

Lünendonk® Survey 2025

Business Consulting in Germany

Revenue, markets, structures, trends

A Survey from Lünendonk & Hossenfelder

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Foreword

The years 2024 and 2025 are characterised by exceptional uncertainty and equally remarkable dynamism. Despite an economic downturn for the second consecutive year, political transition in Berlin, intensifying geopolitical tensions, and disruptive technological innovations, the business consulting market in Germany has proven not only to be resilient but, in many cases, even dynamic in terms of growth. The present Lünendonk Survey 2025, based on extensive research, analysis and market dialogue, once again provides a detailed overview of this complex situation – and offers guidance in a fragmented market environment.

2024 – A YEAR OF CONTRADICTIONS

Germany's economy remained under pressure throughout 2024. A stagnating gross domestic product, rising financing costs and geopolitical uncertainty – driven by the war in Ukraine, ongoing tensions between China and the West, the US presidential election, and the escalating conflict in the Middle East – continued to impact investment decisions. Meanwhile, the era of the so called “traffic light” coalition came to an end in autumn 2024. Since then, the new federal government has pursued a new economic policy agenda, with a focus on reindustrialisation, technological openness and state-backed growth initiatives.

Despite the challenging economic conditions, the business consulting sector once again proved to be a stabilising force during periods of transformation. The industry recorded growth of 6.4 per cent in 2024 – driven by restructuring, performance and digitalisation projects, as well as a surge in advisory services related to artificial intelligence (AI). AI was a central topic for clients but also a key driver of internal efficiency gains. Supported by AI systems, average revenue per consultant increased noticeably.

AI, CONSOLIDATION, ECONOMIC CYCLE – THE DEFINING FORCES OF 2025

The year 2025 begins with cautious optimism. While the overall economic environment remains tense, early signs of recovery – particularly in industry and exports – are boosting demand for growth consulting, reorganisation and international expansion. At the same time, the consolidation of the consulting industry is accelerating. Numerous acquisitions by private equity firms, mergers and capital market transactions are reshaping the consulting landscape – reflected, for instance, in the movements within the Lünendonk List 2025, which ranks the 20 largest international and national consulting firms by revenue.



Jörg Hossenfelder
Managing Partner



From a technological perspective, the widespread application of generative AI is particularly influential. Almost 70 per cent of surveyed firms have set up specialised AI competence centres. Consequently, the industry is not only positioned as a strategic advisor to its clients, but also actively investing in its own future viability.

CONTENT AND INSIGHTS OF THE SURVEY

This year's Lünendonk Survey is based on a robust primary survey of 65 business consulting firms, complemented by in-depth market and competitive analysis. Key focus areas include:

- Trends in market volume, revenue, employee numbers and EBIT
- Comparison between national and international consulting firms
- Relevant growth areas (industries and services)
- The impact of M&A, private equity and globalisation on the German consulting market
- Challenges such as skills shortages, talent acquisition and margin pressure
- Digitalisation and artificial intelligence in consulting
- Client needs, budgets and investment strategies
- Procurement processes, fees and utilisation rates
- Self-assessment of market position, competitive dynamics and future viability

A COMPASS IN TURBULENT TIMES

For over 40 years, the mission and motivation of the market research and consulting company Lünendonk & Hossenfelder has been to provide orientation in dynamic B2B markets. This survey serves equally as a strategic planning tool, a foundation for benchmarking, and a basis for informed discussion.

In an era of accelerating innovation cycles, redefined markets and the growing importance of resilience, we would like to express our sincere thanks to all participating firms for their openness in sharing key performance indicators and assessments.

We hope you find it an inspiring read and that it provides valuable insights for your business decisions.

