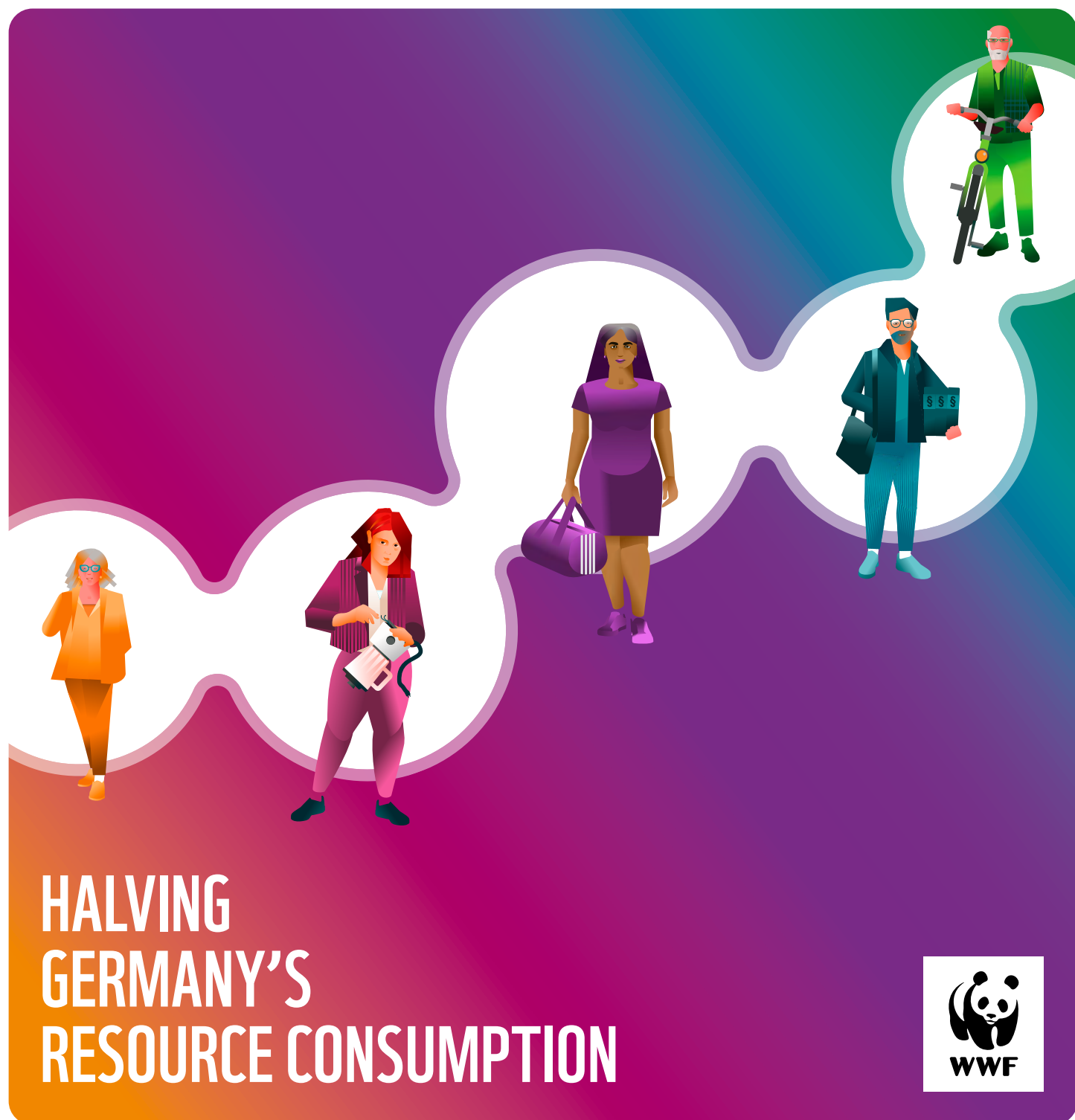


Participative Futures, Data and Courses of Action

RESOURCE-LIGHT LIVING 2045



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Foreword

Dear readers,

How do you want to live in 2045? We have asked thousands of people this question over the past few months – and with good reason. After all, what is better suited to fuelling our fantasies about the future than the crises of our time: the climate crisis, the extinction of species, geopolitical conflicts, social inequality and the loss of trust in political institutions? These developments all have something in common, namely an extremely questionable resource policy, characterised by the enormous material throughput of our economy and our way of life. Resource policy therefore affects us all, and is not a topic reserved for experts, but a question of security, justice, freedom and sustainability.

With the study entitled *A Circular Economy Model for Germany* [Modell Deutschland Circular Economy] published two years ago, WWF showed how resources can be used more efficiently, how they can be recirculated and how to decouple economic value creation from material consumption. Our resource consumption is responsible for 90 percent of biodiversity loss and around 40 percent of greenhouse gases – a perspective that has since made its way into political debate.

With the National Circular Economy Strategy, in late 2024 the previous German government created guiding principles committing to the goal of a raw material consumption of six to eight tonnes per capita. But there is a gap between these principles and reality. The goal is not binding and does not define what this means for our everyday lives. To date, how we will live, work, travel or provide for ourselves in the future has barely been mentioned in political discourse. But if it is not translated to our everyday lives, the goal remains abstract and we risk not harnessing the potential of resource conservation.

The *Resource-Light Living 2045* project aims to help close this gap by making the goal concrete and conceivable: what can a good life look like with around eight tonnes annual resource consumption per person? What do technical innovations, political framework conditions and everyday decisions contribute to our of housing, mobility, diet, consumption, work and leisure? And what is important to people throughout?

Together with around 30 people – young and old, from urban and rural areas, from different walks of life and with different perspectives – we discussed, rejected and developed different visions for of the future. The resulting findings were combined with scientific modelling and then validated in a nationwide survey, creating images of the future that express a deeper understanding of needs and approaches to communication as well as calls for political action. The results are encouraging: they show that a resource-light lifestyle is far from being a distant ideal and is instead both a tangible and viable option for the future.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our project partners and sponsors for all their support.



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Project overview

How to make halving resource consumption feasible and attractive

Context: Political resource protection goals must be embedded and visualised

Germany is living beyond its material means. Each person in Germany consumes an average of around 16 tonnes of primary raw materials per year; science tells us that only six to eight tonnes are sustainable. This overexploitation is not just an ecological problem: it also jeopardises security of supply, economic stability and social resilience. Conserving resources makes us less dependent on global imports, reduces susceptibility to crises and strengthens domestic value creation in the long term.

With the National Circular Economy Strategy (NCES), in late 2024 the German government first set out political guiding principles for halving Germany's raw material consumption by 2045 at the latest. However, it remains to be seen how this goal can be translated into actual lived reality and how the transformation can be organised in such a way that it maintains, or even improves, the quality of life we are accustomed to.

This is precisely where the *Resource-Light Living 2045* project comes in. It goes one step beyond traditional scenarios and targets, asking not only whether it is possible to halve our resource consumption, but what this feels like in everyday life. In other words: what lifestyles are realistic within an eight-tonne corridor? What political and infrastructural framework conditions are needed to ensure that resource-light consumption improves quality of life?

Combining science, participation and design

To answer these questions, the project combined four building blocks in one process: the scientific modelling of raw material consumption; a co-creative public participation process to develop practical futures for 2045; the translation into communication formats; and a subsequent representative survey that examines acceptance, conditions and

political leverage for resource-light lifestyles. The project, initiated and managed by **WWF Germany**, was implemented by an interdisciplinary consortium. The non-profit research institute **Oeko-Institut** was responsible for the overall coordination as well as for bringing the different components together.

1. Scientific modelling Wuppertal Institute

Wuppertal Institute (WI) analysed German raw material consumption in key consumption categories and identified the levers for halving it by 2045. This formed the basis for the quantitative modelling of the future personas developed during the participation process. Assuming a largely defossilised and circular economy by 2045, the personas resource consumption was calculated and made comparable, thus enabling a review of whether different lifestyles can realistically be depicted within the 8-tonne corridor.

2. The public participation process Politics for tomorrow & Oeko-Institut

In a multi-stage participation process of six workshop days in the spring and summer of 2025, 26 citizens developed concrete images of the future, everyday practices and examples of lifestyles for lives with a raw material consumption of less than eight tonnes per person in 2045. Participants contributed their experiences, needs and values and worked together to develop ideas about what constitutes a good life under changed conditions. The results were systematically analysed and fed back into scientific modelling as well as into political deductions.

3. Communication design Ellery Studio

Ellery Studio translated abstract questions about raw material consumption and tonnage into vivid, practical everyday images using visual and narrative methods, which included future postcards, gallery walks, speculative design, storytelling formats and digital applications. These accompanied the participation process and helped to make complex contexts understandable and accessible.

4. Representative survey WWF Germany

A representative survey (N = 1,001) examined the central findings of the project with regard to their social relevance, providing reliable data on the acceptance of resource-light lifestyles, on concepts of fairness and on political measures to reduce raw material consumption.

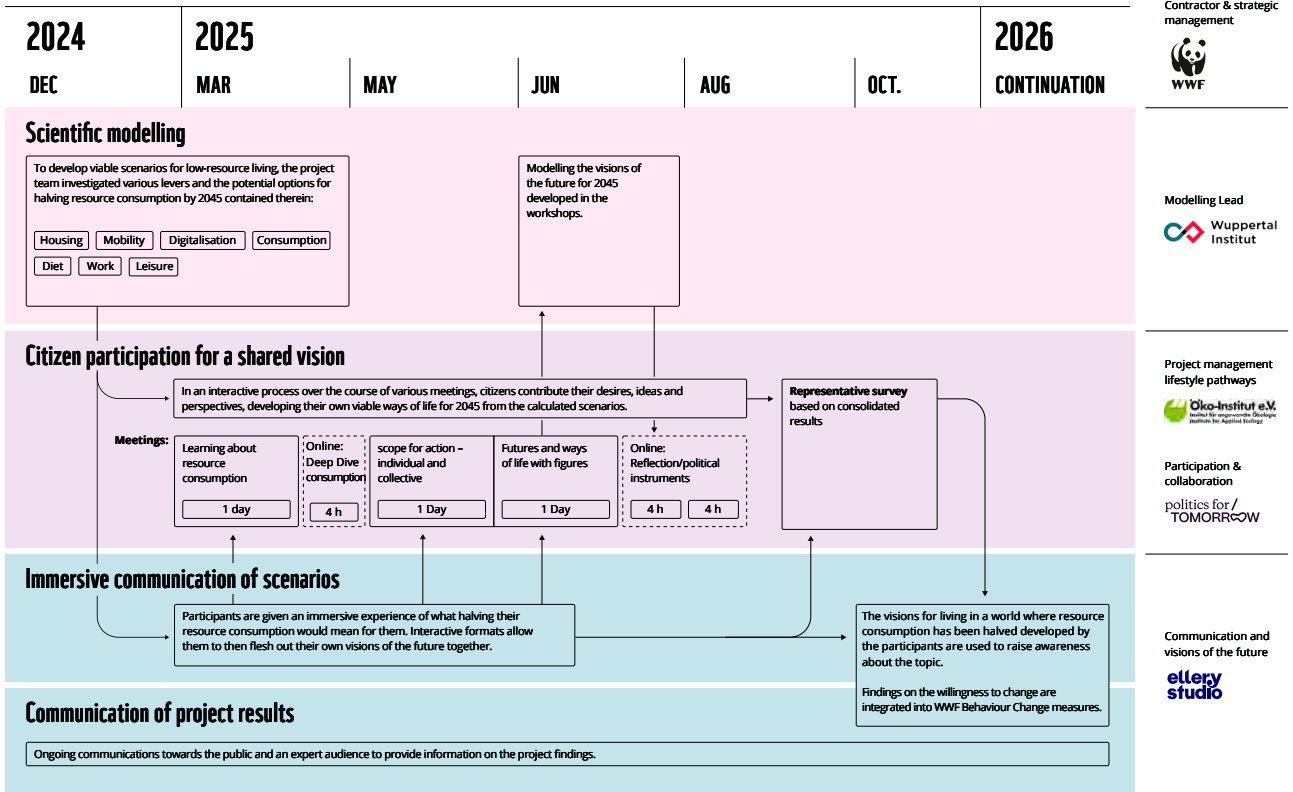


Figure 1. Project partners and timeline of the Resource-Light Living 2045 project

Source: Author's depiction, Ellery Studio

Five key messages on halving resource consumption

Halving raw material consumption is a prerequisite for achieving climate and circular economy targets and reducing geopolitical dependencies. In order for resource conservation targets to be effective, they must be both politically binding and socially compatible. However, the

decisive factor is how this change is organised. Transformation can only succeed if political guidelines and lived social realities are considered together. The following five key messages show which levers need to be moved to do so.



1. A life with a resource consumption of 8 tonnes is realistic

Diverse lifestyles are still possible with low resource consumption

Even with a resource consumption of under eight tonnes per capita, there is still room for different lifestyles and individual concepts, as the five personas we developed show. This requires a comprehensive transformation of the system: Germany needs to establish a fully circular economy and phase out fossil fuels by 2045. These systemic framework conditions are necessary, but they are not sufficient; individual consumption patterns also need to be adapted. The modelling shows that the interplay between both levels is crucial. Sustainable lifestyles can hardly be realised without changed structures. Without an adjustment in behaviour, structural measures are not enough to reach the 8-tonne limit. Society is ready for this co-transformation: 55 percent of the German population find the vision of an 8- tonne life attractive and are willing to halve their raw material consumption, provided politics create the appropriate framework conditions.



2. The majority wants enabling structures and political backing

Lower resource consumption through smart rules, fair prices and a good infrastructure

Citizens want to live more sustainably, but they encounter structural hurdles in their everyday lives: inadequate or unreliable public transport, a lack of needs-based living space, unfair price structures on the food market, an inadequate repair infrastructure or bureaucratic barriers for energy-related measures. Their message is clear: enablement, not admonishment. The overwhelming majority of the population wants an improved infrastructure, financial support for sustainable options, clear standards and transparent labelling on products as well as a socially balanced tax and duty policy. Only when reliable, affordable, socially balanced and convenient alternatives are available can we expect a lasting change in behaviour. Acceptance of the transition towards resource-light lifestyles increases as people are given the time, knowledge and practical skills to change their own everyday lives without being hindered by unreliable framework conditions. And: the majority of the population wants political measures addressing the issue.. Around 58 percent support legal measures to reduce raw material consumption. Politics needs to create attractive alternatives, remove structural barriers and set fair prices.



3. Resource-light living improves quality of life

Halving resources = health, security, freedom & participation

A "good life with half the resources" is a new model of prosperity. The results of the public participation process and representative survey show: sufficiency-orientated lifestyles are particularly popular when their benefits are reflected in everyday life and not just presented as abstract saving potential or long-term resource and climate targets. A convincing benefit profile is one that people can experience directly: financial relief, social stability, health and well-being, along with a decreasing ecological impact.

A resource-light life means relief and self-determination. It helps to achieve more freedom from consumer pressure; it frees us from organisational burdens and makes us less dependent on fragile supply chains. If we buy fewer new products and share, repair and use the ones we do have for longer, we often reap twice the benefits: time and the capacity to take an active role. Sufficiency thus becomes a politically and socially compatible way of making everyday life easier.

The key insight we gained from the findings: in principle, the majority is prepared to break new ground if the benefits become tangible. An effective co-benefit strategy makes halving resources more than just an ecological necessity, it makes it plausible, fair and acceptable to the majority as a gain in quality of life.



4. A successful transformation needs active public participation

Helping shape change creates acceptance, trust and democratic legitimisation

For the transformation to a resource-light society to be successful, people need to experience themselves as active subjects as opposed to being in a passive role. The project's participation formats show the extent to which willingness increases when citizens are able to contribute their experiences, needs and suggestions. According to the survey, more than half of the population can be convinced to halve their raw material consumption if they understand how the measures fit in with their lifestyle and what the benefits are. People who play an active role in shaping policy are more likely to accept change and develop trust in political decisions. Resource policy with strong public participation thus becomes a school of democracy, combining climate protection and the conservation of biodiversity with social justice and strengthening social cohesion.



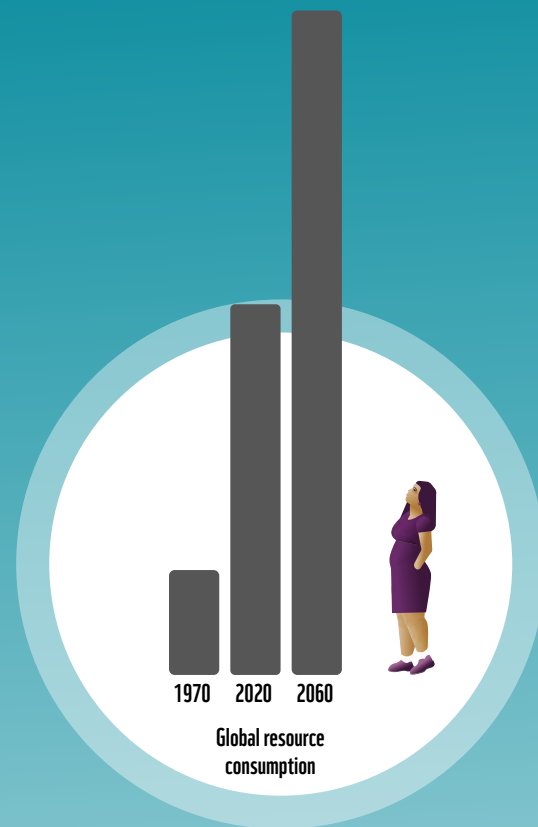
5. Fair distribution decisive for success

People who consume a lot need to assume more responsibility for conserving resources

Resource consumption is distributed very unevenly. Households with high incomes of over €5,000 net per month consume almost twice as many resources as households with low incomes of less than €1,250. The actual consumption of the top five to ten percent is likely to be significantly higher in reality than as recorded in the models. In the areas of construction investment and mobility in particular, consumption increases disproportionately with income, while lower-income households are primarily concerned with covering their basic needs.

