

TRANSLATION FROM GERMAN

Summary

A persistent characteristic of the young generation in Germany is their attitude towards the challenges posed by everyday life, career and society. This attitude includes their willingness to be guided by norms of achievement and a desire for stable relationships in their personal social circle. The primary emphasis is on the individual's search for a secure, independent place in society. Young people try to adapt to circumstances so that they can seize opportunities as they arise. The determining factors are their need for security and their desire for positive social relationships, which also encompasses a willingness to engage with the interests of those around them or to work for the common good.

What is striking is the strong sense of optimism maintained among young people, which has actually grown stronger, despite living in a quite difficult world. Enduring crises in Europe and growing insecurity in other parts of the world, terrorism and increasing flows of refugees have not impinged on the positive personal outlook held by the majority of young people in Germany. A contributory factor in this is the fact that Germany enjoys a more stable situation than that which exists in many other countries in the world.

However, the findings of the new, 17th Shell Youth Study indicate the first changes among today's young generation. A newly identified trend is their increased interest in politics. Many are becoming more open-minded when it comes to following world events. Yet unlike the situation in the 1970s and early 1980s, this openness is developing on the basis of a fundamentally positive view of society's situation and future. It seems that young people are once again gaining somewhat more opportunities to keep abreast with the issues that are shaping society and possibly participating in these processes. At the same time, young people are taking a more critical view of society and how they live their own lives. Respect (for culture and their own traditions), recognition (of human diversity) and awareness (of the environment and health) are important in this regard.

Young people want their career, leisure time and family life to be compatible. Above all, they want to be able to organise their lives in a way that allows them to plan and which offers security, and are less interested in living by the philosophy of "the sky's

the limit". A job should be secure and allow a decent standard of living, but should also be experienced as a self-determined, meaningful and socially useful activity. In contrast with past generations, the youth of 2015 may be regarded as a "generation sallying forth."

An optimistic view of the future

Optimism among young people in Germany has not waned. Our research reveals that 61 % are accordingly optimistic about their own futures, and 36 % consider the situation to be "half and half", while only 3 % tend towards a pessimistic view. The proportion of young people who feel optimistic is slightly up from 2010 (59 %) and far exceeds the corresponding figure for 2006 (50 %).

Once again, however, young people from the most disadvantaged stratum do not feel the benefit of this growing confidence. As in 2010, only one third (33 %) of them claim to be optimistic about their own futures. We are also seeing a slight downturn in optimism in the lower middle stratum, from 56 % in 2010 to 52 % in 2015. In all other social strata, levels of optimism have increased once more, and the top stratum has seen an especially significant rise, from 68 % in 2010 to 74 % in 2015.

On a positive note, we are seeing for the first time that the majority of young people are optimistic about the future of society. After hitting a low of 44 % in 2006, the trend reversal we saw in 2010 (46 %) has continued, reaching 52 % in 2015. Therefore for the first time since the 1990s, a narrow majority of young people now feel confident about the future of society. Social background can explain a great deal about this statistic. The mood of young people from the top stratum is again the most optimistic (59 %), while those from the bottom stratum are far less likely to share this outlook (43 %).

Traditionally (since 2002), the Shell Youth Study has identified five social strata, which are defined in terms of young people's family educational background and disposable material resources of their households. According to this definition, 13 % of the young people belong to the top stratum and 25 % to the upper middle. The largest subgroup comprises those from the middle stratum (29 %), while the lower middle stratum accounts for 22 %. The bottom is the most disadvantaged stratum, to which 11 % of the young people belong.

Education: determining the course of young people's lives

Success at school correlates more closely with the young people's respective social backgrounds in Germany than in any other country. There is no denying that such success is crucial in paving the way for future life. Young people who have left school without a school-leaving qualification have far fewer opportunities to find a training post and taking up regular paid employment afterwards.

Even young people who have obtained school-leaving qualifications face risks. Around four-fifths of vocational trainees (78 %) and students (82 %) feel confident or very confident of being able to make their own career choices a reality. In 2010, only around three-quarters held this view. As in the previous Shell Youth Studies, social background remains crucial in this regard. Young people from the lowest stratum (46 %) feel far less confident of being able to achieve their desired career opportunities than those from the uppermost stratum (81 %). There has also been a noticeable decline in confidence in the upper middle stratum, from 62 % in 2010 to 53 % in 2015.

Despite positive developments in social and economic preconditions, there is increasing disparity between the education levels of young people of different groups. Young people are also aware of the key role of education for their future life courses. Those from the bottom stratum, in particular, who have no prospects of educational advancement, perceive that they have fewer opportunities and feel disinclined to share the growing optimism of the other social strata in relation to the opportunities open to them in their own lives.

The results are once again interesting with regard to gender. Young men have apparently managed to make up for some lost ground, in the context of the universal introduction of new forms of secondary education. Meanwhile, we have seen a certain convergence between the educational aspirations, or desired school-leaving results, of males and females. Young men have become more ambitious. It remains to be seen whether this trend reversal will be reflected in the results actually attained upon leaving school.

**The continued important role of the family as an emotional safe haven;
relativization of the importance of family and children for subsequent personal
fulfilment in life**

The family continues to play an important role for young people. Still, compared with 2010 (76 %), far fewer young people (63 %) consider starting their own family to be important to their personal fulfilment in life. There has been a similar - though less marked - decline in agreement with the idea that you need to have children of your own to be happy in life (2010: 43 %; 2015: 41 %).

Irrespective of this, young people's own families of origin remain a safe haven at times of high demands at school, in vocational education and in their first qualified jobs. This is where the vast majority of adolescents find the (positive emotional) support they need. Over 90 % of young people continue to report that their relations with their own parents are good (40 % enjoy the best possible relations, while a further 52 % get by, despite occasional differences of opinion). Since 2010 (35 %), there has been a further marked rise in the proportion of young people whose relations with their parents are very favourable.

