

## **Female employment and childbearing plans in Germany**

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*Preliminary national report for the RECWOWE task “Fertility, female employment and reconciliation policies”*

## 1. Introduction

This paper wants to investigate the relationship between female labor force participation, reconciliation policies and fertility in the particular national context of Germany. We will see that it is necessary to further divide Germany and to look at the eastern parts (former GDR) and western parts separately.

The focus of this paper lies on family foundation processes.

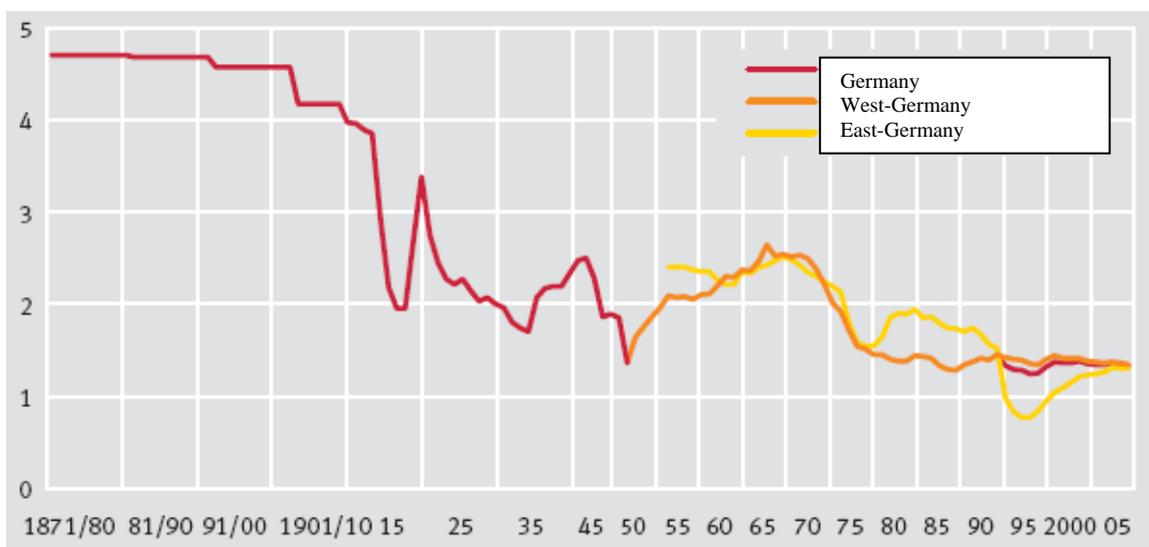
## 2. Background on Germany

The aim of this section is to give an overview of the context in which German couples plan and have their children. Germany, being a conservative welfare state in Esping-Andersen's classification (1990), is supposed to promote traditional living-arrangements, like the male bread-winner model. These characterizations will be verified by analyzing the developments regarding fertility, female labor force participation and reconciliation politics.

### 2.1. Low fertility in Germany for decades

Like almost all other industrialized societies Germany is facing fertility rates below reproduction level for several decades now. Birth rates began to sink at the end of the 60s after the so-called baby boom. The decreasing rates were due to later and fewer births. Women began to be more engaged in the labor market. New contraceptives made it possible to plan parenthood. The development of birth rates in the former GDR differs strongly from the development in the FRG. Even though a similar decrease in birth rates can be observed, family politics were able to influence this development and birth rates increased during the 80s, although they could not reach replacement level. With reunification East-Germany experienced a "demographic shock". Fertility rate sank to historically unique numbers below one (Huinink/ Schröder 2008).

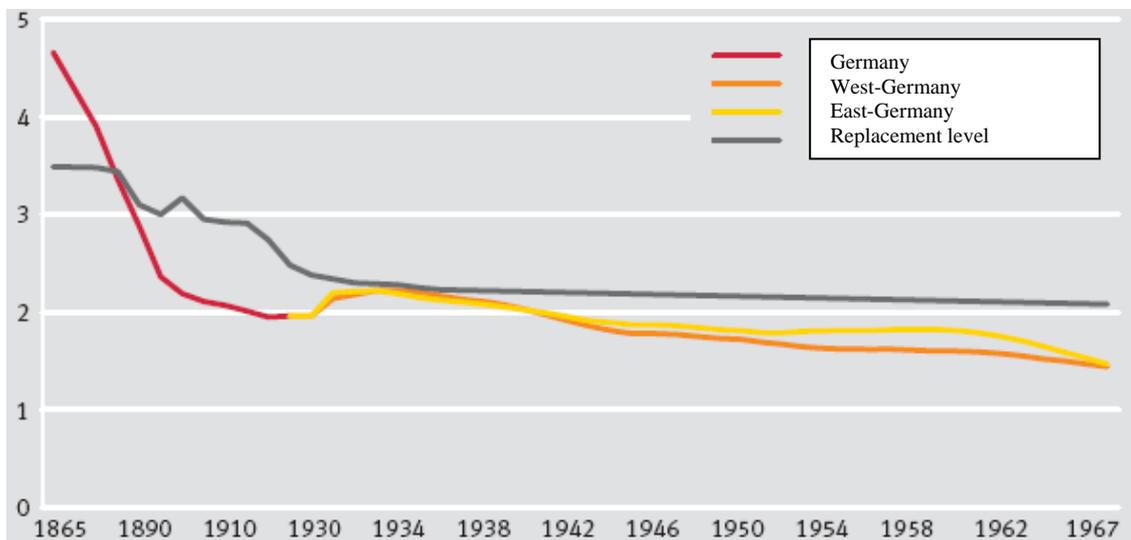
Figure 1: Total Fertility Rate in Germany 1871-2006



Source: BIB 2008: 36.

Even though the total fertility rate is rather discontinuous, the realized fertility stayed relatively constant at 1.6 children per women for cohorts born 1940 and later. This low number is the result of fewer high-parities births<sup>1</sup> on the one hand and a rising percentage of childless women on the other.

**Figure 2: Cohort Fertility Rate for cohorts 1865-1966**



Source: BIB 2008: 38.

Another important point in fertility development, which greatly influences the total fertility rate, is the rising age at first motherhood. Again, differences between women in Eastern and Western Germany can be observed. Women in the GDR had their children traditionally early. This circumstance is partly still valid, even though women in the East follow the Western trend and seem to adapt the pattern of late births (Huinink/ Schröder 2008).

