

Gender equality needs to reach everyone: Gender equality and disability


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Gender equality is moving at a snail's pace

From 2005 to 2015, progress towards gender equality in the European Union was very slow. EIGE's Gender Equality Index shows that the EU score for gender equality is **66.2 out of 100**. There is still a lot of work to be done.

European policies need to be based on an accurate picture of the different needs of citizens. For example, persons with a disability are often prevented from fully taking part in society because of barriers to educational attainment, employment and access to health services.

Both women and men with disabilities face disadvantages because of their disability, but their experiences differ depending on their gender. The situation of women with disabilities is especially difficult. They are worse off than women without disabilities and also face more challenges than their male peers because of gender stereotypes, the gender equality and men's roles traditional roles.

There are around 75 million adults with a moderate disability and 140 million with a severe disability in the EU (1). **16 million women (20% of all women) and 47 million men (25% of all men) have disabilities (2).**

In 2015, 19% of women aged 16-64 and 17% of men in the same age group reported having a disability (3) in the EU. Among people aged 16-64, just under half (46%) of the men and just over half (51%) of the women reported having a disability (4). These figures are important to know in the EU population projection.



Women with disabilities are disadvantaged in the labour market

The Gender Equality Index shows that 30 years of slow progress in the domain of work, with participation in employment particularly low for women with disabilities.

While the full-time equivalent (FTE) employment rate (5) in 2014 was 42% for women and 55% for men, it was only 19% for women with disabilities and 28% for men with disabilities.

Monthly earnings of both women and men with disabilities are around 5% lower than those without disabilities. On average, women in the EU-28, regardless of whether they have a disability or not, earn around 30% less than men.

Women with disabilities (21%) face a higher risk of poverty compared to women without disabilities (15%). Men with disabilities face a lower risk of poverty (28%) compared to women with disabilities, but they still have a higher risk compared to men without disabilities (17%). Low participation in the labour market, low work intensity and discrimination are the main factors that lead to a higher risk of poverty and, as a consequence, for persons with disabilities compared to the rest of the population (6).

1. The higher the score, the better the level of gender equality.

2. Includes reported moderate disabilities and severe disabilities combined.

3. Source: (1), (2), (3).

4. The most frequent reported disability due to health condition for persons with disabilities.

5. Source: (1), (2), (3).

6. The 17% population with a disability is composed of around 10% severe disability, 5% moderate disability and 12% mild disability.

This factsheet looks at how the intersection between gender and disability affects women and men in the EU. It is based on the Gender Equality Index 2017, developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). The Index measures gender equality and helps to monitor its progress across the EU and over time. It is composed of six core domains (work, money, knowledge, time, power and health) and two satellite domains (intersecting inequalities and violence).

Further information

Explore the Gender Equality Index 2017 online



Read the report "Gender Equality Index 2017: Measuring gender equality in the European Union 2005-2015"



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