Right-Wing Extremism Barometer 2024

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Barometer

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Executive Summary
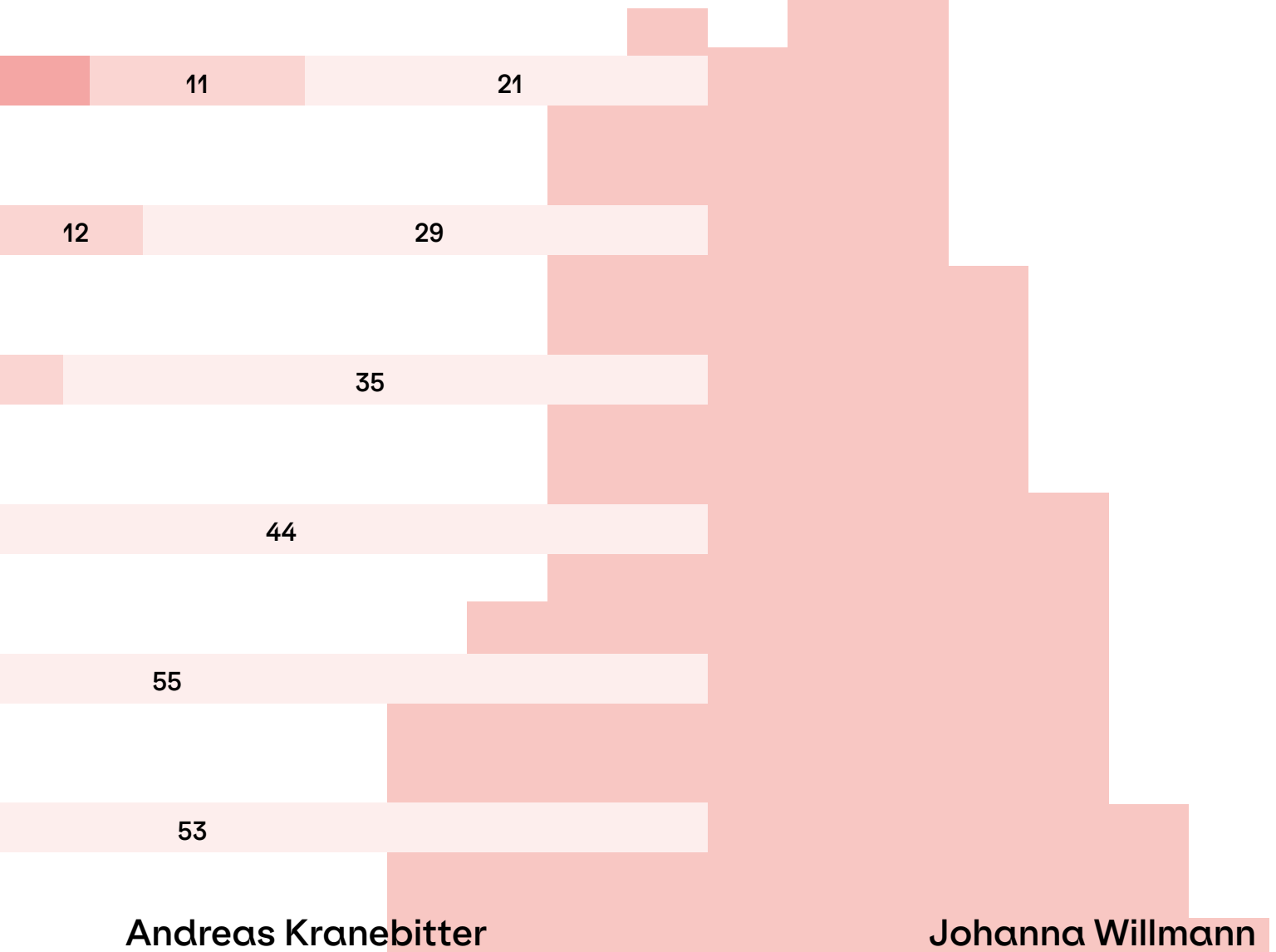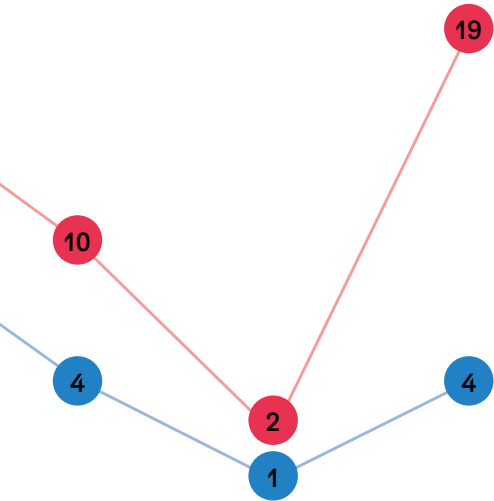
The DÖW Right-Wing Extremism Barometer was realized in an online survey (CAWI), which was conducted from the end of April 2024 to the end of May 2024. The sample, which originates from an online access panel of the opinion research institute marketagent, comprises 2,198 people who were sampled to be representative of the Austrian resident population aged between 16 and 75 in terms of age, gender, federal state and education. The study aims to shed light on the prevalence of authoritarian, racist, antisemitic, and related attitudes in Austria, as well as the societal potential — beyond the current status quo of organized right-wing extremism — that actors encounter who have made such attitudes the basis of their political agenda. This study is to be repeated every two years in future to enable comparisons to be made over time.

In the survey, a majority of respondents stated that they consider "comprehensive remigration" to be necessary or that they sometimes feel "foreign in their own country" because of the Muslims living in Austria. Anti-Semitic views are held by a larger proportion of respondents (15 %–23 %) than is the case in the most recent Leipzig Authoritarianism Study 2022 (approx. 7 %). As in Germany, Israel-related or guilt-avoidance antisemitism is more common than traditional antisemitism. The tendency towards conspiracy narratives is pronounced: Around 50 % of respondents each believe that they are being systematically lied to by "the media" and that the Austrian population is being replaced by immigrants in the long term. Furthermore, respondents are authoritarian when it comes to questions about law and order. Once again, more than 50 % agree with the statement that "dangerous people" should be able to be locked up even before they have committed crimes and that fundamental rights should not prevent deportations. However, the majority of respondents have a positive attitude towards democracy.

As part of the evaluation, a segment of around 10 % of the resident population was identified as having pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes, as expressed in their agreement with key items along the dimensions "anti-egalitarianism", "ethnocentrism" and "authoritarianism". In their ideological self-assessment, the majority of respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes place themselves in the political center or to the right of it.

A   Introduction

Most publications on right-wing extremism deal with right-wing extremist organizations and parties or their programs and thus with the "supply side" of right-wing extremism, so to speak. This study aims to broaden this perspective and, in addition to the right-wing extremist "supply", also examine the right-wing extremist "demand", i.e., ideologies, views and attitudes within the Austrian population.[1] In the following, the focus is therefore not on actions and actors, political campaigns or forms of action. Instead, we will examine which attitudes toward social and political issues characterize right-wing extremism, how widespread they are in society and which socio-demographic factors and other attitude patterns they are linked to.

Surveying attitudes does not initially mean attempting to analyze their causes, but rather the descriptive determination of their occurrence, their frequency and their correlations. In any case, every right-wing extremist offering encounters patterns of attitudes in the population, and this anti-democratic, right-wing extremist social potential mobilized by organized right-wing extremism must be recorded.

The investigation into the spread of attitudes is referred to in social science as attitude measurement, in which opinions in society are surveyed using questionnaires. The *Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance* (DÖW) conducted such a survey for this report, and the results are described in more detail below.[2] For this purpose, the definitions developed within the DÖW[3] were operationalized, i.e., made measurable. According to our terminology, right-wing extremist attitudes are about ideas of "natural" communities (as *ingroups*) that are and should be in a hierarchical relationship to one another, in other words, they are about the devaluation and desire to exclude other groups that are perceived as threatening (*outgroups*). This devaluation is linked to an affirmation of authoritarian political measures that affect both the choice of political content and the political means. In other words, right-wing extremism refers to an ideology,[4] which thinks in terms of supposedly "natural" communities (Volksgemeinschaftsdenken), whose equality and equivalence are rejected in favor of a hierarchically conceived order (anti-egalitarianism). In order to (re)establish this natural inequality, authoritarian modes of action are advocated in form and content (authoritarianism), which may imply political violence.

In our survey, we used extensively tested items that represent different latent attitude dimensions. In order to operationalize "right-wing extremism" according to our definition, we formed the three dimensions of anti-egalitarianism, popular community thinking/ethnocentrism and authoritarianism and identified two items for each dimension that are particularly meaningful in terms of content and meet statistical quality criteria particularly well (see Table 1). With the exception of the authoritarianism dimension, the questions are formulated positively and negatively. If at least four of the six items are agreed with (both "completely" and "rather"), the respondent is assigned to a group of respondents with "pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes." Unlike in other studies, the response category "neither–nor" is not understood as latent agreement but treated as separate category. In the following data analysis, we evaluated and compared the individual questions both for the respondents as a whole and for the group of respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes. This illustrates the extent and manifestation of right-wing extremist attitudes.

Conceptual decisions are always open to debate, as a look at various studies on authoritarianism and right-wing extremism at the beginning of this chapter should show. That is the nature of social science discussions. It is important to emphasize that our research does not aim to provide a guide to the precise identification of right-wing extremists. Rather, it is concerned with measuring far-right 'potential' as a syndrome of anti-democratic attitudes of inequality. In doing so, we examine the far-right social threat potential in Austria, which is understandably perceived in surveys as one of the greatest threats to democracy.[5] We therefore deliberately speak of "pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes" and neither of "right-wing extremist individuals" per se, nor of a "right-wing extremist world view."

Item	Dimension
▸ Can someone be a good Austrian if he or she was not born in Austria?	Ethnic community thinking/ethnocentrism
▸ Our people are inherently superior to other people.	
▸ As in nature, the strongest should always prevail in society.	Antiegalitarianism
▸ We should make more of an effort to ensure that everyone has the same rights.	
▸ I want a strong man at the head of this country who doesn't have to worry about a parliament.	Authoritarianism
▸ Where there is strict authority, there is also justice.	

Table 1: Items of the three dimensions of right-wing extremism, according to the operationalization of the conceptual chapter. If at least four of the six items are agreed (resp. in two cases disagreed) with, the respondent is categorized into a group of respondents with "pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes." Unlike in other studies, the "neither–nor" response category is not regarded as latent agreement for that matter.

B Sociological studies on right-wing extremism in Austria and Germany

In Austria, unlike in Germany, there has not yet been a long-term study that examines far-right attitudes over several years to identify corresponding trends. Existing Austrian long-term studies, such as the "Democracy Monitor" by the survey institute *Foresight/SORA*, which has been conducted since 2018,[6] or the "Democracy Radar" by the *Austrian Democracy Lab*,[7] which was conducted in ten waves from 2018 to 2023, survey general political attitudes, while the "Anti-Semitism Study", which is commissioned by the Austrian Parliament and conducted every two years by the opinion research institute IFES, examines specific anti-Semitic attitudes in Austria.[8] A striking and, in an international context, surprising common feature of these long-term studies is that they do not report political (party) preferences and self-assessments or do not survey them at all.[9] This study aims to close this gap.

Aside from long-term studies, four cross-sectional studies in Austria in the recent years offered essays on specific subtopics of right-wing extremism: a study in Salzburg in 2021 on authoritarianism and coronavirus skepticism,[10] the "Science Barometer" of the *Austrian Academy of Sciences* on hostility toward and skepticism of science,[11] a study on extremism in Austria commissioned by the Federal Ministry of the Interior and conducted by SORA[12] and an international study on authoritarianism conducted under the direction of historian Oliver Rathkolb of the *Vienna Institute for Labor Market and Educational Research (WIAB)*.[13]

The latter two studies draw on survey instruments from the two German long-term studies: the "Mitte-Studies" conducted regularly since 2002 by the *Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation*[14] and the resulting "Leipzig Authoritarianism Studies".[15] The methodology and results of the selected studies relevant to this survey are presented below to contextualize the DÖW Study in the academic field.

B1 Austrian longitudinal studies on hostility to democracy

Austrian Democracy Monitor (SORA)
According to the SORA "Democracy Monitor" 2022, the Austrian population's trust in political institutions fell sharply during the coronavirus pandemic. "Currently, only 34 % of people think that the political system in Austria works well. This is the lowest figure since the survey began in 2018; five years ago, satisfaction was 30 percentage points higher (64 %)."[16] This loss of trust does not apply equally to all institutions, but primarily to the democratically elected ones, i.e., the Federal President and parliament, while the police and armed forces, for example, were largely spared this loss of trust.[17] This affects all population groups in 2022, but only evaluations according to economic situation, education (based on school-leaving certificate yes/no), gender and form of employment are shown, while the political attitude of the respondents, for example, by self-assessment on a left–right scale or by stating a party preference, is not reported. However, SORA categorizes respondents politically into three groups, which they call "autocrats" (6 %), "authoritarian democrats" (37 %) and "convinced democrats" (57 %).[18] In 2023, SORA again found that although an overwhelming majority of the more than 2,000 respondents still consider democracy to be the best form of government (86 %), trust and satisfaction in political institutions remain low in the long-term trend.[19] A low level of trust in political institutions among lower-income respondents, which has been observed for some time, was

supplemented during the coronavirus years by a veritable erosion of trust in the middle and upper classes over the course of the pandemic.[20] At the same time, SORA notes a slight decline in authoritarianism, which is illustrated by the question of a "strong leader" ("*There should be a strong leader who does not have to worry about parliament and elections*"). In 2023, it was supported by a total of 19 %, namely by 6 % strongly (in comparison to 2022: 11 %) and by 13 % somewhat (in comparison to 2022: 15 %).[21]

Democracy Radar (ADL)

The most recent and last survey of the "Democracy Radar" conducted by the *Austrian Democracy Lab (ADL)* from September 22, 2022 to November 21, 2022, which researched satisfaction with democracy and the future of democracy in Austria by surveying a total of 9,000 people every six months from January 2018 to March 2023,[22] comes to similar conclusions. In a separate blog, study co-author of the 7th wave Flooh Perlot discussed right-wing extremism on the basis of the ADL radar. His conclusion: "Authoritarian and right-wing extremist statements receive varying degrees of approval in Austria, but they are not a marginal phenomenon to be downplayed."[23] Compared to the "Leipzig Authoritarianism Study" 2020, whose definition of right-wing extremism the ADL adopted for Austria, respondents in Austria showed higher approval ratings in 2021. Both the approval for a "*leader who rules Austria with a strong hand for the good of all*" was affirmed considerably more often in Austria, namely by 14 % in Austria compared to 8.6 % in Germany,[24] as well as the view that Austria is "*dangerously over-foreignized by the many foreigners*" or the item measuring anti-Semitism that "*the influence of Jews is still too great today.*"[25] Although the different survey dates and the different questions asked in detail must always be taken into account when making comparisons, the differences found are nevertheless noteworthy and warrant attention.

As the data from the ADL "Democracy Radar" are available via AUSSDA, they can also be analyzed by party preference.[26] The data show a clear correlation between right-wing self-assessment or party preference, measured by answering the so-called "Sunday question" (of voting FPÖ next Sunday), and anti-democratic and authoritarian attitudes. While 54.4 % of respondents stated that the political system in Austria works quite well on the whole and 89.0 % thought that democracy was better than other forms of government, these figures were significantly lower among FPÖ sympathizers. A total of 22.0 % and thus not even a quarter of FPÖ sympathizers fully or mostly agreed with the statement that the political system in Austria works quite well on the whole, and 78.5 % thought that democracy was better than other forms of government. A strong national feeling ("*We should finally have the courage to embrace a strong sense of national pride again.*") was agreed to by 41.7 % of respondents overall and 63.4 % of FPÖ sympathizers. The view that the "*discussion about the Holocaust should be ended*" was fully or mostly agreed with by 36.0 % of respondents overall and 60.8 % of FPÖ sympathizers. And the opinion that Austria should have a "*leader who governs Austria with a strong hand*" was also agreed with by 13.9 % overall (7.0 % of these fully and completely); among FPÖ sympathizers, this figure was 28.1 % (of which 15.4 % fully and completely agree).

According to the data from the ADL "Democracy Radar", the majority of FPÖ sympathizers are also in favour of democracy and against a strong man. However, there is a more than clear correlation: a clear hostility to democracy can be observed more frequently on the political right. This points to a potential threat to democracy on the extreme right-wing that needs to be measured, but which has rarely been addressed to date.

