



Right in the Middle, not out on the Sidelines?

Representation and Participation of Women in Europe

Results of a Comparative, Representative Survey in Germany, Italy, Croatia, Poland and Sweden

Dominik Hirndorf

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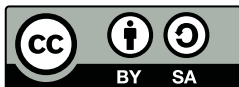
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At a Glance

- › Discrimination of women is regarded as a big or major issue in all countries surveyed. With the exception of Germany, women in all countries consider the issue to be more widespread than men do. What this shows, above all, is the high degree of sensitivity among respondents in relation to this issue.
- › Women, especially young women, experience disadvantages on account of their gender. Male violence against women is still considered to be a widespread problem.
- › Statements that are more sceptical of emancipation enjoy only isolated pockets of support, although gender-based prejudices and older views on gender roles do persist to some extent.
- › Women are trusted to hold important positions in society just as much as men. Both genders are similarly focused on success, with young women actually exhibiting a greater focus than young men, on average.
- › Political measures to achieve gender equality are strongly supported, and a majority is convinced that gender equality promotes economic development.
- › There are no gender differences with respect to political participation. Differences between men and women are observed with respect to people's own confidence in engaging with politics and in their interest in politics.

Below is an overview of the most important findings for the five countries surveyed:

Germany

In Germany, the smallest gap between the genders is observed with regards to how they view the issue of equality as a whole. Men and women in Germany have very similar opinions when it comes to their perception of the problem and attitudes towards or advocating for action. Around half consider the discrimination of women in Germany to be a big or major issue. This view is more common among younger age groups than older ones. Furthermore, one in two women in the 18 to 35 category reports being discriminated against on account of her gender. One in five women reports being the victim of discrimination at work or with respect to a promotion.

However, opinions regarding opportunities for women to have an influential career in Germany are less negative by comparison. Reports of frequent male violence against women were lowest in Germany. Gender-based prejudices do not enjoy majority support, while anti-emancipation attitudes are also less widespread (one in seven) than in

other countries. However, only around a quarter of all respondents self-reported an affiliation with feminism.¹

Young people, especially young women, regularly stand out in the results. They exhibit a clearer interest than men in the values of power and drive to succeed and have a keen interest in politics. The split between East and West Germany and the influence of religion are also particularly interesting. These and other analyses are presented in a separate publication focusing exclusively on Germany (Hirndorf 2023).

Italy

Discrimination against women is perceived most strongly in Italy compared to all other countries. 86 percent of the Italian population believes that discrimination of women in Italy is a big or major issue. Consistent with this view, a majority believes that women have fewer opportunities to have an influential political career, while 68 percent think that women are frequently subject to male violence.

One in two young Italian women is success-oriented. At the same time, more than half of women aged 18 to 35 report being discriminated against occasionally or more often on account of their gender. Accordingly, support for political action aimed at promoting gender equality is particularly high in Italy. 95 percent support the mandatory provision of childcare and 90 percent an extension of parental leave if both parents take leave, while 82 percent advocate gender quotas for board positions. Support for all three programmes is thus higher in Italy than in all other countries, especially with regards to gender quotas. Italy has the lowest economic activity rate among women across all five countries. The overall results generally indicate dissatisfaction with this state of affairs. In fact, more than one in four Italian women reports being (very) dissatisfied with their job situation. No other country reported such high numbers.

The Italian population is deeply concerned with the issue of equality. The issue of gender-based discrimination is considered to be particularly big, while emancipation sceptics are few and far between. Looking at the results, there appears to be a significant desire for political and economic changes, quite likely with a view to taking further steps towards achieving parity for women in politics and society.

Croatia

In Croatia, discrimination of women is regarded as a big issue (62 percent). This is the second highest figure reported, after Italy. It is above all young women who are aware of this issue. One in two Croatian women reports regularly experiencing worse treatment compared to men. The largest share, 58 percent, is found in the age group of women between the ages of 36 and 49. Nearly three quarters of all respondents in Croatia believe that women in relationships are often financially dependent on their partner. This may potentially be the result of a low economic activity rate among women in Croatia (68 percent). Since the legal entitlement to childcare is relatively meagre, the high levels of support for the mandatory provision of childcare is hardly surprising (95 percent – higher than in all other countries).

While support for other political measures, such as extending parental leave or implementing gender quotas for board positions, is equally high, there is a great deal of scepticism over whether the discussion of gender equality is not in fact creating more problems than it is solving (59 percent agree). Overall, one in four Croats exhibits a mindset that is critical of emancipation – by far the highest number in any of the countries. Agreement with gender-based prejudices is highest in Croatia. Croatia reported the lowest figures for feminist attitudes. However, the Croatian population is convinced that gender equality promotes economic growth (64 percent – second-highest total).

More than one in two exhibits little interest in politics, and a large majority feels they have little ability to have any impact personally. Many Croats have limited confidence in their own political capabilities and put little faith in parliament, government, and the justice system.

Gender equality is a more controversial topic in Croatia than in other countries. On the one hand, the discrimination of women is regarded as a big issue, their dependence on their partners is high, and there is a significant desire for political change. On the other hand, gender-based prejudices persist and anti-emancipation attitudes are widespread. Further steps towards equality will have to overcome not just structural, but also cultural hurdles.

Poland

Polish society presents a divided picture when it comes to equality of women in politics and society. A majority considers discrimination of women to be a big issue. However, on closer inspection, this majority exists only among women, and not men. Significant differences between men and women are observed regularly – more in Poland than in any other country surveyed. For example, there are significant differences in how people perceive the frequency of violence against women and the question of whether women receive their “fair share”. The same pattern can be observed regarding support for political action. Support for promoting shared parental leave is 9 percentage points higher among Polish women than Polish men, while support for gender quotas for board positions is a full 24 points higher.

Older views on gender roles and gender-based prejudices are comparatively frequent in Poland. One in six also exhibits attitudes that are sceptical of emancipation. One in two Polish men believes that women are better suited to childcare than men – a significantly higher number than among Polish women. Polish men are also more critical of discussions around gender equality than Polish women. However, the latter exhibit greater agreement with gender-based prejudices – such as how family and home are more important to women. They also identify significantly less with values such as power and drive to succeed.

Consequently, this produces a mixed picture. Polish women appear to be, on average, more sensitive to the issue than men since they are more affected by it. In fact, there is a divide between the genders in Poland with regards to their very perception of discrimination of women. A next step for Polish women could be to implement further political measures to promote gender equality. These measures would receive significant support

among women. The discussion surrounding modern gender roles will remain challenging for large portions of men and women in Poland in light of these many varied differences.

Sweden

Sweden is a significant outlier in this study in several respects, and the country exhibits a particularly high level of awareness of the issue of equality. For example, the Swedish population sees no differences between men and women in terms of their suitability for certain professions, while four in ten report an affiliation with feminist values. This awareness is also reflected in the high scores reported for perception of the issue. More than half of Swedes consider discrimination of women to be a big or major issue in their country. This view is even more widespread among younger age groups. Half of women under 35 years of age report being discriminated against occasionally or more often on the grounds of their gender. Nearly two thirds of the population believe that women in Sweden are frequently subject to male violence.

Gender-based prejudices, scepticism towards emancipation, or support of older gender roles are almost non-existent, as are larger or systematic differences between men and women regarding the issue as a whole. Almost one in three Swedish men and one in two Swedish women identifies with feminism.

In the light of the high economic activity rate among women, the high proportion of female representatives in parliament, and a well-established childcare and parental leave model, Sweden is very much a leader. However, these successes must not be allowed to veil the fact that even Sweden has not achieved parity for women in politics and society, despite the good underlying conditions. Swedes' perception of these issues indicates that there is still a need for action.

The Study

Between 3 November 2021 and 22 March 2022, IPSOS conducted telephone surveys with around 2,000 people in each of Germany, Italy, Sweden, Poland and Croatia on behalf of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (Survey no. 1031). The survey was conducted in the so-called Dual Frame mode, with interviews held on landlines and mobile phones.² This meant that the survey was able to also reach target persons who have only a landline or mobile connection.

The sample was selected at random using the so-called random-digit dialing (RDD) method.³ This method only uses existing files which contain either existing telephone number prefixes or existing country code areas. These are then collated into blocks, within which the last numbers are randomly generated. The RDD method thus ensures that both households which are and are not registered in a public telephone directory are included in the random sampling. The telephone number thus generated is dialled multiple times on different days of the week and at different times of the day so that the survey also includes hard-to-reach persons.

The survey data were weighted for social structure markers. Only the weighted data are analysed. In all five countries, the survey is representative of the voting-age population at a national level, meaning 18 years and older. Since this study regularly draws comparisons between men and women, respondents were actively asked to indicate their gender. Consequently, only men and women who also identify as male or female were included in the survey. Of the 10,009 respondents, twelve persons self-reported as “non-binary”. One other person did not wish to indicate their gender. These persons could not be treated as a group in the gendered analysis due to their small number.

-
- 1 In the study, respondents were asked how similar they are to a person who describes herself/himself as a feminist. This self-reported affiliation is defined in this study as an affiliation with feminism or feminist values.
 - 2 48 percent of interviews were conducted by landline in Germany, 34 percent in Italy, 51 percent in Croatia, 11 percent in Poland and 9 percent in Sweden. The remainder of the interviews were conducted by mobile phone. The differences between the countries here are due to differing distributions of “landline-onlys”, “mobile-onlys” and “dual-users” among the populations of the five countries surveyed.
 - 3 The RDD method was not used for random sampling in Sweden. Instead, a random sample was generated using a variety of sources such as the Swedish state personal address register, SPAR, public telephone directories, and government organisations. This dataset was then used to generate a random sample of telephone numbers, broken down according to age, region and gender. Target persons who had both a landline and a mobile phone were, where necessary, contacted via both channels in order to increase the utilisation and representativeness of the random sample.

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Introduction

Turning legal equality into social parity is a lengthy process, and as such the role of women is still a widely discussed socio-political issue in 21st-century Europe. The *Gender Equality Index*, for example, indicates that inequalities and injustices between the genders still exist. This index regularly compares the situation for men and women in the domains of work, knowledge, health, power, money and time use. It analyses tangible data such as average income, employment rates, education rates or the percentage of women in parliaments. Ultimately, each score in the *Gender Equality Index* indicates how great the differences are between the genders in each individual domain. A higher score is an indication of smaller differences. Sweden leads the *Gender Equality Index*, and is well ahead of all other EU countries with around 84 points (EU average 69). While Germany scores the EU average exactly, Italy (65), Croatia (61) and Poland (58) are slightly to significantly below average (European Institute for Gender Equality 2022a).

What this index does not show, however, is how and whether these tangible differences are in fact perceived by the respective populations. It also does not map potential underlying reasons, attitudes or prevailing stereotypes. Yet these aspects have a vital role to play in the search for actions to combat the issues. The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung is tackling these questions from the perspective of a pan-European comparison. A representative study was used to collect data on attitudes towards women's equality and participation in politics and society in five countries. German, Italy, Poland, Croatia and Sweden were selected because they span the EU both geographically and along lines of socio-political and thematic differences. That is to say, not only do the countries differ in terms of their *Gender Equality Index* score, they also differ in terms of economic power, labour markets, religion or former East/West divides. The results of the survey indicate the attitudes of different national populations towards the issue of equality, enabling us to compare and categorise them and to draw conclusions on strengthening the role of women in politics and society.

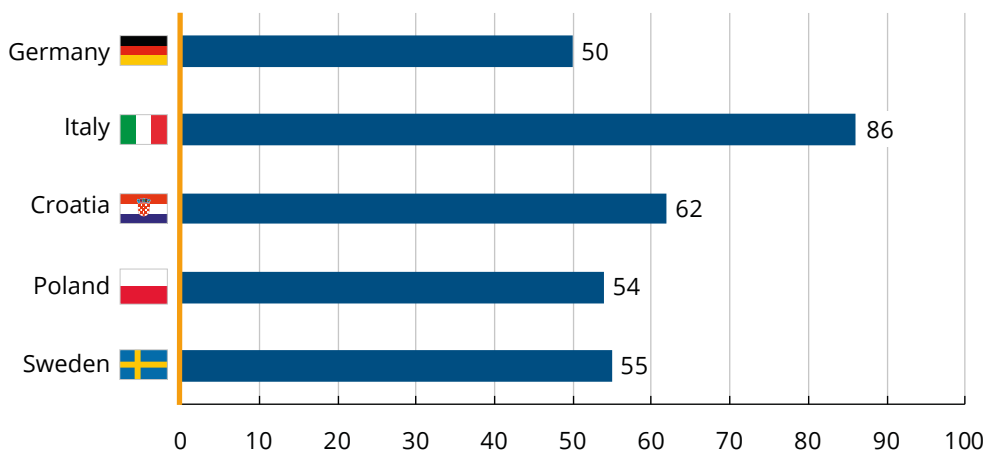


Discrimination and Disadvantages

Discrimination of women is regarded as a big or major issue in all countries surveyed. When asked how great the issue of discrimination of women – explained as women experiencing disadvantages – is in their country, the majority of respondents indicated that it was a “major issue” or “big issue”. This highlights not only how the discrimination of women in society is perceived as widespread, but also the importance of the issue for people. Indeed, 86 percent of respondents in Italy indicated that discrimination of women in the country is a big or major problem. Following some way behind were Croatia (62 percent), Sweden (55 percent), Poland (54 percent) and Germany (50 percent).

Figure 1: Estimated Extent of the Issue of Discrimination of Women in Respondent's Country

Here: major/big issue



Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of combined responses for “a major issue” and “a big issue”. Values for “a minor issue”, “not an issue”, “don’t know/no response” not included.

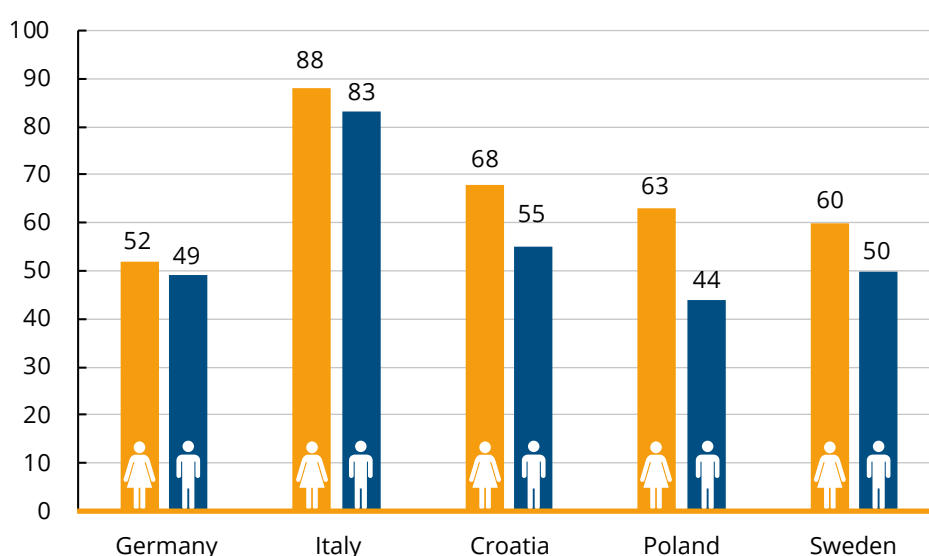
Question: “In your opinion, is the discrimination of women, by which we mean women experiencing disadvantages in [...] society, a major issue, a big issue, a minor issue or not an issue?”

Women consider discrimination to be a bigger issue than men in all countries except Germany. The gender divide between those who consider discrimination of women to be a big or major issue is between 5 percentage points (Italy) and 19 percentage points (Poland). The slight difference in Germany (3 percentage points) is not significant.

In Germany and Sweden, younger age groups of both genders are more concerned with the issue than older people. In Croatia and Poland, it is above all young women who perceive it as a big/major issue. However, awareness of the issue among men in these two countries is greater among the older age groups than the younger ones.

Figure 2: Gender Differences: Estimated Extent of the Issue of Discrimination of Women in Respondent's Country

Here: major/big issue



Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of combined responses for "a major issue" and "a big issue". Values for "a minor issue", "not an issue", "don't know/no response" not included.

The data from Germany do not exhibit any systematic differences between the genders.

