



## **German Public Opinion on Immigration and Integration**

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## I. Executive Summary

Germany has *de facto* been receiving immigrants for the last four decades, but the government only began actively dealing with the long-term impact of immigration a decade ago. This is partly because Germany has perceived immigration as a temporary phenomenon for a long time. Since the 1990s, Germany shifted away from stemming flows to recognizing its identity as a country of immigration and managing the impact of immigration on society. The policy shift is partly due to steadily declining immigration to Germany. More importantly, this shift is fueled by the German government's realization that policies must foster integration among immigrants who have been living there for many years, some of whom were born in Germany. Immigrants and their descendants comprise nearly one-fifth of Germany's population, a share that is expected to increase in the future. Integration is therefore an important policy concern that will have a strong impact on Germany's future.

An analysis of public opinion surveys conducted over the last two decades reveals the following:

- Public opinion on issues of immigration and integration has been fairly consistent over time.
- Curbing and regulating immigration has been an important issue in the past, particularly during periods of heavy and fast-paced immigration. The population has consistently called for restricting immigration.
- The German population expects immigrants to earn their right to acquire German citizenship. The majority opposes dual citizenship.
- The population's overall stance on integration in Germany has been contradictory. Sixty-two percent think that immigrants are not well-integrated, but integration has been and continues to be a low-priority issue compared to the concerns about unemployment or the economy.
- While contact between native Germans and the immigrant population has steadily increased (especially in western Germany), this has not automatically served to improve community relations. On the contrary, it has heightened the perception that significant cultural differences exist in Germany.
- German public opinion reflects a feeling of more "social distance" from some immigrant groups than others. Turkish immigrants are consistently perceived as the group that is culturally most different from nonimmigrant Germans.
- The sentiment that Germany has too many immigrants is still strong although this has declined from 79 percent in the mid-1980s (in West Germany) to 53 percent in 2008.
- Public opinion remains highly skeptical about the integration of Muslim immigrants in Germany. Two-thirds of the population does not think that Muslim immigrants in Germany accept German values.

## II. Immigration to Germany: A Temporary Phenomenon Becomes Permanent

Until 2005, Germany only counted the resident population with foreign nationality. Since then, additional data has been collected according to “immigrant origin.”<sup>1</sup> The number of people in Germany of immigrant origin is nearly double that of the foreign population. According to the 2007 micro census, which takes place once a year and surveys 1 percent of the German population, immigrant-origin residents make up 19 percent of the population.<sup>2</sup> This data has heightened people’s awareness that German society has already changed and will change even more drastically in the future as a result of immigration. Today, one-fourth of all families with children and adolescents under 18 in Germany are of immigrant origin.<sup>3</sup> The immigrant-origin population on average is much younger than the native German population, which means Germany’s total population over time will slowly shrink while the immigrant-origin population will grow. Those of immigrant origin will make up more than one-fourth of the population by 2050.

To understand public opinion on migration and integration in Germany at present, the dynamics of past immigration that have led to the current situation must be taken into account.

In the 1950s, the West German economy was growing rapidly. The government addressed labor shortages by recruiting foreign workers. Its policy was designed to “rotate” in foreign workers who would leave after their temporary contract expired. The first wave of labor migrants, known as guest workers, arrived from Italy, Spain, and Greece, followed by those from Turkey, Morocco, Portugal, Tunisia, and Yugoslavia. The rotation principle was soon abandoned, since many employers avoided the high cost of training new arrivals by extending existing contracts. In the wake of the oil crisis in the early 1970s, the West German labor market contracted. In 1973, the government stopped recruiting international workers, a policy that reinforced the permanency of guest workers.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the West German government focused on curbing labor immigration and introducing restrictive immigration policies. Guest workers were perceived as competing with native Germans for jobs. Numerous guest workers accepted the incentives the German government offered to return to their home countries. But for some groups, like Turkish immigrants, the 1980s were a bad time to go back home. Political instability coupled with severe economic problems prompted many to stay and bring their families to Germany.

Labor migration had primarily brought in single male workers. Family unification resulted in an influx of women and children. Immigration began to impact German society more broadly. The public sector, including schools and the welfare system, had not previously been confronted with the effects of immigration and was not adequately equipped to deal with the changing needs of an increasingly diverse population. Integration was initially not an issue despite family reunification — neither for the guest workers nor for the host society. The perception that immigration was temporary prevailed. The West German government should have devised comprehensive integration measures as part of family reunification policies, but did not. Consequently, integration problems began to take root in West Germany.

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<sup>1</sup> Persons of immigrant origin are defined as those who are either foreign born and have migrated to Germany or who were born in Germany and have at least one foreign-born parent, regardless of whether they have foreign nationality, are naturalized, or have dual citizenship.

<sup>2</sup> The micro census survey is conducted by the Federal Statistical Office of Germany.

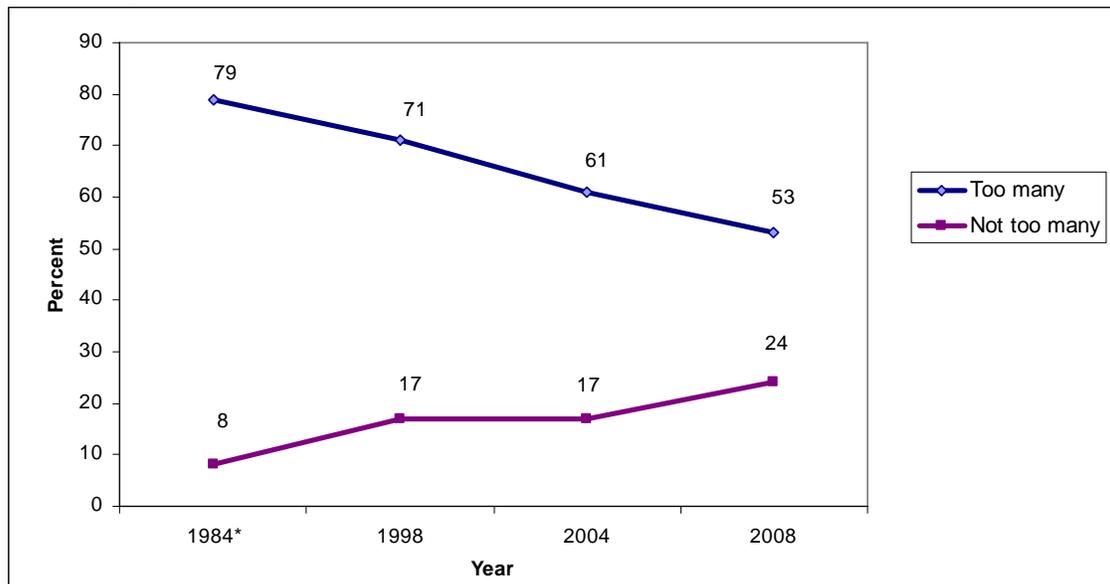
<sup>3</sup> Federal Statistical Office of Germany, Press Release Number 281, August 5, 2008.

