



# Institute for Photopsychology

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2026 Research Project 7: Brief Report

## Psychological Aspects of Private and Everyday Photography

### Notes

- The full report is here: <https://foto-psychologie.de/publikation/>. Citations should refer exclusively to this report.
- In this short version, results are presented only in excerpt form. Information on methodology as well as restrictions and limitations can be found in the full report.
- General population sample obtained via a panel survey (Talk Online Panel), quota-controlled to be representative by age and gender. The photography-involved group was recruited separately.
- Demographic information on the samples is provided in the full report.
- Differences between groups and subgroups are reported in the full report.
- For the agreement items, a value of 5 indicates the highest level of agreement.

### Sample

N = 1017

- N = 496 General population\*
- N = 521 Photography-involved group\*\*

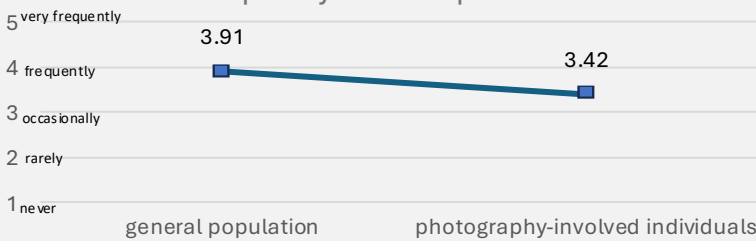
Conducted in \* Germany;

\*\* Germany, Austria, Switzerland, 2025

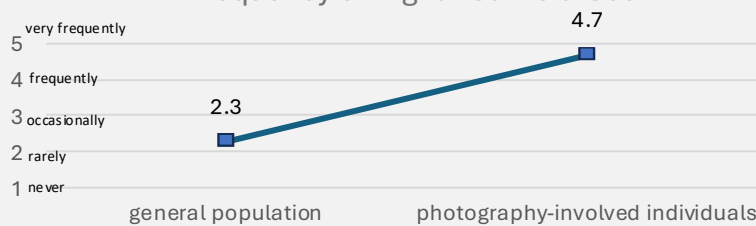
- General population (N = 496): N = 266 (53.6%) “not involved in photography” group; N = 228 (46.0%) hobby/amateur photographers; N = 2 (0.4%) professional photographers
- Photography-involved group (N = 521): N = 294 (56.4%) professional photographers, N = 227 (43.6%) hobby/amateur photographers

### Camera Use, Frequency, Occasions, and Motives for Everyday Photography

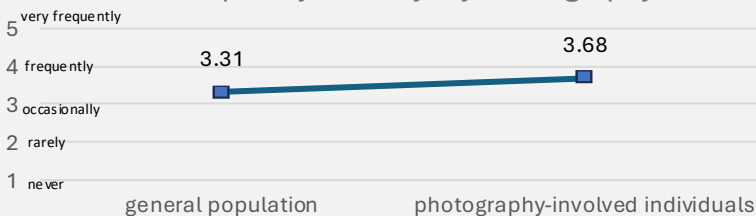
#### Frequency of Smartphone Use



#### Frequency of Digital Camera Use



#### Frequency of Everyday Photography



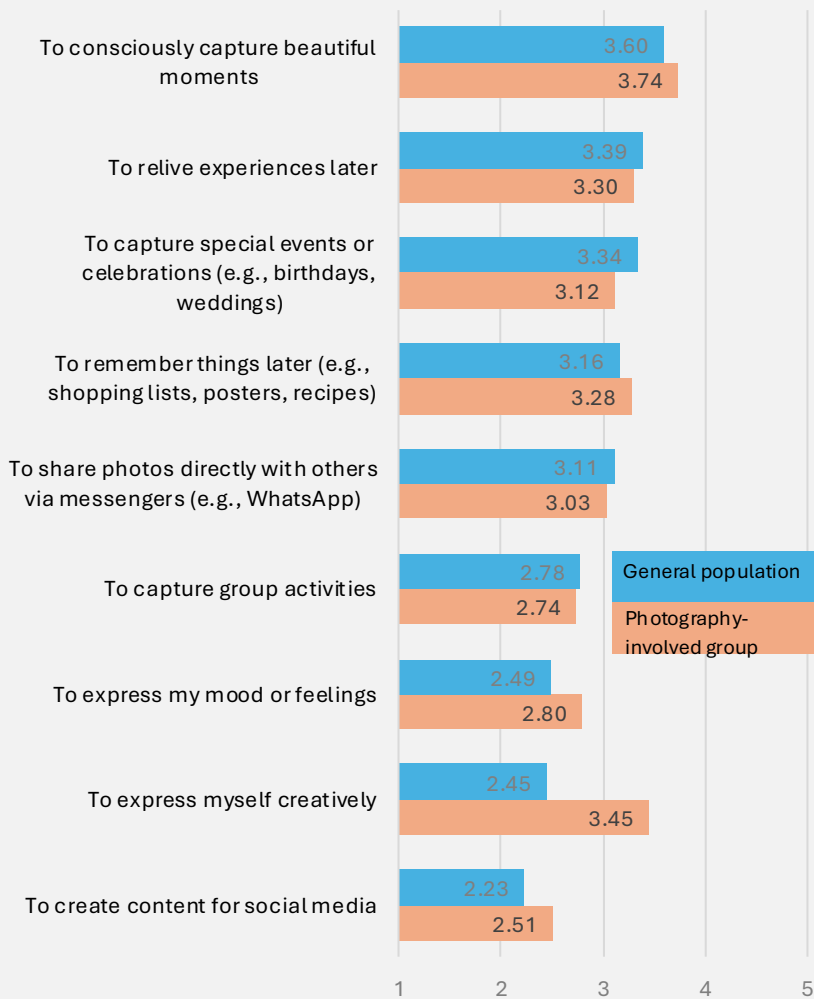
Private and everyday photography is generally common in both groups, but it is more frequent among participants in the photography-involved group. Within the general population, amateurs take everyday photos overall substantially more often than the “not involved in photography” group. In addition, age differences emerge: individuals aged 16–39 take everyday photos overall more frequently than individuals aged 60 and older; the 40–59 age group lies in between.

For smartphones, a clear pattern emerges between the two groups. In the general population, smartphones are used more frequently than among participants in the photography-involved group. Accordingly, 40% of the general population report very frequent smartphone use, compared with 25% among participants in the photography-involved group. For digital cameras, the pattern is reversed relative to smartphones. In the general population, digital cameras are used least frequently, whereas among participants in the photography-involved group they are used most frequently. Accordingly, 5% of the general population report very frequent use, compared with 78% among participants in the photography-involved group.

In the general population, smartphones clearly dominate as the camera for private and everyday photos. On average, respondents report taking 80% of their everyday photos with a smartphone. Exclusive smartphone use is particularly common: 41% report 100%. Among participants in the photography-involved group, the smartphone share of private and everyday photos is distributed much more widely. On average, 59% of everyday photos are taken with a smartphone.

