

Press release**Technische Universität Dresden****Anne-Stephanie Vetter**

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<http://idw-online.de/en/news833202>Research projects, Research results
Politics, Social studies
transregional, national**75th Anniversary of the Constitution: A MIDEM study examines the attitude of Germans towards their constitution**

High acceptance and willingness to defend the German Constitution A representative study by the Mercator Forum Migration and Democracy (MIDEM) at TU Dresden shows that 75 years after its promulgation, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany remains highly accepted. The willingness of Germans to defend their Constitution is highly pronounced. However, there are socio-demographic and political differences when it comes to acceptance. In addition, the German Constitution is viewed more critically in East Germany and among people with an international background. General trust in the political and social institutions of the constitutional order also varies significantly.

High acceptance of the German Constitution - but supporters of the two parties AfD and BSW [Coalition Sahara Wagenknecht] show strong support for a new constitution

"The results of our study make it clear that the constitution remains a strong pillar of our democracy even after 75 years, despite clear differences of opinion with regard to the fringes of the political spectrum," says Prof. Hans Vorländer, head of the study and MIDEM Director. 81 percent are of the opinion that the constitution has stood the test of time, with only six percent taking the opposite view. However, the positive attitude of Germans towards the constitution is not equally pronounced in all parts of society. Only 15 percent are in favor of a total revision of the constitution. 68 percent reject this. In political terms, the strongest support for a total revision is found among AfD supporters (39%) but also among BSW supporters (31%). People with an international background and East Germans share this view more often than West Germans.

Discrepancy between constitutional norm and reality

Germans attach particular importance to the right to freedom of expression, the inviolability of human dignity, the constitutional objective of protecting the natural inalienability of life, and the freedom of assembly and demonstration. However, they observe a strong discrepancy between constitutional norms and constitutional reality. They consider the "preservation of natural resources", the "opportunities for direct democratic participation" and the "ban on anti-constitutional parties" to be particularly poorly implemented.

Willingness to defend the Constitution lowest among AfD supporters

"The willingness of Germans to stand up for the preservation of their Constitution is high overall: 78 percent declare themselves willing to actively defend the Constitution against anti-constitutional ambitions," says Prof. Dr. Hans Vorländer. These figures show lower values among women, Germans with a migration background and people with a low income. The lowest willingness to defend the Grundgesetz is found among AfD and BSW supporters.

Majority in favor of compulsory social service year / Opinion divided on reintroducing compulsory military service

64% of people surveyed are in favor of introducing a compulsory social service year. Support is particularly high with people in rural areas, people over the age of 55 and West Germans. Supporters can also be found across all parties, especially among sympathizers of the CDU/CSU, SPD, Greens and FDP, while supporters of the AfD and BSW are most strongly opposed to the compulsory social service year.

When it comes to compulsory military service, the opinion is again divided: 45% of people surveyed are in favor of reintroducing it, while 36% are against it. Support is particularly low among younger people, East Germans, and city dwellers. On the other hand, supporters of conservative and right-wing parties such as the CDU/CSU and the AfD are particularly in favor of compulsory military draft, while sympathizers of the Left Party and the BSW strongly oppose it.

Trust in institutions varies significantly in Germany - Germans with an international background and East Germans are particularly skeptical

Trust in political and social institutions in Germany varies significantly. Germans with an international background and people who were socialized in East Germany show a lower level of trust in political and social institutions overall. The Federal Constitutional Court enjoys the highest level of trust - alongside the police and science. Trust in public broadcasting is comparatively low. One in four believe that both ARD and ZDF [state-owned TV stations] do not offer balanced, unbiased reporting. Least trust is placed in the Bundestag, the federal government and the media, and even the Federal President, who has also lost trust. Supporters of the AfD (66%) and the BSW (53%) have a particularly negative view of the Bundestag.

A third of Germans tend to have a conspiracy mindset towards official statements

"A particularly high level of mistrust of the constitutional order is reflected in the willingness to believe conspiracy theories. This is alarming," explains Prof. Hans Vorländer. On average, one in three Germans has a fundamental mistrust of the "state authorities" and is open to conspiratorial explanations. This is particularly true for people with a low level of education, low income and sympathy for the AfD, Free Voters or BSW. Approval ratings are higher among those who grew up in East Germany than among West Germans.

The overwhelming majority see Germany as a country of immigration - Hardly any support for abolishing the basic right to asylum

Germany is perceived as a country of immigration by over 70 percent of people surveyed. Contradiction is mainly found among AfD supporters. Even among them, however, two thirds see Germany as a country of immigration. A relative majority of 38% nevertheless want immigration to Germany to be restricted. Only 16% of Germans support the abolition of the basic individual right to asylum. As the most important requirement for naturalization, Germans demand that immigrants "respect and uphold the values of the Constitution".

About the study and methodology

The empirical basis of the study is a survey conducted by MIDEM in cooperation with the Institute for Applied Social Science (infas). In the period from February 1 to February 29, 2024, a total of 2,989 people aged 18 and over in Germany were surveyed on a representative basis. In a mixed-mode procedure, the survey was conducted both by telephone (CATI, n=813) and online (CAWI, n=2,176). The telephone survey was based on an ADM random sample in which both landline and mobile phone connections were taken into account (dual frame approach). The randomly drawn online respondents come from a panel recruited offline. Subsequent weighting compensates for distribution differences between the sample and the population. During the survey, participants were given a standardized questionnaire that included new items as well as items established in survey research in order to determine attitudes towards the Constitution and democracy. Most of the survey items were based on a five-point scale.

About MIDE M

The Mercator Forum for Migration and Democracy (MIDE M) is a research center at TUD Dresden University of Technology, funded by Stiftung Mercator. MIDE M analyzes how migration both shapes and is shaped itself by democratic policies, institutions and cultures. It investigates forms, instruments and processes of politically processing migration in democratic societies – in individual countries and in a comparative view of Europe.

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