### III. Regulating Integration

For many years, public opinion surveys concentrated on Germans' perception of the scope of immigration and various policies designed to regulate immigration. The general population's perception of immigrants has undergone many changes over the past decades. Immigration was initially associated with the guest workers and, later on, in the 1980s and 1990s with asylum seekers. Today, the prevailing "face" of immigration is Germany's immigrant-origin population, some of whom are third- and fourth-generation descendents of immigrants.

The sentiment that Germany has too many immigrants<sup>4</sup> has been widespread. Yet the share of Germans who hold this view has declined steadily from 79 percent (West Germany) in the mid-1980s to 53 percent in 2008 (see Figure 1). While sentiments against migrants have been strong at times, Figure 1 shows that a process of familiarization has taken place, with a growing acceptance of immigrants among the general public.

**Figure 1. Percentage of Surveyed Persons Who Think There Are Too Many Immigrants Living in Germany, 1984 to 2008**



*Note:* \*Data for 1984 are for West Germany only.

*Source:* Allensbach Archives<sup>5</sup>, IfD Surveys 3099 (West Germany), 6059, 7064, 10018.

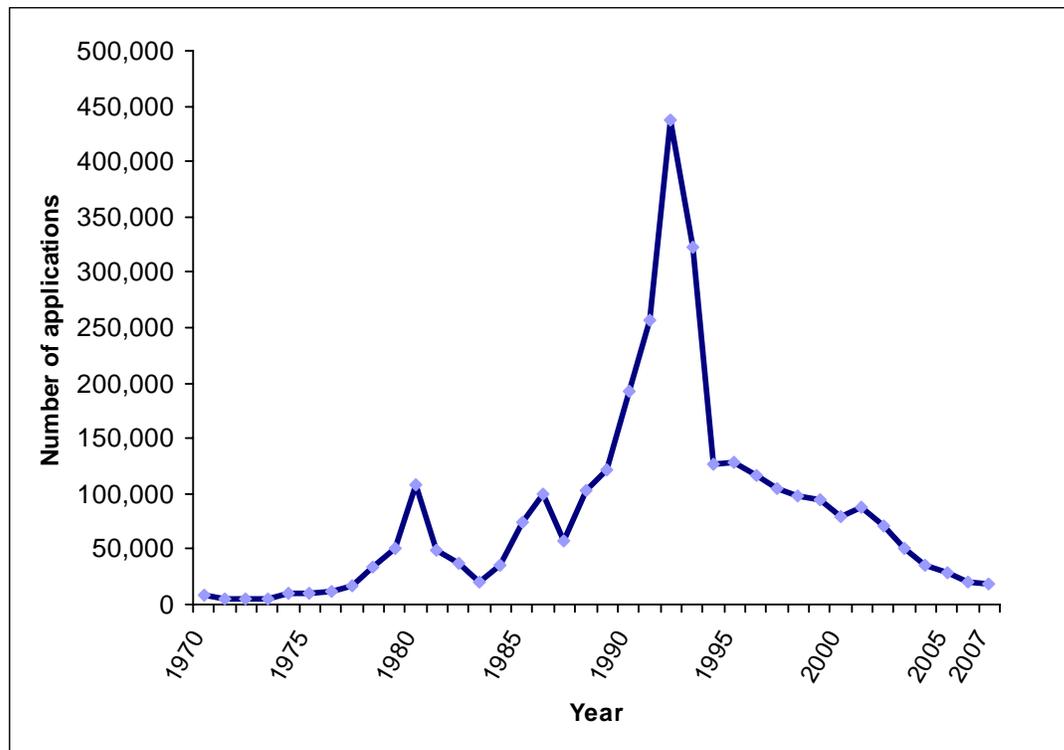
Negative sentiments about immigrants were particularly strong in the late 1980s and 1990s. This perception was partly due to high numbers of immigrants that confronted Germany with a large-scale, very fast-paced wave of migration. These same years were also marked by changes in Europe's geopolitical and security framework: the fall of the Iron Curtain, German reunification, and the wars in former Yugoslavia changed the German population's views on the issue of security. In addition to the families of former guest workers, ethnic Germans from Eastern

<sup>4</sup> The general term used in public for immigrants has been "Ausländer," which can be translated as "foreigner" but implies new immigrants as well as their descendants. "Ausländer" is also the term used in most opinion surveys about immigration. In this paper, the term "immigrant" includes both immigrants and their descendants.

<sup>5</sup> The Allensbach Archives contain data from the 1950s to the present, thus allowing us to track the population's views on immigration and integration over a lengthy period of time. Most of the findings derive from representative surveys conducted among the German resident population (age 16 and over). The survey data cited in the present paper were ascertained via face-to face surveys, which are comparable in terms of methodology, sample size and the sample population, with slight variations in the number of respondents surveyed (from 1,800 to 2,000 respondents).

Europe and Russia immigrated to Germany; their numbers peaked at 397,000 in 1990.<sup>6</sup> Liberal asylum policies encouraged asylum seekers to apply for refuge in Germany. In 1988, the number of asylum seekers topped 100,000, shooting up to 438,000 in 1992 (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Number of Annual Asylum Applicants in Germany, 1970 to 2007**



Source: German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, *Migrationsbericht 2007* (Nuremberg: Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2008).

