



# COVID-19 CRISIS

## IMPLICATIONS AND LESSONS FOR EUROPEAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

COUNTRY STUDY

December 2022

# GERMANY





# PREFACE

This country case study is an integral part of the project COVID-19 crisis: implications and lessons for European social democracy, which the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) conducted in collaboration with the Instituto Cattaneo in Bologna and successfully completed with the invaluable help of Kieskompas in Amsterdam. As a report, this is one of six documents supplementing a comparative study, completed to offer a detailed perspective on Germany.

At its inception in 2020, the founders' ambition was to investigate citizens' attitudes during and after the pandemic. As COVID-19 continued, the two waves of the survey put in the field by Dynata simply captured the opinions in two respective moments—December 2020/January 2021 and October/November 2021—showing how perspectives fluctuated during the profound crisis. All the partners involved in this project wanted to dive deep to gain a comprehensive picture; thus, the survey was comprised of 13 sociodemographic and 63 thematic questions. These allowed for the segmentation of the vast data, which was collected in a sample of 1,000 citizens twice in six countries (France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Sweden, and Poland). Thanks to cross-tabulations and analyses of the overlap of the vote propensity, it was possible to extract very specific answers regarding the trends among diverse groups. There was a special focus on the opinions held by the voters and sympathizers of the centre-left, of course. And, in this spirit, the next pages and the section entitled Key Findings are meant to serve as a piece of policy advice.

After the first wave, FEPS and FES took some time to discuss the initial results internally as well as with circles of experts from the six countries in question. The objective of these discussions was to put the findings in a country-specific context and explain both similarities and points of divergence when making an overall comparison. These debates took place during closed round tables consisting of Members of National Parliaments, Members of the European Parliaments, academics, trade unionists, civil society experts, party strategists and pollsters, youth representatives, and publicists. The organisers remain incredibly grateful to all these individuals for their time, enthusiasm, and input. It is not possible to name them all, as the total number surpassed 200. That said, we would like to mention our gratitude towards the organisations that helped with these events, especially the Centrum im. Ignacego Daszyńskiego, Olof Palme International Center, Foundation Pablo Iglesias, Foundation Rafael Campalans, as well as the respective FES regional Offices in Madrid, Stockholm, Warsaw, Paris, and Rome. The insights gained were invaluable and relevant for this country's case study and the comparative study.

With this in mind, we are eager to present you with this study, thanking again Instituto Cattaneo (including Salvatore Vassallo, Moreno Mancuso, and Federico Vegetti) for all the cooperation in designing the questionnaire and obtaining the data; Dynata for conducting the two waves of surveys; Kieskompas (including André Krouwel and Yordan Kutiyski) whose team engaged with us in several rounds and then completed these important documents. Finally, we would like to thank our colleagues, especially Celine Guedes (FEPS) and Adrianna Hornung (FES), who shouldered all the organizational load.

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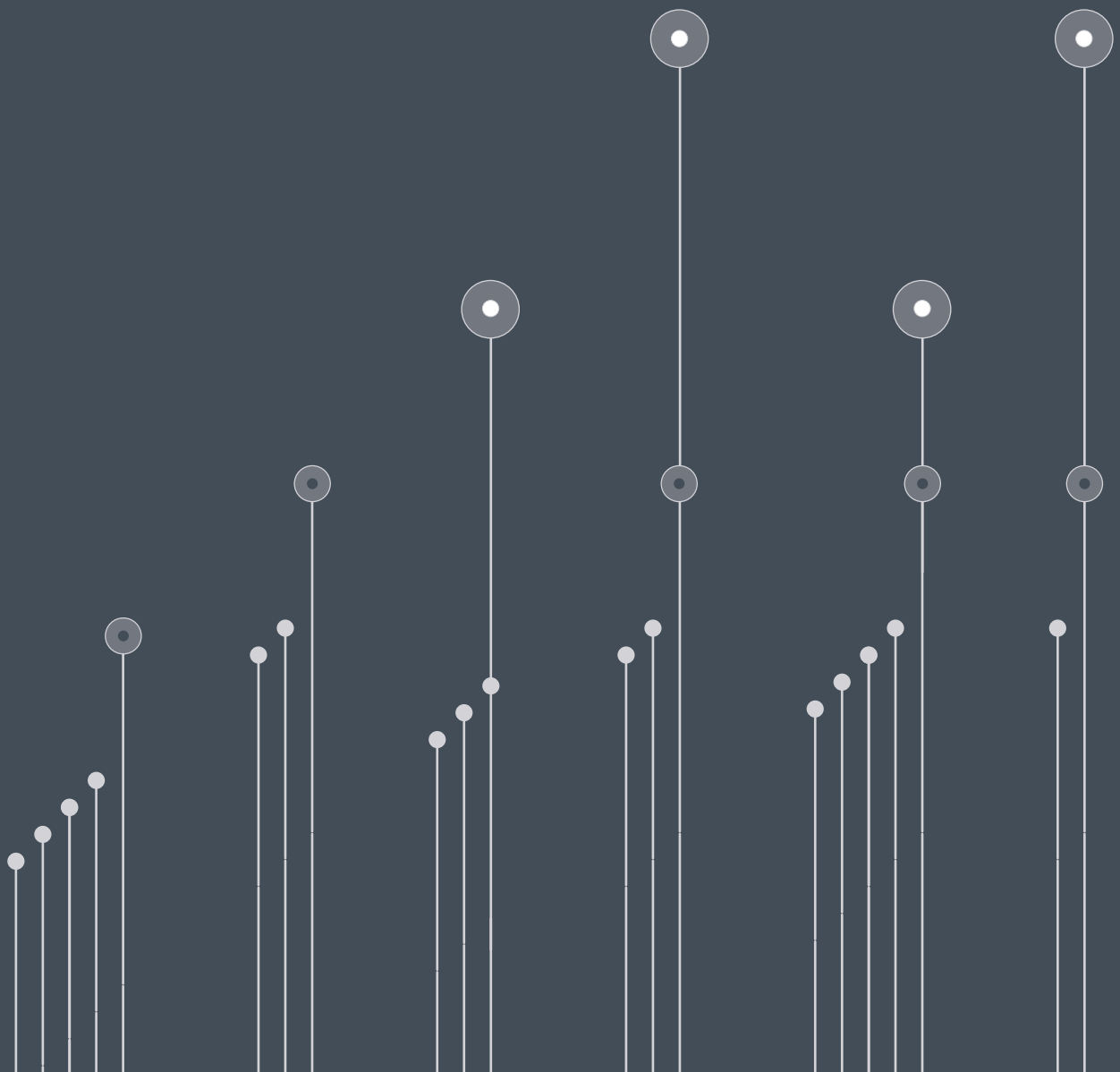
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# SUMMARY

## THE INCREASING CRITICISM AND DISTRUST



- 1) The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened political and societal divisions in Europe and Germany is no exception, as evidenced by the data analyses presented in this country report. It is notable that many respondents' opinions did not change substantially between 2020 and 2021. Rather, the substantial changes that did occur reflect an increased dissatisfaction with the anti-COVID-19 measures among all demographic groups, coupled with the critical opinion towards the general handling of the pandemic, including public spending.
- 2) This increase in criticism coincided with an erosion of institutional trust, a deepening of perceptions of social divisions, but also an increased concern about climate change.
- 3) Most opinions of voters of specific parties and different demographic groups remained largely the same from one year to the other. When it comes to pandemic-related matters and overall satisfaction with governance, voters that support the parties of the previous government coalition between the Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU/CSU) and the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD) can be characterised as having the highest levels of satisfaction with the way the pandemic was handled, the highest degree of institutional trust, and the highest likelihood to follow the recommendations of the government in relation to the pandemic.
- 4) Voters of the left-wing parties Grüne and Die Linke are also very concerned about the pandemic and more likely to support the government's policies to mitigate health risks for society.
- 5) On the other hand, the voters of Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP), Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), and smaller parties are particularly critical of the way the government has been handling the pandemic, but also of German politics at large. While it is known that AfD voters have different, more conservative, and government-critical opinions compared to the rest of the electorate, it comes as a surprise that FDP voters hold very similar views to those of AfD loyalists when it comes to the pandemic.
- 6) Another pattern that emerges from the findings is that many dissatisfied German citizens do not have a clear ideological persuasion: they do not identify with the left or the right. This group of voters is predominantly represented within the AfD electorate. On the other hand, voters with left-wing or centrist orientations are much more likely to be supportive of government policies and the way society operates in general. Respondents who identify as right-wing often have critical stances similar to voters without political ideology; however, right-wing aligned respondents tended to answer more strongly than the latter.
- 7) When it comes to demographics, the most cynical and politically distrustful respondents can be found among citizens with lower levels of education and income difficulties. These respondents are much more distrustful, have an anti-immigration and anti-climate policy orientation, and are generally dissatisfied with governance compared to other demographic groups. Such citizens are also more likely to be opposed to immigration, critical of the European Union, and doubtful that climate change will have a serious impact on future generations.
- 8) In terms of age, older respondents reported being less severely impacted by the negative effect of the pandemic, particularly those effects related to deteriorating living and work conditions. This explains the much higher degree of support older generations have towards anti-COVID-19 measures.
- 9) In sum, the data indicate that, even though there are many different and often polarised opinions among the German electorate, the majority of German citizens are politically moderate, have relatively high confidence in their government, have a high degree of institutional trust, support their country's membership in the EU, believe that immigrants are a benefit to society, and are concerned about climate change.



# DATA AND METHOD





This country report offers an in-depth overview of public opinion in Germany by comparing the stances of various demographic and political groups. Respondents were segmented by gender, age, educational attainment, economic well-being, and ideological orientation. Most importantly, voter groups were identified based on respondents' current vote intention. Comparing citizen categories allows policy-makers and political campaigners alike to make informed decisions when targeting specific population groups.

The results compare how the aforementioned groups of respondents answered the various closed-ended survey questions. Questions on the same topic (e.g., support for measures against the COVID-19 pandemic) that use a scale rather than ordinal answer categories were used to create indices after a reliability analysis was performed to confirm that they measure the same concept. For these indices, the mean scores for each respondent group were estimated; the groups were subsequently plotted on two-dimensional scatterplots comprised of two indices. Again, the average mean scores between the two waves were calculated for each voter group.

Two waves of survey data in six countries: France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, and Sweden, were collected by Dynata, in coordination with the Cattaneo institute, in December 2020/January 2021 and October/November 2021, respectively. In Germany, each wave comprises a sample of 1,003 respondents, representative of the demographic composition and political preferences of the German population. The questionnaires used in both waves contained largely overlapping questions, allowing for an over-time comparison of public opinion on various socioeconomic issues. Given that there were very minor opinion differences between the two waves for items included in both survey iterations, the average percentage and mean scores for these questions are reported, with several exceptions. The following questions were only asked in the first wave of the survey and, therefore, only results from this wave are reported:

- There are different views on how the national government balanced, in the short run, protecting jobs and protecting public health when responding to the coronavirus pandemic.
- There are different views on how the national government balanced preserving public health and preserving individual freedom when responding to the coronavirus pandemic.
- Some hope to be vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as possible, others believe that it would be risky to get vaccinated. If the health authorities provide you an opportunity to get vaccinated, how likely is it that you will do so?
- Have you installed the Corona-Warn-App on your smartphone?

In addition, several questions were only included in the second wave of the questionnaire and, therefore, only results from this wave were reported:

- Some people argue that the COVID-19 vaccination should be mandatory for everyone to stop the pandemic, others that people should always be free to choose whether to get vaccinated or not.
- Compared to the end of 2020, do you think that your own economic situation...
- And thinking about the next 12 months, do you think that your own economic situation ...

The indices measuring conspiracy belief, populist sentiments, and the question asking respondents to evaluate the "NextGenerationEU" plan were also included in the second wave only; therefore, only this second wave data is analyzed for these items.



# CHAPTER 1

## THE VULNERABLE WERE HIT HARDER

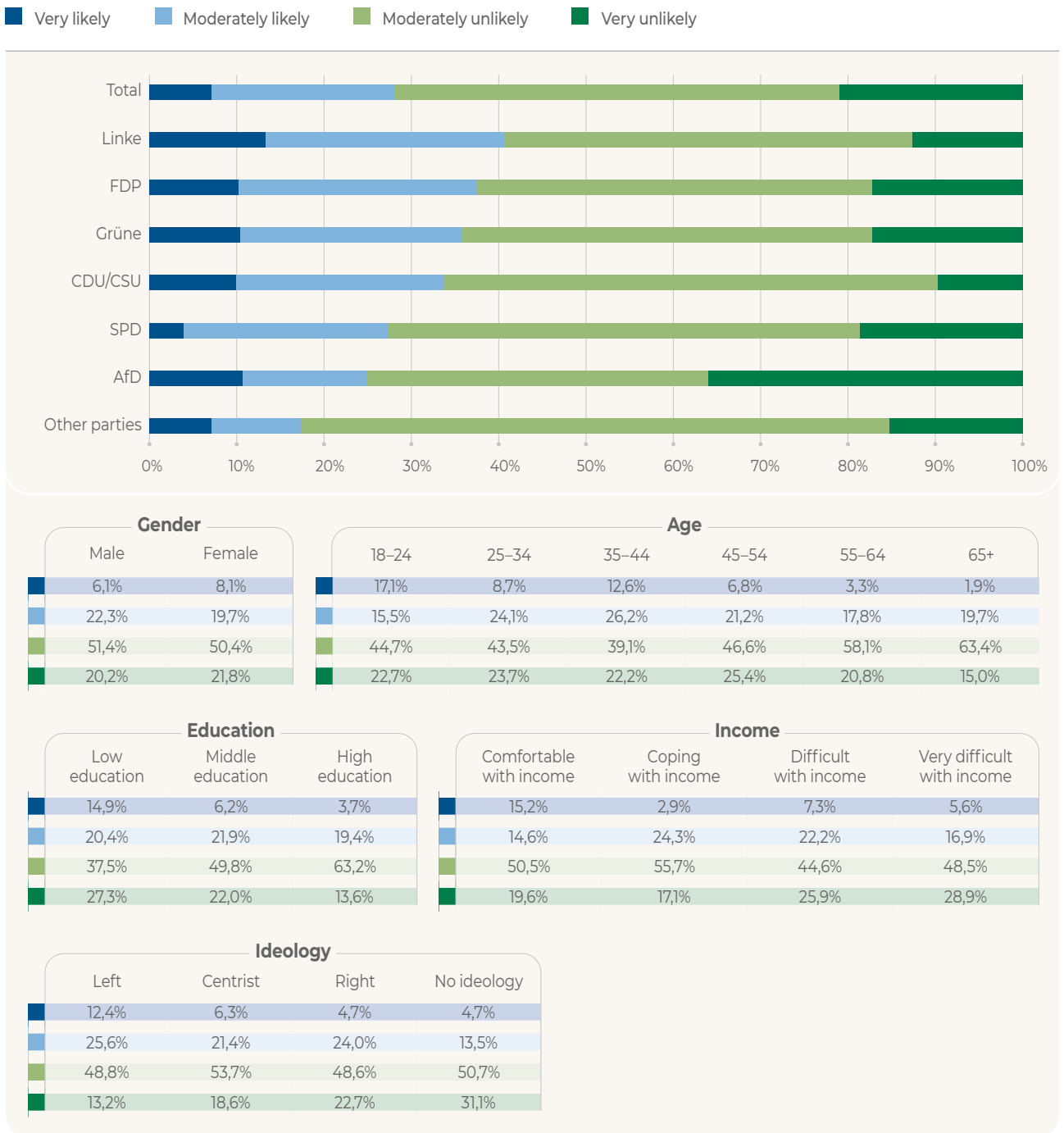


**Likelihood of and Concern about Contracting the Virus**

Despite the danger posed by COVID-19, most German citizens (71.8 per cent) did not think it likely that they would contract the virus. Voters of AfD and smaller parties were the least likely to consider that they would contract the virus, while centrist and left-leaning voters were more likely to think they would get infected. When it comes to demographics, women and those of younger age and lower ed-

ucated individuals considered it more likely that they would contract the virus. In terms of ideology, left-wing voters considered getting infected with COVID-19 a distinct possibility. Comparing the two waves, there is a notable increase among those aged 25–34 and less educated respondents when it comes to their perceptions of their likelihood of contracting the virus.

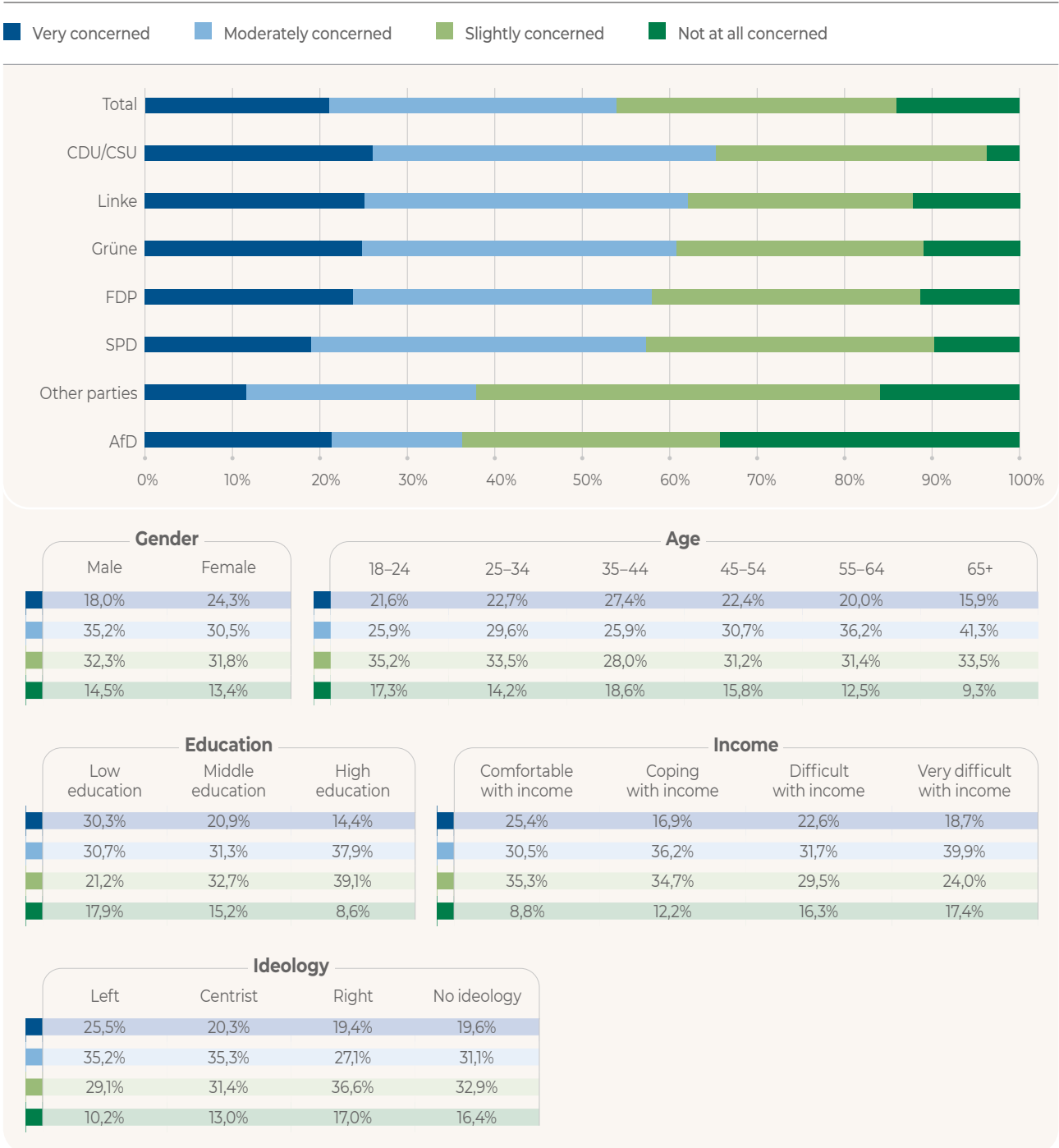
**Figure 1 / Q22 – In your opinion, how likely is it that you will contract COVID-19?**



When it comes to the dangers the virus would pose to individuals' health, it is clear that the majority of German citizens (nearly 90 per cent) were at least slightly concerned. Voters of the populist AfD differed most from other respondents; less than 40 per cent of them reported being very or moderately concerned about the health risk posed by the COVID-19 infection. Over 30 per cent of populist voters were not at all concerned, which is triple the proportion

of other voters. Women, respondents of older age (particularly those age 55 or more), left-wing, and centrist respondents reported the most concern about the health risks posed by COVID-19, while differences in income and education did not result in clear-cut opinion differences on this risk perception. When the two groups of survey responses are compared, there is a notable decline in the degree of concern among all voter groups.

Figure 2/Q23 – How concerned are you that a COVID infection might endanger your health?



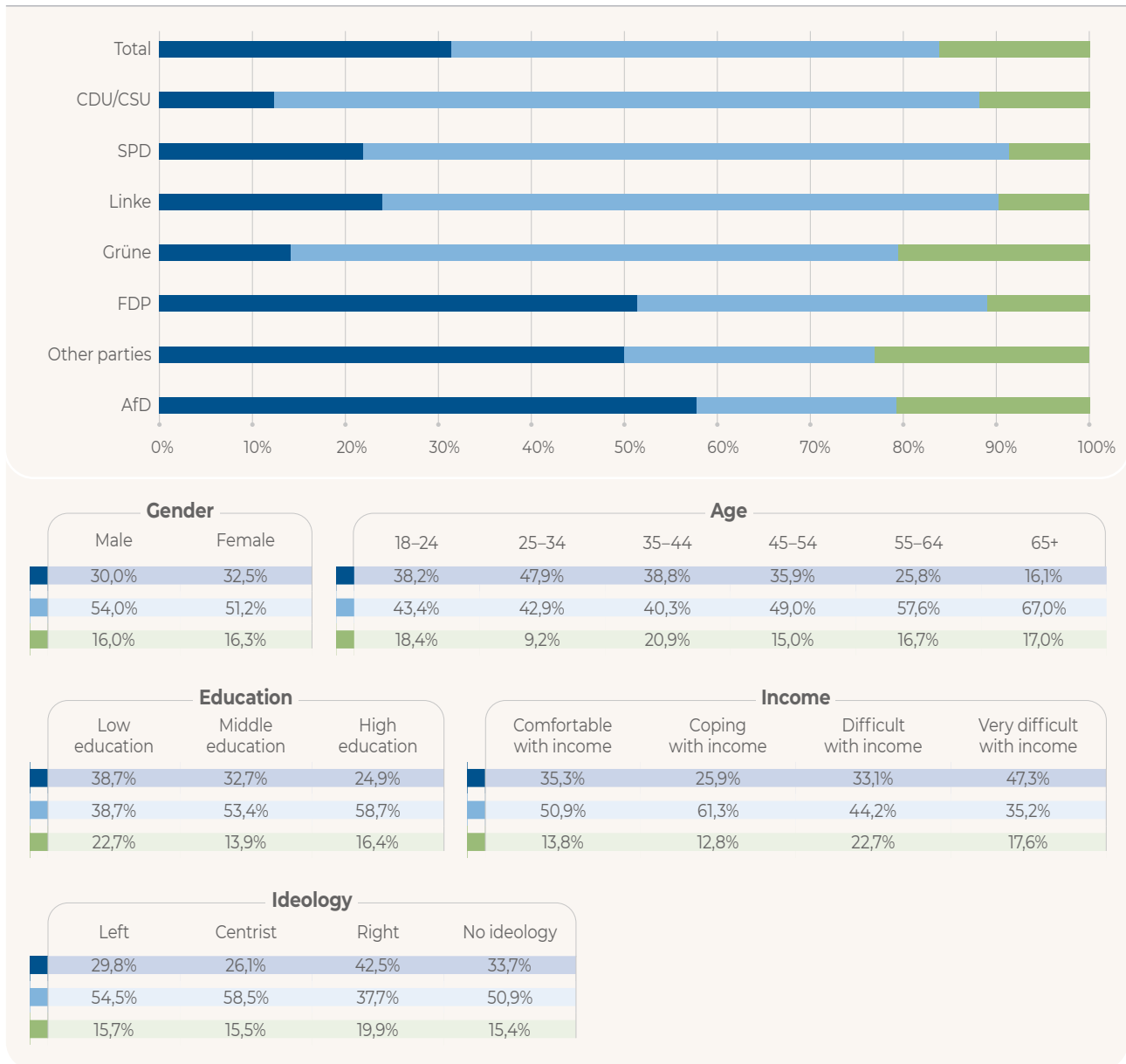
**Evaluations of Government Policy against the Pandemic**

While more than half of German citizens reported that they thought the government response to the pandemic was balanced, there were substantial critical voices on the matter. More than 30 per cent of those surveyed answered that government measures did not take protecting jobs sufficiently into account, while 16 per cent thought that the government should have taken stronger measures to protect public health. Voters of centrist and left-wing par-

ties are all overwhelmingly supportive of the government policies, while FDP, AfD, and smaller party voters are the most critical of the government policy and consider more should have been done to protect jobs. In terms of demographics, younger, lower educated people and those with the most difficult economic situations, who were arguably hardest hit by the pandemic, are most likely to think that the government should have put more focus on protecting jobs.

