

MEMO

Multidimensional
Remembrance
Monitor

STUDY IV | 2021



MEMO IV | 2021

Michael Papendick, Jonas Rees, Maren Scholz & Andreas Zick
Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence (IKG)
Bielefeld University

May 2021

CONTENT

1	The Multidimensional Remembrance Monitor	4
2	Methodology of the study	6
3	Description of the survey sample	7
4	Presentation of key findings	9
4.1	Present, future, and subjective impact of remembering the time of National Socialism	9
4.2	Family biographies as a point of reference for the time of National Socialism	15
4.3	Remembering the groups of victims of National Socialism	16
4.4	Knowledge of forced labor during the time of National Socialism	19
4.5	Role and involvement of German society during the time of National Socialism	20
4.6	National Socialism since 1945	22
4.7	Protective mechanisms and discrimination in society today	25
4.8	Belief in conspiracy myths and historical revisionism	27
5	Authors' summary	30
	Annex – Complete presentation of the descriptive findings	33
	Imprint	44

1 THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL REMEMBRANCE MONITOR

The Multidimensional Remembrance Monitor (MEMO) uses representative surveys to monitor the status and developments of the culture of remembrance in Germany. The MEMO studies analyze the remembrance and critical examination of historical events within the population, attitudes toward these events, and factors that could shape or distort the interpretation of history. MEMO, now in its fourth edition, has been contributing to the empirical documentation of the culture of remembrance in Germany since 2017.

Each edition of MEMO surveys representative samples of the population to determine a range of aspects, including the events people in Germany consider to be historically significant, the attitudes the respondents themselves have toward the culture of remembrance in Germany, whether and how these attitudes are changing, the role that various ways of critically examining history play, and the consequences resulting from a critical examination of history. Prior to MEMO, there was a lack of systematic, representative studies to inform the recurring debates surrounding the status of the German culture of remembrance. MEMO is helping to close this gap so discussions can be based on empirical data. One particular focus of the studies is the remembrance of the persecution, displacement, and extermination of people and groups of people during the period of National Socialism. To what extent are the memories of the Shoah or Holocaust and National Socialism still important for today's society? How do they relate to other memories and sociopolitical attitudes? Which memories and means of critical examination are sought after, and which are being avoided or repressed? How do respondents see the time of National Socialism and society during this period? What roles do personal connections in the form of family narratives play?

In a working session in August 2017, experts in this topic area worked together to develop a concept for the culture of remembrance. This concept, which until now – with 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. Experts who work in the research and practice of the culture of remembrance are involved in the design and interpretation of the studies to support their preparation and critical reflection. Over 70 experts have collaborated on the MEMO studies so far and made significant contributions. The MEMO studies do not claim to depict “the culture of remembrance” as a singular phenomenon. In the form of representative surveys, they reflect the variety of ways in which people deal with history, the attitudes toward these ways of dealing with history, as well as people's expectations or desires in dealing with German history in the future.

The results of the previous MEMO studies have been compiled in the form of reports for the public in each case (available for download on the homepage of the “Remembrance, Responsibility and Future” Foundation). The present study, MEMO IV, was conducted in December and January 2020/21. A particular aim of the fourth MEMO study was to address key topics that had only been touched on briefly or not at all in the previous surveys. What stance do respondents take toward new, digital ways of critically examining the National Socialist era? How differentiated is their knowledge of the groups of victims of National Socialism? Do respondents see the remembrance of the groups of victims of National Socialism as sufficiently differentiated? What do respondents know about the forced labor that occurred and the involvement of German companies during the National Socialist era? What is their judgement of the role of the German population back then? Which events and developments since 1945 do respondents connect with National Socialism? What is the correlation between a belief in conspiracy myths and the relativization and denial of historical facts? MEMO IV approached these topics by

asking the 1,000 participants in the study a range of questions. The present report provides an overview of the design of the study, summarizes key findings from this year's survey, and offers a framework for interpreting these findings on the basis of initial analyses. The report does not address all of the questions in the survey, but the annex does include the entire questionnaire and the complete descriptive analysis of the data. The data from the MEMO studies provide an empirical basis for a wide range of more indepth analyses – selected questions that look at the topics in greater detail are addressed in supplementary publications in the context of the MEMO project. A brief summary of the current study (focus report) as well as German translations of all previous MEMO studies can also be found on the homepage of the EVZ Foundation.

“Empirical studies help us navigate the continually changing field that is the culture of remembrance. The results highlight unused potential.”¹

Dr. Ralf Possekel – EVZ Foundation

¹ This report includes statements from experts at various points. These contributions were provided in the course of a critical reflection process in spring 2021 and offer potential ways for the classification and interpretation of the results. The content of the quotes reflects the opinions of the respective experts.

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 December 2020 and January 2021, interviewing 1,000 randomly selected respondents from all German federal states. In the standardized telephone survey, respondents answered questions both in open format without specified answer options (e. g., “Can you name one specific German company that was involved in the crimes of National Socialism?”) 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 has a special moral responsibility as a result of the time of National Socialism” – “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “neither/nor”, “agree”, “strongly agree”). Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous. There was always the option not to answer a question (“don’t know” or “prefer not to answer”) or to end the participation in the survey. MEMO is designed in such a way that the studies can be repeated as a whole or in excerpts and thus be expanded into a longterm observation.

The following presentation of the data includes calculations of percentages and means (*M*). Mean values describe the calculated arithmetic mean, or the average of the answers provided by all respondents. In some cases, results are reported for a selected share of the respondents; e. g., those who answered a previous question in the same way. 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 statistically significant correlations and differences. These were examined using corresponding statistical methods (correlation, distribution, and variance analyses). The report highlights results as systematic in cases where it is highly probable that correlations or differences are not coincidental (with a probability of error of $p = 5\%$ at most). The analyses do not allow to draw conclusions as to the causal directions of these relationships. The present report does not provide further statistical characteristics in order to improve readability.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE SURVEY SAMPLE

MEMO IV surveyed a total of 1,000 participants. The respondents, between the ages of 16 and 87 ($M = 48.1$), 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 below. For convenience of presentation, respondents can be divided into five groups with regard to their age and place of residence, and into four groups in terms of their highest level of formal education attained². Further demographic indicators are not initially taken into account in the analyses reported below. 24.6 % of the respondents stated that they had a migrant background according to the definition of the Federal Statistical Office.

Distribution of the five age categories, in %

Age group	%
16–30 years old	20.8
31–45 years old	23.3
46–60 years old	28.2
61–75 years old	21.1
76 years or older	6.6

Distribution of the five education categories, in %

Cat.	Contains	%	% cat.
	No school-leaving qualification		2.0
1	High school diploma (Haupt- or Volksschulabschluss)		15.7
2	Completed 10th grade of vocational school (before 1965: 8th grade)	2.5	50.0
	High school diploma (Realschulabschluss, mittlere Reife)	47.5	
3	Secondary school (Allgemeine or fachgebundene Hochschulreife, Abitur)		19.7
4	Completed degree at a university or technical college		12.2

² Because we were unable to clearly determine whether the 2.0 % of respondents who reported that they had “no school-leaving qualification” were in fact school students, this percentage of the respondents was not included in analyses that referred to differences depending on the highest level of formal education attained.

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 sizes of respondents' residences, in %

Residents	%
< 5,000	4.1
5,000–< 20,000	8.7
20,000–< 100,000	20.9
100,000–< 500,000	29.9
>= 500,000	36.4

4 PRESENTATION OF KEY FINDINGS

4.1 Present, future, and subjective impact of remembering the time of National Socialism

Established ways of accessing the topic of National Socialism

As in the previous MEMO studies, a section of the questionnaire looked at how intensively respondents had dealt with the time of National Socialism so far and what means they had used to do so – in other words, which sources people in Germany use to critically examine history. In the current study, nearly half of respondents reported that they had learned “rather a lot” or “very much” about National Socialism in school, while around a third (32.7 %) indicated that they had learned “not very much” or “nothing at all” about this topic in school. Systematic differences in the responses to this question emerged with respect to the respondents’ age and their formal educational background: Both older (in comparison to younger) respondents as well as respondents with lower formal educational qualifications (in comparison to those with higher qualifications) reported that they had learned less about the history of National Socialism in school.

	Nothing at all	Not very much	Some-what	Rather a lot	Very much
What would you say: How much did you learn about the time of National Socialism in school?	9.2 %	23.5 %	20.7 %	25.4 %	21.2 %

In terms of their own critical examination of National Socialism, 50.1 % of respondents indicated that they had dealt with this topic “rather intensively” or “very intensively”, with 22.9 % reporting that they had critically examined National Socialism “not intensively at all” or “rather not intensively.” Both older respondents and those with higher formal educational qualifications reported that they had spent more time critically examining National Socialism.

