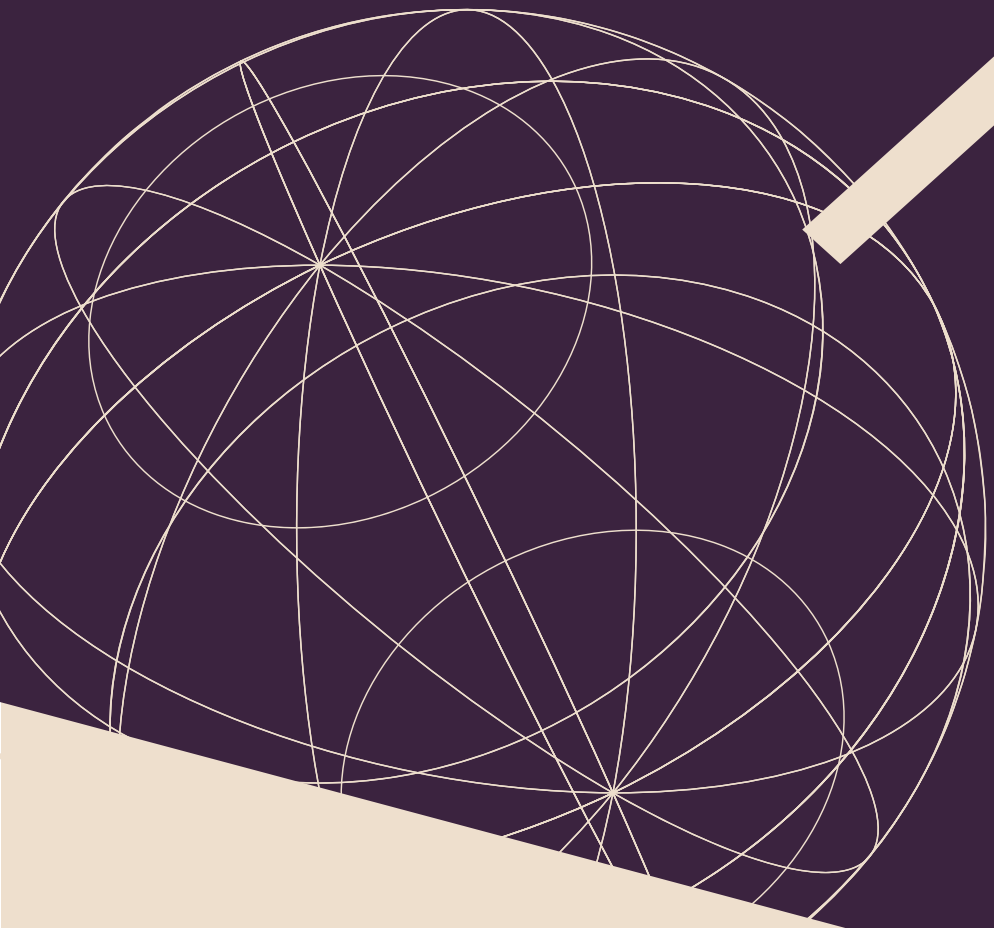
Recognize
Resist
Rise up



Recognize, Resist, Rise Up:
Country Report for Germany on Gender-based Violence against Women in Politics

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Recognize, Resist, Rise Up: Country Report for Germany on Gender-based Violence against Women in Politics

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Disclaimer: Although this report is comprehensive, it does not claim to provide a complete overview and analysis of the situation and all available data. It is based on literature review, publicly available case studies, and examples. The selected practices and policies do not claim to be exhaustive, but to provide an overview.

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List of terms and abbreviations

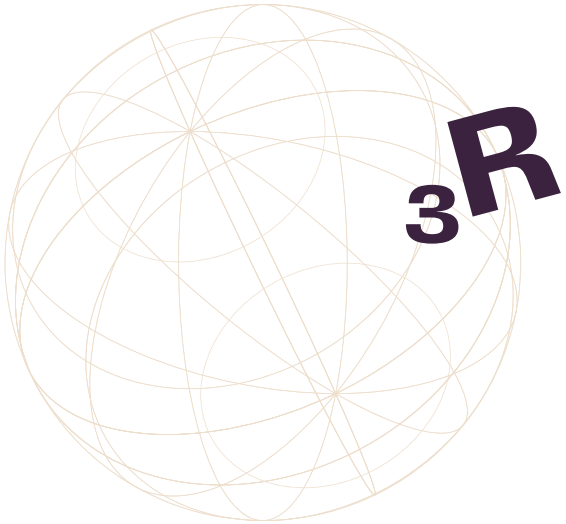
AfD	Alternative for Germany *(Alternative für Deutschland)*
BfV	German Domestic Intelligence Services *(Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz)*
BKA	Federal Criminal Police Office *(Bundeskriminalamt)*
BMBFSFJ	Federal Ministry for Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth *(Bundesministerium für Bildung, Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend)*
BMI	Federal Ministry of the Interior *(Bundesministerium des Innern)*
BSI	Federal Office for Information Security *(Bundesamt für Sicherheit in der Informationstechnik)*
BSW	Alliance Sahra Wagenknecht *(Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht)*
CDU	Christian Democratic Union of Germany *(Christlich Demokratische Union)*
CSU	Christian Social Union in Bavaria *(Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern)*
CEDAW	United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CZ	Czech Republic
DE	Germany
DFK	Foundation German Forum for Crime Prevention *(Stiftung Deutsches Forum für Kriminalprävention)*
DLT	German County Association *(Deutscher Landkreistag)*
DST	Association of German Cities *(Deutscher Städtetag)*
DStGB	German Association of Towns and Municipalities *(Deutscher Städte- und Gemeindebund)*
FDP	Free Democratic Party (Freie Demokratische Partei)
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GewSchG	Act on Protection against Violence *(Gewaltschutzgesetz)*
HU	Hungary
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IE	Ireland
KFN	Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony *(Kriminologisches Forschungsinstitut Niedersachsen)*
KPMD-PMK	Criminal Police Reporting Service for Politically Motivated Crime *(Kriminalpolizeilicher Meldedienst in Fällen Politisch motivierter Kriminalität)*
MdB	Member of Parliament *(Mitglied des Bundestages)*
MdL	Member of State Parliament *(Mitglied des Landtages)*
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MOTRA	Research Network “Radicalization Monitoring System and Transfer Platform” (Monitoringsystem und Transferplattform Radikalisierung)
MP	Member of Parliament
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SK	Slovakia
SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany *(Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands)*
StGB	Penal Code *(Strafgesetzbuch)*
TIN*	Trans*, Inter* and Non-Binary
UN WOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VAWP	Violence against Women in Politics

1. Introduction:

As part of the international project 3R: Recognize, Resist, Rise Up: Tackling Gender-Based Violence against Women in Politics, the consortium of five European organizations, Fórum 50% (CZ), JÓL-LÉT Alapítvány (HU), Možnosť voľby (SK), Women for Election Ireland (IE), and EAF Berlin (DE) developed Country Reports. Those reports were aimed at capturing the background information of each country related to gender-based violence against women politicians.

Objectives of the Project **'Recognize, Resist, Rise Up' (3R)**

- To map the prevalence and root causes of gender-based violence against women politicians in the five European countries participating in the consortium.
- To analyze existing data on the phenomenon, identify gaps, and collect missing data through targeted research.
- To promote the exchange of good practices and the development of evidence-based recommendations.
- To help build skills and awareness of women politicians on handling gender-based violence (GBV), including in the digital sphere.
- To create a safer space for sharing experiences and receiving peer support.
- To advocate for structural change through political commitment.
- To raise public awareness of the issue and contribute to discouraging potential perpetrators.



These Country Reports, developed for each consortium country, serve as a starting point for further research and advocacy activities within Project 3R, which is set to be carried out from March 2025 to March 2027. Their primary aim is to summarize existing information on violence against women in politics (VAWP) in each country and to give a comparative overview of the relevant legislative and institutional frameworks. A comparative analysis provided by Fórum 50% will present an overview of the situation across all participating countries.

The impetus for this international cooperation was the need to stimulate public and professional discussion on gender-based violence against female politicians, and to raise awareness of its various forms and tangible, lived impact on women in politics, especially concerning their involvement in public office and their retention in such positions.

Violence against women in politics poses a significant threat that goes beyond gender equality in politics: virulent online hate and offline violence have spill-over effects and aim to push women politicians as a group out of the public sphere of democratic decision-making. Research demonstrates that this is indeed the case in Germany: While nearly 90% of women in the national parliament, the Bundestag, reported experiencing online abuse in 2021, almost

70% have also faced misogynistic threats and comments, i. e., attacks specifically because of their gender.[1] Political violence online contributes to psychological violence and often converges with physical violence,[2] but the gendered nature becomes explicitly evident in sexual and possibly economic violence directed at women in politics, although more research is needed specifically on the latter.

Not only does this endanger the careers of women politicians, but in recent years, several high-profile women have left politics, citing high stress and online harassment, from New Zealand, Finland, and Germany alike. This situation also jeopardizes the safety of women politicians and their families, making it particularly challenging to fulfill a free mandate and participate in inclusive and democratic decision-making when such severe consequences can arise. Although significant progress has been made, especially in gathering initial data on political violence, identifying legal gaps, and establishing counseling services for the affected, more efforts are necessary to ensure the quality collection of gender-disaggregated data and the evaluation of government measures. Furthermore, a cultural shift and a change in the mindset of political parties and perpetrators are essential to prevent further normalization of violence in politics.

Research Framework

The geographic scope of this report is the Federal Republic of Germany. Its content focuses on gender-based violence (GBV) targeting women in politics, both in online and offline environments. The report and its findings are intended for politicians and lawmakers of all genders and levels, academia, the media, and civil society actors. The general public is also encouraged to take an interest in the subject.