Authoritarianism, national histories and democratic disposition (WIAB)

The aforementioned WIAB authoritarianism study focuses on country comparisons of authoritarian attitudes. In the volume of tables on Austrian respondents, political attitudes are surveyed as an ideological self-assessment and shown for all items and item batteries. The question "*Democracy is the best form of government, even if it may cause problems*" was answered in this survey in Austria in 2022 with 51 % strongly agreeing and 28 % somewhat agreeing, i.e., a rounded figure of 79 %.[27] According to ideological self-classification, there is a clear left–right divide. For people who define themselves as left-wing, the approval rate is 87.6 % overall and even 91.7 % for those who define themselves as "rather left-wing", while on the other hand, 79.3 % of respondents who define themselves as "rather right-wing" agree and only 63.4 % of respondents with the self-classification as "right-wing" agree.[28] There are similarly clear differences for all other questions, such as the question about a "strong leader." This statement ("*You should have a strong leader who does not have to worry about a parliament and elections.*") is strongly agreed with by 6 % of all Austrian respondents and somewhat agreed with by 10 %.[29] Respondents with a lower level of education and income, which they say they struggle to get by on, are more authoritarian than average (although the majority are not authoritarian). In terms of ideological self-assessment, there is again a clear correlation between basic political attitudes and authoritarianism: 13.8 % of people with a "left" self-assessment, 8.2 % with a "rather left" self-assessment, 16.9 % with a "center" self-assessment, 15.5 % with a "rather right" self-assessment and a whopping 48.5 % with a "right" self-assessment agree with the desire for a strong leader.[30] The preventive imprisonment of potentially dangerous people, an authoritarian hallmark of punitiveness and thus as an example of authoritarian aggression, is approved of by 45 % in Austria overall; here, too, approval in political self-assessment increases significantly toward the right, with 71.2 % being of the classification "right-wing."[31] All other questions show that people with a self-assessment as politically right-wing display more authoritarian attitudes; they find violence legitimate to a greater extent than people with other political self-assessments; have less trust in the media, science and political institutions such as parliament or government; are more often anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim; or are more inclined to conspiracy thinking, with a full 82.2 % with a right-wing classification believing that people are systematically lied to in the media.[32]

A few Austrian studies, in particular the SORA study on extremism,[33] refer more closely to comparable studies in Germany, in particular, the German "Mitte-Study" by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation as well as the "Leipzig Authoritarianism Study", which was organized by the University of Leipzig in cooperation with the *Otto Brenner Foundation* and the *Heinrich Böll Foundation* in 2018.

The Mitte-Studies (Friedrich Ebert Foundation)

The aim of the Mitte-Study was and is to record shifts in political attitudes to the right: "Times of crisis are times when people move politically and reposition themselves. And this positioning can move from the center 'to the right.' Whether or not this happens and what the reasons might be are the main topics of interest in the Mitte-Studies."[34] In other words, the aim is to capture the mobilization potential of right-wing extremism in the supposed center of society by measuring attitudes over time. Central to the 2022 study is the reference to the "nested polycrises" that are strongly perceived by the population as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. This crisis perception and its connection to group-related misanthropy have been at the center of the analytical perspective of the Mitte-Studies from the very beginning, as Wilhelm Heitmeyer, in particular, wrote.[35] In an increasingly authoritarian capitalism, perceived or actual threats are interpreted by large sections of the population as a loss of control, both by individuals over their biography and by society over the social order. The social–psychological consequence is that people look for promises to restore this control through law and order, through hierarchies, through the social exclusion of others and, in short, through group-related misanthropy. When crises are experienced as a threatening loss of control, authoritarian aggression against supposedly guilty minorities increases, the need for submission to a strong hand increases and people rigidly cling to the traditional ways.

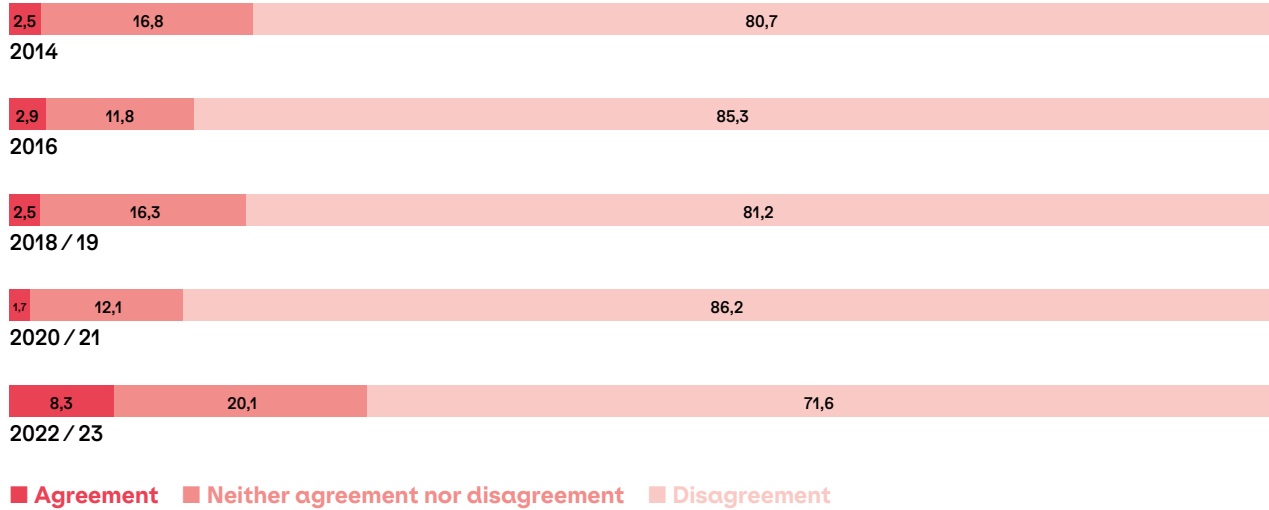**Manifest right-wing extremist world view in Germany** (figures in percentage)

2,5	16,8	80,7

2014

2,9	11,8	85,3

2016

2,5	16,3	81,2

2018 / 19

1,7	12,1	86,2

2020 / 21

8,3	20,1	71,6

2022 / 23

■ **Agreement**　■ **Neither agreement nor disagreement**　■ **Disagreement**

Figure 1: Proportion of respondents in the "Mitte-Studies" from 2014 to 2022/2023 with a "manifest right-wing extremist world view", colored dark red (source: Andreas Zick/Nico Mokros, Rechtsextreme Einstellungen in der Mitte, in: Andreas Zick/Küpper/Mokros [eds.], Die distanzierte Mitte, pp. 53–89, here: p. 71).

As a result of the coronavirus pandemic in particular, this generalized perception of the crisis underwent a massive political and cultural shift to the right: "Support for right-wing extremist attitudes is increasing in the center of society. [...] Likewise, the proportion of responses in the gray area regarding the nationalist ideology is increasing. At the same time, the proportion of people in the center who clearly and unequivocally reject right-wing extremist attitudes is falling, even though the majority of respondents reject right-wing extremism. Democracy is facing greater challenges with regard to right-wing extremism in the center than two years ago or even earlier. Germany emerged from the coronavirus crisis with more right-wing extremism and has thus entered the next crises. Although the country can rely on an absolute majority of a non-right-wing extremist center, this center is shrinking."[36]

In its definition of right-wing extremism, the "Mitte-Study" places violence and approval of violence centrally as the second essential characteristic alongside ideas of inequality; in its operationalization of right-wing extremism, the "Mitte-Study" follows the view that right-wing extremism is made up of six dimensions in 18 "core items": advocacy of a right-wing dictatorship, "national chauvinism", trivialization of National Socialism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and social Darwinism.[37] The following applies to 2022: support for a dictatorship is on the rise and has tripled compared to two years ago. Historical revisionism is held by 4 % of respondents, and xenophobia has increased significantly. An increase in anti-Semitism has also been observed—even before the events of October 7, 2023 and their consequences—and it could be said that "attitudes in the population reflect a rising trend in anti-Semit-ic incitement and anti-Semitic acts."[38] Overall, 8 % of the German population has a manifestly right-wing extremist world view according to the "Mitte-Study", which is a considerable increase, specifically a tripling to quadrupling of the figures from "Mitte-Studies" in previous years (see Figure 1).[39]

More than half of respondents with a manifestly far-right world view, namely 55 %, would place themselves in the political center, which has become smaller overall. Unsurprisingly, those who see themselves on the right agree with far-right attitudes the most, but as many as 12 % of those who define themselves as left-wing would have far-right attitudes. In terms of party preferences, the study found that a quarter of AfD sympathizers can be classified as manifestly far-right.[40] Socio-demographically, the known correlations (low education and low income correlate with approval of far-right attitudes) are less pronounced in 2022 than in previous years; far-right attitudes can be found everywhere and are "represented across the population [...], but to varying degrees."[41] What is relatively new to observe is that those with a medium level of education are also increasingly displaying far-right attitudes. According to a subjective self-assessment of class affiliation, those categorized as "lower" are more likely to be right-wing extremists than those categorized as "middle" and, above all, "upper", but here, too, it can be stated "that a manifestly right-wing extremist world view is widespread to a similar extent among respondents from all classes."[42]

Leipzig Authoritarianism Study

The "Leipzig Authoritarianism Study", which is regularly conducted by Oliver Decker and Elmer Brähler (*Else Frenkel-Brunswik Institute* at Leipzig University) in cooperation with the *Otto Brenner Foundation* and the *Heinrich Böll Foundation*, also emerged from the "Mitte-Studies". In the most recent survey, a total of 2,522 people with and without German citizenship between the ages of 16 and 91 were interviewed between the beginning of March and the end of May 2022.[43] The core of the survey was the questionnaire on right-wing extremist attitudes—Leipzig form (LEZ)—the socio-demographic part of which is randomly selected several times in households by an interviewer and the content of which is completed independently in order to minimize the effects of social desirability. Oliver Decker et al. define right-wing extremism as "a pattern of attitudes that is characterized by ideas of inequality. In the political sphere, these are expressed in an affinity for dictatorial forms of government, chauvinistic attitudes and a trivialization or justification of National Socialism. In the social sphere, they are characterized by anti-Semitic, xenophobic and social Darwinist attitudes."[44]

The main finding of the studies as a whole is that ideas of inequality are not limited to the fringes of society but can be found throughout society. [45]

Right-wing extremism is also measured in Leipzig in 18 statements on the six dimensions mentioned above; these include questions on dictatorship as a supposedly better form of government; on Hitler, who would be celebrated as a statesman without the murder of Jews; on the "necessary" enforcement of the strongest as in nature; on the allegedly excessive influence of Jews or on the natural superiority of Germans over other "peoples"; on the distinction between "valuable and unworthy life"; or on National Socialism, which according to the statement also had its good sides.[46] What is striking even in this short list is that many items are written in downright National Socialist terminology or refer to original Nazi ideology. The anti-Semitism included in the definition of right-wing extremism is also "traditional" anti-Semitism, which, as right-wing anti-Semitism, is apparently clearly distinguished from newer forms; if other forms were included in the definition, the figures would be different. As a result, a decline in right-wing extremism defined in this way can be seen over the long term, particularly in eastern Germany,[47] which probably measures the decline in traditional forms of right-wing extremism in its neo-Nazi manifestations more than the underlying (social) psychological causes. This is illustrated by a look at individual dimensions; for example, approval of ethnocentrism and chauvinism is fluctuating strongly and increasing in some cases.

The final message is that a "closed right-wing extremist world view" cannot be clearly assigned socio-demographically but is a minority phenomenon.

"In the west, we are observing a continuing trend, with the proportion of people with a closed far-right world view having fallen to 2.9 %. For eastern Germany, the long-term trend shows clear fluctuations from 8.0 % (2002) to 15.8 % (2012) and 9.5 % (2020) to just 2.1 % (2022). The declines already seen in the individual dimensions of neo-National Socialist ideology are also leading to a decline in the closed far-right world view. Overall, this ideology for legitimizing resentment in the population has currently lost importance."[48]

B3 (Right-wing) extremism in Austria

The aim of the SORA extremism study, which is the most important one in terms of comparability for this study, was to "provide an overview of the extent of different (potentially) extremist attitudes in the Austrian resident population aged 16 and over, identify reinforcing effects and offer an insight into the dynamics. To this end, the study examines attitudes toward right-wing extremism, religious fundamentalism and coronavirus conspiracy narratives."[49]

The authors of the study therefore considered right-wing extremism to be one of three types of extremism, which would theoretically be linked to five risk factors: *group-focused misanthropy (GMF)*, which was found in around half of the respondents regarding the unemployed or Muslims; *scepticism toward democracy,* measured as a lack of trust in the Austrian Parliament; *anti-Semitism*, which could be latent or manifest; *a willingness to use violence*, which was observed in a tenth of cases; and *reported extremist behavior*, such as participation in relevant rallies, etc.

In their operationalization of right-wing extremism, however, the authors fall back on German attitude measurements. Right-wing extremism is therefore understood as a syndrome, i.e., as a bundle of characteristics that a respondent must exhibit simultaneously:

Variables on chauvinism, social Darwinism, the "classic" authoritarian syndrome (authoritarian aggression, authoritarian subjugation and conventionalism […]), advocacy of dictatorship, trivialization of National Socialism and social dominance orientation. The social dominance orientation describes the assumption of a "natural" social hierarchy in which the representatives place themselves at the top; it is an expression of securing existing privileges. [50]

These dimensions, which, as in the German surveys, must be present simultaneously in order to speak of a right-wing extremist attitude syndrome, also focus on "classic" manifestations of right-wing extremism.

Figure 2 shows the six questions that were intended to measure right-wing extremism in the SORA extremism study, which, however, do not reflect the theoretically formulated six dimensions, but measure social Darwinism and authoritarianism.

Accordingly, the authors' conclusion is similar to that from Leipzig: "The prevalence of manifest right-wing extremist attitudes in Austria is extremely low: a total of 2 % of people in Austria at least fairly agree with all of the aforementioned characteristics and hold social Darwinist, chauvinist views characterized by social dominance and authoritarian subjugation, which are also characterized by conventionalism and authoritarian aggression. Latent right-wing extremist attitudes are more widespread: at 23 %, around a quarter agree at least in part with the aforementioned characteristics."[51]

In socio-demographic terms, the group is older (mostly over 60 years old) and rarely has a high school diploma—information that is probably also a consequence of the definition of right-wing extremism being narrowly confined to Nazi ideology.

Critical review

The brief overview of recent long-term and individual studies on authoritarianism and right-wing extremism in Germany and Austria should address previous measurements and contextualize the DÖW Right-Wing Extremism Barometer in German-language research. The central result of these studies is that the authors of the above studies consider right-wing extremism to be a minority phenomenon, which, however, resonates with a relatively large silent section of the population with potentially right-wing extremist attitudes.

We adopted numerous measurements, particularly in the wording of individual items, in our study, some of which, as discussed below, we reformulated slightly for the Austrian context.[52] At the same time, in the DÖW Right-Wing Extremism Barometer, we applied other definitions and operationalizations in detail, which result from a critical examination of the studies cited and the DÖW`s own conceptual work. Overall, we would like to formulate four points of criticism.

Firstly, in our opinion, the use of a general concept of extremism is unsuitable for the social scientific measurement of a specific ideology of right-wing extremism because, in short, it measures it by formalisms and thus deprives it of its ideological content. The German political scientist Peter Neumann, for example, qualified attitudes that "encompass both political ideas and objectives that are diametrically opposed to the fundamental values of a society and the means that actors use to implement those ideas"[53] as "extremist". However, the ideas pursued are not irrelevant for a definition of a specific extremism, such as right-wing extremism; the authoritarian establishment of a naturally understood inequality between groups of people, for example, implies a different degree of violent latency than, for example, a position of climate activists that is "extreme" according to this definition. The problem with Neumann's definition is that it remains unclear what the fundamental values of a society are and who defines them

Distribution of right-wing extremist attitudes in Austria (SORA, figures in percentage)

| 23 | 20 | 26 | 11 | 21 |

We should regain the courage to have a strong sense of national pride.

| 9 | 11 | 39 | 12 | 29 |

Established behaviors should not be questioned.

| 8 | 11 | 31 | 15 | 35 |

Outsiders and idlers should be dealt with harshly in society.

| 4 | 6 | 29 | 17 | 44 |

We should be grateful for leaders who tell us exactly what we can do.

| 3 | 4 | 21 | 16 | 55 |

As in nature, the stronger should always prevail in society.

| 4 | 5 | 21 | 17 | 53 |

Every society needs groups that are at the top and others that are at the bottom.

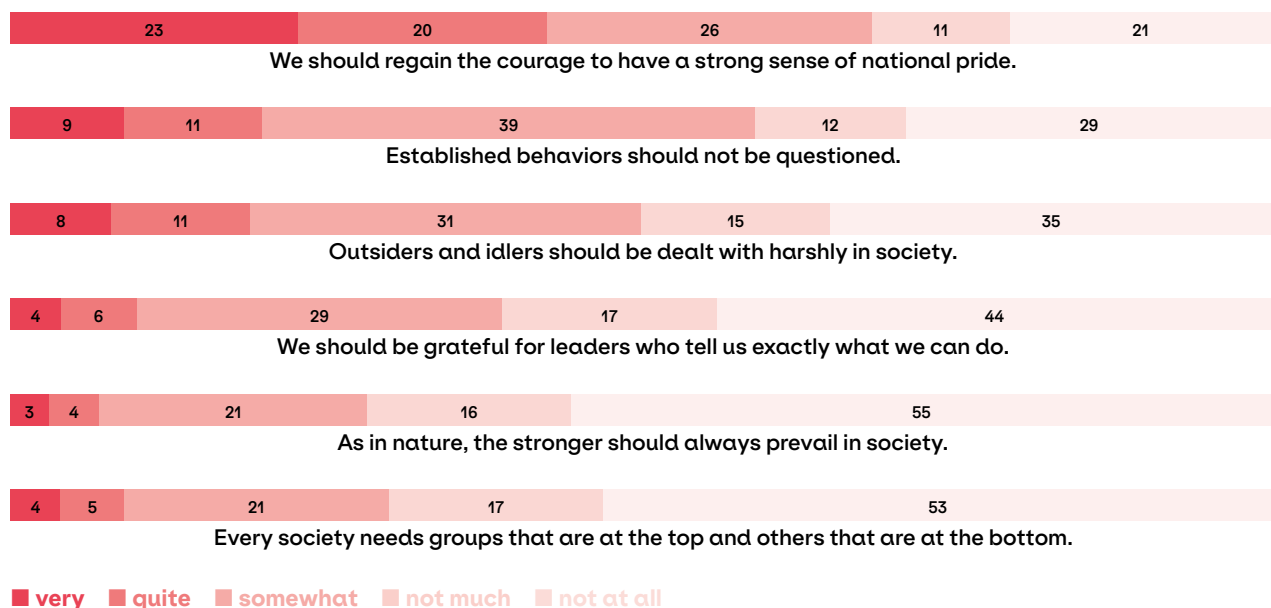■ very ■ quite ■ somewhat ■ not much ■ not at all

Figure 2: Prevalence of right-wing extremist attitudes in Austria in percent of all respondents (n=1,977; source: SORA).

and when. Any deviation from the mean value as a norm is then potentially classified as "extremist" per se, supplemented by the willingness to use violence as a definitional part of a generalized definition of extremism that is therefore stripped of its ideological components.

