

Foundation



Remembrance
Responsibility
Future

MEMO youth study

Institute for Interdisciplinary Research
on Conflict and Violence (IKG)

*First excerpts
from The results*

MEMO youth study

First excerpts from the results | Institute for
Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence (IKG)

Online panel survey

3,485 representatively selected young people
between 16 and 25 years of age

Publication of the final study results: Beginning of 2023

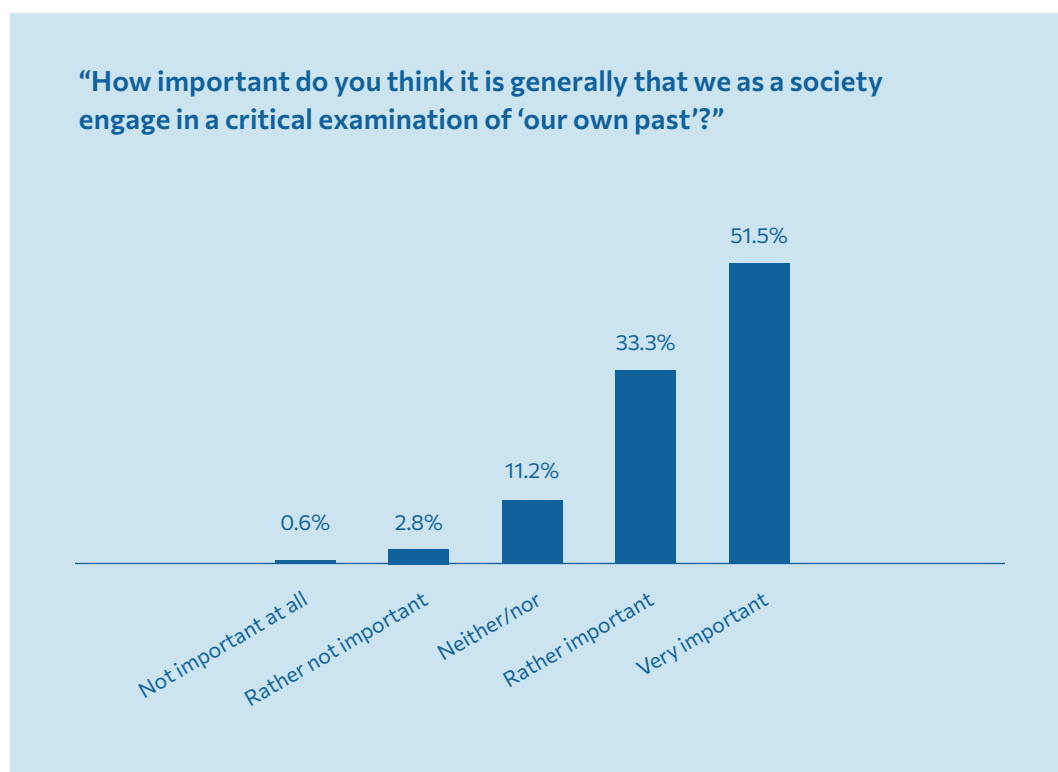
This document presents the first results of an online panel survey carried out by the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence (IKG) at Bielefeld University as part of the MEMO project, which is funded by the Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility and Future (EVZ). For the study, a total of 3,485 young people between the ages of 16 and 25, who were representatively selected, were surveyed online in late summer 2021 concerning German culture of remembrance and the history of National Socialism. In terms of content, the study is linked to the previous MEMO representative surveys, but focuses specifically on adolescents and young adults as the central target group of historical-political educational work. The MEMO youth study is intended to provide information about the concerns and needs of the surveyed age group and to provide an orientation for the current and future historical-political educational work in Germany.

