



Federal Ministry for
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,
Women and Youth

Family today. Data, Facts, Trends – Family Report 2020

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Summary

1. Families and the Covid-19 pandemic:

The Covid-19 pandemic, with its risks, fears and restrictions, has posed major challenges for families in particular and has influenced and changed family life. The period of restrictions in social life has impacted families in different ways. Although some families have seen this period in a relatively positive light, families with younger children in particular have faced numerous challenges (see Chapter 1.1). More than one in every two families found reorganising childcare above all to be difficult. Nevertheless, the crisis has not led to a re-traditionalisation of parental roles. Fathers in particular have become increasingly involved in additional childcare tasks (see Chapter 1.2). As a result, issues about the compatibility of family and work and bringing up children properly have gained a new significance for many families (see Chapter 1.3). During the crisis, companies have shown themselves to a very large extent to be supportive partners of parents and their responsibilities. In this context, family-conscious personnel measures have been introduced or the range of options has been expanded (see Chapter 1.4). There has been widespread concern about the upbringing of children and possible long-term disadvantages (see Chapter 1.5). It has become apparent that the expansion of childcare infrastructure must be further promoted and made dependable. During the crisis, financial support services were rapidly implemented by policymakers, especially for families (see Chapter 1.6).

2. Family life in Germany and Europe:

The family is still the most important aspect of life for people, and the residents of Germany and Europe are very satisfied with their family life (see Chapter 2.1). Married parents are the most common form of family (70 percent), but the number of cohabiting parents is continuing to increase and had already accounted for 11 percent of all families by 2018. The number of single parents has also increased over time, although their total share among families has remained the same at 19 percent of all families. This also applies to families with more than three children. Of the 13.2 million underage children, 74 percent are growing up with married parents. This means that children in Germany grow up with married parents more often than the European average (68 percent). Sixteen percent of children live with only one parent in the household. Three-quarters of children grow up with siblings (see Chapter 2.2). These positive trends are also reflected in people's desire to have children: 63 percent of 16 to 29-year-olds in Germany would like to have children. In 2018 the birth rate was 1.57 children per woman. This puts Germany just above the European average of 1.54 children per woman. The birth rate, however, is lagging behind people's desire to have children. This is the case in all European countries. In an international comparison, childlessness among female graduates is particularly high in Germany. In 2018, however, it will have fallen somewhat in comparison to 2008 (see Chapter 2.3). In Germany, people still wish to marry, and marriages last longer in comparison to other countries, as is shown by the further increase in the number of marriages and the increasing lengths of time until divorce. In a European comparison, Germany is above the EU average for marriages. At the same time, German women and men who marry are also somewhat older than in other European countries. By contrast, the number of divorces is continuing to fall. In this respect, Germany sits in the middle of the European spectrum (see Chapter 2.4).

3. Economic situation of families:

Most families are doing well economically, though not all of them have equal access to the opportunities provided by the growing prosperity. The majority of families today regard their economic situation as good or even very good. Indeed, net equivalised income is distributed very similarly for families and childless households. In other words, families are not systematically worse off economically than childless households, which is aided by a good work-life balance and government benefits for families. However, low-income families often find their everyday life difficult (see Chapter 3.1).

Depending on the data source, the poverty risk of children is between 14.5 and 20.7 percent. Both parents being in livelihood securing gainful employment is the best protection against family poverty. For example, around 45 percent of children at risk of poverty do not have a working parent in their household. Good conditions for an equally shared work and family life and government benefits for low-income families are central to resolving this (see Chapter 3.2).

In the majority of two-parent families (65 percent), both parents were employed in 2018. Since the expansion of childcare facilities and the introduction of Parental Allowance (*Elterngeld*), the number of mothers in employment – including with young children – has risen steadily. Mothers are working for higher hourly wages more frequently and also earning a living wage more frequently. As a result, families have better security (see Chapter 3.3).

In Germany there is broad social consensus for supporting low-income families. The most-common reason for supporting children in such families is that they should have life opportunities as good as other children's (see Chapter 3.4). There is a demand among the population for targeted investments in low-income families. This corresponds with the approach of a sustainable family policy that the Federal Government has been pursuing for some time. With the Strong Families Act (*Starke-Familien-Gesetz*), the Federal Government has continued along this path and made gainful employment more rewarding for mothers and fathers and improved education and participation benefits (*Bildungs- und Teilhabepaket*) for children and young people (see Chapter 3.5).

4. Family life and the world of work:

Attitudes towards the division of labour within families have changed, and the proportion of family-oriented employers is increasing. More than two-thirds of the population now expect fathers to look after their children, to be strongly involved in family life and to support their partner. In 2017 almost three-quarters (71 percent) of Germans disagreed with the statement that a woman's most important task is to look after the household and family. In an international comparison, Germany is one of the countries with egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles. This is also evident in the increasing number of fathers claiming Parental Allowance. In 2017, the number of fathers claiming Parental Allowance had almost doubled compared to 2008, up to 40.4 percent in 2017 from 21 percent in 2008. Since the introduction of Parental Allowance Plus (*ElterngeldPlus*), take-up has risen continuously. Around 28 percent of the parents who applied for Parental Allowance opted for Parental Allowance Plus in 2019 (see Chapter 4.1).

Employees have a growing need for flexible, family-conscious working conditions – not just parents, but also younger workers. A family-oriented corporate culture that is implemented credibly and communicated both internally and externally is a decisive criterion when choosing an employer. Companies have adapted to this. The share of managers and HR officers who consider family-friendly measures important has risen by almost 6 percentage points since 2015 to over 83 percent (2018). Companies have caught up, particularly when it comes to flexible working hours and encouraging active fathers. The Covid-19 pandemic gave an additional boost to remote working. While the orientation towards families has undoubtedly increased, it still does not apply everywhere or to everyone. Many men in particular still fear that they will suffer professional disadvantages if they spend more time with their families. This makes it clear that family orientation is a cultural issue that cannot be addressed with individual measures for affected individuals. Rather, it must be firmly anchored and practised in the day-to-day work of a company (see Chapter 4.2)

5. Digital services for families:

5. Digitisation can be the key to an active, forward-thinking welfare state which keeps responsible citizens informed, is easily accessible and shapes future developments. Among the population, major indicators such as openness to new technologies and digital literacy have been steadily rising. In an international comparison of the population's digital problem-solving skills, Germany ranked 9th out of 27. However, the various services on offer do not always reach the families who are actually entitled to them. If citizens want to take advantage of the services offered by the state, they often have to go down different routes, submit lengthy applications and provide supporting documents. Eighty-eight per cent of parents think that the option of submitting applications for benefits such as Parental Allowance or Child Benefit (*Kindergeld*) online without paper would be a great help for their family. What is therefore needed is a paradigm shift towards a committed, forward-thinking welfare state which is even more accessible, more transparent and more responsive and efficient, especially with regard to families (see Chapter 5.1).

Nevertheless, in terms of administrative digitisation, Germany is in the lower middle range of European countries. The potential of digitisation could be harnessed more effectively by using digital technologies creatively and innovatively to solve social challenges. For this reason, there is a focus on digital access in the form of digital application assistants for all family-related benefits. The aim is to make the application process completely paperless and easily accessible. In October 2018, a digital application assistant called Parental Allowance Digital (*ElterngeldDigital*) was relaunched in a new and so far unique form. Child Supplement Digital (*KinderzuschlagDigital*) is another digital application assistant for family benefits which has been available since January 2020. The Digital Family Benefits Act (*Digitale-Familienleistungen-Gesetz*), passed by the Federal Government in June, will in future make it possible to consolidate four key family benefits in one combined, digital application (see Chapter 5.2). The Family Portal (*Familienportal*) and the Family Information Tool (*Infotool Familie*) allow citizens to obtain information about government benefits and support services interactively in an audience-specific manner (see Chapter 5.3).

Family policy in Germany – goals and assessment

Family policy since 2006: money, time, infrastructure

The 7th Family Report of the Federal Government (2006)¹ was the first to develop an overall concept for a sustainable family policy, which, in the spirit of a forward-thinking welfare state, remains decisive for the family policy of the Federal Government today. The 8th Family Report (2012)² addressed the topic of time policy. The report made it clear that time scarcity and time conflicts have a lasting effect on the well-being and quality of family life and that this also has societal and economic consequences. The 9th Family Report (2021)³ deals with the question of what it means to be a parent today. It treats parents as stakeholders in society and in the world of work as well as stakeholders in interaction with institutions and family policy benefits.

Family policy objectives

Since 2006, family policy measures has followed a triad of financial transfer policy, time policy and infrastructure policy (in short: money, time, infrastructure), with a focus on the following targets:

- **Ensuring economic stability and social participation of families:** the focus here is on avoiding poverty risks and improving family prosperity and both partners' financial independence.⁴
- **Facilitating the compatibility of family and work:** mothers and fathers must be given the opportunity to participate equally in both family and working life according to their wishes. Since the gender-determined division of labour, which is still widespread, often does not (any longer) correspond to the life concepts of families, this usually means an increase in the participation of mothers in the labour market and the extent to which they are employed, as well as greater involvement of fathers in family work.
- **Promoting positive growth in childhood:** the aim is to promote not only educational and developmental opportunities in the first years of life, but also the well-being of children.
- **Helping would-be parents realise childbearing desires:** by improving the parameters for a good work-life balance, family policy can make decisions about having children easier.⁵

1 BMFSFJ (Ed.) (2006): Familie zwischen Flexibilität und Verlässlichkeit – Perspektiven für eine lebenslaufbezogene Familienpolitik, Siebter Familienbericht (*Family between Flexibility and Reliability – Perspectives for a Life Course-Related Family Policy, Seventh Family Report*).

2 BMFSFJ (Ed.) (2012): Zeit für Familie. Familienzeitpolitik als Chance einer nachhaltigen Familienpolitik. Achter Familienbericht (*Time for Family. Family time policy as an opportunity for a sustainable family policy. Eighth Family Report*).

3 BMFSFJ (Ed.) (2021): Eltern sein in Deutschland – Ansprüche, Anforderungen und Angebote bei wachsender Vielfalt von Familien. Neunter Familienbericht (*Parenting in Germany*).

4 BMFSFJ (2014): Gesamtevaluation der ehe- und familienbezogenen Maßnahmen und Leistungen in Deutschland (*Overall evaluation of marriage and family-related measures and benefits in Germany*), p. 112

5 ibid. p. 322.

Knowledge about impacts and developments as a foundation

Sustainable family policy in Germany is evidence- and knowledge-based. At the beginning of the 2000s, little was known about the cost and effects of family policy instruments. This was the reason for the “Overall Evaluation of Marriage- and Family-Related Benefits” study in Germany in 2009, which examined the interaction between marriage- and family-related benefits in relation to the four goals of family policy.

The overall evaluation showed that a good work-life balance also promotes the achievement of the other family policy objectives mentioned. Having both parents in employment has proved to be the best protection against the risk of poverty⁶ and also contributes to economic security in old age, in the event of unemployment and in the event of separation or the death of the partner.⁷ The prevention of poverty risks in turn has a positive impact on the well-being of children.⁸ Ultimately, the possibility of reconciling family and work life has a bearing on whether couples fulfil their desire to have children.⁹ Successful work-life balance is the linchpin of an effective family policy. Among the benefits with the best effects are subsidised childcare and Parental Allowance, introduced in 2007. An evaluation of legal initiatives and reforms is now an integral part of family policy work.

Overview of family policy benefits and measures

The Federal Government would like to offer all families good parameters for a successful family life. This entails helping parents to shoulder the costs incurred by having children and thus creating a level playing field between parents and childless adults. Family benefits are either designed as standalone benefits for families or as a component of general state-provided benefits that considers the living situation of an eligible recipient family. The most-common scenario is for benefits to be integrated into other benefits as a component for the family. Finally, many measures – including those taken by federal state governments and local authorities – contribute to the good development of children and offer parents localised support. Table 1 below shows how the financial volume of individual, centralised benefits has evolved.

6 BMFSFJ (2017): Family Report 2017. Benefits, effects, trends. p. 50.

7 BMFSFJ (2014): Gesamtevaluation der ehe- und familienbezogenen Maßnahmen und Leistungen in Deutschland (*Overall evaluation of marriage and family-related measures and benefits in Germany*), p. 219.

8 Schölmerich, Axel et al. (2013): Wohlergehen von Kindern.

9 *ibid.*

Table 1: Selected family-related benefits/measures from 2009 to 2019 in millions of euros, (estimated) expenditure/revenue shortfall

Benefit	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Child Benefit (fiscal family benefit equalisation and Child Benefit according to BKGG)	37,543	40,095	39,767	39,994	39,974	40,188	41,183	42,233	43,144	42,938	45,272
Parental Allowance	4,450	4,583	4,709	4,825	5,105	5,676	5,822	6,097	6,478	6,762	6,982
Child Supplement	363	399	385	371	352	324	283	306	397	383	432
Payments under the Maintenance Advance Act (federal and federal state expenditures)	819	911	922	880	858	848	842	860	1,103	2,103	2,178
Tax relief for single parents	350	350	350	355	360	370	550	555	540	535	535
Child daycare	14,574	16,183	17,352	18,904	21,408	22,888	24,574	26,569	29,337	31,579	
Childcare cost tax deductions	395	395	415	500	545	570	585	670	690	715	745
Education and participation benefits (<i>Bildungs- und Teilhabepaket</i>)				433	483	531	570	608	652	669	
Free family membership in statutory health insurance for non-employed family members (children and adolescents)	16,152	16,409	16,492	16,633	17,381	18,031	18,559	18,501	19,157	20,099	21,158 (provisionally)
Federal contributions to statutory pension insurance for child-raising periods	11,466	11,637	11,574	11,628	11,585	11,858	12,149	12,530	13,211	14,297	15,392
Child allowance as part of the supplementary pension allowance	1,121	1,183	1,241	1,259	1,293	1,361	1,405	1,412	1,454	1,515	

The development of the financial scale of the family benefits listed in Table 1 clearly reflects that and how the Federal Government is pursuing its family policy objectives in the spirit of a preventive welfare state, how it is investing in families and thus in society as a whole, how it is creating scope for families to reconcile family and work life and how it is allowing them to keep pace with general economic developments.

For example, between 2009 and 2019 the largest increases in expenditure were in child daycare, both in absolute and relative terms. Firstly, childcare provides parents with time off, which is usually used for gainful employment. Child daycare has thus become a central pillar for the compatibility of family and career. Secondly, child daycare also forms the foundation for early support, education and social interaction. It strengthens the development of all children.

Child Benefit and tax allowances help all parents to meet part of the costs of having children reliably and sustainably. In addition, most parents are relieved of costs for their children's health by having them covered under statutory health insurance for no additional contributions.

Mothers in particular tend to limit their gainful employment during child-raising periods of life; child components in pension income increase that assessable income and compensate for the reduction in gainful employment. With Parental Allowance and Parental Allowance Plus, parents receive additional support in addition to Child Benefit immediately after birth. This creates time for family life and supports an equally shared compatibility of family and work life between partners.

Child Supplement, education and participation benefits, Maintenance Advance payments and tax relief for single parents are specific benefits for low-income families or for single parents.

Family policy is a factor in creating sustainable, inclusive social structures. A number of research findings and studies now bear witness to this, concluding that expenditure on families is a social investment with returns.¹⁰ This is also the basis for the statements of the Federal Ministry of Finance on the sustainability of public budgets, namely that targeted configuration of family-related benefits can further improve growth and employment in Germany and have positive effects on public finances through refinancing effects.¹¹

This opens up perspectives for the further development of family policy. If politicians, civil society and the economy can orient themselves in a coordinated partnership of responsibility towards the desires of present and future mothers and fathers who want to shape their family life based on their own life plans using their own economic power, then the positive effects of family policy which have already been achieved can be extended. Conditions for supporting a more flexible division of work and family life are central to this.¹²

10 Summarised in BMFSFJ (Eds.) (2017): Monitor Familienforschung Nr. 36; Investitionen in Infrastruktur für Familien – ein Motor für inklusives Wachstum.

11 Bundesministerium der Finanzen (2016): Vierter Tragfähigkeitsbericht des Bundesfinanzministeriums.

12 Prognos AG (2016): Zukunftsreport Familie 2030.

Review of family policy – 2017 to 2020

Further development of family-related benefits:

- ✓ Continuous adjustment of Child Benefit and Child Allowance: increases in 2019 and 2020
- ✓ 2019: Strong Families Act (*Starke-Familien-Gesetz*): improved and debureaucratised Child Supplement; expansion of benefits for education and participation

Expansion of child daycare:

- ✓ 2019: Act on Good Early Childhood Education and Care (*Gute-Kita-Gesetz*): Federal Government invests €5.5 billion in the period up to 2022 – for more quality and lower fees in child daycare
- ✓ 2020: 5th Childcare Investment Programme (5. *Investitionsprogramm Kinderbetreuung*) – Federal Government invests an additional €1 billion for the expansion of child daycare and €1.5 billion for the expansion of all-day-care at primary schools

Promoting equal compatibility of family and work life:

- ✓ 2019: launch of Reconcilability Progress Index (*Fortschrittsindex Vereinbarkeit*) for companies with an online tool to measure, develop and raise the visibility of family-friendly policies in companies
- ✓ 2020: Cabinet decides to improve parental allowance: bill for more part-time work opportunities and less bureaucracy
- ✓ 2020: Company Childcare (*Betriebliche Kinderbetreuung*) support programme, supporting employers in creating sustainable care services for employees' children

Digital services for families:

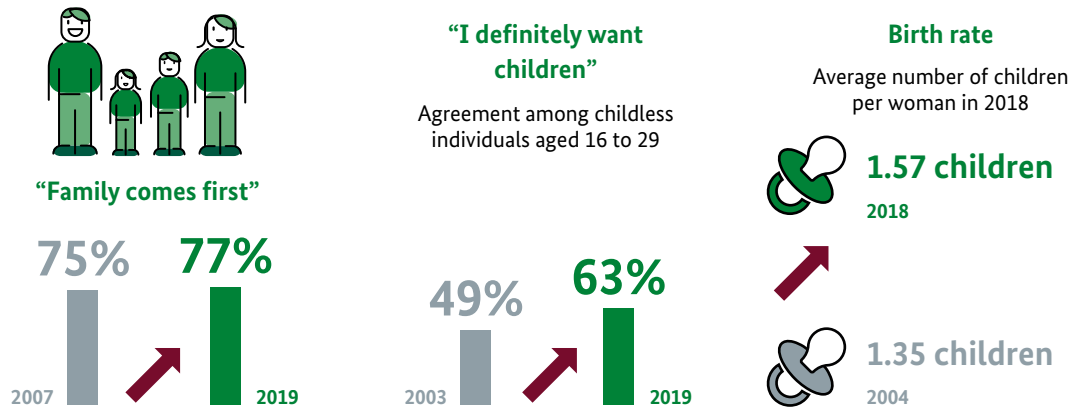
- ✓ 2018: launch of the BMFSFJ's Family Portal – information on benefits in different life situations, advice and help on the spot
- ✓ 2018: launch of Family Information Tool – information on possible individual entitlements to family benefits
- ✓ 2019: launch of Rainbow Portal – information on same-sex lifestyles and gender diversity
- ✓ 2019: digital application assistants: launch of Parental Allowance Digital and Child Supplement Digital
- ✓ 2020: Cabinet approves Digital Family Benefits Act (*Digitale-Familienleistungen-Gesetz*), enabling paperless applications for benefits and better data exchange

Family policy during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic (temporary measures):

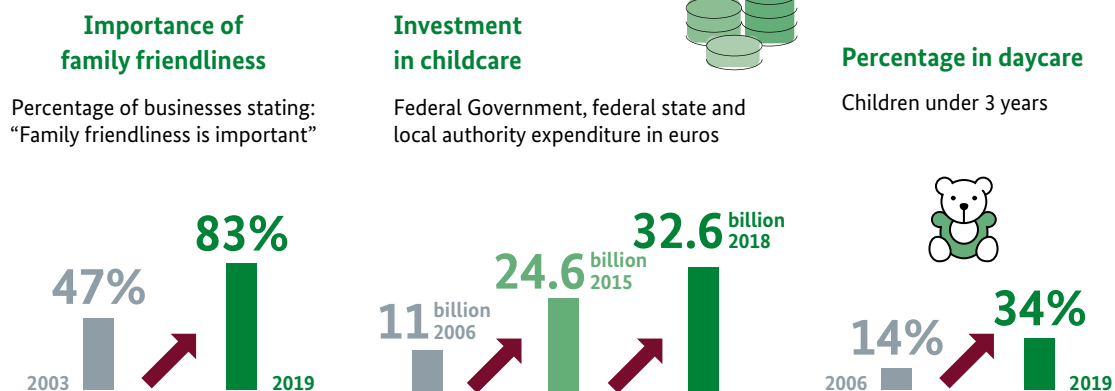
- ✓ Child Bonus: one-time €300 payment for all families
- ✓ Child Supplement reorganised as Emergency Child Supplement (*Notfall-Kinderzuschlag*), with simplified application procedures and even better access
- ✓ More flexible Parental Allowance: postponement of months, no disadvantages due to loss of income
- ✓ Tax relief for single parents doubled from €1,908 per year to €4,008 (until 2021)

Family life reflected in numbers, data and facts

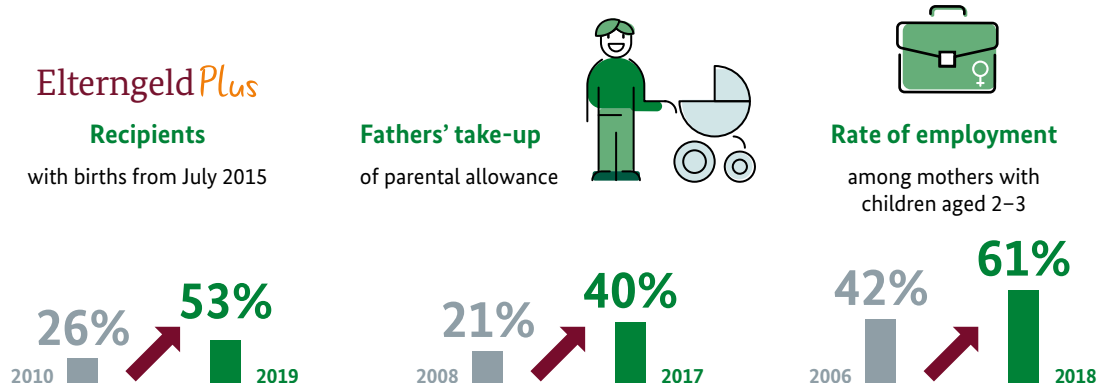
More Family



More reconcilability of family and work life



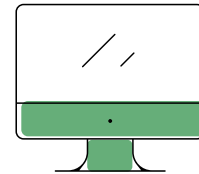
Family and work responsibilities shared more equally between partners



Family benefits, including digital ones

Awareness about Child Supplement

Percentage of parents who are (quite/somewhat) informed



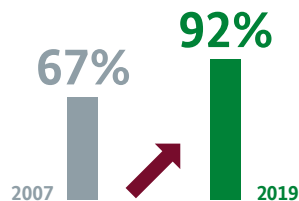
Use of Familienportal.de

Number of visits (June to June of the following year)



Appraisal of Parental Allowance

Proportion of parents calling it a "good benefit"



Germany in the EU

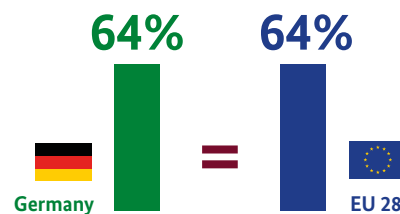
Birth rate

(average number of children per woman in 2018)



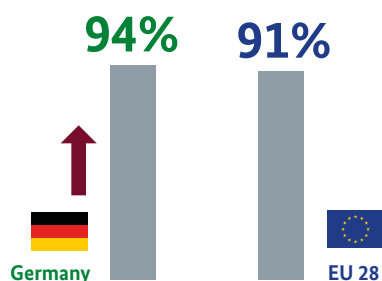
Employment rate

(mothers whose youngest child is under 6 in 2019)



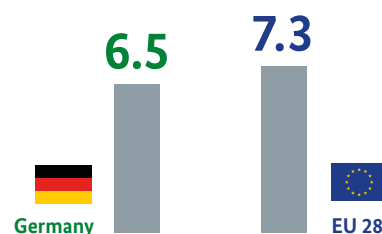
Happy with family life?

(percentage agreement in 2017)



Egalitarian attitudes 2017

(Gender Stereotype Index: the lower the index, the more egalitarian the attitudes)





Families and the Covid-19 pandemic

Life during the Covid-19 restrictions

Many families were particularly hard hit by the restrictions imposed because of the Covid-19 pandemic – and especially by the closure of schools and daycare centres. Depending on their resources, working conditions, employment and income situations and division of tasks between family and work prior to the restrictions, families had a wide range of starting conditions and capabilities for dealing with the challenges.

The representative Allensbach survey of parents with children under 15 years of age, commissioned by the BMFSFJ, shows how families experienced the period of Covid-19 restrictions. Unless otherwise indicated, the following statements and data are drawn from this study.¹³

The Covid-19 pandemic and especially the period of restrictions on social life have affected families in different ways. While some have perceived this period as relatively positive, families with younger children in particular have faced numerous challenges (cf. Chapter 1.1). Professional childcare was interrupted at short notice and had to be replaced with family arrangements. More than one in two families found the reorganisation of childcare in particular to be difficult. The crisis has not led to a return to the traditional role of parents. Fathers in particular have been able to work at home more often than before and have become increasingly involved in the additional tasks of childcare and homeschooling. In this respect, the crisis could accelerate a shift towards more equally shared responsibilities between partners (see Chapter 1.2).

Consequently, the issues of work-life balance and adequate support for children have taken on a new importance in many families. In three-quarters of two-parent families, at least one parent experienced some kind of change in their working arrangements. Added to this were concerns about their specific economic situation (see Chapter 1.3).

During the crisis, businesses have proved to be helpful and responsible partners for parents for the most part. In dialogue with parents, they have developed solutions for balancing families and careers. Family-friendly staffing measures were either rolled out or existing ones expanded. There is a chance that the positive trends in businesses will persist after the crisis, particularly those regarding working from home and flexible working hours (see Chapter 1.4).

The importance of childcare and government support services has become particularly evident during the crisis. Without reliable childcare and all-day schools, families and the economy will soon hit their limits. There has been widespread concern about support for children and possible long-term disadvantages (see Chapter 1.5). This underlines the need to further expand childcare infrastructure. Moreover, financial support services for families in particular were introduced rapidly during the crisis. It can be assumed that these services were successful in stabilising family incomes and creating opportunities for participation (see Chapter 1.6).

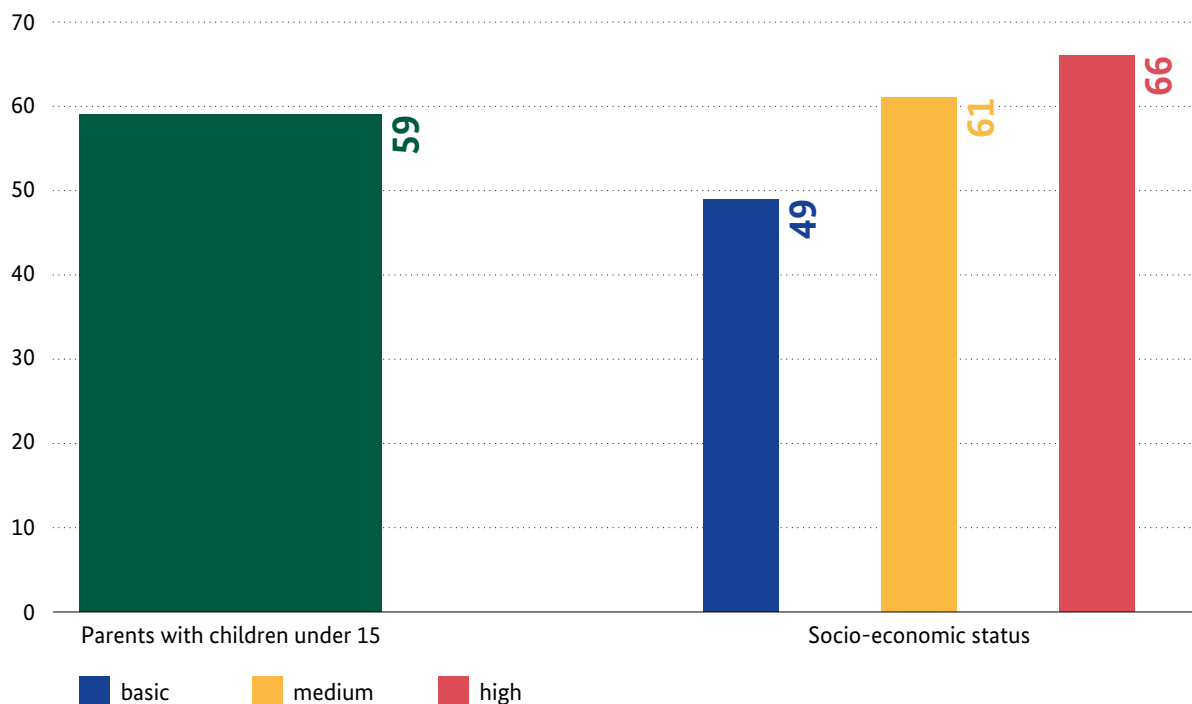
13 Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach (2020): Familien in der Corona-Krise, IfD survey 8237. 1,493 mothers and fathers with children under 15 in the household responded. The stratified random sample was drawn from a large online panel. The weighted results are representative of parents with children of that age. The survey ran from 16 April to 3 May, i.e. in the second half of the lockdown period, while the initial relaxation was being discussed and planned.

1.1 Families during the Covid-19 restrictions

Most families (59 percent) have made it through the crisis well. A closer look, however, reveals that Covid-19's impacts on families have differed. The differences in social and economic factors are particularly clear, with about two-thirds of parents

of a medium or high socio-economic status¹⁴ (61 percent and 66 percent respectively) stating that they have weathered the crisis quite well so far, compared with only 49 percent of parents of a low socio-economic status (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Percentage of parents who say: "We have weathered the crisis quite well so far"



Source: Allensbach Archive (2020): IfD survey 8237.

Whether parents have weathered the crisis well so far also depends on their working conditions. Of working parents who have weathered the crisis well¹⁵, only 31 percent needed to change their volume of work. Parents with positive experiences were also much more likely to work from home and have more flexible working hours. By contrast, two-thirds of parents who have so far had a hard time during the crisis changed their working hours significantly (68 percent).

Families with a higher educational status and higher income were able to work from home with more flexible working hours more frequently than parents with a lower educational status. Parents with school-leaving qualifications of a lower level are slightly more likely to be affected by short-time work and are therefore more impacted by loss of income and financial concerns.

¹⁴ Socio-economic status is determined on the basis of an Allensbach scale, which takes into account education and vocational training, occupational group and net household income.

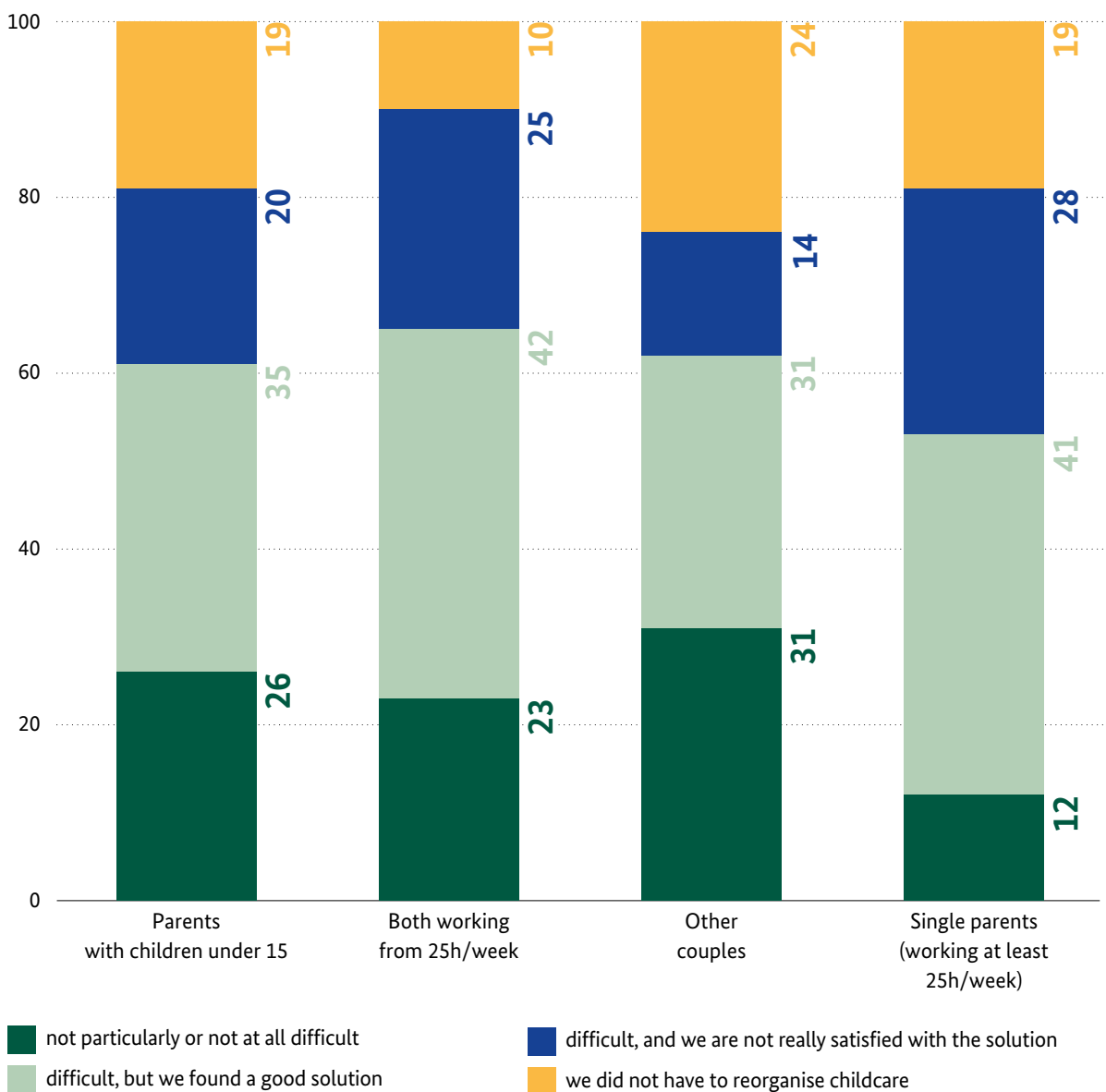
¹⁵ The criteria for assignment to the group were the statements "We have come through the crisis quite well so far", "Childcare at home has worked well so far" and not "I am very concerned about the possible effects of the crisis on the family's financial situation" and "Household income has fallen significantly".

1.2 Compatibility and partnership during the lockdown

Reorganising of childcare was the biggest challenge for parents with children under 15, with more than one in two families finding it difficult (55 percent). Overall, single parents had greater difficulties reorganising childcare (62 percent compared to 54 percent of parents in couples). Particularly affected were also single parents and working couple families with more equally shared employment arrangements, who before the restrictions worked more than 25 hours per

week each. Around two-thirds of these groups described the reorganisation as difficult, and about a quarter were not really satisfied with the solution found (Figure 2). These parents were also the ones who, before the restrictions, made more frequent use of all-day childcare services for their children than other parents and now had to provide correspondingly more childcare in addition to their own source of income.

Figure 2: How would you describe reorganising childcare? Reorganising childcare was ..., in percent



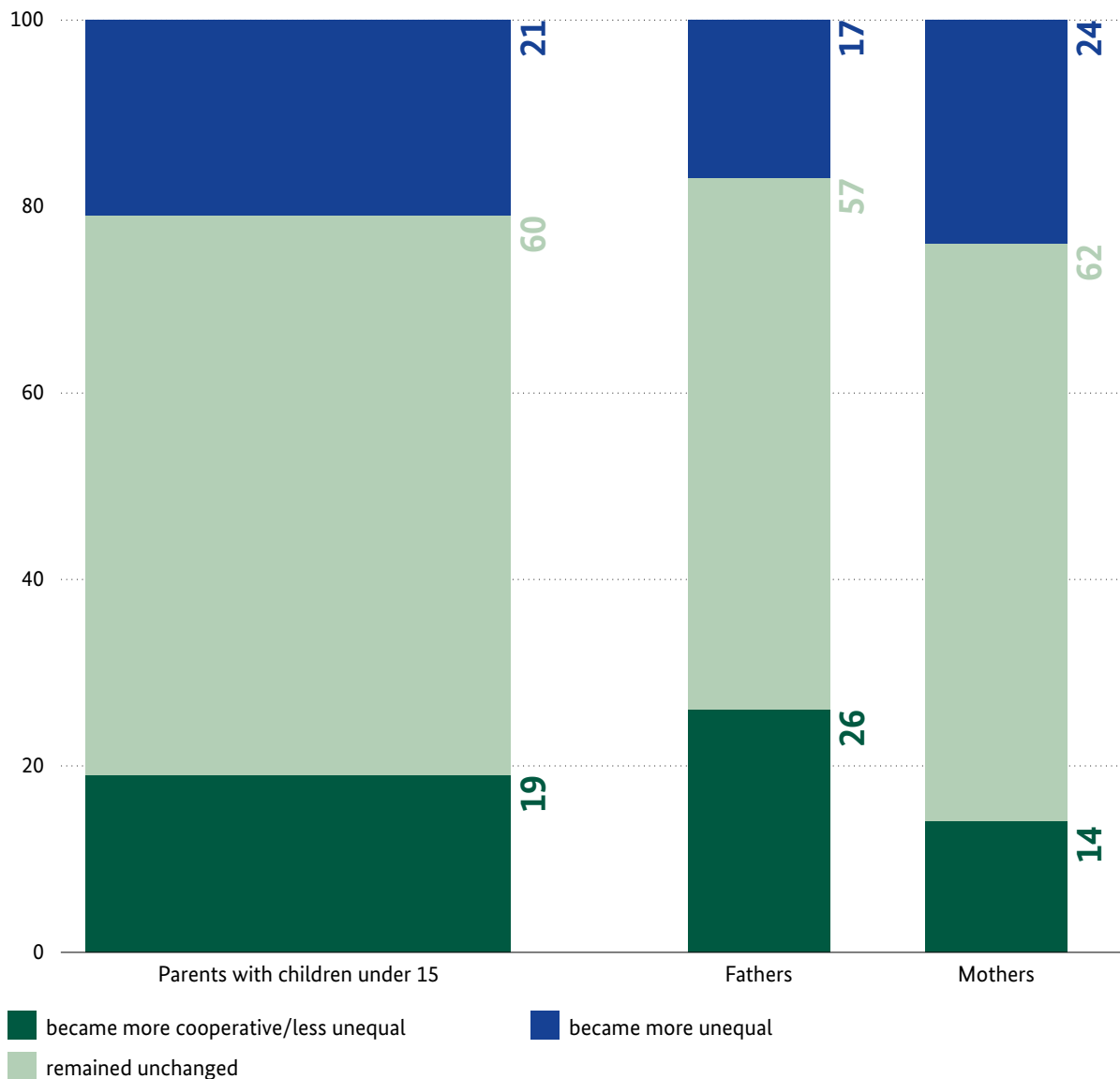
Source: Allensbach Archive (2020): IfD survey 8237.

1 Families and the Covid-19 pandemic

Childcare at home worked well for about half of all families (48 percent). The distribution of childcare with the other parent remained the same for almost six out of ten couples (59 percent). For the remaining 40 percent of families where the

distribution changed, it became more unequal for 21 percent of families and more equal for 19 percent (Figure 3). Mothers and fathers take slightly different views of this distribution.

Figure 3: Sharing childcare duties with the partner or the other parent ..., as a percentage



Source: Allensbach Archive (2020): IfD survey 8237.

The organisation of childcare also depends on the conditions and support at work. If the father or mother received employer support, they took more time for childcare tasks during the Covid-19 crisis (61 percent of mothers and 53 percent of fathers). In order to cope more easily with the increase in childcare, many families worked from home. In just over a third of two-parent families, at least one parent worked from home more often (36 percent) to help them cope with their workload, while about a quarter of single parents were able to use this option (26 percent). In addition, working hours have been made more flexible or reduced, with 14 percent and 11 percent of parents respectively reporting that at least one parent in their family made use of such offers.

However, almost one-third (31 percent) of parents did not need to change childcare arrangements, as one parent was already at home all day or at key times throughout the day. Differences in the choice of childcare arrangements are mainly due to the division of tasks between partners (before the restrictions) as well as working capacities or constraints. Different working conditions gave parents different opportunities to participate in the required increase of childcare at home. The availability of emergency institutional care for parents in critical infrastructure occupations also played a role here.¹⁶

The distribution of childcare time has not become more traditional as a result of Covid-19 restrictions

Irrespective of the Covid-19 pandemic, mothers spend more time caring for children – especially when the children are younger – and work part-time more often than fathers.¹⁷ A look at mothers and fathers and their division of tasks shows that mothers continue to provide most of the care even with Covid-19 restrictions. During the restriction period, working mothers changed their working conditions more often than working fathers because of childcare. For example, 40 per-

cent of working parents reduced their workload while Covid-19 restrictions were in effect, or, 36 percent of fathers and 44 percent of mothers. Fathers reduced their working hours slightly more often than mothers for company reasons – mothers slightly more often than fathers at their own request because of childcare. However, these differences are not pronounced. Slightly more than one in five mothers (22 percent) and almost one in five fathers (18 percent) have reduced their working hours for the sake of childcare.

Mothers and fathers have often shared the additional care responsibilities. Not only did more than one in two mothers (54 percent) take on more care tasks in April and May 2020, but also almost one in two fathers (44 percent). Accordingly, there is no question of a return to old roles at the expense of the mothers, with some fathers becoming increasingly involved in childcare at home – especially if the father now worked (more) from home. At the same time, gender differences in how time is used have grown smaller. Among fathers, those who already took on the same share of care as the mother before Covid-19 became more involved (55 percent). A more equal division of family and career is therefore concomitant with a more equal approach to the crisis. Of the couples in which both parents worked at least 25 hours a week in their jobs before the restrictions, fathers now took on significantly more childcare tasks than other couples during the period of restrictions (51 percent compared to 38 percent).

16 The conditions for access to emergency care had a major impact on the number of parents entitled to it. In 16 percent of families with children under 12 (including single parents) all parents were key workers. The figure is twice as high, at just over 2.1 million families (or 38 percent), if dual-earner families in which only one partner is a key worker are added. Cf. Martin Bujard, Inga Laß, Sabine Diabaté et al. (2020): Eltern während der Corona-Krise: Zur Improvisation gezwungen (*Parents during the Covid-19 Crisis: Forced to Improvise*), (https://www.bib.bund.de/Publikation/2020/pdf/Eltern-waehrend-der-Corona-Krise.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=7; most recently downloaded on 14.07.2020). The study is based on different data sources (e.g. microcensus, Mannheim corona study).

17 OECD (2016): Dare to Share – Deutschlands Weg zur Partnerschaftlichkeit in Familie und Beruf, p. 174ff; <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/service/publikationen/dare-to-share---deutschlands-weg-zur-partnerschaftlichkeit-in-familie-und-beruf/114266>

Other studies also indicate that fathers are becoming more involved in family duties. According to a study by the Federal Institute for Population Research (*Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung*, BiB), the share of fathers taking on family duties rose during the lockdown period from 33 to 41 percent.¹⁸ The German Institute for Economic Research (*Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung*, DIW Berlin) reports that fathers are spending on average 89 percent more time on childcare than in the previous year (the average for mothers was 43 percent).¹⁹ The increase in childcare hours was highest among fathers with a low to intermediate educational status.²⁰

1.3 Impact on employment and income

Working parents were particularly challenged during the period of Covid-19 restrictions. For them the consequences from a lack of childcare and from professional changes added up. In three-quarters of two-parent families, at least one parent experienced changes at work (75 percent). Of single parents, about two-thirds experienced professional changes (63 percent).

Overall, 21 percent of working parents had less work due to the Covid-19 crisis, 17 percent were on short-time work, and 6 percent of those surveyed or their partner had no work at all due to the Covid-19 crisis. As a result, almost half of all working parents had reduced working hours – especially single parents, full-time mothers, parents in small businesses with less than ten employees, the self-employed and freelancers.

Nevertheless, household income for the majority of families has not changed as a result of the Covid-19 crisis (53 percent). For 18 percent of families, however, household income has fallen significantly, mainly due to reduced working hours and a loss of work (Figure 4). Full-time working mothers, single parents, low-skilled parents, employees in small businesses, the self-employed and freelancers are disproportionately affected. For almost a quarter of single parents, income has fallen significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic. This creates financial worries, with more than one-third of parents being very concerned about the possible impact of the crisis on their family's financial situation (35 percent), especially those who were on short-time work or became unemployed during the crisis (51 percent).

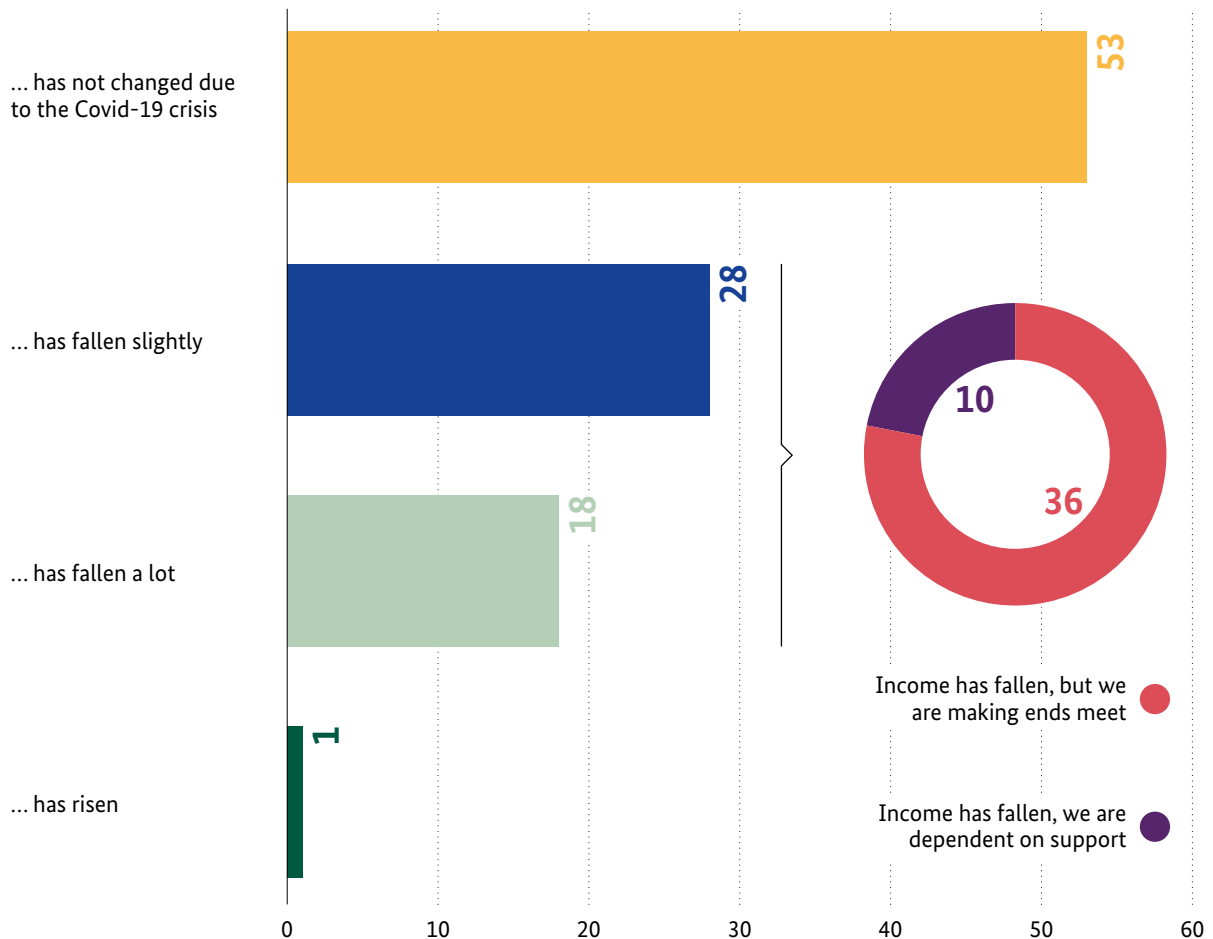
One in ten families report that they are dependent on support benefits because of their fall in income. For some parents, this support is particularly important. There has been an above-average impact on the aforementioned groups (single parents, parents in small businesses with less than ten employees, the self-employed and freelancers), with the exception of mothers working full-time. Couples where both partners are in work are less worried about income. This underlines the importance of partners sharing responsibilities equally.

18 According to the study of the Federal Institute for Population Research fathers have caught up considerably on family work in the Corona crisis. According to the study, fathers in particular took over a large part of family work during the crisis in the form of short-time work or holidays. Cf. Martin Bujard, Inga Laß, Sabine Diabaté et al. (2020): Eltern während der Corona-Krise: Zur Improvisation gezwungen, (https://www.bib.bund.de/Publikation/2020/pdf/Eltern-waehrend-der-Corona-Krise.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=7; most recently downloaded on 14 July 2020). The information on the division of gainful employment and family work is based on data from the Mannheim Corona study for the survey week 17 April to 24 April 2020.

19 Sabine Zinn, Michaela Kreyenfeld and Michael Bayer (2020): Kinderbetreuung in Corona-Zeiten: Mütter tragen die Hauptlast, aber Väter holen auf, DIW aktuell No. 51 (https://www.diw.de/documents/publikationen/73/diw_01.c.794303.de/diw_aktuell_51.pdf; most recently downloaded on 31 July 2020). The SOEP CoV Study is a telephone survey (CATI) of households in Germany based on the SOEP sample. The information is based on data collected in the period from 1 April to 30 May 2020, and on data from the SOEPv35 (2019).

20 The reasons for this are not yet known: it is possible that fathers with a low or intermediate level of education were more frequently affected by short-time work and were therefore more often at home than fathers with a higher level of education.

Figure 4: To what extent has your household income changed as a result of the Covid-19 crisis? In percent

Household income ...

Source: Allensbach Archive (2020): IfD survey 8237.

1.4 Employer support for working parents

Surveys among parents and employers show that the Covid-19 pandemic represents a major challenge, though it also offers new opportunities for reconciling family with a career.²¹

The parents' perspective

Working parents who made it through the Covid-19 restrictions well report that they have improved opportunities for work-life balance significantly more often. Parents without company support have often weathered the period of restrictions less well.

²¹ Prognos AG (2020): Neue Chancen für Vereinbarkeit! Wie Unternehmen und Familien der Corona-Krise erfolgreich begegnen, link: <https://www.prognos.com/publikationen/alle-publikationen/1026/show/be794b778016aa0f8a929cd48c3f9a6c/>

1 Families and the Covid-19 pandemic

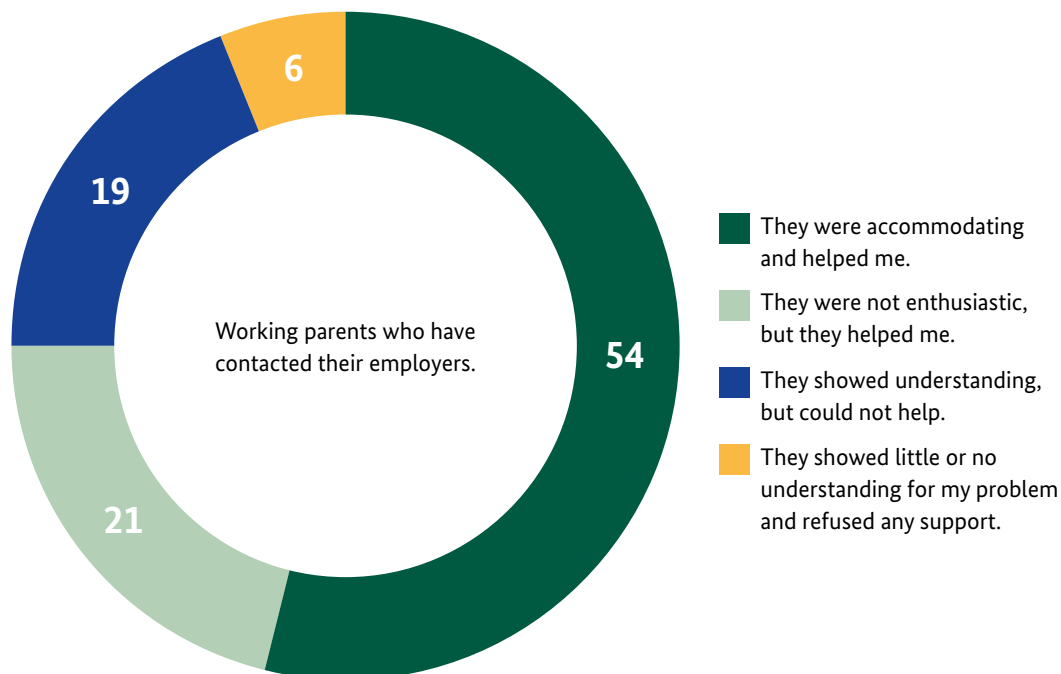
Forty-eight percent of parents have talked to their employer about the changes to their job that were necessary to take on childcare, while 52 percent have not done so. In particular, single parents (55 percent) and mothers in full-time work (58 percent) have asked for such talks. It appears that the majority of employers have helped look for solutions. Seventy-five percent of parents say

that they have experienced understanding and support from their employers while reconciling families and work in this new situation. Only 6 percent of employers have shown no understanding.²² In one in five cases the company has shown understanding, but was unable to help (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Employer understanding during the Covid-19 pandemic

Question:

“How did your employer react when you brought up childcare issues?”



Source: IfD Allensbach (2020): Parents during the Covid-19 Crisis 8237 (Eltern in der Corona-Krise 8237).

Many businesses have created opportunities to improve the reconcilability of family and work or have made more intensive use of existing opportunities. About half of parents experienced at least one improvement in their work-life balance during the period of restrictions (48 percent). Of them, 38 percent reported that new flexible working conditions were introduced (e.g. temporarily adjusted working hours or work from home), almost a quarter reported that existing flexible working opportunities were used more intensively and about 15 percent reported that their work-life balance improved.

During the crisis, almost half of working parents were thus able to use their company's opportunities to combine work and childcare. In 35 percent of the families, at least one parent worked from home, while 20 percent worked at different times than before. However, there are differences in these figures too, with higher-skilled workers, employees in large businesses, white-collar workers and civil servants benefiting from improvements more often than others.

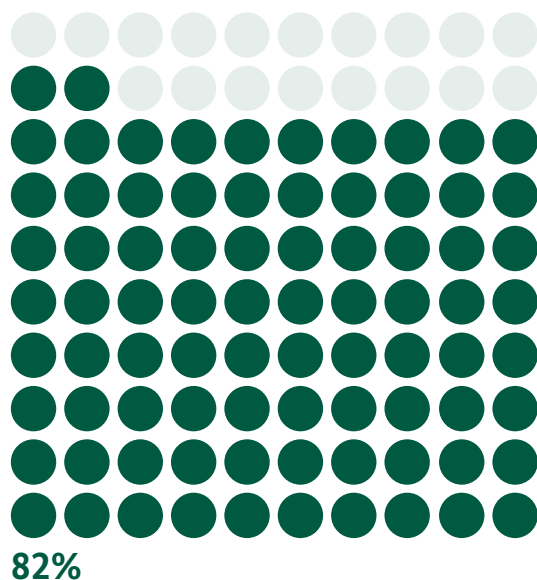
22 IfD Allensbach (2020): Eltern in der Corona-Krise 8237, see also Chapter 1.

A strong developing trend can be observed in the possibilities for working from home. Furthermore, surveys of HR officers and managers²³ show that new options for working from home or remotely have been created and/or existing ones expanded. As a building block of a family-conscious personnel policy, working from home can benefit both mothers and fathers. There is also a need for implementation strategies: of people who have children under the age of 14 in their household, 40 percent consider working from home to be extremely or very stressful.²⁴

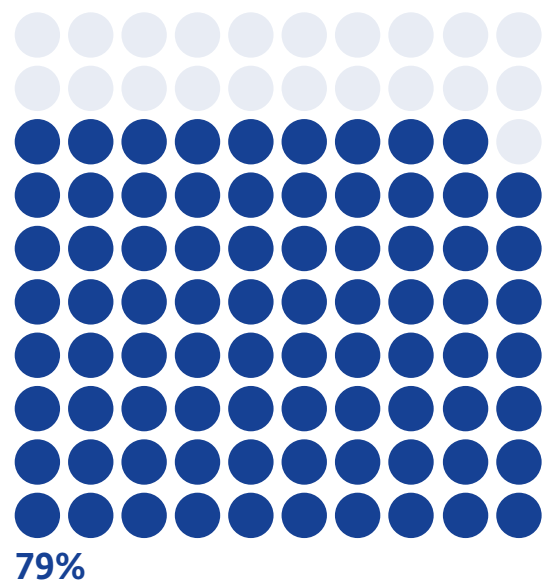
Perspective of businesses

With the closure of schools and childcare facilities and the resulting lack of childcare options, the importance of reconcilability has become a major concern for employers. As a result of the crisis, businesses have strongly internalised the economic importance of work-life balance: 82 percent of businesses report that childcare is a key factor in their productivity. This topic will retain its economic relevance even after the crisis, as 79 percent of businesses report that measures to promote work-life balance after the crisis are of great importance for retaining and recruiting skilled workers (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Reliable childcare: a basis for business



... of businesses regard childcare as a relevant factor for their productivity.



... of businesses think that being family-conscious will remain very important for retaining and recruiting skilled workers.

Source: Prognos (2020): *Neue Chancen für Vereinbarkeit! Wie Unternehmen und Familien der Corona-Krise erfolgreich begegnen.*

23 Prognos (2020): *Neue Chancen für Vereinbarkeit! Wie Unternehmen und Familien der Corona-Krise erfolgreich begegnen*, link: <https://www.prognos.com/publikationen/alle-publikationen/1026/show/be794b778016aa0f8a929cd48c3f9a6c/>

24 cf. Bettina Kohlrausch, Aline Zucco (2020): *Die Corona-Krise trifft Frauen doppelt: Weniger Erwerbseinkommen und mehr Sorgearbeit*, Policy-Brief WSI No. 40, 5/2020. Online interviews of 7,677 labour force members aged 16 and over, quota sample within an online access panel (quotas by age, gender, federal state and education).

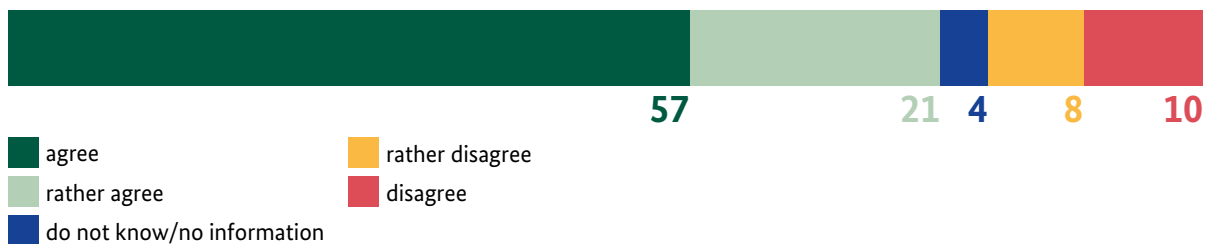
1 Families and the Covid-19 pandemic

In everyday business life, parents and businesses have in most cases found solutions together for the new reconcilability situation. The crisis has acted as an accelerator for family consciousness in companies. Every second business has introduced family-conscious measures or expanded its existing range of measures in response to the crisis. This applies in particular to working from home and/or flexible working hours. In addition, a more active communication culture has developed. Family-conscious businesses have been able to react more rapidly to the challenges because they had already established a large range of flexible solutions with a view to ensuring reconcilability.

Businesses realise that compatibility issues are very relevant for both parents. The majority of businesses have supported active paternity even during the crisis and are opposed to any return to traditional parental roles. Seventy-eight percent (rather) agree with the statement that the crisis clearly shows how important it is for fathers to participate in childcare so that it is not just mothers who reduce their working hours. Managers are coming to accept mothers in gainful employment as common, along with, family time for fathers (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Businesses supporting active fathers

The crisis makes it clear how important it is that fathers participate in childcare so that mothers are not the only ones reducing their working hours for childcare.



Source: Prognos (2020): *Neue Chancen für Vereinbarkeit! Wie Unternehmen und Familien der Corona-Krise erfolgreich begegnen.*

1.5 Impact on family life and support for children

The reorganisation of everyday life that has taken place also affects family life. In most families, there has been a conflicted or chaotic climate during the restrictions at least “sometimes”, and even frequently or very frequently for one in every five families.²⁵

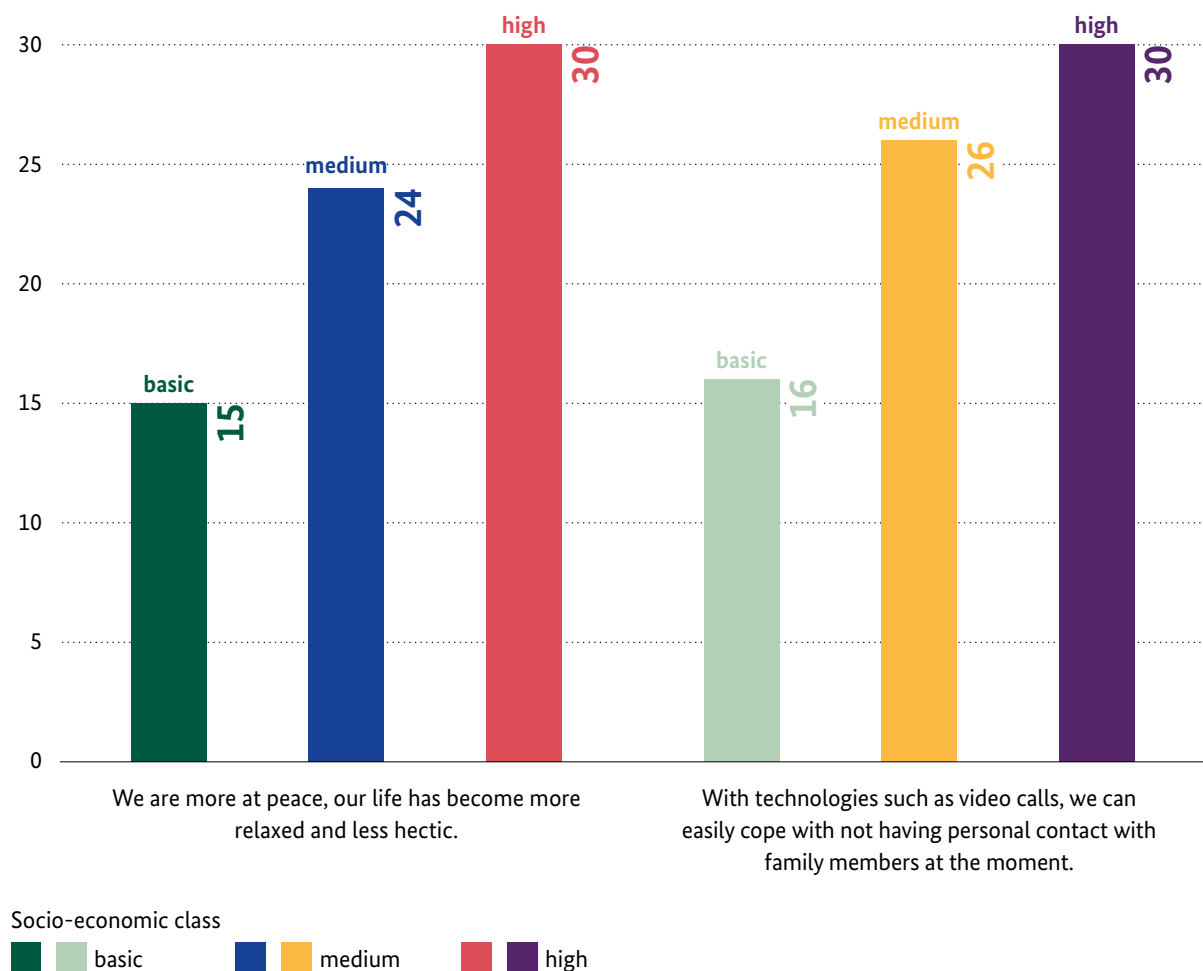
But in this respect too families have experienced this period differently. Studies have shown that there were binary opposites in how families experienced the restrictions.²⁶ On the one hand there were families who called the weeks of restrictions “good times”. Parents reported new freedoms for their children and their own feelings, which are often described as “deceleration”. On the other hand, there were families who had to cope with a whole set of burdens and felt great uncertainty.

