The Economic and Social Situation of Students in Germany 2016

Summary of the 21st Social Survey of Deutsches Studentenwerk, conducted by the German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies (DZHW)
This summary is based on the report produced in connection with the subproject '21st Social Survey – scientific preparation, implementation and documentation of the findings' undertaken by the German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies (DZHW). This subproject formed part of the joint project of Deutsches Studentenwerk and the DZHW entitled '21st Social Survey of Deutsches Studentenwerk, conducted by the German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies', and was undertaken with the financial support of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (funding code M517000 and M517100).

The unabridged report (in German), entitled, 'Die wirtschaftliche und soziale Lage der Studierenden in Deutschland 2016. 21. Sozialerhebung des Deutschen Studentenwerks durchgeführt vom Deutschen Zentrum für Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsforschung', is available at www.sozialerhebung.de. All responsibility for the content of the report rests with the DZHW.

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For an online version of the report, the questionnaire and further information on the survey series, visit www.sozialerhebung.de
1 Introduction

The social survey of Deutsches Studentenwerk (DSW), conducted by the German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies (DZHW), is based on questionnaires designed to monitor the social and economic situation of students in Germany. Approximately every three years, a standardised questionnaire is presented to a representative cross-section of students enrolled at public sector and state-recognised higher education (HE) institutions. Apart from the topicality and quantity of the results, a special characteristic of these surveys is the long time series. The individual surveys bear witness to the times in which they were performed. They reflect ongoing developments in a temporal context.

The 21st survey in the series monitoring the social and economic situation of students in Germany, which was initiated by the DSW in 1951, was conducted during the 2016 summer semester. Since 1981 the data generated by the surveys has been collected, analysed and reported by the DZHW and its institutional predecessors. The 21st social survey was undertaken with the financial support of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

This publication contains a summary of the key findings of the principal report on the 21st survey, focusing on the following topics:

- subject areas and forms of study,
- study characteristics and course of study: change of degree course and studying abroad,
- socio-demographic profile: age, gender, family status, family educational background
- migration background,
- health impairment,
- student finance: income, expenditure, BAföG assistance,
- organisation of studies: time allocation, employment while studying,
- living situation,
- canteens and cafeterias,
- demand for information and assistance.

This report examines the situation of Germans and German educational nationals (Bildungsinländer) enrolled at HE institutions – i.e., those who have completed their secondary education in Germany.

The unabridged report on the 21st social survey (in German) and the questionnaire are available at http://www.sozialerhebung.de/sozialerhebung/archiv. The project website also contains a variety of background information on the survey series, press releases, all of the regular and special reports produced since the inaugural survey in 1951, as well as questionnaires and initial descriptive analyses of the collected data.
2 Methodology

Survey method
Until the 20th social survey a printed questionnaire was sent to the students by post. The 21st survey was the first to be conducted online. On this occasion, students of the participating HE institutions were invited to participate by e-mail.

As in the past, the parent population of the social survey consisted of all students enrolled at German HE institutions in the summer semester of the survey year as per the reporting population of the Federal Statistical Office. Students attending colleges of public administration and those enrolled at HE institutions offering only distance learning degree courses or at a Bundeswehr university (university of the federal armed forces) were excluded from the survey. This was the first in the series of social surveys not to include doctoral students (Germans and German educational nationals). The change is a reflection of the well-established monitoring system that now exists in Germany for junior scholars.

Sample
The sample for the 21st social survey encompassed one in six students (17% of all students belonging to the parent population). For the first time, this sample quota was applied uniformly to the three student groups, namely native Germans, German educational nationals and international students – i.e. those coming from abroad to enter higher education in Germany. The around 400,000 students in the sample received an invitation by e-mail from their parent institutions, containing a password-protected hyperlink to the online survey.

Questionnaire
The questionnaire of the 21st social survey contained a set of questions that have consistently formed the core of the long-term series. To some extent it was updated and revised to reflect the most recent changes in the student and HE landscape. A split questionnaire survey design was used to accommodate new topics without further extending the amount of time already required by individual students to answer the questions. The separate questionnaires for each of the groups, namely Germans/German educational nationals (only in German) and international students (in German and English), can be viewed and downloaded on the project website (www.sozialerhebung.de/sozialerhebung/archiv).

Conduct of the survey
In mid-April 2015, the DZHW, DSW, student services organisations, and the German Rectors’ Conference asked all of the 371 HE institutions (excluding colleges of public administration and institutions offering only distance learning degree courses or Bundeswehr universities) existing in Germany at the time to take part in the social survey. These 371 German HE institutions formed the parent population; their role of Germans and German educational nationals totalled 2,244,951. In the months that followed, 67% of the parent population, that is 248 HE institutions, accepted the invitation. In 2016 these institutions were educating 2,075,525 students – almost 93% of the total student population.

The institutions randomly selected the group of students to be questioned by drawing samples from their internal pools of e-mail addresses, and, in the week commencing 23 May 2016, invited the relevant students to participate in the survey. Altogether, 352,786 students received an invitation to take part in the 21st social survey (gross sample). They were reminded up to three times of the opportunity to participate, at intervals of two, four and six weeks after receiving the initial invitation by e-mail. The field phase of the survey ran until the end of August 2016.

Responses and representativeness
The e-mail invitation reached 341,651 students (net sample). Of these, 67,007 Germans and German educational nationals took part in the survey (excluding students who were abroad at the time the survey was conducted). This represents a gross response rate of 19.6%. After conducting complex and extensive plausibility checks, 55,219 datasets qualified for inclusion in this analysis. This represents a net response rate of 16.2%, which is significantly lower than the rate for the 20th social survey, which stood at 28%.
The individual cases were weighted - to correct discrepancies between the obtained sample and the parent population - on the basis of the official statistics for the variables gender, type of HE institution (university, university of applied sciences), home federal state of the institution, field of study and, for the first time, age (five age groups: up to 19 years old, 20-22 years old, 23-25 years old, 26-30 years old, 31 years old and above). The obtained sample is representative of the student population in the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany. In principle, moreover, the results are also representative at the regional level of the federal states and at the level of student services organisations.