A similar continuum exists in their acceptance of their own parents' style of upbringing. Nearly three quarters of young people (74 %) would bring their own children up in exactly the same or similar way as they were brought up themselves (2002: 69 %; 2006: 72 %; 2010: 72 %). Once again, this level of acceptance is lowest among young people of the bottom stratum (46 %), though we have seen a trend reversal since 2010 (40 %) and the preceding years (2002: 54 %; 2006: 46 %).

On the other hand, young people are less inclined to have children of their own. After a rise to 69 % in 2010, the proportion of young people who want their own children currently stands at 64 %. In 2006 the figure was 62 %, while in 2002 it was still 67 %. The decline in interest in having children is observable in both young women (69 %) and young men (60 %). Irrespective of this, it still remains open to question whether the desire to have children of their own - and most (69 %) consider having two children - remains achievable in the face of the many impending tasks in the 'rush hour' of life. Society therefore faces the task of creating the right preconditions for starting families.

Job expectations: top priority is security; benefits and satisfaction are important; the ability to plan and work/life balance are desirable; and career of secondary importance

Attitudes to working life formed an additional focus of the 17th Shell Youth Study. Traditionally, we survey expectations of working life. At least one fifth of young people (22 %) who have left school look back on the experience of having been

unable to take up the job of their choice due to lack of a school-leaving qualification. This is mainly true for young people from the bottom stratum (50 %). As much as 25 years after German reunification, young people from the eastern *Länder* (federal states) are increasingly finding that they did not attain the school-leaver's qualification they needed for the job of their choice (27 % in the eastern compared with 21 % in the western *Länder*). At the same time, they feel far less certain of being able to realise their career choices (65 % in the eastern *Länder*, 75 % in the western *Länder*). It cannot yet be said that differences in living conditions between the former East and West have been eradicated.

The dominant expectation of working life is the need for security. A secure job is (very) important to 95 % of young people.

Furthermore, young people's expectations can be subdivided into two areas: benefit and satisfaction.

The salient aspects of the **benefit orientation** are high income and good promotion prospects. However, adequate free time, in addition to employment, does play a role here. Young people from the eastern *Länder* of Germany place greater importance on this aspect of working life than their peers from the western *Länder*.

With regard to **job satisfaction**, the priority is that one's own working activity should be meaningful. The key aspects are a sense of achievement, the opportunity to serve other people, and opportunities to do something which is regarded as useful. What is striking is that young women are more likely to consider this aspect of working life to be important than their male peers.

The organisation of working life concerns three equally important aspects: the compatibility of work and home life, the ability to plan one's working life and career orientation. It is striking that career is an aspect of secondary importance for young people. Fewer than half (47 %) believe that overtime is something they must accept if they want to progress. On the other hand, the vast majority of young people (91 %) feel that one's career should not be at the expense of family and children.

The **compatibility of work and home life** comprises the possibility of making short-notice adjustments to working hours to suit personal needs, and switching to part-time working as soon as children arrive. As one might almost expect, we found that young women view these aspects as much more important than their male peers do.

The **ability to plan one's working life** relates to the everyday dimension of gainful employment. Set working hours with a clearly-defined start and finish form the most important aspect of this. At the same time, one's job should not be at the expense of one's family and children. Once again, it is young women who are more likely to desire reliable structures in their everyday working lives than their male peers.

Career orientation covers the two statements that respondents were least in agreement with. Young men are most likely to be still quite accustomed to the idea that overtime is part and parcel of a professional career. They would also be more likely to be willing to work at weekends, if they received appropriate compensation for this during the week.

On the basis of these five aspects, we derived four types of career orientation among young people.

The career launchers (37 %): They place equal emphasis on the benefit and satisfaction from gainful employment. However, in their view, work should fit in with their life. The ability to plan and career orientation are ranked as highly important aspects here.

The idealists (18 %): They unequivocally make the aspect of job satisfaction a priority. In their view, their job should be meaningful, above all. The social aspect, whether for others or together with other people, is also important. Conversely, the personal benefits and the ability to plan are considered somewhat less important, while career orientation is given a slightly less-than-average level of importance.

The down-to-earth types (27 %): They prioritise personal benefit in their working lives. Their career is definitely important, and they want to be able to plan their career as much as possible. Furthermore, work should fit in around their life to a certain degree. A desire for job satisfaction is of less importance to them, however.

The aloof (18 %): They find the aforementioned aspects of working life to be of little interest. By comparison, they have moderate expectations with regard to personal benefits and job satisfaction, the ability to plan their career and being able to fit in work around their life. They are also less career-orientated.

These four basic types of career orientation among young people make it necessary to form a variety of different approaches by which young people can be involved sufficiently in professional life in a way that motivates them. In this regard, we primarily need social actors (tutors, trainers, employers and so forth) to recognise the

needs of young people and to take account of their wide ranging interests as much as possible.

Leisure time – sociability and the internet

Compared with other areas of their lives, young people have more opportunities to pursue their personal interests in their own leisure time. This contributes considerably to forming an identity and, in turn, to self-fulfilment.

The internet has become a significantly more important element in leisure activities in recent years. Sociability (networking, meeting with other people, etc.) remains the central motivation, though sporting activities, use of traditional media (television, music) and creative aspects also feature among leisure activities. Family-orientated activities have also become more important.

Social background has also been found to be a determining characteristic of behaviour in relation to leisure activities. Such behaviour of the type found among young people from families with a better social structure (reading books/creative arts activities) enhances personal skills.

Consequently, young people from the upper stratum are more likely to be found in the **creative arts elite** group (19 % of all young people) in 2015 as well.

Younger, and in particular male, respondents, on the other hand, are more likely to belong to the **media-savvy** group (27 %). Computer games, watching online videos and 'hanging out' are characteristic activities of this group.

The **socially-orientated** (30 %) form the largest group among young people. These young people at the older end of the age range and from the middle strata are most interested in shared activities with friends, such as meeting up, or going to discos, parties and celebratory events.

While these three groups could already be described back in 2010, a fourth group of more **family-orientated** young people (24 %) can be distinguished from others in 2015. What characterises these (predominantly female) young people from the middle strata is that they participate in many family-orientated activities, though watching television and using the internet are also common leisure activities.