Question: "In your opinion, is the discrimination of women, by which we mean women experiencing disadvantages in [...] society, a major issue, a big issue, a minor issue or not an issue?"

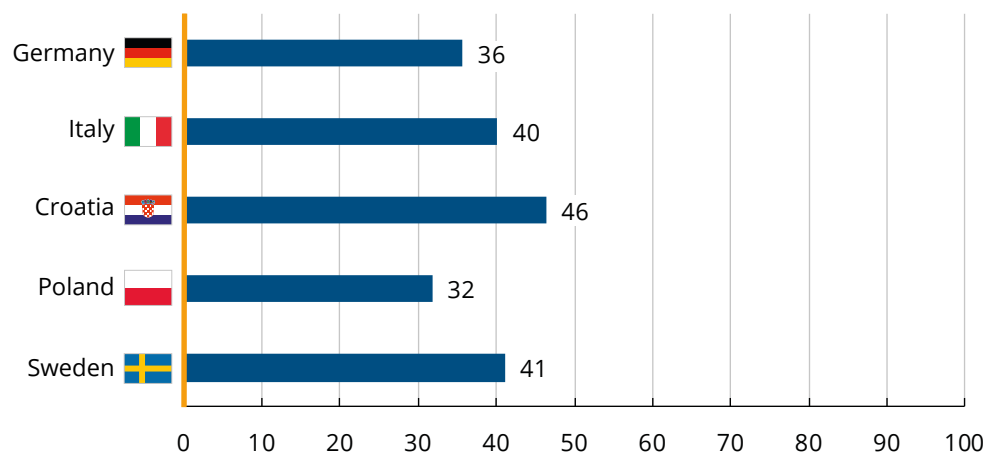
A respondent's assessment of whether discrimination of women is an issue in their country is significantly affected by whether or not it affects them personally. In all countries, we observe that women are more likely to regard the discrimination of women as a big or major issue if they have personally experienced such disadvantages either occasionally or more often. At least one in three women surveyed reports experiencing disadvantages compared to men either "now and then" or "more often". In Croatia, this figure rises to nearly one in two (46 percent).



More young than older women report being at a disadvantage compared to men in all countries. In Germany, Sweden and Italy, more than half of women aged 18 to 35 report being discriminated against on account of their gender occasionally or more often. This same age group reports discrimination significantly more in Poland, too (41 percent). In Croatia, the largest percent of women who feel they are affected by this issue are women aged between 36 and 49 (58 percent). We can presume that it is not necessarily that the extent of discrimination has changed, but rather respondents' awareness of the issue. Discriminatory behaviour is being increasingly criticised and addressed. As a result, younger generations who have grown up with this increased sensitivity are presumably more aware of such disadvantages. This is backed up by the observation that across all countries, the group least likely to report being discriminated against on account of their gender is the over-64s.

Figure 3: Perceived Gender-Based Disadvantages Experienced by Women Compared to Men

Here: now and then/more often



Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of combined responses for "now and then" and "more often". Values for "rarely", "never", "don't know/no response" not included.

Question: "How often have you personally felt discriminated against as a woman compared to men, by which we mean being at a disadvantage just because you are a woman?"



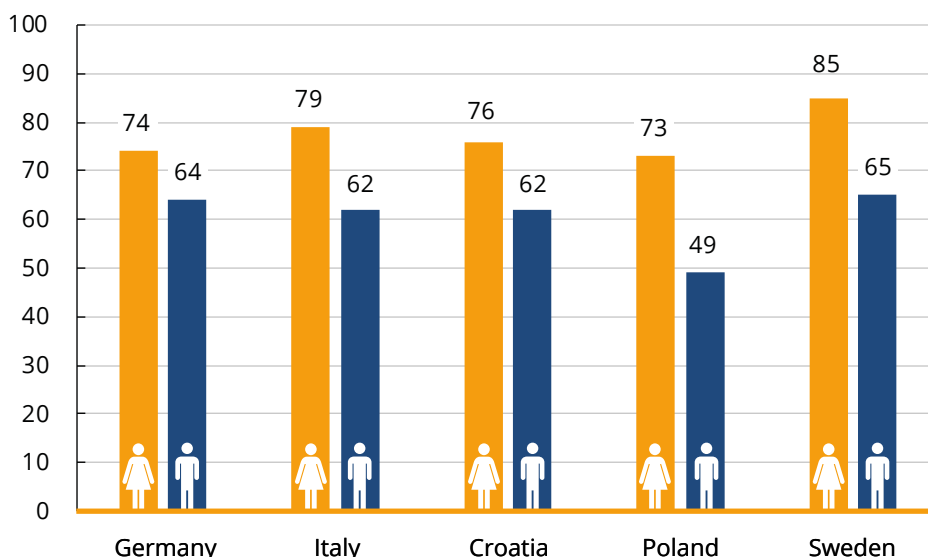
Perceptions of Current Levels of Equality

The discrimination of women with respect to men, or in general, is an issue with many different facets. For example, a large majority in all countries believes that women earn significantly less than their fair share. Many women report experiencing disadvantages specifically with respect to their pay. Again, there are clear differences in perception between the genders. Among men, up to two thirds agree with the statement that women in their country earn significantly less than their fair share, with this number falling to just half in Poland. Women, by contrast, agree with this statement significantly more across all countries. The differences between men's and women's perception of this issue is between 10 (German) and 24 (Poland) percentage points.

It is assumed that the wording of the question elicited, above all, associations with pay. Agreement with the statement may be an expression of the widely discussed Gender Pay Gap⁴ or could also relate to unequal treatment. When asked whether they have ever felt like they are at a disadvantage on account of their gender, around one third of women in the countries surveyed indicate that this has happened to them "regarding pay".⁵ 90 percent of those affected agree that women in their country earn significantly less than their fair share. The monetary aspect certainly played a predominant role in respondents' assessment of this question, in particular given the combination of "earn" and "fair share".



Figure 4: Agreement with the Statement “In [country], women earn significantly less than their fair share.”



Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of combined responses for “fully agree” and “somewhat agree”. Values for “neither/nor”, “somewhat disagree”, “fully disagree”, and “don’t know/no response” not included.

Question: “Please tell me to what extent you agree with the following statements. Please use the following scale to categorise your response: fully agree, somewhat agree, neither/nor, somewhat disagree, fully disagree. In [country], women earn significantly less than their fair share.”

There is also a general perception of financial inequality between the genders with respect to partnerships: the majority of respondents agrees with the statement that women are frequently financially dependent on their partner. In Croatia, a full 72 per cent of respondents agree with this statement, and nearly half (48 percent) in Germany. Sweden is the only country where the majority of respondents does not agree (40 percent). With the exception of Germany, dependence is perceived more greatly by women than men.

One quarter of women in Italy, Croatia and Poland and one fifth of women in Sweden and Germany have personally experienced disadvantages on account of their gender in the context of a job or promotion. Only around half as many men report experiencing discrimination for this reason in these sorts of situations. These personal statements are backed up by agreement with statements on the current level of equality in the workplace.

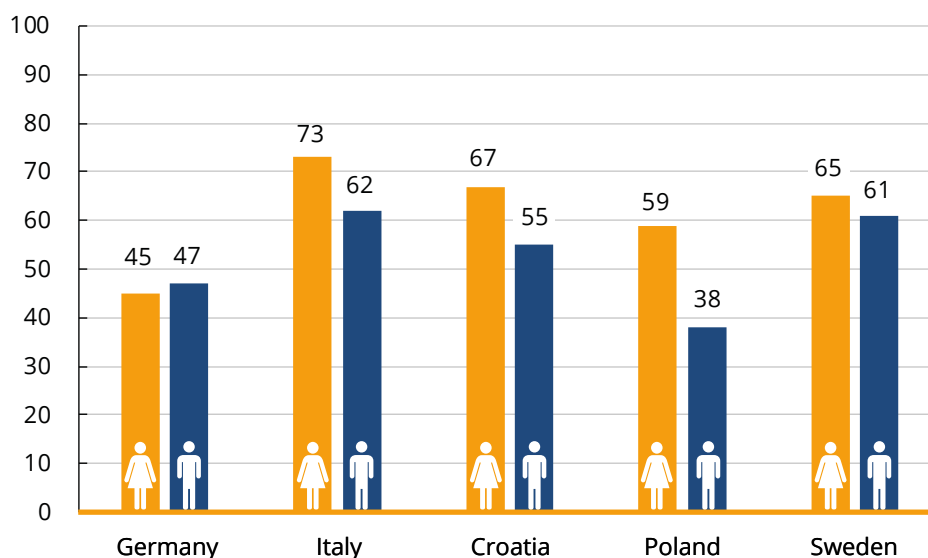
For example, the populations surveyed believe women have less opportunity to enjoy influential careers in politics and finance. A clear majority in all countries believes that women have fewer opportunities than men to make it to the very top of a company. Moreover, the majority of people in Italy, Poland and Croatia believes that women also

have less opportunity to enjoy an influential political career – this view is shared by a minority only in Germany and Sweden (43 percent and 40 percent respectively).

Discrimination also encompasses aspects of physical and psychological violence. This issue was not surveyed at a personal level in this study due to its highly sensitive nature. There are, however, other studies that document quite clearly the extent to which this affects people personally (see Fundamental Rights Agency 2014, Sardinha et al. 2022). However, so as not to completely overlook these aspects of violence, respondents were surveyed on the issue of violence between men and women in general.

A (small) majority (somewhat) agrees that women in their country are frequently beaten by men or are subject to other forms of physical violence. Agreement is particularly high in Italy (68 percent), Sweden (63 percent) and Croatia (61 percent). Only around half of respondents in Germany (46 percent) and Poland (49 percent) agree. However, in Poland there are marked differences between men's and women's perception of this issue. A significant majority of Polish women (59 percent) agrees with the statement, while agreement among men was 21 percentage points lower (38 percent). Women in Italy and Croatia also agree with the statement significantly more than men.

Figure 5: Agreement with the Statement “Women in [country] are frequently beaten by men or are subject to other forms of physical violence.”



Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of combined responses for “fully agree” and “somewhat agree”. Values for “neither/nor”, “somewhat disagree”, “fully disagree”, and “don’t know/no response” not included.

Question: “Please tell me to what extent you agree with the following statements. Please use the following scale to categorise your response: fully agree, somewhat agree, neither/nor, somewhat disagree, fully disagree. Women in [country] are frequently beaten by men or are subject to other forms of physical violence.”



-
- 4 The term 'Gender Pay Gap' describes the difference in average gross hourly pay between men and women. The literature differentiates between the non-adjusted and adjusted Gender Pay Gap. The non-adjusted difference in men's and women's average gross hourly pay in the EU is 13 percent (see provisional calculation by Eurostat 2022). The difference in the adjusted Gender Pay Gap, which filters out structural differences such as level of education, profession and experience, is significantly smaller (e.g., Germany 2018: 6 percent [non-adjusted 20 percent], see German Federal Statistics Office 2020).
- 5 Question: "Please indicate whether you have ever personally felt that you were being discriminated against as a woman/man, by which we mean being at a disadvantage just because you are a woman/man. Has this ever happened to you with respect to your pay?"



Perception of the Genders

The perception that women have a harder time making it to higher positions in politics and finance is in line with the available statistics. Women are under-represented to varying degrees in parliaments and on the boards of companies in the countries surveyed (see below, e.g., Fig. 33). This poses the question of whether gender roles that are socially established but have since become outdated have any impact on this issue. To what extent is women's ability to make it to the most senior positions hampered by assumptions of their suitability for the profession or gender-based prejudices in society?

4.1 Suitability for Certain Professions and Gender Clichés

The differences cannot be explained by perceptions of a person's suitability for their profession: the overwhelming majority of the populations surveyed are convinced that both genders are equally suited to senior positions in government or at companies. Only between 2 percent (Sweden) and 14 percent (Croatia) consider men to be better suited for these roles. Women are preferred by between 2 percent (Sweden) and 7 percent (Italy). These gendered preferences are even less pronounced with respect to the profession of journalist. Here, between 1 percent (Sweden) and 6 percent (Croatia) believe that women are better suited for the role. Between 0 percent (Sweden) and 3 percent (Croatia) prefer men for this profession.

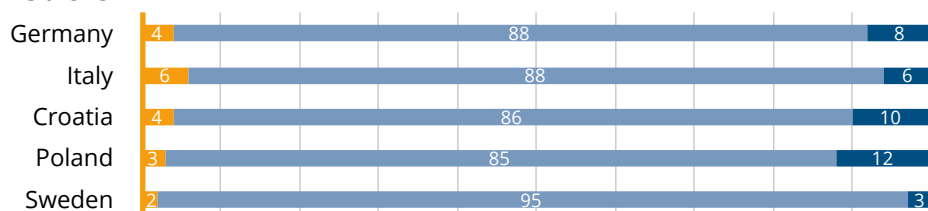
Where notions of traditional roles do still exist, in the form of visible preferences, is in the suitability of the genders for taking care of children or holding the position of army general. Between 15 percent (Sweden) and 42 percent (Poland) of respondents indicate that women are better suited to taking care of children than men. At the same time, at least one third of respondents in Germany, Italy and Croatia think that men are more suitable than women for the position of general, while in Poland this is a view held by the clear majority (63 percent). In Sweden, by contrast, 94 percent of respondents consider both genders equally well suited to this role.

Differences between the genders can be observed, above all, in their suitability for childcare and as generals: with the exception of Italy, men in all countries are more likely than women to indicate that a man is better suited to the role of army general, while a woman is better suited to childcare. For example, one in two Polish men believes that women are better suited to childcare – a view held by only 35 percent of Polish women. In Sweden (+15 percentage points), Germany (+11 percentage points) and Croatia (+8 percentage points), too, men are more likely than women to indicate a preference for women with respect to childcare. Men prefer men for the position of general, especially in Poland (68 percent) and Croatia (47 percent). Women in these countries are less likely to express a preference for a man as general (Poland: 57 percent, Croatia: 34 percent).

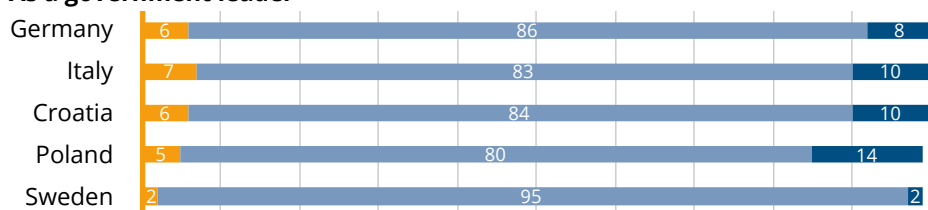


Figure 6: Perceived Suitability of Men and Women for Certain Professions

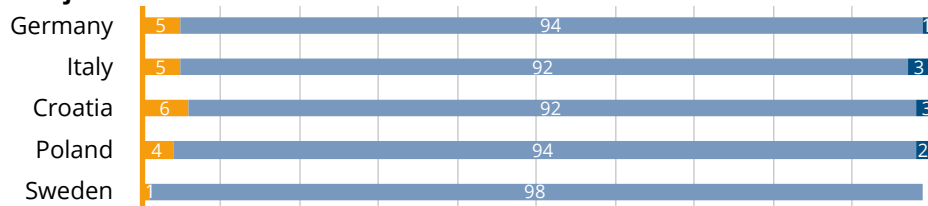
As a CEO



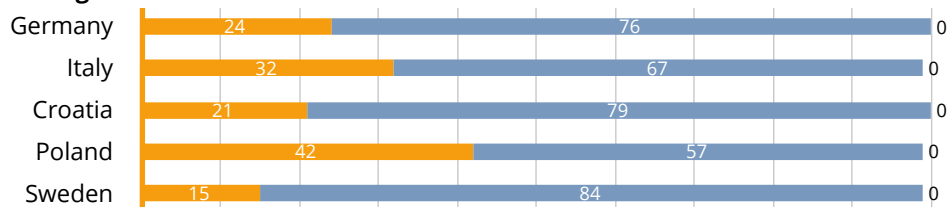
As a government leader



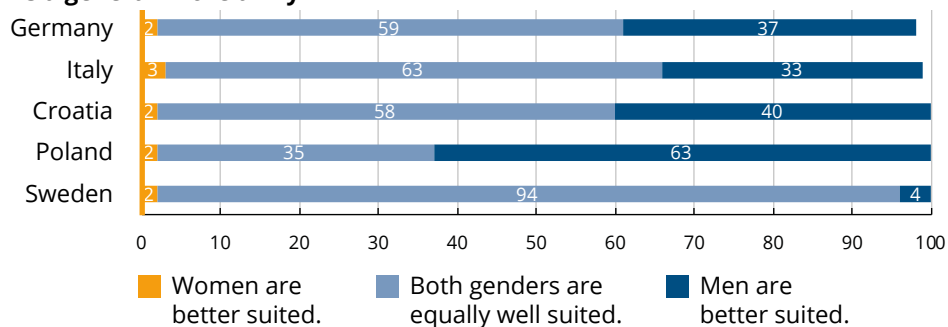
As a journalist



Taking care of children



As a general in the army



Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of responses. Values for "don't know/no response" not included. Rounding may lead to total values of more than 100 percent.

