

Gender Equality Index 2019. Work-life balance

Enduring burden of care perpetuates inequalities for women

Unrelenting and growing inequalities in women’s and men’s use of time are reflected by the overall downward score for this domain. Not only was the 2017 score (65.7) 1 point lower than that of 2005, it also represented a 3.2-point drop from the gains that had been achieved up until 2012 (Figure 21).

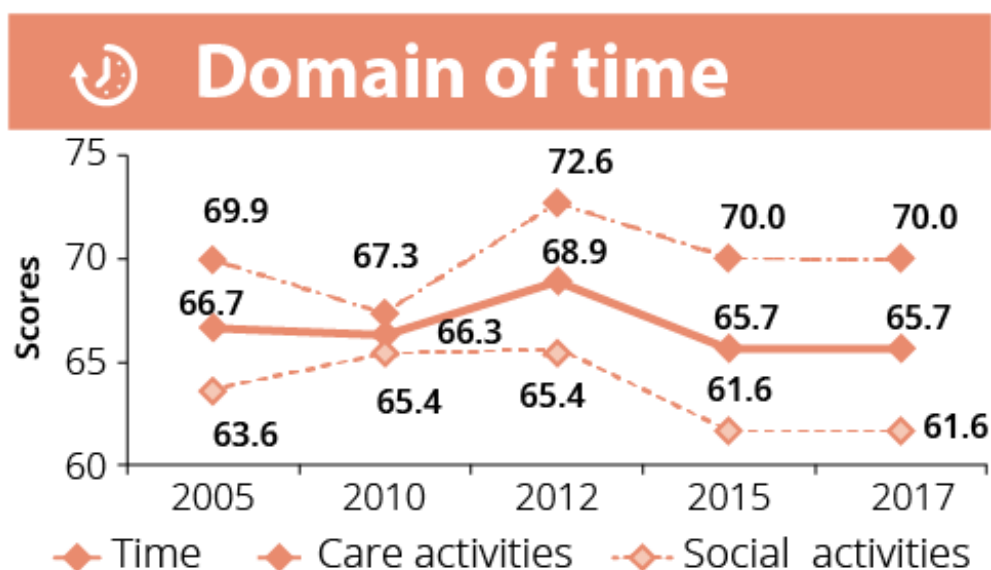


Figure 21: Scores for the domain of time and its sub-domains, EU, 2005-2017
 Note: Due to a lack of data, the 2017 Index scores are used.

While gender imbalances in the sub-domain of care and domestic activities remained relatively stable between 2005 and 2017 (with a score of around 70 points), they increased in social activities as the score dropped by 2 points to 61.6 points.

The enduringly large gender gap in time devoted to care and housework contributed to this domain's overall low score. Indeed, women in the EU were disproportionately more engaged in unpaid care work in 2017. Almost 38 % took care of children, grandchildren, older people and/or people with disabilities every day for 1 hour or more compared with 25 % of men (EIGE, 2017c). Even more strikingly, only 34 % of men engaged in cooking and housework every day for 1 hour or more in comparison with 79 % of women, with the situation barely changing in more than a decade. The unalleviated burden of care and housework not only limits women's social and personal development or career progression, it is the primary reason for economic inactivity or part-time work. As much as 10 % of women, compared to 0.5 % of men, either do not work or work part-time because of care responsibilities.

