

17TH SHELL YOUTH STUDY



YOUTH 2015

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THE SHELL YOUTH STUDY

Since 1953, Shell has been commissioning independent academics and institutes to carry out studies, which document the attitudes, opinions and expectations of young people in Germany. The Shell Youth Study not only presents a perspective on today's youth, but also offers food for thought for socio-political debates. As a longitudinal report, it provides material for decision-makers in politics and society.

The Shell Youth Study analyses how young people in Germany rise to challenges as well as the behavioural patterns, attitudes and mentalities they develop in this process.

The 17th Shell Youth Study investigates the political and social conditions in which young people grow up in contemporary German society, and how they develop a personality in this context. It demonstrates the variety of young people's living environments and explores how the present generation differs from its predecessors.

THE PRAGMATIC GENERATION

Since the beginning of the new millennium, the Shell Youth Studies have portrayed young people aged 12 - 25, who are often known as the "pragmatic generation".

"Pragmatic and not ideological" is how the **Shell Youth Study 2002** characterised young people, who were seeking a place in society in highly individual ways, and were optimistic that they could achieve this. A remarkable feature was the shift in values from "post-materialist" approaches, associated with self-realisation and enjoyment of life, to a synthesis of these approaches with more traditional notions, including wellbeing, hard work, order and security, for example.

The **Shell Youth Study 2006** recorded the persistence of this pragmatic basic attitude and way of life. At the same time, strong anxieties and uncertainties were observed in the young people about whether they would achieve the place they sought in society, and configure their lives as they wished.

At the time of the **Shell Youth Study 2010**, the prevailing attitude of the young people was still pragmatic. Pressures and worries had become less important. Instead, the young people seemed more optimistic about their personal futures. Performance-orientation and a search for ways of individual advancement were noticeable, in conjunction with a heightened sensitivity for social relations. Some of the youngest interviewees revealed a shift of focus away from their own lives and narrow private surroundings, and a growing interest in politics.

The **Shell Youth Study 2015** was devised to examine the question whether this openness to social issues was continuing and, if so, what direction it was taking.

YOUTH 2015 — A PRAGMATIC GENERATION RARING TO GO

The 17th Shell Youth Study is the first dedicated to a generation who have grown up entirely in a reunified Germany. The young generation of today only know about the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall from narrative accounts. Nevertheless, this adolescent generation also has to find its place in a crisis-ridden world.

In addition to the political and economic dimensions, the world of young people's experience still includes the family, friends and school, or other educational institutions. The study therefore focuses on young people's attitudes to these spheres of their lives, in addition to their personal core values.

A pragmatic attitude to school and occupation, family and friends is a key feature of the young generation in Germany. The young people adapt to circumstances and





want to seize opportunities. They look for security and positive social relations. This includes a willingness to engage with the concerns of others in their personal entourage or to work for the common good.

At the same time, this is a young generation who is more adventuresome: their attitude extends beyond a sober orientation towards success. Rather, they pursue idealistic visions. They want to get on with the job, be movers and shakers and explore new horizons. And they are willing to run risks in doing so. The youth of 2015 can therefore be described as a “generation raring to go”.

Young people are once again taking greater interest in current political topics. The result is a growing need to contribute to policymaking processes. They have a strong desire to reconcile work, leisure and family. Their primary concern is for dependable outline conditions, which allow them to make plans. Their (future) jobs should be secure and enable them to live independently. But young people also look for a sensible and socially useful activity, which they have chosen themselves, in their future jobs.

OPTIMISM AGAIN ON THE RISE

There is no waning of the optimism of young people in Germany: 61 per cent of young people look to their own future with optimism. This figure is once again higher than in 2010 and 2006. However, young people from the least favoured social class do not share this rising confidence. As in 2010, only one-third of these say they are optimistic about their own future. In the upper class, on the other hand, three-quarters are optimistic – clearly more than in 2010.

A noticeable positive feature is that, for the first time since the 1990s, a majority of young people today also claim to be positive about the future of society: 52 per cent of them look forward confidently. Social origin also plays a major role here: nearly 60 per cent of young people from the higher class take a positive view, while those from the lower class who do so are much rarer, at 42 per cent.

EDUCATION REMAINS A CENTRAL ISSUE

Young people are less confident with regard to their educational and vocational goals. Young people who have had to leave school without qualifications have much worse prospects of finding a training position and progressing into regular paid work. Even young people who left school with a degree don't always see their dream jobs become reality. Currently, almost three quarters expect to realise their vocational wishes – but more than one quarter does not. Four fifths of apprentices and students are (very) certain to be able to realise their wishes. The social origin is of central importance in this area: young people from the lower class (46%) remain less confident about the feasibility of their career hopes than young people from the higher class (81%).

