

# GERMANY OVERVIEW



## BASIC STATISTICS

- **Total population:** 82,178,000, largest in Europe after the Russian Federation (Ranked 12th in the world by the US Census Bureau).
- **National GDP:** US \$1.81 trillion GDP per capital (average income): US \$22,100.
- **Median Age:** 40.2 years old.
- **Infant Mortality:** 5.08 per 1000 live births.

## GEOGRAPHY

- **Location:** Central Europe, links East and West as well as Scandinavia and the Mediterranean.
- **Borders:** Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Switzerland, Austria, the Czech Republic, and Poland.
- **Capital:** Berlin (federal government moved from Bonn to Berlin in 1999).
- **Area:** 357,022 square kilometer.
- **Major cities and population:** Berlin 3,458,763; Munich 1,225,809; Hamburg 1,707,986; Cologne 964,346; Frankfurt 647,304; Essen 611,827.
- **5 Major regions:** The North German Plain, the Central Upland Range, the terrace panorama of the southwest, the Alpine foothills, and the Bavarian Alps.
- **Historical regional flavor:** The German nation essentially grew out of a number of German tribes comprised of the Franks, the Saxons, the Swabians and the Bavarians. Over time these groups developed stereotypes that have become a part of the traditional flavor of German lore. Some of the examples are that Swabians are thrifty, Rhinelanders happy-go-lucky, and Saxons hardworking and shrewd. Also, 2001 marks the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Prussians, who are remembered by Germans as honorable and orderly.

## DEMOGRAPHY

- **Population density:** 601 people per square mile, 87% urban.
- **Children 0-14:** 15.6 %—12,925,322.
- **Teenage 10-19:** 11.5%—9,517,326.
- **Youth 15-24:** 11.4%—9,425,832.
- **Seniors Over 70:** 11.5%—9,510,904.
- **Male to female ratio:** 96/100.
- **Birth rate:** 9.35 per 1000, one of the lowest in the world.
- **Life expectancy at birth:** Males 73.9, females 80.2.
- **Infant mortality rate:** 5.08 per 1000 live births.
- **Official Language:** German.
- **Ethnic Groups:** 92% German, 2% Turkish, 6% Other.
- **Foreign Nationalities Represented:** 2,107,000 Turks; 721,000 Yugoslavians (Serbia/Montenegro); 281,400 from Bosnia and Herzegovina; 206,600 Croatians; 608,000 Italians; 363,000 Greeks; 185,000 Austrians; 132,000 Spaniards; 132,000 Portuguese; 115,000 British; 113,000 Netherlanders; 104,000 French; 283,000 Poles; 95,000 Romanians; 110,000 Americans; 50,500 people from the former Soviet Union; 52,000 Hungarians; 84,000 from Morocco; 25,500 from Tunisia; 22,000 from Ghana; 19,600 from Brazil; 66,500 from Afghanistan; 36,700 from China; 36,000 from India; 114,000 from Iran; 56,000 from Lebanon; 38,000 from Pakistan; 60,000 from Sri Lanka; and 88,000 from Vietnam.
- **Religious affiliations:** 38% Protestant, 32% Roman Catholic.
- **Religious group representation:** 75.8% Christian (62,326,161), 17.2% Nonreligious (14,131,127), 4.4% Muslim (3,653,365), 2.2% Atheist (1,793,457). Each of the following comprises less than one percent: Jew, Buddhist, Hindu, New-Religionist, Baha'i, Chinese folk-religionist, Sikh, Ethno-religionist, Confucian and other.
- **Education:** Compulsory from ages 6-15.
- **Average number of years of formal education:** 15.8.
- **Literacy rate:** 100%.

## ECONOMY

- **Currency:** Deutsch Mark, Euro Dollar.
- **GNP per capita:** (PPP\$) 21,110.
- **GDP per capita:** \$22,100.
- **Major Industries:** Steel, Ships, vehicles, machinery, electronics, coal, chemicals, iron, cement, food and beverages.
- **Chief crops:** Corn, wheat, potatoes, watermelon, vegetables.
- **Electricity production:** 525.356 billion kWh.
- **TV Sets:** 571 per 1000 people.
- **Radios:** 946 per 1000 people.

- **Telephones:** 48,300,000 main lines.
- **Daily newspaper circulation:** 311 per 1000 people.

## **POLITICS**

- **Government type:** Federal Republic.
- **Head of state:** Johannes Rau.
- **Head of government:** Chancellor Gerhard Schröder.
- **International organization memberships:** United Nations, European Union (EU), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).
- **Between World War II and 1990 Germany was divided into:** East Germany, The German Democratic Republic, which was influenced by Soviet presence and West Germany, The Federal Republic of Germany, which was linked politically to the Western World.

