

THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN GERMANY BEFORE THE GENERAL ELECTION ON 22 SEPTEMBER 2002

Richard Hilmer, Infratest dimap

July 2002

THE LATEST POLLS (1-3 July 2002)

The general mood in Germany has improved somewhat since April. The number of voters who evaluate the current situation optimistically has increased by 8 points to 34%, although a majority of 61% remains pessimistic. Against this background of a positive development, support for the two major parties is increasing. Were a general election to be held at the time of this poll, the governing SPD would receive 36% of the votes – a gain of 2 points compared with the previous month. The strongest party however is still the Union (CDU/CSU), which has gained 1 point, bringing it up to 40% of the vote. Its lead over the SPD, however, has shrunk from 9 to 4 points since May.

The gain of the large parties leads to a loss for the small parties. This applies to both the Greens, who lose two points and would currently get 6%, and to the Liberal Party (FDP). The FDP would reach 9% (-1) and have dropped below the 10% mark for the first time since April. The Socialist Party (PDS) is the only small party which was able to keep its percentage of votes at a constant level of 6%.

In July, 48% of the Germans are in favour of a change in leadership and would prefer a government led by the Union after the general election, whereas 43% still support an SPD leadership. A month ago, opinions were divided vice-versa, indicating more a feeling of insecurity

than a prevalent mood that it is time for a political change.

Hartz-Commission Proposes Employment Reforms

A commission appointed by Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and charged with finding a comprehensive solution to persistent unemployment has proposed a programme that, if implemented, would bring about the most radical reform of Germany's labour market in decades. The Commission, composed of 15 experts drawn from unions, management consultancies, managing boards, and political and economic circles, is to issue a final report in August. The Commission's chairman Peter Hartz, one of Volkswagen AG's directors, states that if his plan were given a chance to work, it could cut unemployment in half – to about two million jobless within three years.

The initial concept has already drawn favourable reviews from Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, from Germany's labour and economics ministers, and from prominent economists such as Klaus Zimmermann of the Berlin-based *Deutsches Institute für Wirtschaftsforschung (DIW)*, one of Germany's six big think tanks.

The Hartz-Commission's programme includes proposals to ease the restriction of temporary and part-time work, encourage labour mobility and accelerate the process of getting the jobless back to work. It also provides for a reduction of the tax

burden on entrepreneurs and, more controversially, cuts unemployment payments. Among the specific measures proposed are:

- staggering of unemployment benefit payments during the first six months an individual is unemployed;
- simplifying and shortening the job placement process;
- increasing the use of private sector temporary work agencies;
- requiring that those whose personal circumstances allow for some mobility, e.g. single men and women, should accept jobs anywhere in the country;
- reducing payments should an unemployed person reject a job offer, even if it offers a lower salary than that person is accustomed to;
- cutting taxes and bureaucracy for start-up firms that earn less than approx. 20,000 Euros annually.

According to half of the Germans (48%), these recommendations are aimed in the right direction. Only one-fifth (20%) believes that they are on the wrong track. One-third is still unaware of the Commissions' suggestions or does not feel able to comment. Especially one of the major points of the Hartz Commission's suggestions – that of creating temporary work agencies – is widely approved (67%), with 25% opposing the plan.

In addition, a majority supports the tightening of demands which an unemployed person has to accept (63% : 36%) - for example, that young

unemployed people must accept jobs anywhere in the country. Three-step flat rates of unemployment benefits instead of costly computed individual benefits are also welcomed (58% : 34%). All these measures are also accepted by the unemployed with the exception of the tightening of demands.

Through a prompt implementation of the Hartz Commission's suggestions, the SPD hopes to regain its image as a reform party. Currently, this role is attributed to the Christian Democrats Union (CDU/CSU): 35% believe that the CDU/CSU is the party with the strongest intention to carry out reforms in Germany, whereas only 20% consider the SPD as **the** reform party. Four years ago, immediately before the last general election, the SPD had been considerably ahead of the Union on this issue.

These are the most important results of the *DeutschlandTREND* for July, which was carried out by Infratest dimap on behalf of the ARD/Report from Berlin and eleven daily newspapers. 1,300 persons eligible to vote were interviewed in a representative telephone survey from 1-3 July 2002. The design of the survey allows generalisation for all eligible voters in Germany applying a confidence interval of plus/minus 1.2 to 2.7 percentage points.

Survey results are shown on the following pages.

