# The Effects of In-Person Conversations on Polarization: Evidence from a Quasi-Experiment

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**Abstract**

Do conversations between like-minded individuals exacerbate political polarization, whereas conversations between contrary-minded individuals reduce it? We examine this by exploiting a large-scale quasi-experiment in Germany, which paired strangers for unobserved in-person meetings. Talking to a person with a similar political opinion leads to more extreme political views. By contrast, meeting a contrary-minded person does not affect political views. However, it reduces negative attitudes towards those with opposing political opinions and improves social cohesion. Our results suggest that conversations among like-minded individuals may widen the gap between ideological groups, while conversations among contrary-minded individuals can reduce affective but not ideological polarization.

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# 1 Introduction

Political polarization has grown in many countries over recent years. Societies have become increasingly divided into distinct ideological groups and animosity between these groups has risen to a high level (see, e.g. Gentzkow, 2016; Pew Research Center, 2014; Iyengar and Westwood, 2015; Ahler and Sood, 2018; Boxell et al., 2020). These trends endanger social cohesion, the functioning of democracy and other institutions (see, e.g. McConnell et al., 2018; Iyengar et al., 2019).

Therefore, it is crucial to understand what causes political polarization and how to counteract it. According to a long-standing idea, social interactions play an important yet two-sided role. On the one hand, there are concerns that interactions between *like-minded* individuals increase polarization as they lead to mutual reconfirmation and thus more extreme views (Sunstein, 2009). On the other hand, there is hope that interactions between *contrary-minded* individuals reduce polarization as people step out of their like-minded peer group and get to know those individuals who hold opposing views. This idea has received substantial attention in the context of echo chambers in social media (see, e.g. Allcott et al., 2020; Peterson et al., 2021). However, we still lack rigorous evidence on the effects of "real" in-person conversations between like- and contrary-minded persons. Understanding the impact of such interactions is crucial, in particular given the sheer number of face-to-face conversations in daily life and their major impact on behavior, preferences and beliefs.[1]

In this paper, we study the effects of in-person conversations among politically like- and contrary-minded individuals on different dimensions of political polarization: (i) ideological polarization, i.e. how extreme political views are; (ii) affective polarization, defined as the animosity towards those with opposing political views; and (iii) the general perception of social cohesion. To estimate the effects, we leverage the quasi-experimental structure of a nationwide newspaper initiative (*Germany Talks*) that matches two strangers for private in-person conversations and complement it with surveys.[2] The conversations were neither guided nor observed. This unique combination

[1] In particular, in-person interactions have strong effects on political preferences (see, e.g. Pons, 2018; Green et al., 2003; Gerber and Green, 2000; Kalla and Broockman, 2020) and inter-group prejudices (see, e.g. Broockman and Kalla, 2016; Paluck et al., 2019; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). Atir et al. (2022) show that conversations with strangers are an important source of learning but that their impact is systematically undervalued by people.

[2] 19,000 participants registered to have a meeting. Since its launch in Germany in 2017, the program *My Country Talks* has expanded worldwide. To date, there have been interventions of the same form in many countries and regions, among others the US (*America Talks*) and Europe (*Europe Talks*). Other countries include Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden,

of private yet controlled interactions in the field provides an ideal setting to study the effects of in-person conversations. We measure outcomes in the endline survey one week after the meetings.

To identify the causal effects of having an in-person conversation, we exploit plausibly exogenous variation in meeting availability. After registration, an algorithm matched two participants based on their political views. Subsequently, participants received an email in which their proposed partner was introduced. As soon as one participant accepted the proposed match, the partner was notified. If both participants accepted, contact was established and they could arrange their meeting. If at least one person did not accept, contact was not established and no meeting took place. To estimate the effects of a meeting, we restrict the analysis to those participants who accepted their partner first (*first-accepters*). This circumvents self-selection into meetings as not the first-accepters themselves but rather their partners decide whether contact is established and a meeting can be arranged (treatment) or no contact is established and no meeting takes place (control). However, a potential concern is that the partners' decisions depend on the first-accepters' characteristics. To address this issue, we exploit the fact that all information that the partner had about the *first-accepter* when taking the decision is contained in the introductory email. Thus, controlling for the information about the first-accepter included in the email achieves conditional random assignment of the first-accepters to the treatment and control group. This approach identifies the intent-to-treat (ITT) effect of an in-person conversation.

To distinguish between the effects of in-person conversations with like- and contrary-minded partners, we consider two treatment conditions and estimate respective ITT effects separately. Assignment to the two conditions is determined by the partners' difference in political views that were used for the matching.[3] The like-minded treatment and control group contain first-accepters who the algorithm matched with a partner with similar political views. The contrary-minded treatment and control group comprise first-accepters matched with a partner with opposing political views. The like-minded sample comprises 775 participants and the contrary-minded sample 748 participants.

This paper has three main results. The first set of findings considers the effect on ideological polarization, defined as the polarization of political views towards more

Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

[3]Conceptually, these are two distinct treatment and control groups within the same "framework" as the non-random matching to the partner was before the conditionally exogenous assignment to treatment and control.

extreme positions.[4] We find that in-person conversations with like-minded partners increase ideological polarization, while there is no effect for contrary-minded partners. We construct two ideological polarization measures that consider how extreme the overall political opinion - defined as a vector of eleven single political attitudes - is: the first one captures extreme views in terms of *absolute* (dis-)agreement levels on the eleven policy statements, while the second one measures extreme views *relative* to the average opinion of the population. The ITT effects of having a conversation with a like-minded partner are 0.161 standard deviations more absolute and 0.166 standard deviations more relative extreme answers. By contrast, deliberating with a contrary-minded person does not affect ideological polarization. When condensing the two individual measures into one overall measure by conducting a principal component analysis (PCA), like-minded meetings increase ideological polarization by 0.195 standard deviations. The estimates for contrary-minded conversations are negative yet small and insignificant. As a benchmark, Allcott et al. (2020) found that a four-week-long deactivation of Facebook in the US reduced their index of polarization of views by 0.1 standard deviations.

Further analysis shows that the null effects for contrary-minded conversations do not hide opposing polarizing ("backlash") and depolarizing adjustments that cancel each other out. Moreover, we detect no sign that the non-adjustment is driven by avoidance of contentious topics or shorter meeting durations. Instead, disagreement on a topic increases the likelihood of discussion and the duration of contrary-minded meetings is 20% (30 minutes) longer. Thus, contrary-minded partners discuss topics on which they disagree but they do not react to this by adapting their own opinion.

Our second set of results deals with the effect on affective polarization. In contrast to the finding on ideological polarization, we find that in-person conversations with contrary-minded partners reduce affective polarization while meeting a person with similar views does not have any significant impact. While affective polarization is usually defined as the animosity towards partisans of the opposing party, Orr and Huber (2020) show that partisan aversion mostly reflects hostility between people with different policy views and not hostility based on partisanship per se. In line with this, we measure affective polarization by considering aversion towards people who have very different policy views in the form of stereotypes and willingness to engage in personal contact. Using a PCA on all stereotypes, we find a significant reduction of 0.379 standard deviations

[4]In some cases, the term *issue polarization* is used when investigating changes in views (see, e.g. Mason, 2015; Allcott et al., 2020). It reflects the extent to which partisans' views are in line with the average opinion of their party.

for those who met a contrary-minded partner. This is associated with a higher willingness to engage in personal contact with a person with opposing views of 0.146 standard deviations (insignificant). In the case of a like-minded partner, there is an insignificant tendency towards the reinforcement of stereotypes and a reduction of the willingness to engage in personal contact. When summarizing the impact on all measures into one index, contrary-minded conversations reduce affective polarization by 0.352 standard deviations, while the estimates for like-minded conversations are positive yet insignificant. As points of comparison, a recent meta-study on the effect of inter-group contact on tolerance found a pooled estimate of 0.379 standard deviations (Paluck et al., 2019). Santoro and Broockman (2022) showed that a conversation with an out-party voter about a predefined non-political topic increased warmth towards out-party voters by 0.34 standard deviations in the short run (directly after conversations).

Our third set of findings is that conversations with contrary-minded partners improve the perception of social cohesion. Having established the impacts of in-person conversations on attitudes towards contrary-minded individuals, we turn attention to whether these effects extend to the perception of all members of society. To assess this impact, we estimate the effects on perceptions of whether fellow society members are trustworthy and pro-social. The significant ITT estimates for contrary-minded partners are 0.274 and 0.245 standard deviations, respectively. Meetings with like-minded partners show a similar, albeit weaker and mostly insignificant tendency.

The results paint a coherent picture and provide important insights into the role of in-person conversations with respect to political polarization. On the one hand, we find that meetings with like-minded partners lead to more extreme views, while they do not reduce affective polarization or bolster the perception of social cohesion. These findings suggest that the geographical clustering of people with similar opinions - as reported by Brown and Enos (2021) and Bishop (2009) - may further widen the ideological gap between political groups. Moreover, the tendency towards a lesser willingness to engage in personal contact with contrary-minded individuals suggests that even the unwillingness to cross that ideological gap may increase. On the other hand, this paper also offers a potential solution to fight this vicious polarizing circle. We show that conversations with contrary-minded partners reduce affective polarization and improve the perception of social cohesion, although they do not reduce ideological polarization. Thus, providing people with the possibility to meet a contrary-minded person can reduce hostility across ideological groups, but does not narrow the ideological gap.

This paper relates to three strands of literature. First, we contribute to research

investigating the concept of echo chambers and one-sided information provision mainly in the context of (social) media (see, e.g. Pariser, 2011; Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2011; Prior, 2013; Flaxman et al., 2016; Halberstam and Knight, 2016; Martin and Yurukoglu, 2017; Sunstein, 2018; Beam et al., 2018; Bail et al., 2018; Eady et al., 2019; Peterson et al., 2021; Di Tella et al., 2021). In a recent paper, Allcott et al. (2020) show that the deactivation of Facebook leads to a reduction of ideological but not affective polarization. By contrast, Levy (2021) finds that exposure to counter-attitudinal news on Facebook reduces affective polarization but does not shift political opinions. Bail et al. (2018) even find a "backlash" effect of opinions when being confronted with opposing views on social media. We contribute to this literature by extending the analysis from (social) media to in-person conversations within and across political groups.

Second, we contribute to research exploring interventions against political polarization. Most closely related are Santoro and Broockman (2022) and Rossiter (2021), whereby both studies pair out-partisan strangers for a conversation via video- or text-based chat about a predefined topic to measure the effect on affective polarization. Both interventions improve how Americans feel and react to members of the opposing party. A recent megastudy by Voelkel et al. (2022), studies the effectivness of 25 interventions that were designed to reduce animosities between parties.[5] Moreover, there is research on the impact of deliberative polls that gather individuals to participate in a "mini-public" for structured and moderated group deliberations (Levendusky and Stecula, 2021; Fishkin et al., 2021; Schkade et al., 2007).[6] Further related interventions use priming of national identity (Levendusky, 2018), correction of misperceptions (Voelkel et al., 2021), meditation (Simonsson and Marks, 2020), making out-party friendships more salient (Voelkel et al., 2021) or narrative writing (Warner et al., 2020). We advance the literature by being the first to study the causal impact of one-on-one in-person discussions that are not guided or observed but rather take place in a natural environment, which is an important feature given the relevance of how conversations are held (Kalla and Broockman, 2020; Atir et al., 2022). In particular in comparison with deliberative pollings, the conversations are more similar to everyday conversations. In addition, our design allows us to construct a clean control group and enables us to compare in-person conversations among contrary- and like-minded individuals within one quasi-experimental setup.[7]

[5]The choosen intervention differ from the one at hand. Most are rather short (reading a text, watching a video, or answering a specific set of questions) and none of them pair strangers for a longer interaction.

[6]More generally, these studies explore the concept of deliberative democracy. A key part of this concept is that deliberation helps to resolve conflicts.(Habermas, 1984; Gutmann and Thompson, 2009).

[7]We are able to compare individuals having a conversation vs. individuals having no conversation.

Finally, the paper contributes to the literature investigating whether interaction reduces inter-group prejudice. This research builds upon the contact hypothesis by Allport (1954), finding extensive evidence on the power of inter-group contact for various types of segregation. For example, Rao (2019) and Lowe (2021) study the effect of contact between different castes in India.[8] Meta-analyses by Paluck et al. (2019) and Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) find that contact generally reduces prejudice. However, there is a lack of studies investigating the effect of *ideological* segregation.[9] Moreover, Paluck (2016) highlights the scarcity of studies using real-world interventions with adults to test the causal effect of inter-group contact. To the best of our knowledge, our paper is the first to use a large quasi-experimental field setting to estimate the causal effect of unobserved in-person conversations across political groups.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. In Section 2, we briefly introduce the intervention *Germany Talks* and the political situation in which it took place. Section 3 describes the quasi-experimental setting and our sample. In Section 4, we present the empirical strategy. Sections 5, 6 and 7 report our results, before Section 8 concludes.

# 2 Background

This study focuses on in-person conversations that took place within the scope of the intervention *Germany Talks* in 2018. In this section, we briefly describe the political situation in Germany at the time and introduce the *Germany Talks* intervention.

**Political Situation** In 2018, the political divide in Germany was perceived as large. With the increasing number of asylum seekers in 2015/16, the 2013-founded right-wing party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) had quickly gained popularity and received the third highest voting share in the 2017 federal election, with 12.6%. For the first time since WWII, a party that was more right-leaning than the established parties - such as the socially conservative Christian Democratic Union or the libertarian Free Democratic

In many of the studies cited above, the control involves some other form of contact or group deliberation. For example, Levendusky and Stecula (2021) compare the effects of group discussions with a heterogenous vs. homogenous discussion group.

[8] Other studies estimating the effect of inter-group contact include Schindler and Westcott (2021), Scacco and Warren (2018), Finseraas and Kotsadam (2017), Burns et al. (2015), Carrell et al. (2015), and Boisjoly et al. (2006).

[9] Santoro and Broockman (2022) and Rossiter (2021) observe contact between political groups. In contrast to our study, they look at short and guided interactions that were held via a text- or video-based chat. In an observational study, Amsalem et al. (2022) uses self-reported contact to study the impact of talking to 'the other side'.

Party - had entered the German parliament, leading to a perceived overall shift to the right. Likewise, similar to other countries like the US (Iyengar and Westwood, 2015), animosity between partisans was at an alarming level, even exceeding aversion based on nationality (Helbling and Jungkunz, 2020). This prompted the federal president of Germany - Frank-Walter Steinmeier - to state in his yearly Christmas address: "Wherever you look - especially on social media - we see hate; there is shouting and daily outrage. I feel that we Germans are spending less and less time talking to each other. And even less time listening to each other."

**Germany Talks** *Germany Talks* was initiated by Germany's largest weekly newspaper DIE ZEIT in 2017 as a response to the contemporary political situation in Germany. The intention behind the intervention was to enable interpersonal conversations across political camps. Since its foundation, it has established itself as a yearly conducted initiative with thousands of people talking to each other. Although it has its roots in Germany, the *My Country Talks* program has since expanded to other regions and countries all over the world, among others the US (*America Talks*) and Europe (*Europe Talks*). Overall, the intervention has taken place in more than 30 countries with more than 200,000 participants to date.[10] The mechanism of *Germany Talks* is simple: based on political views, participants are matched to a partner. If both partners agree to the match, contact details are exchanged and the pair can arrange a meeting. The conversations are held in private.

# 3 Setting

## 3.1 Design

We complemented the *Germany Talks* program by sending out a baseline and endline survey to all participants. See Figure 1 for an overview of the experimental design. The subsequent details in this section track the timeline carefully.

**Recruitment** In 2018, *Germany Talks* was conducted in cooperation with a broad set of German news outlets. Together, the participating partners had considerable outreach ranging from large daily and weekly newspapers and their online platforms, over pure

[10] More information about the program is available at https://www.mycountrytalks.org.

online media to major public television. With respect to political orientation, the participating news outlets reflected a broad political spectrum with a focus on the center-left.[11] The intervention was promoted on these platforms and participants could register either online on the respective websites or by post. 19,365 participants were successfully recruited. As shown in Figure A1, they came from all over Germany.

**Registration** In order to register for the program, individuals had to answer seven binary political questions. Table A1 lists all seven questions, henceforth referred to as *political registration questions*. These political registration questions were chosen carefully by the organizers to capture contemporary political controversies. In addition to these questions, applicants had to state their name, age, gender, place of residence and answer five non-political free response questions.[12]

**Matching on Political Distance** After registration, people were assigned a partner based on their political views and place of residence. The main objective of the algorithm was to match as many participants as possible while fulfilling two conditions, with the first being that the matched partner had to be located within a 20-kilometer perimeter. Given the fulfillment of the first condition, the *political distance* between the partners - defined as the number of differently-answered political registration questions - was maximized. The algorithm was executed exactly once. Thus, there was no chance of changing partners or being matched to another partner later on.

**Variation in Political Distance: Definition of Treatment Conditions (LM and CM)** We divide participants into two treatment conditions based on their political distance from their matched partners. (i) *Contrary-minded partners (CM)*: This group includes those participants who were matched with a partner who answered more than half (i.e. four or more) of the political registration questions differently. It comprises 46% of all matched participants. (ii) *Like-minded partners (LM)*: This group includes participants who were matched with a partner who answered less than half (i.e. three or fewer) of the political registration questions differently. It includes 54% of the matched participants.[13] The definition of the treatment conditions was constructed by us. Thus,

[11] The organizing news outlet DIE ZEIT is considered as center-left. Generally, the main German media are perceived around the middle of a left-right spectrum (PEW, 2018).

[12] The five free response questions were about the participants, their hobbies and dislikes. See Table A2.

[13] Throughout the paper, we show that the results are robust to alternative sample splits into like- and contrary-minded partners.

they are unknown to participants and played no role in the matching process.

**Introduction of Partner** Each successfully paired individual received an email introducing the matched partner. This email contained a list of the political registration questions that the partner had answered differently, the partner's first name, age, gender and the answers to the non-political free response questions. Based on this information, the participants could decide whether they wanted to accept the suggested partner or not. As soon as one participant within a pair accepted, the other person was notified. If and only if both partners confirmed the match, contact was established by giving out the respective email addresses.

**Variation in Meeting Availability: Definition of Treatment and Control** Leveraging this structure, we restrict our analysis to those participants who accepted their partner *first*, i.e. before the partner did. Thus, the (second) partner who had not (yet) accepted essentially decided whether the first-accepter would have a meeting or not. We exploit this feature by defining treatment and control groups in the following way. *Treated participants* are those first-accepters whose partners also accepted. In such cases, contact was established and the partners could arrange their meeting. *Control participants* are those first-accepters whose partner did not accept. In this case, no contact was established and there was no chance of meeting or communicating with the partner. Table 1 summarizes the four resulting combinations of treatment conditions LM and CM (like- vs. contrary-minded partner) and meeting availability (treatment group vs. control group).

There are two key points for our analysis. First, rather than first-accepters selecting themselves into the treatment and control group, the partners of the first-accepters assign the first-accepters to the treatment and control group. Second, the partners could base their acceptance decision only on the information about the first-accepters from the introductory email. Thus, conditional on that information, the decision was independent of the first-accepter.

**Meetings** After contact had been established, the organizers of *Germany Talks* played no further role and participants had to organize the exact time and location of the meetings themselves. Meetings were not observed, moderated, or guided in any way. They mostly took place in natural settings like cafés, parks, or in people's homes. As shown in Figure A2, conversations centered around the topics of the seven political registration

questions. On average, conversations lasted 140 minutes and an overwhelming majority of the participants reported that it was a pleasant experience. For more information about the meeting, see Appendix A.4.

