

# PUBLIC SUPPORT AND CRITICISM IN THE CONTEXT OF MULTIPLE CRISES AND NEW GUIDING PRINCIPLES

*Opinion Monitor for Development Policy 2024*

*Executive Summary*

2024

# IMPRINT

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The Institute's evaluation reports contribute to the transparency of development results and provide policymakers with evidence and lessons learned based on which they can shape and improve their development policies.

In its "Opinion Monitor for Development Policy" series, DEval regularly draws up analyses on the attitude of the German population towards development policy and cooperation as well as global sustainable development.

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## Attitudes towards development policy and development cooperation



### Support for development cooperation

**47 %**

are in favour of maintaining or increasing DC/ODA expenditure

**43 %**

are in favour of reducing DC/ODA expenditure

21 percentage points less than in 2022

24 percentage points more than in 2022



Support is falling across the entire political spectrum



**63 %**

endorse an engagement in DC



**72 %**

endorse an engagement in humanitarian aid



Government engagement in development cooperation is generally endorsed

Respondents continue to rate the effectiveness of DC as low



declining since June 2022

### Development cooperation in comparison with other policy areas

most frequently selected

- Unemployment benefits **21%**
- Development cooperation **21%**
- Economic promotion **13%**



least frequently selected

- Health **3%**
- Internal security **3%**
- Education **2%**



For which of the following policy areas would you be most willing to cut expenditure?

### Interest and feeling informed

**57 %** are interested in DC



The share of the gross national income spent on development is greatly overestimated

**34 %**

feel well informed

**63 %**

are not familiar with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



### Motives for development cooperation

Most frequently selected:

**46 %**

"Doing good with modest resources"

"Combating global epidemics"

**29 %**



**43 %**

"Combating the causes of flight"

**29 %**

"Moral obligation"

**29 %**

"Combating climate change"

### Self-efficacy

Respondents rate their self-efficacy in the field of development policy as low



In January 2024, they assigned it the lowest value to date since September 2019, with a mean value of 2.7 (on a scale of 0 to 10)

