



Know  
Before  
You  
Go

# GERMANY

## A Guide to Keep You Safe Abroad

Provided by Sexual Assault Support and  
Help for Americans Abroad (SASHAA)

*Updated June 2017*



Let's be perfectly clear, the number one way to prevent sexual assault is to **not rape**. While the responsibility of ending sexual gender-based violence is on the perpetrators, this guide will offer general safety tips, country-specific information, and resources to help prevent and prepare travelers for the possibility of sexual assault abroad.

## GENERAL SAFETY TIPS:

1. Use the **buddy system** and travel with friends!
2. Be aware of **social and cultural norms**. For example, looking at someone in the eyes when you speak to them is perfectly normal in the U.S., but in another country that could signify you're interested in the person.
3. **Recognize controlling behavior** when entering a relationship. Most rape survivors recall feeling "uncomfortable" about some of their partner's behaviors such as degrading jokes/language or refusal to accept "no" as an answer, whether in a sexual context or otherwise.<sup>2</sup>
4. **Avoid secluded places** where you could be more vulnerable. Meet new people in public spaces and let a trusted friend know where you'll be beforehand.
5. **Trust your gut**. Many victims have a "bad feeling" right before an assault takes place.



## ALCOHOL AND DRUG AWARENESS:

- Always be sure to watch your drink being poured and carry it yourself, even to the bathroom.
- Be aware of "drug-facilitated sexual assault drugs," also referred to as 'roofies' or 'club drugs,' which may turn your drink bright blue, cloudy, or slightly salty. Effects such as impaired judgment, lost sense of sight, sound, or consciousness can be felt within 15 minutes and up to 4 hours.<sup>3</sup>
- Germany allows ages 16+ to consume beer and wine and ages 18+ access to liquor. The German laws regulating alcohol are some of the least restrictive in the world. Their legislation is designed to teach young people an appropriate approach to alcohol consumption.<sup>4</sup>

## CULTURAL INFORMATION:

**Major Religions:** Roman Catholic 30% (south), Protestant Christians 30% (north), Unaffiliated 35%, Muslim 2-4%, Other 1%.<sup>5</sup>

**Legal System:** Germany has both ordinary (criminal and family law) courts and specialized courts. Each case is heard and determined by up to five judges, depending on the severity of the crime.<sup>6</sup>

**Social/Cultural Norms:** Germans are generally stoic people (although this is more true of people in Northern Germany), who place great emphasis on respect and punctuality. Germans are proud of their accomplishments, specifically classical music and architecture.<sup>7</sup>

**Gender Equality:** A 2015 survey by the World Economic Forum ranked Germany 11th out of 142 countries in terms of gender equality. Men dominate German politics, but women have equal access to healthcare and education. Economically, women are gaining bargaining power and status.<sup>8</sup>



## Sexual Assault and the Law: German Context

Germany's sexual assault laws have come under heavy scrutiny lately, as section 177 of Germany's criminal code states that rape and sexual assault occurs if performed "1. By force 2. By threat of imminent danger to life or limb or 3. By exploiting a situation in which the victim is unprotected and at the mercy of the offender." Campaigners have criticized this formulation for not explicitly mentioning consent, allowing judges to interpret the law to mean that saying 'no' is not enough to prove rape happened." Other rape cases have been dismissed because evidence showed the victim did not fight back, even though the police recommend not fighting back for safety. However, lawmakers are in the process of trying to expand the definition of sexual assault.<sup>9</sup>

### If You Experience Sexual Assault...

Don't blame yourself! **Sexual assault is never the fault of the victim.** You may be unsure of how to proceed, and that's okay. First, consider taking the following actions:

1. If you are in a safe place, **call someone you trust** to be with you. If you are not safe, call someone you trust to come and get you.
2. Do **self-collection of evidence**. Put all of the clothes you were wearing, bed sheets, and so on in a paper bag. If you have any injuries, **take pictures**. If there is semen present, collect what you can in a hotel glass or cup and put it in the paper bag.
3. **Call a SASHAA advocate** internationally toll free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They can help you through the ordeal, honoring your decisions. (See Resources)