**Figure 3 / Q38 – Government balance – jobs or public health**

- The government has taken exaggerated precautions to protect public health instead of jobs
- They got the balance about right
- The government has taken exaggerated precautions to protect jobs instead of public health

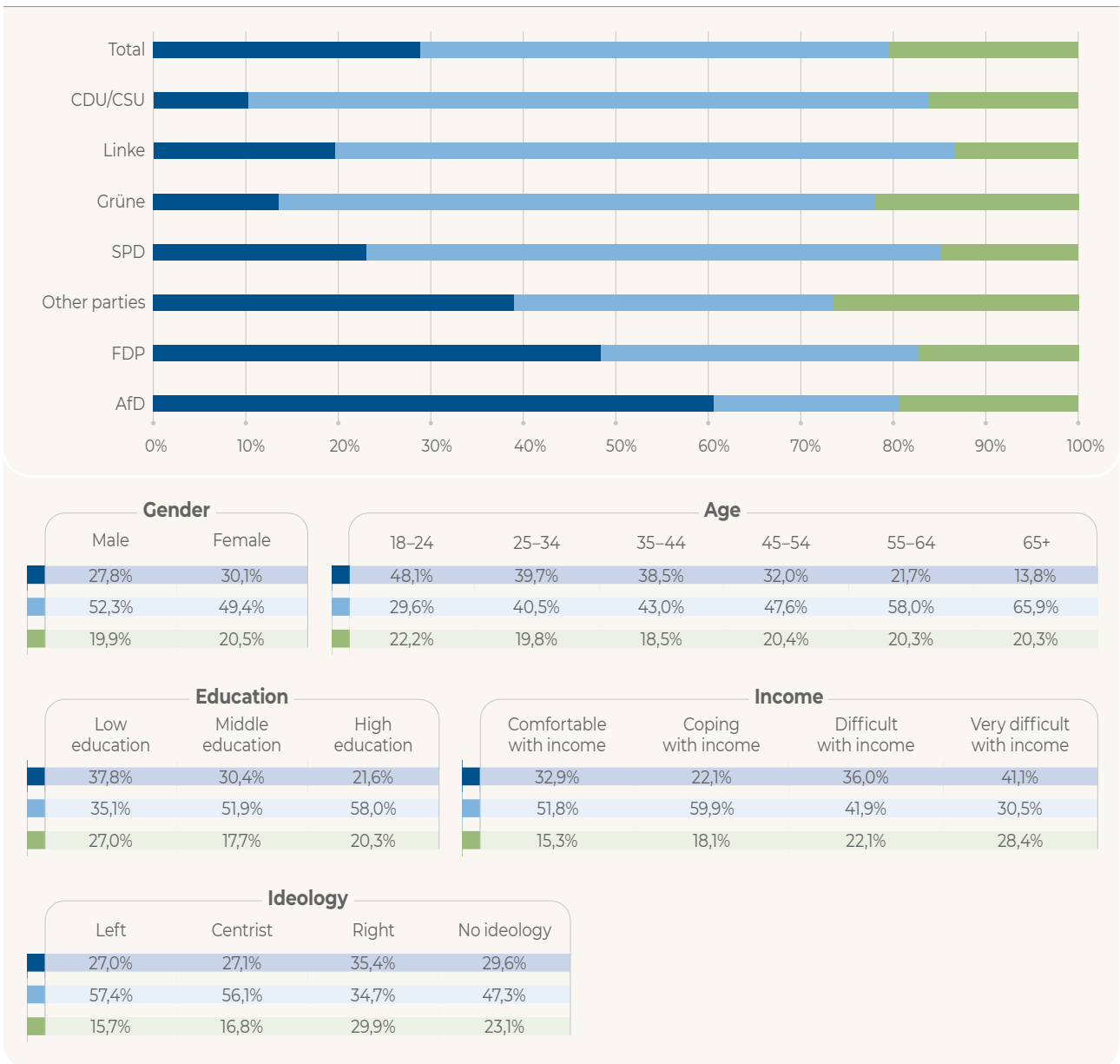


A similar pattern emerges when looking at how citizens view the government response as a trade-off between preserving people's freedom and protecting public health: a razor-thin majority (50.9 per cent) of German respondents consider the balance to be about right, while nearly 30 per cent think freedoms were unduly restricted. Finally, 20 per cent think the restrictions should have been more

far-reaching. Again, moderate voters in the political centre and on the left are most supportive of the restrictive measures, while those on the right, particularly AfD and FDP voters, think that freedoms were unduly restricted. Younger citizens, the less educated, and those in more precarious economic situations were most likely to think that freedoms were restricted unduly.

Figure 4 / Q39 – Government balance – freedom or public health

- The government has taken exaggerated precautions to contain the pandemic that unduly restricted people's freedom
- They got the balance about right
- The government has taken exaggerated precautions to preserve people's freedom that irresponsibly worsened the public health



**Likelihood of Getting Vaccinated**

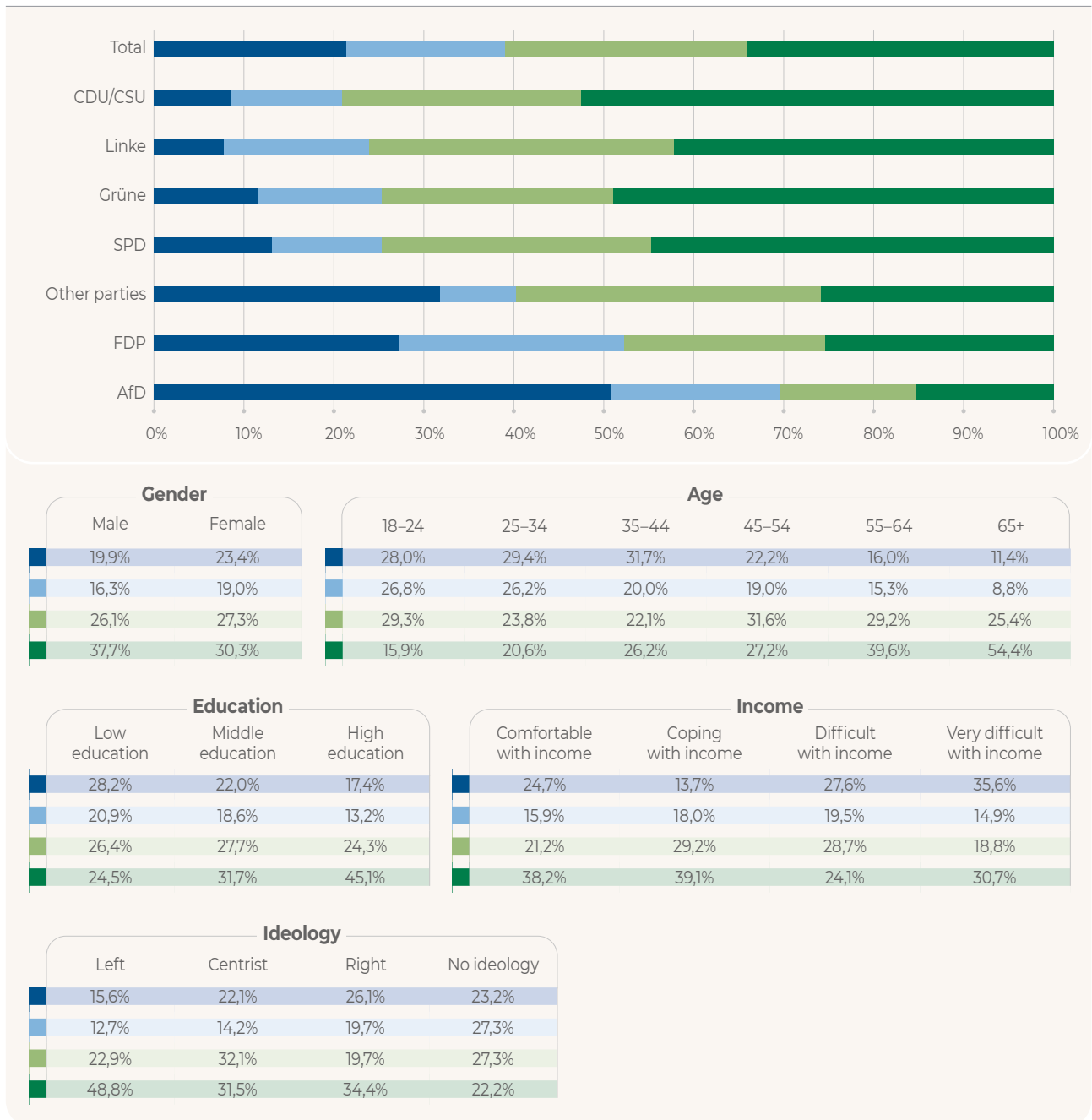
When the survey was conducted in November 2020, 60.9 per cent of the respondents stated that they would get vaccinated if health authorities offered an opportunity for them to do so. This number is only slightly lower than the current vaccination rate in Germany, which stands at about 63 per cent. Similar to the trends reported above, voters for centrist and left-wing parties are most likely to say they would get vaccinated, while a clear majority of about 70

per cent of AfD voters and slightly more than 50 per cent of FDP voters answered that they would not do so. Somewhat surprisingly, women were slightly less likely than men to say they would get vaccinated. More in line with previous findings, younger respondents are substantially less interested in getting vaccinated than older generations. Similarly, respondents with less education, those with lower incomes, and those with right-wing ideology or no ideological persuasion are less likely to say they will vaccinate.

**Figure 5 / Q52 – Likelihood of getting vaccinated**

If the health authorities provide you an opportunity to get vaccinated, how likely is it that you will do so?

Very unlikely Unlikely Likely Very likely



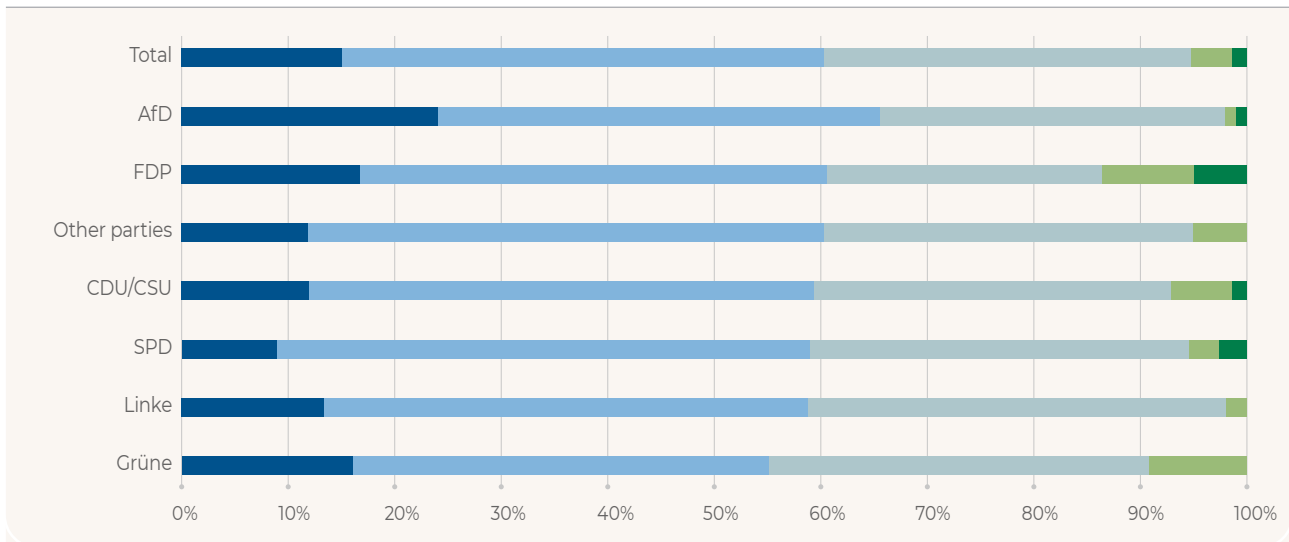
### The Impact of COVID-19 on Quality of Life and Working Conditions

There is very little variation among the different population groups when it comes to the impact of the pandemic on people's quality of life: more than 60 per cent of Germans reported being affected negatively. Still, FDP and AfD voters

have felt the most negative impact on their lives. Specifically, women and younger people experienced a higher degree of quality of life deterioration, along with the less educated and those with lower incomes. Left-wing and right-wing citizens also reported having been more negatively impacted by the pandemic compared to political

Figure 6 / Q74 – Overall - how would you assess the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the quality of your life?

It made my life ... :   
 ■ Much worse      ■ No difference      ■ Much better   
 ■ Somewhat worse      ■ Somewhat better



Gender		Age					
Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
13,4%	17,7%	22,3%	20,2%	26,3%	13,4%	13,7%	6,5%
42,7%	47,0%	43,5%	41,6%	39,1%	43,4%	43,3%	52,6%
38,7%	30,6%	21,2%	31,5%	28,3%	37,9%	39,5%	39,0%
4,0%	3,4%	8,8%	4,6%	4,0%	4,2%	2,9%	1,8%
1,2%	1,3%	4,1%	2,1%	2,3%	1,2%	0,6%	-

Education			Income			
Low education	Middle education	High education	Comfortable with income	Coping with income	Difficult with income	Very difficult with income
24,8%	16,3%	7,4%	13,2%	9,1%	21,5%	26,8%
33,7%	45,3%	51,3%	38,4%	51,2%	45,2%	36,7%
31,8%	34,0%	37,8%	38,4%	35,7%	31,1%	30,7%
7,1%	3,4%	2,6%	6,6%	3,5%	1,7%	3,8%
2,7%	0,9%	1,0%	3,4%	0,5%	0,6%	2,0%

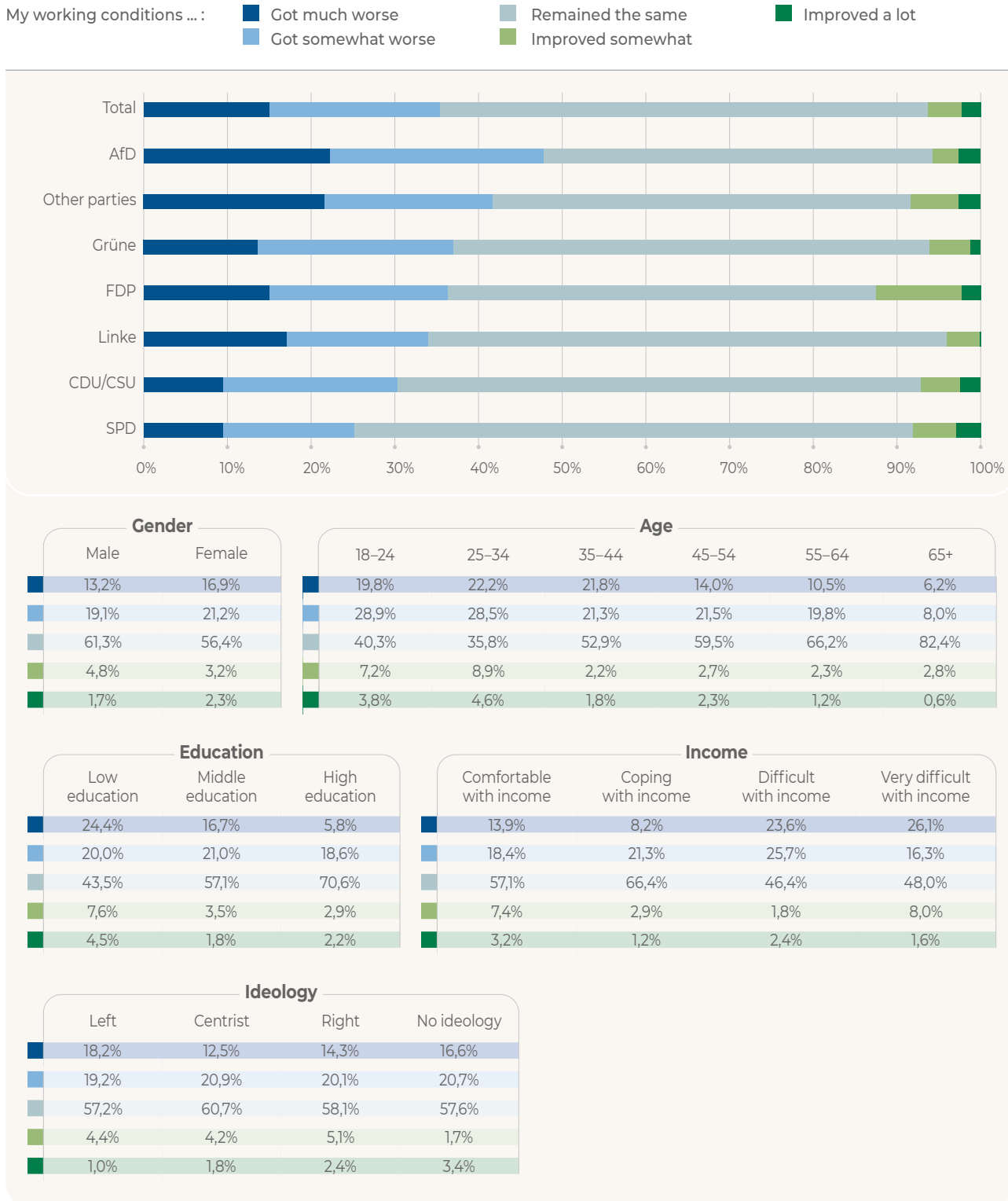
Ideology			
Left	Centrist	Right	No ideology
17,5%	13,1%	14,4%	17,7%
49,3%	41,6%	51,1%	40,4%
29,0%	39,0%	28,4%	38,6%
3,4%	5,2%	4,9%	1,0%
0,8%	1,2%	1,2%	2,2%



moderates and those without clear ideological persuasion. Most German respondents report that their working conditions were unaffected by the pandemic (58.5 per cent). Nevertheless, on both extremes of the political spectrum, Die Grüne and AfD voters report a much more substantial deterioration of their working conditions than CDU/CSU

and SPD voters. Again, younger respondents, those with lower levels of educational attainment, and lower-income individuals reported being most negatively affected by the pandemic. Interestingly, FDP voters were most likely to report an improvement in their working conditions, with more than 10 per cent reporting a positive change.

Figure 7 / Q75 – How would you assess the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on your working conditions?

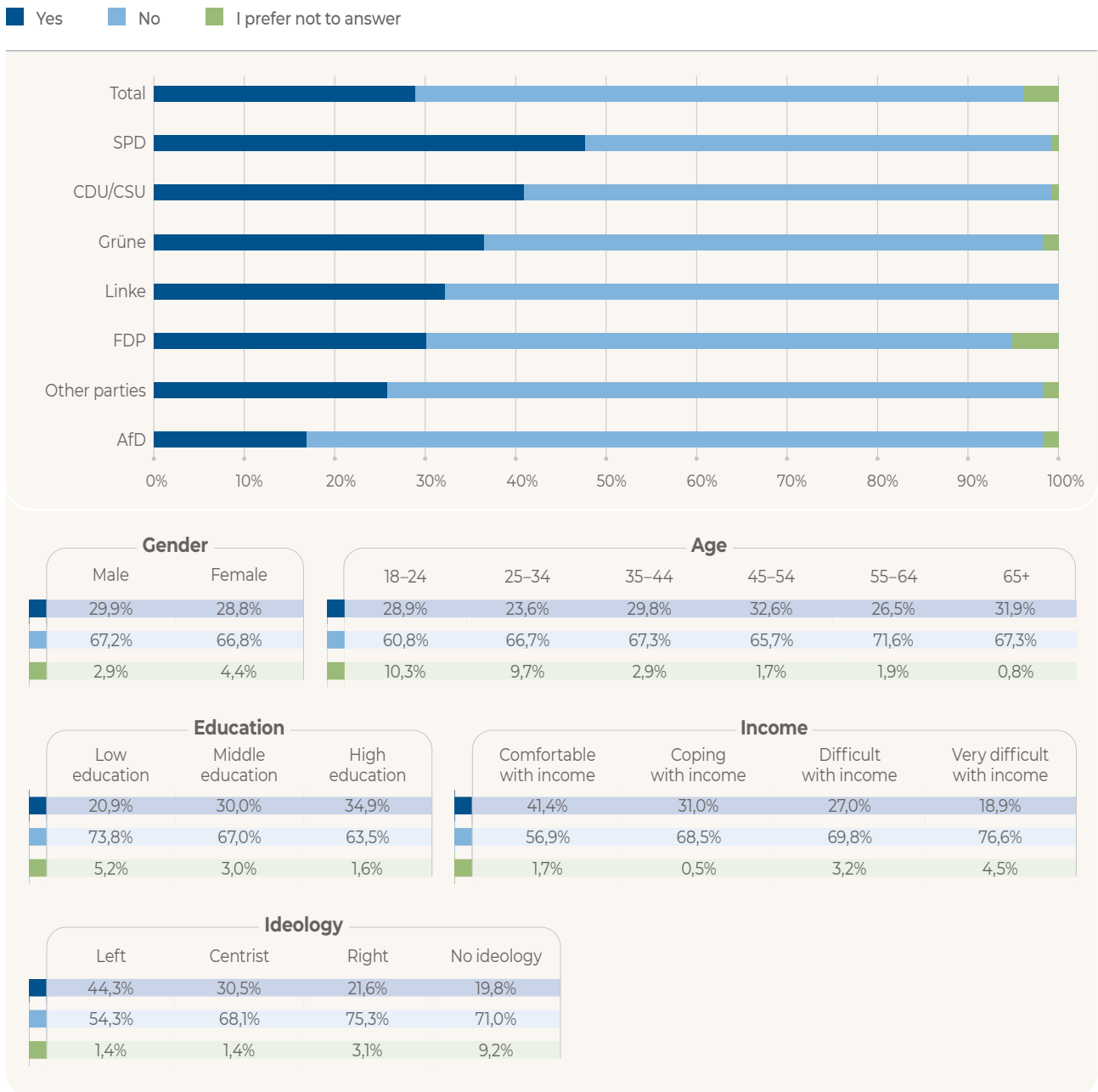


### COVID-19 Contact Tracing App

A rather underwhelming proportion of respondents have installed Germany's national contact tracing app (Corona-Warn-App) — a mere 29.2 per cent. Voters of the two governing coalition parties at the time of surveying (SPD and CDU/CSU) were more likely to have installed the app com-

pared to other voter groups. In contrast, voters of the AfD, FDP, and smaller parties, people with less education, and people in precarious economic situations were less likely to have installed the contact tracing app. Moreover, right-wing voters and those claiming no ideological orientation were least likely to have installed the contact tracing app.