**Presentation of survey results**
Information concerning the social survey, questionnaires, a glossary and other documents relating to the project as well as all publications, including several descriptive analyses of the collected data (see Chapter 16), are available on the social survey website (www.sozialerhebung.de).

### 3 Subject areas, forms of study and study pathways

#### Fields of study
Subject area popularity has changed only moderately in recent years. Engineering (21% of students), mathematics/natural sciences, and law and economics (20% in each case) continued to rank among the largest fields of study during the summer semester of 2016. A slightly smaller portion of students (18%) were pursuing a course in languages or cultural studies. One in six students (15%) were engaged in a subject related to social sciences/social services/psychology/education (Figure 1).

The familiar gender-specific differences in subject choice remained unchanged among the students enrolled in the summer semester of 2016. The most popular field of study for female students was cultural studies (25%), and the next most frequently attended courses fell within the fields of study social sciences/social services/psychology/education (21%). The third most favoured field of study was law and economics (19%).

For male students, in contrast, engineering was the most frequently selected field of study. It attracted almost one-third (31%) of the male student community. The second most popular choice was mathematics/natural sciences (24%). Ranking third in favour among male students was law and economics (21%).

#### Form of study
The 21st social survey encompassed only students enrolled for full-time or part-time courses taught within an HE institution; students belonging to distance learning courses and doctoral students, for example, were excluded.

The overwhelming majority of the students were enrolled to study on campus (93%). Only relatively small proportions were pursuing combined (HE institution and workplace) or in-service education courses (5% and 2% respectively). The results in this respect for universities are even more striking. Here, practically all students (99%) were studying on campus. In universities of applied sciences (UAS), in contrast, 13% of students were attending a combined course of study, and 5% were enrolled in in-service education.

The vast majority of the net sample were registered as full-time students (97%). 5% of this group stated, however, that they were actually pursuing a full-time course only part-time. A combination of this self-assessment and the study time data collected by the survey indicates that 29% of students are to be regarded as part-time (see Chapter 11). Compared to 2012, the significance of formal part-time study has not appreciably increased.

#### Target degree
The adoption of a two-tiered degree structure (bachelor’s/master’s) has been largely completed.
In the summer semester of 2016 more than eight in ten students (84%) were enrolled in a bachelor’s or master’s degree course (2012: 74%), 62% were studying for a bachelor’s, and 22% for a master’s degree (Figure 1).

A large proportion of the students enrolled at universities of applied sciences were attending a bachelor’s degree course (84%), and one in seven students (14%) were seeking to obtain a master’s degree. A small minority (1%) were pursuing a traditional degree course at an institution in this category. In contrast, half of the students (50%) at universities were enrolled in a bachelor’s degree course, a little more than a quarter (27%) were pursuing a master’s degree, and 22% were seeking to obtain a traditional degree.

### Change of degree course

One in five students (20%) fell within this category; they have changed subject and/or degree at least once since first enrolling.

### Interruption of studies

The proportion of those who have interrupted their studies (officially or unofficially, for at least one semester since first enrolling) stood at 16% in 2016.

More than seven in ten (73%) of these students stated that they had interrupted their studies once, almost one-fifth (18%) claimed two interruptions, and nearly one in ten (9%) indicated that they had taken three or more breaks.
4 Studying abroad

Students spend time abroad during their studies for various reasons, ranging from enrolment at a foreign HE institution, internships, language courses and study trips, to excursions, project work and attendance of summer schools. Among the students enrolled in the summer semester of 2016, 16% had gone abroad for study reasons at least once. Four years earlier, in the summer semester of 2012, 17% of students had gained study-related experience abroad.

Given that the social survey is a cross-sectional investigation of students, irrespective of the number of semesters already attended, the proportion of internationally mobile students at a late stage of study (in their 9th to 14th university semester or 7th to 11th UAS semester) was calculated as well, in order to obtain an approximation of the ratio applicable at the time of study completion. 28% of late-stage students had travelled abroad at least once to complete a part of their course, an internship, a language course or other educational activity (Figure 1).

The most frequently given reason for spending time abroad was a temporary study period (16%). The second most common type of study-related time abroad was an internship (9%). Measured against 2012, the ratio of internationally mobile students at a late stage of study has decreased by 3 percentage points. The decline of 1 percentage point in each case was relatively moderate among students pursuing bachelor’s and master’s degree courses (proportion of late-stage students going abroad in 2016: 19% bachelor’s, 34% master’s students).

Among those students who had not yet spent any study time outside of Germany (72%), slightly fewer than one third in each case stated that they were unlikely to find an opportunity (31%) or had no interest in studying abroad (30%). One-sixth (16%) of respondents were unsure of their prospects of travelling abroad to study. Giving consideration to the 19% of students who had not yet spent time abroad, but were intending to travel for study-related purposes in future, the ratio of potentially mobile students among the net population stood at 36%.
5 Socio-demographic profile and entry into higher education

Age of students
In the summer semester of 2016 the average age of Germans and German educational nationals enrolled at HE institutions was 24.7 years. Compared to the data collected for the 20th social survey, this represents a slight increase (2012: 24.4 years). The rise is attributable to both male (2016: 25.0 years, 2012: 24.6 years) and female students (2016: 24.4 years, 2012: 24.2 years). On the other hand, the major factor causing the upturn was the weighting for student age, which was applied for the first time in the 21st survey (see Chapter 2). In the summer semester of 2016, 58% of students were between 20 and 25 years old, and around a quarter (23%) were aged between 26 and 30. About 10% of students in each case were 19 years old or younger (9%), or 31 years old or above (10%). The share of minors attending HE degree courses is statistically insignificant (< 1%).