This finding is met with a pronounced sense of pronounced need for fairness in the population. 75 percent demand that high resource consumption must go hand in hand with greater responsibility. The demand for concrete measures is accordingly clear: 79 percent are in favour of higher taxes on luxury goods such as private jets, yachts or very large homes. And 77 percent reject the idea that the wealthy should be able to buy their way out of resource-intensive behaviour on the principle of "if you can pay, you can consume more".

Society is ready for the transition towards lower resource consumption – but only if the ones who consume the most contribute appropriately. Without a fair distribution of burdens, opportunities and infrastructures, the necessary transition will neither be accepted nor sustainable.



1. 16 tonnes per capita and their consequences

Germany's resource problem

While CO₂ emissions and the climate crisis are receiving widespread attention, resource consumption remains a blind spot in public discourse. But raw materials and emissions are two sides of the same coin. When we extract raw materials, we consume energy – usually fossil fuels. When we move, process and consume materials, we emit greenhouse gases and have an impact on ecosystems. The global extraction of raw materials has more than tripled since 1970: from around 30 billion tonnes per year to around 106 billion tonnes today. Without countermeasures, it will double to around 190 billion tonnes per year by 2060 [1].

The extraction and processing of materials is already responsible for around half of global greenhouse gas emissions, over 90 percent of biodiversity loss and the majority of water scarcity [1]. The environmental impact is clear: **mines supplant forests, overburden pollutes rivers and land, habitats disappear. Resource consumption is exceeding planetary boundaries and further aggravating the climate crisis.**

The raw material issue of our time

Germany is one of the most resource-intensive economies in the world [2]. Each of us consumes around 16 tonnes of raw materials per year [3], which corresponds to the weight of ten mid-range cars per person, every year. This indicator reflects the material lifestyle: buildings, roads and vehicles as well as

food, clothing and energy. It also captures hidden flows: the tonnes of ore for our smartphone, the sand in our urban concrete, the agricultural land abroad for our breakfast. The raw material footprint (RMC) measures the primary raw materials, expressed in raw material equivalents, required through domestic and foreign value chains to satisfy domestic final demand.

This consumption is ecologically unsustainable, not to mention economically risky. German and European industry is dependent on a continuous flow of imported raw materials, which makes us highly vulnerable. Europe consumes a quarter of the world's raw materials, but produces only a fraction itself [4]. The situation is worse when it comes to strategic raw materials; geopolitical tensions thus become supply risks. The war in Ukraine has revealed the extent of our vulnerability: exploding energy and raw material prices met with a highly import-dependent economy. High raw material consumption increases this susceptibility. **Reducing primary resource consumption is therefore also a precautionary measure to protect economic resilience.** Less dependence on raw material imports means greater security of supply and less susceptibility to volatile global markets.

In late 2024, the German government responded to these ecological and economic risks for the first time with the National Circular Economy Strategy: German raw material consumption is to be halved by 2045 at the latest. Even if the strategy

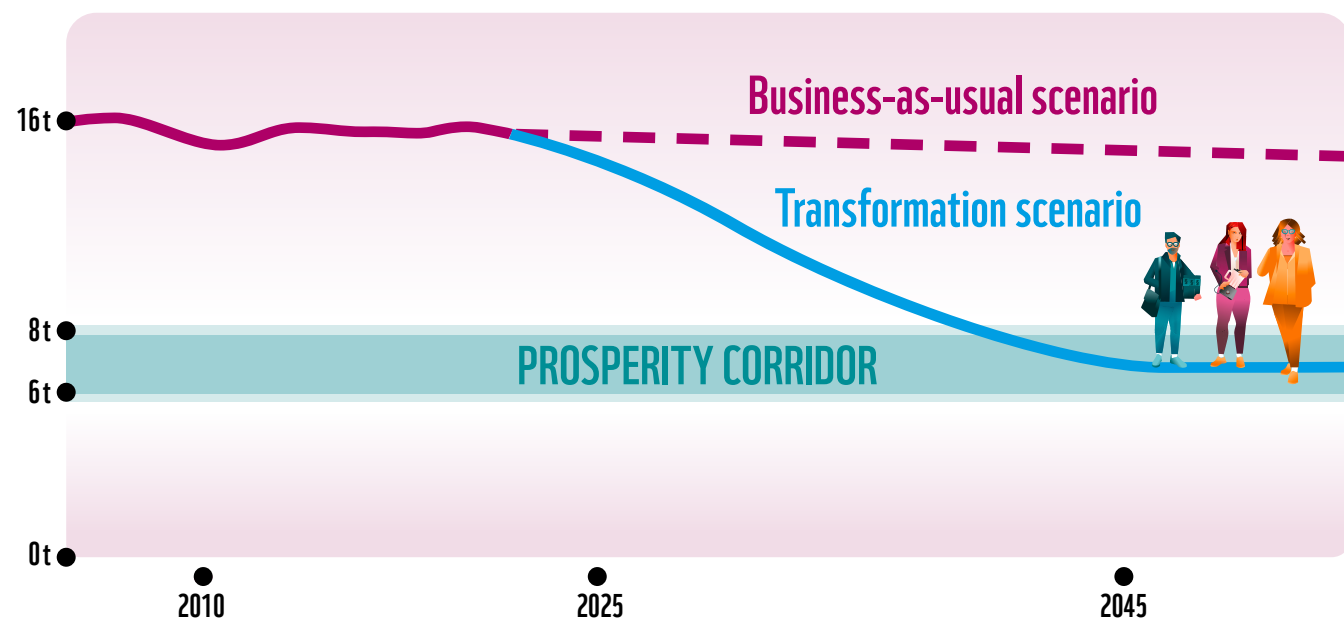


Figure 2. Development of raw material consumption per capita in Germany (RMC) since 2010 and projection scenarios until 2050
Source: Destatis; International Resource Panel (author's depiction)

was only created as a set of "guiding principles", and not as a legal target, it still points the way: towards reducing current per capita consumption from an RMC of 16 tonnes to an RMC of eight tonnes [5].

The guiding principles are based on the current state of research, according to which a consumption of around six to eight tonnes of resources per capita is sustainable. This corridor is based on calculations by the International Resource Panel on the resilience of global ecosystems [6] and describes the amount of material we can use in the long term without overburdening the climate, land, water or biodiversity. This is exactly where we need to be by the middle of the century. In actual fact, the use of primary raw

material in Germany merely fell by around three percent between 2010 and 2022 [7]. If we were to continue at this rate, Germany would not fall below the eight tonnes per capita mark until 2214. **To achieve the 2045 target, the rate of reduction must therefore increase approximately eightfold.**

So where are the key levers to reverse this trend? the following section shows a breakdown of resource consumption in Germany by key levers and socio-demographic characteristics – based on the modelling and calculations conducted by the Wuppertal Institute – and the resulting approaches.

Sources of raw material consumption

In Germany, the sources of raw material consumption are found along different area of demand and resource groups. Investments account for a large proportion: 36 percent of the material footprint is attributable to construction activities, machinery and infrastructure, for example. Added to this is government consumption of around ten percent for running costs, e.g. in public buildings. Private households are responsible for 49 percent, primarily in the areas of housing, heating, diet, mobility and consumer goods. Other categories such as non-governmental organisations or changes in inventory play a secondary role.

Figure 3. Raw material category by source of consumption in tonnes per capita and year
Source: Author's calculations, WI

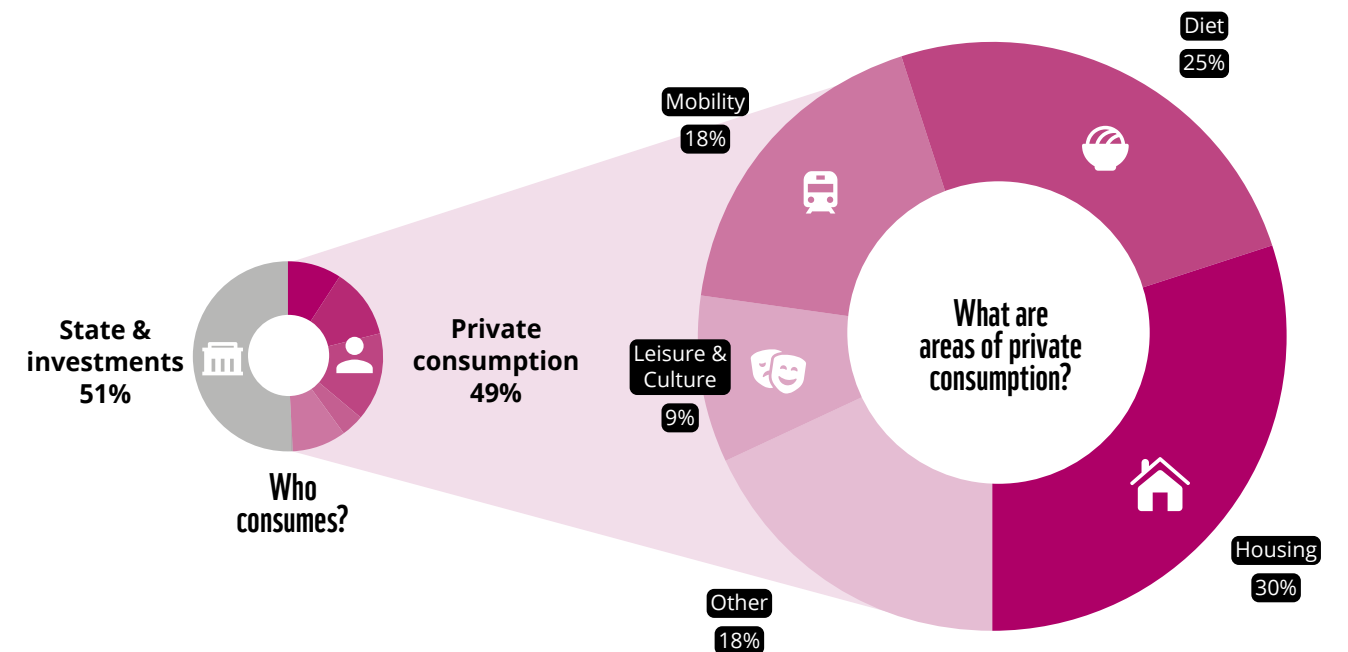
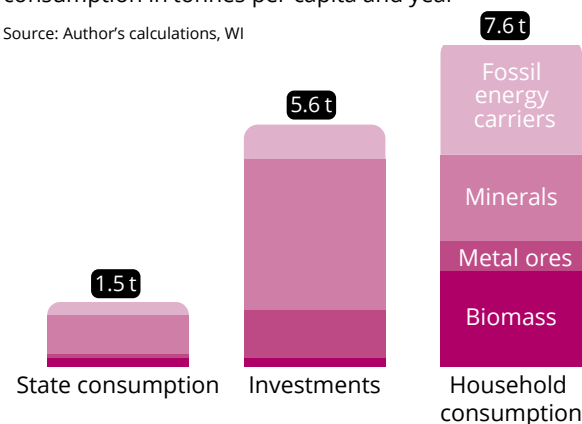


Figure 4. Share of German raw material consumption by consumer groups and breakdown of private demands by areas of life
Source: Author's calculations, WI

1.1. Infobox

Which raw materials are behind our consumption?

Raw material consumption (RMC) distinguishes between four groups of raw materials: non-metallic mineral raw materials (e.g. sand, gravel, limestone, gypsum, natural stone); metallic raw materials (e.g. iron, aluminium, copper, zinc, nickel); fossil energy sources (e.g. crude oil, natural gas, hard coal, lignite); and biotic raw materials (e.g. grain, vegetable oils, cotton, fodder plants, wood). Abiotic raw materials are non-living and non-renewable, i.e. They include all raw material groups except biotic ones (biomass).

What becomes clear is that a few categories are responsible for the majority of raw material consumption. Housing (14.5 percent), diet (12.2 percent) and residential construction (15.4 percent) are particularly resource-intensive; mobility, non-residential construction and other investments are also in the upper range. If we look at private household consumption alone, housing, diet and mobility offer the greatest leverage.

When it comes to diets, biomass is dominant. Here, abiotic raw materials are primarily consumed in processing steps such as preservation or packaging.

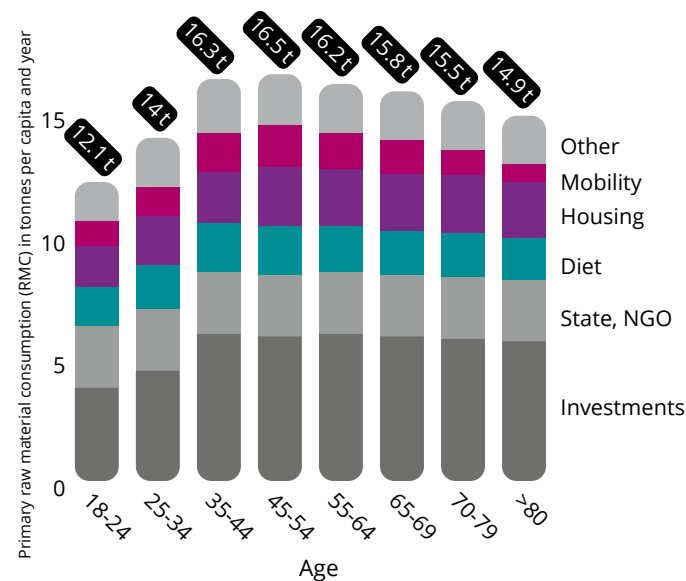
ing. The largest proportion of fossil energy sources is consumed through heating and electricity in the area of housing and primarily through fuels in the area of mobility. Areas such as health, communication and clothing play a much smaller role in the overall picture. This distribution illustrates that basic needs such as housing and diet in particular contribute heavily to the overall footprint.

When calculating resource utilisation per capita with an input-output model (see Infobox 1.2.), we determine average values; these paint a mathematical picture of how many resources are used by a single person. However, these values are not to be understood as "purely individual" because they always reflect the social conditions under which we live and consume, such as infrastructure, energy supply or production methods. Conversely, our individual behaviour has an effect on these structures: our purchasing decisions as well as our mobility and eating habits influence which products and services are offered and which technologies are invested in. The results thus reflect the interplay between individual decisions and collective framework conditions and cannot be clearly differentiated.

Conclusion: By focusing systematically on housing and building investments as well as on diet and mobility, we can make an especially big difference, both politically and privately. This is precisely why

Figure 5. Raw material consumption per capita by age group

Source: Author's calculations, WI



it is worth taking a look at different lifestyles to answer the following question: What consumption is avoidable and where is there true potential for savings?

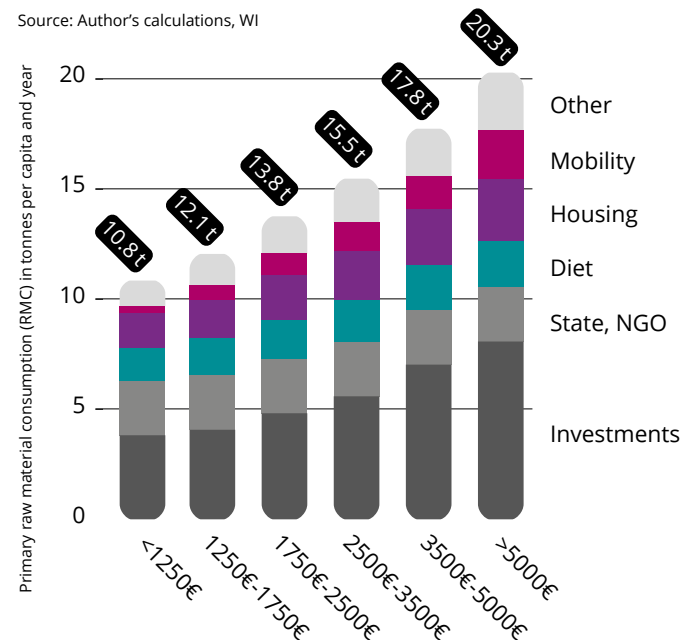
Socio-demographic factors

We analysed today's resource consumption along three social characteristics: income, age and place of residence. This has shown that income is the strongest driver. People with more money consume more resources. While low-income households with less than €1,250 per month consume an average of 10.8 tonnes of resources per person per year, the figure for households with over €5,000 is almost twice as high: more than 20 tonnes. The biggest difference can be seen in those areas that go beyond basic needs: mobility, consumer goods and investments. While people on low incomes have to spend the majority of their resources on housing and food – i.e. on necessities – a considerable proportion of the resources of wealthier people are spent in areas in which a reduction would be possible and reasonable without compromising their quality of life.

Resource utilisation follows a "bulbous" pattern in terms of age distribution: at a young age, consumption is low, increasing significantly in middle age and slowly decreasing again in old age. On average, 18 to 24-year-olds consume 12.1 tonnes per year. Smaller living spaces, limited mobility,

Figure 6. Raw material consumption per capita and year in dependence on monthly net household income, differentiated by consumption

Source: Author's calculations, WI



hardly any investments are all factors that keep the footprint lower. Between the ages of 35 and 54, consumption peaks at over 16 tonnes. This is due to larger living spaces, high investments (e.g. building a house) and resource-intensive mobility in everyday life. The footprint decreases with age, mainly due to reduced mobility; however, housing consumption remains consistently high. As a consumption area, diet accounts for 11 to 13 percent in each age group. Housing increases from 1.7 to 2.4 tonnes, but remains virtually stable in old age. Mobility rises and falls significantly: from 1.0 tonnes in younger years to 1.7 tonnes in middle age, and later to 0.7 tonnes. As expected, the consumption of resources to maintain health increases with age, but remains secondary in terms of quantity. Overall, we see a typical life cycle progression: low resource consumption in younger years, a sharp increase during the family and employment phase, followed by a decline with increasing age.

