questions or items is not possible. However, random assignment to experimental groups is possible. The GESIS Panel accepts a maximum of four experimental groups.
- Plausibility checks are not possible.
- Inclusion of multimedia elements is not possible.
- Dependent interviewing is not possible.
- Please remember: The duration of submitted questionnaires should not exceed five minutes.

2. General structure of questions

A question may consist of the following elements, however not all elements must be used in every question (see Figure 1: Elements of a question):

- I. Introduction
- II. Question text (boldface type)
- III. Instruction
- IV. Response categories

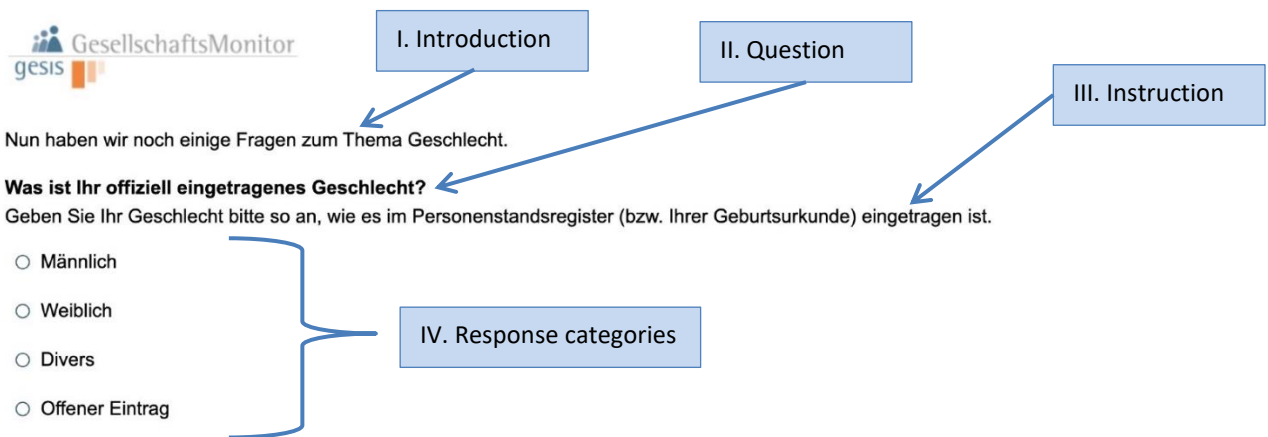


Figure 1: Elements of a question

3. Accepted question types

There are several types of questions that you can choose from. Please note that, due to the mobile first orientation and the mixed-mode character of the GESIS Panel, only a standard subset of the question types with vertical scale directions is permitted. All question types that are accepted within the GESIS Panel are listed and described below.

All questions that are shown in the screenshots can be found in the [Unipark template](#). Please import this template before you generate your survey.

Accepted question types:

- **Single-choice questions (vertical)** [Unipark question type: 111] (see section 3.1)
- **Matrix questions implemented as multiple single item questions** [Unipark question type: 998 + 111] (see section 3.2)
- **Multiple-response questions (vertical)** [Unipark question type: 121] (see section 3.3)
- **Open-ended questions** [Unipark question types: 141, 142] (see section 3.4)
- **Advanced questions – user-defined** [Unipark question type: 911] (see section 3.5)

3.1. Single-choice questions (vertical) [Unipark question type: 111]

3.1.1. Specific remarks

- Unipark question type 111 “single response list (vertical)”
- A blank line is placed manually between the introduction text and the question text (see Figure 4: Implementation of the question text).
- The question text is formatted bold (not as a heading).
- Boldface formatting should not be used in instructions. To highlight a word or a phrase within the instructions, underlining should be used.
- Items should start with a capital letter.
- If an item is a full sentence, it should end with a full stop.
- We recommend scales with five to seven points that are labeled completely, verbally and without numbers (see [GESIS Panel FAQ on Questionnaire Design](#)). In the case of partially labeled scales, the scale points are numbered consecutively with a hyphen placed between the number and the verbal label (see Figure 3).
- The “don’t know” category or other “does not apply” categories that do not form part of the scale should be set in italics. These categories should be visually separated by a blank line (see Figure 17: Unipark implementation of the “don't know“ category).
- Alternating colors should not be used in single-response lists.
- An open-ended response category may be included (see Figure 2: Example of a single-choice question (vertical) with an open-ended response category and a “does not apply” category).
- If an item is a continuation of the question, the question should end with an ellipsis, and the item should start with an ellipsis.

