

Attitudes towards minority groups in West and East Germany

A special Analysis of the Eurobarometer 2000 Survey
on behalf of the



**European Monitoring Centre
on Racism and Xenophobia**

by

**SORA,
Vienna, Austria**

Autorin:

Eva Thalhammer

Vienna, April 2001

Attitudes towards minority groups in West and East Germany

The latest EUMC-survey on racism and xenophobia, which was included in the standard Eurobarometer¹ survey in spring 2000, allows us to gain thorough knowledge about attitudes towards minorities in West and East Germany. There are differences between the West and the East, but you must not say that people in one region have more negative or positive attitudes than people in the other region in general.

In Germany as a whole, the level of acceptance of immigrants, especially of those who wish to work in the EU, is low. Germans favour the repatriation of immigrants somewhat more firmly than other Europeans; however, the level of support decreased over the period 1997 - 2000. The support for policies designed to improve social coexistence between majority and minority groups is similar to the support displayed by other Europeans and showed a slight increase over this period.

Tolerance and Intolerance in West and East Germany

A typology of people was developed according to their attitude towards minority groups at the EU level. The typology divides the population into four groups: actively tolerant; intolerant; ambivalent; and passively tolerant people.

- **Actively tolerant**

People classified as 'tolerant', 24% of the West and 21% of the East German population, do not feel disturbed by people from different minority groups. They agree that minority groups enrich society. Additionally, they don't demand assimilation. The tolerant do not support repatriation of immigrants or restrictive acceptance of immigrants. They show the strongest support for anti-racism policies.

- **Intolerant**

People classified as 'intolerant', 17% of the West and 18% of the East German population, and display strong negative attitudes towards minority groups. They feel disturbed by people from different minority groups and see minorities as having no positive effects on the enrichment of society. They have a strong wish for assimilation. Furthermore, the intolerant support repatriation of immigrants and the very restrictive acceptance of immigrants.

- **Ambivalent**

People classified as 'ambivalent', 28% of the West and 31% of the East German population, have ambivalent attitudes toward minority groups. On the one hand, they do not see minority groups making positive inputs to society. They greatly desire the assimilation of minority groups. On the other hand, they do not feel disturbed by minority groups. Furthermore, they have medium scores on the dimensions 'restrictive acceptance' and 'repatriation'. This ambivalence leads to no consequences. The ambivalent do not support anti-racism policies.

¹ Eurobarometer is a European Union polling tool designed to monitor values and attitudes, their variations and changes in Europe twice a year. This special survey on racism and xenophobia was initiated and commissioned by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia and carried out by INRA (EUROPE) – E.C.O. In total, 16,078 people were interviewed in the 15 EU Member States over the period 5 April - 23 May 2000. On average 1,000 interviews were conducted in each country with two separate samples drawn in Germany, East and West

- **Passively tolerant**

In general, people classified as ‘passively tolerant’, 29% of the West and 30% of the East German population, have positive attitudes toward minority groups, but they do not support policies in favour of minorities. They do not feel disturbed by minorities; they think that minorities can enrich society, and therefore do not wish minorities to abandon their own culture and accept the culture of the majority. Passive tolerance is related to medium scores on restrictive acceptance and leads to no consequences. The passively tolerant neither support anti-racism policies, nor do they favour the repatriation of immigrants.

Table 1: Typology of people in East and West Germany according to their attitudes towards minorities, by age group

		intolerant	passively tolerant	actively tolerant	ambivalent	total
West	15 - 24 years	13	35	29	23	100
	25 - 39 years	15	30	31	24	100
	40 - 54 years	14	29	22	34	100
	55 + years	26	25	18	30	100
	total	18	29	24	28	100
East	15 - 24 years	26	30	25	18	100
	25 - 39 years	18	30	23	29	100
	40 - 54 years	12	35	22	31	100
	55 + years	17	27	18	38	100
	total	17	30	21	31	100

Although the percentages of intolerant people is similar in West and East Germany, differences occur looking at the age groups. 13% of 15 to 24-year olds in West Germany are classified as intolerant, but twice as much (26%) in East Germany. On the contrary, only 17% of the elder generation (55-years old or more) are intolerant in East Germany, but 26% in West Germany. Many more young people are tolerant in West than in East Germany, but many more elder people are tolerant or ambivalent in East than in West Germany. **Intolerance is a phenomenon of the young generation in East Germany, but of the elder generation in West Germany.**