The degree of urbanisation also has an impact on the demand structure. On average, 14.8 tonnes of resources are consumed per person in cities, 16.4 tonnes in suburbs and peak in rural areas, with 16.7 tonnes. Two areas in particular are decisive for this higher consumption in suburbs and rural areas: investments and mobility. This is due to a lower local supply and longer routes in rural areas. The consumption of resources for housing is similar everywhere, while leisure and culture account for a slightly larger share in cities than in rural areas.

Figure 7. Raw material consumption per capita by settlement area

Source: Author's calculations, WI



Conclusion: the greatest leverage lies in housing, diet and mobility

The distribution of the material footprint allows for a clear prioritisation: **the greatest leverage does not lie in "small consumption corrections", but in the large, material-intensive systems of construction and housing, diet and mobility**, which together dominate raw material consumption. At the same time, the socio-demographic differences show that resource consumption is less a question of individual morality than of income, infrastructure and investment patterns. Savings potential lies primarily in those areas in which consumption exceeds basic needs and structures lead to high consumption. In terms of the "eight tonnes by 2045" scenario, this raises the following question, which will be explored below: What changes to individual, political and economic framework conditions are necessary with regard to investments, offers and everyday practices so that resource-light lifestyles are not the exception but become the norm, both within the system and in household consumption?

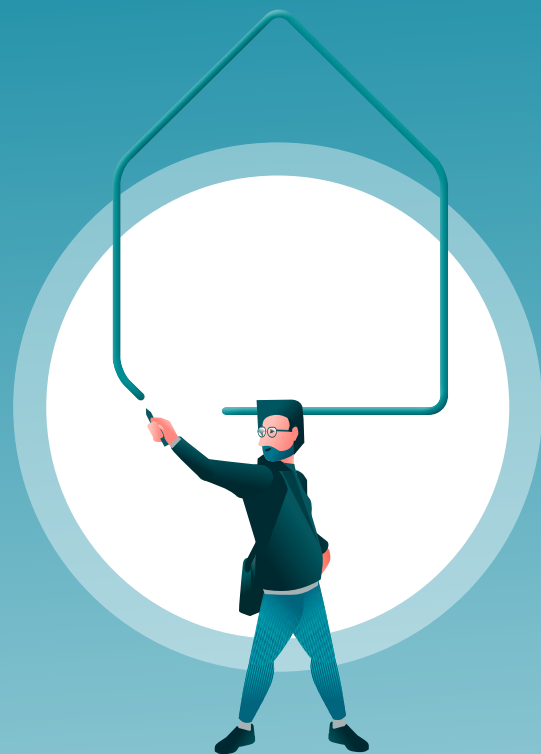
1.2. Infobox

Model and data basis

We used a macroeconomic model with a hybrid input-output approach to calculate raw material consumption. This model combines economic interdependencies with physical material flows and follows the Eurostat standards for calculating raw material consumption (RMC). RMC records both domestic raw material consumption and raw materials that are required abroad for imported goods. Raw material consumption is broken down into four material groups: non-metallic minerals; metals; fossil energy sources; and biotic raw materials.

All calculations are based on data from the Federal Statistical Office (Destatis), which were updated and processed for the project. The year 2019 was chosen as the reference year for modelling, as it represents the last year before the strong distortions caused by the pandemic and geopolitical crises.

In the model, overall economic demand is divided into four sectors: government consumption; private households; investments; and expenditure by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). For private households and investments, consumption was further allocated in more detail to areas of need (e.g. diet, mobility, housing) and investment types (e.g. residential construction, equipment). In order to determine the resource consumption of different population groups, the model was linked with data from representative household surveys [8]. These data provide detailed information on consumer spending, housing situations and socio-economic characteristics. For investments in residential construction, consumption was allocated on the basis of ownership and living space, while other fixed investments were allocated in proportion to consumer demand. Government consumption and NGO expenditure were calculated equally for all groups.



2. Methodology and assumptions

How citizens are designing an 8-tonne Germany

The question of what the path to a raw material consumption of eight tonnes per capita might look like in concrete terms is not one that can be answered solely by a technical model; it needs to be shaped by society. The modelling shows that private demand accounts for around half of raw material consumption. An 8-tonne path therefore also requires a reduction on the demand side – a perspective that is in line with international climate research. Here, demand-side measures are increasingly seen as a key lever for complying with planetary boundaries [9], [10], [11]. In its Sixth Assessment Report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) also refers to the high reduction potential of changing consumption patterns and practical lifestyles [12]. This is because the necessary reduction affects key areas of everyday life (housing, diet, mobility) and is closely linked to infrastructure, investment decisions and political framework conditions. This is precisely why the project team was so keen to develop these images of the future in a deliberate, i.e. carefully thought-out, participation process.

A citizens' forum as a research format

To this end, in 2025 WWF Germany initiated a citizens' forum, in which 28 citizens from across Germany discussed key issues over six days of participation: what could a good life look like in 2045 if we were to consume less than eight tonnes of raw materials per capita? What changes are considered realistic, which are desirable and what political and infrastructural conditions would these changes need? the project team then derived specific assumptions for a target image for 2045. The aim was to

combine qualitative narratives with quantitative modelling and thus create both a content-related and a communicative basis for halving raw material consumption by 2045.

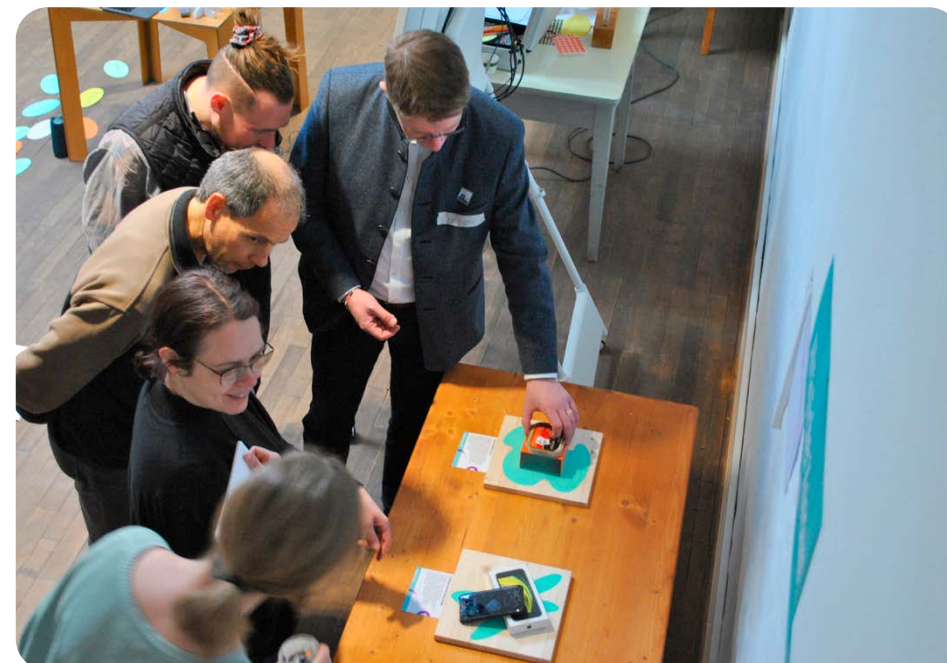
The project team decided on a target-group-specific citizens' forum as the participation format. For months, selected participants analysed the key issues, developing solutions and drawing up recommended courses of action. In the course, they focused on people whose living situation – such as age, housing situation or mobility requirements – is particularly relevant for resource-related decisions. The decisive factor was the model-based analysis of resource consumption, which shows that higher-income households in particular contribute to the material footprint at an above-average rate. At the same time, social science studies confirm the comparatively high willingness of higher-income Sinus-Milieus to change their behaviour within the socio-ecological transformation [13]. The project team defined the following selection criteria:

- medium to higher income
- different stages of life (age groups)
- different living situations (city, suburb, rural area)
- balanced gender ratio
- relevant consumption indicators (e.g. living space, car ownership, long-distance travel)

We received a total of 48 eligible applications. In the end, 28 people took part and were compensated for their efforts. The group consisted of 22 women and six men from all federal states. The income distribution comprised households in the middle to



"If you have a lot of everyday problems and are constantly overburdened, it's not really possible to achieve affluence."



"Why do we measure tonnes per year instead of kilograms per day or month?"



higher range; the places of residence were roughly equally distributed between urban, suburban and rural regions. This heterogeneous composition made it possible to identify heterogeneous perspectives and incorporate these into the images of the future. On the other hand, a certain self-selection bias is likely, as the participants had voluntarily applied for the citizens' forum. Even though we tried to select people with an apparent higher level of consumption (car ownership, more flights, larger houses, etc.), some of the participants already lead a sufficient lifestyle. The findings were then verified in a representative survey of 1,001 people without a specific target group focus (see Chapter 4).

Modelling a target image for 2045

Translating such qualitative images of the future into model calculations requires consistent assumptions about how society, infrastructure, technologies and consumer behaviour might develop. In order to keep the results compatible, plausible and methodologically robust, the modelling of the target year 2045 is based on a scientifically established scenario: the GreenSupreme scenario from the German Environment Agency's RESCUE project, which was developed with over a hundred experts over the course of four years [14]. The scenario describes a target image for a greenhouse-gas-neutral and resource-friendly Germany in which the raw material consumption per capita can be reduced to six to eight tonnes per year – in line with the Paris Agreement and the requirements of the German Federal Climate Action Act. It combines technological transformation, appropriate political framework conditions and changed consumption patterns to create a consistent overall picture and – like the approach chosen here – is based on a comprehensive resource model with technological development paths in areas such as energy, industry and building efficiency (see Infobox 2.1.). A complete overview of the assumptions for the GreenSupreme scenario can be found in Purr et al [14] and Dittrich et al [15].



Future living spaces

In addition to the central, systemic GreenSupreme scenario assumptions, the 28 participants developed further spatial assumptions on urban, suburban and rural living spaces in workshops and discussion rounds. Existing GreenSupreme assumptions were partly refined, strengthened or weakened in order to translate them to different living spaces. These assumptions describe what resource-light everyday life can look like in urban, suburban and rural living spaces.

The vision of a "compact city" is reflected in central, pedestrianised structures: housing, work, leisure and education are close together, transport is notably emission-free and often organised collectively, while multifunctional buildings and green public spaces increase quality of life. Here, a shared infrastructure, communal kitchens and gardens are a given, as is a dense network of public transport, cycle paths and traffic-free neighbourhoods.

Life in the suburbs is characterised by dense, modular housing, communal spaces and a tight-knit, neighbourly culture. Energy is generated cooperatively from wind and solar power, while mobility needs are covered by car sharing, demand-responsive transport and local transport. Leisure activities and consumption are more firmly anchored in the neighbourhood; community farming and barter shops promote local cohesion.



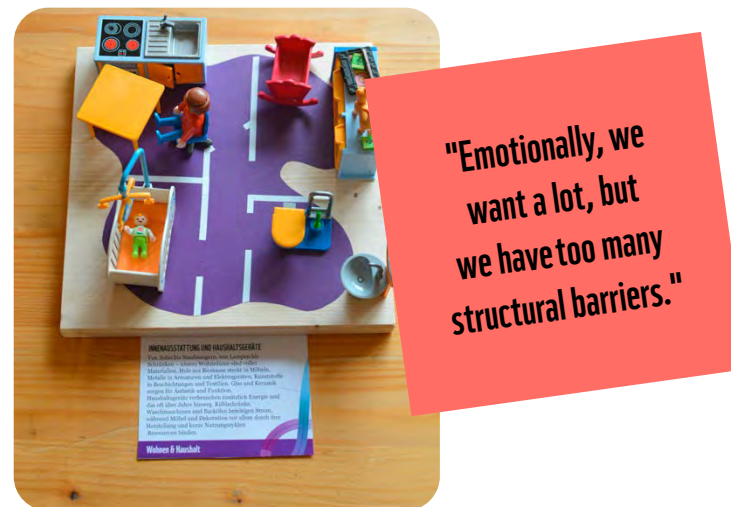
Rural life mainly takes place in multi-generational homes, with additional community kitchens strengthening social life. The food supply is organised centrally and is an expression of community organisation, while the regional supply of energy from mini-hydropower, solar and waste heat power helps gain independence. Previously sealed areas are restored to their natural state. City centres are reached via flexible e-mobility and demand-responsive transport offers.

2.1. Infobox System assumptions in the target image for 2045

- the energy supply has been completely defossilised and converted to renewable and/or synthetic energy sources in the areas of electricity, heat and mobility
- the industry has been completely defossilised and fossil fuels have been replaced with synthetic raw materials
- the extensive efficiency potential in the utilisation of energy and raw materials has been harnessed
- the broad circular economy has been expanded comprehensively in all manufacturing sectors
- unavoidable emissions have been reduced through technological changes in agriculture, waste management and the industry
- land-consuming settlement development has been stopped
- waste has been reduced
- zero growth economy from 2030 on



Over the course of six participation days in the spring and summer of 2025, the citizens' forum met regularly: sometimes at tables full of Post-its, sometimes in front of screens and Miro boards, but always full of curiosity. In Polak Games and Warm Data Labs, participants switched roles and turned assumptions about the future upside down. Complex questions are often difficult to grasp, but engaging in discussion with others helps create a common mindset that sees more than the sum of the individual parts. The Warm Data Lab, a dialogue format developed by Nora Bateson, in particular provided space to do so: personal experiences met "cold" figures and were examined from different perspectives. What do these eight tonnes actually mean for my life, the economy, health or education?



The postcards from the future were particularly visually striking. In quiet moments, participants wrote short scenes from their everyday lives in the year 2045 – addressed to their children, their friends or themselves. These texts later reappeared as AI-visualised images. Many stopped in front of them, discussing, doubting, asking questions: is this really what we want our 2045 to look like?



The Gallery Walk finally brought participants back to the here and now. Material flows and fields of consumption were laid out on tables and walls, complemented by Playmobil figures and "lab meat" made of rubber. Things that otherwise remain abstract suddenly became tangible. Again and again, we heard a quiet, "I see". Followed by discussions about what we really need and what we would like to change in the future.



3. Many roads lead to a resource-light life

Five personas in the year 2045

The project was not about designing a blueprint for resource-light living. The aim was rather to develop different combinations of adaptations to various areas of life, such as housing, mobility, diet, consumption and work, thus leaving room for individual priorities and life situations.

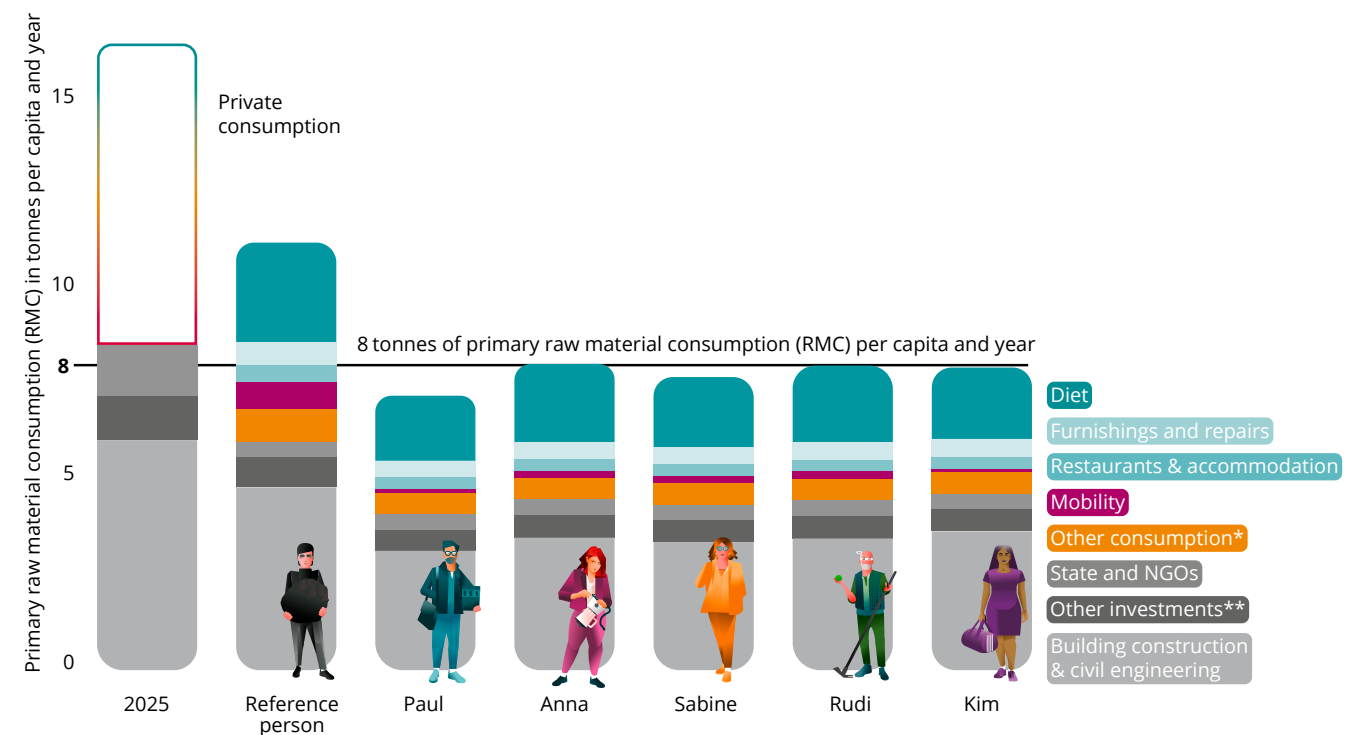
To make this diverse range of resource-light lifestyles tangible, the citizens' forum developed specific personas. While fictitious, these characters are anchored in real life and illustrate how different people – such as a commuter with a family, a pen-

sioner in the countryside or a single urbanite – could lead resource-friendly lives without compromising their quality of life or basic needs. The personas not only served as illustrations, they were also used as the basis for the subsequent quantitative modelling. Each persona represents a coherent bundle of behavioural changes with calculable effects on resources. The following personas were developed by the 28 participants and modelled by the Wuppertal Institute with regard to their consumption of primary raw materials.

