



European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

Working and employment conditions in Germany

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This report is available in electronic format only.

The German Socio-economic Panel Study provides datasets on the development of employment structures between 1984 and 2003. The special module on working conditions in 2001 includes detailed questions on certain aspects of quality of work.

Introduction

This survey data report on employment and working conditions in Germany is based on data from the [German Socio-economic Panel Study \(GSOEP\)](#) at the [German Institute for Economic Research \(DIW\)](#), Berlin. All of the data used in this report were made available by the DIW.

The GSOEP is a wide-ranging representative longitudinal study of private households in Germany. It provides information on all household members, consisting of German nationals, foreign nationals and recent immigrants to Germany. The panel was initiated in 1984 and is conducted each year. In 2003, more than 12,000 households, and nearly 24,000 persons, were sampled. See the Appendix for further information.

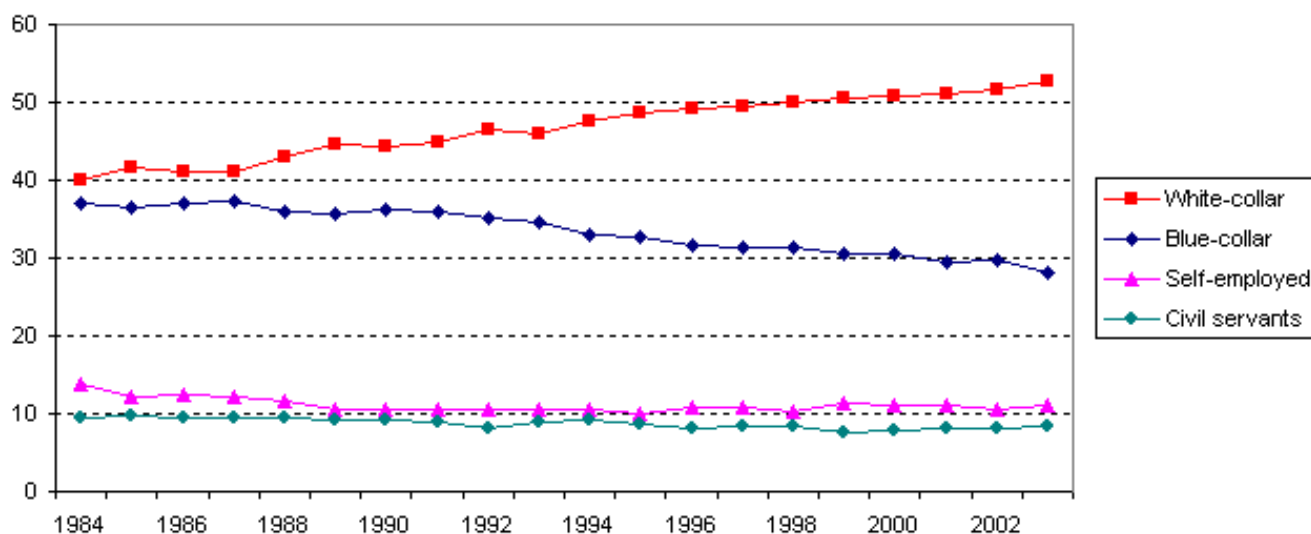
The GSOEP provides a broad range of information on diverse aspects of household composition, occupation history, employment, earnings, health, and satisfaction indicators. This brief report only highlights some results with a focus on [quality of work and employment](#). In addition to the most recent data for 2003, the report also includes an analysis of a special module on working conditions, carried out in 2001.

Employment structure

Occupational status

Between 1984 and 2003, in West Germany, the overall proportion of white-collar employees increased considerably from 40% to 53%, while the share of blue-collar employees decreased from 37% to 28%. In East Germany, a similar tendency is evident from 1991 to 2003. In West Germany, the proportion of self-employed people and civil servants remained almost at the same level, while in East Germany, the share of self-employed people increased from 5.6% to 11.2%, and the share of civil servants rose from 1.1% to 3.9% (Figures 1 and 2).

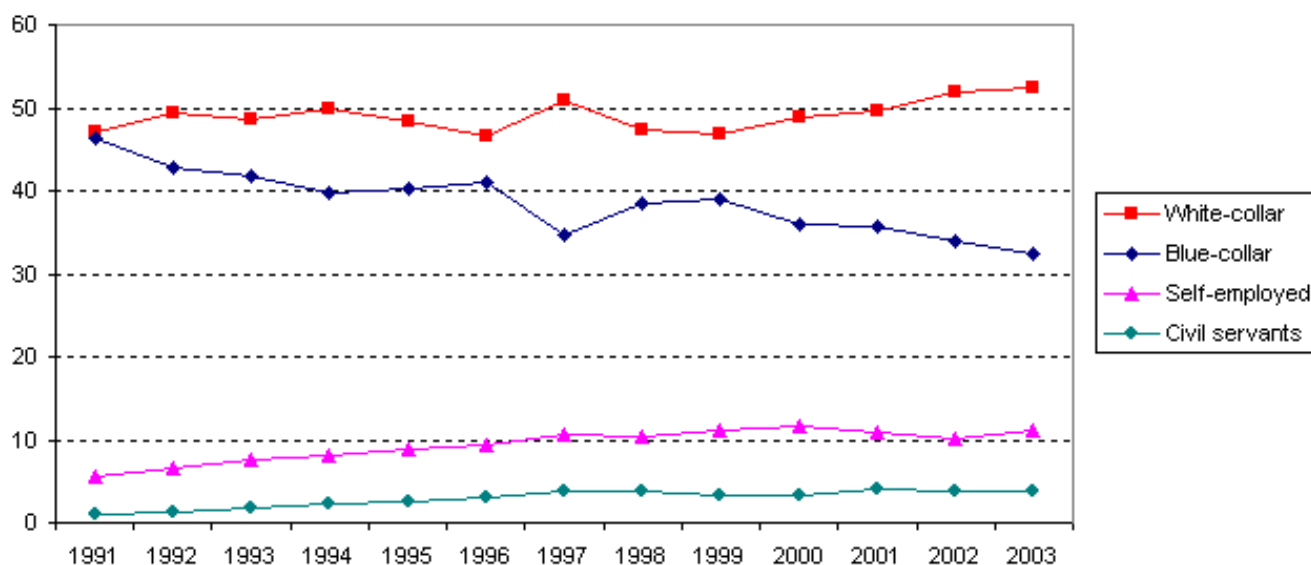
Figure 1 Occupational status of people in employment*, West Germany (%)



Source: SOEP-Monitor, Update: 9 September 2004
 * All people in employment aged 17+ years, excluding apprentices and trainees

Note: All data based on the SOEP-Monitor refer to: All people employed, aged 17 years and over, including self-employed people.

Figure 2 Occupational status of people in employment*, East Germany (%)

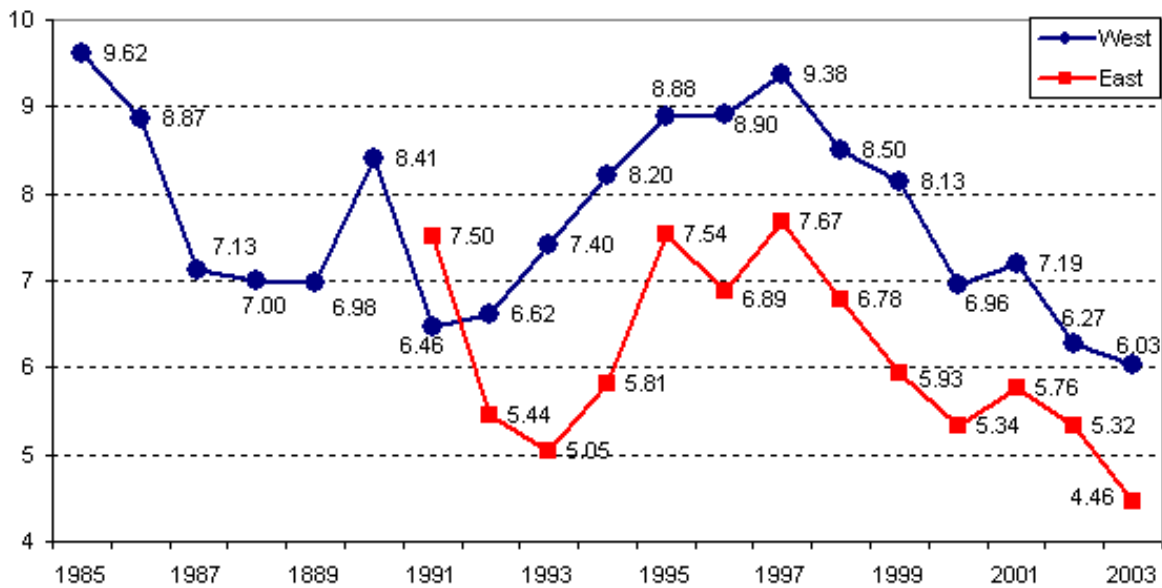


Source: SOEP-Monitor, Update: 9 September 2004
 * All people in employment aged 17+ years, excluding apprentices and trainees

Second job

In West Germany, the proportion of people who have a second job declined from 9.6% in 1985 to 6% in 2003 and, in East Germany, from 7.5% in 1991 to 4.5% in 2003 (Figure 3). In general, the numbers holding a second job is lower in East than in West Germany.

