

Gender Equality Index 2017: Belgium

The Gender Equality Index 2017 examines the progress and challenges in achieving gender equality across the European Union from 2005 to 2015. Using a scale from 1 (full inequality) to 100 (full equality), it measures the differences between women and men in key domains of the EU policy framework (work, money, knowledge, time, power and health). The Index also measures violence against women and intersecting inequalities. These are satellite domains and are part of the framework of the Gender Equality Index, but do not have an impact on the overall score. Intersecting inequalities show how gender intersects with age, education, family composition, country of birth and disability. The Gender Equality Index provides results for each domain and sub-domain for the EU and its 28 Member States ⁽¹⁾.

Progress in gender equality in Belgium, 2005-2015

In the Gender Equality Index 2017, Belgium achieved a score of **70.5 out of 100**, which is an increase of 4.5 points. This score is above the EU-28 average of 66.2 and progress is consistent with the EU-28 average. Belgium's Index rank has dropped one spot and now stands in seventh place.

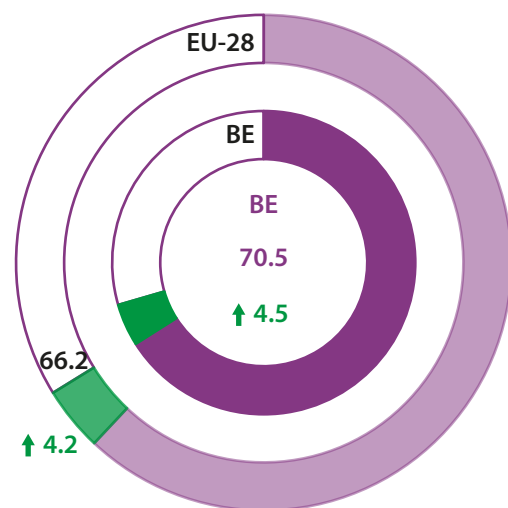
The score in the domain of **money** in Belgium is high and on the rise, showing a good gender equality performance, especially in earnings and income. Its score is the second highest for the domain of money in the EU-28.

The biggest improvement took place in the domain of **power**, largely because women took up more decision-making positions in the economic sector. However, it remains the domain with the lowest score for Belgium.

The situation in the domain of **health** has remained stable. There is still room for improvement in the area of health behaviour.

Gender equality has progressed in the domains of **work** and **knowledge**, at a slightly faster pace than in the EU-28. However, Belgium could improve the participation of women and men in the labour market to boost this sub-domain's current spot in the rankings (24th). In the domain of knowledge, Belgium's level of gender equality is very high, due to a relatively low level of segregation in study fields.

The greatest challenges are in the domain of **time**, which has dropped 9 points. This is largely due to the unequal division of time between women and men for both care and social activities.



↑↓ Change in score from 2005 to 2015

⁽¹⁾ The Gender Equality Index 2017 is based on the data of Eurostat (Education statistics, EU Labour Force Survey, European Health Interview Survey, EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, Structure of Earnings Survey), of Eurofound (European Quality of Life Survey, European Working Conditions Survey), of EIGE's Gender Statistics Database (Women and Men in Decision-Making) and of the Fundamental Rights Agency's Violence Against Women survey. The year of reference is 2015 (2014 for data on intersecting inequalities). The age of the reference population for the indicators is either 15+, 16+ or 18+, depending on the source.

Work

In the domain of work, the increased participation of women in employment and the narrowing gender gap contributed to a slight increase in the score.

The employment rate (20-64) is 63 % for women compared to 71 % for men. The total employment rate is 67 %, and Belgium has not reached its national Europe 2020 strategy (EU2020) target (73 %).

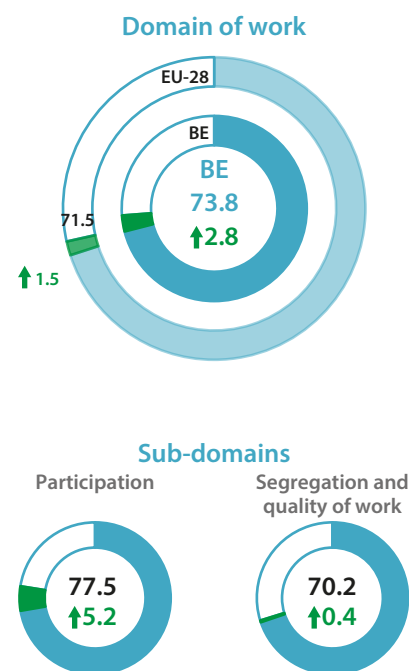
The gender gap in the employment rate increases when the number of hours worked is taken into account. The full-time equivalent (FTE) employment rate of women is around 37 %, compared to 52 % for men.

