

Germany



Introduction

The Federal Republic of Germany has a population of 81 million people and is roughly the size of Montana. Germany's religions are split evenly between Roman Catholics, who are concentrated in the southern part of the country, and Protestants, who are found in the northern region. Germany's economy ranks as the largest in Europe, and the third largest in the world, behind the U.S. and Japan.

The decision-making process in Germany is much slower than in the United States, and this can be troublesome to U.S. executives. Be prepared for the process to take much longer, as there is often a "hidden" group of advisors and decision makers that must approve of any transaction that is to occur.

Fun Fact

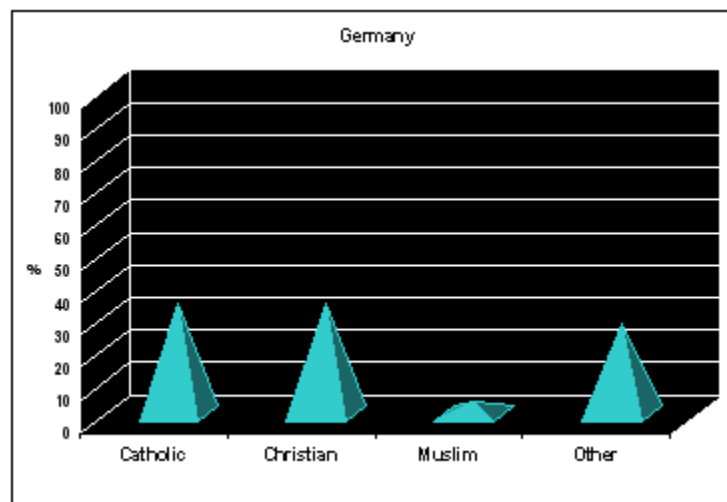
Germany went through a unification process, bringing the East and the West together. Although there still continues to be sensitivities between the two regions, the integration both economically and technologically is moving forward.

Geert Hofstede Analysis Germany

[Click Here for Geert Hofstede country scores](#)

The Geert Hofstede analysis for Germany shows their emphasis on individualism, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance. Power distance and long-term orientation are both ranked considerably lower than the others. This illustrates Germany's belief in equality and opportunity for each citizen, as well as its ability to change and adapt rapidly. [More Details](#)

Religion in Germany



* WORLD FACTBOOK 2002

Appearance

- Business dress in Germany is very conservative.
- Businessmen wear dark suits; solid, conservative ties, and white shirts.
- Women also dress conservatively, in dark suits and white blouses.
- Chewing gum while talking to someone is considered rude.
- Don't be surprised if occasionally you see a fashion statement with white socks being worn with a dark suit.

Behavior

- Germans are strongly individualistic.
- The German thought process is extremely thorough, with each aspect of a project being examined in great detail. This process is often times very time-intensive. However, once the planning is over, a project will move very quickly and deadlines are expected to be honored.
- Germans do not like surprises. Sudden changes in business transactions, even if they may improve the outcome, are unwelcome.
- German citizens do not need or expect to be complimented. In Germany, it is assumed that everything is satisfactory unless the person hears otherwise.
- Punctuality is necessity in Germany. Arrive on time for every appointment, whether for business or social. Being late, even if it is only by a few minutes, is very insulting to a German executive.
- In business situations, shake hands at both the beginning and the end of a meeting. Additionally, a handshake may be accompanied with a slight bow. Reciprocating the nod is a good way to make a good impression, as failure to respond with this nod/bow (especially a superior) may get you off to a bad start. Be sure to look directly into the person's eyes while shaking hands.
- When being introduced to a woman, wait to see if she extends her hand.
- Business is viewed as being very serious, and Germans do not appreciate humor in a business context.
- In business meetings, age takes precedence over youth. If you are in a group setting, the eldest person enters first.
- Germans keep a larger personal space around them, approximately 6 inches more space than North Americans do. *However*, it is not unusual that when in line at a store cash register, Germans will crowd up very close to the person in front of them.
- People that have worked together for years still shake hands each morning as if it were the first time they met.
- German men frequently greet each other with **Herr** 'last name', even when they know each other very well.
- Germans are able to consume large quantities of beer in one evening, but public

drunkenness is *not acceptable*. It is best to know your limits, especially in Bavaria where two liters of beer is an ordinary evening. Pace yourself and eat plenty of food.

- Typically, you do not wait to be seated in German restaurants, and it is *not uncommon* to share a table with strangers. However, most Germans will think it odd if you try to initiate a conversation with them beyond just establishing that the chairs are available.

Communications

- German is the official language.
- Approximately ninety-nine percent of the population speaks German. However, there are several different dialects in the various regions.
- Germans love to talk on the telephone. While important business decisions are not made over the phone, expect many follow up calls or faxes.
- Germans guard their private life, so do not phone a German executive at home without permission.
- Titles are very important to Germans. Do your best to address people by their full, correct title, no matter how extraordinarily long that title may seem to foreigners. This is also true when addressing a letter.