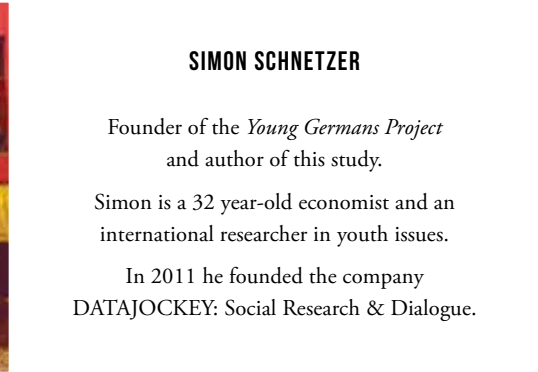




ON THE WAY INTO AN
UNCERTAIN FUTURE





SIMON SCHNETZER

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and author of this study.

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In 2011 he founded the company
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FOREWORD



It is still dark outside when the smell of freshly brewed coffee winds its way through the two-room apartment. Little Moritz has awoken and is now pushing his orange toy garbage truck through the room, laughing each time it bangs up against the wall. Thanks to the children, there is no need to set an alarm clock – this was clearly stated in the online description of my overnight accommodation: the living room couch. The sleeping bag is quickly rolled up, teeth brushed, and the bike's saddlebags packed: ready to keep moving. I eat breakfast with my hosts in their kitchen, but soon Moritz's dad has to go: he's a civil servant and must be on time. I sit with the mom for a little while longer, before I too need to leave. "I don't mean to complain", she says, "but it's gotten pretty hard financially since we've had the children."

The job safety of Moritz's dad is today no longer a granted. A third of every 18 to 34 year-old in Germany are jobless or precariously employed – that is: poorly paid or only temporarily employed. With such concerns an entire generation has come of age, a generation for whom decisions such as having children or settling down are constantly postponed, and whose pensions are essentially banking on nothing but hope. Mountains of debt, crisis after crisis, these are the impending realities that for years have hovered like dark clouds over the life-planning of young people. They don't believe that everything will be fine; however, they are not at fault. Rather, today's precarity is a result of policies that have endorsed decades of unrestrained accumulation of public debt, and economic growth at any cost, disregarding the changes necessary for institutions to adapt to demographic change. The current level of public debt, of social security, and of security on the job

market is neither sustainable nor just for the generations to come. What is missing is the representation of youth interests in social and political processes, a megaphone for the voice of today's young generation and the generations of the future.

This is where the *Young Germans Project* comes in. This is the first study about the transition to adulthood in Germany, seen from the young people's perspective. I wanted to recognise the existing diversity in lifestyles and ideologies among young people, and thus a simple survey would not have sufficed. In autumn 2010, I spent two months biking across the entire Republic of Germany, discussing work, politics, and the future with hundreds of young people, be it on the side of the road or at their kitchen table – bringing the statistics to life. The method of cycling and couchsurfing guaranteed me a unique and private perspective and allowed me in retrospect to bring a qualitative reflection to the survey results around the central question: what makes young Germans tick?

As you read on you will unlock the identity of young Germans. Within these pages you will find out what really matters to them at work, and on which issues they expect vigorous action from policy. In the end, it comes down to the question of how young people see their future in Germany.

This report hopes to stimulate discussion and to support its claims with the requisite facts. Germany is great! And with an intergenerationally just and forward-looking policy it can stay that way.

How does the future look? I'm an optimist. But there's a lot to be done.

Simon Schnetzer

04
ROUTE

06
COUCHSURFING

08
INTRODUCTION

09
IDENTITY

13
POLITICS

17
WORK

21
GERMANY

27
CONCLUSIONS

29
QUESTIONNAIRE

31
CREDITS

THE ITINERARY

#Couchsurfing didn't go as planned today, so a valiant priest offered me the #Parishcouch – thank God.

It's so beautiful on the Rennsteig in the Thuringian Forest – despite the construction of new highways, train tracks, and dwindling towns. Delicious roast at the local pub.

Along the Rhine, not alone. An Australian guy joins me who is cycling from Ireland to Rome – cycling with him is great.

"I don't give a rat's ass about politics!" says a Bavarian farm boy north of Augsburg.

59 Days
—
40 Cycling stages
—
39 Hosts
—
2,895 Kilometers
(according to the map)
—
163 Interviews
—
27 Packs of noodle soup
—
2 sets of brake pads
—
2,617 Pictures

START IN
KEMPTEN



A beautiful Bavarian cow on the side of the road. A glance over my shoulder for my last glimpse of the mountains.

»I WISH YOU MUCH SUCCESS AND GOOD WEATHER«

writes the President of Germany Christian Wulff,
shortly before departure, September 2010.



www.bit.ly/JD-bundespraesident

1ST WEEK

Sep 15th - 21st 2010
567 kilometers

- 01 AUGSBURG
- 02 EICHSTAETT
- 03 SCHWABACH
- 04 BAMBERG
- 05 UNTERSIEMAU BEI COBURG
- 06 KAMSDORF/THUERINGEN
- 07 WEIMAR

2ND WEEK

Sep 22nd - 28th 2010
282 kilometers

- 08 HALLE
- 09 WITTENBERG
- 10 POTSDAM
- 11 BERLIN

3RD WEEK

Sep 19th - Oct 5th 2010
265 kilometers

- 12 NEURUPPIN
- 13 ROGEEZ AN DER MUERITZ
- 14 CRIVITZ

4TH WEEK

Oct 6th - 12th 2010
385 kilometers

- 15 WISMAR
- 16 PELZERHAKEN
- 17 KIEL
- 18 HOLST/HOLSTEIN
- 19 BREMERHAFEN
- 20 BREMEN

5TH WEEK

Oct 13th - 19th 2010
277 kilometers

- 21 VECHTA
- 22 OSNABRUECK
- 23 MÜNSTER

6TH WEEK

Oct 20th - 26th 2010
229 kilometers

- 24 ESSEN
- 25 WUPPERTAL
- 26 DUESSELDORF
- 27 COLOGNE

7TH WEEK

Oct 27th - Nov 2nd 2010
352 kilometers

- 28 BONN
- 29 KOBLENZ
- 30 WIESBADEN
- 31 DARMSTADT
- 32 MANNHEIM
- 33 KARLSRUHE

8TH WEEK

Nov 3rd - 9th 2010
330 kilometers

- 34 BADEN-BADEN
- 35 STRASSBURG
- 36 STEINACH IM KINZIGTAL
- 37 ZEPFENHAN BEI ROTTWEIL

9TH WEEK

Nov 10th - 12th 2010
218 kilometers

- 38 WILHELMSDORF/
LAKE CONSTANCE
- 39 OBEREISENBACH
- 40 KEMPTEN/ALLGAEU

GERMANY, YOUR COUCHES!



COUCHSURFING ACROSS THE COUNTRY



Oatmeal, powdered soups, and occasionally a bottle of wine are all one needs to surf the couches of the Republic. Couchsurfing, a form of “ride sharing for accommodation”, is free, enriches the travel experience and permits insights into the living rooms of young Germans. 300,000 people in Germany are couchsurfers, linked via a Website, average age 27. The only thing they have in common: they are hospitable, and have a free couch.

Couchsurfing tips: Every good couch surfer should have a lightweight silk sleeping bag liner and an inflatable pillow, this way you don't leave any dirty laundry for your hosts. Always have a packet of noodle soup on hand! One cannot expect the host will supply dinner. No matter what, a warm soup in the evening always feels good – and it won't go bad if indeed you are of-

fered a meal. In this case, it's a good idea to bring along a bottle of wine for example. In general: The more personal your written request on the couchsurfing site, the greater your chance for a place to sleep. And each recommendation between host and guest increases the basis for mutual trust within the couchsurfing community.

WESTFALIA

»Couch info: It's a farm –
there's lots of space in the barn«

This old converted farmhouse is now a home for students. One enters through a rusty gate and comes upon a wildly romantic garden, leading down to a pond. Hundreds of bikes are stacked under the eaves of the barn. There, where the horses once were kept, Peter now hosts his guests. He had already had many couchsurfers before me: perhaps because he's posted an image of a steaming woodstove pizza as his couchsurfing profile photo. Peter gives me the instructions: food and showers are in the house; beds are in the barn. Hidden at the end of a long, dark hall, behind tables, where the decorations and leftovers remain from the last big party, I find a rocking chair and a couch: my home for the night. Grandma's living room lamp lights this bizarre scene, lending it a crowning touch of charm.

MECKLENBURG

»Couch info: With God's blessing«

One night it was impossible to organize a couch for myself. No answer to my requests on couchsurfing. Or else all were out of town. Or the couch was already occupied. So I ask around at the Marketplace in a small town near Schwerin. Two friendly ladies suggest that I ask the priest. He agrees to host me immediately. Even better, he lodged me not only on the parish couch, but makes me an honorary guest and takes me everywhere: to dinner with his family, for a painting course with the confirmation group, and then for coffee and gossip with the seniors. When I resume my journey, I feel like part of the community.

THE BLACK FOREST

»Couch info: A couch in the living room –
in the company of my two cats«

Thank goodness for search by map: you enter one location in couchsurfing.org, and it also finds couches in the vicinity. This is how I end up in a community of 1000 souls in the Kinzig Valley. When Stefan opens the door, his animals have already welcomed me. I'm soaking wet after a daylong cycle through the rain, and I am pleased that it is so warm at his (and his cats') place. Stefan is an engineer and commutes half an hour every morning into work. This is where he grew up, and he feels more comfortable here than in the city. A few of his friends also live in the area, with whom he sometimes plays role playing-games, especially into medieval fantasy worlds. Without the Internet it would be lonely in the valley. He'll be visiting his chat girlfriend soon in Thailand.