3.1.2. Examples



Es gibt unterschiedliche Quellen, aus denen man sich über Politik informieren kann.

Woher bekommen Sie aktuell die meisten Informationen über die Politik und die Parteien?

- Fernsehen
- Zeitung
- Radio
- Internet
- Persönliche Gespräche
- Andere Quelle, und zwar:
- Ich informiere mich aktuell nicht.

ZURÜCK

WEITER

Figure 2: Example of a single-choice question (vertical) with an open-ended response category and a “does not apply” category



In der Politik spricht man manchmal von „links“ und „rechts“.

Wo auf der Skala von 0 bis 10 würden Sie sich selbst einstufen, wenn 0 für „links“ steht und 10 für „rechts“?

- 0 - Links
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 - Rechts

ZURÜCK

WEITER

Figure 3: Example of a single-choice question (vertical) with partially labeled response categories

3.1.3. Unipark implementation

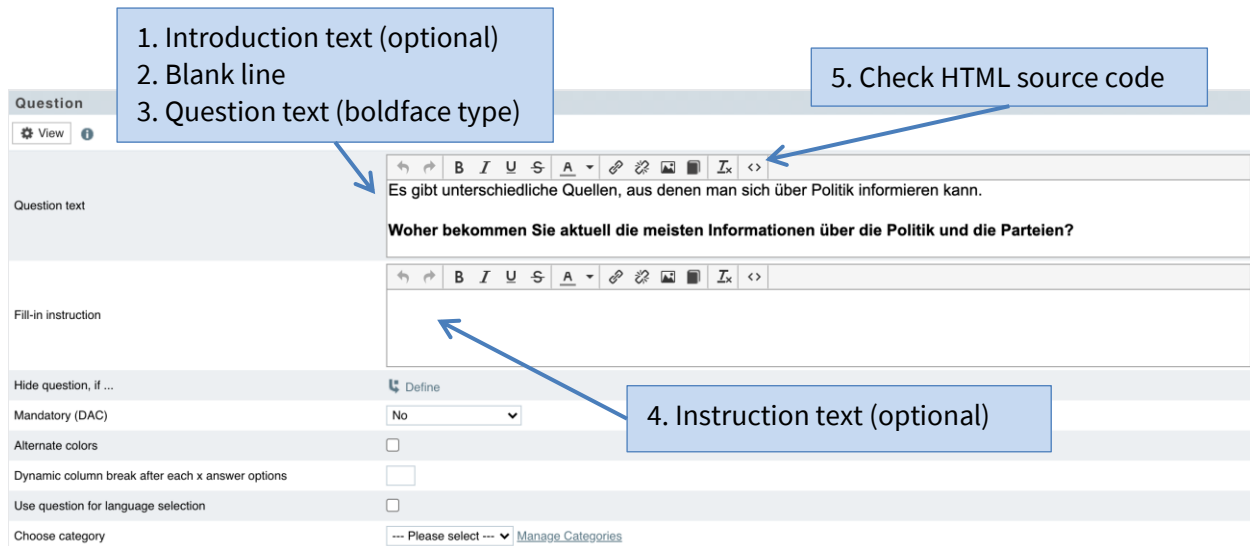


Figure 4: Implementation of the question text

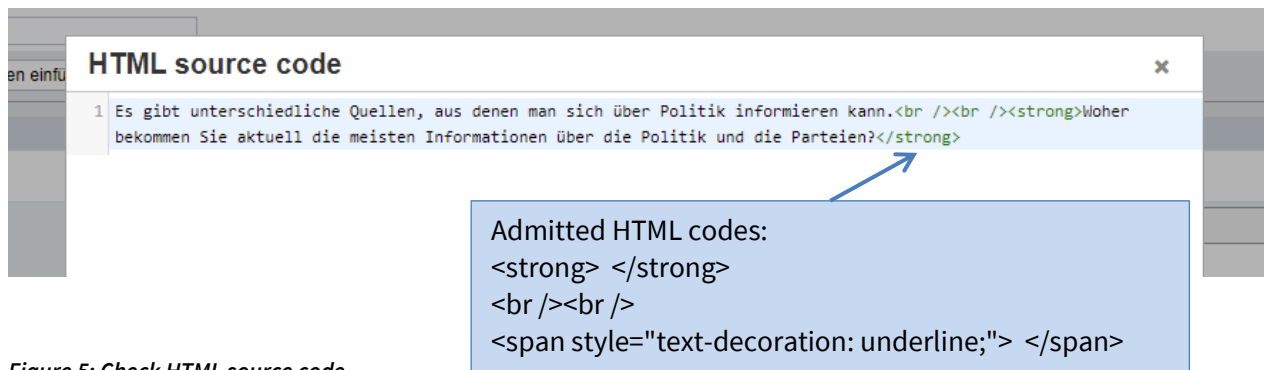


Figure 5: Check HTML source code

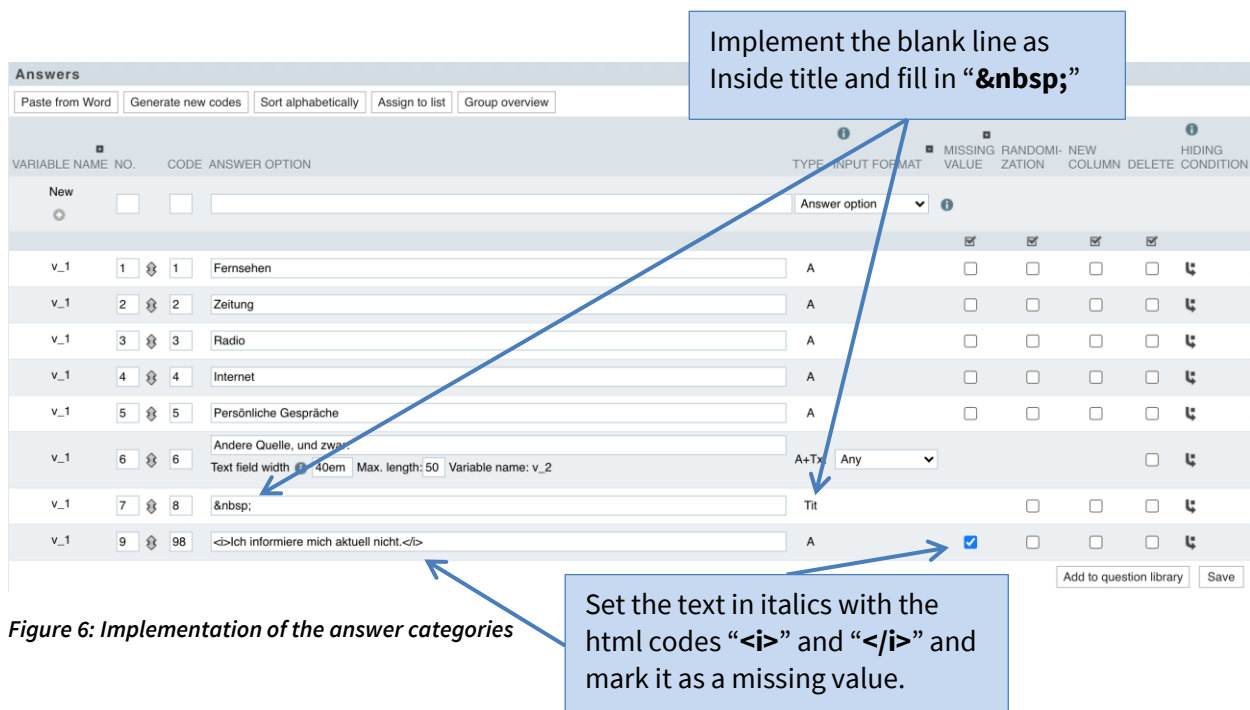


Figure 6: Implementation of the answer categories

3.2. Matrix questions implemented as multiple single item questions [Unipark question type: 998 + 111]

3.2.1. Specific remarks

- Due to the mobile first orientation, matrix questions are implemented as multiple single-item questions.
- Introduction text and superordinate question text are implemented together as question type 998 “Text and image”. Each item is implemented as question type 111 “single response list (vertical)”.
- A blank line is placed manually between the introduction text and the superordinate question text. The question texts are formatted bold (not as headings).
- Boldface formatting should not be used in instructions. To highlight a word or a phrase within the instructions, underlining should be used.
- Up to 5 items can be placed on one questionnaire page. If there are more than 5 items, the items will be divided equally on multiple pages.
- Items in single-response lists and vertical scales should start with a capital letter.
- If an item is a full sentence, it should end with a full stop.
- If an item is a continuation of the question, the question should end with an ellipsis, and the item should start with an ellipsis.
- The “don’t know” category or other “does not apply” categories that do not form part of the scale should be set in italics. These categories should be visually separated by a blank line.
- Alternating colors should not be used.
- An open-ended response category may be included (see Figure 2: Example of a single-choice question (vertical) with an open-ended response category and a “does not apply” category).

