

3.2 GENDER IN CONTEMPORARY GERMANY

Is it possible to achieve gender equality?

C3 Framework Indicator	<p>D2.Eco.1.9-12. Analyze how incentives influence choices that may result in policies with a range of costs and benefits for different groups.</p> <p>D2.His.2.9-12. Analyze change and continuity in historical eras.</p> <p>D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.</p>	
Staging the Compelling Question	Using the Global Gender Gap Report (2017) students will examine gender equality in Germany, the United States, Canada, and other parts of the world.	
Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3
What is the current state of gender equality in your country?	What is the current state of gender equality in Germany?	What is the current state of gender equality elsewhere in the world?
Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task
Students will consider where their country stands in the most recent Gender Equality Gap Report.	Students should write a paragraph about one specific gender equality issue that Germany faces, and how this has improved or deteriorated in the past years.	Students should choose two countries (high and low end) and discuss what economic factors make these two countries so different in their rankings.
Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources
Source A: <i>World Economic Forum</i>	<p>Source A: <i>World Economic Forum</i></p> <p>Source B: <i>European Institute for Gender Equality</i></p> <p>Source C: <i>Global Handelsblatt</i></p> <p>Source D: <i>The German Federal Government</i></p> <p>Source E: <i>Deutsche Welle</i></p>	Source A: <i>World Economic Forum</i>
Summative Performance Task	<p>Argument: Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay) that addresses the compelling question using specific claims and relevant evidence from historical or contemporary sources while acknowledging competing views.</p> <p>Extension: Discuss Christoph Wetzel's painting <i>An Everyday Story</i>.</p>	
Taking Informed Action	<p>Understand: Gender is a construct that is shaped by the society and culture in which we live.</p> <p>Assess: Speak with an adult in your life about opportunities that they have or have not had due to their gender and/or privilege.</p> <p>Act: Discuss with your classmates different ways that you can be proactive about supporting other people.</p>	

? COMPELLING QUESTION

- Is it possible to achieve gender equality?

INQUIRY OVERVIEW

This inquiry focuses on the concept of gender equality. Students will reflect on how policy can affect gender equality. Students will also compare statistics, and consider how policies and attitudes towards gender equality in their country compare to those found in Germany. Using the Global Gender Gap Report (2017) students will also examine gender equality in Germany, the United States, Canada, and other parts of the world.

TEACHER BACKGROUND

In West Germany, the Basic Law of 1949 (Article 3.2) states that “Men and women shall have equal rights,” but it was not until 1957 that the civil code was amended to conform to this statement. After World War II, despite the severe shortage of young men that made marriage impossible for many women, traditional marriage once again became society’s ideal. Employment and social welfare programs were based on the male breadwinner model. Even in the early 1950s, women could lose their jobs in the civil service when they married. Most women in West Germany took on the traditional role of homemakers and mothers, and largely withdrew from employment outside the home. West Germany relied on “guest workers” brought in from other countries and refugees from East Germany (the GDR/German Democratic Republic) to fill the ranks of needed employees. Meanwhile, in East Germany the Soviet-style system mandated women’s participation in the economy. The GDR implemented this key objective by opening up educational and vocational opportunities to women. To enable women to be both mothers and workers, the East German government provided an extensive system of social support, such as a highly developed daycare system for children.



After several decades of conforming to traditional social norms, West German women began to demand changes. Following patterns in Europe and the United States, emancipation in the Federal Republic was a grassroots effort of women themselves. In the 1970s, the women’s movement gathered momentum, having emerged as an outgrowth of student protests in the late 1960s. Rallying around the causes of equal rights, the movement succeeded in having legislation passed in 1977 that granted a woman equal rights in marriage. A woman could now work outside the home or file for divorce without her husband’s permission. Divorce was possible if the relationship between the spouses could no longer be reconciled.¹ The law stated that both parents have equal rights in decisions regarding parenthood.

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, Germany has made progress regarding equal rights for women. At grammar schools females account for 56 percent of graduates; the share of young women embarking on higher education totals almost 50 percent, and 42 percent of doctorates are currently awarded to women. More women are embarking on careers, but the glass ceiling remains regarding salaries and women in executive positions. The General Equal Treatment Act was passed in August 2006 to comply with European Union (EU) guidelines; the law includes pledges to make it easier to more effectively prosecute discrimination against women in the workplace. The EU has called on Germany to adopt such legislation for years.

One outcome of the reunification of Germany in 1990 was an increased desire overall for women to enter the labor force, but one of the major impediments has been the scarcity of childcare facilities and kindergartens for young children. Furthermore,

¹ Women in German Society. (n.d.). Retrieved July 2011, from *German Culture*, http://www.germanculture.com.ua/library/facts/bl_women.htm.

the length of the primary school day needs to be adjusted to meet the increase in working parents, and/or additional after-school programs need to grow. Since 2007 there has been a government-sponsored parental support program, and mostly women have used the program, although it applies to both parents. One aspect of this program is monetary help from the government. Parents are granted a stipend from the government for every child. In 2019, the euro amount for the first and second child was 204 euro per month. For a third and fourth child, parents would receive 210 euro and 235 euro respectively.² Another part of this program guarantees, as a legal right, that every child in Germany over the age of three must receive a spot in a German kindergarten. However, despite this “legal right,” many parents find there are not enough kindergarten spots in their local schools.

