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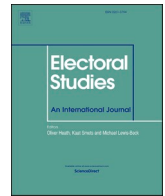
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# Surveying immigrant-origin voters in a post-migrant society: The first Immigrant German Election Study, 2017

Sabrina Jasmin Mayer<sup>a,b,\*</sup>, Achim Goerres<sup>c</sup>, Dennis Christopher Spies<sup>d</sup>, Manuel Diaz Garcia<sup>c</sup>, Jonas Elis<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> University of Bamberg, Department of Political Science, Chair for Political Sociology, Feldkirchenstrasse 21, 96052 Bamberg, Germany

<sup>b</sup> German Center of Integration and Migration Research, Mauerstrasse 76, 10117 Berlin, Germany

<sup>c</sup> University of Duisburg-Essen, Department of Political Science, Lotharstrasse 65, 47057 Duisburg, Germany

<sup>d</sup> University of Duesseldorf, Department of Political Science, Universitätsstrasse 80, 40225 Diesseldorf, Germany

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## ABSTRACT

This paper introduces the Immigrant German Election Study (IMGES) as the first survey that explicitly targeted immigrant-origin voters in Germany. IMGES fills the gap of insufficient data in the field of immigrant-origin voters with a combination of proven and novel survey measures of the electoral behavior of people with a background from either Türkiye or from the former Soviet Union or its successor states. The study was carried out in a post-election, cross-sectional survey in 2017. Its compatibility with the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES), the Ethnic Minority British Election Study (EMBES), and the Dutch Ethnic Minority Election Study (DEMES) allows for in-depth comparative analyses between immigrant-origin voters and natives across different countries. In addition to standard measures of electoral behavior, the data include measures of immigrant-specific factors relevant to voting behavior. Moreover, the dataset is not limited to voting behavior in Germany, it also includes transnational voting behavior in the respective countries of origin.

## 1. Introduction

Immigrant-origin voters nowadays make up a considerable part of the electorate in Western democracies. However, electoral research still focuses mostly on immigrants as attitude objects and the significance of those attitudes in respect of electoral behavior. Immigrants are rarely considered as voters themselves, either in their host country (e.g. Sanders et al., 2014; Just, 2019; Vermeulen et al., 2020; Goerres et al., 2022; Just, 2022) or in their country of origin (e.g. Lafleur, 2011; Lafleur and Sánchez-Domínguez, 2015; Mügge et al., 2021)

This shortcoming arises from the fact that most current datasets lack the necessary information for in-depth analyses. Datasets from electoral research on the one hand – e.g. single-country election studies or multi-country synchronized studies such as the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) or the European Social Survey (ESS) – do not usually contain enough respondents of immigrant origin for subgroup analyses so only highly-aggregate analyses are possible that blur whether these results hold true for all immigrant-origin voters or only for specific subgroups. In addition, they lack the necessary indicators regarding

migrant-specific factors such as a detailed migration history, discriminatory experiences and questions regarding attitudes toward their country of origin. On the other hand, datasets from surveys that focus on immigrant populations usually provide this information, but they lack detailed indicators regarding the core concepts of political science and electoral research such as candidate evaluations, political efficacy, civic duty, and propensity to vote (see the database of the EthMigSurveyData project for an excellent overview of current immigrant-origin surveys <https://ethmigsurveydatahub.eu/>). Currently, studies often provide interesting insights, but they are restricted to a single city, country, or migrant group, or they have to group together all those of immigrant origin due to low case numbers (Schildkraut, 2005; Abadan-Unat, 2011; Wright and Bloemraad, 2012; Rapp, 2020). Whereas the first issue lets us question the generalizability of results, the second might make us miss certain relationships when there are differences between groups that even each other out when analyzed in an aggregated way (e.g. Hamidou-Schmidt and Mayer, 2021; Spies et al., 2022). Thus, we still lack reliable information on a substantial part of the electorate. We do not know whether the same patterns of individual-level and

\* Corresponding author. University of Bamberg, Department of Political Science, Chair for Political Sociology, Feldkirchenstrasse 21, 96052 Bamberg, Germany  
E-mail address: [Sabrina.mayer@uni-bamberg.de](mailto:Sabrina.mayer@uni-bamberg.de) (S.J. Mayer).