**Surveys** We designed a baseline and endline survey to complement the program. The surveys were sent out by the organizers of *Germany Talks*. Unfortunately, the baseline survey was distributed more than one week after the introductory emails had been sent. Therefore, matching, acceptance decisions and assignments to treatment (acceptance decision of the partner) had already taken place before most participants filled out the baseline survey. In fact, by that point in time 98% of the treated participants had already learned that the partner had also accepted.[14] Consequently, measures that were elicited in the baseline survey may potentially be affected by first email contact between partners or expectations. For this reason, we only use measures from the baseline survey that are robust.[15]

Basic information about the participants such as socio-demographics was elicited in the baseline survey. The baseline survey was sent out five days prior to the meetings and required on average 14 minutes to answer. The endline survey contained outcome measures and questions about the meetings. The average response time was 12.5 minutes. The endline survey was sent out one week after the conversations. 2,645 participants completed both surveys. Additional details on the surveys can be found in Appendix A.4.

## 3.2 Composition Like- and Contrary-Minded Sample

Table A3 describes the composition of the like-minded (LM) and the contrary-minded (CM) sample, which comprise 775 and 748 participants, respectively. In a first step, we compare the two samples with the German population (column 1). Both the LM and CM samples are similar in terms of age and place of residence, but more educated and have fewer people with low income and a migration background.[16] Overall, the

[14]Participants had time to accept until the day when the meetings took place. Thus, in principle, first-accepters had the chance of becoming a member of the treatment group until that moment.

[15]In particular, we do not use any sensitive "social measures" like stereotypes or perception of social cohesion. We solely utilize time-invariant measures and political attitudes.

[16]There are two potential reasons for these differences. On the one hand, different types of people may differ in their willingness to participate in a program promoting political discussion. This case may be partly seen as a feature of our study as voluntary participation - in contrast to "forced" or paid interpersonal conversations - is an important requirement for the success of such policies in real life. On the other hand, the specificity of the sample may also reflect the reader-/viewership of the participating

two samples are comparable, except for gender composition and political preferences, with the like-minded sample being less conservative. The reason for these political differences lies in the composition of participants in combination with the mechanics of *Germany talks*: with a large part of the registered participants being more left leaning in their political preferences and the matching algorithm aiming to maximize the political distance between partners, conservatives were predominantly matched with left participants. Analogously, liberals often ended up being matched with fellow liberals due to excess supply. Consequently, the like-minded sample mostly contains left-leaning people, while the contrary-minded sample comprises left and right people.[17]

As we are discussing the impact of in-person conversations within but also across political camps, it is important to ensure that our treatment condition LM captures conversation among people in the same ideological group and that treatment condition CM captures conversations between ideological groups. Party preferences and self-classified ideology of the first-accepters (Table A3) suggest the existence of a large left camp and a small right camp. To be able to assign an ideology to all participants, we look at correlational patterns of the answers to the political registration questions by applying a latent class analysis (LCA).[18] The results of the LCA confirm that we indeed have two distinct ideological groups among all participants, one large ideologically left-leaning and one smaller ideologically right-leaning group. Second, to assess the extent to which the treatment conditions reflect politically like- and contrary-mindedness within pairs, we use the ideological classes found by the LCA and study the overlap of ideological classes within pairs. As shown in Table A4, there is a strong congruence between our treatment conditions and the overlap of ideological classes within pairs. This gives further substantial foundation to our treatment condition definitions. The details of the LCA analysis are described in A.5.

# 4 Empirical Strategy

**Specification** Our approach identifies the ITT of having an in-person conversation with either a like- or contrary-minded person. Recall that the partner assigns the partic-

news outlets.

[17]Female participants are generally less conservative than male participants. Thus, the difference in gender composition is another side-effect of the matching algorithm.

[18]In contrast to political self-classification or party preferences, LCA classes can be applied to all participants of *Germany talks*, in particular also to the partners. This allows us to study the political composition of all pairs, irrespectively of whether the partner filled out the survey or not.

ipant who accepted the match first (first-accepter) to treatment and control by choosing whether to accept or not, based only on the information from the introductory email. Thus, by controlling for the information from the introductory emails, the assignment is conditional independent of the first-accepter. While we are able to control for most of the content from the emails, we have to use proxies for the surname and the answers to the open questions from the participants.[19]

For both treatments LM and CM separately, we estimate the following ITT specification by OLS:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta * Treat_i + \gamma * BasicInfo_i + \delta * AddInfo_i + \rho * Y_i^b + \epsilon_i \quad (1)$$

where $Y_i$ denotes our outcome variable from the endline survey. The dummy $Treat_i$ indicates whether first-accepter $i$ was accepted by the partner or not and $\epsilon_i$ is an individual-specific error term. $\beta$ measures the ITT effect of a political face-to-face discussion. $BasicInfo_i$ and $AddInfo_i$ are sets of fixed effects capturing the information from the introductory mails, and $Y_i^b$ denotes the baseline value of Y.[20] $BasicInfo_i$ contains basic information (hard facts) about participant $i$ that we observe (age intervals, gender, region at the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) level, combinations of answers to political registration questions) and proxies for surname (migration background, and education and income). The set of dummies $AddInfo_i$ accounts for the fact that the answers to the open questions were unobserved by capturing potentially visible information. It comprises political self-classification (left to right), party, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status and the number of politically contrary-minded people in one's social environment. Appendix A.5.1 describes the controls in more detail.

The main identifying assumption is that we achieve conditional independence of treatment assignment and the respective outcome variable by controlling for $BasicInfo_i$ and $AddInfo_i$. This would be violated if - for example - some attitudes of the participants we are not controlling for had shone through in the introductory mail, consequently affected the partners' decisions, and importantly also had an impact on the outcome variable.

[19] We know age, gender, answers to the political registration questions, and region. Due to data protection, we did not receive the surname nor the answers to the open questions from the organizers of *Germany Talks*.

[20] $Y_i^b$ excludes the baseline values for the measures of affective polarization and perception of social cohesion as treatment conditions had already been assigned and contact had already been established in almost all cases when baseline values were elicited. For more details, see Section 3.1.

We also report estimates for the post double selection (PDS) method (Belloni et al., 2014). Out of the vector of all potential controls, PDS chooses the right set via a three-step "double-lasso" procedure: using two lasso regressions, it selects a set of controls that is predictive of treatment status $Treat_i$ and a set of controls that predicts outcome $Y_i$. In a third step, the union of both sets of control variables is used to estimate the treatment effect.

For robustness, we additionally report results from OLS regressions without $AddInfo_i$, results using the overlap of ideological classes from the LCA to define treatment conditions, and results using different cut-offs for our definition of like- and contrary-mindedness.

**Potential Challenges** Table A5 suggests that conditional random assignment to the treatment and control groups in both conditions (LM and CM) is achieved. To test for balance, we use variables from the baseline survey unaffected by the treatment assignment. None of the coefficients are significant in one of the treatment conditions LM and CM, nor is the F-test of joint significance. Table A6 shows that the treatment and control groups are even conditionally balanced if we conditioning only on the basic set of controls.

Table A7 tests for conditional selective attrition between the baseline and endline survey.[21] We find very small and insignificant differences between the treatment and control groups in both the LM (column 1) and CM (column 2) conditions.

To assess the extent to which the ITT effect captures the real effect of an in-person meeting, we look at compliance with treatment assignments. Since contact was only established if both partners had accepted, by construction non-compliance is only one-sided. Participants in the control group had no chance to meet their partner.[22] Compliance in the treatment group is very similar across both treatment conditions, at 87.2% for LM and 86.8% for CM. The high compliance rates of 100% (control) and 87% (treatment) suggest that the average effects of the meetings are close to our ITT estimates. They are presumably even slightly larger, as the ITT likely provides a lower bound with some participants in the treatment group not having a meeting.

One potential challenge to the interpretation of our study is that we estimate the

[21] Note that income (part of the basic controls $BasicInfo$) and marital status (part of the additional controls $AddInfo$) are not controlled for because we elicited them in the endline survey.

[22] There were two participants who stated that they met a partner even though the partner did not accept them. We do not know whether they lied on purpose or accidentally stated that they met their partner. We drop them from our analysis, although including them in our analysis does not change our results.

effects separately in two samples of different (political) compositions. Differences in effects may be partly rooted in the differences between the LM and the CM-Sample instead of being caused by the treatments.[23] To assess the extent of the concern, we look at the selection into the different samples in more detail. Table A8 shows that we do not see any signs that the willingness to accept the partner first varied with political distance. Thus, together with the discussion on sample differences from the previous section, it seems that the two samples are largely comparable, except for political orientation (see Table A3). To account for the observed differences in political attitudes, we re-weight our contrary-minded sample to match the like-minded sample means using the entropy weighting procedure (Hainmueller, 2012). We find the same pattern, which suggests that it is unlikely that the differences in effects are only found due to the dissimilarity of the samples.[24] We further ensure that the differences in effects are not driven by participants in our two samples meeting different types of partners.[25] Analogous to before, we re-weight our contrary-minded sample to match the partners' charcteristics from the like-minded sample and vice-versa. The alterations do not affect the results of our study.[26]

As in most experiments, participants' actions might be systematically influenced by the perceived intent of the intervention. Given that *Germany Talks* was initiated to counteract the perception of growing political division in Germany, participants might have had this in their mind when answering the surveys. Looking at the pattern of results, it is unlikely that the answers are driven by such demand effects. The reinforcement of political opinions, the lower willingness to meet people with contrasting views and the absence of positive effects on the social domains in the like-minded condition as well as the unchanged political views in the contrary-minded condition do not align with demand effects, especially considering that participants are not aware of the division into the like- or contrary-minded samples and that our results are robust to different cut-offs and specifications.[27]

Regarding the findings on affective polarization and social cohesion, disappointment of not being accepted by the proposed contrary-minded partner may partly drive the effects. To assess this concern, we compare the time trends of the two control groups.

[23] Note that this does not concern the identification of the ITT of like- vs contrary-minded meetings.
[24] See Tables A19, A30 and A39
[25] Table A4 provides descriptive statistics of the partners. It shows that in the like-minded condition second-movers are younger, more female and more left than in the contrary-minded condition.
[26] See Tables A21, A34 and A41
[27] See Tables A12, A13, A14, A29, A33, A37 and A38

If disappointment with not being accepted by the contrary-minded partner is actually increasing affective polarization, we should see different time trends for the contrary- and like-minded control group as the latter were not rejected by contrary-minded partners. Table A9 finds no sign of different time trends.[28] This suggests that disappointment does not explain the observed effects for contrary-minded partners.

# 5 Effects on Ideological Polarization

Many scholars argue that deliberations among citizens lead to more agreement within society. However, there is a concern that discussions can yield the exact opposite. Like-minded people may confirm and reinforce each other's opinions (Sunstein, 2009), leading to more polarized views. Even if confronted with contrasting viewpoints, it is unclear what to expect as discussions may result in a "backfire" effect (Bail et al., 2018; Wojcieszak, 2011). In this section, we explore the heterogeneity in effects of interpersonal deliberation on political opinion.

**Measures** To measure polarization in political opinions, we elicited agreement with eleven different political viewpoints in the baseline and endline survey (see Table 2 for an overview). Seven out of the eleven viewpoints were those used by *Germany Talks* to match partners. The remaining four viewpoints capture other typical left-right topics, such as same-sex marriage. We define the overall political opinion as the vector of all eleven opinions. We construct two measures that each capture one facet of ideological polarization. The first measure captures how extreme the overall opinion is in terms of *absolute* (dis-)agreement with the viewpoints. More precisely, it is defined as the Euclidean distance to the center of the answer scale. The second measure captures how extreme the overall opinion is *relative* to the average opinion of the population. Put differently, it reflects the extent to which the opinion is aligned with the average opinion of the population. It is constructed in an analogous way to the first measure and is defined as the Euclidean distance to the average pre-meeting opinion of the sample. To estimate the overall effect on ideological polarization, we condense the two individual ideological polarization measures into one measure via PCA. Using one measure yields effect sizes that usefully summarize the overall impact of the conversations on ideological

[28] Note that the comparison makes use of the baseline data, which we carefully avoided in our analysis. Even though the concern may be smaller when comparing participants who did not have contact with their partner prior to the baseline survey, the results should be interpreted carefully.

polarization and allows us to benchmark effect sizes. All outcome measures are standardized by subtracting the respective control group means and dividing by the control standard deviations. For more information on the construction of the outcome measures, see Appendix A.5.

**Findings** Figure 2 presents ITT effects for the two individual and the overall ideological polarization measures. It shows that the conversations significantly polarized those participants who met a like-minded partner but not those who met a contrary-minded partner. The ITT effects on the two individual measures are 0.161 and 0.166 standard deviations in the like-minded treatment condition, respectively. The point estimate of the overall effect being 0.195 standard deviations is slightly larger than in the case of the two individual measures. For those who met a contrary-minded partner, all point estimates are negative yet insignificant. In particular, we do not find any sign of backlash effects. Figure 3 shows the ITT effects for the PDS method, confirming the findings. The point estimates are similar. However, the estimates are more precise, as the number of controls is much smaller, yielding more narrow confidence intervals.

Tables A10 and A11 provide the respective estimation results for the whole set of controls, the PDS method and a smaller set of controls. The results are very similar across specifications. Tables A12 and A13 test whether the results are robust to an alternative treatment condition definition based on membership to the ideological classes found by the latent class analysis: instead of defining whether a person met a like- or contrary-minded person by using the number of different answers to the partner, this approach uses the alignment of class memberships of the partners. The results do not change. Table A14 confirms the findings if treatment condition definitions are varied by splitting participants into like- and contrary-minded based on alternative cut-offs: participants are assigned to the like-minded condition if they coincide with their partner in three or more and five or more political registration questions, respectively (instead of four or more). The definition of the contrary-minded treatment condition is varied analogously.

Tables A15, A16, A17 and A18 provide the results when using alternative distances measures (Manhattan distance and Mahalanobis distance) to construct our variables instead of Euclidean distance. We find largely the same pattern. Table A19 tests whether the results change when like-minded regressions are re-weighted to match contrary-minded means in political preferences (party affiliation, self-reported left-right classification), gender and age. Likewise, contrary-minded regressions are re-weighted to match the like-minded sample. The results are very similar, suggesting that the differences

between like- and contrary-minded effects are not only found due to their different (political) compositions. Table A20 re-weights our samples to match population means (age, share of males, party shares, and self-reported left-right classification) using the entropy weighting procedure (Hainmueller, 2012). The re-weighting does not change our effects, suggesting that differences along observables are no reason to doubt the generalizability of our results.

**Interpretation** One potential reason for the null effect in the contrary-minded condition is that it masks heterogeneity as found in other persuasion studies (Baysan, 2021). In this case, polarizing (backfire) and de-polarizing (intended) effects would cancel each other out. This may happen for different attitudes within one person, or – alternatively – for different persons. To shed light on this, we look at the general overall change defined by the mere Euclidean distance between the baseline and endline political opinion. This measure focuses on the amount of change and ignores its "direction". Figure A3 plots the corresponding ITT effects and shows that in general only conversations with like-minded partners lead to a substantial adjustment of one's own political opinion.

Why is there no adjustment in contrary-minded conversations? The findings by Chen and Rohla (2018) - who show that Thanksgiving dinners are significantly shorter when residents from opposing party precincts attend - suggests that participants may avoid contentious topics. In contrast to this hypothesis, the meetings among contrary-minded partners were significantly longer than those among like-minded partners, with median durations of 150 and 120 minutes, respectively ( $p < 0.01$). Figure A4 plots the probabilities that contrary-minded partners talked about a specific topic depending on whether a pair agreed or disagreed on it. The graph shows that disagreement clearly increases the likelihood of discussing a particular topic. The results suggest that the effects are not driven by the avoidance of topics between contrary-minded persons. By contrast, participants particularly discuss contentious topics and learn about their partner's viewpoint, but do not alter their own opinion due to it.

Is the ITT effect for like-minded meetings large? As one benchmark, we can compare the overall effect size with those of related interventions. Allcott et al. (2020) study the impact of a four-week-long deactivation of Facebook on political polarization in the US. They find a reduction in their index of issue polarization of approximately 0.1 standard deviations. Our overall effect size is nearly twice as large. Further, we can follow Allcott et al. (2020) and set our estimates in relation to the change in a different index of several political polarization measures in the US (Boxell, 2020). The author finds an increase of

0.38 standard deviations between 1996 and 2016. With 0.195 of a standard deviation, our ITT estimates is about 50 percent of that increase.[29]

# 6 Effects on Affective Polarization

Beyond the effect on ideological polarization, political discussions may have an impact on affective polarization. Independent of the change of their political opinion, people may adjust their view about those with different opinions. Related research on prejudice reduction through interaction suggests that interpersonal conversations between contrary-minded persons may lead to a reduction of stereotypes (Allport, 1954; Fishkin, Siu, Diamond, and Bradburn, Fishkin et al.; Kalla and Broockman, 2020). In this section, we therefore turn attention to estimating the impact of face-to-face discussions with members of one's own and the other political camp on affective polarization.

**Measures** To assess the effect on affective polarization, we measure stereotypes about and preferences for personal contact with generic contrary-minded persons. We defined the generic contrary-minded person as someone with opposing political views on the seven political registration questions. Note that we did not elicit beliefs and attitudes towards the partner but rather towards some arbitrary person with opposing views.[30] We elicited stereotypes about contrary-minded persons that were communicated by former participants of *Germany Talks*. These were the prejudices that contrary-minded individuals are cognitively less capable, poorly informed, have different moral values and lead completely different lives. We reduce dimensionality by implementing a PCA. We use the first principal component - which is the convex combination of the four stereotypes that accounts for the largest possible variation in the data - as our overall stereotype measure. Table A22 provides the respective loadings (weights). To gain a broader picture, we additionally measured the preference for close interpersonal contact with people who hold opposing political views. More precisely, we elicited participants' willingness to have a contrary-minded person in their social environment. See Table 2 for a detailed overview of the outcome measures.

[29] Of course, these benchmarking exercises need to be interpreted with caution: for example, the samples of our study are very different from those by Allcott et al. (2020) and (Boxell, 2020). In particular, both papers look at US residents, while our study took place in Germany. Furthermore, the measures of issue and political polarization of Allcott et al. (2020) and (Boxell, 2020) differ from our measure of ideological polarization.

[30] As a reminder, participants are not aware of our construction of a like- and contrary-minded sample. Thus, they do not necessarily think of partners as like- and contrary-minded in the sense that we do.

**Findings: Stereotypes** Figure 4 shows that interpersonal conversations with contrary-minded persons significantly reduced stereotypes. The point estimate is -0.379 standard deviations. Table A24 report the results from our main specification. Tables A25, A26, A27 and A28 estimate the ITT effects on each stereotype separately. The reduction is strongest for the belief that contrary-minded persons are of low cognitive ability, while we do not see any decrease in whether contrary-minded persons lead a completely different life. Meeting a person from one's own political camp does not have any effect on stereotypes about contrary-minded persons. The positive point estimate of 0.087 standard deviations suggests that - if anything - conversations with like-minded partners tend to slightly increase stereotypes. However, none of the effects is significant, for neither the overall nor for the individual stereotypes. Figure 5 plots the ITT effects for the PDS method and confirms the findings. The point estimates are slightly smaller yet more precise.

Tables A24, A25, A26, A27 and A28 show the robustness of the results to dropping controls, and running PDS regressions for the overall and individual stereotypes. Tables A14 and A29 show that the effects are similar if the definitions of treatment conditions are altered by varying the cut-off and using alignment of ideological classes, respectively. Table A30 provides the results when like-minded regressions are re-weighted to match the contrary-minded sample, and vice-versa. We find the same pattern.[31] Table A31 shows that the result do not change when, we re-weight the LM and CM sample to macht the general population.