Spending one's free time at home and with one's own family has also been more frequently cited in recent Shell Youth Studies. A new development, however, is that there are now slightly more marked differences among young people in this respect.

It also remains to be seen whether this development will manifest itself as a trend in the future.

The ubiquity of the internet

Access to the internet is something that is taken for granted by the current generation of young people. Almost all young people (99 %) now have access to the internet, compared with 2002 when that figure was just 66 %. For that reason, the question of whether young people have access to the internet is no longer a social issue, as it was until 2006. The significant factor when it comes to the variety of access channels has turned out to be social background. Almost half (47 %) of young people from the upper stratum reported that they have three or more means of gaining online access (smartphone, laptop, desktop computer, tablet, etc.), whereas this is only the case for over one sixth (17 %) of young people from the lower stratum.

The comprehensive reach of the internet in this day and age is once again accompanied by a significant increase in the time that young people spend online. On average, young people spend more than 18 hours per week online. In 2010, that figure was only 13 hours, while in 2006 it was fewer than 10 hours, and in 2002 it was just 7 hours per week. The difference between young males (19.2 hours per week) and young females (17.6 hours per week) has decreased significantly compared with previous years.

A look at the internet – critically differentiated – continued use

Young people are quite aware of the fact that the internet has given rise to a broad field of business and that as users of a service they are not only the client, but also the product of the provider.

More than four out of five young people (84 %) agree fully or to a lesser degree with the statement that “large corporations such as Facebook or Google want to earn money using their users’ data”. A large majority also believe that “large corporations such as Facebook or Google want to rule the internet with their services”, with almost three quarters (72 %) agreeing with that statement fully or to a lesser degree. The same number of respondents (72 %) agree with the statement “I look after my personal data when I go online”.

The answers given by young people to the questions on the interactive/social nature of the internet are more varied. Two fifths (39 %) hold the view that “you need to be on social networks because otherwise you miss out on what others are doing”. Two

fifths (39 %) of young people agree with the emotional assessment that “it is fun to make and maintain personal contacts over the internet”. However, almost one third of young people expressly disagree with these two statements. The statement “I am online so often that there is little time left for other things” was the one that the fewest young people agreed with; almost two thirds (65 %) disagreed with this statement.

If we also group young people according to their attitude to the “social web”, 39 % believe that they “**take a critical view and do not want to take part in everything**”. These young people are familiar with potential risks and they state that they also monitor their activity more closely, but without refraining from joining in activities on the social web in principle. 32 % state that they “**take a critical view, but still want to join in**”. These young people also predominantly agree with the statements that view the internet as a “business model”, though they primarily value making full use of the opportunities on the social web. 26 % percent view the purpose of use as “**rather non-critical and join in**”, while the remaining 3 % “**generally dismiss criticism of the internet**”. What is most important for them is “to be part of the social web”.

Overall, young people have very little trust in Facebook with respect to its use of their personal data. In fact, just one in eight young people (13 %) state that they trust Facebook in this regard. Irrespective of this, 27 % of young people use Facebook “very often”, while a further 30 % use it “frequently” and 26 % “now and then”.

Everyday life online – entertainment, information, interaction

We can form three major areas in terms of young people’s everyday behaviour as users of the internet. The first area covers content used for **entertainment** purposes, which includes “videos, films, television”, “downloading or listening to music”, “chatting”, “games, gaming” and “accessing social networks”. Users of these services are primarily young and more likely to be young males. Young females are only slight frontrunners with regard to the use of social networks.

The second area combines activities such as “searching for information that I need right now”, “keeping up to date with political and social developments”, “using the internet for school, training or my job” and “sending emails”. The internet is used to obtain **information** that is relevant to everyday life. The older respondents are, the more frequently we see this type of use. It is therefore the task of the media studies and policy to use age-appropriate content and opportunities for reflection to ensure that young adults are given the opportunity to learn how to use this dimension of the

internet. The relevance of this task increases in view of the fact that young people explore this usage dimension of the internet somewhat less due to simple social circumstances in particular.

Based on the “social media” infrastructure that has evolved on the internet over the last few years, the third area comprises **interactive** activities such as “writing my blog”, “writing reviews of products or services”, or “uploading photos, videos or music to the internet”. With these activities, young people are not just making passive use of the content they find, but rather actively participating using their own content. This form of participation-based internet use is increasingly being used by young people of non-German origin, who are evidently increasingly using this form of internet use to allow those who live far away to participate in their lives with little effort.

We can derive five types of young people’s internet use from these three areas:

Info-users (25 %): These users tend to be female (61 %), older and better-educated young people, who use the variety of information provided by the internet.

Entertainment and interaction play a less important role for them. With almost 18 hours of internet user per week, their use lies just below the average among young people overall.

Media consumers (24 %): This type of user primarily uses the internet for entertainment. They tend to be male (56 %) and at the younger end of the age range, whose weekly internet use (almost 20 hours) lies significantly above the average. 59 % percent of these users are of school age and are over-proportionately (one third) pupils of pre-university level secondary schools.

Digital devotees (20 %): Digital devotees use the internet comprehensively for entertainment, interaction and for information. These predominantly male (60 %), older respondents spend the most time online, reaching almost 25 hours per week. They are found in all social strata.

Occasional users (19 %): Occasional users are less inclined to pursue any of the three areas of internet use. These primarily younger respondents, with a slightly lower level of education, spend an average of 11 hours online per week.

Interaction-orientated profilers (12 %): Profilers make use of the opportunities for interaction on the social web more than anything else. These young people, who are slightly more likely to be male (56 %) but are already towards the older end of the

age range, spend less time online per week (16 hours), but are more likely to spend this time maintaining their online profile.

Overall, the results show that younger respondents in particular often access the internet using the various means of entertainment and this is the case for both boys and girls. However, by comparison, younger girls are slightly more likely to use digital social networks, while boys in this age group tend to be more interested in computer games or media consumption (videos, film, television, etc.). User behaviour differs further as age increases, and the use of the internet for information purposes becomes more evident. Once again, it is young people from the upper strata of social background who use the internet more frequently and are also able to use it more effectively for their purposes. What is common among all young people, however, is the desire to be part of the social domain of the internet. In their view, those who do not have any access would be excluded from a major part of everyday life.

