

Germany in Times of Corona

Longterm Mini Community

12/2020 to 04/2021

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After weeks of “light” lockdown, Germany went into a full lockdown again on December 16th 2020- Advent, Christmas and even New Year’s Eve - hard to imagine how people would comply and deal with the limitations. That day, IKM started a long-term online community to observe changes in behavior, compliance, emotions, and observations of consumers in their close environment. Over time the lockdown was extended, and vaccination became available. IKM continued to observe attitudes and emotional reactions over time. This community was closed in March 2022.

1. Every cloud has a silver lining!



Christmas time is usually a very hectic time, one event chasing another, big Christmas parties and numerous get-togethers at Christmas markets, last minute shopping, stressful preparations for family gatherings and the holidays packed with seeing as many different parts of the family as possible. Yet, despite all the frustrations, loneliness and renunciations, lockdown during holiday season has had a few positive surprises and grounded many consumers, and they found different ways to make use of this “additional time”.

➤ Time to slow down

Life seems more relaxed, less people around in public transportation or shops and less noise from traffic, planes, or neighbors partying. Moreover, readiness to help each other and contacts in the neighborhood has increased.

“I actually enjoyed slowing down”

“I enjoyed having more time for myself and not having to always plan something with other people”

➤ Time with the family

While being stressed with home office and the need to take care of the children, homeschool and entertain them, being at home also offered new opportunities for families. More quality time together, and the opportunity to do things that would usually not be easily possible.

“I potty trained my son because I was at home all the time”

➤ **Time to learn / teach new ways of communication**

One of the key challenges of this lockdown was to spend time apart that is usually defined by spending it in big groups with close family members. Thus, new ways to communicate have been introduced to other family members and video chats (Facetime, WhatsApp, Zoom) allowed for at least some closeness. A tradition that will often be kept even after the lockdown.

“We love to do the video chat with grandma and will keep this a regular tradition in the future. It is nice to stay in touch like that, bringing us closer together”

➤ **Time spent in smaller groups**

There is something positive about having to limit the number of people and spending time with smaller groups. It can actually be more fun and allow for deeper conversations. Also, it often gave a perfect excuse and allowed to change the habit of having the same people around every year.

“To be honest, I did NOT have to invite 1-2 people this year which was very convenient”

“On Christmas, we will do a video chat with my in-laws. My husband’s brothers celebrate with them. I am glad I don’t have to join them. It was always a very annoying obligatory date for me, and I prefer to sit at home and get cozy, which I can actually do this year”

➤ **Valuable time spent actively together**

Board games had their comeback. Forgotten games and puzzles were found in the back of drawers. Families and group of friends revived playing board games and realized how this can be fun to actively spend time together.

“We played Monopoly almost until midnight, which we haven’t done for a long time. The five-year-old threw the dices and, that evening, the whole family enjoyed this special time together”

➤ **Time to learn new skills and hobbies**

Some learned how to cook healthy meals or more elaborate meals. This was the time to try out new recipes and start baking. Some revived skills in sawing or creative hobbies that had become lost in memory due to a stressful everyday life. Meditation and yoga via YouTube helped to stay healthy.

“Together with a friend, I started painting stones and putting them outside in different places. It’s really a sort of exercise right now and puts a smile on many faces”

➤ **Time for creative outdoor activities**

People spend a lot more time outdoors to meet with other family members and friends to reduce the risk of infection. This winter, gardens, balconies, and parks have been turned to a new use, providing space for outdoor meetings. Outdoor decoration was more extensive during Advent 2020. Fire pits, heaters and infrared lamps have been installed, people met to grill marshmallows, drink mulled wine, and eat sausages.

“Our way to replace the Christmas markets and get into Christmas mood this year”

“We moved our social lives outdoors; this has become our new normality”

➤ **Different gift giving and time together as a gift**

A common gift, often mentioned, were gift certificates for joint events, allowing them to look forward to a time when Corona is over and spend valuable time together. This has become so much more important than in the past. Also, more people gifted homemade or self-decorated gifts, as there was less opportunity for shopping, and more time available to create something.

“I received either outdoor experiences for the future, hopefully, or self-created gifts like a painted stone to hold the door”

2. Challenging Corona Christmas Holidays



Christmas of 2020 will most probably be remembered as the “Corona Christmas” and stories be told how different it was and how usual traditions had to be altered or abandoned. While *Weihnachtszeit* is such a special time in Germany, it was quite different this time around and a lockdown during the holiday season brought many challenges and frustrations. In an online diary, IKM explored emotions and coping strategies of consumers during that time.

➤ **Biggest frustrations**

Some of the biggest frustrations included that skiing wouldn’t be possible this winter, to spend New Year’s Eve without friends, not being able to go to church/mess, no restaurant visits, and quarantined family members as well as the uncertainty of tests.

“My girlfriend is quarantined until the 31st of December. They live in a house of 5 and all of them have symptoms but yet only one person has tested positive... so was this one false-positive or 4 false negatives?”

➤ **Increased need to create a pre-holiday atmosphere**

There was more intense decoration at home and even at the office than in other years, to substitute the lack of Christmas markets and Christmas parties. More time was spent at home and this was often the only way to get into some kind of Christmas mood at all.

“It is very difficult this year to get into a Christmas mood. If you listen to the radio, after roughly every 3rd song there is more Corona news and the Christmas music on the radio is also less than usual”

➤ **Creative compliance**

German people are generally compliant but became creative to work around the limitations. They met smaller groups but had more events. Some people circumnavigated the limitations of big group meetings and met with the allowed number of a max of 10 people but did this multiple times with different groups of people. The curfew of 9pm lead to more people staying overnight with friends and family.

