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***Violence and Radicalism – State of Research and  
Prevention Perspectives***

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# **Violence and Radicalism – State of Research and Prevention Perspectives<sup>1</sup>**

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## **1. Introduction**

Violence and radicalism are current topics and “evergreens” in the media. According to a nationwide representative survey conducted in 2017, 71% of the German population report fear of terrorism and 62% fear of political extremism.<sup>2</sup> These two fears are currently at the top of the hit list of Germans’ fears.

At the same time, violence and radicalism cover a broad spectrum of behaviours; at least under the term of radicalism, specific patterns of attitudes have to be subsumed, which further expands the spectrum of phenomena to be considered here. The similarity between all these phenomena is that they can be understood as the possible end of a process of radicalisation. Both the use of violence and various forms of radicalism are the result of radicalisation. In this respect, to a certain extent, these are equivalents that can be considered together in this report, although an emphasis should be placed on the subject of extremism.

According to the Latin word stem, radicalism means that specific ideas are “thought through”, “to the roots”. These can be various ideas; against the background of the current situation in German-speaking countries, this report does not analyse all possible forms of extremist radicalism, but only ideological-political forms of radicalism. For them, the concept of political extremism is an appropriate concept. Political extremism is an actual form of radicalism.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ruv.de/presse/aengste-der-deutschen>.

In the following, various political extremisms will be considered; that is, not only Islamic extremism (also called jihadism or Salafism<sup>3</sup>) is analysed, but also right-wing extremism and left-wing extremism as currently relevant forms of political extremism.

The aim of this report is to assess the current situation and current trends on an empirical basis. For this reason, various statistics are presented in a comprehensive form. This includes data from the police crime statistics as well as from survey studies, for which various analyses are presented. Based on these data, it is possible to detect real trends, which are usually less dramatic than generally assumed; especially on the topics of violence and radicalisation, dramatisation is of little help. On the other hand, these analyses allow some guidelines or challenges for future prevention work to be identified.

Although violence and radicalism are particularly popular among young people and adolescents, this report does not concentrate solely on these age groups. This would hinder to adequately take into account the role of other age groups. The aim of this report is to look at the German-speaking region, with the empirical analyses focusing in particular on results from Germany.

## 2. Concepts, models and influencing factors

### 2.1. *Concepts and models*

Violence can be understood as the intentional use of physical or mechanical force by people, which is directed directly or indirectly against other people (cf. Böttger 1998). In the literature, the concept of violence also covers verbally or relationally harmful behaviour, for which, however, the concept of aggression seems more appropriate.<sup>4</sup> In the following, the entire range of negative, potentially damaging, aggressive behaviour is not considered. Instead a focus is placed on physical violence, i.e. according to the classification of Buss (1961) on direct-physical, aggressive behaviour (assaults such as punches, kicks, attacks with weapons), since empirical data are available in particular for this form of violence and because this behaviour influences the feelings, thoughts and actions of the population to a high degree.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> With regard to the concept of Salafism, it should be noted that a distinction must be made between different forms of Salafism, which do not all equally approve the use of violence (cf. Armborst/Attia 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Relational aggression means that a person's social integration is deliberately manipulated, that a person is excluded, ignored, etc. (cf. Ittel et al. 2008).

<sup>5</sup> In this respect, the area of structural violence is not considered here either, including "discrimination, the unequal distribution of income and resources and limited life opportunities due to poverty, natural disasters and environmental pollution" (Kailitz 2007, p. 134).

In contrast to the concept of physical violence, the understanding of the concept of radicalism differs widely. Usually the term radicalism is not used here, but the term radicalisation. This is also a controversial term, used in various ways (e.g. Malthaner 2017). There is agreement in that radicalisation is a process that leads people or groups to radicalise themselves in terms of their beliefs or behaviour. Although the term radicalisation can refer to the collective level and describes here how groups, organisations, parties etc. change (e.g. Della Porta 1995), this report concentrates on the individual level, whereby it should not be ignored that “individual trajectories are linked to social contexts” (Malthaner 2017, p. 377) and therefore individual radicalisation is related in some way to collective radicalisation. With Khosrokhavar (2014), radicalisation can then be defined as a process that leads individuals to use violence to put through extremist ideas. However, it is also important to consider ideological radicalisation, i.e. the adoption of extremist attitudes, which can also be seen as precursors or triggers of extreme violence.

The focus of this report on the individual level can be explained by the “specificity problem” (Pisoiu 2013, p. 48): Macro and meso approaches cannot explain “that not all individuals affected by radicalisation factors actually become radicalised or violent. Moreover, not all radicalised individuals are affected by these structural causes and processes.

Alava et al. (2017) also point to the different use of the term radicalisation, which is partly used synonymously with terms such as fundamentalism, jihadism, extremism or terrorism. In accordance with the definition of the European Union or the United Nations<sup>6</sup>, radicalisation can be defined in the following way: “the term [...] is referred to as a process that leads to extremism and possibly terrorism”. This definition makes an important distinction: between radicalism and extremism. Radicalism cannot generally be classified as problematic, but can also lead to innovation and thus to social progress, which Moscovici (1976) already pointed out; ecological or feminist movements are examples of innovative radicalism: “While extremists use violence to change society, radicals do not necessarily do so, although their goal is the upheaval of prevailing conditions, too” (Aslan et al. 2018, p. 18).

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. e.g. [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/crisis-and-terrorism/radicalisation\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/crisis-and-terrorism/radicalisation_en)

Therefore, the definition of Beelmann et al. (2017, p. 441) should be used here, according to that radicalisation is a process “that lead to an extremist attitude that deviates significantly from applicable legal norms and is oriented towards a violent change in existing social and state conditions”; or as Neumann (2013, p. 874) puts it even more succinctly: “the process whereby people become extremists”.

Instead of radicalism, phenomena of extremism (and processes leading to extremism) are therefore examined in the following. In accordance with the current social relevance, the focus will be on forms of political extremism. Political extremism is characterized by the fact that it rejects the democratic constitutional state and wants to eliminate or restrict its “constitutional component (separation of powers, protection of fundamental rights) on the one hand, and its democratic component (popular sovereignty, human fundamental equality) on the other” (Goertz/Goertz-Neumann 2018, p. 11). The various extremisms therefore have some things in common: they are directed against the constitution of a country; they are anti-democratic, anti-pluralistic and authoritarian; they are intolerant, not interested in compromises, show a black and white thinking; they reject current law; they seek all means as justified in order to achieve their goals (see also Schmid 2011, p. 630). Eser Davolio and Lenzo (2017, p. 12) also highlight the similarities between various forms of political extremisms: These include black and white thinking, friend and foe schemes, the claim to truth, camaraderie, hostility towards democracy, hostility towards media and anti-Semitism. The opponent of political extremism is the democratic constitutional state, which is characterised by: “Possibility of voting out, control of powers, fundamental rights, principle of individuality, pluralism, rule of law and sovereignty of the people” (Pfahl-Traughber 2017, p. 47). Besides the advocacy of violence, the attitude towards democracy is a characteristic in which radicals and extremists clearly differ: “while radicals might be violent or not, might be democrats or not, extremists are never democrats” (Schmid 2013, p. 10).

In summary, political extremism can be defined as follows: Political extremism includes attitudes and behaviours which are characterised by a rejection of the democratic constitutional state, its basic values and procedural rules and which aim to overcome it by means of violence (cf. Baier et al. 2016). Following Beelmann (2017, p. 9ff), extremism comprises four core elements: 1. pronounced prejudice structures (in right-wing extremism, e.g. ethnocentrism); 2. perceptions of injustices and disadvantages; 3. a clear attitude against democracy and

human rights; 4. an affinity for violence or a readiness to use violence and/or (politically motivated) acts of violence. There are currently at least three forms of political extremism<sup>7</sup>:

- *Islamic extremism*: The aim is “to change the political system and social and cultural life on the basis of an extremist interpretation of Islam and to recognise only this own interpretation of the Koran” (Goertz/Goertz-Neumann 2018, p. 17). The fact that Islamic extremism is a political extremism can be justified with reference to its political goals, which include, among other things: Liberation of Islamic states from “godless” governments, expulsion of Western occupying powers, pushing back the cultural influence of the West, establishment of an Islamic state (Ceylan/Kiefer 2018, p. 45).
- There are various definitions of *right-wing extremism*. It can be considered for right-wing extremism that it negates the principle of equality of all people and that xenophobia and nationalism are essential core elements. Goertz and Goertz-Neumann (2018, p. 93) name further elements such as racism, anti-Semitism, authoritarianism and antipluralism (which, however, ultimately characterises all extremisms).
- *Left-wing extremism* is the orientation that aims at “a socialist or communist society or a society free from power” (Goertz/Goertz-Neumann 2018, p. 164). Other ideological elements include anti-fascism and anti-gentrification (ibid., p. 168ff). In his survey of left-wing youths, van Hüllen also emphasizes that the “fight against the right” is of particular relevance and that a “surprisingly high degree of readiness [exists] to take violent action against this [...] group” (p. 111).

Ultimately, specific ideological goals characterise the individual forms of extremism in addition to the aforementioned unifying elements of the various extremisms (hostility towards democracy, advocacy of violence, friend/foe thinking, etc.). Baier and Manzoni (2017) presented their own concept and developed instruments to measure the various extremisms in standardised surveys. The ideological goals of right-wing extremism are therefore dictatorship advocacy, social Darwinism, racism, xenophobia, hostility towards Muslims and anti-Semitism. Left-wing extremism is characterised by communism,

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<sup>7</sup> Besides these forms of extremism, other extremist groups also exist, for example the Scientology Organization, the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) or the so-called Reich Citizens/Self-administrators (see below). These forms of extremism are summarised under the umbrella term “politically motivated crime” (see below).

a no-border orientation, hostility towards capitalism and hostility towards the police and the state. Islamic extremism is about these goals: Introduction of theocracy and Sharia, superiority of Islam, hostility towards the West, hostility towards non-traditional Muslims, hostility towards the autochthonous population.

An important characteristic of political extremism is that both behaviour and attitudes must be taken into account. Up to now, research on attitudes dominates extremism research. However, there are also various studies that analyse extremist perpetrators. All in all, extremist attitudes and behaviours are examined largely independently of each other. If extremist-motivated violence is exercised, then this is also referred to as terrorism (see also Armbrorst 2017 for a discussion of the term). Terrorism involves violence against persons or property in order to achieve political, religious or ideological goals.

In connection with the concept of radicalisation, attention is also being paid to the concept of deradicalisation. Here, a distinction between deradicalisation and disengagement has to be made: “Deradicalisation describes a reversal of the cognitive radicalisation process, usually surrendering the extremist ideology. Disengagement, on the other hand, means giving up violent or terrorist action, while maintaining the corresponding ideology” (Illgner 2017, p. 17). This definition also reflects the distinction between attitudes and behaviors.

The process of radicalisation, i.e. the process of becoming an extremist, has been tried on several occasions to summarise in a conceptual model. The now numerous models of radicalisation cannot be discussed in detail here (cf., among others, Ceylan/Kiefer 2018, p. 49ff). Ferguson et al. (2008) have identified various factors that contribute to the radicalisation of individuals, in particular the connection to violent groups. These include, for example, the ex-istence of grievances and perceived injustices, which are addressed by social subgroups. These grievances can relate not only to the collective level (e.g. discrimination and oppression of certain groups), but also to the individual level (injustices and victimisation experiences affecting a person himself; cf. McCauley/Moskalenko 2008). The importance of “grievances” is also emphasized by Borum’s four-level model (2011a). This model tries to reflect the changes that lead to terrorist thinking. The starting point is that a situation or an event is classified as “not right” (the grievance). In the following step, this grievance is considered “not fair”. The third step involves attributing responsibility for this injustice (to individuals, groups, states). Finally, the responsible person is

devalued or demonized, which justifies the use of violence against it. Similar models come for example from Moghaddam (2005) or Wiktorowicz (2005). The study by Schils and Verhage (2017) also confirms that perceived grievances are important for extremist radicalisation: “feelings of general discontent and perceived injustice bring people to search for alternatives” (p. 15).

In general, as with other phenomena, it can be assumed that radicalisation is caused by multiple factors. “Causal factors often include broad grievances that ,push‘ individuals toward a radical ideology and narrower, more specific ,pull‘ factors attract them” (Borum 2011 a, p. 57). Precht (2007) distinguishes between three different areas in which factors for radicalisation can be identified:

- the background factors: these include, for example, identity crises or personal traumas;
- the triggering factors: these can be specific political events;
- the opportunity factors: these include certain environmental factors, e.g. places where meetings can take place. With regard to the process of Islamic radicalisation, Neumann and Rogers (2008) mention mosques or Islamic bookstores on the one hand, and prisons and refugee shelters (i.e. places where vulnerable people can be found disproportionately often) on the other as important opportunity structures. These could also be named for left-wing extremism or right-wing extremism (e.g. scene meetings).

Malthaner (2017) summarises the process of radicalisation as follows: These are “individual pathways of ‘becoming an extremist’” (p. 392), “triggered by a personal crisis, facilitated by (pre-existing) personal ties, and driven by dynamics within small groups of friends” (p. 382).

Leuschner et al. (2017) use six theses to formulate a model for describing the process of radicalisation, in particular identifying the similarities between terrorist attacks and school shootings. Their first thesis is: “Personal insults and crises (personal grievances) are the starting point of the development” (p. 59). These insults and crises lead to a “searching and probing attitude with regard to new concepts of life and patterns of interpretation” (p.61); this is accompanied by an opening for extremist ideologies. If the “self-concept is interpreted in the light of ideology,” a “redefinition of the self-concept” and an “intensification of radicalisation” (p. 64) arise.



Matt (2017) also sketches a model of development paths into extremism. The entry takes place accordingly via relations to persons, who are already active, or via the Internet. This entry is motivated by dissatisfaction with one's own situation. In the relationships with active people or on the basis of Internet activities, a feeling of belonging and thus a distinction between ingroup and outgroup arises. The next step is a gradual detachment from previous life, attitudes, relationships and habits. In this way, a new, significant identity is built. The group process, through which affiliation is established, is considered central in this concept.

The Transformative Learning Theory (Wilner/Dubouloz 2010) assumes that personal crises are the starting point for radicalisation. If these crises cannot be overcome with the existing options (so-called meaning schemes), new patterns are sought that create identity. This is connected with an openness also for extremist interpretations and offers. Crises and experiences of failure are also cited by Steffen (2015) as the cause of radicalisation. Zick (2017, p. 23) formulates similarly: "The process of radicalisation can start with experiences, such as individual experiences of disregard and disintegration, which lead to an attachment to other people who have had similar experiences and with whom social motives can be more easily fulfilled. Proximity increases the likelihood of accepting messages that contain beliefs. This bind to or this formation of extremist groups help to develop new identities. In this course, radical structures and interaction systems are successively formed, which, independent of all individual experiences and motives, shape the subjects" (Zick 2017, p. 23).

A challenge for all models is that attitudes and behaviors do not necessarily match. In other words, there are people who advocate violent or extremist attitudes but do not act accordingly; and there are people who behave violently and extremist but this behavior is not caused by corresponding attitudes (e.g. Borum 2011). Various authors therefore propose to distinguish the process of radicalisation from attitudes from the process of radicalisation of behavior (e.g. McCauley/Moskalenko 2014). Aslan et al. (2018, p. 19) speak of "cognitive and violent radicalisation".

It is also particularly important that radicalisation does not have to be based solely on crises and perceived grievances. People who already have a criminal past, which is based among other things on socialisation deficits, also often turn to extremism because they can live out their need for risk and violence here. It can be observed, for example, that about two thirds of the people who left Germany for Syria or Iraq were already criminally suspicious before this radicalisation step

(Bundeskriminalamt 2016). With regard to right-wing extremists and left-wing extremists, Eilers et al. (2015) confirm that there is often a criminal history. As far as right-wing extremism is concerned, the results of Willems et al. (1993) already indicate that criminal young people are more likely to join right-wing extremism.

The analysis of delinquent Islamist activists also confirms that there are several ways of radicalisation (Srowig et al. 2017). Although this analysis points out that personal crises are important in the sense of illness or loss of a close person. At the same time, general delinquency-increasing factors are identified, e.g. experiences of violence in the family as well as alcohol and drug consumption.

The explanations of the different models of radicalisation can be summarised graphically in Figure 1. Two paths of radicalisation are distinguished. The first path refers to the fact that micro- and meso-social background factors lead to a criminogenic socialisation. This path more or less represents a delinquent career based on specific personality traits (e.g. low self-control and empathy, deficits in information processing, low education) and family, school or neighbourhood conditions (e.g. negative parenting style, school failure, low social cohesion in the neighbourhood). The result of a criminogenic socialisation is a lack of norm internalisation; there is an identity that contains delinquency and also a willingness to engage in the field of political extremism.

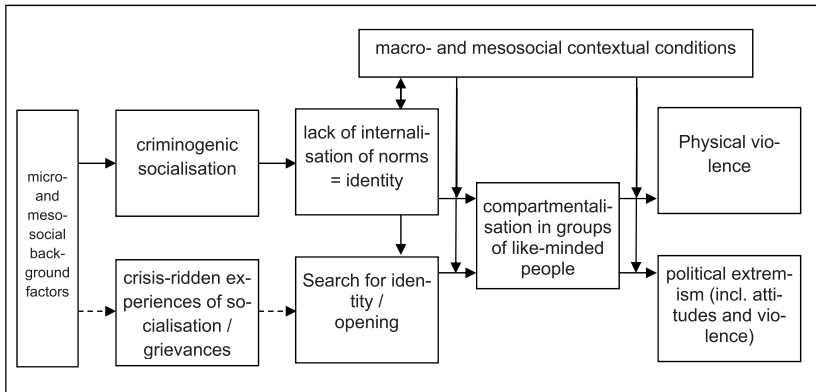
The second path (dotted arrows) is not based on deficit socialisation, although it cannot be ruled out that socialisation experiences are important for how crisis situations are dealt with. The starting point of this path are crisis-like experiences that can refer to the personal level (e.g. illness, separation/death of a parent, experience of disadvantage) or to the social level (especially perception of social grievances). This crisis situation triggers an identity crisis, the search for a new orientation, for meaning. An identity-related opening for new things is taking place.