The German constitution affords the right to asylum to politically persecuted persons. The fall of the Iron Curtain and increased mobility led to an increase in the number of asylum claims. The German government considered only a small fraction of asylum claims legitimate as many of these were from people fleeing their countries for economic reasons. In many cases, applications led to a de facto right of residence even if the applications were ultimately turned down, since the legal proceedings took too long and applicants could not be deported to their home countries in cases of hardship. The government’s failure to deal with the sheer scale of claims and the large proportion of failed claims fueled the population’s skepticism as to the intentions of many asylum seekers.

An Allensbach survey conducted in 1989 showed that a majority of Germans (59 percent) thought asylum proceedings should be handled quickly and restrictively, with failed applicants being repatriated immediately.<sup>7</sup> In the 1990s, when immigration flows dramatically increased, immigration was perceived very negatively. Media coverage mirrored this perception, reporting on “bogus” asylum seekers coming to Germany to take advantage of the social welfare system. The media portrayed Germany as being swamped by asylum seekers and “the boat being full.”

<sup>6</sup> From 1988 to 2005, a total of 3 million ethnic Germans from the former Soviet Union, Poland, Romania, and other eastern European countries immigrated to Germany. Known as Aussiedler, these ethnic Germans were allowed settlement under a separate category and are not counted as foreigners in official statistics. Focus Migration, *Länderprofil Deutschland* (Hamburg: Hamburg Institute of International Economics, May 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Allensbach Archives, IfD Survey 5016, February 1989 (West Germany).

Illegal immigration was a major concern. This unease extended to long-resident immigrants as well.

Elections in the state of Hesse and the city-state of Berlin in 1989 demonstrated how successful populist and xenophobic platforms could be in such a situation. In Berlin, the Republicans, an extreme right-wing party, attained a historically high 7.5 percent of the vote. In Hesse, another extreme right-wing party, the NPD, managed to win 6.6 percent of the vote. Both parties had crafted their election campaigns around the issue of immigration and the growing number of asylum seekers.

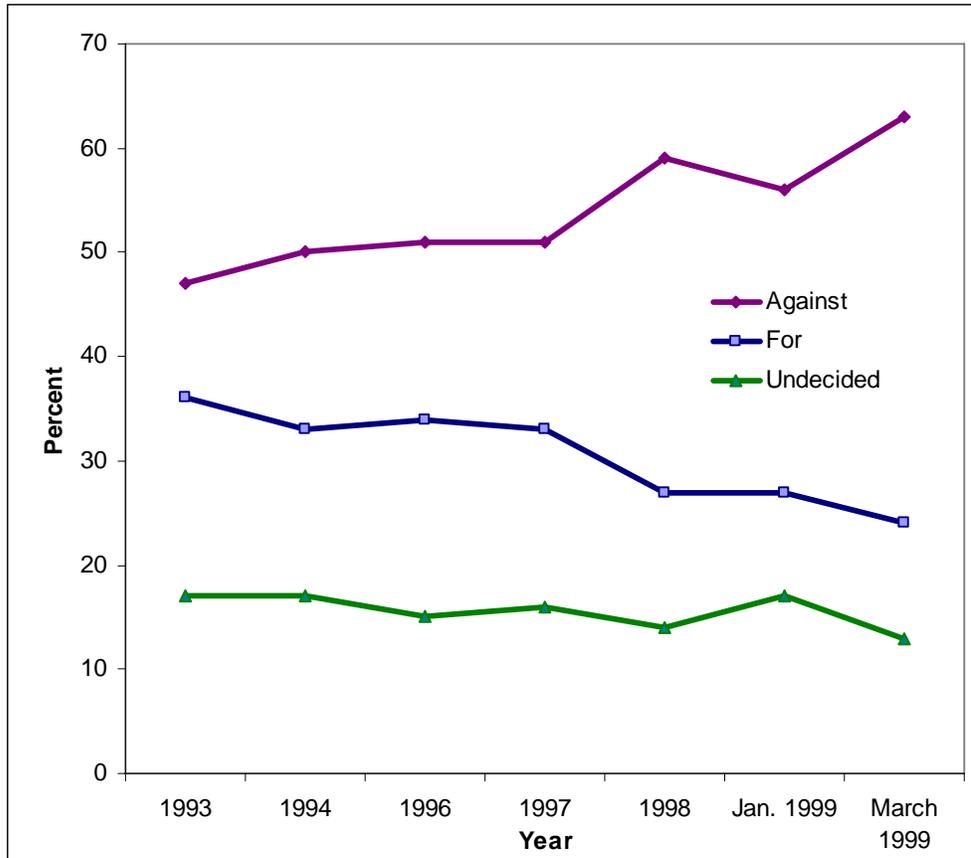
Ultimately, the public and political debate resulted in an amendment to the German constitution and the introduction of more restrictive asylum laws in 1993.

#### **IV. Citizenship Reform**

In the 1990s, policymakers recognized the need to modernize Germany's nationality law — one of the most restrictive such laws in Europe — because second- and third-generation descendants of guest workers had remained foreign citizens. German citizenship had long been perceived as exclusive and as a privilege granted only on the grounds of certain merits. Indeed, immigrants did not have any legal claim to naturalization until 1993. Public opinion continues to view German citizenship as exclusive, rejecting the idea of dual citizenship while at the same time expecting immigrants to fulfill certain prerequisites to earn German citizenship.

Including *ius soli* (birthright citizenship by territory) and dual citizenship in legislation were the focus of heated public debates in the 1990s. The public clearly did not favor dual citizenship, with the percentage against it rising from 47 percent in 1993 to over 63 percent in early 1999 as Germany came closer to passing a new naturalization law (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Public Opinion on Dual Citizenship, 1993 to 1999**



*Note:* Answers were in response to the following question: "According to German law, German citizenship can only be acquired in addition to the citizenship of another country in certain exceptional cases. The possibility of generally allowing dual citizenship is currently being discussed. Do you support the idea of granting dual citizenship to immigrants who have been living here for many years, or are you against that?"

*Source:* Allensbach Archives, IfD Surveys 5081, 6008, 6032, 6044, 6071, 6072, 6074.

