



Democratic Attitudes and Voting Behaviour

A Representative Analysis of Attitudes and Voting Behaviour of Germans with and without a Migrant Background¹ and Foreigners Resident in Germany

Viola Neu

- › Foreigners are the most satisfied with the democracy in Germany.
- › There are hardly any differences in the rating of the importance of fundamental democratic rights and values between Germans, Germans with a migrant background and foreigners resident in Germany. It is apparent, however, that among foreigners and Muslims, the positive attitude to freedom of expression and of religion reaches its limit in the protection of one's own faith against insults. This appears to result in a conflict between the understanding of general freedom of expression and the interpretation of freedom of expression specifically in relation to perceived insults to a person's own faith.
- › The voting behaviour of people with a migrant background followed a fixed pattern for a very long time. An above-average number of resettlers voted for the CDU/CSU and an above-average number of people of Turkish descent voted for the Social Democrats. Our survey shows that these groups have acquired a high degree of party-political mobility in the meantime. In terms of who they intend to vote for, the CDU/CSU has considerably increased its share among eligible voters of Turkish descent from 2015 to 2019.

Table of Contents

Satisfaction with Democracy	2
Importance of Democratic Principles	4
Voting Behaviour	13
Appendix: Parties in Germany	19
Imprint	20

Satisfaction with Democracy

The Corona pandemic has led to Germans having a high level of trust in political institutions:² in part, even higher than before the crisis. Since the data presented here was gathered last year, individual changes in fundamental attitudes toward democracy cannot be ruled out, but they are regarded as unlikely.

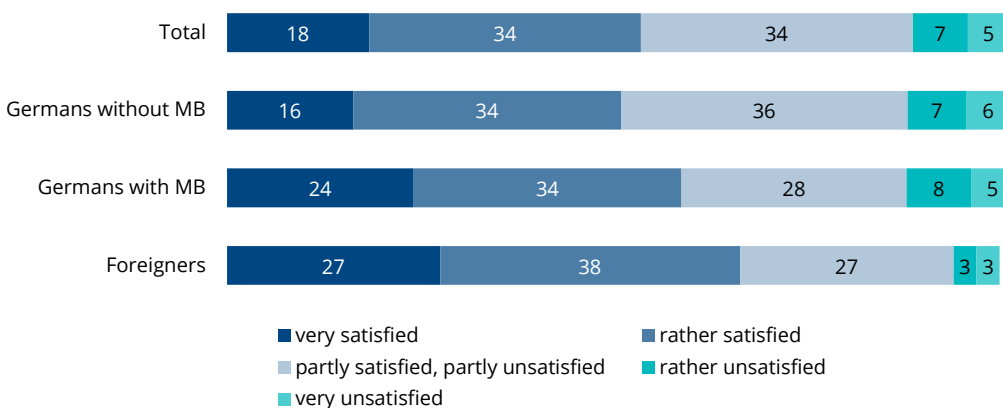
The vast majority³ of people resident in Germany are satisfied with the democracy.⁴ It is striking here that the highest level of satisfaction with the democracy is shown by foreigners, followed by Germans with a migrant background. Germans without a migrant background are somewhat more sceptical. A negative attitude towards the democracy can hardly be detected. If we add the responses of those who are partly satisfied and partly dissatisfied, only a very small minority remains in all three groups that are somewhat or very dissatisfied with the democracy. Just 5 percent of all respondents are very dissatisfied with the democracy.

Satisfaction with
democracy high
before Corona
pandemic

Figure 1:*

How Satisfied or Unsatisfied Are You – All in All – With Democracy as it Exists in Germany?

Presentation without “no response” and “do not know”



In percent, basis: all respondents (Gw/oMB n=1,001; GMB n=1,001; foreigners n=1,001)

Source: Survey 2019-00 Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

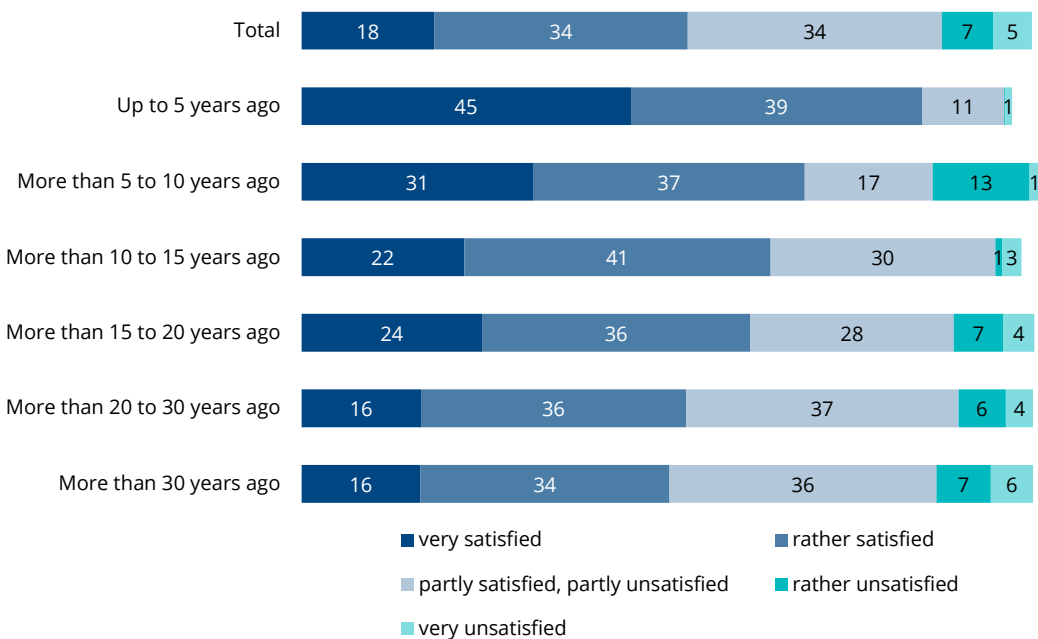
* Due to rounding, the figures in the graphs sometimes add up to more or less than 100 percent.

This applies to all the graphs in this publication.

The shorter their time of residency in Germany, the greater the migrants' satisfaction with the democracy. Thus, 45 percent of those who moved to Germany in the last five years are very satisfied with the democracy. Among those who came to Germany over 30 years ago, the figure comes to 16 percent. This may be due to habituation effects. However, what is decisive is that there is no significant increase in dissatisfaction, rather an increase in the partly/partly ratings.

Figure 2:
How Satisfied or Unsatisfied Are You – All in All – With Democracy as it Exists in Germany?