BERGISCHE LAND

»Couch info: Shared room,
maybe available«

"I've always been different, alternative. And if you had not already had so many recommendations, I wouldn't have hosted you!" Samira is German with Turkish roots. She works as a kindergarten teacher, lives alone and has offered me the couch in her living room. The room looks like a room from One Thousand and One Nights. It smells like incense. After supper and a glass of wine, she says goodbye and logs into the chatroom. Her boyfriend is waiting in Istanbul.

A TYPICAL DAY



Good morning! The early bird, that's me. When my hosts go to work in the morning, I leave the house with them, riding away on my bicycle. Mornings are not good times for interviewing young people anyhow – they either have no time or they are still asleep. For me this means: hit the road. Uphill. Downhill. 70 to 80 kilometers a day, otherwise I'll be off schedule.



At noon, some villages further, I pull out the questionnaires. Conveniently, interviews often take place while eating, be it in restaurants, cafes or sometimes even at roadside snack bars. While I'm at it, I learn about the regional cuisine, and get a bit of office work done: fire off a Twitter message to the world, seek out new couch surfing hosts, and do my best at a little self-PR.



Before an afternoon low hits, I always pass an apple tree. With full pockets and cheeks, I then continue on my way – albeit a little slower, and with my face aglow in biker's bliss. I stop often along the roadside, either to conduct interviews or to ask for directions. Soon again I'm hungry! I find an afternoon snack in the supermarket, where I also stock up on provisions.



It's autumn and the evening comes earlier every day. The streetlights are often already on as I roll into my destination. There's one last Interview to conduct: with my host. We often cook together, eat with roommates or with friends, drink, sit, and talk until late. Once I am alone on my couch, I stay up and write a daily report for the website, edit photos and movies, and ... sleep. Good night!

INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTERS AND THE STATISTICS



The following essays, statistics and stories are based on the results of the project titled Young Germans – a cycling tour and survey of young adults across Germany in 2010 and 2011. Within this report, a selection of particularly important issues – all from the perspective of young people – arise. The combined methods of online survey and in-person interviews across Germany allow for a representative illustration of the lives of young people, in all their versatility and diversity. The results provide an in-depth analysis of the various factors influencing young Germans, illustrated and differentiated according to age, education and employment status.

The validity of statistics is always vulnerable, as neither

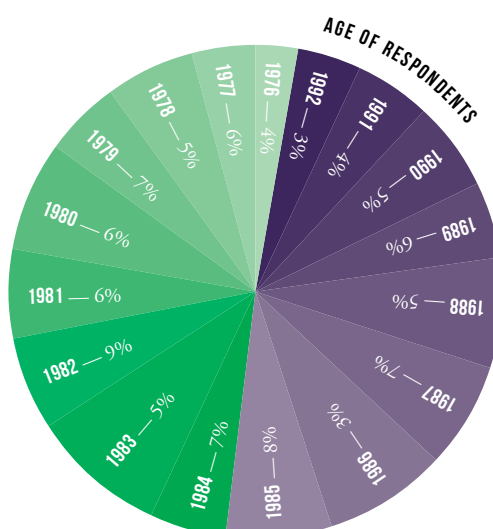
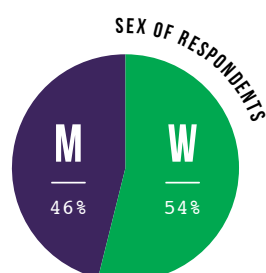
the representative selection of study respondents nor their participation can ever be perfectly controlled. The Young Germans study thus applies different survey methods. The cycling tour of Germany allows for personal insights to be combined with statistical analysis, in a unique and unprecedented manner. The Young Germans study presents the following results with the intention of raising awareness about the situation of young people in Germany, provoking discussion, and inciting further research on the topic.

Simon Schnetzer is responsible for the design of the study and the online survey, the conducting of all interviews, and the evaluation of the study results.

THE SURVEY

Survey period: 15.09.2010 – 15.02.2011	Number of respondents relevant for the analysis: 693
Total number of respondents: 835	Personal interviews: 163

LOCATION OF RESPONDENTS



IDENTITY

YOUNG GERMANS TODAY



They have grown up without hunger and without war, in a united Europe. For them, globalisation means more than a changed economic system: they travel freely and without second thoughts across Europe, without having to change currency or show their passport. They enjoy foods from all over the world. They have a great command of English, and communicate for free across a globe-spanning network of friends and acquaintances. They watch the news from around the world, and are more concerned with disasters in distant lands than they are with elections in their hometown. They are citizens of the world: Africa, Asia, Latin America, no country is too adventurous for them — and yet they know so little of the different regions of Germany. They shop on the World Wide Web rather than at the corner store. They are constantly under pressure, and compete for work against contenders from around the world. Their countless possibilities come accompanied by a perpetual fear of making the wrong decision, or failing to meet the heights of their own expectations.

DIGITALISATION



They are referred to as “digital natives” because digitalisation runs like a common thread through all aspects of the lives of Young Germans, as ever more communication options continue to accelerate their pace of life.

»I’m in a wheelchair all day. In my dreams
I can run, and on the Internet
too I can move about completely unhindered.
The Web is my elixir of life!«
– Chris, Koblenz –

Not all have come to terms with technology, which, although ubiquitous, is often beyond the comprehension of many users. Millions of digital mirror-selves have sprung up online, but no one can control what ultimately happens with this data. The disadvantages of these developments are less studied than their much-lauded benefits.

So it is no surprise that, with few exceptions, all have joined in on Facebook & Co. As a result, the private has blurred with the professional, and face-to-face social interaction is decreasing. Young Germans find it difficult to switch off; they are dependent on electricity and technology. Their consciousness is global and simultaneous, and thus their social life stretches across two parallel worlds – one tangible, the other virtual.

GLOBALISATION



The convergence of the worlds has opened new horizons for Germany and other nations. It has granted young people new perspectives on the labor market, and has led to a global chaos in personal relationships. International love stories don’t always end happily, but they are a growing phenomenon. Many Young Germans are leaving the country, while simultaneously a considerable number of foreigners migrate to Germany, all on a search for professional fulfillment and happiness. Thanks to lower transport and communications costs, many have chosen to live far away from home – a crucial test for bonds and relationships, both within the family and within greater society.

THE BREAKDOWN OF FAMILY



One in every three respondents named the “breakdown of family” as a particularly impactful issue on 18 to 34 year-olds today. The testimonies of young people generally underscore an unfulfilled yearning for close, cohesive and stable relationships. One effect of this breakdown is that the caretaking of children (and other family members in need of care) is now increasingly outsourced to a third party, in exchange for payment. The concept of family in which one parent can earn the entire household income is now passé and no longer financially viable.

»Earlier, families lived together and stuck
together. It’s not like this anymore.
One lives here, the other lives there,
and the way work is these days
leaves us no other option.«
– Ahmed, 34 years old, Bad Iburg –

Policy has yet to fully adjust to this new reality, seeing how the whole country lacks affordable places in childcare. Considering the growing importance of education and social integration, providing these more affordable places would, as an investment, be doubly valuable.

CONCLUSION

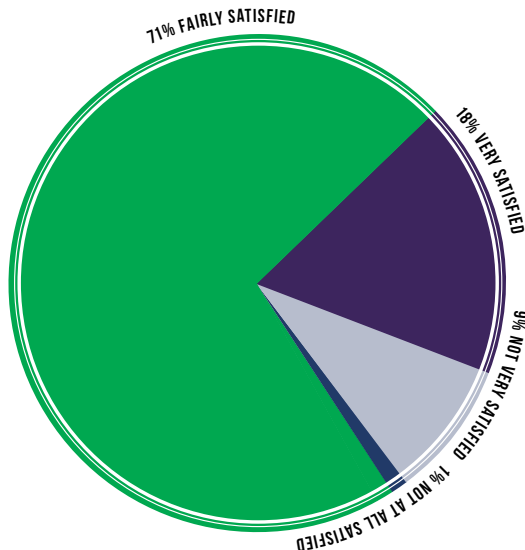


Digitalisation and globalisation have swept Young Germans into a whirlpool of ruthless competition and endless options. The changes in society are so fundamental that 18 to 34 year-olds no longer see their future as rosy. Yet despite all these problems, young Germans are doing rather well at the moment, perhaps too well. Soon, however, they will assume their role as the generation bridging analog and digital, and they will realise their vision: the uniting of these parallel worlds.

A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS



HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU, ON THE WHOLE,
WITH THE LIFE YOU ARE LEADING?



Despite all changes, young people in Germany seem to be doing quite well. 89% are satisfied with the life they are leading. Of this 89%, only 18% describe themselves as “very satisfied”, the reason for which might be found in their respective descriptions of the life aspects in which they most urgently wish for change. In this respect, the areas of personal finances and partnerships (tied at 23%) and employment (22%) play the most critical roles. It is interesting to note that among the 10% who hope to change where they live, the percentage of young women is distinctly greater than the percentage of young men. A few of the respondents have needs whose urgency is greater than the options provided in the questionnaire. These wish for change in areas of health, children, social contacts, or time for cultural excursions. 11% of young women and 14% of young men say they wish for no change at all.

