

Violence and gender equality

Eradicating gender-based violence against women is a priority of the European Union (EU) and its Member States. This commitment is affirmed in the main EU gender equality policy documents, most recently by the EU signing the leading regional legal instrument on gender-based violence: the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). EU ratification of the convention will improve complementarity between national and EU levels for an integrated approach to combating violence against women.

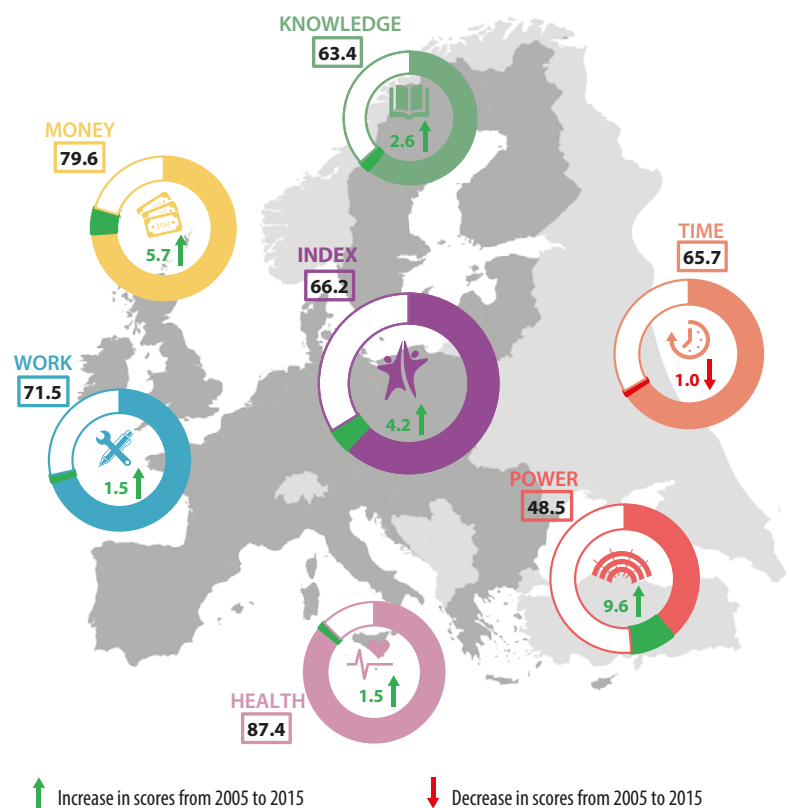
Gender inequalities are both the cause and enabling context of violence against women. Eliminating it is a profound, but also evolving, political challenge that requires addressing the unequal social, political and economic power held by women and men.

Over the past decade, progress towards gender equality in the EU has been rather slow. With an average Gender Equality Index score of 66.2 out of 100 in 2015, the EU has large room for improvement (Figure 1). In nearly all Member States, the notable driver of progress has been a better balance of women and men in decision-making.

Violence against women is included in the Gender Equality Index as a satellite domain. It means that the score for violence does not impact the final score of the Gender Equality Index.

However, the violence dimension needs to be considered alongside other domains, as violence against women reflects persisting inequalities in the fields of work, health, money, power, education and time use. From a statistical perspective, the domain of violence does not measure gaps between women and men as core domains do. Rather, it measures and analyses women's experiences of violence. Unlike other domains, the overall objective is not to reduce the gaps of violence between women and men, but to eradicate violence completely (¹).

Figure 1: Scores for the Gender Equality Index, its core domains and their evolution 2005-2015, EU-28



(¹) European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2013b), *Gender Equality Index — Report*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, available at: <http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Gender-Equality-Index-Report.pdf>.

