

SCIENCE **20**  
BARO+  
METER **20**

Dear reader,

For almost a year now, the coronavirus pandemic has been changing our way of life. Science undoubtedly plays a central role in dealing with the pandemic and in solving the societal challenges it brings. In recent months, scientists and researchers of different disciplines have, therefore, increasingly become the center of public and political attention.

How does the current situation affect public perceptions of science and research? What is its effect on the reputation of scientists? What do citizens currently think about the communication of science and research?

At *Wissenschaft im Dialog*, we have already been able to gain initial insights into potential answers to these questions through two surveys conducted in spring 2020. We are now pleased to once again take a close look at public opinion on science and research in Germany with the science barometer 2020. Much of the data was collected in exactly the same way as in previous years to allow for comparisons over time, while other questions were included with direct reference to the current coronavirus pandemic.

We would like to thank the funders and supporters of the science barometer – the Robert Bosch Stiftung and the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft – for this opportunity. Our thanks also go to the scientific advisory board of the science barometer for its advice.

We wish you an inspiring read,



Markus Weißkopf, Managing Director  
*Wissenschaft im Dialog*



Ricarda Ziegler, Project Lead  
*Wissenschaftsbarometer*



## What is the science barometer?

Through the science barometer, *Wissenschaft im Dialog* annually surveys public attitudes towards science and research in Germany. In close collaboration with a scientific advisory board a new questionnaire is designed each year which includes questions from previous survey waves but also new ones. For all results of the 2020 survey and all previous survey waves as well as further information, please visit [www.sciencebarometer.com](http://www.sciencebarometer.com).

## Who is responsible for the science barometer?

*Wissenschaft im Dialog (WiD)* is a non-profit organisation founded by the German science organisations. Our work focuses on the public discussion of science and research in Germany. *WiD* aims to arouse and strengthen interest in science among people of every age and background. We aim to achieve this by organising discussions, education projects for schools, exhibitions and competitions – all focused on science and research. We develop new formats for science communication and run events across Germany to reach diverse target groups. Our goal is for as many people as possible to be involved in discussions about research, including its controversial aspects. The results of the science barometer help us in doing so. [www.wissenschaft-im-dialog.de](http://www.wissenschaft-im-dialog.de)

## How strong is your interest in...?

local news



science and research



engineering and new technologies



politics



Number of respondents: 1,016; Figures are in per cent. Numbers may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

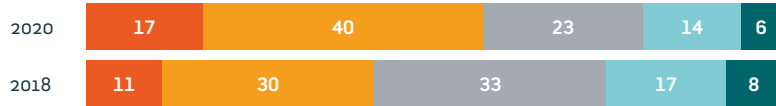


The interest in science and research in Germany is quite stable even against the backdrop of the current coronavirus pandemic. Similar to previous years, 60 per cent of respondents currently state that they are interested in scientific issues. 25 per cent are undecided, while 14 per cent show no interest in science and research. As in the previous year, the interest of respondents in local news (68 per cent) is greater than their interest in science and research. Fewer respondents (49 per cent) state that they are interested in politics.

In the current situation, as in all previous waves of the science barometer, a higher level of formal education goes hand in hand with a greater interest in science and research. Also similar to previous surveys is the greater interest in science and research among men. In 2020, 65 per cent of men state that they are interested compared with a mere 54 per cent of women.

## How often do you use the following sources to get information about science and research on the internet?

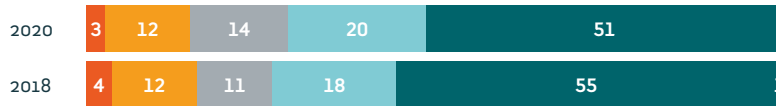
websites of news media such as newspapers, magazines or TV channels



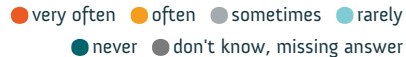
websites of scientific institutions or organisations