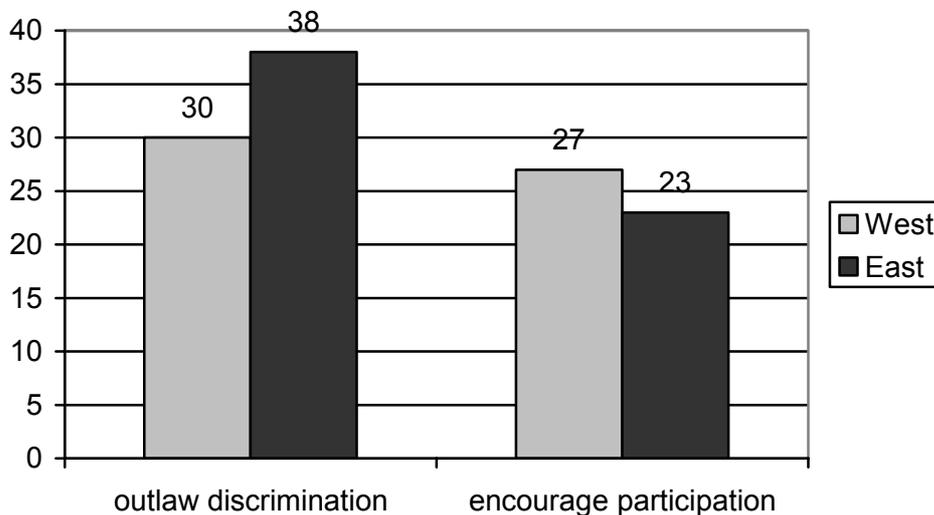
Attitudes in West and East Germany

Concerning policies improving social coexistence, two statistically significant differences between West and East Germany are to be found: East Germans tend to support rules prescribed by law stronger than people in the West (Figure 1).

38% of the respondents in East Germany agree that outlawing discrimination against minority groups might improve relationships between people of different races, religions and cultures. In West Germany, the rate of agreement is 8% lower.

In West Germany, 27% agree with the statement that encouraging of people from these minority groups to participate in the political life of Germany might improve relationships between people of different races, religions and cultures. In East Germany, the rate of agreement is 4% lower.

Figure 1: Support for policies improving social coexistence in West and East Germany



East Germans are also deemed more law-oriented in terms of their wishes for cultural assimilation: Respondents in East Germany (68%) are more likely than respondents in West Germany (59%) to agree with the statement that people from minority groups must abandon those segments of their religion and culture which may be in conflict with law in order to become fully accepted members of society.

People in West Germany are more likely to accept immigrants than people in East Germany.

