

The FADA's research at a glance:

Collection of Anti-discrimination Data in Representative Repeat Surveys

Stock-take and room for development

Study abstract

The expert opinion sets out to identify the discrimination-relevant questions and categories included in representative repeat surveys conducted across Germany. It covers both cross-thematic surveys (such as microcensus, socio-economic panel - SOEP) and major area- and target group specific surveys (such as the German ageing survey "*Deutscher Alterssurvey*"). Based on these data, it evaluates existing approaches and flags data gaps. Finally, the expert opinion formulates recommendations specifying the ways in which discrimination reporting should be developed further to match the scope of protection enshrined in the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG).

Authors, year of publication and title of the study

Baumann, Anne-Luise; Egenberger, Vera; Supik, Linda (2018): *Erhebung von Antidiskriminierungsdaten in repräsentativen Wiederholungsbefragungen. Bestandsaufnahme und Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten*. Edited by the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency.

Methodology

- Overall, the study looked at 20 repeat surveys that complied with **predetermined selection criteria** (nation-wide survey, clearly defined population, repeated conduct, coverage of diverse settings).
- The surveys were first analysed to determine what **questions are asked about discrimination** (e.g. questions about subjective discrimination experiences). Second, the study documented whether and how the **characteristics protected under the AGG** were covered.
- The status of data surveys and the potential to take them further were discussed in two **focus groups with civil society representatives and social scientists**. Moreover, one-off target group interviews and international surveys were scanned for innovative questions.

Results

Most surveys already include **questions asking about subjective discrimination experiences or other aspects of discrimination**. However, the picture remains patchy:

- In some instances, questions to that effect are only asked of certain subsets of persons (such as migrants) or they only look at discrimination on grounds of given characteristics (such as age) or in a given sphere of life.
- By contrast, they include very few or no questions on specific forms of discrimination, such as (sexual) harassment in the workplace. The same is true for questions about responses to such experiences or awareness of the relevant law.

A mixed picture also emerges when we look at the **categories covered by the General Equal Treatment Act - AGG**, against which the surveys can be evaluated. The following are some of the findings that invited criticism:

- There was a notable absence of appropriate measuring tools to identify the groups of persons that are affected by racial discrimination; the distinction between persons with and without migrant background that most surveys have relied on so far, is inappropriate here.
- Questions about sexual orientation only feature in few surveys and, in most cases, the sex-of-interviewee category does not allow for trans* and intersexual persons. As a result, the problems unique to LSBTI* persons are likely to remain hidden.

Regarding the consideration of **civil society principles** for the collection of anti-discrimination and equality data, the following can be stated:

- Most repeat surveys studied guarantee the principles of voluntary and anonymous participation - except for the obligation to respond in the microcensus.
- Some surveys do not fully ensure the principle of self-identification. Especially the sex registered is mostly the result of external identification by the interviewers.
- The calls for participation across all stages of the research process and the informed consent that goes with an increased need for information can only be realised to a limited extent when conducting population-wide cross-thematic surveys.
- In some cases, it is possible to cover multiple identities, multiple discrimination and intersectionality.

Overall, the authors conclude that discrimination reporting schemes that match the scope of protection laid down in the AGG is not currently possible on this basis.

Recommendations for action

Regarding the (further) development of the survey questionnaire, it is recommended that the **interviewing institutions**, among other things,

- make provision for all six AGG categories when asking about discrimination experiences and, wherever possible, put such questions to all surveyees,
- integrate, in a large population-representative survey (such as SOEP) and at regular intervals, a comprehensive module on discrimination that also includes further questions for responses to discrimination experiences or the awareness of counselling services and the relevant law,
- consistently cover, in all surveys, all of the six AGG categories by means of appropriate questions in the context of sociodemographic data so as to make intersectional and multiple discrimination visible, as well,
- adjust the questions used to cover the six AGG categories (except for 'age') and develop them further so as to be able, going forward, to statistically identify all groups that are exposed to a higher risk of discrimination,
- document AGG categories by means of self-reporting, both regarding self-identification and external identification, since the latter tends to play a role in discrimination processes,
- take civil society demands, especially with regard to participation in the research process and information of interviewees, into greater consideration than has been done so far.

Based on the study results, it is suggested that civil society organisations

- develop questions asking about concrete discrimination experiences in qualitative preliminary studies and test them using quantitative methods,
- develop answer catalogues for questions about subjective self-reporting and self-perceived external identification in workshops, focus group discussions or polls.

Moreover, legal and structural needs exist which led the expert opinion to recommend

- the launch of an initiative to amend the Microcensus Act in an effort to cover all AGG categories (on a voluntary basis) and include discrimination-related questions into the microcensus,
- the design of a new, target group-specific repeat survey with an anti-discrimination focus ("Equality Survey").

More information

The legal opinion (in German language only) can be downloaded [here](#).

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