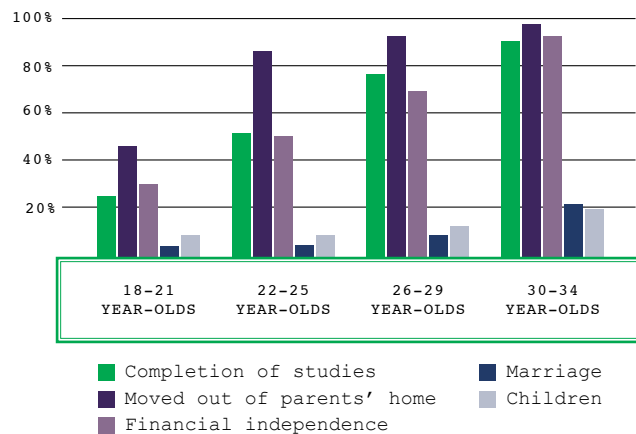
TRANSITION INTO ADULthood



Sociologists have defined five milestones in the transition from childhood to adulthood: completing school, leaving home, becoming financially independent, marrying, and having kids.

In the itemisation alone, one might notice how recent changes in society have already relativised and made this list feel partially outdated. Learning is now a life-long undertaking, and fewer couples seek the church’s blessing for their marriage. And on the subject of children, ever more families bring together children from past relationships – hence the term “patchwork family”. Moving out from the childhood home still takes place relatively quickly, with only 3% of respondents over 30 still living with their parents. Among the 22 to 25 year-olds, however, only 50% are finished with their education, and among the 30+ year-olds, 10% are still studying, or have resumed their studies. Are these the reasons why so many young Germans are taking

HAVE THESE EVENTS HAPPEND TO YOU?



so much time to start families of their own? Overall, only 13% of the 18 to 34 year-olds have children, a total of 46% are planning on having children in the next five years or so, and only 8% don’t want any kids. 82% of 30 to 34 year-olds have no offspring, and 81% are unmarried. 33% of 30 to 34 year-olds expected to become parents within the next five years, and 35% of the respondents in the same age group are still not sure whether or not they will ever have kids.

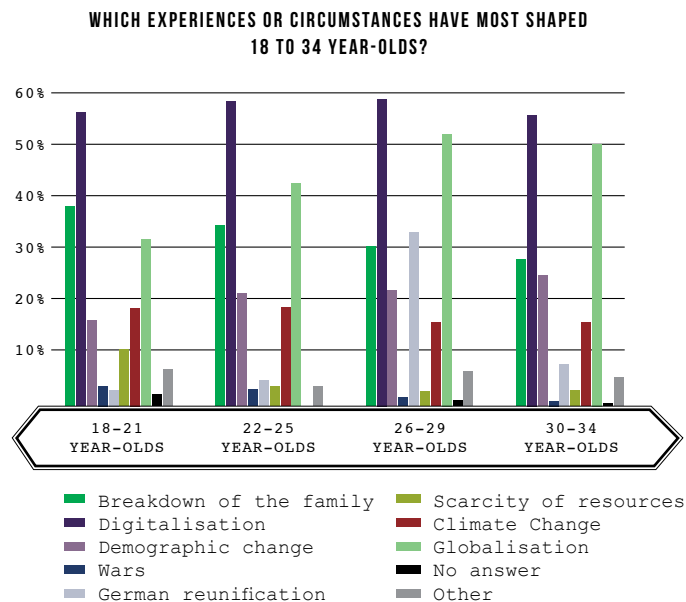
FUTURE



Only
53%
expect to reach
their parents'
standard of living

With a ranking of 57%, digitalisation is cited as the most powerful influence on 18 to 34 year-olds, and it is mentioned equally across all age groups. Other categories have varying significance depending on age, like the role of globalisation, which ranks only 30% for the younger respondents (18 to 21 year-olds), compared to the older respondents (30 to 34 year-olds), for whom it is particularly influential, with 50%. In third place, with 32%, comes the breakdown of the family: one in three respondents finds this aspect particularly influential, though this decreases with age from 38% to 28%. Demographic change ranks fourth with 22%, just before climate change with 17%. The wars in distant countries have an impact on few young Germans, and the German reunification only has some significance for respondents over 30, with 8%. Other formative influences that were mentioned were: unemployment, the changing nature of work, the acceleration of the pace of life, uncertainty, individualization, and changing values.

How do young people feel about the future, and how confident are they about the quality of life that awaits them? The result is harrowing: barely one in two believes they will achieve their parents' standard of living. Among 18 to 21 year-olds this number is nearly 60%, but with the entry into working life, disillusionment seems to set in: among 30 to 34 year-olds, this number is only 47%. Only slightly more than 50% of these same 30 to 34 year-olds expect they will find a stable job. This is an alarming figure because it means, conversely, that nearly 50% do believe they will never be securely employed. Among 18 to 21 year-olds, the expectation of owning one's own house or apartment is 56%: much more pronounced than among 30 to 34 year-olds, where it is 34%. Obviously, somewhere between the early twenties and the early thirties, a fundamental, and often pessimistic, re-evaluation of expectations takes place.



NEXT STOP THURINGIA: THE QUEST FOR HAPPINESS

Andrea never expected a couchsurfer. She cannot remember ever having seen a tourist in her little village in Thuringia, near Saalfeld. And yet Andrea is exactly what is meant by the term "open minded": she is always open to meeting new people. The last cool guy she met she ended up bringing home to Thuringia with her: Joao from Brazil. In Brazil he had been her diving instructor. Now he will soon be the father of her child. The two first met four years ago, as Andrea was in Rio de Janeiro working on a social project. But this is already long ago. Andrea is now 27, and she and Joao have moved back in with her parents. The money she earns as a sociologist is simply not enough to afford their own home. And once the child is born,

the money will only be tighter, because Joao has yet to find a job, although he is fervently learning German and is a certified diving instructor. Andrea describes Joao as multi-talented. She cannot believe there are no jobs for someone like him. "But unemployment in Germany is a big issue", she says, and follows up with more: 'and the pension system too.' But actually Andrea is not thinking quite so far into the future. For now the first priority is for Joao to get a residence permit, otherwise he will not be able to stay with her in Thuringia. Perhaps she'll even marry him to get it, not because she dreams of a white wedding – Andrea is not so conservative. Nevertheless, she would be willing to get married if it helped move

Joao's papers along a little faster. Andrea knows almost a dozen people who are in long distance relationships. Often, these so-called "long distances" entail not only that the partners live in different countries, but also in different continents, seeing each other once every few months. Andrea is happy that Joao is finally here with her. Nevertheless, she sometimes worries that he won't be happy here in Thuringia, that he misses the warm Brazilian climate and the ocean. She worries that it might get too tight for the two of them and the baby in her parents' house. But for the moment, it all fits: love, work and home. And for now that's all Andrea needs.

POLITICS



When young people feel unfairly treated, a lot is called into question, including democracy itself. The feeling of injustice is stirred by the fact that the younger generation's biggest concerns, such as educational issues and unease about the future, are underrepresented in parliament. In general, politicians are often perceived as the untrustworthy "puppets of lobbyists". Why else, many wonder, does Germany have an ailing pension system, an overwrought health system, and excessive national debt? Only the economy is faring quite well, but at what cost? It is not clear who will eventually have to foot the bill. In any case, the assumption that a shrinking and ever-more precariously employed labor force will be able to afford it is a tragic illusion.

DEMOCRACY



What some call a democracy, others call a “dictatorship of the old”.

The absence of young peoples’ engagement in politics has little to do with the much-evoked political disaffection. The phenomenon, rather, has a deeper cause.

The younger generation is interested in politics, but fails to identify with the political parties, whose rigid structures and hierarchies rarely represent the concerns of young people. Moreover, with the exception of the

Green Party, the major parties are perceived as having a poor profile – or as lacking a stance altogether – and this hinders the ability of young people to identify with them. Instead, the concerns of the young generation are exposed in blogs, across social networks or in online petitions. This type of engagement rarely finds its way into the overarching democratic structures. Yet, in a well-functioning democracy, the interests of young people and of future generations should not only be heard but also considered

INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE



Germany’s streets have yet to witness widespread protest against its government – and it must not come to an intergenerational conflict. Nevertheless, a new intergenerational contract must be drafted, in which the distribution of roles and responsibilities between young and old are laid out. This contract cannot simply be imposed on young people, but instead must be developed from a dialogue across generations. It is important that this contract uphold the values of solidarity and justice, as well as honesty with regard to foreseeable demographic changes. A first step might be to finally appoint young members to the Federal Council for Sustainable Development. A next step might be the creation of youth committees who would hold veto rights in matters of intergenerational justice, on both a regional and national level. A further step might be to allow for more direct participation in government with the introduction of a digital Member of Parliament.

These ideas were developed based on the study results. These give insight into the political opinions of young people and allow for measures to be implemented towards enhanced, project-based forms of youth participation in politics, with real impact.



REBELLION TOMORROW?