	Not intensively at all	Rather not intensively	Neither/ nor	Rather intensively	Very intensively
How intensively have you dealt with the time of National Socialism on your own?	7.3 %	15.6 %	27.0 %	28.1 %	22.0 %

Generally speaking, the respondents stated they had a good level of knowledge regarding the time of National Socialism: 55.9 % said that their knowledge of the time of National Socialism was “rather good” or “very good,” with 13.0 % assessing their knowledge as “not good at all” or “not very good.” This self-assessment was systematically related to the extent to which the respondents had actually critically examined National Socialism – respondents who said they had a higher level of knowledge also reported that they had dealt more intensively with the time of National Socialism using a variety of means.

	Not good at all	Not very good	Neither/nor	Rather good	Very good
How would you assess your own knowledge regarding the time of National Socialism?	3.4 %	9.6 %	27.0 %	45.6 %	14.3 %

The picture provided here coincides with that of the previous MEMO surveys with respect to the specific sources that respondents used to deal with the topic of National Socialism. Respondents most frequently reported that they had used means of critically examining the topic of National Socialism that were relatively easy to access: Many respondents said that they had viewed feature or documentary films (93.5 % at least once; 73.3 % “four times or more often”) or spoken with family members about the topic (85.9 % at least once; 71.1 % “four times or more often”). A large percentage of the respondents (79.8 %) also reported that they had visited a memorial site at least once. Over half of respondents (54.4 %) stated that they had visited a memorial site twice or more often for the purpose of critically examining the time of National Socialism. About a third (35.0 %) of respondents said they had participated in an event with contemporary witnesses at least once – however, about two thirds (65.0 %) indicated they had “never” attended an event of this type.

Across the different means of critical examination younger respondents have not spent less time dealing with National Socialism than older respondents. As expected, however, there were differences in the specific ways the various age groups used as a means of access: While younger respondents reported that they had dealt with the topic of National Socialism on the Internet significantly more frequently, older respondents more often reported that they had read non-fiction books and novels, watched feature or documentary films, and had attended an event with contemporary witnesses. In terms of the respondents’ formal education, the results showed systematic differences for all methods of critical examination: Respondents with lower levels of formal education stated that they had used all means of access for dealing with National Socialism less frequently. With regard to the interpretation of differences in relation the respondents’ educational background, it is important to clarify that the potential underlying causes for these differences are multifaceted and cannot be clearly determined on the basis of the present data. We cannot conclude, for example, that respondents with lower formal educational qualifications are less interested in the topic at a fundamental level, inasmuch as the level of education is systematically related to other indicators, such as the available net household income. In other words, differences in terms of education levels are always related to factors such as varying financial resources and other aspects of educational and social inequality, which are important to note in the present context.

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 or feature film. (M = 4.38)	6.5 %	4.6 %	7.1 %	8.6 %	73.3 %
Talked to family members. (M = 4.14)	14.1 %	4.7 %	5.3 %	4.8 %	71.1 %
Read texts or watched videos on the Internet. (M = 3.42)	30.5 %	5.4 %	7.4 %	5.1 %	51.5 %
Read a non-fiction book or novel. (M = 3.07)	32.5 %	12.9 %	8.3 %	8.1 %	38.2 %
Visited a memorial site. (M = 2.98)	20.2 %	25.4 %	15.3 %	14.1 %	25.0 %
Visited an exhibition. (M = 2.94)	29.2 %	16.6 %	13.4 %	12.1 %	28.6 %
Met a contemporary witness. (M = 1.88)	65.0 %	11.1 %	7.9 %	2.6 %	13.4 %

“Apart from these established methods, it is also important to understand and appreciate the individual ways people themselves create to critically examine history. We must continue to develop and support new possibilities, and the culture of remembrance should be participative and diverse. Normative ideas of what constitutes ‘the right way to remember’ close the door to available potential.”

Prof. Dr. Michele Barricelli – Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich

Local ways of critical examination

Around half of all respondents (51.2 %) indicated that the place where they live had public offers or locations that provided an opportunity to critically deal with the time of National Socialism. Respondents who had spent more time critically examining the topic in the past were more likely to report that they were aware of these local means of access. As expected, there was a correlation with the size of the towns where the respondents lived. Respondents who lived in places with fewer residents were systematically less likely to report that public offers were available to them than respondents living in large cities. A majority of the respondents who indicated that they were aware of offers in the place where they live reported that they had made use of these offers on at least one occasion (70.4 %).

Does the place where you live have any public offers or locations that provide an opportunity to critically deal with the time of National Socialism?		
Yes	No	I don't know
51.2 %	42.1 %	6.7 %

Have you already made use of this opportunity for dealing critically with the time of National Socialism in the place where you live?	
Yes	No
70.4 %	29.6 %



Figure 1. Percentages of respondents who indicated that they were aware of public offers in the place where they live, differentiated by the sizes of the respondents' residences.

New ways of critical examination

Specific ways of accessing the topic of National Socialism are well established within the German society. The previous MEMO studies have consistently shown that many people use sources such as books, films, and memorial sites to critically examine the history of National Socialism. At the same time, the fact that contemporary witnesses are passing away means that important, personal ways of remembering the National Socialist era are being lost. In recent years, there have been efforts to establish new ways of critically examining the National Socialist era in order to respond to social developments such as the loss of contemporary witnesses as well as the increasing digitalization of our everyday lives. The need for new ways of accessing historical and political education became particularly clear in the context of the coronavirus pandemic. It remains to be seen whether and to what extent comparatively "new" ways of critical examination are well received over the long term. MEMO IV addressed the topic by asking participants how much they would like to use various new ways of critically examining the National Socialist era. The ways mentioned in the survey do not fully reflect the wide range of developments we are currently seeing – but they allow to determine how open the respondents were to new education offers.

The opportunity to speak with so-called digital contemporary witnesses was met with comparatively high interest among the participants in MEMO IV, with 40.2 % of respondents indicating that they would "rather a lot" or "very much" like to critically examine National Socialism by taking part in this type of conversation. About a quarter of the respondents said they would be interested in addressing the topic of National Socialism by listening to a podcast (27.1 %) or making a virtual visit to a concentration camp memorial site (26.3 %). At the same time, the results show that a large share of respondents would "rather not" or "not at all" like to use the mentioned means of critical examination; this extended across all methods of access mentioned in the survey. As expected, older

respondents were consistently less open to new ways of critically examining the National Socialist era in comparison to younger participants. The results also showed that those respondents who have more intensively dealt with National Socialism in the past via established methods were also more open to new ways of accessing this history. Conversely, this means that respondents who have not previously examined the National Socialist era are also less likely to do so using new, digital means of access.

On a personal level, how much would you like to critically examine the history of National Socialism in the following ways?						
	Not at all	Rather not	Neither/ nor	Rather a lot	Very much	I don't know
By speaking with so-called digital contemporary witnesses. (M = 2.87)	29.6 %	11.4 %	15.0 %	21.8 %	18.4 %	3.8 %
By making a virtual visit to a concentration camp memorial site, e. g., using a computer. (M = 2.39)	40.8 %	13.2 %	13.5 %	15.5 %	10.8 %	6.1 %
By listening to a podcast. (M = 2.36)	38.6 %	16.1 %	10.1 %	20.0 %	7.1 %	8.2 %
Through influencer posts, e. g., on YouTube or Instagram. (M = 1.80)	56.1 %	15.9 %	10.5 %	8.3 %	3.4 %	5.7 %
By playing a computer game set in the time of National Socialism. (M = 1.55)	67.2 %	13.4 %	5.8 %	5.0 %	2.9 %	5.6 %

“New, digital means of access are effective if they are integrated in a meaningful way. This also requires that we address existing structural problems in classical access contexts such as schools and youth work. The existence of digital access points is not enough on its own; we need people who are interested in the topics and in young people, we need curiosity, and a didactic embedding of the digital approaches.”

Prof. Dr. Andreas Thimmel – Cologne University of Applied Sciences

“It is important to create new approaches that let people have direct, immersive, and emotional experiences. At the same time, this potential for evoking sympathy and empathy also comes with an ethical and moral responsibility that we must not lose sight of – particularly as we cannot exclusively rely on intense emotional experiences as the key to a better understanding.”

Dr. Saskia Fischer – Leibniz University Hannover

“New ways cannot and must not replace established approaches – but they can supplement them in a meaningful way. Many of the existing ways for critical examination, including memorial sites, are used by a large share of the population and must be further reinforced.”

Katrin Unger – Bergen-Belsen Memorial

“A ‘digital first’ approach is not enough. It’s a matter of utilizing the channels and media that young people actually use. Generally speaking, we are lagging behind.”