A trend reversal in political interest

Young people's self-reporting of their political interests forms one of the core time series of the Shell Youth Study. To this end, we have comparable cross-sectional data available dating back to the 10th Shell Youth Study in 1984 for the question "Are you interested in politics in general? Would you say you are very interested, interested, not particularly interested or not at all interested?".

The results of the current study show that a trend reversal has taken place in this area and political interest among young people in Germany has once again increased significantly. Compared with an all-time low of 30 % in 2002, 41 % of young people now describe themselves as "being interested in politics" (12–25 age group).

Overall, young people have become disinterested in politics, particularly since the 1990s. During the 1980s, and particularly in the early part of that decade when public debate was heavily characterised by the anti-nuclear and peace movements, until shortly after the Peaceful Revolution, with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the successive reunification of Germany on 3 October 1990, the Shell Youth Studies conducted at that time measured political interest of between 55 % in 1984 and 57 % in 1991 (15–24 age group). This level has never been reached since. The dramatic drop in political interest in the 1990s until the all-time low in 2002, when just one third of young people expressed an interest in politics, seems to have been overcome since then, however.

Seventy-four percent of young people who describe themselves as interested in politics actively seek to inform themselves about political developments. On the other hand, only 10 % of those who have little or no interest in politics do this. In this regard, political interest and political competency go hand in hand.

Relatively speaking, political interest among young people with a lower level of education has increased even more dramatically. However, there remain significant differences compared with the level of political interest among young people from the upper strata, which has always been greater.

General economic conditions are being perceived more positively, but fear of terrorist attacks and war in Europe has increased

Interest in politics has increased against the background of a more positive assessment of the social situation in Germany. This can be said of the economic situation in particular and the related assessment of one's own future and that of society. Only 51 % of young people still make reference to fears relating to the economic situation. In parallel to this, the number of respondents who expressed fear of failing to find a training post or losing their job has fallen to 48 %.

However, what is striking is a simultaneous increase in concern in relation to international politics. The most common risk and problem area that causes anxiety among young people is the possibility of terrorist attacks, which was cited by 73 % of respondents. Fear of a possible war in Europe has dropped into second place, cited by 62 % of respondents. However, the majority of young people (52 %) has since come to view the future of society overall with rather more confidence. This was not the case between 2002 and 2010.

The interest in politics has not been encouraged so much by any anticipated or experienced (social) crises, but rather by a positive view of the future in conjunction with one's own opportunities to act and shape one's life.

Political self-identification – a slight shift to the left once again

A similar finding to what was ascertained in the last few Shell Youth Studies is that political self-identification among young people in Germany (15–25 age group) has shifted slightly to the "left" on the scale we presented to respondents, where 0 = "left" and 10 = "right", with an average of 4.4. However, 20 % did not make any classification, preferring to state that they felt unable to properly classify their political views using these categories.

Overall, the higher one's level of education and the greater one's political interest, the rather more likely it is that someone will position themselves left of centre. The reverse is also true: the lower the level of education and political interest, the less likely it is that young people will classify themselves at all according to the categories of "right" and "left".

Society's priorities

While the "labour market" was previously by far the most frequently cited as the domain in which society should take the most emphatic action (cited by 66 % of young people in 2002 and 78 % in 2006), only 37 % have said this in 2015. The top priority is once again the topic of "children and family", which is now regarded as especially important by 55 % of young people. This is followed by "education, science and research" (46 %) and "social security, pension" (42 %), and only then by the "labour market" (37 %).

In contrast to the last decade, there is, in the view of young people, no comparably well-defined issue that politics and society should be focussing on. Rather, they now view the general preconditions as being important for their own future and that of society. This applies both to the domain of "children and family", (that is, the so-called "rush-hour of life" in which career and family planning need to be managed successfully, and in which people do not want to be left to cope on their own), and the domain of "education, science and research", which is of central importance in ensuring the productivity of society in the future.

What is interesting is that the domain of "environment and nature conservation" has gained importance once again (34 %). The less pressure that is felt in terms of securing the conditions for one's own existence, the greater the scope for concerning oneself with sustainable living and living conditions.

A noticeable increase in satisfaction with democracy and society

Seventy-three percent of young people are "satisfied" with the state of democracy in Germany. In the last Shell Youth Study conducted in 2010, this was true for only 63 %, while this figure was 60 % in 2002. 23 % of young people describe themselves as "rather" or "very dissatisfied", compared with 34 % in 2010 and 35 % in 2002 (15–25 age group; the remaining respondents gave no opinion). The trend here is a significant one and is more than remarkable on this scale.

From a political perspective, it is relevant to point out that the differences that existed previously between the eastern and western *Länder* are now less marked. 77 % of young people from the western *Länder*, and in the meantime also 54 % of young people from the eastern *Länder* (including Berlin) state that they feel satisfied with the state of democracy. In the Shell Youth Studies conducted since 2002, the majority of young people from the eastern *Länder* still said they felt dissatisfied. A comparable situation also exists with regard to the question of satisfaction with democracy as a form of government. Democracy is considered an effective form of government by 85 % of young people (87 % in the western *Länder* and 74 % in the eastern *Länder*).

As was the case before, there are social differences. Young people from the lower social strata express greater dissatisfaction with democracy. Within the context of political self-classification, these dissatisfied young people also position themselves significantly further to the right.

The high level of approval for democracy in Germany corresponds with a high level of agreement with the central norms of democracy. Young people believe these include freedom of speech, the right to vote and the opportunity to vote on decisions in particular.

Political apathy persists

A typical characteristic of the viewpoints among young people in Germany continues to be marked political apathy. We had already investigated and described this mood in previous Shell Youth Studies. Despite the increase in satisfaction with democracy and society in Germany, these findings have remained fundamentally unchanged. As was the case previously, young people show a below-average level of trust in political parties (2.6 on a scale of 1 to 5). 69 % of young people (15–25 age group) agree with the statement “Politicians do not care what people like me think”.

