WOMEN'S LIVES AROUND THE WORLD

A Global Encyclopedia

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Germany

Overview of Country

The Federal Republic of Germany is situated in Central Europe. It borders nine countries; starting in the north and moving clockwise, they are Denmark, Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria, Switzerland, France, Luxemburg, Belgium, and the Netherlands. As all of Germany's current neighbors are members of the European Union and the Schengen Area, a political conglomerate of nations that allows free movement across the borders of its members, or are covered by a special treaty in the case of Switzerland, there are no longer any border fortifications separating Germany from these nine countries. Instead, square blue signs bearing a circle of 12 yellow stars (the European flag) that enclose the name "Bundesrepublik Deutschland" (Federal Republic of Germany) written in white letters mark the border between Germany and its neighboring countries. Border controls no longer exist on land. Only German airports and seaports with connections to countries outside the Schengen Area still maintain border control.

Germany is approximately 137,850 square miles, roughly the size of the state of Montana, and has a population of slightly more than 82 million people (FSO 2017b). Seventy-four percent live in urbanized areas. Berlin has 3.4 million residents, Hamburg has 1.8 million, and Munich has 1.3 million. Ninety-two percent of the population is German, 2.4 percent is Turkish, and the remainder consists of a mix of predominantly Greek, Italian, Russian, Polish, Spanish, and Serbo-Croatian ethnic groups (CIA 2017). German is the official language; more than 95 percent of the country speaks a regional German dialect as their first language. Germany has a national version of Braille (*Deutsche Blindenschrift*) and its own sign language. The *Deutsche Gebärdensprache* (German Sign Language) is used by an estimated 50,000 people (Fischer and Lane 1992).

The first German Empire was formed in 1871. Monarchs of hundreds of smaller and larger entities gathered in Versailles to proclaim the Prussian king Wilhelm I the first German emperor. After the end of World War I, in 1918, the first German democracy, called the Weimar Republic, after the Thuringia city in which the national assembly gathered for the first time, replaced the monarchy, albeit only for a brief period. In 1933, the National Socialists were voted the strongest party of the German parliament and by ways of introducing new laws turned the country into a one-party dictatorship of the National Socialists, led by Adolf Hitler.

After Germany surrendered in World War II, in 1945, it was divided into four parts under Allied governance. The American-, British-, and French-occupied zones transformed into 11 states (*Bundesländer* or *Länder*, for short) and formed the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949 (West Germany). The Soviet-occupied zone became the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) in the same year. The former German capital, Berlin, situated in the Soviet-occupied zone, was also divided into four sectors, which became West Berlin and East Berlin. The West German capital moved to the provincial Bonn on the Rhine River, and the East German capital remained Berlin (East).

While West Germany became a prosperous country, aided by the United States, East Germany stagnated economically under the centralized socialist economy, causing many East Germans to leave the country. In 1961, East

Germany began to build the Inner-German Border, better known as the Berlin Wall. It was 866 miles long and had an intricate border control system that consisted of barbed-wire fences, guard towers, minefields, booby traps, and antivehicle ditches. Eventually, in 1989, the wall came down, and in 1990, East and West Germany "unified." Since then, Germany has been undergoing a complicated process of integrating 17 million East Germans into the old Federal Republic (Lonely Planet 2017).

The life expectancy of Germans is about 80.4 years. Women live 82.9 years on average, surviving men by more than four years (78.2 years). Currently, there are slightly more women than men in Germany, with a female-to-male ratio of 1.04. With a fertility rate of only 1.43 children per family and a birth rate of about 8.5 births per 1,000 people, compared to 11.3 deaths (CIA 2017), Germany's population is declining. Women in Germany are almost 29 years old at the time they give birth for the first time. There is an even stronger decline in the number of pregnancies in nonurban areas compared to cities (Ehrenstein 2012). Overall, there are only about 650,000 births per year. The reason for a still somewhat steady number of residents in Germany is the increasing migration of families with more than two children. Given that, in 2013, 20 percent of the people were immigrants, one can conclude that the population of Germany would shrink more rapidly without immigrant women (FSO 2017a). An end to this trend is not in sight.

