Talking Polarization: The Effects of Face-To-Face Conversations among Like- and Contrary-minded Individuals

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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 question by exploiting a natural experiment in Germany, in which strangers were paired based on their political views for unobserved in-person meetings. We find that meeting a person with a similar political opinion leads to more extreme political views. In contrast, talking to a contrary-minded person reduces negative attitudes towards those with opposing political opinions and improves the perception of social cohesion. However, it does not lead to an adaption of the political views. Together, the results suggest that political in-person conversations among like-minded individuals may increase polarization of views and thus widen the gap between ideological groups while conversations with contrary-minded individuals can reduce affective, but not ideological polarization.

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1 Introduction

Political polarization has grown in many countries over the past years. Societies have become increasingly divided into distinct ideological groups (Gentzkow, 2016; PEW, 2014) and animosity between these groups has risen to a high level (Iyengar and Westwood, 2015). As these trends potentially endanger social cohesion, the functioning of democracy and labor markets (Iyengar et al., 2019), understanding what causes them is crucial. There are long-standing concerns that staying among like-minded while being isolated from contrary-minded individuals leads to more polarization (Sunstein, 2009). Though this concept has received substantial attention in the context of social media,[1] we still lack of rigorous evidence to what extent these concerns are warranted for "real" in-person conversations.

This paper studies the impact of face-to-face conversations among politically like- and among politically contrary-minded on the following dimensions of political polarization: (i) political views; (ii) attitudes towards those with opposing political views; and (iii) the general perception of social cohesion. To estimate the effects, we leverage the structure of a nationwide newspaper initiative called *Germany Talks* and complement it with survey data. Based on political preferences, two strangers are matched for a private face-to-face meeting.[2] These conversations are not moderated and no topics of discussion were predefined, allowing the meetings to develop freely. We measured survey outcomes one week after the conversations.

To estimate the effects of having a face-to-face conversation, we exploit a plausibly exogenous variation in meeting availability. After having been matched to another person based on the highest possible distinctness in political views, 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. By restricting the analysis to those participants who accepted their partner first (*first-accepters*), we face a situation where the partners of the first-accepters determine whether contact is established and a meeting can be arranged (treatment) or no contact is

[1] For recent examples, see Levy (2021) and Allcott et al. (2020).

[2] Since its launch in Germany in 2017, the program *My Country Talks* has expanded worldwide. Until today, there have been interventions of the same form in many countries and regions, among others the USA (*America Talks*) and Europe (*Europe Talks*). Further countries are: Austria, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland.

established and no meeting takes place (control). Thus, controlling for the information from the introductory email that the partner knew about the first-accepter when deciding, achieves conditional random assignment of the first-accepters to treatment and control group. This approach identifies the intent-to-treat (ITT) effect of a face-to-face conversation.

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

This paper has three main results. The first set of findings considers the effect on ideological polarization, defined as polarization in political views towards more extreme positions.[4] We find that interpersonal conversations with like-minded partners increase ideological polarization, while there is no effect for contrary-minded partners. We construct two ideological polarization measures that both consider change in the overall political opinion, defined as a vector of eleven single political attitudes, towards more extreme views. The first one captures the change towards extreme views in terms of *absolute* (dis-)agreement levels on the eleven policy views. The second one measures the change towards extreme views *relative* to the population defined as movement away from the average opinion of the respective sample. The ITT effects of having a conversation with a like-minded partner are 0.286 standard deviations more absolute and 0.279 standard deviations more relative extreme answers. In contrast, deliberating with a contrary-minded person does not affect ideological polarization. Further analysis shows that these null effects for contrary-minded conversations do not hide opposing polarizing ("backlash") and depolarizing adjustments that cancel each other out. Further, 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 for discussion and duration of contrary-minded

[3]Conceptually, we have 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.

[4]In some cases, the term *issue polarization* is used when investigating changes in views (e.g., Mason, 2015; Allcott et al., 2020).

meetings is 20% (30 minutes) longer. Thus, contrary-minded partners discuss topics they disagree on, but do not react to it 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 interpersonal conversations with contrary-minded decrease 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 reflects mostly hostility between people with different policy views, and not hostility based on partisanship per se.[5] In line with this, we measure affective polarization by considering aversion towards people who have very different policy views in form of stereotypes and willingness for personal contact. Using a principal component analysis on all stereotypes, we find a significant reduction by 0.39 standard deviations for those who met a contrary-minded partner. This goes along with a (insignificant) higher willingness for personal contact with a person with opposing views of 0.146 standard deviations. In the case of a like-minded partner, there is a (insignificant) tendency towards reinforcement of stereotypes and reduction of willingness. 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.

Our third set of findings is that conversations with contrary-minded partners improve the perception of social cohesion. Having established the impacts of interpersonal conversations on attitudes towards contrary-minded, we turn attention on whether these effects extend to the perception of all members of the society. To assess this impact, we estimate the effects on perceptions 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 show a similar, albeit weaker and insignificant tendency.

Combined, the results paint a coherent picture and provide important insights about the role of interpersonal conversations with respect to political polarization. On the one hand, we find that meetings with like-minded lead to more extreme views while they do not reduce affective polarization or bolster the perception of social cohesion. These findings suggest that

[5]First, Orr and Huber (2020) find that differences in policy preferences generally lead to larger aversion than differences in partisanship. Second, when additionally providing alignment in partisanship, aversion based on policy preferences does not change much. In contrast, when when providing alignment in policy preferences, aversion based on partisanship decreases heavily.

the clustering of people that have similar views, as found by Brown and Enos (2021); Bishop (2009), may widen the ideological gap between political groups further.[6] On the other hand, the paper also offers a potential solution to fight this vicious polarizing circle. We show that conversations with contrary-minded lower affective polarization and improve the perception of social cohesion, though they do not reduce ideological polarization. Thus, providing people with the possibility to meet a contrary-minded can reduce hostility across ideological groups, but does not narrow the ideological gap.

We contribute to the existing research in three ways. First, we contribute to research investigating the idea that echo chambers and one-sided information increase polarization while providing counter-attitudinal information decrease polarization (see e.g., Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2011; Boxell et al., 2019; Flaxman et al., 2016; Martin and Yurukoglu, Martin and Yurukoglu; Sunstein, 2018). Findings strongly depend on the specific context of the study. In a recent paper, Allcott et al. (2020) show that the deactivation of facebook leads to a reduction of ideological, but not affective polarization. In contrast, Levy (2021) finds that exposure to counter-attitudinal news on Facebook decreases 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 information exchange within and across political groups.

Second, we contribute to research that explores interventions against political polarization. Most closely related, there is research on the impact of deliberative polls that gather individuals to participate in a mini-public for structured group deliberations (Fishkin et al., 2021; Schkade et al., 2007).[7] Further related interventions use priming of national identity (Levendusky, 2018), correction of misperceptions (Voelkel et al., 2021), meditation (Simonsson and Marks, 2020), making outparty 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 impact of one-on-one in-person discussions that are not guided or observed but in a natural environment, an important feature as the way conversations are held matter (Kalla and Broockman, 2020). In comparison to deliberative pollings,the conversations are more similar to every-day conversations. In addition,

[6]Moreover, the tendency towards a smaller willingness for personal contact with contrary-minded suggests that even the unwillingness to cross that ideological gap to interact with those who have different opinions may become larger.

[7]More generally, these studies explore the concept of deliberative democracy. A key part of this concept is the idea of finding consensus through deliberation between contrary-minded (e.g., Habermas, 2015).

our design enables us to compare interpersonal conversations among contrary-minded and like-minded within one quasi-experimental setup.

Last, the paper contributes to the literature investigating whether interaction reduces inter-group prejudice. This research builds up on 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, none of these studies investigate the effect of *ideological* segregation. Moreover, Paluck (2016) points out that there is a shortcoming of studies that use adults to test the causal effect of real-world interventions.

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

2 Background

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

Political Situation. In 2018 the political divide was perceived as large in Germany. With the strong increase of asylum seekers 2015/16, the 2013 founded right-wing party "Alternative für Deutschland" (translation: Alternative for Germany) had quickly gained popularity and received with 12.6% the third highest vote in the federal election 2017. 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 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).

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

This caused 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 institution with thousands of people talking to each other. Even though 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 USA (*America Talks*) and Europe (*Europe Talks*). In total, the intervention has taken place in more than 30 countries with more than 170,000 participants until today.[9]

The basic idea of *Germany Talks* is simple: Based on their 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 program *Germany Talks* by sending out a base- and an 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 online media to major public television. With respect to political orientation, the participating news outlets reflected a broad political spectrum with a focus around center-left.[10] The intervention was

[9]Source: https://www.mycountrytalks.org, on September 16 2021

[10]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).

promoted on these platforms and participants could register either online on the respective websites or by post. 19,365 participants from all over Germany were successfully recruited.

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.[11]

Variation in Political Distance: Assignment of Treatment Condition 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 the following two conditions: First, the matched partner had to be located in 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 one time. Thus, there was no chance of changing partners or being matched to another partner later on.

We divide participants into two treatment conditions based on political distance to their partner. (i) *Contrary-minded Partners (CM)*: To this group belong those participants who were matched with a partner who had answered more than half (i.e., 4 or more) of the political registration questions differently. It consists of 46% of all matched participants. (ii) *Like-minded Partners (LM)*: This group consists of participants who were matched with a partner who answered less than half (i.e., 3 or less) of the political registration questions differently. It includes 54% of the matched participants.[12]

Variation in Meeting Availability: Assignment to Treatment and Control Each successfully paired individual received an email introducing the matched partner. This email contained a list of the political registration questions the partner had answered differently, the partner's first name, age, gender and the answers to the non-political free response questions.

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

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

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 remaining partner was notified. If and only if both partners confirmed the match, contact was established by giving out the respective email addresses.

Leveraging this structure, we restrict our analysis to those participants who accepted their partner *first*, before the partner did. This leads to the fact that the (second) partner, who had not accepted (yet), essentially decided whether the first-accepter was going to 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 partner accepted as well. In these 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 this paper. First, the partners of the first-accepters assign the first-accepters to treatment and control group. First-accepters do not select themselves into treatment and control group. Second, the partners could base their decision on whether to accept as well or not merely 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, nor moderated or guided in any way. They mostly took place in natural settings like cafes, parks, or in peoples' homes. As shown in Figure A1, 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.

Surveys Base- and endline surveys were sent out by the organizers of *Germany Talks*. Unfortunately, the baseline survey was distributed more than a week after the introductory emails had been sent. Therefore, first-accepters' assignments to the partner (treatment condition), acceptance decisions and assignments to treatment (acceptance decision of the partner) had al-

ready 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 accepted as well.[13] As a consequence, 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 which are robust.[14]

Basic information about the participants like socio-demographics was only elicited in the baseline survey. It was sent out 5 days prior to the meetings and required on average 14 minutes to answer. The endline survey contained, besides the outcome measures, questions about the meetings - if they had taken place. Average response time was 12.5 minutes. It was sent out one week after the conversations. 2,645 participants completed both surveys.