Figure 3 Percentage of people with a second job

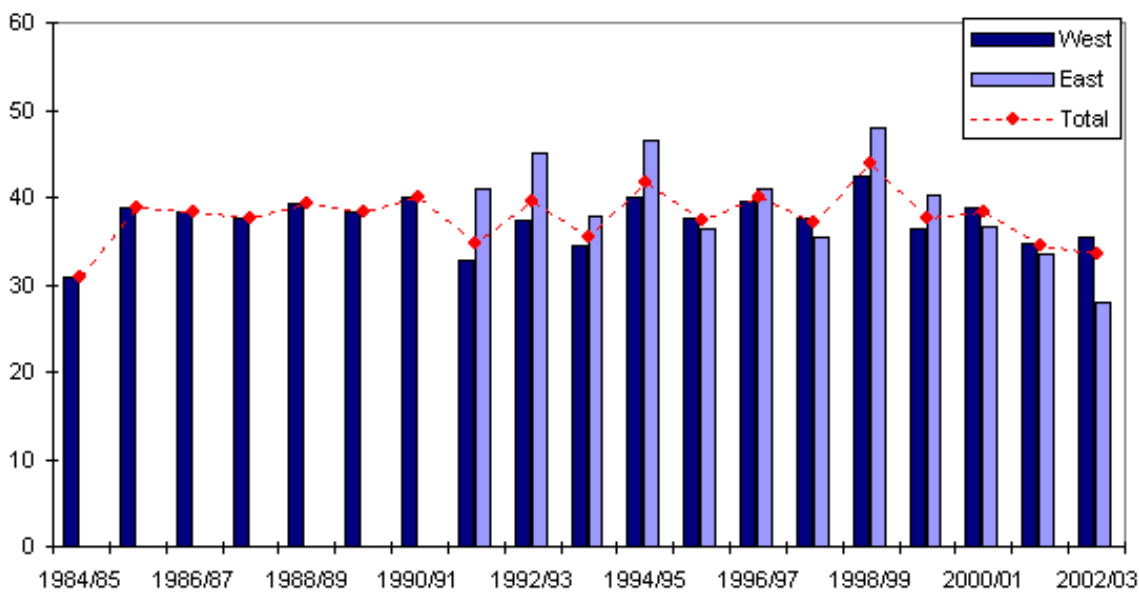


Source: SOEP-Monitor, Update: 9 September 2004
All people in employment, aged 17+ years

Labour market transition

In West Germany, the movement from non-employment into employment remained more or less at the same level between 1984 and 2003, though it increased after reunification in 1991. In the East, the proportion of people moving from non-employment into employment is higher than in the West, particularly in the early 1990s, but with a considerable decline since 2000 (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Labour market transition from non-employment into employment (%)

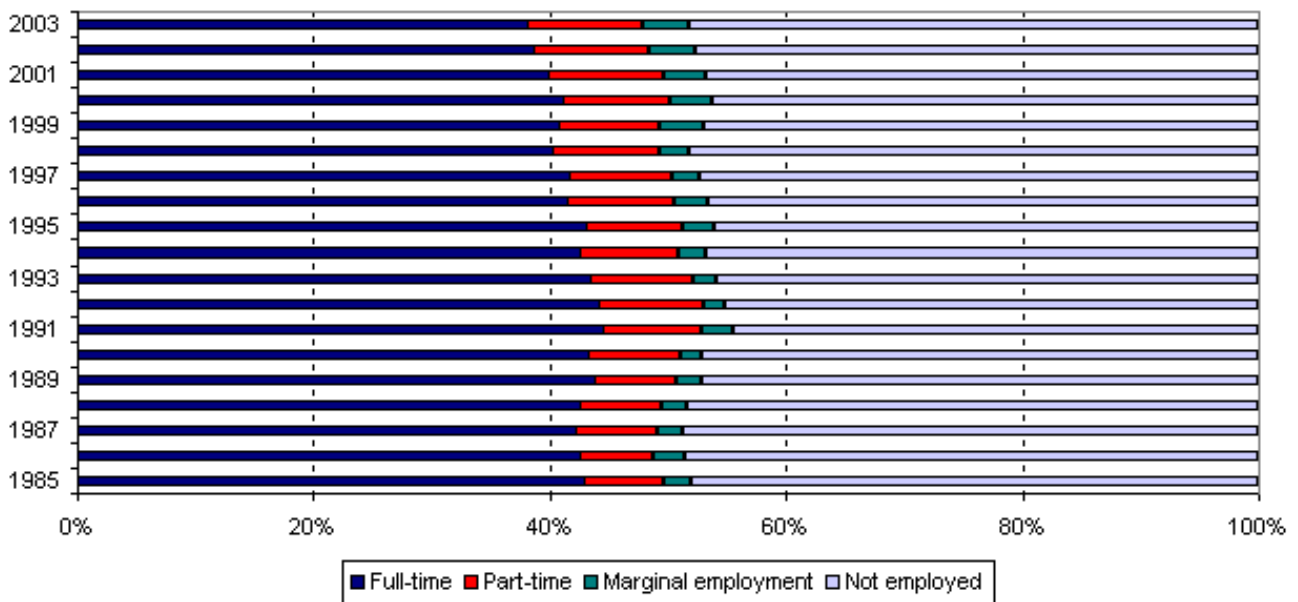


Source: SOEP Monitor, Update 9 September 2004.
Population: All people who were successful within a year in their search for work, aged 17+ years

In West Germany, the proportion of the entire population who were not employed was 48%, both in 1984 and in

2003. The breakdown of those in employment has changed considerably, and is characterised by a decline in full-time employment but an increase in part-time work and marginal employment (Figure 5).

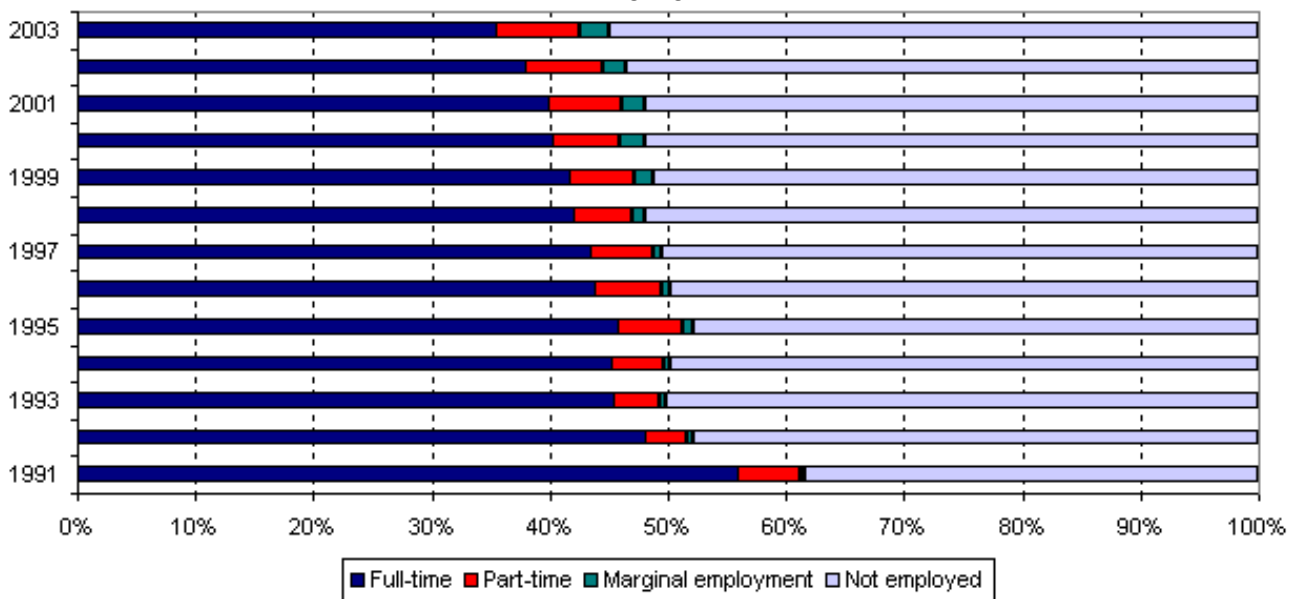
Figure 5 Employment status among all people employed, West Germany (%)



Source: SOEP-Monitor, Update: 9 September 2004

Since 1991, the proportion of people in part-time work and in marginal employment also increased in the East (Figure 6). The decline of people in full-time employment, from 56% to 35%, is considerably greater than in West Germany, where the proportion decreased from 44% to 38% in the same period.