### Attitude strength

**18 %**

Stable opponents

**19 %**

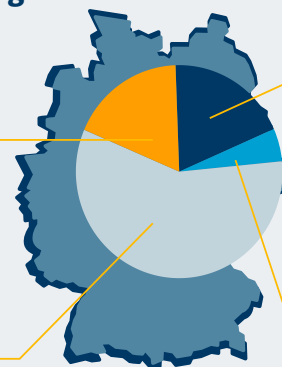
Stable supporters

**58 %**

Unstable moderate supporters

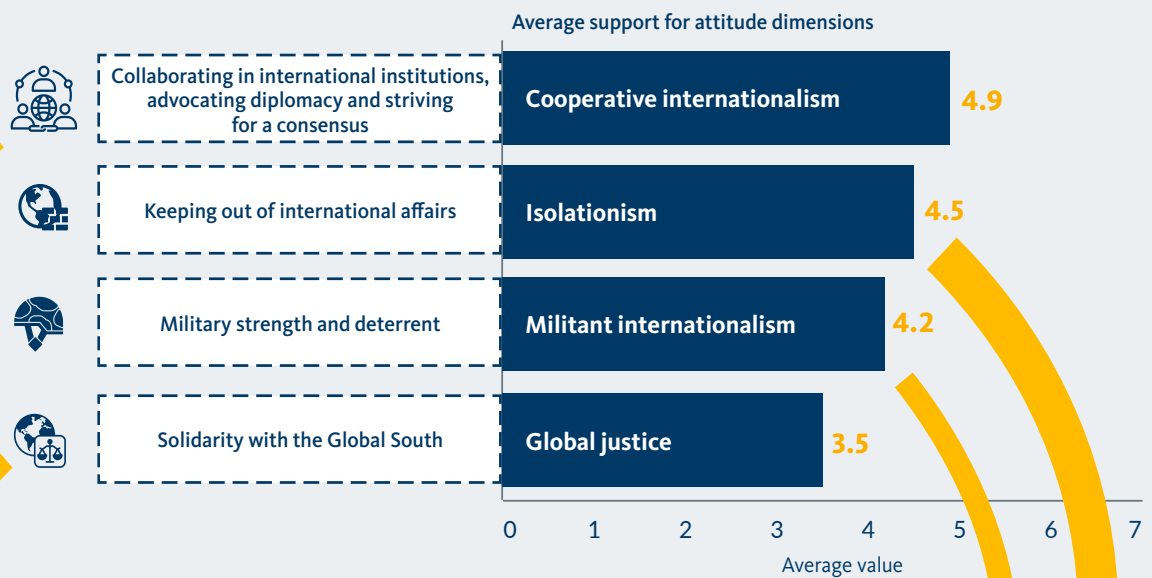
**5 %**

Ambivalent supporters



## Attitudes towards development policy in the context of attitudes towards foreign and security policy

### Four attitude dimensions with regard to foreign and security policy



### Differences between supporters of different parties

Cooperative internationalism and global justice are, on average, advocated most strongly by supporters of Alliance 90/The Greens and least strongly by supporters of the AfD

Militant internationalism is, on average, most popular with supporters of the CDU/CSU and Alliance 90/The Greens and least popular with supporters of The Left

An isolationist approach in foreign policy is, on average, endorsed most strongly by supporters of the AfD and least strongly by Alliance 90/The Greens

### Correlations with attitudes towards development policy/development cooperation

Advocacy of ...

correlates with:



cooperative internationalism

support for



increasing DC/ODA expenditure



global justice

support for



specific DC measures



isolationism

a rejection of

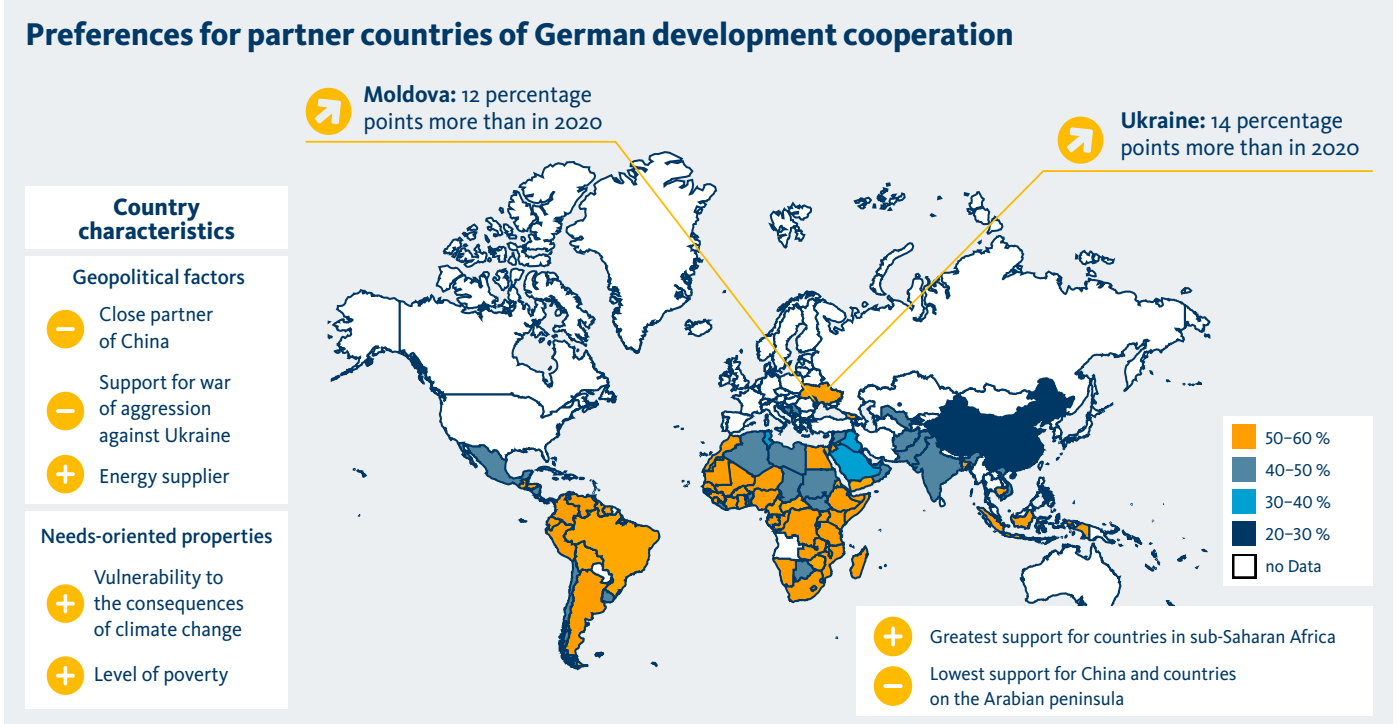
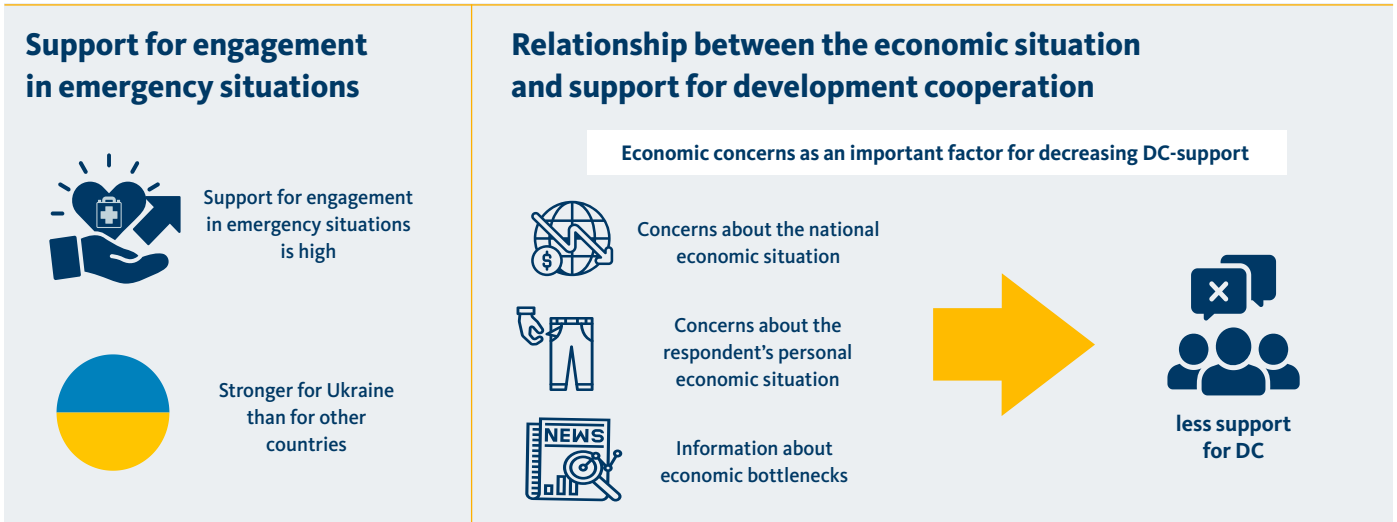