As Figure 1 shows, macro- and mesosocial context conditions are important for the phases of identity formation (path 1) and identity search (path 2). Various factors must be considered as contextual conditions: the existence and actuality of ideologies or religious ideas; the availability of behavioural role models; the presence of specific opportunities (e.g. offers of extremist groups in the place of residence); the presence of actors who support norm conformity (e.g. parents,

teachers, prevention actors). The macro- and mesosocial context conditions have a moderating effect on further trajectories; this makes it difficult to explain or forecast individual developments: even if criminogenic socialisation or experiences of crisis exist, there is no linear path to violence and extremism. It is important how these experiences interact with environmental factors.

If the environment provides the conditions for this, then it often becomes apparent that the further path towards violence and extremism leads through groups of like-minded people. These groups lead to an isolation from the outside world; own norm and value systems are established, which suggest specific attitudes and behaviours. Similarly, segregation in like-minded groups does not mean that physical or extremist violence is necessarily shown. Here, too, contextual conditions are conducive or hindering – as in general the exercise of violence does not always have to be at the end of the radicalisation process. For instance, the execution of an act of violence can be prevented by security authorities or simply by bystanders.

Figure 1: Model of radicalisation (own representation)



The model of radicalisation shown in Figure 1 can be classified as an attempt to structure the current state of knowledge on the subject of radicalisation. It does not claim to depict all existing ways of radicalisation. At the same time, it tries to see violence and extremism as the result of two possible paths of development and thus to point to similarities in the processes of development of the different phenomena. These two development paths represent ideal types; there are many possible overlaps between these paths. For instance, the search for identity can also be important for the path of criminogenic socialisation.

## 2.2. Background factors and contextual conditions

Findings from empirical studies are available for the various background factors and context conditions influencing radicalisation listed in Figure 1.<sup>8</sup> In this section, selected research findings on this topic will be presented.

Beelmann et al. (2017) criticise with reference to the state of knowledge on influencing factors of radicalisation that so far no development-oriented perspective can be determined. As with the explanation of violent behaviour, efforts should be made to identify general psychosocial development conditions, since only on this basis effective prevention and intervention measures can be developed. Beelmann et al. (2017) proposes an explanatory model that distinguishes societal from social and individual risk factors. Comparably, Frindte et al. (2016) distinguish predictors that refer to the perception of macrosocial, mesosocial and microsocial conditions. Other authors also locate the factors influencing violence and extremism at different levels. Pisoiu (2013), for example, distinguishes between the macro, meso and micro level. Bögelein et al. (2017) differentiate the influencing factors along the distinction between society, group and individual. Comparable models can be found in the field of violence research (e.g. Beelmann/Raabe 2007).

### 2.2.1. Microsocial background factors

*Personal characteristics:* Beelmann et al. (2017, p. 444) assume that "extremist violence can probably be explained to a large extent by similar factors like other acts of violence". Persons who use violence and aggression as a means of conflict resolution and thus show a dissocial personality may thus present a higher risk of radicalisation. In addition, Beelmann et al. (2017) mention the following individual risk characteristics: problematic social-cognitive processing patterns, excessive self-esteem, risk-seeking and impulsiveness.

In right-wing extremism research in particular, various personality-based approaches are discussed, which have their starting point in the theory of authoritarian personality, among other things. Here, authoritarianism or dominance orientations are linked with extremism.

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<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that there are numerous empirical studies on the phenomena of physical violence and right-wing extremism, but very few studies on the phenomena of left-wing extremism and Islamic extremism.

According to Dugas and Kruglanski (2014), radicalisation is a result of the search for personal meaning (“quest for significance”). Here one can find a reference to approaches that consider the search for identity or the loss of recognition to be significant risk factors. Chassman (2016, p. 248) accordingly sums up her analyses of the Islamic state as follows: “IS is successful at recruiting foreign fighters because of its ability to appeal to people facing confusion about their identities or experiencing frustration at their perceived grievances.”

In addition, personality traits are discussed as influencing factors that are also discussed in the criminological literature as relevant risk factors, e.g. low self-control. Based on a survey of young people in Belgium, Pauwels and De Waele (2014) confirm that impulsivity (as a dimension of low self-control) is significantly related to the exercise of political violence. For Germany, Baier et al. (2016) show that a high willingness to take risks is related to extremism, too.

*Religiousness:* Primarily with regard to Islamic extremism, the question is discussed whether the strength of religious attachment to Islam is a risk factor of radicalisation. The state of research on this question is not yet consistent. Beller and Kroeger (2017) conclude from a study of over 6,000 Muslims from various countries that the frequency of visits to mosques is accompanied by greater support for extremist violence, while the personal significance of religion reduces advocacy.

The fact that religiosity is a central influencing factor of Islamist radicalisation is doubted in relation to two research findings: On the one hand, it was shown that many Islamists are “religious illiterate” (Dantschke 2014a), i.e. have not experienced any religious socialisation and also have no strong religious ties. On the other hand, a significant proportion of Islamists are converts and therefore have not experienced any Islamic-religious socialisation in childhood and youth either (cf. Steffen 2015).

Eilers et al. (2015) come to the conclusion that religiosity – or in the field of other extremisms specific ideologies – plays a subordinate role in radicalisation: Religiousness and ideology “apparently has more of a group-forming stylistic device”, with the meaning of “recognizing oneself on the other side and above all differentiating one’s own group from other groups” (p. 39). In addition, it serves to justify acts of violence: “both left, right and Islamic extremists resort to ideological narratives in order to legitimize acts committed and also rationalize them before themselves” (p. 40). With regard to a study on left-wing youths,

van Hüllen (2013) summarises his findings as follows: Thus “many of those were very pragmatic when it came to basic political questions. Rather patchwork-like worldviews were built together from inconsistent, sometimes contradictory value patterns” (p. 111).

The question of the influence of religiousness is also at the centre of a French debate. Giles Kepel argues that Islam has become radicalised; this means that Islamic extremism is based on Islam; in this sense religiosity is also ascribed an important role in radicalisation. The opposite view is represented by Olivier Roy, who speaks of an Islamisation of radicalism; generally delinquent persons legitimise their actions with the Islam, which one has acquired “in a crude and simple form, which has nothing in common with traditional Islam” (Dziri/Kiefer 2018, p. 24). In this sense, Islamic religiosity is no independent risk factor for radicalisation. This view is supported by the analysis of chat logs of a Salafist WhatsApp group, in which “all group members obviously have only rudimentary or no knowledge of Islam at all” (ibid., p. 56). Instead, reference is made to the propaganda of jihadist groups, with the consequence that Islam is reduced to a “religion legitimizing violence” (p. 57). Following a “Lego” building block principle, the radicalised Islamists draw on elements of Islam that support their view, “but hardly represent elements of Islamic religiosity” (p. 57).

Based on an analysis by Syrian returnees, Weber (2017) sums up that “no one of the accused had a solid religious identity. All of them are people who can be called religious illiterate” (p. 149).

However, there are also positions that are in line with Giles Kepel’s view: Pfahl-Taughber (2007), for example, lists various arguments with which a proximity between Islam as religion and Islamic extremism can be justified. These include: Claim of absoluteness and exclusion, states with God as sovereign and thus lacking separation of religion and state, connection between religion and war. By means of a qualitative study with imprisoned Islamists, Aslan et al. (2018) support the view that Islamic religiosity is one of the reasons for turning to Islamic extremism. Religion turns out to be “one of the most important factors in the processes of radicalisation” (p. 268); accordingly, the view “All this has nothing to do with Islam” hinders the Islamic community to debate a radicalising theology (p. 268).

The various findings underline the need for further studies on the connection between religiosity and radicalisation. Rieker (2012) suspects that the consent of Muslims to religiously connotated violence has two main explanations: 1. personal experiences of discrimination and marginalisation or the perception that this applies to the Muslim community; 2. integration into youth cultural group structures with an affinity for violence. In this respect, it is not a specific religious content that promotes Islamic extremism, but specific social conditions. This should be further investigated in the future.

*Gender:* Violence and extremism are primarily male phenomena. Nevertheless, there are also women who behave accordingly. With regard to the connection of women to Islamic extremism, it is assumed that the orientation towards traditional, patriarchal values plays a role. A clear role for women is promoted and the emancipated role of women in Western societies is opposed (e.g. Matt 2017). This is also confirmed by Musial (2016, p. 79): “Women are clearly awarded with the domestic role serving as mothers and wives. It can therefore be assumed that girls travelling to the Islamic State are fully aware and supportive of their new life that completely contradicts the female emancipation of their home countries.”

Baer and Weirnböck (2017, p. 87ff) identify three risk factors for young girls and women extremist radicalisation: firstly, family conflicts associated with chronic emotional stress; secondly, family predispositions, e.g. in the sense of existing role models of extremist attitudes; thirdly, opportunity structures in the environment. All in all, however, the authors conclude: “Women radicalise themselves mainly for the same or very similar reasons as men – and are committed with the same personal determination” (p. 90).

The Bundeskriminalamt (2016) notes, however, some special features of the radicalisation of women: “Women are radicalising more quickly and rather in social environments that are not publicly accessible” (p. 61). However, this applies more to Islamic extremism; in the area of left-wing and right-wing extremism, on the other hand, it is the case that women participate actively and visibly in scene life.

*Mental disorders:* To what extent violence and extremism are also an expression of mental disorders is investigated in various studies. Corner et al. (2016) point out that a distinction must be made between individual and group offenders. Among individual terroristic offenders, the following three disorders are more common: schizophrenia,

delusional disorders and psychotic disorders. For other disorders such as depressive disorders or anxiety disorders, however, there are no indications of higher prevalence rates compared to the total population; comparable findings are reported by Bhui et al. (2014). No evidence of increased prevalence of mental disorders can be found for terrorist perpetrators acting in groups. Insofar as schizophrenic disorders are generally associated with violent behaviour (cf. among others Hodgins 2008), it seems necessary to optimise the detection and treatment of these disorders.

Leuschner et al. (2017, p. 60) assume that personality accentuations rather than psychopathologies are associated with radicalisation. These include social insecurity, narcissistic and psychopathic personality structures and a high potential for aggression.

*Experience of discrimination and deprivation:* Particularly with regard to Islamic extremism, the role of experiences of discrimination is discussed. Matt (2017, p. 255) writes: “They feel alien, ‘detached’ from society and future opportunities. It is important to escape being a loser. These factors are often used as an explanation model, but the connection to the radicalisation process cannot be proved”. Eilers et al. (2015, p. 56), however, report as a result of their literature review that experiences of discrimination are significant for Islamist radicalisation: “Experience of discrimination resulting from contact with authorities and the police seems to be particularly relevant.”

In addition to direct experiences of discrimination, indirect experiences of discrimination can also be regarded as influencing factors of Islamic extremism. This means that Muslims are collectively stigmatised in public discourse, for example by equating Islamic religion and extremism: “Life as a Muslim or Muslima in times of terrorism is thus added to the demands of living as a member of a cultural minority” (Schiefer et al. 2013, p. 140).

Deprivation experience is also likely to be quite significant. Especially from right-wing extremism research it is known that experiences of relative and fraternal deprivation increase the probability of developing extremist orientations.<sup>9</sup> Less relevant are forms of absolute deprivation (e.g. low income). In agreement with this, Böckler (2017) formulates in relation to Islamist radicalisation, “that it is not so much

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<sup>9</sup> Relative deprivation is the perception that one is disadvantaged in comparison to others. Fraternal deprivation comprises the perception that the own group is disadvantaged in comparison to a foreign group. These group discrimination perceptions are likely to be relevant for various forms of radicalisation (cf. grievances).



a low level of education that makes vulnerability for devotion [...]. but rather feelings of relative deprivation” (p. 127). Steffen (2015, p. 13) also assumes that poverty and a lack of education are no relevant influencing factors in view of Islamic extremism. Bhui et al. (2014) even report on the basis of a survey of Muslims in England that a higher income is accompanied by a stronger sympathy for violent protest and terrorist attacks. Eilers et al. (2015, p. 46) also confirm that people with Islamist attitudes as well as left-wing extremists are more highly qualified, while at the same time it is pointed out that both groups are more often unable to enter working life. However, there are also opposing views on the influence of absolute deprivation: “The vulnerability seems to be particularly high among disadvantaged young people with multiple and lasting experiences of discrimination or exclusion as well as disappointed newcomers” (El-Mafaalani 2017, p. 88). Lützing (2010) also reports that the biographies of extremists were characterised by multiple problems in the family, failures at school and at work, increased willingness to take risks and identity problems, among other things.

### 2.2.2. *Mesosocial background factors*

*Family and school:* As with violence in general, an influence of family and school is also assumed for extremism. Beelmann et al. (2017) mention, for example, the following factors: lack of or problematic value socialisation at home and school; parental prejudices; family conflicts; experience of violence in the family. Glaser et al. (2017) also name various family risk factors for radicalisation, such as the direct transfer of attitudes from parents to children, various socio-emotional burdens (e.g. negative family climate) and biographical breaks and crises (e.g. experiences of loss of a parent).

Sikkens et al. (2017) conclude, based on a qualitative study of eleven radicalised individuals and their families, that there is an impact of family experiences: The majority of the families were affected by divorce, father’s absence, illness or deaths. These events may have reduced the level of attention and control over children’s development so that parents were unable to respond adequately to problematic biographical changes of the children. “Such circumstances do not in themselves explain the process of radicalisation, but can form a fertile breeding ground for it” (S. 213).

Eilers et al. (2015) point out that so far there are few findings on the influence of the family for left-wing extremist and Islamist radicalisation. In addition to risk-increasing family conditions (e.g. experiences of

violence at home), a greater focus should be placed on protective factors: This includes “a positive, supportive and trustful family climate” (p. 68). Herding (2013) also notes that little research has so far been conducted regarding the influence of the family on Islamic radicalisation. “A direct connection between (authoritarian) education and the acceptance of radical Islam is [...] not yet detectable” (ibid. p. 27).

With regard to youths with an affinity to the left, the findings are also not clear. Kühnel and Willems (2016) sum up: “Our results indicate that many left-wing activists have developed their central political awareness in families, in which information, participation and involvement are still present as core elements of a bourgeois understanding of democracy” (p. 124).

*Media consumption:* The question of the influence of media consumption on radicalisation (especially Islamist radicalisation) is currently in the focus of research. It is widely acknowledged that the consumption of violent media generally has an influence on violent attitudes and behaviour, even if the correlations are rather small (e.g. Anderson et al. 2010). Frischlich et al. (2017) also show that extremist propaganda presented through the media has an effect and can promote extremist attitudes.

However, the influence of the media on extremist radicalisation is still controversially discussed (Alava et al. 2017). First, it is assumed that the Internet and social media (chats, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) are relevant by creating partial realities that can cultivate hatred, conspiracy theories and extremist content and reinforce it among users (“echo chambers”). On the other hand, it is doubted that media content has a direct impact on the users; the experiences in non-media reality are classified as significantly more relevant for extremist radicalisation. Schils and Verhage (2017) report that the Internet is mainly used by extremists to prepare offline activities and maintain offline contacts; “almost all respondents said they first heard of their group by means other than the internet” (ibid., p. 13). The Bundeskriminalamt (2016) also writes on the basis of an analysis of jihad travellers that “a direct personal exchange with like-minded people is more important for further radicalisation than the consumption of extremist Internet propaganda”. “Radicalisation takes place predominantly in a real social environment” (p. 60).

Undoubtedly, the media are intensively used by extremist and violence-glorifying groups, e.g. to address young people with interactive, user-friendly platforms, disseminate ideological content, involve people in activities and build networks, establish personal communications and dialogue with young people or establish communities (Alava et al. 2017, p. 19f). In general, extremist groups are particularly focused on young people who are in a phase of their lives in which the search for belonging has a high priority. The (social) media can help to cope with the central developmental tasks of adolescence. “The starting point for further research can only be that it is not the Internet and the social media that generate extremism, but that the turn towards right-wing extremism and jihadism stems from the circumstances in which young people grow up in conjunction with personal dispositions, which then develop a momentum of their own at a certain point in the radicalisation process.”(?) (Boehnke et al. 2015, p. 32)

The empirical findings so far do not allow an exact assessment of the role of the media. The available studies are more descriptive than explanatory; “the current state of evidence [...] is very limited and still inconclusive” (Alava et al. 2017, p. 43). Boehnke et al. (2015, p. 54) express it in a similar way: The studies available so far are those that “point out more or less plausible assumptions about radicalisation processes and underpin them with empirical material that can be described predominantly as anecdotal”. Media can possibly be classified as mediators rather than causes of radicalisation: “There is not sufficient evidence to conclude that there is a causal relationship between online extremist propaganda [...] and the violent radicalisation of young people” (Alava et al. 2017, p. 46).

However, media consumption is not only important with regard to social media and the communicative exchange among like-minded people. Music is said to have a binding effect on both right-wing extremism and Islamic extremism, too (cf. among others Maiwald 2014, Dantschke 2014). An analysis of right-wing extremist music confirms that anti-Semitism and references to nationalism are gaining in importance. “A renewed radicalisation can also be observed, for example through the glorification of the Holocaust and explicit calls to violence” (Hajok/Wegmann 2016, p. 13). And Dantschke (2014, p. 106f) writes with reference to Nasheeds: “As Muslims you are the strangers and since you belong to the ‘true believers’, you are also the ‘strangers’ within the Muslim community [...] So do not suffer from being excluded, but see it as confirmation that you belong to the selec-

ted group. This is of course an attractive offer for young people.” This message is of particular interest to vulnerable young people and can form the basis for further radicalisation.

*Peer group:* It is often pointed out that development processes that end in violence and extremism are initiated by relationships with relatives, friends and other acquaintances. Malthaner (2017) speaks of a “mobilization via pre-existing social ties”. In criminological research on the causes of violence and crime, this role of peers has long been known: “Perhaps the most consistent finding in the literature on the causes of delinquency is that adolescents with delinquent peers are more likely to be delinquent themselves” (Agnew 1991, p. 47).

The high relevance of personal networks is also reported for the area of Islamic radicalisation. Here it is assumed that “up to 75 % of those who are radicalising themselves do so because of friendship and family networks and their religious orientation” (Goertz/Goertz-Neumann 2018, p. 53).

The research overview presented by Eilers et al. (2015, p. 73f) shows that the risk factor peer group is “the most frequently addressed influencing factor”. Radicalisation usually takes place in a group that is not of primary interest because of ideology reasons but because of other reasons (e.g. feelings of belonging). The peer group influence is classified as significantly more relevant than the media influence: “The Internet can be seen as a tool for communication and the dissemination of certain contents and symbols, but it plays a subordinate role for belonging to this radical milieu compared to face-to-face relationships” (Alsan et al. 2018, p. 266).