Presentation without "no response" and "do not know"



In percent, basis: all respondents

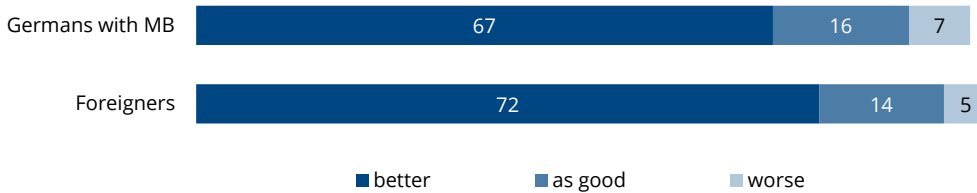
Source: Survey 2019-00 Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Germany also scores well in comparison to respondents' country of origin or that of their father or mother. Among the Germans with a migrant background, 67 percent rate the political system in Germany higher than that in their country of origin; 72 percent of foreigners say the same.

Figure 3:

Is the Political System in Germany Better, as Good as or Worse Than the System in Your Country of Origin/in the Country of Origin of Your Mother/in the Country of Origin of Your Father?

Presentation without "no response" and "do not know"



In percent, basis: all respondents with migrant background or with migrant experience (GMB n=1,001; foreigners n=1,001)

Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

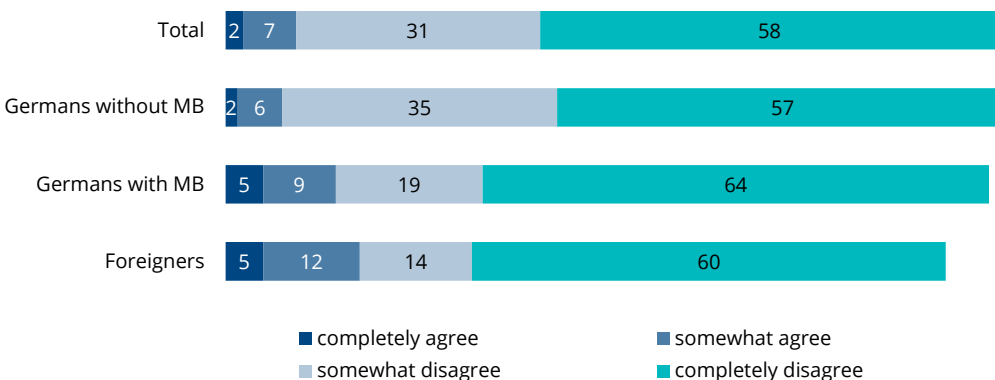
Importance of Democratic Principles

We also asked whether the democratic principle of fundamentally non-violent conflict resolution is accepted. In this respect, the opinion (completely agree, somewhat agree) that conflicts have to be settled by force in a democratic society is only held by a small minority of 9 percent. Only small differences are apparent compared to the survey in the same target groups carried out in 2015.⁵ In that year, the proportion that agreed with the use of force was 6 percent. Within the various groups as well, hardly anything has changed. Agreement is highest among foreigners of Russian descent, 21 percent of whom are of the opinion that conflicts can also be settled by violence.

Figure 4:

Please Tell me How Strongly You Personally Agree With Each of These Statements. In Every Democratic Society, There Are Conflicts That Have to be Settled by Force.

Presentation without "no response" and "do not know"



In percent, basis: all respondents (Gw/oMB n=1,001; GMB n=1,001; foreigners n=1,001)

Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

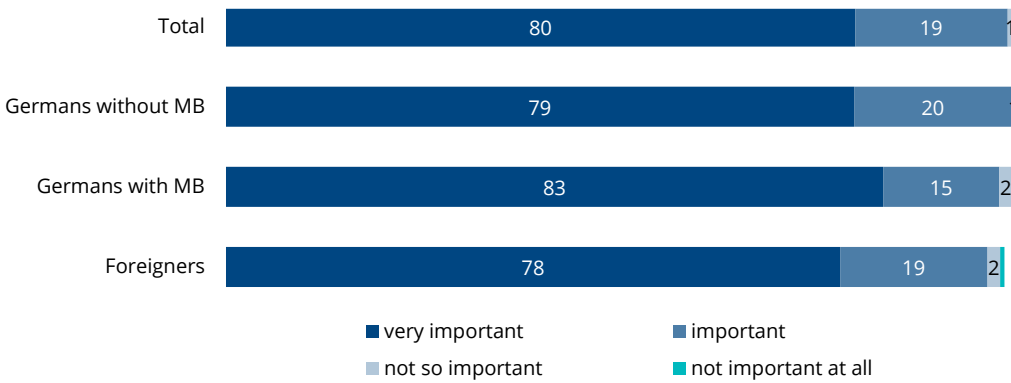
In the surveyed groups, there is significant consensus on some of the constituent rules of democracy, but there are certainly differences in emphasis also. There is very significant agreement with the fundamental democratic values. Therefore, only the “very important” figures are described here, since there are slight differences between them.

There is significant consensus on fundamental democratic values.

There is a consensus on the guarantee of equal rights for women and men. A good three-quarters of the respondents say that this basic right is very important. There are only minor differences between the groups. On the question as to whether men and women have equal rights in Germany, the majority of respondents agree. Here too, the level of agreement is a good three-quarters, which also roughly corresponds to the figure in the various groups.

Figure 5:
How Important Is it to You That Men and Women Have Equal Rights?

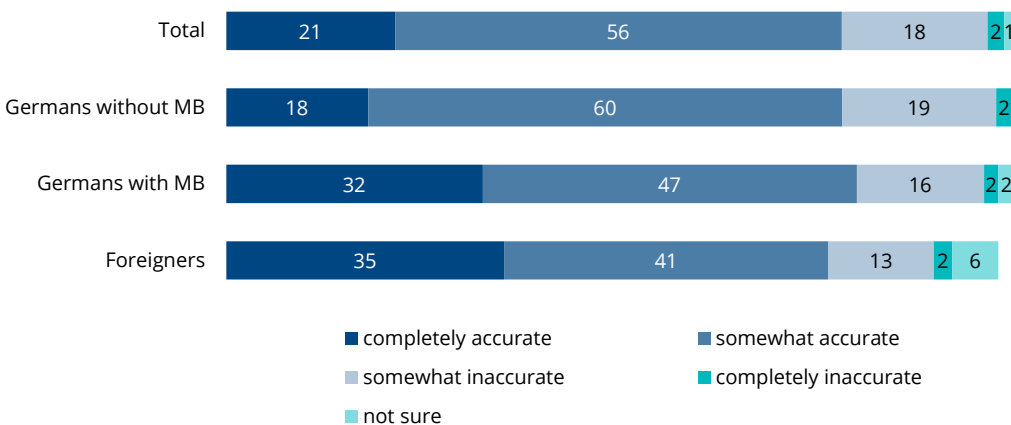
Presentation without “no response” and “do not know”



In percent, basis: all respondents (Gw/oMB n=1,001; GMB n=1,001; foreigners n=1,001)
Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Figure 6:
Please Tell me Now How Accurate, in Your Opinion, the Following Statements Are For Germany. Men and Women Have Equal Rights.

