



Volume 4. Forging an Empire: Bismarckian Germany, 1866-1890 Age of Registered Prostitutes in Berlin (1873)

Prostitutes were usually young women living in urban regions. The following table shows that more than half of the 2,749 Berlin prostitutes who were processed by police authorities and subject to health supervision [*Sanitätskontrolle*] between August 1872 and October 1873 were between 21 and 35 years old (183 prostitutes were aged 17 or younger). Many prostitutes were unmarried servants, unskilled workers, or textile home-workers. The table in document 34 in this chapter shows that whereas one in five prostitutes had a father or mother working in a factory, almost one in two came from a family where one or both parents were craft workers. The table in document 35 in this chapter shows that nearly half of the women were home-workers or shop assistants before they turned to prostitution. Only 16% had been factory workers. Servants, probably from rural areas and usually from lower-class families, constituted another large group. Many who had moved to the city to find paid work were forced into prostitution upon discovering that their wages did not cover the expenses of everyday life.

In the 1880s, prostitution became a much-discussed issue. The middle-class women's movement generally condemned prostitution outright. The first German branch of the International Abolitionist Federation [*Deutscher Kulturbund*], founded in 1880 by Gertrude Guillaume-Schack (1845-1903), condemned the double standard whereby prostitutes but not their clients were punished; it also advocated deregulation as a means of fighting sexually transmitted diseases. According to one source, in 1890 a total of 4,039 Berlin prostitutes were under police supervision. Many of these were confined to designated areas of a city [*Sperrbezirke*]. But another estimate puts the total number of prostitutes in Berlin closer to 30,000 in the 1890s, between 100,000 and 200,000 in all of Germany, and as high as 330,000 nation-wide on the eve of the First World War. (Angelika Schaser, *Frauenbewegung in Deutschland 1848-1933* [*Women's Movements in Germany, 1848-1933*], Darmstadt, 2006, p. 70.) Prostitutes' clients came from all parts of the population, many of them being sailors, soldiers, and students.

Age of Registered Prostitutes in Berlin (1873)

Number of prostitutes of the following age*	
14 years	5
15 years	43
16 years	49
17 years	86
18 years	162
19 years	165
20 years	175
21–25 years	748
26–30 years	452
31–35 years	204
36–40 years	76
40–50 years	39
over 50 years	20
	2224

Source: Hermann Schwabe, “Einblicke in das innere und äußere Leben der Berliner Prostituirten” [“Insights into the Personal and Public Lives of Prostitutes in Berlin”] *Berliner Städtisches Jahrbuch für Volkswirtschaft und Statistik* [*Berlin City Almanac for Political Economy and Statistics*] 1 (1874): pp. 60-74, here pp. 62-66.

Original German data reprinted in Gerhard A. Ritter and Jürgen Kocka, eds., *Deutsche Sozialgeschichte 1870-1914. Dokumente und Skizzen* [*German Social History 1870-1914. Documents and Sketches*], 3rd ed. Munich: C.H. Beck, 1982, p. 252.

Translation: Erwin Fink

* These figures derive from information listed on 2,749 forms (October 1873) collected from prostitutes who had come into contact with the police and were under medical supervision; the forms were collected starting on August 1, 1872. Of these prostitutes, 444 had been discharged from medical supervision in the meantime. In 1890, there were already 4,039 prostitutes in Berlin under police supervision. (Bruno Schoenlank, “Zur Statistik der Prostituierten in Berlin” [“On Prostitution Statistics in Berlin”], *Archiv für soziale Gesetzgebung und Statistik* [*Archive for Social Legislation and Statistics*] 7 [1894]: p. 331.)