



Make
Mothers
Matter

Half of Mothers in Europe Face Mental Health Struggles Germany Among the Most Affected

A new report from international NGO *Make Mothers Matter (MMM)* reveals a silent crisis in Europe: 50% of mothers report mental health challenges, with Germany showing some of the most concerning trends.

The study, [*“State of Motherhood in Europe 2024: Overlooked Challenges, Unmet Needs”*](#), conducted in collaboration with Kantar, the world’s leading marketing data and analytics business, and based on responses from 9,600 mothers in 12 countries, highlights the urgent need for better support, recognition, and shared responsibility for motherhood.

In Germany, 26% of mothers report suffering from depression (vs. 20% EU average*), and 46% feel mentally overloaded. Mothers continue to shoulder the lion’s share of care and domestic work, often with little societal or institutional support.

While the findings reveal a shared sense of overload and insufficient support among mothers in Europe, Germany stands out for the depth of structural, cultural, and economic barriers that mothers face. The results show that:

- 36% of German mothers reduce their working hours (vs. 23% EU average*), and 68% change their working status (vs. 55% EU average*)
- 21% leave paid employment entirely to become stay-at-home mothers after their first child (vs. 15% EU average*)
- 31% of mothers stated motherhood has negatively affected their work/career (vs. 27% EU average*), and among those, 46% report a financial decline linked to motherhood.
- 29% of fathers take no paternity leave; only 20% use their full entitlement.
- 41% of mothers are dissatisfied with maternity benefits.
- 44% feel society does not value their role.

Prof. Jutta Allmendinger, professor in sociology at Humboldt University Berlin and a leading voice on gender equality, shared her perspective on motherhood in Germany. She pointed to isolation, exhaustion, and the weight of unpaid care work as key stressors, adding that Germany’s outdated maternity leave regulations tend to push women out of the workforce, rather than helping them reintegrate. She also cited structural barriers like *Ehegattensplitting*, lack of childcare and full-time schools, as well as persistent cultural stigmas — particularly the notion of the *“Rabenmutter”*, or “raven mother” — as sources of psychological pressure and social inequality. As Allmendinger explained, this complex landscape helps explain why the percentage of mothers who would recommend having children has dropped sharply—according to her, from 99% to just 68% in the past three years.

Since 1990, Verband berufstätiger Mütter e. V. (VBM) has been advocating for working moms in Germany. Chairwoman Cornelia Spachtholz explains: *“For over three decades, we’ve been driving policy change through advocacy, agenda-setting, and strong collaborations. By contributing to legislative processes and promoting best practices, we push to make work and motherhood truly*

compatible.” She adds: “There is still a lot to be done for a better work-life balance, for Equal Care, Equal Pay and Equal Pension.”

Franziska Buschelberger, founder of the *Unpaid Care Work* initiative, points to the contradiction at the heart of societal expectations: *“Mothers are denied economic recognition for raising children, yet society expects them to succeed at it.”* She warns that unpaid care work, still widely invisible and undervalued, though essential to the economy, must not lead to poverty in old age.

Afaf Abounouadar, MMM Executive Director, adds: *“When mothers fall through the cracks of our systems—when their care work goes unsupported, unrecognized, and unshared—the cost is collective.”*

MMM will present and discuss these findings at the Mothers of Europe Exhibition at the VHS-Studienhaus am Neumarkt in Cologne, on 9 July at 17 h CET, calling for urgent action from German and EU leaders to close the care gap, invest in maternal mental health, and recognise motherhood as not just a societal concern but a private one too.

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About Make Mothers Matter

Make Mothers Matter is an international NGO founded in 1947 to promote the recognition and support of the essential role of mothers in society. MMM holds general consultative status with the United Nations and works across Europe and globally to influence policy for mothers and families.

(*) EU average based on the 12 countries included in the study: Belgium, Czechia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and the UK