

Assessment of the GALI question used in SILC since 2008

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Introduction

In this short document, we assess whether the national translations of the GALI question in the various national SILC questionnaires contain the four fundamental concepts of the GALI EU standard.

The information used in this report comes from the experts of the EHLEIS network (See EHLEIS Technical report 2011_4.5). In particular we requested them to comment on the changes in the wording of the GALI question between 2007 and 2008.

The four fundamental concepts included in the Gali are:

- (i) being limited,
- (ii) in activities people usually do
- (iii) because of a health problem
- (iv) for at least the past 6 months

The standard wording of the GALI question is:

For at least the past 6 months, to what extent have you been limited because of a health problem in activities people usually do? Would you say...

The four concepts are easily identified in the question: [For at least the past 6 months], to what extent [have you been limited] [because of a health problem] [in activities people usually do]?

The GALI contains these four concepts in 12 countries. They are:

- *Belgium: limited / activities people usually do / health problem / for at least 6 months*
- *Bulgaria: limited / activities people usually do / health problem / for at least 6 months*
- *Czech Rep.: limited / activities people usually do / health complaints / for at least 6 months*
- *Denmark: limited / activities people usually do / health problem / for at least 6 months*
- *France: limited / activities people usually do / health problem / for at least 6 months*
- *Greece: limited / activities people usually do / health problem / for at least 6 months*
- *Ireland: limited / activities people usually do / health problem / for at least 6 months*
- *Italy: limited / activities people usually do / health problem / for at least 6 months*
- *Malta: limited / activities people usually do / health problem / for at least 6 months*
- *Poland: limited / usual activities / health problem / for at least 6 months*
- *Slovenia: limited / activities people usually do / health problem / for at least 6 months*
- *Spain: limited / activities people usually do / health problem / for at least 6 months*

The Netherlands do not include a time reference

- *Netherlands: hampered, limited / activities people usually do / health problem / no time reference*

All countries refer to “being limited” even if some of them are using alternative word: “being hampered”, “being restricted”. Germany specifies “permanently” limited. All countries refer to “health problem” but one to “health complaints” (Czech Republic). One country refers to “the past six months” (Cyprus), two refer to “during the past 6 months” (Finland and Hungary) and one “for more than 6 months” (Portugal).

Eight countries replaced the reference to activities people usually do by a reference to more personal activities through the use of the term YOUR usual, normal or daily activities: three countries refer to “your usual activities”, one to “your normal activities”, three to “your daily activities” and one to “your daily work”. This restriction is likely to decrease the prevalence of activity limitation for these 8 countries and to increase their HLY values:

- Cyprus: limited / YOUR usual activities / health problem / for the past 6 months
- Finland: limited / YOUR usual activities / health problem / during the past 6 months
- Luxembourg: limited / YOUR usual activities / health problem / for at least 6 months
- Slovakia: restricted / YOUR normal activities / health problem / for at least 6 months
- Hungary: feel being limited / YOUR daily activities / health problem / during the past 6 months
- Latvia: limited / YOUR daily activities / health problem / for at least 6 months
- Sweden: limited / YOUR daily activities / health problem / during the last 6 months
- Germany: limited permanently / YOUR daily work / health problem / for at least 6 months

Two countries refer to daily activities without specification. It is difficult to guess what should be the impact on the prevalence of reported activity limitation compared to referring to activities people usually do.

- Austria: hampered / daily activities / health problem / for at least 6 months
- Portugal: limited capacities / daily activities / health problem / for more than 6 months

In UK, the question used is totally different

- UK: filtered questions / limitation in activities / if 'yes' to the illness question / no time reference

Finally, for three countries, we don't have enough information to assess the national translation of the GALI:

- Estonia: xxx / xxx / xxx / xxx
- Lithuania: xxx / xxx / xxx / xxx
- Roumania: xxx / xxx / xxx / xxx

The gaps with the standard for each country are highlighted below:

- Austria: hampered / daily activities / health problem / for at least 6 months
- Belgium: limited / activities people usually do / health problem / for at least 6 months
- Bulgaria: limited / activities people usually do / health problem / for at least 6 months
- Cyprus: limited / YOUR usual activities / health problem / for the past 6 months
- Czech Rep.: limited / activities people usually do / health complaints / for at least 6 months
- Denmark: limited / activities people usually do / health problem / for at least 6 months
- Estonia: xxx / xxx / xxx / xxx
- Finland: limited / YOUR usual activities / health problem / during the past 6 months
- France: limited / activities people usually do / health problem / for at least 6 months
- Germany: limited permanently / YOUR daily work / health problem / for at least 6 months
- Greece: limited / activities people usually do / health problem / for at least 6 months
- Hungary: feel being limited / YOUR daily activities / health problem / during the past 6 months
- Ireland: limited / activities people usually do / health problem / for at least 6 months
- Italy: limited / activities people usually do / health problem / for at least 6 months
- Latvia: limited / YOUR daily activities / health problem / for at least 6 months
- Lithuania: xxx / xxx / xxx / xxx
- Luxembourg: limited / YOUR usual activities / health problem / for at least 6 months
- Malta: limited / activities people usually do / health problem / for at least 6 months
- Netherlands: hampered, limited / activities people usually do / health problem / no time reference

- *Poland: limited / usual activities / health problem / for at least 6 months*
- *Portugal: limited capacities / daily activities / health problem / for more than 6 months*
- *Roumania: xxx / xxx / xxx / xxx*
- *Slovakia: restricted / YOUR normal activities / health problem / for at least 6 months*
- *Slovenia: limited / activities people usually do / health problem / for at least 6 months*
- *Spain: limited / activities people usually do / health problem / for at least 6 months*
- *Sweden: limited / YOUR daily activities / health problem / during the last 6 months*
- *UK: filtered questions / limitation in activities / if 'yes' to the illness question / no time reference*

Raw material and assessment of the national translations provided by the experts of the EHLEIS network

AUSTRIA

Gabriele Doblhammer / Uta Ziegler

Sind Sie seit zumindest einem halben Jahr durch ein gesundheitliches Problem bei Tätigkeiten des normalen Alltagslebens eingeschränkt?

- Are you hampered in activities of everyday life by a health problem since at least 6 month?

Assessment by Gabriele Doblhammer: *It is a fair translation.*

BELGIUM

Herman Van Oyen / Rana Charafeddine / Jean Tafforeau / Francis Loosen

Etes-vous limités depuis au moins six mois à cause d'un problème de santé, dans l'activité que les gens font habituellement ?

The wording of the GALI question did not need to be changed in Belgium since the new HLY series was initiated.

BULGARIA

Plamen Dimitrov

2008

- Do you have problems with your health (long lasting disease, disability, etc., with duration at least 6 months), which limit your daily activities (incl. that you had a need for help and care)

2009

- For at least the past 6 months have you been limited in performing activities people usually do in personal life and working life because of a health problem? Would you say that you have been:
Yes, highly limited / Yes, limited / No

CYPRUS

Eleni Kyriacou

2005

- During the past 6 months or more, have you been limited in activities people usually do, because of a health problem? Yes, strongly limited / Yes, limited / Not limited

2006-2009

- During the whole period of the past 6 months up to today, are your usual activities limited because of a health problem? (by usual activities please refer to activities of people at your age)
Yes, strongly limited / yes, limited / Not limited

Assessment by Eleni Kyriacou: The wording of the questions used the last years is a fair translation of the English reference standard.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Jakub Hrkal

2005-2006

- Have you been, during the past 6 months, limited in your activities because of health problems?

2007

- Have you been, during the past 6 months, limited on a long-term basis in your activities because of health problems?

2008-2009

- Have you been limited because of health complaints in the previous at least 6 months in activities that people usually do? –
 1. yes, seriously limited,
 2. yes, limited, 3. not limited

Assessment by Jakub Hrkal: this change may have led to increase in the HLY in 2007 and decrease in 2008 (one would expect increase in 2008).