Presentation without “no response” and “do not know”

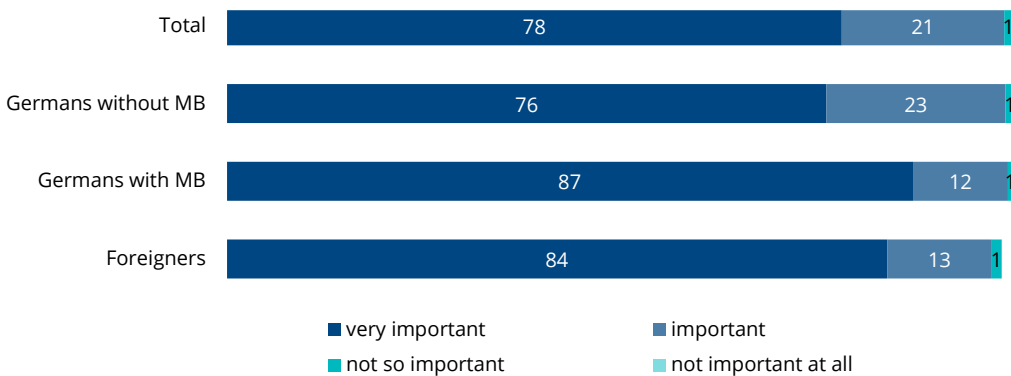


In percent, basis: all respondents (Gw/oMB n=1,001; GMB n=1,001; foreigners n=1,001)
Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Although equality of educational opportunity is very important to Germans without a migrant background (76 percent), equality of opportunity is especially important for Germans with a migrant background (87 percent) and for foreigners (84 percent) in particular. On the question of equality of educational opportunity, a vast majority (84 percent) of the respondents select the response that the statement is “accurate” (completely accurate, somewhat accurate). Here too, only small minorities express doubt about whether equality of opportunity has been achieved in Germany.

Figure 7:
How Important Is it to You That All People Have Equal Educational Opportunities?

Presentation without “no response” and “do not know”

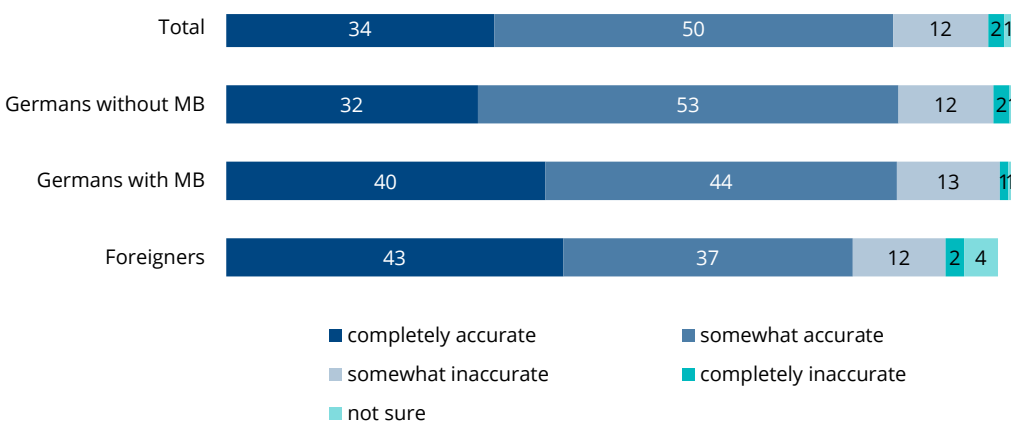


In percent, basis: all respondents (Gw/oMB n=1,001; GMB n=1,001; foreigners n=1,001)

Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Figure 8:
Please Tell me Now How Accurate, in Your Opinion, the Following Statements Are For Germany. All People Have Equal Educational Opportunities.

Presentation without “no response” and “do not know”



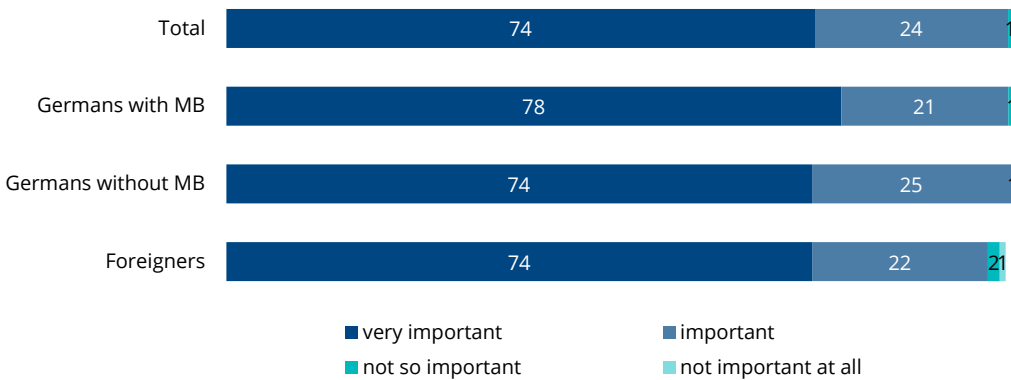
In percent, basis: all respondents (Gw/oMB n=1,001; GMB n=1,001; foreigners n=1,001)

Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Freedom of expression is also considered highly significant. Approximately three-quarters of the respondents in each group are of the opinion that it is very important to them. Another 24 percent rate freedom of expression as important. However, there are sometimes substantial differences in the various subgroups.⁶ For 90 percent of the respondents of Turkish descent, it is very important; only 58 percent of the respondents of Russian descent describe it in these terms. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of respondents are of the view that everyone can freely express their opinion. Around three-quarters of all those residents in Germany share this view.

Figure 9:
How Important Is it to You That Everyone Can Freely Express Their Opinion?

Presentation without "no response" and "do not know"

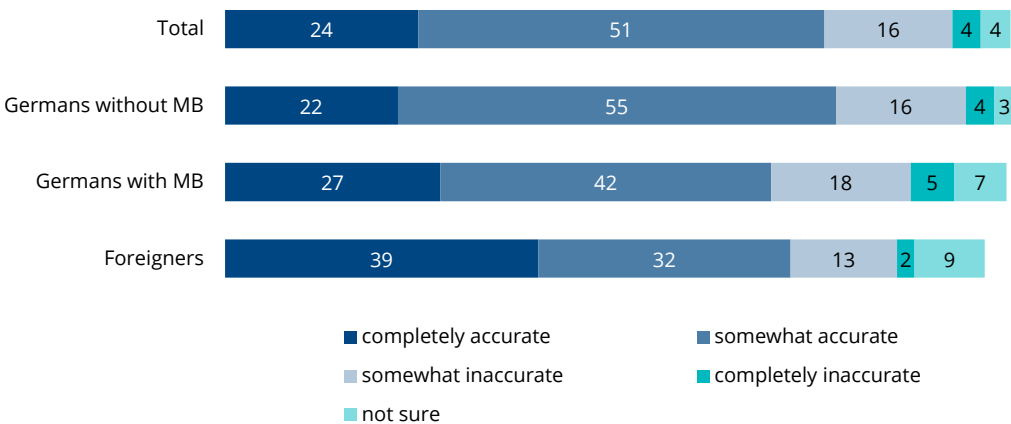


In percent, basis: all respondents (Gw/oMB n=1,001; GMB n=1,001; foreigners n=1,001)

Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Figure 10:
Please Tell Me Now How Accurate, in Your Opinion, the Following Statements Are For Germany. Everyone Can Freely Express Their Opinion.

