



Black, Red, Green – What are the Party Preferences of Immigrants?

Summary

17 million people with a migration background live in Germany; the portion of the population made up by immigrants will continue to further increase in the next few years. For the political parties, this represents a pool of potential voters, members and party officials that has yet to be tapped into. This Policy Brief looks at which parties immigrants in Germany are affiliated with. The medium- and long-term stable preferences identified are a strong indication of which party respondents would actually vote for. Previous findings of election and political party research largely concur that roughly equal numbers of immigrants lean towards the two major parties; *Spät-/Aussiedler*, or repatriated ethnic Germans, tend to favour the CDU/CSU while people of Turkish descent show a preference for the SPD.

This Policy Brief analyses the party preferences of immigrants in more detail by groups of origin for the first time. It is based on a special analysis of the SVR's 2016 Integration Barometer. The Barometer does not just survey repatriated ethnic Germans and people of Turkish descent, it also looks at other groups: EU immigrants who came to Germany before the end of 2000, new EU immigrants (who arrived in 2001 or later) and people from the "rest of the world". This provides a much more in-depth analysis of the party preferences within the immigrant population.

If all groups of origin are taken together, immigrants have a clear preference for the SPD (40.1%) over the CDU/CSU (27.6%). The result is virtually reversed for people without a migration background: in this case, those surveyed showed a clear preference for the CDU over the Social Democrats (40.9% compared to 27.9%).

The analysis also shows that immigrants in Germany are just as interested in the political parties as people without a migration background. In both groups, nearly 70% said that they prefer a certain political party. Key factors in forming a party preference are the length of residence in Germany and gender: the longer the person has lived in Germany, the more likely they are to favour a specific party; women with a migration background are significantly less likely to indicate a party preference than men.

For people of Turkish descent, the data confirms stable links to the SPD, which is known from earlier studies. Among repatriated ethnic Germans, on the other hand, there has been a downright slump in the traditional approval ratings of the CDU/CSU. In return, the CDU/CSU enjoys a high level of popularity among new EU immigrants who mainly come from Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. In contrast, most other EU immigrants and people from the "rest of the world" tend to favour the SPD or other parties to the left of centre like the Greens or *die Linke* (the Left party).



Party preferences of immigrants have therefore undergone significant transformation in part. The country of origin no longer automatically determines – and certainly not over the long run – their party leanings. This finding also puts pressure on political parties to take action. They can no longer just rely on their old affiliations. Instead they need to specifically address the needs and interests of immigrants and open up to this group of people if they want to attract party members, (potential) voters or future party officials.