

# The Movers of Tomorrow?

How Young Adults in Europe Imagine and Shape the Future



**ALLIANZ  
FOUNDATION**

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# Foreword

## Welcome to the very first Allianz Foundation Next Generations Study.

Our mission at the Allianz Foundation is to enable better living conditions for the next generations. That is why we aim to empower, connect and understand those next generations. Our research activities – the Allianz Foundation Study series – play a key role in deepening our understanding by creating new basis of data and providing new insights for civil society, its funders and policymakers.

In this Allianz Foundation Next Generations Study we asked 10,000 young adults between the ages of 18 and 39 in Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland and United Kingdom about their visions for a livable future and what they are doing to help shape that future. Their answers surprised us. Young adults in Europe feel that their societies are in a state of transition and that they are in a waiting room to the future that is marked by profound uncertainties and a lack of leadership.

Young Europeans are united by their anxiety about the future. Eight out of 10 young adults question whether their generation should have children, and many believe their societies will become less equal, less safe and more divided. That outlook is deeply troubling, especially considering young adults' high level of mistrust of the government, organized civil society and other established institutions.

But there are also encouraging findings: The young adults in Generation Z and Y are much more similar than they are different. Above all, they want a secure, fair and climate-friendly society. Most are already taking individual action. But when it comes to amplifying their individual voices and joining others to pull together, much potential is yet to be tapped.

When young adults think about civic engagement, they often think of the risks and disadvantages.



This ultimately stops many of them joining forces and working together toward a common goal. As funders, we and our network partners are therefore encouraged to take young adults' concerns and the barriers to their getting involved more seriously.

Are young adults truly the "movers of tomorrow"? The final answer is not up to us. And so we invite you to read this study and decide for yourself and, more importantly, to use its actionable insights and join us in paving new ways toward civic engagement.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the research teams at the Allianz Foundation and the SINUS Institute as well as to the esteemed members of our research advisory board: Prof. Dr. Klaus Hurrelmann, Joanna Krawczyk, Elias Perabo, Patrizia Pozzo, Magid Magid and Niovi Zarampouka-Chatzimanou. Your commitment, insights and diverse perspectives have enriched the depth and quality of this timely research.

I hope the study makes stimulating reading and look forward to discussing its findings with you.

**Esra Küçük**  
CEO, Allianz Foundation

# Executive Summary

Young adults in Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland and the United Kingdom share a deep sense of anxiety about the future. Eight out of 10 openly question whether their generation should have children, as many believe their societies will become less livable in the future.

They feel that their countries are becoming less equal, less safe and more divided, and they want to have a say in how these issues and other pressing concerns are addressed.

But how are they making their voices heard? The vast majority are taking individual and everyday actions, such as voting and changing what they eat and how they shop and travel. However, only few of them have so far chosen to amplify their individual voices and exert more pressure on decision-makers through collective action, for example by joining a social movement.

To learn more about how young adults imagine and shape a livable future society, the Allianz Foundation commissioned the SINUS Institute with conducting a representative survey among 10,000 young adults (aged 18 to 39) in Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland and the UK – five countries that reflect Europe’s diverse realities on much-discussed issues such as minority rights, anti-democratic tendencies and climate action.

## The Future Young Adults Want

Although Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland and the UK differ in terms of their economic conditions, political landscapes and historical trajectories, the **young adults surveyed in these countries show more similarities than differences.** This “European” perspective also extends to what young adults see as a desirable future society.

- > Nearly three out of four strongly agree that a **robust social welfare state and an independent justice system** should be the fundamental building block of a future society.
- > Fifty-two percent of young adults seek a **fair and eco-friendly** future with equal opportunities for minorities and the less privileged, not only in education and employment, but also in sharing the responsibilities of the green transition.
- > **Strong democratic institutions**, including a free press and a participatory political system are prioritized by 47% of young adults.
- > Overall, there is less agreement among young adults when it comes to **personal wealth, military strength and traditional values.** While some identify these as a priority (35%), most do not. Personal wealth, in particular, is a highly divisive issue.

## The Future Young Adults Expect

By and large, young adults want to live in a future society that is safe, affordable, eco-friendly and fair. Yet, they feel that the conditions for building that future are under threat. Although there is some cautious optimism regarding ecological developments and opportunities for migrants and other minorities, in most other regards all five countries are expected to decline over the next 10 years.

## Green, Yet Less Equal

The trend about which young adults are most hopeful is climate action, for example promoting the use of renewable energies. The majority of young adults support today’s green transformation agenda and expect their countries to become more eco-friendly over the next 10 years. Close to two thirds feel cautiously hopeful that the fight against climate change can be won (except in Germany, where only 38% agree that that will be the case).

Besides this trend (though this is mostly not directly connected to climate action) many fear that the gap between rich and poor will grow (59%), in part due to rising energy, food and transportation costs, which two out of three young adults expect. These perceived risks likely explain why a robust social welfare state remains crucial for most.

## Militarized, Yet Less Safe

Young adults have conflicting feelings about their country’s ability to defend them from threats from beyond their national borders. Close to 60% of respondents agree that Russia’s war in Ukraine could spread to their country. Yet, about the same number rejects the idea of compulsory military service outright.

Despite their reluctance to serve in the military, many young adults expect their country’s armed forces to expand over the next 10 years (40% vs. 23% who think otherwise). However, this higher protective wall is not reassuring to them. In fact, more young adults agree than disagree that their countries will become less safe in the future, not only because of geopolitics but also because of an eroding justice system, which 30% predict, especially in Greece (41%) and Poland (37%).

## Generation Z vs. Millennials: Only Minor Differences

The focus of this study is on two generations of young adults: the so-called Generation Z (whose adult members are currently aged 18 to 26 years) and Generation Y, also known as Millennials (currently aged 27 to 39 years). In the coming years and decades, these young adults will shape the direction their countries take, and some are already doing so today.

More interest has recently been shown in understanding, comparing and contrasting each generation. This interest often comes with the temptation to label a given age cohort as uniformly “woke” and “climate anxious” (Generation Z) or as “self-absorbed” and “non-committal” (Millennials), just to name a few traits. However, our analysis shows that the differences between the two groups are mostly small, measuring only a few percentage points in the following areas:

- > Survey participants classified as Generation Z are, on average, slightly more optimistic about the future, slightly more concerned about the climate, diversity issues and social justice, slightly more willing to take civic action, yet slightly more willing to take risks.
- > The surveyed Millennials are, on average, slightly more concerned about freedom of the press somewhat more conservative when it comes to migration, slightly more conscious about traditional values, somewhat more concerned when it comes to energy and living costs and even more disappointed by the political leadership.

### Diverse, Yet More Divided

Despite their grim economic outlook many young adults expect the future to bring better opportunities for migrants, the LGBTQI+ community and other minority groups in particular. These opportunities extend beyond the job market to areas such as the education system. At the same time, notably more young adults agree than disagree that social cohesion will suffer in the years to come, and that the rift between different groups in society will widen.

These projected divisions can not only be attributed to an ongoing cultural shift from traditional to secular, individualistic values — which some embrace and others despise — as they also reflect deep disagreement over so-called wedge issues, especially those related to diversity. For example, while 69% of young adults, on average, support the right of same-sex couples to adopt children, only 39% do so in Poland.

### Deep Mistrust of Established Institutions

**Although 62% of young adults cope with these insecurities by remaining cautiously optimistic about their own personal future, young adults perceive their societies as being in a state of transition — in a waiting room to the future that is marked by profound uncertainties and in which the old ways of doing things no longer seem to work and new forms of “making” the future have yet to prove effective.**

These “old ways” apparently include the current policymaking processes: While young adults do acknowledge today’s politicians as de jure leaders, they also regard them with mistrust. For 55%, this mistrust runs so deep that they agree with the provocative statement that politicians are “puppets of powerful, shadowy elites.” In the same vein, industry is often regarded as a barrier to change, especially when it comes to the green transition. The mainstream media, too, are widely accused of pursuing their own agendas rather than reporting the facts.

Conversely, young adults express some excitement about old and new forms of grassroots politics, such as social movements, citizens’ initiatives and new collaborations with artists and the cultural sector. However, there is a gap between interest and participation. A total of 57% of young adults are in favor of street-level protest, yet most have never taken part in any.

## Room for Growth: Young Adults’ Civic Action

Most young adults want to have a say in their country’s future. And a clear majority of them already do have a say in individual ways, such as by voting and having political conversations. Yet, young adults are more hesitant when it comes to amplifying their individual voices and collectively pressuring decision-makers and the public.

### Individual Everyday Actions Preferred

Civic engagement has many faces — ranging from more formalized acts such as voting to more “hands-on” collective actions like joining a protest march to less visible everyday efforts like shopping and travelling in ways that are less harmful to people and the planet. While all modes of engagement can potentially impact policies and public sentiments, well-coordinated collective actions are often more effective.

On an individual level, a clear majority of young adults in all five countries are already active. Many vote (76%, on average), donate money or things (63%), boycott products with a bad ecological footprint (45%) and share their political opinions with those in their social circle and at work (60% and 44%, respectively).

Compared to these individual actions, team efforts are few and far between, though: **On average, more than 70% of young adults have never joined in a protest march or demonstration, and just as many have never participated in a citizens’ initiative — even though the majority of them call for more grassroots efforts. When addressing this ambivalence and asking about their willingness to get involved, about a quarter of the population express an interest in doing so — in addition to the 25% to 30% who are already active, thus growing the potential recruitment pool for collective action to about 50% of young adults in Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland and the UK, an invaluable asset for a resilient civil society.**

Yet, given young adults’ deep anxieties about their country’s future, these numbers beg the following questions:

- > Does their current involvement align with their concerns about pressing issues such as climate change, social inequality and material insecurity?
- > Are the current modes of engagement suitable for an age group which more than any other “lives” online and is used to being given ample opportunities for co-creation?
- > And, most importantly: Why do young adults take civic action? Why not?

### The Why: A Call of Duty and Personal Growth

In particular, young adults get involved when they sense a moral duty or a chance for personal growth. Forty-five percent say they invest their time, treasure and talent because they want to be sure, in the future, that they did everything they could, and about four out of 10 simply see it as their “duty” as citizens. For 41%, civic engagement is spurred by a desire for personal development, such as learning about conscious consumption or gaining new skills while planning a political event.

Across the five countries, young adults tend to prioritize purpose over personal gain. Many have moved toward civic engagement due to their profound worry about a specific problem. **Climate change, discrimination and racism exert a particular pull: Around 60% of those who are deeply concerned about one of these issues have already taken some form of action.**

### The Why Not: No Idea, No Desire, Too Risky

It cannot be assumed that all young adults want to get more involved in civic engagement but simply lack the knowledge and time (32% and 29%, respectively, identify these as major barriers). In fact, around 50% are either unwilling or unsure about going on a protest march, joining a citizens’ initiative or another form of collective action; one in four prefers not to talk about political issues and and one in eight does not plan to vote. Ever.

This reluctance does not always signify a lack of interest, but also a concern about the potential downsides of getting involved in hot-button issues: **Numerous young adults say they do not have the courage to take civic action, and between 54% and 69% agree that, in their country, doing so could expose them to several risks — including physical harm, hate speech (especially online) or even legal consequences.** While many can put up with conflicts with friends and family, stress and frustration, less than one third would be willing to face economic, physical or legal risks, even if they strongly believe in the cause.



### “Political Camps” As a Risk Factor and a Solution

The study identifies six types of civically engaged young adults across the five countries: Those who have, so far, taken little to no civic action can be allocated to three groups: Eleven percent belong to the politically left-leaning **Hesitant Progressives** who have yet to act on their pronounced concerns about environmental and social justice. Likewise, members of the sizable **Quiet Mainstream** (33%) are mostly inactive, but also less politically interested. Their counterparts to the right are the **Passive Traditionalists** (8%) who, despite their strong religious affiliations, are not particularly involved.

The other three groups comprise the civically engaged population. The largest is the **Proactive Center** (24%), whose affiliates are less driven by any particular issue, but are nonetheless willing to be involved. The youngest and most left-leaning group as well as the group with the highest overall level of civic engagement are the **Progressive Movers** (14%), who are strongly dedicated to climate action and the rights of disenfranchised groups, including migrants and the LGBTQI+ community. Their counterparts on the right are referred to as **Conservative Campaigners** (10%). The members of this group tend to promote traditional values and personal wealth. They are more organized and less afraid of physical violence or legal risks.

The juxtaposition between these **Progressive Movers** and the **Conservative Campaigners** alone indicates a potential for conflict that is fueled by deep disagreements over wedge issues such as migration. Nevertheless, each group also serves as a “safe space” for like-minded individuals, sheltering them from outside attacks by state authorities, online trolls and others who disagree with them. Thus, they also help mitigate the risks to which “their” people are exposed and thereby encourage civic engagement.

Although their contrasting ideological positions may suggest there is little room for constructive dialogue, the survey results indicate several windows of opportunity, as both groups show significant agreement on issues such as citizen participation, green infrastructure and work–family policies.

### The Movers of Tomorrow?

Are young adults truly the “movers of tomorrow”? The answer is “yes” — potentially. But they cannot single-handedly change the course their societies will take. Not least because of the risks and disadvantages that to this day prevent many young adults from getting involved.

To learn more about what exactly is needed to unleash the civic potential of young adults, the Allianz Foundation invited 78 leading voices from civil society, the arts and journalism to seven interactive Future Labs in seven European cities — Athens, Berlin, Istanbul, London, Palermo, Warsaw and Prizren in Kosovo. Valuable lessons emerged from them, including the need to craft more compelling change narratives, address burnout, create and defend safe spaces and foster dialogue among young adults, civil society and its public and private funders. All the insights and recommendations are detailed in the Allianz Foundation Future Labs report, which is available to download at [allianzfoundation.org/study](https://allianzfoundation.org/study).

## Country Highlights

The future outlook and civic actions of young adults in Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland and the UK are much more similar than they are different. However, although most major trends are common across the five countries, a few country specifics remain:



Germany

> Compared to their counterparts in the other countries, young adults in **Germany** attach greater significance to democratic institutions, particularly independent media, and less importance to economic growth and high-paying jobs. They lean more toward pacifism and are more likely to boycott products with a bad environmental footprint. Yet, they are also the most pessimistic about whether climate change can still be slowed down.



Greece

> Young adults in **Greece** have the lowest level of faith in government and the media and are most likely to turn to alternative forms of political expression, such as street-level protests and non-violent acts of civil disobedience. They are particularly anxious about fake news, an eroding justice system and other threats to democracy. And they are more likely to prioritize economic growth and wellbeing, but not at the expense of social justice or the environment.



Italy

> Young adults in **Italy** are the most pessimistic about the future in general and the most concerned about climate change. However, they are also slower to adjust their shopping habits and more concerned about maintaining economic growth. They have more faith in the EU than in their own political leadership. Citizens’ initiatives hold a particular appeal, with up to two thirds of young adults having either participated in one or planning to do so in the future.



Poland

> In **Poland**, young adults hold more conservative views and are more likely to stress the importance of a free press, independent courts and citizen participation. They are particularly concerned about the prospect of war and prioritize economic development over climate action. They are the most outspoken about their political views, especially on social media. Yet, they are also more likely to avoid taking civic action because they “lack courage” and worry about conflicts with family and friends.



United Kingdom

> Due, in part, to their ethnic and cultural diversity, young adults in the **UK** are more likely to express relatively progressive attitudes toward migration, yet they are also most likely to accept class differences. On average, young adults in the UK are the least worried about current social and economic developments and are least likely to take civic action. However, most still rank rising living costs as an urgent problem, as do about half in relation to climate change.

For more details, see the country briefings available at [allianzfoundation.org/study](https://allianzfoundation.org/study).



# 1 About the Study

**The Allianz Foundation Next Generations Study 2023** focuses on two generations of young adults: Generation Z (whose adult members are currently aged 18 to 26<sup>1</sup>) and Generation Y, also referred to as Millennials (currently aged 27 to 39).

In the coming years and decades, these young adults will shape the direction their countries will take. They will run for public office and will call the shots on factory floors, in schools and universities and on company boards; and they will raise the next generations of committed citizens.

Given young adults' pivotal role in the Europe of today and tomorrow, this study takes a closer look at how they imagine a future society and act to shape that future. The following three questions form the core of the study:

- > What kind of future society do young adults want to live in?
- > What kind of future society do they expect to live in?
- > What action do they take to help create the future they want — and why/why not?

To address these questions, the Allianz Foundation commissioned the SINUS Institute with conducting a study among young adults (aged 18 to 39) in Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland and the UK — five countries that reflect Europe's diverse realities on much-discussed issues such as minority rights, anti-democratic tendencies and climate action.

The countries were chosen based on their individual, measurable exposure to pressing risks affecting people, society and the planet: Germany's energy consumption causes more greenhouse gas emissions than most other European countries. The UK ranks a close second. In Italy and Greece, precarious work opportunities and unemployment present a serious risk for many young adults, especially migrants and other minorities. And comparative data confirm that political rights and civil liberties have been under attack in Poland (see Annex 1 for details).

The study was conducted in two phases. First, to ensure that the research addresses the real concerns of real people, young adults in the five countries were directly involved in focus group discussions. Documenting their future outlook and their experiences of civic engagement paved the way for the second phase: A representative survey, which was administered between September and November of 2022. The survey questionnaire was designed using young adults' true-to-life input from the focus groups, along with state-of-the-art research in the domains of civic engagement, social psychology and youth studies.<sup>2</sup>

The 10,000 survey respondents mirror the young adult populations in the five countries; or, to put it in more technical terms, the survey sample is representative of these populations along the variables of age, gender identity and education. This means that the attitudes, experiences and values reported by survey respondents closely approximate to those that are typical for the entire young adult population in the surveyed countries as well as population subgroups based on gender, ideological camp, etc.

Taking a representative sample of young adults is essential, as this study seeks to accurately portray those attitudes and actions that differentiate young adults from one another and those they share. That is why most findings in the report are presented in numerical form, for example "62% of young adults are optimistic about their own future."

The survey data were mostly analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques such as frequency distributions, cross-tabulations and various goodness-of-fit tests. In addition, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was used to detect salient patterns in the more than 2.6 million answers given by the young adults. Statistical links between their different responses were uncovered using multiple linear regression. [↗](#)

Ultimately, no individual can be reduced to a number. For this reason, the report includes quotes from the focus group discussions. These are not "representative" in the same way as the trends the study identifies; one person's thoughts, feelings and sense-making processes will never precisely mirror another's. However, by including these real-world experiences and personal views,

the study seeks to illustrate the diverse ways in which young adults encounter broader trends.

After providing further information about the survey respondents in section 2, the study takes a deep dive into the kind of future society young adults want to live in (section 3), the future they expect to live in (section 4) and their patterns of civic engagement, including the drivers of and barriers to their (in)action (section 5). To get a better understanding of the civic engagement landscape and the potentials inherent in them, sections 6 and 7 close by portraying six types of engaged and less engaged citizens while also addressing the study's main question: Are young adults really "the movers of tomorrow"?

[↗](#)  
See Annex 1  
for details.



# RESEARCH METHOD

## PHASE 1: ONLINE FOCUS GROUPS

Five focus groups were conducted to gain an initial insight into how young adults view and shape the future. The guided discussions lasted 90 minutes each and were conducted online in the local language.

### WHERE AND WHO?

Diverse group of 34 young adults (aged 18 to 39), i.e., 6 to 8 young adults per country



### WHEN?

27 June –  
4 July 2022

### WHAT?

- > Pressing social issues and leading actors
- > Visions for an ideal society
- > Scenario-building: What would it take to get there?
- > Civic engagement: Actions taken, actions considered, drivers and barriers, perceived risks

## PHASE 2: REPRESENTATIVE SURVEY

To validate the true-to-life input from the focus groups, a large-scale survey was carried out online. The survey sample mirrors the young adult populations in the five countries.

### WHERE AND WHO?



10,000 young adults (aged 18 to 39)

### WHAT?

- > Socio-demographic characteristics
- > The future young adults want
- > The future young adults expect
- > Who will lead the way to a desirable future?
- > Civic engagement: Actions taken, actions considered, drivers and barriers, perceived risks

### WHEN?

3 September –  
7 November 2022

10,000

young adults surveyed

19.1 m  
young adult population

10.7 m  
young adult population

21.8 m  
young adult population

2.6  
million answers

13.7 m  
young adult population

2.5 m  
young adult population

312

survey questions and subquestions



## 2 Today's Young Adults

Despite popular attempts to define younger generations based on one or a few traits, it is crucial to remember how diverse and complex any group of people really is. Within any population, different subgroups can have vastly different views, experiences and ways of behaving and interacting.

Thus, to lay the groundwork for the following analysis, this section first provides a deeper understanding of the young adults under study, in particular their

- > **demographic details:** How old are they? What is their level of education? Where do they live?
- > **political beliefs and concerns:** Where would they say they are on the political spectrum? What are their attitudes toward various much-discussed political issues?

This information not only lays the foundation for the subsequent analysis, it also provides a first glimpse of who the survey respondents are and what moves them.

In terms of their **age** distribution, the young adult populations in Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland and the UK are very similar: The Millennial generation, which includes all respondents between the ages of 27 and 39, is slightly larger than the adult members of Generation Z, whose age range is somewhat smaller, i.e., 18 to 26.

**Gender identification** is evenly split across all the countries, with about 1% of respondents citing a gender identity other than female or male.

When it comes to **education**, 52% of young adults across all the five countries have completed specialized training programs for specific jobs, such as mechanic or bank clerk, here referred to as a vocational level of education. Smaller

percentages have either only completed basic schooling (20%) or have attained higher academic qualifications (28%).

The young adults surveyed can also be distinguished by where they or their parents were born, where they currently live and what religion they identify with, if any. Some differences between the five countries are noticeable here.

As for **place of residence**, in Germany, Italy, Poland and the UK, the surveyed young adults are relatively evenly spread across large cities, medium-sized towns, and villages and rural areas, whereas nearly half in Greece live in a large city. This mirrors the actual population distribution in Greece, where the Athens and Thessaloniki metropolitan areas make up around 45% of the total national population.<sup>3</sup>

**Migration background** — defined here as having been born outside one's country of residence or having at least one parent who was born abroad — also varied, ranging from 2% in Poland to 11% in Italy to 20% in Greece, 24% in the UK and 25% in Germany.<sup>4</sup> Another area in which there are differences is **religious affiliation**. In the UK and Germany, non-believers make up close to half of the young adult population and form the largest single group within the population. By contrast, respondents identifying as Christian make up over 50% of the sample in Italy and over 70% in Poland and Greece (see Fig. 4).

See Annex 1.

<sup>3</sup> See Mouratidis, K. & Yiannako, A. (2021). COVID-19 and Urban Planning: Built Environment, Health, and Well-being in Greek Cities Before and During the Pandemic. *Cities*, 121(16), 103491.

<sup>4</sup> For a critical discussion of the concept of "migration background," see Vietze, J. et al. (2023). Beyond 'Migrant Background.' *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 38, 389–408.

FIG. 1: AGE

# HOW OLD ARE YOU?

**Generation Z**  
18 to 26 years old

**Millennials**  
27 to 39 years old

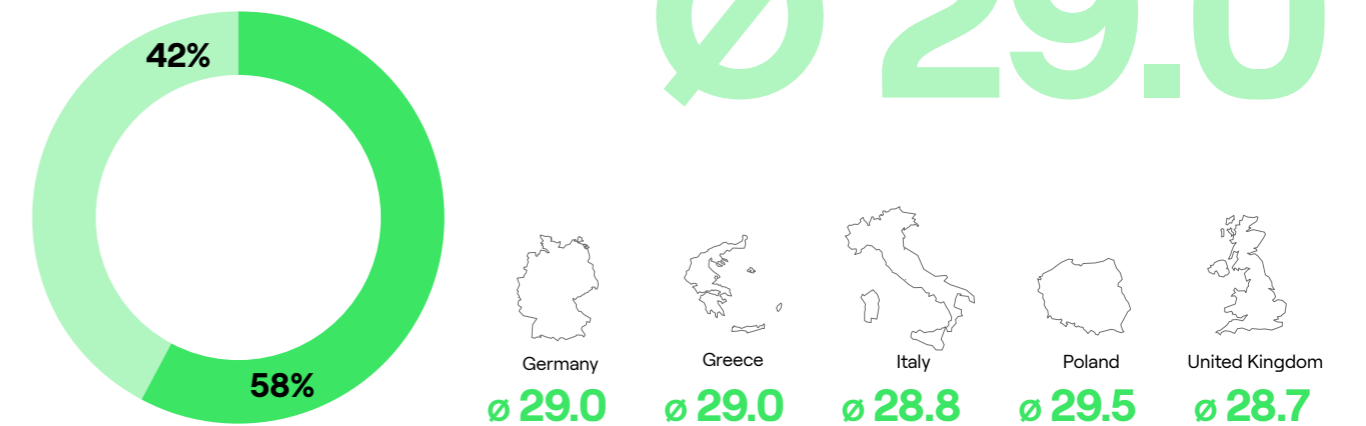


FIG. 2: GENDER

# ARE YOU ...

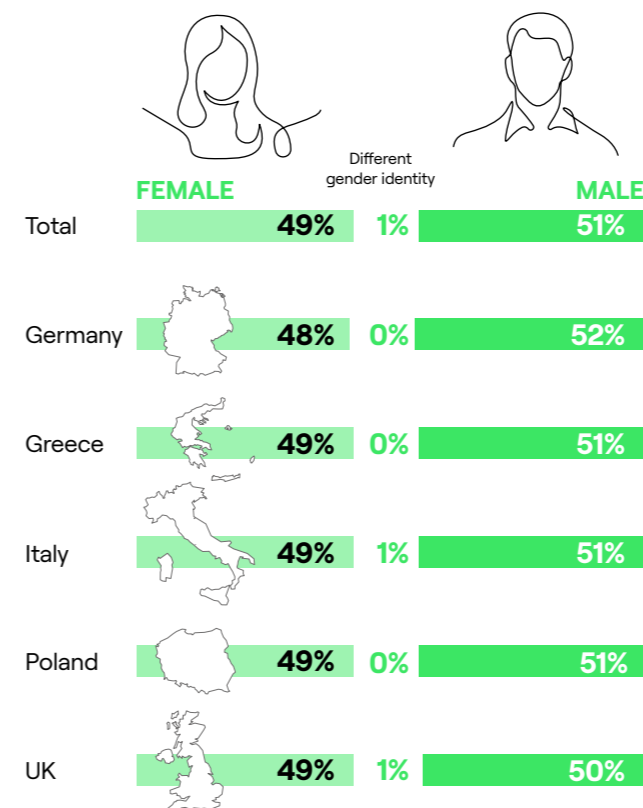


FIG. 3: EDUCATION

# WHAT IS YOUR LEVEL OF EDUCATION?

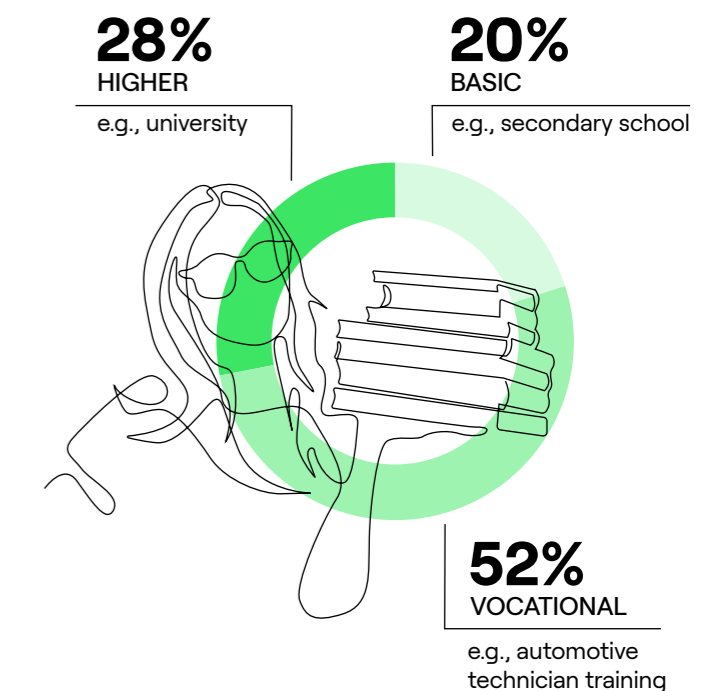
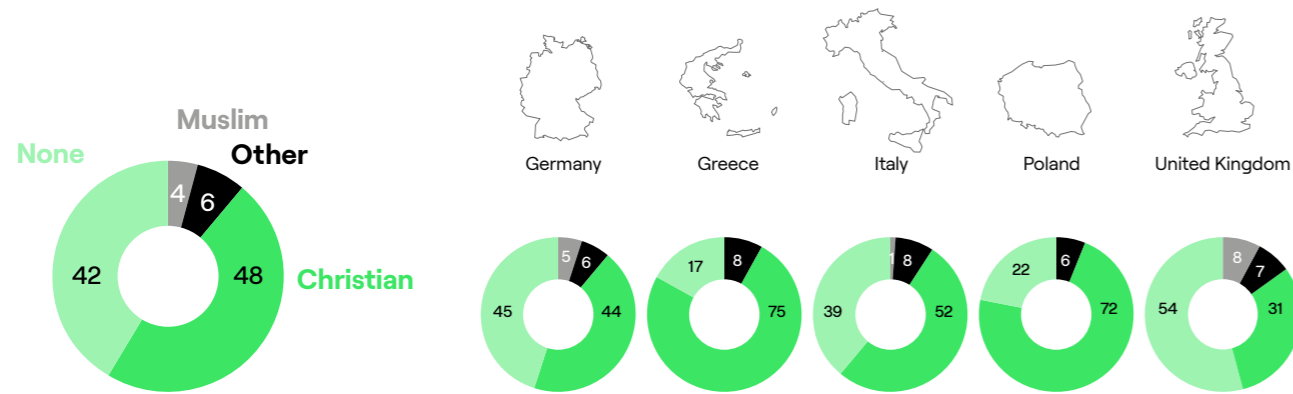


FIG. 4: RELIGION, IN %

# DO YOU IDENTIFY AS A MEMBER OF A PARTICULAR RELIGION?



In terms of their **political beliefs**, most young adults place themselves in the political center. When asked to position themselves on a left-right scale, the survey reveals a slight tendency toward the left in Germany and Italy and a minor tendency toward the right in Poland (Fig. 5).

