

Population Distribution by Size of Locality: German Reich, Prussian Provinces, and Federal States (1871–1910)

Abstract

In 1871, almost two-thirds (63.9%) of the German population lived in villages with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants. By 1910, that figure had fallen to 40 percent. In that same interval, the percentage of the population living in medium-sized cities (between 20,000 and 99,999 inhabitants) almost doubled. In 1871, less than 5% of the population lived in large cities (more than 100,000 inhabitants). By 1910, however, these cities were home to over 20% of the population.

From mid-century onward, the strongest population growth occurred in Prussia’s western provinces—in Westphalia and the Rhineland, where heavy industry was concentrated in the Ruhr district—and in the Kingdom of Saxony. In 1871, fewer than 20% of Rhinelanders lived in medium-sized or large cities. By 1910, this figure had risen to 50%. Local examples are even more dramatic. Chemnitz, Saxony’s most important industrial city, grew from about 78,000 inhabitants in the mid-1870s to 288,000 inhabitants by 1910.

Source

I. Percentage Distribution of the Population

For every 100 members of the total population, the following percentages lived in communities with ... inhabitants

Census Year	fewer than 2,000	2,000 and more
1871	63.9	36.1
1875	61.0	39.0
1880	58.6	41.4
1885	56.3	43.7
1890	53.0	47.0
1895	49.8	50.2
1900	45.6	54.4
1905	42.6	57.4
1910	40.0	60.0

and specifically in communities with ... inhabitants

	2,000 to 4,999	5,000 to 19,999	20,000 to 99,999	100,000 and more
12.4	11.2	7.7	4.8	
12.6	12.0	8.2	6.2	
12.7	12.6	8.9	7.2	
12.4	12.9	8.9	9.5	

12.0	13.1	9.8	12.1
12.0	13.6	10.7	13.9
12.1	13.5	12.6	16.2
11.8	13.7	12.9	19.0
11.2	14.1	13.4	21.3

Source: *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich 1934*, p. 11. According to the census of early December 1871, the total population was not, as indicated here, 41,010,000, but 41,059,000. The distributions—for 1871 only—also show minimal differences when compared with the figures provided in *Bevölkerung und Wirtschaft*, p. 94. Data reprinted in Gerd Hohorst, Jürgen Kocka, and Gerhard A. Ritter, *Sozialgeschichtliches Arbeitsbuch II*, 2nd ed. Munich: Beck, 1978, p. 52.

II. Communities in the Federal States and Prussian Provinces: Population According to Size Category

[Percentage of population] living in communities with ... inhabitants

Federal States and Prussian Provinces	Year	Fewer than 2,000	2,000 to 4,999	5,000 to 19,999	20,000 and more	of them, 100,000 and more	Total population
Province of East Prussia	1871	79.2	8.9	11.9 ¹	11.9	6.2	1,822,934
–	1890	74.6	8.5	6.3	10.6	8.3	1,958,663
–	1910	67.0	6.1	8.9	18.0	11.9	2,064,175
Province of West Prussia	1871	74.8	9.3	6.7	9.2	–	1,314,915
–	1890	68.3	8.6	8.5	14.6	8.4	1,433,681
–	1910	60.0	8.4	12.8	18.5	10.0	1,703,474
Province of Brandenburg (without Berlin)	1871	46.2	7.3	12.2	34.3	28.9	2,034,801
–	1890	32.2	6.0	12.0	49.8	38.3	2,541,720
–	1910	32.0	7.9	13.3	46.7	20.2	4,092,616
Province of Pomerania	1871	68.7	9.5	14.6	7.2	–	1,431,492
–	1890	62.3	7.9	15.8	14.0	7.6	1,520,889
–	1910	55.3	6.8	14.3	23.5	13.7	1,716,921
Province of Poznań	1871	79.1	9.4	6.2	5.3	–	1,583,843
–	1890	73.7	10.8	9.2	6.3	–	1,751,642
–	1910	66.4	7.8	11.9	13.9	7.5	2,099,831
Province of Silesia	1871	70.0	10.8	11.7	7.5	5.6	3,707,167
–	1890	60.2	10.9	14.1	14.8	7.3	4,224,458