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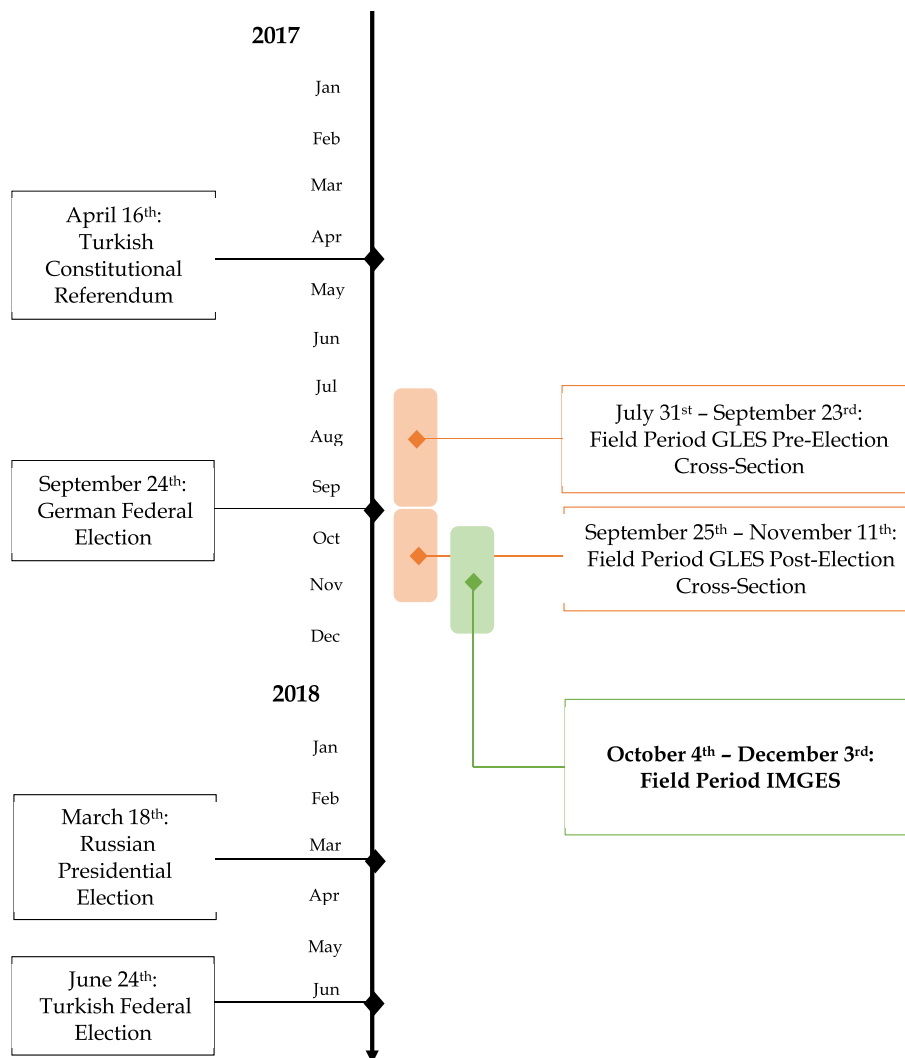
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context-level factors can be observed among immigrant-origin voters and the majority population. It is just as conceivable that migrant-specific patterns prevail due to socialization in different political systems, language barriers, and discrimination experiences.

Past decades have shown remarkable developments in electoral studies that target immigrant-origin voters in Europe. The Ethnic Minority Survey as part of the British General Election Study 1997 (Heath and Saggar, 1999) was the first attempt to systematically study the po-

Netherlands. The Dutch Ethnic Minority Election Study (DEMES) of 2021 introduces a new immigrant-origin survey with a representative sample of first and second-generation immigrants of non-Western origin as part of the Dutch Parliamentary Election Study (Lubbers et al., 2021).

Building on the pioneering work of the Norwegian election study and the EMBES, the principal investigators of the first Immigrant German Election Study (IMGES) translated the ideas for a new national context that offered broad opportunities to overcome the previously mentioned



**Fig. 1.** Timeline of field periods of the Immigrant German Election Study and the German Longitudinal Election Study in the context of the elections in Germany, Türkiye, and Russia in 2017 and the first half of 2018.

litical behavior of ethnic minorities in a European country. However, it still relied on a boost of ethnic-minority respondents in the general survey via random screening instead of specifically sampling immigrant-origin voters in a distinct survey. The advantages of specific immigrant election studies are numerous: large enough samples for subgroup analyses, the combination of detailed indicators from electoral research, as well as in-depth information on migration histories. The first election study to take advantage of these benefits was a Norwegian project which sampled immigrant-origin voters in the context of the 2007 Norwegian local elections (Bergh et al., 2008). The Ethnic Minority British Election Study (EMBES) was the first study to specifically target immigrant-origin people in an election survey in the United Kingdom and did so for the 2010 general election (Fisher et al., 2012). We welcome similar developments in other countries like the

shortcomings of electoral research. Funded by the German Research Foundation, the research was a register-based, face-to-face, post-election survey conducted in 2017 between the two most numerous and influential immigrant groups in Germany: German citizens whose parents or themselves were either born in Türkiye (N = 512) or born in the Soviet Union or its successor states (N = 508).