DeutschlandTREND July 2002

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Study design

Universe:	German population eligible to vote, 18 and older
Sample:	Representative sampling / random sample
Sampling Method:	Computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI)
Number of Cases:	1.300 Interviews (900 West, 400 East)
Fieldwork period:	July 1 to July 3, 2002
Confidence Interval:	1,2* bis 2,7** percentage points * share of 5% ** share of 50%
Institute:	Infratest dimap
Contact:	Richard Hilmer ☎ 0049 (0) 30/533 22 - 110 Reinhard Schlunkert ☎ 0049 (0) 228/329 69 - 3

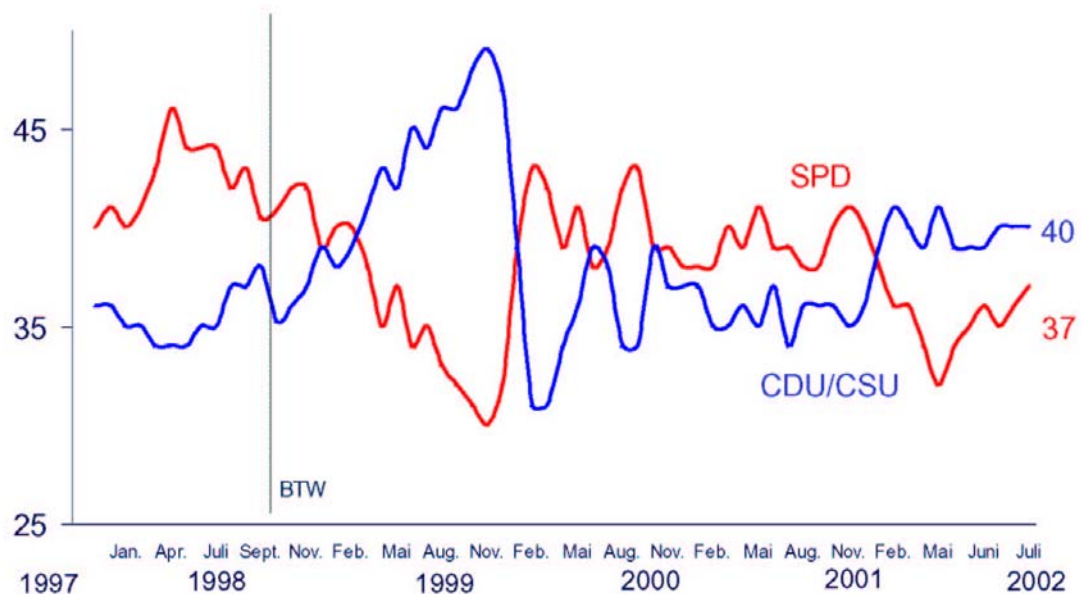
See on the internet page: www.infratest-dimap.com

Berlin, July 2002

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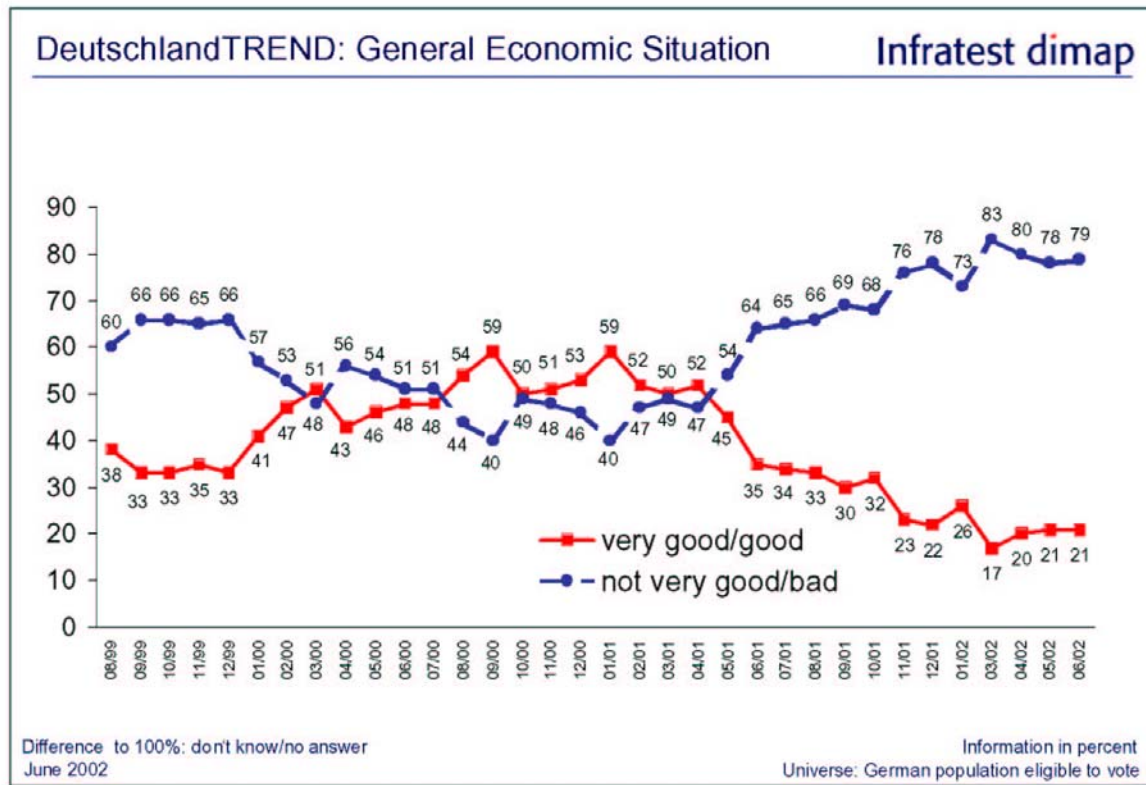
DeutschlandTREND: Vote Intention