What the domain of violence measures

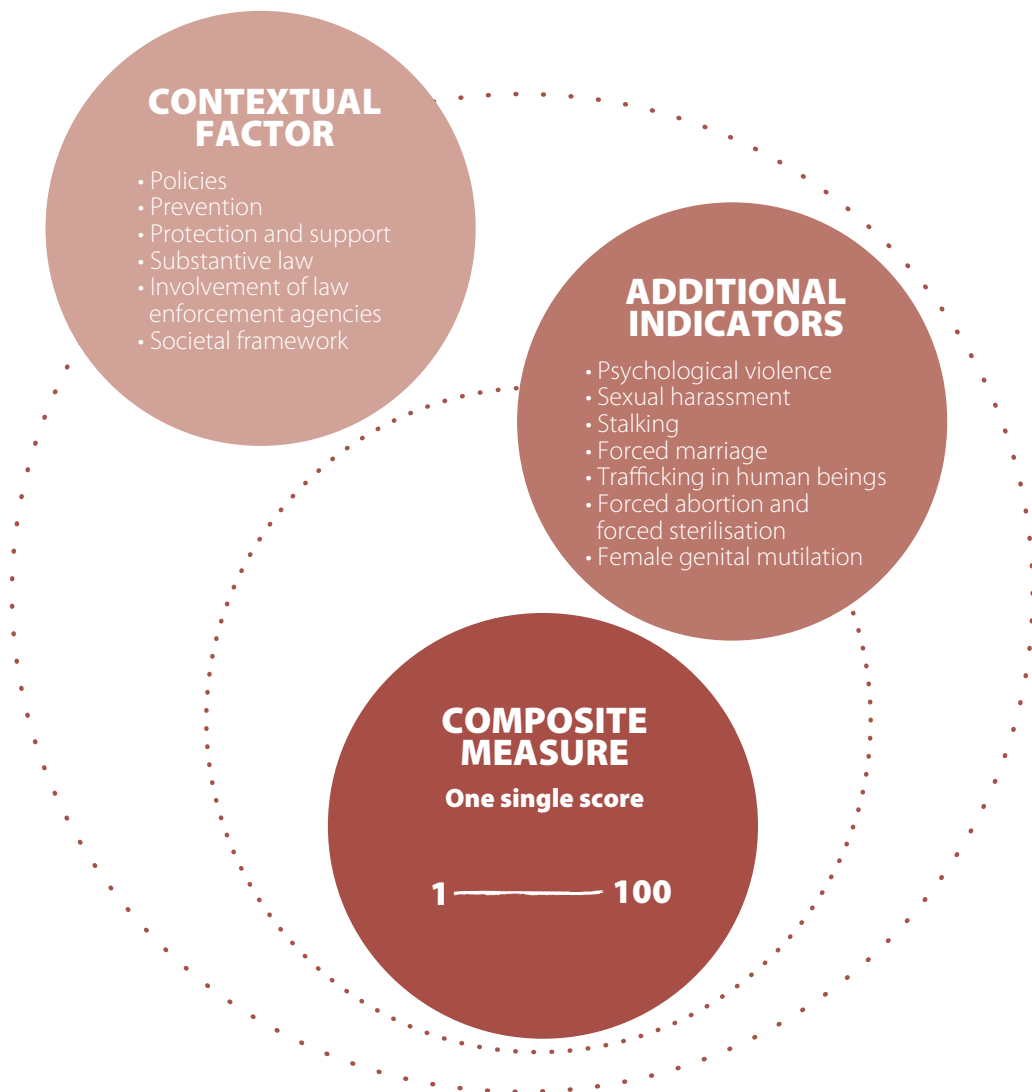
The domain of violence provides a set of indicators that can assist Member States in assessing the extent and nature of violence against women, as well as monitor the institutional response to this phenomenon. It includes the following three layers of measurement.

(1) *Indicators on the extent of violence against women* that are combined into a composite measure (a single score) for each country. This single score helps to monitor the extent of the most common and documented forms of violence against women and highlights existing trends.

(2) *Additional indicators* covering a broader range of forms of violence against women. They provide an overview of the extent of various forms of violence described in the Istanbul Convention as well as data on trafficking in human beings and femicide ⁽²⁾. These indicators might be included in the calculation of the single score if more reliable and comparable data become available.