**Political attitudes and orientations are often more complex than can be captured along the traditional left-right political spectrum.** Thus, to add more nuance to this established measure, young adults were asked to state the extent to which they agree or disagree with a diverse and sometimes provocative set of political statements (see Fig. 6 and 8). They were given four options: They could either “agree completely,” “somewhat agree,” “somewhat disagree” or “disagree completely.”<sup>6</sup>

**The data show that young adults in all countries and ideological camps are united by profound social and ecological concerns as well as by their belief in a greener future. These shared concerns and beliefs often transcend population subgroups and traditional notions of “the left” and “the right.”**

This simple left-right scale has consistently proven useful in the social sciences for approximating people’s basic political orientation. It is a well-known tool that can help predict which political party someone supports, how they vote and what other political action they engage in.<sup>5</sup> The findings at hand broadly echo those of the most recent European Social Survey, on which the left-right scale used in the questionnaire was based.

Political tendencies and attitudes differ somewhat along national and sociodemographic lines. Religious respondents in all five countries are more likely to affiliate themselves with the right. There is also a small but consistent gender effect: Male respondents are somewhat more likely to be right-leaning, and female and gender-diverse respondents are more likely to be left-leaning. Education, on the other hand, appears to play a different role across the various countries. In Germany and Italy, for instance, it is less educated respondents who tend to be right-leaning, whereas in the UK it is the better-educated respondents who are.

<sup>5</sup> Knutson, O. (1995). Value Orientations, Political Conflicts and Left-Right Identification: A Comparative Study. *Journal of Peace Research*, 28(1), 63–93.

<sup>6</sup> Many of the political statements were derived directly and at times verbatim from the focus group discussions conducted prior to the survey with young adults in the five countries. For more information on this mixed-methods approach, see Annex 1.

FIG. 5: POLITICAL ORIENTATION

# WHICH POLITICAL CAMP DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN?

Note: Respondents were asked to locate themselves on a 10-point-scale, ranging from 0 = far left to 10 = far right.

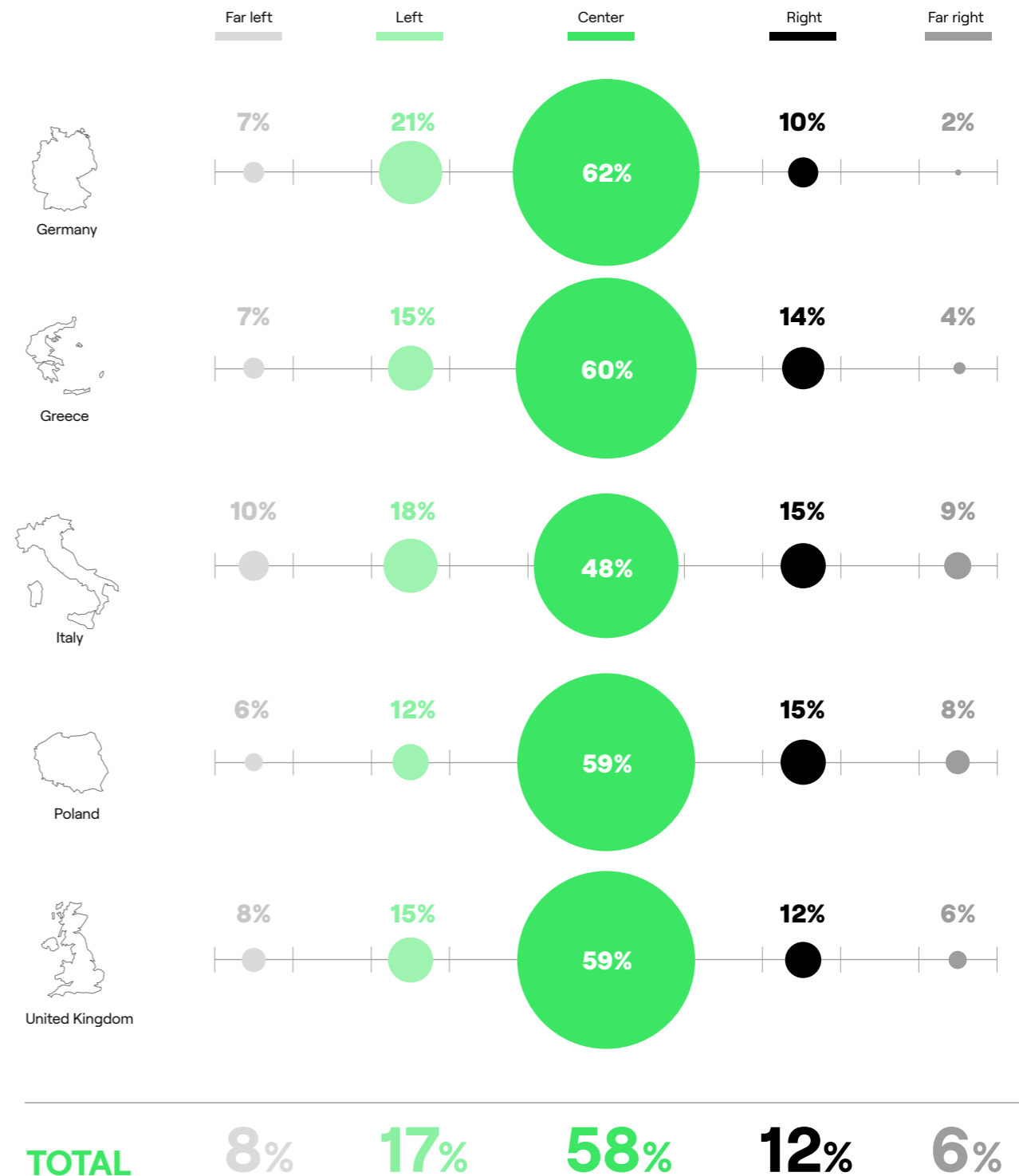
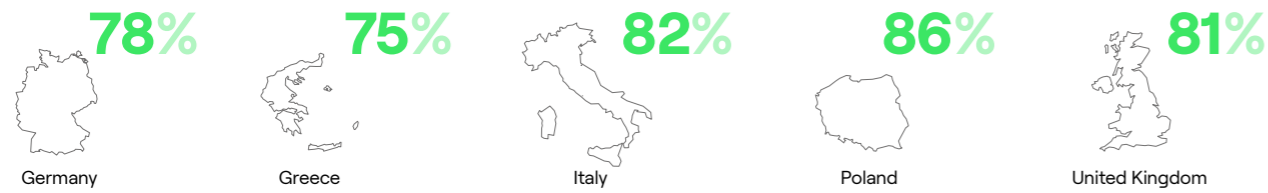


FIG. 6: POLITICAL STATEMENTS

In times like these, I understand when people hesitate to have children.



**81%**  
AGREE



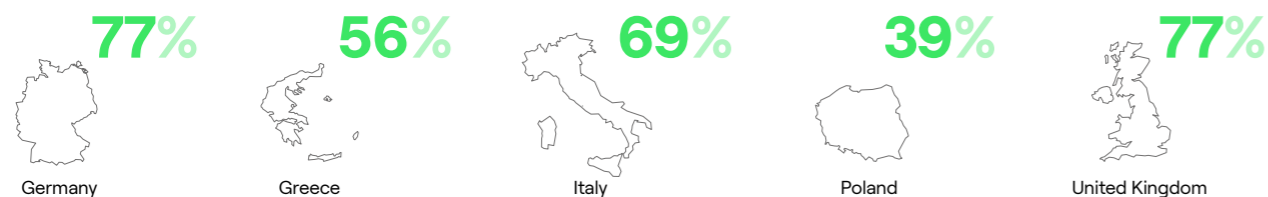
If you migrate to a country you must fit in with the majority population there.



Couples of the same sex/ gender should be allowed to adopt children.



**69%**  
AGREE



Due to migration, it is outdated to think that countries in Europe have a single national culture.



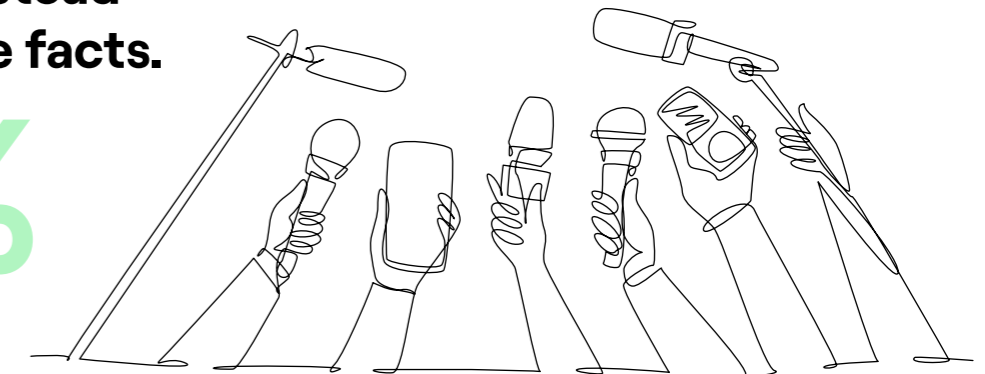
**53%**  
AGREE



We should be grateful for leaders telling us exactly what to do.



The media pursue their own interest instead of reporting the facts.



**70%**  
AGREE



### Issues That Unite Young Adults

The vast majority of young adults in Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland and the UK agree that "in times like these, I understand when people hesitate to have children." No other statement elicited as much agreement across the five countries as this one, with 81% agreeing "somewhat" or "strongly." This could reasonably be seen as an (emerging) expression of existential concern among young adults, a shared anxiety that cuts across national borders and traditional political divisions. Other attitudes and beliefs many young adults converge on are the following:

> **Mistrust of "representative" institutions:** The majority of young adults in all five countries "somewhat agree" or "strongly agree" that the media pursue their own interests rather than report the facts, and the majority in all the countries except Germany believe that politicians primarily serve the interests of the elites rather than ordinary citizens.

- > **Ambivalent attitudes toward migration:** Close to three out of four respondents in all five countries believe that migrants should try to adapt to the norms of the country they live in. However, in all countries except Germany, a slight majority also think that migration means uniform national cultures have become an outdated concept.
- > **A desire to re-empower "ordinary people":** The majority of young people in all five countries show an interest in having a universal basic income as a social corrective, and the majority in all five countries except the UK believe that in times of crisis ordinary people should take to the streets.
- > **An apparent lack of community and cohesion:** Young adults in the four Continental European countries tend to regard social cohesion in their own countries and Europe as poor. Their UK peers have a slightly brighter outlook, both on their own country and on Europe (see Fig. 7).

FIG. 7: SOCIAL COHESION, IN %

## HOW WOULD YOU ASSESS THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY ...

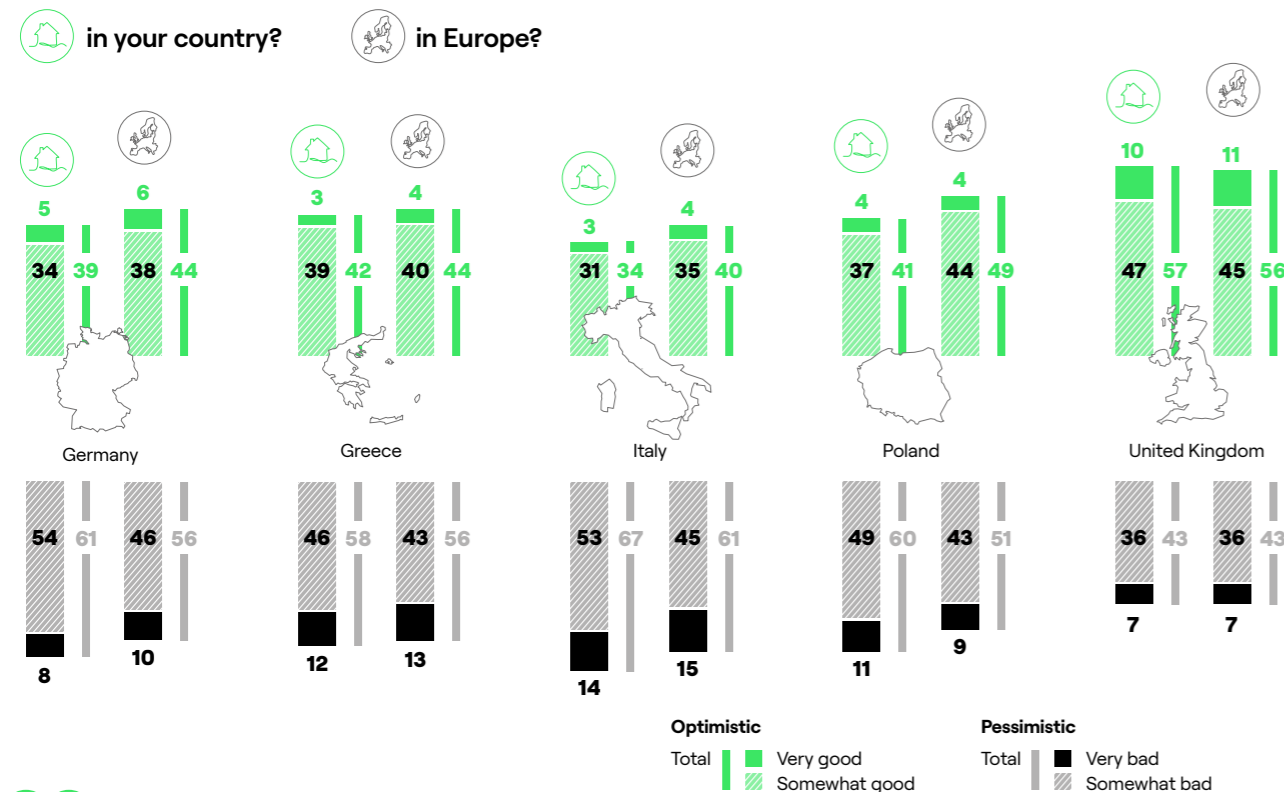
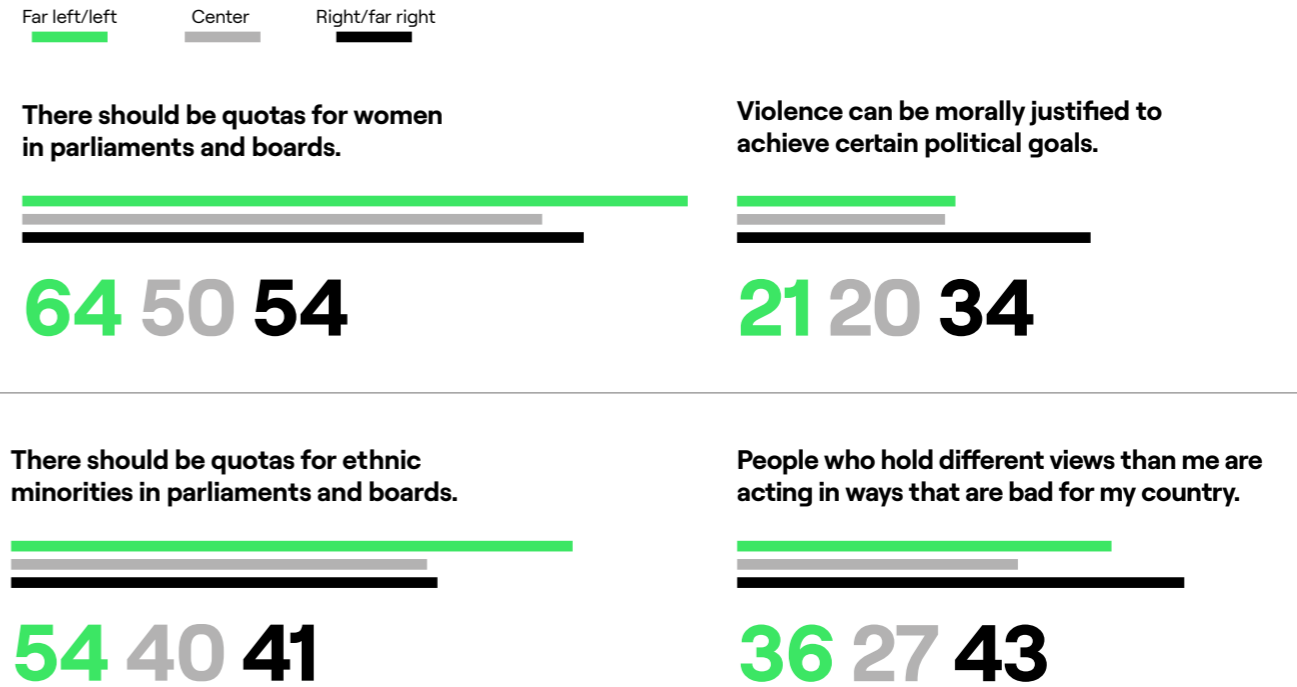


FIG. 8: POLITICAL STATEMENTS, BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION, % OF YOUNG ADULTS WHO AGREE



### Issues That Divide Young Adults

Despite these parallels, there is no consensus across the board. When examining young adults' wide range of opinions on certain political issues, clear patterns related to left-wing and right-wing politics and demographics also emerge, both within and across countries. This is especially true of attitudes to "controversial" topics such as **LGBTQI+** rights and the moral acceptability of authoritarianism and political violence. Here, the survey shows a number of splits along familiar political lines:

- > Across all five countries, young adults who affiliate themselves with the political left are significantly more likely to agree that couples of the same sex/gender should be allowed to adopt children (84% vs. 53% who lean to the right). Only in Poland, where more respondents tended to lean politically to the right, does a slight majority disagree.
- > Left-leaning respondents are also more likely to agree that there should be quotas for women in parliaments and on company boards (64% vs. 54% who are right-leaning) and for ethnic minorities (54% vs. 41%). Female and gender-diverse respondents and those

who have experienced discrimination echo this opinion (note that these subgroups are generally more likely to be left-leaning, too).

- > Young adults who lean to the right, on the other hand, are more likely to support "strong" leaders (34% vs. 19% of left-leaning respondents) and have a greater willingness to accept politically-motivated acts of violence (34% vs. 21% who are left-leaning). While these attitudes are still confined to the minority of right-leaning respondents, they do indicate an increased propensity toward authoritarianism within this section of the young adult population.

**LGBTQI+**  
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and other sexual orientation and/or gender identity

This first set of analyses of young adults and their political attitudes lays the foundation for the subsequent investigation of their outlook on the future (sections 3 and 4) and their civic engagement (section 5). As elaborated in the above, the political left-right scale, supplemented by targeted political questions, is used in the following sections to help illustrate the young adults' diverse and at times divergent responses.



# 3 The Future Young Adults Want

No study on young generations can do without exploring their opinions about the future. This section does exactly that by looking at the future society young adults want to live in (3.1) and how optimistic or pessimistic they feel about the future (3.2).

The answers given by young adults in Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland and the UK are often strikingly similar and present more of a “European” perspective than a solely national one. Thus, the focus was placed on major trends that apply to all five countries. Specific details relating to an individual country are mentioned only when they stand out significantly from the rest.

Likewise, population subgroups such as highly-educated respondents are only mentioned when their answers are noticeably different from the rest. Notably, the answers given by Generation Z and Millennials do not differ much — either from one another or from the “average” young adult. By contrast, more significant distinctions emerge between young adults who are on the political left vs. those who are on the political right, thus further enriching the nuanced description of ideological variances explored in the previous section.

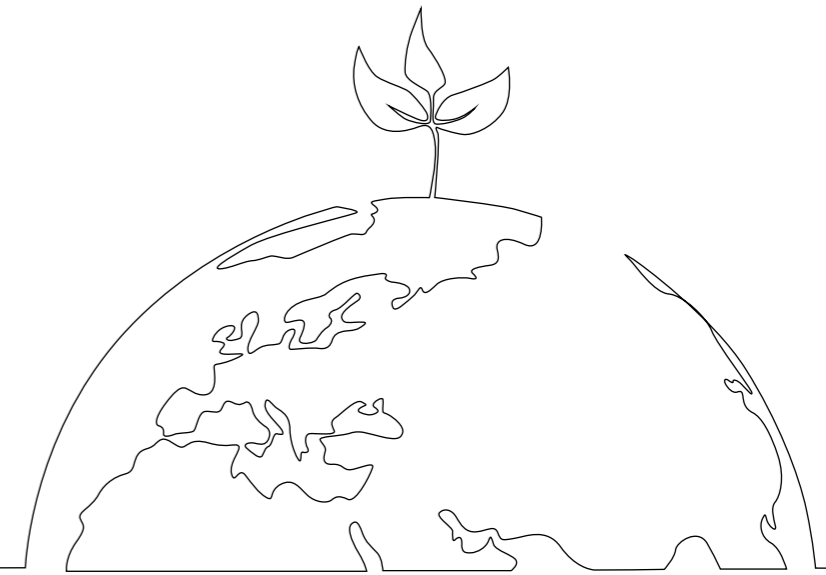
## 3.1 Priorities

One striking finding of this study is that eight out of 10 young adults in Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland and the UK agree that “In times like these I understand when people hesitate to have children.” How does this provocatively large figure come about?

In brief, young adults appear to feel that the conditions needed for a good quality of life and a livable society are under threat. This conclusion is based on comparing (a) the future young adults say they want with (b) the future they expect over the next 10 years. This section focuses on what future young adults want, specifically what factors they believe make a good quality of life possible.

An in-depth statistical analysis shows that in the five countries a desirable future can be described and ranked along the following four dimensions:

- > Top priority: Security and affordability — on average 71% of respondents regard these aspects as very important
- > High priority: A living planet and social justice — on average 52%
- > Medium priority: Strong democratic institutions — on average 47%
- > Ambivalent priority: Personal wealth, military strength and traditional values — on average 35%



## Detecting Future Priorities in the Data

An analytical procedure to reduce complexity was used to find patterns among the many priorities expressed by the thousands of survey respondents. First, a total of 21 aspects of a good life in society were identified based on the focus group discussions with young adults in all five countries. Second, survey participants were prompted to assess all 21 aspects as either “very important,” “somewhat important,” “not very important” or “not important at all.” Third, Principal Component Analysis (PCA), a statistical technique used to simplify complex data, was used to find patterns in the more than 200,000 data points generated by this one survey question alone.

The analysis yielded four dimensions of desirable futures, which can be thought of as clusters of interrelated answers and priorities. Each dimension is relatively independent of the others, meaning a given respondent can in principle ascribe importance to one, several or all dimensions without contradicting themselves. For more details, see Annex 1.

In all five countries, the future favored by most might be provocatively summarized as “the market won’t save us.” Or, in more plain terms, neoliberal objectives such as free market competition or personal wealth are rarely a priority. Instead, security and affordability are the requisite conditions for a good life and a livable society for a very clear majority of young adults.

These conditions span the economic and broader social domains — from low living costs to reliable health and social welfare systems to a good work-life balance and an independent judiciary. In other words, young adults want a robust social welfare state with a people-centered economy that is backed by the rule of law. Significantly, this is the dimension on which there was the most consensus across national borders and population subgroups. However, as will be shown in detail in section 4, many respondents assess these dimensions as being increasingly under threat, as they expect economic wellbeing and security to get worse over the next 10 years.

Reversing this (expected) trend is seen as more urgent than the fight against climate change or any other concern. While this is undoubtedly partly due to the high rates of inflation prevalent during the survey fieldwork period, it also reflects a profound dissatisfaction with longer-term trends.

See Table 4 in Annex 2.



# The future young adults want

# 71%

OF YOUNG ADULTS VIEW THESE ASPECTS AS "VERY IMPORTANT" FOR THE FUTURE THEY WANT

## Top priority: Security and affordability

### ESPECIALLY:

- > independent courts
- > strong social safety net
- > good work-life balance
- > low crime and safe public spaces
- > affordable rent, food, transportation



# 52%

"VERY IMPORTANT"

## High priority: A living planet and social justice

### ESPECIALLY:

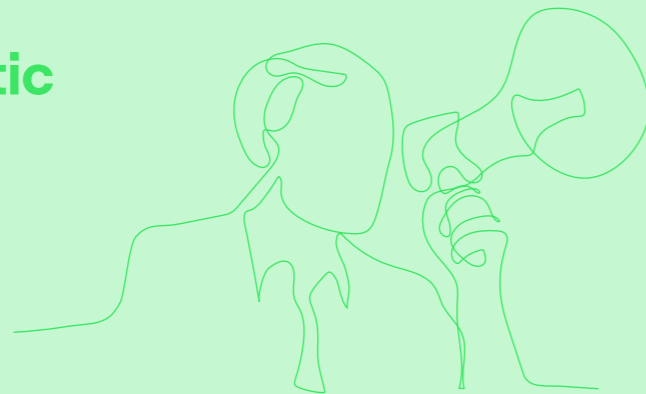
- > less waste
- > low inequality
- > carbon neutrality
- > equal opportunities for minorities



## Medium priority: Strong democratic institutions

### ESPECIALLY

- > independent media
- > citizen participation in politics
- > separation between the state & religion



# 47%

"VERY IMPORTANT"

## An ambivalent priority: Personal wealth, military strength and traditional values

# 35%

"VERY IMPORTANT"



- ### ESPECIALLY
- > strong military
  - > personal wealth
  - > national traditions

These uncertainties are likely linked to many young adults' desire for a feeling of security, which is reflected in the following quotes from the focus groups:

**"Inflation has started. So far, it's okay, but I think this is just the beginning. Things will develop even more. And I think this will be one of the most important things for the next five years in Poland, which will be considered a big problem."**

Focus group participant in Poland

**"Medical care and support in old age will be an issue. Not only that, but the minimum age limit for pensions will be raised further, and then we could only all retire much, much later."**

Focus group participant in Germany

**"When you listen to the news, and you hear that some person beat up another. Then you tell yourself, what if I go outdoors? What will happen to me?"**

Focus group participant in Greece

### High Priority: A Living Planet and Social Justice

For a slight majority of young adults (52%), a good future is a fair and eco-friendly future. However, "fairness" is often in the eye of the beholder. Although nearly all young adults see fairness as a critical aspect of a good life and a society worth living in, there is some disagreement about what is considered "just" or "fair."<sup>7</sup>

The response patterns show that on both sides of the political spectrum fairness often means ensuring equal opportunities. Many — especially those on the right — reject the idea of outside interference to ensure equal outcomes. And even more so, laissez-faire practices, i.e., leaving things to take their own course, are often viewed as unfair, especially by those on the left.<sup>8</sup>

> **Equal opportunities:** Nearly six out of ten of the young adults surveyed "strongly agree" that a society is fair when everyone has the same chances of achieving the level of education they want and getting a job they are qualified for. Left-leaning respondents are significantly more likely to strongly agree (70% and 69%, respectively), but the majority on the

right concur as well (54% and 52%), emphasizing that more often than not young adults agree that fairness means equal opportunities.

