



Boundary representations are not necessarily authoritative.

► EUROPE

BACKGROUND

Land and Climate. Covering 137,803 square miles (356,910 square kilometers), Germany is just smaller than Montana but has around one hundred times as many people. There are four main geographic regions: the broad lowlands in the north; the central uplands, which include various small mountain ranges; the wide valley and gorge of the Rhine River in the southwest; and the forested mountains and plateaus of the south. The Rhine, Danube, and Elbe Rivers flow through Germany. Many of Germany's rivers are important trade and transportation routes. About 30 percent of Germany is forested. Germany's tallest mountain is the Zugspitze, at 9,718 feet (2,962 meters).

The climate is generally temperate, with mild summers and wet winters. In the winter, average temperatures range between 35°F (2°C) in the lowland areas and 21°F (-6°C) in the mountains. In July, average temperatures are between 64°F (18°C) in low-lying regions and 68°F (20°C) in the southern valleys. Precipitation usually tends to be heavier in the south.

History. Prior to becoming part of the Holy Roman Empire, Germany was a patchwork of small, separate principalities. Although officially a nation-state in 1871, Germany passed through three wars (1864–70) before Prussian leader Otto von Bismarck finally united the country into a powerful, industrialized nation. In 1914, Germany allied with Austria and Turkey after the assassination of an Austrian official. In 1917, the United States joined Britain, France, Russia, Italy, and Japan to defeat Germany and its allies. Germany was made to pay huge reparations, admit guilt for the war, and cede about one-tenth of its territory. A democratic government, known as the Weimar Republic, was established in 1918.

The country's humiliation was worsened by the economic depression of the 1920s and a lack of support for democratic

ideals. Germany's distress gave rise to Austrian-born Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist (Nazi) Party. In 1933, President Hindenburg named Hitler chancellor after the Nazis emerged as the dominant party in elections. In 1934, the day after Hindenburg died, the posts of president and chancellor were combined, and Hitler declared himself *Führer* (leader) of the Third Reich. He soon embroiled Germany and the world in World War II. Before being defeated by the Allied forces in 1945, the Nazis occupied much of the continent, killing huge numbers of people, including six million Jews.

After the war, Germany was split into occupation zones to facilitate disarmament and organize a democracy. When the Soviet Union failed to meet these goals, the zones occupied by the Western Allies became the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), a democratic nation. The Soviets created out of the eastern zone the German Democratic Republic (GDR), which followed the Soviet model of development. Thousands of people fled the east, so the GDR built the Berlin Wall (1961) to shut off access to West Berlin. The wall remained a symbol of the Cold War until late 1989, when it was opened to traffic on both sides. The wall was eventually torn down, and the two nations became the reunified Federal Republic of Germany on 3 October 1990. Although Berlin regained its status as the country's capital, the actual transition from Bonn (Western Germany) lasted nearly a decade.

In 1957, West Germany was a founding member of the European Community, now known as the European Union (EU). It had joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1955, but the German constitution restricted the military to German soil. In 1993, policy changes allowed troops to participate in UN peacekeeping and relief operations

Germany

in Somalia, Bosnia, and Yugoslavia.

Elected as chancellor in 1982, Helmut Kohl became a driving force behind German unification and Europe's plan for monetary union. Record-high unemployment and low economic growth led to Kohl's defeat at the polls in September 1998. Political scandal rocked the country in 1999 when former chancellor Kohl admitted to accepting more than one million dollars in secret payments to his Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party during the 1990s. The scandal severely damaged the reputation of Kohl and the CDU.

Germany's current priorities include strengthening the economy, reforming immigration policy, and more clearly defining the country's relationship to Europe and the West.