Secondly, analytical definitions sometimes conflict with normative assumptions. A fundamental criticism of the concept of the "Mitte-Studies" is that they assume a social center "that should be able to distinguish itself from extremist fringes."[54] This implies that the center itself is free of extremism. This assumption was criticized early on in American political science.[55] Defensively, the study does point out that it is not about a political self-image as the center or an economic middle class, but about a center[56] oriented toward democracy - however, this is a normative assumption. In this way, the "center" is not only an object of research, but also a collective subject in action; it is required to "position itself and distance itself from its extremist fringes, some of which it produces itself."[57] From the outset, the "Mitte-Studies" focused not only on the development of right-wing extremist attitudes but also on the image of the "penetration and reactivation of right-wing extremist attitudes in the center of society."[58] However, this is simply an impossibility if the center is defined as being oriented toward democracy because then it may become smaller, but by definition, it cannot become anti-democratic.

Thirdly, the most fundamental criticism of all studies is that the concept of right-wing extremism is narrowed down to its (neo-)Nazi version. This becomes very clear when the "Mitte-Study", for example, talks about more recent manifestations.

"This was accompanied by the formation of new ideological groups that can no longer simply be described as right-wing extremist or right-wing populist; most likely völkisch, authoritarian, rebellious, as we could see in the 2020/2021 Center Study, but also with left-wing and esoteric followers."[59]

In our opinion, this is misleading, as right-wing extremism has always been authoritarian and rebellious; the link to esotericism is also nothing new. So not being able to describe current right-wing extremism as right-wing extremism is a conceptual decision. In this respect, it seems important to us not to confuse right-wing extremism per se with its historically specific manifestations, such as the Holocaust-denying revisionism or South Tyrolean right-wing terrorism of the 1970s or the skinhead groups of the 1990s. A very narrow definition of "right-wing extremism" (with the exception of the most recent Center Study) produces a low result of around 2 % of respondents being defined as "manifestly right-wing extremist", while the "latent" approval of 23 % is interpreted very broadly if, as in the "Leipzig Authoritarianism Study", the answer "neither agree, nor disagree" is interpreted as latent approval. As a result, the construct of right-wing extremism in these definitions appears to us to be too narrow and the interpretation of latency too broad. In view of the fact that between 60 and 70 % of the population perceive right-wing extremism as a threat, not to mention the threat analysis of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution, the low results, i.e., (with the exception of the most recent "Mitte-Study") the identification of a group of 2 to 3 % of manifest right-wing extremists, which is thus estimated to be smaller than the number of religious fundamentalists, are surprising. In terms of content, a narrow definition of right-wing extremism means that old manifestations tend to be measured, as can be seen in particular in the trivialization of National Socialism as a necessary condition and newer manifestations of right-wing extremism. Especially (post-)migrant right-wing extremism as in the case of the "Grey Wolves", however, do not have to and probably cannot be determined by their relationship to (autochthonous) National Socialism. The necessary condition of anti-Semitism as a component of the right-wing extremism syndrome, even more so in its "traditional" form, also seems to us to be an unnecessary and, in view of the spread of anti-Semitic attitudes across all political ideologies, an unjustified narrowing: respondents who disagree with anti-Semitism items but answer anti-democratic questions reproduced in Table 1 would not be classified as right-wing extremist.

The broad and theoretically justified definition of focusing on ideas of inequality[60] is phenotypically narrowed in its operationalization if the focus is on the simultaneous presence of chauvinism, affinity to dictatorship, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, social Darwinism and, in particular, the trivialization of National Socialism. In the DÖW Right-Wing Extremism Barometer we therefore take a different approach.

C   The DÖW Right-Wing Extremism Barometer: Right-wing extremist attitudes in Austria

The DÖW Right-Wing Extremism Barometer was conducted as an online survey (CAWI) from late April 2024 to late May 2024. The sample, drawn from an online access panel provided by the opinion research institute *marketagent*, consisted of 2,198 individuals, representative of the Austrian resident population aged 16 to 75 years in terms of age, gender, federal state, and education. Compared to face-to-face or telephone interviews, it can be assumed that the effects of social desirability are reduced in online surveys, allowing respondents to answer sensitive questions more truthfully.

The questionnaire design was supported by a specially convened scientific advisory board,[61] whose feedback informed the selection, formulation, and arrangement of items in the questionnaire. The final version of the questionnaire was reviewed by the Institutional (Ethical) Review Board of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Vienna and deemed ethically unobjectionable. It included two "attention check" questions to identify inattentive participants. Respondents who answered both questions incorrectly (n=205) were excluded from the analysis. The final sample analyzed thus comprised 1,993 individuals.

For the subsequent analyses, the data were weighted according to gender, age, education, region, marital status, municipality size, employment status, and occupational activity, as well as cross-distributions of age and gender, education and gender, and education and age, based on the distribution of the Austrian resident population aged 16 to 75 years (see Annex).[62]

C1   Right-wing extremist attitudes in the Austrian population as a whole and short-scale "pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes"

To provide an overview of the "demand" for right-wing extremist content in the Austrian resident population, the following sections present the univariate distributions of the responses to the questions along the three dimensions mentioned above (anti-egalitarianism, ethnocentrism and authoritarianism) using bar charts. Due to rounding, the bars may not always add up to 100 %. Subsequently, the short scale for "pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes" was formed, which identifies those respondents who have a higher probability of right-wing extremist response behavior. In selected charts, the response behavior of these respondents is shown separately and compared with the overall population.

The short scale for "pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes" was made up of six items, with two items selected from each of the three dimensions. When selecting the items, attention was paid to the particular extremism of the items. For some items, more respondents may agree with the extreme right-wing position because the statements are not perceived as extreme, whereas for other items, only a very small percentage of respondents would agree with the right-wing extremist position. The latter items can be assumed "more radical." The short scale was constructed exclusively using those "radical" items, were only a small percentage of respondents may agree with the right-wing extremist position. The approximately 10 % of respondents (n=191, 9.58 %) who agree with at least four of the six more radical items are referred to below as "people with pronounced far-right attitudes."

Antiegalitarianism—not all people are equal (worth a lot)
Right-wing extremism views society as hierarchically structured and postulates two types of inequality. Firstly, there is inequality in favor of the ruling elite, and secondly, there is inequality between different population groups based on categories such as age, gender, ethnicity and nationality, etc. For example, older people or men should have more say than younger individuals or women.

The supremacy of (alternative) ruling elites implies uncritical submission and characterizes the authoritarian element of right-wing extremism. The will to submit is closely related to authoritarianism, which is presented below. The supremacy of different population groups within society and within humanity leads to the derogation of subordinate groups (e.g. immigrants, Jews, women, young people) and to the elevation of dominant groups (e.g., ethnocentrism and "old white guys") and is pursued further below.
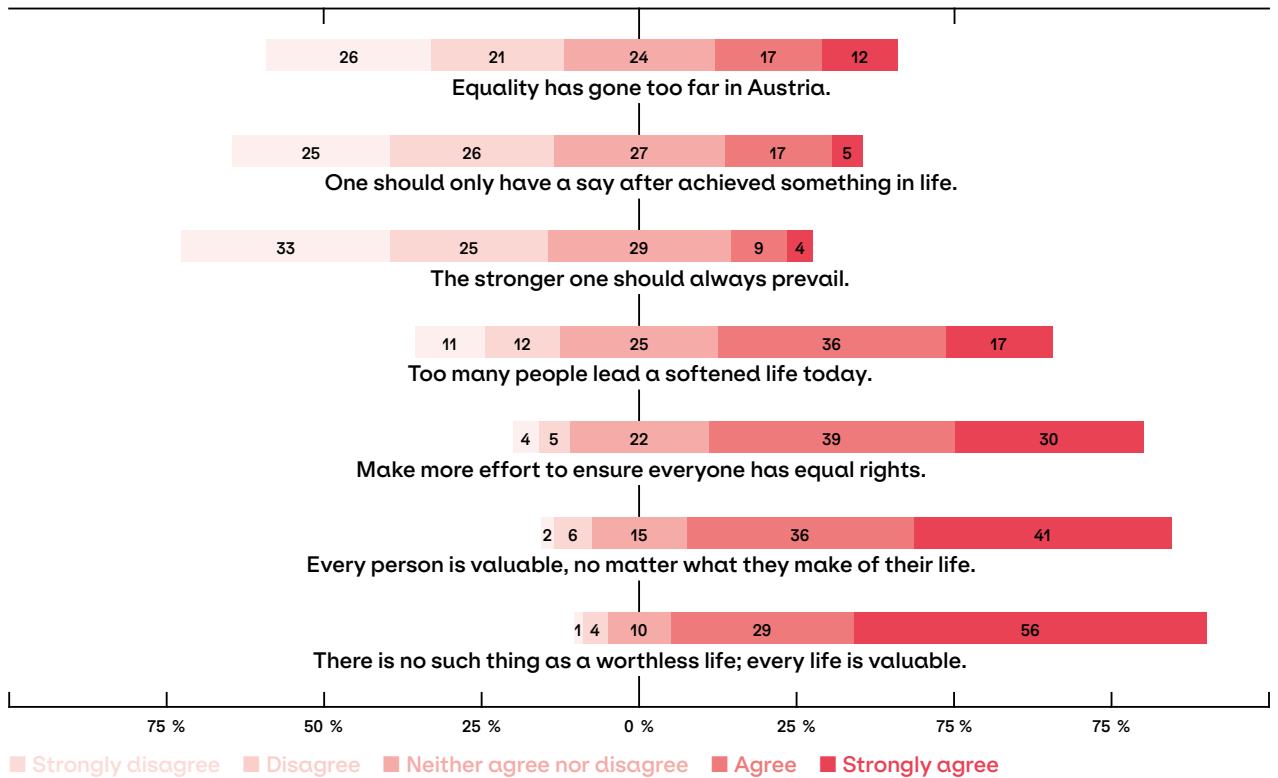
Figure 3: Social Dominance Orientation versus Egalitarian Thinking. Figures in percentage of all respondents, data are weighted.

In any case, both cases of inequality thinking are based on the fundamental assumption that not all people are of equal value. This core idea is operationalized in the present study through the concept of social dominance orientation (SDO).[63] Social dominance orientation measures the extent to which an individual prefers a hierarchically structured society. Individuals with a high level of SDO prefer a social order that is as hierarchical as possible, whereas people with a low level of SDO tend to prefer equality between all people and flat hierarchies. Several of the studies in Germany and Austria discussed above also use questions on SDO to measure far-right attitudes.

For this study, SDO was operationalized by agreeing or disagreeing with seven statements, four of which were formulated positively and three negatively in order to mitigate potential response bias. Agreement with the following four questions indicates a preference for social dominance orientation: *"Equal rights have gone too far in Austria"*;[64] *"You should only have a say in decision making once you have achieved something in life"*;[65] *"As in nature, the strongest should always prevail in society"*;[66] *"Too many people today lead an effeminate life"* (newly introduced item). On the other hand, agreement with the following three questions indicates a preference for egalitarianism: *"We should try harder so that everyone has the same rights"*;[67] *"Everyone is valuable, no matter what he or she does with his or her life"* (a negatively formulated counter-item to the European Values Study item above); *"There is no such thing as an unworthy life; every life is valuable."* (a negatively formulated counter-item from the "Leipzig Authoritarianism Study").[68] Figure 3 shows the distribution of agreement with the individual statements.

The bar chart clearly illustrates that the Austrian resident population holds predominantly egalitarian views, with only a small percentage exhibiting a social dominance orientation. For three of the four positively formulated questions, between 12 % and 29 % agreed somewhat or completely. The fourth item (*"Too many people lead an effeminate life today"*) is an exception, with more than half (53 %) agreeing. In the case of the three negatively formulated items, only between 4 % and 8 % tended to agree or strongly disagreed, indicating an increased social dominance orientation.

The seven questions essentially all load on the same factor when taking into account acquiescence bias. Consequently, they can be combined into an additive index (Cronbach's = 0.75), which ranges from 0 to 10 and indicates the extent of social dominance orientation for each respondent on average (0–4 reflects a preference for egalitarianism; 6–10 reflects a preference for dominance, and 5 neither/nor). On average, respondents score 4 and therefore reject anti-egalitarianism by a majority. Or, viewed another way, only around 6 % of respondents express a preference for an anti-egalitarian society. The histogram in Figure 4 shows the distribution of the population on the additive SDO index. The red line at SDO=5 marks the midpoint of the scale. The bars to the right of the red line represent respondents with higher SDO values, while the bars to the left of the red line represent respondents with egalitarian attitudes.

For the aforementioned right-wing extremism index, respondents who rejected the statement, *"We should try harder so that all people have the same rights,"* and those who agreed with the statement, *"The strongest should always prevail,"* were included in the short scale for right-wing extremism as individuals with "pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes". Both items are formulated in such an extremely manner that only relatively few respondents exhibit a social dominance orientation. Those who exhibit an anti-egalitarian attitude here can therefore be assumed to belong to an extreme minority.

Ethnocentrism (Volksgemeinschaftsdenken)
The concept of the "Volksgemeinschaft" (ethnic community) was a central idea in National Socialism that remained a key ideological element of right-wing extremism both before and after the Nazi era.[69] In this ideology, the "Volksgemeinschaft" is understood as a "natural" group that enjoys supremacy and is entitled to discriminate against those who do not belong to it (because they are not sufficiently similar to the prototype of a member of the "Volksgemein-

schaft"). In the language of Social Dominance Theory,[70] the construct of the "Volksgemeinschaft" serves a hierarchy-legitimizing myth that presents one's own group (the "Volksgemeinschaft") as superior to out-groups (other peoples, races, ethnicities, nations, etc). This superiority, which is postulated as natural, is used to justify the devaluation of other groups.

In the language of Social Identification Theory,[71] the "Volksgemeinschaft" represents the in-group with which members can identify in order to strengthen their self-concept. To this end, it is crucial that the ingroup distinguishes itself positively from other groups perceived as relevant. Both theories share the premise that individuals perceive themselves less as individuals and more as part of a group, which, if the group enjoys a dominant position, can give them certain advantages. Consequently, it is in the interest of group members to do everything they can to maintain the status quo of their own group. This includes, for example, denying or romanticizing inglorious episodes from the group's past.

To investigate the approval of this complex idea of the ethnocentric "Volksgemeinschaft", three aspects were examined in this study. Firstly, the strength of the in-group was analysed. To what extent is the Austrian population prepared to think in terms of the categories "Volk", "Rasse", "Nation" and "Heimat" and how homogeneous is the in-group "Austrians" perceived to be? Specifically, respondents were asked to evaluate how positively or negatively they view the terms "people", "race", "nation" and "homeland" and to describe what the prototypical Austrian should look like.

Second, attitudes toward out-groups were examined. For this purpose, a) sympathy and antipathy toward various socio-political groups was surveyed (e.g., right-wing extremists, left-wing extremists, *identitarians* or climate activists); b) the willingness to engage in direct contact with different ethnic and social groups (in the neighborhood) (e.g., people of a different skin color, homosexuals, Roma and Sinti); and c) the willingness to discriminate against other groups (e.g., immigrants, Muslims or Jews).

Finally, belief in legitimizing myths that justify or even demand discriminatory behavior as a fulfillment of duty was measured. On the one hand, historical transfiguration myths that relativize the crimes of National Socialism were queried; on the other hand, the willingness to fall prey to common modern conspiracy theories that describe alleged new threat scenarios for the "national community" (such as a "great replacement" or "population exchange") was recorded.

