

GENDER EQUALITY INDEX 2026

Making parental leave work

An EU Agency

European Institute for Gender Equality

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The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) produces independent research and shares best practices to promote gender equality and eliminate discrimination based on gender. As the EU agency for gender equality, we help people achieve equal opportunities so everyone can thrive, independent of their gender and background.

We combine research, data and tools to help policymakers design measures that are inclusive and transformative and promote gender equality in all areas of life. We communicate our expertise and research effectively. We work closely with partners to raise awareness. We do this at the EU and national levels, and with EU candidate and potential candidate countries.

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Abbreviations

CARE	Survey of Gender Gaps in Unpaid Care, Individual and Social Activities
ECEC	early childhood education and care
EEA	European Economic Area
EHIS	European Health Interview Survey
EHW	education, health and welfare
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
ENAR	European Network Against Racism
EU-LFS	European Union Labour Force Survey
Eurofound	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
EU-GBV	EU Gender-based Violence (Survey)
EU-SILC	European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
FTE	full-time equivalent
GYED	Gyermekgondozási díj – Child-Raising Fee, HU
GYES	Gyermekgondozást segítő ellátás – Child-Raising Support Allowance, HU
HEAL	health, education, administration and literacy
ICT	information and communication technology
INAMI	Institut National d'Assurance Maladie-Invalidité – National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance, BE
INPS	Istituto Nazionale della Previdenza Sociale – National Social Security Institute, IT
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
IVET	initial vocational education and training

KBGG	Kinderbetreuungsgeldgesetz – Childcare Benefit Act, AT
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MP	Member of Parliament
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
pp	percentage point(s)
PPS	purchasing power standard
PreParE	Prestation partagée d'éducation de l'enfant – Shared Child-Raising Allowance, FR
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
VAW	violence against women
WHO	World Health Organization
WMID	women and men in decision-making
ZUS	Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych – Social Insurance Institution, PL

Country codes

BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CZ	Czechia
DK	Denmark
DE	Germany
EE	Estonia
IE	Ireland
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FR	France
HR	Croatia
IT	Italy
CY	Cyprus
LV	Latvia
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
HU	Hungary
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands
AT	Austria
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
FI	Finland
SE	Sweden
EU-27	27 EU Member States

Note on numerical data: numerical data in the report is rounded to whole numbers; therefore, small differences in percentages cited may not show or add up to 100 %.

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Gender Equality Index 2026 highlights

- EU progress towards gender equality continues, but momentum is slowing. With a Gender Equality Index score of 64.5, the pace of progress has weakened since 2020. This year's Index also marks a historic shift, with France moving to the top, ahead of Sweden – a long-standing leader in gender equality.
- Progress has been driven overwhelmingly by improvements in gender balance in decision-making, making it the engine of the Index's recent gains. Yet, this success also exposes a growing imbalance: advances in other domains remain sluggish, with annual gains of less than one point over the past year.
- All EU Member States have moved closer to gender equality over the past decade, significantly reducing differences across the EU. Despite an average annual convergence rate of 16 %, progress unfolds at a very different speed, making targeted measures essential to keep momentum strong and counter attempts to slow it down.

Domain of work

- Although the labour market participation of women is growing, significant disparities remain in the quality and structure of employment. Women make up only 20 % of information and communication technology specialists in the EU, highlighting their continued under-representation in a sector of growing strategic importance.
- Care responsibilities continue to widen gender inequalities in employment. Among couples with children, the gender gap in full-time equivalent employment rate reaches 24 percentage points (pp) – nearly five times higher than the 5 pp gap among couples without children.
- Making parenthood and employment truly compatible requires both inclusive parental leave and accessible childcare. Yet, gaps in leave eligibility and childcare provision continue to interrupt women's employment, contributing to a 15 pp gender gap in full-time equivalent employment rate across the EU.

Domain of money

- Gender inequality leaves a lasting financial footprint. Across the EU, women earn only 80 % of men's annual earnings, while men earn 47 % more than their partners. Gender inequalities compound over time, resulting in a 24 % gender pension gap in the EU.
- Economic vulnerability is particularly acute for women living alone, single mothers, older women and women with lower socioeconomic status. Single mothers face a higher risk of in-work poverty than single fathers (22 % compared with 19 %), reflecting the combined pressures of lower earnings and greater caregiving responsibilities.

- Well-designed paid parental leave policies combined with early paternal involvement in childcare can increase mothers' labour market earnings and reduce their financial insecurity.

Domain of knowledge

- Gender segregation in education remains widespread, but change is under way. Several Member States are moving towards a more balanced gender mix in different fields of study, with women making up over 40 % of science, technology, engineering and mathematics graduates in three countries and men accounting for around one third of education, health and welfare graduates in two countries.
- Foreign-born women and men are substantially less likely than native-born learners to hold an initial vocational education and training qualification, reflecting obstacles such as language barriers, discrimination and difficulties in having prior qualifications recognised.
- Parental leave policies can shape educational and skills trajectories long after childbirth. Inclusive parental leave policies, particularly for student and parents with limited employment histories, alongside affordable, high-quality childcare, help parents stay in education, empower them to continue developing skills and reduce the risk of long-term labour market disadvantage.

Domain of time

- Women continue to bear the bulk of unpaid caregiving. Around 41 % of women, compared with 20 % of men, provide more than 35 hours of childcare each week, creating persistent time poverty that constrains their participation in paid work, civic life and social and leisure activities.
- Caregiving remains deeply gendered within households. Women in heterosexual couples are nearly three times more likely to provide time-intensive childcare than women in same-sex couples, highlighting the influence of traditional gender roles on the division of care responsibilities.
- Parental leave can drive change, but only if fathers use it. Policies that include non-transferable months, adequate income replacement and inclusive eligibility are the most effective at increasing fathers' uptake and promoting a more equal sharing of care duties.

Domain of power

- Power remains the weakest area of gender equality, despite notable progress. Since 2020, the EU has recorded its largest improvement in the domain of power, driven by gains in both social and economic decision-making. Yet, women remain significantly under-represented in leadership, with 15 Member States still scoring below 40 points.

- EU-wide statistics on decision-making currently capture only sex differences, limiting insight into how intersectional disadvantage and privilege shape access to power. The European Institute for Gender Equality's analysis of the 2024 European Parliament shows that men are particularly over-represented among Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) aged 60 and over.
- Family-friendly political institutions are essential for equal representation. Most elected representatives, including MEPs and members of national parliaments, are not entitled to parental leave, making it harder to combine political office with care responsibilities. Reforms in several Member States and the European Parliament's proposal to allow MEPs to delegate their voting rights around childbirth are important steps towards more inclusive political leadership.

Domain of health

- Women live longer than men, but in poorer health: women at 65 can expect to live around 48 % of their remaining years in good health, compared with 54 % for men. At the same time, men's greater engagement in unhealthy and self-destructive behaviours shows how harmful gender norms can undermine their health and well-being.
- Women are consistently less likely than men to report being in good or very good health. The gap is particularly pronounced among single women and women with lower levels of education, with only one in two rating their health positively.
- Investing in well-designed, well-paid parental leave and timely mental health support for parents benefits every family while helping to reduce health inequalities. These investments are especially important for low-income parents, single parents and parents with lower levels of education, who face the highest risk of poor mental health.

Domain of violence

- Violence against women is widespread, severe and largely hidden. With a score of 31.9, the violence domain reveals the scale of the problem across the EU. Yet, the available data reveals only a fraction of the reality, especially for femicide.
- Violence is often repeated and perpetrated by multiple offenders. Nearly one in three women who were victims of physical and/or sexual violence experienced abuse by more than one category of perpetrator, highlighting the cumulative and pervasive nature of violence across different settings and relationships.
- Economic independence is a key safeguard against intimate partner violence. Well-paid parental leave can strengthen women's financial autonomy, helping to reduce dependence on abusive partners and serving as an important protective factor against domestic violence.

Parental leave

- Fathers' leave uptake is higher where leave is non-transferable and adequately paid, showing clear progress under the Work–Life Balance Directive and a more balanced sharing of leave in several Member States.
- While eligibility for parental leave has expanded, gaps remain. Around 1 in 10 women and 1 in 12 men in employment are not entitled to parental leave, particularly those in self-employment and other forms of non-standard work, where employment-based eligibility conditions are harder to meet.
- Eligibility for parental leave does not guarantee access to leave benefits. Across the overall population, 18 % of women and 13 % of men would receive no parental leave benefits, leaving many parents without the financial support needed to take leave.
- The early childhood education and care gap undermines equality gains. In most Member States, families face a period with neither well-paid leave nor guaranteed affordable childcare, and it is mothers who overwhelmingly absorb this gap through extended leave, unpaid leave or labour market exit.
- Early childhood education and care entitlements often fail in practice: shortages, high costs, limited flexibility and uneven quality continue to create barriers, leaving around a quarter of parents with unmet childcare needs.

