

4.1 General context

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Main challenges to social inclusion

Disadvantages

Around one quarter of young Germans grow up with disadvantages. In Germany, "disadvantage" is taken to mean the presence of various indicators of risk. The three most common indicators are poverty, unemployment and poor level of education. Recent national reports on education in Germany ([Bildung in Deutschland](#)) also use these three indicators. The socioeconomic situation of children and young people is composed of the disadvantages suffered by their parents, their parents' educational status (school qualification), and the children's and young people's dependence on e.g., state welfare.

- Poverty

Within the [population group](#) 'children and youth', adolescents and, in particular, young adults comprise those who have increasingly at risk of poverty over the last decade in particular.

Over the last few years, the [poverty rate](#) has been highest among young adults aged 21 to 30. According to the German Microcensus, in 2015 the at-risk-of-poverty rate amongst under-18s was 19.7% (income year 2015). Around 2.8 million children and young people were at risk of poverty. The at-risk-of-poverty rate [The at-risk-of-poverty rate measures the spread of relative income poverty. The at-risk-of-poverty rate shows the number of people with an equivalised income that falls below 60% of the median equivalised income for the population as a whole. The equivalised income is the need-weighted per capita income per household (net).] has increased by 1.5 percentage points [since 2010](#). [1] In east Germany, almost one in four young people and one in three young adults (aged 21 to 30) recently lived on an [inadequate income](#).

[Children from immigrant community families](#) are another high-risk group. Almost one in five children from immigrant families live in poverty. One in three is threatened by poverty. In either case, this is true for fewer than half of children of non-immigrant families. [At present](#), the influx of children with migrant backgrounds is increasing overall child poverty. The proportion of children at risk of poverty amongst unaccompanied immigrant minors rose from about 36% to 49% between 2011 and 2015. Of children with no migrant background, the figure stayed constant at around 13%.

[Since 2005](#), with slight fluctuations from year to year, 15 per cent of all under-15s have been dependent on social benefit (Sozialgeld) in accordance with Section 28 of Social Code Book II ([Sozialgesetzbuch, SGB II](#)) for family members who are not capable of work who live with those in need of help in a benefits community (Bedarfsgemeinschaft) and as such are dependent on state welfare. [In 2018](#), this group comprised a total number of approximately 2 million children and young people. Children and young people hence represent the largest age group in receipt of benefits under Social Code Book II (SGB II). There are major regional variations. For instance, the rate in east Germany (25.3 per cent) is almost double that in west Germany (13.4 per cent).

Another disproportionately large group comprises [children from immigrant families](#) that receive benefits under Social Code Book II (SGB II).

- Children and young people subject to housing exclusion

There are no reliable statistics on housing exclusion among children and young people. The Federal association for assistance for the homeless ([Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Wohnungslosenhilfe](#), BAG W) estimates that [in 2017](#), around 650 000 persons in Germany did not have a home of their own, including 48 000 that lived on the street (were homeless). Around 82 000 (30%) of persons subject to housing exclusion lived with their partner and/or children. Of the entire group of persons who were subject to housing exclusion in 2017, BAG W estimated that around 8 % were children and underage adolescents (22 000). The number of persons that officially have a refugee status who are subject to housing exclusion amounts to 375 000. To date there are no reliable statistics on whether and how many children and young people who have come to Germany in recent years in search of protection and asylum are affected by housing exclusion or homelessness. According to a [survey published by the German Youth Institute in 2017](#), approx. 37 000 young people (not older than 26 years) in Germany don't have a permanent home, two thirds being males, one third being females. Around 20 % of them are minors.

- Poor level of education

[In 2017](#), 10 per cent of 25 to under 34-year-olds in Germany left school without having completed secondary school, 15 per cent of them are unemployed. [About one in ten](#) 15- to 29-year-olds in Germany is neither in education, training or employment and belongs to the group of the so-called NEETs. At 33 %, the share of 30 to under 35-year-olds from the immigrant community who have no vocational training qualification is around three times as high as their peers who are not from the immigrant community (10 %).

According to the [Education Report 2018](#), 16 to under 30-year-olds from the immigrant community less often attend college or university (15 %) than do their peers who are not from the immigrant community (18 %).