“It was far more stressful as we did not meet with one big group but had to drive to various smaller events with different groups. We could not cover all in one go this year”

“My parents bought a fire pitch and put fur on the seats outside and we baked bread on sticks. Thus, they could give the (grand)kids their gifts personally. Very nice to meet despite the lockdown“

“I met my friend in the car – each in our own car, but we scrolled down the windows, shared a cup of (alcohol free) mulled wine and chatted away“

➤ **Different ways of travel**

Travel was limited as much as possible. Most, if they had to travel, tried to avoid train rides and flights as much as possible and rather rent a car. Motorhomes and caravanning became more attractive again which could be spotted in vacation hotspots which was very usual for this time of the year.

“I decided last minute to not travel this year and cancelled my attendance at the family meeting, the risk is just too high with all the people travelling“

“We drove but did not stop anywhere!“

“The parking lot is full of caravans this year, never saw that before!“

➤ **Shopping experience**

Most gift shopping had to be done online, and spontaneous inspirations were not really possible. Food shopping was more stressful than in other years as more people seemed to cook more at home. Shelves seemed empty and long queues were encountered. However, many shops started to offer pre-order service, and separate lines to pick up the order which were often open-air.

“Long queues and not everybody keeps the distance“

“Had to queue at REWE in the rain outdoors before I was let in“

“If you cannot go to a restaurant you need to spoil yourself at home“

➤ **Loneliness**

While some experience Christmas or New Years as a very lonely time and have developed coping strategies in the past (travel, meet friends, etc.), this year many decided to stay at home and alone on purpose.

“I have just decided (December 24th) that I will stay alone at home and not visit my family. Its just too risky with the train ride and all the inevitable contacts. I will spend the holidays at home and try and forget that festive season.“

“I will go to bed early, not stay up to midnight and just forget about New Year“

➤ **Video chats as a way to connect**

Family video chats replace big family gatherings. While this is perceived as less stressful it does not replace the warmth of a real meeting.

“Video chat with the grandmas was less stressful than visits in the past year“

“Though it does not replace a real meeting face-to-face as only one can talk; moreover, the internet connection was not good, and it interrupts an otherwise comfortable evening“

3. Increasing aggressiveness versus compliance with lockdown rules



For 6 weeks, Germany was in full lockdown again and we observed changing attitudes from understanding to complete denial and frustration. When Germany started the lockdown, there was quite a laid-back acceptance of a situation already experienced earlier in the year. It was the second time around and people knew there was no need to purchase toilet paper or yeast and get stressed, there was nothing to fear. It was unavoidable and a necessary evil to help decrease the exploding numbers of Corona cases. People were mentally stronger than in spring 2020. Yet, over time, additional limitations and an extended lockdown, acceptance decreases, and frustration grows.

➤ Increased aggressivity

An overall observation is, that people are getting impatient and dissatisfied. They start complaining, railing, and fighting.

“The overall aggressiveness has increased; you can feel it”

“What I notice more and more is the mood and atmosphere at work. Everyone is getting increasingly demotivated and irritated. Previously, we were a good team, but now we are strongly divided”

“Customers are getting more and more irritated and the anonymity that masks add, doesn’t help either”

➤ Growing frustration

For Families with kids or teenagers the situation is even more challenging. The lack of social contacts for kids is obvious. Home schooling demands increasing support from parents, often it is lacking technical equipment and knowhow – at home or with the teachers, while home office adds to the stress.

“I do have general sympathy and understanding but it’s hard with a 16-year-old”

“What I notice is that our 5-year-old catches more and more “grown-up-terms” and starts using them e.g., “Laura is very short-tempered today” ... that’s probably the lack of social interaction with kids of the same age”

➤ Growing depression

The slow increase of lockdowns (from lockdown light to full lockdown to intensified lockdown) over a longer period, is painful and leaves people hopeless and without perspective. There is growing impatience and anger.

“The constant Corona-reporting through the media is annoying”

“I suffer great longing and pain”

“Lockdown in winter is even worse, the bad weather is making people depressed”

“Meanwhile, one is in a “whatever/screw that” kind-of-mood. One cannot really counter political arbitrariness”

➤ **Decreasing Compliance**

More and more people question the measures, refusing to adhere to rules they do not comprehend. The virus is not taken seriously any longer by some people.

“We all (circle of friends) do not know any risk groups and also do not have any close contact with anyone else. Thus, I won’t have them forbid it (seeing my friends)”

“Some of my kid’s colleagues apparently cannot be carriers and thus do not always comply with hygiene measures”

“Even if one violates the Corona measures that way, as a single household, I need social contacts”

“One person can visit another household. But 2 people of the same household cannot come and visit me? That is not comprehensible, and I have to honestly admit, that those friends, I usually see, I see at the moment, too”

➤ **Refusal of masks**

While the masks have become an even stricter obligation, there are still some who refuse to wear the masks. Many complain that there is hardly any control nor consequences.

“I am always astonished, how many people actually still run around without masks. Sometimes I feel as if here, in Frankfurt city center, we wouldn’t even have a mandatory face-mask rule”

“I returned my rented car today and was surprised that the Europcar employee wasn’t wearing any kind of mask”

“One adheres to the restrictions, if at all, in public areas, but feels it’s rather patronizing and unnecessary”

➤ **What motivates to comply?**

Still, most participants in the community comply with the rules to avoid contagion and also to save other people: friends and relatives, children! Some have experienced losses in their family or close friends. They want to support a joint effort to help decrease the numbers and fight Corona.