Proportion smartphone use	General population	participants in the photography-involved group
0–19%	4%	20%
20–49%	10%	16%
50–79%	15%	17%
80–99%	30%	35%
100%	41%	12%

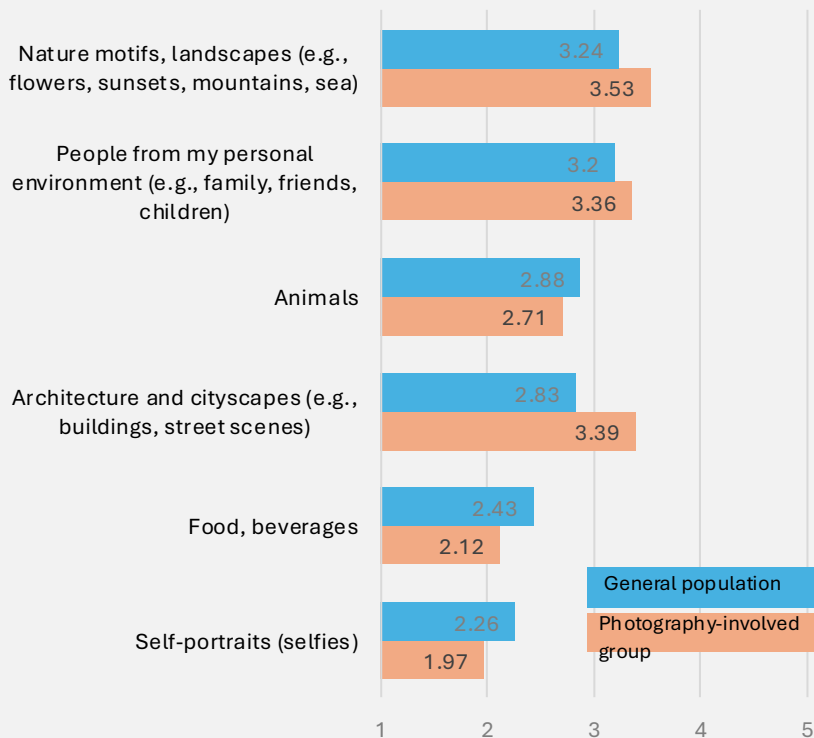
## Occasions for Everyday Photography



The general population and participants in the photography-involved group cite, as central occasions for everyday photography, above all the deliberate capturing of beautiful moments. In the general population, this occasion is most pronounced ( $M = 3.60$ ). 56% photograph for this purpose frequently or very frequently, and 4% never. Also common is subsequently re-living experiences ( $M = 3.39$ ). 47% photograph for this purpose frequently or very frequently, and 8% never. Everyday photography is used much less often to create content for social media ( $M = 2.23$ ).

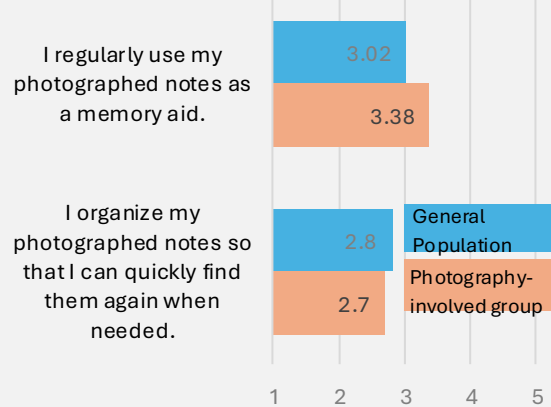
Among participants in the photography-involved group, the deliberate capturing of beautiful moments also dominates ( $M = 3.74$ ). 64% photograph for this purpose frequently or very frequently, and 2% never. Notable as well is creative expression as an occasion ( $M = 3.45$ ). 51% use everyday photography for this purpose frequently or very frequently, and 6% never. Creating content for social media is also overall rather infrequent among participants in the photography-involved group ( $M = 2.51$ ); 23% report doing so frequently or very frequently, and 27% never.

## Motives for Everyday Photography



In the general population, the motives for everyday photography are dominated by nature motifs and landscapes ( $M = 3.24$ ) as well as people from one's personal environment ( $M = 3.20$ ). Among participants in the photography-involved group, nature motifs and landscapes ( $M = 3.53$ ) and architecture and cityscapes ( $M = 3.39$ ) are more strongly in the foreground.

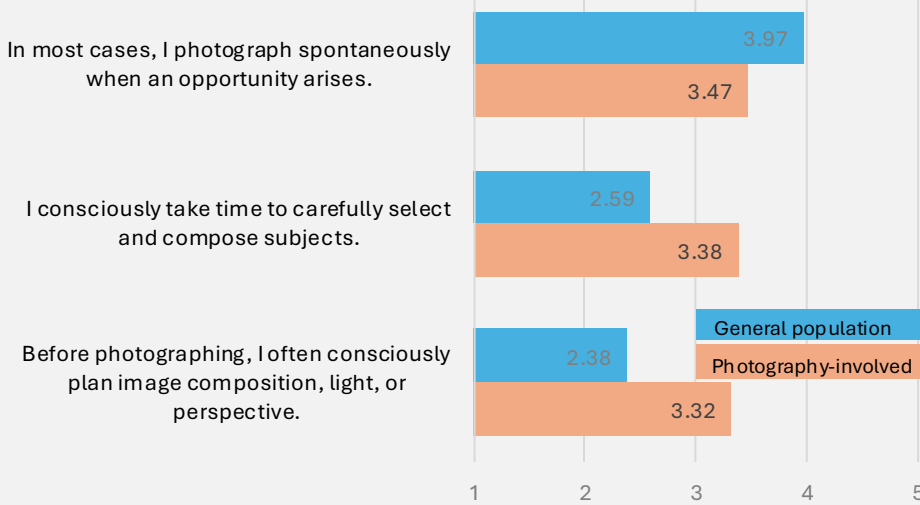
## Photos as Notes



In the general population, photographed notes are indeed used as a practical everyday memory aid ( $M = 3.02$ ). 40% report using photographed notes occasionally as a memory aid, and a further 32% do so frequently or very frequently. At the same time, about one quarter report doing so rarely or never (28%). Systematically organizing these photographed notes is somewhat less common ( $M = 2.80$ ). Among participants in the photography-involved group, regular use of photographed notes as a memory aid is somewhat more pronounced. Among participants in the photography-involved group, it is more common that they use photographed notes regularly ( $M = 3.38$ ). 45% use them frequently or very frequently, and only 22% rarely or never. In contrast, when it comes to organizing photographed notes, there is no corresponding advantage.

# Handling and Effects of Everyday Photography

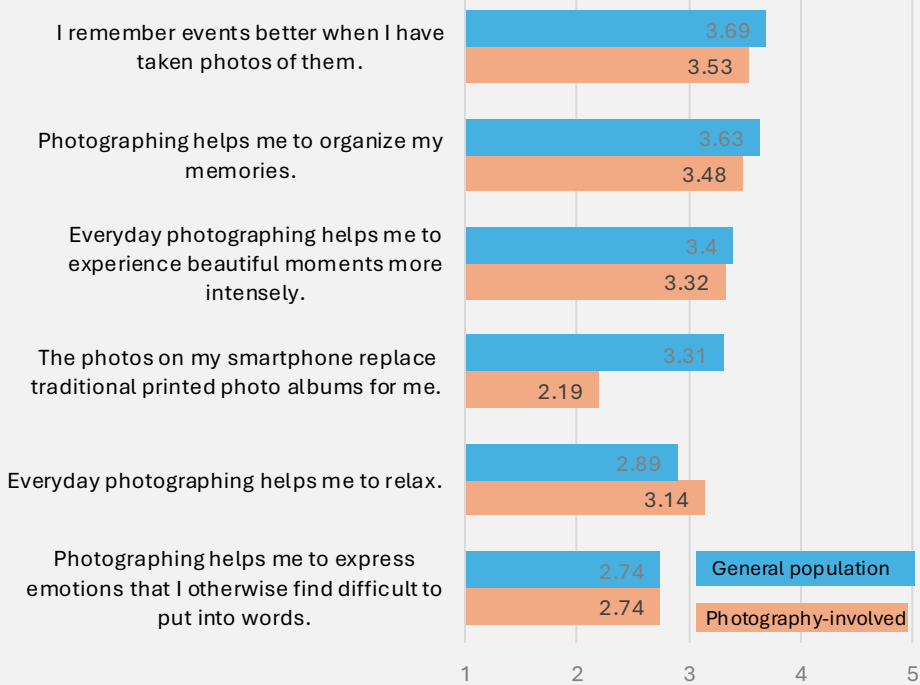
## Spontaneity of Everyday Photography



In the general population, everyday photography is predominantly described as a spontaneous activity. By contrast, planning and compositional elements are much less pronounced.

