



The G20: 9 facts and figures

Factsheet for Policy Brief 6/2018:

The G20 is turning 20. Time to take stock of multilateralism.

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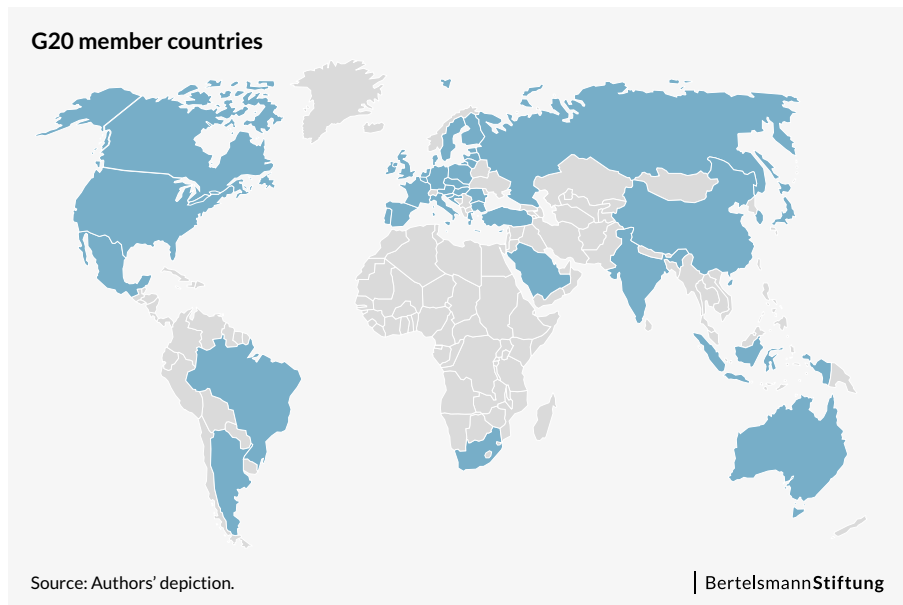
1. What is the G20? – An overview

The Group of Twenty (G20) is the most important coordination forum of the world's largest economies. But it isn't just about agreeing on economic and financial policies.

Founded in 1999, the G20 is a political forum for dialogue and coordination among the 19 leading industrialized and emerging-market nations as well as the European Union. It represents just over 80 percent of the world's gross domestic product, three-quarters of global trade, and around two-thirds of the world's population. In addition to the EU and the G7 countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, USA), it includes Argentina, Australia, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea and Turkey.

As an informal club of states, the G20 does not have a secretariat that could ensure the continuity of its work. Instead, this task is performed by the country holding the presidency, which receives support from the countries holding the presidency before and after it. Together they form the so-called *troika*. The G20 presidency rotates annually among its 19 member states.

The G20 is not based on an international treaty with a conclusively defined mandate. Instead, it is deliberately informal – and thereby flexible and adaptable. Connected to this is the fact that there are no formal rules about membership and procedures. The votes of all member countries have the same weight, and agreements can only be reached by consensus. Instead of resulting in binding decisions, the G20's work only allows the countries to define their common goals, tasks and guidelines in the final declarations of their summits. For their implementation, the G20 depends on the member states and the international organizations in its sphere of influence. There are no possible sanctions other than being excluded from the group.



In its composition, the G20 constitutes a more inclusive and more heterogeneous club of states than the G7. However, since it was created to be a forum for some of the most powerful nations, a large number of states is excluded from its meetings. This imbalance in the G20's membership structure has repeatedly given rise to criticism from non-members and civil society.

In addition to the member countries, other states and organizations are also involved in the G20's work. Regular participants in the G20 process are the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the United Nations (UN), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Financial Stability Board (FSB), as well as the countries holding the presidencies of the regional organizations ASEAN, the African Union and the development program NEPAD. Spain is a "permanent guest" of the G20. The country holding the presidency may invite other states and institutions.

2. How does the G20 work? – More than just a summit

The summits attended by the heads of state and government only constitute the culmination of the joint work that the member states and their guests have performed beforehand.