A part of the participants will be surveyed again in late summer 2022 to map points of contact with the culture of remembrance over a period of twelve months and any changes in attitude that may accompany this. Publication of the final study results is scheduled for early 2023. Since the study is still in the state of implementation and evaluation, the **initial findings presented hereafter should be understood as preliminary**. Furthermore, they only represent an excerpt from the various topic areas of the MEMO youth study and refer exclusively to closed-question formats. In the study, participants also answered a series of open-ended questions that provide differentiated information with regard to young people's knowledge and ideas about the crimes of National Socialism. The analysis of these questions is currently ongoing and will be reported in the final version of the study.

Preliminary results

1. The interest in and the relevance of a critical examination of history

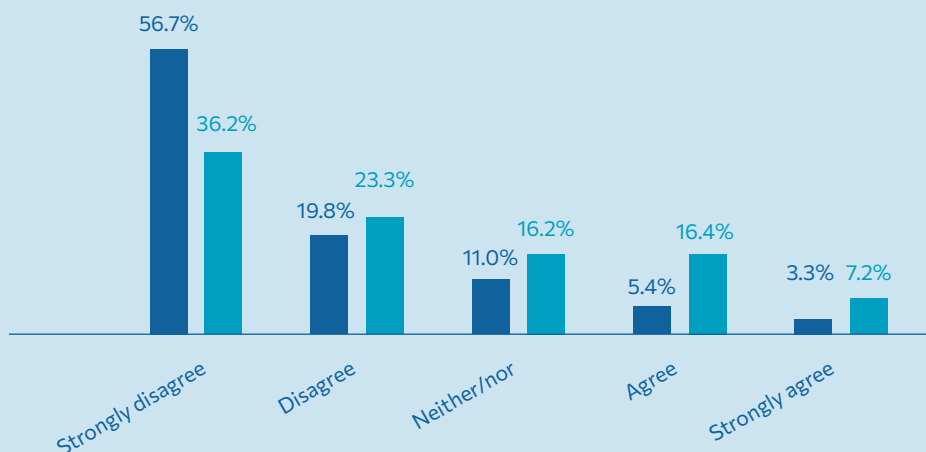
The preliminary results of the MEMO youth study show a high base level of interest among young adults in a societal examination of the past. The majority of 16 to 25-year-olds surveyed (84.8%) feel it is “rather important” or “very important” that we as a society engage in a critical examination of our history. When asked specifically about Germany’s National Socialist past, respondents’ answers do not suggest a lack of interest in addressing the subject on an ongoing basis. On the contrary, only a small percentage of respondents (8.7%) reported a lack of understanding about why they personally should still be dealing with the history of National Socialism today. Approximately three quarters of respondents, (76.5%) do not question the purpose of this examination. When compared with representative surveys of the general population in Germany (see MEMO III/2020), the answers in the MEMO youth study are even clearer: In MEMO III/2020, just under a quarter of adults surveyed (23.6%) said they did not understand why people should still be dealing with the history of National Socialism today.



“I don’t understand why I should still be dealing with the history of National Socialism today.”

■ MEMO youth study

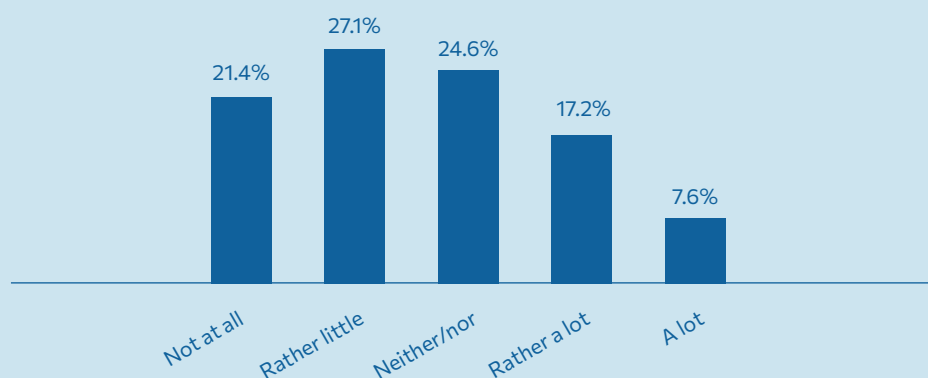
■ MEMO III/2020 (German general population)



