

Actually European!? 2024

Public opinion in Germany ahead of the European elections

The 2024 European elections will take place from June 6 to 9 in the shadow of multiple crises. Populist and radical right-wing forces could benefit from this. Projections predict a shift to the right in the next European Parliament. These forces seek to renationalize European politics and weaken the EU's ability to act together. Specifically, the European Green Deal and support for Ukraine could be curbed. The EU would be weakened at a time when it has to solve major challenges for the future. In this context, the sixth edition of the long-term study *Actually European!?* examines how the German population views the European elections and what they expect from their government at the EU level.

by Johannes Hillje and Christine Pütz

Key Findings of the Representative Survey¹

- High interest in EU elections, high lack of interest among AfD supporters:** Several months before the election, 66.1 percent of citizens are very highly or rather highly interested in the European elections. Interest is very low among 11.0 percent. The proportion of those with very little interest is above average among AfD voters (15.3 percent), while a further 6.0 percent of AfD supporters are rather uninterested (see Fig. 1).
- European crisis solutions in the center of the election campaign:** According to the respondents, the election campaigns should focus on the issues for which European solutions are needed: 74.7 percent want the issue of migration to be debated, followed by security/defense (63.3 percent), economy (48.8 percent), climate/energy (37.2 percent) and inflation (37.1 percent).

Figure 1: What is your interest in the European elections on June 9, 2024? (in percent)

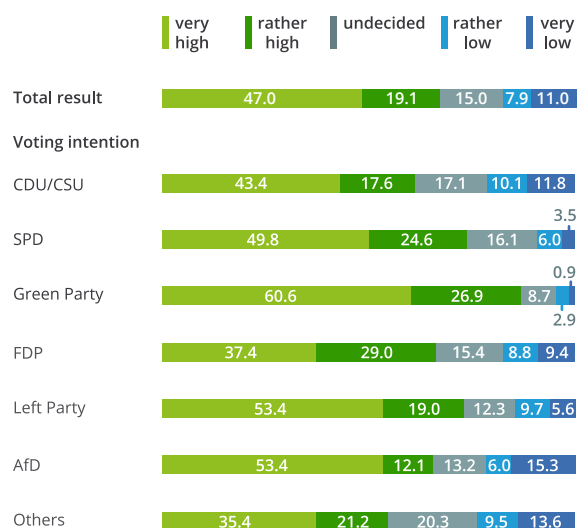
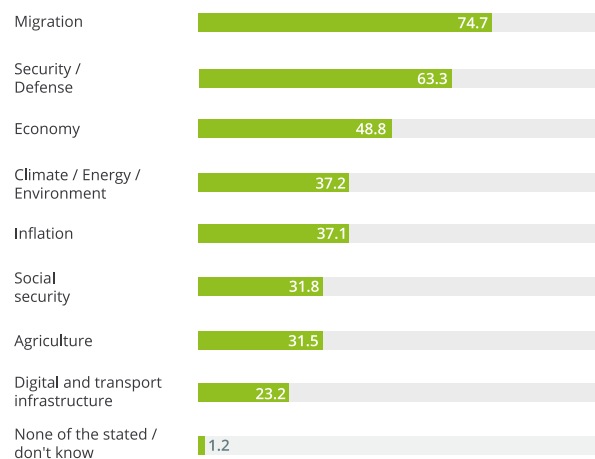
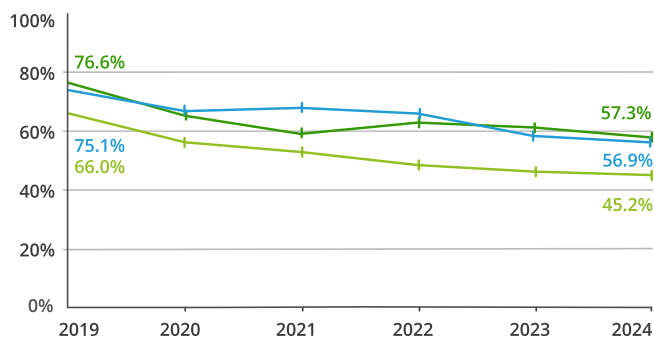


Figure 2: Which of these issues do you think should be discussed most in campaigns for the European elections on June 9, 2024? Multiple choice - max. 3 answers (in percent)



- **Support for EU's aid to Ukraine:** More than 60.0 percent of respondents are in favor of a higher (41.8 percent) or unchanged (18.3 percent) level of EU support for Ukraine. In contrast, a narrow majority of 51.3 percent in Eastern Germany are in favor of less support for Ukraine.
- **Doubts about the EU's economic benefits:** For 56.9 percent of German citizens, the benefits of EU membership continue to outweigh the costs and 52.9 percent believe that the current crises can be solved at European rather than national level. However, only 45.2 percent currently say that the economic benefits of EU membership outweigh the costs.

Fig. 3: Trends since 2019 in three areas: economic benefits, political benefits, benefits of EU membership



■ EU membership has more advantages than disadvantages
■ EU membership has more economic benefits than costs
■ Germany is more likely to achieve its political goals with the EU

- **Germany should be cooperative and active at the EU level:** 46.4 percent perceive the German government's recent EU role as active and 41.7 percent as less active. For the future, a clear majority of just under two thirds would like to see Germany take a cooperative and active stance in Europe.

Trends and Policy Recommendations

- **Build on people's interest in the European elections:** Ahead of the elections, the high level of interest in the European elections – especially among pro-European voters – should be used by political parties and civil society to discuss concrete European solutions to current crises (e.g. security, climate, migration). For example, the EU should view its defense capabilities more as a common European project and make them more coherent. Support for Ukraine against Russia's aggression should also be jointly promoted.
- **Highlight Europe's benefits:** Although the trend in this long-term study shows that German citizens are convinced of the political benefits of the EU, it also depicts that only a minority currently believe in its economic benefits. This perception is probably also linked to the crisis of Germany's economy. Therefore, politicians should highlight that the EU internal market is a guarantee of prosperity for Germany as an export-oriented country and refute misinformation in this regard – e.g. from the AfD – with facts. The numerous blockades by the German government at EU level are also not helpful in strengthening the belief in Europe's ability to take action.
- **Investing in the future:** A clear majority is in support of more flexibility for joint European as well as national investments in future-oriented projects. It would therefore be worth including a „golden investment rule“ in the EU's Stability and Growth Pact, which would distinguish investments in future tasks from consumer government spending. German Citizens are primarily concerned with strengthening resilience by investing in security, research/innovation and a socially just European Green Deal.

¹For this study, the opinion research company Civey surveyed 5,000 people online in February 2024. The results are representative for the German population aged 18 and over. The questionnaire for the long-term study was designed, among other things, on the basis of focus groups conducted in 2019 and 2021.