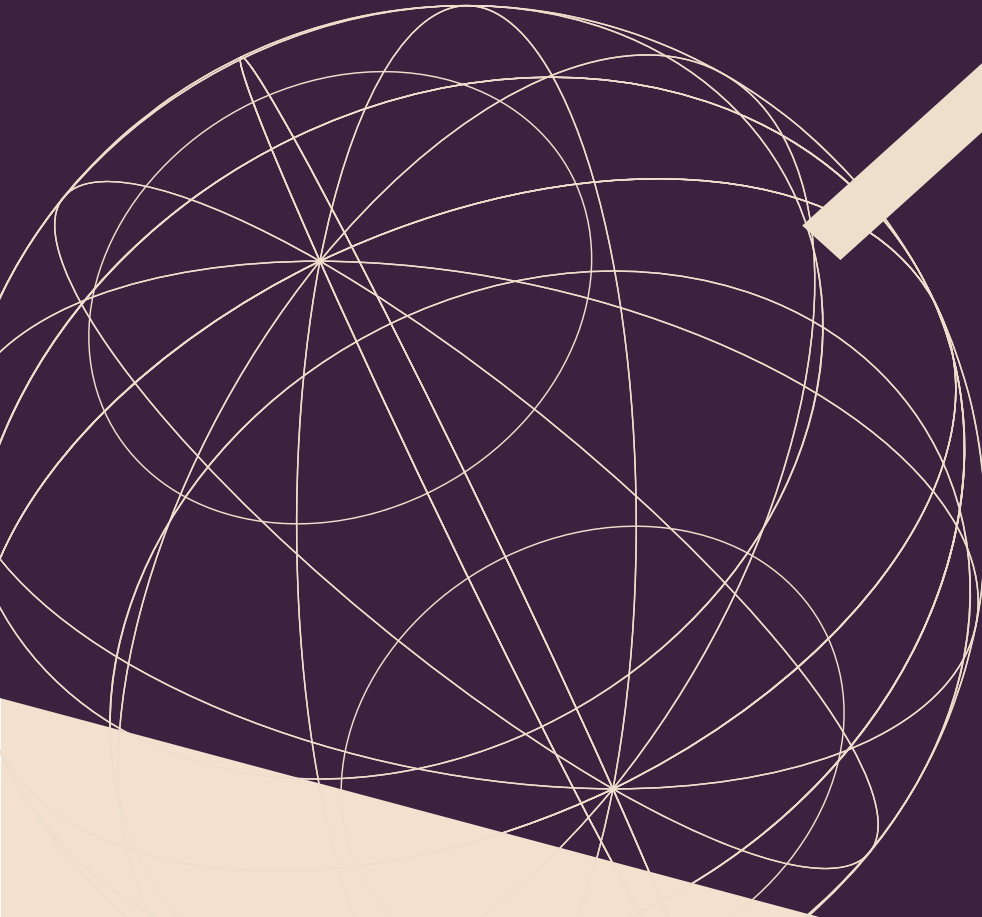


**Recognize
Resist
Rise up**



From Elected to Threatened.
Experiences of Female Members
of the German Bundestag Regarding
Violence against Women in Politics



Co-funded by
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Diversity in
Leadership

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

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Edited by Cécile Weidhofer

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Disclaimer: Data for this study were originally collected quantitatively but subsequently analyzed using qualitative, exploratory, and question-specific sampling methods. The data obtained in this way provide indicative qualitative insights into the experiences of female members of the Bundestag; however, quantifiable statements or statements representative of the population cannot be made from these samples. This study should therefore be explicitly understood as a qualitative narrative insight into the experiences, strategies, and wishes of female members of the Bundestag regarding gender-based violence in politics.

 **Content Note:** This study addresses experiences of violence among female members of the Bundestag. In particular, Chapter Four includes accounts, quotes, and experiences of discrimination and violence. The study also contains terms that may be offensive, insulting, discriminatory, or (re-)traumatizing.



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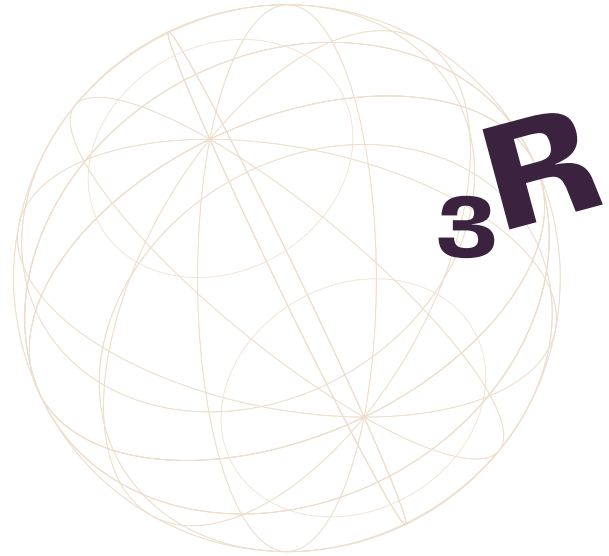
AfD	Alternative for Germany
AGG	General Equal Treatment Act (<i>Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz</i>)
BKA	Federal Criminal Police Office (<i>Bundeskriminalamt</i>)
BMBFSFJ	Federal Ministry of Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth (<i>Bundesministerium für Bildung, Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend</i>)
BMI	Federal Ministry of the Interior (<i>Bundesministerium des Innern</i>)
BSW	Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance – Reason and Justice
CDU/CSU	Christian Democratic Union of Germany/Christian Social Union in Bavaria
CZ	Czech Republic
DE	Germany
DSA	Digital Services Act
FDP	Free Democratic Party
GBV	Gender-based violence
HU	Hungary
IE	Ireland
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
AI	Artificial Intelligence
MP	Member of Parliament
SK	Slovakia
SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany
VAWiP	Violence against Women in Politics

1. Introduction

As part of the European project **Recognize, Resist, Rise Up (3R): Tackling Gender-Based Violence against Women in Politics**, a project consortium comprising the five civil society organizations Fórum 50 % (CZ), EAF Berlin (DE), JÓL-LÉT Alapítvány (HU), Women for Election Ireland (IE), and Možnosť voľby (SK) is compiling background information on gender-based violence against female politicians from 2025 to 2027.

Building on this, the project's objectives are:

- to develop a country-specific voluntary commitment/pledge against gender-based violence and sexism in politics,
- to empower affected women through workshops and empowerment training,
- to create a safe space for sharing and receiving support from people with similar experiences,
- to encourage and promote structural changes,
- to raise public awareness of the issue,
- to promote the exchange of best practices and the development of evidence-based recommendations in the participating countries and beyond.



This study traces women's experiences of violence and their perceptions within the Bundestag. To this end, all female members of the parliament (MPs of the German Bundestag) from the 21st legislative period, as well as selected former women MPs (from the 20th legislative period), were invited to share their experiences, strategies, and recommendations for better addressing gender-based violence (GBV) in politics, as well as measures to combat political violence in general. A comparative study also provides insights into prevalence rates in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Ireland, and Slovakia. Statistically reliable, representative statements on the prevalence in Germany are not possible due to an insufficient response rate, particularly in a comparatively large parliament.