(3) *Contextual factors* include some of the root causes of violence against women and information on institutional responses to prevent and address violence. They enable analysis on the extent of violence against women over time and across Member States. The contextual factors are built around the central aspects of the Istanbul Convention. They cover six dimensions: policies, prevention, protection and support, legislation, involvement of law enforcement agencies and public attitudes related to violence against women and gender equality.

Figure 2: Measurement structure and concepts of the domain of violence



⁽²⁾ Femicide has been used to refer to a wide range of violent acts, such as so-called honour killings, female infanticide, pre-adolescent mortality of girls and dowry-related deaths (United Nations, 2012). EIGE defines femicide as 'the killing of a woman by an intimate partner and death of a woman as a result of a practice that is harmful to women.'

What the score tells us

A high score in the Gender Equality Index means a country is close to achieving a gender-equal society. However, the composite measure of violence against women uses the opposite approach. The higher the value of the composite measure, the more serious the phenomenon of violence against women in the country is. On a scale of 1 to 100, 1 represents a situation where violence is non-existent and 100 represents a situation where violence against women is extremely common, highly severe and not disclosed. The best-performing country is therefore the one with the lowest score.

The composite measure includes three aspects: **prevalence, severity and disclosure** of violence against women (Figure 3). The scores for the composite measure on violence against women range from 44.2 in Bulgaria to 22.1 in Poland. The EU has an overall score of 27.5. Twelve Member States score above the EU average (Figure 4). For most countries, the severity component (health consequences and multiple victimisation) is driving the scores up.

Figure 3: Scores for the domain and subdomains of violence, EU Member States, 2012

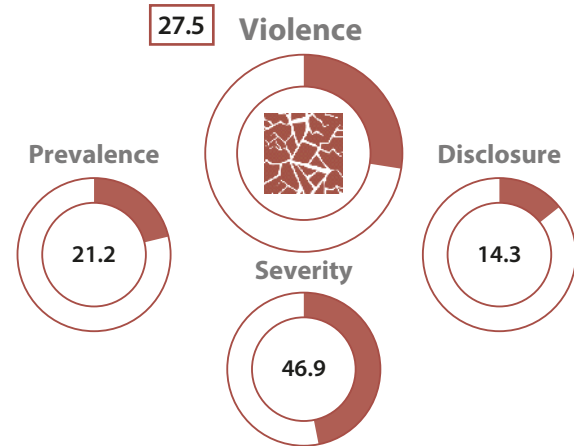
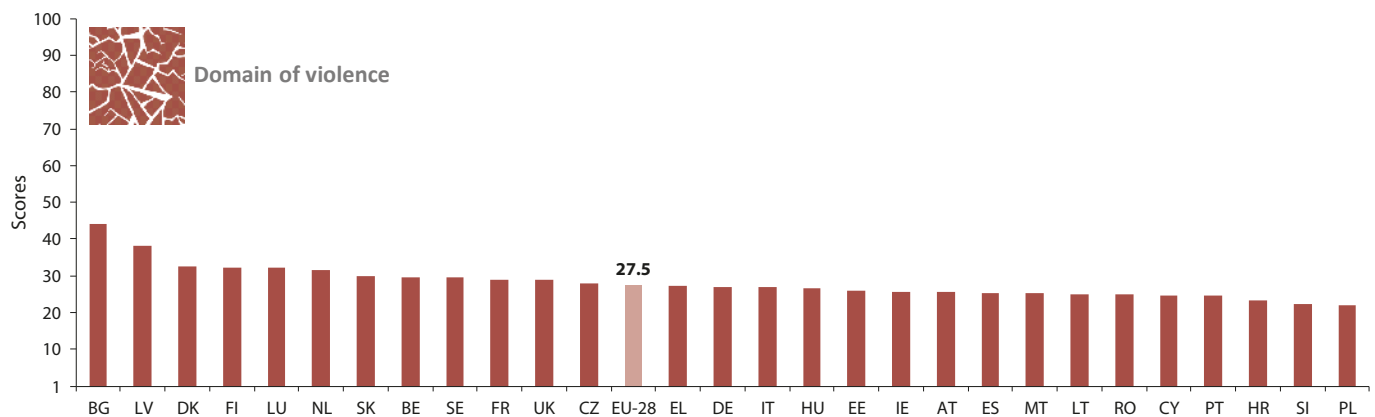