THE PEOPLE

Population. Germany's population of 82.5 million is currently growing at about 0.04 percent. The country is highly urbanized; about 87 percent lives in urban areas. The population is primarily ethnic German (91 percent). Noncitizen minorities from Turkey (2.3 percent), the former Yugoslavia (.7 percent), Italy (.7 percent), Greece, and Poland live and work in Germany. Immigrants comprise a significant percentage of some western metropolitan populations. In western states, numerous political refugees from the Middle East, India, Africa, and Asia receive room and board until their applications for asylum are processed. A small Slavic (Sorbian) minority resides in the east, and a Danish population lives in the north. Many ethnic Germans have emigrated from eastern European nations in search of work. The much-publicized violence against immigrant groups reflects the feelings of only a small minority. But such violence is on the rise. While most Germans do not support these actions, they do support stemming the flow of "economic" refugees. New laws restrict the definition of a valid asylum seeker and limit other forms of immigration.

Language. German is the official language. However, the German taught in school and used in the media is different than the language used in daily conversation. Dialects vary from area to area. In fact, a German from Bonn or Hannover may have trouble understanding a person from Munich (München), where Bavarian is spoken, or Halle where Saxon is spoken. The dialects do have written forms but are mostly oral; they are part of folk literature and music. In all dialects of the written language, all nouns are capitalized. English, widely understood, is a required school subject. Many Germans in eastern states understand and speak Russian.

Religion. Germany is essentially a Christian, but secular, society. About 34 percent of the population belongs to the Roman Catholic Church, 34 percent is Protestant (mostly Lutheran), and nearly 4 percent is Muslim. A number of other Christian denominations are active throughout the country. About 28 percent of the people have no official religious affiliation. Historically, entire towns and regions belonged to one faith, according to the local ruler's choice. These lines are still visible today, as Catholics reside mostly in the south and west and Protestants in the north and east.

General Attitudes. Germans are industrious, honest, thrifty, and orderly. They appreciate punctuality, privacy, intelligence, and skill. They have a strong sense of regional pride, a fact the federal system of government recognizes and accommodates. World War II broke down class distinctions because most people lost their possessions and had to start over again. Germany emerged as a land of freedom and opportunity after the war. Germans appreciate intelligent conversation but may be wary

of unfamiliar or different ideas. Many are prone to skepticism. Most Germans have a strong classical education because of the nation's rich heritage in music, history, science, and art, and they expect others to appreciate that background. Former East Germans are also proud of how they have nurtured their cultural heritage through the performing arts and museums. After four decades of life under communism, however, it is not surprising that those in the east have somewhat different attitudes toward daily life and work.

Tensions exist between people in the west and east over matters relating to reunification. Easterners sometimes feel they are treated as second-class citizens, receiving lower salaries, getting blamed for tax hikes, and being ridiculed by their western counterparts. Westerners resent the economic burden of rebuilding the east; some still believe easterners are less capable and unrefined. Despite the emotional divisions, reconstruction and revitalization are adding to a united Germany.

Personal Appearance. Germans follow European fashion trends and take care to be well dressed in public. Sloppy or overly casual attire is inappropriate. Shorts and sandals are common leisure wear in summer. Women wear cosmetics sparingly. Hints of traditional culture may be part of one's modern daily wardrobe. In southern Germany (mostly southern Bavaria), full traditional attire such as *Lederhosen* (leather pants, either short or knee-length), *Dirndlkleider* (dresses with gathered waists and full skirts, worn with an apron), Bavarian suits, and alpine hats usually are worn during traditional festivals and celebrations.

CUSTOMS AND COURTESIES

Greetings. A handshake is the most common form of greeting. A man waits for a woman to extend her hand before shaking it; in mixed company he shakes a woman's hand before a man's. In groups, several people do not shake hands at once; crossing someone else's handshake is inappropriate. Germans generally do not greet strangers on the street, although sincere smiles are appreciated. The most common verbal greeting is *Guten Tag!* (Good day). Some may use a simple *Hallo* (Hello). Southern Germans may use *Griß Gott!* (Greetings). By tradition, only family members and close friends address each other by first name. Others use titles and surnames. However, this is changing among the youth. When addressing a stranger, acquaintance, or colleague, one combines *Herr* (Mr.), *Frau* (Mrs. or Miss), or other titles with the person's professional title and last name. The titles can also be used without the name. For example, a male professor is addressed as *Herr Professor*; a female head of a department in business or government could be addressed as *Frau Direktor*.