Immigration is the biggest factor that has changed Germany's ethnic configuration since the 1950s, with the advent of guest workers, since the 1990s, with the influx of ethnic Germans from behind the Iron Curtain, and since 2015, with the opening of Germany's borders to refugees. For Germany, a definition of ethnic diversity is only possible by linguistic origin, as many European countries do not keep track of ethnicity. Thus, there are only estimated numbers for people of color. An estimated 300,000–500,000 people of color live in Germany whose interests are represented by the *Initiative Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland* (Black People Initiative Germany), making people of color still a rather uncommon sight, particularly outside the major cities (ISD 2014). This changed drastically, when Germany announced the opening of its borders to millions of refugees, and assigned them even to small communities according to a predetermined percentage allotment. Most Germans are of Central European descent. Out of the 83 million residents of Germany, approximately 3.2 million are Turkish, 3 million are Russian, 1.8 million are Polish,

1.5 million are from the former Yugoslavia, 800,000 are Italians, and 500,000 are Romanians (CIA 2017). Germany also accepted approximately 600,000 Syrian refugees since 2014. Marriages and partnerships between ethnic groups have increased over the last decade, turning the country into a more heterogeneous and multiethnic society, despite occasional claims of the failure of *multikulti*, in the German vernacular (Angelos 2011).

This shift in ethnicities is also one of the reasons that the composition of religions in Germany is undergoing a substantial change. During the Holy Roman Empire, one of modern Germany's predecessors, Roman Catholicism was the sole religion. This changed with the Reformation, when Martin Luther proclaimed the need for reform within Christianity. As a result, most states and principalities in northern and central Germany turned Protestant, consisting of mainly Lutherans and some Calvinists, while southern Germany remained largely Catholic. At that time, people's religion was determined by the religion of the principality's ruler, according to the principle *cuius region, eius religio* (whose realm, his religion), but limited to Catholicism and Lutheranism. Germany's constitution in 1919 eventually guaranteed the freedom of religion, something that was adopted in the Basic Law of 1949 (the name of Germany's constitution).

Overview of Women's Issues

In 2005, a historic event took place in the Federal Republic of Germany. For the first time in the country's 56-year-old history, a woman was elected to the country's highest office. Angela Merkel, chairperson of the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU), became Germany's first female chancellor, de facto head of state, leader of the German government, and the supreme commander of the German military in case of a state of defense. Germany has embraced a strong woman at its helm since then, and the term of endearment "*Mutti der Nation*" (Mommy of the Nation) bestowed to Merkel by the German press indicates how the country now identifies and relies on the leadership of a woman. Under Merkel's guidance, Germany has not only weathered the most recent economic downturns, but it has become Europe's economic powerhouse while making progress toward gender equality. Globally, Germany ranks fourth in terms of its economy and sixth in the Gender Inequality Index (GII) (UNDP 2013). Although it is not evident that there is a direct correlation between Germany's gender politics and the economy, it is safe to

assert that Merkel's leadership has brought attention to a wide variety of women's issues in Germany.

Germany's division into East and West Germany between 1949 and 1990 is the reason that, to this day, the eastern part of Germany is more secularized than the western part. In West Germany, religion played an integral part in the rebuilding after the war. The Catholic and the Lutheran Churches emphasized the traditional family as an integral element, as evidenced by the founding of the two parties, CDU (*Christlich-Demokratische Union*; Christian Democratic Union) in 1945, by members of the Catholic Centre Party and Lutherans, and the Bavarian-only CSU (*Christlich-Soziale Union*; Christian Social Union), also in 1945. West Germany's economic success and swift rebuilding after the war was thus also a win for the two churches and their patriarchal structure—even in the Lutheran Church that up to this day has fewer than 40 percent of its positions occupied by women.

In communist East Germany, churches were tolerated, but they were not supported by the government. In fact, East Germany instituted a secular coming-of-age ritual to replace the religious ceremonies of confirmation in the Christian churches. The *Jugendweihe* was started in 1955 and became a political tradition in 1958, with the intention of secularizing East German society. Indeed, many East Germans did not associate themselves with religion at all. Even in the late 1980s, when East German churches became political spaces and offered room for a growing democracy movement, people did not flock to churches for political reasons.