> **Equal outcomes:** Young adults feel ambivalent about the fairness of equal outcomes. Most, for example, believe that a society in which "hard-working people" earn more is fairer than a society in which income and wealth are equally distributed. This opinion is more often shared by right-leaning respondents, who are also more likely to disagree that a fair society should take care of the poor regardless of what they give back (22% disagree vs. 12% on the left).

> **Laissez-faire:** The fairness statements with which young adults are least likely to agree have to do with "letting things be" or outcomes that are largely outside the control of individuals or society. For example, only 8% "strongly agree" that families with a high social status should enjoy privileges. Right-leaning respondents are almost twice as likely to agree with that statement (15%).

In the same way as notions of fairness differ, respondents have different responses to how to ensure a just transition toward a climate-friendly society. On the one hand, a majority prioritizes

- > safeguarding and improving access to nature (62%),
- > adapting to climate change (57%) and
- > promoting a less wasteful lifestyle (56%).

These calls for more climate action are not partisan in nature. For instance, access to nature is deemed very important by a clear majority of left-leaning (67%) and right-leaning respondents (58%).

On the other hand, the question of who is to pay for the necessary protection and adaptation measures draws varying views on what is considered to be "fair."

<sup>7</sup> Survey questions on justice and fairness were developed based on prior research, especially the European Social Survey, and complemented by a set of novel questions on climate justice.

<sup>8</sup> Here, too, Principal Component Analysis was used to find patterns in what young adults perceive as fair.

Other actors are assigned more responsibility here: **Young adults are in no doubt that industry should pay more to support the fight against climate change on account of its higher energy consumption: Across all surveyed countries around 79% or more share this opinion. More than half of all respondents also agree that a society is fair when people with higher incomes pay more to fight climate change.**

believed — though not necessarily on the degree of political urgency.

**“Climate change increases the need to emigrate, because if it goes this way, then in a while in Greece and in some other countries, it will simply not be possible to live and function, and people will have to move elsewhere.”**

Focus group participant in Poland

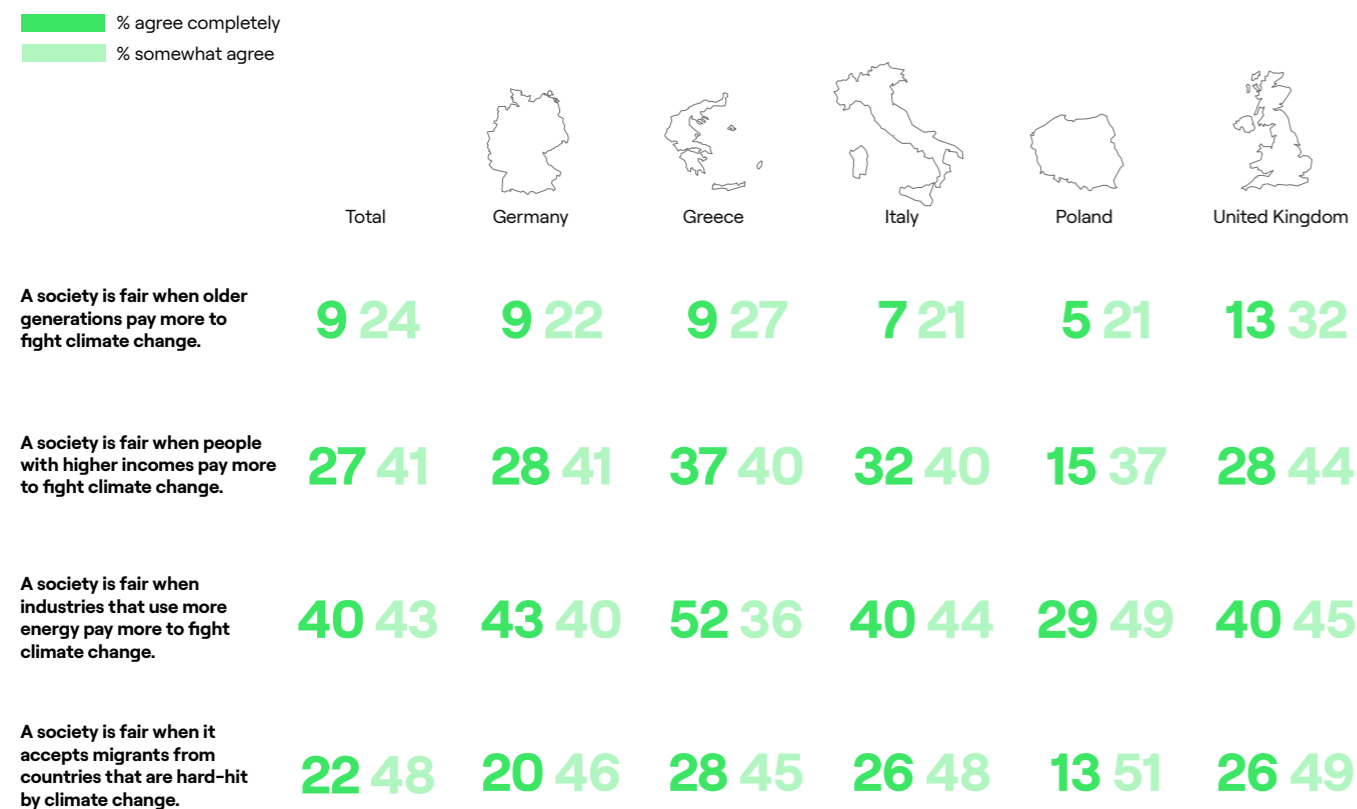
Contrary to numerous opinions,<sup>9</sup> most young adults do not consider the Baby Boomer generation<sup>10</sup> to be the one causing or resolving the looming climate crisis. On average, only 9% of young adults in the five countries “strongly agree” that the older generation should pay more to fight climate change.

Overall, calls for climate justice are voiced more forcefully by the political left. Left-leaning young adults are not only more likely to agree that energy-intensive industries and high earners should pay more to support the green transition. They are also more likely to agree that a society is fair when it accepts migrants from countries that are hard hit by climate change (85% agree “strongly” or “somewhat”). However, it is notable that a slight majority (60%) of the right-leaning respondents even agree with the latter more traditionally “left-coded” statement. This suggests there is more consensus among ideological camps on the moral fundamentals of climate action than is commonly

<sup>9</sup> Lackey, B. (2019, September 30). What Millennial Climate Activists Could Learn from Their Parents. After Greta Thunberg Accused Baby Boomers of ‘Betrayal.’ Daily Mail Online.

<sup>10</sup> As the name suggests, Baby Boomers were born during Europe’s “baby boom,” a period of high birthrates in the middle of the 20th century.

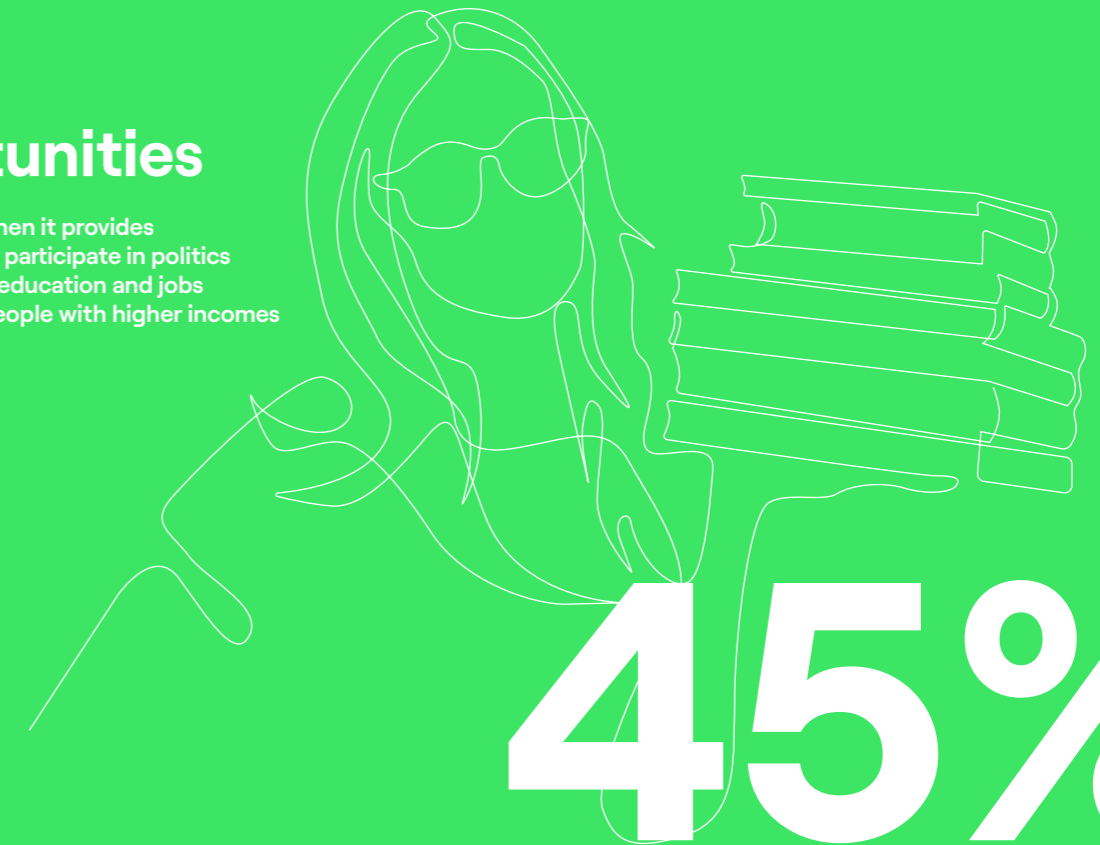
FIG. 9: ATTITUDES TOWARD CLIMATE JUSTICE, IN %



# What is fair?

## Equal opportunities

A society is fair when it provides  
 > many options to participate in politics  
 > equal access to education and jobs  
 > hard-working people with higher incomes

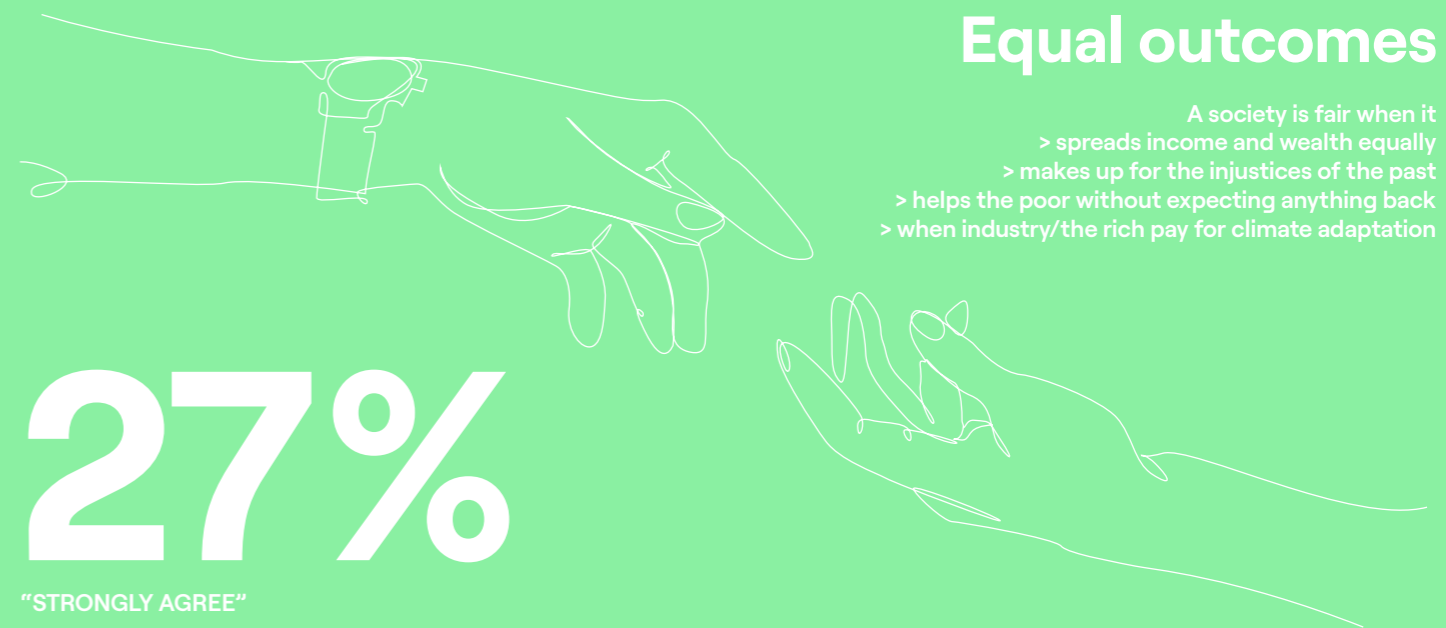


# 45%

OF YOUNG ADULTS “STRONGLY AGREE”

## Equal outcomes

A society is fair when it  
 > spreads income and wealth equally  
 > makes up for the injustices of the past  
 > helps the poor without expecting anything back  
 > when industry/the rich pay for climate adaptation



# 27%

“STRONGLY AGREE”

## Laissez-faire

A society is fair when it  
 > affords privileges to a select few  
 > ensures that “people get what they deserve”



# 13%

“STRONGLY AGREE”

**Medium Priority: Strong Democratic Institutions**

A strong and resilient democracy rests on the fundamental pillars of the free press, free and fair elections and the separation of political powers, among other things. The separation of state and organized religion is also fundamental to most European democracies. Taken together with other aspects such as the rule of law, these democratic institutions safeguard people's rights and ensure effective governance. Around half of young adults see these institutions as "very important" to realizing the future they want. Another 37% regard them as "somewhat important."

Democratic institutions are slightly more important for respondents who affiliate themselves with the left. While more than half of left-leaning adults see the separation between (organized) religion and the state as "very important," only one in three respondents on the right concurs.

A good part of the young adult population in all five countries is very concerned about fake news (41%), the erosion of judicial systems (36%) and political extremism (36%). This is particularly the case in Greece and Poland, where well over half of young adults worry a great deal about media manipulation and the independence of the courts. These concerns are likely a reflection of anti-democratic developments in these two countries over the past decade.<sup>11</sup>

It must also be acknowledged that there are significant parts of the population that appear to be indifferent about certain threats to democratic institutions. Close to one quarter of respondents do not consider political extremism as currently problematic, and 21% are hesitant to call fake news and media manipulation a concern. Here are two focus group participants who beg to differ:

**"Something that is very important to me is democracy, which I think is potentially at risk."**

Focus group participant in the UK

**"[It is important that] laws are in force, but if there are lawyers who can find a loophole, then laws are valid for the poor, not for the rich. If laws are in force for everybody, things can change for the better."**

Focus group participant in Greece

**Ambivalent Priority: Personal Wealth, Military Strength and Traditional Values**

Fewer young adults regard aspects such as individual wealth, national military power and traditional values as critical to a desirable future society. Although around half regard high-paying job opportunities (54%) and high economic growth (47%) as very important, less than one in 10 prioritizes a luxurious lifestyle, indicating a wider preference for social welfare (as mentioned in the above) over the opportunity for individuals to amass wealth.

Respect for tradition and heritage and the maintenance of a strong military are "very important" to approximately one in three respondents. The partisan nature of these priorities is clear: Young adults who identify with the political right place significantly more weight on tradition and heritage (52%) and a strong military (43%) than those who lean to the left (20% and 19%, respectively).

The conclusion that tradition and heritage are of critical importance to a comparatively smaller proportion of young adults is reflected in the finding that as few as 23% express a clear concern about these aspects being under threat.

As with inflation, the timing of the survey should be taken into account when interpreting some respondents' perceived need for a strong military. This topic is clearly linked to Russia's war in Ukraine, which had already been ongoing for some time and dominating news cycles during the fieldwork period. At the time, the majority of respondents (58%) shared the opinion that the war could easily spread to their country (though only 18% were fully convinced that was the case). Notably, a majority in all five countries feared this scenario – and not just in Poland, which is close geographically to Ukraine.

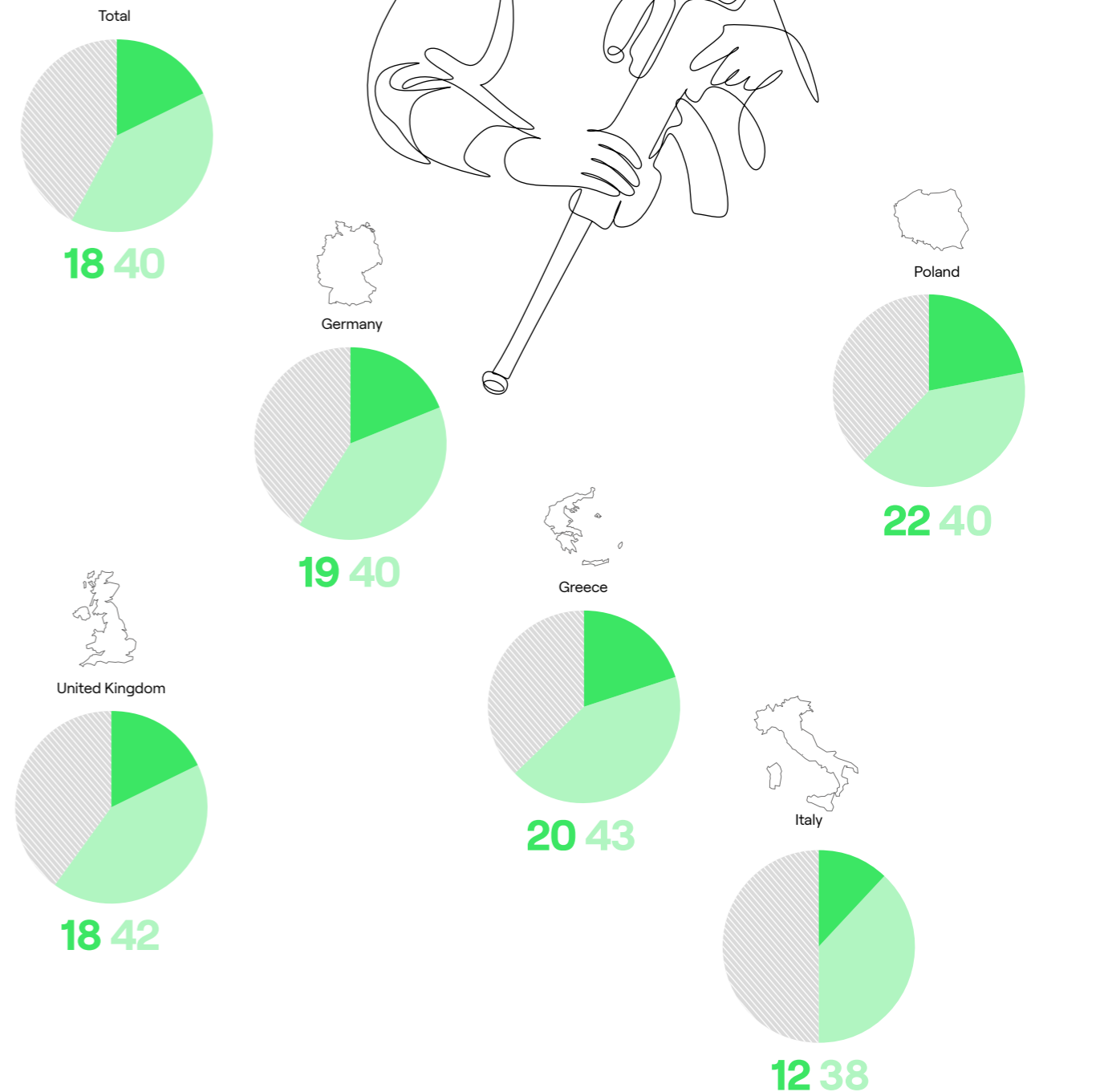
**"The war in Ukraine is probably the most disturbing thing. A war in Europe, you know, in our lifetimes, you probably wouldn't have imagined it in your wildest nightmares."**

Focus group participant in the UK

FIG. 10: ATTITUDES TOWARD WAR, IN %

**The war in Ukraine could easily spread to my country.**

■ % agree completely  
■ % somewhat agree



See Table 4 in Annex 2.

<sup>11</sup> Reporters without Borders (2023). World Press Freedom Index. RSF and Freedom House (2023). Freedom in the World 2023. Freedom House.



### 3.2 Optimism About the Future

12 Carver, C. et al. (2010). Optimism. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 30(7), 879-889.

Given young adults' high level of concern about many social and environmental issues, it is striking that they have not become overly pessimistic about their own personal future. In fact, many express a positive attitude. This can be interpreted as a "coping optimism."<sup>12</sup> In other words, the future of their country might not look too bright and the road ahead might be steep, but the majority of young adults appear confident that they will overcome the obstacles in their own way. For some, this also includes the option of emigrating to another country, especially in Greece, where 48% of young adults say they worry about what the ongoing brain drain is doing to their country.

**At least half of the young population in all the countries surveyed have a positive outlook on their own future.**

Young Brits (68%) and Greeks (66%) are the most optimistic about their own future, followed by Poles (63%), Germans (62%) and Italians (50%).

**"Poland doesn't seem like a viable option for me to live in. Looking ahead, I'm thinking about other options, such as emigration."**

Focus group participant in Poland

However, most respondents share a darker outlook on the future of their countries, Europe and the world. Italians were particularly pessimistic about all three.

**Demographic trends in relation to optimism can be made out across all five countries. On average, young men, migrants and those with a religious affiliation express the brightest outlook on the future.**

Generally speaking, young men – across all surveyed countries – are more likely to be optimistic. This is particularly true when it comes to assessing their own country's future. In Poland and Italy, gender differences are particularly striking (37% and 31% of young men are optimistic about Poland's and Italy's future, respectively, vs. 23% and 20% of women and gender-diverse respondents, respectively).

Ideological factors also appear to play a role. Young right-leaning adults are more optimistic in all respects than those who are left-leaning, but particularly as regards their country's future (47% vs. 29%, respectively). Right-leaning respondents are also more optimistic about their own future, but the gap is somewhat smaller, at 67% vs. 56% of left-leaning young adults. It is worth noting that there are no significant differences in terms of optimism when one compares the survey data on groups with different levels of education.

**"My concern is our political landscape is moving and there are more authoritarian regimes coming up across the world. And I think there is a real risk, especially with what Russia is doing at the moment, that China is waiting for an opportunity. And I think the problem is violence often begets violence. It's my children growing up in that world that I now worry about."**

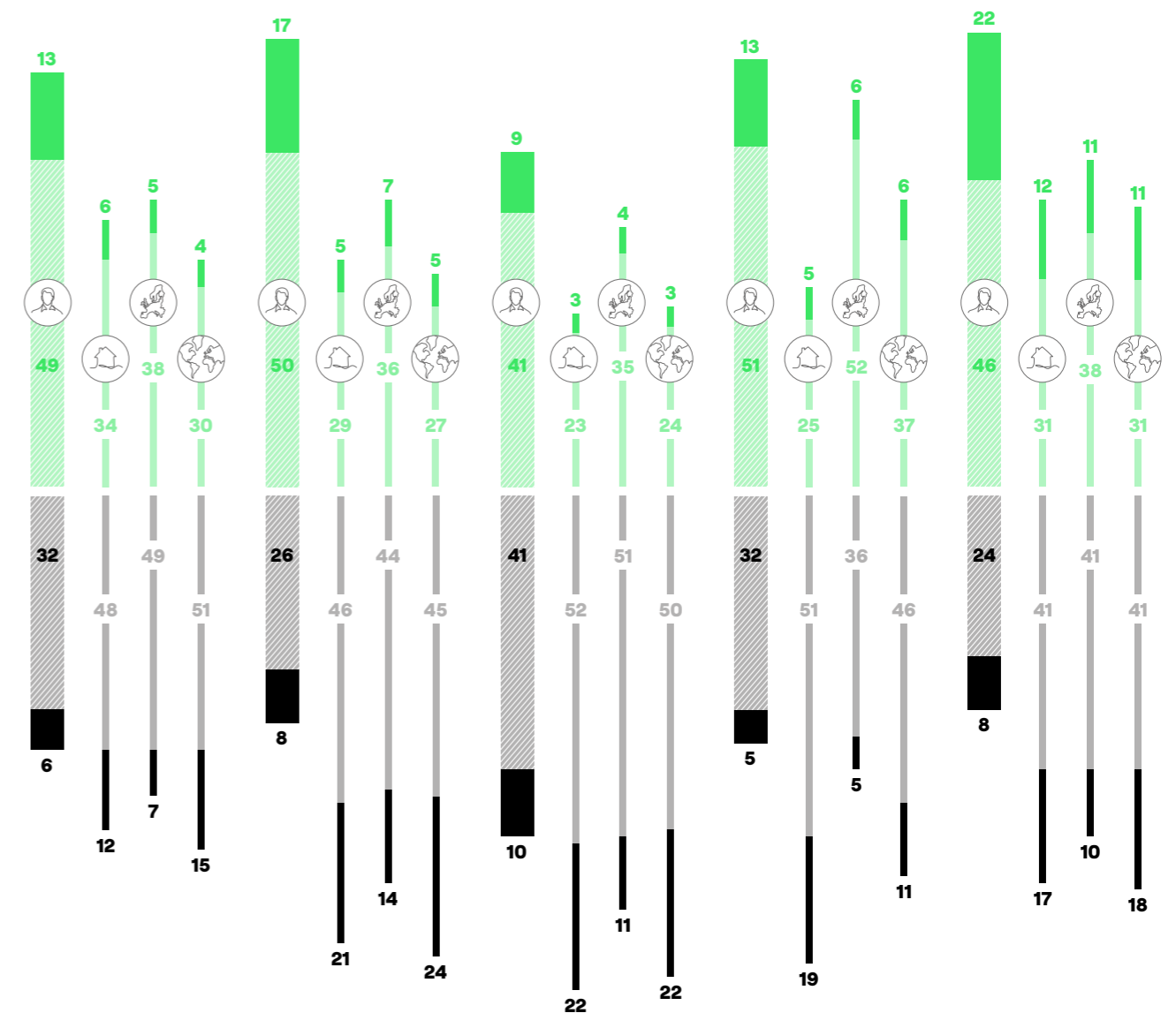
Focus group participant in the UK

The clearest generational difference between Generation Z and Millennials relates to their own personal future (68% of Generation Z vs. 57% of Millennials are optimistic, respectively) and their outlook on Europe's future (52% vs. 43%, respectively). Notably, however, there are no significant differences between Generation Z and Millennials when it comes to their optimism about the future of their own country or the world at large.

FIG. 11: OPTIMISM ABOUT THE FUTURE, IN %

## HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT...

- your personal future?
- the future of your country?
- the future of Europe?
- the future of the world?