The importance of peers is also emphasised for young people with left-wing orientation. The results of the study by Kühnel and Willems (2016) show “that for many of the [...] young people their first political activities [...] have only taken place in the context of peer groups and youthful scenes or subcultures” (p. 124).

Zick (2017, p. 22) therefore concludes: “Extremist radicalisation is a social process that takes place in groups and refers to groups.” Weber (2017, p. 150) states: “Predominantly the returnees radicalise via social contacts.”

The high significance of the peer group for radicalisation is certainly also due to the processes that take place within groups. Borum (2017, p. 19) refers in particular to the following processes: group polarisation, group thinking, ingroup appreciation, intergroup comparison, deindividuation and group norms. The various group processes that take place in radical groups could recently be analysed by using a chat protocol of a Salafist WhatsApp group. The authors of that analyse concluded: “The group is in a gradual process of self-isolation. The main reason for this is the [...] Takfir principle”, by which persons are declared as unbelievers (Dziri/Kiefer 2018, p. 57).

It should also be noted that existing groups represent local opportunity structures. Schils and Verhage (2017, p. 11) report: “Initial engagement in a specific group seems to be largely dependent on what is (directly) available in the social environment. Most respondents get in touch with the specific groups and movements they end up joining almost accidentally.” Baier et al. (2016) also conclude on the basis of their study that young people with specific characteristics do not consciously choose a certain extremism, but affiliate to an extremism to which they have easier access. This refers to a need to investigate individual influencing factors in interaction with the opportunities in the social environment in order to better understand and explain extremist attitudes and behaviour.

### *2.2.3. Meso- and macrosocial contextual factors*

The findings for the peer group already show that relationships in the near (meso) and wider environment (macro) are to be investigated as moderating factors in the process of radicalisation. The range of possible context factors is wide. In the area of right-wing extremism research, for example, reference was made to the role of social change that can trigger uncertainties and feelings of threat (Stephan/Stephan 2000), which in turn triggers individual reorientations. These can be accompanied by an “escape into security” (Oesterreich 1996), i.e. flight into ideologies that provide clarity and support.

Beelmann et al. (2017) identify the following macrosocial contextual factors for the process of radicalisation: conflicts between different social groups; ideologies that legitimise violence against certain groups; the lack of politically shared positive values; growing social inequality; unemployment and uncertain prospects for the future.

An interesting study in this context also points out that the regional climate of opinions can be a triggering factor at the meso level. Müller and Schwarz (2017) report that there is a connection between right-wing extremist and anti-refugee AfD activities on Facebook and violence against refugees. It can be proven that such activities lead to violence in the local context. The results show that “in the absence of anti-refugee posts on the AfD Facebook page 437 (13%) fewer anti-refugee incidents would have taken place” (ibid., p. 26). In the field of right-wing extremism research, in contrast to other areas of extremism, there is already a long tradition of considering the local and regional environment as an important context factor, e.g. regional political culture, the regional economic situation, regional media coverage, the existence of a more or less active civil society, and so on (cf. among others Baier/Pfeiffer 2010).

With regard to opportunity structures and Islamic radicalisation, the mosque associations, which serve as “a social space that offers infrastructure and opportunity for exchange with peers and like-minded people” (Srowig et al. 2017, p. 106), must also be taken into account. Weber (2017, p. 149) also writes that existing Salafist associations “are seen as an entry into the radical jihadist scene”.

With all the factors considered, it should be noted that people are not pushed towards extremism and violence solely on the basis of certain conditions (push factors), but that there are also factors that draw people towards extremism (pull factors). The various extremisms provide attractive offers—especially for young people (cf. among others Steffen 2015, Schils/Verhage 2017); they provide e.g. orientation and unambiguity (e.g. friend-foe scheme), clear answers to existential questions of life, meaningfulness, belonging to a group and community as well as the possibility to articulate protest. Ceylan and Kiefer (2018) also list various “attractive moments” of extremism, such as: Nostalgia, protest, counter-draft, self-presentation, belonging to an avant-garde and the self-elevation associated with it, dress and language codes, masculinity and warrior ethics, living out power fantasies, community and comradeship. These moments of extremism’s attractiveness must be understood in order to develop attractive counteroffers.

### **3. Current data on physical violence and political extremism**

Statements on the prevalence and trends of violence and extremism can be made using various data sources. On the one hand, corresponding crimes are registered by the police and reported as politically

motivated crime in the police crime statistics. These police statistics only represent a part of all committed crimes. Registration depends, for example, on whether an offence is reported by a victim or another person, or whether the police themselves uncover a criminal offence during investigative work. A varying proportion of criminal offences remains in the dark field. With regard to violent crime, victim surveys can be used to estimate what proportion of crime remains in the dark field. The last comprehensive nationwide representative victim survey in 2012, for example, showed that 30.0 % of robberies and 31.6 % of assaults were reported to the police (Birkel et al. 2014, p. 40). Other studies report even lower rates for sexual violence: Hellmann (2014, p. 174), for example, reports a rate of 15.5% for sexual violence. With reference to violent crimes, it can be concluded that the majority of the offences are not registered in police statistics. Focusing solely on this source of data bring along a central problem: increasing or decreasing trends can mark real changes; however, they can also be due to changes in reporting behaviour or in other areas (e.g. changes in police investigation activities, registration practice, legal framework).

Another source of data that can provide information on the prevalence and trends of violence are survey studies. These studies cover both those offences that are registered by the police and those that are not reported. These surveys are usually designed in such a way that a representative selection of the population is questioned about victimisation and/or offending. So far, there has been no repeated, representative survey in Germany, as it is the case in other countries.<sup>10</sup> Survey data are currently only available for individual geographical areas and specific age groups (usually young people), with which trends can be made visible. Surveys are, however, important beyond the question of experiencing or committing crimes in another respect: they can be designed to investigate attitudes and opinions in the population. In this respect, they allow, for example, to identify potentials for extremism and radicalism.

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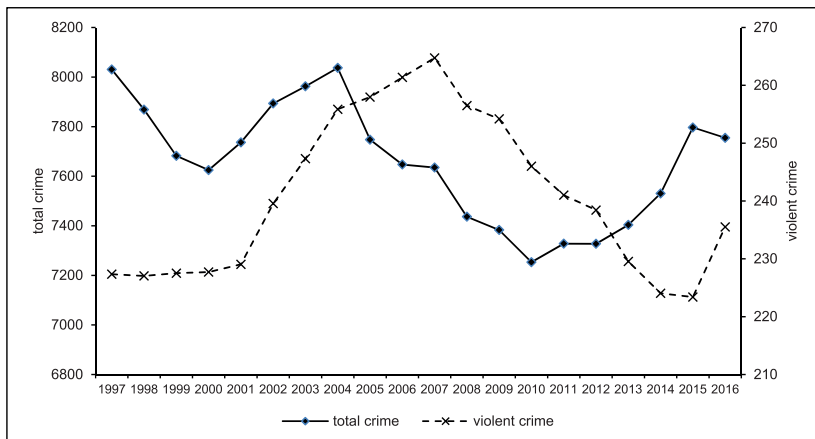
<sup>10</sup> A nationwide representative, continuously repeated victim survey is being planned in Germany. In the US the National Crime Victimization Survey has been conducted since 1973, in Great Britain since 1982 the British Crime Survey/Crime Survey for England and Wales or in Sweden since 2006 a victimisation survey.

### 3.1. Official crime statistics

#### 3.1.1. Trends in violent crime

In the following, analyses of the police crime statistics of the last 20 years are presented. Figure 2 shows the trend in frequency numbers that indicate how many offences have been registered per 100,000 inhabitants; these are therefore relative numbers that take into account changes in the number of inhabitants. This is necessary because an increasing or decreasing population – under *ceteris paribus* conditions – would be accompanied by an increasing or decreasing absolute number of crimes. On the one hand, Figure 2 shows the trend of all criminal offences, on the other hand of criminal offences in the field of violent crime. Violent crime primarily includes murder/homicide, rape, robbery and aggravated assault. With regard to all offences (“total crime”) there has been an inconsistent trend: the frequency number initially falls and then rises to almost the starting level by 2004. Subsequently, a sharp decline can be observed until 2010, followed by another increase until 2015. The increase in the younger years can be attributed among other things to increases in the following areas of offence: domestic burglary, drug offences, insults, offences against the Residence/Asylum Act and pickpocketing.

Figure 2: Trends in the frequency number of various offences since 1997 (source: police crime statistics)





However, the trend in violent crime is of particular interest here. In 1997, 186,447 violent crimes were registered in Germany, which corresponds to a frequency number of 227 (227 violent crimes per 100,000 inhabitants) with a population of 82 million people. By 2007, this figure had risen by one-sixth to 265 (217,923 violent crimes). Since 2007, however, there has been a sharp drop in the frequency number to a level below that of 1997 (2015: 223, 181,386 offences, a drop of -15.8%). In comparison with 2015 and 2016, there is an increase trend (frequency number 236, increase of 5.8%). Ultimately, this analysis of violent crime shows that Germany has experienced a significant decline in violent crime over the past ten years.<sup>11</sup>

As mentioned above, four offences are primarily classified in the category of violent crime. The trends for these four offences are shown in Figure 3. The frequency numbers for 1997 were set to 100, so that the relative changes are shown in Figure 3. It should be noted that no statement is made about the prevalence of the offences. This differs considerably between the offences. In 2016, 140,033 aggravated assaults and 43,009 robberies were registered, but only 2,418 cases of murder/homicide (including attempts) and 7,919 cases of rape. Looking at the trends, for all four offences the level for 2015 and 2016 is lower than at an earlier date. It is therefore not a crime that occurs more frequently at present than in the past. From a delict-specific point of view, too, a decline in violence in Germany is confirmed. Particularly positive trends are found for murder/homicide (decrease in frequency number by about a quarter since 1997) and robbery (decrease by more than a third). The number of aggravated assaults has decreased by about one tenth since 2007 and the number of rapes by about one tenth since 2004. However, a noticeable increase from 2015 to 2016 is found for all offences with the exception of robberies, which does not ultimately cancel out the positive developments.

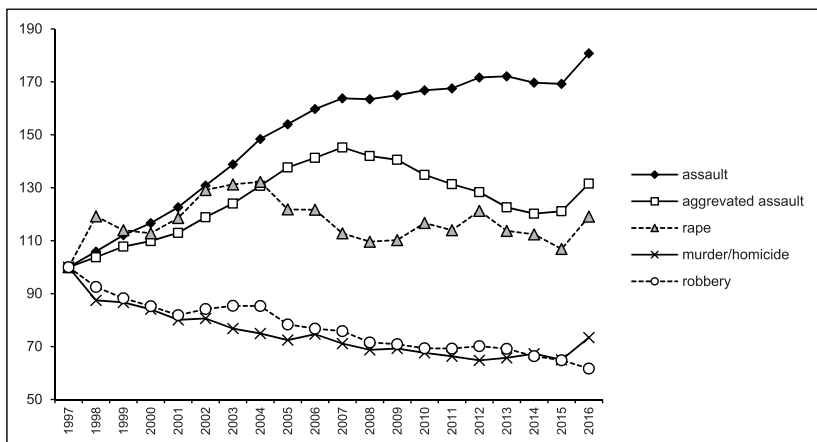
Figure 3 also show the trend of minor bodily injuries (“assault”), which are not counted as violent crime but nevertheless include violent assaults. There has been a continuous increase of more than two thirds in this crime since 1997. However, it is questionable whether

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<sup>11</sup> Similar developments are evident in Switzerland and Austria; it should be noted, however, that in these countries in part different offences are recorded as violent crimes, but a comparison of the developments is still possible. In Switzerland, nationwide data on violent crimes are only available from 2009 onwards. While 49,392 violent crimes were registered in 2009, by 2015 there were only 42,266 violent crimes. The frequency number dropped by 20.0% from 641 to 513, i.e. even more than in Germany. In a comparison between 2015 and 2016, there was a slight increase in the frequency number of 0.6% (frequency number 2016: 516). In Austria, the most recorded acts of violence in the period 2007 to 2016 are reported for the year 2012 (44,290 acts of violence). By 2015, this number dropped to 470 (40,333 acts of violence), i.e. by 10.8% (slightly less than in Germany). For Austria, however, there was a marked increase in the frequency number to 495 in 2016, which corresponds to an increase of 5.4% (comparable with Germany).

this trend actually marks a countertrend to the other crimes and thus points to an increasing violence in German society. The change in reporting behaviour may be an explanation for that trend: If in the last 20 years the readiness to report even minor forms of violence to the police has increased, crime statistic would show an increase, even if the frequency of the offence has not changed. Increases in the readiness to report victimisations to the police were found in surveys on sexual violence, for example (e.g. Stadler et al. 2012, p. 45ff). It is quite plausible to assume that the reasons for this trend (increasing awareness of violence, increasing removal of taboos of violent crimes) can also be applied to other violent crimes.

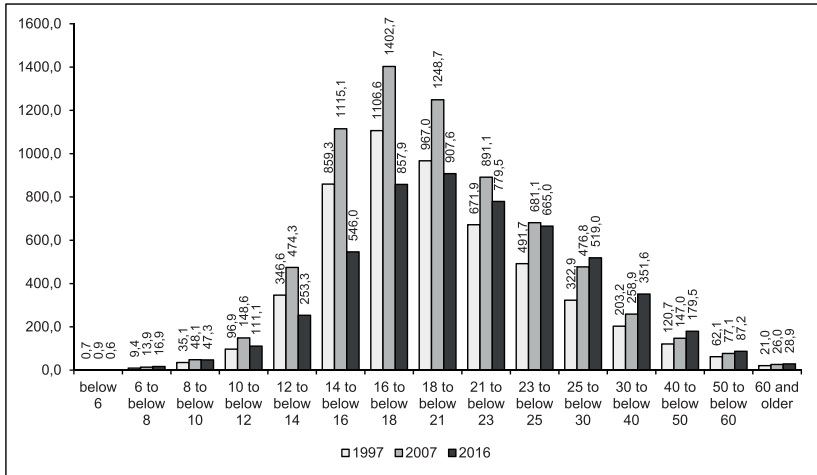
Figure 3: Trends in the frequency numbers of various violent crimes since 1997 (1997 = 100; source: police crime statistics)



When crimes are cleared up by the police, which is the case in about three-quarters of all violent crimes, suspects and their characteristics such as age, gender or nationality become known. It is important to point out here that suspicion does not mean that a person can actually be proven to have committed an offence. In the case of some of the suspects, the suspicion will not be confirmed in further criminal prosecution. Analyses of persons suspected by the police are therefore subject to a certain degree of uncertainty. Figure 4 shows the suspect numbers for different age groups. Again, these are relative figures (number of suspects per 100,000 persons of the respective age group), which take into account changes in the population composition. The

typical age-crime curve, according to which young people (14 to under 18 years) and adolescents (18 to under 21 years) appear particularly often as perpetrators of violent crime, can be found in this analysis, too. For all age groups, it can be noted that the number of violent offenders had increased significantly up to 2007, meaning that all age groups were registered more often as violent offenders. With regard to the trends thereafter, however, there are clear differences between the groups. While the suspect number for 14 to under 16-year-olds has more than halved, there have been further increases in the age groups of 25 and over. This ultimately leads the age-crime curve to be flattened and shifting to the right. The decline in violent crime is thus primarily a decrease in violent crime among the younger population. With regard to young people and adolescents in particular, it can therefore be stated that violent crime has reduced significantly since 2007.<sup>12</sup> To what extent the increases in the older age groups are again caused by an increase in the readiness to report violent victimisation to the police cannot be said at present.

Figure 4: Suspected numbers of violent crime by age group for 1997, 2007 and 2016 (source: police crime statistics)

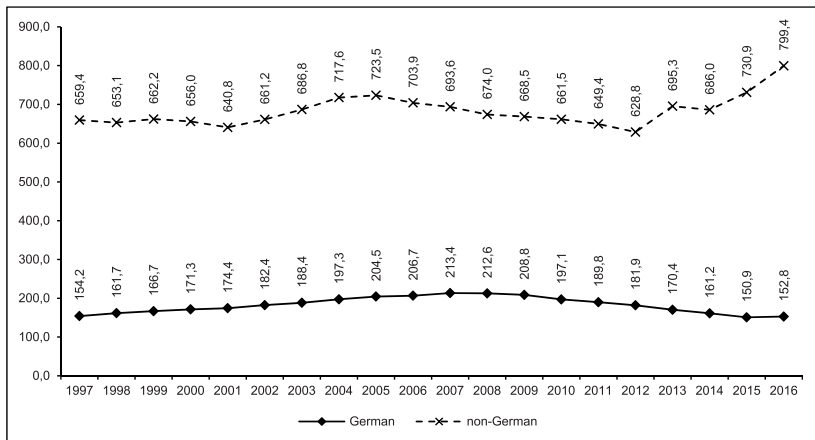


A last analysis of police crime statistics refers to the distinction between German and foreign suspects. This analysis is to be interpreted with caution: Firstly, in crime statistics, this distinction is made solely on the basis of nationality. Other characteristics are not taken into ac-

<sup>12</sup> In Switzerland, too, there has been a significant decline in the number of violent crimes registered by the police for adolescents (Baier 2017).

count. As a result, for example, suspects from countries of the former Soviet Union who have a migration background and thus often have migration experiences themselves are usually registered as German suspects, whereas Turkish suspects who already live here in the second or third generation are registered as foreigners. Secondly, the relativisation of foreign suspects to the population number is problematic. Foreign suspects include, for example, tourists or people living illegally in Germany, but these groups are not included in the population numbers. The number of the foreign population is also rather unreliable in times of strong immigration, such as Germany experienced in the years 2014 to 2016, since the statistical recording of immigrants is incomplete.<sup>13</sup> Despite these restrictions, Figure 5 presents the figures for suspected perpetrators of violent crime for Germans and foreigners, because these at least allow indications of for which group an increase is apparent (and at least for the German population, the figures are reliable).