Tom Uhlig – Anne Frank Educational Centre

The subjective impact of critically examining the time of National Socialism

Determining a general “impact” of critically examining National Socialism is virtually impossible given the complexity of the topic, the diversity of the potential ways of critically examining it, and the vast range of potential consequences that can result from this critical examination. Nonetheless, the current study sought to obtain a rough view of this effect by asking the participants about the extent to which they thought their personal efforts to critically examine the time of National Socialism had contributed to a range of “impacts.” The results show that two thirds of the respondents think that their own efforts to critically deal with National Socialism has contributed “rather a lot” or “very much” to their learning of factual knowledge about the time of National Socialism (66.5 %) and their understanding of the reasons for National Socialism to occur (66.2 %). Likewise, two thirds of the respondents each said that their own critical examination has made them more sensitive to discrimination and exclusion (64.1 %) and more aware of their own responsibility to society (66.5 %). The individual questions are related to each other – respondents who agreed with one of the statements were more likely to agree with the other statements as well. Respondents who indicated that they have gained a great deal of factual knowledge as a result of their own critical examination were in fact able to list a larger number of groups of victims of National Socialism later on in the survey.

To what extent would you say that your personal efforts to critically examine the National Socialist era have contributed so far to the fact that you have...

	Nothing at all	Rather little	Some-what	Rather a lot	Very much
...gained factual knowledge about this time? (M = 3.80)	2.9 %	11.8 %	18.8 %	35.6 %	30.9 %
...become aware of your own responsibility to society? (M = 3.80)	5.3 %	8.2 %	20.0 %	34.0 %	32.5 %
...gained an understanding of the reasons behind the rise of National Socialism? (M = 3.79)	5.5 %	10.7 %	17.6 %	31.8 %	34.4 %
...become more aware of discrimination against and exclusion of people? (M = 3.65)	11.4 %	11.1 %	13.4 %	28.9 %	35.2 %
...continued to remember the groups of victims of National Socialism? (M = 3.50)	6.3 %	17.0 %	24.0 %	26.2 %	26.5 %

“These results appear positive at first glance. But the respondents’ answers could also be seen as reflecting normative perceptions and ideals, such as society’s overall narrative of a culture of remembrance ‘that is working well’. If we as individuals and a society underpin the narrative with the concept that the critical examination of the history of National Socialism has been successful in Germany and that addressing this history immunizes us against hostile attitudes in and of itself, we are overlooking our blind spots. Is our conviction that we have learned something actually reflected in our behavior in everyday life?”

Dr. Saskia Fischer – Leibniz University Hannover

4.2 Family biographies as a point of reference for the time of National Socialism

The previous MEMO studies asked participants in detail about the extent to which they had critically examined their own family history and about their knowledge of their ancestors’ involvement as perpetrators, victims, helpers, or “bystanders” in the time of National Socialism. The results showed that knowledge is being selectively passed on within German families. Respondents in MEMO III/2020, for example, frequently reported that their own ancestors were among the victims (35.8 %) or that their ancestors had helped potential victims of the National Socialists (32.2 %). Knowledge of perpetrators within German families, however, was less frequent (23.2 %). Likewise, only a comparatively small percentage of the respondents reported that their ancestors were among the “bystanders” during the time of National Socialism and, by knowing about the situation, tolerance, political inaction, looking away, or blind obedience, had been at least indirectly involved in National Socialism (39.7 %). These findings were presented and discussed in greater detail in MEMO III/2020.

The previous studies did not pose the question of whether all the respondents actually had a potential point of reference to the time of National Socialism in their families' biographies. In light of families' complex migration biographies, it can be assumed that not everyone living in Germany today had ancestors living in National Socialist society. Of the 1,000 respondents in the present study, 16.4 % indicated that none of their ancestors were living in Germany during the time of National Socialism.³

Were any of your ancestors living in Germany during the time of National Socialism?		
Yes	No	I don't know
82.8 %	16.4 %	0.8 %

Around half of these 164 respondents (48.3 %) indicated that their ancestors' lives were affected "not very significantly" or "not at all" by the time of National Socialism. Somewhat more than a third (36.4 %) reported that their ancestors' lives were affected "rather significantly" or "very significantly" by the time of National Socialism.

How significantly would you say your ancestors' lives were affected by the time of National Socialism, even though they did not live in Germany?				
Not at all	Not very significantly	Neither/nor	Rather significantly	Very significantly
35.8 %	12.5 %	15.4 %	15.2 %	21.2 %

The results show that, with respect to the critical examination of the topic of National Socialism, those respondents whose ancestors did not live in Germany during the time of National Socialism also stated that they had spent less time to critically examine the topic. There was a systematic correlation between the amount of critical examination and the extent to which the respondents believed their ancestors' lives had been affected by National Socialism. Those whose ancestors had not lived in Germany during the time of National Socialism and whose lives were affected insignificantly or not at all by National Socialism also reported that they had spent the least amount of time critically examining this topic.

4.3 Remembering the groups of victims of National Socialism

In MEMO II/2019, we asked participants which people or groups of people that were persecuted and murdered during the National Socialist era should be remembered. The largest share of respondents (49.4 %) stated that "all victims" or "all groups of victims" should be remembered. In MEMO IV we asked the participants to name all groups of victims they can recall. No further specifications were made; the respondents' answers were recorded verbatim and systemized subsequently. It should be noted that the number of victim groups cited by the respondents may be influenced by the surrounding conditions of the survey. However, the present results can still be interpreted as tendencies, and the frequency with which individual groups were mentioned can also be considered in relation to one another.

On average the respondents in MEMO IV recalled two to three victim groups of National Socialism; some respondents recalled no groups at all while others recalled up to seven groups that were persecuted and murdered

³ This proportion of respondents is not identical to the proportion of participants in this study who report a migration background as defined by the Federal Statistical Office (24.6 %). This discrepancy illustrates the diversity of family migration biographies in German society. Dichotomous comparisons of the responses of respondents with and without a migration background are an oversimplification.

by the National Socialists. Respondents who indicated that they had spent more time critically examining National Socialism were able to name more groups of victims. Jews were the group of victims mentioned by the largest share of respondents (82.1 %), while less than half mentioned the group of Sinti and/or Roma (44.5 %). About a quarter each mentioned homosexuals (28.8 %), politically persecuted people (e. g., “communists,” “social democrats”) (27.8 %), and people with illnesses and disabilities (23.1 %). About one in ten of the respondents in MEMO IV did not name any groups (10.9 %). A wide range of mentioned groups that were not specified in greater detail were included under the “Non-specific or mentioned only once” category (7.0 %), among them groups such as “foreigners,” “people of different faiths,” “dissidents,” and “civilians,” as well as specific groups that were mentioned only once and could not be assigned to the other categories (e. g., “grandparents”). Explicit mentions of specifically designated nationalities (e. g., “Poles,” “Russians”), specifically designated religious groups (e. g., “Christians,” “Muslims”), or specifically designated professions (e. g., “writers,” “artists,” “scientists”) were included in the other categories. Names such as “Anne Frank” and “Graf von Stauffenberg” were included in the category of specific individuals mentioned.

Can you name groups of people that, to your knowledge, were persecuted and murdered by the regime during the time of National Socialism? Name all groups that come to mind.	
Group	Percentage of the responses
Jews	82.1 %
Sinti and/or Roma	44.5 %
Homosexuals ⁴	28.8 %
Politically persecuted people	27.8 %
People with illnesses and disabilities	23.1 %
I don't know/no response	10.9 %
Non-specific or mentioned only once	7.0 %
Members of specific nationalities	4.8 %
Members of resistance groups	4.8 %
Members of specific professions	4.6 %
Members of specific religious groups	4.4 %
Members of other racialized groups	3.2 %
Specific individuals mentioned	2.2 %
Lesbians	1.9 %
Prisoners of war	0.8 %
“Social misfits”	0.6 %
“Professional criminals”	0.5 %

⁴ This included both unspecific references to homosexual individuals in general as well as homosexual men (typically “gays”) in particular. Specific references that were made to homosexual women (typically “lesbians”) in some cases were included under a different category in order to emphasize these references and differentiate them.

“The numbers and names of the mentioned groups from these assessments coincide with our experiences at memorial sites. Many people are aware of some of the groups of victims of National Socialism, but their knowledge does not typically reflect a differentiated awareness of the wide variety of groups of victims.”

Katrin Unger – Bergen-Belsen Memorial

When specifically asked about their perception of the variety of groups of victims of National Socialism that are remembered, just under half of respondents (47.5%) agreed with the statement that efforts to remember the time of National Socialism do not place sufficient focus on the wide variety of victim groups who were persecuted and murdered by the National Socialist regime.