Among participants in the photography-involved group, a different pattern emerges: spontaneous photographing is also common, but it is less pronounced than in the general population. At the same time, planning and compositional aspects are much more firmly established.

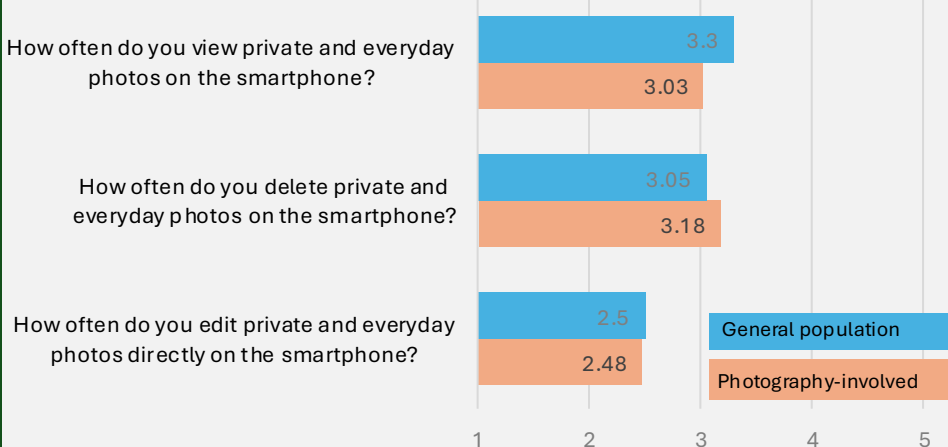
## Influence of Everyday Photography on Experience and Remembering



In the general population, everyday photography is primarily associated with functions of remembering and memory. Agreement is strongest with the statement that one remembers events better if one has taken photos of them ( $M = 3.69$ ). Here, 62% rather or fully agree.

Among participants in the photography-involved group, a similar basic pattern emerges, but with an important difference regarding the album function: participants in the photography-involved group ( $M = 2.19$ ) agree substantially less often that smartphone photos replace printed photo albums.

## Handling of One's Own Photos

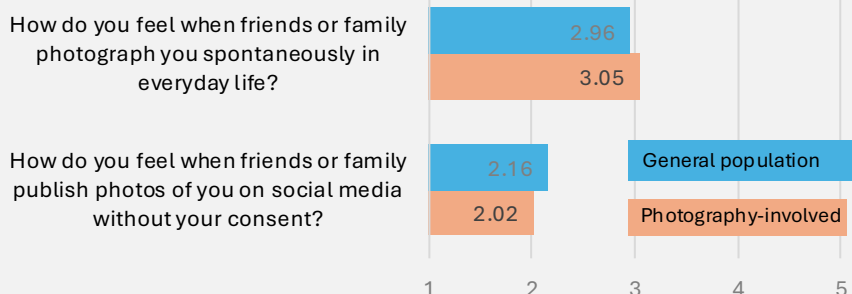


In the general population, the handling of private and everyday photos on smartphones shows rather restrained editing behavior. Viewing one's own photos is reported most frequently ( $M = 3.30$ ).

Among participants in the photography-involved group, a very similar picture emerges with regard to editing on the smartphone; participants in the photography-involved group ( $M = 2.48$ ) are at the level of the general population.

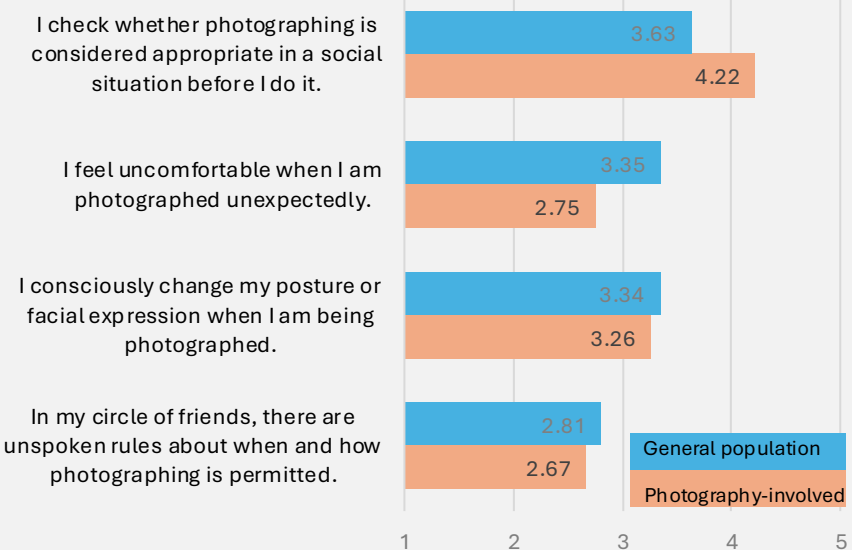
# Being Photographed and Social Norms in Photography

## Spontaneous Photography and Posting Without Consent



In the general population, being spontaneously photographed in everyday life by a family member is evaluated rather neutrally. Almost half rate this as neither pleasant nor unpleasant (47%). At the same time, the share of negative ratings is higher than the share of positive ratings: 27% experience it as rather or very unpleasant, whereas 26% describe it as rather or very pleasant. Among participants in the photography-involved group, a very similar overall picture emerges, but with even stronger neutrality. 59% rate being photographed spontaneously as neither pleasant nor unpleasant.

## Social Norms When Photographing

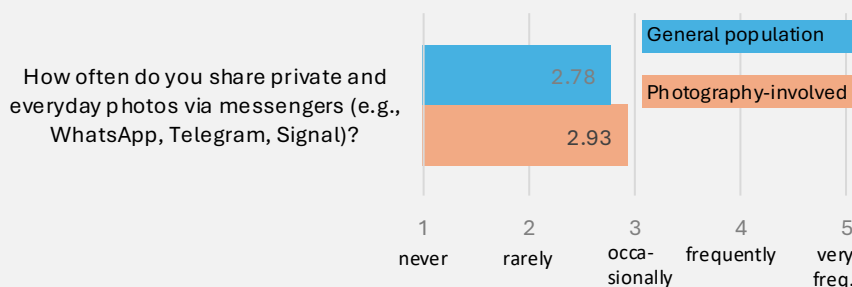


In the general population, social norms around photographing within one's circle of friends are perceived only moderately as "implicitly regulated" (M = 2.81). However, situational weighing is much more common.

Among participants in the photography-involved group, a different profile emerges. Here too, implicit rules within one's circle of friends are perceived rather cautiously (M = 2.67). The central difference, however, lies in self-regulation before photographing: participants in the photography-involved group check substantially more often whether photographing is considered appropriate in the situation (M = 4.22). 81% rather or fully agree.

## Sharing Photos: Messenger

### Sharing Photos via Messenger



In the general population, sharing private and everyday photos via messaging services is generally common, but usually not very frequent. The focus is on occasional sharing (37%). 24% share photos frequently or very frequently, whereas 13% never do so. Accordingly, the mean is in the mid-range (M = 2.78).

Among participants in the photography-involved group, a very similar pattern emerges, albeit with a slight shift toward more frequent use. Here too, occasional sharing dominates (38%). The proportion of those who share photos frequently or very frequently is somewhat larger (30%), whereas 12.7% never share. Accordingly, the mean is slightly higher than in the general population (M = 2.93).

The focus in the general population is on photographs of people, nature/landscape/garden, and animals. Taken together, 56% of mentions fall into this area.

