

Gender Equality Index 2019. Work-life balance

Conceptual framework

The quest for a work–life balance has become a modern holy grail. The dizzying speed of change in the world of work, propelled by a digital revolution and economic crises, has swept away demarcation lines between the professional and the personal. These have brought socioeconomic costs that have impacted gender equality across different domains of life.

Work–life balance is no longer just a personal goal, it is also a political one. The Gender Equality Index 2019 reflects that with its thematic focus on work–life balance, capturing data and information that indicate how the EU and its Member States are progressing on this key policy objective.

In addition to the work–life balance-related indicators already provided by the Index in several domains in previous chapters, this report presents an additional set of indicators on the topic. For this purpose, and at the European Commission’s request, EIGE developed a work–life balance scoreboard which, while not included in the calculations of the Gender Equality Index scores, demonstrates conceptual and statistical links to the Index and is an important step in contextualising the information extracted there.

This analysis is centred on the European Pillar of Social Rights and its ‘New start’ initiative on work–life balance, including legislative and non-legislative measures. It shows that the major challenges of work–life balance are intrinsically linked to gender (in)equalities. It also provides new insight into the monitoring of the implementation of legal and policy measures on work–life balance at the EU and national levels. The proposed indicators on work–life balance could complement the social scoreboard, which monitors Member State performance in relation to the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#).

The analysis does not aim to define what ‘good’ work–life balance is or assess which policy designs are better than others in achieving work–life balance. The exact impact of any policy or measure on this issue in a society depends on a complex interaction between individual preferences, the provision of supporting services, labour-market characteristics or the social-protection system as a whole.

The aim here is to present and explore the different options people have for reconciling their work and personal life and whether these are equally available to all women and men, and if so, how can they further boost gender equality.

Conceptually, the work–life balance scoreboard (Table 1) is based on three broad areas: paid work, unpaid work (care), and education and training. It presents 15 indicators in six specific areas of concern: parental-leave policies; informal care for older people, people with disabilities and LTC services; childcare and childcare services; transport and public infrastructure; flexible working arrangements; and lifelong learning.

The work–life balance scoreboard has multiple advantages. It is based on a broad concept of work–life balance with a gender-equality perspective. It integrates individual-level outcome-based indicators with institutional-level input indicators (e.g. participation in informal care vs availability of care services). Indicators are also analysed in a broader context. For example, the analysis examines different modes of transport used by women and men and how hard it is for women and men to access public transport, in addition to exploring gender differences in commuting patterns. The analysis further looks at how gender intersects with other grounds of inequalities (e.g. age or type of family) throughout the course of a life. It applies a sectoral/occupational approach when relevant.

Work–life balance scoreboard

Areas of concern	Indicator (age, years)	Source
Parental-leave policies	1. Eligibility for parental leave: percentage of women and men not eligible for statutory parental leave (20-49).	Leave network annual reviews Eurostat: EU LFS, EU-SILC, 2016
	2. Reasons for ineligibility: percentage of women and men not eligible for statutory parental leave by reason of ineligibility (20-49).	Leave network annual reviews Eurostat: EU LFS, EU-SILC, 2016
Informal care of older people, people with disabilities and LTC services	3. Informal long-term care rate: percentage of women and men involved in caring for older people and/or people with disabilities at least several times a week (18+).	European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS), 2016
	4. Informal LTC rate among employed people: percentage of employed women and men involved in caring for older people and/or people with disabilities at least several times a week (18+).	EQLS, 2016
	5. Unmet care needs for older people and/or people with disabilities: percentage of women and men who report unmet household needs for professional home-care services (16+).	EU-SILC ad hoc module on access to services, 2016
Informal care of children and childcare services	6. Formal childcare (≤ 3): percentage of children up to 3 years of age cared for under formal arrangements.	EU-SILC, 2017
	7. Formal childcare (3+): percentage of children between 3 years of age and the mandatory school age cared for under formal arrangements.	EU-SILC, 2017
	8. Unmet needs for childcare: percentage of women and men who report unmet household needs for formal childcare services (16+).	EU-SILC ad hoc module on access to services, 2016
	9. Informal childcare rate: percentage of women and men involved in caring for and/or educating their children and grandchildren at least several times a week (18+).	EQLS, 2016
	10. Informal childcare rate among employed people: percentage of employed women and men involved in caring for and/or educating their children and grandchildren at least several times a week (18+).	EQLS, 2016
Transport and public infrastructure	11. Commuting time: average time in minutes per day that women and men spend commuting to and from work (15+).	European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS), 2015
Flexible working arrangements	12. Flexibility in working time: percentage of women and men able to set their own working-time arrangements (15+).	EWCS, 2015
	13. Transition from part-time to full-time work: percentage of women and men who moved from part-time work to full-time work (16+).	EU-SILC, 2017
Lifelong learning	14. Participation in education and training: percentage of women and men participating in formal and non-formal education and training (last 4 weeks) (25-64).	EU LFS, 2017
	15. Barriers to participation in education and training: percentage of women and men not participating in formal or informal education and training due to the main time-related barriers (work schedule or family responsibilities) (25-64).	Adult Education Survey (AES), 2016

Table 4. Work–life balance scoreboard