Figure 8 / Q61 – Have you installed the national contact tracing app (Corona-Warn-App) on your smartphone?

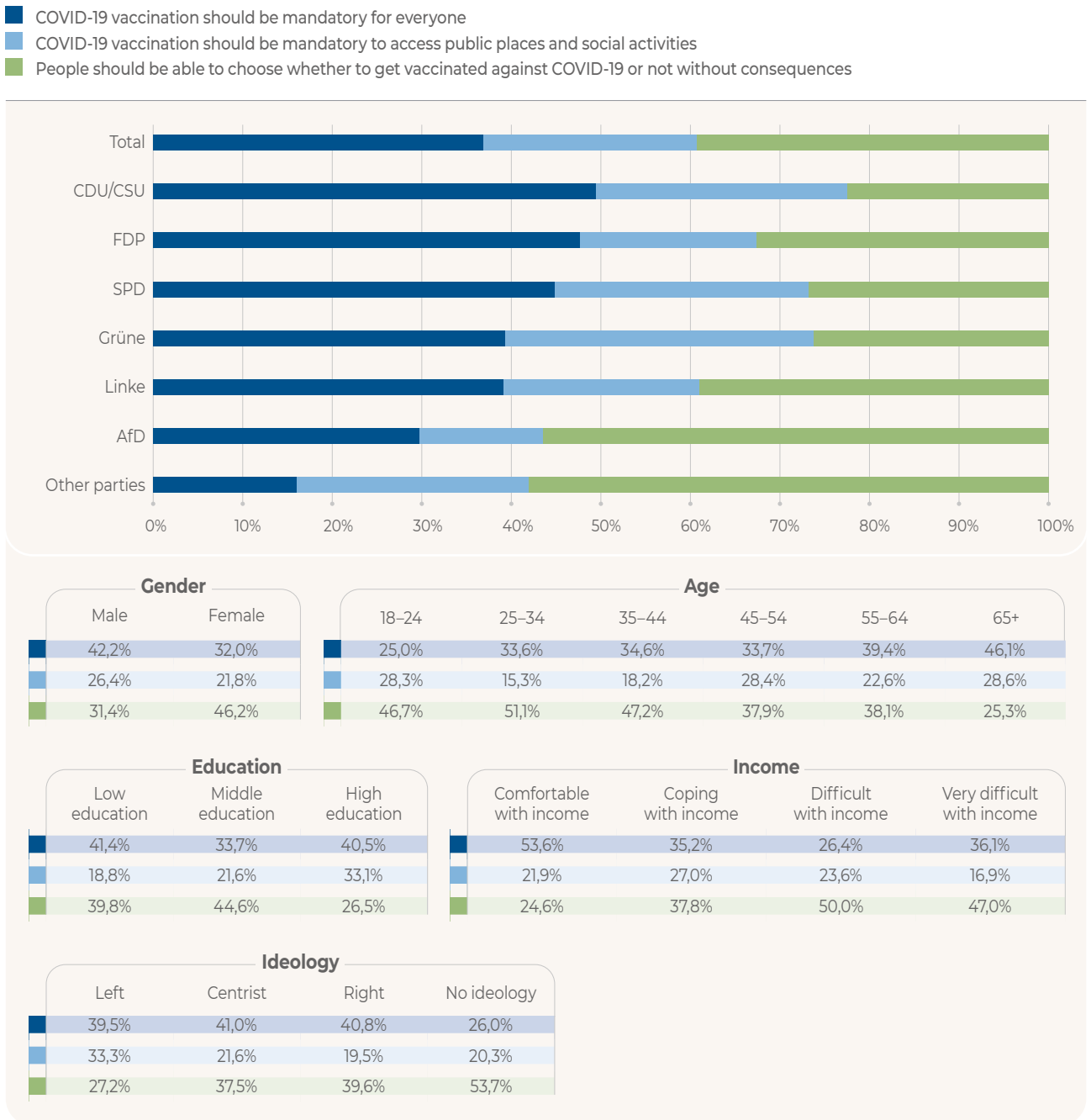


**Mandatory Vaccination**

More than 60 per cent of German respondents believe there should be some form of mandatory vaccination against COVID-19. In general, voters of the centrist parties CDU/CSU, SPD, and Grüne are the most supportive of mandatory vaccination, whereas AfD and smaller party voters are the most opposed. Men are much more likely than

women to support mandatory vaccination, along with older voters, those with higher incomes, and those with left-wing ideologies (although the latter are specifically more supportive of vaccine mandates for accessing public spaces). Likewise, higher educated respondents are more likely to support requesting proof of vaccination to access public spaces compared to other voter groups.

**Figure 9 / Q21G - Mandatory vaccination**



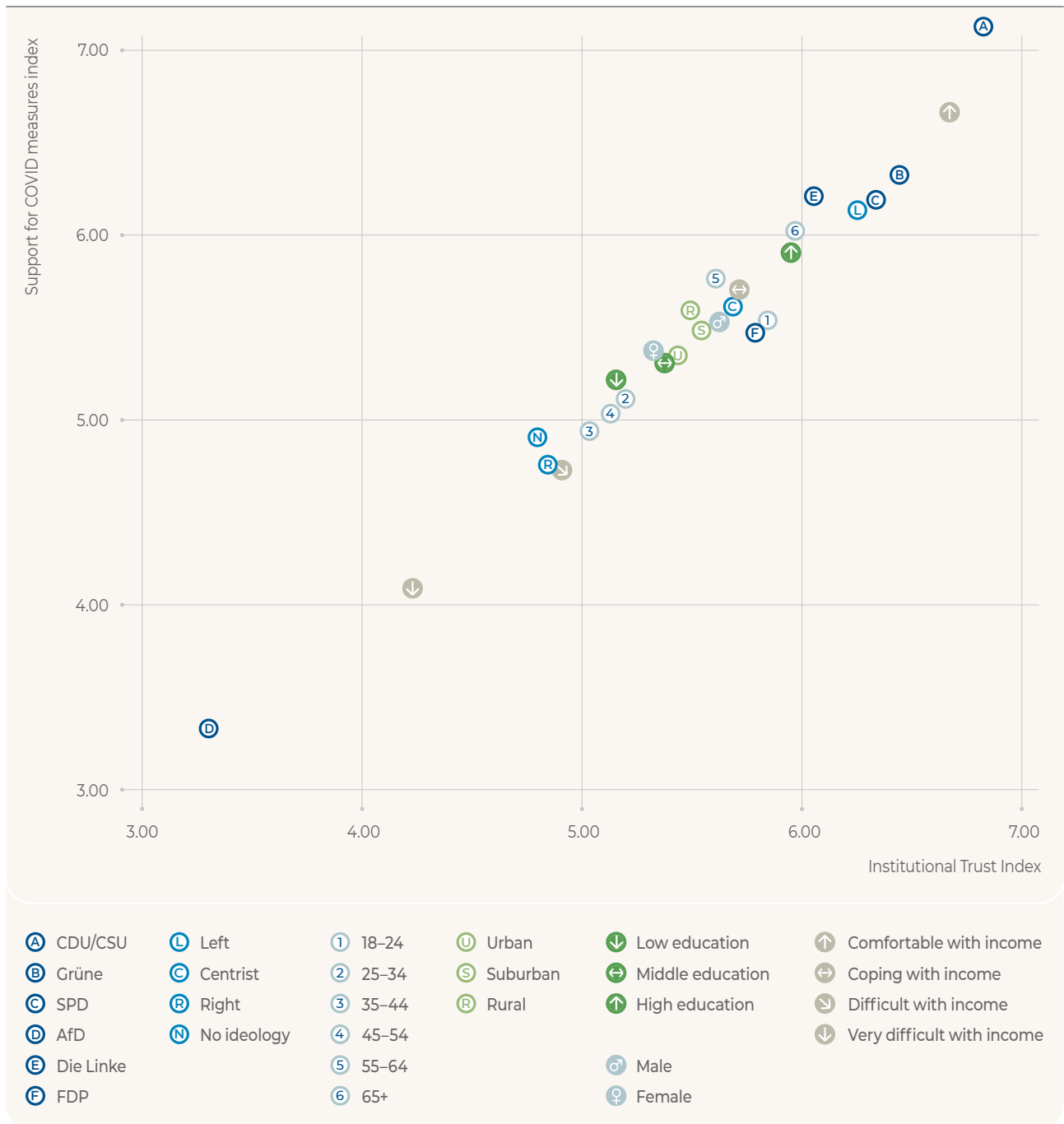
### Public Perception, Institutional Trust, and Support for COVID-19 Measures

The Support for COVID-19 Mitigation Measures Index comprises five separate questions; respondents were asked to evaluate the measures various institutions have taken to respond to the pandemic. The Institutional Trust Index is generated from six separate questions that ask respondents to what extent they trust various national and international institutions on a 10-point scale, where 0 means “no trust at all” and 10 means “complete trust”. All questions used in the scatterplots are asked with a 10-point scale answer category. For all indices included in the country report, lower scores indicate a low level of support or agreement with what is measured, while higher scores account for a high level of support. In sum, a lower institutional trust index score signifies a lower degree of institutional trust.

The average values of numerous respondent groups are reported in a two-dimensional scatterplot with the various population segmentations based on age, gender, educational attainment, difficulty coping with income, political orientation, and party support.

There is a clear linear relationship between the two indices: the more institutionally trustful respondents are, the more likely they are to support COVID-19 measures. In particular, voters of the moderate centrist and the left-wing parties, those with higher levels of education, and those with higher incomes are most supportive of the measures against the pandemic and also have the highest levels of institutional trust, along with voters from the older generation. On the other hand, AfD voters and the respondents in the most precarious economic situations have substantially

Figure 10 – Support für Covid Measures



lower degrees of trust and are less likely to support COVID-19 measures compared to voters of the left-wing parties and the CDU/CSU, the higher educated, and the economically well-to-do.

score above the mean of the scale. This suggests that the public is rather dissatisfied with the handling of public spending during the pandemic. There is a general and widespread perception that the pandemic exacerbated existing societal inequalities.

When it comes to perceptions of who has benefitted from public spending during the pandemic, it is clear that right-wing respondents, AfD voters, and those on the lowest steps of the economic ladder perceive that the wealthiest have benefitted the most from public spending for economic recovery. Ideologically centrist respondents, those aged 18 to 24, those with higher incomes, and moderate and left-wing party voters are less likely to believe that public spending has benefitted the wealthiest. However, it is important to note that the question on the vertical axis is a 10-point scale and all respondent groups in the graph

Figure 11 – Beneficiaries of Public Spending



When it comes to the perception that measures against the pandemic go against constitutional and democratic principles, it is clear that Germans are divided on the matter. On this matter, AfD voters are the outlier again, together with less educated respondents, those struggling with their income, respondents aged 35 to 54, and those on the political right. However, many respondent groups have a

rather moderate position on the matter. Respondents older than 65, those with comfortable incomes, people with higher levels of educational attainment, as well as those that support the left-wing parties and the moderate CDU/CSU are the least likely to think that the government's response to the pandemic was unconstitutional and anti-democratic.

Figure 12 – Covid Measures and Constitutional Rules



Most German respondents agree that the pandemic has deepened the divisions among people. AfD voters, less educated respondents, and those aged 25 to 44 are most likely to agree with this proposition.

Figure 13 – Covid and Divisions Among People

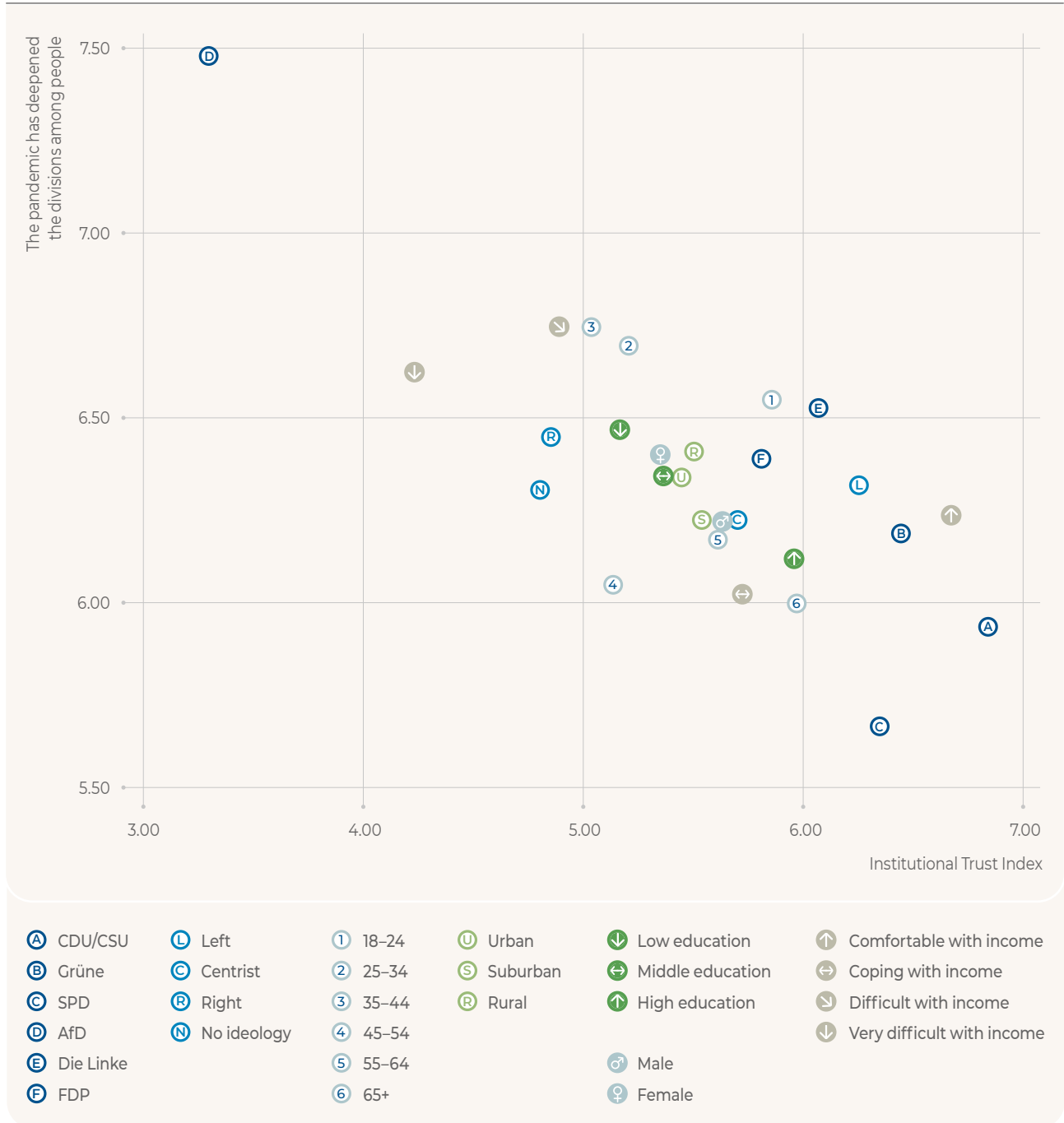
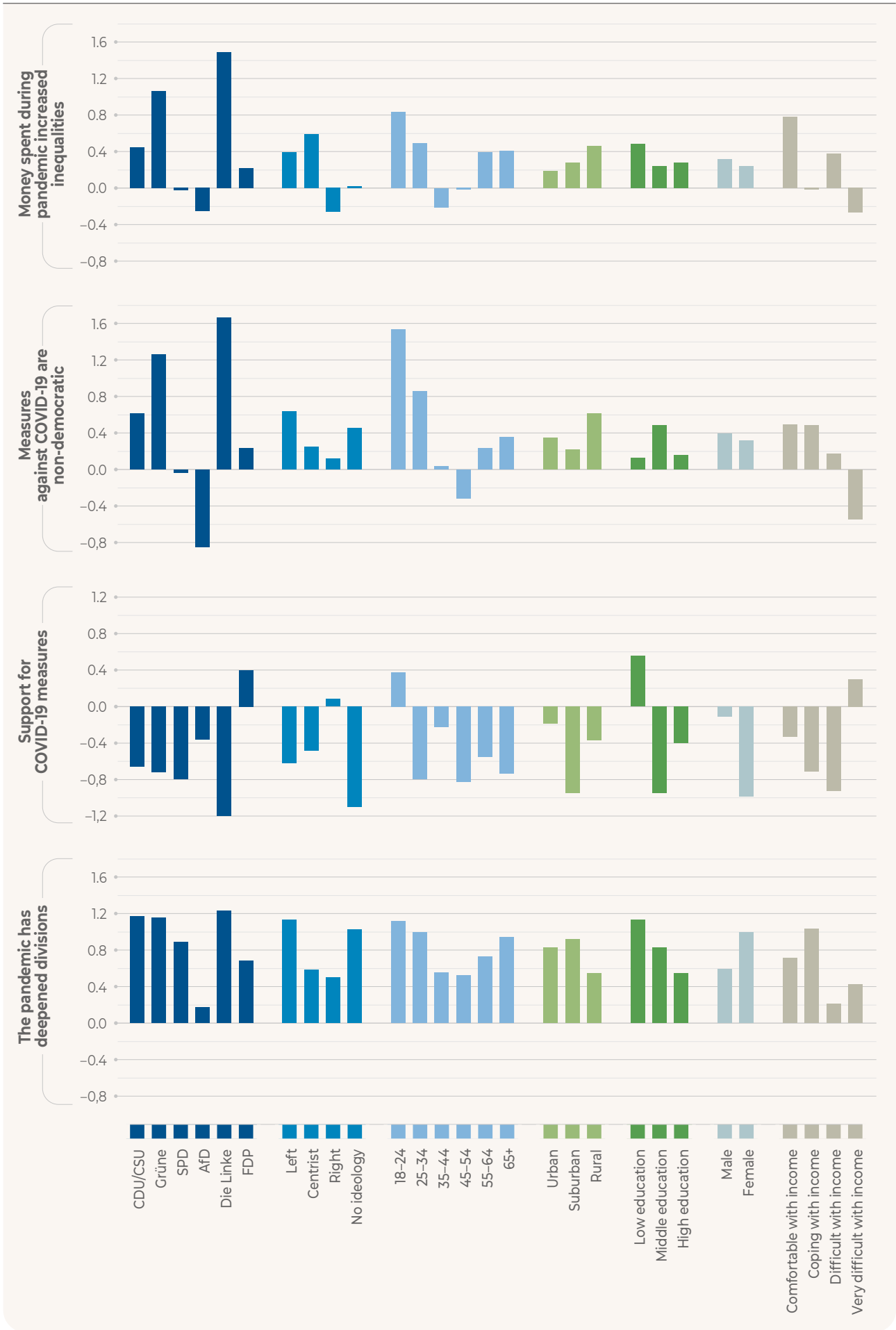


Figure 14





When it comes to the differences between the results in the two waves, we report how the mean values for each index changed for each sociodemographic respondent group. There is a clear pattern: all respondent groups agreed more strongly in 2021 compared to 2020 that the pandemic has deepened divisions between people. In addition, support for COVID-19 measures dropped substantially among nearly all voter groups. The increase in negative opinion toward pandemic mitigation measures is also reflected in the increase in the number of respondents who consider the measures to be undemocratic and perceive inequality to have increased. The only respondents for which the negative perception did not increase were among respondent groups who already had negative perceptions toward the anti-COVID-19 measures.

## KEY FINDINGS 1

- Although the majority of German respondents understand the COVID-19 pandemic has a serious impact of on public health, society is rather polarized when it comes to the government's pandemic response and vaccination campaign.
- While the vast majority of Germans were concerned that the virus would endanger their health if they were to get sick, most people did not consider it likely that they would contract the virus. Voters of AfD and FDP were the least likely to be concerned about the virus.
- More than half of Germans consider the government to have taken appropriate measures to protect public health, regardless of the impact these measures had on the economy and personal freedoms. Less educated respondents, those with economic difficulties, and AfD and FDP voters were most critical of the anti-pandemic measures.
- Although the majority of respondents reported a willingness to get vaccinated, most AfD and FDP voters, as well as less educated respondents and those with income difficulties state that they are (very) unlikely to use the vaccine.
- The majority of the German public reported the pandemic had a negative effect on their quality of life, while most Germans' reported their working conditions remained largely the same. Nevertheless, it is clear that both the quality of life and working conditions for less educated respondents, those on the bottom of the economic ladder, as well as AfD voters were the most negatively affected by the pandemic.
- Most Germans believe that there should be some form of mandatory vaccination, at least when it comes to accessing public events. AfD voters, younger respondents, and those with income difficulties are the most likely to oppose mandatory vaccinations.
- The more institutionally trustful respondents are, the more likely they are to support COVID-19 measures. In particular, voters of the moderate centrist and the left-wing parties, those with higher levels of formal education, and respondents with higher incomes are most supportive of pandemic mitigation measures and also have the highest levels of institutional trust.
- The perception that pandemic mitigation measures go against constitutional and democratic principles is a divisive matter. AfD voters, voters with less formal education, those struggling with their income, those aged 35 to 54, and finally, respondents on the political right are most likely to believe that the measures have taken democratic freedoms away.
- All respondent groups agreed to a larger extent in 2021 than in 2020 that the pandemic has deepened divisions between people.