“I would have loved to hug him, but especially to protect him, I refrained from it”

“Because I have a certain sense of duty and I want to protect my family”

“Because I do not want to end up at an intensive care unit”

“None of us really know how severe they will fall ill in case they get infected”

Still there are many who are very creative to find ways around.

“If the weather is nice, all hills for sledging in Munich city are all full. No surprise in a city of 1.5 Mio. people. It is not coherent. So, we are thinking of going to Austria next week for sledging, on a weekday, which is possible because of home schooling. Before, we will dutifully apply for a return to Germany, and will stay at home for 5 days, which we will do anyhow. And then, after 5 days we will do a corona test to get out of quarantine. The last test is already a month old so it is time again. But if this is the idea of the whole thing, is a whole different matter.

“Many are always looking for loopholes, according to the principle ‘what one is still allowed to do’ instead of just leaving it, like having birthday parties”

One participant has described it very distinctly:

“Especially because I myself do not feel like all these restrictions anymore, I have to do everything in my power (for me and society) for numbers to decrease. If everyone is making an exception, we will never hit the target “

4. New Routines that will stick



Meanwhile, Germans are experienced “Lock-downers”. New routines have become accepted customs and habits. Individual awareness for distance and safety is constantly increasing. But which of these will continue once the lockdown is lifted? What routines will transform to the New Normal?

➤ More Me Time

While social distancing forced people to stay at home and figure out what to do, many started to appreciate having more time for themselves

“A bit more me time – this is what I want to keep”

“Intensive long walks with another person. I got to know some people better due to the deep talks we had while walking. I would love to continue with that”

“I learned to busy myself with something and enjoy it”

➤ More home office, less travels!

Work environment has changed tremendously. While being stressful in the beginning, especially with homeschooling kids, there are many advantages seen and changes will be made over time.

“More home office, more time in the office, less travels, less time at clients. Zoom calls have replaced most of my business travels”

“I experience stress reduction due to the home office”

“Less time spent commuting, more me time”

“I can imagine keeping at least 50% home office in the future”

➤ Hygiene

Overall awareness for hygiene has increased over the past year. Disinfection of tools and hand sanitizers have become a regular in private environments, not just medical. Wash hands and washing hands longer will remain with those who experienced this critical time.

“I will continue to wash my hands more often and more intensely”

“It starts with the shopping cart and keeping distance and goes as far as personal hugs”

➤ Personal contact

A hug or a handshake in Germany expresses agreement, openness, and friendship – it is part of the German culture. Due to Corona new ways of greetings have been established, like bump elbows, kick feet, air kiss, etc. Furthermore, personal contact has decrease tremendously and

one is automatically keeping a “safer distance”. Will the old-fashioned handshake belong to the BC – before Corona?

“I am sure we will shake hands less often than before Corona”

“People you used to hug are often taking a step back. Wonder whether this will stay the same”

➤ **Grocery shopping**

Shopping used to be a social event: finding inspiration to cook, meet friends, a chat over coffee in the supermarket, this has become obsolete. Basic shopping behavior has changed over time- There is a tendency to go less often and with a clear plan; or just to order online or call delivery.

“Grocery shopping once a week on Saturday, shop straight, drink coffee on the go – there is no normal shopping any longer. I do not even think of what it used to be like”

“I will keep my “Kochkiste“ that is being delivered every Thursday. Honestly, shopping is annoying”

➤ **Sports in home**

Due to being restricted to their homes and locked out from gyms, participants joined online yoga classes, booked a personal trainer virtually or started weightlifting at home. Some even purchased special equipment and made room even in smaller spaces.

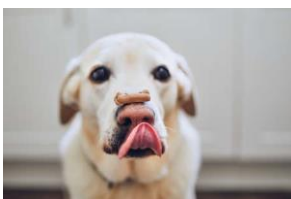
“I have never done sports at home before and it is actually quite good, I will keep this”

➤ **More video calls**

Video calls per se are not new, but the extensive way to use them with friends and family is new.

“I will keep doing video calls to nourish friendships”

5. Excitement and Joyful Anticipation for The Small Things in Life



Pleasant anticipation is the best kind of delight. After weeks of lockdown and a year of relinquish, what is most looked forward to?

Many participants in our community think they will only slowly get used to a new normal. Only with a high ratio of vaccination, after some time of hesitation and observing people, will participants be able to enjoy happy moments again. However, a feeling of risk avoidance and increasing self-responsibility will stick. Many will be traumatized with wearing masks and distancing. Thus, the end of the tunnel will not immediately follow the end of the lockdown but only after some extended period of hesitation.

Still there are some dreams:

➤ **Friends / Family**

Most important will be long missed visits with friends and family. The feeling of a hug, and touching a loved one, is what people feel deprived of the most.

“I want to hug my friends”

“I will immediately go and see my grandchild”

“Yes, friends, but this is so long ago I met friends, I would almost have forgotten to mention!”

➤ **Socializing**

Socializing is what people miss most. Meet family and friends in other environments than home (Restaurant/Café/Bar/BBQ/Sports). Feel socially included and serviced.

“Eat something different than at home”

“Sit and chat and observe others”

“Play soccer with friends again”

➤ **Vacation planning / Travels**

Travel, to many a basic need, was missed painfully in the past year. Some still travelled, others stayed in Germany and found some fun places unexpectedly. Still travelling is high on the list for the time AC (After Corona).

