

Pressemitteilung

Hertie School

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20.07.2023

<http://idw-online.de/de/news818121>

Forschungs- / Wissenstransfer, Forschungsergebnisse
Gesellschaft, Politik, Umwelt / Ökologie, Verkehr / Transport, Wirtschaft
überregional



Survey: Majority of Berliners in favour of expanding bike paths and low-traffic neighbourhoods

Researchers at the Hertie School asked Berliners about urban mobility policies. Alongside consensus, economist Prof. Dr. Christian Traxler and public policy scholar Prof. Dr. Kai Wegrich also found strong polarisation.

Berlin, 20 July 2023. What do Berliners think about possible changes in mobility policy, city tolls and parking fees? According to researchers at the Hertie School, 56% of Berliners are in favour of expanding the network of bike paths – contrary to current decisions taken by the Senate. The respondents also want more Kiezblocks, or low-traffic neighbourhoods in residential areas. On the other hand, Berliners are critical of pricing policy measures. Only about a third of the respondents advocate an increase in parking fees or the introduction of a congestion charge. Overall, authors Christian Traxler, Professor of Economics, and Kai Wegrich, Professor of Public Administration and Public Policy, see strong polarisation among the population. The researchers therefore call for better communication by policymakers so that the purpose and benefits of transport policy measures are understood by the city's residents. The most important findings can be found in the policy brief "Attitudes on Urban Mobility Policies".

Results at a glance

*** Protected bike paths: 56% of Berliners are in favour of extension; 29% are opposed.

Kiezblocks: 51% of respondents would like to see more low-traffic neighbourhoods; 31% oppose them.

*** Speed limit 30 km/h: 43% support an extension to main roads; 42% oppose the limit. The approval rate is 56% among people who do not own a car and 36% among those who do.

*** Parking fees: About 33% approve of an increase in fees for short-term parking and residents' parking permits; 46% disapprove.

*** Congestion charge within the inner city: 36% approve, 48% disapprove.

Christian Traxler, Professor of Economics at the Hertie School, says:

"Our survey shows that a majority of Berlin's population is in favour of more protected bike lanes and Kiezblocks. At the same time, we see strong polarisation, especially when it comes to the pricing of parking space and a congestion charge. To reduce polarisation, politicians should better explain the goals and positive effects of transport policy measures."

Kai Wegrich, Professor of Public Administration and Public Policy at the Hertie School, adds:

"One issue that makes the polarisation tangible is a potential congestion charge within the inner city: only one third of the respondents find this measure sensible. If politicians communicated that such a toll would not only lead to fewer emissions, but also to less congestion and better traffic flow, the toll would probably find more approval."

Polarisation along educational level, car ownership, residence and party preference

Overall Traxler and Wegrich find high polarisation regarding the policy measures surveyed. The most important dimensions of division are educational level, car ownership and political orientation. A lower level of education and/or the ownership of a car is associated with a tendency to reject the policy measures, a higher level of education and/or the lack of a car with more openness to the measures. Green, SPD and Left voters have a more accepting attitude, while FDP, CDU and AfD voters are less accepting towards the measures. The survey also shows that a person's district of residence does not shape his or her attitude per se: more versus less accepting attitudes are recognisable both within and outside the inner city.

Methodology

For the survey, the researchers interviewed 1,500 Berliners aged 16 and older from all districts. The questions covered five areas: 1) protected bike paths; 2) the expansion of Kiezblocks; 3) the extension of the 30 km/h speed limit to main roads; 4) a congestion charge; and 5) higher parking fees. The survey was conducted online in June 2022 in cooperation with the opinion research institute Bilendi.

About the Hertie School

The Hertie School in Berlin prepares exceptional students for leadership positions in government, business and civil society. The school offers master's programmes, executive education and doctoral programmes, distinguished by interdisciplinary and practice-oriented teaching, as well as outstanding research. Its extensive international network positions it as an ambassador of good governance, characterised by public debate and engagement. The school was founded in 2004 by the Hertie Foundation, which remains its major funder. The Hertie School is accredited by the state and the German Science Council. www.hertie-school.org

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