**Findings: Willingness to Engage in Personal Contact** Figure 4 also presents the effect of the conversation on the willingness to engage in personal contact with a contrary-minded person. In line with the previous finding, the point estimate for meetings with a contrary-minded partner is 0.146 of a standard deviation, meaning a stronger yet insignificant willingness to engage in personal contact. Analogously, the coefficient for like-minded meetings is -0.0993 and insignificant. Figure 5 shows the effects for the PDS method. The estimate of contrary-minded conversations is of a similar size (0.176 standard deviations) but significant at the 5% level due to a smaller standard error. Similarly, the coefficient for like-minded partners is -0.137 standard deviations and significant at the 10% level. Table A32 shows the respective estimates and robustness to dropping the set of additional controls (columns 1 and 4). Varying the definition of like- and contrary-minded partners produces very similar results (see

[31] The effect sizes of like-minded meetings are even slightly larger.

Tables A14 and A33). Table A30 shows robustness towards re-weighting the samples.

**Interpretation** The results for stereotypes and willingness to engage in personal contact paint a coherent picture. To estimate the overall effect on affective polarization, we conduct a PCA with all five affective polarization measures, the four stereotypes and willingness to engage in personal contact. Hence, the resulting overall measure is a weighted index of the five measures capturing aversion towards contrary-minded persons.[32] This usefully summarizes the overall impact on affective polarization and allows benchmarking effect sizes. Figure 4 provides ITT estimates for both treatment conditions. The estimates for like-minded partners are insignificant but positive (0.099 standard deviations), while conversations with contrary-minded persons reduce affective polarization by 0.352 standard deviations.[33]

To put the effect magnitude in perspective, we use different benchmarks. First, we follow Lowe (2021) and compare our estimates with effects of inter-group contact from a recent meta-analysis by Paluck et al. (2019). The meta-analytic effect of 0.39 standard deviations is very close to our estimate. Second, a recent study by Santoro and Broockman (2022) found that a conversation with an out-party voter about a predefined non-political topic increased warmth towards out-party voters by 0.34 standard deviations directly after the conversations. Similarly, Broockman and Kalla (2016) show that a ten-minute face-to-face conversation with transgender/gender non-conforming canvassers leads to an increase in tolerance. The effect sizes are 0.45 standard deviations after three days and 0.3 standard deviations after three weeks, respectively. Our effect consistently ranks between both the points in time of elicitation (the endline survey being sent out seven days after the conversations took place). The fact that Broockman and Kalla (2016) found very long-lasting effects after a ten-minute conversation may give hope that our conversations with a median duration of 150 minutes lastingly reduced affective polarization.

# 7 Effects on the Perception of Social Cohesion

One fear associated with the rising levels of affective and ideological polarization is the threat to society as a whole (Iyengar et al., 2019). The increasing gaps and animosity

[32] Table A23 provides the loadings on the overall measure. With positive signs for the individual stereotypes and a negative sign for willingness to engage in personal contact, it confirms the interpretation of an overall measure for animosity towards contrary-minded persons.

[33] Figure 5 shows the effects for PDS.

between contrary-minded individuals may threaten social cohesion by changing how society members are perceived. Although the contact hypothesis predicts improved attitudes towards contrary-minded persons, it is less clear whether these effects also transfer to general levels of beliefs and attitudes. Related evidence by Rao (2019) finds an increase in general pro-sociality after contact, while Lowe (2021) observes a reduction in general trust. Similarly, Dinesen et al. (2020) show that ethnic diversity is generally negatively related to generalized trust. In this section, we hence shed light on the effect of interpersonal conversations on perceptions of trustworthiness and pro-sociality of fellow society members.

**Measures** To explore the heterogeneous impact of interpersonal conversations, we elicited two beliefs: first, the belief about how trustworthy fellow citizens generally are, and second, the belief about the extent to which German citizens generally care about the well-being of others (see Table 2).

**Findings** Figure 6 provides the ITT effects on the two beliefs. For both types of conversations, the point estimates are positive for both measures, although in the case of like-minded conversations they are small and insignificant. Coefficients for contrary-minded meetings are 0.274 (trustworthiness) and 0.245 (pro-sociality) standard deviations and significant.

Figure 7 plots the estimates for the PDS regressions. Tables A35 and A36 report the results when dropping the set of additional controls and for the PDS regressions. The results are similar, although the PDS effect on trustworthiness for meetings between like-minded partners is also significant due to a slightly larger coefficient and smaller standard error. Tables A14, A37 and A38 show the robustness of the results towards varying the definition of treatment conditions. Table A39 and A40 provides re-weighted results and finds largely the same pattern.

To assess the overall impact of the conversations on the perception of social cohesion, we summarize both perceptions into one measure by using a PCA. Figure 6 plots the corresponding ITT effects. In line with the effects on the individual measures, the estimate for contrary-minded meetings is 0.299 standard deviations. The like-minded coefficient is positive yet insignificant.

**Interpretation** The findings are largely in line with the effects on affective polarization and the idea that the positive inter-group effects extend to attitudes towards a more

general population. Conversations among contrary-minded individuals reduce affective polarization and have a positive impact on the perceptions of general trustworthiness and pro-sociality.

# 8 Conclusion

This study exploits a natural experiment to estimate the impact of a single political in-person conversation on political polarization. It provides a benchmark for the effects of staying among like-minded people. At the same time, this study serves as a proof of concept. Given the appropriate circumstances, interpersonal communication is a powerful tool to counteract the negative consequences of rising polarization.

We show that conversations among people who hold similar political views further fortify political opinions. Thus, staying among like-minded people can magnify existing differences between political camps. One could argue that these differences in policy views are not negative by themselves given that a healthy democracy "is designed" to handle such disagreements. However, as soon as people condition their attitudes and behavior on other people's political opinions, this argument begins to fall apart. In this respect, the paper provides evidence that communication across political camps can help. It shows that talking to someone who holds contrasting political views reduces negative attitudes towards contrary-minded persons and improves the perception of social cohesion. Therefore, our study provides clear policy implications. It shows that reducing obstacles to communicating with contrary-minded people and facilitating interaction between different political camps can be an effective countermeasure against affective polarization. "My Country Talks" is a highly efficient example in this respect, as it costs relatively little but can have a big impact on people's perceptions.[34]

Our results suggest several avenues for future research. First, one could explore whether the observed effects in attitudes and beliefs are also reflected in behavioral changes. Second, one could study how long-lasting the effects of in-person conversations are. Third, given that - by design - our sample comprises people who want to deliberate on politics, one could explore to what extend the observed effects generalize to other samples. The impact of conversations - in particular with contrary-minded persons - may differ for those who have a lower willingness to do so. However, from a policy

[34]The main costs are programming and maintaining the matching program. However, note that in order to achieve desirable effects, one should focus on bringing together people with different political views.

perspective, the sample at hand may be suitable given that people with an intrinsic willingness can be targeted via relatively simple interventions.

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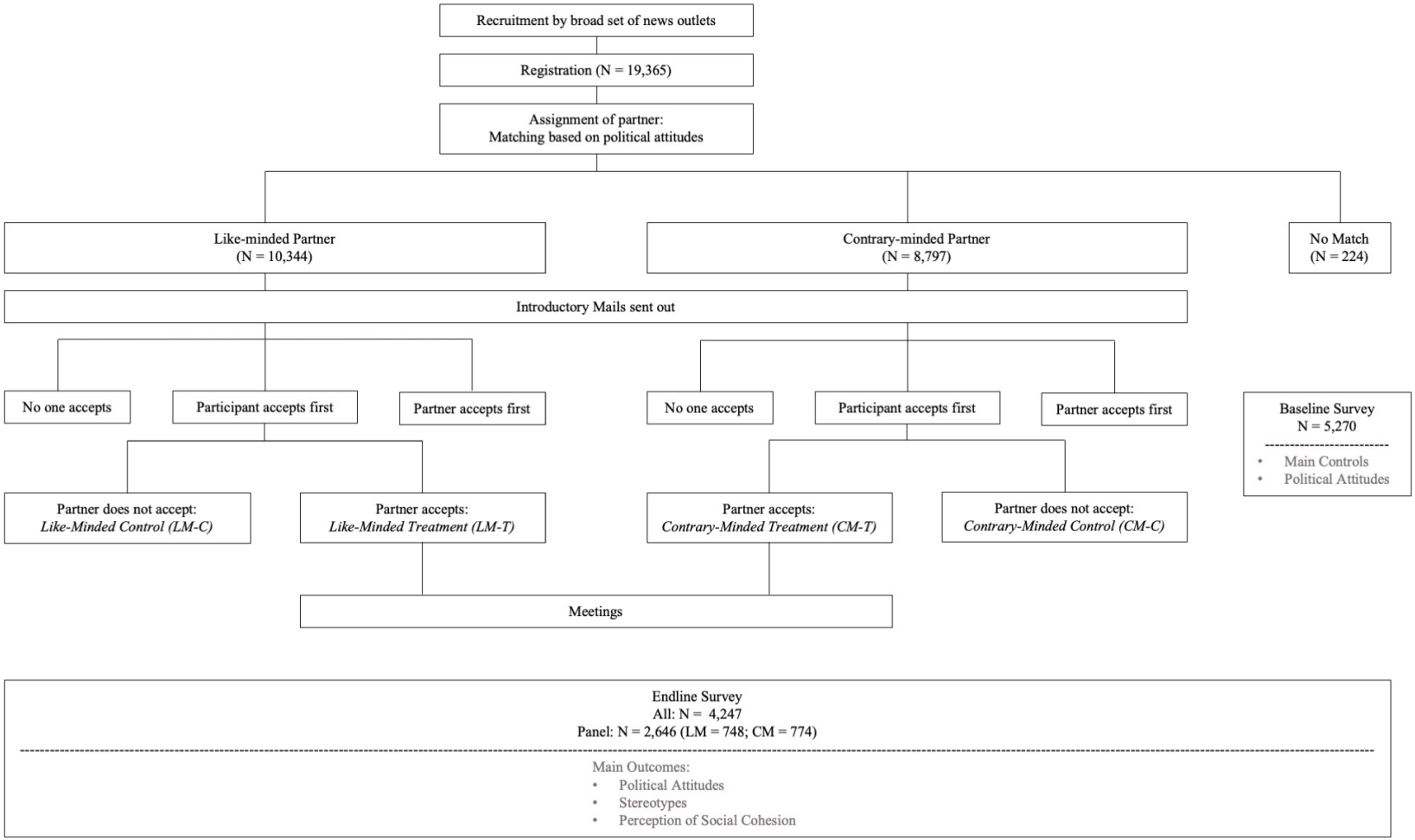
# Figures: Setting

Figure 1: Quasi-experimental Setting



# Tables: Treatment Conditions and Outcome Variables

Table 1: Overview Treatment & Control Groups

| | Like-minded Partner (LM) | Contrary-minded Partner (CM) |
|---|---|---|
| Treatment (Meeting) | First-accepters, assigned to a like-minded partner who accepted as well. | First-accepters, assigned to a contrary-minded partner who accepted as well. |
| Control (No Meeting) | First-accepters, assigned to a like-minded partner who did not accept. | First-accepters, assigned to a contrary-minded partner who did not accept. |

**Notes:** This table summarizes the different treatment and control groups. Treatment conditions LM and CM are shown in columns, while the rows differentiate between whether the first-accepters could arrange a meeting or not. Section 3 describes the assignment to treatment and control groups in detail.

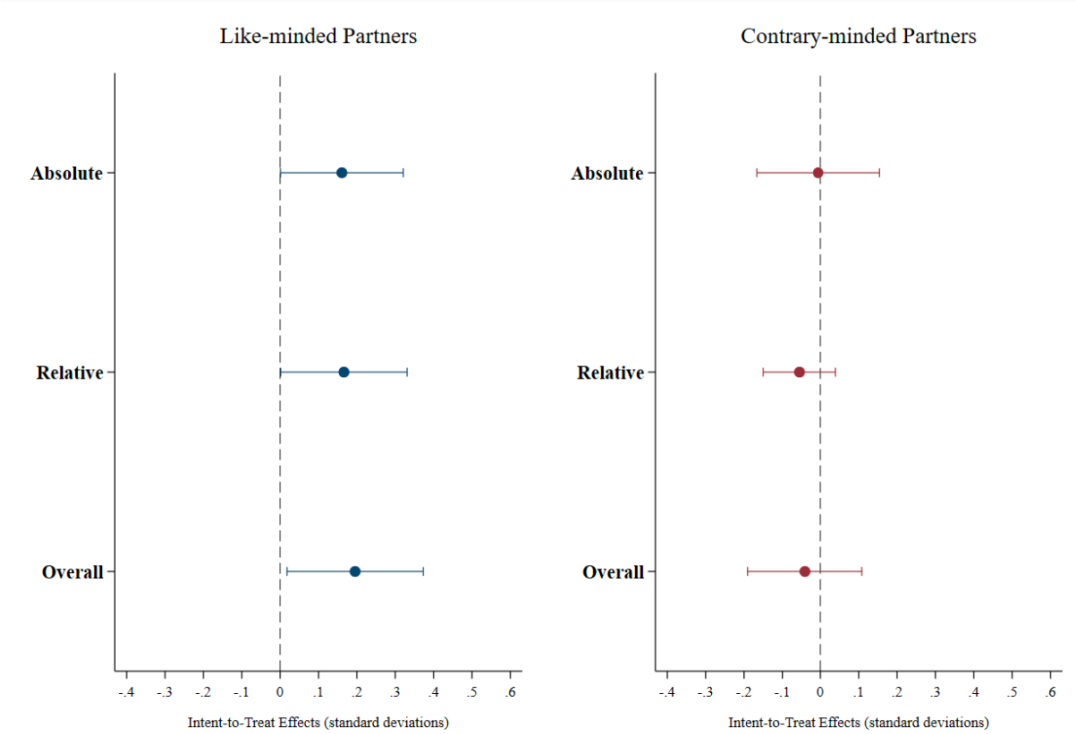
Table 2: Outcome Variables

| Variable | Statement |
|---|---|
| **Political Views** | |
| *Overall Political Opinion* | |
| Coexistence | Muslims and Non-Muslims can coexist in Germany. |
| #metoo | The public debate about sexual harassment and #metoo had some positive effects. |
| Tax Meat | Meat should be taxed higher in order to reduce its consumption. |
| Car-free City Centers | German city centers should be car-free. |
| Border Control | Germany should implement stricter border controls. |
| Germans worse off | Germans are worse off today than 10 years ago. |
| Trump | Donald Trump is good for the USA. |
| Same-Sex Marriage | Marriage should only be allowed between a man and a woman. |
| Cooperation within EU | Germany should deepen its cooperation with other EU countries. |
| Income Tax | To reduce the gap between rich and poor, the tax rate for top earners should be increased. |
| Trustworthiness Media | Altogether, German media are trustworthy. |
| **Affective Polarization** | |
| *Overall Stereotype* | |
| Cognitive Abilities | This person is incapable of understanding complex contexts.(rev.) |
| Poorly Informed | This person is poorly informed. |
| Moral Values | This person has completely different moral values. |
| Way of Life | This person leads a completely different life. |
| *Willingness to Engage in Personal Contact* | I would like this person to be in my personal environment.(rev.) |
| **Perception of Social Cohesion** | |
| *Trustworthiness* | One can trust most people in Germany. |
| *Pro-Sociality* | Most people in Germany do not care about the wellbeing of others. |

**Notes:** The table shows all elicited variables that we use to construct our outcome measures. *Overall Political Opinion* is a vector consisting of the eleven single political views. Out of this vector we construct both ideological polarization measures. See Section 5 for more details. *Overall Stereotype* is the first principal component of a PCA of all four stereotypes as detailed in Section 6. To elicit the affective polarization measures, we asked participants to picture some person that gave *very different* answers to the seven political attitude questions. The last column shows the corresponding scales. Some variables, denoted by (rev.), are reversed for interpretational reasons. Participants had to state their agreement to the statements (political attitudes, perception of social cohesion) and the extent to which they apply (stereotypes) on seven-point Likert-Scales.

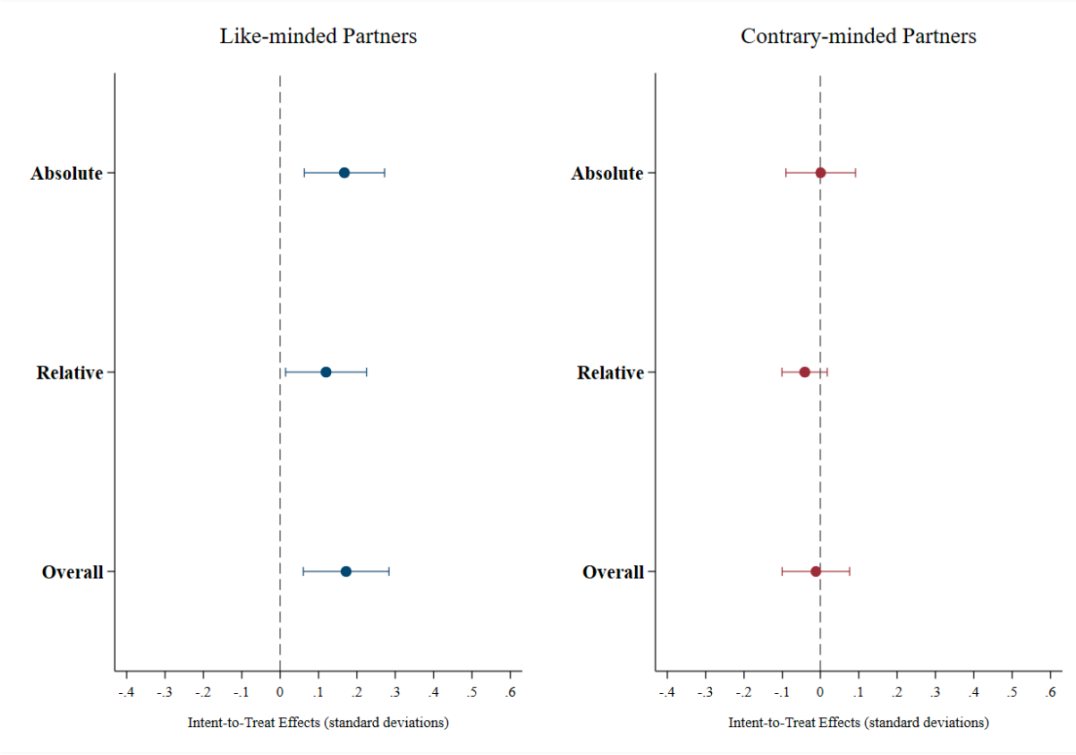
# Figures: Effects of Conversations

Figure 2: Effect of the Conversations on Ideological Polarization



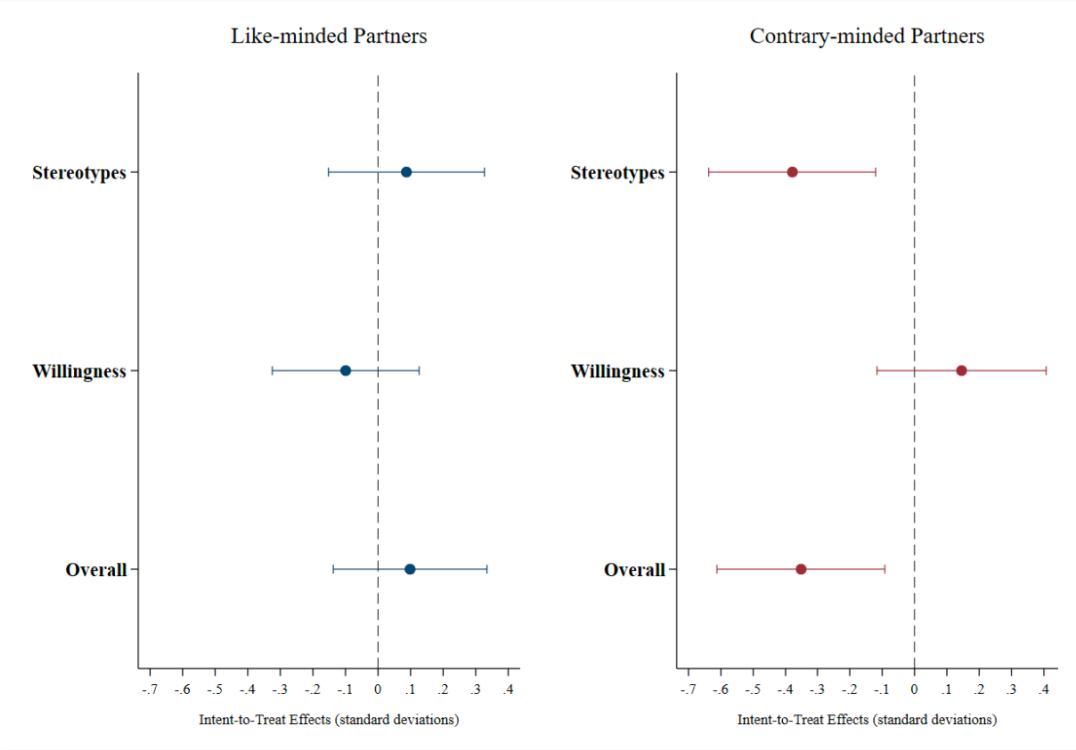

**Notes:** This figure shows the ITT effects of the like- and contrary-minded treatments on the three standardized measures of ideological polarization. It plots the effects on how extreme the overall political opinion is (i) in terms of absolute (dis-)agreement to policy views, and (ii) in relation to the average opinion of the population. (iii) It plots the effect on the overall measure of ideological polarization, defined as the first principal component of the two individual measures. Higher values are associated with more ideologically polarized (extreme) outcomes. The outcome measures are described in Section 5 and regression specifications are detailed in Section 4. 95% confidence intervals are included.