## **TRENDS AND SOCIAL ISSUES**

### ***THE EUROPEAN UNION AND GERMANY***

Since the inception of the European Community in the 1950s, Germany has been a key player and continues to be so in the evolution of the European Union. Other original members of the European Community include Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Each decade since, the European Community has grown in size and power. In the 1970s Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom joined, and the European Parliament was elected for the first time. In the 1980s Greece, Spain, and Portugal became members, and the plans for the Single Market and the Economic and Monetary Union were launched. In the 1990s the development of the EU community escalated. The community officially became the European Union and the Single Market was established in 1993. In 1995 Austria, Finland, and Sweden joined, making the total number of countries 15, and in 1999 the single currency was established. In the coming millennium, the EU plans to expand its membership with at least 13 other sites indicating interest. The vision of EU promises to revolutionize world politics. EU's website, Europa, states, "The European Union's mission is to organize relations between member states and between their peoples in coherent manner and basis of solidarity." It also identifies the EU objectives as the following: "to promote of economic and social progress, to assert the identity of the EU on the international scene, to introduce European citizenship, to develop an area of freedom, security and justice, and to maintain and build an established EU law." In order to reach those objectives, the EU has divided the governing responsibilities into the following five branches of the EU: the European

Parliament, the Council, the Commission, the Court of Justice, and the Court of Auditors. EU's evolution on to the world scene will be interesting to watch.

### ***EAST/WEST UNIFICATION***

As recently as October 3, 2000, the new Federal Republic of Germany celebrated its 10th anniversary. In 1990, the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) merged with the Federal Republic (West Germany), forming the nation we know today as Germany.

Of primary importance as these two countries merged was the economic development of the formerly communist eastern Germany. The official government program, "Afbau Ost," was implemented in order to provide infrastructure, resources, businesses, and training, to raise the east's standard of living up to the west's. Much has been accomplished, including the development of more than a half million new companies, creating jobs for approximately 3.2 million people. By examining Germany's budget, however, one can discern that this is still a priority issue for Germany. In 2000 the federal budget allocated approximately DM 38 billion to the development of east Germany and delineated it as such: DM 19.1, billion for infrastructure, DM 11.9 billion for employment, DM 3.1 billion for research and development, DM 2.3 for regional economic development, and DM 1.7 billion for supplementing sound, private business ventures and improving environmental standards.

Currently, the largest obstacle is the uniting of the people themselves. Though eastern German sentiment is basically positive toward unification, feelings of alienation and sub-German status still resonate 10 years after the wall came down. On April 19, 1999 Chancellor Schröder challenged the German people, " 'What we know of one another is often too superficial, too laden with prejudice. East and west Germans will, for a long time, have to explain themselves to one another without having to immediately justify themselves.' " (August 30, 2000)

### ***RISE OF RADICAL NEO-NAZI SENTIMENT***

In the German newspaper "Die Woche" German Interior Minister Otto Schily noted the recent trend in eastern Germany as the year 2000 came to a close:

From January to November 2000—I don't yet have the figures for the entire year—we registered 13,753 right-wing extremist, xenophobic, and anti-Semitic offences. In the same period the previous year there were 9456 such offences. Thus, there has been an alarming increase. The figures for the months of August and September are particularly dramatic. Nearly a third of the total offences registered were committed in these two months. At the

same time there was about a 40 percent increase in xenophobic acts of violence, from 397 to 553. Killings, bodily injury, as well as arson and bomb attacks accounted for 18 percent of the xenophobic offences...

More recently, however, the German government is working hard to curb racist hate ideology from festering among German youth. On February 27, 2001, the Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth Minister, Christine Bergmann, presented an educational initiative "Youth for Tolerance and Democracy—Against Right-Wing Extremism, Xenophobia and Anti-Semitism."

The country is investing millions of marks into this taskforce designed to "strengthen democratic behavior and civic commitment among young people as well as promote tolerance and open-mindedness."

## **SOURCES**

### TEXT

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**McGeeveran Jr., W. (Ed.). (2001).** *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 2001.* Mahwah, NJ: World Almanac Books.

**Turner, B. (2000).** *The World Today: Essential Facts in an Ever Changing World 2000.* New York, NY: St. Marten's Press.

### WEB

#### **[Die Bundesregierung.](#)**

- (August 30, 2000) "10th Anniversary of German Unification—A Review of the Progress Made in Bringing Living Standards in the Eastern Section of the Country into Line with Those in the West"
- (September 19, 2000) "Ten Years of German Unity Taking Stock of Germany's Internal Unity at Subjective Level (Part II)"
- (September 27, 2000) "10th Anniversary of German Unity"
- (February 23, 2001) "XENOS: German Government Initiates Programme to Promote Understanding and Tolerance"

#### **[EUROPA \(the EU website\).](#)**

- 'The ABC of the European Union.'

- "European Union in the US"
- "EU in Brief"

**UNICEF Information Statistics.**

**United Nation Statistics Division.**

**US Census Bureau, International Database.**

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION**

1. How important do you see Germany's role in Europe and in the World?
2. What most impresses you about the above information?
3. Do you take issue with any of the above? If so, how would you express it differently?
4. What strikes you most about the population of Germany and the birthrate? Why?
5. What do you see as the historical and cultural contributions of Germany to the world?
6. How has Germany handled its part in WWII and the holocaust?
7. What can we learn from Germany and the German people?

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