Infratest dimap

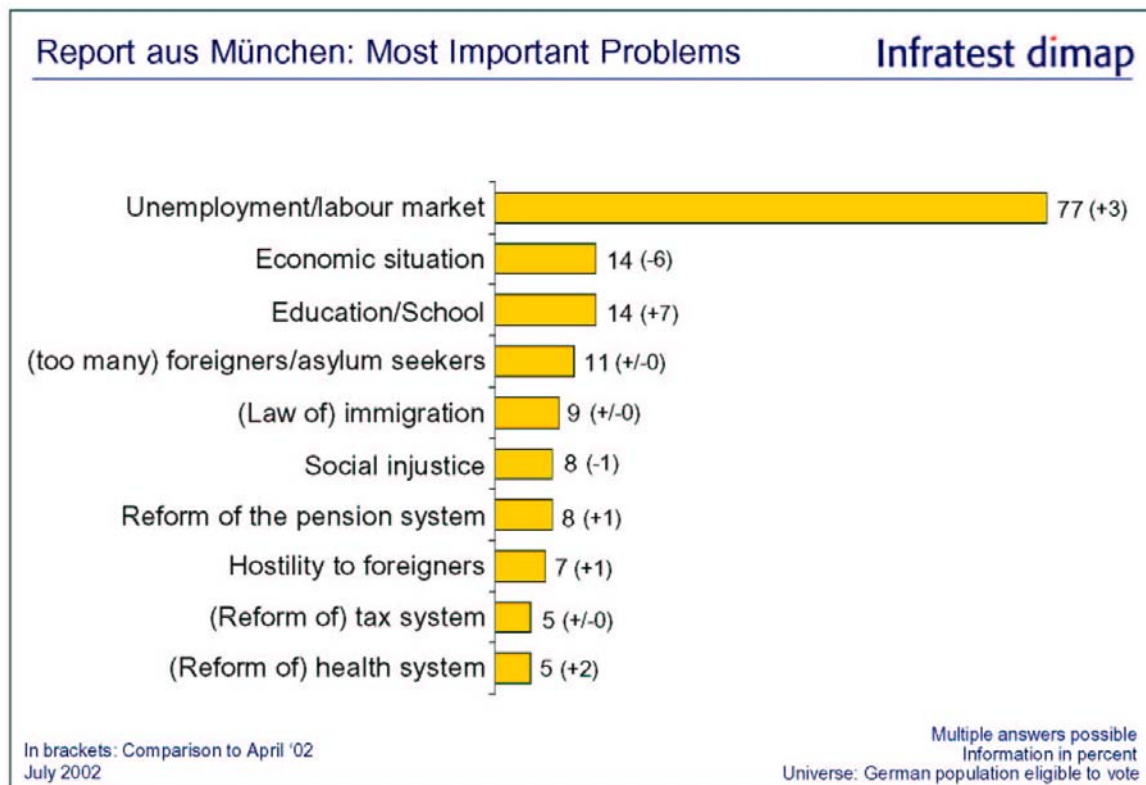


Angaben in Prozent

Universe: German population eligible to vote



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Report aus München: Party Competence

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Most competent party in bold type	SPD	CDU/CSU
Protection and creation of jobs	28 (+1)	40 (-2)
Protection of Germany as an economic site	28 (+6)	48 (-5)
Fighting crime	23 (+4)	51 (-1)
Taking care of social justice	47 (+1)	21 (-1)
Supporting families with children	47 (+3)	28 (+3)
Pursuing good education policy	29 (-1)	43 (+6)
Solving Germany's problems of the future	30 (+3)	32 (-3)