Political apathy is certainly a heavily prejudiced attitude and there is something about it that conjures up stereotypes. However, the lack of trust expressed here and the low level of credibility can hardly be addressed using reproaches or by making reference to a lack of ability to differentiate. What young people in Germany are missing is not an acceptance of democracy, neither is it problem awareness. Rather, they blame politics for focusing primarily on their organisational interests within the

political sphere and for a lack of reliability. If politicians want to win back trust, their campaigns will need to focus on these areas with convincing arguments.

On the other hand, only a minority of young people admit to holding extremist views. 14 % agreed with the statement that “there are conflicts in every society that can only be resolved with violence”. The most marked differences exist between respondents who position themselves on the left or the right: although the level of approval of the legitimacy of violence in social conflicts roughly corresponds with the average value among young people who classify themselves as left, tending towards the left or in the centre (left: 14 %, tending towards the left: 12 %; centre: 15 %; no positioning: 12 %), it rises significantly among young people who classify themselves as on the right or tending towards the right (tending towards the right: 19 %; right: 37 %).

Reservations towards others are declining, while differences between the East and West remain

As part of the Shell Youth Study, we measure the level of tolerance towards other social groups. One of the ways we do this is by asking young people “whether you would consider it a positive thing, whether you would be indifferent or whether you would consider it a negative thing, if the following people were to move into the house next door”. This is followed by a list of selected social groups.

In terms of a trend, reservations among young people are diminishing. For example, the level of disapproval expressed towards a Turkish family has fallen from 27 % in 2010 to 20 % in the current study, and from 26 % to 17 % in relation to a family of ethnic German repatriates from Russia. Young people are also less likely to disapprove of a homosexual couple (12 % in the current study compared with 15 % in 2010).

As has been the case before, young people from the eastern *Länder* (including Berlin) are more likely to express reservations than their counterparts from the western *Länder*. A Turkish family is disapproved of by 30 % of young people in the eastern *Länder*, but only by 18 % in the western *Länder*. 24 % of respondents from the eastern *Länder* would feel negative towards a family of ethnic German repatriates from Russia, while 16 % from the western *Länder* would; for a family from Africa, the figures for East and West would be 21 % and 9 % respectively. What is interesting, however, is that a German family with many children would be more likely to meet with disapproval from young people in the eastern *Länder* (24 %) than from young

people in the western *Länder* (16 %). No relevant differences emerged in attitudes towards a homosexual couple as neighbours.

Acceptance of immigration to Germany is increasing predominantly in the western *Länder*, while disapproval prevails in the eastern *Länder*

Remarkably, the level of acceptance towards immigrants has since increased. While 48 % of young people in 2002 and even 58 % in 2006 said they were in favour of restricting immigration to Germany, this proportion has fallen in the current study to 37 %. In contrast, 39 % of young people say they support the idea that just as many immigrants should come to Germany in the future, and as many as 15 % said that more immigrants should do so. It is apparent that the economic and social necessity of immigration to Germany that has been the subject of public debate has since been taken into account more often in respondents' views.

There are also marked differences between the eastern and western *Länder* in this respect. 35 % of young people from the western *Länder* say they are in favour of reducing immigration to Germany, while on the other hand 49 % of young people from the eastern *Länder* (including Berlin) argue for lower rates of immigration to Germany. The majorities in terms of opinions of young people from the eastern in comparison to the western *Länder* towards this topic are almost reversed.

There are similar proportional divisions with regard to the question of taking in refugees. 32 % of young people call for fewer refugees to be taken in than was previously the case. 36 % argue for the same number as before to be taken in, while 24 % believe Germany should take more than before (the remaining respondents gave no opinion). 44 % of young people in the eastern *Länder* call for fewer refugees to be taken in, compared with only 30 % of young people in the western *Länder*.

Everyday discrimination – differing perspectives

In addition to the attitudes towards diversity and immigration, the Shell Youth Study measures the extent to which young people feel excluded and discriminated against in everyday life. We ask about this using a list of typical aspects in relation to which someone may feel discriminated against in their everyday lives occasionally or frequently.

What is striking here is the significantly higher rates of feelings of discrimination among non-Germans and young people with a migrant background. If we combine these two groups (non-German respondents and German respondents with a

migrant background) together in this regard, 44 % of young people with a migrant background refer to discrimination on the grounds of their nationality compared with 5 % of Germans without a migrant background, 31 % and 18 % respectively on the grounds of their appearance, 27 % and 9 % respectively on the grounds of their social background and 25 % and 4 % respectively on the grounds of their religion or beliefs.

In terms of a trend, we have seen a slight fall in the discrimination experienced by young people in their everyday lives. However, non-German respondents are since more likely to complain of discrimination in their everyday lives, contrary to the general trend.

These different accentuations, greater tolerance among young people of different social groups and the decline in levels of disapproval of further immigration, though existing simultaneously with increasing levels of everyday discrimination experienced by young non-Germans, are not a contradiction. Rather, they all reflect the overall climate in society, which has been especially characterised in the last few months by greater polarisation of opinion, within the context of various protest movements and against the backdrop of a debate on immigration. It is entirely plausible for the majority of young people to be emphasising their tolerance of social diversity, while at the same time, young non-Germans are more likely to point to the discrimination they are experiencing.

The level of personal engagement falls slightly

In the current study, 34 % of young people report that they actively help and engage with others in everyday life “often”. In 2010, this figure was 39 %, compared with 33 % in 2006 and 34 % in 2002.

If we analyse the background to this, it soon becomes clear that it is primarily young people at the younger end of the age range who are now less likely to report any personal engagement than in previous studies. In the present study, only 30 % of 12–14 year-olds describe themselves as actively participating “often” (compared with 41 % in 2010), while this figure is 36 % for 15–17 year-olds (compared with 47 % in 2010). Conversely, the level of engagement among 18–21 year-olds has actually risen slightly to 40 %, compared with 36 % in 2010.