Figure 5: Suspect numbers of violent crime for Germans and foreigners (source: police crime statistics)



<sup>13</sup> Since only violent crimes are considered here, one problem of the comparison of German and foreign suspects is negligible, namely that nearly solely foreigners can commit violations or infringements of the Asylum Act. On the other hand, the following areas pose key problems when considering the number of foreign suspects charged with violent crime: Firstly, foreigners are recorded in crime statistics, but in some cases not in population statistics. This leads to an artificial increase in the numbers. Secondly, the group of foreigners has a different sociodemographic composition, insofar as they are more often young, male people with a higher risk of violence (irrespective of their origin). Thirdly, foreigners are reported more frequently to the police and are therefore more likely to be registered in the police crime statistics (cf. Baier 2015a).

The fact that the suspect number for foreigners is higher, i.e. that they appear more frequently as offenders of violence, is not surprising, taken their demographic structure and worse social situation into account, as well as the fact that they are more often reported to the police when they commit a violent act (e.g. Baier et al. 2009, p. 43ff). More important here is how the ratio between German and foreigner suspects changed over time: In 2008 and 2009, the ratio of the suspect numbers was lowest. Since then, trends differ, what is particularly clear after 2013: While the German suspect number drops – and even in a comparison of 2015 and 2016 there is only a small increase in the number – there was a strong increase in the number for foreigners. It can therefore be concluded that the recent increase in violent crime can be explained by an increase of crimes committed by foreign offenders. If we look at the number of suspects in 2016 for the four offences subsumed under violent crime, we can additionally conclude that the gap in the number of suspects is particularly large for murder/homicide, robbery and rape, i.e. foreign suspects appear particularly often as suspects of these crimes compared with German suspects.

### *3.1.2. Trends in politically motivated crime*

Since January 2001, the registration of political crimes in Germany is based on the concept of “politically motivated crime” (cf. Kubink 2002). The corresponding statistic counts on the one hand so-called state protection offences, such as state, peace and high treason, the endangerment of the democratic constitutional state, crimes against constitutional bodies or the formation of terrorist associations. On the other hand, it includes offences which provide evidence that they should influence the democratic decision-making process, that they are directed against the liberal democratic order, that they endanger the foreign interests of the Federal Republic of Germany or that they are directed against a person on the basis of his/her political opinion, nationality, ethnicity, race, colour, religion, world view, origin, appearance, disability, sexual orientation or social status (Bundesministerium des Innern 2017, p. 21).

A subset of the crimes registered as politically motivated crimes are so-called extremist-motivated crimes (cf. Bundesministerium des Innern 2017, p. 23ff). These are crimes in which there are indications “that their aim is to eliminate or override certain constitutional principles that are characteristic of the free democratic order”. (ibid., p. 23).<sup>14</sup> Three areas are distinguished:

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<sup>14</sup> These offences are reported in the “Verfassungsschutzbericht”, i.e. the source used for the following analy-

- Crimes motivated by right-wing extremism: These include crimes committed on the basis of the idea of a national community or which are characterised by xenophobia, racism, anti-Semitism or historical revisionism.
- Left-wing extremist crimes: In these crimes it is expressed that the democratic state and social order is to be abolished and replaced by a communist system or an anarchist system free from power.
- Crimes with an extremist background in the field of “politically motivated foreigner crime”: On the one hand, this includes Islamist crimes aimed at replacing the current political order by an Islamic state of God in which the separation of state and religion is abolished. On the other hand, it subsumes the security-threatening and extremist aspirations of foreigners who have no Islamic background and who usually aim at radical changes in political conditions in their home country (among others activities of the Workers’ Party of Kurdistan PKK, the Revolutionary People’s Liberation Party Front DHKP-C and the “Ülkücü” movement).

The validity of the recording of politically motivated crimes, especially with regard to crimes motivated by right-wing extremism, is repeatedly criticised (Kleffner/Holzberger 2004). Insofar police officers have to take up and classify offences, the allocation to an area always depends on the extent to which they are sensitised to different phenomena. In addition, a dark field of politically motivated crimes can also be assumed, which means that the statistics only reflect part of what is happening. Nevertheless, various statistics are to be reported below, insofar as these allow at least an initial assessment of the developments.

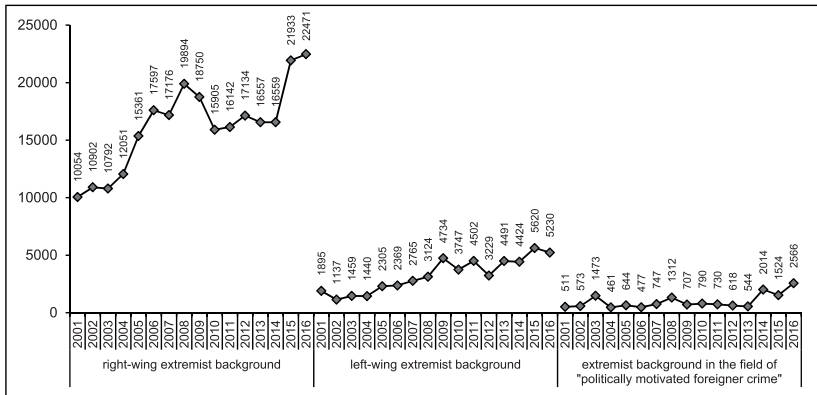
Figure 6 shows the trend of the number of extremist offences since 2001, the majority of which do not include acts of violence. An example from the field of right-wing extremist crimes illustrates that: In 2016, more than half of the cases were propaganda offences (12,476 cases); other crimes such as incitement of the people (6,432 cases) or damage to property (1,501 cases) were also very frequent. In the area of left-wing extremist crimes, damage to property or other crimes are most frequently registered. For all three areas of politically motivated crime, there have been increases over time, so politically motivated crime increases significantly in contrast to other forms of crime – whereby, with regard to the increase, the above-mentioned factors

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ses. These are acts carried out with the motivation to overcome the basic political order. If this motivation is not apparent, a classification as right, left, etc. violence can still be made (but such acts would not be reported in the “Verfassungsschutzbericht”).

of a possibly increasing sensitivity of police officers and an increasing readiness to report victimisations to the police must be taken into account. Compared to the figures for 2001, the number of registered crimes in 2016 is 2.2 times higher in the area of right-wing extremism, 2.8 times higher in the area of left-wing extremism and 5.0 times higher in the area of foreigner extremism. Especially since 2012 and 2013, there have been significant increases in registered offences. The similar trends suggest that there is a connection between the extremisms, which can be explained, among other things, by the fact that crimes are also directed against political opponents (for instance right-wing extremists commit crimes against left-wing extremists). The aggregate correlation between the figures for right-wing extremism and left-wing extremism is  $r = .81$ ; an increase in right-wing extremism is therefore accompanied by an increase in left-wing extremism and vice versa.

Figure 6: Number of extremist offences since 2001 (source: Verfassungsschutzberichte)



Violent acts are part of extremist crimes. Table 1 shows the trends of the total number of acts of violence and the trends of a sub-category of acts of violence, assaults. In 2016, 1,600 out of 22,471 right-wing extremist crimes were acts of violence; in left-wing extremism, 1,201 out of 5,230 crimes were violent crimes. The lowest number of right-wing extremist crimes is reported for 2001 (709 acts of violence), the highest for 2016 (1,600 acts of violence; increase 2.3 times). The lowest figure for left-wing extremism is 385 acts of violence in 2002, the highest is 2,608 in 2015 (an increase of 4.2 times). Violent acts include in part crimes that do not involve the direct use of force against

persons, e.g. arson, resistance offences or breach of the peace, which is why it makes sense to consider the most frequent form of physical violence once again separately. In the area of right-wing extremism, assaults account for the majority of acts of violence (between 80% and 90%); between 2001 and 2016 these increased 2.1 times. In the area of left-wing extremism, the proportion of assaults among all acts of violence is significantly lower (approx. 50%). Between 2002 and 2015, the number of assaults increased 6.5-fold. In right-wing extremism, assaults are primarily directed against (alleged) foreigners or migrants (xenophobic assaults) and (alleged) left-wing extremists – whereby (alleged) foreigners and immigrants have been the target of much more assaults since 2011; in left-wing extremism, the proportion of assaults committed to (alleged) right-wing extremists is significantly higher, especially in recent times, than in right-wing extremism the proportion of assaults committed to (alleged) left-wing extremists.



Table 1: Number of extremist acts of violence or assaults since 2001 (source: Verfassungsschutzberichte)

|  | 2001   | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|--|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| right-wing extremist background  | Violent crimes                                   | 709  | 772  | 759  | 776  | 958  | 1047 | 1042 | 891  | 762  | 755  | 802  | 801  | 990  | 1408 | 1600 |
|  | assaults   | 626  | 646  | 637  | 640  | 816  | 919  | 845  | 738  | 638  | 640  | 690  | 704  | 871  | 1116 | 1313 |
|  | Xenophobic assaults                              | 343  | 388  | 377  | 310  | 322  | 455  | 377  | 361  | 321  | 263  | 364  | 443  | 464  | 756  | 1020 |
| left-wing extremist background   | assaults against (alleged) left-wing extremists  | -    | -    | -    | 171  | 288  | 266  | 263  | 322  | 232  | 178  | 171  | 136  | 127  | 215  | 217  |
|  | Violent crimes                                   | 750  | 385  | 483  | 521  | 896  | 862  | 833  | 701  | 944  | 1157 | 876  | 1110 | 995  | 1608 | 1201 |
|  | assaults against (alleged) right-wing extremists | 194  | 152  | 192  | 226  | 391  | 444  | 384  | 359  | 541  | 583  | 471  | 606  | 633  | 986  | 638  |
| extremist background in the field of "politically motivated foreigner crime" | Violent crimes                                   | 84   | 61   | 88   | 61   | 47   | 95   | 108  | 113  | 130  | 191  | 117  | 76   | 259  | 235  | 427  |
|  | assaults   | 30   | 20   | 32   | 24   | 24   | 45   | 54   | 63   | 77   | 109  | 52   | 62   | 200  | 177  | 322  |

The statistics on politically motivated crime reveal further trends that point to increasing extremist activities in recent times:

- The number of arson attacks is increasing sharply. In a comparison of 2013 and 2016, there was an increase in the number of right-wing arsons from 11 to 113; among left-wing arsons there was an increase from 45 to 134.
- Since 2007, damage to property has roughly doubled (right-wing extremism: from 821 to 1501 acts in 2016, left-wing extremism: from 1142 to 2233 acts in 2016).
- In the area of right-wing extremism, there has been an enormous increase in crimes relating to refugee centres: In 2013, 55 offences were registered, in 2016 907.
- An increasing number is also being expelled with regard to the extremist potential, i.e. persons who are members of extremist organisations or who are violent. In right-wing extremism, the lowest number was recorded in 2014 (21,000 persons), in 2016 it was 23,100; in left-wing extremism, the lowest number was 26,700 in 2015 (2016: 28,500). There have been increases, especially for violent people.

With regard to the extremist potential, figures on Islamic extremism are also published in the reports. These also point to an increasing activity of this extremism: Thus in 2012 still 4,500 persons were assigned to Salafists; by 2016 it was already 9,700 persons. While in 2013 only 270 people were aware that they had left to take part in hostilities in war zones, by 2016 there were already 890 people.

*In summary, the analyses of the police statistics allow the following two central conclusions: Firstly, violence in Germany is decreasing – especially among young people. Since 2015, however, there has been a reversal of this trend, which is mainly due to an increase in violence by persons of non-German nationality. This points to a central challenge for future prevention work: to improve the integration of people with a migration background, especially refugees. Secondly, there has been an increase in the activity of political extremism; extremist crimes in general and extremist acts of violence in particular are increasing. Another central challenge for future prevention work is to regain the people's confidence in democracy and the political system in order to reduce the willingness of individuals or groups of individuals to take violent action against the democratic political order.*

## 3.2. Survey studies

### 3.2.1. Findings on violent behaviour

The trends identified in the police crime statistics cannot yet be validated on the basis of survey studies. With regard to the adult population, a comprehensive picture of the trends of violent crime therefore cannot be drawn. Nevertheless, single studies provide specific insights:

- The last representative survey in Germany was carried out in 2012, with over 35,000 people aged 16 and older being interviewed by telephone. The results show that violence victimisations are rare events: At least one robbery in the past twelve months were experienced by 0.7% of the respondents, at least one assault by 2.8% (Birkel et al. 2014, p. 14).
- With reference to Lower Saxony, Baier (2015, p. 48) conducted a representative mail survey of almost 6,000 people aged 16 and older in 2014. This survey already shows slightly lower prevalence rates of robbery (0.4%) and assault (2.4%), so a comparison with the 2012 survey suggests a decrease in violence.
- This is also confirmed by a mail survey conducted repeatedly by the Landeskriminalamt Niedersachsen (2016) in 2013 and 2015 with over 20,000 respondents aged 16 and older: The proportion of respondents who experienced assaults fell from 2.3% to 1.9%, as did the proportion of respondents who experienced sexual offences (from 1.7% to 1.5%; robbery: both years 0.5%; *ibid.*, p. 33ff).<sup>15</sup>
- A study comparing the results of surveys conducted in 1992 and 2011 focuses on the trends in a particular form of sexual violence, child sexual abuse (Stadler et al. 2012). The proportion of respondents who have experienced sexual abuse with physical contact has fallen from 6.5% to 4.4% over the years (*ibid.*, p. 32). In addition, the study provides findings on the trends in sexual violence among women, which according to the results fell from 4.7% to 2.4% in the two survey years (Hellmann 2014, p. 154).
- In 2004, 2006, 2010 and 2014, Baier et al. (2017) conducted nationwide representative surveys of the German-speaking population aged 16 and older, with a focus on perceptions of crime and smaller samples of up to 3,000 people. The surveys also covered

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<sup>15</sup> Representative surveys were also conducted in other German states, such as North Rhine-Westphalia, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Schleswig-Holstein and Saxony. The results cannot be appreciated here because comparative data on different years are not always available and thus no trends can be made visible. In any case, however, it should be acknowledged that such surveys provide important information on the real prevalence of crime victimisation and thus are an important supplement to police crime statistics.

the experience of two acts of violence. With regard to assaults, the 5-year prevalence fell from 4.7%, over 4.0% and 3.0% to 2.7%, and with regard to robbery from 2.1% (2004) to 0.8% (2014).

The few survey findings available for adults indicate a decrease in violence victimisation and correspond to the police statistics presented above. It should be noted that the most recent data collection took place in 2015. It is not known how things developed after 2015.

For the group of young people, there is more information on trends in violent behavior. It is also true for young people that repeated, Germany-wide representative surveys are not available. The last and only representative survey took place in 2007/2008 (Baier et al. 2009). However, repeated surveys have been conducted in various cities, districts and federal states. Pfeiffer et al. (2018) presented an overview of the results of these surveys. Referring to repeated surveys in twelve areas and among several 10,000 young people in the ninth grade, they show that the proportion of respondents who have committed at least one assault in the past twelve months has fallen from 18.4% in 1998 to 4.9% in 2015; in the same period, robbery rates have fallen from 4.7% to 0.4%. Congruent with the findings of the police crime statistics, particularly strong declines in violent behaviour of young people can be found since approx. 2007<sup>16</sup>. Nevertheless, there have already been declines before 2007, which were not visible in police crime statistics due to an increasing readiness to report victimisations to the police.

Pfeiffer et al. (2018) also examine which factors are responsible for the sharp decline in juvenile violence. The following nine factors can be assumed to have contributed to the decline based on empirical findings:

- the increase in the proportion of young people with higher school-leaving qualifications
- the decline in the use of parental violence
- the increase in parental care as a positive style of upbringing
- the increasing condemnation of violence by peers
- the decline in contact with delinquent friends
- the declining willingness of young people to play truant
- the reduction of leisure activities that are spent in an unstructured and uncontrolled manner

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<sup>16</sup> In Switzerland, too, repeated surveys on young people have shown a significant decline in the prevalence of violence (Ribeaud 2015).

- less agreement with violence-accepting attitudes
- the decline in alcohol consumption.<sup>17</sup>

It is also being investigated whether increasing violence prevention activities are of significance for the decline. However, the problem in this respect is that there is no systematic recording of these prevention activities. Based on a repeated pupil survey conducted in Lower Saxony in 2013 and 2015 there are indications that more and more young people are involved in the following violence prevention activities: Lessons on violence, conflict mediation and self-defence training. However, data from previous surveys are not available, so that the contribution of violence prevention activities to the decline in juvenile violence cannot be conclusively assessed.

*Excursus: Violence at school and the use of knives*

Two phenomena are currently being intensively discussed in Germany: the (supposed) increase in violence at schools, such as the (supposed) increase in the use of knives. With regard to school violence, analyses of surveys conducted repeatedly in the federal state of Lower Saxony in 2013 and 2015 show that there is a decline in intra-school violence (cf. Baier/Bergmann 2016). The decline in physical violence is particularly strong: The total number of victims has been reduced by about one-fifth. The decline in property damage and verbal aggression is somewhat less pronounced (decrease by about one-sixth). These trends are confirmed by data on school accidents: Since 1999, the number of accidents per 1,000 schoolchildren has been falling steadily (cf. Pfeiffer et al. 2018, p. 21ff); the latest available data refer to 2016 and confirm a downward trend. However, it should be noted that more recent data for 2017 or 2018 are not yet available.

In a pupil survey in Berlin, teachers were also asked to assess how often they themselves experience violence in the school context (cf. Baier/Bergmann 2016). The results show that teachers are rarely attacked. About every sixth to seventh teacher stated that he was threatened by a pupil. In fact, less than one percent of teachers were physically attacked. Teachers most frequently report verbal attacks: Every fifth teacher stated that he/she was ridiculed, almost every second teacher

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<sup>17</sup> It is also discussed that the increase in media activities has reduced violent behaviour because children and adolescents spend less time in public space (e.g. Berghuis/De Waard 2017). However, the relationship between media consumption time and criminal behaviour is rather small; it should also be noted that the risk of coming into contact with content that is not appropriate for one's age increases with increasing media time. This in turn can increase the willingness to commit acts of violence. Empirical evidence that the increase in media activity has reduced juvenile delinquency is therefore still lacking.

that he/she was insulted. Verbal hostility is quite common in schools, but physical attacks on teachers are the exception.