Jörg Hossenfelder

Managing Partner

Lünendonk & Hossenfelder GmbH



Management Summary

MARKET VOLUME

- According to the German Association of Management Consultancies (BDU in Bonn), the volume of the German business consulting market reached 48.7 billion euros in the 2024 financial year. This represents an increase of 4.3 per cent compared to 2023 (€ 46.7 billion).
- The 20 leading German business consulting firms (by revenue) headquartered in Germany, together with the 20 largest international consulting firms active in the German market, represent approximately 39.8 per cent of the total market volume.

REVENUE AND PROFIT MARGIN

- The Top 20 German consulting firms generated total revenues of 3.84 billion euros in 2024 (2023: € 3.8 billion). Of this, an estimated 2.5 billion euros was attributable to the German market.
- The growth momentum in the consulting sector is slowing. In 2024, the average revenue increase of the Top 20 – adjusted for outliers – was 7.5 per cent.
- 38 per cent of consulting firms achieved a profit margin of more than 15 per cent.

PREDICTION AND GROWTH STRATEGY

- The participating consulting firms expect average global revenue growth of 8.8 per cent for 2025. Forecasts for the coming years are cautiously optimistic.
- Growth is expected to be driven primarily by an increase in project volume. 79 per cent of respondents indicated that they are focusing on volume expansion as their main lever.

CUSTOMER REQUIREMENTS

- Digitalisation, digital transformation, and cost and performance optimisation are by far the most important entry points for consulting services in 2025.
- The most relevant client departments are IT, production/manufacturing, and logistics/supply chain.

48.7 billion €

Market volume
increases by
4.3 per cent

7.5 %

increase in revenue
among Germany's Top
20 consulting firms

**8.8 %
increase**

Companies expect an
increase in revenue for
2025

**Key issues
on the
market**

Digitalisation and
cost & performance
optimisation remain
Top priorities

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

- 69 per cent of survey participants aim to benefit from artificial intelligence as a consulting topic.
- 92 per cent are investing in staff training to build internal AI expertise.

BARRIERS AND SUCCESS FACTORS

- The top three success factors are AI expertise, digital capabilities, and innovation strength.
- In 2025, 70 per cent of respondents consider the current economic situation in Germany to be the greatest obstacle to success in the consulting industry.

69 %

of survey participants
aim to benefit from
artificial intelligence as
a consulting topic

70 %

of consultants regard
the current economic
situation as a key
obstacle to success



Introduction

The German market for business consulting is considered one of the largest worldwide. As the world's third-largest economy and a country with a significant export share, Germany is characterised by high consulting expenditures. This explains why international consulting firms and private equity investors are strongly committed to establishing a significant presence in the German market – and why so many medium-sized and smaller boutique consultancies operate in the country.

GLOBAL BUSINESS CONSULTING MARKET

According to estimates by Maximize Market Research, the global business consulting market is worth 303 billion US dollars. In the previous year (2023), this figure stood at 287.9 billion US dollars. While North America, Europe and the Asia-Pacific region have seen particularly notable regional growth, emerging markets are also playing a critical role in the market's expansion. Key drivers of industry growth include the adoption of advanced technologies, the digital transformation of businesses, and the growing demand for specialised expertise (source: Mordor Intelligence).

Business consulting continues to be a growth market. Both Maximize Market Research and IBISWorld forecast an average annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.27 per cent, reaching 412.6 billion US dollars by 2030. Likewise, the German consulting market is expected to expand further, by 6.4 per cent specifically, reaching a volume of 51.8 billion euros by 2025 (source: BDU). This implies that around 20 per cent of global consulting revenues will be generated in Germany, although direct comparison of the BDU and Maximize Market Research figures should be treated with caution due to differing methodologies.

With a market volume exceeding 50 billion euros (approximately 60 billion US dollars), Germany will reach a new all-time high in 2025. A further Lünendonk flash survey, to be conducted in November/December 2025, will shed light on the performance of business consulting firms operating in Germany during the current financial year.



