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Working Group
Elections and Public Opinion

Call for Papers:

Special Issue Proposal “The 2025 German Federal Election: Fundamental Shifts in Challenging Times” (to be submitted to *Electoral Studies*)

The federal election of 2025 marks another pivotal moment in German political history. The early elections followed the unprecedented three-party “traffic light” coalition formed by the Social Democrats (SPD), the Greens and the Free Democrats (FDP) in 2021 and its premature end. The 2025 election took place against a backdrop of multiple overlapping crises: Economic stagnation, continuing geopolitical tensions resulting from Russia’s full-scale war against Ukraine, major shifts in international relations following changes in the US administration, and the topics of migration and domestic security taking center stage in the election campaign following recent terrorist incidents.

These developments have had profound effects on the German political landscape. The center has shrunk, with the centrist parties—the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU), SPD and Greens—no longer commanding a two-thirds majority in parliament. The radical right Alternative for Germany (AfD) is the second-strongest force in parliament and has, for the first time, emerged as the strongest party in all Eastern German states except for Berlin. Meanwhile, The Left (Die Linke) has experienced a notable resurgence after its near-elimination from parliament in 2021, whereas its splinter, the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW), missed the 5 percent electoral threshold narrowly. As a member of the incumbent government that was blamed by many for its collapse, the FDP did not manage to enter parliament for the second time in the Federal Republic’s history.

Beyond these fundamental political shifts, the 2025 German federal election is characterized by a number of special features that make it an interesting object of analysis. The election took place against a backdrop of institutional changes, including the controversial electoral reform implemented before the election. The leading candidates of the major parties struggled with low popularity among the public. Due to the early election date, the election campaign was comparatively short this time. Nevertheless, the general political situation seems to have sufficiently motivated people to vote: At 82.5 percent, voter turnout was the highest since reunification.

Against this background, we invite papers for this Special Issue that examine aspects of this transformative German federal election of 2025. Submissions may address, but are not limited to, the following themes:

We welcome analyses on the *role of issues and events in shaping campaigning and voting decisions*. This may include research on economic voting in the context of stagnation and inflation, the impact of Russia’s war against Ukraine and geopolitical shifts following the 2024 election of Trump as

US president, as well as the influence of migration, terrorist attacks, and debates surrounding the “Firewall” against the AfD. We also encourage studies on *voting behavior across different demographic groups*. Contributions could examine generational divides in political preferences, gender gaps within age cohorts, voting behavior along the urban-rural divide, or the electoral choices of minority voters. The *electoral success of the AfD and The Left* presents an important area of inquiry. Contributions may explore regional variations in AfD support, the realignment of voter bases, and the cultural, economic, and social factors driving the party’s rise. Comparative perspectives on the success of populist radical right parties are also welcome. At the same time, we invite studies on the electoral performance of The Left, including the role of personalization and social media campaigns, shifts in the party’s voter base, and evolving campaign strategies.

We also invite research on *parliamentary dynamics*, including changes in coalition structures following the loss of the two-thirds majority for the center parties, as well as the impact of shifting demographic compositions in parliament on both descriptive and substantive representation. *Electoral reform* and its consequences constitute another area for contributions. Papers could examine the reform’s impact on representation and the strategic adaptations of parties and voters in response to these changes. Finally, we seek contributions on *campaign strategies* and *voter turnout*. Potential topics include how parties navigate elections with unpopular candidates and the effectiveness of different mobilization strategies.

We welcome papers that contribute to understanding the 2025 election through comparisons with earlier elections and developments in other countries. This includes studies focused not only on voters but also on parties, electoral candidates, or aggregate-level results. We explicitly invite different methodological approaches (e.g., computational, observational, experimental, and mixed-methods approaches). We encourage proposals from all career levels and backgrounds.

Our intention is to compile a coherent proposal for a Special Issue which will be submitted to Electoral Studies. The proposal will be reviewed by the editors of Electoral Studies. If you are interested in contributing to the Special Issue on the 2025 German federal election, please submit your abstract (400 words max.) by **30 April 2025** to ak-wahlen@dvpw.de. As editors of the Special Issue, we will review the abstracts and select potential contributions to set up a coherent proposal. All selected papers will be presented and receive feedback at the Annual Workshop of the DVPW Working Group Elections and Public Opinion (AK Wahlen und politische Einstellungen) taking place at Free University Berlin, **18-19 September 2025**.

We look forward to receiving your submissions and will be happy to answer any questions.

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