



## Germany: Facts & Figures May 2008

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

### Politics

If Bundestag elections would be held on June 1, the CDU/CSU would receive 35% of the vote, the SPD 23%, the Green Party 11%, the FDP 12%, the Left Party 14%, and all other parties combined 5%. (Forsa. 05/28/08)

Both the CDU and the SPD suffered considerable losses in the local elections in Schleswig-Holstein. The SPD lost 2.7% and reached its worst result ever with 26.6%. The CDU received 38.6% of the votes (down 12.2%). The Green Party received 10.3% and the FDP 9%. The Left Party ran for the first time and received 6.9% of the votes. (Major papers, 05/27/08)

58% of Germans are opposed to the SPD nominating its own presidential candidate. 31% said it would be a good idea if there was an alternative to current President Köhler. 75% of Germans would vote for President Horst Köhler if they could vote directly. 17% favor the SPD candidate Gesine Schwan. 85% of the respondents said Köhler does a good job. (Forsa, 05/21/08 and ARD Deutschlandtrend, 05/28/08)

### Economy

The number of employed people in Germany has increased by 1.4 million within two years, the greatest rise since German reunification. In the first quarter of 2008, 39.8 million people were employed. Most new jobs were created in the service sector. In May, the unemployment rate sank to 7.8% (April: 8.1%), dropping below eight percent for the first time in 18 years. (Federal Statistics Office. 05/22/08 and 05/29/08)

The economy grew by a 1.5% in the first quarter of 2008 over the previous quarter, the strongest growth in 12 years. Growth was based on strong domestic consumption and foreign trade inside the EU but also to Asia and North America. (Major papers, 05/16/08)

Due to the positive developments at the labor markets, tax revenue in the last quarter was higher than expected. The federal and the Länder governments collected more than 157.3 billion euros in taxes in the first quarter of this year, an increase by 6.9% compared to the same period of last year. (Sueddeutsche. 05/16/08)

The average German spends about 2,970 euros per year for healthcare. This is an increase of 2.4% compared to the figures from last year. Overall health care spending in Germany amounted to 10.6% of the GDP, while this figure is 11.1%, and 15.3% in the United States. (Federal Statistical Office. Major papers, 05/06/08)

### Society

The number of foreigners and expatriates immigrating to Germany increased last year by 20,000 to 683,000. This is the first time in seven years that more foreigners immigrated to Germany than in the previous year. (Federal Office of Statistics. Major papers, 05/20/08)

36% of Germans said surplus state income should be saved to repay the state's debt, while 55% favored tax cuts. (Forsa. RTL, 05/20/08).

13% of Germans are considered poor and another 13% are saved from poverty through social payments from the government. Someone is considered poor if he/she has a monthly net income of less than 781 euros. Someone is considered rich if he/she has a monthly net income of more than 3,418 euros. (Government Report on Poverty in Germany. 05/19/08)

64% of Germans said Israel no longer plays a special role for Germany. They think of Israel like any other country. 56% rejected the view that Israel plays a special role in German foreign policy, while 36% said this special role is still necessary because of German history. 50% believe reconciliation with Israel has been accomplished, while 44% hold the opposite view. (Forsa. Berliner Zeitung, 05/12/08)

The number of Germans who wish to emigrate is increasing. Between January and November 2007, 150,000 Germans emigrated, while 99,000 Germans returned. In the same period of last year, 142,000 Germans left Germany. The majority moved to Switzerland (19,000), followed by the United States (13,400), Austria (9,500) and Poland (9,400). (Federal Statistical Office. Tagesspiegel, 05/02/08)

Every third German wants the Deutsche Mark back. Asked whether the euro should be replaced by the D-mark again, 34% said 'yes,' while 65% are opposed to a return. (BdB. Berliner Zeitung, 05/02/08)