3.2.2. Example



Nun haben wir noch einige Fragen zu Ihnen persönlich.

Wie gut treffen die folgenden Beschreibungen auf Ihre gegenwärtige Lebenssituation zu?

Um das Leben richtig kennen zu lernen, setze ich mich gern neuen Herausforderungen und Erfahrungen aus.

- Trifft voll und ganz zu
- Trifft eher zu
- Trifft teilweise zu
- Trifft eher nicht zu
- Trifft gar nicht zu

Ich gehe viel aus.

- Trifft voll und ganz zu
- Trifft eher zu
- Trifft teilweise zu
- Trifft eher nicht zu
- Trifft gar nicht zu

Bei den technischen Geräten in meinem Haushalt bin ich immer auf dem neuesten Stand.

- Trifft voll und ganz zu
- Trifft eher zu
- Trifft teilweise zu
- Trifft eher nicht zu
- Trifft gar nicht zu

In meinem Alltag greife ich stets auf bewährte Routinen zurück.

- Trifft voll und ganz zu
- Trifft eher zu
- Trifft teilweise zu
- Trifft eher nicht zu
- Trifft gar nicht zu

Ich halte an Traditionen meiner Familie fest.

- Trifft voll und ganz zu
- Trifft eher zu
- Trifft teilweise zu
- Trifft eher nicht zu
- Trifft gar nicht zu