**Optimistic**  
 % very optimistic  
 % somewhat optimistic

**Pessimistic**  
 % very pessimistic  
 % somewhat pessimistic

# 4 The Future Young Adults Expect

To gain a more nuanced understanding of why young adults view the future with optimism or pessimism, their predictions for each aspect of a good life in society (as analyzed in section 3) were explored. Specifically, survey respondents were asked whether they thought their country would change for the better or for the worse in the next 10 years.<sup>13</sup>

The findings show cautious optimism regarding ecological developments, but pessimism as regards most social and economic matters. Young adults are also optimistic about future opportunities for migrants and other minority groups, but are concerned about looming social divisions. Furthermore, national militaries are expected to get stronger, yet security is expected to decline. All of this is expected to happen amid a deep cultural shift toward a less traditional and more secular society – which is welcomed by some and feared by others.

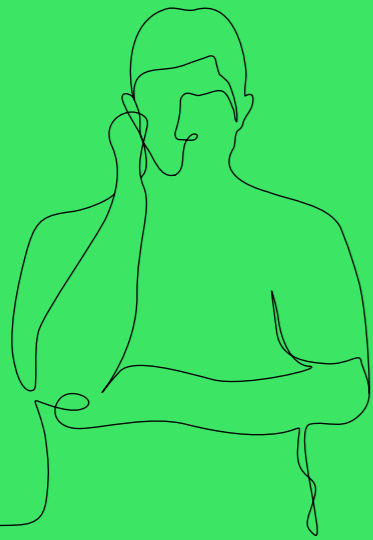
## Green, Yet Less Equal

**Young adults feel somewhat confident that, going forward, their countries will take more effective climate action, for instance by promoting the widespread use of renewable energies.**

In fact, climate action stands out as the most hopeful aspect of all future projections. More young adults agree than disagree that policies and practices in their countries will become more climate-friendly over the next 10 years. Those living in Germany are the most optimistic (54% vs. 21% who expect less climate-friendliness), Italy (53% vs. 21%) and the UK (51% vs. 25%); those living in Poland (42% vs. 31%) and Greece (41% vs. 31%) are the least optimistic.

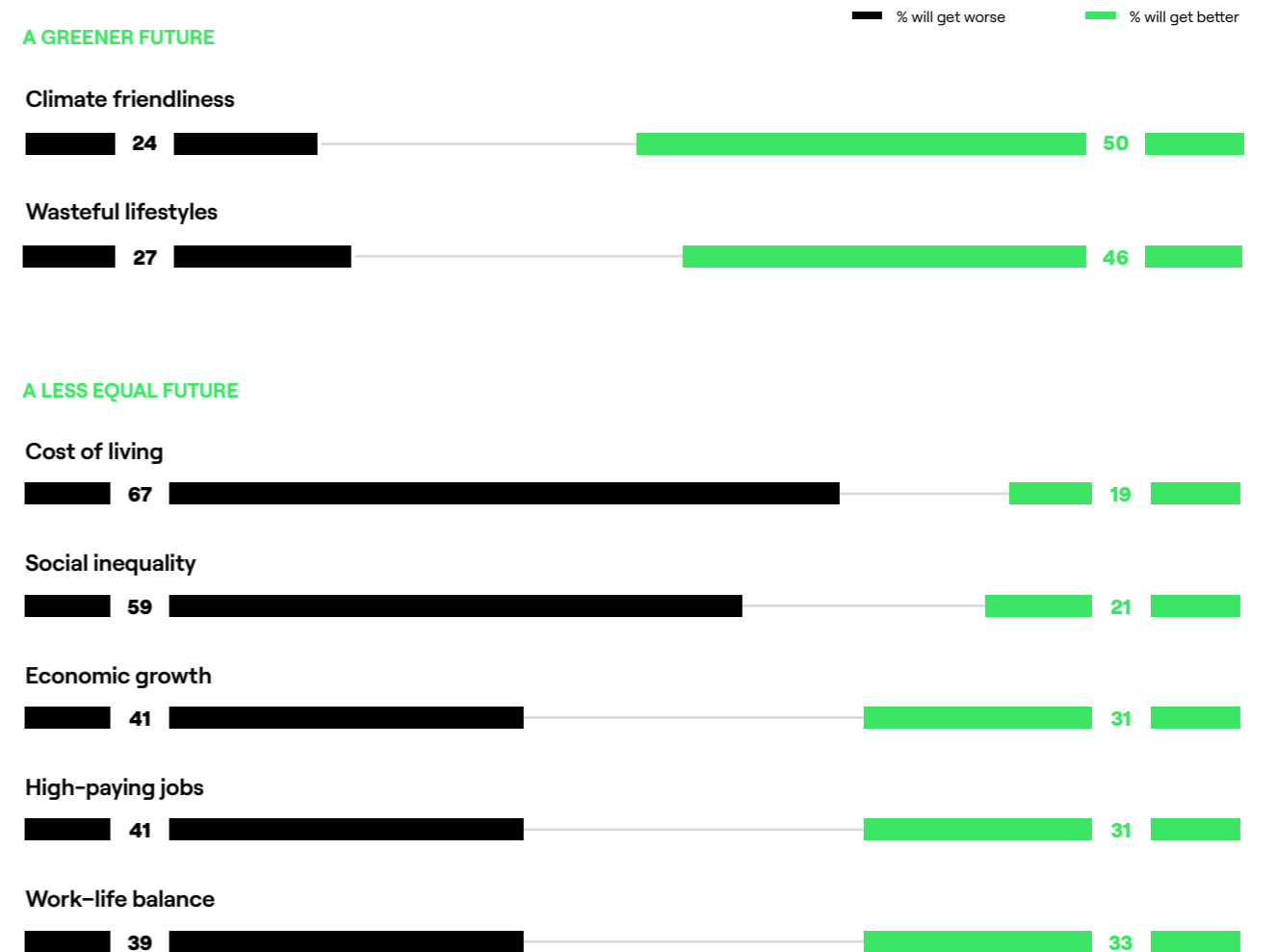
The same trend holds when it comes to comparing less vs. more wasteful lifestyles. Close to half of all surveyed young adults predict that improvements will be made within the next 10 years in that regard. On the other hand, their outlook on access to nature is less positive, with more respondents expressing pessimism (37%) rather than optimism (33%). The fact that young adults expect key aspects of their country's ecological performance to improve over the next 10 years links to them feeling cautiously optimistic that the fight against climate change can be won. Twenty-nine percent across all five countries are very sure and 36% are somewhat sure of this. However, there are drastic country differences: Young adults in Italy are the most hopeful, while their German peers are significantly less optimistic, with only 8% agreeing completely on this and 30% somewhat (Fig. 13).

<sup>13</sup> Survey respondents were asked to choose between three scenarios: (1) better than today (i.e., more climate-friendly), (2) the same as today and (3) worse than today.



# GREEN, YET LESS EQUAL

FIG. 12: TEN-YEAR PROJECTION: CLIMATE AND THE ECONOMY, IN %



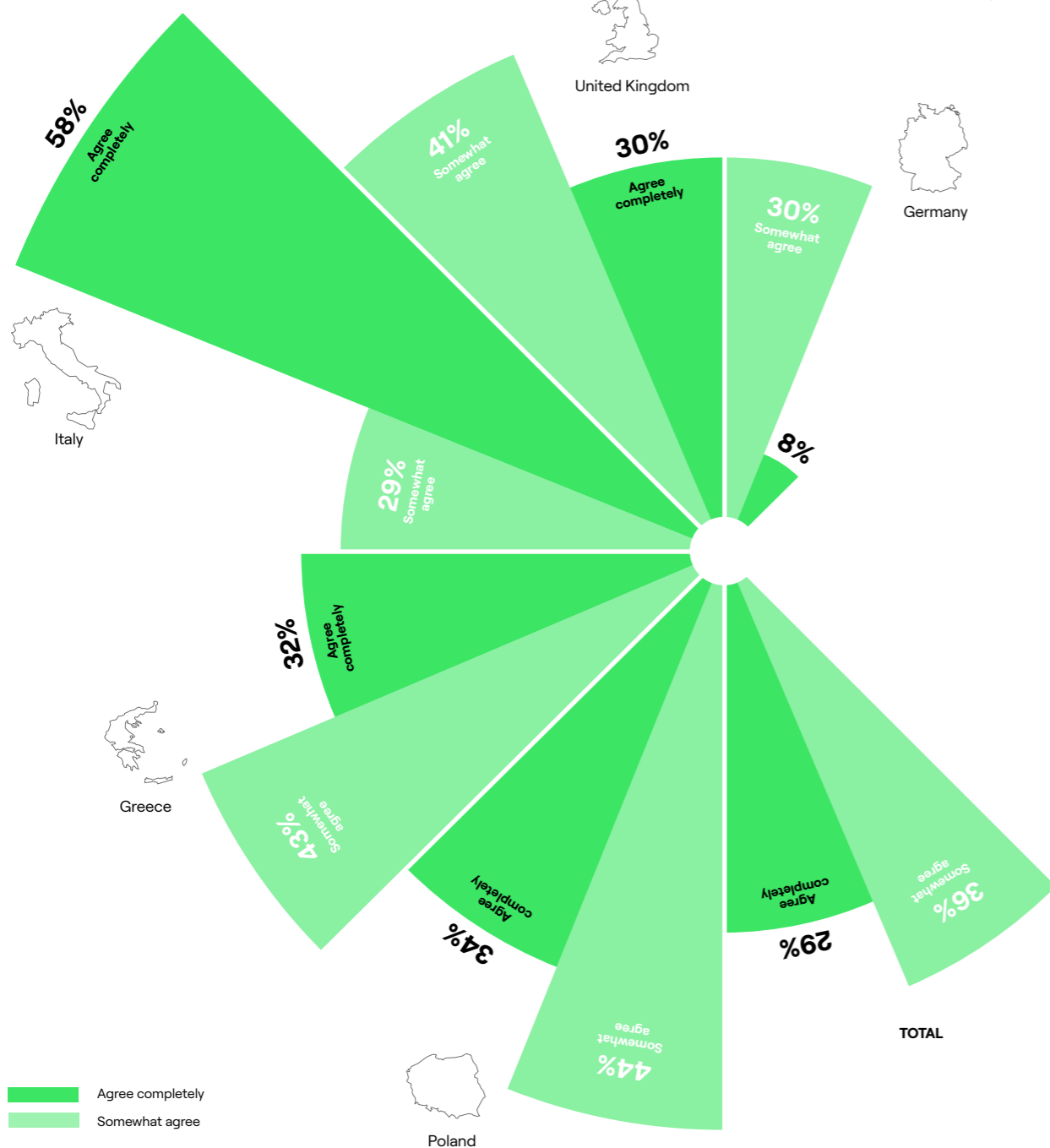
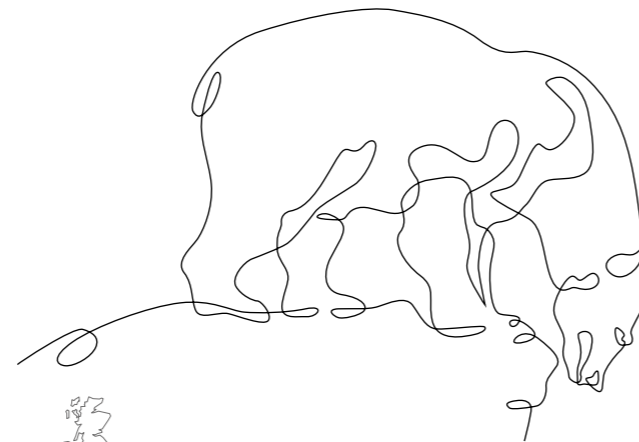
In contrast to that, young adults have a gloomy view of economic developments, but not necessarily because of climate action. Most young adults predict that it will become harder to maintain a decent standard of living in general due to rising energy, food and transportation costs,

but also because of a dwindling work-life balance, among other factors. Recalling that 71% of young adults see basic livability aspects as critical to a desirable future society, it is striking that only one in three believes that these aspects will improve.



FIG. 13: ATTITUDES TOWARD CLIMATE CHANGE

# I'M HOPEFUL WE CAN WIN THE BATTLE AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE.



Specifically, many young adults expect that the future will be more economically precarious, i.e., that they will face

- > higher living costs (67%),
- > fewer high-paying jobs (41%) and
- > higher inequality overall (59%).

It is quite possible that young adults' economic pessimism is a major cause of their overall pessimistic outlook on the future of their country, Europe and the world.

It should again be noted that the survey fieldwork period most likely impacted the intensity of responses regarding the cost of living in particular. Due to inflation related to Russia's war in Ukraine, this was an ever-present topic in the media at the time. But young adults also show a negative or an unsure outlook on other economic and social aspects that are not as dependent on immediate price changes and the news cycle. For instance, more young people predict that the work-life balance will get worse in their country (39%) than predict that it will get better (33%). Likewise, more of them predict lower economic growth (41%) than higher growth (31%) going forward. Finally, their outlook on the future of their country's health and social welfare systems is evenly split, with 37% believing they will get worse and 35% that they will get better.

**These findings reinforce the conclusion that many young adults believe their countries are becoming less livable in general.**

**"Perennial uncertainty. In a society where climate change is a huge problem and social unrest — in a wider sense — is a problem. It seems that it is necessary for us to 'live from day to day.' There isn't any balance between future opportunities and the certainty of being able to build something. So, the idea of living in perennial uncertainty, a black carpe diem."**

Focus group participant in Italy

## Diverse, Yet More Divided

Despite their grim economic outlook, one area in which many young adults predict that improvements will be made is equality of opportunity for migrants, the LGBTQI+ community and other minority groups. A total of 40% believe that these groups' situation will improve, as opposed to only 27% who believe that it will get worse. Given the aforementioned finding that equal opportunities are the cornerstone of a fair society, this is meaningful. If young adults act to substantiate this belief, their countries will indeed become more inclusive going forward.

However, the young adults' careful hope in this regard does not extend to them having a generally positive outlook on broader social cohesion and equality. More of them agree than disagree that the sense of community will get weaker in their country (40% vs. 29%). Signs of this projected division are already visible today in how young adults disagree over diversity-related policies and practices. Three out of the six most divisive political statements in the study are directly related to anti-discrimination measures, specifically adoption rights for same-sex couples, quotas for ethnic minorities in parliament and quotas for female parliamentarians.<sup>14</sup>

- > "Couples of the same sex/gender should be allowed to adopt children."
- > "There should be quotas for ethnic minorities in parliaments and boards."
- > "There should be quotas for women in parliaments and boards."

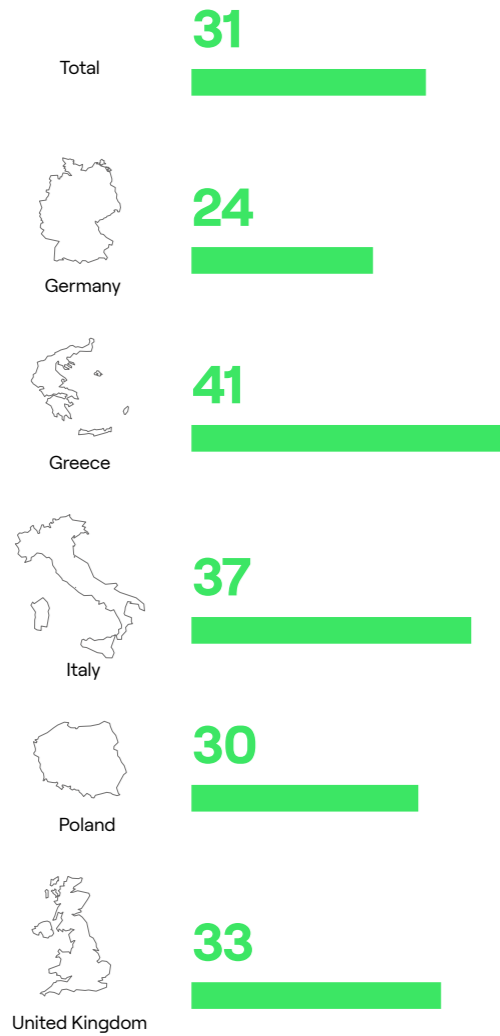
Political orientation plays a clear role here. Left-leaning respondents are more likely to agree that there should be quotas in parliaments and on company boards for women (64% vs. 54% of respondents who are right-leaning) and ethnic minorities (54% vs. 41%). Overall, left-leaning young adults appear to believe much more strongly than their right-leaning peers that achieving a more diverse future will require proactive structural interventions, including — but not limited to — interventions in the political system and the workplace.

<sup>14</sup> The only statements that stirred more controversy were statements in support of authoritarian rulers, violent protest and political echo chambers.

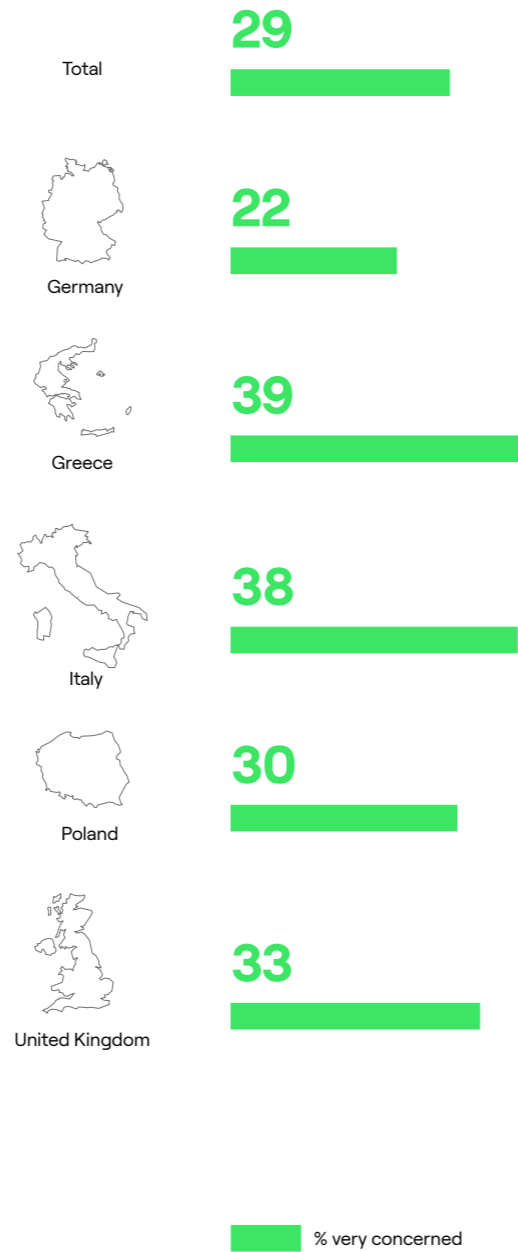
FIG. 14: ATTITUDES TOWARD DISCRIMINATION, IN %

# HOW CONCERNED ARE YOU ABOUT DISCRIMINATION...

on the basis of ethnicity or nationality?



on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation?



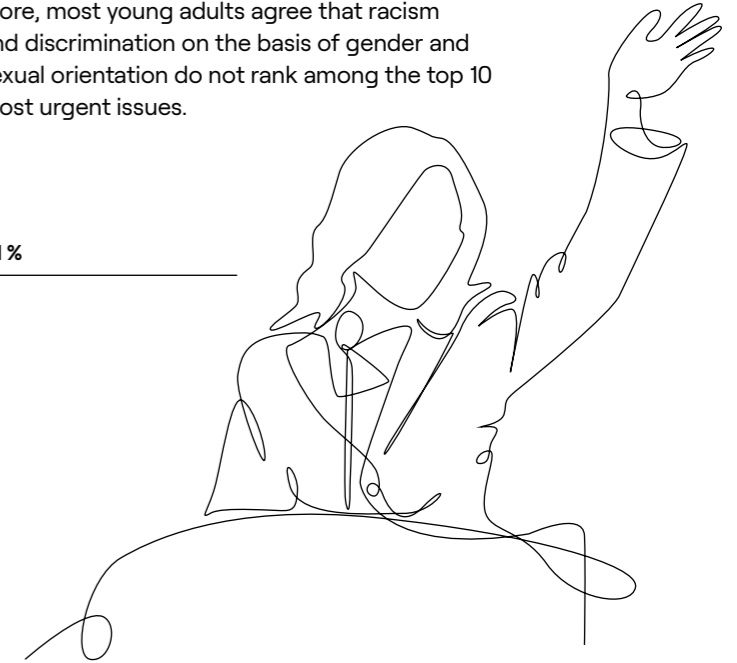
A structural adjustment on which young adults are particularly split is the extension of adoption rights to same-sex couples. Across all five countries, young adults on the left of the political spectrum are significantly more likely to agree that couples of the same sex/gender should be allowed to adopt children (84% vs. 53% of right-leaning respondents). In Poland these percentages are notably lower, with 63% on the left and 25% on the right agreeing.

But diversity-related issues do not only elicit disagreement. The survey indicates that a majority of young adults may favor assimilation over more inclusive policies and practices. Seventy-two percent maintain that newcomers to a country should try hard to "fit in" with the majority population. Only two other political statements in the entire survey were met with more agreement. Furthermore, most young adults agree that racism and discrimination on the basis of gender and sexual orientation do not rank among the top 10 most urgent issues.

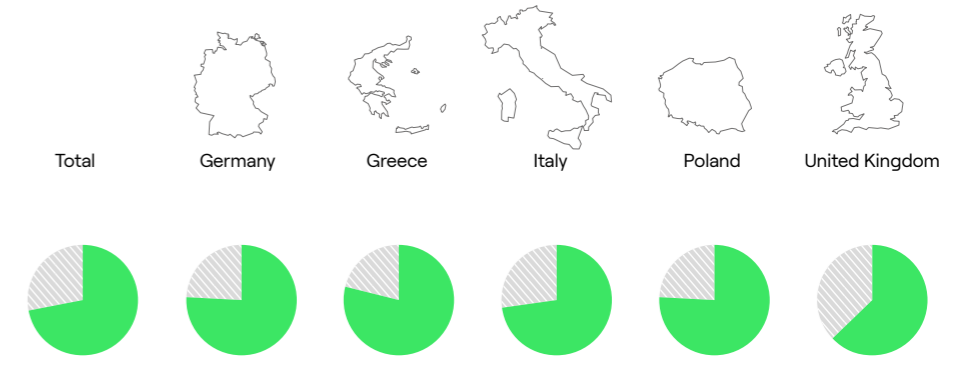
FIG. 15: ATTITUDES TOWARD DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION, IN %

# HOW DO WE WANT TO LIVE AND WORK TOGETHER?

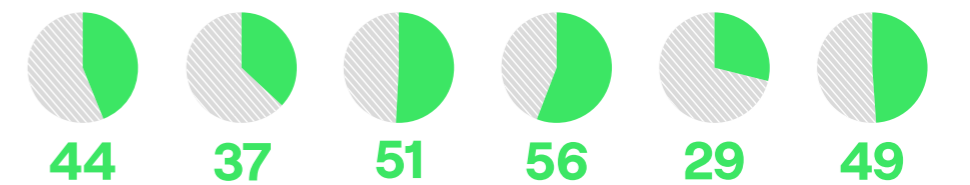
— % agree



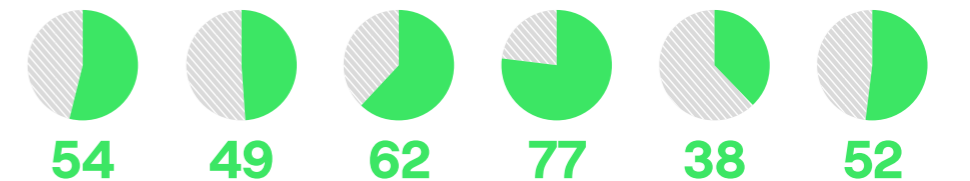
If you migrate to a country, you must try to fit in with the majority population there.



There should be quotas for ethnic minorities in parliaments and boards.



There should be quotas for women in parliaments and boards.



### Militarized, Yet Less Safe

Young adults have conflicting feelings about their country's ability to defend them from threats from both inside and outside their national borders. While they predict that their national militaries will grow stronger, they seem less certain about their own safety.

Only one third of young adults regard a strong military as very important to a desirable future society. Another 41% regard it as somewhat important. These views notwithstanding, 40% state that their country's military will grow over the next 10 years (compared to 23% who disagree). Presumably due to their geographical proximity to the war in Ukraine, Polish respondents in particular consider a strong military to be a relevant guarantor of a high quality of life.

It is noteworthy that the belief that a strong military is necessary does not automatically translate into a clear wish for compulsory military or community service for young people: Only about one in six respondents fully supports this, while one in four is somewhat in favor (see Fig. 17).

With regard to internal threats, a desirable future society seems impossible to picture without security. Almost every respondent agrees that this is very or somewhat important. However, more young adults agree than disagree that their countries will be less safe in 10 years' time (38% vs. 31%). This is not only attributed to burglaries and violence on the street, but also to the possibility of an eroding judicial system — that is evident in unfair trials, police brutality, etc. — which 30% predict will happen, especially in Greece (41%) and Poland (37%).



**“Well, I have to say that I’m afraid when I drive into Berlin. The Alexanderplatz, it’s not like it used to be. You’re afraid to be there. So I’m just reluctant to go there, I just feel uncomfortable there, and I’m always glad when I get on the metro and go back to the outskirts of Berlin, where everything is still peaceful.”**

Focus group participant in Germany

**“Greece theoretically is not on good terms with Turkey. So one risk is, a war took place in Ukraine, why not a war taking place here as well?”**

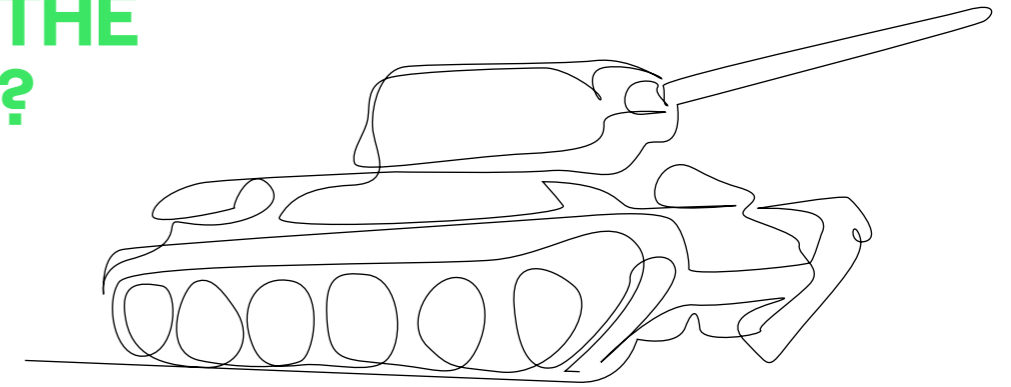
Focus group participant in Greece

**“Looking at Ukrainians, everyone thinks what would happen, what if it would affect our families, our friends, our country? It’s somewhere in the back of one’s mind all the time, and unfortunately it also dominates the news.”**

Focus group participant in Poland

FIG. 16: TEN-YEAR PROJECTION: THE MILITARY

## WHAT IS YOUR TAKE ON THE MILITARY?



IN 10 YEARS MY COUNTRY WILL HAVE...