Question: "Some people believe that men and women are better suited to certain professions or that both genders are equally suited to all professions. What is your opinion on this in the following areas: Are men better suited, are women better suited, or are both genders equally suited?"

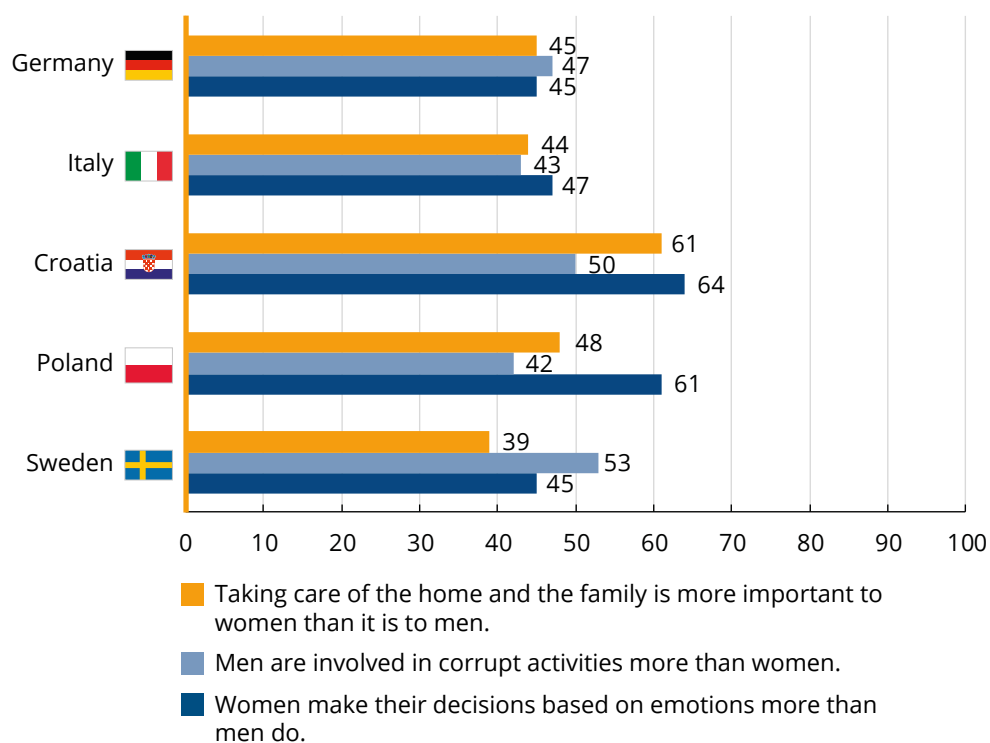
4.2 Gender-Based Prejudices

While gender-based clichés are widespread, it is rare for a majority to agree with stereotypical statements about the genders. Older people agree just as frequently as people with lower levels of formal education.

The following three statements were used to survey how widespread simple gender-based prejudices are. For each, respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agree on a five-point scale (fully agree, somewhat agree, neither/nor, somewhat disagree, fully disagree):

- › Taking care of the home and the family is more important to women than it is to men.
- › Men are involved in corrupt activities more than women.
- › Women make their decisions based on emotions more than men do.

Figure 7: Agreement with Stereotypical Statements about the Genders



Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of combined responses for "fully agree" and "somewhat agree". Values for "neither/nor", "somewhat disagree", "fully disagree", and "don't know/no response" not included.

Question: "Please tell me whether or not you agree with the following statements. The answers you can choose from are: fully agree, somewhat agree, neither/nor, somewhat disagree, fully disagree."



A majority agreed with all three statements in Croatia only. A majority also agreed with one of the statements in Poland ("Women make their decisions based on emotions more than men do."). More women agreed with this statement than men. Furthermore, of the more than half of Swedes who agree that "Men are involved in corrupt activities more than women", the majority are of the gender suspected of such clichéd activities: 60 percent of Swedish men agree, but only 47 percent of Swedish women. Differences between the genders are otherwise observed predominantly in Poland and Croatia, with women agreeing with statements 1 and 3 more frequently than men.

Overall, we can observe clear age differences: the 18 to 35 group agrees with the statements the least, while it is common for a majority of the over-64 group to agree. Agreement also increases as the level of formal education decreases.

Gender-based clichés and ingrained gender roles may prove to be hurdles on the path to greater equality. While prejudices concerning women's suitability for many important professions have been dismantled (e.g., in politics), they continue to persist in certain domains, in particular with respect to childcare, with an above-average number of people in Poland and Croatia maintaining the perception that women are better suited to this task.

5

Policy Measures for Achieving Gender Equality

There are a variety of political measures that can be taken to reduce existing inequalities. There is a particular focus in this regard on initiatives that will empower women to strike a better work-life balance. One key to achieving this is ensuring that women have the opportunity to get a guaranteed space at a childcare facility. There are also other initiatives that can be implemented at home and at work to promote gender equality. While the discussion over parity among management professionals is focused on achieving binding gender quotas, shared parental leave concepts can incentivise couples to further share roles within the family. In this study, the populations of the five countries were surveyed for their level of agreement with all three initiatives.

5.1 Political Measures: Childcare Spaces for 3 to 6 Year-Olds

Nearly all respondents in all countries support the mandatory provision of childcare spaces for 3 to 6 year-olds. When asked whether they support the idea that every child aged between 3 and 6⁶ must be offered a space at a childcare facility, respondents indicate a high level of agreement, with support ranging from 91 percent (Germany) to 95 percent (Croatia). Moreover, a full 97 percent of women in Poland, Croatia and Italy support this idea. The actual initiatives required to implement this idea, such as enshrining the right to childcare from the age of three upwards in law, also enjoy widespread support.

To put this into context, it is worth taking a look at the figures for childcare in each of the countries, i.e. how many 3 to 6 year-olds are in private or public childcare in each country. As early as 2002, the European Council set a target of at least 90 percent of children aged between 3 and 6 in childcare by 2010. For children under three years of age, this target was set at 33 percent.



Table 1: Comparison of Childcare Figures, Legal Entitlement and Employment Rates

Country	3-6 year-olds in childcare	Children in childcare under 3	Legal entitlement	Employment rate among women
Sweden	93 %	54 %	From 1 year old	85 %
Italy	93 %	26 %	From 3 year old	60 %
Germany	92 %	34 %	From 1 year old	79 %
Poland	58 %	11 %	From 6 years old (pre-school)	71 %
Croatia	54 %	20 %	250h/year from year before starting school	68 %

Sources: German Federal Statistical Office (2021), Eurostat (2022), European Commission Report (2018).

Support for the initiatives described is highest among respondents in those countries where the legal entitlement to childcare is currently the least developed, namely Poland, Croatia and Italy. Poland and Croatia, in particular, are significantly below the EU-wide target of 90 percent. These same countries, and Italy as well, are also significantly short of the 33 percent target for children under 3 years old.

The question, then, is to what extent this lack of childcare is due to a lack of demand or a lack of supply, as there are many factors that influence whether or not a child attends a childcare facility. According to respondents in a Eurostat survey from 2016, the costs for childcare are too high in Italy (41 percent), as well as in Croatia (38 percent), Germany (23 percent) and Poland (17 percent) (Sweden: 6 percent). One fifth of those surveyed in Germany, Croatia and Poland indicated a lack of spaces. Respondents in Sweden (20 percent), Germany (18 percent), Poland (10 percent) and Italy (9 percent) also pointed to the issue of unsuitable opening hours (see Eurostat 2016).

The table also indicates a correlation between economic activity rates⁷ and childcare rates. Countries where the rates of childcare are particularly low among children under three in particular exhibit significantly lower rates of employment among women (see Report of the European Commission 2018). Moreover, according to Eurostat (2016), childcare obligations are one of the main reasons behind whether women in the EU work part-time or full-time. Men are far less likely to mention childcare obligations in this context. This has given rise to the term *Gender Care Gap*, a concept almost identical to the Gender Pay Gap, which describes the difference in time spent by the genders on care work and housework. This gap between the genders is still significant. Women in Croatia, for example, spend around 19 hours per week more than men on these activities (see Ombudsperson for Sex Equality of the Republic of Croatia, 2017).

The high level of support for guaranteed childcare for children aged three years and older identified by our study and a survey of the underlying data on trends in childcare and employment rates suggest that further expanding childcare schemes is one of the keys to achieving greater gender equality, in the interests of equal opportunities. Over the next few years, the primary focus of efforts in this area will be on achieving EU targets for childcare among children under three years old. The link between employment rates and childcare rates would seem to take on greater significance here, too (see Table 1). Whether support for childcare schemes is equally high for this age group requires further investigation.

5.2 Extending Parental Leave when both Parents Take Leave

The concept of extending parental leave if both parents use only part of their leave is supported by a large majority in all countries. The initiative was described as follows: “In some countries, after the birth of a child, there is paid parental leave, during which one of the parents does not work and receives money for the time they spend taking care of their child. If this parental leave were extended by three months, subject to the condition that both parents take some of this parental leave, to what extent would you support or reject this idea?” This initiative is supported by 90 percent of respondents in Italy, 84 percent in Croatia and Germany, 82 percent in Poland, and 65 percent in Sweden. Data analysis does not reveal any differences between the genders, with the exception of Poland where support is greater among women than among men (87:78 percent). One possible explanation for the low level of support in Sweden is that this country already has a regulation that provides for up to 16 months paid parental leave. Consequently, the proposed new parental leave of 15 months is below what the law in Sweden currently permits. In Germany, by contrast, the law currently provides for only “12+2” months, split between both parents, while Italy provides “6+3”, Poland “8+0” and Croatia “4+4”.⁸ As a result, the regulation proposed exceeds the existing legal benefits in these four countries.

Regulations on paid – split – parental leave are regarded as one way of achieving more gender equality. The hope is that by incentivising fathers to also take parental leave, some of the strain will be taken off women so that they have the opportunity to potentially return to work earlier. However, analyses show that the leave provided is definitively not taken equally by both parents. Currently, one in four people claiming maternity/paternity pay in Germany is male, yet women take significantly more time off (14.5 months) than men (3.7 months, see Suhr 2021). In Sweden, men use on average 4.5 months of the 16 months available for shared parental leave (see “The Local SE” 2017). This is a trend that is on the rise in both Germany and Sweden. According to Eurobarometer, when asked about what incentives would make them more likely to take parental leave, fathers in Europe responded with: more financial support (41 percent), flexibility to take leave in blocks or part-time (35 percent), greater understanding with respect to career progression and more support from colleagues and managers (30 percent).



Improved opportunities for sharing parental leave should be seen, above all, as a step towards equal opportunities. Consequently, while it might at first glance seem surprising that Germany and Sweden provide only the minimum maternity leave stipulated by the EU of 14 weeks, while Poland (20 weeks) and Italy (22 weeks) offer longer periods of leave, the option of dividing parental leave and the incentives this offers to share childcare responsibilities earlier is generally considered to be a better way of promoting gender equality than providing longer maternity leave⁹ which only women can take advantage of (see Dobrotić 2020).

Overall, not only are further initiatives and incentives for sharing parental leave a better way to promote gender equality – by reducing the *Gender Care Gap*, for example – they also enjoy widespread support among people in Europe. In practice, fathers should be incentivised to take more than the statutory minimum leave. Greater financial compensation, as is provided in Sweden, and more acceptance in the workplace and within wider society can help to promote this (see Kantar Public Flash Eurobarometer 2019).

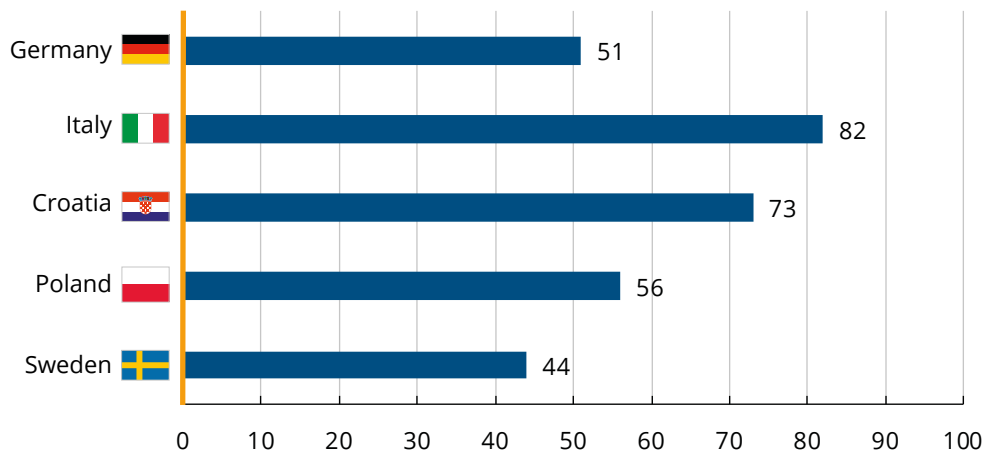
5.3 Gender Quotas for Board Positions

Regulations on quotas in the workplace are regularly discussed as a way of increasing proportions of disadvantaged groups faster than by simply improving the framework conditions. Support for introducing a binding gender quota for board positions in the countries surveyed is mixed. Participants were asked: “If there were a binding quota regulation stating that men and women must be equally represented on the boards of major companies, to what extent would you support or reject this idea?”

The greatest support for binding quotas for board positions is observed in Italy (82 percent) and Croatia (73 percent). Poland (56 percent), Germany (51 percent) and Sweden (44 percent) lag behind significantly. In all countries, support is between 24 percentage points (Poland) and 5 percentage points (Italy) higher among women than among men. The actual quota for board positions at major companies is around 40 percent in Italy, Sweden and Germany, and below 30 percent in Poland and Croatia (see European Institute for Gender Equality 2022b). At the EU level, there is now a binding gender quota regulation stipulating that listed companies must have at least 40 percent female members on their boards by 2026 or face financial penalties (see *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 2022).

Accordingly, we find a high level of support in countries where the economic activity rate among women is lower and where women are currently less represented on executive boards (Croatia, Poland, Italy). In Sweden and Germany, where there is already increasing parity at a management level and where general employment opportunities for women are good, the majority of respondents does not believe that such a quota regulation is absolutely necessary.

Figure 8: Support for Binding Gender Quotas at Major Companies



Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of combined responses for “fully support” and “somewhat support”. Values for “neither/nor”, “somewhat reject”, “fully reject”, and “don’t know/no response” not included.
 Question: “If there were a binding quota regulation stating that men and women must be equally represented on the boards of major companies, to what extent would you support or reject this idea?”

- 6 In Sweden, this question led to misunderstandings since children in this country are offered a space at a childcare facility from the age of one. The question was therefore changed for Sweden to read “between 1 and 6 years old”. Nevertheless, the rate of support for this initiative of 82 percent is low compared to the other countries despite a well-established childcare culture and structure, indicating that the questions are no longer comparable as a result of these changes. It would otherwise be difficult to explain this divide between Sweden and the other four countries.
- 7 Following Eurostat (2022), the economic activity rate (EAR) is calculated by dividing the number of employed and unemployed persons aged between 15 and 64 years old by the total population in that same age range. Unlike the employment rate, therefore, this index also takes into account unemployed persons who are in principle able to participate in the labour market.
- 8 The percentage of their salary that employees continue to receive while on leave was not addressed in this survey but also differs significantly in the countries surveyed. This figure is 80 percent in Sweden, 65 percent in Germany and 30 percent in Italy, while in Poland it is 100 percent for the first 1.5 months and then 60 percent for the remainder of an employee’s leave. In Croatia this percentage depends on an employee’s income, although the maximum rate is still extremely low and is barely above the minimum wage.
- 9 A directive set to be enacted by late summer 2022 stipulates ten days of paid paternity leave for fathers immediately after the birth of a child.

