

PRESS ADVISORY

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Security Report 2020 – Coronavirus Special

The Current Mood in Germany

- **Germans very concerned about economic impact of coronavirus crisis**
- **No expectation that crisis will be over soon**
- **Infection fears declining**
- **Divergent opinions on German crisis management**
- **Call for more spending on schools, healthcare system, and families**
- **One in four Germans believes in conspiracy theories**

Many Germans expect lasting downturn

The public mood in Germany has reached the lowest point since the start of the coronavirus crisis. Only 22 percent of Germans view the next twelve months with optimism, while 71 percent are concerned and sceptical. With fears of being infected declining, an overwhelming majority of Germans, 76 percent, are concerned about the possible economic consequences of the crisis. 70 percent expect that the business climate will not recover within the upcoming twelve months; 40 percent expect the downturn will last even longer.

57 percent consider national rescue programmes for the economy beneficial. At the same time a majority is convinced that most businesses are not receiving sufficient support.

At the moment, 20 percent of workers are on short-time work schemes ("Kurzarbeit") or have been made redundant because of businesses closures, while 17 percent live in the same household as a person who is in such a situation. 46 percent of Germans expect their personal economic circumstances will deteriorate due to the pandemic; however, only twelve percent expect the consequences to be severe. 58 percent of Germans consider their own personal economic situation to be good or very good, a figure that has not changed significantly compared to the situation before the crisis.

“We will be able to judge only in the next few months the extent to which the crisis will impact the economic well-being of Germans. If most people are on short-time work only briefly, the affects of the crisis could be minor for the overwhelming majority,” says Prof. Dr. Renate Köcher of the Allensbach Institute for Public Opinion Research.

Fears of infection are declining, but long road back to normal

Over the past week, we have observed a significant decline in the number of Germans who fear they could be infected by COVID-19. In April 44 percent were afraid of being infected, but the figure has now dropped to 31 percent. Two-thirds of Germans consider the compulsory wearing of masks necessary, even though many consider it annoying.

The majority of Germans are getting used to the idea that things will take a long time to return to normal. 38 percent expect a period of several months; 51 percent think it will take even longer.

It is remarkable that Germans continue to view climate change as their main concern. Worries about their own job security may have increased but this still comes lower down the list.

Respect for German healthcare system and companies

An overwhelming majority of Germans say they appreciate the way hospitals and employers have managed the crisis. 92 percent think that hospitals have coped well with the crisis, while 70 percent respect their own employers for how they are dealing with it. But the work of local education authorities and local government in general is not seen as positively, with only half of Germans saying they think their response to the emergency situation been adequate. The public's assessment of police enforcement of government measures is similar: 54 percent consider police action helpful, but every fifth German thinks it is less constructive. The Bundeswehr's involvement is viewed positively by 30 percent, while 23 percent think it is less constructive and about half declined to offer an opinion.

The crisis has also sharpened the German public's awareness of many shortcomings. An overwhelming majority demands more public funding for schools and more investment in the healthcare system, despite falling government financial reserves. 86 percent call for more spending on school infrastructure and 84 percent for more funds for the healthcare system. Furthermore, a majority demands higher government spending to support families with children and promote digitalisation and environmental protection. “The corona crisis has brought home to all Germans just how far behind Germany is in terms of digitalisation. People now expect at last to see major investment in the digitalisation of education, healthcare, and public administration”, emphasises Prof. Dr. Klaus Schweinsberg of the Centre for Strategy and Higher Leadership.

In international terms, Germans have become aware that the German healthcare system was much better prepared for such a crisis than was the case in many other countries. This awareness has increased the public's already high opinion of the German health care system even more. 89 percent of the population now consider the German health care system to be good or very good – the highest score of the past twenty years.

Science, too, enjoys a great deal of public support. 83 percent of Germans think that virologists currently have a high or very high degree of influence on politics; the majority does not question this but considers it adequate for the current situation. 69 percent have a high or very high degree of trust in the Robert Koch Institute, while 23 percent see the Institute critically.

Solid acceptance for the German government's strategies

A large and stable majority of Germans approves of how the federal government is managing the coronavirus crisis. In April, the figure was 75 percent, in May, 74 percent. This high rating spans all parties, with the exception of the followers of AfD (Alternative for Germany), who are widely critical of the government's crisis management.

Chancellor Merkel's crisis management receives a particularly positive assessment; the same applies to the crisis management of Minister President Markus Söder of Bavaria, Finance Minister Olaf Scholz, and Health Minister Jens Spahn.

A quarter of the German population is susceptible to conspiracy theories

In particular on social media is the suspicion expressed that political measures to fight the pandemic have completely different goals than the message communicated by politicians and the media. 27 percent of the population and an overwhelming majority of AfD followers believe that such suspicions are justified.

In addition, 38 percent of Germans believe that the public is being intimidated in order to lessen opposition to political measures. 27 percent believe that one needs to be cautious when expressing opinions about the current situation and the political measures; 73 percent of AfD followers share this view. But the great majority of the population disagrees: 65 percent of Germans are convinced they have the freedom to express their views of the current situation and political measures without prejudice.

About the Security Report

The Security Report was developed by the Centre for Strategy and Higher Leadership in 2011 and has been conducted annually since.

Commissioned by the Centre for Strategy and Higher Leadership, the Institut für Demoskopie (IfD) Allensbach conducts a representative survey of the population about their perception and assessment of risks at least once a year. For this supplementary Corona Special edition of Security Report 2020, 1013 interviews were conducted with a representative cross-section of the population over 16 years of age between May 6 and May 14, 2020. The last regular survey for the Security Report was carried out between January 9 and January 22, 2020. Professor Dr. Renate Köcher und Professor Dr. Klaus Schweinsberg are responsible for the survey.

For more results, please visit: www.sicherheitsreport.net

Media contacts:

Markus Förderl: markus.foederl@glh-online.com, Tel.: 0172 9051869

Dr. Markus Küppers: mkueppers@ifd.allensbach.de; Tel.: 07533 805-0

Centre for Strategy and Higher Leadership

The Centre for Strategy and Higher Leadership specialises in coaching and individualised training at management level. The activity emphasises, among others, skill-building for decision-making in complex situations of high insecurity. The Centre was founded in 2009 by Professor Dr. Klaus Schweinsberg. Schweinsberg is also the author of the book „Stresstest 2020 – Erfolgsfaktor Ungewissheitskompetenz“ (ISBN 978-3-451-38831-6), to be published by the Herder Verlag in June 2020.

Allensbach Institute for Public Opinion Research

The Allensbach Institute for Public Opinion Research (IfD) is one of one of the most well-known and respected opinion and market research institutes in Germany. Professor Dr. Renate Köcher is the Managing Director of IfD, which is owned by the Allensbach Foundation for Public Opinion Research.