Among couples with children, the FTE employment rate for women is 60 % compared to 78 % for men. The gender gap is wider for couples without children. The FTE employment rate is also higher for men aged 25-49, compared to women in the same age group (74 % and 62 %, respectively). Women with a low level of education have a very low FTE employment rate of 12 %, compared to men in the same group (27 %).

The FTE employment rate increases and the gender gap shrinks as education levels rise.

About 42 % of women work part-time, compared to 10 % of men. On average, women work 33 hours per week, compared to 40 hours for men. 8 % of working-age women versus 0.4 % of working-age men are either inactive or work part-time due to care responsibilities.

Gender segregation in the labour market is a reality for both women and men. Nearly 39 % of women compared to 11 % of men worked in education, human health and social work activities (EHW). About six times more men (34 %) than women (6 %) work in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) occupations.



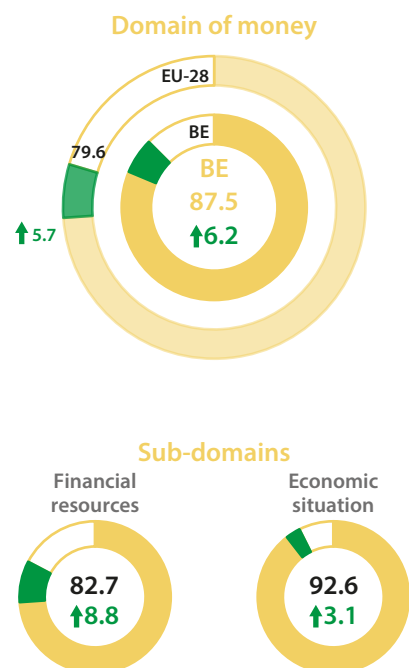
Money

The situation in the domain of money has improved. Gender equality has progressed both in earnings and income, and, to a lesser extent, the distribution of wealth and the risk of poverty.

Mean monthly earnings of women and men have increased but women continue to earn over 10 % less than men a month. This gap has slightly decreased. The gender gap is greater between women and men in couples with children.

The population of women and men at risk of poverty has hardly changed. 15 % of women and 13 % of men are at risk of poverty. Lone parents are more at risk than other family types. Similarly, foreign-born women and men are at higher risk of poverty than native-born women and men. The higher a person's education, the lower their risk of poverty.

Inequalities in income distribution have decreased, especially among men. The gender pay gap is 7 % to the detriment of women. In 2012, women had lower pensions than men and the gender gap was 31 %. Both values are lower than the EU-28 averages (16 % and 38 %, respectively).



Knowledge

In the domain of knowledge, the score improved, mainly because of the increase in attainment.

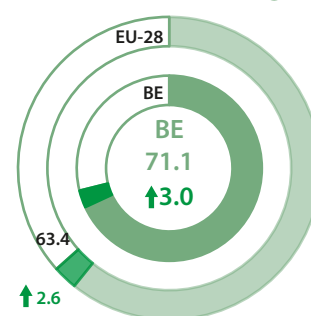
The number of tertiary graduates increased, especially for women. In 2005, there were more women than men with a tertiary education degree and the gap has been getting wider. Belgium has not yet met its national EU2020 strategy target to have 47% of people aged 30-34 obtain tertiary education. The rate currently stands at 43%.

Women outnumber men in the share of graduates up to the age of 49. Only 19% of women with disabilities have attained tertiary education, compared to 42% of women without disabilities.

The rate of participation in lifelong learning has slightly decreased, with participation equal for both women and men (14%).

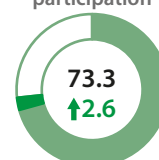
Gender segregation in study fields remains a challenge. The gender gap in tertiary education in the fields of education, health and welfare, humanities and arts has slightly increased. 56% of women students, compared to 31% of men students, are concentrated in these fields, which are traditionally seen as 'feminine'.