The societal remembrance of the time of National Socialism does not place a sufficient focus on the wide variety of victim groups who were persecuted and murdered by the National Socialist regime.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
7.0 %	15.8 %	28.3 %	26.6 %	20.9 %

The participants were also asked about the extent to which they thought the perspectives of the groups of victims themselves, e. g. of Jewish people or Sinti and Roma, was adequately represented in the German culture of remembrance. A third of all respondents (33.7 %) were of the opinion that the perspectives of the groups of victims were already sufficiently represented, with around a quarter (28.2 %) disagreeing with this statement.

The perspectives of the groups of victims themselves – e. g., those of Jewish people or Sinti and/or Roma – are sufficiently represented in the German culture of remembrance.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
7.9 %	20.3 %	35.6 %	22.1 %	11.6 %

“It’s not a matter of specific perspectives being represented ‘too much’ in this context, because ultimately, all of the perspectives of the groups of victims are underrepresented in the remembrance of National Socialism. The diversity of the victim groups of National Socialism is insufficiently reflected and integrated in the culture of remembrance, which is dominated by the so-called majority of society.”

Marianna Matzer – EVZ Foundation

4.4 Knowledge of forced labor during the time of National Socialism

The previous MEMO studies did not analyze the range of topics relating to forced labor under National Socialism. To gain an initial insight into the extent to which the respondents are aware that people were forced to labor during the time of National Socialism, the participants were asked to provide an estimate as to how many people were forced into labor during the entire time of National Socialism in the “German Reich”. On average, the respondents estimated that about four million people were forced to labor for the National Socialist regime during the entire time of National Socialism. The results show that younger respondents and those who have spent more time critically examining the time of National Socialism estimate that forced labor occurred at a greater scale in National Socialist Germany.

During the entire time of National Socialism, how many people do you think were made to work as forced laborers in the “German Reich” at the time?

M
3,980,000

“There were over 13 million forced laborers in the German Reich, and well over 20 million in occupied Europe. But few people today are aware of this vast number. This group of victims receives too little attention in the public memory, in school education, and even at many memorial sites.”

Dr. Cord Pagenstecher – Free University of Berlin

As in the previous MEMO studies, the participants were also asked about whether they were aware of having ancestors of their own who were involved in forced labor under National Socialism. The questions looked at whether ancestors of the respondents themselves had forced laborers working for them as well as whether ancestors of the respondents had been forced into labor for the National Socialist regime. 8.1 % of all respondents indicated that their ancestors had forced laborers working at their companies, in their households, or on their farms during the time of National Socialism, while 81.4 % of them explicitly answered this question with “no.” One in eight of the respondents (13.3 %) reported that they know of ancestors who had been forced into labor for the National Socialist regime.

Did any of your ancestors have forced laborers working at their companies, in their households, or on their farms during the time of National Socialism?

Yes	No	I don't know
8.1 %	81.4 %	10.5 %

Were any of your ancestors who were persecuted during the time of National Socialism made to work as forced laborers for the regime?

Yes	No	I don't know
13.3 %	77.9 %	8.8 %

“Forced labor under National Socialism was omnipresent and for all to see. In contrast to other National Socialist crimes, it also served the interests of economic commercialization; many people profited at the time, and we continue to profit from this labor in many ways to this day. This topic is an especially suitable one in terms of illustrating the circumstances of National Socialism in society as a whole, particularly with respect to our own cities and perhaps in relation to our own families.”

Dr. Cord Pagenstecher – Free University of Berlin

4.5 Role and involvement of German society during the time of National Socialism

Involvement of the German population

In the previous MEMO studies, participants provided various responses regarding the role and involvement of German society during the time of National Socialism, including which percentage of the German population they saw as perpetrators, victims, and helpers. They were also asked which factors they saw as crucial to the fact that the population at the time did nothing to stop the systematic crimes committed by the National Socialist regime. In MEMO III/2020, the respondents estimated that 33.6 % of all Germans were perpetrators during the time of National Socialism, 33.8 % were victims, and 15.4 % of all Germans had helped potential victims. When asked about the key reasons that the population “did nothing,” the respondents in MEMO II/2019 cited a fear of being punished by the National Socialist regime (95.4 %), a lack of a sense of responsibility (73.0 %), and an underestimation of the seriousness of the situation (72.8 %).

In the present study, the participants were asked about their assessment of the role and attitudes of the German population during the time of National Socialism in greater detail. On average, the respondents estimated that around half of all Germans (54.1 %) were aware of the systematic murders committed by the National Socialist regime which, in turn, would indicate that 45.9 % of Germans were unaware of these crimes.

During the time of National Socialism, what percentage of the German population do you think knew that groups of people were being systematically murdered at the time?

M

54.1 %

Around a quarter of all respondents (25.2 %) said that they could understand how the German people “didn’t want to know anything about the crimes committed by the Nazi regime.” Around one in five respondents (19.6 %) were of the opinion that the German people did not share any responsibility for the crimes committed by the National Socialist regime. A nearly equal number of respondents (17.8 %) believed that the German population “suffered just as much during the National Socialist era as the groups that were persecuted by the National Socialist regime.” The responses to all of the questions showed that the respondents who agreed more strongly with statements exonerating the German people during the time of National Socialism were older on average, that they had expended less effort critically examining the time of National Socialism, and that they were also significantly more likely to agree with revisionist statements (“I doubt that all the reports about the extent of the persecution of the Jews are true”). The results of the previous MEMO studies (see MEMO II/2019, MEMO III/2020) had previously pointed to tendencies to emphasize the role of the German population as victims during the time of National Socialism in comparison to their role as perpetrators and bystanders. 42.7 % of all respondents shared the view that a majority of Germans actively supported the National Socialist regime until the end of World War II.

I can understand how the German people didn't want to know anything about the crimes committed by the Nazi regime during the time of National Socialism.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
25.3 %	20.6 %	28.1 %	16.4 %	8.8 %

The German population at the time did not share any responsibility for the crimes of National Socialism.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
30.6 %	24.3 %	25.2 %	11.3 %	8.3 %

The German population suffered just as much during the National Socialist era as the groups that were persecuted by the National Socialist regime.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
34.1 %	23.1 %	23.3 %	9.8 %	8.0 %

The majority of Germans supported the National Socialist regime up to the end of the Second World War.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
6.7 %	15.9 %	33.6 %	24.4 %	18.3 %

“A large majority of the population at the time supported the National Socialist regime until it was completely defeated – and continued to ascribe to a significant number of National Socialist beliefs after the turning point in 1945. The results of the study show that a surprisingly large percentage of the population today is not sufficiently informed about the extent of this support and simultaneously tends to equate the suffering of the German population with that of the victims of the National Socialist regime.”

Prof. Dr. Christina Morina – Bielefeld University

Involvement of German companies

The topic of the involvement of the German economy in the crimes of National Socialism was initially approached by asking the participants in MEMO IV whether they could name one specific German company that, to their knowledge, had connections to the crimes of the National Socialist regime. The question was openended, and the companies named by the respondents were subsequently systematized. Around a third of all respondents (37.0 %) were unable or unwilling to name a company. These respondents were younger on average and had spent less time critically examining the time of National Socialism prior to this. Of the remaining respondents, a large percentage (30.7 %) named the “Krupp” company (alternatively known as “Krupp Stahl” or “Thyssen-Krupp”). 14.4 % of the respondents explicitly mentioned “IG Farben” for the most part or else specific companies such as “BASF,” “Bayer,” or “Hoechst,” which were part of IG Farben. 8.3 % of the respondents named “Volkswagen,” 4.8 % “Siemens,” and other companies were mentioned still less frequently

Can you name one specific German company that was involved in the crimes of National Socialism?	
Company	Percentage of the responses
I don't know/no response	37.0 %
Krupp	30.7 %
IG Farben	14.4 %
· BASF	· 3.9 %
· Bayer	· 1.4 %
· Hoechst	· 0.8 %
Volkswagen	8.3 %
Siemens	4.8 %
Other companies mentioned once	3.2 %

An excerpt of the results is presented here, and the Annex to the study includes the complete analysis of the responses.

4.6 National Socialism since 1945

In this section of the survey, we were interested in learning about the extent to which the respondents viewed the time from 1933 to 1945 as a “closed chapter” in German history and whether they see National Socialist and hostile ways of thinking as a persistent part of German society to this day. We approached this topic area by asking the respondents a range of questions. First, they were asked whether they could name an incident or event in German history since 1945 that they believed had a direct link to National Socialism. In this question the participants were asked to name the specific event that they personally saw as having the clearest link to Germany’s National Socialist past. The respondents were not provided with any further guidelines for answering this question. The open answers were subsequently systematized. A large part of the 1,000 respondents (46.1 %) were unable or unwilling to answer this question. These respondents had previously spent less time critically examining the time of National Socialism on average than those who did respond to the question. The remaining respondents answered the question in very different ways, with some citing very specific events, while others mentioned general sociopolitical topics and developments that they saw as having a connection to the time of National Socialism.