Presentation without "no response" and "do not know"



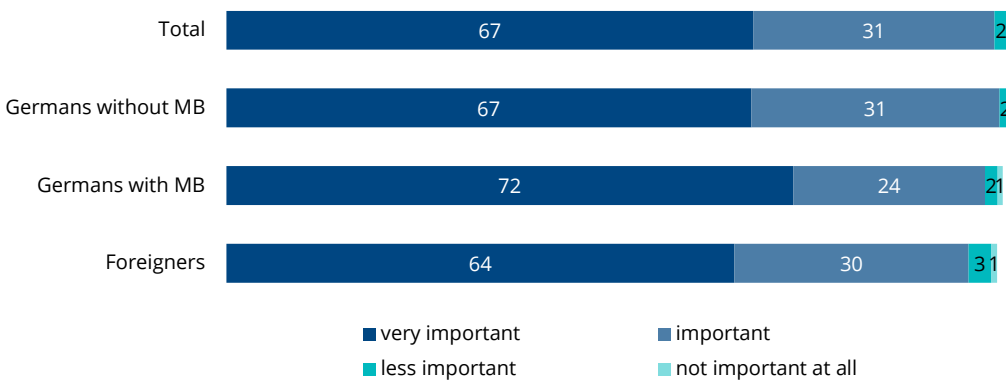
In percent, basis: all respondents (Gw/oMB n=1,001; GMB n=1,001; foreigners n=1,001)

Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Between approximately two-thirds and nearly three-quarters of the respondents value freedom of religion highly. In this category also, more similarities than differences occur in the various groups. Similar to their responses to other questions, people of Russian descent are somewhat more reluctant to agree here. Among this cohort, 53 percent say that it is very important to them that everyone can believe in whatever they want.

Figure 11:
How Important Is it to You That Everyone Can Believe in Whatever They Want?

Presentation without "no response" and "do not know"



In percent, basis: all respondents (Gw/oMB n=1,001; GMB n=1,001; foreigners n=1,001)
Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

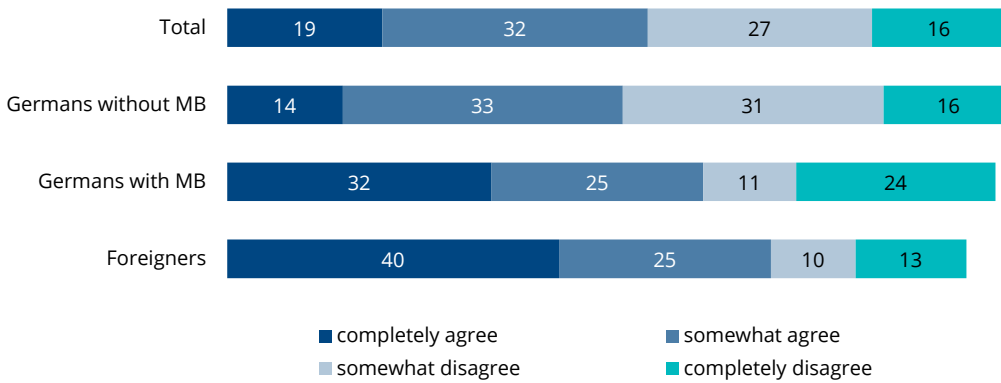
It is apparent, however, that among foreigners and Muslims, the positive attitude to freedom of expression and of religion reaches its limit in the protection of their own faith against insults. Whereas 19 percent of all respondents believe the state should better protect their own faith against insults, the figure is 40 percent among foreigners and 60 percent among respondents of Muslim faith. This appears to result in a conflict between the understanding of general freedom of expression and the interpretation of freedom of expression specifically in relation to perceived insults to a person's own faith.

Especially among respondents of Muslim faith, there is a limit in the protection of their own faith against insults.

Figure 12:

**Please Tell me How Strongly You Personally Agree With Each of These Statements.
The State Should Protect my Faith Better Against Insults.**

Presentation without "no response" and "do not know"



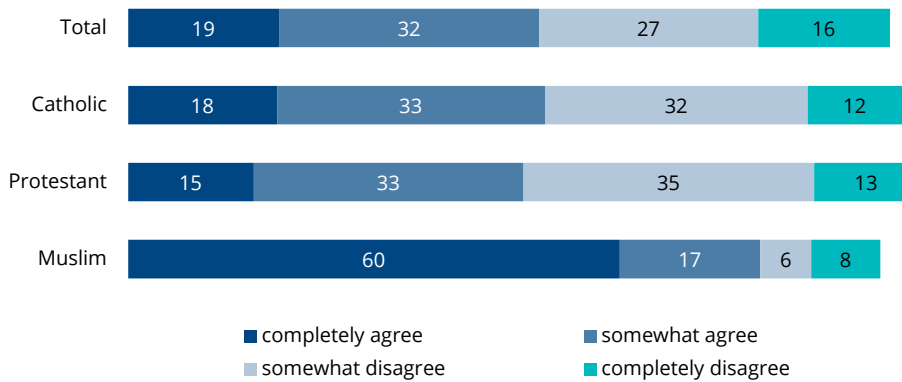
In percent, basis: all respondents, (Gw/oMB n=1,001; GMB n=1,001; foreigners n=1,001)

Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Figure 13:

**Please Tell me How Strongly You Personally Agree With Each of These Statements.
The State Should Protect my Faith Better Against Insults.**

Presentation without "no response" and "do not know"



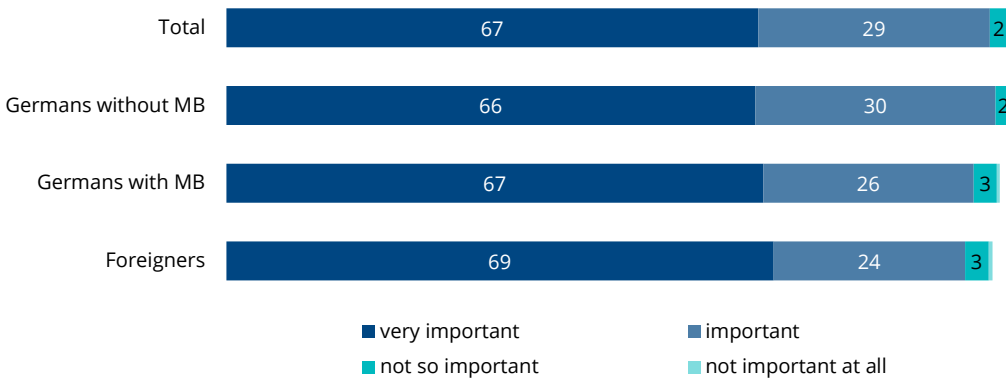
In percent, basis: all respondents, (Catholic n=708; Protestant n=579; Muslim n=495)

Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Likewise, virtually no differences appear in the agreement with freedom of the press and of research. Approximately two-thirds are of the opinion that this is very important to them. People of Polish descent as well as those of Russian descent rate this basic democratic right as less important. A good half say that freedom of the press and of research are very important to them.