Domain of knowledge

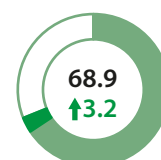


Sub-domains

Attainment and participation



Segregation



Time

In the domain of time, the score went down. The greatest challenge remains the uneven division of time for social and care activities.

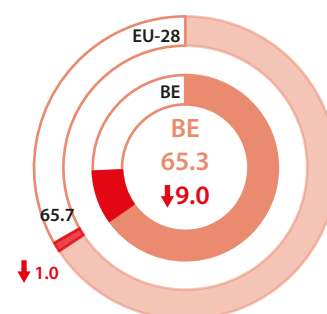
Women continue to do the bulk of caring for their family, although the gap has slightly narrowed. 43% of women and 29% of men spend at least 1 hour a day on care responsibilities. The gaps are bigger among couples with children (87% of women and 68% of men) and people aged 25-49 (68% of women and 46% of men).

81% of women compared to only 32.5% of men do cooking and housework every day for at least 1 hour. The gender gap has significantly increased and is higher among foreign-born women and men compared to native-born women and men. The more educated women and men are, the more likely they are to do cooking and housework every day.

Inequality in time-sharing at home also extends to social activities. Men are slightly more likely than women to participate in sporting, cultural, and leisure activities outside the home. Participation in voluntary or charitable activities is also higher for men but particularly low among men with a low level of education.

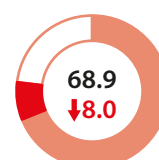
Belgium has met both the 'Barcelona targets', which are to have at least 33% of children below the age of three in childcare and 90% of children between the age of three and school age in childcare. In Belgium, the enrolment rates are 50% and 99%, respectively.

Domain of time

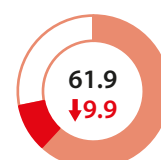


Sub-domains

Care activities



Social activities



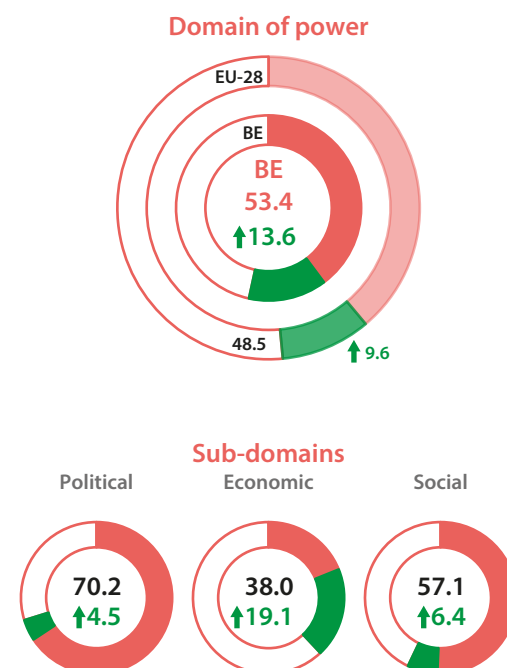
Power

The score for the domain of power shows a marked increase, which is mostly driven by progress in the sub-domain of economic power. However, it remains the domain with the lowest score for Belgium.

From 2005 to 2015, the representation of women on the corporate boards of publicly listed companies increased fourfold (from 6 % to 24 %). On the other hand, the situation has barely improved in the central bank, where women hold just 15 % of board seats.

The increase in the score in the sub-domain of political power is due to the increased gender balance in parliament, from 36 % to 41 % women members. On the other hand, the share of women ministers dropped slightly to 25 %.

40 % of board members of research-funding organisations and about 36 % of board members of publicly owned broadcasting organisations are women. The gender gap in decision-making in sport is much greater — women comprise just 12 % of members of the highest decision-making bodies of national Olympic sport organisations.