Figure 8. Comparison of the personas' material footprints (RMC) in 2045

** includes equipment, facilities, supplies and valuables. * includes leisure, culture, education, health, communication, clothing, housing and energy. Consumption fields for 2025 not differentiated in private consumption due to different categorisation.

Source: Author's calculation, WI





Paul
27 years old

Paul is 27, a lawyer and lives with his girlfriend Paula in a light-filled flat with around 38 square metres per person.

The compact living space is part of a building complex with community kitchens (in addition to its own small kitchenette), workshops and roof gardens, which reduces private space requirements. The two of them maintain an almost exclusively plant-based diet and favour regional, unpackaged food. They predominantly purchase clothing and electronics

second-hand and use them for a long time. They no longer own their own car and instead travel by bike, public transport and the occasional car sharing offer. With a 30- to 35-hour week, both have more time to get involved in the community garden. They enjoy the new-found ease of a resource-friendly lifestyle, but still struggle with their longing for spontaneous long-distance travel. With an RMC of 7.2 tonnes per year, Paul and Paula are well below eight tonnes, mainly thanks to their plant-based diet, compact living space and car-free lifestyle.



Anna
38 years old

Anna is 38, has a part-time job in controlling and lives with her partner, two children of primary-school age and a Golden Retriever in a terraced house in the suburbs with around 40 square metres per person.

She invests specifically in climate-friendly redevelopment measures. She still owns a car, but mainly uses her bike, public transport and the train, travelling by plane at most once every five years. Her diet is a

mixed diet with significantly fewer animal products; it is regional and often organic. She wastes less than 500 grams of food. Anna uses clothes, appliances and furniture for a long time, occasionally buying second-hand and borrowing things. She uses digital devices for several years. Repairability is more important to her than constantly buying new items. With a 30- to 35-hour week, she has more time for culture, nature and her family. Anna will thus have a footprint of eight tonnes in 2045.



Sabine
55 years old

Sabine is 55 and works as an editor, both as a permanent employee and a freelancer. She lives on her own on the edge of town, in a condominium that has recently been reduced to 40 m² and modernised for energy efficiency.

Taking the step was hard for her. Saying goodbye to her previous 78 square metres was a true turning point. However, she now appreciates the quiet, well-connected location and the communal rooms in the building, without having to move into a housing project herself. She travels almost exclusively on foot,

by bike or by train and hardly ever uses the car. Her diet is fully vegetarian, regional and low in packaging, and her food waste stays under 500 grams per week. She uses clothes, technical equipment and furniture for a long time, occasionally buys second-hand and pays particular attention to repairability. She fills her spare time with culture, voluntary work, nature and close social contacts. She rarely travels by plane, perhaps once every ten years. With an RMC of 7.7 tonnes in 2045, she is in the ambitious range and knows that her reduction in living space has had the greatest impact on her significantly reduced footprint.



Rudi
73 years old

Rudi is 73 and a former bank branch manager who lives in the country in a freehold house that has recently been modernised for energy efficiency, with around 39.6 square metres per person.

A move or communal living is out of the question for him, even though he has become interested in appealing examples. Instead of having two cars, he and his partner now drive a smaller electric model and get around a lot on foot, by bike and by train where possible. He no

longer travels long distances by plane. His diet is predominantly vegetarian, regional and organic. He often swaps his home-grown produce with his neighbours. He uses his experience and good stock management to minimise food waste. He uses clothes and everyday objects for a long time, often borrows tools from neighbours and only occasionally buys second-hand. He uses his digital devices for years; quality beats novelty. He is a handyman who devotes himself to his garden and his family in his spare time. Rudi's resource consumption is at 7.95 tonnes.



Kim
46 years old

Kim is 46 and is a project manager in a large health-care company. She is career-oriented and in 2045 lives with her now teenage children in a modern condominium that has recently been modified for energy efficiency in the city, with around 52 square metres per person.

Her car is passé – Kim commutes by train and bike, taking the train for longer journeys. Air travel has disappeared from her life completely. Her diet is fully vegetarian, predominantly organic and regional, with

minimal food waste. She rarely buys clothes, furniture and technical devices; she usually opts for second-hand or durable products – and uses everything twice as long as she used to. She still works full-time and does not want to shift down a gear or compromise on her career. She relaxes at the theatre and cinema, in the garden and by engaging with her close-knit network. With an RMC of 7.9 tonnes, Kim shows that a demanding job and a resource-friendly life are compatible, even if she constantly struggles with the different expectations of her family.



Reference Persona

All the above personas are in stark contrast to a reference persona that serves as a benchmark. This persona does not represent a real person or a desired target image, but describes how high our resource consumption would still be in 2045 if we did almost nothing to change our lifestyle and merely the technological and infrastructural improvements assumed in the GreenSupreme scenario ([see Infobox 2.1.](#)) came into effect.

The reference persona thus carries today's average consumption pattern largely unchanged into the future. In 2045, they will still live in a home with a living space of around 49 square metres per person, use their own car very regularly and buy mostly new clothes, technical appliances and furniture. Meat and dairy products, along with highly processed foods,

continue to dominate their diet, while regional or organic products are the exception. Repair, share or second-hand offers barely play a role. Their leisure time is more consumption-orientated, focussing on regular shopping trips, streaming and travel.

Despite more efficient technologies and improved infrastructure, their primary raw material consumption will reach an RMC of 11.2 tonnes in 2045. The reference persona thus still consumes around three tonnes more than the average GreenSupreme value and over 1.5 times as much as Paul. As such, the reference persona shows: structural improvements alone are not enough to achieve the 8-tonne target. Without making changes in key areas of our everyday life, our raw material consumption will remain well above sustainable levels.

Figure 9. Lifestyle characteristics and resource consumption of the five personas in 2045

Source: Author's calculation, WI

					
	Paul	Anna	Sabine	Rudi	Kim
Age	27	38	55	73	46
Household situation	Couple household without children	Couple household with children	Single household	Couple household without children	Couple household with children
Place of residence	Urban	Suburban	Suburban	Rural	Urban
Diet	Vegetarian, organic, hardly any waste	Regional, occasionally meat	Vegetarian, regional and organic	Vegetarian, regional, little waste	Vegetarian, significantly fewer animal products
Living space p. p.	38 m²	40 m²	40 m²	39.6 m²	51.8 m²
Mobility	Mostly bike & bus, no own car	Own car plus occasional public transport	One car, a lot on foot	By car, bike & on foot	Public transport dominant, no own car
Electronics Period of use	Smartphone 4-5 yrs. Laptop ≥5 yrs. ICT second-hand: always	Smartphone 2-3 yrs. Laptop 4-5 yrs. ICT second-hand: sometimes	Smartphone 4-5 yrs. Laptop ≥5 yrs. ICT second-hand: never	Smartphone 4-5 yrs. Laptop ≥5 yrs. ICT second-hand: never	Smartphone 4-5 yrs. Laptop ≥5 yrs. ICT second-hand: sometimes
Furnishings/ furniture	Buys new approx. 1×/year; occasionally second-hand; will regularly buy used instead of new in future; borrows/shares if possible	Buys new approx. 2×/year; rarely/never second-hand; uses as long as possible; will buy used regularly in future; borrows/shares regularly	Buys new approx. 1×/year; occasionally second-hand; uses as long as possible; will regularly/almost only buy second-hand in future; borrows/shares if possible	Buys new approx. every 3 years; occasionally second-hand; uses as long as possible; will occasionally buy used in future; regularly borrows/shares	Buys new approx. every 3 years; often second-hand; significantly extended period of use; will regularly buy used in future; regularly borrows/shares
RMC 2045	7.2 t	8 t	7.7 t	7.95 t	7.9 t

Conclusion: Eight tonnes are achievable in everyday life

Our look to the year 2045 gave us the following picture: a per capita consumption of just six to eight tonnes is achievable if we combine the effect of sustainable lifestyles, technical innovations and political frameworks. The decisive factor here: neither the project team nor the participants went into the process with a predetermined "tonnes target". Rather, it was up to the citizens themselves to describe a good life in 2045: what needs, priorities and assumptions they made, which infrastructures they took for granted and which routines they would be prepared to change.

The personas developed in the participation process do not show a single path; they show several. And especially in contrast to the reference persona, the modelled personas illustrate the great potential for conserving resources, even when only some areas of consumption change. The personas show that ambitious yet realistic lifestyle changes – such as a predominantly plant-based diet, more compact living spaces or shared mobility offers – can significantly

reduce resource consumption in everyday life without having to sacrifice quality of life. The fact that in the modelling, all five of the personas that were based on these citizen assumptions actually consumed less than eight tonnes of raw materials per capita per year was a result we could not have expected to see with such clarity and came as a positive surprise over the course of the project. It shows that if people are free to describe their idea of a "good life" while at the same time taking the right structural conditions into account, they create lifestyles that are not just possible within planetary boundaries, but are attractive to boot.

It is also worth noting that these approaches appear feasible while maintaining or even improving quality of life and have already been met with broad approval from the parties involved. As the following chapter shows, key elements of resource-light lifestyles are also popular among the population as a whole.



4. Shaping acceptance

The conditions under which people support change

The previous chapter shows that resource-light lifestyles within a raw material budget of 8 tonnes per capita per year are possible. These results are based on a deliberately selective sample of around 30 participants with predominantly high incomes. However, it remains to be seen to what extent the lifestyles and roads to change identified in the last chapter are also viable for the population as a whole. Against this backdrop, this chapter uses a representative nationwide survey to analyse how society views key components of resource-light lifestyles, and what role systemic framework conditions play in acceptance and feasibility. The survey data were gathered by quantilope on behalf of WWF Germany. In August 2025, 1,001 people in Germany were surveyed online; the survey is representative of the German-speaking population aged 18 and over.

The survey's approach: Identical lifestyles, two realities

The survey uses a contrast: two scenarios describe the same resource-light lifestyle, but differ in terms of framework conditions. This brings to light whether people fail to accept a resource-light lifestyle due to the necessary practices themselves or due to the current conditions that make these practices more difficult. The starting point is the realisation that sustainable behaviour is not primarily the result of individual decisions, but is essentially controlled by social, political and economic framework conditions. Empirical studies show that infrastructure, pricing and regulations in particular determine whether sustainable options are perceived as practicable and attractive in everyday life [16], [17], [18]. Against this background, the scenario

comparison aims to visualise the importance of systemic prerequisites for acceptance. Both scenarios are based on the average lifestyle characteristics of the developed personas.

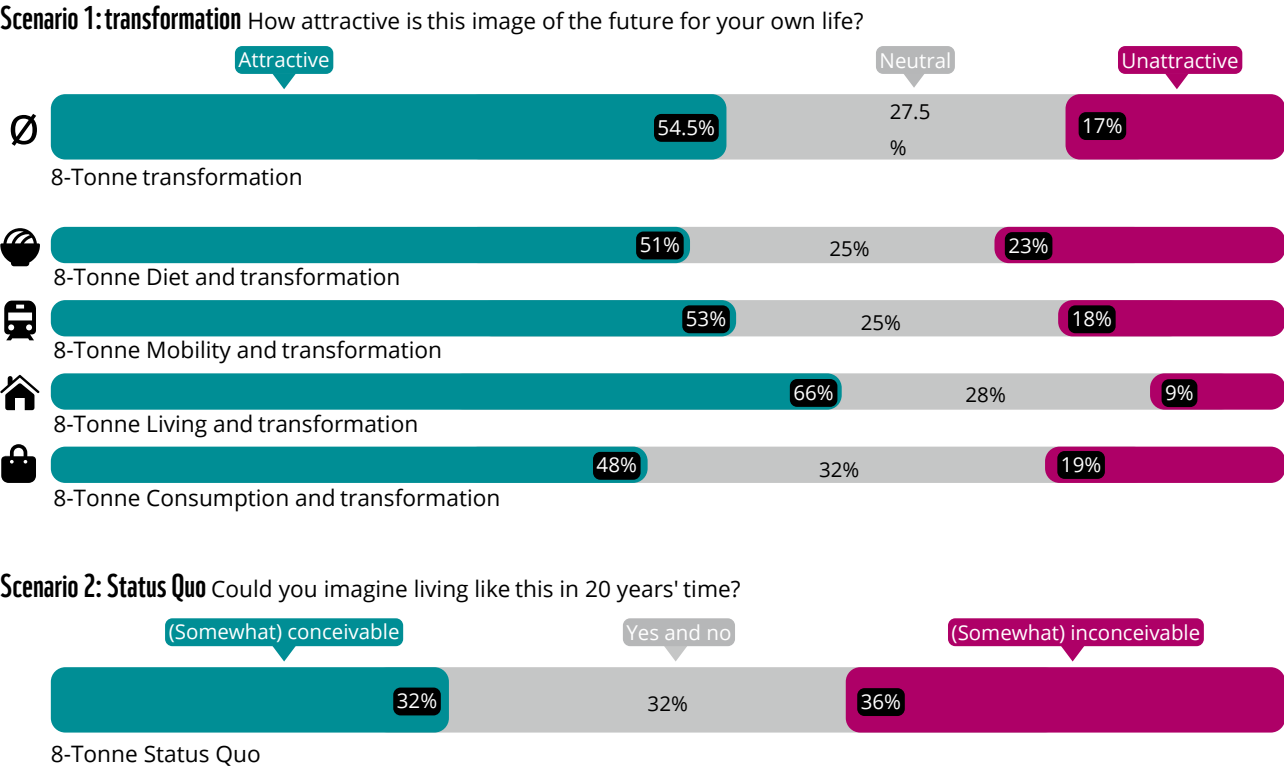
- **Housing:** 41 m² p. p., no pets
- **Diet:** vegetarian
- **Clothing:** predominantly second-hand
- **Devices:** Period of use over five years
- **Mobility:** Bike, car sharing, train and bus, no own car, no intra-European flights, at maximum one intercontinental flight every five years
- **Working hours:** 30-hour week

Scenario 1: transformation (with supporting framework conditions)

In the first scenario (titled "The 8-Tonne transformation"), these lifestyle characteristics are supplemented by supporting systemic requirements. These include expanded infrastructures, price-based incentives, political measures and the visions of the future devised in the citizens' forum. Put in concrete terms, this translates to:

- **Diet:** a predominantly plant-based diet as a social standard with political backing, supported by local supply systems (e.g. community-supported agriculture, membership initiatives) and readily available, affordable plant-based options in retail, restaurants and catering.
- **Housing:** energy-efficient modernisation of buildings as a state-subsidised and established practice. Energy-efficient buildings allow for

Figure 10. Proportion of respondents who find a resource-light lifestyle attractive in the Status Quo or supporting scenarios [n = 1,001]



- high thermal comfort with low energy consumption. Decentralised energy generation (e.g. balcony solar power) and access to private or communal green spaces are widespread.
- **Mobility:** Everyday mobility predominantly by bike, bus and train, supplemented by nationwide on-demand services (car sharing, autonomous shuttles, demand responsive transport) via app. Rail is the standard for mid- and long-distance journeys, including night train services. The system is flanked by government incentives such as climate bonuses for low-flight mobility and improved rail services (comfort, punctuality, digital services).
 - **Consumption:** Local exchange, lending and sharing platforms, an established repair infrastructure (digital finder, access to spare parts, workshops) and durable, repairable products as a market standard promote the shift towards circular consumption.

Scenario 2: Status Quo

In the second scenario ("The 8-Tonne Status Quo"), the lifestyle characteristics are identical, but there is a complete lack of supporting framework conditions. Based on the current status quo, respondents assessed a resource-light lifestyle as an individual adaptation effort in an everyday life in which resource-friendly options are not yet systemically facilitated.

Key result: Approval is conditional and can be shaped politically

The survey shows: whether someone considers a resource-light lifestyle attractive and practicable depends less on the lifestyle itself and more on the framework conditions that help bring it to life. Even though the underlying lifestyle characteristics (e.g. 41 square metres of living space per person) are identical in both scenarios, and are below the target value of a raw material consumption of eight tonnes per capita, assessments differ significantly. Depending on the scenario and area of consumption, approval ratings range between 32 and 66 per cent. The comparison between the status quo (32

percent attractive) and the enablement scenarios (Ø 55 percent attractive) shows: the differences are not due to individual willingness. Rather, the same actions and lifestyle characteristics are viewed much more positively if they are facilitated and socially normalised by a suitable infrastructure, incentives and political framework conditions.