Since German unification, more and more Germans are leaving churches, and only for a short period after 2005, when the German cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was elected pope of the Catholic Church and caused a brief uptick in numbers, official religious affiliation has decreased. Overall, however, Germany is still a country permeated by the religious influences of the two main churches.

Girls and Teens

Because of the demographic changes and the fact that almost 25 percent of the teenagers in Germany have a diverse family background, with their parents or grandparents having immigrated to Germany, the lives of girls and teenagers are difficult to generalize. Perhaps this lack of generalization is most striking because the difference one observes between German girls and teens and those with a "migration background"—a term used in Germany to describe those 25 percent—indicates two things. First, girls and female teenagers are disadvantaged over their male peers. Second, a migration background disadvantages girls and female teens further, as established patriarchal structures position and solidify the girls in those structures, often against their will. For those reasons, separating German girls and girls with a migration background is a troublesome necessity because there is a clear distinction at all levels of German society. In general, girls, teens, and women with a migration background have a more difficult life.

Education

According to a study conducted for Ursula von der Leyen, more gender equality is essential for the future of Germany (von der Leyen 2013). Nevertheless, at present, more girls leave German schools with a diploma than their male counterparts. In 2014, 5.6 percent of German girls and 12.9 percent of girls with a migration background did not graduate, compared to 9.5 percent of German boys and 19.7 percent of boys with a migration background. Almost 35 percent of German girls and 10.3 percent of girls with a migration background received a degree that allowed them to attend college (compared to 26.3% of German boys and 8.1% of boys with a migration background) (OECD 2014).

As schooling is compulsory until the equivalent of the eighth grade in the United States, and homeschooling is illegal in Germany, each girl is guaranteed a basic education that requires interaction in a social setting with children of all genders. Most schooling is done at public schools, which are governed by the laws of each state. Private schools also have to adhere to these laws and are only allowed to charge modest tuition to avoid segregation by social status. Most schools are coed schools, but schools that are exclusively for girls do exist, especially at the secondary level. At those schools, girls have shown more interest in the sciences due to the lack of gender stereotyping that is often the case at mixed schools (Expatica 2017).

The infrastructure thus theoretically enables all girls to graduate with a diploma, enabling them to attend college. In reality, girls, particularly with a migration background, are often discouraged to attend secondary schools beyond the requirement, especially when their cultural roots require them to occupy traditional gender roles within their families. The German government started to address these issues with special projects and programs offered to girls with a migration background, such as free computer

courses, mentoring by successful women from migration backgrounds, and support networks.

The statistics that show the low percentage of women with migration backgrounds receiving a degree that qualifies them to attend college have further implications. While the overall percentage of female students has been hovering around 47 percent since 2005, most of them come from families without migration backgrounds, making college education still largely unattainable for some girls due to sociocultural considerations (BPB 2014). Socioeconomic factors only play a small role, as studying at German universities is tuition free or bears only a nominal fee and students generally qualify for low-interest student loans to cover some of their living expenses. Cultural barriers, going back to the patriarchal system of many minority cultures, prevent an increase in better education, at least for the moment.

Employment

Sixty-eight percent of German women are employed at least part-time (compared to a 78% employment rate for men) (OECD Better Life Index 2014). As in many other areas for women in Germany, a migration background complicates life. Almost one-third of all unemployed women come from a family of immigrants.

Overall, more women work part-time than men and earn less on average than their male counterparts, and they still generally juggle housework and caring for the children on top of their day jobs. This often makes the pursuit of a full-time position impossible. In particular, when children who have not yet reached school age are involved, the lack of adequate child care (only one space for three children) and having half-day kindergarten coupled with the expectation of a male breadwinner and the female homemaker have posed major problems for women interested in joining the workforce. Conditions have improved for women, but one can still observe a large gap between women and men (OECD Better Life Index 2014).

Historically, this was different. Before 1990, East Germany led the way over West Germany in providing day care options for women to allow more of them to work. In the 1980s, almost 80 percent of East German women had a job outside the home. This changed with unification in 1990, when droves of East Germans, particularly women, became unemployed (OECD Better Life Index 2014).