Figure 4: Scores for the domain of violence, EU Member States, 2012



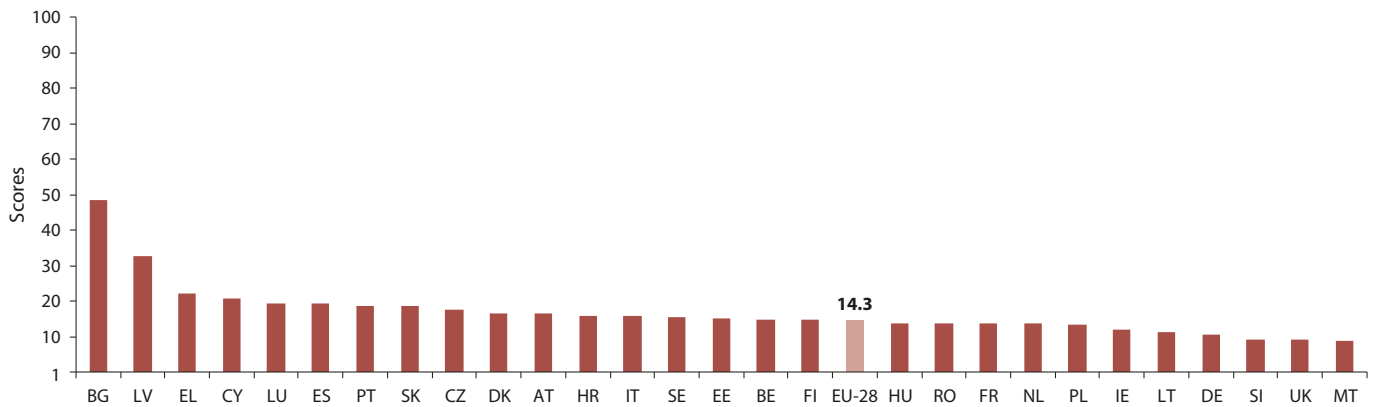
Across the EU, almost one in two victims of sexual and/or physical violence (47 %) have not disclosed the incident to anyone ⁽³⁾. Such a high level of under-reporting is alarming and indicates that women may feel that they will not receive the support they need or not be safe from further violence, including femicide. It also means that perpetrators are not held accountable for violence.

Figure 5 presents Member States scores for the subdomain of disclosure. The higher the score, the less likely women are to discuss their experiences of violence with institutions or individuals. It means that the phenomenon of violence against women is likely to be more hidden and underestimated country wide.

In most Member States, women are more likely to disclose experiences of violence when the perpetrator is a partner (or former partner) than a non-partner.

⁽³⁾ Percentage of women (aged 18-74) in the EU-28 who have not disclosed their experience of sexual and/or physical violence since the age of 15 to anyone. Source: EIGE's calculation, FRA, Violence against women: an EU-wide survey, 2012