This study also builds on findings from the country report on the prevalence of gender-based violence in politics in Germany (as of June 2025). This country report, **Recognize, Resist, Rise Up: Country Report for Germany on Gender-based Violence against Women in Politics**, is available on the EAF Berlin's website.

2. Background and Methodology

For this study, all 205 female members of the 21st German Bundestag were invited to participate in an online survey between November 2025 and mid-February 2026 (at that time). In addition, a total of 36 former female members of the Bundestag from the previous legislative period were invited to participate in the survey. Several reminders, a letter from the Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister of Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth (BMBFSFJ), as well as separate appeals from the women's and/or gender policy spokespersons of the parliamentary groups, were sent out to draw attention to the survey by acting as multipliers.

A total of 22 analyzable questionnaires were received (12 from MPs in the 21st legislative period and 10 from former members of the Bundestag in the 20th legislative period). Of these, 16 (eight current members and eight former members) completed the survey in its entirety.¹ Due to the low response rate of approximately 4 percent among current members of the Bundestag, the quantitative data were evaluated using a qualitative, exploratory approach. For the qualitative content analysis, units of analysis were used that did not require complete individual cases; no cases were excluded. Instead, a question-specific sample size evaluation was conducted to take into account all available information provided by the participants. The number of cases per question varies accordingly. The data obtained in this way provides indicative qualitative insights into the experiences of female members of the Bundestag; however, quantifiable statements or those representative of the population cannot be made based on these samples. This study should therefore be explicitly understood as a qualitative narrative insight into the experiences, strategies, and wishes of female members of the Bundestag regarding gender-based violence against women in politics.

For questions regarding personal experiences or characteristics, only “yes” and “no” answers were considered.

Written supplementary information provided by the participants was edited to anonymize references to age, education, political party, geographic origin, or details that could clearly lead to identification (such as locations, events, specific terms, etc.). All answers were provided in German; therefore, quotes were translated by the authors.

Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Sample: What Experiences Are Represented?

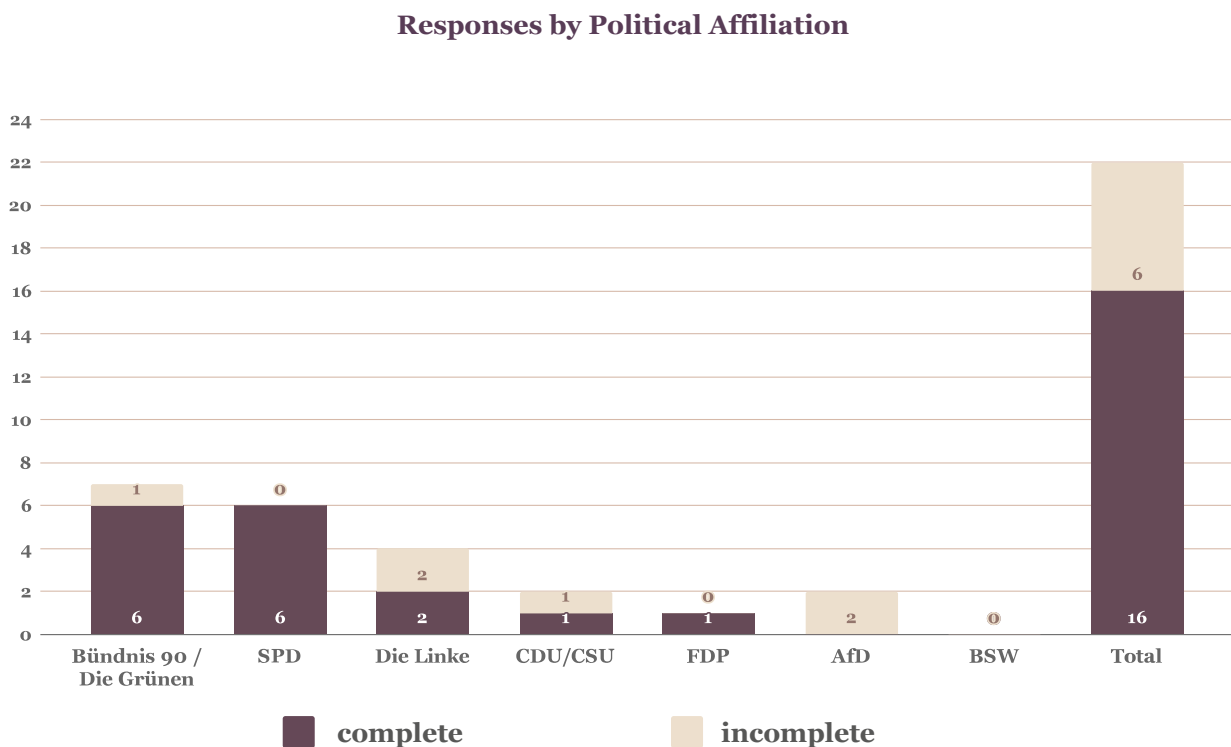
The survey included female lawmakers ranging in age from their twenties to their sixties. At the time of the survey, the majority of participants were over 40 years old; within the German Bundestag, the average age among women in the 21st legislative period was 44.8 years at the time of the election². Slightly more than one-third of those surveyed are under 40 years old. The majority of participants were female politicians who are in their first term or who served as members of the national Parliament for one legislative period.

1 One of these questionnaires by former members of the Bundestag was completed almost in its entirety (97%); only a few voluntary sociodemographic details are missing. The questionnaire was therefore evaluated as complete.
2 German Bundestag (2025): Age, gender, occupation. Member statistics: The new Bundestag in numbers.

Most of the participating female politicians describe themselves as white ethnic majority German and do not identify as a person of color or as a person with a so-called migration background³. However, the proportion of female parliamentarians who describe themselves as women with a migration background—at least 20 percent of the survey participants—is higher than the general proportion among members of the German Bundestag: In the 21st legislative term of the Bundestag, approximately 16 percent of women have a statistical migration background. Overall, the proportion of members of parliament of all genders with a migration background is about 11.6 percent, compared with 29.7 percent in Germany’s total population.⁴

The survey was primarily completed by members of the parliamentary groups from the Alliance 90/The Greens, SPD, and The Left. Responses from the Union faction (CDU/CSU) and the FDP (fully completed questionnaires for both were received only from former members) are lower. No complete questionnaires were received from the AfD or the BSW.⁵

Figure 1: Responses by party/parliamentary group, broken down into completed and incomplete questionnaires (n=22).



3 According to the Federal Statistical Office (DeStatis), a person is considered to have a migration background if they themselves or at least one parent were not born with German citizenship.

4 Eubel, Cordula et al.(2025): Bundestag 2025: 73 Members of Parliament with a migration background.

5 In the 21st German Bundestag, the FDP and BSW (Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance – Reason and Justice) parties are not represented; however, they were in the previous legislative period. BSW representatives did not enter the Bundestag as members of this party; rather, they left the Left Party in early 2024, with which they had previously been elected to the Bundestag.

3. Mapping Violence against Female Politicians: Forms and Power Dynamics

Female politicians may experience (gender-based) violence at various levels. The most well-known classification into four forms—(1) *physical*, (2) *psychological*, (3) *sexual*, and (4) *economic violence*—was established by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in studies on sexism, harassment, and violence against female parliamentarians in 2016⁶ and in 2018⁷ regarding female parliamentarians in European countries. Nowadays, *digital violence* should also be mentioned as an overlapping, additional fifth form.