Only 37 % of pupils in pre-university secondary education report any personal engagement (in the “often” category), compared with 43 % in 2010. Only 27 % of

pupils of intermediate modern secondary school level (completion aimed for by Year 10) report this compared with 44 % (in 2010). On the other hand, the reported level of engagement among pupils at lower secondary level (completion aimed for by Year 9) has remained stable at 38 %. If we also look at students, their level of engagement, even if slightly more moderate, has fallen slightly to 42 % in the current study, compared with 44 % in 2010.

It is obvious that these declines in engagement among young people can be related to the factor of time, in other words, the reduction of time spent in education to 8 years in pre-university education (known as G8), and among students due to the introduction of the Bachelor degree. This could directly explain the decline in engagement among pre-university level pupils and students. Conversely, unemployed respondents are more likely (27 % compared with 20 % in 2010) to actively participate “often” and report a corresponding level of engagement. This finding is not implausible, as voluntary participation among the unemployed is being more frequently viewed as a potential stepping stone to future gainful employment.

Experiences of participating in political activity

In total, 56 % of young people report that they have participated in one or more of the political activities we listed. For the majority of young people, activities carried out by individuals, such as a personal choice to boycott certain products (34 %), an activity on the internet such as signing an online petition (27 %) or a conventional list of signatures (26 %), tended to be the most commonly cited. On the other hand, only a slightly smaller proportion of young people have participated in more collectively organised activities; at least, almost one in four has participated in a demonstration (23 %) and even 10 % as part of a citizens’ initiative.

Activities on the internet are of particular interest. Online petitions and similar initiatives can also be organised in a more formalised way as direct public participation, in the context of opinion polls or even as voting on relevant issues. This would be at least a more accessible way for young people to become politically involved and could form an important element in promoting participation.

Young people still distance themselves from involvement in political parties. The reason for this is a below-average level of trust that young people put in political parties on the one hand, while on the other hand, it reflects the continued apathy towards politics and politicians.

The findings of the current Shell Youth Study illustrate that young people are now once again far more inclined to position themselves politically. This demand for participation has developed against the background of a critical yet generally positive assessment of the social reality in Germany, and is also connected with the willingness to participate in political activities. What characterizes this situation are the forms of participation that make it easy for young people to get involved as individuals. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that major new opportunities will be created in this regard with opportunities and invitations to participate that are accessible online and in which young people can get involved online.

Concern about the global situation

When young people concern themselves with the state of Europe and the world, they are especially inclined to associate this with the key words of crisis, war and terrorism. Terrorist attacks are a concern for 73 % of young people (2010: 61 %), while 62 % feel the same about a potential war in Europe (2010: 44 %). The level of concern about the potential for war in Europe is almost on a par with that in 2002 when the effects of the war in the former Yugoslavia were still being felt. Fear of terrorism at present is even slightly greater than in 2002, when the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and on the Pentagon in Washington were still fresh in people's memories.

Despite growing numbers of refugees, most young people have a fairly relaxed attitude towards immigration. Only 29 % are fearful of immigration, and though this is two percentage points higher than in 2010, immigration at that time had fallen to a very low level. The population in Germany decreased, whereas it is since growing again. Young people sense that accommodating and providing for hundreds of thousands of immigrants every year could create significant problems. 48 % fear that xenophobia could grow within the population, compared with forty percent in 2010.

Interest in world affairs

Crisis, war, terrorism and increasing immigration are constant reminders to young people of the problems faced in the world. As many people are often online, they also see the numerous headlines from a crisis-ridden world via electronic media. Only 13 % of young people say they are not interested in world affairs. By contrast, 51 % show significant interest in the state of the world. Many young people say that they have become more interested in world affairs over the last few years (49 %).

Interest in world affairs is heavily influenced by politics: those who are actively concerned with world affairs are also interested in politics in general.

In the upper stratum, 67 % of respondents are interested in world events, compared with only 31 % in the lower stratum. In response to the question of how their interest has developed over the last few years, 61 % of young people from the upper stratum, and 36 % from the lower stratum, said that their interest had increased. On the one hand, the effects of global events on Germany are obvious, while on the other hand, young people realise that Germany has been playing a new and more important role in Europe and in the world over the last few years.

Some young people have already accepted this abrupt change. 54 % believe that Germany should play a leading role in Europe, while 11 % do not share this view. Young men, who tend to be more interested in politics than young women, are more likely to hold this view (58 %/49 %; rejection 10 %/14 %). More detailed interviews revealed that young people are aware of the important status of Germany's Chancellor in Europe. At the same time, they advocate that the nature of Germany's intervention to date, which they consider to be moderate, should remain the same.

Between East and West

When young people look beyond Europe, they observe the increased tensions around the world. Sixty percent of young people feel closer to the USA than China or Russia, for example. Nevertheless, 51 % also believe at the same time that China is now just as important to Germany as the USA. Young men in particular are aware of the economic importance of China. They are also more inclined than young women to recognise Russia as having shared interests (with Germany).

On the other hand, cultural influences also play a role in the new *Länder* when young people give their assessments of China and Russia in particular. 56 % continue to regard Russia as an important partner for Germany, a view which is shared by only 40 % in the old *Länder*. Conversely, in the western *Länder*, 60 % of young people believe that the USA stands far closer to Germany than China or Russia, while only 52 % of young people in the eastern *Länder* believe that. However, differences of this kind between young men and women and between young people in the western and eastern *Länder* are not particularly relevant with regard to the question of whether and how Germany should position itself in a world of crises.

Only 29 % of young people hold the view that Germany should join in military action to end wars around the world, while only 27 % of young people believe it should act as a mediator between the major powers. Young people from the new and old *Länder*, both male and female, largely agree on this issue.

Pride in one's home country

Young people recognize that their country now holds an important position in the world. 68 % regard it as an important global actor, yet they do not believe that this new status requires Germany to become overly involved in conflicts around the world. On the one hand, they value the quality of products that the country is able to offer to the world, while on the other hand, they believe that Germany's culture and society are attractive to others and therefore may serve as an example to other countries around the world. On the basis of this positive mood, one which is shared by many migrants, many young people say they are proud to call Germany their home.