Family status and parenthood
The composition of the student community by family status has slightly shifted since the time of the 20th social survey. In 2016 slightly fewer than one in two students (48%) was unmarried but in a permanent relationship (2012: 51%), 6% of enrolled students were married or in a registered partnership (2012: 6%), and 46% were not in any kind of permanent relationship or partnership at the time of questioning (2012: 43%).

In the summer semester of 2016, 6% of all students had at least one child; proportionally more women than men were parents. Compared to the summer semester of 2012, the overall ratio has increased by 1 percentage point, which is chiefly attributable to the enlarged proportion of men with children (2012: 4%, 2016: 5%). For students who are parents, the average number of children is 1.6. More than half (55%) have one child, slightly less than a third (32%) have two children, and 12% have three or more children. The majority (59%) of students with children are married (only 3% of students without children are married), and 31% of students with children are in a permanent relationship (as against 49% of students without children). Almost three-quarters of students with children have a spouse/partner in gainful employment (74%, compared to 39% of students without children). A larger proportion of women (84%) (female students without children: 45%) than men (62%) (male students without children: 31%) fall within this category. Marginally less than one in ten students with children are single parents; in other words, looking after at least one child up to the age of 15 without the assistance of a partner (10% of female parents, 7% of male parents).
### Figure 2  Socio-demographic variables

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<td></td>
<td>Overall</td>
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<td>Age of students, arithmetic mean in years</td>
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<td>Students with children, in %</td>
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<td>Highest professional qualification of parents, in %</td>
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<td>Apprenticeship, skilled worker’s qualification</td>
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<td>25</td>
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*In the 21st social survey, students with at least one parent born abroad were further differentiated by additional variables, namely (children of) post-1992 ethnic German resettlers, and students with at least one naturalised German parent.*
6 Family educational background of students

The characteristics of the family of origin exert an influence on many of the prerequisites and outline conditions that govern a period of study (including entry into higher education, study pathway, student finance, time allocation, and employment). To facilitate an analysis of the implications of family background, the social survey has a history of recording diverse education-related and professional variables to describe students’ parents. Among other characteristics, they include the mother’s and father’s general educational and professional qualifications. These are the variables that govern the concept of ‘family educational background’, as applied in the social survey.

In regard to professional attributes, students’ parents are divided into five educational categories: (1) university degree, (2) UAS degree, (3) apprenticeship or skilled worker’s qualification, (4) master craftsman, trade/technical school qualification, and (5) no professional qualification. In the summer semester of 2016 just over one-half of students (52%, compared to 50% in 2012) originated from a household in which at least one parent held an HE degree. Differentiated according to degree type, the highest professional qualification in the family of origin was a university degree in 40% of cases (2012: 36%) and a degree awarded by a university of applied sciences in 12% of cases (2012: 14%). In one in four families of origin, the highest professional attainment of at least one parent was an apprenticeship or skilled worker’s qualification (2016: 25%, 2012: 27%), and one in five students had parents whose highest professional attainment was master craftsman or a trade/technical school qualification (2016: 20%, 2012: 21%). 3% of students’ families of origin did not hold any professional qualifications (2012: 2%). Measured against the findings of the 20th social survey, these figures reflect the following shifts: the proportion of students whose parents belonged to one of the three middle educational categories has decreased, while the proportion of those originating from a household in which either an HE degree is held, or no professional qualifications have been obtained, has increased. The share of each of these educational categories – the highest and lowest – has risen.

The concept of ‘family educational background’ is based on the typology described above, which aggregates the variables describing the formal educational and professional qualifications of the students’ mothers and fathers. The family educational background is divided into four categories, namely ‘low’ (only one parent has a professional qualification and no HE degree), ‘middle’ (both parents have a professional qualification and no HE degree), ‘high’ (one parent holds an HE degree), and ‘upper’ (both parents hold an HE degree).

In the summer semester of 2016 slightly fewer than one in two students originated from a non-academic household (aggregated educational background categories ‘low’ and ‘middle’: 48%, 2012: 50%). 36% of students belonged to the ‘middle’ educational background category. Among the students originating from a family with academic qualifications, the proportion belonging to the categories ‘high’ and ‘upper’ was 28% and 24% respectively. Students were significantly less frequently assigned to the ‘low’ category (12% proportion).
Compared to the findings of the preceding social survey, only the proportion of students belonging to the ‘middle’ category has declined sharply (2012: 41%). The proportion of students with a ‘low’ (2012: 9%) or ‘upper’ (2012: 22%) family educational background has increased, and the share of those in the ‘high’ category (2012: 28%) has remained stable.

In line with the described changes in the highest professional attainment of students’ parents, the pattern established in 2006, indicating a continuously high proportion of students originating from a household with an HE bias, has been sustained. A new development now emerges alongside this pattern: the proportion of students belonging to the ‘low’ educational background category has climbed by 3 percentage points (Figure 3).

### Higher education entrance qualification

95% of the students enrolled in the summer semester of 2016 entered higher education holding a general HE entrance qualification or a qualification enabling them to attend a university of applied sciences. This proportion has remained unchanged since 2006. Among those attending university, the large majority (95%) held a general HE entrance qualification, and 3% held an entrance qualification for study at a university of applied sciences. Students attending a university of applied sciences, in contrast, were much less likely to possess a general HE entrance qualification (64%); a quarter of them held an entrance qualification specifically for a university of applied science. Compared to 2012, a clear upward shift (plus 7 percentage points) in the proportion of students holding a general HE entrance qualification is discernible in universities of applied sciences; the current figure is the highest recorded since the social survey series began. At the same time, the proportion of students holding an entrance qualification specifically for a university of applied sciences dropped from 32% in 2012 to 27% in 2016.

3% of all students had a subject-related HE entrance qualification, and 1% gained entry by way of a professional qualification. In universities of applied sciences, compared to traditional universities, a larger proportion of students either enrolled with a subject-related HE entrance qualification (6%, as against 2%) or gained entry on the basis of a professional qualification (2% vs. 1%). ‘Other’ routes for gaining access to higher education accounted for 0.4%.

