



Berlin, October 15, 2019

Shell Youth Study 2019: Young people speak their minds

Young people are more willing to speak their minds and express their interests and expectations, not just amongst themselves, but also increasingly towards those in politics, society and employers. At the same time, the majority of young people are inclined to be positive about the future. Their satisfaction with democracy is increasing. The EU is mainly perceived as positive. Young people are mostly tolerant and liberal with regards to society. The greatest concern for young people is environmental degradation.

Those are the core results of the 18th Shell Youth Study, which was presented in Berlin on October 15. "In the 2015 Youth Study, many young people had already shown greater involvement in political and social issues. They are now strengthening their involvement based on increasing awareness of environmental and climate-related issues. Although young people are optimistic about their personal futures and that of society, they believe that the time to act is now," says study director Dr. Mathias Albert from Bielefeld University. The message of young people to older generations is as follows: "We are still confident but listen to us and take care of our future now!"

Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Dr. Franziska Giffey (SPD): "Young people know that today's decisions influence the future and they want to be involved. They are right to demand that they will not only be listened to, but that their demands also have consequences. The current Shell study shows that young people want to get more involved and that many are committed even more to democracy, an open society and a united Europe. We must not take this trust for granted. It can only be a joint effort with the youth. Participation is therefore, in addition to protection and promotion, part of our values in order to bring the rights of children and young people into the Constitution."

The key results in detail:

Interest in politics

The sharply increased interest in politics since the start of the millennium holds fast. Young people consider political involvement to be very important. This view is increasing amongst girls in particular but is primarily limited to young people with a higher level of education.

Fears and concerns

The fears and concerns reflect the debates of recent years. Fears over the environment have gained greatly in importance particularly amongst those with a higher level of education. The debates on refugees and migration are reflected in the increased fear of both xenophobia and – at a lower level – of immigration. Fear of immigration tends to be expressed more by those with a lower level of education.

Confidence and justice

More than half of young people tend to be positive about the social future. 59% think that the German government is treating them fairly on the whole. That applies equally to western and eastern Germany.

European Union

Fifty per cent of the young people are on the whole positively disposed towards the EU, with only eight per cent having a negative opinion. Confidence in the international community has tended to increase. Among young people it stands for freedom of movement, cultural diversity and peace, more so compared to 2006, but also for economic and social welfare.

Populism

Certain right-wing populist orientated statements meet the approval of young people as well. For example, more than two thirds agree with the statement that 'you can't say anything negative about foreigners without being considered a racist.' Young people in western Germany and those who have a higher level of education have a slightly more global outlook than those from eastern Germany and those with a lower level of education.

Diversity and tolerance

The trend towards an increasingly mixed society goes along with a high level of tolerance among young people. The study shows that a great majority of girls and boys are positive about different social groups and minorities. The negative values are consistently under 20 per cent.

Satisfaction with democracy, political disenchantment and trust in institutions

More than three quarters of young people are satisfied with democracy. At the same time, more than two thirds are critical that politicians do not look after their interests, which can be seen as cause for political disenchantment. On the question of trust in institutions, the police, Federal Constitutional Court and environmental protection groups achieve significantly above-average scores. Large companies, churches, parties and banks are significantly less trusted.

Value systems

For most young people, good friends, a close relationship and positive family life remain the most important values. A high standard of living and furthering their own needs are much less important in comparison. All in all, idealistically, more meaningful values are back in favour among young people. The trend is moving away from materialistic values aimed at increasing personal power and self-assertion.

Parents and family

The results show a relatively family-orientated picture. The relationship between the young people and their parents is largely satisfactory. The majority regard their parents as role models for parenting. The desire to have children is steady. In the case of starting a family, mainly men and women from western Germany want the man to be the main or sole provider of the family.

Religion

The vast majority of young people are members of a religious community. Although this value is currently lower than 2015, it is higher than 2002. Whereas the Christian denominations have been steadily losing young members since 2002 (five percentage points between 2015 and 2019 alone), Islam and other non-Christian religions have increased in significance. The proportion of those unaffiliated with any religion remains static. The proportion of young people for whom belief in God is important, is significantly lower though, with almost a third, and has even decreased slightly since 2002.

School and qualifications

The trend towards higher education qualifications continues. The grammar school (Gymnasium) is undoubtedly the most popular type of school, and among girls even the school attended by an absolute majority. The "Abitur" (pre-university level) is accordingly by far the most-common school-leaving qualification aimed for. The trend towards university education continues to increase. Integrated types of school, which have been introduced in nearly all German federal states show the largest growth since 2015. The proportion of young people attending them has doubled since 2002. Correspondingly fewer young people attend a secondary or secondary modern school (Hauptschule or Realschule).

Connection between education and social background

A strong link can still be ascertained between social background and educational success. It is only half as likely that young people from educationally disadvantaged parental homes will obtain the "Abitur" certificate, then those from homes where parents have a higher level of education. Recent education policy has been successful, however, young people from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds are now also attempting to obtain, or are obtaining, the "Abitur" leaving more people with a Abitur diploma than before.

The study was drawn up on behalf of Shell Germany by Prof. Dr. Mathias Albert (director, Bielefeld University), Prof. Dr. Gudrun Quenzel (Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences), Prof. Dr. Klaus Hurrelmann (Hertie School of Governance), as well as a team of experts from the Munich research institute Kantar organised by Ulrich Schneekloth. The company has funded the Youth Study since 1953. "With this commitment to youth research we are reinforcing our willingness to take our part of the social responsibility we have," says chairman of Deutsche Shell Holding GmbH, Dr. Thomas Zengerly.

The 18th Shell Youth Study is based on a representative sample of 2,572 young people aged between 12 and 25 who were interviewed personally by Kantar interviewers regarding their living conditions and their attitudes and focus. The survey was conducted between early January to mid-March 2019 based on a standardised questionnaire. Two to three-hour interviews were conducted with 20 young people in this age group as part of the qualitative study.

The study has been published by Beltz-Verlag and is available from bookshops for EUR 24.95 or as an e-book (EUR 22.99).

Website: www.shell.de/jugendstudie

Youth Study on podcast: www.shell.de/jugenstudie-podcast (tbc)

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With respect to operating costs synergies indicated, such savings and efficiencies in procurement spend include economies of scale, specification standardisation and operating efficiencies across operating, capital and raw material cost areas.

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