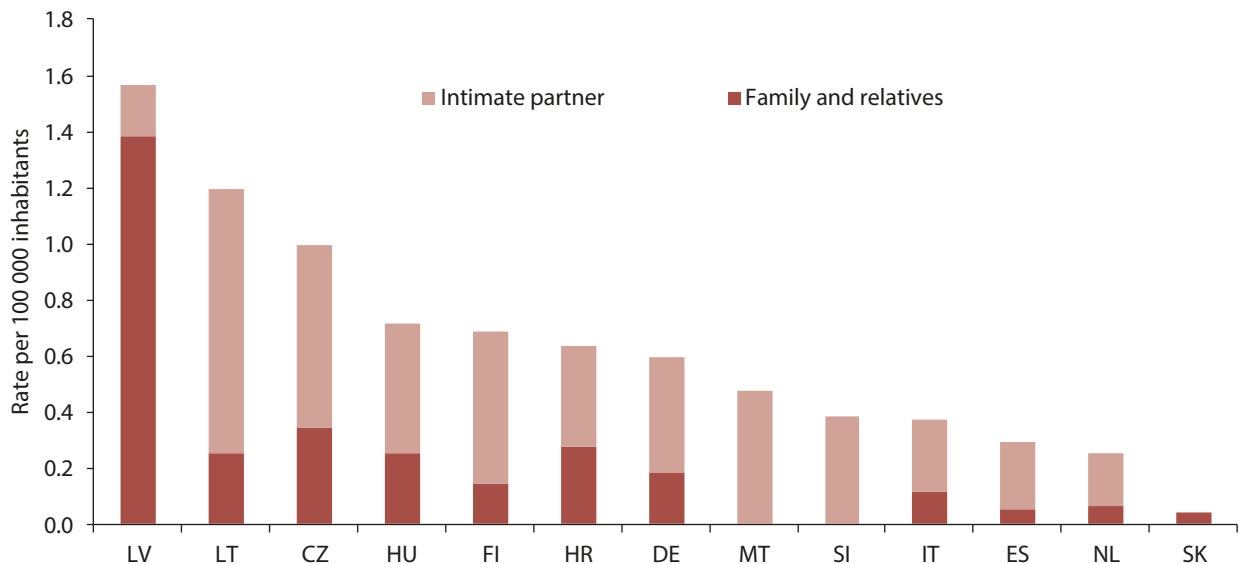
Figure 5: Scores for the subdomain of disclosure, EU Member States, 2012



Femicide requires more and better-quality data

Femicide is the ultimate manifestation of violence against women. EIGE recently defined femicide as ‘the killing of a woman by an intimate partner and death of a woman as a result of a practice that is harmful to women’⁽⁴⁾. To date, no EU Member State has incorporated a definition of femicide into their criminal law. For 2014, data on female victims of intentional homicide is available for 12 Member States⁽⁵⁾. With the exception of Latvia, the majority of women’s deaths were perpetrated by an intimate partner rather than by a family member or relative (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Women victims of intentional homicide, by perpetrator, by 100 000 inhabitants, 2014⁽⁶⁾



Source: Eurostat, (crim_hom_vrel)

⁽⁴⁾ EIGE (2017, forthcoming), *Terminology and indicators for data collection: rape, femicide and intimate partner violence*.

⁽⁵⁾ Data on femicide is captured partially through national administrative data on intentional homicide of women by an intimate partner or by family members or relatives, and published on Eurostat’s website for most Member States.

⁽⁶⁾ To allow for comparison between Member States of different population sizes, the number of women victims of intentional femicide is shown as a percentage of the population rather than in absolute numbers.

Exposure to violence varies with age, ability and sexual orientation

All women experience or might experience violence and discrimination simply because they are women. At the same time, due to factors such as race, migrant or refugee status, sexual orientation, age, disability, or other factors, some women are at higher risk of violence or to exposure of specific forms of violence. Additionally, certain women may also have limited opportunities to escape violence or access support services (European Commission, 2011 ⁽⁷⁾; EIGE, 2012 ⁽⁸⁾).

The results from the survey conducted in 2012 by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) show that women with a disability, young women and non-heterosexual women are more at risk of physical and/or sexual violence. For non-heterosexual women, the prevalence is more than twice higher than for women in general (FRA, 2014) ⁽⁹⁾. For women with disabilities, the prevalence of sexual and physical violence is 13 percentage points higher than for women in general (ibid.). Understanding why certain circumstances put women more at risk or expose them to certain types of violence is critical if policies and services are to answer the needs of all victims of violence. These aspects highlight the need for support services and also stress that policies on the prevention of violence against women need to take into account the differences among women.

