

# Measuring femicide in Ireland

## Femicide

Femicide can be understood as the extreme end of a continuum of violence against women that happens in all European Union Member States <sup>(1)</sup>. There is no standard agreed definition of femicide among the EU Member States or around the world. The lack of a uniform definition hampers the measurement of femicide, which becomes invisible among general homicide data <sup>(2)</sup>. The general concept of femicide refers to the killing of a woman or girl because of her gender. The United Nations Vienna Declaration on Femicide <sup>(3)</sup> was the first to identify different types of femicide, including:

- murder of women as a result of intimate partner violence;
- torture and misogynistic slaying of women;
- killing of women and girls in the name of honour;
- targeted killing of women and girls in the context of armed conflict;
- dowry-related killing of women;
- killing of women and girls because of their sexual orientation and gender identity;
- the killing of aboriginal and indigenous women and girls because of their gender;
- female infanticide and gender-based sex selection foeticide;
- genital mutilation-related deaths;
- accusations of witchcraft;
- other types of femicide connected with gangs, organised crime, drug dealers, human trafficking and the proliferation of small arms.

## Femicide in Ireland

There is no definition of femicide in the Irish legal system. However, this type of offence may fall under other provisions of the Irish criminal statute. The relevant criminal offences that incorporate femicide cases are, inter alia, as follows <sup>(4)</sup>.

**Murder** occurs if a person intended to kill, or cause serious injury to, another person who dies as a result.

**Manslaughter** is an unlawful killing that is not murder and currently consists of two categories, voluntary manslaughter and involuntary manslaughter. Voluntary manslaughter deals with what would otherwise be murder but where there is some excusing circumstance – such as provocation – which reduces the offence from murder to manslaughter.

**Involuntary manslaughter** currently comprises two sub-categories. First, manslaughter by an unlawful and dangerous act, where the killing involves an act constituting a criminal offence, carrying with it the risk of bodily harm to the person killed. The second subcategory is gross negligence manslaughter, where the death arises from a negligent act or omission by the accused involving a high risk of substantial personal injury.

## About the study

Data collection systems vary widely across EU Member States, as they draw on various sources. To improve the collection of administrative data on femicide, EIGE has been working to establish indicators that can harmonise data collection processes across Member States' jurisdictions.

EIGE has collected information from a wide variety of stakeholders through a questionnaire sent to official data providers and an online survey filled in by national experts. The ultimate goal is to identify a classification system of femicide with mutually agreed variables that can be used by all EU Member States.

## Methodology for data collection

To address the lack of comparable data on violence against women, EIGE developed 13 indicators with uniform definitions of the multiple forms of intimate partner violence, femicide and rape <sup>(5)</sup>. A detailed report regarding the methodology for the collection, reporting and validation of data, along with detailed metadata per country, has been published <sup>(6)</sup>. The information presented in this factsheet refers to indicator 9: 'Women victims of intimate femicide (aged 18 and over) committed by a male intimate partner (aged 18 and over), as a share of the women victims of homicide aged 18 and over'. However, the data for Ireland under this indicator is not yet available.

See EIGE's Gender Statistics Database for more information ([https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/browse/genvio/genvio\\_int](https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/browse/genvio/genvio_int)).

<sup>(1)</sup> This factsheet includes data collected before the United Kingdom left the EU, so the reference to EU Member States includes the United Kingdom.

<sup>(2)</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2017), *Glossary of definitions of rape, femicide and intimate partner violence*, EIGE, Vilnius.

<sup>(3)</sup> UN Economic and Social Council (2012), *Vienna Declaration on Femicide*, UN, New York ([https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CCPCJ/CCPCJ\\_Sessions/CCPCJ\\_22/E-CN15-2013-NGO1/E-CN15-2013-NGO1\\_E.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CCPCJ/CCPCJ_Sessions/CCPCJ_22/E-CN15-2013-NGO1/E-CN15-2013-NGO1_E.pdf)).

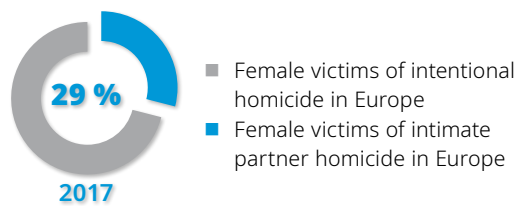
<sup>(4)</sup> O'Malley, T. (2006), *Sentencing Law and Practice*, 2nd edition, Round Hall Ltd, Dublin, p. 249.