In addition to school policies and placement availability, parental leave policies also have an important impact on gender equality. German law allows employees to go on paid parental leave in specific circumstances, in addition to mandatory paid maternity leave after childbirth. Until now, the German Parental Allowance and Parental Leave Act (Bundeselterngeld- und Elternzeitgesetz, BEEG) provided for a parental allowance for a maximum duration of 12 months of paid parental leave (14 months if the secondary-caregiver parent decides to go on parental leave as well). The allowance is paid by the state and ranges from 300 euro to up to 1800 euro a month, depending on the employee’s prior income.

Following reforms, an additional option dubbed “Parental Allowance Plus” is now available for parents of children born on and after 1 July 2015. Under the new rules, employees have a right to request up to 24 months of paid parental leave (instead of 12 months) or, if both parents decide to go on parental leave, they are entitled to 28 months of paid parental leave (instead of 14 months) to be shared between the parents. While the duration of paid parental leave doubles, the amounts paid will remain the same, i.e. payments will merely be stretched out over a longer period of time.³

A further measure of a country’s gender equality can be seen reflected in women’s roles (or lack thereof) in the upper echelons of both business and politics. Women are far more strongly established in politics in present-day Germany than in the top echelons of business. The rise in the proportion of women in the *Bundestag* has grown significantly: in 1980 women comprised only eight percent of all members of parliament, the figure in 2017 was 31%. The number quadrupled in roughly 4 decades. In addition, Angela Merkel was elected the first female German Chancellor in 2005 and was reelected in 2009, 2013, and 2017.

In business, however, German women continue to struggle, despite the fact that in 2016 Germany passed a law that requires some of Europe’s biggest companies to fill 30% of their supervisory/board seats with women.

The World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report, published since 2006, measures the gender disparity of 144 economies. The gender equality of each economy is measured in four key economic areas: Economic Participation & Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health & Survival, as well as Political Empowerment. The report features four sub-indexes, one for each aforementioned economic area, along with an overall index, where each of the four economic frameworks are taken into consideration. The highest possible score is 1 and the lowest is 0. The Global Gender Gap Report is a great academic resource to learn about gender equality all around the world. It may surprise students to see where Germany, the United States, and Canada fall in this report.



TIME: 4–5 45-minute class periods

CONCEPTS LIST

- German Democratic Republic (GDR)
- Federal Republic of Germany (FRG)
- Basic Law of 1949
- Birth rate
- Social norms
- Parental leave
- Social welfare
- Traditional
- Mandated

2 “Kindergeld Ratgeber 2019.” *Kindergeld.org*, 2019, <https://www.kindergeld.org/>.

3 Employment Germany Blog, <https://blogs.dlapiper.com/employmentgermany/2014/12/01/reform-of-the-german-parental-allowance-and-parental-leave-act-2/>.

- Glass ceiling
- European Union (EU)
- Pledge
- Impediments
- Gender equality
- Gender gap
- Bundestag

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

- “Analyze a Photograph.” *National Archives*, 18 December 2018, PDF download Worksheet, <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/photo.html>.
- “Equal opportunity and diversity in the Science program.” *The German Federal Government—Federal Ministry of Education and Research*, 2019, <https://www.bmbf.de/de/das-professorinnenprogramm-236.html>.
- “Gender equality: Germany below European average.” *Deutsche Welle*, 11 November 2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/gender-equality-germany-below-european-average/a-40911232>.
- “Gender Equality Index 2017—Knowledge, Germany.” *European Institute for Gender Equality*, 2017, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2015/domain/knowledge/DE>.
- “Gender Equality Index 2017—Money, Germany.” *European Institute for Gender Equality*, 2017, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2015/domain/work/DE>.
- Neuemer, Dietmar and Dana Heide. “Women still shut out of German boards.” *Global Handelsblatt*, 1 October 2018, <https://global.handelsblatt.com/companies/women-still-shut-out-of-german-boards-872971>.
- “The Global Gender Gap Report 2017.” *World Economic Forum*, 2017, <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2017>.

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

As a class brainstorm the meaning of ‘gender equality.’

Provide students with this definition of gender equality:

“Gender equality is achieved when women and men enjoy the same rights and opportunities across all sectors of society, including economic participation and decision-making, and when the different behaviors, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally valued and favored.”⁴

? SUPPORTING QUESTION #1

What is the current state of gender equality in your country?

► Formative Performance Task

Students should consider where their country stands in the most recent Gender Equality Gap Report. They should look at the sub-indexes and determine in which economic thematic dimension their country could improve in terms of gender parity (economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment). Have students write a short paragraph on how they would tackle one issue of inequality in their country.

► Resources

- “The Global Gender Gap Report 2017.” *World Economic Forum*, 2017, <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2017>.