Gestures. Chewing gum in public is inappropriate. Talking with one's hands in the pockets is disrespectful. People cross the legs with one knee over the other and do not place feet on furniture. Pointing the index finger to one's own head is an insult to another person. To wish luck, Germans "squeeze the thumb" instead of crossing fingers. That is, they fold the thumb in and close the fingers on it.

Visiting. Germans appreciate punctuality, but hosts are not insulted if guests arrive a few minutes late. Dinner guests often bring an odd number of flowers, avoiding roses (symbolizing love) or white flowers (associated with mourning). They unwrap flowers before giving them to the hostess. Guests usually stand when the host enters the room and remain standing until offered a seat again. It is also courteous to stand when a woman enters the room. Not everyone adheres to these rules

of etiquette, but it is polite to do so. Hosts almost always serve refreshments to guests, even during short visits. Spontaneous visits, even between neighbors, are not very common, but this is changing among young people. Arrangements generally are made in advance. Germans enjoy gathering for conversation and social events. While dinner parties may last well into the night, daytime visits are usually short, except in the case of afternoon teatime, called *Kaffee-trinken*, where tea or coffee and cakes or cookies are served.

Eating. Germans eat in the continental style, with the fork in the left hand and the knife in the right. They keep hands above the table, with wrists resting on the edge. When potatoes and fish are served, Germans do not cut them with a knife because this indicates to the cook that they are not fully cooked. Leaving food on the plate is considered wasteful. Most Germans prefer beer, wine, or mineral water with meals; they rarely drink tap water. Soft drinks and fruit juices are also popular. Germans prefer their drinks without ice. Because of the tradition of bottled water, Germany does not have drinking fountains. In restaurants, the bill usually includes a service charge and is paid at the table. Customers often round up the total, giving the server the difference as an extra tip (*Trinkgeld*).

LIFESTYLE

Family. Traditionally, the father is the head of the family. Both parents often work, more so in the east than in the west. Large families are not common, even in rural areas. The average family has only one or two children. Order, responsibility, and achievement are traditional family values. People today, especially Germans in the west, practice a greater variety of lifestyles than in the past. Most young adults prefer to live away from home once they become wage earners or go on to a university. Most families live in apartments. Single-family homes are by no means rare, just very expensive. Roughly 40 percent of all western homes (whether houses or apartments) are owned by the occupants. The rate is lower in the east. In urban areas, people often own or rent small garden plots (*Schrebergarten*) in or near the city.

Dating and Marriage. Dating is different in Germany than in the United States. The German language does not even have a word for *dating*. Young men and women socialize on a casual basis. If a person wants to go out with someone, either sex can suggest a *Verabredung* (appointment). They each pay for their own food and entertainment (unless one offers to pay for a special occasion). Couples usually marry in their twenties, but they often wait until they have some financial security. It is common for young people to live together before or instead of marrying. Legal marriages are performed at the city hall; religious ceremonies are optional. Around 40 percent of marriages end in divorce.

Diet. While regional dishes vary, potatoes, noodles, dumplings, sauces, vegetables, cakes, and pastries are common in Germany. Pork is a popular meat, along with beef and chicken. Pork is prepared according to regional tradition; it may be boiled with cabbage in Frankfurt, roasted with dumplings in München, or prepared as ham in Westphalia. Lamb is widely available in the north. Fish is popular in North Sea areas such as Hamburg but also in Bavaria, where trout is plentiful. Every region has its own type of *Wurst* (sausage).