measures to support Ukraine

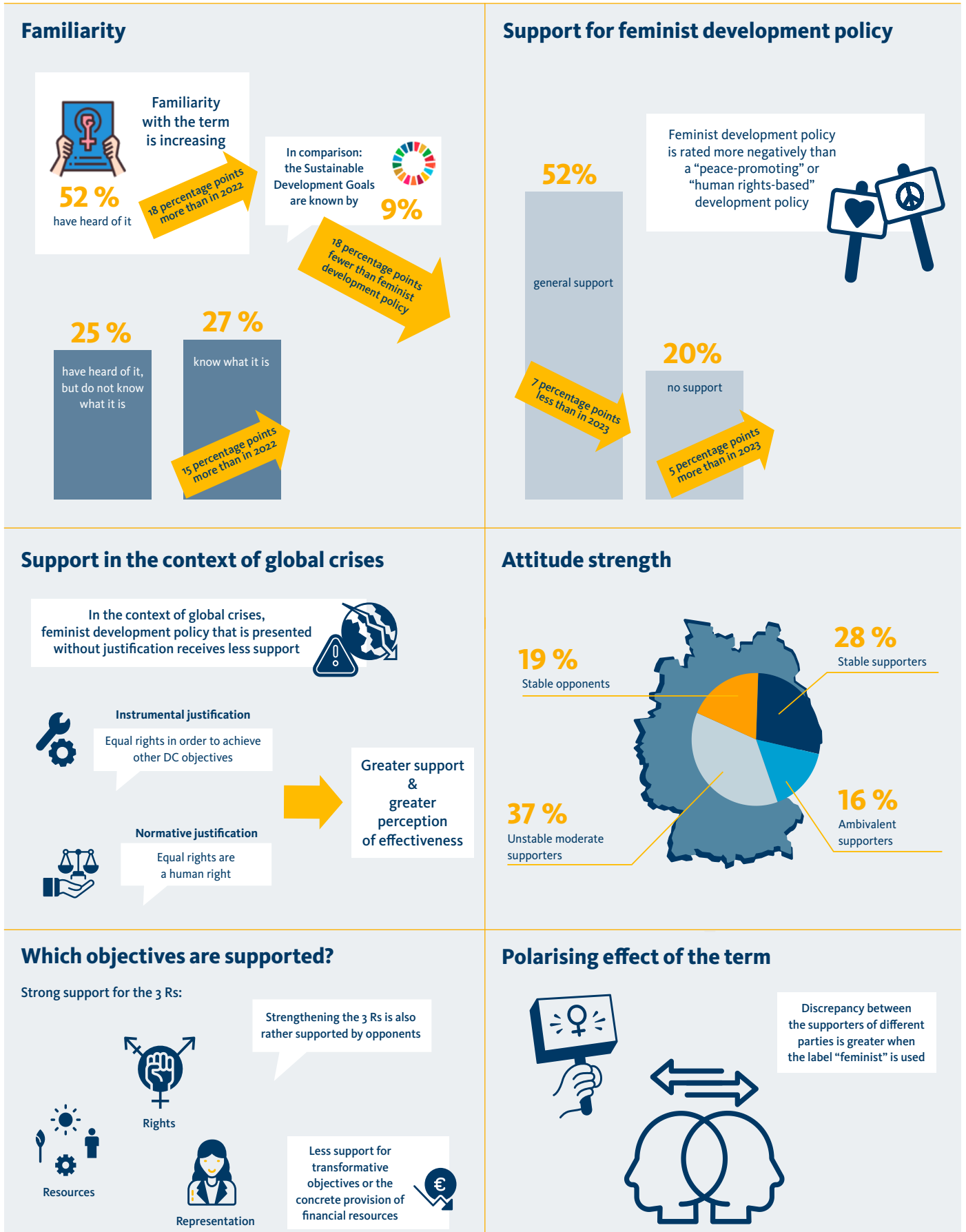


feminist development policy

# Attitudes towards development cooperation in the context of security policy and economic challenges



# The attitude of the German population towards feminist development policy



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Background

As a result of numerous global crises and the lack of progress in achieving the United Nations' sustainability goals, German development policy is being challenged more than almost ever before. At the same time, many partner countries are becoming more fragile, and the number of states ruled by an autocratic regime is increasing. In the context of domestic developments such as the strained economic and budgetary situation, the general public in Germany is increasingly questioning development policy. These challenges come at a time when the German Federal Government is establishing new focal points in its international engagement, for example with the guiding principle of a feminist foreign and development policy presented in 2023 (see Chapter 1: Development policy context and objectives of the report).