# CHAPTER 2

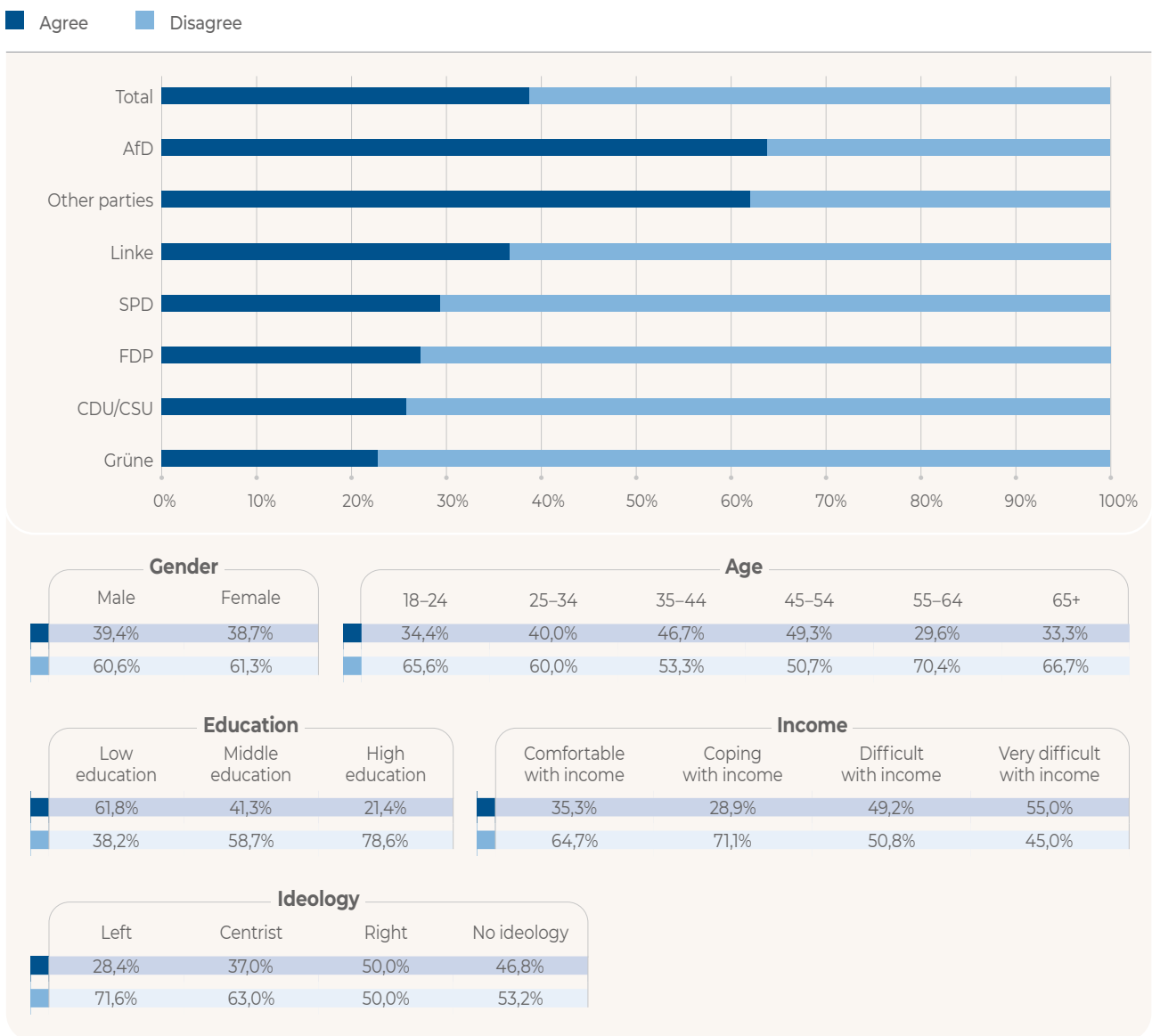
## COMPARATIVELY HIGH BELIEF IN CONSPIRACY THEORIES



When it comes to belief in conspiracy theories, the proposition stating that “the virus is a biological weapon intentionally released by China” has the largest degree of support among Germans compared to other countries surveyed in this study: 39 per cent of those surveyed stated that they believe in this theory. AfD voters are most likely to agree with the proposition, while Grüne and CDU/CSU voters are least likely. Middle-aged respondents, those with lower levels of educational attainment, those most precarious in terms of income, as well as respondents with right-wing or no ideology are more likely to believe in this conspiracy theory.

Looking at how respondents in other countries answered this question, it is notable that the proposition that the virus was intentionally released by China is considered true by many European citizens. More than 50 per cent of Spanish and Polish respondents agree that this theory is true. The degree of agreement is somewhat lower in Italy and France, where about 40 per cent of respondents in these countries agree with the proposition. Swedish respondents are least likely to agree with the theory, with slightly more than 20 per cent of respondents there in agreement.

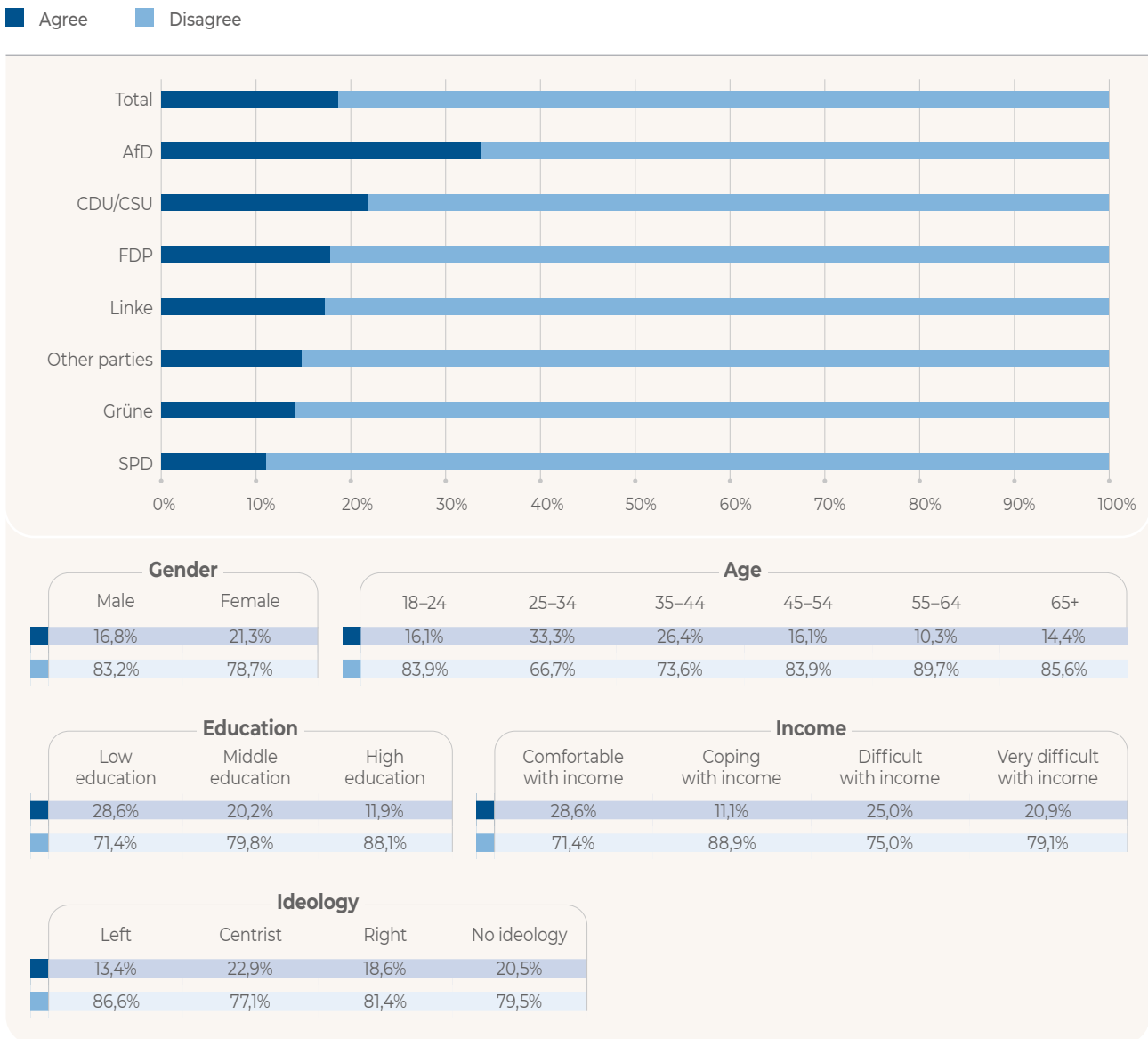
Figure 15 / Q57XB – “The virus is a biological weapon released by China”



Another conspiracy theory addressed in this survey is the proposition that “5G technology is causing the coronavirus to spread more quickly”. This theory has a low degree of support: 19 per cent of those surveyed stated that they believe in this theory. AfD voters are most likely to agree with the proposition, while Grüne and SPD voters are least

likely to do so. Respondents who are middle-aged, have lower levels of educational attainment, are struggling with their financial situation, or have right-wing or no ideology are more likely to believe in this conspiracy theory compared to respondents from other demographic groups.

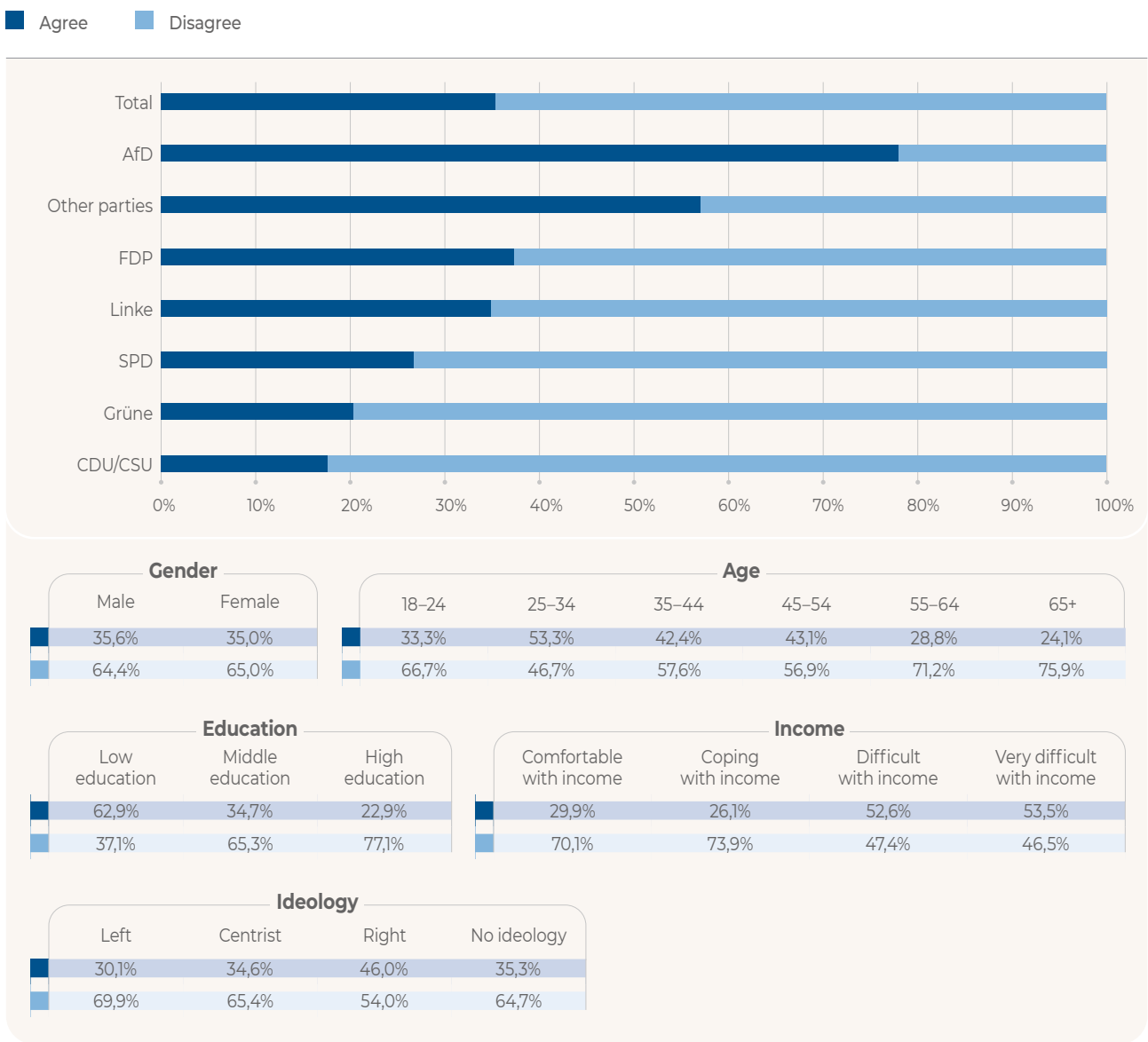
Figure 16 / Q57XB – “5G technology is causing the coronavirus to spread more quickly”



A rather high degree of agreement among the populace was found for the conspiracy theory “The virus has been spread by multinational pharmaceutical companies now ready to make huge profits by selling the vaccine” — 35.4 per cent of those surveyed stated that they believe in the theory. AfD voters predominantly agree with the proposi-

tion (77.8 per cent), while Grüne and CDU/CSU voters are least likely to believe in the theory. Respondents with lower levels of educational attainment, the economically precarious, and those on the political right are more likely to believe that multinational pharmaceutical companies spread the virus for their own economic gain.

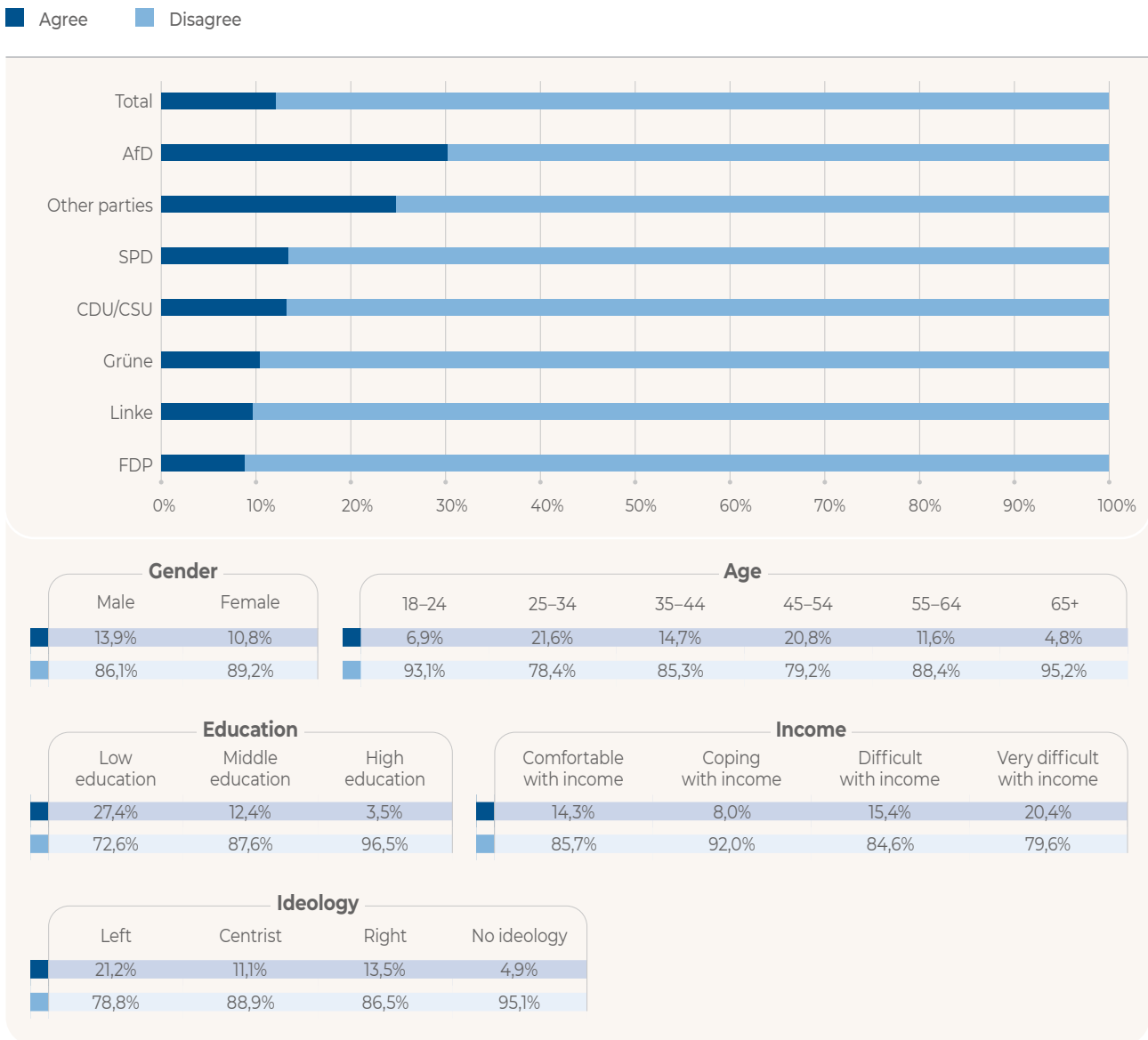
**Figure 17/Q57XB – “The virus has been spread by multinational pharmaceutical companies so they can make huge profits by selling the vaccine”**



The proposition stating that “the coronavirus is a hoax” has the lowest degree of support; only 12.5 per cent of those surveyed doubt that the virus is a genuine threat. Again, AfD voters and supporters of smaller parties are most likely to agree with the proposition, while FDP and Die Linke voters are least likely to think that COVID-19 is a

hoax. Middle-aged respondents, those with lower levels of educational attainment, those having difficulty coping with their income, and respondents with left-wing ideology are more likely to believe in this conspiracy theory compared to other demographic groups.

Figure 18 / Q57XB – “The coronavirus is a hoax”



**KEY FINDINGS** 2

- Given that conspiracy theories about the COVID-19 pandemic were prevalent during the first two years of the pandemic, it comes as no surprise that a large proportion of German citizens profess that some conspiracy theories are true.
- AfD and smaller party voters are notably more likely to believe in conspiracy theories than other voter groups, along with less educated respondents and younger respondents.
- Two conspiracy theories (that the virus was intentionally released by China and that it is spread by pharmaceutical corporations on purpose) have the largest degree of support among the German public: 39 and 35 per cent, respectively.
- A substantial number of respondents also agree with the two other conspiracy theories, even though one would expect otherwise, given their very unlikely propositions: 19 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement that 5G technology helps the virus spread more quickly and 12 per cent agreed with the statement that the coronavirus is a hoax.
- The data suggests that there is a widespread belief in conspiracy theories in Germany. These findings could indicate that, in times of crisis, public opinion is more susceptible to suggestive messages disseminated by populists and organizations with potentially anti-democratic aims.



# CHAPTER 3

## HOPEFULNESS REGARDING ECONOMIC PROSPECTS





**Changes in Economic Situation between 2020 and 2021**

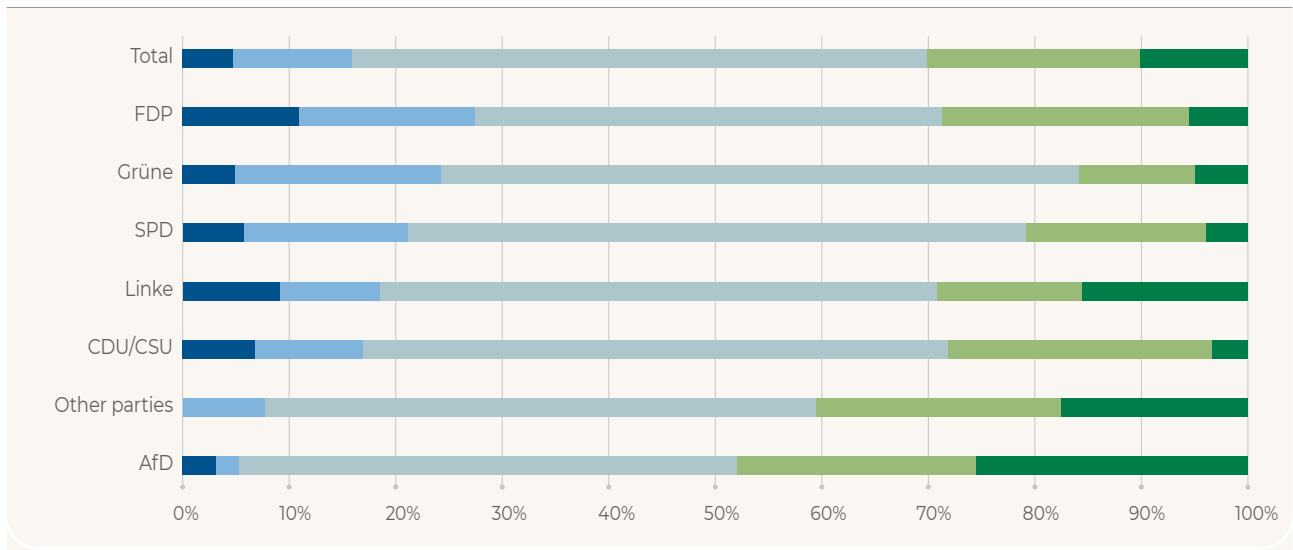
A small majority of German respondents (54 per cent) stated that their economic situation remained the same from 2020 to 2021. Understandably, only 16 per cent stated that their situation has improved, while, for about 30 per cent of respondents, their economic situation deteriorated after 2020. FDP voters reported experiencing the largest degree of improvement, while the opposite is the case

for AfD voters. SPD and Grüne voters are the voter groups whose economic situation remained largely unchanged compared to 2020. The proportion of respondents with a deteriorating economic situation is similar among nearly all voter groups; however, this response was less prominent among men, older respondents, those with higher education, people with higher incomes, and those with a left-wing ideology.

**Figure 19 / Q27 – Changes in Economic Situation between 2020 and 2021**

Compared to the end of 2020, do you think that your own economic situation ...