Figure 14:
How Important Is it to You That There Is a Free Press and Freedom of Research?

Presentation without "no response" and "do not know"

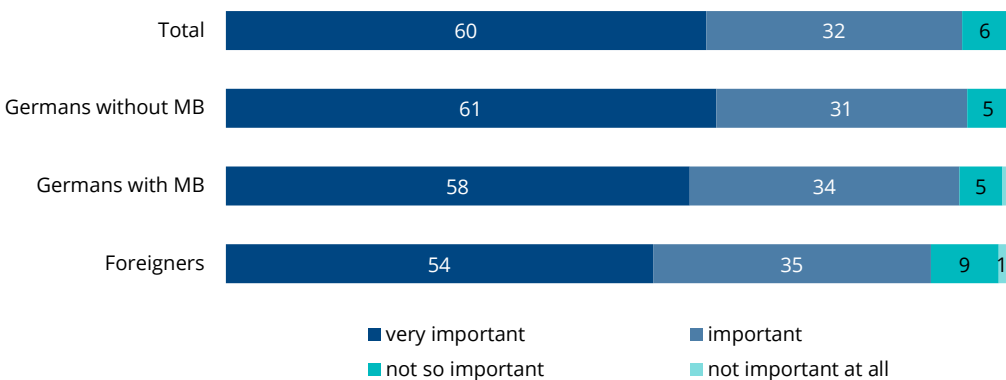


In percent, basis: all respondents (Gw/oMB n=1,001; GMB n=1,001; foreigners n=1,001)
Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

The right to demonstrate is likewise regarded as very important in all surveyed groups. Differences are minimal. Once again, people of Russian descent are somewhat more reserved in how they evaluate the significance of a basic democratic right. A 38 percent share of people of Russian descent say that it is very important to them to have the right to demonstrate to express one's opinion.

Figure 15:
How Important Is it to You to Have the Right to Demonstrate to Express One's Opinion?

Presentation without "no response" and "do not know"



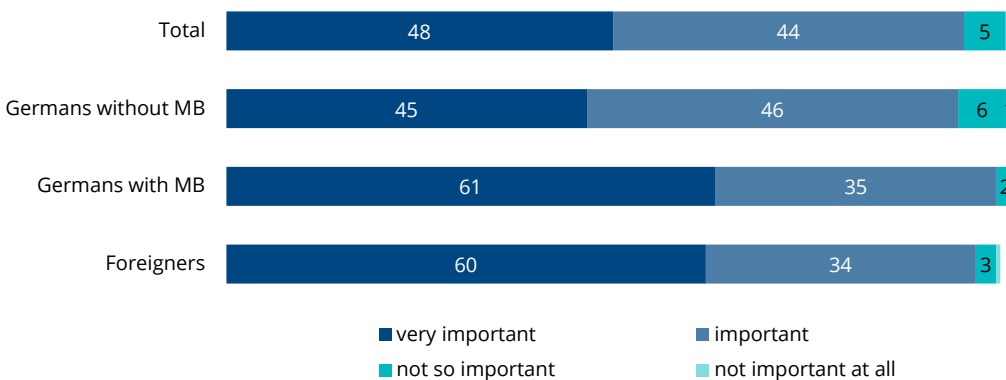
In percent, basis: all respondents (Gw/oMB n=1,001; GMB n=1,001; foreigners n=1,001)
Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Major differences are apparent on only one issue: social security. Germans without a migrant background (45 percent) consider it important that the state provides social security that is as comprehensive as possible. Social security is of far greater importance among Germans with a migrant background (61 percent) and foreigners (60 percent), although it is below the level of the other rights relating to freedom and equal opportunity. At 75 percent, social security is of above-average importance especially to people of Turkish descent.

Social security is of above-average importance to Germans with a migrant background and foreigners resident in Germany.

Figure 16:
How Important Is it to You That the State Provides Social Security That Is as Comprehensive as Possible?

Presentation without "no response" and "do not know"



In percent, basis: all respondents (Gw/oMB n=1,001; GMB n=1,001; foreigners n=1,001)

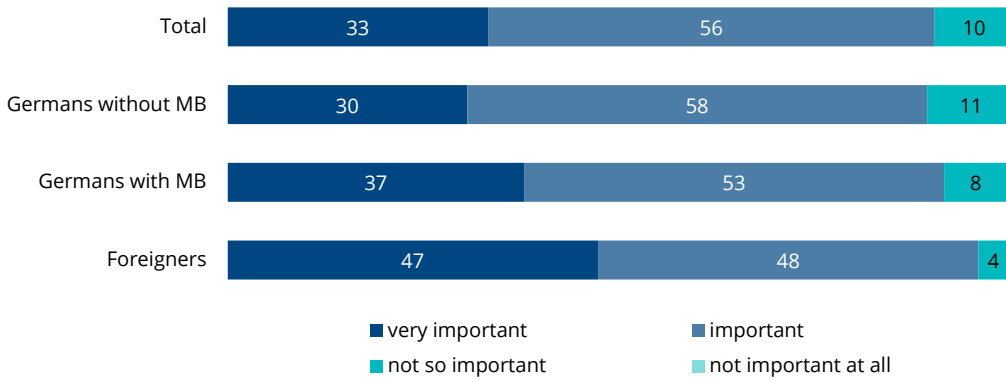
Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Equality before the law is especially important to foreigners. The proportion of foreigners who agree that this is "very important" is 47 percent; among Germans without a migrant background, the figure is 30 percent. We also asked whether the statement that all people are treated equally before the law is accurate. Around one-third of all respondents were sceptical in their responses. Foreigners showed the least scepticism.

Figure 17:

How Important Is it to You That All People Are Equal Before the Law?