In the enablement scenario, the majority predominantly approves of resource-light lifestyles. The highest level of approval is for housing (66 percent), followed by mobility (53 percent), diet (51 percent) and consumption (48 percent). The pattern is consistent: the more clearly the framework conditions ensure convenience, availability and reliability, the higher the level of acceptance. Supportive framework conditions translate existing willingness into actual practice. The 34 percentage points difference between the status quo scenario and the enablement scenario therefore does not point to sceptics who need convincing, but to people who already agree under the right conditions.

conditions (32 percent in total). At the same time, 36 percent cannot imagine this lifestyle and a further 32 percent remain undecided. In order to analyse these obstacles in more detail, we asked which elements of the lifestyle respondents considered particularly difficult to imagine under status quo conditions. This revealed the inhibiting factors: 55 percent find it difficult to imagine doing without their own car. 50 percent reject a vegetarian diet without supportive framework conditions. 35 percent each consider it difficult to do without pets and intra-European flights, while 30 percent consider it difficult to reduce living space. These values are not an expression of a general refusal, but point to structural deficits, as Scenario 1 shows. Without reliable alternatives, affordable offers and political support, the exact same lifestyle characteristics are considered an imposition.

Barriers and motivation

In Scenario 2, with no supporting framework conditions, approval drops significantly. 13 per cent agree with a resource-light lifestyle without reservation, while a further 19 percent only agree under certain

Sufficiency is not the crux of the matter; how it is realised is

The fact that ambivalence and rejection primarily result from a lack of options becomes apparent when we take an isolated look at individual practices, beyond the logic of the scenarios. Respondents are extremely open when it comes to meat consumption: 76 percent are in favour of a low-meat diet. 49 percent already consume less than 300 grams

Figure 11. Conceivability of an 8-tonne lifestyle in the Status Quo scenario by net income in € [n = 1,001]

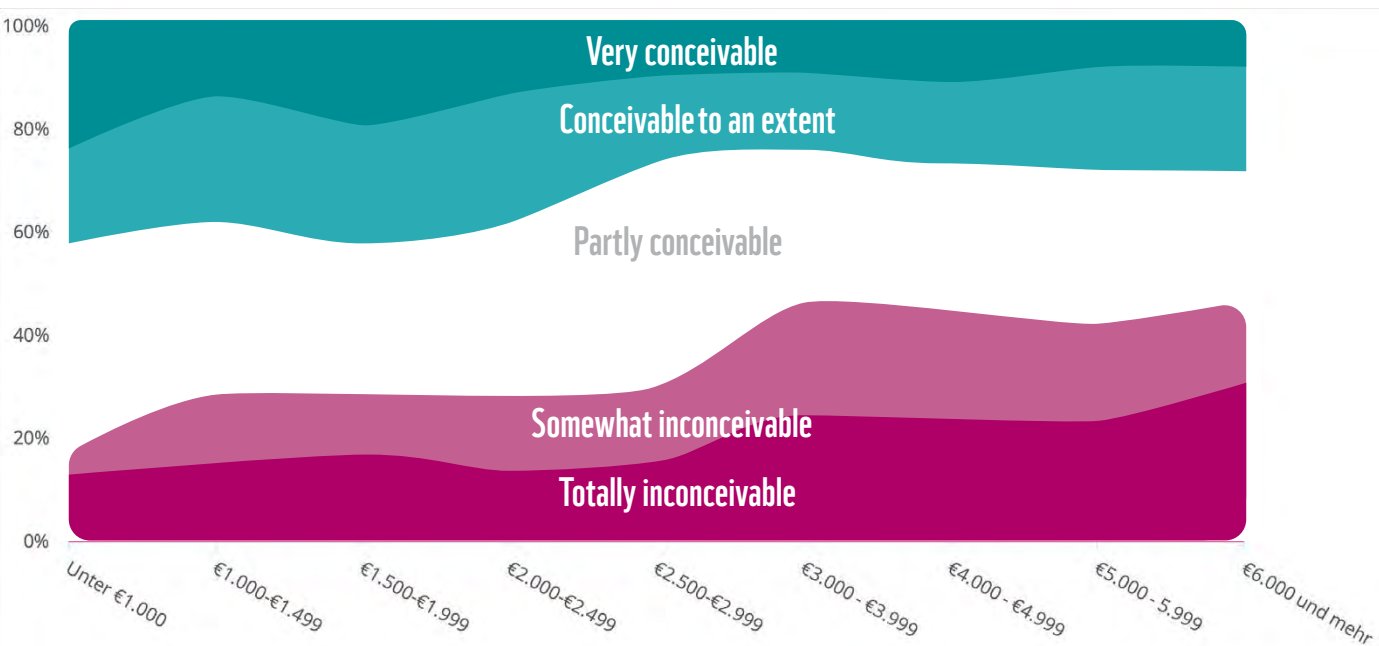
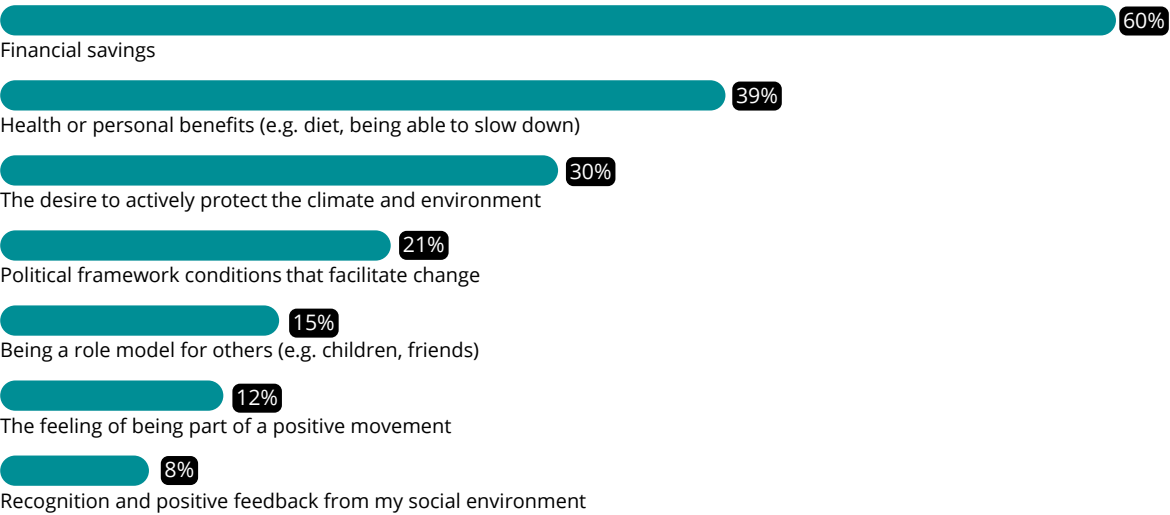


Figure 12. Motivating factors for maintaining a resource-friendly lifestyle.

What would most motivate you to make your lifestyle more resource-friendly?
[n = 1.001]



of meat per week (GreenSupreme guideline value), while a further 27 percent can imagine doing so under certain conditions (e.g. with cheaper alternatives). There is also high potential for car-free mobility: 62 percent are open to a life without their own car (14 percent already do not own a car; 22 percent can well imagine being car-free; 26 percent can imagine being car-free under certain conditions).

This highlights the crux of the matter: the willingness to do with "less" itself is not a barrier, but the expectation that a resource-light life will work under the given conditions is. As soon as policies create structural conditions and incentives, the approval ratings for the exact same practices increase significantly in the enablement scenarios, for example in the areas of more compact housing, a plant-based diet or car-free mobility.

A question of justice: More acceptance among lower incomes

These results are also relevant from a socio-economic perspective. When linked to income data, we see that the willingness to adopt an 8-tonne lifestyle increases in the status quo scenario as income decreases. A well-facilitated 8-tonne lifestyle can improve the quality of life of low- and middle-income households, for example through lower running costs, reliable mobility alternatives, more comfortable housing and a more convenient supply. High-income sections of the population whose resource consumption is well above ecologically sustainable

levels per capita face much greater reduction efforts. An 8-tonne strategy is therefore not a general reduction programme, but a policy for prosperity within a corridor: secured at the bottom by social participation and limited at the top by ecological sustainability.

Why the status quo curbs approval: Barriers, concerns, motivation

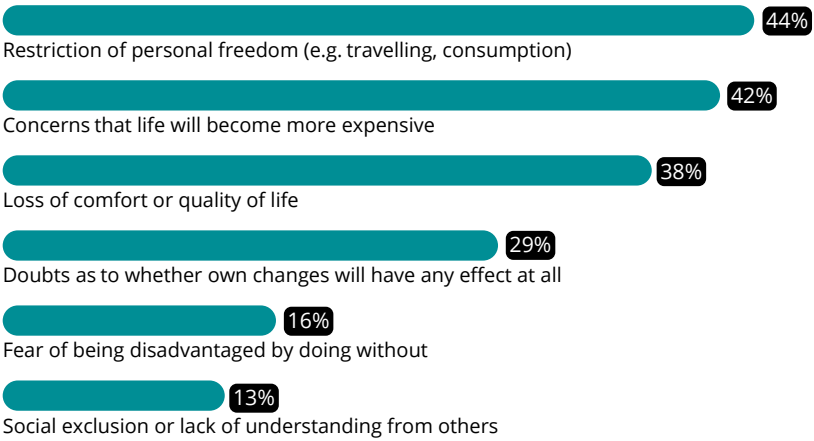
Across all areas of consumption, respondents identified three key barriers that currently stand in the way of a resource-light lifestyle.

- 1. **Cost perception:** Resource-light alternatives are perceived as too expensive.
- 2. **Suitability for everyday use:** there is a lack of simplicity and practicable routines.
- 3. **Competence and time barriers:** time, knowledge and capabilities are cited as additional hurdles.

When it comes to worries and concerns about resource-light lifestyles, 44 percent associate a more resource-friendly lifestyle with a loss of freedom, 42 percent with higher costs and 38 percent with a loss of comfort. This explains why approval drops so quickly in the Status Quo scenario; the lifestyle is not considered progress, but a burden.

At the same time, the survey shows what helps create acceptance. Resource-friendly decisions become

Figure 13. What worries or concerns do you associate with a more resource-friendly lifestyle? [n = 1.001]



particularly attractive when they are seen as an actual, tangible benefit in everyday life. Financial savings are the most convincing (60 percent), followed by health and personal benefits such as a better diet or being able to slow down (39 percent). At 30 percent, climate and environmental protection is also relevant, but lags behind those co-benefits that are immediately tangible. In addition, 21 percent would like to see a political framework that motivates change. This shows that co-benefits need to become visible and plausible as a relief for our budgets, health and everyday life.

Political implications: Eight tonnes belong on the political agenda

The central conclusion: it is not primarily a lack of willingness that causes an 8-tonne policy to fail, but a lack of enablement. In this field, transformation is less about persuasion than it is about prior concession: invest first, and behaviours will change, thus creating acceptance.

A political framework is a key factor in whether resource-light lifestyles are perceived as a restriction or a desirable normality. In concrete terms, this means:

- Expanding and converting infrastructures so that resource-light options are available, reliable and efficient across the board (e.g. expansion of public transport and cycle networks, local repair and reuse centres, sharing infrastructures, regional supply structures)

- Realigning price structures and fiscal incentives so that resource-intensive options correspond to their actual social costs and resource-light alternatives become affordable (e.g. reduction of subsidies that are harmful to the environment, lowering of taxes and levies on repairs, second-hand items and sharing offers)
- Bindingly gearing product and market frameworks towards longevity and circularity so that sustainable products become a matter of course (e.g. minimum requirements for durability, reparability and availability of spare parts)
- Prioritising suitability for everyday use: less complexity, more time and accessibility, less "extra effort"

Under conditions such as these, it is possible to activate majorities; acceptance therefore depends on how policies are shaped. The survey thus not only shows what an 8-tonne lifestyle might look like; it also highlights the political and structural conditions that make this lifestyle socially viable.

Who needs to act

Do consumers have to change their behaviour, or is it up to politicians to set the framework conditions? the survey data show: the population believes responsibility needs to be shared almost evenly among individuals (23 percent), companies (21 percent), politicians (21 percent) and major consumers such as the super-rich (20 percent). No one is held solely responsible.

This equal distribution contradicts the theory frequently put forward that consumers "simply have to make different choices". People understand that individual behaviour is only part of the solution. At the same time, they recognise that they themselves need to assume responsibility – provided the other stakeholders also play their part. This results in a clear mandate for co-operative approaches. It will take the combined effort of individual actions, economic innovations and political guidelines, and that includes major consumers.

The role of politics

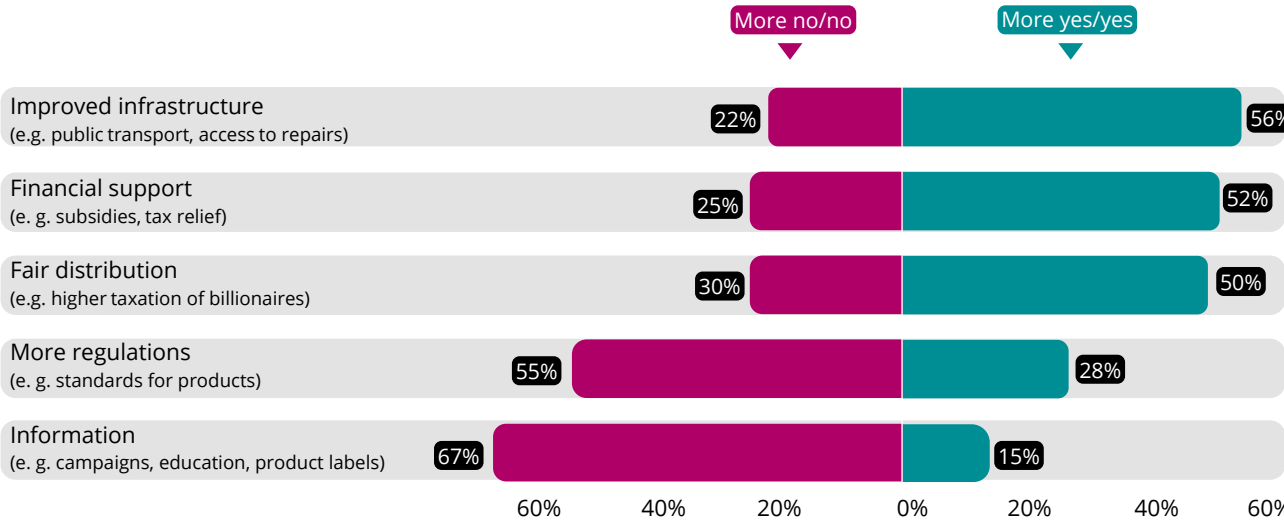
The data also provide a robust basis for political action. 58 percent consider legal regulations to reduce resource consumption important (35 percent somewhat important, 23 percent very important); only 15 percent reject them. However, 27 percent are undecided or have no clear opinion – a group that can surely be won over with comprehensible arguments about benefits and transparent

communication. However, it is key *how* political control is implemented. Investment and facilitating approaches such as the expansion of infrastructure (e.g. public transport, access to repair services) and financial support through subsidies or tax relief are particularly popular. The majority also supports greater redistribution, for example through a higher taxation of substantial wealth. By contrast, additional regulations and product standards are viewed much more sceptically, while pure information and education campaigns fared the worst.

Fairness as a basis for legitimisation

The modelling carried out within the project shows that resource consumption is unevenly distributed across society. On average, high-income households use significantly more resources than low-income households. This imbalance is key to political legitimisation, as in the survey, it is negotiated not just as an environmental issue, but an issue of fairness as well. Accordingly, many respondents expect resource conservation; namely, that highly resource-intensive lifestyles are held more accountable and that households with lower incomes are granted targeted relief. 79 percent support higher taxes on particularly resource-intensive luxury goods such as private jets and yachts. 77 percent consider buying one's way out of resource-intensive behaviour based on the principle of "pay more and you'll be allowed to consume more" to be unfair. And 75 percent are in favour of the principle of "consume more, pay more". 60 percent of respondents agree

Figure 14. Which of these political approaches would you most strongly support in order to promote more resource-friendly living? [n = 1.001]



with the statement that people with high incomes should contribute more to resource conservation than people with low incomes. 51 percent support advertising restrictions for resource-intensive status symbols such as SUVs.

These values open up space for progressive instruments that provide targeted relief for lower-income households. Research supports this approach: studies show that acceptance of environmental policy measures depends heavily on whether they are perceived to be fair. Sustainability policies that take social inequality into account are not only perceived as fairer, but are also more effective [19]. The strong support for higher taxes on luxury consumption and major consumers also refutes the fear that resource policy measures would be rejected across the board as a "dictate to go without". Quite the opposite is true: when burdens are distributed fairly and the largest consumers are held accountable, there is broad support for political control.

