Network Homogeneity & Societal Cohesion in Germany

Selected Findings from the 1st Cohesion Report of the German Social Cohesion Panel (SCP)

17th Conference "Social Monitoring & Reporting in Europe"
Menaggio, October 10th, 2023

Jean-Yves Gerlitz, Olaf Groh-Samberg, Nils Teichler, Eric Nissen (Univeristy of Bremen), Holger Lengfeld, Clara Dilger (Univerity of Leipzig), Jost Reinecke, Stephan Skolarski, Lena Verneuer-Emre (Univeriyt of Bielefeld), Richard Traunmüller (University of Mannheim), Carina Cornesse (DIW Berlin)
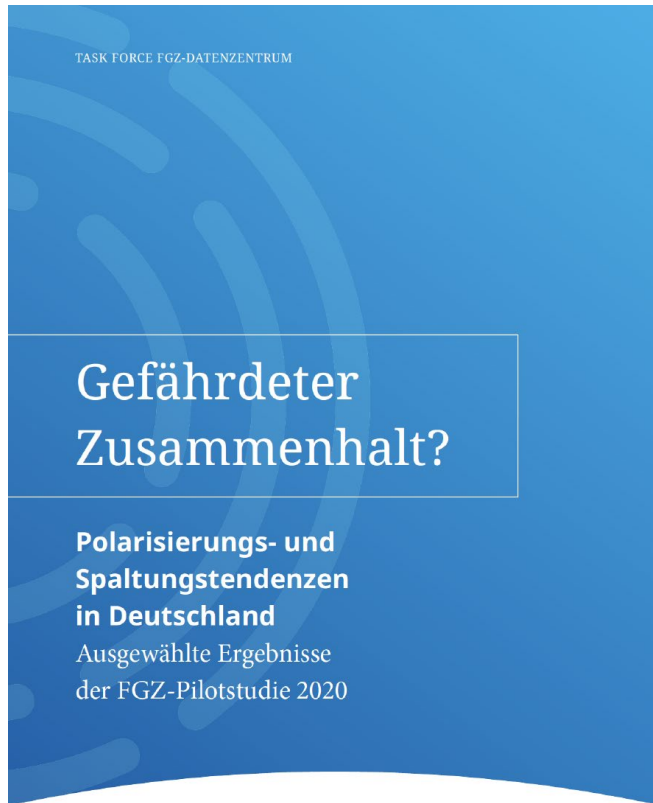
Research Institute Social Cohesion

GEFÖRDERT VOM

Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung

Content

Research Institute
Social Cohesion

- 1. Background & Research Questions
- 2. Central Concepts
- 3. Data & Indicators
- 4. Selected Findings
- 5. Conclusion & Way Forward

1. Background & Research Questions

Our concept of polarisation (Task Force FGZ-Datenzentrum 2022):

- systematic attitude & value conflicts

- overlayed by socio-economic inequalities

- accompanied by social network segregation

TASK FORCE FGZ-DATENZENTRUM

Gefährdeter Zusammenhalt?

Polarisierungs- und Spaltungstendenzen in Deutschland

Ausgewählte Ergebnisse der FGZ-Pilotstudie 2020

Forschungsinstitut Gesellschaftlicher Zusammenhalt

1. Background & Research Questions

Our concept of polarisation (Task Force FGZ-Datenzentrum 2022):

- systematic attitude & value conflicts
- overlayed by socio-economic inequalities
- accompanied by social network segregation

1. Background & Research Questions

- **Focus: extent & effect of network homogeneity & segregation**
- **Basic assumption: network segregation endangers societal cohesion**

  - => emergence of social "bubbles": groups refer to themselves & are no longer in mutual exchange

  - => Relationship to other groups: unknowledge & ignorance, stereotypes & prejudices, demarcation & devaluation

  - => **societal division**

1. Background & Research Questions

- a) What is the extent of social network homogeneity in Germany?

- b) How does network homogeneity affect aspects of societal cohesion?