The majority of these respondents answered by mentioning assaults and attacks (24.1 %), with most of them (20.0 %) referring to terrorism motivated by right-wing extremism such as the National Socialist Underground (NSU) (e.g., “the NSU murders,” “NSU history,” “the NSU’s attacks in various cities”) and the terror attacks in Halle (e.g., “the attack in Halle,” “assassinations in Halle”) and Hanau (e.g., “the attack in Hanau”). Other specific events that were mentioned a number of times included “the murder of Walter Lübcke,” “the Oktoberfest bombing in 1980,” and “the attacks in Hoyerswerda.” A share of the respondents (4.1 %) mentioned attacks and assaults without naming specific contexts, although it was clear in most cases that the respondents were also referring to crimes motivated by extreme right-wing views (e.g., “the attacks on Jews,” “attack on the Jewish synagogue,” “attacks on refugees,” “arson attacks on homes for asylum seekers”).

Around one in ten respondents (9.7 %) referred to right-wing and extreme right-wing sociopolitical developments and mentioned associated groups (“the neo-Nazis,” “the people in Pegida,” “right-wing radicals,” “the Reichsbürger movement”). Many respondents referred to political parties such as the National Democratic Party (NPD) and the Alternative for Germany party (AfD) (“the political views of the AfD,” “the AfD’s success in elections,” “the rise of the AfD”).

Overall, 5.0 % of the respondents cited various sociopolitical developments and events without referring to right-wing politics. They most frequently pointed to Germany’s division and reunification (e.g., “the German partition,” “the fall of the Wall,” “the reunification”) as well as “Germany’s Basic Law,” “the German constitution,” or “the Cold War.” Events cited in the context of remembering National Socialism (4.6 %) included mentions of memorial sites and days of remembrance, and, in particular, Willy Brandt kneeling in Warsaw. In the context of coming to terms with National Socialism (4.2 %), references to the Nuremberg trials made up a significant share of responses. The final category (1.6 %) consists of one-off answers in which the respondents did not refer to specific events but rather to forms of group-focused enmity in society today (e.g. “racism,” “antisemitism,” “hatred against Jews”), which they saw as being linked to the time of National Socialism.

Would you say that there were or are any incidents or events in recent German history, i.e., since 1945, that are directly linked to the history of National Socialism? Can you name a specific event that you think has a particularly clear link to Germany’s National Socialist past?

Category	Percentage of the responses
I don’t know/no response	46.1 %
Attacks and assaults	24.1 %
· Specifically extreme right-wing	· 20.0 %
· Not clearly specified	· 4.1 %
Right-wing sociopolitical developments and events	9.7 %
Sociopolitical developments and events in general	5.0 %
Events in the context of the remembrance of the time of National Socialism	4.6 %
Events in the context of coming to terms with the time of National Socialism	4.2 %
Group-focused enmity	1.6 %

“Extreme events such as the attacks of the NSU, the terror attacks in Halle and Hanau, as well as the AfD’s success in elections, represent typical links in historical and political education work. They promote an awareness of inhuman ideologies in our society and convey the necessity of taking action as a matter of urgency. It seems questionable whether an awareness of this urgency and of the continuities reflected by these events are also prevalent in society at large. This is reflected first and foremost in the large percentage of respondents who did not answer the question at all.”

Tom Uhlig – Anne Frank Educational Centre

When specifically asked whether they think National Socialist attitudes continue to be an indelible part of the so-called center of German society to this day, 41.0 % of respondents disagreed, while a third (33.0 %) percent agreed. Respondents who disagreed with this statement spent less time on average critically examining the time of National Socialism. Responses to the question of whether German society today is less receptive to right-wing ideologies than it was during the time of National Socialism yielded a mixed picture – 34.5 % disagreed with this statement, while 35.0 % agreed with it.

National Socialist attitudes continue to be an indelible part of the center of German society.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
12.9 %	28.1 %	25.1 %	21.8 %	11.2 %

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
10.0 %	24.5 %	28.7 %	23.5 %	11.5 %

“I see the fact that a third of the respondents attributed National Socialist ideas to the so-called ‘center of society’ as being at odds with the positive picture that is frequently painted of the center of society. And it simultaneously calls this section of society into greater responsibility.”

Tom Uhlig – Anne Frank Educational Centre

4.7 Protective mechanisms and discrimination in society today

The final section of the survey pertained to German society today in terms of the mechanisms that protect us as a society against developments like National Socialism and the extent to which people in Germany feel a personal sense of responsibility for preventing others from being excluded and discriminated against. The participants were first asked about the extent to which they thought that a range of aspects protect us as a society against something like the time of National Socialism occurring again in Germany today.

The answers provided by the respondents indicated that they place the greatest amount of trust in “democratic institutions” (48.9 %). A somewhat smaller percentage, 42.1 %, were confident that “we as a society have become more sensitive to discrimination against and exclusion of people.” Around a third of the respondents (34.8 %) believed that “our previous efforts to critically deal with the time of National Socialism” can protect us as a society against something like National Socialism happening again, while a significantly lower level of confidence was evident among those respondents who had previously spent comparatively less time critically examining the time of National Socialism. Systematic correlations with the age of the respondents were evident for two of the mentioned protective mechanisms: In comparison to older participants, younger respondents reported greater trust in democratic institutions and had greater faith that critically examining the time of National Socialism will protect us as a society against something similar happening again.

To what extent would you say the following aspects protect us as a society against something like National Socialism happening in Germany again?					
	Not at all	Rather little	Some-what	Rather a lot	Very much
Our democratic institutions. (M = 3.36)	6.5 %	20.3 %	24.3 %	28.8 %	20.1 %
The fact that we as a society have become more sensitive to discrimination against and exclusion of people. (M = 3.22)	7.6 %	20.6 %	29.7 %	26.2 %	15.9 %
The European Community. (M = 3.08)	9.4 %	23.6 %	29.5 %	24.5 %	13.0 %
Our previous efforts to critically deal with the time of National Socialism. (M = 3.07)	7.1 %	25.9 %	32.2 %	22.5 %	12.3 %
Our good economic situation. (M = 3.06)	10.0 %	22.2 %	31.5 %	24.5 %	11.8 %

“It is reassuring that positive tendencies can be seen among younger respondents in the study, in this case taking the form of greater trust in democratic institutions and the importance of critically examining National Socialism. We can build on this potential in historical and political education.”

Corinna Jentzsch – EVZ Foundation

Around half of respondents (52.1 %) found the current scale of discrimination against and exclusion of people or groups of people in Germany alarming. Over half (58.0 %) said that they felt it was also their responsibility to actively prevent discrimination against and exclusion of other people. More than one in three respondents (38.8 %) reported that they are actively engaged in preventing discrimination and exclusion. Those respondents who stated that they were sensitive to discrimination and had a high degree of civic courage had spent more time critically examining the time of National Socialism. They were also more likely to attribute a share of the responsibility for the crimes of National Socialism to the German population during the time of National Socialism.

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
9.0 %	9.8 %	28.7 %	27.1 %	25.0 %

I feel it is also my responsibility to prevent discrimination and the exclusion of people or groups of people in Germany.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
13.3 %	10.4 %	17.5 %	24.1 %	33.9 %

I am actively involved in fighting discrimination and the exclusion of people or groups of people in Germany.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
10.8 %	16.8 %	31.7 %	20.5 %	18.3 %

When asked whether and to what extent the groups of people who were persecuted during the time of National Socialism in Germany continue to be discriminated against and excluded in our society today, 6.5 % of the respondents answered that these groups are persecuted “not at all anymore.” Just under half of the respondents (49.2 %) were of the opinion that there is “much less” discrimination against and exclusion of these groups than during the time of National Socialism, while 39.0 % thought there was “somewhat less” discrimination and exclusion now. 5.2 % of all respondents said the groups that were persecuted during the time of National Socialism are subjected to just as much discrimination and exclusion in our society today.

To what extent would you say that the groups that were persecuted during the time of National Socialism continue to be discriminated against and excluded in our society today?

Not at all anymore	Much less than then	Somewhat less than then	Just as much as then
6.5 %	49.2 %	39.0 %	5.2 %

4.8 Belief in conspiracy myths and historical revisionism

In light of the historical revisionist incidents in relation to the so-called “corona demonstrations” in 2020, the instrumentalization of Nazi symbols, and the mockery of the suffering the victims of National Socialism experienced, the participants in MEMO IV were also asked an explicit question relating to these events. 75.2 % of respondents “strongly” disagreed and 14.0 % “disagreed” with the statement that it is reasonable to compare the adversity faced by the German population during the coronavirus pandemic with the suffering of people during the time of National Socialism – 3.9 % of all respondents agreed with the statement, and a further 6.1 % at least did not expressly disagree with it.