Within the German Country Report, women active in public and political life were included in the research as follows:

— Members of the national parliament *(Bundestag)* and the 16 state parliaments (most commonly *Landtage)* in Germany;

— Politicians at the local level, such as city council members, mayors, district administrators *(Landrät*innen)*, and candidates;

— Women respondents in broader surveys and studies who voluntarily engage in politics but do not hold a mandate or plan to run for office (if distinctions were available in the source).

Albeit information was gathered specifically for the forms of violence, it was not possible to get a complete picture of the studies and surveys done with regard to political violence and violence against women in politics. More recent studies (within the last 5 years) as well as those that cover the whole country rather than states were prioritized. While this report may be comprehensive, it does do not claim to be complete. Additionally, data gaps in the findings available have to be considered.

Chapters 8 and 9 feature a special focus on electoral times (Chapter 8) and minority groups (Chapter 9), aiming to identify intersections and research gaps. The intersectional analysis looked at findings available for women who experience discrimination and/or marginalization, for instance, because of ethnicity, religion, sexuality, or disabilities, as well as trans*, inter*, and non-binary (TIN*) persons, as far as information is available (but not necessarily statistically reliable).

Chapter 4 provides an overview of relevant data from the available literature as of May 2025. Here, findings relating to all forms of gender-based violence as defined by the Istanbul Convention and other pertinent frameworks were summarized.

1 Wilfore, 2021: “The Gendered Disinformation Playbook in Germany is a Warning for Europe.”
2 HateAid et al., 2025: “Angegriffen & alleingelassen.”

Table1: Definitions and Examples of the Categories of Gender-Based Violence (GBV):

Physical Violence	Defined as intentionally committing acts of physical violence against another person (Art. 35).[3] • Includes, e. g., kicking and beating.
Psychological Violence	Defined as intentional conduct seriously impairing a person's psychological integrity through coercion or threats (Art. 33).[4] • Such as: intimidation, insults, threats (including threats of rape or death), harassment, stalking, coercion, bullying. • Includes symbolic and semiotic violence (related to symbols and speech), which render women in politics "invisible" or frame them as incompetent.[5]
Sexual Violence	Refers to all acts of violence of a sexual nature perpetrated against another person without their consent, including rape or obliging a person to take part in non-consensual sex with a third party (Art. 36).[6] Sexual harassment is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment (Art. 40).[7] • (Attempted) sexual assault, unwanted touching, sending of unsolicited intimate materials, or dissemination of sexualized deep fakes. • Sexual harassment, including verbal conduct intended to humiliate, degrade, or intimidate.
Economic violence	Can be understood as any act or behaviour which causes economic harm to an individual.[8] • Denial, restriction or withdrawal of access to resources essential to carry out political duties (e. g., office, salary, support staff, or technical equipment). • Destruction of offices and property related to their political function or mandate. • Restriction of access to education, career opportunities, or financial support based on gender

3 Council of Europe (CoE), 2011: Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.
4 Council of Europe (CoE), 2011.
5 Krook and Sanín, 2016: "Violence against Women in Politics: A Defense of the Concept."
6 Council of Europe (CoE), 2011.
7 Council of Europe (CoE), 2011.
8 European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), 2017: "Glossary of Definitions of Rape, Femicide and Intimate Partner Violence."

Digital Violence

Cyber stalking is the intentional conduct of repeatedly or continuously placing a person under surveillance, without that person's consent or a legal authorisation to do so, by means of ICT, to track or monitor that person's movements and activities, [...] likely to cause serious harm to that person (Art. 6).[9]

Cyber harassment includes engaging in threatening conduct directed at a person [...] by means of ICT, where such conduct is likely to cause that person to seriously fear for their own safety or the safety of dependants; [...] where such conduct is likely to cause serious psychological harm to that person. It furthermore encompasses the unsolicited sending, by means of ICT, of an image, video or other similar material depicting genitals to a person, where such conduct is likely to cause serious psychological harm to that person; [...] or for the purpose of inciting other persons to cause physical or serious psychological harm to that person (Art. 7).[10]

- Cyber stalking, online-harassment, public incitement to violence or hatred, non-consensual publication of personal data (doxxing), dissemination of hate speech, and digital mockery.

As digital violence typically intersects with other forms of violence against women in politics, it is not mentioned in a separate sub-chapter but interwoven into the other findings on violence against women in politics. Additionally, the report considered the following three types of power dynamics most commonly at play when it comes to violence against women in politics:

— Horizontal Violence – between political peers and colleagues;

— Vertical Violence – from superiors or subordinates within hierarchical political structures;

— Third-Party Violence – from the media, general public, members of other/opposing political parties, or trolls and bots on social media.

For Germany, the most common forms on which information was available were horizontal and third-party violence.

2. The Issue of Violence against Women in Politics: Relevant Definitions

There is no legal definition specifically for Violence against Women in Politics (VAWP) in Germany, although relevant general provisions relating to violence against women, gender-based violence, and political violence are covered by existing national laws, as will be outlined in Chapter 3.

The following part provides a summary of international sources and specific definitions, bearing in mind the intersection of gender-based violence (and/or violence against women) and political violence:

9 European Parliament and the Council, 2024: Directive 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council on Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.
10 European Parliament and the Council, 2024.

The EU's Definition of Violence against Women (Art. 2a, Directive 1385):

> *"***Violence against women** *means all acts of gender-based violence directed against a woman or a girl because she is a woman or a girl or that affect women or girls disproportionately, that result in or are likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life."* [11]

Definition of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR/OSCE):

> *"**Violence against women in politics** is understood as any act, threat, or attempt of gender-based violence, leading to or resulting in physical, sexual, psychological, or economic harm or suffering directed against a woman in politics (candidate for office or in an elected or appointed position or member of a political party), because she is a woman and is aimed specifically at undermining her rightful representation, voice, and agency in politics. Violence against women in politics is a form of discrimination which seriously inhibits women's ability to enjoy full rights and freedoms.*
>
> *Additionally, violence against women in politics can have a symbolic effect, rendering women incompetent, irrelevant or invisible in politics, and deterring other women from seeking to enter politics for fear of becoming a target."* [12]

3. Overview of the Legislative and Institutional Framework

National criminal law specifically covers violence against politicians and electoral campaigners. Although gaps remain, most instances of general political violence can be addressed under existing provisions, such as those related to bodily harm, coercion, or defamation. Over the last few years, media coverage and the attention of lawmakers have increased, leading to relatively recent discussions on creating laws specifically addressing political stalking and reforming laws on cybercrimes.

Violence against women in the "private sphere" (such as domestic and intimate partner violence) is mainly covered under the Act on Protection against Violence *(Gewaltschutzgesetz,* GewSchG). Sexual violence is generally covered in the Penal Code *(Strafgesetzbuch*, StGB): Sexual assault, coercion, and rape (including attempts of these offenses) are covered under Section 177 StGB, sexual harassment (specifically groping) is covered under Section 184 (i) StGB. Section 184 (k) StGB covers taking and distributing images and recordings of intimate body parts (and underwear) against the consent of the recorded person. The dissemination of pornographic material is furthermore regulated under Section 184 StGB.

Commonly Reported Offenses

Politically motivated crimes are registered at the Criminal Police Reporting Service for Politically Motivated Crime (Kriminalpolizeilicher Meldedienst in Fällen Politisch motivierter Kriminalität, KPMD-PMK) in

11 European Parliament and the Council, 2024.
12 OSCE/ODIHR, 2022: "Introduction to Violence against Women in Politics."

the Federal Criminal Police Office (*Bundeskriminalamt*, BKA). Reported violence against elected officials (no gender-disseminated data available) increased by roughly 30% from 2023 to 2024. It is especially concerning that among the reported offenses with political motivation, misogynistic hate speech has increased by 73.3% in the same amount of time (although there is no data available on female politicians as targets).[13]

The most commonly reported offenses against elected officials are insults (Section 185 StGB), threats or coercion (Section 240 StGB), destruction of property (Section 303 StGB), dissemination of propaganda (Section 86 StGB), and incitement to hatred (Section 130 StGB).[14] Section 188 of the Penal Code specifically addresses offenses (insults, slander, and defamation) against politicians as democratic representatives.

Cyber Violence

The federal Penal Code covers some forms of digital violence that may disproportionately affect women. **Cyberstalking**, for instance, is either considered a form of cyberbullying that is actionable as insult, slander, defamation (Section 185 – 187 StGB), coercion or threat (Section 240 and Section 241 StGB), or stalking (Section 238 StGB) carried out through digital means. Nonetheless, stalking requires a certain (repeated) threshold of actions, and perpetrators often act purposefully within the bounds of the law. Roughly 80% of victims of stalking (online and offline) are women, which suggests that this might also be a relevant form of intimidation some women politicians may experience. The majority of perpetrators are male.[15]

Doxxing (from 'dox' as an abbreviation for 'documents') refers to the systematic collection and subsequent publication of a person's private and personal data on the Internet.[16] It has been a criminal offense since 2021, see Section 126 (a) StGB. The aim is to dishearten victims, and it often coincides with incitement to further intimidate and threaten the affected individuals, thereby possibly leading to further offenses and violence.

Relevant Current Developments

One of the most significant changes necessary to improve politicians' safety is a **reform of the so-called Melderegisterauskunftssperre** (information block for the residents' register). In Germany, it is mandatory for every inhabitant to register their permanent address with their local municipality, which can then be found in the residents' register *(Melderegister)*. Upon request, anyone can access this data. During local elections, the addresses of the candidates used to be and sometimes still are printed on the ballots. Some regional states (e. g., Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate, and Schleswig-Holstein) have already changed their legislation to include only partial data. In May 2024, the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) introduced a bill to enhance the protection of politicians and elected officials at all levels from data requests by private individuals. It introduced a blocking period of 4 years instead of 2, which may have required multiple applications during a single term. It also aimed to close a gap that currently allows access to politicians' data by requesting their family members' data. However, increased protection measures were not extended to candidates.