“I have saved so much money during the pandemic that I can afford some great travelling”

“I would love to go someplace warm and sunny for 3 full weeks!”

“I just need a vacation”

➤ **And many other small simple activities:**

“Movies on a large screen offer such a different experience than just TV screen in your home”

“Hairdresser - my hair is a catastrophe”

“Massage - my back hurts from home office”

“Indoor pool - I want to swim again!”

6. Dream or Nightmare: Home Office



The two lockdowns forced many employees to work from home for the first time. Home office - what some experience as a blessing is a curse for others. While many fight for extended home office options and a right to work from home in the future, others want to go back to their workplaces rather sooner than later.

➤ **General Pros**

- No more commuting reduces contacts and exposure to the virus
- There is less travel involved to and from workplace, less meetings and the overall time spent is visibly reduced.
- Less interruptions and better focus result in higher efficiency.
- Flexible working hours allow for individual planning of work time and leisure.
- Improved work-life-balance leads to an increased quality of life!

“I find home office way more relaxed. You don’t have to dress up as much and a shower is not really necessary; do the hair not really as well – only in case of a video conference. You preserve your better cloths and can be casual in front of the computer, wearing only sweatpants. Furthermore, you can do your laundry on the side or accept a package which is great. Collaboration happens via phone, or email. The many private conversations, of course, get lost but you focus more on professional content”

➤ **General Cons**

The advantages mentioned above are perceived by some as rather theoretical as many need to combine home office with family, home schooling or a small home with little privacy. Often there is not a separate room due to small apartments. Devices and bandwidth in a family may be limited and create tension.

Separation of private vs work seems to be more difficult and often lines are blurred. Some report a tendency to work more from home than in the office.

A lack of social contacts leads to loneliness and isolation. Often it seems difficult to get a day structured. Parents with kids are especially challenged to cope with office and home schooling.

“One’s own productivity decreases a lot, which might be due to lack of concentration and the lack of normal routine, or the many possible ways to distraction”

“It’s more stressful since you have to be quicker in answering to Emails or messages. Otherwise, the other person has the feeling one is not at his workplace but somewhere else busy at home”

➤ **Homo Office is not possible for all types of work**

While management and office workers can often switch to home office easily, others need equipment and structure provided only at the workplace. This can lead to a discrepancy of different types of workers as well as jealousy.

“By now, a real sense of injustice is distinguished by many amongst us technical employees because by now, besides the scientists/ researchers and office staff suddenly cleaning personal, mechanics etc. have to do home office, even if they also cannot really work from home. Yet, I would always prefer home office to being at the office”

➤ **Students are most affected**

Young people suffer most. Distance teaching, home schooling and continuously changing expectations for examinations add to the stress of loneliness and decreasing motivation. For this group home office is not an option at all.

“Since almost a year now, we only have online lectures and online learning groups. Meetings and Discussions also only happen via Zoom. I haven’t been to the library since last spring! You cannot meet anyone anymore and only spend time at home. Everyone is experiencing this. You really need a lot of motivation to continue to sit down at your desk”

7. Carnival 2021 – Craziiness of Corona continues, Lockdown prolonged



Carnival for Germans peaks in a long weekend from Thursday to Tuesday and is celebrated in different ways depending on the region. Karneval in the West and Fasching in the South, for example. This year, it was cancelled for the whole of Germany. Another typical German long weekend holiday missed due to Corona lockdown. We had expected our participants in the community would complain.

However, interestingly, for most this wasn’t the case, and it wasn’t missed as much as we would have expected. Some people had even forgotten about it. Others enjoyed the good sides like Krapfen or Berliner from home along with some special TV sessions.

“To be honest, I didn’t even know it was Fasching”

“After one year of Corona I didn’t even think about it anymore”

What bothered people more is the (again) prolonged lockdown that has been decided during those holidays, with some light opening in 2 weeks’ time. While there is a basic understanding of necessity, frustration and anger grow!

➤ **Want to be on the safe side!**

In general, there is a widespread acceptance of the fact that this prolonged lockdown cannot be avoided. A continued lockdown is perceived as caring for people, a necessity to make sure that the ratio of infections will sink even more. Mutations are seen as the new threat.

“Overall, I find the prolongation a good thing, since it’s a measure to decrease new infections”

“Generally, I consider it too early for a light opening and would rather continue like this for another 2-3 months”

➤ **Growing anger**

On the other side, there is growing anger because of how it is communicated, one small step at a time, and a lack of sufficient justification of those limitations. There are different limitations in different states, and different incident ratios are discussed. What is allowed in one place, is not allowed in another. What seemed like an achievement weeks ago is now no longer valid. Even friends may have different perceptions, and this leads to frustration and fights.

“Because of our social behavior, we, as human beings, need goals. If these goals are getting unattainable, it leads to frustration”

“The mood/spirits have hit rock bottom. Many start to doubt and are on one’s last leg. Financially as well as mentally”

“I find it completely wrong that politics is so unreliable. They are taking away any kind of hope from their citizens by decreasing the (goal of) incidences further”

“Because of differing opinions regarding Corona, there are increasing disagreements within the friends circle. With some it even leads as far as the friendship getting a cut, which is really sad”

➤ **Makes no sense**

Many question the reasoning for the prolonged lockdown and try to make sense of the limitations they are all facing. There are so many situations that do not seem to make sense in everyday life:

“One has to wear masks in the streets, which doesn’t apply on a Sunday. For whatever reason”

“Why do kids at daycare or school be in one room with more than 30 people but are not allowed to meet with 2 friends in private. Same applies to employees”

“A friend of mine is quarantined. She lives in a house with 4 others. All 5 have signs of a cold but only one person was tested positive. So, one wonders whether this test is false positive or the other 4 tests are false negative?”