Presentation without "no response" and "do not know"

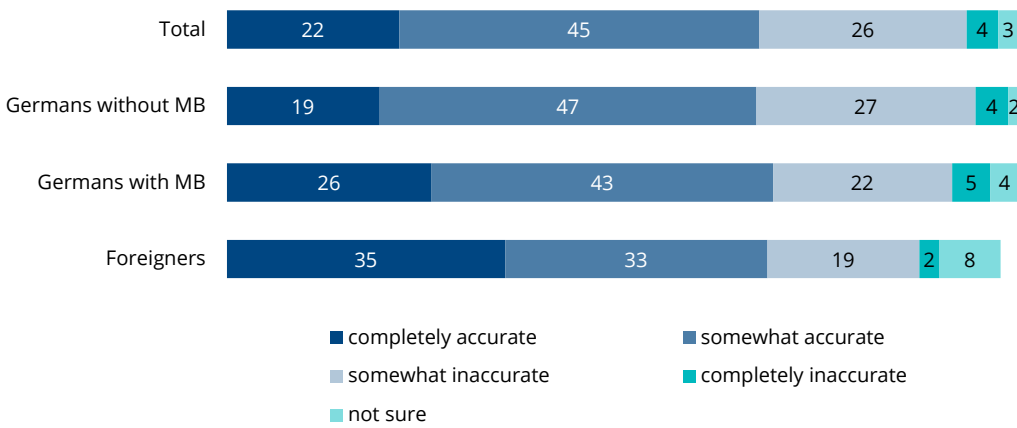


In percent, basis: all respondents (Gw/oMB n=1,001; GMB n=1,001; foreigners n=1,001)
Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Figure 18:

Please Tell me Now How Accurate, in Your Opinion, the Following Statements Are For Germany. All People Are Treated Equally Before the Law.

Presentation without "no response" and "do not know"



In percent, basis: all respondents (Gw/oMB n=1,001; GMB n=1,001; foreigners n=1,001)
Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Voting Behaviour

The voting behaviour⁷ of people with a migrant background followed a fixed pattern for a very long time. An above-average number of resettlers voted for the CDU/CSU and an above-average number of people of Turkish descent voted for the Social Democrats. In recent years, there are increasing indications⁸ that this stable attachment has become fragile. Our survey shows that these groups have meanwhile acquired a high degree of party-political mobility, just like eligible voters without a migrant background. Moreover, not only do people of Turkish descent change parties within the left, they also cross the boundary between the left and the right. This could be interpreted as a process of normalisation. It is clear that the findings presented here only describe this mobility, not a static condition.

The voting behaviour of people with a migrant background is becoming more volatile.

We asked the same target groups about their voting behaviour or, in the case of foreigners, about their potential voting behaviour, back in early 2015. Substantial shifts can be seen in party support between 2015 and 2018/2019. It is difficult to judge whether this would still be the case today, since the political mood has changed significantly during the Corona pandemic. The CDU/CSU has benefitted – visibly from April 2020 onwards – in terms of the political mood and attains figures of around 40 percent. The FDP and AfD have suffered losses, the Greens are experiencing significant levels of loss in support, and for the SPD and the Left-wing party, there is no discernible trend.

If we compare the polling data from 2015 and 2019, the SPD loses ground in almost all surveyed groups. The decline is moderate among Germans⁹ without a migrant background. Support falls from 25 to 18 percent. Among Germans with a migrant background, the SPD receives 15 percent support in 2019 (2015: 32 percent). Among foreigners as well, the potential vote of the SPD decreases from 41 to 26 percent. If we examine the largest groups of voters with a migrant background, the pattern remains the same. Among eligible voters of Turkish descent, support falls from 50 percent in 2015 to 13 percent in 2019. Among eligible voters originally from Poland, the SPD share declines from 28 to 9 percent. However, the SPD remains stable among resettlers. Of this cohort, 21 percent vote for the SPD in 2019 and the proportion was 20 percent in 2015. The SPD manages to achieve an increase among eligible voters of Russian descent: the party's share increases from 20 to 29 percent in this group.

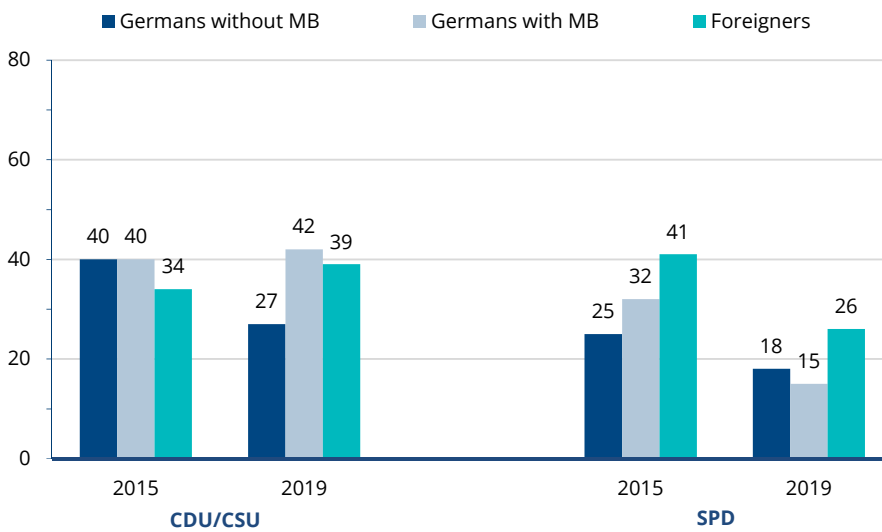
Varying tendencies appear for the CDU/CSU. Among Germans without a migrant background, 2019 sees a decline in support compared to 2015. The CDU/CSU is at 27 percent in 2019; in 2015, the share was 40 percent. However, among Germans with a migrant background, the CDU/CSU remains largely stable (2019: 42 percent; 2015: 40 percent). The CDU/CSU manages to improve its (potential) share of support among foreigners somewhat. In 2019, 39 percent of foreigners would have voted for the CDU/CSU as compared to 34 percent in 2015.

However, there are considerable shifts within the group of Germans with a migrant background. It was almost a tradition that the CDU/CSU had little support among eligible voters with a Turkish migrant background. In 2015, 17 percent of them would have supported the CDU/CSU. This changed dramatically in 2019. Of this group, 53 percent would have voted for the CDU/CSU in 2019. The CDU/CSU proportion among eligible voters of Polish descent rose slightly (from 51 to 57 percent). However, support for the CDU/CSU declined considerably among resettlers and eligible voters of Russian descent. Among eligible voters of Russian descent, the CDU/CSU proportion fell from 56 percent in 2015 to 29 percent in 2019; among resettlers, from 55 percent to 47 percent.

While the CDU is making significant strides among voters of Turkish descent, the SPD is losing ground among this group.