As of May 2025, the draft bill has not been passed and remains on hold since the new government term began following the early election in February 2025. The coalition treaty of the new government sets out

13 Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) and Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), 2025: "Fact Sheet: Bundesweite Fallzahlen 2024 Politisch Motivierte Kriminalität."
14 Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) and Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) 2025.
15 HateAid, 2024: "Doxxing."
16 HateAid, 2024.

to improve the current registration law to protect political representatives better.[17] Rules and bureaucratic procedures, therefore, continue to be fragmented across the regional states and even municipalities. Blocking periods, required evidence, and substantial requirements (to prove a credible threat, for instance) may also vary. Legislation that better protects candidates, elected officials and politicians is desperately needed and would follow a Federal Constitutional Court ruling from 2021, which affirmed that individuals who engage in public activities for the common good, including politicians, are entitled to sufficient protection of their personal rights. It is explicitly stated that only then can they be expected to participate effectively in democratic decision-making.[18]

In December 2024, a **draft bill on digital violence** was introduced by the former government. However, due to the early federal elections in February 2025, it has not been passed. The coalition treaty of the new government sets out to pass such a law under its chapter on violence against women. The planned law is described as aiming to improve victims' legal standing and to block anonymous accounts that spread hate speech and other forms of cyber violence. Moreover, communication with platform providers and coordination with law enforcement is to be improved and sped up.[19]

The Cybercrime Law also includes a provision for **reforming the Cybercrime Law** *(Cyberstrafecht)*, which aims to close current gaps such as image-based sexual violence (e. g., deepfakes). It is also announced to seek to intensify sanctions on digital platform providers if they fail to remove actionable content.[20]

Both draft bills have been introduced under the previous so-called traffic-light coalition of the Social Democrats (Social Democratic Party of Germany, SPD), Greens (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen), and Liberals (Free Democratic Party, FDP). In their coalition treaty, the new grand coalition of the Christian Democrats (the Christian Democratic Union, CDU, and the Christian Social Union in Bavaria, CSU) and SPD, has indicated that it plans to follow up on these topics. The necessity to act on these matters, therefore, seems to have been recognized across the aisle.

In the wake of the regional elections in some states as well as the European elections in 2024, some politicians and public figures have raised questions about the necessity of **introducing a new criminal offense** labeled as "influencing state decision-makers". This would cover more subtle forms of threats and harassment, such as rallies and protests in front of politicians' private homes.[21] However, as of May 2025, no new draft bills have been introduced.[22]

17 CDU, CSU, and SPD, 2025: "Coalition Treaty for the 21st Legislative Period."
18 HateAid et al., 2025: "Angegriffen & alleingelassen."
19 CDU, CSU, and SPD, 2025.
20 CDU, CSU, and SPD, 2025.
21 zdf via AFP, 2024: "Politiker vor Gewalt schützen – Wie geht das?"
22 As Germany faced early elections in February 2025, the new government and parliament have only been in office for a few weeks at the time of compiling this report.

4. Summary of Existing Data on Violence against Women in Politics

Although political violence has been on a steady rise for a while now, the public stabbing of Cologne's mayor Henriette Reker (2015) on the eve of her electoral campaign and the murder of Walter Lübcke (2019), a local government president of the city of Kassel, both of which were politically motivated, can be considered the dawn of a new era. Theretofore, verbal attacks against politicians have been publicly framed as part of the job, covered by free speech, or even as a legitimate expression of frustration from isolated individuals who have taken it too far. If a person, specifically a woman, could not handle it, they were considered the problem. [23] [24]

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of incidents reported to police has doubled and continues to increase.[25] The pandemic gave rise specifically to online violence, marches *("Spaziergänge")* and rallies to and in front of local politicians' private homes,[26] destruction of property, and physical attacks. Experiencing political violence can be considered the norm, rather than an exception:[27] Almost every second politician (46%) experienced aggression or violence within the last six months, according to a country-wide survey by the Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony *(Kriminologisches Forschungsinstitut Niedersachsen, KFN)* in May 2025.[28]

There is a continuous increase in reported political violence against party members, politicians, and their employees, as well as party property and election posters. In 2024, 3.964 offenses against politicians and party representatives were reported to police forces.[29] Likely, the number of actual incidents is much higher, as studies indicate that only a fraction of affected individuals (between 11% and 13%[30], with some surveys reporting up to 30%[31]) seek legal redress. For the federal police registry, however, there is no gender-disaggregated information on criminal offenses against politicians available, nor is data available on the nature of the offenses women politicians are specifically targeted for (e. g., on gender-based violence, including, e. g., sexual harassment).

The latest monitoring published by the Federal Government (written response by the Federal Government to a minor interpellation) includes violent crimes such as the infliction of bodily injury, extortion, or sexual offenses as well as "expression offenses" such as defamation, slander, verbal abuse, threats of violence, incitement, and hate speech. It does not contain any information on the gender or exact nature of the offense.[32]

Research and media coverage on violence in politics and its effects have increased significantly over the last five years as well. Due to the federalist structure of Germany, overarching data collection, especially

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23 Köcher and Lukoschat, 2021: "Parteikulturen und die politische Teilhabe von Frauen."
24 Berliner Zeitung, 2017: "Sexismus: Frank Henkel, Jenna Behrends und die Sache mit der Maus."
25 Blätte, Dinnebier, and Schmitz-Vardar, 2022: "Vielfältige Repräsentation unter Druck."
26 Der Spiegel, 2021: "Polizei verhindert Aufmarsch vor Privathaus von Ministerpräsidentin Schwesig."
27 At the very least when it comes to local politicians in the 77 biggest German cities (above 100.000 inhabitants), according to Blätte, Dinnebier, and Schmitz-Vardar, 2022.
28 Kriminologisches Forschungsinstitut Niedersachsen e. V., 2025: "Aggressionen und Gewalt gegen Politiker*innen (AGgP)."
29 Statista, 2025: "Crimes against Political Parties in Germany until 2024."
30 Depending on the source/survey, the data varies slightly: According to the Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony (KFN), 2025, 13% and, according to MOTRA, 2024, 11% have sought legal redress (although reporting seems to be higher during electoral campaigns).
31 In HateAid's 2025 survey on online violence, numbers differ: 30% of respondents used judicial responses, Blätte, Dinnebier, and Schmitz-Vardar, 2022, also find that 27.7% (men) and 22.6% (women) use criminal justice to address attacks against them.
32 Written Response by the Federal Government to a Minor Interpellation, 2025: "Document No. 20/14879."

gender-disaggregated data, may differ between the states *(Bundesländer)*, and available resources are used with different priorities. Therefore, most findings depend on independent research done through surveys. Although most studies and surveys cover as many individuals at as many levels and forms of violence as possible, some look more closely at a specific target group or area of concern:

Local Level

Since 2021, the collaborative civil security research project MOTRA (Radicalization Monitoring System and Transfer Platform) has conducted annual Spring and Fall surveys to monitor hate, harassment, and violence specifically against mayors and district administrators.

Nearly two-thirds (59%) of **women politicians in larger cities** experienced at least one incident of violence while in office.[33] MOTRA's 2024 surveys even indicate that **women mayors and district administrators** are significantly more affected than men (38% vs. 28%).[34] Full-time politicians, even at the local level, were more affected than voluntary or part-time politicians (39% vs. 20%), especially in urban areas (40% vs. 29% in rural areas).[35] However, even though female mayors are more likely to be found in voluntary positions than as full-time mayors,[36] a study on voluntary mayors[37] from 2024 found that more women (62%) than men (55%) have experienced harassment and hate speech, many even multiple times.[38] This finding is especially alarming because the share of women mayors across Germany (currently estimated at 13.5%)[39] is even below the European average of 17.4%[40].

In some cases, there are also studies focused on the situation in specific regional states: Brandenburg[41] and Thuringia[42] have done regional studies. The state's government even commissioned Brandenburg's survey.

National and Regional Level

Rarely do studies disclose the number of respondents to specific questions from the national or regional level. The public service broadcasting channel ARD, in 2021, reported that 90% of **female MPs** *(Mitglieder des Bundestages,* MdB) have been targets of online threats and hate speech.[43]

Most recent studies look at the local level or combine data from various levels but do not exclusively survey MPs or regional state representatives *(Mitglieder des Landtages,* MdL). HateAid & the Technical University of Munich gathered comprehensive insights into the effects of digital violence on politicians and other politically active groups, such as activists, scientists, and party members, although the study is not representative. It is the most recent and comprehensive study on digital violence in politics published as of May 2025. The study looks at all levels and indicates the participation of 47 female MPs (MdB) and 81 parliamentarians from the state level (MdL); however, most respondents were local politicians.

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33 Blätte, Dinnebier, and Schmitz-Vardar, 2022.
34 Bitschnau, Buchmann, and Eberspach, 2025: "KoMo, Onepager, Auswertung der Herbstbefragung 2024.
35 Bitschnau and Eberspach, 2024: "KoMo, Frühjahrsbefragung 2024."
36 Bogumil, Gehne, and Süß, 2024: "Ehrenamtliche Bürgermeister in Deutschland. Das unbekannte Wesen."
37 Voluntary mayors serve without a salary, usually this is the case in smaller municipalities. Almost 60% of mayor positions in Germany are carried out on volunteer basis. Female mayors are more likely to serve as volunteer mayors than full-time mayors, which brings about specific challenges to reconciling their private life, (family, job, hobbies, and other volunteer positions) with their public role. They are, however, nonetheless elected, either directly by the citizens or by the district council, depending on the regional state. See Bogumil, Gehne, and Süß, 2024.
38 Bogumil, Gehne, and Süß, 2024.
39 Stocker, 2024: "Die Vermessung des Frauenanteils."
40 Coessens, 2024: "Women in Politics."
41 Klewes et al., 2022: "Präventive Strategien zum Schutz von kommunalen Amts- und Mandatspersonen vor Einschüchterung, Hetze und Gewalt."
42 Salheiser et al., 2023: "Demokratie unter Druck."
43 Wilfore, 2021.

