



This is Stefan Hofmann. He is 15 and lives with his mum, Eva, his dad, Josef, his older sister Bettina and their dogs Max and Liesl in the Bavarian village of Konzell. Stefan thinks family life is very important and, like 9 out of 10 young people in Germany, he thinks he has a good relationship with his parents.

Stefan goes to a *Realschule*, a school where pupils can focus on particular subjects in addition to the ordinary ones like English, German and maths. Over 1.2 million young people (31%) go to *Realschulen*. Stefan is focusing on business studies and economics. He would like to become a businessman and has his eye on possible jobs with BMW or one of the big German banks.

Stefan's dad works in the nearby town of Straubing. He is a civil servant (*der Beamte*)

in the local finance department. He has flexible working hours (*die gleitende Arbeitszeit*) and starts work between 7 and 8.30am. Frau Hofmann works in Straubing too. Her working hours in the local council (*das Landratsamt*) fit in well with family life (*ein familienfreundliches Arbeitsmodell*). She can choose to work at home sometimes, using the Internet to keep in touch.

Bettina is 17 and goes to a grammar school (*das Gymnasium*) where, unusually, a small number of children also board (*das Internat*). Bettina takes turns with other older pupils to help the boarders with their homework in the afternoons after school.

The whole Hofmann family is very sporty and they are often occupied with some sport in their free time – in summer, tennis, cycling (*radfahren*), jogging, walking (*wandern*) and even swimming in the open-air pool (*das Freibad*). In winter they swim in the indoor pool (*das Hallenbad*) and go skiing. Stefan plays basketball at a sports centre (*das Sportzentrum*). 34% of German boys and 29% of girls rate sport as a top pastime. Girls are generally less keen on team games (*der Mannschaftssport*).

Did you know?

- More than 70% of Germans have to get up before 6 o'clock in the morning.
- German households separate their waste meticulously. Every yoghurt pot, can and aluminium top has to be washed and taken to a collection point together with paper and bottles. Fines await those who throw everything into the normal bin, which is reserved for non-recyclable waste.

- 31% of young people attend a *Realschule* (vocation orientated).
- 40% attend a *Gymnasium* (academic focus).
- 33% of boys love computer games.
- 8% of girls do too.
- 60% of all young people enjoy hanging out with friends.

About 85% of 13-17 year-olds get regular pocket money, on average 17-25 Euros per month.

A typical day with the Hofmann family

6.30 Frau Hofmann wakes everyone up. It often takes more than one call to get Stefan out of bed!

7.00 The family has breakfast together. Stefan usually has black bread (*das Schwarzbrot*) with cheese, chocolate spread or honey or sometimes a boiled egg and ham. He has hot chocolate or orange juice to drink.

7.15 Stefan walks to the bus stop where he meets his friends. He has a 25-minute journey to school in the nearby town of Viechtach.

8.00 School starts.

13.00 End of the school day and Stefan goes home for lunch – cooked by either his mum or his gran (*die Oma*). Lunch is the main meal of the day, normally a hot meal: soup, casserole or pasta.

15.00 Stefan starts his homework (*die Hausaufgaben*). He usually works for one or two hours. After that, he often plays computer games. Stefan also likes music – heavy metal or punk – and sometimes practises the guitar.

17.00-19.00 Twice a week, Stefan goes to a two-hour football training session. He plays in a youth team with players from Konzell and the neighbouring village, Rattenberg.

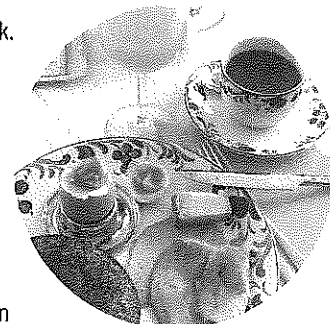
18.00 The family eats their evening meal (*das Abendbrot*) together. This tends to be a cold meal with sausage (*die Wurst*), cheese and bread.

19.00 When he's not at football training, Stefan likes watching TV. He enjoys sports programmes (*die Sportsendung*) and comedies. Stefan also admits to quite like watching the News (*die Nachrichten/die Tagesschau*) and even political programmes.

On Friday nights, Stefan sometimes goes out in Viechtach with friends.

21.30-22.00 Stefan goes to bed. He can't go to bed too late on school days, because he has to get up so early in the morning (*früh aufstehen*).

He sometimes reads and he enjoys books by American author, Michael Moore.

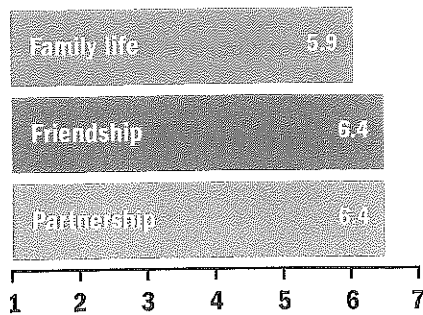


Read pages 8 and 9 and answer the questions.

- 1 a Why has Stefan chosen to go to a *Realschule*?
b In what way is Bettina's school slightly unusual?
- 2 Find the German for:
 - a Flexible working hours
 - b A family friendly work model
 - c Grammar school
 - d Team games
- 3 Think about the two types of school mentioned: *Realschule* and *Gymnasium*. If you lived in Germany, which would you choose and why?
- 4 What do you think of half-day school? What are the possible disadvantages?
- 5 When does Stefan have his main meal of the day? How does this compare with life at your house? Write a short paragraph.