■ a stronger military  
■ a weaker military

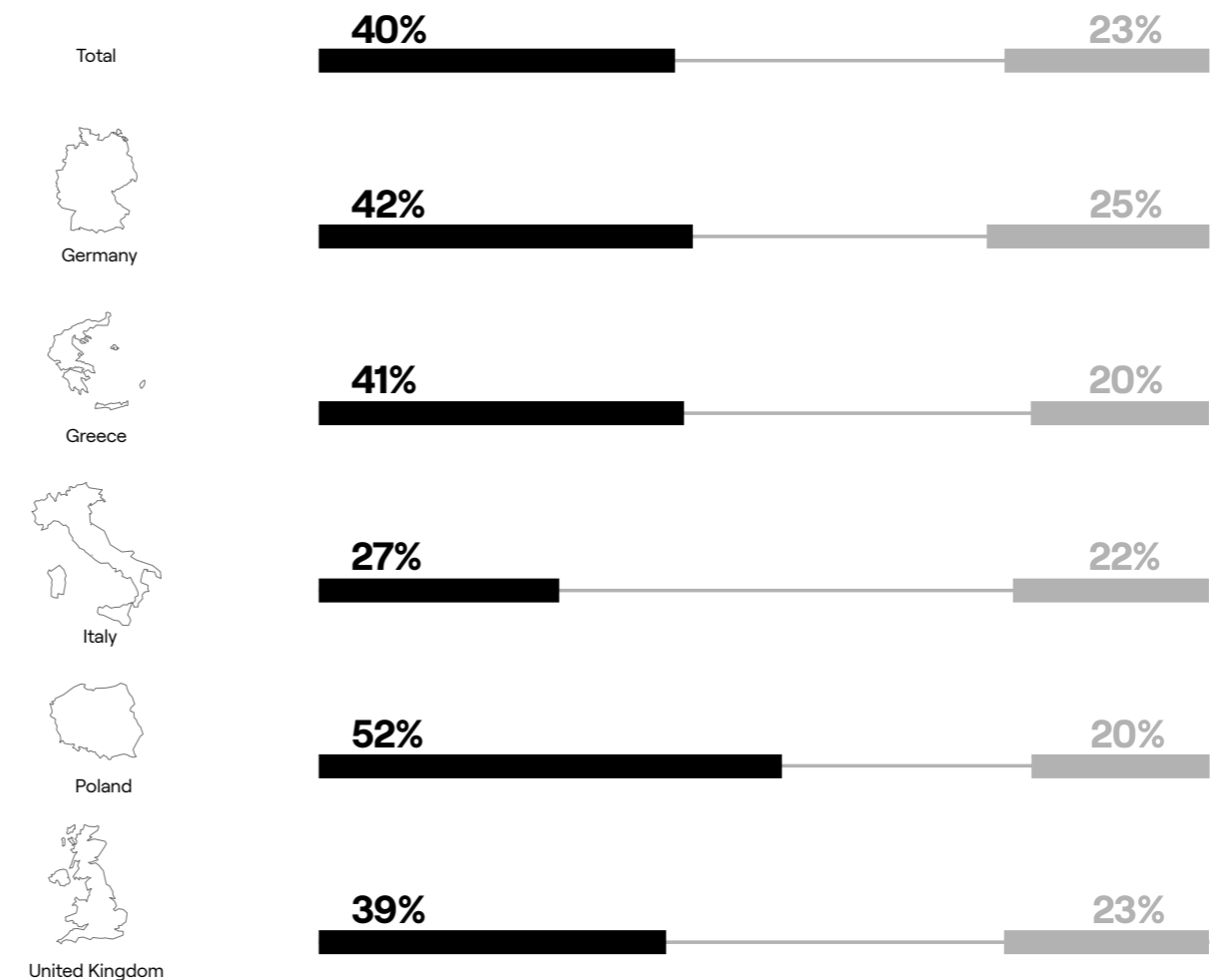
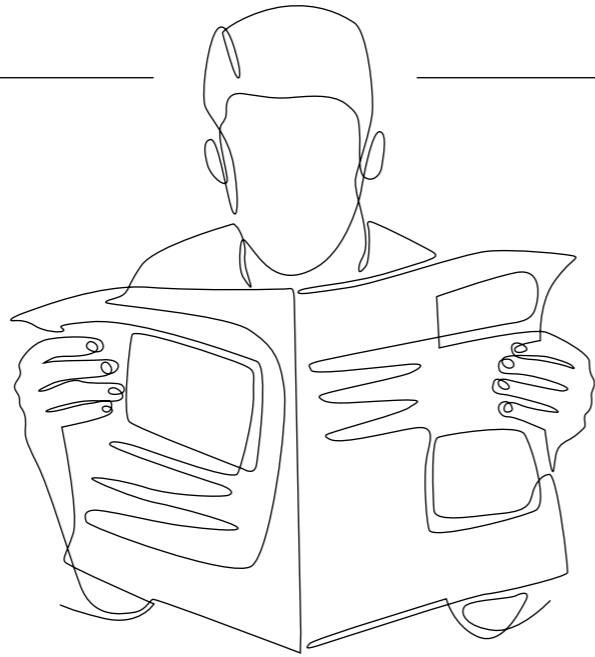
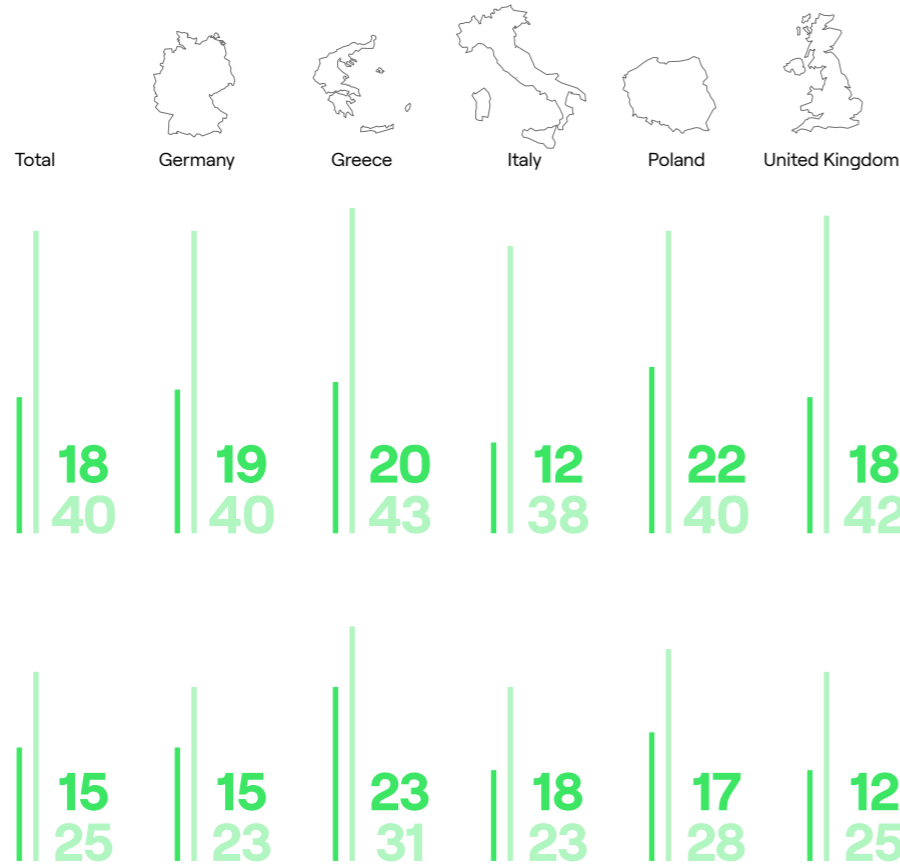


FIG. 17: ATTITUDES TOWARD NATIONAL SECURITY, IN %

# WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON NATIONAL SECURITY?



— % agree completely  
— % somewhat agree



The war in Ukraine could easily spread to my country.

A period of either community or military service should be mandatory for young people in my country.

## Signs of a Cultural Shift

Numerous young adults predict that their societies will become less traditional, more secular and richer in artistic expression over the next 10 years. Those leaning toward the left embrace these cultural changes, while those leaning toward the right voice skepticism and anxiety.

The majority of young adults expect a shift away from tradition and religious orientation. Forty-one percent predict that the next 10 years will bring less respect for tradition and heritage (as opposed to 25% who foresee an increase), while 35% say that the degree of separation between (organized) religion and the state will grow (23% expect the opposite).

For most on the political left, these trends do not give rise to uneasy feelings. Comparatively few respondents say that they are “very” or “somewhat” concerned about the loss of tradition and heritage (39% of left-leaning respondents) or religion (26%). Those on the right are about twice as likely to see these developments with great concern (77% and 52%, respectively).

These differences are rooted in diverging views about what makes a livable future society. Young adults who identify with the political right tend to place significantly more weight on the importance of tradition and heritage. More than half say that these are “very important” to them. By contrast, only 20% of their left-leaning peers do so.

When asked about the value of free and vibrant artistic expression, the percentages are practically reversed. Nearly half of all left-leaning young adults consider the arts to be “very important” for a livable future society, while only about one in three respondents on the right shares this view.

These diverging future scenarios and preferences are far from indicating that there is a clash of cultures. They do, however, highlight the fact that young adults do not always share the same vision of what makes a desirable future. Rather, there are multiple desired futures. Different groups and subgroups of young adults imagine and work to shape the world in different – sometimes conflicting, sometimes concurring – ways.

Despite these different (and at times competing) visions, the following general trends emerge for all population subgroups, irrespective of political ideology:

- > Young adults in all five countries value social welfare more highly than the promise of personal wealth and success.
- > Above all, young adults want to feel safe. But while many predict that they will be protected more against outside threats, they anticipate feeling less safe in their own city, not least due to a dwindling social welfare net.
- > Young adults want to see more climate action. And a slight majority believe that the use of renewable energies and other adaptive measures will grow as part of a more ambitious and climate-friendly agenda – although they believe that will possibly not be enough.
- > Young adults believe that a fair society must entail equal opportunities for all – regardless of ethnic or sexual identity. They predict better conditions for ethnic, sexual and gender minorities, but fear rising costs and growing societal divisions.

**More than anything, young adults in Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland and the UK share a deep sense of anxiety about the future. A majority see their countries becoming less equal, less safe and more divided – and they want to have a say in how these and other pressing issues are addressed.**

The following section explores how and how much young adults currently voice their opinions and how willing they are to do so in the future.

# 5 Civic Action for a Livable Future

The previous section highlighted young adults' concerns about the future of their societies and the planet. This section explores their actions in response to those concerns. Section 5.1 starts by asking what institutions and individuals young adults think will lead the way, sections 5.2 and 5.3 outline young adults' past and potential future civic engagement and section 5.4 examines the drivers of and barriers to their individual and collective civic action.

## 5.1 Who Will Lead the Way?

Various representative surveys conducted at the EU level measure basic trust in institutions such as the government or industry (e.g., Eurobarometer and the European Social Survey). However, given that the current study focuses on realizing social change, young adults were asked what institutions and actors (including themselves) they believe will take a **leading role** in addressing climate change, racism and other pressing challenges examined in section 4.

The findings do not unequivocally point to a single actor that young adults uniformly identify as paving the way to their preferred future. In fact, virtually all the actors receive only low to moderate approval.

### Government: A Leader with Trust Issues

Governmental institutions at the national and local level have a legislative and ethical mandate to address social and ecological challenges. Close to half of young adults across all the five countries surveyed ascribe a leadership role to their own national governments, followed by the EU (38%) and international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (32%).

However, as shown in Fig. 19, rankings differ somewhat by country. Young adults in Germany and the UK expect their own governments to have the most impact (53% and 46%, respectively). Conversely, young Italians, Greeks and Poles have more faith in the EU as a leading actor than in their own governments.

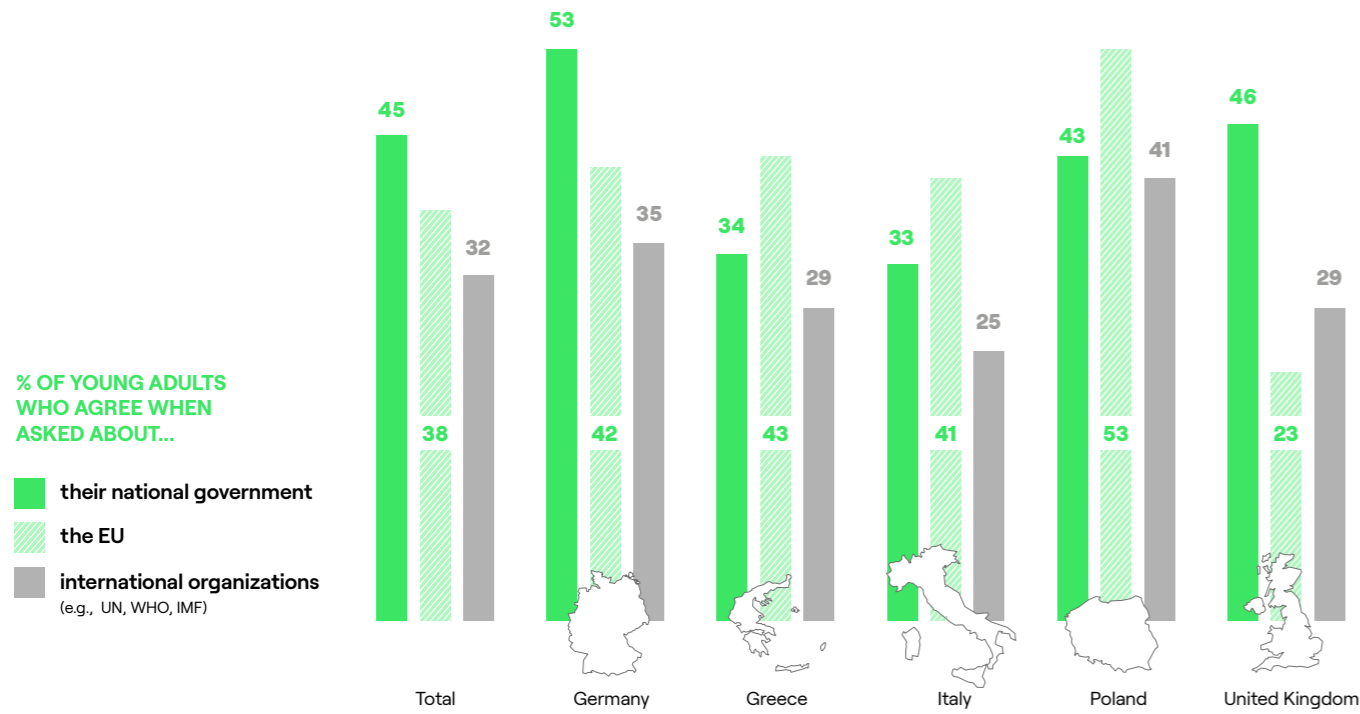
FIG. 18: ACTORS THAT LEAD TOWARD A BETTER FUTURE SOCIETY, % OF YOUNG ADULTS WHO AGREE





FIG. 19: LEADERSHIP ROLE OF GOVERNMENT, % OF YOUNG ADULTS WHO AGREE

# WILL THE GOVERNMENT LEAD US TOWARD A BETTER FUTURE?



**% OF YOUNG ADULTS WHO AGREE WHEN ASKED ABOUT...**

- their national government
- the EU
- international organizations (e.g., UN, WHO, IMF)

Although governments' approval ratings are not high, they are higher than those of any other category of institution. However, this relative confidence should not be interpreted as blind trust. In fact, the vast majority of young adults across all five countries disagree that "we should be grateful for leaders telling us exactly what to do," indicating that they reject authoritarianism and governments that are not answerable to citizens. At the same time, close to one in four respondents agrees with the idea of leaving power and decision-making in the hands of a few "leaders." One in three right-leaning adults favors this kind of leadership style.

Overall, the survey reveals various skeptical views about governments and politicians, mainly with regard to trust and competence deficits. Only around a quarter "somewhat agree" or "strongly agree" that politicians in their country want close contact with ordinary people (27%) or care what ordinary people think (24%). A significant 55% of young adults hold such strong mistrust that they agree with the provocative statement that politicians are "puppets of powerful, shadowy elites."

Looking 10 years into the future, around two out of three young adults across all the surveyed countries predict that their national governments will perform as poorly or worse than they are now doing. Attitudes on this topic are fairly consistent across different population subgroups. However, right-leaning respondents across all five countries express slightly more hope that governance will improve (41% vs. 30% on the left). This makes sense, given the rightward tilt of political developments in all five countries during the fieldwork period.

**"I would definitely trust the politicians to do that [i.e. eliminate social inequality]. If they are up for it, then I think it is feasible."**

Focus group participant in Germany

**"Politicians, we don't trust them, because they don't want to change things."**

Focus group participant in Greece

**"I think that sincerity is probably the quality that most leaders miss a bit. Actual sincerity and truth, rather than just worrying about image. I think that would make an awfully big difference. I think people are a bit disenfranchised."**

Focus group participant in the UK

## Somewhat Well-regarded: Scientists and Researchers

At 42%, young adults' confidence that scientists and researchers will take a leading role in addressing social and environmental issues is relatively high. This may reflect opinions on their involvement in public health actions aimed at dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic during the two and a half years preceding the fieldwork period.<sup>15</sup>

By contrast, only few young adults believe that tech companies, some of which work on social and green innovations, will take a leadership role (22%). Further, across all five countries, confidence in tech companies is concentrated among men (27% vs. 16% among women and gender-diverse respondents).

The gap between "high confidence in scientists and researchers" and "low confidence in tech companies" could be based on the assumption that academic institutions are more likely than commercial companies to keep the public good in mind. Consequently, they are seen as better equipped to meet public expectations around social and environmental responsibility.

## Low Confidence in Industry

Mirroring the lack of confidence in tech companies, a smaller proportion of young adults see businesses and corporations in a leading role. The respondents most likely to place such trust in businesses and corporations are those in Germany (one in three), followed by Poles and Greeks (one in four). Confidence regarding the social and ecological contributions the commercial world makes is lowest in Italy and the UK, where it is as low as one in every five respondents (Fig. 20).

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., Bromme R. et al. (2022). An Anchor in Troubled Times: Trust in Science Before and Within the COVID-19 Pandemic. PLOS ONE, 17(2).



FIG. 20: LEADERSHIP ROLE OF INDUSTRY

# WILL INDUSTRY LEAD US TOWARD A BETTER FUTURE?



16 Reporters without Borders (2023). World Press Freedom Index. RSF.

### Unhelpful Media

Opinions on the change-making potential of media actors are strikingly negative. A mere 26% of young adults identify traditional print and broadcast media as the drivers of social and environmental change, while only 19% say the same of influencers on social media. Only in Poland do more than a third of respondents see traditional media as a leading driver of change; in the UK more than a fifth believe that social media influencers could take a leading role. Overall, the analysis shows that only 36% of respondents believe that either traditional or social media actors will take a leading role.

Why is that? The broader survey findings suggest a lack of trust in both legacy media and new media. The vast majority in all five countries “somewhat agree” or “strongly agree” that the media pursue their own interests rather than report the facts. This position is most dominant among young adults in Greece, where close to all respondents see the media as mostly concerned with their own interests. An important reason for this mistrust of the media is the pronounced concern regarding fake news and media manipulation, which 41% of respondents are “very

worried” about. Concerns are especially high among respondents in Greece (67%) and Poland (57%). These two countries also rank lower than the other three in the 2023 World Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders.<sup>16</sup>

Strikingly, most respondents are not convinced that independent media outlets’ situation will improve over the next 10 years. Only a third believe that the situation will get better in their country.

The media’s image and trust deficits are also highlighted by focus group participants, who often framed a dysfunctional media as a multiplier of other problems — such as the spread of inaccurate information, either by mistake (mis-information) or by design (disinformation). In doing so, the media are believed to contribute to public apathy toward social and environmental issues as well as to a lack of awareness of ongoing efforts to address them. The following quotes illustrate these concerns:

“A subject that I believe is growing is indifference. Toward politics, toward social issues, climate issues. Nowadays we’re used to watching our lives through a screen and we think that everything that can happen is confined to this screen. Often, we even trivialize the effects of a war or a crisis, because what is important to us is to have likes on social media.”

Focus group participant in Italy

“There’s probably loads of good stuff that goes on that just doesn’t get the media coverage because of the way the media works.”

Focus group participant in the UK

This cascade of false information has introduced new obstacles that civil society needs to overcome, as those who want to take civic action come up against an ever-more misinformed public that is growing increasingly suspicious of them. This issue was also raised by social movement leaders and other risktakers in all five countries who were interviewed as part of the Allianz Foundation Risktaker Pulse prior to this study.

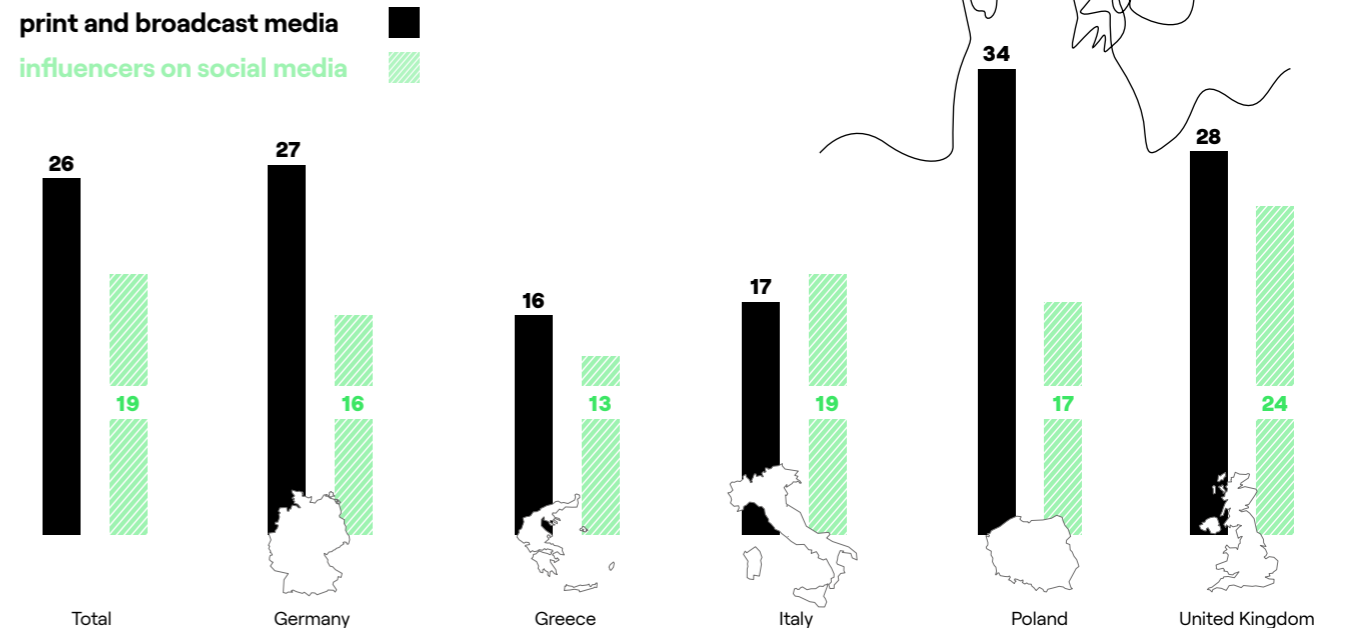
### Low-key Enthusiasm for Grassroots Action

Perhaps surprisingly, only a minority of young adults feel that well-established NGOs, foundations, religious institutions and other parts of organized civil society are at the forefront of social change (see Fig. 24). In all the surveyed countries, between around a fifth and a fourth of respondents express confidence in NGOs’ leadership potential. In most countries, this was higher than the level of confidence expressed in religious groups or foundations and philanthropists. Notably, however, in Greece, foundations and philanthropists enjoyed more trust than NGOs did. Focus group findings reinforce the conclusion that the term “NGO” is not widely understood, and that NGOs suffer from a trust deficit, particularly in Greece.

# WILL THE MEDIA LEAD US TOWARD A BETTER FUTURE?

FIG. 21: LEADERSHIP ROLE OF THE MEDIA

% OF YOUNG ADULTS WHO AGREE WHEN ASKED ABOUT...



**“There is corruption [in NGOs]. For sure there will be one or two which work as they should. But overall, I don’t think that they will deliver equally.”**

Focus group participant in Greece

**“People are creating NGOs just to earn more money through different loopholes.”**

Focus group participant in Greece

**“It depends on the NGO, in my opinion. There are some which work for the improvement of the environment and who have great activities between activism and academia, government, etc., [...]. But there are NGOs, such as Greenpeace in the seventies, who were involved in terrorism and harassing people and hunting animals.”**

Focus group participant in Italy

Interestingly, young adults tend to view informal, community-driven grassroots initiatives and ordinary people as assuming leadership roles more often than they do established civil society organizations (see Fig. 24).

**Perhaps most strikingly, confidence in ordinary people is higher than confidence in NGOs — or, for that matter, in industry or the media. Only governments and scientists are viewed as having better leadership abilities than regular citizens or groups of them.** A total of 28% of all respondents across all five countries indicate that “people like me” could take a leading role in addressing social and environmental problems. Young adults in Poland (36%) and Greece (34%) in particular take themselves to task here, followed by those in the UK and in Germany (29% each). Respondents in Italy, on the other hand, are more reserved (18%). It is worth noting that young adults in Greece (68%) and Poland (68%) are also the most willing to take to the streets in times of crisis.

As with philanthropy, confidence in citizens’ initiatives is higher in Greece (37%), where it even exceeds confidence in the government (34%). However, Poles and Germans also express

enthusiasm for such initiatives. Greek and British respondents are the most likely to see culture professional, teachers and social workers as the drivers of change.

Other answers provided by young adults add context here. The majority in all five countries state that they are “somewhat” or “very” confident in their own ability to understand and evaluate political issues (71%) and participate in political conversations (62%). What is particularly revealing is the difference between this demonstrated self-confidence and young adults’ extremely low level of confidence in politicians (as shown in Fig. 25).

Based on young adults’ confidence in their own political capacities on the one hand and their (lack of) confidence in politicians being responsive to their wishes and needs on the other, it is possible to assess what political scientists have termed “perceived political self-efficacy.”<sup>17</sup> This factor is rated slightly higher by respondents in the UK and Germany, where politicians are somewhat more highly regarded than in Greece, Italy or Poland. It is notable that in all five countries it was the well-educated respondents and men who expressed

the strongest sense of political self-efficacy. This also proved an important distinction between the six types of civically engaged young adults identified in section 6.

Overall, young adults in the five countries lament a lack of leadership at a time of great uncertainty about the direction their countries are heading in. **This perceived absence of leadership and guidance might be seen as a sign of a society in transition, a waiting room to the future in which the old methods no longer seem to work and new ways of shaping the future have not yet been sufficiently tested.**

<sup>17</sup> Yeich, S. & Levine, R. (1994). Political Efficacy: Enhancing the Construct and its Relationship to Mobilization of People. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 22(3), 259–271.