- Family, friends, and other people: 44 mentions, 19%
- Nature, landscape, garden, and weather: 43 mentions, 19%
- Animals and pets: 41 mentions, 18%

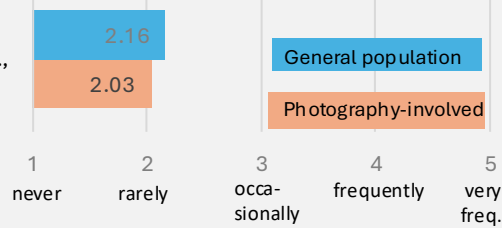
The focus among participants in the photography-involved group is also on photographs of people as well as photographs from the area of nature/landscape. In contrast, travel and vacation photos are shared more frequently than photos of animals.

- Family, friends, and other people: 61 mentions, 25%
- Nature, landscape, and weather: 43 mentions, 18%
- Travel, vacation, and places on the go: 33 mentions, 14%

## Sharing Photos: Social Media

### Sharing Photos via Social Media

How often do you share private and everyday photos via social media (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, X, TikTok)?



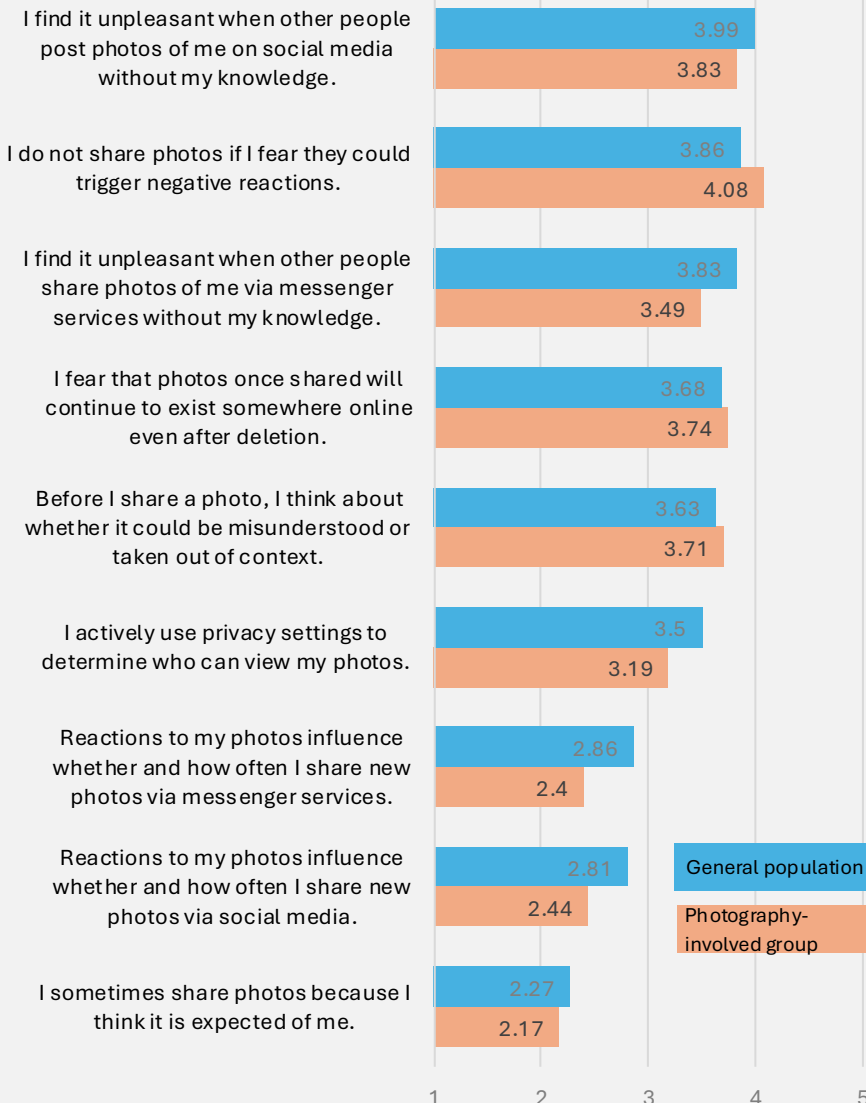
In the general population, sharing private and everyday photos via social media is overall practiced rather infrequently ( $M = 2.16$ ). The most common response is never sharing via social media (38%); a further 24% do so rarely. Occasional sharing is 24%, whereas only 13% share private and everyday photos frequently or very frequently via social media. Among participants in the photography-involved group, a very similar basic pattern emerges, albeit with slightly more restrained use ( $M = 2.03$ ). Here too, not sharing dominates (40%), and a further 28% share rarely. Occasional sharing is 25%, and only 8% share frequently or very frequently. Compared with the general population, sharing via social media is thus not more pronounced among participants in the photography-involved group, but rather slightly lower overall.

Overall, in the general population, nature/landscape motifs, travel/vacation motifs, and animal motifs dominate. Taken together, these three areas account for 57% of the analyzable mentions. Photos of people are shared substantially less often on social media.

Overall, participants in the photography-involved group share similar types of photographs on social media. Notable are shared photos in the areas of profession, work, and behind-the-scenes, artistic work and portfolio, as well as events, culture, and exhibitions, which were not reported in the general population.

## Attitudes Toward Shared Photos

### Statements on Shared Photos

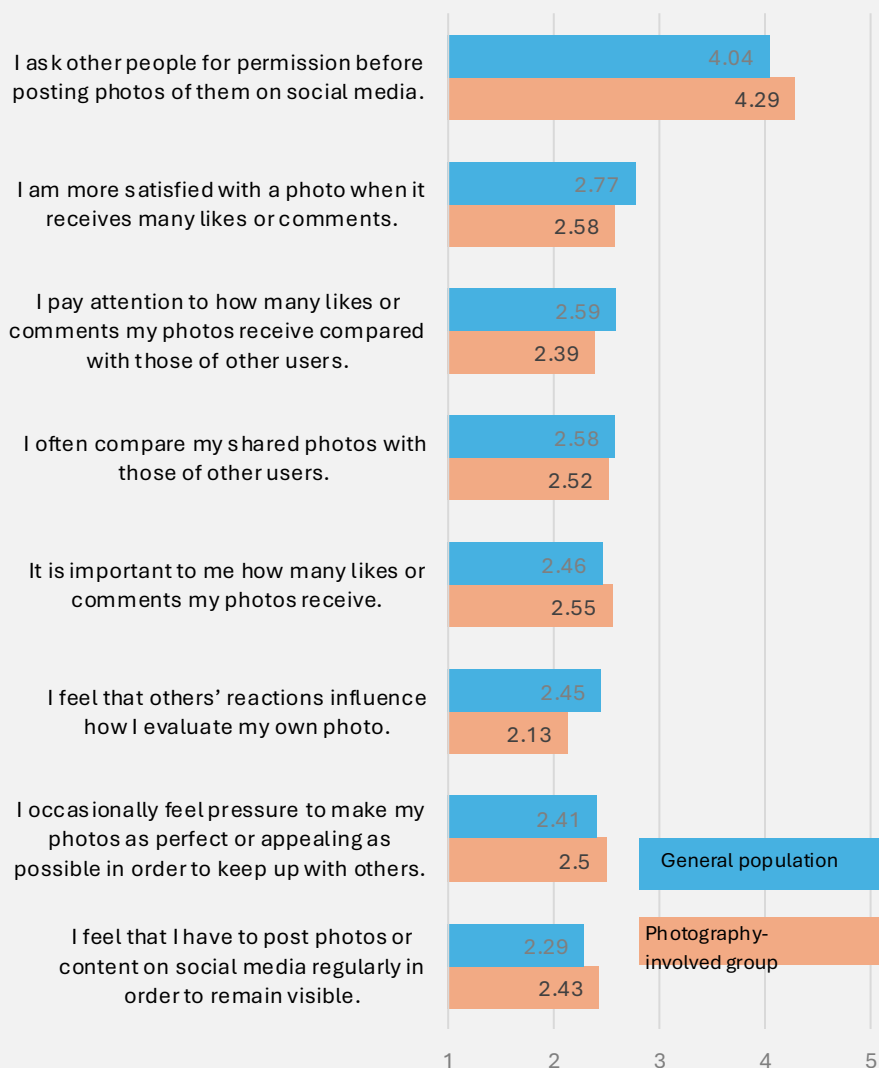


When sharing photos, a clear pattern of risk awareness and control emerges in both groups. Only individuals who share photos at least rarely were surveyed here. In the general population, many report actively using privacy settings to determine who can see their own photos ( $M = 3.50$ ). 58% rather or fully agree. At the same time, concern is widespread that photos shared once may continue to exist online even after deletion ( $M = 3.68$ ), and many think before sharing about whether photos could be misunderstood or taken out of context ( $M = 3.63$ ). Particularly pronounced is cautious self-selection: many refrain from sharing when they fear negative reactions ( $M = 3.86$ ). Perceived social pressure, by contrast, plays a subordinate role.