6

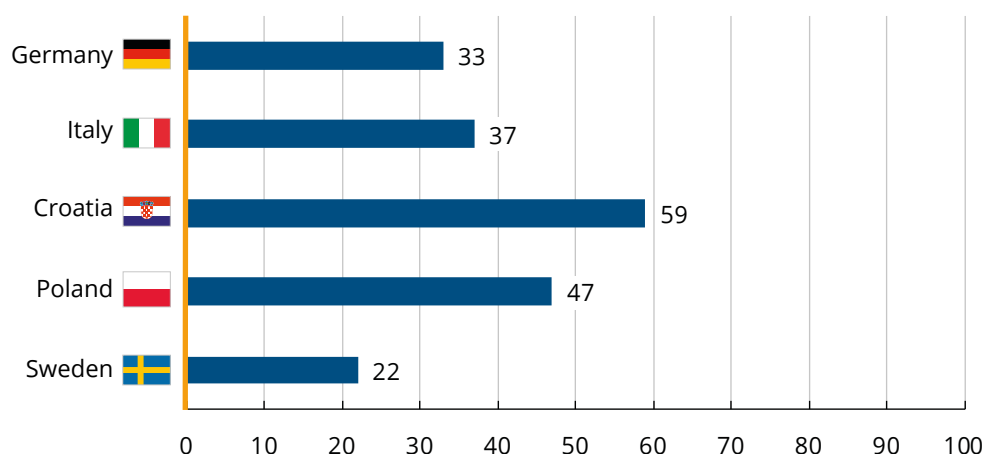
Attitudes towards Gender Equality

Wherever there is talk of prejudices and initiatives, the discussions themselves also become the subject of social debate. In order to gauge people's attitudes towards discussions around gender equality, respondents were presented with a variety of statements. For each, they were asked whether they agree or disagree. A five-point scale was used to indicate fully agree, somewhat agree, neither/nor, somewhat disagree, fully disagree. The values for "fully agree" and "somewhat agree" were combined to create a general "agree" category.

"The discussion around gender equality in [...] is creating more problems than it is solving."

In Croatia, a majority believes that the discussion around gender equality is creating more problems than it is solving. This opinion is shared by nearly half of respondents in Poland, and by a good third of those surveyed in Germany and Italy. In Sweden, only 22 percent agree with this statement. There are no major differences between men and women, with the exception of Poland and Sweden (women's agreement is 10 percentage points lower).

Figure 9: Agreement with the Statement "The discussion around gender equality in [...] is creating more problems than it is solving."



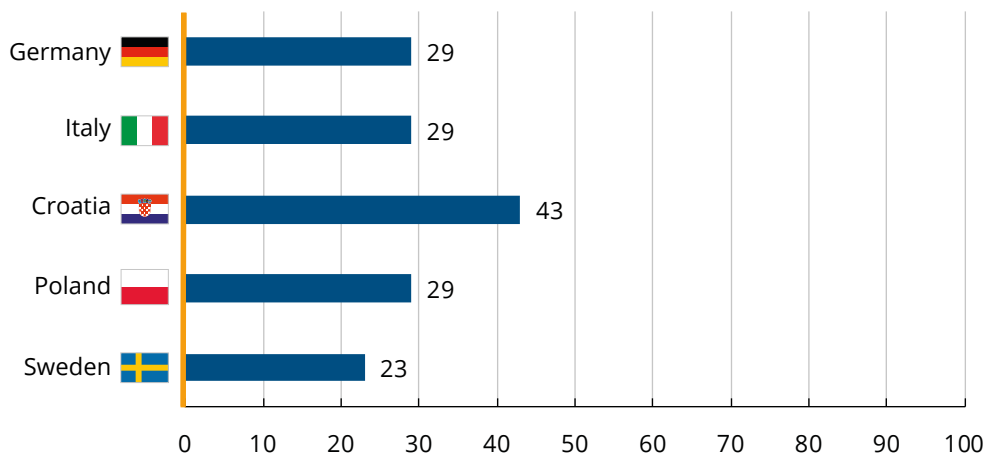
Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of combined responses for "fully agree" and "somewhat agree". Values for "neither/nor", "somewhat disagree", "fully disagree", and "don't know/no response" not included.

Question: "There are different opinions when it comes to the issue of gender equality. Please tell me to what extent you agree with the following statements. Please use the following scale to categorise your response: fully agree, somewhat agree, neither/nor, somewhat disagree, fully disagree."

“The discussion around gender equality in [...] is having a negative impact on the image of women who stay home to raise their children.”

The statement that the image of mothers is suffering as a result of discussions around gender equality does not enjoy majority support in any country. Nevertheless, 43 percent of respondents in Croatia, and around 30 percent in Germany, Poland and Italy agree with the statement. The statement enjoys the least support in Sweden (23 percent). There are no observed differences between genders.

Figure 10: Agreement with the Statement “The discussion around gender equality in [...] is having a negative impact on the image of women who stay home to raise their children.”



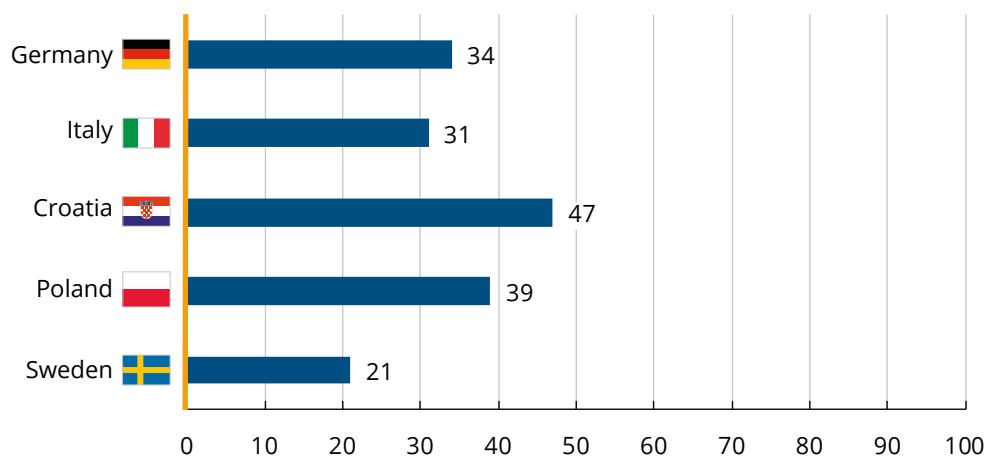
Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of combined responses for “fully agree” and “somewhat agree”. Values for “neither/nor”, “somewhat disagree”, “fully disagree”, and “don’t know/no response” not included.

Question: “There are different opinions when it comes to the issue of gender equality. Please tell me to what extent you agree with the following statements. Please use the following scale to categorise your response: fully agree, somewhat agree, neither/nor, somewhat disagree, fully disagree.”

“Gender equality in [...] is a problem for people who don’t have real problems.”

Nearly half of people in Croatia believe that gender equality is a problem for people who don’t have real problems. In Poland, Germany and Italy, around one third of respondents agree with this. In Sweden, by contrast, only one in five people agrees with the statement. The only observed differences between genders are in Poland and Sweden. Here, men tend to agree more than women (+14 percentage points in Poland, +7 percentage points in Sweden).

Figure 11: Agreement with the Statement “Gender equality in [...] is a problem for people who don’t have real problems.”



Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of combined responses for “fully agree” and “somewhat agree”. Values for “neither/nor”, “somewhat disagree”, “fully disagree”, and “don’t know/no response” not included.

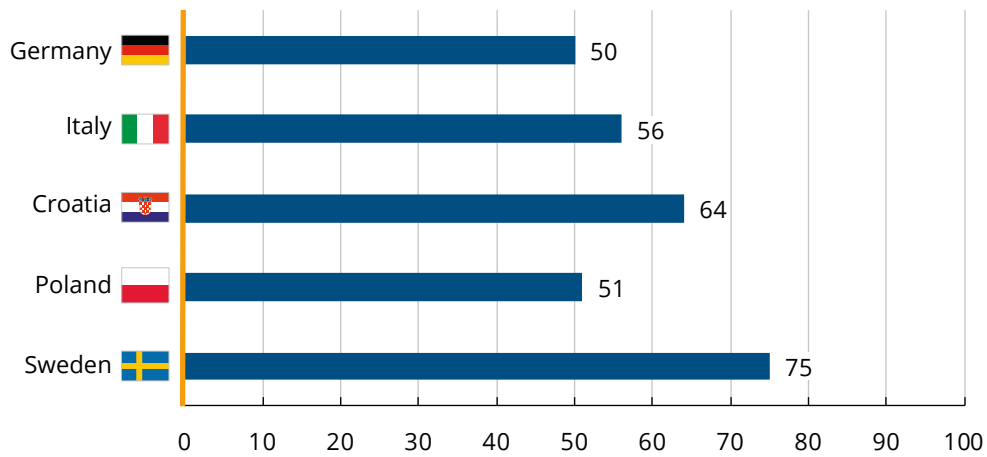
Question: “There are different opinions when it comes to the issue of gender equality. Please tell me to what extent you agree with the following statements. Please use the following scale to categorise your response: fully agree, somewhat agree, neither/nor, somewhat disagree, fully disagree.”

“Gender equality promotes economic growth in [...].”

The majority of respondents in all countries agrees that gender equality promotes economic growth. In Sweden, a full three quarters agree with this statement, followed by nearly two thirds of people in Croatia.

The only countries where fewer men than women agree with the statement are Poland (-9 percentage points) and Sweden (-7 percentage points).

Figure 12: Agreement with the Statement “Gender equality promotes economic growth in [...].”



Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of combined responses for “fully agree” and “somewhat agree”. Values for “neither/nor”, “somewhat disagree”, “fully disagree”, and “don’t know/no response” not included.

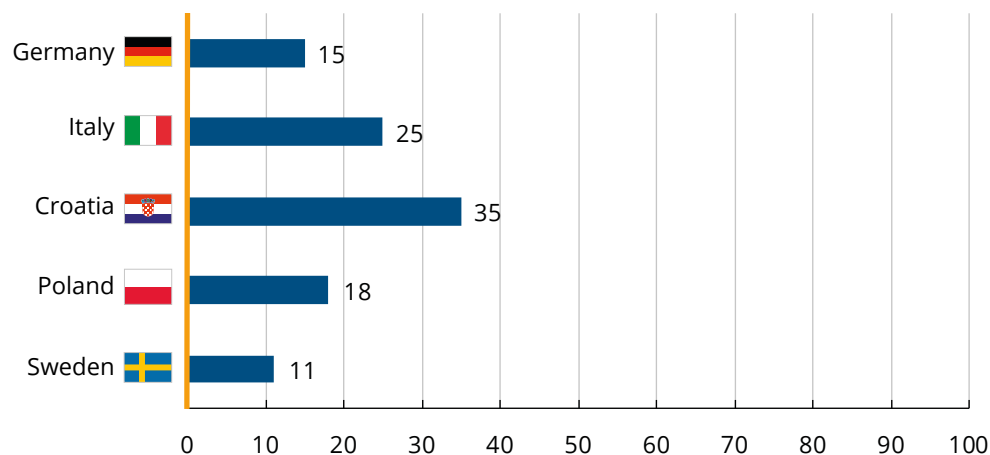
Question: “There are different opinions when it comes to the issue of gender equality. Please tell me to what extent you agree with the following statements. Please use the following scale to categorise your response: fully agree, somewhat agree, neither/nor, somewhat disagree, fully disagree.”

"The measures being taken to achieve greater gender equality in [...] are harming our culture."

The statement that measures being taken to achieve greater gender equality are harming a country's culture is rejected by the majority of respondents. Support for this statement is particularly low in Sweden (11 percent). Croatia is the only country where a greater level of support is observed, with 35 percent stating they either "fully agree" or "somewhat agree".

Differences between the genders, albeit minor ones, are again observed only in Sweden and Poland. Men in Poland (+5 percentage points) and Sweden (+7 percentage points) were more likely to agree with the statement.

Figure 13: Agreement with the Statement "The measures being taken to achieve greater gender equality in [...] are harming our culture."



Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of combined responses for "fully agree" and "somewhat agree". Values for "neither/nor", "somewhat disagree", "fully disagree", and "don't know/no response" not included.

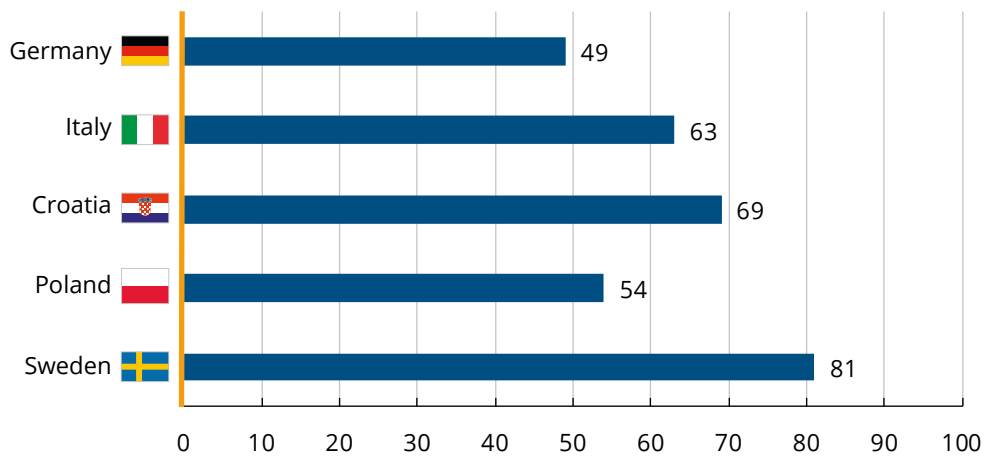
Question: "There are different opinions when it comes to the issue of gender equality. Please tell me to what extent you agree with the following statements. Please use the following scale to categorise your response: fully agree, somewhat agree, neither/nor, somewhat disagree, fully disagree."

“The discussion around gender equality is making society in [...] better.”

The majority of people in all five countries are convinced that the discussion around gender equality is making their society better. Agreement with this statement is particularly high in Sweden (81 percent) but particularly low in Germany (49 percent).

The only differences between genders are observed in Sweden. 86 percent of women agree, while 77 percent of men do. However, this is still a significantly higher score than the average of the other four countries.

Figure 14: Agreement with the Statement “The discussion around gender equality is making society in [...] better.”



Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of combined responses for “fully agree” and “somewhat agree”. Values for “neither/nor”, “somewhat disagree”, “fully disagree”, and “don’t know/no response” not included.

Question: “There are different opinions when it comes to the issue of gender equality. Please tell me to what extent you agree with the following statements. Please use the following scale to categorise your response: fully agree, somewhat agree, neither/nor, somewhat disagree, fully disagree.”



Overall, differences between genders can only be observed in Poland and Sweden. There are systematic differences in agreement among men and women. Swedish and Polish women tend to agree more with positive statements and less with more negative ones. However, there are significant differences in the levels of agreement between these two countries: while Swedish men score lower than Swedish women, they still tend to agree more frequently with positive statements and less frequently with negative statements than men and women in the other four countries. This indicates the high degree of awareness among Swedes regarding issues and discussions of gender equality, which is even stronger among women than among men.

In Poland, by contrast, this gender divide has a different effect than in the other countries. If we sort the average scores into Polish men and Polish women, then we observe that Polish men, together with the overall results from Croatia, are significant outliers at a pan-European level: roughly one in two Polish men believes that gender equality is only causing additional problems or is a problem for people who do not have real problems. The only place where we find similar opinions is Croatia, although here there is no difference between men and women.

In addition to these gender differences, we can also observe the effects of age and education in all five countries. Younger people and people with a higher level of formal education agree more with positive statements and disagree more with negative statements. In many cases, we can observe a particularly significant contrast with the over-70s.