IMGES offers five major advantages: 1) It focuses on immigrant-origin groups with very different major migration trajectories (1960's guest workers and ethnic German returnees, respectively) in sufficient numbers for subgroup analyses, thus enabling researchers to see whether their results hold true between heterogeneous groups. 2) It includes items on the groups' political attitudes and behavior towards their country of origin, which allows for a rich analysis of transnational political attitudes and electoral behavior. 3) Due to the same field time

and mode, as well as many similar question wordings as in the general German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES), it enables comparisons not only within the minority groups analyzed but also with the majority population. 4) For comparative studies, it can be ex-postharmonized<sup>1</sup> with EMBES and the British Election Study 2010 in Great Britain, providing data on minorities and majorities in very different contexts. 5) Contextual macro-level data based on the electoral district – such as district turnout and election results, but also on unemployment rates or the proportion of foreigners – can be merged easily.

Many questions are still to be answered due to the numerous variables included in IMGES and its compatibility with other election studies, for example, the importance of spatial voting, the most important problem perceived by respondents and the respondents' region of origin. In this paper, we thus intend to explore the contribution of the dataset to the field of the electoral behavior of immigrant-origin voters' and to demonstrate its uniqueness in terms of quality and applicability. After discussing existing studies and earlier works that use the dataset, we give an overview of how electoral research benefits from the dataset by promoting further research ideas.

## 2. Contribution to the field of electoral research

IMGES is making headway in the field of electoral research by paying attention to the growing political relevance of immigrant-origin voters in Western democracies. It contributes in three ways to the field of electoral research to provide a more nuanced and complete understanding of an important part of the German electorate.

### 2.1. Adding new high-quality data on Germany

First, despite the importance of this voter group, there has been a lack of high-quality research on the electoral behavior of immigrant-origin voters in most Western European countries. This is mainly caused by the current state of data availability, as few election studies that specifically target immigrants have been conducted before. Most previous research has had to rely either on aggregated analyses of large-N surveys or on specific immigrant-focused surveys. The problem with this first issue is that the numbers of ethnic minorities and immigrant-origin voters are so low that all voters from these groups usually had to be grouped together with only a few differentiations and with little immigrant-specific information; for example, questions about ethnic identity, discrimination experience, or length of stay were rarely asked. Immigrant-focused surveys, on the other hand, often did not include questions relevant to electoral research in adequate detail, and they often did not include the majority population against which to make comparisons.

IMGES represents the first study in over 20 years that draws on a high-quality sample of immigrant-origin voters in Germany. It enables contributions to the theoretical discussions on the explanation of individual voting behavior, due to the large number of variables relevant to political science, and compares standard theories of electoral research with immigrant-specific factors. Previous research has already shown

<sup>1</sup> IMGES and GLES share the same concepts with the two British studies, but all employ the measures most commonly used in the respective countries, such as turnout, party identification or participation, which often slightly differ (e.g. party identification is measured with a specific item in Germany that is functional equivalent but not similarly worded). The IMGES also captures the same migrant-specific concepts as the EMBES but due to the different political systems and immigrant trajectories as well as research foci, these question wordings/answer scales are not the same. E.g. for ethnic/cultural identities, IMGES employed broader measures as EMBES: We ask separately about the strength of different social identities (national identity, ethnic identity, religious identity), and then inquire which is the most important one, whereas in the EMBES a combined question is employed that asks whether people feel more Black/Asian than British or not.

the importance of the Civic Voluntarism model for turnout and the Michigan model and spatial models for explanations of vote choice (Campbell et al., 1960; Enelow and Hinich, 1994; Brady et al., 1995; Verba et al., 1995; Johnson et al., 2006; Jessee, 2009; Smets and van Ham, 2013). Explanations such as the level of civic skills and the availability of resources, as well as psychological attachments and mobilization efforts, increase turnout among majority voters (e.g. Smets and van Ham, 2013; e.g. Cancela and Geys, 2016) as well as among immigrant-origin and ethnic-minority voters (Spies et al., 2022). Systematic tests, a comparative perspective, and in-depth analyses of the different groups are all missing in current research.