Facebook, Twitter or other social networks



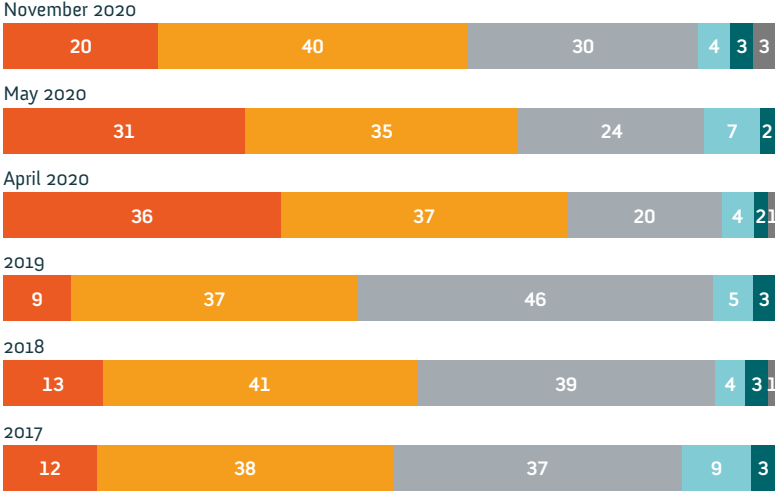
Number of respondents: 748 in 2018 and 809 in 2020; Figures are in per cent. Numbers may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.



Compared to 2018 – when data on online information behaviour relating to science and research was last collected in the science barometer – websites of news media have gained in importance. More than half of respondents state that they often or very often inform themselves about science and research on these websites. The proportion of respondents who often or very often use websites of scientific institutions or social networks to inform themselves about science and research has remained stable.

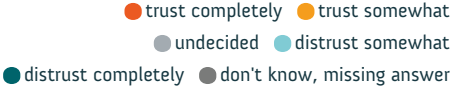
Note: These results are based on answers of respondents who previously stated that they use the internet to obtain information about science and research.

# How much do you trust science and research?



Currently, 60 per cent of respondents state that they trust science and research somewhat or completely. Thus, the proportion of people who trust in science and research is lower than it was in the two surveys conducted by the science barometer corona special edition in spring 2020, but higher than it was in previous years. In all three science barometer survey waves in 2020, the proportion of undecided respondents is lower than in previous years, while the proportion of respondents who state that they distrust somewhat or distrust completely remains stable.

In all of the survey waves shown here, a higher level of formal education of respondents is associated with a higher level of trust in science and research.



Minimum of 1,000 respondents each survey wave; Figures are in per cent. Numbers may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

# Here are some reasons why people might trust scientists. To what extent do you personally agree with them?

Because scientists are experts in their field.



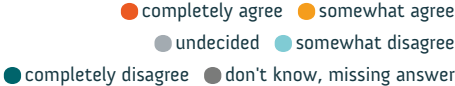
Because scientists work according to rules and standard procedures.



Because scientists do research in the public interest.

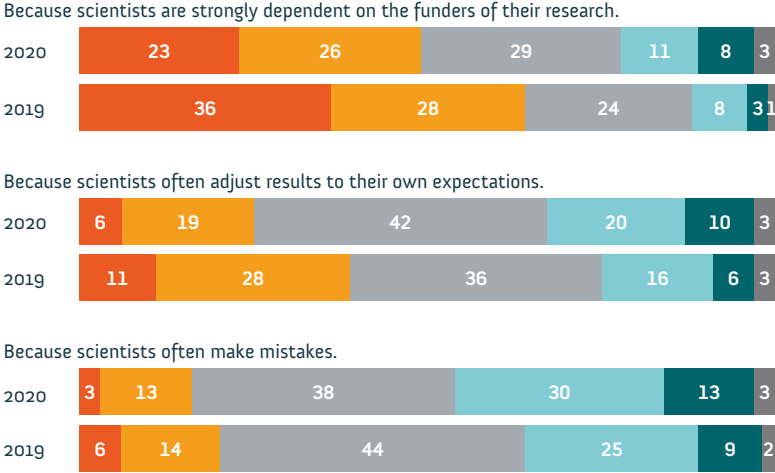


Compared to last year’s science barometer, more respondents agree that the expertise and integrity of scientists are reasons to trust them. However, the proportion of respondents who state that an orientation towards the public interest is a reason to trust scientists has remained stable, also in the context of the coronavirus pandemic.