### Vocational training before first enrolment

The proportion of students who had completed a vocational training programme before enrolling for the first time stood at 22% in the summer semester of 2016. The difference in this variable between the HE institution types was large (UAS 36%, universities 14%). The proportion of students entering higher education after completing a vocational training programme has been falling since 1994. Compared to the situation in 2012, this general trend developed into opposite directions - it has been slightly reversed in universities (1 percentage point rise), but accelerated in universities of applied sciences (6 percentage point decrease).

Almost two thirds (65%) of students with a vocational training qualification had a non-academic educational background. 23% originated from a family in which one parent had completed higher education, and 12% of students indicated that both parents were academics. A quarter (25%) of the students who had undergone vocational training enrolled for an engineering degree, and marginally less than a quarter (23%) had selected law or economics as their subject area. The less frequently chosen fields of study were social sciences/social services/psychology/education (16%), mathematics/natural sciences (15%), languages or cultural studies (11%), and medicine or health sciences (9%).
One-fifth (20%) of the students enrolled in the summer semester of 2016 had a migration background. Of these, 69% were German nationals, 19% foreign nationals, and 12% were dual citizens of Germany and one other country. 71% of the students with a migration background were born in Germany, and 29% were born elsewhere.

Differentiated by migration status, the (children of) post-1992 ethnic German resettlers represented the largest group of students with a migration background (proportion of all students: 5%). Almost as many of those enrolled were German educational nationals (4%) or had at least one parent holding foreign citizenship (4%). Based on a comparison with the 2012 survey, when 23% of students had a migration background, this group now represents a smaller proportion of those enrolled at German HE institutions.

Migration status and family educational background
Compared to students without a migration background, the proportion of those with a migration background who belonged to the ‘low’ educational background group was three times greater (27% vs. 9%), but the proportion belonging to the ‘middle’ group was significantly smaller (24% vs. 38%). Among the students originating from academic households, the proportion of those with a migration background almost matches that of students without a migration background (49% vs. 53%). Differentiated by migration status, this group is characterised by heterogeneity. Students with dual citizenship, for example, were much more likely than naturalised students and (children of) postethnic German resettlers to originate from an academic household (60% vs. 38% and 43% respectively).

Countries of origin
Almost half of students (49%) with a migration background, or their parents, originated from eastern European countries, and one-fifth (20%) originated from either Western Europe or Asia. The four most strongly represented countries of origin were Poland and Turkey (12% each), the Russian Federation (9%) and Kazakhstan (6%).

Financial situation of students with a migration background
The average income of students with a migration background belonging to the reference group ‘focus type’ (as defined in Chapter 10, p. 13) was more or less the same as that of those without a migration background (€ 916 vs. € 918). From the perspective of their overall budgets, however, students with a migration background relied to a lesser extent on parental support (43% vs. 52%). They compensated the difference primarily with payments received on the basis of the German Federal Training Assistance Act (BAföG), which represented 18% of their total income (10% for students without a migration background). In cases in which they had interrupted their studies, students with a migration background cited financial reasons much more frequently than students without a migration background (24% vs. 14%).
9 Health impairments and impediments to studying

In the summer semester of 2016, 11% of students stated that they were suffering from one or more health problems and thus being hindered in their studies. The proportion of students reporting impairments has therefore increased by 4 percentage points since 2012. A marginally larger proportion of women (12%) than men (10%) had a health problem that was hampering their studies.

Mental disorders were affecting studies especially frequently. For 47% of those suffering from one or more impairments, a mental disorder was either the only impairment or the one that was exerting the greatest impact on studying. For 18% of adversely affected students, the most severe impediment to studying originated from a chronic somatic symptom disorder. In 6% of cases, several impairments were affecting the ability to study to an equal extent. 11% of affected students were unwilling to disclose the nature of their health problem(s).

Impairments having a detrimental effect on studying exert a major influence on the study pathway. More than a third of the students with impaired health had already completed in excess of ten semesters, whereas only a little more than a fifth of students not suffering health problems had been studying for such a long period (36% vs. 22%).

Students with a health impairment had changed their degree course and/or HE institution more frequently than those who were well (31% vs. 21% and 22% vs. 16% respectively), and were more than twice as likely to have interrupted their studies (32% vs. 13%). Compared with their healthy fellow students, far fewer of those with health problems regarded their livelihood as secure (49% vs. 70%).
10 Student finance and economic situation

The assessments of income and expenditure refer exclusively to students who are (1) not married, (2) living alone or providing only for themselves, (3) seeking to obtain their first HE degree (disregarding bachelor’s degrees held by master’s students), and (4) enrolled on a full-time course taught within an HE institution. This ensures that the students under consideration are comparable as regards their study and living situations. 51% of the students in the parent population satisfy the forenamed conditions. For the purposes of this report, these students represent the ‘focus type’.

Amount of monthly income
In the summer semester of 2016 students belonging to the reference group ‘focus type’ disposed of € 918 per month (Figure 4). In the four years since the previous survey in the summer semester of 2012, student income had increased by € 76. Giving consideration to the change in the consumer price index during this period, this corresponds to real income increase of 6% (nominal increase of 9%). The median of the nominal incomes rose accordingly, by € 60 or 8%. Measured against the median, in the summer semester of 2016 half of students therefore had a disposable income of less than € 860, and half had a disposable income of more than € 860.

A regional comparison shows that major differences in student income still exist. Students in the western German states, for example, disposed of an average monthly income of € 930 in the summer semester of 2016 (2012: € 858), while the corresponding figure for the eastern German states was only € 839 (2012: € 757). The absolute difference between the two regions was therefore € 91, but it is worth noting that incomes in the eastern German states had increased more sharply than in the western states, by 11%. The average rise in student income in the western states was 8%, thus sustaining at a slow pace the gradual trend towards an alignment of incomes across the regions (difference in 2016: 11%, difference in 2012: 13%).