## 2.2. Female employment is interrupted by childcare

The enrollment of women in the labor market has been rising for the last decades. The development goes along with a higher participation in the educational system and a higher percentage of working mothers. In 2007, 71 percent of the 15 to 65 year old women and 82 percent of the 15 to 65 year old men were employed (Statistisches Bundesamt 2008a). The difference in gender is due to a different effect of having children on the employment. Women tend to take a career break and reduce working hours to raise their children. As can be seen in the following table the effect of children on female employment is moderated by education of women and the region (East or West Germany) they are from<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> For details on the number of children see table A1 in the appendix.

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of female labor force participation in different age groups see table A2 in the appendix.

**Table 1: Labour force participation of women**

Age of the youngest child	West Germany	East Germany
<b>Education less than university graduation</b>		
without children	92	79
youngest child under 3 years	33	45
youngest child 3 to under 10 years	68	70
youngest child ten years and older	81	81
<b>With university graduation</b>		
without children	91	87
youngest child under 3 years	42	58
youngest child 3 to under 10 years	72	82
youngest child ten years and older	84	91

Percentage of employed women in West and East Germany, age 25 to 40; Source: Huinink/ Schröder 2008 on the basis of the census 2001

In all groups women with young children are less often employed than women without children or mothers whose children are older. Women with university education stay employed more often even though they have young children. Another effect can be observed for the region in which the woman lives. A higher percentage of women living in the New Länder are employed while having young children. This refers to the different cultural heritage in the regions. The norm for women to be employed has been promoted in the GDR very much, while in the FDR not only the role as housewife was and is much more accepted, but also the attitude that young children have to be cared for by the mother and that they would suffer from institutional childcare was and is more dominant (Gender Datenreport 2005).

The focus of women on raising the children can also be seen when analyzing the working hours of women. Most women with young children reduce their working hours. They are either part-time or marginal employed. Marginal employment relationships are usually restricted to a certain income (400 Euros at the moment) and few working hours. Many of these jobs do not require formal qualification. They are mostly held by women to have an additional income for their family. Marginal employment has a special status in social law. Employers normally do not pay for social insurance and tax. With marginal employment one usually does earn only little pension rights. In December 2008, 6.7 million people had a part-time job with an income not higher than 400 Euros. 63 percent of them were women. In addition 173,165 people worked in private households. 92 percent of these employees were women (Deutsche Rentenversicherung).

**Table 2: Working hours of female labour force**

Hours worked last week	All women	Single women	Married women with children < 10 years	All married women
0	9	7	16	10
1 – 9	8	6	14	10
10 – 20	21	9	36	28
21 – 31	14	9	15	16
32 – 35	5	6	3	5
36 – 39	11	17	4	8
40 – 44	22	32	8	16
45 and more	10	14	4	8

Source: Percentages are own calculations based on Statistisches Bundesamt 2008a

The differences in working hours can be seen in the table above. One third of all employed and married women with young children work less than ten hours a week. From this employment they do not earn enough for a living so they have to rely on a partner or the state. State policies did not substitute this loss of income until 2007.

In general, female employment in Germany differs very much between women with and without children. While Germany is among those with the highest female employment rate in the OECD (rank 7), this picture changes once only mothers are looked at. Here, Germany reaches rank 12 only. Most of the German women are employed part-time while for men full-time arrangements are normal. With regard to the extent of working hours we find a difference between the East and West German women, the latter working to a higher percentage part-time (27.8 vs. 45.3 percent) (Gender Datenreport 2005).

### **2.3. Family policies with growing interest for reconciliation policies**

The typical German model of labor division between men and women is the male breadwinner model. This implies an institutional regime which encourages women to cease to work after the birth of a child. The father then has the task to support the family. A modified version of the male breadwinner model implies the encouragement of women to change working full-time into working just part-time. Political arrangements are jointly responsible for women's courses of action. In addition to that or because of that in West Germany especially prejudices against working mothers with young children can be detected. The improvement of reconciliation of work and family in Germany first became an important political issue with the change of government in 1998 (Bothfeld et al. 2005).

Legal regulations of parental leave influence the labor market behaviour of young mothers and fathers. There is empirical evidence that a long-lasting leave makes it more difficult to return to the labor market. Furthermore, a low payment during the period of parental leave has a negative influence on the decision to have a baby in the first place (Eichhorst et al. 2007).

#### *Child benefit (Kindergeld) in Germany*

In Germany, child benefit amounts 164 € per month and per child. For the third child families receive 170 € for the fourth and subsequent children 195 € per month. Child benefit is normally paid until the

age of 18. If children are unemployed, the benefit is paid until the age of 21 and if it is enrolled in further education until the age of 25. For disabled children the benefit is not limited at all. There is also the possibility to receive a tax allowance instead of receiving monthly child benefit. This is more profitable for families with higher income (MISSOC 2008).

#### *Tax Relieves for German families*

Germany's tax system rewards married couples. Spouses can choose between being assessed separately or jointly. In case of jointly assessment the income of both spouses is summed up and divided by two (splitting of income between spouses). The normal income tax scale is applied of each half. The calculated amount is doubled and this result is the couple's tax due. In case of splitting of income between spouses the rate of taxation is particularly low if one spouse earns much less than the other one or even nothing, giving the women an incentive not to be employed. Beside income splitting between spouses there are other tax relieves based on having children (Dingeldey 2002). Another tax relief for families is as mentioned before the possibility to choose between child allowance and child benefit.

#### *Development of Maternity and Parental Leave in the Federal Republic of Germany<sup>3</sup>*

Since 1952 mothers are not permitted to work six weeks before the expected date of birth and (up to) eight weeks after birth (until 1968 six weeks) (*Mutterschutz*). During this period women receive a payment (*Mutterschaftsgeld*). This law – with little modification – has been valid until today. The intention of it is to protect pregnant women and new mothers for health reasons.

**Table 3: Maternity leave for pregnant women and new mothers**

<b>Date of validity</b>	<b>Name of Leave</b>	<b>Duration of leave</b>	<b>Name of Payment</b>	<b>Duration of payment</b>	<b>Amount of Payment</b>
1952 - 1968	Mutterschutz	6 weeks before and 6 weeks after birth	Mutterschaftsgeld (Maternity Benefit)	6 weeks before and 6 weeks after birth	Equal to previous earnings
1968 till now	Mutterschutz	6 weeks before and 8 weeks after birth*	Mutterschaftsgeld (Maternity Benefit)	6 weeks before and 8 weeks after birth*	Equal to previous earnings; min. 13€per working day.