3.2 Sample

In our study, we focus on first-accepters who filled out both surveys. Table 3 describes the composition of the resulting sample, which is composed of 1523 participants. Compared to the German population (column 1), our sample (column 2) is similar in terms of age, income and place of residence, but more educated, male, politically left-leaning and with less migration background.[15] While the sample is left leaning *on average*, it is not clear how this translates to the existence of distinct ideological groups within the sample. Are all participants from one "left" political camp, or are there still a left and a right group represented in the sample? As shown in Table 3, party preferences and self-classified ideology suggest the existence of a large left camp and a small right camp. To further explore this heterogeneity, we investigate correlational patterns of the answers to the political registration questions. The organizers of *Germany Talks* carefully picked them in a way that there is typically a more "left" and a more "right" answer.[16] Thus, we should expect that one group gathers around left answers while another

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

[14]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.

[15]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. For example, conservatives may be less willing to have such a 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 news outlets. We cannot clearly differentiate which of the two factors plays how much of a role, but it is likely to be a mixture of both.

[16]There are questions like "Should Germany increase its border control?" which represent typical left vs right topics, in this case migration. Other questions, like "Is Donald Trump good for the USA?" do reflect less classic

group chooses predominantly right answers - if there actually are members of the two distinct camps within our sample. To check this, we use latent class analysis.[17] 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 or the other class with high probability (see Figure A2). 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 both groups, shown in Figure A3, confirm the hypothesized distinction into a (large) ideologically left and a (small) ideologically right group. Membership in the left group predicts agreement to more liberal notions and clear disagreement to more conservative viewpoints. Likewise, members of the right group show a rather conservative answer pattern.[18] 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 A3 reassuringly shows that we find nearly identical groups if we use k-means clustering instead of LCA. Focussing on the sample we use, it is representative of all registered participants in terms of class membership (83% and 17%). Taken all facts together, our sample consists of a majority of left- and a minority of right-leaning participants.

Subsamples Table 3, columns 3 and 4 provide descriptive statistics of the subsamples of like-minded and contrary-minded first-accepters. Subsample sizes are of similar size with 775 participants in the like-minded and 748 in the contrary-minded condition. Both subsamples are comparable, except for political preferences. The like-minded sample is less conservative. The reason for these political differences lies in the mechanics of *Germany talks*: With a large part of the registered participants being from the left ideological camp and the matching algorithm aiming to maximize political distance between partners, conservatives were predominantly matched

left-right topics, but nevertheless yield predictions about what conservatives and liberals would answer.

[17] LCA is related to factor analysis as both explore the relationship among variables. But, 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.

[18] For example, membership in the left group predicts disagreement with the demand of stricter border control, and agreement to the notion that #metoo had some positive effects. Membership in the right group predicts agreement to stricter border control, but shows otherwise a less differentiating pattern. This is not surprising as many of the conservative answer options are rather extreme opinions. For example, disagreement to the statement that the #metoo movement and the debate about sexual harassment had *some* positive effects reflects arguably a far right position.

with left participants. Analogously, liberals often ended up being matched to fellow liberals due to excess supply. As a consequence, the like-minded subsample contains left but no right people, while the contrary-minded subsample comprises left and right people.

3.3 Treatment Conditions: Like-Minded and Contrary-Minded Partners

The treatment conditions differ in the political views of the partners who are by construction like- or contrary-minded to the first-accepters. Table A4 provides descriptive statistics of the partners. It shows that in the like-minded condition they are younger, more female and more left than in the contrary-minded condition, as would be expected following the rationale about pair compositions above.

To assess to what extent the treatment conditions actually reflect politically like- and contrary-mindedness within pairs, we compare them to an alternative way of defining of whether a person met a like- or a contrary-minded partner. As each participant of *Germany Talks* can be assigned one ideological class found by the LCA, this allows us to use the overlap of ideological classes within pairs to define like- and contrary-mindedness. As shown in Table A4, there is great congruence of our treatment conditions and the overlap of ideological classes within pairs. This gives further substantial foundation to our treatment condition definitions. For robustness, we also report results using the overlap of ideological classes to define treatment conditions.

4 Empirical Strategy

Specification Our approach identifies the ITT of having an in-person conversation with either a like-minded or a contrary-minded person. Recall that the partner assigns the participant who accepted the match first (first-accepter) to treatment and control by choosing 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 control for most of the content from the mails, 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

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

OLS:

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

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 ϵ_i is an individual specific error term. β measures the intent-to-treat 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. $BasicInfo_i$ contains basic information (hard facts) about participant i that we observe (age intervals, gender, region on 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 consists of political self-classification (left to right), party, political engagement, religion, religiousness, marital status and number of politically contrary-minded people in one's social environment. Appendix A.1 describes the controls in more detail.

The main identifying assumption is that we achieve conditional independence of treatment assignment and respective outcome variable by controlling for $BasicInfo_i$ and $AddInfo_i$. This would be violated if, for example, some attitudes of the participants shine through in the introductory mail, as a consequence affect the partners' decisions and, importantly, also have an impact on the outcome variable.

For robustness, we also report estimates from OLS regressions without $AddInfo_i$ and 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 which predicts outcome Y_i. In a third step, the union of both sets of control variables is used to estimate the treatment effect. The conclusions from all the three specifications are very similar. If anything, the smaller standard errors of PDS yield more precise (and thus more significant) estimates.

Potential Challenges Table 4 suggests conditional random assignment to treatment and control groups in both conditions LM and CM is achieved. Neither is any of the coefficients

which are not affected by the treatment significant in one of the treatment conditions LM and CM, nor is the F-Test of joint significance. Table A5 shows that treatment and control groups are even conditionally balanced if we use the more conservative approach of conditioning only on the basic set of controls.

Table A6 tests for conditional selective attrition between base- and endline survey. Note that income (part of the basic controls $BasicInfo$) and marital status (part of the additional controls $AddInfo$) are not controlled for because we (only) elicited them in the endline survey. Thus, we should interpret the findings with caution. We find very small and insignificant differences between treatment and control groups in both conditions LM (column 1) and CM (column 2). Mean attrition is in both cases 49%.

As many participants already knew their treatment status before the baseline survey was sent, people may have selected differently into our panel depending on treatment condition. Table A7 tests for selective response rates to both surveys between the treatment conditions. Note that, as none of controls from the surveys can be used (because the surveys are part of the test), assignment to treatment and control is not conditionally exogenous. Thus, the findings are only suggestive and should be interpreted cautiously. There are significant, yet small differences between treatment and control groups in both treatment conditions (6.7% and 7.2%). 18.9 and 21.5% of all participants fill out both surveys in the LM and CM condition, respectively.

To assess to what extent the intent-to-treat effect captures the real effect of a face-to-face meeting, we look at compliance with treatment assignments. Since contact was only established if both partner had accepted, non-compliance is by construction only one-sided. Participants in the control group had no chance to meet their partner.[20] Compliance with treatment status is very similar across both treatment conditions, 87.2% for LM and 86.8% for CM. Thus, the high compliance rates of 100% (control) and 87% (treatment) suggest that the average effects of the meetings are close to our ITT estimates. Presumably, they are 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 effects sep-

[20]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, but including them in our analysis does not change our results.

arately in two subsamples of different (political) compositions. Differences in effects may partly be rooted in the differences between subsamples instead of being caused by the treatments.[21] To assess the extent of the concern, we look at the selection into the different subsamples 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 subsample differences from the previous section, it seems that the subsamples are in large parts comparable except for political orientation (see Table 3). 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. This suggests that it is unlikely that the differences in effects are only found due to the dissimilarity of the subsamples.

5 Findings: Political Attitudes

Scholars like Habermas argue that deliberations among citizens lead to more agreement within the society. However, there is the concern that discussions can yield the exact opposite. Like-minded people may confirm and reinforce each other's opinion (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 therefore explore the heterogeneity in effects of interpersonal deliberation on political opinion.

Measures To measure polarization in political opinions, we elicited agreement to eleven different political viewpoints in the base- and the endline survey. See Table 2 for an overview. Seven out of the eleven viewpoints were those that were 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 is the change towards a more extreme opinion in terms of *absolute* (dis-)agreement to the viewpoints. More precisely, it is defined as the change in the Euclidean distance to the center of the scale between end- and baseline. The second measure is the change towards a more

[21] Note that this does not concern the identification of the ITT of like- vs contrary-minded meetings.

extreme opinion *relative* to the population average. Thus, 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 defined as change away from the average pre-meeting opinion of the subsample. Both outcome measures are standardized by subtracting the respective control group means and dividing by the control standard deviations. Note that we use data from the baseline survey to construct our measures. Hence, the analyses are only valid under the assumption that political attitudes are not affected by either learning the treatment assignment or first email contact to arrange the meeting and should thus be looked at with this in mind. For more information on construction of the outcome measures see Appendix A.

Findings Figure 2 presents ITT effects for both 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 measures are 0.286 and 0.279 standard deviations in the like-minded treatment condition. For those who met a contrary-minded partner both point estimates are negative, yet insignificant. In particular, we do not find any sign of backlash effects.

Tables A9 and A10 additionally provide the estimation results for the post double selection method (PDS) and a smaller set of covariates. The results are very similar. Tables A19 and A20 test whether results are robust to an alternative treatment condition definition that is based on membership to the ideological classes found by the latent class analysis: Instead of defining whether a person met a like- or a contrary-minded by using the number of different answers to the partner, this approach uses the alignment of class memberships of the partners. Results do not change. Table A18 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 A12, A13, A14 and A15 provide the results when alternative distances measures, Manhattan distance and Mahalanobis distance, are used to construct our variables instead of Euclidean distance. We find largely the same pattern.

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 base- and endline political opinion. This measure focuses on the amount of change and ignores its "direction". Figure A4 plots the corresponding ITT effects and shows that in general only conversations with like-minded partners lead to a substantial adjustment of the own political opinion.

Why is there no adjustment for contrary-minded? 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 were significantly longer than those among like-minded, with median durations of 150 and 120 minutes, respectively ($p < 0.01$). Figure A5 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 to discuss a particular topic. The results suggest that the effects are not driven by the avoidance of topics between contrary-minded. In contrast, participants particularly discuss contentious topics and learn about the partners viewpoint, but do not alter their own opinion due to it.

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 who have different opinions. Indeed, 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 discussion with members of the own, and members from the other political camp on affective polarization.

