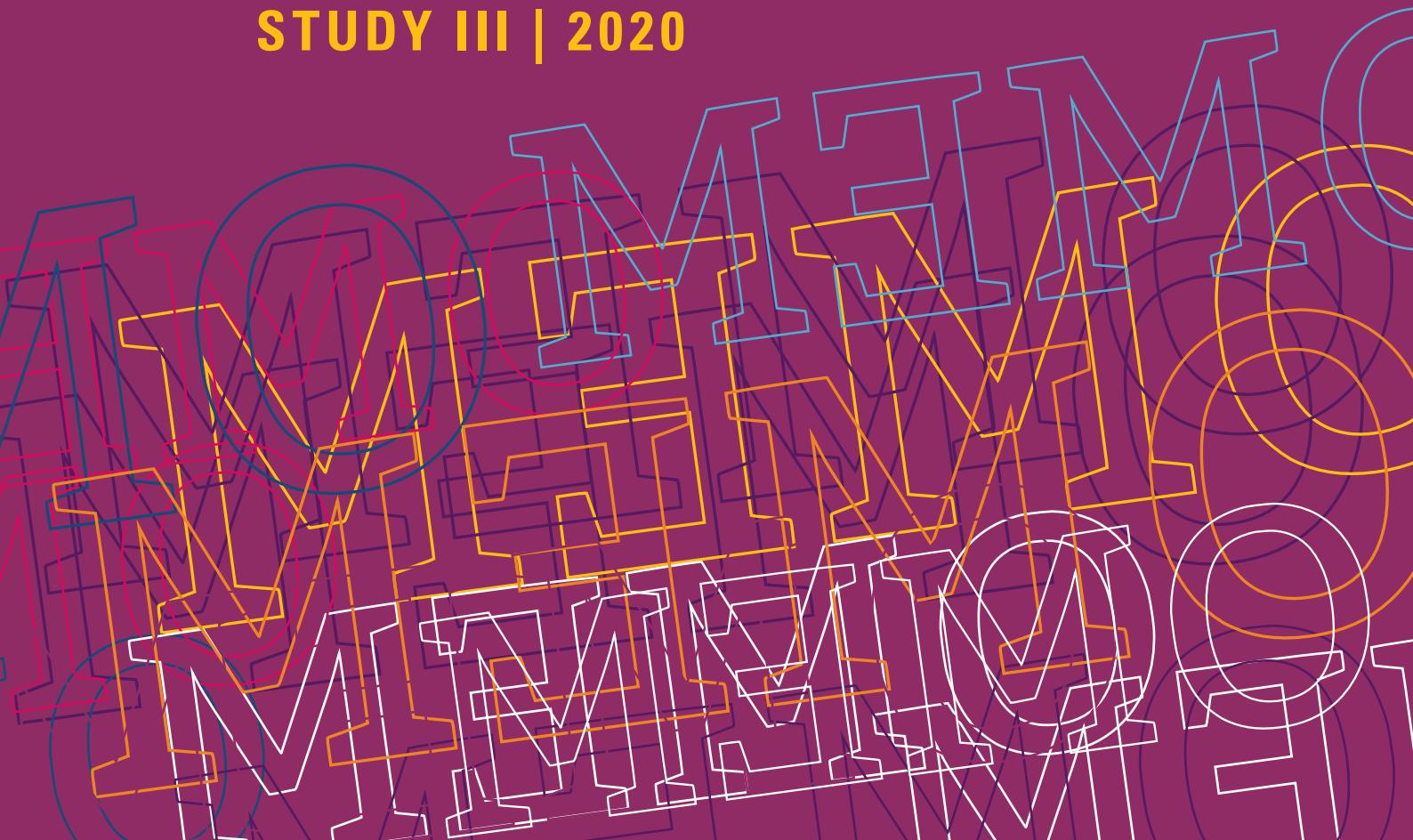


MEMO

Multidimensional
Remembrance
Monitor

STUDY III | 2020



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THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL REMEMBRANCE MONITOR

The Multidimensional Remembrance Monitor (“MEMO”) regularly monitors the state of Germany’s culture of remembrance and its developments, using representative surveys. It examines the historical memories among the general public, the attitudes towards these memories and factors that can shape or distort such memories. MEMO, now in its third edition, has thus been contributing to the empirical documentation of Germany’s culture of remembrance since 2017.

The survey, addressing representative samples of German citizens, aims to find out for example what events people in Germany consider to be historically significant, what attitudes the respondents report having towards the culture of remembrance in Germany, whether and how these attitudes are changing, the extent to which different ways of critically examining history play different roles, and what consequences follow from a critical examination of the past.

By asking these and similar questions, the MEMO studies aim to make an empirical contribution to the discussions on the culture of remembrance in Germany. In the recurring debates about the status of “the German culture of remembrance”, there has often been a lack of systematic, representative studies on the subject. MEMO is helping to close this gap, making it possible to conduct such debates on the basis of empirical data. The study particularly focuses on the remembrance of the persecution, displacement and annihilation of people and groups of people that took place during the time of National Socialism. To what extent are the memories of the “Shoah” – the Holocaust – and National Socialism still important for today’s society? How do they relate to other memories and attitudes? What memories and ways of dealing critically with the subject are desired? Which ones are possibly being avoided or repressed? What roles do local cultures of remembrance and personal connections in the form of family narratives play?

In a working session in August 2017, experts investigating these subjects jointly developed a definition for the concept of a culture of remembrance. This concept, which until now – with a few modifications – forms the basis of MEMO, is defined by the key dimensions of *what* is remembered (such as specific events or the content of family narratives) and *how* it is remembered (for example, different ways and places of critical examination). A third dimension is the question of why one remembers or ought to remember, and *what consequences* follow for the present from the critical examination of German history. In doing so, the MEMO studies do not claim to depict “the culture of remembrance” as a singular phenomenon. Rather, in the form of representative surveys, they reflect the variety of ways in which people deal with history the attitudes towards these ways of dealing with history as well as people’s expectations or desires in dealing with German history in the future.

MEMO I was conducted as a representative telephone survey from December 2017 to February 2018; MEMO II was carried out in November and December 2018. The results were made available online for the general public in the form of reports (accessible on the ► website of the Foundation “Remembrance, Responsibility and Future”).

The present study, MEMO III, was conducted in November and December 2019 after the results of the previous studies were critically discussed with experts engaged in the research and practice of the culture of remembrance. This third study enables us to further track lines of development of the culture of remembrance in Germany. In addition, MEMO III delves deeper into topics that were only touched on in the previous surveys. For example, the study assesses participants' subjective knowledge of different aspects of National Socialism, such as their knowledge about the everyday life and attitudes of the German population in the time of National Socialism; it further addresses films as specific ways of critically examining the period of National Socialism in more detail and examines participants' retrospective interpretation of what happened in Germany in 1945 – end of the war, defeat or liberation?

The present report provides an overview of the design of MEMO III, summarises key findings and offers a framework for interpreting them on the basis of differentiated analyses. In addition, the report includes the entire questionnaire used and the complete descriptive analysis of the data.

2

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

On behalf of the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence (*Institut für interdisziplinäre Konflikt- und Gewaltforschung, IKG*) at Bielefeld University, the survey institute Ipsos conducted a telephone survey (CATI) between November and December 2019 interviewing 1,000 randomly selected respondents from all German federal states. In the standardised telephone survey, respondents answered questions both in open format without specified answer options (e.g. “What would you say happened in Germany in 1945?”) and in closed formats, where statements were given and respondents could indicate the degree of their agreement or disagreement on rating scales (such as “Germany can serve as a successful model of coming to terms with history for other countries to follow.” – “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “neither/nor”, “agree”, “strongly agree”). Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous. There was also always the option not to answer a question (“don’t know” or “prefer not to answer”) or to end the participation in the survey. The MEMO concept is designed in such a way that the study can be repeated as a whole or in excerpts and thus be expanded into a long-term observation.

The following presentation of the data includes calculations of percentages and means. The fact that the answer values do not always add up to 100% is due to some respondents’ “don’t know” answers or missing answers. Furthermore, since for some questions more than one answer was possible, response values can add up to more than 100%. The report also includes information on the statistical significance of both reported correlations and mean differences.

Mean values (M) describe the calculated arithmetic mean, i.e. the average of all answers within the survey. Some mean values are differentiated for different age groups (e.g. M_{31-45}) or for groups that answered questions in a similar way (for example, $M_{National\ Socialism}$ v. $M_{reunification}$).

Correlations (r) describe the strength of a statistical relationship between two variables. They do not allow us to draw conclusions as to the causal direction of this relationship. Correlations or differences can be assumed as “statistically significant” when they are highly unlikely to be random, but systematic. Statistically significant correlations and differences are identified as such in the report. Low correlation coefficients ($r < .30$) are to be interpreted as tendencies. Mean value comparisons (t) provide information on whether the values of two groups differ statistically significantly from each other; distribution tests (χ^2) show whether frequency distributions between groups differ significantly.

3

DESCRIPTION OF THE SURVEY SAMPLE

MEMO III surveyed a total of 1,000 participants. The respondents, between the ages of 17 and 90 ($M = 50.4$, $SD = 19.3$ years old), constitute a representative sample for Germany with an approximately even gender distribution (50.8% female). The distribution among the 16 federal German states is shown on the right. Respondents can be divided into five groups with regard to their age, and into four groups in terms of their highest level of formal education attained. Of all respondents, 16.4% stated that they had a migrant background. Other demographic indicators (information on occupational activity, marital status, net income, religious affiliation) have not yet been included in the analyses reported below.

Distribution of respondents by federal state, in %

Baden-Württemberg	13.1
Bavaria	15.6
Berlin	4.2
Brandenburg	3.0
Bremen	0.8
Hamburg	2.2
Hesse	7.4
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	2.0
Lower Saxony	9.7
North Rhine-Westphalia	21.6
Rhineland-Palatinate	4.9
Saarland	1.3
Saxony	5.1
Saxony-Anhalt	2.8
Schleswig-Holstein	3.5
Thuringia	2.8

Distribution of the five age categories, in %

17–30 years old	19.5
31–45 years old	21.0
46–60 years old	28.3
61–75 years old	19.4
76 years and older	11.8

Distribution of the four education categories

Cat.	Indicates	%	%Cat.
1	No high school diploma	1.6	21.1
	High school diploma ("Hauptschulabschluss" or "Volksschulabschluss")	19.5	
2	Completed 10 th Grade of Vocational School (before 1965: 8 th grade)	4.7	46.1
	High school diploma ("Realschulabschluss", "mittlere Reife")	41.4	
3	Secondary School ("Allgemeine oder fachgebundene Hochschulreife"/"Abitur")	19.7	19.7
4	Completed degree at a university or technical college	12.2	12.2

PRESENTATION OF KEY FINDINGS

4.1 INTEREST IN AND THE MOST IMPORTANT EVENT IN GERMAN HISTORY

Overall, the respondents in MEMO III report a rather high level of interest in German history: 57.1% said they were “interested” or “strongly interested” in German history, 33.7% reported some interest (“somewhat interested”).