<sup>(5)</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2017), *Terminology and Indicators for Data Collection: Rape, femicide and intimate partner violence*, EIGE, Vilnius.

<sup>(6)</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2020), *Intimate Partner Violence: Data collection methodology*, EIGE, Vilnius.

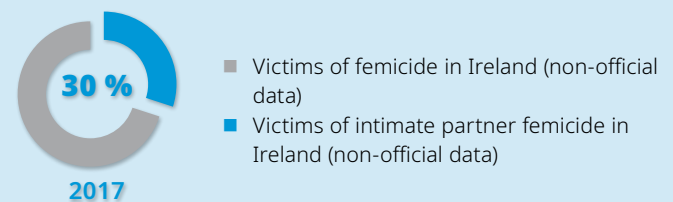
### Intimate partner femicide in Europe

From a statistical perspective, and based on the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS), the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) highlights that intentional homicide of female victims perpetrated by intimate partners or family members is the most prevalent form of femicide (7). UNODC estimates that, in Europe (8), about 29 % of female victims of homicide (9) are killed intentionally by an intimate partner.



### Intimate partner femicide in Ireland

From a statistical perspective, the working definition that the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) uses for femicide is 'killing of a woman by an intimate partner and the death of a woman as a consequence of a practice that is harmful to women. Intimate partner is understood as a former or current spouse or partner, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim'. In Ireland, most femicides would be covered by the criminal offence definitions identified above. According to data from Women's Aid Femicide Watch, in 2017 there were 10 femicides, of which 30 % were committed by intimate partners ( $n = 3$ ) (10).



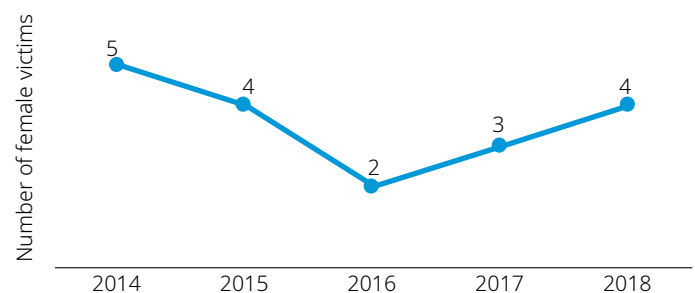
## Female victims of homicide and intimate partner femicide in Ireland

EIGE has gathered data on female homicide and intimate partner femicide for 2014 to 2018. There are no official statistics available for intimate partner femicide in Ireland; however, there is a non-official source. The data used in Figure 1 comes from Women's Aid Femicide Watch (10). Figure 1 includes data regarding intimate partner femicide in Ireland. The highest peak was registered in 2014, and between 2014 and 2016 there was a downward trend. However, the number of female victims of intimate partner femicide has been escalating since 2016.

### Type of relationship between the victim and the perpetrator

Women's Aid Femicide Watch collects data on the type of intimate relationship between the victim and the perpetrator according to the following classifications: (i) partner or ex-partner, (ii) male relative or male acquaintance, (iii) male stranger and (iv) remains unsolved.

Figure 1: Victims of intimate partner femicide in Ireland



Source: Women's Aid Femicide Watch (10).

## Collecting administrative data on femicide



**What is administrative data?** Administrative data is collected for recording, organising and monitoring purposes (11). Administrative data on femicide can be obtained from different institutions, namely those that are involved in criminal investigations, prosecutions, the punishment of perpetrators and victim support – that is, institutions in the **police and justice sectors**. Administrative data might include information about the prevalence and types of femicide, the characteristics of the victim, the perpetrator and their relationship, the characteristics of and motive for the crime, and data about the criminal process.