■ Got a lot better   
 ■ Got a little better   
 ■ Stayed the same   
 ■ Got a little worse   
 ■ Got a lot worse



**Gender**

	Male	Female
Got a lot better	7,9%	1,8%
Got a little better	11,7%	10,7%
Stayed the same	56,5%	52,0%
Got a little worse	18,0%	21,7%
Got a lot worse	5,9%	13,8%

**Age**

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Got a lot better	13,5%	8,1%	8,8%	2,3%	1,9%	1,2%
Got a little better	23,6%	11,0%	16,3%	13,2%	6,9%	4,4%
Stayed the same	48,3%	42,6%	43,8%	54,6%	54,1%	68,5%
Got a little worse	7,9%	18,4%	20,6%	20,1%	27,7%	19,8%
Got a lot worse	6,7%	19,9%	10,6%	9,8%	9,4%	6,0%

**Education**

	Low education	Middle education	High education
Got a lot better	12,0%	3,9%	1,6%
Got a little better	23,5%	9,3%	6,2%
Stayed the same	39,9%	53,2%	66,5%
Got a little worse	20,2%	19,4%	21,0%
Got a lot worse	4,4%	14,2%	4,7%

**Income**

	Comfortable with income	Coping with income	Difficult with income	Very difficult with income
Got a lot better	18,4%	2,3%	0,6%	-
Got a little better	13,5%	12,2%	8,8%	8,2%
Stayed the same	57,3%	60,5%	49,7%	25,9%
Got a little worse	7,0%	22,6%	21,0%	27,1%
Got a lot worse	3,8%	2,3%	19,9%	38,8%

**Ideology**

	Left	Centrist	Right	No ideology
Got a lot better	10,0%	3,4%	1,2%	3,9%
Got a little better	18,0%	10,6%	8,8%	6,6%
Stayed the same	48,8%	57,5%	56,1%	53,1%
Got a little worse	15,6%	18,8%	22,8%	24,1%
Got a lot worse	7,6%	9,7%	11,1%	12,3%

**Future Economic Outlook**

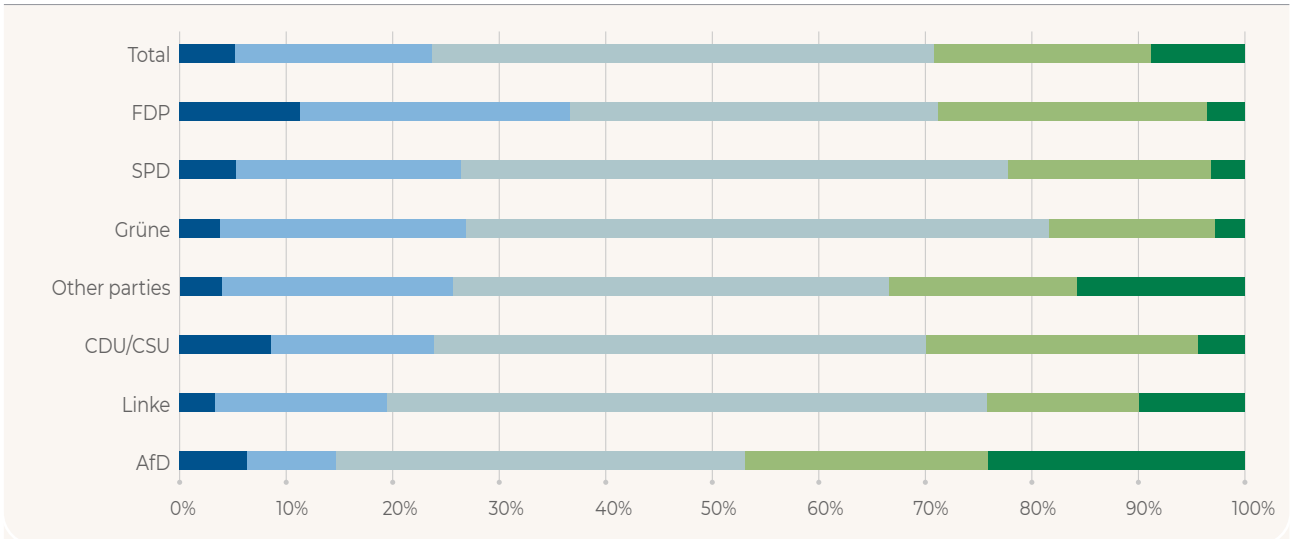
When it comes to their economic expectations for the next 12 months, 47.4 per cent of respondents expected their economic situation to stay the same. However, more voters were pessimistic (29 per cent) than optimistic (23.6 per cent). FDP voters were the most positive

when it came to their expectations for the coming year, while AfD voters were the most negative. Also, middle-aged respondents, those with more precarious income situations, as well as right-wing respondents had the most negative economic expectations for the next 12 months.

**Figure 20 / Q28 – Economic outlook for the next 12 months**

And thinking about the next 12 months, do you think that your own economic situation ...

Will get a lot better   Will get a little better   Will stay the same   Will get a little worse   Will get a lot worse



**Gender**

	Male	Female
Will get a lot better	7,2%	3,3%
Will get a little better	17,4%	19,1%
Will stay the same	47,9%	47,3%
Will get a little worse	21,3%	19,3%
Will get a lot worse	6,2%	11,0%

**Age**

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Will get a lot better	14,9%	8,1%	10,5%	1,7%	1,9%	0,8%
Will get a little better	30,9%	21,5%	19,1%	20,1%	19,9%	8,6%
Will stay the same	36,2%	43,0%	42,0%	47,7%	43,6%	60,5%
Will get a little worse	10,6%	12,6%	19,8%	20,7%	25,6%	25,5%
Will get a lot worse	7,4%	14,8%	8,6%	9,8%	9,0%	4,5%

**Education**

	Low education	Middle education	High education
Will get a lot better	12,7%	4,7%	1,5%
Will get a little better	30,4%	18,4%	10,0%
Will stay the same	31,5%	48,0%	58,3%
Will get a little worse	21,5%	17,2%	25,5%
Will get a lot worse	3,9%	11,7%	4,6%

**Income**

	Comfortable with income	Coping with income	Difficult with income	Very difficult with income
Will get a lot better	18,4%	2,8%	1,7%	1,2%
Will get a little better	18,4%	20,0%	18,9%	12,0%
Will stay the same	54,1%	50,6%	45,6%	26,5%
Will get a little worse	5,4%	23,1%	23,3%	30,1%
Will get a lot worse	3,8%	3,5%	10,6%	30,1%

**Ideology**

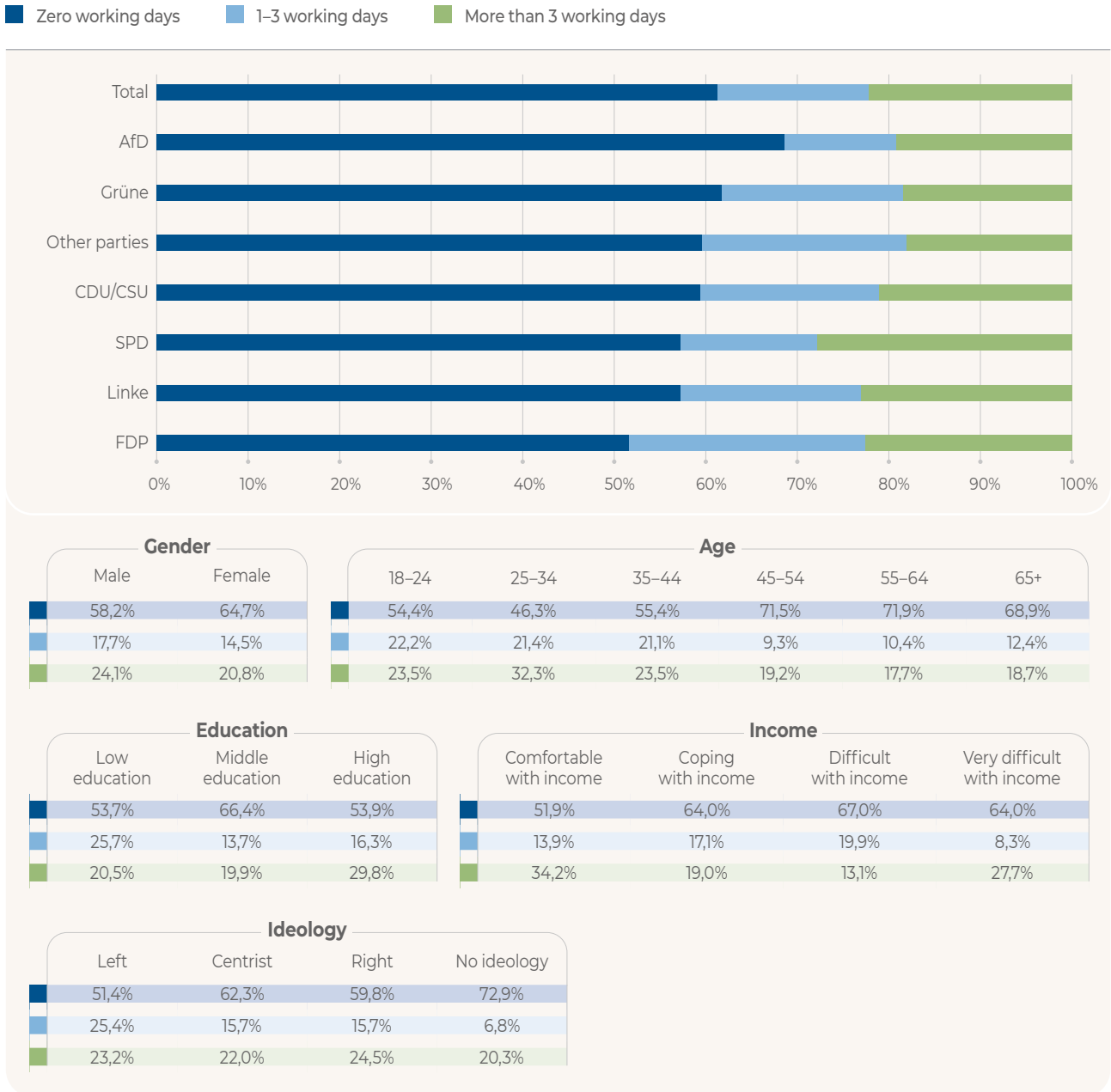
	Left	Centrist	Right	No ideology
Will get a lot better	9,6%	2,5%	3,5%	4,9%
Will get a little better	19,7%	17,5%	16,9%	19,1%
Will stay the same	48,6%	48,4%	46,5%	45,8%
Will get a little worse	18,1%	23,2%	21,5%	18,2%
Will get a lot worse	4,0%	8,3%	11,6%	12,0%

**Working from Home**

The majority of all voter groups, apart from FDP voters, had not worked from home during the previous week at the time in which the data was collected (November 2020/2021). FDP voters were least likely to have worked from home, while Die Linke, SPD, and CDU/CSU voters

spent the most time working from home. Men, younger respondents (aged 18 to 34), those with high levels of income, and those with more formal education were more likely than other groups to report having worked from home recently.

**Figure 21 / Q9 – “During the last week, how much time have you spent working from home?”**



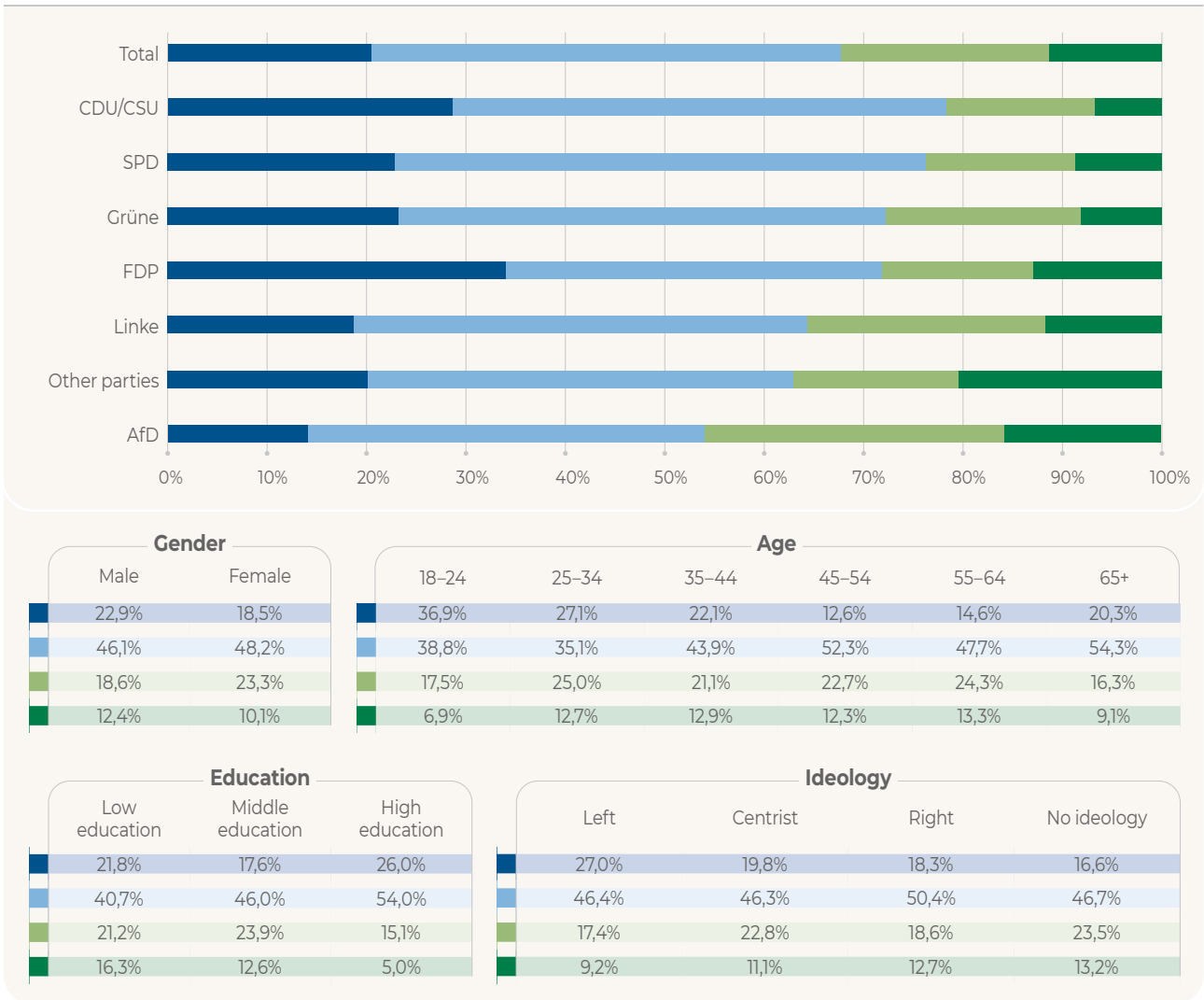
**Income Situation**

The majority of German citizens (67.9 per cent) reported that they live comfortably or cope well with their income. The voter groups experiencing the most economic difficulties are voters of AfD and of the smaller parties, while CDU/CSU, SPD, and FDP voters predominantly reported being well-off economically.

**Figure 22 / Q12 – Income situation**

Which of these descriptions comes closest to how you feel about your household's income nowadays?

Living comfortably    Coping    Finding it difficult    Finding it very difficult

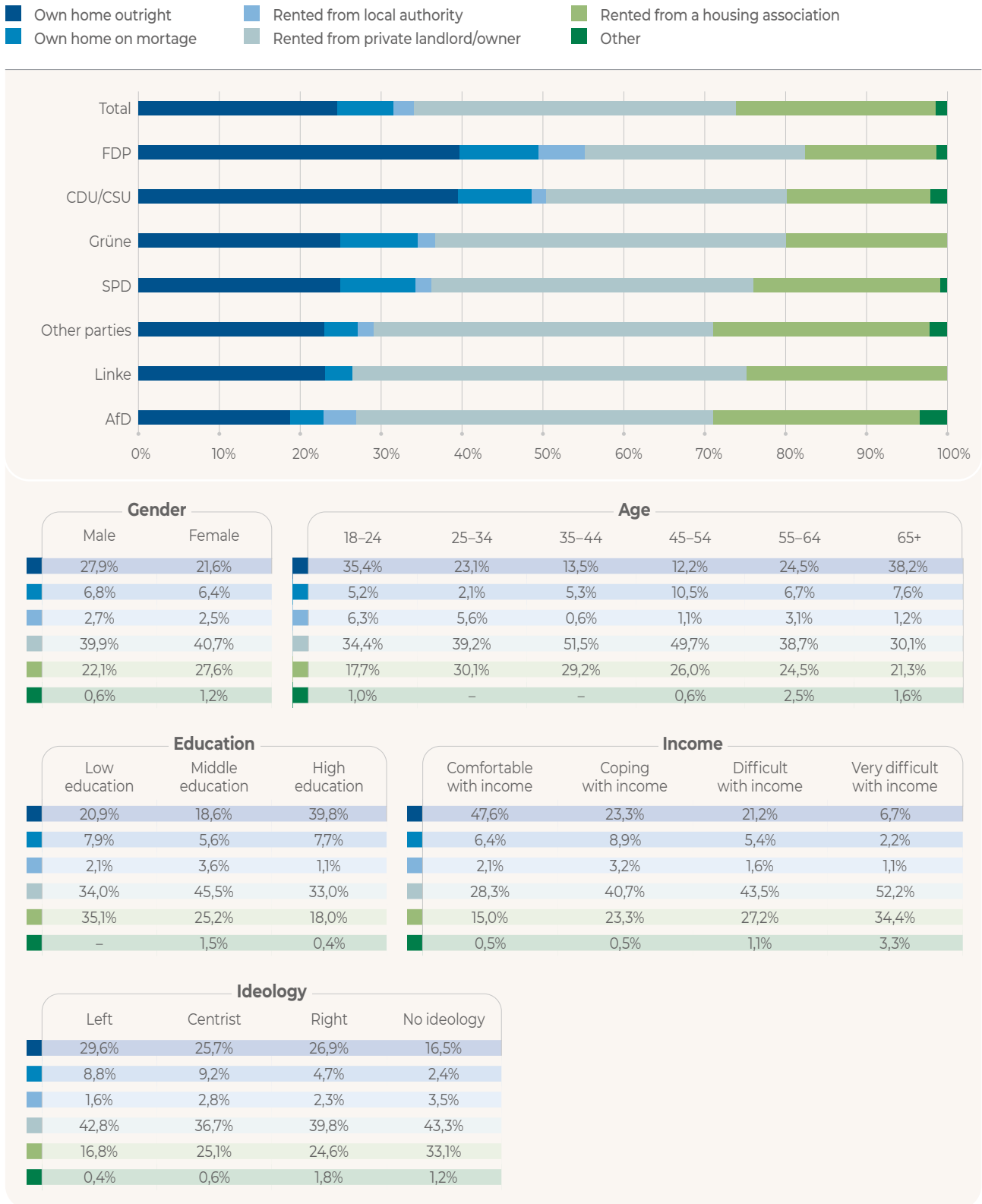


**Homeownership**

When it comes to homeownership, it is clear that centre-right CDU/CSU and FDP voters are much more likely to own a home outright compared to other voter groups. Nevertheless, more than 50 per cent of all voter groups are renting from either a private landlord, housing association, or local authority. While men are more likely than women to own a home, it comes as a surprise that respondents aged 18 to 24 are substantially more likely to own a home compared to respondents aged 25 to 64. Ed-

ucation is clearly related to home ownership, as evidenced by the finding that those with higher levels of education are much more likely to own a home compared to other education categories. Income is also a predictor of homeownership: the higher income a person has, the more likely they are to own a home. There are no substantial differences when it comes to ideology, apart from the finding that respondents with no ideological orientation are less likely to be homeowners compared to other voter groups.

**Figure 23 / Q12B – Homeownership**



## KEY FINDINGS 3

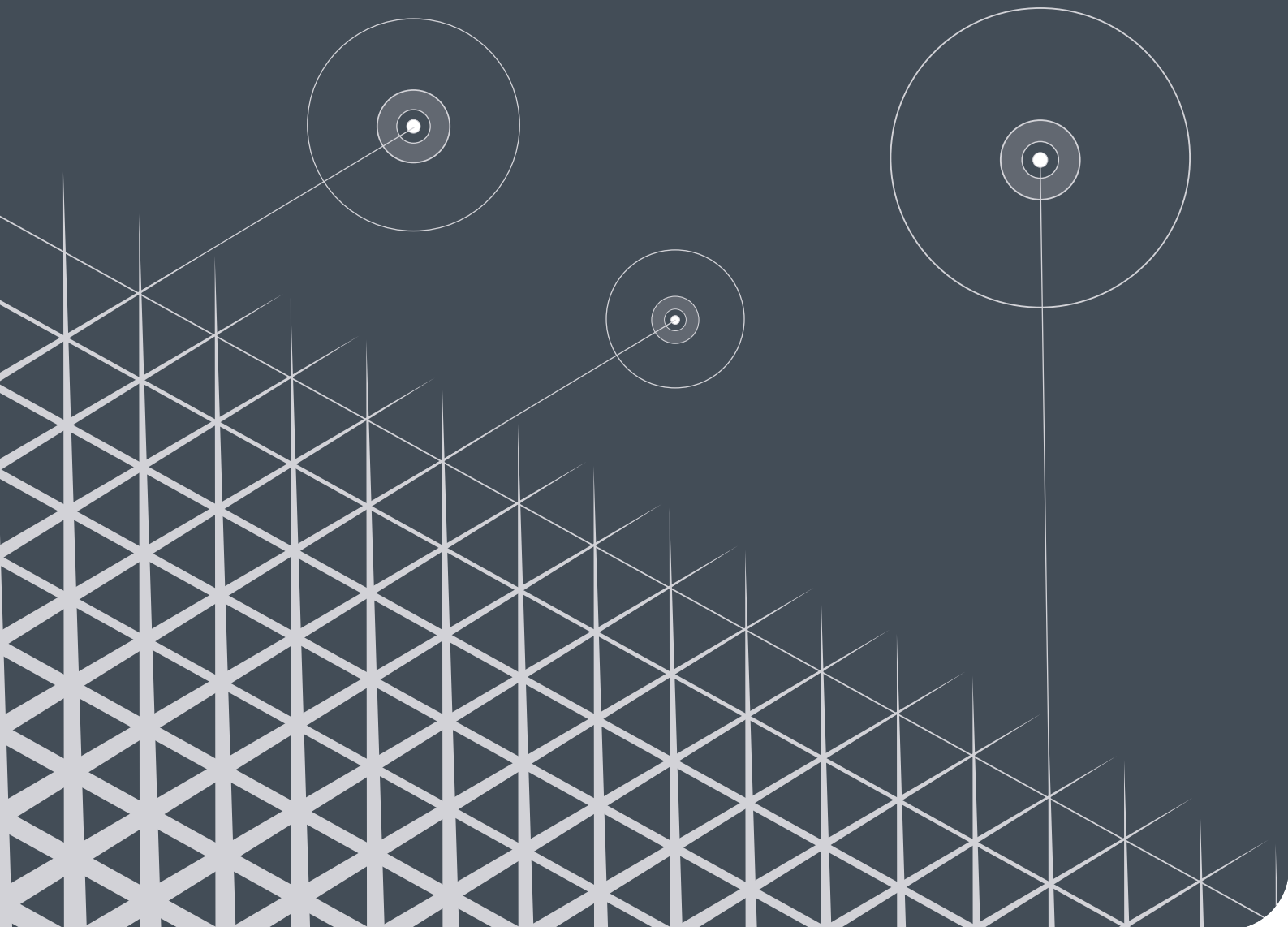
- The vast majority of Germans reported that their economic situation stayed the same or improved from 2020 to 2021. AfD voters and respondents with income difficulties were most likely to report a deterioration of their economic situation.
- Most Germans had a positive economic outlook for the upcoming year (2022). FDP and SPD voters, younger respondents, and respondents with lower levels of education had the most positive expectations, whereas AfD voters and people in a difficult economic situations had the most negative expectations.
- When it comes to income, nearly 70 per cent of Germans report that they live comfortably or at least cope with their current income. CDU/CSU and SPD voters are the economically most comfortable voter groups, along with younger and leftwing respondents. AfD voters and the voters of smaller parties are most likely to experience income difficulties.
- Centre-right CDU/CSU and FDP voters are much more likely to own a home outright compared to other voter groups.
- Income is also a predictor of home ownership: the higher income a person has, the more likely they are to own a home.