Measures To assess the effect on affective polarization we use two measures, stereotypes about and preference for personal contact with contrary-minded persons. We defined such contrary-minded persons as someone who has opposing political views on the seven political registration questions.[22] We elicited stereotypes about contrary-minded views that were communicated by former participants of *Germany Talks*. These were the prejudice that contrary-minded are cognitively less capable, bad informed, have different moral values and lead completely different lives. We reduce dimensionality by implementing a principal component analysis (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 get a broader picture, we additionally measured the preference for close interpersonal contact with 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.

Stereotypes Figure 3 shows that interpersonal conversations with contrary-minded significantly reduced stereotypes. The point estimate is -0.379 standard deviations. Figure A6 estimates the ITT effects on each stereotype separately. The reduction is largest for the belief that contrary-minded are of low cognitive ability, while we do not see any decrease in whether contrary-minded lead a completely different life. Meeting a person from the own political camp does not have any effect on stereotypes about contrary-minded. The positive point estimate of 0.087 standard deviations suggests that if anything conversations with like-minded tend to slightly increase stereotypes. However, none of the effects is significant, neither for the overall nor for the single stereotypes.

Tables A21, A25, A26, A24 and A23 show robustness to dropping controls, and running PDS regressions for the overall and the single stereotypes. Tables A18 and A27 show that effects are similar if treatment conditions definitions are altered by varying the cut-off and using alignment of ideological classes, respectively.

Willingness for Personal Contact Table 5 presents the effect of the conversation on willingness for personal contact with a contrary-minded person. In line with the previous finding,

[22]Note that we did not elicit beliefs and attitudes towards the partner, but towards some arbitrary person with opposing views.

the point estimate for meetings with a contrary-minded partner is 0.146 of a standard deviation meaning a higher willingness for personal contact, yet insignificant (column 5). Analogously, the coefficient for like-minded meetings is -0.0993 and insignificant. Dropping the set of additional controls (columns 1 and 4) and post-double selection (columns 3 and 6) yield the same pattern. In the latter case, the estimate of contrary-minded conversations is of similar size (0.176 standard deviations) but significant at a 5% level due to a smaller standard error. Similarly, the coefficient for like-minded partner is -0.137 standard deviations and significant at a 10% level. Varying the definition of like- and contrary-minded partners produces very similar results (see Tables A18 and A28).

Interpretation The results for stereotypes and willingness for personal contact paint a coherent picture. To estimate the overall effect on affective polarization we conduct a principal component analysis with all five affective polarization measures, the four stereotypes and willingness for personal contact. Hence, the resulting overall measure is a weighted index of the five measures capturing aversion towards contrary-minded.[23] Using one measure yields effect sizes that usefully summarize the overall impact of the conversations and allows us to benchmark 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 reduce affective polarization by 0.352 standard deviations ($p<0.01$)

To put the effect magnitude in perspective, we use two different benchmarks. First, we follow Lowe (2021) and compare our estimates with effects of intergroup contact from a meta-analysis by Paluck et al. (2019). As Figure XX shows, the meta-analytic effect of 0.39 standard deviations is very close to our estimate. Second, Broockman and Kalla (2016) show that a 10-minute face-to-face conversation with transgender/gender non-conforming canvassers leads to an increase of tolerance. The effect sizes are 0.45 standard deviations after 3 days and 0.3 standard deviations after 3 weeks, respectively. Our effect consistently ranks between both the two points in time of elicitation (the endline survey being sent out 7 days after the conversations took place), and the two effect sizes. The fact that Broockman and Kalla (2016) found very long lasting effects after a 10-minute conversation may give hope that our conversations with a

[23]Table A29 provides the loadings on the overall measure. With positive signs for the single stereotypes and a negative sign for willingness for personal contact, it confirms the interpretation of an overall measure for animosity towards contrary-minded.

median duration of 150 minutes reduced affective polarization lastingly.

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 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 of general pro-sociality after contact, while Lowe (2021) observes a reduction of general trust.[24] In this section, we hence shed light on the effect of interpersonal conversations on perceptions of trustworthiness and pro-sociality of fellow society members.

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 to which extent German citizens generally care about the wellbeing of others (see Table 2).

Findings Figure 5 provides the ITT effects on the two beliefs. For both types of conversations the point estimates are positive for both measures, though 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.

Tables A30 and A31 provide estimates for the PDS regressions and if the set of additional controls is dropped. The results are similar, though 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 A18, A32 and A33 show robustness towards varying the definition of treatment conditions.

The findings are in large parts in line with the effects on affective polarization and the idea that the positive intergroup 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. However, the (insignificant) tendencies for like-minded conversations are not consistent with the hypothesis. Even

[24] Similarly, Dinesen et al. (2020) show that ethnic diversity is generally negatively related to generalized trust.

though affective polarization tends to increase, trust and perception of general pro-sociality both tend to improve as well.

Alternative Explanation: Disappointment One potential alternative explanation of our findings on affective polarization and social cohesion may be that disappointment of not being accepted by the proposed contrary-minded partner drive the effects. To assess this concern, we compare the time trends of the two control groups. If disappointment of not being accepted by the contrary-minded partner is actually increasing affective polarization we should see different time trends for the contrary-minded and the like-minded control group as the latter was not rejected by contrary-minded. Table A34 finds no sign for different time trends.[25] This suggest that disappointment does not explain the effects for affective polarization and perception of social cohesion for contrary-minded partners.

8 Conclusion

This study exploits a natural experiment to estimate the impact of political face-to-face conversations on political polarization. It provides evidence that in-person communication among people who hold similar political views fortifies these opinions further. As a consequence, already existing opinion difference between different political camps are magnified making people even more unequal in their opinion how policy should be shaped. One could argue that differences in policy views are not bad by themselves because a healthy democracy "is designed" to handle such disagreements. But as soon as people condition their attitudes and behavior on other peoples' political opinions, this argument begins to fall apart. With 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 and improves the perception of social cohesion. Therefore, the study provides clear policy implications. It shows that lowering obstacles to communicate with contrary-minded people and facilitating interaction between different political camps can be an effective countermeasure against affective polarization. One possibility to do so may be interventions like "My Country Talks". However, these interventions should focus on interactions between groups.

[25]Note that the comparison make 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 to their partner prior to the baseline survey, the results should be interpreted carefully.

More generally, our findings support any effort to bring together those who hold different views to talk. People may understand each other better, without having to give up own convictions.

This study explores the effects of one single in-person conversation. It therefore provides a benchmark for what the effects of echo chambers may be. At the same time, it serves as a proof of concept that, given the right circumstances, interpersonal communication is a powerful tool.

One limitation of this study is that, due to the quasi-experimental contraints, it does not explore long-term effects on polarization. Further, it would be interesting to explore whether the observed effects are also reflected in behavioral changes. Another weakness is rooted in the nature of our sample being a selection of people who want to deliberate on politics. The impact of conversations, in particular with contrary-minded, may differ for those who have a lower willingness to do so. However, from a policy perspective, the sample at hand may be the right one to look at as these type of persons can actually be reached via relatively simple policies.

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Figure 1: Quasi-experimental Setting