4.1. Categories of Violence

Physical Violence

Physical violence is among the least commonly reported forms of violence against politicians in Germany. Incidents of women politicians as targets of general physical assault seem to be slightly lower than for men (8.5% women vs. 10.4% men).[44] Crime statistics (reported offenses) point to similar numbers as in 2023, 9% of crimes committed for misogynistic reasons were categorized as violent crimes, such as physical injury.[45] Actual numbers might likely be higher as not all acts of violence against women in politics – physical or otherwise – are reported to the police, disclosed in surveys, or communicated to third parties at all.

Psychological Violence

Psychological violence appears to be the most commonly experienced form of violence, which coincides with EU-wide data on violence against women in politics.[46] It is most commonly experienced through insults, discrimination,[47] or threats via telephone, email, or even fax, in person, and on social media.[48] Politically motivated criminal statistics indicate that 46.6% of recorded misogynistic offenses in 2023 were insults, and threats amounted to 7.5%.[49]

Gendered differences are most apparent when it comes to **threats of physical violence**, such as beatings or murder. Such threats have been described by 43% of women, 10% fewer than among the male respondents of HateAid's 2025 study. Women politicians are more affected by threats against members of their family,[50] for instance, their children, which aims at pushing them out of the public and back into an antiquated dichotomy of a woman's place being in the private sphere.

Noteworthy is furthermore that 8% of politicians (no levels specified) have experienced **stalking** since taking up office, 7% even experienced incidents within the last six months of a survey by KFN.[51] Considering that most victims of stalking are women,[52] it can be assumed that women politicians might likewise be more affected than men in politics, although the findings released so far not present gender-disaggregated data.

As a pervasive form of violence, **online violence** can manifest in various ways. According to the study by HateAid, more than two-thirds of female respondents across all levels have experienced gender-based forms of violence online, including sexist remarks or misogyny as a form of semiotic violence.[53] Similarly, in the Bundestag, 64% of female MPs received misogynistic threats in 2021, mostly online.[54] Most often, digital violence is experienced by politically active women through violent or hateful comments and reactions to their online presence. The quality of these insults differs from those that address men: Women often receive sexualized insults. They are targeted specifically because of their gender and the stereotypical roles and expectations ascribed to it.[55]

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44 Blätte, Dinnebier, and Schmitz-Vardar, 2022.
45 Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), 2024: "Geschlechtsspezifisch gegen Frauen gerichtete Straftaten. Bundeslagebild 2023."
46 Coessens, 2024.
47 Kriminologisches Forschungsinstitut Niedersachsen e.V., 2025.
48 Blätte, Dinnebier, and Schmitz-Vardar, 2022.
49 Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), 2024.
50 Bitschnau, Buchmann, and Eberspach, 2025.
51 Kriminologisches Forschungsinstitut Niedersachsen e.V., 2025.
52 Suhr, 2020: "Frauen sind häufiger Opfer von Stalking."
53 HateAid et al., 2025.
54 Der Spiegel, 2021 a): "Frauenfeindlichkeit im Bundestag durch AfD gestiegen."
55 Alin et al., 2021: "Beleidigt und bedroht: Arbeitsbedingungen und Gewalterfahrungen von Ratsmitgliedern in Deutschland."

Across all genders, 83% of respondents to MOTRA's survey among mayors and district administrators feel that their personal safety and political career are threatened by disinformation or "deep fakes".[56] False information, faked videos and images, therefore, form a very real connection and even pose a threat to the political and private life of the affected individuals.

Moreover, cyber violence carries over into the analog sphere: 71% of politicians have experienced at least one incident of offline violence in addition to cyber violence. Moreover, 45% of female respondents who experienced violence online have also experienced sexual and gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, offline – with the instances being related to being politically active.[57] Psychological violence can have the same significant effects on victims, including stress, anxiety, and depression, and lead to changes in behavior. According to MOTRA, 81% of those affected suffer from psychological and/or physical consequences.[58]

Sexual Violence

According to HateAid, almost a quarter (24%) of politically active women have been threatened with sexualized violence such as threats of rape (whereas only 3% of men participating in the study share those experiences).[59] Nearly every second politically active woman (45%) is affected by gender-based and sexual harassment offline.[60]

The KFN's 2025 survey finds that 6% of respondents experienced sexual violence (or sexualized aggression) within the last six months of the reporting period. This data, however, is not gender-disaggregated.[61]

Misogynistic forms of violence with a lower threshold of violence are even more common. Looking at general misogyny within the parliament or by colleagues, 69% of MPs surveyed by news magazine DER SPIEGEL agreed to having been affected.[62] Although MOTRA's biannual local monitoring does not systematically disaggregate their data according to the gender of their respondents (mayors and district administrators), 26% report verbal or written offenses that relate to their physical appearance, 11% specifically relate to their gender as a reason or point for verbal and written abuse. In general, 5% of all offenses reported to MOTRA are discriminatory.[63] These findings suggest that the percentage experiencing these incidents could even be higher among women. In addition, one finding differentiates that women respondents felt significantly less safe than men,[64] suggesting that highlighting this as the only gendered analysis of the data points to a stark contrast in the effects of violence on women in local politics.

On social media, many comments and reactions about women center around physical appearance, age, private lives, and relationship status. As such, they often bear deeply personal, sexist, and misogynistic qualities.[65] A 2021 study by the EAF Berlin finds that 16.8% of women interviewed have received sexist comments online (whereas only 3.1% of male respondents received such comments).[66]

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56 Bitschnau, Buchmann, and Eberspach, 2025.
57 HateAid et al., 2025.
58 Bitschnau, Buchmann, and Eberspach, 2025.
59 HateAid et al., 2025.
60 HateAid et al., 2025.
61 Kriminologisches Forschungsinstitut Niedersachsen e.V., 2025.
62 Der Spiegel, 2021 a).
63 Bitschnau and Eberspach, 2024.
64 Bitschnau and Eberspach, 2024.
65 HateAid et al., 2025.
66 Köcher and Lukoschat, 2021.

Roughly 20% of women receive unsolicited pictures of genitals online; another 25% are afraid that they might be confronted with fake intimate pictures (sexualized deep fakes) or actual recordings of intimate situations disseminated without their consent.[67]

Economic Violence

Among the forms of violence experienced, destruction of property or damage to personal belongings is usually surveyed and recorded for political crimes. Although rates are low compared to threats and insults, 8.6% of women local politicians in larger cities have been affected by damages to their property, such as slashed car tires, damage to mailboxes, scribbles, smearing, and vandalism of property or electoral posters.[68] However, the 2022 study by the Heinrich-Böll-Foundation does not indicate whether and how those have been of a different quality when directed at women than towards men. A 2025 survey shows slightly higher numbers in the aftermath of several elections (at the EU-level, national level, regional level, and local levels): between 10% and 15% have experienced destruction of property, although the quality, nature, and gender of the targeted politicians are not disclosed.[69] In 2021, DER SPIEGEL found that 36% of MPs experienced attacks against their offices or private homes, although this number was summarized along with physical assaults.[70]

Although there are few studies looking into gender discrimination when it comes to financial resources to run for office, qualitative interviews by the EAF Berlin confirm that it might be more difficult for women to acquire the means for electoral campaigns when running for mayor as well as at the regional and national levels. This more indirect form of discrimination, however, is often due to underlying gendered dynamics of poverty and resource allocation as well as a perceived legitimacy or entitlement to fundraise for one's own benefit.[71]

Wiechmann and Holtkamp[72] recently examined **gender differences in campaign financing** for the CDU and SPD in the 2021 *Bundestag* election, focusing on direct mandates. The total budgets available for successful candidates show that women in the CDU, on average, have more than € 10,000 less available than male candidates in their party. Particularly, funding secured via donations is, on average, 13.000 € less than for men in the CDU. When parties themselves contribute to financing campaigns, men, on average, get twice as much as women in the CDU. Typically, candidates are expected to include their personal capital. Wiechmann and Holtkamp find that successful women candidates in both the CDU and SPD contributed more private capital than men, although the differences here are lower than in the other two sources of campaign funding (between € 1,300 for women in the CDU and € 1,600 for women in the SPD).

Conclusions

Although there is a growing body of research on violence against politicians in Germany, gender-specific analyses are only partially available. Not all data available is gender-disaggregated, thereby posing challenges to the interpretation of the gendered nature of violence against women in politics. Additionally, most studies draw from multiple levels: from local politicians and mayors to MPs and sometimes even MEPs. The data presented does not always clarify whether there are differences between the levels of respondents.

To date, no study has specifically looked at the categories of violence against women in politics. This makes a secondary data analysis especially difficult as gendered dimensions can only partially be pinpointed, e. g., when it comes to economic violence.

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67 HateAid et al., 2025.
68 Blätte, Dinnebier, and Schmitz-Vardar, 2022.
69 Kriminologisches Forschungsinstitut Niedersachsen e.V., 2025.
70 Der Spiegel, 2021.
71 Köcher and Lukoschat, 2021.
72 Wiechmann and Holtkamp, 2025: "Wahlkampf und Wahlkampffinanzierung von Direktkandidaturen."

4.2. Impact and Intervention

Changed behavior or retreating from politics are severe consequences of experiencing and fearing threats of violence as a politician. This leads to, e. g., self-censorship in public discourse or a lack of opposition and diverging opinions to avoid becoming a target. It seriously inhibits pluralistic discourses and the independence of the political mandate.