Figure 3: Effect of the Conversations on Ideological Polarization (PDS)



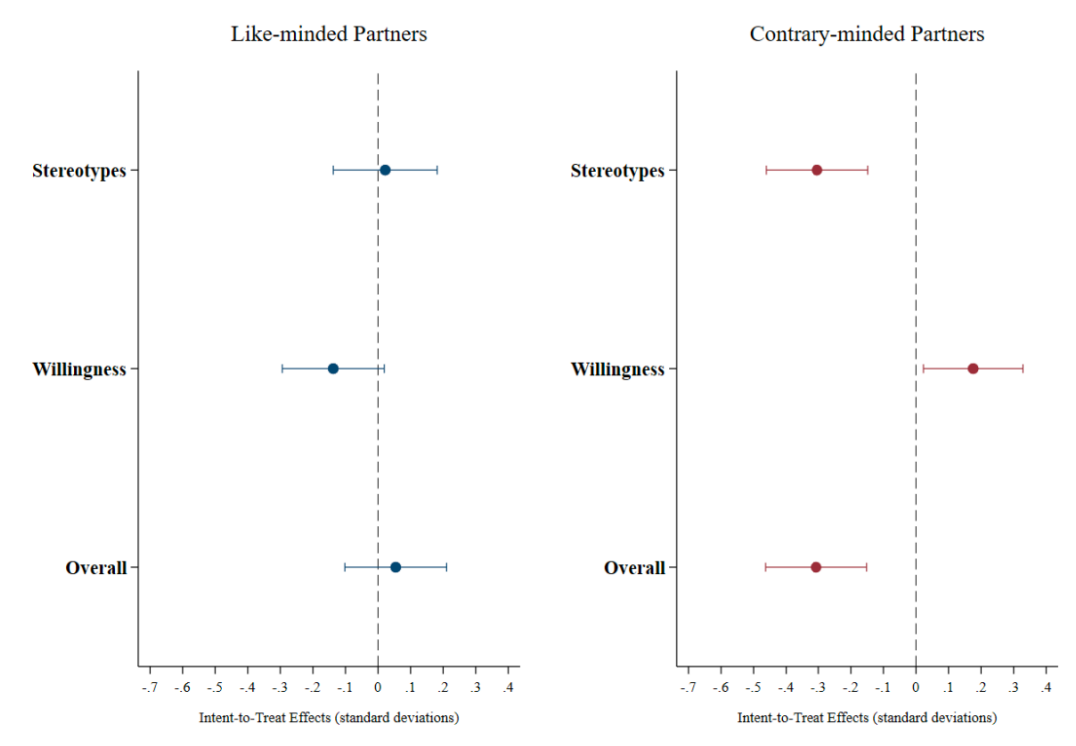

**Notes:** This figure shows the ITT effects of the like- and contrary-minded treatments on the three standardized measures of ideological polarization for the post double selection method (PDS). It plots the effects on how extreme the overall opinion is (i) in terms of absolute (dis-)agreement to policy views, and (ii) in relation to the average opinion of the population. (iii) It shows the effect on the overall measure of ideological polarization, defined as the first principal component of the two individual measures. Higher values are associated with more ideologically polarized (extreme) outcomes. The outcome measures are described in Section 5 and regression specifications are detailed in Section 4. 95% confidence intervals are included.

Figure 4: Effect of the Conversations on Affective Polarization



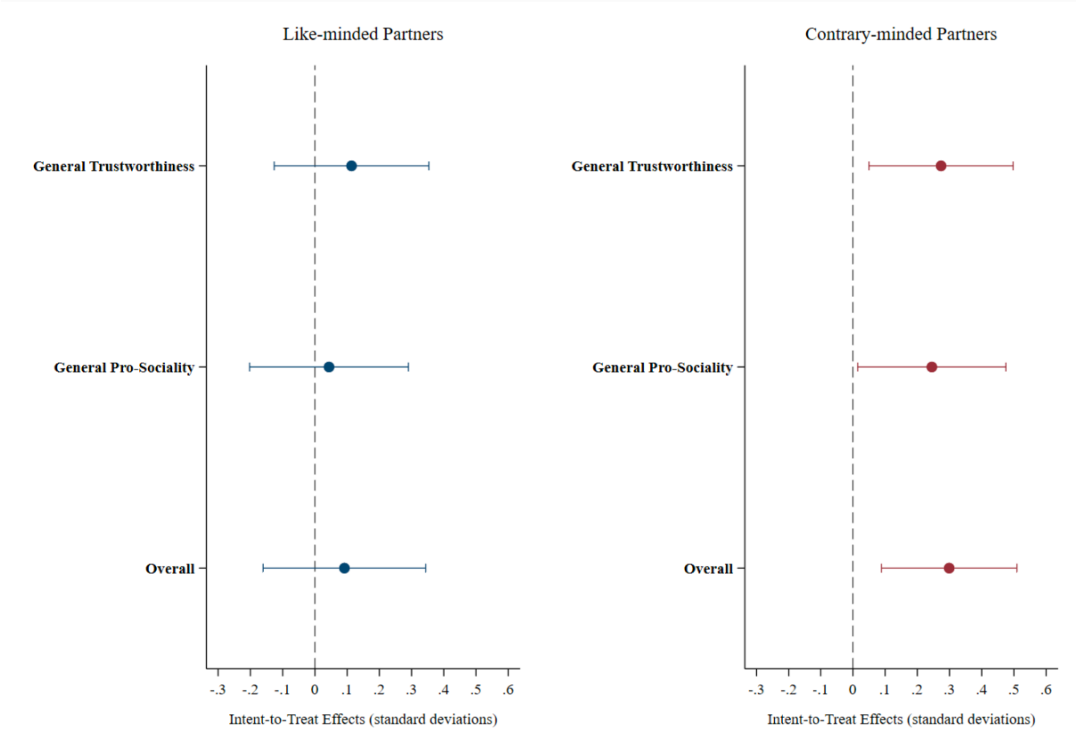

**Notes:** This figure shows the ITT effects of the like- and contrary-minded treatments on (i) standardized overall stereotypes about a person with opposing political views, (ii) standardized willingness to engage in personal contact with a person that has opposing political views, and (iii) standardized overall affective polarization. The overall stereotype measure is defined as the first principal component of all four elicited stereotypes. Table A22 shows the loadings. Lower values denote lower stereotypes (and lower affective polarization). Lower willingness to engage in personal contact is associated with higher affective polarization. The overall affective polarization measure is defined as the first principal component of all four elicited stereotypes and the willingness to engage in personal contact. Table A23 shows the respective loadings. Lower values are associated with lower affective polarization. The measures are described in Section 6 and regression specifications are detailed in Section 4. 95% confidence intervals are included.

Figure 5: Effect of the Conversations on Affective Polarization (PDS)



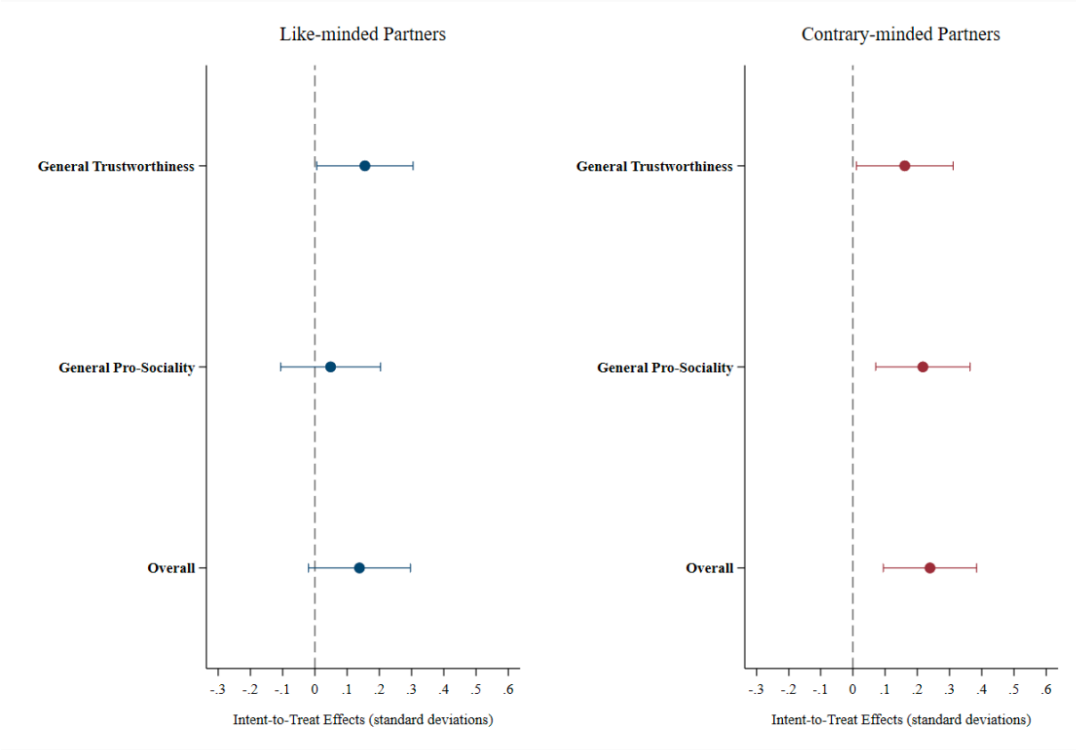

**Notes:** This figure shows the ITT effects of the like- and contrary-minded treatments on affective polarization for the post double selection method (PDS). It plots the effects on (i) standardized overall stereotypes about a person with opposing political views, (ii) standardized willingness to engage in personal contact with a person that has opposing political views, and (iii) standardized overall affective polarization. The overall stereotype measure is defined as the first principal component of all four elicited stereotypes. Table A22 shows the loadings. Lower values denote lower stereotypes (and lower affective polarization). Lower willingness to engage in personal contact is associated with higher affective polarization. The overall affective polarization measure is defined as the first principal component of all four elicited stereotypes and the willingness to engage in personal contact. Table A23 shows the respective loadings. Lower values are associated with lower affective polarization. The measures are described in Section 6 and regression specifications are detailed in Section 4. 95% confidence intervals are included.

Figure 6: Effect of the Conversations on the Perception of Social Cohesion




**Notes:** This figure shows the ITT effects of the like- and contrary-minded treatments on standardized measures of perceptions of social cohesion. It plots the impacts on (i) the perception that fellow citizens are generally trustworthy, (ii) the perception to what extent fellow citizens generally care about the well-being of other and (iii) the overall effect, defined as the first principal component of the two primer measures. Higher values denote higher perceptions. The outcome measures are described in Section 7 and regression specifications are detailed in Section 4. Error bars reflect 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 7: Effect of the Conversations on the Perception of Social Cohesion (PDS)




**Notes:** This figure shows the ITT effects of the like- and contrary-minded treatments on standardized measures of perceptions of social cohesion for the post double selection method (PDS). It plots the impacts on (i) the perception that fellow citizens are generally trustworthy, (ii) the perception to what extent fellow citizens generally care about the well-being of other and (iii) the overall effect, defined as the first principal component of the two primer measures. Higher values denote higher perceptions. The outcome measures are described in Section 7 and regression specifications are detailed in Section 4. Error bars reflect 95% confidence intervals.

# For Online Publication: Online Appendix

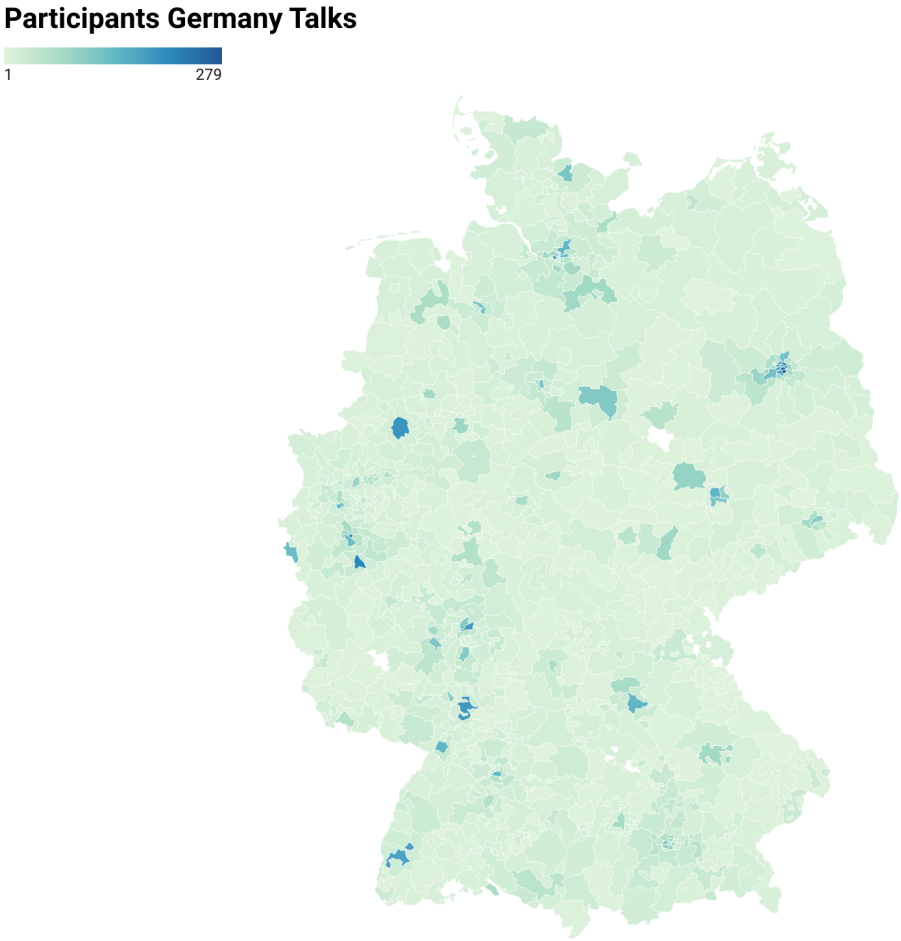
The Effects of In-Person Conversations on Polarization: Evidence from a Quasi-Experiment

Sven Heuser and Lasse S. Stötzer

# A Online Appendix

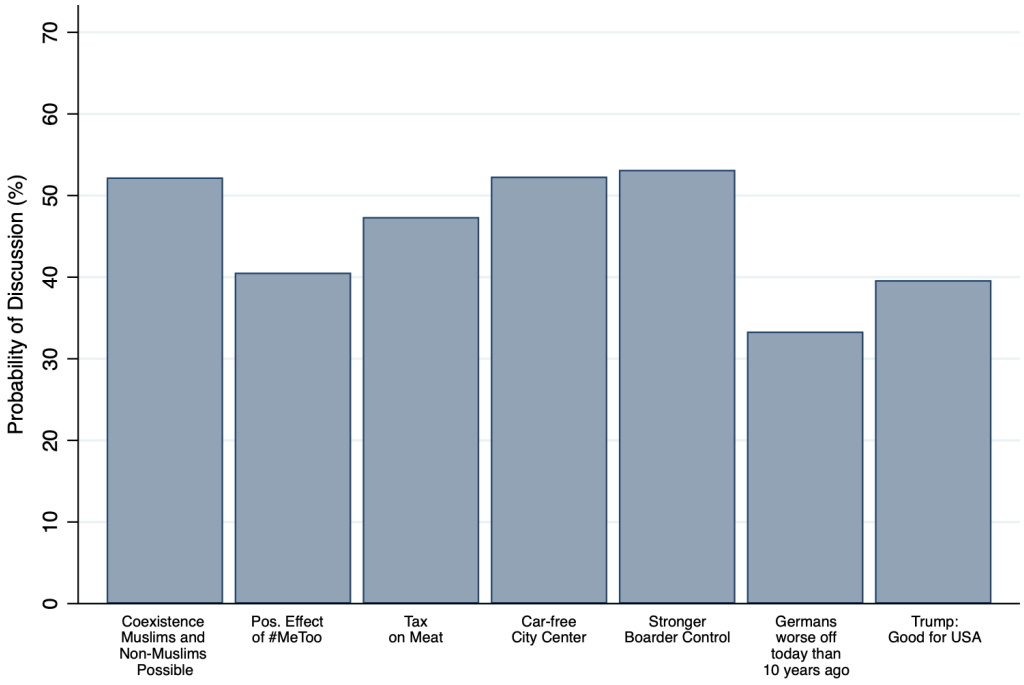
## A.1 Additional Figures

Figure A1: Registrations Germany Talks



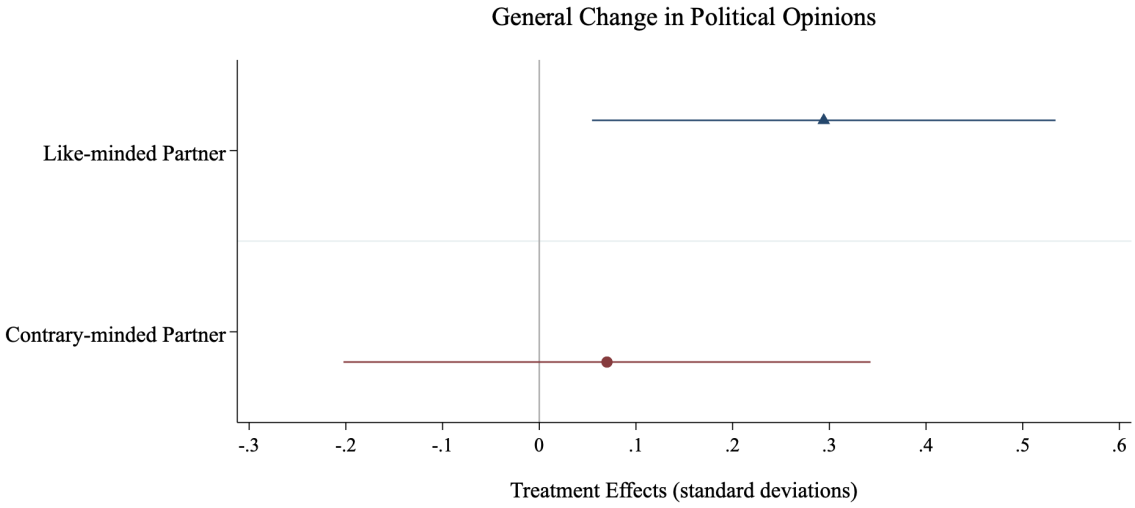

**Notes:** Map of Germany showing the places where participants registered for *Germany Talks*. Level of visualization are NUTS regions. Blank areas depict NUTS regions where no participant registered.