DENMARK

Henrik Brønnum-Hansen

2005-2007

- Have you been hampered in your daily activities by this chronic problem or by other health-related problems for longer time-periods within the past 6 months?
Yes / No

2008-2009

- For at least the past 6 months, to what extent have you been limited because of a health problem in activities people usually do?
Severely limited / Limited but not severely / Not limited at all

ESTONIA

Liis Roovali

2008-2009

Assessment: Starting 2008 the correct EHIS limitation question is used (first two questions were not changed). You have the correct national version of questions, I do not start to translate them again as Estonia participated in respective Eurostat EHIS module projects and all questions (also the russian version of questions) were translated for and back and tested and validated during those projects.

2004-2006

- Has any disease, health problem or injury caused harm/ bothered/ hampered your work or your everyday activities during the past six months? (also those limitations that have lasted half a year the cause of which is not considered longstanding)
 1. a lot/ much
 2. to some extent
 3. or not at all

2007

- Have you had, at least during the past six months (and still at this moment), due to health problems
 1. major functional limitations (or: activity limitations, but translations possible)
 2. functional limitations to some extent,
 3. no functional limitations at all

2008

- To what extent has a health problem limited your normal/usual activities (compared to other people) during the past 6 months. Would you say your activities
 1. have been severely limited
 2. have been limited but not severely
 3. are not limited at all.

Assessment by Marja Jylha: So yes, question 3 (this is the GALI question?) has been changed between 2007 and 2008. And yes, to my understanding the Finnish question 3 in 2008 is an as exact translation of what is ET3 in 2009 in the paper you sent me as only possible. There are some minor differences in the first sentence but I would say the meaning is the same.

Hannele Sauli says that the interviewers consider the GALI question very difficult, particularly because it includes so many specifiers: usual, compared to other people, at least 6 months... And also (this is my personal comment), the interviewee also must consider whether it really is a health problem that is limiting the activities. It is not clear that all older people would see their functional limitations as caused by health problems, many probably attribute them simply to old age. To my understanding it is also likely that there are cultural differences in the extent to which old people attribute their limitations to ageing as such, and to what extent to (age-related) health problems. I wonder whether this causes comparability problems. – It is also well known that people answer the self-rated health questions differently in different countries, they just differ in their willingness to report health problems and also they differ in the way they use the scale. Therefore I doubt how comparable, across countries, the self-rated health questions are. SRH does do, e.g. predict mortality in one country (as age adjusted, or if the age range is not too wide), but there is no results whatsoever of its association with mortality in samples that include individuals from different countries, different cultures, different languages.

2008

- For at least the past 6 months, to what extent have you been limited because of a health problem in activities people usually do?
Would you say you have been: severely limited / limited but not severely / not limited at all

Assessment by Sandrine Danet: La traduction nous semble tout à fait correcte.

GERMANY

Jurgen Thelen / Gabriele Doblhammer / Uta Ziegler

2008

In welchem Ausmaß sind sie durch Krankheit in der Ausübung ihrer alltäglichen Arbeiten dauerhaft eingeschränkt? Wir meinen damit seit mindestens einem halben Jahr.

Erheblich eingeschränkt / Eingeschränkt, aber nicht erheblich / Nicht eingeschränkt / Weiß nicht

- To what extend are you limited permanently in your daily works because of illness. We mean for at least half a year?
Severely limited / Limited but not severely / Not limited / Don't know

Assessment by Jurgen Thelen (RKI): The 2008 version of the GALI question is only partly comparable to the original English version. The original version asks for limitations due to health problems while the German version asks for limitations due to illness. The original GALI question asks for limitations in activities people usually do while the German version asks for limitations in personal activities.

Due to the differences between to original MEHM questions and the national German version currently in use, the MEHM3 questions will be revised. Moreover results from the German national health surveys indicate that the MEHM3 question in its current German phrasing is too complex to be understood unambiguously as it covers three different dimensions (limitation due to health problem, duration of the limitation, severity of the limitation) that shall be taken into account by the respondents. Therefore we investigate the possibilities to split the GALI question in three parts, that are asked subsequently and that enable for the gathering of truly GALI comparable data.

Assessment by Gabriele Doblhammer: Yes, it is fair but I find the Austrian version better, because it is more clear and the translation is slightly closer to the English text.