Would you say that you are interested in German history?				
Not interested at all	Rather not interested	Somewhat interested	Interested	Strongly interested
1.1%	8.1%	33.7%	32.3%	24.8%

“The most important event in German history”

When asked the open question “We would like to know what you think is the most important event in German history”, 46.4% of the respondents answered with events from the context of the German reunification; 28.7% answered with events from the context of National Socialism. The respondents’ open answers were subsequently sorted (coded) into categories, with explicit answers (such as “World War II”) being assigned to the superordinate category in the same way as keywords (such as “the time of the Nazis”, “National Socialism”) or specific events (“Hitler’s seizure of power”, “the end of World War II”, etc.). If the answers from the “context of National Socialism” are further differentiated, 21.9% of the respondents explicitly referred to “World War II” while 6.8% referred to “the time of the Nazis”, “the persecution of the Jews” or “the Holocaust”. The category of events from the context of “reunification” includes answers such as “German unity”, “the fall of the Berlin Wall” or “reunification”. The category of “other” answers (13.8%) subsumes events such as “the Reformation”, “the Thirty Years’ War” and “the founding of the German Reich” or unspecific answers such as “the democracy” and “the Basic Law” (Grundgesetz). The 464 respondents who mentioned events from the context of reunification mostly assessed these events to be “rather positive” or “positive” (89.2%). Almost three quarters of them (73.1%) were of the opinion that the events have been “rather positive” or “positive” for social cohesion in Germany.

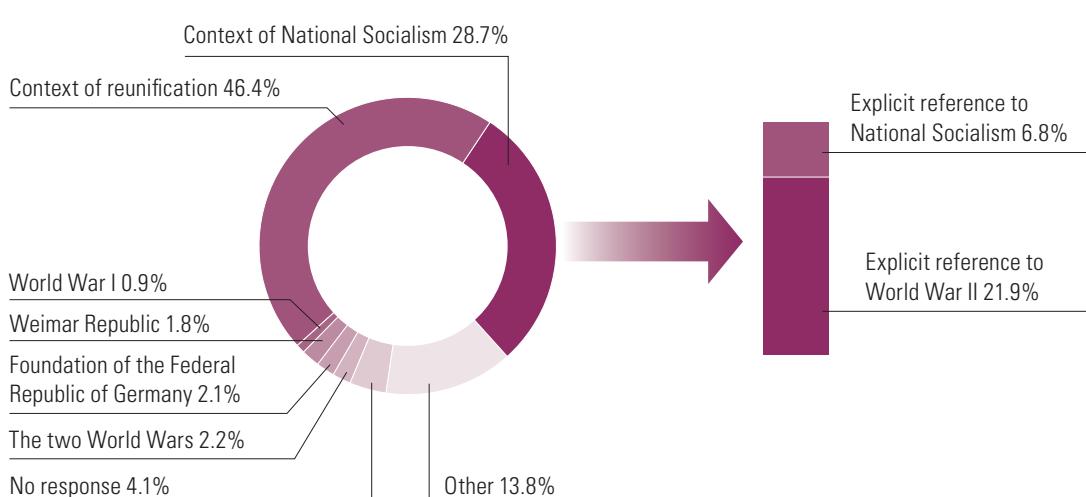


Figure 1. Coding of the open responses to the question regarding the most important event in German history.

On average, those respondents who answered with events from the context of the time of National Socialism assessed the respective event to be more negative ($M_{\text{National Socialism}} = 2.54$, $SD = 1.85$; scale of 1 “negative” to 5 “positive”¹) than those who answered with events from the context of reunification ($M_{\text{reunification}} = 4.59$, $SD = 0.99$)². Furthermore, those who mentioned events from the context of reunification assessed the respective event to be more positive for social cohesion in Germany ($M_{\text{reunification}} = 4.19$, $SD = 1.14$) than those who mentioned events from the context of National Socialism ($M_{\text{National Socialism}} = 3.10$, $SD = 1.67$)³. If we compare these findings to those of the first MEMO study (2018), in which a similar question was asked (“What do you think has been the most important event in Germany since 1900?”), it is notable that in 2018 events from the context of National Socialism were mentioned more often (42.7%) while events from the context of reunification were mentioned less often (35.4%). One possible explanation for this may be a basic shift in the assessment of the significance of the two contexts. On the other hand events from the context of reunification may have been more likely to be cognitively accessible because of the 30th anniversary of reunification and the celebrations just before data collection began on 9 November 2019. Further surveys will provide information about whether this shift proves to be long-term.

4.2 INTERPRETATION OF THE EVENTS IN GERMANY IN 1945

To capture participants’ unbiased perspective, they were first asked to state in their own words what they thought had happened in Germany in 1945. The answers to this open question, which were subsequently coded, show that the majority of respondents (77.0%) answered with the general expression “the end of World War II”, while other, more specific answers such as “defeat” (2.1%), “liberation” (2.0%), “surrender” (1.8%) or the “division” or “occupation of Germany” (1.2%) were rarely mentioned spontaneously.

This open question was followed by a closed question as to how well, in the respondents’ opinion, four different terms describe “what the end of World War II had meant for Germany”. The analysis shows a high level of overall agreement with all four terms, with the respondents perceiving the term “defeat” as the least appropriate in comparison (70.3%) and the term “liberation” as the most appropriate (87.0%). While there were no significant correlations between the other terms and respondents’ age, the approval rating for the term “surrender” was positively correlated with age⁴. Older respondents found the term to be more appropriate for describing the significance of World War II for Germany. With regard to the description of the end of the World War as a “new beginning”, there were differences at a regional level: on average, respondents living in the old federal states of Germany (former West Germany) consider the term “new beginning” to be somewhat more appropriate ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.88$) than respondents from the new federal states (former East Germany) ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 1.05$)⁵.

1 This evaluation included all the answers of respondents who cited events from the context of the period of National Socialism. This includes answers such as “the Holocaust” as well as “the end of World War II”.

2 This difference was statistically significant, $t(388) = 17.22$, $p < .001$; degrees of freedom adjusted for heterogeneity of variances.

3 $t(450) = 9.73$, $p < .001$; degrees of freedom adjusted for heterogeneity of variances.

4 $r(998) = .13$, $p < .001$.

5 $t(998) = 3.40$, $p < .01$.

How well do you think the following terms describe what the end of World War II meant for Germany?					
	Not well at all	Not that well	Neither/nor	Rather well	Very well
"Liberation" ($M = 4.41$)	0.6%	2.3%	10.1%	29.7%	57.3%
"New beginning" ($M = 4.18$)	1.3%	4.2%	13.2%	37.2%	44.0%
"Surrender" ($M = 4.11$)	2.2%	6.9%	13.7%	32.0%	45.2%
"Defeat" ($M = 3.91$)	4.4%	7.8%	17.5%	33.3%	37.0%



Only 5.5% of all respondents find the term ‘new beginning’ to be inappropriate for describing what the end of World War II meant for Germany. Are these the only ones who have retained an awareness of continuities in history, knowing or suspecting that talking about a ‘new beginning’ means repression and the deflection of guilt?

Prof. Dr Doron Kiesel (Education Department of the Central Council of Jews in Germany)

Prof. Dr Thomas Eppenstein (Protestant University of Applied Sciences, Bochum) —————

4.3 WAYS AND PLACES OF REMEMBERING THE TIME OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM

Another block of questions related to the critical examination of the time of National Socialism in various contexts. A total of 45.8% of respondents reported having learned “rather a lot” or “very much” about the time of National Socialism in school. On the other hand, 35.0% reported that they had learned “rather little” or “nothing at all”. There were systematic differences in terms of the respondents’ age as well as their regional origin: the younger the respondents, the more on average they said they had learned about National Socialism in school⁶. In addition, respondents living in the new federal states stated they had learned more in school ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 1.21$) than respondents from the old federal states ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.27$)⁷.

What would you say: How much did you learn about the time of National Socialism in school?				
Nothing at all	Rather little	Neither/nor	Rather a lot	Very much
8.7%	26.3%	19.2%	25.8%	20.0%

⁶ $r(998) = -.29$, $p < .001$; see also Figure 2.

⁷ This difference was significant: $t(998) = 4.82$, $p < .01$.

■ How much did you learn about the time of National Socialism in school?

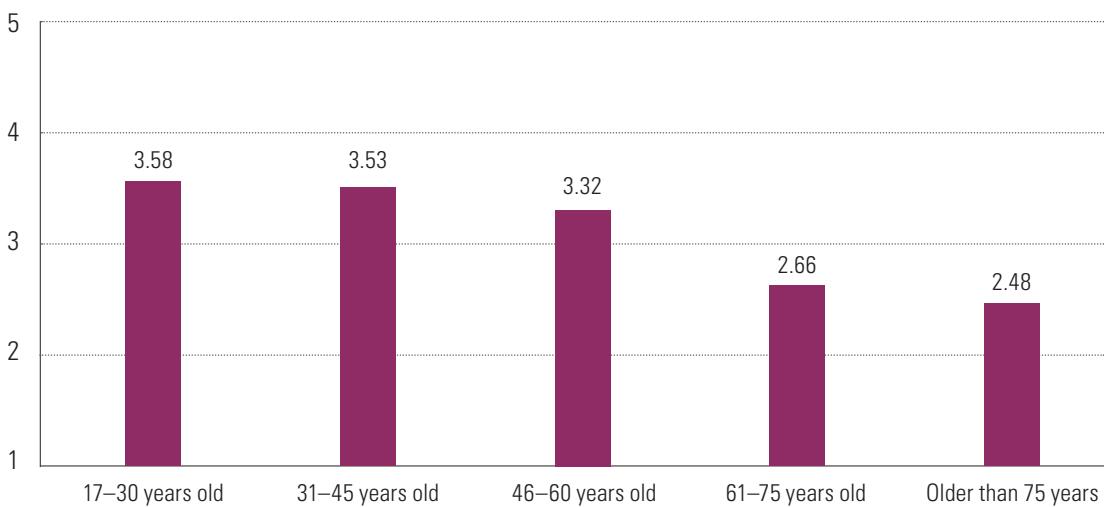


Figure 2. How much was subjectively learned in school in terms of the respondents' age.

