

Basics

The German constitution says:

Article 1: „**Human dignity shall be inviolable**” and

Article 3.2: „**Men and women shall have equal rights.**”

- * This means that a woman has the same rights as a man. It also means that every woman has the right to be treated in a way that respects her dignity. Nobody may deny her these rights.
- * Every woman in Germany enjoys these basic rights, regardless of her nationality, cultural background, heritage, or religion.
- * Every woman has the right to make her own life decisions, to speak freely, to act on her own behalf and in her own interest. She does not need a man to do all this for her.
- * In Germany, the constitution stands above all religions. Every woman has the right to decide freely whether or not to obey a religious rule.
- * Every woman who comes to Germany has the right to apply for asylum, independently and on her own behalf. She does not need her husband, a male relative, or other representative to do this for her. Nobody has the right to act or speak on her behalf unless she has explicitly allowed them to do so.
- * Every woman who applies for asylum in Germany but does not (yet) speak German has the right to an interpreter who will be present at hearings at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF). The interpreter will be made available by the authorities. If you need an interpreter to be present at other appointments and hearings you can ask for a volunteer.
- * Every woman who is granted asylum in Germany must take a so-called integration course where she will learn German and some basics of German culture. Nobody, not even her husband, may prevent her from attending this course.

Emergency information

- * If you are threatened, hurt, or harmed in any way you should seek help immediately! Do not feel ashamed to ask for protection or support. In Germany, it is not the woman's reputation that suffers when she is harmed, but the violator's.
- * Call the toll free helpline 08000 116 016 if you experience or fear violence, forced marriage, or other threats. They offer practical help and advice in several languages (their URL is www.hilfetelefon.de).
- * Women's shelters offer sanctuary to women who have experienced violence. Their addresses are secret to keep these places safe. Ask the police, church personnel, or women's organization how to get there. Staying at the women's shelter is free.

Publishing information

The information provided here is not meant to be exhaustive. It is intended as an introduction to the rights of women in Germany.

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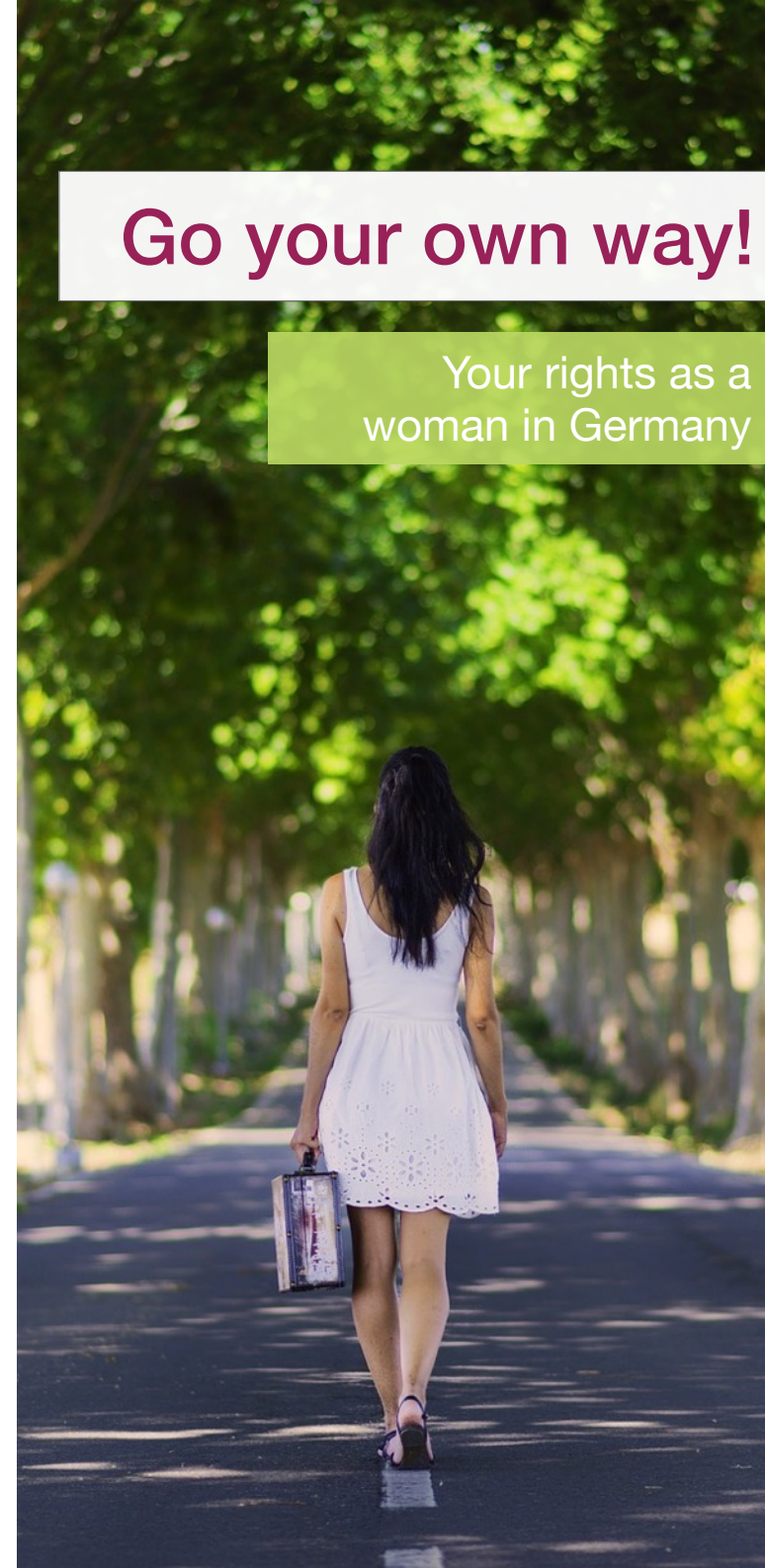
Translated by Julia Ritter.