Several studies agree that violence against politicians has severe effects on political discourse and the willingness to become or stay politically active. Women affected may feel stressed, intimidated, humiliated, and unable to react/defend themselves. They may feel frustrated and discouraged from expressing their views and ideas. Such effects seem to be experienced more strongly by women than by men.[73] Many feel insecure, even at home, or fear for their friends and family. Women in local politics commonly receive threats of violence against their loved ones. This decreases their sense of security.[74]

Women more often receive misogynistic and discriminatory attacks (based on their gender) than men in local leadership positions. Almost 50% of women (from all political levels) surveyed by HateAid felt that online violence affected their political activity negatively. Moreover, 49% of women politicians who experienced cyber violence have at least thought about declining a position/running for a specific office because of a likely increased exposure to threats online and offline. Some, roughly twice as many women as men, have considered quitting politics altogether.[75]

Roughly a third of local politicians in cities above 100.000 inhabitants admit to having changed their behavior because of threats and assaults; 26% have even done so without having been targets of violence themselves.[76] More significantly, this affects women, people from minoritized backgrounds (e. g., people of color or with a statistical "migration background"[77]), and people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds more strongly.[78] Women (as well as people with a so-called "migration background" or from lower socioeconomic classes) are significantly more likely to change their behavior because of threats and attacks against them or their loved ones.[79] As Blätte, Dinnebier, and Schmitz-Vardar point out, substantive representation suffers even when underrepresented groups remain in office, but (have to) choose to limit or edit their public statements and opinions.[80] It also may lead to avoiding appearances due to fear of becoming targets of threats and attacks, thereby becoming less visible and less present in public discourse. Consequently, attacks and threats of violence lead to more severe consequences for democratic representation and legitimacy when carried out against minorities (which women as a group constitute, as they only make up about one-third of politicians across the national, regional, and local levels).

Responses to Harm: Victims' Needs and Coping Strategies

When it comes to the needs of people affected, the majority of women (2/3) said that they did not feel sufficiently prepared to deal with digital violence and its consequences. Additionally, 59% would like to see support in the form of more solidarity within their party or communities. Only 24% of women respondents feel

73 Forsa, 2025: "Die Situation von Stadt- und Gemeinderäten."
74 Bitschnau and Eberspach, 2024.
75 HateAid et al., 2025.
76 Blätte, Dinnebier, and Schmitz-Vardar, 2022.
77 According to the Federal Statistical Office of Germany (DeStatis), a person has a migration background if they themselves or at least one of their parents were not born with German citizenship.
78 Bartsch and Aalders, 2024: "Rückzug oder Engagement."
79 Blätte, Dinnebier, and Schmitz-Vardar, 2022.
80 Blätte, Dinnebier, and Schmitz-Vardar, 2022.

like their institutions (e. g., parties) have sufficient resources to deal with digital violence, and 38% do not have any information on whether or not there are any resources or support mechanisms available.[81]

Most politicians affected either ignore the incident (25%)[82], although women seem to be less likely to stay silent (10.4% vs. 18.4% men),[83] or try to distance themselves mentally (83% of women and 78% of men)[84]. Almost half of the women affected online choose to confront the perpetrator or suspect,[85] although no information is available on correlations with the different categories of violence. Offline, 14% seek dialogue, regardless of gender.[86] More women than men seek advice from family members and friends (69.8% vs 59.3% of men) or from party colleagues (67.5% of women vs. 56.7% of men).[87]

Judicial responses are often perceived as inadequate, which leads to judicial training and increased political will to act being a common recommendation.[88] Overall, 75% of mayors and district administrators surveyed by MOTRA consider it necessary to implement further measures to protect local political officials and elected representatives.[89]

Profiling Political Violence: Suspects and Perpetrators

One way to address the issue is through prevention and engagement with perpetrators. While this does not provide immediate relief to women affected, it serves to shift the focus from the victim and what they could have done to addressing the underlying power structures and societal dynamics that enable this behavior.

In 79% of cases, the suspects in the most recent incident were known to those affected, according to MOTRA's survey among mayors and district administrators. Fifty-two percent of the suspects appear to be repeat offenders. Most suspects (78%) were male, between 40 and 59 years old, and residents of the respective municipality.[90] The Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) also finds that, in 2023, political violence against women for misogynistic reasons, and in which the perpetrator could be identified, was overwhelmingly (72.8%) committed by men over the age of 30.[91] For digital violence, 29% of women in politics identified attacks as coming from politicians from other parties, 16% even from within their own party.[92] Men between 30 and 60 years as well as party members and politicians themselves should, therefore, be looked at more closely when developing counter-measures and sensitivity-trainings.

Politically motivated violence requires a political motivation/ideology that is clustered into different categories by the BKA. Most commonly, reported political violence in Germany in 2024 was identified as motivated by right-wing (17.2%) and left-wing (13.5%) ideologies. Although members of the AfD are themselves victims of political violence and attacks online and offline at a large scale, many of the affected victims form other parties identify the AfD as perpetrators or allude to them as drivers of an increasingly discriminatory and misogynistic political climate.[93]

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81 HateAid et al., 2025.
82 Bitschnau and Eberspach, 2024.
83 Blätte, Dinnebier, and Schmitz-Vardar, 2022.
84 HateAid et al., 2025.
85 HateAid et al., 2025.
86 Bitschnau and Eberspach, 2024.
87 Blätte, Dinnebier, and Schmitz-Vardar, 2022.
88 HateAid et al., 2025.
89 Bitschnau and Eberspach, 2024.
90 Bitschnau and Eberspach, 2024.
91 Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), 2024.
92 HateAid et al., 2025.
93 Der Spiegel, 2021 a); Der Spiegel, 2024: "Bundestagspräsidentin Bas beklagt Sexismus im Plenarsaal."

5. Policies and Strategies for Preventing and Addressing Violence against Women Politicians in Parliaments, Political Parties, and Other Stakeholders

5.1. National Parliament – *Bundestag*

Public information about training and prevention courses, especially mandatory ones, is scarce. Federal authorities such as the Federal Office for Information Security *(Bundesamt für Sicherheit in der Informationstechnik,* BSI), together with the German Domestic Intelligence Services *(Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz,* BfV), the Federal Criminal Police Office *(Bundeskriminalamt,* BKA), and the *Bundestag's* administration, offer training on hybrid threats and the IT security situation for MPs, their employees, and parliamentary groups. Additionally, information events are offered in cooperation with popular social media platforms. These trainings cover prevention measures for accounts and mailing as well as information on reporting and receiving support in case of an emergency situation or attack.[94] On demand, the Federal Office for Information Security also consults political actors and representatives on information security.

There is no information publicly available on preventing sexual harassment, gender-based violence, discrimination, or hate speech in the Bundestag. (Former) sources from the parliament confirmed that there are no mandatory trainings for MPs, and if the administration does offer or facilitate trainings, they are usually geared towards or frequented by the MPs' employees.

During parliamentary sessions, it is one of the President's (or their proxies') tasks to monitor the procedure of the current sitting. The President of the previous legislative period, Bärbel Bas (Social Democrats, SPD), has commented on a significant deterioration of the discussion climate since the party *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD)[95] entered the Bundestag in 2017:

> *"It has become more aggressive, it has become more discriminatory towards the MPs themselves. And I think that's a big difference compared to previous years".*[96]

She added that one of the consequences of testing the waters with sexist comments, discriminatory, and disrespectful language is a shift of the boundaries towards what can publicly be said. Ultimately, this would also result in action that goes beyond verbal attacks.[97] Never before has the German national parliament seen as many calls to order as in the previous legislature (2021-2025): 135 calls to order were issued, 85 of those were attributed to the AfD.[98]

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94 Federal Office for Information Security (BSI), 2025: "Bundestagswahl 2025: Sensibilisierung für Fraktionen, MdBs und Mitarbeitende."

95 On May 2, 2025, the party was classified as an extremist right-wing party by the German Domestic Intelligence Services (BfV). The party subsequently filed a lawsuit and an emergency appeal, which led to the BfV suspending the classification for the time being. A final decision on the classification needs to be made by a court.

96 Der Spiegel, 2024. Translated by EAF Berlin.

97 Der Spiegel, 2024.

98 Spieker, 2025: "Immer mehr Ordnungsrufe im Bundestag."

5.2. Political Parties

The current legislative period consists of five parliamentary groups in the national parliament *(Bundestag)*: The Christian Democratic Union *(Christlich Demokratische Union,* CDU) and its sister party, the Christian Social Union, which competes only in Bavaria *(Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern,* CSU), the Social Democratic Party *(Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands,* SPD), the Greens *(Bündnis 90/Die Grünen)*, the Left *(Die Linke)*, and the Alternative for Germany *(Alternative für Deutschland,* AfD). The Liberal Free Democratic Party *(Freie Demokratische Partei,* FDP) has been a relevant force in previous legislatures, as well as at the regional and European levels. The Alliance Sahra Wagenknecht *(Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht,* BSW) was founded in 2024, following its secession from the Left, and has gained influence at both the regional and European levels.

Even though the administration of the Bundestag does not provide generalized training on sexism or political violence, many parties and their parliamentary groups provide their own training offers, materials, and resources in case of attacks:

— Social Democrats (SPD): A direct hotline for people affected and handouts/checklists.
— The Greens *(Bündnis 90/Die Grünen)*: Workshops at the district and regional levels, checklists, and guidelines.
— The Left *(Die Linke)*: Internal awareness-raising and federal contact point.
— The Liberals (FDP): Guidelines on security measures for events and awareness raising.

For the Christian Democrats (CDU)/(CSU) and the Alliance Sahra Wagenknecht *(Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht,* BSW) no comment was provided to the media. For the AfD, no specific measures were named.[99] Nonetheless, party-affiliated foundations often provide training or information sessions for members as well as interested individuals and volunteers.