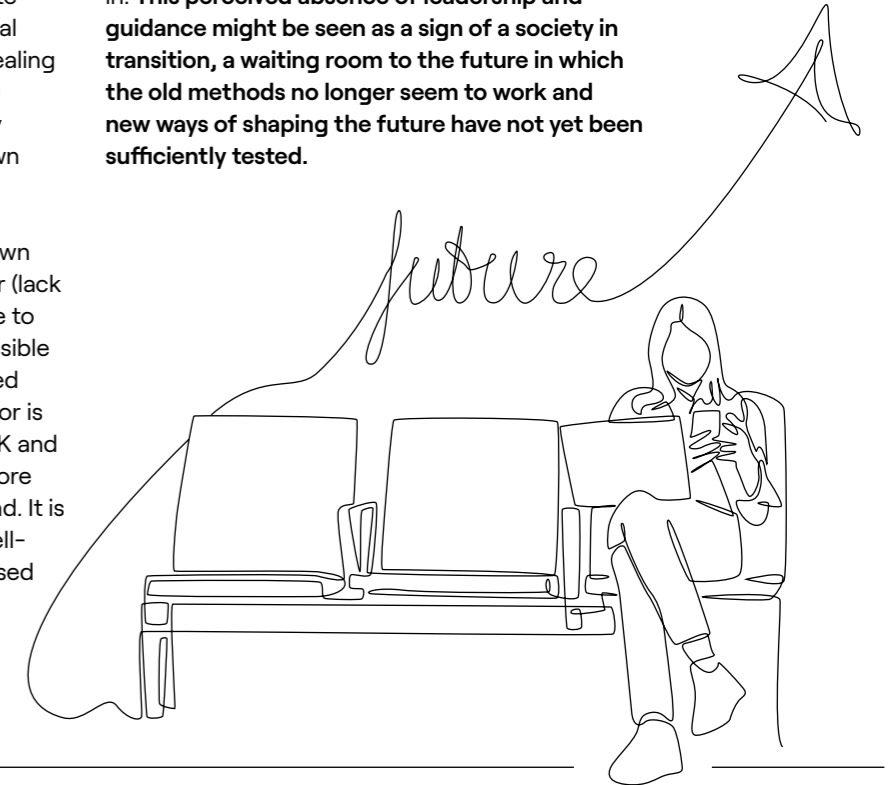


FIG. 22: TEN-YEAR PROJECTION: MEDIA INDEPENDENCE

# IN 10 YEARS, MEDIA OUTLETS IN MY COUNTRY WILL BE...

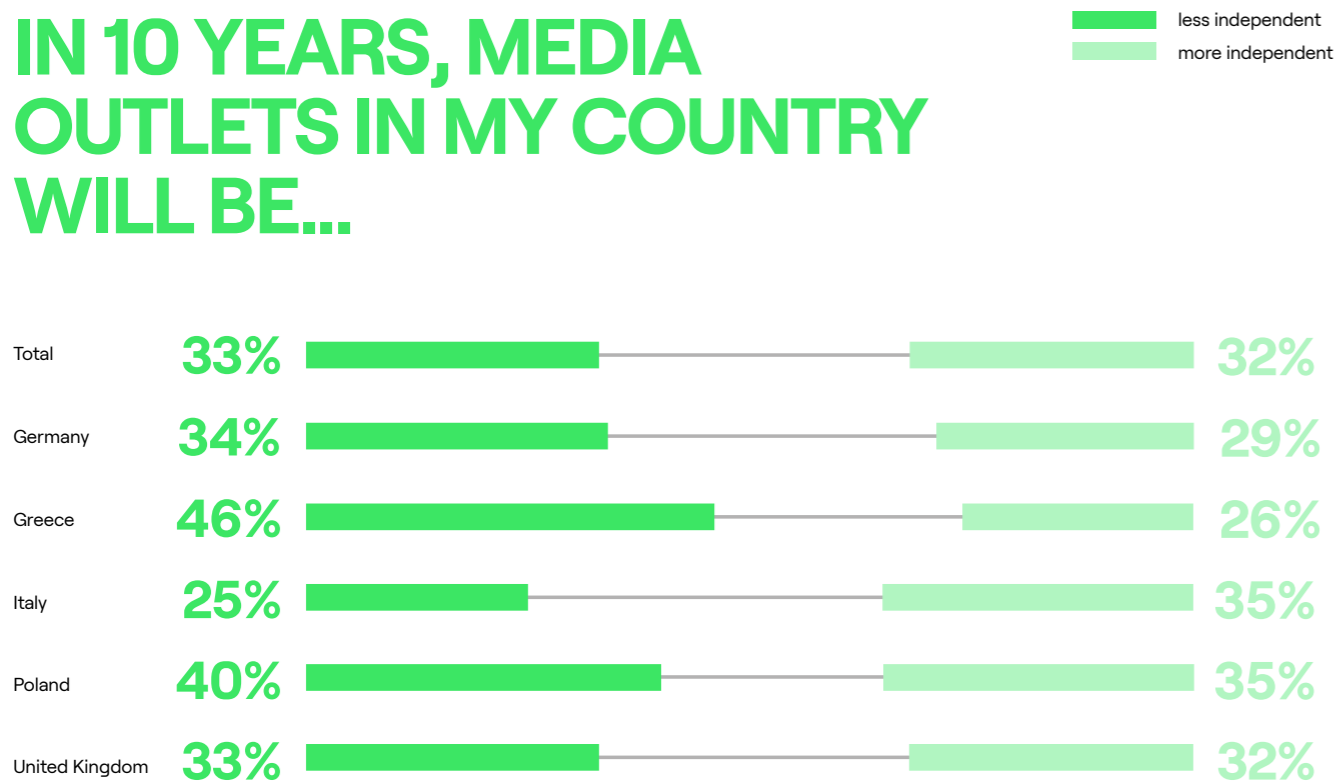


FIG. 23: ATTITUDES TOWARD FAKE NEWS, IN %

# I AM WORRIED ABOUT FAKE NEWS AND MEDIA MANIPULATION.

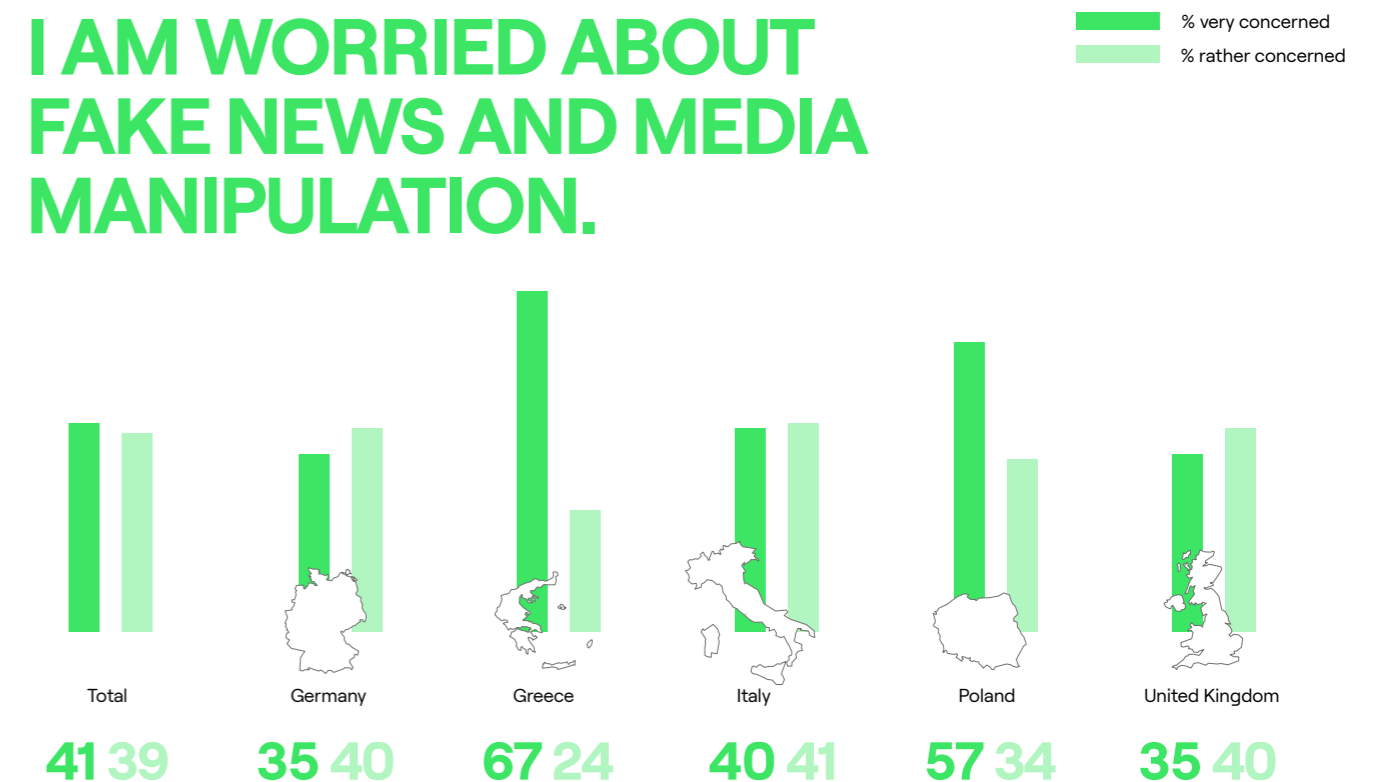
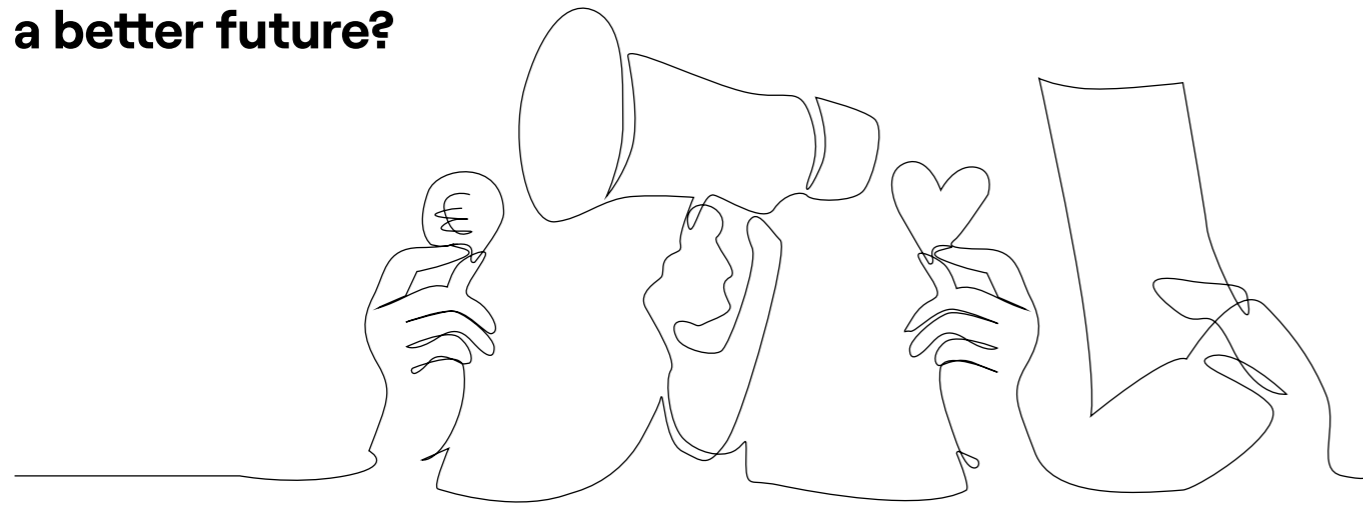


FIG. 24: LEADERSHIP ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY, IN %

## Will civil society lead us toward a better future?



% OF YOUNG ADULTS WHO AGREE WHEN ASKED ABOUT...

### ORGANIZED CIVIL SOCIETY

	Total	Germany	Greece	Italy	Poland	United Kingdom
NGOs	21	18	25	20	24	24
Foundations and philanthropists	14	11	30	11	17	17
Religious groups and communities	9	9	10	4	8	13

### GRASSROOTS ACTORS

	Total	Germany	Greece	Italy	Poland	United Kingdom
Citizens' initiatives	29	32	37	22	34	26
People like me	28	29	34	18	36	29
Teachers, social workers, youth workers	20	20	28	13	18	26
Artists, musicians, writers	13	11	21	12	12	16

FIG. 25: POLITICAL SELF-EFFICACY, IN %

## How confident are you in your own political abilities? And in politicians?

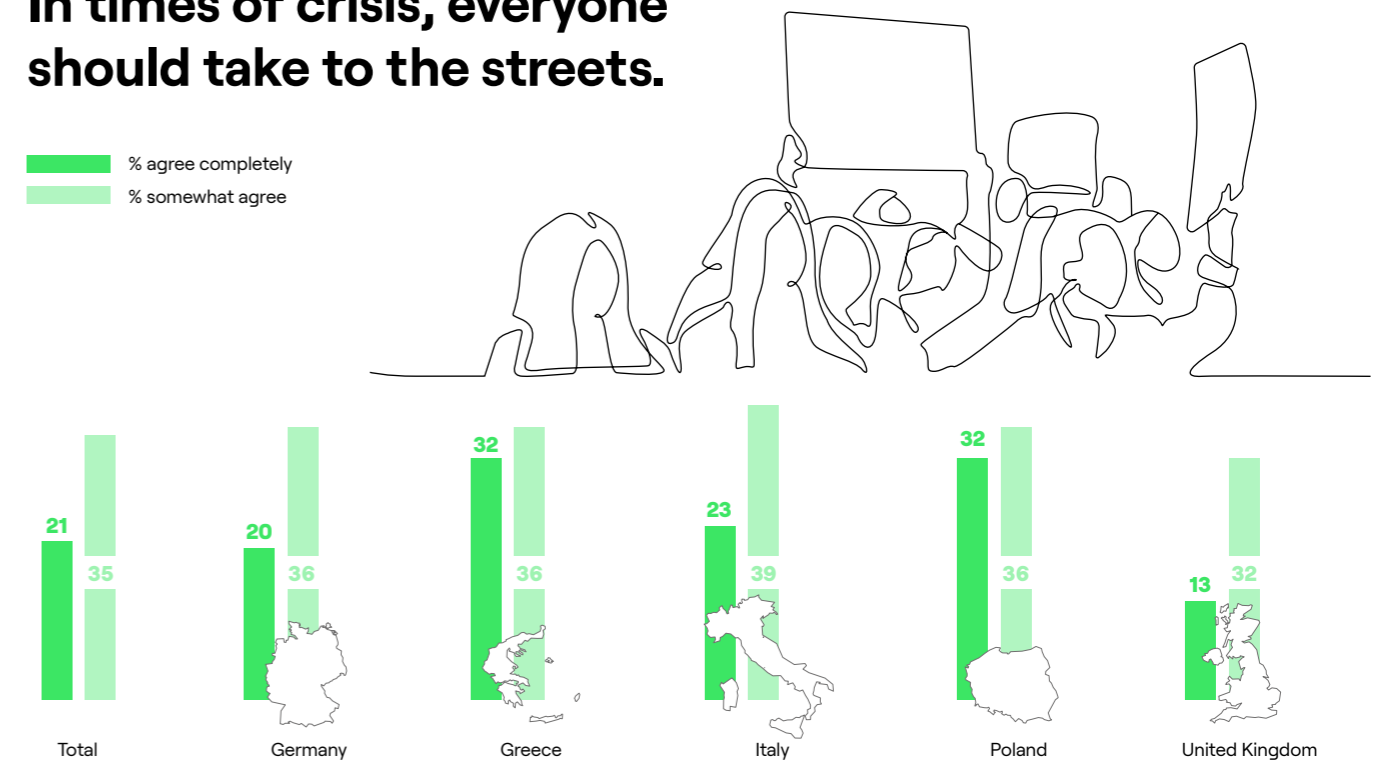
■ % agree completely ■ % somewhat agree

	Total	Germany	Greece	Italy	Poland	United Kingdom
I can understand and assess important political issues well.	18 53	17 56	22 54	16 48	18 57	19 52
I have the confidence to actively participate in a conversation about political issues.	19 43	20 43	22 40	15 39	21 44	20 44
Politicians strive for close contact with ordinary people.	7 20	5 22	5 14	6 18	4 16	11 24
Politicians care what ordinary people think.	6 18	5 19	4 12	5 14	4 11	9 25

FIG. 26: ATTITUDES TOWARD STREET-LEVEL PROTEST, IN %

## In times of crisis, everyone should take to the streets.

■ % agree completely ■ % somewhat agree





## 5.2 Actions Taken

When 28% of young adults see “people like me” as potential change leaders, the question arises of how many are already taking civic action or are planning to, and why?

**Civic action has many faces** — ranging from formal acts such as voting to more collective “hands-on” action like joining a protest march to less visible individual actions such as shopping and travelling in ways that are less harmful to people and the planet. Individual actions are quite widespread among young adults; collective efforts are less common.

This study uses the terms “civic action” and “civic engagement” synonymously and understands both as the “individual and collective actions in which people participate to improve the well-being of communities and society in general.”<sup>18</sup>

### Widespread: Changing Individual Habits

The majority of respondents in all five countries have already engaged in lower-barrier individual actions that come with a financial savings incentive, such as reducing energy use (85%), consumption (75%) or travel (67%). This is unsurprising in a period of rising costs. A significant number of young adults have also donated money or things to charitable causes (63%). All these modes of engagement can be characterized as changes to personal habits and, arguably, as a form of “invisible politics.”

### Very Common: Individual Political Participation

Most young adults report having voted (76%) — though across all five countries there is an education gap, with more highly educated respondents being more likely to go to the polls. Expressing political opinions in conversations despite some discomfort (60%), signing petitions (57%), boycotting products with a bad environmental or social footprint (45%) and expressing political opinions on social media (37%) round out the top modes of individual political participation. These can all be categorized as individual participation in the narrow or classically “liberal” sense of the word, i.e., participation in representative institutions and political discourse.

Voting, speaking up and engaging in political conversation, be it among friends or on social media, demands a degree of confidence in one’s own ability to participate in politics. Most respondents demonstrate this confidence. Recall that in all five countries the majority of young people are somewhat or very confident in their own ability to understand political issues (71%) and participate in political conversations (62%). This aligns with the finding that when it comes to solving social challenges, respondents saw “people like me” as more likely to take a leadership role than NGOs, foundations or other parts of organized civil society (see section 5.1).

### More Rare: Collective Action

Protests, political events, sit-ins and other grassroots actions have the power to make individual voices heard, gain media attention, challenge public opinions and put pressure on decision-makers both inside and outside of government, as social movements like Black Lives Matter and Fridays for Future have recently shown.<sup>19</sup> Studies indicate that coordinated efforts — when supported by compelling arguments, robust responses to opposition and meaningful connections with policymakers — can effectively shape policies, practices and public sentiments.<sup>20</sup>

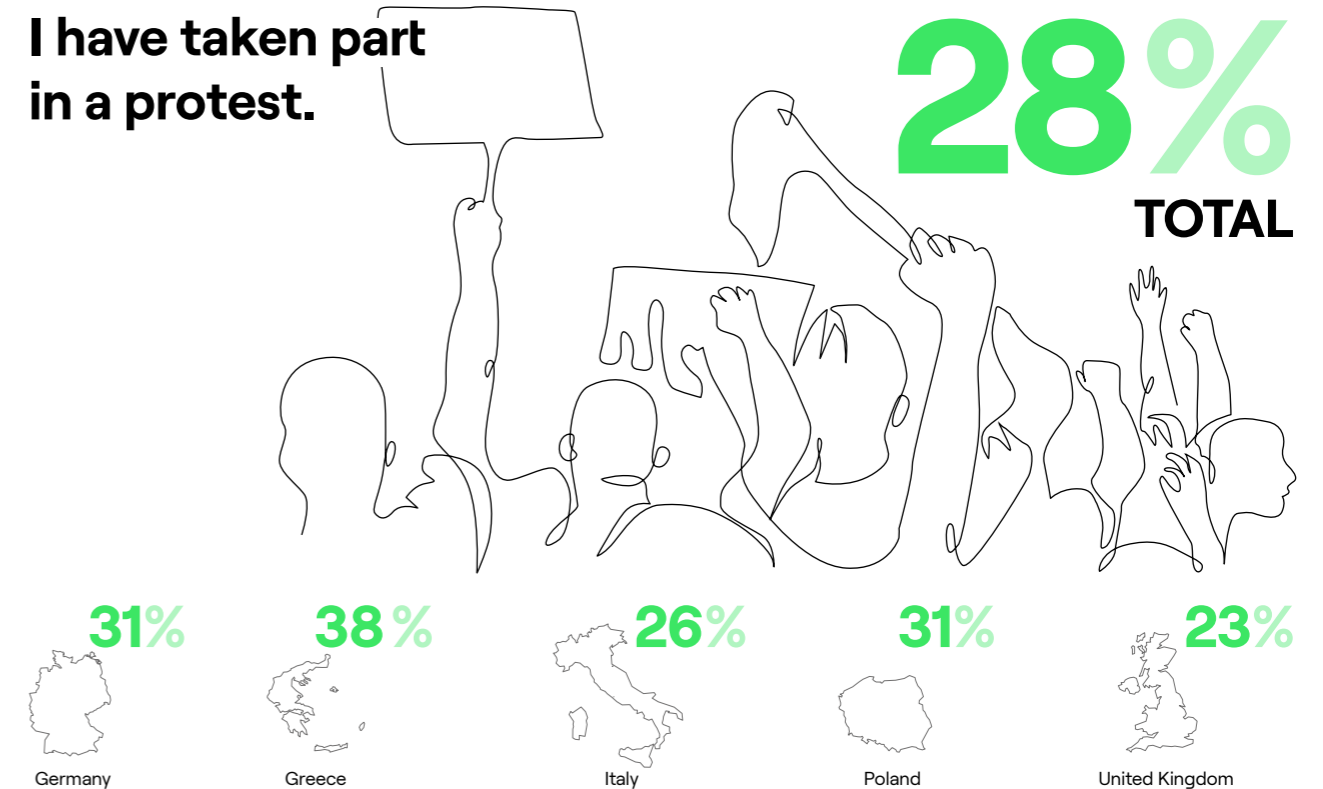
**“Everyone should take to the streets, but no one dares to do so.”**

Focus group participant in Germany

Recall that more than half of young adults agree that in times of crisis everyone should take to the streets. But how many have actually done so?

Despite their emphasis on such team efforts, most young adults have actually never joined a protest march (though 28% have), engaged in non-violent civil disobedience (20%) or supported a citizens’ initiative (27% have). Affinity with such modes of engagement is highest in Greece and Italy.

FIG. 27: EXPERIENCE OF STREET-LEVEL PROTEST



## Capturing Different Forms of Civic Engagement

During the unstructured part of the focus group discussions, participants readily shared some of their civic engagement and volunteering experiences. But when asked explicitly about “political participation” or even “civic engagement,” they were less likely to bring up things like volunteering in the fire brigade, clean-up activities or helping the homeless, possibly because many perceived these efforts in a different light.<sup>21</sup>

Participants’ specific stories make the following interpretation plausible: The collective action many describe was mostly taken together with others in their immediate social circles, and these are framed in neutrally charitable terms (e.g., “helping” people or the environment) rather than the more oppositional terms that are often used to discuss “political” actions (e.g., “fighting” climate change or “resisting” racism).

Hence, when developing the questionnaire, attention was paid to using neutral language to capture a wide range of civic actions.

Supporting street protests does not mean that these young adults condone violence. In fact, only 6% “strongly agree” that “violence can be morally justified to achieve political goals,” while another 17% “somewhat agree” with that statement.

**“I’ve got a wife and two kids and a mortgage. I can’t just go on protest marches every day.”**

Focus group participant in the UK

Creative and artistic approaches are common in street-level actions — and the social and political potency of such actions is acknowledged by a majority of young adults. Two out of three respondents attribute a certain transformative capacity to art. This mindset is particularly pronounced in Greece and Italy. Despite, or possibly because of its potential impact on society, almost 40% of

<sup>18</sup> See UNICEF’s definition in Cho, A. et al. (2020). *Digital Civic Engagement by Young People*. UNICEF.

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., Mazumder, S. (2019). *Black Lives Matter for Whites’ Racial Prejudice: Assessing the Role of Social Movements in Shaping Racial Attitudes in the United States*. SocArXiv.

<sup>20</sup> See, among others, Dür, A. (2019). *How Interest Groups Influence Public Opinion: Arguments Matter More Than the Sources*. *European Journal of Political Research*, 58(2), 514–535. and McCombs, M. & Valenzuela, S. (2021). *Setting the Agenda. Mass Media and Public Opinion*, Polity Press.

<sup>21</sup> Calmbach, M. & Borgstedt, S. (2012). *„Unsichtbares“ Politikprogramm? Themenwelten und politisches Interesse von bildungsfernen Jugendlichen [“Invisible” Politics? Issues and Political Interest Among Lower-Educated Youth]*. In W. Kohl, A. Seibring (Eds.), *Schriftenreihe der BpB*: 1138. (41–80).

22 Cho, A. et al. (2020). Digital Civic Engagement by Young People. UNICEF.

respondents feel that artistic freedoms are being restricted in their country.

**“I’ve also thrown some eggs in the past [...] for the TV cameras, just to give them images. But what actually happened was totally different from what they were showing to the public.”**

Focus group participant in Greece

It is also not common for young adults to engage in collective action that calls for more commitment on their part or that is likely to signal a strong ideological position, thus exposing them to harsh criticism or other risks.

Around one in five young adults reports having had some experience of organizing or helping to organize political gatherings, such as demonstrations or information desks at events. Slightly fewer have been involved in launching a community initiative or a social enterprise (17%). And around one in six has invested their time and talent in a political party or movement (15%).

These figures can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, the fact that one in five young adults invests a significant amount of time and effort in a collective cause is deserving of praise. On the other hand, given the urgency of issues such as climate change, inequality and political polarization — and especially the marked level of concern expressed by young adults — this raises the following questions: **Does young adults’ current level of involvement align with their concerns about these pressing problems? And are the current modes of engagement suitable for an age group that, especially in the online**

**world, is used to not only receiving and reacting to easy-to-access information but also having opportunities for co-creation?**

The latter question connects to new research on digital civic engagement, which shows that young adults are already not only consuming social and civic content online; a non-trivial number are actively creating political memes and other content themselves, supporting movements on social media and taking part in virtual events.<sup>22</sup> These displays of digital support for a social or environmental cause are often referred to as “clicktivism” or “slacktivism.”<sup>23</sup> The fact that

between 33% (Germany) and 47% (Poland) of the young adults in this study also report using social media to broadcast their political views speaks to this development. This increased online participation may potentially also have an impact on face-to-face forms of civic engagement.<sup>24</sup> To learn more about why young adults choose to take action and why not, section 5.3 looks into young adults’ potential civic engagement.

**“I have not organized [a petition], but yes, I have signed online petitions, distributed them, i.e., forwarded the links, yes. But I have not yet organized one myself.”**

Focus group participant in Germany

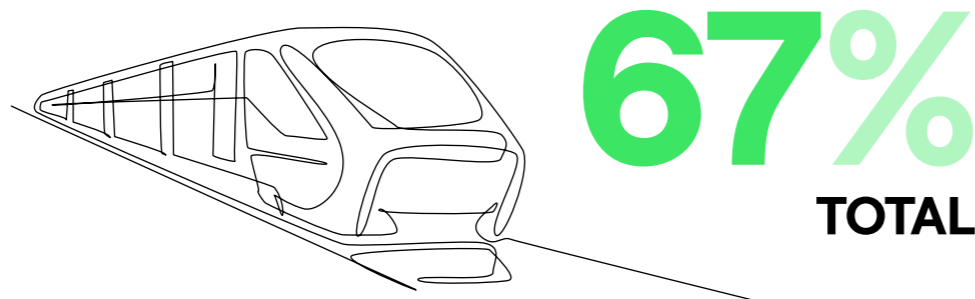
23 Kristofferson, K. et al. (2014). The Nature of Slacktivism: How the Social Observability of an Initial Act of Token Support Affects Subsequent Prosocial Action. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40 (6), 1149–1166.

24 Greijdanus, H. et al. (2020). The Psychology of Online Activism and Social Movements: Relations Between Online and Offline Collective Action. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 35, 49–54.