Minimum of 1,000 respondents each survey wave; Figures are in per cent. Numbers may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

# Here are some reasons why people might distrust scientists. To what extent do you personally agree with them?



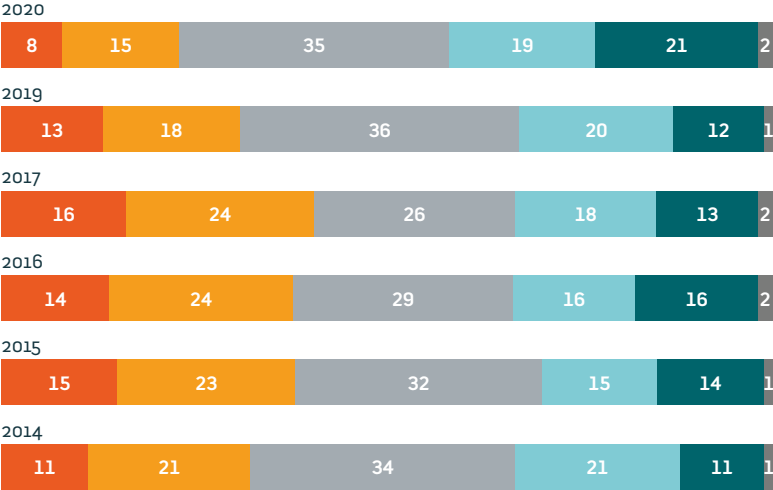
The agreement with all three reasons for distrusting scientists is markedly lower than in the previous year. Especially noteworthy is the fact that currently 49 per cent somewhat or completely agree that their dependence on funders is a reason to distrust scientists. In 2019, that proportion was 64 per cent. Similarly, there is lower agreement with the statement that scientists often adjust results to their own expectations. In this year's survey, 25 per cent of respondents agree, whereas in 2019, 39 per cent agreed.

Minimum of 1,000 respondents each survey wave; Figures are in per cent. Numbers may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

- completely agree
- somewhat agree
- undecided
- somewhat disagree
- completely disagree
- don't know, missing answer

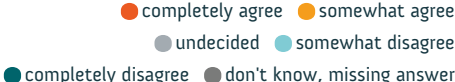


# People trust too much in science and not enough in their feelings and faith.



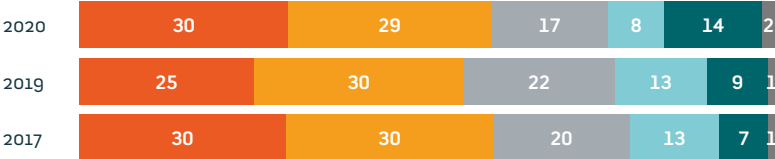
Currently, a lower proportion of respondents than ever before in the science barometer agrees that people trust too much in science and not enough in their feelings and faith. 40 per cent – the highest rate across all science barometer survey waves – do not agree with this statement.

Minimum of 1,000 respondents each survey wave; Figures are in per cent. Numbers may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

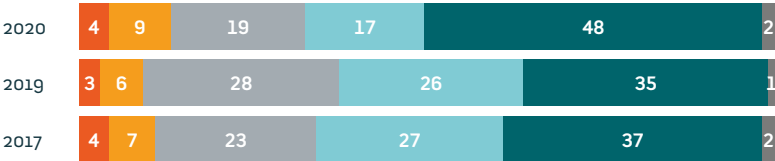


# To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

I personally benefit from science and research.



All in all, science and research do more harm than good.

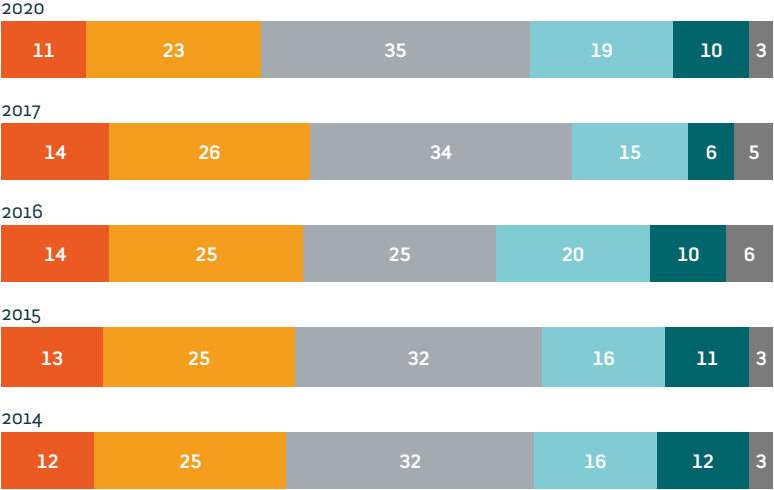


The respondents’ assessment of the benefits of science and research is similar to previous years, even in the current situation. Currently, 59 per cent of respondents agree somewhat or completely that they personally benefit from science and research. Nearly two thirds agree that there is a general benefit of science and research. More respondents (48 per cent) than in previous years completely disagree with the statement that science and research do more harm than good.