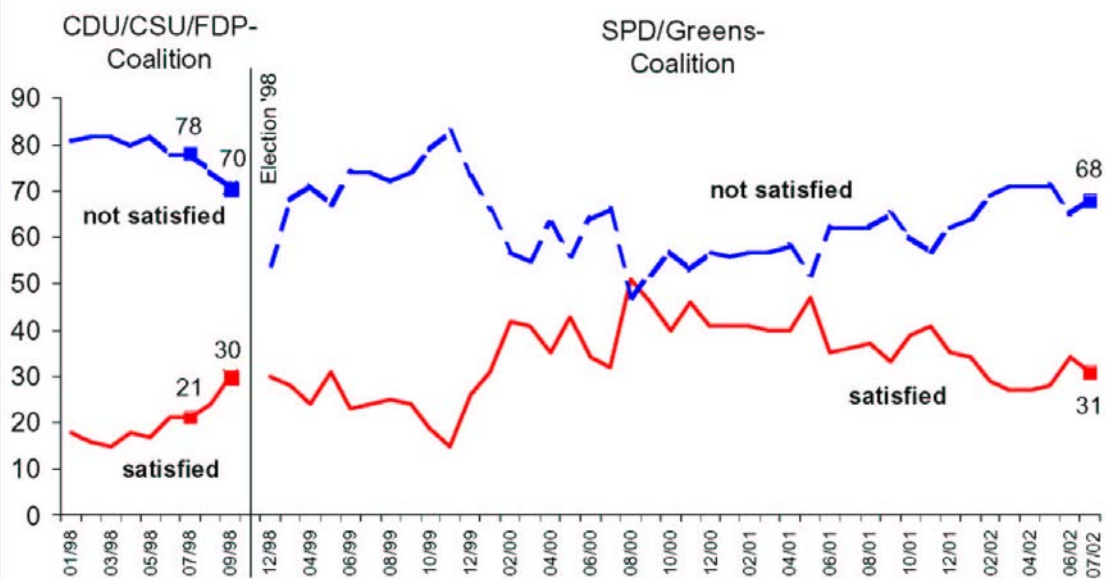
In brackets: Comparison to previous month
July 2002

Information in percent
Universe: German population eligible to vote

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DeutschlandTREND: Satisfaction with Government