Table 1: Definitions and Examples for the 5 Categories of Gender-based Violence (GBV):

<p>Physical Violence</p>	<p>Defined as intentionally committing acts of physical violence against another person (Art. 35).⁸</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Includes, for example, kicking and hitting.
<p>Psychological Violence</p>	<p>Defined as intentional conduct seriously impairing a person’s psychological integrity through coercion or threats (Art. 33).⁹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Such as: intimidation, insults, threats (including threats of rape or death), harassment, stalking, coercion, bullying. ➤ Includes symbolic and semiotic violence (related to symbols and speech), which render women in politics “invisible” or frame them as incompetent.¹⁰
<p>Sexual Violence</p>	<p>Refers to all acts of violence of a sexual nature perpetrated against another person without their consent, including rape or obliging a person to take part in non-consensual sex with a third party (Art. 36).¹¹</p> <p>Sexual harassment is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment (Art. 40).¹²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ (Attempted) sexual assault, unwanted touching, sending of unsolicited intimate materials, or dissemination of sexualized deep fakes. ➤ Sexual harassment, including verbal conduct intended to humiliate, degrade, or intimidate.

6 Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), (2016): Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians.
7 Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), (2018): Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women in Parliaments in Europe.
8 Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (hereinafter “Istanbul Convention”), 2011.
9 Istanbul Convention (2011).
10 Krook, Mona, Restrepo Sanín, Juliana (2016): Violence against Women in Politics: A Defense of the Concept.
11 Istanbul Convention (2011).
12 Istanbul Convention (2011).

Economic Violence

Can be understood as any act or behavior which causes economic harm to an individual¹³ or impacts their professional resources.

- Denial, restriction, or withdrawal of access to resources essential to carry out political duties (e. g., office, salary, support staff, or technical equipment).
- Destruction of offices and property related to their political function or mandate.
- Restriction of access to education, career opportunities, or financial support based on gender.

Digital Violence

Digital violence is typically accompanied by other forms of violence against women in politics. In addition, there are specific forms of (gender-based) violence that are generated or disseminated online or through information and communication technologies (ICT). These include, in particular:

- **Cyberstalking** as intentional behavior involving the repeated or continuous monitoring of a person via ICT without their consent or legal authorization, in order to track or control their movements and activities, [...] which is likely to cause serious psychological harm to that person (see Art. 6).¹⁴
- **Cyberbullying and/or harassment** encompasses the making of threats against a person [...] via ICT, if this behavior is likely to cause that person to experience serious fear for their own safety or the safety of their relatives; [...] if this behavior is likely to cause that person serious psychological harm. It further includes the unsolicited sending of images, videos, or similar material depicting genitalia to a person via ICT, if this behavior is likely to cause that person serious psychological harm; [...] or with the aim of inciting others to inflict physical or serious psychological harm on that person (see Art. 7).¹⁵

This provision also covers, for example, online harassment, public incitement to violence or hatred, non-consensual publication of personal data (doxxing), dissemination of hate speech, and digital mockery/defamation.

Furthermore, the survey considered the following three types of power dynamics that most frequently play a role in violence against women in politics (VAWiP):

- **Horizontal violence:** between political peers and colleagues;
- **Vertical violence:** from superiors or subordinates within hierarchical political structures;
- **Violence by third parties:** from the media, the general public, members of other political parties, as well as trolls and bots on social media.

13 European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), (2017): Glossary of Definitions of Rape, Femicide, and Intimate Partner Violence.

14 Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council on Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (hereinafter “EU Directive 1385”), (2024).

15 EU Directive 1385 (2024).

All three levels can be found in the experiences of the survey participants: from bots systematically deployed online to target gender equality issues, harassing remarks, or unwanted physical contact from fellow party members, to sexist comments about appearance and clothing, or remarks regarding sexual acts by ministers.

Many of the female members of the Bundestag who participated in the study point to polarization and explicitly attribute hostile behavior to the “opposing” political camp. An analysis of heckling in the German Bundestag up to 2021 also confirms that such interruptions in parliamentary discourse mostly originate from ideologically opposing parties or parliamentary groups. In particular, apolitical remarks—that is, those that have nothing to do with the content but are aimed at the personal level—primarily serve to intimidate and deter, and can even amount to open discrimination.¹⁶

For context, however, it should be noted that among the politically motivated crimes reported to the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), the vast majority of cases are recorded as right-wing motivated.¹⁷ Specifically in the Bundestag, two-thirds of all calls to order during the 20th legislative period (October 2021–March 2025) were directed at MPs from the AfD.¹⁸ Further studies and reports also describe a general increase in interruptions as well as a deteriorating political climate since the AfD entered various state parliaments and the German Bundestag.¹⁹

4. From Online Abuse to Everyday Intimidation: Female MPs’ Experiences of Violence

Political violence has been steadily increasing for some time now. This is reflected in the statistics on the one hand, and on the other, affected politicians report an increasing number of attacks with varying intensity. Members of the Bundestag are “popular” targets of hostility and serve as a projection screen for social and political frustration and hatred. In our survey, for example, one female MP reports that demonstrations took place in front of her private residence every two weeks at times, and she required personal protection from the police.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of reported politically motivated acts of violence has risen rapidly; hostility and attacks against party representatives, political symbols, and elected officials account for a significant portion of these incidents.²⁰ Experiencing political violence can now be considered the norm rather than the exception: According to a 2021 survey by *Der Spiegel* magazine, 69 percent of female members of the Bundestag have experienced misogynistic hate as lawmakers (e.g., through threats, insults, messages, or even vandalism).²¹

16 Hailer-Röthel, Teresa (2026): Decoding Discourse: Gendered Heckling in German Bundestag Debates (1949-2021).

17 Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) and Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), (2025): Fact Sheet: Bundesweite Fallzahlen 2024 Politisch Motivierte Kriminalität.

18 Deutschlandfunk (2025): Bundestag: Zwei Drittel der Ordnungsrufe seit Ende 2021 gingen an AfD-Abgeordnete; Spieker, Greta Giuliana (2025): Immer mehr Ordnungsrufe im Bundestag.

19 See Hailer-Röthel, Teresa (2026): Decoding Discourse: Gendered Heckling in German Bundestag Debates (1949-2021); *Der Spiegel* (2024), Hailer-Röthel, Teresa (2026): Decoding Discourse: Gendered Heckling in German Bundestag Debates (1949-2021); *Der Spiegel* (2024): Bundestagspräsidentin Bas beklagt Sexismus im Plenarsaal.

20 Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) and Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), (2025): Fact Sheet: Bundesweite Fallzahlen 2024 Politisch Motivierte Kriminalität.

21 *Der Spiegel* (2021): Frauenfeindlichkeit im Bundestag durch AfD gestiegen.

This exploratory study also reveals evidence of all forms of political violence among the respondents. As other studies have shown,²² insults and threats (classified as psychological violence) as well as digital violence—particularly on social media—are particularly common. This plays a significant role in driving women out of spaces of digital discourse. For all female politicians who participated in this survey, receiving hateful comments or even threats online has been a reality throughout the course of their mandate, regardless of which party they belong to.