As with the preceding sections of the survey, a clear hierarchy emerges among the countries. While people in Sweden are on average positive about discussions around gender equality, they are viewed with more scepticism in Croatia and Poland. It cannot be a coincidence, then, that the order of Sweden, followed (mostly) by Germany and Italy, then Poland and Croatia is identical to their ranking in the *Gender Equality Index*, that is, the actual measurable differences in equality of women. There is likely to be a correlation between perception of the issue of gender equality and the progress made towards achieving this. What is unclear, however, is whether a greater cultural openness to the issue is what promotes societies to take action, or whether it is actions taken and changes in the workplace that bring about a change in culture.

7

Scepticism towards Emancipation

While the emancipation of women continues to make advances, there are still small groups in all five countries that have a negative view of this process. In this analysis “scepticism towards emancipation” describes an attitude that considers discussions surrounding gender equality to be “over the top” and consequently regards the status quo as less problematic or even believes that national cultural heritage is under threat from the steps being taken to achieve gender equality.

Scepticism towards emancipation was measured using four statements which were combined to create a mean index:¹⁰

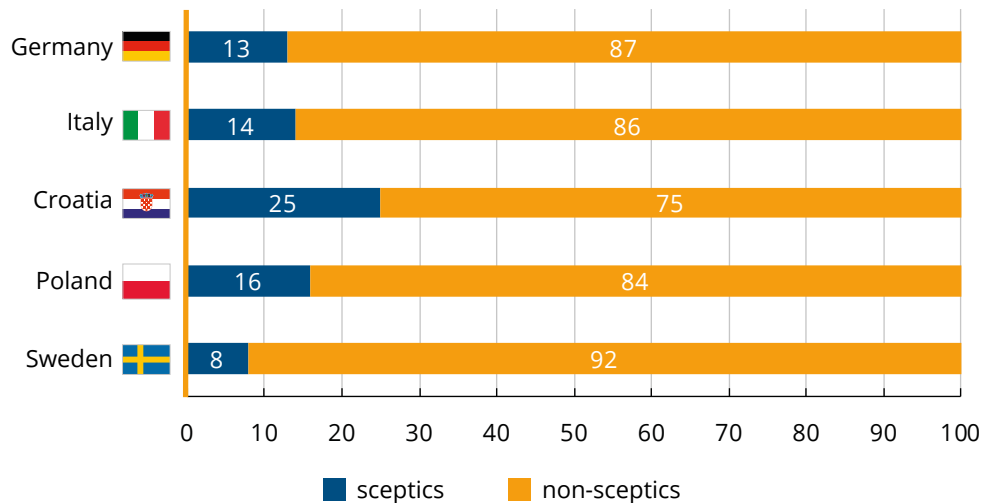
- › The discussion around gender equality in Germany is creating more problems than it is solving.
- › The discussion around gender equality in Germany is having a negative impact on the image of women who stay home to raise their children.
- › Gender equality in Germany is a problem for people who don’t have real problems.
- › The measures being taken to achieve greater gender equality in Germany are harming our culture.

All respondents who provided valid responses to at least two of the four statements were included in the index. The index ranges from a score of 1 “fully agree”, to 2 “somewhat agree”, 3 “neither/nor”, 4 “somewhat disagree”, and 5 “fully disagree”.

The average index score for scepticism towards emancipation is between 3 (Croatia) and 3.8 (Sweden) in all countries, that is, between the neither/nor and somewhat disagree responses. In other words, the average citizen tends not to be an emancipation sceptic. Emancipation sceptics are respondents who score 2 (average: somewhat agree) or lower.

While the number of emancipation sceptics is low, there are differences between the countries. One in four respondents in Croatia exhibits attitudes sceptical of emancipation, compared to one in six (16 percent) in Poland, and around one in seven (14 percent and 13 percent respectively) in Italy and Germany. The smallest number of emancipation sceptics is found in Sweden, at 8 percent of the population.

Figure 15: Scepticism towards Emancipation by Country



Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Represented as percentages. Emancipation sceptics are respondents who score 2 or lower on the scepticism towards emancipation scale.

In all countries, it is the same factors that increase the likelihood of a respondent being a sceptic, in particular preference for a right-wing populist party. More in-depth analysis shows that the older a person is, the lower their level of formal education and the worse their assessment of their own income situation, the more likely a person is to be a sceptic. The strongest correlations, however, are observed with respect to gender, assessment of the level of discrimination in a respondent's own country and, above all, voting preferences. Men are more likely to be emancipation sceptics than women – a correlation that is not observed in Croatia, however, where women have a marginally higher share. People who consider the discrimination of women in their country to be a minor issue or not an issue at all also tend to agree more with statements that support scepticism towards emancipation. There is a particularly clear correlation between the decision to vote for a right-wing populist party¹¹ and the likelihood of being categorised as an emancipation sceptic. Right-wing populist parties are the biggest defenders of older divisions of gender roles, in that they hold up the traditional, hetero-normative family as the ideal. According to this ideal, women take on the supposedly natural role of housewife and mother (see Off 2022). Right-wing populist parties also take up counter-positions on issues relating to equal access to the labour market for all genders, abortion rights or gender equality for LGBTQI+ people¹² (see Akkerman 2015). As in other areas of social policy (migration, climate change), right-wing populist parties take extreme positions and reinforce the perceived polarisation. The results suggest that, firstly, these positions prove to be fertile ground for right-wing populist parties, appealing as they do to voters with strongly traditional gender values. Secondly, positions on this presumed “cultural backlash” (see Norris/Inglehart 2019) contribute to the success of right-wing populist parties.

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- 10 While a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.7 is below the bottom end of the moderate and acceptable range of 0.8, according to which a scale is considered reliable (Schnell et al. 2005: 153), a factor analysis indicated that all four items load on just one single factor. Therefore, the four statements were combined to create a common “scepticism towards emancipation” index. The two positive statements concerning economic growth and improvement of society load on another factor, but do not increase the Cronbach Alpha and were therefore not included in the index.
- 11 Definition according to Rooduijn et al. (2019).
- 12 These positions are not always coherent, especially when right-wing populist parties talk about the threat to liberal values posed by migration.



Comparison of Different Areas of Life

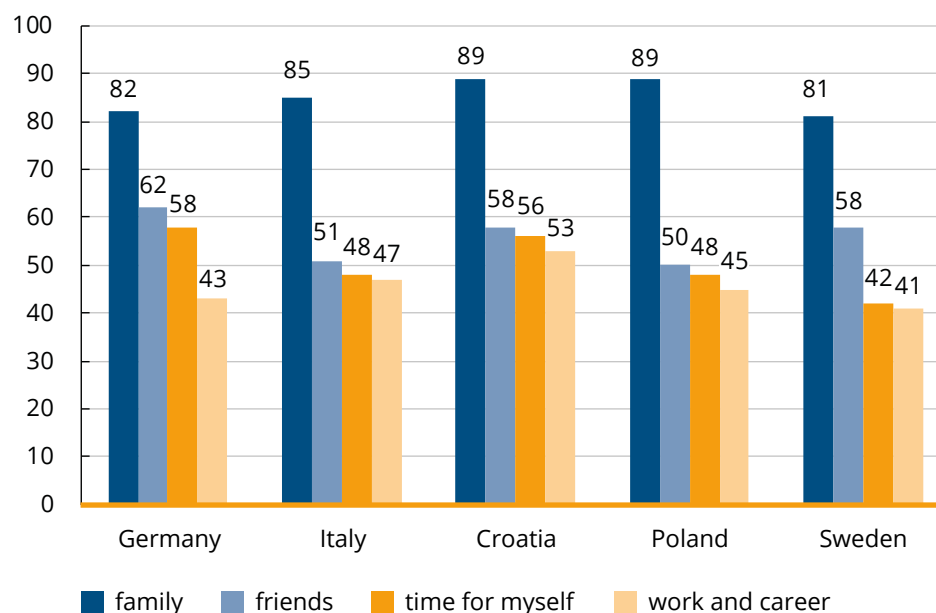
Family is the most important aspect of life for people in all countries surveyed. When asked about how important specific areas of their lives are, at least four fifths of all respondents rated their family as “very important”. The specific figures are 89 percent in Poland and Croatia, 85 percent in Italy, 82 percent in Germany and 81 percent in Sweden. Despite this high rate of agreement, there is also a clear divide between the genders: the number of women who rated their family as “very important” is between 5 percentage points (Croatia) and 13 percentage points (Germany) higher than the number of men.

“Friends” is another area of life that is of great importance to people. This area is ranked as the second-most important in all countries. Between 62 percent (Germany) and 50 percent (Poland) rate their friends as “very important”.

Another aspect of life that is very important to respondents in all countries is “time for myself”. Between 58 percent (Germany) and 42 percent (Sweden) consider this aspect of their lives “very important”.

By contrast, “work and career” comes in at fourth in all countries. Between 53 percent (Croatia) and 41 percent (Sweden) consider this area of their lives to be “very important” to them personally.

Figure 16: Importance of Areas of Life



Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of responses for "very important". Values for "somewhat important", "neither/nor", "somewhat unimportant", "very unimportant", "don't know/no response" not included.

Question: "We would like to know how important different areas of your life are to you. For each of the following areas of your life, please indicate whether it is very important, somewhat important, neither/nor, somewhat unimportant or very unimportant to you."

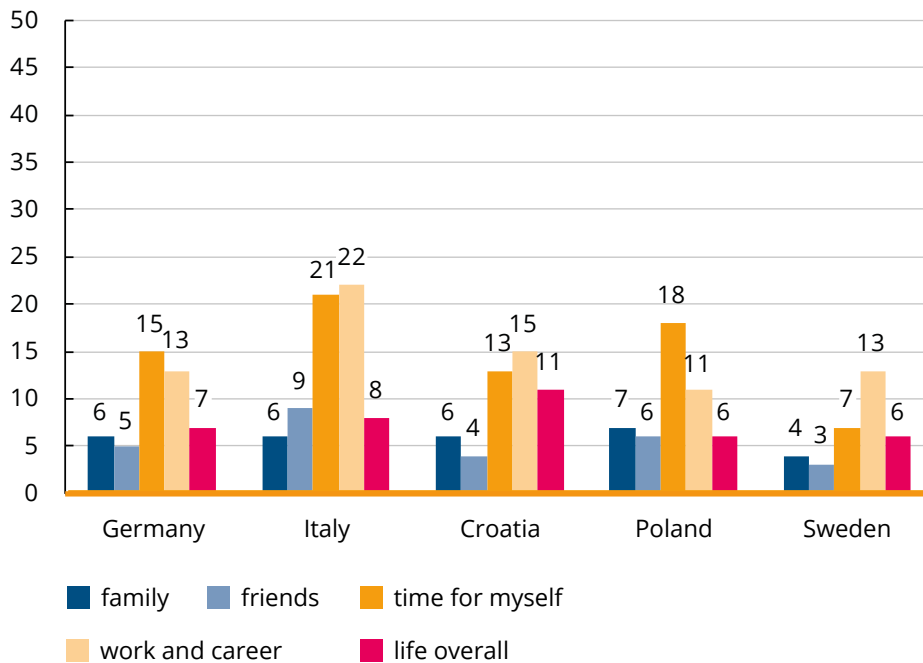
All four areas of life, in particular friends and family, are very important to respondents, but they are not satisfied with these areas to the same degree. Nevertheless, only a few responded to the question of how satisfied they are with specific areas of their life by answering "somewhat dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied". Almost none are dissatisfied with their friends and family situation (<10 percent).

Slightly more respondents are dissatisfied with "time for myself". Similar levels of satisfaction were reported for "work and career". Among those who have a job or career, between 11 percent (Poland) and 22 percent (Italy) report being dissatisfied with their job situation. Indeed, in Italy more than one in four women (27 percent) reports being dissatisfied with "work and career". This is a reflection of the difficult situation on the labour market and the low economic activity rate among women in Italy.

Dissatisfaction with life overall is low in all countries, ranging from 11 percent (Croatia) to 6 percent (Poland, Sweden).



Figure 17: Dissatisfaction with Areas of Life



Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of combined responses for "somewhat dissatisfied" and "very dissatisfied". Values for "neither/nor", "very satisfied", "somewhat satisfied" and "don't know/no response" not included.
Question: "Now I would like you to estimate how satisfied you are with the following areas of your life. For the following areas of your life, please indicate whether you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither/nor, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied."

How people assess the importance of different areas of their lives and how they rate their satisfaction with these allows us to draw some initial conclusions regarding the priority given to each of these areas. Family, for example, is consistently rated as more important than work and also scores higher in terms of satisfaction. What this analysis does not yet allow us to do, however, is to glean any fundamental differences in attitudes between countries or genders, for the reason that the respondents essentially rated all areas of their lives as very important and that the differences in levels of satisfaction are also rather small.

9

Values

So-called Schwartz items (Schwartz 1992, 2003) were used to find out what values are important to people. Respondents were given a description of a person with certain characteristics and then asked to indicate, to what extent they are similar or dissimilar to this person.

9.1 Self-Enhancement

The group most likely to identify with values of “self-enhancement” is 18 to 35 year-olds, with the effects of gender varying greatly between the countries. The set of values subsumed under self-enhancement are defined, above all, by the values of power and drive to succeed (see Schwartz 1992, 2003). The question here is whether the genders differ with respect to these values. Are the values of power and drive to succeed systematically less important to women than they are to men? Can this be traced back to social inequalities?

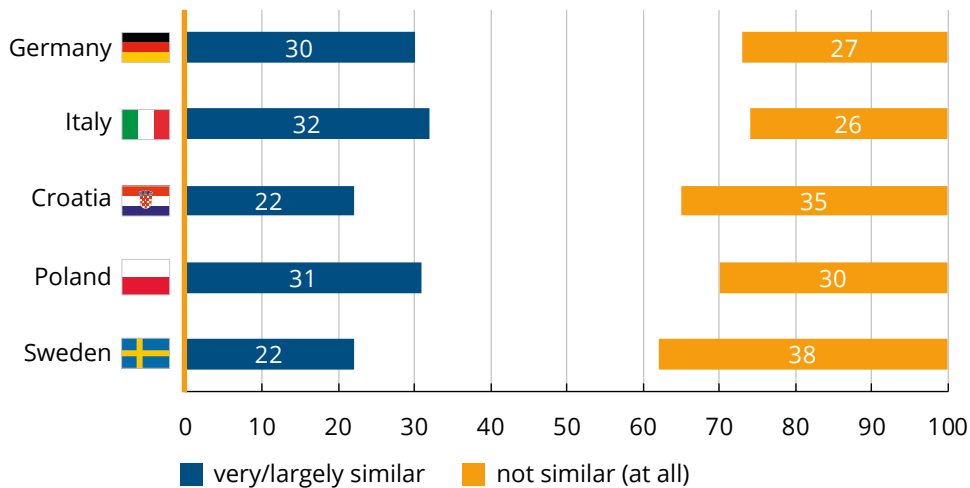
The values of power and drive to succeed were measured using three descriptions of people which were combined to create a mean index.¹³

- › It is important to her/him to be rich. She/he wants to have a lot of money and expensive things.
- › Being very successful is important to her/him. She/he hopes people will recognise her/his achievements.
- › It is important to her/him to get respect from others. She/he wants people to do what she/he says.

On average, we do not observe any major differences between the countries for the values of power and drive to succeed. There is no majority indicating either that they are very or largely similar to the persons described or that they are not similar to them (at all). The values are roughly the same for Poland, Germany and Italy, while the number of respondents indicating similarity with the persons described is equally low in both Sweden and Croatia.