In respect of how respondents have personally dealt with the time of National Socialism, there was no systematic correlation with their age. A total of 55.5% of the respondents stated that they had dealt with the period of National Socialism “rather intensively” or “very intensively” on their own initiative.

What would you say: How intensively have you critically dealt with the time of National Socialism on your own?				
Not intensively at all	Rather not intensively	Neither/ nor	Rather intensively	Very intensively
2.8%	14.4%	27.3%	33.6%	21.9%

■ How intensively have you critically dealt with the time of National Socialism on your own?

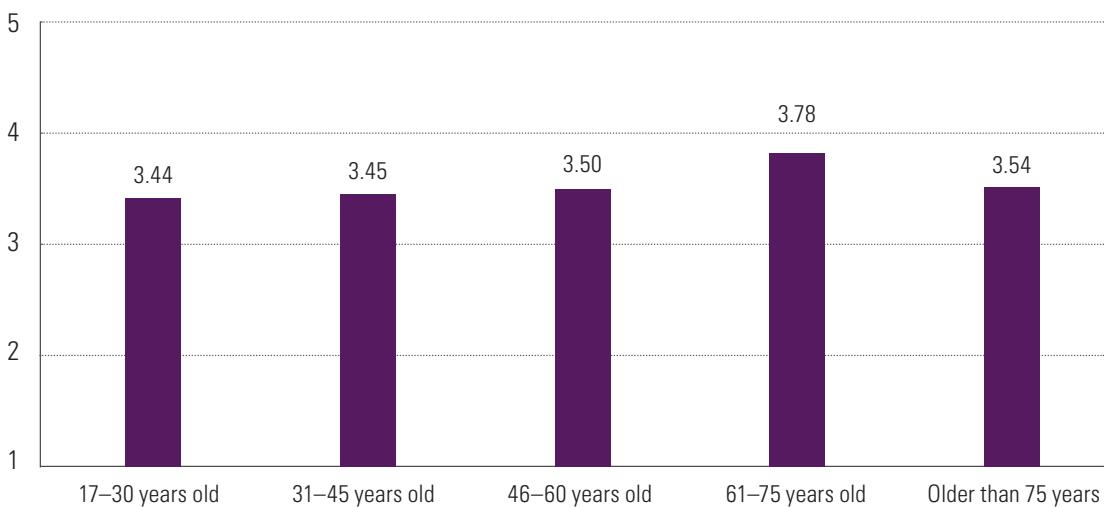


Figure 3. Respondents' critical examination of the topic on their own initiative, in terms of their age.

Ways and places of critical examination

A key aspect of the culture of remembrance is which sources and opportunities people use to critically deal with history. The question “How often have you ever done the following to deal critically with the subject of National Socialism?” asked about a number of possible ways of confronting the subject; the respondents indicated how often they had used the respective ways of dealing with National Socialism so far.

The results show that certain ways and places of critical examination are frequently used by the majority of the respondents and have never been used by only a few respondents. This applies particularly to documentary and feature films, which 75.2% and 69.3% of all respondents, respectively, had used to deal with the subject of National Socialism “four times or more often”, but also to conversations with family members (72.7%). A second group of ways of dealing critically with National Socialism is either not used at all or frequently used by a large percentage of the respondents. This applies, for example, to dealing with the topic on the Internet (36.5% “never” and 48.2% “four times or more often”) and via social media (41.0% “never” and 44.6% “four times or more often”), but also to non-fiction books and novels. For some of the ways, we observe significant correlations with the respondents’ age. Younger respondents, for example, reported more often that they had dealt critically with the period of National Socialism via the Internet⁸ or social media⁹; older respondents, on the other hand, reported more frequently that they had read novels on the subject¹⁰.

How often have you done the following to deal critically with the subject of National Socialism?					
	Never before	Once	Twice	Three times	Four times or more often
Watched a documentary ($M = 4.40$)	4.0%	7.5%	7.7%	5.6%	75.2%
Watched a feature film ($M = 4.24$)	7.2%	7.7%	8.5%	7.2%	69.3%
Talked to family members ($M = 4.22$)	12.8%	3.2%	6.2%	4.9%	72.7%
Read texts or watched videos on the Internet ($M = 3.25$)	36.5%	3.3%	6.8%	5.2%	48.2%
Read a non-fiction book ($M = 3.13$)	28.6%	13.4%	11.9%	9.2%	36.7%
Visited a memorial site ($M = 3.13$)	21.5%	19.4%	15.2%	11.9%	31.8%
Used social media ($M = 3.11$)	41.0%	3.2%	5.1%	5.8%	44.6%
Visited an exhibition ($M = 2.99$)	28.5%	17.1%	13.2%	9.3%	31.5%
Read a novel ($M = 2.84$)	38.4%	13.1%	8.6%	6.6%	32.8%
Met a contemporary witness ($M = 1.94$)	64.4%	9.4%	7.2%	6.0%	12.6%

In addition, the respondents indicated how much personal contact they themselves currently have or have had with people who experienced the period of National Socialism themselves. With regard to direct contact with contemporary witnesses, respondents reported knowing or having known an average of 14 people who had experienced the period of National Socialism themselves. The number of personal contacts correlated with the respondents’ age: older respondents on average reported knowing or having known more people who experienced the period of National Socialism than younger respondents¹¹. A comparison of the values differentiated by age groups shows that the youngest group of respondents on average reported personal contact to five contemporary witnesses of the National Socialist era.

8 $r(998) = -.37, p < .001$.

9 $r(998) = -.21, p < .001$.

10 $r(998) = .21, p < .001$.

11 $r(981) = .29, p < .001$.

■ How many people have you personally known that lived through the Second World War?

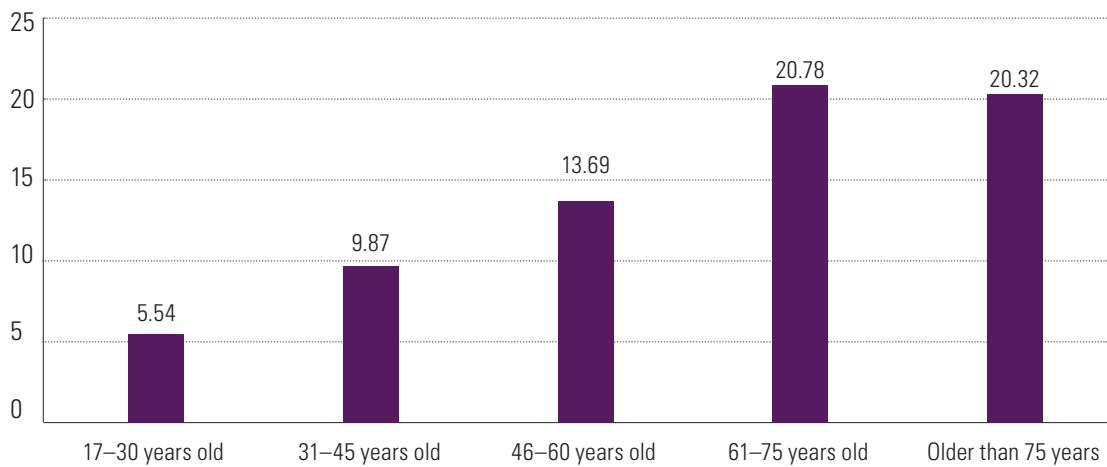


Figure 4. Contact with contemporary witnesses in terms of respondents' age.

Films as means of critical examination

All the respondents who stated that they had seen a feature film or documentary dealing with the subject of National Socialism at least once in their lives were afterwards asked to name a film that they had remembered for a particularly long time after watching it. The majority of these respondents (43.2%) named the film *Schindler's List*, followed by *Holocaust* (5.7%) and *The Diary of Anne Frank* (5.2%). A residual category of "other answers" (16.8%) encompasses numerous films that were mentioned sporadically (e.g. *Night and Fog*, *The Tin Drum* or *All Quiet on the Western Front*).

Frequencies of answers naming specific films dealing with the subject of National Socialism	%
<i>Schindler's List</i>	43.2
<i>Holocaust</i>	5.7
<i>The Diary of Anne Frank</i>	5.2
<i>The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas</i>	4.6
<i>Die Brücke (The Bridge)</i>	4.6
<i>Downfall</i>	3.6
<i>Naked Among Wolves</i>	3.2
<i>Saving Private Ryan</i>	2.4
<i>Life is Beautiful</i>	1.6
<i>The Pianist</i>	1.2

The significance of a local culture of remembrance

Regarding the history of their own place of residence during the National Socialist era, the respondents reported having comparatively little knowledge: 54.8% of all respondents stated that they knew “rather little” or “nothing at all” about what had happened in their place of residence during the period of National Socialism. As to an interest in learning more about the history of their own place of residence, there was a balanced distribution: 38.6% of respondents stated they would like to know more about the history of where they live, and 37.9% were not interested. Approximately one in four respondents chose the middle category: “neither/nor”.

How much do you know about the history of your current place of residence, during the time of National Socialism?				
Nothing at all	Rather little	Neither/nor	Rather a lot	Very much
17.0%	37.8%	24.8%	11.4%	9.0%

Would you be interested in finding out more about the history of your current place of residence, during the time of National Socialism?				
Not interested at all	Not particularly interested	Neither/nor	Quite interested	Very interested
16.4%	21.5%	23.6%	27.9%	10.7%

Remembering the victim groups of the National Socialist era

The following questions were designed to examine the extent to which respondents are in favour of remembering various groups who were murdered during the National Socialist era or who died as German or Allied soldiers in World War II. Results show that 72.0% of all respondents would support the remembrance of the victims of National Socialism; about half of the respondents would support the commemoration of German soldiers killed in action (49.9%), and half would support the commemoration of Allied soldiers killed in action (51.4%).

