

Press Release

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Immigration Loses Relevancy for Germans

Findings of GfK Verein's "Challenges of Nations 2017"

Nuremberg, August 25, 2017 – "Immigration and Integration" remains the dominant topic on the list of concerns for Germans in 2017. Even so, compared with 2016, the topic has lost relevance with a decline of 27 percentage points. In contrast, other challenges such as poverty, retirement and crime are once again becoming pressing. The long-term concern about unemployment remains in the top five, but has stabilized at a historically low level. This is shown by the "Challenges of Nations 2017" study, for which over 27,500 people in 24 countries were asked about the most pressing challenges in their countries. Across all of the countries, unemployment dominated the list of concerns.

After concerns about immigration and integration rose dramatically last year, they sunk back in 2017. Nonetheless, almost every other German (56 %, 2016: 83 %) is still concerned about this topic. "Since the Balkan route was closed and the EU-Turkey Refugee Deal came into effect in March 2016, the number of incoming refugees has decreased significantly," said Raimund Wildner, Managing Director of the GfK Verein. "Even if this has prevented another influx, many Germans still see it as a social task to integrate immigrants in Germany."

Immigration also provides challenges for German foreign relations, which is currently a concern for 10 % of Germans. Reasons for the increase include EU politics – with the criticism of the Dublin Regulation and Brexit – and the worsening conflict with Turkey.

Poverty triggers growing worry

With an increase of seven percentage points, poverty ranks second in the German list of concerns, for the first time, at 17 %. The respondents named poverty in old age a problem in particular. The number of recipients of social security in old age is increasing, and the development of the pay-as-you-go statutory retirement insurance is under intense discussion due to changing demographics and changing career profiles. On this note, the concern expressed about pensions and retirement benefits is increasing (2017: 14 %; 2016: 8 %). This year, it is in fifth place.

Increasing worry about crime and terrorism

Worry about crime increased from 10 % to 16 %, which puts it in third place in the German list of concerns. According to crime statistics, the number of registered offenses in Germany increased by nearly 1 % in total from 2015 to 2016. In detail, however, there are larger changes. For example, domestic burglaries decreased, and the situation also improved for shoplifting and white-collar crime. However, this has not been the case for violent crimes and violations of the German Weapons Act. Politically motivated crimes also reached a new high.

For the first time, terrorism also ranks among the ten most important concerns in Germany this year. It has increased from 4 % to 9 % (tenth place). "Fear of terrorism is moving more into view for the general public, especially since Germany also became a target for terroristic violence," explained Wildner. In July 2016, an assailant attacked several people on a regional train with an axe. Only a few days later, an attacker blew himself up in Ansbach. And twelve people died in Berlin in the winter of 2016 during a truck attack on a Christmas market.

Concern about unemployment remains at a relatively low level

Concern about unemployment currently ranks fourth at 16 %, and, even with a slight increase, this is the first time since the start of the study that it has not been in the top two. With an unemployment rate of 4.1 % in 2016 according to the OECD, there have never been so few unemployed people since the reunification.

The Challenges in Germany 2007 to 2017

In %:	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015	2016	2017
Immigration/ Integration	7	7	16	8	35	83	56
Poverty	3	6	6	13	15	10	17
Crime	10	8	17	8	10	10	16
Unemployment	67	57	55	32	22	13	16
Pensions/ Provisions for old age	18	9	17	14	16	8	14
Developments in pricing and purchasing power	18	13	33	29	16	8	12
Educational policy	10	14	23	16	15	9	12
Social security	8	13	25	12	9	8	11
Foreign / World / European policy	-	1	4	4	7	7	10
Terrorism	-	-	1	1	6	4	9

Source: GfK Verein, Challenges of Nations 2017

Big difference between East and West in fears of inflation

After a downward trend in previous years, concerns about pricing and purchasing power also began to increase in 2017 and is now at 12 %. At the same time, purchasing power increased for the third time in a row in 2016. This is primarily a result of lower inflation, which was at 0.5 % for the yearly average in 2016, according to OECD. However, above all else, Germans still

want higher salaries and a fairer distribution of income. Also worth mentioning when discussing pricing and purchasing power is the comparison between states in the former East and former West Germany. In western Germany, only 10 % have these concerns, while concern in the East ranges in the top five at 18 %. In the German Federal Government's 2016 Yearly Report on the State of German Unification, it was also reported that the social conditions in the former East and former West are diverging instead of converging.

Job market and inflation an international concern

A comparison of the 24 countries surveyed shows that in 2017 people consider unemployment (24 %) the greatest challenge, with Spain in first place with 61 %. Unemployment is also the top concern for three other countries, namely France, Italy and India. Similar to their concerns about unemployment, people are worried about pricing and purchasing power (23 %), which was still narrowly at the top last year. The unfortunate front-runner in this comparison is Nigeria (67 %), but the topic is also the top concern in Russia and Indonesia.

The global top two, unemployment and pricing and purchasing power, also rank as the main concerns in most countries. In some countries, however, other topics are of greater concern: In Japan, family policy and elderly care play the greatest role as usual, while in the United Kingdom, Poland and the Netherlands, health care is the top concern. The prevention and combating of crime is at the top of the to-do list in Mexico and South Africa; in Kenya it's corruption and in South Korea, economic stability. And even though the topic immigration and integration is not represented in the global top ten, it holds the first place in Austria, Sweden, Switzerland and the US, in addition to Germany.

[You find a video about the study on YouTube.](#)

About the study

These findings are taken from the "Challenges of Nations 2017" study and based on around 27,500 interviews conducted on behalf of the GfK Verein in spring 2017 across 24 countries: Austria, Belgium, Brazil, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Poland, Russia, Spain, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the UK and the USA. This year, Kenya was included for the first time. The survey is based on the following open-ended question which is asked every year: *"What do you believe are the most pressing challenges that need to be solved today in [respective country]?"* There are no restrictions on the responses given by those surveyed, and several issues can be mentioned.

About the GfK Verein

The GfK Verein is a nonprofit organization founded in 1934 to promote market research. It is comprised of 550 companies and individuals. The purpose of the Verein is to develop innovative research methods in close cooperation with scientific institutions; to promote the training and continuing education of market researchers; to follow fundamental structures and developments for private consumption in society, the economy and politics; and to research the impact of these on consumers. The findings of the studies will be made available to the members of the Verein free of charge. Additional information at www.gfk-verein.org.

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