In both groups, it is perceived as unpleasant when others forward photos without one's knowledge, especially when they are posted on social media. In the general population, rejection is more pronounced, both for sharing via messaging services ( $M = 3.83$ ) and for posting on social media ( $M = 3.99$ ).

# Photos on Social Media

## Statements on Photos on Social Media



In both groups, agreement with a central social norm is very high: before posting photos of other people on social media, permission is usually requested. In the general population, this agreement is at a high level ( $M = 4.04$ ); among participants in the photography-involved group, it is also very high and somewhat more pronounced ( $M = 4.29$ ). This suggests that obtaining consent when publishing photos of others is regarded as a widely accepted standard, regardless of how strongly individuals are involved in photography. In addition, the statements on social comparison and on the importance of likes and comments show overall rather moderate levels. Frequent comparisons with photos from other users are reported rather cautiously in both groups. The same applies to orientation toward likes and comments, and to the perceived pressure to make photos as perfect as possible or to have to post regularly in order to remain present. Overall, this indicates that social-media photography in both groups is socially framed, but that direct dependence on others' feedback is not the dominant motive for the majority.

## Factors of Everyday Photography

To identify types of everyday photographers, a factor analysis was conducted as a first step. The aim was to identify the underlying dimensions of everyday photography and, on this basis, to form interpretable scales for the subsequent analyses.

### Factor 1: Capturing events and one's personal environment (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.85$ )

- Photographing to deliberately capture beautiful moments
- Photographing to re-live experiences later
- Photographing to capture group activities
- Photographing to capture special events or celebrations (e.g., birthdays, weddings)
- People from my personal environment (e.g., family, friends, children)

### Factor 2: Expression, mood, and motif repertoire (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$ )

- Photographing to express myself creatively
- Photographing to express my mood or feelings
- Photographing in everyday life helps me relax.
- Photographing helps me express emotions that I otherwise find difficult to put into words.

### Factor 3: Organizing memories and sharpening memories (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.79$ )

- Photographing helps me organize my memories.
- I remember events better when I have taken photos of them.

### Factor 4a: Functional memory aid (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.67$ )

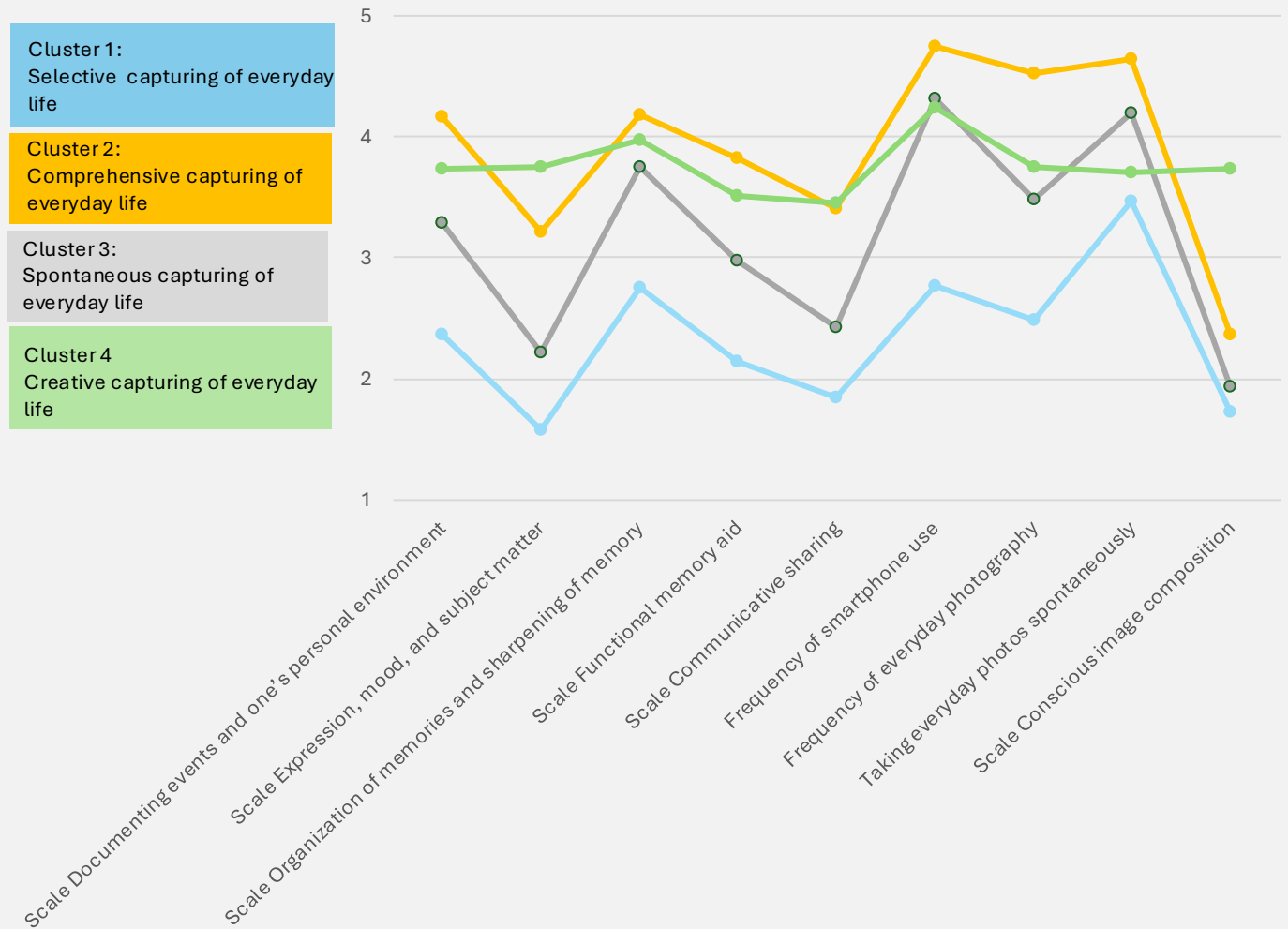
- To remember things later (e.g., shopping lists, posters, recipes)
- I use my photographed notes regularly as a memory aid.

### Factor 4b: Communicative sharing (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.67$ )

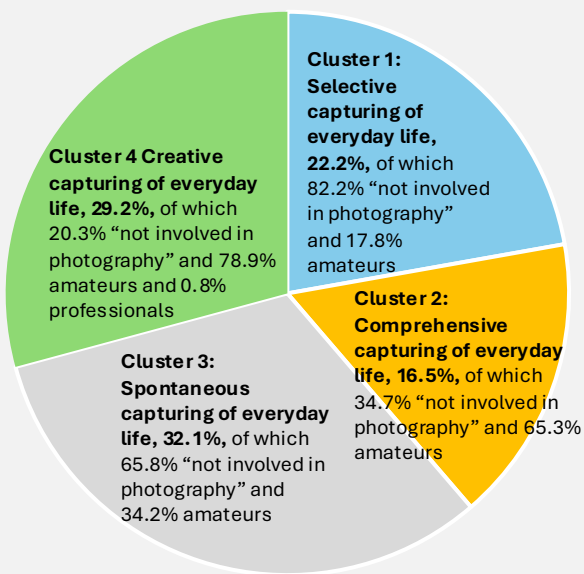
- To share photos directly with others via messaging services (e.g., WhatsApp)
- To create content for social media

# Types of Everyday Photographers in the General Population

Cluster Analysis: Types of Everyday Photographers in the General Population



## Types of Everyday Photographers in the General Population



### Cluster 1: Selective capturing

A restrained, pragmatic profile: photos are taken only occasionally, without a focus on remembering, expression, or sharing. Smartphone use is moderate, and the approach is neither particularly spontaneous nor particularly planned.