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- 25 Angelika Guglhör-Rudan; Alexandra Langmeyer; Thorsten Naab et al. (2020): Kindsein in Zeiten von Corona. Erste Ergebnisse zum veränderten Alltag und zum Wohlbefinden von Kindern. German Youth Institute (https://www.dji.de/fileadmin/user_upload/dasdji/themen/Familie/DJI_Kindsein_Corona_Erste_Ergebnisse.pdf; most recently downloaded on 26 May 2020). Online survey of about 8,000 parents of children aged 3 to 15. The participants were recruited using snowball methods. The first evaluation is based on the participants who took part in the study between 22 April 2020 and 4 May 2020.
- 26 Sabine Andresen, Anna Lips, Renate Möller et al (2020): Kinder, Eltern und ihre Erfahrungen während der Corona-Pandemie: Erste Ergebnisse der bundesweiten Studie KiCo. Universitätsverlag Hildesheim (<https://hildok.bsz-bw.de/frontdoor/index/index/docId/1081>; last accessed on 5 June 2020). Online survey of more than 25,000 persons (parents with children under 15 years of age), no specific sampling strategy; the link to the survey was widely distributed by the research team and the press offices of both universities with the request to include it in private and professional networks. The questionnaires were mainly answered by working mothers; hardly any families without working parents/household members where German is not the predominant language are represented.

In another study²⁷, 42 percent of families report that there have been things that have been changed positively by the Covid-19 crisis in the last few weeks. The positive changes mentioned were that leisure time increased, that there were positive effects on relationships in the family or with friends, that everyday life “decelerated” or that people became more “aware” with the impact of the crisis.

The experience with restrictions also seems to be influenced by socio-economic status. For example, 30 percent of parents with a high socio-economic status report that their lives became quieter and they were able to rest during the restrictions, compared to only 15 percent of parents with a low socio-economic status (Figure 8). Parents with a higher status agreed almost twice as often with the statement that they could compensate for not seeing family members in person by using technology.

Figure 8: Share of parents with children under 15 of age who agree with the above statements, in percent



Source: IJfD Allensbach Archive (2020): Survey 8237.

²⁷ ifo Institut/forsa (2020): Erste Ergebnisse des Befragungsteils der BMG-„Corona-BUND-Studie“ (<https://www.ifo.de/DocDL/bmg-corona-bund-studie-erste-ergebnisse.pdf>; most recently downloaded on 14 July 2020).

During the period of restrictions, parents were mainly concerned about how to support and occupy their children. Over 40 percent of the parents surveyed fear long-term disadvantages for their children as a result of the crisis. Only 20 percent are confident that they can support their children well at home. More than half of single parents are mainly concerned about the limited possibilities for support at home and about keeping their children busy at home. Fifty-six percent of single parents fear that their children might be less supported at home compared to support in daycare or school and therefore might be disadvantaged later. These fears underline the high level of awareness among parents about daycare offerings. The crisis thus highlights the importance of a well-functioning education and childcare system for families.

Parents are sensitive to the effects of the restrictions on their children. Lack of contact and activities outside the home and the absence of fixed daily structures is a burden for many. About two-thirds said that it is difficult for their children not to see their friends. In four out of ten families, the children suffered from not being able to attend kindergarten or school and having to give up sports or hobbies outside the home. Almost every third family (29 percent) also reported a lack of motivation to study at home. Almost half of the parents of primary school children reported motivation problems of their children while learning.

Of parents with school children, 44 percent stated that they support their children more in their learning. However, only one in five families is confident that they can offer their children the same level of support at home as they receive at daycare or school (19 percent in total) – either because they know the level of education provided by professionals there or because they are unable to provide the necessary support due to a lack of skills or time.

Here, too, there are clear differences between parents: 10 percent of parents with a basic educa-

tion and low income (low status) stated that they were able to take good care of their child from home. Of parents with a high status, 29 percent considered that they could also do this from home.

Other studies also show that on average parents felt moderately burdened by homeschooling and less-educated mothers or fathers and single parents suffered more from the situation than parents with a higher education or parents in two-parent relationships.²⁸

1.6 State measures for families during the Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has demanded a lot from families so far. During the period of the Covid-19 crisis when severe restrictions were in effect, families with small children, most of whom could no longer be cared for in daycare centres or in all-day schools, were particularly challenged. Caring for children and starting homeschooling led to stress and tension, especially in families where one parent was a single parent or where both parents were employed. There are fears that the children, especially those from socially exposed families, will be disadvantaged in their development and in the course of their school education. In addition to these strains, many families are confronted with financial concerns and economic difficulties because the parents have become unemployed or at least have been put on short-time work. The subjective significance of financial support depends largely on whether and to what extent there has been a loss of income (usually due to short-time working). More financial support was requested by 31 percent of parents and 39 percent of single parents. Almost a quarter of parents overall and 27 percent of single parents stated that it would help them if one parent could work from home; more flexible working hours would help 20 percent of parents overall and 18 percent of single parents.²⁹

28 Sabine Zinn, Michaela Kreyenfeld, Michael Bayer (2020): Kinderbetreuung in Corona-Zeiten: Mütter tragen die Hauptlast, aber Väter holen auf. DIW aktuell No. 51.

29 IfD Allensbach (2020): Familien in der Corona-Krise. IfD Survey 8237.

The Covid-19 crisis has once again highlighted the fact that good childcare is essential for the well-being of families and is the main response to the challenges of reconciling work and family life. Reliable daycare centres, after-school care and all-day schools are crucial to whether and for how many hours parents are able to work independently and provide for their families.

For the step-by-step reopening of childcare services, the Federal Government had already been in regular contact with the responsible federal states and also with local authority representatives since the end of March 2020. In addition, the Federal Government also introduced various measures at an extremely rapid pace to support families during the crisis.

The **Infection Protection Act** (*Infektionsschutzgesetz*) contains a compensation scheme offering financial support to parents who are unable to work due to temporarily closed daycare centres and schools. They can receive compensation of 67 percent of their monthly net income for up to ten weeks (capped at €2,016 for a full month), while single parents are entitled to up to 20 weeks.

The **tax relief for single parents** is an additional tax-free allowance to cover the special costs of single parents. It was doubled for the years 2020 and 2021 in order to additionally cushion the considerable childcare efforts, especially for single parents. It went from €1,908 to €4,008.

Child Supplement, which supports low-income families with up to €185 per child per month in addition to Child Benefit, was adjusted in the context of Covid-19 support and became the Emergency Child Supplement. It also supports families who have had to incur a short-term loss of earnings due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Access has been made easier and digitised. From March to the end of June, almost 500,000 additional children were added to this scheme.³⁰

In order to help partners share duties more equally, the requirements for **Parental Allowance** were adapted to the circumstances of the crisis. Parents who make an important contribution to society in critical infrastructure occupations can postpone months for receiving Parental Allowance until June 2021 if necessary. They will not lose their Partnership Bonus if they are currently working more or less than planned due to the crisis. In addition, income replacement benefits such as short-time working allowance and Unemployment Benefit I are not offset against Parental Allowance.

In order to help families as a whole to alleviate the burden of the Covid-19 pandemic and give them back financial leeway, a €300 **Child Bonus** was granted for every child. This benefit is not counted towards the basic income support scheme and essentially strengthens families on low and medium incomes.

In addition to these measures, the economic stimulus package initiated by the Federal Government contains major stimulus for families and children. It contains a total of €3 billion for the expansion of childcare, with a further €1 billion made available in 2020 and 2021 for the expansion of daycare facilities. A further €2 billion will be made available for the expansion of all-day childcare and the digitisation of schools. The reduction in value-added tax included in the economic stimulus package will also lead to noticeable relief for families until the end of 2020.

30 Further information on family benefits can be found at www.familienportal.de.



Family life in Germany and Europe

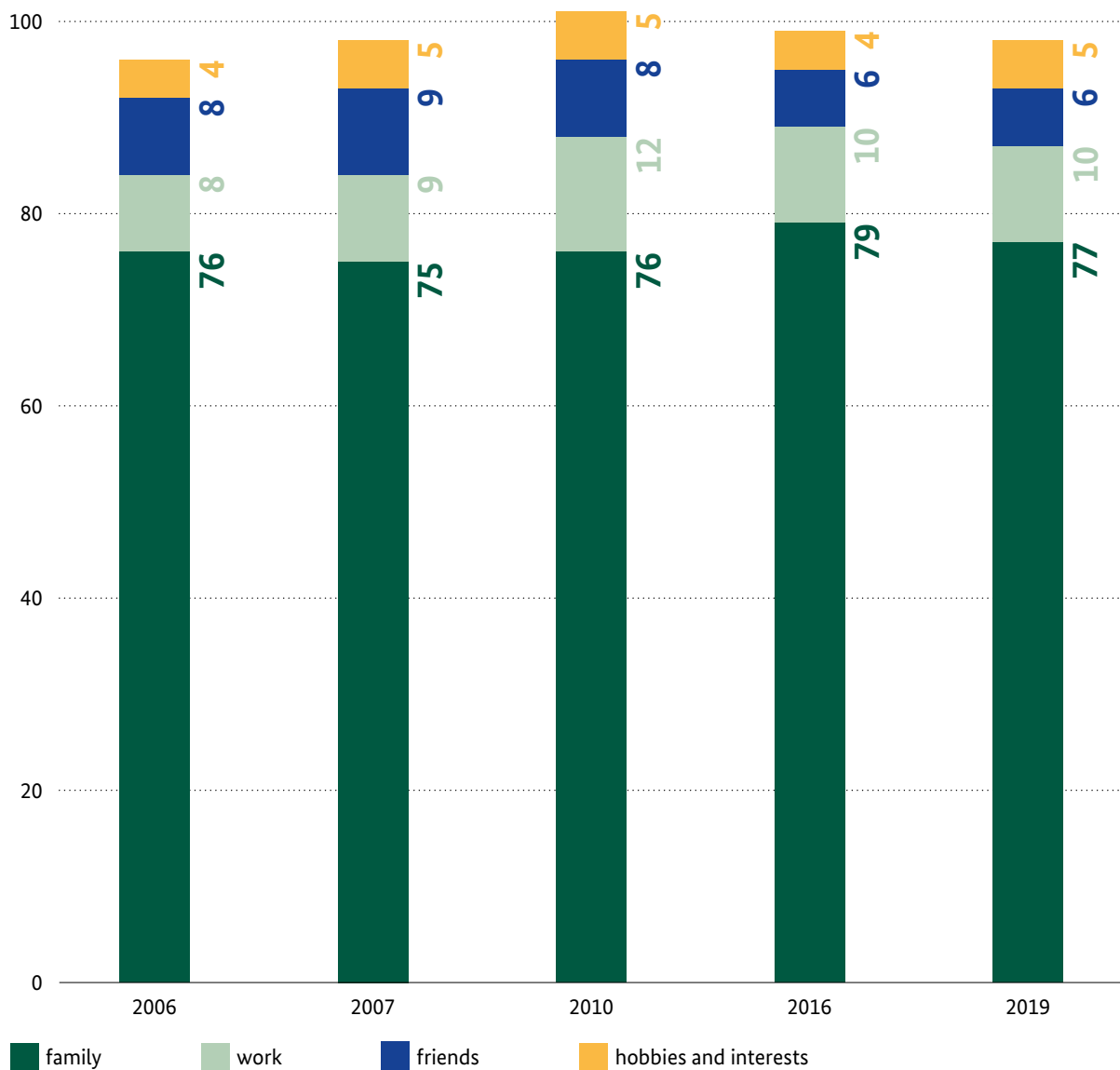
2.1 Importance of the family

Family still a highly regarded value

In 2019, the family was still the most important aspect of life for 77 percent of the population, ahead of work and friends (see Figure 9). For

parents with underage children, the proportion is as high as 91 percent.³¹ In recent years, the value attached to the family has remained consistently high, almost unchanged since 2006.

Figure 9: Importance of different aspects of life, 2006 to 2019



Note:

Question: "If you rank family, job, hobbies and friends by priority, what is most important to you and what comes first?"

Basis: Federal Republic of Germany, population aged 16 and over

Source: IfD Allensbach (2019): Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Familienpolitik, p. 5.

31 IfD Allensbach (2019): Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Familienpolitik, p. 5, link: https://www.ifd-allensbach.de/fileadmin/IfD/sonstige_pdfs/Rahmenbedingungen_Bericht.pdf

Over 60 percent of adults consider it very important to have their own family.³² Family and social relationships are also by far the most important values for almost all adolescents and young adults. They are even more important than “personal responsibility” (89 percent) and “independence” (83 percent).³³ For the vast majority of parents, family also means being able to rely on each other (83 percent)³⁴.

For most people today, family is wherever children exist – irrespective of the parents’ living arrangements. For all or almost all persons aged 20 to 39 interviewed in 2013, a heterosexual couple with children – married or unmarried – is considered a family. 88 percent of those interviewed also consider a homosexual couple with children to be a family. For 85 percent, stepfamilies and blended families are considered family. Single parents are also considered a family by most people. In a family policy context, a family is where people of different generations assume responsibility for each other over the long term and, in doing so, support and care for each other irrespective of their religious, political, ideological or sexual identity. This includes married and unmarried couples with children as well as single parents, separated parents, stepfamilies, blended families, rainbow families and families who look after relatives in need of care and assistance. The deciding factor is the people’s sense of social involvement, not their way of life.

For people in both eastern and western Germany, family still involves children. In 2017, more than two-thirds of respondents (68 percent) in western Germany agreed with the statement “without children there is something missing in life”, while the comparable figure in eastern Germany exceeded three-quarters (78 percent).³⁵ For the majority in both parts of Germany, marriage is no longer an essential precondition for starting a family. About 75 percent of respondents from western and 80 percent of respondents from eastern Germany take this view.³⁶

The great importance of the family in Germany and Europe is for the most part matched by a high level of satisfaction with family life. In 2017, more than seven out of ten respondents in every EU member state say that they are satisfied with their family life. Compared to 2006, more people agree that they are satisfied with their family life. In Germany, 94 percent of respondents say that they are “completely happy” with their family life (Figure 10). This puts Germany, together with Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Portugal, above the EU average (91 percent total agreement). In Denmark, respondents are more satisfied with their family life (99 percent agreement). In Bulgaria, by contrast, only 74 percent are satisfied with their family life.³⁷

32 Datenreport (2018): p. 394.

33 Shell (2019): Youth Study 2019, Summary, p. 20, https://www.shell.de/ueber-uns/shell-jugendstudie/_jcr_content/par/toptasks/stream/1570708341213/4a002dff58a7a9540cb9e83ee0a37a0ed8a0fd55/shell-youth-study-summary-2019-de.pdf

34 IfD Allensbach (2019): Archive, IfD survey 8214.

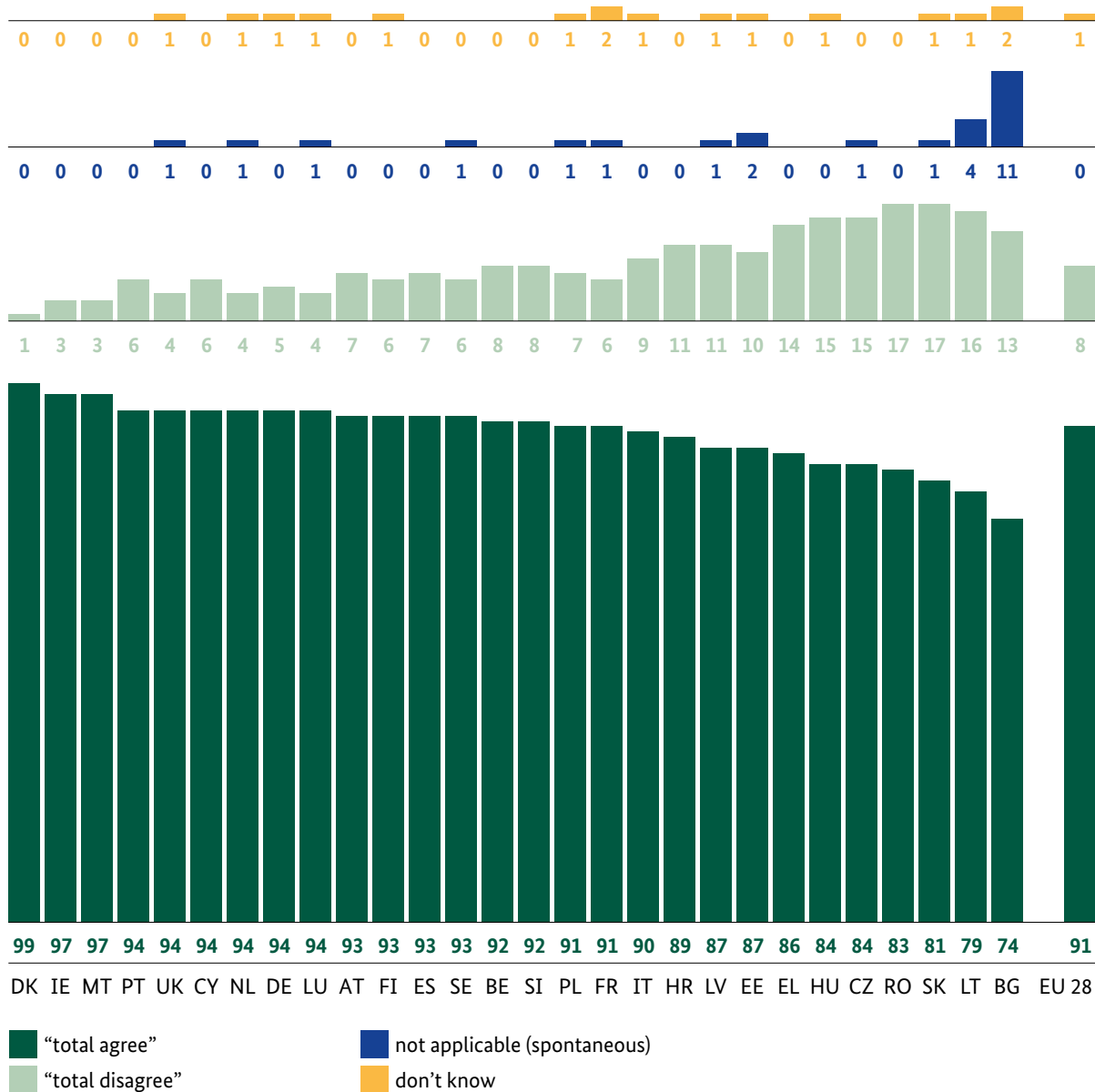
35 Datenreport (2018): p. 394.

36 Datenreport (2018): p. 394ff.

37 Special Eurobarometer 467: Future of Europe, 2017, population aged 15 and over, p. 23, link: <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/80647>

Figure 10: Satisfaction with family life compared to the EU, 2017

Agreement with statement: “You are happy with your family life” (as a percentage)



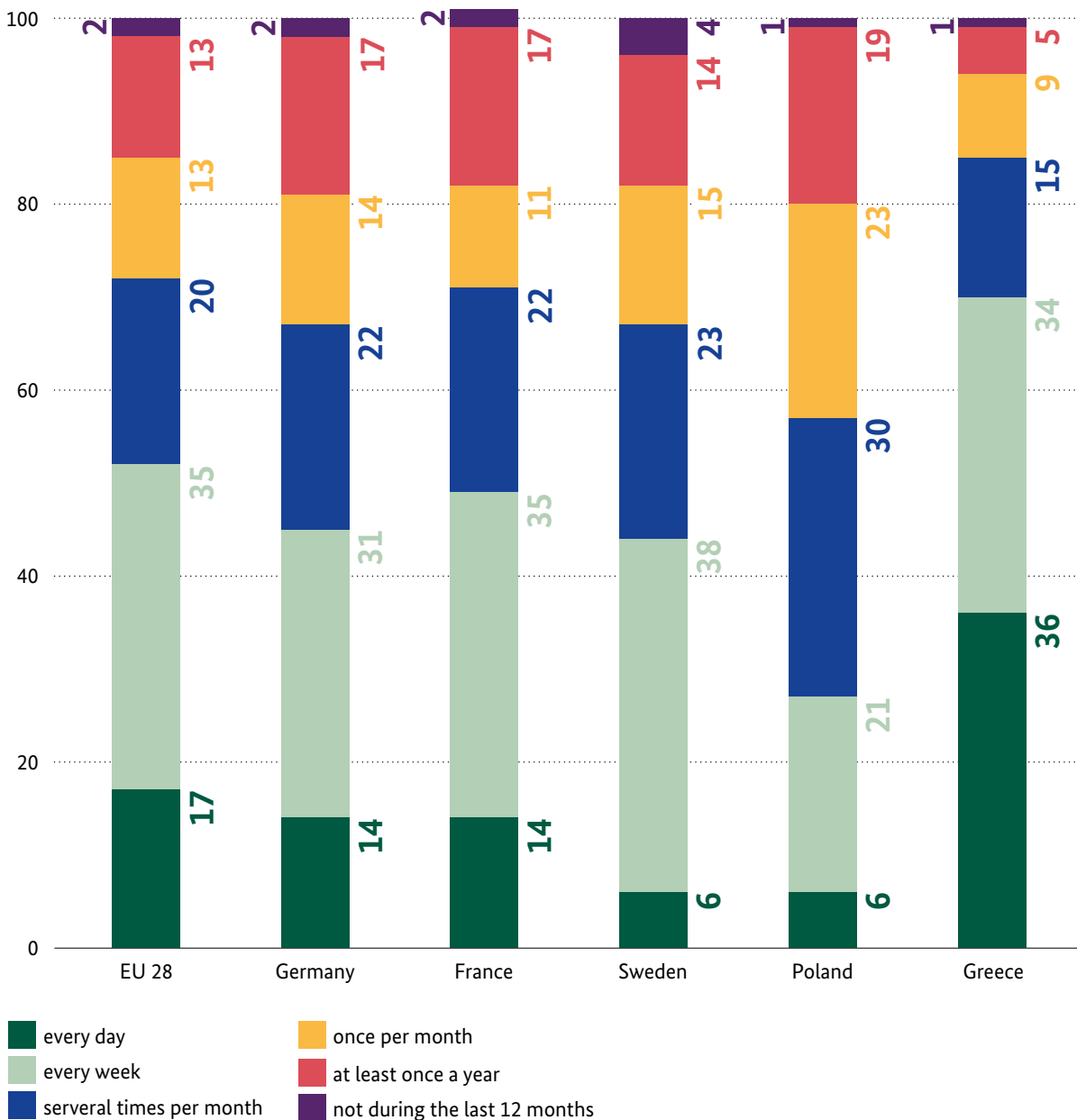
Source: Directorate-General for Communication (2017): Special Eurobarometer 467: Future of Europe, population aged 15 and over, p. 23.

People also get together with their families and relatives to a corresponding extent. In Germany in 2015, around two-thirds of those surveyed meet family and relatives daily, weekly or at least several times a month (67 percent). This is slightly less than the European average (72 percent), but comparable to countries such as France

(70 percent) or Sweden (67 percent). By contrast, people in Greece, for example, meet particularly frequently (Figure 11).³⁸

38 Eurostat (2020): data from: European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC); ad hoc module on social and cultural participation. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/de/web/income-and-living-conditions/data/database?node_code=ilc_scp

Figure 11: Frequency of getting together with family members compared to the EU, 2015



Values over 100 are due to rounding

Own presentation; data basis: Eurostat 2020, EU SILC, ad hoc module 2015: social and cultural participation, table (ilc_scp09, link: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/de/web/income-and-living-conditions/data/database?node_code=ilc_scp).

In Germany, 87 percent of respondents have contact with family and relatives on a daily or weekly basis or at least several times a month. This puts Germany slightly above the European average (85 percent) and again comparable to

countries such as France (87 percent), Italy (88 percent) and the United Kingdom (87 percent). Again, people in Greece have particularly frequent contact with family members (91 percent), while people in Poland are below average (70 percent).

2.2 Diversity of families in Germany and Europe

Diverse and complex families are not a new phenomenon.³⁹ Even in the past there were step-families, blended families, single parents, foster parents, unmarried parents, married parents and complex family relationships. What is relatively new, however, are rainbow families, i.e. families with same-sex parents, and insemination families, i.e. families with children produced by artificial insemination.⁴⁰ The type of living arrangement and family form can be chosen relatively freely today and can be changed later in the course of life. Single parents and stepfamilies today arise mainly through separation and divorce and not, as a century ago, because one parent has died.⁴¹

Married parents are still the most common form of family

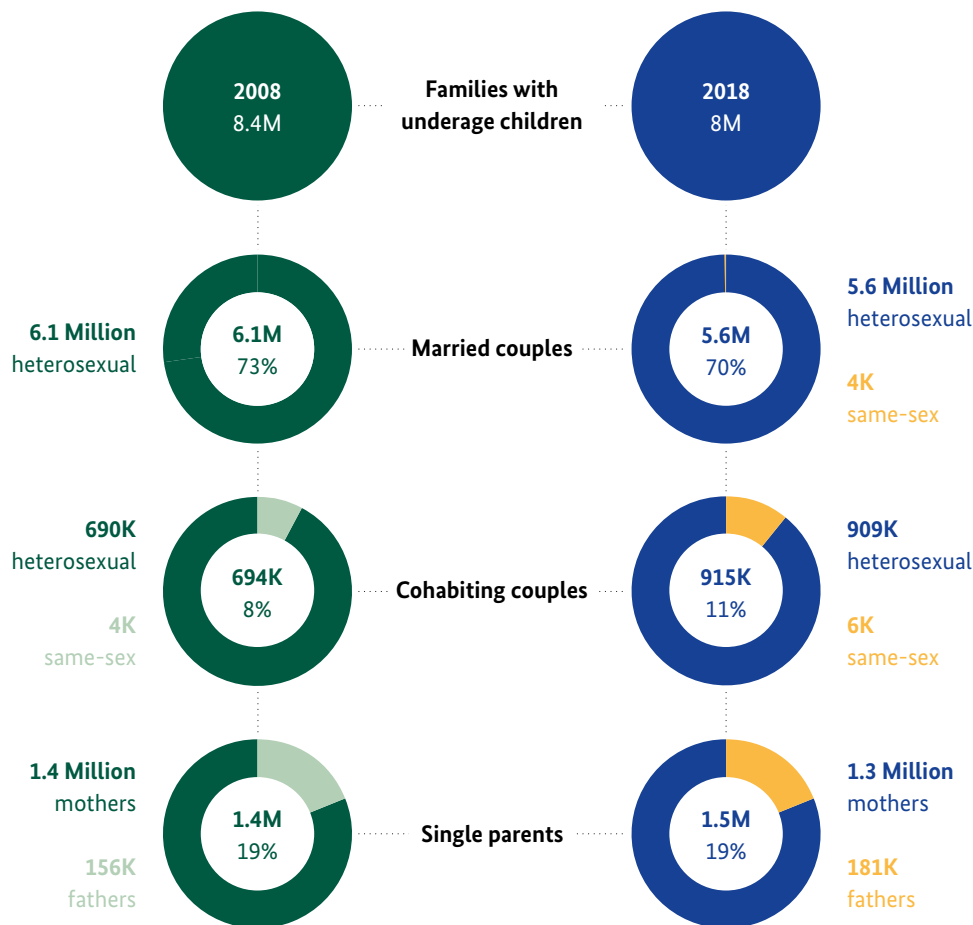
In 2018 there were 8 million families in Germany with underage children in their household, of which 6.5 million lived in western Germany (81 percent) and 1.5 million in eastern Germany (19 percent). Ten years earlier there were 8.4 million families in Germany. Married parents were the most common form of family in 2018 at 5.6 million (70 percent of all families), although their number has slightly decreased compared to 2008 (6.1 million or 73 percent). In comparison, the number of couples living together unmarried (cohabiting couples) and especially single parents has increased. In 2018 there were 915,000 cohabiting couples (11 percent of all families) and 1.5 million single parents (19 percent of all families). This is about 220,000 more cohabiting couples and 94,000 more single parents than ten years earlier (Figure 12).

39 Anja Steinbach (2017): Mutter, Vater, Kind: Was heißt Familie heute? Essay, in: Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte 30–31/2017: Familienpolitik, link: <https://www.bpb.de/apuz/252649/mutter-vater-kind-was-heisst-familie-heute?p=all>

40 ibid.

41 ibid.

Figure 12: Families with underage children*, 2008 and 2018



* 2018 figures for families from 2011: results based on the 2011 census.

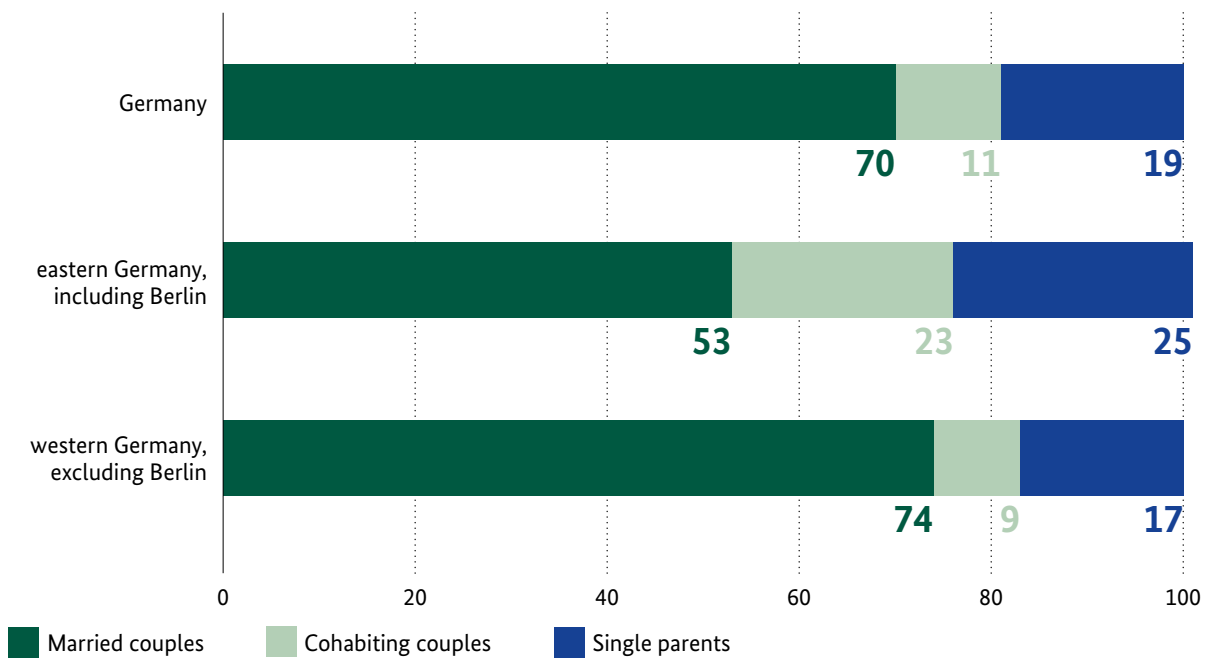
Source: Federal Statistical Office (2020): Haushalte und Familien 2018, Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus; statistical discrepancies up to 100 are the result of rounding.

In 2018 there were 6,000 same-sex cohabiting couples and 4,000 same-sex married couples living in households with underage children. This corresponds to a share of less than 0.1 percent of all families (see also Rainbow Families, page 47).

Family forms still differ in their frequency in the eastern and western federal states. In both western and eastern Germany, married parents are the most common family form, but in the eastern federal states there are still significantly more

cohabiting couples and more single parents. For example, in 2018 slightly more than half of the parents in the eastern states were married (53 percent), while in the western states nearly three-quarters of parents were married (74 percent). Accordingly, the share of cohabiting couples (23 percent) and single parents (25 percent) is higher in the east than in the west, where only 9 percent of parents live together unmarried and 17 percent of families are single parents (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Family forms in eastern and western Germany, 2018, in percent



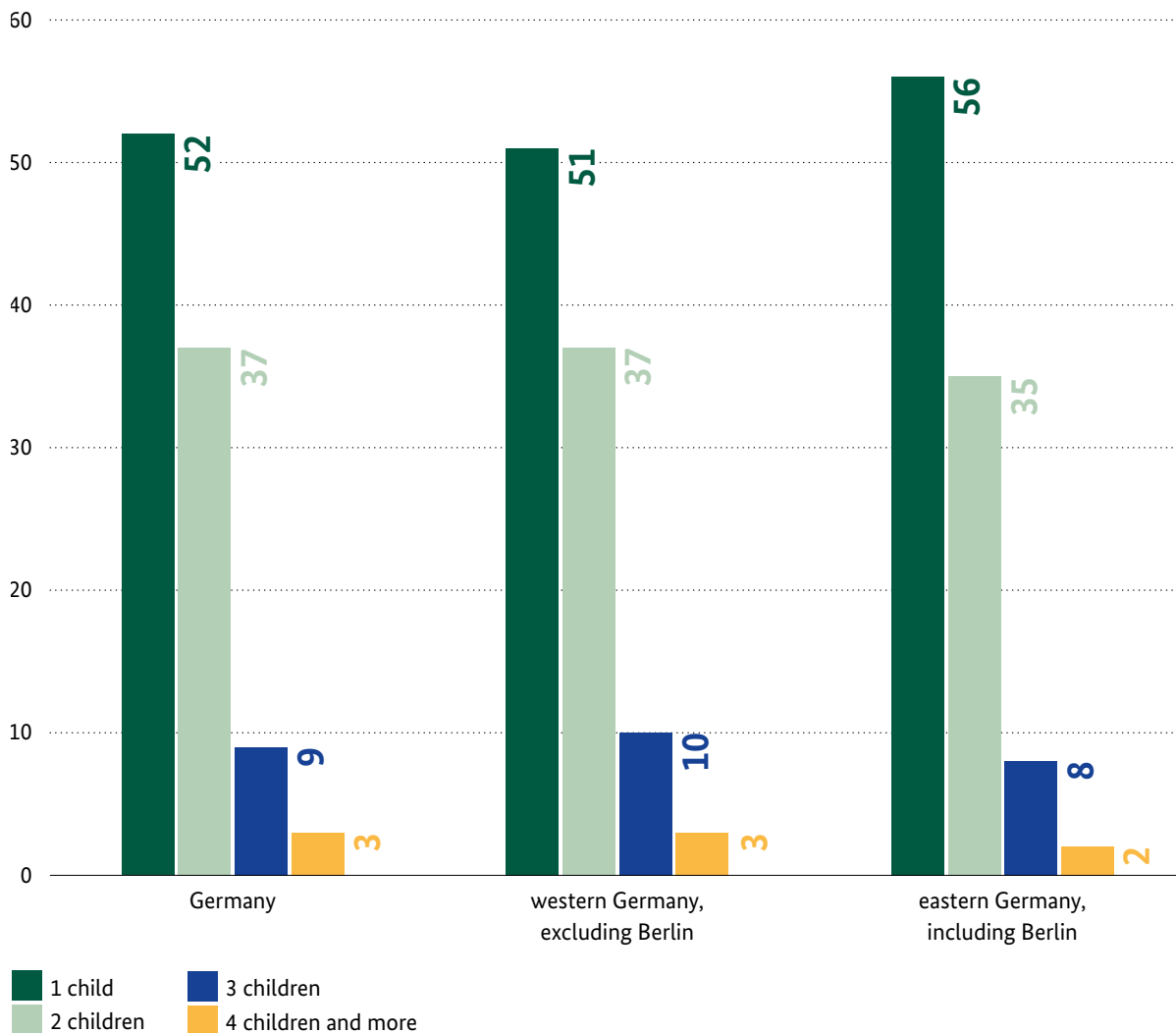
Source: Federal Statistical Office (2020): Haushalte und Familien 2018, Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus; statistical discrepancies up to 100 are the result of rounding.

Majority of families have one or two underage children

In 2018, more than half of the families with underage children in Germany had one child (52 percent), more than one in three families had two children (37 percent) and 12 percent had three or more children (Figure 14). Eastern and

western Germany do not differ fundamentally in this respect, although slightly more families in eastern Germany have one child (56 percent) than in western Germany (51 percent).

Figure 14: Families by number of children under 18 and region, 2018, in percent

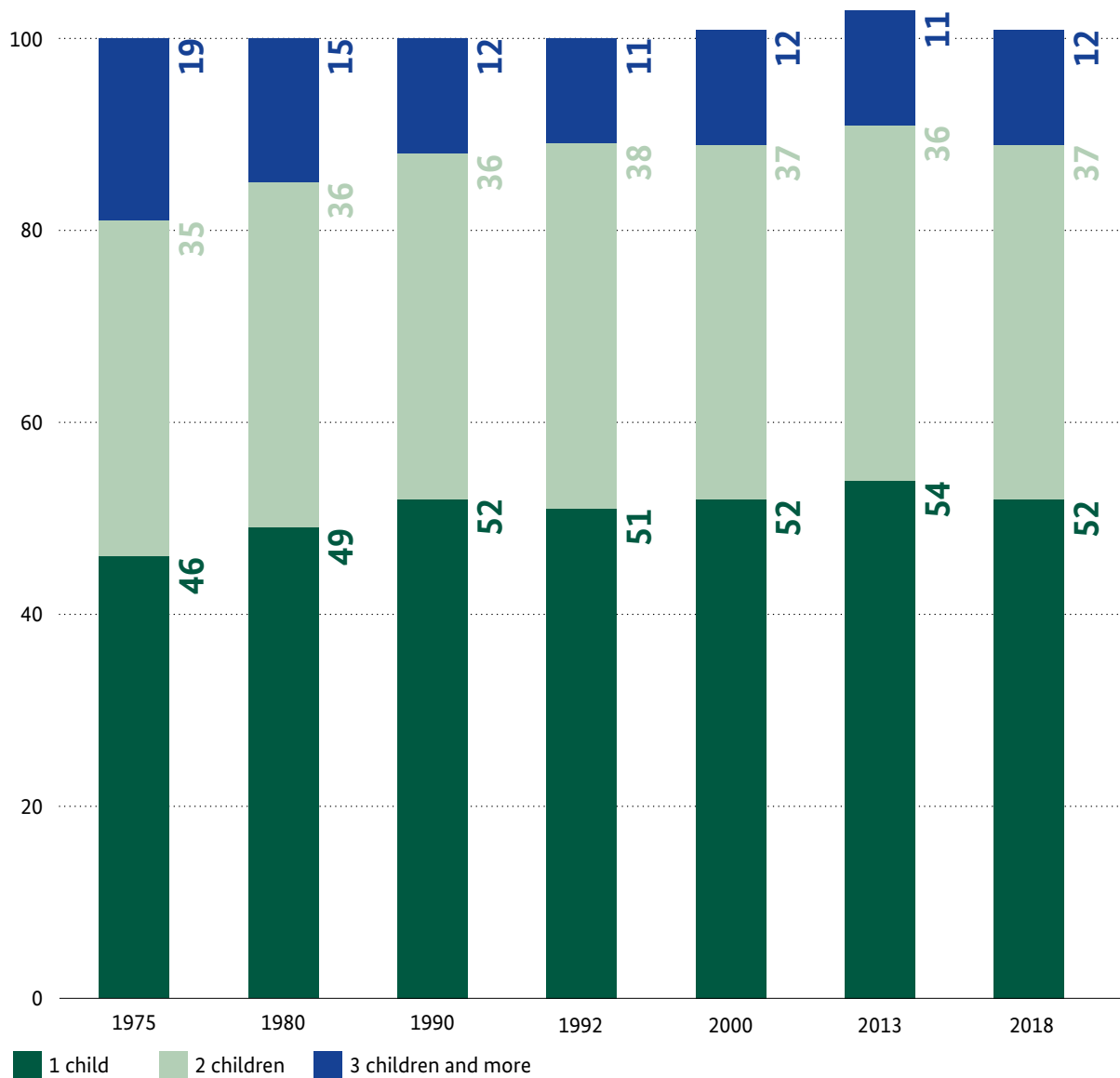


Source: Federal Statistical Office (2020): *Haushalte und Familien 2018, Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus*; own presentation.

The proportion of families with three or more underage children has also remained virtually unchanged in Germany since reunification (Figure 15). In 1975, 19 percent of families still had three or more underage children, and 6 percent of them had four or more children. By 1990, the

proportion of families with more than one child had fallen, and in particular the proportion of families with four or more children had halved in comparison (from 6 percent to 3 percent in 2018).

Figure 15: Families by number of children under 18 years of age compared over time, 1975 to 2018, in percent

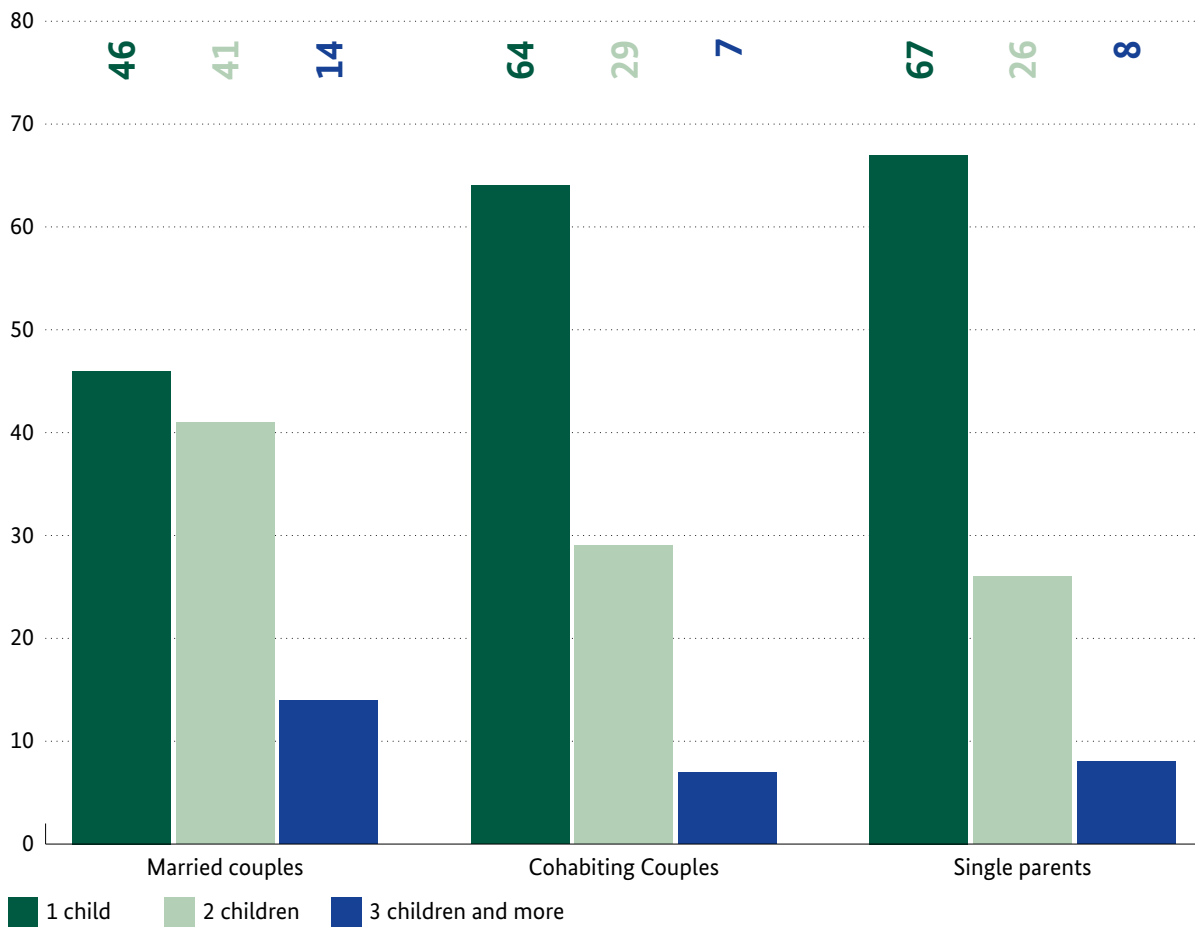


Source: Federal Statistical Office (2020): Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus; own presentation; statistical discrepancies up to 100 are the result of rounding.

The more children living in a family, the greater the probability that the parents are married to each other (Figure 16). In 2018, 41 percent of married parents had two children, while only about a quarter of unmarried parents or single

parents had two children. Married couples are also twice as likely to have three or more children (14 percent) as single parents and parents living together (8 percent and 7 percent respectively).

Figure 16: Family forms by number of underage children, 2018, in percent



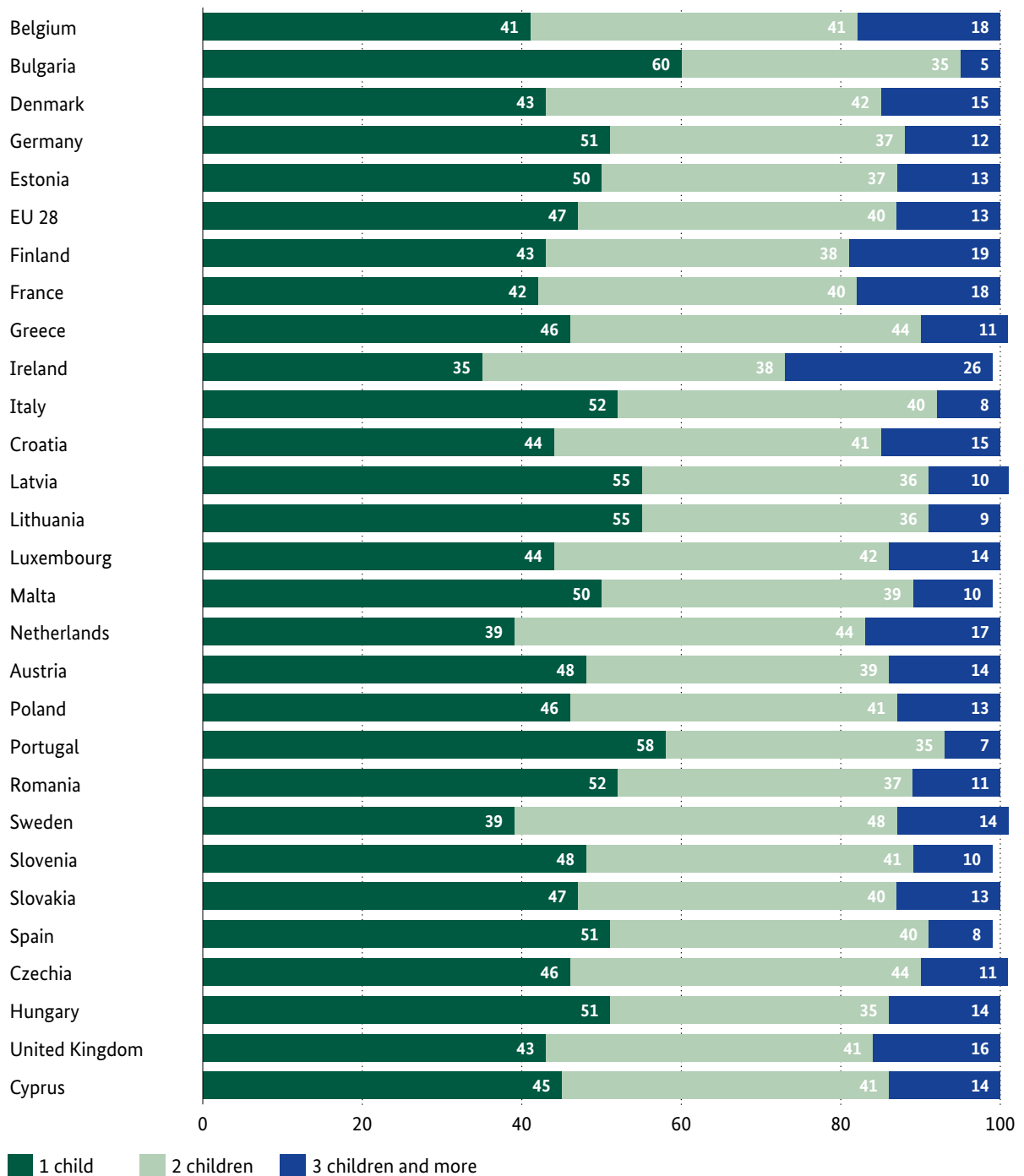
Source: Federal Statistical Office (2020): *Haushalte und Familien 2018, Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus*.

In a European comparison, Germany was mid range in 2018 when it came to the distribution of family households by number of children. In Europe – as in Germany – a family household with one child is also the most common (Figure 17).⁴² Exceptions are Sweden, Netherlands and Ireland,

where there are more households with two children than households with one child. In Netherlands, France, Belgium, Finland and Ireland, the proportion of households with three or more children is particularly high.

⁴² These data may differ from national data due to different methods and definitions.

Figure 17: Households with dependent children, by number of children, in an EU comparison, 2018, in percent



Source: own calculations and presentation; statistical discrepancies up to 100 are the result of rounding.

Data basis: Eurostat (2020): Table: Number of private households by household composition, number of children and age of youngest child, link: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/de/web/lfs/data/database>.

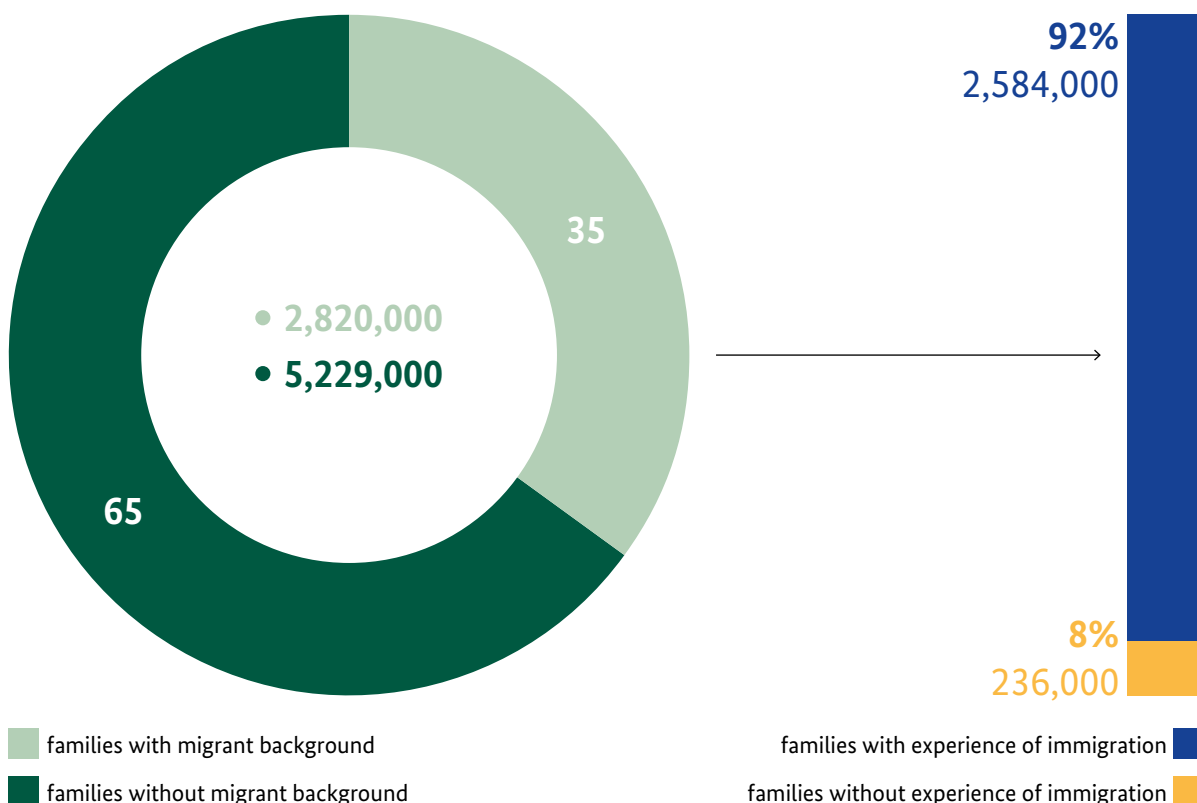
Note: comparative data may differ from national data due to different methods and definitions.

One of three families have a migrant background

In 2018, one in three families in Germany with underage children in their household had a migrant background.⁴³ This represents about 2.8 million families. Of the families with a migrant background, a large proportion (92 percent) have had their own migration experiences, i.e. at least one parent was born abroad and immigrated to

Germany (Figure 18).⁴⁴ This shows that families with a migrant background tend to live in the western federal states. Here 43 percent of families have a migrant background, whereas in the eastern states it was one in five families (21 percent). Just under a third of people with a migrant background cite family as a reason for moving to Germany.⁴⁵

Figure 18: Families with underage children according to migrant background, 2018, in percent



Source: Federal Statistical Office (2019): Sonderauswertung Mikrozensus 2018, BMFSFJ's own presentation from: BMFSFJ (2020): Gelebte Vielfalt. Familien mit Migrationshintergrund in Deutschland.

⁴³ Families with a migrant background are defined as families in which at least one parent has a migrant background. The term "migrant background" is understood in this context as analogous to the definition of the Federal Statistical Office, which is that persons have a migrant background if they themselves or at least one parent was not born with German citizenship. This includes immigrated and non-immigrated foreigners, immigrated and non-immigrated naturalised citizens, late repatriates and the descendants of these groups who were born as Germans.

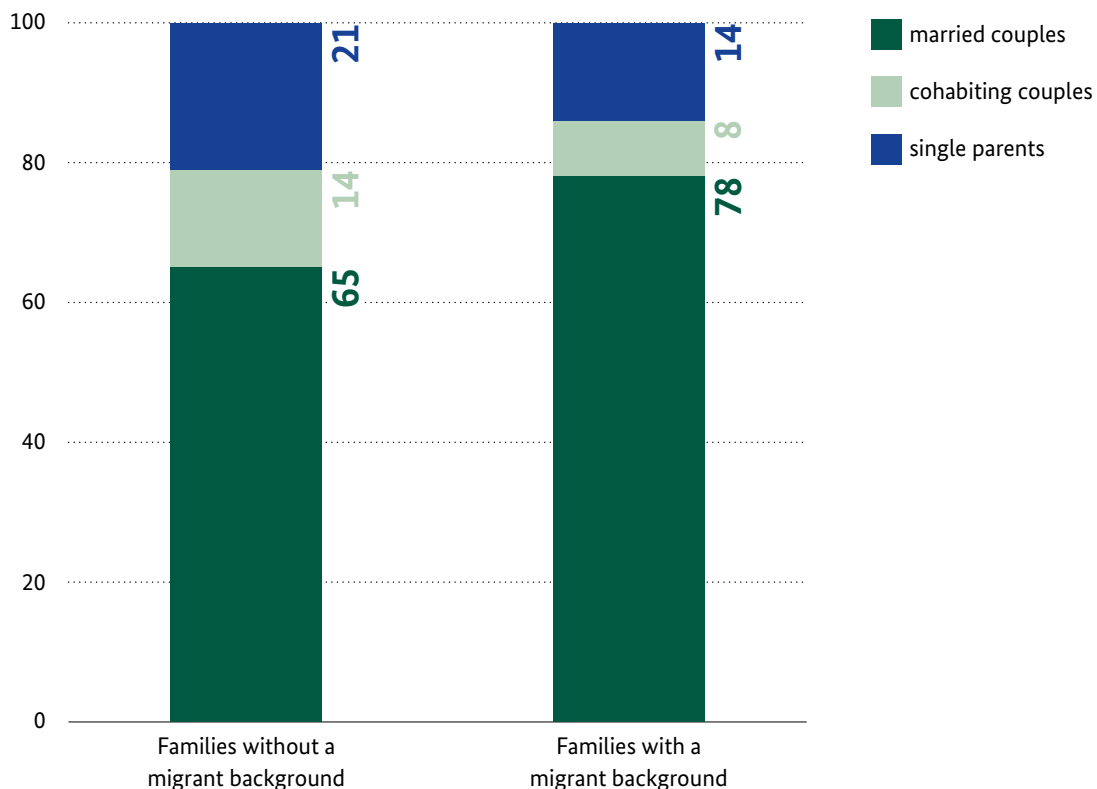
⁴⁴ BMFSFJ (2020): Gelebte Vielfalt. Familien mit Migrationshintergrund in Deutschland. Basis: Statistisches Bundesamt (2019): Sonderauswertung Mikrozensus 2018

⁴⁵ cf. Wido Geis-Thöne (2020): <https://www.iwkoeln.de/studien/iw-reports/beitrag/wido-geis-thoene-ueber-eine-million-erwerbsorientierte-zuwanderer-in-10-jahren.html>

In families with a migrant background, parents are more often married and less often single parents than in families without a migrant background (Figure 19). Thus two-thirds of families without a

migrant background are married, while more than three-quarters of families with a migrant background are married.

Figure 19: Families with underage children by migration status and family form, 2018, in percent



Source: own presentation and calculation.

Data basis: Federal Statistical Office (2020): *Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2018, Bevölkerung in Familien/Lebensformen*.

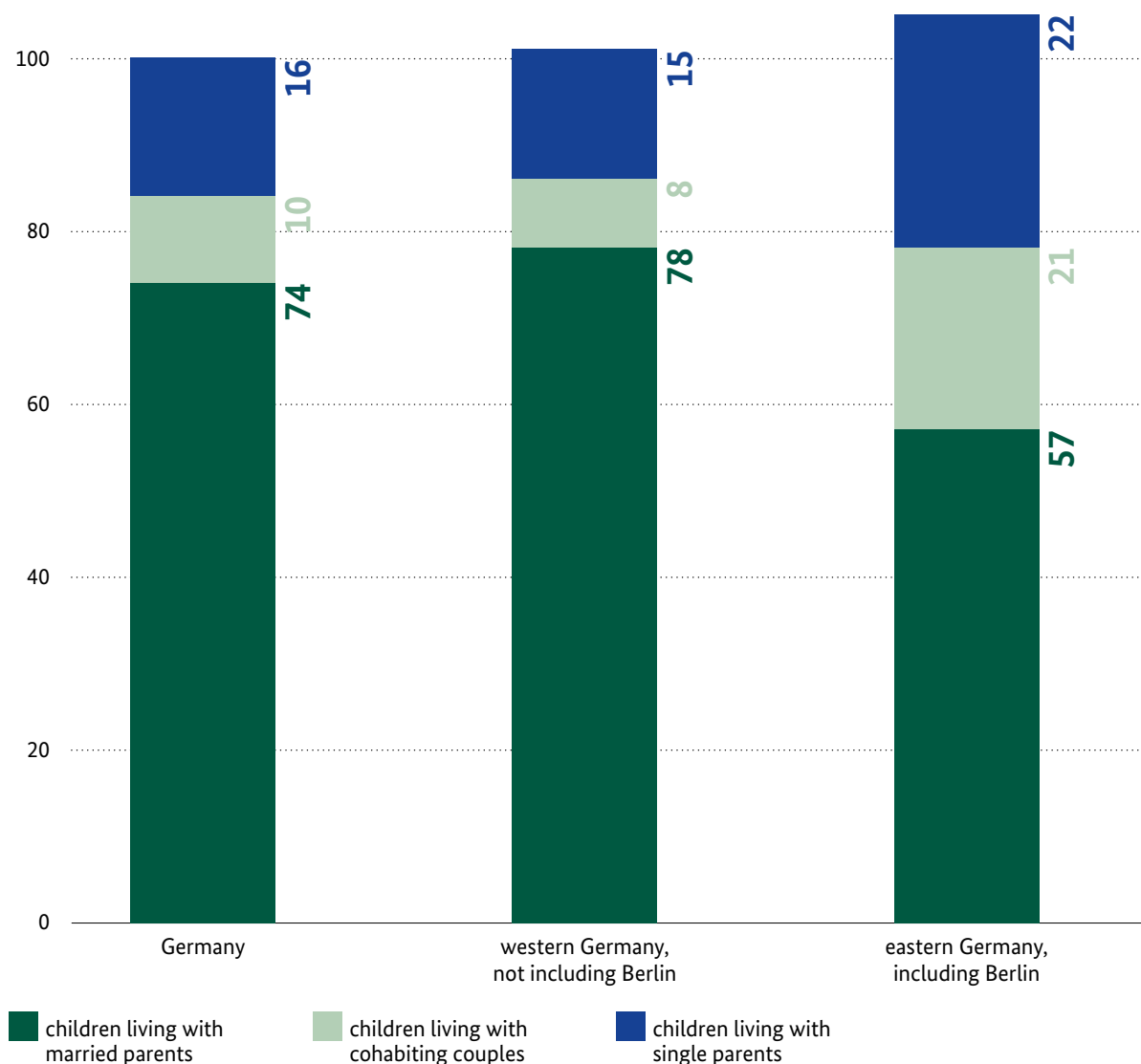
While the proportions of family households with two children with and without a migrant background do not differ (37 percent in each case), families with a migrant background are more likely to have three or more underage children (16 percent compared to 9 percent). However, most often, families both with and without a migrant background have an underage child in the household.

Children in families

In 2018, there were about 13.2 million underage children living in Germany, of whom 2.4 million lived in the eastern federal states (18 percent) and 10.7 million in the western federal states (82 percent).

In 2018, almost three-quarters of underage children in Germany were living with married parents in the household (74 percent), 16 percent were growing up with single parents and 10 percent with cohabitants (Figure 20). The proportion of children growing up with married parents has therefore not changed significantly in recent years. Here, too, the eastern and western federal states differ. In the western federal states, the majority of parents of underage children were married, with 78 percent of underage children living with married parents, compared to only 57 percent in the eastern federal states. By contrast, children in the eastern federal states grew up more often with cohabiting parents and single parents than in the western federal states.