FIG. 28: CHANGING PERSONAL HABITS

**I have modified how I travel.**

(e.g., less air travel)



**I have...**

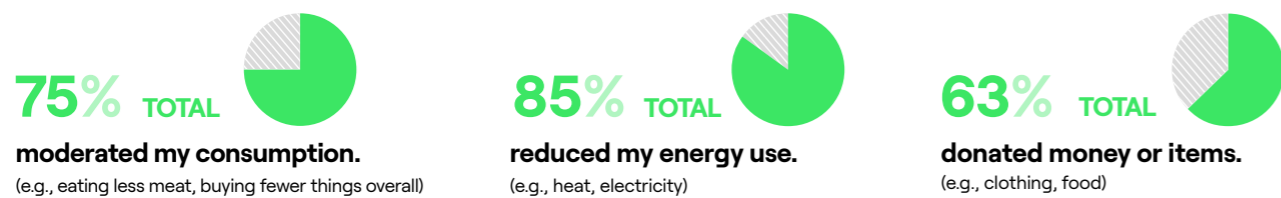
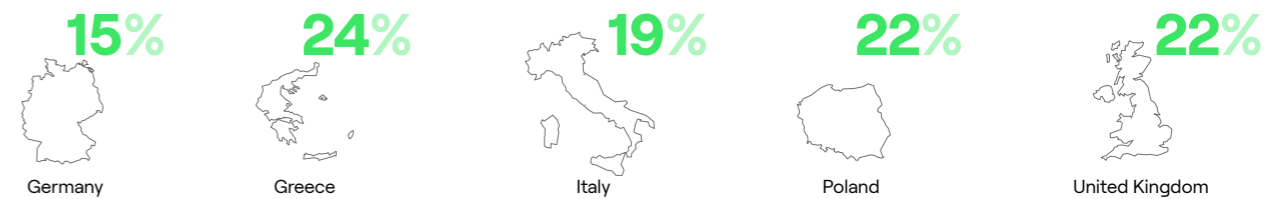
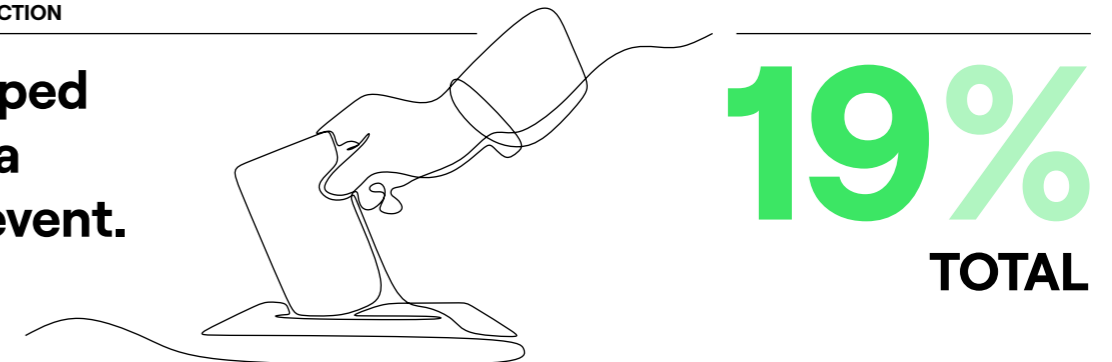


FIG. 29: COLLECTIVE ACTION

**I have helped organize a political event.**



**I have participated in a citizens’ initiative.**



**I have been part of non-violent civil disobedience.**



**I have helped start a social enterprise/initiative.**



**I have actively supported a political party or movement.**



### 5.3 Potential Engagement

The question of who is willing to participate in civic action in the future is in some ways just as important as the question of who has done so in the past.

As mentioned in the previous section, changing personal habits is a very common form of civic engagement. Most young adults have made some adjustment in recent years. Accordingly, this section focuses on collective action and grassroots activities that require more time and energy as well as voting and other forms of political participation.

**Most young adults have not yet taken part in a protest march, helped organize a political event or engaged in other forms of collective civic action. Around 50% are unwilling to get involved or unsure about it, meaning the other 50% could potentially take collective action.**<sup>25</sup>

When asked about concrete actions such as sit-ins or other forms of non-violent disobedience, a sizable number (in addition to those who have already taken action) express a willingness to invest their time and energy. Citizens' initiatives draw the most interest, with an additional +26% (aside from the currently active 27%) being willing to give them a go. Political protests rank second (+24%).

A slightly lower percentage of supporters are willing engage in higher-exposure activities like organizing political events, participating in civil disobedience or helping start a community initiative or social enterprise (around +20% in each case, in addition to those who are already active).

The mode of engagement young adults are least likely to consider is joining or working with a political party or movement (+15%). This is a troubling indictment of the established political landscape and aligns with young adults' lack of confidence in politicians.

**Another noteworthy finding in relation to the political establishment is that a sizable proportion of young adults who have not yet voted or engaged in other forms of "conventional" political participation see no reason to change that.**

One domain in which young adults are somewhat more willing to take action is the workplace. An additional +24% would consider standing up for an issue at work — besides the 44% who have already

done so. Politically-oriented cultural events (+21%) and petitions (+20%) are also of interest to them.

When it comes to representative politics and political discourse, those young adults who have so far refrained from getting involved show only a very moderate potential for growth (+12% to +15%). In other words, the "silent minority" appears content to remain silent — or feel so disengaged that they see no reason to speak out, be it

- > at the ballot box (8% say they have no plans to vote),
- > in political conversations (27% express no interest or are unsure) or
- > on social media (35% are unwilling to engage).


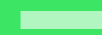
Another way of looking at the potential for action is to consider what political issues are most likely to inspire people to take individual and collective action.

**The analysis shows that environmental challenges, discrimination and racism are the issues most likely to move concerned young adults to actually do something.** Environmental issues dominate. A total of 68% of those young adults who worry about climate change have already been engaged in some form of civic action; 63% of those who are concerned about environmental destruction have done so.

Discrimination and racism are close behind, with 60% of young adults who express deep concerns about discrimination based on gender or sexual identity having already been active, and 58% of those who worry about racism having done so.<sup>26</sup>

Another standout issue that has attracted civic engagement in the past is dangerous diseases. Sixty-five percent of young adults concerned about this issue report being involved in community relief efforts. This may reflect the spike in support measures during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been documented in numerous studies.<sup>27</sup>

## Who has taken collective action? Who else is willing?

 Have already taken action  
 Have not taken action, but would consider it



**28%+24%**  
**Street-level protest**

**27%+26%**  
**Citizens' initiatives**


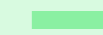
**20%+20%**  
**Non-violent civil disobedience**

**17%+21%**  
**Help start a social initiative or enterprise**

**19%+21%**  
**Help organize an event**

**15%+15%**  
**Support a political party or movement**



 Have already taken action  
 Have not taken action, but would consider it

<sup>25</sup> This resilience also extends to the individual level. Research shows that for individuals, civic engagement is associated with improved physical and mental health as well as a greater sense of belonging. For more information, see Abdelaal, N. et al. (2022). "Knocking on the Door": Youth Civic Engagement and Its Impact on Social Connectedness and Wellness. Toronto Metropolitan University.

<sup>26</sup> These issues can also be addressed by means of individual actions such as eating less meat for the benefit of the climate or by voting for political parties with inclusive policies on combatting discrimination.

<sup>27</sup> See, e.g., Zannella, M., Ambrosetti, E. & Edwards, J. (2022). Baseline Report: Community and Citizen Responses — Update M24. COVINFORM.

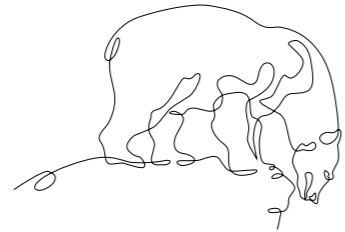


FIG. 30: ACTION-INSPIRING ISSUES

## WHICH ISSUES INSPIRE YOUNG ADULTS TO TAKE ACTION?

### Climate change

(e.g., extreme weather events like heat waves, climate migration)



68%

OF THOSE ESPECIALLY CONCERNED  
HAVE ALREADY TAKEN ACTION

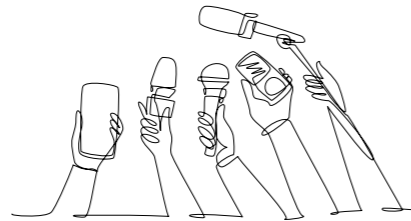
65%



### Dangerous diseases

(e.g., COVID-19)

### Fake news and media manipulation



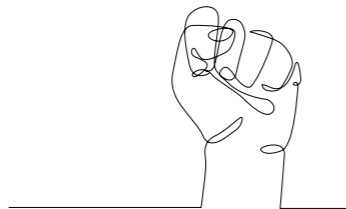
51%

60%



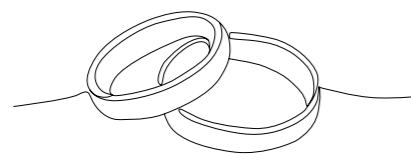
### Discrimination and racism

### Political extremism



34%

50%



### Loss of traditional values

## 5.4 Drivers and Barriers

As has been made clear in previous sections, young adults differ as regards the amount of civic action they have already engaged in and how much more they want to get involved in going forward. Why might that be?

The following findings delve into young adults' personal motives for civic engagement and the information channels that inspire young adults to take action. Although there are more reasons that appear to speak for taking action than against, the barriers are sometimes high and risks can be severe, and these will be covered toward the end of this section.

### What Drives Civic Action?

Young adults are more likely to take civic action when they sense a moral duty or a chance for personal growth. Delving deeper into this finding, moral or ethical commitments are more important than self-improvement. Forty-five percent of respondents across all five countries say they take action because they want to be sure, in the future, that they did everything they could to address the social and environmental issues they care about deeply; 38% see it as their duty as citizens. For 41%, their actions are inspired by aspirations of personal growth, although growth is seldom perceived in terms of career advancement. Only one in eight respondents says they take action specifically to enhance their CV (see Table 5 in Annex 2).

Social factors also appear to drive civic engagement, especially when they connect to ethical sentiments. More than one in three young adults takes action or would do so in order to inspire others, and about a quarter want to feel they are part of a larger movement that is changing things for the better. By contrast, only about one in seven takes action because they want to join or even mimic others or in order to gain recognition.

The results also show that some young adults move toward civic engagement of their own accord, often because they have experienced a certain social or environmental problem first hand. However, more credit their social circles and social media with prompting them to action. NGOs, political stakeholders and celebrities follow well down the list.

To measure the impact of particular channels and touchpoints, those young adults who have already taken some form of action were asked who or what inspired them to take the first step. Discussions with family, friends and colleagues top the list (45%).

Social media are also a key touchpoint for nearly 40% of respondents. Here, too, social contacts probably played an important role. TV, radio and online streaming media inspired around 30% of respondents to take action. Printed and online articles have less impact on most young adults, prompting 19% to take action.

Nearly a fifth of young adults find information available in their schools or workplaces particularly motivating, but corporate responsibility campaigns reach only one in ten respondents – again testifying to the importance of a direct personal connection to the relevant source of information. Cultural figures such as celebrities, influencers, artists and musicians inspire civic engagement in just over 10% of cases.

Touchpoints traditionally regarded as “political” also play a much smaller role than expected. Only between 10% and 16% of young adults report being moved to action by protests or political events, information from political stakeholders, NGO campaigns or interactions with NGO personnel or activists.

However, the following in-depth statistical analysis shows that in the case of those young adults who were invited by NGO representatives to join their cause such institutions played a significant role in motivating young adults to increase the scope of their civic engagement.

For more detailed information on what drives climate action and other forms of issue-specific engagement, refer to our data dashboard at [allianzfoundation.org/study](https://allianzfoundation.org/study).





### In-depth Analysis: Not All Civic Actions Are Created Equal

Taking civic action does not always require the same level of commitment, courage or effort. It is arguably easier to make an individual choice to boycott cheap supermarket meat than to plan a large-scale protest against factory farming. And the reasons for taking either of those actions may possibly be different, too.

Therefore, to understand why young adults engage in these and other forms of civic action, all survey responses were subjected to a more in-depth statistical analysis to look at the “why” of the following three types of civic engagement (which are also covered in section 5.2):

- > **Changing personal habits,** such as less air travel
- > **Individual political participation,** such as voting in an election
- > **Collective action,** such as joining a protest march or social movement and other forms of civic engagement that require more time and effort

The analysis took into account (1) the motives and drivers that young adults themselves mentioned and (2) several other factors that might have affected their civic action even though they themselves did not explicitly mention them, for instance how much they claim to know about politics or how much disposable income they have.<sup>28</sup> The resulting statistical models show that each of the three forms of civic engagement is driven by a unique mix of young adults’ concerns, their willingness to take risks and their social interactions. More specifically:

**Changes in personal habits** are first and foremost driven by how much young adults care/worry about a current environmental or social issue. No other factor shows a stronger measurable correlation. Discussions with family, friends and colleagues also impact the behavior of young adults, albeit somewhat less so than the aforementioned concerns. Other potential influences such as political campaigns or celebrity endorsements do not have any major effect.

**Individual political participation**, such as voting or having political conversations, is primarily driven by young adults’ personal interest in politics, followed by their concerns about the future, especially when it comes to equality and fairness issues. Perhaps not surprisingly, those young adults who are more willing to take risks to voice and defend their political beliefs are also the ones who are more likely to talk about politics, vote, sign petitions, etc. Here, too, efforts by the state, the media or civil society to encourage people to vote or engage in other forms of traditional political involvement have a measurable effect.

**Collective action**, including non-violent acts of civil disobedience, are primarily driven by young adults’ individual risk tolerance (described in detail at the end of this section), followed by their own knowledge of politics and their (lack of) trust in politicians. Further, concern about social cohesion and traditional values (especially for those on the political right) drive young adults to invest a significant amount of time and effort and to take to the streets. Significantly, recruitment efforts by NGOs or activists also play a significant role.<sup>29</sup>

The latter finding regarding NGOs is intriguing when one recalls that only 21% of young adults believe that NGOs take a leading role in solving social challenges (section 5.1). And only a fraction of young adults report that encounters with these institutions have inspired them to take action – possibly because they had little to no contact beforehand. **However, as the in-depth analysis indicates, those young adults whom NGOs did get in touch with have indeed participated in a broader range of collective modes of engagement. This insight brightens the ambivalent outlook on organized civil society that is in evidence throughout much of this study.**

### What Hinders Civic Engagement?

As shown in the above, most young adults prefer individual civic action and only few have chosen to amplify their individual voices by teaming up with others. Given young adults’ deep-rooted concerns about the future and their favorable view of street-level action, this begs the question: What keeps young adults from taking collective action?

A significant number of young adults point to a lack of knowledge. One in every three young adults is not sure what kinds of action they could take, and 22% feel they do not know enough about the issues at hand to act. Others mention time constraints (29%) and competing priorities (19%). This reluctance does not always signify a lack of interest, though. Numerous young adults say they do not have the courage to take civic action, and many agree that doing so in their country could expose them to several disadvantages and risks, including physical harm, hate speech (especially online) or even legal consequences.

Because the **potential risks of civic engagement** have yet to be studied in greater detail, a set of survey questions was developed specifically to address how young adults perceive and handle such risks. The data show that most young adults think that taking civic action may have personal disadvantages or risks (61%). But they are willing to put up with some disadvantages. For instance, only about one in every three young adults regards physical effort as a big enough drawback to prevent them from taking action (Fig. 31).

Social risks, such as being stigmatized due to one’s views or provoking conflicts with friends or family, are tolerable to around half of respondents, whereas mental health risks such as stress, frustration and burnout are tolerable to around 40%. Similarly, 43% of young adults are willing to bear simple financial costs such as membership fees, and 42% are willing to redirect time and energy away from other priorities (such as their families or careers) in order to push for social justice, climate action and other issues (see Table 7 in Annex 2 for details).

Around 40% are willing to put up with risks that apply primarily (though not exclusively) to online civic engagement, i.e., loss of privacy or anonymity and exposure to hate speech or bullying. Finally, there are certain kinds of risks that only a few young adults are willing to endure: Loss of income or job opportunities (30%), physical conflicts (29%) or legal risks (27%).

**Political orientation also matters. Those who affiliate with the left or right were more tolerant of every category of risk than those who claim the political center ground. Social risks are more bearable for left-leaning respondents, especially conflicts with friends and family. Right-leaning respondents, on the other hand, express more willingness to risk physical or legal conflicts for the sake of their social and political priorities.**

These differences have implications as regards the “profile” of potential supporters on either side of the political spectrum, as do the risks that may arise from within civil society itself. The following section provides preliminary insights into these potential risks.



<sup>28</sup> Factors were selected using a modified version of the well-known Civic Voluntarism Model. For details, see Annex 1.

<sup>29</sup> For statistical details, see Table 3 in Annex 1.

FIG. 31 WILLINGNESS TO TAKE RISKS FOR A BETTER FUTURE SOCIETY, IN %

## Physical effort

(e.g., overworked, long marches)



**64%**  
TOTAL



Germany

19 49



Greece

24 39



Italy

20 45



Poland

18 46



United Kingdom

18 42

■ % very willing ■ % somewhat willing

**43%**  
TOTAL

## Mental health risks

(e.g., stress, frustration, burnout)

TOTAL



Germany

9 33



Greece

19 33



Italy

8 30



Poland

8 29



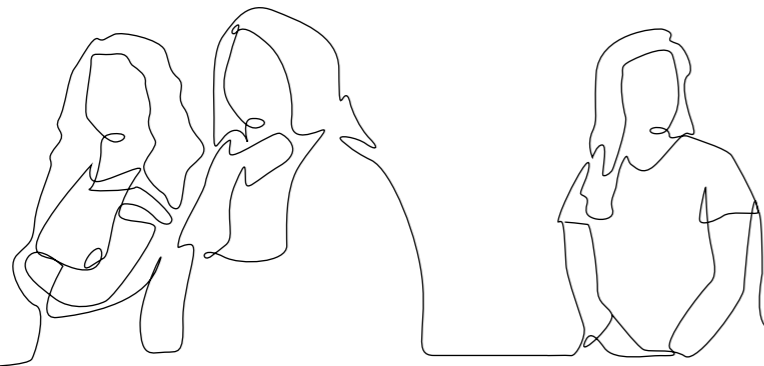
United Kingdom

13 36

■ % very willing ■ % somewhat willing

## Social risks

(e.g., conflicts with family and friends)



**48%**  
TOTAL



Germany

12 42



Greece

21 31



Italy

12 38



Poland

6 20



United Kingdom

14 36

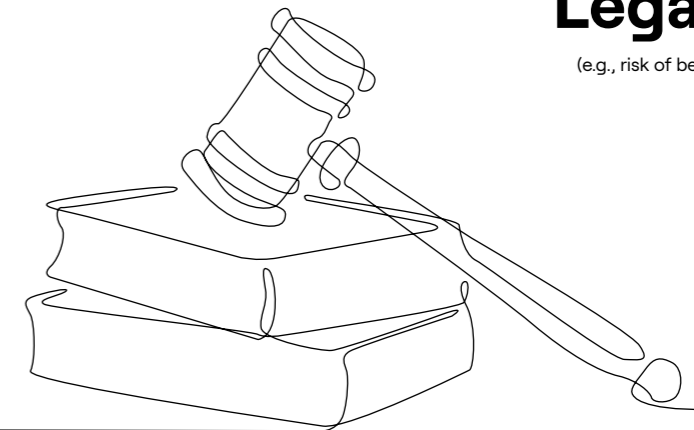
■ % very willing ■ % somewhat willing

**27%**  
TOTAL

## Legal risks

(e.g., risk of being fined or arrested)

TOTAL



Germany

7 20



Greece

11 21



Italy

5 15



Poland

5 16



United Kingdom

11 23

■ % very willing ■ % somewhat willing

## 6 Who Takes Action? Who Doesn't?

Who are the young adults that take civic action to address inequality, climate change and other pressing issues? And who are the ones that do not?

Over the course of this study, it has become clear that age, gender, education, income and other individual characteristics can provide some insights into who is in which camp. However, it is young adults' individual political beliefs — as well as their willingness to take risks — that more directly affect their civic action.

Political beliefs, though, often transcend traditional notions of “the left,” “the center” and “the right.” And while this typology is useful, it ultimately falls short when it comes to portraying those who engage in civic action and those who do not. Accordingly, to increase accuracy, a statistical segmentation model was defined on the basis of young adults' political orientation on the one hand and their civic engagement on the other.

**Six engagement types were identified, drawing on the abundant opinions and perspectives shared by young adults throughout the study. The engagement types describe distinct groups of young adults that can be identified within and across the five countries.<sup>30</sup>**

Eleven percent of those young adults who, so far, have taken little to no civic action belong to the politically left-leaning group of **Hesitant Progressives**, who have yet to act on their pronounced concerns as regards environmental and social justice. Likewise, members of the sizable **Quiet Mainstream** (33%) are mostly inactive, but also less politically interested. Their counterparts to the right are the **Passive Traditionalist** (8%), who, despite their strong religious affiliations, are not particularly involved in any social or environmental causes.

The smallest yet most organized of the three civically engaged groups is that of the **Conservative Campaigners** (10%), who through their action seek to promote values of individual prosperity and national identity. The **Proactive Center** (24%) is less driven by any particular issue, but is nonetheless willing to be involved in shaping the future, preferably through individual actions. Finally, the **Progressive Movers** (14%) are the youngest and most left-leaning category as well as the group with the highest overall level of civic engagement.



### Hesitant Progressives (11%)

In many ways, the Hesitant Progressives represent the traditional moderate left. They show a keen sense of environmental and social justice, but are anxious about their time commitments, uncertain of what actions they themselves can take and prefer to avoid risks — particularly physical and legal conflicts. Women and the well-educated are overrepresented within this group compared to the general young adult population. With regard to the urban-rural divide, however, the distribution mirrors that of the population as a whole. Some attitudes and attributes that distinguish this segment are the following:

- > Hesitant Progressives are the least optimistic about their personal future (54%) and the future of their country (29%).
- > They have the strongest belief in the social welfare state, which they see as essential to a livable future society (86%).
- > They are the most concerned about rising living costs (78%).
- > They express the most confidence in scientists and researchers leading the way to solve social and environmental problems (49%).

The Hesitant Progressives are significantly less likely to take risks than their much more engaged ideological compatriots, the Progressive Movers. They are also more likely than the Progressive Movers to cite personal factors as barriers to civic engagement, for example lack of time (32%) or uncertainty about what actions to take (38%).

### Quiet Mainstream (33%)

The Quiet Mainstream represent the “silent majority,” which many established centrist and center-right parties across Europe rely on for support. They are primarily concerned with issues that affect them personally and are mostly willing to take action that aligns easily with their established lifestyle and routines. They have a similar gender and age distribution as the young adult population overall, but are slightly more rural and somewhat less educated than the average. Key attitudes and attributes of the Quiet Mainstream include the following:

- > The Quiet Mainstream are much more concerned about living costs than about any other economic, social or environmental issue (77%).
- > They express the most confidence in the government's leadership role, although, at 48%, that confidence is still fairly low.
- > They are the most skeptical about whether taking action makes a difference; this is the key barrier to action for at least a quarter of this group (25%).

The values and concerns of the Quiet Mainstream are on par with the “average” young adult in nearly every regard. Along with the more right-leaning Passive Traditionalists, they are the least engaged. They also have the second-highest aversion to risk, after the Passive Traditionalists.



<sup>30</sup> The six engagement types can be found in each of the five countries. For more details, see the country briefs available at [allianzfoundation.org/study](http://allianzfoundation.org/study).

## Passive Traditionalists (8%)

Passive Traditionalists are the most rural category and the oldest on average. Men are over-represented, though not as heavily as among their ideological compatriots, the Conservative Campaigners. While considerably more right-leaning than most of their peers, they are also the least convinced that getting personally involved will make a difference — and the least comfortable with the various risks involved in civic engagement, for example conflict with friends and family. Attributes and attitudes that characterize the Passive Traditionalists include the following:

- > Passive Traditionalists are the category that is least optimistic about the future of Europe (40%).
- > They have the strongest belief in the importance of high-paying job opportunities (61%) and national security (74%).
- > They express considerable skepticism about whether or not getting civically engaged will make a difference (26%).
- > They are the least likely to report having been discriminated against (70%).
- > They are the second-most religious category (behind the Conservative Campaigners), but the least likely to identify as Muslim.

Of the young adults surveyed, Passive Traditionalists are the least likely to engage in civic action — and many are strongly resistant to changing their personal habits. They are also the most risk-averse group. This is a notable factor that differentiates them from their right-leaning compatriots, the Conservative Campaigners, who are often willing to risk conflict for the sake of their political goals.



## Proactive Center (24%)

The Proactive Center is that group in the political mainstream that actually engages in civic action. They share almost equal levels of concern about environmental matters with the Progressive Movers, but they are less convinced when it comes to issues of social justice, for example the rights of minority groups. They are also significantly less risk-tolerant than their committed left- or right-wing peers. Notably, men are over-represented in the Proactive Center compared to the less-committed Quiet Mainstream. Key attitudes and attributes include the following:

- > The Proactive Center are the category that is least likely to rank low living costs as very important (68%); however, they are the most concerned about war (48%).
- > They express the most confidence in corporations' social and environmental leadership potential (27%).
- > They are most prone to avoid action due to potential personal risks or because others in their social circle are also inactive.

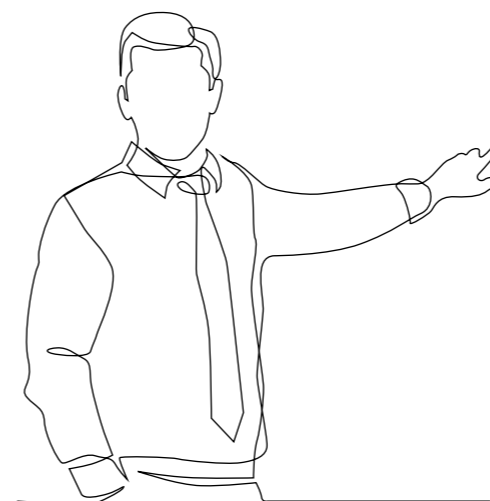
The Proactive Center are less passionate about specific values than either the Progressive Movers or the Conservative Campaigners, and less likely to invest significant time and energy in civic action. However, they are notably more likely than the Quiet Mainstream to change their own habits in order to affect social and environmental change.

## Conservative Campaigners (10%)

Conservative Campaigners are the engagement type that identifies most strongly as right wing. They are clearly committed to the values of individual prosperity and national identity — and also display latent authoritarian tendencies, as is evidenced by their comparatively high agreement with statements like “violence can be morally justified to achieve certain political goals” (44% agree “strongly” or “somewhat” vs. 23% of all surveyed respondents) and “we should be grateful for leaders telling us exactly what to do” (43% vs. 23%). Attitudes and attributes that distinguish this type include the following:

- > Conservative Campaigners are strongly committed to individual prosperity, national identity and military power.
- > They are more environmentally conscious than the less-involved right, the Passive Traditionalists.
- > They are the most religious group, i.e., they are most likely to identify either as Christian (63% vs. 48% sample average) or Muslim (8% vs. 4% survey average).

Conservative Campaigners are by far the most organized group: Forty-five percent report having helped start a citizens' initiative or a social enterprise (vs. 24% of Progressive Movers), 40% have actively worked with a political party or movement (vs. 28%) and 45% have helped organize political events (vs. 33%). This organizational experience and support might be one of the key reasons why Conservative Campaigners are more willing to risk legal consequences (20% very willing vs. 10% of Progressive Movers) or dealing with the financial consequences of their actions (20% vs. 13%).



## Progressive Movers (14%)

Progressive Movers are the youngest and most left-wing category as well as the group with the highest overall level of civic engagement. They stand out on account of their strong progressive values, such as gender equality, social justice and environmental sustainability. They are very willing to change their own habits and participate in the political process as well as much more willing to invest their time and energy in street-level protests (62% vs. 28% survey average).

However, they are less organized than their right-wing counterparts, the Conservative Campaigners. Progressive Movers are the youngest group and the only one with a measurable non-gender-binary component (2%). The following attitudes and attributes distinguish the Progressive Movers from the other groups:

- > Progressive Movers are that group that is most concerned by far about nearly all ecological and social justice issues covered in sections 3 and 4, especially racism and the loss of biodiversity.
- > They express the most confidence in the potential leadership roles of NGOs (31%) and ordinary people (36%).
- > They are the most willing to express their political opinions in face-to-face conversations (88%). Notably, however, they are tied with Conservative Campaigners when it comes to expressing political opinions on social media (which two out of three do).

Progressive Movers are the most fearless when it comes to stigma and conflicts in personal social circles; compared to their actively engaged right-wing counterparts, though, the Conservative Campaigners, they are less willing to deal with the police, counter-protestors and the legal system, and they are more concerned about taking financial risks. This could be because, on average, Progressive Movers are younger and have less organizational experience and support.