\*12 weeks in case of multiple or premature birth

Sources: Bird 2004, 311-312; Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend 2008.

For the same reasons, a law concerning maternity leave (*Mutterschaftsurlaub*) was passed in 1979 to give mothers the possibility of having a break with pay lasting up to six months after giving birth.

More focussing on employment and social policy reasons, parental leave (*Erziehungsurlaub*) and childrearing allowance (*Erziehungsgeld*) were newly arranged in 1986 and have often been modified since then. Especially the duration of a possible leave and payment was more and more enlarged.

<sup>3</sup> For details see table A2 in the appendix

Since 1992 the duration of leave and the duration of payment differ. It was then possible to take a leave without financial support.

During the time of leave, mothers and fathers can not be dismissed. Their workplaces are supposed to be secured during this time. From 1979 to 1968 mothers could return to their *old* job after their break. Since 1986 parents have a guarantee that they can return to a *similar* job.

The first version of parental leave in Germany only applied to mothers. Since 1986, fathers have been given the possibility to take parental leave as well. Since 2001, fathers and mothers are able to take leave together or to share the parental leave with each other (*Elternzeit*). Furthermore, the duration and payment of parental leave has become more flexible. Parents can choose between receiving child-raising allowance for one or two years. Additionally, parents can opt to take the third year of parental leave (without cash benefit) at some time before the child's 8<sup>th</sup> birthday (Bird 2004, 309 – 312).

Another arrangement concerning working parents is the child sick leave. In case of a child's sickness, parents can take up to 10 days off if they have one child and up to 20 sick days if they have two or more children. Single parents receive twice as many days off (Kreyenfeld 2004, 284).

A major change concerning financial support during parental leave was passed in 2007. The so-called *Elterngeld* (parental allowance) now replaces the childrearing allowance. This cash benefit is at present 67 percent of the income before having a child. The maximum benefit is 1,800 € The former income of parents shall be replaced by parental allowance. Expectations towards parental allowance were on the one hand to increase birth-rates among higher educated women and on the other hand to make women's employment more continuous. Mothers should have more incentives to re-entry earlier in their former job (Spieß and Wrohlich 2006).

#### *Development of Family Benefits in the German Democratic Republic<sup>4</sup>*

In the German Democratic Republic (GDR), a child benefit for parents was paid as well. In addition, a birth grant was paid uniquely at a child's birth (in most cases more than one monthly salary). Maternity and paternity leave were also common but not lasting as long as in the FRG. Maternity leave usually lasted 14 weeks and could be prolonged up to 18 weeks (until 1972), later up to 26 weeks. Since 1972, single mothers have been able to take a paid leave of one year in case no day care was available. Since 1976, mothers with two and more children have been given a paid break of one year. In 1984, the leave was extended to 18 months for mothers with three and more children. Since 1986, all mothers have had the opportunity of a paid leave for one year. Furthermore, some arrangements have been made for single mothers and mothers with more than one child (since 1972). Their working hours have been reduced and it has become possible for them to have a leave in case of a child's sickness. Mothers with two and more children have been given more holidays (Kreyenfeld 2004, 280).

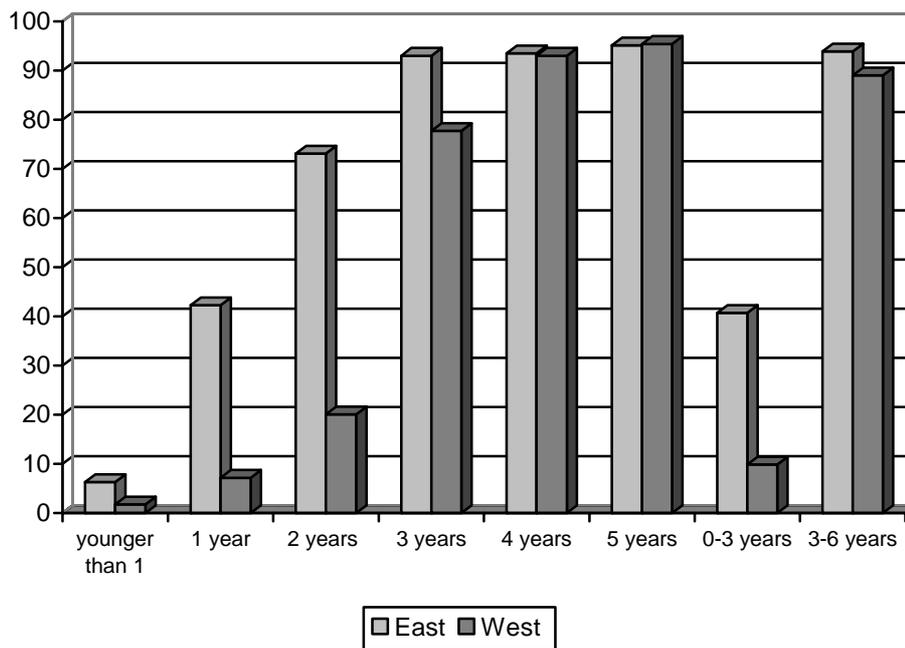
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<sup>4</sup> For details see table A3 in the appendix

## 2. 4. Childcare Facilities in Germany

Childcare facilities are an important condition for the reconcilability of work and family. 3,218,983 places in childcare facilities were offered in 2007. 2,981,993 children were registered in a childcare facility. Thus, 93 percent of all places were taken. 78 percent of the children were between three and seven years old, 9 percent were under the age of three. The rest of the children were already attending school (see table A5 in the appendix).

**Figure 3: Attendance in Childcare according to age (2007)**



Source: National Education Report 2008.

The data differ considerably between the Eastern (former GDR) and the Western part of Germany. In East Germany, more children under the age of three are cared for in facilities (40 per cent of all children in this age group). In West Germany, only 10 percent of the under three-year olds use childcare centres. Additionally, more school children in East Germany have a place in after-school childcare. 31 percent of children in childcare facilities are school children, in West Germany only 8 percent (table A5).

Also the hours per day in childcare differ substantially. In East Germany, 44 percent of all children have a place in an all-day childcare facility which in West Germany only 19 percent have (Statistisches Bundesamt 2008b).