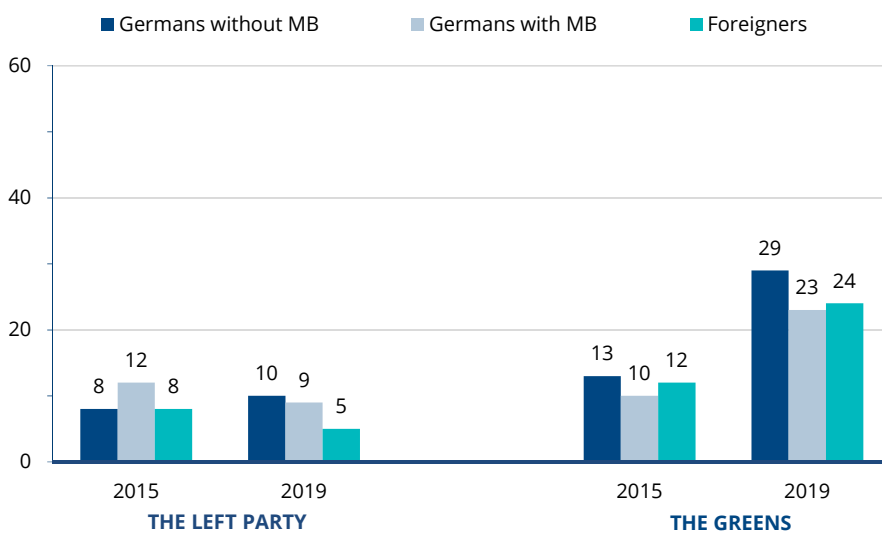
There are also some clear shifts in support for the other parties. The Left-wing party is losing ground among the resettlers group; the Greens are gaining support among Germans of Polish descent. The changes are especially pronounced in the AfD, which has managed to increase its share in the resettlers group from 3 to 16 percent. Its share has grown from 2 to 29 percent among eligible voters of Russian descent.

Figure 19:
If Elections for the Bundestag Were Taking Place Next Sunday and You Were Eligible to Vote, Which Party Would You Vote for? (Second Vote)



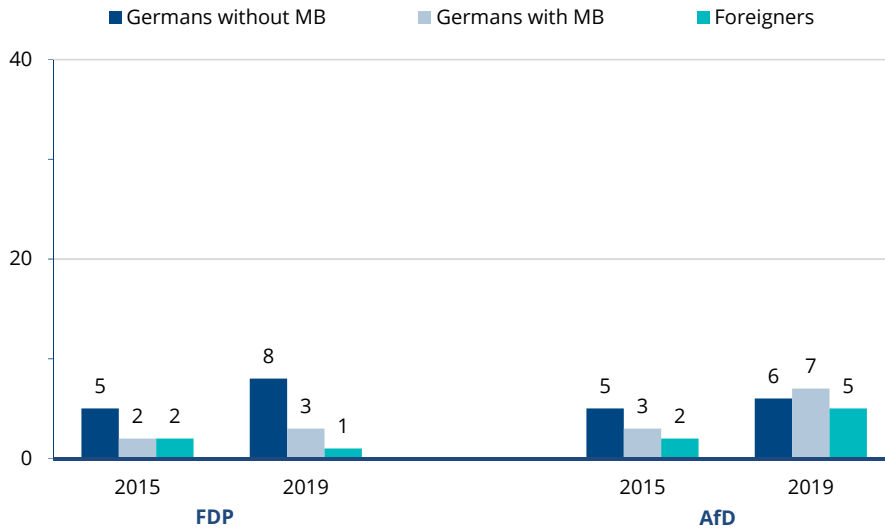
Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., in percent.

Figure 20:
If Elections for the Bundestag Were Taking Place Next Sunday and You Were Eligible to Vote, Which Party Would You Vote for? (Second Vote)



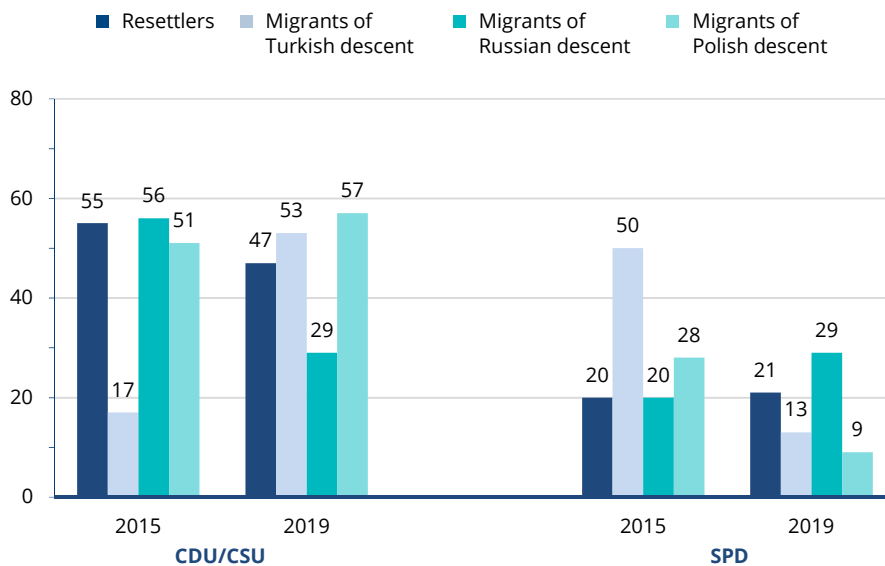
Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., in percent.

Figure 21:
If Elections for the Bundestag Were Taking Place Next Sunday and You Were Eligible to Vote, Which Party Would You Vote for? (Second Vote)



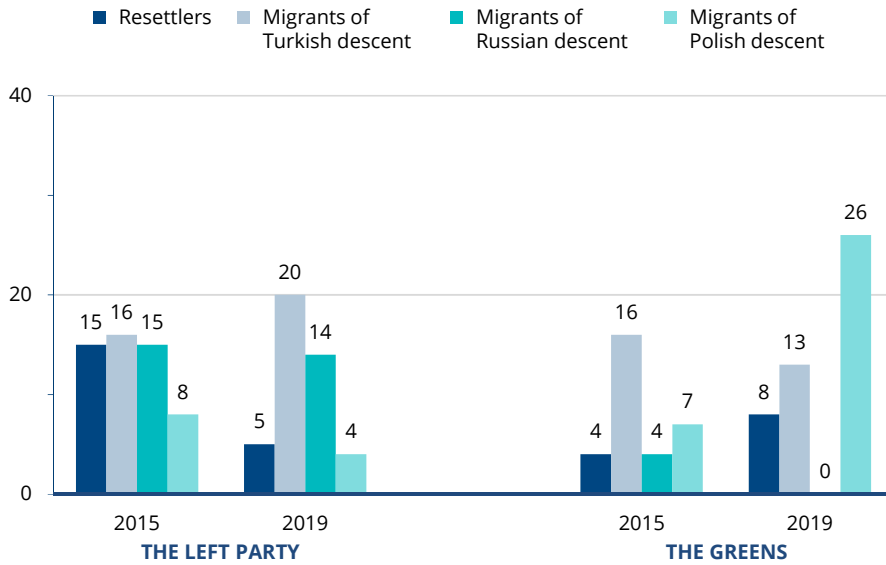
Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., in percent.