Figure A2: Topics of the Conversations



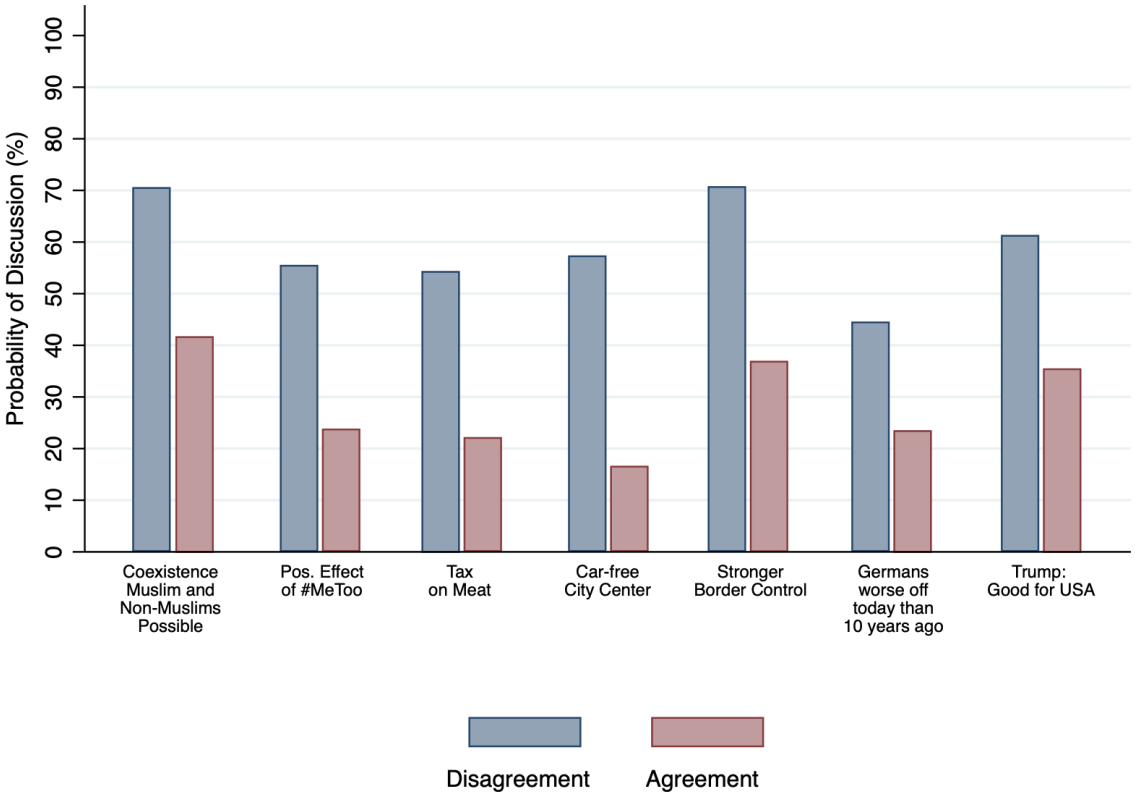

**Notes:** This figure plots the probabilities of discussion for the seven political registration questions. The y-axis of the graph denotes the frequency in %. Table A1 shows the political registration questions.

Figure A3: Effect on General Change of Political Opinion




**Notes:** This figure shows the ITT effects of the like- and contrary-minded treatments on standardized general change of the overall political opinion. A higher value denotes higher change. The general change of the overall political opinion is defined as the Euclidean Distance between the overall opinion before and after the meeting. The measure is described in Section 5 and regression specifications are detailed in Section 4. 95% confidence intervals are included.

Figure A4: Conversational Topics: Agreement vs Disagreement (CM)




**Notes:** The figure plots probabilities of discussion for the seven political registration questions in the contrary-minded treatment condition, depending on whether the partners agreed or disagreed on the topic. The Y-axis indicates the share of pairs that discussed the respective topic. Table A1 shows the political registration questions.

## A.2 Additional Tables

Table A1: Political Registration Questions

| Question | Abbreviation |
|---|---|
| Can Muslims and Non-Muslims coexist in Germany? | Coexistence |
| Did the public debate about sexual harassment and #metoo have any positive effects? | Pos. Effects of #metoo |
| Should meat be taxed higher in order to reduce its consumption? | Tax on Meat |
| Should German city centers become car-free? | Car-free City Centers |
| Should Germany implement stricter border controls? | Stricter Border Control |
| Are Germans worse off today than 10 years ago? | Germans worse off |
| Is Donald Trump good for the USA? | Trump: Good for USA |

**Notes:** The table lists all seven political registration questions. The answers were elicited during registration and served as the basis for the matching with the partners. The answer scale was binary.

Table A2: Five Open Questions

| Question / Statement |
|---|
| What do you do for a living? |
| You are a friend of.... |
| What do you do in your free time? |
| How would you describe yourself? |
| What are your dislikes? |

**Notes:** The table shows the five open questions elicited during registration for *Germany Talks*.

Table A3: Summary Statistics

| | German Population (%) | Sample (%) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | All | LM | CM |
| **Age** | | | | |
| 18 - 34 | 24 | 25 | 27 | 23 |
| 35 - 54 | 32 | 37 | 35 | 39 |
| 55 or older | 43 | 38 | 37 | 39 |
| **Gender** | | | | |
| Female | 49 | 37 | 42 | 32 |
| **State** | | | | |
| Baden Württemberg | 13 | 13 | 13 | 14 |
| Bayern | 16 | 14 | 14 | 14 |
| Berlin | 4 | 13 | 16 | 11 |
| Brandenburg | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Bremen | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Hamburg | 2 | 6 | 7 | 5 |

Table A3: (continued)

| | German Population | Sample | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | All | LM | CM |
| Hessen | 8 | 8 | 8 | 9 |
| Mecklenburg-Vorpommern | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Niedersachsen | 10 | 10 | 11 | 9 |
| Nordrhein-Westfalen | 22 | 17 | 16 | 18 |
| Rheinland-Pfalz | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Saarland | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Sachsen | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Sachsen-Anhalt | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Schleswig-Holstein | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| Thüringen | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| **Migration background** | | | | |
| Yes | 23 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| **Education** | | | | |
| No Education | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Lower Sec. Education | 24 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Middle School | 30 | 7 | 6 | 7 |
| Advanced technical certificate | 6 | 6 | 7 | 6 |
| High School | 10 | 17 | 17 | 17 |
| University | 27 | 67 | 68 | 66 |
| Other | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| **Income (monthly; EUR)** | | | | |
| 0-800 | 19 | 10 | 11 | 8 |
| 800-1499 | 25 | 13 | 13 | 13 |
| 1500-2199 | 23 | 20 | 21 | 20 |
| 2200-3299 | 17 | 23 | 26 | 21 |
| 3300 or more | 17 | 27 | 24 | 30 |
| **Political spectrum left-right** | | | | |
| Far-left | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| Left | 18 | 25 | 29 | 21 |
| Centre-left | 30 | 40 | 44 | 34 |
| Centre | 28 | 20 | 18 | 21 |
| Centre-right | 16 | 9 | 4 | 15 |
| Right | 3 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| Far right | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| **Party** | | | | |
| Die Linke | 10 | 14 | 14 | 12 |
| Bündnis/90 Die Grüne | 16 | 50 | 54 | 39 |
| SPD | 17 | 11 | 12 | 9 |

Table A3: (continued)

| | German Population | Sample | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | All | LM | CM |
| CDU/CSU | 28 | 7 | 5 | 8 |
| FDP | 9 | 7 | 5 | 9 |
| AfD | 15 | 7 | 0 | 13 |
| Other | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 |
| Don't Vote/Don't know | 31 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| **Ideological Class** | | | | |
| Left Ideology | | 83 | 98 | 67 |
| Right Ideology | | 17 | 2 | 33 |
| Observations | | 1,523 | 775 | 748 |

**Notes:** The table presents characteristics of the German adult population, our combined sample, and the like-minded (LM) and contrary-minded (CM) samples. Measures for the German population are taken from the German Microcensus (age, gender, marital status), German Allbus 2018 (education, migration background, income, religious confession, religiousness), the CSES 2017 (left-right), and an election poll by Forsa from the week prior to DS (Party). To allow for comparisons, some variables were transformed by collapsing several subcategories into one supercategory.

Table A4: Like-minded vs contrary-minded Partners

| | Like-minded Partner (%) | Contrary-minded Partner(%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | | |
| Female | 38 | 21 |
| Male | 62 | 79 |
| **Age** | | |
| 18 - 34 | 46 | 33 |
| 35 - 54 | 34 | 38 |
| 55 or older | 21 | 29 |
| **Ideological Class** | | |
| Left Ideology | 98 | 57 |
| Right Ideology | 2 | 43 |
| **Ideological Class: Overlap** | | |
| Same Ideological Class | 97 | 26 |
| Different Ideological Class | 3 | 74 |

**Notes:** This table summarizes the characteristics of the partners in the like-minded LM (column 1) and the contrary-minded CM treatment condition (column 2). As most partners did not fill out the surveys, only age, gender and ideological (LCA) classes are available. Class membership is defined by the answers to the political registration questions. The last two rows indicate whether the two partners within one pair belong to the same class or not. The LCA is described in Section 3.

Table A5: Balance Checks

| | Like-minded Partner (1) | | Contrary-minded Partner (2) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Political Views** | | | | |
| Border Control | 0.0969 | (0.137) | -0.0922 | (0.139) |
| #metoo | -0.191 | (0.127) | -0.103 | (0.148) |
| Meat Tax | 0.00334 | (0.140) | -0.0752 | (0.189) |
| Car free inner-cities | -0.163 | (0.132) | -0.0806 | (0.158) |
| Coexistence (Non-)Muslims | -0.0415 | (0.114) | 0.0486 | (0.149) |
| Germans worse off | -0.00698 | (0.157) | 0.0500 | (0.169) |
| Trump | -0.0387 | (0.0981) | 0.0764 | (0.126) |
| Same-sex marriage | -0.118 | (0.122) | -0.161 | (0.153) |
| Cooperation within EU | -0.114 | (0.0973) | 0.172 | (0.122) |
| Income Tax | 0.118 | (0.160) | -0.0373 | (0.172) |
| Trustworthiness Media | 0.0310 | (0.160) | -0.148 | (0.169) |
| **Importance** | | | | |
| Border Control | 0.0357 | (0.222) | 0.219 | (0.232) |
| #metoo | 0.0737 | (0.178) | -0.152 | (0.204) |
| Meat Tax | -0.0495 | (0.177) | 0.150 | (0.196) |
| Car free inner-cities | 0.0474 | (0.178) | 0.184 | (0.192) |
| Coexistence (Non-)Muslims | 0.161 | (0.157) | 0.0729 | (0.172) |
| Germans worse off | 0.326 | (0.216) | 0.182 | (0.222) |
| Trump | 0.285 | (0.224) | 0.186 | (0.235) |
| **Beliefs** | | | | |
| Number applications for asylum | -16641.0 | (33678.8) | -8822.1 | (41681.3) |
| Share Muslims in Population | -0.177 | (0.601) | 0.107 | (0.741) |
| F-Test | 0.95 | | 0.71 | |
| P-Value | 0.52 | | 0.82 | |

**Notes:** The table reports the treatment coefficients of the balance checks. Dependent variables are measures from the baseline survey: baseline political views, subjective evaluation of importance of political topics, and baseline beliefs about the share of muslims in Germany and number of asylum seekers in Germany. Each of these variables is regressed on the treatment dummy and the sets of basic and additional controls. The respective dependent variable is listed in the left column. Column (1) reports the results for the like-minded and column (2) for the contrary-minded individuals. F-Tests of joint significance are calculated by regressing the treatment on all those variables and the sets of basic and additional controls. Robust standard errors in parentheses.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A6: Balance Checks (Basic Info only)

| | Like-minded Partner | Contrary-minded Partner |
|---|---|---|
| **Political Attitudes** | | |
| Border Control | 0.137 | -0.0270 |
| | (0.131) | (0.138) |
| #metoo | -0.151 | -0.212 |
| | (0.121) | (0.145) |
| Meat Tax | 0.00334 | -0.0752 |
| | (0.140) | (0.189) |
| Car free inner-cities | -0.174 | -0.170 |
| | (0.130) | (0.160) |
| Coexistence (Non-)Muslims | -0.0590 | 0.0679 |
| | (0.110) | (0.149) |
| Germans worse off | 0.0688 | 0.147 |
| | (0.144) | (0.168) |
| Trump | -0.0204 | 0.149 |
| | (0.103) | (0.122) |
| Same-sex marriage | -0.0505 | 0.0666 |
| | (0.140) | (0.170) |
| Cooperation within EU | -0.0733 | 0.114 |
| | (0.0886) | (0.120) |
| Income Tax | 0.0764 | -0.0690 |
| | (0.160) | (0.181) |
| Trustworthiness Media | 0.0547 | -0.257 |
| | (0.153) | (0.161) |
| **Importance** | | |
| Importance: Border Control | 0.0639 | 0.193 |
| | (0.209) | (0.220) |
| Importance: #metoo | 0.0827 | -0.141 |
| | (0.163) | (0.195) |
| Importance: Meat Tax | 0.0190 | 0.0870 |
| | (0.165) | (0.184) |
| Importance: Car free inner-cities | 0.0349 | 0.0444 |
| | (0.167) | (0.191) |
| Importance: Coexistence (Non-)Muslims | 0.169 | 0.142 |
| | (0.151) | (0.156) |
| Importance: Germans worse off | 0.351* | 0.163 |
| | (0.207) | (0.203) |
| Importance: Trump | 0.305 | -0.0309 |
| | (0.210) | (0.222) |
| **Beliefs** | | |
| Number applications for asylum | -16025.4 | -6738.0 |
| | (32060.3) | (37974.5) |
| Share Muslims in Population | -0.0148 | 0.125 |
| | (0.562) | (0.696) |
| **Political Engagement** | | |
| Participation in citizens' initiative | 0.0284 | -0.0148 |
| | (0.0272) | (0.0313) |

Table A6: (continued)

| | Like-minded Partner | Contrary-minded Partner |
|---|---|---|
| Participation in demonstration | -0.0905* | -0.0102 |
| | (0.0528) | (0.0500) |
| Work for party | 0.0460 | 0.00946 |
| | (0.0358) | (0.0448) |
| Work for union | 0.0183 | -0.00592 |
| | (0.0215) | (0.0261) |
| None | 0.00981 | 0.00447 |
| | (0.0523) | (0.0573) |
| Not specified | -0.0119 | 0.0170 |
| | (0.0158) | (0.0157) |
| **Marital Status** | | |
| Single | 0.00486 | -0.0288 |
| | (0.0419) | (0.0450) |
| Single, in relationship | -0.00394 | 0.0225 |
| | (0.0417) | (0.0501) |
| Life Partnership | -0.00686 | -0.00538 |
| | (0.0109) | (0.00768) |
| Married | -0.0614 | -0.00108 |
| | (0.0472) | (0.0536) |
| Married, living separately | 0.0308 | -0.00321 |
| | (0.0215) | (0.0167) |
| Divorced | 0.0261 | 0.0131 |
| | (0.0216) | (0.0334) |
| Widowed | -0.00449 | 0.00783 |
| | (0.0139) | (0.0146) |
| Not specified | 0.0137 | -0.00495 |
| | (0.0160) | (0.0120) |
| **Social Environment** | | |
| No one | 0.0208* | -0.00855 |
| | (0.0122) | (0.00569) |
| Almost no one | -0.0572 | -0.0137 |
| | (0.0348) | (0.0411) |
| Some | -0.0100 | 0.102* |
| | (0.0543) | (0.0607) |
| Approx. half | 0.0635 | -0.0442 |
| | (0.0431) | (0.0535) |
| Many | -0.0326 | -0.0422 |
| | (0.0339) | (0.0389) |
| Almost everyone | 0.00731 | 0.00310 |
| | (0.00593) | (0.0143) |
| **Religion** | | |
| None | -0.0521 | -0.0122 |
| | (0.0522) | (0.0563) |
| Christian | 0.0313 | 0.0171 |
| | (0.0515) | (0.0539) |
| Other | -0.00654 | 0.00755 |
| | (0.0149) | (0.0174) |

Table A6: (continued)

| | Like-minded Partner | Contrary-minded Partner |
|---|---|---|
| Not Specified | 0.0274* | -0.0125 |
| | (0.0154) | (0.0168) |
| **Religiousness** | | |
| Never | -0.0602 | -0.0485 |
| | (0.0517) | (0.0600) |
| Less than several times per year | 0.00396 | 0.0203 |
| | (0.0550) | (0.0592) |
| Several times per year | 0.0519 | 0.0144 |
| | (0.0415) | (0.0410) |
| One to three times per month | 0.0106 | -0.00417 |
| | (0.0217) | (0.0264) |
| Once per week | -0.0100 | 0.0238 |
| | (0.0164) | (0.0151) |
| Several times per week | -0.00836 | 0.00920 |
| | (0.0169) | (0.0120) |
| Not specified | 0.0121 | -0.0150 |
| | (0.0102) | (0.0146) |
| **Political spectrum left-right** | | |
| Far-left | -0.0349 | 0.00198 |
| | (0.0212) | (0.0248) |
| Left | 0.0226 | -0.0419 |
| | (0.0515) | (0.0476) |
| Centre-left | -0.00872 | 0.0395 |
| | (0.0544) | (0.0569) |
| Centre | 0.0627 | -0.0103 |
| | (0.0384) | (0.0466) |
| Centre-right | -0.0317 | 0.0224 |
| | (0.0220) | (0.0352) |
| Right | -0.0000269 | -0.00797 |
| | (0.00119) | (0.0185) |
| Far right | 0.00128 | 0.00814 |
| | (0.00228) | (0.0131) |
| Not specified | -0.0113 | -0.0119 |
| | (0.0121) | (0.0112) |
| **Party** | | |
| CDU/CSU | -0.0273 | 0.00295 |
| | (0.0208) | (0.0292) |
| SPD | 0.0564* | -0.0197 |
| | (0.0325) | (0.0356) |
| Bündnis/90 Die Grüne | -0.0145 | -0.0413 |
| | (0.0536) | (0.0561) |
| FDP | 0.0247 | 0.00427 |
| | (0.0234) | (0.0349) |
| Die Linke | -0.0653 | -0.0206 |
| | (0.0396) | (0.0402) |
| AfD | -0.000179 | 0.0518** |
| | (0.00153) | (0.0230) |

Table A6: (continued)

| | Like-minded Partner | Contrary-minded Partner |
|---|---|---|
| Other party | 0.0154 | 0.0162 |
| | (0.0185) | (0.0287) |
| Don't Vote | 0.000221 | -0.000299 |
| | (0.00632) | (0.00877) |
| Not specified | 0.0107 | 0.00673 |
| | (0.0215) | (0.0270) |
| F-Test | 1.11 | 1.12 |
| P-Value | 0.28 | 0.27 |

**Notes:** The table reports the treatment coefficients of the balance checks if only the set of basic controls is conditioned on. Dependent variables are measures from the baseline survey: Baseline political views, subjective evaluation of importance of political topics, baseline beliefs about the share of muslims in Germany and number of asylum seekers in Germany, and baseline values of the additional set of controls. Each of these variables is regressed on the treatment dummy and the sets of basic controls. The respective dependent variable is listed in the first column. Column (1) reports the results for the like-minded and column (2) for the contrary-minded individuals. F-Tests are calculated by regressing the treatment on all those variables and the sets of basic controls. Robust standard errors in parentheses.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A7: Attrition

| | Like-minded Condition (LM) | Contrary-minded Condition (CM) |
|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) |
| Treat | -0.0162 | -0.0228 |
| | (0.0345) | (0.0357) |
| Constant | 0.845** | 0.640 |
| | (0.365) | (0.393) |
| Basic Controls (no income) | Yes | Yes |
| Add. Controls (no marital st.) | Yes | Yes |
| Outcome Mean | 0.49 | 0.49 |
| Observations | 1489 | 1412 |