The income situation of the reference group ‘focus type’ varies markedly with student age. On the one hand, this reflects the overall increase in student income since 2012 in every age group, but at the same time it remains true – as observed in the preceding social surveys – that students’ disposable income rises with age. In the summer semester of 2016 monthly income in the group of the oldest students (30 years old and above) was around 20% or € 170 higher than that of the youngest students (up to 21 years old).

Measuring income against family educational background (as defined in Chapter 6, p. 9) shows that students in the ‘low’ (€ 903) and ‘middle’ (€ 903) background categories had lower average incomes than students belonging to the ‘high’ (€ 924) and ‘upper’ (€ 945) categories. Compared to the situation prevailing in 2012, the income of students in the ‘low’ background category has climbed a little more sharply, by € 86, than that of students in the other three groups (‘middle’: + € 78, ‘high’: + € 77, ‘upper’: + € 73).

Income distribution
The average increase in student income overall is attributable in particular to the higher proportions of students reporting relatively large amounts. Although those with a monthly disposable income in the range from € 701 to € 800 continued to make up the largest proportion of students (16% vs. 18% in 2012), a clear shift is taking place towards higher incomes. Reflecting this trend, a diminishing percentage of students were managing on relatively low (up to € 700; 2016: 28%, 2012: 33%) and medium (€ 701 to € 1,000; 2016: 41%, 2012: 45%) incomes, while a growing proportion disposed of more than € 1,000 a month (2016: 31%, 2012: 21%). This applied in particular to students in the highest income bracket (more than € 1,300).
In comparison to 2012, their proportion had doubled (2016: 10%, 2012: 5%). Despite the general rise in income, more than one in five students in the reference group ‘focus type’ disposed of less than € 670 per month, which was the maximum BAföG rate at the time of the survey (2016: 21%, 2012: 26%).

Sources and composition of monthly income

By far the majority of students in the reference group ‘focus type’ received financial support from their parents (2016: 86%, 2012: 88%). Parents were contributing an average amount of € 541 per month (2012: € 481) in cash (2016: € 407, 2012: € 358) and/or in kind (2016: € 309, 2012: € 251). In other words, they were either paying money directly to their student children or providing subsidies indirectly, typically by way of rent payments to landlords, or both. Each of these types of support, direct and indirect, increased between 2012 and 2016, by € 49 (14%) and € 58 (23%) respectively, which accordingly pushed up the monthly average amount transferred by parents as well, by € 60 (13%).

The larger financial contribution being made by parents is one cause of the rise in student income since 2012, even though the proportion of students receiving non-cash payments has decreased sharply, from 54% in 2012 to 43% in 2016.

The other cause is the increase in personal earnings of students in the reference group ‘focus type’. The average amount of earnings from employment that was being used to cover living expenses stood at € 385 (€ 300 in 2012), which represents an increase of € 85 or 28% in the period since the 20th social survey. The € 100 increase in the median reflects a rise in earnings, in particular of those who formerly ranked among the low-earners. Given that the proportion of students funding their living expenses from employment while studying has remained stable (61% in 2012 and 2016), students now have more money from employment at their disposal overall.

In contrast, the average rate (€ 435) paid to students receiving BAföG assistance in the summer semester of
2016 remained more or less unchanged (2012: € 436). The proportion of students obtaining BAföG assistance has continued to decline in the period since the previous survey, from 32% in 2012 to 25% in 2016.

The proportion of students receiving BAföG assistance remains larger, however, than the proportions of those who rely on funding from other relatives and acquaintances, or those who draw on financial reserves. 19% (2012: 24%) and 18% (2012: 21%) of students respectively received income from these sources. The average amount originating from funds saved before entering higher education stood at € 171 (2012: € 124) and the amount received from relatives and acquaintances averaged € 92 (2012: € 80). Although the proportions of students relying on these two sources have fallen, the average amount originating from each source has increased, by € 47 (38%) and € 12 (15%) respectively.

No more than 5% of students belonging to the reference group ‘focus type’ in each case had other sources of finance (orphan’s benefit, partners, scholarships, loans, other). In this respect it is notable that scholarships (2016: 5%, 2012: 4%) and the student loans payable by Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) (2016: 5%, 2012: 3%) are now being granted and taken up more frequently than in 2012. Together, these sources are also making relatively large amounts available; although the average KfW student loan remains practically unchanged (2016: € 463, 2012: € 450), the average amount of a scholarship has risen by € 106 or 33% (2016: € 423, 2012: € 317).

Some 123,000 students had at their disposal a monthly amount of less than € 500 originating from their parents or other sources of finance that could be regarded as funding in lieu of parental support; in other words, from sources other than personal earnings (basic funding according to the definition of Sockelfinanzierung in the German glossary on the website www.sozialerhebung.de).

Financial structure
The financing structure is analysed to illuminate the share of the individual funding sources in the monthly income of all students belonging to the reference group ‘focus type’.

The analysis examines the ratios of the three principal sources of finance, namely earnings, BAföG (financial assistance) and parents; other income sources are aggregated under the heading ‘other’.

In keeping with the results of preceding surveys, in 2016 around a half (51%) of monthly income in the reference group ‘focus type’ consisted of parental contributions; about a quarter (26%) of the students’ income originated from students’ personal earnings. The increase in the proportion of personal earnings, measured against the results of the 20th social survey, is partly attributable to a 5 percentage point decrease in the share of BAföG in students’ total monthly income. The BAföG proportion stood at 12% in 2016 – equivalent to the share of the ‘other’ funding sources in student income.

The income structure varied substantially, depending on student age. The youngest students, for example, were obtaining 66% of their income from parents (2012: 62%). According to the survey, this proportion falls with increasing age; for the oldest group of students it stood at just 18% (2012: 21%). As student age increases, the significance of personal earnings and other sources grows as well. From the age of 29, personal earnings replace parental support as the largest source of income. Another striking result concerns the other sources of finance; for students aged 30 and above, these sources’ share of income stood at 20% (2012: 21%); younger students were relying on funding in this category to a much lesser extent. The proportion of income originating from BAföG assistance, on the other hand, hardly differed at all across age groups. Depending on student age, it accounted for between 10% and 15% (2012: between 13% and 18%).