Minimum of 1,000 respondents each survey wave; Figures are in per cent. Numbers may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

- completely agree
- somewhat agree
- undecided
- somewhat disagree
- completely disagree
- don't know, missing answer

# Scientists make too little effort to inform the public about their work.



The level of agreement with the statement that scientists make too little effort to inform the public about their work is similar to previous years. Currently, about one third of respondents agrees, roughly another third is undecided and 29 per cent do not agree.

Minimum of 1,000 respondents each survey wave; Figures are in per cent. Numbers may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

- completely agree
- somewhat agree
- undecided
- somewhat disagree
- completely disagree
- don't know, missing answer

## How much do you trust statements on the coronavirus pandemic made by the following actors?

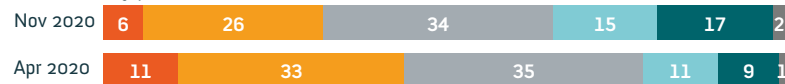
### statements by doctors and medical staff



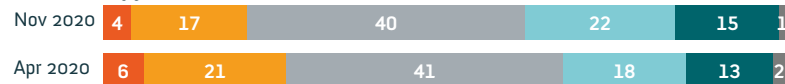
### statements by scientists



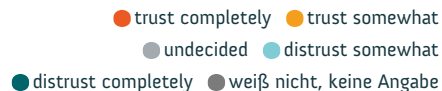
### statements by politicians



### statements by journalists



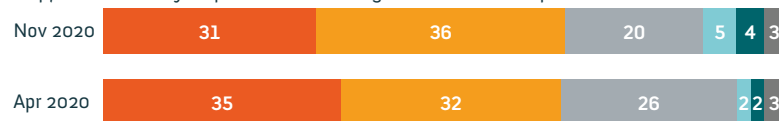
Minimum of 1,000 respondents each survey wave; Figures are in per cent. Numbers may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.



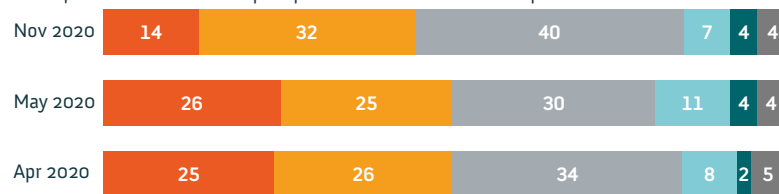
The science barometer corona special edition in spring 2020 already surveyed trust in statements on the coronavirus pandemic made by different actors. As in spring, trust in statements by doctors and medical staff is currently the highest, followed by statements by scientists. In addition to the actors shown here, trust in the statements by public authority officials as well as the trust in statements by friends, family members and acquaintances was surveyed. The strongest decrease in trust concerns statements by politicians about the coronavirus pandemic.

## Against the background of the current developments surrounding the coronavirus pandemic, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?

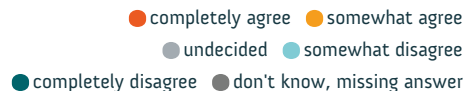
Controversies between scientists regarding the coronavirus pandemic are helpful because they help ensure that the right research results prevail.



Most scientists currently speaking up differentiate clearly between what they know for sure and what are open questions on the coronavirus pandemic.



Minimum of 1,000 respondents each survey wave; Figures are in per cent. Numbers may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.



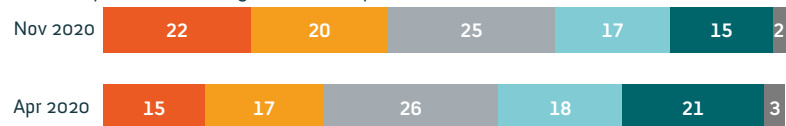
As in spring 2020, almost two thirds of respondents currently agree that controversies between scientists on the coronavirus pandemic are helpful to ensure that the right research results prevail. In contrast, more respondents than in spring 2020 are currently undecided concerning their assessment of scientists' ability to differentiate between what they know for sure and what are open questions when communicating about the coronavirus pandemic.

## Against the background of the current developments surrounding the coronavirus pandemic, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?

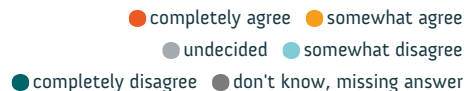
Political decisions on handling the coronavirus pandemic should be based on scientific evidence.