Theoretically, women in German have access to any job. By law, women cannot be excluded from any career option and are, at least on paper, to be treated equally to men. This legislation originated in East Germany. During the time of division, from 1945 to 1990, East Germany promoted gender equality and supported women entering "traditional" male occupations, such as engineering, while West German women still needed the permission of their husbands to pursue work at all (Labor Market Reporting 2015).

Nowadays, women work in blue-collar and white-collar jobs, and they are increasingly pursuing traditionally male professions, such as car mechanics. In some manufacturing jobs that have a three-shift rotation, women are excluded from night shifts. Job ads have to be published using gender-neutral language, either by advertising the position with male and female word forms or by stating in parentheses that the position is open to both genders. As an example, a search for a police officer would state "Polizist/Polizistin" (with the suffix "in" indicating the female gender) or "Polizist (m/w)" (the letter "m" standing for male or *männlich* and the letter "w" for female or *weiblich*).

Although more women than in the past may have been pursuing traditionally male jobs, most women still work in the service sector. The most popular jobs for women in 2013 were management assistant (secretary), followed by nurse practitioner, hairstylist, and dental hygienist (Labor Market Reporting 2015). Most of these jobs only require vocational school and apprenticeships, starting at age 15 or 16. Virtually all girls without a migration background either receive job training or pursue a comprehensive school degree.

Despite equal language and antidiscrimination laws based on gender, there are still significant and crucial differences between women and men in many areas of employment. For instance, the gender pay gap is still large, at 22 percent, despite the same or similar qualifications of women (Statista 2014). In eastern Germany, women receive lower pay on average than women in western Germany, but as wages in the eastern states are generally lower than in the western states, the gender pay gap there is only 8 percent due to generally lower wages and the previous history of women working in traditionally male jobs in East Germany (Statista 2017b). The few women who are CEOs or in leading roles receive lower pay than their male counterparts at other companies.

In 2007, an all-female business network for women, Generation CEO (with the letter O replaced by the symbol for Venus), was founded to address and improve the situation (CEO Generation 2017). In 2014, the network boasted more than 140 female members, many of them in

leading positions in large German companies. This change, along with the increase of women in politics, indicates that Germany is working on further progress toward gender equality. At the same time, even a recent law from 2014 that requires companies to introduce a gender quota for women in leading positions is not expected to change gender inequity soon.

Family Life

The sexual revolution of the 1960s changed family roles for girls and young women, at least for those with a non-migration background. During the time of Nazi rule, from 1933 to 1945, women were expected to give birth and take care of the household. This notion of the man as breadwinner and the woman as homemaker continued in postwar Germany and in the years to follow; in fact, in West Germany, women still needed written permission from their husbands to pursue work outside the house until 1957, and it took until 1977 to completely abolish this law (Erdmann 2012). In East Germany, on the other hand, women were considered equals from the very beginning of the country's founding in 1949, and they were not limited to the traditional gender roles in the family.

In 2017, girls are no longer expected to learn mending and cooking, but most children, regardless of gender, have rotating chores, such as loading the dishwasher, setting the table, taking out trash and recycling bags, going grocery shopping, and even cooking and picking up a younger sibling from day care. Even though girls are not expected to be only homemakers, many girls learn to run a household, but for more practical reasons, as school days in Germany used to end around 1:00 p.m. and parents often worked until 6:00 p.m.

In families with migration backgrounds, girls are still expected to follow the traditional role of learning how to be a homemaker. Unlike their peers, these girls do not receive schooling longer than the time required by law. They assist their mother and sisters at home, serving their father, brothers, and other male family members. At a young age, they are conditioned for their future destiny as housewives, representing a model that is disappearing otherwise, as more and more girls without migration backgrounds go on to have careers and a family.

For most families in Germany, family life is that of a First-World family, but often still with rather traditional gender roles. In 2012, there were 387,000 marriages (Germany signed a law to allow same-sex marriage in 2017);

674,000 children were born; and 870,000 people died. The average age of women at the time of marriage was 30.5 years, with a tendency upward. Almost 35 percent of marriages will end with divorce eventually (Statista 2017a).

One of the most striking statistics about Germany is that of a low birth rate. In Germany, only 1.38 children are born per couple. Germany's population would be decreasing dramatically if not for immigration and families with migration backgrounds who keep the population stable. The low birth rate also suggests that many women give birth rather late and have only one child, or forego having children altogether (CIA 2017).

