

Refugees from the Soviet Occupation Zone/GDR in the Federal States of West Germany (1950 and 1961)

Abstract

In 1950, East German refugees accounted for 3.3% of all those living on Federal territory; by 1961, that figure had jumped to 5.5%. The increase was particularly dramatic in West Berlin. In 1952, the GDR government sealed off the 1,378-kilometer-long inner border between the two German states, leaving the zonal border in West Berlin as the last loophole to the West. In 1950, East German refugees made up 3.7% of the population of West Berlin. By 1961, the percentage had grown to 17.3 – nearly a fivefold increase.

Source

States	1950		1961	
	Refugees in thousands	%	Refugees in thousands	%
Schleswig-Holstein	134	5.2	114	4.9
Hamburg	68	4.2	130	7.1
Lower Saxony	369	5.4	356	5.4
Bremen	21	3.8	48	6.8
North Rhine-Westphalia	379	2.9	909	5.7
Hesse	166	3.8	302	6.3
Rhineland-Palatinate	47	1.5	128	3.7
Baden-Württemberg	144	2.2	416	5.4
Bavaria	228	2.5	294	3.1
Saarland	–	–	23	2.1
Berlin (West)	80	3.7	381	17.3
Federal territory	1,636	3.3	3,099	5.5

Refugees are persons of German nationality or ethnicity who, for the 1950 census, were not expellees* and who, on September 1, 1939, were permanently domiciled in the territory of the Soviet Occupation Zone or in the Soviet sector of Berlin. This category also includes any of the refugees' children born after this date. For the 1961 census, the only members of this group who were counted as refugees were those persons and their children who emigrated from the above-mentioned areas to federal territory (i.e., West Germany), including West Berlin, *after* the war.

* *Expellees* are persons of German nationality or ethnicity who, on September 1, 1939, were permanently domiciled abroad or in the eastern territories of Germany that are currently under foreign administration (territorial borders as of December 31, 1937). This category also includes any children born to them after this time.

Source: Gerhard A. Ritter and Merith Niehuss, *Wahlen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Bundestags- und Landtagswahlen 1946–1987*. Munich: Beck, 1987, p. 31.

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