

The German Family Panel pairfam

Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships
and Family Dynamics

pairfam tutorial

1. What is pairfam

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Welcome to *pairfam*! This online tutorial consists of several short videos introducing the design, samples, available variables, and data sets of the German Family Panel *pairfam*, as well as explanations of codes for missing values, data access, and available documentation. In this first part, we will cover what the *pairfam* study is, and who, when, how, and what exactly is surveyed as part of the study.

Let's jump right in!

What is *pairfam*?

pairfam is an abbreviation for **Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics**.

pairfam

...is a multidisciplinary, multi-actor panel study focusing on partner and family dynamics in Germany.

- » Nationwide random sample of 12,402 “anchors”
- » Yearly interviews conducted by Kantar Public
- » 2008 - 2021
- » Partners, parents, and children also interviewed
- » Funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG)

pairfam is a multidisciplinary, multi-actor panel study focusing on partner and family dynamics in Germany.

pairfam began in 2008 with a nationwide random sample of 12,402 respondents called “anchor respondents”.

These anchor respondents were interviewed annually from 2008 to 2021, a total of 13 waves, by the survey institute Kantar Public (formerly known as TNS Infratest).

Anchor respondents’ partners, parents, and children were also interviewed during this time period.

The study was funded as a long-term infrastructure project by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

Principal investigators

- » Prof. Dr. Josef Brüderl (LMU Munich/University of Mannheim)
- » Prof. Sonja Drobnič, PhD (University of Bremen)
- » Prof. Dr. Karsten Hank (University of Cologne)
- » Prof. Dr. Johannes Huinink (University of Bremen)
- » Prof. Dr. Bernhard Nauck (Chemnitz University of Technology)
- » Prof. Dr. Franz J. Neyer (Friedrich Schiller University Jena)
- » Prof. Dr. Sabine Walper (DJI - German Youth Institute Munich)

The principal investigators of the *pairfam* study were professors Josef Brüderl, Sonja Drobnic, Karsten Hank, Johannes Huinink, Bernhard Nauck, Franz Neyer, and Sabine Walper.

Together with over 50 researchers, they guided the design, implementation, processing and documentation of the *pairfam* study.

Design

Multidisciplinary:

- » Simultaneously covers information from multiple life domains and relationships

Multi-actor:

- » Independently surveys anchor respondents, their partners, (step)parents, and children

Panel study :

- » Annual interviews with the same (anchor) respondents over the course of the study

As mentioned, *pairfam* is a multidisciplinary study. This means it simultaneously covers information from multiple life domains and relationships with various other individuals.

It is also a multi-actor study, including interviews with anchor respondents' partners, parents, and children.

pairfam is also a panel study, which annually interviewed the same respondents over the course of 13 years.

Key topics

Partnership processes

Formation, institutionalization, organization, quality, stability, expectations, separation ...

Parenthood and fertility

Timing, spacing, interruption of births, decision-making processes, contraception...

Demography: place of residence, education, employment, income, health, leisure activities, personality

Inter-generational relationships

Family norms, transfers and solidarity between generations, relationship quality ...

Parenting and child development

Parenting goals, skills, and styles, co-parenting, caretaking, child health and behavior ...

What was surveyed?

The key topics of the *pairfam* study are partnership processes, parenthood and fertility, intergenerational relationships, parenting, and child development.

Partnership processes entail questions about the formation, institutionalization, organization, quality, and stability of romantic partnerships, expectations towards partnerships, and separations.

The topic of parenthood and fertility includes questions about the timing, spacing, and interruption of births, the decision-making process behind having children, sexuality and contraception.

Parenting and child development covers parenting goals, skills and styles, co-parenting of separated parents, child care, and children's behavior.

Family norms, transfers between family members, solidarity between generations, and relationship quality in families is included under the topic of intergenerational relationships.

Furthermore, *pairfam* gathered demographic information on respondents' place of residence, level of education, employment status, income, health, leisure activities, and personality.

By covering various life domains and relationships, we can examine interdependencies and dynamics between these key topics.

Questionnaire

Main modules:

- » Basic information | Annual rotation

Immersion modules:

- » Detailed information | Two-/four-year rotation

Add-on Modules:

- » e.g., retrospective information | One-time only

The anchor questionnaire contains main modules to collect annual information on respondents' demography, current partnerships, intergenerational relationships, and parenting. By asking the same questions every year, we can observe changes over the course of respondents' lives and relationships, as well as their effect on other life domains.

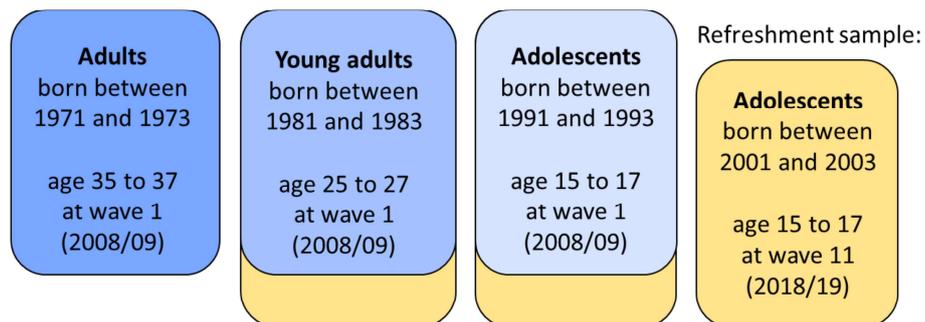
Immersion modules that are repeated every two or four years gathered more in-depth information on specific topics, for example expectations towards partnerships, personality, sexual communication, and fertility expectations.