The low birth rate and an increase in the number of women not getting married also tell another story—one of a society with independent women who no longer need to rely on marriage or partnership (Destatis 2012). This may not always be the case for women with migration backgrounds. They marry earlier and have more children. Sometimes, these marriages are arranged by the woman's parents. On occasion, women are married, or at least "promised," while they are still minors, a practice that is not acceptable or legal in Germany.

The state supports raising children with financial incentives such as *Kindergeld* (child allowance), *Elterngeld* (parental allowance), *Betreuungsgeld* (child care subsidy), and *Mutterschutz* (paid maternity leave). The child allowance was started under the Nazis as an incentive to give birth to Aryan children. After the war, the incentives were continued as a way to help with the costs families incur for raising children. In 2014, families received USD$194 each for the first and the second child, USD$200 for the third, and USD$227 for each subsequent child.

Pregnant women cannot be fired from their jobs due to pregnancy and are protected by a number of laws that guarantee them paid leave six weeks before their due date and eight weeks after giving birth, during which time they receive their full salary. The expecting mother cannot be replaced and has a right to return to the same work during that time. Yet, despite these incentives and the opportunity to have both a career and children, many women have decided not to become mothers, as much of the work associated with raising a child falls back to the women. Working mothers thus face a triple workload of their job, raising the children, and caring for the household. A stark gender imbalance still exists in Germany.

Despite the gender imbalance and a still prevailing expectation of women to be mothers and housewives in addition to having jobs, the tendency of having fewer babies

later in life suggests something positive: most women control their sexuality. German women are sexually active earlier than their peers with a migration background. By age 17, more than 67 percent of German teenagers have had intercourse. Teachers and friends, not parents, are the main source of sex education (Spiegel Online 2006).

The use of contraceptives is well established among teenagers and adults alike, partially due to general mandatory sex education in school biology courses, but also because of easy access to contraceptives in pharmacies, stores, and even from vending machines located in public restrooms. Only 6 percent of all teenagers do not use contraceptives at all, which is one reason why the number of teenage pregnancies is fairly low. Girls older than 14 can receive a prescription for the pill from a gynecologist even without their parents' knowledge. Many teenagers use a combination of the pill and condoms, whereas women largely rely on the pill to prevent pregnancies (Spiegel Online 2006).

In Germany, sexual activity after the age of 14 is not prosecuted if it is consensual, regardless of whether the sexual activity is between minors or between minors and adults. An exception is the exchange of money for sex. Prostitution is legal in Germany, but only between adults. The legalization of prostitution has caused problems with sex trafficking of young women. Southeast Asians and Eastern Europeans are brought to Germany and forced to work in brothels, often without access to condoms, or perform what has become known as "flat-rate sex" (Spiegel 2013).

Politics

On paper, German women have the same rights as men when it comes to participation in German politics. In 1949, West Germany's Basic Law, the equivalent of a German constitution, which is still in place today, codified gender equality in paragraph 3 with the statement, "Men and women are equal before the law." Already 30 years before, on November 12, 1918, the law had been ratified that allowed German women to vote and be elected for office, and only 18 days later, the law was put in place, just in time for the federal elections on January 19, 1919. More than 300 women ran for candidacy, and, eventually, 37 women were elected to become a part of the national assembly of 423 members.

In comparison, the German parliament in the year 2014 had 230 women out of the 631 members—a quota of 36.5

percent, ranking it 21st in countries with the highest percentage of women in parliament (Weiser 2017). Two of its four political parties currently represented in the parliament have more women than men, *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* (Green Party) with 54 percent and *Die Linke* (Left Party) with 56 percent. The SPD (Social Democrats) have 45 percent, and the CDU/CSU (Christian Parties) have a mere 25 percent. The Green Party and the Left Party instituted an official quota of at least 50 percent women in all positions and with the advantage in tiebreaker cases, while the Social Democrats have a quota of 40 percent. The Christian Democrats only have a "Women quorum," suggesting a quota of 33 percent of women (Expatica 2016).