**Notes:** Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variable is a dummy variable equal to one if the participant filled out the baseline survey but did not complete the endline survey. It is equal to zero if only the baseline was completed. Column (1) shows the results for the like-minded treatment condition, column (2) for the contrary-minded treatment condition. Income and marital status were elicited in the endline survey and thus not conditioned onn. As the specification used here differs from the specification discussed in Section 4, results should be interpreted cautiously with respect to the existence of selective attrition. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A8: Political Distance Dependent Selection

| | All Participants | Panel |
|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) |
| Contrary-minded | -0.00553 | 0.0157 |
| | (0.00721) | (0.0187) |
| Constant | 0.446*** | 0.633*** |
| | (0.00488) | (0.0131) |
| Observations | 19135 | 2646 |

**Notes:** The table reports OLS estimates. The dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if a person accepted first and zero if she did not accepted or accepted second. *Contrary-minded* is 1 if the participant was assigned to a contrary-minded partner. The first column contains all available observations while in column (2) the sample is restricted to people who answered both surveys. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A9: Disappointment: Comparison of Time Trends

| | Affective Polarization | | | | Social Coehsion | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Stereotypes | | Willingness | | Trustworthines | | Pro-Sociality | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) |
| Time × CM | 0.0298 | 0.0112 | -0.0641 | -0.0316 | -0.0139 | -0.0336 | -0.231* | -0.207 |
| | (0.0999) | (0.121) | (0.120) | (0.145) | (0.0916) | (0.110) | (0.120) | (0.146) |
| CM | 0.000499 | -0.0697 | 0.228 | -0.0191 | -0.257** | -0.0563 | -0.343*** | 0.00309 |
| | (0.129) | (0.182) | (0.140) | (0.209) | (0.112) | (0.152) | (0.125) | (0.180) |
| Time | 0.190** | 0.188** | -0.198** | -0.212** | 0.271*** | 0.290*** | 0.166** | 0.173* |
| | (0.0734) | (0.0894) | (0.0879) | (0.107) | (0.0679) | (0.0819) | (0.0841) | (0.102) |
| Constant | -0.204** | -1.257 | 3.448*** | 4.039** | 4.089*** | -0.217 | 3.460*** | 2.810* |
| | (0.0909) | (1.430) | (0.100) | (1.585) | (0.0795) | (1.409) | (0.0893) | (1.436) |
| Basic Controls | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Additional Controls | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Observations | 1090 | 1075 | 1098 | 1083 | 1098 | 1083 | 1100 | 1085 |

**Notes:** The table tests for different time trends between the control groups. It shows regression results of the non-standardized outcome variables on the dummy *time*, the dummy $CM$ and their interaction. $CM$ denotes whether a person was matched to a like- or a contrary-minded partner. Standard errors are clustered at participant level. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

## A.3 Tables: Treatment Effects

### A.3.1 Tables: Effect on Ideological Polarization

Table A10: Effect on Ideological Polarization: Absolute (Dis-)Agreement

| | Like-minded Partner (LM) | | | Contrary-minded Partner (CM) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OLS | OLS | PDS | OLS | OLS | PDS |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Treat | 0.156** | 0.161** | 0.168*** | -0.0364 | -0.00638 | 0.000348 |
| | (0.0785) | (0.0814) | (0.0534) | (0.0761) | (0.0815) | (0.0466) |
| Constant | -5.045*** | -4.544*** | | -5.778*** | -5.358*** | |
| | (0.459) | (0.788) | | (0.562) | (0.981) | |
| Baseline Value | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Additional Controls | No | Yes | | No | Yes | |
| Observations | 721 | 721 | 721 | 695 | 695 | 695 |

**Notes:** Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized (ideological) polarization of views in terms of absolute (dis-)agreement. Positive coefficients mean a change towards more extreme views. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Various NUTS FE (Column (3)). Two combinations of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE (Column (4)). The outcome measure is described in Section 5 and regression specifications are detailed in Section 4.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A11: Effect on Ideological Polarization: Relative to Population

| | Like-minded Partner (LM) | | | Contrary-minded Partner (CM) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OLS | OLS | PDS | OLS | OLS | PDS |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Treat | 0.128 | 0.166** | 0.120** | -0.0442 | -0.0556 | -0.0416 |
| | (0.0830) | (0.0838) | (0.0539) | (0.0465) | (0.0482) | (0.0304) |
| Constant | -0.720 | -0.848 | | -2.402*** | -2.979*** | |
| | (0.692) | (0.851) | | (0.374) | (0.557) | |
| Baseline Value | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Additional Controls | No | Yes | | No | Yes | |
| Observations | 721 | 721 | 721 | 695 | 695 | 695 |

**Notes:** Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized (ideological) polarization of views relative to the population. Positive coefficients indicate a change towards more extreme views. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Various NUTS FE(Column (3)). One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE (Column (6)). The outcome measure is described in Section 5 and regression specifications are detailed in Section 4.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A12: Effect on Ideological Polarization (Absolute): Ideological Classes

| | Like-minded Partner (LM) | | | Contrary-minded Partner (CM) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OLS | OLS | PDS | OLS | OLS | PDS |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Treat | 0.129* | 0.146** | 0.132*** | -0.0832 | 0.000539 | 0.00963 |
| | (0.0681) | (0.0702) | (0.0470) | (0.0986) | (0.108) | (0.0532) |
| Constant | -5.380*** | -4.929*** | | -5.990*** | -4.818*** | |
| | (0.435) | (0.739) | | (0.587) | (1.181) | |
| Baseline Value | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Additional Controls | No | Yes | | No | Yes | |
| Observations | 876 | 876 | 876 | 540 | 540 | 540 |

**Notes:** Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized (ideological) polarization of views in terms of absolute (dis-)agreement. Treatment conditions are defined by using overlap of ideological classes (see Section 3). Positive coefficients mean adjustment away from the center towards the boundary, negative coefficients the opposite. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE, measure from first period (Column (3)). Three combinations of the political registration questions, two NUTS FE, measure from first period (Column (6)). The outcome measure is described in Section 5 and regression specifications are detailed in Section 4.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A13: Effect on Ideological Polarization (Population): Ideological Classes

| | Like-minded Partner (LM) | | | Contrary-minded Partner (CM) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OLS | OLS | PDS | OLS | OLS | PDS |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Treat | 0.150** | 0.184** | 0.106** | 0.00445 | 0.0331 | -0.0182 |
| | (0.0697) | (0.0723) | (0.0489) | (0.0691) | (0.0713) | (0.0404) |
| Constant | -2.727*** | -3.376*** | | -3.004*** | -2.345*** | |
| | (0.509) | (0.897) | | (0.460) | (0.772) | |
| Baseline Value | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Additional Controls | No | Yes | | No | Yes | |
| Observations | 876 | 876 | 876 | 540 | 540 | 540 |

**Notes:** Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized (ideological) polarization of views relative to the population. Positive coefficients mean adjustment away from the center towards the boundary, negative coefficients the opposite. Treatment conditions are defined by using overlap of ideological classes (see Section 3) Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE, measure from first period (Column (3)). Three combinations of the political registration questions, several NUTS FE, one party dummy, measure from first period (Column (6)). The outcome measure is described in Section 5 and regression specifications are detailed in Section 4.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A14: Alt. Treatment Conditions: Comparison of Different Cut-Offs

| | Like-minded Partner (LM) | | | Contrary-minded Partner (CM) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| | Standard LM | Weak LM | Strict LM | Standard CM | Strict CM | Weak CM |
| Abs. (Dis-)Agreement | 0.161** | 0.205** | 0.149** | -0.00638 | 0.0278 | -0.0858 |
| | (0.0814) | (0.101) | (0.0657) | (0.0815) | (0.0675) | (0.147) |
| Rel. to Population | 0.166** | 0.212* | 0.145** | -0.0556 | -0.00704 | -0.0868 |
| | (0.0838) | (0.113) | (0.0677) | (0.0482) | (0.0586) | (0.0784) |
| Stereotypes | 0.0873 | 0.185 | 0.0554 | -0.379*** | -0.237** | -0.552** |
| | (0.122) | (0.165) | (0.0960) | (0.132) | (0.0966) | (0.230) |
| Willingness Contact | -0.0993 | -0.0994 | -0.114 | 0.146 | 0.0208 | 0.160 |
| | (0.115) | (0.147) | (0.0906) | (0.133) | (0.101) | (0.212) |
| Trustworthiness | 0.114 | 0.0366 | 0.159* | 0.274** | 0.253*** | 0.400* |
| | (0.122) | (0.168) | (0.0897) | (0.114) | (0.0872) | (0.204) |
| Pro-Sociality | 0.0438 | 0.0412 | 0.0629 | 0.245** | 0.176* | 0.208 |
| | (0.125) | (0.175) | (0.0939) | (0.117) | (0.0943) | (0.226) |

**Notes:** Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. Treatment coefficients are reported. The dependent variable are standardized change towards extreme views (rows 1 and 2), stereotypes and willingness to engage in personal contact (rows 3 and 4), and the beliefs of trustworthiness and pro-sociality (rows 5 and 6). Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1) and (4) show the results for the standard split into the like- and contrary-minded condition. Columns (2) and (5) report the results if first-accepters are assigned to the like-minded (contrary-minded) condition only if they answered 2 (3) or less (more) of the political registration questions differently. Columns (3) and (6) report the results if first-accepters are assigned to the like-minded (contrary-minded) condition only if they answered 4 (2) or less (more) of the political registration questions differently. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A15: Effect on Ideological Polarization: Abs. (Dis-)Agreement (Manhattan Dis.)

| | Like-minded Partner (LM) | | | Contrary-minded Partner (CM) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OLS | OLS | PDS | OLS | OLS | PDS |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Treat | 0.131* | 0.136* | 0.142*** | -0.0547 | -0.0178 | -0.0382 |
| | (0.0785) | (0.0822) | (0.0538) | (0.0779) | (0.0831) | (0.0491) |
| Constant | -3.783*** | -3.025*** | | -5.150*** | -5.349*** | |
| | (0.509) | (0.818) | | (0.544) | (0.978) | |
| Baseline Value | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Additional Controls | No | Yes | | No | Yes | |
| Observations | 721 | 721 | 721 | 695 | 695 | 695 |

**Notes:** Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized (ideological) polarization of views in terms of absolute (dis-)agreement, measured with the Manhattan Distance. Positive coefficients mean adjustment away from the center towards the boundary, negative coefficients the opposite. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Various NUTS FE (Column (3)). Two combinations of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE (Column (6)).* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A16: Change towards Extreme Views: Abs. (Dis-)Agreement - Mahalanobis Dist.

| | Like-minded Partner (LM) | | | Contrary-minded Partner (CM) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OLS | OLS | PDS | OLS | OLS | PDS |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Treat | 0.100 | 0.122 | 0.145*** | -0.0193 | -0.00131 | -0.0210 |
| | (0.0770) | (0.0787) | (0.0528) | (0.0800) | (0.0848) | (0.0458) |
| Constant | -5.084*** | -5.162*** | | -5.510*** | -5.976*** | |
| | (0.465) | (0.816) | | (0.646) | (1.024) | |
| Baseline Value | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Additional Controls | No | Yes | | No | Yes | X |
| Observations | 721 | 721 | 721 | 695 | 695 | 695 |

**Notes:** Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized (ideological) polarization of views in terms of absolute (dis-)agreement, measured with the Mahalanobis Distance. Positive coefficients mean adjustment away from the center towards the boundary, negative coefficients the opposite. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: : Various NUTS FE (Column (3)). Two combinations of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE (Column (6)).* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A17: Effect on Ideological Polarization: Relative to Population (Manhattan Dis.)

| | Like-minded Partner (LM) | | | Contrary-minded Partner (CM) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OLS | OLS | PDS | OLS | OLS | PDS |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Treat | 0.116 | 0.147* | 0.114** | -0.0537 | -0.0600 | -0.0602* |
| | (0.0856) | (0.0863) | (0.0562) | (0.0467) | (0.0479) | (0.0314) |
| Constant | -0.584 | -0.382 | | -2.350*** | -2.802*** | |
| | (0.892) | (0.940) | | (0.342) | (0.565) | |
| Baseline Value | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Additional Controls | No | Yes | | No | Yes | |
| Observations | 721 | 721 | 721 | 695 | 695 | 695 |

**Notes:** Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized (ideological) polarization of views relative to the population, measured with the Manhattan Distance. Positive coefficients mean adjustment away from the average opinion, negative coefficients the opposite. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Various NUTS FE (Column (3)). One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE (Column (6)).* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A18: Effect on Ideological Polarization: Relative to Population (Mahalanobis Dis.)

| | Like-minded Partner (LM) | | | Contrary-minded Partner (CM) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OLS | OLS | PDS | OLS | OLS | PDS |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Treat | 0.0834 | 0.123 | 0.0885 | -0.0370 | -0.0579 | -0.0483* |
| | (0.0826) | (0.0851) | (0.0555) | (0.0435) | (0.0450) | (0.0291) |
| Constant | -0.446 | -0.754 | | -2.089*** | -2.751*** | |
| | (0.713) | (0.857) | | (0.364) | (0.599) | |
| Baseline Value | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Additional Controls | No | Yes | | No | Yes | |
| Observations | 721 | 721 | 721 | 695 | 695 | 695 |

**Notes:** Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized (ideological) polarization of views relative to the population, measured with the Mahalanobis Distance. Positive coefficients mean adjustment away from the average opinion, negative coefficients the opposite. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Various NUTS FE (Column (3)). One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE (Column (6)).* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A19: Effect on Ideological Polarization (Re-weighted)

| | Like-minded | | | | Contrary-minded | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Absolute | | Relative | | Absolute | | Relative | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) |
| Treat | 0.161** | 0.161* | 0.166** | 0.169* | -0.00638 | -0.0336 | -0.0556 | -0.0783 |
| | (0.0814) | (0.0861) | (0.0838) | (0.0905) | (0.0815) | (0.0897) | (0.0482) | (0.0498) |
| Constant | -4.544*** | -4.204*** | -0.848 | -0.738 | -5.358*** | -5.304*** | -2.979*** | -3.111*** |
| | (0.788) | (0.765) | (0.851) | (0.971) | (0.981) | (1.052) | (0.557) | (0.681) |
| Baseline Values | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Add. Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Reweighted | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Observations | 721 | 721 | 721 | 721 | 695 | 695 | 695 | 695 |

**Notes:** The table reports ITT effects of in-person conversations on the two standardized ideological polarization measures, more extreme views in terms of absolute (dis-)agreement (columns 1, 2, 5, 6) and relative to the population (columns 3, 4, 7, 8). Columns (1), (3), (5) and (7) show the estimates using equal weights. These columns are the same as columns (2) and (5) in Table A10 and Table A11, respectively. Columns (2) and (4) reweight the like-minded sample to match the contrary-minded sample on the following covariates: mean age, share of males, females and non-binary, party shares, and self-reported left-right classification. Analogously, Columns (6) and (8) reweight the contrary-minded sample to match the like-minded sample on the these covariates. This analysis is discussed in Section 4. Robust standard errors in parentheses.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A20: Effect on Ideological Polarization (Re-weighted General Population Characteristics)

| | Like-minded | | | | Contrary-minded | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Absolute | | Relative | | Absolute | | Relative | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) |
| Treat | 0.161** | 0.185* | 0.166** | 0.214** | -0.00638 | 0.0625 | -0.0556 | -0.0488 |
| | (0.0814) | (0.103) | (0.0838) | (0.0982) | (0.0815) | (0.0972) | (0.0482) | (0.0521) |
| Constant | -4.544*** | -4.646*** | -0.848 | -0.355 | -5.358*** | -5.412*** | -2.979*** | -2.770*** |
| | (0.788) | (0.960) | (0.851) | (1.147) | (0.981) | (1.155) | (0.557) | (0.652) |
| Baseline Values | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Add. Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Reweighted | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Observations | 721 | 710 | 721 | 710 | 695 | 680 | 695 | 680 |

**Notes:** The table reports ITT effects of in-person conversations on the two standardized ideological polarization measures, more extreme views in terms of absolute (dis-)agreement (columns 1, 2, 5, 6) and relative to the population (columns 3, 4, 7, 8). Columns (1), (3), (5) and (7) show the estimates using equal weights. These columns are the same as columns (2) and (5) in Table A10 and Table A11, respectively. Columns (2) and (4) reweight the like-minded sample to match the general population on the following covariates: mean age, share of males, females and non-binary, party shares, and self-reported left-right classification. Analogously, Columns (6) and (8) reweight the contrary-minded sample to match the general population on the these covariates. Robust standard errors in parentheses.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A21: Effect on Ideological Polarization (Re-weighted Second-Mover Characteristics)

| | Like-minded | | | | Contrary-minded | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Absolute | | Relative | | Absolute | | Relative | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) |
| Treat | 0.161** | 0.143* | 0.166** | 0.166* | -0.00638 | 0.00424 | -0.0556 | -0.0604 |
| | (0.0814) | (0.0866) | (0.0838) | (0.0866) | (0.0815) | (0.0835) | (0.0482) | (0.0495) |
| Constant | -4.544*** | -4.453*** | -0.848 | -1.035 | -5.358*** | -5.533*** | -2.979*** | -2.994*** |
| | (0.788) | (0.788) | (0.851) | (0.804) | (0.981) | (0.943) | (0.557) | (0.551) |
| Baseline Values | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Add. Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Reweighted | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Observations | 721 | 721 | 721 | 721 | 695 | 695 | 695 | 695 |

**Notes:** The table reports ITT effects of in-person conversations on the two standardized ideological polarization measures, more extreme views in terms of absolute (dis-)agreement (columns 1, 2, 5, 6) and relative to the population (columns 3, 4, 7, 8). Columns (1), (3), (5) and (7) show the estimates using equal weights. These columns are the same as columns (2) and (5) in Table A10 and Table A11, respectively. Columns (2) and (4) reweight the like-minded sample to match the charcteristics of the second-movers in the contrary-minded sample on the following covariates: mean age, share of femals, and seven political registration questions. Analogously, Columns (6) and (8) reweight the contrary-minded sample to match the second-movers' characteristics in the like-minded sample on the these covariates. This analysis is discussed in Section 4. Robust standard errors in parentheses.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

### A.3.2 Tables: Effects on Affective Polarization

Table A22: PCA: Loadings Stereotypes on Principal Component

| Stereotype | Loadings |
|---|---|
| Different Way of Life | 0.36 |
| Different Moral Values | 0.33 |
| Low Cognitive Abilities | 0.61 |
| Poorly Informed | 0.62 |

**Notes:** The table presents the loadings of the principal component analysis of all four stereotypes on the first principal component. The first component is the linear combination of the four stereotypes with the respective loadings as weights.

Table A23: PCA: Loadings Stereotypes and Willingness to Engage in Personal Contact on First Principal Component

| Stereotype | Loadings |
|---|---|
| Different Way of Life | 0.34 |
| Different Moral Values | 0.32 |
| Low Cognitive Abilities | 0.54 |
| Poorly Informed | 0.55 |
| Willingness to Engage in Personal Contact | -0.43 |

**Notes:** The table presents the loadings of the principal component analysis of all four stereotypes and willingness to engage in personal contact on the first principal component which denotes our measure for overall affective polarization. The first component is the linear combination of the four stereotypes and willingness with the respective loadings as weights. The loadings are consistent with an interpretation of the component as an overall affective polarization measure as the signs of the loadings are positive for stereotypes and negative for willingness.

