



#RMP18
#Vielfaltleben

The complete study is only available in German:
Zusammenleben in kultureller Vielfalt
Vorstellungen und Präferenzen in Deutschland
Bertelsmann Stiftung (Hrsg.)

English Summary

Living in Cultural Diversity

Views and Preferences in Germany

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Summary

Based on the data from the 2017 Religion Monitor, this special evaluation focuses on how people in Germany view successful coexistence in the presence of cultural and religious diversity. We explored this in a representative survey based on four typical approaches to living together in diversity: cultural adaptation of immigrants to the host society, the merging of different cultures and traditions (fusion), the preservation of different cultures, and the adaptation of the majority population to traditions of the immigrants. The goal was to determine, based on the preferences of respondents for a particular model, their views on how much one side ought to move toward the other, the two sides ought to move toward each other—or neither side should move toward the other.

In a second step, we analyzed the survey results in relation to sociodemographic factors such as age, place of residence, religious affiliation, and religiosity. This made it possible to determine with greater precision which factors influence attitudes regarding successful coexistence.

The results of our analysis can be summarized as follows:

Half of respondents were in favor of cultural adaptation. Among respondents in Germany, 52 percent believe that coexistence in cultural diversity can be successful if immigrants and their children adapt to the culture of the mainstream society. About one third view coexistence as successful if the various cultures merge into one common culture. Cultural coexistence is preferred by one in ten respondents. Neither

participants with or nor those without a migrant background held the view that coexistence can succeed if the majority adapts culturally to the immigrants.

German states with broader experience of immigration are more open to cultural diversity.

The preferences for successful coexistence amid cultural diversity vary among German states depending on how much of the population has an immigrant background. People are more likely to expect adaptation in regions where there are relatively few people with a migrant background. In German states where less than 10 percent of the population have a migrant background, nearly two thirds of respondents expect adaptation. Where people with a migrant background constitute 25 percent or more of the population, this expectation drops to below 50 percent and openness to cultural diversity increases. Thus, a merging of cultures is preferred by 40 percent of respondents in those states in contrast to just 23 percent in German states with a lower proportion of migrants. This supports the conclusion that the experience of cultural diversity promotes acceptance of other cultures.

Young people show significantly more cultural openness. The preferences for a particular form of living together in cultural diversity vary by age group. The proportion of people who view cultural adaptation as the best form of coexistence increases with age. Among people over 70 years old, 66 percent hold this view, while only about one fifth of people under 25 year prefer adaptation. More than 50 percent of people under 40 years old approve of a common culture

that develops from a merging of different cultures. These findings indicate that attitudes about cultural diversity are in large part a generational issue.

At the same time, a preference for cultural independence is more pronounced among young adults. The declining preference for cultural adaptation among younger people does not always lead to stronger approval for a merging of cultures. To some extent, young adults are more likely to prefer an independence of cultures. Thus, more than one fifth of respondents under 25 years old support the idea that people should maintain their own cultures, while just under 7 percent of 25- to 39-year-olds hold this view. Furthermore, the preference for cultural independence is more pronounced among young adults with a relatively low level of education and among those who are Muslim. It may also indicate the potential for conflict among young adults from different backgrounds—especially because it primarily occurs in educationally disadvantaged environments. There is thus a need for further research on the specific effects of this attitude on coexistence.

The well-educated are more open to diversity. The expectation that immigrants will adapt shows a steady decrease as the respondent's level of education rises: While about 60 percent of people who have completed little education expect immigrants to adapt culturally, this opinion is held by just 43 percent of respondents who have earned a university entrance diploma. Almost half of the well-educated hold the view that a merging of cultures can allow people to live together in cultural diversity. This greater openness can stem from their broader educational horizon, but it may also reflect the fact that people with a higher level of education are far less affected by economic problems and thus less inclined to view immigrants as competitors for scarce resources.

Religion can serve both as barrier and as a bridge between different cultures. Christians in Germany more frequently hold the view that people can live together in cultural diversity if migrants adapt culturally than do those with no religious affiliation or Muslims (Christians: 55 percent; nonreligious: 48 percent; Muslims: 39 percent).

Less religious Christians who rarely go to church believe that cultural independence can lead to coexistence in everyday life more than practicing Christians do, by 18 more percentage points. Among Muslims, the correlation looks different and is much more sharply pronounced: Less religious Muslims show the greatest readiness to adapt (53 percent), while highly religious Muslims (30 percent) indicate that an increasing relevance of Islam in everyday life correlates with decreasing readiness to adapt. A higher proportion of practicing Muslims (20 percent) also expresses support for cultural independence. At the same time, both highly religious Christians (39 percent) and highly religious Muslims (49 percent) have the highest levels of support for a merging of cultures and are accordingly of the opinion that cultural convergence represents the best option for successful coexistence. The results indicate that religion is neither problematic nor conducive to cultural diversity per se; rather, it has the potential to be both.

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