The issue of dual citizenship also shaped the outcome of the 1999 election in the state of Hesse. The center-right Christian Democratic Party (CDU) started circulating a petition against dual citizenship ("Yes to integration – No to dual citizenship"). Five million Germans signed the petition, contributing to CDU's victory in the state. In the wake of the controversy over the CDU petition, supporters of the Christian Democrats increased their opposition to dual citizenship from 61 percent in 1996 to 83 percent in 1999. Those who voted for the liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP) also became more entrenched, with the share of FDP voters against dual citizenship jumping from 49 percent in 1996 to 74 percent in 1999.<sup>8</sup>

The new Nationality Law of 2000 law did not permit dual citizenship but contained an alternative known as the "optional model" of temporary dual citizenship that requires children to choose one of their two nationalities at adulthood. Supporters of all political parties represented in the German Federal Parliament approved of this approach at the time of the law's passage, with support among even the general opponents of dual citizenship ranging from 52 percent (CDU/CSU) to 74 percent (FDP).<sup>9</sup> Under the new law, children of long-term-resident foreign parents born in Germany after January 1, 2000, are granted German citizenship in addition to their citizenship by descent. By age 23, such dual citizens must opt for a single nationality. The

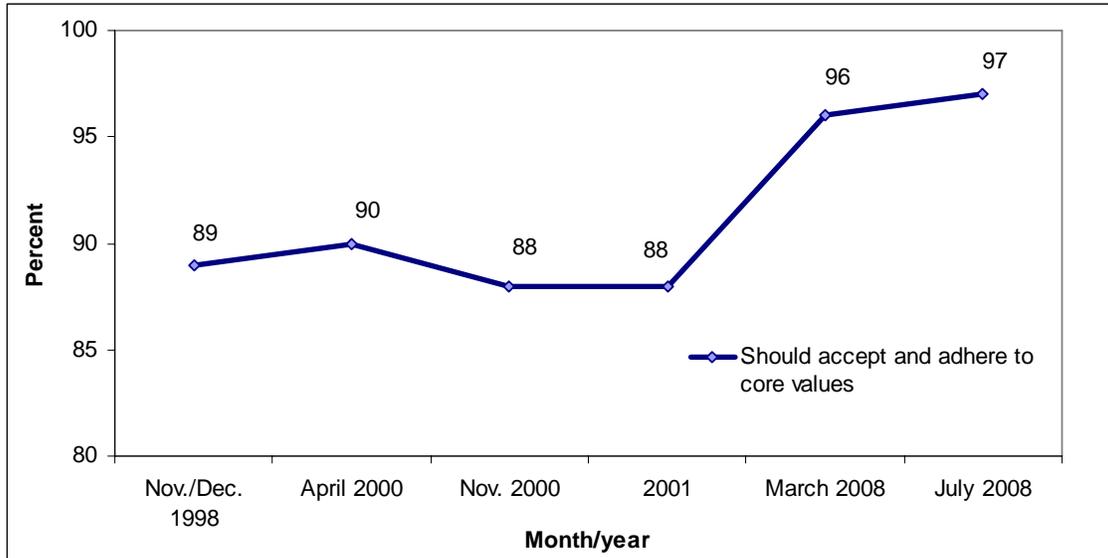
<sup>8</sup> Allensbach Archives, IfD Surveys 6032 and 6074.

<sup>9</sup> Allensbach Archives, IfD Surveys 6032.

first cohort of *ius soli* children (due to the law’s retroactive application) are coming of age, and the choices they make and how the public reacts to those choices will show whether the optional model works in practice.

The Nationality Law did succeed in making naturalization easier. The law allows immigrants to apply for naturalization after eight instead of 15 years of residence (with proof of independent income and the absence of a criminal record). They also have to prove they have a sufficient command of the German language and pledge to abide by Germany's Basic Constitutional Law (*Grundgesetz*).<sup>10</sup> Both provisions reflect the public’s expectations. A very steady majority, ranging from 92 percent in 2000 to 98 percent in 2008, believed that immigrants living in Germany should speak German.<sup>11</sup> From 1998 to 2008, the percentage of respondents who believe adhering to German values should be a prerequisite for naturalization has wavered by only a few percentage points, reaching a high of 97 percent in July 2008 (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Public Opinion on Whether Immigrants Should Adhere to and Accept Core German Values, 1998 to 2008**



Note: Answers were in response to the following question: "If an immigrant who has been a long-term resident of Germany or who was born here wants to be naturalized, should he or she accept and adhere to the principles and core values of our society, or is that not necessary?"

Source: Allensbach Archives, IfD Surveys 6071, 6090, 6099, 7007, 10018, 10023.

Results of more recent public opinion polls, such as the ALLBUS Survey<sup>12</sup> conducted in 2006, show that the majority of Germans continue to reject the idea of generally granting dual citizenship. Asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the idea of allowing immigrants to naturalize without relinquishing their former citizenship, 40 percent of respondents strongly disagreed and 54 percent rejected the idea to some degree.

<sup>10</sup> The *Grundgesetz* is the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany and comprises the fundamental values and norms of the state. It ranks higher than all other legislation.

<sup>11</sup> Allensbach Archives, IfD Surveys 6090, 10023.

<sup>12</sup> The German General Social Survey (ALLBUS) is a biennial survey conducted since 1980 on the attitudes, behavior, and social structure of persons resident in Germany. A representative cross-section of the population is questioned using face-to-face interviews. Since 1992, the sample has been weighted by population, meaning that 2,400 interviews are conducted in the western states and 1,100 in the eastern states of Germany. ALLBUS is a project of GESIS (Leibniz Institute for Social Sciences).

## V. The Immigration Act of 2005: A Milestone in Immigration Policy

After the introduction of new asylum laws and the subsequent decrease in the number of asylum seekers, the population no longer perceived the number of asylum seekers as a priority issue. Regulating immigration nevertheless continued to be an important political goal for the majority of Germans as shown in surveys conducted in the wake of public debates on immigration policies (see Table 1). Surveys conducted from 1993 to 2003 in the wake of the public debate on immigration policies show that a steady majority of Germans supported enacting immigration legislation that would regulate immigration and curb the number of immigrants.