### Medical Care and Reporting Sexual Assault in Germany

Medical care includes an examination for injuries, a gynecological exam, and a clinical exam. The doctors are bound by confidentiality and will not report the incident unless the victim chooses to do so.<sup>10</sup> If you choose to report a sexual assault to the police, it is important to know that the legal process can be very frustrating for victims. Each case is treated on a case-by-case basis, and each case requires enough evidence to continue. To get a conviction, a victim needs to prove that they fought back with their attacker or were coerced into a forced sex act. A lack of consent is not enough for a conviction, making the trial process extremely difficult if the assault was committed by a close friend, in a home, or if the victim sustains no visible injuries.<sup>11</sup>

#### LGBTQ VICTIM CONCERNS



Homosexuality and transgender activities are all legal in Germany. Discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and same sex marriages are recognized by the state. It is safe for LGBTQ victims to report to both hospitals and to the police. When polled, 87% of the public agreed that homosexuality should be accepted by society.<sup>12</sup>

#### POST EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS, EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION, AND ABORTION

##### Q. Are post exposure prophylaxis and emergency contraception available?

**A:** Yes; emergency contraceptive in the form of the "morning-after pill" is available at pharmacies without a prescription for under 20 USD.<sup>13</sup> PEP is also available in Germany, but a victim might have to ask for it during an examination.<sup>14</sup>

##### Q. Is abortion legal in Germany?

**A:** Abortion is legal within the first 12 weeks of gestation (after 12 weeks abortion is only allowed to save the life of the mother), and requires three days of counseling before the procedure. However, if the pregnancy is a result of sexual crimes, abortion is available without counseling.<sup>15</sup>

## Resources

### SASHAA

#### SASHAA International Crisis Line:

To call our confidential, toll-free, International Crisis Line first dial the country specific AT&T access code for **Germany (0-800-225-5288)**. Then, at the prompt, enter our phone number: **866-USWOMEN (866-879-6636)**.

#### Crisis Email:

To reach a SASHAA advocate, you can email us at [crisis@866uswomen.org](mailto:crisis@866uswomen.org). All crisis emails will be responded to within 24 hours. However, if you need to get in touch with us immediately, please call the international toll-free crisis line.

#### Live Chat:

SASHAA online chat services are available 24/7 at our website <https://sashaa.org>.

## ANTI-VIOLENCE ORGANIZATIONS

### ALL OF GERMANY:

Help Portal for Sexual Abuse (Hotline)  
Tel: 0800 22 55 530

### BERLIN:

**Bundesverband Frauenberatungsstellen und Frauennotrufe**  
Petersburgerstr. 94, 10247 Berlin  
Tel: 030 322 99 500

### FrauenNachtCafé

Kreuzberg, Friesenstrasse 6  
Tel: 61 62 09 70

### LARA Crisis Center for Women

Tel: 49-2168888  
Website: <http://www.lara-berlin.de>

### FREIBURG

**Frauenhorizonte (Center for Sexually Assaulted Women)**  
Basler Str. 8, 79100 Freiburg  
Helpline: 49-761-2858585

## U.S. EMBASSIES/CONSULATES

### BERLIN:

Clayallee 170, 14191 Berlin  
Tel: +49-30-8305-0

### DÜSSELDORF:

Willi-Becker-Allee 10, 40227 Düsseldorf  
Tel: +49-211-788-8927

### FRANKFURT:

Gießener Str. 30, 60435 Frankfurt am Main  
Tel: +49-69-7535-0

### HAMBURG:

Alsterufer 27/28, 20354 Hamburg  
Tel: +49-40-411 71-100

### LEIPZIG:

Wilhelm-Seyfferth-Straße 4, 04107 Leipzig  
Tel: +49-341-213-840

### MUNICH:

Königinstraße 5, 80539 München  
Tel: +49-89-2888-0

## SELECTED LIST OF HOSPITALS

### BERLIN:

**Charité Campus Benjamin Franklin**  
Freie Universitätsklinikum Hindenburgdamm 30  
Tel: 030-8445-0

### FRANKFURT:

**Bethesda Krankenhaus Stuttgart**  
Hohenheimer Str. 21, 70184 Stuttgart  
Tel: 0711-2156-0

### Evangelisches Krankenhaus

Weyertal 76, 50931 Köln  
Tel: 0221-4790

### MUNICH:

**Harlachinger Krankenhaus Sanatoriumsplatz 2**  
81545 Munich  
Tel: (089) 62101

## EMERGENCY NUMBERS

**Police:** 110

**Fire and Ambulance:** 112

\*Note: You can't call 112 with a phone without SIM card.

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## References

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