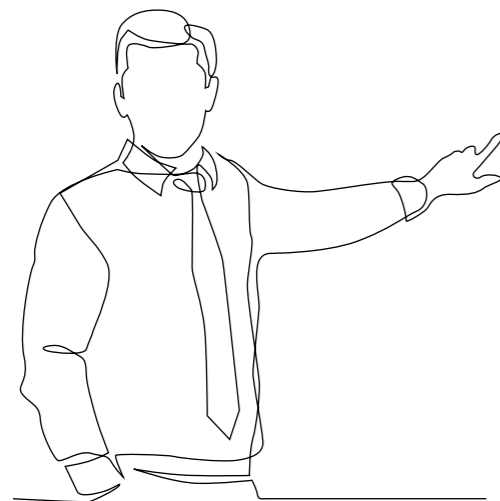
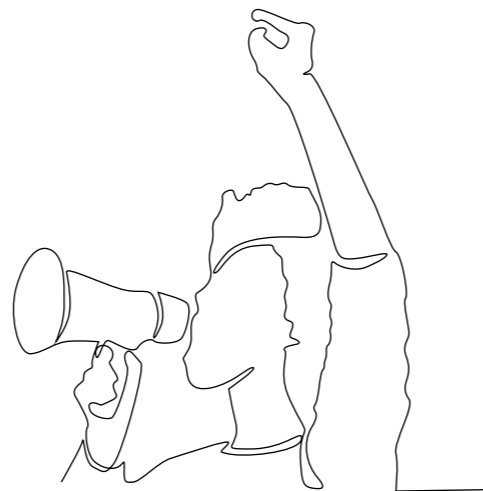
### Civil Society as Risk Factor and Solution

The six engagement types described in the above showcase the diverse and at times divergent perspectives and priorities prevalent among young adults in Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland and the UK. These differences can also lead to conflicts, especially among groups with stronger political motivations. Two groups in particular illustrate this risk:

Progressive Movers are strongly dedicated to climate action and the rights of minority groups such as migrants and the LGBTQI+ community. They do not shy away from having controversial conversations, and many participate in street-level protests. Although their counterparts to the right, the Conservative Campaigners, are not per se opposed to climate action, they often promote traditional values and are more organized and less concerned about physical violence and legal action. They sympathize with restrictive policies and practices relating to migrants and other minorities, whom the Progressive Movers support. This juxtaposition alone echoes the potential risks of civic engagement, which ultimately deter many from getting involved (section 5.4). These risks do not always stem from conflicts with the police or other state authorities, which in some of the surveyed countries are more common than in others. But they can also arise from within civil society itself.<sup>31</sup>

At the same time, civil society – even its competing groups – can also serve as a “safe space” for like-minded individuals, sheltering them from outside attacks by state authorities, online trolls and others who disagree with them.<sup>32</sup> Thus, they also help mitigate risks and encourage civic engagement.

Although the ideological positions of Progressive Movers and Conservative Campaigners suggest there is little room for constructive dialogue, the survey results indicate several windows of opportunity, as both groups show significant agreement on issues such as citizen participation, green infrastructure and work–family policies. The majority of young adults in both groups regard each of these issues as foundational to a good life and a desirable future society that is affordable and low on crime. Going forward, these commonalities should receive more attention, both in terms of civic and government action.



## 7 Young Adults: The Movers of Tomorrow?

Are young adults truly “the movers of tomorrow”? The answer is “yes” – potentially.

Already today, the vast majority of young adults take individual and everyday actions, such as voting and reducing what they eat and buy and how they travel. Yet, despite these efforts young adults are split on collective action. Around half express no desire to join a protest, a citizens’ initiative or another form of collective action, while the other half have already engaged in civic action or are willing to do so in the future – an invaluable asset for resilient civil societies and strong democracies across Europe.

But challenges remain. When young adults think about collective civic action, they often think of the risks and disadvantages. This ultimately stops many of them joining forces and working together toward a common goal. To amplify their many individual voices and actions, civil society and its public and private funders are therefore encouraged to take young adults’ concerns and the barriers to getting involved more seriously, ranging from conflicts with friends and family to hate speech (especially online) and legal consequences or other risks.

These challenges cannot be resolved quickly; several require structural changes, such as online safety legislation and policing reforms. Yet, when it comes to the question of how to unleash the civic potential inherent in young adults, this study points to some important ground rules:

> Young adults are first and foremost motivated by their own deep-rooted concerns about climate change, discrimination and racism or other issues they deeply care about. For many, these ethical considerations are only one key motive. Personal growth is another. Both aspects should be central to any call to action.

> In addition, social contacts (both online and offline) serve as gateways to civic engagement, and more strategic use should be made of them. They include family, friends, work colleagues and NGO staff. The latter are encouraged to reach out more directly, as many young adults hold ambivalent or outright negative opinions of organized civil society. These sentiments need to be addressed first.

> Likewise, young adults’ mistrust of politicians, the media and other democratic institutions signals a need for new forms of dialogue, political communication and civic education.

> Time and knowledge barriers must not be underestimated. Period.

To explore how to incorporate these and other study insights into practice, the Allianz Foundation invited 78 leading voices from civil society, the arts and journalism to seven interactive Future Labs in seven European cities – Athens, Berlin, Istanbul, London, Palermo, Prizren and Warsaw.

Their recommendations for civil society and its public and private funders are summarized in the Allianz Foundation Future Labs report, which can be downloaded at [allianzfoundation.org/study](https://allianzfoundation.org/study).

As we move forward, the example set by the Future Lab participants and the 10,000 young adults surveyed as part of this study reminds us that while individual actions are extremely valuable, a bit catalyst for a more livable future society lies in our collective efforts, where we not only exert individual pressure but also all unite in pulling in the same direction.

<sup>31</sup> See Edwards, M. (2014). *Civil Society*. Wiley and Sons.

<sup>32</sup> See, e.g., Nilan, P. (2021). *Young People and the Far Right*. Palgrave Macmillan.

# Annex 1

## Research Design

To learn more about how young adults imagine and shape a livable future society, the Allianz Foundation commissioned the SINUS Institute with conducting the Allianz Foundation Next Generations Study 2023. The study used a sequential mixed-methods design,<sup>33</sup> comprising the following five steps:

### Step 1: Country Selection

Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland and the UK were chosen based on their individual exposure to salient risks affecting people, society and planet. The countries were selected in a three-step process. First, risks were operationalized using the following statistical indicators:

- > **People at Risk:** The percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET; data source: Eurostat); migrants and other minorities are over-represented in this at-risk group in each of the five countries.<sup>34</sup>
- > **Society at Risk:** The Global Freedom Score (data source: Freedom House), which measures political and civil liberties in a country.
- > **Planet at Risk:** The ratio between energy-related greenhouse gas emissions and gross domestic energy consumption (data source: Eurostat), which serves as a proxy for each country's contribution to global warming.

Second, all the EU Member States, EU candidate countries as well as Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and the UK were ranked based on the above indicators. Third, five countries were chosen based on their individual ranking and geographical location. Instead of focusing exclusively on those

countries with the highest risk exposure, the goal was to select a balanced sample that reflects the diverse realities across Europe (Table 1).

### Step 2: Focus Groups

To develop a study that is grounded in the lived experiences of young adults in the five countries, the project began with an initial exploration of how young adults imagine a future society and what they are willing to do to help shape the future they want.

To this end, the SINUS Institute conducted five online focus group discussions between 27 June and 4 July 2022. These guided discussions lasted 90 minutes each and included a total of 34 participants aged 18 to 39 who live in the five countries under study.

Each focus group was led by an experienced native-speaker moderator who used the primary local language. Discussions were simultaneously interpreted into English and overseen by the SINUS research team, which ensured consistent implementation across all five countries.

TABLE 1: COUNTRY SELECTION

Source: Eurostat 2021, Freedom House 2021

	People at risk (% NEET)	Society at risk (Global Freedom Score)	Planet at risk (CO <sub>2</sub> ratio)
Germany	Low risk (5.7%)	Low risk (97)	High risk (87.2)
Greece	High risk (16.9%)	Medium risk (87)	Medium risk (74.9)
Italy	High risk (21.2%)	Low risk (90)	High risk (82.2)
Poland	Medium risk (12.0%)	Medium risk (82)	High risk (85.9)
United Kingdom	Medium risk (11.3%)	Low risk (93)	High risk (81.8)
EU27	Medium risk (11.8%)	N/A	High risk (82.8)

Every focus group had six to eight participants and was gender-balanced. To mitigate potential biases, there were

- > at least two participants with lower educational attainment, i.e., no vocational or academic training,
- > at least two participants with incomes in the lowest 25% of the population and
- > at least two participants who were born outside their country of residence and/or had at least one parent who was born abroad.

All groups represented a good mix of participants from rural and urban areas in different regions in each country.

Participants were prompted to share and discuss pressing social and environmental issues, their ideas for a desirable future society, their perceptions of political leaders, civil society and other impactful actors as well as their own involvement in civic action (or lack thereof), along with their main motives for and barriers to getting involved.

The groups moved from first exploring each topic openly to addressing more specific questions aimed at gathering relevant data in each area. Creative techniques such as projective and imaginative exercises were applied. For instance, when discussing civic engagement, a scenario-building method based on the psychotherapist Steve de Shazer's "miracle question"<sup>35</sup> was employed to delve more deeply into the topic.

All focus groups were audio- and video-recorded. Recordings were transcribed, and the transcripts were pseudonymized to protect participants' personal data. The transcripts were then analyzed using an open coding method inspired by grounded theory and classical qualitative content analysis and adapted to the group discussion context. Throughout the analysis, findings were shared and discussed within the SINUS and Allianz Foundation research teams as well as with the local moderators who led the discussions.

All data were collected, processed and stored in accordance with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation.

33 Howell Smith, M. et al. (2020). Modeling the Use of Mixed Methods-Grounded Theory: Developing Scales for a New Measurement Model. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 14(2), 184-206.

34 See, e.g., Rahmani, H. & Groot, W. (2023). Risk Factors of Being a Youth Not in Education, Employment or Training: A Scoping Review. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 120, 2023, 102198.

35 De Shazer, S. et al. (2022). *More Than Miracles. The State of the Art of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy*. Routledge.

### Step 3: Questionnaire Design

In accordance with established procedures for sequential mixed-methods research such as this, many survey questions were directly derived from qualitative research findings, i.e., the focus groups. This approach was applied to several parts of the questionnaire, including those dealing with attitudes toward political issues, modes and risks of civic engagement, aspects of a good life and a desirable future society, and social and environmental concerns. Within this process, key quotes from the focus group discussions were turned into statements that were suitable for the survey questionnaire (see Box on the right).

Other sections of the questionnaire were also closely inspired by the focus group findings, though individual items or statements were not necessarily always derived from direct quotes. In addition to the focus groups, survey questions expanded upon and were also influenced by existing research in the fields of youth studies, civic engagement and social psychology, such as the question battery on fairness, which took conceptual cues from the European Social Survey. Some standardized measurement instruments were also used, such as the political left-right scale<sup>36</sup> and the survey questions on political self-efficacy.<sup>37</sup>

The questionnaire was finalized in consultation with the Study's Research Advisory Board and included the following question batteries:

- > Sociodemographic characteristics
- > Political interest, self-efficacy and orientation
- > Political attitudes
- > Social cohesion
- > Experiences of discrimination and racism
- > Optimism about the future
- > Dimensions of a good life and a desirable society
- > Dimensions of a fair society
- > Expectations: My country in 10 years
- > Social and environmental issues of concern
- > Perceptions of leading societal actors and strategies
- > Past and current modes of civic engagement
- > Potential modes and frequency of civic engagement
- > Drivers of civic engagement
- > Barriers to civic engagement
- > Perceived risk of civic engagement
- > Willingness to tolerate perceived risks
- > Civic engagement touchpoints

### Step 4: Fieldwork

Data were collected between 3 September and 7 November 2022, using a self-administered online survey, also referred to as computer-assisted web interviews, or CAWI.

The decision to use this method — as opposed to a survey questionnaire administered by an interviewer by telephone or face-to-face — was driven by the high rates of internet usage among young adults in the five countries. Based on internet access data published by the International Telecommunication Union, it is fair to say that almost the entire population in the target group has internet access and is thus technically accessible via online survey methods.

The survey was administered by the experienced fieldwork provider Dynata and overseen by the SINUS Institute. To ensure data quality, constant checks were carried out to identify and weed out respondents who gave the same answer, for example “somewhat agree,” to all questions in a given question battery. Additionally, so-called “traps” were laid, for instance at certain points respondents were asked to specify whether they were a human or a robot. The purpose of this and other questions was to ensure that participants read all the survey questions carefully and answered them in good faith.

Further, the SINUS Institute conducted additional quality checks of the final dataset, including reviews of certain response patterns, for example respondents who jumped back and forth between “agree completely” and “somewhat agree” as well as those who gave contradictory responses, such as offering very conservative opinions within one question battery and then very progressive opinions within a different question battery.

**The surveyed sample of 10,000 young adults in Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland and the UK is representative, meaning that it accurately reflects the age, gender and education distribution of the young adult populations in these five countries.**

As a result, the attitudes, behaviors, experiences and values reported by the survey respondents

## Direct Quotes From the Focus Groups

“Perhaps I’m at an age where I’d like to have children, but I’m wondering if I should have children in a time like this. The world seems to be going in a very precise direction, and we’re doing very little to stop it [...]. And I have wondered many times: If you have a child, what will this child face? What problems? What will his or her life be like? Probably they won’t have the life that our generation had, where everything was abundant and nobody thought water was an issue, for example.”

Focus group participant in Italy

“Everyone should take to the streets, but no one dares to do so.”

Focus group participant in Germany

“Our politicians are simply [...] I’ll say puppets in the sense that, as someone said here in the round, they hardly ever represent their own opinion, but the opinion of someone who is playing in the background.”

Focus group participant in Germany

“If you go anywhere, if you migrate, you will follow the rules of the others.”

Focus group participant in Greece

## Survey Questionnaire Statements

In times like these, I understand when people hesitate to have children.

In times of crisis, everyone should take to the streets.

Politicians are puppets of powerful, shadowy elites in the background.

If you migrate to a country, you must try to fit in with the majority population there.

closely approximate to those that typify the young adult populations, both at a total level and with regard to differences between population subgroups, such as Generation Z vs. Millennials or politically left-leaning respondents vs. those who lean to the right. To draw a representative sample, nationally representative quotas were set based on Eurostat data on age, gender and education, which were defined as follows:

> **Gender:** Female vs. male (at the time the fieldwork was done, reliable structural data on non-binary or alternative gender identifications were not available in any of the five countries)

> **Age:** Four age categories

- > 18 to 24 years old
- > 25 to 29 years old
- > 30 to 34 years old
- > 35 to 39 years old

> **Education:** Three levels of education

- > Basic: ISCED 2011 levels 1 to 2
- > Vocational: ISCED 2011 levels 3 to 5
- > Higher: ISCED 2011 levels 6 and above

As regards education, in each country respondents were asked to select their highest formal educational attainment from a list of national qualifications, for example a Bachelor’s degree. The national lists were drawn up using the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011), a framework that facilitates the comparison of education-related information globally. For a full list of educational credentials included in the questionnaire, please contact the Allianz Foundation research team at [study@allianzfoundation.org](mailto:study@allianzfoundation.org).

36 Knutsen, O. (1995). Value Orientations, Political Conflicts and Left-Right Identification: A Comparative Study. *European Journal of Political Research*, 28(1), 63–93.

37 Yeich, S. & Levine, R. (1994). Political Efficacy: Enhancing the Construct and Its Relationship to Mobilization of People. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 22(3), 259–271.

**TABLE 2: FIELDWORK DATA**

	Germany	Greece	Italy	Poland	UK
Fieldwork period	3 September – 7 November 2022	3 September – 7 November 2022	3 September – 7 November 2022	3 September – 7 November 2022	4 September – 7 November 2022
Total access panel size	Over 200,000 participants	Ca. 20,000 participants	Over 200,000 participants	Ca. 50,000 participants	Over 200,000 participants
Participants recruited	N=4,066	N=4,599	N=4,369	N=6,033	N=3,439
Screen-outs due to quota criteria	N=108	N=299	N=132	N=274	N=92
Screen-outs due to full quotas	N=78	N=771	N=631	N=2,091	N=37
Screen-outs due to quality checks	N=1,149	N=1,054	N=1,060	N=1,101	N=954
Incomplete questionnaires	N=731	N=474	N=545	N=567	N=356
<b>Total final sample</b>	<b>N=2,000</b>	<b>N=2,000</b>	<b>N=2,000</b>	<b>N=2,000</b>	<b>N=2,000</b>

Table 2 specifies the fieldwork periods, access panel sizes and rates of participation, dropout and screen-out based on the above-mentioned demographic sampling quotas on the one hand and quality checks on the other.

**Step 5: Analysis**

The survey data were mostly analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques such as frequency distributions, cross-tabulations and various goodness-of-fit tests. In addition, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was used to detect salient patterns in the young adults’ responses, while statistical links between their different responses were uncovered using multiple linear regression. All findings were discussed with the Study’s Research Advisory Board.

**Finding Patterns in Survey Data**

PCA, a statistical technique used to simplify complex data, was employed to find patterns in what young adults view as (1) a desirable future society, (2) a “fair” or “just” society, (3) pressing social or environmental challenges or (4) the civic actions that young adults prefer to take.

In each of these instances, PCA was used to look at young adults’ answers in a particular question battery to discover groups of answers that correlate as strongly as possible with each other and as little as possible with the rest of the answers. That way, numerous variables were reduced to only a few underlying components.

For example, in the case of perceived fairness, young adults’ divergent reactions to 16 different statements about what makes a society “fair” (e.g., “A society is fair when hardworking people earn more than others”) was reduced so that young adults’ answers were reliably assigned to one of three dimensions of fairness, i.e., fairness seen as (1) equal opportunities, (2) equal outcomes or (3) laissez-faire.

The explanatory power and statistical reliability of each PCA output was further substantiated using additional measurements and tests, such as Cronbach’s alpha.

**Civic Action**

To understand why young adults get involved in specific forms of civic action, their survey responses were subjected to a multiple linear regression analysis, which was used to test a modified version of the well-known Civic Voluntarism Model.<sup>38</sup>

The Civic Voluntarism Model was developed to explain factors that drive participation in electoral politics, but has also been used to explain other modes of social and political participation, such as support for environmental movements.<sup>39</sup> The Model holds that four factors often contribute to social and political participation: (1) access to resources such as time, money and information; (2) “recruitment,” i.e., invitations/encouragement to participate by other people; (3) psychological involvement with politics in general; and (4) psychological involvement with specific issues, such as climate change. As a novel contribution to the original model, “risk tolerance” — defined as individual willingness to endure the risks reported in Table 7 — was also included as a fifth factor.

The survey questionnaire included questions about all five factors, and they were included in the analysis as independent variables in order to explain the variations in young adults’ civic actions, i.e., the dependent variable, which comprised three modes of engagement:

- > **Changing personal habits,** such as less air travel
- > **Individual political participation,** such as voting in an election
- > **Collective action,** such as joining a protest march or social movement and other forms of engagement that require more time and effort.

Before running the statistical regressions, all three modes were tested for reliability and, as they all proved reliable, they were adopted as dependent variables in three separate analyses.

The modified Civic Voluntarism Model proved statistically significant for all three modes of engagement, adding nuance to previous findings. The combination of factors that influence different kinds of engagement does indeed differ. Specifically, collective “hands-on” action and individual political participation are mostly affected by young adults’ political self-efficacy and their tolerance of risks — as well as touchpoints with NGOs — while changes in personal habits appear to be driven primarily by concerns about racism, climate change and other issues.

Table 3 summarizes the regression results for the collective action model. The model proved successful at predicting whether and, if so, how much young adults participate in collective civic action (R<sup>2</sup>=0.315). Here, individual willingness to take risks proved decisive (β=0.295), followed by perceived political self-efficacy (β=0.170), concerns about social cohesion and traditional values (β=0.152) and recruitment by NGO volunteers and/or activists (β=0.151). Most other variables are technically significant but have minor impacts. For more details on these and other analyses, please contact the Allianz Foundation research team at [study@allianzfoundation.org](mailto:study@allianzfoundation.org).

<sup>38</sup> Verba, S. & Nie, N. (1972). *Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality*. University of Chicago Press.

<sup>39</sup> Barkan, S. (2004). *Explaining Public Support for the Environmental Movement: A Civic Voluntarism Model*. *Social Science Quarterly*, 85(4), 913–937.



**TABLE 3: DETERMINANTS OF COLLECTIVE CIVIC ACTION**

Model summary					
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Standard error of the estimate	
1: Collective action	,562	0.316	0.315	0.22371	
ANOVA					
	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean square	F-value	Significance
Regression	225.599	12	18.800	375.637	,000b
Unstandardized residuals	487.563	9742	0.050		
Total	713.161	9754			
Coefficients					
Fieldwork period	Unstandardized coefficients (B)	Standard error	Standardized coefficients (β)	F-value	Significance
Constant	-0.474	0.022		-21.724	0.000
Age	-0.003	0.000	-0.079	-9.024	0.000
Gender: Male	0.015	0.005	0.027	3.058	0.002
Education: High	0.023	0.005	0.040	4.398	0.000
Income: Above median	-0.015	0.005	-0.028	-3.250	0.001
Interest in politics	0.014	0.003	0.044	4.374	0.000
Perceived political self-efficacy	0.074	0.005	0.170	15.987	0.000
Engagement driver: Discussions with family, friends, colleagues	-0.011	0.005	-0.020	-2.414	0.016
Engagement driver: Discussions with activists, NGO representatives	0.133	0.008	0.151	17.432	0.000
Concerns: Social justice	0.044	0.005	0.093	8.525	0.000
Concerns: Traditional values	0.068	0.004	0.152	15.640	0.000
Concerns: Climate and environment	-0.011	0.005	-0.022	-2.060	0.039
Willingness to take risks	0.120	0.004	0.295	31.066	0.000

# Annex 2

## Data Tables

**TABLE 4: YOUNG ADULTS' CONCERNS ABOUT THE FUTURE**

	Total		Germany		Greece		Italy		Poland		UK	
	very concerned	somewhat concerned	very concerned	somewhat concerned	very concerned	somewhat concerned	very concerned	somewhat concerned	very concerned	somewhat concerned	very concerned	somewhat concerned
Rising living costs (e.g., rent, energy, food, transportation)	74%	21%	71%	23%	83%	14%	76%	22%	84%	14%	71%	22%
Destruction of nature (e.g., loss of biodiversity, destruction of forests and oceans)	54%	36%	53%	36%	67%	26%	60%	33%	58%	35%	45%	41%
Energy shortages and energy insecurity (e.g., blackouts, gas shortages)	54%	36%	53%	35%	64%	28%	56%	37%	64%	31%	46%	40%
Climate change and its consequences (e.g., extreme weather events like heat waves)	51%	36%	49%	36%	58%	31%	63%	30%	48%	38%	47%	39%
Rising social inequality	40%	44%	41%	44%	51%	37%	46%	41%	40%	44%	34%	47%
Food and water scarcity	47%	37%	40%	41%	58%	25%	51%	34%	62%	30%	40%	40%
Fake news and media manipulation	41%	39%	35%	40%	67%	24%	40%	41%	57%	34%	35%	40%
My country fighting in a war	42%	36%	36%	40%	53%	26%	49%	34%	60%	28%	34%	41%
Erosion of the justice system (e.g., unfair trials, police brutality)	36%	42%	24%	41%	59%	31%	40%	45%	55%	36%	33%	44%
Political extremism	36%	42%	37%	43%	37%	41%	41%	35%	34%	46%	32%	43%
Social tension caused by migration	29%	45%	30%	45%	46%	37%	28%	47%	32%	47%	25%	44%
A weakening sense of community and togetherness	28%	46%	27%	47%	37%	44%	28%	49%	30%	45%	26%	45%
Discrimination and exclusion on the basis of ethnicity or nationality	31%	42%	24%	44%	41%	36%	37%	40%	30%	42%	33%	42%
Brain drain (i.e. highly-skilled workers leaving the country)	28%	41%	22%	39%	48%	33%	36%	45%	34%	45%	24%	41%
Dangerous diseases (e.g., COVID-19)	30%	39%	23%	40%	36%	35%	34%	38%	34%	38%	31%	41%
Discrimination and exclusion on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation	29%	37%	22%	36%	39%	33%	38%	36%	30%	34%	30%	40%
Loss of significance of tradition and heritage of your country	23%	35%	19%	33%	35%	31%	23%	39%	29%	41%	22%	33%
Loss of significance of religion	14%	23%	11%	21%	27%	23%	12%	19%	17%	28%	16%	27%

**TABLE 5: YOUNG ADULTS' MOTIVES FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, % OF YOUNG ADULTS**

	Total	Germany	Greece	Italy	Poland	UK
In the future, I want to be certain that I did everything I could.	45%	43%	61%	49%	51%	39%
I want to develop as a person.	41%	47%	62%	29%	52%	34%
It is my duty as a citizen.	38%	31%	55%	52%	37%	35%
I want to inspire other people to think and act through my actions.	35%	45%	47%	31%	35%	25%
There are simply too few people who take action.	34%	35%	39%	37%	42%	27%
Certain social and environmental issues are particularly close to my heart.	34%	35%	36%	41%	31%	30%
I think that my actions will change things for the better.	34%	38%	40%	27%	32%	33%
I want to feel like part of a larger movement that is changing things for the better.	27%	26%	37%	22%	25%	31%
People in my social circle take action and I want to join in.	15%	18%	18%	8%	15%	17%
I want to be recognized by others as having helped change things for the better.	13%	11%	18%	9%	13%	17%
I want to enhance my CV.	12%	10%	14%	7%	16%	15%

**TABLE 6: YOUNG ADULTS' BARRIERS TO CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, IN %**

	Total	Germany	Greece	Italy	Poland	UK
I don't know what kind of actions I could take.	32%	28%	42%	39%	33%	30%
I have no time.	29%	32%	40%	18%	30%	31%
It's not the right period in my life.	22%	21%	37%	19%	28%	21%
I don't know enough about the issues.	22%	20%	25%	22%	25%	23%
I don't have the courage.	21%	20%	19%	12%	32%	24%
I don't think it would make a difference.	21%	21%	20%	19%	21%	24%
I could suffer personal disadvantages.	19%	18%	18%	16%	21%	22%
I have other things that are more important to me.	19%	21%	19%	11%	26%	19%
Nobody else in my social circle takes action.	16%	16%	20%	12%	22%	14%
It is already too late. Things will never change anyway.	10%	11%	9%	10%	7%	13%
I simply don't want to.	9%	10%	5%	6%	8%	11%

**TABLE 7: YOUNG ADULTS' WILLINGNESS TO TAKE RISKS FOR A BETTER FUTURE SOCIETY, IN %**

	Total		Germany		Greece		Italy		Poland		UK	
	very willing	some-what willing	very willing	some-what willing	very willing	some-what willing	very willing	some-what willing	very willing	some-what willing	very willing	some-what willing
Physical effort (e.g., overworked, long marches)	19%	45%	19%	49%	24%	39%	20%	45%	18%	46%	18%	42%
Being stigmatized or excluded because of my views	13%	37%	13%	38%	19%	30%	13%	41%	8%	27%	15%	38%
Conflicts with friends and family	12%	35%	12%	42%	21%	31%	12%	38%	6%	20%	14%	36%
Financial costs (e.g., travel costs, membership fees)	10%	34%	9%	40%	16%	33%	6%	28%	7%	34%	13%	32%
Psychological risks (stress, frustration, burnout)	10%	32%	9%	33%	19%	33%	8%	30%	8%	29%	13%	36%
Less time or energy for other areas of my life	9%	33%	8%	35%	14%	32%	8%	33%	6%	30%	12%	33%
Less privacy	10%	32%	9%	30%	16%	32%	11%	36%	7%	30%	11%	33%
Verbal attacks, bullying, hate speech	13%	29%	13%	29%	20%	28%	10%	27%	9%	26%	16%	31%
Less income or fewer job opportunities	9%	21%	9%	22%	12%	22%	6%	18%	5%	15%	11%	26%
Physical conflicts (e.g., with security, police, counter-protesters)	9%	20%	9%	17%	12%	20%	7%	18%	7%	15%	12%	27%
Legal problems (e.g., risk of being fined or arrested)	8%	19%	7%	20%	11%	21%	5%	15%	5%	16%	11%	23%

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