Introduction

The 2026 Gender Equality Index marks the second edition published under the revised methodology introduced in 2025. Developed through extensive consultations with policymakers at the EU and national levels, researchers, government representatives and civil-society organisations, the updated methodology aligns the Index with its time. Equipped with new data sources and perspectives, the revised structure of the Index sharpens its ability not only to monitor gains but also to detect setbacks and highlight areas where policy action is most urgently needed.

The renewed approach comes at a pivotal moment. Growing political polarisation, the rising of populism and increasing pushback against women's rights and gender equality are challenging the decades of progress. In this context, the Gender Equality Index is more relevant than ever. By measuring gender inequalities across six core domains of everyday life – work, money, knowledge, time, power and health – the Index provides an evidence-based picture of how gender equality is evolving across the EU. It serves both as a mirror of our societies and as a compass showing what remains to be done for EU values to become a lived reality.

The policy landscape has also evolved significantly. The adoption of the 2026–2030 EU gender equality strategy, building on the roadmap for women's rights launched in 2025, sets out ambitious goals to advance gender equality, address persistent structural inequalities and safeguard hard-won gains against growing anti-gender-equality movements. The close alignment of these policy frameworks with the structure of the Gender Equality Index reinforces its role as the EU's flagship monitoring tool, strengthening bridges between evidence, policymaking and accountability.

Against this backdrop, this year's thematic focus examines one of the defining policy challenges facing Europe today – how to support families while advancing gender equality. As EU Member States confront demographic decline and discuss policy options to increase birth rates, parental leave has moved to the centre of policy debates. However, the number of children born cannot be considered in isolation from the conditions under which families care for them. The design of parental leave policies shapes not only parents' ability to reconcile work and family life, but also the sharing of caregiving responsibilities between parents, women's labour market opportunities and, ultimately, the economic and social sustainability of European societies.

Applying a gender equality perspective to the analysis of parental leave ([1]), the thematic focus is set to assess the effects of the Work–Life Balance Directive. Adopted in 2019, the directive introduced individual, non-transferable entitlements for both parents and set up the requirement that at least two months of parental leave per parent be paid at an adequate level. It thereby created, for the first time, a tangible incentive for fathers to take time off from work to care for their child. While all Member States now provide statutory parental leave, national schemes vary in duration, payment levels, eligibility conditions and the degree to which they are genuinely available

([1]) In the context of this report, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) considers parental leave to be a care measure that gives both parents an equal opportunity to care for a young child and is usually taken at the end of maternity leave.

to both parents. The report analyses how parental leave is designed, who can access it, who takes it up and how it connects with early childhood education and care (ECEC) services. Understanding these differences is essential to assessing how policy design either promotes or hinders gender equality.

The report is organised into nine chapters. Chapter 1 presents an overview of the progress towards gender equality across the EU. Chapters 2 to 8 delve into each of the Index's domains, highlighting new indicators, policy context and key findings. Each chapter explores trends in domain and subdomain scores for the EU-27 and individual Member States, examines inequalities affecting different groups of women and men through selected indicators and analyses how the domain relates to this year's thematic focus on parental leave.

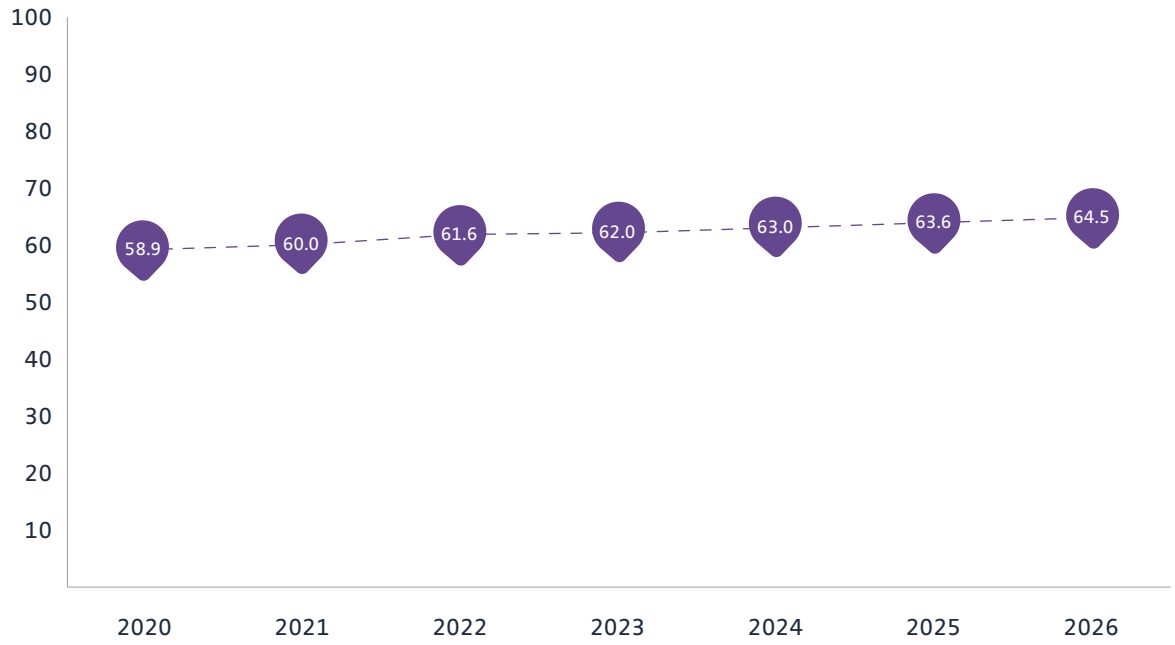
Chapter 9 presents the thematic focus on parental leave eligibility across the EU. It reviews national parental leave policies, with particular focus on the policy features promoting men's uptake. It analyses eligibility rates across countries and the trends over time. Finally, it describes if and how parental leave schemes align with childcare provision at the national level.

1. Gender equality in the EU at a glance

1.1. One step forward, equality remains elusive

The Gender Equality Index 2026 records 64.5 out of 100 points. Gender equality in the EU has advanced by 0.9 points over the past year and by 5.6 points since 2020 (Figure 1). While it is one step forward, the progress is at a crawl. Small annual gains highlight that gender equality is advancing incrementally, leaving a substantial distance to full equality and underscoring the need for sustained and more ambitious actions across domains.

Figure 1: Gender Equality Index, 2020–2026



NB: Data corrections and updates to the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) microdata carried out by several national statistical institutes affected a number of indicators included in the Index. As a result, the previous editions of the Gender Equality Index have been recalculated.

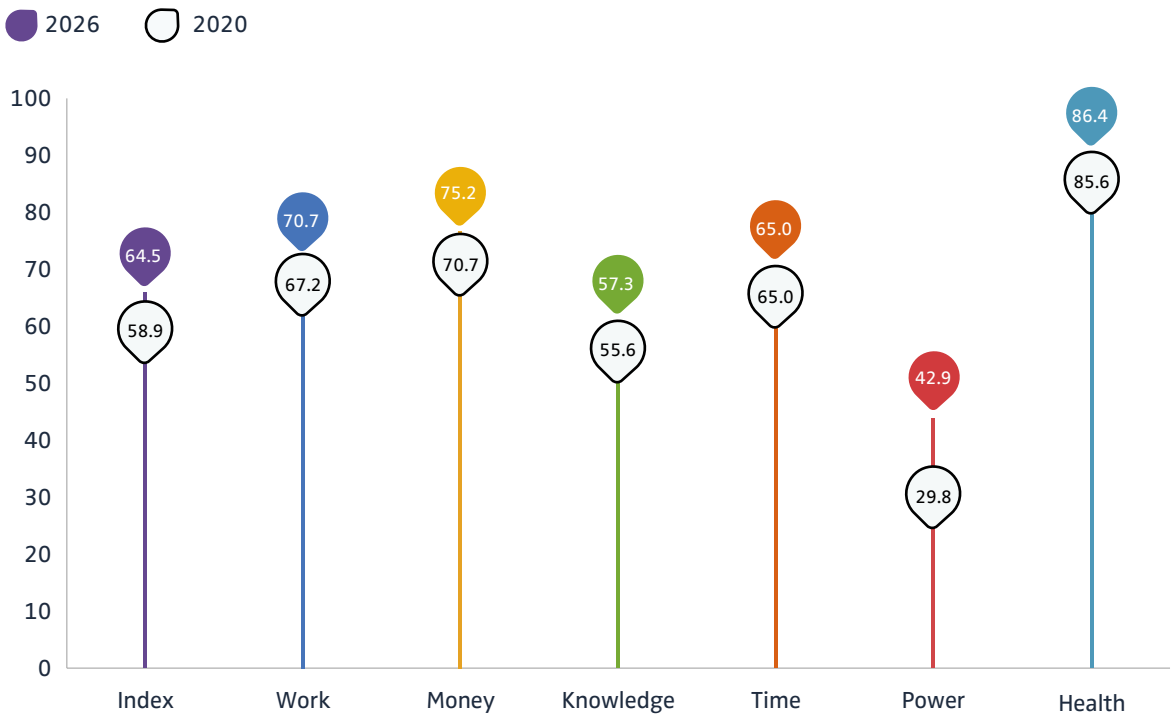
The Index is calculated every year by using *n* – 1 data. The 2026 Index is mostly based on 2025 data. See Annex 1 for more details.

