

Occupational Breakdown of Germany's Population (1882–1907)

Abstract

Industrialization changed the way the rapidly expanding German population earned its livelihood. In 1871, about 49% of the workforce was engaged in agriculture; by 1907, that number had fallen to 35%. In that time span, many Germans migrated to urban areas to take full advantage of employment opportunities in growing industries. Industry's share of the workforce rose from 31% to 40%. It is obvious that women represented a much higher proportion of the workforce in some sectors—e.g., domestic service—than in others. As note 9 reminds us, in order to appreciate the size and significance of female labor—especially in agriculture—contemporary statistics must be interpreted carefully.

Source

Gainfully Employed Persons and their Dependents by Economic Sector (in thousands)

Economic sector	Year	Total number of gainfully employed	Number of women	in %	Family members (d) ⁷	Gainfully employed and family members	in % of total population
A. Agriculture ¹	1882	8,236	2,535	30.8	10,564	18,801	41.6
–	1895	8,293	2,753	33.2	9 834	18,127	35.0
–	1907	9,883	4,599 ⁹	46.5	7,634	17,517	28.4
–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
B. Industry ^{2,8}	1882	6,396	1,127	17.6	9,359	15,756	34.8
–	1895	8,281	1,521	18.4	11,652	19,933	38.5
–	1907	11,256	2,104	18.7	14,799	26,055	42.2
–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
C. Trade and commerce ^{3,8}	1882	1,570	298	19.0	2,665	4,236	9.4
–	1895	2,339	580	24.8	3,344	5,683	11.0
–	1907	3,478	931	26.8	4,458	7,935	12.9
–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
D. Domestic service ⁴	1882	1,723	1,466	85.1	539	2,261	5.0
–	1895	1,772	1,548	87.4	453	2,225	4.3
–	1907	1,736	1,570	90.4	320	2,056	3.3
–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

E. Administration, military, and independent professions ⁵	1882	1,031	115	11.2	1,027	2,058	4.6
–	1895	1,426	177	12.4	1,218	2,644	5.1
–	1907	1,739	288	16.6	1,445	3,184	5.2
–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Total A. through E.	1882	18,957	5,542	29.2	24,154	43,111	95.3
–	1895	22,110	6,578	29.8	26,501	48,611	93.9
–	1907	28,092	9,493	33.8	28,655	56,747	91.9
–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
F. Those without occupations and those drawing pensions ⁶	1882	1,354	702	51.8	756	2,117	4.7
–	1895	2,143	1,116	52.1	1,016	3,159	6.1
–	1907	3,405	1,792	52.6	1,568	4,973	8.1
–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Total A. through F.	1882	20,311	6,247	30.7	24,911	45,222	100.0
–	1895	24,253	7,694	31.7	27,517	51,770	100.0
–	1907	31,497	11,285	35.8	30,223	61,721	100.0

¹ Includes gardening, animal husbandry, forestry, and fishing.

² Includes mining, construction, and trades.

³ Includes restaurants and taverns.

⁴ Domestics who live either with or separate from their employers (including various kinds of wage labor). For a definition, see *Statistik des Deutschen Reichs* 202 (1907), p. 117. The number of persons engaged in various kinds of wage labor was 235,506 in 1882; 200,919 in 1895; and 155,696 in 1907.

⁵ Including church and municipal administration.

⁶ Includes individuals living from their own assets, pensions, and subsidies, and those residing in various charitable institutions; school-age children, students, and wards living outside of their families; persons without individual occupations and those for whom no occupational information was provided.

⁷ In the individual occupation categories A, B, and C, gainfully employed persons are divided into (a) self-employed, including executive civil servants and other kinds of business managers (owner, proprietor, co-owner or co-proprietor, lessee, hereditary lessee, master tradesmen, entrepreneur, director, administrator).

(b) non-executive civil servants, generally, administrative and supervisory personnel with scientific, technical, or business training, as well as accounting and office personnel.

(c) other assistants, apprentices, factory workers, wage laborers, and day laborers, including family

members working in the trades and domestics.

(d) family members who have no regular occupation and do not live in other households. The allocation is done according to the primary occupation and social standing of the gainfully employed person who provides the support and in whose household the individual lives.

⁸ According to estimates by the present authors [Hohorst, et. al.], the occupational category “worker” included 166,000 salesclerks (of whom approximately 32,000 were women) in 1882, 268,868 (81,838 women) in 1895 (according to *Statistik des Deutschen Reichs*, vol. 111), and 406,385 (173,611 women) in 1907 (according to *Statistik des Deutschen Reichs*, vol. 203), all of whom, in modern terms, should be counted among salaried employees. – In sector B, foremen were still counted among workers in 1882; after 1895, they were counted among salaried employees.

⁹ Especially in the category “Agriculture (A),” the “helping family members”—almost entirely women—are incompletely recorded in the statistics from 1882 and 1895. As a result, the dramatic increase in the percentage of women from 33.2% to 46.5% of all gainfully employed individuals in agriculture between 1895 and 1907 was caused entirely by a change in the definition of “gainful” employment. According to Hoffmann, *Das Wachstum der deutschen Wirtschaft*, pp. 182-84, 210, if one applies the recording methods of 1907, there were already 3,935,000 women employed in agriculture in 1882, and 4,153,000 in 1895. For trade and the restaurant business (part of C), Hoffmann—on account of a more accurate accounting of “helping family members”—arrives at a much higher figure, especially for female workers. By contrast, deviations from the official statistics are substantially fewer in “Industry and Mining (B).” If we use the figures from Hoffmann (pp. 205, 210), which correct the official statistics, the percentage of female workers among the total number of the gainfully employed was: 35.91% in 1882; 34.86% in 1895; and 34.88% in 1907.

Source: Gerd Hohorst, Jürgen Kocka, and Gerhard A. Ritter, eds., *Sozialgeschichtliches Arbeitsbuch: Materialien zur Statistik des Kaiserreichs 1870-1914*, vol. 2. Munich: C.H. Beck, 1975, p. 66. The statistics were compiled by the editors and drawn from the following sources: (for 1882) *Statistik des Deutschen Reichs*, new version, vol. 2 (1884) and new version, vol. 4, 3 (1884); (for 1895) *Statistik des Deutschen Reichs*, new version, vol. 111 (1899); and (for 1907) *Statistik des Deutschen Reichs*, vol. 203 (1910).

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Recommended Citation: Occupational Breakdown of Germany’s Population (1882–1907), published in: German History in Documents and Images,
<<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/forging-an-empire-bismarckian-germany-1866-1890/ghdi:document-1742>> [May 03, 2024].