However, in 2014, more women than men were in leading positions in their political parties and the three branches of the German government. Women held the following roles: the position as chancellor (the de facto head of Germany), Angela Merkel; the position of the president of the Federal Court (*Bundesgerichtshof*, or BGH), Bettina Limperg; four of the seven positions in the federal assembly (*Bundestag*); 15 of the 30 members of the Council of Elders in the federal assembly (*Ältestenrat*); and 5 of the 15 secretaries in the federal government (*Bundesministerien*). The BGH currently has 26 female judges (including one formerly transgender judge, Johanna Schmidt-Räntsch, who recently completed surgery to become a women) out of a total of 130, making the quota 20 percent.

Compared to the situation at the turn of the millennium, Germany has progressed rapidly, and women are still on the rise in politics. The only position never occupied by a woman is that of the federal president, the ceremonial head of state of Germany. In East Germany, the last acting head of state from April 5 to October 2, 1990, was a woman, Sabine Bergmann-Pohl. In 2004 and 2009, Gesine Schwan ran for the office, but she was defeated twice. At the state level, only 4 of Germany's 16 states, North Rhine–Westphalia, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland, and Thuringia, had women as minister-presidents in 2014.

Due to this lingering underrepresentation of women in politics, men still largely dominate discussions and decisions concerning the legislation of women's rights. Current law prohibits abortion; it is punishable by prison in accordance with Section 218 of the penal code. In reality, a number of exceptions to the law allow the termination of a pregnancy. The law permits abortion within the first three months of the pregnancy (*Fristenlösung*), and there are also exceptions due to medical or criminal reasons. A threat to the health of the expecting mother or a pregnancy

due to rape exempt the woman and the medical personnel performing the abortion from punishment.

Religious and Cultural Roles
Religion

Officially, there is a separation of church and state in Germany; yet, a number of procedures, practices, and state laws seem to indicate otherwise. For instance, a "church tax" (*Kirchensteuer*) to finance the acknowledged churches in Germany is gathered annually using the federal income tax return. The limitation of this tax to "statutory corporations," that is, gaining the status of an officially acknowledged church by the German states that essentially guarantees the freedom of religious practice, shows the strong ties between church and state and the relative validity of the 1919 law. Recent public debates about the role of the crucifix in Bavaria's classrooms and the legality of teachers wearing head scarves while teaching denote further secular influence on religion in Germany. For instance, each classroom in Bavaria features a crucifix by default, instituted by a Bavarian law from 1995 to circumvent a decision earlier that year by the Federal Constitutional Court that declared crucifixes illegal in accordance with Germany's Basic Law. The new Bavarian law refers to the history and dominant Western culture as premise for this decision. In individual cases, a school principal has the authority to either remove the crucifix upon complaint or to retain it.

In the Head Scarf Judgment from 2003, the Federal Constitutional Court granted each German state the freedom to deny employment to future teachers displaying "religious opinion." The Muslim future teacher Fereshta Ludin had refused to remove her head scarf in the classroom and was denied a permanent teaching position for a lack of "personal aptitude." She sued at the administrative court (*Verwaltungsgericht*) in Stuttgart, then at the Higher Administrative Court (*Verwaltungsgerichtshof*) in the state of Baden-Württemberg, and finally at the Federal Constitutional Court, losing all three times. In a reaction to the decision, many German states ratified new laws that regulate (most often to forbid) wearing "religiously motivated" garb. Despite these laws, the habits of nuns and monks teaching at German public schools are allowed (Dearden 2016).

Christianity is the de facto state religion, even though no state religion exists, with 30.2 percent of the population belonging to Catholicism and 29.2 percent to Lutheranism. Between 3.8 million and 4.3 million residents are Muslims, 13 million are orthodox, and only 100,000 are

Jews—the latter low number was caused by the genocide committed by the Nazi regime between 1933 and 1945 that decimated the German Jewish community of originally over 550,000 (DIK 2017; CCJG 2017). Jehovah's Witnesses (*Zeugen Jehovas*) are fewer than 200,000 members, and they only recently achieved the status of a statutory corporation in most German states. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (*Kirche Jesu Christi der Heiligen der Letzten Tage*) has about 39,000 members, but it has only become a statutory corporation in the states of Berlin and Hesse. And the Church of Scientology (*Scientology-Kirche*) is only considered a registered association (*eingetragener Verein*) and has been under surveillance by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (*Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz*) for suspicion of threatening the democratic system of the Federal Republic of Germany (Berlin.de 2017; Mormon Newsroom 2017; BfV 2017).