**Table 4: Hours per day in childcare in 2007**

	Up to 5 hours	5 to 7 hours	All-day	All-day with midday break at home	Total
East Germany*	32	23	44	0	100
West Germany*	33	33	19	15	100
Overall Germany	33	31	25	12	100

Source: Percentages are own calculations based on Statistisches Bundesamt 2008b

\* excluding Berlin

The National Education Report 2008 also detects big differences between childcare in East and West Germany. In spite of a massive reduction of child-care institutions, the *Neue Länder* still have more child-care establishments with longer opening hours. Differences are most prominent in the under-3 age group: In the new German states 37 percent of children under 3 are registered in a child-care institution. In the West only 8 percent are (National Education Report 2008). It could also be shown that the demand for childcare institutions depends on population density. Areas with a dense population have a more childcare facilities. In order to provide childcare for 35% of all under three-year-old children until 2013 70,000 places have to be created in the *Alte Länder*. In addition - as the DJI-Child-Care Study of 2006 claims - childcare facilities should offer more flexible arrangements (Fendrich and Pothmann 2007).

## 2.5. What do German companies do?

In the context of the DJI-Child-Care Study, mothers and fathers were asked what their companies offer to support childcare. Flexible working hours and flexible solutions in case of need were named most often. The possibility of part-time work was named often as well. Childcare at work, the possibility of telework, financial support and the procurement of childcare were rarely named (Jurczyk and Lange 2007). Employees wish companies to be family-friendly. More and more companies try to support the reconciliation of work and family. Personnel policy with regard to families has several positive outcomes (Eichhorst et al. 2007). The German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs asked for expert opinions concerning the economic effects of work-life balance measures. Family-friendly measures are profitable. The Ministry for Family Affairs has initialized programmes to enhance and support the companies' reconciliation efforts. Networks were started to implement family-friendly measures (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend 2009, Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend 2003).

### **3. Relationship between female employment, reconciliation policies and childbearing plans in the German context**

#### **3.1. State of the art<sup>5</sup>**

When analyzing childbearing plans it is necessary to first consider the demand for children. German studies come to different results for childbearing desires. Some see a declining demand for children consisting of a decrease of the number of children desired and a higher percentage of those who do not want children at all. Others find a continuously high wish for children but a lower chance to realize this desire. This difference seems to be a consequence of different questions used to measure the demand for children (Huinink et al. 2008, Dorbritz et al. 2005). From the findings of our own research we assume that the majority of young Germans want children of their own, even though some of them will postpone this step and might not take it at all (Huinink et al. 2008). One important reason for postponing is the difficulty for the partners to reconcile family with their employment. In most families one of the parents, mostly the mother has to reduce employment which results in relatively high opportunity costs compared to other European countries. The height of the opportunity costs depends on the possibility to reconcile employment with the care for children, which is strongly influenced by the institutional structures in the country and the individual employment characteristics. We have explained the institutional context in Germany in chapter 2.

In this chapter we will have a look on current research regarding the influence of educational and occupational attainment on childbearing plans in the German political context. For many questions it is necessary to differentiate between the Eastern and Western parts of Germany even though the political situation is the same since 1990. There are still differences according to attitudes towards maternal employment and the availability of child care.

The interdependence of labor force participation and fertility has been an important subject of empirical and theoretical research for a long time. The main focus is the question how one sphere influences the other (Brewster/Rindfuss 2000). Empirical studies in Germany use mainly structural information explaining the interaction between fertility and employment (Huinink/Blossfeld 1991, Tölke/Diewald 2003, Kreyenfeld 2004, Kurz 2005).

#### *Educational Attainment*

There are two effects regarding educational attainment. One is due to the actual time stayed in the educational system. Huinink names three reasons why it is inappropriate to have a child while in school, occupational training or university: a) the difficulty to divide the time between child and education; b) the lack of own financial resources and c) the insecurity about the future career

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<sup>5</sup> We have concentrated on publications that address the causal relationship of female employment on childbearing; papers that are interested in the influence of motherhood on female working arrangements are left out for now (see Drobnic 2000, Drobnic, Blossfeld & Rohwer 1999, Trappe & Rosenfeld 2000 or Hank 2004).

perspectives of oneself and the partner (Huinink 2000). This institutional effect leads to a postponement of parenthood during educational attainment and the establishment of a career which correlates positively with the achieved education. The higher the education the later an occupational position can be held which is widely regarded as necessary for family formation is achieved (Maul 2007).

The second effect refers to the difference in opportunity costs. The extent of opportunity costs a woman experiences depends on possibilities of combining work and family. The German welfare system is known as one that does not make it easy for women to combine work and motherhood (Brewster/Rindfuss 2000; Dornseiff/Sackmann 2003; Hank et al. 2004; Huinink 2001).<sup>6</sup> A higher education normally leads to a job with a higher income. This means that the opportunity costs are higher for women with a good education, a point which leads to a higher rate of childlessness for higher educated women. However, Klein (2006) does not find a significant influence of educational background on childbearing intentions in her analysis of childless men and women. Ruckdeschel (2004) on the contrary finds that higher education influences childbearing intentions positively, but only for women who have at least one child. This on first sight contradictory result can be explained by a polarization of women.

The difficult reconciliation leads to the necessity for women to decide for one of the life spheres, since a decision for the family will lead to a career break or even an end of the career; a problem which is more important for higher educated women. Highly educated women who decide for the family have a second child. They face the negative consequences of the break anyway. Material resources are earned by the normally fulltime working partner. As a consequence we find a polarization of well educated women in one career-orientated group with no children and a career-orientated group with at least two children (Huinink 2002).

The mentioned difference for childlessness of women regarding their educational attainment differs between East and West Germany (Boehnke 2007). Besides different attitudes on the micro-level (e.g. working orientation and the importance of children) as well as a different climate on the macro-level, institutional factors (e.g. availability of childcare) play an important role too. It seems that for women in the *Neue Länder* there is not such a pressure to decide between work and family, not only because of the more extensive availability of childcare but also because childcare institutions are widely accepted even for under-three-year olds. Furthermore children are seen as more important for life satisfaction and are planned upon earlier in life. For this reason we find lower overall percentages of childless women in the East and no such polarization. It is rather likely that the number of children is being reduced than opting for a life without children (Boehnke 2007; Huinink 2002).