[1] The at-risk-of-poverty rate varies depending on the data source: EU-SILC: 14.6% (income year 2014); Microcensus: 19.7% (income year 2015); SOEP: 21.1% (income year 2014).

Other discrimination factors and obstacles to education

The indicators for disadvantages are not the only factors that can lead to social marginalisation and discrimination. Other models cite (additional) risk factors such as, e.g., growing up with one parent, membership of the immigrant community, or the presence of a certain social environment.

- Immigrant community membership

The educational qualifications of members of the immigrant community differ markedly from those of their non-immigrant peers. 17% of the [immigrant population](#) aged 15 or over have no school qualifications; ; this includes those members of the immigrant community who arrived in Germany between 2015 and 2017. Among non-immigrants, the rate is 2%.

- Young refugees

Young refugees, especially unaccompanied minors and young adults in need of assistance, are a new challenge. As at 2 January 2018, there were around [54 144 unaccompanied minors \(29 171\) and young people of legal age \(24 973\)](#) who fell under the responsibility of child and youth services.

- Children and young people with disabilities

The 13th child and youth report of the federal government ([13. Kinder und Jugendbericht der Bundesregierung](#)), a regular publication on research into the situation faced by children and young people in Germany, took up the situation of children and young people with health restrictions and disabilities for the first time in 2009. It describes a number of factors which, however, are discussed in close context with other disadvantages.

The relationship between the health of children and young people and their socioeconomic status is also the focus of a study entitled Study on the health of children and young people in Germany ([Studie zur Gesundheit von Kindern und Jugendlichen in Deutschland](#), KiGGS), which has been conducted since 2003 by the Robert Koch Institute ([Robert-Koch-Institut](#), RKI). Between 2003 and 2006, it was known as Child and youth health survey (Kinder- und Jugendgesundheitssurvey).

- Social background

In Germany, [educational attainment is closely linked to social background](#). The lower the parents' educational qualifications, the less likely their children are to attend Gymnasium (the most academically challenging secondary school type in Germany). In 2015, most children under 15 whose parents have a high educational qualification attended Gymnasium (61 %). Only very few children from this group (3 %) attend Hauptschule (the least academically challenging secondary school type). For children with parents with mid-level educational qualifications, Realschule (the option between Gymnasium and Hauptschule) is the most frequently chosen option (35 %); only 30 % of children in this group attend Gymnasium. They rarely attend Hauptschule (7 %). Conversely, only one in seven children with parents with low educational qualifications attend Gymnasium (14 %). 22 % of children in this group opt for Hauptschule.

[Academic performance at both primary and secondary school level](#) also varies greatly depending on children's social backgrounds. Children and young people from socially disadvantaged families often still have reading difficulties. According to the PISA model of achievement levels, this risk group, as it is known, includes youngsters who have not reached level 2. Young people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds in Germany account for 15 % of this group. The group of high-achieving readers at level 5 or 6 has remained stable over time at 9 %, which corresponds to the OECD average.

- Other factors influencing disadvantage

Besides those already mentioned, there are [other, context-dependent factors](#) that influence whether children and young people are disadvantaged. One example is the discrimination faced by [lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans* young people](#).

National surveys containing information on young people's social inclusion

Regular reporting structures have been established at the federal level concerning the situation of young people. In accordance with section 84 Social Code Book VIII (SGB VIII), a Child and Youth Report (Kinder- und Jugendbericht) is published each parliamentary term, [last in 2017](#).

Since 2001, under the leadership of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs ([Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales](#), BMAS), the federal government has produced and published a national Report on Poverty and Wealth ([Armuts- und Reichtumsbericht](#)), last in 2017. The report provides an insight into the social situation in Germany and covers issues such as income and wealth distribution, disability, childcare, investment in education, the level of education of the population, the at-risk-of-poverty rate, the impact of social transfers, housing exclusion and so forth. The situation faced by children and young people is included in this, with some reports containing separate sections on this. The reports summarise research outcomes, describe the main factors determining the risk of descending into poverty, and identify ways to give systematic access to opportunities for overcoming disadvantages. These analyses are designed to assist policy-makers at various levels in shaping social mobility policies.

