

Information sheet

Information on lay resuscitation in Germany



Dear Reader!

This information sheet is intended to continue to provide you with a clear, abridged version of our printed brochure "How Resuscitation Works".

More than 10,000 human lives could be saved in Germany every year if resuscitation procedures were started as soon as someone suffered a cardiac arrest. This is because cardiac massage is highly effective, if performed correctly. With its information campaign, the Federal Institute of Public Health (BIÖG), together with its alliance partners from the National Resuscitation Action Group (NAWIB), aims to help to make sure that all citizens are aware of the necessary resuscitation measures and how to apply them in emergencies. As a medical professional, it is especially important to me to encourage you: Please take action in an emergency!

With lay resuscitation, you cannot do anything wrong – other than not helping.

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Situational analysis

Social impact

- In 2024, an estimated 136,000 people in Germany suffered a sudden cardiac arrest outside a hospital. In about half of these cases – around 67,000 people – emergency medical services initiated resuscitation measures (Fischer et al., 2025).
- 45 percent of patients who undergo resuscitation are of working age. The average age is just under 70. Two-thirds of those affected are male (Fischer et al., 2025).
- Three out of four people who have survived the first 30 days after resuscitation are able to work again. On average, this is possible five months after being resuscitated (Kragholm et al., 2015).

Definition: In the event of a **cardiac arrest**, the pumping function of the heart and the blood circulation stop for various reasons. Vital organs are no longer supplied with oxygen.

Development of the disease

- The most common causes are cardiac events such as coronary heart disease (chronic ischaemic heart disease), acute heart attack and heart failure, cardiac arrhythmia or heart valve defects (Fischer et al., 2025; Federal Statistical Office, 2024; Fischer et al., 2013; Schmitt and Güder, 2021).
- Only just under 20 percent of patients have a rhythm that can be treated with an electric shock (defibrillation). Only in these cases is the treatment of a cardiac arrest with an additional electric shock possible and advisable (Fischer et al., 2025; Metelmann C., Wnent and Kofler, 2023).

Measures

- The brain cells suffer irreparable damage after a cardiac arrest after only three to five minutes without blood flow and die (Breck-Woldt et al., 2009). It is necessary to bridge this critical time window with the helpful intervention of eyewitnesses: Check. Call. Compress.

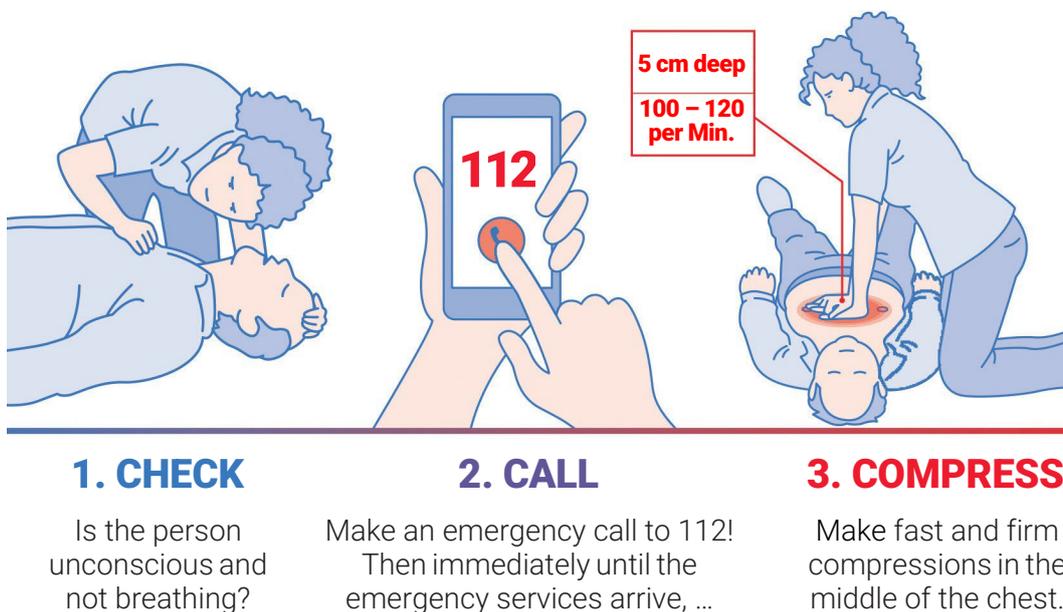


Figure 1 Lay resuscitation: Check. Call. Compress.
Source: Federal Institute of Public Health (BfÖG).

- It is essential for the patient's chances of survival to shorten the therapy-free interval and to optimise the interaction within the rescue chain (resuscitation measures taken by first-aiders, care given by the emergency services, admission to a hospital) (Gässler et al., 2020; Gräsner et al., 2020).
- It takes an average of eight minutes or longer for the emergency services to arrive (Fischer et al., 2025; Neukamm et al., 2011).

- Approximately 70 percent of cardiac arrests occur in the home, about 12 percent in care facilities and about 16 percent occur in public spaces. Up to 45 percent of all cases are witnessed by family members, friends or other people (Fischer et al., 2025; Böttiger et al., 1999; Weisfeldt et al., 2011).
- If bystanders were to immediately begin chest compressions in an emergency (see Figure 2), an estimated 10,000 additional lives could be saved each year in Germany, and more than 100,000 in Europe (Gräsner et al., 2014; Böttiger, 2015).