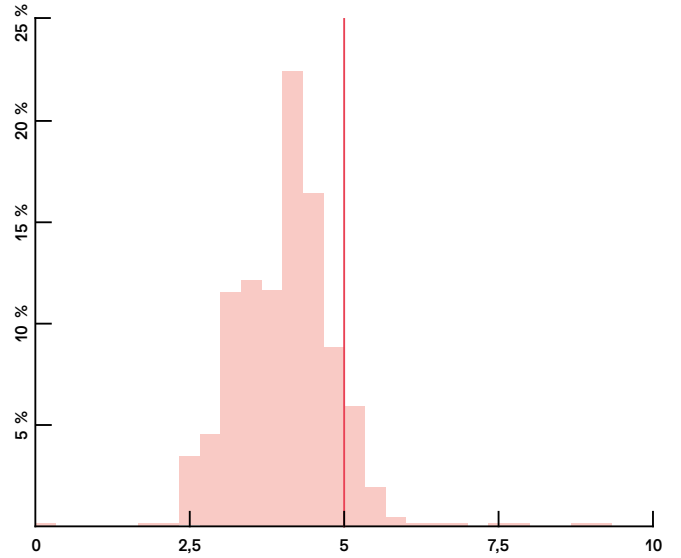**Social Dominance Orientation** (figures in percentage)

Figure 4: Index of Social Dominance Orientation, histogram.

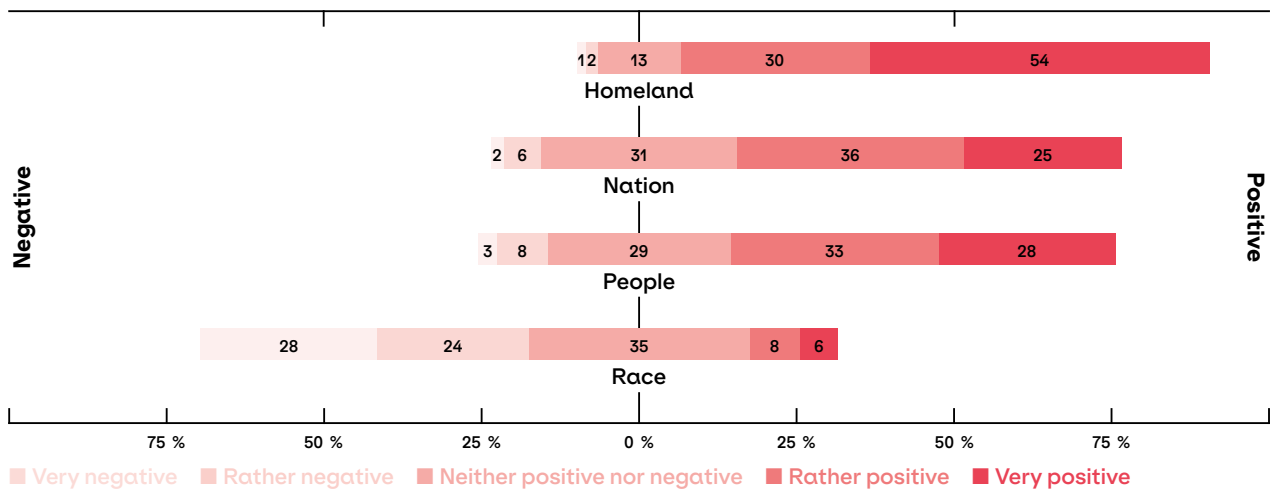**How positively or negatively do you view the following terms?** (figures in percentage)

Figure 5: Evaluation of the terms homeland, nation, people and race. Figures in percent of all respondents, and data are weighted.
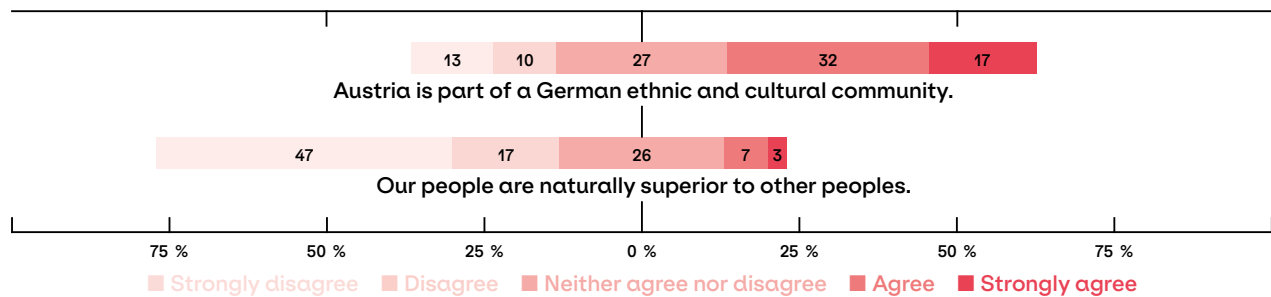
13 10 27 32 17	
Austria is part of a German ethnic and cultural community.	
47 17 26 7 3	
Our people are naturally superior to other peoples.	

75 %　50 %　25 %　0 %　25 %　50 %　75 %

■ Strongly disagree　■ Disagree　■ Neither agree nor disagree　■ Agree　■ Strongly agree

Figure 6: Agreement with nationalist ideas. Figures are in percent of all respondents, and data are weighted.

The Austrian people as an *in-group*

How much resonance do classic ethnic and identity-forming terms have? Figure 5 shows the evaluation for various terms. The terms *"Volk"*, *"Nation"* and *"Heimat"* are predominantly perceived as unproblematic and are rated as very or somewhat positive by more than half (between 61 % and 84 %) and as very or somewhat negative by only 4 % to 11 %. The assessments of these terms correlate with between r=0.5 and r=0.6 (Pearson's correlation coefficient), indicating that they are predominantly accepted or rejected by the same individuals.

The situation is different with the term *"race"*, which is viewed more critically and is rated as very or somewhat negative by 52 %, neither negative nor positive by a third (35 %) and very or somewhat positive by 14 %. Among those with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes, this approval is significantly higher at 37 %.

In two additional questions, the ethnonationalist idea was further intensified and agreement with the following statements was surveyed: *"Austria is part of a German ethnic and cultural community"* and *"Our people are inherently superior to other peoples"* (Figure 6). Half of the respondents (49 %) somewhat or completely agree with the first statement; around a quarter of the respondents (27 %) are undecided, and a further quarter of the respondents (23 %) reject this idea. The latter statement is then rejected by the

vast majority (64 %), but still finds a sympathetic ear among 10 %. Among those with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes, however, 58 % are receptive to this statement. Furthermore, this attitude correlates with the respondents' social dominance orientation at r=0.4 (Pearson's correlation coefficient), highlighting the preparatory nature of SDO in fostering receptivity to right-wing extremist ideas.

Finally, tolerance toward deviations from the in-group was also assessed. Could *someone be a good Austrian if, for example, he or she* criticized Austria or was not born in Austria? A total of eight supposedly "unpatriotic" behaviors were surveyed, as shown in Figure 7.

Ancestry is generally considered to be the least important factor. For example, 83 %–84 % of respondents state that someone *can definitely or possibly be a good Austrian if he or she has no Austrian ancestors or was not born in Austria*. It is also relatively unproblematic (for 82 % of respondents) *not to know the Austrian anthem*.

Criticism of Austria or a lack of willingness to defend it militarily is viewed more critically but still predominantly as unproblematic. Around two thirds of respondents think that *someone can be a good Austrian if he or she criticizes Austria* (68 %) or if he or she *would not defend Austria in the event of war* (64 %). It also seems unproblematic to many if someone *does not follow Austrian customs and traditions* – 65 % believe that one can still be a good Austrian. This response behavior is surprising because in practically all European surveys, including this one, as will be shown in more detail in the next section, a large majority of respondents (83 % in this case) would like immigrants to adapt to the respective national culture.

So, it also fits the overall picture when 65 % of respondents state that one cannot be a good Austrian *if they do not speak German*. The shared language seems to be a key factor for mutual acceptance. However, to *respect Austrian*

laws is considered even more important. Here, 87 % of respondents state that someone *cannot be a* good Austrian if they disregards the applicable legal system.

If the analysis is restricted to people with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes, the picture changes drastically. In Figure 7, the bars indicating disagreement are longer than the ones indicating agreement for almost all items, showing that the majority of respondents consistently state that one cannot be a good Austrian if they violate the respective requirements.

Attitudes toward social groups
How much sympathy or hostility is directed toward different population groups, especially marginalized groups, and is hostility higher among those with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes? The blue bars show in Figure 8 the attitudes of all respondents toward immigration and immigrants, as well as toward Muslims. In comparison, the red bars illustrate the response behavior of people with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes.

Can someone be a good Austrian if they ...
(figures in percentage)

... have no Austrian ancestors.
(blue: 51, 33, 10, 6 / red: 22, 31, 28, 19)

... were not born in Austria.
(blue: 48, 35, 11, 6 / red: 17, 23, 37, 23)

... do not know the national anthem.
(blue: 56, 26, 11, 8 / red: 23, 23, 28, 26)

... criticize Austria.
(blue: 35, 33, 18, 14 / red: 17, 26, 26, 31)

... would not defend Austria.
(blue: 31, 33, 20, 15 / red: 20, 23, 27, 29)

... do not maintain Austrian traditions.
(blue: 29, 36, 23, 13 / red: 14, 22, 32, 32)

... do not speak German.
(blue: 11, 25, 34, 31 / red: 8, 12, 28, 52)

... do not respect Austrian laws.
(blue: 3, 10, 31, 56 / red: 7, 8, 21, 64)

75 %   50 %   25 %   0 %   25 %   50 %   75 %

■ Yes, definitely   ■ Yes, possibly   ■ No, rather not   ■ No, definitely not
● Respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes

Figure 7: Tolerance of deviations from the *ingroup*. Figures in percentage of all respondents (blue) and respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes (red), and data are weighted.

Immigration and Islamophobia (figures in percentage)

Immigrants are good for the economy.
14 | 18 | 30 | 28 | 10
38 | 18 | 20 | 16 | 9

Immigrants take away jobs.
30 | 28 | 25 | 12 | 5
9 | 10 | 30 | 27 | 24

Immigrants should receive the same social benefits.
28 | 24 | 21 | 17 | 10
53 | 20 | 10 | 13 | 4

Immigrants should adapt.
4 | 13 | 30 | 53
2 | 1 | 4 | 13 | 81

The integration of immigrants is an enrichment for both sides.
17 | 15 | 26 | 27 | 15
44 | 13 | 21 | 14 | 9

Immigrants should live in their own neighborhoods.
47 | 23 | 17 | 6 | 6
25 | 18 | 20 | 15 | 23

Comprehensive remigration is urgently needed.
16 | 11 | 23 | 24 | 26
5 | 7 | 19 | 19 | 51

Muslims should bei prohibited from immigration.
27 | 20 | 23 | 15 | 14
9 | 8 | 14 | 22 | 47

I sometimes feel alienated because of Muslims.
15 | 14 | 15 | 26 | 30
5 | 9 | 5 | 17 | 64

Islam is generally compatible with Western values.
31 | 26 | 22 | 17 | 5
49 | 17 | 15 | 12 | 6

75 %   50 %   25 %   0 %   25 %   50 %   75 %

■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree
● Respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes

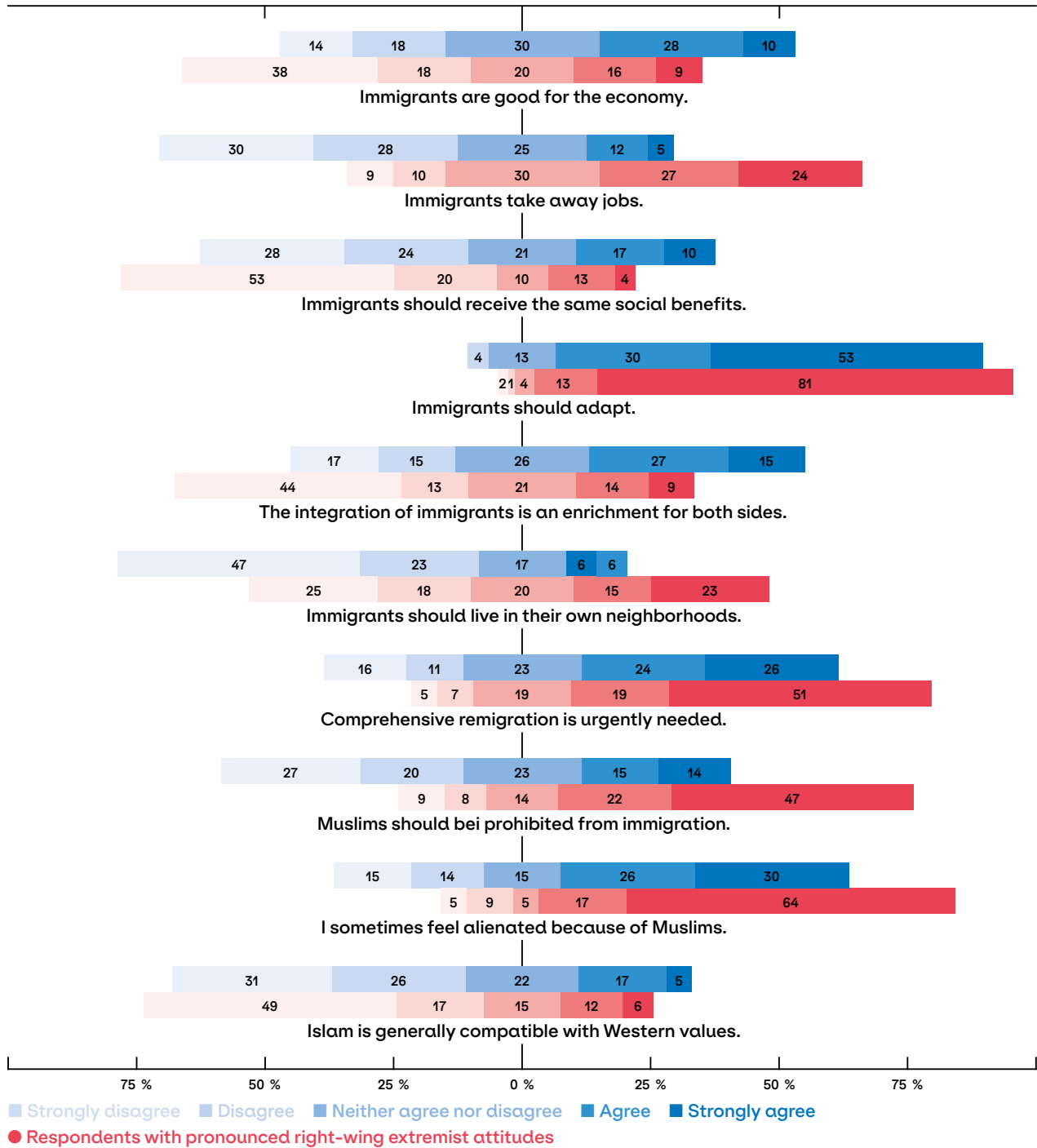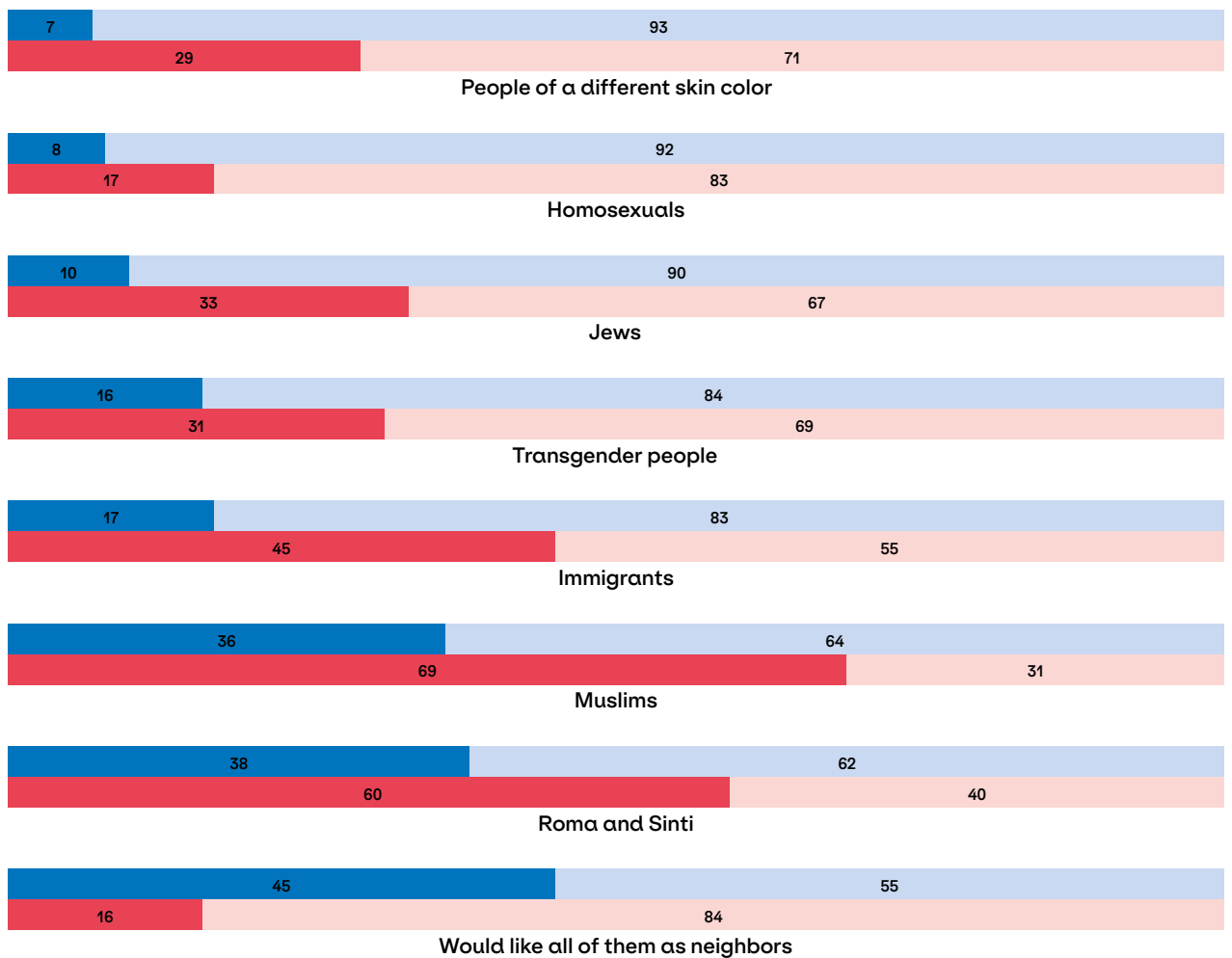**Figure 8:** Attitudes toward immigration and Muslims. Figures in percentage of all respondents (blue) and respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes (red), and data are weighted.