Figure 6 Employment status among all people employed, East Germany (%)

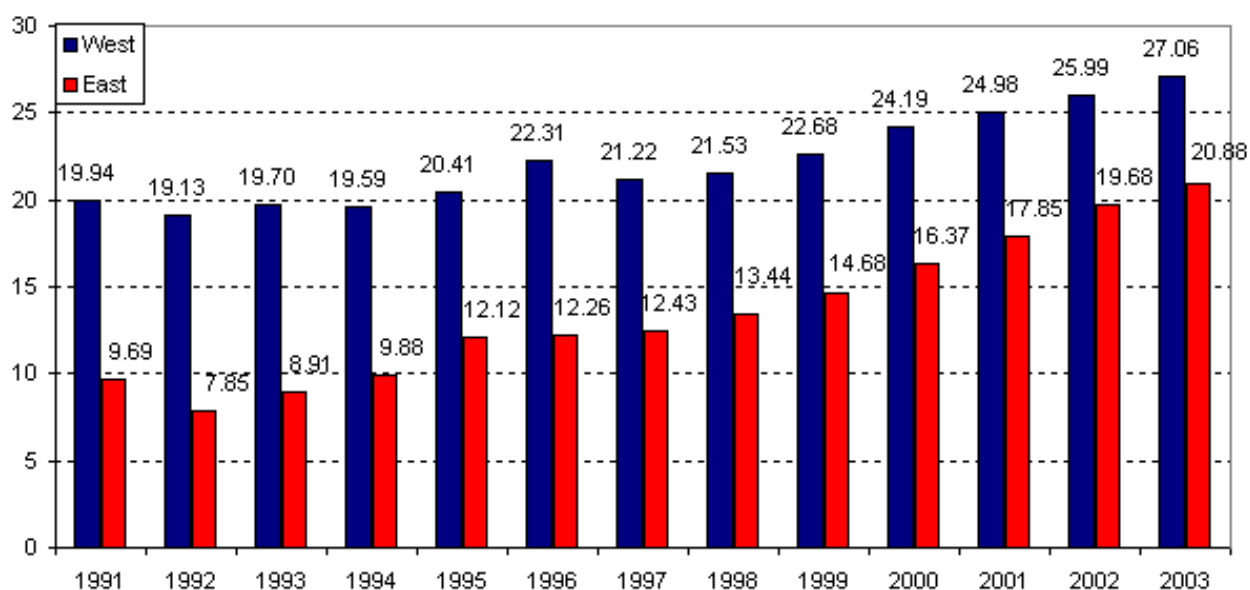


Source: SOEP-Monitor, Update: 9 September 2004

The proportion of employed people who are engaged in part-time employment is considerably higher in West than

in East Germany. However, the steady increase in part-time work, since 1991, has been stronger in East than in West Germany.

Figure 7 Percentage of part-time work among all people employed



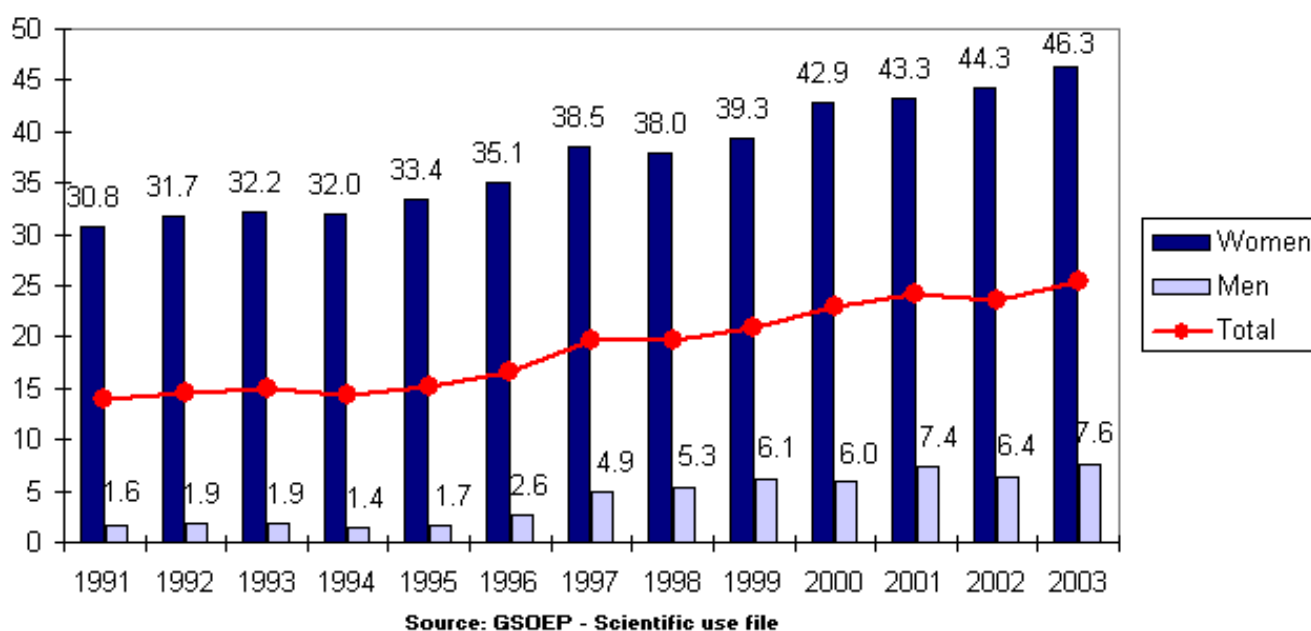
Source: SOEP-Monitor, Update: 9 September 2004

Note: The term ‘part-time work’ includes only regular part-time work, except for Figure 8, which includes any type of part-time work.

Employment contract

The proportion of women in part-time work is vastly higher than that for men. Between 1991 and 2003, the overall share of part-timers steadily increased from 13.9% to 25.4%. In the same period, the share of women in part-time employment increased from 30.8% to 46.3%, while the share of men working part time rose from 1.6% to 7.6%.

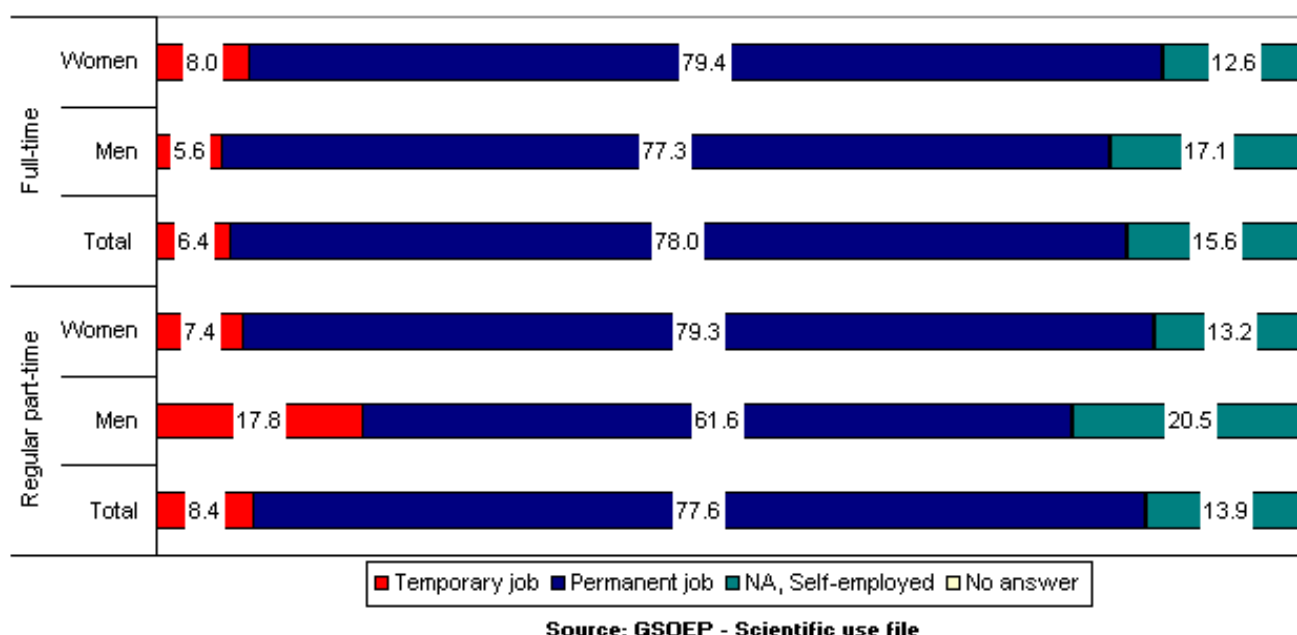
Figure 8 Part-time work (any type) between 1991 and 2003 (%)



Note: All data based on the author's analysis of the GSOEP - Scientific use file are based on all people who are gainfully employed.

Some 6.4% of full-time workers, and 8.4% of part-timers in gainful employment, work on a temporary employment contract. Among those who are full-time employed, a higher proportion of women than men have a temporary contract. With regard to part-time work, a notable share of men (17.8%) are temporary workers (Figure 9).