# CHAPTER 4

## THE DESIRE FOR THE STATE TO PLAY A GREATER ROLE





**EU Membership**

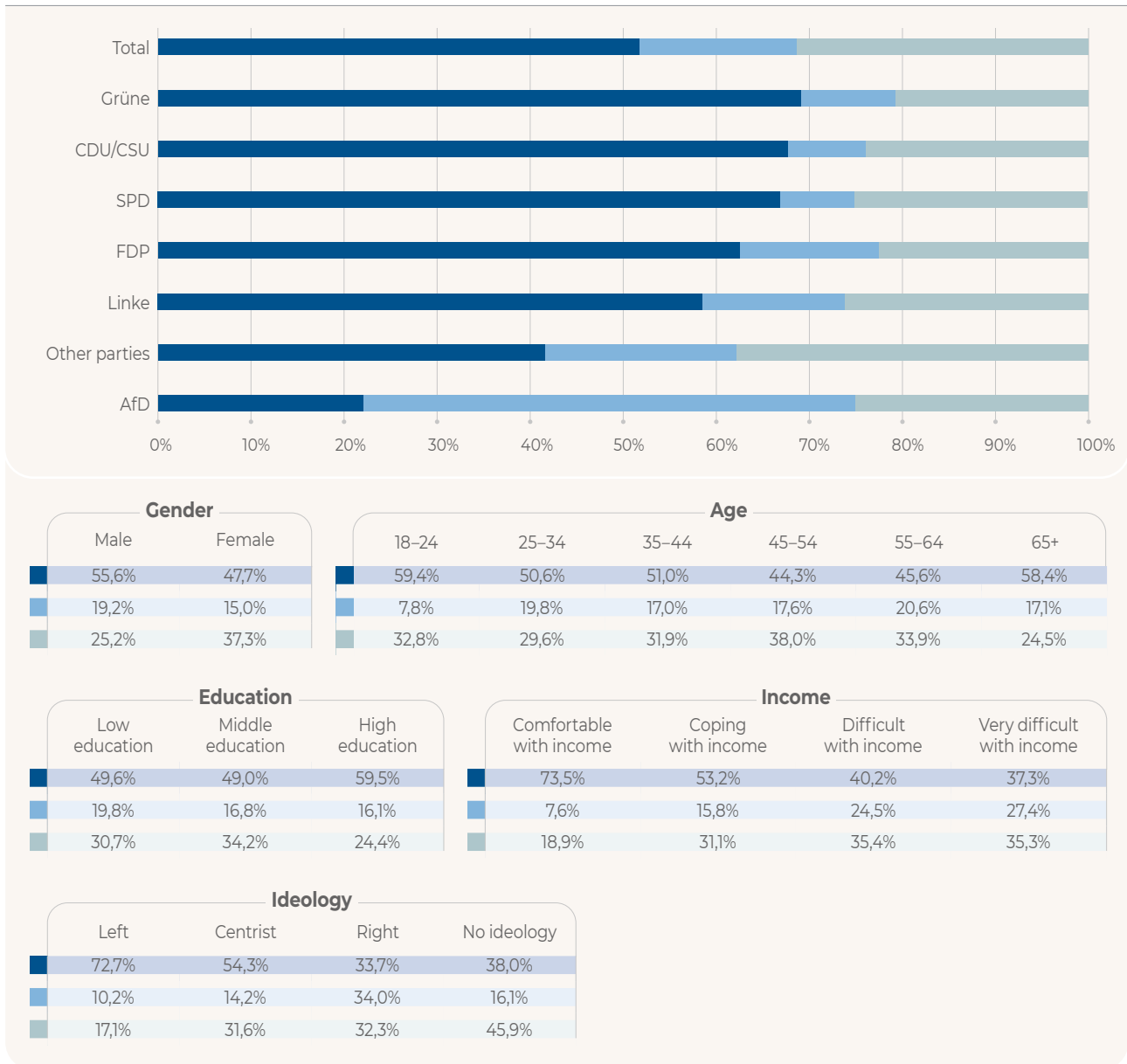
Slightly more than half of German respondents consider their country's EU membership to be a good thing. Meanwhile, only 17.1 per cent perceive EU membership negatively. The results differ by vote choice, with CDU/CSU, Grüne, and SPD voters being the most positive about Germany's EU membership, and AfD voters and

supporters of smaller parties most likely to think Germany's EU membership is a bad thing. In terms of demographics, men, older respondents, those with lower levels of educational attainment, those with difficulties coping with their income, and right-wing respondents are most likely to perceive Germany's EU membership as a bad thing.

**Figure 24 / Q20 – Membership in the EU**

Generally speaking, do you think that your national's membership in the EU is ...?

■ A good thing   ■ A bad thing   ■ Neither good nor bad



**Economic Regulation by the State**

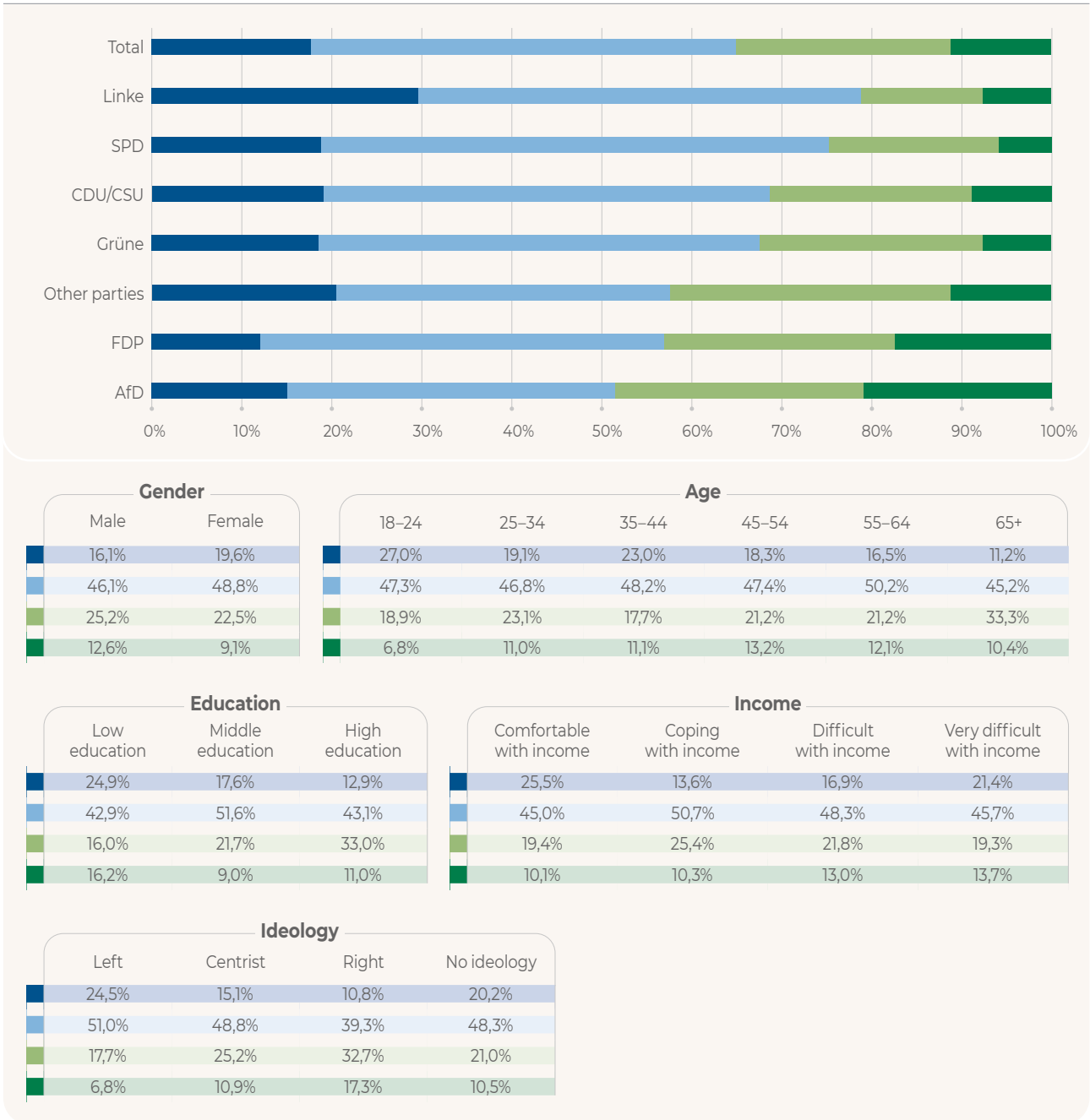
In what can be seen as good news for the (moderate) left, a clear majority (65 per cent) of German respondents agree that the state should play a greater role in regulating the economy. Die Linke voters agree with this proposition the most; SPD voters are second in line in terms of agreement, followed by CDU/CSU and Grüne voters. Even a slight ma-

jority of AfD and FDP voters are in favour of this statement. Men from older generations and respondents with higher levels of educational attainment are most likely to disagree with the statement. Unsurprisingly, those with higher incomes or a right-wing ideological orientation are also more likely to disagree that the state should play a greater role in regulating the economy.

**Figure 25 / Q41C – State regulation of the economy**

“The state should play a greater role in the regulation of the economy”

Agree strongly    Agree    Disagree    Disagree strongly

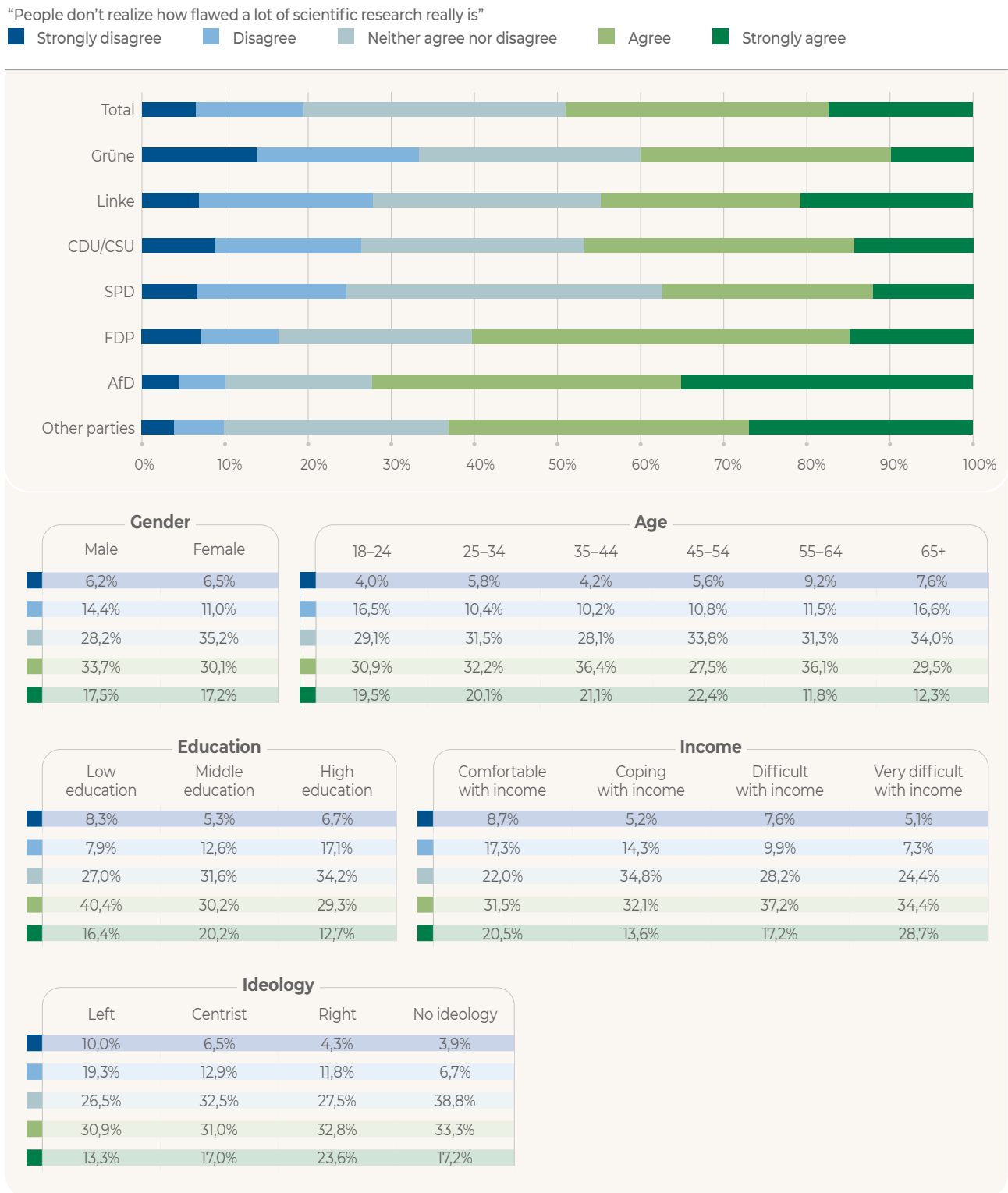


**Science Scepticism**

When it comes to distrust in science, a common sentiment among citizens critical of the way the COVID-19 pandemic is handled, there is a strong trend: more than 49 per cent of respondents agree with the statement “people don’t realise just how flawed a lot of scientific research really is”, while only 19.3 per cent disagree. The proportion of respondents who agree with the statement is

larger than those who disagree across all voter groups, with the largest being among AfD and FDP voters and the lowest among SPD and Die Grüne voters. Respondents with lower levels of education, lower incomes, and right-wing identities are all more likely to agree that science is more flawed than people realise; however, the degree of agreement is relatively similar among all demographic groups.

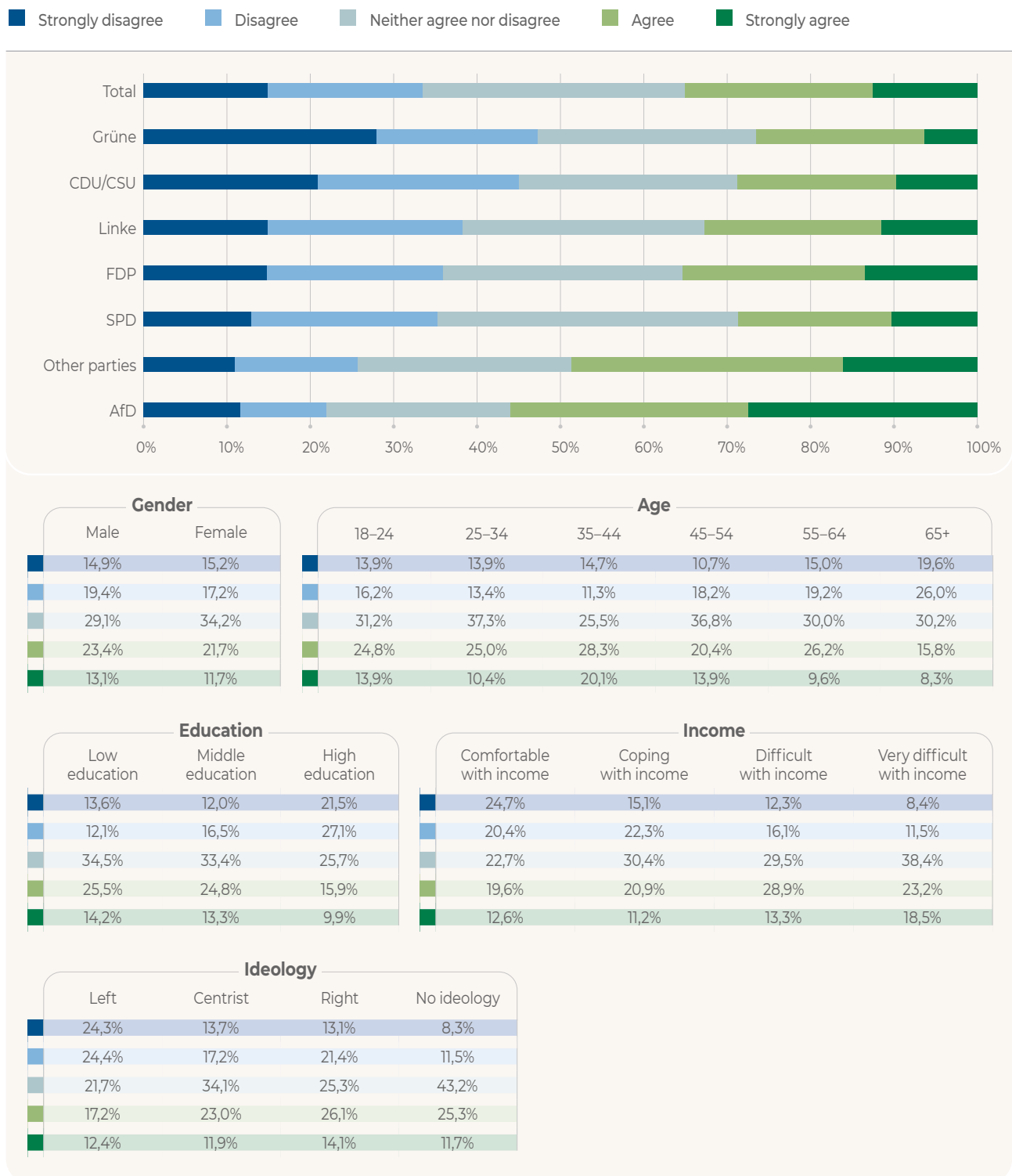
**Figure 26 / Q53 – Science Scepticism**



Many respondents are also concerned about the influence of scientists in society, although the proportion here is relatively smaller: 36 per cent of those surveyed agree with the proposition compared with 33.5 per cent who disagree; 31.6 per cent neither agree nor disagree with the proposition. The voters of AfD, FDP, and smaller parties are more worried about the influence of scientists in society, while Die

Grüne, SPD, and CDU/CSU voters are least likely to worry about the influence of scientists. Respondents who are younger, have lower and middle levels of educational attainment, have precarious economic situations, have no ideology, and have a right-wing political orientation are all more likely to be concerned about the influence of scientists in society compared to other demographic groups.

Figure 27 / Q53 – “I am concerned by the amount of influence that scientists have in society”

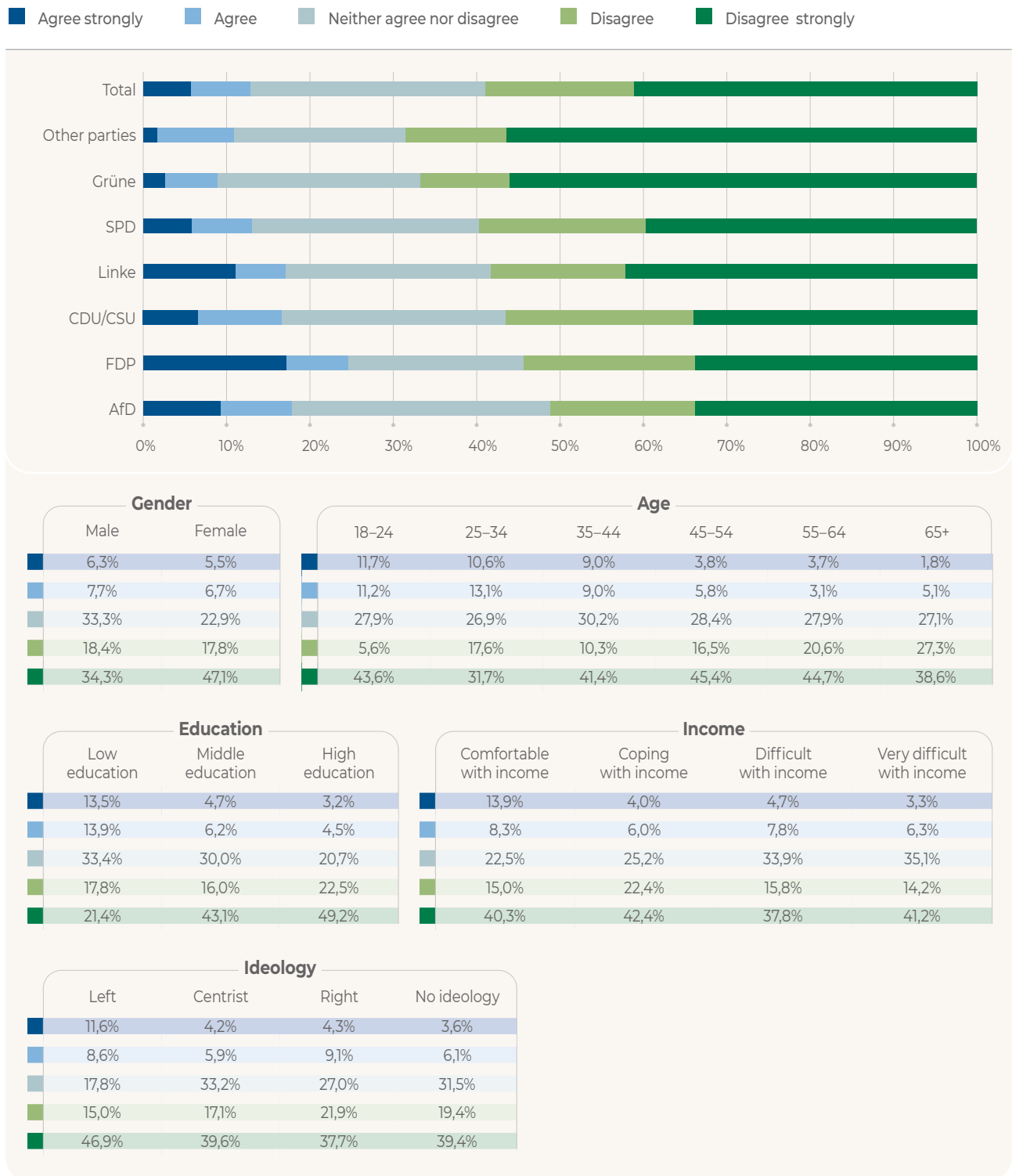


**Opinions on Gender Inequality**

When it comes to traditional gender roles when jobs are scarce, there is overwhelming opposition to this proposition across the German public at large. A significant 59.9 per cent of respondents strongly disagreed with the proposition. Nevertheless, voters of the right-wing parties, AfD and FDP, are most likely to agree that male employment

should be prioritised over female employment. In terms of demographics, men, middle-aged and younger respondents, and the less educated are more likely to agree with the statement. Interestingly, with regard to political orientation, left-wing voters seem very torn on the issue, with a relatively high proportion agreeing strongly in addition to a relatively high proportion disagreeing strongly!

**Figure 28 / Q64 – “Men should have more right to work than women when jobs are scarce”**



**Support for Immigration, Opinions on Climate Change, Populism, and the NextGenerationEU Program**

The Support for Immigration Index is comprised of two separate scales, which asked respondents whether immigrants are a benefit to the country's economic development and whether they culturally enrich the country. The Institutional Trust Index is comprised of six separate questions that ask respondents to what extent they trust various national and international institutions (please see the section on methodology for more information). The average values of numerous respondent groups are reported in a two-dimensional scatterplot.

Ideologically left-wing respondents, voters of Grüne, CDU/CSU, Die Linke, and SPD, as well as those with the highest incomes, are most supportive of immigration in Germany. In contrast, AfD voters, respondents on the ideological right, and those struggling most with income are the least supportive of immigration. This suggests that citizens in the most precarious economic situation feel the most threatened by immigration.