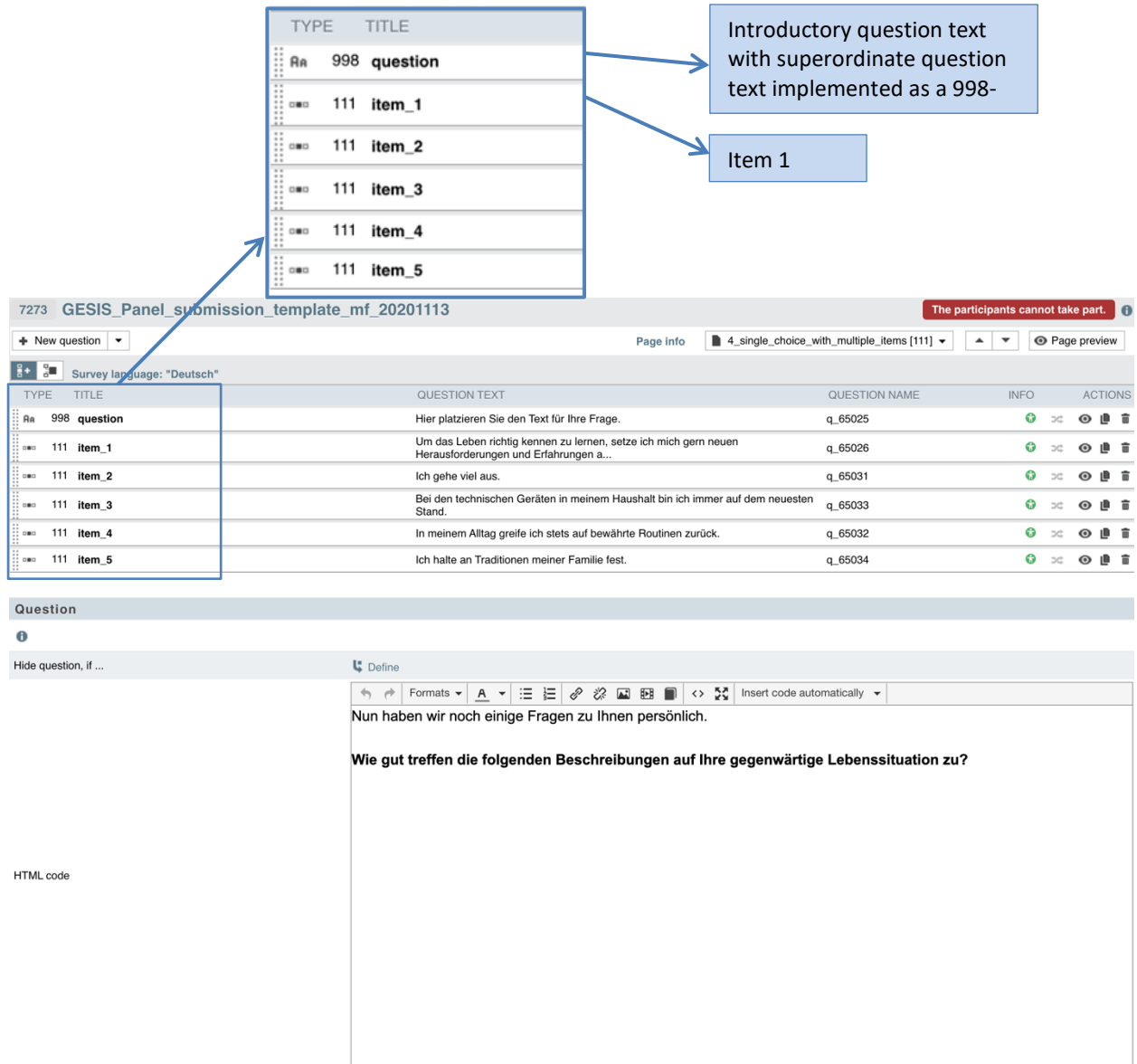
ZURÜCK

WEITER

Figure 7: Example of a matrix-question implemented as single response items

3.2.3. Unipark implementation

Former matrix questions that are implemented into the GESIS Panel as multiple single-items (see Figure 7: Example of a matrix-question implemented as single response items), usually have a superordinate question text. The optional introductory text and the superordinate question text should be programmed separately as a 998-type question and placed on the same page as the items. A blank line separates the introductory text from the question text. The question text must be set bold. Boldface formatting should not be used in introductions. If you wish to highlight a word or a phrase within the introduction, please underline it. Italics should not be used for highlighting as well.



The screenshot shows the GESIS Panel editor interface. At the top, a table lists the questions:

TYPE	TITLE
998	question
111	item_1
111	item_2
111	item_3
111	item_4
111	item_5

Below this is a detailed view of the question editor. The 'QUESTION TEXT' column shows the following content:

Hier platzieren Sie den Text für Ihre Frage.

Um das Leben richtig kennen zu lernen, setze ich mich gern neuen Herausforderungen und Erfahrungen a...

Ich gehe viel aus.

Bei den technischen Geräten in meinem Haushalt bin ich immer auf dem neuesten Stand.

In meinem Alltag greife ich stets auf bewährte Routinen zurück.

Ich halte an Traditionen meiner Familie fest.

The detailed view also shows the 'QUESTION NAME' column with values like q_65025, q_65026, q_65031, q_65033, q_65032, and q_65034.

At the bottom, the 'Define' section shows the introductory text for the 998-type question:

Nun haben wir noch einige Fragen zu Ihnen persönlich.

Wie gut treffen die folgenden Beschreibungen auf Ihre gegenwärtige Lebenssituation zu?

Figure 8: Example of Unipark implementation of introductory text

7273 GESIS_Panel_submission_template_mf_20201113 The participants cannot take part.

111 item_1 Page info 4_single_choice_with_multiple_items [111] Question preview

Survey language: "Deutsch" Pipe survey data Question 2/6

Question

View

Question text: **Um das Leben richtig kennen zu lernen, setze ich mich gern neuen Herausforderungen und Erfahrungen aus.**

Fill-in instruction:

Hide question, if ... [Define](#)

Mandatory (DAC)

Alternate colors

Dynamic column break after each x answer options

Use question for language selection

Choose category [Manage Categories](#)

Answers

Paste from Word Generate new codes Sort alphabetically Assign to list Group overview

VARIABLE NAME	NO.	CODE	ANSWER OPTION	TYPE	INPUT FORMAT	MISSING VALUE	RANDOMIZATION	NEW COLUMN	HIDING DELETE	CONDITION
New	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Answer option		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v_48	1	1	Trifft voll und ganz zu	A		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v_48	2	2	Trifft eher zu	A		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v_48	3	3	Trifft teilweise zu	A		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v_48	4	4	Trifft eher nicht zu	A		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v_48	5	5	Trifft gar nicht zu	A		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Figure 9: Implementation of a question and answer categories

3.3. Multiple-response questions [Unipark question type: 121]

3.3.1. Specific remarks

- A blank line is placed manually between the introduction text and the superordinate question text. The question texts are formatted bold (not as headings).
- As in the case of single-choice questions, items should start with a capital letter and, if they are full sentences, should end with a full stop.