GREECE

Giorgos Ntouros

2004-2007

- For at least the last 6 months have you been limited your daily activities because of a health problem?

2008-2009

- For at least the last 6 months have you been limited because of a health problem in activities people usually do?

HUNGARY

Zsuzsanna Szabó

2006-2007

- Do you have any kind of health problem, what limits you in any kind of activities at least for the last six months?

2008-2009

- To what extent have you felt being limited in your daily activities during the last six months due to health problems?

Assessment by Zsuzsanna Krisztina Szabo: As to the translations of SILC MEHM question the recent version is identical to the 2008 and 2009. The Hungarian version is correct. Translation has been made by expert statistician who is employee of HCSO since 1990 and has a high qualification in English and a great experience in statistical surveys and question wording.

IRELAND

Gerry Brady

2004-2009

Assessment by Gerry Brady: The questions asked in Ireland are consistent over the period 2004-2008 and also consistent with the English version of MEHM.

ITALY

Luisa Frova

2004-2006

A causa di problemi di salute, Lei ha delle limitazioni, che durano da almeno 6 mesi, nello svolgere le abituali attività della vita quotidiana?

- For at least the part six months to what extent have you been limited because of a health problem in activities people usually do?

2007-2009

A causa di problemi di salute, in che misura Lei ha delle limitazioni che durano da almeno 6 mesi nelle attività che le persone abitualmente svolgono? Direbbe di avere:

- For at least the past 6 months, to what extent have you been limited because of health problem in activities people usually do? Would you say you have been:

Assessment by Luisa Frova: The questions are exactly the same for 2007, 2008 and 2009. Fair translation of the European English reference standard? Yes, for all the three questions on health (2007, 2008, 2009).

LATVIA

Juris Krumins

2005 (from Latvian to English)

- For at least the last 6 months have you been limited in activities people usually do at home, at work or recreation due to any long-standing problems?

2005 (from Russian to English)

- For at least the last 6 months have you been limited in activities people usually do at home, at work or recreation due to any long-standing health problems?

2006-2009 (from Latvian and Russian to English)

- Do you presently have health problems, which for at least the last 6 months have been limited your daily activities at home, at work or recreation?

Assessment by Juris Kruminis: Translation of the European English reference standard is not very correct.

LITHUANIA

Ramune Kalediene

Luxembourg

Guillaume Osier

Assessment by Guillaume Osier : Considering the English formulation of the EHIS questionnaire adopted on 22nd November 2006 by the Eurostat Working Group on Public Health Statistics, questionnaire recommended for use in the 2007/2008 round of the EHIS, the French formulation is OK.

MALTA

Calleja Neville

2006-2010

- During the last 6 months, have you been limited because of a health problem in activities people usually do?

Netherlands

Wilma Nusselder / Coen van Gool

2006-2007

- Are you hampered in carrying out your daily activities because of health problems?

2008-2009

- To what extend are you hampered because of health problems in activities persons usually do. Is this:

Perhaps an alternative for the 2008 back translation is: To what extent does your health limit you in usual activities. In Dutch it stated: 'health' instead of 'health problems' ([Coen van Gool](#)).

Assessment by Wilma Nusselder: Important changes between 2007 and 2008.

POLAND

Bogdan Wojtyniak

2005

Because of a health problem (disability or chronic disease) have you been limited in everyday activities adequate to your age (studying at school, occupational activities, housekeeping, self-care) for six months or longer? Yes, totally limited; Yes, seriously limited; No.

2006-2008

Because of a health problem (disability or chronic disease) have you been limited in usual activities (studying at school, occupational activities, housekeeping, self-care) for six months or longer? Yes, strongly limited; Yes, limited not seriously; No, I have no limitations.

PORTUGAL

Carlos Diaz

2008-2009

- Do you have since more than 6 months your capacities limited to do daily activities due to a health problem?