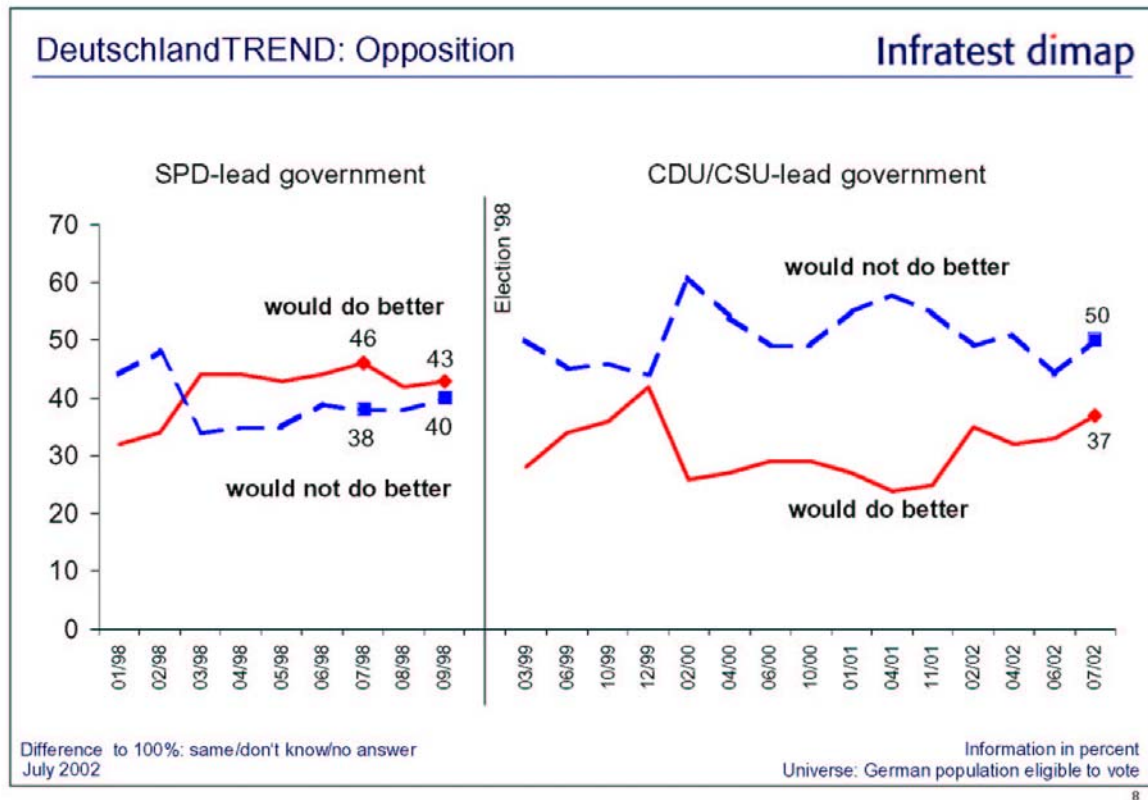
Infratest dimap



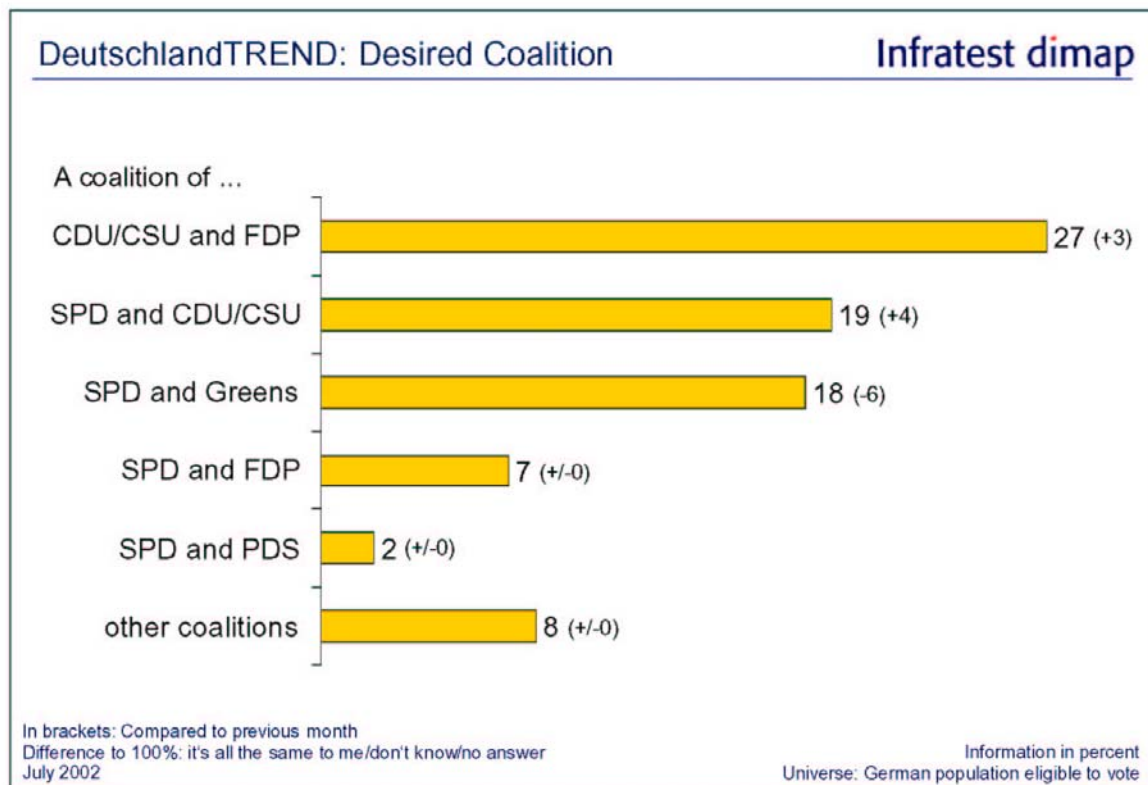
Difference to 100%: don't know/no answer
July 2002

Information in percent
Universe: German population eligible to vote

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DeutschlandTREND: Satisfaction with Politicians