Figure 9 Duration of work contract among all people employed, 2003 (%)

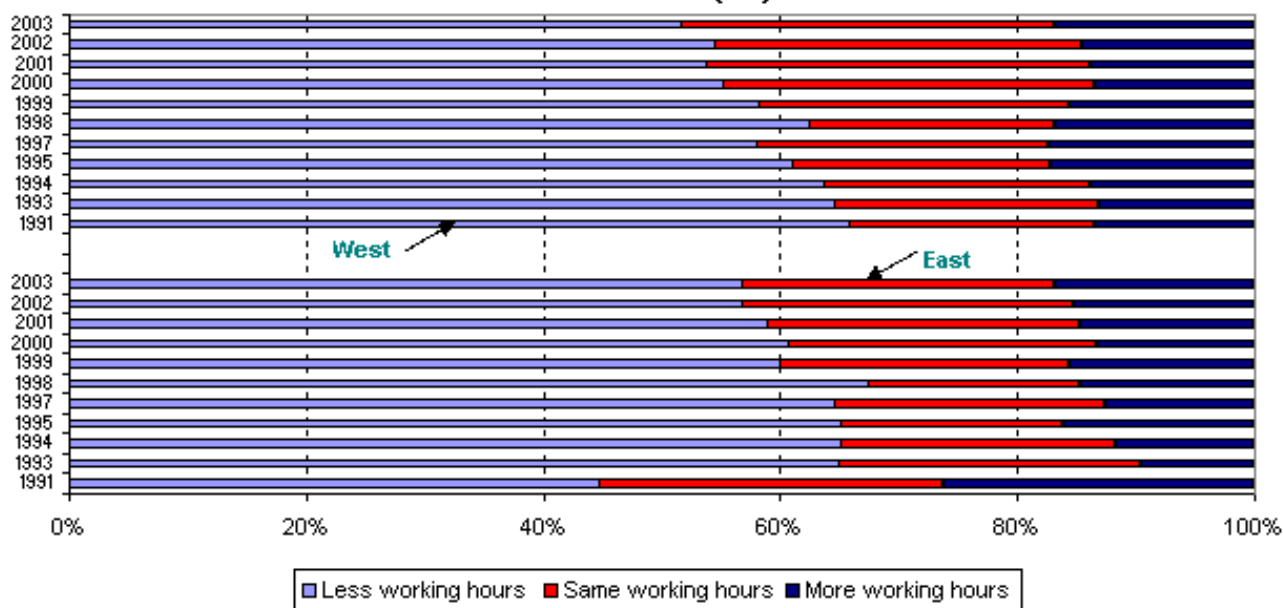


Working time

Actual and desired working time

Figure 10 shows working time preferences of employed people, and compares actual working times with desired working times, between 1991 and 2003. In 2003, 51.5% of employed people in West Germany and 56.8% in East Germany reported that they would like to work fewer hours, while about 17% said they would like to work more hours. Some 31.6% in the West and 26.3% in the East indicated that they were satisfied with their current working hours. Over the last decade, and particularly over the last four years, the proportion of people who want to work fewer hours has decreased, while the share preferring to work more hours has increased (Figure 10).

Figure 10 Working time preferences among all people employed, 1991-2003 (%)

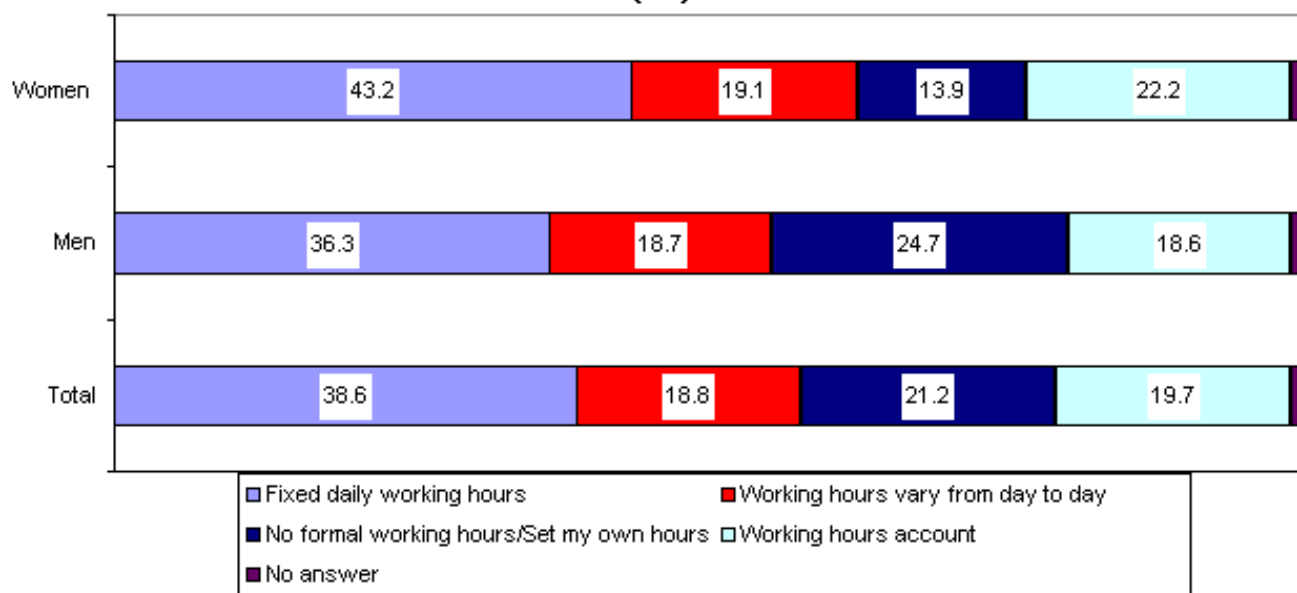


Source: SOEP-Monitor, Update: 9 September 2004
 Comparison of actual/desired working times. No data for 1996, data for 1992 incomplete

Working time arrangements

More than one third (38.6%) of people employed full time have fixed daily working hours, while 19.7% have a working time account, and 21.2% are able to set their own working hours. Women are more likely to have fixed daily working hours or a working time account. A considerably higher proportion of men (24.7%) are able to set their own working hours (Figure 11).

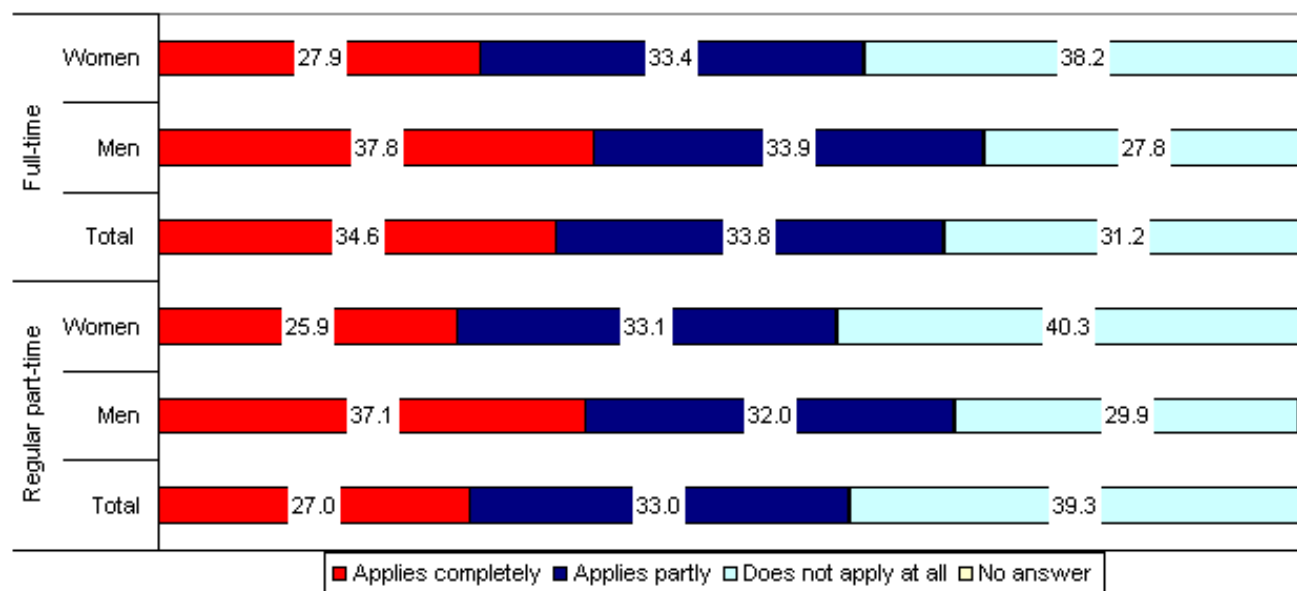
Figure 11 Flexibility in working hours among full-time employed, 2003 (%)



Source: GSOEP - Scientific use file

In 2001, 34.6% of full-time and 27% of part-time workers stated that their working hours depended entirely on the company's workload as a whole; a further 34% (full-timers) and 33% (part-timers) said that their working hours depended partly on workload (Figure 12). Working hours for men, both full-time and part-time, are more dependent on workload than for women.

Figure 12 Working hours depend on workload, 2001 (%)



Source: GSOEP - Scientific use file

In 2001, 16.1% of full-time workers worked nights or other special shifts; this partly applied to a further 6.5% of workers (Table 1). Women and men are affected by shift work to an equal extent.

