



## Germany: Facts & Figures February 2009

*A monthly overview of current opinion data and statistical information in the Federal Republic of Germany*

### Politics

If Bundestag elections were held on March 1, the CDU/CSU would receive 34% of the vote, the SPD 23%, the Green Party 10%, the FDP 18%, the Left Party 11%, and all other parties combined 4%. (Forsa. 02/25/09)

Four months before the European Parliament (EP) elections, 69% of Germans do not know that there will be EP elections this year. Nine percent were able to say that the elections would take place in June. Nevertheless, 43% said that they would definitely cast their vote on June 7. (Bertelsmann Foundation. Major papers, 02/09/09)

### Economy

The recession in Germany deepened dramatically between October and December, with the GDP shrinking by 2.1% compared with the previous quarter. It was the sharpest drop since Germany's unification. Imports were down 3.6%, while exports dropped 7.3%. Business investment in machinery, equipment and vehicles declined by 4.9%, following eight consecutive quarterly increases. (Federal Statistical Office. Major papers, 02/26/09)

Non-university research institutions in Germany spent EUR 8.5 billion on research and development in 2007, an increase of 4.7% compared to 2006. Seventy-five percent of the expenditure was spent on natural sciences (EUR 4.1 billion) and engineering (EUR 2.4 billion). EUR 1.1 billion (12.7%) of the research expenditure went on humanities and social sciences, EUR 0.6 billion (6.6%) on human medicine and EUR 0.4 billion (5.0%) on agricultural research. (Federal Statistical Office. 02/18/09)

Germany will be especially hard hit by the global financial crisis. The Gross National Product dropped by 2.1% in 2008, much more than in any other European country. This is the most serious drop in its economic output since 1987. Economic experts only presumed an economic drop of 1.8%. (Federal Statistical Office. Major papers, 02/14/09)

Consumer prices rose by less than one percent in January, a sign that the global financial crisis has worn down demand for everything ranging from washing machines to cars. Inflation rose only 0.9% in January compared to last year's figures. (Federal Statistical Office. Major papers, 02/12/09)

The unemployment rate rose to 8.5% (January: 8.3%), with 3.552 million people out of work. (Federal Labor Agency. 02/26/09)

### Society

In 2007, more than 186,000 pensioners received their pension abroad, 8,000 more than in 2006 and more than double the number 20 years ago. The largest group of pensioners abroad lives in the United States (25,300), followed by Switzerland (21,100) and Austria (18,250). (Sueddeutsche. 02/25/09)

The number of right-wing crimes considerably increased in 2008. According to preliminary results, right-wing extremists committed almost 14,000 crimes, among them 735 acts of violence last year. In 2007, police registered 10,935 such activities. (Ministry of the Interior. Sueddeutsche, 02/18/09)

Energy consumption of private households for housing in Germany declined considerably since 2000. The consumption of household energy – adjusted for variations in temperature and changes in domestic fuel stocks – dropped by a total of 10.9% between 2000 and 2007. The consumption of mineral oils (-32.7%), mainly of domestic fuel, and of coals (-28.1%) decreased. Natural gas recorded a decline (-8.4%), too. As for other energy carriers (mainly wood fuel including wood pellets), consumption increased markedly between 2000 and 2007 (+20.4%). (Federal Statistical Office, 02/18/09)

Seventy-one percent of Germans approve of Chancellor Merkel's appeal to the Pope to make clear the Vatican's position concerning Holocaust denier Bishop Williamson. Forty-two percent of Germans said that their personal view of the Pope has suffered because of Williamson's re-acceptance in the Catholic Church. (Die Welt, 02/12/09)

Forty-nine percent (42% in December) of respondents are worried about their savings. Thirty-seven percent (32% in December) are worried that they could lose their jobs; and 73% think that the worst is still to come. Germans have also become more critical of the government's crisis management. While two-thirds said in December the government would resolutely tackle the crisis, this figure has now dropped to 58%. (Politbarometer. Major papers, 02/06/09)

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