–	1910	46.9	10.3	17.9	24.8	9.8	5,225,962
Province of Saxony	1871	60.2	13.4	14,6	11.8	–	2,103,281
–	1890	49.9	14.2	13.4	22.5	11.8	2,580,073
–	1910	42.9	13.5	12.6	30.9	18.5	3,089,275
Province of Schleswig-Holstein	1871	64.2	11.4	11.4	13.0	–	1,045,419
–	1890	54.4	10.8	12.6	22.2	11.8	1,219,523
–	1910	41.4	12.0	14.9	31.7	23.7	1,621,004
Province of Hanover	1871	75.3	7.3	10.7	6.7	–	1,963,080
–	1890	65.3	9.4	10.2	15.1	7.2	2,278,348
–	1910	54.0	9.6	8.6	27.9	10.3	2,942,436
Province of Westphalia	1871	51.2	27.8	13.0	8.0	–	1,775,175
–	1890	36.7	22.6	24.9	15.8	–	2,428,661
–	1910	19.7	16.8	23.8	39.6	12.6	4,125,096
Province of Hesse-Nassau	1871	70.2	10.7	15.3	13.8	–	1,400,370
–	1890	58.8	12.4	8.2	20.6	10.8	1,664,439
–	1910	46.0	11.2	7.6	35.1	30.5	2,221,021
Province of the Rhineland	1871	42.7	18.4	19.8	19.1	3.6	3,579,347
–	1890	32.5	15.2	19.8	32.5	18.6	4,710,391
–	1910	20.7	11.7	17.7	49.8	32.9	7,121,140
Kingdom of Prussia (overall)	1871	62.8	12.3	11.9	13.0	5.2	24,691,085
–	1890	51.6	11.6	13.9	22.9	13.3	29,957,367
–	1910	38.4	10.2	14.1	37.1	22.4	40,165,219
Kingdom of Bavaria	1871	76.4	7.7	7.2	8.7	3.5	4,863,485
–	1890	68.2	8.0	7.9	15.9	8.8	5,594,982
–	1910	55.3	10.3	8.7	25.8	15.0	6,887,291
Kingdom of Saxony	1871	62.1	7.7	12.7	17.5	11.1	2,556,244
–	1890	37.1	15.2	20.0	27.7	20.3	3,502,684
–	1910	27.0	12.6	21.0	39.3	32.2	4,806,661
Württemberg	1871	69.3	14.2	10.0	6.5	–	1,818,539
–	1890	61.2	15.4	11.2	12.2	6.9	2,036,522
–	1910	50.0	14.4	14.6	21.1	11.7	2,437,574

Baden	1871	67.5	17.1	8.5	6.9	–	1,461,539
–	1890	57.4	18.7	8.0	15.9	–	1,657,867
–	1910	42.4	19.7	10.5	27.3	15.3	2,142,833
Hesse	1875 ²	61.4	17.8	7.3	13.5	–	884,218
–	1890	–	–	–	–	–	992,883
–	1910	39.4	18.6	14.6	27.4	8.6	1,282,051
Mecklenburg-Schwerin	1875 ²	61.7	17.0	10.1	11.2	–	553,785
–	1890	–	–	–	–	–	578,342
–	1910	52.4	15.0	11.8	20.7	0.0	639,958
Hamburg	1871	6.4	9.0	16.5	68.1	–	338,974
–	1890	–	–	–	–	–	622,530
–	1910	1.8	2.4	4.0	91.8	91.8	1,014,664
Alsace-Lorraine	1875 ²	62.9	13.9	8.6	14.5	–	1,531,801
–	1890	–	–	–	–	–	1,603,506
–	1910	46.8	14.6	17.9	20.6	9.5	1,874,014
German Reich	1871	63.9	12.4	11.2	12.5	4.8	41,058,804
–	1890	53.0	12.0	13.1	21.9	12.1	49,428,470
–	1910	40.0	11.2	14.1	34.7	21.3	64,925,993

¹ Cumulative value for towns with 5,000 to 19,999 people and 20,000 and more.

² A minimal margin of error must be tolerated regarding the figures for 1875, since the size categories were defined differently than in the table: 2,000 and fewer; 2,001–5,000; 5,001–20,000; and more than 20,000.

Source: The table was compiled from statistics in the following: *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich 1915*, pp. 4–5 (for the year 1910); 1880, pp. 6–7 (for the year 1875), and Richard Tilly, “Popular Disorders in Nineteenth Century Germany: Preliminary Survey,” in *Journal of Social History* (Fall 1970), pp. 1–40. Table reprinted in Gerd Hohorst, Jürgen Kocka, and Gerhard A. Ritter, *Sozialgeschichtliches Arbeitsbuch II*. 2nd ed. Munich: Beck, 1978, pp. 42–44.

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