Once a year, the heads of state and government of the world’s most powerful economies meet for a G20 summit. When they get together, the relevant ministers, central bank governors, sherpas and finance deputies of the member countries have already covered a long distance on the way to the joint final declaration.

The G20’s work in the run-up to the summit is divided into two tracks: the Finance Track and the Sherpa Track. Within the two tracks, there are thematically oriented working groups in which representatives from the relevant ministries of the member and host countries as well as from the participating international organizations get together. The working groups meet regularly throughout the term of each presidency and are each co-chaired by one industrialized country and one emerging-market country. In addition, both tracks include meetings of relevant ministers that ultimately result in joint ministerial-level declarations on sector-specific policies. Conferences on specific issues are sometimes part of this process, as well. The results form the basis for discussions at the summit and are included in the final communiqué of the heads of state and government.

The Finance Track constitutes the sphere of influence of the central bank governors, finance ministers and their representatives, the finance deputies. Their work focuses on financial and economic issues, such as the development of the world economy and the design of the international financial architecture. The issues handled by the Finance Track form the traditional focus of the G20. In the first phase of each presidency, several meetings of the finance ministers and central bank governors are held. These are prepared by the finance deputies.

The Sherpa Track, which covers a broader spectrum of issues, is made up of 10 working groups under the current Argentine presidency. Here a key role is played by sherpas, as the personal emissaries of the heads of state and government are known. They coordinate the processes of reaching agreements within the track,

prepare the summit meetings and negotiate the final communiqué of the summit. The agenda of the working groups includes, among other topics: agriculture, climate sustainability, development, education, employment, health, and trade & investment.



The country holding the G20 presidency bears primary responsibility for organizing the numerous working group meetings, specialist conferences and ministerial-level meetings. In addition, it has a major hand in shaping the agenda of this forum of states and determines the structure of the working groups in the Finance Track and the Sherpa Track. However, the agenda is also influenced by current economic developments as well as by the tasks and goals agreed upon in previous years.

3. Interaction, participation, influence? – The engagement groups of the G20

Designed as an outreach instrument for facilitating interaction with and participation of non-state actors, the engagement groups certainly still have some room for improvement.

As part of its engagement group process, the G20 enters into dialogue with interest groups from business, civil society and research. These interactions take place in the run-up to the summits. There are currently seven engagement groups in which organizations from different parts of society have joined together. Each engagement group is chaired by a non-governmental organization from the current host country. The NGO is selected by the government of the country holding the presidency and put in charge of coordinating the group's members. The presidency plays a key role in shaping the dialogue with the engagement groups and can financially support their work.

As part of its own work, each engagement group develops a position paper and recommendations for action on the issues on the G20 agenda. In this way, the groups try to exert influence and make their concerns heard. In the process, they focus on the aspects that are of particular interest to their field of activity. They submit their final document to the current G20 presidency in a separate international conference before the summit. Furthermore, they check and document the implementation of the measures to which the member states have committed themselves to a certain extent. However, their opportunities for scrutiny are limited, as they hardly have any access to the meetings of the working groups in the Sherpa Track and, in particular, the Finance Track. As the G20 has continued to develop, the number of engagement groups has steadily risen.

Dialogue with the engagement groups gives the G20 an opportunity to present itself as being open and accessible to the needs and demands of the citizens from its member countries. Against the backdrop of a debate regarding its legitimacy, and in recognition of its shortcomings in this area, the G20 views the engagement group process and the way it facilitates outreach and participation as a chance to counter existing criticisms. However, observers have been able to identify clear differences in how the forum of states deals with the various engagement groups.

Engagement Groups

B20 BUSINESS 20

Founded in: 2008
Recognized by the G20: 2010
Members: Business interest groups

L20 LABOR 20

Founded in: 2008
Recognized by the G20: 2011
Members: Trade unions and other employee representatives

C20 CIVIL 20

Founded in: 2008
Recognized by the G20: 2013
Members: Civil society organizations

Y20 YOUTH 20

Founded/recognized by the G20: 2010
Members: Youth representatives

T20 THINK 20

Founded/recognized by the G20: 2012
Members: Think tanks

W20 WOMEN 20

Founded/recognized by the G20: 2015
Members: Women's rights organizations

S20 SCIENCE 20

Founded/recognized by the G20: 2017
Members: Representatives from science and research

