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# The Voter's Heart

Emotional Party Assessment in  
Representative and Qualitative Surveys

Viola Neu

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Representative and Qualitative Surveys**

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## Imprint

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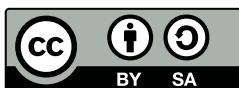
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## At a Glance

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- › In a representative survey, the vast majority of voters can imagine voting for several parties. Only a few voters do not have a second choice. In relation to all supporters, between 24 percent (of SPD voters) and 33 percent (of CDU voters) can imagine voting for only one party. At 50 percent, the AfD has the largest proportion of supporters with no second choice.
- › The Greens and the FDP could benefit from the prospective alternate vote of CDU/CSU supporters. In terms of the prospective second choices of SPD supporters, the Greens and the CDU/CSU are top of the list. Among both AfD and FDP supporters, the largest number of second choices are in favour of the CDU/CSU. In terms of the prospective alternate votes of Left party supporters, the Greens and the Social Democrats are on top; most Green voters lean toward the SPD. The CDU/CSU and the Left party could benefit slightly.
- › The testing of terms – which are not representative – during in-depth interviews produces some unexpected results. Many terms have a clear association with a political party. Other terms do not evoke any associations with parties. An especially large number of respondents do not know what to make of the terms populist and liberal, although the FDP is mentioned most often for liberal. The terms Christian and conservative are strongly associated with the CDU; conservative tends to have a negative image. The CDU and the SPD share the term centre. The SPD is often mentioned when respondents are asked about the term civil. Respondents think of the AfD and the NPD in connection with the term “Nazi”. The Greens are mentioned when respondents are asked about sustainable.
- › The emotional positioning of the parties divides the party system into AfD supporters and supporters of all other parties. All supporters have a positive assessment of their own party. The AfD is associated with the terms fear, indignation, anger, and despair by supporters of all parties except, needless to say, the supporters of the AfD. With some differences in the details, supporters associate their own party with the words hope, security, trust, confidence, and satisfaction. The AfD also evokes these positive emotions in its supporters. AfD supporters associate all other parties with fear, indignation, anger, and despair.

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# Introduction

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Electoral research is one of the firm pillars of the German research landscape and expertise in it is widely dispersed. It includes academic research, commercial electoral research which is often financed by the media, electoral research as conducted by foundations, research that is initiated by parties (which is made available to the public more rarely), and supportive infrastructure like the Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences (GESIS) and the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES), which is funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). Thanks, above all, to the GLES, Germany has had access to a wide variety of data for analysing federal elections since 2009.

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has devoted special attention to electoral research since the 1970s. As a background to the data records of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's empirical studies, the GESIS writes: "The aim is to use scientific means to create the bases for political action and to detect future developments early on. [...] Situated at the intersection between politics and science, it will study developments that have repercussions on politics, the party system and political decision-making processes."<sup>1</sup>

Despite the long tradition and an established methodological approach, there are always new challenges. Election results have become so surprising in recent years, and almost decades, that even seasoned experts on the data will not go so far as to make predictions. Former certainties are crumbling, electoral behaviour is displaying erratic traits, and the timeless question of electoral research, "Who votes for whom, when and why", is not easy to answer. Who are the non-voters, why do they stay home? Why do voters change their votes? Who votes for the AfD? This is just a small selection from an endless array of questions that electoral research deals with.

One of the long-term findings of electoral sociology is that, at this point, social position or social structure can only be used to explain voting behaviour for a few (small) population groups in Germany.<sup>2</sup>

In general, it is assumed that social structure has a weak influence on voting decisions. In electoral research, the following finding applies: "More recent research thus does not deny that a person's position in the social structure influences their party preferences and voting behaviour. [...]" "It is argued now that each individual citizen develops certain political preferences from his or her everyday experience, which he or she then uses as selection criteria in deciding how to vote."<sup>3</sup>

This finding has already been known for a long time, even if it has not yet become firmly established knowledge everywhere. It is no contradiction that there are still clearly recognisable voting patterns in certain social groups. Older voters, for example, lean more towards the CDU and the SPD; an above-average number of younger, female voters, especially with a higher level of education, vote for the Greens. Among Catholics,<sup>4</sup> those who go to church regularly still have a high tendency to vote for the CDU/CSU. This vot-

ing behaviour is no longer found among all Catholics, however, and the proportion of Catholics who regularly go to church is declining.

Although the varying levels of support for the parties is relevant here, the behaviour is not determined, in part, by the social structure, but by attitudes and political preferences whose connection to social-structural position<sup>5</sup> is becoming weaker and weaker. In short, voting behaviour has become more personalised.

The challenges facing electoral research are not to be underestimated, since social change has substantially altered the personal decision-making and behavioural spectrum. The dynamics involved in voting decisions are immense and old certainties fragile. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct research on theoretical foundations also, to avoid making the mistake, by posing old questions, of failing to recognise new problems and overlooking decisive social developments.

Therefore, the question as to what other factors are important in voting decisions has been on the table for quite some time. The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung is studying the emotional factors involved. The explanatory model from Ann Arbor<sup>6</sup> (referred to as the Michigan model), which has been used frequently in electoral research up to now, consists of various levels: First, there are the areas that are upstream of party identification (like, for example, sociological and socio-structural factors). The latter have an influence on party identification (conceived as long-term attachment to a party) and on current decision-making variables like the assessment of current issues and candidates. The assessment of candidates and issues can then cause voting behaviour to deviate from the actual party identification.<sup>7</sup> However, regardless of which voting theory model is given preference, emotional variables beyond party identification are not part of the standard repertoire.<sup>8</sup>

There are also clear preferences in terms of methods. Of course, all possible methods (telephone, face-to-face, online) are used. For the most part, the aim is to collect representative data, which is regarded as "gold standard".<sup>9</sup> Many studies in electoral research work with quantitatively collected survey data. These surveys can be representative, but they do not necessarily have to be. However, they predominantly consist of questions that are to be answered using a predefined set of responses (closed-ended questions). Open-ended questions, which occasionally give respondents a (brief) opportunity to express themselves without specific instructions, are also included in the standardised interviews. Qualitative data does not allow us to measure the distribution of attitudes in the population, since it is not, in principle, representative. However, it provides us with insights into reasoning, the unconscious and emotional perceptions. Moreover, the individual's personal life situation can be taken into account far more broadly than is possible in the standard approach. In short, such surveys afford an intensive insight into respondents' mood.

Therefore, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has opted for a multi-stage approach and a combination of methodologies based on the interplay of a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods. In-depth psychological interviews<sup>10</sup> provide an insight into the world and the motives of voters. Respondents have time to deal with the questions and reflect on them calmly, which enables the researchers to gain insights into personal motivations.