Regarding vote choice, research from both the U.S. (Barreto, 2007; Abrajano et al., 2008) and the U.K. (Heath et al., 2013; Fisher et al., 2014) which draws on the Michigan model has shown that factors such as candidate evaluation and issue orientation are equally important for both native and immigrant-origin voters. However, the impact of party identification on voting behavior differs from candidate and issue orientation. Earlier research from Germany has shown that party identification is generally weaker among naturalized voters compared to native voters (Wüst, 2004). However, some ethnically defined groups may still hold strong party identification, as seen in studies from the U.S. (Bishin and Klofstad, 2012) and the U.K. (Heath et al., 2013). Besides the factors of the Michigan model (Campbell et al., 1960), citizens' ideological positions can also be considered for explaining electoral behavior. They have also been applied to immigrant political behavior in the past. In EMBES, Sanders et al. (2014) demonstrated that British immigrant voters used the same dimensions of political space when making their vote choice, but that the impact of spatial considerations is lower for immigrants than for natives.

In addition to standard theories of electoral behavior, previous research has shown that immigrant-specific factors can be highly relevant when explaining immigrant-origin voters' electoral behavior. Examples of such factors are the length of stay in the host country (DeSipio and Uhlaner, 2007; Heath et al., 2013), ethnic and national identity (Dancygier and Saunders, 2006; Bergh and Bjørklund, 2010; Rapp, 2020; Spies et al., 2022), and discrimination experiences (Schildkraut, 2005; Sanders et al., 2014; Oskooii, 2020). For example, research from the U.K. has shown that group-based discrimination led to greater support for the governing Labour Party, while personal discrimination led to less support for it (Sanders et al., 2014). So far, however, systematic analyses that compare the impact of migrant-specific variables and standard theories are scarce.

### 2.2. Diverse selection of two immigrant groups

As a second contribution to the field of electoral research, the selection of immigrant groups in IMGES is unique and offers rarely available research opportunities. Due to high costs and small target groups, researchers focusing on immigrant-origin voters always have to deal with the tradeoff between costs and case numbers. Instead of having respondents from many immigrant groups (but mostly with low case numbers), IMGES followed the lead of the British colleagues, and decided to survey only two groups. However, these two groups were the two biggest immigrant communities in 2017 and capture 65% of all naturalized immigrants in Germany. In addition, they are highly diverse in many ways, thus allowing researchers to run analyses in both groups showing the robustness of findings, but also to work out differences.

One group are Germans of Turkish descent who themselves or their parents mostly immigrated in the 1950s/1960s on the premise of a quick return home. However, to understand the composition of Germans of Turkish descent, it is essential to consider three primary immigration pathways: the pathway of guest workers, the pathway of asylum seekers, and the pathway of family reunion. First, during the 1960s, most Turkish immigrants arrived in Germany as so-called "guest workers" due to a bilateral recruitment agreement between Germany and Türkiye. Since these workers were not intended to stay beyond their employment

contracts, no additional efforts were made to integrate them into German society. Most guest workers experienced their political socialization in labour unions. This relationship has changed over the years: In the beginning, labour unions were critical about the bilateral recruitment agreements because of the high numbers of unemployed Germans. Although most union officials remained skeptical about guest workers, they started to integrate them – by measures like foreign language information material – into the union structures as the feared more difficult negotiations with employers and guest workers founding their own organisations (Trede, 2012). Second, political instability in Türkiye between 1960 and 1980 led to an increase in asylum seekers from Türkiye, primarily because of a military coup d'état in 1980 (Schührer, 2018). Ethnic Kurds were especially targeted and oppressed under the new regime, leading many to flee the country. Finally, family reunification played a critical role for both guest workers and asylum seekers.

The other central immigrant group is the group of ethnic German resettlers,<sup>2</sup> whose ethnic origin dates back to their forefathers, who mostly emigrated from 18th century German lands to the then-tsarist Russia. Most Russian Germans then immigrated back to the newly unified Germany from the Soviet Union or its successor states during the 1990s. Their remigration was legally privileged, and most resettlers were initially granted financial benefits as well as German citizenship status – including the right to vote – almost immediately upon their arrival (Jost, 2020).