3.3.2. Example



Welche dieser Tageszeitungen lesen Sie regelmäßig oder gelegentlich?
Bitte geben Sie auch diejenigen Tageszeitungen an, die Sie online oder elektronisch lesen.

- Bildzeitung
- Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)
- Die Welt
- Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ)
- die tageszeitung (taz)
- Eine lokale oder regionale Tageszeitung
- Eine zweite lokale oder regionale Tageszeitung
- Eine oder mehrere Tageszeitung aus dem deutschsprachigen Ausland
- Eine oder mehrere andere fremdsprachige Tageszeitungen

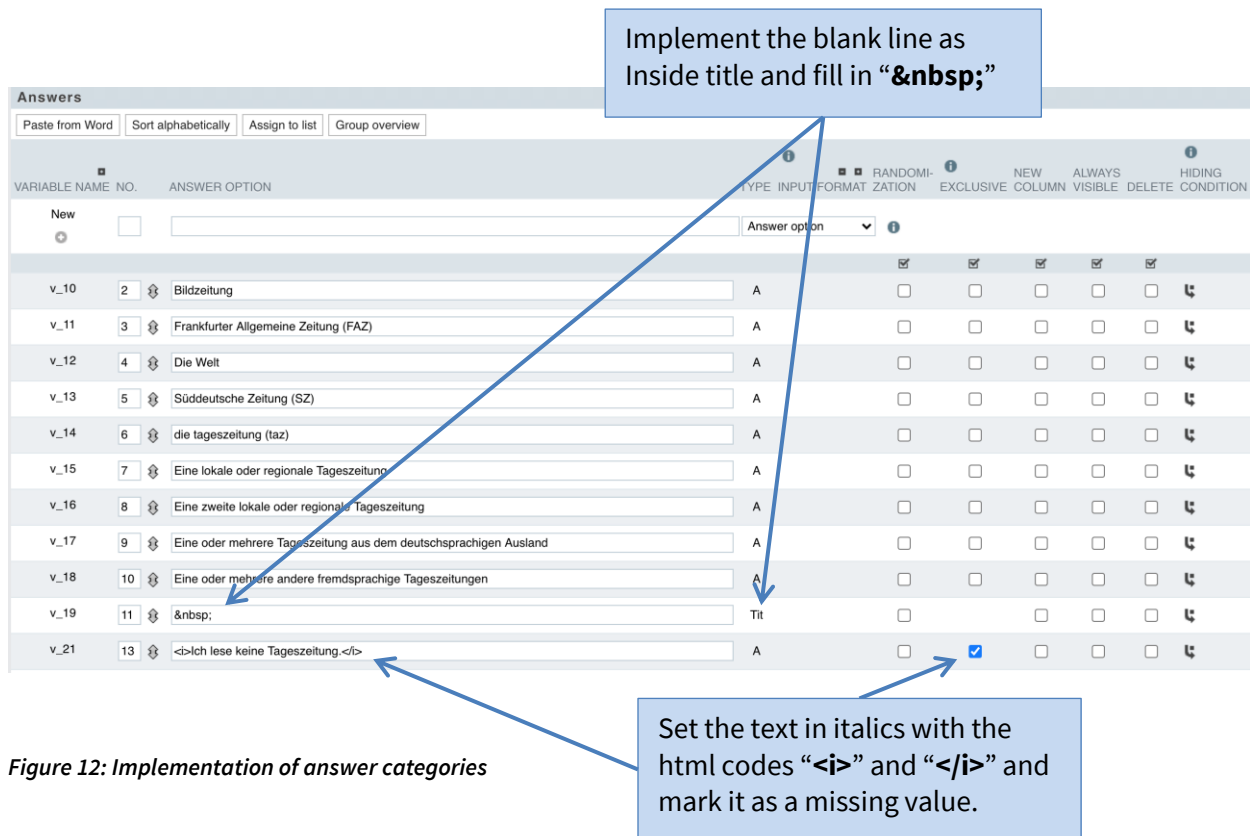
- Ich lese keine Tageszeitung.