Suppose that a plaque commemorating ...	Strongly opposed	Rather opposed	Neutral	Rather in favour	Strongly in favour
... victims of National Socialism was to be erected on your street. Would you be ...	3.6%	6.5%	17.9%	28.8%	43.2%
... fallen German soldiers during World War II was to be erected on your street. Would you be ...	4.8%	11.7%	33.3%	26.1%	23.8%
... the Allied soldiers killed in action during World War II was to be erected on your street. Would you be ...	4.5%	11.7%	32.0%	31.9%	19.5%

Concerns about the loss of the remembrance of National Socialism

About half of all the respondents agreed to a fundamental concern that the memory of the time of National Socialism could “disappear” (50.3%); this concern was found to be more pronounced among older respondents than among the younger ones¹². Two-thirds of all respondents (64.6%) agreed with the concern that the German culture of remembrance could be taken over by right-wing populists.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/ nor	Agree	Strongly agree
I am concerned that the memory of the time of National Socialism could disappear.	7.9%	21.9%	20.7%	29.4%	19.9%
I am concerned that the German culture of remembrance could be monopolised by right-wing populists.	4.7%	14.1%	16.7%	37.5%	27.1%

4.4 KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM

In the course of the study, the respondents were asked about specific aspects of their knowledge about the period of National Socialism. First, they were asked how much they thought that they themselves knew about the respective aspects; furthermore they were asked how important they thought it was for Germans in general to have knowledge about these specific aspects. The possible answers were provided in a randomised order within the survey to prevent sequence effects.

Results show that the knowledge about all the aspects of the period of National Socialism addressed within the survey was considered to be “important”. In the mean value comparison, the knowledge about “the systematic murder of the Jews of Europe” was assessed to be the most important aspect of knowledge about the period of National Socialism ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 0.80$). In line with this, the respondents rated their personal knowledge of this aspect as particularly high in comparison with the others ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.91$). Larger discrepancies between respondents’ assessment of the significance of the specific knowledge and their actual personal knowledge emerge in relation to other aspects. For example, respondents rated their knowledge of aspects of political and societal conditions and of the sequence of events of the National Socialists’ seizure of power ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 1.05$), the reactions of the German population ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.02$) and the everyday life and attitudes of the population towards National Socialism ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.01$) as comparatively low. For the last aspect mentioned – the everyday life and attitudes of the German population during National Socialism – we find a significant correlation with respondents’ age¹³. Younger respondents reported knowing less about the everyday life and attitudes of the German population than older respondents.

12 $r(998) = .23$, $p < .001$.

13 $r(998) = .13$, $p < .001$.

-
- How important do you think it is that Germans have knowledge about the following aspects of National Socialism?
 - How much do you yourself know about the following aspects of National Socialism?



Figure 5. Assessment of the significance and the personal knowledge of specific aspects of the period of National Socialism.



The respondents felt they were ‘well informed’ or even ‘very well informed’ about different aspects of National Socialism. For me, it is less clear: many people are indeed very interested and informed, but many only have a superficial knowledge of the history of National Socialism.

Dr Tobias Freimüller (Fritz Bauer Institute)



4.5 FAMILY NARRATIVES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE TIME OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM

Through conversations and accounts, various narratives and stories about the roles of one’s ancestors in the time of National Socialism are being handed down and passed on in families. In order to depict these narratives, MEMO III asked again about the respondents’ knowledge of perpetrators, victims, helpers and people who knew about the situation (bystanders) among their own ancestors. If one of the questions was answered in the affirmative, participants were asked more specifically, as to which category best described the way in which their ancestors were perpetrators, victims or helpers. It should be noted that respondents could always respond with “I don’t know” or refrain from giving an answer (“no response”). This ensured that there were absolutely no forced answers that could have distorted the results. Particularly for the question regarding ancestors who helped potential victims, a significant percentage of the respondents made use of these options.

	Yes	No	I don't know
Were any ancestors of yours among the perpetrators during the time of National Socialism?	23.2%	67.9%	8.8%
Were any ancestors of yours among the victims during the time of National Socialism?	35.8%	59.6%	4.6%
Did any ancestors of yours help potential victims during the time of National Socialism?	32.2%	42.1%	25.6%
Would you say that any ancestors of yours were "bystanders" in the time of National Socialism?	39.7%	50.3%	10.1%

A little more than a third of all respondents (35.8%) reported that there were victims among their own ancestors during the time of National Socialism. Nearly one-third (32.2%) answered in the affirmative to the question of helpers; approximately one quarter (23.2%) gave an affirmative answer regarding perpetrators in their own family. Respondents most frequently reported that their ancestors were among the "bystanders" group. The terms "perpetrator", "victim" and "helper" were consciously kept open, i.e. they were not defined in more detail in the survey. The question about knowledge of "bystanders" was preceded by a definition ("This refers to people who – for example, by knowing about the situation, tolerance, political inaction, looking away or blind obedience – became accomplices of the National Socialist crimes."). If a question was answered in the affirmative, respondents were asked which out of a list of categories best describes the way in which their ancestors can be regarded as perpetrators, victims or helpers. It was possible to select multiple categories in each case. Below is a breakdown of what percentage of respondents rated the relevant categories as applicable.

Which of the following categories describe the perpetrators among your ancestors?		
Direct involvement in the acts (e.g. as a member of the SS, soldier or police officer).	12.4%	
Indirect involvement in the acts (e.g. as an employee of a public authority).	6.7%	
None of the categories listed.	5.0%	

Which of the following categories describes the victims among your ancestors?		
Members of a persecuted group (e.g. Jews, Sinti and Roma, victims of political persecution).	7.0%	
Civilian victims of war (e.g. during air raids).	14.1%	
Refugees or displaced persons.	15.5%	
Soldiers.	16.7%	
None of the categories listed.	4.3%	

Which of the following categories describe how your ancestors helped potential victims?		
Helping them to flee.	9.9%	
Hiding potential victims.	9.7%	
Supporting them as a public servant (e.g. issuing false papers).	0.9%	
Supporting them in everyday needs (e.g. slipping them food or medicine).	19.8%	
None of the categories listed.	3.4%	



For the respondents the term ‘victim’ does not only subsume the victims of the National Socialist persecution, but also the victims of air raids, the displaced ones, soldiers, etc. Nearly half of the respondents are in favour of commemorating German soldiers killed in action. This leads us to ask what function a ‘victim’s perspective’ has for German society today.

Aleksandra Janowska (*Foundation “Remembrance, Responsibility and Future”*)



If respondents confirmed they knew of perpetrators or victims among their ancestors, they were subsequently asked how much this knowledge feels like a burden. Results show that one quarter of the respondents feel burdened by knowing of perpetrators (25.7%), and one quarter by knowing of victims (25.9%) in their own family history. The burden felt as a result of knowing of perpetrators was correlated with the respondents’ age: compared to younger respondents, older respondents felt it to be more of a burden to know that their ancestors had been among the perpetrators of National Socialism¹⁴.

	Not at all	Rather little	Neither/nor	Rather a lot	Very much
How much does it bother you to know that there were perpetrators among your relatives or ancestors?	23.5%	28.3%	22.6%	10.5%	15.2%
How much does it bother you to know that there were victims among your relatives or ancestors?	16.4%	27.6%	30.1%	15.3%	10.6%

In the course of the survey the participants were also asked how much they perceive their own family’s history to be part of the German culture of remembrance. The majority of the respondents (57.8%) agreed with this statement; however, nearly every fourth respondent (23.5%) felt the story of their own family was not represented in the German culture of remembrance. Respondents with a migrant background agreed less strongly with the statement ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.60$) than respondents without a migrant background ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.16$)¹⁵. They thus experienced their own family’s history to be less a part of the German culture of remembrance. A comparison of respondents from the old federal states of Germany ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 1.27$) and the new federal states ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 1.18$) shows a smaller difference¹⁶.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
My own family’s history is a part of the German culture of remembrance.	8.8%	14.7%	17.8%	35.0%	22.8%

14 $r(230) = .14$, $p < .03$.

15 $t(994) = 5.35$, $p < .001$.

16 $t(229) = -1.74$, $p < .08$; degrees of freedom adjusted for heterogeneity of variances.

4.6 GERMANS DURING THE TIME OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM

One section of the questionnaire addressed how respondents retrospectively assess the German population at the time of National Socialism, i.e. the perception and evaluation of historical behaviour from a modern-day perspective. This perspective can be considered a relevant part of the culture of remembrance as it connects people directly with the actions of people and societies in the past. This includes the question of historical responsibility just as much as questions of the extent to which respondents classify Germans during the time of National Socialism as perpetrators, victims or helpers.

The respondents were first asked how much and in what form they thought the German population had been involved in National Socialism and the proportion of those who had known that people were being systematically murdered. All the answers reflect the respondents' subjective assessments. As in the entire interview, the respondents were given the opportunity not to answer questions. The following categories of perpetrators, victims, helpers and people who knew about the situation (bystanders) were not considered mutually exclusive: historically, one and the same person may have belonged to all four categories. The survey did not enquire about only one category, but always all of the categories.

Behaviour of the Germans during the time of National Socialism

The respondents estimated on average that during National Socialism the German population consisted of about one-third victims (33.8%) and one-third perpetrators (33.6%). According to the respondents, a significantly smaller proportion of Germans (15.4%) helped potential victims. The respondents assessed that more than a third of the population (40.1%) knew people were being systematically murdered during the time of National Socialism. On average, younger respondents estimated the percentage of perpetrators¹⁷ and of those who knew about the situation¹⁸ to be higher than older respondents.

During the time of National Socialism, what percentage of the German population do you think ...	M
... were among the perpetrators?	33.6%
... were among the victims?	33.8%
... helped potential victims?	15.4%
... knew that groups of people were being systematically murdered at the time?	40.1%

The respondents felt that the German perpetrators during the time of National Socialism tended to be talked about too little – 32.9% felt that this role held by the Germans during National Socialism was covered too little while 18.3% felt the Germans' perpetrator role was talked about too much. This assessment was independent of the respondents' age¹⁹.

	... much too little	... too little	... to just the right extent	... too much	... far too much
Do you think that the Germans' role as perpetrators during National Socialism is talked about ...	3.1%	29.8%	48.9%	12.3%	6.0%

17 $r(966) = -.17, p < .001$.

18 $r(975) = -.25, p < .001$.

19 $r(998) = -.03, p = .294$.

In the evaluation of those Germans who knew of the murders carried out by the National Socialist regime but did nothing about it, the respondents proved to be inconclusive: 28.9% rejected the statement that “those who knew” were complicit in the crimes of National Socialism; 31.6% of the respondents felt the inaction of those who knew of the crimes of the regime made them likewise guilty. There was no connection between this evaluation and the respondents’ age: younger and older respondents did not differ systematically in evaluating the complicity of the Germans who had known what was going on²⁰.