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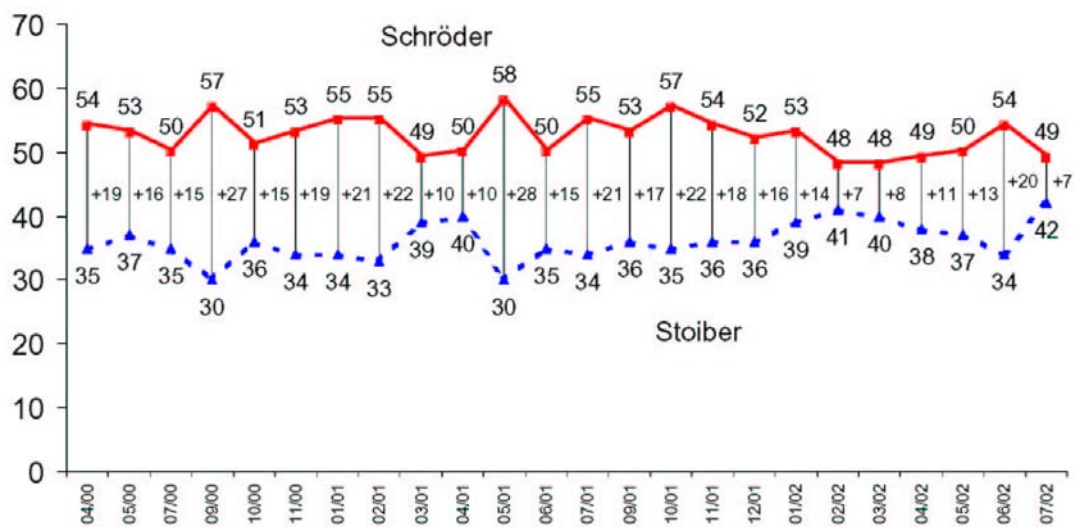
In brackets: Compared to previous month; Riester compared to April '02
 Difference to 100%: can't assess/don't know/no answer
 July 2002

Information in percent
 Universe: German population eligible to vote

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DeutschlandTREND: Direct Election of Chancellor

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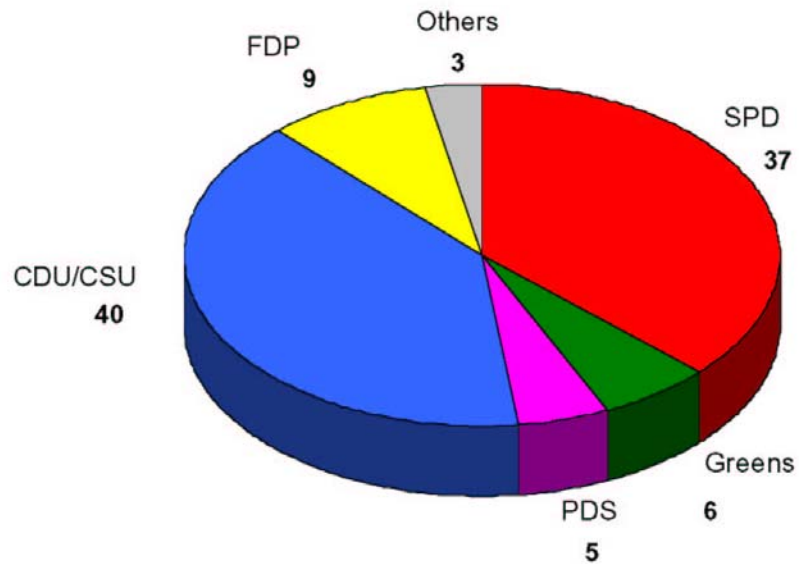
Difference to 100%: none of the two/don't know/no answer
 July 2002

Information in percent
 Universe: German population eligible to vote

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Report aus München: Vote Intention

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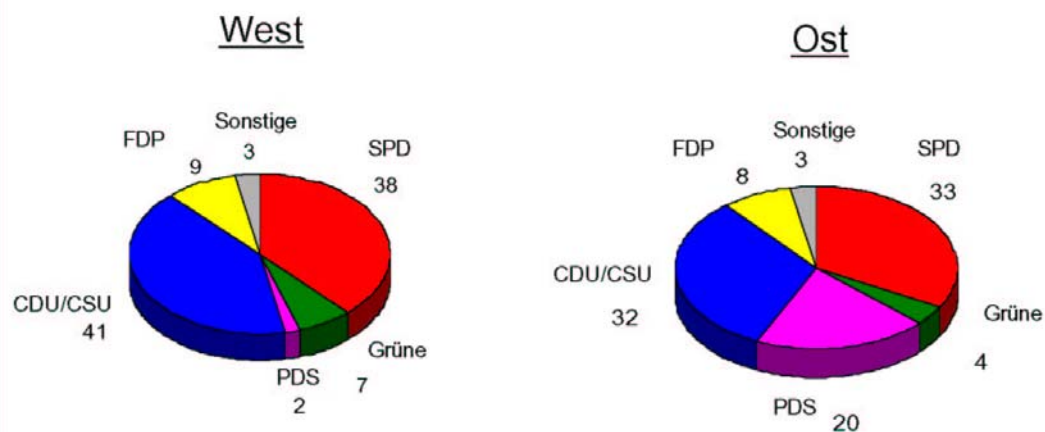
July 2002

Information in percent
Universe: German population eligible to vote

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Report aus München: Vote Intention West-East