2. Family history: Knowledge and critical examination

Whilst interest in a critical examination of National Socialist history appears to be fundamentally high, many respondents in the MEMO youth study reported not having looked much at the history of their own family during the time of National Socialism or not having addressed it at all. Almost half of the respondents (48.5%) state that they had so far dealt “not very much” or “not at all” with references to the time of National Socialism in their own family history. Accordingly, many respondents report ignorance when they were asked about their own ancestors’ involvement in crimes of National Socialism. For example, over a quarter of the respondents say they do not know whether their ancestors were among the perpetrators (26.7%) or among the victims (26.9%) during the time of National Socialism. These and comparable figures are consistently higher among young adults than in previous surveys among the German general population (see MEMO III/2020); this confirms assumptions about increasing gaps in knowledge and awareness in German family biographies.

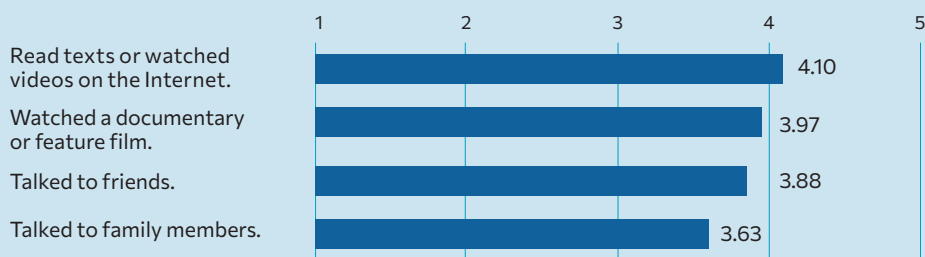
“Have you dealt with your family’s history as part of your previous critical examination of the time of National Socialism?”



3. Ways of critical examination of the subject of National Socialism

With regard to various ways of critical examination of National Socialism, the preliminary results unsurprisingly confirm a particular relevance of the internet as a source of information. Participants in the MEMO youth study very frequently name YouTube and Instagram as concrete digital access points. While some established methods of engagement, for example reading non-fiction books or novels, are reported less frequently compared to the general population (cf. MEMO III/ 2020), feature films and documentaries seem to be a central access point for young people to deal with the subject of National Socialism. Films, series and documentaries are also described by many respondents in the MEMO youth study as the way of examining National Socialism which has personally brought them the most so far. At the same time, the preliminary results show that young people in Germany do not only address the time of National Socialist digitally, but also by conversations among their friends and within their families.

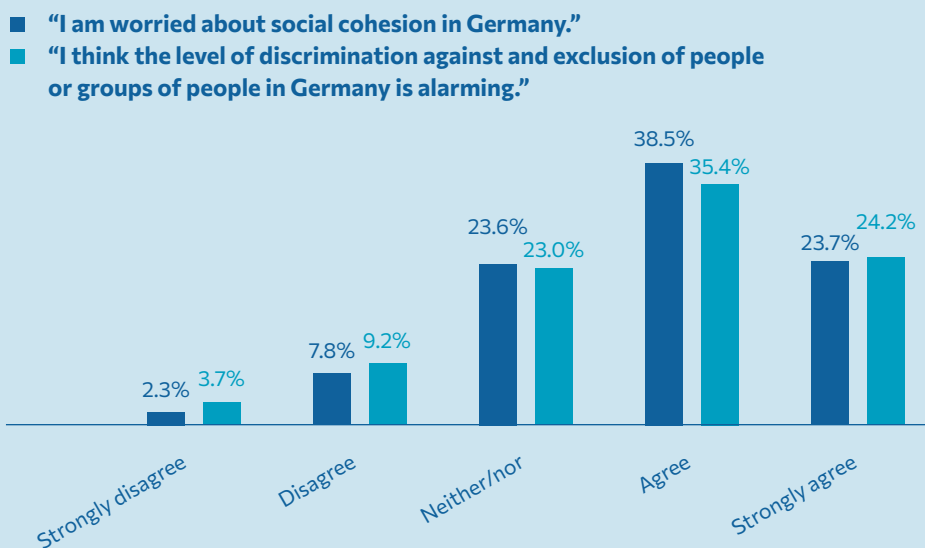
How often have you done the following things to deal critically with the subject of National Socialism?