	Not guilty at all	Not particularly guilty	Neither/ nor	Rather guilty	Absolutely guilty
Would you say that those who knew about the murders but did nothing to stop them were also guilty of the crimes of National Socialism?	11.9%	17.0%	39.5%	21.0%	10.6%

4.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT AND PERCEPTION OF PRESENT-DAY CONDITIONS

A culture of remembrance does not only comprise historical knowledge, but also a subjective perception, interpretation and evaluation of what is remembered historically. What is remembered can be placed in relation to the present and – especially with regard to the critical examination of the time of National Socialism – used for a critical self-reflection. Questions about commemorating the past and “the others” are linked to questions such as “How would I have acted?”.

Accordingly, MEMO III again asked about relationships to the respondents themselves and to the present day. What parallels do the respondents see between present-day societal developments and the period of National Socialism? Do they think people today are less susceptible to right-wing ideologies? How do the respondents think they themselves would have acted and how responsible do they feel for fighting discrimination and exclusion in today’s society? Again, it should be noted that the respondents always had the option not to answer a question.

The respondents’ self-assessment

The next block of questions was introduced with the sentence: “Imagine you yourself had lived in Germany during the time of National Socialism.” Then various categories (perpetrator, victim, helper, member of the resistance) were mentioned; the respondents were asked to assess how likely they thought it was that they themselves would have belonged to these groups during National Socialism.

The majority of the respondents (70.5%) considered it “rather unlikely” or “very unlikely” that they themselves would have become perpetrators; only every tenth respondent (10.5%) felt it was “rather likely” or “very likely”. About one-third each of the respondents considered it “very unlikely” or “rather unlikely” (34.7%) or as “rather likely” or “very likely” (40.5%) that they themselves would have become victims at the time of National Socialism. About two-thirds of the respondents (65.3%) considered it “rather likely” or “very likely” that they themselves would have helped potential victims while only 9.8% imagined it to be “rather likely” or “very likely” that they would not have helped. With regard to active resistance against National Socialism, the respondents were ambivalent – a total of 36.0% considered it unlikely, 32.4% considered it likely, that they would have resisted while 27.4% were uncertain (“neither/nor”).

20 $r(998) = .03, p = .29$.

Imagine you yourself had lived in Germany during the time of National Socialism.
How likely do you think it is that you yourself would have ...

	Very unlikely	Rather unlikely	Neither/nor	Rather likely	Very likely
... become a perpetrator?	41.0%	29.5%	16.4%	7.6%	2.9%
... become a victim?	10.5%	24.2%	22.7%	25.9%	14.6%
... helped potential victims?	2.0%	7.8%	22.5%	34.2%	31.1%
... actively resisted National Socialism?	8.0%	28.0%	27.4%	17.6%	14.8%

These assessments were correlated with respondents' demographics. Male respondents considered it more likely that they themselves would have been among the perpetrators ($M = 2.23, SD = 1.26$) than female respondents ($M = 1.96, SD = 1.21$)²¹. Female respondents deemed it more likely that they would have helped potential victims ($M = 4.01, SD = 1.02$) than male respondents ($M = 3.83, SD = 1.09$)²². Respondents with a migrant background considered it more likely than those without that they themselves would have been among the victims during the period of National Socialism ($M_{\text{with migrant background}} = 3.72, SD = 1.27$ v. $M_{\text{without migrant background}} = 3.04, SD = 1.28$)²³. They also considered it more likely that they would have helped potential victims ($M_{\text{with migrant background}} = 4.29, SD = 0.98$ v. $M_{\text{without migrant background}} = 3.85, SD = 1.06$)²⁴ and actively resisted National Socialism ($M_{\text{with migrant background}} = 3.50, SD = 1.43$ v. $M_{\text{without migrant background}} = 3.09, SD = 1.28$)²⁵.

Assessment of present-day societal conditions

A majority of the respondents assumed that people today would generally be capable of acts similar to those committed during National Socialism: overall, 59.5% of respondents "rather" or "strongly" agreed with this statement; about one-fifth (20.9%) "rather" or "strongly" disagreed. When the same question was asked with regard to Germans as a specific group, the agreement decreased. The statement that Germans today would be capable of acts similar to those committed during National Socialism was affirmed only by 42.4% of the respondents; about one-third (31.3%) rejected the statement. More than one in four respondents (30.1%) felt that Germans today are less susceptible to right-wing ideologies than Germans during the time of National Socialism. Parallels between current political developments in Germany and the time of National Socialism were noted by 30.1% of all respondents.

21 $t(998) = 3.46, p < .01$.

22 $t(989) = 2.77, p < .01$; degrees of freedom adjusted for heterogeneity of variances.

23 $t(994) = 6.27, p < .001$.

24 $t(994) = 4.89, p < .001$.

25 $t(218) = 3.40, p < .01$; degrees of freedom adjusted for heterogeneity of variances.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/ nor	Agree	Strongly agree
I think people today would be capable of acts similar to those of the time of National Socialism.	7.1%	13.8%	19.3%	32.8%	26.7%
I think Germans today would be capable of acts similar to those of the time of National Socialism.	11.3%	20.0%	25.9%	28.3%	14.1%
Today, Germans are less receptive to right-wing ideologies than Germans during the period of National Socialism.	11.6%	23.8%	32.3%	21.4%	8.7%
I see parallels between current political developments in Germany and the time of National Socialism.	8.9%	30.4%	29.4%	18.3%	11.8%



The fear that there is potential for recurrence and the perception of parallelism between current political developments, the end of the Weimar Republic and the time of National Socialism are expressions of both vigilance and helplessness. Places that make historical-political education accessible are competence centres for overcoming present-day societal challenges and for engaging in dialogue about those challenges – beyond generational and social background limits.

Stefan Querl (Villa ten Hompel Memorial Site, Münster)



Assessing personal societal responsibility

Another block of questions dealt with the perception of discrimination and exclusion of groups of people in Germany today due to their national origin, religion or other group affiliations. Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they a) perceived discrimination and exclusion in Germany, b) considered this to be a cause for concern, c) felt responsible for doing something about it, d) had the means to take action themselves, and finally e) were willing to be active in fighting discrimination and the exclusion of people or groups of people in Germany.

Almost two-thirds of the respondents “rather” or “strongly” agreed with each of the individual statements. Responses to the individual statements were correlated (“formed a consistent scale”, Cronbach’s alpha = .65). Respondents who agreed with one of the statements were more likely to agree with the other statements as well. Those respondents who perceived discrimination and the exclusion of people in Germany on the basis of their national origin, religion or other group affiliations were therefore more likely to consider these to be causes for concern, were more likely to feel some personal responsibility for taking action and were more likely to say they knew what they themselves could do to fight the exclusion of and discrimination against people in Germany. They also reported that they were more willing to become active in fighting discrimination and exclusion.

	Percentage of the responses
In my opinion, the discrimination and exclusion of people on the basis of their national origin, religion or other group affiliations is increasing again in Germany.	63.1%
I think the level of discrimination against and exclusion of people or groups of people in Germany is alarming.	59.3%
I feel it is also my responsibility to prevent discrimination and the exclusion of people or groups of people in Germany.	59.9%
I know what I can do to help prevent discrimination and the exclusion of people or groups of people in Germany.	65.2%
I am willing to get actively involved in fighting discrimination and the exclusion of people or groups of people in Germany.	66.4%

The percentage of respondents who "rather" or "strongly" agree with the respective statement is shown here.

When asked about a direct relationship between history and the way social minorities are being dealt with in Germany today, i.e. one of the possible "lessons" of a critical examination of history, the respondents showed some scepticism. Almost two-thirds (60.3%) felt that if we had indeed learned from history, we would treat social minorities better today.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
If we had really learned something from history, we would treat social minorities better today.	1.6%	11.5%	25.3%	33.6%	26.7%

4.8 INTERMEDIATE CONCLUSION ON PERPETRATORS, VICTIMS AND HELPERS

In the course of the survey, respondents indicated their knowledge and their assessment of the frequency of perpetrators, victims and helpers during the time of National Socialism from various perspectives. They reported what they knew about the role their own ancestors played (section 4.5); they estimated the proportions of the German population involved during the time of National Socialism (section 4.6); and they provided an assessment of the likelihood in which they themselves would have become perpetrators, victims or helpers if they had lived in Germany during National Socialism (section 4.7). If we juxtapose these assessments, we obtain the following picture:

With regard to the group of victims among the German population during the time of National Socialism, there is an assessment of slightly more than one-third each. The average estimate of the proportion of victims among the German population (33.8%) is roughly the same as the knowledge of victims among respondents' own ancestors (35.8%) and the likelihood with which respondents estimated that they themselves would have belonged to the group of victims during the time of National Socialism (40.5%).

There are clear differences in terms of the knowledge of or the assessment of perpetrators and helpers during National Socialism. The percentage of perpetrators among the German population at the time of National Socialism is estimated at 33.6%, which is higher than the knowledge of perpetrators among the respondents' own families (23.2%). Furthermore, the proportion of respondents who considered it "rather likely" or "very likely" that they themselves would have belonged to the group of perpetrators during the time of National Socialism is significantly lower (10.5%).

A reverse pattern can be observed with regard to the group of helpers: while their percentage among the German population at the time of National Socialism was assessed to be comparatively low (15.4%), a significantly larger percentage of respondents (32.3%) reported helpers in their own families. The respondents' self-assessment was significantly higher, with almost two-thirds (65.3%) assessing that it was "rather likely" or "very likely" that they themselves would have helped potential victims. Almost a third of the respondents (30.4%) also stated that they likely would have actively resisted National Socialism.

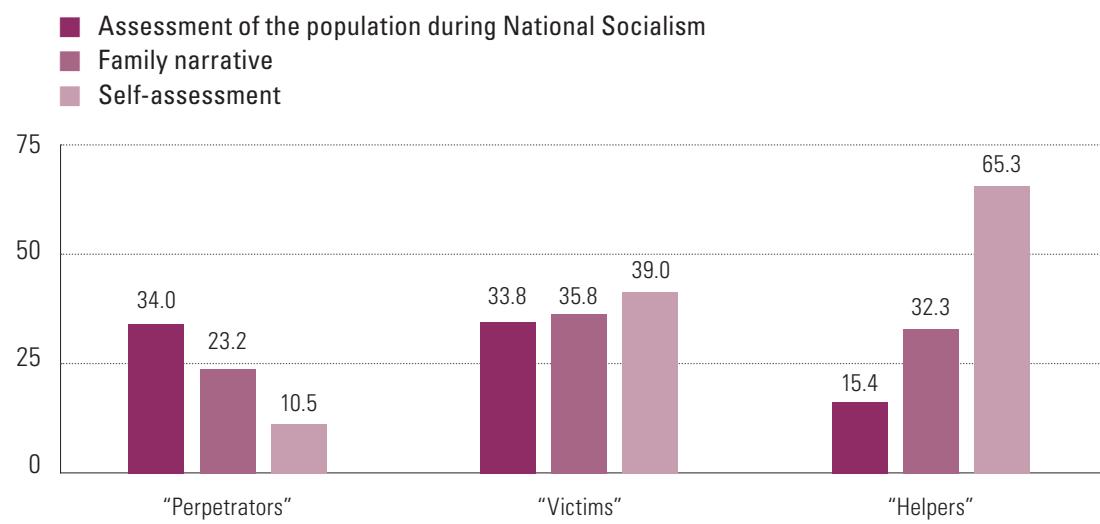


Figure 6. Comparison of the assessed proportions of perpetrators, victims and helpers among the German population during National Socialism, in family narratives and in the assessment of their own behaviour if the respondents themselves had lived during National Socialism (statements in %).