Power continues to be the EU's greatest gender equality challenge. It has improved faster than any other domain but remains the lowest-scoring area of the Index, at 42.9 in 2026 (Figure 2). Since 2020, it has gained 13.1 points, averaging around 2 points per year, driven largely by the increased representation of women in economic and social decision-making in several Member States. Yet,

women remain substantially under-represented where decisions are made, making unequal access to power one of the biggest hurdles to gender equality in the EU.

Gender segregation in education continues to slow progress. The knowledge domain records the second-lowest score (57.3) and has improved by just 1.7 points since 2020. While the EU has made remarkable progress in educational attainment overall, women and men continue to cluster in different fields of study, particularly in tertiary education. These persistent educational choices reinforce labour market inequalities and, unless they change more rapidly, gender equality in education will remain generations away.

Figure 2: Gender Equality Index 2020 and 2026



Time stands as one of the least equally shared resources. With a score of 65.0, the time domain reveals enduring inequalities in the distribution of unpaid care and time for self-care. Women continue to shoulder a disproportionate share of childcare and long-term care responsibilities, which leaves them with less time for paid work, career progression, leisure and civic engagement. Although data limitations constrain trend analysis, unequal care responsibilities remain one of the most significant drivers of gender inequality across the EU.

Women's participation in employment is increasing, but equality at work remains elusive. The work domain reached 70.7 – an improvement of 3.5 points since 2020. More women are entering employment, yet progress is constrained by persistent occupational and managerial segregation and unequal working conditions. Without faster change in a rapidly evolving labour market, equal opportunities in working life will remain out of reach for generations to come.

Economic inequalities accumulate over the course of a lifetime and can hinder financial autonomy. The money domain scored 75.2, gaining 4.5 points since 2020. Gender differences in earnings lead to unequal financial resources, especially for women. This is particularly evident in households with children, where caregiving responsibilities impact women's lower earnings, and among older people, where lifelong inequalities can result in lower pensions and greater financial vulnerability for women. The persistence of these gaps demonstrates that economic independence remains unevenly distributed between women and men, and that financial equality is still a distant goal.

With a score of 86.4, health continues to lead the Gender Equality Index. However, an increase of only 0.8 points since 2020 suggests that improvements have largely plateaued. Maintaining high levels of gender equality in health will require renewed attention to emerging inequalities rather than relying on past achievements.

1.2. Progress is patchy, but power is leading the way

Progress towards gender equality continues to differ markedly across the EU. In 2026, the scores range from 74.8 in France to 46.7 in Cyprus, revealing persistent disparities in gender equality in Europe (Figure 3).

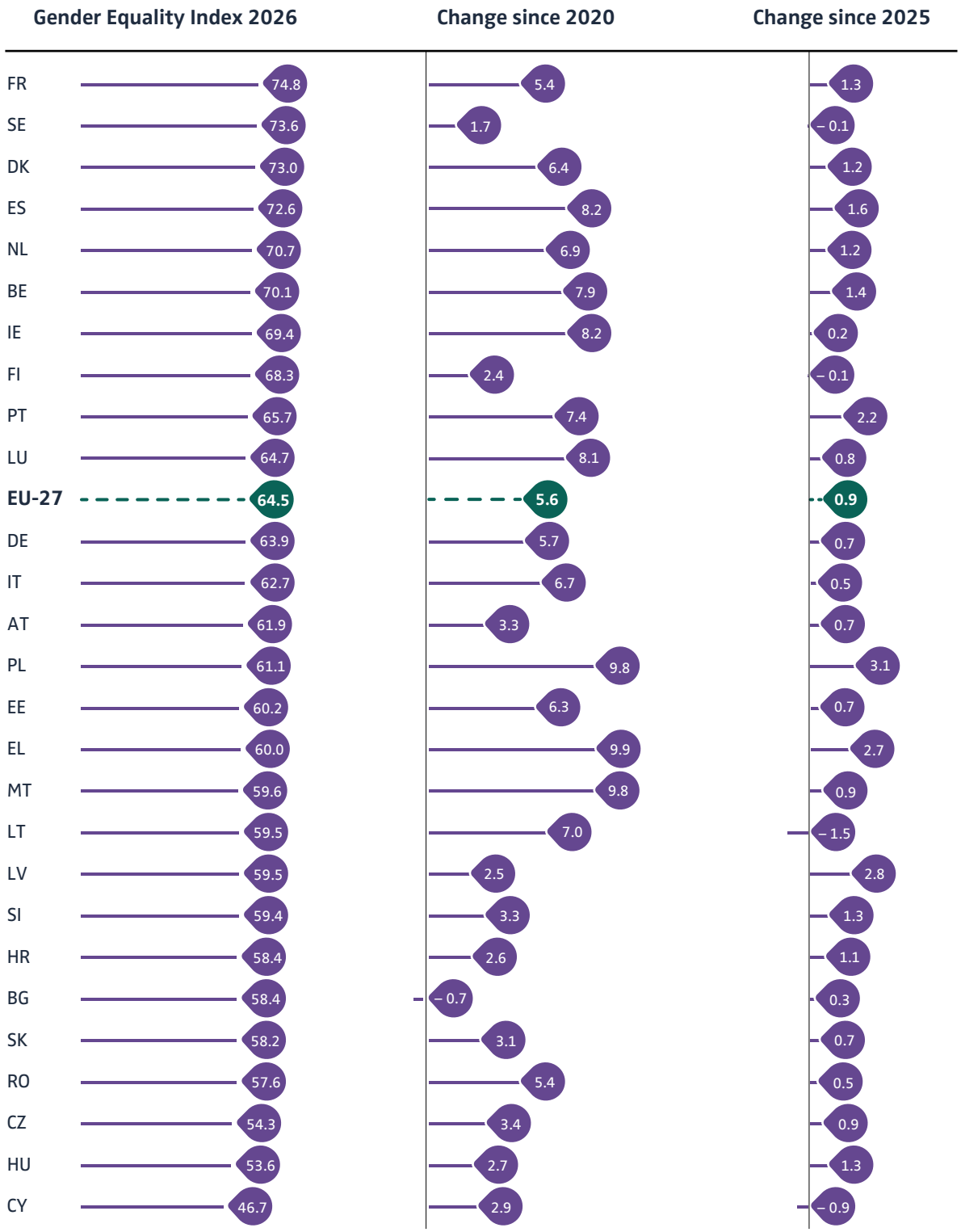
This year marks a significant change: for the first time since 2013, Sweden is no longer the highest-ranking Member State in gender equality. France now leads the Index, followed closely by Sweden, Denmark and Spain. At the other end of the ranking, Cyprus, Hungary and Czechia record the lowest scores, illustrating that substantial gender gaps remain in parts of the EU.

While differences between countries persist, many Member States are making steady progress. Ten countries now score above the EU average of 64.5, and 16 have reached at least 60 points.

However, the pace of improvement varies considerably. Since 2020, Greece, Malta and Poland have achieved the largest gains in gender equality, demonstrating that rapid progress is possible with sustained policy action. By contrast, Bulgaria is the only Member State to record an overall decline, with its score falling by 0.7 points over the same period.

Over the past year alone, Poland, Latvia and Greece have recorded the strongest improvements, each gaining around 3 points. By contrast, Lithuania experienced the largest decline, of 1.5 points. These contrasting trajectories underline that progress towards gender equality is neither uniform nor guaranteed, requiring continued commitment to sustain and accelerate change.