In 2017, also under the leadership of BMAS, the federal government adopted the 2nd Federal Government Report on Participation with regard to the circumstances of persons with impairments 2016 ([Zweiter Teilhabebericht der Bundesregierung über die Lebenslagen von Menschen mit Beeinträchtigungen 2016](#)). It includes people with recognised disabilities as well as those who live with health-related impairments but are not formally recognised as disabled or severely disabled. It analyses the factors that impact, negatively and positively, the participation of persons with impairments and contains indicators that promote participation in the following areas: family and social life, education and training, gainful employment and income, everyday life, health, leisure, culture and sports, security and protection from violence, politics, and public life. One of the findings of the 2016 federal government's participation report was that school pupils with special educational needs are increasingly attending mainstream schools. The number being taught at schools for children with learning difficulties is falling slightly. Comprehensives are the main type of secondary schools teaching pupils with special educational needs.

The federal government also commissions ad-hoc research projects to evaluate government-funded programmes and study individual youth and social policy issues. Evaluations assist the government in making political decisions on programmes and activities. Current evaluations include:

- Evaluation of the ESF programme 'Strengthening locally' ([STÄRKEN vor Ort](#)) with which the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth supported, inter alia, young people about to enter working life (2009-2011),
- Evaluation of the ESF programme 'Competence agencies' ([Kompetenzagenturen](#)), part of the JUGEND STÄRKEN (Strengthening youth) initiative, which ran from 2008 to 2014 and offered young people who did not have access to mainstream services targeted assistance as they transitioned from school to training or work,
- Evaluation of the ESF programme 'School dropouts – a second chance' ([Schulverweigerung - Die 2. Chance](#))

-), part of the JUGEND STÄRKEN (Strengthening youth) initiative, which ran from 2008 to 2014 and offered targeted assistance to young people in danger of dropping out without a qualification,
- Monitoring report on the education package ([Monitor-Bericht zum Bildungspaket](#)): Chancen für Kinder aus Familien mit Kinderzuschlag (Opportunities for children from families receiving supplementary child allowance). Amongst other things, the report presents the results of the evaluation of the use, assessment and impact of the education package for children from families in receipt of supplementary child allowance, ([see also Inclusive Programmes for Young People](#))
 - Overall evaluation of benefits relating to marriage and family, including relating to managing work and family life, support for and well-being of children, financial stability for families and compensation for disadvantages ([Gesamtevaluation der ehe- und familienbezogenen Leistungen](#)). ([see also Access to Quality Services](#)).

The Federal Statistical Office ([Statistisches Bundesamt](#), Destatis) supplies regular data including, inter alia, on child and youth services ([Kinder- und Jugendhilfe](#)), educational status, social welfare reporting and social welfare. Destatis is responsible for providing and disseminating objective, independent and high-quality statistical information. Federal statistics are available to policymakers, authorities, the private sector and the public at large.

Main concepts

In Germany, the term "inclusion" was introduced initially as a technical term originating in sociological systems theory. It entered colloquial language as a term borrowed from English and international parlance and is only gradually becoming established in German. Even in official language, it is rarely used to refer to all people or groups of people who are marginalised or threatened by marginalisation. Instead, it is applied specifically to people with (physical and/or intellectual) disabilities (cf. the term "inclusive school").

An alternative term that is often used in connection with social settings is "integration". Experts dispute the appropriateness of the term. Some criticise that it stems from a unilateral attempt to encourage people to integrate in or assimilate with what is known as "mainstream society"; alternatively, that it is taken to mean societal, social and legal equality without genuinely attempting integration in the real sense of the word (which leads to "parallel societies"). By contrast, the term "inclusion" is taken to mean an active (social) attempt to eliminate excluding structures.

There are various definitions of "homelessness" (Obdachlosigkeit) and "housing exclusion" (Wohnungslosigkeit) in Germany. The Federal association for assistance for the homeless [[Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft \(BAG\) Wohnungslosenhilfe e.V.](#)] uses the term "housing emergency" (Wohnungsnotfall). According to [BAG's definition](#) a housing emergency is what results when households or individuals lack security of tenure in the form of a rental agreement. The individuals in question can include persons living in the street, persons living in homes, shelters, institutions, asylum camps, women's shelters, housing for ethnic German immigrants and asylum-seekers, and individuals living temporarily with relatives, friends or acquaintances.