About half of the participants have also experienced forms of sexualized violence, such as threats of rape, unwanted touching, and remarks with sexual undertones—and this trend is even higher among female lawmakers under 40. With regard to economic violence, such as property damage and vandalism or restricted access to resources, several participants have experienced defaced or destroyed campaign posters or attacks on their district offices. Physical violence appears to be the least common form of violence against the female politicians of this study, a finding that is consistent with the results of other surveys.²³

Female members of parliament, however, face gender-based and misogynistic violence to a particularly high degree, often in combination with hostility based on other characteristics, particularly physical appearance. While people with a migration background, for example, are generally underrepresented in the Bundestag,²⁴ they are more heavily represented in this survey. Even with the small number of participants in the survey, connections can already be identified: One female politician describes having been threatened with violent fantasies and hate speech in which her gender identity was explicitly linked to her “background” (she states that she has a migration background). Far-right youths threatened another female representative with a migration background, who describes how she, her relatives, and her Syrian friends were told to flee abroad, as they were no longer safe and would soon be expelled from the country anyway. For some, activism against racism and discrimination is specifically linked to the hostility they have experienced, including concrete threats.

Thematically, other sensitive issues that can lead to hostility can also be identified: for example, health policy—especially during the COVID-19 pandemic—migration and equality issues, and advocacy for the climate or against discrimination.

Media reports suggest that hostility affects female public officials and elected representatives across the board, from those in less prominent positions all the way up to the highest offices: Two public statements alone by former Bundestag Vice President Yvonne Magwas (CDU), who served as a member of the German Bundestag until 2025, reveal an attempted assault that may have been directed at the politician herself, as well as sexualized and degrading intimidation. For example, during a speech at a demonstration for democracy, cosmopolitanism, and tolerance in March 2024, an explosive device detonated, injuring a demonstrator at the event.²⁵ Furthermore, in the book *“Feindbild Frau. Wie Politikerinnen im Netz bedroht, beleidigt und verdrängt werden – und was wir alle dagegen tun können”* (Women as the Enemy: How Female Politicians Are Threatened, Insulted, and Marginalized Online—and What We Can All Do About It) by Ingrid Brodnig, Yvonne Magwas recounts that during her time as an MP, a German flag covered in semen was sent to her constituency office.²⁶

All these examples make it clear that these are not isolated incidents, but rather a multifaceted phenomenon of political violence with a specific bias against female politicians. To better understand these dynamics, a nuanced examination of the various manifestations is necessary. In the following, different categories of violence are therefore distinguished and classified.

22 See Robinson, Sarah (2025): *Recognize, Resist, Rise Up*.

23 See Robinson, Sarah (2025): *Recognize, Resist, Rise Up*.

24 Eubel, Cordula et al. (2025): *Bundestag 2025: 73 Abgeordnete mit Migrationshintergrund*.

25 Jähn, Nicole (2024): *Nach Zwischenfall bei Demokratie-Demo: Polizei findet verbotene Sprengsätze in der Wohnung eines Auerbachers*.

26 Brodnig, Ingrid (2026): *Feindbild Frau*.

Psychological Violence: “The Strongest Attacks Occur When Advocating for Gender Equality”

The following findings provide a more detailed insight into forms of psychological violence against female politicians, particularly in the form of **insults, threats, and intimidation**. Both experiences in the digital sphere and in direct, physical encounters were considered. Additionally, differences emerge between age groups as well as in the contexts in which violence occurs, ranging from public political situations to the private sphere.

Another key aspect is the source of the violence: in addition to attacks by citizens and organized groups, female politicians also report abusive behavior within political structures. Overall, it becomes clear that psychological violence occurs in various forms, spaces, and relational contexts, thereby significantly shaping the everyday political lives of female politicians.

Nearly all of the female politicians surveyed (n=20) report having already received threats against themselves. Particularly distressing are situations in which these threats are linked to specific personal information, thereby creating an immediate sense of danger. As one Member of Parliament describes:

“Another time, a man on my train insulted me shortly before we got off at my stop and repeatedly gave me the Nazi salute—this was on April 20, Hitler’s birthday. The man addressed me by my full name and knew exactly who I was. He lived in the same town, and that scared me. As we were getting off, he also tried to physically attack me and my husband, but two older relatives stopped him.”

Such threats of physical violence cause psychological stress, too. Most of the respondents (n=18) report threats of physical violence; among female politicians under 40, all of the participants were affected. Furthermore, these threats are directed not only at the victims themselves but also at their private lives: about one-third of respondents state that their families are also affected (just under one-quarter among those under 40). This points to the extension of violence into the private sphere and particularly sensitive areas such as family life.

These experiences of threats are often followed by intimidating and harassing behavior in direct contact. A clear majority of the female Bundestag politicians surveyed report such repeated and threatening behavior, which occurs particularly in the context of carrying out their duties. Public situations such as election campaigns or information booths thus become central sites of psychological violence:

“At a [campaign] information booth, I was bumped from behind by a man of medium height in a black jacket; he turned around while continuing to walk backward, fixed his eyes on me, raised his fist, and started to come back toward me. A male colleague came to my side, and then the attacker stopped his advance and hurried off in the opposite direction.”

In addition to these physical encounters, violence continues in the digital space. Here, **sexist and sexualized remarks** play a central role: Four out of five respondents report receiving such comments. These are often not only offensive but also explicitly threatening and serve to intimidate as well as delegitimize political positions:

“In [online] comments, such as: ‘Someone should rape me to test whether I would still support so-called humanitarian refugee policy. Maybe the far-right actors will drop by to see me then’.”

But **intimidating and harassing behavior** also occurs in the private lives of female politicians, for example, by members of the public. The line between public role and private life is increasingly blurring, so that threats extend into their personal lives. It is precisely this form of interaction in the private sphere that takes on a particular quality of psychological violence, as it deliberately generates fear, undermines a sense of security, and affects those involved in their private lives:

“We received postcards with gallows in our mailbox and a note saying that someone knew where we lived.”

Indirect threats targeting one’s immediate living environment also illustrate this form of intimidation:

“Once, a participant in one of the [...] demonstrations [...] approached me while I was sitting on the balcony and asked if ‘that cat’ was mine, if I loved it, and what would happen if the cat didn’t come home anymore. I took that as a threat to kill my cat.”

While these forms of psychological violence manifest primarily in direct interactions and online communication, sexualized or derogatory portrayals by the press are reported comparatively rarely. In some cases, however, a lack of willingness to protect subjects of reporting is lamented, for example, when inappropriate comments under articles are not moderated. This underscores the particular significance of digital and immediate communication spaces for the spread of psychological violence, as well as the responsibility of media professionals.

The **effects of this violence**, however, are not limited to the political sphere but extend deep into private daily life. Female politicians report enduring stress from verbal attacks across various channels that accumulate over extended periods:

“Comments like ‘Why don’t you knit yourself a nice rope, then you’ll have peace forever’ also weighed on me. The sheer volume of hate coming from all sides, over an extended period and across every possible channel at once, was hard to bear. Since much of it took place publicly, I also thought about how this discourages young women from entering politics themselves, because they would then have to endure such treatment.”

