

OMGUS Survey of Prejudice and Antisemitism (April 1948)

Abstract

In the wake of the radical antisemitic policy of the Nazi regime and the Holocaust, the Allies carefully observed German attitudes toward the Jews after 1945. This poll, taken in April 1948, demonstrated that one-third of those surveyed were antisemites or radical antisemites and that more than a quarter advocated racist positions. Antisemitism was especially pronounced among young Germans who had been socialized entirely in the Third Reich.

Source

Prejudice and Anti-Semitism^[1]

Sample: a cross-section of persons 15 years of age and older in the American Zone.

Interviewing dates: April 1948. (11 pp.)

This study was a repeat of a survey made in December 1946 (cf. Report No. 49). Its purpose was to ascertain whether there existed a general anti-Semitism among the German people and, if so, to measure both the spread and its incidence within certain groups of the population. One historical note should be borne in mind: Whereas in 1933 there were about 503,000 Jews in Germany (0.8 per cent of the total population), in 1948 there were less than 20,000.

A comparison of the two detailed studies on anti-Semitism made in December 1946 and April 1948 revealed that overt anti-Semitism had not increased during the year. Indeed, it had decreased slightly, from 21 per cent to 19 per cent for anti-Semites and 18 per cent to 14 per cent for intense anti-Semites.

However, at the same time, racist attitudes – the basis of anti-Semitism – had increased sharply, from 22 per cent to 26 per cent.

An objective estimate of population divisions (overcoming possible objections to the wording of the questions) showed that about two in ten persons were clearly anti-Semitic, about three in ten were indifferent or unconcerned, and just over half could be termed "not anti-Semitic." Group differences paralleled those found in the earlier report: women, the poorly educated, and rural persons were more likely to be anti-Semitic than men, the well-educated, or city dwellers. More detailed analysis, however, revealed that locale was even more important than education in shaping outlooks on this issue. Examination of the *Regierungsbezirke* (administrative districts) showed that in Wuerttemberg, for instance, there was more prejudice (gradient score of 129 per cent on a scale ranging from 0 per cent equalling the total absence of prejudice to 100 per cent equalling absolute anti-Semitism) than in Baden (gradient score of 103 per cent).

Knowledge reduces prejudice. However, parents of German youth were more frequently carriers of prejudice than childless couples. Germans between the ages of 15 and 19 showed more anti-Semitism than other age groups. Trade union members were less often anti-Semitic than nonmembers. Expellees from the East did not differ from natives of an area in their degrees of prejudice.

NOTES

^[1] Editorial note: while we use the more current spelling "antisemitism" in our editorial texts, we

have retained the original spelling in all our sources.

Source: A. J. and R. L. Merritt, *Public Opinion in Occupied Germany. The OMGUS Surveys*. Urbana, IL, 1970, pp. 239–40.

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