



## Discrimination

The term discrimination refers to the devaluation or exclusion of persons or groups on the basis of social or ethnic origin, religion, gender, sexual identity, age, or disability. These categories are set out in the Federal General Equal Treatment Act in Germany. Devaluation can range from insulting statements to exclusion in the housing or labour market to physical violence. Persons affected can file a complaint against it on the basis of the above-mentioned law, yet the legal reality varies as far as success is concerned due to the burden of proof.

Beyond this legal level, the Bielefeld Institute for Conflict and Violence Research has regularly surveyed discriminatory attitudes in its studies on group-focused hostility since 2002. In its 2019 study, for example, the statement "The Federal Republic is foreignized to a dangerous degree by the many foreigners" is agreed to fully by 10.3%, predominantly by 8.9%, and partly by 17.8%. The statement "Every people/nation has an unchangeable identity" is agreed to fully by 34% and predominantly by 18.6%. In 2016, 6.0% fully agreed, and 3.5% more or less agreed to the statement that "homosexuality is immoral". These figures show the extent to which discriminatory attitudes can be found far beyond the extreme right, reaching into the middle of society.

Although actual pejorative comments to the groups mentioned vary, they all have in common that people are hierarchized - favoured or disadvantaged - on the basis of the above categories. For discrimination always takes place in a power relationship - in the case of multiple discriminations also in several power relationships: The less powerful group is restricted or massively hindered in its opportunities to participate in society, or even exploited, by discrimination. Therefore in working against discrimination, it is always necessary to consider both the level of individual attitudes of perpetrators and the structural level of society as well as possibilities of support for those affected.

## Literature

- Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes (2019): Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz (AGG). Berlin
- Institut für Konflikt- und Gewaltforschung (2016): Gespaltene Mitte Feindselige Zustände. Bielefeld
- Institut für Konflikt- und Gewaltforschung (2019): Verlorene Mitte Feindselige Zustände. Bielefeld