62 % of young people are proud to be German. This figure rises to as much as 70 % among young people without a migrant background, while it is 54 % among German-born young people with at least one parent of non-German origin. A very large number of young people take a positive view towards their hometown and Germany. There are, however, two different viewpoints with regard to the topic of "pride in the nation": one group, which primarily consists of respondents with a higher level of education, believes that one can only be proud of something that one has achieved him/herself, while the other group, the majority, believes that pride develops by itself if one is native to a culture or has integrated into it.

These differing viewpoints have implications of their own. Those who base pride on one's own achievements are rather indifferent about the country of origin. They feel an affinity to those who achieve something, irrespective of where they come from. Achievement in this case is not only understood to be material but also in an idealistic sense. A cultural "connection" with people who "just happen" to share your country of origin plays a smaller role. On the other hand, young people who identify with their culture with a sense of pride, believe that the "standards" of their own country and a sense of belonging with their compatriots are more important.

History and the present

Young people who reject the concept of “pride in Germany” are more likely to raise the issue of the fracture in German history brought about by National Socialism. Others on the other hand recognise historical continuity, where the achievements of industrial innovation, as well as the capacity for invention, science and art, play an important role. This has implications for the contemporary definition of Germany. Those who focus on the historical fracture also desire a change of role. A country that once attacked and oppressed other countries has become (or at least should be) a country that supports other countries.

Young people who see Germany more within the context of historical continuity, are less demanding. They believe it is important for the country to protect its interests of an economic nature, in particular, but it should not throw its weight around. Young people who shun the term “pride” in relation to their association with the country, and those who do use the term, are equally cautious as far as Germany’s involvement in international conflicts is concerned; the former because they do not support nationalism and military action, the latter because it could damage Germany’s economic success.

Many young people fear that military involvement in other countries does nothing to improve the situation; rather it makes it worse. They also fear a spiral of violence.

A robust system of values

The Shell Youth Study 2015 has once again shown that young people in Germany have a robust system of values, in which friendship, partnership and family are held in high regard. 89 % believe it is especially important to have good friends, 85 % believe it is important to have a partner that they can trust, while 72 % believe leading a good family life is important. What is more surprising, however, is that 84 % of young people also consider it important to respect law and order, while 64 % even consider this to be especially important.

Young people believe it is important to develop into an independent person. Most still live with their parents and affirm this family relationship. Many young people also feel well-supported in this sphere in making their first steps towards becoming independent individuals. The family provides the conditions for the early development of values, within which a person develops the ability to form attachments, but also forms his or her individuality. Many young people believe that the values that represent family and social attachment, virtues (organisation, hard work, etc.) and independence, are closely interrelated.

Basic rules for community have since become more important to young people than “being creative” or “enjoying life”, for example. Since 2000, the Shell Youth Studies have observed how an increasing number of young people identified themselves as being hard-working and ambitious. In 2010, an all-time high was reached, with 60 % of respondents regarding these aspects as especially important. This is a throwback to those characteristics that are attributed to the German people by other countries as being “typically German virtues”. In the latter half of the 1980s, hard work and ambition were still considered especially important by just 36 % of young people.

A deeper entrenching of values

Since the 1990s, young people have been concerned with adapting to the increasingly important norms of achievement that went hand in hand with forced globalisation. Yet the period between 2010 and 2015 saw a firm end to this trend, when hard work, ambition and security became somewhat less important again, while the same could not be said for respect for law and order, which in fact increased.

At the same, a willingness to engage in politics was on the increase. Although those young people who considered it important to engage in political activity were in the minority (32 %), in 2010 this figure was only 23 %. All the same, the level of political engagement is now the same as in the second half of the 1980s. We have also seen an increase in young people’s willingness to act in an environmentally friendly way (2010: 59 %; 2015: 66 %). This is closely associated with an increase in health awareness. By contrast, material things such as power or a higher standard of living have rather lost their importance.

82 % of young people consider the first value we questioned them about, namely “to recognise and respect human diversity”, to be important, while 60 % even considered this very important. Young women consider such values, which include respect for social rules and other people, to be more important than young men do.

Closer to tradition

Values that are considered “feminine” have become more firmly established in young people’s values system, while “masculine” values, which relate to material things, have fallen out of favour, particularly the desire to have “power and influence”. Yet other values that young men consider to be more important, such as an interest in politics, and traditional values on the other hand, have gained importance. Men have

more of an affinity to politics, both in terms of their interests and their willingness to engage in political activity. Young women, on the other hand, tend to view politics as rather emotionless or technocratic.

Young people remain aware of history. The fact that Germany has increasingly developed into a “normal” nation since reunification, and has in fact adopted a leading role in Europe, has still had an effect on young people. “Being proud of German history” and “maintaining traditions” were still considered something of a “red rag” to 60 % of young people (66 % in West Germany) in the latter half of the 1980s. Today, only 44 % (48 %) of young people reject these attitudes.

However, this trend is being led rather more by young men rather than young women. Pride in Germany’s history plays a role in the lives of 56 % of young men (52 % of young women) and 33 % even feel this is important (compared with 29 % of young women). 52 % of young men believe it is at least somewhat important to “maintain traditions”, compared with 51 % of young women (26 % of young men and 24 % of young women consider it important).

Less interest in contact

Apart from a deeper entrenching of young people’s values system, we have also seen another development. Since 2010, the desire to have as much contact with other people as possible (by which young people primarily mean contact with other young people) has fallen significantly. Although the opportunities for keeping in touch online everywhere all of the time have grown considerably, it is clear that this has not necessarily increased young people’s enjoyment of this.

Rather, the boom in contact acquisition has triggered a certain level of emotional defence. This has been accompanied by mixed views towards “social” networks, particularly among young people with a higher social status. The fear that the world of virtual communication may result in a levelling of young people’s cultural landscape must also be viewed from a wide range of perspectives. At least, many young people are themselves quite aware of the shallowness of the new communication platforms.

