

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's score ⁽¹⁾ for gender equality is **66.2 out of 100**. There is still a lot of room for improvement.

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 in educational attainment, employment and access to health services.

Both women and men with disabilities face inequalities 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 that push women and men into traditional roles.



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For example, women are more likely to be the main carers in the family and this is also the case for women with disabilities, which makes it more difficult for them to engage in paid work outside the home.

There are around 75.5 million adults with a moderate disability and 34.9 million with a severe disability in the EU ⁽²⁾. **In total, 61 million women (30 % of all women) and 47 million men (25 % of all men) have disabilities ⁽³⁾.**

In 2015, 19 % of women aged 16-64 and 17 % of men in the same age group reported having a disability ⁽⁴⁾ in the EU. Among people older than 65, just under half (46 %) of the men and just over half (53 %) of the women reported having a disability ⁽⁵⁾. These figures are expected to rise as the EU population gets older.

Women with disabilities are disadvantaged in the labour market

The Gender Equality Index shows 10 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 ⁽⁶⁾ in 2014 was 40 % for women and 56 % 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 almost 30 % less than men.

Women with disabilities (21 %) face a higher risk of poverty compared to women without disabilities (16 %). Men with disabilities have a lower risk of poverty (19 %) compared to women with disabilities, but they still have a higher risk compared to men without disabilities (15 %). Low participation in the labour market, low work intensity and discrimination are the main factors that lead to a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion for persons with disabilities compared to the rest of the population ⁽⁷⁾.

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

⁽²⁾ Academic Network of European Disability Experts, *European comparative data on Europe 2020 & people with disabilities*, 2013.

⁽³⁾ Eurostat, [hlth_silc_07].

⁽⁴⁾ They report having long-standing limitations due to health problems for at least 6 months.

⁽⁵⁾ Eurostat, [hlth_silc_07].

⁽⁶⁾ The FTE employment rate is obtained by comparing a worker's average number of hours worked to a full-time worker's average number of hours worked, taking into account the higher incidence of part-time employment among women.



Women with disabilities face bigger barriers in education

13 % of women with disabilities have a university degree compared to 29 % of women without disabilities. Men with disabilities also attain tertiary education less often (17 %) than men without disabilities (27 %).

The disability gap also shows up among the younger generation. 30 % of persons with disabilities aged 30-34 have completed tertiary education, compared to 43 % of persons without disabilities in the same age group ⁽⁷⁾. Over one fifth (22.5 %) of young people with disabilities are early leavers from education and training compared to 11 % of pupils without disabilities ⁽⁸⁾.



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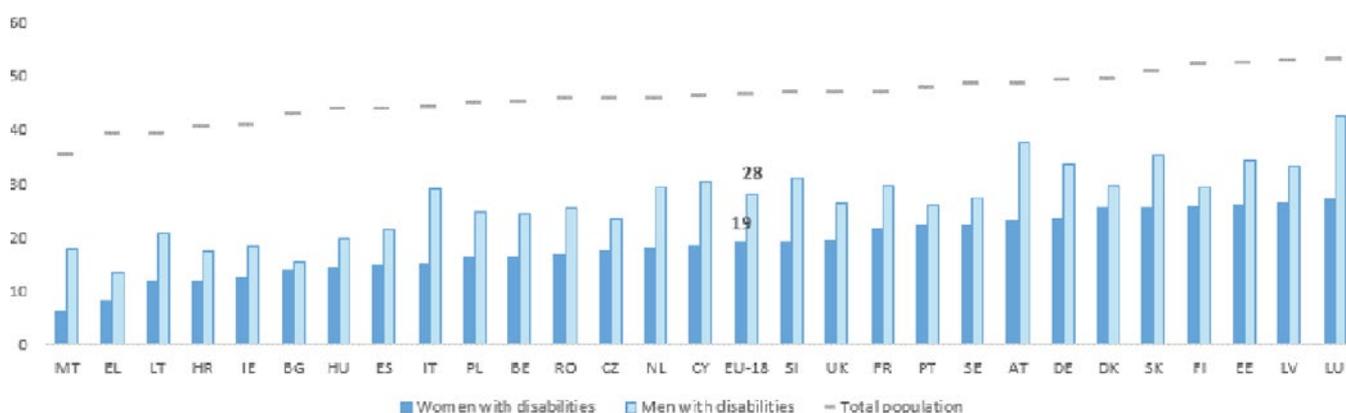
Women and men with disabilities need care, but they are also carers

29 % of women with disabilities and 20 % of men with disabilities care daily for someone else, such as children, older people or other adults with disabilities. This dual role is seldom recognised. Persons with disabilities also make notable contributions to society through voluntary or charitable activities.