Table 1 Proportion of full-time employed people in night or other special shift work, by gender, 2001 (%)

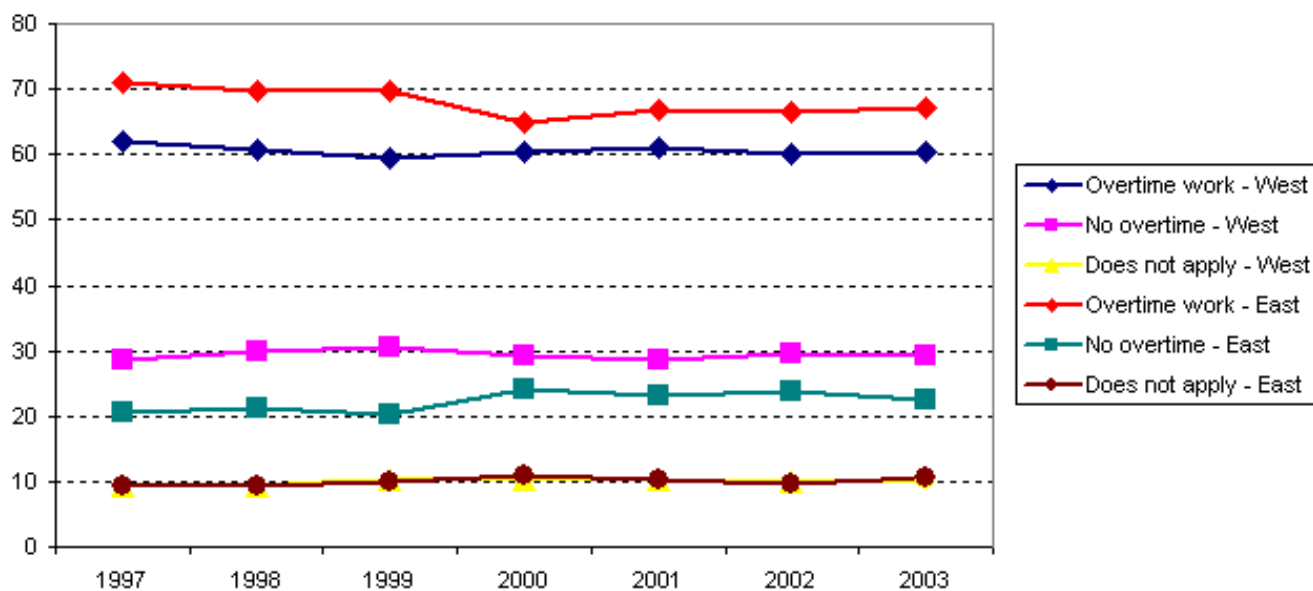
	Women	Men	Total
Applies completely	15.8	16.3	16.1
Applies partly	6.7	6.4	6.5
Does not apply at all	76.7	76.5	76.6
No answer	0.7	0.8	0.7

Source: GSOEP - Scientific use file

Overtime

A considerable proportion of employees work overtime, with a higher incidence in East Germany than in West Germany. Between 1997 and 2003, the rate slightly decreased from 71% to 67% in the East and from 62% to 60% in the West.

Figure 13 Incidence of overtime work among all people employed (%)



Source: SOEP-Monitor, Update: 9 September 2004

In 2003, there were only small differences, by gender, in terms of paid full-time employment. The share of female part-timers working overtime was 10 percentage points higher than for men (Table 2).

Table 2 Working overtime, by gender, 2003 (%)

	Women	Men	Total
Full-time workers	67.0	68.3	67.9
Part-time workers	56.8	46.6	55.8

Source: GSOEP - Scientific use file

Figures 14 and 15 show a clear decline in paid overtime work in West and East Germany. Increasingly, overtime

tends to be compensated by time in lieu, or by a combination of time and pay. This tendency is stronger in the East than in the West. In East Germany, a lower proportion of workers are not compensated for overtime than in the West, but this share has decreased over the last six years.

Figure 14 Compensation of overtime work, West Germany (%)

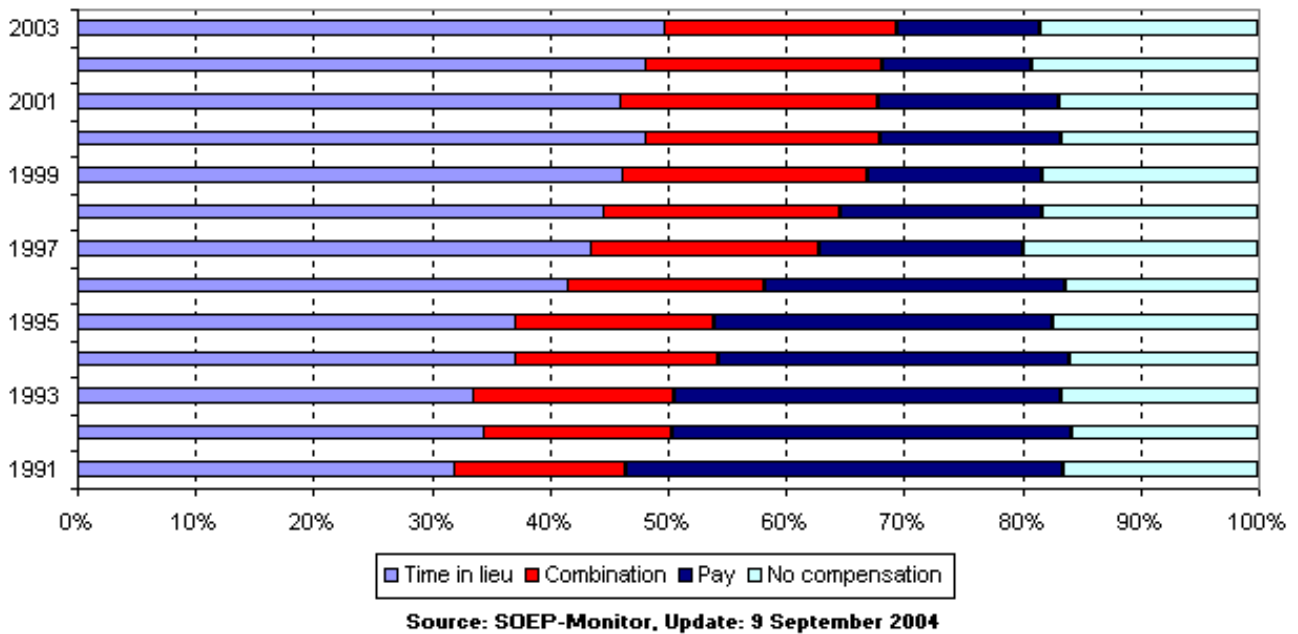
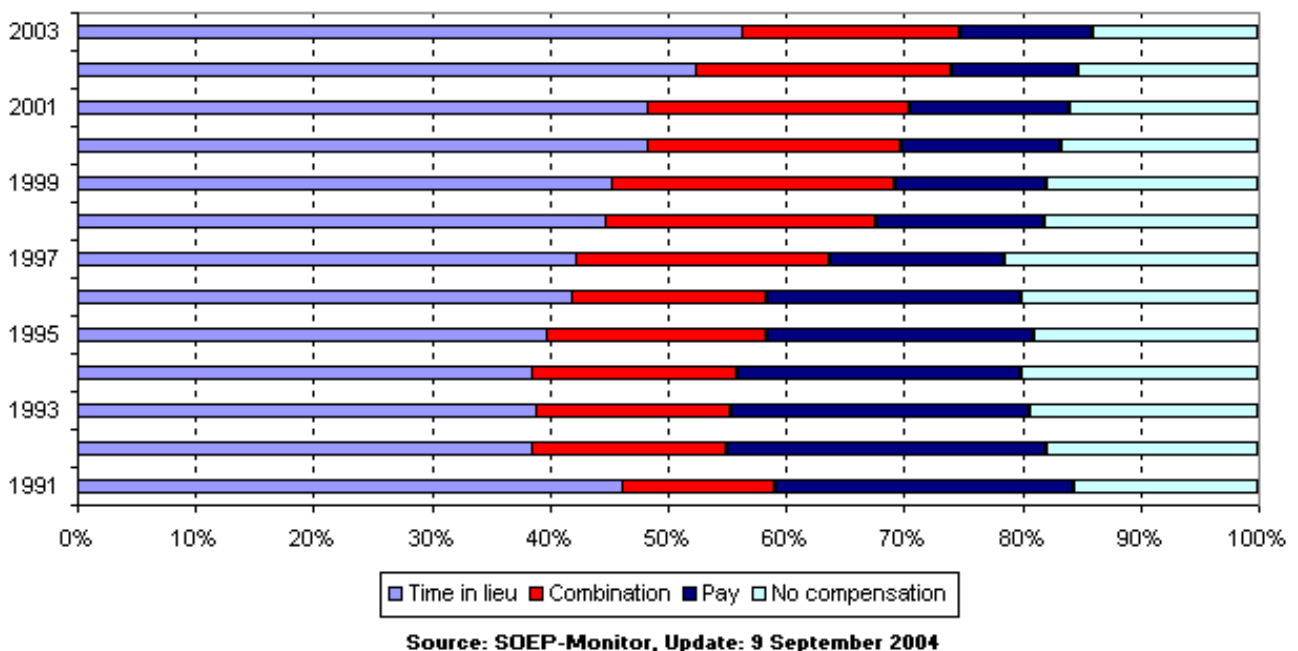


Figure 15 Compensation of overtime work, East Germany (%)



In 2003, clear gender differences can be seen in the compensation of overtime work. Women tend to be compensated by time in lieu, to a considerably higher degree than men, who are more often compensated by pay. However, a higher proportion of men than women are not compensated at all for overtime work (Table 3).

Table 3 Compensation of overtime work, by gender, 2003 (%)

	Women	Men	Total
Does not apply	33.0	31.7	32.1
Time in lieu	37.8	26.3	30.0
Combination of both	10.5	15.5	13.9
Paid	4.6	9.4	7.8
Not paid	12.5	15.6	14.6
No answer	1.6	1.5	1.5

Source: GSOEP - Scientific use file

Working conditions

Computer and Internet use

In 2001, 63.5% of women working full time used a computer for work, compared with 56.8% of men. In terms of Internet use, there are no gender differences among full-time workers. With regard to part-timers, Internet use is considerably more widespread among part-time working men (Table 4).

