




Opinion barometer

Exploring what the participants know

Overview

In this activity, participants are asked to position themselves on an axis according to the extent to which they agree with statements on the topic of growth. The idea is for them to choose a position spontaneously, relying on their intuition. This gives the facilitators an idea of how much the group knows about the topic and what views they hold.

	10-20
	10-15 minutes
	none

Instructions

Preparation

The facilitators draw an imaginary line through the room with two poles – complete agreement or complete disagreement – at opposite sides of the room.

Execution

- The participants are asked to position themselves along the line in relation to the following questions or statements, according to their opinion. The line should be regarded as a continuum: the available choices are not limited to the two extremes, but comprise every possible position in between.
- The facilitators read out a question/statement and specify the two poles (e.g. agree/disagree).
- The participants select an appropriate position on the barometer. During the activity, the participants should not talk to each other, but try to keep their thoughts to themselves and focus on their own opinion.
- Once a statement/question has been read out and all participants have chosen a position, the facilitator can ask individual participants whether they would like to briefly comment on their choice. However, this should remain strictly optional. No one should be pressured into explaining themselves!

Questions for the barometer:

The two poles of the barometer represent the answers “yes” and “no”, but these should be switched frequently to ensure the participants move around. The questions are divided into (1) knowledge questions, which give the facilitators an overview of how much the participants know, and (2) opinion questions, which can provide a basis for discussion. They can be asked in any order.

(1)

“I can give a thorough explanation of what economic growth means.”

“I can give a thorough explanation of what post-growth is.”

“I can explain what GDP is.”

(2)

“Economic growth creates jobs.”

“Growth is a natural phenomenon.”

“We need continued growth in Germany (or other country as appropriate) in order to finance the welfare state.”

“We need ecological and sustainable growth in order to save resources.”

“What else can possibly grow? We already have everything we need!”

“The countries of the Global South in particular are in urgent need of economic growth to fight poverty.”

“Without growth, our economy will collapse.”

“Economic growth enables prosperity in our society.”

“No growth is not the solution.”

“Everyone is entitled to growth.”

Tips for facilitators

This method has a somewhat provocative and polarising effect. However, the aim is not to divide the group into opposing camps, but rather to highlight the wide range of opinions and perceptions people hold. The method should only be used if the facilitator believes the group is capable of dealing with the tension in a creative manner, and feels able to make good use of the resulting atmosphere. Other questions/statements can be formulated, but the overall number should not be too high (no more than 5-8 questions/statements). The questions and statements should also cover as broad a spectrum as possible.