4.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF CALLS TO "DRAW A LINE"

Again and again, the remembrance of the atrocities of National Socialism is challenged by calls for "drawing a line". While more than half of all respondents in MEMO III (51.7%) rejected the statement that it was time to draw a line under Germany's National Socialist past, and 20.7% gave an ambivalent response ("neither/nor"), approximately every fourth respondent (27.1%) agreed with the statement. If we compare those respondents who rejected drawing a line under Germany's National Socialist past with those who were in favour of it, we find systematic differences in their demographic background and in other attitudes.

For example, we observed a difference with regard to the respondents' educational background. Those participants with higher educational qualifications were more likely to reject drawing a line under Germany's National Socialist past²⁶. Those who were in favour of drawing a line report that they are less interested in German history²⁷, have spent less time critically dealing with the time of National Socialism²⁸ and learned less about the subject in school²⁹. They also assessed the significance of the period of National Socialism and their own knowledge of all the aspects addressed in the survey as being generally lower³⁰.

	In favour of "drawing a line"	Rejecting "drawing a line"
Would you say that you are interested in German history?	$M = 3.47$	$M = 3.89$
How intensively have you dealt with the time of National Socialism on your own?	$M = 3.26$	$M = 3.82$
How much would you say you learned about the time of National Socialism in school?	$M = 2.96$	$M = 3.34$

There were further systematic differences observed regarding the assessment of the German population during the National Socialist era. For example, respondents who were in favour of drawing a line assess the percentage of victims³¹ and helpers³² among the German population as higher and the percentage of those who knew about the systematic murder of people groups during this time as lower³³.

During the time of National Socialism, what percentage of the German population do you think ...	In favour of "drawing a line"	Rejecting "drawing a line"
... were among the victims?	$M = 38.8\%$	$M = 30.3\%$
... helped potential victims?	$M = 19.6\%$	$M = 13.6\%$
... knew that groups of people were being systematically murdered at the time?	$M = 32.7\%$	$M = 44.3\%$

Finally, differences can be observed between the groups in respect of attitudes with a direct relevance to the present. For example, respondents who were in favour of drawing a line under Germany's National Socialist past considered it less likely that people today would be capable of acts similar to those in the time of National Socialism³⁴ and judged Germans today to be less susceptible to right-wing ideologies than Germans during National Socialism³⁵. In addition, they identified more strongly with Germany³⁶ and, at the same time, were less willing to fight discrimination against and exclusion of people and groups of people in Germany today³⁷. Moreover, they agreed more strongly with both

26 $\chi^2(4, N = 788) = 51.06, p < .001$.

27 $t(501) = 5.66, p < .001$; degrees of freedom adjusted for heterogeneity of variances.

28 $t(514) = 7.21, p < .001$; degrees of freedom adjusted for heterogeneity of variances.

29 $t(786) = 4.05, p < .001$.

30 all $p < .001$.

31 $t(486) = 4.77, p < .001$; degrees of freedom adjusted for heterogeneity of variances.

32 $t(423) = 4.57, p < .001$; degrees of freedom adjusted for heterogeneity of variances.

33 $t(769) = 5.54, p < .001$.

34 $t(492) = 4.31, p < .001$; degrees of freedom adjusted for heterogeneity of variances.

35 $t(609) = 3.34, p < .01$; degrees of freedom adjusted for heterogeneity of variances.

36 $t(769) = 3.66, p < .001$.

37 $t(478) = 7.40, p < .001$; degrees of freedom adjusted for heterogeneity of variances.

antisemitic³⁸ statements and those that potentially relativise the Holocaust³⁹, and they sympathised more strongly with the Alternative for Germany (*Alternative für Deutschland, AfD*) political party⁴⁰ than respondents who rejected drawing a line under Germany's National Socialist past.

	In favour of "drawing a line"	Rejecting "drawing a line"
I think people today would be capable of acts similar to those of the time of National Socialism.	$M = 3.34$	$M = 3.74$
Today, Germans are less receptive to right-wing ideologies than Germans during the period of National Socialism.	$M = 3.15$	$M = 2.85$
Being German is an important part of my identity.	$M = 3.79$	$M = 3.44$
I am willing to get actively involved in fighting discrimination and the exclusion of people or groups of people in Germany.	$M = 3.46$	$M = 4.05$
Jews have too much influence in Germany.	$M = 2.28$	$M = 1.58$
I doubt that all the reports about the extent of the persecution of the Jews are true.	$M = 2.72$	$M = 1.99$
The AfD is a political party just like all the others.	$M = 2.46$	$M = 1.64$

38 $t(428) = 8.17, p < .001$; degrees of freedom adjusted for heterogeneity of variances.

39 $t(540) = 7.54, p < .001$; degrees of freedom adjusted for heterogeneity of variances.

40 $t(420) = 8.80, p < .001$; degrees of freedom adjusted for heterogeneity of variances.

5

RESULTS OF MEMO I, II AND III IN COMPARISON

A number of questions have been asked in the same way in all the MEMO studies, enabling the monitoring of the course and development of attitudes towards the German culture of remembrance. The following is a direct comparison of the answers to those questions that were asked in MEMO I (2018), MEMO II (2019) and MEMO III (2020) and that are relevant for the context of the culture of remembrance. Various samples representative of Germany were surveyed in each case (repeated representative cross-sectional survey).

	MEMO I	MEMO II	MEMO III
Would you say that you are interested in German history?	60.2%	62.3%	57.1%
How much did you learn about the time of National Socialism in school?	39.6%	45.3%	45.8%

This shows the percentage of respondents who stated that they were "interested" or "strongly interested" in German history or had learned "much" or "very much" in school.

	MEMO I	MEMO II	MEMO III
The era of National Socialism is part of the German identity.	63.5%	71.1%	66.6%
Part of belonging to Germany is knowledge of the history of National Socialism.	87.7%	87.2%	84.7%
Jews have too much influence in Germany.	5.7%	5.6%	2.4%
It is time to draw a line under Germany's National Socialist history.	25.5%	32.6%	27.1%
Germany can serve as an example to other countries because of how well it has come to terms with its past.	44.3%	49.6%	45.7%
I worry that something like the Holocaust could happen again.	47.2%	—	35.0%
When thinking about how other countries think about Germany because of the Holocaust, I feel ashamed.	23.5%	25.9%	32.2%
I see parallels between current political developments in Germany and the time of National Socialism.	—	35.9%	30.1%
It should finally be OK to be proud to be German again.	52.6%	57.3%	53.5%
I think people today would be capable of acts similar to those of the time of National Socialism.	—	65.6%	59.5%

The percentage of respondents who "rather agree" or "strongly agree" with the respective statement is shown here.

In the year of the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II, the findings of MEMO III illustrate the challenges of dealing critically and appropriately with history in a way that is historically accurate, just as they depict the diversity of narratives and perspectives regarding the remembrance of the period of National Socialism that are found in German society today. First of all, it should be noted that, as in the previous studies, the respondents largely report a fundamental interest in German history in general and in remembering the period of National Socialism in particular. This is reflected, for example, in the multitude of ways in which respondents deal with Germany's National Socialist past, their concern that the memory of the period of National Socialism might "disappear" and that Germany's culture of remembrance could be taken over by right-wing populists.

However, the question arises as to the extent to which the significance attributed to remembering the National Socialist past is also reflected in the respondents' reality, attitudes and behaviour. Various indicators in MEMO III make clear that there are perspectives and narratives about the period of National Socialism and World War II prevalent in German society that are very difficult to reconcile with historical facts. This includes in particular those aspects concerning the question of a German victimhood, the Germans' role as perpetrators and the role of the majority of German society during the time of National Socialism. One finding of the MEMO studies that is by now established and observed repeatedly is the respondents' selective knowledge of the role of their ancestors during National Socialism. The findings of MEMO III illustrate again the fact that German families are primarily passing on accounts of the victims and helpers among their own ancestors to following generations, while reports on and knowledge of perpetrators are rarely reported. At the same time, it can be observed that a significant percentage of respondents also count German soldiers killed in action in the victim groups during the time of National Socialism.

Beyond the families' perspectives on the period of National Socialism, the findings also point to a blurring of historical facts and a possible "competition" between the narratives of German victimhood and the victim groups of the National Socialist regime. When asked for a term that appropriately described what the end of World War II meant for Germany, a large percentage of the respondents answered with terms that would enable the narrative – supposedly desirable from today's perspective – that the Germans, who had fallen victim to the National Socialist regime, were "liberated" from it in 1945 and then granted a "new beginning". These results reflect that, including at a linguistic level, perspectives on the time of National Socialism are shared in today's German society that are not compatible with the historical facts in this form.

Findings such as these seem remarkable particularly in light of the fact that, at the same time, a large percentage of the respondents expressed concern that the German culture of remembrance could be taken over by right-wing populists. The historical-revisionist perspectives of such right-wing populists include the relativisation of the National Socialist reign of terror and the disparagement of victim groups of National Socialism, but also the glorification of German perpetrators and the overemphasis on German victims. The findings of MEMO III do not suggest that such extremely right-wing perspectives would meet with approval among broad sections of the German population. Rather, it can be critically established that they would at least be implicitly compatible since they are already reflected at various points in the answers and perspectives on the history of National Socialism. While those respondents who are expressly in favour of "drawing a line" under Germany's National Socialist past can be assumed to openly agree to such reinterpretations, the question arises for the other respondents, constituting the majority, regarding the causes for such displaced perspectives. The fact that many are generally in favour of remembering Germany's National Socialist past and critically deal with it on their own initiative suggests that the distortions are not conscious or deliberate. Rather, we would assume that it is due to the chronological distance that "memory gaps" with regard to the period of National Socialism have now emerged and are emerging, and it is these gaps that

make people susceptible to revisionist tendencies, (social-)psychologically motivated reinterpretations or the influence of individual media presentations of the time of National Socialism. *Schindler's List* for example has been seen by at least a third of the representative sample and is remembered as an especially important film for dealing critically with the time of National Socialism. The fact that individual media presentations are so widespread seems problematic: they are often only loosely based on historical facts and generally present events from one specific perspective.