I find it reasonable to compare the adversity faced by the German population during the coronavirus pandemic with the suffering of people during the time of National Socialism.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
75.2 %	14.0 %	6.1 %	0.9 %	3.0 %

While the overwhelming majority of the respondents clearly disagreed with this revisionist statement, it raises the question of whether and to what extent people who have a stronger belief in conspiracy myths, for example in the context of the corona-virus pandemic, are also more likely to relativize historical facts, call history into question, or reinterpret it. The study approached these questions by comparing those participants who agreed or disagreed with conspiracy myths. Of the 1,000 participants, 29.2 % said they “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement that there are “secret organizations that exercise a great deal of influence on political decision-making.” Moreover, 22.2 % said they “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement that politicians and other people in positions of leadership “are only puppets for the real agents of power behind them.”

There are secret organizations that exercise a great deal of influence on political decision-making.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
27.0 %	18.6 %	20.1 %	16.1 %	13.1 %

Politicians and other people in positions of leadership are only puppets for the real agents of power behind them.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
31.4 %	21.2 %	23.9 %	10.0 %	12.2 %

In the comparison presented below, answers from respondents who disagreed with corresponding statements were compared with answers from respondents who agreed with these statements. As expected, the two groups differed in their responses to other parts of the questionnaire. Respondents who were in stronger agreement with conspiracy myths tended to have spent less time critically examining the time of National Socialism. They attributed less responsibility for the crimes of National Socialism to the German population during the time of National Socialism and were more likely to equate the suffering of these German people with the suffering of the groups that were persecuted by the National Socialist regime. In addition, they were more likely to doubt “that all the reports about the extent of the persecution of the Jews are true.”

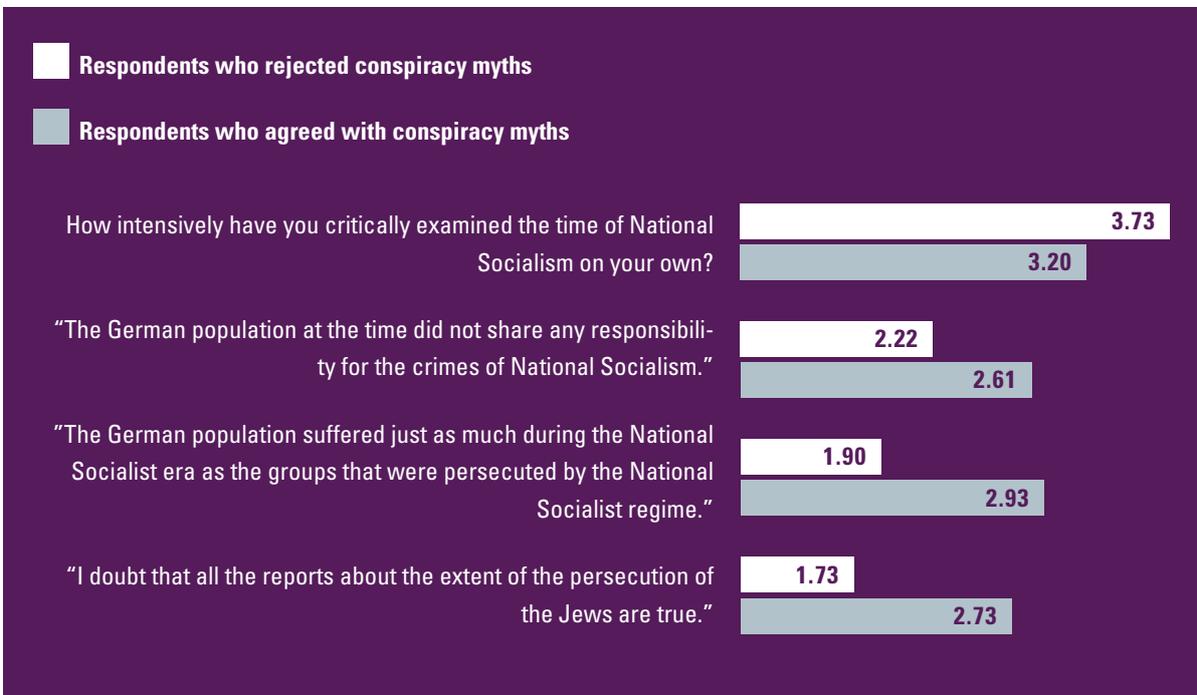


Figure 2. Average of responses provided by the two subgroups to the below questions. The questions were answered using a five-tier scale from “1 – not at all” to “5 – very much” (question 1) and “1 – strongly disagree” to “5 – strongly agree” (questions 2–4).

In terms of current sociopolitical attitudes, the results showed that there were both commonalities as well as systematic differences between the groups. Respondents who more strongly agreed with conspiracy myths indicated that, on a subjective level, they felt just as much responsibility for preventing discrimination against and the exclusion of people or groups of people in Germany. At the same time, they have a more hostile attitude toward refugees and are more in favor of placing an upper limit on the numbers of refugees admitted to Germany than those respondents who did not believe in conspiracy myths.



Figure 3. Average of responses provided by the two subgroups to the below questions. The questions were answered using a five-tier scale from "1 – strongly disagree" to "5 – strongly agree."

“The fact that a majority of the respondents explicitly rejected comparisons with National Socialism in the context of the coronavirus pandemic may appear reassuring. A closer examination of the results, however, shows widespread tendencies toward relativizing and revisionist statements – which highlights that a larger share of the German population is potentially susceptible to these views.”

Charlotte Jahnz – Open History e.V.

5 AUTHORS' SUMMARY

The fourth edition of the MEMO study was designed in particular to analyze topics that had not been addressed or had only been touched on in the previous studies. The present results provide new insights into the state of Germany's culture of remembrance as well as prevailing views among the population and their knowledge regarding the time of National Socialism. At the same time, the results offer an impression of the respondents' views on our society today and the extent to which they think National Socialist ideas and group-focused enmity continue to exist to this. In doing so, the results themselves directly raise new questions.

The **ways the respondents reported for critically examining the topic of National Socialism** in MEMO IV confirm the results of the previous studies. Films, books, and memorial sites, for example, appear to be established means of critically examining the time of National Socialism, while conversations with contemporary witnesses were rarely reported. The results also indicate that the existing approaches do not address and reach all groups of people and population groups equally. Educational and social inequalities in our society also appear to be reflected in the critical examination of history. **Local opportunities for critically examining National Socialism** are used by many of the respondents, provided they are available and people are aware of them. However, the results also show that these local means of access are less readily available in rural regions in particular, or that people are unaware of them.

New and often digital ways of critically examining history attracted interest among a share of the respondents in MEMO IV and appear to be useful additions to the existing offers for historical and political education. Younger respondents and those who have already spent significant time critically examining the topic of National Socialism in the past show themselves to be more open to new approaches. At the same time, the results suggest that respondents who have critically examined the topic of National Socialism less intensively or not at all will not use new digital means of access to do so, either. In light of these results, it appears that one of the challenges faced by the culture of remembrance and historical and political education in Germany is ensuring that a wide variety of offers is available, both with respect to the methods used as well as to the diversity of the groups of people the offers aim to reach. It appears that an increased digitalization of ways to access the topic of National Socialism is necessary, but this will not be sufficient. Efforts to reach more people with educational offers appear worthwhile, taking into consideration that the respondents themselves in MEMO IV saw their own critical examination of the time of National Socialism as "effective." This is reflected in the fact that around two thirds of the respondents each reported that their own efforts to critically examine National Socialism helped them to understand a great deal about the reasons it occurred and that their critical examination helped them become aware of their own responsibility to society.

The results further show that respondents' own **family biographies** do not offer a direct point of reference for the time of National Socialism in all cases. A share of the respondents reported that none of their ancestors were living in Germany during the time of National Socialism, and some felt that their own ancestors' lives had not been affected at all by National Socialism. The results of MEMO III/2020 had previously shown that a relevant share of respondents (23.5 %) did not see their own family's history as part of the German culture of remembrance. These findings raise the question of how inclusive or exclusive the German culture of remembrance is in general and the remembrance of National Socialism is in particular, as well as the **extent to which they take into account the complexity of the perspectives and family biographies found in German society today** – or could incorporate them to a greater extent. This also poses the question of how significant direct points of reference in families are for individuals' own critical examination of National Socialist history. While our ancestors' experiences during National Socialism represent one potential means of accessing the topic, the wide range of migration biographies that have no direct connection to National Socialism and an individual's own, current experiences of racism and discrimination appear to be potential motives for critically examining the history of National Socialism.