In a second step, the results from qualitative studies are transferred to a standardised design and the scope of the findings and the interplay between them are tested in a representative survey. Data on a range of other variables – some of which are trending – is collected at the same time.

- 1 <https://www.gesis.org/wahlen/bundestagswahlen> [last accessed on 10 November 2020].
- 2 Matters are different in the United States. Cf <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/202073/1/1671412540.pdf> [last accessed 10 November 2020]; Paul R. Abramson, John H. Aldrich, Brad T. Gomez, David W. Rhode, 2016: *Change and Continuity in the 2012 and 2014 Elections*. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press. Race, religion, socio-economic status, age and gender have an influence on voting decisions in the United States.
- 3 Harald Schoen, 2014: Soziologische Ansätze in der empirischen Wahlforschung. In: Jürgen W. Falter, Harald Schoen (eds.), *Handbuch Wahlforschung*, Wiesbaden: Springer VS. P. 207 and 208. As recently remarked in an analysis on the AfD: Cf. Knut Bergmann, Matthias Diermeier, Judith Niehues, 2018: Ein komplexes Gebilde. Eine sozio-ökonomische Analyse des Ergebnisses der AfD bei der Bundestagswahl 2017. In: *ZParl Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen*, book 2, p. 243–264.
- 4 Viola Neu, 2020: *Religiosität und Wahlverhalten – Eine repräsentative Untersuchung, Analysen und Argumente* no. 408, Berlin: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.
- 5 Cf. Rainer Schnell, Ulrich Kohler, 1995: Empirische Untersuchung einer Individualisierungshypothese am Beispiel der Parteipräferenz von 1953–1992. In: *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, vol. 47, book 4, p. 634–657.
- 6 Cf. Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, Donald E. Stokes, 1960: *The American Voter*, New York: Springer.
- 7 For an overview of methods, findings and research gaps, see: Jürgen W. Falter, Harald Schoen (eds.), 2014: *Handbuch Wahlforschung*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- 8 Personality structures, conversely, are examined: Cf. Siegfried Schumann, 2014: *Persönlichkeit und Wahlverhalten*. In: Jürgen W. Falter, Harald Schoen (eds.), 2014: *Handbuch Wahlforschung*, Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- 9 Jochen Roose/Sabine Pokorny, 2020: *Die Eignung von Umfragemethoden. Methodische Einschätzung. Informationen und Recherchen*, Berlin: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.
- 10 The interviews were conducted as one-to-one interviews and in focus groups.



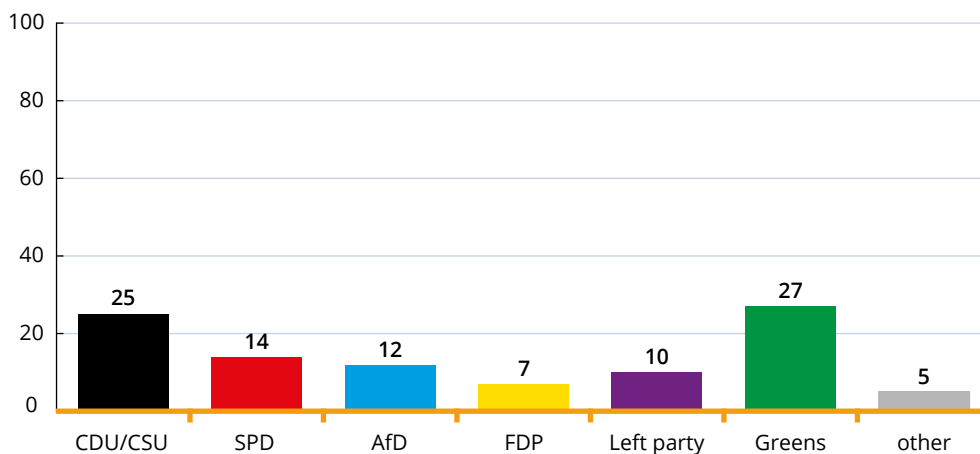


## Voter Potential

In a survey<sup>11</sup> that was completed in February 2020, i.e. before the Corona crisis, the CDU/CSU and the Greens had almost the same scores at 25 and 27 percent respectively. The Social Democrats obtained 14 percent, the AfD 12, the Left party 10 and the FDP 7. The climate of opinion has changed over the course of the pandemic. The CDU/CSU has considerably more support in the polls. All other parties have lost support (as of November 2020).

**Figure 1: Elections for the Bundestag Sunday Question**

Which party would you vote for, if elections for the Bundestag were being held next Sunday?



Source: Survey 2020-05 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Population: eligible voters in Germany; values in percent

However, merely assessing the results of the “Sunday question” is not sufficient to capture voter potential. In order to do so, we asked two questions: first, the traditional Sunday question, then the question as to whether one could imagine voting for another party. Those who mention the same party in their answers to both questions appear to have a more stable attachment than other eligible voters. However, this model is only a brief variant on potential measurements. Further questions have to be asked: like, for example, on the certainty of voting intentions. But even as a preliminary model, which surely overestimates the proportion of loyal party voters, it shows that the proportion of presumably stable voter groups tends to be low for all parties – except the AfD. In all other parties, the proportion fluctuates between 33 percent (in the case of the CDU/CSU) and 24 percent for the SPD. At 50 percent, the AfD has the highest proportion of respondents who can only imagine voting for the AfD.

In the case of the CDU/CSU,<sup>12</sup> 25 percent of those who answer "CDU/CSU" to the Sunday question could imagine voting for the Greens. Another 18 percent mention the FDP. All other parties are mentioned very infrequently as second choice. Just 1 percent mention the Left party, 4 percent the AfD and 9 percent the SPD.

There is also a strong inclination to vote for the Greens among SPD supporters: 39 percent can imagine doing so. Another 18 percent mention the CDU/CSU and 11 percent consider voting in favour of the Left party if in doubt.

In the case of the AfD, 23 percent can imagine voting for the CDU/CSU, 9 percent mention the FDP and 5 percent the Left party.