With religion dominated by patriarchal Judeo-Christian traditions, German women have only influential roles in the few religions allowing women to occupy such roles. For Germany, in particular, they are restricted to participation in religious services in Catholicism, but they cannot be clerics. Up to this day, women can only aid priests if they are part of a Catholic order, and only since the 1990s can they serve as altar girls. Lutheran women have a more diverse array of opportunities for participation and leadership. The Lutheran Church of Germany (*Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*) allows the ordination of women. In 1992, Maria Jepsen became the first female bishop, and in 2009, the leaders of the EKD elected Margot Käßmann as their first female president (*Ratsvorsitzende*). However, despite this, ordained women are in the minority, even in the Lutheran church.

Culture

Germany's cultural life features a substantial number of women in theater, film, music, and literature—but often not in leading positions. For example, of Germany's 76 opera houses, men manage 72 of them. The German film industry is much the same. Films are still predominantly directed and produced by men, while women act or work as makeup artists or costume designers. Notable and successful exceptions are contemporary female directors such as Dorris Dörrie, Katja von Garnier, and Margarete von Trotta, who have been staples of German cinema for more than 20 years.

In literature, German women have had considerable impact for centuries. Contemporary women authors

sometimes write for women and sometimes for general audiences. Names such as Julia Franck, Elfriede Jelinke, Emine Özdamar, Verena Stefan, and Julie Zeh regularly publish best sellers.

The arguably best-known German woman in the context of sexuality is Beate Uhse, a pilot in Nazi Germany's air force during World War II. After the war, Uhse was no longer allowed to fly, so she sold a brochure about sexual hygiene and contraception through the mail (Heineman 2011). A few years later, she added condoms and books, and in 1962, Uhse opened the first sex store in the world in Flensburg, Germany. The chain now comprises more than 200 shops in 7 European countries, and its stock is traded on the German stock market.

Issues

As in many other areas of women's lives in Germany, the most pressing issues differ depending on their migration background. Those with a migration background are more affected by serious issues than their peers without such a background. For instance, violence committed by male family members due to religious beliefs, such as beatings or "honor" killings of the women, rarely happen in families without a migration background. Violence against women is omnipresent, however, with domestic violence still a problem. Until 1997, marital rape was not considered a felony and was generally not even considered a violation of the law until the Bundestag voted in favor of women's rights. Sexual violence in general is a pressing issue. More than 8 percent of all women will report being victims of sexual violence at some point in their lives, and many more cases will go unreported. In 2013, approximately 7,200 rapes were reported, according to official police statistics. In 2014, the case of Tuğçe Albayrak made international headlines. The young German-Turkish woman had helped two girls who were being assaulted by a group of young men in the restroom of a dance club. When Tuğçe left the club, she was hit by one of the men and beaten to death in the parking lot while bystanders looked on (Huggler 2014).

Sexual exploitation in Germany is a big issue, too. Although prostitution is legal, many of Germany's female sex workers are victims of sex trafficking who have been lured to Germany from Eastern Europe under false promises.

Germany's beauty standards are largely those of the United States, determined by the media and their notion of an "ideal" body. These perceptions are reinforced by women's magazines that regularly introduce their readers to the latest diet craze and fashion and swimwear presented by models with "perfect" bodies. Many girls and women are thus also subject to illnesses and unhealthy behavior, such as bulimia, bingeing, and purging, and follow the latest fitness and diet recommendations in their pursuit of these beauty standards.

Officially, German women and men are equal; yet, gender discrimination is still omnipresent in society. Salary inequity, the lack of women in leading positions, and a society that is still largely patriarchal in its structures show that things are far from perfect. In addition, the integration of women with migration backgrounds, women's rights, and strategies to encourage women to pursue jobs that were traditionally dominated by men are aspects that would improve women's lives in Germany.

SEBASTIAN HEIDUSCHKE

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Greece

Overview of Country

Surrounded by the Aegean, Ionian, and Mediterranean Seas, Greece is as well-known for its many beautiful islands as its sprawling capital city, Athens. Mainland Greece