Finally, the questionnaire also contains various add-on modules, asked only once. These included, for example, retrospective information on romantic partnerships before the first interview.

Multi-cohort design

Anchor respondents:

Random selection of German-speaking individuals of four birth cohorts living in private households.



Who was surveyed?

pairfam is designed as a multi-cohort study, meaning the sample of anchor respondents is a random selection of over 17,000 German-speaking individuals from four birth cohorts living in private households in Germany.

The study began with over 12000 respondents from three cohorts: Adults aged 35 to 37 at the time of the first interview (born between 1971 and 1981), young adults aged 25-27 (born between 1981 and 1983), and adolescents aged 15 to 17 (born between 1991 and 1993). Naturally, some anchor respondents dropped out of the panel over time. By wave 10, a total of 4,000 anchor respondents remained – one-third of the original base sample.

In wave 11, a refreshment sample was drawn to “refresh” the two younger cohorts with over 2,300 new respondents in total. In addition, a new cohort of almost 2,500 adolescents aged 15-17 in wave 11 (born between 2001 and 2003) were added to the sample.

Multi-actor design

- » Anchors: Base sample
- » Partners: Irrespective of partnership institutionalization
- » Parents: Biological, adoptive, and/or stepparents
- » Children: Biological, adopted, foster, and/or stepchildren aged 8 to 15
→ grow into “step-up” respondents

To collect information on...

Gendered relationship perspectives

Intergenerational relationships from all perspectives

Parenting – As practiced by parents, perceived by children

pairfam's multi-actor design means that anchor respondents' partners, parents, and children were also interviewed as part of the study. We call these secondary respondents “alteri” respondents.

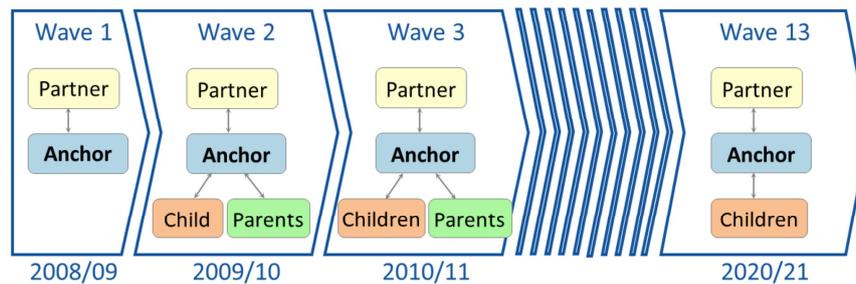
Partners were interviewed irrespective of the level of institutionalization of the partnership with the anchor respondent; in other words, regardless of whether they lived together or were married at the time of the interview.

Up to three biological, adoptive, and/or stepparents were interviewed as well, along with the anchor respondent's children between the ages of 8 and 15, regardless of status (may they be biological, adopted, foster, or stepchildren). Children over 15 were able to grow into the main panel and become anchor respondents themselves. These respondents are called “step-up” respondents.

By implementing a multi-actor design, *pairfam* was able to collect information on gendered relationship perspectives, intergenerational relationships from all perspectives, and parenting – as practiced by parents, and perceived by their children.

Panel study with 13 waves

» Annual interviews of anchor respondents and their “alteri”



When were respondents surveyed?

The *pairfam* study ran for a total of 13 waves with annual interviews of anchor and alteri respondents from 2008 to 2021.

In wave 1, which was at the end of 2008/ beginning of 2009, only anchor respondents and their partners were interviewed.

In wave 2, one child and the anchor respondent’s parents were added to the survey.

In wave 3, multiple children were integrated.

As the response rate was relatively low, the parent survey was discontinued after wave 8.

From wave 9 to wave 13, only anchor respondents and their partners and children were interviewed.

Survey format

Personal interviews:

- » CAPI for anchor respondents and children
- » CASI section for sensitive questions

Telephone interviews:

- » CATI for some anchors and children in 2020-2021
- » PAPI questionnaire for sensitive questions

Paper questionnaires:

- » PAPI for partner survey, parenting modules, and (step-) parent survey

How were respondents surveyed?

For anchor respondents and their children, face-to-face interviews at the anchor respondent's home were conducted with interviewers from the survey institute Kantar Public. Interviewers posed questions to respondents and completed the questionnaire on a special laptop – so-called CAPI mode. For sensitive questions, for example about sexuality or income, the interviewer handed the laptop to the anchor respondent to fill in this section of the questionnaire themselves (so-called CASI mode).

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in Europe in early 2020, made personal interviews more difficult. Therefore, some interviews were conducted via telephone (so-called CATI mode) in waves 12 and 13, which took place in 2020 and 2021, for both anchor and child respondents. Anchor respondents in CATI mode received an additional paper questionnaire (so-called PAPI mode) including the sensitive questions normally asked in the CASI mode.

Partners and parents received paper questionnaires throughout the study. In addition, supplemental paper questionnaires concerning parenting were delivered to both anchor respondents and their partners.

Next up: Tutorial #2 – Sample description and panel maintenance

This concludes this first part of the tutorial.

The next part includes a more detailed description of the sample as well as panel maintenance measures.