Health

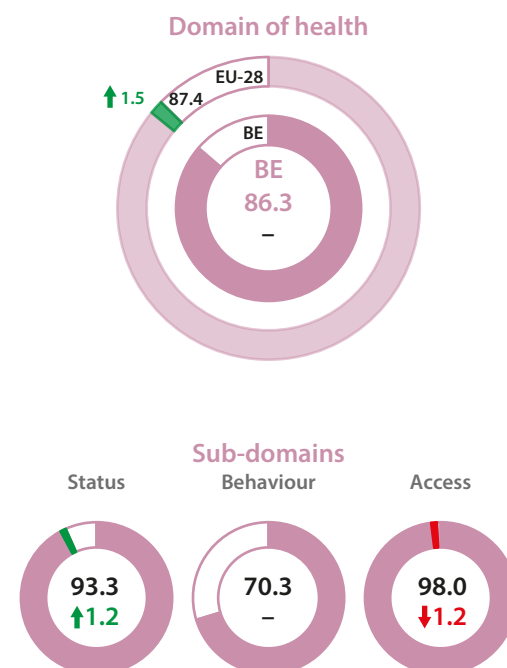
Gender equality in the domain of health has not changed. Only small changes are visible in the sub-domains of status and access.

Life expectancy has increased for both women and men. Women on average live 5 years longer than men, but they both have the same number of healthy life years.

78 % of men and 71 % of women rate their health as 'good' or 'very good'. As the level of education increases, the gender gap in self-perceived health decreases. The gender gap in self-perceived health is wider among single women and men than among other family types.

In 2005, almost all women and men were able to meet their medical and dental needs, but this situation has slightly deteriorated.

Half of men smoke and/or drink excessively compared to around a third of women. On the other hand, slightly more men than women engage in healthy behaviour (doing physical activities and/or consuming fruit and vegetables).

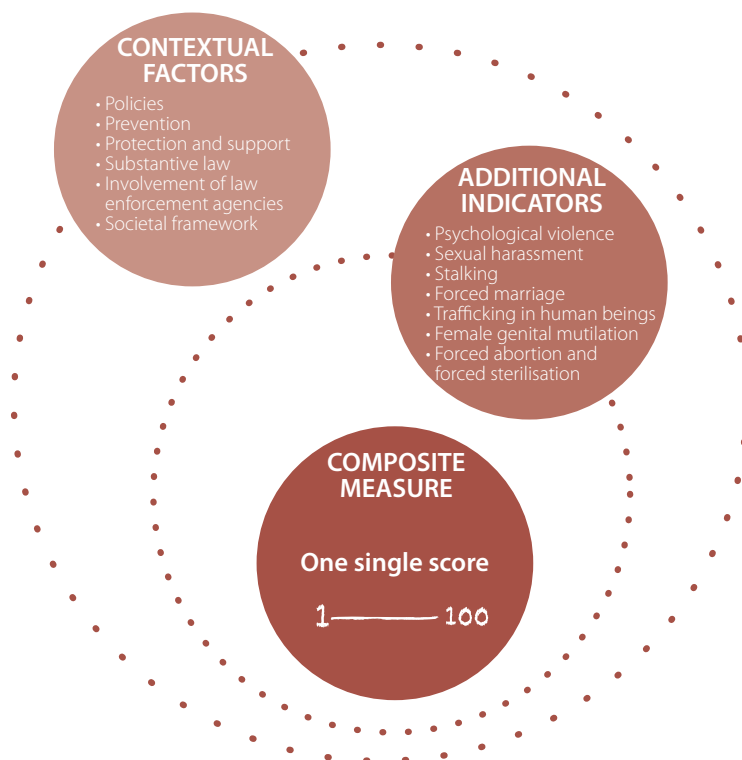


Violence

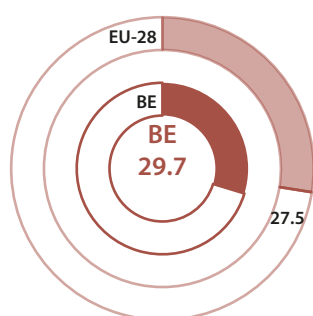
Violence against women is included in the Gender Equality Index as a satellite domain. This means that the scores of the domain of violence do not have an impact on the final score of the Gender Equality Index. From a statistical perspective, the domain of violence does not measure gaps between women 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.

A high score in the Gender Equality Index means a country is close to achieving a gender-equal society. However, in the domain of violence, the higher the score, 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.

Measurement framework of the domain of violence



Domain of violence



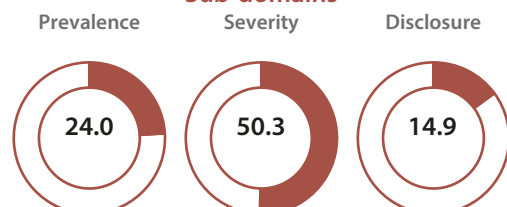
Belgium's score for the domain of violence is 29.7, which is slightly higher than the EU average.