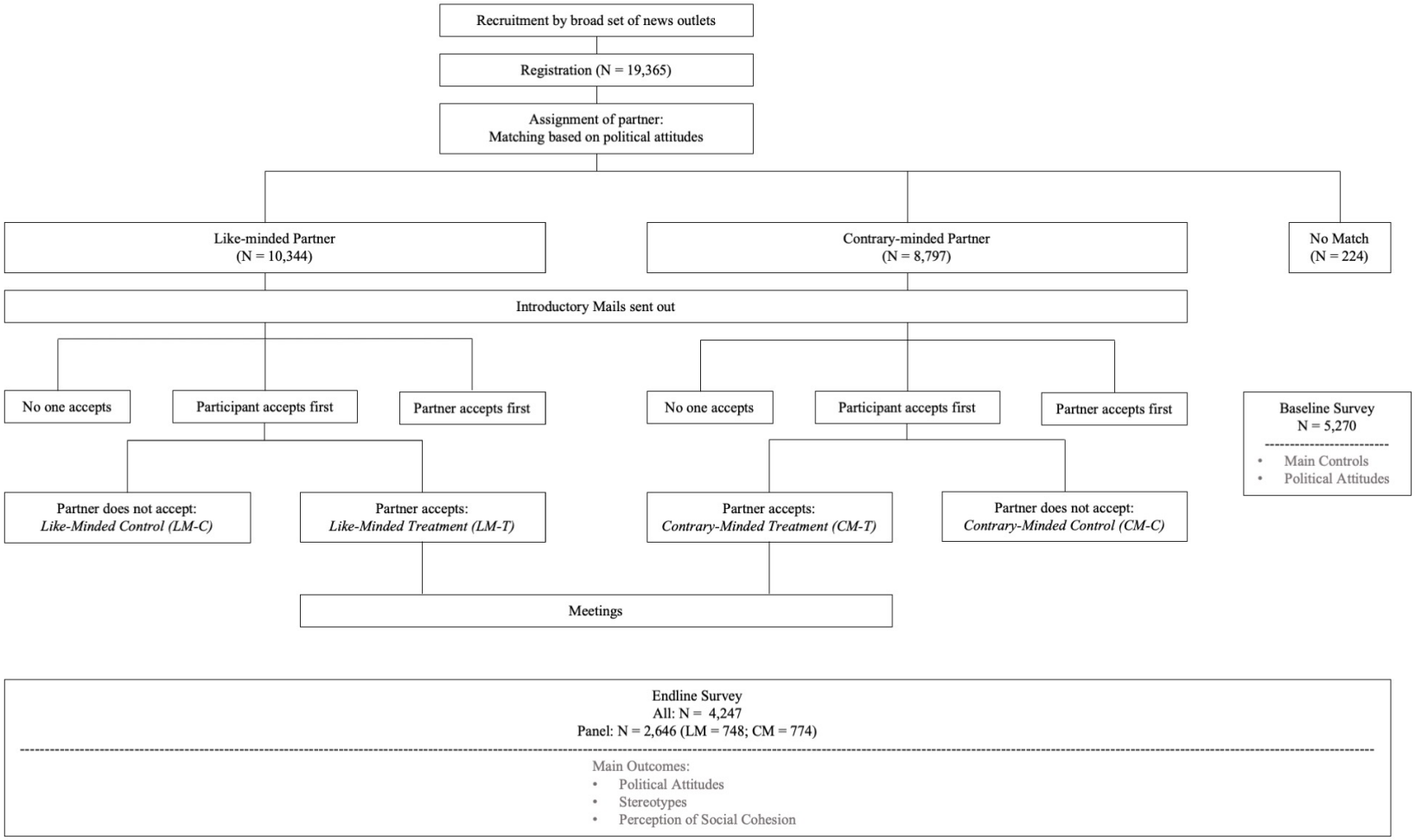
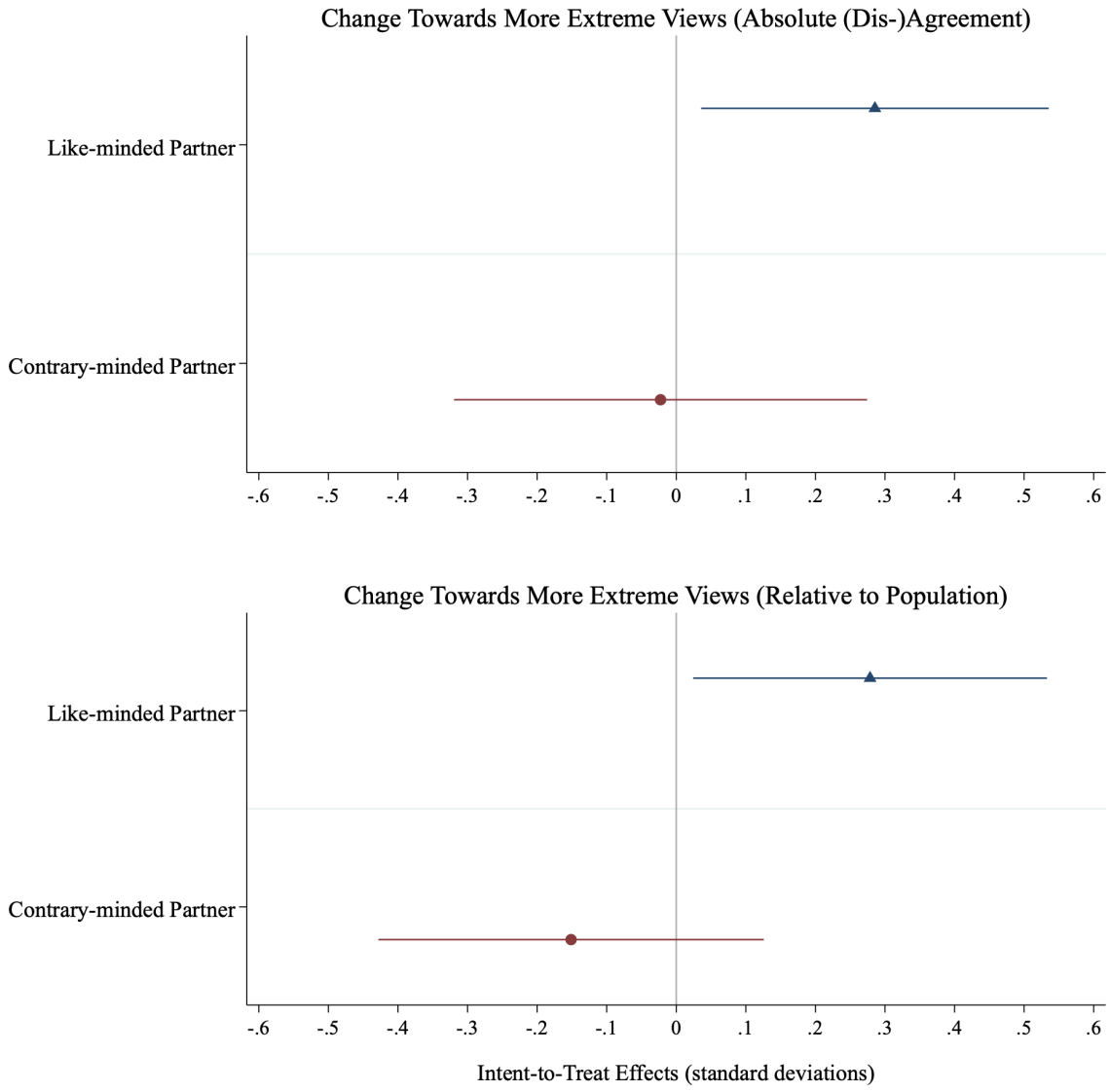
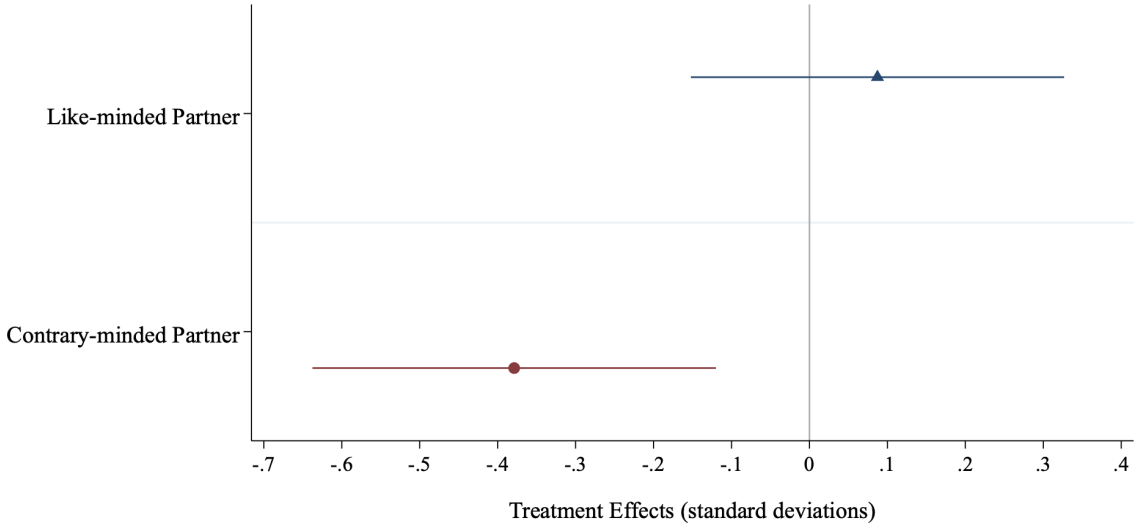


Figure 2: Effect of the Conversations on Political Views



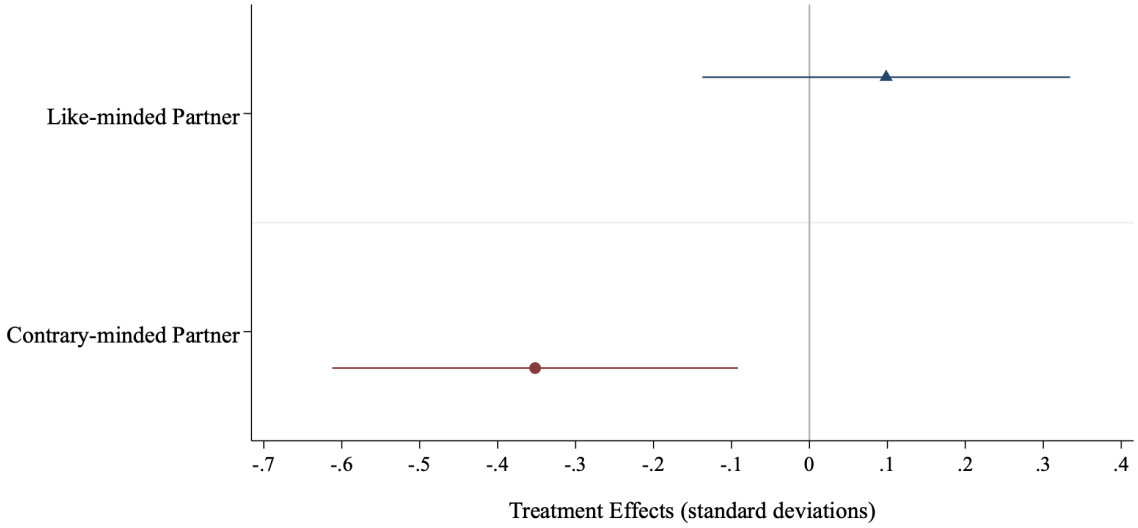
Notes: This figure shows the ITT effects of the like- and contrary-minded treatments on standardized change of the overall political opinion. The first panel plots the impacts on the change towards a more extreme opinion in terms of absolute (dis-)agreement to policy views. The second panel plots the effects on the change towards more extreme views relative to the population. Higher values denote a change towards an extremer overall opinion. The outcome measures are described in Section 5 and regression specifications are detailed in Section 4. 95% confidence intervals are included.

Figure 3: Effect on Stereotypes about Contrary-minded



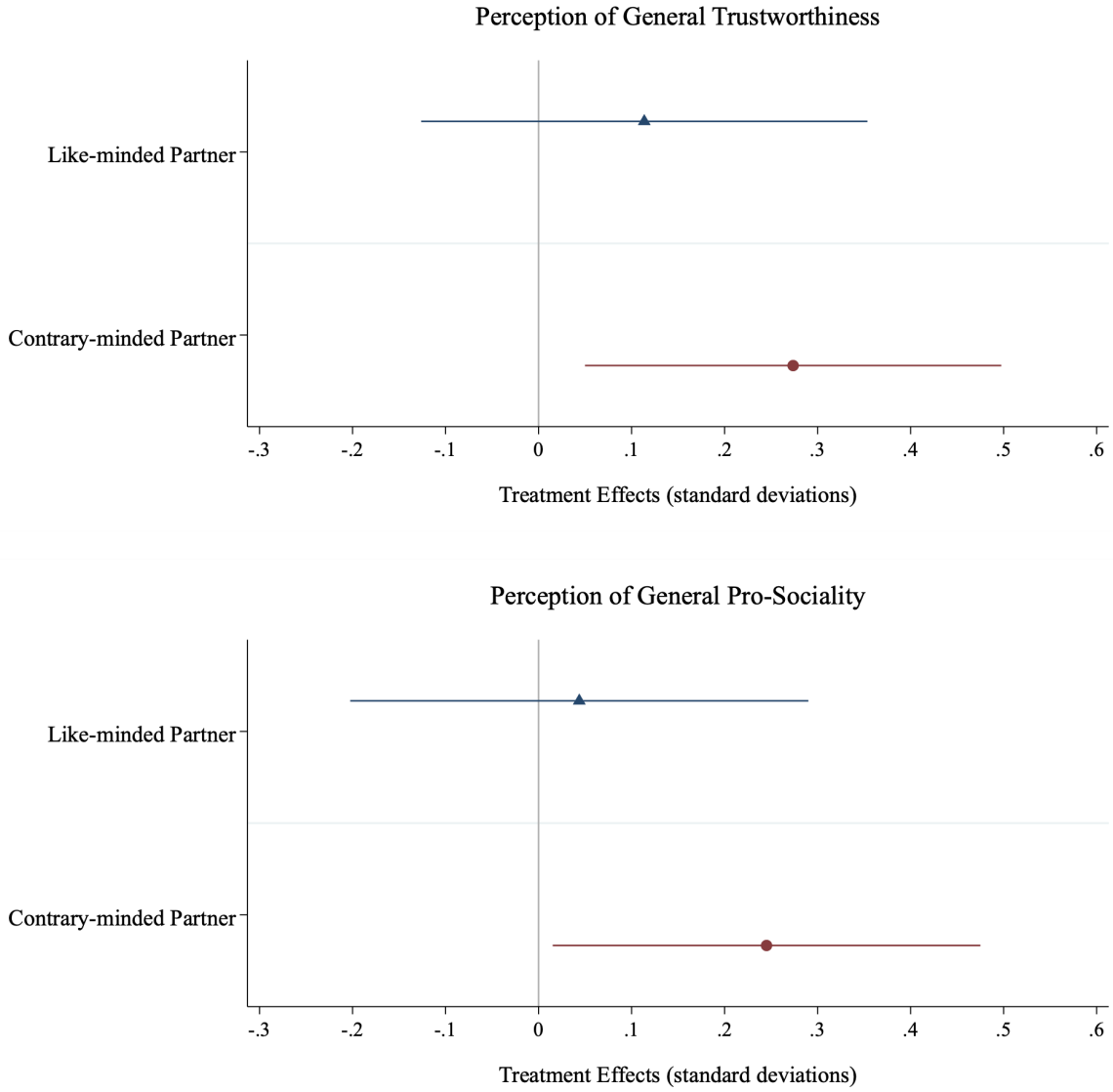
Notes: This figure shows the ITT effects of the like- and contrary-minded treatments on standardized overall stereotypes about a person with opposing political views. A higher value denotes higher stereotypes. The overall stereotype is defined as the first principal component of all four elicited stereotypes. The measure is described in Section 6 and regression specifications are detailed in Section 4. 95% confidence intervals are included.