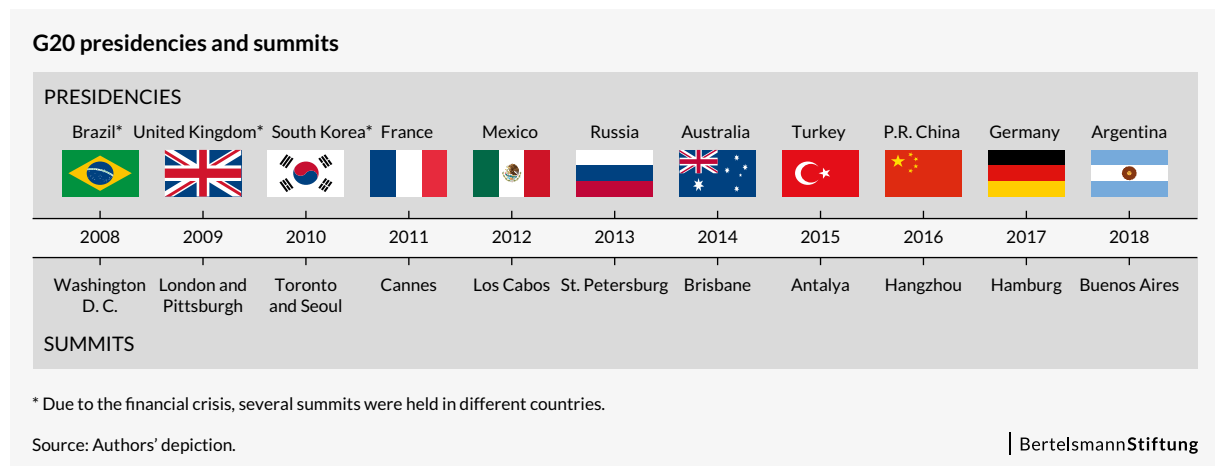
Source: Authors' depiction.

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For example, B20 and L20 are regarded as being the most influential and best organized participation groups. In contrast, the German association VENRO, which co-coordinated the C20 process in 2017, has complained that the C20 has been marginalized under the Argentine presidency. In the organization's view, this has resulted from Argentina's low level of financial support, which has made it virtually impossible for civil society organizations from other continents to participate.

4. New tasks, new challenges – Expanding the range of issues in the G20 portfolio

The G20 has evolved from an instrument for coping with international economic and financial crises into a platform for coordination on a very broad range of issues.



Since its founding, the G20 has undergone considerable change. This has involved a gradual expansion of its portfolio. Its development has been accompanied by an increase in the status of the forum of states.

The G20 was created in 1999 in response to the financial crisis in Asia, initially as an informal platform for dialogue among finance ministers and central bank governors. It was meant to contribute to crisis management. Having recognized that neither they nor the international financial organizations by themselves could effectively combat the crisis, the G7 countries decided to get other “systemically relevant” national economies involved. In the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis, the G20 was elevated to the level of heads of state and government.

While the first summits – held in Washington D.C. and London – were still dominated by crisis management, there were soon signs of an expansion and diversification of the G20’s field of activity. Since then, the countries holding the presidency have both advanced the increasingly broad agenda and tried to highlight issues of specific importance to them. At the 2009 summit in Pittsburgh, the member countries declared that the G20 would be their main forum for international economic cooperation, thereby relegating the G7 to second place.

In 2010, under the South Korean presidency, development, climate change and energy made up the core of the agenda, and members drew up a plan of action for combating corruption. At the summit in Cannes a year later, the European sovereign debt crisis dominated the agenda. However, discussions on the new issues continued, and the states agreed on a joint action plan for agriculture and the fight against high food price volatility. In 2012, the Mexican presidency addressed many of the issues while also focusing on green growth and employment.

At the 2013 summit in St. Petersburg, climate change, anti-corruption efforts and development were discussed. At the 2014 summit chaired by Australia, the G20 committed itself to work against disadvantages women face on the labor market as well as to fight youth unemployment. Turkey placed a focus on inclusion and inequality in 2015. And since the 2016 summit in Hangzhou, the G20 has also discussed health policies. In the final declaration of the 2017 summit, the heads of state and government stressed the need to make globalization fair.