Figure 18: Descriptions of People – Drive to Succeed and Power

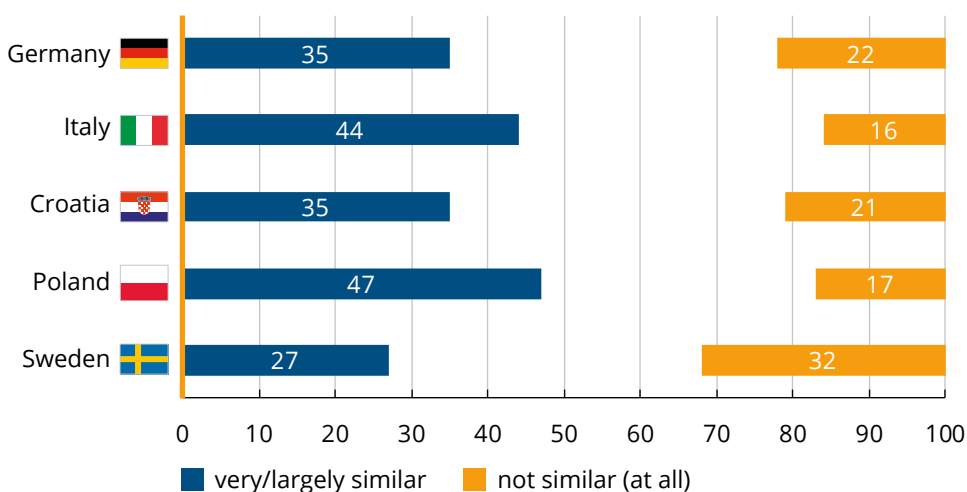


Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of combined responses. Values for “a bit similar” (middle category), “don’t know/no response” not included.

Question: “Next, I will describe a few people to you. Please tell me how similar or not similar you are to this person. The responses you can select from are: not similar at all, not similar, a bit similar, largely similar, very similar. How similar are you to this person?”

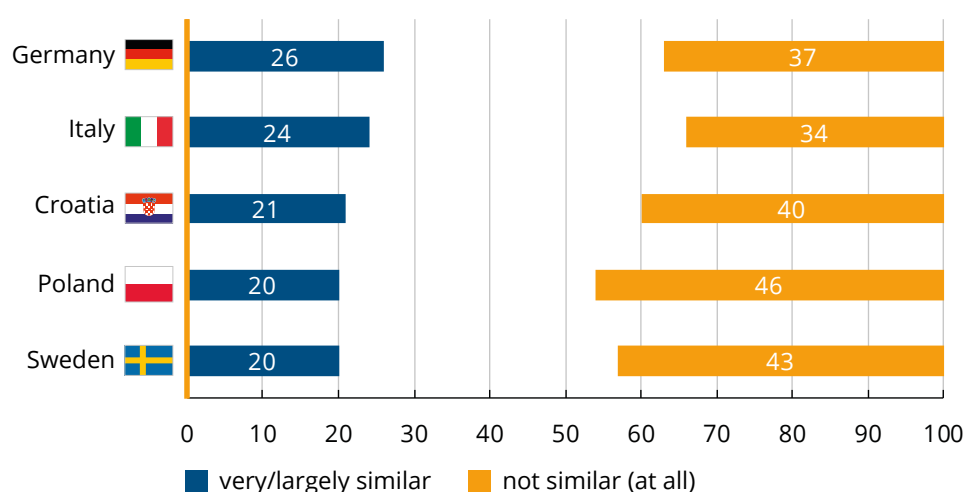
Taking other factors like age or gender into account, we immediately see a clear age divide: power and drive to succeed is significantly more important to 18 to 35 year-olds than all other age groups. This is true of all countries. Except for Sweden, the number of those who view themselves as similar to the persons described is between 30 percentage points (Poland) and 13 percentage points (Germany) higher than the number of people who do not consider themselves to be similar to these people. Quite the opposite picture emerges among the over-64s, in particular. Respondents in this age group are twice as likely to describe themselves as not similar than similar. Poland offers a very clear example of how stark this age divide is. On average, roughly the same number of Poles describe themselves as similar (31 percent) as describe themselves as not similar (30 percent, see Fig. 18). Among under-35s, however, 47 percent consider themselves to be similar to the persons described, with only 17 percent describing themselves as not similar. Among the over-64s, meanwhile, 20 percent describe themselves as similar and 46 percent as not similar. This age divide can be primarily explained by life-stage effects. As a person gets older, they achieve more security at work and in society, and start families. Moreover, as retirees, the over-64s are no longer pursuing professional goals. Over time, therefore, a personal drive to succeed, and personal changes and challenges give way to universal values such as caring for the wellbeing of others (see, in particular, Veroff et al. 1984, Denzinger et al. 2016).

Figure 19: Descriptions of People – Similarity/Dissimilarity of 18 to 35 Year-Olds with regards to Drive to Succeed and Power



Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of combined responses. Values for "a bit similar" (middle category), "don't know/no response" not included. Question: "Next, I will describe a few people to you. Please tell me how similar or not similar you are to this person. The responses you can select from are: not similar at all, not similar, a bit similar, largely similar, very similar. How similar are you to this person?"

Figure 20: Descriptions of People – Similarity/Dissimilarity of Over-64s with regards to Drive to Succeed and Power



Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of combined responses. Values for "a bit similar" (middle category) "don't know/no response" not included. Question: "Next, I will describe a few people to you. Please tell me how similar or not similar you are to this person. The responses you can select from are: not similar at all, not similar, a bit similar, largely similar, very similar. How similar are you to this person?"



On average, the only observed differences between genders occur in Poland and Croatia – although in Italy and Germany the age divide described above is far more evident among younger women. Only in Poland do we see a clear divide between men and women on average. While 37 percent of men in Poland identify more strongly with the values of power and drive to succeed, only 26 percent of women identify with these values. These differences appear across all age groups.

In Croatia, more than one in four men identifies similarities with themselves, a figure that falls slightly among women to one in five.

Sweden, Germany and Italy do not exhibit any systematic differences between the genders with regards to respondents' perceived similarity to the values of power and drive to succeed. What is interesting, however, is the analysis of women aged 18 to 35 years old in Germany and Italy. The divide between this age group and the over-64s, as described above, is even more pronounced. Nearly one in two Italian women sees similarities in herself (48 percent) and only 17 percent describe themselves as dissimilar (men 41:15). It is much the same picture in Germany. Here, 39 percent of young women identify similarities (17 percent dissimilar), while 31 percent of young men consider themselves similar compared to 27 percent who consider themselves to be dissimilar. On average, these gender differences are offset by mirror-image distributions among other age groups.

The overall picture that emerges is that the difference in identification with the values of power and drive to succeed can be better explained by the effect of age than gender differences with respect to self-enhancement. Poland is the only country where we observe marked differences between men and women. Here, power and drive to succeed appears, on average, to be more important to men than to women. The same trend is observed in Croatia, albeit to a lesser degree. In Germany, Italy and Sweden, by contrast, we do not observe any gender differences on average. The life-stage effects, however, do appear to impact women between 18 and 35 years of age in Italy and Germany even more than men. In this group, women identify with persons, for whom power and drive to succeed is important, even more so than men. There is no systematically weaker drive among women here that could explain unequal distributions of positions of power (e.g., board positions) – quite the opposite. Conversely, the results in Croatia and Poland permit a different conclusion. It is striking, however, that these two countries are ones where we find more traditional gender roles, scepticism towards emancipation, experiences of discrimination and factual inequalities with greater frequency. These cultural and similar structural conditions in Croatia and Poland (women's access to positions of power; labour market) may be the most likely explanation for the differences between Sweden, Italy and Germany, on the one hand, and Croatia and Poland, on the other.

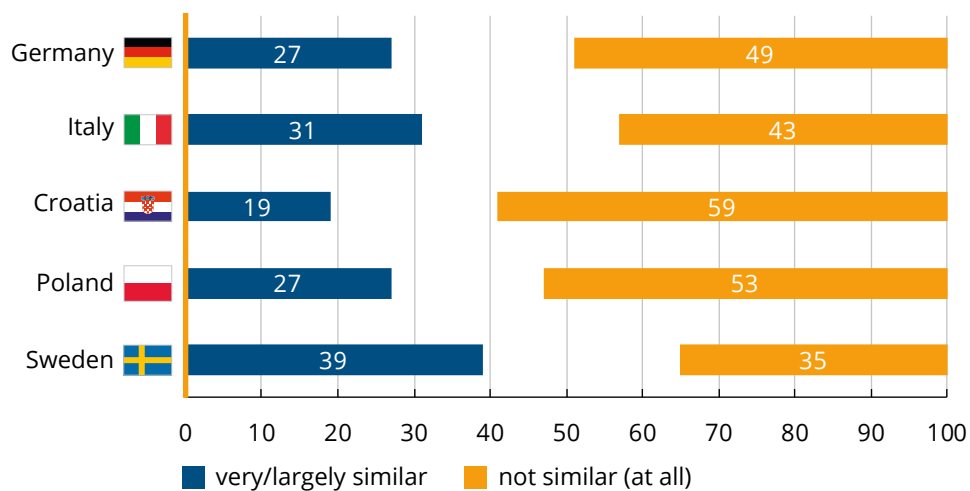
9.2 Feminism

The following person was also described to respondents:

- She/He identifies as a feminist.

The only country where more respondents consider themselves similar to this person than dissimilar is Sweden. Nearly four in ten Swedes view themselves as largely similar or very similar to a person who identifies as a feminist. In Poland and Croatia, the majority are of the opposite opinion. In Italy and Germany, too, the number of respondents describing themselves as not similar (at all) outweighs those who describe themselves as similar.

Figure 21: Descriptions of People – Similarity/Dissimilarity with Feminist



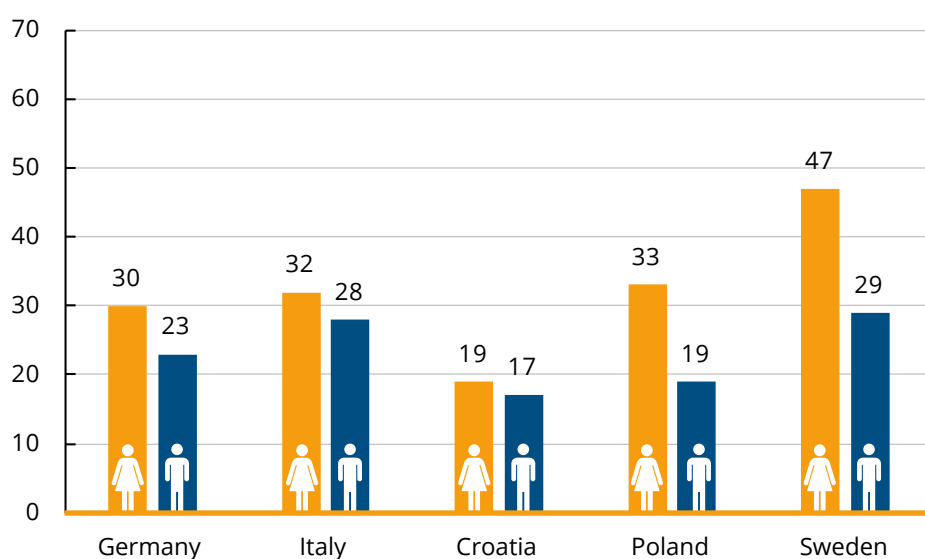
Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of combined responses. Values for "a bit similar" (middle category), "don't know/no response" not included. Question: "Next, I will describe a few people to you. Please tell me how similar or not similar you are to this person. The responses you can select from are: not similar at all, not similar, a bit similar, largely similar, very similar. How similar are you to this person?"

Younger people are more likely to describe themselves as similar than older people. In Sweden, for example, more than one in two respondents (55 percent) within the age group of 18 to 35 years is similar to a person who describes herself/himself as a feminist. Among the over-64s, this figure falls to just one in three. Age has similar, albeit lesser effects in all the other countries.



There are similarly uniform differences between women and men: Women are between 4 percentage points (Italy) and 18 percentage points (Sweden) more likely than men to describe themselves as similar, with nearly one in two women in Sweden (47 percent) describing themselves as similar. These figures permit us to draw conclusions concerning how important feminist values are to the respondents. Accordingly, feminist values are the most important for Swedes (see also Jezierska/Towns 2018). Nevertheless, feminist values do also appear to play a role for one third of women in Germany, Italy and Poland.

Figure 22: Descriptions of People – Similarity with a Feminist



Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of combined responses for “very similar” and “largely similar”. Values for “a bit similar” (middle category), “not similar”, “not similar at all”, “don’t know/no response” not included.

Question: “Next, I will describe a few people to you. Please tell me how similar or not similar you are to this person. The responses you can select from are: not similar at all, not similar, a bit similar, largely similar, very similar. How similar are you to this person?”

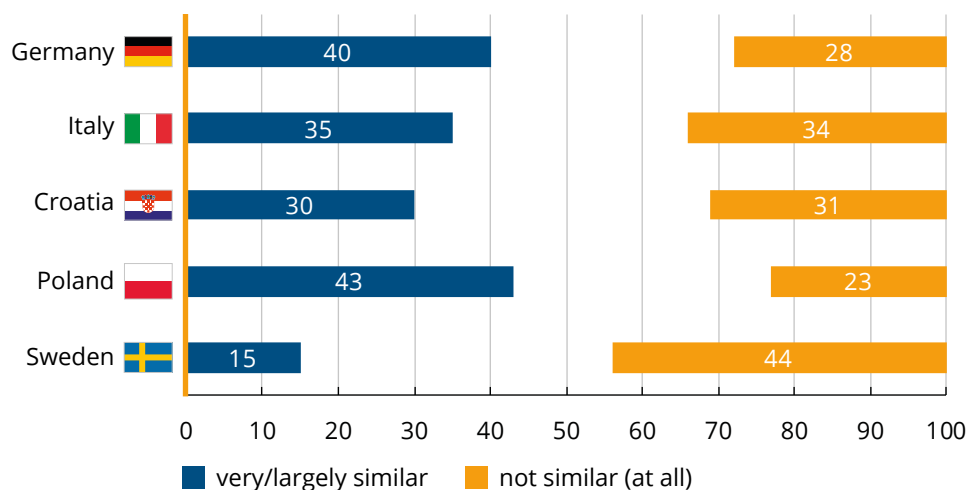
9.3 Importance of Own Looks

The following description elicits significant differences across country, age and gender lines.

- › She/He cares a lot about her/his looks.

The majority of respondents in Italy, Germany and, above all, Poland can identify with this kind of person. Sweden, by contrast, delivers opposite results. While nearly four out of ten respondents in Germany and Poland describe themselves as similar to a person who cares about their looks, this figure falls to just 15 percent in Sweden, with 44 percent of Swedes describing themselves as not similar to this person.

Figure 23: Descriptions of People: Similarity/Dissimilarity with a Person who Cares about their Looks



Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of combined responses. Values for "a bit similar" (middle category), "don't know/no response" not included. Question: "Next, I will describe a few people to you. Please tell me how similar or not similar you are to this person. The responses you can select from are: not similar at all, not similar, a bit similar, largely similar, very similar. How similar are you to this person?"

The age divide also varies. In Italy, it is younger people who are more likely to agree with the statement, while in Poland it is older people. Nearly one in two respondents in the latter group (65 years and older) describes themselves as very or largely similar. Women identify with the person more than men, on average. The biggest average differences between women and men are found in Italy (+15 percent) and Germany (+13 percent).



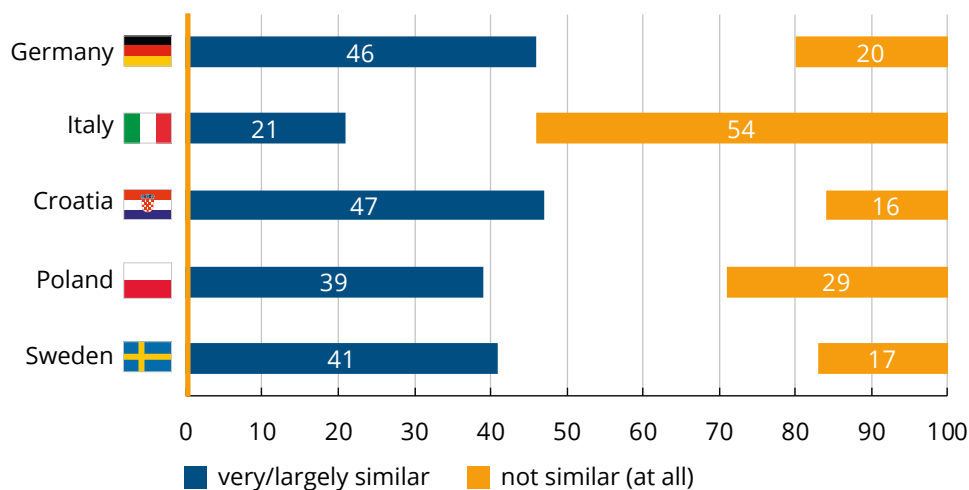
9.4 Having an Impact on Society

In the past, uneven distributions of political offices were also explained away by fundamental differences between the genders (see next chapter for more details). The following description of a person was used to investigate whether fundamental differences in personality traits exist with respect to people's willingness to engage in society:

- › She/He is very engaged and wants to have an impact on society.