The student surveys conducted repeatedly in the federal state of Lower Saxony can also be used to identify possible trends in the use of knives. In the survey, the perpetration of assaults with weapons (including knives) was asked from the perspective of victims and perpetrators. This results in a declining prevalence rate for both perspectives, so that it can be assumed that knives are not used more frequently. However, a comparison of 2013 and 2015 shows an increase in the proportion of young people carrying knives with them. The proportion of young men who at least rarely carry knives with them rose from 27.4% to 29.1% (women: from 6.2% to 6.9%). For other weapons (baton, knuckleduster) no increase is found (see Baier/Bergmann 2018). Even if the increase in knife carrying should not yet be interpreted as a trend, it should still be taken seriously, simply because further analyses can show that knife carrying is an independent influencing factor of violent behaviour. The prevention of knife carrying in particular and of carrying weapons in general, therefore requires increased attention.

### 3.2.2. *Findings on extremism: adults*

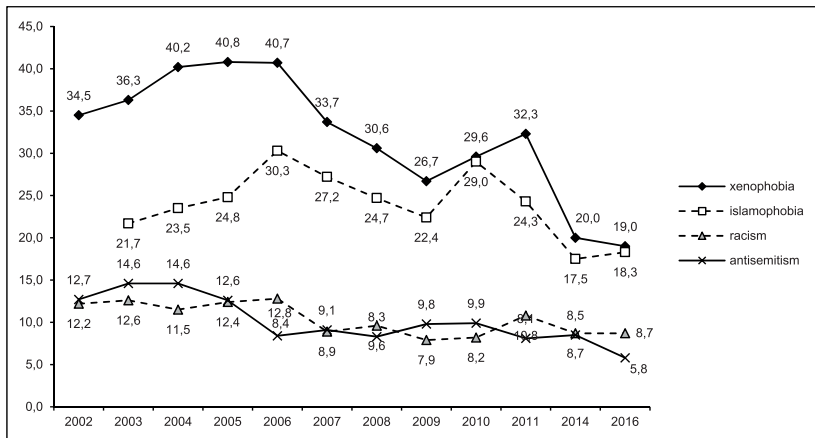
So far there are no survey studies on extremist behaviour in Germany with regard to adults. The data situation is also limited with regard to extremist attitudes. Only in the area of right-wing extremism there is information on trends available on the basis of repeated surveys. Since 2002, the Institute for Interdisciplinary Conflict and Violence Research has conducted surveys on “group focused enmity” (Heitmeyer 2002, Zick et al. 2016). Figure 7 shows the proportion of people in these surveys who agreed to four dimensions of attitudes characteristic of right-wing extremism. It should be noted that only persons of German nationality and without migration background were interviewed between 2002 and 2011. “In 2014 and 2016, on the other hand, all persons with German citizenship, i.e. with or without a migration background, were interviewed. Comparisons are therefore only possible to a limited extent” (Zick et al. 2016, p. 49).<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, the trends before 2014, such as the comparison of 2014 and 2016, allow some important conclusions to be drawn. Firstly, a general increase in right-wing extremist attitudes among the population cannot be assu-

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<sup>18</sup> To what extent this change in the sample composition affects the findings is not further reflected by the authors. It would have been possible to limit the trend analyses for the years 2014 and 2016 to the subsample compatible with the previous surveys; however, this is not done by the authors.

med. In the case of xenophobia, for example, there was a decline in the proportion of respondents who agreed from 40.8% in 2005 to 32.3% in 2011. Secondly, there are also declining proportions of xenophobia and anti-Semitism comparing the years 2014 and 2016; the proportion of racism remains constant. Thirdly, however, negative findings must also be mentioned: It should first be noted that attitudes such as xenophobia and hostility to Muslims are quite widespread – about one in five respondents expressed their agreement.<sup>19</sup> This is even more often the case for other dimensions that were only asked for at a later date and therefore not shown in Figure 7: 49.5% of the respondents had a negative attitude towards people seeking asylum in 2016<sup>20</sup>, 24.9% had a negative attitude towards Sinti and Roma. In addition, in a comparison of 2014 and 2016, there is an increase in the proportion of persons in favour of hostility towards Muslims (“islamophobia”; from 17.5 to 18.3 %) and of devaluation of people seeking asylum (from 44.3 to 49.5 %). The sharp increase in the devaluation of asylum seekers is likely to be linked to the strong influx of refugees in 2015 and 2016. For this attitude dimension of right-wing extremism, but also for the other dimensions, it would be interesting to know how they developed after 2016.

Figure 7: Trends in agreement with right-wing extremist attitudes (in %; source: Zick et al. 2016, p. 50)



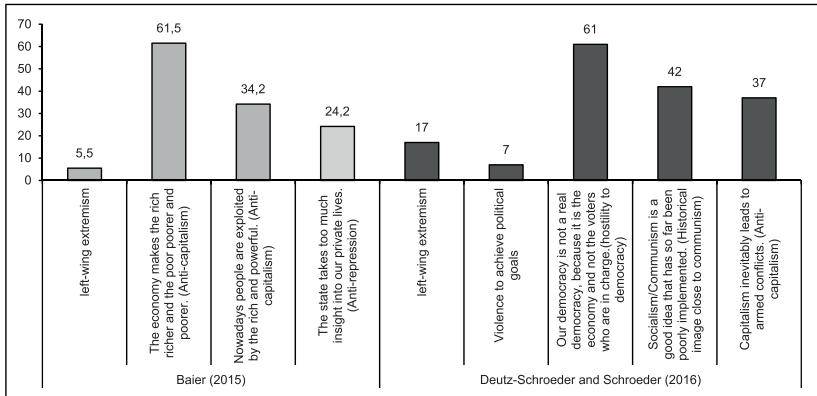
Due to a lack of empirical studies, it is currently not possible to make any statements on trends in left-wing extremism. The two more comprehensive adult surveys were conducted in 2014. Deutz-Schroeder and Schroeder (2016, p. 41ff) conducted a nationwide representative survey of almost 1,400 people in this year, Baier (2015, p. 93ff) a survey of almost 6,000 people in Lower Saxony. In both studies a newly developed instrument was used to measure left-wing extremism. In the Deutz-Schroeder and Schroeder study, this instrument consisted of 14 items assigned to measure four superordinate dimensions: Anti-capitalism/anti-fascism, anti-racism, anti-democratic attitudes and communism. Baier (2015) measures left-wing extremism with ten items assigned to the dimensions anti-capitalism, anti-repression, anti-militarism, communism/state abolition and advocacy of violence.

Figure 8 presents selected results of both surveys. In the Baier study (2015), the proportion of left-wing extremists is estimated at 5.5%, in the Deutz-Schroeder and Schroeder survey (2016) at 17%. The significantly lower proportion in the Baier study (2015) may be due to the fact that advocacy of violence was included in defining left-wing extremism.<sup>21</sup> However, the corresponding items receive very little approval (between 1.2 and 4.6 %). In the study by Deutz-Schroeder and Schroeder (2016), too, advocacy of violence receives rather little support (7%); taking this scale into account, the proportion of left-wing extremism would probably be similar. A central finding of both studies



is at the same time that individual statements containing left-wing extremist attitudes receive a high degree of approval. Similar to what was stated for right-wing extremism, it can thus also be stated for left-wing extremism that individual elements or dimensions are quite common. The numbers in Figure 8 show that statements that are critical of capitalism and democracy in particular receive a high degree of approval. In addition, quite a few respondents show an affinity to socialism or communism.

Figure 8: Approval of left-wing extremist attitudes (in %)



There are also no findings on trends regarding Islamic extremism. The most comprehensive study on this phenomenon dates back several years. In 2005, Brettfeld and Wetzels (2007) interviewed a total of 970 Muslims by telephone in various major West German cities. They measured agreement on various dimensions of Islamic extremist attitudes, such as fundamental religious orientations, superiority of Islam and hostility towards Christian/Western societies, attitudes towards democracy, fundamental rights and the rule of law, religiously motivated violence and terrorist violence. It should first of all be emphasised that approval of violence was found to be rather low. For example, only 7.6% of those questioned agreed with the statement “If it serves the Islamic community, I am prepared to use physical violence against unbelievers”, only 5.5% with the statement “Violence is justified when it helps to spread and enforce the Islam”. In contrast, 91.3% of those questioned confirmed that suicide attacks are cowardly and harm the Muslims. Overall, only 9.4% thought it would be good if certain crimes in Germany were punished with corporal punishment, as in Islamic law.

At the same time, various findings point out that anti-democratic attitudes are in some cases quite widespread. The following findings should be highlighted in this respect:

- 43.4% confirm that people who modernise Islam destroy its true doctrine.
- 46.7% agree with the statement “For me, to obey the commandments of my religion is more important than democracy”.
- 65.6% say that Islam is the only true religion.
- 71.0% are of the opinion that the sexual morale of Western societies is completely decayed.

Brettfeld and Wetzels (2007, p. 201) therefore come to the following conclusion: “Overall, the results of this survey lead to the conclusion that there is a relevant potential in the Muslim resident population, which can be [...] a recruiting field for radicalisation and extremism” and that, depending on operationalisation, can cover up to 16% of the Muslim resident population. At the same time, the authors point out that a generally low level of integration is one of the reasons for this: According to this, “a considerable proportion of Muslims in German society have significant low participation options due to a low level of education, a low level of vocational qualification or even unemployment” (ibid., p. 193).

In a survey of 517 non-German Muslims aged between 14 and 32 years conducted four years later, Geschke et al. (2011) confirm that there is a relevant proportion of Muslims who show a radicalisation tendency. Radicalisation is measured in this study using the following six indicators: Prejudices against the West, prejudices against Jews, religious fundamentalism, negative emotions towards the West, distance to democracy and acceptance of ideologically motivated group violence. In this study, no percentages of Muslims accepting these indicators are presented. Instead, the publication only contains mean values of the scales or items surveyed. Since the answer categories ranged from “1 – don’t agree at all” to “5 – completely agree”, the mean values allow the conclusion that in some cases a fairly high proportion of respondents expressed their agreement. The mean values of prejudices against the West (e.g. “As long as the Western world exploits or oppresses other peoples, there will be no peace in the world”), religious fundamentalism (e.g. “Islam is the only true religion”) and the distance to democracy (“To obey the commandments of my religion is more important to me than the laws of the state in which I live”) are above

the theoretical average of 3.0, so that it can be assumed that a majority of Muslim respondents agreed.<sup>22</sup> If those Muslims are considered who are strictly religious, have a strong hostility towards the West, accept violence and show no tendency towards integration, the proportion reaches 24%, which is above the 16% reported by Brettfeld and Wetzels (2007), which can possibly be explained by the younger age of the people surveyed.

### *3.2.3. Findings on extremism: adolescents*

If survey research on extremism in adolescence is considered, it can be noted that various studies on right-wing extremism were conducted in the 1990s and at the beginning of the 2000s (e.g. Fuchs et al. 2003, Heitmeyer et al. 1992, Kleinert/de Rijke 2000, Melzer 1992, Wetzels/Greve 2001). Thereafter, less attention was paid to right-wing extremism by means of standardised surveys. There are generally hardly any findings from surveys on left-wing extremism and Islamic extremism. Dealing with extremism in adolescence seems important because this phase of life is crucial for political socialisation – although this socialisation is not limited to the youth phase (cf. Baier/Boehnke 2008). Even if, at least in the area of right-wing extremism, young people do not agree more often to right-wing attitudes than older people, instead as Rippl (2005, p. 377) states “a stronger orientation towards xenophobic attitudes can be seen among older people”, a significantly greater participation of young people or adolescents has to be stated regarding practicing right-wing extremist behaviour. In the area of xenophobic violence, for example, young men are the main perpetrators (among others Wahl 2001). According to Backes et al. (2014), “right-wing violent criminals are generally between 14 and 25 years old” (p. 82).

Two studies on youth right-wing extremism in recent years deserve special attention. On the one hand, this concerns a long-term study on young people in Brandenburg conducted since 1993 (Sturzbecher et al. 2012). This study shows that approval of right-wing extremist attitudes declined between 1993 and 2010: “While in 1993 5.4 percent of young people agreed with right-wing extremist statements, completely and 20.1 percent, in part, these shares had almost halved by

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<sup>22</sup> Koopmans (2014) also reports with reference to a 2008 survey of Muslims in Germany and five other countries that 44% of those questioned agree with religious fundamentalist attitudes (measured by the three items “Muslims should return to the roots of Islam”, “There is only one interpretation of the Quran and every Muslim must stick to that” and “The rules of the Quran are more important to me than the laws of the country”); 65% of respondents agreed that the rules of the Koran were more important than the laws of the country in which they live.

2005 (2.8% and 10.4% respectively); since then they have stagnated (2010: 2.9% and 10.5% respectively)” (Burkert 2012, p. 178). Comparable results are obtained for the separately measured dimension of xenophobia.<sup>23</sup> Data after 2010 are not yet available. On the other hand, based on a Germany-wide survey conducted in 2007/2008, representative findings on the prevalence of right-wing extremist attitudes and behaviour are also available. Baier et al. (2009) report that 14.4% of the on average 15 year old German pupils that were surveyed are very xenophobic and 4.3% very anti-Semitic<sup>24</sup>; in addition, there is a considerable proportion of respondents who are considered to be partially xenophobic or anti-Semitic (26.2% and 8.4% respectively). Thus, a fairly wide spread of right-wing extremist attitudes must also be assumed with regard to young people. In addition, xenophobic behavior was also measured in that survey. With reference to their entire lives, 4.3% of the youths reported that they have already committed assault or damage to property motivated by xenophobia. This confirms that even right-wing extremist behaviour in adolescence is not uncommon.<sup>25</sup>

Brettfeld and Wetzels (2007) investigated the prevalence of Islamist extremist attitudes among young people using instruments comparable to those used in their adult survey. Pupils of the ninth and tenth grades in Hamburg, Cologne and Augsburg were interviewed in 2005 and 2006. Among the participants were 500 Muslims. Unfortunately, the presentation of results for the student survey does not allow a direct comparison with the adult survey because presentations of the percentages differ to some degree. However, the findings suggest that Islamic extremist attitudes are more widespread among Muslim youth than among Muslim adults. The following findings are important:

- The statement “If it serves the Islamic community, I am prepared to use physical violence against unbelievers” was agreed by 24.0% of young people, the statement “Violence is justified when it helps to spread and enforce the Islam” was agreed by 21.4%. These values are significantly higher than in the adult survey.
- The fact that suicide attacks are cowardly and harm the Muslims

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<sup>23</sup> “In 1993, 14.4 percent of young people were “completely” in favour of xenophobic statements and 24.0 percent “in part” [...]. In 2010, only 5.9 percent of those questioned were still in favour of xeno-phobic statements ,completely’ and 16.4 percent ‘in part ’” (Burkert 2012, p. 180).

<sup>24</sup> The study classified respondents as very xenophobic or anti-Semitic who on average agreed with the various statements with a value of more than 5.5 (answer categories from “1 – do not agree at all” to “7 – completely agree”).

<sup>25</sup> Survey research on right-wing extremist behaviour has been rare so far. Schmid and Storni (2009) conducted a survey for Switzerland in 2005, focusing on victim experiences. The results show that between 2000 and 2005 about one in ten young people fell victim to right-wing extremist violence or were seriously threatened by right-wing extremist violence.

is confirmed by 75.3% of those questioned which is also below the value of the adult sample.

- 10.2% were of the opinion that it would be good if certain crimes in Germany were punished with corporal punishment, as in Islamic law.<sup>26</sup>
- This also applies to the other items: 36.3% strongly agreed with the statement that people who modernise Islam destroy its true doctrine, 43.6% with the statement "To obey the commandments of my religion is more important to me than democracy" and 50.1% with the statement that Islam is the only true religion. Only with regard to sexual morality Muslim youths are much more tolerant than adults: Only 18.1% believed that the sexual moral of Western societies is completely decayed.

If the various assessments considered together, i.e. those youths who show a political-religious willingness to use violence, then this risk group makes up "with 29.2 % more than a quarter of the sample" (Brettfeld/Wetzels 2007, p. 341). The authors again point out that "experiences of exclusion" are "of eminent importance" for the radicalisation of Muslims (ibid., p. 341). However, it is also emphasized that "religious prejudices and distinctions" should be taken into account and in this respect the contribution of Islamic religiosity to radicalisation should be analysed. This is also underlined by a study from Switzerland: Ribeaud et al. (2017) interviewed on average 17-year-old pupils in the canton of Zurich on extremist attitudes, with four statements submitted for evaluation.<sup>27</sup> Between 15.1 and 46.0 % of men and between 8.8 and 22.1 % of women agreed with the statements. For Muslim youths, a significantly higher approval was noted than for Catholic or Protestant youths. The additional analyses also revealed the following three key findings for prevention:

- The risk factors of extremist attitudes are comparable to the risk factors for aggressive behaviour.
- The most important target population for prevention measures are young men with low education and a migrant background.
- Increasing acceptance of the rule of law and its institutions and strengthening norm orientation should prevent extremist attitudes.

<sup>26</sup> Here a comparison with the adults is not possible, since with the young people the percentage is presented that strongly agreed with the statements.

<sup>27</sup> These statements contained no direct reference to Islam but were formulated in general terms, so that they did not cover any specific form of political extremism. The items were: "Sometimes it is necessary to use violence to fight things that are very unjust", "Sometimes people have to resort to violence to defend their values, convictions or beliefs", "It is okay to support groups that fight injustice with violence" and "Sometimes it is necessary to fight for a better world with violence, attacks or kidnapping".

*Youth extremism reflected in current student surveys*

The prevalence and possible risk factors of various forms of political extremism among young people in Germany can currently be examined most comprehensively using the student surveys conducted by the Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony in the years 2013 and 2015 in ninth-grade classes (2013: 9,512 respondents, 2015: 10,638 respondents; cf. Bergmann et al. 2017). In 2013 and 2015, different instruments were used to measure right-wing extremism and left-wing extremism, and in 2015 an additional instrument was used to measure Islamic extremist attitudes.

Right-wing extremist attitudes were measured by 20 items, including xenophobia (six items, e.g. “Most foreigners are criminals.”), anti-Semitism (three items, e.g. “Jews have too much influence in the world.”), hostility towards Muslims (five items, e.g. “Muslims should be forbidden to immigrate to Germany.”), dictatorship advocacy (three items, e.g. “We should have a leader who rules Germany with a strong hand for the good of all”) and nationalism (three items, e.g. “We must push German interests hard and vigorously abroad.”). Rightwing extremist behaviors were measured with six items covering the committing of various crimes over the past twelve months.<sup>28</sup> All items were only presented to young people who were born in Germany and have German citizenship and for whom both apply to their biological parents (“German young people”).