In the meantime, an increasing amount of policy areas has become part of its coordination efforts. As a result, the question has been repeatedly raised in recent years of whether the G20 enjoys sufficient legitimacy to have such an expansive sphere of influence.

5. Important, but unknown? – Knowledge about the G20 in its member countries

The level of knowledge about the G20 among the wider public is poor. A study in five member countries reveals particularly large knowledge gaps in the United States and the United Kingdom.

How well do citizens in its member countries know the G20? And how present has it become in people’s everyday lives? To answer these questions, a survey of citizens was conducted in September 2018 in Argentina, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The survey included four questions related to knowledge about the G20. These questions covered aspects of the thematic orientation of the forum

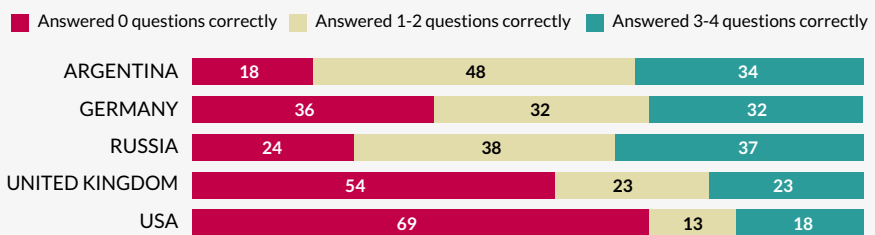
of states, the makeup of its membership, its decision-making power and its interaction with business and civil society. The number of correctly answered questions was added together in an index. You can find more on the methodological background on page 11.

The following picture emerges from the data: More than two-thirds of the people in the countries surveyed have only a very vague idea of what the G20 is. In the five countries, a total of 46 percent of citizens have almost no factual knowledge about the G20 – i.e., they could not answer any of the questions correctly. In addition, 23 percent answered only one question correctly. Therefore, despite its importance as a coordination forum for its member states, the G20 does not play a significant role in the perception of many citizens in the five countries.

Overall, the following trend can be observed across the countries: The further back in time that a G20 summit was held in one’s own country, the lower the level of knowledge among the population about the G20. Russia deviates from this pattern, as it has the highest proportion of people who know a lot about the G20 compared to the other countries. Nevertheless, knowledge about the forum of states is at a comparatively low level everywhere.

Knowledge about the G20 in the member countries

Share of the population in percent



Questions/factual statements: The G20 is a forum of states that ...

- makes binding decisions for its member countries.
- deals with the regulation of financial markets.
- engages interest groups from civil society and business.
- consists primarily of countries from the southern part of Africa.

Basis: Population 18 years and older in Argentina, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States in 2018 (sample size: 8,312).

Source: YouGov on behalf of the Bertelsmann Stiftung.

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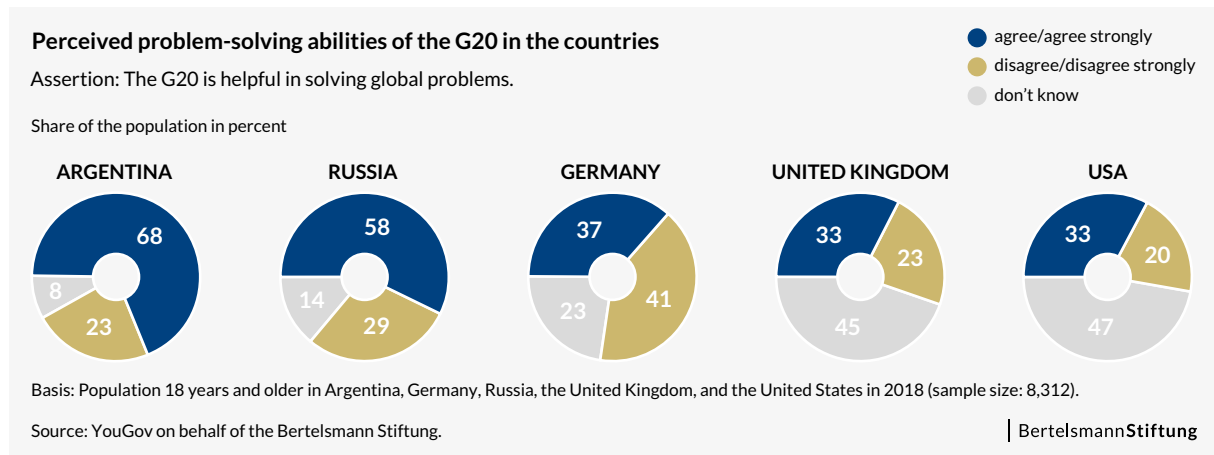
In Argentina, which is hosting the G20 process in 2018, 34 percent of citizens have a high level of knowledge about the G20. The share of the population that knows nothing about the forum of states is the lowest here, at 18 percent. Almost half of all Argentines have a low to medium level of knowledge about the G20.