**Table 1. Percentage of Surveyed Persons in Favor of Immigration Quotas, 1993 to 2003**

Year	Percentage
1993	55
1994	53
1995	47
1996	54
2000	60
2001	69
2003	66

*Note:* Answers were in response to the following statement: "I am for an immigration act that will allow a certain number — a quota — of immigrants to come to Germany."

\*The question was not posed from 1997 to 1999 nor in 2002.

*Source:* Allensbach Archives, IfD Surveys 5085, 6008, 6017, 6035, 6099, 7007, 7037.

The absence of regulatory measures that led to the large influx of immigrants in the 1980s and early 1990s had made the calls for regulating immigration stronger. In addition, negative perceptions of asylum seekers caused immigrants to be associated with illegal activities and prompted people to support a more restrictive approach. In 1996, a restrictive immigration act was advocated by 53 percent of voters for CDU/CSU, 56 percent of voters for the center-left Social Democrats (SPD) and the environmental Greens, 48 percent of the voters for FDP, and 50 percent of those who supported the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), the successor party to the East German SED.<sup>13</sup>

Considering public sentiment, policymakers must have recognized that comprehensive immigration legislation could only succeed if it included restrictive measures. The public debate on the new legislation was highly charged partly because the discussions on regulating immigration proved that Germany had become a country open to immigration — a fact that had been denied in political circles for a very long time.

It took many years of negotiations before all political parties agreed on a compromise and the Immigration Act was enacted on January 1, 2005. The act incorporated the regulation of labor immigration, legislation pertaining to asylum seekers and refugees, and the integration of immigrants.

## VI. Attitudes Toward Immigrants

Today, immigrants have become a permanent feature of German society, and contact between the native German and immigrant populations has increased (especially in western Germany). In a 2008 Allensbach Institute survey, 46 percent of respondents in western Germany stated they

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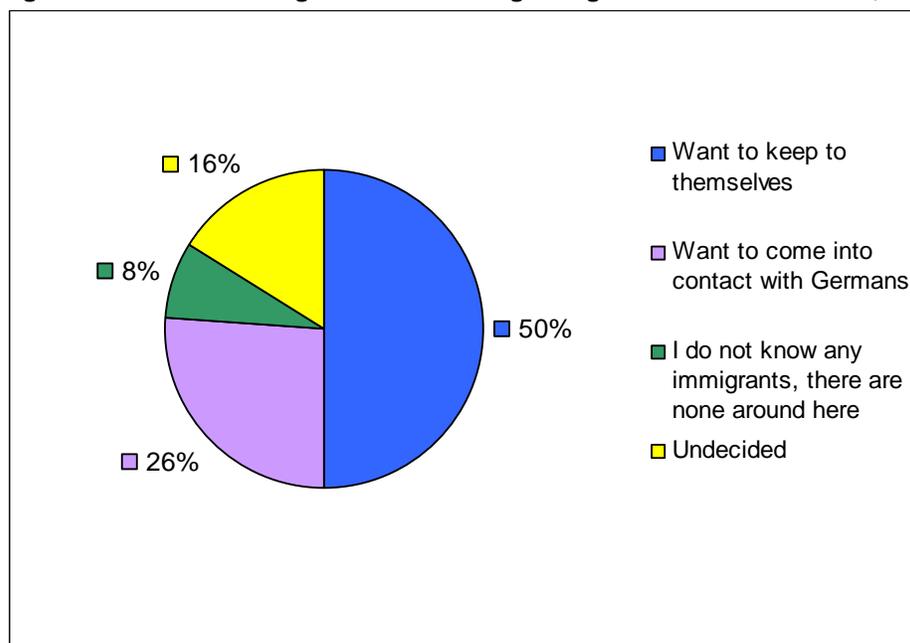
<sup>13</sup> Allensbach Archives, IfD Survey 6032.

had immigrant friends and close acquaintances, an increase of 16 percent compared to 1985.<sup>14</sup> Young Germans have far more contact with immigrants than older Germans: 65 percent of the respondents between 16 and 24 stated they had immigrant friends and acquaintances, while the level of contact declines with increasing age. Only 32 percent of respondents who are age 60 or older have immigrant friends.<sup>15</sup> The results of the Shell Youth Study (2006) are similar: 67 percent of the young people between ages 12 and 25 stated they had immigrant friends and close acquaintances.

However, personal contact has not automatically led to improved relations between immigrants and native Germans. Problems and conflicts are perceived in areas where there is daily interaction between immigrants and Germans, such as the schools, where the deficits of integration become evident. The share of respondents who believed that the high number of children of immigrant origin at German schools cause major problems increased from 47 percent in 1997 to 67 percent in 2008.<sup>16</sup>

In a March 2008 survey, half of Germans said the immigrants they know want to keep to themselves (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Perceived Immigrant Behavior Regarding Contact with Germans, 2008**



*Note:* Answers were in response to the following question: "Thinking of the immigrants you know or immigrants living around here: do most of them keep to themselves or do most of them want to come into contact with Germans?"

*Source:* Allensbach Archives, IfD Survey 10018, March 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Allensbach Archives, IfD Survey 4053 and 10018 (both results are for West Germany). Note: In 1985, the question was addressed only to respondents who had contact with immigrants.

<sup>15</sup> Allensbach Archives, IfD Survey 10018, March 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Allensbach Archives, IfD Survey 6043, April 1997; Allensbach Archives, IfD Survey 10018, March 2008. Respondents were asked to voice their opinion according to a list of statements concerning immigrants; this statement was among the listed statements. It does not specify what is meant with "major problems" but rather voices the general perception that the increasing number of immigrant-origin students are causing problems for the teachers and the curricula (mostly because neither have taken diverse schools into account but also because students of immigrant origin — due to many reasons that would take considerable space to elaborate here — are often not as successful in school as students coming from families without immigrant origin, thereby affecting the educational level of the whole class negatively).

Integration can only succeed if it is a two-way process, with a society willing to accept and integrate foreigners and with immigrants willing to make visible efforts to integrate. For immigrants, it is more difficult to integrate into a society that does not accept the presence of foreigners or is hostile to them. Although German society has never been hostile to immigrants, it is fair to say that Germans have not viewed their society as being open to immigration and that there has been a strong perception of alienation and cultural differences, especially toward some groups of immigrants.

