

“How Much Does a Date Cost?” (1959)

Abstract

In the 1950s, West German youth had more and more disposable income. This article from *Twen* shows how much young men were spending on dates.

Source

Twens report how expensive girls are. “I spent a lot of money on her, but I don’t regret a thing.”

Twen asked twens: How much does a girlfriend cost? For one month, thirty twens wrote down every penny they spent on their girls, added it all up, and sent us the final total. The findings are random, sometimes even harsh, but nonetheless revealing. “I never was entirely aware of how expensive girls actually are,” one of them wrote. “Good thing you asked about it, now I know!”

Only a few of the surveyed twens, however, knew how much their girlfriends spent on them. That will be examined in the next issue. For that, *Twen* is still looking for reports from female twens.

How expensive, then, are the girls of young men? The twens we surveyed listed very different amounts. As a rough average, however, they spent about DM 20 to 150 per month for their dates (DM 5.50 and DM 310 are no doubt extreme cases). In other words: they spend this money not only on their girlfriends; rather, the majority of it is spent on themselves.

Klaus S., 22, a bank employee from Aachen, is one example. He gets together with Margit every Saturday afternoon. This costs him:

Two ice cream cups 1.80 DM

Two movie tickets 4.- DM

A small serving of french fries (for her) -.45 DM

A large serving of french fries with a sausage (for me) 1.50 DM

Beer (one for her, four for me) 2.75 DM

Travel costs -- DM

10.50 DM

Klaus explains this list: “My father is decent enough to give me his car. And Margit does not eat or drink very much. In fact, she has a natural instinct for inexpensive things.”

Typical of the economically-minded twen is Klaus F., 24, a student from Düsseldorf. He added up the costs of his last evening with Irmgard:

Theater ticket (for me) 3.- DM

Program -.50 DM

Beer (for me) 1.50 DM

Soda (for her) -.50 DM

Streetcar -.80 DM

6.30 DM

Klaus explains why his expenses were so low: "Irmgard's father is an academic himself, and he told her that students are paupers."

Ulrich K., 23, Duisburg, also a student, goes on an outing every weekend with Helga in a minibus owned by the company where he works as a work-study student. He gets the gas for free; as the driver, he does not drink alcohol on principle. Adds up to:

Four bottles of cola 2.40 DM

One bar of chocolate 1.30 DM

3.70 DM

Now, this is already an exception. Most put a twenty-mark bill into their pocket just to be safe ("You never know") before they meet their girlfriend.

Hans-Horst G., 25, clerk, Eilendorf (Rheinland), drives a car at company expense. Still, he ends up spending a considerable amount when he meets Hannelore on the weekend:

Movies 4.- DM

Peppermint -.20 DM

Beer 2.- DM

Parking fee 1.- DM

Italian meal 6.35 DM

Drinks with the meal (beer, apple juice) 3.60 DM

Cigarettes 1.10 DM

Tip 1.- DM

16.25 DM

Hans-Horst meets Hannelore every weekend, that is, four times a month. He calculates:

$4 \times 16.25 \text{ DM} = 85 \text{ DM}.$

Helmut F. also spends around 80 DM per month on his girlfriend. However, from that he can deduct a 5 DM can of tobacco that his girlfriend gives him at the end of every month.

Dieter R., 20, a musician from Mainz, has a fixed budget every month: 50 DM. From that he pays for ten, or, in less favorable cases, seven dates. (Once the budget covered only a single date – but Dieter doesn't talk about that).

“In the long run a steady girlfriend is cheapest.” – Nearly all the young men we polled had that experience. Of course, no girlfriend at all was (financially) even better. On the other hand: switching girlfriends frequently was a pleasant but expensive diversion. One man spoke of an “investment phase” that had to be overcome with every new girlfriend. “In the beginning, every girl costs money, you have to impress her, after all.”

Girls who pay

There is disagreement, however, on whether girls should pay for themselves later on. Hans P. from Hamburg is horrified: “Out of the question, of course I will pay.” Nearly three-quarters of those polled, though, said that they would have no problem if girls wished to contribute to the expenses in an appropriate way. Elmar W., however, reported the following: “Here in Munich the praiseworthy custom has established itself that girls pay for themselves. *Twen* should recommend this as worthy of emulation.” In fact, many girls pay for themselves. Especially when they have already been together with their boyfriends for a long time. “For cultural events – and that includes theater, circus, art exhibits, and ice shows – she buys the tickets,” reports Ingo N. Werner N. says: “My real girlfriend costs me 60 DM a month, my other girlfriend about half – she pays for herself.” One man appreciates the fact that his girlfriend contributes to the cost of gas for the scooter (3 Pfennigs per kilometer); another likes that his girlfriend brings butter sandwiches along; and one student is grateful that his girlfriend cooks him lunch twice a week (“Otherwise you don’t eat properly, she always says to me.”).

“The disadvantage of a steady girlfriend: you have to give her presents,” notes Ernst B. About one in three of those surveyed at least gave his girlfriend something on her birthday and at Christmas. Ten to twenty Marks are invested in a birthday present (records, books, “something for her room”), between 10 and 50 Marks for a Christmas present (jewelry, clothes, books). In addition, Hermann C. buys flowers for 2.50 DM every two weeks, though in the winter, when the flowers are more expensive, only every three or four weeks. “A girl is naturally always an expensive affair,” maintains Frank J., “but if you are a little bit clever, it need not be too expensive.” He goes on a lot of walks – “Still the best way to entertain a girl.” Dirk T. often invites his girlfriend home – “there is less interruption and it’s cheaper: my parents have a beer cellar.” Jan Z. and Bruno D. always go out together with their girlfriends – they share the gas costs for Jan’s car, and at the dance club they can then order one bottle of wine for four people.”

Still, many believed that girls were actually much more expensive than they seemed at first glance. If they had no girlfriend, they would go out less readily and less frequently, and probably also to simpler restaurants. “In addition to the direct expenses, one must not forget the ‘indirect costs,’” noted Friedrich L. And he lists: “A new tie (4.50 DM), a white handkerchief (1.20 DM), a wet shave (1.50 DM).” Peter S. speaks of certain special expenses next to his “fixed costs.” For example: “3.50 DM for flowers for his girlfriend’s mother on Mother’s Day.” But Ludwig M. from Stuttgart stated: “If she is nice and looks good, I don’t care what she costs me.” And Jürgen C., now twenty-three, recalls: “I have already spent a lot of money on girls in my life, but I regret nothing!”

Source: Klaus Bresser, “How Much Does a Date Cost?”, *Twen*, August 1959, pp. 2–22.

Translation: Thomas Dunlap

Recommended Citation: “How Much Does a Date Cost?” (1959), published in: German History in Documents and Images,
<<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/occupation-and-the-emergence-of-two-states-1945-1961/ghdi:document-4603>> [May 16, 2024].