Figure 20: Underage children by family type, 2018, in percent

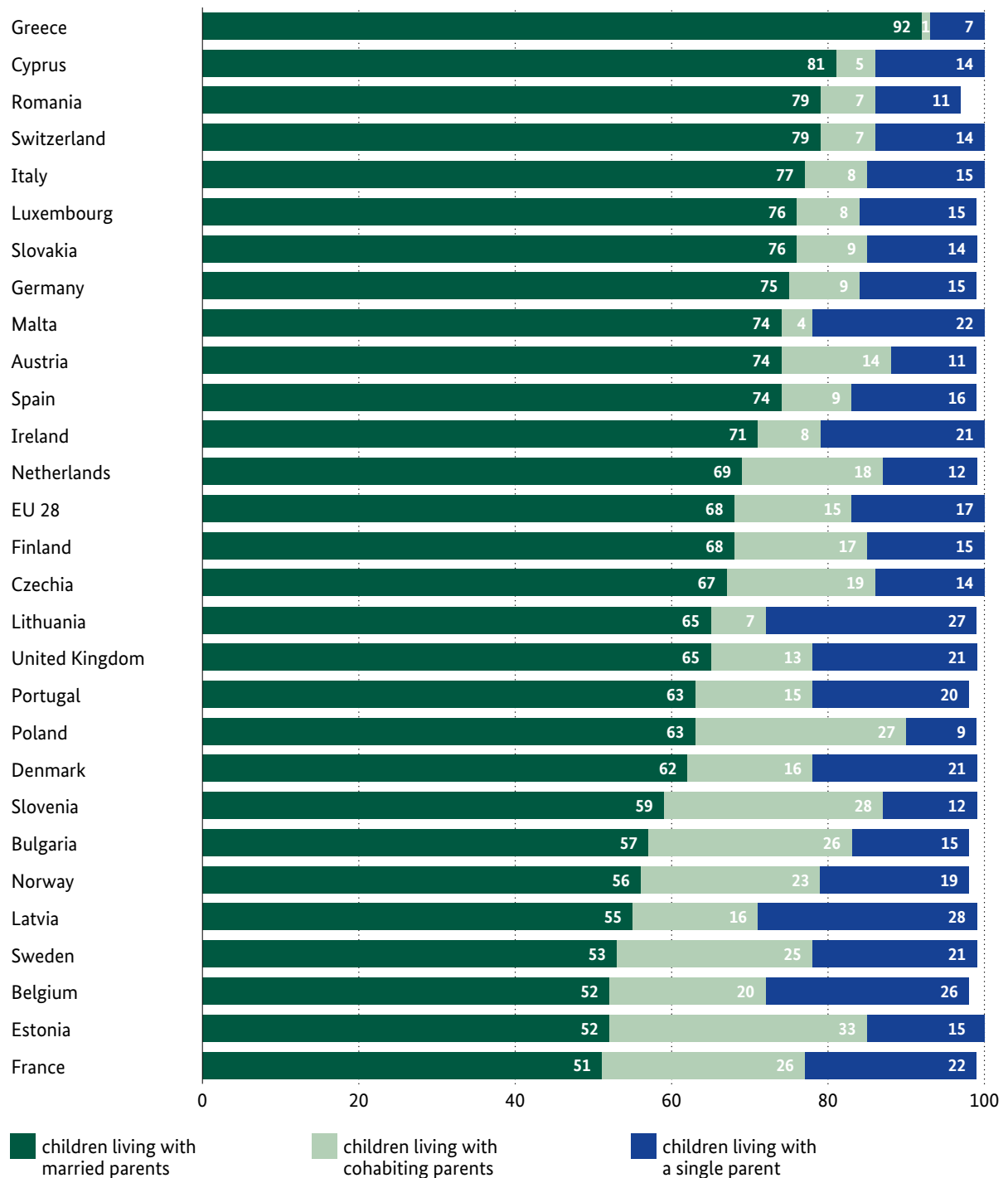


Source: Federal Statistical Office (2020): Haushalte und Familien 2018, Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus.

This means that children in Germany grow up with married parents more often than the European average (Figure 21). Children in countries such as Slovakia, Malta, Austria, Italy and Spain are relatively likely to grow up with married parents. In Greece, almost all children grow up with

married couples, whereas in France only one child in two grows up with married parents. Similarly, in France about one in five children grow up with single parents, while in Greece only 7 percent of children grow up with single parents. Germany is mid range in this regard.

Figure 21: Living arrangements in which underage children live, 2018



Source: Eurostat (2020): Table: Proportion of children (under 18 years) living with their parents by household type – EU-SILC survey; own presentation.
 Note: the percentage gap between presented figures and 100 represents children who do not live in their parents' household or who live in other arrangements.

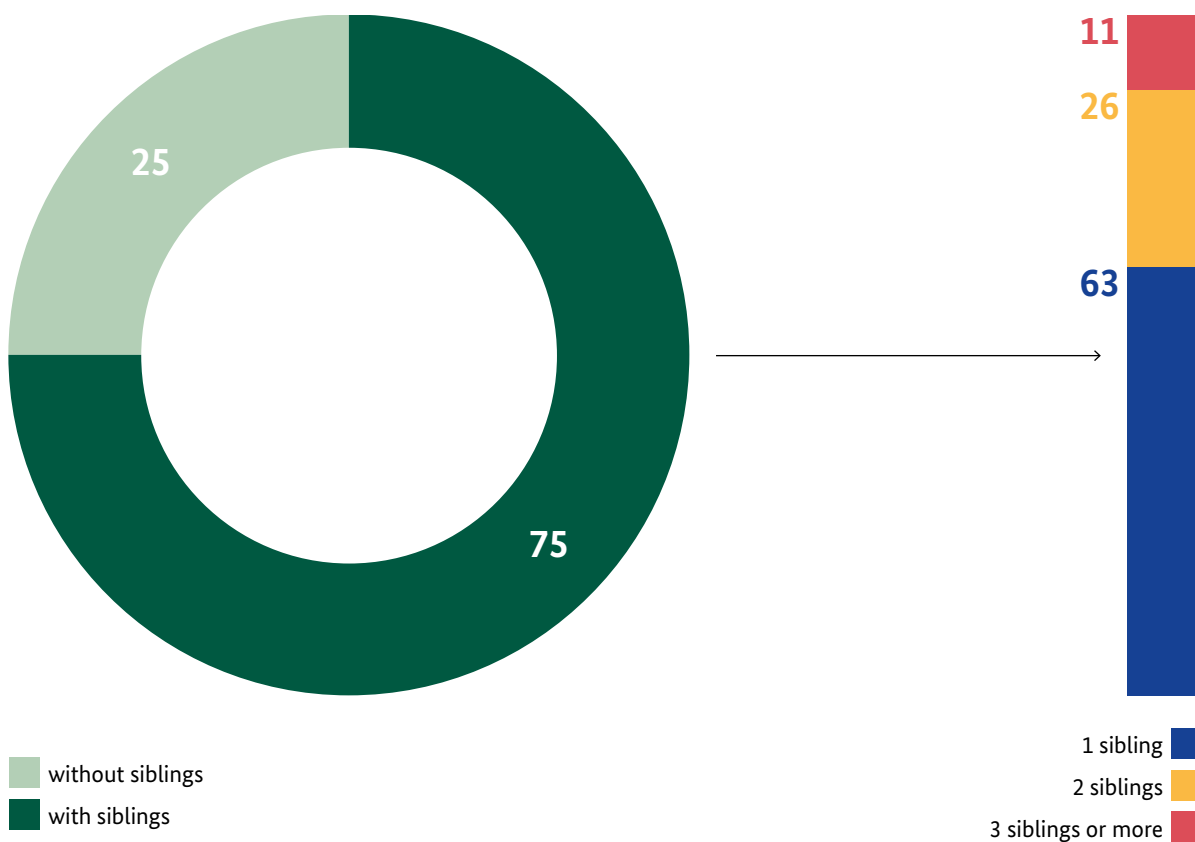
Most children grow up with siblings

Although just over half of families had only one underage child in total in 2018, three-quarters of underage children grew up with at least one sister or brother (Figure 22). Only one-quarter live (still) without siblings in their household. Viewed over time, families in Germany continue to have two children on average. Thus, in 1998 an average of 1.65 underage children lived in families, whereas

in 2008 it was 1.61. In recent years the average number of children in family households had risen slightly to 1.64 children by 2018.⁴⁶

Of the 75 percent of children with siblings in their household, almost two-thirds had one sister or brother, more than one-third had two siblings and 11 percent had three or more siblings.

Figure 22: Underage children by number of siblings* in household, 2018, in percent



*Single siblings – including stepchildren, adopted children and foster children, without age limits.

Source: Federal Statistical Office (2020): Haushalte und Familien 2018, Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus.

46 Statistisches Bundesamt (2020): Haushalte und Familien 2018, Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus.

Rainbow families

Statistically, rainbow families are defined as the households of same-sex couples with children. However, for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer people (LSBTIQ), rainbow families are families where at least one parent is transgender, intersex, lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer.⁴⁷ This diversity is difficult to capture in statistics, which is why the number of rainbow families is probably underestimated in official statistics. The following presents rainbow families in the statistical sense.

In 2018, there were a total of 130,000 same-sex couples, 37,000 of whom were married and 38,000 in registered life partnerships. Of the 8 million families with underage children, 10,000 were rainbow families, of which 4,000 were married same-sex couples with underage children and 6,000 cohabiting same-sex couples. In both these groups, 50 percent had one child whilst the other 50 percent had two children, irrespective of whether the couples are married or not.⁴⁸ Almost

three-quarters of married and unmarried rainbow families lived in the western federal states and almost one-quarter each in the eastern federal states.⁴⁹

Of the 13 million underage children in Germany, 15,000 grew up in rainbow households. Of these, 5,000 were in households with same-sex couples and 10,000 in registered life partnerships.⁵⁰

Single and separated parents

In 2018 there were 1.5 million single parents, of whom 1.3 million were single mothers and 181,000 single fathers. This means that almost nine out of ten single parents were female.⁵¹ In about one in five families, one parent lived alone with children in the household (19 percent). In 2018, the number of single parents was at the same level as in 2002 (Figure 23) and had fallen for the third year in a row compared to previous years. By contrast, the number of two-parent families with underage children has risen again somewhat in recent years.

47 Regenbogenportal, link: <https://www.regenbogenportal.de/informationen/regenbogenfamilien>

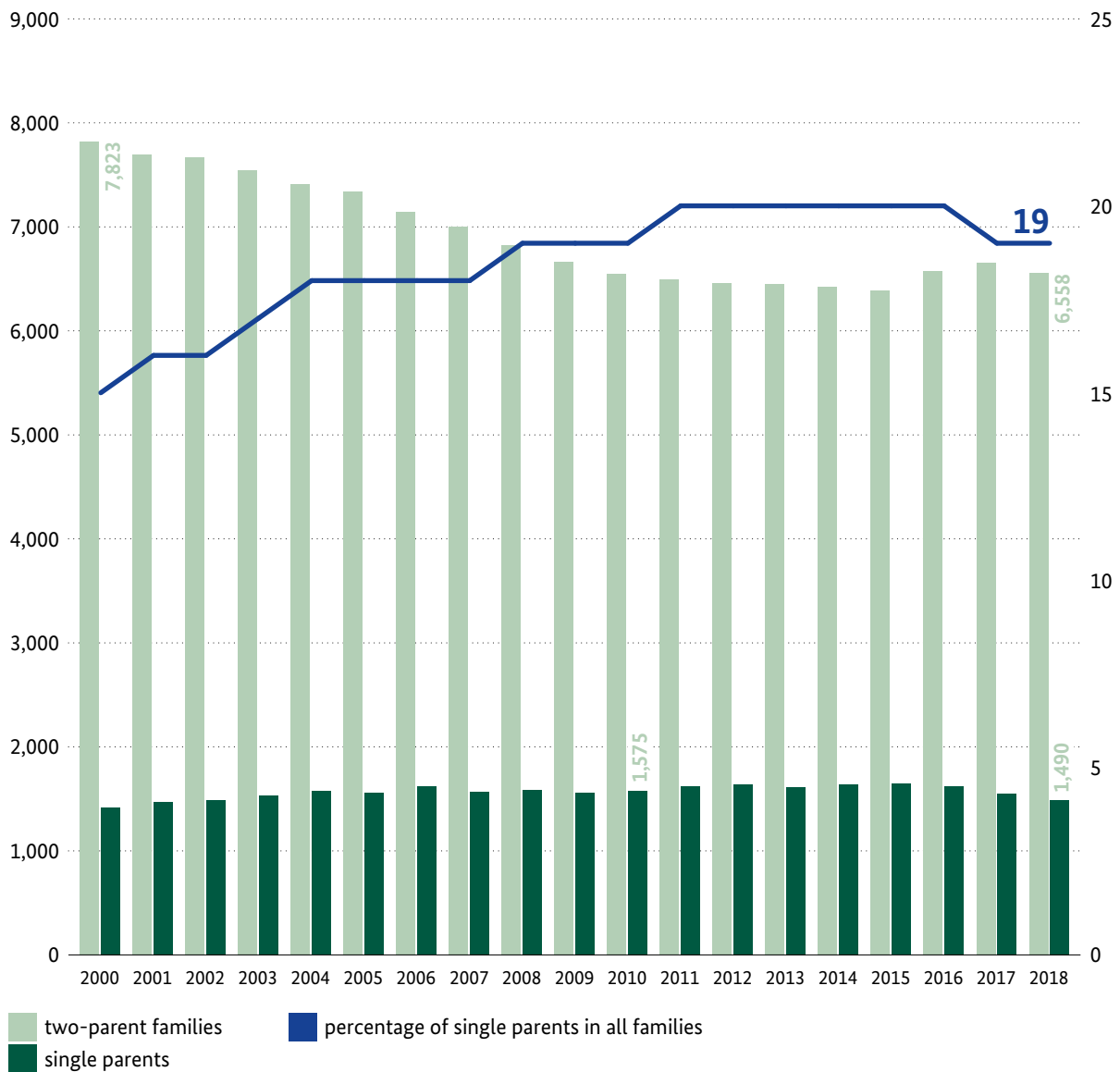
48 Statistisches Bundesamt (2019): Haushalte und Familien 2018, Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus.

49 ibid.

50 ibid.

51 The number of single fathers is therefore relatively low. In order to be able to make differentiated assessments for single parents, the situation of single mothers is examined below.

Figure 23: Trends in two-parent families and single parents with children under 18 in their household (columns, left y-axis) and proportion of single parents in all families (line, right y-axis)



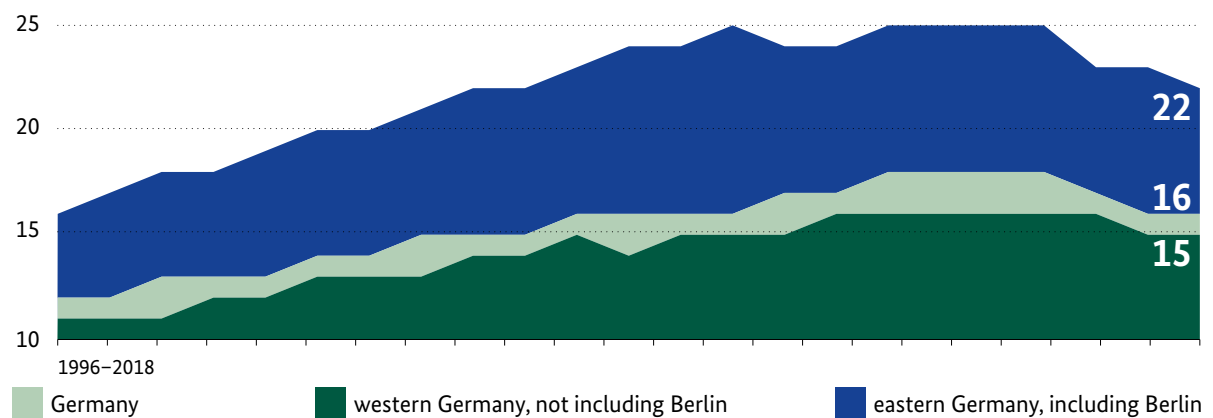
Source: Federal Statistical Office: Mikrozensus

The number of underage children growing up with only one parent has risen continuously since 1996, from around 1.9 million in 1996 to 2.1 million in 2018.⁵² This means that in 2018 16 percent of all underage children grew up with single parents. Since 2015, however, the proportions have been declining again slightly (Figure 24). In

eastern Germany the proportion of children growing up with single parents is consistently higher. In 1996, 16 percent of all underage children in this region lived with single parents, whereas in 2018 it was 22 percent. In western Germany the proportion was 11 percent in 1996 and 15 percent in 2018.

⁵² Statistisches Bundesamt: Mikrozensus; calculations: Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung (2017): Immer mehr Kinder wachsen bei Alleinerziehenden auf (press release, 17 May 2017).

Figure 24: Proportion of underage children living with a single parent, 1996 to 2018, in percent



Source: Federal Statistical Office, microcensus. Calculations: Federal Institute for Population Research

In the statistics, single parents are defined as households where one parent lives alone with unmarried children. This does not adequately reflect the living situation of separated families, as even after a separation or divorce both parents usually wish to continue to be there for their child or

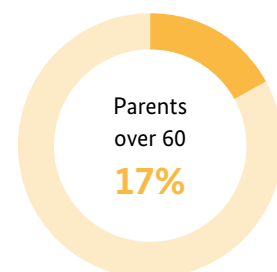
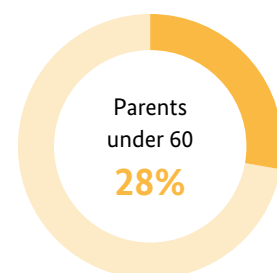
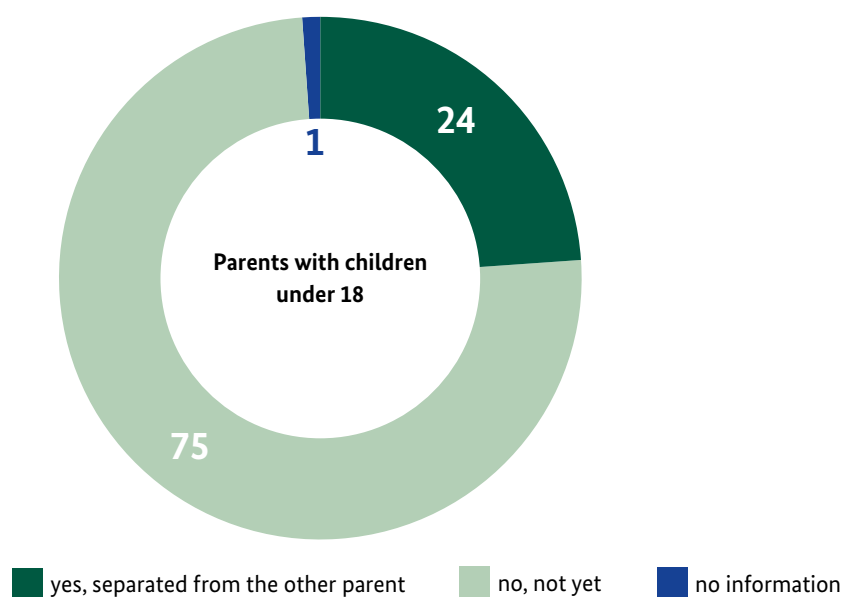
children. Single parents and separated parents make up a considerable proportion of families in Germany. Almost a quarter of mothers and fathers with underage children are separated parents, i.e. they have children from a previous relationship (Figure 25).⁵³

Figure 25: Separated parents, 2017

Question:

“Have you ever separated from a partner with whom you had children together and these children were younger than 18 at the time of separation?”

Proportion of parents separated from other parent, irrespective of their children’s age:



Basis: Federal Republic of Germany, Parents with Children under 18.

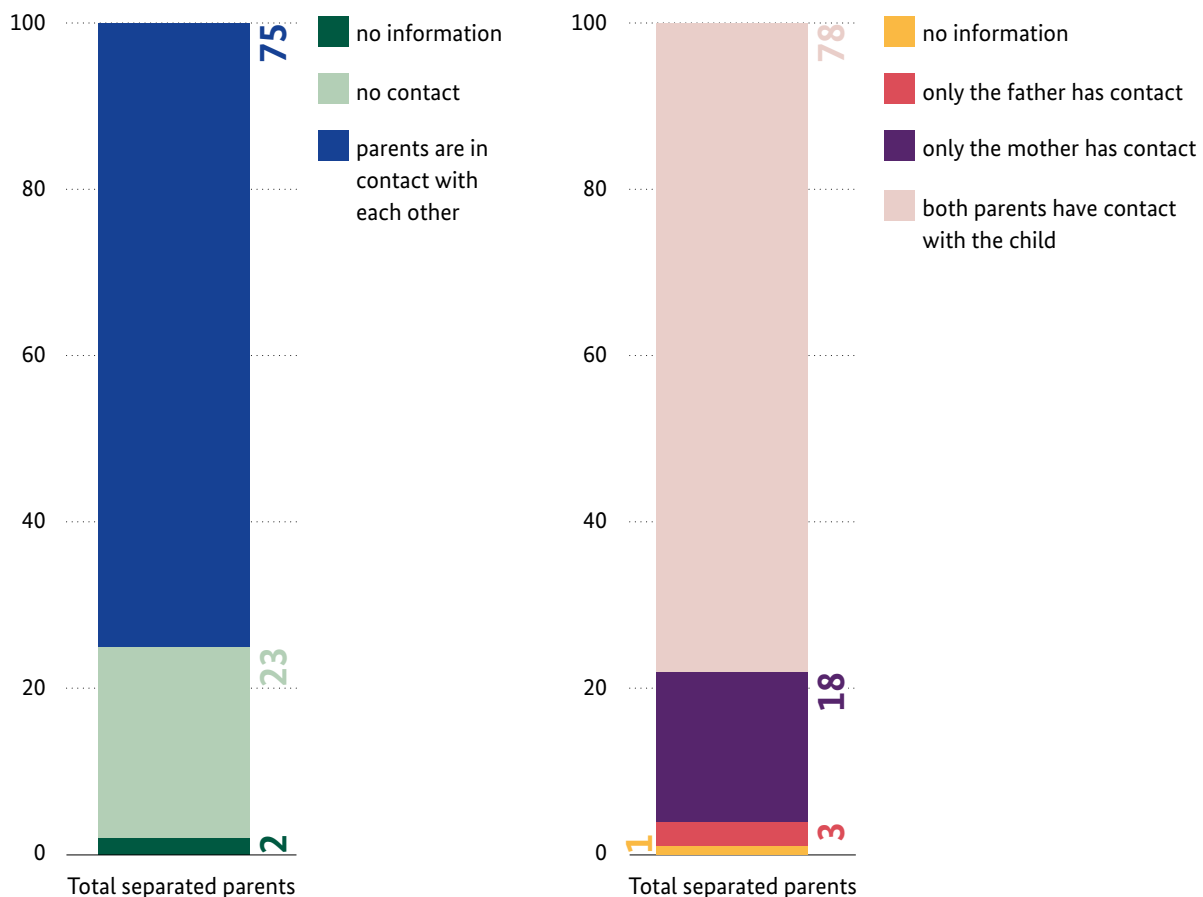
Source: IfD Allensbach (2017): *Getrennt gemeinsam erziehen*, p. 5.

53 IfD Allensbach (2017): *Gemeinsam getrennt erziehen*, p. 5, link: https://www.ifd-allensbach.de/fileadmin/studien/Abach_Trennungseltern_Bericht.pdf

Most parents stay in touch with each other and their child even after separating or divorcing. This is reported by about three-quarters of the separat-

ed parents surveyed (Figure 26). For just under two-thirds of these parents, relations with their ex-partner are predominantly normal to good.⁵⁴

Figure 26: Contact with the other parent and child, 2017



Basis: Federal Republic of Germany, Parents with Underage Children from Earlier Partnerships.

Source: IfD Allensbach (2017): *Getrennt gemeinsam erziehen*, p. 6.

Note: contact with the youngest child from the previous partnership.

The “single parent” household form can therefore conceal different arrangements and phases of life. Statistically speaking, single mothers live without a partner in their household, but this does not mean that they are not in some type of partner-

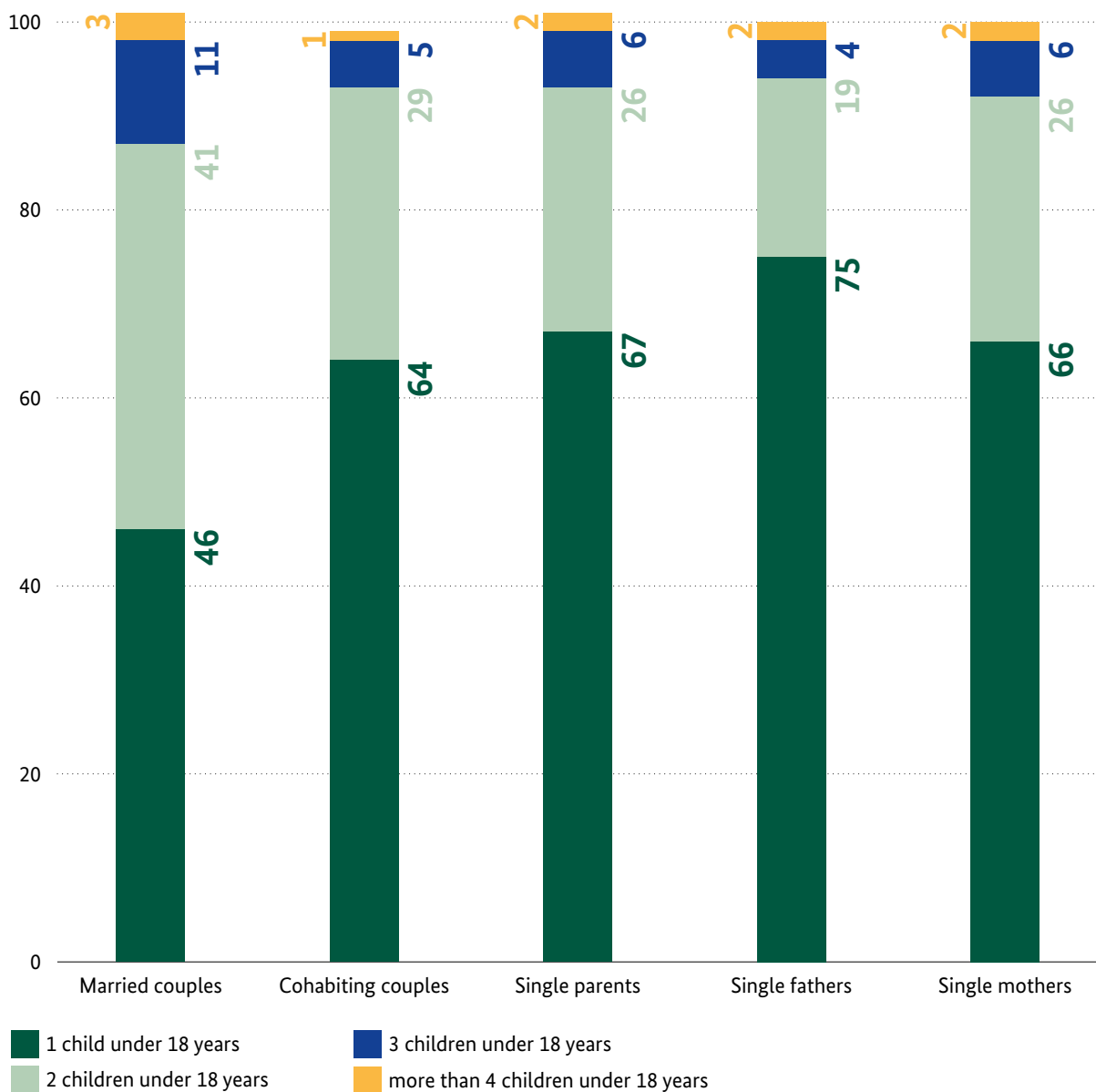
ship, as surveys show that more than one in three single mothers lives in a stable relationship (39 percent). 61 percent of single mothers do not have a stable partnership.

54 IfD Allensbach (2017): *Gemeinsam getrennt erziehen*, p. 7, link: https://www.ifd-allensbach.de/fileadmin/studien/Abach_Trennungseltern_Bericht.pdf

Single parent households are more likely to have only one underage child⁵⁵ (67 percent) than two-parent households (46 percent of married couples and 64 percent of cohabiting couples). One-fifth of single parents have two underage children and 6 percent have three or more children in their household. This means that one in four single parents have two or more underage

children. Single mothers and fathers differ slightly in this respect. Single fathers are more likely to have one underage child (75 percent compared to 66 percent of single mothers), while single mothers are more likely to have two or more children (34 percent compared to 25 percent of single fathers) (Figure 27).

Figure 27: Families by number of unmarried children under 18 in the family, 2018, in percent



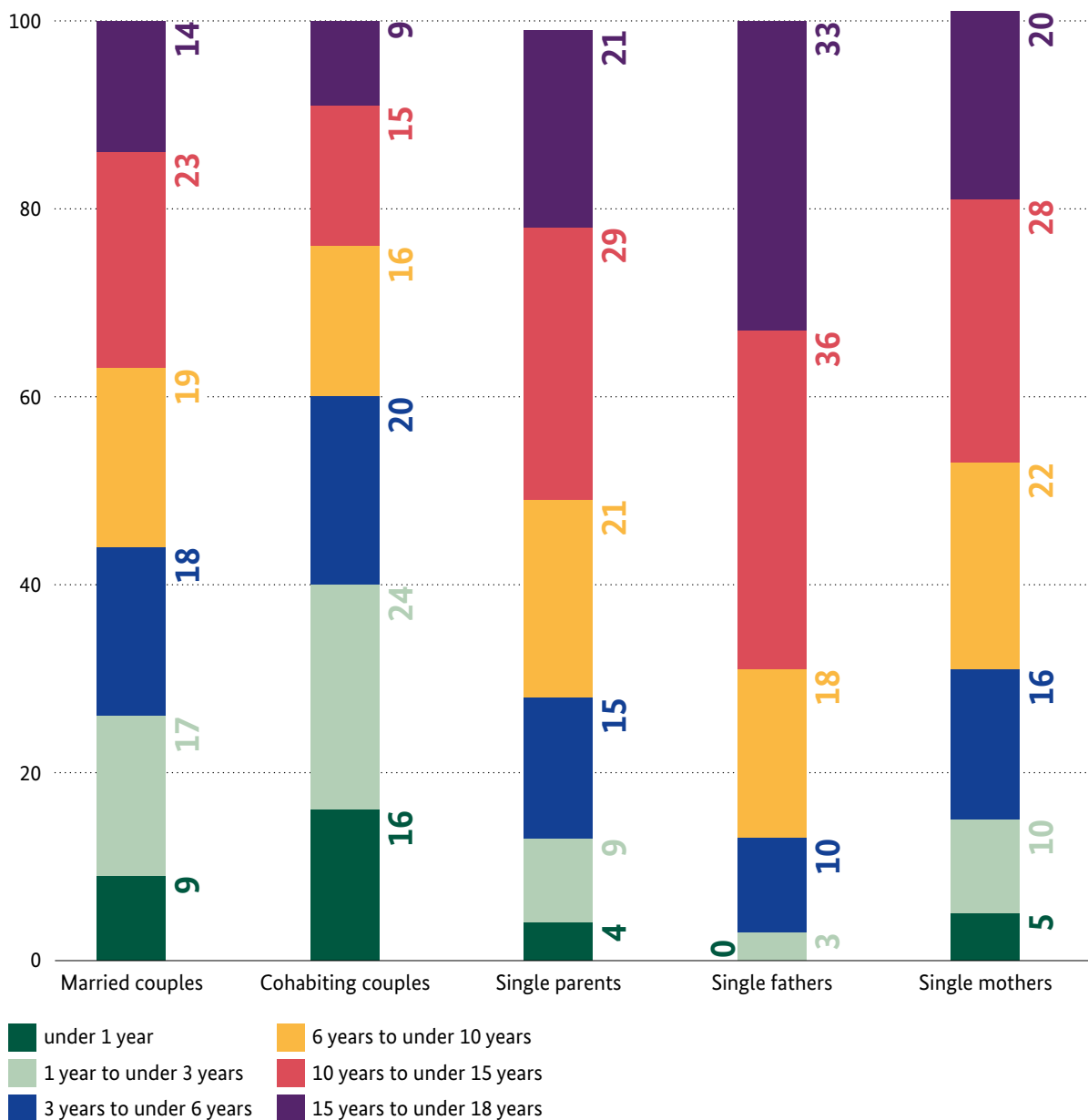
Source: Federal Statistical Office (2020): Haushalte und Familien 2018, Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus. Calculation: Prognos AG; statistical discrepancies up to 100 are the result of rounding.

⁵⁵ Unless otherwise stated, the following evaluations always refer to single parents with at least one underage child.

In 2018 it was also more likely that single parent households had children aged 10 years or older (50 percent). By contrast, mothers in two-parent

families were slightly more likely to have children of up to 3 years of age (Figure 28).

Figure 28: Families by age of youngest unmarried child in the family, 2018



Source: Sonderauswertung Mikrozensus f203_006_2; calculation: Prognos AG; statistical discrepancies up to 100 are the result of rounding.

One explanation could be the average divorce age of 43.9 years (see also Chapter 2.4 Marriages and divorces). A separation or divorce usually leads to women (temporarily) becoming single parents. Single parents are therefore older than mothers in two-parent families. Accordingly, about a quarter of single mothers with underage children are

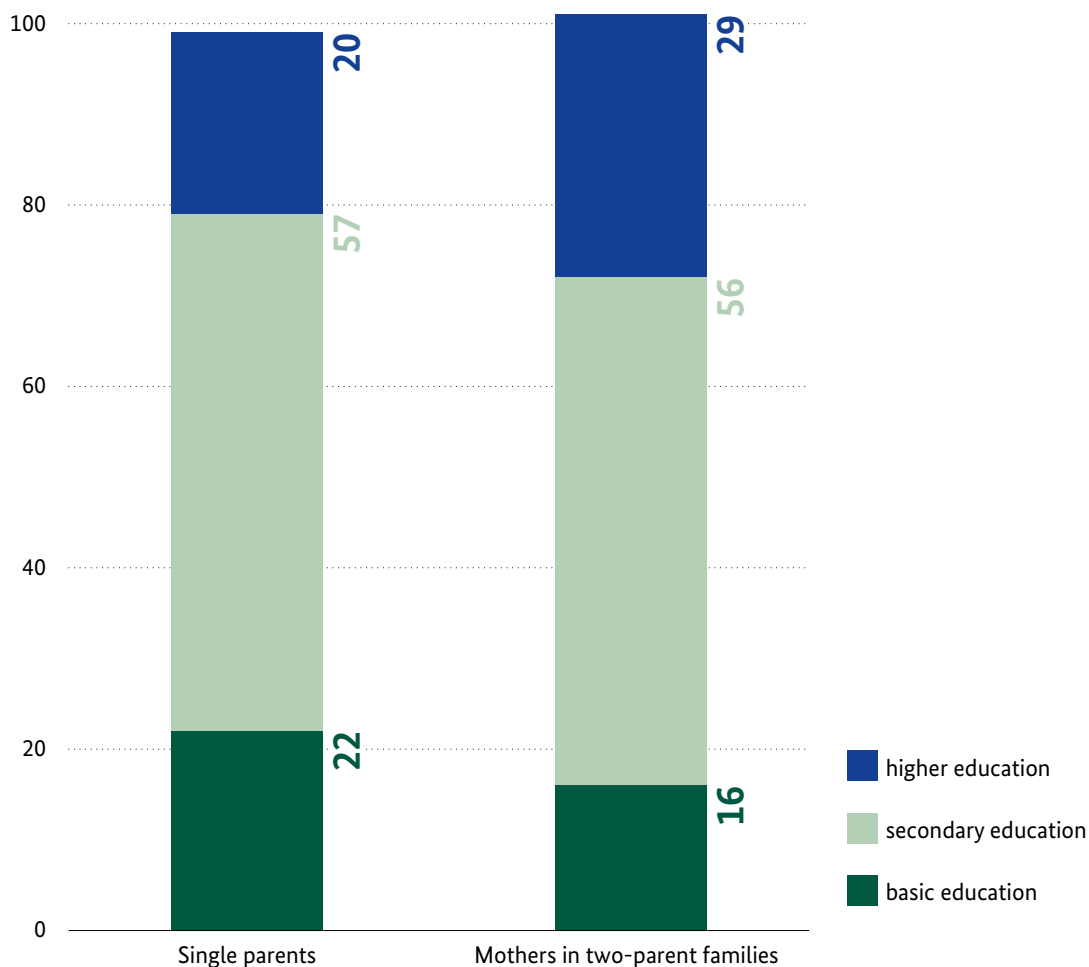
over 35 years old. Forty-one percent belong to the age group between 35 and 45, while 29 percent are already 45 or older. Only slightly more than a quarter of single mothers are between 25 and under 35 years of age (24 percent), and 4 percent are under 25.

Single parents predominantly well educated

Seventy-seven percent of single parents have an intermediate or high level of education. In 2018, about one in five single mothers had a low educational level⁵⁶, which was slightly more frequent than mothers in two-parent families (16 percent) (Figure 29). About 16 percent of single mothers

with underage children have a university degree, about 10 percent have a degree from a university of applied sciences and 48 percent have completed an apprenticeship or vocational training in the dual system. This means that there were slightly more single parents with a university degree in 2018 than in 2015 (12 percent).⁵⁷

Figure 29: Highest educational level of mothers, by family form, 2018



Source: Federal Statistical Office (2019): Sonderauswertung Mikrozensus 2018; calculation by Prognos AG; statistical discrepancies up to 100 are the result of rounding.

High propensity to earn of single parents

The trend towards more mothers being in employment also applies to single parents. Nearly three-quarters of single women were in employment in 2018 (71 percent), while slightly over two-thirds (68 percent) of mothers in two-parent

households and 92 percent of fathers in two-parent households held employment. This puts Germany in line with the EU average. In 2018 the average employment rate for single mothers in the EU was 72.1 percent.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Including an equivalent vocational school qualification, preparatory service for the middle service in public administration, apprenticeship training
⁵⁷ Statistisches Bundesamt (2019): Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2018 – Bevölkerung in Familien/Lebensformen am Hauptwohnsitz.
⁵⁸ European Commission (2019): Mechanisms to support single parents in the European Union, link: http://cite.gov.pt/asstscite/downloads/diretriz_ce_monoparentais.pdf

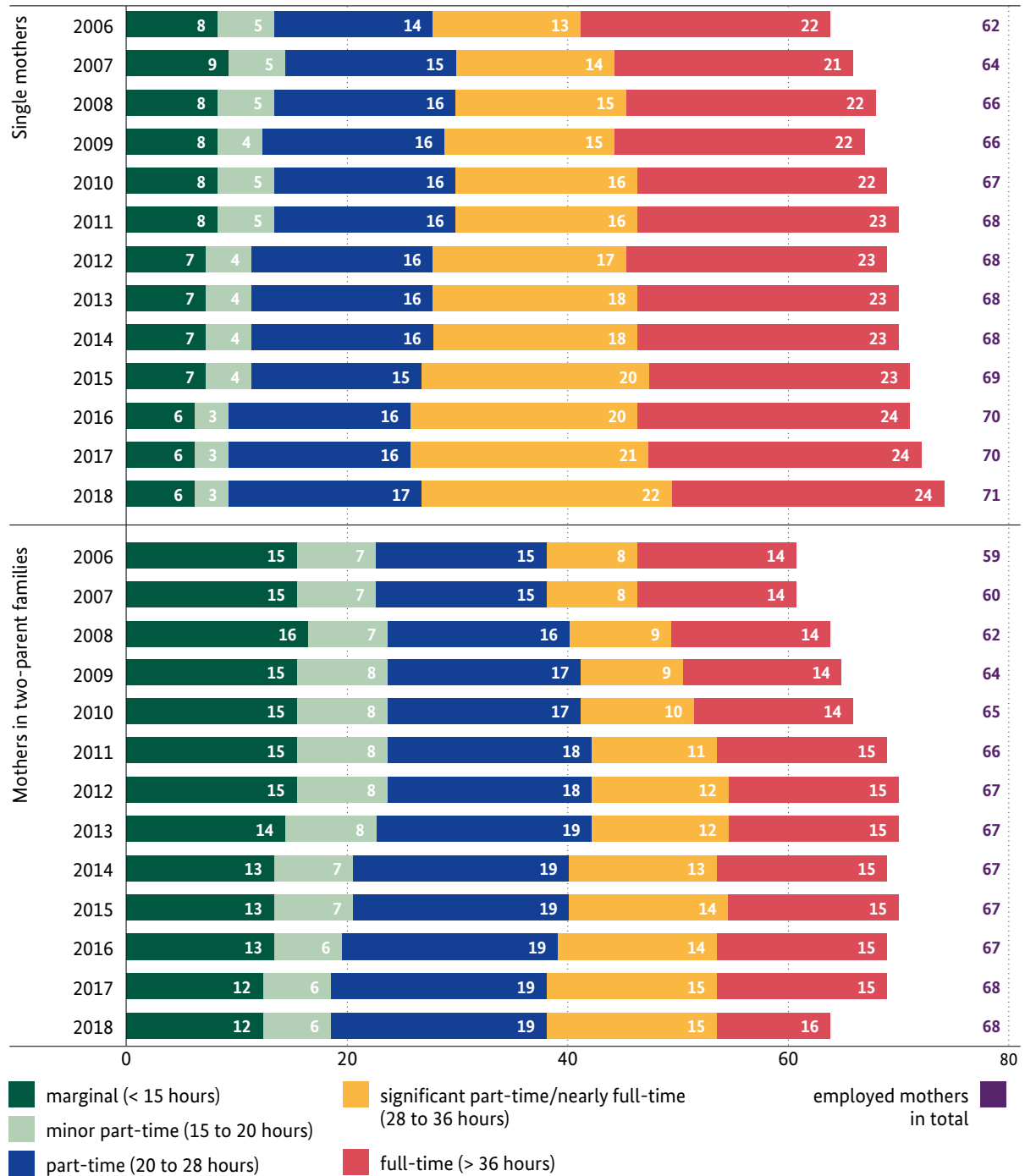
Eighty-one percent of single fathers are in employment. In 2006, 62 percent of single mothers, 59 percent of mothers in two-parent families and 76 percent of single fathers were employed. Accordingly, more than two-thirds of single mothers earn most of their livelihood from their own work (68 percent).⁵⁹ Single mothers also work significantly more often full-time or nearly

full-time than other mothers, with 46 percent doing so compared to 31 percent of mothers in two-parent families (Figure 30). This strong focus that single parents have on earning money is also evident among those currently not in employment, as three-quarters of the unemployed would like to take up employment.⁶⁰

59 Statistisches Bundesamt (2019), Fachserie 1 Reihe 3: Haushalte und Familien. Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2018.

60 IfD Allensbach (2020): Allensbach Archive 8229, 2020.

Figure 30: Evolution of realised gainful employment⁶¹ among single mothers and mothers in two-parent families with a youngest child under 18, by weekly working hours, 2006 to 2018



Source: Federal Statistical Office: Sonderauswertung Mikrozensus; calculation: Prognos AG.

61 The term "realised gainful employment" has now replaced the term "gainful employment" which was formerly used in family reporting in official statistics. It considers persons who are usually in gainful employment to be gainfully employed. The only exceptions are persons who have interrupted their previous employment due to maternity or parental leave. The actual labour force participation of parents with a youngest child under 3 years of age is thus recorded more realistically (see Tim Hochgürtel (2018): Realisierte Erwerbstätigkeit zur Messung des Vereinbarkeitsarrangements von Familie und Beruf, in: WISTA – Wirtschaft und Statistik, 3, 2018, pp.54–71.

However, the employment of (single) mothers depends on the age of their children. In 2018, only 5 percent of single women with children under 3 were in employment, compared to 14 percent of mothers in two-parent families. In contrast, 39 percent of single mothers with children between 3 and 10 years of age are in employment, compared with 42 percent of mothers in two-parent families.

Nevertheless, the economic situation of single parents is more often precarious than that of two-parent families with one or two children. The distribution of the various family types by income shows that single mothers had slightly more than half of the disposable income of two-parent families (cf. Chapter 3.1).⁶²

In some cases, single parents do not earn sufficient income from their employment to avoid transfer payments. Thirty-three percent of single parents receiving benefits from basic income support under Title 2 of the German Social Security Code (Sozialgesetzbuch Zweites Buch, SGB II) were in employment in 2018.⁶³ In 2018, single parents received SGB II benefits nearly five times as often

as two-parent families. Thirty-eight percent of single parents with children under 18 received SGB II benefits, but only 8 percent of two-parent families.⁶⁴

Single parents have very different assessments of their own economic situation. The majority of single parents describe their own economic situation as “OK” (45 percent). While just over a quarter rate their own economic situation as good or very good or good (28 percent), a quarter consider their own economic situation to be rather bad or bad (26 percent).⁶⁵ There has been a significant improvement here in the last ten years, because in 2010 only 18 percent of single parents assessed their economic situation as good or very good. Accordingly, the proportion of single parents who rated their economic situation as rather bad or bad has also declined – from 34 percent in 2010 to 26 percent in 2019.⁶⁶

The general population also sees single parents as needing this support.⁶⁷ Eighty-four percent of the population think that single parents should receive more support from the government than they have so far (Figure 31).

62 VamV, Landesverband NRW (2019): Alleinerziehend – Situation und Bedarfe. Aktuelle Studienergebnisse zu Nordrhein-Westfalen und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Figure 16, p. 21; income including all state benefits, maintenance

63 Bundesagentur für Arbeit (BA) (2020), Analyse des Arbeitsmarkts für Alleinerziehende, BA Statistiken 2018, p. 39, link: <https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/Statistikdaten/Detail/201812/analyse/analyse-arbeitsmarkt-alleinerziehende-bund/analyse-arbeitsmarkt-alleinerziehende-bund-d-0-201812-pdf.pdf>

64 ibid, p. 41

65 IfD Allensbach (2019): Archive surveys 5276, 8214.

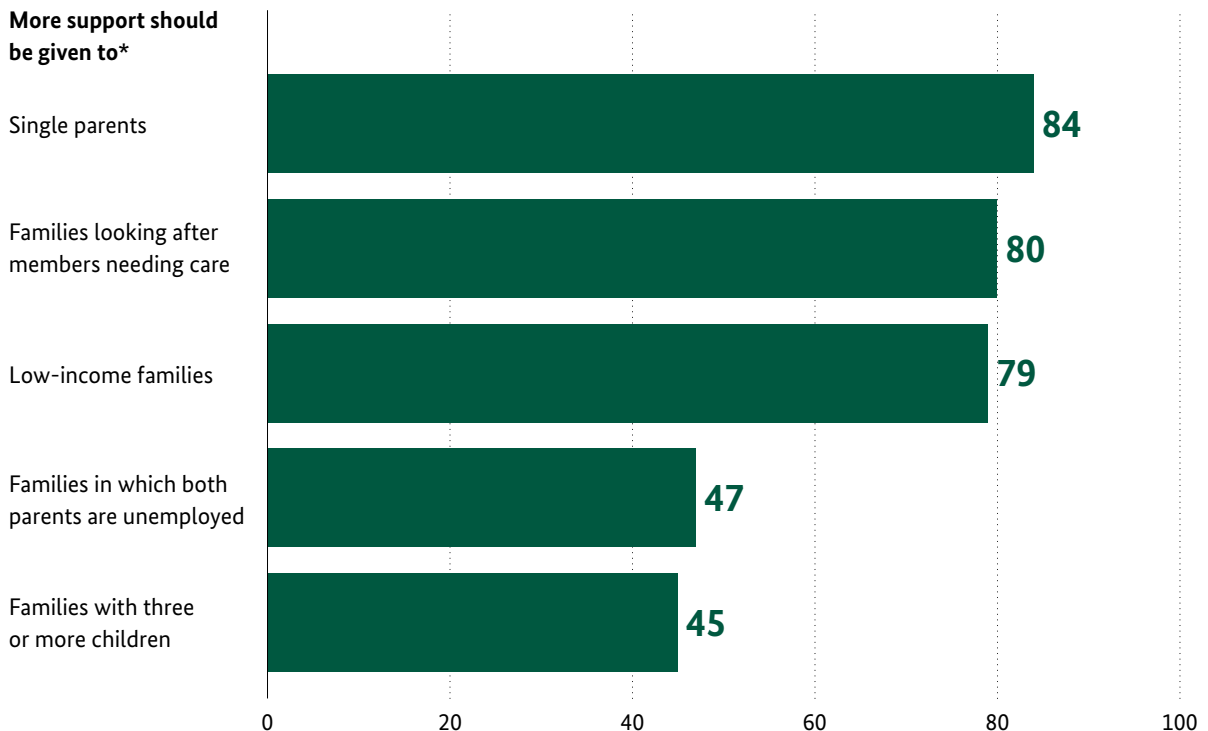
66 ibid.

67 IfD Allensbach (2019): Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Familienpolitik, p. 36ff., link: https://www.ifd-allensbach.de/fileadmin/IfD/sonstige_pdfs/Rahmenbedingungen_Bericht.pdf

Figure 31: Increased support for single parents, 2019

Question:

“Which families do you think should receive more support from the state? Please pick from the following list.”

More support should be given to*

* Most frequent responses

Source: IfD Allensbach (2019): Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Familienpolitik, p. 38, population aged 16 and over.

Large families

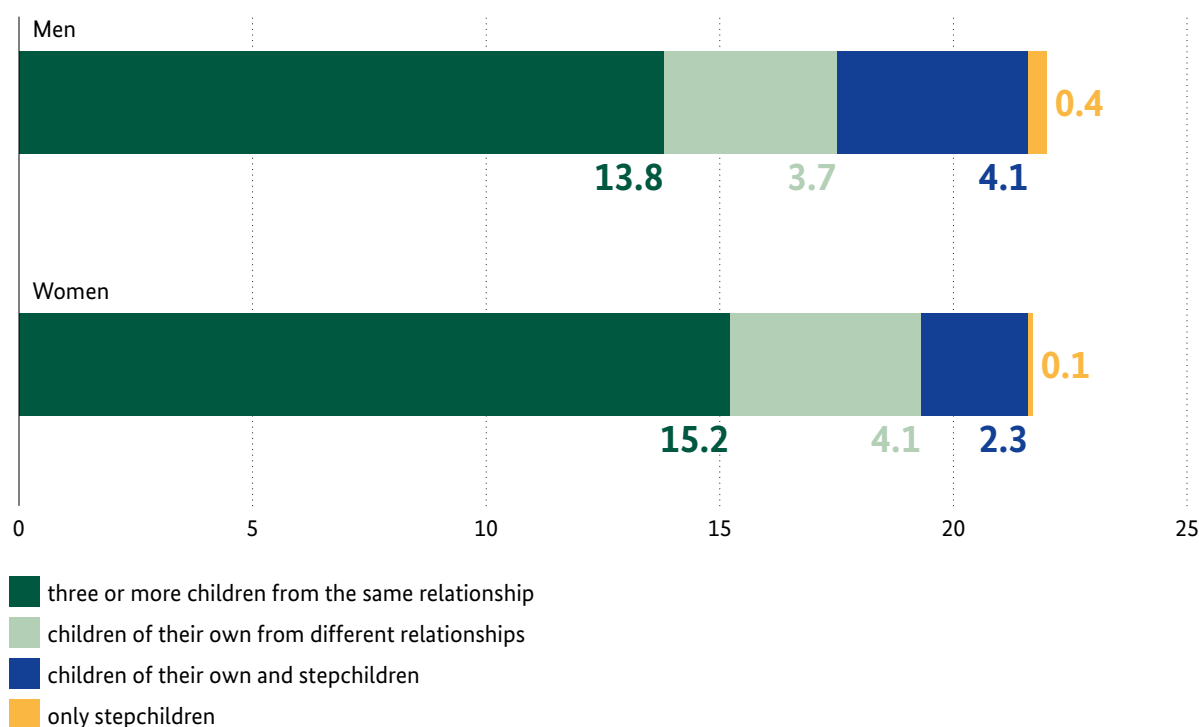
Families with many children are not uniform. This concept comprises families with three or more children in various life and family arrangements with different needs and resources. Like other families, large families are characterised by great solidarity. Eighty-two percent of parents state that their family members can rely on each other. Children also take part in housework more often than in other families (42 percent; in families with two children 27 percent, in families with one child 19 percent). These parents consider their financial situation to be good less frequently than parents with one or two children. For this reason, surveys regularly show that parents with three or more children are more likely than average to support an increase in financial support for families⁶⁸.

Of the 8 million families in 2018, 947,000 had three or more children. This represents 12 percent of all families. The concept of a large family, however, conceals a great diversity of family relationships and different sociostructural characteristics. Stepfamilies and blended families can also be considered large families. For example, 22 percent of women and men have three or more children. Of them, 14 percent of men and 15 percent of women have three or more children from the same relationship. Just over 7 percent of all men and women have three or more children who come from different relationships and/or are stepchildren (Figure 32).⁶⁹

68 IfD Allensbach (2019): Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Familienpolitik, link: https://www.ifd-allensbach.de/fileadmin/IfD/sonstige_pdfs/Rahmenbedingungen_Bericht.pdf, Population aged 16 and over

69 Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung (2019): Kinderreiche Familien in Deutschland, p. 44, link: https://www.bib.bund.de/Publikation/2019/pdf/Kinderreiche-Familien-in-Deutschland.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4

Figure 32: Proportion of women and men with at least three children, in percent



Source: Federal Institute for Population Research (2019): *Kinderreiche Familien in Deutschland*, p. 44.

Note: NEPS 8.0.0 (until 2016/2017), weighted calculations: Federal Institute for Population Research, birth cohorts 1944–1971, studied until at least age 45.

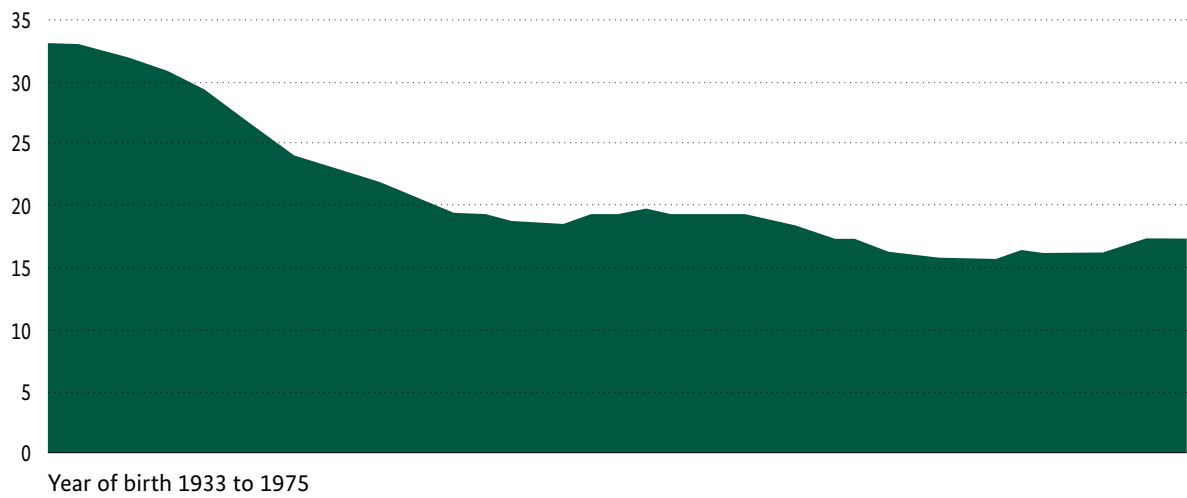
When looking at women rather than family households, 16 percent of all women between 45 and 49 in 2018 had three or more biological children. The proportion was 12 percent in the federal states of eastern Germany (excluding Berlin) and 17 percent in the federal states of

western Germany (excluding Bremen and Hamburg).⁷⁰ Over time, the proportion of women with three or more children has decreased among all women in the respective age group. Only among women born in 1970 and after is there a slight increase (Figure 33).⁷¹

70 Statistisches Bundesamt (2019): *Kinderlosigkeit, Geburten und Familien*. Results of the microcensus 2018, p. 21, link: https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Haushalte-Familien/Publikationen/Downloads-Haushalte/geburtentrends-tabellenband-5122203189014.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

71 Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung (2019): *Kinderreiche Familien in Deutschland*, p. 12, link: https://www.bib.bund.de/Publikation/2019/pdf/Kinderreiche-Familien-in-Deutschland.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4

Figure 33: Proportion of women born between 1933 and 1975 with three or more children, in percent



Source: Federal Institute for Population Research (2019): *Kinderreiche Familien in Deutschland*, p. 13.

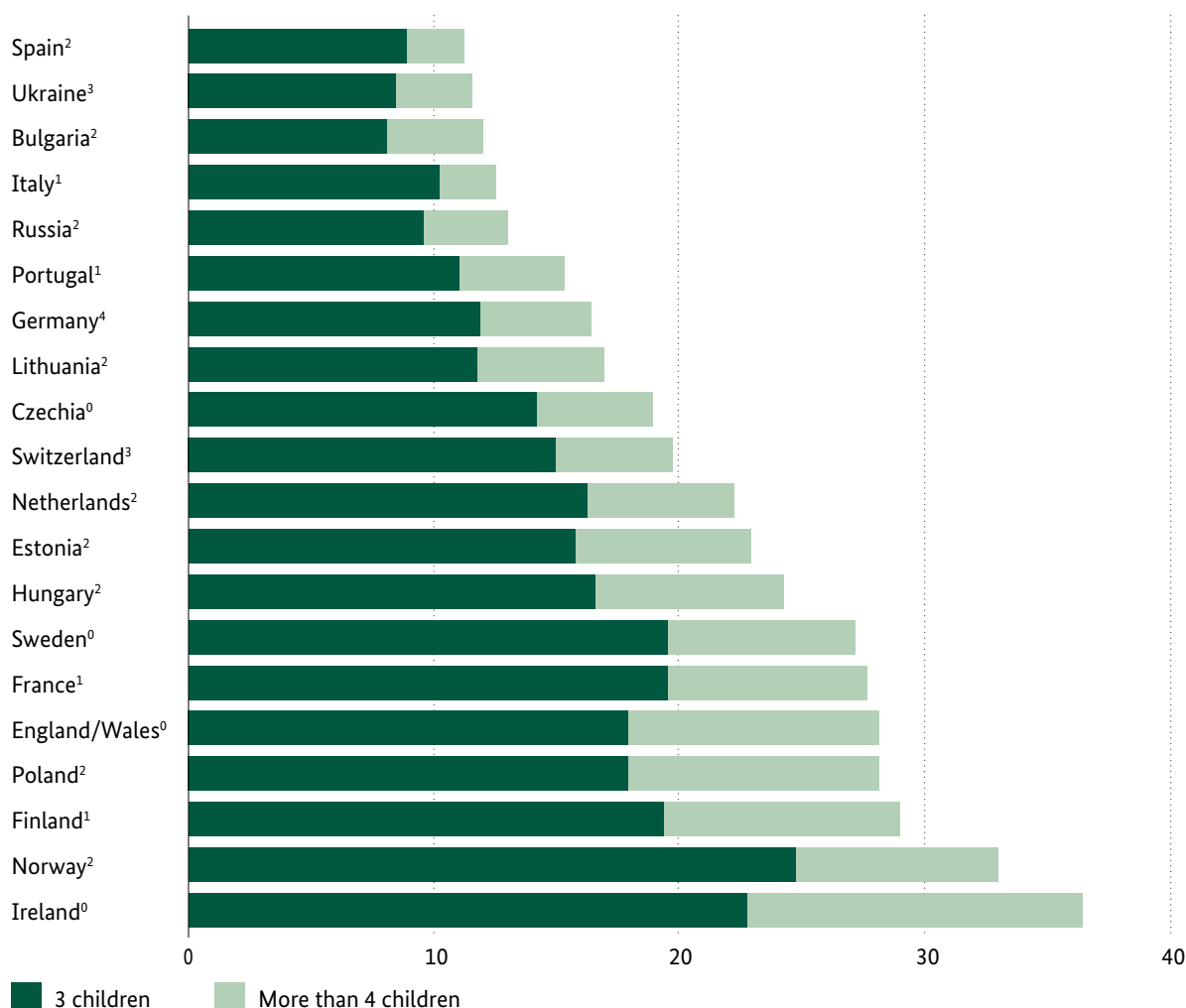
Comments: 2008 microcensus for the years 1933 to 1958, 2016 microcensus for the years 1959 to 1975. Values smoothed out in three-year averages. Only biological children counted.

This puts Germany in the lower middle range in a European comparison. In particular, countries such as Norway, Finland and Sweden, as well as England and Ireland, have higher proportions of

women with three or more children (Figure 34).⁷² In Spain and Italy, however, there are comparatively few women with three or more children.

⁷² Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung (2019): *Kinderreiche Familien in Deutschland*, p. 21, link: https://www.bib.bund.de/Publikation/2019/pdf/Kinderreiche-Familien-in-Deutschland.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4

Figure 34: Proportion of women with three or more children in a European comparison, in percent



Source: Federal Institute for Population Research (2019): *Kinderreiche Familien in Deutschland*, p. 23.

Note: calculations: Federal Institute for Population Research,

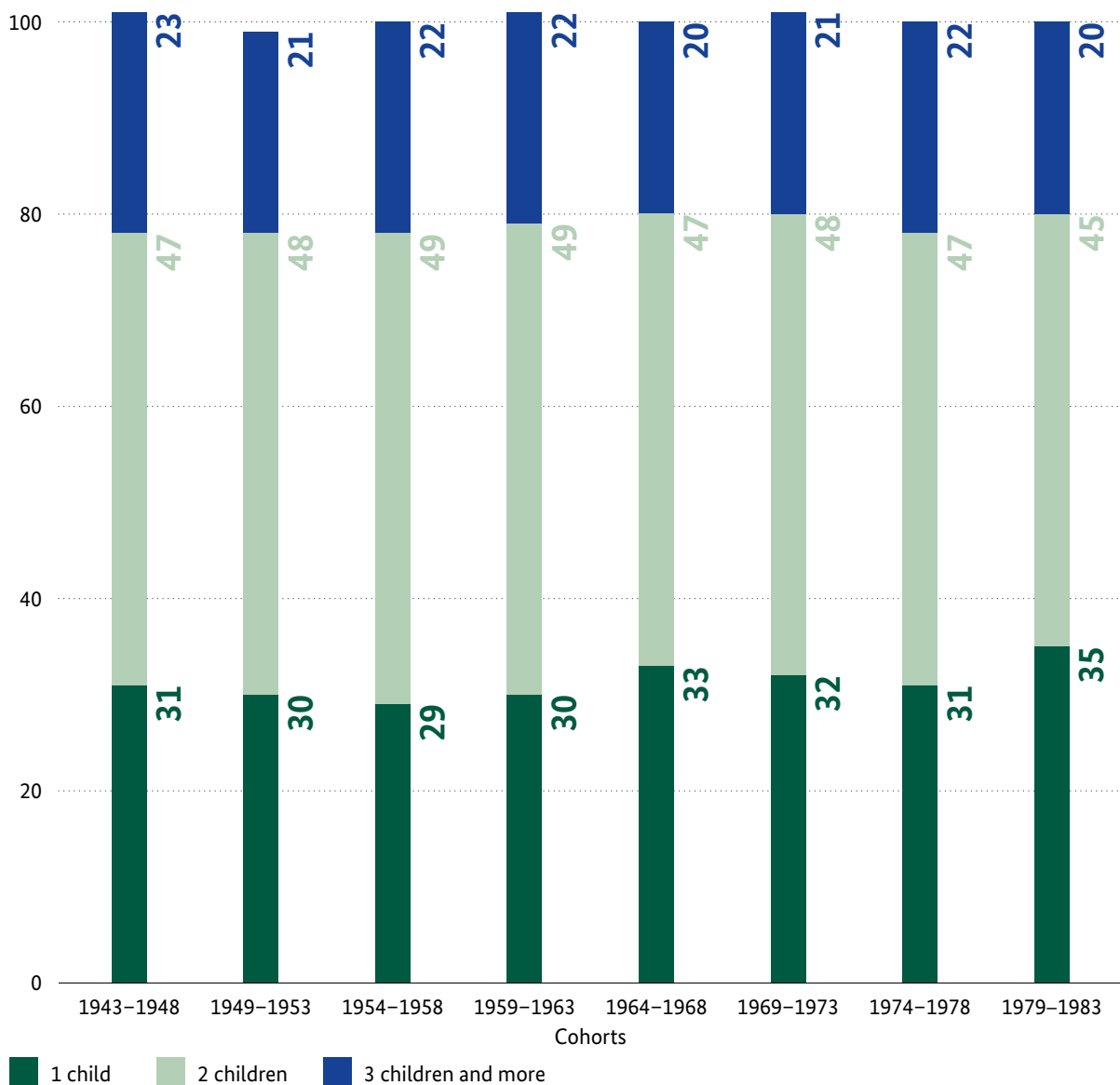
Final number of children in the birth cohorts 01969, 11968, 21967, 31966, 41965–74.