### Cluster 2: Comprehensive capturing

Intensive use of photography as an everyday tool. Photography is frequent, spontaneous, and smartphone-oriented, primarily for memory support, structuring, and communication. Deliberate composition remains secondary.

### Cluster 3: Spontaneous capturing

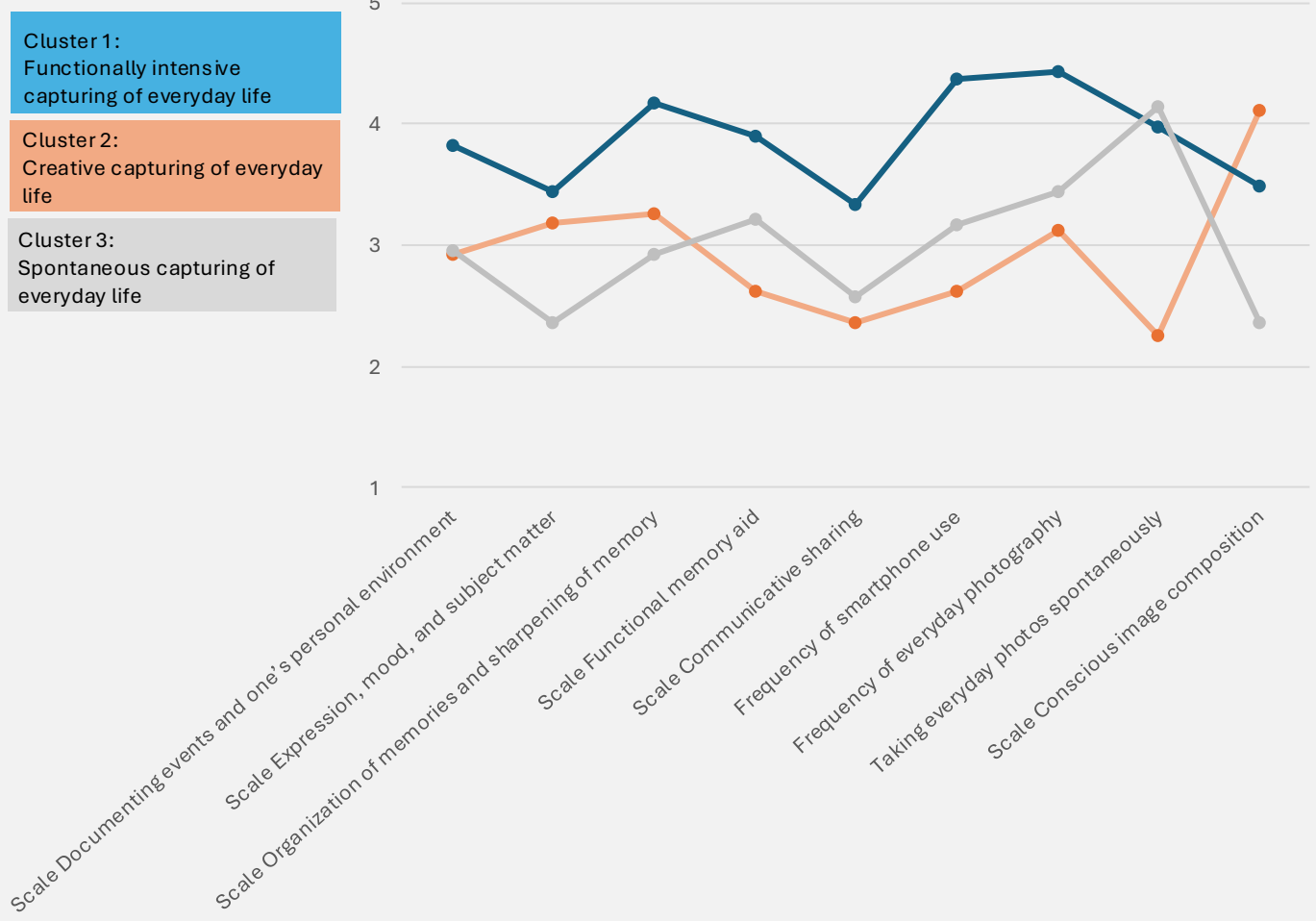
A moderate photographic practice characterized by quick, situation-based snapshots. While smartphones are often used, deliberate composition, deeper expression, or intensive sharing play a rather subordinate role.

### Cluster 4: Creative capturing

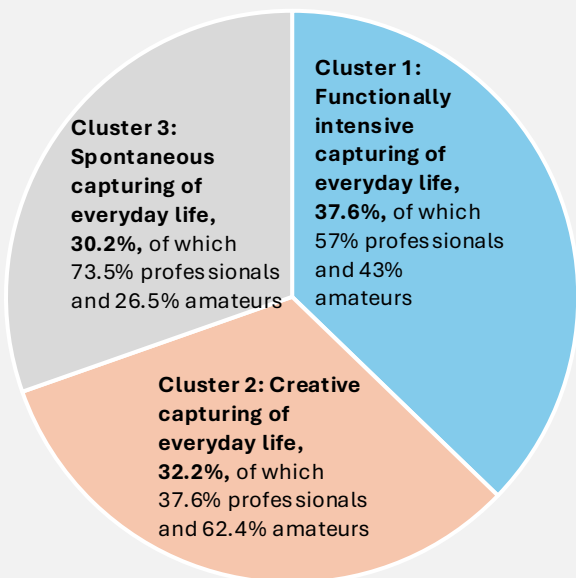
Combines frequent photography with high compositional standards. In addition to remembering and communication, mood and deliberate motif choice are in focus. This type deliberately takes time for image composition and combines function with expression.

# Types of Everyday Photographers: Photography-Involved group

Cluster Analysis: Types of Everyday Photographers Among participants in the photography-involved group



## Types of Everyday Photographers: Photography-involved group



### Cluster 1: Functionally intensive capturing

This cluster represents an intensive, functionally broad form of everyday photography. Members frequently use photos as a memory aid and to structure memories; sharing is also common. In terms of behavior, high, mostly spontaneous smartphone activity dominates, while deliberate composition remains secondary. Photography serves here as a versatile tool for remembering and communication.

### Cluster 2: Creative capturing

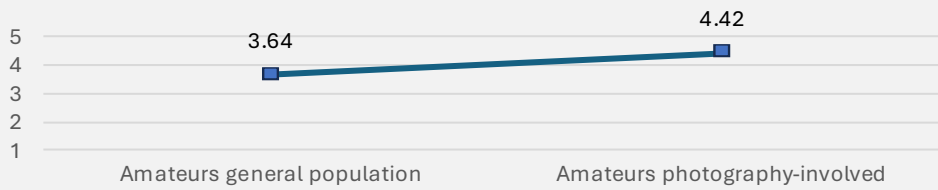
Here, everyday photography is combined with a clear compositional ambition. Rather than pure spontaneity, members deliberately take time for motif choice and image composition. Usage intensity is moderate to high; memory functions and sharing are present, but do not alone define the profile. This type understands photography primarily as deliberate composition in everyday life rather than mere documentation.