In 2016, approximately 700,000 Germans of Turkish descent and around 1.9 million descendants from the countries of the former Soviet Union were eligible to vote in the *Bundestagswahl* (Destatis, 2017). Our research designs includes only citizens that are eligible at the federal election, thus omitting those without German citizenship. For the group of immigrants from the former USSR, only a small share does not have German citizenship. This is different for the group of individuals of Turkish descent aged 18 and above: In 2017, this group encompassed about 2.1 million people of which only about one third (~750,000) were German citizens and thus eligible to vote (Destatis, 2017). Total numbers, as well as their proportion, have steadily increased since the early 2000s. Besides their highly diverse migration trajectories, these two groups are also diverse in the way the German government treated them. As mentioned above, Russian-German resettlers were granted German citizenship almost immediately upon arrival, while Turkish guest workers, refugees, and family members were never given easy access to citizenship. As a result, most members of the group of immigrants from the former Soviet Union or its successor states have citizenship and are eligible to vote, whereas naturalization was much harder for people of Turkish descent. Although they received their political socialization in labor unions, most Germans of Turkish descent were not allowed to vote until a citizenship law reform in 2000 simplified the naturalization process. However, the on-going naturalization of Turks and their descendants who have reached voting age make them one of the fastest growing groups of immigrant-origin voters in Germany today. From the approximately 723,000 eligible voters in 2017, the number has increased to 932,000 in 2021 and is still expected to grow (Destatis, 2021). Furthermore, the political allegiances of these two groups are highly diverse: parties from the political left still receive a considerable share of votes from Germans of Turkish descent. This is generally a major pattern among all immigrant groups, when not controlling for composition effects (Dancygier and Saunders, 2006; Bird et al., 2011), due to their socialization by labor unions and their low socio-economic status.

<sup>2</sup> The groups of immigrants from the former Soviet Union or its successor states are highly diverse, and include not only ethnic Germans who were recognized as (re)settlers – a legal status – but also ethnic Russian and spouses of other ethnicities, as well as contingents of Jewish refugees. However, as ethnic German resettlers represent the largest proportion of this group, we address them hitherto as “Russian Germans”.

However, some immigrant groups, such as the *pieds noirs* in France (Savarese, 2016) or Cubans in the U.S. (Bishin and Klofstad, 2012), show different patterns. Russian Germans are politically more in this vein and tend to vote on the political right. Due to their Christian traditions, conservative values, and the openness of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) toward German resettlers, most Russian Germans preferred the CDU for a long time (Goerres et al., 2019) and, compared to the majority, they voted over-proportionately for the right-wing populist Alternative for Germany (AfD) in 2017. These two different groups thus allow analyses of immigrant groups on the right and on the left.

### 2.3. Opportunity for additional analyses

The third contribution that IMGES makes to the field of electoral research is the opportunity for contextual analysis at the level of electoral districts and cross-country comparisons. We know that integration and citizenship regimes are important when it comes to political attitudes and behavior (Ersanilli and Koopmans, 2011; Wright and Bloemraad, 2012), but the possibility to post-harmonize the IMGES with the DEMES in the Netherlands or the EMBES in the UK – due to their having similar items from electoral research – offers new insights into cross-country similarities and differences. Furthermore, contextual factors at the level of electoral districts and similar units were found to affect electoral behavior. These factors include either political macro factors, such as candidate characteristics and local political setup (e.g. Mattes and Milazzo, 2014; Reményi et al., 2023), or other macro indicators, such as local unemployment rates or the proportion of immigrants (Park and Reeves, 2020; Brännlund, 2021). Political macro factors, such as the number and share of district candidates of immigrant origin – whether a district candidate is of Turkish descent or from the former Soviet Union or its successor states – and the turnout by electoral districts are provided directly within the IMGES dataset. Moreover, the German Federal Returning Officer provides contextual data at the level of electoral districts for the *Bundestagswahl* 2017 (e.g. the composition of the population, the populations of immigrant-origin, and unemployment rates) which were already merged based on the electoral district identifier, thus offering the possibility of analyzing context effects for minority voters as well.

### 3. The Immigrant German Election Study: survey description

IMGES was conducted as a post-election survey after the German federal election in 2017 (Goerres et al., 2020) in cooperation with the infas Institute for Applied Social Sciences in Bonn, Germany as computer-assisted personal interviews.<sup>3</sup> The data, questionnaire, and documentation are stored in the GESIS repository.<sup>4</sup> After a free user registration on the GESIS website, the dataset is open to all for scientific use via download. Access to the questionnaire and documentation do not require any registration. For a better understanding of the survey's timeline, as well as important international developments for the groups of interest, see Fig. 1.