## Question

In light of these multiple crises and the new guiding principle of development policy, the Opinion Monitor for Development Policy 2024 provides important information for policy communications, education and strategy by

1. providing a detailed picture of the attitudes of the German population towards development policy and how these have changed over time, selectively addressing differences between population groups,
2. examining attitudes towards development policy in the context of general attitudes towards foreign and security policy,
3. studying attitudes towards development policy in the context of foreign and security policy crises and the war against Ukraine with the associated challenges and
4. touching upon the population's knowledge, understanding and perceptions of and attitudes towards the guiding principle of feminist development policy and its contents.

## Data sources

The study uses a wide range of survey data collected in 2023 and 2024. In addition, secondary data collected by the *Aid Attitudes Tracker* (AAT) and the *Development Engagement Lab* (DEL) from 2013 onwards is analysed and time series of relevant attitude indicators are updated (see Chapter 2: Data sources and methodology).

## Attitudes towards development policy and development cooperation over the course of time

Since the beginning of 2022, the respondents' support for development cooperation (DC) has declined. In January 2024, only 47 percent of respondents advocated DC expenditure remaining the same or increasing – a drop of 21 percentage points. Decreasing support can be observed across the entire political spectrum. The fact that the German Federal Government provides DC and humanitarian aid in general is met with a high level of support – from 63 and 72 percent of respondents respectively, although this figure has declined slightly since January 2023. In comparison with other policy areas, many respondents see DC as an area in which they would be most willing to cut funding (21% of respondents).

Even though the majority of respondents express a general interest in the topic area of development policy/DC (57%), only 34 percent feel well informed about it. In October 2023, 30 percent of respondents were aware of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda, but only 9 percent knew precisely what these involve. A majority of over 60 percent had never heard of the SDGs.

“Doing good with modest resources” (46%) and “combating the causes of flight” (43%) remain the most convincing motives for DC in the eyes of the respondents. Other motives such as “moral obligation”, “combating climate change” and “preventing pandemics” have lost some support over the course of time.

According to the respondents, the European Union (49%) and multilateral organisations (48%) are primarily responsible for implementing DC, followed by the governments of partner countries (41%) and the German Federal Government (35%). The most frequently endorsed goals of DC are improvements to water, sanitary and hygiene (WASH; 56%), education (47%), health care (42%), and food and agriculture (41%).

The majority (58%) of respondents have a moderately positive, but relatively unstable attitude towards DC. Only 19 percent can be identified as stable supporters, while 18 percent are stable opponents.

Respondents consider their self-efficacy in the field of development policy – i.e. the feeling that they can achieve something themselves in terms of development policy – to be low. Since the beginning of 2022, the feeling of self-efficacy has dropped from 3.3 to 2.7 (on a scale from 0 = “can achieve absolutely nothing” to 10 = “can achieve a lot”). The respondents also continue to have a low opinion of the effectiveness of German DC. Around 18 percent rate it as “very effective”, while around 32 percent consider it to be “absolutely ineffective”. Here too, the assessment is more negative than at the beginning of 2022 (see Chapter 3: Attitudes towards development policy and development cooperation over the course of time).

#### Attitudes towards development policy in the context of ...

##### ... foreign and security policy

In the area of foreign and security policy, many respondents most strongly endorse cooperation in international institutions as well as diplomacy and striving for consensus (attitude dimension: “*cooperative internationalism*”). The attitude that Germany should keep out of international affairs received a similarly high level of support (dimension: “*isolationism*”). At the same time, fewer respondents agreed with a foreign and security policy focusing on military might and deterrent potential (dimension: “*militant internationalism*”). There is even less support for a foreign and security policy centred around assisting countries in the Global South (dimension: “*global justice*”). This attitude dimension is conceptually closest to general support for DC.

Respondents who advocate cooperative internationalism and global justice are also more likely to be in favour of increasing the DC expenditure, concrete DC interventions, development policy aid for Ukraine and a feminist development policy. However, respondents who support an isolationist approach reject such interventions (see Section 4.2: Attitudes towards development policy in the context of attitudes towards foreign and security policy).

