

OMGUS Survey of the Chief Cares and Worries since the Currency Reform (February–August 1948)

Abstract

The currency reform that was carried out in June 1948 in the Western occupation zones and the subsequent improvement in the supply of food and consumer goods eased the population's concerns about getting enough to eat. Instead, Germans in these zones now worried about finding a suitable job and making a living under conditions dictated by the free market economy.

Source

Chief Cares and Worries since the Currency Reform

Sample: not specified.

Interviewing dates: nine surveys taken between February and August 1948. (5 pp.)

During the spring of 1948, the cares and worries of the German people were much the same as they had been the first time this question was asked in the first survey. In June 1948, however, when the Western Powers introduced the currency reform, a change occurred in the German situation and consequently in the cares and worries expressed by the public.

Before the currency reform, the most frequently reported chief worry had always been food. Indeed, during the winter and spring of 1948, over half the people in AMZON, two-thirds in Berlin, and three-fourths in Bremen mentioned food among their chief cares and worries. After the currency reform, however, the picture changed markedly in AMZON and Bremen, while in West Berlin, where the blockade was instituted along with the currency reform, the food situation remained serious and 47 per cent of the population was still seriously concerned with it.

During the winter and spring of 1948 clothing and shoes ranked second as an expressed worry, with about four in ten AMZON adults mentioning it. But after the currency reform this figure dropped and by August only eight per cent thought it important enough to mention. In Berlin, however, the drop was only from 32 per cent to 14 per cent.

Fuel was a less pervasive worry but one which showed the same tendency as food and clothing. In Berlin, after dropping to its usual summer low of one or two per cent in late spring, it rose again to one in ten during August.

Although worries over basic necessities tended to decrease after the currency reform to nearly manageable proportions, anxiety over the means of obtaining them skyrocketed. By midsummer, half the AMZON population (48%) said that they had no means of livelihood and by August this figure had risen to 59 per cent.

In all the surveys, a small group of people in AMZON (less than 5%) mentioned concern about the future in general. In West Berlin, however, it rose from about five per cent to 13 per cent in mid-April, dropped again in May and then rose again, remaining relatively high (10% to 14%) during June, July, and August.

Most of the other kinds of cares and worries remained fairly constant: anxiety about prisoners of war and

missing persons (6–9%), loss of housing (8–14%), Nazi Party membership (0–2%), health (3–6%), evacuee difficulties (8–9%). The number claiming to have no worry varied from one to five per cent of the AMZON sample.

Source: A. J. and R. L. Merritt, *Public Opinion in Occupied Germany. The OMGUS Surveys*. Urbana, IL, 1970, pp. 258–59.

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