

The FADA's research at a glance:

Experiences of discrimination in Germany

Initial results of a representative survey and a survey of the people affected

Overview of the survey

The survey deals with the issue of how discrimination is perceived and experienced in Germany. For that purpose, comprehensive quantitative data from a representative telephone survey and from mixed mode interviews (online and paper questionnaires) with people affected as well as qualitative data from focus group and individual interviews were evaluated. On the one hand, conclusions can be drawn about existing discrimination structures in society due to the survey results regarding experienced discrimination conclusions. On the other hand, insights can be gained into the perception of the parties concerned and cases of discrimination can be clarified in detail.

Authors, year of publication and title of the survey

Beigang, Steffen; Fetz, Karolina; Kalkum, Dorina; Otto, Magdalena (2017): Experiences of Discrimination in Germany. Initial results of a representative survey and a survey of the people affected. Edited by the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Results

Perception of discrimination

In everyday life, a situation will be rather perceived as discriminatory if:

- the respondent feels **personally affected**, e.g. since he or she belongs to the same group which has been discriminated against,
- the conduct of the party causing the discrimination **seems to be illegitimate** or the **discrimination cannot be justified by any laws or standards**,
- the party concerned **seems to deserve protection**, e.g. because the damage caused by discrimination is very great for him or her.

Risk of discrimination

- The differences in the **extent of discrimination experienced** by the German population depend on the particular discrimination characteristic.
- That is also connected with the **specific risk of discrimination** for particular subgroups in society: for example, as ageism is not limited to specific age groups, a comparably large part of society is affected. With regard to other characteristics, however, it is clearly shown that certain subgroups are affected to an extent above average. For example, women report on incidents of discrimination on grounds of their gender five times as often as men.
- Moreover, some subgroups of society run a **higher general risk** of experiencing discrimination across all characteristics surveyed. Thus, for example, people with disabilities

or chronic diseases experience discrimination considerably more often than people without impairments - irrespective of a particular characteristic.

- There were also many reports about **forms of multidimensional discrimination**, i.e. situations where those concerned had experienced discrimination on grounds of several characteristics at the same time. In the context of those multidimensional discrimination experiences, the focus is on gender as the cross-cutting category.

Experiences of discrimination in different spheres of life

- The most frequent incidents of discrimination are reported to occur in **working life, in public and/or during leisure time** as well as in **shops and/or the service sector**. But also other settings with which many of the respondents are in contact rather seldom in their everyday life are comparably often reported to be places where discrimination has been experienced (e.g. public offices and authorities, the educational sector, the housing market).
- Starting out from the outcome of the interviews with people affected, **experiences of discrimination in seven selected areas of life** are outlined in detail and illustrated by case descriptions. For the sphere of working life, experiences which are considered as discrimination are examined more closely, e.g. job applicants who are not employed, financial disadvantages within the scope of existing employment relationships and workplace bullying.
- In addition, other analyses and case descriptions are included for the areas of shops and services, housing market, education, public and leisure time, health and long-term care as well as public offices, authorities and politics. In this context, it is also explained on grounds of which **discrimination characteristics** and in which spheres of life discrimination is experienced to an extent above average, and which **forms of discrimination** play a pre-eminent role.

Reactions to experiences of discrimination

- In summary, it can be stated that nearly six out of ten people affected by discrimination have already **reacted** in one way or another **to discrimination(s)**: a comparatively large share of them try to draw attention to the discrimination; other reactions directed against the party or incident having caused the discrimination are chosen rather seldom, as e.g. complaints submitted to an official body or initiating legal proceedings.
- In cases where a **reaction** directed against the party or incident causing the discrimination is **refrained from**, the underlying decisive reasons are, in particular, doubts as to the efficiency of measures, fear of negative consequences as well as a lack of necessary resources (lack of knowledge and financial, emotional resources or limited time).
- Indeed, the measures taken against the party or the incident causing the discrimination were frequently **not successful**: just around one out of five people who had taken measures against discrimination reported on positive outcomes (e.g. apologies, remedial action, punishment of the perpetrator).

Effects of experienced discrimination

- From the point of view of the people affected, the majority of reported cases of discrimination experiences resulted in **definitely negative outcomes**. The reports most frequently stated that the people affected felt traumatized by constantly recurring memories

of the incident in question and that the individual affected became more suspicious as a result of that experience.

- Moreover, it was revealed that probably especially dramatic experiences of discrimination, such as physical assaults or a combination of financial disadvantages and social disparagements, are often also connected with **particularly severe effects**, such as impairments of mental and physical health.

General recommendations for action from the authors' perspective

- **Abolishing discrimination in law** (e.g. discriminating provisions included in the Act regarding transsexuals) and **closing gaps in the protection against discrimination** (e.g. limitation on derogations such as the so-called 'church clause'),
- **Extending the protection against discrimination within the General Equal Treatment Act**, e.g. by including governance into its scope and examining the inclusion of other discrimination characteristics, such as for example socioeconomic situation or outer appearance,
- **Increasing transparency to counteract discrimination**, e.g. by extending the right to obtain information from employers as regards salary structures,
- **Raising the awareness of discrimination and strengthening the anti-discrimination culture**, e.g. by extending and encouraging anti-bias training modules for employees in public authorities and institutions,
- **Scrutinizing current practices and circumstances and checking them for discrimination**, e.g. by abolishing discriminating phrases on forms or examining the spatial situation with a view to accessibility,
- **Enlarging the existing scope of resources of the people affected** (e.g. by introduction of a derivative right of action or a right for associations to initiate proceedings) and **imposing tougher sanctions against discrimination**,
- **Strengthening research**: Increasing and improving the knowledge about discrimination, e.g. by continuously monitoring the extent of experiences of discrimination.

More information

The final report on that survey can be downloaded => [here](#) (in German language only).

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