Germans perceive wider cultural differences between themselves and some immigrant groups more than others. For example, a 1982 survey revealed that Germans saw guest workers from Italy as foreign in many respects but had stronger negative attitudes about Turkish guest workers, particularly in regards to behaving “totally differently”: 47 percent said this statement was true about Italians while 69 said it was true of Turks (see Table 2). By 1993, the share of respondents who stated that Italians behave totally differently had plummeted to 24 percent while 58 percent still believed that statement described Turks.<sup>17</sup>

**Table 2. Nonimmigrant Attitudes toward Italian and Turkish Immigrants in West Germany, 1982**

Positive attitudes	Italians (percent)	Turks (percent)
Friendly, courteous people	26	29
Hardworking people	23	13
Nice co-workers	20	12
Good neighbors	13	8
<b>Ambivalent and negative attitudes</b>		
Behave totally differently	47	69
Take away our jobs	32	39
Can sometimes seem frightening	20	31
Do not attach importance to cleanliness	21	26
Take advantage of us	14	18

*Note:* Given a list of statements, respondents were asked to select those items that they would attribute to Italians and Turks living in Germany.

*Source:* Allensbach Archives, IfD Survey 4005.

The perception of difference towards Turkish immigrants remains today. In a 2006 ALLBUS poll, respondents were asked how they would react if an Italian or Turk were to marry a family member: 24 percent of the respondents stated they would not be pleased at all to have a Turk marrying a family member; only 4 percent stated the same for an Italian. A 2008 Allensbach survey found that 76 percent of the respondents agree that Turkish immigrants “have a totally different culture,” while 73 percent say they “think totally differently than we do about a lot of things.”<sup>18</sup>

One reason for the social distance between Germans and Turkish immigrants/those of Turkish origin may well be that Germans identify them with the Muslim faith. Turkish immigrants and those of Turkish origin represent the largest group of Muslim immigrants in Germany (an estimated 3.2 to 3.4 million). Since 9/11, similar to other countries in Europe, integrating Muslim immigrants and Islam into German society has often been discussed within the framework of security issues and the fear of terrorist attacks. The attempted suitcase bombings in 2006 by Islamic terrorists fueled the perception of Muslims as a security threat in Germany.

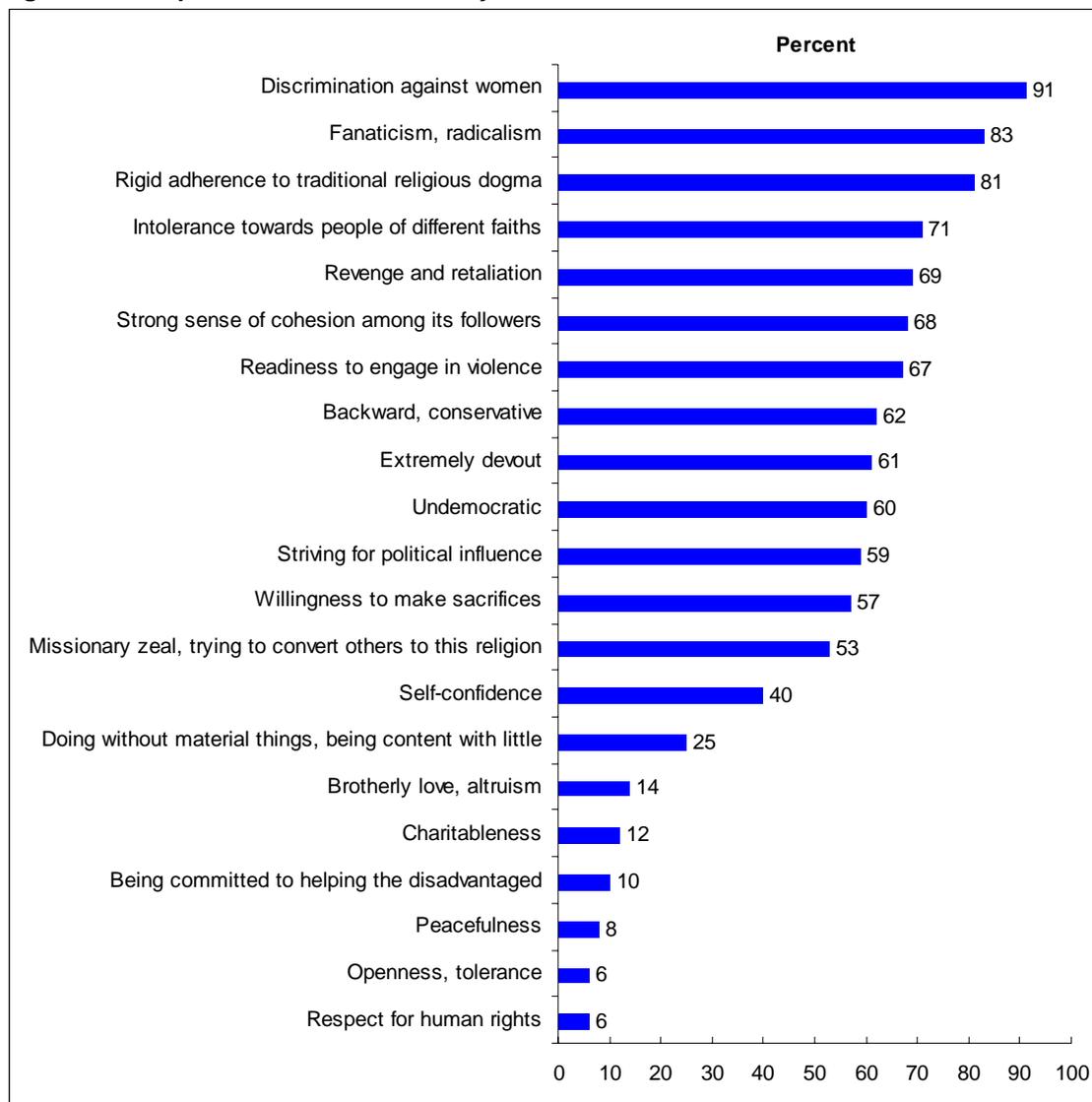
The majority of Germans differentiate between Islam and the actions of fundamentalist and

<sup>17</sup> Allensbach Archives, IfD Survey 5082, 1993.