Figure 4: Overall Effect on Affective Polarization



Notes: This figure shows the ITT effects of the like- and contrary-minded treatments on the standardized overall measure of affective polarization. A higher value denotes higher affective polarization. The measure is defined as the first principal component of all four elicited stereotypes about, and the willingness for personal contact with a person who has opposing political views. The measure is described in Section 6 and regression specifications are detailed in Section 4. Error bars reflect 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 5: 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 perception of social cohesion. The first panel plots the impacts on the perception that fellow citizens are generally trustworthy. Higher values denote higher perceptions of trustworthiness. The second panel plots the effects on the perception to what extent fellow citizens generally care about the well-being of others. A higher values is associated with a higher perception of pro-sociality. The outcome measures are described in Section 7 and regression specifications are detailed in Section 4. Error bars reflect 95% confidence intervals.

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 accepted	First-accepters, assigned to a contrary-minded partner who did not accepted.

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.

Table 2: Outcome Variables

Variable	Statement
Political Attitudes	
Cohabitation	Muslims and Non-Muslims cohabit well 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.
German Development	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.
Stereotypical Beliefs:	
Cognitive Abilities	This person is incapable of understanding complex contexts. (rev.)
Badly Informed	This person is badly informed.
Moral Values	This person has completely different moral values.
Way of Life	This person leads a completely different life.
Willingness for Personal Contact	I would like this person to be in my personal environment. (rev.)
Social Cohesion	
Trust	One can trust most people in Germany.
Care	Most people in Germany do not care about the wellbeing of others.

Notes: The table lists all outcome variables. 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 7-point-Likert-Scales.

Table 3: 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
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

Table 3: (continued)

	German Population	Sample		
		All	LM	CM
Other	0	1	1	2
Income (monthly; EUR)				
0-800	19	10	0.11	0.08
800-1499	25	13	0.13	0.13
1500-2199	23	20	0.21	0.20
2200-3299	17	23	0.26	0.21
3300 or more	17	27	0.24	0.30
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
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 sample, the subsamples LM and CM. 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 4: Balance Checks

	Like-minded	Contrary-minded
Political Views		
Border Control	0.0969	-0.0922
	(0.137)	(0.139)
#metoo	-0.191	-0.103
	(0.127)	(0.148)
Meat Tax	0.00334	-0.0752
	(0.140)	(0.189)
Car free inner-cities	-0.163	-0.0806
	(0.132)	(0.158)
Cohabitation (Non-)Muslims	-0.0415	0.0486
	(0.114)	(0.149)
Development Germany	-0.00698	0.0500
	(0.157)	(0.169)
Trump	-0.0387	0.0764
	(0.0981)	(0.126)
Same-sex marriage	-0.118	-0.161
	(0.122)	(0.153)
Cooperation within EU	-0.114	0.172
	(0.0973)	(0.122)
Income Tax	0.118	-0.0373
	(0.160)	(0.172)
Trustworthiness Media	0.0310	-0.148
	(0.160)	(0.169)
Importance		
Importance: Border Control	0.0357	0.219
	(0.222)	(0.232)
Importance: #metoo	0.0737	-0.152
	(0.178)	(0.204)
Importance: Meat Tax	-0.0495	0.150
	(0.177)	(0.196)
Importance: Car free inner-cities	0.0474	0.184

Table 4: (continued)

	Like-minded	Contrary-minded
	(0.178)	(0.192)
Importance: Cohabitation (Non-)Muslims	0.161	0.0729
	(0.157)	(0.172)
Importance: Development Germany	0.326	0.182
	(0.216)	(0.222)
Importance: Trump	0.285	0.186
	(0.224)	(0.235)
Beliefs		
Number applications for asylum	-16641.0	-8822.1
	(33678.8)	(41681.3)
Share Muslims in Population	-0.177	0.107
	(0.601)	(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 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 and additional controls. Robust standard errors in parentheses.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table 5: Effect on Willingness for 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
R^2	0.394	0.501		0.529	0.582	

Notes: Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized willingness for 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: Column (3): Various NUTS FE. Column (6): Various combinations of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE. The specifications are described in more detail in Section 4. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Appendix

A Measures

Our analysis relies on two datasets: data from the intervention *Germany Talks* and self-reported survey data. The primary dataset consists of 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 consists of information elicited in the baseline or the endline survey. In the following section we describe in detail the measures we use and construct from the two datasets.

A.1 Controls

In our analysis we condition on a variety of control dummies that stem from both datasets, the *Germany Talks* and the survey dataset. In the baseline survey, we gathered information about participants' demographics like 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 on 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, 65+. Gender is a binary variable indicating whether a person identifies as male, female or nonbinary. Instead of including 1531 five-digit zip codes in our analysis, we construct dummies based on the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (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 categories, from "0-800 Euro" to "3300+ EUR" and an option for participants that don't know their monthly income. All variables additionally have a category "Not specified".

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) by 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* consists of *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 (7 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.2 Outcome Measures

Outcome measures were elicited in the endline survey. Only in the case of political views, 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 do a more precise analysis.

Change towards More Extreme Views: Absolute (Dis-)Agreement We construct two measures of ideological polarization. The first measure indicates to what extent a person shows stronger (dis-)agreement to the topics after the meeting. More precisely, we construct one measure that indicates whether someone moved towards or away from the midpoint of our scale (a vector of 3s), denoting neither disagreement nor agreement. The measure is defined as follows:

$$ExtremeViewsAbsolute_i = \sqrt{\sum_{s=1}^{11} (Y_{si2} - 3)^2} - \sqrt{\sum_{s=1}^{11} (Y_{si1} - 3)^2}$$

where Y_{sit} denotes individual i's level of agreement to statement s in the endline (t=2) and the baseline (t=1) survey. The eleven statements are the political attitudes from Table 2. The first term is the Euclidean distance between i's agreement and the center point (vector of 3s) in the endline survey (t=2), while the second term is the respective Euclidean distance in the baseline survey (t=1). Thus, $ExtremeViewsAbsolute_i$ indicates the change in the distance to the

midpoint of our scale. A positive realization of this variable indicates that individual i moved "towards the boundary of our scale", whereas a negative realization implies that i's attitudes changed "in the direction of the center". If the variable equals zero, participants moved neither closer nor further away from the center.

Change towards More Extreme Views: Relative to Population The second measure of ideological polarization reflects the change in the extent to which an individual's overall opinion aligns with the average overall opinion in the respective subsample (treatment condition):

$$ExtremeViewsRelative_i = \sqrt{\sum_{s=1}^{11} (Y_{si2} - \overline{Y}_{s1c})^2} - \sqrt{\sum_{s=1}^{11} (Y_{si1} - \overline{Y}_{s1c})^2}$$

where Y_{sit} denotes individual i's level of agreement to 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 to statement s of all participants in the treatment condition c in the baseline survey. The two terms reflect the distance to the average pre-meeting opinion after and before the meeting took place. In sum, $ExtremeViewsRelative_i$ denotes whether someone moved towards ($ExtremeViewsRelative_i < 0$) or away from ($ExtremeViewsRelative_i > 0$) the average pre-meeting opinion or none of the two.

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 end- and baseline survey:

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

where Y_{asit} denotes individual i's level of agreement to statement s in the endline (t=2) and the 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 to which extent 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 that hold opposing views. The elicited stereotypes were communicated by previous participants of *Germany Talks*.

Stereotypes - We elicited four stereoytpes. These were the beliefs that contrary-minded persons have low cognitive abilities, are badly informed, have different moral values and lead a different life. Table 2 shows the exact wordings. We condense these questions by conducting a principle component analysis. We use the first principle 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.