However, if only the mothers of the different cohorts are considered, i.e. excluding the childless women of a cohort, the proportion of mothers with three or more children only varies between the different cohorts by 20 to 23 percent.⁷³ In 2018, 22 percent of all mothers born between 1974 and

1978 had three or more children; 47 percent had two children and about one in three had one child (Figure 35). When women decide to have children, about one in five of all mothers have three or more children over time.

⁷³ Statistisches Bundesamt (2019): *Kinderlosigkeit, Geburten und Familien. Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2018*, link: https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Haushalte-Familien/Publikationen/Downloads-Haushalte/geburtentrends-tabellenband-5122203189014.pdf?__blob=publicationFile, Table 1.1

Figure 35: Mothers by number of children born, by birth cohort (percentage of all mothers in the relevant cohort), 2018



Source: Federal Statistical Office (2019): *Kinderlosigkeit, Geburten und Familien. Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2018*, Table 1.1, own presentation

Note: values over 100 percent are due to rounding.

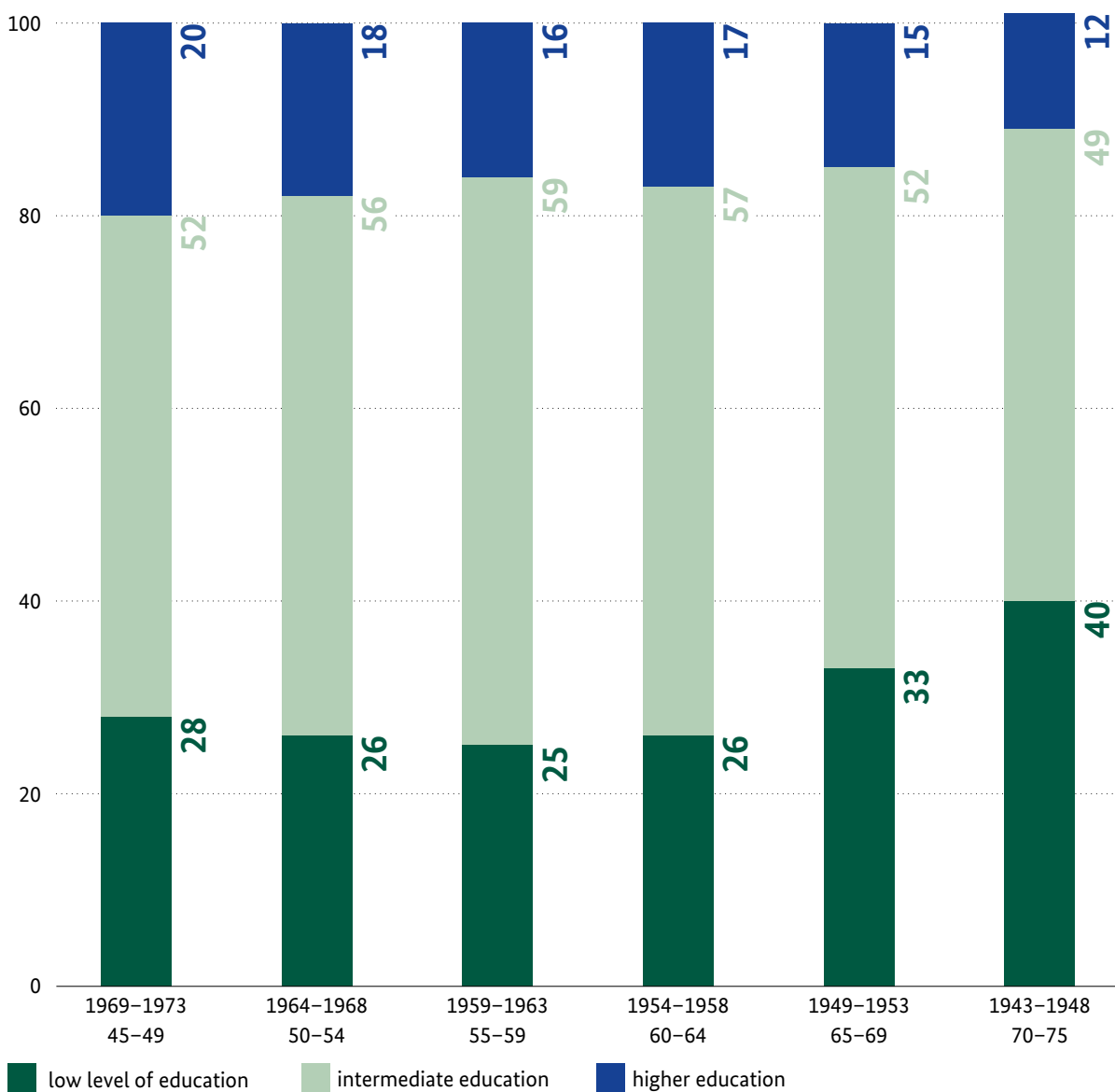
Most women in families with several children are well educated

Of the mothers aged between 45 and 49 with three or more children in 2018 (cohort 1969–1973), almost three-quarters (72 percent) had an inter-

mediate or high level of education. Of today's mothers aged 70 to 75, only six out of ten mothers with more than three children had such a level of education (Figure 36).⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Statistisches Bundesamt (2019): *Kinderlosigkeit, Geburten und Familien. Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2018*, link: https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Haushalte-Familien/Publikationen/Downloads-Haushalte/geburtentrends-tabellenband-5122203189014.pdf?__blob=publicationFile, Table 3.5

Figure 36: Mothers with more than 3 children, by educational level (ISCED 2011), 2018



Data basis: Federal Statistical Office (2019): *Kinderlosigkeit, Geburten und Familien. Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2018*, Table 3.5, own calculations.

Note: low level of education: e.g. lower secondary school leaving certificate, polytechnic secondary school and no vocational or academic qualification.

Intermediate education: e.g. vocational qualification and/or upper secondary school leaving certificate or technical college entrance qualification, school for health care.

Higher education: e.g. an academic degree or a master tradesperson/technician or university of applied sciences degree.

These figures demonstrate that the negative correlation between education and a higher number of children among mothers is increasingly changing. This is not least due to the fact that women as a whole are now achieving a higher level of education and, as a result, the proportion of women with a low level of education has declined.⁷⁵ Thus, 35 percent of female graduates born between 1971 and 1993 find three or more children ideal, which is more than with the other education statuses.

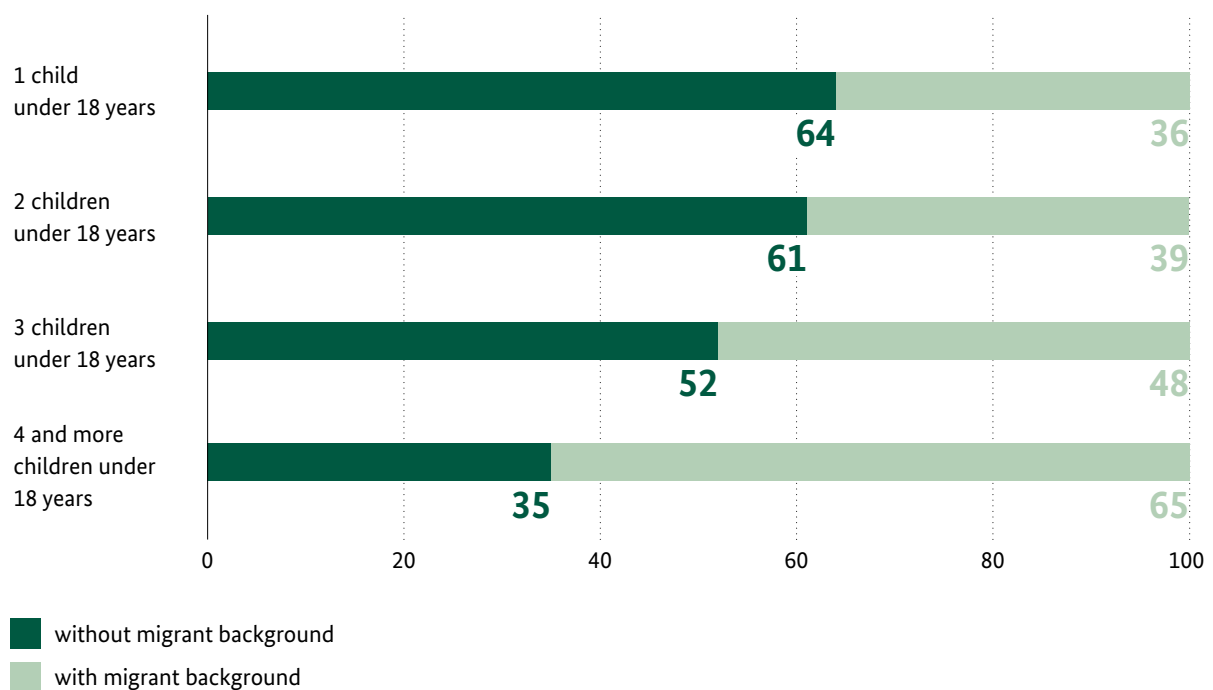
However, only 14 percent of female graduates have this number of children.⁷⁶ One explanation for this could be that women are having children progressively later. Previous studies show that mothers with three or more children are on average 26 years old, which is about one year

younger than mothers with two children and three years younger than mothers with one child.⁷⁷ However, female graduates in particular start a family later after a longer period of education/training. This leaves them less time for further births.⁷⁸

Families with a migrant background more likely to have four or more children

In families with three children there are still no significant differences based on having a migrant background. Fifty-two percent of families with three children do not have a migrant background (this corresponds to 48 percent of families with a migrant background). By contrast, however, almost two-thirds of families with four or more children have a migrant background (Figure 37).

Figure 37: Families by number of children and migrant background, 2018, in percent



Source: Federal Statistical Office (2019): Fachserie 1 Reihe 3: Haushalte und Familien. Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2018.

⁷⁵ Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung (2019): Kinderreiche Familien in Deutschland, p. 28f., link: https://www.bib.bund.de/Publikation/2019/pdf/Kinderreiche-Familien-in-Deutschland.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4

⁷⁶ ibid. p. 29

⁷⁷ BMFSFJ (2013): Dossier Mehrkindfamilien in Deutschland, p. 19, link: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/blob/94312/0b8bf636b124a2735ed0f46ed4e80bfe/mehrkindfamilien-in-deutschland-data.pdf>

⁷⁸ Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung (2019): Kinderreiche Familien in Deutschland, p. 29, link: https://www.bib.bund.de/Publikation/2019/pdf/Kinderreiche-Familien-in-Deutschland.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4

Women with a migrant background are also more likely to have more than three children than women without a migrant background are. Of the women born between 1965 and 1974, 28 percent of the ones with a migrant background have three or more children. The figure is half this (14 percent) among the women without a migrant background.⁷⁹ Here, too, there are adjustment effects between the different generations. First-generation migrant women, i.e. those who have emigrated themselves and were not born in Germany, have three or more children even more frequently than second-generation migrant women, who have already clearly adapted to the birth rate of the majority society.⁸⁰

Labour force participation decreases with number of children, but increases with age of children

The number of children has an influence on the employment behaviour of mothers. For example, having a second child, as opposed to one child, has little impact on the employment rate of mothers. From the third child onwards, and especially from the fourth child onwards, the employment rate falls significantly. Overall, 72 or 70 percent of mothers with one or two children are still in employment, while only 53 percent of mothers with three children and only one in three mothers with four or more underage children are still in employment.⁸¹

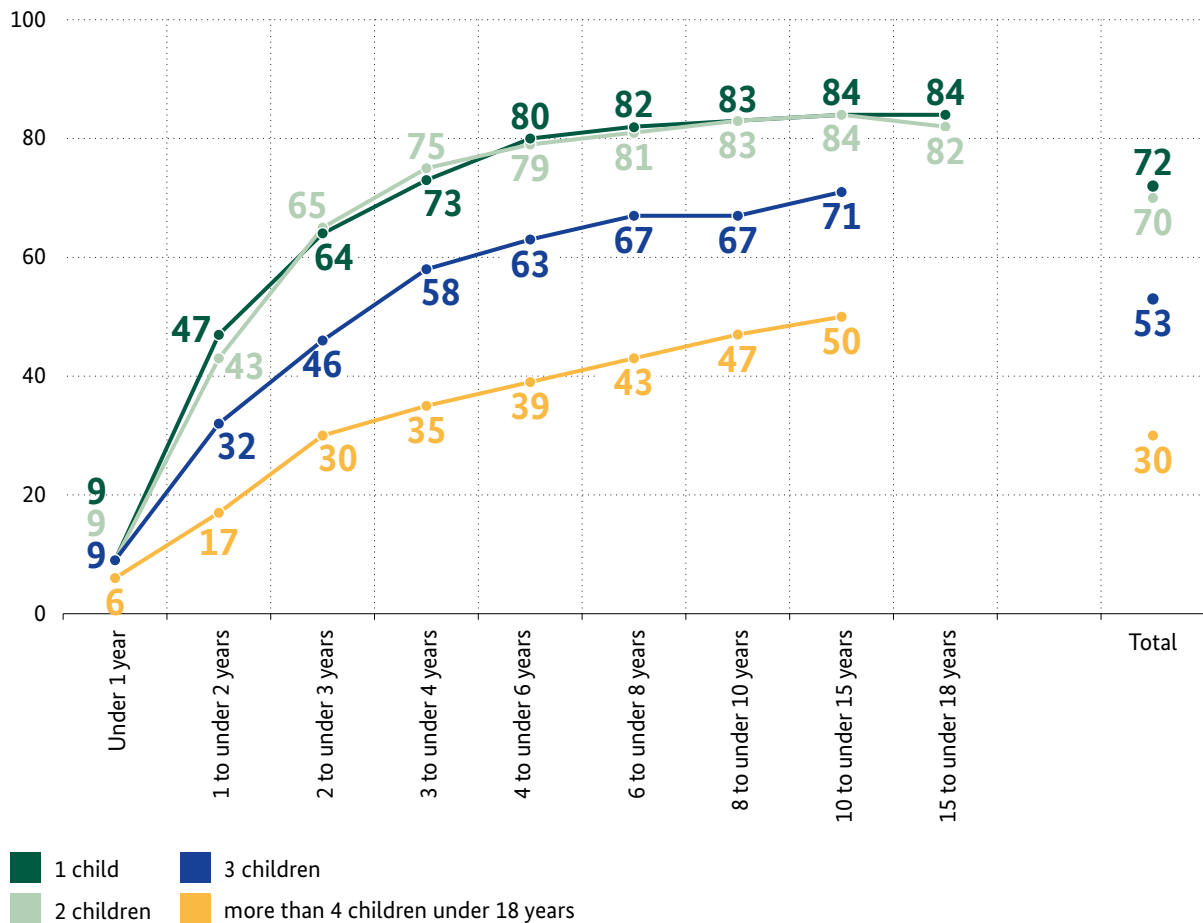
However, the employment rate of mothers with three or more children does not remain permanently low, but increases steadily as the youngest child ages. For example, one in two mothers with four or more children and two-thirds of mothers with three children are in employment when their youngest child is over 10 years old, whereas three-quarters of mothers with three children are employed (Figure 38).

79 *ibid.* p.27

80 *ibid.* p.28f.

81 Statistisches Bundesamt (2019): Mikrozensus 2018, Sonderauswertung. Own calculations: Prognos AG; realised gainful employment.

Figure 38: Realised gainful employment of mothers, by number of underage children and age of youngest child⁸², 2018



Source: Federal Statistical Office (2019): Sonderauswertung Mikrozensus 2018, own calculation: Prognos AG.

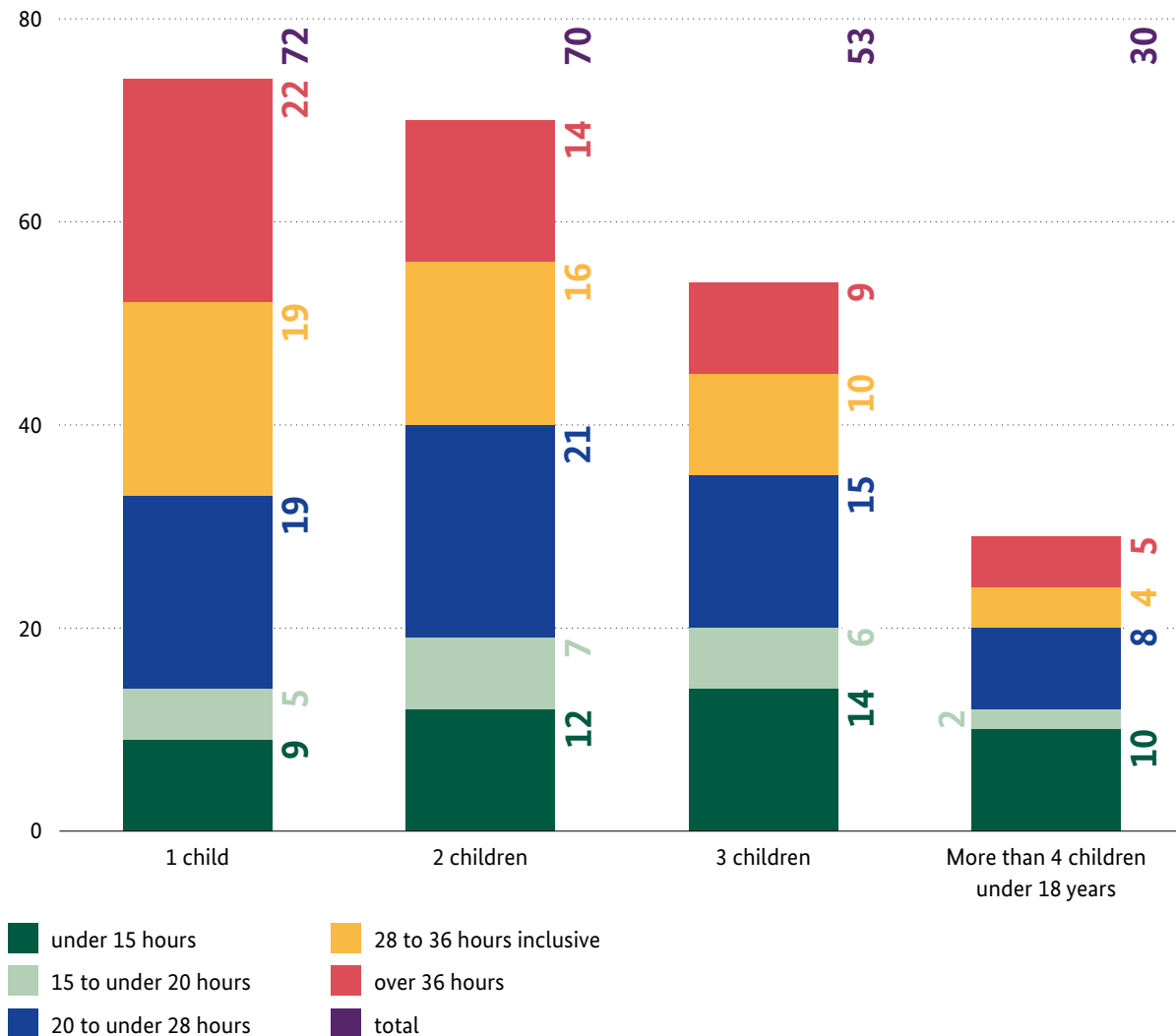
Mothers with three or more children more likely to be working fewer hours

As their number of children increases, the proportion of mothers in work decreases, and they work fewer hours. This trend begins as early as the second child. Mothers with three or more children usually work part-time (Figure 39). While 40 per cent of working mothers with one child work

more than 28 hours per week, one in three mothers with two children and only one in five mothers with three children works more than 28 hours per week. At the same time, the proportion of mothers working very little (under 15 hours) rises from 9 percent with one child to 12 percent with two children and further to 14 percent with three children.

⁸² Due to low case numbers, there is no data for three or more children between 15 and under 18 years old.

Figure 39: Realised gainful employment of mothers with a youngest child under 18, by weekly working hours and number of underage children, 2018, in percent



Source: Federal Statistical Office (2019): Mikrozensus 2018. Sonderauswertung Mikrozensus 2018, own calculation: Prognos AG.

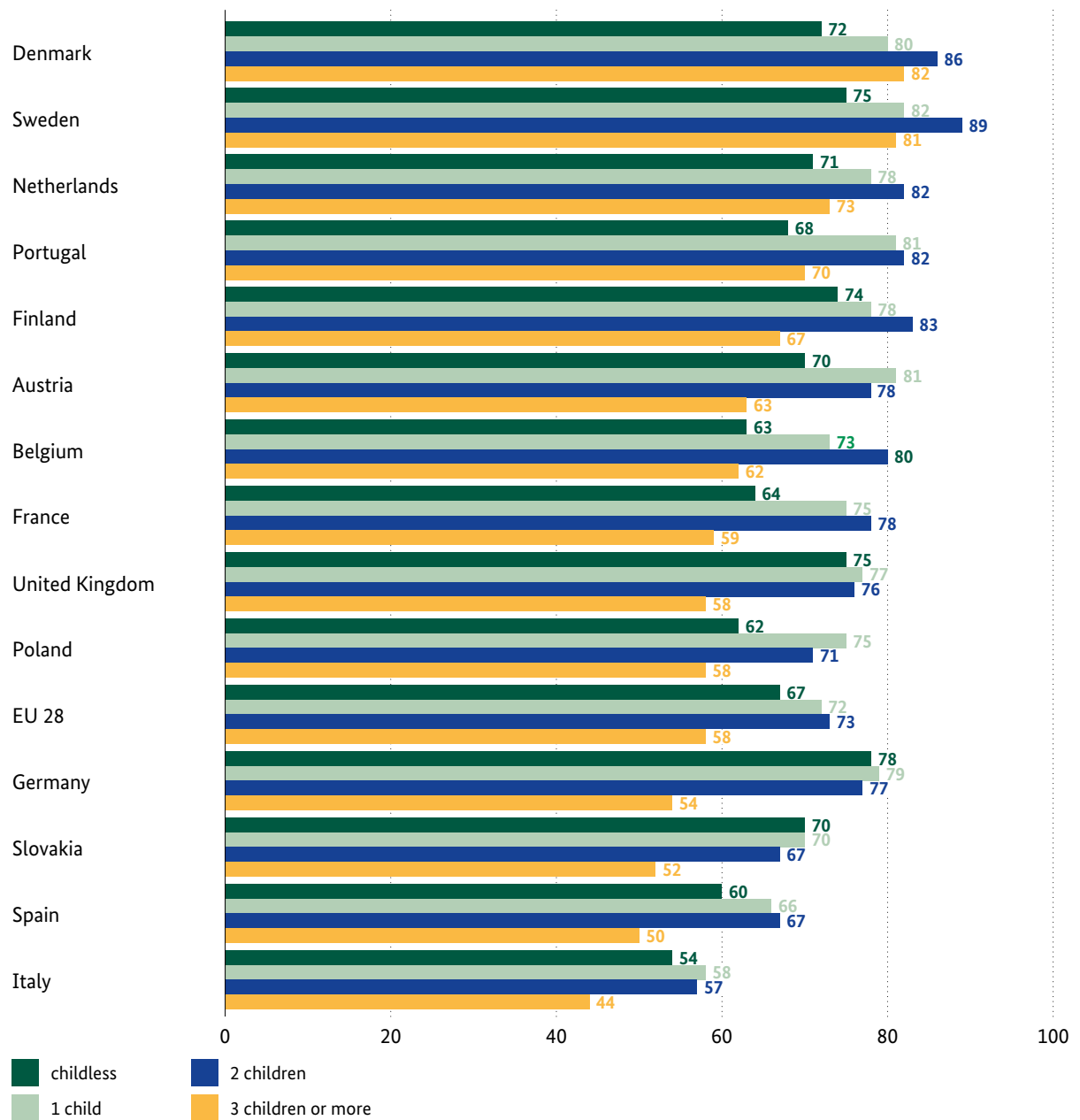
Germany at the lower end of the scale in Europe

In almost all European countries, mothers with three or more children are less likely to be in employment than childless women or mothers with one or two children. Nevertheless, there are significant differences between the countries (Figure 40). While Germany has the second-

highest employment rate for childless women in the EU (78 percent, only Estonia being higher at 79 percent), the employment rate for mothers with three or more children in Germany, at 54 percent, is among the lowest in the EU 28 and is below the EU average of 58 percent.⁸³

⁸³ Eurostat (2020): Table: Adult employment rate by gender, age groups, educational level, number of children and age of youngest child, women aged 15–64, link: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/infographs/womenmen/bloc-2b.html?lang=en>. The figures differ from those of the microcensus because employment is defined differently and there are no age restrictions on the youngest child and the age group of women.

Figure 40: Mothers in employment, by number of children in a European comparison, 2018

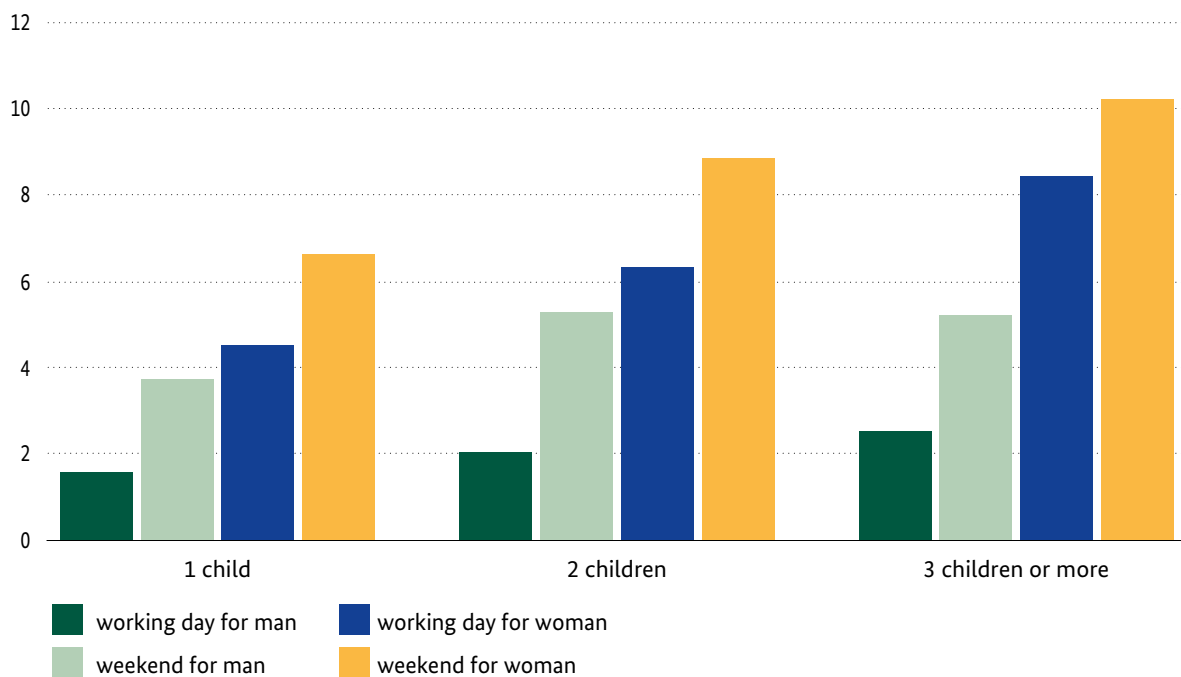


Source: Eurostat (2020), own presentation, women aged 15 to 64, with and without children.

The difference between the employment rates of mothers with one or two children and mothers with three children is also relatively large in Germany compared to other European countries (79 percent and 77 percent compared to 54 percent). A similarly strong decline after the third child is also observed in the United Kingdom, France, Austria, Slovakia and Spain. The picture is quite different in countries such as Sweden and Denmark. In these countries, mothers with three or more children are about as likely to be in employment as mothers with one child.⁸⁴

Mothers with more than three children desire a good balance just as much as mothers with fewer children.⁸⁵ In families with three or more children, however, the man is more often the sole earner and the woman earns additional money. On the other hand, mothers with several children spend more time on childcare and housework than men and mothers with fewer children.⁸⁶ Mothers with three or more children spend twice as much time on childcare as fathers with three or more children (Figure 41).

Figure 41: Average hours of childcare per day, by gender and children in household, 2017



Source: Federal Institute for Population Research (2019): *Kinderreiche Familien in Deutschland*, p. 34.

⁸⁴ Eurostat (2020): Table: Adult employment rate by gender, age groups, educational level, number of children and age of youngest child, women aged 15–64, link: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/infographs/womenmen/bloc-2b.html?lang=en>. The figures differ from the figures of the microcensus due to the different definition of employment and the absence of age restriction on the youngest child and the age group of women.

⁸⁵ Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung (2019): *Kinderreiche Familien in Deutschland*, p. 34, link: https://www.bib.bund.de/Publikation/2019/pdf/Kinderreiche-Familien-in-Deutschland.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4

⁸⁶ Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung (2019): *Kinderreiche Familien in Deutschland*, p. 34f., link: https://www.bib.bund.de/Publikation/2019/pdf/Kinderreiche-Familien-in-Deutschland.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4

2.3 Desire to have children, births and childlessness

There is still a strong desire among those aged 16 to 29 in Germany to have children, and it has increased compared to 2003 (Table 2). Sixty-three percent of those under 30 are certain that they want children, while 27 percent may want to have children. In 2003, 49 percent definitely wanted to

have children and 40 percent may have wanted to have children. Compared to 2003, the certainty of the desire for children in particular has increased. It is still only a small minority that do not want to have children.⁸⁷

Table 2: Desire among childless young people to have children, 2003 to 2019

	Question: "Do you want to have children one day or do you not want any?"							
	Childless persons under 30 years of age							
	2003	2005	2007	2008	2011	2013	2014	2019
I definitely want children	49	55	56	58	68	65	61	63
I might want children	40	33	34	35	27	30	32	27
I do not want children	11	12	10	7	5	5	7	10
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Basis: Federal Republic of Germany, childless people aged 16 to 29 years with specific information.

Source: IfD Allensbach (2019): Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Familienpolitik, p. 9.

Two-thirds of the population and almost two-thirds of the childless under 30 years of age regard two children as the ideal. In 2019, 22 percent of people aged 16 to 24 thought that three or more

children would be ideal for them.⁸⁸ In 2003, this figure was only 16 percent. On average, people in Germany wanted to have 2.0 children in 2019 (Table 3).⁸⁹

87 IfD Allensbach (2019): Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Familienpolitik, p. 9, link: https://www.ifd-allensbach.de/fileadmin/IfD/sonstige_pdfs/Rahmenbedingungen_Bericht.pdf

88 IfD Allensbach (2019): Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Familienpolitik, p. 8, link: https://www.ifd-allensbach.de/fileadmin/IfD/sonstige_pdfs/Rahmenbedingungen_Bericht.pdf

89 ibid.

Table 3: Ideal number of children, 2007 to 2019

The ideal size is	Question: "What is the ideal size of a family for you? How many children, if any?"						
	Total population			Childless persons under 30 years of age			
	2007	2012	2019	2003*	2007	2012	2019
No children	4	1	4	5	8	3	5
1 child	10	7	13	16	18	8	14
2 children	66	68	64	63	63	67	59
3 children or more	20	24	19	16	11	22	22
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
On average	2.1	2.2	2.0	1.9	1.8	2.1	2.0

* 18 years and above

Source: IfD Allensbach (2019): Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Familienpolitik, p. 8, own presentation.

The two-child ideal prevailing in Germany might be explained both by culturally established behavioural patterns and by the expectations of people's social milieu.⁹⁰ This means that young people orient themselves to familiar patterns of behaviour and ideas and examples from their immediate social milieu.⁹¹ In addition, there exists a particular feeling that society stigmatises large families.⁹² The personal attitudes of young adults are much more positive: three-quarters of those aged 20 to 39 in 2016 agreed with the statement that many children are wonderful, and only about 10 percent agree with the statement that those with many children are considered antisocial.⁹³

Gap between desired and achieved number of children

While the ideal number of children in Germany averages two children, the birth rate is significantly lower, currently 1.57 children per woman. Indeed, all European countries differ according to the difference between the real and ideal numbers of children⁹⁴.

An international comparative study was carried out to determine how many children women aged 40 to 42 actually had and how many children they, on average, wished to have in the 1990s when they were between the ages of 20 and 24.⁹⁵ The study shows that the gap between the desired and actual number of children is smallest in France, where it was 0.12 children per woman. Germany is mid range with a difference of 0.3 children per woman (Figure 42). In countries such as Greece and Spain,

90 Martin Bujard, Detlev Lück, Jasmin Passet-Wittig, Linda Lux (2019): Drei Kinder und mehr – Familien aus der Mitte der Gesellschaft. Ed. by: Konrad Adenauer Foundation, p. 24, link: https://www.bib.bund.de/DE/Aktuelles/2020/pdf/2020-01-10-FK-Drei-Kinder-und-mehr-Broschuere.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2

91 ibid.

92 ibid. and Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung (2019): Kinderreiche Familien in Deutschland, p. 36, link: https://www.bib.bund.de/Publikation/2019/pdf/Kinderreiche-Familien-in-Deutschland.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4

93 Martin Bujard, Detlev Lück, Jasmin Passet-Wittig, Linda Lux (2019): Drei Kinder und mehr – Familien aus der Mitte der Gesellschaft. Ed. by: Konrad Adenauer Foundation, p. 40, link: https://www.bib.bund.de/DE/Aktuelles/2020/pdf/2020-01-10-FK-Drei-Kinder-und-mehr-Broschuere.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2

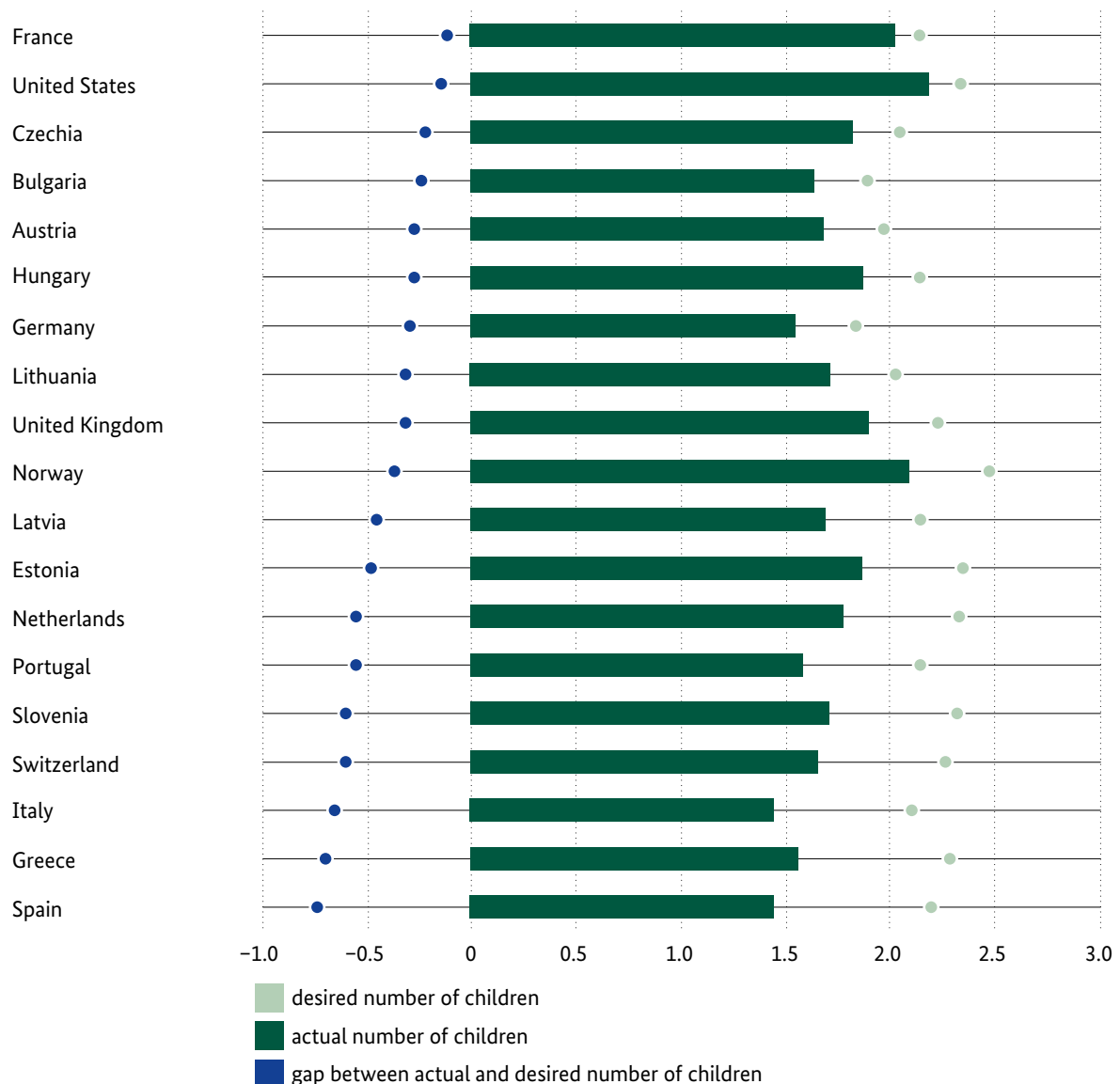
94 Vienna Institute for Demography (2019): Die große Lücke. In: Demografische Forschung aus erster Hand, issue 4/2019, p. 4, link: <https://www.demografische-forschung.org/archiv/defo1904.pdf>; Original study: E. Beaujouan, C. Berghammer (2019): The gap between lifelong fertility intentions and completed fertility in Europe and the United States: A cohort approach, opulation research and policy review 38(2019)4, 507–535, link: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11113-019-09516-3>

95 Eva Beaujouan, Caroline Berghammer (2019): The Gap between Lifelong Fertility Intentions and Completed Fertility in Europe and the United States A Cohort Approach, Population Research and Policy Review 38(2019)4, 507–535, link: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11113-019-09516-3>

on the other hand, the gap is relatively large (a difference of 0.75 children per woman). However, different patterns are concealed behind the various differences. In Germany, for example, the

gap is comparatively small, but both the desire to have children, at around 1.8 children per woman, and the birth rate of 1.5 children per woman (for these age cohorts) are also comparatively low.⁹⁶

Figure 42: Average number of children desired (during the ages from 20 to 24) and actual number of children (at about age 40)



Source: Vienna Institute for Demography/Eva Beaujouan (2019): *Die große Lücke*, in: *Demografische Forschung aus erster Hand*, issue 4/2019, p. 4, own presentation.

⁹⁶ Vienna Institute for Demography (2019): *Die große Lücke*, in: *Demografische Forschung aus erster Hand*, issue 4/2019, p. 4, link: <https://www.demografische-forschung.org/archiv/defo1904.pdf>; original study: Eva Beaujouan, Caroline Berghammer (2019): The gap between lifelong fertility intentions and completed fertility in Europe and the United States: A cohort approach, in *Population Research and Policy Review* 38(4), pp. 507–535, link: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11113-019-09516-3>

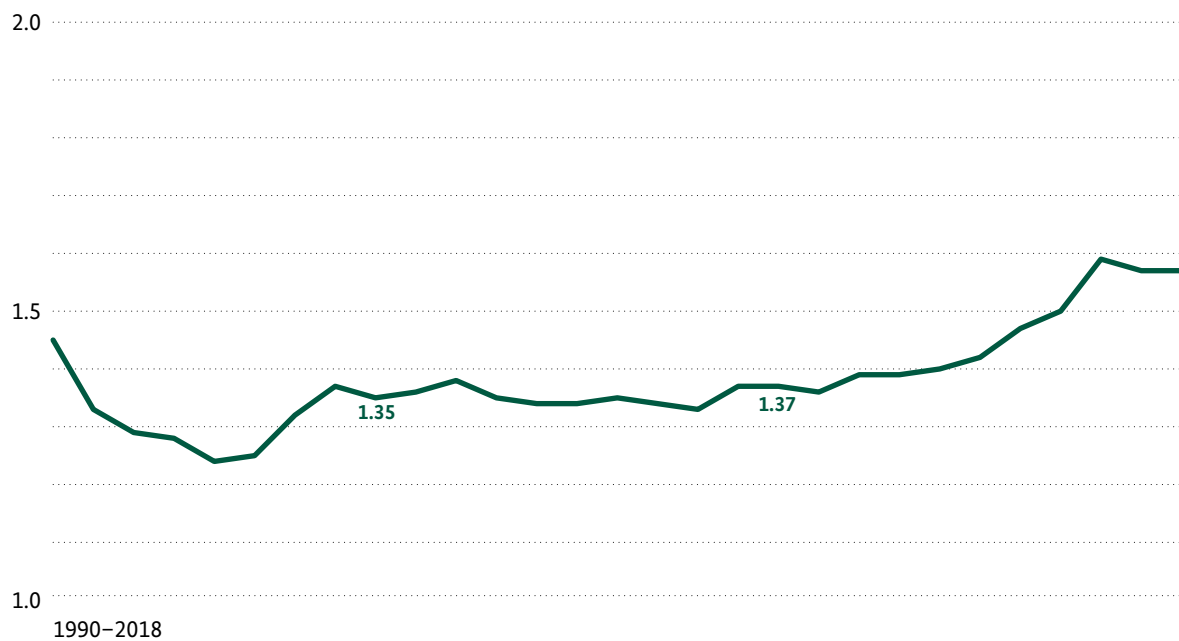
Births in Germany

The number of children born each year depends largely on the number of (potential) mothers of childbearing age (in official statistics usually women aged 15 to 45 or 49) and women's fertility rates. If the age structure and/or number of women in the population changes, this also influences the birth rate. Over time, each cohort of women has come to be smaller than the previous one. For example, in 1998 there were 17.5 million women aged between 20 and 45 years, in 2008 there were just under 14 million and in 2018 there were around 12.7 million. Since 1998, the number of women aged between 20 and 45 in the western federal states has fallen by around 3.3 million

(from 13.7 million in 1998 to 10.4 million in 2018).⁹⁷ In the eastern federal states, the number of women in the same period fell by 1.4 million (from 3.7 million in 1998 to 2.3 million in 2018). At the same time, the birth rate has been rising again since 2012.

In 2018 the total fertility rate ("birth rate")⁹⁸ for Germany was 1.57 children per woman aged between 15 and 49 years (Figure 43). Between 2011 and 2016 the birth rate rose continuously from 1.36 to 1.59 children per woman. In 2018 the birth rate stabilised at 1.57 children per woman. Despite a minimal decline compared to 2016, this figure is the second highest since 1990.⁹⁹

Figure 43: Development of the total fertility rate ("birth rate") 1990 to 2018, Germany



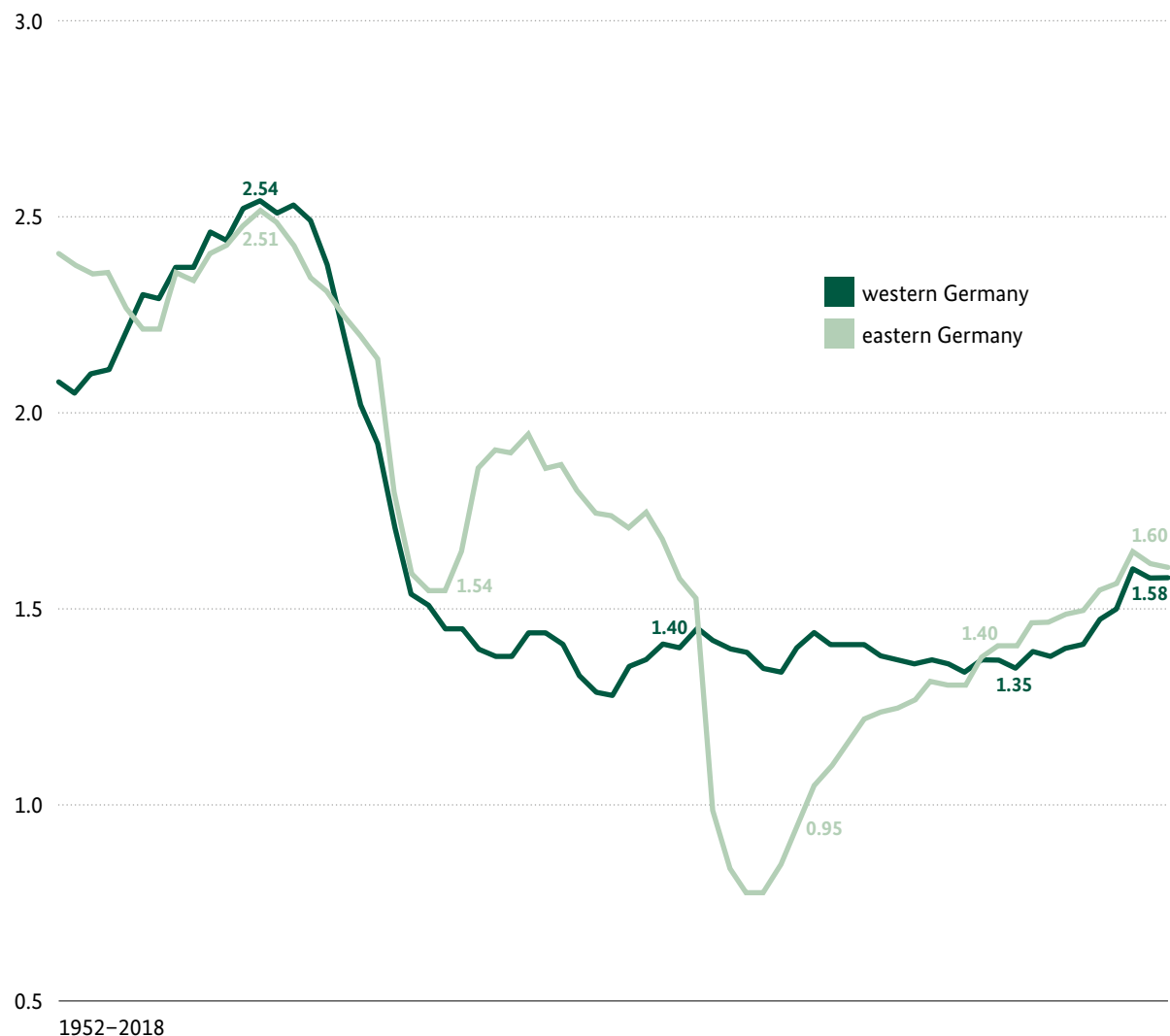
Note: starting in 2011: results based on the 2011 census, 2011: based on the population on the census date of 9 May 2011.
Source: Federal Statistical Office (2019): Statistik der Geburten.

- ⁹⁷ Statistisches Bundesamt (2020): Genesis Datenbank: Tabelle 12411-0013, Bevölkerung: Bundesländer, Stichtag, Geschlecht, Altersjahre, link: <https://www-genesis.destatis.de/genesis/online?operation=statistic&levelindex=0&levelid=1589562717404&code=12411>
- ⁹⁸ The total fertility rate is the sum of all age-specific fertility rates of women aged 15 to 45 or 49 years for one calendar year. It is a composite hypothetical figure and indicates how many children would be born per woman if the age-specific fertility rates of the calendar year under consideration were to apply to her whole life. (Source: Bundesamt für Bevölkerungsforschung, link: <https://www.bib.bund.de/DE/Fakten/Fakt/F08-Zusammengefasste-Geburtenziffer-ab-1871.html?nn=9991998>)
- ⁹⁹ As the birth rate depends on the number of women aged 15 to 45, the 2011 census will also affect the birth rate. For example, the birth rate before the 2012 census was 1.38 and the same year after the 2011 census the average birth rate was 1.40 children per woman. The birth rate from 2011 onwards, which was calculated on the basis of the 2011 census, can therefore only be compared with previous years to a limited extent. In the following, the development up to 2011 is presented without the results of the 2011 census, after 2011 with the new results from the census.

In 2018 the birth rate in eastern Germany was 1.60 children per woman and in western Germany 1.58 children per woman (Figure 44). In both parts of the country there was a baby boom in the 1960s, which peaked in 1964 with a birth rate of 2.54 children per woman in the former West Germany (FRG) and 2.51 children per woman in the former East Germany (GDR). Subsequently, a decline in births set in in both parts of the country and the birth rate in the former West Germany fell continuously to 1.4 children per woman in 1989.

In the former GDR, too, the birth rate had fallen to 1.5 children per woman by the mid-1970s. After that, it rose again slightly until 1982 as a result of family policy measures in the GDR (1.86 children per woman). Afterwards, the birth rate fell again in the former GDR and, particularly after 1990, fell sharply as a result of the social and economic upheaval, reaching 0.95 children per woman in 1996. Since then, the birth rate in eastern Germany has risen again and has in fact been higher than in western Germany since 2008.

Figure 44: Development of the total fertility rate ("birth rate"), 1952 to 2018, eastern and western Germany



Note: starting in 2011: results based on the 2011 census, 2011: based on the population on the census date of 9 May 2011, birth year method, as of 2001 new and old federal states, excluding Berlin.

Source: Federal Statistical Office (2020).

Since 2011, three trends have been behind this positive development: women are having more second and further children, childlessness is not increasing further and desires to have children are being fulfilled in a shorter time. At present, birth trends are mainly driven by the female cohorts born between 1973 and 1986 – cohorts that experienced the introduction of Parental Allowance and the expansion of childcare facilities and was the first generation to benefit directly from it.¹⁰⁰ In addition, the new family policy measures take greater account of the desire for a more equal division of family and work responsibilities.

Family policies (such as Parental Allowance and the development of childcare), effective policies for balancing work with a family, a more positive social climate with regard to children and a generally good economic situation make it easier to realise desires to have children. This is reflected above all in the steadily increasing rate of fathers claiming Parental Allowance and the rising care rates for children under 3 years of age in childcare. Employers are also increasingly helping parents to reconcile work and family obligations (see Chapter 4).¹⁰¹

With a birth rate of 1.57 children per woman, Germany is in the European mid range and slightly above the EU average (2018: 1.56 children per woman).¹⁰²

There is no uniform trend in Europe. Particularly in countries with formerly high birth rates, such as France, Sweden, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway and Finland, birth rates have declined over the last ten years, albeit at different levels (Table 4). In Norway and Finland, for example, birth rates in 2008 were still at 1.96 and 1.85 children per woman respectively; in 2018 they were at 1.56 and 1.41 children per woman, slightly or significantly below the German birth rate. In France and Sweden the birth rates in 2008 were still at 2.01 and 1.91 children per woman respectively – in 2018 they were at 1.88 and 1.76 children per woman respectively. In Italy and Spain, too, where birth rates were already low, they have fallen even further in recent years. In addition to Germany, however, countries such as Denmark, Czechia, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and Portugal are again recording rising birth rates – albeit here too at very different levels. For example, the birth rate in Slovakia rose from 1.34 children per woman in 2008 to 1.52 children per woman in 2018 and in Czechia from 1.51 children per woman in 2008 to 1.71 children per woman in 2018.

100 Olga Pötzsch (2018): Aktueller Geburtenanstieg und seine Potenziale, in: WISTA 3/2018.

101 Seventy-seven percent of companies agree that family-friendly measures are important/very important for society. (IW Köln: Unternehmensmonitor Familienfreundlichkeit 2016)

102 Eurostat (2020).

Table 4: Birth rate in a European comparison, 2008 to 2018

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
France	2.01	2.00	2.03	2.01	2.01	1.99	2.00	1.96	1.92	1.90	1.88
Sweden	1.91	1.94	1.98	1.90	1.91	1.89	1.88	1.85	1.85	1.78	1.76
Ireland	2.06	2.06	2.05	2.03	1.98	1.93	1.89	1.85	1.81	1.77	1.75
Denmark	1.89	1.84	1.87	1.75	1.73	1.67	1.69	1.71	1.79	1.75	1.73
Czechia	1.51	1.51	1.51	1.43	1.45	1.46	1.53	1.57	1.63	1.69	1.71
United Kingdom	1.91	1.89	1.92	1.91	1.92	1.83	1.81	1.80	1.79	1.74	1.68
Belgium	1.85	1.84	1.86	1.81	1.80	1.76	1.74	1.70	1.68	1.65	1.62
Netherlands	1.77	1.79	1.79	1.76	1.72	1.68	1.71	1.66	1.66	1.62	1.59
Germany	1.38	1.36	1.39	1.39	1.41	1.42	1.47	1.50	1.60	1.57	1.57
EU 28	1.61	1.61	1.62	1.59	1.59	1.55	1.58	1.58	1.60	1.59	1.56
Norway	1.96	1.98	1.95	1.88	1.85	1.78	1.75	1.72	1.71	1.62	1.56
Slovakia	1.34	1.44	1.43	1.45	1.34	1.34	1.37	1.40	1.48	1.52	1.54
Poland	1.39	1.40	1.41	1.33	1.33	1.29	1.32	1.32	1.39	1.48	1.46
Portugal	1.39	1.34	1.39	1.35	1.28	1.21	1.23	1.31	1.36	1.38	1.42
Finland	1.85	1.86	1.87	1.83	1.80	1.75	1.71	1.65	1.57	1.49	1.41
Italy	1.45	1.45	1.46	1.44	1.43	1.39	1.37	1.35	1.34	1.32	1.29
Spain	1.45	1.38	1.37	1.34	1.32	1.27	1.32	1.33	1.34	1.31	1.26

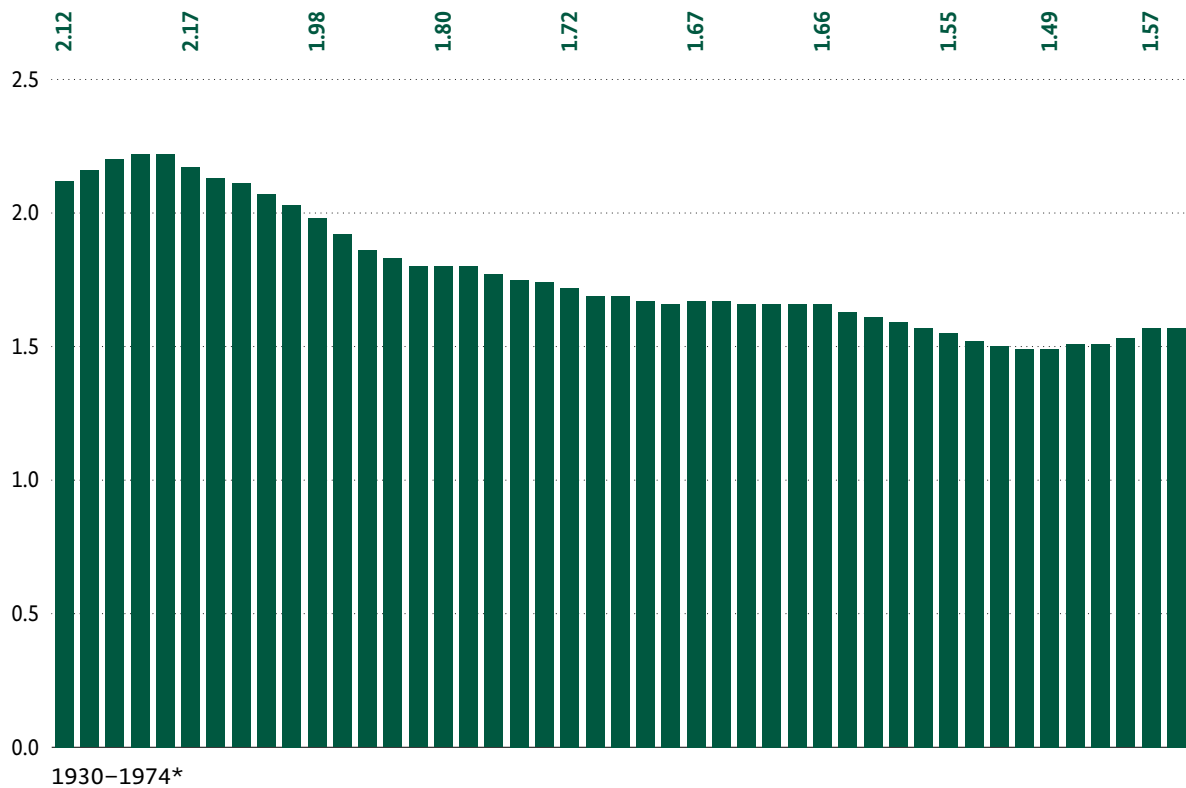
Source: Eurostat (2020), own presentation.

However, the total fertility rate only describes one calendar year and does not take into account total lifetimes. A better indication for these purposes is given, for example, by the final number of children of women in different age groups. Women born in 1969 had the lowest final number of children to date, at 1.49 children per woman.

Among women born after 1970, the final number of children per woman has stabilised at just under 1.6, i.e. the younger female age groups have slightly more children.¹⁰³ For example, the final number of children of women born in 1973 is 1.57 children per woman (Figure 45).

¹⁰³ Statistisches Bundesamt (2020): Final number of children (per woman): Germany, woman's year of birth, age groups of the women, Table 12612-0013 in Genesis database.

Figure 45: Final number of children per woman, by mother's year of birth, all women aged 15 to 45, Germany



* 1974: provisional number of children

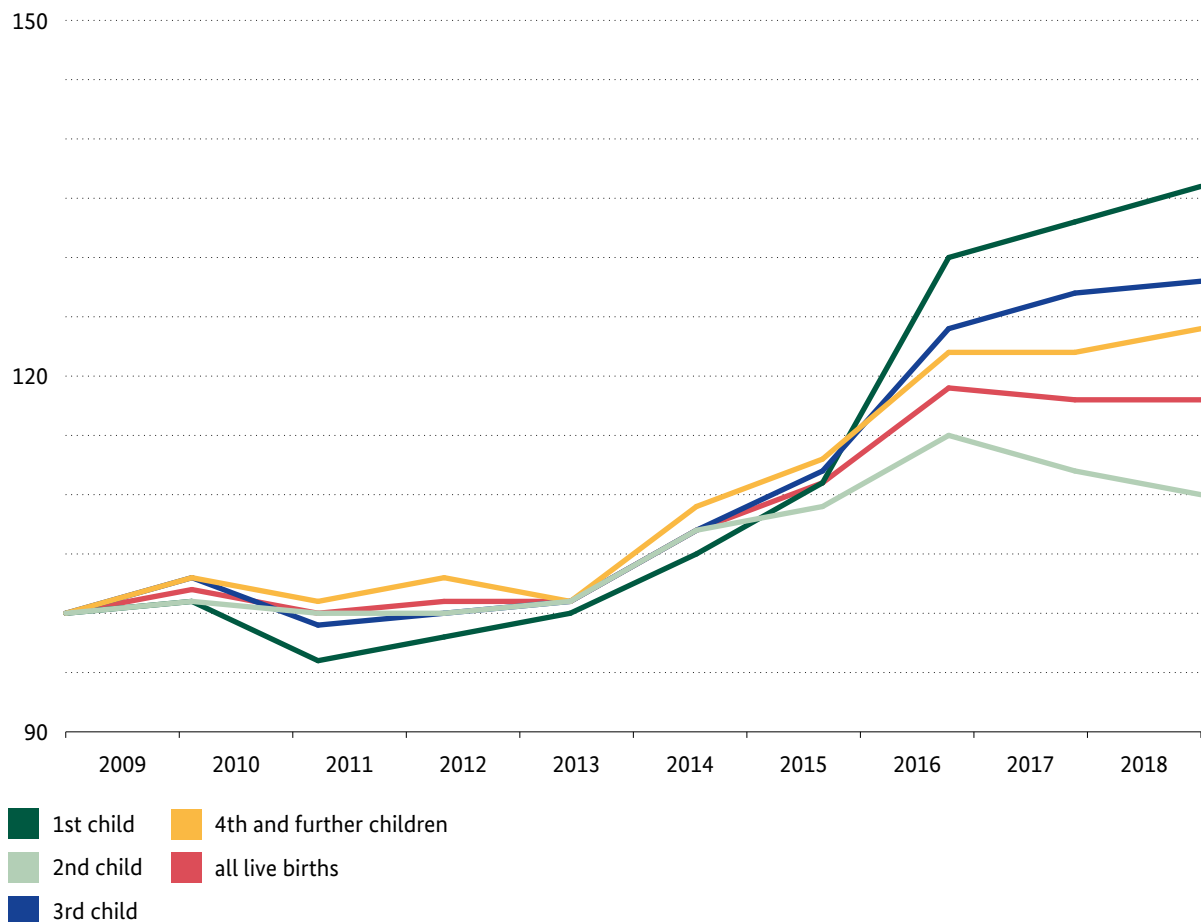
Source: Federal Statistical Office (2020): Table 12612-0013 in Genesis database, own presentation.

Live births in Germany

In 2018, there were 787,523 children born in Germany, which is half as many as in 1964 – the year when Germany had its most newborns (around 1.4 million) – though still around 105,000 more than ten years prior.

Forty-seven percent of live births in 2018 were firstborns, 35 percent were secondborns and 18 percent were thirdborns or subsequent babies. The number of secondborns has thus had a positive effect on the total number of births since 2009 and on the number of thirdborns and subsequent babies since 2016 (Figure 46).

Figure 46: Relative change in birth rates, by order of birth, compared to 2009 (2009 = 100)



Data basis: Federal Statistical Office (2020): Statistik der Geburten, own calculations.

About eight out of ten live-born babies in 2018 had at least one German parent (82 percent). While almost three-quarters of live-born babies had parents with German citizenship (72 percent), 18 percent of parents had foreign citizenship and 10 percent had parents with both German and foreign citizenship.

Mothers 30 years old on average when they have their first child

In 2018, women became mothers for the first time at an average age of 30, while mothers with a migrant background were on average two years

younger. This continues the trend towards births later in life.¹⁰⁴ At the beginning of the 1970s, the average age in West Germany was still just over 24, while in East Germany it was between 22 and 23 until 1989.¹⁰⁵ In 2018, women aged between 28 and 35 had the highest birth rate, especially women aged between 31 and 32. In 2018, 115 children were born for every 1,000 women aged 31. At the same time, more and more women over 40 are having (additional) children, albeit at a much lower level. For example, in 2002 only ten children were born for every 1,000 women aged 40, whereas by 2018 the figure had risen to 33.

¹⁰⁴ Statistisches Bundesamt (2020): Statistik der Geburten. Durchschnittliches Alter der Mutter bei der Geburt des Kindes (Geburtsjahrmethode).