Figure 3: Gender Equality Index and changes over time, 2026 (scores)



NB: Data corrections and updates to the EU-SILC microdata carried out by several national statistical institutes affected a number of indicators included in the Index. As a result, the previous editions of the Gender Equality Index have been recalculated.

The Index is calculated every year by using *n* – 1 data. The 2026 Index is mostly based on 2025 data. See Annex 1 for more details.

Progress across domains has been uneven, with advances in some areas offset by setbacks in others (Table 1). Since 2020, several countries have experienced declining scores in individual domains, highlighting that progress is neither automatic nor irreversible. The knowledge domain has seen the most widespread setbacks, with 11 Member States recording lower scores than six years ago. Setbacks in gender equality across health, access to economic resources and employment and decision-making power have also been observed in several countries, highlighting the fragile nature of progress.

Table 1: Changes in the 2026 Gender Equality Index and domain scores

	Changes in scores, 2026 versus 2020							Changes in scores, 2026 versus 2025						
	Index	Work	Money	Knowledge	Time	Power	Health	Index	Work	Money	Knowledge	Time	Power	Health
EU-27	5.6	3.5	4.5	1.7	0.0	13.1	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.6	– 0.1	0.0	2.4	0.2
BE	7.9	4.8	7.0	1.8	0.0	20.7	0.2	1.4	1.3	2.2	– 1.8	0.0	4.7	– 0.1
BG	– 0.7	0.0	– 0.7	– 0.4	0.0	– 1.4	0.7	0.3	– 0.1	0.5	3.0	0.0	– 0.6	0.1
CZ	3.4	3.1	2.3	– 1.3	0.0	5.7	– 0.1	0.9	0.7	0.4	0.1	0.0	1.6	0.1
DK	6.4	1.9	– 1.7	0.3	0.0	22.9	1.8	1.2	1.6	– 0.2	– 0.3	0.0	3.5	1.1
DE	5.7	4.1	7.2	– 0.9	0.0	14.8	– 0.6	0.7	1.4	0.9	0.0	0.0	1.3	0.0
EE	6.3	3.5	6.0	3.1	0.0	7.8	1.0	0.7	1.0	2.3	1.4	0.0	0.4	– 1.2
IE	8.2	3.1	3.2	2.1	0.0	24.3	– 1.3	0.2	– 0.4	0.7	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.8
EL	9.9	2.0	2.1	0.7	0.0	19.7	1.4	2.7	– 0.5	0.5	0.5	0.0	6.9	1.1
ES	8.2	3.2	4.8	– 4.4	0.0	32.9	0.5	1.6	1.2	0.8	– 0.2	0.0	6.6	0.5
FR	5.4	4.1	2.6	4.0	0.0	20.2	– 0.3	1.3	0.1	– 0.4	– 1.0	0.0	9.0	– 0.6
HR	2.6	3.6	3.7	1.0	0.0	3.3	– 0.3	1.1	1.9	1.6	1.4	0.0	1.0	0.5
IT	6.7	2.0	5.1	– 1.7	0.0	19.3	2.8	0.5	0.6	0.8	– 0.8	0.0	1.1	1.3
CY	2.9	2.7	7.0	– 0.1	0.0	2.1	3.2	– 0.9	– 0.4	0.4	– 1.0	0.0	– 0.9	– 1.4
LV	2.5	– 0.7	4.1	3.6	0.0	4.1	0.9	2.8	– 0.1	4.1	1.4	0.0	6.0	0.5
LT	7.0	0.5	8.7	4.4	0.0	11.2	0.9	– 1.5	1.0	0.0	2.4	0.0	– 5.9	1.0
LU	8.1	5.3	7.0	5.0	0.0	14.9	2.1	0.8	– 0.7	2.2	0.1	0.0	1.9	– 0.6
HU	2.7	5.2	– 3.0	1.6	0.0	2.9	0.5	1.3	2.1	– 4.1	3.3	0.0	1.4	– 0.3
MT	9.8	12.4	2.0	0.2	0.0	15.1	– 1.5	0.9	4.8	2.2	0.8	0.0	– 0.9	1.8
NL	6.9	5.2	7.8	1.0	0.0	18.9	1.4	1.2	0.8	3.1	0.3	0.0	2.0	0.0
AT	3.3	3.6	4.0	– 0.5	0.0	7.4	0.1	0.7	0.4	1.1	1.6	0.0	0.9	0.2
PL	9.8	2.1	7.7	– 4.1	0.0	16.8	1.1	3.1	0.3	0.9	– 0.8	0.0	7.2	0.0
PT	7.4	3.1	0.0	– 3.1	0.0	20.2	2.6	2.2	0.5	– 0.4	0.2	0.0	6.6	1.5
RO	5.4	1.3	– 1.1	0.3	0.0	10.3	1.3	0.5	0.4	2.6	2.2	0.0	– 0.9	1.9
SI	3.3	– 1.8	2.5	– 3.5	0.0	7.6	3.3	1.3	1.0	– 0.7	– 0.2	0.0	3.1	– 0.5
SK	3.1	4.7	– 2.7	– 2.2	0.0	6.4	1.4	0.7	1.5	– 6.0	0.1	0.0	2.6	0.9
FI	2.4	0.9	2.0	2.8	0.0	6.3	1.3	– 0.1	– 0.2	– 0.4	0.0	0.0	0.2	– 0.1
SE	1.7	4.1	0.7	3.4	0.0	2.1	0.2	– 0.1	0.4	– 1.0	1.7	0.0	– 0.7	– 1.4

The greater representation of women in decision-making continues to be the strongest driver of progress across the EU. The power domain has recorded by far the largest improvements since 2020, with 16 Member States increasing their scores by more than 10 points. Spain achieved the most remarkable progress, followed by Ireland and Denmark. Bulgaria is the only Member State where a decline in gender balance in power is observed.

Knowledge presents a more mixed picture. While Luxembourg recorded the largest improvement in the knowledge domain, followed by Lithuania, France and Latvia, progress has been undermined by the continued gender segregation in education. As a result, several Member States have seen their scores decline, with the largest decreases recorded in Spain, Poland and Slovenia.

Signs of stagnation in the health domain have become increasingly evident. Malta and Ireland have recorded the largest declines since 2020, suggesting that maintaining high levels of gender equality in health cannot be taken for granted. By contrast, Slovenia, Cyprus and Italy have made the most progress.

In the money domain, Lithuania has made the strongest gains since 2020, followed closely by the Netherlands and Poland, reflecting improvements in closing gender gaps in economic situation and in access to financial resources. At the same time, Hungary, Slovakia, Denmark, Romania and Bulgaria have experienced declining scores.

Labour market outcomes also tell contrasting stories. Malta recorded by far the largest improvement in the work domain, with Luxembourg, Hungary and the Netherlands also making notable gains. By contrast, Slovenia and Latvia moved backwards, showing that advances in employment and job quality are not shared equally across the EU.

Comparable trend analysis is not yet possible for the time domain. Due to changes in the underlying data, progress since 2020 cannot be assessed. Nevertheless, the latest results highlight the persistent imbalance in the time that women and men devote to unpaid care and social activities, confirming that the unequal distribution of time remains a fundamental barrier to gender equality.

1.3. Is the EU converging towards gender equality?

Over the last decade, the EU has moved closer to gender equality, but Member States have not followed a single path. While some countries have combined sustained improvements with a gradual narrowing of the distance to the EU average, others have increased their scores without strengthening their relative position. These contrasting trajectories illustrate that progress in gender equality is not only about moving forward, but also about how countries evolve in relation to one another.

The concept of upward social convergence assumes that countries advance in gender equality while simultaneously reducing disparities across the EU (Eurofound et al., 2021). Evidence from the

Gender Equality Index suggests that this process has taken place at the EU level. Between 2016 and 2026, average Index scores increased steadily and differences between Member States became smaller, resulting in an overall annual convergence rate of 16 %.