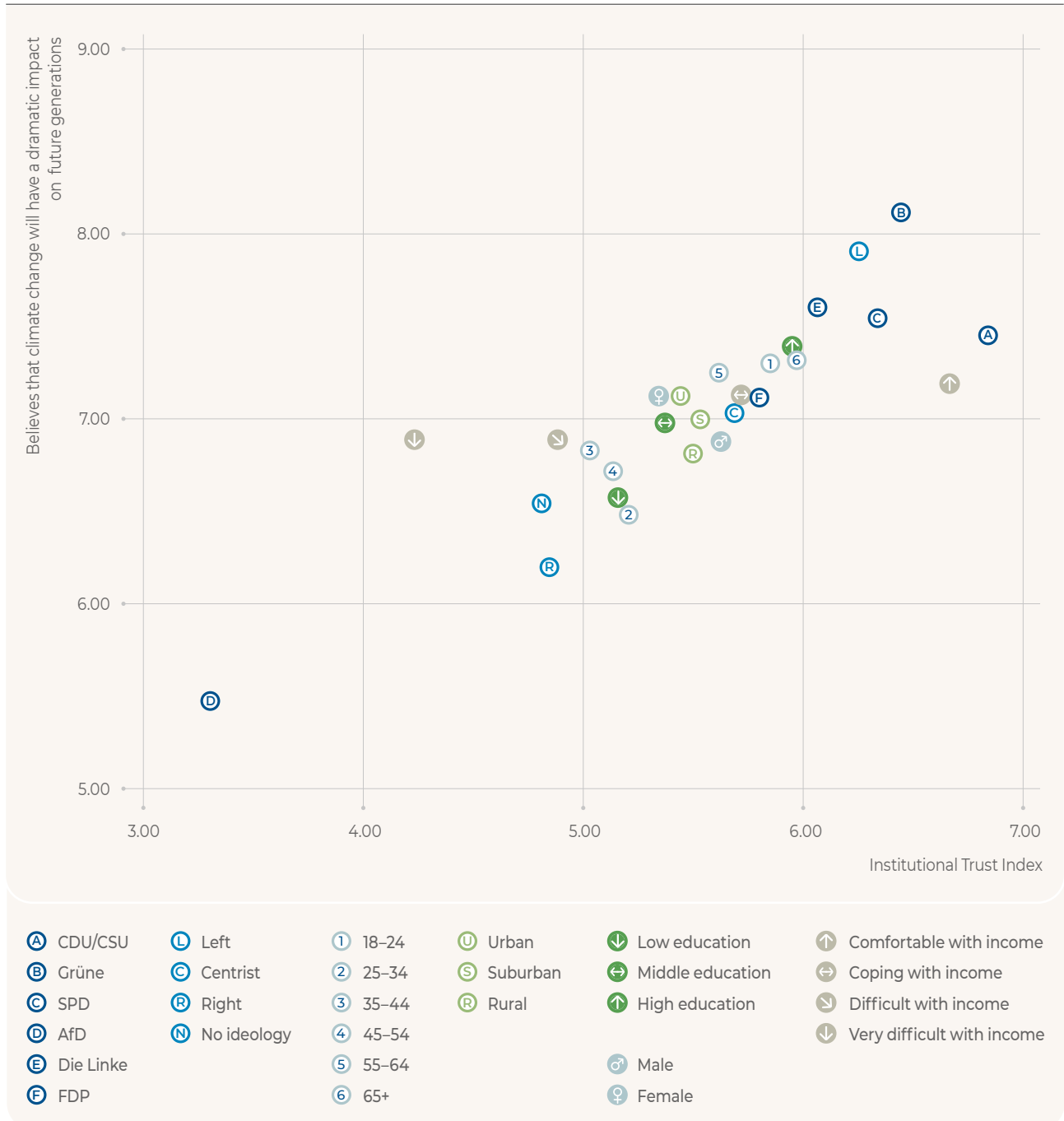
**Figure 29 – Support for Immigration**



A majority of German citizens are seriously concerned about the impact of climate change on future generations, as evidenced by the graph above. All respondent groups, including AfD voters, score above the average on the scale of concern about climate change. As was to be expected, Grüne voters are most concerned about climate

change, accompanied in their concern by voters of the other left-wing parties and CDU/CSU. Right-wing respondents, AfD voters, those with lower levels of educational attainment, and those struggling with their finances are the least concerned about climate change.

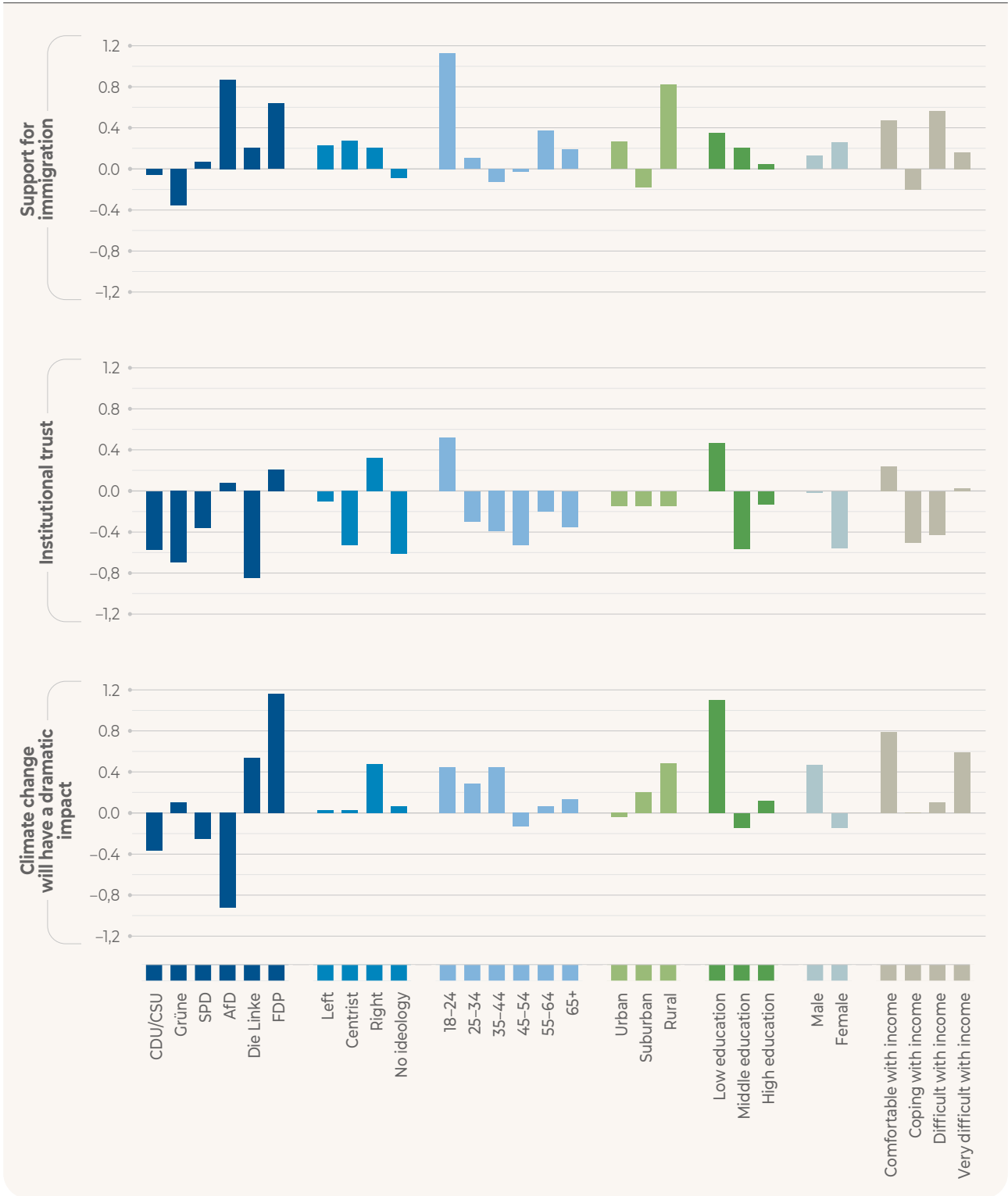
Figure 30 – Impact of Climate Change



In terms of change over time, most voter groups reported being more concerned about climate change in 2021 than in 2020, with those aged 18 to 24 and rural voters having a marked increase. Meanwhile, institutional trust declined among all respondent groups, including CDU/

CSU, Grüne, and especially Die Linke voters. The changes in support for immigration are mixed, with support increasing particularly among FDP voters and respondents with lower levels of education and declining further among AfD voters.

Figure 31





A substantial number of German respondents believe in at least one conspiracy theory, as measured by the high average scores (higher than 5 out of 10) on the Conspiracy Theory Belief Index among all respondent groups except for CDU/CSU voters. It comes as no surprise that AfD voters are

the most susceptible to conspiracy theories, along with respondents with income difficulties, no or right-wing ideology, and rural voters. In contrast, left-wing and mainstream party voters, as well as those comfortable with their incomes, are less likely to believe in conspiracy theories.

Figure 32 – Belief in Conspiracy Theories



When it comes to populism, as measured by anti-elitist sentiments, it is clear that AfD and Die Linke voters, along with respondents with income difficulties, right-wing ideology, and those aged 35 to 44 are among the most populist respondent groups. CDU/CSU voters, those comfortable with their income, and SPD and Grüne voters are the least populist demographic groups in Germany. Surpris-

ingly, respondents with lower levels of education have fewer populist sentiments compared to the more highly educated. Furthermore, respondents with no ideology are the least populist ideological group. Although this is a counter-intuitive finding, the differences between the three education groups are below 0.2, suggesting that, in Germany, education is not a strong predictor of support for populism.

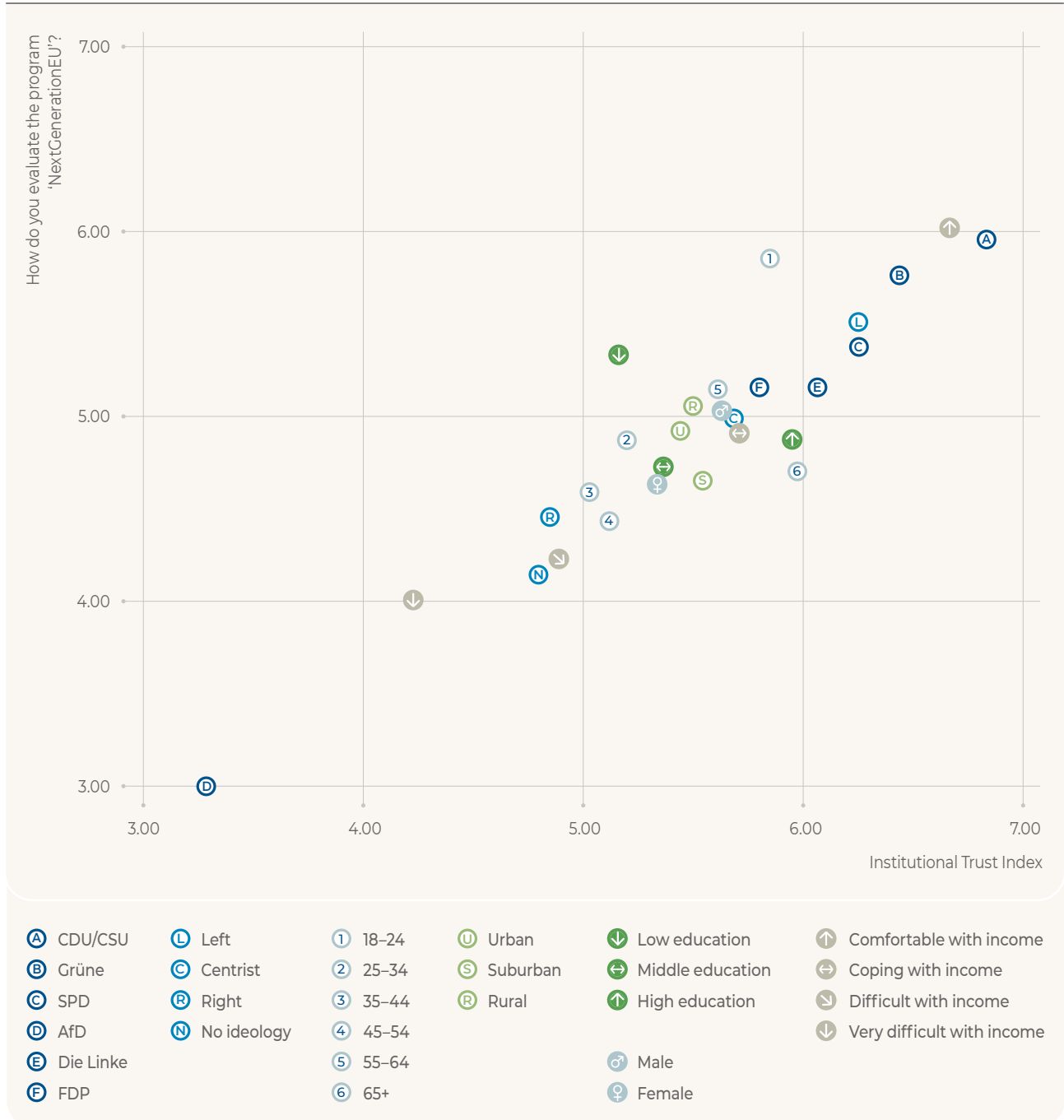
Figure 33 – Followers of Populism



The 'NextGenerationEU' plan, designed by the European Commission as a strategy for transforming societies and economies after the COVID-19 pandemic, enjoys moderate support among the German public. CDU/CSU, SPD, and Grüne voters, those with a left-wing political orientation, and those comfortable with their income are the demographic groups most supportive of the program. Conversely,

AfD voters, right-wing respondents, and those with no ideology or economic difficulties are the least supportive of the plan. This could mean that economically vulnerable groups are concerned that the socioeconomic transformation will have a negative impact on their lives. Naturally, respondent groups who dislike the established parties are also likely to approve of their EU-wide programs.

Figure 34 – Support NextGenerationEU Plan



## KEY FINDINGS 4

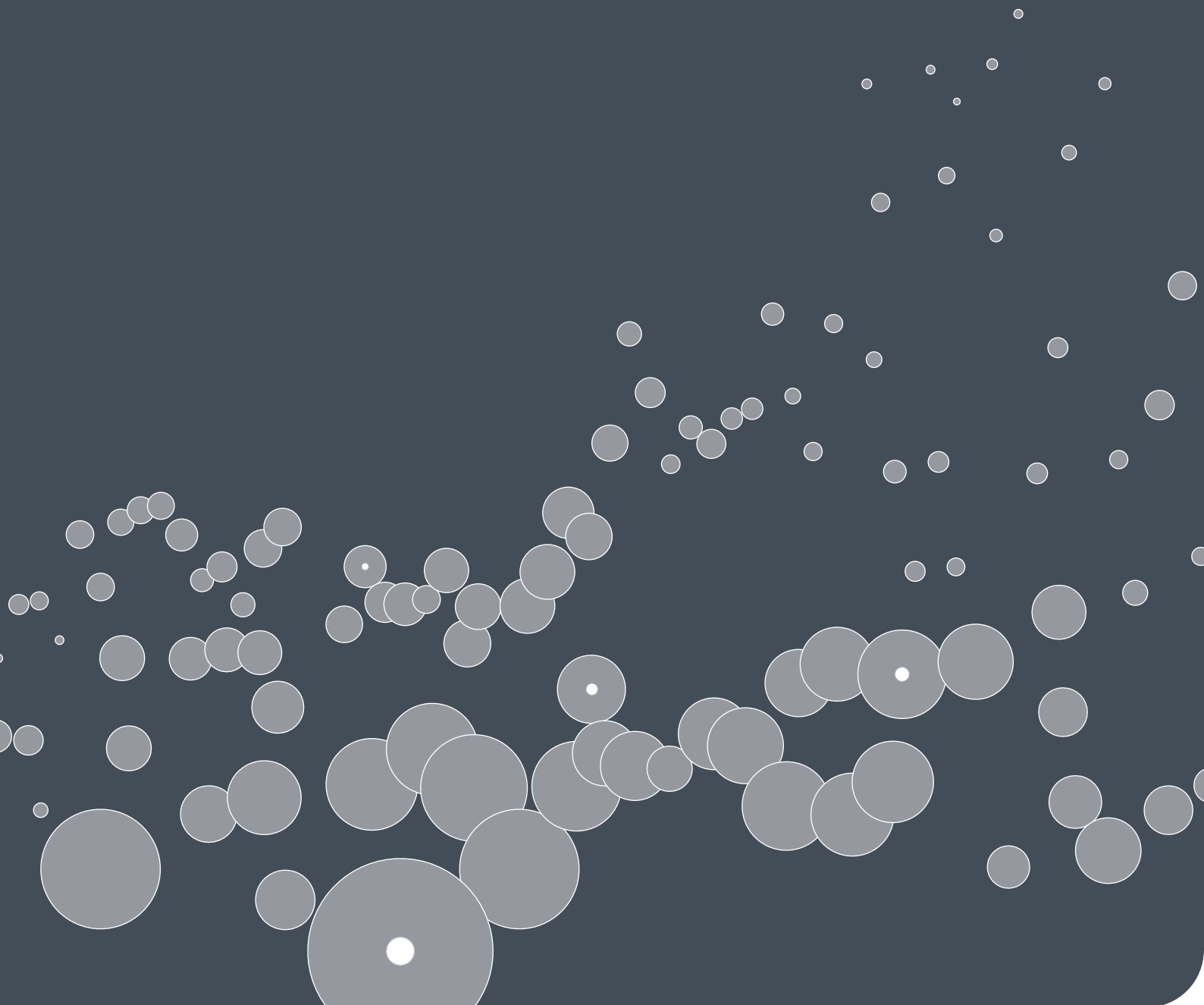
- Although relatively few Germans perceive their country's EU membership negatively, there is a substantial proportion of respondents who are ambivalent towards the EU. CDU/CSU, Grüne, and SPD voters are the most positive about Germany's EU membership, while AfD voters and supporters of smaller parties are the most likely to think Germany's EU membership is a bad thing.
- A clear majority (65 per cent) of German respondents agree that the state should play a greater role in regulating the economy. Even among FDP and AfD voters, the proportion of those who agree is higher than 50 per cent.
- The results suggest that there is a worryingly widespread distrust in science. The voters of AfD, FDP, and smaller parties are the most distrustful, while Die Grüne, SPD, and CDU/CSU voters are the most likely to see science positively.
- A very small number of Germans believe that men should have a job priority when employment positions are scarce. AfD and FDP voters are the most likely to agree with the proposition, along with respondents who are male, middle-aged, younger, and have less formal education.
- Party preference, age, and income situation are the strongest predictors of support for immigration. Voters who support left-wing parties and respondents who are wealthier and younger are the most positive towards immigrants. On the other hand, respondents with right-wing ideologies and income difficulties are the most likely to oppose immigration.
- All respondents are at least somewhat concerned about climate change, even those traditionally sceptical about the human influence on climate, such as respondents with lower levels of education or right-wing political ideologies. Nevertheless, citizens are unlikely to accept measures against climate change that will directly impact their economic situation negatively, such as increases in energy prices.
- Belief in conspiracy theories (based on an index containing questions unrelated to the pandemic) is most widespread among AfD voters — clearly an outlier compared to the rest of respondents. Respondents with income difficulties or right-wing or no ideology are also susceptible to believe in conspiracy theories, pointing to an overall cynical worldview of many respondents in these demographic categories. CDU/CSU voters and left-wing respondents are least likely to believe in conspiracy theories.
- The most populist respondent groups are AfD and Die Linke voters, along with respondents with income difficulties and right-wing ideologies. CDU/CSU, SPD, and Grüne voters are the least populist voter groups in Germany.
- When it comes to the 'NextGenerationEU' plan, it is clear that it is supported the most by voters of the centrist and left-leaning parties, while AfD voters, as well as people with right-wing or no ideology, have a rather negative evaluation of the policy program.





# CHAPTER 5

## THE CONSOLIDATED PREFERENCES IN THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS



**Political Ideology**

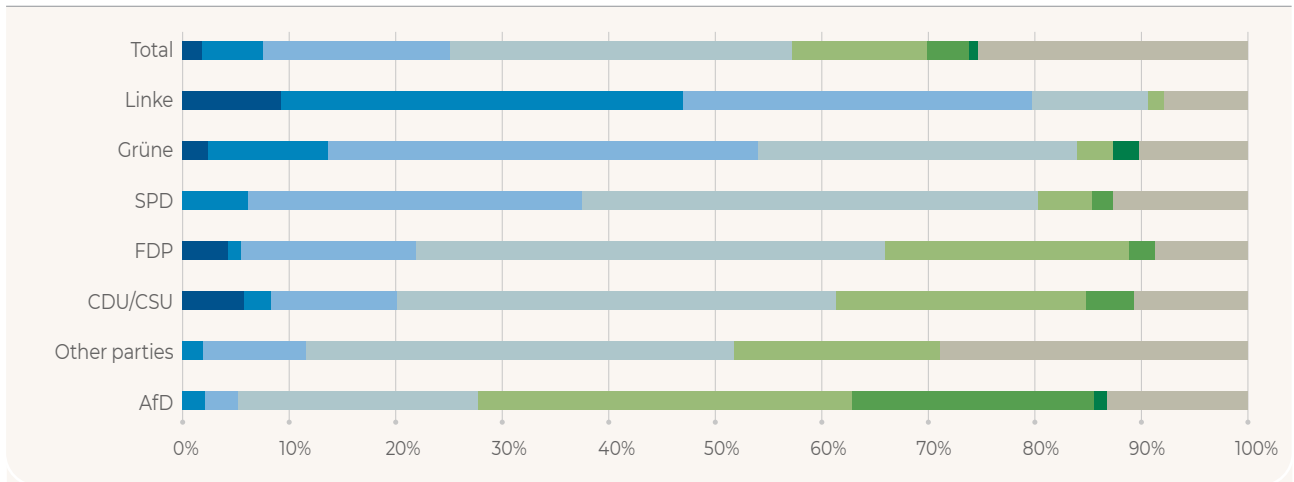
A very logical and consistent pattern arises from data gathered connecting political orientation to party choice. Three-quarters of those with a left-leaning political orientation consider themselves centre-left. Similarly, three-quarters of right-leaning German voters consider themselves centre-right. Clearly, most Germans think of themselves as

moderate centrists. This is in sharp contrast to the dominant political discourse in which often the extremes dominate; yet, they are clearly a minority group! In fact, the largest proportion of German respondents (35.6 per cent) place themselves in the political centre. Only a very small proportion of German voters position themselves on the political extremes.

**Figure 35 / Q71 – Political ideology**

Consider the following labels. Which one best expresses the way you define yourself politically?