To capture left-wing extremist attitudes, 13 statements were used: anti-fascism (one item, “Nazis should also be fought by force.”), anti-capitalism (one item, “Nowadays people are exploited by the rich and powerful.”), anti-repression (three items, e.g. “The state takes too much insight into our private lives.”), anti-militarism (one item, “No more euros may be spent on the military.”), communism/abolition of the state (one item, “We can only be truly free if the whole state is abolished.”) and advocacy of violence (six items, e.g. “It is right if the luxury cars of the rich are lit.”). Left-wing extremist behavior was again measured for the last twelve months, using five items.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> These are: someone beaten and injured because he was a foreigner/migrant; things damaged because they belonged to foreigners/migrants; a house damaged that was occupied by foreigners/migrants; someone beaten and injured because he was left; things damaged because they belonged to people who were left; a house or youth club damaged that was occupied by leftists.

<sup>29</sup> These are: at a demonstration throwing glass bottles, stones or similar against the police; setting a car or house on fire to protest against the big businesses and millionaires; beating and injuring someone because he was right; damaging things because they belonged to people who are right; damaging a house or youth club that was occupied by right people.

Islamic extremist or fundamentalist attitudes<sup>30</sup> were measured with nine statements (cf. Pfeiffer et al. 2018, p. 60), which contained the following items: “Islam is the only true religion; all other religions are worth less”, “Muslims are allowed to achieve their goals if necessary also with terrorist attacks”. The statements were submitted to German as well as non-German young people and the various denominational groups for answer; at this point, however, only the answers of Muslim young people are considered.

The various items for measuring attitudes could be answered using response scales ranging from one to seven or one to four (high values = high extremist attitudes). For the analyses, the mean value for all statements of extremism was first calculated; the respondents were then grouped, i.e. respondents with values above 4.00 (seven-step response format) or above 2.50 (four-step response format) were combined into the group of youths with extremist attitudes. With regard to extremist behaviour, young people who have practised at least one behaviour of extremism are distinguished from young people who have not shown such behaviour.

In addition to extremist attitudes and behaviour, attitudes on acceptance of violence in general and on committing violent acts were measured, too. Four items were used to measure violence-accepting attitudes (e.g. “Violence is part of having fun”). Committing violent acts were measured with regard to the past twelve months, asking about robberies, extortion, sexual violence and various forms of assault (Bergmann et al. 2017, p. 47).

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<sup>30</sup> Not all of the statements presented to the young people for answering were directly related to the use of force, which is why the scale covers both fundamentalist orientations and Islamic extremist attitudes.

Figure 9: Trends in violence and extremism (in %)

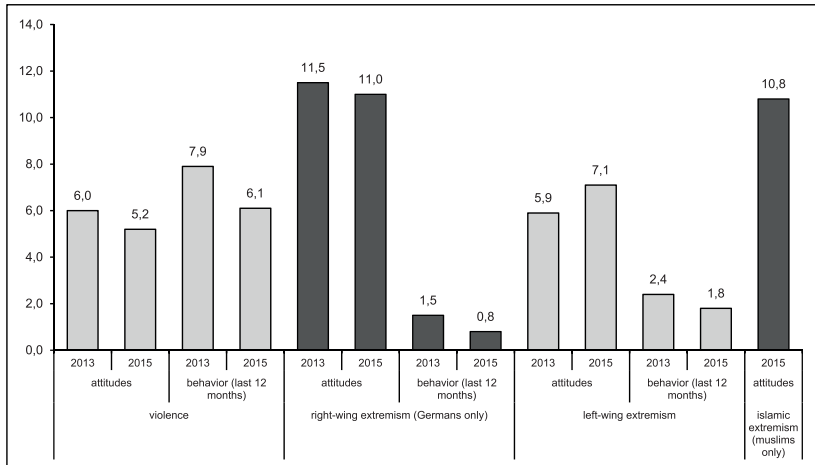


Figure 9 shows that approval of extremist attitudes is quite common among Lower Saxony's youth. In the 2015 survey, 11.0% of young people are classified as right-wing extremists (only German youths), 7.1% as left-wing extremists (all respondents) and 10.8% as Islamic extremists or fundamentalists (only Muslims). Attitudes towards violence are approved by 5.2% of young people. Extremist behaviour is carried out only by a small minority of young people: 0.8% of German young people said they had committed right-wing extremist behaviour, 1.8% of young people said they had committed left-wing extremist behaviour. At least one form of violence was committed by 6.1% of young people. Most of the numbers shown in Figure 9 are lower in 2015 than in 2013, i.e. declining trends can be observed. Only the proportion of young people with left-wing extremist attitudes has risen slightly; no comparison is possible with regard to Islamic extremism. A comparison between extremisms should not be made (e.g. "right-wing extremism is more widespread than left-wing extremism"), because the scales and indices are not constructed equivalently. Right-wing extremist attitudes, for example, were not captured with items that contain an approval of violence, which is the case with left-wing extremist and Islamic extremist or fundamentalist attitudes. Overall, the analyses confirm on the one hand that at least extremist attitudes are shared by a substantial proportion of young people; on the other hand, a slight decline in extremism can be assumed, with the exception of left-wing extremist attitudes.



Table 2 shows correlations between various explanatory factors and violent resp. extremist attitudes. The analyses here are limited to attitudes because, firstly, they are more common than behavior. Secondly, behaviour, particularly extremist behaviour, depends on whether the social environment of young people contains those groups that are regarded as opponents of political extremism and can be attacked accordingly. These opportunity structures cannot be adequately measured in survey studies. To analyse the relationships between the explanatory factors and the attitudes, Table 2 shows product-moment correlations (Pearson's  $r$ ), which can vary between 0 (no correlation) and +1 or -1 (perfect positive or negative correlation). Correlations below .100 can be classified as negligible and will not be interpreted further, even if they are shown as significant due to the large sample size. Only the data from the 2015 survey are included in the analyses, as extremist Islamic attitudes were measured in this year. All respondents are included in the analysis of violence-accepting attitudes, i.e. at least 9,733 respondents.<sup>31</sup> With regard to right-wing extremist, left-wing extremist and Islamic extremist or fundamentalist attitudes, only subsamples are considered, because the corresponding questions were placed in questionnaire modules that were not answered by all young people. The number of Muslim respondents ( $N_{\text{Min}} = 284$ ) is particularly low, which means that correlations that have a comparable level as for the other scales are in part not shown as significant. Correlations highlighted in grey in Table 2 are correlations that differ from the other correlations in the direction of the relationship and reach a value above .100.

The analyses of the demographics and social status variables show that young men and young people with a low level of education<sup>32</sup> more frequently agree to the four attitude measures; both factors thus prove to be relevant risk factors. Only with regard to Islamic extremism is it true that boys agree only slightly more often than girls (not significant). A low social status has no significant correlation with acceptance of violent or extremist attitudes, which does not confirm assumptions that social disadvantage is related to radicalisation.<sup>33</sup> Respondents

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<sup>31</sup> The fact that the number differs from the total number of respondents mentioned above (10,638) can be explained by the fact that respondents did not give an answer to all questions (missing values) or that numerous questions were not asked in special schools focusing on students with learning disabilities, that were also included in the survey (in order not to make the questionnaire too extensive). Students with learning disabilities are therefore largely excluded from the analyses.

<sup>32</sup> The targeted school leaving certificate was recorded. If young people attend a Hauptschule (lowest school track in Germany), then a corresponding school leaving certificate was coded as the targeted school leaving certificate. In schools that offer different certificates (e.g. comprehensive schools), respondents should indicate in the questionnaire which certificate they are aiming for.

<sup>33</sup> The social disadvantage was assessed both objectively and subjectively. An objective social disadvantage is measured by the dependence on state transfer payments, which is reflected in the unemployment of at

of non-German origin more often agree with violent and left-wing extremist attitudes. Since Muslims usually have a non-German origin, in the sense that at least one parent was not born in Germany or has no German citizenship, the relationship between the non-German origin and the Islamic extremist attitudes cannot be analysed, but the influence of the possession of a German citizenship. Muslims with a German citizenship agree with Islamic extremist attitudes less often than Muslims without a German citizenship. This form of institutional integration can therefore prove to be a protective factor against radicalisation.

No strong, but also no negligible correlations are found for the family factors. Although the experience of separation or divorce of parents or the death of at least one parent is not of great importance (although they tend to indicate a risk factor of radicalisation), it is found that the experience of severe parental violence<sup>34</sup> is a risk factor; and even more so the experience of parental warmth<sup>35</sup> is a protective factor. Parenting styles play a role in radicalisation, although it should be noted that the two factors mentioned seem to be somewhat less important for Islamic extremism.

In addition to family factors, school factors are also important for radicalisation. Initially, it is not confirmed that experiences of bullying by fellow students represent a risk factor – although, with the exception of Islamic extremism, a weak tendency can be observed in accordance with this assumption ( $r < .100$ ). What is important, however, are school failures that are reflected in a poor school performance: The poorer the school performance, the higher the approval of violence-accepting or extremist attitudes. This correlation, which can be found for all four attitudes under consideration, is an independent effect, i.e. it remains significant if the targeted school leaving certificate is controlled in the analyses (young people with lower certificates also tend to have poorer school grades). In this respect, radicalisation can be seen as a possible consequence if young people cannot cope with the performance expectations in schools.

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least one parent or the receipt of social welfare/unemployment benefit II. The subjective disadvantage was measured by the question “How much of what you want can you afford” (from “everything” to “almost nothing at all”). Although there are almost consistently positive correlations, according to which an increasing disadvantage is also accompanied by a stronger agreement with violence-accepting or extremist attitudes, the correlations are very low.

<sup>34</sup> The pupils should state whether they have experienced three behaviours during childhood and/or the last twelve months by their mother and/or father (e.g. “hit me with the fist or kicked me”).

<sup>35</sup> In relation to childhood, students should report how often the mother or father showed six behaviours (e.g. “really cared about me”).

Factors that describe the neighbourhood and the immediate social environment alongside family and school are not directly relevant to Islamic extremism. For the other attitudes, however, there are direct relationships. This applies, above all, to the contact with delinquent friends<sup>36</sup>: The more delinquent friends a teenager knows, the more likely he agrees with violent, right-wing and left-wing extremist attitudes. A neighbourhood perceived as highly cohesive<sup>37</sup> as well as the membership in associations<sup>38</sup> on the other hand represent protective factors, whereby the correlations are to be classified as rather small. In this respect, it is only partially confirmed that neighbourhoods and associations are important for the prevention of radicalisation.

Finally, relations between different personality characteristics and the four attitudes were analysed. A high degree of religiousness<sup>39</sup> tends to be a protective factor, but the correlations are small ( $r < .100$ ). One exception concerns Islamic extremism: here there is a positive correlation, according to which a stronger religiousness of a Muslim youth is accompanied by a higher approval of Islamic extremist attitudes. For the other two personality factors there are comparable correlations, but for Islamic extremism they are again lower: young people with low self-control<sup>40</sup> and lack of acceptance of norms<sup>41</sup> show a stronger agreement with violence-accepting and extremist attitudes.

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<sup>36</sup> Contact with delinquent friends was measured by questions on how many friends the students know, who committed an assault or a shoplifting in the last twelve months for example.

<sup>37</sup> The young people should answer statements like "The people in my area help each other." or "You can trust the people in the neighborhood."

<sup>38</sup> Membership in eight associations (e.g. volunteer fire brigade, sports club, gymnastics club, riding club) was asked for.

<sup>39</sup> This was measured by questions such as "How important is religion for you personally in your every-day life?" or "How often have you visited a church (or mosque, synagogue) in the last twelve months?"

<sup>40</sup> Low self-control was measured by statements indicating a high willingness to take risks (e.g. "I like taking risks simply because it's fun" or "I like testing my limits by doing something dangerous.").

<sup>41</sup> To measure acceptance of norms statements such as "If you want something from life, you cannot obey everything that the law requires" or "You do not need to take it so exactly with the law as long as you do not endanger someone else's life" were used.

Table 2: Relationships between explanatory factors and violence-accepting or extremist attitudes (Pearson correlations shown)

|  |                                       | violence<br>(N <sub>min</sub> = 9.733) | right-wing<br>extremism<br>(Germans<br>only; N <sub>min</sub> =<br>4.955) | left-wing ex-<br>tremism<br>(Muslims<br>only; N <sub>min</sub> = 3.151) | islamic ex-<br>tremism<br>(Muslims<br>only; N <sub>min</sub> =<br>284) |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| demogra-<br>phy                            | Male gender                           | .243 ***                               | .133 ***  | .170 ***  | .045   |
|  | Non-German/German nationality         | .112 ***                               | -   | .142 ***  | -.123 *  |
| social sta-<br>tus                         | Low school education                  | .159 ***                               | .233 ***  | .096 ***  | .135 *   |
|  | Dependent on social welfare           | .054 ***                               | .067 ***  | .085 ***  | .043   |
|  | Deprivation                           | .036 ***                               | .059 ***  | .069 ***  | -.068  |
| family                                     | Separation/divorce/death of a parent  | .034 **                                | .065 ***  | .045 *  | .028   |
|  | Experiencing severe parental violence | .135 ***                               | .106 ***  | .099 ***  | .072   |
|  | Parental warmth                       | -.161 ***                              | -.125 ***   | -.158 ***   | -.116 *  |
| school                                     | Bad school grades                     | .172 ***                               | .204 ***  | .114 ***  | .222 ***   |
|  | Victim of school bullying             | .039 ***                               | .053 ***  | .072 ***  | -.005  |
| neigh-<br>bourhood/<br>other con-<br>texts | Neighbourhood cohesion                | -.123 ***                              | -.076 ***   | -.126 ***   | .015   |
|  | Member of an association              | -.078 ***                              | -.107 ***   | -.094 ***   | .015   |
| personal-<br>ly                            | Delinquent friends                    | .311 ***                               | .174 ***  | .283 ***  | .075   |
|  | Low self control                      | .384 ***                               | .169 ***  | .298 ***  | .207 ***   |
|  | High religiosity                      | -.028 **                               | -.099 ***   | -.061 ***   | .357 ***   |
|  | Lack of acceptance of norms           | .541 ***                               | .210 ***  | .392 ***  | .097   |

\* p &lt; .05, \*\* p &lt; .01, \*\*\* p &lt; .001

*In summary, the analyses show firstly that there is a decline in violence with regard to both adults and young people. However, the reasons for this decline cannot be conclusively determined due to the lack of data. A challenge for future prevention work is to systematically re-*

*cord one's own activities in such a way that relationships between crime trends and prevention measures carried out can be investigated. Secondly, the analyses regarding political extremism show that an increase in extremist attitudes cannot be proven. Right-wing extremism even tends to have a declining trend – among adults and young people. However, two restrictions must be taken into account here: On the one hand, there are currently no findings from studies after 2016, so it is unclear which trends have emerged in recent times. On the other hand, findings on trends in left-wing extremism and Islamic extremism cannot be reliably named because there are hardly any survey studies on these forms of extremism. Regardless of the trends, existing studies show that extremist attitudes are quite widespread, which underlines the challenge of future prevention work to restore public confidence in democracy and the political system. Thirdly, the analyses of the influencing factors of violence-accepting and extremist attitudes in adolescence confirm that the risk and protective factors for violence and radicalisation are to some extent the same, although for Islamic extremism there are in part also divergent findings. A future challenge of prevention work is, according to the findings, that those population groups that are at greater risk of breaking central norms must be reached. These include above all young men, people with low education, young people who had little positive experience in family and school and who have a tendency to seek risk and danger.*

#### **4. The prevention of violence and political extremism**

In the following, various principles of violence and crime prevention will first be presented, followed by a discussion of extremism prevention measures. The principles of violence prevention are considered here because firstly the report deals with both (physical) violence and political extremism, and secondly because there is a clear decline in violence behaviour in both the police crime statistics and in surveys, which may also be explained by the implementation of prevention measures. Thirdly, it can be assumed that at least some of the principles can also be applied to the prevention of extremism, insofar as the previous analyses showed that the factors influencing the different phenomena are at least partially comparable. Prevention measures are usually divided into primary, secondary and tertiary measures (or universal, selective and indicated measures). In the following, the primary or universal measures are dealt with in particular. Since there is a large number of introductions to violence prevention measures (e.g. Beelmann/Raab 2007, Scheithauer et al. 2012), only a brief assessment of various principles is to be made here, whereby these principles are presented in each case along a guiding thesis.

#### 4.1. Principles of violence prevention

*Prevention should take place early in life:* Various effective violence prevention programmes start very early in childhood. These include the nurse-family partnership programme, which looks after young mothers with specific risk characteristics during pregnancy. This programme was also transferred to Germany with “Pro Kind”. Other programmes designed to impart skills that are undoubtedly also crucial for the prevention of extremism usually begin in kindergarten. This includes “EFFEKT”, which teaches children how to express feelings and anticipate consequences of action. The “Papilio”, “Paths” and “Faustlos” programmes, which also work with kindergarten and primary school children, try a similar approach.

*A positive development needs good role models:* Children’s first role models can be found in the family. But other good examples can also come from very different areas. Teachers, trainers, neighbours, older students, etc. should be mentioned here. The idea that a positive development requires good role models is taken up by mentoring programmes. These include “Big brothers, big sisters” from the US and “Balu und Du” from Germany.

*It takes an entire village to raise a child:* Preventive measures must at best be carried out in cooperation with various actors. Networking is often mentioned in this context. This refers to the cooperation of families, schools, police, courts, social work, associations, etc. The establishment of prevention councils, which are increasingly being set up in towns and communities, takes account of the idea of networking. These councils bring the various actors together in one board, create a space for mutual knowledge and decide jointly on measures to be implemented.<sup>42</sup> The “Communities that Care” programme is a project that has been successfully committed to the motto that prevention requires the participation of the entire community. This programme proceeds in different steps: Once a municipal structure has been created, a survey is conducted to identify the problems that exist in a community with regard to children and young people. The results are discussed with local representatives and a joint decision will be made on the problems to be addressed. Depending on the problem selected, various evidence-based programmes are available, which can be adopted, but the municipalities are also free to implement their own prevention

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. also the “Magdeburg Declaration” of the 21st German Congress on Crime Prevention (<http://www.praeventionstag.de/html/download.cms?id=519&datei=Magdeburger-Erklarung-519.pdf>).

ideas. After a certain period of time, another survey is carried out to determine whether or not the objectives were achieved or which problems persist.