Federal Ombuds Offices responsible for dealing with topics such as discrimination, hate speech, or sexual harassment are available for the Christian Democrats (CDU) and the Liberals (FDP), who also have Ombuds Offices at the level of their regional associations. The Greens have not only federal and regional association Ombuds Offices but also a specific "Code of Conduct for Dealing with Violations of Sexual Self-Determination and/or Sexualized Violence".[100]

For the Social Democrats (SPD) and the Left, Ombuds Offices exist at the regional levels, although it could not be verified if they are available in every state (Bundesland). Nonetheless, the SPD, the Left, the BSW, and the AfD each have an arbitration commission, which is responsible, for instance, for matters of organizational procedure, exclusion procedures, and (sometimes) conflict resolution between members. The SPD furthermore has a control commission which deals with complaints at the leadership level.[101]

After the previous coalition of Social Democrats (SPD), Greens, and Liberals (FDP) fell apart in November 2024, ahead of finishing their term, these parties, together with the Christian Democrats (CDU)/(CSU) and the Left, committed to an **Agreement on a Fair Election Campaign** *(Vereinbarung zu einem fairen Bundestagswahlkampf)*. The agreement aims at constructive debate without personal insults or derogatory comments. The parties also agreed to use ethical standards in their digital campaigning and to avoid disinformation or to utilize false information for campaign purposes. A peaceful campaign atmosphere is stated as the goal, promising not to resort to violence against political candidates, campaign helpers, or to damage competitors' campaign materials.[102] The AfD and BSW declined to commit to the agreement.[103]

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99 Becke and Schillat, 2024: "So wollen die Parteien ihre Wahlkämpfer vor Angriffen schützen."
100 Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2025: "Aufarbeitung und Verantwortung."
101 Social Democratic Party (SPD), n.d.: "Über Uns - Gremien."
102 SPD, CDU/CSU, Greens, Left, and FDP, 2024: "Fairnessabkommen."
103 The Munich Eye, 2024: "Fairness Agreement Reached Among Six Parties Ahead of 2025 Bundestag Elections."

5.3. Measures Initiated by Civil Society

Some measures addressed to support politicians and people affected by sexism and gender-based violence in the public sphere were initiated and are carried out by civil society organizations:

Public Declaration against Sexism

The alliance "Together against Sexism," *(Bündnis "Gemeinsam gegen Sexismus")* was established by the EAF Berlin and funded by the federal Ministry for Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth *(Bundesministerium für Bildung, Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend*, BMBFSFJ) in 2022. It aims to raise awareness about sexism in the workplace, public spaces, and within culture and the media. More than 850 organizations, companies, and institutions have signed the "Joint Declaration against Sexism and Sexual Harassment", forming a cross-industry network. The entire federal cabinet of the previous government (2021–2025) became a signatory to the Declaration in 2023. While not directly geared towards political actors and parties, there are also several local party chapters, regional chapters, and state parliamentary groups, as well as the Social Democrats' (SPD) women's wing and a regional Christian Democrats' (CDU) women's wing among the signatories. Notably, among the parties of the previous Bundestag, there are no signatories from the Liberals (FDP), the BSW, or the AfD as of May 2025. Chapters of European and local parties (Volt and the women's wing of *Freie Wähler* in Bavaria), however, did sign the Declaration.

Codes of Conduct

The charitable foundation *Körber-Stiftung* promotes and facilitates debates and constructive dialogue (among others) to strengthen democracy. With the project **Respekt im Rat** (Respect in the Municipal Council), the foundation supports municipal bodies in coming to a cross-party agreement (like a code or guidelines) for a good culture of discussion.[104] The goal is to counter disrespectful behavior that comes from within one's own political party as well as from other parties in the council.

At the local level, **codes of conduct** and shared commitments to fair and non-discriminatory behavior have gained ground recently, and interest is even increasing. The city of Potsdam (in the state of Brandenburg) was the first in Germany to adopt a code of conduct in 2021.[105] This was followed primarily by municipalities in Schleswig-Holstein, such as the district council of Rendsburg-Eckernförde,[106] as part of a pilot project initiated by the Hamburg-based *Körber-Stiftung*.

5.4. Security Authorities and the Monitoring of Crimes: "Politically Motivated Violence" Within the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA)

The Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) records crimes of political violence. Among other things, it registers all criminal offenses reported to the police if there are indications that the crime was committed for political reasons and/or against political representatives and their property. The BKA also monitors political crimes in which the suspect might be biased according to the victim's gender or sexual identity, sexual orientation, or physical appearance. In the latest report on violence against women covering the year 2023, politically motivated crimes against women are covered as a subsection under hate crimes – misogyny. The number of recorded misogynistic offenses has increased by 56.3% compared to the previous year; 45% of all

104 Körber-Stiftung, n.d.: "Projekt: Respekt im Rat."
105 City Council of Potsdam, 2021: „Kodex für wertschätzenden Umgang". Anlage 2 der Geschäftsordnung der Stadtverordnetenversammlung der Landeshauptstadt Potsdam vom 04. März 2021.
106 District Council of the District of Rendsburg-Eckernförde, 2023: "Kodex des kommunalpolitischen Miteinanders".

misogynistic crimes were committed out of a right-wing motivation, and another 42.2% cannot be attributed to a motivation under the categories of the monitoring. Nine percent of all politically motivated misogynistic crimes were registered as violent crimes. In 2023 and 2022, 37.7% of offenses were committed online.[107]

6. Case Studies of Violence against Women Politicians

The following two cases of political violence against women serve to exemplify extreme cases of physical and digital semiotic violence. Both cases gathered widespread media attention and led to increased awareness about the subject in the broader public as well as politics with long-lasting effects.

*** Trigger Warning: The second case study contains explicit language/sexual violence.***

6.1. Henriette Reker

Henriette Reker is a non-partisan German politician and jurist. Since 2015, she has been the mayor of the city of Cologne. Previously, she served as deputy mayor, responsible for social affairs, integration, and the environment. In the autumn of2015, Reker ran as a non-partisan candidate for mayor of Cologne. The CDU, FDP, and the Greens publicly supported her candidacy. Her election campaign took place against the backdrop of the so-called "refugee crisis" in a society that was becoming increasingly polarized, particularly on the issue of migration. Her clear stance in favor of a humane asylum policy made her a target of right-wing extremist and xenophobic hostility.

On Saturday, October 17, 2015, the last day of her campaign, Henriette Reker attended a campaign event at the weekly market in the Cologne district of Braunsfeld. There, she was handing out roses to passersby. A man approached her, asked for a rose, and then pulled out a combat knife and stabbed her in the neck.[108]

The attacker was taken into custody without resistance. According to statements made to the police, he cited his opposition to Reker's and then Chancellor Angela Merkel's refugee policies as his motive. Henriette Reker suffered life-threatening injuries: her windpipe was severed, and the blade split a thoracic vertebra. She was kept in an induced coma for five days and only learned of her election as mayor days later.[109]

The attack caused widespread shock and solidarity nationwide. Politicians from all parties, the media, citizens, and civil society organizations expressed their support. The then Prime Minister of North Rhine-Westphalia, Hannelore Kraft, tweeted: *"This is an attack on all of us*[110]*"*. [111]

107 Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), 2024.
108 Schmidt and Fischer, 2024: "Messerangriff auf die Demokratie."
109 Deutschlandfunk, 2016: "OB Reker schildert Messerangriff: Seit dem Attentat Alpträume."
110 Translation by EAF Berlin.
111 ZEIT Online, 2015: "Köln: OB-Kandidatin bei Messerangriff schwer verletzt."

Reker herself showed great determination. Despite ongoing health issues, she took office just weeks after the attack. Her words – *"Getting up and carrying on is an act of civil resistance"* [112] – became a symbolic statement against political violence.

In 2016, the perpetrator was sentenced to 14 years in prison for attempted murder and multiple counts of serious bodily harm.[113] The attack on Reker is considered a landmark example of the threat to democratic actors posed by right-wing extremist violence. Its physical and psychological consequences on her continue to affect Cologne's mayor: she is protected by personal security at selected events to this day.

Henriette Reker received support from state institutions, security authorities, and cross-party solidarity. Her return to office was accompanied by great public support in the city. The attack led to intensified discussions about the protection of officeholders and elected representatives, especially at the local level. The case raised awareness in politics and society about the increase in politically motivated violence – and in particular against women – and helped strengthen existing protection and support networks.

6.2. Renate Künast

Renate Künast is a German politician from the Greens. She served as Federal Minister of Food, Agriculture, and Consumer Protection from 2001 to 2005 and was a member of the German Bundestag from 2002 to 2025. Künast is one of the most prominent politicians of the Greens, known primarily for her clear positions on issues such as equality, environmental policy, and human rights. Due to her public profile and progressive stance, she repeatedly became the target of hate and agitation – especially in the digital space.

Renate Künast was continuously harassed with sexualized and dehumanizing insults, rape threats, and misogynistic comments on social networks, particularly on Facebook. In 2019, extreme right activist Sven Liebich published a fake quote on Facebook that falsely attributed a statement to Künast. The statement suggested that the politician had downplayed sexualized violence against children. Under this post, numerous hateful comments quickly gathered. Users called Künast names such as "dirty cunt," "slut", "piece of shit," and "mentally ill." Some comments contained explicit rape fantasies.[114]

Künast decided to take legal action against the insults. In early April 2019, the civil society organization HateAid began documenting the comments and supported Künast in the legal process. In September 2019, Künast brought the case to the Berlin Regional Court together with HateAid, hoping the court would classify the 22 documented comments as unlawful and thus create grounds to identify the authors. However, the court initially ruled against her, stating the comments were permissible expressions of opinion. This decision caused nationwide outrage for downplaying digital violence.[115] Künast filed an appeal, and in January 2020, the court reconsidered the case. The result was a partial success: six of the 22 comments were subsequently classified as unlawful, and Facebook was ordered to release the user's data. Künast went on to seek full recognition of all comments as criminal insults. In March 2020, Berlin's Higher Regional Court recognized six additional comments as unlawful, bringing the total to twelve. The remaining ten comments were still not pursued. In May 2020, she filed a constitutional complaint with the Federal Constitutional Court (BVerfG) to have the Higher Regional Court's decision reviewed and to clarify the fundamental limits of freedom of expression online when it infringes upon personality rights.[116]

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112 Translation by EAF Berlin.
113 Lakotta, 2016: "Messerangriff auf Henriette Reker: 'Er wollte ein Klima der Angst erzeugen.'"
114 HateAid, 2023: "Voller Erfolg für Künast im Facebook-Verfahren."
115 Boehme-Neßler, 2019: "Hasskommentare: Widerlich und die Würde verletzend."
116 HateAid, 2023.