MARKET VOLUMES OF THE GERMAN CONSULTING MARKET (IN € BILLION)

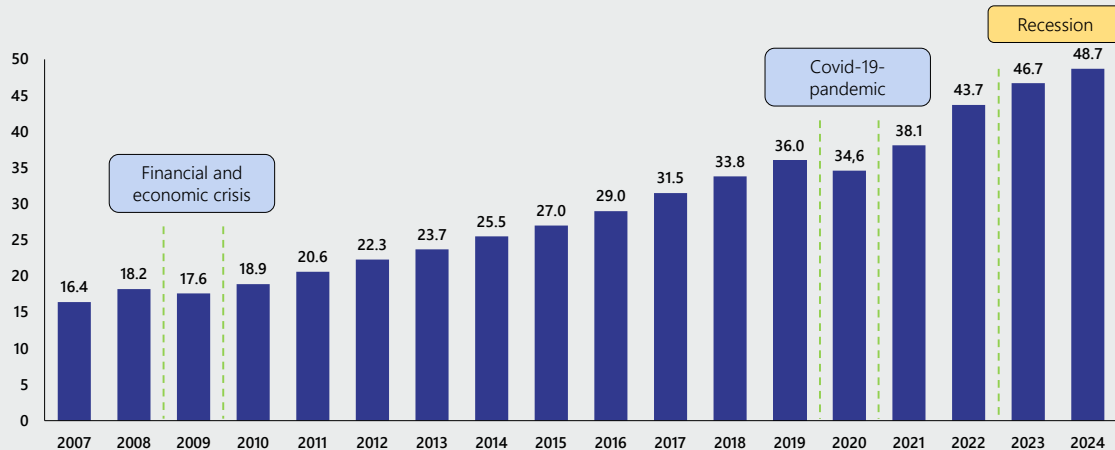


Fig. 1: Market volumes of the consulting market according to BDU (in € billion)

GERMAN CONSULTING MARKET

Germany's economy remained under pressure throughout 2024. A stagnating gross domestic product, rising financing costs and ongoing geopolitical uncertainties – including the war in Ukraine, persistent tensions between China and the West, the US presidential election, and the escalating conflict in the Middle East – weighed heavily on investment decisions. At the same time, the era of the so called “traffic light” coalition ended in autumn 2024, and the new federal government has since been pursuing an economic policy reset focused on reindustrialisation, technological openness and state-backed growth programmes.

How have recent years affected the consulting industry? Until the 2024 financial year, the impression persisted that even the recession had not significantly affected consulting firms. According to the BDU, the German business consulting market grew by 14.7 per cent in 2022 and by 6.9 per cent in 2023. However, the second consecutive year of recession did leave its mark on the industry: In 2024, the German market volume increased by only 4.3 per cent, reaching 48.7 billion euros. Notably, the German Association of Management Consultancies (BDU) had still forecast in spring 2024 that the 50 billion euros threshold would be exceeded (+10.3 %).

With the exception of the crisis years such as the dot-com bubble, the financial and economic crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic – the last time growth fell below five per cent was in 1995. This makes the outlook for 2025 all the more relevant: According to the BDU, the German business consulting market is expected to grow by 6.4 per cent, reaching 51.8 billion euros.