*Fewer opportunities, fewer thieves:* For many young people, violence and delinquency are a unique phenomenon or part of a short phase. The reduction of the delinquency of these youths can take place via the reduction of crime opportunities. The main way to reduce the likelihood of a crime is through higher behavioural control or a so-called higher informal social control. A “culture of control” at schools, in neighbourhoods, associations, etc. is a possible step in this direction.

*The family is a central place for prevention:* According to numerous studies, parenting styles are related to delinquent behaviour. Various prevention programmes therefore focus on improving parent-child interaction. The evidence-based programme “Triple-P” (Positive Parenting Program) is worth mentioning here. The aim of this programme is to establish a positive relationship between parents and child. In addition, strategies are taught on how to deal adequately with children’s problem behaviour. “Functional Family Therapy” as another family-related programme focuses more on families whose children have already become deviant or delinquent. Communication strategies and behaviour within the family are addressed by this programme.

*School is a central place of prevention:* Not only the family, but also schools are to be classified as a central place of prevention, since effective prevention concepts have also been developed for this context. The Anti-Bullying-Program of Olweus should be emphasized, which tries to establish a clear anti-violence culture at school through measures on different levels. The programme is based on the following principles: Develop warmth, interest and commitment of teachers, set fixed limits for unacceptable behaviour, show consistent but not hostile reactions to rule violations, practice a certain degree of observation and control (e.g. by pause supervision). In Germany, the “Konflikt-KULTUR” programme was developed on the basis of the Olweus concept. It is aimed in particular at teachers and helps to implement undisturbed teaching and non-violent conflict resolution strategies. Conflict mediation programmes on the other hand are especially aimed at students. Selected students are trained as mediators who solve conflicts between other students by means of communication. Another effective concept relating to schools is the “Klasse-2000” programme.

*Hard punishments do not have a deterrent effect:* The fact that hard punishments have a special preventive effect, i.e. deter offenders from further offences, can be regarded as disproved; additionally, severe punishments do not show a general preventive effect (i.e. persons who have so far been inconspicuous are not deterred from committing crimes simply because of the threat of severe punishments). Against the background of the available scientific findings, discussions about the tightening of criminal law seem unnecessary, which are usually discussed again and again on an irregular basis after spectacular criminal acts. With regard to extremism, it can also be assumed that new or stricter criminal norms hardly influence this behaviour. Prevention does not take the form of legislation.

*Preventive measures are usually not counterproductive:* Various measures have repeatedly proven that they effectively prevent crime and violence. The “Grüne Liste Prävention” of the State Prevention Council of Lower Saxony includes a number of prevention programmes classified as evidence-based (see Groeger-Roth/Hasenpusch 2011). At the same time, it is also true that no crimereducing effect could be proven for various programmes, but also no counterproductive effects. It is rarely the case that a programme does the opposite of what it intends to do. This opens up the possibility of treading new paths of prevention, of trying out new ways of addressing and working with young people. Prevention depends on the further and new development of measures and programmes.

*Even groups that are difficult to access can be reached with prevention measures:* These groups include for example socially disadvantaged households or migrant households. In the past, local youth and leisure centres were used to reach the children from these households. In addition, there are various other approaches to better reach migrant families, for example. Increased use of social workers with a migrant background is a possible way forward. In addition, attempts are being made in various cities to reach migrants at low thresholds via discussion groups; the “femmes tables” are an example of this (cf. also the portal [www.pufii.de](http://www.pufii.de) operated by the German Prevention Congress, Crime Prevention Council of Lower Saxony and the German-European Forum for Urban Security).



#### *4.2. The prevention of political extremism*

Taking into account the findings on similar explaining factors of violent and extremist attitudes, these principles are certainly also applicable in part to the prevention of political extremism. There is no doubt in the field of extremism that negative developments can be prevented if families are reached, competences are taught in schools and the various actors in a community work together. However, specific programmes and measures are also needed that take account of the respective contents of extremism.

In the following, selected (mostly universal-preventive) projects or approaches to the prevention of extremism will be presented, which are dedicated to the prevention of extremist attitudes as well as extremist behaviours. Nevertheless, a restriction must be pointed out: Gruber and Lützing (2017) recently investigated which projects are being carried out in Germany to prevent extremism. A total of 721 projects were identified for the years 2014/2015. The clear focus was on the prevention of right-wing extremism (three quarters of projects; left-wing extremism: 4%, Islamic extremism: 14%; different extremisms: 13%) and universal prevention. So far, the prevention of extremism in German-speaking countries has essentially been the prevention of right-wing extremism. Experience in the prevention of other extremisms is only gradually being gained. In this respect, the present literature does not yet allow to formulate best-practice measures or to present evidence-based prevention measures with reference to the entire area of extremism.

Beelmann (2017, p. 54ff) recently formulated recommendations for development-oriented prevention in the area of right-wing extremism. These recommendations should also apply to other areas of extremism. It is recommended to enable children to have positive experiences of social diversity (getting to know different forms of social categorisation, including the parents), to teach them social-cognitive skills and social competence, to provide them identity-generating offers (which allow them to take responsibility, receive recognition and thus build up a positive identity), to provide political and cultural educational offers (forms of democracy education beyond classical knowledge transfer) and to intensify contact measures.

Even more comprehensive and focused on the prevention of extremism in general, the Eisenman and Flavahan Model (2017) distinguishes four levels to which preventive activities should refer:

- Individual level: here, skills in dealing with challenging situations and increasing resilience, addressing feelings of belonging and self-worth, and identifying and treating mental illness and addiction abuse are among other things required.
- Level of relationship: here it is necessary to support parents in risk constellations or families affected by separation and divorce, to prevent domestic violence, to strengthen peers to rely on non-violent conflict resolution strategies and to generally strengthen role models (e.g. also critically attuned, religious leaders).
- Community level: this requires, among other things, the networking of religious communities and other urban organisations, investment in education and training, strengthen social cohesion, the integration of migrants and a clear positioning, e.g. through campaigns against violence and extremism.
- Society level: for the prevention of extremism it is important to ensure social prosperity, housing, health, access to education, etc.. Moreover, it is important that there is also a clear position against violence and extremism at this level and that above all the social media, which are of great importance to young people, are involved in prevention work.

With regard to right-wing extremist youth, Hohnstein (2017) talks about various principles that can be generalised to work with violent radical or extremist youth in total. This includes a critical but accepting approach, the relationship work, the holistic work related to the whole person and possible problems, the need and individual case orientation and the inclusion of social contexts. This requires adequately qualified specialists, a heterogeneous team (regarding gender and disciplinary affiliation), cooperation with other actors in the help system and a longterm orientation. With regard to her work with Salafist youth, Yuzva Clement (2017) also stresses the need to refrain from a “deficit-oriented perspective”; “young people who turn to Salafism should also be accompanied critically and supportively in their identity work”. Glaser and Figlestahler (2016) also point out that prevention work covers the biographical needs of young people and that these needs must be made conscious and dealt with in pedagogical discussions. Glaser (2016) therefore proposes the following principles for working with (Islamist) radicalised young people: Differentiation between attitude and person, understanding, trust, a multi-level approach, work with social contexts. In the following, some of the levels named by Eisenman and Flavahan (2017) will be considered further.

*Individual level:* Beelmann (2017) presents an overview of measures that relate to the reduction of prejudices or the development of tolerance and that can generally serve to prevent radicalisation in the sense of universal prevention. These measures include promoting inter-ethnic contacts, imparting knowledge and strengthening individual skills (including empathy and civil courage training). Important measures on an individual level also include: the recognition of radical messages (e.g. learning to check sources for their reliability), the strengthening of democratic competence, the facilitation of experiences of self-esteem and self-efficacy and the addressing and processing of perceived injustices and perceived grievances.

*Relationship level (especially family and school):* Families should be supported in two ways: On the one hand, parents often lack knowledge about different extremisms; on the other hand, they need competence in dealing with radicalising children (Sikkens et al. 2017). HAYAT ("Life") is a current intervention project focusing on Islamic radicalisation (see Sischka/Berczyk 2017). Primarily the project works with the family, which needs "professional contacts in its efforts to win back the radicalised son or daughter" (p. 343). If necessary, HAYAT's work is not only aimed at the family, but also at other important people in other contexts. This initiative is an advisory service with a low-threshold structure; those seeking advice turn to the advisors on their own initiative.

Various prevention approaches are devoted to the school environment. Keidel (2017), for example, presents an offer for schools, which provides an information platform for the school's Intranet/Internet, which contains the most important content on right-wing extremism and which can be used and further developed for school lessons. Kiefer (2017) refers to the "clearing procedure and case management" model, which also refers primarily to schools. The aim of the project is the early identification of radicalisation processes. The focus is on a so-called clearing team consisting of various external cooperation partners with appropriate expertise (e.g. youth welfare office, independent youth welfare organisations, police). The clearing procedure is multi-level and can be individually adapted. Another important feature is "clear control and continuous monitoring, which can also provide clarity in a confusing "helper carousel"" (p. 338).

Eser Davolio and Lenzo (2017) list the following school-related prevention measures: the establishment of a supportive and appreciative class climate; the provision of information on different (religious) at-

titudes and values as well as on politics and democracy; cooperation with parents, which should include further education and offers for discussion and also address parents with a lack of German language skills; the further training of teachers; advice and information events for pupils; the establishment of school social work and a crisis intervention group (in cooperation with the school psychological service). Concrete school projects to increase intercultural education are presented by El-Mafaalani et al. (2016, p. 8ff) and refer to programmes of the Violence Prevention Network, the association [ufuq.de](http://ufuq.de) or the offer “Dialog macht Schule”. In this context, it should also be mentioned that the implementation of a democratic school culture is an important goal (cf. Guthmann 2011).

Theatre plays also represent a universal prevention measure of extremism that can be implemented at school. One example is the play “Virgin without Paradise”, which tries to raise awareness of Islamist radicalisation (Wegel 2017).

Nordbruch (2017) also refers to the need for Islamic religious education that sensitises people to “inner-Islamic diversity” (p. 160). In addition, migration biographies should be dealt with, for example, on the basis of well-known personalities; the discussion of experiences of racism and discrimination could also be intensified as well as the thematisation of conflicts in the Middle East.

According to Steffen (2015, p. 21), successful conditions of school prevention represent precisely formulated goals, the avoidance of stigmatisation, the structural anchoring of prevention work and profound pedagogical expertise.

*Community level:* The municipalities are a crucial place for the prevention of political extremism. The Belgian example of the municipality of Molenbeek shows under what urban conditions the radicalisation of young people can take place, but also how it can be prevented through concerted action. It becomes clear that prevention primarily requires personnel resources: the local police department, which is supposed to prevent radicalisation, has been doubled; it has also been trained with a view to preventing radicalisation. In addition, a team of social workers was hired.

At the urban level, cooperation between the various actors is needed. In the area of Islamic extremism, this includes cooperation with Muslim communities: They enjoy credibility and can reach vulnerable people; however, cooperation presupposes a commitment to demo-

cracy and the rejection of all forms of misanthropy. “With regard to the spatial orientation of projects, locally and communally anchored approaches are particularly important. It makes sense to involve local Muslim communities, taking into account the different representation of different actors” (El-Mafaalani et al. 2016, p. 264). However, there are also critical voices regarding the involvement of Muslim communities, which is based on the fact that Muslim youth do not regularly visit mosques and therefore cannot be reached through them – this also applies to converts who are not necessarily involved in mosque structures. Some radicalised young people also refuse to seek out and pray in many mosques because of the Takfir principle.

*Society level (media and democracy education):* Due to the fact that (social) media play an important role in the process of radicalisation, approaches are increasingly being discussed that are intended to counter the extremist contents presented by the media with alternative information, so-called counter-narratives. An extensive study by Frischlich et al. (2017) recently looked at the dissemination, structure and effect of counter-narratives. Among other things, it is proven that narratives that tell stories in an attractive way have an effect; narratives that refer to argumentation or humour, on the other hand, are less effective. The authors summed it up as follows: “Videos against extremism show their effectiveness above all in the ‚application‘ of democratic, peaceful worldviews and not in the ‚against‘ argumentation or the satirical devaluation of others” (p. 271).

Further research is needed on the effect of counter-narratives. It is not ruled out that these may also have an opposite effect. Ernst et al. (2017) report, for example, that comments on videos by the Federal Agency for Civic Education devoted to Islam (“Begriffswelten Islam”) contained anti-Muslim content. The explicit examination of prejudices and stereotypes may also consolidate them instead of putting them into question. Böckler and Allwinn (2017, p. 251) emphasise: “Important is above all the authenticity of the messenger. Promising messengers of counter-narratives in the past were celebrities such as athletes and actors, but also people who left the extremist scene as well as survivors of extremist attacks”. Günther et al. (2016, p. 192) also emphasise that “work should increasingly be done with Muslim role models in order to present visible examples against the ideology that Muslims cannot be successful”. In agreement with this, Frindte et al. (2016, p. 151) propose an increased visibility of “critical thirds”, or more generally: of critical role models. “Critical thirds can be people who left the

jihadist scene or representatives of reflected Islamic interpretations. Civil-society initiatives by Muslims must also be publicly and mediably strengthened in this context". The concept of "critical thirds" can certainly also be applied to other forms of extremism.

Another universal prevention measure is the education of media competence: It is important "to focus more strongly on imparting media competence. Especially adolescents must learn to question the easily available catch-all explanations on the Internet" (Böckler/Allwinn, 2017, p. 251).

Beyond this, the operators of platforms have a responsibility to identify and delete extremist content. In addition, programmes can increasingly be used that automatically present information that contradicts the searched extremist terms (so-called redirect method).

The fact that communication is increasingly shifting to social networks suggests that the activities shown here reflect radicalisation processes at an early stage. Within the framework of a project network started in 2017, communication processes in social networks are to be analysed with the aim of developing an instrument for the event-related monitoring of extremist agitation (Böckler et al. 2017).

Furthermore, measures are also needed to strengthen democratic awareness. Democracy lives from the conviction of the population in the superiority of this basic political order over all other orders. The most comprehensive democratic awareness education programme is currently financed by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth: the "Demokratie leben" programme (initially until the end of 2019). In addition to numerous other measures, more than 70 model projects also being funded, some of which are based on new prevention approaches.

*Networking as a prerequisite for prevention work:* The establishment of local, regional and further-reaching networks is also central to successful work in the field of extremism prevention. Neumann (2016, p. 242) formulates this clearly: "All are called for here: citizens' initiatives, associations, non-profit associations and foundations, Muslim groups, private companies and – in the state sector – not primarily the security authorities, but cities and communities, schools and social institutions." The following aspects seem to be important here:

- Visibility of the different actors is needed. Internet platforms such as [www.pufii.de](http://www.pufii.de) are important for this.
- Networking at a European level is also needed (e.g. Erasmus+ programme). This seems particularly necessary because there are programme experiences in other countries which give indications of how effective prevention could be (cf. among others Neumann 2017; RAN 2017; Young et al. 2016).
- An important role is played by nationwide competence centres (cf. Köhler/Hoffmann 2017). In general, the level of the federal states seems to be particularly relevant for the further development of prevention. Kiefer (2015) and Ceylan und Kiefer (2018) report promising initiatives for various federal states: In North Rhine-Westphalia, for example, the “Wegweiser” programme is being implemented in various cities (setting up advice centres, establishing a network, offering an exit programme). A prevention network against Salafism has been implemented in Hesse. The network for prevention in Hamburg works together with Muslim partners, whose focus is on advisory teams. In Lower Saxony there is the “Centre for Islamism Prevention”.
- With regard to the entire Federal Republic of Germany, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees offers an advisory centre on radicalisation (Endres 2014). The “Demokratie leben” programme (see above) and the diverse activities of the Federal Agency for Civic Education (also of the regional headquarters) should also be mentioned at this level.
- At the municipal level, cooperation with the police is important, for example in the “Prävention im Team” project. The cities also see “the necessity of setting up or expanding security networks or crime prevention councils” (Deutscher Städtetag 2017, p. 4). Sestoft et al. (2017) also recommend cooperation between police, social services and psychiatry – a measure that was implemented in Denmark.
- For all these activities, trained personnel must be available. Further education is particularly important in such a dynamically changing field as extremism (e.g. offers of the Violence Prevention Network). The training of social workers with a Muslim background is also increasingly being implemented. Especially in the work of deradicalisation in the field of Islamic extremism it is pointed out that advisors with a Muslim background or knowledge of Islam are advantageous (Ülger/Çelik 2016; Glaser/Figlstahler 2016).



*Special area Prison:* The penal system is regarded as a place that can promote radicalisation processes. On the one hand, this is the case because incarceration is a challenging experience that questions existing identity constructions and triggers the search for new patterns of orientation. On the other hand, there are convicted prisoners who have committed extremist crimes and can try to convince fellow prisoners of their ideologies. With regard to juvenile detention, Leuschner (2017) reports that three out of four institutions have been confronted with incidents of extremism. This includes, for example, that young people showed behaviour during imprisonment that suggested the existence of radical attitudes. About half of the institutions have offers to counteract a political or religious radicalisation (e.g. exit programmes, cooperation with Violence Prevention Network, time of thought training). In this respect, it cannot be said that the institutions are not aware of their exposed risk. However, further commitment is necessary, especially because there is the impression that “the current focus is on forms of religiously motivated extremism” (ibid., p. 262) and other forms may not be sufficiently appreciated. It is to be expected, for example, that in the near future left-wing extremist perpetrators of violence will also increasingly be found in the prison system, for whom deradicalisation concepts are still lacking.

Illgner (2017, p. 52) demands the following with regard to the prevention of extremism in the prison system: in prisons, fundamental rights should be adhered and treatment should be characterised by mutual respect; staff should have a basic knowledge of the subject of radicalisation; risk assessments should be carried out regularly and should not be based solely on the results of standardised instruments; the practice of religion should be guaranteed; intervention should include educational, work and leisure activities, psychological and cognitive measures and, if necessary, family involvement.

In addition, innovative projects such as theatre pedagogy could be examined more intensively. Wegel et al. (2017) report that theatre pedagogy can have a lasting effect if it is not understood as entertainment alone, “but is selected thematically and professionally accompanied” (p. 11).