Bleak future prospects, and certain groups feeling discriminated against – a recipe for revolution. But it can also be the birth of new political movements. Intergenerational conflict or youth rebellion? Neither in sight so far, not in Germany. In conflict theory, one speaks of hot and cold conflicts. Conflicts are cold when the repercussions hardly arouse emotions, and conflicts are hot when stakeholders are disrupted from their comfort zone and emotions are stirred. In Germany life is relatively comfortable – still. What happens though, when the young generation feels the true weight of public debt, or when exploding health care costs incur their first victims? Young Germans will start to feel the injustice because they are not the cause of the problem. Stuttgart 21 or the nuclear debate following the disaster in Fukushima are prime examples of how a smoldering conflict can erupt abruptly and turn to riots.

A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

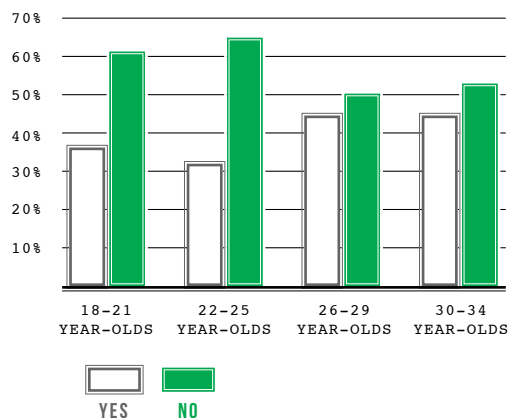


Two out of three 18 to 34 year-olds (68%) say that they are “very well” or “fairly well” informed about politics in Germany. At the same time, the number of those “absolutely not interested” in politics decreases with age, from 7% among 18 to 21 year-olds down to 1% for respondents 30 years and up. Again comparing these two age groups, the number of respondents who are “very well” informed about politics, rises with age: from 20% to 30%. Young Germans are thus well placed to make statements about politics in their country.

DEMOCRACY AND ITS DISCONTENTS



I AM SATISFIED WITH HOW DEMOCRACY IS WORKING IN GERMANY



Satisfaction with how democracy is working in Germany has its limits. 58% of 18 to 34 year-olds are not satisfied with democracy in Germany; only 40% are satisfied. The younger the respondents, the lower the satisfaction: 44% of respondents over 30 are satisfied with democracy, compared with only 37% of 18 to 21 year-olds. Democracy as a political system relies on the participation of citizens – when citizens believe they are able to affect change through participation, they are motivated to get involved in politics. Yet three out of five young people (57%) do not believe they are able to affect politics with their personal involvement, though among 22 to 25 year-olds only about half (44%) feel this way. It is interesting in this context to note that young men generally have greater faith in their political influence than young women.

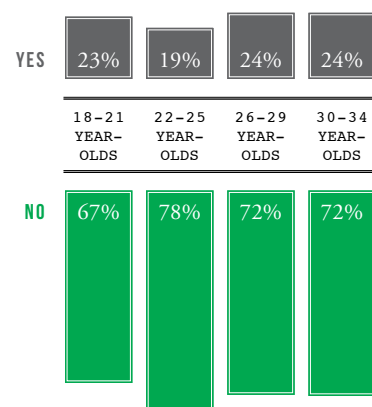
CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT



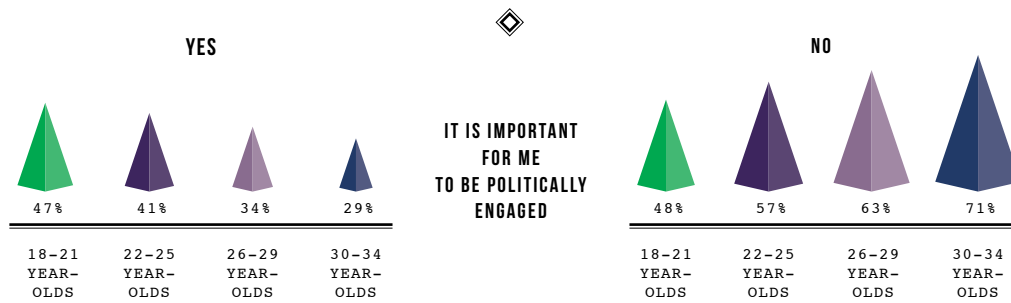
Confidence in the work of a government is a key prerequisite for the acceptance of its laws and democratic institutions. It is thus all the more appalling that only 22% of young people express confidence in the current federal government's conservative/liberal coalition. 73% of 18 to 34 year-olds do not trust the government to run the country well.

Could this strong mistrust lie in the fact that young people do not feel represented by their government? 86% of 18 to 34 year-olds believe that the government does not sufficiently represent the interests of younger generations. This is all the more dramatic when one recognizes that the most pressing problems according to young people are not youth-specific at all – they affect society in general: education, pensions, health, unemployment, and the environment.

I TRUST THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT AND HOW IT IS RUNNING THE COUNTRY.



POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT



The importance of political commitment is significantly higher among the younger respondents than among the older. 47% of 18 to 21 year-olds state that it is important for them to be involved politically; for respondents over 30, this number is only 29%. To understand these results, we must consider the increasing importance of employment and family as one advances through life, though perhaps a degree of disillusionment also sets in. But what does political engagement mean anyhow? 47% of 18 to 21 year-olds are certainly not members of political parties. The issue of how young people engage politically and how they define the term “politically engaged” remains a question for future studies. It is certain that

more people would become politically active if conditions in Germany became less bearable. Political engagement – a civil duty in democracy – tends to be neglected in times of peace and prosperity.

The situation is similar in current social engagement: it decreases with age. Whereas one in two 22 to 25 year-olds is politically active, this number is only one in three in respondents above 30. And in this aspect, not only do young men consider themselves more influential than young women, they are also much more involved than young women: almost every second young man is socially active, and only one in three young women.

POLITICS 2.0

Both professionally and personally, young people spend more and more time in virtual space. Would it therefore not be logical to adapt their political participation to this social change? 67% of 18 to 34 year-olds support possibilities for participation online, whereas 20% oppose this idea and 14% preferred to abstain.

NEXT STOP LOWER SAXONY: LONG LIVE THE PROTEST

Vechta is the smallest university town in Germany, at least such is the claim of the people who live there. The real reason why one might have heard of Vechta however is the horse auctions. The regular meetings at the auction house and the stallions and mares in the paddocks that line the roads into town make Vechta a true Mecca for horse lovers. For Sandra, who is studying to become a teacher, the city is too busy. She wants to move back to the country as soon as possible. She has no doubt that there is a need for English and sport teachers where she grew up. Unfortunately, she still requires a few more credits to graduate from university. Sandra is hardly interested in politics, but it is important to her that the national education policy finally be unified. Sandra however has no idea how she could become involved, and it is hardly any use anyway, because she doesn't believe she can make a difference.

Sandra's flat is a small, safe world. Everything is clean and tidy. She lives with a fellow student and a young man from France who works. When he needs a breath of fresh air, he goes out into the suburbs of Vechta: to visit Annelie, her five roommates, and all the other people who hang out in Vechta's only anarchist flat. The flat always has room for couchsurfers or supporters. Currently, nine people live there. Between anti-fascist flags and posters of the most recent protests, roommates and guests share a dinner at the kitchen table. Those who have a bit of cash to spare have bought the food, the others have cooked: vegan of course, politically correct. After dinner comes discussion, about everything under the sun. On the subject of taxation, the social worker on the sofa says: “Either they use tax revenues for better ends, or they should get rid of taxes altogether” she scolds, garnering applause from the guy next

to her, a nursing assistant. He supports the idea of referendum as the instrument of political decision-making, because, he says, we need more transparency in politics. “The population should have more say in politics,” he states with loud authority. Instead of banging on the table, he'd rather take it one notch further: “Racism needs to be driven out at long last, otherwise the integration project will never succeed.” The discussion about this and other issues continues well into the night. No one in this flat sees the future with rose-colored glasses. Yet none is inactive. Annelie works for animal welfare; she's politically active, and, if need be, sometimes militant. Her roommate started an anti-fascist Internet platform. “The system must be changed!” To this all agree, because in the moment, the only voices influencing decisions are those of lobbyists.

W O R K



The German economic system — the social market economy — is based on the principle of solidarity. The more people work and pay taxes, the more money can be redistributed into the social systems. In 2011, unemployment among young people in Germany was the lowest it has been in a long time. Compared to the rest of Europe however, Germany is in a very good position. What these figures hide, however, is the increasing prevalence of precarious jobs among young people, and the resulting problems for society. The reasons for this are to be found in four places: in the employment policies of employers; in the legal framework of labor laws; in the education and attitudes of young people; and in the changing nature of work itself. There no longer exists a reliable compass for today's working world. The work of the future is becoming more complex, more international, and less secure, with poorer pay and faster changes. For young people, reliable legal and social conditions are becoming increasingly important.

PRECARITY



To reduce costs, many companies and public institutions hire young people as interns, temporary workers, or mini-jobbers on short-term contracts. Employment is defined as precarious when, because of low income, lack of social security, or short-term contracts, young people are deprived of a long-term outlook on an independent life. These flexible forms of employment were initially introduced with good intentions: students would gain work experience, the unemployed were offered a chance at work, and companies gained more flexibility during uncertain times. The extent of precarious employment now is considerable, with 26% of 18 to 34 year-olds precariously employed or unemployed. Meanwhile, these forms of employment are so common that one in every four Young Germans are being robbed of their life perspective and have had their financial independence postponed into an indefinite future. The social system is losing its foundation – the contributors. Precarious forms of employment should be eradicated, or should be used strictly as an interim solution, to prevent them from permanently replacing normal employment – thus assuring that normal employment is good employment.