In Belgium, 44 % of women have experienced physical or sexual violence since the age of 15. This level is higher than the EU-28 average of 37 %.

14 % of women who have experienced physical or sexual violence by any perpetrator in the past 12 months have not told anyone. This rate is slightly higher than the EU-28 average of 13 %.

At the societal level, violence against women costs Belgium an estimated EUR 5 billion per year through lost economic output, service utilisation and personal costs ⁽²⁾.

Sub-domains

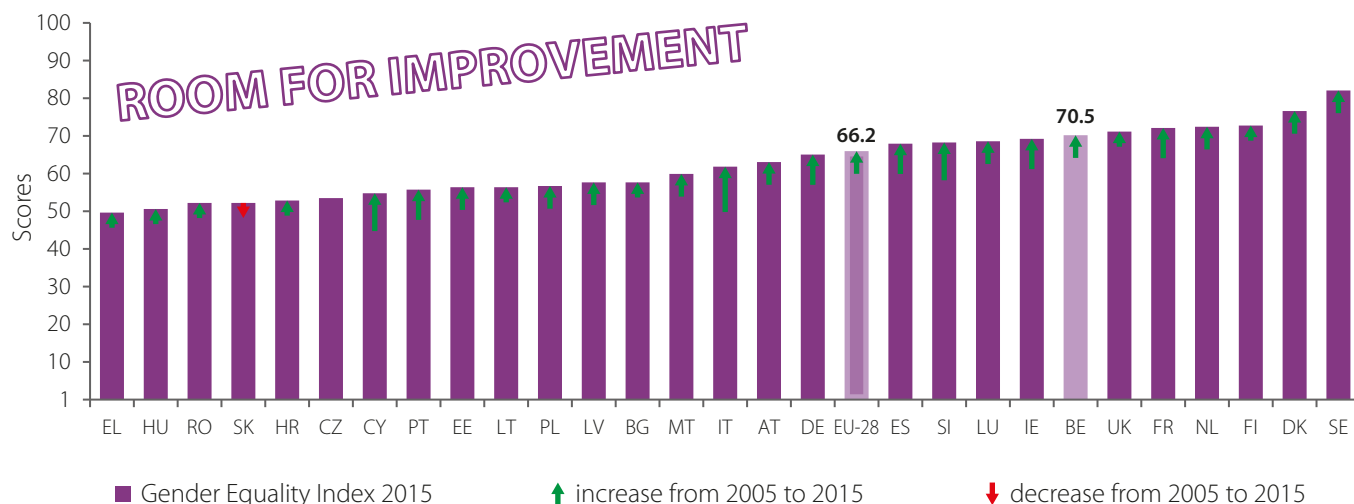


The domain of violence is made up of three sub-domains: **prevalence**, which measures how often violence against women occurs; **severity**, which measures the health consequences of violence; and **disclosure**, which measures the reporting of violence.

⁽²⁾ 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, *Estimating the costs of gender-based violence in the European Union*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2014, p. 142 (available at: <http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/MH0414745EN2.pdf>).

Unique features and benefits of the Gender Equality Index 2017

Results show that Belgium's Gender Equality Index score is slightly higher than the EU-28 average, leaving considerable room for improvement, especially in the domain of time. In order to reach full gender equality, a more targeted and holistic approach to gender equality is needed.



The Gender Equality Index:

- monitors progress in gender equality across the EU and over time;
- supports decision-makers in assessing how far Member States are from reaching gender equality;
- shows the different outcomes of EU and national policies for women and men;
- allows for meaningful gender analysis and comparison between different policy areas;
- supports the development and implementation of gender equality policies and legislation;
- increases awareness among decision-makers and the public of progress and challenges in implementing gender equality policies;
- highlights data gaps and calls for harmonised and comparable data that are sex disaggregated and available for all Member States.

Read more about the Gender Equality Index 2017

- Main report (2017)
- Main findings (2017)
- A snail's pace towards gender equality: fact sheet (2017)
- Methodological report (2017)
- Measurement framework of violence against women (2017)
- Intersecting inequalities (forthcoming)

Explore the Gender Equality Index and the full data for Belgium at <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index>

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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