### Cluster 3: Spontaneous capturing

This cluster describes a spontaneous, everyday photographic practice of moderate extent. Quick smartphone shots dominate, while deliberate composition and expression are rare. Situational capturing is in the foreground; memory and sharing functions are noticeable, but less deeply developed. It is a photography of immediate moments, which is rarely used in a targeted communicative manner.

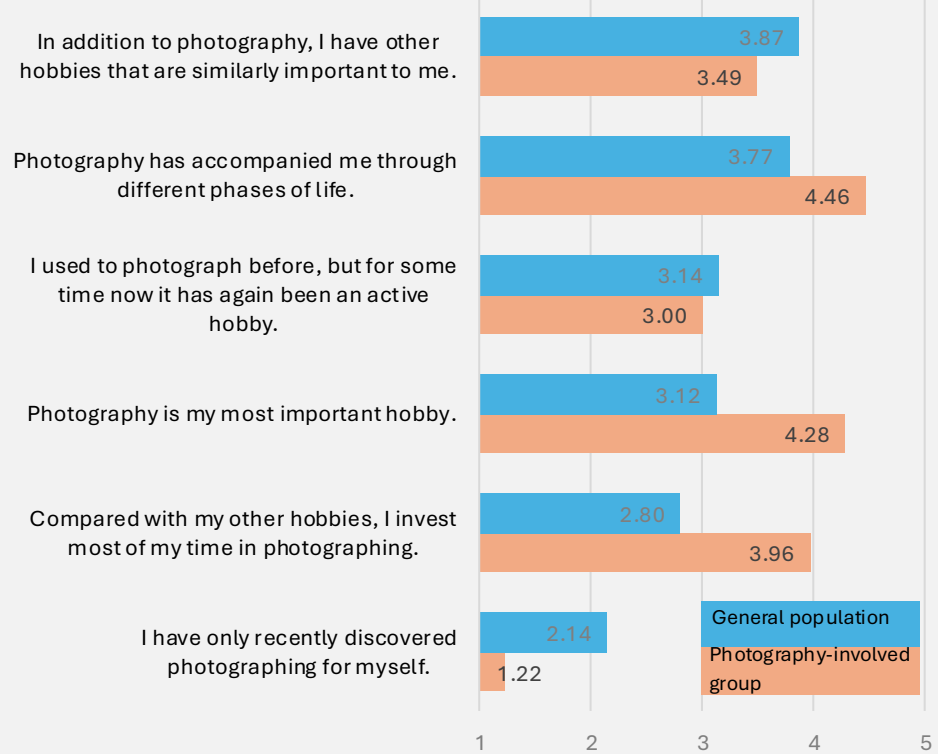
# Photography as a Hobby

## Amateurs: Personal Importance of Photography



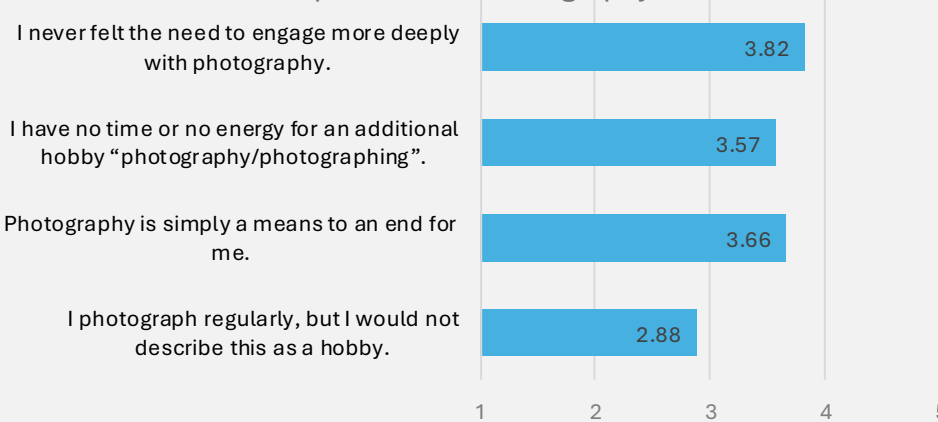
The personal importance of photography is substantially higher among amateurs in the Photography-involved group than among the amateur group in the general population.

## Amateurs: Importance of Photography



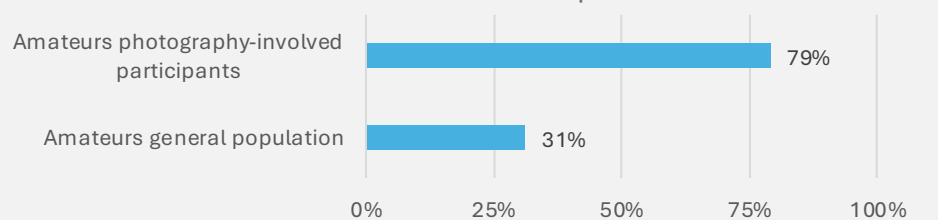
Among hobby photographers in the general population, photography is more of an important hobby, but not consistently the central hobby. At the same time, for most people photography is not the only central leisure domain: 65% rather or fully agree that, in addition to photography, there are other important hobbies. Among hobby photographers in the Photography-involved group, photography is much more firmly established as the central hobby. The results show a clear selectivity of the participants in the photography-involved group: this amateur group primarily reflects highly involved hobby photographers for whom photography has a central temporal and identity-related significance. By contrast, the amateur group in the general population is broader, more often characterized by parallel hobbies, and an overall lower time focus on photography.

## General Population "Not involved in photography": Importance of Photography



In the group of those who did not classify themselves as either professional or amateur/hobby photographers ("not involved in photography"), a clear picture emerges of a rather functional relationship with photography that is only weakly hobby-related. Many individuals indicate that they have never felt the need to engage more deeply with photography (M = 3.82); 63% rather or fully agree with this statement.

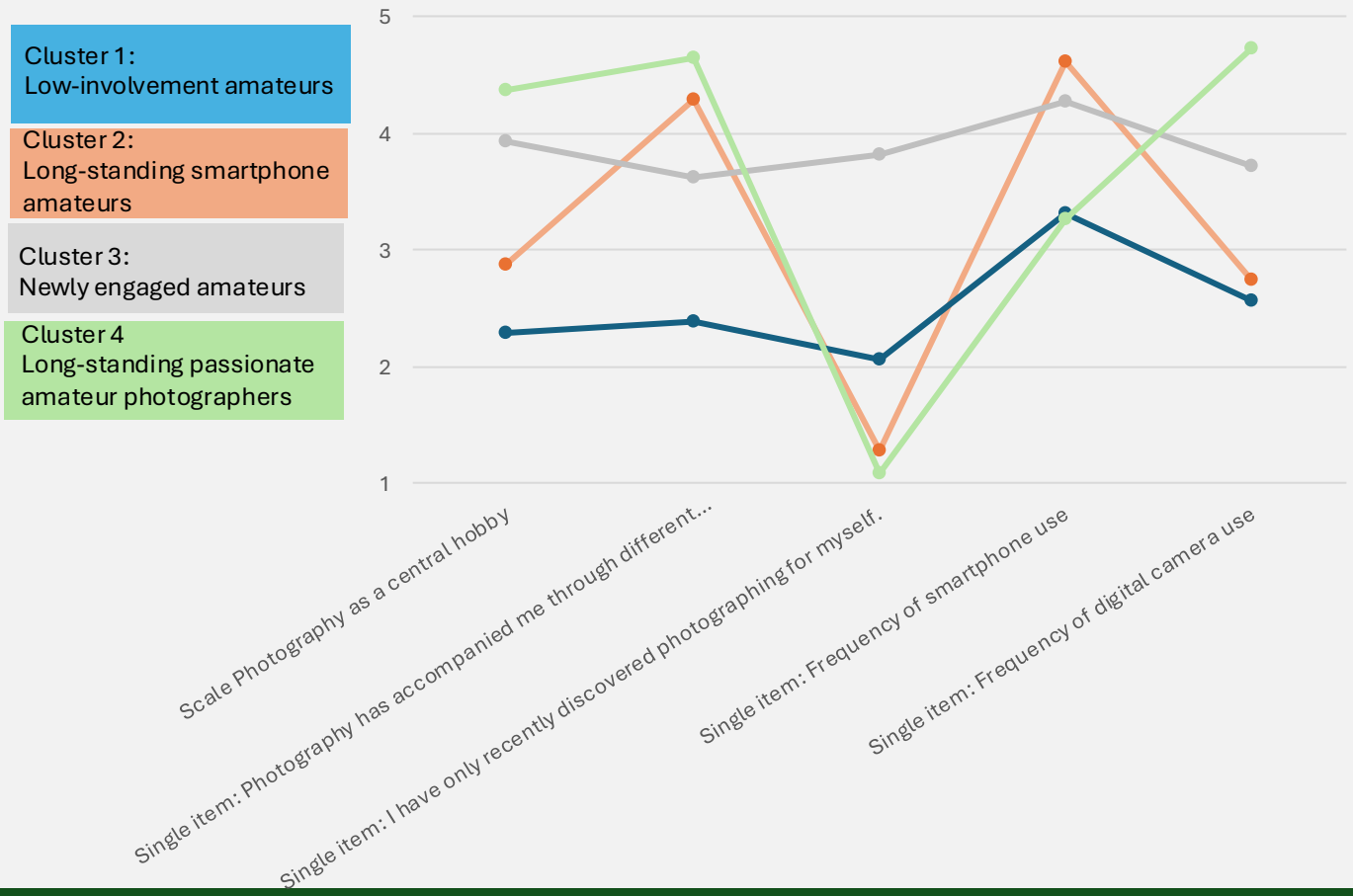
## Amateurs: Participation in Photography Training Courses/Workshops