<sup>18</sup> Allensbach Archives, IfD Survey 10018, March 2008.

radical Muslims: 62 percent clearly state that radical followers of Islam pose a threat, not the religion itself.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, Islam has a predominantly negative image in Germany, with a majority finding it undemocratic, backward, intolerant of other faiths, and fanatic — even before the attempted bombings (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6. Perceptions of Islam in Germany, 2006**

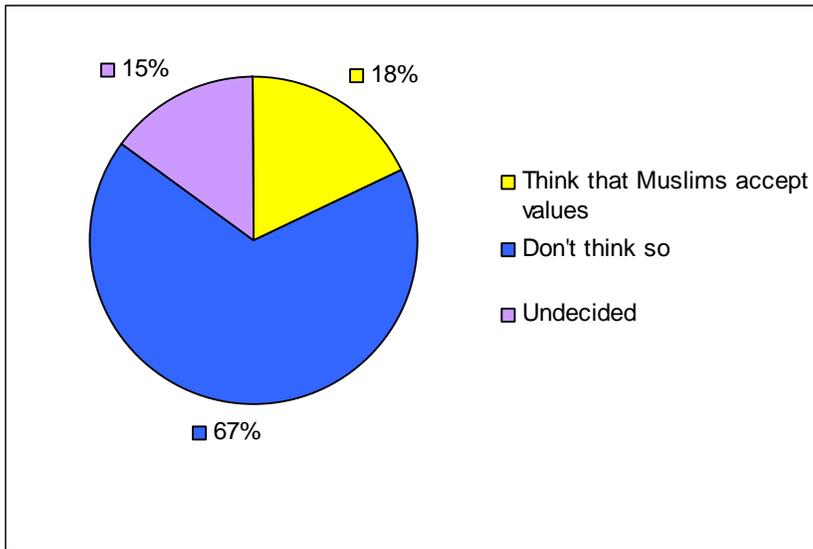


Source: Allensbach Archives, IfD Survey 7089, May 2006.

Among the general public, there seems to be diffuse mistrust of Islam and skepticism towards Muslims in Germany, with only 18 percent saying resident Muslims accept German values (see Figure 7).

<sup>19</sup> Allensbach Archives, IfD Survey 7089, May 2006.

**Figure 7. Public Perceptions of the Resident Muslim Population's Acceptance of German Values, 2008**



*Note:* Answers were in response to the following question: "Do you think that most Muslims living here in Germany accept the common values and basic convictions of German society, or don't you think so?"

*Source:* Allensbach Archives, IfD Survey 10018, March 2008.

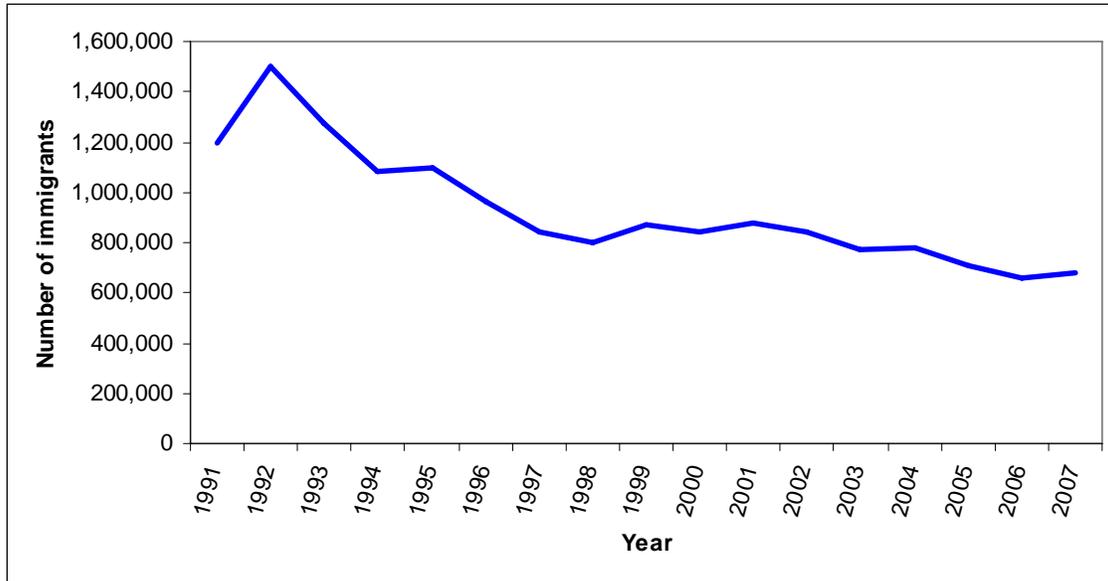
Policymakers have taken steps to improve the dialogue with representatives of Muslim organizations (the Islamkonferenz, which met for the first time in September 2006) and have created a platform for discussing ways of incorporating Islam into German society. The public debate on integrating Muslims into German society tends to focus on highly controversial issues, such as headscarves, forced marriages, honor killings, religious instruction for Muslim children at German schools, and the official representation of Muslims in Germany. Many of these issues have yet to be resolved satisfactorily and will continue to be the subject of controversial discussions in the near future. If policymakers want to settle these issues in ways that are acceptable to the general public, they will have to take the skeptical attitude towards Muslims in Germany into account while searching for ways to overcome these attitudes.

## **VII. Public Opinion on Immigrant Integration**

In 2007, 680,766 new immigrants arrived in Germany compared with 661,855 the year before. This was the first slight increase in the flow of new immigrants over a long period of time: the number of new immigrants has been declining steadily in the last decade (see Figure 8).

This decline in flows has meant more policy attention on integrating new arrivals and resident immigrants rather than on limiting immigration.

**Figure 8. Annual Number of New Immigrants in Germany, 1991 to 2007**



Source: German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, *Migrationsbericht 2007* (Nuremberg: Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2008).