##### ... security policy and economic challenges

Against the backdrop of security policy and economic challenges, respondents show a high level of support for international engagement in emergency situations. In this context, they endorse measures to assist Ukraine more strongly than measures to assist other countries.

Since the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine began, respondents have had a more negative view of their future personal and the future national economic situation. This goes along with a decline in support for development cooperation. Furthermore, experimental findings show that a reference to the tense budgetary situation in Germany has a negative impact on support for DC across various demographic, socio-economic and political characteristics.

If respondents in a survey experiment are informed about the war in Ukraine, a war that is visible in the media and geographically close, they express greater support for DC than those who have been informed about the war in Yemen, which is less visible in the media and geographically further away. This greater level of support is primarily because the respondents feel more affected by the situation in Ukraine, because they perceive the security threat caused by this situation to be greater and because they consider the people living there to be more similar to themselves.

When asked about specific countries, participants prefer countries in sub-Saharan Africa as partners for German DC, whereas the preference for a cooperation with China and countries on the Arabian peninsula and in North Africa is lower. A cooperation with Ukraine receives much greater support than in 2020.

In a comparison of hypothetical country profiles, geopolitical factors such as a close partnership with China or support for the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine lead to a clear rejection of partner countries. By contrast, the respondents prioritise countries from which Germany obtains energy. The number of refugees coming to Germany from a potential partner country



has no effect on whether the respondents support DC with this country. In addition, needs-based characteristics of the countries, such as vulnerability to the consequences of climate change or the level of poverty, play an important role. Furthermore, respondents are more likely to reject countries with a predominantly Muslim population as partner countries (see Section 4.3 Attitudes towards development cooperation in the context of security policy and economic challenges).

### ... *feminist development policy*

An increasing number of people are familiar with the term “feminist development policy”. In January 2024, for example, a narrow majority of respondents (52%) had heard of or read about feminist development policy; 27 percent confirmed that they knew what the term meant. This is an increase of 15 percentage points since June 2022. Even though the respondents understand the main features of a feminist orientation, they are largely unaware of more specific contents, such as intersectional, post-colonial or power-critical approaches.

Whereas 59 percent of respondents still supported feminist development policy in January 2023, this fell to 52 percent in January 2024. In comparison with other focuses, such as a

“human rights-based” or “peace-promoting” development policy, fewer respondents are in favour of a feminist development policy. Concerning the goals of a feminist development policy described in the strategy drawn up by the BMZ, respondents primarily agree with the overarching goal of strengthening the “rights, resources and representation of women”. However, fewer respondents support the specific provision of financial resources for projects promoting equal rights.

The opinions of the supporters of different parties vary more when the “feminist” label is used for development policy than when the same feminist contents are presented without the label.

Around 28 percent of respondents are stable supporters of feminist development policy. A total of 63 percent are moderately unstable or ambivalent supporters, while 19 percent can be described as stable opponents.

In times of global crises, feminist development policy is more likely to be supported if it is justified on normative or instrumental grounds than if no additional justification is provided (see Section 4.4 The attitude of the German population towards feminist development policy).

## Implications for development policy strategy, communications and education

*Implication 1:* Support for development cooperation is waning. In this situation, development policy actors should look into possible changes to their strategies and design policy communications and education proactively to meet future challenges.

*Implication 2:* A large proportion of the population has moderately positive, but unstable attitudes towards development policy. Development policy actors should actively seek communication to maintain the existing development policy consensus.

*Implication 3:* The increasing interconnectedness between DC and geopolitical and security policy aspects is leading to new areas of tension in development policy; here it is important to find a new balance of interests and to communicate this appropriately.

*Implication 4:* The polarising effect of the term “feminist development policy” requires careful consideration of whether and how the label is used; contents that are capable of achieving consensus should be implemented and conveyed to the general public (see Chapter 5: Implications).