Note. The mean values for the four most frequently reported ways of dealing critically with the subject of National Socialism are stated here. Respondents answered this question on a scale of 1 – “never” to 5 – “four times or more often” for a total of ten given approaches to the issue.

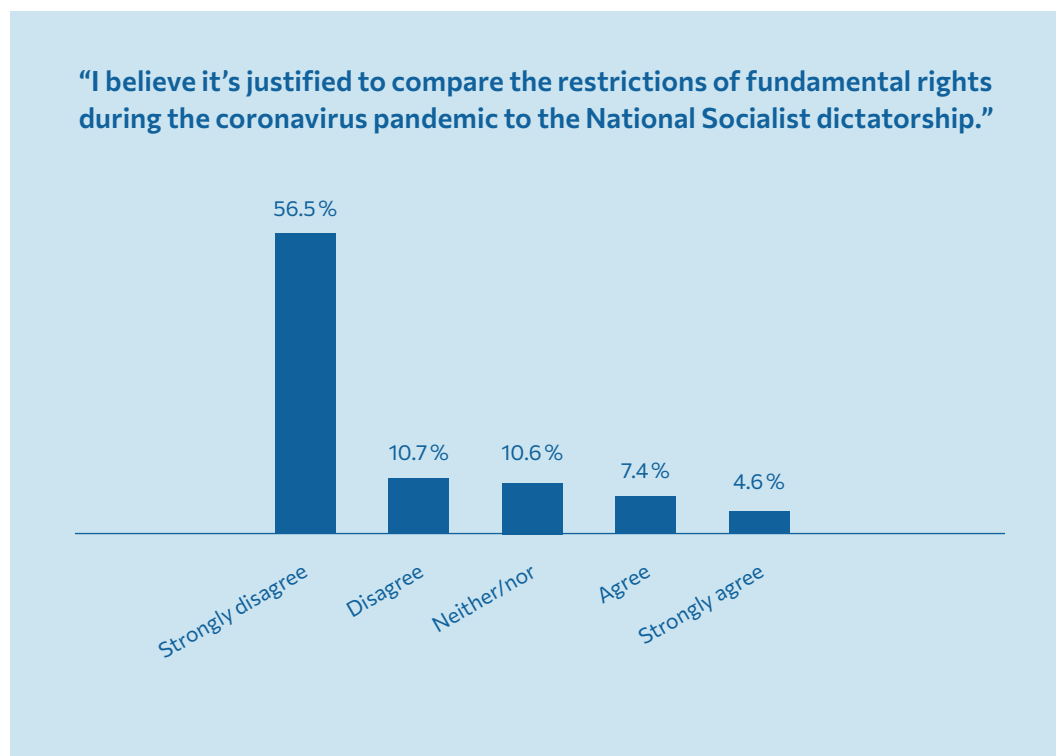
4. The perception of social cohesion in the present

In addition to questions directly related to National Socialist history, the MEMO youth study also includes a series of questions about the perception of current sociopolitical issues and challenges. Among other things, this shows that many of the 16 to 25-year-olds questioned are concerned about social cohesion in Germany (62.2%) and experience the extent to which people are discriminated against and excluded in today's society as a matter of concern (59.6%). Numerous respondents stated in the survey that they themselves felt discriminated against in everyday life because of characteristics such as gender, skin color, religion or other aspects.



