

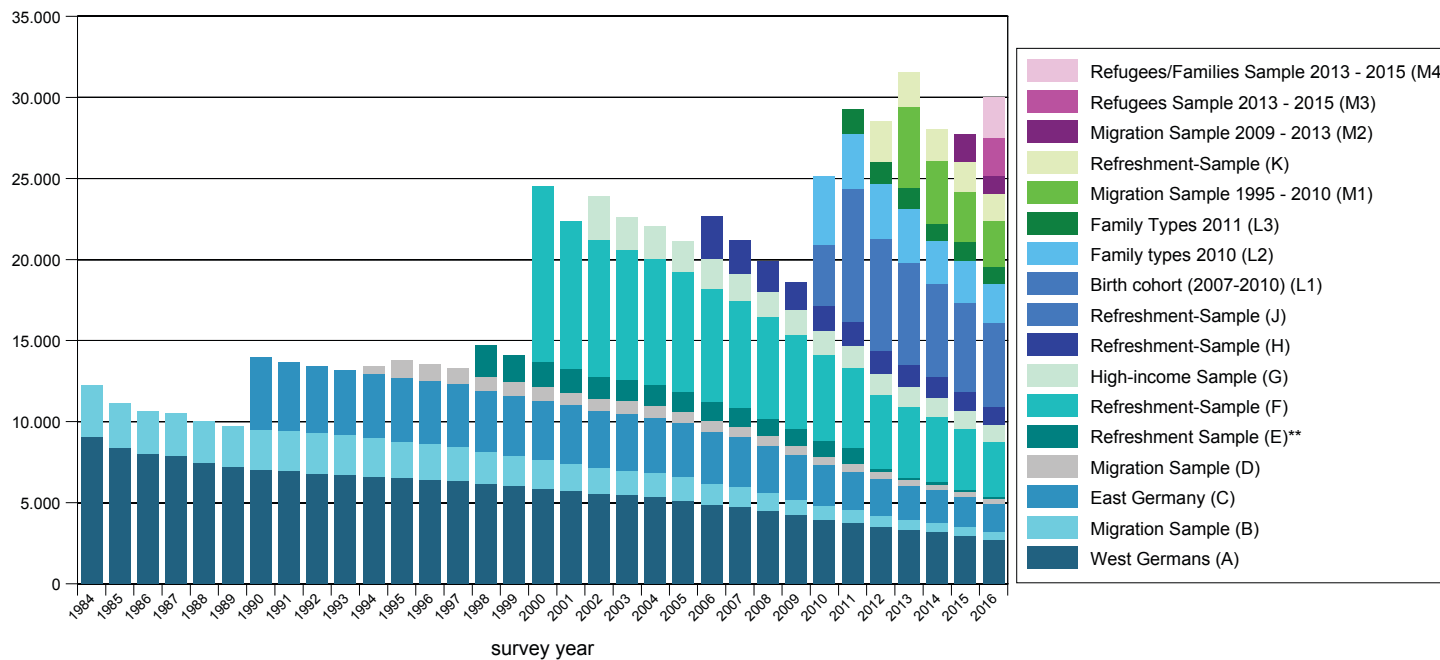
## What is the SOEP?

The German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) study offers microdata for research in the social, economic, and behavioral sciences. Like a high-powered telescope providing data to researchers worldwide, SOEP acts as an observatory for social phenomena. The data are used not only for basic academic research but also for social policy reports aimed at a broader audience.

SOEP is a wide-ranging representative longitudinal study of private households in Germany, surveying the same private households, individuals, and families every year since 1984. The survey is constantly being adapted and developed in response to current social developments. As early as June 1990—even before the Economic, Social, and Monetary Union—SOEP expanded to include the states of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), thus seizing the rare opportunity to observe the transformation of an entire society. Additional immigrant samples were added in 1994/95, 2013, 2015 and 2016 to account for the changes that took place in German society. Further new samples were added to include special sub-populations or to stabilize sample size (see figure below).

### Development of the Sample (Availability of subsamples over time)

Respondents



The data provide information on objective living conditions, values, willingness to take risks, current social changes, and the relationships and interdependencies among all these areas. SOEP places great value on integrating users' input for improvements and theory-based extensions to the survey. We even implemented an innovation panel recently ([www.diw.de/soep-is](http://www.diw.de/soep-is)).

SOEP data open up a range of unique analytical possibilities for research through:

- Longitudinal data: panel design
- Household context: all adult household members are surveyed and information about children
- Regional comparisons: use of geo-code context indicators is possible (from federal states to geo coordinates, see flyer Regional Analysis with SOEP)
- Migrants: the largest regular survey of foreigners and immigrants in the Federal Republic of Germany. The SOEP currently includes four migration samples (1984, 1994, 2013, 2015) and two samples on refugees (2015, 2016), see figure below.