⁴ “What is Gender Equality?” *Gender Equality in Ireland*, <http://genderequality.ie/en/GE/Pages/WhatisGE>.

❓ SUPPORTING QUESTION #2

What is the current state of gender equality in Germany?

► Formative Performance Task

Students should consider where Germany stands in the most recent Gender Equality Gap Report. Students should then write a paragraph about one specific gender equality issue that Germany faces, and how this has improved or deteriorated in the past years.

For example:

Students can investigate how legislation has affected the chances of women for senior management positions in Germany. Are there measurable differences between 2016 and 2019 of German women in senior management positions? Has any other legislation been passed to address this gap?

Students can explore why Germany is ranked low in educational attainment, especially when taking into consideration that education is free throughout Germany.

► Resources

- “Equal opportunity and diversity in the Science program.” *The German Federal Government—Federal Ministry of Education and Research*, 2019, <https://www.bmbf.de/de/das-professorinnenprogramm-236.html>.
- “Gender equality: Germany below European average.” *Deutsche Welle*, 11 November 2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/gender-equality-germany-below-european-average/a-40911232>.
- “Gender Equality Index 2017—Knowledge, Germany.” *European Institute for Gender Equality*, 2017, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2015/domain/knowledge/DE>.
- “Gender Equality Index 2017—Money, Germany.” *European Institute for Gender Equality*, 2017, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2015/domain/work/DE>.
- Neuemer, Dietmar and Dana Heide. “Women still shut out of German boards.” *Global Handelsblatt*, 1 October 2018, <https://global.handelsblatt.com/companies/women-still-shut-out-of-german-boards-872971>.
- “The Global Gender Gap Report 2017.” *World Economic Forum*, 2017, <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2017>.



❓ SUPPORTING QUESTION #3

What is the current state of gender equality elsewhere in the world?

► Formative Performance Task

Students should pick two countries on the index whose rankings surprised them (one on the lower end and one on the higher end of the spectrum). They should discuss what economic factors make these two countries so different in their rankings.

They should look further into what has been done for (or what has not been done for) gender equality. In the case of countries where there is more gender equality, students should investigate what steps were taken by the government, consider the culture of the country (is it a matriarchal society?), and the geographic location to understand why the country is ranked where it is.

► Resources

- “The Global Gender Gap Report 2017.” *World Economic Forum*, 2017, <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2017>.



✓ SUMMATIVE PERFORMANCE TASK

Is it possible to achieve gender equality?

Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay) that addresses the compelling question using specific claims and relevant evidence from historical or contemporary sources while acknowledging competing views.

⊕ EXTENSION (OPTIONAL) TASK

Project Christoph Wetzel's painting *An Everyday Story* for the class to view. (**PowerPoint 3.2.1**)

Important: Do not provide any information about the painting at this time. Divide the class into small groups and ask each group to analyze the painting using the photograph analysis worksheet steps developed by the National Archives.

Step 1: Observation—Study the artwork for 2 minutes. Form an overall impression and then examine individual items. Next, divide the piece into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become apparent. Then, list people, objects, and activities in the scene.

Step 2: Inference—Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from this visual.

Step 3: Questions—What questions does this visual raise in your mind? Where could you find answers to them?

After the students study the painting in groups, discuss their observations as a class. Next, ask the students what the painting says about a woman's roles. List the roles/jobs a woman may have, e.g. homemaker, mother, soldier, employed in the labor market, etc.

After a brief discussion share the following information and interpretation of the painting.

In Christoph Wetzel's 1988 painting *An Everyday Story*, the divided canvas proudly depicts women's accomplishments in the German Democratic Republic. On one side, a woman operates a large piece of heavy machinery in a rolling mill, cool and competent behind the enormous mass of metal and gears. On the other side, the same woman helps her two children prepare for school in the morning. In the act of combing her daughter's hair, she looks out directly at the viewer, her expression asking: "And why are you surprised?" This painting, displayed as part of a 1995 exposition on art commissioned by government agencies in the GDR, graphically displays that government's ideological commitment to women's paid labor, especially in jobs that, in capitalist societies, are often thought to be inappropriate for women.⁵

► Resources

- "Analyze a Photograph." *National Archives*, 18 December 2018, PDF download Worksheet, <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/photo.html>.



⁵ Elizabeth H. Tobin and Jennifer Gibson, "The Meanings of Labor: East German Women's Work in the Transition from Nazism to Communism," *Central European History*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (1995), pg. 301.

TAKING INFORMED ACTION

UNDERSTAND Gender is a construct that is shaped by the society and culture in which we live.

ASSESS Speak with an adult in your life about opportunities that they have or have not had due to their gender and/or privilege. Which jobs did they not get? Have they experienced salary discrepancies between genders at their workplace? Could they work? Was childcare an issue?

ACT Discuss with your classmates different ways that you can be proactive about supporting other people. For example, if there is someone who does not often speak up but who voices a good idea, support that person and restate what you understood, acknowledging their contribution. Consider how you can make space for voices that may not otherwise be heard. How can you use your power or privilege to amplify those voices?