5. Placing National Socialist comparisons in the context of the coronavirus pandemic

Direct comparisons of the restrictions of fundamental rights during the coronavirus pandemic with the dictatorship in the time of National Socialism were rejected by the largest proportion of respondents in the MEMO youth study (67.2%). At the same time, more than one in five respondents feel that such comparisons are justified or do not clearly reject them (22.6%). Approximately one in ten respondents (10.2%) gave no answer to this question. Other items in the preliminary results of the study also show agreement with or lack of rejection of revisionist attitudes and group-focused enmity among adolescents and young adults.



Background




Since 2018 the **Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence (IKG)** at Bielefeld University has been carrying out empirical studies on society's memory and critical examination of the time of National Socialist as part of the project "Multidimensional Remembrance Monitor" (MEMO), funded by the EVZ Foundation. The results of four representative telephone surveys have been published so far. They are freely accessible via www.stiftung-evz.de/memo. The MEMO studies shed light on various dimensions of the culture of remembrance and include questions about the following, among other things:

- Concrete knowledge and subjective ideas about the crimes and victims of National Socialism.
- Established and new ways of engaging in a critical examination of National Socialist injustice.
- Attitudes and feelings in relation to the German National Socialist past and the reappraisal of it in society today.
- The connections between a critical examination of history and sociopolitical attitudes in the present.

The studies provide an empirical data basis for discussions about the German culture of remembrance and for reflection on the practice of culture of remembrance.

The content of the MEMO youth study is linked to the previous telephone surveys, but focuses specifically on adolescents and young adults as a central target group of historical-political educational work. The study is designed as an online panel survey and, since it has a larger proportion of open-ended questions, it can provide more nuanced information about the interest in and understanding of history among young people in Germany, their attitudes and expectations concerning the culture of remembrance, and about central didactic approaches and open questions in the context of National Socialist history. By focusing on the concerns of the target group, the study provides a helpful orientation for the current and future historical-political educational work.



In late summer 2021, 3,485 representatively selected young people aged between 16 and 25 (average age: 20.8 years) were questioned via an online survey. It was carried out by the opinion survey institute Ipsos. In late summer 2022, a part of the participants will be questioned again in order to map changes in attitudes and points of contact with National Socialist culture of remembrance within a year. In addition to questions such as those presented here, participants in the study also answered questions about which historical events and time periods they themselves consider to be relevant and which forms of societal examination of history they themselves consider meaningful. The study also asked about issues such as young people's own approaches to explaining the crimes of National Socialism, the role and responsibility of the German population during the time of National Socialism, as well as the unanswered questions that young people themselves ask about National Socialist history. The MEMO youth study is scheduled for publication in early 2023. The descriptive results in this document refer to attitudinal and behavior-related questions which participants answered in closed-question formats. The fact that response values do not always add up to 100 percent within a question is due to „don't know“ answers or missing values. Participants had the option to leave individual questions unanswered at any time during the study.

About the IKG

The Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence (IKG) was founded in Bielefeld in 1996 with the aim of closing a gap in interdisciplinary research on conflict and violence. The IKG is now one of the leading German research institutions in this field and provides a comprehensive structure for interdisciplinary theory development and empirical research on politically and socially relevant phenomena associated with conflict and violence and their implications for social cohesion, participation, democracy and peace. Since 2020, the IKG has been one of the locations of the Research Institute Social Cohesion (Forschungsinstitut Gesellschaftlicher Zusammenhalt) (FGZ) ► www.fgz-risc.de

About the EVZ Foundation

The mission of the EVZ Foundation is to keep alive the memory of the injustice of National Socialist persecution, to accept the implied responsibility in the here and now, and to actively shape the future. The central motive for establishing the Foundation in 2000 was the payment of humanitarian compensation to former forced laborers under the National Socialist regime – a milestone in Germany's efforts to come to terms with the past. Today, with its fields of activity Education and Action, the Foundation funds projects that support survivors of National Socialist persecution, international understanding and the strengthening of human rights.



Further information

MEMO Germany – Multidimensional Remembrance Monitor (2018–2021):
www.stiftung-evz.de/memo

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