The first three questions address the economic aspects of immigration. Firstly, respondents were asked if *immigrants are generally good for the Austrian economy*. On average, around a third of respondents answered this question in the affirmative (38 %) and around a third in the negative (32 %), and a further third was undecided (30 %). More than half (56 %) of people with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes reject immigration for economic reasons. Secondly, respondents were asked if *immigrants take away jobs*. This view is rejected by more than half of respondents (58 %). However, among individuals with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes, only 19 % reject this idea. The situation is similar when it comes to the question of whether *immigrants should receive the same level of social benefits as Austrians*. Half of respondents (52 %) reject this idea, whereas 73 % of individuals with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes oppose it.

The next three questions deal with the integration of immigrants. As mentioned above, the majority of respondents (83 %) agree *that people who come to Austria and want to live here should adapt to Austrian culture*. Among people with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes, the figure is as high as 94 %. The notion that *the integration of immigrants can be an enrichment for both sides* is generally supported by 42 % of respondents. However, only 23 % of people with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes agree. Finally, a question was asked that touches on the concept of ethnopluralism advocated by right-wing extremists, i.e., the segregation of ethnic groups in order to preserve each ethnic group's own cultural and national identity: *"Immigrants should live in their own neighborhoods where they can keep to themselves."* Only 11 % of respondents agreed with this statement, but within the group of respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes, the figure rises to 38 %. Closely related to the idea of ethnopluralism is the idea that *comprehensive remigration of immigrants to*

Which of these groups of people would you <u>NOT</u> like to have as neighbors? (figures in percentage)

People of a different skin color
7 / 93
29 / 71

Homosexuals
8 / 92
17 / 83

Jews
10 / 90
33 / 67

Transgender people
16 / 84
31 / 69

Immigrants
17 / 83
45 / 55

Muslims
36 / 64
69 / 31

Roma and Sinti
38 / 62
60 / 40

Would like all of them as neighbors
45 / 55
16 / 84

■ Mentioned   ■ Not mentioned
● Respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes

Figure 9: Attitudes toward minorities. Figures in percentage of all respondents (blue) and respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes (red), data are weighted.

their home countries is urgently necessary. This idea is viewed more positively the respondents. As can be seen in Figure 8, half of the respondents (50 %) somewhat or completely agree with this idea, with as many as 70 % of those with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes.

Finally, three questions were asked specifically about Muslims. Even though half of the population is in favor of comprehensive remigration, the idea that *Muslims should be banned from immigrating to Austria* is only supported by just under a third of the general population (29 %), but by a good two thirds (69 %) of people with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes. Furthermore, 56 % of those surveyed stated *that the large number of Muslims in Austria sometimes makes them feel really foreign in their own country*, while this figure rises to 81 % among respondents with strongly right-wing extremist attitudes. When comparing these figures with the previously mentioned concern about job security, which is shared by 51 % of respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes, this once again underscores the opinion often expressed in the literature[72] that skepticism toward immigration is fueled much more by cultural fears than by economic ones. Finally, agreement with the statement that *Islam is generally compatible with Western values* was assessed. Here, "only" 22 % of respondents agreed with this statement, and only 18 % of respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes.

If we take a closer look at Figure 8, in addition to the fact that respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes tend to be more xenophobic and Islamophobic, it is noticeable that they are also less likely to select the "neither/nor" response category but tend to express stronger opinions on this topic.

In addition to attitudinal questions, behavioral questions about minorities were also posed, specifically the willingness to tolerate different groups of people as neighbors. Figure 9 shows the percentage of respondents *who would not like to have* the individual *groups of people as neighbors* (multiple answers possible). The last bar of the chart shows that 45 % of respondents have no issues with any of the minorities surveyed and would like to have all of them as neighbors, but only 16 % of people with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes would. The ranking within the unpopular groups of people is similar both for respondents in general and for those with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes. Respondents are most reluctant to come into contact with Muslims and Roma and Sinti as neighbors, whereas they are least afraid of contact with homosexuals. For respondents in general, people of other skin colors are also relatively well-accepted neighbors.

Similarly clear differences in the response behavior of respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes compared to the average respondent can be seen in questions on anti-Semitism. The items used here are almost exclusively taken from the "Leipzig Authoritarianism Study."[73] Figure 10 displays the response behavior of respondents in general and in particular of those with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes. The first three questions relate to what the "Leipzig Authoritarianism Study" refers to as "traditional anti-Semitism" and records agreement with long-held stereotypes. This form of anti-Semitism has become relatively unpopular among the general respondents. Between 15 % and 23 % of respondents agree somewhat or completely that *the influence of Jews is still too great today*, that *Jews work more than other people with evil tricks to achieve what they want*, or that *Jews have something special and peculiar about them and do not really fit in with mainstream society*. Among respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes, this figure raises to between 43 % and 52 %.

The next three questions cover attitudes toward what the "Leipzig Authoritarianism Study" refers to as "Israel-related anti-Semitism." This more modern form of anti-Semitism finds agreement among a larger proportion of respondents. Between 22 % and 42 % agree somewhat or strongly that *Israeli policies are making them dislike Jews more and more*, that *Israel's policies in Palestine are just as bad as those of the Nazis in the Second World War*, and that *even if other nations may have their flaws, Israel's crimes are the most severe*. At 39 % to 60 %, these approval ratings among people with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes are once again as high as for traditional anti-Semitism.

The last set of questions relates to questions on guilt-defense anti-Semitism, which the "Leipzig Authoritarianism Study" identified as "the most widespread expression of anti-Semitism in Germany."[74] The situation in Austria is comparable. Between 35 % and 49 % of respondents agree with the following statements that were adapted to the Austrian context: *"It makes me angry that the Allied attacks in the Second World War are always seen as a lesser crime"*, *"Compensation paid by Austria often does not benefit the victims but rather a Holocaust industry of resourceful lawyers"*, and *"The discussion about the Second World War and the Holocaust should come to an end."* Among people with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes, this figure is as high as 46 % to 76 %.
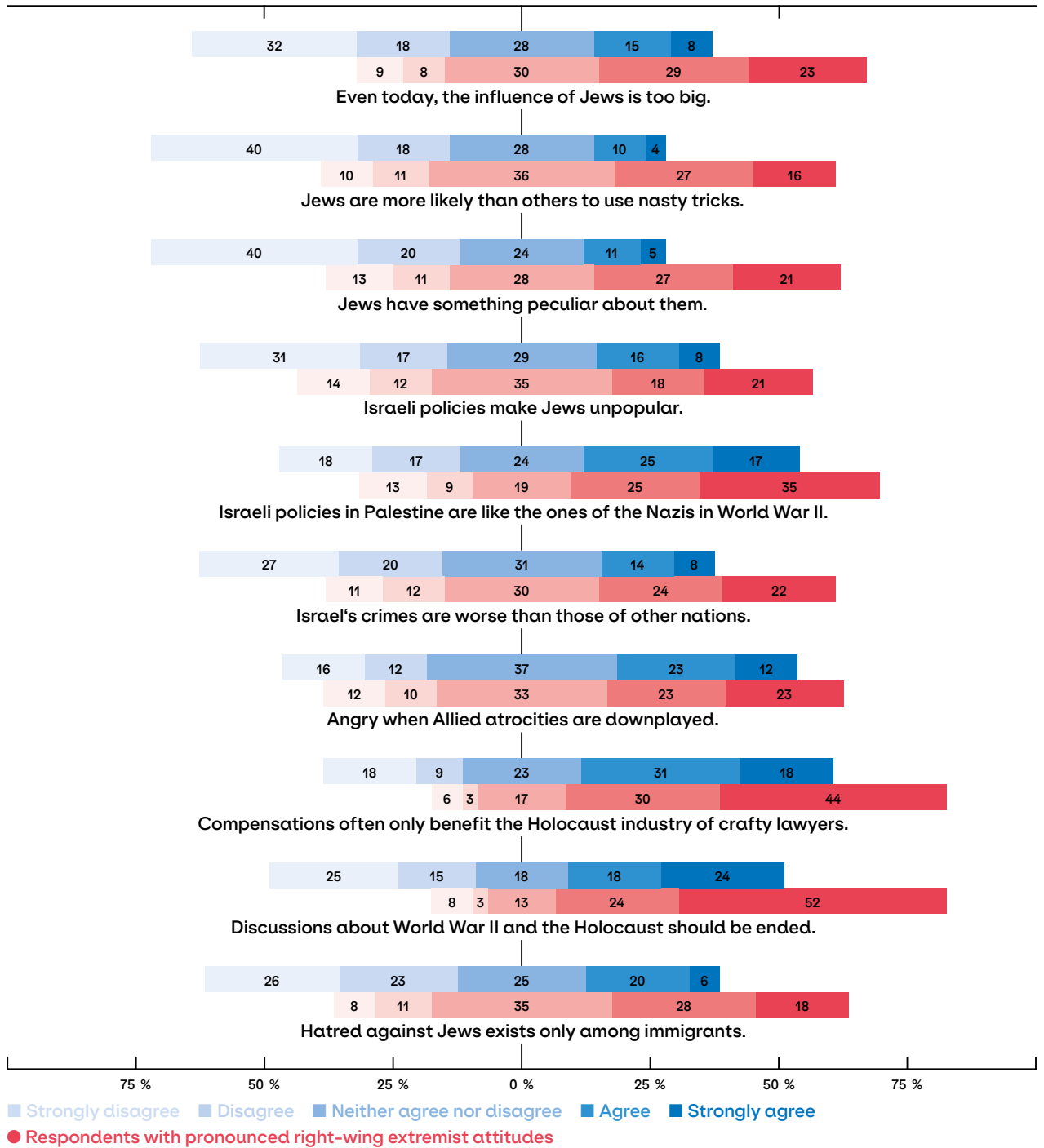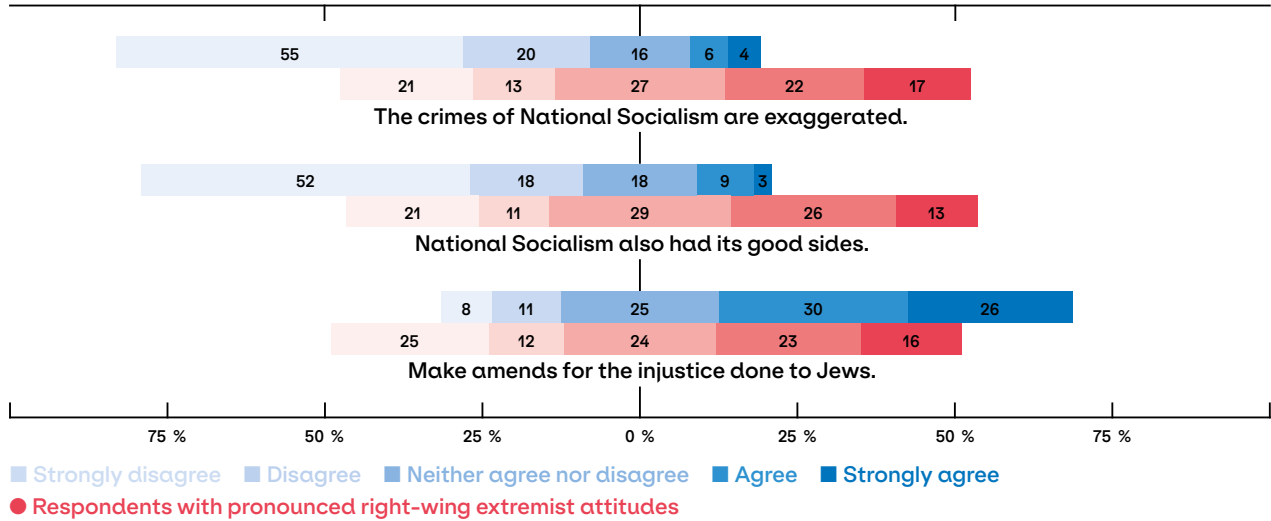
32	18	28	15	8
9	8	30	29	23

Even today, the influence of Jews is too big.

40	18	28	10	4
10	11	36	27	16

Jews are more likely than others to use nasty tricks.

40	20	24	11	5
13	11	28	27	21

Jews have something peculiar about them.

31	17	29	16	8
14	12	35	18	21

Israeli policies make Jews unpopular.

18	17	24	25	17
13	9	19	25	35

Israeli policies in Palestine are like the ones of the Nazis in World War II.

27	20	31	14	8
11	12	30	24	22

Israel's crimes are worse than those of other nations.

16	12	37	23	12
12	10	33	23	23

Angry when Allied atrocities are downplayed.

18	9	23	31	18
6	3	17	30	44

Compensations often only benefit the Holocaust industry of crafty lawyers.

25	15	18	18	24
8	3	13	24	52

Discussions about World War II and the Holocaust should be ended.

26	23	25	20	6
8	11	35	28	18

Hatred against Jews exists only among immigrants.

75 % 50 % 25 % 0 % 25 % 50 % 75 %

■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree
● Respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes

Figure 10: Attitudes toward anti-Semitism. Figures in percentage of all respondents (blue) and respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes (red), data are weighted.

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |

The crimes of National Socialism are exaggerated.

National Socialism also had its good sides.

Make amends for the injustice done to Jews.

- ■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree
- ● Respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes

Grafik 11: Attitudes toward historical transfiguration myths. Figures in percentage of all respondents (blue) and respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes (red), data are weighted.

In addition, the following new statement related to guilt-defensive anti-Semitism was included: *"Today, hatred against Jews is essentially only found among immigrants."* Only 26 % of respondents (somewhat or strongly) agreed with this. This indicates a clear awareness that anti-Semitism cannot be dismissed as a minority problem.

If we look at Figure 10 as a whole and compare it with other charts, it becomes apparent that more respondents opted for the middle category in this item battery than in other. In other words, a quarter to a third of respondents did not clearly distance themselves from the anti-Semitic statements and answered with a vague "neither agree nor disagree."

Legitimizing myths
The theory of Social Dominance Orientation[75] posits that the dominant group's position of supremacy is justified and secured by legitimizing myths. The theory of Social Identification,[76] on the other hand, posits that group members strive for a positive image of the group in order to strengthen their own self-image and thus self-esteem. In both cases, it is crucial to create a positive image of the in-group (one's own people) and to overcome any historical demonizations

that could undermine the justification that one's own ideology is superior to any other. Similarly, it is helpful to create a negative image of "the others" — both the other groups and the ruling elites that need to be overthrown.

Two types of myths are therefore examined below: the degree to which the population is willing to believe historical glorification myths that whitewash National Socialism and the degree to which the population is willing to believe in conspiracy theories that corrupt other groups and groups perceived as ruling elites.

Figure 11 shows the level of agreement with the statements relativizing National Socialism*: "The crimes of National Socialism have been greatly exaggerated in historiography"* and *"National Socialism also had its good sides."* Both of these statements receive relatively low support from the overall population. Between 9 % and 12 % somewhat or strongly agree with the statements and 16 % and 18 %, respectively, abstain from an opinion ("neither/nor"). Within the group of individuals with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes, however, the figure is significantly higher with 39 % endorsing each statement.

In order to prevent acquiescence bias, a question was included whose affirmative answer assesses the opposite of historical glorification, such as a historical confession and recognition of past injustice, namely, *"It is right to try to make amends for the injustice done to Jews in Austria."* In this case, 19 % of the overall population disagree with this notion, and among respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes, the figure rises to 37 %.

There are similar differences between the population as a whole and respondents with pronounced far-right attitudes when it comes to modern conspiracy theories that demonize other groups and the (groups of) people perceived as the ruling elite and are therefore intended to delegitimize them. Figure 12 shows agreement with six common conspiracy theories, separately for the population as a whole and for respondents with pronounced far-right attitudes.

In the general population, it is noticeable that three conspiracy narratives are predominantly received positive. Statements suggesting that *the population is systematically lied to by the media*, that there *are secret organizations that have great influence on political decisions* and that the *Austrian population will be replaced by immigrants in the long term* are somewhat or fully supported by around half of the respondents (51 % and 47 %, respectively). The other theories are less popular, but not completely dispelled. For example, 29 % believe that *the coronavirus pandemic was staged in order to fundamentally reshape society*, 23 % believe that *the political elites are actively working to replace the Austrian population* and 13 % believe it is possible or true that *Bill Gates and his lobby are pursuing a secret plan to implant chips into the human race*.