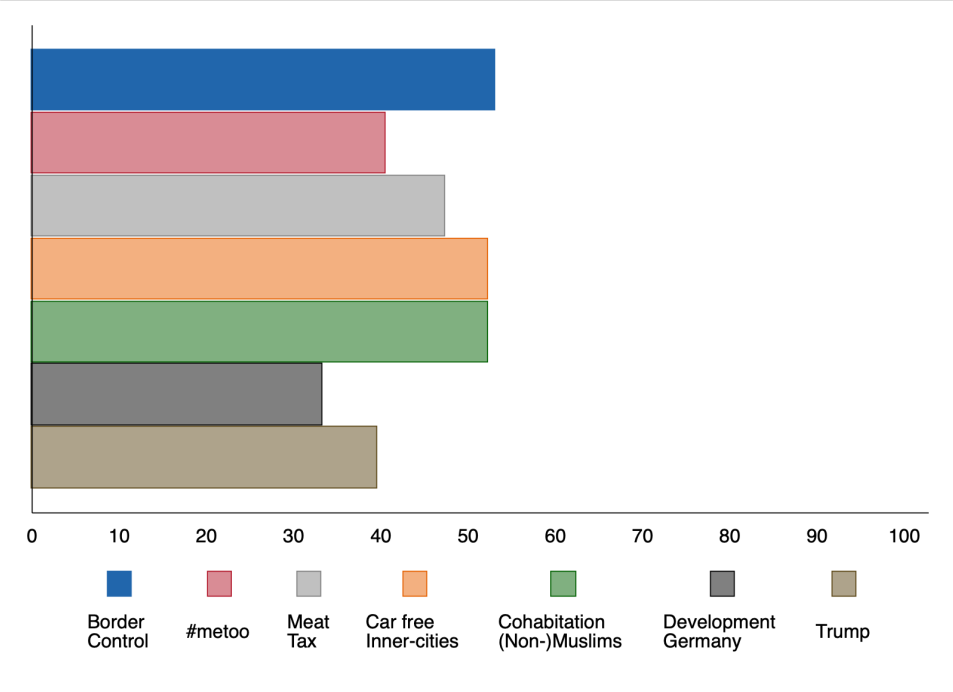
Willingness for personal contact We elicited participants' *Willingness for personal contact* by asking participants to state their level of agreement to the statement that they do not want to have a person with opposing views in their social environment. For our analysis, we reverse the scale. See Table 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*). Second, we measured participants' *Perception of General Pro-Sociality* by asking to what extent German citizens generally care about the wellbeing of others. [26] The two questions are listed in Table 2.

[26]The OECD defines a society as 'cohesive' "if it works towards the well-being of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, and offers its members the opportunity of upward social mobility."(Quote OECDsocialcohesion: See BibTex below).

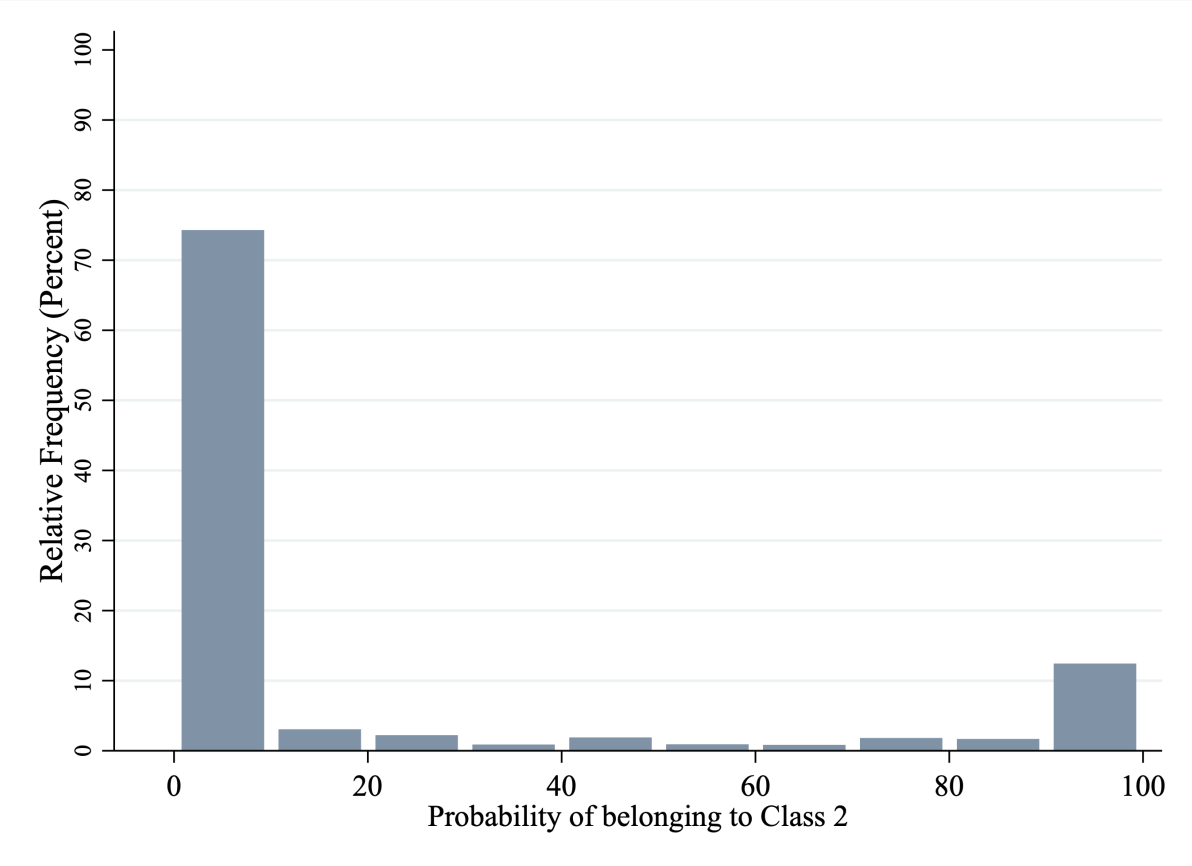
B Figures

Figure A1: Topics of the Conversations



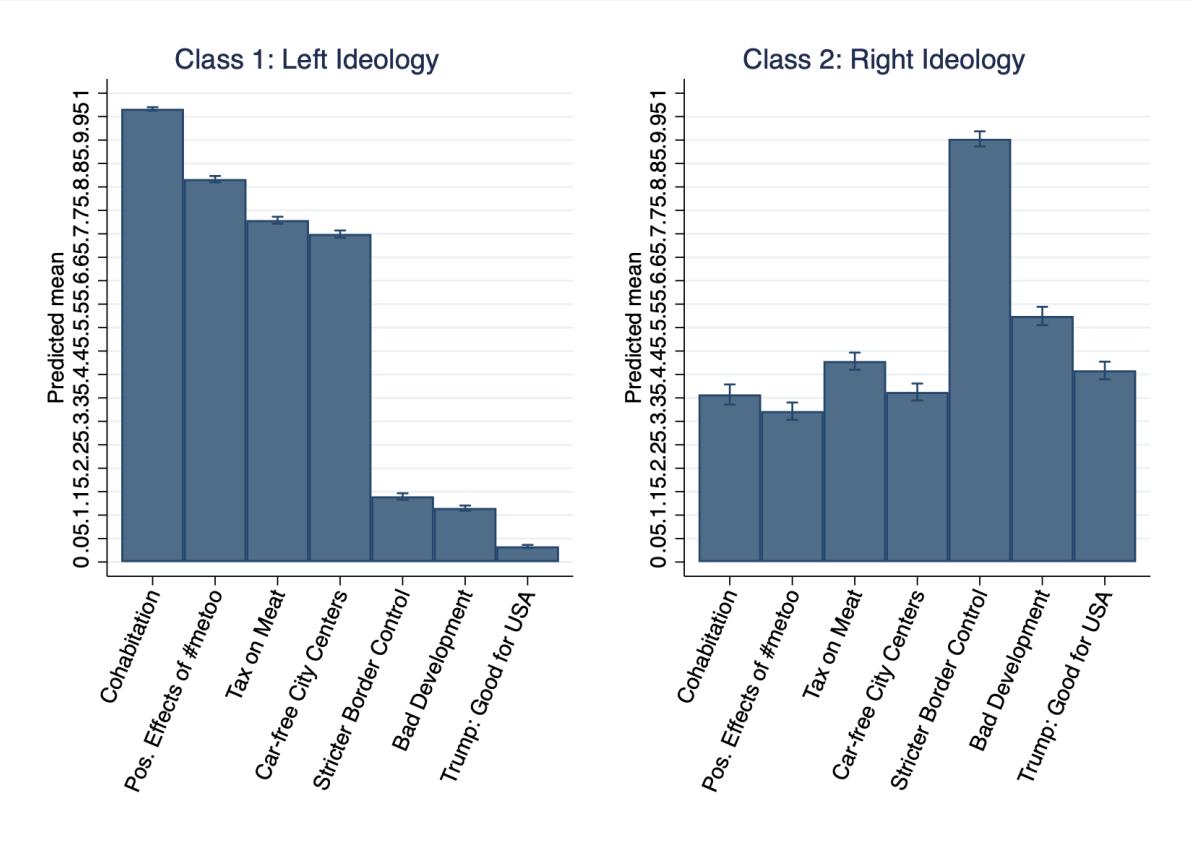
Notes: The Figure shows which of the political registration questions were discussed during the conversations. The x-axis on the graph denotes the frequency in %.

Figure A2: LCA: Likelihood of Class 2 Membership



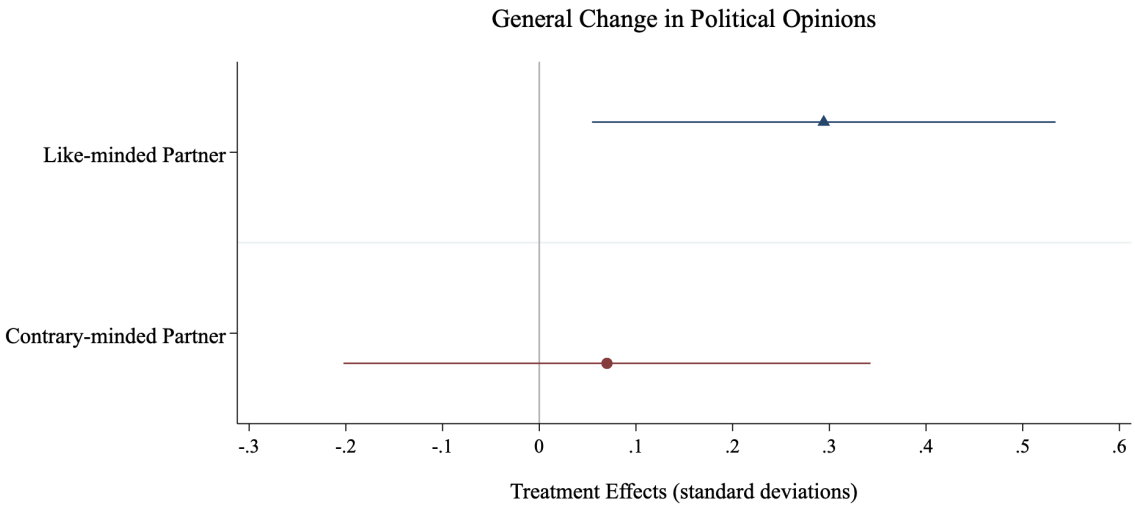
Notes: The Figure plots the distribution of probabilities to belong to the class 2 from the Latent class analysis.