Assessment of financial situation
The students’ own assessment, as to whether their living costs were securely financed while studying, varied widely, depending on their family educational background (as defined in Chapter 6). 51% of students belonging to the ‘low’ educational background category (2012: 53%) felt that their funding situation was secure; this view was shared by 81% of those in the ‘upper’ category (2012: 83%).
Living expenses
Alongside income, living and study expenses are a major factor in determining students’ financial situation. Students’ expenditures differ from the typical living expenses of other population groups as regards their particular types of accommodation (halls of residence, shared flats etc.), the particularities of student health insurance plans, and other factors. The social survey series gathers information on the amount of regular spending on these and other key items that shape student lifestyles. The survey is, however, unable to record every type of expense incurred across the whole range of individual lifestyle choices. For this reason, the data are to be interpreted on the understanding that students incur other regular and irregular costs (for insurances, personal hygiene, computers etc.) that are excluded from the analysis.

In keeping with the finding of previous social surveys, in the summer semester of 2016 (Figure 4) by far the largest proportion of monthly expenditure was for rent including utilities (€ 323). The second largest expense item was food (€ 168). Directly related to student life is the expenditure on learning resources, which consumed a monthly average of € 20 in the summer semester of 2016. In the period since data were last collected, in the summer semester of 2012, the average cost of some expense items has increased by as much as € 29 (rent including ancillary costs), while average spending on learning resources, for instance, fell by € 10. The 29% rise in health-related expenses, from € 62 in 2012 to € 80 in 2016, is likewise noteworthy.

BAföG assistance
The German Federal Training Assistance Act as revised by the 24th amending law of 6 December 2011 was valid when the survey was conducted in the summer semester of 2016. Its revision by way of Article 6 of the law of 27 July 2015 (25th BAföG amending law) did not take effect until the winter semester of 2016/17. The findings of the 21st social survey therefore describe the position as it existed immediately before the amendment and do not give any indication of changes triggered by the legislative reform concerning, for example, the receipt of assistance or the financial situation of students.

The scope of this form of public assistance for students can be illustrated by reference to the BAföG ratio. It indicates the proportion of all students belonging to the parent population (excluding those enrolled at colleges of public administration and institutions offering only distance learning degree courses or Bundeswehr universities, as well as doctoral students) who were receiving BAföG assistance at the time of the survey. In the summer semester of 2016, 18% of all students were in receipt of BAföG assistance. 3% of students indicated that they were still awaiting the outcome of their BAföG application at the time of the survey. Four years earlier, 24% of students were receiving BAföG assistance, and 2% were awaiting the outcome of their application. Measured against 2012, therefore, the BAföG ratio fell by 6 percentage points. Such a low rate has not been posted since the start of the 1990s.

A large majority of those receiving assistance depended on the availability of a BAföG assistance in order to pursue an HE degree course. As in 2012, almost four-fifths (79%) stated that they would not be able to study without a BAföG assistance. Compared to those in the other three groups, a substantially larger proportion of students (85%) belonging to the ‘low’ educational background category gave this answer in the survey (‘middle’: 81%, ‘high’: 74%, ‘upper’: 72%).
11 Time allocation

Since 1988 the social survey has been recording in a table how students spend their time, breaking down their typical semester weekday activities by the hour. It shows the amount of time allocated to class attendance, self-study and employment. The figures reflect retrospective estimates by the students.

The following assessments focus on by far the largest group of students, namely those enrolled on a full-time course taught within an HE institution. They were asked to submit data on how their time was allocated in a typical week during the lecture period of the summer semester of 2016.

Study-related time
Full-time students studying on campus invested an average of 33 hours of week in their studies; within this total, self-study (18 h/week) outweighed class attendance (15 h/week) (Figure 5).

Overall, compared to the data collected during the 20th social survey four years earlier (35 h/week in 2012), students were therefore spending two hours less a week on study-related activities. The decrease is exclusively attributable to the fall in the amount of time they allocated to class attendance (2012: 18 h/week).

The total amount of time spent on study-related activities in a typical week during the lecture period by those studying full-time on campus was largely independent of the type of degree course. Those studying for a state examination (excluding teacher training students) were the only outlying group. They invested an above-average amount of time (41 h/week) in their studies, which reflects the fact that medical and pharmacy students allocate a lot of time to both class attendance (22 and 31 h/week respectively) and self-study (21 h/week in each case).

### Figure 5

**Time allocation and employment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>Uni</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 11</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Study-related time</strong></td>
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<td>Full-time students studying on campus, mean values in hours/week</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class attendance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-study</td>
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<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Study time by type of target degree</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Full-time students studying on campus, mean values in hours/week for aggregated class attendance and self-study time</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAS bachelor’s (excluding teacher training)</td>
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<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uni bachelor’s (excluding teacher training)</td>
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<td>32</td>
</tr>
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<td>UAS master’s (excluding teacher training)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uni master’s (excluding teacher training)</td>
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<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma/Uni magister degree</td>
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<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher training</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State examination (excluding teacher training)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>41</td>
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</table>

**Chapter 12**

Employment ratio during lecture period, in %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DSW/DZHW 21st Social Survey
The comparatively small amount of time (32 h/week) spent on study-related activities by students pursuing diploma and magister courses, on the other hand, is attributable to the fact that they are more often late-stage students, whose studies consume less time overall and shift in focus away from class attendance (10 h/week) towards self-directed study (22 h/week). A similar shift in emphasis takes place between the bachelor’s and master’s cycles as well (disregarding teacher training). Students pursuing a bachelor’s degree allocate comparatively more time to class attendance, while master’s students spend more time on self-study. The data also show that students attending bachelor’s and master’s degree courses at university allocate two hours more to self-study and three hours less to class attendance than their fellow students attending universities of applied sciences. Teacher training students likewise spend more time on self-study than attending classes.