The sheer volume of hostile messages also significantly increases the strain:

“In some weeks, I received thousands of critical emails, many of which were also insulting and malicious (threatening me with ‘Nuremberg Trials’²⁷). The sheer volume alone was very stressful for me—it was hard to find any normal emails at all.”

Overall, the results show that psychological violence is a structural part of the daily political life for many female members of the Bundestag.

27 The victim describes how, in response to a post she made, she was threatened that there would soon be new Nuremberg Trials and that she would then be “next”.

About two-thirds of respondents reported at least one incident at some point. Reports were most frequently filed with the police or the public prosecutor's office, but respondents also used online platforms as well as support and counseling services.

Some of the incidents are also addressed within parliamentary structures, particularly when they involve assaults in the political workplace:

"I reported [an] incident involving a member of my parliamentary group to the group leaders via the spokesperson for women's policy, who then changed the seating arrangement for the group so that I no longer had to sit next to the MP who had made sexist remarks to me on multiple occasions."

Other cases are forwarded directly to law enforcement agencies, particularly when concrete threats are involved:

"I handed over a threatening letter to the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) for review."

Digital Violence: "No Male MP Would Ever Receive Such Comments"

A key area where female members of the Bundestag experience violence is in digital spaces. The following findings illustrate the forms digital violence takes and how widespread such hostility is in everyday political life.

This study primarily focused on **verbal violence in the form of insults, belittlement, coercion, and threats online** (e.g., on social media, messaging apps, and in emails). Some of the MPs surveyed here reported having also experienced image-based digital violence, such as receiving unsolicited images of genitals. Additionally, about one in three respondents has already experienced having photos of herself with degrading or sexualized connotations published by others. However, the 17 participants provided little detail in this section regarding the creation and dissemination of so-called deepfakes (i.e., falsified image or audio material, e.g., for the purpose of disinformation). Doxxing—the illegal and systematic collection and publication of private and/or personal data of others on the internet²⁸—was also not mentioned by the participants, though general hacking attacks were cited, with no further details provided.

All female politicians surveyed here are familiar with the feeling of receiving hateful comments or even threats online in the course of their public service—regardless of age or party affiliation.

"Whenever I post something about equality or women's issues, I'm bombarded with misogynistic comments. I just don't read them anymore."

In addition to public comments on social media posts, most survey participants have also received private hate messages, insults, or threats, for example, via email or direct message. On social media, this often occurs in response to story posts (e.g., on Instagram) as well as in discussions related to gender equality.

28 HateAid (2025): Doxxing: Was ist das und wie schützt du dich?

All female parliamentarians under the age of 40 have already received private messages online intended to threaten, humiliate, or intimidate them:

“[I have] constantly been sent dick pics or received dating requests. I’ve also received comments on my appearance under posts or inappropriate ‘compliments’ when it came to professional content.”

When asked whether men would likely receive the same hurtful comments or messages, nearly all respondents suspect that this is (probably) not the case. They thus identify **clearly gendered nuances** in the hostility they have experienced. The female lawmakers also state that such comments and messages frequently relate to their physical appearance (e.g., weight, body, looks, and clothing) or refer to their (lack of) abilities and suitability for politics (intelligence, credibility, young age, “quota woman”). Traditional gender roles are also cited as a supposed justification for “criticism”:

“When I posted a photo with female members of the Bundestag on social media, I received responses such as: ‘only qualification: tits’ and ‘women as decoration and for representation.’ And why I dare to appear in public, that as a woman I belong in the kitchen and not in politics. I was repeatedly referred to as a token ‘quota woman’ with a derogatory connotation [...] there are countless examples like this.”

The fact that such views remain deeply entrenched in society is consistent with the findings of representative long-term surveys such as the Leipzig Authoritarianism Study, according to which, in 2024, roughly one in five respondents in Germany agreed with the statement “Women often make fools of themselves in politics”. As many as one in four people felt that women should “focus more on their role as wives and mothers again”.²⁹

Sexualized Violence, Misogyny, and Sexism: “Internal Power Struggles Were More Important”

The following section focuses on reports of forms of sexualized and gender-based violence as described by the surveyed MPs. These experiences occurred both online and offline and provide insights into the extent, manifestations, and perpetrator profiles associated with these forms of violence.

Misogynistic statements and sexism are commonplace for most lawmakers. On a verbal level, a separate analysis of heckling in the German Bundestag up to 2021 suggests that female politicians at the podium have been interrupted more frequently, particularly since the late 1980s. Male members of parliament were particularly responsible, with party-political conflicts also playing a central role.³⁰ Even though heckling can serve legitimate criticism, mutual understanding, and political discourse, it should be noted that existing gender bias can negatively influence procedural fairness and reproduce underlying assumptions about the role, competencies, and topics women politicians are suitable for as well as ultimately the legitimacy of women in politics overall.³¹

29 Decker, Oliver et al. (2024): Die Leipziger Autoritarismus-Studie: Methoden, Ergebnisse und Langzeitverlauf. In: Vereint im Ressentiment: Autoritäre Dynamiken und rechtsextreme Einstellungen (Leipzig Authoritarianism Study 2024).

30 Hailer-Röthel, Teresa (2026): Decoding Discourse: Gendered Heckling in German Bundestag Debates (1949-2021).

31 Hailer-Röthel, Teresa (2026): Decoding Discourse: Gendered Heckling in German Bundestag Debates (1949-2021).

Traditional notions of gender roles also come into play here, for example, when women are portrayed as unsuitable for leadership positions and denied a place in public life:

“I was frequently labeled as incompetent and stupid, often in reference to being a woman [...] ‘We need women, but certainly not in leadership positions. The world is male and always will be.’ I was also told in writing that I should go back to the kitchen and cook for my husband.”

In this context, the term “quota woman” is often used in a derogatory manner—the existence of women’s quotas in some political parties is consequently portrayed as something that inevitably comes at the expense of competence. This is particularly hurtful not only, but apparently especially, for younger women, as they are regularly denied the competence to be suitable for their office (e.g., because of their age) and to have been elected precisely because of their suitability and qualifications:

“I encountered this accusation particularly often during street campaigning: that I was so young and beautiful and had therefore surely been placed in the front row. What kind of competence could I possibly ever have?”