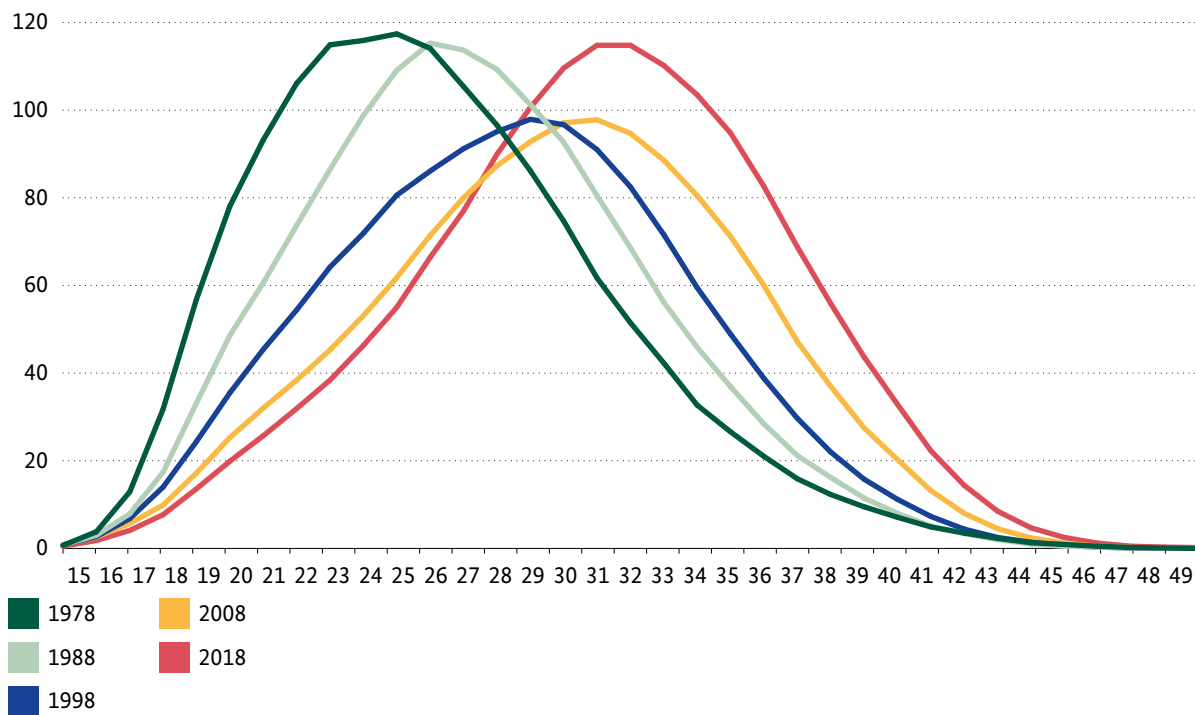
¹⁰⁵ Statistisches Bundesamt (2013): Geburtstrends und Familiensituation in Deutschland.

2 Family life in Germany and Europe

In 1978, for example, the number of births was highest among women aged 21 to 29 (Figure 47). Since 2006, women over 30 have had more children than women under 30, and the contribution that women aged 20 to 29 make to the birth rate fell from 51 to 35 percent between 2001 and

2018. By contrast, the contribution that women aged 30 to 39 make to the birth rate rose from 43 to 57 percent over the same period.¹⁰⁶ In the Scandinavian countries and France this development began much earlier than in Germany.

Figure 47: Live births per 1,000 women, by women's age, Germany, 2002 to 2018



Starting in 2011: results based on the 2011 census.

Data basis: Federal Statistical Office (2020): Statistik der Geburten, Geburtsjahrmethode.

106 Statistisches Bundesamt (2020): Geburtenstatistik, Geburtsjahrmethode. Starting in 2011: results based on the 2011 census.

Mothers still having two children on average

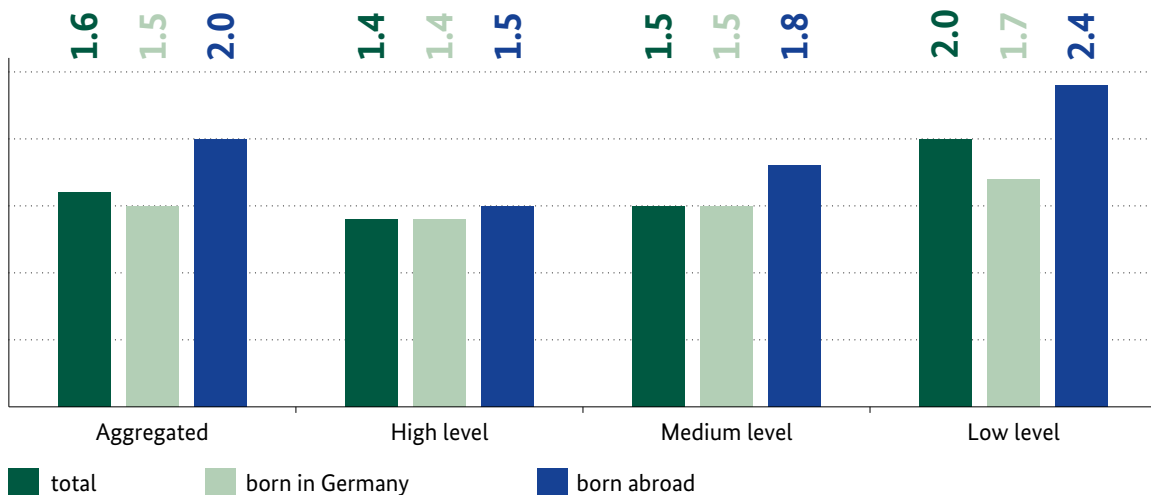
When women become mothers, they still have two children on average. This figure is relatively stable for different age groups. For example, almost all mothers in the 1983 cohort had an average of two children.¹⁰⁷ The proportion of mothers in the various age groups has fallen slightly. In the age groups born between 1943 and 1948, 88 percent of women were still mothers; in the age groups born between 1974 and 1978, the figure was 78 percent.¹⁰⁸

The distribution of mothers according to the number of children is also relatively stable. Of the mothers who were between 45 and 49 years old in 2018 (born between 1969 and 1973), almost half have two children (47 percent), one-third have one child and one mother in five has more than two children.¹⁰⁹ The situation is similar for mothers aged 35 to 39 and 40 to 44.

Educational level of mother correlates with number of children had

The average number of children in 2018 for mothers aged 45 to 54 (born 1964 to 1973) with a low level of education¹¹⁰ was 2.0 children and for those with a high educational level 1.4 children per mother (Figure 48). Migrant women with a high level of education had on average almost as many children as mothers born in Germany with a high level of education. The average number of children was slightly higher among migrant women with an intermediate level of education than among mothers born in Germany with an intermediate level of education (1.8 compared to 1.5 children per mother). The differences were greatest among mothers with a low educational level. While immigrants with a low educational level had an average of 2.4 children, those born in Germany had 1.7 children per mother.¹¹¹

Figure 48: Average number of children per woman aged 45 to 54 (born between 1964 and 1973), by educational level and country of birth



Source: Federal Statistical Office (2019): *Kinderlosigkeit, Geburten und Familien. Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2018*, Chart 8.

Note: women who indicate that they have both a general school leaving certificate and a vocational training certificate. According to the International Standard Classification of Education 2011 (ISCED 2011), the highest level of education attained is the result of a combination of the characteristics of a general school leaving certificate and vocational education and training qualification.

107 Statistisches Bundesamt (2019): *Kinderlosigkeit, Geburten und Familien, Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2018*, Table 1.1.

108 ibid. Table 1.3.

109 Statistisches Bundesamt (2019): *Kinderlosigkeit, Geburten und Familien, Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2018*, Table 1.1.

110 According to the International Standard Classification of Education 2011 (ISCED 2011), the highest level of education attained is a combination of the characteristics of general school leaving certificate and vocational education and training qualification. Low: e.g. lower secondary school leaving certificate, polytechnic secondary school leaving certificate and no vocational qualification or no educational qualification. Intermediate level: e.g. a vocational qualification and/or the Abitur or polytechnic secondary school leaving certificate, health school. High: e.g. an academic degree or a master craftsman/technician or polytechnic college degree.

111 Statistisches Bundesamt (2019): *Kinderlosigkeit, Geburten und Familien, Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2018*, Chart 8.

More than one-third of births outside of marriage

A look at live births in 2018 shows that 34 percent of all newborns had unmarried parents. In eastern Germany, the proportion of live births outside of marriage was 55 percent, almost twice as high as in western Germany (29 percent).¹¹² The proportion of children born outside of a marriage in eastern Germany fell from 59 percent to 55 percent between 2013 and 2018, while it remained almost unchanged in western Germany.¹¹³

Two-thirds (66 percent) of women in western Germany born between 1971 and 1973 were already married at the time of birthing their first child. In eastern Germany, only about one-third (37 percent) of women were married. In western Germany in particular, the birth of the first child is a major reason to get married. In this region,

the proportion of unmarried women fell sharply from 54 percent to 34 percent between the onset of pregnancy and birth; in eastern Germany the proportion of unmarried women fell only moderately (from 75 percent to 63 percent). When the second child was born, the vast majority of women in both the eastern (59 percent) and western Germany (83 percent) were married.¹¹⁴

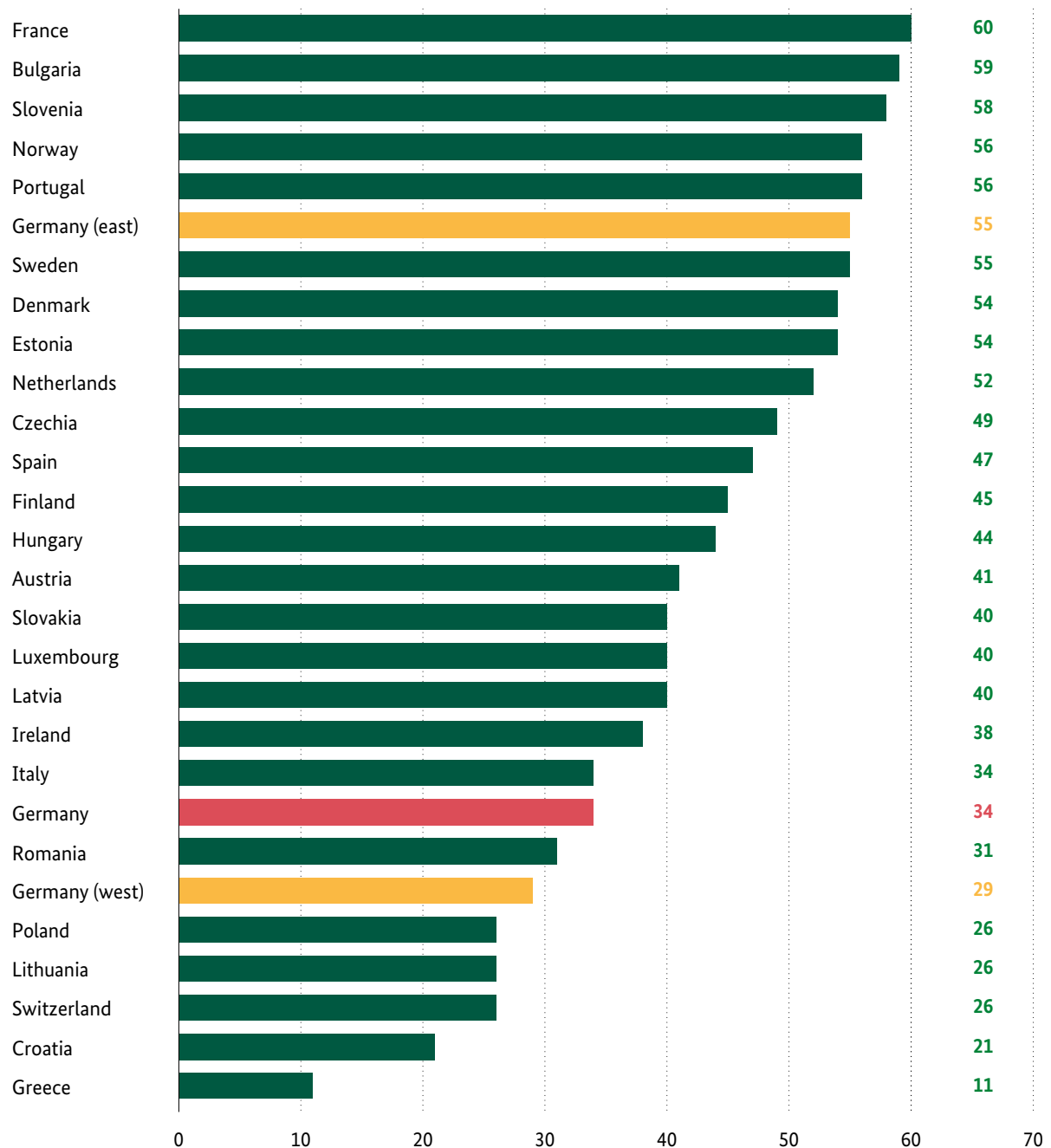
Compared to the rest of Europe, western Germany is the exception. In most European countries the proportion of live births outside of marriage is rising continuously. In this respect, eastern Germany ranks among the top ten countries with the highest proportion of live births outside of marriage (Figure 49). Iceland has the highest proportion of births outside of marriage in the EU at 71 percent and Greece the lowest.

112 Statistisches Bundesamt (2020): Statistik der Geburten.

113 Statistisches Bundesamt (2020): Statistik der Geburten, Tables 12612-004 and 12612-0102, in Genesis database.

114 Sonja Bastin, Michaela Kreyenfeld and Christine Schnor (2012): Diversität von Familienformen in Ost- und Westdeutschland, p. 13f., link: <https://www.demogr.mpg.de/papers/working/wp-2012-001.pdf>

Figure 49: Proportion of live births outside of marriage among all live births in a European comparison, 2018, in percent



Source: Eurostat (2020) and Federal Statistical Office (2020): Statistik der Geburten, eastern Germany including Berlin.

Even before the division of Germany in 1949 there were regional differences.¹¹⁵ For example, in 1920 the proportion of people born outside of marriage

was 18 percent in the region that subsequently became the GDR and 9 percent in the territory of the later Federal Republic in the west.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Sebastian Klüsener (2014): Deutschland auf Dauer geteilt (press release from 24 July 2014), link: https://www.demogr.mpg.de/mediacms/3497_MPIDR-PM_Deutschland_auf_Dauer_geteilt.pdf

¹¹⁶ ibid.

Childlessness in Germany

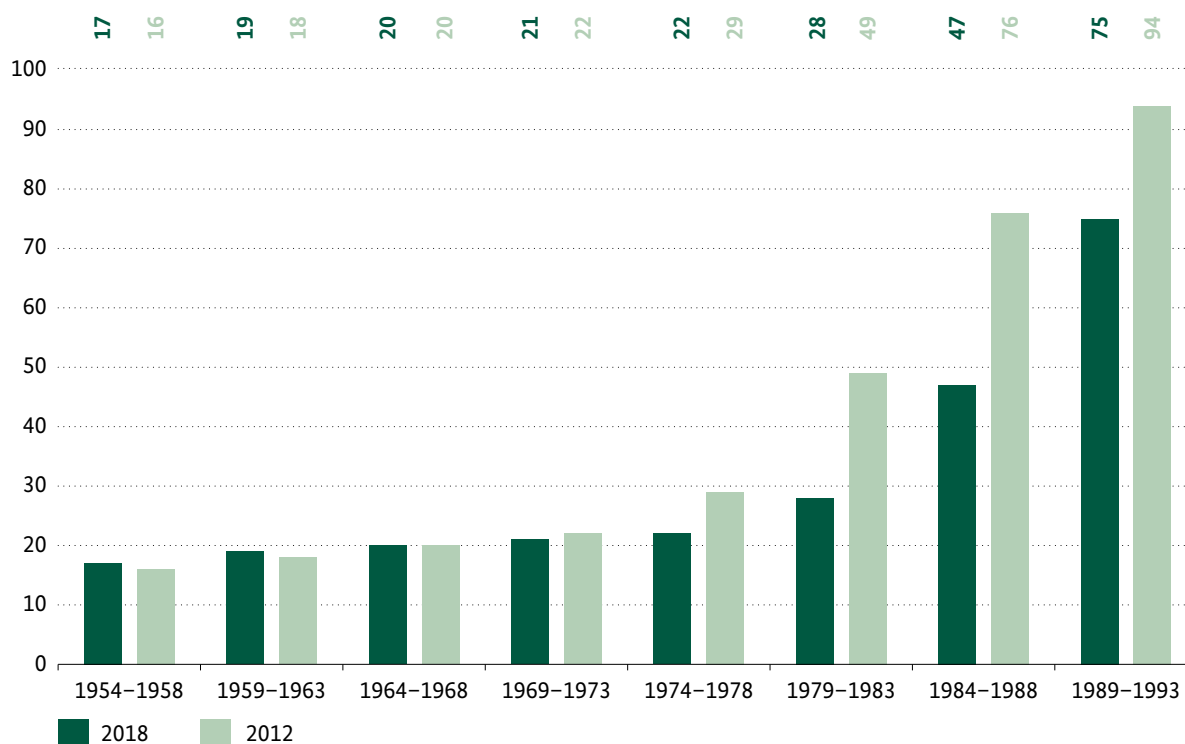
Childlessness is considered definitive between the ages of 45 to 49. In 2018, the final rate of childlessness for women between 45 and 49 years of age¹¹⁷ is 21 percent, a minimal increase compared to 2016 (20 percent for women aged 45 to 49). Since 2008, the childlessness rate has risen from 17 percent to 21 percent.¹¹⁸

Childlessness in younger age groups has fallen

Today's 45- to 49-year-old age group is the one with the lowest final number of children so far (cf. Figure 45 on page 76). Younger age groups have

again had significantly more children. A look at the childlessness trends in different age groups shows that the (provisional) childlessness rate has fallen in almost all age groups compared to 2012 (Figure 50). The decline was particularly sharp for women born between 1979 and 1988 (24 to 33 in 2012 and 30 to 39 in 2018). This means that women in these age groups have, since 2012, had their first child more frequently than other age groups. By contrast, women born in 1973 and earlier (45 and older in 2018) have a childlessness rate that has hardly changed since 2012.

Figure 50: Women without children as a percentage of all women in the respective age groups, 2018 and 2012



Source: Statistical Federal Office (2019): *Kinderlosigkeit, Geburten und Familien. Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2018*, Table 1.3, own presentation.

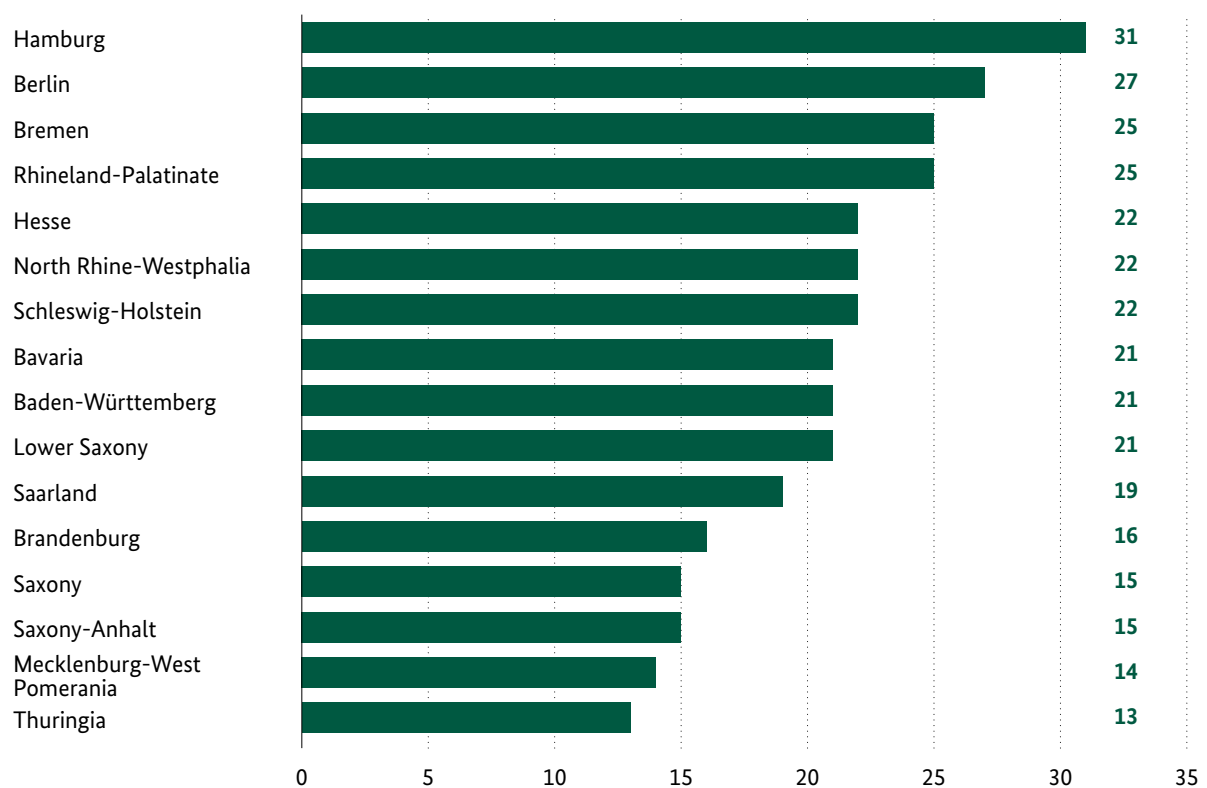
¹¹⁷ At present these are the years 1969 to 1973.

¹¹⁸ Statistisches Bundesamt (2019): *Kinderlosigkeit, Geburten und Familien: Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2018*, Table 1.3, link: <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Haushalte-Familien/Publikationen/Downloads-Haushalte/geburtentrends-tabellenband-5122203189014.html>

The (provisional) final childlessness rate is particularly high in the city states (i.e. Berlin, Bremen and Hamburg), while it is much lower in the eastern (non-city) states. Of the current women aged 45 to 49 (born 1969 to 1973), 22 percent of those in the western federal states and 15 percent of those in the eastern federal states are childless. In the city states, by contrast, the proportion is 28 percent. These differences exist in all age groups.

The highest childlessness rate in 2018 was recorded in Hamburg. There almost one-third (31 percent) of women between the ages of 45 and 49 were childless. Thuringia and Mecklenburg-West Pomerania had the lowest rates of childlessness at 13 percent and 14 percent respectively (Figure 51).

Figure 51: Women aged 45 to 49 who do not have children, by federal state, 2018, in percent



Source: Federal Statistical Office (2019): *Kinderlosigkeit, Geburten und Familien. Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2018*, Table 1.3, own presentation.

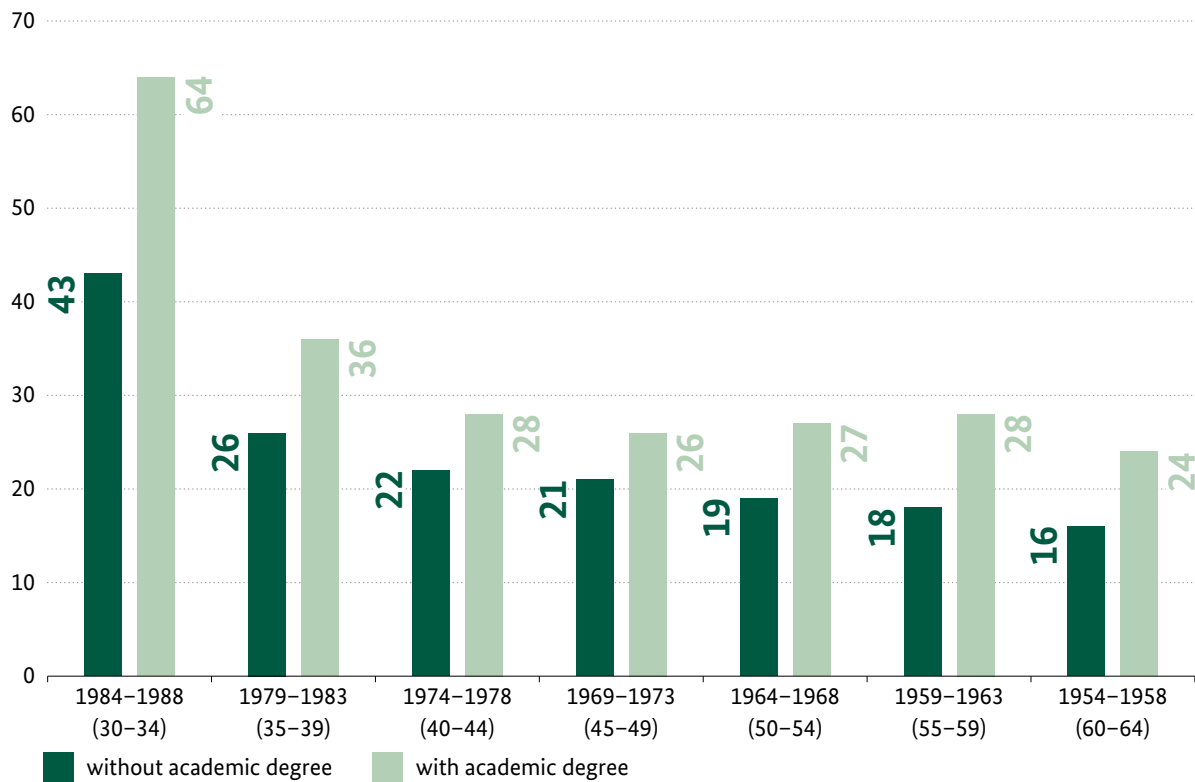
Childlessness among female graduates is decreasing

Childlessness among female graduates is particularly high in Germany. For some years now, however, childlessness among them has ceased to increase or has even fallen. Between 2008 and 2018, the final childlessness rate fell from

28 percent to 26 percent.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, women with an academic background are still more likely to be childless than women without an academic degree. Of women aged 45 to 49 without an academic background, 21 percent were childless in 2018 (Figure 52).

¹¹⁹ Statistisches Bundesamt (2019): Jede fünfte Frau zwischen 45 und 49 Jahren war 2018 kinderlos (press release #475 from 11 December 2019), link: https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2019/12/PD19_475_122.html

Figure 52: Childlessness rate of women with and without an academic degree, by year of birth, 2018, Germany, in percent



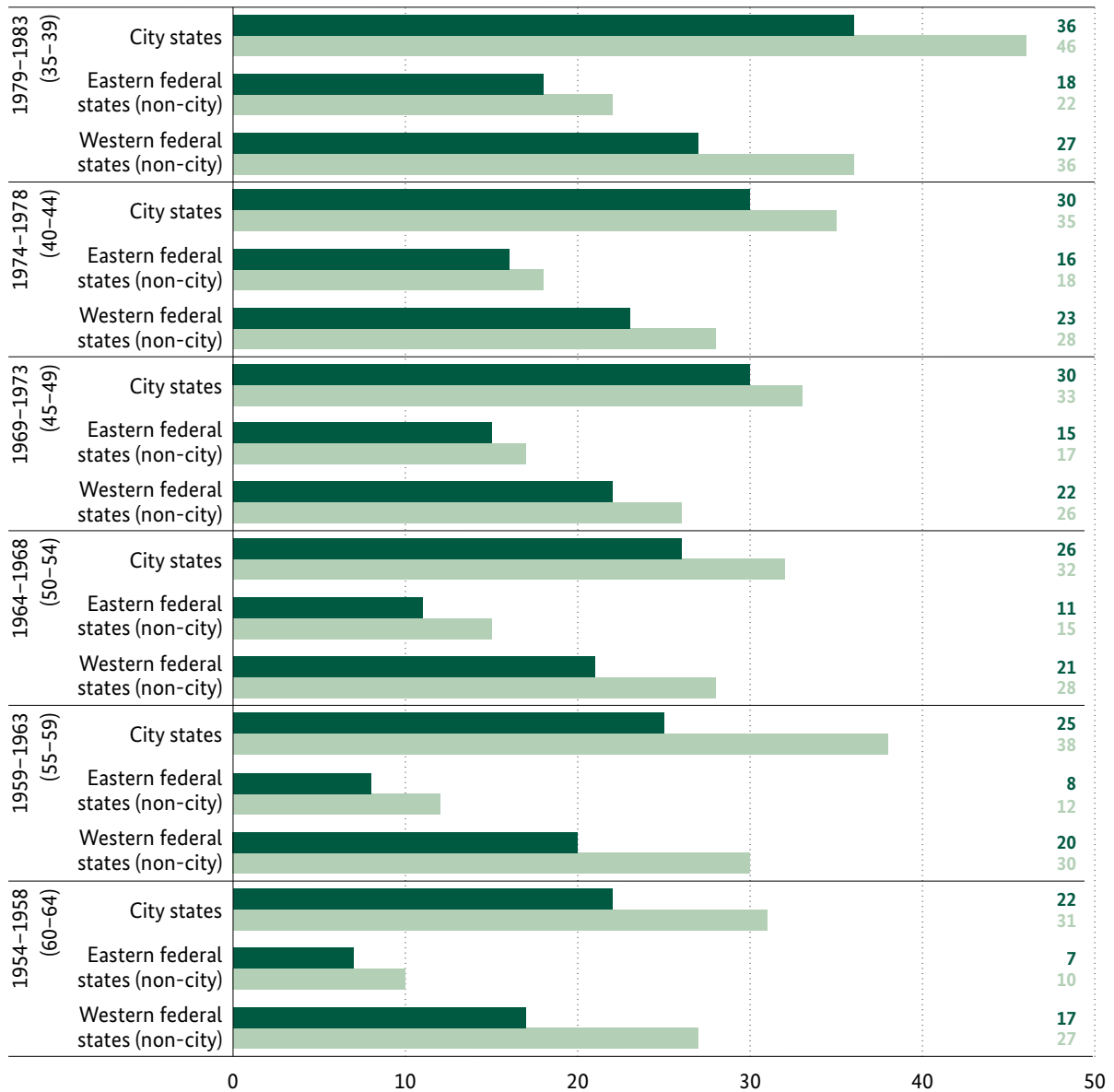
Database: Federal Statistical Office (2019): *Kinderlosigkeit, Geburten und Familien. Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2018*, Table 3.7, own calculations.

Note: the childlessness rate is the proportion of women without children among all women in the respective age group. Only women with professional qualifications. Considered as an academic degree: bachelor's, master's, Diplom or doctorate. Women holding a vocational qualification not consisting of a bachelor's, master's, Diplom or doctorate degree are not considered to have an academic degree.

The differences between female graduates and non-graduates vary according to year of birth and region (Figure 53). In the western (non-city) states, women are more often childless than in the eastern (non-city) states, irrespective of their educational background. However, women are most frequently childless in the city states of Hamburg, Bremen and Berlin. Of women aged

40 to 44 in the city states, 30 percent of women without an academic degree and 35 percent of women with an academic degree were childless in 2018. In the federal states in the east, by contrast, only 16 percent of women without an academic degree and 18 percent of women with an academic degree were childless.

Figure 53: Childless rate of women with and without graduate qualifications, by place of residence and year of birth, 2018, in percent



■ women without an academic degree
 ■ women with an academic degree

Source: Federal Statistical Office (2019): *Kinderlosigkeit, Geburten und Familien. Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2018*, Table 3.7, Charts 5 and 6, own presentation.
 Note: the childlessness rate is the proportion of women without children among all women in the respective age group. Only women with professional qualifications. Considered as an academic degree: bachelor's, master's, Diplom or doctorate. Women holding a vocational qualification not consisting of a bachelor's, master's, Diplom or doctorate degree are not considered to have an academic degree.

A comparison of the different age groups shows that childlessness has evolved differently from region to region and depending on educational attainment. The increase in childlessness among women is particularly marked in the eastern federal states. In 2018, 8 percent of women aged 55 to 59 in these states who did not have an academic

degree were childless, while the figure was already 15 percent among women aged 45 to 49. Among women in eastern Germany with an academic degree, the childlessness rate rose from 12 percent among 55- to 59-year-olds to 17 percent of 45- to 49-year-olds. By contrast, the childlessness rate among women in the western non-city federal

states and in all city states who had an academic degree has fallen. Here, the childlessness rate between 55- to 59-year-olds and 45- to 49-year-olds in the western federal states fell by 4 percentage points from 30 percent to 26 percent and in the city states by 5 percentage points from 38 percent to 33 percent.¹²⁰ In the younger age groups, it can be observed overall that childlessness among women both with and without an academic degree is stabilising and only slightly higher. Here it could even fall, as these women can still have children.

The high childlessness rate can have several causes that potentially influence each other. They include infertility, lacking desire to have children or repeated postponement of starting a family.¹²¹ Only about 4 to 5 percent of women are infertile for life¹²² and only a minority of young people do not want children¹²³ (see section “Desire to have children”). For example, cultural, structural, economic and partnership factors and the way they interact can often lead to women being involuntarily childless.¹²⁴ Seventy-nine percent of under-40s consider financial security a basic requirement for parenthood and 60 percent also believe that women should be able to start a career independently of their partner.¹²⁵ Other surveys also show that many childless people have not yet found the right partner or still feel too young to have children.¹²⁶ One-third of childless women

between 25 and 29 in Germany still feel too young to have children. For most of the respondents it is also an absolute precondition for children that both partners want a child and feel ready to have children (86 and 73 percent respectively). For two-thirds of those surveyed, a secure career for one partner is also an important precondition. Just under half consider it important to have a sufficient income for the family.¹²⁷

Periods of intentional and unintentional childlessness can therefore alternate over a lifetime and in different stages of life¹²⁸. As a result, people's desire to have children is more and more often being postponed, as the rising number of late births between 35 and 40 years of age shows. Most people do not consider this postponement ideal – 62 percent of 20- to 39-year-olds in 2012 thought an age between 25 and 29 to be ideal for having their first child.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, women with an academic degree in particular are becoming mothers later on in life and the time window for further births is then often (too) small.

Childlessness in Germany very high by European standards

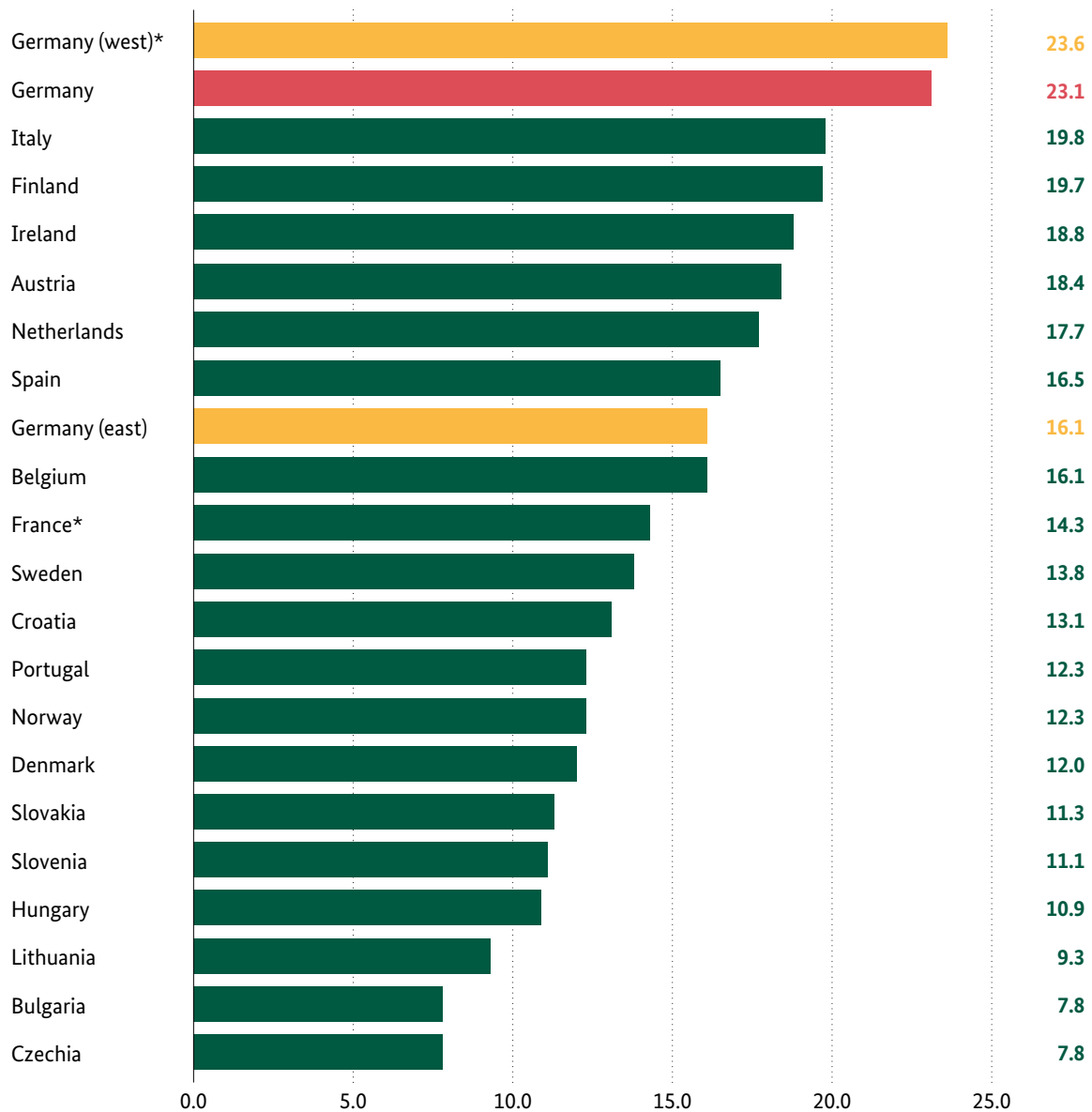
A European comparison of the childlessness rates among women born in 1968 (50 years old in 2018) shows that childlessness was highest in Germany (Figure 54).¹³⁰ Eastern and western Germany differ in this respect. Childlessness is similarly high in

- 120 Statistisches Bundesamt (2019): Kinderlosigkeit, Geburten und Familien: Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2018, Table 3.7, Charts 5 and 6, link: <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Haushalte-Familien/Publikationen/Downloads-Haushalte/geburtentrends-tabellenband-5122203189014.html>
- 121 Martin Bujard, Sabine Diabaté (2016): Wie stark nehmen Kinderlosigkeit und späte Geburten zu? Neue demografische Trends und ihre Ursachen, in: Der Gynäkologe 49(5), p. 397, link: https://www.bib.bund.de/Publikation/2016/pdf/Wie-stark-nehmen-Kinderlosigkeit-und-spaete-Geburten-zu.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2
- 122 ibid.
- 123 ibid.
- 124 Martin Bujard, Sabine Diabaté (2016): Wie stark nehmen Kinderlosigkeit und späte Geburten zu? Neue demografische Trends und ihre Ursachen, in: Der Gynäkologe 49(5), p. 397, link: https://www.bib.bund.de/Publikation/2016/pdf/Wie-stark-nehmen-Kinderlosigkeit-und-spaete-Geburten-zu.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2
- 125 ibid. p. 397.
- 126 BMFSFJ (2015): Monitor Familienforschung No. 34 „Familienbilder in Deutschland und Frankreich“, link: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/service/publikationen/familienbilder-in-deutschland-und-frankreich/96144> and IfD Allensbach (2015): Familienbilder in Deutschland und Frankreich, link: https://www.ifd-allensbach.de/fileadmin/studien/6127_Familienbilder_D_F_Bericht.pdf
- 127 ibid.
- 128 Jürgen Dorbritz, Ralina Panova, Jasmin Passet-Wittig (2015): Gewollt oder ungewollt? Der Forschungsstand zu Kinderlosigkeit (2. überarbeitete Auflage). Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung (2015): Working Paper 2/2015, link: https://www.bib.bund.de/Publikation/2016/pdf/Gewollt-oder-ungewollt-Der-Forschungsstand-zu-Kinderlosigkeit-2-ueberarbeitete-Auflage.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3
- 129 Martin Bujard, Sabine Diabaté (2016): Wie stark nehmen Kinderlosigkeit und späte Geburten zu? Neue demografische Trends und ihre Ursachen, in: Der Gynäkologe 49(5), p. 402, link: https://www.bib.bund.de/Publikation/2016/pdf/Wie-stark-nehmen-Kinderlosigkeit-und-spaete-Geburten-zu.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2
- 130 Tomáš Sobotka (2017): Childlessness in Europe: Long-term reconstruction trends in women born 1900–1972, in: Michaela Kreyenfeld, Dirk Konietzka (eds.): Childlessness in Europe: contexts, causes and consequences, Annex 2, pp. 47–49, link: <https://www.springer.com/de/book/9783319446653>

Italy and Finland, at around 20 percent each. By contrast, childlessness was particularly low in Czechia, Bulgaria and Lithuania. Sweden, France,

Belgium and eastern Germany are in the middle of the European range, with roughly 14 to 16 percent of women born in 1968 not having children.

Figure 54: Childless women born in 1968 in a European comparison



* France: value for women born between 1965 and 1969; Germany (west): value for women born between 1966 and 1970.

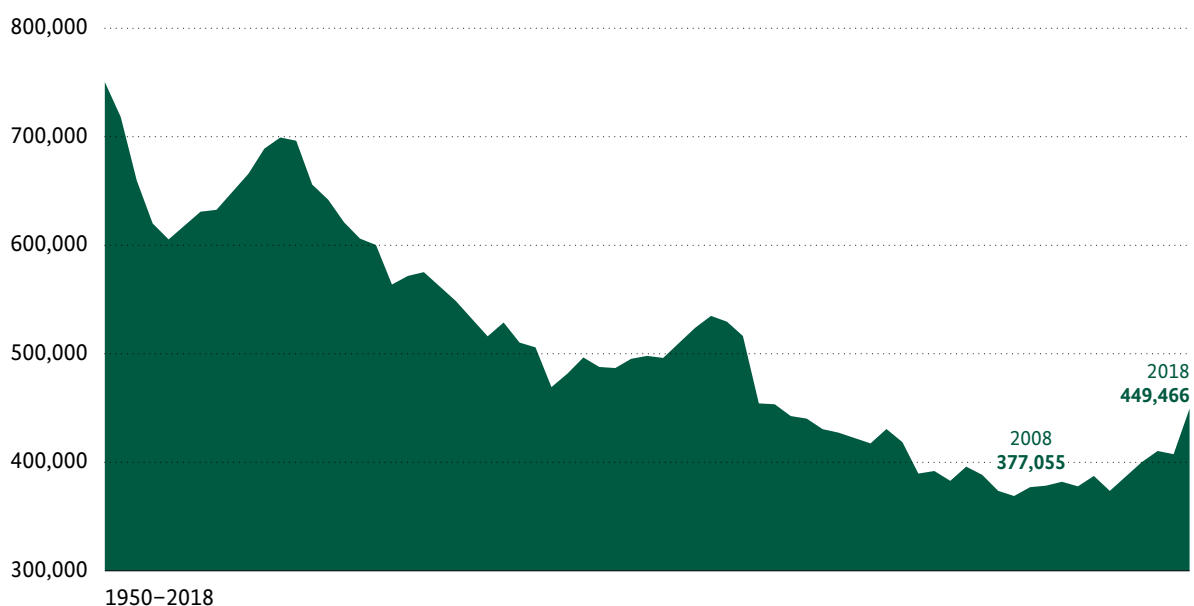
Data basis: Tomáš Sobotka (2017): *Childlessness in Europe: reconstruction of long-term trends in women born 1900–1972*; compiled according to the data in Annex 2, pp. 47–49, own presentation.

2.4 Marriages and divorces

Most people still get married at least once in their lives, although marriages are no longer considered a requirement for starting a family or having a happy life.¹³¹ Almost two-thirds of young people under 40 do not consider marriage obsolete.¹³²

In 2018, 449,466 couples married, which was 42,000 more than the year before. Seven percent of marriages in 2018 were between people of the same sex. This means that the number of marriages in 2018 was equal to that in 1992/1993 (Figure 55). Over the last ten years, the number of marriages has risen steadily.

Figure 55: Marriages in Germany, 1950 to 2018, absolute



Source: Federal Statistical Office (2019): *Eheschließungen, Geborene und Gestorbene*.

In a European comparison, Germany is above the EU average (Figure 56). In 2018 there were 5.4 marriages per 1,000 inhabitants in Germany – in the EU 28 there were 4.4 in 2016.¹³³ The highest

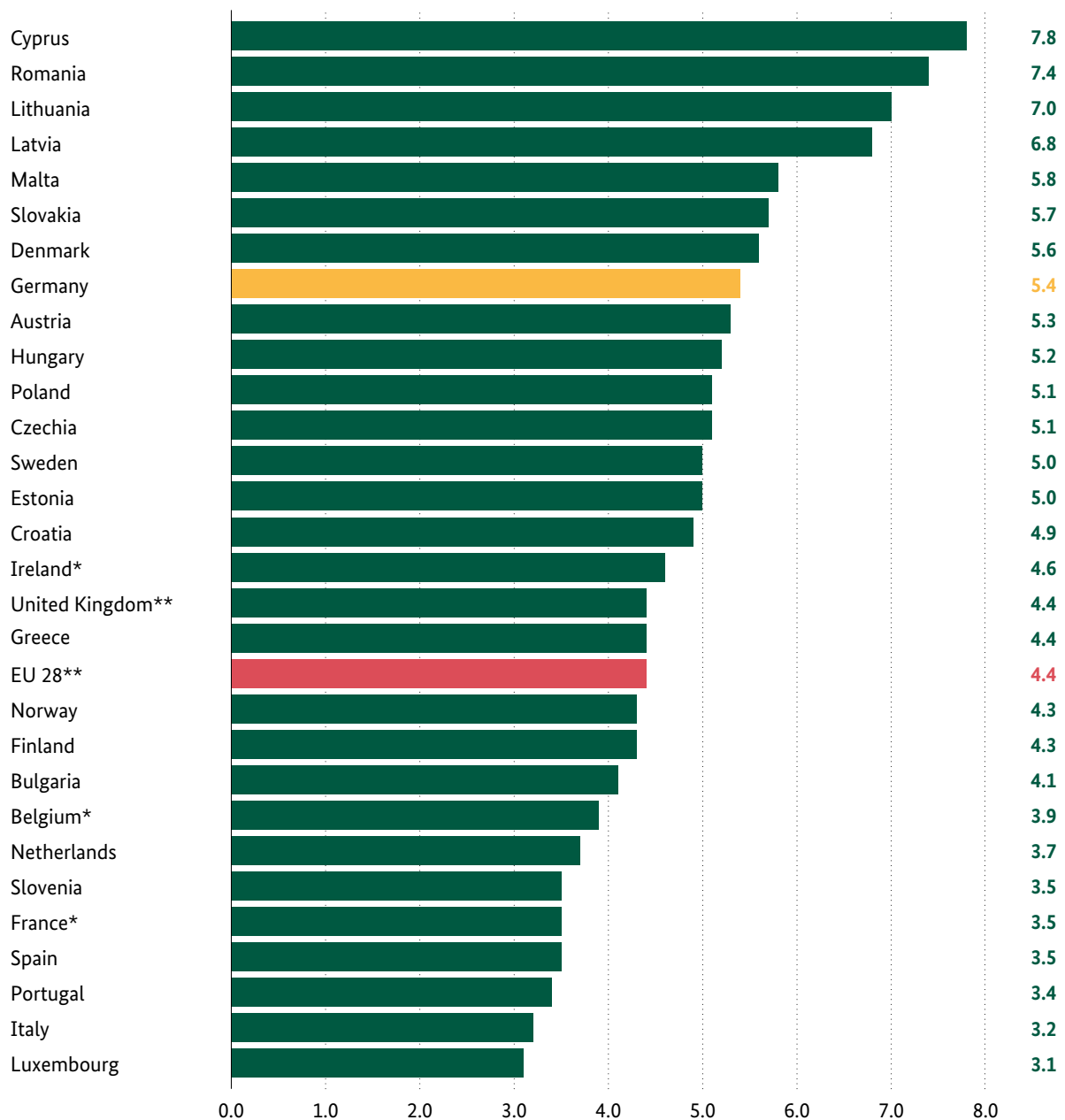
marriage rates were found in Cyprus, Romania, Latvia and Lithuania and the lowest in Luxembourg, Italy and Portugal.

131 Stefan Weick (2018): Einstellungen zu Familie und Lebensformen, in: Datenreport 2018. Ein Sozialbericht für Deutschland, p.394ff, link: https://www.wzb.eu/system/files/docs/sv/iuk/dr2018_bf_pdf_ganzes_buch.pdf

132 Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung (2013): Familienleitbilder. Vorstellungen. Meinungen. Erwartungen., p.9, link: https://www.bib.bund.de/Publikation/2013/pdf/Familienleitbilder-Vorstellungen-Meinungen-Erwartungen.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=1

133 Eurostat (2020): crude marriage rate, link: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/de/web/products-eurostat-news/-/EDN-20190214-1?inheritRedirect=true>, data table: demo_nind, Marriage indicators.

Figure 56: Marriages per 1,000 inhabitants, 2017/2018



Note: *data for 2017, **data for 2016, 2018 figures for Germany added from Federal Statistical Office (2020)

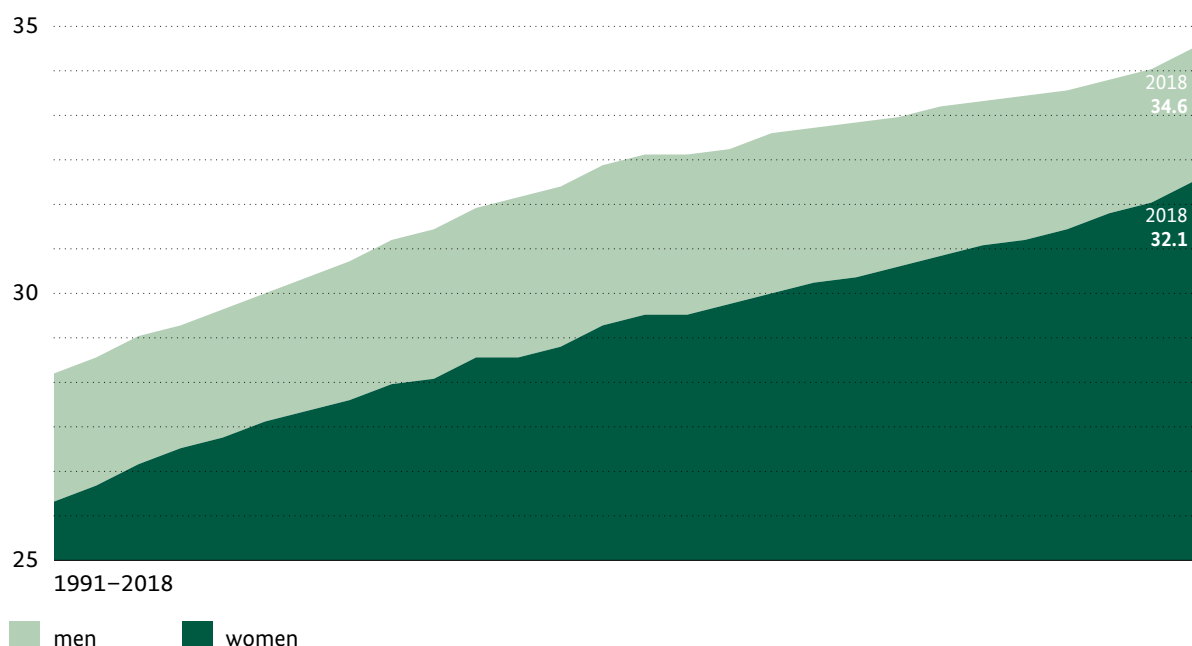
Source: Eurostat (2020), own presentation.

In 2018, two-thirds of those married were married for the first time (69 percent), and in 14 percent of marriages both spouses were widowed or divorced.¹³⁴ Since 2004, the proportion of first-time marriages has been on the rise again, rising from

61 percent to 69 percent between 2004 and 2018. In 2018 the age for first getting married in Germany was 34.6 years for men and 32.1 years for women (Figure 57). People's marriage age is therefore continuing to rise.

¹³⁴ Statistisches Bundesamt (2019): Erst-Ehen und Wiederverheiratungen bei Eheschließungen zwischen Mann und Frau; only opposite-sex couples, missing values up to 100: the marrying couple have different marital statuses (single, widowed, divorced).

Figure 57: Average age of single women and men at marriage, Germany, 1991 to 2018



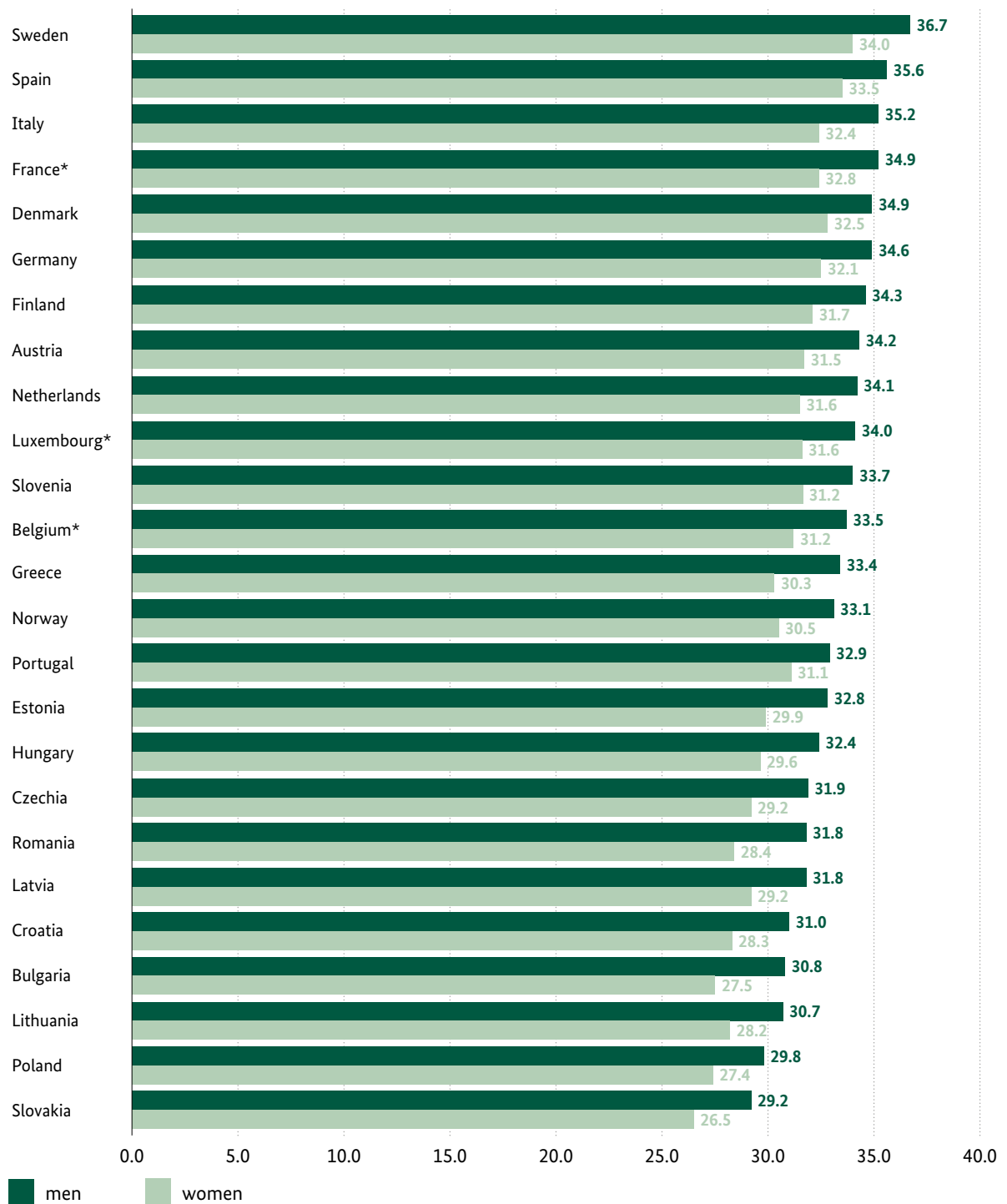
Source: Federal Statistical Office (2019): Statistik der Eheschließungen.

The age difference between eastern and western federal states when first getting married initially grew smaller over time until about 2004. For ten years now, unmarried couples from the eastern federal states have been older than unmarried couples from the western federal states at the time of their first marriage. In 2018 the age difference between couples in the east and the west was 3 years for men and about 2.5 years for women. In 2018, men in the east were therefore 36.5 years old on average when they married and women in the east 33.8 years old. Men in the west were 33.9 years old and women in the west 31.4 years old. In 2008, men in the west were 32.8 years old on average and women 29.9 years old at the time of their first marriage – men in the east were 33.2 years old and women 30.2 years old.

At around 32 or 35, German women and men who marry for the first time tend to be older than in other European countries¹³⁵ (Figure 58). Only in Sweden and Spain are the bride and groom older at their first wedding than in Germany. In these countries, women are 34 years old at their first marriage and men between 36 and 37. Those getting married in Italy, France, Denmark, Finland, Austria, Netherlands and Luxembourg are about the same age as in Germany. In these countries women are also around 32 years old on average when they first get married and men around 34 years old on average. By contrast, people in Slovakia, Poland, Lithuania and Bulgaria marry relatively young. There, men are 29 to 30 years old on average and women 27 to 28 years old.

¹³⁵ Eurostat (2020): Mean age at first marriage, link: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/de/web/products-eurostat-news/-/EDN-20190214-1?inheritRedirect=true>, Data table: demo_nind, marriage indicators

Figure 58: Average age of women and men in Europe at first marriage, 2018/2017



Note: *data for 2017, 2018 figures for Germany added from: Federal Statistical Office (2020).

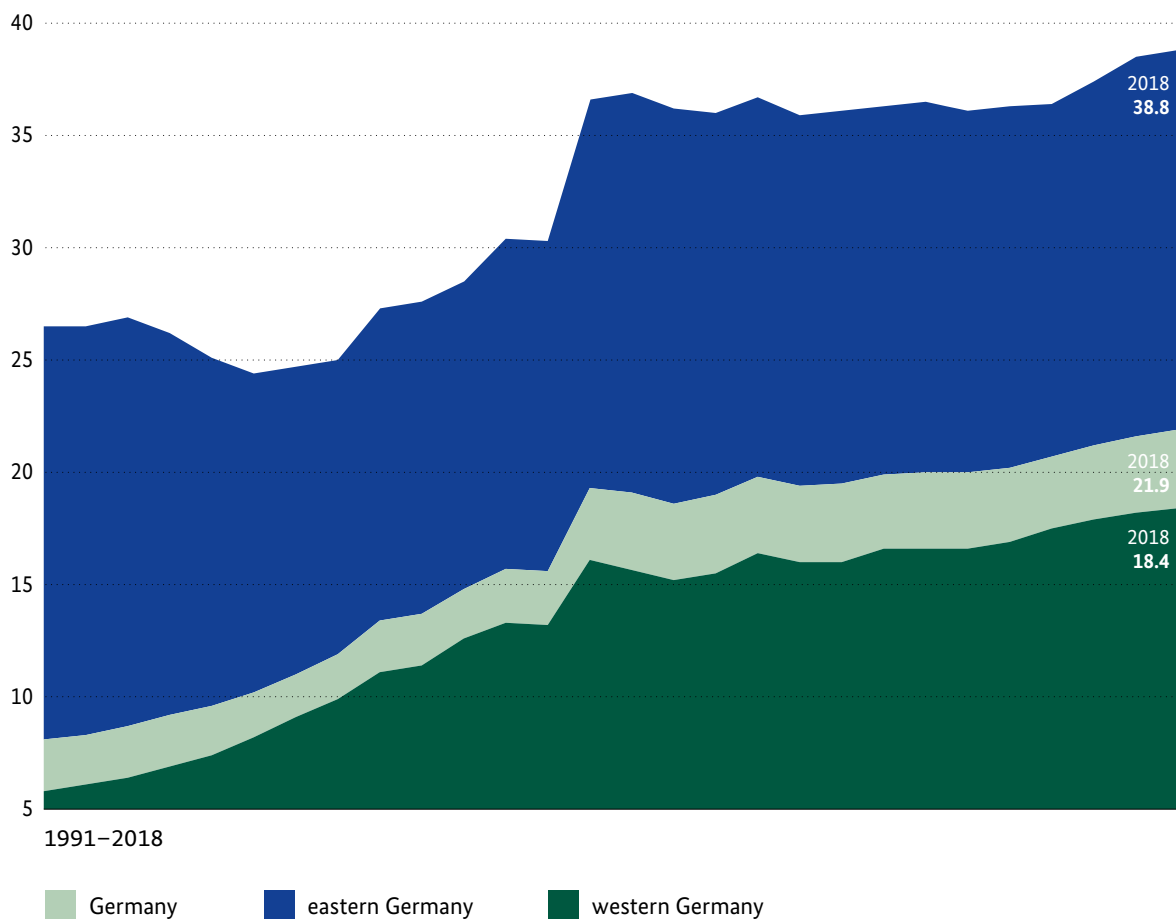
Source: Eurostat (2020), own presentation.

In 86 percent of marriages in 2018, both partners held German citizenship. In 11 percent of marriages, at least one of the spouses had foreign citizenship (binational marriages) and, in 3 percent of marriages, both spouses had foreign citizenship. This means that binational marriages have remained steady over the last ten years. In 92 percent of two-parent families with a migrant background, both parents are married. This is 9 percentage points higher than in two-parent families without a migrant background. The proportion of unmarried parents in two-parent families with a migrant background (8 percent) is correspond-

ingly lower than in two-parent families without a migrant background (17 percent).¹³⁶

Twenty-two percent of all marriages in 2018 involved families with premarital children. This proportion has more than doubled since 1991 (Figure 59). Due to the greater proportion of children born outside of a marriage in eastern Germany, the proportion of marriages with premarital children is more than twice as high in eastern Germany (39 percent) as it is in western Germany (18 percent).

Figure 59: Proportion of premarital children at marriage, 1991 to 2018, in percent



Data source: Federal Statistical Office (2019), starting in 2001: eastern and western federal states, both excluding Berlin.