Across all degree types, it is also notable that the distribution of study-related time between class attendance and self-study has changed further in the period since the 20th social survey. Irrespective of target degree type, fulltime students studying on campus are now investing far less time in class attendance; the time allocated to self-study remains more or less consistent. From an overall perspective, students are therefore engaging less in study-related activities. The most prominent examples in this respect are master’s degree students (UAS: 32 h/week, university: 31 h/week) and those studying for teaching qualifications (32 h/week). Measured against 2012, the time being invested in study-related activities by these students has decreased by three to four hours. Those studying for other degree types have decreased their study hours by one to two hours.

Since the preceding survey, the proportion of de facto full-time students has appreciably decreased. The downturn of 7 percentage points in their overall proportion is chiefly attributable to the smaller proportion of those who were either not working at all, or worked only a few hours a week. Compared to the 2012 figures, this ratio has dropped by 6 percentage points, while the proportion of de facto part-time students has increased by 7 percentage points.

**Subjective assessment of study time during lecture period**

68% percent of the students enrolled on a full-time course taught on campus regarded the amount of study time during the lecture period as (very) high (responses 4 and 5 on the five-point scale). 23% placed the demand on their time in the middle category, while 9% rated the amount of study time as (very) low (responses 1 and 2). Compared to their male counterparts, female students were more likely to perceive their study time input as (very) high (71% vs. 66%) and less likely to consider it as (very) low (7% vs. 11%). There was little difference in these assessments between full-time students studying on campus in universities on the one hand, and universities of applied sciences on the other.
During the lecture period of the 2016 summer semester, more than two-thirds (68%, Figure 5) of students were engaged in employment alongside studies. Measured against 2012, the proportion of employed students increased by 6 percentage points, thus returning to the record level posted in the summer semester of 2003. Standing at 69% in 2016, the employment ratio among those studying in universities was higher than ever before. For students enrolled at universities of applied sciences, the ratio of employed students has risen by 1 percentage point since the 20th social survey. At 65%, it is now lower than the rate for university students, and remains below the peaks recorded during the last decade.

The actual number of students pursuing employment alongside their studies is influenced by numerous factors, including regional context conditions. As reported in past studies, the proportion of working students is lower in eastern Germany than in the west of the country (2016: 63% vs. 68%).

**Employment ratio and socio-demographic attributes**

Proportionally more female than male students have a job (70% vs. 66%). This bias continues until students reach the age of 30, at which point it is reversed. Among the factors driving this turnaround are family formation processes. When a child is born, as in other population groups, predominantly traditional role patterns emerge among students as well; more male students turn to employment in order to cover the family’s living expenses, while the women are more likely to take care of the work that arises in the family home.

In 2016 it remained the case that the proportion of students who were working while pursuing their studies differed by educational background groups (see Chapter 6). Among the students originating from a non-academic household (educational background categories ‘middle’ and ‘low’), the proportion of those with a job was above average (69% in each case). The employment ratio was lower (64%) for students whose parents both hold an HE degree (‘upper’ background group).

**Reasons for working while studying**

There are diverse reasons why students seek employment during higher education. Most students expressed a desire for disposable money so that they could “afford a little more” (72% “applicable” or “fully applicable” on a five-point scale). The second most popular reason stated in the survey was the wish to be (more) independent of parents (62%). Far more than half of employed students (59%) were relying on their personal earnings to cover living expenses. More than one in two students (53%) said that they were working in order to “gain practical experience”. The goal of establishing contacts with a view to subsequent employment, ranked next among the reasons (36%). More than one in five working students (21%) was seeking to obtain financial security by way of a part-time job and/or was hoping, by working, to procure an employment opportunity, irrespective of the outcome of their studies.
13 Living situation

Living arrangements
Almost four out of ten students (38%) were living in their own flat either alone (17%) or together with their partner (21%). Just short of a third (30%) were living in shared accommodation (Figure 6). Compared to the 2012 data, living arrangements have been subject to only minor changes. The proportion of students living with their parents has decreased by 3 percentage points to 20%, while halls of residence have become a little more popular again. The figure for those occupying halls of residence include students living in accommodation provided by non-profit institutions other than the student services organisations, or in privately operated students’ quarters (29%).

The data distinguishing the living arrangements of men and women reveal a familiar pattern. A larger proportion of male than female students (22% vs. 18%) live with their parents or in halls of residence (13% vs. 11%), while substantially more women than men (25% vs. 18%) live with a partner and/or child in a flat.

As in the past, age in particular correlates closely with accommodation type - the younger the students, the larger the proportion of those living with their parents or in a hall of residence. More mature students, on the other hand, are more likely to be living in a flat of their own, either alone or, in particular, with a partner and/or child.

Reasons for selecting accommodation types
When asked about the relative importance of individual reasons for choosing their living arrangements, the most frequently identified criterion overall was the size of the accommodation (“fully applicable”: 64%). The other key factors were good transport connections (61%), proximity to the teaching facilities (59%) and the amount of rent (56%).

Travelling between accommodation and higher education institution
In regard to the commute to the teaching institution, in the summer semester of 2016 two-fifths of students (41%) were mainly using public transport, and slightly less than a third (31%) were cycling. In the winter, fewer students used their bicycle (14%) and elected to travel predominantly by public transport instead. More than half of students (56%) used public transport in the winter.

From an overall perspective, the average travel time between living accommodation and HE institution was around 33 minutes. The commute took up to 25 minutes for half of students and no more 15 minutes for a quarter.
The proportion of students who eat in a canteen at least once a week stood at 73% in the summer semester of 2016. On average, students visited a canteen for a meal 2.8 times a week. Three-quarters of male students (74%) and seven out of ten female students (71%) dined in a canteen at least once a week. The weekly average number of visits by male and female students was 3.1 and 2.4 respectively. Broken down by subject area, engineering (76%) and medicine (74%) were the two disciplines whose students were most likely to visit a canteen at least once a week.