The same representative describes how such remarks were made not only by men, but also by other female elected officials within the party, or how they would even speak poorly of the person’s suitability to male colleagues. She attributes this to envy or internal party rivalry—a strategy for political survival that some women choose, while others consciously rely on women’s networks to establish new structures.³²

Of the eight participants who provided information on this in the survey, the majority identify perpetrators as members of other parties or among the general public (such as people from their own constituency). In cases of incidents within one’s own party, there is often an additional power imbalance in which the perpetrators hold more influence within the political/intra-party hierarchy. Notably, sexist structures, actions, statements, and behaviors can be found in all parties, regardless of ideology.³³

This feedback aligns with studies focusing on online violence or violence against local politicians: Regarding digital violence, 29 percent of women in politics surveyed by HateAid stated that attacks came from male politicians in other parties, and about 16 percent came from within their own party.³⁴ Offline, most suspects (78%) are male, between 40 and 59 years old, and reside in the same locality.³⁵ The Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) also notes that, in the 2023 reporting year, violence against women motivated by misogyny—where perpetrators could be identified—was predominantly (72.8%) perpetrated by men over the age of 30.³⁶

Sexualized hostility is also a recurring feature of the everyday political life of women MPs. Nearly half of the 15 female politicians who responded to this question have experienced behavior that they themselves consider(ed) sexual harassment in their role as lawmakers. This applies even to roughly two out of three female politicians among the younger respondents under 40. HateAid also concludes that at least 20 percent of politically active women who experience digital hostility have also been subjected to sexualized hostility. One in four female

32 Köcher, Renate and Lukoschat, Helga (2021): Parteikulturen und die politische Teilhabe von Frauen.

33 Köcher, Renate and Lukoschat, Helga (2021): Parteikulturen und die politische Teilhabe von Frauen

34 HateAid et al. (2025): Angegriffen & alleingelassen.

35 Bitschnau, Sarah, and Eberspach, Kirsten (2024): Kommunales Monitoring. Hass, Hetze und Gewalt gegenüber Amtsträgerinnen und Amtsträgern (KoMo). Frühjahrsbefragung 2024.

36 Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), (2024): Geschlechtsspezifisch gegen Frauen gerichtete Straftaten. Bundeslagebild 2023.

politicians has also received sexualized threats, including threats of rape.³⁷ This form of violence is reported significantly more frequently by women in politics than by their male colleagues.³⁸

The female lawmakers primarily describe perpetrators as individuals from other parties or from their own constituencies (i.e., ordinary citizens). However, some Members of Parliament also provide information about individuals from their own party, ranging from peers to people who are or were hierarchically superior to them. On a verbal level, for example, sexist remarks about appearance and clothing, or comments regarding sexual acts, were mentioned:

“But a colleague in my parliamentary group has also made sexist remarks to me; for example, when he picked something up off the floor next to me, he said it depended on my skirt whether he could manage not to look underneath it.”

One elected official reports having witnessed another female representative being sexually harassed by a person from the constituency. In this respect, it is worth noting that not all incidents occur in secret, which can lead to situations where it might be one person’s word against another’s. Sexualized assaults also occur in public spaces or in the presence of witnesses, yet they often still go unpunished for the perpetrators. Most of these incidents were neither reported within the parliamentary caucus nor reported to the police by the affected female politicians. However, the reasons for this are complex: one female member of parliament, for instance, reports that the consequences following an internal party complaint regarding repeated harassment were deemed insufficient. She and another affected colleague remained unprotected because they belonged to a different faction within the party than the perpetrator and the party leadership.

She states:

“When I [...] complained, there was [...] neither public criticism (i.e., publicly within the parliamentary group) nor any bilateral consequences for the perpetrator (as I learned). [...] Internal party power struggles took precedence, and the man had powerful supporters within the party.”

This also highlights the importance of loyalty within the political network and its influence on processes and structures within parties and parliamentary groups.

37 HateAid et al. (2025): Angegriffen & alleingelassen.

38 HateAid et al. (2025): Angegriffen & alleingelassen; Köcher, Renate and Lukoschat, Helga (2021): Parteikulturen und die politische Teilhabe von Frauen.

Power Dynamics: “You Don’t Want to Stir Up Trouble Either, So You Won’t Be Labeled a ‘Bitch’”

It is striking that all female politicians under the age of 40 who were surveyed reported having been the target of sexist or sexualized remarks and insults. The vast majority of female politicians over the age of 40 also reported having been subjected to such remarks. This happened among the 15 female politicians who reported, for instance, that in their younger years they were subjected to such behavior by older party colleagues or at parliamentary events—that is, directly within the political arena. Much of this occurs through subtle displays of power, in which men seem to call the shots and women are primarily viewed as decorative accessories:

“In my view, it’s very common for things to happen in a gray area. I want to address this because it affects you and is often perceived as too minor to escalate, yet it really has no place in a professional setting.

What I mean are subliminal power games: male colleagues, often MPs for many years or even in government positions, who happen to place their hand on your back a bit too low when they want to appear particularly gallant, or who ‘miss’ a greeting kiss on your cheek with particular passion, [...]. As a young female member of parliament, you learn very quickly to just put up with it and not make a fuss, so as not to be labeled a ‘bitch’.”

The insidiousness of this description lies precisely in the fact that perpetrators can easily claim it was a misunderstanding rather than admitting their own misconduct. This implies that a woman who defends herself against such behavior might be uncooperative, not get the joke, or might simply be too sensitive, overreacting. Women often retain such an (internal) reputation as a “bitch” for a long time, whereas a reputation as, say, a “groper” is usually dismissed or set aside within a man’s political career, as the account regarding men in government offices also suggests. For women who are once perceived as troublesome, however, further consequences for their political careers quickly come into play.³⁹ One candidate reports that she was advised not to accept a seat in favor of a man ranked below her on the party list. Instead, she was offered a career in state politics. She chose the seat in the Bundestag and has since found that one of her former main supporters began backing majorities against her:

“Within the party, there was support for voluntary offices, up to a certain point where there was no direct competition with others. The power games between young women and long-established men, who could then switch their support to other, more compliant women, gave me a sickening feeling [...] of being a pawn on their chessboards. The path to independence—to emancipate oneself from this—is very arduous and, at times, dangerous for one’s own political advancement.”

Physical Violence: “I Was Almost Pushed into Traffic”

The following findings provide insight into the experiences of female members of the Bundestag with physical violence and threats in their everyday political lives. Even though direct physical attacks were rarely reported by the survey participants (n=16), the accounts show that even threatening situations and restrictions on freedom

39 Köcher, Renate and Lukoschat, Helga (2021): Parteikulturen und die politische Teilhabe von Frauen.

of movement have a lasting impact on the sense of safety. The incidents described all involved third parties, such as members of the public, for example, groups during public gatherings and rallies, but also individuals.

Three female politicians describe how they felt at the mercy of others when their **freedom of movement was restricted**. One member of parliament was surrounded and shouted at by a group of activists. Another politician recounts an incident during the COVID-19 pandemic in which entire areas around the Reichstag building were besieged by violent demonstrators, to the point that she had to take a wide detour. There was a smell of fire in the plenary chamber, screams could be heard from outside, and the member of parliament initially thought someone had set the building on fire. The resulting anxiety led to lasting changes in her daily behavior:

“At the time, I was also afraid to walk to the Bundestag; I took detours or used the parliamentary car service where I would normally have walked, out of fear of physical attacks.”

This restriction on freedom of movement is closely linked to the fear of physical violence and points to the intertwining of psychological and physical forms of violence.

There were also reports of **dangerous situations in confined spaces** directly related to the exercise of their mandate. Thus, professional contexts, such as the use of the car service provided to parliamentarians by the Bundestag, can create situations in which members of parliament are restricted in their freedom of movement due to structural dependencies and a lack of alternatives. Such situations can be understood as forms of physical endangerment and situational deprivation of freedom, and they highlight specific vulnerabilities faced by elected officials:

“One night, I had a driver from the car service who talked my ear off and made me increasingly uneasy. Specifically with strange statements about his private life, his ex, and how if she were to die, he would be there for her until the very end. He claimed to have experience in emergency medical services and to have cut through a torso before... all while driving with his hands off the steering wheel. Despite my comments and requests to keep his hands on the wheel, he just told me that he was a professional.”