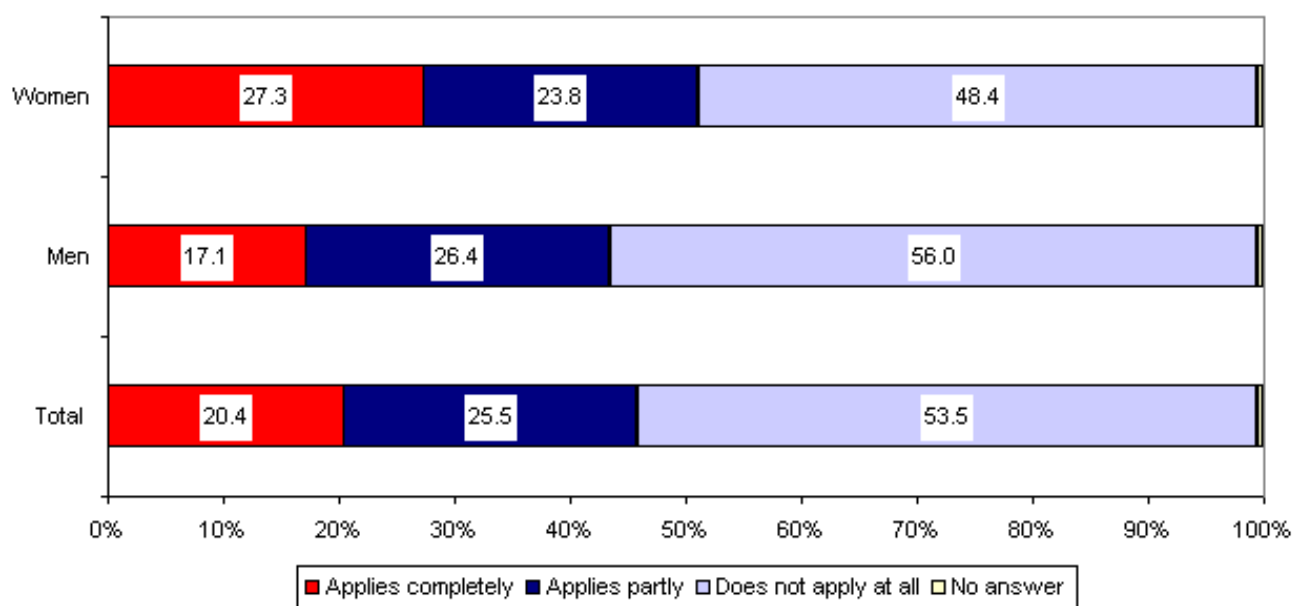
Table 4 Computer and Internet use at work, 2001 (%)

	Women	Men	Total
Computer use			
Full-time	63.5	56.8	59.0
Part-time	50.0	51.3	50.1
Internet use			
Full-time	32.2	33.3	33.0
Part-time	18.4	33.5	19.8

Source: GSOEP - Scientific use file

Just over half (51.5%) of gainfully employed women working full time were engaged in computer screen work to an unhealthy extent, in 2001. The corresponding figure for men is 44% (Figure 16).

Figure 16 Computer screen work to unhealthy extent, 2001 (%)



Hard manual labour

In 2001, a greater proportion of men's jobs involved hard manual labour than women's jobs. More than half (51.3%) of full-time employed people experience at least some hard manual labour.

Table 5 Job involves hard manual labour, by gender 2001 (%)

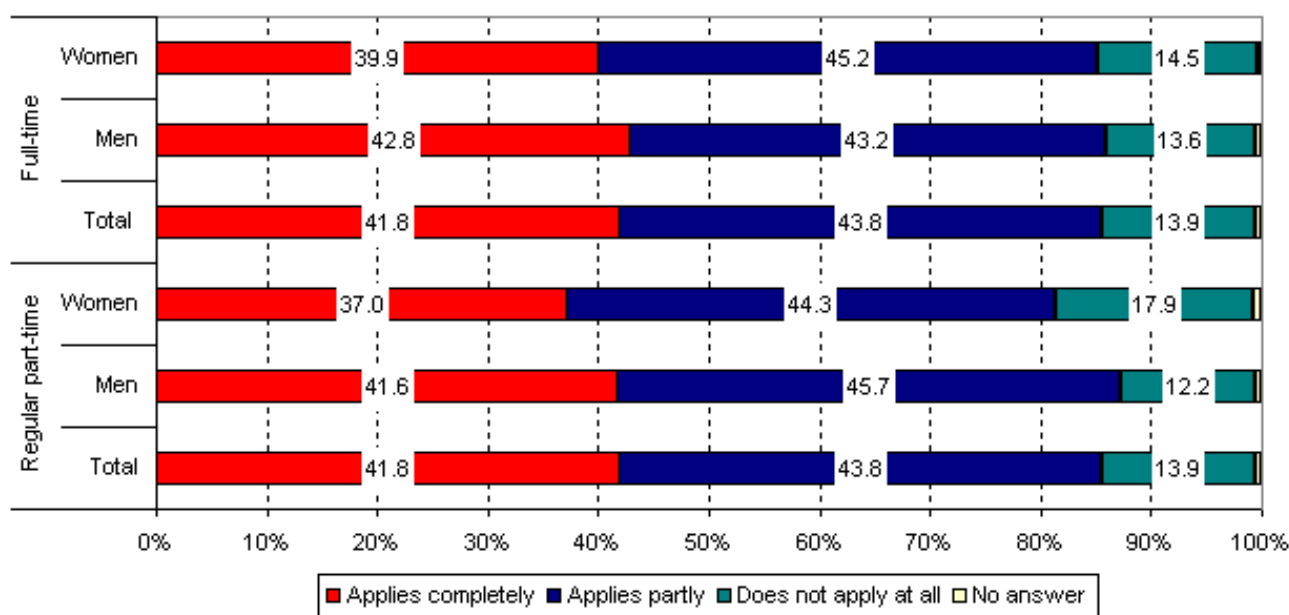
	Women	Men	Total
Applies completely	12.8	20.3	17.8
Applies partly	29.1	35.6	33.5
Does not apply at all	57.8	43.7	48.2
No answer	0.3	0.4	0.4

Source: GSOEP - Scientific use file

Autonomy

More than 40% of full-time and part-time workers agreed completely with the question: 'Do you decide yourself how to complete the tasks involved in your work.' The proportion of women is slightly lower than for men. Part-time working women have the least autonomy on how to complete their tasks (Figure 17).

Figure 17 Work autonomy among people employed, 2001 (%)

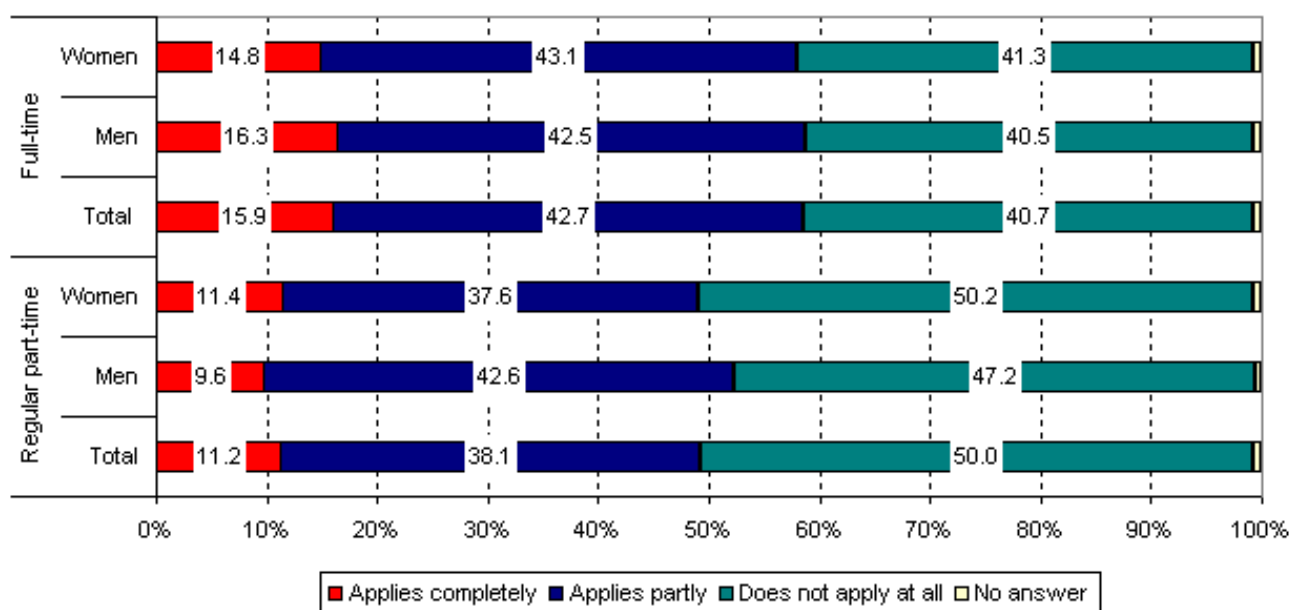


Source: GSOEP - Scientific use file

Control of work

Work is strictly monitored for 15.9% of full-time workers, and another 42.7% report that this is partly the case. Full-time working men are more affected than women. With regard to part-time workers, a lower proportion feel that their work is strictly monitored. Part-time working women are more affected than part-time working men (Figure 18).