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Go your own way!

Your rights as a woman in Germany



Education, Professional Training, Career

- * Every girl has the right and the obligation to attend school for at least nine or ten years. Nobody may force her to leave school after year 9/10 if her grades are good enough to continue her academic education.
- * Every woman has the right to decide whether she wants to train for a job after she has finished school. If she has earned a higher education entrance qualification she has the right to enroll in a university.
- * Every woman has the right to choose her profession. If she has the required qualifications she may train for any job in Germany.
- * Every woman has the right to be compensated appropriately for her work. Every woman has the right to decide over her own financial assets and the money she earns. Every woman has the right to open her own bank account and manage her own money.

Everyday Life

- * Every woman has the right to spend her free time any way she likes. Only she decides what she wants to do and with whom, whether she wants to work out, go to a movie, or have a drink in a bar.
- * Every woman has the right to be outside at any time of the day or night.
- * Every woman has the right to talk to anybody she wants, women or men, regardless of her or the other person's marital status.
- * Nobody, not even her husband, may dictate what the woman may wear. She alone decides what clothes she wants to wear.
- * Every woman has the right to decide whether or not she wants to cover her hair and her body. In Germany, it does not affect a woman's reputation and honor if she decides not to wear enveloping outer garments.

Relationships/Marriage

- * Every woman has the right to choose her own partner. She decides with whom she wants to be together and share her life, regardless of her partner's sex, gender, religion, or culture. Nobody may force her to get married. Nobody may force her to marry someone she does not want as a husband.
- * Every woman has the right to end a relationship or marriage if she so chooses.
- * A woman's reputation or honor do not suffer if she rejects a man, ends a relationship, or gets a divorce. By doing so, she does not compromise anyone else's honor, either. She only exercises her right to decide freely over her own life.
- * When a woman decides to end the relationship with the father of her children, both parents usually share custody of the child or children. This means that both parents have to continue caring for their children. They need to share the personal and financial obligations involved in raising them. Both need to spend a suitable amount of time with their kids. Neither parent may take the children away or prevent the other from seeing them. The only exception is when a court of law has ruled otherwise, e.g. by issuing a restraining order against one parent.
- * Every woman has the right to decide whether or not she wants to become pregnant, regardless of her marital status. There are some circumstances in which she has the right to an abortion (including, but not limited to pregnancy following rape or when the woman's health is in danger). An abortion does not constitute a disgrace nor compromise anyone's honor.
- * Every woman has the right to refuse taking on the sole responsibility for childcare and housekeeping. Her partner/husband/the father of her children has the right and the obligation to share these duties equally.
- * Every woman has the right to have equal say in the raising of her children. The father may not decide anything that the mother does not want.

Sexuality

- * Every woman has the right to decide for herself with whom she wants to have sexual relations, regardless of that person's sex, gender, religion, or cultural background.
- * Every woman has the right to refuse sexual intercourse or other sexual acts at any time. Nobody has the right to coerce her into having sex of any kind, not even her husband. Every woman has the right to report any violation of this right to the police.
- * Every woman has the right to take proper precautions against sexually transmitted diseases and/or unwanted pregnancy, regardless of her marital status.
- * Rape and sexual coercion are crimes, whether victim and perpetrator are married to each other or not. These crimes will be legally prosecuted.
- * A woman's virginity is not vital for her family's honor, nor is it a prerequisite for marriage. A woman's virginity is nobody's business but her own.

Health

- * Nobody, neither strangers nor family members, may threaten, harass, beat or otherwise intentionally cause physical or psychological harm to a woman or girl. Doing so is against German law.
- * Every woman who has become the victim of violence has the right to report the perpetrator(s), even if it is her husband or her or her husband's/partner's relatives. The police must investigate such reported crimes.
- * Every woman has the right to receive medical treatment for physical and psychological ailments. She has the right to choose her own doctor. Nobody, not even family members or her husband, has the right to make health-related decisions on behalf of the woman.
- * All violations of bodily integrity are crimes. This includes female circumcisions performed on girls. These crimes will be legally prosecuted.