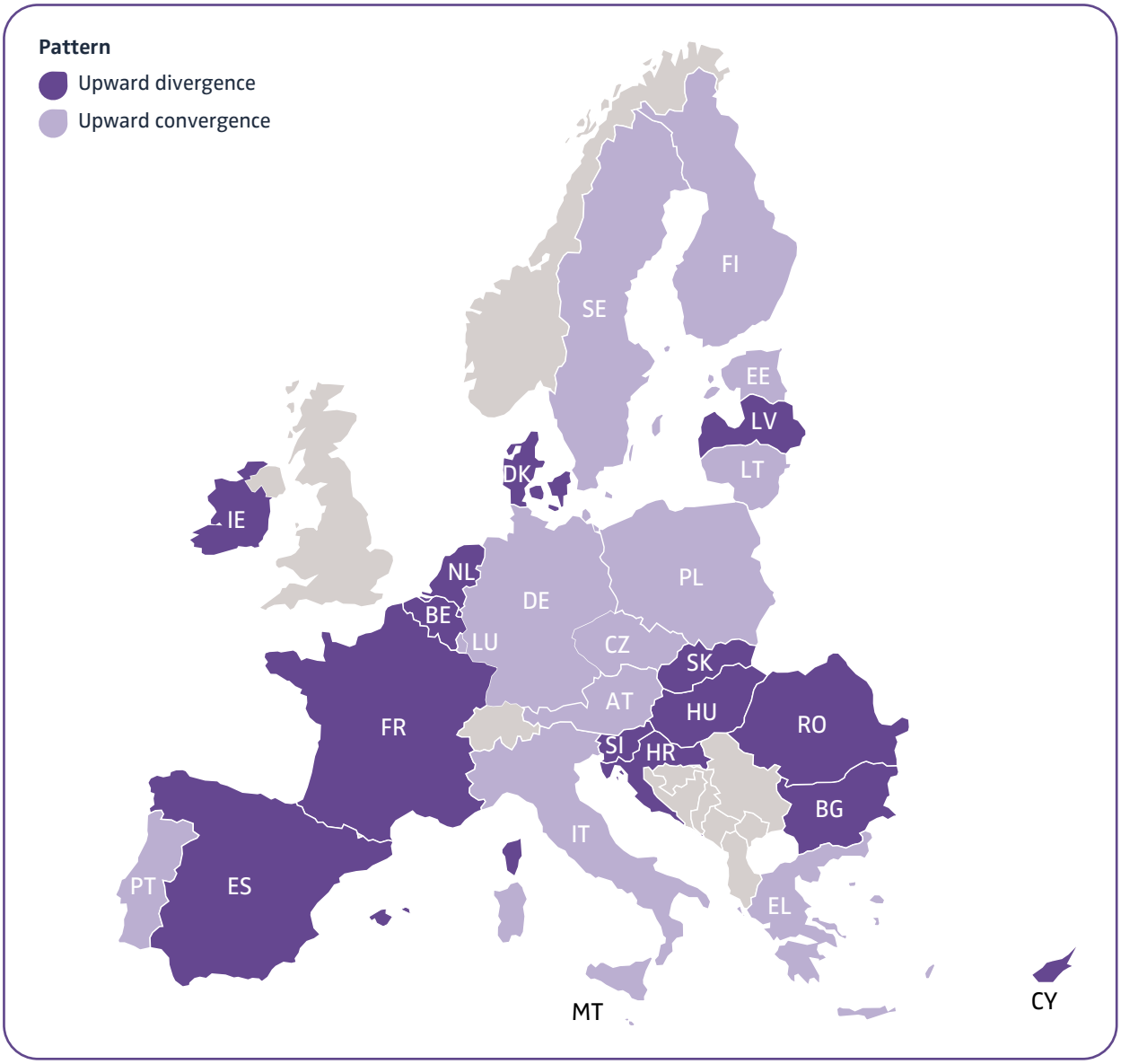
Beneath this positive EU-wide trend, however, national experiences differ substantially. Member States can be grouped into two broad categories according to the relationship between their progress and their distance from the EU average.

Comparing each Member State's trajectory with the evolution of the EU average identifies two broad patterns (Figure 4), each including countries that are both above and below the EU average:

- upward convergence: Czechia, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Finland and Sweden have improved their Gender Equality Index scores while simultaneously narrowing the gap with the EU average;
- upward divergence: Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Ireland, Spain, France, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Hungary, the Netherlands, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia have also improved their scores, but at a pace that has widened their distance from the EU average.

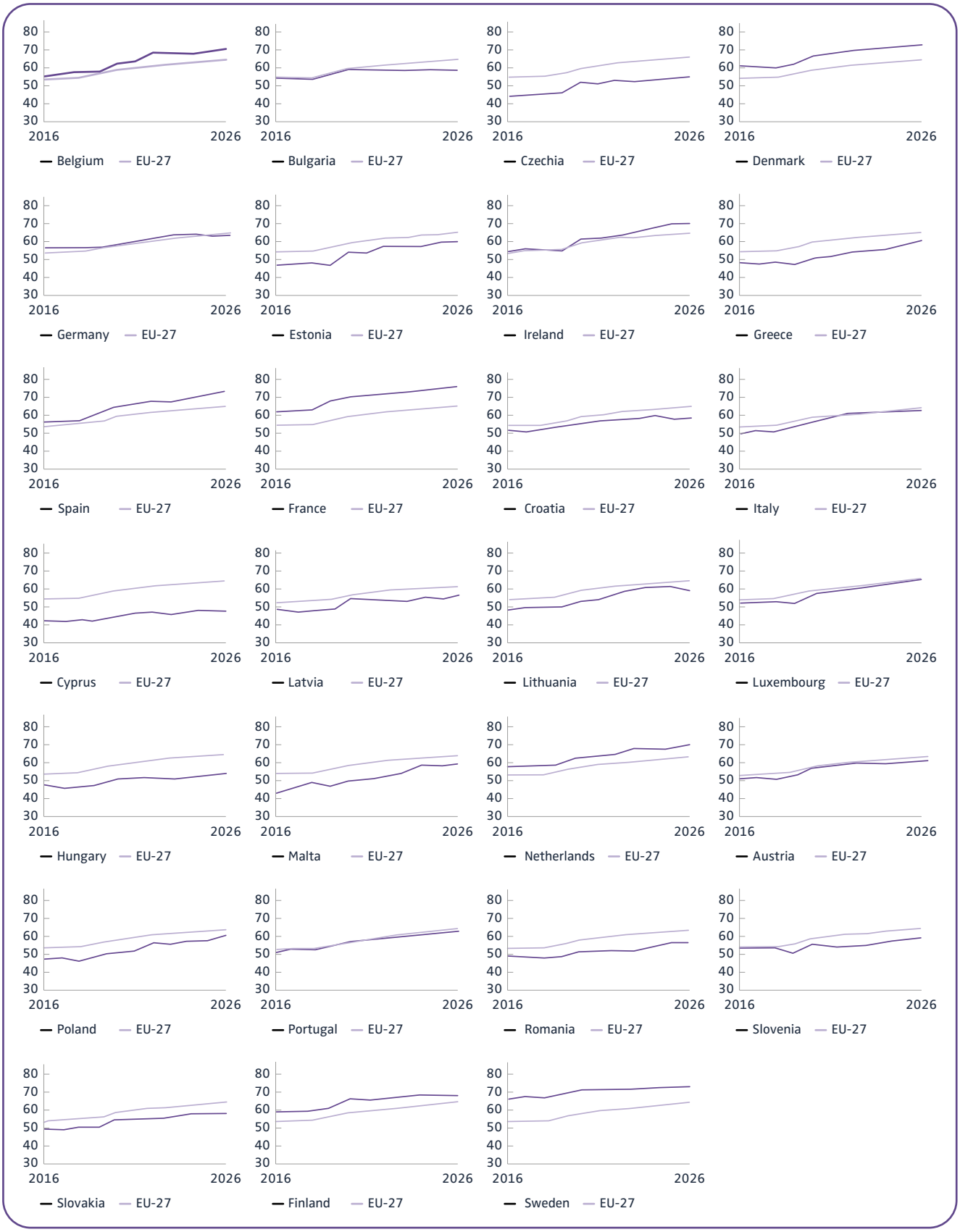
Overall, the findings point to a more nuanced picture than the EU average alone might suggest. Progress towards gender equality is widespread across the EU, yet Member States are advancing at different speeds and from different starting points (Figure 5). Ensuring that improvements translate into stronger convergence will remain a key challenge for EU and national policymakers in the years ahead.

Figure 4: Patterns of convergence in the Gender Equality Index by Member State, 2016–2026



Source: Authors' calculations.

Figure 5: Gender Equality Index scores by Member State, 2016–2026



Source: Authors' calculations.

2. Domain of work

Women's labour market participation in the EU has risen substantially, with employment rates reaching historic highs (Eurostat, 2026c). This reflects decades of policy efforts to expand equal rights and remove legal barriers (European Commission, 2026). Yet, despite this progress, significant gender inequalities persist. In the labour market, women work fewer hours and their working lives are shorter; they have fewer career advancement opportunities, experience stronger occupational segregation, face lower economic security and continue to carry a disproportionate share of unpaid care work. These enduring disparities show that equal rights and access alone are insufficient to eliminate gender gaps in the labour market (Kleven et al., 2019).

