Spotlight on fertility trends

In 2022, 738 819 babies were born in Germany, corresponding to a total fertility rate (TFR) of 1.46 children per woman, which is slightly below the OECD average of 1.51.

Across the OECD on average, the TFR steadily declined from 1960 until 2002. There was a small a fertility rebound in the 2000s until 2008, upon which the TFR dropped to an all-time low of 1.5 in 2022. The trend in Germany is different as the TFR dropped rapidly in Germany from 1967 until 1975 but stabilised thereafter. Immediately after re-unification the TFR declined - as the TFR in Eastern Germany dipped, but fertility increased in the mid-1990s and again in the mid-2010s until 2022.

Figure 1. In Germany total fertility rates have been close to the OECD average over the past decade

Number of children per woman aged 15 to 49, Germany and OECD average, 1960 to 2022

Note: Germany refers to both Eastern and Western Germany from 1960 onwards.  
Source: Figure 1.1 in OECD (2024), Society at a Glance 2024, https://stat.link/vxd1nc.

Many factors affect fertility choices, including employment of both men and women, unemployment, financial support for families (e.g. paid parental leave and childcare supports) and housing costs (Figure 1.7, https://stat.link/8zu7m3 and Figure 1.14, https://stat.link/ois3k8). However other factors such as (financial) uncertainty as well as norms and attitudes also play a role. In many OECD countries, the desire to establish oneself in labour and housing markets have contributed to a delay in childbearing. In Germany, the mean age of mothers at childbirth rose from 28.8 in 2000 to 31.4 years in 2022, just above the OECD on average (Figure 1.5, https://stat.link/163n2d).

The fall in TFRs is related to women having fewer children and/or none at all. Childlessness has been on the rise across the OECD, but there is cross-national variation in timing and extent. In Germany there was a rise in permanent childlessness from 16% for women born in 1955 to 20% for women born in 1975. (Figure 1.3, https://stat.link/mvkw3b).
How does Germany compare?

Selection of indicators related to the chapter on fertility trends and other social indicators

Indicators related to the chapter on fertility trends

- Total Fertility rate (2022 or nearest year): Germany 0.78, OECD average 1.51, Min 0.76, Max 2.89
- Mean age of mothers at childbirth (2022): Germany 27.0, OECD average 30.9, Min 27.0, Max 33.5
- Childlessness (1975 cohort): Germany 8.9, OECD average 16.2, Min 8.9, Max 20.0
- Share of third born children (or higher birth order) (2022): Germany 8.3, OECD average 19.6, Min 8.3, Max 31.5
- Percentage of young adults aged 20-29 living with their parents (2022 or nearest year): Germany 10, OECD average 33, Min 10, Max 81
- Public expenditure on family benefits: Germany 0.5, OECD average 2.3, Min 0.5, Max 3.4

Other social indicators

- Percentage of respondents who report being somewhat or very concerned by inflation and cost of living (2022): Germany 84, OECD average 91, Min 84, Max 96
- Employment rate, Men (aged 15-64), Q4 2023: Germany 70, OECD average 77, Min 70, Max 87
- Employment rate, Women (aged 15-64), Q4 2023: Germany 36, OECD average 67, Min 36, Max 80
- Percentage of persons living with less than 50% of median equivalised disposable income (2021 or nearest year): Germany 4.9, OECD average 11.4, Min 4.9, Max 21.0
- Life expectancy at birth, in years, in 2021 (or nearest year): Germany 73.1, OECD average 80.3, Min 73.1, Max 84.5
- Old-age to working-age ratio, 2060: Germany 33, OECD average 59, Min 33, Max 96
- Number of people of retirement age (65+) per 100 people of working-age (20-64): Germany 59, OECD average 63, Min 59, Max 96
- Internet users: Germany 81, OECD average 92, Min 81, Max 100