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<sup>6</sup> Which is different to the situation in the former GDR, where the reconciliation politic favored working mothers, see for example: Huinink, Johannes/Michael Wagner. 1995

### *Characteristics of Employment*

Characteristics of employment are another fundamental factor in studies concerning fertility. A stable job of the potential father is still a necessity before having a child for German couples. Only if men can provide for the family couples decide for a family formation (Kurz 2005; Tölke 2005; Kühn 2004; Tölke/Diewald 2003). However this persistence of the male provider model, female job trajectories influences the decision as well. Following the argument of opportunity costs women being unemployed, not employed, working part-time or in marginal jobs should have a positive risk of having a child. But there is no general effect of female unemployment (Kurz et al. 2001). The effect depends on the women's educational level and whether she lives in Eastern or Western Germany. Well educated women in Western Germany avoid birth while being unemployed to preserve their chance to find a job (Kreyenfeld/Konietzka 2005), while unemployment has rather a positive effect for Eastern German women (Kreyenfeld 2001). Bernardi et al. (2008) also report substantial differences between East and West German men and women with regard to job insecurity on childbearing intentions. While a secure job is to start childbearing in the West, in the East job security and family formation are more seen as parallel investments. Focusing on West Germany Brose (2008) assumes income and income security as central conditions for family formation. Her analysis distinguishes between individual economic factors and the overall economic development. In general, the results show that individual factors matter more. The result underlines the finding of Bernardi et al. (2008) about the importance of job security for women in the West.

Working part time predicts fertility for all women, but the causal direction is a matter of discussion. On one hand opportunity costs are relatively low, giving an argument for employment causing fertility behavior but on the other it is possible that women choose this kind of employment for compatibility reasons (Hakim 2000). The causality would then lead from anticipated fertility behavior to employment decisions.

Schröder and Brüderl (2008) investigate this problem of causality by using indirect test methods. They follow Hakims tenet of preferences leading to certain employment patterns. Their results show that the usually found negative effect of female labor force participation on fertility is a consequence of family-orientated women either leaving employment because they anticipate a birth or going back to work because they cannot realize a birth for some reasons. The number of women in these groups is small though.

### **3.2. Hypotheses**

The aim of this paper is to analyze the interdependency between the female labor force participation and the intention and realization of family formation in the German context. Previous research has proven the immense effect of women's employment status on the transition to motherhood - an effect which is different for the regions of East and West Germany. Still a matter of discussion is the causality concerning the employment status and the intention to have a child. Unfortunately we can

not shed more light on this question either. The timing of the decision to have a first child would be needed to do so. A variable which is not part of the studies we will use.

Taking the previous research into account we state the following hypotheses regarding the employment situation of women:

*H1a: Having stable working conditions such as a permanent and full-time employment will increase the probability to intend and to have a first child for women in West Germany.*

*H1b: Employment characteristics will have no effect for women in East Germany on the intention and the realization of a first child.*

There are three reasons that prevent young persons to have a child while they are still in education: lack of time, lack of money and lack of perspective. This institutional effect is valid in both parts of Germany:

*H2: Being in education reduces the probability to intend and to have a first child.*

Besides the educational system and the labor market, the personal situation of the respondent is crucial as well. Especially the existence of a partnership is a key prerequisite before founding a family. We assume the effect of the partnership to differ according to its institutionalization, i.e. whether it is a consensual or a marriage. We then postulate hypothesis H3:

*H3: Having a partner increases the probability of family formation (intention and realization). For West Germany the effect is strongest if the couple is married.*

Another relevant aspect for family formation is the respondent's age. We postulate a non-linear effect. It will have a negative effect in younger ages, a positive one in middle ages and again a negative effect when the women approaches the end of her fertility phase. In the beginning she might find herself to be too young to have a child, especially if she is still in education and not settled in the labor market and at the end there is probably a selective group left, who has not yet done the transition. They are for instance less likely to be generally in favor of children.

*H4: Age has a non-linear effect on the probability to intend and to realize a first birth, with a negative effect at the beginning and the end of the fertile phase.*

The educational background of a person serves as an indicator of the individual's opportunities on the labor market. In Germany it also shows the opportunity costs, women face when having a children. We therefore postulate a negative effect of a high educational level on the intention and transition to the first child.

*H5: The higher the educational level, the lower is the probability to intend and to realize a family formation.*

## **4. Analysis**

### **4.1 Intention for the first child**

#### *Method*

The present research utilizes data available from the first wave of the German Generations and Gender Survey (GGS). The GGS is part of Generations and Gender Programme (GGP) which is providing a better knowledge base for policy-making in UNECE countries. The GGS is a panel survey of a nationally representative sample of 18-79 year-old resident population in each participating country with at least three panel waves and an interval of three years between each wave. In Germany, the first wave was conducted in 2005 with 10.000 participants. The questionnaire covered besides childbearing intentions a number of other areas, e.g. family relationships and social networks.

The present study includes women between the ages of 18 and 35 without children. The mean age of the participants (N=705) is at about 25 (24.9) years. The sample size for East Germany (*Neue Länder*) is 127, for West Germany (*Alte Länder*) it is 578.

#### *Instruments*

The dependent variable of this section is *the intention to have a first child in the next three years*. Responses were originally measured on a four-point scale, from 'certainly not' (1) to 'certainly yes' (4) and were dichotomized into 'yes' (1) and 'no' (0)<sup>7</sup>. As predictors employment status (1=in education, 2=not employed<sup>8</sup>, 3=part time, 4=full time), whether the respondents have a partner or not ('no' coded '0,' and 'yes' coded '1'), and age (1=18-26, 2=27-35) were included. The model will control for educational attainment (ISCED levels<sup>9</sup> 1 and 2 coded '1', levels 3 and 4 coded '2', levels 5 and 6 coded '3') as well as the subjective perception on how the household is managing with the current income situation (measured on a six-point scale, from 'having big trouble' (1) to 'very well'

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<sup>7</sup> Participants who were not sure, were randomized to either one of the two categories.

<sup>8</sup> The category includes being unemployed as well as being a housewife, a pensioner or on long-term sick leave .

<sup>9</sup> The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) is designed and adjusted by UNESCO and especially helpful for international comparisons. Level 1 and 2 cover basic education, level 3 and 4 secondary and post-secondary education (for Germany e.g. vocational training), level 5 and 6 include tertiary education (such as advanced vocational training *Meister* as well as *Fachhochschule* and university).

(6). In a second model we included the characteristics of the partner's employment status as predictor (1=in education, 2=not employed, 3=part time, 4=full time) and therefore restricted the model to women who live in partnership (N=355). Models are calculated separately for East and West Germany<sup>10</sup>).