This description does not elicit any differences between the genders. The only surprising result is the high number of respondents in Italy who "rejected" the idea of having an impact on society.

Figure 24: Descriptions of People – Similarity/Dissimilarity with a Person who Wants to Have an Impact on Society



Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of combined responses. Values for "a bit similar" (middle category), "don't know/no response" not included. Question: "Next, I will describe a few people to you. Please tell me how similar or not similar you are to this person. The responses you can select from are: not similar at all, not similar, a bit similar, largely similar, very similar. How similar are you to this person?"

13 As per approach to the "scepticism towards emancipation" index. All respondents who provided valid responses to at least two of the three statements were included. The statements are strongly correlating and cover the values of power and drive to succeed theoretically and empirically (see Schwartz 1992).

10

Political Engagement

The individual attitudes that can be subsumed under the term 'political engagement' encompass attitudes towards political participation, interest in politics, political efficacy and trust in political structures. Differences between countries and genders provide insight into different political cultures and show what framework conditions are required for equality in politics.

10.1 Political Participation

Political participation comes in many forms and cannot be reduced merely to political offices. Only a small number of people are actively involved in political parties, while more accessible forms of participation such as collecting signatures, boycotting products or petitions are employed more frequently.

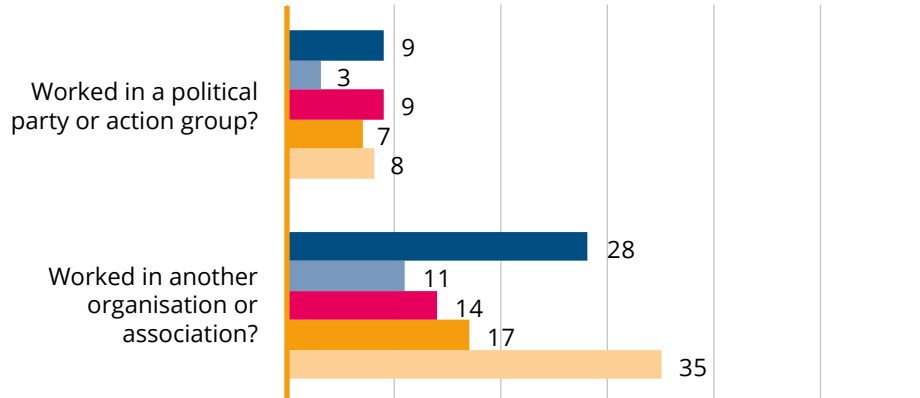
In Germany, Croatia and Sweden, nearly one in ten respondents¹⁴ reports having been actively involved in a political party or political group in the past twelve months. When this question is expanded to organisations as a whole, Sweden (35 percent) and Germany (28 percent) come out as leaders. In line with the results from the preceding chapter, Italy sits in last place with respect to involvement in both political and other organisations.

Petitions are among the institutionalised forms of political participation that are used more frequently. In Poland, for example, one in two eligible voters reports has signed a petition. In Sweden, 46 percent of eligible voters report that they have recently participated in signature-collecting. In all other countries, too, at least one in five respondents reports participating in signature-collecting or a petition in the past twelve months.¹⁵

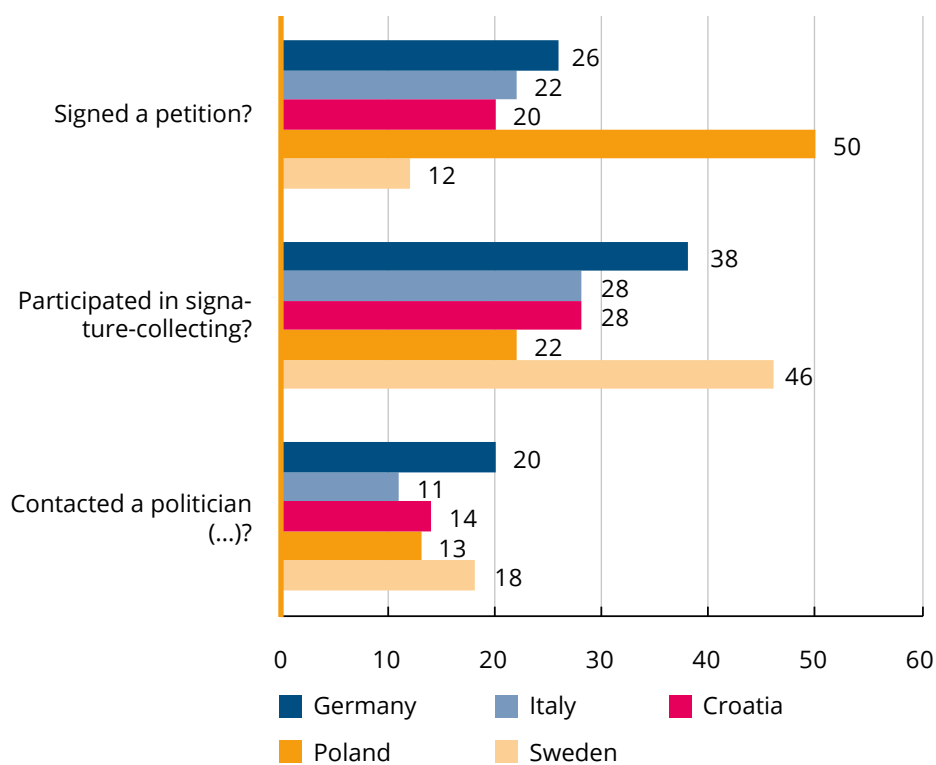
Another way of bringing a concern to the attention of political decision-makers is to make direct contact with a politician. Between 11 percent (Italy) and 20 percent (Germany) of eligible voters report having used this channel in the past twelve months.

Figure 25: Percentage of Persons Who Have Been Involved in a (Political) Organisation in the past twelve Months or Have Engaged in other Means of Political Participation

(Politically) involved



Other (institutionalised) forms of participation

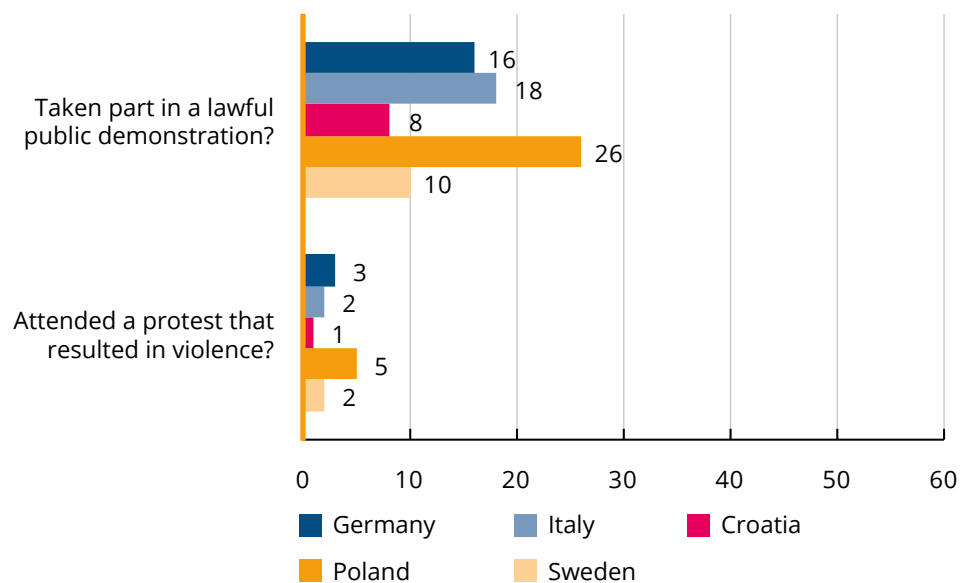


Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of responses. Values for "no", "don't know/no response" not included.

Question: "There are different ways of trying to improve things in [country] or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? Have you ..."

One in four respondents in Poland reports having attended a demonstration recently, while 5 percent indicate that they have attended a protest that resulted in violence. These are the highest scores reported among any of the countries surveyed in our study.

Figure 26: Percentage of Persons who Have Attended Demonstrations

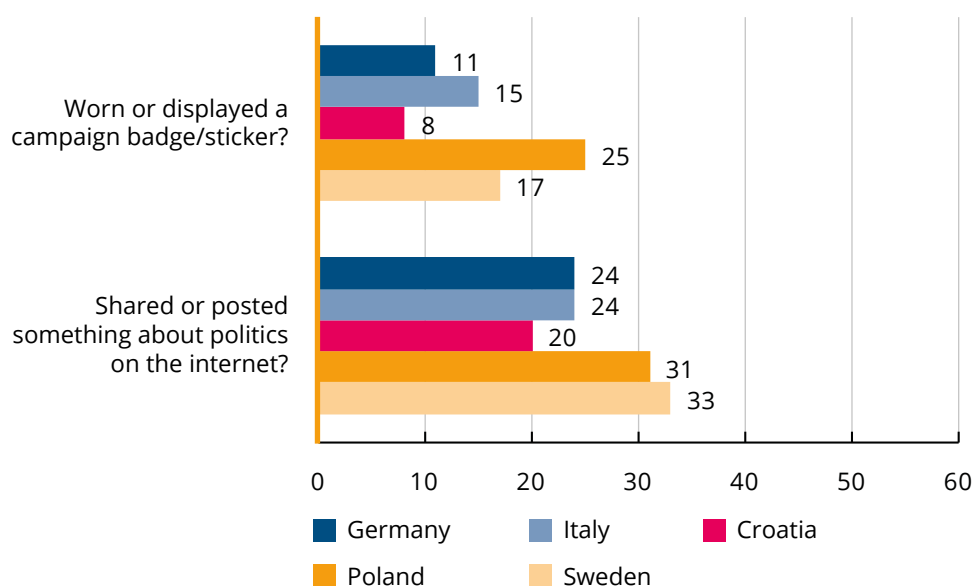


Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of responses. Values for "no", "don't know/no response" not included.

Question: "There are different ways of trying to improve things in [country] or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? Have you ..."

One third of eligible voters in both Sweden and Poland report having used the internet to share or post something about politics in the past twelve months. In Croatia, only 20 percent claim to have done so. The wearing of an insignia of a political campaign was reported most frequently by respondents in Poland (25 percent) and most infrequently by respondents in Croatia (8 percent).

Figure 27: Percentage of Persons Displaying Campaign Insignia (Offline) or Political Content (Online)

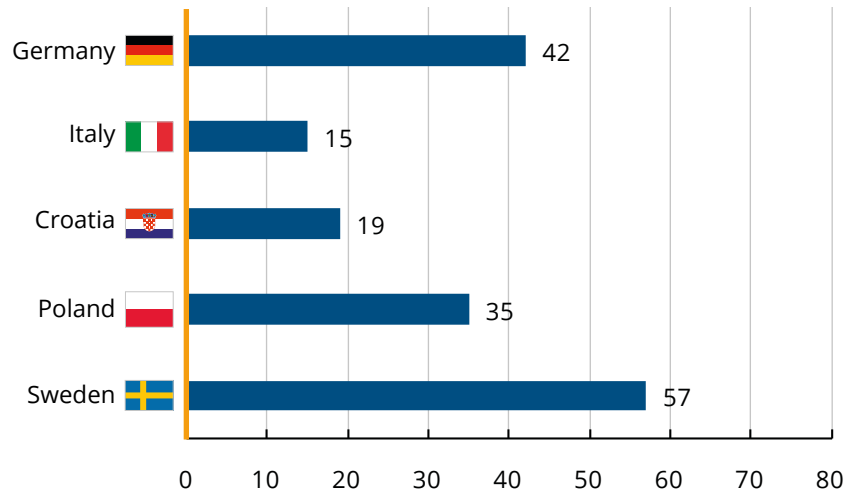


Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of responses. Values for "no", "don't know/no response" not included.

Question: "There are different ways of trying to improve things in [country] or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? Have you ..."

The politically motivated boycotting of products is most frequently reported as a form of political confrontation in Sweden – more than one in two say they have boycotted a product in the past twelve months. Many eligible voters in Germany (42 percent) and Poland (35 percent) also report boycotting certain products. Conversely, this is far less frequently reported in Italy (15 percent) and Croatia (19 percent).

Figure 28: Percentage of Persons who Boycott Products



Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of responses. Values for "no", "don't know/no response" not included.

Question: "There are different ways you can try to improve something in [country] or to stop things from getting worse in [country]. Have you done any of these in the past twelve months? Have you ..."

Who Participates?

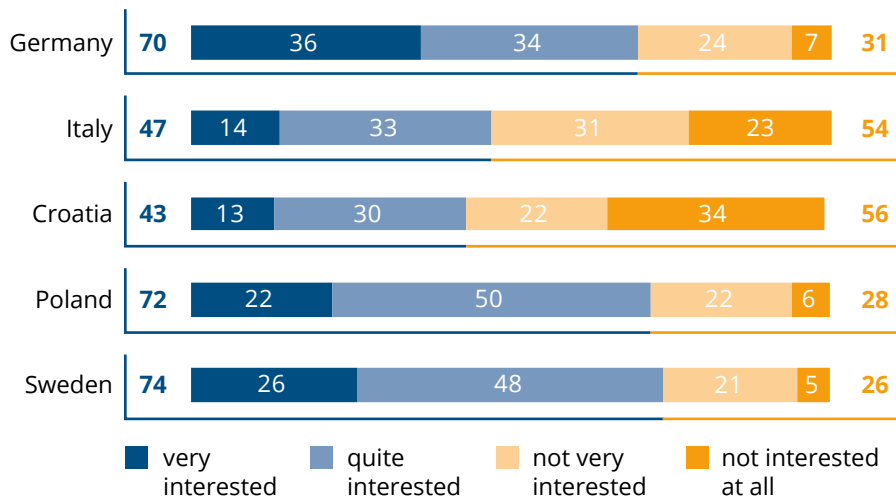
A pattern can be observed across all five countries, in that people with higher levels of formal education and greater interest in politics make use of forms of participation more frequently. Moreover, in Germany, Italy and Croatia, it is men who are more frequently active in parties or organisations and who attempt to make contact with politicians, rather than women. In Sweden, women are more likely than men to exercise their rights in signature-collecting or demonstrations. Products are more likely to be boycotted by women than by men in both Germany and Sweden.

On the whole, however, there are no major differences between the genders when it comes to political participation. Other studies that have been conducted since the 1990s have similarly come to the conclusion that participation and non-participation depends primarily on motivating factors like interest in politics, political efficacy or identification with a party. Socio-demographic factors such as higher age and higher level of formal education do have positive effects here but to a lesser degree by comparison. Once these significant influencing factors have been taken into account, the gender divide disappears (see Norris 1991). The long-held assumption that women are generally more passive and less involved in the sphere of politics (see, for example, Lipset 1971, Rokkan 1970, Verba et al. 1980) has been regarded by the literature as an outdated position since the 1990s (see Norris 1991).

10.2 Political Interest

Interest in politics is, on average, high in Germany, Poland and Sweden, but comparatively low in Italy and Croatia. In Germany, 70 percent of respondents are “very” or “quite” interested in politics. 72 percent of respondents in Poland and 75 percent in Sweden also fall into these categories. The largest percentage of very interested respondents, however, is found in Germany (36 percent), followed by Sweden (26 percent). In Italy and Croatia, by contrast, more than one in two reports being “not very interested” or “not interested at all” in politics.

Figure 29: Interest in Politics by Country



Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of responses. “Don’t know/no response” not included. Rounding may lead to total values of more than 100 percent.

Question: “How interested are you in politics? Are you ...”