The 2017 German federal election was characterised by the heightened salience of the topic of migration, after the mass influx of refugees in late 2015. It led to declining vote shares by the two major parties, the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats, as well as the electoral victory of the right-populist Alternative for Germany (AfD) entering parliament for the first time with 12.6% of second votes, but also the re-entering of the liberal Free Democratic Party. The topic of “Migration” is

<sup>3</sup> It also included a qualitative first stage, in which four focus-group interviews with Russian Germans were conducted, see <https://doi.pangaea.de/10.1594/PANGAEA.919342>.

<sup>4</sup> The data can be found under the following link: [https://search.gesis.org/research\\_data/ZA7495](https://search.gesis.org/research_data/ZA7495).

deemed the ultimate wedge issue as it became a polarized topic in the election campaign with most center/right parties but the AfD hesitating to position themselves clearly (Dostal, 2017).

As described previously, the target population was Germans who either themselves, or at least one parent, were born in Türkiye or in the former Soviet Union or its successor states. A two-step sampling procedure was employed. First, 150 sampling points were drawn from 140 municipalities in Germany, with a probability proportional to the size of each municipality.

Next, addresses from between 1400 and 2000 German citizens aged 16<sup>5</sup> and above (on the day of the election, September 24, 2017) were randomly selected from local registers at each sampling point. In the case of sampling points where fewer than those numbers lived, all available addresses were requested. Onomastic classification procedures (see e.g. Diehl and Schnell, 2006; Krause et al., 2015) were employed on the first and last names of the selected people to determine if someone was likely to be of Turkish or post-Soviet descent. Those qualified as having a high likelihood of belonging to one of the two immigrant groups were then contacted by interviewers. Following a short screening interview to determine whether they were part of the target group, interviews were carried out in German. Due to this research design, we cannot determine the share of respondents classified as false negatives – i.e. as having this specific migrant background but not detected onomastically – but we can determine the share of false positives (around 6%).

If the interviewers found that a respondent's German language skills were lacking, the respondent could still participate by using a self-administered survey in Russian or Turkish on the interviewer's laptop. However, only a minority of participants was offered this option, due to the fact that our sample only consisted of German citizens. After intensive pre-tests, the survey was fielded from October 4, 2017 to December 3, 2017. The mean survey time was 75 min. In total, 1020 interviews were realized: 512 interviews with Germans of Turkish descent and 508 interviews with Germans from the former Soviet Union.

For our study, we drew 150 primary sampling units out of all ~10,000 German municipalities, with the drawing probability proportional to their size. Thus, large cities had also a larger probability to be selected than smaller villages. Later, we regrouped these municipalities into the respective electoral districts for the federal election. In most cases, 1–2 municipalities are part of one electoral district. Out of the 299 electoral districts, 134 districts are represented in our sample. There are no official statistics for the groups of foreigners and naturalized immigrants/second generation Germans on the electoral district level, so we cannot compare our data to assess the data quality.

The IMGES dataset also offers a post-stratification weight that takes into account differences in selection probability due to sample design and non-response (for more details see Goerres et al., 2018). See Table 1 for the main sample characteristics and population characteristics from the Mikrozensus 2016 (Destatis, 2018).<sup>6</sup>

IMGES imitates the setup of GLES (Roßteutscher et al., 2017) regarding the sampling framework (person addresses from inhabitant registries for all German citizens aged 16 and over), survey mode (CAPI), and field time, and it also uses the same question wordings for electoral research core constructs to be able to draw comparisons. Documentation and data set description are available in German and English.

IMGES includes questions about turnout (hypothetical for those under 18 and recalled); vote choice for the federal election 2017 and 2013; different forms of political participation (offline and online); propensity to vote for the major parties; political interest; party

identification; the two most important problems perceived by the respondents; candidate evaluations for major politicians; left–right self-placement and placement of all parties; self-placement and party positions for the socio-economic and socio-cultural dimension; Inglehart's index; perception of the economic situation; satisfaction with democracy; issue positions; political knowledge; national and religious identity; internal and external efficacy; institutional and social trust; organizational memberships; and discussions about politics.

Specific to immigrant-origin voters, IMGES also includes questions about hypothetical turnout and (for those with dual citizenship) recalled turnout; recalled vote choice in their country of origin (for those with dual citizenship) as well as voting intention for the next election in their country of origin; voting in the 2017 referendum (for the Turkish-origin group); candidate evaluations for major foreign politicians; political interest in their country of origin; perception of the economic situation of their own migrant group; self-placement and party positions regarding the relationship between their country of origin and Germany; ethnic identity; self-reported discrimination; ties to their country of origin, as well as social trust in their own migrant group. Furthermore, information on the region of origin is also available, as well as answers to an open-ended question regarding the most important problem for each specific immigrant group.