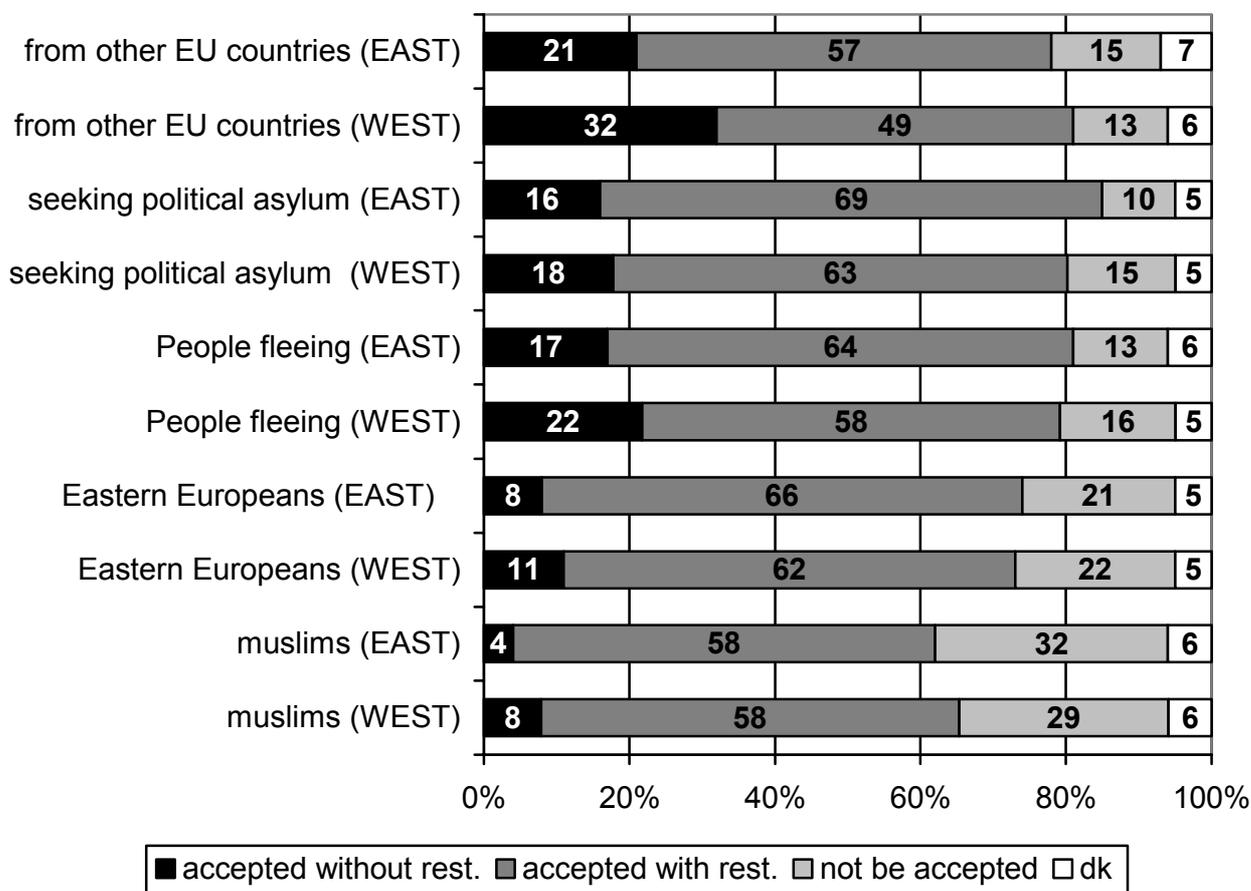


Figure 2: Acceptance of immigrants in West and East Germany

People from Muslim countries who wish to work in the EU are least accepted of all without restriction. 8% of the West German respondents and only 4% of the East German respondents accept immigrants from Muslim countries without restriction. Most (58%) of the respondents in Germany think that people from Muslim countries should be accepted but with restriction. In East Germany, every third citizen (32%) agrees that people from Muslim countries should not be accepted, in West Germany the rate of agreement is 3% lower.

People from Eastern Europe who want to work in the West also have to face a low level of acceptance in Germany. There is no statistically significant difference between West and East.

22% of the West German respondents accept people fleeing from countries where there is a serious internal conflict without restriction. In East Germany, the rate of acceptance without restriction is 17%. But the percentage of respondents who do not accept these immigrants is higher in West Germany (16%) than in East Germany (13%).

People suffering from human rights violations in their countries and who seek for political asylum are the most accepted of all, but with restriction. 63% of the people from West Germany and 69% of the people from East Germany accept them, but with restriction. 18% of the respondents in West

Germany accept them without restriction, whereas 15% do not accept them at all. 16% of the people in East Germany accept them without restriction and 10% do not accept them.

Citizens from other EU countries working in Germany are the most accepted of all without restriction.

People from East Germany are more likely to blame minorities than people from West Germany.

Table 2: Blaming minorities in West and East Germany

	tend to agree	tend to disagree	dk
In schools where there are too many children from these minority groups, the quality of education suffers (WEST)	60*	26*	14*
(EAST)	48*	35*	17*
People from these minority groups abuse the system of social welfare (WEST)	54*	28*	18*
(EAST)	60*	22*	18*
The presence of people from these minority groups is a cause of insecurity (WEST)	42*	37*	21*
(EAST)	51*	32*	18*
People from these minority groups are given preferential treatment by the authorities (WEST)	26	55	19
(EAST)	26	51	23
The presence of people from these minority groups increases unemployment in (COUNTRY) (WEST)	57*	27*	16*
(EAST)	65*	22*	13*
They (immigrants) are often involved in criminality than the average (WEST)	57*	29*	14*
(EAST)	67*	19*	14*

*statistically significant

However, one exception is the statement that in schools where there are too many children from minority groups, the quality of education suffers. 48% of the people in East Germany agree with this statement, as against 60% in West Germany.

Most East German respondents (60%) agree with the statement that people from minority groups abuse the social welfare system; in West Germany 54% agree with this statement.

More than half of the respondents in East Germany (51%) think that the presence of people from minority groups gives rise to insecurity, in West Germany the percentage is lower (42%).

There are no significant differences between East and West Germany concerning the statement that people from these minority groups are accorded preferential treatment by the authorities. 26% of the people in Germany as a whole agree with this statement.

The highest rates of agreement are found with respect to the statements that people from minority groups increase unemployment in Germany and that the immigrants' involvement in crime is higher than the average.

West and East Germans have similar attitudes with respect to multicultural optimism. The only differences are to be found in the statement that where schools make the necessary effort, the education of all children can be enriched by the presence of children from minority groups. 51% of the respondents in West Germany and 56% of the respondents in East Germany agree with this statement.

No significant differences between West Germany and East Germany are found in respect of the statements concerning the presence of people of another nationality, race or religion disrupting daily lives. Three citizens out of four in Germany as a whole do not find the presence of those people disturbing.

As for the wish for (conditional) repatriation of immigrants no significant differences are to be found between West and East Germany.

The entire Eurobarometer survey is available as a 64 pages publication or can be downloaded from the EUMC website: <http://eumc.eu.int>