Figure 22:
If Elections for the Bundestag Were Taking Place Next Sunday and You Were Eligible to Vote, Which Party Would You Vote for? (Second Vote)



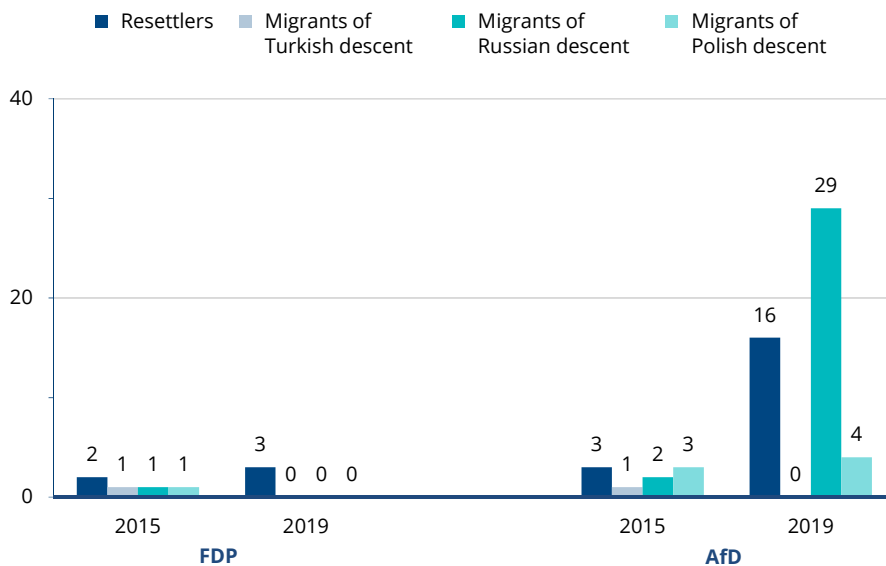
Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., in percent.

Figure 23:
If Elections for the Bundestag Were Taking Place Next Sunday and You Were Eligible to Vote, Which Party Would You Vote for? (Second Vote)



Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., in percent.

Figure 24:
If Elections for the Bundestag Were Taking Place Next Sunday and You Were Eligible to Vote, Which Party Would You Vote for? (Second Vote)



Source: Survey 2019-00 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., in percent.

Coming back to all respondents who are eligible to vote, the question of potential participation in an election arises. The intention to vote of the surveyed groups here varied only slightly in 2019. A total of 7 percent of all respondents said that they would not go to vote.¹⁰ Differences between Germans with and without a migrant background are minimal. The figure is 5 percent among eligible voters of Turkish descent, 6 percent among those of Russian descent, and 10 percent among those of Polish descent. However, those of Russian descent differ considerably in one figure. The proportion of respondents who say they do not know whom they would vote for is 36 percent. Overall, 21 percent of respondents evade the question using this response. The number is 23 percent among eligible voters of Turkish descent and 13 percent among those of Polish descent.

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- 1 "A person has a migrant background if he or she or at least one of his or her parents was not born with German citizenship."
The definition comprises the following individuals:
 1. foreigners who immigrated and those who did not;
 2. naturalised citizens who immigrated and those who did not;
 3. resettlers;
 4. progeny of the three aforementioned groups who were born with German citizenship.In terms of residency status, the definition comprises various groups. The present study is not based on the migrant background alone. The question of whether a respondent is eligible to vote or not is crucial. Cf. https://www.bamf.de/DE/Service/ServiceCenter/Glossar/_functions/glossar.html?nn=282918&cms_lv3=294952&cms_lv2=282966 [accessed on 20 October 2020].
 - 2 A total of 4,228 interviews were carried out from 30 March to 4 July 2020 as part of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's *Crisis Barometer*. Approximately 300 eligible voters were surveyed each week by telephone. A new sample was drawn each week to ensure that the same target individuals were not surveyed again (there was no panel). The interviews did not take place on a single day, however. Approximately 50 interviews were conducted every day (apart from Sundays and holidays). Thus, the crisis was observed in "real time". Cf. <https://www.kas.de/de/einzelartikel/-/content/krisenbarometer-der-konrad-adenauer-stiftung> [accessed on 20 October 2020].
 - 3 A total of 3,003 interviews were conducted by USUMA from 15 October 2018 to 28 February 2019. The survey is representative for Germany and the subgroups: interviews were held with 1,001 Germans without a migrant background, 1,001 Germans with a migrant background and 1,001 foreigners resident in Germany. Of the interviews conducted, 56 percent took place on a landline and 44 percent on a mobile phone (dual frame). Foreigners are significantly easier to contact via mobile phone. In this cohort, 55 percent of the interviews were conducted via mobile phone. The sample is a random sample and representative of the population resident in Germany aged 18 and over.
A survey using the same sample design was already carried out in 2015. Further information on the methodological procedure is documented there. Cf. Sabine Pokorny, 2016: *Was uns prägt. Was uns eint. Integration und Wahlverhalten von Deutschen mit und ohne Migrationshintergrund und in Deutschland lebenden Ausländern*, Forum Empirische Sozialforschung, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Sankt Augustin/Berlin, p. 93 ff.
 - 4 Cf. Viola Neu, 2019: *Niemand möchte die Demokratie abschaffen*, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Analysen und Argumente 351/June 2019, Berlin, <https://www.kas.de/de/analysen-und-argumente/detail/-/content/niemand-moechte-die-demokratie-abschaffen-einstellungen-zu-demokratie-sozialstaat-und-institutionen> [accessed 20 October 2020].
 - 5 USUMA GmbH conducted 3,034 interviews on behalf of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung from 8 January to 18 April 2015. Of these, 1,021 were conducted with Germans without a migrant background, 1,004 with migrants and 1,009 with foreigners living in Germany. In keeping with the dual frame approach, 60 percent of the gross sample was selected via landline and the remaining 40 percent via mobile phone. The data is representative for the population resident in Germany aged 18 and over.
 - 6 Resettlers are not considered separately in this analysis. Therefore, resettlers are included in the group of respondents of Russian or Polish descent (and a few cases are also in the group of respondents of Turkish descent). This results in some slight differences from other analyses. Cf. Sabine Pokorny/Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, 2021: *Was eint die Einwanderungsgesellschaft? Einstellungen, Glaube und Wertorientierungen von Bürgerinnen und Bürgern mit und ohne Migrationshintergrund*. Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Berlin.
 - 7 Andreas M. Wüst, 2002: *Wie wählen Neubürger? Politische Einstellungen und Wahlverhalten eingebürgerter Personen in Deutschland*, Opladen.
 - 8 Cf. Andreas M. Wüst, Thorsten Faas, 2018: *Politische Einstellungen von Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (ed.), <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/dialog/14347.pdf>, p. 18 [accessed on 24 November 2020].
 - 9 Only respondents who have expressed the intention to vote and who are eligible to vote are included.
 - 10 In surveys, the proportion of respondents who state that they will not vote is always far less than the actual proportion of non-voters in elections.

Appendix: Parties in Germany

CDU/CSU	Christian Democratic Union/ Christian Social Union	center-right
SPD	Social Democratic Party Germany	center-left
Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen (Grüne)	Federation 90/The Greens	center-left
FDP	Liberal Democratic Party	center-right
Die Linke	The Left	far-left
AfD	Alternative for Germany	far-right

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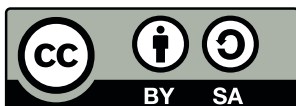
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