This case illustrates how a reckless driving style—to which the MP was completely at the mercy in that situation—undermined her sense of safety. In conjunction with the remarks she found unsettling, this further intensified her fear that something might happen to her. The politician who described this incident consulted with a male colleague and wanted to have the driver banned, but was ultimately unable to locate him.

While actual **physical assaults** are reported less frequently, they are nonetheless part of the experiences of individual lawmakers. In this survey, for example, one female politician reports having experienced forms of direct physical violence such as being hit, shoved, or kicked. The following accounts illustrate such specific instances of physically threatening situations:

“In the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, a man attacked me on the train and tried to assault me; he was only stopped from hitting me by an older gentleman. His issue was that I was in favor of wearing masks on public transportation (it was mandatory at the time), and he refused to comply.”

“I was once jumped on from behind by a man (a participant in a far-right rally) and kicked in the back of the knees while I was waiting at a crosswalk—I nearly fell into the street and into traffic, and the only reason I wasn’t seriously injured was because the attacker slipped as he kicked my leg. I had previously been at a counter-demonstration where people were protesting against right-wing extremism in

a completely non-violent manner. Several police officers intervened immediately and detained the man. I don't know if his attack had any consequences."

In addition to such direct assaults, **threats involving weapons** also play a role. One in four respondents reports receiving such threats; among those under 40, it is even one in three. Even if these do not necessarily constitute acts of violence, such threats contribute significantly to a subjective sense of danger and reinforce a constant feeling of insecurity.

Economic Violence: "The Storefront Was Completely Wrecked Afterward"

The following analysis focuses on forms of economic violence that manifest both in direct attacks on property and in the restriction of resources within political structures. These forms of violence have a direct impact on the scope of action, safety, and visibility of female lawmakers.

About one in three participants in this survey has experienced **vandalism and damage to professional property**. For example, one MP's constituency office was attacked multiple times, sustaining significant property damage, including once by fire. The female politicians also described shattered and smashed windows, graffiti, and even swastikas.

The female parliamentarians surveyed (n=16) also reported incidents ranging from paint attacks to the smearing or destruction of campaign posters. In most cases, the attacks on constituency offices and other acts of vandalism were reported to the police, state security agencies, the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), or public prosecutors' offices. A former member of the Bundestag reports that in not a single case she reported were the perpetrators ever identified.

Economic violence can also occur within parliamentary operations or parliamentary groups, e.g., by **restricting access to resources** or denying them altogether. With regard to the Bundestag administration, this was not reported by any of the respondents. One MP, however, stated that she felt her own parliamentary group had restricted the visibility of her work:

"I received significantly less support from the parliamentary group's public relations department than many others, e.g., redistribution of press releases on the parliamentary group's channels, dissemination of speech quotes, or similar."

The participants did not report any evidence of gender-based discrimination in campaign financing, although a 2025 report by Elke Wiechmann and Lars Holtkamp suggests that such discrimination is generally prevalent among candidates from the SPD and CDU/CSU.⁴⁰ This does not, of course, mean that there are no such experiences among (directly) elected members of parliament. However, it can be assumed that most of the female Bundestag politicians surveyed here were elected via party lists rather than direct mandates due to their party affiliation.

40 Wiechmann, Elke and Holtkamp, Lars (2025): Election Campaigns and Campaign Financing for Direct Candidacies.

5. Between Resistance and Withdrawal: Coping with Violence

Based on the respondents' feedback, some conclusions can be drawn about how they deal with their experiences. These include, above all, reporting incidents to various authorities and the impact of hostility on their advocacy for certain issues.

Police, Party, Platform? Points of Support for Victims

Most female politicians who have experienced forms of psychological, digital, or economic violence state that they have reported at least one incident. In cases of insults or threats (i.e., forms of psychological violence), those affected have largely turned to the police and/or prosecutors, followed by online platforms if the incident occurred online.

Table 2: Reporting Channels Used for Psychological Violence

Police/Prosecutor's Office	12
Online Platform	4
Counseling Services	2
Ombudsperson or Mediation Office, e.g., within the parliamentary caucus	2

(Figures in absolute numbers. Multiple responses allowed.)

Reporting to the platforms themselves seems, at first glance, to be the most obvious option when it comes to digital violence. Nevertheless, investigative authorities were most frequently involved in these cases as well, which may indicate that the content was already deemed to be criminal in nature.

Counseling services were generally used only sporadically, though more frequently than results from surveys at the local level would suggest⁴¹. The reasons for this should be examined more closely, as one can only speculate whether female victims may be more likely to seek support from family or colleagues⁴². Possible reasons might be that they feel better supported there emotionally, or, conversely, are already so familiar with attacks that they know exactly how to proceed. When asked directly about their needs, several female politicians expressed a desire for emotional and legal support from specialized contact points, whether within the Bundestag administration or externally, with a specific focus on (professional) politicians. For example, there already is the "starke Stelle" ("Strong Point"), a referral service for politicians who are experiencing hostility. However, this service is intended for local politicians and thus does not cover members of the National Parliament.

41 Bitschnau, Sarah and Eberspach, Kirsten (2024): Kommunales Monitoring. Hass, Hetze und Gewalt gegenüber Amtsträgerinnen und Amtsträgern (KoMo). Frühjahrsbefragung 2024..

42 See Blätte, Andreas et al. (2022): Vielfältige Repräsentation unter Druck.

Table 3: Reporting Channels Used for Digital Violence

Police/Public Prosecutor’s Office	9
Online Platform	4
Counseling Services	3

(Figures in absolute numbers. Multiple responses allowed.)

In the area of economic violence, particularly cases of property damage and vandalism were reported. Since violence against constituency offices in public spaces is likely the most immediately visible, nearly all those affected in this survey reported at least one incident, particularly to law enforcement agencies.

Table 4: Reporting Channels Used for Economic Violence

Police/Prosecutor’s Office	4
State Security/BKA	1
Counseling Service	1

(Figures in absolute numbers. Multiple answers allowed.)

Sexualized forms of violence were rarely reported by those affected. Although the reasons can only be speculated, statements in such cases suggest that victims are concerned about their credibility and reputation. This might be even more so when the consequences for the perpetrators are minimal—especially when a relationship of dependency or hierarchy is involved. Specialized and independent structures, such as ombuds offices within parliamentary groups or parties, can help address this issue. This allows victims to navigate the tension between political loyalty and the party’s reputation, as well as the violation of their own boundaries, without having to approach political leadership directly. For incidents involving politicians from other parliamentary groups, consideration should be given to establishing a non-partisan body within the German Bundestag, particularly since, according to the accounts of those affected, such a body already exists for staff members.

Physical violence was not reported to authorities or services by the respondents here—in the only case that mentioned it, this was because the police were already present and intervened directly on the spot.

When Hostility Shapes Political Work

Most of the 16 respondents who completed the survey state that, despite all the hostility, they do not avoid certain topics. Among the eight former MPs, however, the proportion of those who tend to avoid (i.e., replying in a relativizing manner) is higher than among current lawmakers. Among those elected, five out of eight are certain that they do not avoid any topics. However, four of the 16 female politicians—that is, one-quarter—state that they tend to avoid certain topics (i.e., COVID-19 measures, migration policy, topics related to specific countries or regions).