YOUNG PEOPLE WANT FLEXIBLE WORKING PATTERNS

Young people today have higher educational and career aspirations. They also expect more from their employers. They look for careers with interesting and satisfying activity profiles, but also flexibility and reconciliation of work and the family. At the same time, a secure job is (very) important for 95 per cent of young people. Over 90 per cent believe that the family and children should not lose out because of work; 59 per cent actually agree “very” strongly with this assertion. For around four-fifths of young people, it is important to be able to adapt their working hours to their own needs at short notice. Three-quarters would like to be able to work part-time once they have children. Career orientation becomes less important than work-life balance and the ability to plan working activity.

Young women are, on average, more demanding in this respect than men. At the same time, young people realise that the outlook for these aspirations is relatively bad in the world of work. Half consider work-life balance difficult to achieve, and an equal number fear that working (later) will leave them too little free time.

HAVING CHILDREN: EVEN LOWER ON THE AGENDA

There is strong evidence that concern about the difficulty of reconciling work and home life is having an impact on the wish to have children. Overall, at present, only 64 per cent of all young people want to have children; in 2010, the figure was 69 per cent. The trend is more marked among young males than among young females. Older young people feel less inclined to have children in 2015 than the boys and girls of the same years of birth did five years ago, when they were younger.

Expectations towards future occupation

Based on young people aged 12 to 25

What does a job need to offer you in order for you to be satisfied?

A safe job



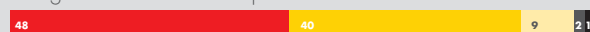
Opportunities to bring in own ideas



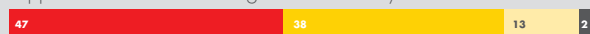
Opportunities to do something meaningful



Enough free time besides the job



Opportunities to do something useful for society



Feeling appreciated



Good promotion opportunities



A high income



A lot of contact to other people



Opportunity to care for others



Feeling like a performer



Information in %

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Social origin also plays a role in the inclination to have children. While three-quarters of young people from the higher class stated that they wanted children, only just



over half of the lower class expressed this desire. This indicates that young people, especially from the lower classes, are very doubtful whether they can bring up children well and find a secure career, given the uncertain opportunities on the employment market.

FAMILY AS THE MOST VALUABLE ASSET

As ever, young people value their own families highly. The vast majority of young people find the necessary backing from their families, and gain positive emotional support on the way to adult life. Over 90 per cent of young people have good relations with their parents.

Nearly three-quarters would bring up their own children in approximately, or exactly, the same way as they were brought up themselves. This figure has increased steadily since 2002. Again, this opinion was least common among young people from the lower class.

GROWING INTEREST IN POLITICS ASIDE FROM THE MAINSTREAM PARTIES

Increasing numbers of young people are showing an interest in politics. While in 2002 only 30 per cent were interested in politics, this number increased to 41 per cent in 2015. This political interest is associated with a willingness to take part themselves in political activities. The mainstream parties do not stand to gain from this, however: disenchantment with politics remains strong. Young people place little trust in parties, as with major corporations, churches and banks. Their trust is greatest in the police, the courts and human rights and environmental conservation groups.

Young males are more often politically interested than females. Nearly six out of ten young people have already taken part in one or more political activities. Top of the list are politically motivated embargoes and petition-signing. Online petitions are more popular than lists of signatures. One in four has taken part in a demonstration, while 10 per cent are committed to citizens' action groups.

GREATER FEAR OF XENOPHOBIA THAN OF IMMIGRATION

Only 29 per cent of young people fear immigration, though 48 per cent are afraid of xenophobia (2010: 40 per cent). On the other hand, young people have become more open to inward migration. In 2002, 48 per cent of young people and in 2006, as many as 58 per cent, called for curbs on immigration into Germany. In 2015 only 37 per cent of young people still backed this idea. Nevertheless, major differences can be identified between east and west. While 35 per cent of young people from Germany's western regions are in favour of the idea of reducing immigration into Germany, in the eastern regions (including Berlin) the figure stands at 49 per cent.