(7) UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2019), *Global Study on Homicide – Gender-related killing of women and girls*, UNODC, Vienna.  
 (8) Data from UNODC includes European jurisdictions other than the EU Member States. There is no estimation of the percentage of female victims of homicide who were victims of intimate partner femicide limited to EU Member States.  
 (9) The term 'homicide' is used when reporting UNODC data given that it is the term used in the original source (p. 17). The gender-related motivation is not recorded, because of the lack of a standardised definition. However, it is clear from the report that this data quantifies a significant share of all gender-related killings of women and girls.  
 (10) Women's Aid (2019), *Femicide Watch 2019 – Republic of Ireland – A legacy of loss for women, family and community*, Women's Aid, Dublin (<https://www.womensaid.ie/about/policy/publications/femicide-watch-2019-republic-of-ireland/>).  
 (11) UN Women (2020), *A synthesis of evidence on the collection and use of administrative data on violence against women*, UN Women, New York.

In order to help policymakers design effective policies to combat femicide, it is necessary to understand the nature and prevalence of the issue. The collection of comparable administrative data on femicide across Member States is key to gaining this understanding<sup>(12)</sup>. It is particularly important that the motive for the killing is established by the police or judiciary and that this is then translated into standardised statistical data. The ICCS is a standardised tool for obtaining comparable

administrative data. However, it lacks a gender-related motive variable. This means that the concept of femicide cannot be properly operationalised, which prevents the collection of data that fully captures the phenomenon. The collection of data on femicide would make the issue more visible, which would strengthen the political will to eradicate it. Administrative data on femicide also enables countries to monitor trends over time and evaluate the effectiveness of measures.

## What administrative data on femicide is available in Ireland?

Definition of femicide and availability of data		
Definition of femicide used for statistical purposes	No	
Collection of data on femicide	Yes, official data	Yes, non-official data

Three institutions collect or analyse data on femicide in Ireland: the Central Statistics Office Recorded Crime Unit<sup>(13)</sup>, Women's Aid Femicide Watch<sup>(14)</sup> and the Department of Justice led by the Minister for Justice and Equality<sup>(15)</sup>. Where data on

femicide in this factsheet is drawn from these institutions, this is indicated by <sup>(a)</sup>, <sup>(b)</sup> and <sup>(c)</sup>, respectively. There may be other institutions that and researchers who collect and analyse data on femicide in Ireland.

	Institution <sup>(a)</sup> Central Statistics Office Recorded Crime Unit	Institution <sup>(b)</sup> Women's Aid Femicide Watch	Institution <sup>(c)</sup> Department of Justice led by the Minister for Justice and Equality
Type of data collection	Official	Non-official	Official
Sources of data	Police crime investigations	Media reports, police and court cases	Court cases
Stage at which the homicide is established as a femicide	It is not established	During the data analysis	Information not available
Stage at which the homicide is registered as a femicide	It is not registered	During the data analysis	Information not available
Parameters for establishing the killing as a femicide	Information not available	Female victim (aged 13 years and over) killed by a male perpetrator	Information not available
Network(s) with which information is shared	Law enforcement institutions, judicial authority, ministries, Department of Justice or another gender equality body, statistics authorities, non-governmental organisations and the media	Not shared	Information not available
Regularity of data collection	Continuous	Occasional	Occasional
Availability of data to the public	Data publicly available	Data publicly available	Information not available

Official and non-official sources inform administrative data collection in Ireland. In line with EIGE's data collection, data on the total number of victims of intimate partner femicide is displayed for 2014 to 2019. However, non-official data is available in Ireland for 1996 onwards. Official data shows that, in 2019,

there were 8 female victims of murder and manslaughter in Ireland and 6 in 2020<sup>(16)</sup> <sup>(a)</sup>. Data from Women's Aid Femicide Watch also shows that, since 1996, 236 women died violently in the Republic of Ireland, of whom 55% were killed by their intimate partners or ex.

<sup>(12)</sup> It is important to note that data and statistics should be produced, developed and disseminated in compliance with the principles in the *European Statistics Code of Practice*: Eurostat (2018), *European Statistics Code of Practice*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/4031688/8971242/KS-02-18-142-EN-N.pdf/e7f85f07-91db-4312-8118-f729c75878c7?t=1528447068000>).