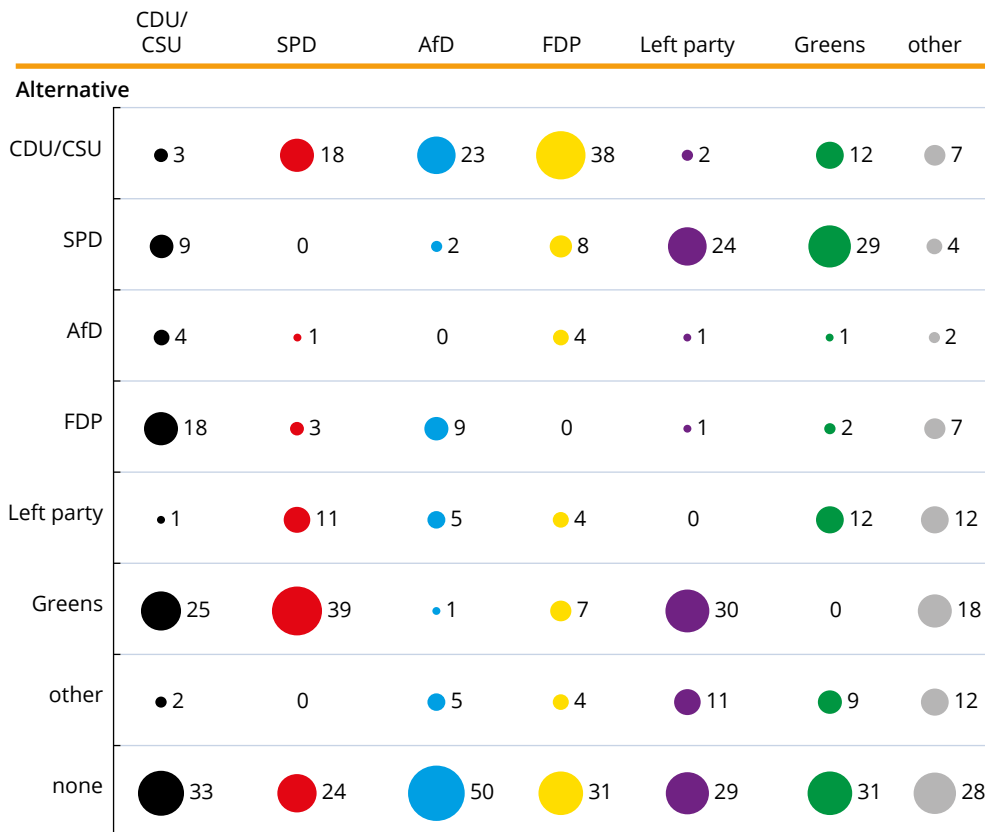
In the case of the FDP, the CDU/CSU is the second choice for 38 percent. All other parties are below 10 percent.

The proportion of Left party supporters who can imagine voting for the Greens is 30 percent. Another 24 percent have a preference for the SPD. For the most part, Left party voters are not willing to transfer to any of the other parties.

29 percent of Green party supporters can primarily imagine voting for the SPD. The CDU/CSU and the Left party are mentioned as alternatives (12 percent each). Voters from the Green camp are not prepared to transfer to the other parties.

**Figure 2: Elections for the Bundestag Sunday Question: Alternate Party**  
 And could you imagine possibly also voting for another party? If yes, which?

**Party Preference Sunday Question**



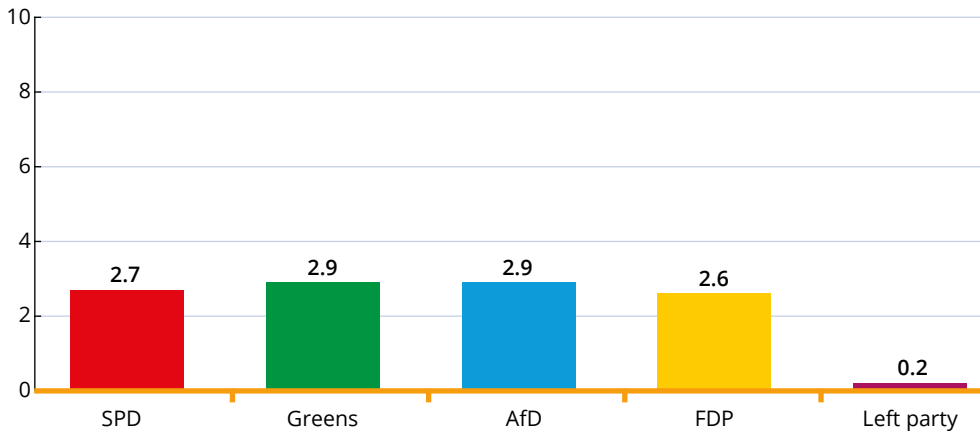
Source: Survey 2020-05 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Population: eligible voters in Germany; values in percent; figures missing to add up to 100 percent: do not know/no response

Tip on how to read the chart: Reading the column from top to bottom: 3 percent of CDU/CSU supporters can imagine also voting for the respective sister party. 9 percent respond that the SPD is an alternative for them; 4 percent say this about the AfD.

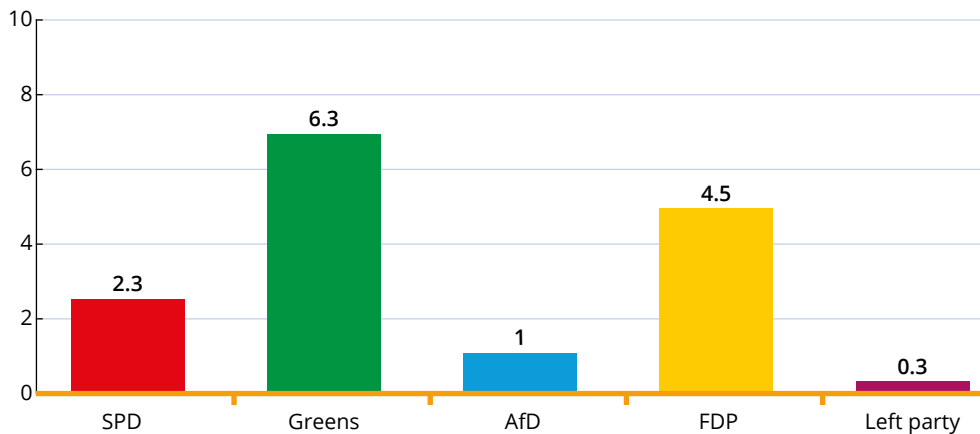
The question as to how these potential outcomes could affect a party's electoral results now has to be posed. We will take the CDU/CSU as an example. If the CDU/CSU could mobilise all voters for whom it is a second choice (which is not, of course, possible in reality), it could expect gains of almost 3 points from each of the other parties (except the Left party). The potential losses must be offset against these gains. If the CDU/CSU were to lose all voters who indicate a second choice, it would lose no less than 6 points to the Greens and 4.5 points to the FDP. It would lose 2 points to the SPD. Conversely, losses to the AfD (1 point) or the Left party (0.3 points) are not significant.