Figure 10: Example of a multiple-response question (vertical)

3.3.3. Unipark implementation

Question	
View ⓘ	
Question text	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"><p>← → B I U S A ↕ ↻ ↷ ↻ Ix <></p><p>Welche dieser Tageszeitungen lesen Sie regelmäßig oder gelegentlich?</p></div>
Fill-in instruction	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"><p>← → B I U S A ↕ ↻ ↷ ↻ Ix <></p><p>Bitte geben Sie auch diejenigen Tageszeitungen an, die Sie online oder elektronisch lesen.</p></div>

Figure 11: Implementation of question text and instructions



Implement the blank line as inside title and fill in “ ”

VARIABLE NAME	NO.	ANSWER OPTION	TYPE	INPUT FORMAT	RANDOMIZATION	EXCLUSIVE	NEW COLUMN	ALWAYS VISIBLE	DELETE	HIDING CONDITION
New										
v_10	2	Bildzeitung	A			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v_11	3	Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)	A			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v_12	4	Die Welt	A			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v_13	5	Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ)	A			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v_14	6	die tageszeitung (taz)	A			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v_15	7	Eine lokale oder regionale Tageszeitung	A			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v_16	8	Eine zweite lokale oder regionale Tageszeitung	A			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v_17	9	Eine oder mehrere Tageszeitung aus dem deutschsprachigen Ausland	A			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v_18	10	Eine oder mehrere andere fremdsprachige Tageszeitungen	A			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v_19	11	 	Tit			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v_21	13	<i>Ich lese keine Tageszeitung.</i>	A			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Set the text in italics with the html codes “<i>” and “</i>” and mark it as a missing value.

Figure 12: Implementation of answer categories

3.4. Open-ended questions (fields for text input) [Unipark question types: 141, 142]

3.4.1. Specific remarks

Due to the limitations of the paper-and-pencil mode, there are restrictions on the number of open-ended questions that we can integrate into one wave questionnaire and on the size of the text field provided for the answer. A typical open-ended question in a standardized questionnaire provides an answer field for single words or numbers (see Figure 13: Example of a numerical open-ended question and Figure 14: Example of a single-line open-ended question). The rule of thumb for longer open-ended questions is to provide a maximum of five lines in the answer field (see Figure 15: Example of a multiple-line open-ended question).

The number of open-ended questions and the size of the textbox should be discussed with the project manager responsible for the wave.

3.4.2. Examples



Im Folgenden möchten wir Sie bitten, einige Fragen zu Ihrer aktuellen Wohnsituation zu beantworten.

Wie viele Personen leben ständig in Ihrem Haushalt, Sie selbst eingeschlossen?

Zählen Sie dazu bitte auch Kinder, bzw. Personen, die normalerweise mit Ihnen zusammen wohnen, aber momentan abwesend sind z. B. im Krankenhaus oder im Urlaub.

Personen

ZURÜCK

WEITER

Figure 13: Example of a numerical open-ended question



In welcher Region leben Sie?

ZURÜCK

WEITER

Figure 14: Example of a single-line open-ended question



Haben Sie noch weitere Anmerkungen?

Hier können Sie Lob oder Kritik äußern.

Bitte bedenken Sie, dass wir Ihnen aus Datenschutzgründen hierzu nicht persönlich antworten können. Geben Sie in dieses Feld aus diesem Grund auch bitte keine Telefonnummer oder andere Kontaktdaten ein.

Wenn Sie Fragen haben, können Sie uns gerne unter 0621-1246 564 anrufen oder eine E-Mail an info@gesis-gesellschaftsmonitor.de schreiben.

ZURÜCK

WEITER

Figure 15: Example of a multiple-line open-ended question

3.4.3. Unipark implementation

Question	
View	
Question text	<p>Im Folgenden möchten wir Sie bitten, einige Fragen zu Ihrer aktuellen Wohnsituation zu beantworten.</p> <p>Wie viele Personen leben ständig in Ihrem Haushalt, Sie selbst eingeschlossen?</p>
Fill-in instruction	<p>Zählen Sie dazu bitte auch Kinder, bzw. Personen, die normalerweise mit Ihnen zusammen wohnen, aber momentan abwesend sind z. B. im Krankenhaus oder im Urlaub.</p>
Hide question, if ...	Define
Mandatory (DAC)	No
Input format	Any
Text around the input field	%s Personen
Text field width	3em
Input length (max.)	2
Variable name	v_22
Choose category	--- Please select --- Manage Categories

Figure 16: Unipark implementation of an open-ended question

3.5. Advanced questions – User defined [Unipark question type: 911]

User-defined questions should be used only in exceptional cases. The questions must fit into the vertical alignment and must not cause any problems for smartphone or offline participants. The GESIS Panel Team has no resources to provide any support for user-defined questions. Please use only HTML, not JavaScript.