Figure 15. How important is it to you that politicians adopt legal regulations to reduce resource consumption in Germany? [n = 1.001]

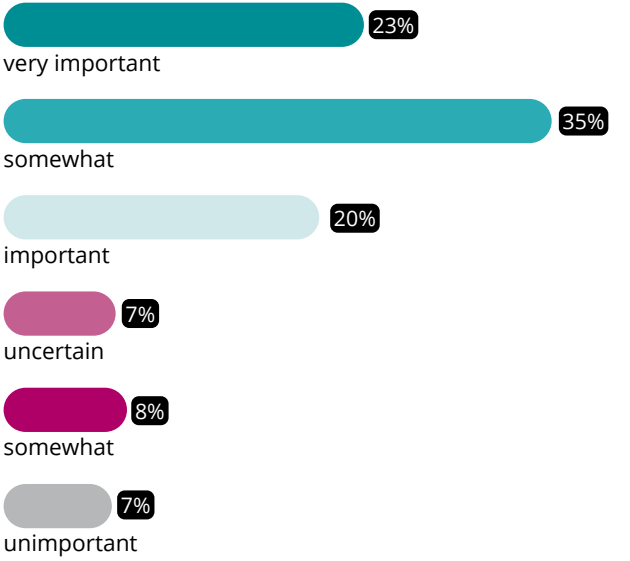
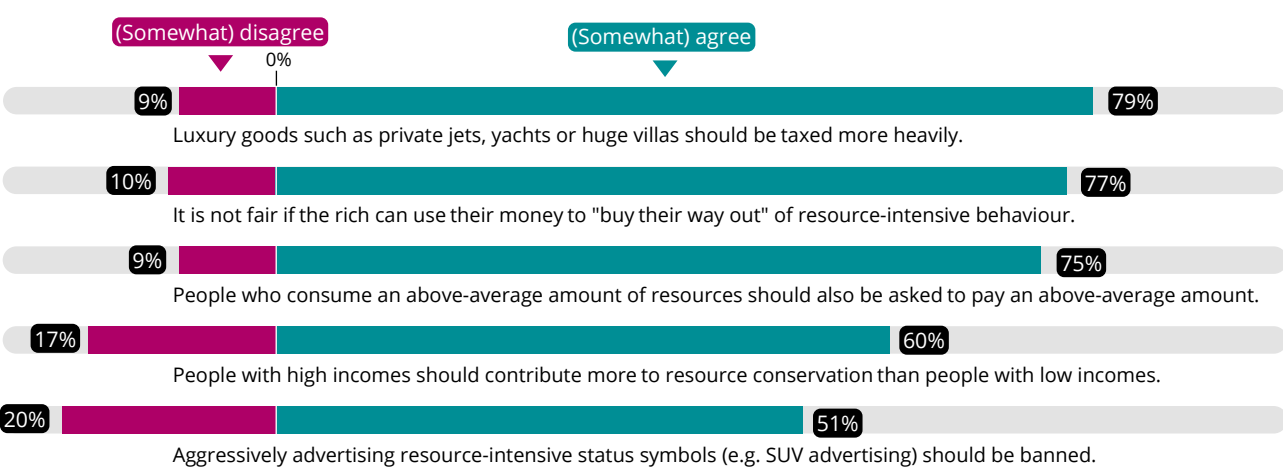


Figure 16. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? [n = 1.001]





5. Fields of action in everyday life

Policy approaches for Diet, Housing, Mobility, Consumption and time

This chapter translates the results from the representative population survey (n = 1,001) and the participation process (n = 26) into policy approaches. It focuses on five fields of action that depend heavily on enablement framework

conditions: Diet; Housing and Households; Mobility; Consumption; and time. The findings are extensive: many people are generally open to less resource-intensive practices, as long as price, availability, quality and suitability for everyday use are right. Policy

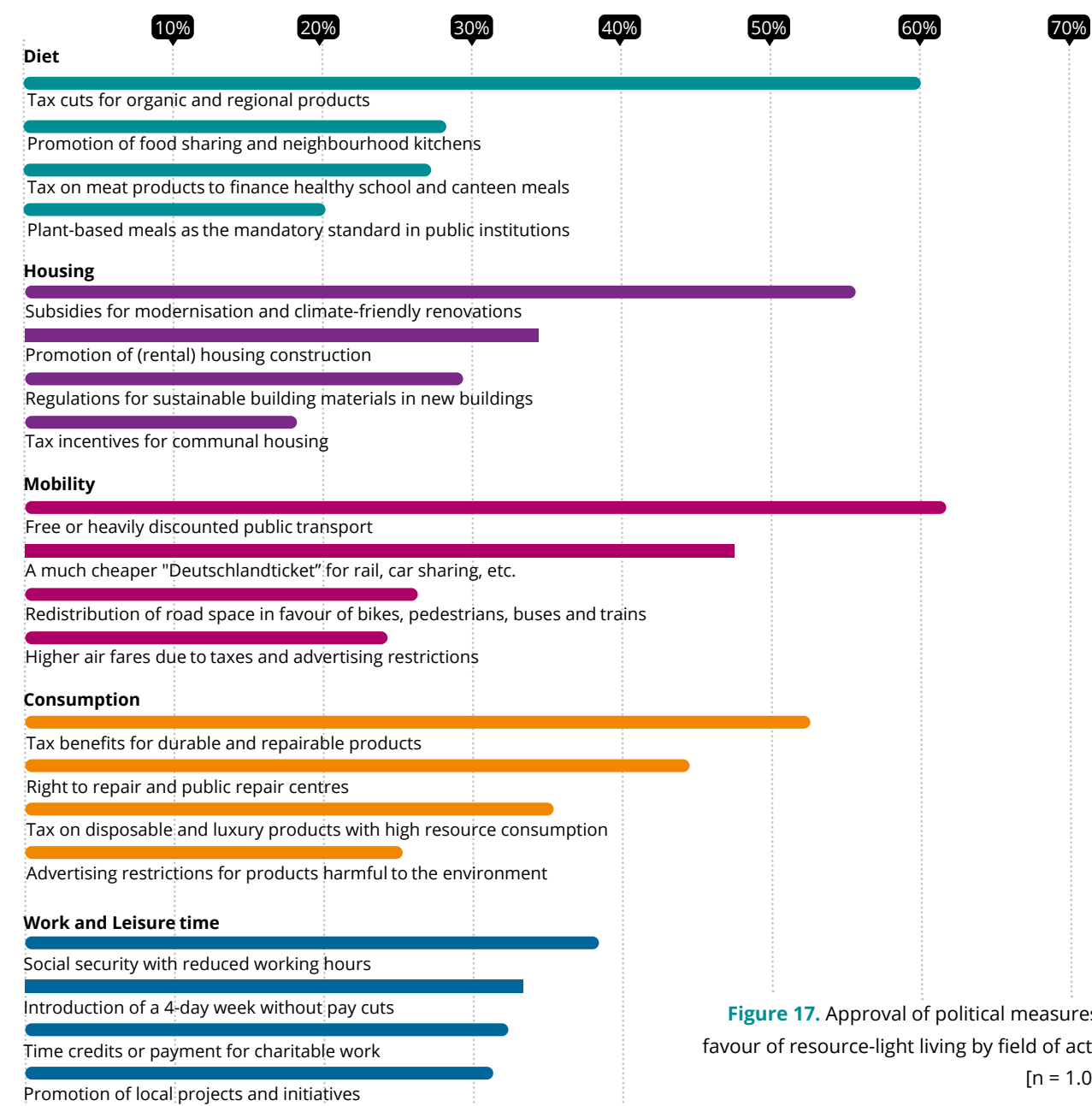


Figure 17. Approval of political measures in favour of resource-light living by field of action [n = 1.001]

Figure 20. Less than 300 g of meat per week? Could you imagine eating less than 300 g of meat per week on average in future? (Corresponds to two small portions per week, for example) [n = 1,001]

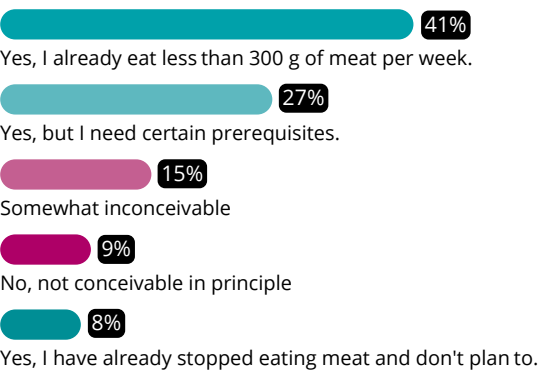


Figure 19. Political measures for a resource-friendly diet. What political measures would you like to see in order for your diet to become more resource-friendly? [n = 1.001]

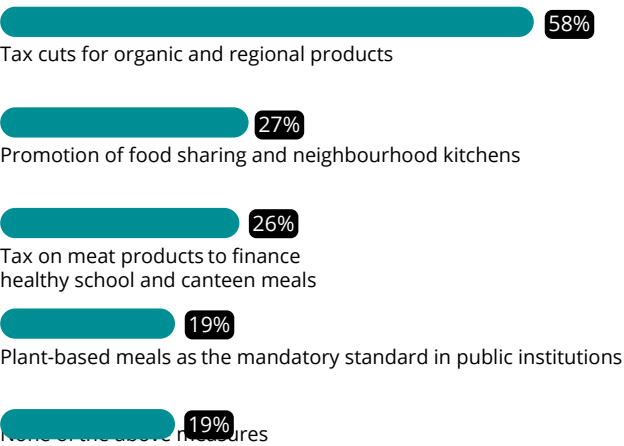
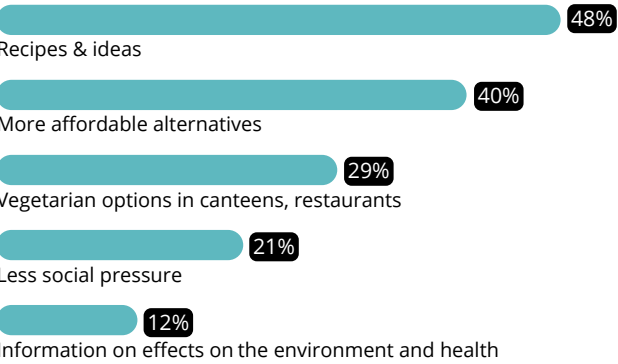


Figure 18. What would you need to stay below 300 g of meat per week? [n = 272]



instruments should primarily aim at enablement and – where appropriate – be supplemented by binding standards for offers and prerequisites along with minimum standards to create a new "normal" (e.g. plant-based options as the standard in canteens) and by financial guidance.

Diet

The survey shows the potential for a lower-meat, plant-based diet. Today, 41 percent already consume less than 300 grams of meat per week, while a further eight per cent eat no meat at all. At the same time, there is a large group that, while not absolutely opposed to reducing meat in their diet, needs reliable framework conditions to do so. 27 percent would be prepared to eat less than 300 grams if the conditions were right. 24 percent remain sceptical (15 percent "rather not", nine percent "absolutely not"). Among the sceptics (n = 239), the amount of meat deemed "important" is usually well over 300 grams (most common range: 500 to 700 grams per week).

This shows that there is less need for political action vis-à-vis those who are already convinced than vis-à-vis the "persuadables". This group is large enough to shift dietary patterns across the board, but reacts sensitively to flavour, offer and price. Among those who are generally willing (n = 272) but cite prerequisites, 48 percent would like to see everyday recipes and ideas for tasty low-meat dishes in particular. 40 percent cite cheaper prices for plant-based alternatives, 29 percent a wider range of vegetarian options in canteens, restaurants and shops. Even among those who already eat less meat (n = 406), cuisine and availability remain central stimuli. 39 percent cite tasty and filling alternatives as a motivation, 26 percent a wider range of vegetarian options and 25 percent reliable evidence of effects on health and the environment.

Rejection stems less from a fundamental obstructionist attitude than from perceptions, routines and supposed health logic. Among the openly sceptical (<300 grams of meat per week "somewhat" inconceivable; n = 150), there are two dominant barriers: the taste of plant-based alternatives (59 percent) and health beliefs ("meat is part of a healthy diet", 58 percent), followed by social habits (27 percent) and price (24 percent).

The survey shows approval for fiscal and financial instruments that boost a low-meat diet. The participation process confirms this tendency, adding proposals: reducing or abolishing VAT for plant-based staple foods; animal welfare levies; and vegetarian or vegan food as the standard in canteens and schools with an increase in organic and regional quotas. Other measures include the expansion of local reusable and unpackaged options; digital information platforms; advertising restrictions for unhealthy products; and CO₂ labels for imports.

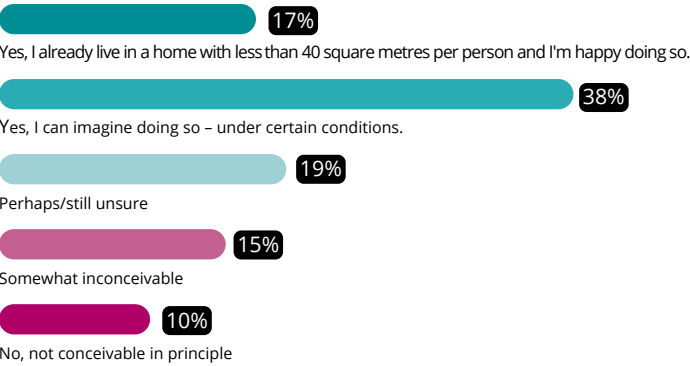
The greatest impact is achieved by an enablement-first approach in which infrastructural, pricing and social framework conditions are initially designed so that sustainable options are suitable and attractive for everyday use. Attractive, filling plant-based options, high everyday availability and fair prices reduce the costs of switching and normalise new standards. Regulations gain legitimacy as soon as the benefits become evident (e.g. levies earmarked for communal catering in the interest of Planetary Health, binding procurement standards).

Diet implementation priorities

- 1. Fiscal reorientation (True Cost Accounting: reduction of subsidies for animal products, tax relief for plant-based/organic/regional products)
- 2. Transformation of communal catering (plant-based as the standard, organic/regional quotas ≥50%)
- 3. Strengthening of capabilities for a plant-based diet (evidence-based cookery education, low-threshold recipes and preparation tips)
- 4. Education about health and environmental effects to counter persistent flavour and protein myths
- 1. Expansion of food infrastructure in underserved regions (market access for fresh, plant-based products; logistics and distribution)

This combination specifically addresses the "persuadables" (27% of the population) and stabilises flexitarians through structural support rather than moral appeals.

Figure 21. Living space of less than 40 m²? Could you imagine living in a home with less than 40 square metres of living space per person in the future? [n = 1.001]

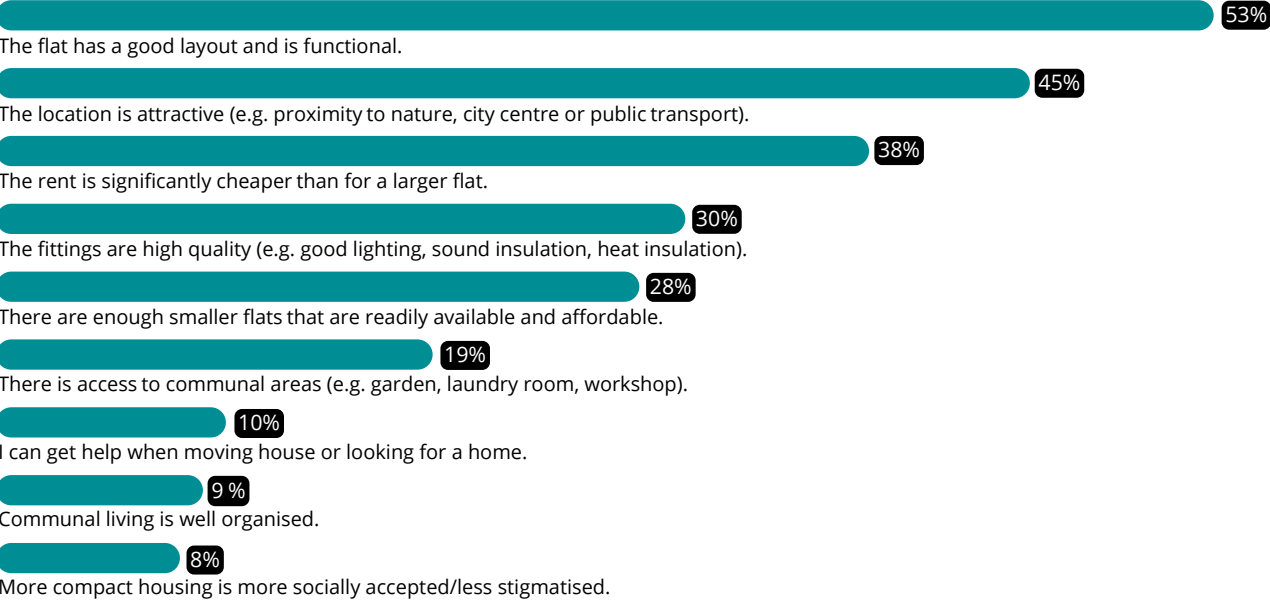


Housing and Households

When it comes to housing, there is high potential for transformation, but this is strongly linked to quality and costs. In the survey, 17 percent of respondents already enjoy living in homes with a living space of less than 40 square metres per person. A further 38 percent can imagine a home with less than 40 square metres per person in principle if certain conditions are met. In the participation process, the majority (54 percent) also signalled their willingness to live in a home with less, or significantly less, living space in future; at the same time, 73 percent of participants already live in a home with less than 40 square metres per person. The sceptics (n = 252) in the survey predominantly considered it "important" to live in a home with 50 to 100 square metres per person.

A reduction in floor space is therefore not unattractive per se, but it is subject to conditions. Among those who are open to a living space of <40 square metres per person under certain conditions, 53 percent cite functional flats with a good layout as a decisive factor. 45 percent emphasise an attractive location (public transport connections, proximity to nature or the city centre), while 38 percent mention a tangible reduction in rent. Other key criteria are high-quality furnishings (30 percent) and the actual availability of small, affordable flats (28 percent). The participation process added essential details that are often underestimated: storage space, private areas and a well-organised shared infrastructure (workshops, common rooms). These factors make compact living practical.