Figure 3: Potential Gains for the CDU/CSU



Source: Survey 2020-05 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Figure 4: Potential Losses for the CDU/CSU



Source: Survey 2020-05 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

- 11 3,250 telephone interviews were conducted in a survey by Infratest dimap from 9 October 2019 to 27 February 2020. Of the interviews, 40 percent were done via cell phone and 60 percent via landline (dual frame). The survey is representative for eligible voters in Germany.
- 12 The 3 percent who answer that they could vote for another Christian Democratic party in the case of the CDU/CSU are referring to the option of CDU or CSU. This possibility is logically excluded for the voters of all other parties, as CDU and CSU are considered together.

# 3

## The (Emotional) Associations of Political Terms

In the qualitative survey,<sup>13</sup> we presented respondents with a potpourri of political terms. They were asked to describe what they understand by the term, what they associate with it, what occurs to them. There were no instructions or follow-up questions. In addition, for some of the terms, respondents were asked to what extent they themselves could be described by the term. The terms are presented in word clouds, with frequently mentioned words written in large font. The findings presented here are not robust in the statistical sense, as they are drawn from qualitative interviews. Therefore, case numbers and percentages are not shown either.

Figure 5: conservative



Source: Survey 2019-12 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Conservative is most often associated with the CDU. Respondents who are not CDU voters associate the CDU with the term conservative particularly often. Apart from a few instances, the associations with the term tend to be negative. Conservative is felt to be something static. For the respondents, words like old-fashioned, outmoded, and holding on to something come to mind, as well as old men. On the contrary, for some responses, like preserve or traditional, it is not possible to determine whether they have a positive or negative meaning for the respondents.



Figure 6: civil



Source: Survey 2019-12 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Civil (opposed to noble or working class) is most often described using the terms middle class and conservative, but also by reference to *bürgerliche Küche*, middle-class cuisine. The SPD is the main party associated with the term.

Figure 7: innovative



Source: Survey 2019-12 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Innovative is not associated with any party. It is striking that the associations are almost exclusively positive: future, progress, modern, ideas or trying new things out.











Figure 14: tolerant



Source: Survey 2019-12 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

The meaning-related content of the term is not entirely clear, since it is most often associated with important. Only then do notions like accepting other opinions, live and let live or respect come to mind for the respondents. There is no party-political association.

Figure 15: centre



Source: Survey 2019-12 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

The term centre is particularly strongly associated with the CDU and the SPD. Berlin-Mitte (Berlin's central district) also appears to shape the term's image. In addition, there is an association with not right, not left and balanced.

Figure 16: Christian



Source: Survey 2019-12 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

The term Christian very strongly evokes three content-related meanings: CDU, church and values. The other associations also have religious connotations: like, for example, altruism, religion, Protestant and Catholic.

Figure 17: liberal



Source: Survey 2019-12 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Liberal is the term that is particularly strongly marked by the association with a party. Although the FDP is clearly associated with the word, at the same time, many respondents do not know what to make of the term. The term is most likely to be associated with freedom (free), tolerance and centre.



Figure 18: compromise



Source: Survey 2019-12 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Compromise is not associated with any party, rather it is related to the political arena, since coalitions are associated with compromise. Compromise is felt to be important and is described by reaching out to others and coming to an agreement.

Figure 19: right-wing



Source: Survey 2019-12 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

The term right-wing operates within a range of meanings that are almost exclusively negative. In terms of party politics, it is primarily associated with the Afd and the NPD. The FDP and CDU are mentioned only very rarely. Right-wing is declared to be dangerous, extreme, radical, and negative. The terms Nazi and fascism also occur to respon-

dents. A minor ancillary meaning is found in the association with conservative values, although there are no findings that indicate whether this is meant in a positive or negative context.

Figure 20: left-wing



Source: Survey 2019-12 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

The group of content-related meanings of left-wing is considerably more ambivalent than that of right-wing, but here too, there is an association with negative terms like radical, communist, antifa or Baader-Meinhof (the Red Army Faction – RAF). Terms like tolerance, openness and equality are additionally mentioned. Above all, the Left party – not surprisingly, given the party’s name – is associated with left-wing. The Greens are also mentioned, but far more rarely. The SPD hardly occurs to any respondents in connection with the term left-wing.







## The Emotions Provoked by Parties

We examined the emotions that are provoked in eligible voters by parties for the first time at the beginning of 2018.<sup>14</sup> A simple, but clear pattern emerged: To varying degrees, the party for which people intend to vote provokes positive feelings. Vis-à-vis all other parties, the emotional position remains diffuse: i.e. parties beyond one's own voting intentions have only weak emotional positioning. There is one exception to this: the supporters of the AfD. Their assessment of all parties other than the AfD is distinctly negative. Whereas the AfD is associated with negative feelings by all other voters, it provokes the same feelings among its own supporters as the other parties do among their supporters.

We were interested in whether these emotional assessments of the parties are stable. Therefore, at the end of 2018,<sup>15</sup> we asked the question again. Using a slightly abridged response scale, the emotional position and the associated patterns remain largely stable.

Among all eligible voters, all parties except the AfD provoke positive feelings, even if the level is very low. The AfD provokes intensely negative feelings. Among all eligible voters, the party is associated with the feelings of fear, indignation, anger and despair.