This already indicates a significant influence on democratic discourse, or so-called silencing effects. Furthermore, this figure does not differ between current and former female members of the Bundestag, meaning that even current MPs are already refraining from commenting on certain topics because they anticipate (or must anticipate) hatred and hostility.

Even though the sample size is too small to make generalizations, it is noteworthy that two of the four female politicians who say they tend to avoid certain topics also identify as having a so-called migration background. In one out of two cases, it can be assumed that this is related to the topics they avoid (such as an actual or perceived biographical/family connection).

6. What Now? Needs and Demands of Female Politicians

Survey participants had the opportunity to indicate what they believed could be improved, based on their own perspectives or personal experiences. The following five categories outline where female members of the Bundestag see room for improvement and what suggestions they have:

Sensitive and Consistent Law Enforcement

This category addresses structural issues within the police and the justice system. Survey participants describe a lack of consequences in the prosecution of crimes as well as an overload of work for investigative authorities. This, in turn, leads those affected to perceive complaints as ineffective and, in some cases, to stop filing them altogether:

“I felt the dismissal [of a case because an investigation for a more serious offense was already underway] was a direct message to me [...], that it simply didn't matter if someone insulted me so badly. I didn't feel supported by the rule of law, neither by the police nor by the judiciary. If someone steals a car and also commits a serious assault, the case for the car theft isn't dismissed just because the potential penalty for the assault is higher, right?”

Particularly in cases involving digital and/or sexual violence, comparatively few female politicians reported having filed complaints. Given the high incidence of digital violence, this contributes to the perception of the internet as a largely lawless and anonymous space.

A lack of awareness and, consequently, a perceived lack of willingness to investigate are also perceived by the politicians surveyed. Greater awareness of the consequences for democracy as a whole should be a priority. The withdrawal of women and other marginalized groups undermines the representation and legitimacy of democracy, and ultimately erodes public trust in politics and state institutions.

What is needed?

- Awareness-raising measures and capacity-building for investigative authorities,
- Specialized contact points for violence against public officials and elected representatives,
- Monitoring and reporting requirements to track complaint rates, dismissal rates, and convictions in cases of political and gender-based violence, for the systematic identification of gaps and weaknesses.

Institutional Contact Points and Support Structures

The majority of the 16 respondents who completed the survey consider protection and reporting mechanisms to be insufficient. Female politicians under 40 consistently recognize a need for action here. The focus is on the need for clear, well-resourced support services. There is a call for specialized, non-partisan, and independent (complaints) offices within the German Bundestag, as well as external support structures, especially for dealing with digital attacks and legal issues. As one politician describes:

“There is and was no office in the Bundestag where female MPs could report experiences of sexism and receive support. There were only contact points for female staff members and employees. Such an office for MPs was under discussion, and there was an initiative and a meeting about it, but then the initiator [...] passed away, and no one carried the initiative forward.

I felt left alone and at the mercy of my experiences—both with sexist members of my own parliamentary group (the cases were less severe, but particularly unpleasant due to our shared group affiliation) and with misogynistic attacks coming from outside the parliament.”

A former MP describes the importance of guidance and support through adequate resources as follows:

“For example, I would have liked to see a kind of ‘HateAid’ for female members of the Bundestag to help them better defend themselves against misogynistic aggression. ‘Defending oneself’ is expensive and requires a lot of energy—energy you simply don’t have when you’re overworked and also a target. That’s why people defend themselves far too rarely and report far too few cases.”

What is needed?

- A non-partisan and independent reporting/complaints office in the German Bundestag (as well as in the individual parliamentary groups) with appropriate resources and the ability to impose sanctions,
- Legal as well as psychosocial counseling and support for those affected (if possible, accessible to staff members, since they are often the first to read or pre-screen the emails and comments),
- Resources for the consistent prosecution of even minor (but often cumulatively challenging) transgressions, for example, through AI-supported programs or a unit within the Bundestag administration or the Bundestag police.

Measures against Sexism and Discrimination

Gender-based discrimination is clear in the experiences of the female politicians surveyed as well as in other publications on the topic.⁴³ Here, a lack of protection against sexist behavior in the plenary chamber as well as within one's own party/parliamentary group is described, along with the generally inadequate sanctions for such incidents. Derogatory remarks, ridicule, and disproportionately frequent interruptions—and this in the public sphere, where one would expect members of parliament to be aware that their words and actions are being observed—are just a few examples of behaviors that create an intimidating and hostile atmosphere. A cultural shift is needed here, one that requires defining and enforcing boundaries to stop discriminatory behavior.

What is needed?

- A shared understanding and guidelines (e.g., through a code of conduct) for respectful and non-discriminatory interaction (such as in Parliament, within the parliamentary group, toward staff and the administration, etc.),
- Appropriate awareness-raising for session chairs and committee chairs,
- An expansion of the scope of the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG) to include situations outside the workplace,
- Consequences (e.g., sanctions) for perpetrators in cases of misconduct,
- Monitoring of interruptions and speaking behavior to highlight structural discrimination in (public) parliamentary proceedings.

Platform Regulation and Accountability

When addressing digital violence, structural issues related to hate speech and disinformation on social media are particularly prominent. Respondents criticize the lack of or insufficient moderation and regulation, including inadequate consequences. One member of parliament criticizes deliberate disinformation and distortion, such as through the publication of statements on official party accounts in particular. This is aimed at rallying followers against specific issues or individuals and actively inciting them against politicians from other parties. She also sees a lack of moderation by platforms as well as a lack of restraint on the part of elected officials themselves.

“This happened particularly frequently to female MPs. There should be ways to sanction this. AT THE VERY LEAST, there should be resources in the Bundestag to report criminal content to the platforms and file complaints with the police. None of this is happening, and the burden should not fall on the victims.”

43 See Köcher, Renate and Lukoschat, Helga (2021): Parteikulturen und die politische Teilhabe von Frauen; Weidhofer, Cécile, et al. (2023): Mit Kind in die Politik; HateAid et al. (2025): Angegriffen & alleingelassen.

Another member of parliament advocates introducing a real-name requirement to curb anonymous and fake accounts. The lack of consequences when reports are filed with platforms is also criticized.

What is needed?

- Guidelines or some kind of fairness agreement for political competition,
- Enforcement of existing EU directives and regulations, such as the Digital Services Act (DSA), particularly regarding reporting and removal deadlines,
- Fact-checking as well as clarifications regarding contextual distortions and targeted disinformation,
- Resources and guidelines for transparent moderation of comments on accounts of public bodies and media to protect those affected,
- Provision of technical support for those affected (e.g., by the Bundestag administration), such as through monitoring and analysis tools, automated documentation options, or human resources.

Social Responsibility and Public Awareness

Measures are also needed in the broader social context to stimulate a cultural shift. Those affected often lack public attention, solidarity, and support from the wider community, particularly from men and political leaders.

What is needed?

- Sensitive media coverage,
- Digital civic courage, counter-speech, and the reinforcement of positive/supportive rather than divisive reactions that fuel the algorithm,
- Public stances and engagement of men in politics and society,
- Public campaigns and assessments of the extent and societal consequences of violence against politicians.

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