Figure 22. Conditions for less living space. Under what conditions could you imagine a good and happy life with less living space? [n = 382]



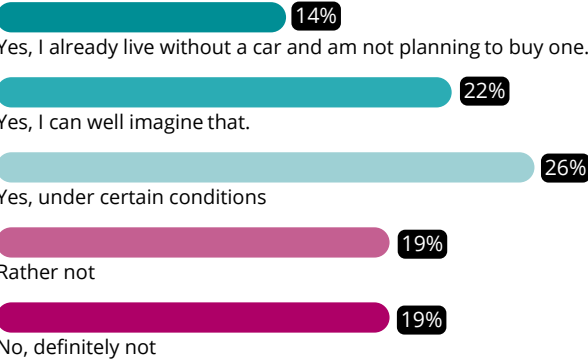
Among people who already live in homes with a living space of less than 40 square metres per person, the most important motive is economic: 45 percent cite lower housing costs or state that they cannot afford a larger flat. This is followed by primarily pragmatic reasons such as meeting their own needs, a preferable location and less effort in everyday life (e.g. cleaning, maintenance).

The results show that the concept of living in a home with a living space of less than 40 square metres per person fails less due to rejection than due to actual structural and practical everyday hurdles. Existing ties have a particularly strong effect. For almost half of the respondents, home ownership (47 percent) is a key obstacle, as downsizing is not only associated with selling, renovating or legal issues, but often with a strong emotional attachment to one's own home. Concerns about storage space (44 percent) and limited privacy (42 percent) indicate that smaller living spaces are often not perceived as equivalently functional. It is striking that 26 percent do not expect any financial relief – which is plausible, as a move often means losing a favourable existing contract and entering an expensive housing market; a lack of suitable offers (15 percent) reinforces this effect.

The participation process brings additional hurdles to light: firstly, there is a lack of adequate financing, targeted funding and independent advice for energy-efficient modernisation, photovoltaics, green areas and renovations. In communities of condominium owners (CCO), PV and efficiency projects often fail due to legal and organisational hurdles. Secondly, rules and procedures slow us down: parking space regulations hinder the division of large detached houses into smaller units; development plans exclude tiny and modular houses; notary fees and high procedural costs make subdivisions more expensive; preservation orders and CCO specifications make joint investments in renewable energies more difficult. Thirdly, the housing market is still tight: high rents and the risk of worse living conditions when downsizing or moving prevent people from adapting their housing to meet their needs. While vacant properties exist, repurposing them is complex and currently not very attractive.

Compact housing is not being blocked by a lack of will, but by institutional barriers, market failure and a lack of financial incentives. This preference is reflected in the assessment of the 8-Tonne Housing scenario. 66 percent rate the future scenario with a living space of 40 square metres per person, a building that has been modernised for energy efficiency,

Figure 23. Could you imagine no longer owning a car and using other forms of mobility instead in the future (e.g. public transport, bicycle, car sharing, e-scooter)? [n = 1.001]



balcony solar power and access to green spaces as attractive (34 percent very, 32 percent somewhat); only nine percent reject it. Under suitable conditions, needs-based, compact living space is attractive for two thirds of the population.

What are the levers for implementation? 55 percent would like subsidies for energy-efficient modernisations and climate-friendly renovations; 33 percent would like support for (rental) housing exchanges; 27 percent are in favour of binding standards for sustainable building materials; 19 percent would like tax incentives for communal living. The participation format also mentioned the following: renovation premiums; low-interest loans with advisory services for renovations; simplified building regulations (in particular parking space requirements, flat divisions); and instruments to prevent vacancies and activate the potential for exchanges.

The central message here: "smaller" will be accepted if it is better and cheaper. Functional floor plans, storage space, privacy, a good location and price advantages are decisive. What follows is political prioritisation. It will take market and regulatory reforms that actually make compact homes available and attractive.

Implementation priorities for Housing and Households

- 1. Promote modernisation and renovation (subsidies, loans, advice)
- 2. Systematically enable the exchange of homes incl. a path for existing tenants [19]
- 3. Make affordable small flats with good layouts available
- 4. Adapt municipal regulations (parking spaces/ development/CCO)
- 5. Cultivate community infrastructures and housing projects as a quality factor

The above creates great potential for reducing the amount of living space without any loss of prosperity, provided the framework conditions are specifically geared towards suitability for everyday use and fairness.

Figure 24. Changes to increase use of public transport

What would have to change for you to use public transport (e.g. train, bus) or shared mobility services (e.g. car sharing) more often? [n = 379]

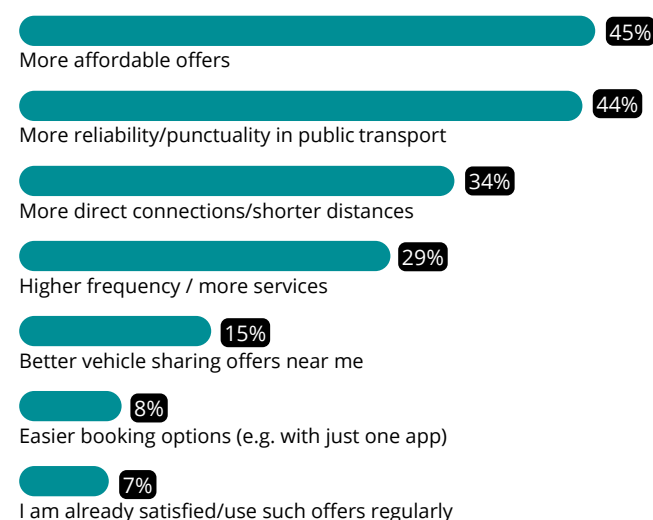
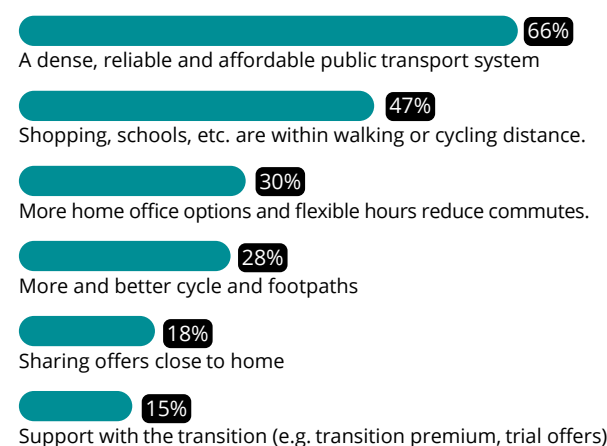


Figure 25. Conditions for living without a car

What would it take for you to do without your own car? [n = 258]



Mobility

According to the survey, 62 percent of the population can imagine living without a car in the future or is already car-free. Of these, 22 percent can imagine doing without a car, 26 percent can imagine doing so under certain conditions and 14 percent already do not have their own car. In contrast, 38 percent are somewhat or clearly opposed to living without a car. This is consistent with the results of the participation process: around 70 percent already use multimodal transportation, and just under half would use their car considerably less often or do without a car altogether if attractive alternatives were available.

What are the conditions that enable car-free mobility? From the point of view of those who can imagine living without their own car under certain conditions (n = 258), a dense, reliable and affordable public transport system comes in first place (66 percent). This is followed by short distances in everyday life (47 percent), more opportunities to work from home and time flexibility (30 percent) and a better infrastructure for bikes and pedestrians (28 percent). For sceptics (n = 188), decisive factors would be cheaper public transport prices (45 percent), greater punctuality/reliability (44 percent), more direct connections (34 percent) and denser intervals/public transport systems (29 percent). The participation process adds

practical points such as safe railway stations at night; fully illuminated cycle paths; better options for taking a bike on public transport/parking facilities as well as "last mile" solutions (demand responsive transport, shared taxis) and multimodal hubs.

In terms of flight behaviour, the following picture emerges: while 54 percent of respondents did not fly for personal reasons at all last year, and air travel overall is still concentrated among a minority (31 percent one or two flights; ten percent three to four; six percent five or more), a further decline in intra-European flights primarily depends on improving alternatives. The conditions under which people would stop flying are clear: cheaper train journeys (30 percent); more direct rail connections (28 percent); shorter travel times (25 percent); and greater comfort (21 percent) all address the main disadvantages of rail travel compared to air travel. Nearby destinations (18 percent) and more time for holidays or reduced working hours (11 percent) underline the fact that travel decisions are strongly influenced by everyday life and time budgets. Climate motives (ten percent) play a subordinate role, as individual action is often perceived as having little effect. In the participation process, over 80 percent stated that they had not flown at all in the past year; intercontinental flights were rare and mostly family-related.

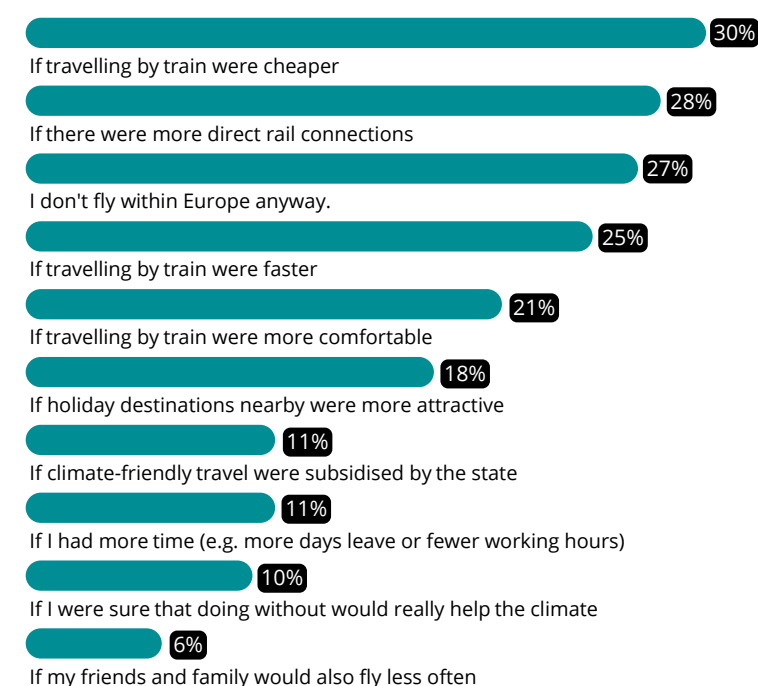


Figure 26. Conditions for not flying within Europe Under what conditions could you imagine not taking touristic flights within Europe in the future? [n = 1.001]

From a political point of view, pricing instruments that provide relief are particularly popular. 61 percent would like free or heavily discounted public transport; 45 percent would like a significantly cheaper "Deutschlandticket", a monthly ticket that allows holders to use public transport anywhere in Germany (incl. rail/car sharing). Structural and steering measures are also popular, but to a lesser extent: 23 percent are in favour of redistributing road space; 21 percent are in favour of higher air fares (taxes/advertising regulation). 11 percent reject all measures. The participation group also cites the need for a reform of tax benefits for persons who use a company car for personal reasons, the commuter allowance and car park management as well as communicating public transport more strongly as modern and convenient.

The key message: there is a broad willingness to switch, but there are clear conditions. To be effective, it will take a consistent pool of measures comprising quality offers, fair prices and alternatives suitable for everyday use, supplemented by structural levers to reduce the volume of traffic.

Implementation priorities for Mobility

1. Expand infrastructure and services

Increase public transport services and expand routes (frequencies, direct connections); create a safe and consistent cycling infrastructure; establish nationwide car sharing and ridepooling offers as well as demand responsive transport; "last mile" solutions and efficient multimodal hubs.

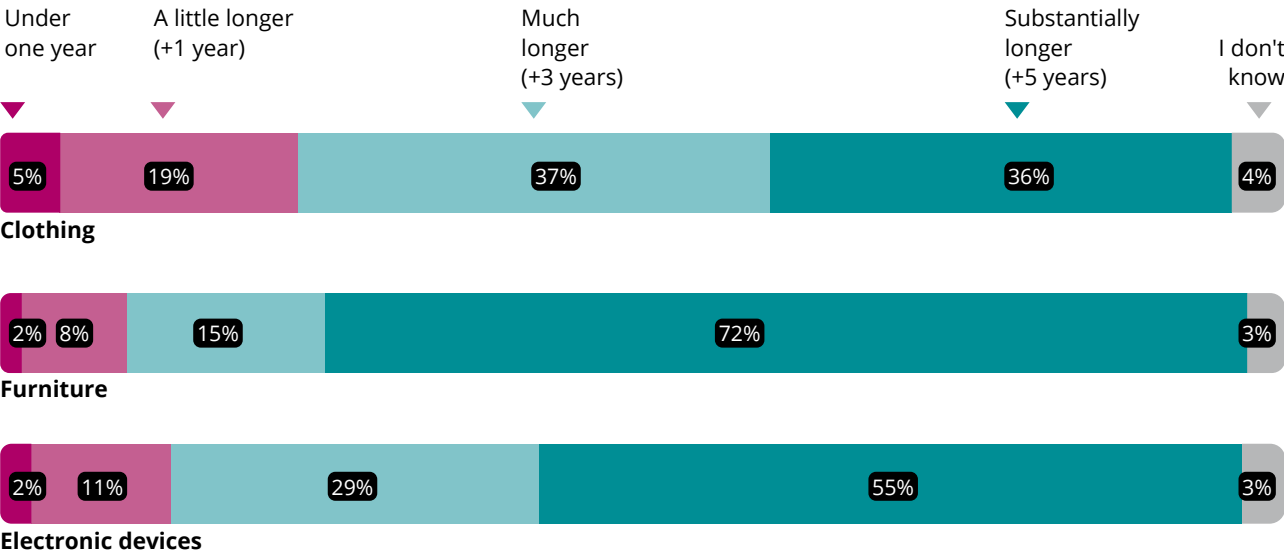
2. Realign prices and incentives

Secure affordable public transport; expand and simplify the "Deutschlandticket"; at the same time reduce resource-intensive subsidies (e.g. tax benefits for persons who use a company car for personal reasons, commuter allowance, low-cost parking).

3. Reduce the volume of traffic

Promote short journeys; strengthen working from home and flexible working hours to structurally reduce transport needs

Figure 27. Extend use of things in the future Could you imagine using certain things for much longer than you do now in the future? Please state how long you can imagine using the following items. [n = 1.001]



Consumption

87 percent of respondents would use furniture for at least three to five years longer; for 84 percent, the same applies to electronics and for 73 percent to clothing. At the same time, 48 percent rate an urban exchange or lending scenario as attractive, while a further 32 percent are neutral. Merely a minority rejects approaches such as these in principle. This shows high social acceptance for longer use and reuse.

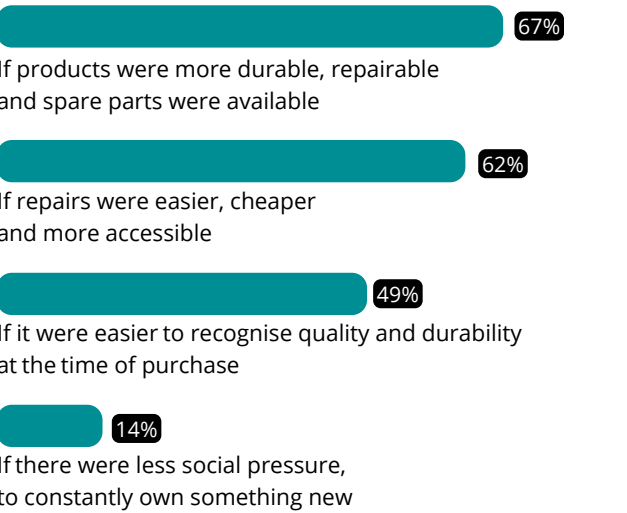
In the participation process, almost all participants expressed the desire to use products for "as long as possible" – particularly when it comes to electronics – combined with clear expectations regarding reparability and longer software updates. The purchase of second-hand furniture and household items is also very popular. Here, motivation is less ideological than pragmatic and includes saving costs, maintaining quality and conserving resources.

Which conditions would enable significantly longer use? For 67 percent, it is essential that products are more durable, repairable and that spare parts are available. 62 percent cite simpler, cheaper and more accessible repairs as a key requirement. Just under

half (49 percent) would like to be able to recognise quality and durability more clearly at the time of purchase. The social factor, on the other hand, is of considerable secondary importance: a mere 14 percent cited less social pressure to constantly own new things as a decisive factor.

The main barriers lie in the market structure. Advertising, trends and low prices boost new purchases, while repairable or used alternatives are often more expensive, difficult to find or time-consuming. This is exacerbated by a lack of political guidelines, of binding requirements for durability, reparability and the availability of spare parts. In the survey, 52 percent are therefore in favour of tax benefits for durable and repairable products, while 43 percent are in favour of the right to repair and public repair centres. Respondents also support more restrictive instruments, albeit to a lesser extent (33 percent support levies on disposable or luxury products, 22 percent support advertising restrictions); only 11 percent reject measures as a whole. In addition, participants point to infrastructural deficits in repair, lending and sharing offers as well as to social norms in which "new" is still considered a status.

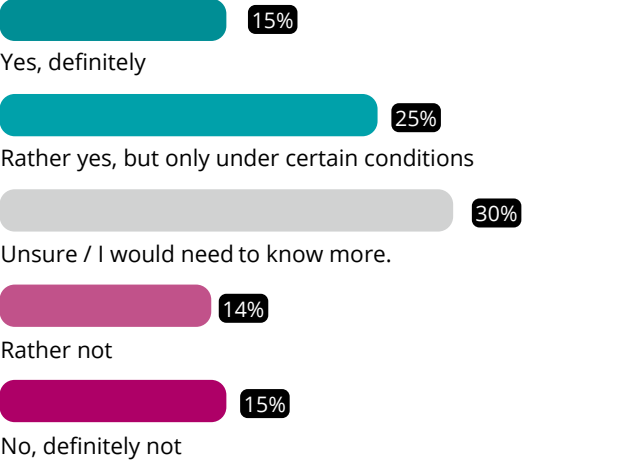
Figure 29. What would have to change for you to use things for much longer in future? [n = 1.001]



Implementation priorities for Consumption

- 1. Strengthen political guidelines for the circular economy:** Binding requirements for durability, reparability and spare parts; the right to repair; warranty and guarantee paths that promote repairs; clear targets for reuse. Limit fast fashion through higher production standards and fair minimum prices.
- 2. Realign economic incentives:** Implement tax relief for repairs; promote second-hand and rental models; use public procurement as a role model (used/refurbished goods, leasing and sharing of appliances).
- 3. Expand infrastructure in a targeted manner:** Local repair hubs; mobile repair services; reliable rental systems with quality standards; and visible, easy-to-use platforms for swapping, lending and second-hand items.
- 4. Strengthen transparency and communication:** Clear product information on durability, reparability and spare parts; effective labelling against greenwashing; and campaigns that enhance the value of used products and relativise "new = status".