Young people

- What's most important?



Family life in Germany has developed and changed in much the same way as it has in Britain. For young people, having a secure family is still very important. On a scale of importance from 1–7, Family Life rates at 5.9. This is beaten only by Friendship and Partnership at 6.4 each.

The trend now is for smaller families. 100 years ago, 44% of households consisted of more than five people, i.e. Mum, Dad and three children. Nowadays, only 9% of all families have three or more children.

Many couples live with one another without being married. Of 21.6 million partnerships in Germany, 89% are marriages (*die Ehe*). The average age for getting married is 31.6 years for men and 28.8 years for women. A civil marriage ceremony must by law first take place at the local registry office (*das Standesamt*) and may be followed by an

optional religious service.

The number of married couples without children has risen significantly since the early 1990s. In western Germany 7.9 million couples have no children. In eastern Germany the figure is considerably lower at 1.8 million. This trend might pose a problem for elderly people throughout Germany in the future who will not have close family to care for them.

There are other significant differences affecting young people between the two regions. Throughout Germany, 4.3 million children live with one parent only (*alleinerziehende Eltern*). In western

Germany this represents 13% of all young people. In the eastern half of the country it accounts for 20%.

Young people's attitudes towards their upbringing are generally positive. More than half believe their parents were not particularly strict (*streng*). Most say they would bring up their own children in much the same way. Only 8% say they would take a completely different approach.

It will be interesting to see what names young people will choose for their own children. Just now, *Marie* and *Alexander* top the bill, following the fashion for internationally known names.



Married couples wear their wedding band on the right hand

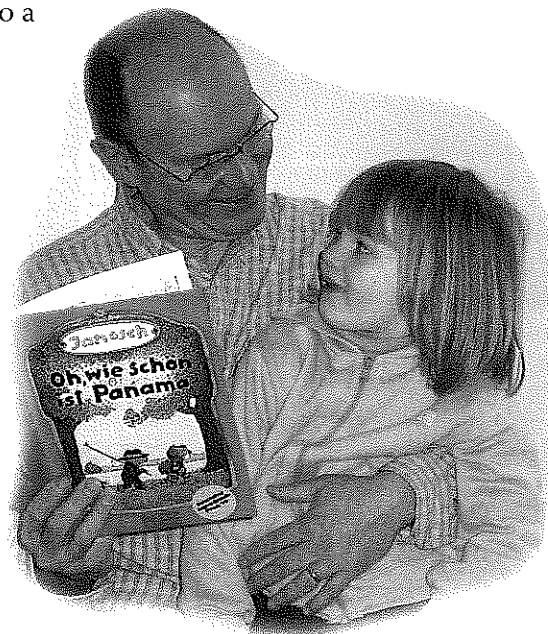
A few facts

- 864 000 Germans are married to people from overseas (*Ausländer*) e.g. Turkey, Italy, the Balkan States and Greece.
- 67% of 16-25 year olds would like to have their own children.
- In 2001 190 000 couples in Germany celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary (50 years of marriage). Only 71 000 reached this in 1991.

Church tax (*die Kirchensteuer*) is paid by members of the two largest religious bodies in Germany – the Roman Catholic church and the Evangelical (Protestant) church. Over 28 million people in each of these, plus members of other key religious organizations such as the Greek Orthodox church or the Council of Jews, pay this tax in addition to regular income tax. It greatly benefits all churches.

Divorce (*die Scheidung*) and separation (*die Trennung*) affect the lives of many families. Almost half of all couples who separate have children under 18. Recent figures show that the most common time for couples to separate is between the third and sixth year of marriage. Three out of four of these separations end in divorce. In 2001/2002 there were 391 967 divorces. This figure seems to be stabilising – certainly an improvement on the 1991 figure of 454 291!

Parents in Germany are entitled to a paid period of leave for childcare (*die Elternzeit* or *der Erziehungsurlaub*) of up to three years. This can be taken by one parent or split between both, whichever best suits the family lifestyle. *Elternzeit* is designed to care for children under three, but some employers allow it to be extended so that children between three and eight years can benefit from having more time with their parents.



Young people are staying at home with their parents for longer now. In 1972, 20% of 25 year-olds still lived at home. This was up to 29% in 2002. 31% of students at college or university still live at home.

It's the young men who are more reluctant to leave the family home than the young women!

Read pages 10 and 11 and answer the questions.

- 1 a How are 21st century families in Germany different to families 100 years ago?
b Who gets married at a younger age in Germany: men or women? Give figures.
c What percentage of young people in eastern Germany belong to one-parent families?
- 2 Are young people in Germany happy about how their parents have brought them up? Give reasons for your answer.
- 3 Why do you think internationally recognizable names are becoming more popular?
- 4 What is the trend of the divorce rate in Germany in recent times? Give figures.
- 5 Do you think the system of *Elternzeit* is a good idea? Give reasons for your answer.
- 6 Find the German for:
a single parents
b marriage
c divorce
- 7 Do you think *Kirchensteuer* is a good thing? Why?