

Berlin: The Gender Datenreport



 Berlin, Germany

Open Data

Data Management

Introduction

Berlin, following the tumultuous past of the city, has quickly become one of the most progressive cities in Europe on issues of gender equality and rights for LGBTQI+ communities. This progressive reputation was hard won after the checkered history of the city, but the recent decades of progressive policy and intentional and specific inclusion has pushed forward an innovative agenda in the city. Since the enactment of the Berlin State Equality Act in 1991, the proportion of women in public administration has doubled to 64%, reflecting significant strides toward gender parity in governance. But, even with this longstanding commitment to inclusivity in the city, challenges remain in advancing gender equality in all manners of public and private life; which is why having gender disaggregated data is so central to the implementation of gender mainstreaming.

[Problem Statement]

A longstanding commitment to gender equality in the city requires a method for implementation and consistent tracking. Often, measures will be implemented in a city and will have positive anecdotal impacts on the city and the citizens within it, but it will be difficult to prove a substantial impact on the long-term well-being of the citizens and a shift towards a more equal city. Across the EU there is no consistent standard for gender disaggregated data at the city level, making individual cities that take on the challenge of sharing this data unique at this time. Data and knowledge gaps are not just limited to gender, but all intersections of experience that could lead to discrimination. Data cannot capture all forms of discrimination, nor correct it, but being able to quantify the problem is a useful tool in addressing persistent forms of inequality in all levels of society.

[Implementation and Actions]

Following the model set by Vienna, the Berlin Department for Women and Equality (Abteilung Frauen und Gleichstellung in German) began to publish the Berlin Gender Datenreport in 2009, where gender disaggregated data on demographics, education, employment, economics, and political participation in Berlin is made openly available to the public. This project, which has now been going on for more than 14 years, allows academics, city officials, and citizens to access data on some of the most important markers of gender equality in the city for a period of over ten years. We were able to speak to Clara Stienke, the current Data Manager for the department of Women and Equality, who currently organises the report to learn more about how this project is compiled.

[Interview with Clara Stienke, Department of Women and Equality, Berlin]

Q: What is your role within the Department, and what are some of the main projects you are taking on the right row?

Clara: I've been working in the department for gender equality in Berlin for four years, and I've been working on the data project for about three and a half years now. Berlin is a city, of course, but it's also a federal region in Germany - because we are both, this means that we probably have a bit more budgeting and capacities working in gender equality than other cities could have. We are quite a large department on gender equality in Berlin. We are between 30 and 40 people and we are working on different issues. We have gender strategy, public affairs, we also have a lot of law-related work. We are currently working on many projects about women and employment, as well as violence against women and all topics surrounding that.

My approach on the data is a bit different, I would say. We had always some reports we had to do for Berlin, but about gender equality in the administration of the city itself, like in Berlin's public employees. But when I came into the position I am in now, I started to think about who actually wants to use the data we had, and how we could make it more accessible. The paper review of data that was previously being published was not how people use data today. So, I started to digitise all the data that we have and were getting.

We try to have a wide range of different topics, so we have some on employment, participation, and demographics; which are related to living in Berlin and what the status of gender equality is in the city. At the moment, I'm also trying to modernise the indicators and to get more topics in, because the topics included in the data reports have not changed since like 20 years more or less. The indicators I would like to include are those on care (such as childcare and eldercare), which we don't have so much access to currently, and more information about living situations, because in Berlin, as in many big cities, it's very difficult to find somewhere to live and we would like to see how this intersects with gender. But as a whole, and for me in my role, I try to provide data to people who then use it in their research, and I hope to broaden people's horizons and increase their access to knowledge.

Q: How do you collect data and how do you make these reports?

Clara: Most of the data I'm getting is from our regional data lab, but we also have data from our own department, which is especially on the violence against women data, which we collect. We also get some data from other departments, for example, from the health department on some topics, but largely it comes from the regional data lab. But now to extend the topics on the data reports, it will get a bit more difficult to find the sources to get them, when you want to go a little bit deeper or highlight specific topics, like for example, housing, it's more difficult and you have to search deeply to find your reliable high-quality sources.

And I think this is also kind of a topic that I would discuss under the umbrella of the gender data gap. It's not that the specific intersectional data doesn't exist; it's there somewhere, but it's very well hidden. And I think this could be also a chance for the gender data report in the future to actually lift up some of these sources and show it in the same space so specific data can be found much more easily. Another issue we are currently facing is that we have gender listed at the moment as men and women. We don't have any other categories, and it is treated as if it's a very binary thing. And it's very difficult to find other data that includes these intersectional experiences because like statistical data, you need a lot of cases to actually be able to publicise it and to publish it.

So, with creating a report like this, I think it's still not so easy that it just happens while you do other job functions and then you can just work on this project a little bit on the side. This is really a full job.

With this data, I feel like I give others some argumentation, or a base for argumentation, and facts so that they can do their work on specific topics with a little bit more input and to convince others that these issues are important. The gender data report can help with advocacy and can improve the whole of Berlin because we can now use this data and show, for example; the streets are here and there and are not safe for women. We have something that is quantifiable and it's not just our opinion. Data is considered a fact. This kind of public data report can help to give these facts to people who are working on these topics.

Q: What are the aspects of this project that you feel very proud of?

Clara: I'm proud of the digitalisation and the push to make it more accessible. I think this is really the thing I'm proud of, that the data can now be used by different groups more easily and it can be used to communicate with people from all different educational backgrounds because it's more inclusive. I would say that's the most important thing I've done till now.

[Lessons Learned]

- ❖ Mentorship from other localities that have taken on the process of creating an open data portal can be a critically important tool in creating an accessible gender data portal, allowing a high level of transparency on the local level of implementation of any local equity initiatives. Both Vienna and Berlin have a high level of visibility for their process of creating their gender data reports, which can be instructive for other localities interested in replicating the process.
- ❖ Partnerships between municipal governments and local academic institutions can increase the visibility, quality, and depth of these projects. Often, researchers are the greatest users of the open data on the municipal level, and so integrating them into the development of the data reports can illuminate gaps in the data, or better isolate what data is most useful to gather. This can also potentially provide additional support for these projects outside of the municipal government.
- ❖ That being said, having a local government that has the infrastructure internally to support a long-term data project focused on gender equality is one of the fundamental aspects that allowed for the longevity of both the Berlin gender data report, and Vienna's data portal. In the case of Berlin, this means having a department of women and equality and then within that department having a position dedicated to data management. This is one of the aspects that was emphasised heavily in interviews and research on these projects, especially in the early stages.
- ❖ These projects, while being foundational to tracking the progress of gender equality in the city, are often time and labour intensive to develop. The process of gathering, cleaning, disaggregating, and publishing data requires a high-level coordination between many different municipal departments and developing the platform where this data can be accessible requires a high degree of investment from the municipality to bring into reality, that can be accomplished more easily by having a staff member who is dedicated to data management in the department.

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Clara Stienke
Data Manager for the department of Women and
Equality of Berlin

[+] Learn more about this Project

- + The Gender Data Gap: How Berlin's Data Report can contribute to Equality : citylab-berlin.org/en/blog/the-gender-data-gap-how-open-data-can-contribute-to-equality/
- + Berlin's Gender Data Report:



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