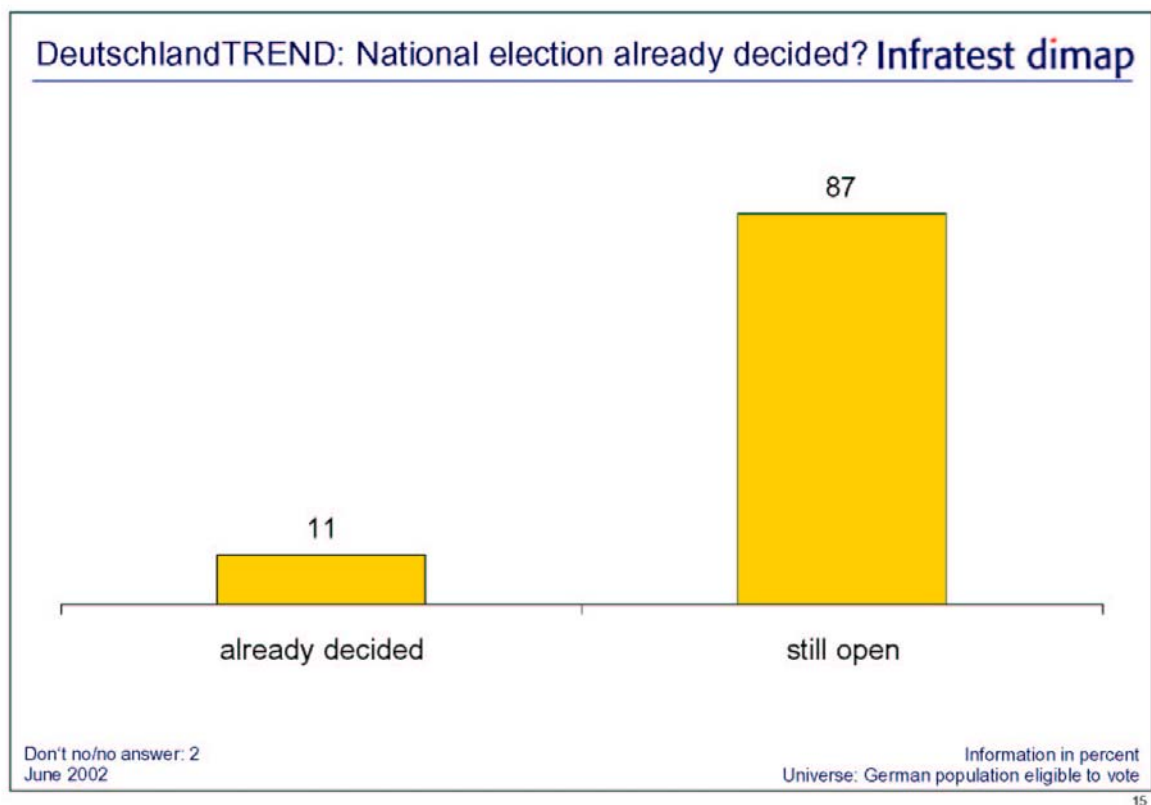
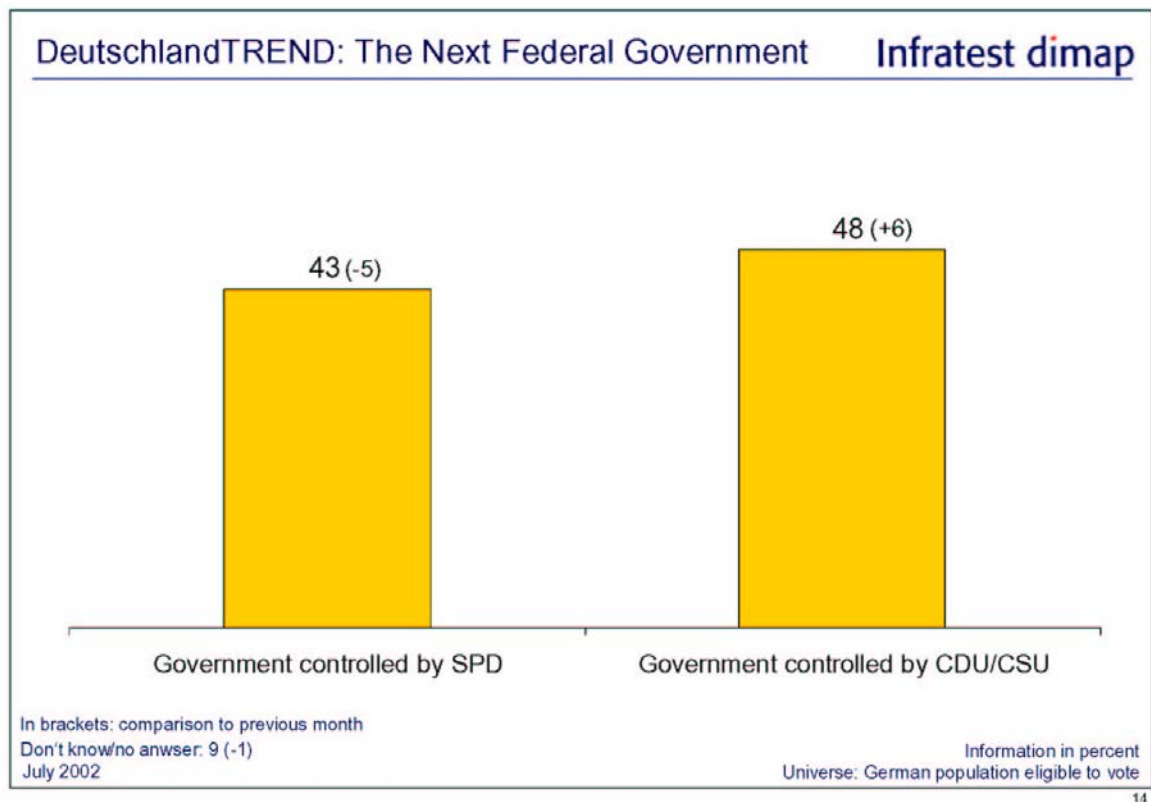
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July 2002