### Results

Using logistic regression models we estimated the probability of intending to have a first child within the next three years. Table 6 displays the results from our first estimations. Consistent with the above-stated assumption (H1b), being in education decreases the chance to intend having a first child in the near future<sup>11</sup>, whereas an influence of stable working conditions could not be found in neither one of the two regions (H1a). Having a partner increases the probability to start a life with children in the next three years (H2). For the importance of age the expected effect becomes obvious. Being in the age group of 27-35 (an age that most would see as ideal for children) increases the chances to start childbearing in comparison to being 18-26 years old. For income an interesting result emerged for the *Neue Länder*: Having an insufficient income increases the probability for a first child in the next three years. No influence of educational attainment was found.

**Table 5: Logistic Regression Model, Dependent Variable: Intention to have a first child within the next 3 years**

	East		West	
	$\beta$	Odds ratio	$\beta$	Odds ratio
Employment status				
Full time	0	1	0	1
Part time	.60	1.82	-.13	.88
Not employed	.08	1.09	.15	1.16
In education	-.80	.45	-.84**	.43
Having a partner	1.11*	3.03	1.19***	3.29
Age				
18-26	0	1	0	1
27-35	.66	1.94	.52*	1.69
Educational attainment				
Middle (ISCED 3, 4)	0	1	0	1
Low (ISCED 1, 2)	.02	1.02	-.10	.91
High (ISCED 5, 6)	.15	1.16	.03	1.03
Income	-.34 <sup>+</sup>	.71	.04	1.04
Intercept	.25	1.28	-1.43**	.24
Nagelkerke's R <sup>2</sup>	.21		.18	

<sup>+</sup> p<0.10 \*p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01 \*\*\*p<0.001

<sup>10</sup> Survey participants from Berlin were randomized to either one of the regions.

<sup>11</sup> As coefficients and odds ratios are very similar for both regions, it must be due to the smaller number of cases that no significant result showed for the Eastern model.

The model in Table 6 refers to women in partnership only as it includes characteristics of the partner's employment status. While the reported effect for age remains unchanged changes with regard to women's employment situation occurred, making the importance of the partner's work situation evident. For East Germany we find the same significant effect of partner being in education (it decreases the probability of a first child) as we did before for women, for West Germany it seems to be important that the male partner has a full time contract. Working on a part time basis decreases the chance for a first child in the near future. Even though our hypotheses 1a could not be confirmed for women this result indicates that stable working conditions do play a role in Western Germany.

Another interesting effect of educational attainment emerged for the *Neue Länder*: Having achieved a basic education (in comparison to a secondary or post-secondary degree) increases the chance of having a first child rather soon.

**Table 6: Logistic Regression Model, Dependent Variable: Intention to have a first child within the next 3 years**

	East		West	
	$\beta$	Odds ratio	$\beta$	Odds ratio
Women in partnership				
Employment status				
Full time	0	1	0	1
Part time	1.02	2.78	.03	1.03
Not employed	.97	2.64	.09	1.10
In education	-.35	.71	-.55	.58
Employment status partner				
Full time	0	1	0	1
Part time	.91	2.48	-1.51 <sup>+</sup>	.22
Not employed	-1.12	.33	.75	2.11
In education	-2.26*	.10	-.48	.62
Age				
18-26	0	1	0	1
27-35	1.17	3.24	.49 <sup>+</sup>	1.63
Educational attainment				
Middle (ISCED 3, 4)	0	1	0	1
Low (ISCED 1, 2)	1.93 <sup>+</sup>	6.91	.04	1.04
High (ISCED 5, 6)	.35	1.42	.57	1.76
Income	-.40	.67	.16	1.18
Intercept	1.25	3.48	-.81	.45
Nagelkerke's R <sup>2</sup>	.33		.12	

<sup>+</sup> p<0.10 \*p< 0.05 \*\*p<0.01 \*\*\*p<0.001

## 4.2 Transition to the first child

### *Method*

To validate our stated hypotheses on the effect of female employment on the transition to the first child we will use data of the German Life History Study. The study provides retrospective data for several cohorts born between 1919 and 1971 in Eastern and Western Germany. It offers rich information on respondents' life courses, including their employment trajectories, the partnership and fertility biographies.<sup>12</sup> For this paper the youngest cohort, born 1971, has been selected. The data collecting took place in 1996-98 in the East and 1998-99 in the West (wave 1) when respondents were 25-27 and 27-28 years respectively and in 2005 (wave 2) when respondents were 34.

N=517 women took part in both waves of the survey, 373 (72.15 per cent) coming from the western and 144 (27.85 per cent) from the eastern part of Germany. 69 per cent make the transition to having the first child during the observed time frame. However, it is important to notice that the fertility phase is censored, so these results can not reveal how many of them will stay childless in the end.

### *Instruments*

The fact whether the event of a first child occurred serves as dependent variable in the empirical model. The probability of having the event will be estimated controlling for a set of independent variables. Central for this paper are variables regarding the employment status. The status itself is differentiated between "being in education", "not employed" and "employed". "Not employed" can either mean that the responding women is unemployed or a housewife<sup>13</sup>. Furthermore the category "employed" is divided according to the amount of working hours. The variables related to the employment are used as time-variant-covariates in the model.

An important factor for fertility decisions is the partnership. A variable stating the partnership status according to its institutionalization is used for the analysis. Unfortunately, information on the employment situation of the partner is not available for all respondents and can not be integrated.

Finally, the model will control for age, educational level and the region (East and West).