2. Central Concepts

- Network homogeneity:
  - a large share of network persons resemble each other in terms of a certain characteristic (e.g. education or political orientation)

  - reasons:
    - chance (distribution of characteristics, institutional & socio-spatial opportunity structures)
    - selection (social homophily, symbolic demarcation)

2. Central Concepts

- Aspects of societal cohesion:
  - attitude & value conflicts
  - institutional trust & populism
  - cohesion experiences in social relationships
  - affective polarisation

2. Central Concepts

- Aspects of societal cohesion:
  - attitude & value conflicts
  - institutional trust & populism
  - cohesion experiences in social relationships
  - affective polarisation

3. Data & Indicators

- **German Social Cohesion Panel (SCP) 2021_1 (Anchor)**

  - field time: September 2021- April 2022

  - randomly drawn register sample (gross ~38,000 persons)

  - N = 12,104 „Anchor Persons" (private HH, HH size <= 10, complete interviews)

Q28 Next, your circle of acquaintances. We define acquaintances as people whose names you know and with whom you would have a brief conversation if you met them on the street or while shopping. How many of your acquaintances ...

	None	Very few of them	Several of them	Many of them	Most of them	All of them	Don't know
... live in a big city?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... live in the countryside?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... come from East Germany?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... come from West Germany?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... have German citizenship?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... have immigrated to Germany?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... are devout Muslims?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... are devout Christians?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... have a university degree?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... do not have an educational qualification?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... have very little money (e.g. live on Hartz IV/basic benefits, work at minimum wage)?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... have a plenty of money (e.g. are millionaires, own several houses)?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... are politically left-wing?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... are politically right-wing?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... sympathise with Die Grünen?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
... sympathise with Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Research Institute Social Cohesion

Network homogeneity
- RISC's development (SCP Pilot Study 2020)
- 16 items on social network composition
- 8 "polar" group characteristics
- 4 dimensionen:
  - SES
  - cultural background
  - political orientation
  - regional context

3. Data & Indicators

Network homogeneity

	Characteristic B (e.g. rich)					
	None	Very few	Several	Many	Most	All
Characteristic A (e.g. poor) None					Rather/homogeneous B (e.g. rich network)	
Very few						
Several		Diverse/other				
Many	Rather/homogeneous A (e.g. poor network)					
Most						
All						

→ **Focus:** network homogeneity along "polar" characteristics

→ **Reference group:** "heterogeneous" networks & networks homogeneous regarding "medium" or "alternative" group characteristics

