

Xenophobia on the rise in Germany, study finds



Far-right protesters in Chemnitz, a city in eastern Germany that has been a flashpoint for tensions this year (Photo: Tim Mönsh)

Germans are becoming more hostile towards immigrants, people of the Muslim and Jewish faiths, and other minorities like the Roma, according to a new study.

A report out this week by the Leipzig-based Competence Centre for Right-Wing Extremism and Democracy Research found that more than one-out-of-three Germans think foreigners come only to exploit the welfare state.

Oliver Decker, who headed the study and survey, told Deutsche Welle that “more than 30 percent of the people living in eastern Germany unanimously agree with xenophobic views.”

The figure drops down to around 22 percent in western Germany, he noted.

The study appears to dovetail with a spate of far-right events held in Germany last

year.

According to a government dataset compiled by Der Spiegel magazine, Germany was host to some 289 far-right events in 2017, the most since 2005.

In August, far-right demonstrators and residents in the German town of Chemnitz marched in anger, some waving Nazi salutes, after immigrants were named as suspects in the stabbing death of a 35-year-old German-Cuban carpenter.

Other high profile acts of violence against immigrants and religious minorities in Germany stand in stark contrast to the country's open-door policy for hosting and helping refugees in 2015.

The Leipzig authoritarianism study appears to point towards a change of heart.

Some 44 percent of Germans surveyed for the research now want a ban on Muslim immigration, compared to 36.5 percent in 2014.

It also found that more than one-in-two Germans said Muslims make them feel like strangers, compared to 43 percent four years ago.

Elmar Brahler, who co-authored the Leipzig study, said right-wing extremists are turning towards parties like Germany's far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD).

Anti-semitism is also on the rise in eastern Germany, increasing from 4.1 percent in 2016 to 5.2 percent in 2018.

"Up to one-third of respondents agree at least in part with anti-semitic statements," said Decker.

Roma and Sinti minorities are not spared, either.

Some 60 percent in the study believe they are prone to crime, a five percent increase since 2014.

Source: <https://euobserver.com/migration/143336>

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