<sup>(13)</sup> <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/crimeandjustice/>

<sup>(14)</sup> Women's Aid (2019), *Femicide Watch 2019 – Republic of Ireland – A legacy of loss for women, family and community*, Women's Aid, Dublin (<https://www.womensaid.ie/about/policy/publications/femicide-watch-2019-republic-of-ireland/>) and Femicide factsheet 2020: [https://www.womensaid.ie/assets/files/pdf/womens\\_aid\\_femicide\\_factsheet\\_2020.pdf](https://www.womensaid.ie/assets/files/pdf/womens_aid_femicide_factsheet_2020.pdf)

<sup>(15)</sup> <http://www.fsdhr.ie>

<sup>(16)</sup> Data for 2020 available at: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-rcvo/recordedcrimevictims2020andsuspectedoffenders2019/recordedvictims2020/>

● Official data available    ● Non-official data available    ○ No data available

Data availability	2014 <sup>(b)</sup>	2015 <sup>(b)</sup>	2016 <sup>(b)</sup>	2017 <sup>(b)</sup>	2018 <sup>(a)</sup> <sup>(b)</sup>	2019 <sup>(a)</sup> <sup>(b)</sup>
Female victims of homicide	○	○	○	○	●	●
Victims of intimate partner femicide	●	●	●	●	●	●

Since 2019, a study has been under way in the Department of Justice, led by the Minister for Justice and Equality, on familicide and domestic homicide reviews, to look at best practice

in supporting families bereaved by familicide and to identify international best practice in domestic homicide reviews.

Types of femicide	
Intimate partner femicide <sup>(b)</sup>	●
Family-related femicide <sup>(b)</sup>	●
Child femicide <sup>(b)</sup>	●
Prostitution-related femicide	○
Robbery-related femicide	○
Other types of femicide <sup>(b)</sup>	●
	Sexual violence-related femicide <sup>(b)</sup>

Characteristics of the victim and the perpetrator	Victim	Perpetrator
Age <sup>(a)</sup> <sup>(b)</sup>	●	●
Sex <sup>(a)</sup> <sup>(b)</sup>	●	●
Gender identity	○	○
Sexual orientation	○	○
Nationality <sup>(b)</sup>	●	●
Education	○	○
Occupation	○	○
Applied for protection order	○	n/a
Active protection order	n/a	○
Socioeconomic profile	○	○
Recidivist status	n/a	○
Alcohol/drug abuse	○	○
Victim–perpetrator relationship <sup>(b)</sup>	●	●
Other	○	○

Motive for femicide		Analysing femicide	
Context of sexual violence <sup>(b)</sup>	●	Homicide reviews / domestic homicide reviews <sup>(c)</sup>	●
Prior intimate partner violence <sup>(b)</sup>	●	Analysis of court cases	○
Prior harassment and/or stalking by the perpetrator	○	Administrative data from police <sup>(c)</sup> <sup>(b)</sup>	●
Prior genital mutilation	○	Administrative data on cause of death	○
Prior complaints or requests for protection measures	○	Media information <sup>(b)</sup>	●
Recent separation	○	Other	○
'Shame or dishonour' brought on the family	○	Contextual variables	
Dowry-related problems	○	Method of killing <sup>(b)</sup>	●
Refusal to enter into an arranged marriage	○	Location <sup>(b)</sup>	●
Political role / feminism / activism of the woman who was killed	○	Suicide of the perpetrator <sup>(b)</sup>	●
Context of prostitution / pornography	○	Killing of children <sup>(b)</sup>	●
Human trafficking context	○	Killing of other persons in the family <sup>(b)</sup>	●
Targeted killing of a woman in an armed conflict	○	Children present	○
Sexual orientation and gender identity	○	Other killings in connection with the femicide <sup>(b)</sup>	●
Disfigurement of the body	○	Other	○
Other	○	Investigating femicide	
		Protocol for investigating femicide cases	○