THE CHANGING WORKPLACE



Large and small companies worldwide seek the most favorable conditions for production, and distribute their products and services across global markets. With globalisation and increased competition, the requirements placed on young people entering the job market have increased significantly. Through digitalisation and mobile access, the speed of communication has increased radically, whereas the predictability of the workload has drastically decreased. Simultaneously, digitalisation has eradicated many aspects of the physical workplace and has blurred the boundaries between the professional and the private. Technologies and markets are changing so rapidly that in many professions, prolonged time off can lead to disqualification – for example, an extended maternity leave might mean that you lose your edge. There remains little room in working life for the qualities which are, after all, most important to young people: self-fulfillment, a good working atmosphere, and a healthy work-life balance. Burnouts are now increasingly widespread – a sad consequence of this so-called progress. Employers and politicians have the option to change that.

OUTLOOK OF YOUNG ADULTS OUTLOOK FOR THE COUNTRY



Regardless of their level of education or their employment situation, the satisfaction of young Germans with their lives is quite high. Even the most precariously employed are satisfied – this is often because they receive additional financial support either from the state or from their families. This is not however a permanent solution, because low income and lack of planning will make it difficult for these young people to achieve independence and start their own families.

For an aging society, it is of central importance to provide career prospects for young people and make it possible for them to plan a family. This will require extensive efforts. Young people who are unemployed or at risk of unemployment should be integrated into the labor market. Degree programs should be more in line with the actual demand for graduates in specific disciplines. There needs to be special promotion for training and apprenticeships in fields where skilled labor will soon be in shortage. These changes will require the support of policy and decision-makers, as will the establishment of a balance between family life and working life. This should not be an option – it is a social need for both employers and government legislators to bear responsibility. On the employer's side, this requires a change in attitude, in which maternity leaves and special child-related conditions are offered to employees. On the side of policy-making, this means better efforts to ensure comprehensive care services at affordable prices. In order to encourage the emergence of new forms of employment opportunities, it is also important to promote entrepreneurship among young people across the country.

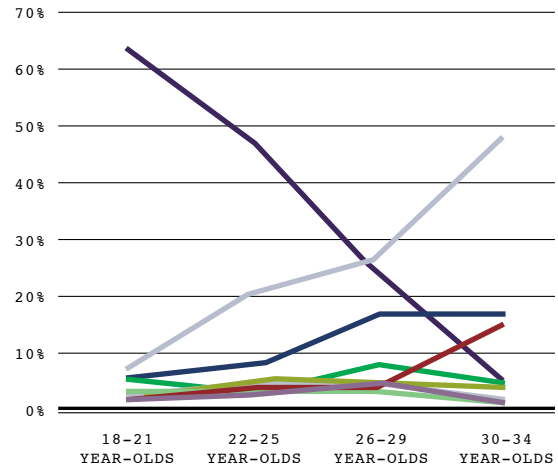
Although these facts are no news to politicians, businessmen and journalists, the urgency of the situation is not reflected in their behavior. The consequences of demographic change are threatening our quality of life and can only be prevented if we choose to encourage the potential of all young people by allowing them to develop both their professional and family lives.

A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

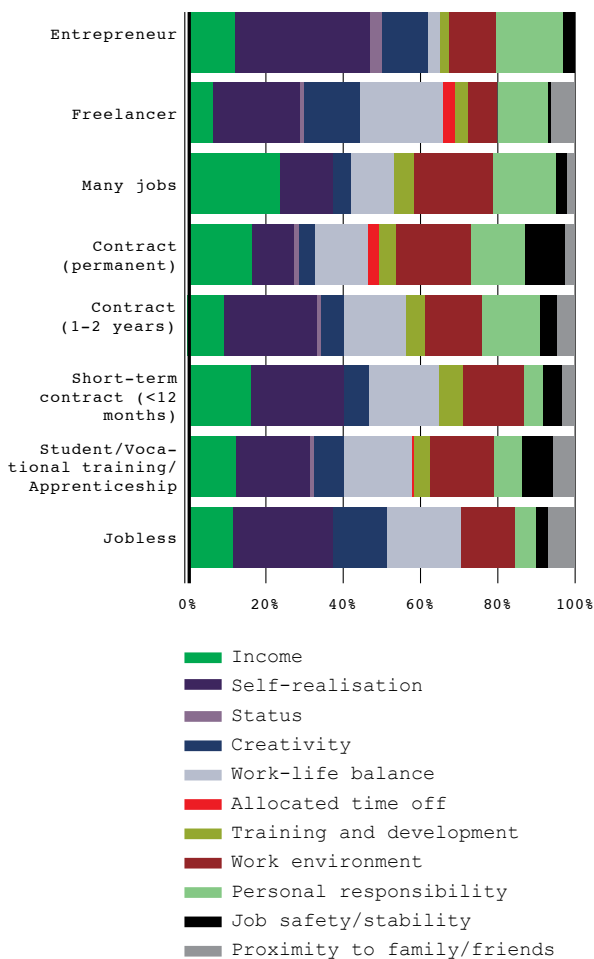


17% of 18 to 21 year-olds are precariously employed, and for those within this age group who are working and not in training/school, it is one in two. For those over 30, 28%, or a third, of all respondents who are not in school are precariously employed. The precarity in this graph is depicted by people who are either unemployed, or working in fixed-term contracts or as multi-jobbers. In observing the adjacent chart, the employment situation of young people in relation to their age, one is struck by two opposing curves: the strong decline in education with relation to age, and the steadily rising curve of permanent employment contracts. Among 30 to 34 year-olds, every second respondent (49%) has a permanent employment and one in twenty (5%) is still in training or studying.

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS?



WHICH ARE THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF YOUR JOB, FOR YOU PERSONALLY?



GOOD WORK



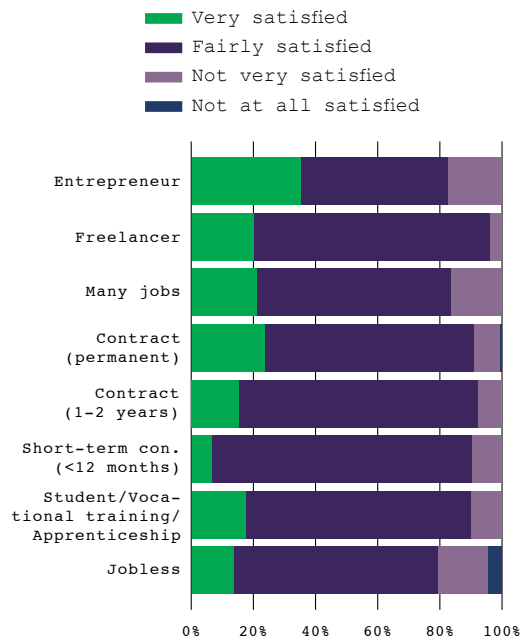
What constitutes a good job for young people today? It is not the income, or at least not according to respondents, who ranked it as fourth priority. Because these priorities vary greatly depending on the respondent's employment situation, it is best to visualise them in the following graph.

The most important aspect in the workplace, ranked first by 37% of 18 to 34 year-olds, and relatively consistent across all types of employment, was self-fulfillment. This aspect is particularly important for entrepreneurs and the unemployed. At second and third place are working atmosphere (33%) and work-life balance (32%). The balance between working and private life (family), is rated very highly by almost all groups. Only the entrepreneurs seem to identify so strongly with their work that the work-life balance is clearly secondary. Income comes in fourth with 26% – most highly valued by multi-jobbers and least prioritised by freelancers. Personal responsibility comes in fifth place with 22% and time off (2%) is a priority only for a few permanent employees and freelancers.

ENTREPRENEURS ARE PARTICULARLY SATISFIED



Work is not the only factor in the happiness of young people, but it is particularly important. It shapes their identity and enables financial independence. It is therefore worthwhile to look at the life satisfaction of 18 to 34 year-olds in relation to their job situation. Some of the most satisfied people are for example entrepreneurs, of which 35% described themselves as 'very satisfied', and 47% as 'fairly satisfied'. Particularly dissatisfied, however, are the unemployed, of which 5% declared themselves 'not at all satisfied', and 15% as 'not very satisfied'. But, as one might anticipate, the picture is mixed – even among the unemployed, one in eight says they are 'very satisfied' with their life. Another striking aspect is found when one considers respondents in permanent contracts: stable employment is valuable, but no guaranteed recipe for happiness.



NEXT STOP BAVARIA: WORK 'TIL YOU DROP

On my journey through Middle Franconia, I stopped in Schwabach. It was five o'clock in the evening, and as I strolled through the beautiful city, made famous for its crafts made of gold, I met Robert. Robert is 24, wears dirty work overalls and his long blond hair in a braid. He is a trained glasscutter, and one sees it in his walk and in his heavy boots. Robert has been working all day. "Glass cutting is really hard work" he sighs, "I've already had my first slipped disc." We sit down on the stairs of a doorway, the evening sun shines in our faces. Robert is tired. "I sometimes wonder about this dream politicians have when they talk of raising the retirement age to 67 or even 70. When I see my older colleagues, I can hardly imagine that it's possible." Work till you drop, this only applies to Robert if certain criteria are met: he needs to feel good on the job, and get along well with his colleagues. Right now for Robert things are not going so well. He has a new colleague, from a temporary employment agency. Although his company managed to create a new job, the new employee has already been told when he has to leave, and he gets less money than the other coworkers. "It's pure poison for our work environment", says Robert. "The new guy doesn't know what he's doing, and the regular workforce has to absorb the surplus labor. He is friendly, but he will likely never become a full-fledged member of our group – because he might be gone tomorrow, it's not worthwhile for us to teach him."