“Why do busses still go around Munich every 20 minutes at midnight, even though we have a curfew after 9pm? Wouldn’t it be better to just have an hourly emergency service?”

“The one-person rule. I am allowed to meet my new grandchild alone and then my husband has to travel there alone and then my son... it is a 300 km distance, and we all live in one single household. This does not make sense to me”

8. Vaccination brings new Hope



Two thirds of the community participants would like to get vaccinated, rather sooner than later. Many are already registered and are expecting to be vaccinated this summer. Some hinge it on the availability of vaccines. Typically, one friends circle has the same opinion. Still, there is this other third who is still reluctant and would definitely not get vaccinated. Interestingly, especially in the older generations and with medical professionals the reluctance is highest.

➤ Stop Corona

The main argument for the vaccination is to stop Corona and reduce the risk for themselves, their families, and their communities.

“Reach immunity through vaccination in order to stop Corona”

“With the vaccination, I would be less at risk to fall ill severely in case of an infection”

“To protect my surroundings and especially my family”

“Because of professional ethics I should get vaccinated to be a role model”

“Protect me of the virus. Protect everyone – herd immunity. Protect the economy (no more insolvencies because of a lockdown)”

➤ Give me back my life

Many would like to get vaccinated rather sooner than later and therefore already signed up. They hope to get back their lives from BC (Before Corona), maybe not exactly the same, but at least to some degree. Some expect special rights for vaccinated people for travels and other activities.

“Everything that is enjoyable is connected to other people, cultural activities, parties, being together with your own family, everywhere more or less people meet”

“I would like to be able to finally move again freely in a big group of people”

“I would just have a better feeling and not continuous fear of getting infected”

“I assume that in the coming years, travel will only be possible if you have been vaccinated”

“I expect vaccinated people will get more rights”

➤ Wait and see

Then there are those who are very skeptical about the vaccination and different conspiracy theories exist which lead to many preferring to wait.

“I am not opposing the vaccinations, but I rather wait”

“Even if it’s assured that the vaccination is harmless and doesn’t cause any genetical defects, there are no long-term studies regarding side effects and cell change”

“The ones skeptical about vaccinations are probably so uncertain that it would hardly be possible to convince them with objective and factual arguments”

➤ **Residual Risk**

There is still a risk of passing on the virus and a need to continue with hygienic measurements, nevertheless. Also, there are questions not yet answered that keep people from getting vaccinated.

“I most probably only protect myself in having a milder course in case of an infection. But I can still get infected despite of the vaccination and carry the virus. So it doesn’t protect my fellow human beings“

“There are no certain insights on whether vaccinations also cover the different mutations“

“Until now there is no confident prediction how long the vaccination actually protects“

➤ **Only with XYZ vaccine!**

The type of vaccine makes a big difference and are discussed in depth. While some refuse AstraZeneca, others would only want the one from AstraZeneca. There is growing skepticism against other Russian and British vaccines.

“I wouldn’t want AstraZeneca. Rather Biontech or some other mrna vaccination”

“I would only get vaccinated with the vector vaccine from AstraZeneca”

“Not with the Russian variant or the one from England”

There is still a lot of information needed to convince those who are still reluctant to get vaccinated!

9. Unexpected full pockets



During the prolonged lockdown, consumer behavior changed slowly and apparently almost unnoticed. While stating that nothing really has changed in their consumption, most of the participants realize that they spent significantly less money over time. Thus, saving doesn’t occur on purpose, but it seems related to a change in consumer.

80% say they have spent less money than before the pandemic.

“At the moment, I have around 250-300€ left over at the end of the month”

➤ **No travels for vacation**

Of high importance and near to their hearts, is the possibility to travel for Germans; to move around freely and go on a vacation. According to Maslow’s hierarchy, travel has become a basic need in Germany. Participants in our community mention their ‘missed’ vacation and limited travels as the area where they saved most but they miss most and what they will catch up with as soon as it will be possible again!

“No vacation in the summer and now no vacation in winter”

“I planned a skiing trip which now will also have to be cancelled”

“I travel a lot and am usually on vacation 5-6 times a year”

"Less costs for fuel since we limit driving to the most important journeys"

➤ **Less money spent on leisure activities**

Due to the limitations and regulations, activities on weekends and afternoons have become impossible and thus no money has been spent on sport activities, cinema, or cultural events or even gifts.

"Limitations since free time activities are very limited: e.g. pool, sports, cinema – nothing is possible at the moment"

"No trips and therefore no costs for fuel / train rides"

"Less visits to relatives / general visits / birthday invitations where you bring something along"

"An occasional Cappuccino in a cafe is not happening"

"No skiing classes for kids (about 250€ per kid)"

➤ **Online Shopping – reduced spending**

A lot more is purchased online nowadays. But this leads to more rational decisions and to spending less money in the end. Spontaneous purchases may be returned. Only what is really needed is bought!