Information in percent
Universe: German population eligible to vote

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ABOUT INFRATEST DIMAP

Infratest dimap is one of the leading companies in Germany for political and electoral research. In the field of political research, surveys are carried out on the political climate in Germany and most of its federal states and in many communities, in addition to ad hoc studies on specific political topics and continuous studies, such as the weekly political survey, the *'PolitScope'* and the monthly *'DeutschlandTREND'*.

'DeutschlandTREND' is Infratest dimap's comprehensive monthly national survey on the current political climate in Germany. It is conducted as a CATI-survey (computer-assisted telephone interviewing) with random digit dialling to poll a random sample of the German voting population. 1.300 interviews (900 in West and 400 in East Germany) are conducted in each wave. The survey includes numerous trend questions such as vote intention, assessment of the economy, satisfaction with government and leading politicians. The results are published on the first Friday of each month in the ARD's (First German Public Television Channel) news magazine *"bericht aus berlin"* and numerous daily newspapers.

The weekly *PolitScope* is an omnibus survey which can include questions on political and societal issues. At least 1,000 interviews are conducted during a 3-5 day period, results are available the day after the end of fieldwork. Depending on client needs the fieldwork can be shortened to 2 days.

Infratest dimap also conducts regular surveys on political opinion in most of the German federal states, for example in Baden-Wuerttemberg, Bavaria, Berlin, Brandenburg and Rhineland-Palatinate. The results and research designs of these *'StateTRENDS'* can be found on Infratest dimap's website www.infratest-dimap.com.

An in-depth analysis of the political climate in cities and communities has become more and more important over the last few years. Infratest dimap has accumulated comprehensive experience in the field of studies on local politics and also offer ad hoc studies on specific political topics and in special target groups, for example the surveys *"10 Years German Reunification"* and *"Elites and Foreign Policy"*.

In 1996, NFO Infratest and the dimap Institute were awarded the contract to support the Election Reporting of the ARD, Germany's leading public television station. In order to carry out this project, NFO Infratest and dimap founded a joint venture: Infratest dimap, Company for Trend- and Election Research Ltd located in Berlin and Bonn. The long-term experience and special know-how regarding political and election research of both companies is combined in Infratest dimap.

The ARD is the leading German information channel with a comprehensive coverage of German elections during TV prime time. A core element of reporting on election day is the publication of a so-called "6.00 pm prognosis" of the election result immediately after the polls are closed. These prognoses are exclusively based on large exit poll surveys. On behalf of the ARD, Infratest dimap has carried out exit polls for the general election in 1998, the European election in 1999, for all state elections and various local elections. Based on these exit polls, the election results have been predicted with a very high degree of precision: in the exit polls for national and state elections, the average deviation per party from the party's actual share of the vote was below one percentage point.

Richard Hilmer is the Director of infratest dimap.

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Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
London Office
Director: Dr Gero Maass

The Chandlery
Office 609

50 Westminster Bridge Road
London SE1 7QY
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)20 7721 8745
Fax: +44 (0)20 7721 8746
email: feslondon@dial.pipex.com
web: www.fes.de/london