Figure A3: LCA: Conditional Likelihood of Agreement



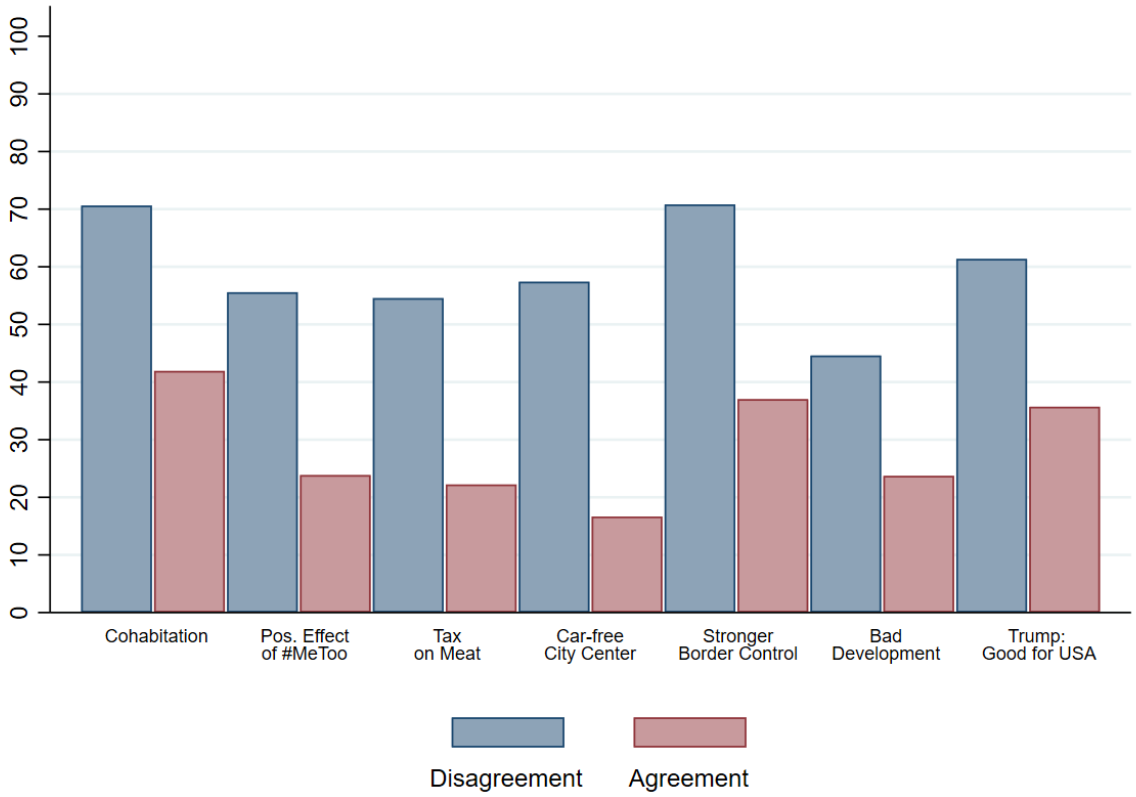
Notes: The Figure shows the probabilities of agreeing to the binary political registration questions conditional on class membership.

Figure A4: Effect on General Change of Political Opinion



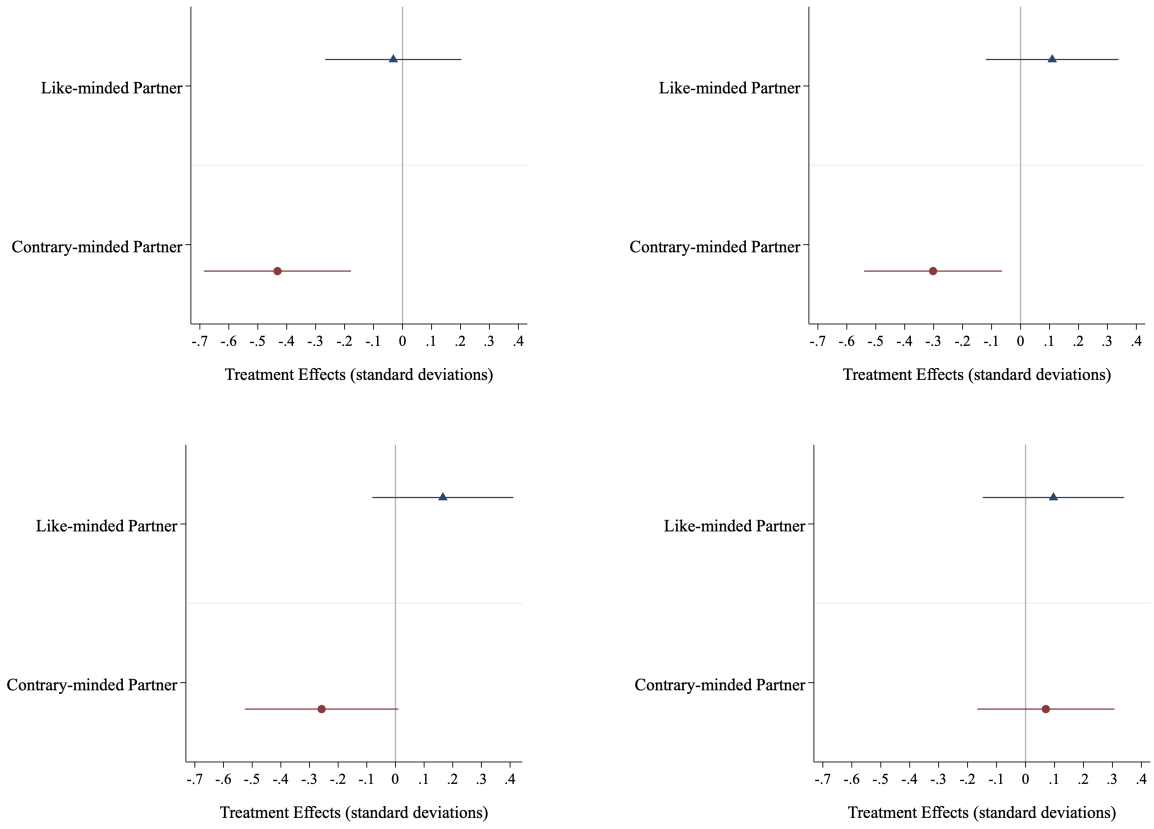
Notes: This figure shows the ITT effects of the like- and contrary-minded treatments on standardized general change of the overall political opinion. A higher value denotes higher change. The general change of the overall political opinion is defined as the Euclidean Distance between the overall opinion 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 A5: Conversational Topics: Agreement vs Disagreement



Notes: The Figure plots probabilities of discussion of the seven political registration questions, depending on whether the partners agreed or disagreed on the topic.

Figure A6: Effect on Stereotypes



The panels show the effect on stereotypes.

C Tables

Table A1: Political Registration Questions

Question	Abbreviation
Do Muslims and Non-Muslims cohabit well in Germany?	Cohabitation
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 today worse off than 10 years ago?	Bad Development
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: Treatment Conditions

	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

This table shows the number of participants who belong to either the left or the right class, identified by LCA (rows) and k-means clustering (columns), respectively.

Table A4: Like-minded vs contrary-minded Partners

	Like-minded (%)	Contrary-minded (%)
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

This table summarizes the characteristics of the partner in the LM (column 1) and the CM treatment condition (column 2).

Table A5: Balance Checks

	Like-minded	Contrary-minded
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)
Cohabitation (Non-)Muslims	-0.0590	0.0679
	(0.110)	(0.149)
Development Germany	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: Cohabitation (Non-)Muslims	0.169	0.142
	(0.151)	(0.156)
Importance: Development Germany	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)

Table A5: (continued)

	Like-minded	Contrary-minded
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)
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)

Table A5: (continued)

	Like-minded	Contrary-minded
Many	-0.0326	-0.0422
	(0.0339)	(0.0389)
Almost everyone	0.00731	0.00310
	(0.00593)	(0.0143)
Everyone	7.45e-17***	-4.63e-17***
	(7.56e-18)	(6.35e-18)
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)
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)

Table A5: (continued)

	Like-minded	Contrary-minded
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)
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. Dependent variables are measures from the baseline survey that are not used in the basic specification: Baseline attitudes, the set of additional controls, subjective evaluation of importance of 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 and the set of basic controls. The respective dependent variable is listed in the first column. Column (1) reports the results for the and column (2) for the contrary-minded. F-Tests are calculated by regressing the treatment on all variables and the set of basic controls. Robust standard errors in parentheses.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A6: Attrition

	Like-minded (LM)	Contrary-minded (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

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. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A7: Selective Take-Up

	Like-minded (LM)	Contrary-minded (CM)
	(1)	(2)
Treat	0.0669***	0.0715***
	(0.0126)	(0.0155)
Constant	-0.0449	0.494***
	(0.0685)	(0.152)
Basic Controls (no income)	Yes	Yes
Outcome Mean	0.189	0.215
Observations	4032	3391

Notes: Dependent variable is a dummy variable equal to one if the participant filled out both surveys and equal to zero if no survey was completed. Column (1) shows the results for like-minded treatment condition, column (2) for the contrary-minded treatment condition. Robust standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

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)
R^2	0.0000307	0.000267
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: Effect on Views: Adjustment towards *Absolute* Extreme Views

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.283**	0.286**	0.281***	-0.0645	-0.0225	-0.00911
	(0.123)	(0.127)	(0.0810)	(0.140)	(0.151)	(0.0827)
Constant	0.615	0.927		-2.226**	-1.309	
	(0.575)	(1.133)		(0.924)	(1.777)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	721	721	721	695	695	695
R^2	0.386	0.447		0.521	0.582	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized general adjustment PA_change_center. 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: Column (3): Various NUTS FE. Column (6): Two combinations of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A10: Effect on Attitudes: Adjustment towards *Relative* Extreme Views

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.232*	0.279**	0.199**	-0.156	-0.151	-0.112
	(0.130)	(0.129)	(0.0834)	(0.131)	(0.141)	(0.0797)
Constant	1.505**	1.256		-2.404**	-4.168**	
	(0.738)	(1.255)		(0.959)	(1.664)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	721	721	721	695	695	695
R^2	0.381	0.448		0.540	0.585	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized general adjustment *PA_change_average*. 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: Column (3): Various NUTS FE. Column (6): One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A11: Effect on Attitudes: General Adjustment

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.303***	0.294**	0.216***	0.0998	0.0700	0.167**
	(0.115)	(0.122)	(0.0818)	(0.143)	(0.138)	(0.0790)
Constant	0.664	0.373		-0.738	-4.155**	
	(0.791)	(1.379)		(1.167)	(2.037)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	721	721	721	695	695	695
R^2	0.405	0.459		0.535	0.615	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized general adjustment *PA_change*. 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: Column (3): Two combinations of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE. Column (6): One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE, one social environment dummy.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A12: Effect on Attitudes: Adjustment away from Center (Manhattan Distance)

