

Press Release

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Concerns about Immigration Reach Record Level

Findings of GfK Verein's "Challenges of Nations 2016"

Nuremberg, Germany, July 26, 2016 – The issue of immigration is of greater concern to Germans than anything else. Roughly four out of every five German citizens (83 percent) believe that solving immigration and integration is one of the most pressing challenges facing the country. Worries about this issue are more than twice as prevalent as in the previous year. Conversely, concerns about unemployment in Germany have continued to fall. These are the findings of GfK Verein's "Challenges of Nations 2016" study in which more than 27,600 people in 24 countries were surveyed. Across all of the countries, inflation and unemployment dominated the list of concerns.

Concerns about immigration have dominated the list of concerns in Germany this year with 83 percent of respondents believing that solving immigration/integration is one of the most pressing challenges facing Germany. Worries about this issue have therefore reached a record high. They were mentioned more than twice as often as in the previous year (2015: 35 percent) and are 15 percentage points higher than the previous record in 1992. However, the problem is viewed differently today than it was 25 years ago. "Although the number of people in favor of immigration has risen, opponents of further immigration have increased by much more," says Raimund Wildner, Managing Director of the GfK Verein, regarding the findings. "One out of every seven who mention this problem would like it to be solved in the context of positive integration, and one out of every five is opposed to any further immigration. This means that around two thirds of Germans simply want the problem solved, one way or another."

Unemployment causing less anxiety

The dominance of the immigration debate appears to have pushed other worries into the background. Unemployment is now in a distant second place in the ranking of the most important challenges with 13 percent of respondents seeing it as the biggest challenge facing Germany. This is 9 percentage points lower than in the previous year. "This is by far the lowest value recorded since the survey was first carried out across Germany as a whole in 1992. Only ten years ago, it was 80 percent," says Wildner. This reflects the historically low unemployment rate at present, which now stands at 4.3 percent, according to the OECD.

Challenges in Germany from 2002 to 2016							
Percentage of respondents who believe that the following issues urgently need to be resolved in Germany: (free responses; rounded; multiple responses possible)							
	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2015	2016
Immigration and integration	13	9	8	7	13	35	83
Unemployment	80	53	66	34	33	22	13
Poverty	2	10	5	12	14	15	10
Crime	6	13	15	7	11	10	10
Politics / government	6	9	10	13	7	6	10
Education policy	9	17	14	12	12	15	9
Pensions/old age provision	18	23	19	13	24	16	8
Social security	10	13	17	11	11	9	8
Prices and purchasing power	11	37	24	26	26	16	8
Global politics / European politics	-	2	2	3	4	7	7

Source: Challenges of Nations 2016 – a study by the GfK Verein

Germans less worried about economic instability

Another knock-on effect is that each of the challenges ranked third to fifth – poverty, crime, and the situation of politics and the government – is only a cause for concern among 10 percent of respondents. Concerns about poverty have fallen, for the first time since 2010, by 5 percentage points. Germans also believe that much less action needs to be taken on economic issues compared with the previous year, and worries about prices and purchasing power have dropped from 16 to 8 percent. This is likely due to the low inflation rate, which, according to the OECD, was 0.2 percent in 2015, primarily as a result of the fall in energy prices. Economic stability also means that Germans are less anxious. While this issue was ranked fifth in the previous year at 15 percent, it was in eleventh place this year at 6 percent.

Economic concerns predominate internationally

It is not just Germans who are concerned about immigration and integration. This is also seen as the number one challenge in other European countries: Austria (66 percent), Sweden, Switzerland (both 50 percent), Belgium (43 percent), the Netherlands (40 percent), and the UK (33 percent). However, unemployment tops the ranking in Spain (65 percent), France (64 percent), Italy (48 percent) and Poland (34 percent). Looking at all the countries surveyed together, prices/purchasing power and unemployment are the most frequently mentioned challenges at 24 percent each. Crime (18 percent) and corruption (15 percent) are also high in the ranking internationally.

About the study

These findings are taken from the "Challenges of Nations 2016" study and based on 27,675 interviews conducted on behalf of the GfK Verein in spring 2016 across 24 countries: Austria, Belgium, Brazil, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Poland, Russia, Spain, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the UK, the USA, and, for the first time this year, Mexico and the Philippines. 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 non-profit organization founded in 1934 to promote market research. It is comprised of around 600 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, as well as to research their impact on consumers. The results of the studies will be made available to the members of the Verein free of charge. The GfK Verein is a shareholder in GfK SE. Additional information at www.gfk-verein.org.

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