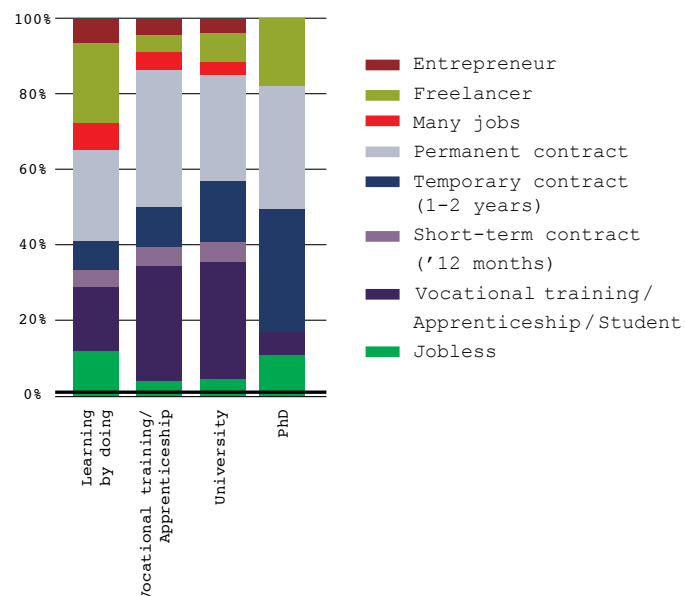
Robert is still talking about the temping agency when we have to scoot aside. A resident whose staircase entrance we are blocking has come home from work. He is in his early thirties, a mason, and a father of three. "The workday's finally over?", I ask – but before the three of us can enter into conversation, he is called down to from the window above us. For this mason the workday is far from over. "You don't think I just have one job, do you?", he laughs, a little cynical. "When my shift is over, I come home, put the kids to bed, and then go to work in a bar. The money has to come from somewhere." He's hardly finished his sentence before he's climbing the stairs out of sight.

Robert still has time to chat. He finds that his generation has been chiefly influenced by digitalisation and the German reunification. He won't say what he thinks about the future of Germany. But maybe it doesn't matter anyhow, because Robert hardly believes he can influence politics in any way – although he sees a need for political action when it comes to the issues of immigration and terrorism.

LEARN SOMETHING, AND YOU'LL BECOME SOMETHING?



At the end of this chapter on work, we'll consider the relationship between education and employment. The PhDs, those who have spent the longest time at school, are still not safe from unemployment (11%), and only a third of them have permanent work contracts. And apparently the best education for entrepreneurs is "learning by doing": One in every four whose education is "learning by doing" is a self-employed entrepreneur. Vocational training as a skilled laborer seems to be the best way towards permanent employment.



GERMANY



Wherever you are in the world, if you say you come from Germany, the first response will be to list off the names of famous football players, followed by German car brands. Also common is an appreciative “Yeah, German Beer!” Once through with those subjects, the conversation comes down to three main stereotypes: German order — which is revered abroad. The economy — known as “the German wonder”. And Berlin, the German capital — known as the New York of Europe.

Germany is a wealthy, beautiful country, from the majestic Alps, across its lovely meadows, up to the alluring beaches of the North and Baltic Seas. Life is good in Germany, but many young people only learn to appreciate this once they have left the country. Only then do they realise how much they had taken their standard of living for granted: a functioning rule of law, effective bureaucracy, good public transport, quality drinking water from the tap, a reliable power supply, social peace, low crime rates, and high quality of schooling and vocational training — these things do not exist everywhere. However, only every second young German is optimistic about the future: education and the incurred debt are their biggest challenges. It is important for these concerns to be taken seriously in order that Germany maintain its standard of living for the generations to come.

BILDUNGSREPUBLIK GERMANY?



From all perspectives – be it as students, apprentices, teachers, workers, employers or the unemployed – young Germans across the board see education as the biggest challenge for Germany. The youngest feel they are victims of an experimental administration that has introduced shorter high school and university curriculums at the expense of education. Many teachers (and some students) are equally annoyed by growing

class sizes, and by the restricted mobility that results from the fact that education is overseen at the level of the Länder (states). Tuition for university might be a constructive means to improve the quality of education and to encourage student commitment. However, as long as tuition is perceived as an additional burden without a reciprocated increase in value, students have the right to resist them.

EXPENSIVE INHERITANCE: DEBT



»I really don't want to pay
into the pension fund. I mean,
I'll never see that money
again, will I?«
– Andy, 27 years old –
(a farmer near Augsburg)

A sober glance at recent demographic and economic changes is sufficient to recognize that Germany's young people have been dealt a difficult hand. Increasing debt will be the burden of future generations, for their entire lives. It's no surprise that people therefore see no reason why they should pay into pension funds, as they do not expect they will ever get anything in return. What is needed now is decisive action, not the easy course of ignoring the problem at hand. A good start would be to reduce youth unemployment and to begin converting precarious employment in solid jobs. The former relieves the strain on public funds; the latter helps replenish them. Introducing a levy on financial transactions and raising the inheritance tax would also help relieve public funds and renew faith in a general sense of justice. It is in the interest of social peace to counteract the rising concentration of wealth among the few.

THE GOOD (ENOUGH) LIFE



Another matter in the distribution of wealth is the problem of scarce and expensive housing in major German cities. As the incomes of young people are falling, rents continue to rise and push young people into the peripheral areas, at the latest when the first child is born the need for more space becomes critical. This usually means longer distances and poorer infrastructure. With a good income, of course, these obstacles can easily be overcome, but how many young people nowadays can claim as much?

Despite the high costs, Germany's large economic centers continue to attract young people. Here they find jobs, culture, and potential partners. For precisely these reasons so many young people are leaving the East. Many people love their hometowns in the East, but with the lack of work and the deteriorating social infrastructure, they see no future there. Many are drawn to other countries in search of better working conditions, wages, or following their partners. One in every seven 18 to 34 year-old would prefer to live "abroad" and considers this move a possible solution to the debt crisis.

WISH LIST



In the conversations with young people one question that always came up were the aspects of Germany they would like to see change. Some wish for politicians they can believe in, others wish people would treat each other more lovingly, and others hoped for a partner, more money, or more recognition in their job.

The author has three hopes for Germany, and these were the inspiration and motivation for the project Young Germans:

More solidarity and social cohesion

More openness and curiosity in peoples' attitudes

Tolerance and dialogue between generations

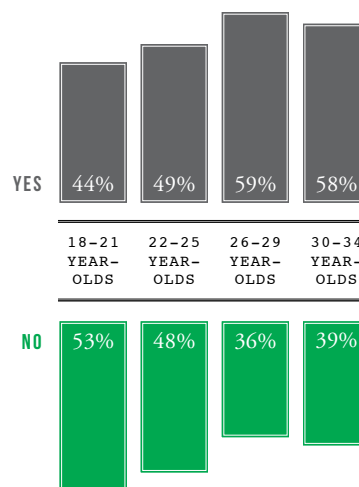
One more thing. The author of the study always found himself justifying the fact that a project about young people in Germany would be called Young Germans. In light of German history, feedback on the project name was often wary that it may come across as overly patriotic. In addition, some critics deemed that people with immigrant backgrounds might feel excluded from the title. People with immigrant background were also polled – and they felt neither excluded from the project title nor irritated. If young people grew up in Germany and have a German passport, they should also be able to call themselves German. To emphasise togetherness rather than difference, terms such as “German-Russian” or “German-Turks” should fall into disuse. Time for a rethink!

A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS



»I SEE THE FUTURE OF GERMANY POSITIVELY«

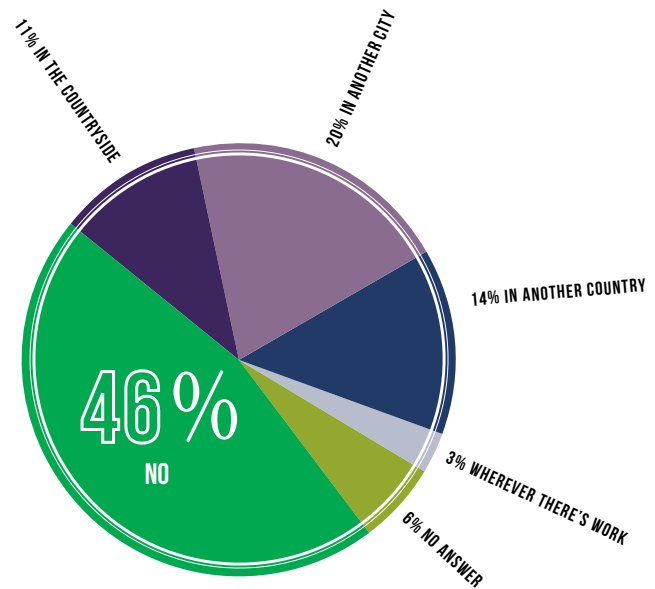
Attitudes of young people towards the future of Germany vary, but are increasingly positive with age. Among 18 to 21 year-olds, pessimism tips the scale with 53%; whereas among 22 to 25 year-olds there are about the same number of optimists as pessimists, and from age 26 and up, optimists are well in the majority, with 60%. Among the youngest, 16% see the country's future as very grim; among the respondents above 30, this number is down to only 5%.