In Austria, an “overall package for the prevention of extremism and deradicalisation in the prison system” was adopted in 2016, which includes measures in the areas of training, security and care (cf. Hofinger/Schmidinger 2017). These include more comprehensive offers of talks for radicalised prisoners as well as increased cooperation with



probation services after release. The measures taken so far were examined in a qualitative study. It can be ascertained that various measures have been implemented as far as possible, such as the implementation of a liaison service to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and the anchoring of offers of talks. At the same time, two challenges are identified: 1. “(to prevent further) radicalisation in prison”; 2. to find the “balance between security measures and ,normalisation“” (Hofinger/Schmidinger 2017, p. 145). This balance implies that extremist detainees should participate in normal prison life, but at the same time receive special treatment (higher safety combined with longer confinement and isolation). “In some institutions, however, the strategy of normalization is more a program than reality” (ibid., p. 146). It is also recommended that Islamic pastoral care be anchored in the institutions.

*Special area refugees:* With regard to refugees, it should first of all be emphasised that refugees do not generally present an increased risk of radicalisation. A survey of 4,500 refugees in Germany, for example, shows that 96% of those who fled consider democracy the best form of government and also more than nine out of ten consider free elections, the protection of civil rights and equal rights for men and women to be fundamental elements of democracy. At the same time, however, almost one in two fugitives experienced disadvantages because of their own origins (Brücker et al. 2016). “In view of the large number of refugees admitted to the municipalities in recent months, this population group must be given greater consideration as a target group for preventive approaches” (El-Mafaalani 2016, p. 264).

One problem area is the fugitive accommodation, where there is narrowness, different ethnic groups are accommodated together and a daily structure is not always given. Under these negative conditions, the vulnerability for radicalisation is increased. Haverkamp (2017) points to various possibilities to counter violence and radicalisation in refugee accommodations, which include structural aspects (e.g. smaller, lockable housing units), social aspects (e.g. separate provision of vulnerable groups) and cultural aspects (staff training, supervision for social workers). Part of these cultural aspects could also be to introduce mediation approaches (combined with the training of residents as mediators) or just-community approaches (involving personnel with the aim of strengthening self-organisation) (Plich/Doering 2017).

In addition, it is pointed out to explicitly counteract a possible radicalisation of refugees. In addition to the police, local authorities and spe-

cialist personnel as well as the “moderate local Muslim communities” (ibid., p. 9) must be included. In addition, measures providing for accommodation in smaller, decentralised flats are to be welcomed.

A special group of persons is provided by unaccompanied minor refugees. Schneider et al. (2017) estimate that about 60,000 unaccompanied minor refugees currently live in Germany.<sup>43</sup> This is a very heterogeneous group when, for example, refugee history, personal attitudes or school ties are considered; the care situation can also be classified as rather positive in comparison to other refugee groups. At the same time, specific challenges arise in areas such as housing (and the lack of minimum standards), the material situation, school integration and mental health. Due to the various challenges, the situation of young refugees can be classified as “predominantly very precarious” (ibid., p. 469). This can be a possible breeding ground for a shift towards violence and extremism.

## 5. Outlook

The initial aim of this report was to present data on the prevalence of violence and extremism. A diagnosis should always begin with the analysis of the available data. The data have shown, among other things, that 1. violence, especially juvenile violence, is declining in Germany – according to police crime statistics as well as survey studies. Even if data from 2017 and 2018 are not yet available (survey studies) or indicate an end to the decline (police crime statistics), neither the high level of violence of previous years is reached nor should there already be talk of a trend reversal. Certain areas and phenomena that are currently the focus of media attention (e.g. violence in schools, carrying and using knives) should be followed up and scientifically investigated; they do not point to a new trend towards the brutalisation of society. The decline in violence is the result of various causes – the intensification of activities in the field of violence prevention over the past 15 years, among other factors, has certainly been decisive for this. 2. The data on extremism point to an increase – in all areas of extremism. For extremist-motivated violence there is an indication of an increase, which indicates that prevention work needs to be intensified. Nevertheless, there are hardly any alternative data sources available to date with which the extremism crime statistics trends could be validated. As with the recording of crime in general, the readiness to

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<sup>43</sup> Due to the declining influx of refugees, it can be assumed that the number of unaccompanied minor refugees will be lower in 2018. In Lower Saxony, for example, the number at the end of March 2018 was 4,370, compared with 5,150 in March last year, a decrease of around 15%.

report, the sensitivity of the police and other factors have a decisive influence on the trends observed in the statistics. Particular attention to extremism therefore points to a lack of data. This lack of data also concerns the question of which extremist-related prevention activities can actually be effective and which rather not. Clear guidelines on how extremism prevention should be designed cannot be formulated at this stage. Therefore, in addition to some suggestions for the prevention of extremism the following also formulates some methodological suggestions that refer to the still inadequate data situation.

### *Suggestions for extremism prevention*

1. Extremism is a possible consequence of a lack of integration; discourses of exclusion promote extremism – this should be taken into account in political discussions as well as in political action.

Trust in the basic democratic order can only be conveyed to all population groups if all these groups are also signalled that they belong to the society. Identification and belonging only develop to the extent that opportunities for participation exist and are communicated. Exercising the basic democratic principles of freedom, openness and tolerance is one way of bringing young people closer to democracy. In this sense, it is problematic that political discussions are repeatedly held that contradict these principles, exclude parts of the population or stigmatise and discriminate them.

2. Crime prevention must play an active role in social discourses and support democratic awareness.

Modern societies are diverse, plural societies. Apparently this is true with regard to the ethnic and religious origin of the people. But also in terms of values, interests and attitudes, modern societies allow a great heterogeneity. This is an expression of the individual freedoms granted in these societies. Part of freedom is that people with similar values, interests and attitudes can come together to form groups – this in itself is not problematic. It is problematic when differences are constructed that are connected with mutual upvaluation and devaluation. Such construction processes are currently taking place; many lines of conflict are becoming visible in society. The issue of refugees in particular or integration of migrants in general is an example of this. Social discourses that emphasize differences and boundaries should

find a counterweight in a perspective that emphasizes community and cohesion. Crime prevention actors can become even more involved in the current discourses and thereby support democratic awareness. The task of crime prevention is also to point out the limits of repressive measures in particular: Fear of violence and extremism must not lead to measures leading to excessive monitoring and restrictions on individual freedoms.

3. If not already done, national action plans should provide a strategic framework for prevention activities.

In December, Switzerland adopted a national action plan to prevent and combat radicalisation and violent extremism. This includes a total of 26 measures in the areas of “knowledge and expertise”, “cooperation and coordination”, “prevention of extremist ideas and groups”, “exit and reintegration” and “international cooperation”. If, on the one hand, the discussion process on the development of this action plan could have promoted the further networking of the various actors, on the other hand, a further impetus for prevention work can be expected from it, since responsibilities are defined and in part financing is proposed. It is subject to future evaluation to assess the achievement of the aims set; however, the development and adoption of such a plan is certainly also helpful in other countries. Steffen (2015, p. 27) agrees: “What is still missing is a national prevention strategy.” A model for that in Germany could be the Violence Commission, which in the years 1987 to 1989 worked on the development of measures against violence – even if no national strategy for preventing violence has yet emerged from these initiatives (cf. Voß/Marks 2018). In this context, it would certainly be worth to consider taking up the work of the expert group, which prepared and published two Periodic Reports on Security at the beginning of the 2000s. With the German Forum for Crime Prevention and its workplace, the National Centre for Crime Prevention, there is a structure to which such a group could be institutionally linked. Ceylan and Kiefer (2018, p. 11) also criticise the lack of a holistic strategy of prevention in Germany with reference to Islamic radicalism. In their view, this should include: a precise concept of prevention, clear objectives, coordinated measures, management, scientific monitoring and sufficient resources to ensure long-term orientation. Among others, Alsan et al. (2018, p. 269) are in favour of an action plan that can “help to deal appropriately with the phenomenon of radicalisation”.

4. Extremism prevention must be anchored in the municipalities and needs qualified personnel.

The phenomena to be countered with concrete prevention work differ from city to city. In this respect, a strong municipal focus is always needed in prevention. Prevention Councils can provide the necessary framework for this, in so far as different actors work together in a network. Even if the phenomena differ from one place to another, this does not mean that the municipalities have to reinvent prevention. The basics of prevention work are to be imparted to the people who carry out prevention work on site. For example, the Beccaria qualification programme is available for this purpose.

5. Extremism prevention will have to deal even more with left-wing extremism and other new extremism phenomena in the future.

At present, the prevention of Islamic extremism and right-wing extremism is dominant. However, the figures on left-wing extremism show that further priorities are needed. So far, there are hardly any programmes dedicated to the prevention of left-wing extremism. This lack also applies to the so-called “Reichsbürger” /Self-administrators. These are groups or individuals who do not recognise the existence of the Federal Republic, in particular its legal system. They “often define themselves as standing outside the legal system and thus legitimise infringements and crimes” (Goertz/Goertz-Neumann 2018, p. 145). The causes of the radicalisation of “Reichsbürger” /Self-administrators are, on the one hand, social upheavals that question previous life plans and, on the other hand, material problems and perceptions of threats, i.e. causes that are discussed particularly in the area of the emergence of right-wing extremism.

6. More programmes and measures dedicated to deradicalisation are needed.

Due to the increasing number of returnees from war zones in Syria and Iraq, but also new groups of people such as “Reichsbürger” /Self-administrators and the rise of further extremisms, the issue of deradicalisation is becoming increasingly relevant. Taking Islamic extremism as an example, 960 people left Germany by the end of November 2017 to go to Syria or Iraq. An estimated 150 people have died in fights, about a third are currently back in Germany.<sup>44</sup> “Despite their return,

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<sup>44</sup> <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/19/002/1900284.pdf>.

the majority are still jihadists”; and “distinguishing between disillusioned and ,dangerous‘ returnees is a difficult task for the police and intelligence services throughout Europe” (Neumann 2016, p. 249). Weber (2017, p. 151) states: “Germany lacks [...] an accompaniment of returnees in the post-prisonment period.” Schmid (2016) emphasises that one of the central challenges for the future is to create a willingness in the communities to reintegrate former extremists. On the basis of deradicalisation work in other areas of extremism, among other things, there are various approaches that could be expanded and adapted, such as systemic counselling, outreach youth work and religion-based approaches (cf. El-Mafaalani et al. 2016). Deradicalisation programmes should have the following characteristics (Illgner 2017, Bertram 2015): adaptation to the individual case in question; enabling independent living, e.g. through education and training; ideological deradicalisation, i.e. interventions based on belief and ideology; psychological and cognitive interventions which, among other things, address the issue of identity. In view of Islamic extremism, the deradicalisation of very young extremists poses a particular challenge. Not only with regard to Islamic extremism, the question must also be asked how children of extremists can be reached and, if necessary, deradicalised.

#### 7. To prevent extremism, schools need to be empowered.

Educational factors have an influence on the development of extremism. Schools are a place where belonging, recognition and democracy can be lived and where children and young people who have or cause problems can be identified and addressed. In order to fulfil this decisive role in the prevention process, schools need good conditions, including adequately trained personnel. These conditions, e.g. the embedding of schools in the respective city districts and district cultures, must be further optimised.

#### 8. Prevention of extremism particularly needs investment in the less integrated groups of the population.

The empirical findings on various extremisms show that it is the rather low-educated young people who are susceptible to extremism and not successful at school. These are groups of people who have few political advocates. This also applies to other groups of the population, such as prisoners or refugees, for whom there are also indications that they are susceptible to extremism. Extremism prevention must be a priority for these population groups, for which appropriate means and proven concepts are needed.

9. The implementation of evaluated prevention measures is desirable; however, this must not mean that the development and implementation of new ideas can be dispensed with – prevention depends on creative initiatives that have not yet been evaluated in the first step.

Prevention is always exposed to the question of effectiveness. The effect of prevention measures is a decisive argument for their use. Against this background it is understandable that in recent years the demand for evidence-based prevention has become increasingly accepted both internationally and nationally. The aim here is to trace the knowledge on prevention back to reliable empirical findings. Preventive measures have to prove themselves in reality. However, the concentration on evidence-based prevention also has disadvantages. It can lead to the loss of new, innovative, non-evaluated projects and creative ideas. However, prevention depends on these, as the societies and societal problems change from one generation to the next. The demand for rigorous evaluation of prevention programmes must be supplemented by the demand to generate new ideas and programmes on the basis of existing findings and data. This can be illustrated by the following example: So far, there are still few prevention approaches that systematically include peer groups. Taking into account the high importance of peers for almost all attitudes and behaviour in adolescence, it is surprising that peers as a resource are hardly used at present; the *ufuq.de* project “What do you post” is an exception. How peer education approaches can be taken into account even more than before in the prevention of violence and extremism should be tested and examined through innovative measures.

At the same time, it must be emphasised that a plea for new approaches does not mean neglecting the principles of project work in the field of prevention (cf. Beccaria Standards). New approaches must also clearly state what the objectives of the measure are, they must have assumptions as to why they should be effective, etc. It also requires openness to have one’s own work evaluated externally at best – not to control and evaluate the work, but to learn for future prevention work.

10. The importance of Islamic religiosity for Islamic radicalisation must be further scientifically investigated and addressed in prevention work.

It is true that it has not yet been conclusively clarified what influence an individual Islamic religiosity or an integration into an Islamic community has on radicalisation. However, various findings suggest that there is a relationship that should not be neglected: “The attempt to counter radicalisation solely by creating employment perspectives [...] misunderstands the ideology and persuasion practices of this movement” (Aslan et al. 2018, p. 270). Clement (2017, p. 180) also emphasises that the accepting youth work with Salafist youth must include the examination of religious orientations. The discussion of possible consequences of religiosity and religious affiliation must also be conducted by the Islamic communities themselves. It is necessary to deal with topics of faith against the background of the level of development of the countries in which the religious communities are located.

#### *Suggestions for studying extremism*

1. Evaluation studies on measures dedicated to the prevention of and intervention in political extremism are necessary.

In the field of violence prevention, there is reliable evidence as to which measures are demonstrably effective. This is not the case for political extremism – with the exception of certain measures to prevent right-wing extremism (cf. Beelmann 2017). An international analysis of programmes for the prevention of Islamic radicalisation confirms this: In only 12% of the studies examined, the effectiveness of the programmes was stated (Feddes/Gallucci 2015). In this analysis, it is recommended that the effectiveness of the programmes be increasingly tested on the basis of quantitative data. This picture is confirmed with a view to Germany: Kober (2017) and Armbrorst and Kober (2017) respectively identify only seven projects for which evaluations are available (Hayat, HEROS, Ibrahim meets Abraham, Intercultural Dialogue, MAXIME, regional security dialogue and Violence Prevention Network training course) in relation to programmes for the prevention of Islamist radicalisation. However, the evaluations do not allow any methodological conclusions on effectiveness, so that “no studies or evaluation reports have been identified in Germany so far [...] which allow statistically reliable statements on the effectiveness of measures or projects to prevent religious radicalisation” (ibid., p. 233). Leim-



bach et al. (2017, p. 419) also speak of an “almost complete lack of impact analyses”, so that “almost nothing is known about the impact of the numerous projects, the vast majority of which are funded with public funds”; existing evaluations relate only to process evaluations. It would be advantageous to carry out repeated impact assessments that adequately address various methodological challenges, which are designed for the long term and link different methods and sources of information (cf., among others, Beelmann et al. 2018). Evaluations always represent a certain imposition on the actors who carry out the measures, since extra efforts have to be planned with regard to data collection. Evaluations therefore presuppose the willingness of these actors to evaluate, as well as the willingness of the bodies financing these measures to promote independent evaluations as an integral part of project implementation.

## 2. Theoretically guided longitudinal studies on the causes of political extremism are necessary.

Criminological and social science research on the causes of violence and other forms of delinquency is strongly guided by theoretical approaches. More recently, for example, situational-action theory has been mentioned here. Corresponding theoretical empirical research is hardly to be found in the field of political extremism. Pauwels and De Waele (2014) present an approach that combines various criminological approaches (control theory, theory of procedural justice, strain theory, learning theory, self-control theory). Corresponding theoretical studies are likely to be helpful in understanding the conditions under which political extremism develops. Beelmann (2017, p. 14) formulates this as follows: “Without a reasonably realistic assumption that an event will occur and without an idea of how and why something like this could happen, effective prevention is unthinkable.” Longitudinal studies are therefore necessary in order to investigate the causal relationships in a methodologically appropriate manner. Adequate prevention and intervention measures can only be developed on the basis of studies that permit the examination of causal relationships.

## 3. Repeated surveys are central for a valid assessment of the trends of political extremism.

Surveys on political extremism in the form of trend surveys are also necessary because the analysis of prevalence and trends of extremism have so far mainly been based on crime statistics. These statistics can be criticised, among other things, “because the individual steps of data

collection by the authorities are not made transparent” (Hummel et al. 2016, p. 44). Repeated surveys are needed for adults, where, for example, acceptance of extremist attitudes and experiences of extremist victimisations (e.g. Hate Crime) can be asked for. On the other hand, these surveys are needed for young people, as violence and extremism are a youth phenomenon in particular. In addition to attitudes and victimisation experiences, youth surveys can also ask about the practice of extremist behaviour, so that the offender’s perspective is also taken into account. It will be of particular importance to obtain representative samples and also to reach those groups of people that are generally difficult to reach, as there is a higher risk of developing extremism for these groups.

#### 4. More comparative studies and exploratory studies on new forms of extremism are desirable.

Qualitative studies comparing different forms of extremism or extremists already exist (e.g. Lützing 2010; Schils/Verhage 2017). In addition, quantitative studies comparing extremism types appear to be necessary, which can help to support the findings to date on a broader basis. One example is the study by Chermak and Gruenewalt (2015), who compare almost a thousand right-wing and left-wing extremists and Islamists in the United States. This study shows, among other things, that right-wing extremists and Islamists exhibit mental illness more frequently and more frequently intended to kill people with their deeds; more than half of the right-wing extremists were already imprisoned earlier, and a quarter of the other groups. If studies comparing extremism are carried out prospectively, this also helps to distinguish between general and specific influencing factors as well as development trajectories.

It was mentioned that in the prevention of extremism, new forms of extremism must increasingly be dealt with. This also applies to the scientific study of extremism: New forms of extremism have to be addressed by research, whereby qualitative approaches are certainly more suitable than quantitative approaches to study new phenomena.

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