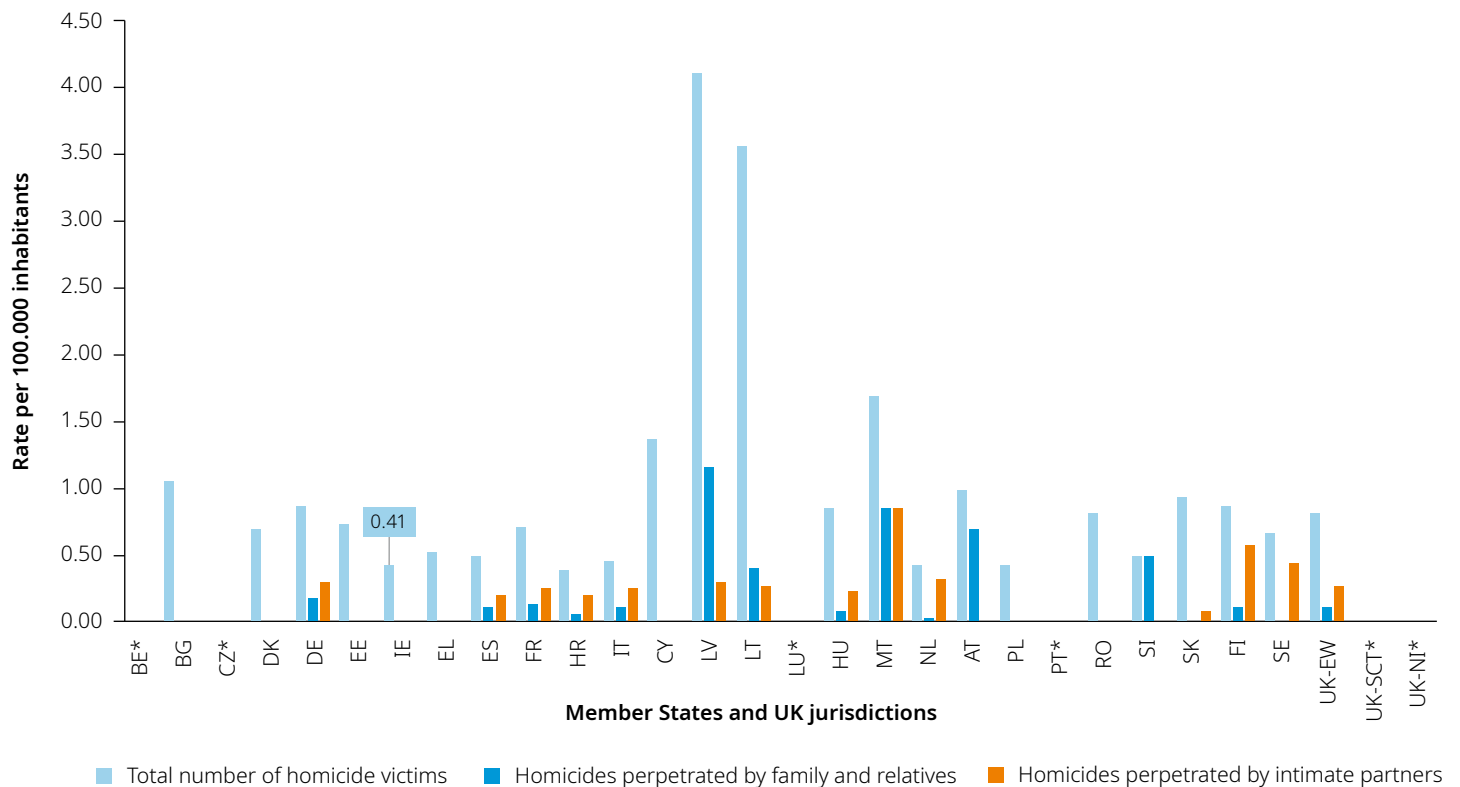
NB: n/a, not applicable.

## Female homicide in EU Member States and the United Kingdom (Eurostat)

At the EU level, based on the ICCS, Eurostat compiles data on intentional female homicides, focusing on intimate partner and family-related homicides, disaggregated by age, gender and relationship with the perpetrator. The data from Eurostat presented in Figure 2 reveals that, in 2018, the rate of female

victims of homicide in Ireland was 0.41 per 100 000 inhabitants, the second lowest rate among the 24 Member States for which information is available and the United Kingdom. There is no information on rates of homicide perpetrated by family, relatives and intimate partners in Ireland.

Figure 2: Rate of female victims of intentional homicide in EU Member States and the United Kingdom (2018)



(\*) No data available.

NB: UK-EW, England and Wales, United Kingdom; UK-NI, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom; UK-SCT, Scotland, United Kingdom.