Ideals of living together
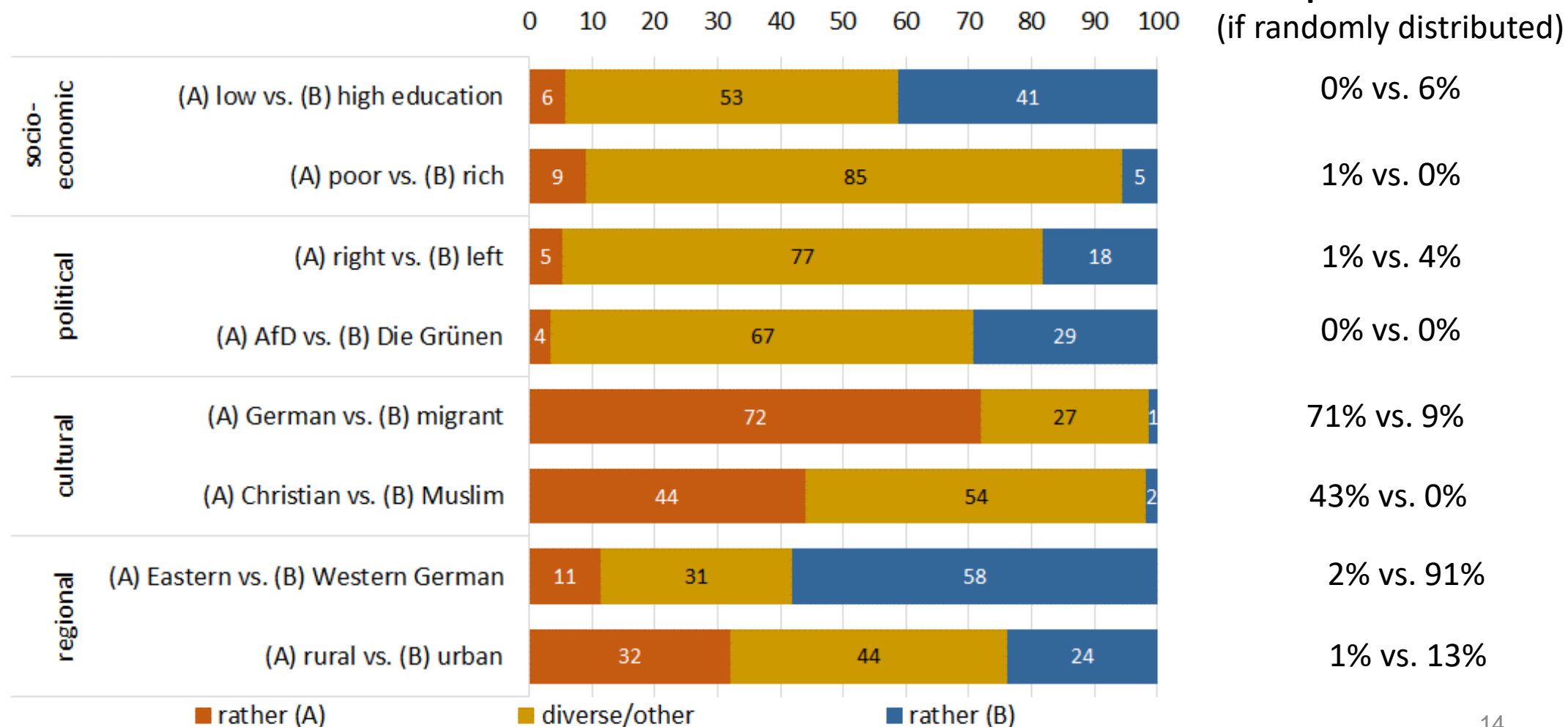
For me, a good living together in society means that...		Traditional-communitarian	Liberal-individualistic	Uniqueness
Social order	... everyone has their own place in society.	**0.522**	0.086	0.709
	... everyone can develop freely according to their abilities and inclinations.	0.103	**0.524**	0.702
Cultural values	... all share the same values, customs, and traditions.	**0.571**	-0.066	0.679
	... people from different cultural backgrounds live together.	-0.124	**0.548**	0.701
Norm bonding	... everyone abides by law and order.	**0.434**	0.114	0.787
	... everyone can live the way they want to.	-0.041	**0.436**	0.813
Decision-making	... differences in opinion are discussed and compromises are worked out.	0.043	**0.554**	0.686
	... someone is there who tells what to do.	**0.471**	-0.157	0.771
Social relations	... the cohesion in the families and in the neighbourhood is close.	**0.412**	0.075	0.817

Quelle: SCP 2021_1 (Anchor Persons); N=11,614; Maximum Likelihood Factor Analysis, oblique promax rotation; proportion of explained variance: 0.26; BIC: 1 factor = 4,899, 2 factors = 684, 3 factors = 444.

4. Findings

Homogeneous networks by characteristic (in %)

Forschungsinstitut Gesellschaftlicher Zusammenhalt

Expected shares
(if randomly distributed)

Category	Characteristic	rather (A)	diverse/other	rather (B)	Expected shares
socio-economic	(A) low vs. (B) high education	6	53	41	0% vs. 6%
socio-economic	(A) poor vs. (B) rich	9	85	5	1% vs. 0%
political	(A) right vs. (B) left	5	77	18	1% vs. 4%
political	(A) AfD vs. (B) Die Grünen	4	67	29	0% vs. 0%
cultural	(A) German vs. (B) migrant	72	27	1	71% vs. 9%
cultural	(A) Christian vs. (B) Muslim	44	54	2	43% vs. 0%
regional	(A) Eastern vs. (B) Western German	11	31	58	2% vs. 91%
regional	(A) rural vs. (B) urban	32	44	24	1% vs. 13%

■ rather (A)   ■ diverse/other   ■ rather (B)

N=11,909-11,982; weighted analysis.

14

4. Findings

Effects of homogeneous networks on ideals of living together (+ individual status)

Ideals of living together

Networks (ref. diverse/other)

N=9,513; OLS regressions, weighted analysis.