In Germany, which held the presidency in 2017, 32 percent of people have a high level of knowledge about the G20 – less than in Argentina and Russia. A considerably higher proportion of people in Germany could not answer any of the knowledge-based questions about the G20.

The level of knowledge about the G20 is lowest in the United Kingdom and the United States, which both most recently hosted a summit in their own country in 2009. The United States is the front-runner: 58 percent of Americans said they had never heard of the forum, and nearly 70 percent could not answer any of the knowledge-based questions correctly. In contrast, only 18 percent of US citizens know a lot about the G20. In the United Kingdom, as well, more than half of citizens know little to nothing about the G20. In comparison, 23 percent of Britons have a high level of knowledge about the club of states.

6. Thumbs up or thumbs down? – How citizens view the G20

Citizens in the G20's member countries have varying assessments of it. Contrasting attitudes can be found among the so-called “winners” and “losers” of globalization.



People in Argentina, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States were asked about their fundamental assessment of the club of states and how they would rate its problem-solving abilities.

On the whole, the assessments of the G20 and its problem-solving abilities tended to be positive: 45 percent of the people in the five countries had a favorable opinion of the G20, and 20 percent had an unfavorable opinion of it. About a third of the citizens said they “don’t know.” Thus the majority of people do not reject the club of states. However, one also cannot state that the support is enthusiastic.

The attitudes toward the G20 and the assessments of its performance differ between countries. In those states in which the majority of citizens has a favorable attitude toward the forum of states, more people view the G20 as being helpful in solving global problems. Argentines and Russians have a high opinion of the G20 and its contribution to solving international problems. A clear majority of them – 67 and 66 percent, respectively – have a favorable opinion of the forum of countries. Argentina is the country with the highest proportion of citizens (68 percent) who agree that the G20 is helpful in solving global problems. The majority of the population also sees things this way in Russia.

Scepticism toward the G20 is more pronounced in Germany, where the largest segment of the population (41 percent) does not believe it helps solve

international problems. This represents the most negative assessment of the G20’s performance among people in all five countries. Germany also has the largest proportion of citizens (33 percent) with an unfavorable opinion of the G20 compared to other countries. In contrast, 44 percent of the population in both the United Kingdom and the United States do not have a clear opinion of the forum of countries. A similar picture emerges regarding assessments of problem-solving abilities: 45 percent of Britons and 47 percent of Americans are uncertain about how they should rate these abilities.

In addition, people who claim to benefit from globalization are more positive about the G20 and rate its performance better than those who report that globalization is having a negative impact on their lives. For example, 56 percent of the so-called “winners” of globalization believe that the G20 is helping to solve global problems. In contrast, among the “losers” of globalization, only 27 percent share this belief, while 49 percent view the G20 as not being helpful in this respect.

Furthermore, there is no connection between the age and gender of citizens, on the one hand, and their opinions of the G20 and assessment of its performance, on the other. Supporters and opponents of the G20 can also be found in equal measure in the groups of those who know a lot about it and those who know nothing about it.

7. Assessments of the G20 summit in its member countries

Citizens complain about the lack of transparency of the G20 summits. Germans are particularly sceptical.