136 BMFSFJ (2020): Gelebte Vielfalt: Familien mit Migrationshintergrund in Deutschland.

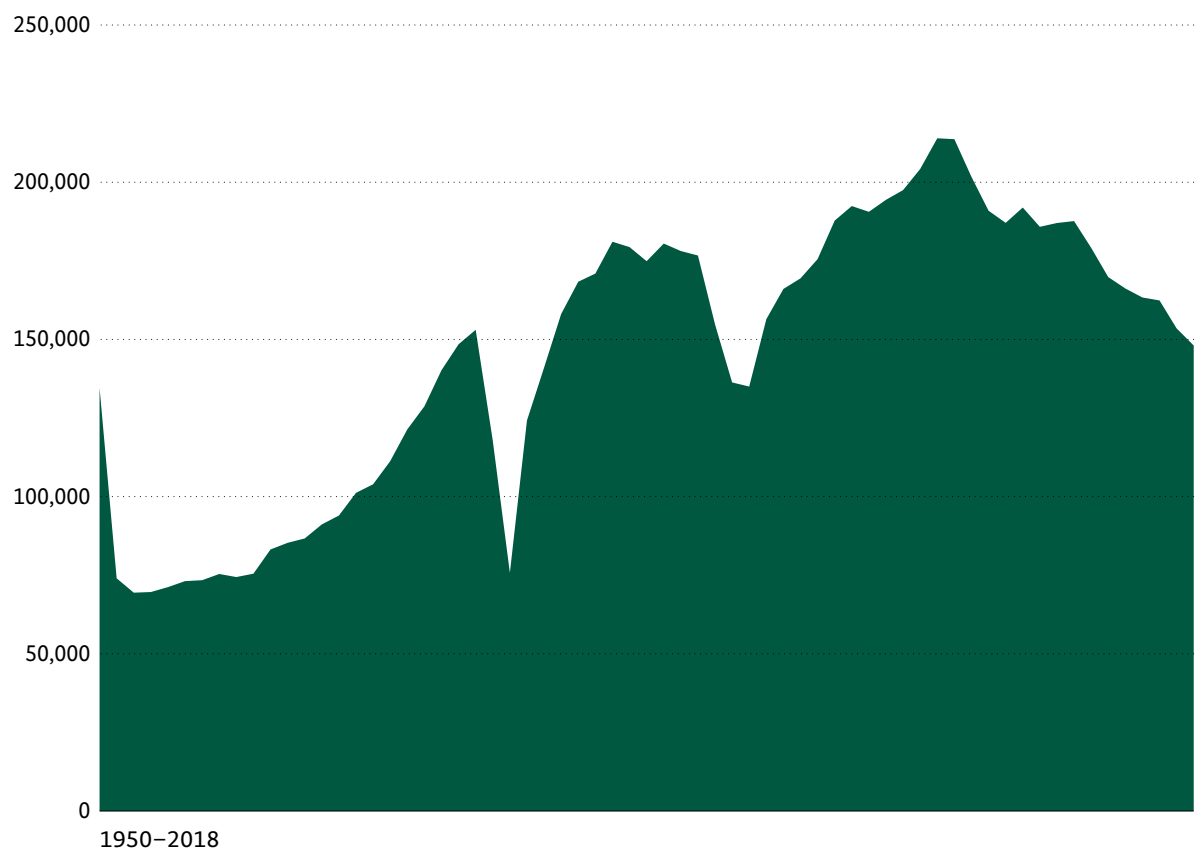
Divorces

The demands on marriage and partnership have changed in recent years. Today, young people want to take on responsibility in their relationship on an equal footing. For young people under the age of 40, emotional factors such as mutual love, sexual fulfilment and mutual freedom are particularly important for a functioning partnership.¹³⁷ The (emotional) expectations of marriage and partnership are increasing. If these expectations are not met, people are more likely to opt for divorce today than 10 or 20 years ago. This is also a finding made by a recent Danish study on divorce. It identified most common reasons for divorce as lack of love/intimacy, communication problems,

lack of empathy, lack of respect, lack of trust and living apart.¹³⁸

A total of 523,665 marriages ended in 2018. Most marriages still end with the death of a spouse. This was the case for 72 percent of the marriages dissolved in 2018. There were 148,066 marriages that ended in a court-approved divorce (“divorces”), representing 28 percent of dissolved marriages (Figure 60). In 2018, 3.5 percent fewer marriages resulted in divorce than in 2017. Of the approximately 17.8 million marriages that existed in 2018 as a whole, less than 1 percent were divorced in 2018 and just under 3 percent were dissolved.

Figure 60: Number of divorces, 1950 to 2018, absolute



Note: the reduction between 1977 and 1979 is due to the change in divorce law on 1 July 1977 in the former West Germany. At-fault divorce rules were replaced by the notion of irreconcilable differences, and extensive new regulations were also introduced for asset and pension settlements between ex-spouses. Data basis: Federal Statistical Office (2019): Statistik rechtskräftiger Urteile in Ehesachen (Scheidungsstatistik).

¹³⁷ Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung (2013): Familienleitbilder. Vorstellungen. Meinungen. Erwartungen., p.9,

link: https://www.bib.bund.de/Publikation/2013/pdf/Familienleitbilder-Vorstellungen-Meinungen-Erwartungen.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=1

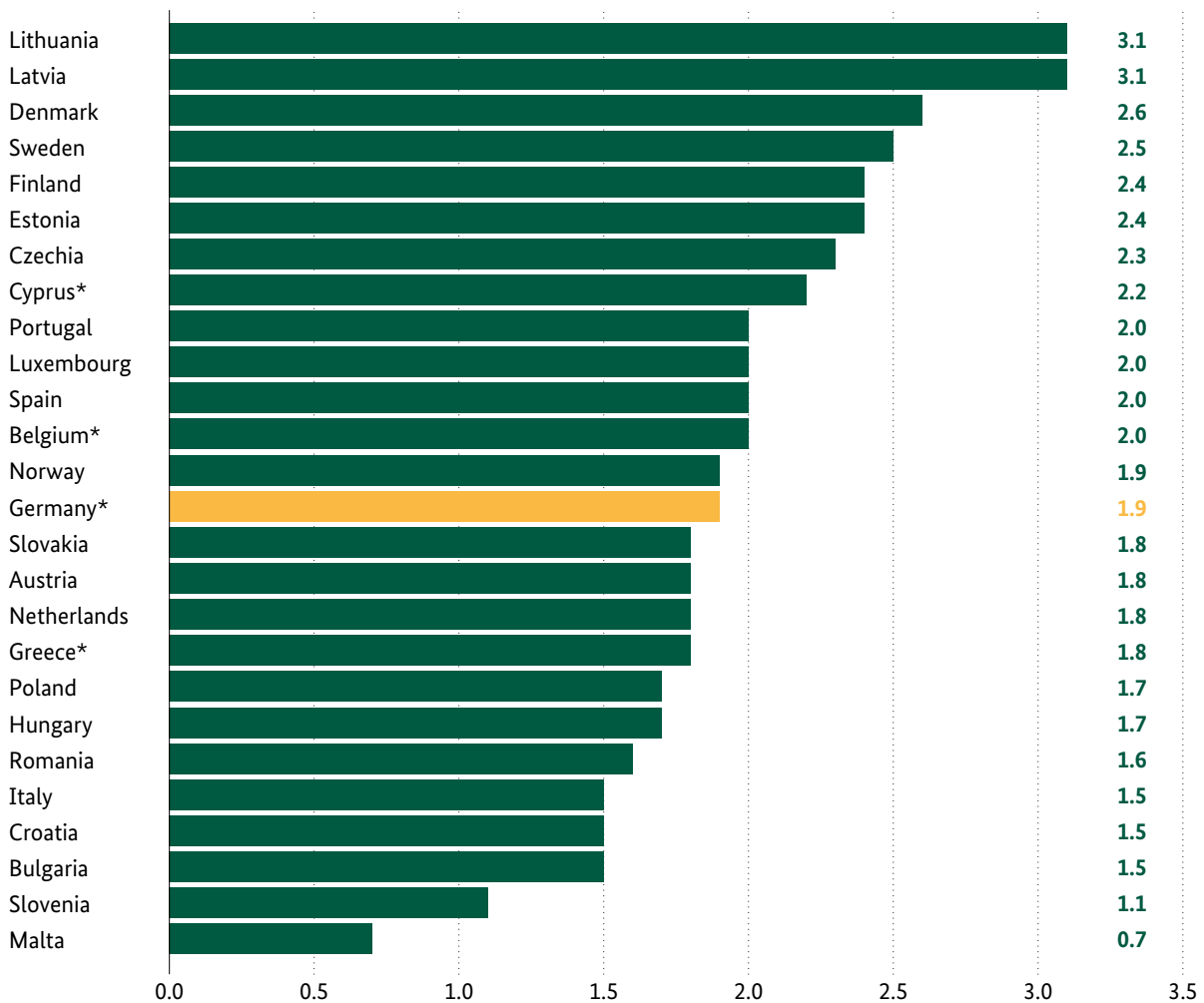
¹³⁸ Jenna Marie Strizzi, Søren Sander, Ana Ciprić, Gert Martin Hald (2020): “I Had Not Seen Star Wars” and Other Motives for Divorce in Denmark, in: Journal for Sex & Marital Therapy, 46:1, pp.57–66, DOI: 10.1080/0092623X.2019.1641871.

2 Family life in Germany and Europe

In a European comparison, Germany is roughly mid range (Figure 61). A look at the number of divorces per 1,000 inhabitants shows that 1.9 marriages per 1,000 inhabitants end in divorce.

Marriages end in divorce the least frequently in Malta, Slovenia and Bulgaria, and most frequently in Lithuania, Latvia and the Scandinavian countries.¹³⁹

Figure 61: Divorce rate in European countries (divorces per 1,000 inhabitants), 2018/2017



Note: *data for 2017

Source: Eurostat (2020): Divorce rates, crude divorce rate.

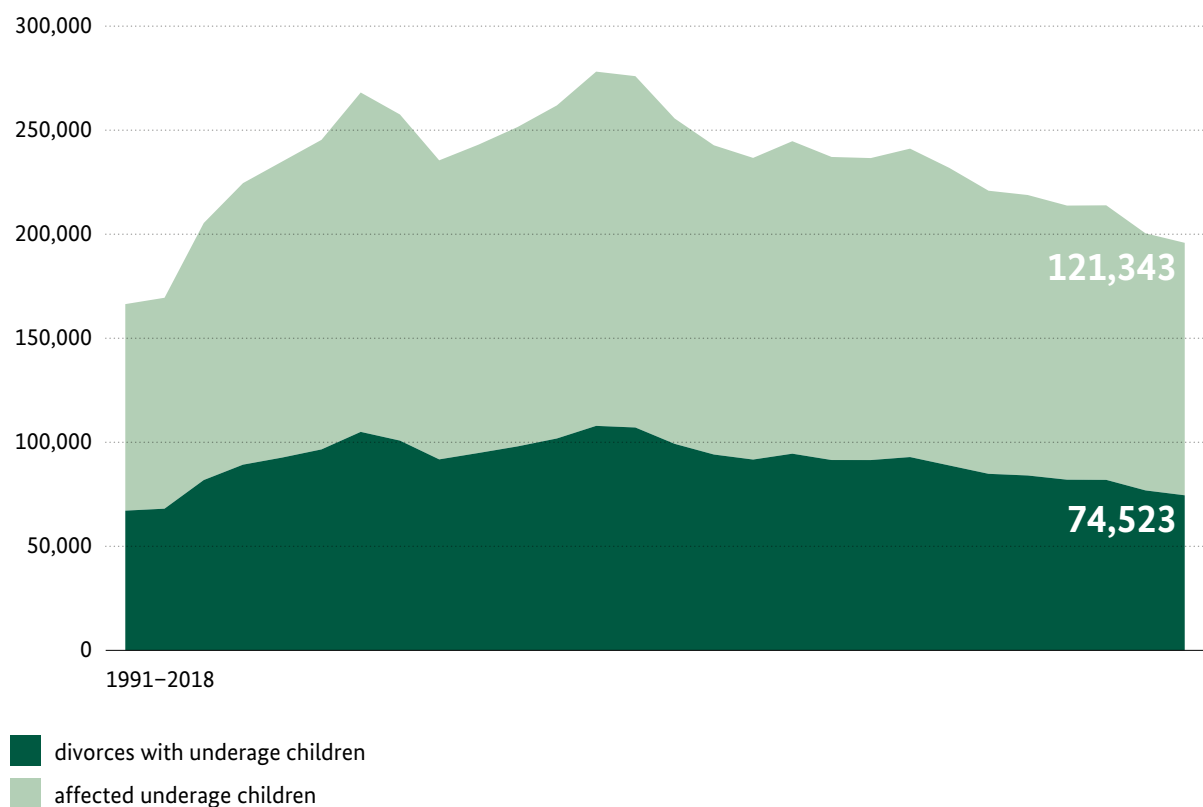
139 Eurostat (2020): Divorce rates, crude divorce rate, link: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/de/data/database>, Table: demo_ndivind

The average span of a marriage before divorce in 2018 was 14 years and 9 months. This continues the trend towards longer marriages. In 1990, the average length of marriage was 11.5 years and in 2000 12.9 years. According to the current divorce statistics, the consolidated divorce rate is 32 percent, i.e. 32 percent of all marriages in one year statistically divorce again within the next 25 years. This goes hand in hand with the increasing average age of women and men when divorcing. In 2018, men were on average 46.7 and women

43.9 when they divorced; twenty years earlier, women were on average 37.8 and men 40.5.¹⁴⁰

Half of all divorces involve under children had together (Figure 62). In 2018, a total of 74,523 divorces involved underage children had together, i.e. 50 percent of divorces. In 2018 a total of 121,343 minors were affected by divorces. Although the absolute number of children affected has been declining continuously since 2003, underage children are still proportionally affected in one out of every two divorces.¹⁴¹

Figure 62: Divorces with underage children and number of underage children involved, 1991 to 2018



Data basis: Federal Statistical Office (2019): *Ehescheidungen und betroffene minderjährige Kinder*.

140 Statistisches Bundesamt (2019): Statistik rechtskräftiger Urteile in Ehesachen (Scheidungsstatistik) 2018.

141 Statistisches Bundesamt (2019): Statistik rechtskräftiger Urteile in Ehesachen (Scheidungsstatistik) 2018.



Economic situation of families

For families to be able to fulfil their social functions and for men and women to be able to realise their desire to have children, it is important that parents and families do not systematically live in deprived economic conditions or find themselves cut off from the economic development of the rest of the population. A central goal of German family policy is to promote the economic stability and social participation of families. Economic stability essentially means protecting families from financial poverty, “i.e. from a lack of income, taking into account savings and assets”.¹⁴² Social participation refers to access to life in society, for example participation in education, art and culture, sports or club activities.¹⁴³

Family-related benefits help parents bear the costs of having children, have the ability to work, even with small children in their household and therefore cover their living expenses. Family-related benefits also compensate for disadvantages (relative to childless households) and thus help prevent long-term economic deficits in families. In particular, family financial security is strengthened if both parents work as continuously and extensively as possible.

3.1 Distribution of family income

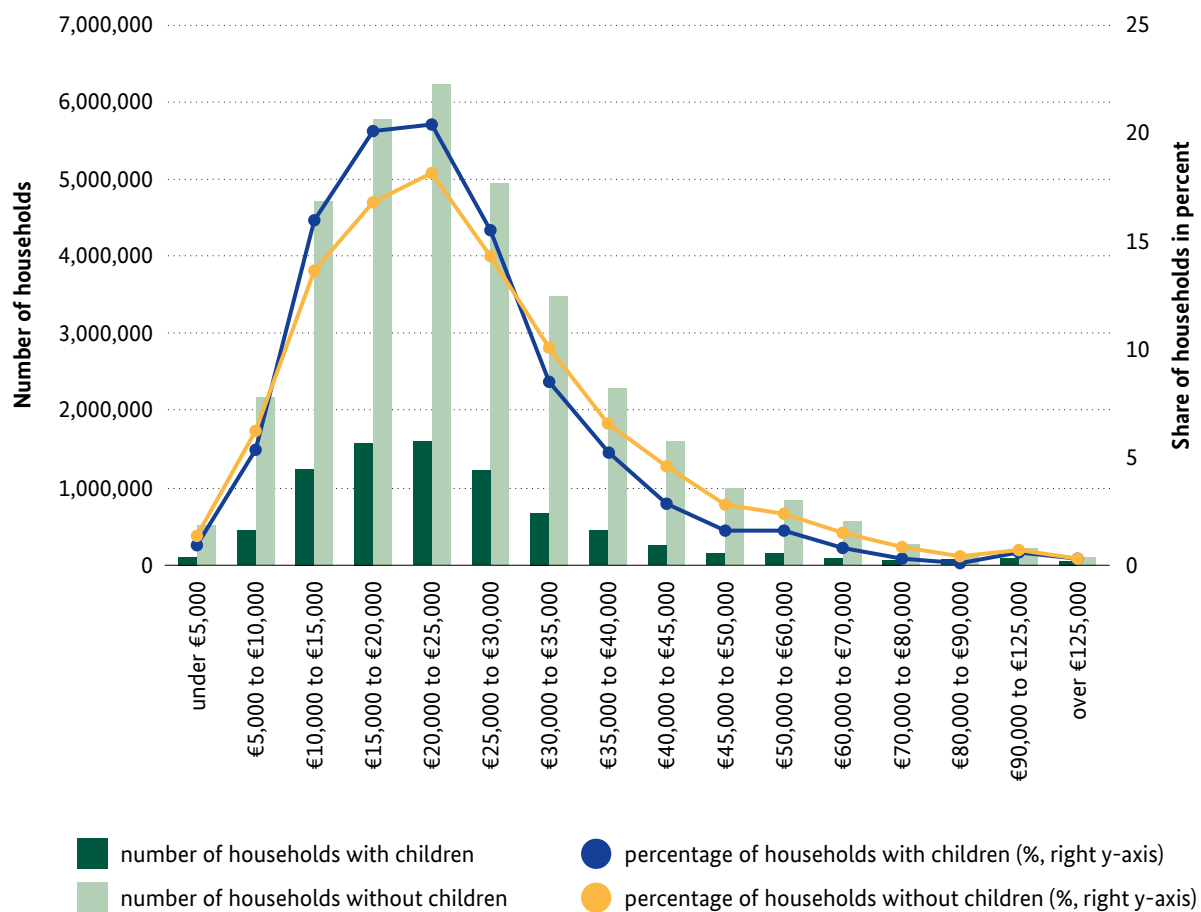
Looking at the absolute income of family households alone, without taking into account the number of household members, there is a distinct impression that families usually have a higher income level than childless households. About half of all families (51 percent) have a net household income of at least €45,000 per year. Among childless households, this proportion is only a quarter (25 percent). To map the different needs of households depending on household size and the age of the children when comparing household incomes, Figure 63 shows equivalised net household income¹⁴⁴. It puts the above result into perspective. Taking into account the size and age structure of households, families are marginally more likely to have a lower income than persons without children. Around 42 percent of families have an equivalised income of up to €20,000 per year. The proportion of childless persons is 38 percent. The reason for this is that the income of the parents in a family also has to cover the needs of the children. Overall, however, the two distributions are very similar. Accordingly, families are not systematically worse off financially than childless households.

142 Prognos (2014): Gesamtevaluation der ehe- und familienbezogenen Leistungen und Maßnahmen. Final report, p. 98ff., link: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/blob/93954/25490622c47497e47acbf797748cfb/gesamtevaluation-der-ehe-und-familienbezogenen-massnahmen-und-leistungen-data.pdf>

143 ibid.

144 Equivalised net income is net income weighted by the number and age of household members. According to the new, generally used scale of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the main income recipient of a household has a weighting factor of 1.0, all other household members aged 14 and over have a factor of 0.5 and persons under 14 have a factor of 0.3. A married couple with two children under 14 would thus have an equivalent income of €2,142.86 per month ($4500 / (1.0 + 0.5 + 2 \cdot 0.3) = 2142.86$) on a disposable income of €4,500. (Source: Glossar Armuts- und Reichtumsbericht der Bundesregierung, link: https://www.armuts-und-reichtumsbericht.de/DE/Service/Glossar/Functions/glossar.html;sessionid=23DB5A609FCDEB82B2F4100B2CDC63F3?cms_lv2=62630&cms_lv3=62574#glossar62574)

Figure 63: Distribution of equivalised net household income, 2018

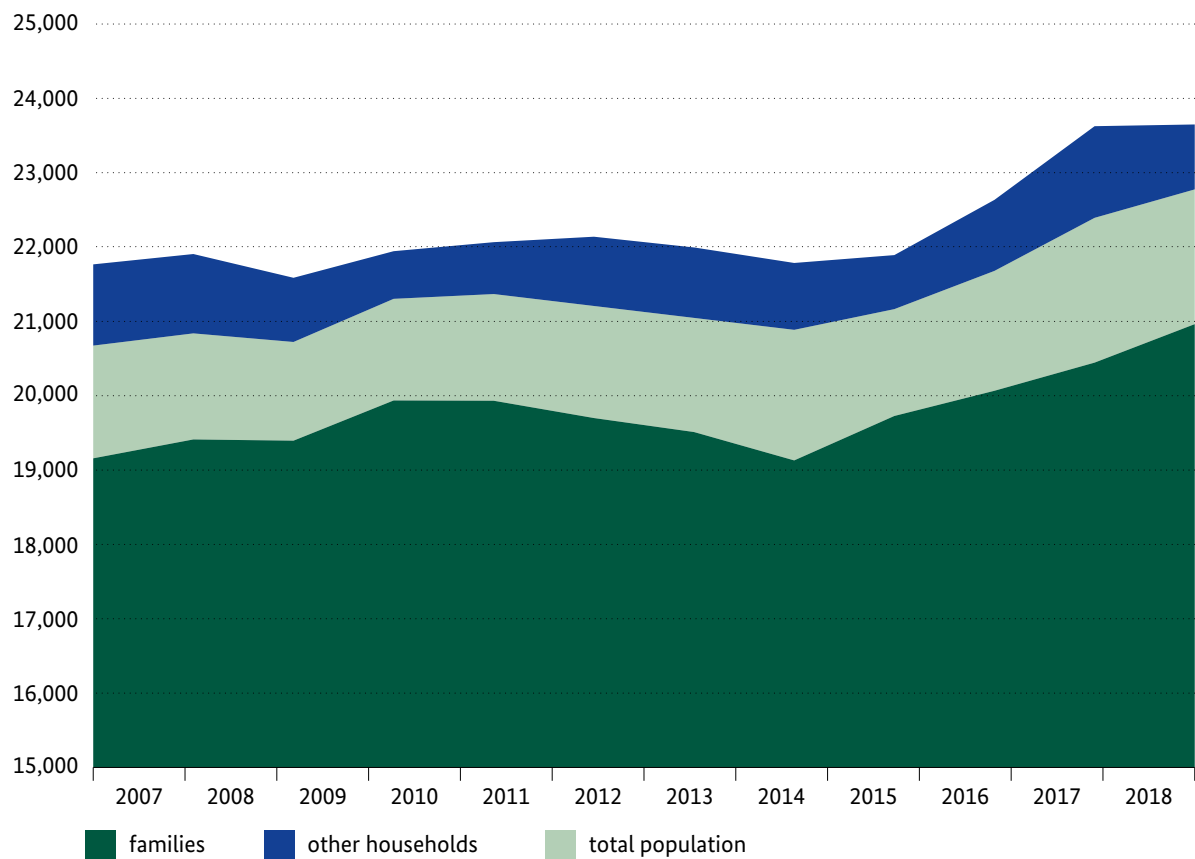


Source: SOEP v35 (survey year 2018, income from 2017), own calculations of Prognos AG.

A longer-term view also shows that families are not systematically worse off financially than childless households. This can be seen in the family income trend in comparison to the population. The income trend is shown using median income, the median of equivalised net income. The family income trend is influenced not only by general economic trends, but also by the possibilities of reconciling family and work and by government-provided family benefits. Overall, families have kept pace with the general economic development of childless households. Equivalised net income among families is almost always lower

than the income of childless households (Figure 64). Further analysis shows that this is attributable to the income of single-parent families. Single parents have a much lower equivalised income than childless households and two-parent families. Although the gap has been narrowed slightly by the reform of tax relief for single parents in 2015 and Maintenance Advance in 2017, the employment rate of single parents lags behind that of two-parent families, resulting in a lower median value for the income of single parents as a whole.

Figure 64: Income evolution among families with children under 18 relative to the total population and to households without underage children, 2007 to 2018, average equivalised net income, in euros, in 2011 prices



Source: SOEP v35, prior-year income, including rent payment assumptions for property-owning households. Own calculations of Prognos AG.

Education level also determines income

Income is also dependent on a person's education level. Particularly for mothers, educational attainment has a central influence on the capacity for and the extent of employment. While 73 percent and 74 percent of mothers with intermediate or high educational qualifications are in employment, only 43 percent of all mothers with low educational qualifications have work. In addition, mothers with a high level of education are significantly more likely to be in full-time or significant part-time employment. By contrast, the lower the educational level of mothers, the more widespread are marginal employment relationships.¹⁴⁵

3.2 Poverty risks for families

Poverty is a social phenomenon with many facets. It is essentially a lack of resources and opportunities to shape one's life. As a complex phenomenon, it eludes simple and clear measurement methods.¹⁴⁶ Even in the European Union, poverty or the risk of falling into poverty are described by various indicators.

For example, in the European Union, one important and meaningful indicator for measuring poverty is the proportion of households considered to be "materially deprived". This indicator reflects situations of deprivation and also helps to display the situation of families at risk of

¹⁴⁵ BMFSFJ (2020): (Existenzsichernde) Erwerbstätigkeit von Müttern, link: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/service/publikationen/-existenzsichernde--erwerbstaetigkeit-von-muettern/158748>

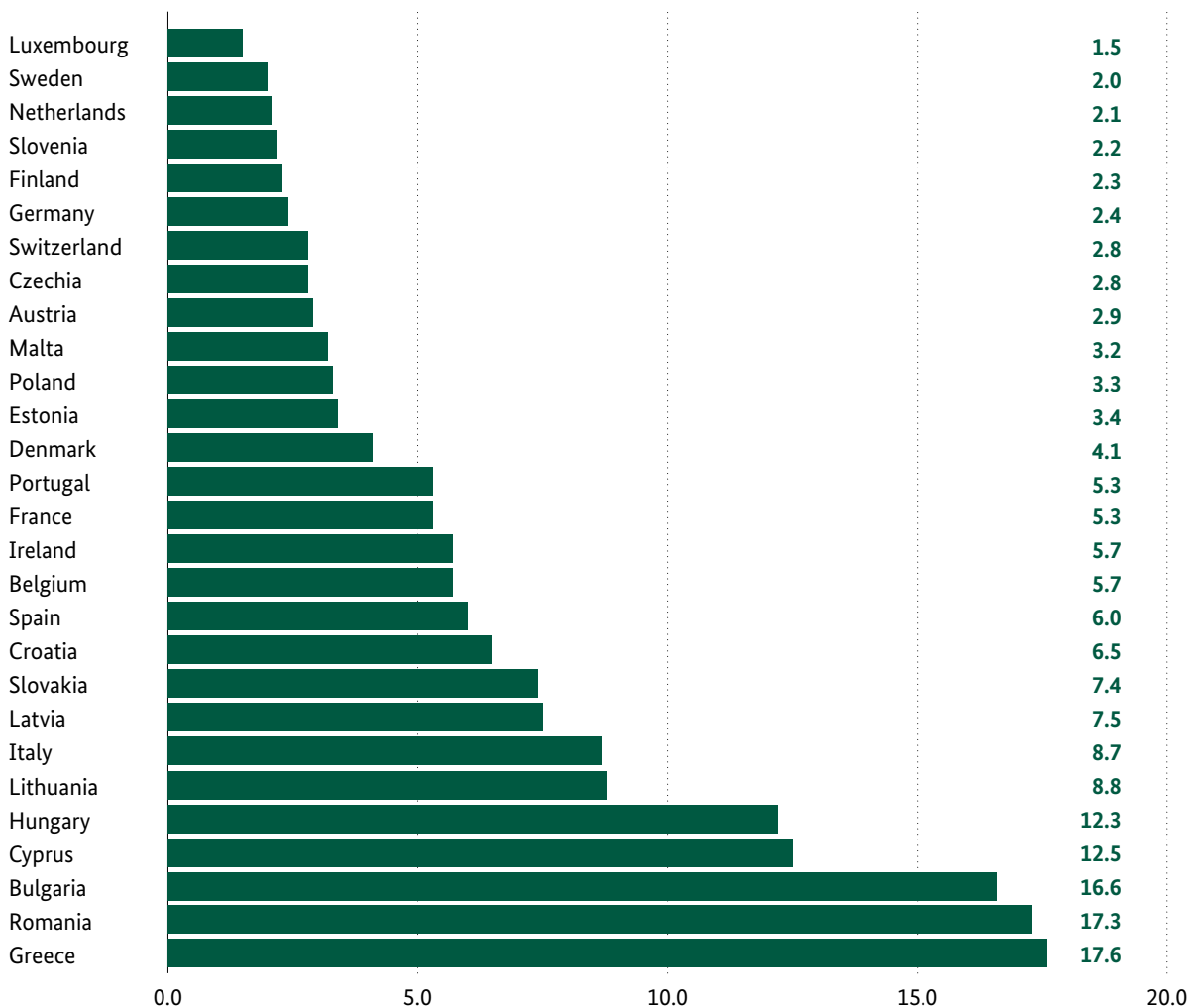
¹⁴⁶ cf. 5. Armuts- und Reichtumsbericht der Bundesregierung.

3 Economic situation of families

poverty.¹⁴⁷ The proportion of materially deprived households with dependent children was 2.4 percent in Germany in 2018, below the EU

average of 6.2 percent. Only Finland, Slovenia, Netherlands, Sweden and Luxembourg had a lower share in the EU (Figure 65).

Figure 65: Rate of significant material deprivation in households with dependent children relative to the EU, 2018, in percent



Source: Eurostat, based on the EU-SILC survey.

The at-risk-of-poverty rate is firmly established as a key measure in public discourse surrounding poverty. This indicator also shows that the vast majority of families are financially well off. However, depending on the data source, between

14.5 percent and 20.7 percent of children in Germany still grow up at risk of poverty. Precisely because of the importance of this measure, it must be emphasised that the at-risk-of-poverty rate is considered in complete detachment from individ-

¹⁴⁷ Significant material deprivation applies to all households that meet at least four of nine predefined criteria that reflect the household's financial constraints. The nine criteria are: Financial problems, 1. being able to pay rent, mortgage or utility bills on time, 2. being able to heat the home adequately, 3. being able to cover unexpected expenses to a certain level from their own financial resources, 4. being able to eat meat, fish or an equivalent vegetarian meal every other day, 5. being able to spend one week's vacation away from home every year, 6. not having a car, 7. not having a washing machine, 8. not having a colour TV, 9. not having a telephone in the household. The lack of the last four consumer goods is only considered a "disadvantage" if they cannot be purchased for financial reasons.

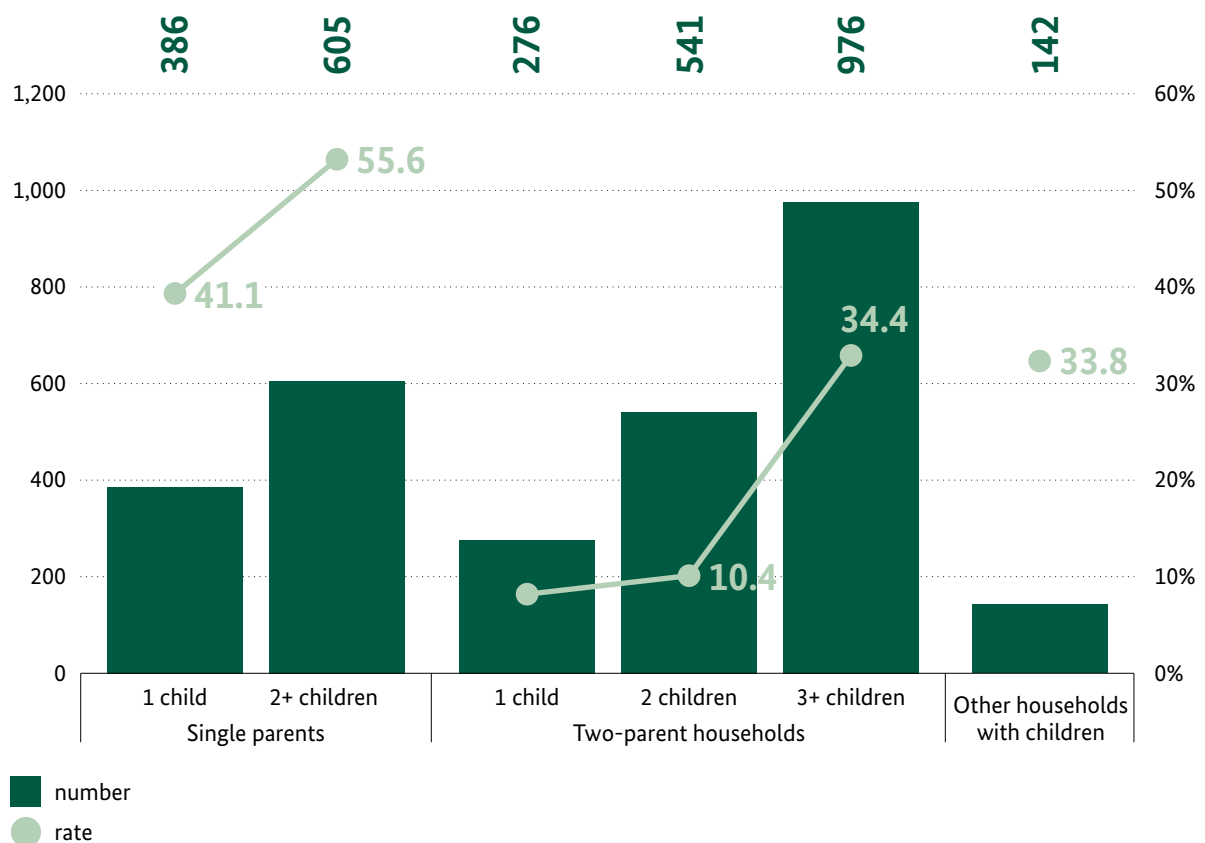
ual needs and acts as a statistical measure of income distribution.¹⁴⁸ There is a risk of poverty if the income of those affected is significantly below the average income of a society.

The at-risk-of-poverty rate can be used for analysis over time and for comparison between different family types or situations, despite the statistical uncertainties of the indicator. For example, Figure 66 shows that the at-risk-of-poverty rate of children differs significantly between family types on the one hand and by the number of children in the household on the other. Children of single parents are particularly often at risk of poverty.

For single parents with one child, the at-risk-of-poverty rate is 41.1 percent, for further children it rises as high as 55.6 percent (Figure 66).

In contrast, children from two-parent households are comparatively less at risk of poverty. For two-parent households with one or two children, the at-risk-of-poverty rates are 8.6 percent and 10.6 percent respectively. Multi-child families with three or more children are at relatively greater risk of poverty (34.4 percent). Here, household size plays an important role. The risk of poverty tends to increase with family size, as more persons have to live on the same income.

Figure 66: Number and proportion of children at risk of poverty, by family type and number of children, 2018, number at risk (left y-axis) and percentage at risk (right y-axis)



Source: SOEP v35 (survey year 2018, income from 2017), own calculations of Prognos AG.

148 The at-risk-of-poverty rate depends, among other things, on the underlying data basis, the reference range (usually 60 percent of average income) and the weighting of household members. At EU level, the national statistical institutes of the EU member states and Eurostat have agreed that the adult with the highest income receives a weighting of 1, every second person in the household aged 15 and over 0.5 and children under 15 0.3. The at-risk-of-poverty rate is a relative measure based on the average income of a society. If, in particular, average incomes fall as a result of the pandemic, the value of the at-risk-of-poverty threshold (60 percent of average income) also falls.

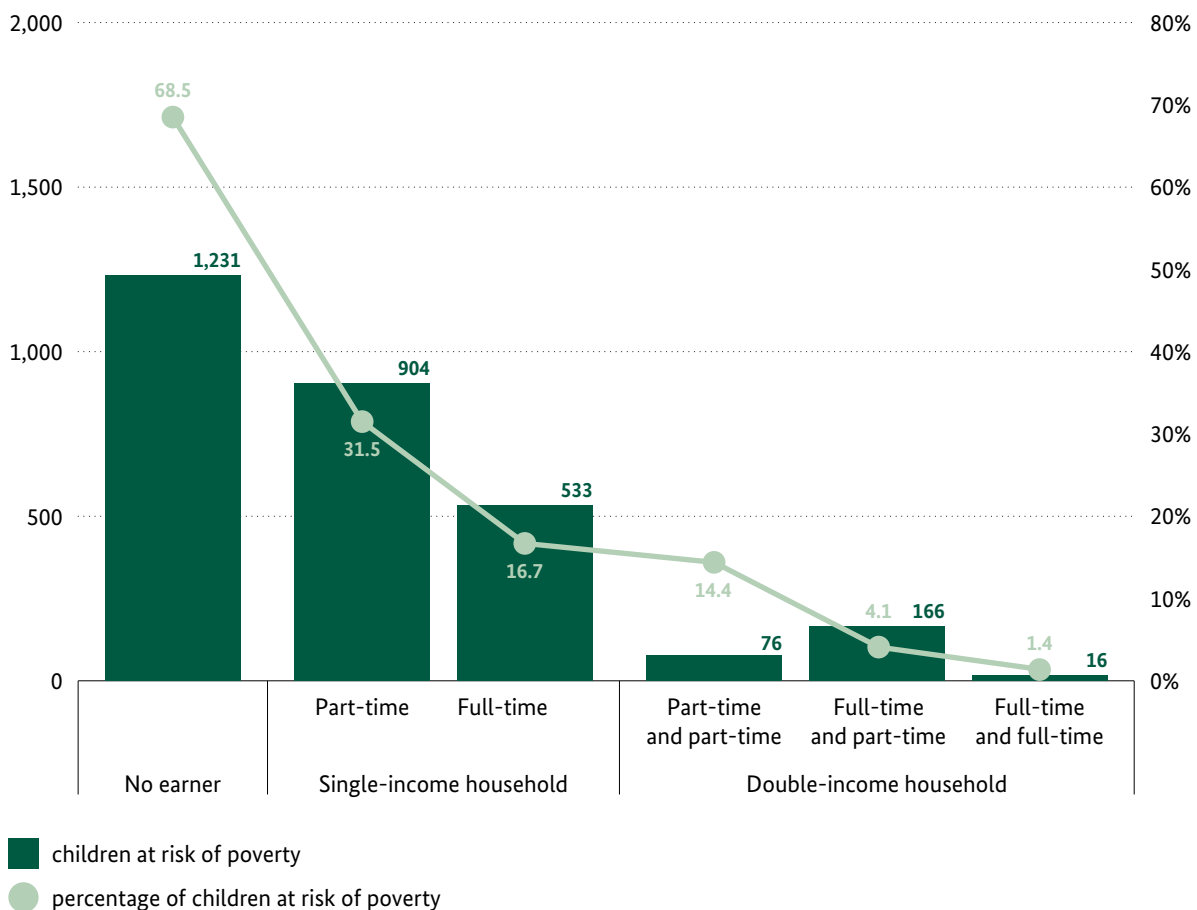
3 Economic situation of families

In all member states of the European Union, single parents face a higher risk of poverty than two-parent families. However, being a single parent is not intrinsically the reason for a higher risk of poverty. This is because the at-risk-of-poverty rate is determined on the basis of disposable income and not family type.

Accordingly, the deciding factor in avoiding the risk of poverty is the employment of the parents or the amount of work they do. This correlation

applies to both single parents and two-parent families. For example, the poverty risk for children from families where there is no adult in employment is 68.5 percent (Figure 67). If one parent works at least part-time, the risk of poverty more than halves – to 31.5 percent. A full-time job again almost halves the poverty risk significantly to just 16.7 percent. However, even in double-income households there may still be a risk of poverty. This is particularly the case if parents work for low wages or if a family has multiple children.

Figure 67: Children at risk of poverty based on parents' participation in the labour market and working hours, 2018, number at risk (left y-axis) and percentage at risk (right y-axis)



Source: SOEP v35 (survey year 2018, income from 2017), own calculations of Prognos AG.

Changing perspective also confirms the great importance that employment and working hours have for the risk of poverty. For around 45 percent of children at risk of poverty, both parents in their household do not work. For another 29 percent, only one parent works and then only part-time. Unemployment also explains the significantly higher risk of poverty for single-parent families relative to two-parent families with one or two children. About 43 percent of single parents were at risk of poverty and only about 10 percent of two-parent families with one or two children. Just over 90 percent of single parents are women; the employment rate among single mothers is about 70 percent, i.e. about 30 percent are unemployed. This explains a large part of the high risk of poverty for single parents. For two-parent

families, the unemployment rate is only 5 percent. The poverty risk thus also reflects the great importance of a good work-life balance for family financial stability.

In a European comparison, Germany's at-risk-of-poverty rate of 12.9 percent for households with dependent children in 2018 is below the EU average of 18.4 percent (Figure 68).¹⁴⁹ Social security and family benefits reduce the risk of poverty in Germany to just over half.¹⁵⁰ Countries such as Denmark (8.9 percent) and Finland (9.2 percent) as well as Czechia, Slovenia and Hungary had lower at-risk-of-poverty rates. The highest at-risk-of-poverty rates were found in Romania (27.0 percent), Spain (25.9 percent) and Bulgaria (23.4 percent).

Figure 68: Selected at-risk-of-poverty rates for households with dependent children in the EU, 2008 to 2018, in percent

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Austria	15.2	14.4	15.1	14.7	14.6	15.5	14.6	15.1	15.1	16.3	16.2
Denmark	7.9	9.0	9.5	8.9	8.5	7.9	8.2	8.6	7.9	8.3	8.9
European Union	17.9	17.8	18.5	18.6	18.8	18.8	19.4	19.4	19.1	18.6	18.4
Finland	10.5	10.8	10.2	10.3	9.5	8.1	9.1	8.8	8.0	8.4	9.2
France	14.0	14.8	15.7	16.6	16.8	16.2	16.0	16.5	16.8	16.3	16.5
Germany	13.1	13.0	14.6	13.7	13.5	13.2	13.7	13.2	13.5	13.3	12.9
Italy	21.8	21.5	23.1	24.2	24.0	23.1	23.6	24.4	24.6	24.8	n/a
Netherlands	10.2	12.7	11.0	13.0	10.9	10.5	11.9	12.3	12.7	12.9	12.1
Norway	8.0	9.5	9.2	7.8	7.1	8.8	8.5	9.1	10.1	10.8	n/a
Romania	26.5	25.7	26.2	27.8	29.0	28.7	32.0	31.8	30.8	28.1	27.0
Spain	23.4	24.8	25.2	23.8	25.8	25.9	28.0	27.4	27.7	26.3	25.9
Sweden	13.2	13.7	15.0	15.6	15.5	15.9	15.5	15.6	16.1	16.5	16.1

Source: Eurostat, based on EU-SILC and ECHP surveys, own presentation of Prognos AG. No data are available for Italy and Norway for 2018.

¹⁴⁹ The reported at-risk-of-poverty rates of children vary, sometimes considerably, depending on the data source. For a meaningful comparison of different countries it is therefore important to have a comparable data basis. An EU comparison is possible with data from the Statistical Office of the European Union (eurostat).

¹⁵⁰ Prognos (2014): Gesamtevaluation der ehe- und familienbezogenen Maßnahmen und Leistungen.

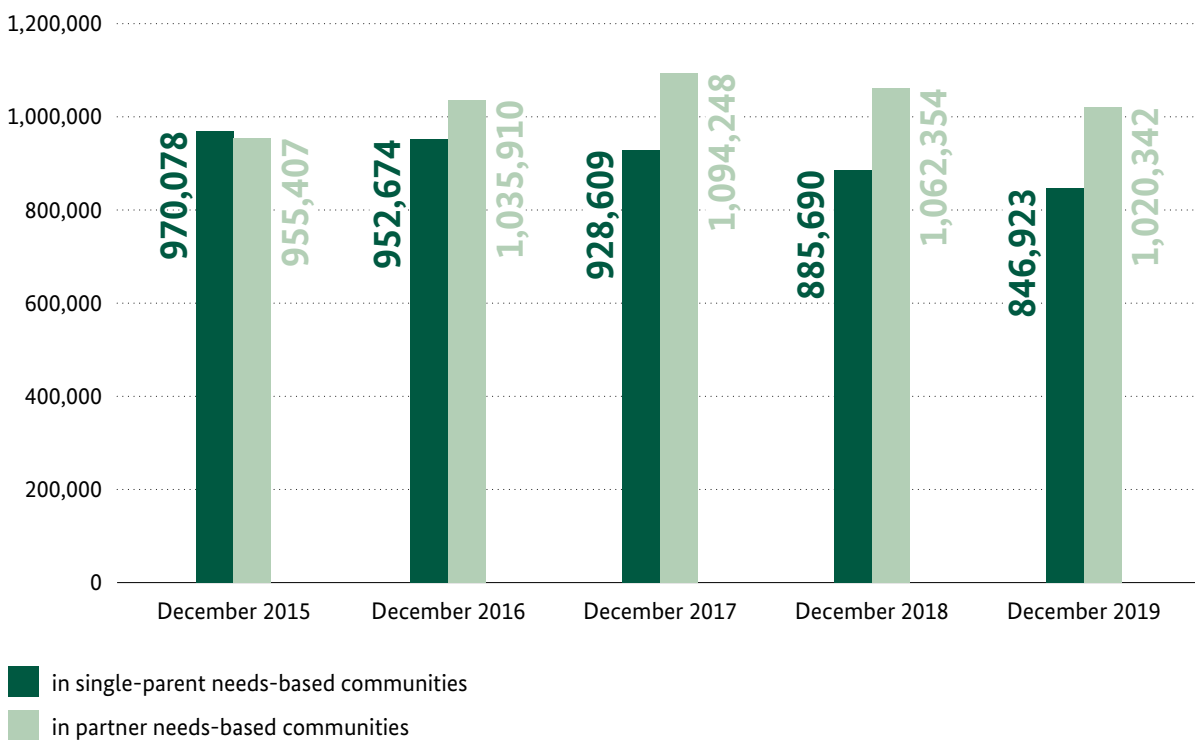
3 Economic situation of families

As described above, there is a risk of poverty if the income of the parents is significantly below the average income in a society. By contrast, the standard needs rate according to the SGB define the socio-cultural subsistence level, based on the expenditure of the lower 15 percent or 20 percent of income earners. This standard indicates the minimum necessary for a decent life in Germany. Although the number of persons or households receiving basic income support according to the SGB cannot be used as a measure of the extent of poverty or the risk of poverty, this figure nevertheless attracts considerable attention in the public debate. The mere fact that the minimum subsistence level is guaranteed for these households means that the number of households receiving basic income support for jobseekers cannot be used as a measure of poverty. In addition, households with persons in employment can also receive basic income support to cover subsistence costs (under the basic provision for jobseekers).

These households have an income above the minimum subsistence level because of the allowances for those in employment.

In 2019, some 996,000 needs-based communities/joint households (*Bedarfsgemeinschaften*) with children under 18 years of age received basic income support. Just under 527,000 of these families were single-parent families, while around 469,000 were partner needs-based communities (*Partner-Bedarfsgemeinschaft*) with children. Since 2014, the number of single-parent needs-based communities has fallen continuously by almost 100,000. In a comparison between 2014 and 2019, the number of partner needs-based communities has remained almost the same, although there have been large fluctuations from year to year. A look at the number of children receiving basic income support shows that, over time, single parents have made less use of basic income support (see Figure 69).

Figure 69: Children under 18* in single-parent needs-based communities and partner needs-based communities, figures for the month of December, 2015 to 2019, absolute



*unmarried minors under 18 years of age residing in needs-based communities/joint households

Source: Bundesagentur für Arbeit (2019): Statistik, Tables: Kinder in Bedarfsgemeinschaften (Monatszahlen).

The importance of gainful employment and the amount of work is also evident within the basic income support scheme. Of the approximately 555,000 single parents who receive basic income support, only just under 33 percent were in gainful employment, while only 19 percent were subject to social security contributions. This means that slightly more than 80 percent of the single parents receiving basic income support were not in employment subject to social security contributions. This is one of the main reasons why financial support is necessary.

3.3 Mothers in employment

In order to ensure stable safeguards, families depend not only on effective family benefits, but above all, on employment to secure their livelihood – this applies to mothers and fathers alike. Since families in which only one parent is employed or contributes the majority of the family income can quickly fall into crisis and face a higher risk of poverty if the primary or sole earner is unable to work, families are best secured if both parents are in gainful employment¹⁵¹ which can secure their livelihood.

In the majority of families today, both parents are employed. For the majority of mothers, employment is now a matter of course (see Chapter 4.1). However, it is still usually the mothers who reduce their working hours over a longer period of time in order to reconcile their family with work. This also has an impact on their career opportunities and possibilities for securing their livelihood.

In addition to personal attitudes and social norms and political parameters, the age and number of children and educational attainment have a strong

influence on a mother's labour market participation. The younger the youngest child in the household and the more (young) children living in the household, the lower the labour market participation of the mothers.¹⁵² The better the education, the more often, earlier and more extensively they return to their jobs.

Better reconcilability for both parents means greater mother participation in workforce

Better parameters for reconciling work and family life, mainly through the increased expansion of childcare facilities, have enabled and encouraged employment growth. In addition, the introduction of Parental Allowance in 2007 in particular has created opportunities and incentives for fathers to become more involved in childcare and for mothers to take a shorter career break after the birth of a child.¹⁵³

Rate of mothers in employment growing steadily since 2007

In 2018, 69 percent of mothers of underage children were in employment (compared to 60 percent in 2006), with mothers in single-parent families employed at a similar frequency to mothers in two-parent families. Of mothers with one or two children, about 70 percent were in employment in 2018, compared to about half of mothers with three or more children.

The employment rate of mothers in Germany whose youngest child is under 6 years of age does not differ from the EU average – it is around 64 percent (Figure 70).¹⁵⁴ The highest employment rates are found in Portugal (80 percent), Slovenia (82 percent) and Sweden (84 percent), and the lowest in Czechia (44 percent), Slovakia and Hungary (43 percent).

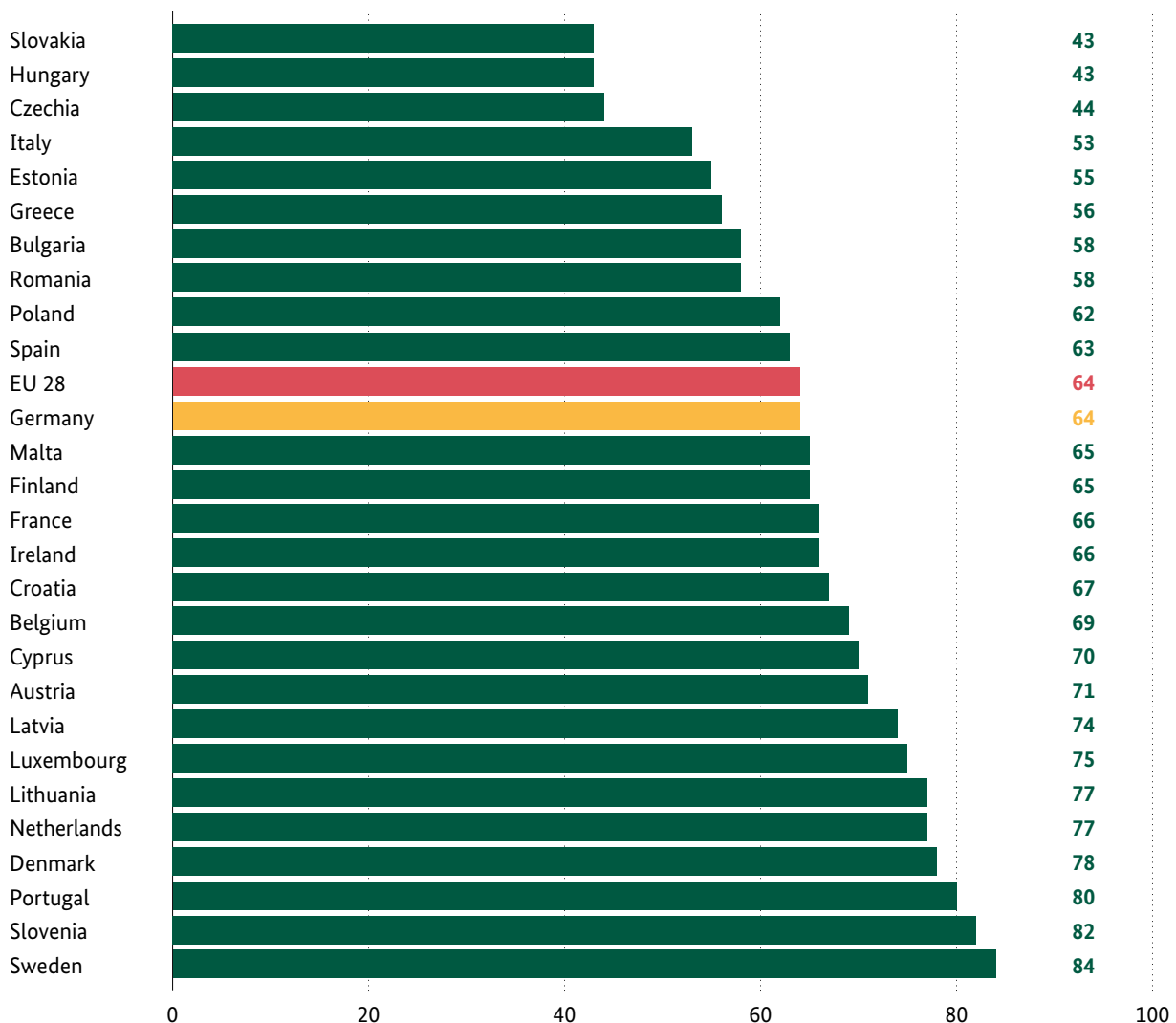
151 For the concept for measuring the employment of mothers to secure their livelihood, see BMFSFJ (2020): (Existenzsichernde) Erwerbstätigkeit von Müttern: Konzepte, Entwicklungen, Perspektiven. Monitor Familienforschung, No. 41. The concept defined in this publication aims to secure the livelihood of mothers in the short term. The defined livelihood threshold comprises the standard requirement for single mothers, a flat-rate housing allowance and a basic allowance for employed persons, amounting to around €900 net per month.

152 Matthias Keller, Irene Kahle (2018): Realisierte Erwerbstätigkeit von Müttern und Vätern zur Vereinbarkeit von Familie und Beruf, link: https://www.destatis.de/DE/Methoden/WISTA-Wirtschaft-und-Statistik/2018/03/realisierte-erwerbsstaetigkeit-032018.pdf?__blob=publicationFile; BMFSFJ (2020).

153 Ulrike Unterhofer, Clara Welteke et. al. (2017): Elterngeld hat soziale Normen verändert, in: DIW Weekly Report No. 34/2017; OECD (2017): Dare to Share. Germany's Experience Promoting Equal Partnership in Families; Svenja Pfahl, Stefan Reuyß et. al. (2014): Nachhaltige Effekte der Elterngeldnutzung durch Väter – Gleichstellungspolitische Auswirkungen der Inanspruchnahme von Elterngeldmonaten durch erwerbstätige Väter auf betrieblicher und partnerschaftlicher Ebene.

154 Eurostat, online database.

Figure 70: Rate of employment among mothers in the EU with a youngest child under 6, 2019



Source: Eurostat (Table Ifst_hheredch; data for 2019), own presentation.

In Germany, as in Europe as a whole, starting a family has a greater impact on the employment of mothers (and here more on the scope of the labour force than on labour participation in itself) than on that of fathers. In all EU countries, well over 50 percent of mothers reduce their working hours to take care of their children.¹⁵⁵

In Germany, most of those returning to work are part-time employees and go back when their children are very young.¹⁵⁶ By the time their

youngest child is 2 years old, most mothers are back at work. In 2018, this was true for 61 percent of mothers (as against 42 percent in 2006; see Figure 72). For a majority of mothers in Germany, it is common today to be in employment even with small children.

In 2018, a total of around 60 percent of all working mothers whose youngest child was under 18 were employed on a part-time basis.¹⁵⁷ However, the concept of part-time work can comprise very

¹⁵⁵ Eurostat (online data code: Ifso_18ceffed). In doing so, the nationally differing context conditions for the compatibility of family and work (e.g. availability of childcare facilities, part-time work) must be taken into account.

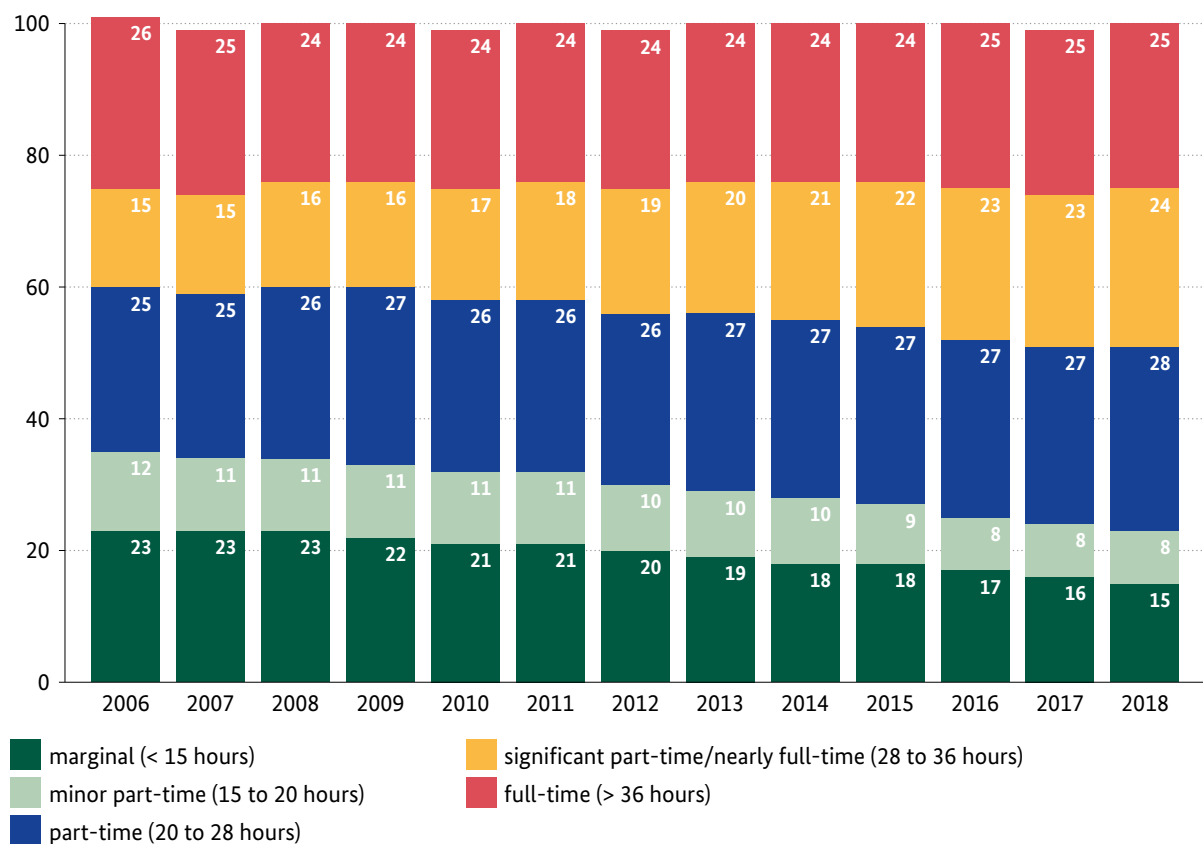
¹⁵⁶ Cf. BMFSFJ (2020): (Existenzsichernde) Erwerbstätigkeit von Müttern: Konzepte, Entwicklungen. Monitor Familienforschung, No. 41

¹⁵⁷ Calculations by Prognos AG based on the Microcensus 2018, concept of realised gainful employment. In this context, part-time employment means working hours between 15 and less than 36 hours per week.

different levels of employment and models for the distribution of working hours. Today, more than ten years after the introduction of Parental Allowance, more and more mothers of underage children are working part-time beyond the classic half-day job and less and less in marginal employment (fewer than 15 hours per week). About one

in four working mothers of underage children was in nearly full-time employment in 2018 (between 28 and 36 hours per week; 24 percent) and slightly more worked part-time between 20 and 28 hours per week (28 percent). In 2018, every fourth mother of underage children worked full-time (Figure 71).

Figure 71: Realised gainful employment* of mothers whose youngest child was under 18 and in their household, 2006 to 2018, by weekly workload, in percent



*The term "actual gainful employment" has meanwhile replaced the term "realised gainful employment" which was formerly used in family reporting in official statistics. It considers persons who are usually in gainful employment to be gainfully employed. The only exceptions are persons who have interrupted their previous employment due to maternity or parental leave. The actual labour force participation of parents with a youngest child under 3 years of age is thus recorded more realistically (see Tim Hochgürtel (2018): Realisierte Erwerbstätigkeit zur Messung des Vereinbarkeitsarrangements von Familie und Beruf, in: WISTA – Economy and Statistics, 3, 2018, pp. 54–71).

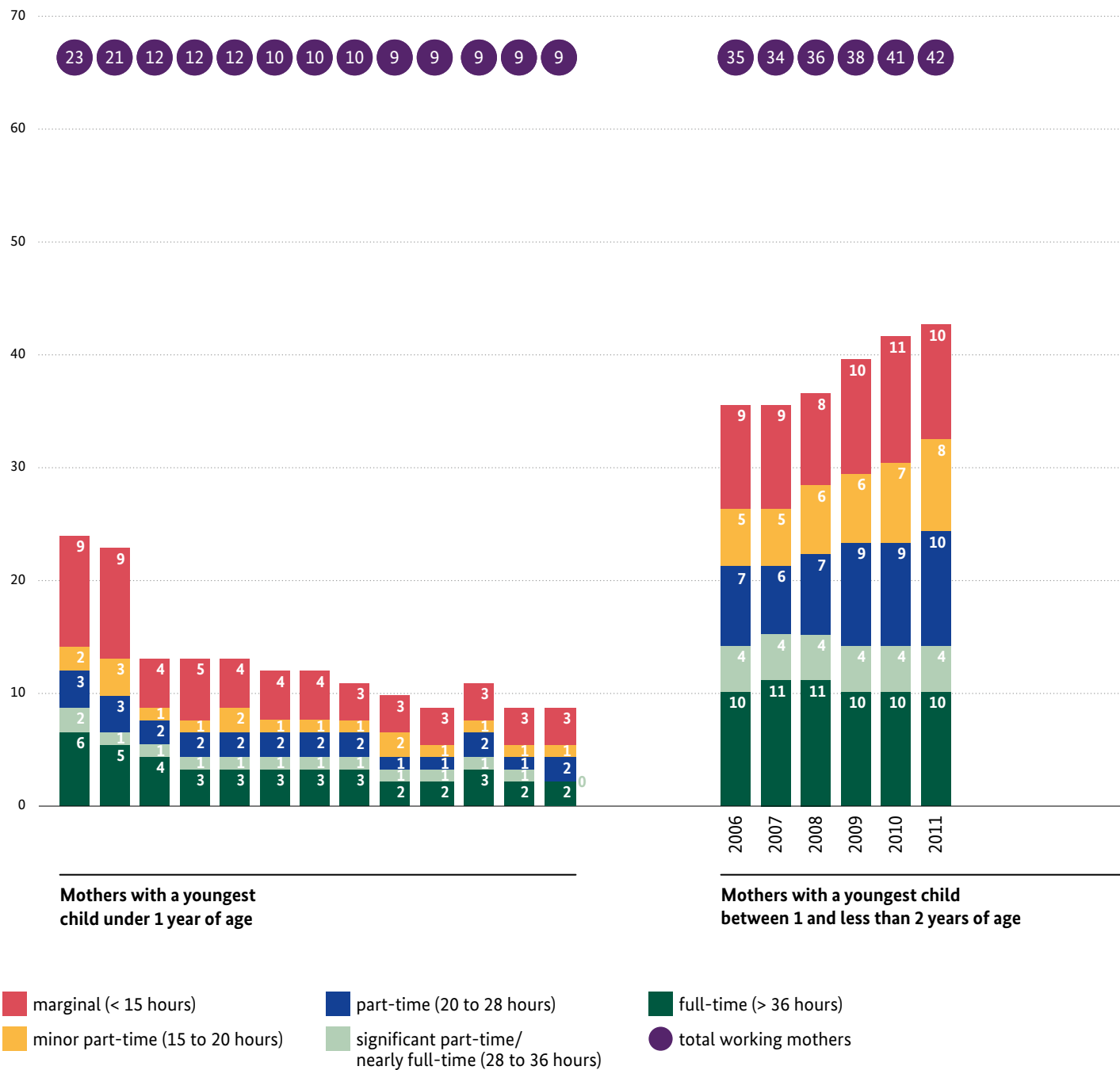
Data basis: Mikrozensus Sonderauswertung, calculation of Prognos AG. Values different from 100 due to rounding.