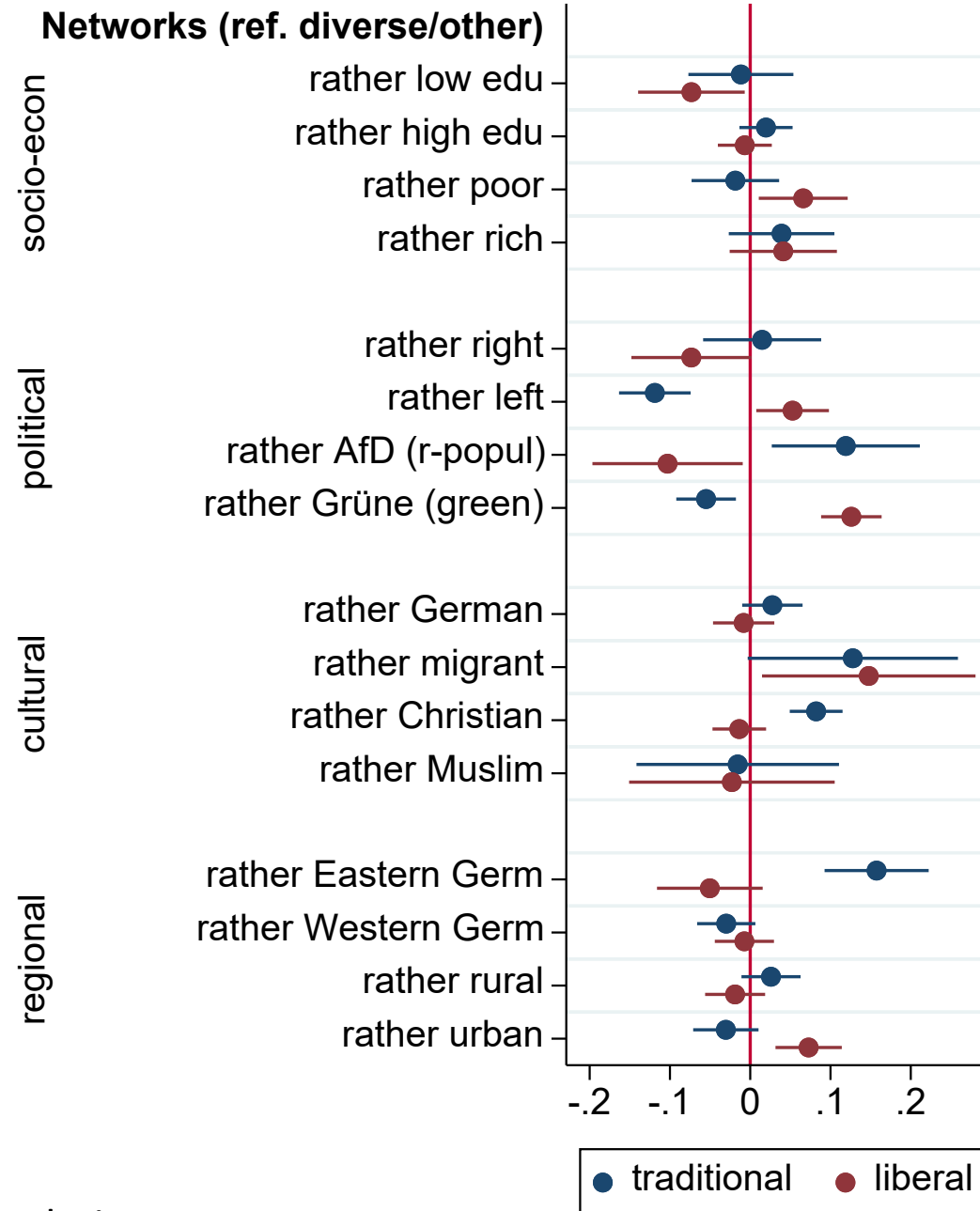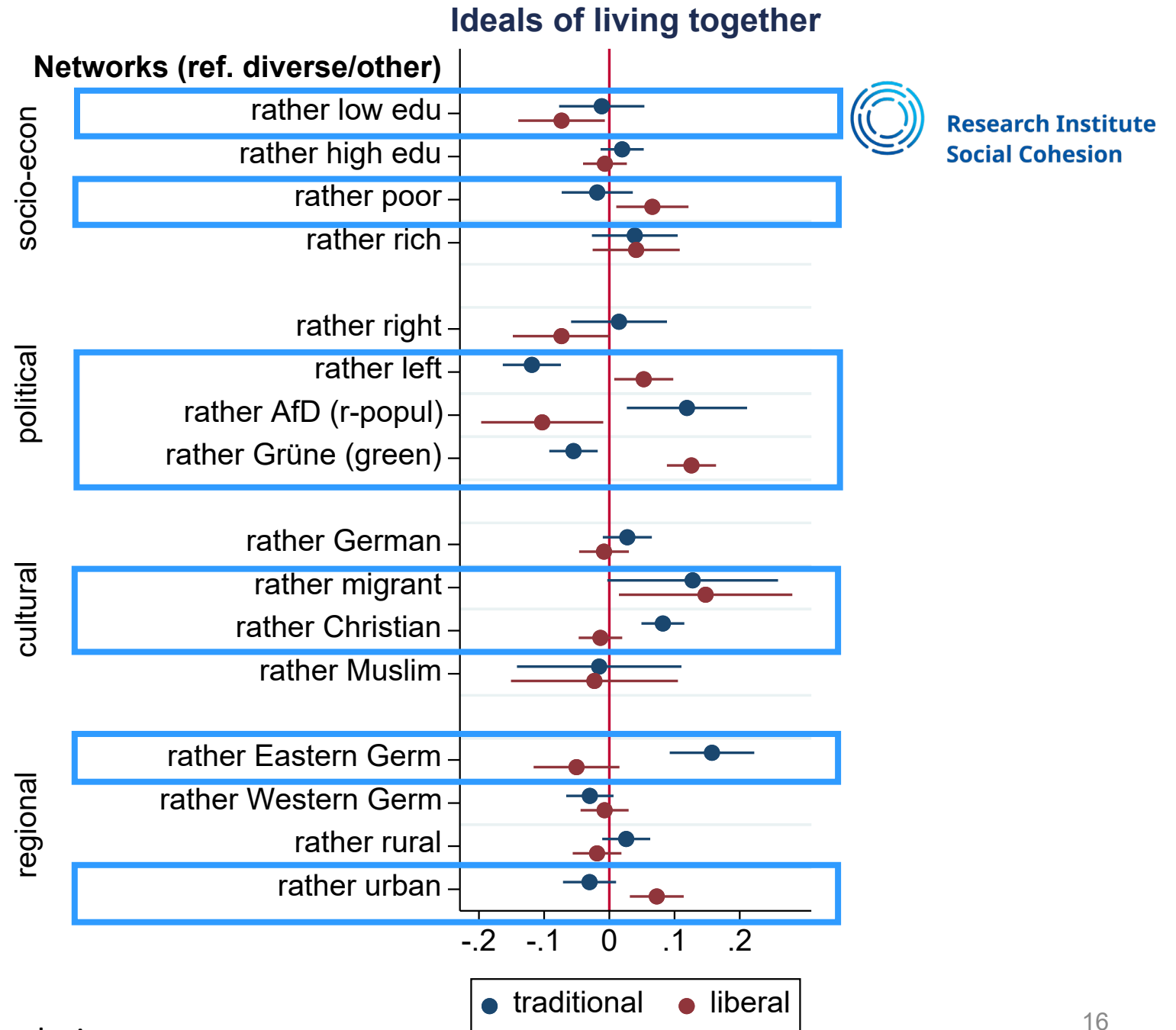# 4. Findings