A key explanation lies in the persistent gender norms surrounding caregiving (Omidakhsh et al., 2020). Motherhood is still closely associated with primary responsibility for daily informal care, whereas fatherhood is linked to continuous employment and the role of economic provider. These expectations shape both family decisions and workplace practices, reinforcing traditional divisions of paid and unpaid work (Aarntzen et al., 2021; Schmidt et al., 2023).

Workplace cultures further entrench inequality through the ideal worker norm, which rewards constant availability, uninterrupted career trajectories and high organisational commitment (Montanye et al., 2024). Although presented as gender-neutral, this norm reflects the legacy of the traditional male breadwinner model. Workers with substantial caregiving responsibilities – disproportionately women – are often perceived as less committed, resulting in disadvantages in hiring, promotion and career progression (Haas et al., 2019; Petts et al., 2022). At the same time, the ability of parents to reconcile paid work and caregiving depends not only on workplace cultures but also on the broader institutional environment.

Parental leave policies are one of the most important institutional mechanisms shaping the division of care responsibilities after childbirth or adoption. Equal legal entitlements do not automatically lead to equal uptake, prompting recent EU policy to focus on creating conditions that encourage fathers' participation. The Work–Life Balance Directive ([2]) introduced non-transferable parental leave for each parent and strengthened work–life balance rights for carers. By establishing individual entitlements for fathers, the directive aims to shift caregiving norms and challenge traditional gender roles in families and workplaces.

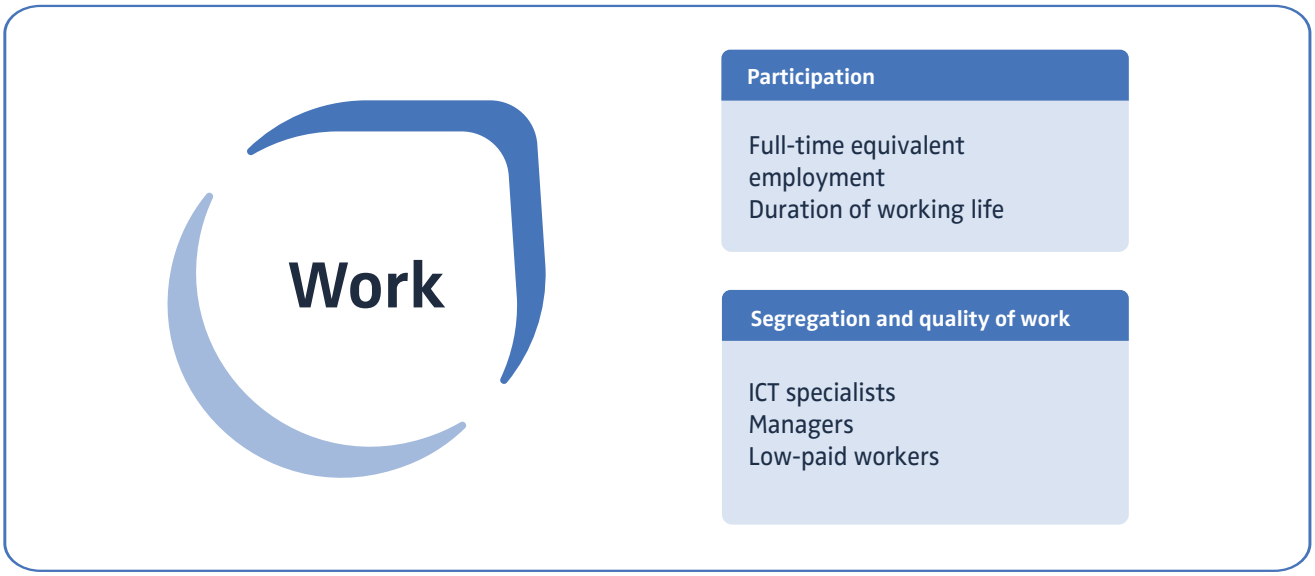
Together with the European care strategy and the gender equality strategy, these initiatives signal a broader shift from ensuring formal equality towards fostering the structural and cultural conditions necessary for an equal sharing of care responsibilities and, ultimately, more gender-equal labour market outcomes (OECD, 2025a; Tamm, 2019).

([2]) Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work–life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU (OJ L 188, 12.7.2019, p. 79, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/1158/oj).

EU policy context

- The **European Pillar of Social Rights** aims to ensure equal treatment and opportunities for working women and men, including in career progression and pay. It promotes quality jobs with fair working conditions and supports shared care responsibilities.
- The **Work–Life Balance Directive** strives to improve gender equality in the labour market by encouraging both parents to take up family leave and promoting flexible working arrangements.
- The **2022 European care strategy** recognises affordable, accessible and high-quality care services as essential infrastructure for increasing women's labour market participation and promotes a more equal sharing of care responsibilities.
- The **Adequate Minimum Wage Directive** (Directive (EU) 2022/2041) requires Member States to set adequate minimum wage levels. This supports gender equality as it benefits women, who are over-represented in the lowest-paid sectors and more affected by low wages.
- The **2030 Digital Decade policy programme** promotes women's participation in digital careers, with a 2030 target of having at least 20 million information and communication technology (ICT) specialists while ensuring women's greater access to this field.
- The **Directive on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions** (Directive (EU) 2019/1152) seeks to strengthen protections for workers, particularly those in precarious and non-standard jobs, the majority of whom are women. The need for flexible work that fits around their caregiving responsibilities leaves women more exposed to economic insecurity and poor working conditions.
- The **2025 quality jobs roadmap** provides the EU framework for improving job quality and supporting fair working conditions and workers' rights. It supports gender equality by promoting equal opportunities, reducing labour market inequalities, improving working conditions in sectors with high female employment and facilitating a better balance between paid work and care responsibilities.
- The **2026–2030 gender equality strategy** provides the strategic compass for tackling persistent gaps in women's labour market participation, segregation and quality of work, ensuring coherence across leave, working conditions and digital skills initiatives.

The domain of work examines the extent to which women and men can benefit from equal access to jobs, the degree of gender segregation in the labour market and the quality of work.



The subdomain of participation is based on two key indicators. Full-time equivalent (FTE) employment rate ([3]) captures not only how many people are employed, but also their working time. It factors in part-time work, which is far more common among women than men. The second indicator looks at the duration of working life.

The second subdomain focuses on the structure and quality of work. It covers three indicators, two measuring gender segregation through the representation of women among ICT specialists and managers, and one measuring the prevalence of low-paid work in the labour market. Workers are considered low-paid if they receive two thirds or less of the national median employee income (i.e. gross cash, non-cash employee income and employers' social insurance contributions). Low-paid jobs are a key driver of economic vulnerability. Women, often stereotyped as secondary or supplementary earners, are at far greater risk of such vulnerability as they are more likely to work part-time.