Breakfast consists of rolls (preferably whole wheat or whole grain bread), jam, and coffee, tea, or milk. The main meal, traditionally served at midday, includes soup, a main dish, and dessert. For the lighter evening meal (*Abendbrot*), open-faced

sandwiches (cheese, meats, and spreads) are common; although full meals are the norm in restaurants. Two-income families rarely have a big midday meal; they eat the main meal in the evening. Germans buy groceries often and prefer fresh foods for cooking. Ethnic dishes (especially Italian, Greek, and Turkish) and fast foods are popular. Germans are known for their beer making and drinking. They also enjoy domestic and imported wines. However, the younger generation consumes less alcohol overall than the older generation.

Recreation. Germans enjoy hiking, skiing, swimming, cycling, touring in cars, and playing tennis, among other things. Garden plots with small gazebos offer relaxation on summer evenings. People also enjoy watching television or getting together with friends. Soccer (*Fußball*) is the most popular sport and millions belong to soccer clubs. Germany's team traditionally participates in World Cup competitions. Participation in organized sports is changing because of reunification; a uniform club system is being established. Germans in the west have long relished travel, something those in the east are also beginning to enjoy. Carnival (*Fasching*) is important in some regions, where dances, parades, and other celebrations take place before the Catholic Lent.

The Arts. Cultural arts, especially music and theater, are well supported in Germany. Festivals and performances draw large audiences throughout the country. Private support and government subsidies allow even the smallest cities to have professional orchestras, opera companies, and at least one museum. Expressionism continues to be a hallmark of German fine art. Local arts might include weaving, wood carving, and woodblock printing. Numerous world-renowned composers, artists, philosophers, and writers are German.

Holidays. New Year's celebrations begin on *Sylvester* (31 Dec.) with midnight fireworks and parties, followed by a public holiday on 1 January. Easter is celebrated with Sunday worship services and Monday family gatherings. Labor union parades mark Labor Day (1 May). Various religious holidays (Catholic and Protestant) are celebrated, such as Pentecost, Ascension, and All Saints' Day (1 Nov.). The German Unification Day is celebrated on 3 October. At Christmas, people exchange gifts on Christmas Eve (*Heiliger Abend*); the family relaxes on Christmas Day. Germans enjoy visiting on 26 December, also a legal holiday.

Commerce. Before reunification, shops in the east were open late to accommodate workers, while stores in the west closed by 6:30 p.m. to comply with labor laws. However, recent legislation allows stores to stay open until 8 p.m. on weekdays. On Saturdays, shops may close at 4 p.m. rather than 2 p.m., and bakeries can open for three hours on Sundays. Business hours range from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays. Banks close at 4 p.m. but remain open a bit later on Thursdays. Some banks and small businesses in less metropolitan areas close for lunch. Many Germans shop daily for fresh produce (often at open-air markets) and bread (at bakeries).

SOCIETY

Government. Germany is a federal parliamentary republic. The country's president (currently Johannes Rau) is elected as head of state by members of the federal and state legislatures for up to two five-year terms; his duties are mostly ceremonial. The chancellor (currently Gerhard Schröder) is head of government. The chancellor is elected by the lower house of Parliament, the Federal Assembly. Germany's legislature has two houses, the Federal Council (*Bundesrat*) and the Federal

Germany

Assembly (*Bundestag*). The country has 16 states (*Länder*), each of which has its own legislature and autonomy over schools and other matters. State governments elect the 69 members of the *Bundesrat*, while the 603 members of the *Bundestag* are elected by popular vote. The voting age is 18.

