Young People in Germany have Trust in Democracy and in the EU

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The 18 to 30 generation in Germany has more trust in the European Union than is the case on average in other European countries. But they lack confidence in the German government and parliament. These are the findings of a data analysis commissioned by the Bertelsmann Stiftung.

Gütersloh, 6 February 2024. Many young people in Germany have confidence in democracy and in the European Union. In a representative survey of people aged between 18 and 30 in 10 European countries, 59 percent of young respondents in Germany indicate that they have confidence in democracy, and 62 percent say the same about the European Union. On average only 50 percent of respondents in the other nine countries have confidence in democracy and 57 percent in the EU. Education and science are the most highly regarded: Around three quarters of those surveyed in Germany indicate that they have confidence in these fields. Young people are however more critical of the Federal Republic's political institutions: More than half of the participants aged 18 to 30 (52 percent) express distrust in the government, and 45 percent show a lack of confidence in parliament. There is also strong distrust of the media (60 percent) and religion (58 percent).

The survey found that young people are concerned mainly about human rights violations, climate change and sexual harassment. With respect to climate change in particular, their fears are however no greater than those of the older generation. In fact, more respondents in the 31 to 70 age group indicate that they follow a more environmentally conscious lifestyle than younger respondents.

Mental health is one of the issues that concerns young people the most: As many as 41 percent of them state that they are concerned about this – considerably more than older respondents (26 percent). In addition, more young people say they “feel all alone these days” than do those aged 31 to 70. However, both younger and older respondents believe that their mental health will deteriorate over the years ahead.

Regardless of age, respondents are relatively concerned about the future. Accordingly, 36 percent of the younger respondents and 42 percent of older respondents expect various factors, including living standards, the climate and income inequality, to worsen. A larger percentage of the 18 to 30 age group anticipates an improvement to a greater extent than their seniors, although this remains a minority view among younger respondents.

Additional information:

For the study "The Next Generation in Germany: Perspectives on Building a Sustainable Tomorrow", the international market research institute Glocalities, based in the Netherlands, conducted a representative survey of 2,248 respondents in Germany, 516 of them aged between 18 and 30, and 1,732 aged between 31 and 70. The poll was conducted online over the period February to April 2023. Glocalities compared the results with polling data from 4,399 young people aged between 18 and 30 from identical surveys in nine other European countries (Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom).

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