



Volume 5. Wilhelmine Germany and the First World War, 1880-1918
Occupational Breakdown of Germany's Population (1882-1907)

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 the same period, many Germans migrated to urban areas to take full advantage of 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, contemporary statistics have to be interpreted carefully to appreciate the size and significance of female labor, especially in agriculture; but women always constituted over one-third of the total workforce.

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. | 1882 | 1,354 | 702 | 51.8 | 756 | 2,117 | 4.7 |
| Those without occupations and those drawing pensions ⁶ | 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 | 1882 | 20,311 | 6,247 | 30.7 | 24,911 | 45,222 | 100.0 |
| A. through F. | 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 Domestic workers who live either with or separate from their employers (including various kinds of wage labor). For a definition, see *Statistik des Deutschen Reichs* [*Statistics of the German Reich*], 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 sales clerks (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* [*The Growth of the Germany Economy*], 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* [*Social History Workbook: Materials on Kaiserreich Statistics 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* [*Statistics of the German Reich*], new version, vol. 2 (1884) and new version, vol. 4, 3 (1884); (for 1895) *Statistik des Deutschen Reichs* [*Statistics of the German Reich*], new version, vol. 111 (1899); and (for 1907) *Statistik des Deutschen Reichs* [*Statistics of the German Reich*], vol. 203 (1910).

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