Although there has always been a clear tendency toward curbing immigration, attitudes about integration are unclear. The population's overall stance on integration is contradictory: On one hand, major shortcomings are perceived when it comes to the efforts that have been made to integrate immigrants thus far. On the other hand, however, integration has consistently ranked low on the political agenda. Economic issues like unemployment and security issues have been a higher priority than integration. A mere 19 percent of respondents viewed integrating immigrants as an important political issue in 2007. For 75 percent of the respondents, lowering the unemployment rate was a top priority.<sup>20</sup>

The fact that the population ascribes low priority to the issue of integrating immigrants is partly due to the minimal role integration policies have played in the political debate in the past: until very recently, the broader population was not confronted with the need for comprehensive integration policies, since these simply were not an issue for policymakers. Just because integration is not an important political priority does not mean Germans think immigrants are well-integrated. In 2006, only 26 percent of respondents thought immigrants in Germany were sufficiently integrated — 62 percent disagreed. When asked about the cause of poor integration, 34 percent said that this was due to the fact that immigrants were not willing to integrate, 3 percent stated that too little was being done in Germany to foster integration, and 23 percent stated that both were the case.<sup>21</sup>

Public opinion does support citizenship tests for immigrants who are applying for German citizenship. Introduced in September 2008, the test includes questions on German history, the political system, laws, and regulations. In an August 2008 Allensbach survey, 69 percent of respondents said they thought the integration test was a sensible measure; only 23 percent disagreed.

Although they believe integration has not gone well, a large portion of Germans have a pragmatic approach to the country's diverse nature. In 2008, 44 percent of all respondents believed that

<sup>20</sup> Allensbach Archives, IfD Survey 10013, October/November 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Allensbach Archives, IfD Survey 7087, February/March 2006.

immigrants in Germany would retain their cultural identities but that this would not severely inhibit the social interaction of Germans and immigrants; this rate went up to almost 60 percent for those with a university degree. Yet nearly an equal percentage (43 percent) of all respondents expected immigrants would increasingly separate themselves from German society and live in communities with people of the same ethnic heritage, heightening the problems between Germans and immigrants. Only 7 percent thought complete assimilation was the most probable scenario.<sup>22</sup> Sociodemographic factors like gender, social class, or the size of the city where respondents lived only slightly affected respondent views.

## VIII. Conclusion

The integration of the immigrant population is one of the major issues confronting Germany today. Immigrants show strong deficits when it comes to educational levels and employment levels. Among immigrants ages 25 to 34, 34 percent did not have vocational training or a university degree in 2007 compared to 16 percent of Germans. Also, 20 percent of immigrants with foreign citizenship were unemployed in 2007, while the unemployment rate among Germans was 10 percent.<sup>23</sup> Integration policies that deal with these deficits and that bring about structural changes to prevent such deficits are needed. Existing policies will not be enough to secure current living standards in the decades to come as Germany's population ages and declines. In view of this demographic trend, Germany will presumably have to formulate a concept for labor migration policies in the future, particularly with an eye to attracting skilled immigrants. At present, Germany ranks very low on the list of preferred destinations of highly qualified migrants. In economically troubled times, when native skilled workers are facing unemployment, developing policies that would make Germany more attractive for skilled immigrants may not seem like a priority issue. In the long run, however, these policies are important for the German economy and should not be neglected. Past experience has shown that the German public attaches great importance to regulating immigration, so this aspect must be considered when developing new immigration regulation policies.

In Germany, public opinion polls have generally been directed at the "German resident population," meaning that immigrants with foreign nationality were excluded in principle. A closer analysis of the share of immigrants included in Allensbach Institute interviews reveals that even naturalized immigrants and ethnic Germans from eastern Europe are not represented commensurately — a situation that presumably applies to surveys conducted by other polling institutes as well. This means the "public opinion" data collected thus far largely represents the views of the nonimmigrant-origin population. Integrating the immigrant-origin population into the samples of general opinion surveys is desirable.

Insufficient data regarding the immigrant-origin population in Germany is another problem that has to be resolved in the near future, since adequate policy decisions can only be made based on accurate information. Different sources provide data for variously defined immigrant populations in Germany. What is needed is a single source of data on immigrants in Germany, as well as additional, comprehensive data on the immigrant-origin population that goes beyond structural integration indices, such as attitudes, sentiments, and values.

Germany is a country in transition. The immigrant-origin population already comprises one-fifth

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<sup>22</sup> Allensbach Archives, IfD Survey 10018, March 2008.

<sup>23</sup> Institut für Sozialforschung and Wissenschaftszentrum für Sozialforschung gGmbH, *Integration in Deutschland. Erster Integrationsbericht: Erprobung des Indikatorensets und Bericht zum bundesweiten Integrationsmonitoring*. (Berlin, 2009), <http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Artikel/IB/Anlagen/>.

of the total population and will continue to grow at a faster pace than the native German population. The immigrant-origin population is changing German society, and policies will have to adapt to these changes rapidly, especially regarding education and access to the labor market. Integration policies are fairly new in Germany and surveys have shown that the general population does not attach great importance to the issue of integration.

There is no recent data evidence that negative sentiments toward immigrants might become stronger again, nor is there evidence as yet that the recent economic crisis has affected general perceptions of immigrants. In times of economic instability, there is a danger that integration policies might lose the significance and political weight they currently have. One of the major challenges facing policymakers will be to transfer the political discussion from an expert level to the general public and to convey the importance of this issue. Integration policies can only be implemented successfully if integration is defined and viewed as a task for all of society — in other words, for immigrants and native Germans alike.

## IX. About the Author

**Oya S. Abali** is employed by the Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, a private polling institute based in Allensbach, Germany, where she works on surveys of the immigrant population in Germany. Born in Turkey and possessing a binational Turkish-German background, Ms. Abali worked for the Conflict Prevention Network, a European Union-commissioned project based at the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik in Berlin from 1991 to 2001. She then joined the Körber Foundation in Hamburg, where she worked on the German-Turkish Dialogue, a project which fostered civil society dialogue between Turkey and Germany and grassroots initiatives involving Turkish immigrants in Germany. She joined the Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach in 2006. Her fields of interest include immigration and integration policies in Germany, the integration process of immigrants in Germany, Turkish foreign policy, and Turkey-European Union relations.

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