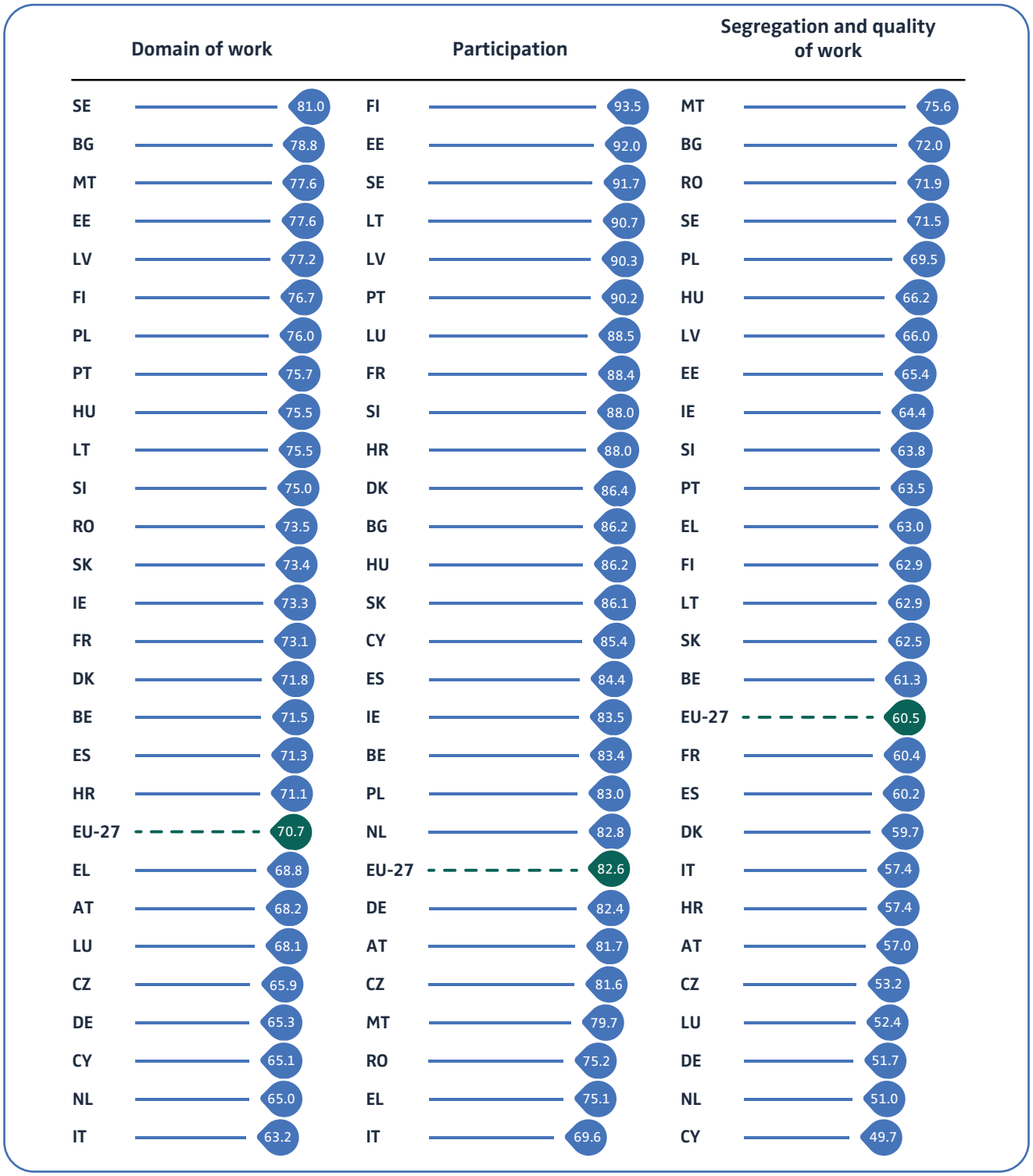
2.1. Gender employment gaps are narrowing while job quality gaps stay wide

The domain of work ranks third among the six domains of the Gender Equality Index, with an EU score of 70.7 points. However, considerable differences remain across Member States, ranging from 81.0 points in Sweden to 63.2 points in Italy, indicating that progress towards gender equality in work remains uneven across the EU.

([3]) The FTE employment rate is a unit to measure employed people in a way that makes them comparable even though they may work a different number of hours per week. The unit is obtained by comparing an employee's average number of hours worked with the average number of hours worked by a full-time worker. A full-time worker is therefore counted as one FTE, while a part-time worker gets a score proportional to the hours they work. For example, a part-time worker employed for 20 hours a week when full-time work consists of 40 hours is counted as 0.5 FTEs.

Within the domain, the two subdomains show a substantial difference in scores. While the participation subdomain reaches 82.6 points, reflecting relatively high levels of gender equality in labour market participation, the segregation and quality of work subdomain scores only 60.5 points (Figure 6). This 22-point gap shows that the main challenge is no longer women's access to employment, but the conditions under which women and men participate in the labour market.

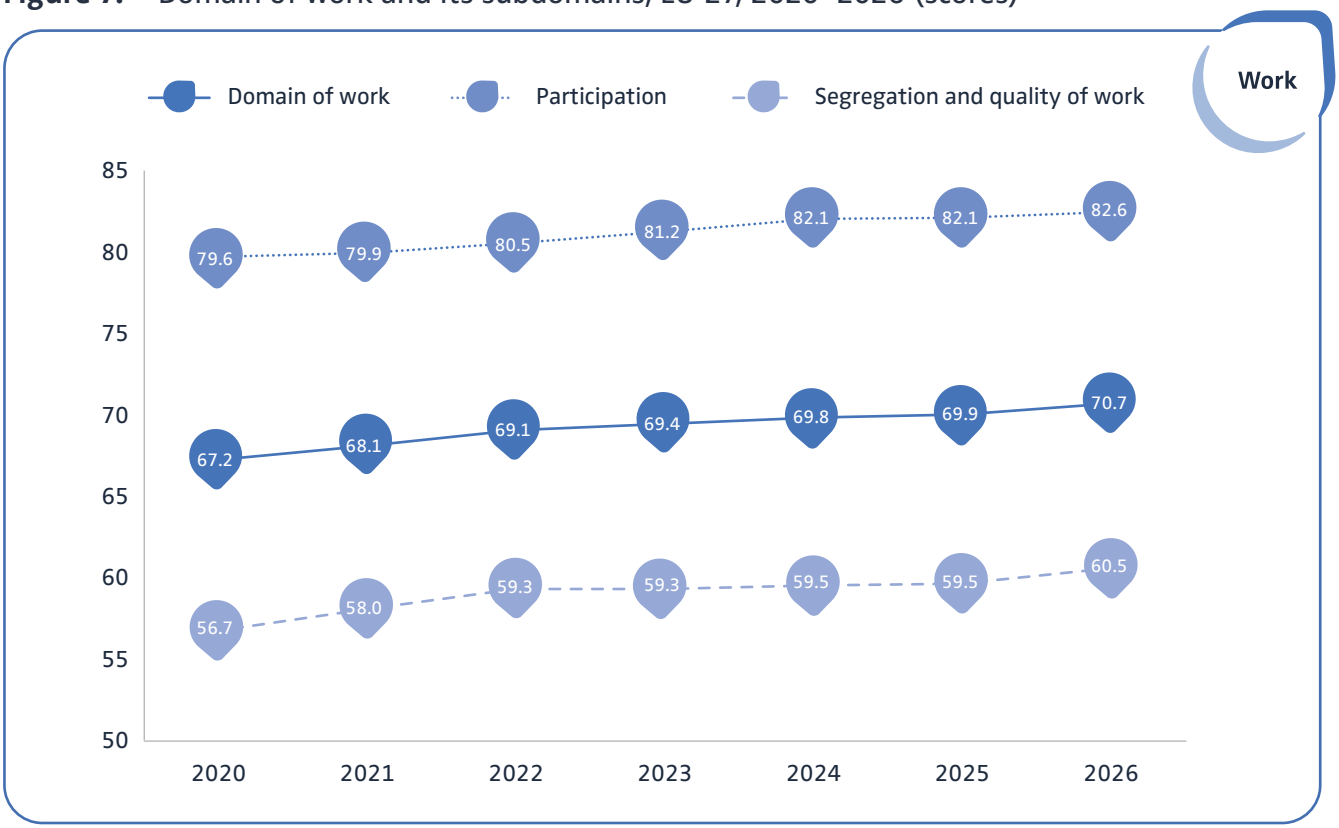
Figure 6: Domain of work and its subdomains, 2026 (scores)



NB: The full list of indicators, including the data sources, is presented in Annex 1.

Between 2020 and 2026, the EU made steady progress in this domain, with the overall score increasing from 67.2 to 70.7 points (Figure 7). Improvements were recorded in both subdomains. The participation score increased from 79.6 to 82.6 points, reflecting continued growth in women's labour market participation. At the same time, the segregation and quality of work score rose from 56.7 to 60.5 points, indicating modest improvements in the distribution of women and men across occupations and in some aspects of job quality.

Figure 7: Domain of work and its subdomains, EU-27, 2020–2026 (scores)



Despite this positive trend, progress remains too slow to achieve gender equality in the foreseeable future. Between 2020 and 2026, the overall score increased by 3.5 points, equivalent to an average annual improvement of approximately 0.6 points. If this pace were maintained, full gender equality in the domain of work would not be achieved for around five decades. Moreover, progress has been considerably stronger in increasing women's labour market participation than in reducing occupational segregation or improving job quality. This suggests that future policy efforts need to shift from supporting women's entry into employment towards ensuring that women and men have equal access to high-quality, secure and rewarding jobs.

In comparison with 2025, 7 out of the 27 Member States recorded a decline in gender equality in the domain of work in 2026, with the largest decreases observed in Ireland, Greece, Cyprus and Luxembourg. By contrast, Malta recorded the greatest improvement, followed by Croatia and Hungary, illustrating the differing pace of progress across the EU (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Domain of work and changes over time, 2026 (scores)



A closer examination of the underlying indicators reveals women's lower employment intensity and shorter working lives, reflecting the greater prevalence of part-time employment among women and the unequal distribution of care responsibilities (Table 2).

In 2026, 44 % of women in the EU were employed on an FTE basis, compared with 59 % of men. This 15 percentage point (pp) gap limits women's earnings, career progression and long-term financial security, while also reducing the available labour supply at a time when many Member States face labour and skills shortages. Gender differences are particularly pronounced in Italy (20 pp), followed by Greece and Malta (18 pp each). Finland records the smallest gap – 6 pp.