Effects of homogeneous networks on ideals of living together
(+ individual status)

Ideals of living together

Networks (ref. diverse/other)

N=9,513; OLS regressions, weighted analysis.

5. Conclusion & Way Forward

- **New data on the homogeneity of networks of acquaintance**
  - homogeneous networks along "polar" characteristics
  - can partly be assigned to chance (i.e. group size; e.g. homogeneous German & Christian networks)
  - strong deviations from expected rates indicate
    - either selection (e.g. Green party supporters, the highly educated)
    - or varying, context-dependent encounter probabilities (e.g. rural)

5. Conclusion & Way Forward

- **Effects of network homogeneity on top of individual characteristics**
  - generally: strong effects of politically homogeneous networks
  - generally: some effects of socio-economically homogeneous networks
  - here: some effects of regionally homogeneous networks
  - partly very small vs. very large groups (cultural characteristics)

- *Further analyses: look at combinations of network characteristics & their effects*

Thank you!

gerlitz@uni-bremen.de

TASK FORCE FGZ-DATENZENTRUM

COMING SOON! (08.11.2023)

Entkoppelte Lebenswelten?

Soziale Beziehungen und gesellschaftlicher Zusammenhalt in Deutschland
Ergebnisse aus dem
FGZ-Zusammenhaltspanel
2021

Forschungsinstitut Gesellschaftlicher Zusammenhalt