In February 2022, Künast achieved a historic success: the Federal Constitutional Court ruled that the Higher Regional Court had violated her personality rights, as its previous decision did not meet constitutional requirements for balancing freedom of expression and personal rights. This cleared the way for a renewed review of all comments. In October 2022, the Higher Regional Court revised its decision and also recognized the last ten comments as unlawful.[117]

After a three-year legal battle, all 22 comments were finally classified as criminal insults – a significant legal and societal victory. The case sent a strong signal regarding the handling of digital violence in Germany. Künast herself called it *"a good day for democracy*[118]*"* on Twitter (now X).[119] At the same time, the case revealed how burdensome, lengthy, and costly legal defense against digital violence can be for victims.

Renate Künast told the news magazine DER SPIEGEL that she did not pursue the legal case for personal reasons. Instead, she wanted to send a message to courts and public prosecutors to highlight the need to protect politically active people online. After the decision, she said on the public broadcasting service *ZDF* that it was *"a ruling for everyone, for all those who are engaged"*.[120]

Künast received extensive support from HateAid, which not only provided legal support but also drew the attention of society and the media to the case. Women's rights organizations, many media outlets, and parts of civil society also stood behind her. Politically, the pressure increased to pursue digital violence more consistently and to protect victims better. The Federal Constitutional Court's decision was seen as a historic milestone in the fight against online violence.[121]

7. Analysis of the Efficacy of Current Interventions at the National Level

In recent years, the legislature has recognized that political violence poses a significant threat to attracting new party members and promoting democratic participation. As indicated, discussions and draft bills center on enhancing penalties for political violence, reforming the residents' register, and introducing better protection and reporting measures online. Concrete programs and steps (without claiming to be complete) that have been implemented or publicly (and often financially) supported have focused on providing information, counseling, and support for those affected:

— Under the auspices of the German president, the **website "Stark im Amt"** (Strength in Office) provides various forms of support for local officials and elected representatives in Germany since 2021. The online platform provides information and guidance on prevention, handling personal threats, and crisis management. The website also lists points of contact, resources, and stakeholders in the field to advise and connect affected politicians more efficiently. It is an initiative by the charitable foundation *Körber-Stiftung* in cooperation with the German County Association – *Deutscher*

117 HateAid, 2023.
118 Translation by EAF Berlin.
119 Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ), 2022: "Verfassungsgericht setzt dem Hass im Netz Grenzen."
120 Kahl and Stein, 2022: "Was der Künast-Beschluss des Bundesverfassungsgerichts für den Rechtsschutz von Politikerinnen bedeutet." Citation translated by EAF Berlin.
121 Kahl and Stein, 2022.

Landkreistag (DLT), the Association of German Cities – *Deutscher Städtetag (DST)*, and the German Association of Towns and Municipalities – *Deutscher Städte- und Gemeindebund (DStGB)*.

— A nationwide independent **complaints office and contact point for local politicians**, the **"Starke Stelle"** (Strong Point), became operative in August 2024. It provides referral counseling, assistance, and support services at the federal and regional state levels for municipal officials and elected representatives. The Foundation German Forum for Crime Prevention (DFK) established the office with the support of the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) in autumn 2023.

— There are around 50 **mobile counseling teams** organized under the federal association of mobile counseling teams **"Bundesverband Mobile Beratung"** across Germany. They advise interested parties and affected individuals, including politicians, on right-wing extremism, racism, antisemitism, antifeminism, and conspiracy theories. Additionally, they publish guidelines and their work was scientifically evaluated by the federal government's program *"Demokratie leben!"* ("Live Democracy!") from 2020-2024. They are furthermore supported by the Federal Ministry for Education, Family, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth and the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration.

— Six civil society organizations have recently formed the nationwide platform **toneshift – Network against Online Hate and Disinformation** *(Netzwerk gegen Hass im Netz und Desinformation)*, which is funded by the federal government's program *"Demokratie leben!"* ("Live Democracy!"). According to the website, toneshift aims to advise on hate speech, develop counter strategies, and facilitate dialogue.[122]

— The project **KommA – Kommunale Allianzen & Strategien gegen Rassismus und Hass** (Municipal Alliances & Strategies against Racism and Hatred) was carried out by the consulting institute IMAP and supported by the office of the Minister of State for Migration, Refugees and Integration and Federal Government Commissioner for Anti-Racism *(Staatsministerin für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration und Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Antirassismus)*. It collected and continues to share good practices on countering hatred and racism in municipal administrations and provided training and support to 10 model communities and 60 additional network communities.

— The project **Forum against Fakes – Together for a Strong Democracy** aims to initiate a debate on how to address disinformation, sensitize the public, and ultimately find ways to rebuild trust in pluralistic democracies, the government, and its institutions. The Bertelsmann Foundation initiated it together with the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI), the Mercator Foundation, and the Michael Otto Foundation for Sustainability.

Although strongly supported by the government, the crucial involvement and implementation of these interventions by civil society actors is also apparent. Its targets are typically individuals affected by or interested in the issue, as well as the broader public. Depending on the study, however, only a fraction of affected individuals seek out counseling or advice from dedicated services. Only 1% of mayors and district administrators surveyed by MOTRA reported using such services.[123] The 2022 study by the Heinrich-Böll-Foundation finds that (among local politicians) 22.3% of women seek out support services, more than 10% more than the men surveyed.[124]

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122 The project was only set up recently and has been preceded (until 2024) by the project "Kompetenznetzwerk gegen Hass im Netz".
123 Bitschnau and Eberspach, 2024.
124 Blätte, Dinnebier, and Schmitz-Vardar, 2022.

In addition, recent campaigns have been carried out by private and public good-oriented stakeholders, focusing on disinformation, for instance, by the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy (CFFP)[125] or the Amadeu-Antonio Foundation[126]. **Prevention and engagement with perpetrators**, such as through broad national campaigns or mandatory training, do not appear to be a central focus of state-supported interventions despite studies and surveys frequently highlighting similar findings regarding suspects and perpetrators.

There seems to be a **lack of internal support and prevention mechanisms**, specifically within political parties, especially when considering that 29% of female politicians who experienced online violence claim that the perpetrators are party colleagues. Although most parties have an Ombuds Mechanism, often also below the federal level, mechanisms in place are frequently regarded as inadequate, with the lack of emotional and psychological support and solidarity within the party or communities being the main complaint points.[127] It seems also telling that, overall, 75% of mayors and district administrators surveyed by MOTRA consider it necessary to implement further measures to protect local political officials and elected representatives.[128] Gaps also remain in the resources available to contact points within parties and institutions. There is a need for internal assistance in reporting incidents, securing evidence, and pressing charges.[129]

The **legal route remains of special relevance**: About 30% of respondents to HateAid's 2025 study on cyber violence have filed criminal complaints, and an additional 8% have filed complaints under civil law. Although the majority of people affected do not seek legal redress for various reasons, some underrepresented groups tend to make more use of those avenues, e. g., politicians with a so-called migrant background or from lower socio-economic classes.[130] Hurdles and resources for those groups might be particularly scarce, but the necessity is evidenced by HateAid's 2023 transparency report: 522 criminal complaints, 117 legal warnings, and 33 civil suits were filed using their solidarity-based model of litigation funding.[131]

One of the biggest challenges that remain, however, is identifying the perpetrator(s). In cases of online violence, harassment often occurs anonymously through private profiles or pseudonyms; sometimes it is even carried out by bots or trolls (as reported by 54% of women respondents).[132] Here, private, usually for-profit platform providers are responsible for verifying, identifying, and monitoring data more accurately, particularly in cases involving violence and cybercrime.

125 The CFFP implemented a project with Microsoft: Countering the Impact of (AI-driven) Gendered Disinformation on Elections.
126 The Amadeu-Antonio-Foundation implemented the campaigns #SagsDeinerMutter (Say it to Your Mother) and #FactsOverFakes!
127 HateAid et al., 2025.
128 Bitschnau and Eberspach, 2024.
129 HateAid et al., 2025.
130 Blätte, Dinnebier, and Schmitz-Vardar, 2022.
131 HateAid, n.d.: "Tätigkeitsbericht 2023."
132 HateAid et al., 2025.

8. Campaigning under Threat: Political Violence during Elections

Political violence recently spiked during electoral campaigns[133] as politicians, their work, and agenda for many become more visible in the public sphere than it usually does. Within the German super election year of 2024, reported attacks against political representatives spiked 30% compared to the previous year.[134]

Women mayors and district administrators were significantly affected by violence during the 2024 European Parliament elections and regional elections in the East German states of Thuringia, Saxony, and Brandenburg. Most commonly, verbal harassment and slander, destruction of property, threats of violence, and discrimination were reported. Moreover, incidents of stalking, sexual harassment, and sexualized violence, as well as threats of rape, were reported to MOTRA.[135]

Destruction of property appears to occur more frequently during electoral campaigns (10% vs. 2%), as does the overall willingness to report offenses to the police (between 27% and 31% during campaigns vs. 11% throughout the term). Among the reported crimes against **elected officials, party members, and campaign volunteers**, insults and bodily harm follow property destruction as the most common offenses.[136]

Online violence, as another pervasive form of violence, usually peaks during electoral campaigns, although it affects most male politicians, too.[137]

Some parties/their local chapters offer specific training for candidates and campaign volunteers. Several NGOs, associations, and consulting agencies offer training to candidates and volunteers, some even without compensation. It is, however, also a matter of whether or not these resources are known and available to affected politicians, especially in more rural areas. Nonetheless, protection measures for newly campaigning candidates are often described as inadequate; there is a need for (party) resources to be allocated for prevention courses, measures, and assistance in managing incidents.[138] At the local level, party structures are eroding, and many candidates run as independents or as part of a locally formed voters' association. This means they are not entitled to claim government funding, which could help provide prevention training or emergency support.