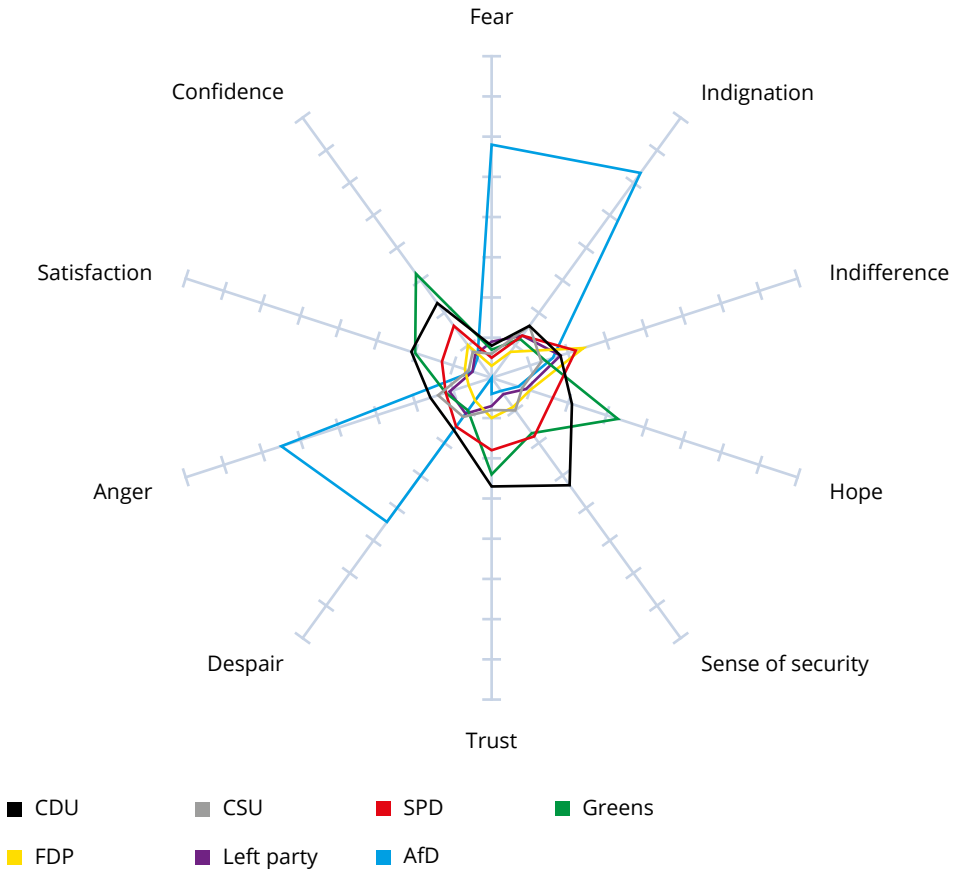
CDU supporters feel confidence, satisfaction, trust, hope and a sense of security.<sup>16</sup> The AfD provokes anger, despair, fear and indignation among CDU/CSU supporters. All other parties provoke only weak emotional reactions. This pattern is repeated for the supporters of each of the other parties, even if at different levels. An above-average number of CDU/CSU, SPD and Green party supporters experience positive feelings; supporters of the Left party and the FDP mention positive feelings more rarely. Like the CDU/CSU among its supporters, the Greens provoke positive feelings among eligible voters that support them; only the sense of security appears less often. This pattern breaks down among AfD supporters. They consistently experience positive feelings vis-à-vis the AfD: roughly on a comparable level to supporters of the FDP and the Left party. However, while all other supporters display little emotion vis-à-vis other parties, the other parties produce intensely negative feelings among AfD supporters. Above all, the CDU and the Greens provoke fear, indignation, anger and despair. In percentage terms, the negative feelings among supporters are at about the same level as the positive feelings.

Some small particularities that merit a brief mention remain. Hope and confidence, as well as trust, are felt among SPD supporters – even if at a lower level – vis-à-vis the Greens; the CDU also provokes a sense of security. The CDU/CSU also elicits a sense of security among supporters of the Greens. Supporters of the Left party also experience a sense of confidence and hope vis-à-vis the Greens. The CDU also provokes a sense of security among FDP supporters.



**Figure 24: Feelings Provoked by Parties**

*The party provokes ... in me:*



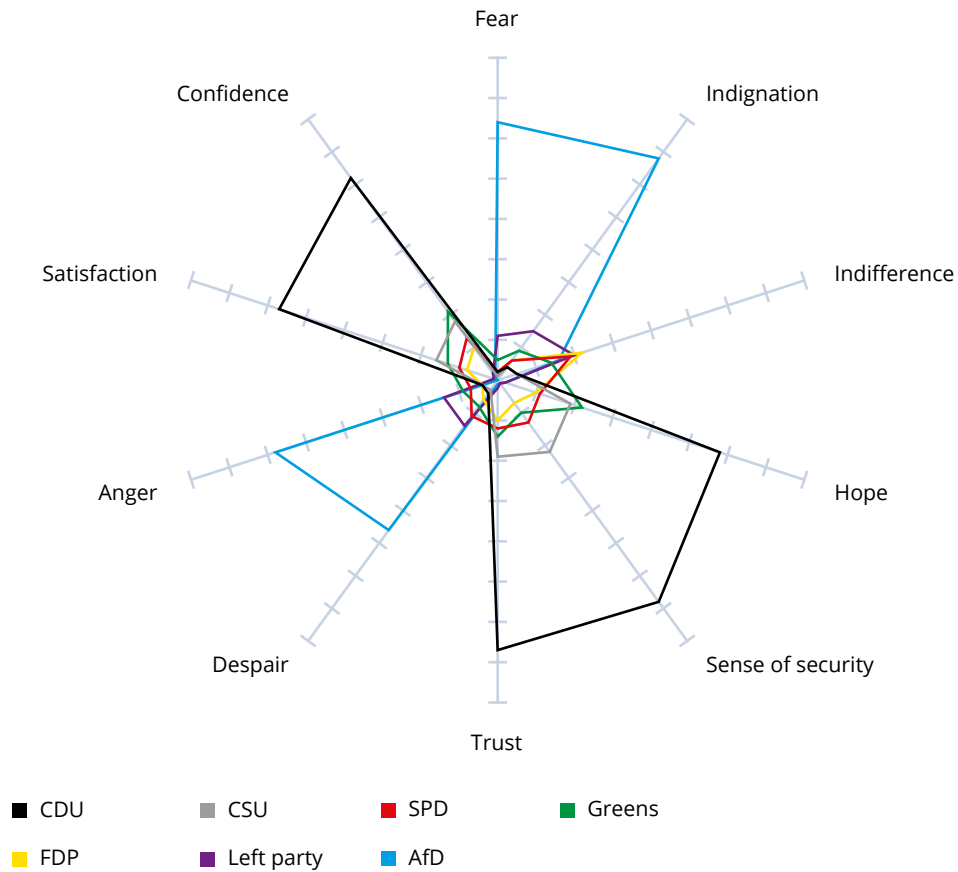
Source: Survey 2018-01 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Values in percent; multiple answers possible; not included: no party, do not know, no response



Figure 25: Feelings Provoked by Parties, CDU/CSU voters

The party provokes ... in me:

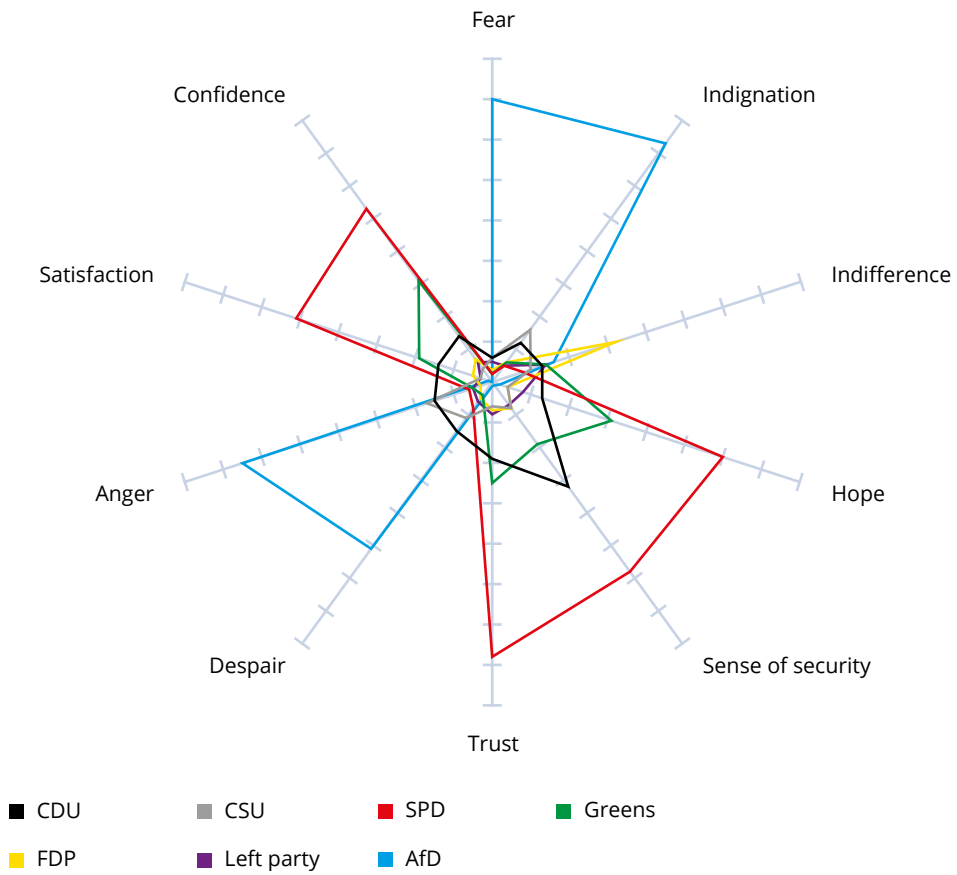


Source: Survey 2018-01 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Values in percent; multiple answers possible; not included: no party, do not know, no response

**Figure 26: Feelings Provoked by Parties, SPD voters**

*The party provokes ... in me:*



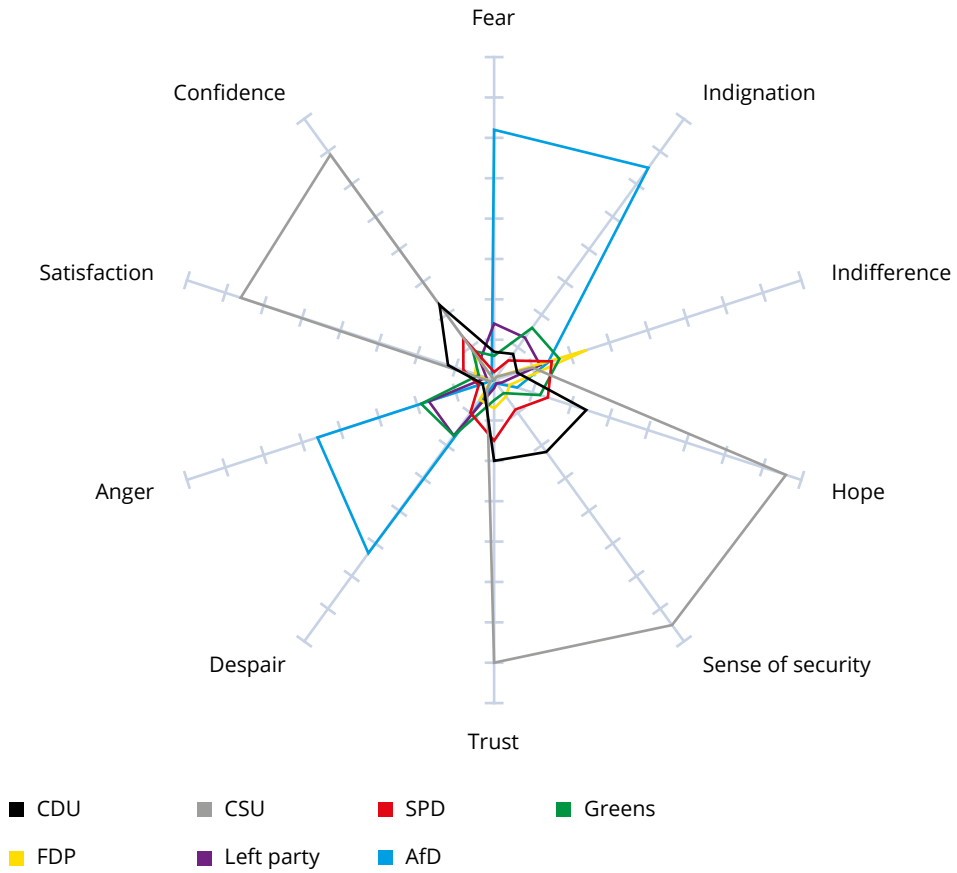
Source: Survey 2018-01 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Values in percent; multiple answers possible; not included: no party, do not know, no response



Figure 27: Feelings Provoked by Parties, CSU voters

The party provokes ... in me:

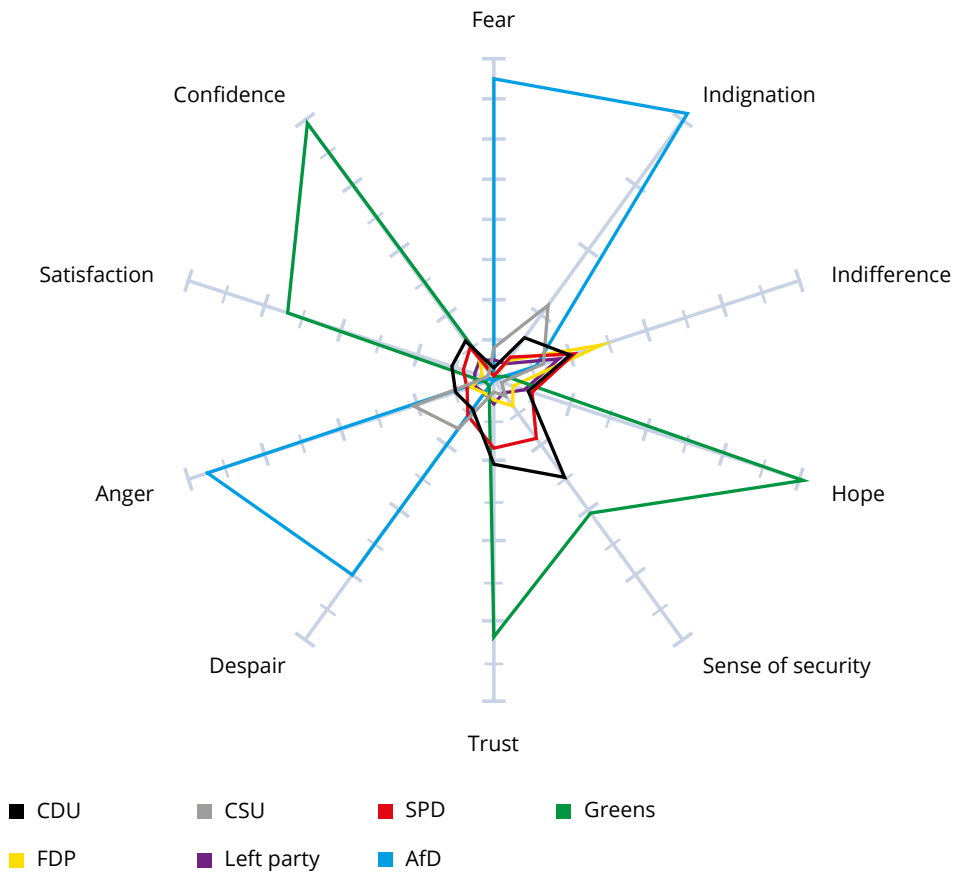


Source: Survey 2018-01 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Values in percent; multiple answers possible; not included: no party, do not know, no response

**Figure 28: Feelings Provoked by Parties, Green voters**

*The party provokes ... in me:*



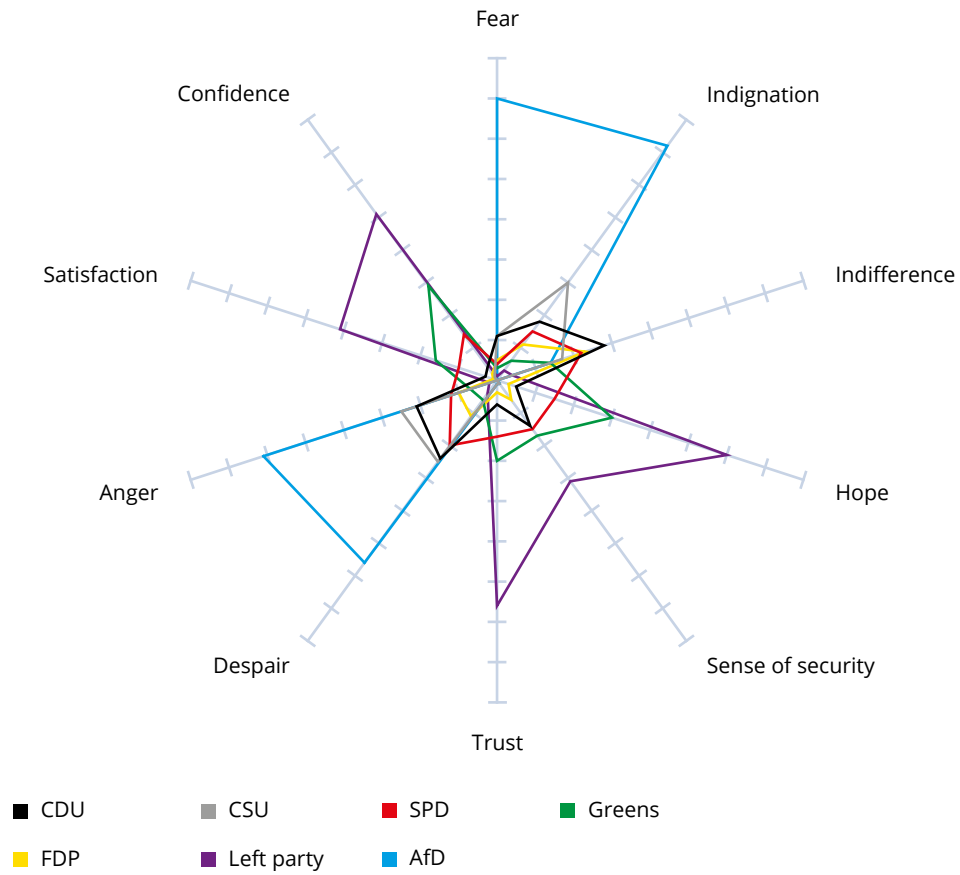
Source: Survey 2018-01 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Values in percent; multiple answers possible; not included: no party, do not know, no response



Figure 29: Feelings Provoked by Parties, Left party voters

The party provokes ... in me:

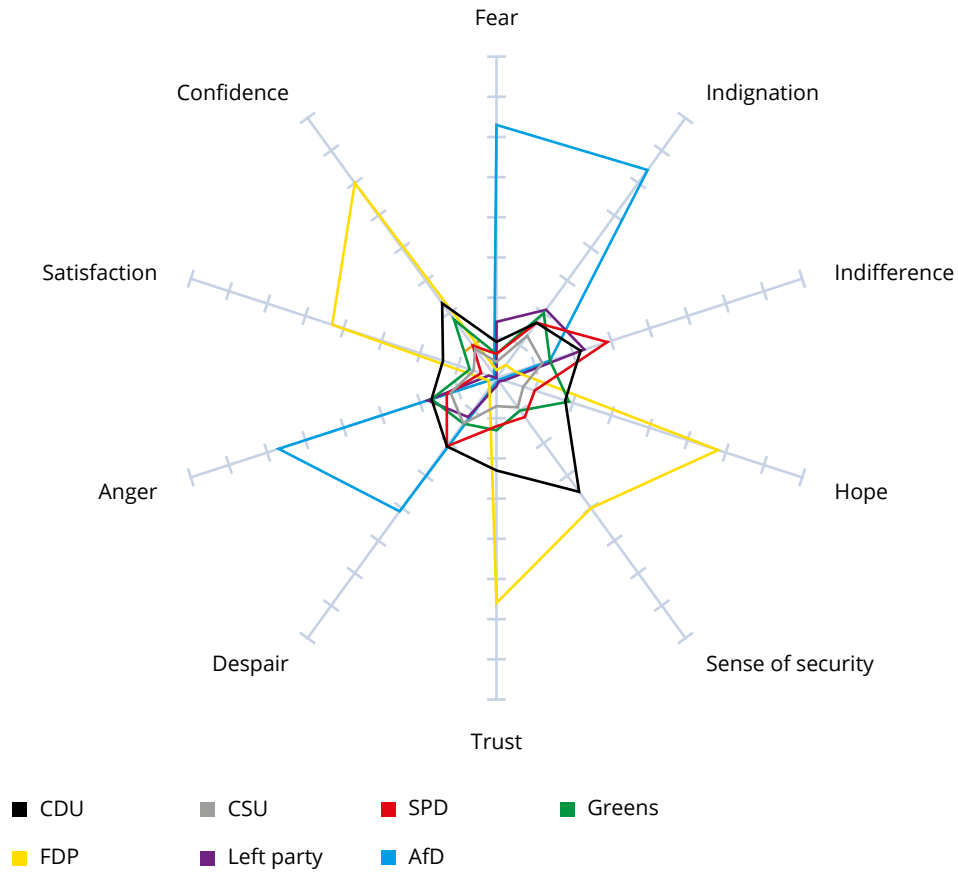


Source: Survey 2018-01 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Values in percent; multiple answers possible; not included: no party, do not know, no response