It is not up to scientists to get involved in politics.



Minimum of 1,000 respondents each survey wave; Figures are in per cent. Numbers may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.



The science barometer corona special edition in spring also dealt with the role of science in politics and similar questions were included in the current survey wave. The proportion of respondents who are in favour of science-based policy-making in the context of the coronavirus pandemic is high – as it was already in spring 2020. Around three quarters of respondents somewhat agree or completely agree that relevant political decisions should be based on scientific evidence. However, the proportion of respondents who currently agree that it is not up to scientists to get involved in politics (42 per cent) is higher than in spring.

## To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

I think the current measures against the coronavirus pandemic are appropriate.



Scientists do not tell us everything they know about the coronavirus.



It is important to also get information on the coronavirus from outside the scientific community.



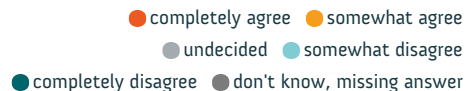
The coronavirus pandemic is being made into a bigger deal than it actually is.



We should rely more on common sense when dealing with the coronavirus pandemic and we do not need any scientific studies for this.



There is no real proof that the coronavirus really exists.



Number of respondents: 1,016; Figures are in per cent. Numbers may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Notwithstanding the high level of trust in science and research and the general agreement with current measures against the coronavirus pandemic, the science barometer 2020 also investigated sceptical positions on the coronavirus pandemic. Approximately 40 per cent of respondents agree that scientists do not reveal everything they know about the coronavirus and that it is important to get information about it from outside the scientific community.

29 per cent agree that the coronavirus pandemic is being made into a bigger deal than it actually is – the majority of respondents, however, disagrees. 15 per cent think that there is no real proof that the coronavirus really exists, while three quarters of the respondents disagree with this statement.

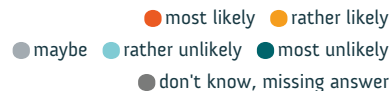
Across all the statements shown here – with exception of the statement on the appropriateness of measures against the coronavirus pandemic – the agreement among respondents with a high level of formal education is lower than among respondents with a medium or low level of formal education.

## If there was a vaccine approved in Germany by then, how likely is it that you would get vaccinated against the coronavirus next year?



The majority of respondents in the science barometer 2020, whose data were collected between November the 3rd and 9th, state that they would likely want to get vaccinated against the coronavirus if an approved vaccine was available in 2021. 15 per cent would maybe want to do so and 29 per cent think it is unlikely that they would want to get vaccinated in 2021.

Number of respondents: 1,016; Figures are in per cent. Numbers may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.





# Data on the survey design of the science barometer 2020

## Representative population survey

<b>Population</b>	German-speaking residential population of the Federal Republic of Germany in private households from the age of 14 years and over
<b>Number of respondents</b>	1.016 respondents
<b>Type and period of the survey</b>	The interviews were conducted as telephone interviews (dual frame of landlines/mobile phones, 80:20) from 3 to 9 November 2020. The interviews were part of an omnibus survey carried out centrally by Kantar.
<b>Sampling</b>	The sampling was carried out according to ADM – i.e. using a telephone sample which was created by an initiative of the <i>Arbeitskreis Deutscher Marktforschungsinstitute (ADM)</i> using the <i>Gabler-Häder-Verfahren</i> and which also contains unlisted telephone numbers. Within the selected households from the landline sample, the target person was selected randomly. For the sample of mobile phones, no systematic selection of the target person took place since mobile phones are almost exclusively used by only one person.

**Implementation** The interviews were computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI). The general working instructions, used by all interviewers at Kantar, were applied in order to conduct all the interviews consistently.

**Weighting and representativeness** The weighting took place in several steps: Firstly, a design weighting compensated for the different selection probabilities of the target persons caused by the numbers of landlines and mobile phone numbers as well as household sizes. Subsequently, the two samples of landlines and mobile phones were merged and weighted based on the characteristics of federal state, size of location, gender, age, occupation, formal education and household size. The weighting ensures that the structure of the sample on which the results are based matches the structure of the population. Therefore, the results of the survey are representative and can be generalised for the population within statistical margins of error. For this survey, the margin of error ranges from  $\pm 1.4$  (for a share of five per cent) to  $\pm 3.1$  (for a share of 50 per cent).

**Documentation** The original text of the questionnaire as well as result tables are available online via the following link:  
[www.sciencebarometer.com](http://www.sciencebarometer.com)

# Imprint

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