With regard to **remembering the groups of victims of National Socialism**, half of all respondents in MEMO II/2019 were in favor of remembering “all groups of victims.” The results of the present study now show that respondents are able to name **two to three groups of victims of National Socialism on average**. In this context, most but not all respondents mentioned Jews as one of the groups, with around half mentioning the Sinti and/or Roma. Even fewer respondents named other groups that were persecuted and murdered by the National Socialist regime. It appears justified to conclude that the extent to which the groups of victims are differentiated does not fulfill the aim of remembering all groups of victims, even without assessing the figure of two to three groups respondents recall on average. While around half of the respondents in MEMO IV said they were in favor of greater diversity in terms of society’s remembrance of the groups of victims of National Socialism, around one third thought that the perspectives of the groups of victims are already sufficiently represented in the German culture of remembrance. Based on the available data, it is not possible to evaluate the extent to which this assessment coincides with the situation as perceived by the affected groups themselves. However, social marginalization of specific communities can also be reflected in a lack of awareness of their victimhood during the period of National Socialism. In light of the knowledge we actually find regarding the groups of victims of National Socialism, it seems desirable that an effort is made to strengthen the perspectives of these groups in the German culture of remembrance.

Society’s awareness of **the scale of forced labor during National Socialism** appears comparatively low when measured against the estimated number of forced laborers in the time of National Socialism and the respondents’ knowledge regarding their own ancestors who were involved as perpetrators or were affected by National Socialist forced labor as victims. One potential starting point for accessing the topics surrounding forced labor would be a critical examination of **companies who were involved in the crimes of National Socialism**. Even though only two thirds of the respondents in MEMO IV were able to name a specific Germany company that was involved in National Socialist crimes, the responses provided by these participants reflect an awareness of the role played by companies such as “Krupp” and “IG Farben.” Questions that may be worth examining in future studies include the extent to which respondents are aware of the entanglement between the German economy and National Socialist crimes, how much they know about the corresponding processes aimed at addressing this involvement, and how previous efforts to come to terms with this involvement are viewed within society.

In relation to the specific question of **which events since 1945 the respondents believed had a direct link to the time of National Socialism**, the first and most notable aspect is almost half of all respondents were unable or unwilling to answer this question. A majority of the remaining respondents associate the time of National Socialism with acts of terror committed by right-wing extremists (e. g., the attacks carried out by the National Socialist Underground and the attacks in Halle and Hanau) as well as right-wing and extreme right-wing sociopolitical developments in recent German history. Based on the available results, it is not possible to make any definitive conclusions regarding the **awareness of continuities in National Socialist ways of thinking within German society**. Likewise, the responses when directly asked about National Socialist attitudes in German society do not reflect a clear stance on the part of the respondents but rather point to ambivalence as to whether National Socialist and hostile attitudes continue to exist in relevant parts of our society to this day.

The previous MEMO studies had already demonstrated that revisionist perspectives on **the role and involvement of the German population in the time of National Socialism** are compatible with the mindsets of at least a share of Germany’s population today. The present study also shows that, when directly asked, some respondents have a clear tendency to play down the population’s share in the responsibility for the crimes of National Socialism or equate the suffering of the German population in the time of National Socialism with the suffering of the groups that were persecuted by the National Socialist regime. Perspectives like these appear as an expression of and gateways to revisionist and right-wing populist attitudes in German society. The extent of the ambivalence that is reflected in respondents’ assessments of the role and involvement of the German population during National Socialism does not appear compatible with historical facts. A majority of the respondents in MEMO IV did reject the explicitly revisionist statement that the suffering of the German population during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic could be compared with the suffering of people during the time of National Socialism. However, the results also show that a significant share of respondents agree with **conspiracy myths** and that this assent coincides **with**

an increase in historical revisionist perspectives regarding the time of National Socialism. The available data gives the impression that these propensities to play down the time of National Socialism and revisionist reinterpretations of it are particularly reflected in responses to **questions regarding to the roles of perpetration and victimhood during the time of National Socialism.** These supposedly more subtle forms of relativization and historical revision – as opposed to those that explicitly deny the relevant events – appear to particularly require a civic society that not only takes decisive steps to counter attacks on the remembrance of the time of National Socialism and its victims but is also capable of responding to these attacks with indepth historical knowledge. In light of the present findings, we find it reasonable to conclude that we as a society must engage in regular, critical examination of our selfimage of possessing a good knowledge of historical facts, of being aware of discrimination, and of being actively involved in preventing the exclusion of marginalized groups in today’s society.

ANNEX – COMPLETE PRESENTATION OF THE DESCRIPTIVE FINDINGS

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
9.2 %	23.5 %	20.7 %	25.4 %	21.2 %

How intensively have you dealt with the time of National Socialism on your own?				
Not at all	Not very much	Somewhat	Rather a lot	Very much
7.3 %	15.6 %	27.0 %	28.1 %	22.0 %

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 or feature film. (M = 4.38)	6.5 %	4.6 %	7.1 %	8.6 %	73.3 %
Talked to family members. (M = 4.14)	14.1 %	4.7 %	5.3 %	4.8 %	71.1 %
Read texts or watched videos on the Internet. (M = 3.42)	30.5 %	5.4 %	7.4 %	5.1 %	51.5 %
Read a non-fiction book or novel. (M = 3.07)	32.5 %	12.9 %	8.3 %	8.1 %	38.2 %
Visited a memorial site. (M = 2.98)	20.2 %	25.4 %	15.3 %	14.1 %	25.0 %
Visited an exhibition. (M = 2.94)	29.2 %	16.6 %	13.4 %	12.1 %	28.6 %
Met a contemporary witness. (M = 1.88)	65.0 %	11.1 %	7.9 %	2.6 %	13.4 %

On a personal level, how much would you like to critically examine the history of National Socialism in the following ways?

	Not at all	Rather not	Neither/ nor	Rather a lot	Very much	I don't know
By speaking with so-called digital contemporary witnesses. (<i>M</i> = 2.87)	29.6 %	11.4 %	15.0 %	21.8 %	18.4 %	3.8 %
By making a virtual visit to a concentration camp memorial site, e. g. using a computer. (<i>M</i> = 2.39)	40.8 %	13.2 %	13.5 %	15.5 %	10.8 %	6.1 %
By listening to a podcast. (<i>M</i> = 2.36)	38.6 %	16.1 %	10.1 %	20.0 %	7.1 %	8.2 %
Through influencer posts, e. g.. on YouTube or Instagram. (<i>M</i> = 1.80)	56.1 %	15.9 %	10.5 %	8.3 %	3.4 %	5.7 %
By playing a computer game set in the time of National Socialism. (<i>M</i> = 1.55)	67.2 %	13.4 %	5.8 %	5.0 %	2.9 %	5.6 %

Can you name groups of people that, to your knowledge, were persecuted and murdered by the regime during the time of National Socialism? Name all groups that come to mind.

Group	Percentage of the responses
Jews	82.1 %
Sinti and/or Roma	44.5 %
Homosexuals ⁵	28.8 %
Politically persecuted people	27.8 %
People with illnesses and disabilities	23.1 %
I don't know/no response	10.9 %
Non-specific or mentioned only once	7.0 %
Members of specific nationalities	4.8 %
Members of resistance groups	4.8 %
Members of specific professions	4.6 %
Members of specific religious groups	4.4 %
Members of other racialized groups	3.2 %
Specific individuals mentioned	2.2 %
Lesbians	1.9 %
Prisoners of war	0.8 %
"Social misfits"	0.6 %
"Professional criminals"	0.5 %

Were any of your ancestors living in Germany during the time of National Socialism?

Yes	No	I don't know
82.8 %	16.4 %	0.8 %

⁵ This included both unspecific references to homosexual individuals in general as well as homosexual men (typically "gays") in particular. Specific references that were made to homosexual women (typically "lesbians") in some cases were included under a different category in order to emphasize these references and differentiate them.

Only the 164 respondents who stated that they did not have ancestors living in Germany during the time of National Socialism were subsequently asked the following question:

How significantly would you say your ancestors' lives were affected by the time of National Socialism, even though they did not live in Germany?				
Not at all	Not very significantly	Neither/nor	Rather significantly	Very significantly
35.8 %	12.5 %	15.4 %	15.2 %	21.2 %

Did any of your ancestors have forced laborers working at their companies, in their households, or on their farms during the time of National Socialism?		
Yes	No	I don't know
8.1 %	81.4 %	10.5 %

Were any of your ancestors who were persecuted during the time of National Socialism made to work as forced laborers for the regime?		
Yes	No	I don't know
13.3 %	77.9 %	8.8 %

During the time of National Socialism, what percentage of the German population do you think knew that groups of people were being systematically murdered at the time?	
<i>M</i>	
54.1 %	

During the entire time of National Socialism, how many people do you think were made to work as forced laborers in the "German Reich" at the time?	
<i>M</i>	
3,980,000	

Would you say that there were or are any incidents or events in recent German history, i.e., since 1945, that are directly linked to the history of National Socialism? Can you name a specific event that you think has a particularly clear link to Germany's National Socialist past?