## Thematic areas

SOEP data cover a wide range of issues including:

- Demography and population
- Work and employment
- Income, taxes, and social security
- Family and social networks
- Health and care
- Home, amenities, and contributions of private households
- Education and qualification
- Attitudes, values, and personality
- Time use and environmental behavior
- Integration, migration, transnationalization
- Survey methodology

## Specialized questionnaires across the Life Course

In 2000, the SOEP introduced a youth questionnaire for all 16- to 17-year-old household members to collect data on issues related specifically to children and teenagers. In 2003, a questionnaire for mothers of newborns was introduced to provide central indicators that can help to better understand child development. Further specialized questionnaires have been introduced successively since then: a questionnaire for parents of two- to three-year-old children in 2005, for parents of five-to-six year-old children in 2008; for parents of seven-to eight-year-old children in 2010; and for parents of nine-to ten-year-old children in 2013. Thus, with the 2003 birth cohort, the SOEP has become a true cohort study. A student questionnaire was introduced in 2014 for eleven and twelve-year-olds, and in 2016 for 13- and 14-year olds.

## Who can analyze the data?

Access to the scientific use file of the SOEP with anonymous microdata is possible through our Research Data Center. Universities and research institutes can use the SOEP data for research and teaching purposes free of charge. Use of the data is subject to special regulations. German data privacy laws necessitate that all users sign a data user contract with DIW Berlin. More than 500 research groups in Germany and around the world are currently working with SOEP data.

## SOEP Research Data Center

The SOEP Research Data Center (RDC) currently offers a wide range of services. SOEP data are disseminated in several formats (raw data, SAS, STATA, and SPSS), accompanied by thorough web based documentation ([paneldata.org](http://paneldata.org)). Regional context data can also be accessed at DIW Berlin and via our remote access system (SOEPremote). Joint workshops with German and international universities (SOEPcampus) offer SOEP users introductory and advanced training in use of the data. All registered users regularly receive the SOEPnewsletter with information on the latest developments in SOEP. This can also be found on the SOEP homepage, [www.diw.de/soeprdc](http://www.diw.de/soeprdc), along with a wide range of supplementary informational material including SOEP questionnaires, the interactive program [paneldata.org](http://paneldata.org), which provides information on all SOEP variables as well as data extraction programs, and SOEPLIT, a bibliographic databank that enables you to search for previous publications with SOEP data. The special externally available module PanelWhiz provides users with a collection of STATA/SE add-ons to simplify the use of SOEP in longitudinal analysis ([www.panelwhiz.eu/](http://www.panelwhiz.eu/)).

## Organization & Financing

The SOEP household panel is a Service Unit of the Leibniz Association (WGL) and is located at DIW Berlin. SOEP researchers not only provide the data to the global research community but also conduct their own analyses of the data. TNS Infratest Sozialforschung (Munich) carries out the fieldwork.

The SOEP was founded in 1983 as a sub-project of the German Research Foundation's Collaborative Research Center Sfb 3, "Microanalytical Foundations of Social Policy," which was then based at the Universities of Frankfurt am Main and Mannheim. The director of the project up to 1988 was Prof. Hans-Jürgen Krupp. In 1989, Prof. Gert G. Wagner took over as director, and left the position in 2011 to join the executive board of DIW Berlin. In early 2011, Prof. Jürgen Schupp (FU Berlin), previously deputy director of the SOEP, took over as SOEP director. Since 2013, Gert G. Wagner (MPIB) has been the representative of the SOEP on the executive board of DIW Berlin. In January 2018, Prof. Dr. Stefan Liebig took over as the representative on the executive board as well as the SOEP Director. The board of directors of the SOEP is formed by the director and the division heads.

From 1990 to 2002, SOEP was funded by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG). As a Service Unit of the Leibniz Association, SOEP now receives continued funding through the Joint Science Conference (GWK) by the Federal Government and the State of Berlin.

## Publications

A list of published research using SOEP data is available on the Internet at: [www.diw.de/soeplit](http://www.diw.de/soeplit)



## Selected book publications:

**Britzke, Janina, and Jürgen Schupp** (eds.). 2018. SOEP Wave Report 2017. Berlin: DIW Berlin.

**Ehlert, Martin**. 2016. The Impact of Losing Your Job: Unemployment and Influences from Market, Family, and State on Economic Well-Being in the US and Germany. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

**Goebel, Jan, Markus Grabka, Stefan Liebig, Martin Kroh, David Richter, Carsten Schröder, and Jürgen Schupp**. (in press) The German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP). Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik - Journal of Economics and Statistics.

**Krause, Peter**. 2016. Quality of life and inequality (Chapter 7). In Luigino Bruni, and Pier Luigi Porta (eds.), Handbook of Research Methods and Applications in Happiness and Quality of Life, 111-152. Cheltenham, Northampton: Edward Elgar.



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The Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) is the largest and longest running multidisciplinary longitudinal study in Germany. The SOEP is an integral part of Germany's scientific research infrastructure and is funded by the federal and state governments under the framework of the Leibniz Association (WGL). The SOEP is based at DIW Berlin.