Employment of more than 20 hours per week and, above all, nearly full-time employment became more important in the period from 2006 to 2018 – for mothers of underage children overall – and significant part-time employment especially for mothers whose youngest child was 2. For the latter, the trend towards higher levels of employ-

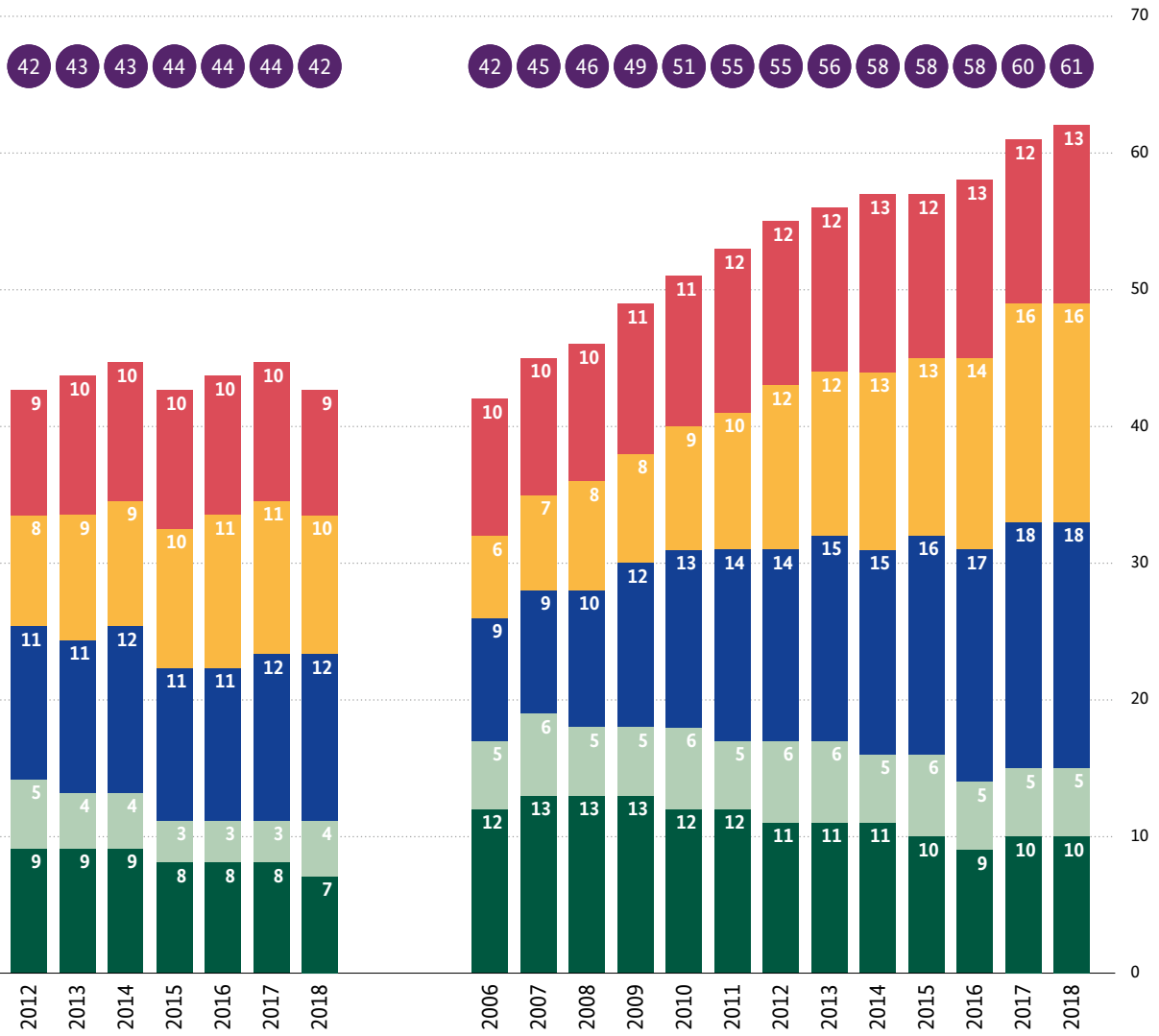
ment is particularly clear. Between 2006 and 2018, the share of mothers whose youngest child was 2 and were working in significant part-time more than doubled (from 6 percent to 16 percent); for part-time employment of over 20 and under 28 hours per week, it doubled (from 9 percent to 18 percent) (Figure 72).

3 Economic situation of families

Figure 72: Evolution of realised gainful employment among mothers, 2006 to 2018, by weekly working hours and age of youngest child up to 3 years of age, in percent



Data basis: Mikrozensus Sonderauswertung, calculation of Prognos AG.



Mothers with a youngest child
between 2 and less than 3 years of age

In 2018, the average weekly working hours for working mothers were 26.7 hours per week, 2 hours more than in 2006 (24.7). Working mothers in eastern Germany worked on average more hours per week than mothers in western Germany (average 33.0 relative to 25.1 hours per week).¹⁵⁸

Mothers in nearly full-time jobs almost always able to earn a livelihood

Although there is a clear trend towards higher participation of mothers in the labour market, the question remains as to what extent the employment of mothers also enables them to be financially independent of their partner. This question is particularly relevant given the fact that part-time work is often maintained for several years. In the event of separation or divorce, and also in old age, women often become exposed to a risk of poverty.¹⁵⁹

Single mothers in particular often have to take a job that provides a livelihood to safeguard the family income over the long term. However, the economic stability of two-parent families is also greater over the long term if both mothers and fathers are employed in jobs that provide a livelihood, as they are better protected in times of crisis (e.g. loss of income due to illness, short-time work or unemployment of one partner). In comparison to working fathers, of whom around 96 percent¹⁶⁰ have a job providing a livelihood, mothers are significantly less frequently able to earn a livelihood. Depending on the data source used, around 65 percent (SOEP, 2017) or 74 percent (Microcensus, 2018) of working mothers earn a living wage. The reason for this is that mothers are less likely to be in employment and more likely to be employed on lower hours.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, the proportion of mothers with a living wage from gainful employment has increased in recent years,

from around 57 percent in 2011 to around 65 percent in 2017.¹⁶²

Whether mothers can financially secure the necessities of life in the “here and now”, i.e. in the short term, depends largely on their income level. While almost all mothers in full-time or nearly full-time work manage to cross the subsistence threshold (96 and 93 percent respectively), this is only the case for 19 percent of mothers in marginal employment¹⁶³.

The deciding factor is therefore whether mothers achieve a minimum income through their (part-time) employment with which they can support their households. Assuming an hourly wage at the statutory minimum wage of €8.84 (2018), 23.5 hours of work per week is necessary to achieve a living wage.

Given the importance of greater working hours for the individual livelihood of mothers, the trend towards higher part-time employment levels is particularly significant. This is because low working hours are often associated with poorer opportunities for career progression and thus individual and family security. Only higher working hours with good wages offer mothers effective long-term protection against poverty risks and also provide better security for families. Accordingly, the aim of family policy is to increase the proportion of working mothers with a living wage to 80 percent by 2030¹⁶⁴. For this purpose, it is necessary to continue to support and promote a more equal division of gainful employment and family work between mothers and fathers, as the time available for gainful employment depends on how parents share their childcare and parenting duties.

158 BMFSFJ (2020): (Existenzsichernde) Erwerbstätigkeit von Müttern: Konzepte, Entwicklungen, Perspektiven. Monitor Familienforschung, No. 41.

159 Bertelsmann Stiftung (2015): Demographie konkret – Altersarmut in Deutschland; StaFederal Bureau of Germany (2018): Alleinerziehende in Deutschland 2017, link: https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressekonferenzen/2018/Alleinerziehende/pressebroschuere-alleinerziehende.pdf;jsessionid=128F2F72DF0C8C683229B57183E84360.internet8731?__blob=publicationFile

160 According to SOEP (2017), see BMFSFJ (2019): Agenda 2030 – Nachhaltige Familienpolitik; BMFSFJ (2020): (Existenzsichernde) Erwerbstätigkeit von Müttern. Konzepte, Entwicklungen, Perspektiven. Monitor Familienforschung, No. 41.

161 *ibid.*

162 *ibid.*, SOEP data from 2011 and 2017.

163 *ibid.* Nearly full-time is defined as working hours from 28 up to and including 36 per week, full-time as over 36, with a marginally employed person working up to 15 hours per week.

164 Of about 65 percent (SOEP (2017)), see BMFSFJ (2019): Agenda 2030 – Nachhaltige Familienpolitik, link: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/blob/142626/e593258f01dcb25041e3645db9ceaa5b/agenda-2030-langfassung-data.pdf>

Employment arrangements in two-parent families: most follow the dual-income model

In recent years, dual incomes in two-parent families have become increasingly important. In 2018, the majority of all two-parent families in Germany (65 percent) had both parents in employment (up 9 percentage points on 2006) (Figure 73). By contrast, the share of two-parent families in which both parents are inactive has fallen (minus 4 percentage points) and the male single income model has lost importance (minus 5 percentage points).¹⁶⁵ This corresponds to the thinking of today's parents and is also attributable to the strongly changed role model of fathers. Whereas a generation ago, fathers' expectations were mainly to be the breadwinner of the family, today the time spent together with the children and the support of the working partner play a major role.¹⁶⁶

Accordingly, the single-income model is now only prevalent among just under one in four families with underage children and is particularly widespread among couples with very young children and those with three or more children.¹⁶⁷ The single-income model is most common in couples with a youngest child under 1 year of age (78 per-

cent), in only one in three families (31 percent) with a youngest child aged 2 and in only one in five families (21 percent) with a youngest child between 3 and 6.

In 2018, both parents were in full-time employment in 13 percent of two-parent families. Double full-time employment of both parents in two-parent families is much more common in eastern Germany than in western Germany (27 percent versus 10 percent) – irrespective of the age of the child. In 2018, for example, 14 percent of couples with a youngest child under 3 years of age and 27 percent of couples with a youngest child aged between 3 and under 6 were in full-time employment simultaneously. By contrast, the figures for couples with children of the same age in western Germany were only 5 percent and 8 percent respectively.¹⁶⁸

In almost half of two-parent families with underage children (45 percent), the employment arrangement is “father full-time, mother part-time” (see Figure 73); in other European countries, this model for coupled parents is much less frequent and double full-time employment more frequent.¹⁶⁹

165 BMFSFJ (2020): (Existenzsichernde) Erwerbstätigkeit von Müttern. Konzepte, Entwicklungen. Monitor Familienforschung, No. 41.

166 IfD Allensbach (2019): Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Familienpolitik.

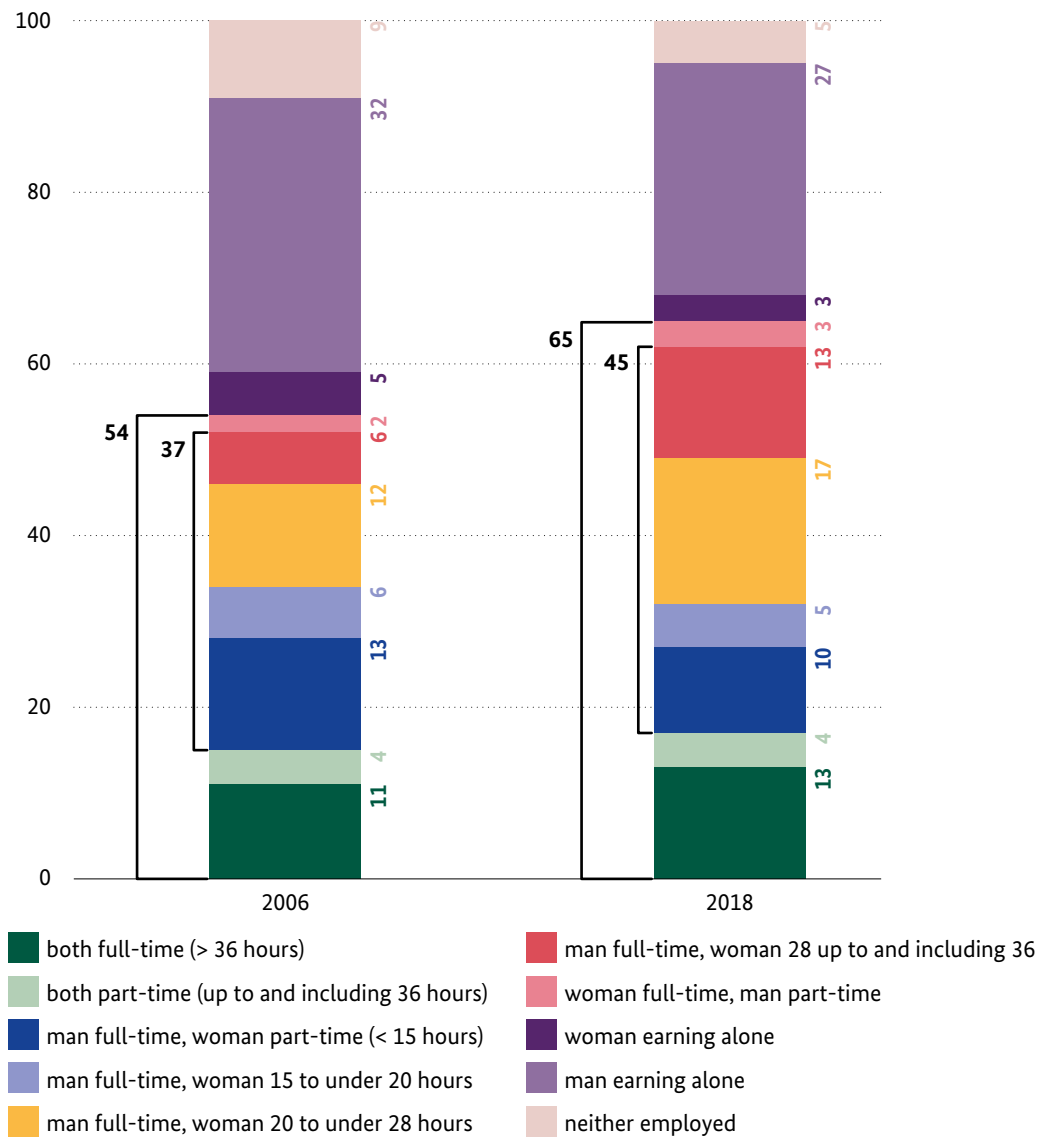
167 BMFSFJ (2020): (Existenzsichernde) Erwerbstätigkeit von Müttern. Konzepte, Entwicklungen, Perspektiven. Monitor Familienforschung, No. 41.

168 *ibid.*

169 OECD (2017): Dare to Share. Deutschlands Weg zur Partnerschaftlichkeit in Familie und Beruf, link: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/service/publikationen/dare-to-share-deutschlands-weg-zur-partnerschaftlichkeit-in-familie-und-beruf-114266>

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Figure 73: Employment arrangements among couples with children under 18 in their household, 2006 and 2018, in percent



Data basis: Mikrozensus Sonderauswertung, calculation of Prognos AG.

Today, however, working mothers in two-parent families in Germany are more likely to work more hours and less likely to have marginal employment. The share of households in which mothers work between 20 and under 36 hours has risen significantly between 2006 and 2018 from 18 percent to 30 percent, while the share of households in which mothers work up to a maximum of 20 hours has fallen from 19 percent to 15 percent¹⁷⁰.

There are many reasons for the “man full-time, woman part-time” arrangement, which is often not in harmony with the widespread desire for equal sharing of family and work duties between parents. In addition to individual attitudes, individual time and childcare needs, especially of mothers, as well as a lack of suitable childcare facilities and financial considerations¹⁷¹. For example, the pay gap between men and women means that young families often decide for

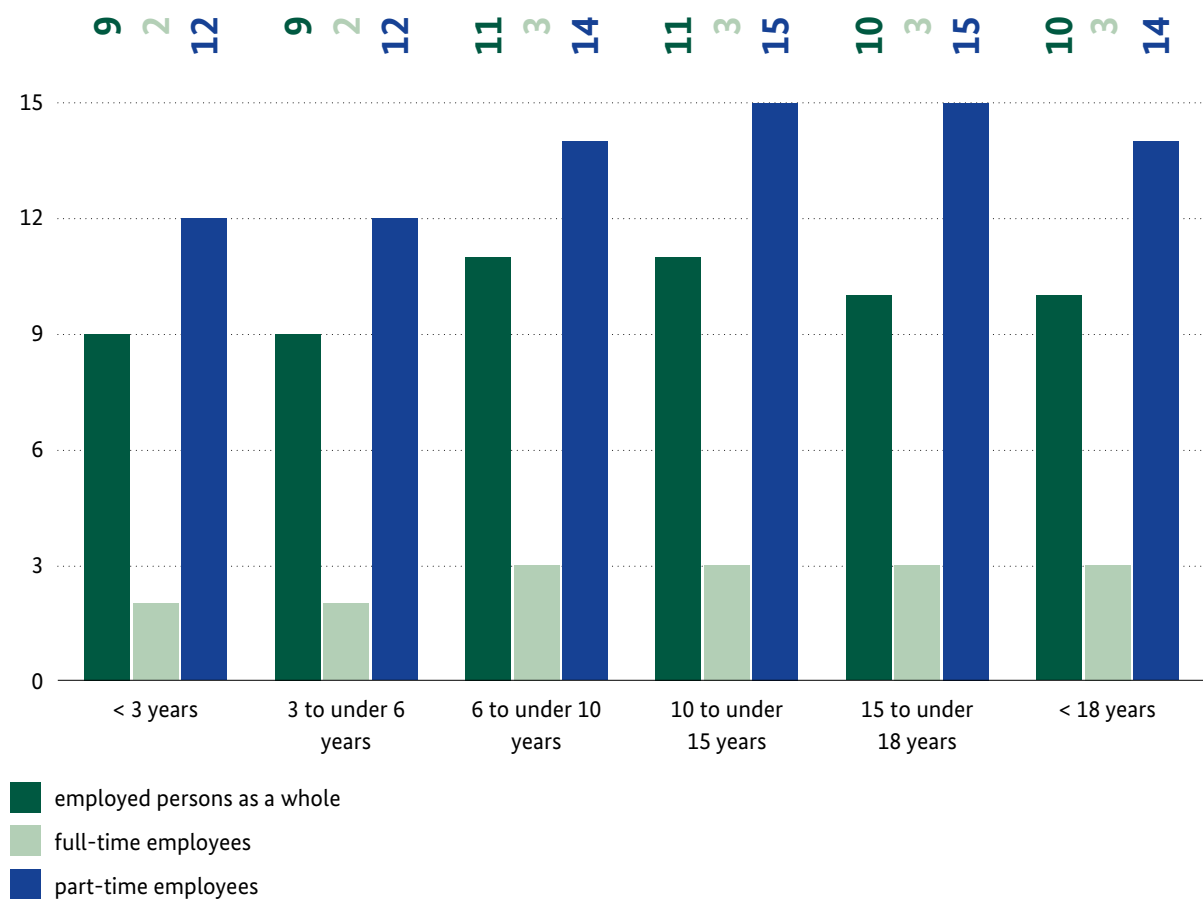
¹⁷⁰ ibid.

¹⁷¹ IfD (2015): Weichenstellungen für die Aufgabenteilung in Familie und Beruf.

financial reasons that only the mother should reduce her working hours. On average, women still earn less per hour worked than men and are more often in marginal employment. In view of the negative effects on income and security in old age, it is crucially important that mothers have employment that provides a livelihood (especially in the event of separation or divorce).¹⁷² However it is often difficult for mothers to return to higher working hours. Many part-time mothers would

like to work more (14 percent). This wish increases as their youngest child ages. Single mothers have a much stronger desire to increase their working hours (28 percent) than mothers in two-parent families (11 percent) and this desire is less dependent on the age of their youngest child. On average, part-time working mothers would like to increase their working time by 12 hours per week, irrespective of their family form (see Figure 74).¹⁷³

Figure 74: Employed mothers who want to increase their working hours, by age of youngest child and current working hours, in percent



Source: Mikrozensus Sonderauswertung. Calculation of Prognos AG.

¹⁷² BMFSFJ (2020): (Existenzsichernde) Erwerbstätigkeit von Müttern. Konzepte, Entwicklungen, Perspektiven. Monitor Familienforschung, No. 41.

¹⁷³ *ibid.*

While partners in two-parent families can support each other share work and family responsibilities, there are special challenges for single parents (see also Single and Separate Parents in Chapter 2.2).

Mothers with a migrant background

In Germany, every second mother with a migrant background is in employment (58 percent), and they are thus the least active group on the labour market. At the same time, their potential for employment is high. Of the 1.12 million mothers with a migrant background who are not employed, 80 percent would “definitely” or “probably” like to be employed again, while as many as

48 percent wish to be employed immediately or in the coming year. Almost three-quarters of mothers, whether with or without a migrant background, wish to work part-time.

There are various hurdles that prevent mothers with a migrant background from taking up employment, e.g. limited recognition of foreign university or vocational qualifications, inadequate language skills for the local labour market or a traditional division of roles within the family.



ESF federal programme:

Strong in the Work Place – Migrant Mothers Get on Board.

There are 580,000 mothers with a migrant background in Germany who would like to enter the labour market immediately or within a year. The ESF federal programme “Strong in the Work Place – Migrant Mothers Get on Board” of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs provides them with comprehensive support. By being given targeted support, two out of three participants either obtain a qualification that introduces them to the labour market or find employment.

How Strong in the Work Place works



Around 90 contact points throughout Germany support mothers with a migrant background on their way into the world of work. Local contact points can be found on this map: <https://www.starkimberuf.de/praxis/projektstandorte>



Counselling, coaching, qualifications, language courses – the contact points provide individual support to mothers looking for work.



The contact points offer something that individual women often do not have: an overview of funding and support options, of the regional labour market and of ways to find a job.



A good network is what it takes: The contact points cooperate closely with partners in the community to ensure the best possible case-related support system. Each contact point has the local Jobcenter or employment agency as an obligatory partner; other partners (including (further) education and vocational training providers, migrant organisations, language course providers, the IQ Network and cultural institutions) are consulted according to individual needs.



The programme has reached 14,000 mothers so far, with almost 28 percent having a refugee background. Of the mothers with a migrant background who have completed the programme, 36 percent found a job (that pays social security contributions) or vocational training (as at October 2020).

Further information about the federal programme can be found at: www.starkimberuf.de

3.4 Public opinion

Not all families have benefited equally from the generally positive economic developments since 2005 (see Chapter 3.1).¹⁷⁴ Families experience their own economic situation as well as the career opportunities for their own children and the social permeability of society, in different ways. Of the 8 million families with a total of 13 million underage children in Germany, around 1 million families with an approximate total of 2 million children have little money at their disposal, despite their parents' gainful employment, and live just above the threshold for basic income support (under SGB II). Among them are many single parents, two-parent families with three or more children, but also those with one or two children. As in all families, these families also attach importance to the positive development and support of their children. However, their everyday life is often characterised by financial insecurity, worry and the challenge of enabling a good upbringing for their children. A caring welfare state bears a special responsibility in this respect.

Perception of the economic situation

Citizens in Germany rate their household finances as above average relative to the rest of Europe. In autumn 2019, a majority of 85 percent of citizens in Germany rated the financial situation of their household as "good", while only a minority of 13 percent rated it as "bad". On average in the EU, the proportion of those who rate their situation as "bad" is much higher at 25 percent, while the proportion of citizens who rate their situation as "good" is much lower at 73 percent.¹⁷⁵

The majority of the middle generation in Germany, which includes many parents, has also had positive financial experiences in recent years.¹⁷⁶ In 2018, 56 percent of people in this generation were generally satisfied with their material situation and only 12 percent dissatisfied.¹⁷⁷ Whereas in total almost half (49 percent) of parents of underage children in 2018 said that they were economically better off than five years prior, a nuanced analysis shows clear differences according to social and economic status.¹⁷⁸ Almost twice as many parents with a high socio-economic status relative to parents with a low status report that their economic situation has improved in the last five years (62 percent relative to 36 percent).

Conversely, it is particularly likely for parents of a low status to say that their situation has worsened, at 31 percent relative to 9 percent of parents with a high status.¹⁷⁹

Almost half of parents with a low socio-economic status (47 percent) also stated that they did not expect their situation to change and almost one in three said that they could not assess their long-term economic situation.¹⁸⁰

Perception of opportunities for advancement and social permeability in society

Citizens in Germany believe more than the EU average that they have the same chances as everyone else to make progress in life, at 70 percent versus 58 percent. Education is also more often considered "extremely important" for success in Germany, at 56 percent in Germany compared to 33 percent in the EU 28.¹⁸¹

174 Prognos AG (2018): Familien mit kleinen Einkommen wirksam unterstützen.

175 Eurobarometer (2019): Standard Eurobarometer 92, Germany fact sheet, link: <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/standard/surveyky/2255>. See also quality of life index, satisfaction with finances (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/infographs/qol/index_en.html).

176 See Allensbach, Generation Mitte Studien 2017, 2018, 2019.

177 Allensbach (2018): Generation Mitte 2018 (lecture by Professor Köcher, press conference on 19 September 2018).

178 The differentiation between high, medium and low is based on different variables (education, occupation and net income of the primary income earner).

179 Allensbach (2018): Sonderauswertung Generation Mitte 2018 (unpublished).

180 *ibid.*

181 Eurobarometer (2017): Special Eurobarometer 471: Fairness, inequality and inter-generational mobility, Germany fact sheet.

However, social permeability is assessed differently depending on status. In Germany, a broad majority of parents in the middle generation aged between 30 and 50 consider it important to very important (40 and 23 percent respectively) that their own children achieve more than they do, i.e. that they move up socially. It is not surprising that parents with a low socio-economic status express this desire for advancement particularly frequently. A total of 77 percent of these parents consider their children's advancement to be important or very important, compared to only 66 percent of parents with a medium status and 47 percent of parents with a high status. However, social mobility is rated relatively poorly, especially by families with a lower socio-economic status. Almost half of families with a low socio-economic status believe that the chances of advancement for a working class child in Germany are less good or not good at all. However, only 25 percent to 27 percent of parents with a medium or high status share this view.¹⁸²

In addition, some of these parents (41 percent) show a certain lack of perspective: they agree with the statement that society is divided into top and bottom strata and that the "lower ones" cannot climb up, even with great effort. This view is much less prevalent among parents of a medium and high status (18 and 14 percent respectively). With regard to social cohesion, these findings point to the need to create prospects for parents in a comparatively poor socio-economic situation – for example, by investing in targeted measures and services for families that reward their own efforts and also provide as much support as necessary (see the discussion about reforming Child Supplement in connection with the Strong Families Act in Chapter 3.5).

Financial worries

The day-to-day life of families in which the parents have only a low income is often difficult. Surveys show that although low-income parents generally manage on their limited income, most parents feel pressured and perceive their financial situation as a burden¹⁸³. In families where money is scarce, parents consider if any expenditure can be contested, reduced or avoided; often limit themselves and themselves go without, especially for the benefit of their children. Above all, large expenses in the monthly budget (such as rent payments), combined with spending on children are seen as burdensome. In addition, parents are always aware that unforeseen events and associated, larger necessary expenditures would cause the family considerable problems. Low-income families therefore live with a feeling of "at-risk security".¹⁸⁴

Accordingly, it is not surprising that financial worries are not only present in the daily lives of low-income families, but are also reflected in their prospects and hopes. More than half of parents were afraid in 2018 that their income might not be sufficient in the next few years (57 percent) or that their standard of living might fall (52 percent). Almost a third (31 percent) saw a great danger of social decline for themselves.¹⁸⁵

Various studies show that financially strained circumstances also affect children. In fact, it depends very much on a family's financial situation whether the children themselves express concerns about the financial situation of their family. In a recent survey of children and young persons, about the same number said that they "sometimes", "often" or "always" (51.8 percent) or "never" (48.1 percent) worry about how much money the family has.¹⁸⁶ On the other hand, children and young persons who own less are more often worried about their family's financial possibilities.

182 Allensbach (2018): Sonderauswertung Generation Mitte 2018 (unpublished).

183 Allensbach (2018): Lebenssituation und Einstellungen von Eltern mit kleinen Einkommen.

184 *ibid.*

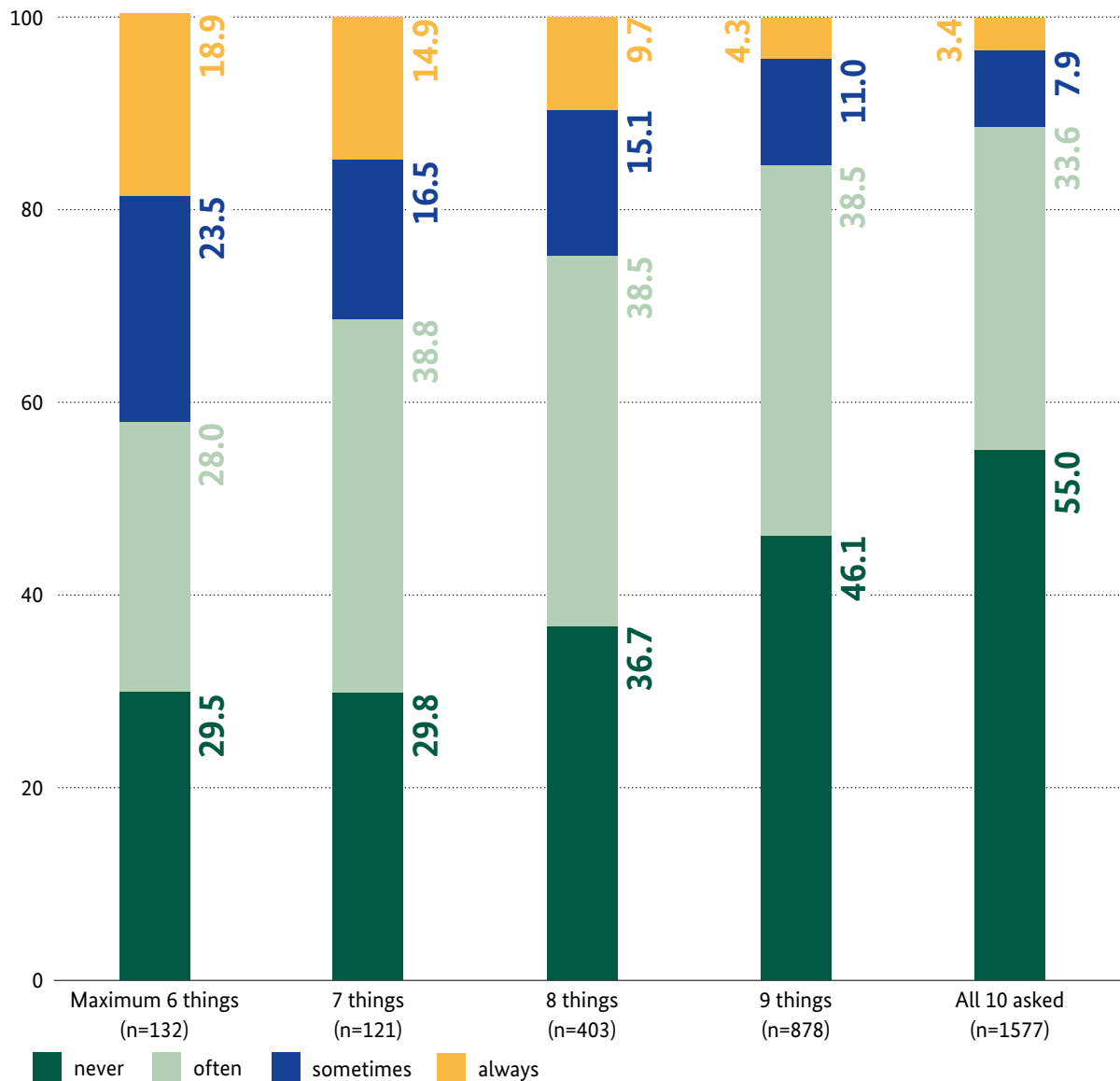
185 Allensbach (2018): Sonderauswertung Generation Mitte 2018 (unpublished).

186 Sabine Andresen, Johanna Wilmes and Renate Möller (2019): Children's Worlds: Eine Studie zu Bedarfen von Kindern und Jugendlichen in Deutschland, Bertelsmann Stiftung.

Seventy percent of children and young persons who state that they own a maximum of six things (from a list of items asked about) worry “sometimes”, “often” or “always”. For children who have

everything they need, this proportion is just under 45 percent (cf. Figure 75). However, family assets are also critical for the perception of financial worries.¹⁸⁷

Figure 75: Proportion of respondents worried about their family’s financial situation, by number of things owned, in percent



Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung, calculation by Bertelsmann Stiftung based on Children’s Worlds+ (2018).

For a majority of 60 percent of parents with a low socio-economic status, government support helps them to feel secure. It is thus significantly more

important for a subjective feeling of security than for parents with medium or high status (45 and 44 percent respectively). By contrast, depending

¹⁸⁷ Sabine Andresen, Johanna Wilmes and Renate Möller (2019): Children’s Worlds+: Eine Studie zu Bedarfen von Kindern und Jugendlichen in Deutschland, Bertelsmann Stiftung.

on the socio-economic status of the parents, there are only slight differences in the importance of their own workplace or company for a subjective

feeling of security (low status: 60 percent, medium status: 57 percent, high status: 54 percent).

3.5 Support for families with low income

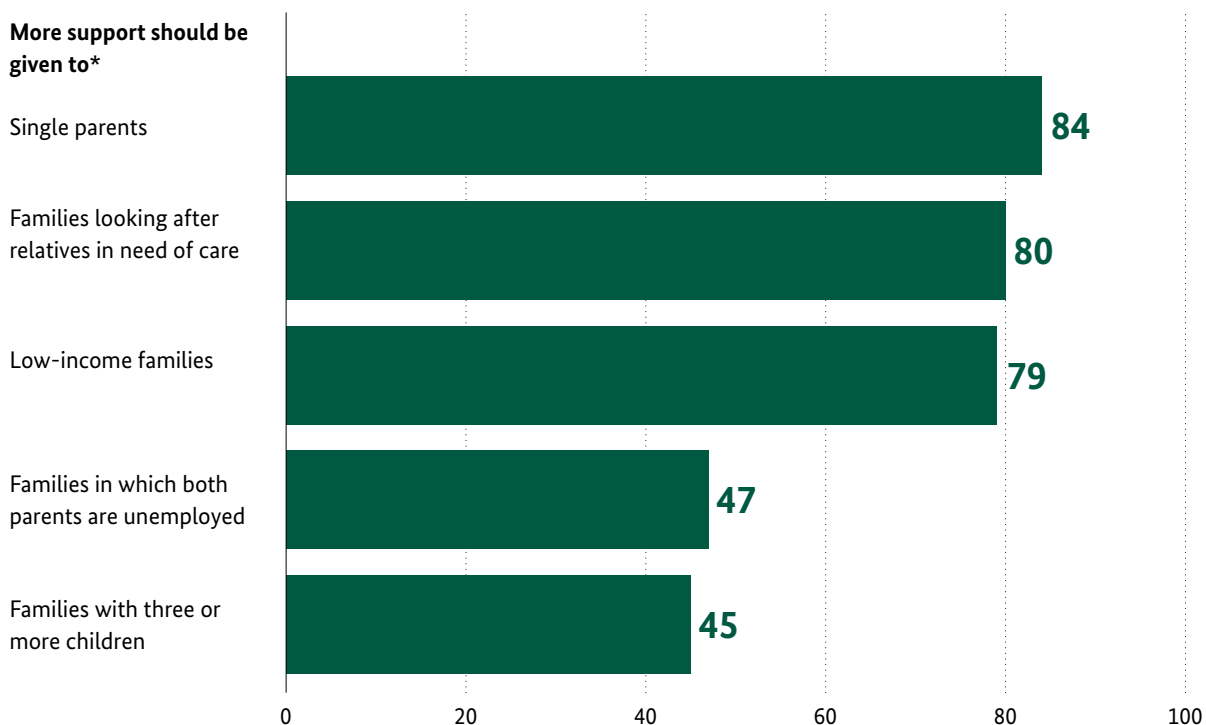
Population surveys show that a large majority of persons are aware of the differences in the social situation of families and that there is a broad social consensus to prevent social division in society.¹⁸⁸

Low-income families are regularly at the top of the list of those whom the population considers should be supported better by the state (Figure 76).¹⁸⁹ In 2019, increased government support for single parents and low-income families was supported by a majority of the population at 84 percent and 79 percent respectively (see also Single and separated parents, page 47ff.).

Figure 76: Persons whom the population considers should receive more support, 2019

Question:

“Which families do you think should receive more support from the government? Please pick from the following list.”



* Most frequent responses

Source: IfD Allensbach (2019): Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Familienpolitik, p. 38, population aged 16 and over.

188 IfD Allensbach (2019): Generation Mitte 2019; Prognos AG (2018): Familien mit kleinen Einkommen wirksam unterstützen; IfD Allensbach (2018): Generation Mitte 2018.

189 IfD Allensbach (2017): Familien erreichen – Wie Familien leben und was sie von der Familienpolitik erwarten, in: BMFSFJ (Ed.): Monitor Familienforschung, issue 38; IfD Allensbach (2019): Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Familienpolitik, link: https://www.ifd-allensbach.de/fileadmin/IfD/sonstige_pdfs/Rahmenbedingungen_Bericht.pdf

The demand for better support for low-income families is most often justified by the fact that their children should have similar opportunities in life as other children (93 percent).¹⁹⁰

3.5.1 The Strong Families Act (*Starke-Familien-Gesetz*)

If families do not have enough money despite employment, parents can obtain financial support for their children in the form of Child Supplement.¹⁹¹ It is paid to parents who earn enough for themselves, though who are not or barely able to meet all their family's needs. This applies both to single parents and to parents who raise their children together. Child Supplement is intended to help families cover the necessary expenses for their child – together with Child Benefit and, if applicable, Housing Benefit (*Wohngeld*).

Child Supplement is paid in addition to Child Benefit and accordingly acts as a supplement to Child Benefit for low-income families. Those who receive Child Supplement are also entitled to benefits for education and participation and are exempt from childcare costs.

The Strong Families Act came into force in July 2019.¹⁹² The law redesigned Child Supplement and improved the benefits for education and participation. The reform of Child Supplement in 2019 currently provides more low-income families with better support and fair opportunities for children to participate. This will strengthen the ability of parents to earn an adequate family income and cease to be reliant on transfer payments.

Child Supplement currently amounts to up to €185 per child and month and, together with Child Benefit and separately granted education and participation benefits, ensures the children's livelihood. From 2021, the Child Supplement rate will be made dynamic in accordance with the Subsistence Level Report.

Since July 2019, child income has only reduced Child Supplement by 45 percent instead of 100 percent as before. This means that Child Supplement is now also available to single parents even if their children are paid maintenance or Maintenance Advances. Moreover, the range of families entitled to Child Supplement has been expanded overall by abolishing the income ceilings and allowing Child Supplement to expire more slowly as parent income increases, starting in January 2020. To ensure that the Child Supplement gets to where it is needed, the application procedure for families has been made much simpler and Child Supplement has become more reliable both for parents and for the administration. Eligibility for Child Supplement can be checked in advance using the family fund's Child Supplement guidance tool (*Kiz Lotse*) and the application can be submitted online. (www.kiz-digital.de).

In addition to the Strong Families Act, the Good Childcare Act (*Gute-Kita-Gesetz*) exempts all parents who receive Child Supplement, SGB II benefits or Housing Benefit from childcare fees.¹⁹³ With the Good Childcare Act, the Federal Government supports the federal states to improve the quality of childcare facilities. The Federal Government is investing €5.5 billion for the further expansion of daycare for children in Germany. The 16 federal states decide for themselves what specific measures to take locally.

190 IfD Allensbach (2019): Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Familienpolitik, link: https://www.ifd-allensbach.de/fileadmin/IfD/sonstige_pdfs/Rahmenbedingungen_Bericht.pdf

191 Further information on Child Supplement available online on the Familienportal website: <https://familienportal.de/familienportal/familienleistungen/kinderzuschlag/was-ist-kinderzuschlag-/124590>

192 Strong Families Act: <http://www.bmfsfj.de/blob/jump/135830/bgbl-starke-familien-gesetz-data.pdf>

193 Good Childcare Act: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/themen/familie/kinderbetreuung/mehr-qualitaet-in-der-fruehen-bildung/das-gute-kita-gesetz>

3.5.2 Federal ESF programme: parental advisors

In order for government support services to reach families, information about benefits and services as well as concrete support for using services need to be provided for specific audiences. Family education and support services are important here – especially for families who cannot be reached easily using conventional informational offerings. Disadvantaged families in particular benefit when parents and their children are approached at a local level in a preventive manner and thus at an early stage.

The landscape of family education and support in Germany is changing. Local, state and federal authorities have launched various initiatives and programmes to provide parents with even better support on educational and child-raising matters and thus increase equal opportunities for all children. In the federal ESF programme Opportunities for Parents II – Getting Families Involved in Education Early On (*Elternchance II – Familienfrüh für Bildung gewinnen*) (2015–2021) and the preceding federal programme Opportunities for Parents are Opportunities for Children – Parental Support in Childhood Education (*Elternchance ist Kinderchance – Elternbegleitung der Bildungsverläufe der Kinder*) (2011–2015), 13,000 specialists¹⁹⁴ in family education and (early) education have qualified as parental advisors.

In the qualification courses to become a parental advisor, professionals expand their knowledge and skills relating to educational processes and transitions, creating a learning-friendly climate in the family and, generally, optimal pedagogical

support for children. The core issues in further education are how to reach socially disadvantaged parents, how to achieve an inviting, appreciative dialogue “on an equal footing”, imparting intercultural skills and information about the parents’ responsibility as partners; and networking with other institutions in the community. Evaluations of the qualification clearly confirm that the skills of the specialists have expanded and that the content taught has practical relevance.¹⁹⁵

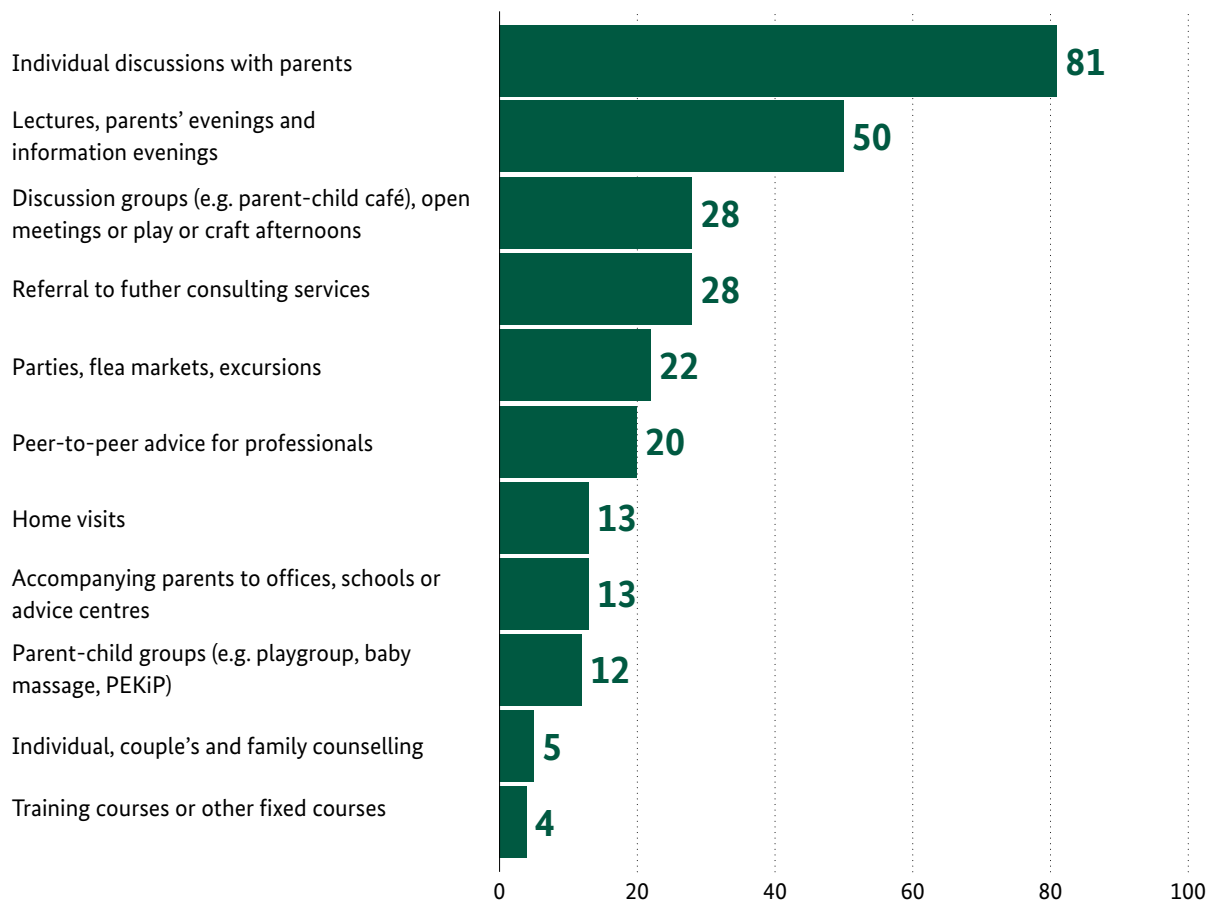
The issue of poverty is complex and pervasive for low-income families. Thanks to their closeness to families and non-judgemental attitude, parental advisors have good access to these families and can address sensitive issues such as income scarcity and overcome emotional obstacles (including shame). They know the most important benefits for low-income families and can communicate where and how to apply for these benefits. If necessary, parental advisors also help parents in dealing with the authorities or filling in forms.

The cooperation of the parental advisors with families directly on the ground is fundamental in various ways: to strengthen parental upbringing and educational competence in everyday family life, for informing parents about the importance of a high quality of education and care in the daycare facilities and for directly addressing parents with regard to early childhood support and their children’s education. To this end, qualified parental advisors realise needs-based offers and measures, some of which include doing easy-to-access and outreach work (see Figure 77).

194 Stiftung SPI (2020): Servicestelle Elternchance, 27 August 2020, Berlin.

195 cf. DJI/FAU; Dagmar Müller, Mira Beck et al. (2015): Evaluation des Bundesprogramms „Elternchance ist Kinderchance – Elternbegleitung der Bildungsverläufe der Kinder“, final report. Munich:DJI.

Figure 77: Frequent offers and measures of parental advisors, in percent (multiple answers possible)



Source: Stiftung SPI (2020): Servicestelle Elternchance, 27 August 2020, Berlin.

In the medium term, parental advisors also serve for social and societal cohesion in a community and relieve communities financially. Investments in early childhood education are considered particularly efficient and sustainable. The cost-effectiveness of parent advisors has been examined on the basis of a cost-benefit analysis as part of the federal programme Opportunities for Parents are Opportunities for Children.¹⁹⁶ There is a high return on investment in parental advisors, ranging between €3.72 and €6.49, depending on the scenario used. This first viability study on the work of the parental advisors is emphatic confirmation that family support from local authorities, focusing on parental advising as a preventive

measure, not only improves the educational opportunities of children but also pays off financially for local authorities over the medium and long term.

Local authorities have taken notice of this. According to a representative youth welfare office survey commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, two-thirds of the heads of youth welfare offices throughout Germany are now familiar with the parental advisor concept.¹⁹⁷ There is still considerable potential for actively and permanently rooting parental advisors in local government areas and institutions as a support instrument for families.

¹⁹⁶ cf. Detlef Krüger (2018): Verbesserung der Bildungsmobilität in Deutschland. Zur Wirtschaftlichkeit von Eltern- und Bildungsbegleitung für benachteiligte Familien, Blätter der Wohlfahrtspflege, 6, pp. 228–233.

¹⁹⁷ Detlef Krüger, Angela Schröder (2017): Familienbildung und Familienförderung zum gelingenden Aufwachsen von Kindern als Aufgabe des Jugendamtes, link: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/blob/116312/dfaa781be0aee4b262eeb6ba6dbb419e/familienbildung-und-familienfoerderung-zum-gelingenden-aufwachsen-von-kindern-als-aufgabe-des-jugendamts-data.pdf> (downloaded on 18 September 2020).



Family life and the world of work

4.1 Task sharing within families – attitudes and trends

People in the EU member states have varying attitudes as regards egalitarian gender roles. Germany, with its very widespread desire for fairer division of tasks between women and men, is one of the states with more egalitarian attitudes in Europe and is well above the EU average. In 2017, almost three-quarters (71 percent) of Germans disagreed with the statement that a woman's most important task is to look after the household and family. This puts Germany well above the EU average (54 percent disagreement). Only in France, Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden were the populations more egalitarian. The most traditional attitudes are found in Bulgaria (only 17 percent disagreement), Hungary (20 percent disagreement), Poland and Czechia (both 21 percent disagreement).¹⁹⁸ A similarly egalitarian picture can be seen with regard to the role of men as with regard to the role of women: almost two-thirds (62 percent) of Germans disagreed with the view that the most important task of a man is to earn

money. In this regard, Germany was above the EU average (55 percent disagreement) though did not lead with the Nordic countries and Netherlands. The populations with most traditional attitudes are again found in Bulgaria (17 percent disagreement), Hungary (20 percent disagreement) and Slovakia (20 percent disagreement).¹⁹⁹

Using an index calculation²⁰⁰ about gender stereotypes makes it possible to understand how traditional or egalitarian attitudes in a country are (Figure 78). The lower the value, the more egalitarian a country is. A ranking based on this index shows that traditional gender roles and gender stereotypes are most common in Bulgaria (12.4), Hungary (11.3) and Lithuania (10.9). People are most egalitarian in Sweden (3.0), Denmark (4.4) and Netherlands (4.6). With a score of 6.5, Germany is ranked among the more egalitarian countries and below the EU average (7.3).²⁰¹

198 European Commission (2017): Special Eurobarometer 465. Gender Equality 2017, p. 15, link: http://ibdigital.uib.es/greenstone/collect/portal_social/index/assoc/coeuro01/47.dir/coeuro0147.pdf

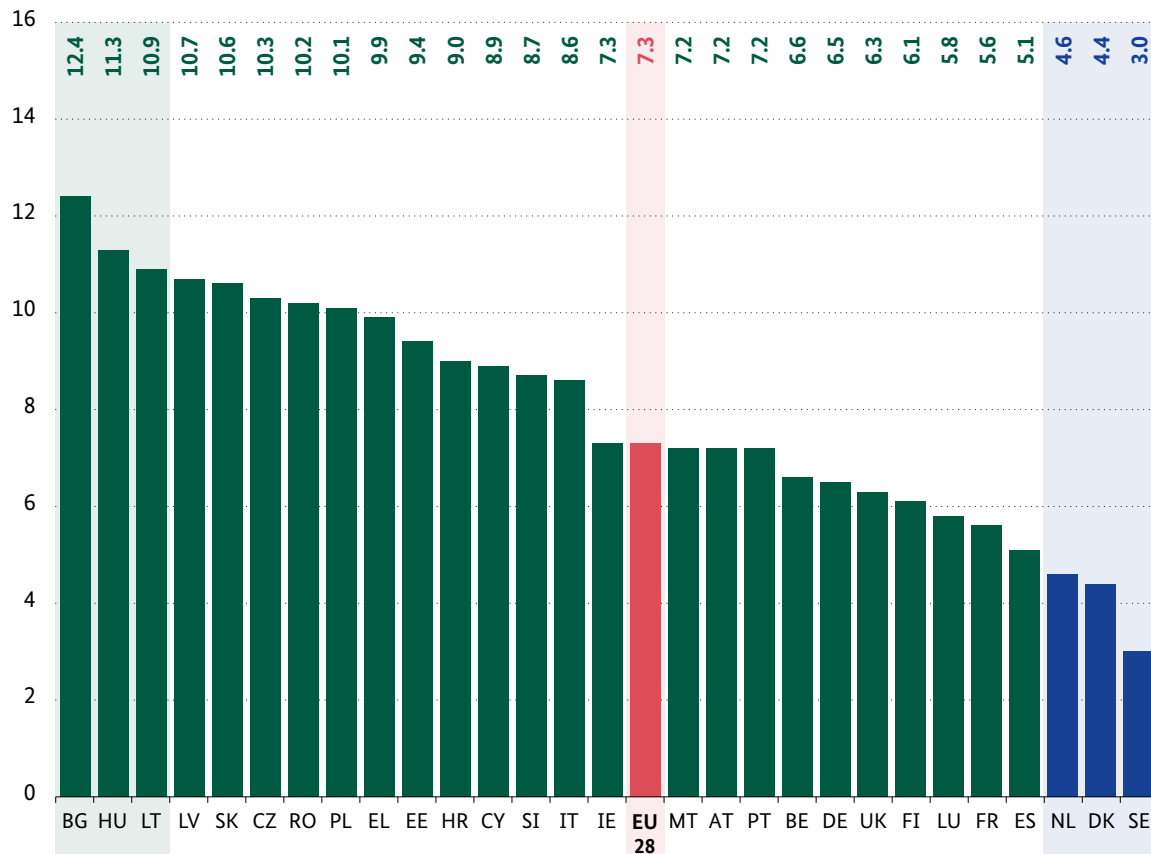
199 European Commission (2017): Special Eurobarometer 465. Gender Equality 2017, p. 16, link: http://ibdigital.uib.es/greenstone/collect/portal_social/index/assoc/coeuro01/47.dir/coeuro0147.pdf

200 The respondents were able to select values from 0–5 (5=strong agreement) to rate statements about gender stereotypes. An average index was calculated for each country. The higher the index, the greater the acceptance of traditional gender roles in a country.

201 European Commission (2017): Special Eurobarometer 465. Gender Equality 2017, p. 16, link: http://ibdigital.uib.es/greenstone/collect/portal_social/index/assoc/coeuro01/47.dir/coeuro0147.pdf

Figure 78: Index of gender stereotypes, 2017, average values

Gender stereotype index (average)



Source: European Commission (2017): Special Eurobarometer 465. Gender equality 2017, p. 17.

The role of mothers in Germany has thus changed significantly. The rating and significance of mothers holding jobs is a central component of this (see Chapter 3.3). For example, only about one in ten respondents (13 percent) stated that having a job was part of a mother's role in their own parents' generation. These days, 43 percent of the total population and 53 percent of mothers of underage children believe that a mother should be employed today.²⁰²

The high employment rate among mothers today therefore also and especially reflects a changed perception that mothers have of themselves. Being gainfully employed is no longer a financial necessity, but rather part of their own understanding to be gainfully employed.²⁰³

202 IfD Allensbach (2019): Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Familienpolitik, p. 15, link: https://www.ifd-allensbach.de/fileadmin/IfD/sonstige_pdfs/Rahmenbedingungen_Bericht.pdf

203 IfD Allensbach (2019): Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Familienpolitik, p. 16, link: https://www.ifd-allensbach.de/fileadmin/IfD/sonstige_pdfs/Rahmenbedingungen_Bericht.pdf

Analogously to the changed attitudes towards and from mothers, society's expectations of fathers and the way fathers see themselves have also changed in recent years. More than two-thirds of the population today expect fathers to look after their children, to be strongly involved in the family's everyday life and to support their partner. Around three-quarters (72 percent) of the population now find it important for fathers to look after their sick children or take them to the doctor – in 2015 this figure was still 66 percent.²⁰⁴ This also corresponds to the wishes of the fathers. Fathers wish just as often as mothers to spend more time with their children.²⁰⁵ In fact, one father in two would like to take over half of childcare duties, but only one in six does so.²⁰⁶ However, more than two-thirds of fathers (69 percent) say that they are already more involved in the upbringing of and care for their children than fathers of their parent generation – and see this as a personal gain.²⁰⁷ The population is also noticing that fathers today are often more strongly integrated into the family, with 72 percent of the population having the impression that fathers are now more involved in the upbringing of and care for their children than they were 10 to 15 years ago. Around half of the population knows one or more fathers who are or were on parental leave. This development is predominantly seen as positive.²⁰⁸

Attitudes towards the distribution of roles in the family have changed considerably in recent years. Men as well as women are increasingly in favour of sharing work, family and domestic tasks equally between themselves (Figure 79). Whereas in 2007 only slightly more than a third (34 percent) of parents with underage children wanted an equal division of work and family responsibilities, in 2019 almost half (46 percent) of those surveyed supported this. Twenty-four percent of respondents wish for both partners to work full-time and share household and child-raising responsibilities. Twenty-two percent were in favour of both partners working part-time and sharing family responsibilities.²⁰⁹

In 2007, just under two-thirds of those surveyed were still in favour of either the father being the sole breadwinner (20 percent) or a full-time/part-time arrangement in which the mother handles most household and childcare tasks (43 percent). Such arrangements have lost significance (see Chapter 3.3). In 2019, 18 percent were in favour of the father being the sole breadwinner and only 28 percent wanted a full-time/part-time arrangement that distributed tasks predominantly to the mother.²¹⁰

204 *ibid.*, p. 18.

205 *ibid.*, p. 32.

206 IfD Allensbach (2015): Weichenstellungen für die Aufgabenteilung in Familie und Beruf, p. 54, link: https://www.ifd-allensbach.de/fileadmin/IfD/sonstige_pdfs/Weichenstellungen_Bericht_FINAL.pdf

207 *ibid.*, p. 56; BMFSFJ (2018): Väterreport, p. 11, link: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/blob/127268/2098ed4343ad836b2f0534146ce59028/vaeterreport-2018-data.pdf>

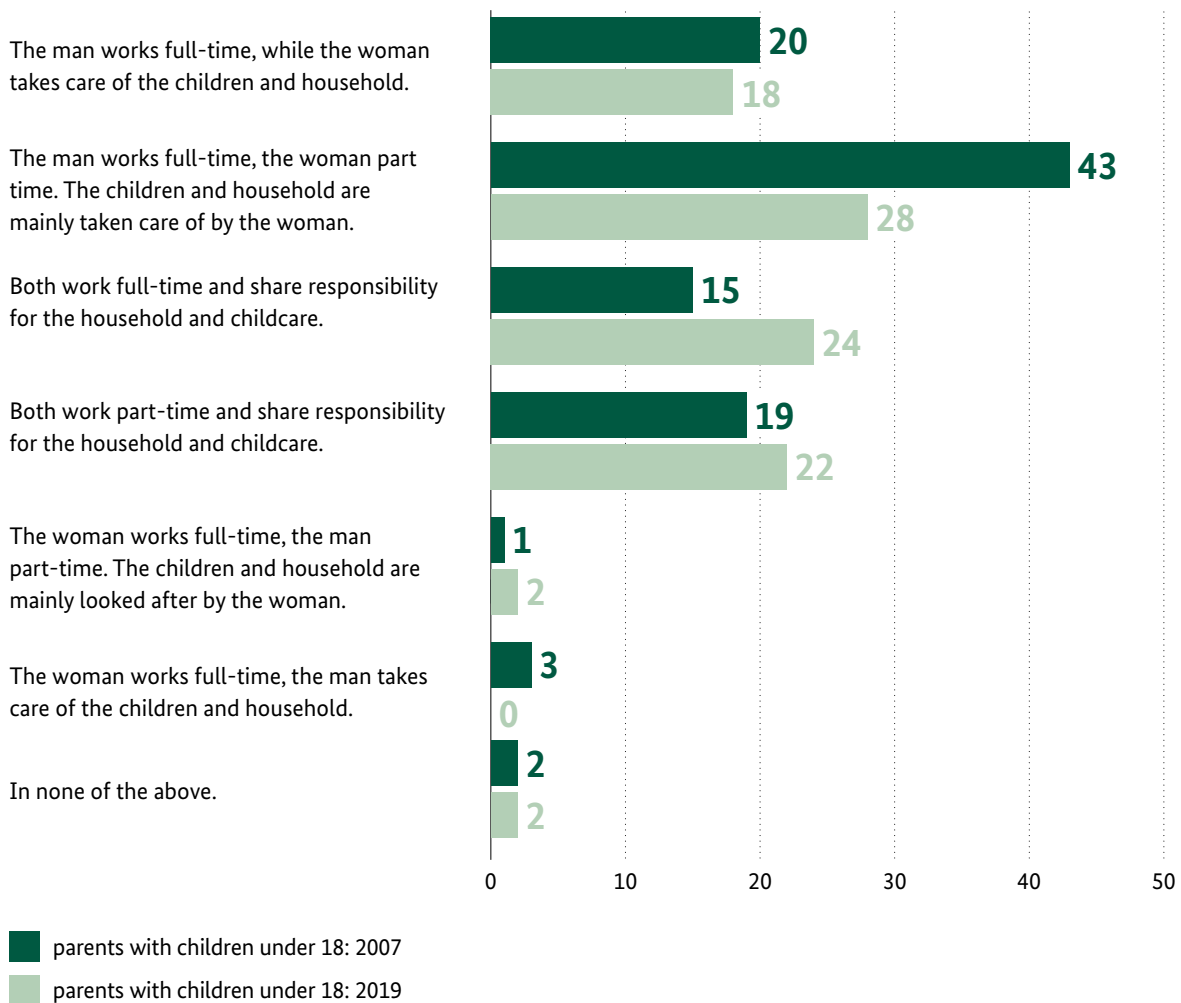
208 IfD Allensbach (2019): Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Familienpolitik, p. 20ff., link: https://www.ifd-allensbach.de/fileadmin/IfD/sonstige_pdfs/Rahmenbedingungen_Bericht.pdf

209 IfD Allensbach (2019): Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Familienpolitik, p. 26, link: https://www.ifd-allensbach.de/fileadmin/IfD/sonstige_pdfs/Rahmenbedingungen_Bericht.pdf

210 *ibid.*

Figure 79: Ideal division of work and family tasks in 2007 and 2019: increasing preference for equal sharing, in percent

Question: “This list describes various family forms. Ignoring your current situation, which one would you most like to live in?”



Multiple responses possible

Note: parents with children under 18.

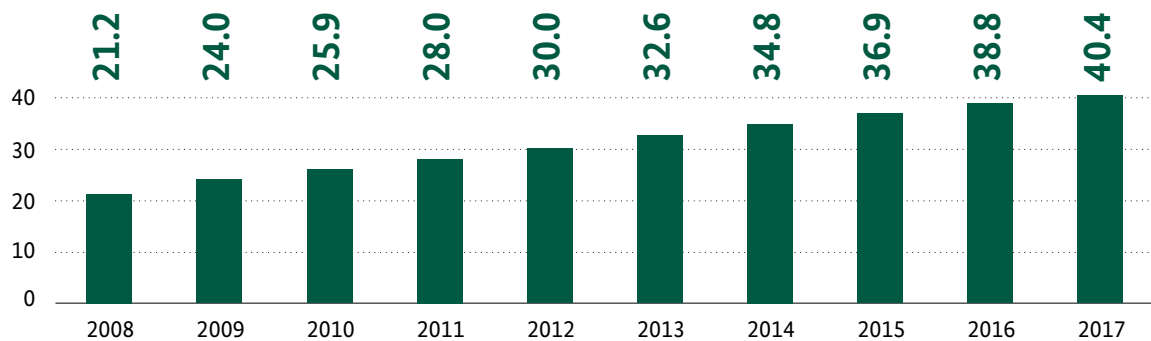
Source: IfD Allensbach (2019): p. 27.