Even so, while the young generation is slowly returning to tradition, this is of no benefit to religion, which is in fact the strongest pillar of tradition. Belief in God has lost importance, particularly among young Catholics, while young Evangelicals have been attributing somewhat less importance to a belief in God for some time already.

Religion is only considered moderately important

Belief in God forms an important guideline in the lives of 76 % of Muslims, while this is true for only 37 % of young Evangelicals. There are even significant differences in religiosity between young people in the former West and East of Germany. Belief in God is unimportant for 68 % of young people in the new *Länder*, but only for 45 % of those in the old *Länder*. In the eastern *Länder*, it is still the case that many young people are not members of any church community, where religiosity is increasing slightly once again, even within the context of eastern German society without a strong church presence.

Young people who are unaffiliated with any religion are still a minority in Germany (23 %), but a large proportion of these young people nevertheless accept the institution of the Church. 42 % believe it is a good thing that the Church exists, while 39 % do not (remainder: no opinion given).

A typical finding is that the majority of young people belong to a church or religious denomination. However, only 38 % of young Christians think that a belief in God is important, compared with 81 % of young Muslims. A contributing factor is that only 27 % of parents are classified by young people as “(quite) religious” (2006:28 %). Most say that their parents are “less religious” (45 %; 2006: 40 %). However, the proportion of young people who classify their parents as “not at all religious” has fallen from 32 % to 27 %.

Although religion is still not directly present in the centre of young people’s values system, it is a rather constant factor among the young generation. Yet religious rituals and rules from bygone ages put off many young people. They do not deny the Church’s right of existence and they appreciate its role in society, but they often fail to have the answer to the more important questions of how they live their lives.

Requirements of the future

There is no clearly defined trend in the developments in young people’s values system. Order and tradition have become more important, but so have political and environmental interests. Newer and older values have been prioritised together, and at the same time, idealistic values have gained favour over material values, even if not significantly so. Young people increasingly do not want to choose between idealism and materialism. What is particularly obvious, however, is that young people

are continuing to combine values of all kinds. This reveals the requirements that young people have of the future.

Young people want to earn money in a secure job, but also do something meaningful and beneficial for society at work. They want to achieve something, but have enough leisure time and space for their own family. They want to work in a committed way, but also enjoy life. Many believe that this is possible within the social order that has developed so far. It remains to be seen whether society can do justice to these wishes and requirements of a growing and increasingly influential group of young people.

The qualitative component

The findings in the qualitative component of the Shell Youth Study show how important a stable social environment composed of parents, friends, leisure time and relationships is for young people.

In the current study, young people feel that a “good relationship”, in other words, an open and harmonious relationship with their parents, is important. They feel safe, secure and supported in their parents’ home. This level of security and reliability must be present even in the event of conflict. “Trust” is considered the essential value by young women, as well as support.

When young people consider the issue of relationships, (the desire for) trust, loyalty and happiness are at the top of the list. Trust in this case means an unconditional openness towards one’s partner. In this intimate relationship, partners must feel that they can reveal anything. Security, on the other hand, is of subordinate importance – a partnership is initially experienced as more of a challenge.

Trust is also just as important to young people when they consider friends and leisure time, in addition to fun and solidarity. Young people describe trust as a requirement for making it through the good times and the bad times together. Leisure time and friends not only encompass vibrant variety, as described by young people, but also reliability.

With regard to the topic of qualifications, the essential life development stages in young people’s lives are summed up in the commonly cited terms “secure future” and “good grades”. It soon becomes clear when examining this topic that this is where young people feel the greatest pressure.

What life will be like “five years from now”

When looking to the future in five years' time, young people expect to face the greatest changes in relation to qualifications. They also consider things such as “successful completion of studies”, “leading one's own life” and “earning enough money”.

In other areas of life, young people would like as few changes to take place as possible in the next five years. They also continue to regard the support function of their parents as important. Values such as security, trust and support remain highly relevant for young (adult) women, while greater independence is of no importance. Young males on the other hand definitely anticipate a more pragmatic and, so to speak, “more mature” relationship with their parents in five years' time.

Trust continues to remain the priority in the topic of relationships, and this aspect of a long-term relationship gains significant importance, when primarily young women consider the topic of “children”. Young men tend to postpone this aspect to the distant future and do not want to commit themselves as yet.

“Trust” and “fun” are once again the priority in the “friends and leisure” topic group. It becomes clear from the guiding theme of “keeping good friends” that young people are also specifically interested in continuing close friendships with their current friends.

Young people describe a wide variety of fears that could hinder them in implementing their plans in the future. School, grades, training and a job are the greatest stress factors and where significant fear of failure sometimes lies. However, young people's futures can also be considerably affected by major life events such as severe illness, divorce of parents or the death of a parent.

In turn, young people experience their immediate social environment in the form of parents, partners and friends as central pillars in realising their own plans. However, young people also see themselves as having a duty to take the bulk of the responsibility for their own future, and see themselves as being able to do this, to a large extent.

On the topic of society

The concept of “society” initially seems abstract and superficial to most young people. Over the course of discussion however, they develop surprisingly specific

ideas of how our society will develop in the next five years. The main topic here is immigration with all its associated aspects, something which young people accept in principle. Increasing digitalization and automation also play a role as a future development, but also the growing threat of war and the euro crisis, which is by no means over.

The qualitative findings make it clear that young people seize upon those aspects that sociologists describe as “developmental tasks” as issues of their own and set about tackling them. Development “brings about change”, first of all in relation to the desired security and stability of one’s own environment, but then also in relation to society and how this can be shaped.

Methodology

The 17th Shell Youth Study 2015 was conducted on the basis of a representative random sample of 2558 young people aged between 12 and 25 years of age, who were questioned by trained Infratest interviewers about their life situation and their attitudes and orientation towards different aspects. The data was collected using a standardised questionnaire between early January and early March 2015. The qualitative study consisted of in-depth interviews lasting two to three hours with 21 young people in this age group.