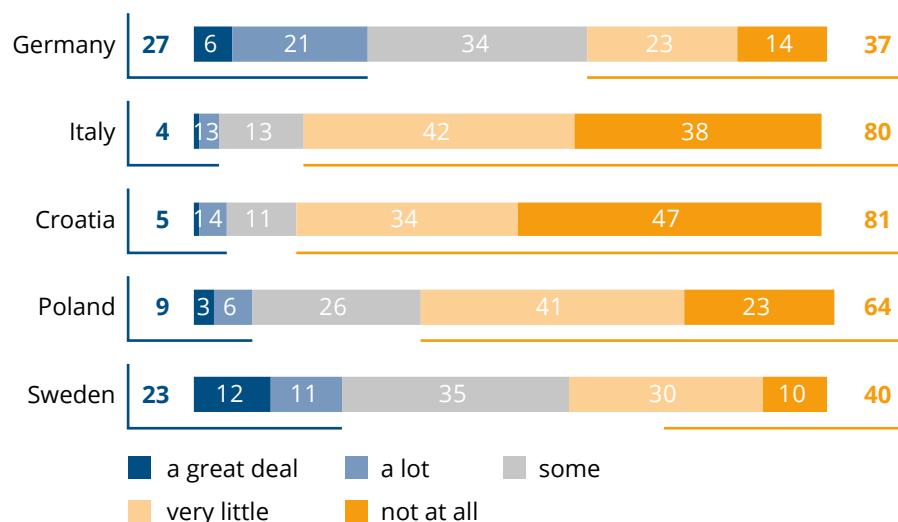
Men are, on average, slightly more interested in politics than women. The difference between genders here ranges from 6 percentage points (Sweden) to 17 percentage points (Italy). Studies suggest that this difference is due to socio-structural inequalities. Analyses conducted since 1989 indicate that this gap is significantly reduced across almost all European states as the level of education and employment rises (see European Commission 1991). Other reasons may be that when thinking about politics, women deliberately categorise themselves as less interested in politics or primarily think about the (still) male-dominated world of politics, and less about socio-political aspects (see Wolak 2020/Gomez 2017).

There is hope when looking at the results from Sweden and Germany: here, the gender gap disappears completely among 18 to 35 year-olds. In fact, women are just ahead of men, by a single percentage point. This could firstly be a reflection of the effects of equal access to education, work and politics which may be most well-established in Sweden and Germany compared to the other countries (see European Institute for Gender Equality 2022a). The literature has long presumed a positive correlation between high levels of gender equality and a shrinking of the gap with respect to interest in politics (Fraile/Gomez 2017). Secondly, when women turn 35 they enter a phase of life, in which their time resources dwindle. Unequal family obligations or professional roles have a negative impact on interest in politics and could explain the growing gender divide (see Burns et al. 2001, Schneider et al. 2019). Whether this is a case of a new generational effect or a life-stage effect remains unclear. We may, however, presume that an increase in gender equality will have a positive effect in either case.

10.3 Political Efficacy

In Italy, Croatia and Poland, a large majority considers their ability to have a personal impact on the political system to be very limited. The question “How much would you say that the political system in [country] allows people like you to have an influence on politics?” measures the level of perceived political efficacy. 27 percent of respondents in Germany and 23 percent in Sweden believe that the political system gives them a (very) good opportunity to have an impact on politics. A further 34 percent and 35 percent respectively fall into the same category. Conversely, the majority of eligible voters in Poland (64 percent) and, above all, in Italy and Croatia (80 percent and 82 percent respectively) believes that people like them have very little or no ability at all to have an impact on politics. There are no differences between the genders.

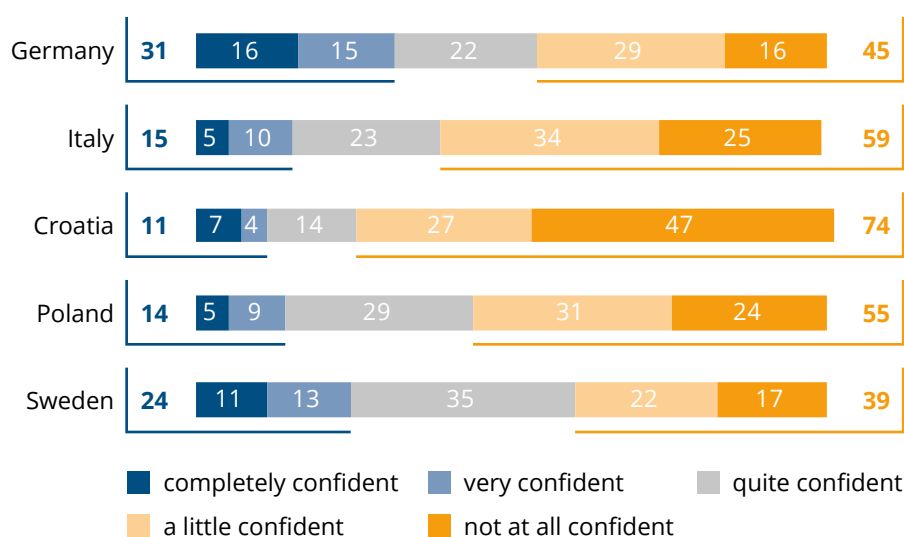
Figure 30: Assessment of Own Ability to Have an Impact



Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of responses. “Don’t know/no response” not included. Rounding may lead to deviations in marginal totals. Question: “How much would you say that the political system in [country] allows people like you to have an influence on politics?”

A person's own perception of political efficacy is closely connected to their confidence in their own political skills. That is to say, people who have confidence in their ability to participate in political life are more likely to believe that they have the ability to influence the political system and will do so more confidently. Accordingly, Figure 30 (Assessment of own ability to have an impact) and Figure 31 (Confidence in own ability to participate in politics) look distinctly similar. Confidence is highest in Germany and Sweden and lowest in Croatia.

Figure 31: Confidence in Own Ability to Participate in Politics



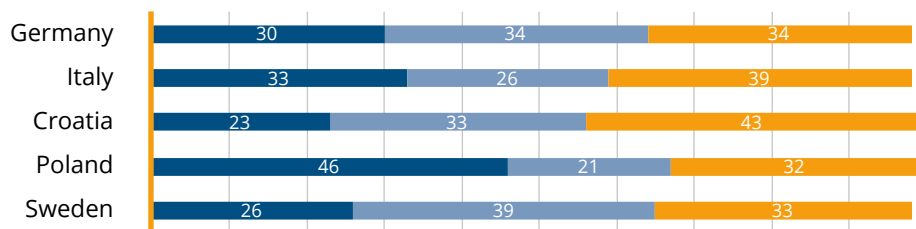
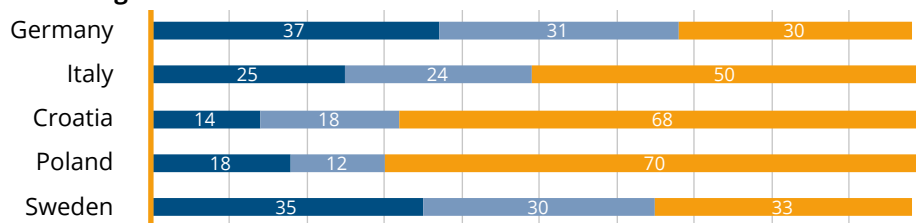
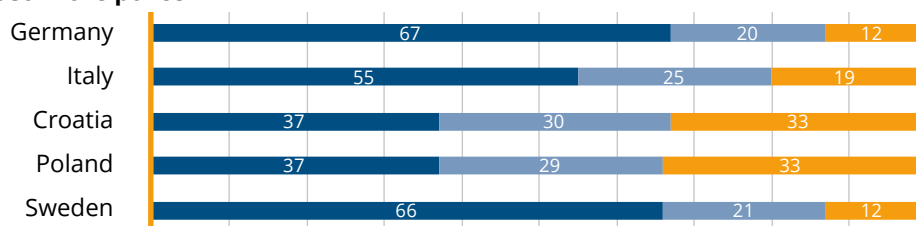
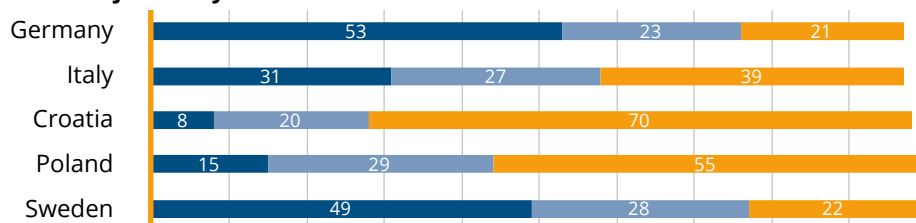
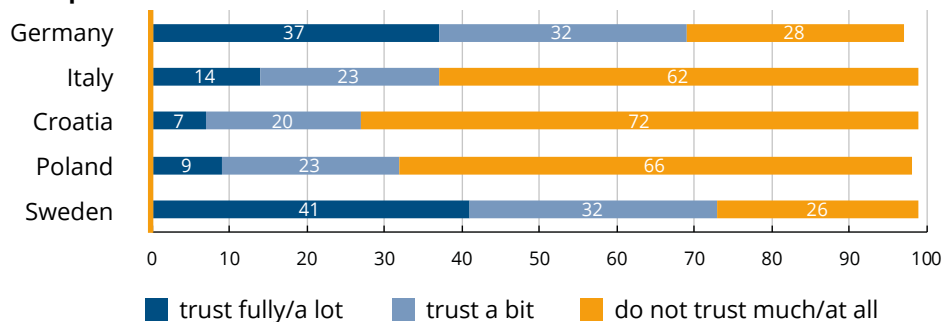
Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of responses. "Don't know/no response" not included. Rounding may lead to deviations in marginal totals. Question: "How confident are you in your own ability to participate in politics? Are you ..."

Unlike respondents' assessment of their ability to have an impact, systematic differences between genders do emerge with respect to respondents' confidence in their own abilities: women are significantly less likely to be "completely" or "very" confident in their skills. The gender divide ranges from 6 percentage points (Poland) to 14 percentage points (Italy). There is no such gender gap in Sweden. As was the case with the gender gap with respect to interest in politics, the influence of confidence proved to also be an important factor in respondents' assessment of their own political nous – a character trait that is more common in men than in women (see Wolak 2020, Beyer/Bowden 1997).

10.4 Political Trust

While there are no differences between the genders with respect to trust in political and state institutions, there do exist significant differences between countries. Only respondents' trust in the European Union (EU) is at a comparatively (high) level across all five countries. Conversely, Italy, Croatia and Poland exhibit significantly less trust in their own government and national parliament than Germany and Sweden. These same country effects are observed with respect to trust in the justice system, while similar, albeit lesser, differences are also evident in respondents' trust in the police. No gender differences are reported for trust in political institutions.

Figure 32: Political Trust

Trust in the EU**Trust in the government****Trust in the police****Trust in the justice system****Trust in parliament**

Source: Survey 1031 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., 2021/22. Percentage of combined responses. Values for "don't know/no response" not included.

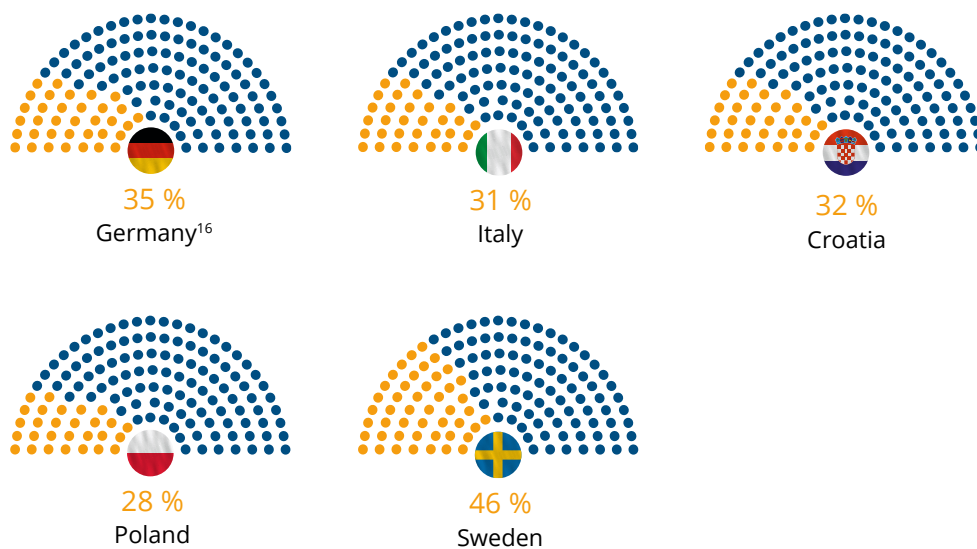
Question: "For each public institution or group of persons I read out to you, please tell me how much you personally trust them. Please indicate your level of trust using the following scale: trust fully, trust a lot, trust a bit, do not trust very much, do not trust at all. How much do you trust ..."

10.5 Getting Women into Politics – but how?

Looking at Figure 33, we can see that women are under-represented in the national parliaments – the most visible arena of political representation. In line with the prevailing research, the results of this study indicate that the reason for this under-representation is not any male-specific affinity for or a female aversion to politics. Women engage in politics just as frequently as men. There is equally no difference between the genders with respect to their trust in political structures or assessment of their own ability to have an impact on the political system. The literature has long since rejected the role of gender-specific voting, and in particular non-voting, behaviour.

Nevertheless, there are two gender differences that persist in the literature on political engagement: that women are less interested in politics, and that they are less positive about their own abilities to engage in political life. Both of these factors are important parameters for political participation, e.g., applying for political offices. This offers important insights into the framework conditions required for parity in politics. Where women do not (yet) possess the confidence required to offer their own strengths and interests, it is important to have an inclusive, and less hierarchical and patriarchal culture (see Wolak 2020, Burns et al. 2001). Only then can political talents be empowered, instead of scared away. Italy, for example, continues to suffer from the legacy of a patriarchal system that for a long time has predominantly assigned women roles in the private sphere and has only begun to open up to the participation of women slowly (see Guadagnini 1998: 230, Campus 2016). Changes in cultural conditions (change in gender roles) and structural conditions (work-life balance), which Sweden began to roll out as early as the 1960s/70s (see Bergqvist 1998), are therefore important. Germany and Sweden offer an indication of the positive influence of greater gender equality. There is no difference in interest in politics among young people in these countries, and in Sweden the gap between the genders in terms of their assessment of their own political capabilities has already disappeared entirely. It is not surprising, therefore, that – similarly to many other results in this study – Sweden again comes out on top with respect to the percentage of women in its parliament, at 46 percent.

Figure 33: Share of Women in National Parliament



14 Distortions caused by the influence of social desirability in response behaviour or the lack of a more precise definition of the forms of participation may lead to a slight over-reporting here and with respect to all other forms of participation hereafter.

15 In Sweden, this figure refers only to signature-collecting and not to signing a petition (12 percent). The comments in footnote 14 apply here too, especially considering the high values.

16 Data for all countries: see Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) 2022.



Conclusion: Equality of Women in Society and Politics

This study highlights the issue of equality from a variety of perspectives. What is clear is that discrimination of women is perceived as a big issue in European countries. Women, and young women in particular, experience disadvantages on account of their gender, and male violence against women is still considered to be a widespread problem.

There are positive signs for the future, however. While there are still differences between the countries, the tendencies are the same in all: political actions aimed at achieving gender equality are being strongly advocated for and a majority is convinced that gender equality promotes economic growth. Statements that are more sceptical of emancipation enjoy only isolated pockets of support, although gender-based prejudices and older views on gender roles do persist to some extent. While many of the findings in this study cannot be used as indicators of the actual spread of discrimination or the current status of equality, they do shed light on levels of awareness and perception of the issue.

Women are just as success-oriented as men, even more so in the case of young women, and they are being entrusted with important positions in society. There is no gender divide in political participation, while systematic differences in trust and interest in politics point to structural hurdles.

There is still a long way to go on the road to political and social equality for women in Europe, but it seems that the conditions ahead are good. The discrimination of women is a widely accepted problem. Accordingly, policy measures are advocated.

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The role of women remains a much discussed socio-political topic in Europe in the 21st century, as the road from legal equality to social parity is long. Gender inequalities continue to be found in areas such as work, education, health, power, money or time use. But what are the reasons for these differences? What are people's perceptions around the issue of gender equality in Europe? The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung addresses these questions in a European comparative perspective. In a representative survey, attitudes towards the perception of gender equality, stereotypes and gender roles were examined in Germany, Italy, Croatia, Poland and Sweden. Thus, the study shows the perspectives of different national populations on women's representation and participation. The results enable classifications, comparisons and conclusions on strengthening the role of women in politics and society.