#### 4. Previous results and avenues of future research

IMGES has already been used in several ways, not only to answer questions about the electoral behavior of immigrant-origin voters – voter turnout, party preference, and transnational political attitudes – but also about related concepts such as national and ethnic identities. For example, Spies et al. (2020) make use of IMGES' compatibility with GLES to investigate the differences in turnout levels between immigrant-origin voters and native voters. Mainly, the results show two key aspects: First, immigrant-specific variables add very little to the explanatory power of standard variables of voter turnout. Second, there are still differences in turnout between immigrant-origin voters and native voters that cannot be explained and which need further exploration. Moreover, in an analysis of party preferences among immigrant-origin voters and native voters in Germany, Goerres et al. (2022) found similar patterns. A comparison of the explanatory power of the Michigan model and immigrant-specific factors for the vote choice of immigrant-origin voters showed that the Michigan model also explains immigrant-origin voters' choices. However, a longer length of stay in Germany, a stronger ethnic identity, and reporting less subjective discrimination experiences led to fewer item non-responses for the standard variables of vote choice.

As noted above, it is important to distinguish between different immigrant-origin groups when analyzing their electoral behavior since collapsing the groups might miss important heterogeneity between groups with different migration trajectories and experiences in the host country. IMGES is perfectly suited for distinguishing between Germans of Turkish descent and Russian Germans by answering questions that are more specific. For example, relying on the Russian-German subgroup, Spies et al. (2022) offer an explanation of the counter-intuitive connection between a group of immigrant-origin voters and the right-wing populist AfD. Studying both groups, Hamidou-Schmidt and Mayer (2021) find a diverging relationship of national identity with out-group rejection: National identity reduced hostility towards out-groups only among the Turkish descent, but not the Russian-German subgroup. Low levels of social and economic integration, as well as a strong ethnic identity, correlate positively with support for the AfD, which especially approached this group in the election campaign. In addition, Hansen and Olsen (2020) identify negative attitudes toward refugees to be the most powerful predictor of AfD vote choice among Russian Germans.

Although some research has already been conducted using IMGES – due to its compatibility with other datasets and the rich amount of

<sup>5</sup> Even though the voting age was 18, we include already 16 and 17 year-old citizens, to mirror the design of the GLES that also includes those age groups.

<sup>6</sup> The Federal Statistical Office of Germany provided the census data for Russian Germans via a special count of the Mikrozensus 2016 specifically looking at people from countries of the former Soviet Union.

**Table 1**  
Characteristics of the Immigrant German Election Study sample and in the 2016 Mikrozensus by migrant group (weighted descriptives).

		Turkish Descent			Russian Germans		
		IMGES (N = 512)		Mikrozensus 2016 (N = 2,797,000)	IMGES <sup>a</sup> (N = 508)		Mikrozensus 2016 (N = 3,166,000)
		Share/ Mean	SD	Share/Mean	Share/ Mean	SD	Share/Mean
IMMIGRANT GENERATION	First Generation	0.46	–	0.47	0.95	–	0.96
	Second Generation	0.54	–	0.53	0.05	–	0.04
Gender	Men	0.53	–	0.52	0.44	–	0.46
	Women	0.47	–	0.48	0.56	–	0.54
Age in years		39.3	13.2		46.7	16.2	–
University entrance exam or equivalent		0.18	–		0.07	–	–
Dual citizenship		0.20	–		0.25	–	–
Religion confession	Sunni Muslim	0.48	–	–	0	–	–
	Shia Muslim	0.03	–	–	0	–	–
	Alevi	0.13	–	–	0	–	–
	Jewish	0	–	–	0.04	–	–
	Yazidi	0.03	–	–	0	–	–
	Protestant	0.01	–	–	0.40	–	–
	Catholic	0.02	–	–	0.13	–	–
	Russian Orthodox	0.03	–	–	0.23	–	–
	Other Christian	0.04	–	–	0.02	–	–
	Other	0.03	–	–	0.02	–	–
None	0.21	–	–	0.17	–	–	

<sup>a</sup> The IMGES sample includes one missing value on the question of whether the respondent was born in Germany among Russian Germans.

information it contains – there are still multiple avenues of future research that could use the data. At this point, we want to highlight two major ways for using the dataset in future research.

