

Information sheet – English

The Microcensus is a survey of all 16 Federal States of the Federal Republic of Germany and includes the Labour Force Survey, the Statistics on Income and Living Conditions Survey as well as the survey on access and use of information and communication technologies (ICT) of the European Union.

For this survey, we ask for your cooperation.

What is the Microcensus?

The Microcensus is an official Federal household survey conducted annually in Germany. The term Microcensus means "small census" and is a representative survey of households prescribed and regulated by law. Approximately 810,000 people in around 370,000 private households and collective residences are surveyed on their living conditions. Representative of the total population, around 1 % of the population is selected according to a statistical process of random sampling. The survey is completely confidential and the data is used exclusively for statistical purposes.

What is its purpose?

The Microcensus provides data regarding population structure as well as the economic and social situation of the population. Providing information about family and partnership, labour market and employment, occupation and education, the Microcensus represents an important source of data. The statistics are utilised by government and administrative officials, researchers, the media and the broader public.

The State Bureaus of Statistics, the Federal Bureau of Statistics and the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat) publish the results. They are available for all interested residents, for example online.

Why was I selected?

It is not possible, and luckily not necessary, to annually survey all of the approximately 40 million households in Germany. The answers of a selection (a so-called representative random sample) suffice. Eligible areas (buildings) are selected for the sample according to a mathematical-statistical random sampling procedure. All sampled buildings, or rather households, may be surveyed up to four times. Depending on the questionnaire, the household may be contacted up to twice a year. Follow-up surveys ensure a high precision of the results. Furthermore, they facilitate statements about changes and developments in households.

The results of the sample enable reliable statements about living conditions in Germany. However, this depends on the participation of all household members in the sample. One household cannot be replaced with another. **We rely on your cooperation.**

Why is a questionnaire used when the authorities already hold a wide range of data?

In many other European countries (e.g. Sweden, the Netherlands, Austria, Italy) personal data held by administrative authorities provide a substantial source of information for statistical purposes. That is why households in these countries are not, for instance, required to answer questions on income. This is not possible in Germany where such a comprehensive register of personal data, including income, education, employment status, health insurance, etc., does not exist.

Am I obliged to participate?

Yes, as there is a public interest in obtaining an accurate and complete picture of living conditions in Germany. Every missing response reduces the reliability of the results.

All adults over 18 years living in selected households (and all underage persons (under 18 years) living in their own household) are legally required to respond. Furthermore, as an adult member of a selected household you are required to provide information about underage household members as well as those who, for example due to illness or disability, may not be able to take part by themselves. Should no member of the household be capable of providing information a legal caregiver has the obligation to do so. In the case that no legal caregiver exists, a person of trust may be named to provide the household's information. Your obligation to respond extends to all the facts about the household known to you.

In collective accommodations (such as nursing homes, child or youth centres, monasteries, military barracks, refugee accommodations, correctional facilities) the management of the facility has the obligation to provide information. In these cases the questionnaire is significantly shorter.

What do I have to do?

There are three possible ways in which you may participate in the questionnaire:

- Online interview
- Interview in person or on the phone
- By mail (paper questionnaire)

Your State Bureau of Statistics or your interviewer will provide you with the required login details for an online interview (initial password and user name). Using these credentials, you can login at mikrozensus.de/online.

In our experience, a personal interview with our trained interviewers tends to be the most practical way of completing the questionnaire. A personal interview can be carried out at your home or by telephone. It should be noted that not all members of the household must be present during the interview. One adult household member may provide the answers for all household members.

Of course, it is also possible for you to complete the survey by mail. Should you prefer to do so, you may request the necessary paper questionnaire (available in German or in English) from your State Bureau of Statistics or your interviewer.

Which questions will I be asked?

The questions are addressed to all members of your household and refer, among other things, to:

- Personal information (e.g. gender, year of birth, marital status, nationalities)
- Means of living, income
- Childcare, school, course of study
- Further education and training
- Employment, occupation, job search
- Retirement provisions
- Internet use
- Living situation (only every four years)

Thank you for your cooperation!