INTRODUCTION

Business Consulting in Germany

BUSINESS CONSULTING MARKET VOLUME AND INFLATION-ADJUSTED GDP

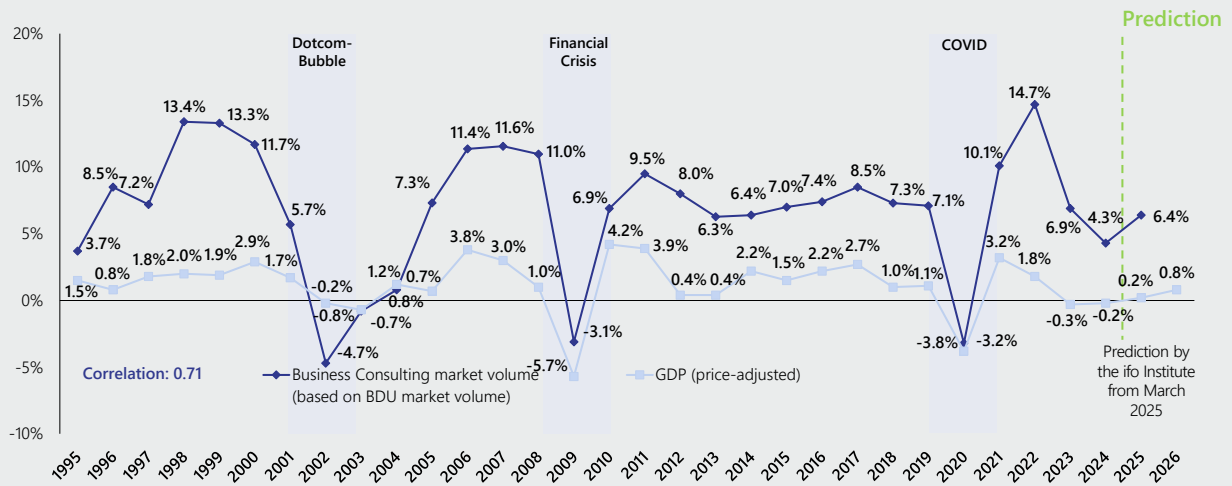


Fig. 2: Development of the market volume and price-adjusted gross domestic product from 1995 to 2024 with forecast for 2025/2026

GROWTH RATE OF THE CONSULTING SECTOR IN 2024 REMAINS IN SINGLE DIGITS

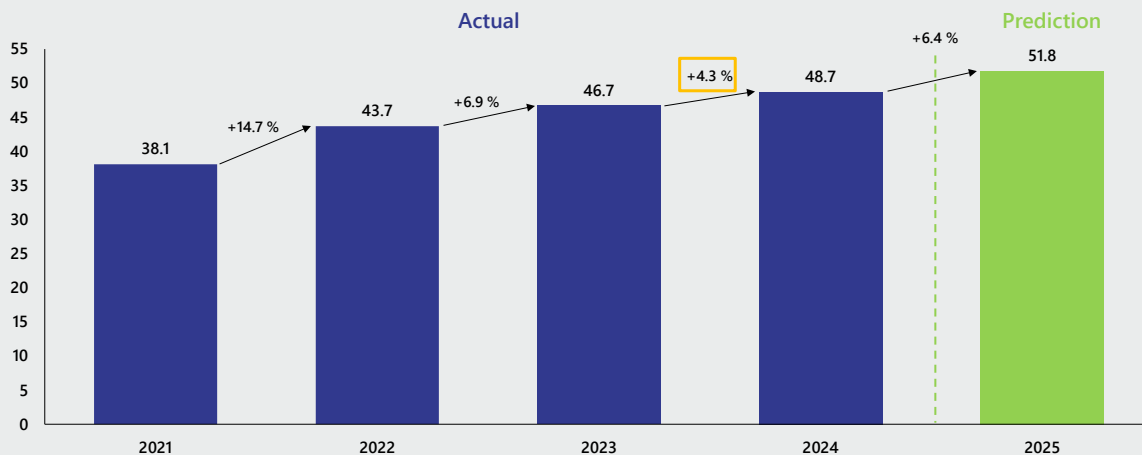


Fig. 3: Market volume of the consulting market according to the Federal Association of German Management Consultants (BDU) (in € billion)

MAJORITY OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS ARE MORE CAUTIOUS THAN BDU

The participants in the Lünendonk Survey take a somewhat more cautious view than the industry association BDU: For the 2025 financial year, all consulting firms analysed expect an average revenue increase of 5.4 per cent. Notably, consulting firms with annual revenues between 15 million and 50 million euros are significantly more sceptical.