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.262**	0.264**	0.237***	-0.0908	-0.0392	-0.0663
	(0.121)	(0.129)	(0.0819)	(0.137)	(0.145)	(0.0823)
Constant	0.442	1.129		-2.792***	-2.558	
	(0.705)	(1.217)		(0.886)	(1.691)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	721	721	721	695	695	695
R^2	0.376	0.437		0.532	0.599	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized away from the center, 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: Column (3): Various NUTS FE. Column (6): Two combinations of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A13: Effect on Attitudes: Adjustment away from Center (Mahalanobis Distance)

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.181	0.213*	0.232***	-0.0402	-0.0278	-0.0455
	(0.117)	(0.120)	(0.0799)	(0.152)	(0.163)	(0.0846)
Constant	0.137	-0.533		-2.455**	-3.181*	
	(0.592)	(1.163)		(1.110)	(1.902)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	721	721	721	695	695	695
R^2	0.412	0.478		0.492	0.562	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized away from the center, 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: Column (3): Various NUTS FE. Column (6): Two combinations of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A14: Effect on Attitudes: Adjustment away from Average Opinion (Manhattan Distance)

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.201	0.233*	0.173**	-0.173	-0.152	-0.160**
	(0.126)	(0.128)	(0.0830)	(0.126)	(0.132)	(0.0792)
Constant	1.930*	1.967		-2.416***	-3.793**	
	(1.046)	(1.332)		(0.860)	(1.600)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	721	721	721	695	695	695
R^2	0.381	0.443		0.565	0.612	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized adjustment away from the center, 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: Column (3): Various NUTS FE. Column (6): One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A15: Effect on Attitudes: Adjustment away from Average Opinion (Mahalanobis Distance)

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.145	0.200	0.148*	-0.131	-0.139	-0.0989
	(0.131)	(0.134)	(0.0839)	(0.128)	(0.138)	(0.0809)
Constant	1.255	0.516		-2.560***	-4.447**	
	(0.862)	(1.216)		(0.964)	(1.879)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	721	721	721	695	695	695
R^2	0.382	0.449		0.567	0.613	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized adjustment away from the center, 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: Column (3): Various NUTS FE. Column (6): One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A16: Effect on Attitudes: General Adjustment (Manhattan Distance)

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.320***	0.278**	0.218***	0.119	0.0712	0.204**
	(0.106)	(0.110)	(0.0759)	(0.150)	(0.137)	(0.0806)
Constant	0.532	-0.260		-0.777	-3.800*	
	(0.749)	(1.285)		(1.111)	(2.031)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	721	721	721	695	695	695
R^2	0.419	0.484		0.534	0.615	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized general adjustment, measured with the Manhattan Distance. 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: Column (3): Two combinations of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE. Column (6): One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE, one social environment dummy.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A17: Effect on Attitudes: General Adjustment (Mahalanobis Distance)

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.266**	0.264**	0.191**	0.0923	0.0569	0.170**
	(0.110)	(0.117)	(0.0776)	(0.156)	(0.152)	(0.0836)
Constant	0.740	0.499		-0.495	-3.316	
	(0.829)	(1.424)		(1.225)	(2.151)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	721	721	721	695	695	695
R^2	0.393	0.452		0.532	0.610	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized general adjustment, measured with the Manhalanobis Distance. 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: Column (3): Two combinations of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE. Column (6): One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE, one social environment dummy.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A18: Cut-Offs

	Like-minded			Contrary-minded		
	(1) Standard	(2) Strict	(3) Weak	(4) Standard	(5) Strict	(6) Weak
Extreme Views: absolute (dis-)agreement	0.286**	0.344**	0.270**	-0.0225	0.0658	-0.127
	(0.127)	(0.159)	(0.106)	(0.151)	(0.118)	(0.272)
Extreme Views: rel. to population	0.279**	0.323*	0.245**	-0.151	-0.0331	-0.256
	(0.129)	(0.179)	(0.110)	(0.141)	(0.112)	(0.230)
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 for 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)

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A19: Effect on Ideological Polarization (Extreme Views): Ideological Classes

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.258**	0.276**	0.243***	-0.122	-0.00411	0.00523
	(0.111)	(0.114)	(0.0751)	(0.176)	(0.200)	(0.0912)
Constant	-0.632	-0.268		-2.321**	-0.556	
	(0.573)	(1.166)		(0.909)	(2.038)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	876	876	876	540	540	540
R^2	0.309	0.368		0.596	0.694	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized ideological polarizatio towards more extreme views. 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: $.^{*}$ $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A20: Effect on Ideological Polarization (Non-average Views): Ideological Classes

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.226**	0.286**	0.187**	-0.221	-0.102	-0.171*
	(0.108)	(0.111)	(0.0738)	(0.174)	(0.184)	(0.0916)
Constant	-0.220	-0.763		-2.750***	-2.789	
	(0.602)	(1.158)		(0.995)	(1.943)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	876	876	876	540	540	540
R^2	0.322	0.385		0.651	0.734	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is standardized ideological polarization towards non-average views. 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: $.^{*}$ $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A21: Effect on Stereotypes

	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
R^2	0.388	0.470		0.561	0.618	

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: Column (3): Various NUTS FE. Column (6): Two combinations of the political registration questions, two NUTS FE..* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

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: Effect on Stereotypes: 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	0.150	0.0903	0.113	0.0853	0.0738	-0.0552
	(0.107)	(0.116)	(0.0752)	(0.125)	(0.127)	(0.0799)
Constant	-1.927***	-1.788*		-1.301	-1.012	
	(0.557)	(1.039)		(0.838)	(1.609)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	X	Yes	Yes	X
Additional Controls	No	Yes	X	No	Yes	X
Observations	755	755	755	725	725	725
R^2	0.420	0.479		0.536	0.616	

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: Column (3): One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE, one education dummy. Column (6): Two combinations of the political registration questions, one NUTS FE, one social environment dummy.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A24: Effect on Stereotypes: Different Moral Values

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.142	0.159	0.0897	-0.214	-0.267*	-0.234***
	(0.111)	(0.120)	(0.0765)	(0.130)	(0.141)	(0.0797)
Constant	-0.704	-0.370		-1.718*	-0.796	
	(0.903)	(1.215)		(0.969)	(1.741)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	X	Yes	Yes	X
Additional Controls	No	Yes		No	Yes	
Observations	753	753	753	725	725	725
R^2	0.368	0.439		0.503	0.570	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the standardized belief that contrary-minded 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: Column (3): Various NUTS FE. Column (6): One combination of the political registration questions, one NUTS FE.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A25: Effect on Stereotypes: Low Cognitive Abilities

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	-0.0414	-0.0305	-0.0595	-0.366***	-0.448***	-0.341***
	(0.110)	(0.115)	(0.0765)	(0.124)	(0.134)	(0.0809)
Constant	-1.819*	-2.095*		-1.594	-1.327	
	(1.039)	(1.202)		(1.000)	(1.557)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	X	Yes	Yes	X
Additional Controls	No	Yes	X	No	Yes	
Observations	753	753	753	725	725	725
R^2	0.372	0.439		0.529	0.586	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the standardized belief that contrary-minded 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: Column (3): Various NUTS FE, one education dummy.Column (6):Two combinations of the political registration questions.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A26: Effect on Stereotypes: Poorly Informed

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.0733	0.107	0.0246	-0.228*	-0.308**	-0.144*
	(0.110)	(0.114)	(0.0771)	(0.116)	(0.123)	(0.0784)
Constant	-2.410**	-2.355		-1.987**	-2.777**	
	(1.213)	(1.454)		(0.967)	(1.345)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	X	Yes	Yes	X
Additional Controls	No	Yes	X	No	Yes	X
Observations	753	753	753	726	726	726
R^2	0.380	0.464		0.562	0.626	

Regression estimates, robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the standardized belief that contrary-minded 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: Column (3): Various NUTS FE, one party dummy. Column (6): One combination of the political registration questions, two NUTS FE, one income dummy.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A27: Effect on Stereotypes: Ideological Classes

	Like-minded Partner (LM)			Contrary-minded Partner (CM)		
	OLS	OLS	PDS	OLS	OLS	PDS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat	0.0563	0.0426	0.00151	-0.341**	-0.388**	-0.328***
	(0.0938)	(0.0970)	(0.0709)	(0.162)	(0.177)	(0.0930)
Constant	-3.424***	-3.943***		-2.194**	-1.107	
	(0.585)	(0.955)		(1.091)	(1.714)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	910	910	910	557	557	557
R^2	0.383	0.450		0.643	0.716	

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: $.^{*}$ $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A28: Willingness for 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	-0.166*	-0.129*	0.219	0.235	0.232**
	(0.0918)	(0.0952)	(0.0682)	(0.152)	(0.165)	(0.0927)
Constant	-0.596	-0.944		-0.0648	-1.821	
	(0.553)	(0.852)		(1.009)	(1.673)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	918	918	918	564	564	564
R^2	0.336	0.418		0.649	0.696	

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: .* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A29: PCA: Loadings Stereotypes and Willingness for 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 for Personal Contact	-0.43

Notes: The table presents the loadings of the principal component analysis of all four stereotypes and willingness for 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 A30: 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	0.163**	0.229**	0.274**	0.155**
	(0.114)	(0.122)	(0.0768)	(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	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	757	757	757	726	726	726
R^2	0.356	0.430		0.655	0.698	

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: Column (3): One combination of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE, one income dummy. Column (6): Two combinations of the political registration questions, various NUTS FE, one income dummy, two political party dummies.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A31: 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
R^2	0.384	0.456		0.595	0.657	

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: Column (3): One combination of the political registration questions, two NUTS FE, one education dummy. Column (6): Various combinations of the political registration questions, two NUTS FE, one political party dummy.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A32: 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	0.101	0.131	0.132**	0.309**	0.252	0.201**
	(0.0858)	(0.0887)	(0.0644)	(0.151)	(0.166)	(0.0946)
Constant	-1.283*	-0.701		-0.494	-0.722	
	(0.722)	(1.244)		(1.143)	(2.287)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	921	921	921	562	562	562
R^2	0.321	0.376		0.690	0.738	

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: $.^{*}$ $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A33: 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	0.0612	0.0753	0.0839	0.310**	0.273*	0.218**
	(0.0897)	(0.0934)	(0.0659)	(0.146)	(0.161)	(0.0895)
Constant	-2.020***	-1.417		1.516*	2.828	
	(0.554)	(1.106)		(0.858)	(1.858)	
Basic Controls	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Additional Controls	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Observations	923	923	923	563	563	563
R^2	0.356	0.428		0.631	0.692	

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: $.^{*}$ $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, and *** $p < 0.01$

Table A34: 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

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 $^{***}\ p < 0.01$