Category	Percentage of the responses
I don't know/no response	46.1 %
Attacks and assaults	24.1 %
· Specifically extreme right-wing	· 20.0 %
· Not clearly specified	· 4.1 %
Right-wing sociopolitical developments and events	9.7 %
Sociopolitical developments and events in general	5.0 %
Events in the context of the remembrance of the time of National Socialism	4.6 %
Events in the context of coming to terms with the time of National Socialism	4.2 %
Group-focused enmity	1.6 %

To what extent would you say the following aspects protect us as a society against something like National Socialism happening in Germany again?

	Not at all	Rather little	Some-what	Rather a lot	Very much
Our democratic institutions. (<i>M</i> = 3.36)	6.5 %	20.3 %	24.3 %	28.8 %	20.1 %
The fact that we as a society have become more sensitive to discrimination against and exclusion of people. (<i>M</i> = 3.22)	7.6 %	20.6 %	29.7 %	26.2 %	15.9 %
The European Community. (<i>M</i> = 3.08)	9.4 %	23.6 %	29.5 %	24.5 %	13.0 %
Our previous efforts to critically deal with the time of National Socialism. (<i>M</i> = 3.07)	7.1 %	25.9 %	32.2 %	22.5 %	12.3 %
Our good economic situation. (<i>M</i> = 3.06)	10.0 %	22.2 %	31.5 %	24.5 %	11.8 %

To what extent would you say that your personal efforts to critically examine the National Socialist era have contributed so far to the fact that you have...

	Not at all	Rather little	Some-what	Rather a lot	Very much
...gained factual knowledge about this time? (M = 3.80)	2.9 %	11.8 %	18.8 %	35.6 %	30.9 %
...become aware of your own responsibility to society? (M = 3.80)	5.3 %	8.2 %	20.0 %	34.0 %	32.5 %
...gained an understanding of the reasons behind the rise of National Socialism? (M = 3.79)	5.5 %	10.7 %	17.6 %	31.8 %	34.4 %
...become more aware of discrimination against and exclusion of people? (M = 3.65)	11.4 %	11.1 %	13.4 %	28.9 %	35.2 %
...continued to remember the groups of victims of National Socialism? (M = 3.50)	6.3 %	17.0 %	24.0 %	26.2 %	26.5 %

How would you assess your own knowledge regarding the time of National Socialism?

Not good at all	Not very good	Neither/nor	Rather good	Very good
3.4 %	9.6 %	27.0 %	45.6 %	14.3 %

To what extent would you say that the groups that were persecuted during the time of National Socialism continue to be discriminated against and excluded in our society today?

Not at all anymore	Much less than then	Somewhat less than then	Just as much as then
6.5 %	49.2 %	39.0 %	5.2 %

Can you name any specific German companies that were involved in the crimes of National Socialism?

Company	Percentage of responses
I don't know/no response	37.0 %
Krupp	30.7 %
IG Farben	14.4 %
· BASF	· 3.9 %
· Bayer	· 1.4 %
· Hoechst	· 0.8 %
Volkswagen	8.3 %
Siemens	4.8 %
Sonstige Einzelnennungen	3.2 %
BMW	1.9 %
Mercedes Benz	0.8 %
Bosch	0.7 %
Porsche	0.7 %
Adidas	0.5 %
Daimler	0.5 %
Deutsche Bank	0.5 %

Does the place where you live have any public offers or locations that provide an opportunity to critically deal with the time of National Socialism?

Yes	No	I don't know
51.2 %	42.1 %	6.7 %

Only the 512 respondents who stated that the place where they live does have an offer or a location for critically dealing with the time of National Socialism were subsequently asked the following question:

Have you already made use of this opportunity for dealing critically with the time of National Socialism in the place where you live?

Yes	No
70.4 %	29.6 %

I can understand how the German people didn't want to know anything about the crimes committed by the Nazi regime during the time of National Socialism.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
25.3 %	20.6 %	28.1 %	16.4 %	8.8 %

The majority of Germans supported the National Socialist regime up to the end of the Second World War.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
6.7 %	15.9 %	33.6 %	24.4 %	18.3 %

The German population at the time did not share any responsibility for the crimes of National Socialism.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
30.6 %	24.3 %	25.2 %	11.3 %	8.3 %

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
10.0 %	24.5 %	28.7 %	23.5 %	11.5 %

National Socialist attitudes continue to be an indelible part of the center of German society.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
12.9 %	28.1 %	25.1 %	21.8 %	11.2 %

People in Germany should feel a sense of responsibility for taking active steps to deal critically with the time of National Socialism.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
5.9 %	10.3 %	19.8 %	30.1 %	33.7 %

I see parallels between current political developments in Germany and the time of National Socialism.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
18.1 %	22.1 %	22.6 %	23.1 %	12.9 %

The societal remembrance of the time of National Socialism does not place a sufficient focus on the wide variety of victim groups who were persecuted and murdered by the National Socialist regime.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
7.0 %	15.8 %	28.3 %	26.6 %	20.9 %

Being German is an important part of my identity.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
15.5 %	14.0 %	19.7 %	19.5 %	28.8 %

I see myself as part of German society.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
3.7 %	3.3 %	10.6 %	27.3 %	54.9 %

I am proud to be German.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
13.5 %	13.2 %	27.6 %	19.4 %	23.2 %

Germany should have an upper limit for the numbers of refugees admitted to the country.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
31.4 %	19.3 %	19.7 %	14.3 %	13.7 %

There are secret organizations that exercise a great deal of influence on political decision-making.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
27.0 %	18.6 %	20.1 %	16.1 %	13.1 %

Politicians and other people in positions of leadership are only puppets for the real agents of power behind them.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
31.4 %	21.2 %	23.9 %	10.0 %	12.2 %

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
9.0 %	9.8 %	28.7 %	27.1 %	25.0 %

I feel it is also my responsibility to prevent discrimination and the exclusion of people or groups of people in Germany.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
13.3 %	10.4 %	17.5 %	24.1 %	33.9 %

I am actively involved in fighting discrimination and the exclusion of people or groups of people in Germany.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
10.8 %	16.8 %	31.7 %	20.5 %	18.3 %

Germany should take in more refugees from crisis regions.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
11.4 %	10.4 %	32.1 %	22.6 %	22.6 %

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
6.7 %	7.0 %	34.7 %	30.3 %	21.1 %

Germany has a special moral responsibility as a result of the time of National Socialism.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
8.1 %	7.5 %	20.0 %	28.8 %	34.8 %

The perspectives of the groups of victims themselves – e. g., those of Jewish people or Sinti and/or Roma – are sufficiently represented in the German culture of remembrance.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
7.9 %	20.3 %	35.6 %	22.1 %	11.6 %

I think it's okay if future generations no longer deal critically with the time of National Socialism.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
52.2 %	20.0 %	11.7 %	7.7 %	8.2 %

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
46.5 %	15.1 %	14.1 %	13.6 %	9.4 %

The German population suffered just as much during the National Socialist era as the groups that were persecuted by the National Socialist regime.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
34.1 %	23.1 %	23.3 %	9.8 %	8.0 %

I find it reasonable to compare the adversity faced by the German population during the coronavirus pandemic with the suffering of people during the time of National Socialism.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither/nor	Agree	Strongly agree
75.2 %	14.0 %	6.1 %	0.9 %	3.0 %

IMPRINT

Responsible for the content of the study

Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence (IKG)
Universitätsstrasse 25
33615 Bielefeld, Germany

IKG Research Team

Michael Papendick
Phone: +49 521 106-3106
Email: michael.papendick@uni-bielefeld.de

Dr. Jonas Rees
Phone: +49 521 106-3106
Email: jonas.rees@uni-bielefeld.de

Maren Scholz
Email: maren.scholz@uni-bielefeld.de

Prof. Dr. Andreas Zick
Phone: +49 521 106-3124
Email: sekretariat.ikg@uni-bielefeld.de

The study was funded by

Foundation “Remembrance, Responsibility and Future”
Friedrichstrasse 200
10117 Berlin, Germany

Translation: Sprachwerkstatt Berlin

IKG | Institut für interdisziplinäre
Konflikt- und Gewaltforschung

evz FOUNDATION
REMEMBRANCE
RESPONSIBILITY
FUTURE



**Forschungsinstitut
Gesellschaftlicher
Zusammenhalt**

STANDORT BIELEFELD

www.stiftung-evz.de

www.stiftung-evz.de/memo