STAYING HERE: 46% ARE HAPPY WITH WHERE THEY ARE LIVING



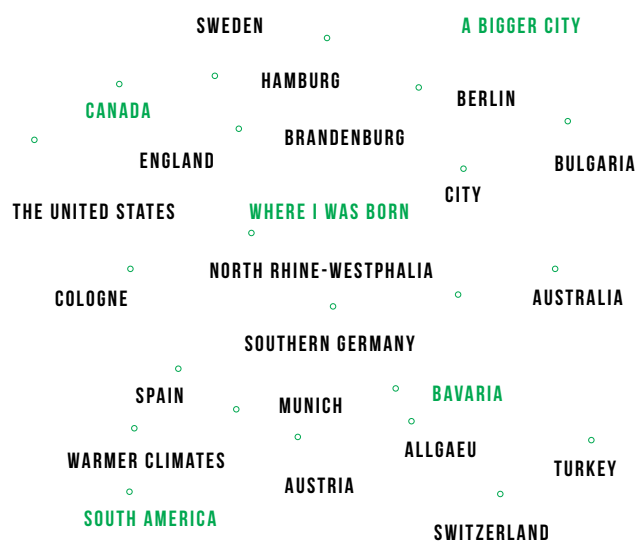
Almost every second German is satisfied with the place they are presently living. The question was whether or not young people would prefer to live permanently in a location other than their current place of residence. 42% of 18 to 21 year-olds answered no, they do not wish to settle anywhere else. Among respondents over 30, 48% were satisfied with their place of residence. It is important to note that the adjacent results are incomplete. They do not indicate an ultimate preference for city, state or foreign country, because they do not qualify the location of the 46% who are already happy with where they are living. One in four of the youngest respondents said they would like to live in a (another) city — amongst the oldest it is only one in seven. One cannot really speak of a great longing for the countryside, with only one in ten wishing to move to the countryside. Across all ages, one in seven, or 14%, wish to live in another country.



IN THE LONG RUN, WOULD YOU RATHER LIVE
SOMEWHERE ELSE THAN HERE?

With age, this trend increases up to 17% in respondents over 30. Some of the respondents knew exactly where they would prefer to live, be it in Germany's largest cities, abroad, or back home.

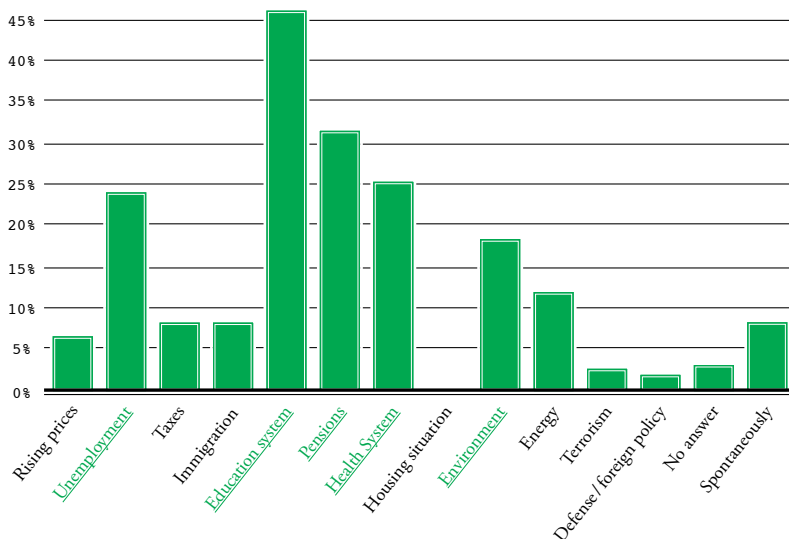
The most-frequently cited destinations were:



IF YOUNG PEOPLE COULD DECIDE ...



WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES
FACING GERMANY AT THE MOMENT?



Rarely do young people influence the political agenda. The matters that concern them rarely garner the public's attention. This makes it all the more interesting to address the great national issues from the perspective of young people. On this subject there were three questions: 1 – a selection of the most important challenges for Germany; 2 – the opportunity to add their own grievances to the list; and 3 – a selection of the main challenges with respect to intergenerational justice.

The greatest challenge cited for Germany was by far the education system (46%), followed by the pension system (32%), the health system (26%), unemployment (24%) and the environment (19%). Looking at the numbers more closely, one notes that (foreseeably) the importance of pension increases with age, from 36% in the youngest respondents to 43% in the oldest. Even wider is the gap in concern for the health care system: its importance increases with age, from 16% to 36% among the respondents over 30. Conversely, the issue of the environment is most critical among the youngest: 27% of which feel it is the most important problem facing Germany today, in contrast to only 12% of the older respondents (30+). Approximately one in ten respondents cited topics such as energy,

immigration, inflation and taxes as particularly important.

A predetermined selection of topics always limits the responses, and in this case the options were additionally decreased by the

lead-up question pertaining specifically to issues of intergenerational justice. To illustrate the breadth of concerns addressing young people today, the following is a list of various other answers to this question of Germany's greatest challenges:

TRUST IN POLITICS SHIFTS IN VALUES EVERYDAY TOLERANCE OF ONE ANOTHER
CLASS DIVISIONS THE FINANCIAL SYSTEM THE WORLD ECONOMY PEACE
INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE NATIONAL DEBT SOCIAL PARASITES
INFLATION DEBT REDUCTION RACISM DATA PROTECTION
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INTERGENERATIONAL CONTRACT ISLAMOPHOBIA
DISENCHANTMENT WITH POLITICAL PARTIES WORLD PEACE INTOLERANCE TOWARDS FOREIGNERS
EMIGRATION FAMILY POLITICS SOCIAL JUSTICE LACK OF LOVE
TRANSPARENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY IN POLITICS AND THE ECONOMY
INTEGRATION OF FOREIGNERS YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT ARMS INDUSTRY
LOBBYISM EXCESSIVE SOCIAL BENEFITS SOCIAL POLITICS
INTRODUCE UNCONDITIONAL BASIC INCOME PREVENT A SHIFT TO THE RADICAL RIGHT
POOR QUALIFICATIONS AMONG THE MAJORITY SOCIAL SECURITY
THE GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY
CHILD-FRIENDLY ATTITUDES CLIMATE CHANGE DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE
WE ARE NO LONGER THINKING SUSTAINABLY – INSTEAD, ONLY AS FAR AS THE NEXT ELECTIONS

INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE



Indicators determined by the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) served as template for the young Germans survey on intergenerational justice. In retrospect, this list of indicators on themes of intergenerational justice seems incomplete, because they only partly address the main issues from the perspective of young people. The results are therefore to be considered alongside the ones in the previous section (on challenges for Germany). The top five issues of intergenerational justice were identified as: education (48%), public debt (38%) renewable energy (26%), economic foresight/investment (25%) and climate change (24%).

It is striking that public debt comes in second place, and gains importance in relation to the age of the respondents: from 30% among 18 to 21 year-olds, up to

41% among those over 30. In contrast to the previous section, young people respond much more strongly to the question of “renewable energy” rather than simply “energy”, although the magnitude decreases with age: from 31% among 18 to 21 year-olds, down to 26% for those over 30. Another comparison among questions: the response to “climate change” (in the section intergenerational justice) and “environment” (in the general questionnaire) is about the same, whereas the importance of “the environment” as a national challenge drops in relation to age from 27% (18 to 21 year-olds) to 12% (30+). The gap in the significance of “climate change” is not quite as wide, though it too decreases from 30% (18 to 21 year-olds) to 19% (30+). Far behind, with only 7%, 3% and 2% respectively, were the topics of innovation, biodiversity and land use.

NEXT STOP: GERMANY

TIM IN KIEL

The city of Kiel was the northernmost point of the trip and early in the morning, I was already on my way to the Kiel Canal between the North and Baltic seas. The last of the fog had not yet lifted, and Tim and his father had already unpacked their folding chairs and lowered their bait into the water. Tim is 24, born and raised in Kiel, and a trained baker. Today is his day off, but it is seldom that Tim is able to take the time to come fishing with his dad. He wants to go back to school, become a master baker, and then do the additional training to become a food inspector. Both cost a lot of money, so Tim is working on the side as a package deliveryman. Which means even less time for fishing. In the long run, however, Tim has no intention of staying in Germany. His best friends have already all moved to the United States, and he wants to join them. As a food inspector, he has better chances of being awarded a residence permit.

JENNY NEAR COLOGNE

North of Cologne, I took a ferry across the Rhine River. In the parking lot above the ferry landing, two guys are taking advantage of the good weather to polish their souped-up Volkswagen Golf. Jenny is the girlfriend to one of them. She is 19 years old, and watches as they work, gently rocking her little baby in the stroller. Why someone would travel two months across Germany with a bicycle and questionnaires makes no sense to these three. Only Jenny fills out the questionnaire. To the question “What would you change about Germany, if you could?” the younger of the two men suddenly exclaims: “I would build a wall around Germany”, and the older one agrees. This is important to them, they say, because the many foreigners are taking away their jobs.