### *Results*

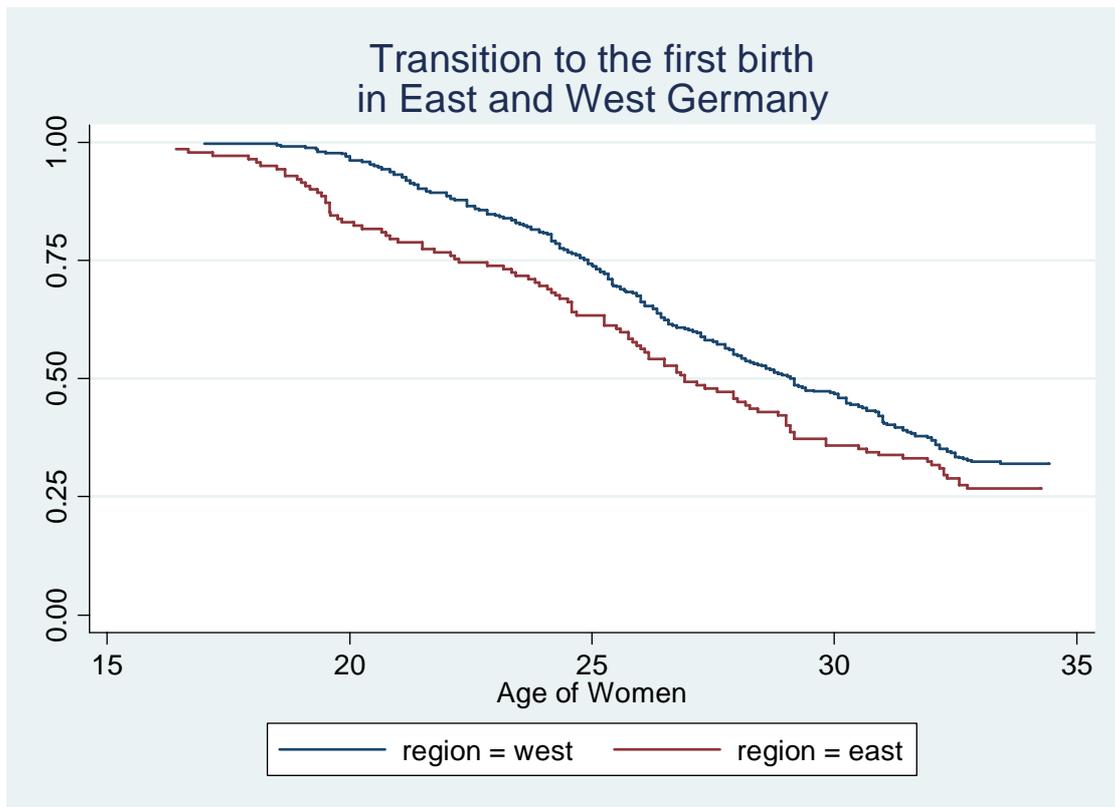
Analyzing the transition to the first birth in Germany, it is still reasonable to divide the sample according to the region of eastern and western Germany. In the East women have the transition earlier than their neighbors in the west. This difference was strongest before the fall of the wall but can still be observed today. In figure 4 a Kaplan-Meier curve can be seen, which clearly shows that eastern women (born 1971) start family formation early resulting in lower level of childlessness by the age of 35.

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<sup>12</sup> For more information on the study see <http://www.yale.edu/ciqle/GLHS/index.html>  
We thank Karl-Ulrich Mayer for making the data available for us.

<sup>13</sup> The third category „being on parental leave“ is obviously not possible before having the first child.

**Figure 4: Transition to first birth, Kaplan-Meier survival curve**



Source: German Life History Study, Cohort 1971, own estimations

The result of the cure regression models show that the difference between East and West indeed is a matter of timing and not a matter of fewer events as such.

The cure regression model divides the effects of the covariates into an risk-effect and a timing-effect. There is only one effect in regard to the event itself. Women not living with a partner have a higher probability not to have the event of a family formation. Other variables only affect the timing of the event: A low educational level pushes family formation on, a high education delays it. Being single or part of a consensual union also delays the transition to a first child, just like being from West Germany brings a delay compared to women from the East.

**Table 7: Cure Regression Model, Dependent Variable: Transition to first child**

	Cure Fraction (Risk-effect)		Scale (Timing-Effect)	
educational level				
low	0.084		0.138	**
middle (Ref.)				
high	0.079		-0.181	***
employment status				
in education	0.272		-0.037	
not employed	-0.750		-0.068	
employed (Ref.)				
partner status				
single	4.097	***	-0.141	*
living-apart-together	3.388	***	-0.060	
consensual union	0.469		-0.140	***
married (Ref.)				
region				
east (Ref.)				
west	-0.301		-0.148	***
N of subjects	503			
Log likelihood	-1137.963			

Source: GLHS, cohort 1971, own estimations, <sup>+</sup> p<0.10 \*p< 0.05 \*\*p<0.01 \*\*\*p<0.001

Using event history analysis to analyze employment biographies and their impact on fertility behavior, we find the postulated effects of the control variables (table 8). The hazard rate is lowest in younger ages and at least for the East we see the tendency of a low rate at the end of the observed time. Since the data is censored at an age in which the fertile phase is not over yet, hypotheses 4 can not be verified conclusively.

Having a partner and especially living with a partner are important factors for family formation (H3). The results of the variables regarding the institutionalization of the partnership show the different attitudes which still characterize both parts of Germany. While marriage is still an important prerequisite for having children in the more conservative West, Eastern Germans do not find it important to be married. The crucial step for them is moving with the partner into a household.

Hypotheses 5, stating a linear effect of the educational level, cannot be verified since not all effects are significant. However, the effects clearly got to the postulated direction. High education decreases the probability of the transition to a first child (at least significant in the West) and low education increases the probability (at least significant in the East).

**Table 8: Piecewise Constant Exponential Model, Dependent Variable: Transition to first child**

	East		West	
	Hazard ratio		Hazard ratio	
age episode				
age < 18	0.020	***	0.002	***
age 18 - 20	0.272	***	0.099	***
age 20 - 25	0.124	***	0.156	***
age 25 - 30	0.265	***	0.271	***
age 30 - 35	0.171	***	0.319	***
educational level				
low	5.955	*	1.257	
middle (Ref.)				
high	0.654	+	0.590	**
employment status				
in education	0.822		0.606	**
not employed	1.809	+	0.500	
part time employed	0.432		0.925	
full time employed (Ref.)				
partner status				
single	0.054	***	0.137	***
living-apart-together	0.270	***	0.198	***
consensual union	0.778		0.535	***
married (Ref.)				
N of subjects	142		361	
N of events	104		242	
Log likelihood	-16.535		-7.316	

Source: GLHS, cohort 1971, own estimations, <sup>+</sup> p<0.10 \*p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01 \*\*\*p<0.001

The institutional effect of not having children while still in the educational system can clearly be seen in the West, as a trend also in the East (H2). The effects of the employment status are not exactly the way it was postulated in hypotheses 1a and 1b. For western women having a fulltime employment does not increase the probability of family formation, compared to a part time employment. For eastern the results show the tendency of a decreased probability when working less than 35 hours but the effect is not significant. The main difference between western and eastern women is their reaction to unemployment. In the East a positive effect becomes obvious; women in this region tend to use the phase of unemployment to have a first child. The opposite seems to occur in the western parts of Germany. The effect is clearly negative, though not statistically significant.