Figure 28. Would you be prepared in principle to reduce your working hours, even if this meant a lower income? [n = 1.001]

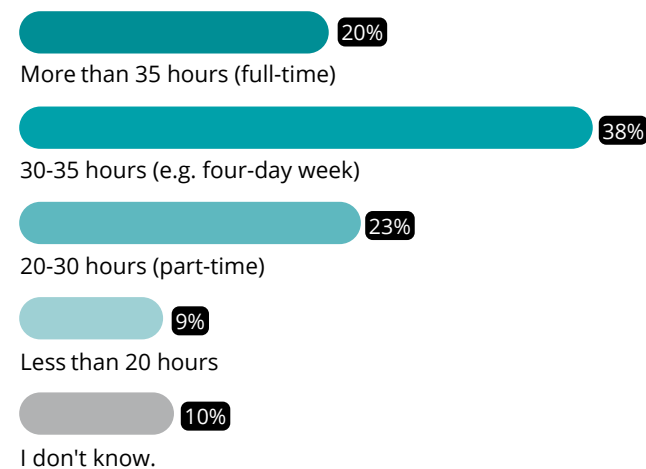


Time

In addition to the four areas of consumption, we have also considered a fifth, cross-sectional field of action: Work and Leisure time. After all, how we distribute and experience time is closely linked to resource consumption, for example when stress and time pressure lead to resource-intensive decisions (e.g. jumping to buy a new product instead of repairing the old, flying instead of a longer train journey).

In sustainability research, time prosperity is considered an important prerequisite for sufficient lifestyles [21], [22], [23], [24], [25]. People who spend less time working in gainful employment have the capacity to actively practice resource conservation, such as repairing and swapping items, self-sustainability and volunteer work. At the same time, having additional spare time is not "ecological" per se; it can also be used for consumption-intensive activities such as long-distance travel or shopping (rebound effect). How time gained is used is therefore crucial, as are the framework conditions policy-makers and employers create to promote time prosperity and prevent rebound effects.

Figure 30. How many hours would you ideally like to work per week? [n = 855; the "No, definitely not" group has been excluded]



In both the participation process and the survey, these matters – reduced working hours and time prosperity – met with broad, albeit conditional, acceptance. In the survey, 40 percent of respondents are open to fewer working hours in principle or under certain conditions, even with lower incomes; 30 percent are unsure and 29 percent are opposed.

The preferred weekly workload in both polls is 30 to 35 hours, for example in the form of a four-day week (survey: 38 percent; participation process: 42.3 percent). This is followed by a range of 20 to 30 hours (23 percent). In the participation process, far fewer participants wanted more than 35 hours than in the survey (20 percent). The requirements for a reduction in working hours are almost identical in both data sets. Reliable social security (pension, health insurance) and the fulfilment of basic needs such as housing and food are the top priorities for the proportion who agree under certain conditions (n = 255). There is also a desire for more time for the family, volunteer work and self-care; flexible employer models (four-day week, job sharing); and a fair distribution of work.

The desired political measures reflect these conditions: social security with reduced working hours

is the measure most frequently mentioned (38 percent), followed by the introduction of a four-day week without pay cuts (32 percent), revaluating time spent on charitable work through time credits or payment (30 percent) and the promotion of local projects (29 percent).

More time, not stuff

In order to quantify the effect of reduced working hours on resource consumption, the Wuppertal Institute modelled data from the participation process. The feedback from participants in the citizens' forum shows a clear willingness to reduce working hours, a willingness that is not even dampened if the reduction is associated with a lower income. The majority of respondents would like to work 30 to 35 hours a week, coming from a current full-time job with a 40-hour week. For the modelling, we quantified this desire within the GreenSupreme scenario as follows: a reduction in full-time working hours from 40 to 32.5 hours – which corresponds to the average of the desired range – leads income to drop to around 81.25 percent of the original full-time income. In the course, the WI assumed that each area of consumption would be affected differently.



- The Diet area remained constant, as survey and modelling results show no significant influence of income on diet-related behaviour.
- The Housing area was left at the same level, as the participants' responses indicate a compensatory effect from spending more time at home.
- All other areas of consumption, such as Mobility, Leisure, Clothing and Culture, were adjusted proportionally to the drop in income.

This differentiated adjustment results in an additional average reduction potential of around 2.5 percent compared to the GreenSupreme compensation scenario, or an (average) saving of 200 kilograms of RMC per person per year. This potential shows that a reduction in working hours can effectively help achieve ecological targets.

The important result here is that there was no recognisable rebound effect among the participants of the citizens' forum. The participants' motivation to reduce their working hours was predominantly value-based, not consumption-driven. Many participants emphasised a pronounced willingness to adopt sufficient consumer behaviour, which is characterised by consciously opting against new purchases and using products for longer.

Many participants expressed statements such as:

- "If I had more time, I would repair and make things myself instead of buying new products."
- "I would make and design more things myself."
- "I could do handyman jobs myself again instead of outsourcing everything."
- "I would grow vegetables and keep dairy cattle. I would do almost everything myself."
- "My consumption has decreased since I stopped working. I have more time to cook from scratch. [I] rarely need new clothes."

Due to the qualitative nature of these statements, it was not possible to quantify this sufficiency potential precisely. However, the statements clearly show that there is additional savings potential here that goes beyond the mere income effect. Everything points to the fact that there is much greater scope for resource savings and sustainable behaviour than purely income-based models can capture.



6. What convinces people

Narratives of freedom, ease and the future

Whether or not social change succeeds does not just depend on targets, scenarios and measures, but on the images, meanings and stories associated with them. Narratives shape what people perceive as desirable, realistic and feasible – and thus what changes they agree to and what they themselves will actively work towards. Especially when it comes to far-reaching transformations such as halving one's raw material consumption, it takes communication approaches that provide orientation and show a future with a tangible gain in quality of life, security and the capacity to play an active part. Good communication translates systemic change into everyday life and thus becomes an important lever for social transformation.

A resource-light life is liberating

To find out how to effectively communicate the target of halving raw material consumption, Ellery Studio examined key communication patterns and narratives. It became apparent that a resource-light life, made possible by economic and social framework conditions, stands for ease and new capacity to take on an active role. Less ballast, less compulsion, less dependency and instead, more time, rest, health, safety and space for what really matters. This also reflects a different understanding of prosperity: "being able to do more", not "having more", becomes an expression of freedom and self-determination.

For citizens, a resource-light life is particularly relevant when it ties in with concrete everyday experiences: less stuff, less consumer pressure, less stress. It is especially easy to convince people to conserve resources when doing so seems to make everyday life easier: by providing more space to breathe, more time for relationships, hobbies, health and relaxation. Freedom then does not mean being able to own everything and instead means not having to own everything in order to feel secure and fulfilled.

Policies can make this possible. They create fair framework conditions that open up real choices by making alternatives attractive and accessible: affordable mobility instead of compulsory car ownership, good housing models instead of pressure to own property, healthy food instead of the logic of excess. At the same time, "freedom" is a very concrete term here: less dependence on fossil fuel imports, unstable supply chains and geopolitical risks. Sufficiency policy thus becomes a policy of freedom and security.

Resource-light living means helping to shape things, not just agreeing with them. People are more likely to support change if they can understand how decisions are made and contribute their own experiences. Participation increases acceptance, legitimacy and resilience. Communication should therefore open up spaces in which citizens are not only provided with information but are also empowered to contribute their lived realities and ideas.



Image 6.1. Postcards from 2045: community gardens, autonomous shared mobility and more green areas in cities. On postcards, participants in the citizens' process described their everyday lives in a resource-light Germany. Ellery Studio then visualised these images of the future with the help of AI and used them to stimulate discussions.

Four facets of freedom that tie in to many milieus

We can derive four robust starting points from the main narrative, which can be emphasised differently depending on the target group.

Redefining prosperity: Freedom from old standards

Prosperity is no longer about what you own, but what you can experience, create and share. For citizens, this means no longer having to run to keep up. For policy-makers, it means new prosperity indicators that go beyond GDP and growth constraints.

Security and resilience: Freedom from dependencies

Resource-light living and decentralised infrastructure make societies more stable and people more independent. For citizens, that means being less vulnerable to crises and jumps in prices. And for politics: energy and resource sovereignty as protection against blackmail.

Justice and participation: Correcting social imbalance

Freedom is only real if everyone can afford it. Sustainability must not be a privilege, but must be doable in everyday life, especially in terms of costs, access and infrastructure. For policy-makers, this means social support and investments that enable participation.

Sustainability and innovation: Freedom to shape the future

Using fewer resources creates space for creativity, efficiency and new business models. For citizens: solutions that make everyday life easier. For policy-makers: bold rules and markets that scale sustainable offers.

The messages: Concrete, feasible, useful

Messages that are particularly effective combine concreteness (What exactly does it mean?), feasibility (Can I picture it?) and benefits (What's in it for me and us?). This logic is also consistent with the findings



from the participation formats, which in summary show five central patterns for successful communication around transformation: firstly, added value and co-benefits act as a guiding principle: resource conservation tied in to people's everyday life when it was associated with a new quality of life (time, nature, encounters, ease), community and self-efficacy instead of with restrictions. Secondly, concrete narratives (e.g. personas or humorous everyday stories) generated significantly more resonance than abstract figures, as they enabled identification and allowed for individual interpretation. Thirdly, tangible everyday images of the future (weekly markets, neighbourhood kitchens) were more popular than technology-centric utopias. People accepted a resource-light future if it seemed familiar and practical and if they were able to help shape it. Fourthly, open questions ("What do you really need?") proved to be more effective than appeals, as they triggered reflection and active appropriation. And fifthly, credibility was key: communication was only convincing if it combined individual consumption styles with structural framework conditions while recognising social realities and obstacles (e.g. lack of time, costs, infrastructure).

The survey provides answers as to which overarching interpretative frameworks and statements are most

likely to convince people in the context of reducing resource consumption. Respondents most frequently chose a narrative of finiteness and urgency: "Our resources are finite – we have to act before it is too late" (21 percent). This was followed by arguments for less dependence ("Less dependence – on China, Russia or rising prices", 18 percent) and for protecting the climate and the environment ("Good for the climate and the environment – using less protects what we love", 17 percent). This in turn was followed by "It's smart to save resources – just like electricity, water or money" (13 percent) and "Using less means more time, rest and quality of life" (12 percent). A technology-oriented narrative ("Fewer resources, more progress – an opportunity for new ideas and technology") reached eight percent, while 10 per cent said that none of the statements was particularly convincing.

When it comes to communication, this means: technology can be part of the solution, but it will rarely carry the story on its own. More sustainable narratives emphasise security, self-determination and an easier everyday life, without glossing over risks, conflicting goals or transitions. The participation process also showed that people want to take ambivalence seriously instead of being served a "future straight out of an ad".



7. What needs to happen now

Recommended courses of action

The results of the project show: a resource-light society is realistic if measures are not only technically and ecologically effective, but are also compatible with everyday life and perceived as fair. It is crucial that policy-makers create reliable framework conditions that provide orientation and make sustainable options easily accessible. This creates more capacity for people to take action, greater social integration, less mental stress and a higher quality of life.

From the above, WWF has derived the following recommended courses of action for policy, the industry and (civil) society.

Policy

The participation process and the survey have shown: behavioural changes are particularly successful when the political framework conditions are right. Policy sets rules, creates infrastructure and shapes incentives. Currently, technology-orientated approaches such as recycling, product design and efficiency measures dominate the NCES. In contrast, structural levers that enable changes that are suitable for everyday use – such as better utilisation concepts, sharing offers, fair prices or incentives for space-saving housing – are hardly taken into account. There is no binding target framework to provide orientation and strengthen both acceptance and the capacity to act. This leads to the following recommended courses of action:

- 1. Binding targets and governance:**
A majority of 58 percent of respondents consider it (very) important that politicians adopt legal regulations to reduce resource consumption in Germany. The target of halving resource consumption should therefore be established in law, with a target path (an RMC of six to eight tonnes per capita by 2045), binding departmental responsibility and transparent monitoring. Resource targets should be systematically linked to social concerns (affordability, participation, protection of vulnerable groups).
- 2. Financial instruments for fairness and control:** these control resource consumption and secure acceptance:
 - **Price incentives:** taxes on particularly material-intensive products and primary raw materials, with exceptions for essential goods
 - **Design and utilisation incentives:** Bonus-malus systems for durable, repairable and recyclable products
 - **Resource remuneration:** Per capita redistribution of revenue from resource levies relieves low-consumption households and increases political sustainability
 - **Tax relief for resource-light options:** Reduced VAT on plant-based foods, repairs, second-hand items, lending, sharing and maintenance offers
 - **Subsidy reforms:** Ecological reorientation of mobility, construction and food subsidies (e.g. abolition of commuter allowance and tax benefits for persons who use a company car for personal reasons)
 - **De-risking:** Reducing the risk of circular technologies and approaches by promoting investments that focus on upper R-strategies



3. Bringing soft and hard instruments together

In key areas of consumption, there is a need for transformation packages that combine infrastructure, standards, incentives and communication and make resource-light options the obvious choice. One example is a repair package comprising the expansion of municipal repair centres, binding product design standards for repairability and the availability of spare parts and reduced VAT on repair services.

4. Systematically strengthening municipalities

Municipalities are key actors that tangibly demonstrate whether resource-light living is doable at local level. Resource-light structures should be strengthened through resource-friendly urban and transport planning, a housing policy that enables space efficiency (e.g. vacancy management, exchanging homes, co-housing) and circular services for the public, for example through a repairs infrastructure, libraries of things and scalable repair and sharing services. Resource targets and strategies at municipal and state level are well-suited to further support these efforts.

The industry

The industry has a decisive influence on product design, business models and market offers and therefore on how resource-intensive consumption is. Its influence determines whether durable products, plant-based nutritional offers or sharing solutions move from niche markets to the mainstream. This leads to four recommended courses of action:

1. Strengthen utilisation, not ownership

Companies can expand sharing, leasing and service models to keep products in circulation for longer and reduce the resources required per use.

2. Make durability the standard

Robust, repairable and durable products, as well as refurbishment and reuse processes, reduce the use of materials and open up new service business models.

3. Establish new narratives that favour value over quantity

Marketing and brand communications can position quality, durability, sufficiency, repairability and shared use as attractive alternatives to the purchase of new products and overconsumption.

4. Actively support good framework conditions

Companies should advocate standards, tax incentives and regulations that strengthen circular business models and gradually make linear models less attractive.

Society

Everyday practice, social norms and civic engagement influence how quickly sustainable forms of consumption, sharing and repairing spread. Society thus plays a key role in whether resource-light lifestyles are socially accepted, tested and perpetuated. WWF recommends three things in order to spur, or increase, willingness:

1. Embed participation in strategies and implementation

People are more likely to support transformation if they understand issues, are actively involved in decision-making and solution processes and understand the actual effects on their own lives. Public participation should therefore be made mandatory in federal, state and municipal circular economy and resource strategies. At the same time, it must be ensured that citizens are also able to participate in the planning, development and operation of municipal circular infrastructures, such as repair centres, repair cafés, lending shops or libraries of things.

2. Strengthen common knowledge and practical skills

Disseminate knowledge about the most effective personal resource levers and foster skills around repairs, maintenance, communal use and sufficient consumption, including via schools, adult education centres, makerspaces, libraries and neighbourhood centres

3. Expand and secure social initiatives

Repair cafés, swap platforms, pawn shops and neighbourhood projects need stable foundations, as today, many fail due to a lack of funding; space; administrative hurdles; and dependence on individuals. Municipal funding programmes, cost-free spaces, start-up funding and local networks can consolidate these structures and make them accessible to a broad range of user groups.



Civil society

What do the findings of our work tell us? Resource-Light Living 2045 has shown how we can communicate resource consumption in an easy-to-understand way, how we can translate knowledge into self-efficacy and how we can generate curiosity and action through lifestyle communication. From this, we have derived three strategic lines of action:

1. Advocacy

We are committed to a binding target of 8 tonnes and a National Circular Economy Strategy with clear, measurable resource targets. We prioritise infrastructure investments and effective price signals so that resource-light options become the default choice.

2. Positive narratives

We use specific examples to show the benefits of resource-light living. We focus on self-efficacy and a wide range of co-benefits, from health and cost savings to improved quality of life. Our communication emphasises new images of prosperity, everyday relief and the ability to use products for longer, to share and maintain them and to strengthen the community.

3. Alliances

We rely on strategic partnerships with consumer organisations, trade unions, the housing industry, local authorities and pioneering socio-ecological companies and innovation centres. We see long-term public participation through education programmes, citizens' councils and media cooperation as another key lever.

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Our goal

We want to stop the global destruction of nature and the environment and shape a future in which people and nature live together in harmony.

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