Table A24: Effect on Affective Polarization

| | Like-minded Partner (LM) | | | Contrary-minded Partner (CM) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OLS | OLS | PDS | OLS | OLS | PDS |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Treat | 0.0847 | 0.0873 | 0.0303 | -0.292** | -0.379*** | -0.305*** |
| | (0.117) | (0.122) | (0.0814) | (0.120) | (0.132) | (0.0798) |
| Constant | -2.542** | -2.519* | | -2.496** | -2.421 | |
| | (1.196) | (1.412) | | (0.982) | (1.489) | |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Additional Controls | No | Yes | | No | Yes | |
| Observations | 747 | 747 | 747 | 720 | 720 | 720 |

**Notes:** Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized stereotypes about contrary-minded. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Various NUTS FE (Column (3)). Two combinations of the political registration questions, two NUTS FE (Column (6)).* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A25: Effect on Stereotype: Different Way of Life

| | Like-minded Partner (LM) | | | Contrary-minded Partner (CM) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OLS | OLS | PDS | OLS | OLS | PDS |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Treat | 0.160 | 0.0964 | 0.121 | 0.0810 | 0.0701 | -0.0524 |
| | (0.114) | (0.124) | (0.0803) | (0.119) | (0.120) | (0.0759) |
| Constant | -2.014*** | -1.864* | | -1.270 | -0.995 | |
| | (0.595) | (1.109) | | (0.796) | (1.528) | |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Additional Controls | No | Yes | X | No | Yes | X |
| Observations | 755 | 755 | 755 | 725 | 725 | 725 |

**Notes:** Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the standardized belief that contrary-minded lead a different way of life. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE, one education dummy (Column (3)). Two combinations of the political registration questions, one NUTS FE, one social environment dummy (Column (6)).* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A26: Effect on Stereotype: Different Moral Values

| | Like-minded Partner (LM) | | | Contrary-minded Partner (CM) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OLS | OLS | PDS | OLS | OLS | PDS |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Treat | 0.148 | 0.166 | 0.0935 | -0.206 | -0.258* | -0.226*** |
| | (0.116) | (0.125) | (0.0797) | (0.126) | (0.136) | (0.0770) |
| Constant | -0.707 | -0.359 | | -1.681* | -0.790 | |
| | (0.941) | (1.266) | | (0.936) | (1.681) | |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Additional Controls | No | Yes | | No | Yes | |
| Observations | 753 | 753 | 753 | 725 | 725 | 725 |

**Notes:** Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the standardized belief that contrary-minded individuals have different moral values. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Various NUTS FE (Column (3)). One combination of the political registration questions, one NUTS FE (Column (6)).* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A27: Effect on Stereotype: Low Cognitive Abilities

| | Like-minded Partner (LM) | | | Contrary-minded Partner (CM) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OLS | OLS | PDS | OLS | OLS | PDS |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Treat | -0.0432 | -0.0318 | -0.0622 | -0.353*** | -0.432*** | -0.328*** |
| | (0.115) | (0.120) | (0.0799) | (0.119) | (0.129) | (0.0780) |
| Constant | -1.891* | -2.179* | | -1.544 | -1.287 | |
| | (1.086) | (1.256) | | (0.964) | (1.501) | |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Additional Controls | No | Yes | X | No | Yes | |
| Observations | 753 | 753 | 753 | 725 | 725 | 725 |

**Notes:** Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the standardized belief that contrary-minded individuals have low cognitive abilities. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Various NUTS FE, one education dummy (Column (3)). Two combinations of the political registration questions (Column (6)).* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A28: Effect on Stereotype: Poorly Informed

| | Like-minded Partner (LM) | | | Contrary-minded Partner (CM) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OLS | OLS | PDS | OLS | OLS | PDS |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Treat | 0.0748 | 0.109 | 0.0164 | -0.223* | -0.302** | -0.141* |
| | (0.112) | (0.116) | (0.0787) | (0.114) | (0.121) | (0.0770) |
| Constant | -2.481** | -2.425 | | -1.933** | -2.708** | |
| | (1.239) | (1.484) | | (0.948) | (1.320) | |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Additional Controls | No | Yes | X | No | Yes | X |
| Observations | 753 | 753 | 753 | 726 | 726 | 726 |

**Notes:** Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the standardized belief that contrary-minded individuals are poorly informed. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Various NUTS FE, one party dummy (Column (3)). One combination of the political registration questions, two NUTS FE, one income dummy (Column (6)).* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A29: Effect on Affective Polarization: Ideological Classes

| | Like-minded Partner (LM) | | | Contrary-minded Partner (CM) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OLS | OLS | PDS | OLS | OLS | PDS |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Treat | 0.0592 | 0.0458 | 0.00292 | -0.333** | -0.378** | -0.317*** |
| | (0.0954) | (0.0985) | (0.0719) | (0.158) | (0.173) | (0.0907) |
| Constant | -3.440*** | -3.957*** | | -2.158** | -1.080 | |
| | (0.597) | (0.974) | | (1.065) | (1.681) | |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Additional Controls | No | Yes | X | No | Yes | X |
| Observations | 910 | 910 | 910 | 557 | 557 | 557 |

**Notes:** Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the standardized overall stereotype measure. Positive coefficients mean adjustment away from the center towards the boundary, negative coefficients the opposite. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE (Column (3)). Three combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE (Column (6)). * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A30: Effect on Affective Polarization (Re-weighted)

| | Like-minded | | | | Contrary-minded | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Stereotypes | | Willingness | | Stereotypes | | Willingness | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) |
| Treat | 0.0873 | 0.120 | -0.0993 | -0.0929 | -0.379*** | -0.469*** | 0.146 | 0.240* |
| | (0.122) | (0.122) | (0.115) | (0.117) | (0.132) | (0.141) | (0.133) | (0.137) |
| Constant | -2.519* | -2.572* | -0.563 | -0.822 | -2.421 | -2.876 | 0.211 | -0.0932 |
| | (1.412) | (1.385) | (1.104) | (1.072) | (1.489) | (1.769) | (1.482) | (1.802) |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Add. Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Reweighted | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Observations | 747 | 747 | 755 | 755 | 720 | 720 | 727 | 727 |

**Notes:** The table reports ITT effects of in-person conversations on the two standardized affective polarization measures, overall stereotypes (columns 1, 2, 5, 6) and willingness to engage in personal contact (columns 3, 4, 7, 8). Columns (1), (3), (5) and (7) show the estimates using equal weights. These columns are the same as columns (2) and (5) in Table A24 and Table A32, respectively. Columns (2) and (4) reweight the like-minded sample to match the contrary-minded sample on the following covariates: mean age, share of males, females and non-binary, party shares, and self-reported left-right classification. Analogously, Columns (6) and (8) reweight the contrary-minded sample to match the like-minded sample on the these covariates. This analysis is discussed in Section 4. Robust standard errors in parentheses.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A31: Effect on Affective Polarization (Re-weighted General Population Characteristics)

| | Like-minded | | | | Contrary-minded | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Stereotypes | | Willingness | | Stereotypes | | Willingness | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) |
| Treat | 0.0873 | 0.205 | -0.0993 | 0.0519 | -0.379*** | -0.482*** | 0.146 | 0.193 |
| | (0.122) | (0.152) | (0.115) | (0.149) | (0.132) | (0.180) | (0.133) | (0.159) |
| Constant | -2.519* | -3.009** | -0.563 | -0.827 | -2.421 | 1.225 | 0.211 | -0.885 |
| | (1.412) | (1.227) | (1.104) | (1.038) | (1.489) | (1.749) | (1.482) | (1.648) |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Add. Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Reweighted | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Observations | 747 | 735 | 755 | 743 | 720 | 703 | 727 | 710 |

**Notes:** The table reports ITT effects of in-person conversations on the two standardized affective polarization measures, overall stereotypes (columns 1, 2, 5, 6) and willingness to engage in personal contact (columns 3, 4, 7, 8). Columns (1), (3), (5) and (7) show the estimates using equal weights. These columns are the same as columns (2) and (5) in Table A24 and Table A32, respectively. Columns (2) and (4) reweight the like-minded sample to match the general population on the following covariates: mean age, share of males, females and non-binary, party shares, and self-reported left-right classification. Analogously, Columns (6) and (8) reweight the contrary-minded sample to match the general population on the these covariates. T Robust standard errors in parentheses.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A32: Effect on Willingness to Engage in Personal Contact

| | Like-minded Partner (LM) | | | Contrary-minded Partner (CM) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OLS | OLS | PDS | OLS | OLS | PDS |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Treat | -0.113 | -0.0993 | -0.137* | 0.131 | 0.146 | 0.176** |
| | (0.110) | (0.115) | (0.0799) | (0.122) | (0.133) | (0.0779) |
| Constant | 0.733 | -0.563 | | 1.149 | 0.211 | |
| | (1.196) | (1.104) | | (0.991) | (1.482) | |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Additional Controls | No | Yes | | No | Yes | |
| Observations | 755 | 755 | 755 | 727 | 727 | 727 |

**Notes:** Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized willingness to engage in personal contact. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Various NUTS FE (Column (3)). Various combinations of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE(Column (6)). The specifications are described in more detail in Section 4. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A33: Willingness to Engage in Personal Contact: Ideological Classes

| | Like-minded Partner (LM) | | | Contrary-minded Partner (CM) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OLS | OLS | PDS | OLS | OLS | PDS |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Treat | -0.150 | -0.165* | -0.130* | 0.219 | 0.235 | 0.228** |
| | (0.0940) | (0.0974) | (0.0698) | (0.148) | (0.160) | (0.0902) |
| Constant | -0.538 | -0.916 | | -0.124 | -1.773 | |
| | (0.567) | (0.880) | | (0.984) | (1.632) | |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Additional Controls | No | Yes | | No | Yes | |
| Observations | 918 | 918 | 918 | 564 | 564 | 564 |

**Notes:** Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the standardized overall stereotype measure. Positive coefficients mean adjustment away from the center towards the boundary, negative coefficients the opposite. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Various NUTS FE (Column (3)). Three combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE, one party dummy (Column (6)).* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A34: Effect on Affective Polarization (Re-weighted Second-Mover Characteristics)

| | Like-minded | | | | Contrary-minded | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Stereotypes | | Willingness | | Stereotypes | | Willingness | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) |
| Treat | 0.0873 | 0.129 | -0.0993 | -0.0864 | -0.379*** | -0.321** | 0.146 | 0.106 |
| | (0.122) | (0.127) | (0.115) | (0.119) | (0.132) | (0.128) | (0.133) | (0.131) |
| Constant | -2.519* | -2.762* | -0.563 | -0.688 | -2.421 | -2.381* | 0.211 | 0.112 |
| | (1.412) | (1.441) | (1.104) | (1.083) | (1.489) | (1.367) | (1.482) | (1.479) |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Add. Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Reweighted | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Observations | 747 | 747 | 755 | 755 | 720 | 720 | 727 | 727 |

**Notes:** The table reports ITT effects of in-person conversations on the two standardized affective polarization measures, overall stereotypes (columns 1, 2, 5, 6) and willingness to engage in personal contact (columns 3, 4, 7, 8). Columns (1), (3), (5) and (7) show the estimates using equal weights. These columns are the same as columns (2) and (5) in Table A24 and Table A32, respectively. Columns (2) and (4) reweight the like-minded sample to match the charcteristics of the second-movers in the contrary-minded sample on the following covariates: mean age, share of femals, and seven political registration questions. Analogously, Columns (6) and (8) reweight the contrary-minded sample to match the second-movers' characteristics in the like-minded sample on the these covariates. This analysis is discussed in Section 4. Robust standard errors in parentheses.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

### A.3.3 Tables: Effect on the Perception of Social Cohesion

Table A35: Effect on Perception of General Trustworthiness

| | Like-minded Partner (LM) | | | Contrary-minded Partner (CM) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OLS | OLS | PDS | OLS | OLS | PDS |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Treat | 0.0963 | 0.114 | 0.155** | 0.229** | 0.274** | 0.155** |
| | (0.114) | (0.122) | (0.0762) | (0.109) | (0.114) | (0.0761) |
| Constant | -1.259 | -2.196 | | -0.502 | -0.948 | |
| | (1.259) | (1.413) | | (0.889) | (1.852) | |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Additional Controls | No | Yes | | No | Yes | X |
| Observations | 757 | 757 | 757 | 726 | 726 | 726 |

**Notes:** Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the standardized perception of general trustworthiness. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE, one income dummy (Column (3)). Two combinations of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE, one income dummy, two political party dummies (Column (6)).* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A36: Effect on Perception of General Pro-Sociality

| | Like-minded Partner (LM) | | | Contrary-minded Partner (CM) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OLS | OLS | PDS | OLS | OLS | PDS |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Treat | 0.0211 | 0.0438 | 0.0585 | 0.255** | 0.245** | 0.217*** |
| | (0.114) | (0.125) | (0.0786) | (0.109) | (0.117) | (0.0746) |
| Constant | -1.078 | -0.107 | | 0.960 | 1.566 | |
| | (1.248) | (1.037) | | (0.815) | (1.536) | |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Additional Controls | No | Yes | | No | Yes | X |
| Observations | 759 | 759 | 759 | 727 | 727 | 727 |

**Notes:** Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the standardized perception of general pro-sociality. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: One combination of the political registration questions, two NUTS FE, one education dummy (Column (3)). Various combinations of the political registration questions, two NUTS FE, one political party dummy (Column (6)).* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A37: Effect on Perception of General Trustworthiness: Ideological Classes

| | Like-minded Partner (LM) | | | Contrary-minded Partner (CM) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OLS | OLS | PDS | OLS | OLS | PDS |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Treat | 0.0964 | 0.126 | 0.138** | 0.282** | 0.230 | 0.181** |
| | (0.0926) | (0.0960) | (0.0688) | (0.142) | (0.156) | (0.0893) |
| Constant | -1.184 | -0.594 | | -0.343 | -0.561 | |
| | (0.790) | (1.379) | | (1.085) | (2.154) | |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Additional Controls | No | Yes | | No | Yes | X |
| Observations | 921 | 921 | 921 | 562 | 562 | 562 |

**Notes:** Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized perception of trustworthiness. Positive coefficients mean adjustment away from the center towards the boundary, negative coefficients the opposite. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: Two NUTS FE (Column (3)). Two combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE, one party dummy (Column (6)).* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A38: Effect on Perception of General Pro-Sociality: Ideological Classes

| | Like-minded Partner (LM) | | | Contrary-minded Partner (CM) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OLS | OLS | PDS | OLS | OLS | PDS |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Treat | 0.0457 | 0.0560 | 0.0796 | 0.279* | 0.245 | 0.195** |
| | (0.0943) | (0.0987) | (0.0693) | (0.144) | (0.159) | (0.0883) |
| Constant | -1.926*** | -1.424 | | 1.703** | 2.902 | |
| | (0.591) | (1.128) | | (0.841) | (1.800) | |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | X | Yes | Yes | X |
| Additional Controls | No | Yes | | No | Yes | X |
| Observations | 923 | 923 | 923 | 563 | 563 | 563 |

**Notes:** Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the standardized belief about general pro-sociality. Positive coefficients mean adjustment away from the center towards the boundary, negative coefficients the opposite. Columns (1) - (3) report the results for those with like-minded partners (LM), columns (4) - (6) for those with contrary-minded partners (CM). Columns (1), (2), (4) and (5) present OLS and columns (3) and (6) PDS regressions. Basic controls include dummies for age intervals, gender, NUTS regions, combinations of seven political registration questions, education, income and migration background. Additional controls consist of dummies for political parties, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and number of politically contrary-minded people in social environment. Variables selected by the PDS procedure (denoted by "X") are: One combination of the political registration questions, two NUTS FE (Column (3)). Three combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE, one party dummy (Column (6)). * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A39: Effect on Perception of Social Cohesion (Re-weighted)

| | Like-minded | | | | Contrary-minded | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Trustworthiness | | Pro-Sociality | | Trustworthiness | | Pro-Sociality | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) |
| Treat | 0.114 | 0.0731 | 0.0438 | -0.0234 | 0.274** | 0.186* | 0.245** | 0.166 |
| | (0.122) | (0.132) | (0.125) | (0.125) | (0.114) | (0.108) | (0.117) | (0.124) |
| Constant | -2.196 | -2.748* | -0.107 | -0.163 | -0.948 | -1.496 | 1.566 | 0.367 |
| | (1.413) | (1.404) | (1.037) | (0.979) | (1.852) | (2.378) | (1.536) | (2.300) |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Add. Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Reweighted | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Observations | 757 | 757 | 759 | 759 | 726 | 726 | 727 | 727 |

**Notes:** The table reports ITT effects of in-person conversations on standardized perceptions of general trustworthiness (columns 1, 2, 5, 6) and general pro-sociality (columns 3, 4, 7, 8). Columns (1), (3), (5) and (7) show the estimates using equal weights. These columns are the same as columns (2) and (5) in Table A35 and Table A36, respectively. Columns (2) and (4) reweight the like-minded sample to match the contrary-minded sample on the following covariates: mean age, share of males, females and non-binary, party shares, and self-reported left-right classification. Analogously, Columns (6) and (8) reweight the contrary-minded sample to match the like-minded sample on the these covariates. This analysis is discussed in Section 4. Robust standard errors in parentheses.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A40: Effect on Perception of Social Cohesion (Re-weighted General Population Characteristics)

| | Like-minded | | | | Contrary-minded | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Trustworthiness | | Pro-Sociality | | Trustworthiness | | Pro-Sociality | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) |
| Treat | 0.114 | 0.197 | 0.0438 | 0.0919 | 0.274** | 0.267** | 0.245** | 0.182 |
| | (0.122) | (0.138) | (0.125) | (0.130) | (0.114) | (0.129) | (0.117) | (0.140) |
| Constant | -2.196 | -2.194 | -0.107 | 0.942 | -0.948 | 0.971 | 1.566 | 3.942*** |
| | (1.413) | (1.411) | (1.037) | (1.183) | (1.852) | (1.696) | (1.536) | (1.490) |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Add. Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Reweighted | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Observations | 757 | 745 | 759 | 747 | 726 | 709 | 727 | 710 |

**Notes:** The table reports ITT effects of in-person conversations on standardized perceptions of general trustworthiness (columns 1, 2, 5, 6) and general pro-sociality (columns 3, 4, 7, 8). Columns (1), (3), (5) and (7) show the estimates using equal weights. These columns are the same as columns (2) and (5) in Table A35 and Table A36, respectively. Columns (2) and (4) reweight the like-minded sample to match the general population on the following covariates: mean age, share of males, females and non-binary, party shares, and self-reported left-right classification. Analogously, Columns (6) and (8) reweight the contrary-minded sample to match the general population on the these covariates. Robust standard errors in parentheses.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A41: Effect on Perception of Social Cohesion (Re-weighted Second Mover Characteristics)

| | Like-minded | | | | Contrary-minded | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Trustworthiness | | Pro-Sociality | | Trustworthiness | | Pro-Sociality | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) |
| Treat | 0.114 | 0.141 | 0.0438 | 0.0877 | 0.274** | 0.306** | 0.245** | 0.286** |
| | (0.122) | (0.123) | (0.125) | (0.128) | (0.114) | (0.122) | (0.117) | (0.123) |
| Constant | -2.196 | -1.858 | -0.107 | -0.162 | -0.948 | -1.128 | 1.566 | 0.996 |
| | (1.413) | (1.456) | (1.037) | (1.110) | (1.852) | (1.676) | (1.536) | (1.493) |
| Basic Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Add. Controls | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Reweighted | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Observations | 757 | 757 | 759 | 759 | 726 | 726 | 727 | 727 |

**Notes:** The table reports ITT effects of in-person conversations on standardized perceptions of general trustworthiness (columns 1, 2, 5, 6) and general pro-sociality (columns 3, 4, 7, 8). Columns (1), (3), (5) and (7) show the estimates using equal weights. These columns are the same as columns (2) and (5) in Table A24 and Table A32, respectively. Columns (2) and (4) reweight the like-minded sample to match the characteristics of the second-movers in the contrary-minded sample on the following covariates: mean age, share of femals, and seven political registration questions. Analogously, Columns (6) and (8) reweight the contrary-minded sample to match the second-movers' characteristics in the like-minded sample on the these covariates. This analysis is discussed in Section 4. Robust standard errors in parentheses.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

## A.4 Additional Details on Germany Talks and Surveys

### A.4.1 Media, Recruitment and Meetings

**Participating Media** These news outlets were DIE ZEIT, Süddeutsche Zeitung and SZ.de, tagesschau.de and Tagesthemen (ARD aktuell), Deutsche Presse-Agentur, Der Spiegel, Chrismon and evangelisch.de, Schwäbische Zeitung, Die Südwest-Presse, Der Tagesspiegel, t-online.de, and Landeszeitung Lüneburg. The majority of the news outlets are traditional print media with online appearances. For example, DIE ZEIT is the largest weekly newspaper and Süddeutsche Zeitung is the second-largest daily newspaper in Germany. Both also cover the internet and broadcast media. t-online.de is a pure online news outlet. Tagesthemen is a daily news show in the evening on ARD, one of the two major German public television channels. On 16/08/2018 Tagesthemen showed a clip inviting viewers to participate in the program.[35] tagesschau.de is the online appearance of ARD. According to PEW (2018), ARD is the main news source for many Germans across the political spectrum. The political orientation of the larger partners is center/center-left. PEW (2018) show that ARD, Der Spiegel, and Süddeutsche Zeitung are placed on the middle of the left-right spectrum. Freitag et al. (2021) measure the political position of news outlets by politicians' sharing behavior and conclude that DIE ZEIT and Der Spiegel are positioned on the left of the political spectrum, while ARD and Süddeutsche Zeitung are positioned on the center-left.