## 5. Discussion

Two main conclusions can be drawn from our analyses about the interdependencies of female labor force participation and the intentions and transitions to family formation in Germany. First, the male partner has an important impact on the intention to have a first child and second, there are still big differences between East and West Germany.

The regressions analyzing childbearing intentions clearly showed the dominant influence of the male's employment status: The job (in)security of the partner is stronger than the women's own job situation. This is due to the German welfare system, which promotes a family-break for women. For this reason couples have to rely –at least for some time- solely on the men's income, i.e. on his secure employment. But why is this effect different in the East, even though couples there face the same (conservative) institutional structure? Studies such as Bernardi et al (2008) give answers to this question. Eastern Germans tend to assume the situation after the birth of a first child to be more positive, i.e. they think the employment of both partners and the childcare can be organized easily. This is why they do not estimate the employment situation as an important prerequisite unlike western Germans.

Unfortunately, we can not test this result for the transition to the first child because the dataset we used does not give enough information on the partner's employment.

The crucial finding in the model for the transition to first parenthood is the different effect of employment status in East and West Germany. While eastern German women use the time while they are not employed for having children, women in the West fear to further reduce their chances on the labor market when they have children during a time of non-employment. This finding does not support the thesis of self-selection, we described above. Referring to employment in part-time, another difference shows. Though the effect is not significant, for eastern Germans we find a negative effect when they work reduced hours (less than 30 hours a week). This corresponds to the assumption, that they want to have a secure basis for themselves and not to rely on the partner, when they have a family.

In regard to childbearing intentions only a few differences between East and West could be found. The most surprising result is probably that income has a reverse effect in East Germany; having a household income which is hard to make do with fosters the intention of having a child within the next three years. This outcome goes along with Friedman, Hechter, and Kanazawa (1994) who argue that deciding for a child might give people a chance to gain control in a situation where they are exposed to uncertainties in other life domains.

Lately new political instruments were implemented: The "Elterngeld" (parental allowance) reduces opportunity costs, when staying at home for up to 12 months after the birth of a child, more childcare for under 3 years olds is planned and there are political programs promoting family-friendly companies. The future will show whether these developments can change the institutional and normative setting for family formation in Germany.

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## Appendix

**Table A1: Families with children younger than 18 in 2006**

Family structures	Number of children			
	1	2	3	4 and more
Married couples	35	47	14	4
Cohabitation	62	30	7	2
Single-parent families	59	31	8	2
Total	41	43	12	4

Percentages are own calculations based on Statistisches Bundesamt 2008c

**Table A2: Labor force participation rate of women**

Age	West Germany	East Germany (Former GDR)*
15 – 20	29	32
20 – 25	68	67
25 – 30	75	78
30 – 35	76	85
35 – 40	78	90
40 – 45	82	91
45 – 50	82	90
50 – 55	77	88
55 – 60	64	77
60 – 65	28	25
Total	51	54

Source: Percentages are own calculations based on Statistisches Bundesamt 2008

\* including Berlin

**Table A3: Development of Parental leave in the FRG**

Date of validity	Name of Leave	Duration of leave	Name of Payment	Duration of Payment	Amount of Payment
1979 – 1985	Mutterschaftsurlaub	6 months	Mutterschaftsurlaubsgeld	6 months	equal to previous earnings
1986 – 1987	Erziehungsurlaub	10 months	Erziehungsgeld (childrearing allowance)	10 months	Proportional to previous earnings (max. 750 DM per month)
1988	Erziehungsurlaub	12 months	Erziehungsgeld	12 months	Proportional to previous earnings (max. 750 DM per month)
1989 – 1990	Erziehungsurlaub	15 months	Erziehungsgeld	15 months	Proportional to previous earnings (max. 510 DM per month)
1990 – 1991	Erziehungsurlaub	18 months	Erziehungsgeld	18 months	600 DM in the first 6 months, thereafter means tested, max. 600 DM
1992	Erziehungsurlaub	36 months	Erziehungsgeld	18 months	600 DM in the first 6 months, thereafter means tested, max. 600 DM
1993 - 2000	Erziehungsurlaub	36 months	Erziehungsgeld	24 months	600 DM in the first 6 months, thereafter means tested, max. 600 DM
2001 - 2006	Elternzeit	36 months	Erziehungsgeld	12 months or 24 months	Either 900 DM for one year or 600 DM for two; 2002: Either 460 € for one year or 307 € for two
Since 2007	Elternzeit	36 months	Elterngeld (parental allowance)	12 months up to 28 months	Proportional to previous earnings (67%), min. 300 € and max. 1,800 € per month

Sources: Bird 2004, 311-312; MISSOC 2007

**Table A4: Family Benefits in the GDR (1949-1990)**

Name of Benefit	Introduction	Description
Birth Grant	1950	lump-sum paid for the 3 <sup>rd</sup> and following children, since 1958 for the 1 <sup>st</sup> and following children,
Child Benefits	1950	since 1972 lump-sum 1000 GDR Mark on every child birth monthly paid benefit for the 4 <sup>th</sup> and following children, since 1969 for the 3 <sup>rd</sup> and following children, since 1972 for every child
Maternity Leave	1950	Maternity leave with a duration of 14 weeks, since 1972 18 weeks, since 1976 26 weeks
Parental leave	1972	Paid leave for single mothers if no place in daycare available, since 1976 possible for all mothers with two and more children for one year
Reduced Working Hours	1972	Reduced working hours for mothers with three or more children, since 1976 for mothers with two or more children
Extra Holidays	1972	Extra holidays for mothers with two or more children
Child Sick Leave	1972	paid leave for single mothers in case of a sick child, since 1984 also for mothers with three or more children, since 1986 also for mothers with two or more children
Interest-Free Loan	1972	couples who married before age 26 receive a marriage loan of 5000 GDR Mark Partly release out on birth of a child, since 1980 for couples who married before age 30, since 1986 a higher loan of 7000 GDR Mark

Source: Kreyenfeld 2004, 280

**Table A5: Age of Children in Childcare Facilities in 2007**

	Children's Age			
	0-3	3-7	School children	Total
East Germany*	17	52	31	100
West Germany*	6	85	8	100
Overall Germany	9	78	13	100

Row Percentages; Source: Percentages are own calculations based on Statistisches Bundesamt 2008b

\* excluding Berlin