Figure 18 Work is strictly monitored, 2001 (%)



Source: GSOEP - Scientific use file

Stress

Almost a third (31.1%) of full-time employees feel that their work involves a high level of stress. More than half (51.2%) report that this partly applies. Only 17.2% do not find that their work involves a high level of stress.

Figure 19 Work involves a high level of stress, 2001 (%)
 Source: GSOEP - Scientific use file. Population: Full-time employed

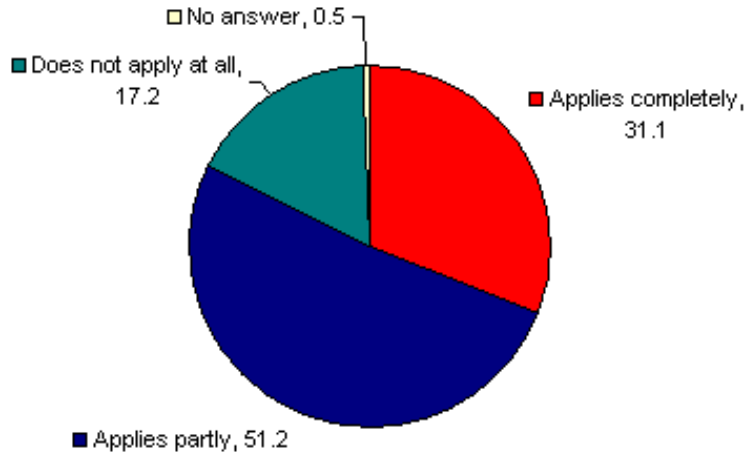


Table 6 shows little gender difference with regard to high levels of stress. Some 32.7% of women and 30.3% of men agree completely with the question.

Table 6 Job involves high level of stress, by gender, 2001 (%)

	Women	Men
Applies completely	32.7	30.3
Applies partly	48.9	52.3
Does not apply at all	18.0	16.9
No answer	0.5	0.5

Source: GSOEP - Scientific use file

Learning new things

One question in the 2001 questionnaire asked: ‘Do you often learn something new on the job, something which is relevant for your career?’ Almost 40% agreed completely with the question and 44.2% partly agreed. The proportion for men is slightly higher than for women (Table 7).

Table 7 Often learn something new on the job, by gender, 2001 (%)

	Women	Men	Total
Applies completely	39.2	40.2	39.9
Applies partly	43.0	44.8	44.2
Does not apply at all	17.4	14.4	15.4

No answer	0.6	0.6	0.5
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Source: GSOEP - Scientific use file

Occupational health and safety

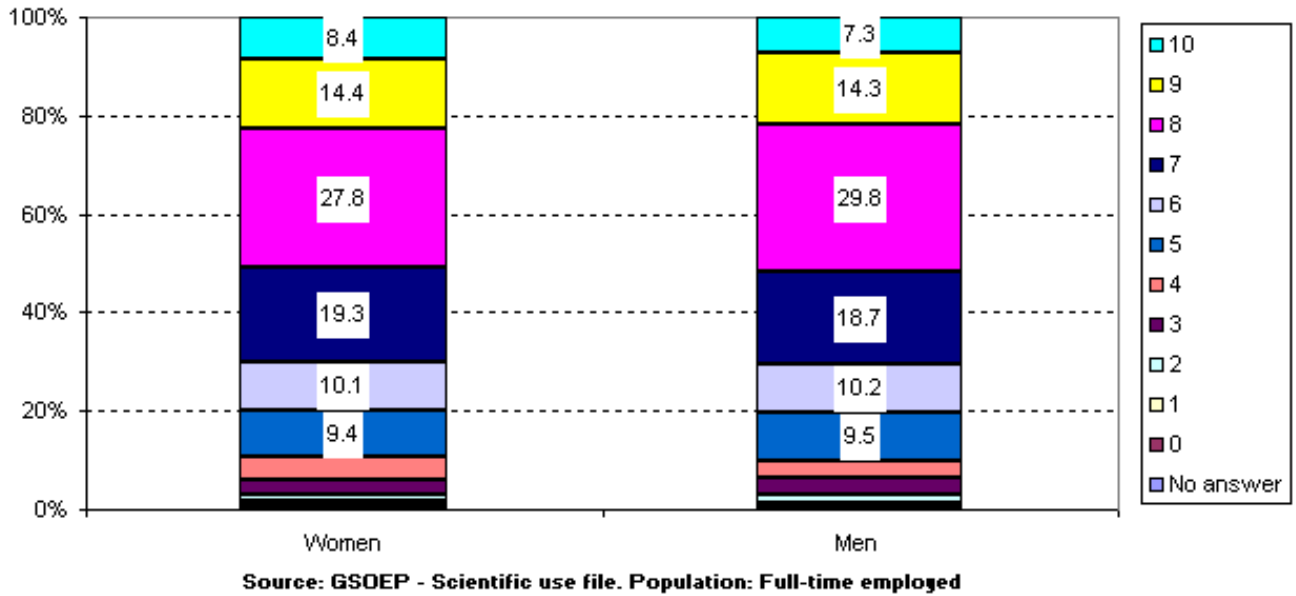
Almost one in five full-time employed people (19.8%) is exposed to hazardous substances or unhealthy conditions, such as cold, moisture, heat, or chemicals at work. Some 12.9% experience a high risk of accidents at their workplace. Men are concerned by both types of exposure to a considerably higher extent than women (Figure 20).



Work satisfaction

Figure 21 shows a high degree of work satisfaction among full-time employed people in 2003. More than half of men (51.4%) and women (50.6%) are satisfied with their work to a degree from eight to 10, on a scale ranging from zero as the lowest level to 10 as the highest level. However, just 8.4% of women and 7.3% of men opted for the highest satisfaction rating of 10 (Figure 21).

Figure 21 Satisfaction with work on a scale of 0-Low to 10-High, 2003 (%)



Figures 22 and 23 illustrate changes in work satisfaction year on year, by looking at the numbers registering less, more, or equal satisfaction with work, compared with the previous year. In East Germany, the share of employees who feel more satisfaction with work declined - with some variations - from 40% in 1991/92 to 30% in 2002/03. No clear trend is visible in West Germany.

Figure 22 Annual change in work satisfaction, West Germany (%)

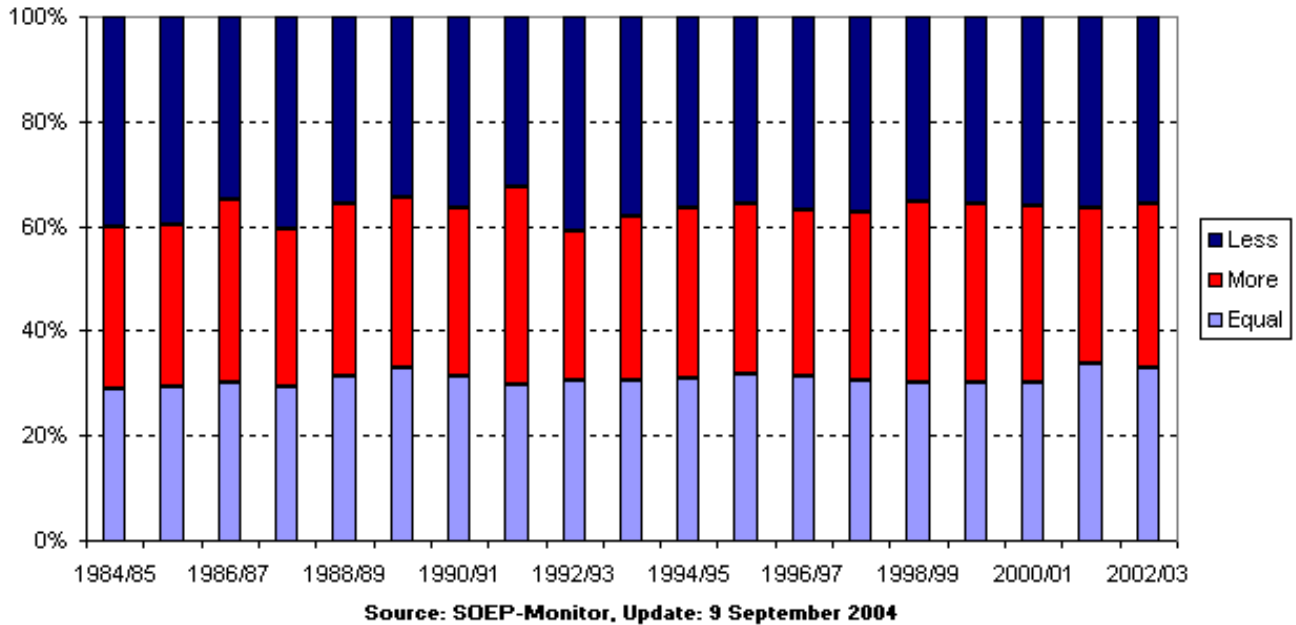
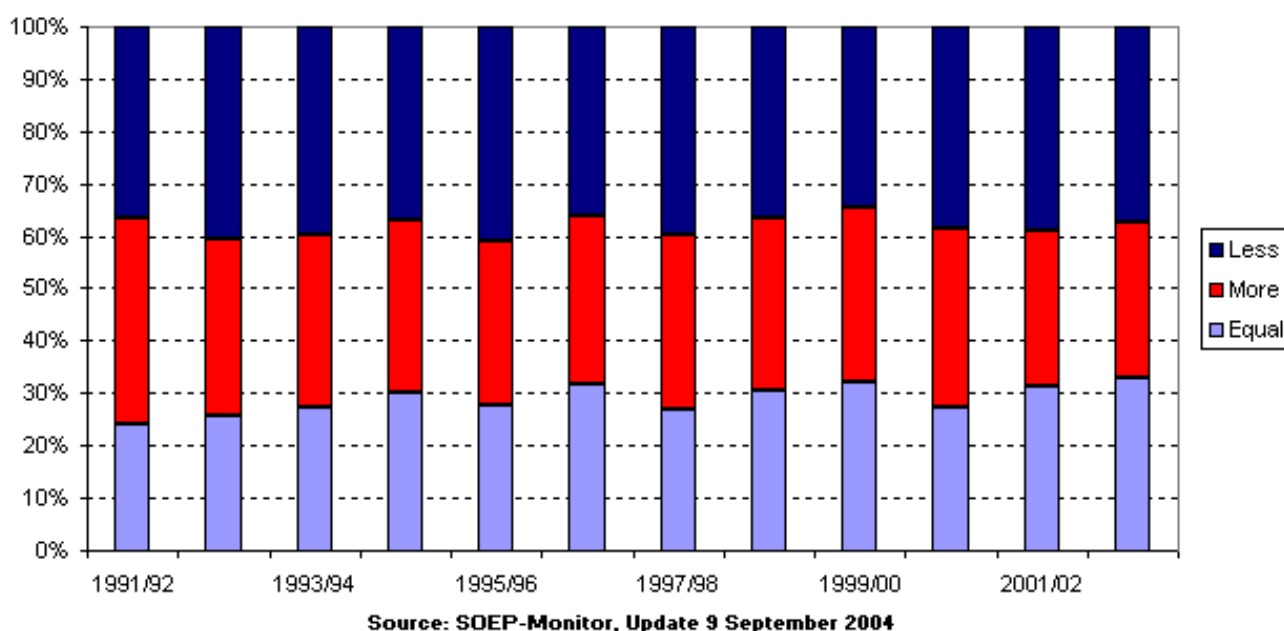