**Figure 30: Feelings Provoked by Parties, FDP voters**

*The party provokes ... in me:*



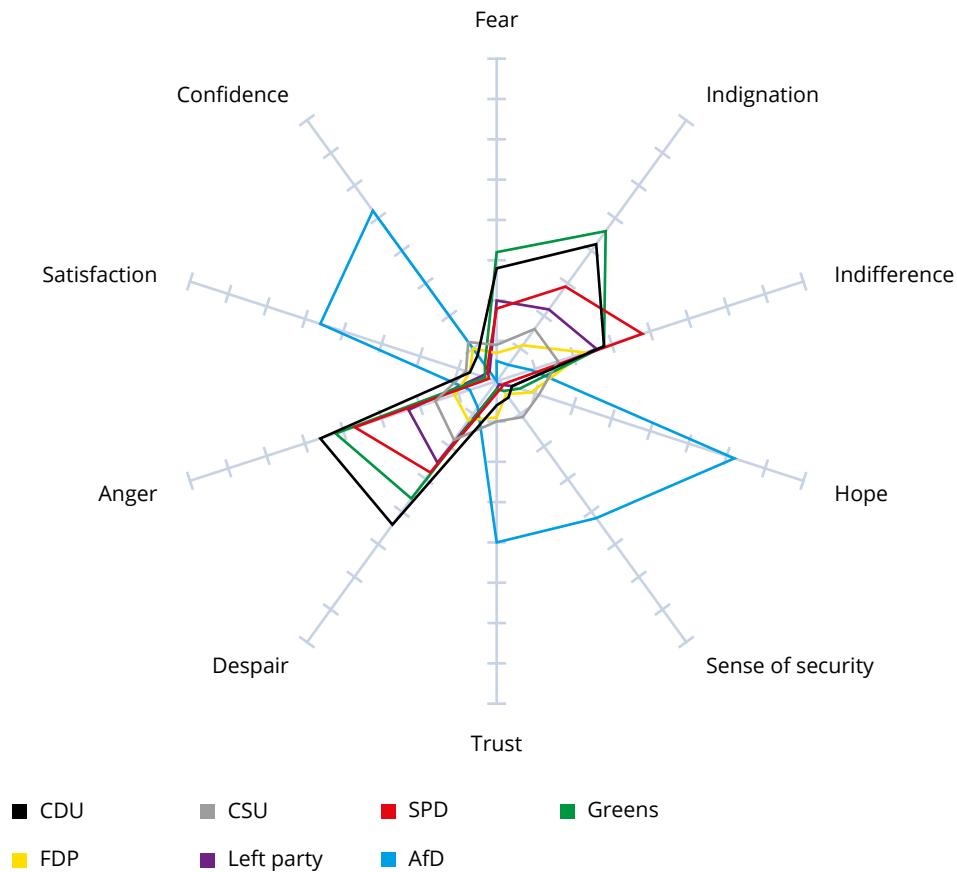
Source: Survey 2018-01 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Values in percent; multiple answers possible; not included: no party, do not know, no response



Figure 31: Feelings Provoked by Parties, AfD voters

The party provokes ... in me:



Source: Survey 2018-01 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Values in percent; multiple answers possible; not included: no party, do not know, no response

14 Cf. Sabine Pokorny, 2018: Von A wie Angst bis Z wie Zukunft, Analysen und Argumente no. 302, p. 6 ff. St. Augustin/Berlin: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

15 5,585 telephone interviews with German-speaking eligible voters resident in Germany were conducted by KANTAR EMNID from 26 September 2018 to 17 December 2018. Using the dual-frame approach, 20 percent of the interviews were conducted as cell phone interviews. The data is representative for the German population that is eligible to vote.

16 In the comparative studies, instead of "sense of security", simply "security" was queried.



# 5

## Emotion and Voting Decisions

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Electoral research explains voting behaviour on the basis of interests that have been formed, for example, by way of the person's own social position. Assessments of parties' or politicians' expertise are the "rational" aspects of voting decisions; party identification is an upstream emotional attachment to parties.

The question of other emotional relationships to parties has received considerably less attention. Representative surveys and open-ended in-depth interviews show stable emotional patterns among eligible voters. Parties are evaluated in the electorate using associative and emotional assessments. This does not, as yet, show whether and to what extent these emotions affect voting decisions. However, ignoring the emotional side of voting decisions – ignoring the voter's heart – would be a fatal mistake.

# Methodological Remarks

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Surveys are conducted by polling institutes on behalf of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. The questionnaire is created by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung evaluates the raw data using statistical programmes and compiles the analyses. Only minor weightings are carried out, in which over- and under-representation is offset. No "political weighting" of the data takes place. Consequently, deviations from results published by polling institutes themselves may occur. There are also substantial differences in study design, since the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung frequently conducts surveys over a longer period of time and therefore reaches far higher numbers of respondents than is the case in many other surveys.

The data collected in qualitative studies is not representative in the statistical sense. These studies provide data that cannot be collected in quantitative studies, insofar as qualitative methods reveal the reasoning behind attitudes and emotional relationships. This data is therefore robust from a content viewpoint.

## Appendix: Parties in Germany

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CDU/CSU	Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union	center-right
SPD	Social Democratic Party Germany	center-left
Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen (Grüne)	Federation 90/The Greens	center-left
FDP	Liberal Democratic Party	center-right
Die Linke	The Left	far-left
AfD	Alternative for Germany	far-right

# The Author

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This study examines the question of voters' emotional relationships to parties using new approaches. Stable emotional patterns can be found among eligible voters using a combination of methods consisting of representative surveys and open-ended in-depth interviews. Parties are evaluated in the electorate on the basis of associative and emotional assessments. It is therefore worthwhile to study the emotional side of voting decisions: the voter's heart.