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Germans rate their Basic Law positively, but are not particularly enthusiastic

SINUS study on the occasion of “75 years of German Basic Law” on May 23, 2024 in cooperation with YouGov

The Basic Law came into force on May 23, 1949 and established the Federal Republic of Germany. It was initially intended as a transitional solution, but with reunification in 1990 it became the constitution for the whole of Germany. To mark the 75th anniversary of the Basic Law, SINUS-Institut together with YouGov carried out a representative online survey to find out from Germans: How do people rate the Basic Law? Which fundamental rights are particularly important to people? What is missing from the German constitution? And how satisfied are people in Germany with their democracy?

Most Germans support their Basic Law, but by no means all of them: three quarters of Germans (73%) rate our constitution positively. On the other hand, 17% are critical of the Basic Law - that is at least 10 million people between the ages of 18 and 75. Furthermore, two thirds of respondents (67%) consider the Basic Law to be one of the greatest achievements of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Significant differences in assessment and knowledge gaps within the population

There are major differences in these assessments within society: men are significantly more likely to give a positive assessment than women. Age, level of education and political interest also influence the opinion of the Basic Law: the older, more formally educated or more politically interested the respondents are, the more positive their opinion of the Basic Law is. Interestingly, East and West Germans hardly differ in their assessment.

There are also large gaps in the population's knowledge: 43% of Germans admit that they are not very familiar with the Basic Law. Many people are also unable to answer numerous questions about the Basic Law, with at least one in ten answering “don't know”.

Basic Law plays no major role in everyday life - separate public holiday is not an issue

For many Germans, the Basic Law remains abstract: only for less than half (44%) does the constitution play an important role in everyday life. Only one in three respondents (34%) would celebrate an annual public holiday to honor the Basic Law. On the other hand, only 11% say that they do not care about the Basic Law.

“The results of our study show that the majority of people in Germany can relate to the Basic Law. At the same time, the data indicates that dealing with the Basic Law does not play an important role in everyday life. Almost half of those surveyed (48%) also believe that the Basic Law needs to be

revised in order to adapt it to contemporary realities. This shows that people in Germany are not indifferent to their constitution,” says Philipp Schneider, Head of Marketing at YouGov Germany.

Most important fundamental rights: protection of human dignity, equality before the law, freedom of opinion / freedom of the press

Fundamental rights are the cornerstones of our constitution. They encompass the rights that all citizens have with regard to the state. If you present Germans with a list of selected fundamental rights and ask them to name the three most important, the inviolability or protection of human dignity (52%), the equality of all people before the law (49%) and freedom of expression and the press (40%) land on the podium.

Specific proposals for amendments to the Basic Law do not achieve a majority

In the 75 years of its existence, the Basic Law has been amended many times, and there are currently many ideas in politics and society for extending it. However, in a multiple selection of 13 current proposals, none of these ideas can inspire a majority. A new basic right to decent housing still enjoys the broadest support (36%). The population also believes that a ban on discrimination based on sexual orientation or identity could be given constitutional status (31%). Children's rights, German as a state language and referendums at federal level should also be enshrined in the constitution (31% each). Respondents see the least need for change when it comes to the term “race” (15%), relaxing the Schuldenbremse (“debt brake”) (12%) or compulsory voting in federal elections (9%).

The middle class is particularly dissatisfied with democracy

The Basic Law defines how democracy works in Germany. At present, however, only one in two Germans (52%) is satisfied with democracy in their country, with 11% very satisfied and 41% somewhat satisfied. On the other hand, 40% say they are dissatisfied (15% of whom are very dissatisfied).

The milieu affiliation of a person affects their satisfaction with democracy significantly more than gender, age, education or political interest. This is shown by the data analysis based on the Sinus-Milieus social model, which divides the population into ten “groups of like-minded people” according to their values and lifestyles.

The German middle class consists of several milieus that shape attitudes throughout the country. Dissatisfaction with democracy is particularly high in these milieus. In the so-called Nostalgic Middle Class Milieu, for example, 59% express dissatisfaction - the highest figure of all groups. Dr. Silke Borgstedt, Managing Director of the SINUS-Institut, explains: “This highly harmony-oriented part of the middle class feels oppressed by the diverse and confusing changes and longs for the supposedly good old days”.

Disenchantment with democracy is also above average in another middle class milieu: 47% of the Adaptive-Pragmatic Middle Class Milieu are dissatisfied. Dr. Borgstedt comments: “This modern, performance-oriented part of the middle class is in the rush hour of its life and increasingly frustrated by poor infrastructure and unfulfilled promises of transformation. Both center milieus are united by the desire for predictability and prosperity security and the impression of not being noticed by the state and politics.”

Majority sees democracy and social cohesion under threat - growth since 2019

In view of the current social challenges, 59% of Germans believe democracy is in danger. This is an increase of 6 percentage points compared to a 2019 survey (53%). Right-wing forces worry significantly more Germans (59%) than left-wing forces (44%). 69% of respondents complain that they lost sight of what unites them in Germany. Two thirds (65%) of people are happy to live in Germany, but significantly fewer (44%) are proud of their country.

Methodological information

The results are based on an online survey conducted by YouGov Deutschland GmbH, in which 2,065 people took part between April 18 and 25, 2024. The weighted results are representative of the German population aged 18 to 75.

About SINUS-Institut

SINUS Markt- und Sozialforschung GmbH, with offices in Heidelberg and Berlin, has specialised in psychological and social science research and consulting for over 40 years. SINUS develops strategies for companies and institutions that use socio-cultural change as a success factor.

A key tool is the [Sinus-Milieus model](#) - a model of society and target groups that summarises people according to their lifestyles in "groups of like-minded people". For decades, the Sinus-Milieus have been one of the best-known and most influential segmentation approaches in the German-speaking market and are available for over 50 countries.

SINUS cooperates closely with its sister companies INTEGRAL Markt- und Meinungsforschung in Vienna, Austria, and OPINION Market Research & Consulting, Nuremberg, Germany (INTEGRAL-SINUS-OPINION Group).

More Information on SINUS-Institut at www.sinus-institut.de.

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About YouGov

YouGov is an international online market research and analytics technology company. As innovators and pioneers of online market research, we have spent the last twenty years building an ever-growing source of consumer data that enables us to understand the complex lives of consumers. Our treasure trove of data is not static, but is continuously updated and expanded. We call this: Living Data.

Our innovative solutions help the world's best-known brands, media owners and agencies to better plan, activate and measure their marketing activities.

With operations in the UK, the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, India and Asia Pacific, we have one of the world's largest research networks.

YouGov data is regularly quoted by the international press - we are the most quoted market research institute in the world.

YouGov. Living Consumer Intelligence.

More information on YouGov at yougov.de

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