ROMANIA

no contact

SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Jan Meszaros

2005

- Did you must within the last 6 months to limit your activities because of a health reason? Markedly must limited, partly must limited, did not have to limit

2006-2007

- Did you must to limit your activities for medical reasons at least the last six months? Markedly must limited, partly must limited, did not have to limit

2008-2009

- To what extent were you in your normal activities restricted due to health problem in at least the last 6 months? Very restricted, restricted, but not very much, not restricted, I don't know, didn't answer

SLOVENIA

Daša Moravec Berger

Assessment by Dasa Moravec Berger: The questions of MEHM in SILC in the Slovenian translation have not been changed in the last period. But we plan to change the wording for use in 2010 because now the translations in SILC and in EHIS are not identical. Therefore we will back translate the questions for 2010.

My understanding and my explanation of the third MEHM question (made by my own back translation):

- "Was "Name and surname" in the past 6 months limited for a longer time in activities people usually do because of a health problem?"

So you can see there are some linguistic differences and there is a grammatical difference in tenses. It could have influence on defining and understanding the period observed. Therefore theoretically Slovenian translation could cause bias in the direction of underestimating the problem because the time period in Slovenian translation could be understood as shorter than in the original concept with definition. But we believe that in practice the influence of this difference on understanding the question was not important.

In the instructions for SILC interviewers the formulation of the third MEHM SILC question is more appropriate. It means: "For the past six months or more time ...". So we believe our SILC data correspond to the underlying concept.

SPAIN

Juan Luis Gutiérrez Fisac

2004-2007

- Have you been limited in daily activities during the last 6 months (or do you think you will be for at last 6 months) because of a health problem. The possible answers are: Yes, intensely; Yes, to some extent; No

2008-2009

- For at least the last 6 months, to what extent have you been limited because a health problem in activities people usually do? Would you say that you have been... (read the options) Strongly limited; limited but not strongly; not limited.

Assessment by Juan Luis Gutiérrez Fisac: It seems that the 2008 question demands for a minimum length of the disease or health problem (6 months), similarly to the standard question, and the other seems to ask for any health problem during the last 6 months. I think that the current questions used in SILC (years 2008 and 2009) are very similar to the European English reference standard (such as the Minimum European Health Module used in EHIS).

SWEDEN

Marten Lagergren

2004-2006

- Do you have any chronic or long-standing illnesses or troubles (inconveniences, bothers, pains)?
Yes / No
If yes: Does the illness(es) you have cause your capacity to work to being reduced?
(For old-age pensioners: Does the illness(es) you have prevent you from doing any activities?)

2007

- Has in any way your health caused you to be limited in your daily activities during the last six months. If so, to some degree or to a high degree?

Assessment by Marten Lagergren: the GALI was changed substantially in 2007 – I guess in order to make it conform better with the SILC-question. The wordings, however, are still somewhat different as you can see. It is difficult to judge whether this has any importance.

2008

The English translation of the Swedish 2007 SILC-question seems to be all-right. However, as you can see, there is some difference in the wording compared to the European English reference. In the Swedish version limitations are referring to "your daily activities", whereas in the European English reference it is phrased "in activities people usually do". It is difficult to say whether this has any importance. If you are a mountain-climber and climbing is your daily activity of course it makes a difference, but this example is rather extreme (to say the least). My guess is that it does not matter. In the 2008 Swedish ULF/SILC this is changed to be more in accordance with the European English reference using the phrase "...activities people usually do".

Assessment by Chris White (ONS): There are substantial differences between the SILC and UK questions designed to capture the prevalence and strength of activity limitation. Firstly, the words 'Suffer' and 'Chronic' do not appear in the UK question, secondly, in the UK, questions regarding the extent of limitation are asked only of those who respond 'yes' to the illness question and these take the form of two questions asking if activities are limited and then probing the extent of that limitation. Finally, these filtered limitation questions do not refer to a specific time period as does the SILC question.

Preliminary analyses looking at the difference in responses to the UK and SILC limiting illness questions suggested that the SILC questions would record a higher prevalence and degree of activity limitation in the UK population.

The UK limiting illness question has not changed over the period 2005-2007. A question suite designed to capture the prevalence and extent of limiting illness and that meets UK legislative requirements is in the final stage of testing. In short these questions will change in the near future and we will be able to comment further on the differences between UK and SILC limiting illness questions at that time.



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