Source: Eurostat.

### Data information

Eurostat regularly publishes figures on crime and criminal justice. Intentional homicides are recorded by the police in each of the Member States and the United Kingdom. It is not possible to collect information about the gender-related motivation for homicide, the sex of the perpetrator or the age of the perpetrator using this database. Therefore, it is not possible to

provide precise data on femicide. Figures for 2008 onwards are based on the joint Eurostat-UNODC data collection. In this database, homicide is classified by the ICCS.

Data is available on Eurostat’s website (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>).

## Key findings

- Ireland does not have a legal definition of femicide. However, the perpetrator may be liable for murder, manslaughter or involuntary manslaughter.
- There are three main institutions that collect or analyse data for the identification of femicide. Non-official data is available for intimate partner femicide and other types of femicide.
- EIGE has gathered data on homicide and intimate partner femicide for 2014 to 2018; however, non-official data on intimate partner femicide is available in Ireland for 1996 onwards. Available data includes information about the characteristics of the victim and the perpetrator, contextual variables and motive.
- Femicide is analysed on the basis of official and non-official

sources, such as data from police, domestic homicide reviews and media information. In May 2019, the Department of Justice started to undertake in-depth research on femicide and domestic homicide reviews.

- The analysis of femicide carried out by Women's Aid aims to influence policymaking. The report includes several key variables and has identified collateral victims in 22 cases (killed or injured) and sexual violence / rape reported in 23 cases. Between 1996 and 2019, '14 children were killed alongside their mothers in intimate partner femicide cases with a further 131 children being left without their mothers' (17).
- In Ireland, administrative data records are based on data that uses a 'primary offence' rule. As a result, a homicide preceded by a sexual assault would count only as a homicide for statistical purposes.

## Recommendations

The collection of accurate and comparable data on femicide by the police and justice sectors across Member States helps to increase knowledge and improve responses to prevent femicide (18). It is therefore important to:

- develop a femicide definition for statistical data collection, in order to reflect the specific circumstances relating to the killing of women;
- implement a process of continuous data collection;
- establish comprehensive data collection, adding variables that are important for detecting key aspects of femicide, such as those describing the context and the circumstances of the killing, the gender-related motivation, and the victim and perpetrator characteristics, in order to systematise and harmonise the collection of data for statistical use;

- cross-reference the variables of the victim and those of the perpetrator, and analyse them using an intersectional approach;
- ensure that the gender dimension of homicide data is made visible.

### Recommendations for data collection on femicide in Ireland

To populate EIGE's indicator on femicide (indicator 9) and to improve understanding of intimate partner femicide, it is recommended that the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator be systematically recorded using the categories 'current intimate partner/spouse' and 'former intimate partner/spouse', whether cohabiting or non-cohabiting (19).

This factsheet is based on information from EIGE's study 'Advancing administrative data collection on intimate partner violence and gender-related killings of women' (2021) and has been prepared by the Alternative and Response Women's Association (UMAR). For more information, visit <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/femicide>.

(17) Women's Aid (2019), *Femicide Watch 2019 – Republic of Ireland – A legacy of loss for women, family and community*, Women's Aid, Dublin, p. 5 (<https://www.womensaid.ie/about/policy/publications/femicide-watch-2019-republic-of-ireland/>).

(18) European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2018), *Recommendations to improve data collection on intimate partner violence by the police and justice sectors – Ireland*, EIGE, Vilnius; European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2017), *Recommendations for the EU to improve data collection on violence against women*, EIGE, Vilnius; European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2021), *EIGE's indicators on intimate partner violence, rape and femicide: Recommendations to improve data quality, availability and comparability*, EIGE, Vilnius.

(19) Indicator 9 of the Gender Statistics Database ([https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/indicator/genvio\\_int\\_adm\\_ipv\\_\\_ipv\\_indic\\_9/metadata](https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/indicator/genvio_int_adm_ipv__ipv_indic_9/metadata)).

### European Institute for Gender Equality

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is the EU knowledge centre on gender equality. EIGE supports policymakers and all relevant institutions in their efforts to make equality between women and men a reality for all Europeans by providing them with specific expertise and comparable and reliable data on gender equality in Europe.

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