The cost of violence against women is alarmingly high

Violence hampers women's enjoyment of their fundamental freedoms and negatively affects their health and well-being and that of their families. At the societal level, violence against women incurs public expenditure of considerable magnitude: an estimated EUR 225 billion are lost yearly in economic outputs, services utilisation and personal costs ⁽¹⁰⁾ for the European Union. When left unpunished, violence against women strongly hinders women's full participation in society and maintains an oppressive and coercive pattern of control of men over women.

The proposed measurement framework offers multiple possibilities for measuring complex interactions between gender equality and violence against women. It also provides a basis for a solid and reliable tool for regular monitoring of measures applied for eradication of violence against women by the EU and its Member States. Detailed and comparable information on Member States policies, service provision, judicial and police services, criminalisation of forms of violence against women and information on the public attitudes related to violence against women and gender equality should advance the understanding of what constitutes violence against women and its interaction with gender inequalities in other spheres of life. This information is crucial for better-tailored policies and legal measures to fight violence against women.

Despite decades of progress in the development of gender equality policies and strategies, women in Europe continue to be exposed to serious forms of violence due to their gender. The evidence confirms the importance of policies directly addressing coercive and violent practices ⁽¹¹⁾. For instance, gender equality policies in the workplace need to work in conjunction with policies to end violence against women at work. Violence against women causes gender disparities and perpetuates inequalities, therefore addressing coercive, manipulative and harmful practices is necessary for gender equality to become a lived reality for women and men.

⁽⁷⁾ European Commission (2016), Commission staff working document (SWD(2016) 159 final) 'Report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings (2016) as required under Article 20 of Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims,' http://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/commission_staff_working_document.pdf.

⁽⁸⁾ In 2012, EIGE's report on victim support in the EU found that only limited specialised support for women survivors of multiple discrimination existed and only eight Member States and Croatia (at the time not yet a Member State) provided at least one such service. EIGE (2012), *Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States: violence against women — Victim support*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, available at: <http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Violence-against-Women-Victim-Support-Report.pdf>.

⁽⁹⁾ These data have to be interpreted with caution. Data for non-heterosexual women include women who identify as 'lesbian', 'bisexual' or 'other'. Furthermore, the survey does not provide data on the sex of perpetrators (current or former partner) of violence experienced by non-heterosexual women. Finally, women may not disclose that they are non-heterosexual. FRA (2014), *Violence against women: an EU-wide survey*, available at: http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2014-vaw-survey-main-results-apr14_en.pdf

⁽¹⁰⁾ This is an exercise done at EU level to estimate the costs of the three major dimensions: services, lost economic output and pain and suffering of the victims. The estimates were extrapolated to the EU from a United Kingdom case study based on population size. EIGE (2014), *Estimating the costs of gender-based violence in the European Union*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, available at: <http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/MH0414745EN2.pdf>.

⁽¹¹⁾ Klein, R. (2013), 'Language for institutional change: notes from US higher education,' in Klein, R. (ed.), *Framing sexual and domestic violence through language*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 163-178.

Read more about the Gender Equality Index 2017

Measurement framework of violence against women (2017)

Gender Equality Index 2017: main report (2017)

Main findings (2017)

Methodological report (2017)

Intersecting inequalities (2017)

Explore the Gender Equality Index at <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index>

Further reading from EIGE

Cyber violence against women and girls (2017)

Terminology and indicators for data collection: rape, femicide and intimate partner violence (2017, forthcoming)

Administrative data collection on violence against women, good practices (2016)

An analysis of the victims' rights directive from a gender perspective (2016)

Combating violence against women: European Union (2016)

Estimation of girls at risk of female genital mutilation in the European Union (2015)

Administrative data sources on gender-based violence against women in the EU-28: report (2014)

Estimating the costs of gender-based violence in the European Union (2014)

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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