**Registration Process** Participants were recruited by the news outlets. They could register online on the respective websites and additionally via mail (DIE ZEIT). To register, the participants had to answer the *political registration questions*, comprising seven yes/no questions about contemporary political topics that were chosen by the program organizers of *Germany Talks* to be as controversial as possible.[36] The translated questions can be found in Table A1. After answering the political registration questions, individuals were introduced to the program. They were told that if they chose to participate, the program would attempt to find a person residing within a 20 km radius from their home who answered the seven questions differently and who would be willing to meet on a predetermined date (September 23, 2018). If an individual decided to participate, the email address, zip code, name, gender, and age of the individual were collected, as were the answers to five questions in which participants were asked to

[35] The clip is available at the following link (in German): Link.

[36] The whole intervention was designed by the organizers of *Germany Talks*. We took no part in designing the intervention.

describe themselves. The five questions are listed in Table A2.

**Meetings** Participants had to organize the exact time and location of the meetings themselves. However, the suggested and officially communicated date of the conversations was September 23, 2018. 90% of the participants reported having met on that date. The meetings were unobserved: there was no third-party moderating, guiding, or observing the discussion and no rules or topics of discussion were predefined. On average, the conversations took 2 hours and 20 minutes. The shortest reported meeting was 40 minutes, while the longest meeting was 10 hours. These numbers indicate the participants took time to get to know the other person and discuss their (opposing) viewpoints.

To shed light on what happened during the meetings, we elicited the topics of the conversations and details about the atmosphere during the conversation and the general experience of being part of *Germany Talks*. Figure A2 plots how frequently the topics of the *political registration questions* were discussed. These topics are at the core of our political attitude measures. We see that the conversations centered around these topics. The least discussed topic of the *political registration questions* was whether Germans are worse off today than ten years ago (33%). The most discussed topics were stronger border control (53%) and car-free inner cities (52%). Moreover, if a pair disagreed on a topic, the likelihood of discussing it is higher than in the case of agreement. Figure A4 plots the likelihoods of discussion if the partner agreed and disagreed for contrary-minded pairs. Overall, the meetings were a pleasant experience: 95% of the participants stated that the atmosphere during the conversation was enjoyable, 94% said that there were no loud or heavy disputes and 75% stated that their conversation partner was likable.[37]

### A.4.2 Surveys

As a complement to the program *Germany Talks*, we designed two surveys, which were sent out by the organizers of *Germany Talks*. One survey was sent out prior to the suggested and officially communicated date of the conversations (baseline survey) and one after the conversations took place (endline survey).

[37]Participants had to state how much a statement applied to their conversation on a seven-point Likert scale. The reported percentages are for those who stated one of the two highest categories, *agree* or *strongly agree*.

**Baseline Survey** All registered participants were invited to fill out the baseline survey, which was sent out five days before the suggested day for the conversations (18/09/2018). At this point, the email introducing the matched partner had been out for a week and 98% of the treated participants had already learned that the partner had accepted. 5,677 participants took part in the survey, and the average response time was 14 minutes. The elicited measures are described in detail in Appendix A.5.

**Endline Survey** All registered participants were invited to participate in the endline survey, which was sent out eight days after the conversation (01/10/2018). Even though the organizers of *Germany Talks* strongly suggested holding the conversation on 23/09/2018, not all participants were able to meet on the specified day. However, 97% of the respondents had met at least three days before we sent out the email. 4,200 participants completed the survey, and the average response time was 12.5 minutes. The elicited measures are described in detail in Appendix A.5. Out of the 4,200 responders, 63% also answered the baseline survey.

## A.5 Measures

Our analysis relies on two datasets: data from the intervention *Germany Talks* and self-reported survey data. The primary dataset comprises all 19,134 registered participants and includes age, gender, zip code, answers to the seven political registration questions and the matched participant. The latter dataset comprises information elicited in the baseline or the endline survey. We have all data points for 2,465 participants.

### A.5.1 Controls

In our analysis, we condition on a variety of control dummies that stem from both datasets, namely the *Germany Talks* and the survey dataset. In the baseline survey, we gathered information about participants' demographics such as education, migration background, and religion, the political heterogeneity of their social environments, i.e. how many politically contrary-minded people they have in their social environment, and their political preferences, which includes a position on a political self-classification and the party they would vote for. In the endline survey, we elicited income and marital status. The following paragraphs list the relevant controls and how we construct them.

**Set of Basic Info** The set of dummies *BasicInfo* contains basic information (hard facts) about the participant that we observe (age intervals, gender, region at NUTS level, combinations of answers to political registration questions) and proxies for surname (migration background, and education and income). More precisely, we divide age into following six intervals: 18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-65, and 65+. We construct Gender as a binary variable indicating whether a person identifies as male, female / non-binary. Instead of including 1,531 five-digit zip codes in our analysis, we construct dummies based on the NUTS to increase power. NUTS (level 3) is a geocode standard that is developed and regulated by the European Union and divides Germany into 401 regions. We include all combinations of the seven binary political registration questions to control for policy view patterns. From our baseline survey, we include variables for the participants' education, income, and migration background. Education is an ordinal variable with seven categories from "No school leaving certificate" to "Ph.D.". We include dummies for each category. Migration background is a binary dummy where we define a person with a migration background as someone who either was not born in Germany or has parents who were born in a different country. Income is an ordinal variable that captures the net income per month of the respondents. It contains five cat-

egories, from "0-800 Euro" to "3300+ EUR" and an option for participants who do not know their monthly income. All variables additionally have a "Not specified" category.

**Set of Additional Info** The set of dummies *AddInfo* accounts for the fact that the answers to the open questions were unobserved by capturing potentially visible information. We did not receive that information (and the surname) from the organizers of *Germany Talks* due to data protection. Thus, we use proxies to capture potential topics as well as possible. Table A2 shows the five open questions. *AddInfo* comprises *dummies* for each category of the measures party preference, political self-classification, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status, and the number of politically contrary-minded people in their social environment. Party preference indicates the party that the respondents would vote for. It is a nominal variable with nine categories including all five parties represented in the 19th Bundestag (German parliament) and the categories "Other party", "I don't know", and "I do not vote". Political self-classification is an ordinal variable with seven values from "Very liberal" to "Very conservative". Political engagement contains different forms of political engagement that participants have been part of or not: "Participation in civic initiatives", "Attending demonstrations", "Being an active member of a party", and "Being an active member of a trade union". Religion is a nominal variable indicating religious affiliation (seven categories). Religiousness is an ordinal variable eliciting how often participants visit a place of worship. It has six categories from "Never" to "More than once per week". Marital status dummies are "Single", "Divorced", "Widowed", "Registered partnership", "Married and living separately", "Married and living with a spouse". The number of contrary-minded people in the participants' social environment contains seven categories from "None" to "All". For all variables, we add a dummy indicating a missing value.

### A.5.2 Outcome Measures

Outcome measures were elicited in the endline survey. Only in the case of political views did we also use values from the baseline survey to construct our measures. All outcome measures are standardized by subtracting the (respective) control group mean and dividing by the control group standard deviation.

**Political Views** Participants were asked to state the extent to which they agree with different political statements on a seven-point Likert scale. Apart from the transformation from questions into statements and the change of scales, the first seven of the

eleven statements were identical to the political registration questions. In addition to the seven questions, we elicited four other, more general political attitudes (see Table 2 for an overview). Based on these attitudes, we create outcome measures for our analysis. The underlying idea is to take all eleven attitudes together and interpret the eleven-dimensional vector as the overall political opinion. In contrast to the measures of affective polarization and perception of social cohesion, we use data from the baseline survey as political views are not as easily affected by either learning the treatment condition (like- or contrary-minded partner) or first email contact with the partner. Importantly, looking at individual changes enables us to conduct a more precise analysis.

*Ideological Polarization: Extreme Views in Terms of Absolute (Dis-)Agreement* We construct two measures of ideological polarization. The first measure indicates the extent to which a person shows stronger (dis-)agreement with the topics after the meeting. More precisely, we construct one measure that indicates the distance to midpoint of our scale (a vector of 3s), denoting neither disagreement nor agreement. The measure is defined as follows:

$$ExtremeViewsAbsolute_i = \sqrt{\sum_{s=1}^{11} (Y_{sit} - 3)^2}$$

where $Y_{sit}$ denotes individual i's level of agreement with statement $s$ in the endline (t=2) or the baseline (t=1) survey. The eleven statements are the political attitudes from Table 2. Thus, $ExtremeViewsAbsolute_i$ indicates the Euclidean distance to the midpoint of our scale. By construction, the variable is always non-negative with larger values denoting more extreme opinions, i.e. more extreme disagreement or agreement on the topics.

*Ideological Polalrization: Extreme Views Relative to Population* The second measure of ideological polarization reflects the extent to which an individual's overall opinion aligns with the average overall opinion in the respective sample (treatment condition):

$$ExtremeViewsRelative_i = \sqrt{\sum_{s=1}^{11} (Y_{sit} - \overline{Y}_{s1c})^2}$$

where $Y_{sit}$ denotes individual i's level of agreement with statement $s$ in the endline (t=2) and the baseline (t=1) survey. The eleven statements are the political attitudes from

Table 2. $\overline{Y}_{s1c}$ is the average level of agreement with statement $s$ of all participants in the treatment condition $c$ in the baseline survey. In sum, $ExtremeViewsRelative_i$ reflects the distance to the average pre-meeting opinion in t.

*General Change of Political Opinion* To measure the general adjustment of the political opinion, we construct a measure that disregards any direction but focuses on the mere amount of change. More precisely, we define general change as the Euclidean distance between the endline and baseline survey:

$$GeneralChange = \sqrt{\sum_{a=1}^{11} (Y_{si2} - Y_{si1})^2}$$

where $Y_{asit}$ denotes individual i's level of agreement with statement $s$ in the endline (t=2) and baseline (t=1) survey. The eleven statements are the political attitudes from Table 2.

**Affective Polarization** To study how the conversations' affected stereotypes about individuals with contrasting political views and participants' willingness to have personal contact with these individuals, participants had to picture a person that gave opposing answers to the seven political registration questions. We then elicited participants' beliefs about this person by asking them the extent to which they agree with different statements about the contrary-minded person on a seven-point Likert scale. Importantly, we did not elicit beliefs and attitudes towards the matched partner but some generic person who holds opposing views. The elicited stereotypes were communicated by previous participants of *Germany Talks*.

*Stereotypes* We elicited four stereotypes, reflecting the beliefs that contrary-minded persons have low cognitive abilities, are poorly informed, have different moral values and lead a different life. Table 2 shows the exact wordings. We condense these questions by conducting a PCA. We use the first principal component as our overall *stereotype* measure. A higher value of our *Stereotypes* measure is associated with larger stereotypes about contrary-minded individuals. Table A22 provides the loadings of the first principle component.

*Willingness to Engage in Personal Contact* We elicited participants' *willingness to en-*

*gage in personal contact* by asking participants to state their level of agreement to the statement that they do not want to have a person with opposing views in their social environment. For our analysis, we reversed the scale (see Table 2 for the exact wording).

**Perception of Social Cohesion** To assess the effect on participants' perceptions of social cohesion in Germany, we elicited two beliefs: first, we asked how trustworthy the fellow citizens in Germany are (*Perception of General Trustworthiness*); and second, we measured participants' *Perception of General Pro-Sociality* by asking the extent to which German citizens generally care about the well-being of others. The two questions are listed in Table 2.

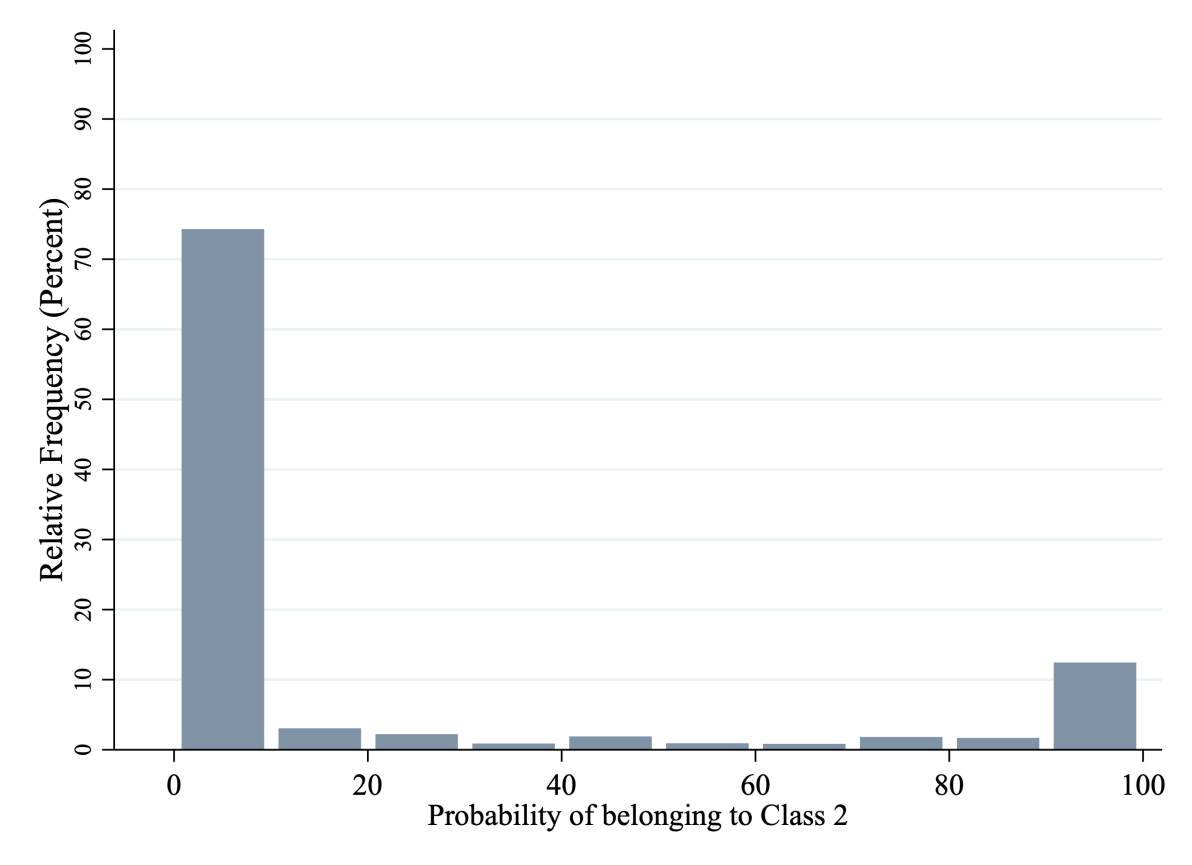
### A.5.3 Latent Cluster Analysis

We investigated correlational patterns of the answers to the political registration questions. The organizers of *Germany Talks* carefully selected them in a way that there is typically a more "left" and a more "right" answer.[38] Thus, we should expect that one group gathers around left answers while another group chooses predominantly right answers if there are actually members of the two distinct camps within our sample. To check this, we use latent class analysis. LCA is related to factor analysis as both explore the relationship among variables. However, in contrast to FA, LCA assumes a categorical latent variable with a multinomial distribution instead of a continuous normal-distributed variable. This method does not demand any a priori assumptions about the correlations between the questions (i.e. which answers should belong in which group). Instead, it takes the data and checks whether there are latent classes whose members have specific answer patterns. LCA endogenously creates classes with specific answer patterns and assigns each participant a likelihood of membership in each class. Applying it to all registered participants, we see a bipolar distribution, i.e. participants belong to either one class or the other with a high probability (see Figure A5). Assigning participants to classes according to the probabilities, we find a large group to which 82% and a small group to which 18% of the participants belong. The answer patterns of the two groups - shown in Figure A6 - confirm the hypothesized distinction into a (large) ideologically left and a (small) ideologically right group. Membership in the left group

[38]There are questions like "Should Germany increase its border control?", which represent typical left vs right topics, in this case migration. Other questions such as "Is Donald Trump good for the USA?" reflect less classic left-right topics, but nevertheless yield predictions about what conservatives and liberals would answer.

predicts agreement with more liberal notions and clear disagreement with more conservative viewpoints. Likewise, members of the right group show a rather conservative answer pattern.[39] A t-test using self-stated left-right classification confirms the interpretation with the members of the large group being significantly more left ($p<0.01$). To further support this finding, Table A42 reassuringly shows that we find nearly identical groups if we use k-means clustering instead of LCA. Focusing on the LM and CM samples, it is representative of all registered participants in terms of class membership (83% and 17%). Our sample comprises a majority of left- and a minority of right-leaning participants.

Figure A5: LCA: Likelihood of Class 1 Membership




**Notes:** The Figure plots the distribution of probabilities to belong to class 1 from the Latent Class Analysis. The LCA is described in Section 3.

[39]For example, membership in the left group predicts disagreement with the demand of stricter border control, and agreement with the notion that #metoo had some positive effects. Membership in the right group predicts agreement with stricter border control but otherwise shows a less differentiating pattern. This is unsurprising as many of the conservative answer options are rather extreme opinions. For example, disagreement with the statement that the #metoo movement and the debate about sexual harassment had *some* positive effects arguably reflects a far-right position.

Figure A6: LCA: Conditional Likelihood of Agreement


**Notes:** The Figure plots the probabilities of agreeing to the binary political registration questions conditional on LCA class membership. The political registration questions are shown in Table A1 and the LCA is described in Section 3. Error bars reflect 95% confidence intervals.

Table A42: Membership of Participants of *Germany Talks* to "Left" and "Right" Class

| | Class 1: Left Ideology (kmeans) | Class 2: Right Ideology (kmeans) |
|---|---|---|
| Class 1: Left Ideology (LCA) | 15,721 | 0 |
| Class 2: Right Ideology (LCA) | 377 | 2997 |

**Notes:** This table shows the number of participants of *Germany Talks* who belong to either the "left" or the "right" class, identified by LCA (rows) and k-means clustering (columns), respectively. The LCA is discussed in Section 3.