First, IMGES offers additional information at the context level. Electoral district identifiers for the *Bundestagswahl* 2017 enable the merging of district-level contextual data with the individual-level data provided by IMGES for assessing the effects of different contextual factors such as unemployment or previous turnout levels. For example, it still needs to be determined whether turnout rates in the district, candidate setup, or unemployment rates also affect individual attitudes and the voting intentions of minority voters. In addition, IMGES' setup allows comparative analyses which rely on other electoral surveys that specifically target immigrant-origin voters. The Ethnic Minority British Election Study 2010 (Heath et al., 2013) and the Dutch Ethnic Minority Election Study 2021 (Lubbers et al., 2021) are only two examples of similar surveys in other countries that would allow for cross-country comparative studies. This might become even more relevant in the upcoming years if more surveys are conducted that specifically target minority populations. To our knowledge, this option has not been used before, although it offers a myriad of research options, ranging from comparing the correlates of turnout, extending studies on the calculus of minority voting (Sanders et al., 2014) to other countries, and to addressing open questions about the importance of discrimination experiences and social identities to explain political behavior.

Second, researchers can make use of variables that have not been at the center of previous research. In addition to electoral behavior, IMGES includes many other indicators, for instance different forms of political participation and campaign activities, but also other factors such as institutional and social trust, organizational membership, as well as issues such as gender quotas or extending voting rights. Due to the availability of information on the region of origin for respondents from Türkiye, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine, as well as questions about the (hypothetical) political behavior in the country of origin, in-depth analyses of transnational political behavior and regional differences are possible. Moreover, variables on the first and second most important political issues invite investigation differences in the evaluation and perception of the political and social environment between natives and immigrant-origin voters. In this vein, IMGES provides a rich set of information on how immigrant-origin voters perceive party positions on a

classic left–right scale, as well as more detailed measures on the socio-economic and libertarian–authoritarian dimensions. These measures allow for more in-depth insights into how people of immigration origin navigate the political space in Germany.

## 5. Conclusion

In a society in which immigrant-origin voters are gaining increasing political relevance, it is of the utmost importance to understand the electoral behavior of this group. IMGES is a new and important dataset that addresses this highly relevant topic by looking at the two largest and most important groups of immigrant origin in Germany: Germans of Turkish descent and descendants from the former Soviet Union or its successor states. As a register-based, face-to-face, post-election survey conducted in 2017 that specifically samples for German citizens whose parents, or they themselves, were born either in Türkiye (N = 512) or in the Soviet Union or its successor states (N = 508), IMGES contributes to closing a still existing research gap where there is a lack of reliable information for a substantial part of the immigrant-origin electorate.

IMGES is unique in several ways. It consists of two samples of immigrant-origin groups that are large enough to allow for subgroup analyses. It includes political attitudes and behavior toward the country of origin, thus enabling the analysis of transnational political behavior. Furthermore, it allows for comparisons with the electoral behavior of native Germans in the GLES and can also be used for cross-country comparisons with EMBES. Additionally, the dataset enables researchers to analyze contextual factors at the electoral district level.

Although some research has already been conducted using the IMGES dataset, there is still a lot of room for improvement. We have pointed out two major avenues for future research that will further contribute to our understanding of the electoral behavior of immigrant-origin voters. First, there is a lot of potential for contextual analyses, including political and other macro factors in the IMGES itself, as well as the potential for cross-country comparisons with existing and potential future election studies of immigrant-origin voters in other countries. Second, there is a rich set of variables closely related to electoral behavior that has not yet been part of electoral research. Factors like campaign activity, social capital, and the perception of political actors among immigrant-origin voters have yet to be explored. Moreover,

IMGES provides a unique opportunity for the investigation of transnational political behavior within the two most important groups of immigrant origin: Germans of Turkish descent and descendants from the former Soviet Union or its successor states.

However, we still need more studies that specifically target immigrant-origin groups in Germany – as well as in other countries with a large share of immigrant-origin voters – to make more robust statements of these groups' electoral behavior. Analyses across different national contexts could reveal similar or differing patterns, depending on which social and political environment immigrant groups find themselves in. Moreover, as with all cross-sectional surveys, IMGES reaches its limitations in terms of causal statements and changes in attitudes and behavior over a longer period. The follow-up study to the one presented in this paper – the Immigrant German Election Study II – starts to tackle these problems by making use of a three-wave panel survey during the German Federal Election Campaign 2021 in the city of Duisburg, a highly diverse West German metropolis.

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### CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Sabrina Jasmin Mayer:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Achim Goerres:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Funding acquisition, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision, Writing – review & editing. **Dennis Christopher Spies:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Funding acquisition, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision. **Manuel Diaz Garcia:** Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Jonas Elis:** Project administration, Writing – review & editing.

### Declaration of competing interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

### Data availability

The link to the data is shared in the manuscript.

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### Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2024.102773>.

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