MITKO IN KARLSRUHE

The road into Karlsruhe runs through a huge forest north of the city. This is where Mitko lives in a nice shared flat with a fellow Bulgarian and a German student. Mitko is a computer scientist and has a strong opinion on how Germany treats its human capital. “I think the German immigration policy is really bad. Germany needs well-qualified young people and not uneducated guest workers”, he scolds. It is quite incredible that each year 30,000 poorly trained Turks migrate to Germany, while 40,000 well-educated German-Turks leave. Mitko likes it in Germany, although as a foreigner he always has to justify his being here. And he misses human solidarity: “The indifference with which people meet each other in Germany must be a side effect of the functioning social state”, he says.

AMY IN BADEN-BADEN

Where one might find a phone booth in other places, the resort town of Baden-Baden has a defibrillator. It is red, and it sits in the middle of the town's central square, with an instructional sign in both German and in Russian. The defibrillator is a good indicator of the average age and lifestyle in Baden-Baden. For Amy this means: loneliness. Amy is American, 28 years old. She is the manager at an international corporation. From her window, Amy can look out over the city, all the way to the hills of the Black Forest, and down to the city's famous spas. She can almost see the defibrillator. She stands here often. In the last years, Amy has lived in fifteen different cities in six different countries. But it was never quite like this, in Baden-Baden. “I wish someone would talk to me”, she says, still standing at the window. She simply does not connect with the people here.

CONCLUSIONS



FORECAST

Young people in Germany hope for two things most of all: to live well and pursue a fulfilling career. Both of these are at stake. Germany must set the right course, and as quickly as possible. Young Germans expect a good government to face the challenges of intergenerational justice. This good government must hold businesses and citizens accountable and equally distribute the collective burdens of debt, pensions and healthcare across all shoulders.

The results of the study show that young Germans look to the future with anxiety, almost resignation. They have gotten used to unstable working conditions, and have given up the expectation of achieving their parents' standard of living: a generation with seemingly

endless possibilities, and an uncertain future. Their trust in democracy is thereby compromised. The younger generation sees their political engagement as pointless, because their interests are not taken into account by the government.

Germany might not witness an uprising of its youth in the next few years, but the growing outrage about system failures and injustices is taking impact. A change in thinking about financial markets, minimum wages and nuclear risks has already begun. This is a start, but policy needs to step in now and steer Germany onto a forward-looking and intergenerationally just path – socially, environmentally and economically:

**PEOPLE WITH FULLTIME JOBS SHOULD BE ABLE TO LIVE,
AND NOT JUST SURVIVE, ON THEIR SALARY.
ENOUGH WITH PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT!**

**NATIONAL DEBT SHOULD NOT BE AN INHERITED BURDEN.
THE RISES IN THE LEVELS OF DEBT SHOULD NOT BE SLOWED, BUT THE
ACTUAL LEVELS SHOULD ACTIVELY BE REDUCED!**

**GROWTH, COMPETITION AND ACCELERATION HAVE THEIR LIMITS.
AN APPEAL TO REASON AND MODERATION!**

**WORK AND FAMILY LIFE MUST BE COMPATIBLE.
WE NEED GOOD EMPLOYERS AND BETTER CHILD CARE!**

**GERMANY NEEDS A NEW INTERGENERATIONAL CONTRACT.
YOUNG PEOPLE MUST BE MORE INVOLVED IN ITS CONCEPTION!**

The *Young Germans Project* was launched with the intention of making the interests of young people in Germany more visible. You hold the result in your hands. With these findings, the conditions can be improved for young adults as they make their transition into working life, strive to reach financial independence and to found families of their own. *Young Germans* continues its research on young adults and intergenerational dialogue.

For more information, visit www.jungedeutsche.de/young-germans/



junge Deutsche 

YOUNG GERMANS: THE QUESTIONNAIRE 2011

The following is the questionnaire used for “young Germans” 2011. The questionnaire could be filled out either online or in paper form and took about 4 to 5 minutes. In 2012, the survey will continue, with more themes about young Germans. You can find news and further information online at www.jungedeutsche.de.

PERSONAL DETAILS

First name / Nickname / Alias

Postal Code

Year of birth

☐ Male ☐ Female

LIFE

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU, ON THE WHOLE, WITH THE LIFE YOU LEAD?

☐ Very satisfied ☐ Fairly satisfied ☐ Not very satisfied ☐ Not at all satisfied ☐ No answer

WHAT ARE THE TWO MAIN FACTORS IN YOUR CHOICE OF WHERE TO LIVE? (please check the two most important for you)

☐ Work ☐ Being close to friends and family ☐ Quality of life ☐ Family-friendliness
☐ Leisure activities ☐ (Proximity to) nature ☐ (Proximity to) urban centre ☐ Habit
☐ Other: _____ ☐ No answer

WHICH ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO CHANGE (just check one)

☐ No change ☐ Work situation ☐ Relationship ☐ Place of residence ☐ Finances
☐ Other: _____ ☐ No answer

IN THE LONG RUN, WOULD YOU RATHER LIVE SOMEWHERE ELSE THAN HERE?

☐ No ☐ In the countryside ☐ In another city ☐ In another country ☐ Wherever there's work ☐ No answer
 > Where exactly? (city/country/region): _____

WORK

HOW WOULD YOU JUDGE YOUR PERSONAL JOB SITUATION CURRENTLY?

☐ Very good ☐ Fairly good ☐ Rather bad ☐ Very bad ☐ No answer

HOW WOULD YOU JUDGE THE FINANCIAL SITUATION OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD CURRENTLY?

☐ Very good ☐ Fairly good ☐ Rather bad ☐ Very bad ☐ No answer

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS?

☐ Jobless ☐ Student/Vocational training/Apprenticeship ☐ Short-term contract (<12 months)
☐ Contract (1-2 years) ☐ Contract (permanent) ☐ Entrepreneur
☐ Many jobs ☐ Freelancer ☐ No answer
 Job description: 1) _____ (optional 2) _____

WHAT IS YOUR HIGHEST PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION / EDUCATION LEVEL?

☐ Learning by Doing ☐ Vocational training/Apprenticeship ☐ University ☐ PhD ☐ Other
 Acquired title: _____ ☐ No answer

WHAT ARE THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS IN A JOB, FOR YOU PERSONALLY? (check max. 2)

☐ Income ☐ Self-realisation ☐ Status ☐ Creativity
☐ Work-life balance ☐ Allocated time off ☐ Training and development ☐ Work environment
☐ Personal responsibility ☐ Job safety/stability ☐ Proximity to friends / family ☐ No answer

WHAT ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS FOR THE NEXT 12 MONTHS REGARDING YOUR PERSONAL JOB SITUATION?

☐ Better ☐ Worse ☐ Same ☐ No answer

DO YOU PLAN TO START YOUR OWN COMPANY?

☐ I already have ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐ No answer

FUTURE

HAVE THESE EVENTS HAPPENED TO YOU?

> WHEN IN THE FUTURE?

OR IN THE PAST?

	Yes	No	No Answer	> In <5yrs	In 5yrs+	Never	Don't know	<5yrs ago	Over 5yrs
I. Completion of studies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
II. Moved out of parents' home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
III. Financial independence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
IV. Marriage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
V. Children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

DO YOU FEEL THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS WILL BE TRUE FOR YOU IN THE FUTURE (OR ARE ALREADY?)

	Yes	No	Don't know	Not interested	No Answer
I have reached (or even surpassed) my parents' standard of living.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a secure job.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a good/positive work-life balance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I own a house/apartment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

POLITICS

TO WHAT EXTENT DO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS APPLY TO YOU?

	Very	Fairly	Not very	Not at all	No answer
1) I see the future of my country very positively.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2) I stay informed about national politics.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3) I am satisfied with how democracy is working in my country.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4) I believe I can influence politics with my personal engagement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5) I trust the current government and how it is running the country.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6) I find current policy adequately represents the interests of my generation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7) It is important for me to be politically engaged.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8) I am involved in political parties, committees, movements, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9) The Internet should allow for new opportunities of political participation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10) I am worried about the abuse of my personal data on the Internet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING GERMANY AT THE MOMENT?

- ☐ Rising prices ☐ Unemployment ☐ Taxes ☐ Immigration ☐ Educational system ☐ Pensions
☐ Health system ☐ Housing situation ☐ Environment ☐ Energy ☐ Terrorism ☐ No answer
☐ Defense/foreign affairs ☐ Other: _____

ABOUT OUR GENERATION

WHICH EXPERIENCES OR CIRCUMSTANCES HAVE MOST SHAPED OUR GENERATION OF 18-34 YEAR-OLDS?

- ☐ Breakdown of family ☐ Digitisation ☐ Demographic change ☐ Wars ☐ End of cold war
☐ Scarcity of resources ☐ Climate change ☐ Globalisation ☐ No answer ☐ Other: _____

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING GERMANY WITH RESPECT TO INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE?

- ☐ Saving resources ☐ Climate change ☐ Renewable energies ☐ Biodiversity ☐ Economic ☐ Health
☐ foresight/investment ☐ Public debt ☐ Innovation ☐ Education ☐ No answer

WHAT DO YOU DO PERSONALLY FOR SUSTAINABILITY?

	Yes	No	No answer
Riding a bicycle or taking public transportation?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Daily efforts to save water/electricity/gasoline?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Purchasing "sustainable" products (organic, fair trade, local, recycled, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Financially supporting sustainable initiatives?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
With a focus on: <input type="radio"/> Environment <input type="radio"/> Energy <input type="radio"/> Poverty <input type="radio"/> Education	<input type="radio"/> Other: _____		
Other: _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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WINORA



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Young Germans

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