"I buy less cloths. Once in a while I order online. In a shop, I wouldn't have thought about it so much and thus bought more. If I do online shopping, I can think about it for longer, whether I really need it and really like it. Thus, purchases are more rational, and, in the end, I spend less"

"I spend very little on cloths / shoes. I am not a passionate online shopper for cloths and thus my spending is very limited in this area"

"It's frustrating to buy cloths online and not good for the environment with all the resources so I just wait"

➤ **Home delivery vs restaurant visits:**

Eating out has been replaced by home delivery. A good wine at home is less expensive than wine at a restaurant. Overall a lot of money has thus been saved.

"About once a week we get some take away food from a restaurant in the area, this is still a less expensive than our lifestyle before the lockdown"

"Even if you sometimes get take away or a delivery, is still cheaper since you do not pay for drinks at the restaurant. An Aperol Spritz for 8€ only costs me around 1-2€ at home. The 30€ expensive bottle costs me 10€ at home"

➤ **Change of priorities**

While needs may have changed during the pandemic, it is an overall perception of priorities that matters most.

"I didn't buy cloths, nor shoes and didn't go to the café / cinema / hairdresser. Everything was closed and somehow it seemed extremely unsensible and not useful to buy such things (e.g. cloths from Zalando) while people die everywhere"

10. New ways to spend money



While participants in the community realize they saved money over time during the lockdown, they also became aware of new areas where they spent their money.

➤ **Changed Lifestyle:**

A big change is happening in the area of nourishment and food. While eating out has been replaced by home delivery, there is a trend to home cooking, triggered by closed restaurant but also by a need to eat healthy in a time of a pandemic. More time and money are invested to prepare healthy meals. Special and rare ingredients trigger a feeling of indulgence. Expensive wine at home replaces a simple wine at the restaurant. Costly chocolate and cake increase wellbeing at home. This upscale home cooking has triggered unexpected expenses.

"We buy fresh and better groceries more often e.g. beef filet for the BBQ (Since you cannot go to a good steak restaurant), shrimps, once a week fresh fish, good wine, prosecco etc."

"We like to buy more premium groceries. For example: we love Carpaccio. You can get this as frozen at Metro. Then you only need fresh parmesan cheese (which we usually always have at home) and Rucola (from our garden during summer)"

"A lot of chocolate or cake or other things that make me feel good. Unfortunately"

➤ **Bio/vegan/healthy became more important**

More home cooking has led to more awareness about produce and products purchased and a need to live a healthier lifestyle. Many spend more on food as they buy organic, started to cook vegan or want to make sure they live healthy.

"I generally buy more organic products. For food but also with cosmetics, like yesterday when I bought a vegan, plastic-free lip balm. In the past I would have just grabbed a known brand but today I focus more on sustainability. It's the general social trend"

"I am more focused when I shop, I look into ingredients of the products e.g. buy more alkaline foodstuffs, and rather buy organic products. This is not directly related to the lockdown but since you have more time to occupy with these things it was a topic, I concerned myself with. How do I subsist myself better and healthier than before"

➤ **Home improvement**

Other areas of increased expense have to do with anything that improves personal life at home: Toys, Netflix, hygienic care, and DIY.

While spending more time at home, costs for renovation, decoration, energy, and entertainment have increased. Many used the extra time to repair and remodel. Decoration became more important with the increased time spent at home.

"Since I spent a lot of time at home, I looked for a new hobby – renovating the apartment"

"Increased overall costs for staying at home: more heating, more electricity more water"

“More money for interior furnishings and decoration since I spend more time in the apartment and want to have it really comfortable. In the beginning I only bought things that were missing. Now I already replace things since a different style or something else fits better”

Products purchased for example:

- New mattress
- New bed cover
- New carpet
- New curtains
- New furniture
- Balcony decoration

In-home entertainment replaced social activities and cultural events.

“I indulged in a Netflix subscription”

“Friends told me that video streaming services are being used a lot more. Many got a Netflix subscription or Amazon Prime video”

“The reason for spending more money on toys is that we are home way more often and need to provide new stimuli for our son. So, he doesn’t get bored but also that he develops and learns. Basically, as a substitute for museums and so forth which you cannot visit at the moment”

While hairdressers and cosmeticians had to close, people tried to DIY also in these areas. Some may even continue doing this, if not forever at least for a couple of times to save money.

“I am spending more on cosmetics as I am not seeing a cosmetician or a hairdresser. Maybe I will keep doing this as it saves a lot of money and I can do it myself”

“I started cutting my kids hair myself (just the ends). There are a lot of tutorials on YouTube”

➤ **Additional purchases, not planned before Corona**

Clearly there was a need for new technology products to equip home offices. An overall increased consumption of hygienic products can be seen with a need for higher quality and a readiness to pay higher prices.

“I needed a headset and a microphone which I didn’t need before”

“With hygiene products – I bought hand soaps that specifically kill bacteria and viruses which are comparably higher priced. Also, the consumption of soap and disinfectant has increased significantly”

“I bought a soda maker, to avoid carrying all those bottles, but also for sustainability reasons”

Finally, there are additional unplanned purchases for personal use like glasses or phone, just to treat themselves!

“This was because I thought with all the additional savings, I can treat myself”

11. Test Yourself



Germany is waiting for at home test kits. In most places they were sold out within a short time frame after opening.

While there seems to be a huge demand, there is still also some reluctance and barriers to break down. 70% of the community members think that basically testing kits are great. 30% are not yet sure about the home use and skeptical about the results. It reflects a general attitude towards tests, how it was dealt with in the media and their own experience made in the past year.

