

## A New Triggered Questionnaire "The Deceased Person"

### Background

**Motivation**

For about the first 15 waves, the SOEP survey instruments concentrated on adults. Only a few variables were measured for the early years of life and childhood. And for many older adults, the late years of life were not measured adequately – in some cases because respondents were hospitalized or moved into nursing or retirement homes. This was a basic shortcoming of household panels like SOEP, given the strength of the sample design lies in its potential to provide data on early and late life and on intergenerational relations.

While the SOEP survey instruments on early childhood and also later childhood had been improved steadily since 2002, the survey instruments for late life had remained largely unchanged. In response to requests from our user community and based on initial experiences with the SHARE survey, we decided to test whether better information can be obtained about the later years and months of a respondent's life by interviewing the family and household members of the deceased person.

**Pretests in 2007**

- In two special SOEP pretests in 2007, we tried for the first time to collect information about the death of relatives. In the pretests it was asked, for instance, if anyone had died in the last twelve months and whether the person lived in the same household. In addition, there were questions about the closeness of the relationship with the deceased and the cause of death.
- Provided that the deceased person was at one time a SOEP respondent, this interview technique will make it possible for the first time to link longitudinal information on respondents with information about their death.
- In the future, this may provide the basis for significant new scientific findings on the connection between lifestyle, social sphere, and circumstances of death.

**First Results of Pretests**

Kröger, Katharina (2008): "Exit-Interviews" in SOEP und SHARE. *DIW Data Documentation No. 40, Berlin.*

### Test-Realization in SOEP 2009 – triggering via personal questionnaire

156. Has your family situation changed after December 31, 2007?  
Please indicate if any of the following apply to you and if so, when this change occurred.

		Yes	in 2008		in 2009
			in month		in month
I married .....	<input type="checkbox"/>		□ □		□ □
I moved in with my partner .....	<input type="checkbox"/>		□ □		□ □
Had a child .....	<input type="checkbox"/>		□ □		□ □
<b>Death in the household or in the family:</b>					
- My spouse / partner has died .....	<input type="checkbox"/>		□ □		□ □
- Father has died .....	<input type="checkbox"/>		□ □		□ □
- Mother has died .....	<input type="checkbox"/>		□ □		□ □
- Child has died .....	<input type="checkbox"/>		□ □		□ □
- Another person who lived here in the household has died .....	<input type="checkbox"/>		□ □		□ □
There have been no changes in my family .....	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Please complete the questionnaire "The deceased person"

**Topics of the Questionnaire "The Deceased Person"**

- Place and cause of death
- Health and illness in the last six months of life
- Relation to the deceased person
- Satisfaction with life of the deceased person three months and six months prior to death

**Limitations**

- We will obtain almost no information about childless respondents
- We will obtain much more information about deceased persons who lived together with others in one household
- Statistical control of selectivity is necessary

**Expected numbers of cases**

- information on about 150 deceased respondents out of 200 who had died
- multiple responses for about 30 deceased respondents