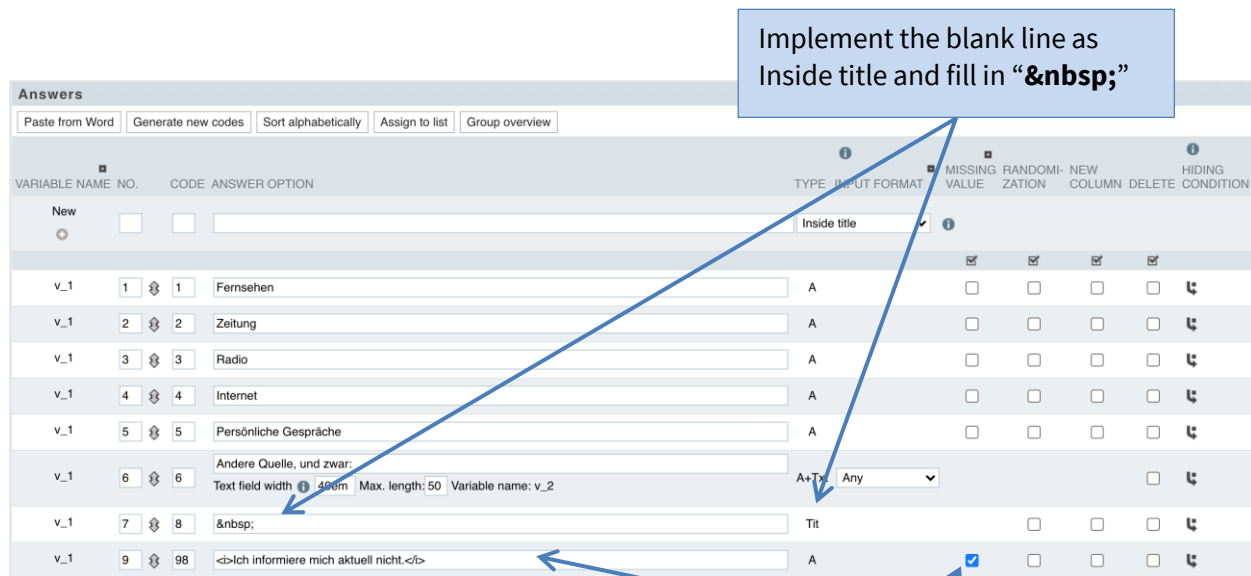
4. Programming remarks

- Variable name convention: The GESIS Panel Team will rename your variables according to the naming convention of the GESIS Panel. Variable names or labels may be either in English or in German.
- If you are using a scale labeled with numbers, never use the value “0” as a variable code, even if the scale starts with “0”, because “0” is defined as a missing value in Unipark. Values should start with 1. You can label the value “1” as “0” (see example of a “single_choice_horizontal_0 scale” in the template).
- Codes for missing data: Unipark has standard codes for missing data (-66, -77, and 0). These codes should not be changed in the online questionnaire submitted.

5. Implementation of the “don’t know” category

We do not recommend using a “don’t know” option. However, it may be used if it is a substantive category (in the case of knowledge questions) or for comparison purposes if a question is replicated from other survey.

In vertical response lists, the “don’t know” category and similar “does not apply” categories that do not form part of the scale should be set in italics and be visually separated by a blank line.



VARIABLE NAME	NO.	CODE	ANSWER OPTION	TYPE	INPUT FORMAT	MISSING VALUE	RANDOMIZATION	NEW COLUMN	DELETE	HIDING CONDITION
New					Inside title					
v_1	1	1	Fernsehen	A		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
v_1	2	2	Zeitung	A		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
v_1	3	3	Radio	A		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
v_1	4	4	Internet	A		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
v_1	5	5	Persönliche Gespräche	A		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
v_1	6	6	Andere Quelle, und zwar: Text field width: 49cm Max. length: 50 Variable name: v_2	A+T	Any					
v_1	7	8	 	Tit		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
v_1	9	98	<i>Ich informiere mich aktuell nicht.</i>	A		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Figure 17: Unipark implementation of the “don’t know” category

Set the text in italics with the html codes “<i>” and “</i>” and mark it as a missing value.

Code “98” should be assigned to an explicitly offered “don’t know” category. The “don’t know” category should be marked in Unipark as a missing value.