Germany in a Europe-wide comparison

- More and more people in Europe and around the world start cardiac massage in an emergency (Chika Nishiyama et al., 2023). In Germany, the so-called lay resuscitation rate increased from 14 percent in 2010 to 55.4 percent in 2024 (Fischer et al., 2025; Fischer et al., 2018)

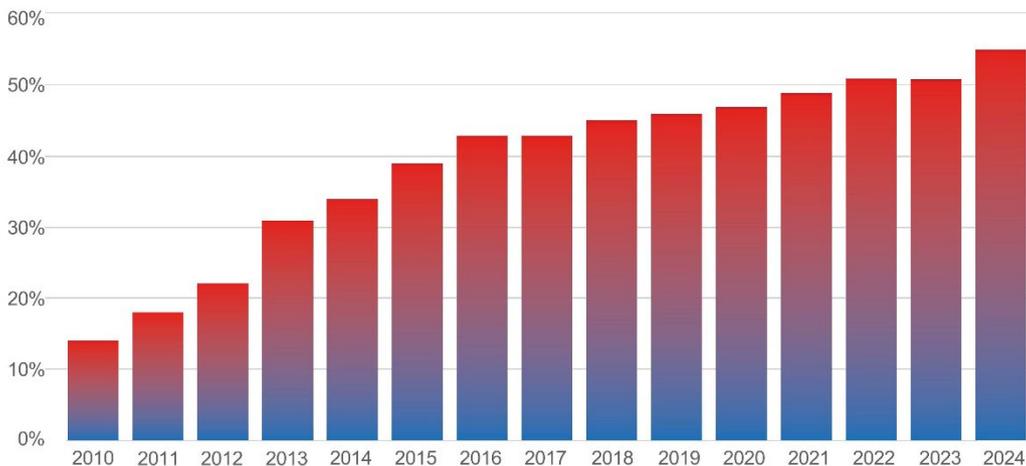


Figure 2 Lay resuscitation rate in Germany 2010–2024.

Source: Based on Fischer et al., 2018, 2025 (see www.reanimationsregister.de).



You can save a life!

CHECK | CALL | COMPRESS

National Resuscitation Action Group

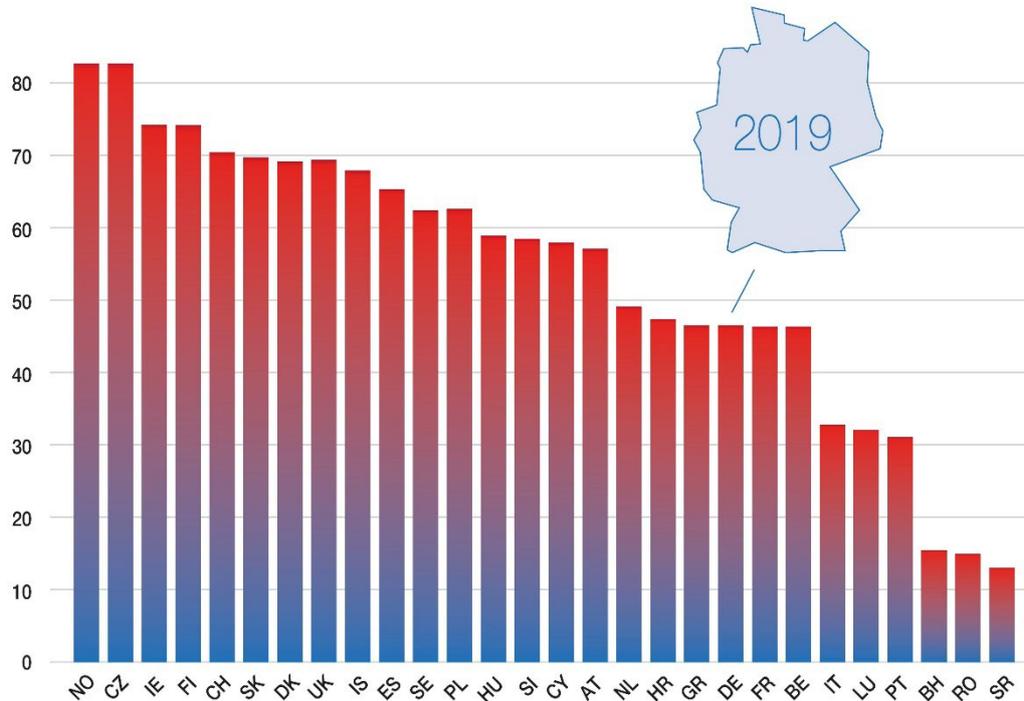


Figure 3 Lay resuscitation rate in Europe in 2019.

Source: Own illustration based on Gräsner et al., 2020, Supplemental EuReCaTWO.

- In other European countries, such as Norway, the Netherlands and Sweden, rates of approximately 70 to 80 percent are already being achieved (Jerkeman et al., 2022; Gräsner et al., 2020; Gräsner et al., 2013).
- The example of Denmark shows that national initiatives, such as the introduction of resuscitation measures in school education and a broad information campaign, have increased the lay resuscitation rate from 20 percent in 2000 to over 45 percent by 2010. The survival rate of people affected by cardiac arrest in Denmark tripled during this period (Wissenberg et al., 2013). The lay resuscitation rate had risen to approximately 70 percent by 2019.
- If more people were to take immediate resuscitation measures, the survival chances of patients could double to triple and reduce the admissions to nursing homes after a cardiac arrest (Kragholm et al., 2017; Böttiger et al., 1999).

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Figure 2 Lay resuscitation rate in Germany 2010–2024.

Figure 3 Lay resuscitation rate in Europe in 2019.

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