As expected, these figures are higher among those respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes. All conspiracy theories apart from the one about Bill Gates meet with 61 % to 82 % approval. Only 44 % want to believe in Bill Gates and chip implantation.

When examining the correlations between the conspiracy items more closely, it becomes evident that they range between r=0.50 and r=0.75 (Pearson's correlation coefficient). The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient is as high as 0.89. It is therefore predominantly the same respondents who believe in these myths and the same respondents who do not believe in these myths. In other words, whether or not someone believes in a particular conspiracy myth depends less on its the content but on whether or not they have a general predisposition to conspiracy myths.

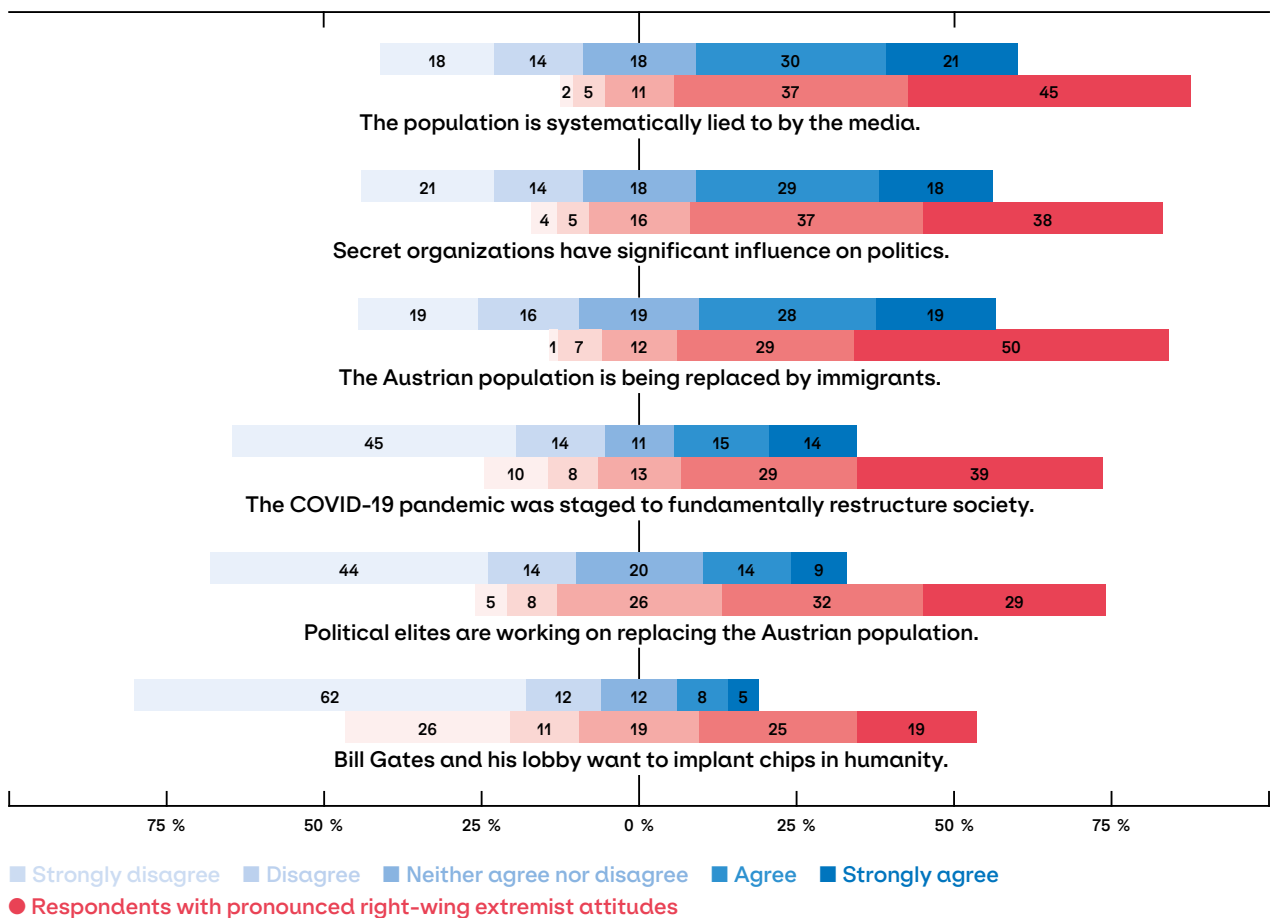**Conspiracy Myths** (figures in percentage)

Figure 12: Attitudes toward conspiracy myths. Figures in percentage of all respondents (blue) and respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes (red), data are weighted.
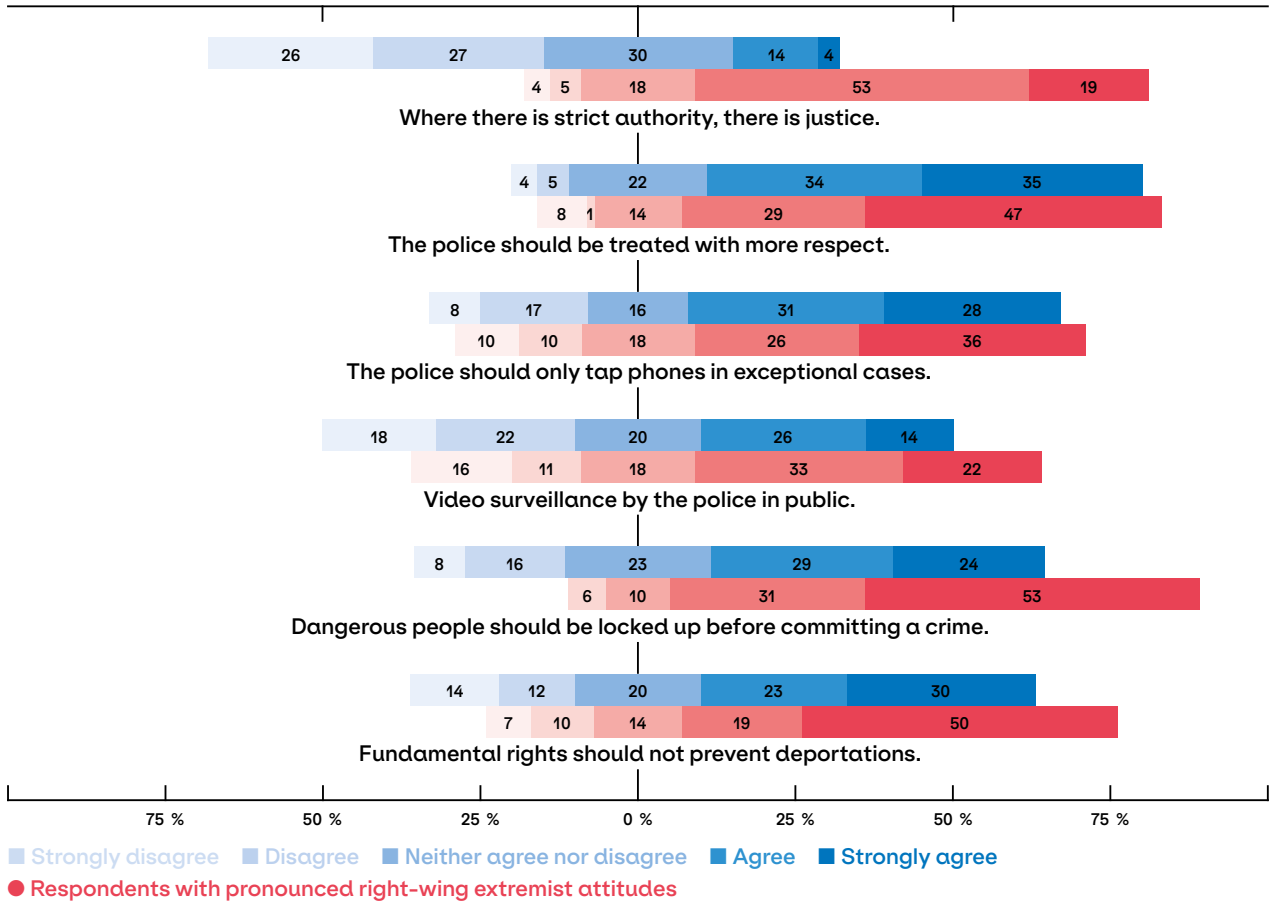
Where there is strict authority, there is justice.
- Blue: 26 | 27 | 30 | 14 | 4
- Red: 4 | 5 | 18 | 53 | 19

The police should be treated with more respect.
- Blue: 4 | 5 | 22 | 34 | 35
- Red: 8 | 1 | 14 | 29 | 47

The police should only tap phones in exceptional cases.
- Blue: 8 | 17 | 16 | 31 | 28
- Red: 10 | 10 | 18 | 26 | 36

Video surveillance by the police in public.
- Blue: 18 | 22 | 20 | 26 | 14
- Red: 16 | 11 | 18 | 33 | 22

Dangerous people should be locked up before committing a crime.
- Blue: 8 | 16 | 23 | 29 | 24
- Red: 6 | 10 | 31 | 53

Fundamental rights should not prevent deportations.
- Blue: 14 | 12 | 20 | 23 | 30
- Red: 7 | 10 | 14 | 19 | 50

Axis: 75 % | 50 % | 25 % | 0 % | 25 % | 50 % | 75 %

Legend:
- ■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree
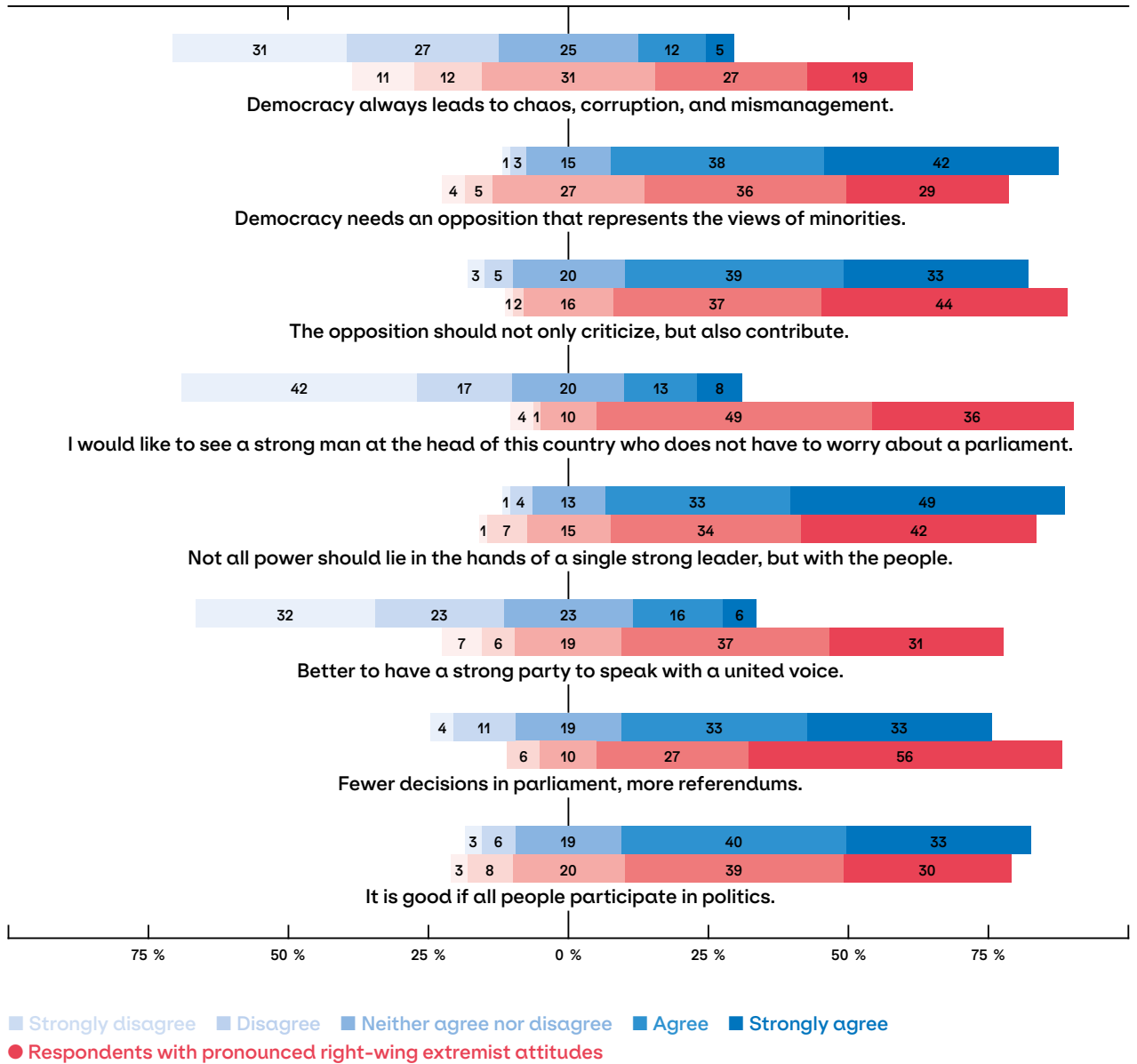- ● Respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes

Figure 13: Attitudes toward law and order. Figures in percentage of all respondents (blue) and respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes (red), data are weighted.

Authoritarianism

For the supposed "national community" to fulfill its protective and sheltering function, everyone must abide by the rules and submit to existing hierarchies. From this perspective, deviations from the norm must be punished, under certain circumstances but not necessarily, with violence. The end justifies the means. The rules are derived from natural principles beyond debate or discussion. It is therefore not necessary to determine the will of the majority because laws are derived from nature and are thus excluded from the realm of the political and socially negotiable constructs in the narrower sense. According to authoritarian views, all that is needed is a single strong leader who transforms these natural rules into binding laws and who has the power to enforce them and demand conformity to normative behavior from everyone.

Firstly, this study surveyed the population's affinity for authoritarianism and law and order as well as their attitude toward democracy. Secondly, the study looked at the willingness to use violence (latency to violence) and assessed the acceptance of violence by others.

Figure 13 shows agreement with the statement *"Where there is strict authority, there is also justice"* and with a battery of items on law and order. The majority of the population rejects strict authority in this abstract formulation (53 %) but is more authoritarian when it comes to specific police measures. For example, 69 % of respondents agree that *the police should be shown more respect*, 53 % think that *people who are dangerous should be able to be locked up before they commit a crime*, and 53 % also think that *fundamental rights should not be able to prevent the deportation of migrants*. However, 59 % also agree that *the police should only be able to tap the phone of a suspicious person in exceptional cases* and therefore advocate limiting excessive police power. Respondents are also less authoritarian when it comes to measures that could affect them personally, rather than just targeting potential criminals. For example, only 40 % of the population agree that *the police should have the right to monitor people in public by video surveillance*.

31	27	25	12	5
11	12	31	27	19

Democracy always leads to chaos, corruption, and mismanagement.

1 3	15	38	42	
4 5	27	36	29	

Democracy needs an opposition that represents the views of minorities.

3 5	20	39	33	
12 16	37	44		

The opposition should not only criticize, but also contribute.

42	17	20	13	8
4 1 10	49	36		

I would like to see a strong man at the head of this country who does not have to worry about a parliament.

1 4	13	33	49	
1 7	15	34	42	

Not all power should lie in the hands of a single strong leader, but with the people.

32	23	23	16	6
7 6	19	37	31	

Better to have a strong party to speak with a united voice.

4 11	19	33	33	
6 10	27	56		

Fewer decisions in parliament, more referendums.

3 6	19	40	33	
3 8	20	39	30	

It is good if all people participate in politics.

75 %   50 %   25 %   0 %   25 %   50 %   75 %

■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree
● Respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes

Figure 14: Attitudes toward certain aspects of democracy. Figures in percentage of all respondents (blue) and respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes (red), data are weighted.

Willingness to use Violence (figures in percentage)

58	21	12	7	2	
39	20	18	15	9	

I am willing to use physical violence.

54	18	15	8	5
31	16	23	14	17

Not willing to use violence myself, but it is fine if others do.

75 %   50 %   25 %   0 %   25 %   50 %   75 %

■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree
● Respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes
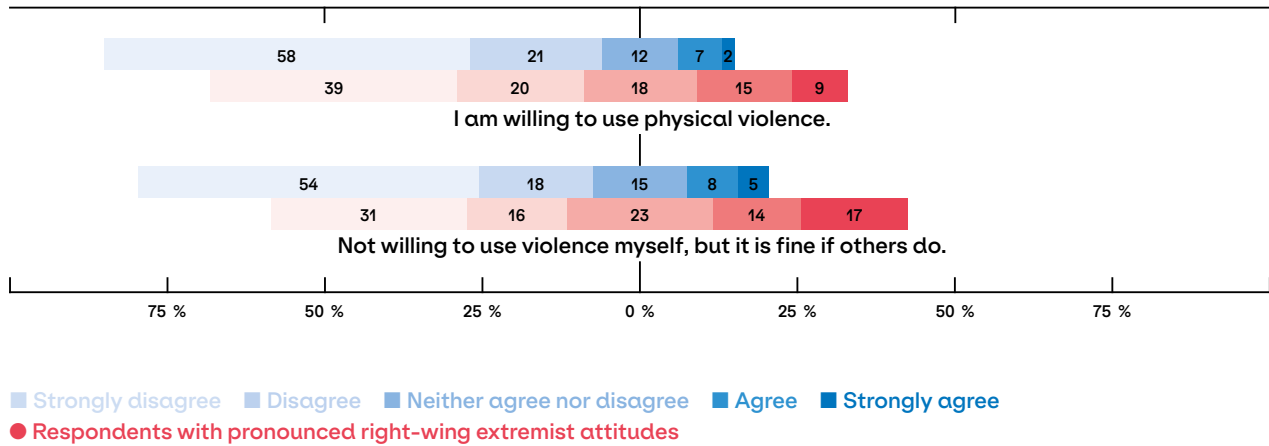
Figure 15: Attitude toward acceptance of violence and willingness to use violence. Figures in percentage of all respondents (blue) and respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes (red), data are weighted.

Respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes again differentiate less between the individual measures and agree with all questions by a majority with approval rates between 55 % and 84 %. However, the measure of video surveillance in public places also receives the least approval in relative terms.

So, although the population is occasionally prepared to sacrifice basic liberal values for perceived greater security, support for democracy as a form of government remains relatively uncontroversial. Figure 14 shows approval of various aspects of a democratic system. Mixed positive and negative questions were included to prevent acquiescence bias, which is why some bars show overwhelming agreement and others disagreement. In terms of content, however, the overwhelming majority predominantly supports democratic ideas. For example, 58 % reject the statement *"Democracy always leads to chaos, corruption and mismanagement"*, 59 % reject the statement *"I wigh for a strong man to lead this country who does not have to worry about a parliament"*, and 55 % reject the statement *"It is better to have only one strong party in this country in order to be able to speak with a united and strong voice."* However, 60 % agree with the statement that *in every democracy, there must also be an opposition that represents the opinion of minorities,* 82 % agree *that not all power should lie in the hands of a single strong leader, but with the people,* and 73 % agree that *it is good if all people participate in politics.*

The high approval rates for the following two questions should be viewed somewhat more critically: 72 % of the population agree that *the opposition should not just always criticize everything, but should also achieve something at times,* and 66 % agree *that fewer decisions should be made*

in parliament and more decisions should be made through referendums. The former probably expresses dissatisfaction with controversial political debates and parliamentary discussions - which are, however, always part of a democracy - while the latter expresses dissatisfaction with the political elites. This in turn can be an expression of an authentic direct democratic desire for more participation but can often also undermine parliament as a pillar of representative democracy in pseudo-democratic systems.

The democratic attitudes of respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes should be considered in a somewhat more nuanced way. While the majority of average respondents reject the statement that democracy always leads to chaos, corruption and mismanagement, 46 % of respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes agree with it, which is almost half. However, the attitude of individuals with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes toward the opposition differs only slightly from the average. While 60 % of all respondents believe that democracy also needs an opposition, 45 % of respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes share this view, and while 62 % of alle respondents believe that the opposition should not just criticize, this figure is as high as 81 % among respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes.

It is striking that both the statement *"I would like to see a strong man at the head of this country who does not have to worry about a parliament"* and the statement that *"not all power should lie in the hands of a single strong leader, but with the people"* are affirmed by a majority of respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes, although both items appear to contradict each other. In our opinion, there are two reasons for this contradictory agreement: Firstly, in continuation of the previously described tendency to express strong opinions, there may sometimes be an *agreement bias* that does not take contradictions too seriously. In other words, the contradiction is not in the formulation of items, but in the inconsistent response behavior of respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes. Secondly, it must be said that the two questions do not measure exactly the same thing, particularly with regard to the aforementioned pseudo-democratic direct-democratic ideology, respondents may not perceive a contradiction between these two items if they believe that a "strong man" without parliamentary control should directly execute a supposed "will of the people."

Violence as a means to an end

Holzer[77] describes the acceptance of violence and latency of violence, alongside demagogy, as political stylistic devices of right-wing extremism. Violence is not necessarily a component of right-wing extremism, but where the implementation of right-wing extremist ideologemes such as inequality, homogeneity or dominance cannot be achieved otherwise, violence is considered a legitimate means. After all, nature itself allegedly employs violence to maintain its order.

To express political dissatisfaction, it may be acceptable under extreme circumstances to ...
(figures in percentage)
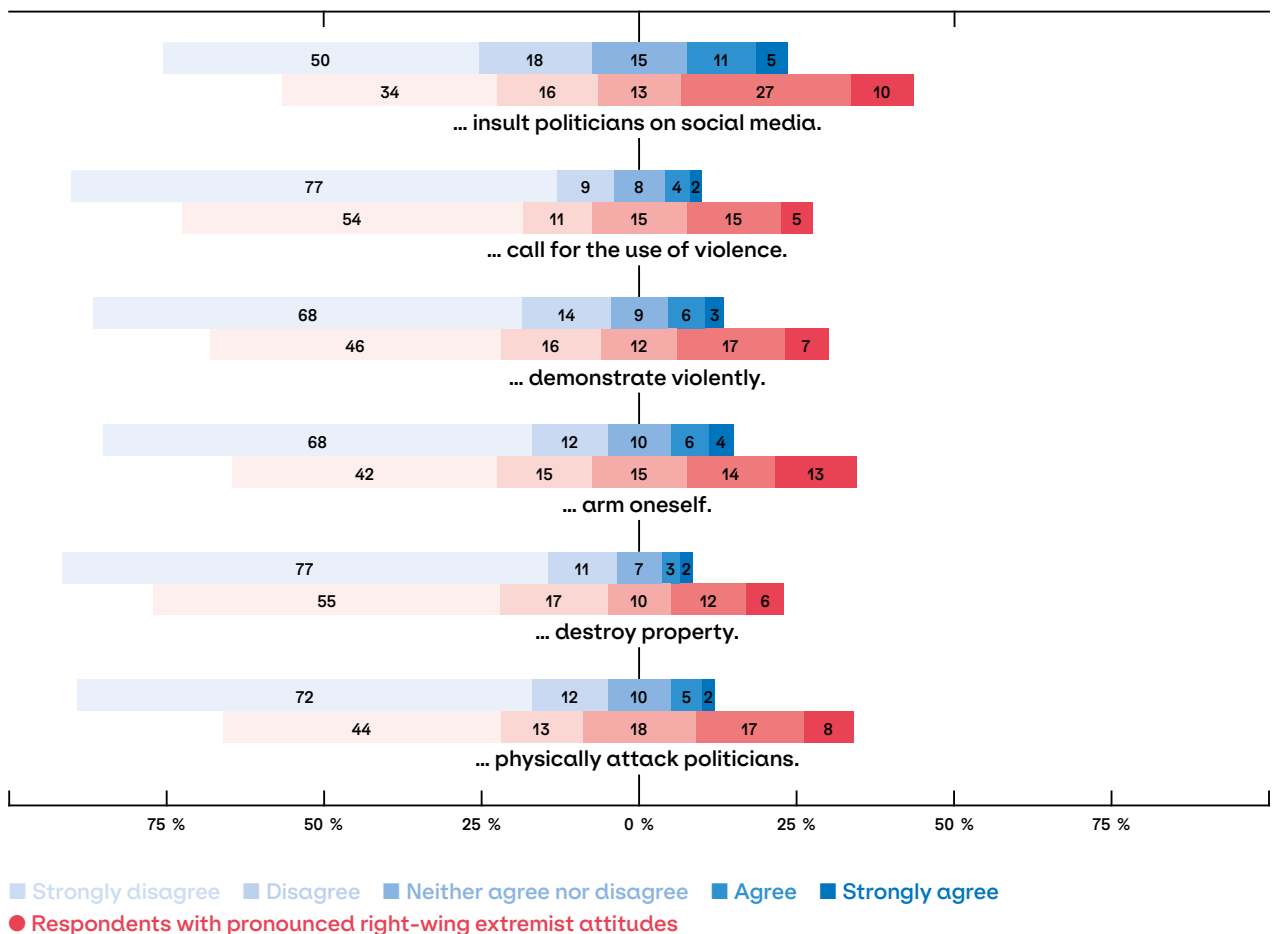
Grafik 16: Attitudes toward violence as an expression of political dissatisfaction. Figures in percentage of all respondents (blue) and respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes (red), data are weighted.
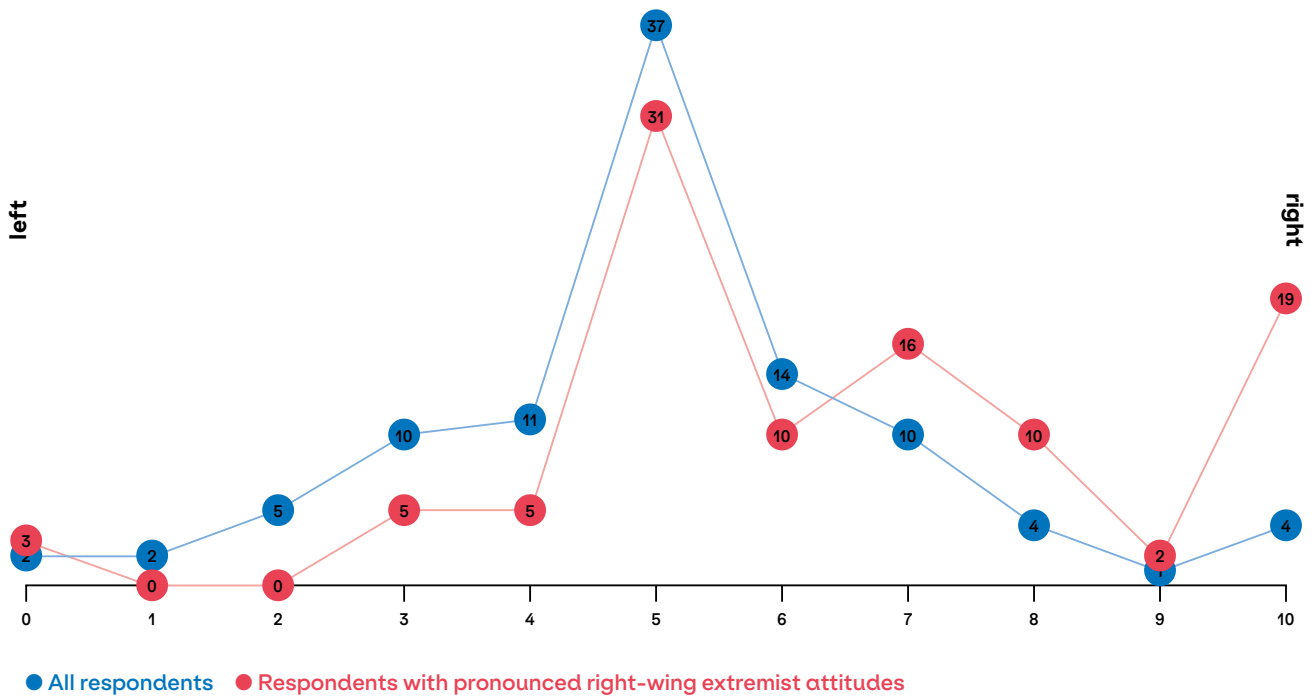
Figure 17: Line diagram showing the proportional distribution of respondents' political self-assessment along the left–right spectrum (0=left to 10=right) for all respondents (n=1,782) and respondents with pronounced right-wing exremist attitudes (n=173), and data are weighted.

In the current study, both the acceptance of violence and the willingness to use violence in general were surveyed as well as the acceptance of political violence in specific terms. The series of questions on general latency to violence originates from the "Leipzig Authoritarianism Study"[78] and examined both the willingness to use physical violence oneself and the willingness to tolerate violence when it is used by others. As can be seen in Figure 15, 9 % agree somewhat or strongly that they *are quite prepared to use physical violence in certain situations in order to assert their interests*, and 13 % agree somewhat or strongly that they *would never use violence themselves, but that it is a good thing that there are people who let their fists do the talking when there is no other way*. In a direct comparison, the figures are therefore lower than among respondents in both western and eastern Germany.[79] Among individuals with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes, the willingness and acceptance of violence is significantly higher at 24 % and 31 %, respectively.

The item battery on the acceptance of political violence comes from the Austrian National Election Study (AUTNES) 2024 and investigates the extent to which respondents find it acceptable in extreme circumstances to engage in various acts of verbal or physical violence to express political dissatisfaction. Figure 16 shows that verbal violence (*insulting politicians on social media*) is more ac-

ceptable (for 16 %) than physical violence. For 6 %, it is acceptable to *call for the use of violence*; for 9 %, to *protest violently*; for 10 %, to *arm themselves*; for 5 %, to *destroy property;* and finally for 7 %, to *physically attack politicians*. These ratios are also roughly the same for people with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes, albeit at a consistently higher level. Here, it is acceptable for more than a third (37 %) to *insult politicians on social media*. The other forms of physical violence are accepted by 17 % to 25 % of respondents with increased right-wing extremist potential.

C2 Political orientation of people with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes

The current study also aims to analyze the subjective political positioning of people who we classify, based on theory, as having pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes. To this end, we examined both their ideological positioning on the left–right spectrum and their party preference.

If national elections were held next Sunday, which party would you vote for?
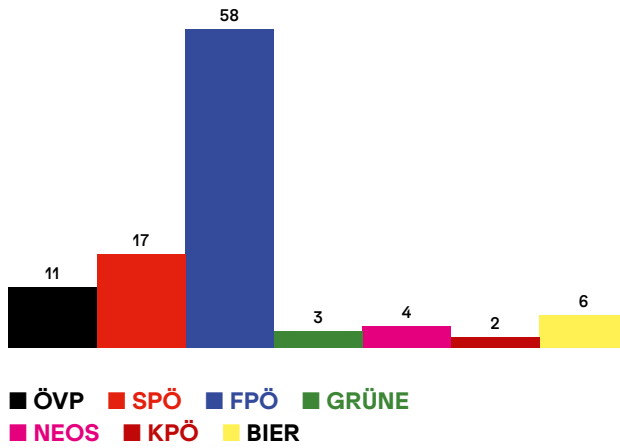(figures in percentage)

■ **ÖVP** ■ **SPÖ** ■ **FPÖ** ■ **GRÜNE**
■ **NEOS** ■ **KPÖ** ■ **BIER**

Figure 18: "Sunday question": "If national elections were next Sunday, which party would you vote for?" Distribution of respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes (n=146). Figures in percent, and data are weighted.

Ideological classification

The ideological classification is assesed by means of the frequently used self-assessment of respondents along the left–right scale: "*In politics, people often talk about 'left' and 'right'. Where on this scale would you place yourself?*"

Figure 17 shows the distribution of all respondents and those respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes along this left–right spectrum. The scale on the x-axis ranges from 0 (left) to 10 (right). Just under a third of respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes (31 %) place themselves in the political center (value 5 on the x-axis); around 13 % see themselves as left-of-center; more than half (56 %) classify themselves as right-of-center, and as many as 19 % apparently classify themselves as extreme right.

These results are broadly in line with the aforementioned German studies, such as the most recent "Mitte-Study",[80] which shows that right-wing extremist views are not only found on the fringes of the right, but also in the political center. Ultimately, this makes it clear that right-wing extremism cannot be determined solely by political self-positioning and thus subjective assessment but must always also be measured in a theory-driven way by the degree of agreemetn with core dimensions of right-wing extremism. In comparison, the distribution among all respondents is different. The proportion of those who see themselves in the center or left-of-center is significantly higher at 30 % (left) and 37 % (center), while the proportion of those who see themselves to the right-of-center is significantly lower at 43 %.

Party preference

For party preference, the "Sunday question" was examined, which asks: "*If national elections were held next Sunday, which party would you vote for?*"

Options "Other party", "I would vote invalid" and "I would not vote" are not shown, and data are weighted.

Figure 18 shows the response behavior of respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes to this question. With 58 %, the FPÖ is by far the most popular party here, followed by the SPÖ with 17 % and the ÖVP with 11 %, with the Beer Party far behind with 6 %, the NEOS with 4 %, the GREENS with 3 % and the KPÖ with 2 %.

D   Summary

The sociological studies cited at the beginning of this section, as well as the presentRight-Wing Extremism Barometer conducted here for the first time, show clear correlations between authoritarianism and various forms of group-focused misanthropy on the one hand and political self-assessment and party preference on the other. Within the right-wing political spectrum, a proportion of people with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes can be identified, a group that represents a vehemently anti-democratic and anti-egalitarian potential for right-wing extremist organizations. On the other hand, a look at German studies, which take a similar approach to this Right-Wing Extremism Barometer, shows that although traditional and, in particular, neo-Nazi forms of right-wing extremism represent an absolute minority, they appear to have grown in recent years in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic. Due to the lack of a basis for comparison, it is currently not possible to determine how the figures in Austria are developing on a longitudinal basis; it will only be possible to make such statements after regular repetition of this Right-Wing Extremism Barometer. Future surveys and evaluations will also address questions of socio-demographic correlations and statistical explanations, which will be analyzed using appropriate multivariate analysis models.

The figures presented here must be viewed in a nuanced manner. Taken as a whole, the study results do not warrant alarmism. Even if a group of people with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes can be identified, the vast majority of respondents are clearly democratically minded. However, some of the results are democratically concerning even for the general populationFor example, 29 % of the respondents we surveyed believe that "Muslims should prohibited from immigrating to Austria", 38 % do not want to live next to Roma and Sinti and 42 % think that Israel's policy in Palestine is just as bad as the Nazi policy in the Second World War, a statement that could be interpreted by the courts as a criminal offense under the Prohibition Act. In summary, the Right-Wing Extremism Barometer reveals a socially significant inclination to the need to devalue "others", a contempt for minorities and a socio-psychological "desire" for group-based misanthropy and authoritarianism that is linked to an increasing loss of trust in democratic institutions.