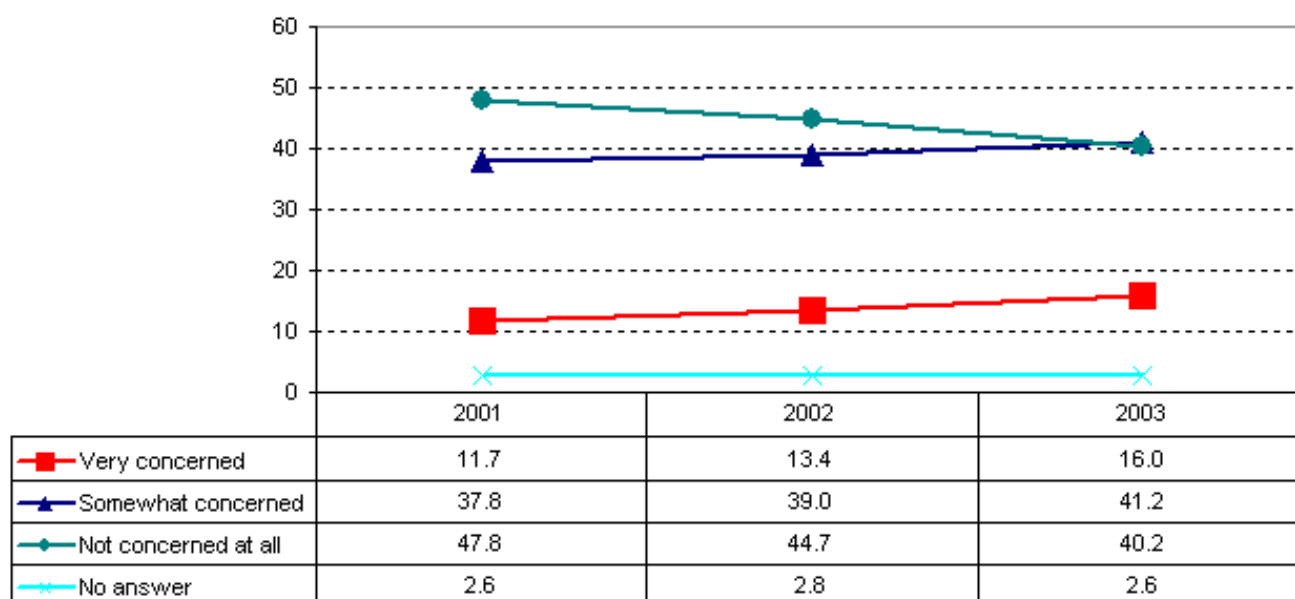
Figure 23 Annual change in work satisfaction, East Germany (%)



Job security

Between 2001 and 2003, the confidence of employees in job security declined. In 2003, 16% of employees, compared with 11.7% in 2001, were very concerned about job security, and a further 41.2% were somewhat concerned, compared with 37.8% in 2001 (Figure 24).

Figure 24 Worried about job security, 2001-2003 (%)



Source: GSOEP - Scientific use file. Population: Full-time employed

Commentary

The data provide insight into some considerable differences that still exist in employment and working conditions in West and East Germany.

The high level of stress reported by most workers underlines the need for action, as envisaged in the European [Social Partners' Framework Agreement \(80Kb pdf\)](#) on work-related stress.

The high degree of satisfaction with work is in line with international survey experience in this area. Work is a central factor for feelings of personal identity. However, in East Germany, there was a clear decline among those who were more satisfied with their work compared with the previous year.

One of the key questions concerning German workers is employment security. Those who are in employment feel increasingly uncertain about their employment prospects.

Anni Weiler, AWWW GmbH ArbeitsWelt - Working World

Notes:

All data based on the SOEP-Monitor refer to: All people employed, aged 17 years and over, including self-employed people.

All data based on the author's analysis of the GSOEP - Scientific use file are based on all people who are gainfully employed.

The term 'part-time work' includes only regular part-time work, except for Figure 8, which includes any type of part-time work.

References

Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung (DIW), Das Sozio-oekonomische Panel, SOEP 1984-2003, CD-ROMS (Scientific use file).

German Socio-economic Panel, [SOEPinfo](#)

German Socio-economic Panel, [Desktop Companion \(DTC\) - 1.6Mb pdf](#)

SOEP-Monitor, Zeitreihen zur Entwicklung von Indikatoren zu zentralen Lebensbereichen, Beobachtungszeitraum: 1984-2003, Analyse-Ebene: Person, Update: 09.09.2004, http://www.diw.de/deutsch/sop/service/soepmonitor/soepmonitor_person2003.pdf (500MB).

Appendix: About the survey

Survey name : German Socio-economic Panel (GSOEP)

Techniques : Longitudinal data (panel design). See [questionnaires](#) .

Content structure : Covers a wide range of subjects:

- household composition;
- occupational and family histories;
- employment and professional mobility;

- earnings;
 - health;
 - personal satisfaction.
- Examples of subjects covered in topic modules of the survey:
 - social security, early retirement, disability, childcare;
 - further education and training;
 - allocation of time;
 - family and social services.

Methodology : Instrument: Questionnaires

Individual respondents vs. households

Subsample-specific questionnaires: West and East Germans, foreign nationals, immigrants

Sample size : The SOEP has a high degree of stability, mainly due to the diligent work done in maintaining response rates. In 1984, 5,921 households, containing 12,290 people, participated in the »SOEP West«; in 1990, 2,179 households, with 4,453 people, were surveyed in the GDR. This sample constituted the »SOEP EAST« sample. The most recent wave of data (2002) includes 3,889 households, with 7,175 people, for the SOEP West sample, and 3,466 people in 1,818 households in the SOEP East sample.

Retention rates in the 1994/95 immigrant sample of 1,078 persons in 522 households have also been good. In 2002, the sample included 780 persons in 402 households.

In 1998, the SOEP was extended by a Supplementary Sample E with 1,923 people in 1,067 households. From these, two years later, 1,373 persons in 773 households were successfully surveyed.

A major extension of the SOEP was carried out in 2000: the Sample F included 10,890 persons in 6,052 households (2002: 8,427 persons in 4,586 households). This significantly increased the possibility of analysis of small societal groups.

The last refreshment of the SOEP was drawn up in 2000: a random sample of households with high income, Sample G. It contained 1,224 households with 2,671 persons (GSOEP, Living in Germany).

Field of application : Household context (all adult household members are surveyed)

Frequency : Annually

Interviews : Face-to-face individual interviews with all household members aged 16 and over. Paper-and-pencil interview (samples A through D, E1, F, G). No proxy interviews.

Self-completers: Data Agency resolves inconsistencies

Sample E PAPI/CAPI: Analyses of mode effects 'methodology mix'

Access to data : [English Public Use Version of the SOEP](#)

Contact points (survey institutes) : [German Institute for Economic Research \(DIW\)](#)

[Department German Socio-Economic Panel Study](#)

List of publications linked to the survey :

[SOEP based publications](#)

[Documents](#)

[Journal Articles](#)

[Discussion papers](#)

[Reports](#)

[SOEPlit](#)

Website : <http://www.diw.de/english/sop/index.html>

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