



Navigating Uncertainty in Germany



About More in Common



More in Common is an **international initiative** set up in 2017 to build societies that are stronger, more united, and more resilient to the increasing **threats of polarisation and social division.**

We work with a wide range of groups in civil society, politics, government, business, faith, education, philanthropy and the media to connect people across lines of division.

More in Common has teams in France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States as well as Poland and Spain.

For more information please visit
www.moreincommon.com or contact
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Methodology



Scope

France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, United Kingdom

Sample Size

N=2,000 per country; margin of error +/- 2.1%; larger for subgroups. In some cases, numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Research Partner

YouGov

Fieldwork dates

France: 7-15 Dec, 2021

Germany: 7-17 Dec, 2021

Italy: 7-21 Dec, 2021

Poland: 6-17 Dec, 2021

Spain: 7-12 Dec, 2021

UK: 19 Nov - 1 Dec, 2021

Fieldwork Method

Online survey using representative demographic and political quotas

Key Details

Surveys are a mix of common and tailored, nationally specific questions. Comparisons are drawn to a precursor project completed in June 2020.

Two years of the pandemic has led to an atmosphere of disillusionment and distrust



- The German COVID "honeymoon" has ended. We see sharp increases in civic disillusionment and cynicism. 55 percent feel disappointed with their country's handling of the pandemic (+23 since 2020). For 41 percent, trust in federal government has worsened during the pandemic (+22 compared to June 2020), while another 42 percent say that people's concern for welfare of others has worsened too (+32 to 2020).
- Only 54 percent of people now feel that they are sufficiently appreciated for their own contribution to fighting the pandemic (in 2020 it was 72 percent).
- We are not only seeing a decline in civic confidence among those who were generally suspicious or dissatisfied before the pandemic, but also among those who had greater attachment to society.
- For the moment, there are still stable majorities in favour of fighting the virus. Trust in information around Covid is high even though 59 percent say the tone of public debate has worsened during the pandemic. There is still a willingness to follow decisive action when it comes to rules but lines of division around the issue are gaining momentum, which in turn is creating negative perceptions around certain groups.

Germans want unity but the vaccination debate has created a new fault line in society



- People in Germany have one thing in common: they want their lives to get back to normal. 84 percent of people want that.
- But currently society feels divided for most people. 52 percent say German society is divided, 19 united, 28 neither.
- The national debate on Covid has created a new line of division in society, crystallising most prominently around the issue of vaccination. The division between the vaccinated and unvaccinated is seen as the deepest in society.
- On a scale from 0 (cold feelings) to 100 (warm feelings), vaccinated people rate unvaccinated people with an average of an extremely cool 22. The same rejection is not seen when reversed: those who have not been vaccinated have more moderate feelings (49) towards those who have been vaccinated.

The divisions between the vaccinated and unvaccinated builds on old disagreements



- The unvaccinated are not a homogenous bloc. In short, the vaccination issue is certainly ideology-driven for some, but not for all involved.
- Those who have chosen not to be vaccinated tend to have other grievances with society. They are more likely than vaccinated people to not feel free in Germany. They are a group that often have a closed world view with deep distrust of the elite and a high threat perception. Their hostility towards the system culminates in a rejection of the vaccine.
- However, there are also many people among the unvaccinated who are generally detached from society, who are less likely to tune into the news, and more likely to miss communications from politics and civil society.

Germans desire change in politics but do not need a radical overhaul of the system



- Germans show a strong desire for political action, but radical transformation is not a goal per se. Instead, they demand the creation of a better normality. In line with earlier findings on the strong need for political action, 68 percent demand decisive action instead of careful governance from the new federal government.
- German society shows cracks in relevant "early warning" indicators. Only 67 percent say they believe federal elections were held in a fair and correct manner. 71 percent believe the system to be rigged toward the wealthy and influential - with no positive counter-majority ("system works for most people") in any group.
- Trust in institutional actors also systematically worsened during the pandemic. Not only did trust in the federal government decrease for 41 percent of respondents, but at least a third of Germans also say their trust in the health system, the social systems and the EU has worsened too.

Germans agree on climate action but are sceptical of the benefits



- Climate change is - second only to Covid itself - the most important issue for political action. Nearly 8 in 10 say they are concerned about climate change but there is too little trust in collective action. Setting fair contributions and a transparent agenda, politicians and big actors must lead the way to lay the ground for credible collective initiatives.
- But Germans are less certain that measures to tackle climate change will have a positive impact for them. 30 percent say that they believe policies will make their lives worse rather than better. Germans are the least optimistic in comparison to the other European countries in the *Navigating Uncertainty* study. This highlights that climate and social justice issues are not separate from each other – they go hand in hand.
- Lastly, when asked about their ideal society, Germans rank “environmentally friendly” as the second highest attribute, just after “democratic”. They believe Germany is not currently living up to this expectation. Therefore, there is public will for positive changes in this area in the next few years.

Recommendations



Going forward: New opportunities for social cohesion



- The first step to addressing the decline in social cohesion is to acknowledge it. **A conscious period of social and political reappraisal is needed**, in which what went well and what went wrong is discussed publicly and transparently – in a sober tone than brings the “temperature” of social debate back to normal. **This should be taken over by a Covid Processing Commission**, which can also initiate political adjustments (e.g. long overdue recognition for people in the nursing professions) and ensures that mourning and a culture of remembrance are also made possible.
- **We need to reassess how state and social actors can better reach certain parts of the population**, especially the more detached groups who are characterised by great distrust and lack of faith in institutions. This is necessary if we want to increase social uptake and participation in important initiatives, such as vaccination drives, in the future.
- Our research shows that there is desire to live in a united society. We need to make it clear that most people want something different from society. Only then can a positive dynamic start to take hold. Therefore, **there is a need for new opportunities for social interaction**. Encounters, not to discuss or convince opposites, but to tackle things together. That's missing after almost two years of social distancing - and is becoming more important every day.



Thank you

For more detailed information about Navigating Uncertainty and our findings in Germany, please contact us at: contact@moreincommon.com

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