The Gender Equality Index shows that women do the bulk of the cooking, household tasks and care work. This also applies to women with disabilities, of whom 79 % do housework every day, compared to 41 % of men with disabilities.

An important factor that prevents women and men with disabilities from fully taking part in society is 'ableism' — discrimination against a person because they have a disability. This includes the attitude that disability is 'negative and tragic' and that 'overcoming' disability is the only valued outcome ⁽¹⁰⁾.

Full-time equivalent (FTE) employment rate by sex and EU Member State (15+ population, %), 2014



Source: EIGE's calculations, EU-SILC 2014

⁽⁷⁾ EIGE, *Poverty, gender and intersecting inequalities in the EU. Review of the implementation of Area A: women and poverty of the Beijing Platform for Action*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2016.

⁽⁸⁾ European Commission, Commission staff working document 'Progress report on the implementation of the European disability strategy (2010-2020)', 2017.

⁽⁹⁾ Ibid.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Hehir, T., *New directions in special education: eliminating ableism in policy and practice*, Harvard Education Press, Cambridge, 2005.

Women with disabilities have more trouble accessing healthcare

Across the EU, the number of persons with disabilities who reported unmet medical or dental needs in 2014 was nearly three times higher than the general population — 13 % versus 5 %. The situation is slightly better for persons with disabilities who are already of retirement age (65+). 11 % of older women with disabilities and 9 % of older men with disabilities reported unmet medical needs in 2014 ⁽¹⁾.



What can be done to ensure gender equality reaches everyone?

Improve data collection

The Gender Equality Index 2017 includes disaggregated data on persons with disabilities in all of the core domains, except for power. We need more detailed and comparable data to ensure the specific needs of women and men with disabilities are reflected in policymaking.

Foster an intersectional perspective in policymaking

The challenges and inequalities that persons with disabilities face affect all aspects of their life and vary depending on their gender. The European Pillar of Social Rights acknowledges that income support, services and adapted work environments are all necessary and mutually reinforcing for the well-being of persons with disabilities. The EU strategy for equality between

men and women post-2015 highlights that women with disabilities face higher risks regarding poverty and social exclusion.

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) recommends that the European Union mainstream a perspective of women and girls with disabilities in its forthcoming gender equality strategies, policies and programmes as well as a gender perspective in its disability strategies.

Create more inclusive education programmes

The continued high rate of youth with disabilities who leave school early might indicate difficulties in accessing suitable educational programmes. Having an education increases the chances of getting a job. The employment rate of persons with disabilities who have completed primary education is 27 %, and this figure rises to 68 % for those who have finished university ⁽²⁾. Changing teaching methods to make them more suitable for youth with disabilities could help to close the disability gap more effectively.



The European Disability Forum emphasises that primary healthcare, sexual and reproductive health services, programmes and healthcare addressing violence against women and mental health services are often not accessible to women and girls with disabilities. Information should be available on sexuality, birth control, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, and breast or uterus cancer. The information should be available in different formats (sign language interpretation, Braille and language-accessible means for women with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities).

⁽¹⁾ Eurostat, [hlth_dh030].

⁽²⁾ Academic Network of European Disability Experts, *European comparative data on Europe 2020 & people with disabilities*, 2013.



The EU promotes the active inclusion and full participation of persons with disabilities

- The **EU's founding documents** recognise and respect the rights of persons with disabilities and prohibit any discrimination on the grounds of disability.
- In 2010, the EU acceded to the **UN CRPD**.
- The **European disability strategy (2010-2020)** identifies eight priority areas: accessibility, participation, equality, employment, education and training, social protection, health, and external action.
- The **European Pillar of Social Rights** (2017) supports expanding protection against discrimination based on disability to include social security, healthcare, education and housing.
- Recent policy initiatives include the **directive on web accessibility**, the **EU Disability Card**, provisions in the **Erasmus+** programme to allow better mobility for students with disabilities, and the increased attention paid to disability in **EU external action policies**.

These developments show the EU's commitment to building a barrier-free and inclusive Europe for all.

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).



Read more about the Gender Equality Index

- [Main report \(2017\)](#)
- [Main findings \(2017\)](#)
- [A snail's pace towards gender equality \(2017\)](#)
- [Methodological report \(2017\)](#)
- [Measurement framework of violence against women \(2017\)](#)
- [Intersecting inequalities \(forthcoming\)](#)

Explore the publications and the interactive interface 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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