Radical Left Left Center-Left Center Center-Right Right Radical Right None of these



**Gender**

	Male	Female
Radical Left	1,8%	1,6%
Left	6,9%	4,7%
Center-Left	19,0%	13,4%
Center	35,8%	32,4%
Center-Right	15,5%	9,1%
Right	5,1%	3,1%
Radical Right	0,6%	0,4%
None of these	15,5%	35,2%

**Age**

	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+
Radical Left	7,3%	2,8%	1,5%	0,5%	0,6%	0,6%
Left	7,8%	7,0%	8,8%	3,6%	3,7%	5,4%
Center-Left	19,7%	9,4%	16,2%	12,1%	14,2%	21,8%
Center	30,6%	28,7%	30,0%	37,0%	41,2%	33,6%
Center-Right	3,1%	14,3%	11,2%	12,9%	10,5%	15,8%
Right	4,1%	5,2%	4,1%	4,7%	3,7%	2,8%
Radical Right	2,1%	1,4%	1,2%	0,5%	0,6%	0,6%
None of these	25,4%	31,1%	27,1%	28,6%	25,5%	19,4%

**Education**

	Low education	Middle education	High education
Radical Left	6,3%	0,6%	0,8%
Left	3,9%	6,3%	6,4%
Center-Left	14,3%	13,4%	23,1%
Center	27,9%	36,9%	35,1%
Center-Right	9,4%	11,6%	15,7%
Right	5,2%	3,9%	3,9%
Radical Right	5,2%	0,7%	0,8%
None of these	33,1%	26,6%	14,4%

**Income**

	Comfortable with income	Coping with income	Difficult with income	Very difficult with income
Radical Left	5,9%	1,2%	0,5%	–
Left	7,0%	5,3%	7,0%	5,3%
Center-Left	19,8%	18,0%	13,7%	13,8%
Center	33,1%	34,1%	37,3%	34,5%
Center-Right	12,7%	14,3%	10,2%	13,7%
Right	2,2%	4,1%	5,1%	3,9%
Radical Right	0,8%	0,7%	0,5%	1,4%
None of these	18,4%	22,3%	25,8%	27,3%

**Ideology**

	Left	Centrist	Right	No ideology
Radical Left	7,2%	–	–	–
Left	24,7%	–	–	–
Center-Left	68,1%	–	–	–
Center	–	100,0%	–	–
Center-Right	–	–	73,2%	–
Right	–	–	24,2%	–
Radical Right	–	–	2,7%	–
None of these	–	–	–	100,0%

Those considering themselves on the radical left are primarily concentrated within the Die Linke electorate, with very few aligning themselves with the Grüne and SPD parties. Nevertheless, large majorities of the SPD and Grüne electorate consider themselves centre-left of pure centrists.

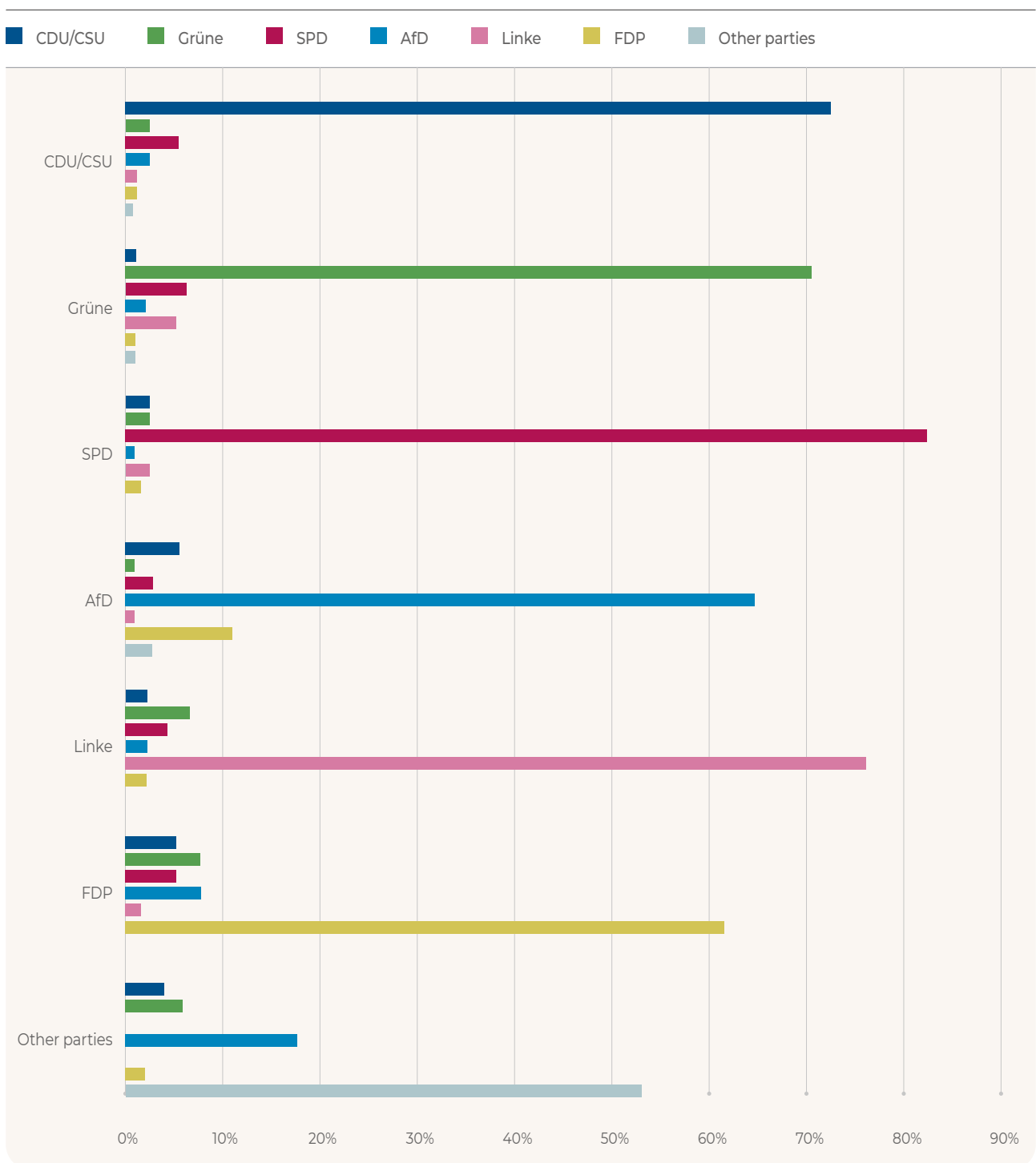
With regard to FDP voters, we find a surprising pattern; a relatively high proportion position themselves as left compared to FDP voters positioning themselves on the right, with a majority of FDP voters positioning themselves in the political centre. However, this may be an artefact of the very low number of respondents who support this party. The largest proportion of centrist voters can be found within the CDU/CSU electorate, while the largest proportion of radical right, right-wing, and centre-right respondents vote for AfD.

While men and those aged 18 to 24 are more likely to identify as right-wing, women, people with less education, and those with economic difficulties are more likely to report no ideological orientation.

**Vote Recall in the 2019 European Parliament Elections**

Most respondents who voted for a particular party in the 2019 European elections were still planning to vote for the same party if a national election was held at the time of data collection. SPD voters are the most loyal ones to their party — 82.3 per cent of them were still planning to vote for the party in a national election, while only 61.5 per cent of FDP voters stated they would do so. There appears to be a notable electoral exchange between AfD and FDP.

**Figure 36 – Which party did you vote for at the European Election of 2019?**



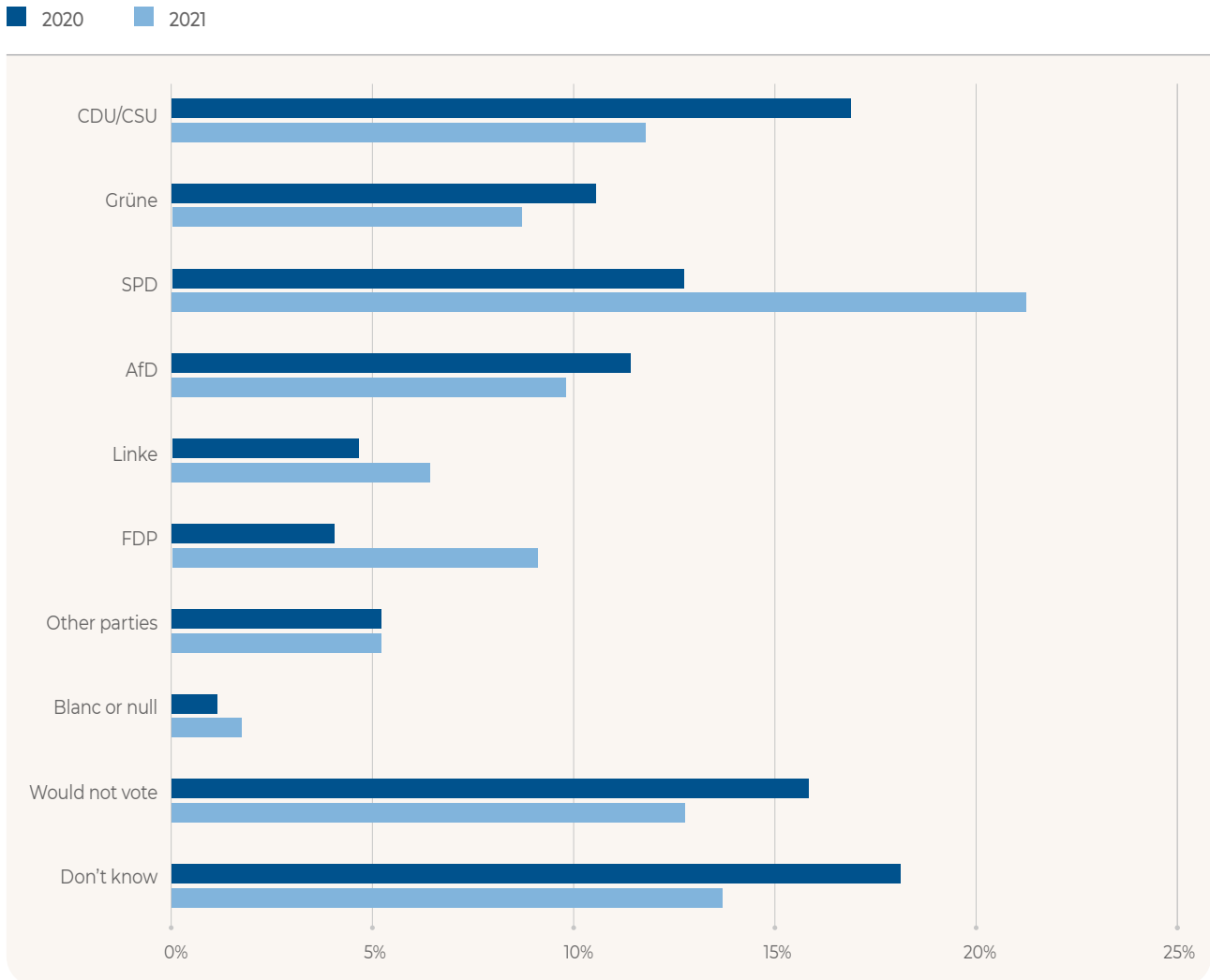


### Vote Intention Changes from 2020 to 2021

The reported changes in voting behaviour from the 2020 to 2021 survey iterations clearly demonstrate which parties gained and which lost support. CDU/CSU lost substantial support over the year, whereas support for

SPD increased. A smaller proportion of respondents in 2021 answered that they would vote for Grüne and AfD compared to 2020, whereas support for Die Linke and FDP increased. Support for the smaller parties remained stable.

Figure 37 – If there were a national general election tomorrow which party would you vote for?



## KEY FINDINGS 5

- Respondents who identify with radical ideologies, on both the left and the right, comprise less than 3 per cent of the German electorate, while respondents in the political centre are the biggest respondent group. Die Linke is the party which enjoys the support of most left-leaning voters, while AfD voters are most likely to identify as right-wing.
- Most people who voted for a certain party in the 2019 European elections reported they would still likely

vote for the same party in a national election. SPD was most likely to retain its voters, while people who voted FDP in 2019 were most likely to change their party preference.

- The reported changes in voting behaviour from 2020 to 2021 show that support for SPD, FDP, and Die Linke has increased, whereas support has declined for CDU/CSU, Grüne, and AfD.



# CHAPTER 6

## THE EDUCATIONAL LEVEL AS THE KEY DETERMINANT FOR PARTISAN SUPPORT

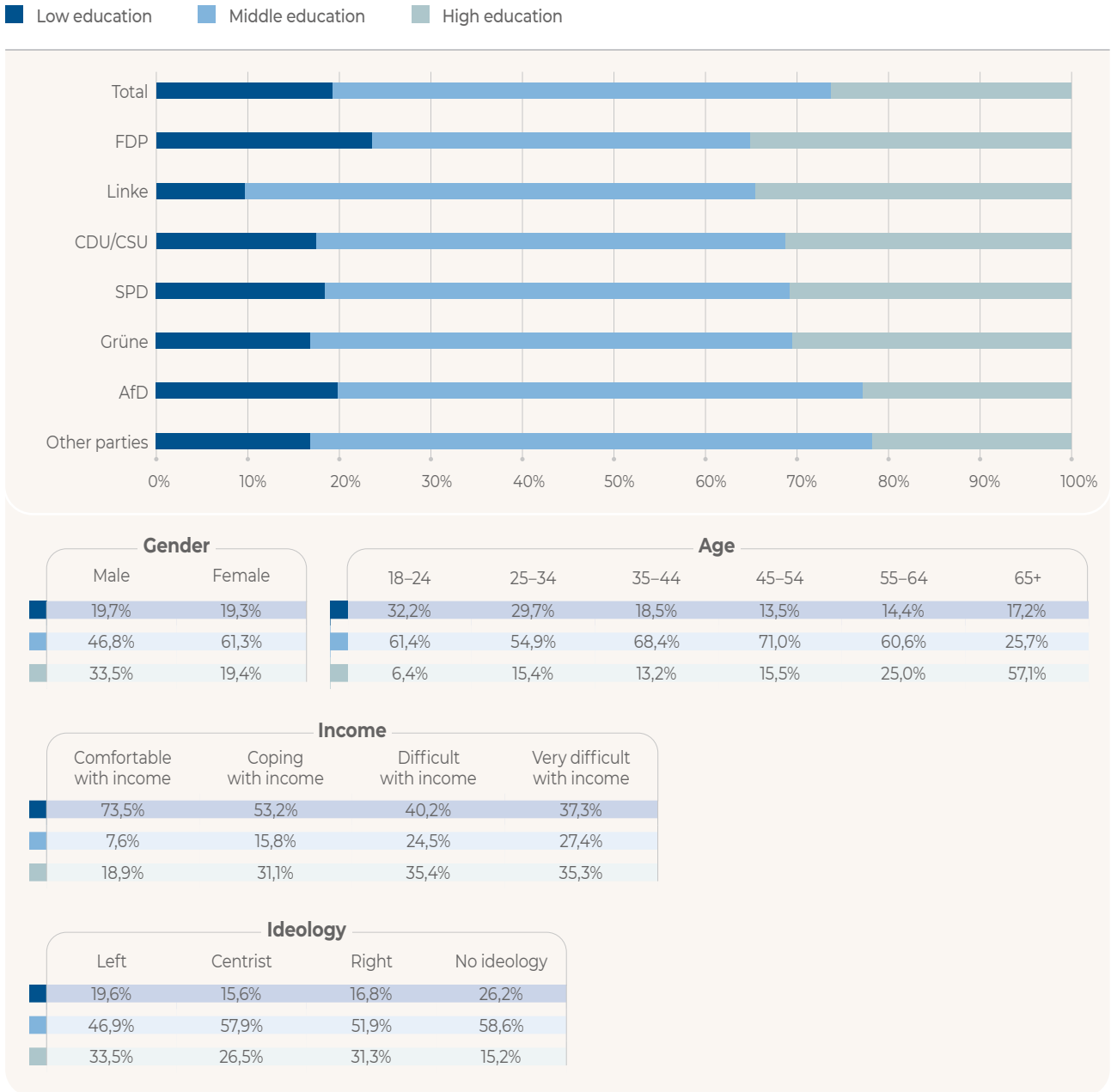


**Education**

In terms of education, FDP voters are the group with the largest proportion of highly educated respondents, while the groups with the smallest proportion of highly educated respondents are those who vote for the AfD and those who vote for 'other parties', not directly listed. Note that

the idea that the Volksparteien CDU/CSU and SPD still represent large numbers of low and middle educated and have not, as some alarmist accounts suggest, become the domain of the highly educated elite. The data suggests that there are very few respondents with low educational attainment among Die Linke voters.

**Figure 38 – Education**



### Religious Service Attendance

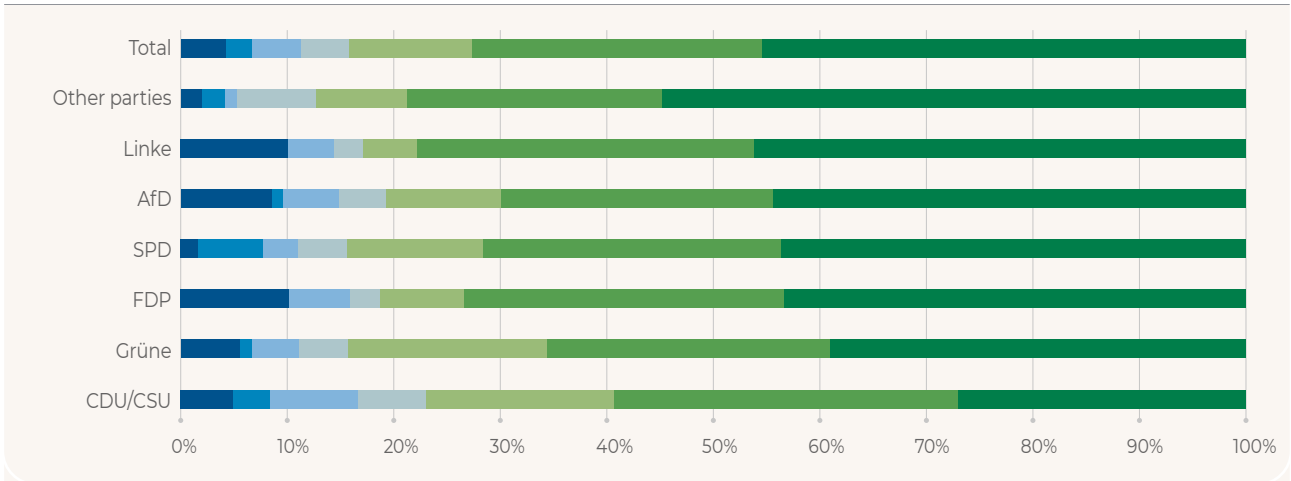
When it comes to religious service attendance, less than 20 per cent of Germans attend such services. People who vote for smaller parties and Grüne are least likely to attend religious services, while AfD voters are most likely to attend daily religious services. As could be expected from a Chris-

tian Democratic party, when all categories of attendance are combined, CSU/CSU voters are most likely to attend religious services. Notably, however, all parties including the Union have become parties of the 'secularised majority' that attend religious services infrequently, only on holidays, or never attend a religious service.

Figure 39 / Q11 – Religious Service Attendance

In general, apart from special occasions such as weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend religious services?

- Every day
- More than once a week
- Once a week
- At least once a month
- Only on holidays
- Less often
- Never



#### Gender

	Male	Female
Every day	5,1%	3,8%
More than once a week	2,9%	2,1%
Once a week	4,4%	4,5%
At least once a month	4,7%	4,5%
Only on holidays	11,6%	11,4%
Less often	25,2%	29,2%
Never	46,1%	44,5%

#### Age

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Every day	15,1%	8,8%	5,8%	3,4%	1,3%	1,2%
More than once a week	1,8%	3,7%	4,1%	1,6%	2,6%	2,3%
Once a week	4,8%	7,8%	3,1%	4,7%	4,3%	3,3%
At least once a month	6,0%	8,0%	5,1%	4,3%	2,6%	3,3%
Only on holidays	16,2%	11,7%	8,5%	10,6%	12,9%	11,4%
Less often	24,8%	20,6%	26,3%	28,1%	32,1%	27,4%
Never	31,3%	39,4%	47,1%	47,2%	44,0%	51,1%

#### Education

	Low education	Middle education	High education
Every day	12,4%	2,9%	2,2%
More than once a week	5,3%	1,7%	1,8%
Once a week	2,7%	5,1%	4,4%
At least once a month	6,8%	4,7%	5,7%
Only on holidays	6,3%	12,6%	13,1%
Less often	23,2%	29,1%	26,6%
Never	43,3%	44,0%	46,2%

#### Income

	Comfortable with income	Coping with income	Difficult with income	Very difficult with income
Every day	13,8%	2,1%	1,4%	3,6%
More than once a week	6,5%	1,5%	1,1%	3,4%
Once a week	4,5%	5,2%	4,1%	2,1%
At least once a month	4,4%	5,4%	4,4%	2,6%
Only on holidays	11,1%	12,7%	11,5%	9,1%
Less often	22,8%	28,3%	28,3%	28,1%
Never	36,9%	44,8%	49,2%	51,2%

#### Ideology

	Left	Centrist	Right	No ideology
Every day	10,3%	3,8%	1,6%	1,4%
More than once a week	4,2%	2,4%	1,6%	1,6%
Once a week	3,2%	4,9%	7,0%	3,8%
At least once a month	5,2%	5,3%	5,1%	2,8%
Only on holidays	8,6%	12,5%	15,6%	9,9%
Less often	26,2%	28,2%	26,1%	27,0%
Never	42,2%	43,0%	43,0%	53,6%

**KEY FINDINGS** 6

- Education is usually a good predictor of party preference, with highly educated respondents voting for centrist parties and less educated respondents over-represented among the far-right electorate. Nevertheless, at least in the German context, education differences are not that widespread among the different voter groups.
- Religion has been increasingly losing its importance in Western Democracies, including in Germany, where less than 20 per cent of respondents say they attend such services regularly. Voters of the Christian Democratic CDU/CSU and the populist AfD attend religious services most often, while voters of Die Linke and smaller parties are least likely to ever attend such services.

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### **About Kieskompas (Election Compass)**

Kieskompas is an independent scientific research institute specialising in quantitative data analysis, opinion polling, and voter profiling. Founded by Dr André Krouwel in collaboration with the VU University Amsterdam in 2006, Kieskompas is a market leader in the development and innovation of Voting Advice Applications (VAAs), used by more than 30 million people. Kieskompas is embedded in the academic community and is driven by a team of established researchers with a strong focus on political science, data science, and statistics. The company is best known for creating a methodology for visually displaying the positions of political parties in country-specific political landscapes in its VAAs. These online tools have been developed in collaboration with local academics in more than 40 countries, generating large-N datasets suitable for in-depth analyses.

### **André Krouwel**

André Krouwel teaches comparative political science and communication at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and is the founder of Kieskompas (Election Compass). He develops online Voting Advice Applications that collect data on party positions and voter opinions. Krouwel's research focuses on public opinion and politically relevant sentiments, voting behaviour, political parties, and social movements. Recent research has also resulted in publications on conspiracy beliefs, opinions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the vote determinants for European fringe parties and Euroscepticism.

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ISBN 978-3-98628-380-3

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This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Parliament.