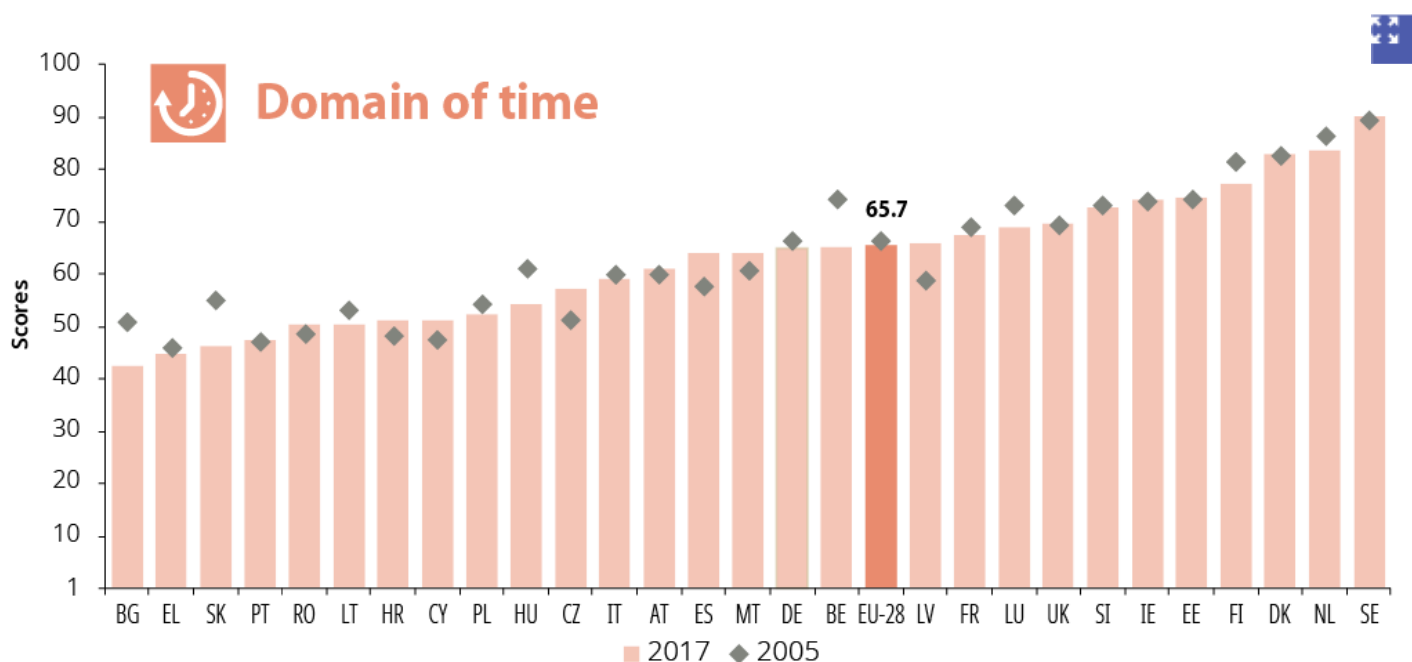


Figure 22: Scores for the domain of time, EU Member States, 2005 and 2017

Note: Due to lack of data, the 2017 Index scores are used.

While gender gaps in leisure, sport, cultural (4 p.p.) and charitable activities (- 1 p.p.) are much smaller, working women's and men's participation in this area is extremely low in some Member States. Of even greater significance is the high variation among Member States. In 10 of them (BG, EL, HR, CY, LT, HU, PT, RO, SK, PL), fewer than one in five workers are engaged in any sport, cultural or leisure activities outside the home at least every other day. The rates in another 10 Member States (BE, CZ, DE, EE, FR, IT, LV, MT, AT, UK) range from 20 % in Latvia to 36 % in Belgium and Estonia.

The level of participation in charitable activities is much lower. In Spain and Lithuania, 5 % of workers are engaged in voluntary or charitable activities at least once a month; in Bulgaria it is only 3 %; and in eight other Member States (BE, EL, CY, LV, PL, PT, RO, SK) the participation dropped to less than 10 %. The lack of time for engaging in social, cultural and charitable activities has an impact on women's and men's personal development and well-being, and on social cohesiveness and solidarity in general.

A more encouraging situation is, however, evident in other Member States. More than 50 % of workers take part in sport, cultural and leisure activities in Denmark, Finland, Sweden and the Netherlands, with at least 20 % engaging in charitable activities in Sweden, the Netherlands and Slovenia.