Despite the increasing time interval between the present and the time of National Socialism and the decreasing contact with contemporary witnesses, young respondents continue to report a high level of interest in critically examining the history of National Socialism. It then seems all the more important to enable a variety of ways of critical examination to reach as many interested young people in Germany as possible, offering ways of linking their interests, questions and individual biographies with the historical context of National Socialism. These challenges surely include the finding that while respondents with a migrant background are just as interested in this period of history, they feel that their own family histories are underrepresented in the German culture of remembrance. In this respect, there seem to be numerous possible points of reference for very different family histories – regardless of their respective origins – that can be easily communicated in historical-political terms. Furthermore, targeted offerings for dealing critically with “local cultures of remembrance” could also help establish more direct, more specific links to local history. Still just over a third of the respondents would like to find out more about the history of their place of residence, during the period of National Socialism; more than half answered that they knew rather little or nothing at all about their town’s history in this respect.

In light of these findings, the question arises as to what extent Germany’s present-day culture of remembrance reflects a “critical examination” along with a “remembering of” the National Socialist past. Findings such as those regarding the respondents’ comparatively low level of knowledge about the societal conditions and processes that preceded the systematic murder of people during the period of National Socialism, the fact that the respondents simultaneously assessed their own willingness to help and civic courage to be high, and finally the perception that Germans today are “immune” to a certain extent suggest that precisely this knowledge of the processes in society as a whole constitutes an important part of the critical examination that will help prevent historical-revisionist tendencies from taking (even more) effect in emerging knowledge gaps.

ANNEX

COMPLETE PRESENTATION OF THE DESCRIPTIVE FINDINGS

We would like to know what you think is the most important event in German history. (Open answer format)

Event	Percentage of the responses
Events from the context of reunification	46.4%
Events from the context of National Socialism	28.7%
Other	13.8%
No response	4.1%
The two World Wars	2.2%
Founding of the Federal Republic of Germany	2.1%
Weimar Republic	1.8%
World War I	0.9%

Below are the answers of the 464 people who answered the previous question with “events in the context of reunification”. It should be noted that this question was subsequently coded. This category includes answers such as “German unity”, “the fall of the Berlin Wall” or “reunification”.

Would you say this event was ...?				
Negative	Rather negative	Neutral	Rather positive	Positive
5.0 %	0.3%	5.4%	8.6%	80.6%

Would you say this event was ... for social cohesion in Germany?				
Negative	Rather negative	Neutral	Rather positive	Positive
4.2%	4.2%	18.4%	14.8%	58.3%

Below are the answers of the 287 people who, in response to the question about the most important event in German history, mentioned events from the context of National Socialism. This includes explicit answers such as “World War II” as much as keywords attributable to this category such as “the National Socialist regime”, “the persecution of the Jews” or more specific events such as “Hitler’s seizure of power” and “the end of World War II”. The wide range of this category in terms of content is also reflected in the variance of the evaluations of the events, described below.

Would you say this event was ...?				
Negative	Rather negative	Neutral	Rather positive	Positive
55.1%	4.8%	4.1%	2.4%	33.5%

Would you say this event was ... for social cohesion in Germany?				
Negative	Rather negative	Neutral	Rather positive	Positive
31.0%	6.9%	18.1%	9.1%	34.9%

The category of “other” answers subsumes events such as “the Reformation”, “the Thirty Years’ War”, “the foundation of the German Empire” and unspecific answers such as “the democracy”.

What would you say happened in Germany in 1945?
(Open answer format)

Event	Percentage of the responses
"End of World War II"	77.0%
Other answers	4.4%
"Defeat"	2.1%
"Liberation"	2.0%
"Surrender"	1.8%
"End of the National Socialist dictatorship"	1.4%
"Division/occupation of Germany"	1.2%

How well do you think the following terms describe what the end of World War II meant for Germany?					
	Not well at all	Not particularly well	Neither/nor	Rather well	Very well
Defeat	4.4%	7.8%	17.5%	33.3%	37.0%
Liberation	0.6%	2.3%	10.1%	29.7%	57.3%
Surrender	2.2%	6.9%	13.7%	32.0%	45.2%
New beginning	1.3%	4.2%	13.2%	32.0%	45.2%

Would you say that you are interested in German history?				
Not interested at all	Not particularly interested	Neither/nor	Interested	Strongly interested
1.1%	8.1%	33.7%	32.3%	24.8%

What would you say: How much did you learn about the time of National Socialism in school?				
Nothing at all	Not very much	Somewhat	Rather a lot	Very much
8.7%	26.3%	19.2%	25.8%	20.0%

How much do you yourself know about the following aspects of National Socialism?

	Nothing at all	Not very much	Neither/ nor	Rather a lot	Very much
The systematic murder of the Jews of Europe. ($M = 4.10$)	1.7%	4.1%	14.0%	42.9%	37.3%
The persecution of various victim groups in Germany. ($M = 3.75$)	1.2%	10.1%	24.0%	41.6%	23.1%
The ideology of National Socialism. ($M = 3.65$)	3.2%	13.2%	21.1%	40.6%	21.9%
The political and societal conditions and the sequence of events as the National Socialists seized power. ($M = 3.49$)	2.7%	16.9%	26.2%	37.3%	16.9%
The German population's reactions to the crimes of the National Socialist regime. ($M = 3.42$)	2.2%	16.6%	34.3%	30.8%	16.1%
Everyday life in National Socialist Germany and the general public's attitude towards National Socialism. ($M = 3.34$)	2.4%	18.5%	35.5%	30.0%	13.5%

How important do you think it is for Germans to know something about the following aspects of National Socialism?

	Not important at all	Not particularly important	Neither/ nor	Rather important	Very important
The systematic murder of the Jews of Europe. ($M = 4.59$)	1.7%	1.1%	6.3%	18.1%	72.7%
The persecution of various victim groups in Germany. ($M = 4.49$)	1.6%	1.8%	8.7%	21.6%	66.2%
The political and social conditions and the sequence of events as the National Socialists seized power. ($M = 4.40$)	0.7%	2.8%	11.1%	26.5%	58.8%
The German population's reactions to the crimes of the National Socialist regime. ($M = 4.39$)	0.7%	2.6%	12.5%	25.2%	59.0%
Everyday life in National Socialist Germany and the general public's attitude towards National Socialism. ($M = 4.31$)	0.6%	3.4%	13.2%	29.7%	53.2%
The ideology of National Socialism. ($M = 4.24$)	2.7%	4.2%	13.9%	24.3%	54.8%

How intensively have you dealt with the time of National Socialism on your own?				
Not at all	Not very much	Neither/nor	Rather a lot	Very much
2.8%	14.4%	27.3%	33.6%	21.9%

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

	Never	Once	Twice	Three times	Four times or more often
Watched a documentary ($M = 4.40$)	4.0%	7.5%	7.7%	5.6%	75.2%
Watched a feature film ($M = 4.24$)	7.2%	7.7%	8.5%	7.2%	69.3%
Talked to family members ($M = 4.22$)	12.8%	3.2%	6.2%	4.9%	72.7%
Read texts or watched videos on the Internet ($M = 3.25$)	36.5%	3.3%	6.8%	5.2%	48.2%
Read a non-fiction book ($M = 3.13$)	28.6%	13.4%	11.9%	9.2%	36.7%
Visited a memorial site ($M = 3.13$)	21.5%	19.4%	15.2%	11.9%	31.8%
Used social media ($M = 3.11$)	41.0%	3.2%	5.1%	5.8%	44.6%
Visited an exhibition ($M = 2.99$)	28.5%	17.1%	13.2%	9.3%	31.5%
Read a novel ($M = 2.84$)	38.4%	13.1%	8.6%	6.6%	32.8%
Met a contemporary witness ($M = 1.94$)	64.4%	9.4%	7.2%	6.0%	12.6%

The 729 participants who, when asked if they had “watched a documentary” or ”watched a feature film”, answered that they had done so at least “once”, were then asked the following:

**The following question is about films that you have watched on the subject of National Socialism. Can you tell me the name of a film that has remained in your memory for a particularly long time after you watched it?
(Open answer format)**

Film title	Percentage of the responses
<i>Schindler's List</i>	43.2%
Other answers	16.8%
<i>Holocaust</i>	5.7%
<i>The Diary of Anne Frank</i>	5.2%
<i>The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas</i>	4.6%
<i>Die Brücke (The Bridge)</i>	4.6%
<i>Downfall</i>	3.6%
<i>Naked Among Wolves</i>	3.2%
<i>Saving Private Ryan</i>	2.4%
<i>Life is Beautiful</i>	1.6%
<i>The Pianist</i>	1.2%
<i>Holocaust (miniseries)</i>	1.0%
<i>The Adventures of Werner Holt</i>	0.9%
<i>Die weiße Rose (The White Rose)</i>	0.5%
<i>Europa Europa</i>	0.3%
<i>Die Welle (The Wave, film, 2008)</i>	0.3%

How much do you know about the history of your current place of residence, during the time of National Socialism?				
Nothing at all	Not very much	Neither/nor	Rather a lot	Very much
17.0%	37.8%	24.8%	11.4%	9.0%

Would you be interested in finding out more about the history of your current place of residence, during the time of National Socialism?				
Not interested at all	Not particularly interested	Neither/nor	Quite interested	Very interested
16.4%	21.5%	23.6%	27.9%	10.7%

Suppose that a plaque commemorating the victims of National Socialism was to be erected in your street. Would you be ...				
Strongly opposed	Rather opposed	Neutral	Rather in favour	Strongly in favour
3.6%	6.5%	17.9%	28.8%	43.2%

Suppose that a plaque commemorating fallen German soldiers during World War II was to be erected on your street. Would you be ...				
Strongly opposed	Rather opposed	Neutral	Rather in favour	Strongly in favour
4.8%	11.7%	33.3%	26.1%	23.8%

Suppose that a plaque commemorating the Allied soldiers killed during World War II was to be erected in your street. Would you be ...				
Strongly opposed	Rather opposed	Neutral	Rather in favour	Strongly in favour
4.5%	11.7%	32.0%	31.9%	19.5%

How many people have you personally known who lived through World War II? (Open answer format, categories formed subsequently)				
0	1–5	6–10	11–30	31–100
5.9%	41.4%	23.8%	20.6%	8.3%

Were any ancestors of yours among the perpetrators during the time of National Socialism?		
Yes	No	I don't know
23.2%	67.9%	8.8%

The 232 people who answered “yes” to the question were also asked the following question:

Which of the following categories describe the perpetrators among your relatives or ancestors? (More than one answer is possible)

Categories	Percentage, partial sample	Percentage, total sample
Direct involvement in the acts (e.g. as a member of the SS, as a soldier or as a police officer).	53.2%	12.4%
Indirect involvement in the acts (e.g. as an employee of a public authority).	28.7%	6.7%
None of the categories listed.	21.6%	5.0%
I don't know.	1.8%	0.4%

How much does it bother you to know that there were perpetrators among your relatives or ancestors?