Since 2009, G20 summits have been repeatedly accompanied by protests. Often the process of the summit meetings has been criticized. In many cases, it has been described as non-transparent, ineffective and too expensive as well as lacking sufficient democratic legitimacy.

Are these points of criticism shared by the majority of the population? The citizens of Argentina, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States were asked how strongly they associate certain characteristics with the meeting of the heads of state and government of their countries.

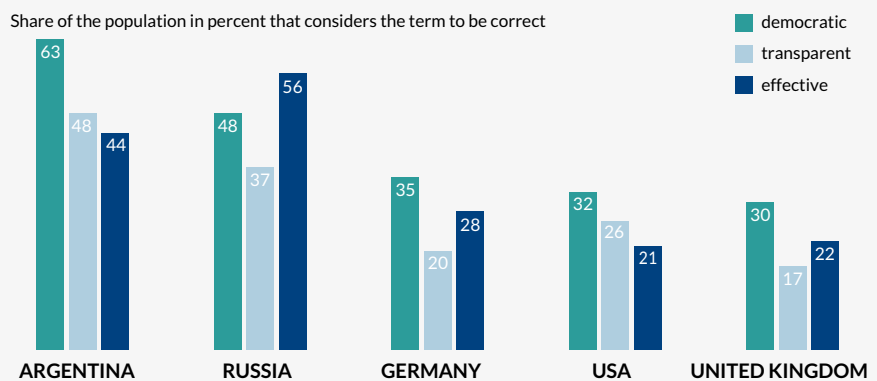
The results show that, in their eyes, the summits lack transparency. Overall, only 26 percent of people across the five countries consider the summits to be transparent, while just under 40 percent believe that “transparent” describes the G20 summits fairly badly or even very badly.

Argentina is the country with the most positive appraisal of the summits. While almost half of all Argentines describe the meetings of heads of state and government as transparent, this proportion is much lower in the other four countries. In the United Kingdom and the United States, a respective 17 and 26 percent of citizens consider the summits to be transparent. However, the vast majority of people in both countries say that they are unable to pass judgment. In Russia, on the other hand, a more pronounced opinion predominates: 49 percent of the population believe that G20 summits are not transparent. An even clearer picture can be found in Germany: 57 percent of Germans said the summits are non-transparent, while 24 percent abstained from making an assessment.

Image of the G20 summits in the countries – effectiveness, transparency and democratic quality

Question: Do you think that each of the following words describes the G20 summits well or badly? – effective, transparent, democratic

Share of the population in percent that considers the term to be correct



Basis: Population 18 years and older in Argentina, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States in 2018 (sample size: 8,312).

Source: YouGov on behalf of the Bertelsmann Stiftung.

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A similar pattern emerges when assessing the effectiveness of the summits. Just over half of Britons and Americans say they do not know whether they think the summits are effective or not. Twenty-seven percent of the people in both countries describe the meetings of heads of state and government as ineffective, while around 20 percent of them consider them to be effective. In Argentina and Russia, on the other hand, a respective 44 and 56 percent consider the summits to be effective. Things look different in Germany, where 43 percent of citizens rate G20 summits as being ineffective.

The picture is also similar when it comes to assessments of the democratic quality of the summits. Almost two-thirds of Argentines view this as a given. In Russia, more people consider the meetings of the heads of state and government to be democratic than undemocratic (39 percent). Germans are rather divided, but there are more who view the meetings as undemocratic than those who view them as democratic (39 and 35 percent, respectively). Britons and Americans have no opinion, as up to 50 percent of them abstained from making an assessment.

8. Media coverage of the G20 in its member countries

The print and online media sources in the member countries hardly write anything about the G20. The highest volume of reporting can be found during the period surrounding the summit.

Media sources have an influence on which issues come to the attention of citizens. An analysis of the leading national media sources of the G20 countries examined where, how and to what extent the forum of states was reported on over the course of 2017. Turkey was not part of the study due to the lack of available data.

On the whole, there was little reporting on the G20 in its member countries. Media reports on the club of states accounted for only 0.35 percent of the total volume of reports across all 18 countries. In Germany, the number of reports on the G20 reached its highest level in 2017, accounting for 1 percent of total reporting. Argentina took second place, followed by China and South Korea. The lowest amounts of reports on the G20 were found in India and Japan.