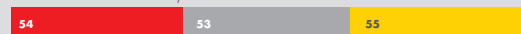


The most important societal priorities

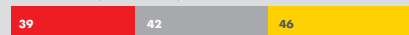
Based on young people aged 12 to 25

*In which areas do we need to become more active?
Up to three listings.*

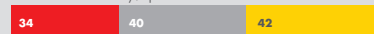
Children and family



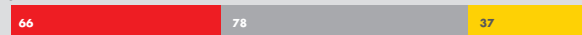
Education, science, research



Social security, pension



Job market



Environment and nature conservation



Healthcare system



Homeland security



Business environment



Information in % ■ 2002 ■ 2006 ■ 2015

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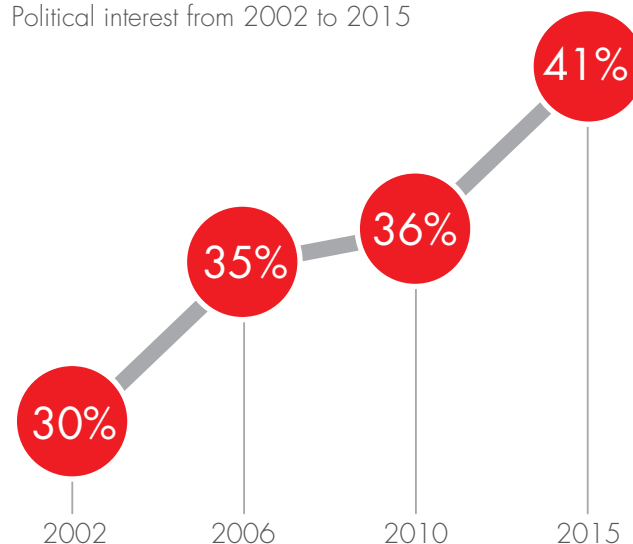
ONLINE, BUT WARY

In 2015, online access for all has become a reality: 99 per cent of young people have access to the Internet. On average, they use 2.3 channels of access, e.g. smartphone or laptop/notebook. Furthermore, they spend more time online: the younger generation spends an average of 18.4 hours per week online whereas, in 2006, the figure was less than 10 hours.

At the same time, young people are aware of the problems of data usage on the Internet and take a critical view of this subject. More than four-fifths of them believe that major corporations such as Google and Facebook earn a lot of money from their users and their data.

INCREASED INTEREST IN POLITICS

Political interest from 2002 to 2015

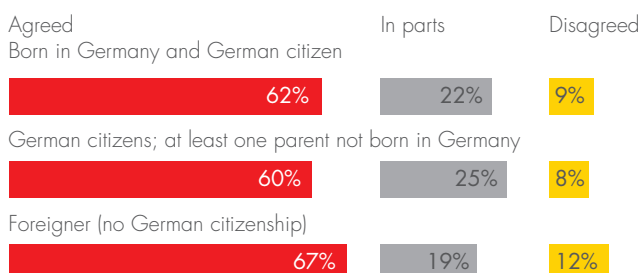


CONCERN AT WORLD EVENTS

Young people are mindful of the increased danger of terrorism and the conflict in Ukraine. In 2010, only 44 per cent feared war in Europe whereas, by 2015, the figure had leapt to 62 per cent. Three-quarters are afraid of terror attacks. Young people would like Germany to pursue a major role as a mediator in international politics, but without intervening.

GERMANY AS A ROLE MODEL

"Germany is a country that acts as an example for other countries"

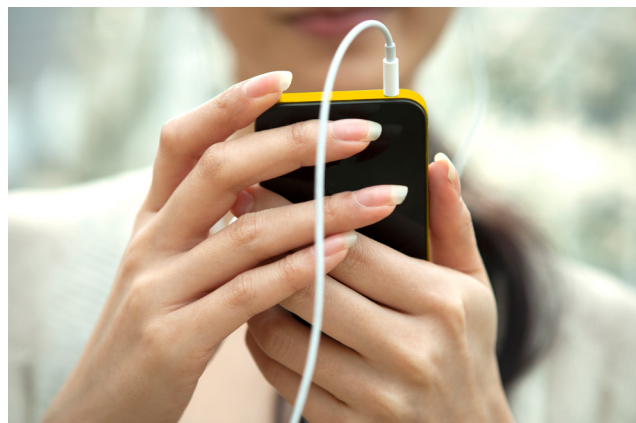


Although over half of young people say that they use Facebook often or very often, they apparently have very little trust in this company.

A STABLE SET OF VALUES

Friendship, partner relationships and the family are the top priority for boys and girls. 89 per cent consider it especially important to have good friends; 85 per cent having a partner whom they can trust; and 72 per cent having a good family life.

The values of young people are also stable. 64 per cent place great value on respect for law and order. The 2015 interviewees viewed a willingness for environmentally responsible behaviour as more important than in past studies. On the other hand, material things, power or a higher standard of living lost importance. For the first time, there was a question about "recognising and respecting human diversity". The majority considered this an important value.



METHOD

The 17th Shell Youth Study 2015 is based on a representative random sample of 2558 young people in the 12 - 25 age range from the sixteen federal states. They were interviewed personally, by Infratest interviewers, about their living situations, attitudes and outlook. The survey ran from early January to mid-March 2015 and was based on a standard questionnaire. The qualitative study involved more thorough interviews, lasting two to three hours, with 21 young people from this age group.

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The 17th Shell Youth Study is available from bookshops under the title "Jugend 2015", and is published in the Fischer Taschenbuch series (ISBN 978-3-596-03401-7), price €19.99.