Not at all	Not much	Neither/nor	Rather a lot	Very much
23.5%	28.3%	22.6%	10.5%	15.2%

Were any ancestors of yours among the victims during the time of National Socialism?

Yes	No	I don't know
35.8%	59.6%	4.6%

The 358 people who answered “yes” to the question were also asked the following question:

Which of the following categories describe the victims among your relatives or ancestors? (More than one answer is possible)

Categories	Percentage, partial sample	Percentage, total sample
Members of a persecuted group.	19.5%	7.0%
Civilian victims of the war (e.g. in air raids).	39.5%	14.1%
Refugees or displaced persons.	43.2%	15.5%
Soldiers.	46.7%	16.7%
None of the categories listed.	11.9%	4.3%
I don't know.	1.1%	0.4%

How much does it bother you to know that there were victims among your relatives or ancestors?

Not at all	Not much	Neither/nor	Rather a lot	Very much
16.4%	27.6%	30.1%	15.3%	10.6%

Did any ancestors of yours help potential victims during the time of National Socialism?		
Yes	No	I don't know
32.3%	42.1%	25.6%

The 323 people who answered “yes” to the question were also asked the following question:

Which of the following categories describe how your ancestors helped potential victims? (More than one answer is possible)

Categories	Percentage, partial sample	Percentage, total sample
Helping them to flee.	30.8%	9.9%
Hiding potential victims.	30.1%	9.7%
Supporting them as a public servant (such as issuing false papers).	2.7%	0.9%
Supporting them in everyday needs (such as slipping them food or medicine).	61.2%	19.8%
None of the categories listed.	10.6%	3.4%
I don't know.	4.1%	1.3%

With regard to the behaviour of the German population during the National Socialist era, the term “bystander” is often used. This refers to people who – for example, by knowing about the situation or looking away, or by their tolerance, political inaction or blind obedience – became accomplices to the National Socialist crimes.

Would you say that any ancestors of yours were bystanders during the time of National Socialism?		
Yes	No	I don't know
39.7%	50.3%	10.1%

Would you say that those who knew about the murders but did nothing to stop them were also guilty of the crimes of National Socialism?				
Not guilty at all	Not very guilty	Neither/nor	Rather guilty	Absolutely guilty
11.9%	17.0%	39.5%	21.0%	10.6%

Do you think that the Germans' role as perpetrators during National Socialism is talked about ...				
... much too little	... too little	... to just the right extent	... too much	... far too much
3.1%	29.8%	48.9%	12.3%	6.0%

Have you ever participated in a project/an international exchange programme dealing with the subject of National Socialism, such as a youth exchange or an international memorial site tour?	
Yes	No
10.8%	89.2%

The following questions are about the people who lived in Germany at the time of National Socialism – approximately 80 million people.

During the time of National Socialism, what percentage of the German population do you think ...

	<i>M</i>
... were among the perpetrators?	33.60 (<i>SD</i> = 22.78)%
... were among the victims?	33.82 (<i>SD</i> = 22.63)%
... helped potential victims?	15.39 (<i>SD</i> = 15.48)%
... knew that groups of people were being systematically murdered at the time?	40.20 (<i>SD</i> = 28.51)%

Imagine you yourself had lived in Germany during the time of National Socialism. How likely do you think it is that you yourself would have become a perpetrator?

Very unlikely	Rather unlikely	Neither/nor	Rather likely	Very likely	I don't know/ no response
41.0%	29.5%	16.4%	7.6%	2.9%	2.5%

Imagine you yourself had lived in Germany during the time of National Socialism. How likely do you think it is that you yourself would have become a victim?

Very unlikely	Rather unlikely	Neither/nor	Rather likely	Very likely	I don't know/ no response
10.5%	24.2%	22.7%	25.9%	14.6%	2.0%

Imagine you yourself had lived in Germany during the time of National Socialism. How likely do you think it is that you yourself would have helped potential victims?

Very unlikely	Rather unlikely	Neither/nor	Rather likely	Very likely	I don't know/ no response
2.0%	7.8%	22.5%	34.2%	31.1%	2.5%

Imagine you yourself had lived in Germany during the time of National Socialism. How likely do you think it is that you yourself would have actively resisted National Socialism?

Very unlikely	Rather unlikely	Neither/nor	Rather likely	Very likely	I don't know/ no response
8.0%	28.0%	27.4%	17.6%	14.8%	4.3%

I don't understand why, today, I am still supposed to deal with Germany's history in the time of National Socialism.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
36.2%	23.3%	16.2%	16.4%	7.2%

I think people today would be capable of acts similar to those of the time of National Socialism.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
7.1%	13.8%	19.3%	32.8%	26.7%

Today, Germans are less receptive to right-wing ideologies than Germans during the period of National Socialism.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
11.6%	23.8%	32.3%	21.4%	8.7%

I think Germans today would be capable of acts similar to those of the time of National Socialism.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
11.3%	20.0%	25.9%	28.3%	14.1%

I am concerned that the memory of the time of National Socialism could disappear.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
7.9%	21.9%	20.7%	29.4%	19.9%

The descendants of survivors of the crimes of National Socialism should also be recognised as a victim group and receive compensation.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
10.4%	16.6%	26.0%	28.1%	17.9%

My own family's history is a part of the German culture of remembrance.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
8.8%	14.7%	17.8%	35.0%	22.8%

My family has preserved its traditions and customs over the years.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
10.9%	24.7%	24.5%	24.5%	14.0%

There are certain traditions that characterise my family.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
12.8%	32.3%	20.7%	20.0%	11.6%

Being German is an important part of my identity.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
7.6%	16.6%	15.5%	29.8%	30.4%

The era of National Socialism is part of the German identity.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
4.0%	11.1%	17.9%	37.3%	29.3%
It should finally be OK to be proud to be German again.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
8.8%	11.9%	24.6%	29.4%	24.1%
Part of belonging to Germany is knowledge of the history of National Socialism.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
0.4%	3.5%	11.3%	36.7%	48.0%
I am concerned that the German culture of remembrance could be monopolised by right-wing populists.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
4.7%	14.1%	16.7%	37.5%	27.1%
I feel like the politicians in office in Germany represent me and my interests.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
11.2%	19.5%	37.4%	23.8%	7.6%
The AfD is a political party just like all the others.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
46.5%	29.3%	10.9%	9.3%	3.5%
In my opinion, the discrimination and exclusion of people on the basis of their national origin, religion or other group affiliations is increasing again in Germany.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
2.8%	9.0%	24.2%	39.6%	23.5%
I think the level of discrimination against and exclusion of people or groups of people in Germany is alarming.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
2.7%	12.9%	24.6%	35.5%	23.8%
I feel it is also my responsibility to prevent discrimination and the exclusion of people or groups of people.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
9.6%	15.5%	14.6%	35.0%	24.9%
I know what I can do to help to prevent discrimination and the exclusion of people or groups of people in Germany.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
3.6%	7.5%	22.8%	40.9%	24.3%

I am willing to get actively involved in fighting discrimination and the exclusion of people or groups of people in Germany.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
3.1%	6.6%	22.9%	37.9%	28.5%
I see parallels between current political developments in Germany and the time of National Socialism.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
8.9%	30.4%	29.4%	18.3%	11.8%
Germany should take in more refugees from crisis regions.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
7.7%	17.3%	37.2%	23.4%	12.4%
Germany should have an upper limit for the numbers of refugees admitted to the country.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
14.9%	23.9%	20.2%	23.8%	16.1%
I'm glad Germany is a migration society.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
3.0%	6.3%	23.4%	40.3%	26.6%
If we had really learned something from history, we would treat social minorities better today.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
1.6%	11.5%	25.3%	33.6%	26.7%
When it comes to helping other people, it doesn't matter to me what nationality they are.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
0.9%	1.1%	5.9%	28.5%	63.7%
Important phases of German history are directly connected with each other.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
1.3%	4.0%	32.0%	38.0%	21.0%
German history is a sequence of related events.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
1.8%	4.5%	21.6%	42.5%	27.8%
Even though I haven't done anything bad, I feel guilty for the Holocaust.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
44.0%	37.2%	8.0%	8.2%	2.2%

When thinking about how other countries think about Germany because of the Holocaust, I feel ashamed.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
18.3%	26.3%	22.2%	21.8%	10.4%

Jews have too much influence in Germany.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
47.5%	35.5%	11.8%	2.1%	0.3%

It is time to draw a line under Germany's National Socialist history.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
27.4%	24.3%	20.7%	15.8%	11.3%

Germany can serve as an example to other countries because of how well it has come to terms with its past.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
5.2%	13.9%	34.6%	31.6%	14.1%

In Germany, there are regulations as to what should and what should not be remembered.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
16.5%	31.0%	29.2%	13.6%	7.4%

I worry that something like the Holocaust could happen again.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
15.9%	30.7%	18.5%	21.8%	13.2%

I doubt that all the reports about the extent of the persecution of the Jews are true.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
35.1%	29.3%	18.1%	9.3%	6.4%

How content are you now with your life, all in all?				
Not content at all	Rather discontent	Neither/nor	Rather content	Very content
0.9%	2.7%	14.6%	36.6%	45.1%

How often in your life have you felt affected by the following symptoms for at least two weeks?

	Never	Once	Twice	Three times	Four times or more
Little interest or enjoyment in your activities.	33.7%	12.7%	14.1%	8.9%	28.4%
Low spirits, melancholy or hopelessness.	50.9%	13.0%	12.3%	5.9%	16.7%
Nervousness, anxiety or tension.	37.2%	14.7%	12.3%	8.4%	25.2%
Inability to stop or control your worry.	58.3%	10.2%	8.8%	7.3%	13.7%

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RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CONTENT OF THE STUDY

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