In all countries, the volume of reports increased in the month of the summit. Germany tops the list here once again with a 5 percent share of reporting being on the G20. In Argentina, reporting was also more extensive during the month of the summit, and the coverage was similarly strong in December 2017, when the country's G20 presidency started.

The space dedicated to reports on protests in the overall media coverage of the G20 was also examined. On average, these activities were touched upon in almost 8 percent of all G20-related articles in the leading national media sources of the countries. They therefore played only a subordinate role in the totality of reports. Particularly in China, South Korea, Japan and India, there was almost no reporting on the summit protests. In the Western democracies and Russia, there was an above-average share of reports on the demonstrations.

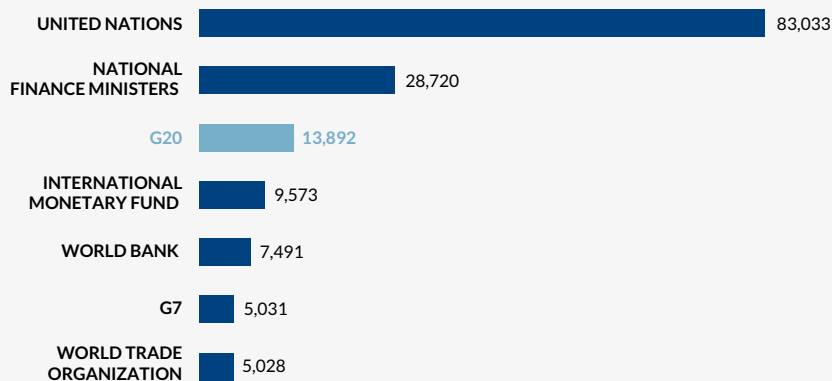
How does the visibility of the G20 in the media compare with that of other relevant institutions from the economic and financial sector? In 2017, the G20 received more media attention across all 18 countries than the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and its sister forum, the G7. The reference figure at the national level is the total number of articles that have appeared in the leading media of each of the countries.

However, this does not generally apply to all countries. For example, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are more strongly represented in emerging-market nations not only on the ground, but also in the media.

The United Nations holds the top position among the institutions examined. It received the largest amount of media attention in all member countries. At the same time, all the examined institutions played a rather marginal role in the overall national reporting.