Although such incidents are not new, the quality, specifically the brutality of those incidents, has increased. Local politician Carolyn Macmillan (Social Democrats, SPD) and her husband, for instance, were physically attacked (kicked with combat boots, e. g.) by four neo-Nazi teenage men[139] on their way to campaign in Berlin in December 2024.[140] Ultimately, there seems to be a shift occurring where more MPs and prominent politicians are affected rather than "just" local representatives.[141] Among the general incidents reported to police in 2024, the target/motivation behind the attack is most often correlated with the federal level.[142]

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133 Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (BpB), 2025: "Gewalt gegen Wahlkämpfer."
134 Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) and Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), 2025.
135 Bitschnau and Eberspach, 2024.
136 Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) and Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), 2025.
137 HateAid et al., 2025.
138 HateAid et al., 2025.
139 Losensky, 2025: "Prozess gegen Schläger. Angriff auf SPD-Wahlkämpfer: Ein Nazi gesteht, die anderen grinsen."
140 Deutsche Welle (DW), 2024: "Berlin: 4 Teens Arrested for Attack on SPD Election Helper."
141 Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (BpB), 2025.
142 Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) and Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), 2025.

9. Intersecting Realities: Experiences of Marginalized Groups

Online, politically active women frequently receive comments and reactions that center on specific markers such as their religion (as well as age, appearance, and relationship status).[143] Women with a **statistical migration background**[144] and **women of color** seem to receive more sexist comments online (20.8%) than the overall number for women (16.8%). **Younger women** politicians (under the age of 45) receive the highest number of sexist online attacks (35.7%).[145] While there are no studies that focus on political violence against women from minoritized or racialized backgrounds, some (case) studies point to intersectional experiences of violence and incidents that are not only sexist and/or sexualized but also racist, antisemitic, or Islamophobic[146]:

— **Sawsan Chebli** (Social Democrats, SPD), for instance, became State Secretary for Civic Engagement and International Affairs (2016 – 2021) for the state of Berlin at 38 years old. She received and continues to be a target of racialized and sexualized attacks on social media.[147] Many of her public appearances are only possible in the company of state security.[148]

— **Dr. Adeline Abimnwi Awemo** (Christian Democrats, CDU) was racially insulted and attacked in the presence of her family, while campaigning as a candidate for the state parliament of Brandenburg in 2024. The perpetrator also ended up filing a report against her as Awemo tried to defend herself.[149]

Reporting to police and filing criminal complaints, as well as making incidents public, can be seen more among people with a statistical migration background (33.7%) than their colleagues without a so-called migration background (24.1%). Similar numbers can be found for politicians from lower economic classes, although, overall, women seem to file charges less than men (22.6% vs. 27.7%).[150]

Physical violence seems to be experienced more frequently by politicians from **lower socio-economic classes** than by colleagues from other classes in urban areas.[151] However, there does not seem to be a difference regarding their gender.

Moreover, the political climate and culture of discussion are described as rougher in the eastern part of Germany (the territory of the former GDR). More mayors and district administrators report on attacks online and offline in East Germany than in West Germany (45% vs. 33%).[152]

Regarding **other marginalized genders**, few studies provide data for non-binary respondents or consider the third option for gender identities in Germany ("diverse"). The majority of respondents who self-identified their gender as "diverse" experienced cyber violence. Thirty-one percent even received threats of physical and sexual violence.[153] Although only a tiny number of non-binary local politicians have been surveyed in 2022, 77% (10 out of N=13) have personally been targets of insults, threats, and even physical assault.[154] Generally, however, as data collection remains largely gendered among the binary categories of women and men, reliable data is scarce.

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143 HateAid et al., 2025.
144 According to the Federal Statistical Office of Germany (DeStatis), a person has a migration background if they themselves or at least one of their parents were not born with German citizenship.
145 Köcher and Lukoschat, 2021.
146 Alin et al., 2021.
147 Engelking, 2023: "Sawsan Chebli zum Twitter-Bußgeldverfahren: "Staat kann zeigen, dass er nicht zahnlos ist"."
148 Welt, 2020: "Sawsan Chebli: Die Bedrohungslage ist so groß, dass ich nicht mehr frei sein kann."
149 rbb24 Brandenburg aktuell, 2024: "CDU-Politikerin Awemo in Cottbus offenbar rassistisch beleidigt und angegriffen."
150 Blätte, Dinnebier, and Schmitz-Vardar, 2022.
151 Blätte, Dinnebier, and Schmitz-Vardar, 2022.
152 Bitschnau and Eberspach, 2024.
153 HateAid et al., 2025.
154 Blätte, Dinnebier, and Schmitz-Vardar, 2022.

9. Recommendations

To effectively address and remedy violence against women in politics, the following recommendations shall help to guide different actors and stakeholders:

To Government and Legislature

- **Parity Law and Gender Quotas:** Although women comprise roughly half of the population in Germany, they remain significantly underrepresented at nearly all levels of political decision-making. This imbalance limits the diversity of perspectives and weakens democratic legitimacy. This is not due to a lack of qualifications or interest but rather to structural barriers. Quotas and parity regulations can be effective instruments for increasing the political participation of women. They aim to create equal opportunities and strengthen democratic legitimacy, as seen in several EU countries. While there is an ongoing debate in Germany about whether such regulations are compatible with the German Constitution, the Basic Law *(Grundgesetz)*, it is important to explore lawful ways to promote gender equality in political decision-making, in line with Germany's obligations under the Basic Law and international agreements, such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

- **Realize Stipulations of the Current Coalition Treaty:** specifically to improve blocking mechanisms of the public register for politicians and politically active individuals and their families. Pass a gender-sensitive specific law on digital violence or the proposed reforms in Cybercrime Law to close persisting gaps and speed up coordination with platform providers and law enforcement.

- **Ensure that Platform Operators Meet their Obligations:** for instance, when it comes to blocking users or releasing information to identify anonymous perpetrators and harmful bots. Illegal content, hate speech, and sexist and misogynistic content should be closely monitored and removed, especially during electoral campaigns. Transparency and accountability are necessary to put a stop to gendered violence on the internet.

- **Collect Quality Data:** to facilitate inclusive gender-sensitive monitoring and identify challenges and threats to specific groups in order to address needs and barriers effectively.

- **Strengthen Prevention:** Target male politicians and men between 30 and 60 in public campaigns and awareness-raising. A systemic cultural change is necessary to counter the entitlement and supremacy some perpetrators feel in attacking minorities, and women, specifically.

To Parliaments and Local Councils

- **Introduce Codes of Conduct** to create a space for dialogue and reflection on behavior together. In order to become an efficient and actually utilized tool, codes of conduct should become part of the council's statute and provide rules on non-compliance, for instance, sanctions. Such documents should be publicly available to ensure access for everyone, send a signal of inclusion to candidates, and lead by example as a blueprint for other councils and committees.

- **Introduce Mandatory Training** on sexual harassment and discrimination. A sexist and discriminatory climate inhibits people from participating at their full potential and infringes upon their rights to participate freely. Particularly underrepresented groups and communities that face intersecting forms of discrimination, such as younger women, trans*, inter* and non-binary (TIN*) persons, immigrants, or people of color, may feel unwelcome and deterred from engaging politically.

- **Introduce Independent Complaint Mechanisms**, such as Ombuds Offices within parliaments at all levels, to decentralize structures and lower reservations and fears when reaching out and reporting incidents. Awareness persons or teams at council sessions or (local) events could also be considered. They can have a preventative function but also signal that they are there to help as soon as a situation arises and advise on and contextualize incidents.

To Political Parties and Voters' Associations

- **Limit Public Data on Candidates and Members:** Parties should consider sharing less personal data about candidates and officials on their (local chapter) websites. Checking with candidates which information they would like to be public is advised: the number and age of children, marital status, home address, or exact place of work/employer (for volunteer politicians and candidates) is not always relevant to voters or the politician's perspectives and expertise. Such information may leave candidates and members more vulnerable to receiving threats against loved ones and in their private lives.

- **Offer Information, Support, and Training Services** about campaigning and violence in politics, specifically gender-based and sexualized experiences. Provide materials and guidelines as well as S. O. S. contacts. Parties should get connected with local support facilities, security authorities, and mobile advisory teams.

- **Protect and Train Candidates on Violence against Women in Politics** and provide support for unelected party affiliates as well. Unaffiliated candidates and candidates from voters' associations have less access to structural resources and protection measures that political parties have at their disposal. Especially unaffiliated candidates who are nevertheless backed by parties should receive access to training as well as contact points, local Ombuds Offices, and awareness mechanisms.

- **Engage Leadership**, especially male party leaders, to support affected people publicly and to speak out against cultures of intimidation and harassment. Eradicating (gender-based) violence against politicians should be made an executive responsibility with corresponding resources. Publish statements and documents that show what the party has done to address incidents or why they advocate against discrimination and sexism.

All levels and actors could demonstrate political willingness to show that they are committed to acting more inclusive and non-discriminatory by adhering to pledges (i. e., a public commitment to support equality and respect, and to introduce zero tolerance for violence), such as the Joint Declaration against Sexism and Sexual Harassment and a specific pledge on combatting violence against women in politics to be developed in the project Recognize, Resist, Rise Up (3R) – Tackling Gender-Based Violence against Women in Politics.

Additionally, several toolkits and guidelines have been developed internationally to combat violence against women in politics, including those by UN WOMEN[155] and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the OSCE[156]. International cooperation and the exchange of good practices should therefore be facilitated to conserve resources and aid in the swift implementation of tested, practical, and effective measures.

155 UN WOMEN, 2021: "Preventing Violence against Women in Politics."
156 OSCE/ODIHR, 2022: "Addressing Violence against Women in Politics in the OSCE Region: Toolkit."

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