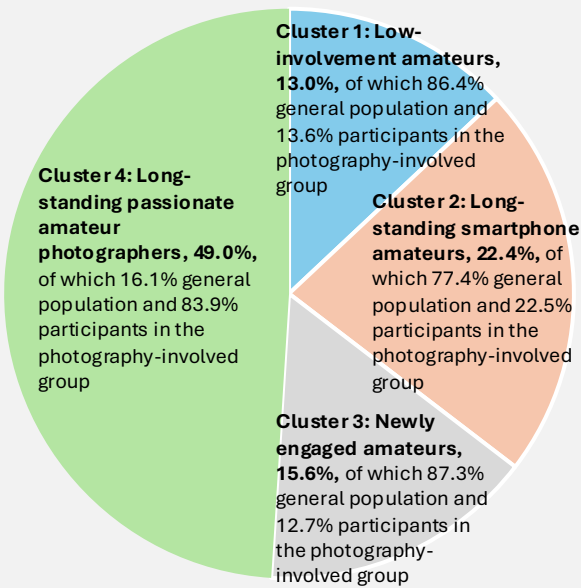
Participation in continuing education and workshops differs substantially between the amateur groups. In the amateur group of the general population, 31% have already participated in workshops, whereas among photography-involved amateur photographers the figure is 79%.

# Types of Hobby/Amateur Photographers

Cluster Analysis: Types of Amateur Photographers



## Types of Amateur Photographers



### Cluster 1: Low-involvement amateurs

Characterized by low hobby centrality and low biographical embeddedness. The mean value for “newly discovered” suggests a rather loose relationship with photography. Device use is smartphone-oriented, while digital cameras are used rarely. Amateurs from the general population dominate (86.4%); participants in the photography-involved group are rare (13.6%).

### Cluster 2: Long-standing smartphone amateurs

Combines high biographical embeddedness with rather low hobby centrality. As an established type, photography is present over the long term, but not a dominant main interest. Technically, this type shows a pronounced smartphone orientation with rare camera use. Here too, the general population predominates (77.4%).

### Cluster 3: Newly engaged amateurs

Notable is the clear “newly discovered” character: photography has only recently been taken up actively, but quickly gains importance. Biographical embeddedness is correspondingly low. Device use is broad; smartphones and digital cameras are both strongly present. In terms of composition, the general population dominates (87.3%).

### Cluster 4: Long-standing passionate amateur photographers

Shows the highest hobby centrality and strongest biographical embeddedness. There is a long-term, passionate orientation, while the aspect of “newly discovered” hardly plays a role. Technically, the digital camera is clearly central; smartphones are secondary. Here, participants in the photography-involved group dominate very clearly (83.9%).

## Summary

The present study examines psychological aspects, functions, and usage patterns of private photography and everyday photography in the German-speaking region using an exploratory online survey. A near-population online panel sample (N = 496) and a deliberately recruited group of participants in the photography-involved group (amateurs and professionals, N = 521) were surveyed. This makes both widespread everyday patterns and more specific patterns of more strongly involved photographic practice visible.

The results show that, for many people, photography in everyday life is not only tied to special occasions but also takes place regularly alongside other activities. Private photography remains important as a frame of reference: within the logic of the survey, it more often refers to selected occasions and to photos that are particularly important for personal remembering, whereas everyday photography more often encompasses incidental situations and is described more as an ongoing habit.

Technically, a clear pattern emerges: in the general population, everyday photography is clearly concentrated on the smartphone, whereas among participants in the photography-involved group a mixed practice is more often evident, in which people switch between smartphone and digital camera depending on the situation. These differences primarily describe the technical framework of everyday photography; taken on their own, they do not show how particular usage patterns emerge or what causes them.

In terms of motives, everyday photography appears as a bundle of multiple functions. At the center are capturing and later remembering, complemented by pragmatic use as a visual note and for everyday organization. At the same time, social exchange plays an important role: many everyday photos are taken in order to pass them on within a close circle, whereas posting on social media is less common and is more often associated with issues of visibility, control, and appropriateness.

The findings on psychological effects and photographic style do not show a uniform pattern. Everyday photography is often described as spontaneous; at the same time, a more composition-oriented approach is evident among a subset of respondents. Statements on effects on experience, attention, or remembering should be understood as subjective assessments that depend on situation and motivation, not as evidence for general causal relationships.

With regard to social practices, it becomes clear that everyday photography regularly takes place in situations in which other people are affected. Evaluations of appropriateness and consent therefore typically depend on the context. Particularly relevant is the distinction between the moment of taking the photo and the later handling of images: whereas photographing in a private setting can be experienced as unproblematic, posting without asking is evaluated much more critically. This is consistent with the measured expectation that permission should be sought before posting photos of other people, even though such agreements are not always made explicitly in everyday life.

The typology analyses underscore that everyday photography does not constitute a uniform behavior. The types were computed separately for the general population and participants in the photography-involved group. In the general population, four types can be distinguished, ranging from a restrained marginal type with selective use to functionally broad and composition-oriented profiles. Among participants in the photography-involved group, a three-type structure emerges that corresponds in content to the three more active basic patterns, but without an independent restrained type. This makes visible that everyday photography follows similar underlying logics in both groups, but differs markedly in distribution and intensity.

The additional typology of amateur photographers complements the results by examining how strongly photography is anchored as a hobby in a person's life and whether it has accompanied them for a long time or has only recently taken on greater importance. A key finding is the wide range of amateur self-classification: in the general population, "amateur" can be a broad, everyday self-description without photography necessarily being a particularly central hobby. In the deliberately recruited group of participants in the photography-involved group, by contrast, amateur photographers are located almost entirely in the type with the highest hobby centrality. This shows that the same self-label can mean very different things in the two samples.

Overall, the results portray everyday photography as a widespread but strongly situation-dependent practice. Whether it is experienced as helpful or burdensome depends less on photographing per se than on the respective functions, the social situation, and the handling of sharing and control.