Overall reporting on international and national institutions in 2017

Number of articles

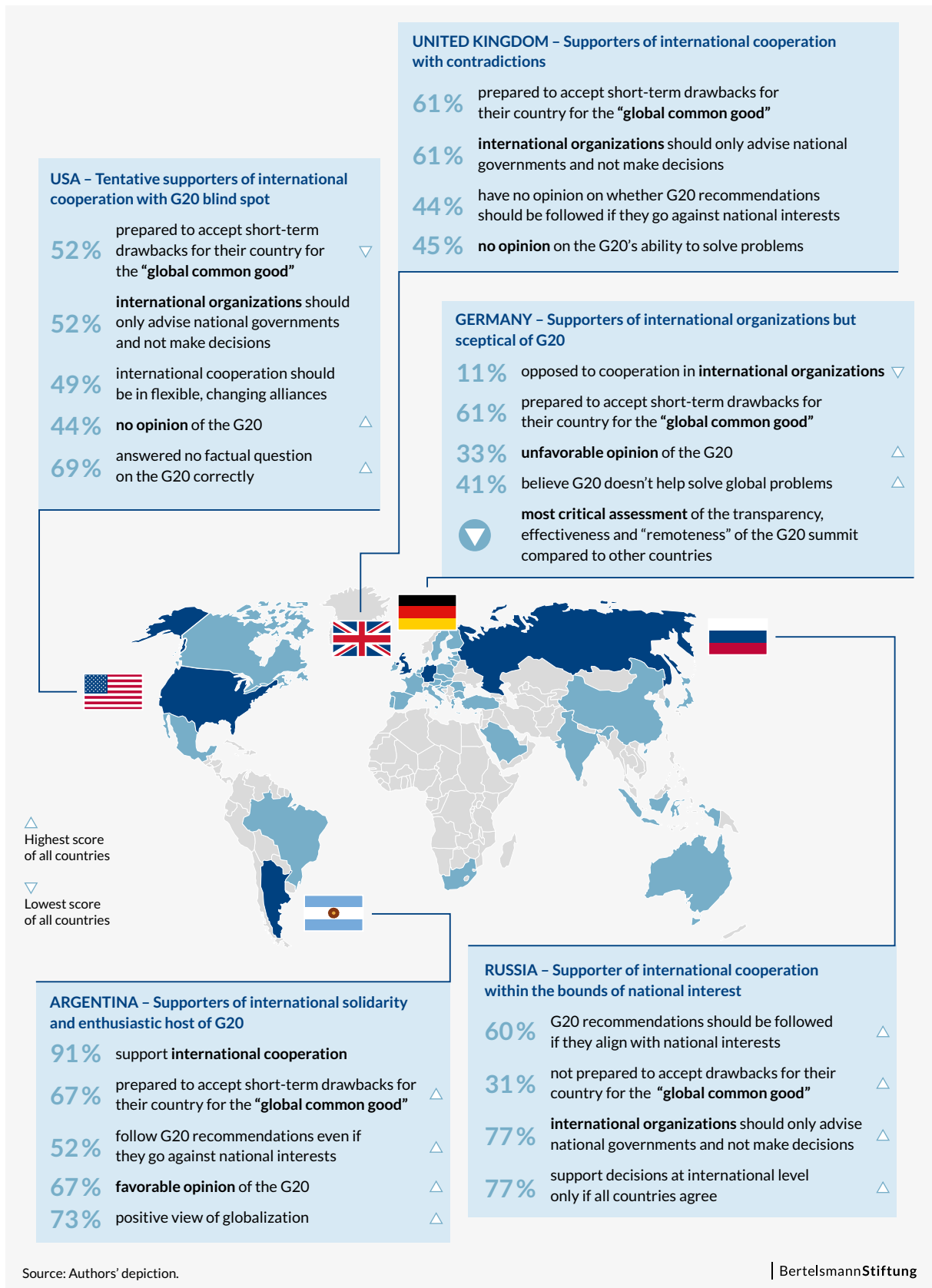


Basis: 3,973,699 articles from 67 print and online media sources in 18 G20 member countries.

Source: Argus Data Insights® on behalf of the Bertelsmann Stiftung.

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9. Country profiles



Survey

Survey period: Sept. 17, 2018 to Sept. 27, 2018

Survey method: Online panel survey

Total sample size: 8,312

Examined countries: Argentina (sample size: 1,010), Germany (sample size: 2,008), UK (sample size: 2,014), Russia (sample size: 1,022), USA (sample size: 2,258)

Executing company: YouGov Deutschland

The questionnaire contained 11 closed questions on the G20 and international cooperation. Four questions covered knowledge about the G20, which focused on aspects of the thematic orientation of the forum of states, the makeup of its membership, its decision-making power and its interaction with representatives from business and civil society. To assess knowledge about the G20, the number of correctly answered questions was added together in an index.

The results were weighted by country and are representative for the population aged 18 and over in Argentina, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States as well as for the population aged 18 to 69 in Germany.

Media Resonance Analysis

Review period: Jan. 1, 2017 to Dec. 31, 2017

Examined countries: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Executing company: Argus Data Insights®

Types of media: Print and online media sources

Media sets: The media sets of the countries surveyed consisted of the print and online versions of the leading national media sources and were composed of three to seven media sources per country. Only one medium was taken into consideration in Argentina due to a lack of available data. The selected media covered the spectrum of political opinions.

Database research: The following search terms were used: *G20, G7, UN, World Bank, WTO, NATO and IMF*. A search was also performed for reports on the national finance ministers. In order to differentiate the content of the media coverage, the search term G20 was used in combination with the words *protest, riot, confrontation, demonstration, demonstrator, police, policeman, vandalism, property damage, injured, violent, set on fire and car*. The search terms were translated into the different national languages.

Further reading

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Imprint

© November 2018
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