



Die berufliche Situation von Eltern in Deutschland

During child-rearing years many women either withdraw from the work force or work part-time. In Germany, employers are required to make every attempt to facilitate the return to work for mothers, including providing part-time work. In fact, 50% of mothers with underage children are gainfully employed, either part-time or full-time. Overall, half of all employed women in Germany, including those who do not have young children, have part-time jobs, while only 15% of employed men hold part-time jobs. However, despite government mandates, women who interrupt their careers or work part-time during child-rearing years very often find themselves at a disadvantage when they resume full-time employment.

A special case is the situation of single parents (**Alleinerziehende**). Approximately 15% of the minor children in Germany live in a single-parent home, 86% with their mother versus 14% with their father. Single-parent families are entitled to the same bene-

fits as traditional families. However, for families with working single parents, life is complicated by a shortage of childcare facilities and the fact that most German schools run only to noon or slightly later. The government is only now in the process of increasing the number of full-day schools (**Ganztagschulen**).

As an aside, in all households headed by two married adults—both those with and without children—only 15% of husbands share housework with their wives, even when the wives have an outside job. That means, of course, that unlike her husband, the wife has two jobs.



Mutter arbeitet am Computer, während ihre Kinder spielen.



Land und Leute

equal rights

Gleichberechtigung: Wichtige Daten

A few milestones in the progress toward legal equality of the genders:

- 1901 German universities begin to admit women.
- 1918 German women receive the right to vote and to be elected to parliament.
- 1949 The Basic Law of the Federal Republic (**Grundgesetz**) guarantees the right of a person to decide on her or his role in society.
- 1955 The Federal Labor Court (**Bundesarbeitsgericht**) states that there should be no discrimination on the basis of gender in compensation for work performed.
- 1977 Women and men are judged by law to be equal in a marriage. Either can take the surname of the other, or a combination of both names. A divorce may now be granted on the principle of irreconcilability rather than guilt, and all pension rights that the spouses accrued during marriage are equally divided.
- 1979 Women are entitled to a six-month leave to care for a newborn child. By 1990 the leave time had increased to 12 months and was available to mothers or fathers.
- 1980 The law prohibits gender discrimination in hiring practices, wages, working conditions, opportunities for advancement, and termination policies.
- 1986 Years spent raising children are included in the calculation of retirement pensions.
- 1991 Married partners may keep separate names. Children may have the name of either parent.
- 1994 Married couples have the right to decide on a common married name. A law forbidding sexual harassment at the workplace is passed. Parents may take turns staying at home for three years to care for their child.
- 2001 One or both parents may stay home, and the option to convert a former full-time position into a part-time position should be generally supported by the employer. Couples of the same sex gain the right to enter a registered life partnership (**eingetragene Lebenspartnerschaft**). While the partnership is not a marriage, it has, with a few exceptions, the same legal standing as marriage.



Geschäftsfrau bei einer Präsentation vor ihren Kollegen.

Austrian women received the right to keep their maiden names in 1995.

The equality of women and men guaranteed by law has not translated into their compensation. Women still generally earn 27% less than men in comparable positions, and only 30% of top managerial positions are held by women.



Land und Leute

Familienpolitik

In Germany, federal policy concerning families (**Familienpolitik**) covers a number of areas intended to support the quality of life for women, men, and children. One aim is to help both women and men reconcile their professional and personal lives. In recent years, opportunities for flexible work hours (**Gleitzeit**), part-time work (**Teilzeitarbeit**) with full benefits, or job sharing have improved. Many single mothers and fathers receive financial aid (**Unterhaltsvorschüsse**), and every woman receives a paid six-week maternity leave before the child's birth and eight weeks after the birth (**Mutterschutzurlaub**), the cost of which is shared by the government and her employer. One or both parents may stay home and care for the child for the first three years (**Elternzeit**). With the consent of the employer, twelve months of the three years of **Elternzeit** may be taken at any other time before the child's eighth birthday. At the age of three, the child is legally entitled to placement in a nursery school, although in reality many children are three and a half or four before space becomes available.

The government also provides a number of financial benefits. If the parent on leave during **Elternzeit** has an income below 2,600 euros a month, she/he receives a one-year monthly stipend (**Erziehungsgeld**) equal to 67% of his or her take-home pay, up to a maximum of 1,800 euros a month. This money is in addition to the child benefit (**Kindergeld**) of 154 euros per month. **Kindergeld** is paid until the child is 18 or, if she/he pursues further education, up to age 25.



Vater mit seinem Baby beim Wickeln (*changing diapers*).

The U.S. Family and Medical Leave Act enables employees in large companies to take up to 12 weeks off, but that time is unpaid.