New trends in Parental Allowance: Fathers' participation rises

Parental Allowance has contributed to the fact that mothers and fathers now frequently distribute family and working hours between each other differently. Since the introduction of Parental Allowance, more and more fathers are reducing their working hours for a limited period of time

or leaving work completely for a while to make time for their child and family. Just one year after the introduction of Parental Allowance, one in five fathers entitled to it (21 percent) took advantage of it. The number has subsequently risen steadily, reaching a national average of over 40.4 percent in 2017 (see Figure 80).

Figure 80: Development of fathers' participation* in Parental Allowance, 2008 to 2017, in percent



* Percentage of children born whose fathers received Parental Allowance, by period of birth of the child

Data basis: Federal Statistical Office 2009 to 2016): Statistiken zum Elterngeld – Beendete Leistungsbezüge.

In some federal states, roughly half of fathers now claim Parental Allowance. The front-runners in the participation of fathers are Thuringia with

47.6 percent, Bavaria with 47.7 percent and Saxony with 51.9 percent (Table 5).

Table 5: Development of fathers' participation for entitled children born from 2008 onwards, by federal state²¹¹

State	Year of birth									
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Baden-Württemberg	20.6	24.6	27.4	30.5	33.4	36.7	39.2	40.9	42.2	43.7
Bavaria	27.4	30.7	33.5	36.5	38.6	40.5	42.2	44.8	46.5	47.7
Berlin	27.5	30.7	32.2	33.7	35.5	37.9	39.7	40.9	42.9	43.8
Brandenburg	25.5	27.3	28.1	30.2	32.4	34.8	36.6	40.0	42.5	44.9
Bremen	18.3	19.9	19.3	21.7	22.9	25.8	27.1	28.1	31.0	33.4
Hamburg	22.9	27.4	28.5	31.1	33.7	36.2	38.0	40.2	41.0	42.5
Hessen	20.3	23.3	25.3	27.2	29.4	30.8	33.1	34.4	35.8	37.3
Mecklenburg-West Pomerania	20.5	23.3	23.5	21.3	25.3	26.5	28.0	31.2	35.2	36.5
Lower Saxony	19.5	21.6	23.2	25.3	26.9	29.3	31.5	34.5	36.7	38.4
North Rhine-Westphalia	16.8	18.5	19.7	20.9	22.0	25.6	27.5	29.4	31.7	33.4
Rhineland-Palatinate	17.5	20.1	21.7	23.6	25.0	27.3	30.3	31.9	33.5	35.0
Saarland	12.9	14.6	16.4	18.8	19.1	21.0	24.1	25.3	28.5	28.4
Saxony	26.9	31.0	33.0	36.0	38.5	41.1	44.7	47.5	49.1	51.9
Saxony-Anhalt	17.6	17.9	20.1	22.2	23.2	25.9	28.6	31.7	35.1	36.8
Schleswig-Holstein	18.4	19.9	22.0	24.0	24.7	27.0	29.4	30.8	33.4	34.6
Thuringia	25.0	28.4	29.4	32.1	34.6	37.0	40.6	43.3	45.2	47.6
Germany	21.2	24.0	25.9	28.0	30.0	32.6	34.8	36.9	38.8	40.4

Data basis: Federal Statistical Office (2020): Zeitreihe Entwicklung Väterbeteiligung und Bezüge nach Bundesländern 2008–2017.

211 Statistisches Bundesamt (2020): Statistik zum Elterngeld. Beendete Leistungsbezüge für das Jahr 2016.

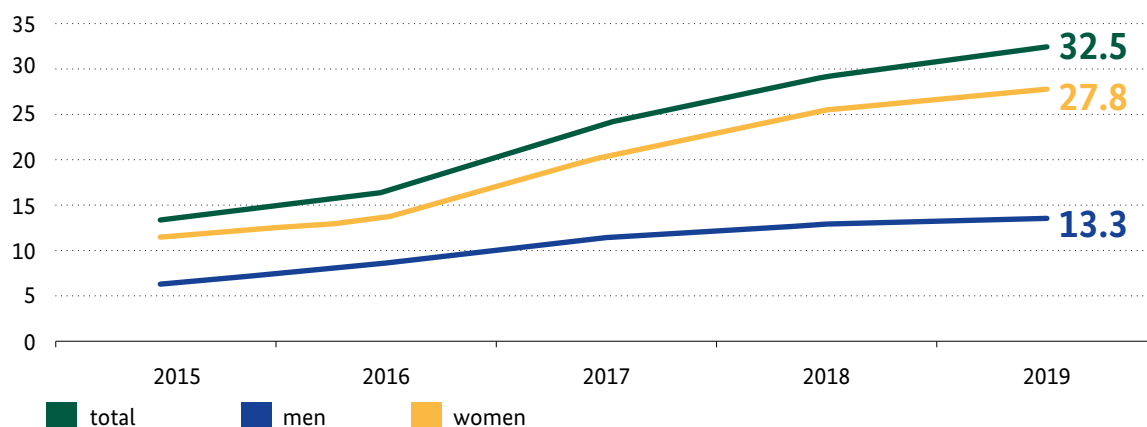
The conception of the parental allowance can also be thanked for the fact that today there are more active fathers.²¹² An additional incentive for the participation of both parents is the “partner months”, which a family is only entitled to if both parents take up of the Parental Allowance months. Since Parental Allowance months are designed as a wage replacement benefit, they are also financially attractive for fathers.

Parental Allowance Plus (*ElterngeldPlus*), introduced in 2015, is a further step towards enabling both partners to support each other at a time when families are beginning to develop their future task-sharing patterns.²¹³ It has led to women being able to return to work more often and to fathers taking more time off for their children. Forty-one percent of the fathers who receive Parental Allowance Plus would have taken less time off to care for their children without Parental Allowance Plus. Twenty-four percent of mothers state that they can pursue their career goals better with Parental Allowance Plus. Just under a quarter (23 percent) have opted for Parental Allowance Plus because they wanted to be employed even when on parental leave.

Parental Allowance Plus and, in particular, the Partnership Bonus encourages parents to implement their wish for a more even distribution of time. Whereas only 17 percent of families shared childcare duties (relatively) equally in the months with (basic) Parental Allowance, in the months with Parental Allowance Plus it were 24 percent and in those months with the partnership bonus it were 82 percent.²¹⁴

The take-up of Parental Allowance Plus has risen continuously since its introduction. Around 28 percent of the parents who applied for Parental Allowance in 2019 opted for Parental Allowance Plus (Figure 81) – in Thuringia and Rhineland-Palatinate rising as high as about 36 percent. This means that take-up has more than doubled since the introduction of Parental Allowance Plus: in the third-quarter of 2015, when the benefit was first available, it was taken up by 13.8 percent of parents. In some federal states, more than one-third of fathers (up to 38 percent) who applied for Parental Allowance Plus in 2019 also opted for the Partnership Bonus. The national average for fathers is 26.5 percent.²¹⁵

Figure 81: Evolution of applications for Parental Allowance Plus from 2015 to 2019



Source: Federal Statistical Office (2020): *Elterngeld-Statistik*.

212 Further information about Parental Allowance and Parental Allowance Plus is available on the Familienportal website: www.familienportal.de

213 BMFSFJ (2016): Bilanz 10 Jahre Elterngeld, link: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/blob/113300/8802e54b6f0d78e160ddc3b0fd6fbc1e/10-jahre-elterngeld-bilanz-data.pdf>

214 Deutscher Bundestag (2018): Bericht der Bundesregierung über die Auswirkungen der Regelungen zum ElterngeldPlus und zum Partnerschaftsbonus sowie zur Elternzeit. (Report of the Federal Government on the Effects of the Regulations on Parental AllowancePlus and Partnership Bonus and on Parental Leave (2018))

215 Statistisches Bundesamt (2020): Statistik zum Elterngeld, Leistungsbezüge 2019.

An approximately equal distribution of childcare and domestic work is particularly common among couples where fathers and mothers work a similar number of hours. This is the case for couples who have double full-time work, but even more so for couples where both the mother and father work part-time.²¹⁶ Working time arrangements based on equally shared family and work responsibilities with reduced full-time work correspond to the wishes of many parents and enable an even distribution of time. This is associated with a particularly high level of satisfaction among mothers and even more among fathers when it comes to time,²¹⁷ provides an equally good basis for both parents and offers them financial security. Equally shared work/life balance opportunities and responsibilities between partners also meets the wishes of the children, who want to have experiences with both their mothers and their fathers and benefit from close relationships with their fathers.²¹⁸

The incentive systems for mothers and fathers to share family and work responsibilities equally follow a similar logic to international and European ones, with financial incentives for both parents to take parental leave and parental benefits offered throughout. An individual entitlement is usually not transferable to the other parent and lapses if it is not claimed. However, due to the different concrete form of the entitlements, the figures are hard to compare.

In Iceland, for example, one-third of paid parental leave is available for each parent. A further third can be divided freely. The financial compensation is 80 percent of the average annual salary. In 2013, 80 percent of Icelandic fathers took parental leave, an average of 87 days.

Sweden offers a total of 480 days of paid parental leave. There are 90 days reserved for each parent. An income replacement benefit is paid for 390 days, which is equivalent to about 80 percent of previous income. The remaining 90 days are paid at a flat rate of €17 per day.²¹⁹ These offers are also received well in Sweden. In 2004, fathers took up only 19 percent of paid days. By 2018, however, 29 percent of paid days were taken up by fathers.²²⁰ On average, fathers claimed 41 days and mothers 83.²²¹

In Norway there is a right to non-transferable paid parental leave of 15 or 19 weeks per parent. The remaining 16 weeks can be divided freely between them. The duration of the cash benefit varies between 46 weeks (at 100 percent of previous income) and 56 weeks (80 percent of previous income). Seventy percent of fathers in Norway took paid parental leave in 2015.²²²

216 cf. Svenja Pfahl, Laura Rauschnick, Dietmar Hobler, Selina Alin (2017): Partnerschaftliche Arbeitszeiten aus Kinder- und Elternsicht, Projektbericht, SowiTra, Chapter 7, p.137, link: https://www.sowitra.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Partner-Arbeitszeiten_aus_Kindersicht_SowiTra_2017.pdf

217 BMFSFJ (2017): Männer-Perspektiven. Auf dem Weg zu mehr Gleichstellung?, link: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/blob/115580/5a9685148523d24aef-12258d060528cd/maenner-perspektiven-auf-dem-weg-zu-mehr-gleichstellung-data.pdf>

218 see OECD (2017): Dare to Share; BMFSFJ (2016): Väterreport 2016, link: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/blob/112720/2d7af062c2bc70c8166f5bca1b2a331e/vaeterreport-2016-data.pdf>

219 European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2019): Parental and paternity leave – take-up by fathers, link: https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef18087en.pdf

220 Försäkringskassan (2019): Social security in figures 2019, link: <https://www.forsakringskassan.se/wps/wcm/connect/cec4cea8-1d6c-4895-b442-bc3b64735b09/socialforsakringen-i-siffror-2019-engelsk.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=>

221 *ibid.* p. 20, link: <https://www.forsakringskassan.se/wps/wcm/connect/cec4cea8-1d6c-4895-b442-bc3b64735b09/socialforsakringen-i-siffror-2019-engelsk.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=>

222 European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2019): Parental and paternity leave – take-up by fathers, link: https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef18087en.pdf

4.2 Companies as partners

During the Covid-19 pandemic it has become clear how vitally important good reconcilability for parents and a functioning economy are. Even before the crisis, the population was of the opinion that a better work-life balance should be the most important goal of family policy.²²³ Working parents and employees with relatives in need of care are – in addition to a good provision of childcare and financial aid – particularly dependent on family-conscious working conditions if they want to combine family and work. Against the background of the demand for skilled workers and demographic change, more and more employers have adapted to these needs in recent years and created new structures for organising work. Companies across the world have made headlines with their measures: SAP gives fathers a reduction in working hours with full pay and Hewlett-Packard offers its employees six months' parental leave with full pay.

Flexible, family-conscious working conditions that allow time for private commitments and interests have become a relevant topic for the vast majority of all employees. Although preferences and needs vary from generation to generation and milieu to milieu, the desire to successfully reconcile family, private life and work can be found across all social classes, age groups and professions.²²⁴ Cohorts that form the next generation of professionals and managers or will soon enter the labour market with good qualifications but do not yet have family responsibilities attach particular importance to this sort of balance.²²⁵ This has the advantage for mothers or parents that they are not perceived as a “special interest group”, with family-oriented measures instead becoming increasingly relevant for all employees.

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown that family-conscious companies that had established many flexible solutions with reconcilability in mind were able to react more rapidly to the new challenges than “conservatively minded” companies that still rely on full-time and compulsory presence.²²⁶ Flexible, family-conscious working hour models offer business advantages, especially in periods of economic difficulty. During the Covid-19 pandemic – as during the 2008/2009 financial crisis – it has been noted that, in addition to targeted government support, flexible work organisation can also help to prevent job losses. In the period that follows, family-conscious companies have a double advantage – firstly, they avoid brain drain and, secondly, the employer appeal from being family-oriented is a valuable factor in the search for motivated and high-performing staff.

The importance of time

Before the crisis there were clear trends in working hours. Many mothers are working more hours, many part-time mothers want to work more hours, many fathers want shorter working hours, parents want to reconcile and share family and work duties equally, and more and more companies have responded to the changing desires and values.²²⁷ It can be assumed that these trends will recover their former dynamic as the economy recovers.

Models that allow reconcilability and for parents to share professional and family responsibilities equally are gaining in importance (see Chapter 3).²²⁸ Mothers can and want to be more gainfully employed. However, this will only work if fathers take on more unpaid work in the family, if daycare is further expanded and if employers offer parents flexible solutions for a good work-life balance.

223 IfD Allensbach (2019): Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Familienpolitik, link: https://www.ifd-allensbach.de/fileadmin/IfD/sonstige_pdfs/Rahmenbedingungen_Bericht.pdf

224 Silke Borgstedt (2019): Vereinbarkeit 4.0 – Alltagsrealitäten von Familien in Deutschland und ihr Blick in die Zukunft, SINUS-Institut.

225 Hans-Peter Klös, Jutta Rump, Michael Zibrowius (2016): Die neue Generation, RHI Diskussion Nr. 29, link: <https://www.romanherzoginstitut.de/publikationen/detail/die-neue-generation.html/> berufundfamilie Service GmbH (2018): Zukünftige Arbeitswelt der Generation Z – und die Rolle der Vereinbarkeit, link: <https://berufundfamilie.de/forms/33-jinbound-landing-pages/9-gen-z>

226 cf. Chapter 1.4

227 For the trends regarding the gainful employment of mothers see Chapter 3.3, regarding the working hours of fathers see BMFSFJ (2018): Väterreport. Vatersein in Deutschland heute.

228 IfD Allensbach (2019): Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Familienpolitik, link: https://www.ifd-allensbach.de/fileadmin/IfD/sonstige_pdfs/Rahmenbedingungen_Bericht.pdf

A growing number of collective agreements (IG Metall, Deutsche Bahn, Deutsche Post, EVG) include not only salary increases but also a time component. That is, instead of a (collectively agreed) salary increase, they offer employees an option of increased free time (option model). This also reflects the wishes of employees for greater control over their time. In a questionnaire of the trade union Ver.di, 92 percent of respondents indicated that the option of choosing between free time and more money was very important to them. Fifty-seven percent of those asked were prepared to trade a (collectively agreed) salary increase for a reduction of their working hours.²²⁹

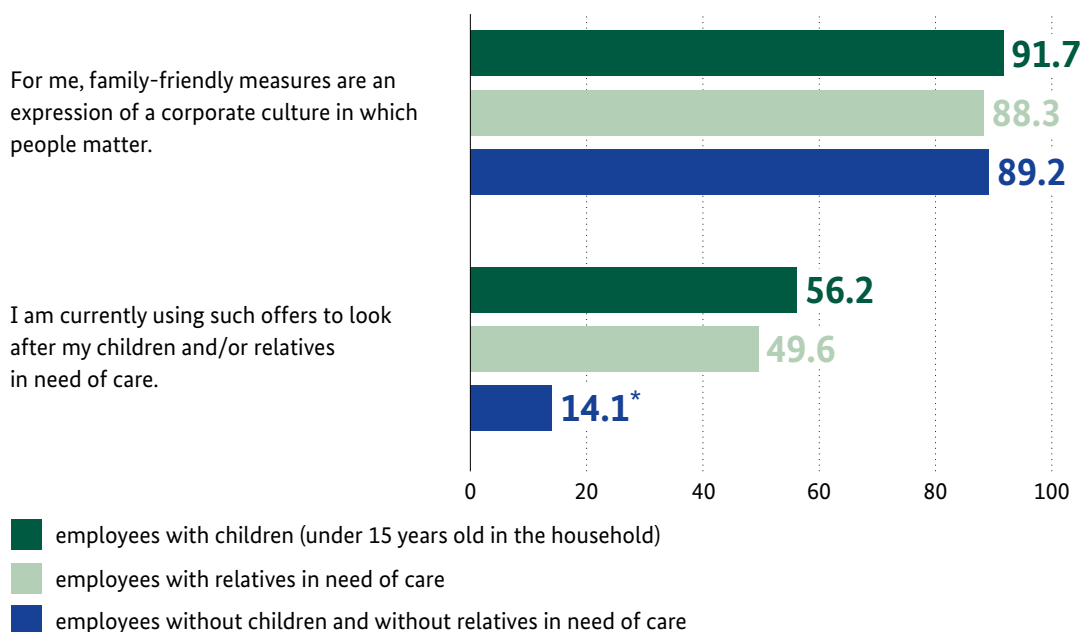
4.2.1 Family focus a cultural issue within companies developments and dynamics

The proportion of managers and HR officers for whom family-friendly measures are important has risen by almost 6 percentage points since 2015 to over 83 percent (2018) (Figure 82).²³⁰ Nine out of ten employees consider family-friendly measures to be important because they are an expression of a corporate culture in which people matter. This opinion is held equally by employees with and without family care responsibilities.

Figure 82: Family-friendly measures within companies

Why are family-friendly company measures important for you?

Percentage of employees who state that they (rather) value their company's family-friendly measures for the following reasons



* This group also includes employees with older children, for example.

Source: BMFSFJ (2019): Unternehmensmonitor Familienfreundlichkeit 2019, IW Köln.

229 Ver.di Arbeitszeitbefragung 2019, link: <https://www.verdi.de/presse/downloads/pressemappen/++co++afb621b4-f01f-11e9-ab89-525400b665de>

230 BMFSFJ (2019): Unternehmensmonitor Familienfreundlichkeit 2019, IW Köln, BMFSFJ (all figures in this section unless otherwise stated), link: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/service/publikationen/unternehmensmonitor-familienfreundlichkeit-2019/138444>

A family-oriented corporate culture that is implemented credibly and communicated internally and externally is a deciding criterion when choosing an employer – even if the measures are not utilised by all. The question “Would a poor work-life balance be a reason for you to change jobs?” reveals a trend: the younger the employees are, the more of them would change jobs if the work-life balance turned out to be bad for them. Seventy-seven percent of 18- to 29-year-olds and 76 percent of 30- to 39-year-olds would change jobs. At least almost seven out of ten (68 percent) 40- to 49-year-olds would give up their jobs because of a poor work-life balance. If children live in the household, the decision to change jobs because of a poor work-life balance seems more likely. Seventy-four percent of employees with

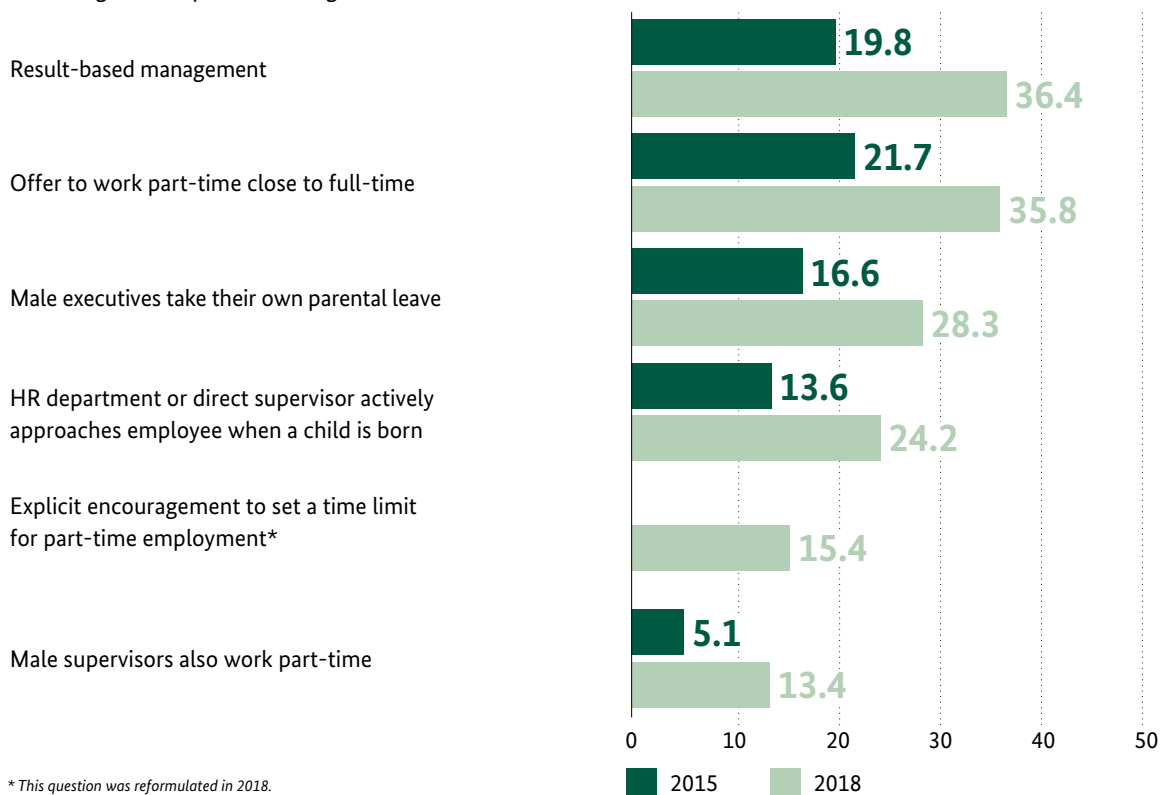
children living in their household see poor work-life balance as a reason to change jobs.²³¹

Not only have companies generally understood the effects of family friendliness, they have also caught up in important areas of action. For example, company commitment to supporting fathers has increased particularly strongly (Figure 83). While in 2015 only around 35 percent of companies offered at least one measure to support fathers, by 2018 the figure was around 53 percent. The option for fathers to work part-time close to full-time hours has also risen sharply, from just under 22 percent (2015) of companies to around 36 percent (2018). The proportion of companies in which male executives take parental leave themselves has also risen sharply from just under 17 percent (2015) to 28 percent.²³²

Figure 83: Support initiatives for fathers

What measures do you offer to actively support fathers in taking parental leave or part-time work?

Percentage of companies offering the measures



Source: BMFSFJ (2019): Unternehmensmonitor Familienfreundlichkeit 2019, IW Köln, BMFSFJ p. 21.

231 berufundfamilie Service GmbH (2020): Civey-Umfrage zur Zertifizierung für Vereinbarkeit.

232 BMFSFJ (2019): Unternehmensmonitor Familienfreundlichkeit (2019), IW Köln,

link: https://www.iwkoeln.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Studien/Gutachten/PDF/2019/Unternehmensmonitor_Familienfreundlichkeit_2019.pdf

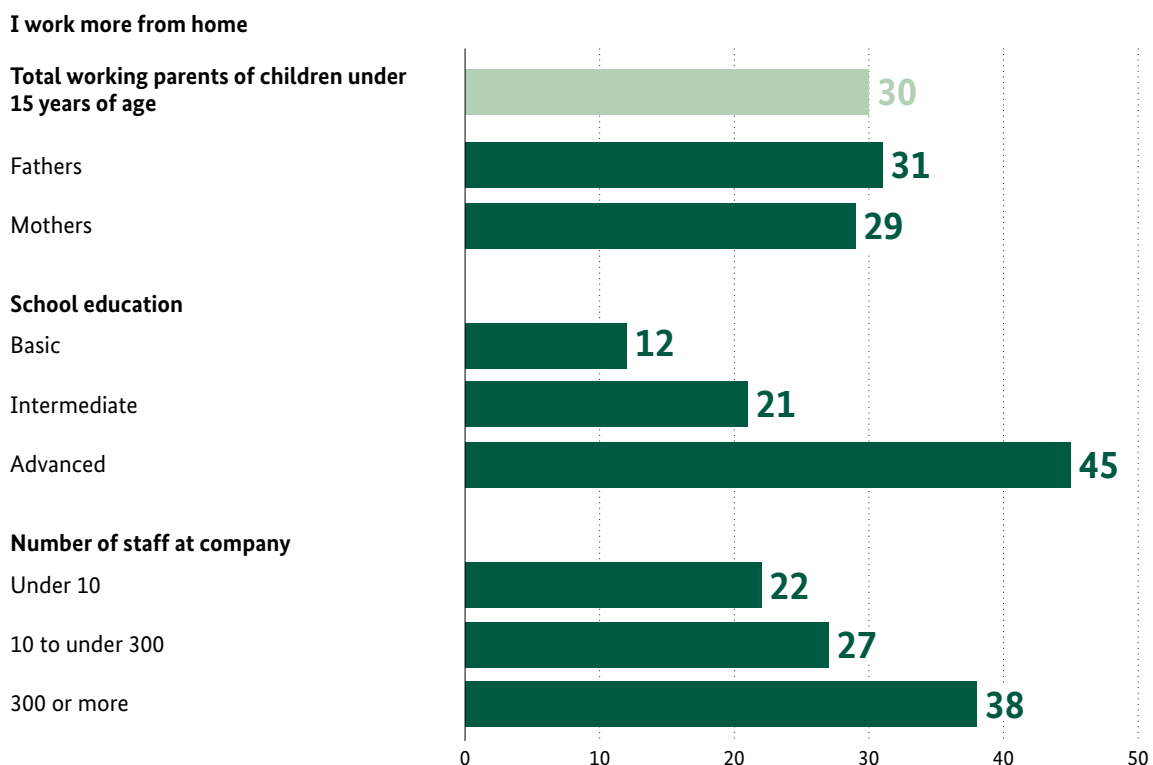
About eight out of ten companies now offer flexible working hours. The options for flexitime, part-time models, job-sharing and sabbaticals has also increased. This is in line with employees' wishes, because more time sovereignty means better reconcilability. However, it should be noted that reliability and predictability must be ensured, even with all this flexibility.

The above statement particularly applies when working remotely. What in recent years has only been granted to certain "privileged" employees despite significantly greater demand²³³ has undergone a cultural change at many companies in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. The vast majority of companies have instructed their employees to work from home wherever possible, even companies previously sceptical about remote work. The reasons for this were not insurmount-

able technical, legal and/or financial issues, but primarily corporate culture.

Both to prevent infection and to care for their children better, almost a third of working parents worked from home for the first time or more often than before the crisis, with mothers (29 percent) doing so almost as much as fathers (31 percent) (Figure 84). However, there are considerable differences. More highly skilled employees and parents at larger companies had much more access to such opportunities than others. For example, 45 percent of working parents with an advanced education were able to work from home (more), while only 21 percent of parents with an intermediate education and only 12 percent of parents with a basic education were able to do so. In this respect, the working worlds of parents have evolved noticeably differently during the crisis.²³⁴

Figure 84: Working from home



Source: IfD Allensbach (2020): Eltern in der Corona-Krise, IfD Archiv 8237.

233 BMFSFJ (2015): Digitalisierung: Chancen und Herausforderungen für die partnerschaftliche Vereinbarkeit von Familie und Beruf, link: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/service/publikationen/digitalisierung---chancen-und-herausforderungen-fuer-die-partnerschaftliche-vereinbarkeit-von-familie-und-beruf/109006>

234 IfD Allensbach (2020): Eltern in der Corona-Krise, IfD Archiv 8237.

Even though this was done under difficult conditions due to the closure of daycare centres and schools, and even though work from home was difficult to reconcile with childcare or home-schooling, many companies learned that work could be done without constant presence at the workplace and without external supervision. This will lead to many companies retaining the option of remote work even after the crisis.²³⁵ Seventy-seven percent of employees who only began working from home regularly during the Covid-19 pandemic would also like to retain this form of work in future – at least in part.²³⁶ With regard to accessibility, clear regulations, e.g. in the form of company agreements, would be helpful. Last but not least, it should be noted that many employees do not want to work remotely, as 30 percent would rather see a clear separation between their professional and private lives, partly because they feel that working from home is less efficient and there is no contact with colleagues.²³⁷

Despite all the progress made, there is still a gap between the family orientation intended by companies and the family orientation perceived by employees. Forty-six percent of companies describe themselves as extremely family-friendly, while only 39 percent of employees describe their companies as extremely family-friendly. Not all of them can actually make use of family-friendly offers without having to put up with career disadvantages. Just over four in ten employees (44.2 percent) believe that it is only possible to excel at a company by being available for work matters outside of working hours. Closely related to the presumed accessibility requirements, there is also a fear that they will not be given sufficient consideration for appealing tasks if they make stronger use of family-friendly measures. This concern is shared by around 37 percent of employees (Figure 85).²³⁸

235 ZEW Mannheim (2020): link: <https://www.zew.de/presse/pressearchiv/unternehmen-wollen-auch-nach-der-krise-an-homeoffice-festhalten>

236 DAK Gesundheit (2020), link: <https://www.dak.de/dak/bundesthemen/sonderanalyse-2295276.html#/>

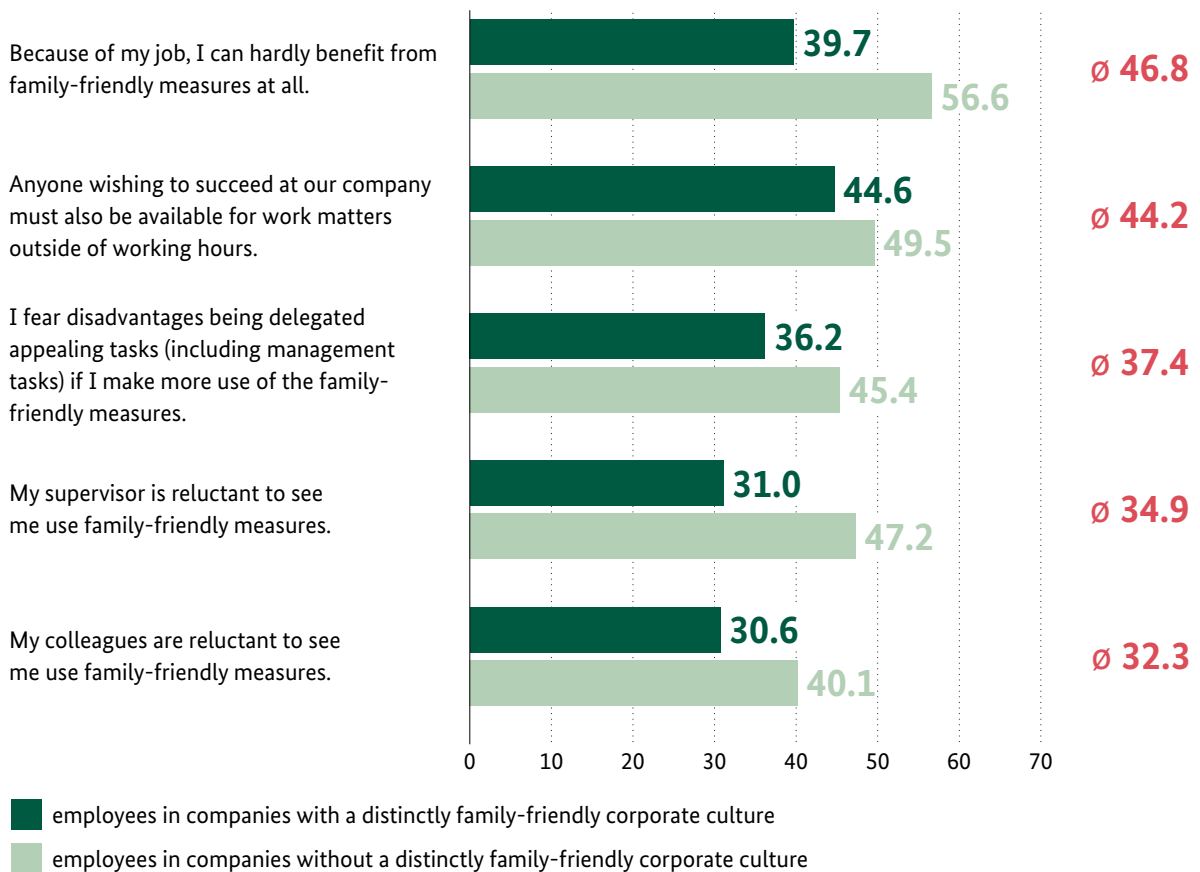
237 IAB (2020): Wie Corona den Arbeitsalltag verändert hat, IAB-Kurzbericht 13/2020, link: <http://doku.iab.de/kurzber/2020/kb1320.pdf>

238 BMFSFJ (2019): Unternehmensmonitor Familienfreundlichkeit 2019, IW Köln, link: https://www.iwkoeln.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Studien/Gutachten/PDF/2019/Unternehmensmonitor_Familienfreundlichkeit_2019.pdf

Figure 85: Family-friendly measures from the perspective of the employees

To what extent do the following statements apply to you?

Percentage of employees who describe the statement as completely or fairly true, in percent*



* The average values refer to the entire sample of employees (in companies with at least five employees). Due to the lack of information about the corporate culture in some questionnaires, these values deviate from the weighted average of the different employee groups shown here.

Source: BMFSFJ (2019): Unternehmensmonitor Familienfreundlichkeit 2019, IW Köln, p. 17.

As much as the importance of a family orientation has increased, it does not apply everywhere or to everyone. In particular, many men still fear that they will suffer disadvantages at work due to longer periods of family life. Although many fathers would like to take longer parental leave than the usual two months, the third most common obstacle after financial reasons and partner wishes is concern about career consequences. Although there is no scientific evidence of such disadvantages, social perceptions still seem to have a strong influence.²³⁹

This makes it clear that family orientation is a cultural issue that does not consist of individual measures for individual people affected. Rather, it is something that must be anchored, practised and made an example of in day-to-day company operations. Family-conscious measures can only have their full effect when they are met with broad acceptance and are supported by executives or used by them themselves, and there is no risk of negative consequences. Company and business location can benefit sustainably from the positive business and economic effects.

4.2.2 Initiatives of and with the economy

Company programme Success Factor Family (*Erfolgsfaktor Familie*)

With the Success Factor Family (*Erfolgsfaktor Familie*) programme for companies and the associated network that acts as a platform, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth is promoting a family-conscious working environment in close cooperation with trade associations (Federal Association of German Employers' Associations, Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce and Central Association of German Crafts), the regional chambers of commerce and the German Trade Union Confederation as well as other partners (Federal Association of Personnel Managers, German Hospital Federation, et cetera).²⁴⁰ The numerous joint projects, events and publications, some of which were realised independently, as well as the personal commitment of the peak representatives have demonstrably contributed to employers and those with scientific and political responsibility for business and the labour market recognising the economic benefits of family orientation. What began as a niche topic primarily for the interest group of working mothers has evolved into a strategic, guiding theme for a sustainable corporate culture and successful human resources management. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, the company programme also systematically provided information and practical examples of how companies were dealing with the consequences of the crisis and was in constant dialogue with companies and employees as well as with business and industry associations to find practical answers for employers and parents.

The Reconcilability Progress Index (*Fortschrittsindex Vereinbarkeit*)

As various studies show, there has been an increase in family-oriented measures, though also a "cultural divide" between companies and employees. For this reason, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, in cooperation with the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (*Deutscher Industrie- und Handelstag*) and the German Association of Personnel Executives

(*Bundesverband der Personalmanager*), has developed an online tool called the Reconcilability Progress Index (*Fortschrittsindex Vereinbarkeit*) for 2019.²⁴¹ The aim is to anchor the topic of family orientation in corporate cultures in a binding and verifiable way.

The index consists of two parts. Firstly, companies use guidelines to commit themselves to an innovative and family-oriented corporate culture. Secondly, employers can measure their status annually using a key performance indicator (KPI) system and compare themselves anonymously with other companies of the same size and sector. The KPIs that are asked about include the number of employees with flexible working hour models, the length of parental leave for mothers and fathers and the proportion of female executives. The companies receive tailor-made and proven recommendations for further development in the individual fields of action as well as a seal of participation, which they can use for their personnel marketing.

Success Factor Family company network

The company network Success Factor Family (*Unternehmensnetzwerk Erfolgsfaktor Familie*) is the operational basis of the company programme and has about 7,700 members nationwide (Figure 86). As a joint initiative of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs and the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce, the service-oriented network office provides free advice, particularly to small- and medium-size companies, on the practical implementation of a family-oriented personnel policy.

The network office located within the association offers services that support companies as well as chambers of commerce and information sharers in questions about reconciling work with family. With around 70 different event formats in different regions every year, topics such as family-conscious corporate culture, equal duty sharing between partners, working hour arrangements and reconciling work with care, et cetera and how to achieve them within companies are discussed.

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²⁴⁰ www.erfolgsfaktor-familie.de

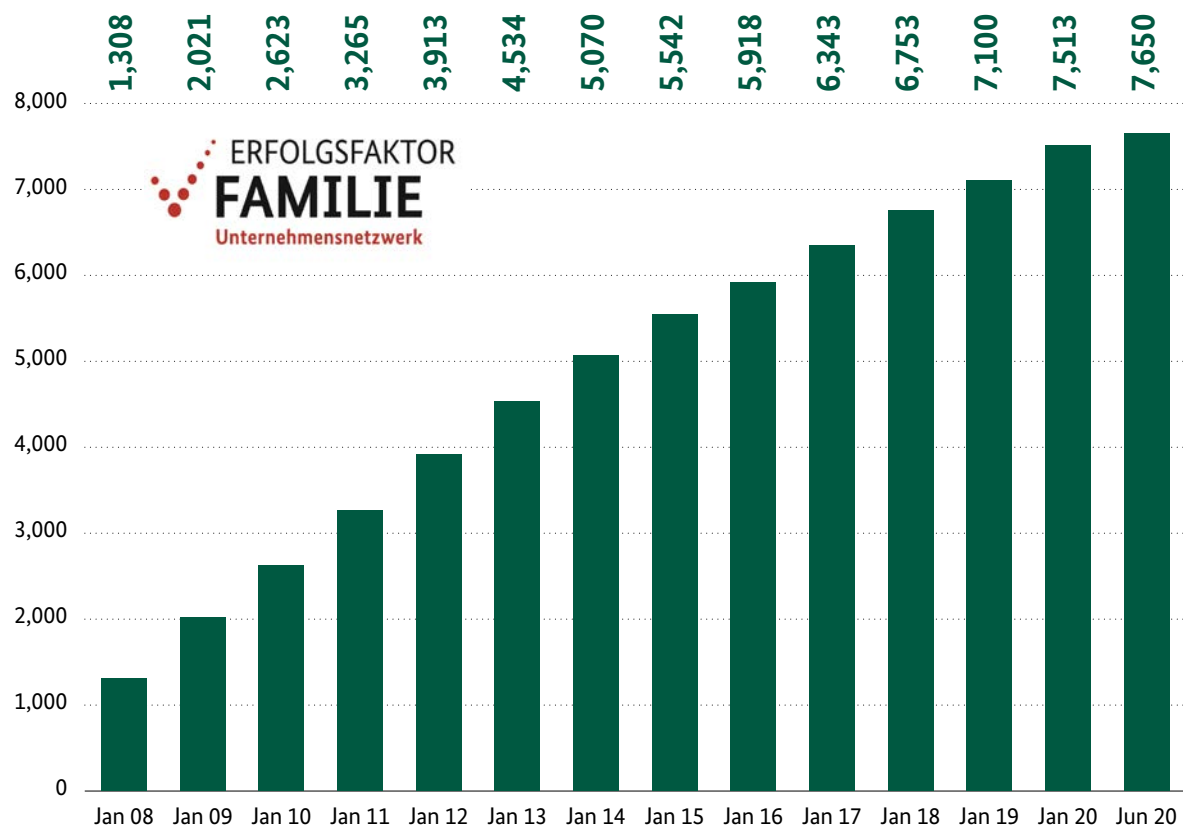
²⁴¹ www.fortschrittsindex-vereinbarkeit.de

Online seminars on a wide range of topics (parental leave and Parental Allowance, internal communication, the law on care and nursing leave (*Pflegezeit- und Familienpflegezeitgesetz*), family-friendly job advertisements or family-friendly shift patterns) round off the programme. Each year, the programme reaches around 4,500 stakeholders in the business community. Network members and information sharers are invited to Berlin to exchange views with representatives from business and politics on current developments and trends in reconciling families and

careers in Germany at the annual major events “Company Day” and “Multipliers Event”, in innovative formats.

Specific cooperations with industry associations illustrate the basic characteristics of the sector and how to implement family-conscious measures using specific examples. In addition, workshops on topics related to reconcilability have been held regularly in various German cities since 2017 with partners such as Väter gGmbH and beruf-undfamilie Service GmbH.

Figure 86: Evolution of membership in the Success Factor Family company network, 2008 to 2020



Source: Success Factor Family network office, DIHK Service GmbH.

Company Childcare (*Betriebliche Kinderbetreuung*) support programme

As a further building block in the creation of a family-conscious living and working environment, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs has relaunched the Company Childcare support programme (*Förderprogramm Betriebliche Kinderbetreuung*) (duration: 1 September 2020 to 31 December 2022). The aim of the support

programme is to strengthen company commitment to childcare and thus improve the reconcilability of family and career. The funding is designed as an initial financial boost for new places in company childcare programmes to make the starting stage easier. It not only supports new places in company childcare, it is now also supporting daycare, childcare in exceptional cases and holiday care for the first time.²⁴²

242 www.erfolgsfaktor-familie.de/kinderbetreuung



Digital services for families

When it comes to digitising services, the enormous potential of digital technologies for a modern and caring welfare state is clear. The Covid-19 pandemic showed that videoconferencing and other digital tools could be used creatively within a short time to maintain contact in families – even over the necessary physical distances – to organise help, to enable learning despite school closures and to work from home in a way that had long seemed impossible.

However, digital technologies are not a panacea. Their beneficial use depends on good parameters: the availability of mobile phones, tablets or computers; software and licences, a reliable internet connection, technical know-how and social and cultural “digital” skills. Digital technologies can create cognitive overload, increase existing inequalities, promote insecurity and encourage the spread of false information.

The citizens of Germany are relatively well equipped for this challenge. The Digital Index D21 shows for 2019/2020 that the age groups between 14 and 59 have almost complete connection to the internet (92 to 99 percent).²⁴³ Although the majority of older audiences also use the internet at least occasionally, there are clear gaps in coverage (60- to 69-year-olds: 82 percent; 70 and over: 52 percent). In addition to access to, and actual use of, the internet, it is evident that important indicators such as openness to new technologies and digital competence have also steadily increased among the German population. An OECD study ranks Germany ninth out of 27 countries when comparing the digital problem-solving abilities of the population; among younger people (16 to 25), Germany is in fact in the top group (fifth place).²⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the Digital Index D21 also points out major challenges. Besides demographic variables, socio-economic factors also determine access to and competent use of new technologies. For example, around 97 percent of citizens with a high level of formal

education are regular internet users, while only 64 percent of citizens with a low level of formal education fall into this category.

5.1 Improving access

In order to increase the potential of digitisation for all families, an opportunity-oriented approach is needed to allow creative and innovative use of digital technologies to solve social challenges.

In its Digital Administration Monitor reports in 2019, the National Regulatory Control Council (*Normenkontrollrat*) summarised the status quo in Germany and compared it with the results from other EU countries.²⁴⁵ All in all, Germany is in the lower middle range for digital administration in a European comparison. For example, in the Digital Economy and Society Index 2020 (EU), category “Digital Public Services”, Germany ranked only 21st out of 28.²⁴⁶ This index contains, for example, data about the percentage of internet users who need to submit forms, the proportion of pre-filled forms and the proportion of transactions with government offices completed online.

This underlines the national need for action in digitising administration, which the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) is addressing with its digital application assistants in particular. The German welfare state, with its broad spectrum of family and social benefits, does indeed offer an answer to very different life situations and personal challenges. However, these various offers do not always reach the families who are actually entitled to specific benefits.

Digitisation offers a multitude of new opportunities, e.g. with more seamless networking between different services, the possibility of data matching between authorities or new types of counselling services as well as better integration of existing

243 Initiative D21 (Ed.) (2020): WIE DIGITAL IST DEUTSCHLAND? D21Index, link: https://initiatived21.de/app/uploads/2020/02/d21_index2019_2020.pdf

244 OECD (2019): Measuring the Digital Transformation, link: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264311992-en>

245 Normenkontrollrat (Ed.) (2019): Monitor Digitale Verwaltung #2, Berlin.

246 European Commission (Ed.) (2020): Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI), link: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/digital-economy-and-company-index-desi-2020>

counselling structures. The advantages of digital networking and communication can be used in a more targeted way to help families utilise the services to which they are entitled, to make information available in a targeted manner and to make official procedures from advice and applications to notification simpler and more efficient for all parties involved, i.e. applicants and administration.

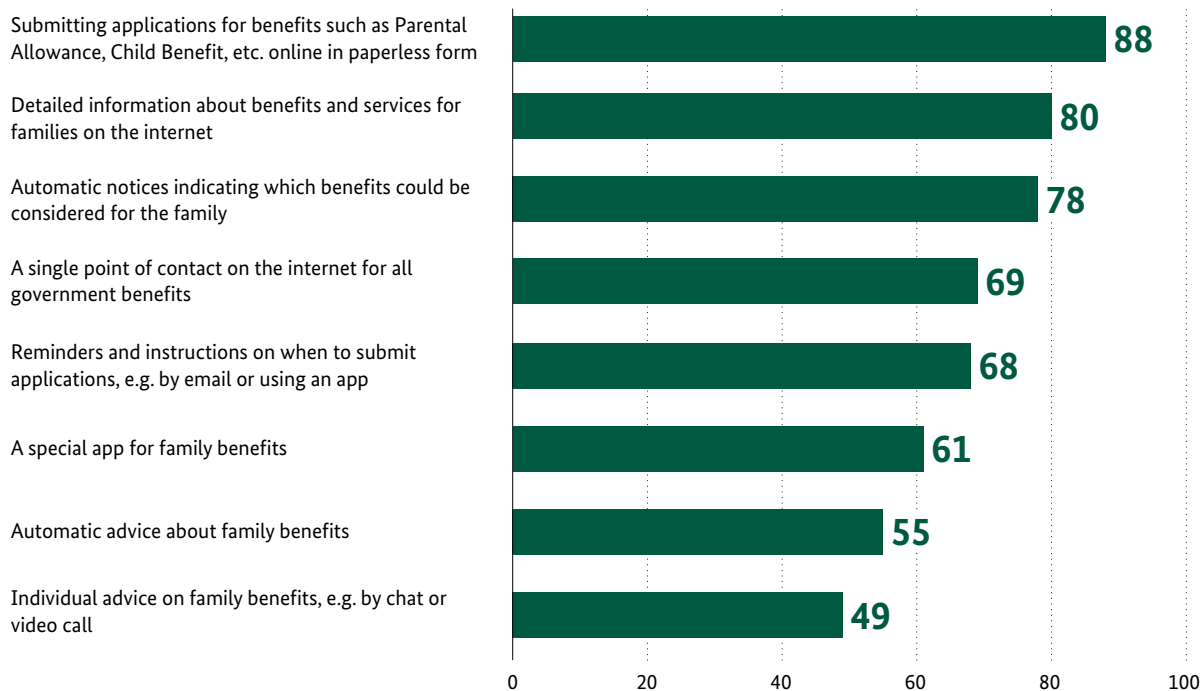
Relationship between citizens and the state

If citizens want to take advantage of services from the administration, they often have to contact different authorities on different occasions, some-

times submit extensive applications and enclose a large number of documents – sometimes original ones.²⁴⁷ For family life in particular, situations arise that make it impossible to spend the time desired for and with each other.²⁴⁸ When citizens apply for family benefits, they can waste a lot of (family) time on bureaucratic procedures. This makes the welfare state seem passive and hard to reach. Parents with children under 18 in particular regard the possibility of applying for benefits such as Parental Allowance or Child Benefit online and without paper as a great help for the family – according to a survey by Allensbach, 88 percent see it that way (Figure 87).²⁴⁹

Figure 87: Digital support for family benefits from a family perspective

These digital options would be a great help for families



Basis: Federal Republic of Germany, parents with children under 18.

Source: Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach (2019): Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Familienpolitik.

²⁴⁷ Bundesrats-Drucksache 307/18.

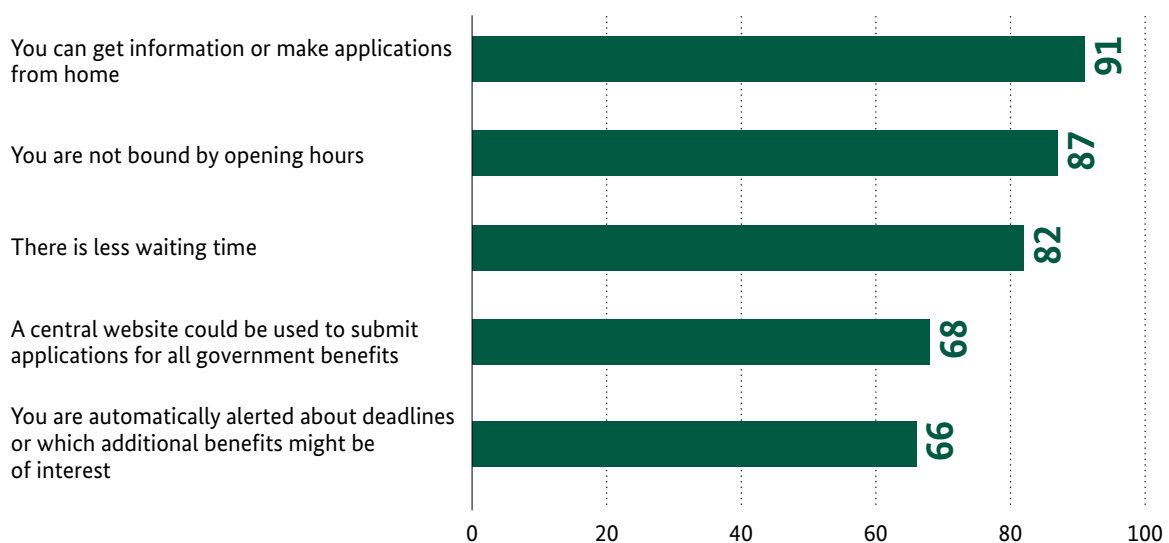
²⁴⁸ Statistisches Bundesamt (Ed.) (2017): Wie die Zeit vergeht. Analysen zur Zeitverwendung in Deutschland. Beiträge zur Ergebniskonferenz der Zeitverwendungserhebung 2012/2013, Wiesbaden.

²⁴⁹ IfD Allensbach (2019): Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Familienpolitik, link: https://www.ifd-allensbach.de/fileadmin/IfD/sonstige_pdfs/Rahmenbedingungen_Bericht.pdf

The advantages for the respondents are obvious: they can submit applications and obtain information from home, are not bound by the opening hours of public authorities and offices and can reduce waiting times. These are the key factors for a consistently positive assessment of digital family benefits (Figure 88). Families would like to find more and better targeted information on the internet and, where appropriate, be informed

automatically and in a personalised way about the benefits to which they are actually entitled. Almost a quarter of respondents would find it particularly helpful to be reminded by app or email when particular (follow-up) applications need to be submitted in order to meet deadlines. All in all, it is precisely tailored and detailed information that families especially value.

Figure 88: Benefits of digital support for family benefits



Basis: Federal Republic of Germany, parents with children under 18.

Source: Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach (2019). *Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Familienpolitik*.

Families make very different assessments of the costs and benefits of digital services, even if the advantages outweigh the possible disadvantages. Families are afraid that, in the event of questions and problems, the employees in the responsible departments will no longer be able to be reached directly and personally (66 percent), that local services and local contact points could even be replaced by online services (44 percent) and that personal contact will no longer be possible, e.g. to explain personal circumstances better (40 percent).²⁵⁰ The fear that personal data could be misused or even stolen is less important, with only 34 percent of respondents expressing such fears. However, just over half of respondents said that they were afraid that they could no longer under-

stand how their data was being used. Future digital services must therefore ensure that data is used in a transparent and comprehensible manner and that there are still opportunities for personal communication. Online services should be a supplement to conventional application and counselling services and not replace them. Citizens should have a choice in the services that they use.

A paradigm shift is therefore needed towards a committed, forward-thinking welfare state that is more accessible, transparent and, especially with regard to families, more responsive and efficient. The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs sees the use of digital tools as a key to achieving these goals.

²⁵⁰ Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach (2019): *Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen für die Familienpolitik*, Befragungen im Rahmen der demoskopischen Begleitforschung des BMFSFJ.

5.2 Digitisation of family benefits

The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs is developing digital access to all family-related benefits, to some extent in cooperation with the federal states. This will begin with the development of digital application assistants. These are interactive, “intelligent” application forms. In contrast to paper applications, they can filter information and thus ask only questions that are actually necessary. Context-specific information boxes, explanatory videos, images and text are intended to make it easier for citizens to find their way to the service. Digital application assistants check the information for completeness and plausibility and make it possible to improve the quality of applications and thus significantly reduce processing times.

The goal is a completely paperless and low-effort application process. This includes enabling citizens to identify themselves digitally or sign documents digitally, e.g. with the new identity card and Federal User Account (*Nutzerkonto Bund*) project driven by the Federal Ministry of the Interior (*Bundesministerium des Inneren*). In future, the data collected in digital application assistants will be transmitted electronically and securely directly to the responsible authorities. Necessary documentation can be photographed and uploaded at the same time. This will also reduce the workload of the processing offices. The staff capacity freed up will in turn benefit families in the form of faster response times and more extensive advisory services.

For some benefits, it may also be possible in the long term to dispense entirely with the requirement to enclose specific documents and instead obtain them from other bodies and authorities. The implementation of this once-only principle also includes the possibility of combined applications, by which different family benefits can be applied for at the same time and repeated details (e.g. name and date of birth of a child) need only be provided once for all applications at the same time.

All in all, the advantages of digitising family benefits are obvious. They are reflected, for example, in time and postage savings for citizens and in an increase in the efficiency of the administration. Finally, there are also advantages for employers, as they have fewer paper documents to submit and, thanks to more complete applications and documents, fewer queries are raised by applicants and authorities.

In total, the National Regulatory Control Council has calculated for the 35 most important administrative services that citizens would save 47 percent of the time spent on official business through digitisation, that companies would be spared up to €1 billion in expenses and that the administration could achieve time savings of about 64 million hours per year.²⁵¹

Against this background, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs has already reached some major milestones in the realisation of this vision with a range of benefits.

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²⁵¹ Nationaler Normenkontrollrat (Ed.) (2017): Mehr Leistung für Bürger und Unternehmen: Verwaltung digitalisieren. Register modernisieren., Berlin.

Parental Allowance Digital ([elterngeld-digital.de](https://www.elterngeld-digital.de))

With the digitisation of Parental Allowance, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs has made progress in administrative digitisation. The Parental Allowance Digital application assistant developed for this purpose was the first of its kind. Parental Allowance Digital was activated in October 2018 along with the application assistants of the federal states of Berlin and Saxony. On 8 July 2019, the application assistants of the federal states of Thuringia, Rhineland-Palatinate, Bremen and Hamburg were also activated. More and more families in these federal states are already using the support of Parental Allowance Digital when applying.

Parental Allowance Digital will be gradually expanded; other federal states will follow in the course of 2020. In the same period, digital authentication, electronic data transmission to Parental Allowance offices and the upload of documentation will be implemented in the first federal states. A legal basis for this was created within the Federal Parental Allowance and Parental Leave Act (*Bundeselterngeld- und Elternzeitgesetz*). In addition, numerous user experience improvements have been activated in Parental Allowance Digital since August 2020, which make the procedure even simpler and more convenient for applicants (shortening of application steps, more user-friendly design of various functions).

Child Supplement Digital ([kiz-digital.de](https://www.kiz-digital.de))

Child Supplement Digital is a digital application assistant for Child Supplement which has been available since 15 January 2020. The digital application assistant is intended to help to better reach the families for whom this benefit can be claimed. In addition to a smart and shortened application process, it also offers the possibility to upload supporting documents electronically, which replaces sending paper documents by post. The high and steadily increasing utilisation figures for Child Supplement Digital show that those entitled to this benefit are interested in, and have a great need for, digitally provided information and the possibility of applying online. Building on this, the range of functions (e.g. transfer of data from previous applications to the benefits office, video consultations that can be joined in) will be continuously expanded in the years 2020 to 2022.

Further services being digitised by the federal states and local authorities

Within the context of the implementation of the Improvement of Online Access to Administration Services Act (*Onlinezugangsgesetz*), the federal, state and local governments are currently planning and processing about 575 administrative services for 16 focus topics. Together with Bremen, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth is responsible for the focus topic of “Family and Child”. With the participation of Saarland and the local authorities of Delmenhorst and Wiesbaden, several digitisation laboratories are working on the services and developing prototype applications and digitisation concepts. Solutions from the ongoing implementation of Parental Allowance Digital, the digitisation of Child Supplement and the project Simple Services for Parents – ELFE (*Einfache Leistungen für Eltern – ELFE*) from Bremen are being adopted. Currently, the implementation phase for the digitisation of Maintenance Advance is already under way with the participation of several federal states. Further reference implementation projects will also enter the implementation phase in 2020.

Digital Family Benefits Act (*Digitale-Familienleistungen-Gesetz*)

In many cases, technical possibilities already exist today which could make it much easier for citizens to receive the family benefits to which they are entitled. In practice, however, the current legal framework, some of which dates back to “pre-digital” times, does not fully permit citizen-friendly digitisation. Against this background, the Bundesrat passed a resolution on 21 September 2018 calling on the Federal Government to create the necessary legal framework for Bremen’s Simple Services for Parents – ELFE initiative.

Accordingly, the Federal Government, under the leadership of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and the Federal Ministry of the Interior, passed the Digital Family Benefits Act (*Digitale-Familienleistungen-Gesetz*) on 24 June 2020. It enables the combination of five important family benefits into one consolidated digital application. In future, parents will be able to apply for a birth certificate – with a formal name and birth announcement – as well as Parental Allowance and Child Benefit in a

single application. In the next stage, Child Supplement will also be added.

The key element of the act is the regulation of electronic data exchange. In many places, authorities will be able to retrieve necessary data from each other. In future, citizens will no longer have to present documents themselves. The relevant births, deaths and marriages registries, health insurance funds and Parental Allowance offices as well as the Deutsche Rentenversicherung pension agency are authorised to exchange data electronically if requested by parents. This means that parents no longer have to submit multiple documents in paper form. Duplicate entries in different applications are avoided by the combined digital application. This saves parents as well as government offices and business more time.

Promotion and use of digital innovation

As early as 2017, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs presented its “Digital Agenda for a Society Worth Living In” (*Digitale Agenda für eine lebenswerte Gesellschaft*), together with families, the scientific community, civil society and digital partners. Since December 2018, the “Digital Living” innovation office at the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth has been supporting interest groups and partner structures as well as committed individuals from the scientific community, civil society and digital partners in developing digital innovation and making it widely available.²⁵²

The innovation office started in June 2019 with the Opportunity Hackathon (*Chancen-Hackathon*).²⁵³ Over 100 participants developed ideas on how digitisation can tangibly add value for citizens.

The idea of making benefits and services, especially for families, more accessible by using mapping services is currently being implemented. In this

way, parents should be able to identify easily and clearly which places and contact points in their area are relevant for them. Whereas in the past it was mainly shopping facilities or restaurants that were made more accessible, we want to make facilities and support services such as advice centres, neighbourhood houses, daycare centres, playgrounds or breastfeeding rooms more visible.

Artificial intelligence – recognition and use of resources

The OECD has identified artificial intelligence (AI) as one of the most important future fields of action for digital transformation. Accordingly, AI is defined as “the ability of machines and systems to acquire and apply knowledge”. This includes a broad spectrum of cognitive tasks, e.g. sensory perception, speech processing, pattern recognition, learning as well as decision-making and predicting future developments.²⁵⁴

For the majority of civil society organisations, it is hard to identify useful applications for their own field of work. For this reason, they rate AI technologies as having little or no relevance for their own organisation in about 78 percent of cases. Another 10 percent cannot estimate the importance²⁵⁵. The tertiary sector is thus lagging behind the private sector, which explored this potential by experimenting at an early stage and has already realised it in many cases. There are already innovative examples of applications, including those of non-profit organisations. Due to the different organisational structures, audiences and tasks, they cannot be transferred one-to-one to other organisations, but they show possibilities and provide orientation in the debate about artificial intelligence technologies. In the future, it will therefore be important to increase the sensitivity and competence regarding this topic among the stakeholders in civil society, to identify needs and to address them in a targeted manner.

252 Link: <https://www.innovationsbuero.net/>

253 Press release: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/aktuelles/presse/pressemitteilungen/ministerin-giffey-startet-innovationsbuero--digitales-leben--des-familienministeriums-/136670>

254 OECD (2020): Going Digital: Den digitalen Wandel gestalten, das Leben verbessern, p. 23, link: <https://doi.org/10.1787/e78eb379-de>

255 Haus des Stiftens gGmbH (Ed.) (2020): DIGITAL-REPORT 2020. Non-Profits & IT., link: <https://www.hausdesstiftens.org/wp-content/uploads/Digital-Report-2020.pdf>

5.3 Family Portal and Family Information Tool

The central Family Portal (*Familienportal*) www.familienportal.de of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs has provided information on family benefits, application procedures and legal regulations since summer 2018. The Family Portal focuses on the different situations of families, such as “pregnancy and birth” or “children and adolescents”. Users can find the information they need in just a few clicks.

The Family Portal also helps when it is not yet clear which benefits users are eligible for. From a desire to have children to caring for relatives – the Family Portal offers useful tips as well as an overview of what benefits families can receive in their situation. The Family Portal also provides an overview of seven key family benefits in ten different heritage languages. This gives families with little knowledge of German an initial orientation as to which benefits they are entitled to claim.

By searching by postcode, families can also find counselling options close to home on a range of topics, whether it is the nearest parent counselling centre or the closest counselling options for single parents. With a section for “crisis telephone numbers and contact points in emergency situations”, families can also find help rapidly in emergency situations.

With a newly created comprehensive topic area called “Families and Covid-19”, launched in March 2020, the Family Portal also provides information about financial help and support during the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, it provides parents, children and young persons with tips on how to deal with the coronavirus.

All topic areas on the Family Portal are constantly being expanded and updated. The number of visits is continuing to increase. From the Family Portal’s launch in June 2018 to June 2019, it recorded around 3.5 million visits. Between June 2019 and June 2020 it even reached 6.9 million visits.

The Family Portal also provides access to the popular Parental Allowance calculator and the Family Information Tool (*Infotool-Familie*, www.infotool-familie.de). The Family Information Tool advises (expectant) parents and families online about the family benefits they are likely to be entitled to and where they can find further information. By being constantly expanded and adapted to the legal situation, the tool can provide up-to-date assistance and highlight benefits not previously known to the recipients.

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