Across the sexes, younger students were more frequent users of canteens than older students. 81% of 20-year-olds, almost as many (77%) 20 to 22-year-olds, and slightly less than three-quarters (74%) of 23 to 25-year-old students visited a canteen at least once a week for breakfast, lunch, dinner or a snack.

The proportion of canteen users in the age groups 26 to 30 on the one hand, and 31 and above on the other, stood at 67% and 60% respectively.

**Midday meal and canteen user types**

Two-thirds of students (68%) were taking a set midday meal in a canteen at least once a week. Compared to the figure for 2012, the proportion had fallen by 6 percentage points, from 74%. Measured against 2012, midday meal consumption in canteens had likewise decreased from a weekly average of 2.7 to 1.7 lunches per student.

### Figure 6 Social infrastructure for students

<table>
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<th>Variable</th>
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<th>2016 Women</th>
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<tr>
<td>Canteen user type by weekly frequency of lunch visits, in % of students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular users (three or more times)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sporadic users (once or twice)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-users</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 15</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demand for information and assistance, and use of advisory services (^1) (Those answering “yes, a lot” on a three-point scale from “no, not all” to “yes, a lot”), in %</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students requiring advice on at least one of the 21 surveyed topics</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students requiring advice and using advisory services</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Not surveyed in 2012.
Depending on the number of midday meals taken in a canteen, students are assigned to one of three groups. In the summer semester of 2016 almost a third of students (32%) were regular users; in other words, they ate at least three lunches a week in a canteen. The proportion of students belonging to the sporadic user group – those who take a canteen lunch once or twice a week – stood at 36%. 32% of students stated that they did not use a canteen.

Compared to the data gathered by the preceding survey four years earlier, the regular user group had decreased by 5 percentage points (2012: 37%). The proportion of non-users had increased by 6 percentage points (2012: 26%), and that of sporadic users remained more or less unchanged (2012: 37%).

**Satisfaction with canteen offering**
On a five-point scale from “very dissatisfied” to “very satisfied”, 63% and 45% of students respectively reported that they were (very) satisfied with the value for money on the one hand, and with both the range of food and possible combinations on the other. Satisfaction with the quality of the food was less high (30%). As was to be expected, sporadic users were generally less satisfied than regular users with all aspects of the offering. The difference between the two groups was especially striking in respect of the taste of the food, with which 51% of regular users, but only 42% of sporadic users were (very) satisfied.

**Providing advisory services relating to studying and everyday life**
In order to establish the demand for advice and assistance, the students were asked to assess the extent to which they had experienced various kinds of issues, difficulties or stresses in the preceding 12-month period. The surveyed 21 topics were allocated to three subject categories, namely financial, personal and study-related issues. In students’ everyday lives, the individual topics and categories are interlinked and relate to their studies in diverse ways.

**Demand for student services and assistance**
In the preceding 12 months, 61% of students had sensed the need to obtain assistance on at least one topic. A third of all students in each case reported on severe difficulties or stresses concerning (at least) one personal topic (33%) and (at least) one study-related topic (32%). One-fifth (20%) indicated a need to ask questions relating to finance.

**Use of professional information and advisory services**
Among the students experiencing serious issues, difficulties or stresses, 46% had used at least one professional advisory service. 60% of the students wishing to obtain guidance had sought assistance in connection with at least one study-related topic. Professional advice on financial matters had been obtained by 49%, and advice on personal topics by 43% of the students with a need for support.

At the time of the survey, more than half of the students (54%) with a desire for advice on at least one of the surveyed topic had not used an advisory service. The principal reason given, by 49% of the students, was the offering of suitable support by friends, acquaintances and relatives. More than two-thirds stated that they lacked the time to obtain advice (38%) and/or that the problem had resolved itself (37%). A little less than one-third (32%) of the non-users of advisory services gave other, unspecified reasons for not seeking advice.
Alongside the main report, which is available (in German) on the project website http://www.sozialerhebung.de/sozialerhebung/archiv and summarised in this document, the data of the 21st social survey are being analysed in greater detail in respect of selected topics and groups.

Initial analyses of the collected data giving an overview of the distinctions made as regards the regions and subject matter (Randauszählungen) are also available (in German) on the website. These cover the following areas:

**Germany**
- Gender
- Bachelor’s/master’s degrees
- Type of HE institution
- Region (east/west)
- Age
- Family educational background
- Living arrangements

**Federal states (overall and separately by gender and higher education institution type)**

Baden-Württemberg
- Bavaria
- Berlin
- Saarland
- Brandenburg
- Bremen
- Hamburg
- Hesse
- Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania
- Lower Saxony
- North Rhine-Westphalia
- Rhineland Palatinate
- Saarland
- Saxony
- Saxony-Anhalt
- Schleswig-Holstein
- Thuringia

In addition, more in-depth scientific analyses of the data concerning Germans and German educational nationals enrolled at German HE institutions are planned, which are to be made available through further publications. Among the topics earmarked for examination in this way are student finance, academic performance and success, entry into higher education and social profile, study pathways and studying abroad, students with children, and students with health impairments affecting the ability to study.

The separate report on international students will appear in spring 2018. These students, who come from abroad to enter higher education in Germany, were interviewed in connection with the 21st social survey by way of a separate bilingual questionnaire (in German and English) tailored to their specific study situation.

In view of the large number of cases realised within the scope of the online survey, the demand for data can now be satisfied on a regional basis for the first time. All of the student services organisations, for example, are to receive initial analyses of the collected data relating to the Germans and German educational nationals enrolled at the HE institutions they support. HE institutions attended by 300 or more students who took part in the survey are to be presented with an institution-specific analysis.

Upon the project’s completion, for secondary scientific analysis purposes the anonymised data of the 21st social survey will be made available in a scientific use file (SUF) in the Research Data Centre of the German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies (https://fdz.dzhw.eu). Together with the data sets from the 19th and 20th social surveys, in autumn 2018 scholars will then be able to access three survey SUFs for time series analyses as well.
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