➤ Excitement about quick results

Immediate results allow testing to be flexible – one can choose the moment and location and get the latest result. Most agree that it makes sense to use quick tests in hospitals, schools, nursing homes, daycare, and other locations (cinema, restaurant, etc.) where people meet and come into close contact. This could bring back some normality and freedom to meet.

“I am glad they exist. Especially if there are no symptoms but close contact with other people”

“It could allow a way back to freedom by just testing oneself beforehand”

“The ideal scenario would be testing yourself every day before leaving the apartment to minimize spreading”

“I would like to see it being used regularly in schools and kindergartens, not just with teachers and childcare workers but also with the kids”

Many expect special rights to come along with self-testing, like access to restaurants, home visits, travels, or leisure activities (gym, pool, etc.).

“I would like it to be connected with openings of e.g., restaurants if e.g., the staff has to get tested every day and the guests as well (take a test, go for a walk for 15min until getting the results and only then being allowed in)”

“I would be willing to pay 1-5€ for such a test before visiting a restaurant or a bar so I can behave just like before Corona”

➤ Residual risk

But there is no 100% reliability. A negative result does not completely prevent infection. This is discussed critically as there could be a misleading feeling of security resulting in a higher infection rate due to wrong results.

“One has to consider that the test is just a snapshot which needs a certain amount of viral load for a positive result”

“Already one day later the result is not reliable anymore. Or it is false negative since not enough viral load exists yet, giving a false sense of security”

“It can happen that the test is being done in the beginning of an infection, being negative even though PCR is already positive. Or one has a different infection, and it is showing a false positive”

“I am just worried that people will start to become less careful with masks and keeping a safe distance since they will just think they will get tested in the evening”

There is also reluctance to accept laymen to do the testing and a fear to overdo it and ask for tests in too many ways and locations, leading towards increasing costs and decreasing sustainability.

“Can a layman, so someone who isn’t trained, do those tests right in order for them to be correct”

“I hope you won’t be needing a quick test for all sorts of activities soon and having to pay for them oneself. Thus, I am still a little indecisive”

“I think panicky people might do these tests for their conscious regularly which I find a waste of resources”

12. Torn Between Excitement and Fear: open up or close?



There is excitement in the air. Germany is opening up again, while exposed to a third wave of Covid. Vaccination is much slower than promised and even slowed down due to issues with Astra Zenaca unexpected events.

Community participants expressed their feelings about the new situation. Some feel it is too early to open up, others are waiting eagerly for normality to return So this is even more relevant now that Easter

Holidays are looming and there is discussion about a full lockdown in high incident areas while some federal states are planning to open up even more.

➤ Relieve

Overall, there is a feeling of relieve, happiness and excitement to be able to meet again with friends and move around freely.

“It’s an enormous relief that our little one can go back to kindergarten again and the older one attend school in shifts”

“Feeling free! I will for sure feel better and freer compared to when everything is always closed”

“Happy about normality returning but we are still careful”

“One place.... For people to meet, eat and talk. The key to freedom. Many people, a lot of food and plenty of culture”

“I will feel happy again, liberated, and a desire to do all those activities from the past again. Meeting friends, going out in the nature, going on vacation, outside of ones four walls”

➤ Fear

For many this excitement is combined with skepticism. There is a general fear about the future and what is to come. Bankruptcies and insolvencies are looming around the corners. Many areas of the German economy will need a long time to recover. Changed consumer behavior will not change back to where it was before Corona. People are afraid that there will be a wrong feeling of security that might lead to higher infection rates.

“With one’s eyes open into abyss”

“I (and my husband) consider it dangerous. We will watch the numbers closely”

“Somehow worried, I would prefer to be vaccinated. Only then normality will be possible. Everything else is nice but doesn’t mean you can still get infected. How fatal shortly before getting vaccinated”

➤ **Frustration**

The back and forth with opening and closing, light lockdown and full lockdown, the discussions about what to open up and what should still be closed creates confusion, and people have a hard time understanding the measurements. They were ready to comply but feel overstrained with the regulations and limitations over the past year.

“I am just exhausted and cannot really comprehend most of it anymore. It feels like an infinite loop”

13. Outlook 2022



The pandemic is still looming. Germany is facing the third year of Corona. What many thought to be just a few weeks or months has turned out to be much longer and more challenging than expected. IKM has asked their long-term community of consumers “Times of Corona” what they are anticipating for this year to come.

➤ **The pandemic will still dominate 2022**

There is the overall expectation for 2022 that Corona will still dominate our lives. Nobody can reliably predict how it evolves, and thus participants expect a difficult couple of months with

- New and even more infectious variants of Covid
- Continuously changing and adjusting rules from political leaders

➤ **Vaccination friend and foe**

Vaccination is still being discussed rather divers.

- Some criticize those vaccinations did not prevent to get infected and spread the virus and thus keep people in a wrongly perceived security. Others wish for a higher quota of vaccination and would have wished for an earlier vaccine mandate.
“Mandatory vaccinations at the beginning would have had a positive impact on the course of the pandemic “
- The need for another booster vaccination is increasingly seen
„More boosters are to be expected as the immunity in the long run cannot be guaranteed otherwise”

➤ **But 2022 will be better!**

Nevertheless, there is an overarching hope that the situation will improve in 2022.

- Summer will bring more freedom
- Next winter just light limitations
- Soon it will be endemic
- No strict lockdown is expected for 2022
- By the end of 2022 Corona will be like the flu
- And in 2023 all will be even better!