	STATcube 2024 Total population in percent	DÖW Barometer sample-weighted, TOTAL in percent	DÖW Barometer sample-weighted, only respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes in percent	DÖW Barometer sample-weighted, only respondents with pronounced right-wing extremist attitudes in percent
Gender				
Men	49,90	50,07	47,59	44,50
Women	50,10	49,83	52,41	55,50
Age				
16 to 29 years	20,87	24,28	21,33	14,13
30 to 39 years	18,25	20,08	20,82	16,75
40 to 49 years	17,31	19,08	22,33	21,99
50 to 59 years	19,61	16,45	14,05	19,90
60 to 75 years	23,97	20,11	21,48	27,23
Region				
Eastern Austria (Lower Austria, Burgenland, Vienna)	44,20	44,24	40,47	50,79
Southern Austria (Carinthia, Styria)	20,07	19,86	22,64	22,51
Western Austria (Vorarlberg, Tyrol, Salzburg, Upper Austria)	35,72	35,90	36,89	26,70
Education				
Compulsory school	19,30	19,54	25,96	25,65
Apprenticeship certificate (vocational school)	31,22	31,42	35,72	40,83
Vocational secondary school (without vocational school)	11,14	10,61	10,29	9,95
Secondary school (AHS and BHS)	18,84	19,11	16,38	14,66
University, university of applied sciences, university-related educational institution	19,50	19,33	11,64	8,91
Employment				
Employed (including apprentices) and on maternity leave	59,51	65,09	67,60	63,69
In training, military/civilian service	8,85	7,64	2,44	2,11
Jobseeker, unemployed	4,75	4,10	4,01	4,74
Retired	19,60	16,88	18,48	25,79
Permanently incapacitated for work/ household management	7,29	6,29	7,40	3,68
Occupation				
Workers and apprentices	15,83	15,83	20,52	13,61
Employees	36,20	36,00	29,48	30,37
Officials and contract staff	5,44	5,47	4,80	5,24
Self-employed	7,75	7,79	12,87	8,90
Rest	34,79	34,92	32,34	41,88
Marital status				
Single	39,92	39,50	32,35	29.47
Married	48,94	49,18	53,61	54.21
Widowed/divorced	11,15	11,32	14,04	16,32
Municipality size				
up to 2.000 inhabitants	15,42	15,40	14,66	15,34
2.001 to 5.000 inhabitants	23,44	23,53	22,89	23,81
5.001 to 20.000 inhabitants	21,71	21,73	24,85	20,63
20.000 to 300.000 inhabitants	17,34	17,64	16,18	15,87
300.000 to 2.000.000 inhabitants	22,09	21,70	21,42	24,34

Notes

1 Christoph Schulze therefore speaks of a dual character of right-wing extremism. See Christoph Schulze, Rechtsextremismus. Gestalt und Geschichte, Wiesbaden 2021, p. 10.

2 Although the DÖW has not conducted its own sociological surveys as part of its decades of research into right-wing extremism, it has always provided a framework for the discussion of such studies, for example in conferences such as studies by Gerda Lederer (see Peter Schmidt/Gerda Lederer [eds.], Autoritarismus und Gesellschaft. Trendanalysen und vergleichende Jugenduntersuchungen von 1945–1993, Opladen 1995) and anthologies such as the first volume on right-wing extremism in Austria in 1979 (see Josef Weidenholzer, Rechtsextreme und autoritäre Tendenzen im Bewußtsein der österreichischen Bevölkerung, in: Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes [ed.], Rechtsextremismus in Österreich nach 1945, Wien 1979, pp. 392–404). For an overview of sociological research on right-wing extremism in Austria, see Saskja Schindler/Carina Altreiter/Michael Duncan/Jörg Flecker, Soziologische Forschung zu Rechtsextremismus in Österreich nach 1945, in: Andreas Kranebitter/Christoph Reinprecht (eds.), Die Soziologie und der Nationalsozialismus in Österreich, Bielefeld 2019, pp. 394–425.

3 Cf. Willibald Holzer, Rechtsextremismus – Konturen, Definitionsmerkmale und Erklärungsansätze, in: Stiftung Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (eds.), Handbuch des österreichischen Rechtsextremismus, Vienna 1996, 2nd edition, pp. 12–96; as well as the conceptual debate in the Rechtsextremismusbericht des DÖW, which is to appear soon.

4 "Ideology" is not understood here as a mere body of thought, but as an attitude syndrome that materializes in institutions (organizations, parties, magazines, etc.).

5 In Austria, in a *Gallup survey* of 1,000 respondents, 60 % stated that the far right poses a threat to democracy, with only corruption being rated as a greater threat (see *derstandard.at*, 18.4.2024, https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000216458/oesterreicher-sehen-durch-rechtsextremismus-die-demokratie-bedroht). Also, the most recent Mitte-Study found that almost 70 % of respondents in Germany considered right-wing extremism to be the greatest threat to Germany alongside climate change (cf. Andreas Zick, Die distanzierte Mitte - eine Annäherung an das Verhältnis der Mitte zur Demokratie in Krisenzeiten, in: Andreas Zick/Beate Küpper/Nico Mokros [eds], Die distanzierte Mitte. Rechtsextreme und demokratiege fährdende Einstellungen in Deutschland 2022/23, Bonn 2023, pp. 19–33, here: p. 23).

6 See most recently the „SORA-Demokratie-Monitor" 2022 and 2023 (summarized in: Martina Zandonella, Demokratie Monitor 2022. Fokusbericht, Wien 2022 and idem, Demokratie in stürmischen Zeiten. Erste Ergebnisse Demokratie Monitor 2023, Wien 2023). More detailed analyses of political attitudes were planned for 2024; the relevant report was not yet available at the time this report went to press.

7 Cf. most recently Katrin Praprotnik/Patricia Oberluggauer/Carolina Plescia/Isabella Juen, Democracy Radar Wave 10 (SUF edition), https://doi.org/10.11587/GCSLIN, AUSSDA, V2. Authoritarianism was surveyed in Wave 7 of the Democracy Radar in connection with the coronavirus pandemic in 2021, see Flooh Perlot/Marc Grimm/Christina Hainzl/Daniela Ingruber/Isabella Juen/Viktoria Nutz/Patricia Oberluggauer, Democracy Radar Wave 7 (SUF edition), https://doi.org/10.11587/HSFFCN, AUSSDA, V1.

8 Cf. most recently IFES, Antisemitismus 2022. Gesamtergebnisse | Langbericht. Studie im Auftrag des österreichischen Parlaments, Wien 2023.

9 The data from the waves of the ADL Democracy Radar are available for secondary analyses via AUSSDA, while those from other long-term studies are not.

10 Cf. Wolfgang Aschauer/Janine Heinz, Autoritäre Dynamiken in der Corona-Krise. Einblicke in das Ausmaß von Autoritarismus und Coronaskepsis in der Salzburger Bevölkerung 2021, Salzburg 2023.

11 Cf. Präsidium der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften/Heinz Faßmann (Hrsg.), Wissenschaftsbarometer 2022: Vertrauen, Interesse, Information. Ergebnisse und Analysen der Erhebung über die Einstellung der Österreicher:innen zu Wissenschaft und Forschung, Wien 2023.

12 Cf. Janine Heinz/Christian Glantschnigg, Extremistische Einstellungsmuster in Österreich. Abschlussbericht, Wien 2023.

13 Cf. Petra Ziegler/Andreas Schulz, Autoritarismus, nationale Geschichtsbilder und demokratische Disposition, Online Umfrage 2022, Länderbericht Österreich, Wien 2023; Dies.: Autoritarismus, nationale Geschichtsbilder und demokratische Disposition. Online-Umfrage 2022. Ländervergleich, Wien 2023.

14 Cf. most recently Zick/Küpper/Mokros, Die distanzierte Mitte.

15 See most recently Oliver Decker/Johannes Kiess/Ayline Heller/Elmar Brähler (eds.), Autoritäre Dynamiken in unsicheren Zeiten. Neue Herausforderungen – alte Reaktionen? Leipziger Autoritarismus Studie 2022, Gießen 2022.

16 Cf. Zandonella, Democratie Monitor 2022, p. 4.

17 Summarized elsewhere: "The loss of trust has thus far only affected democratically elected representative bodies - this indicates that the political system is facing a crisis of representation." (ibid., p. 12).

18 Cf. ibid. p. 27.

19 Cf. Zandonella, Demokratie in stürmischen Zeiten, p. 5f.

20 Cf. ibid., p. 2.

21 Cf. ibid. p. 7.

22 See the project website https://www.austriandemocracylab.at/?lang=en .

23 Cf. *austriandemocracylab.at*, Flooh Perlot, 28.7.2021, https://www.austriandemocracylab.at/was-die-demokratie-herausfordert.

24 See Oliver Decker/Johannes Kiess/Julia Schuler/Barbara Handke/Gert Pickel/Elmar Brähler, Die Leipziger Autoritarismus Studie 2020: Methode, Ergebnisse und Langzeitverlauf, in: Oliver Decker/Elmar Brähler (eds.), Autoritäre Dynamiken. Neue Radikalität – alte Ressentiments. Leipziger Autoritarismus Studie 2020, Gießen 2020, pp. 27–87, here: p. 35.

25 Perlot rightly points out a limitation in the direct comparison between Germany and Austria, as the figures in Austria were collected for the year 2021, in Germany for 2020.

26 Cf. Perlot et al, Democracy Radar Wave 7. The data were analyzed here weighted for all respondents and for the group of those who answered the Sunday question by selecting FPÖ (v=3), with only 8.8 % of respondents stating that they would vote FPÖ next Sunday.

27 Ziegler/Schulz, Autoritarismus (Ländervergleich), p. 45.

28 Idem, Autoritarismus (Länderbericht, Tabellenband), p. 17.

29 Idem, Autoritarismus (Länderbericht), p. 59.

30 Idem, Autoritarismus (Länderbericht, Tabellenband), p. 51.

31 Ibid., p. 67. 39 % of respondents in Austria believe that the discussion about the Second World War and the Holocaust should be ended (see idem, Autoritarismus [Ländervergleich], p. 79), but only 12.2 % on the left, 19.9 % on the left, 43.8 % in the center, 50.7 % on the right and almost three quarters of respondents on the right, namely 73.3 % (see idem, Autoritarismus [Länderbericht, Tabellenband], p. 81).

32 Ibid, p. 164.

33 Cf. Heinz/Glantschnigg, Extremistische Einstellungsmuster. On behalf of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, a representative sample of the resident population in Austria aged 16 and over was surveyed with a sample size of 1,977 in telephone (CATI) and online interviews (CAWI) during the survey period: May 27 to July 19, 2022.

34 Zick, Die distanzierte Mitte, p. 21.

35 See generally Wilhelm Heitmeyer, Deutsche Zustände. Folgen 1–10, Frankfurt am Main 2002ff.; most recently in a concise overview, Autoritäre Versuchungen. Signaturen der Bedrohung 1, Berlin 2018.

36 Andreas Zick/Nico Mokros, Rechtsextreme Einstellungen in der Mitte, in: Andreas Zick/Küpper/Mokros, Die distanzierte Mitte, pp. 53–89, here: p. 84. The most recent Mitte-Study from 2022 was conducted as a telephone survey (CATI) of over 2,000 people as a representative sample of all people aged 18 and over living in Germany.

37 Anyone who achieves a total score of 63 across all 18 questions measuring these six dimensions is considered to have a manifestly right-wing extremist world view (cf. ibid., p. 63). For this, the respondent must at least tend to agree everywhere.

38 Ibid, p. 70.

39 Cf. ibid. pp. 67–71.

40 Cf. ibid. pp. 71–73.

41 Ibid, p. 74.

42 Ibid., p. 78. However, in contrast to the subjective self-assessment, actual income clearly shows that "lower-income people agree with all dimensions of right-wing extremist attitudes much more frequently." (ibid.). Blue-collar workers would also agree more often (cf. ibid., p. 79), although 83 % still disagree. "The experiences of dependent wage laborers in particular seem to be translated less into demands for redistribution *from top to bottom*, but rather into a nationalist conflict between *inside* and *outside*, in which migrants stand for competition for work, status and prosperity […]. Right-wing populist logic and right-wing extremist ideology are intertwined." (ibid., p. 80).

43 See Oliver Decker/Johannes Kiess/Ayline Heller/Julia Schuler/Elmar Brähler, Die Leipziger Autoritarismus Studie 2022: Methode, Ergebnisse und Langzeitverlauf, in: Decker/Kiess/Heller/Brähler, Autoritäre Dynamiken, pp. 31–90, here: p. 34.

44 Oliver Decker/Elmar Brähler, Vom Rand zur Mitte. Rechtsextreme Einstellung und ihre Einflussfaktoren in Deutschland, Berlin 2006, cited in Decker/Kiess/Heller/Schuler/Brähler, Autoritarismus Studie 2022, p. 33.

45 Cf. ibid., p. 36. The strictness of the criteria themselves is problematized, especially in the long-term course: "In this section we look at the agreement in the individual dimensions over time. For this purpose, the three items per dimension were summarized. In the following charts, the percentage values indicate the proportion of respondents who at least predominantly agree with the statements on average (cut-off value ≥ 12; for the individual questions, this corresponds to a value of 4). This very hard criterion therefore already excludes respondents who predominantly agree with two statements and only partially agree with one statement. In this respect, we are therefore looking at a consolidated attitude per dimension." (ibid., p. 47).

46 Ibid, pp. 37–39.

47 Cf. ibid., pp. 47–53.

48 Ibid, p. 53.

49 Heinz/Glantschnigg, Extremistische Einstellungsmuster, p. 4.

50 Ibid, p. 22.

51 Ibid, p. 36.

52 For example, a question on the bombing of Dresden, which measures guilt-aversion anti-Semitism from the Leipzig Authoritarianism Study, seemed to us to need to be adapted for Austria.

53 Ibid, p. 16.

54 Zick, Die distanzierte Mitte, p. 24.

55 Cf. Lipset's concept of "extremism of the center": Seymour M. Lipset, Der „Faschismus" - die Linke, die Rechte und die Mitte, in: Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie 1 (1995 [1959]), Heft 3, pp. 401–444; idem, Soziologie der Demokratie, Neuwied am Rhein 1962.

56 Zick, Die distanzierte Mitte, p. 24.

57 Ibid, p. 25.

58 Ibid, p. 26.

59 Ibid, p. 22.

60 See also Decker et al, Autoritarismus Studie 2022, p. 33.

61 This advisory board included Christian Fleck (Graz), Fiona Kalkstein (Leipzig), Reinhard Kreissl, Silvia Kritzinger, Oliver Rathkolb, Christoph Reinprecht, and Bernhard Weidinger (Vienna).

62 The distributions are derived from the STATcube database of *Statistics Austria*: https://www.statistik.at/en/databases/statcube-statistical-database.

63 Jim Sidanius/Felicia Pratto, Social Dominance: An Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression, Cambridge 1999.

64 See Stanley Feldman, Structure and consistency in public opinion: The role of core beliefs and values, in: American Journal of Political Science 32 (1988), No. 2, pp. 416–440.

65 See Josef Glavanovits/Julian Aichholzer/Sanja Hajdinjak/Sylvia Kritzinger, The European Values Study 2018 - Austria Edition, Vienna 2019.

66 See Heinz/Glantschnigg, Extremistische Einstellungsmuster in Österreich, p. 36 and Decker et al, Autoritarismus Studie 2022, p. 38.

67 See Feldman, Structure and consistency, p. 421.

68 Decker et al, Autoritarismus Studie 2022, p. 39.

69 Cf. Michael Wildt, Volksgemeinschaft als Selbstermächtigung. Gewalt gegen Juden in der deutschen Provinz 1919 bis 1939, Hamburg 2007; Frank Bajohr/Michael Wildt, Volksgemeinschaft. Neue Forschungen zur Gesellschaft des Nationalsozialismus, Frankfurt am Main 2009.

70 Cf. Sidanius/Pratto, Social Dominance.

71 John C. Turner/Rupert J. Brown/Henri Tajfel, Social comparison and group interest in ingroup favoritism, in: European Journal of Social Psychology 9 (1979), No. 2, pp. 187–204.

72 Cf. E.g. Diana C. Mutz, Status threat, not economic hardship, explains the 2016 presidential vote, in: PNAS 115 (2018), Issue 19, pp. E4330–E4339.

73 Cf. Decker/Kiess/Heller/Schuler/Brähler, Die Leipziger Autoritarismus Studie 2022, p. 42 and pp. 67–70.

74 Ibid, p. 69.

75 Cf. Sidanius/Pratto, Social Dominance.

76 Cf. Turner/Brown/Tajfel, Social comparison and group interest.

77 Willibald Holzer, Rechtsextremismus – Konturen, Definitionsmerkmale und Erklärungsansätze, in: Stiftung Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (ed.), Handbuch des österreichischen Rechtsextremismus, Wien 1996, pp. 12–96, here: p. 64ff.

78 Decker/Kiess/Heller/Schuler/Brähler, Die Leipziger Autoritarismus Studie, p. 76.

79 Cf. ibid.

80 Cf. Zick/Mokros, Rechtsextreme Einstellungen in der Mitte, pp. 71–75.

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