

Methodological Note

Index of Right-Wing Extremist Attitudinal Profiles

As part of our comparative [research project on political attitudes and socio-economic realities in the European Union in 2024](#), we examined respondents' views on anti-democratic and right-wing extremist positions.

The statements and questions included in our survey regarding right-wing extremist and anti-democratic attitudes were based on established and scientifically recognized instruments, particularly the FES-Mitte Study. This approach ensured comparability with existing research while adhering to academic standards and leveraging proven methods for assessing right-wing extremist attitudes. At the same time, our survey, which covers a broad range of respondents' political attitudes, was not designed to capture the full dimensional complexity of right-wing extremist attitudinal profiles as comprehensively as the FES-Mitte Study. Therefore, we deliberately relied on a selection of well-established instruments to ensure methodological consistency even in a more condensed form by incorporating existing questions on established dimensions.

Building on the academic framework of the FES-Mitte Study and related research, right-wing extremism is defined here as an ideology of human inequality that promotes the notion that some groups are fundamentally superior to others. This ideology opposes the democratic constitutional state and is characterized by an acceptance of violence as a means to achieve its goals (see Zick, Küpper & Mokros, 2023, p. 61). Right-wing extremism rejects democratic values, such as the equality of all individuals in their dignity, the separation of state powers, and the protection of minorities (see Pfahl-Traugber, 2019), and promotes an authoritarian, national-chauvinist worldview.

The FES-Mitte Study further sought to establish a consensus that right-wing extremism encompasses six sub-dimensions, which can be operationalized: support for a right-wing dictatorship, national chauvinism, trivialization of Nazi ideology and its crimes, xenophobia, antisemitism, and social Darwinism (see Zick, Küpper & Mokros, 2023, p. 62; Decker, Brähler & Geißler, 2006). This framework is expanded to include the concept of group-focused enmity, which manifests in various forms of devaluation and exclusion, including racism, antisemitism, sexism, and homophobia (see Zick, Küpper & Mokros, 2023, pp. 152-160).

We adopted this framework in our questionnaire and incorporated eight established statements to serve as instruments for capturing and operationalizing the sub-dimensions of right-wing extremist attitudes (see table below):

| Subdimension of Right-Wing Extremism | Survey Statement |
|---|--|
| National Chauvinism | „It’s time we regain the courage to embrace a strong sense of national pride.“ |
| Support for a Right-Wing Dictatorship | „In the national interest, under certain circum-stances, a dictatorship is the preferable form of government.“ |
| Xenophobia | “Most refugees only come here to exploit our wel-fare state.“ |
| Xenophobia | „When jobs become scarce, foreigners should be sent back to their home countries.“ |
| Antisemitism | “In terms of the politics Israel pursues, I can well understand why one might have something against Jews.“ |
| Racism | “Muslims should be prohibited from immigrating to [Respondents’ Country].“ |
| Homophoba | „Homosexuality is immoral.“ |
| Hetero/-Sexism | „Women should once again focus more on their roles as wives and mothers.“ |

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with each statement on a five-point Likert scale: (1) „strongly agree,“ (2) „somewhat agree,“ (3) „neither agree nor disagree,“ (4) „somewhat disagree,“ or (5) „strongly disagree.“

However, agreement with a single statement—such as expressing strong national pride—is not sufficient to comprehensively assess right-wing extremist attitudes. Therefore, we developed an index that aggregates responses across all eight statements to provide a multidimensional, overarching measure of right-wing extremist attitudes. This approach aligns with standard methods in attitudinal research, which focus on patterns and correlations rather than isolated responses. It is important to emphasize that agreement with individual statements does not necessarily indicate a developed right-wing extremist attitudinal profile of a person.

The index reflects the mean response across the eight statements, standardized between 0 and 1, with reverse coding relative to the original scale: a score of 1 indicates that a respondent selected „strongly agree“ for all statements, while a score of 0 means they chose „strongly disagree“ for all statements. If participants did not provide answers to some statements, the mean score was calculated based only on the responses they provided.

References

Decker, O., Brähler, E., & Geißler, N. (2006). Vom Rand zur Mitte. Rechtsextreme Einstellungen und ihre Einflussfaktoren in Deutschland. Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

Pfahl-Traughber, A. (2019). Rechtsextremismus in Deutschland. Eine kritische Bestandsaufnahme. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Zick, A., Küpper, B., & Mokros, N. (2023). Die distanzierte Mitte: rechtsextreme und demokratiegefährdende Einstellungen in Deutschland 2022/23. JHW Dietz Nachf.

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We have particular expertise in working on the participation of social groups that are often politically underrepresented. As such, we focus on addressing and enhancing the political participation of young people, people with migration biographies, and people with lower socio-economic status.

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