Economy. Germany is one of the top five economic powers in the world and provides leadership and generous financial support to the EU. As a whole, the country has a high gross domestic product per capita; however, the east's economy is far weaker than the west's. East German prices typically are as high as those in the west, but salaries, rents, and overall living conditions remain lower. The east has made substantial progress in its shift toward a market economy; however, the region still relies heavily on subsidies (nearly \$100 billion a year) from the economically powerful western states. The government has undertaken huge projects to retrain workers and rebuild roads, railways, public transportation, and communications facilities. With investment from the west, economic growth in the east averaged 8 percent from 1992 to 1995 but dropped to 2 percent in 1997 and has hovered at about that level since then. Despite progress, more private investment is required to revitalize eastern industries and relieve the west of heavy tax burdens.

Inflation is low. Generous social benefits, rigid work rules, and high labor costs have been obstacles to reviving the economy and reestablishing the country's global competitiveness. Germany is traditionally one of the world's largest exporters. Main exports include cars, televisions and other manufactured goods, steel, and aluminum. Construction, manufacturing, and service industries are important components of the domestic economy. In 2002, the euro replaced the *Deutsche Mark* as Germany's currency.

Transportation and Communications. Most German families have cars; owning one is more important to Germans than to many other Europeans. They especially favor cars for touring or traveling long distances. Public transportation and bike riding are more efficient for daily travel in major cities because of heavy traffic and limited parking. Subways, buses, streetcars, and trains form the main transportation network. Trains travel to nearly every town and city. Drivers carefully obey traffic rules. One must attend expensive and rigorous driver-training classes to qualify for a driver's license.

The communications system is modern and fully developed. Telephone and postal services are centralized and efficient. There are more mobile phones in use than regular phone lines. Many Germans own computers and have access to the internet. Most have access to cable or satellite television.

Education. Education is a source of pride, especially in the areas of technology and craftsmanship. The states administer public education. Preschool begins around age four. Full-time schooling is mandatory for students between ages six and fifteen, and part- or full-time schooling continues on a chosen track until age eighteen. Students may enter a job-training program, train for specific professional careers, or study to enter a university. Nearly every occupation, from mechanic to waiter to accountant, has a school or program designed specifically for it. For example, waiters and waitresses might attend school for up to three years before certifying as servers.

DEVELOPMENT DATA

Human Dev. Index* rank	18 of 175 countries
Adjusted for women	15 of 144 countries
Real GDP per capita	\$25,350
Adult literacy rate	99 percent (male); 99 (female)
Infant mortality rate	4 per 1,000 births
Life expectancy	75 (male); 81 (female)

Because of this training, their salaries are much higher than those of their counterparts in the United States.

Education is free at all levels, but entrance to universities is difficult and can be gained only through success on the *Abitur* exam, taken at the end of *Gymnasium*. Adults can continue their education through evening classes.

Health. Germany has an excellent health care system. Medical care is provided free or at minimal cost to all citizens. Private doctors also practice, but most people have access to care in hospitals and clinics. The government controls fees, but some co-payments are required. In addition to government health insurance, private insurance is available. When workers become ill, they receive up to six weeks of full pay while they recover. People in eastern states suffer more often from illnesses related to pollution.

AT A GLANCE

Events and Trends.

- Along with France and Russia, Germany opposed the U.S. move toward military action against Iraq in 2003. During 2002 elections, Chancellor Schröder had promised that under his government, Germany would not participate in a strike against Iraq. Some Germans were reluctant to risk the country's diplomatic ties with the United States.
- In 2003, Germany's economy shrank by .1 percent, the worst outcome in 10 years. Amid recession and high unemployment (about 10 percent), the country faces a budget deficit higher than what the EU allows. However, economists predicted better results for 2004.
- In an attempt to kick-start the economy, German lawmakers have proposed reforms that would reform labor markets by making it easier to fire workers and curbing unemployment benefits; change health care by making citizens pay for more dental and optical services; and trim pensions by making people work longer to receive full benefits.
- Immigration reform is a significant issue in Germany. The country must balance its need for highly skilled foreign workers against fears that increased immigration could worsen unemployment. Demand for skilled workers will increase if, as predicted, the German population declines over the next 50 years.

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