

# Germany: Number of right-wing extremists rose by a third in 2019

German authorities identified over 32,200 right-wing extremists in 2019, according to a report. Much of the rise has to do with authorities counting groups affiliated with the far-right AfD for the first time.



The number of right-wing extremists active in Germany rose significantly in 2019, the Berlin-based *Tagesspiegel* newspaper reported on Monday.

Germany's federal domestic intelligence service (BfV) and the state-level intelligence services identified over 32,200 right-wing extremists this year, the paper reported, citing information gathered from security sources.

That figure is a third higher compared to 2018, when authorities counted 24,100 people involved in right-wing extremist networks.

One of the main reasons for the spike is due to the BfV including groups affiliated with the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) for the first time in its count of right-wing extremists.

In January this year, the BfV took aim at the extreme-right faction of the AfD

known as “Der Flügel” (The Wing) as well as the party’s youth wing “Junge Alternative” (Young Alternative) over suspected extremism.

According to *Tagesspiegel*, authorities included 7,000 members of the “Der Flügel” in its right-wing extremist count, as well as 1,000 members of the “Junge Alternative.”

*Read more:* German authorities to expand crackdown on right-wing extremists.

### **Far-right groups included in extremist count**

In January, the BfV declared both AfD-affiliated groups “suspected cases” of right-wing extremism, increasing observation to investigate whether they pose a threat to constitutional order.

The designation means that the BfV can save personal data on members of the AfD groups and use undercover informants and other intelligence methods to collect information.

The BfV stopped short of classifying the entire AfD as a “test case” for increased observation after a court ruled that authorities failed to justify the designation.

The anti-immigration AfD has been criticized for fostering an atmosphere of hate in Germany that encourages political violence.

This year also saw several deadly incidents involving suspected right-wing extremists in Germany, including an attack outside a synagogue in the eastern city of Halle that killed two people in October. Pro-immigration politician Walter Lübcke was also shot and killed by a neo-Nazi extremist in June.

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