

OMGUS Survey on Attitudes toward General Economic Conditions (January 15, 1947)

Abstract

In November 1946, about half of those surveyed anticipated an economic upswing in the American occupation zone and in the British and American sectors of Berlin within six months. Likewise, about half assumed that the currency would remain stable. The survey showed that freelancers and businesspeople in big cities were able to earn above-average incomes. But the number of Germans who didn't earn enough to make ends meet was also increasing. A large portion of survey respondents strongly favored lower taxes or a more equitable distribution of tax burdens.

Source

Attitudes toward General Economic Conditions

Sample: 3,022 respondents in the American Zone and 401 in the American and British Sectors of Berlin.

Interviewing dates: first part of November 1946. (25 pp.)

From July 1946 to November 1946 monthly family incomes declined RM 20 in the American Zone and RM 30 in West Berlin. In November 1946 the median family monthly income was RM 129 in the American Zone and RM 199 in Berlin. Of the three *Laender* in the American Zone, Wuerttemberg-Baden reported the highest median monthly income (RM 150), followed by Bavaria (RM 123) and Hesse (RM 120). Highest monthly incomes were reported by professionals and businessmen (RM 287), residents of cities of 250,000 or more in population (RM 188), those with more than 11 years of education (RM 177), men (RM 153), and those between 40 and 49 (RM 148).

In November 1946, 39 per cent of the respondents in the American Zone said that their family's total income was not sufficient to cover necessary living expenses, as did 48 per cent in West Berlin. These percentages were the highest recorded since surveying began in November 1945. Among the three *Laender* of the American Zone, more respondents in Hesse (41%) reported insufficient income than in Bavaria (39%) or Wuerttemberg-Baden (37%). The highest percentages reporting insufficient income were residents of cities between 100,000 and 249,999 in population (46%), unskilled laborers (53%), those with 12 or more years of education (46%), women (41%), those between 30 and 39 (48%), and those with no income (86%).

A substantial number (26%) of AMZON respondents relied on their savings to meet necessary expenses. Many West Berliners (18%) relied on barter and the sale of personal property, and only ten per cent fell back upon their savings. It should be noted, however, that an increasing percentage said that they could not buy everything they needed (seven per cent in AMZON; 13 per cent in West Berlin).

Half (52%) of the respondents in both the American Zone and West Berlin felt that there were some taxes which should be lowered or which were not fairly apportioned. In general, the higher the income, the greater was the objection to current taxes, except among the three *Laender* of the American Zone. Half (52%) of the respondents in Bavaria, where incomes tended to be lower, said taxes were not fairly apportioned or should be lowered, in contrast to 49 per cent of the respondents in Wuerttemberg-Baden and 44 per cent in Hesse who made a similar claim. Respondents in the American Zone objected most to taxes on tobacco (25%) and alcohol and luxury items (16%). Respondents in West Berlin objected most to

taxes on wages and community taxes (23%) and to income and personal property taxes (14%).

Confidence in the continued value of the *Reichsmark* had declined since April 1946. A substantial portion (43%) of the AMZON and West Berlin respondents did not think the *Reichsmark* would be worth as much six months later as it was in November 1946. Half (50%) of the respondents in West Berlin, however, expected no such inflationary trend. As far as confidence in the *Reichsmark* as compared to Allied military money was concerned, most people (55 per cent in AMZON; 46 per cent in West Berlin) found no difference between the two currencies.

The respondents were optimistic about economic conditions in the next six months: 45 per cent of the AMZON respondents and 51 per cent in West Berlin felt that economic conditions would improve in the next six months; 22 and 18 per cent, respectively, expected no change, and 24 and 13 per cent, respectively, expected a deterioration of economic conditions.

Source: A. J. and R. L. Merritt, *Public Opinion in Occupied Germany, The OMGUS Surveys*. Urbana, IL, 1970, pp. 131–33.

Recommended Citation: OMGUS Survey on Attitudes toward General Economic Conditions (January 15, 1947), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/occupation-and-the-emergence-of-two-states-1945-1961/ghdi:document-4084>> [July 02, 2025].