14. Impact of Vaccination



There is a high acceptance of vaccination amongst the IKM long-term community “Times of Corona” with most participants having been vaccinated and boosted as soon as it was available. Most are ready to take another booster if needed.

➤ Feel free again

For many, vaccinations changed everything to the better, and returned things to normal. People still adhere to some basic hygienic rules (wash hands, wear masks, keep distance) but socialize again.

“What a blessing this vaccination!!”

“We are trying to lead a life like we did pre-Corona, meeting friends, go on vacation etc. since we all have been vaccinated “

“ Following the AHA rules as well as enough fresh air I feel save.

“In our friends circle we call the CovPass App our boarding pass to a normal life “

- There is no more fear of infection
- Meet people, still keep distance
- Go to theater and cinema again
- Feel safe
- Feel less stressed
- Visit restaurants and clubs

➤ Still abstaining

While socializing again, there are still things people hesitate and miss doing, as they are aware of the risk of infection still looming despite vaccination:

- No more hugging with friends
- No handshakes
- Do not meet with larger groups
- Avoid crowds
- Avoid public transportation
- Have not travelled since two years
- Shopping

“Only one single person from our household goes shopping for groceries”

➤ **Increasing department in German society**

While gaining back private life and basic rights there is increasing anger against deniers leading to people becoming more extreme in their views

- Deniers should be excluded from healthcare benefits
- Deniers are treated like second tier people

Yet, given the high ratio of vaccinated people who also tested positive, even with very mild symptoms only, there is little acceptance that vaccinated people can visit restaurants while non-vaccinated must continuously test negative to be able to do the same.

- Rules are not perceived fair for deniers by some
“I strongly condemn the division in German between those who are vaccinated and those who are not“

15. Changing Relationships



Two years into the pandemic, during which many have adapted their lifestyle and withdrawn themselves, we were wondering how this might have affected personal relationships and checked with the IKM long-term community “Times of Corona”.

➤ **No loss of close friends**

The good news is that friends have not been lost over time. People stayed in touch via phone, zoom, skype.

“I am trying to keep friendships going as well as I can (personally, virtually, etc.)”

“Not willing to give up any friendship”

“Talk to important people regularly / have personal contact on a regular basis“

➤ **Neglected but not lost**

Still there are many relationships that have been neglected over the past year. Some report about having barely socialized with friends. Those who have been rather scared, and therefore withdrawn themselves, are often respected for their decision. More distant relationships from the past have been put on ice and are hardly missed.

“I am glad I didn’t have any obligation to attend anymore / no social obligation / can enjoy more freedom”

“Everything on the side like celebrations, meetings, basically everything that requires my attendance, I don’t miss at all. I feel more free if I don’t always have to or must “

Nevertheless, there are groups of people who have been neglected.

- Friends who did not accept the contact limitations and got angry
- Parents and older family members who have not been visited as frequently anymore due to fear of spreading the virus
- Colleagues and friends living further away could not be visited due to contact, and travel limits, and thus felt cut off

➤ **Intensified relationships**

Many report that some relationships have become even more intense during the pandemic. Friends that live close by, some neighbors, and family members have become more important, often even being some kind of a support group. Close friendships have been nurtured and intensified, as most focused on a few key contacts. Some even grew closer to their colleagues despite home office, needing to support each other in these difficult times.

“We are all in the same boat and the feeling of belonging together grew immensely “

➤ **New relationships**

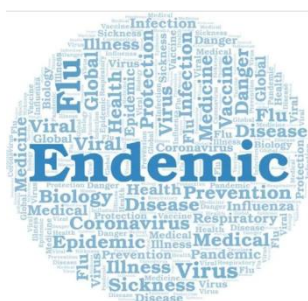
Some even made new friends. Neighbors connected more often. People seem to look out for each other and showed increased awareness and readiness to support.

“Now, during my quarantine, I am even surprised how much help I am being offered from everyone. Even my boss offered to help if I needed anything“

However, this positive social connection seems to decline with the continuing social division of our society.

“On the onset of the pandemic one felt that it led to stronger social cohesion, yet, by now, I feel a clear division (vaccination discussion) and loneliness because of the distance“

16. Inner Endemic



Mutations again and again. After Delta it is now Omicron and new mutations are popping up in different areas in the world, keeping all alert to what will come next. Still rules and regulations are relaxed.

We were wondering how this affected our participants from the IKM long-term community ‘Times of Corona’

➤ **Sedateness**

People obviously got used to the pandemic and show some real composed attitude. There is

“no longer fear of an infection, due to vaccinations and less severe mutations expected. “

“This will not be the last variant“

“No longer feel the pain from spring 2020“

“Omicron leaves me cool”

“Take Omicron seriously, but feel good because I am boosted”

“My influenza was far worse than Omicron seems to be”

➤ **Fear of destabilization of infrastructure**

While there is no longer the fear of an infection, this has shifted to a fear about schools, universities, hospitals, senior citizen caretaking and public services. The concern is about keeping the infrastructure we all take for granted up and running.

➤ **Hope**

Facing all the new mutations with less severe effects, there is a hope for immunity of a large group. People tend to relax and hope for an end of the situation in 2022

“Hope we achieve herd immunity with Omicron soon”

“Being vaccinated and feeling better informed today, I am so much more relaxed than a year ago”

“This is now the process to an endemic situation”

“Omicron to me means hope”

While sticking to their hygienic routines and behavior adjusted over the past two years, there is no longer panic and rather a wish to just move on. It seems people show a status of an inner endemic while starting into a post pandemic area.