Gender differences are also reflected in the expected duration of working life – an important determinant of lifetime earnings, pension accumulation and economic independence. Across the EU, women are expected to spend 35 years in employment over their lifetime, compared with 40 years for men. The largest gap is observed in Italy, where women can expect to work nine years less than men. By contrast, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are the only Member States where women have a slightly longer expected working life than men.

Table 2: Indicators of the domain of work, EU-27

	Women	Men
FTE employment rate, age group 15- 89, 2024 (%)	44	59
Duration of working life, age group 15 and above, 2025 (years)	35	40
ICT specialists, age group 15-74, 2025 (%)	20	80
Managers, age group 15- 74, 2025 (%)	36	64
Low-paid workers, age group 16 and above, 2025 (%)	37	29

NB: The full list of indicators, including the data sources, is presented in Annex 1.

Occupational segregation by gender is particularly visible in digital occupations, which are becoming increasingly important for Europe's competitiveness and the green and digital transitions. Despite policy efforts to increase women's participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and ICT professions, women account for only 20 % of ICT specialists in the EU. The highest shares are found in Romania (28 %), Latvia (26 %) and Bulgaria (25 %), yet no Member State has achieved balanced representation. The persistent under-representation of women in ICT not only limits individual career opportunities but also constrains the diversity of talent available to one of the EU's fastest-growing sectors.

Vertical segregation remains another important feature of European labour markets. Women occupy only 36 % of managerial positions, with national shares ranging from 45 % in Sweden to 26 % in Cyprus. Although women's labour market participation has increased substantially over recent decades, their progression into leadership roles has been considerably slower. This suggests that structural barriers continue to restrict women's career advancement and influence over organisational and economic decision-making.

Gender inequalities are also reflected in earnings. Across the EU, 37 % of women are employed in low-paid jobs, compared with 29 % of men. The largest gender gaps are observed in Germany, the Netherlands and Austria, where women are around 16 pp more likely than men to be low-paid workers. Bulgaria, Malta and Poland are the only Member States where women are slightly less likely than men to be employed in low-paid jobs. These findings demonstrate that gender inequalities extend beyond access to employment and continue to shape the quality, remuneration and career prospects associated with women's work.

2.2. Progress in employment masks persistent inequalities linked to parenthood

The FTE employment rate offers a more comprehensive measure of labour market participation than the conventional employment rate because it adjusts for differences in working hours. By converting part-time work into FTEs, it captures not only whether people are employed, but also the intensity of their participation. This distinction is essential from a gender equality perspective, as women are far more likely than men to work part-time, often due to the unequal sharing of care responsibilities. As a result, FTE employment is a key indicator of economic independence, career prospects, earnings and future pension entitlements. It is therefore a central measure within the domain of work and aligns well with EU commitments set out in the gender equality strategy and the roadmap for women's rights.

Despite gradual progress, substantial gender inequalities persist. In 2024, the EU-27 FTE employment rate stood at 44 % for women and 59 % for men, corresponding to a – 15 pp gender gap. Although the gap has slightly narrowed since 2019 (– 16 pp), change remains slow, suggesting that structural barriers continue to constrain women's participation in paid work.

These inequalities are experienced differently across the population (Figure 9). The largest gender gaps appear among groups with significant caregiving responsibilities. Couples with children show a – 24 pp gap, followed by single-parent households (– 21 pp), reflecting the persistent motherhood penalty broadly documented in the literature (Eurofound, 2022; OECD, 2023b). By contrast, couples without children show a much smaller gap (– 5 pp).

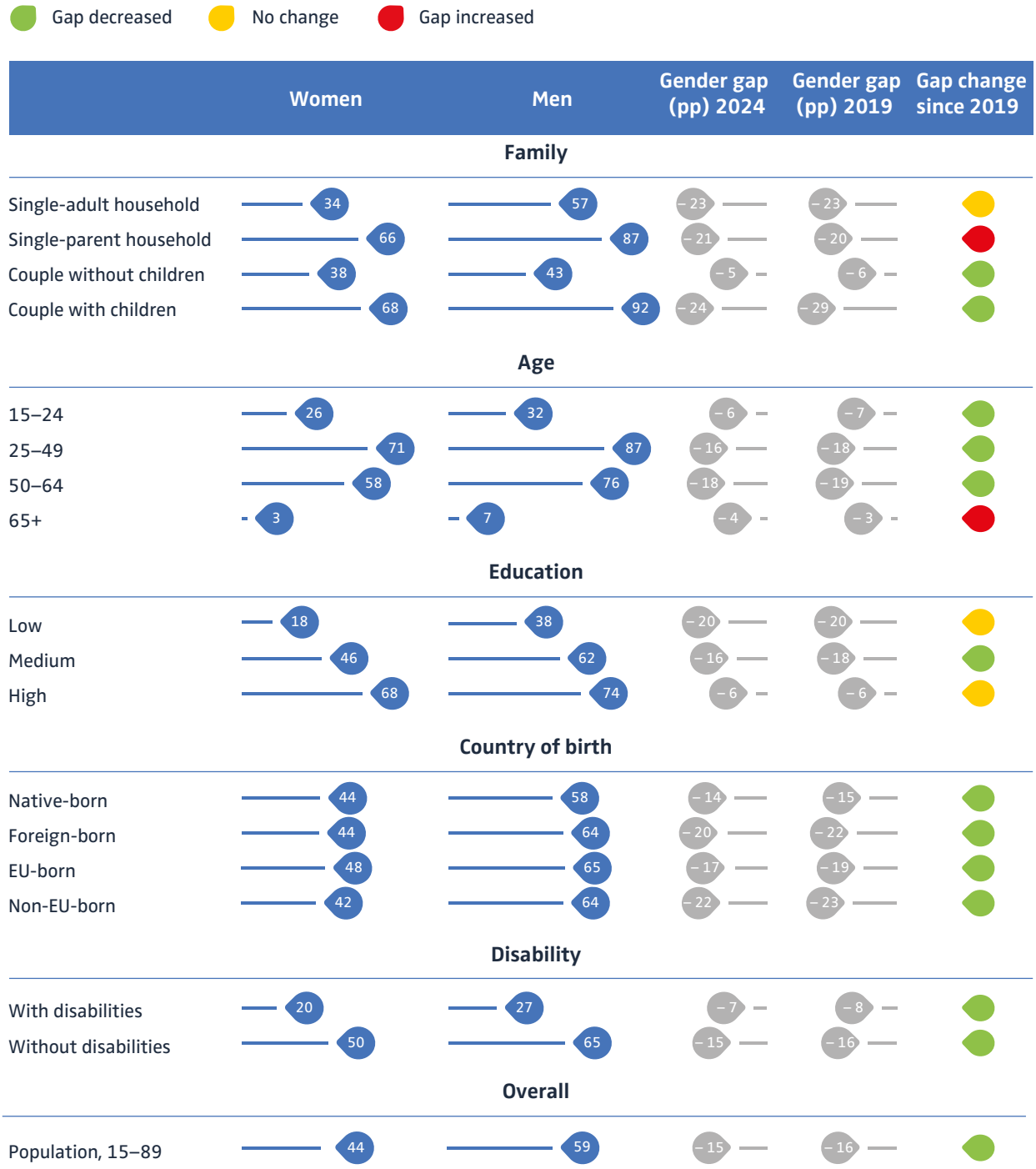
Gender inequalities in FTE employment also widen across the life course. The gap increases from – 6 pp among young people aged 15–24 to – 16 pp among those aged 25–49 and – 18 pp among those aged 50–64. This progression illustrates how the cumulative effects of caregiving, career interruptions and part-time work shape women's employment trajectories over time (European Commission, 2026).

Education remains an important protective factor. People with higher levels of education show the highest employment rates and the smallest gender gap (– 6 pp), while those with lower levels of education experience a gap of – 20 pp. Yet, education alone cannot eliminate inequalities because occupational segregation and unequal care responsibilities continue to affect labour market outcomes.

An intersectional perspective reveals further disadvantages. Among non-EU-born individuals, the gender gap reaches – 22 pp, compared with – 20 pp among the overall foreign-born population, driven by discrimination, limited childcare access and barriers to qualification recognition. Among people with disabilities, the smaller gender gap (– 7 pp) largely reflects low employment rates for both women and men rather than greater equality.

These findings reinforce the priorities of the gender equality strategy and the roadmap for women's rights, which emphasise reducing the gender employment gap and improving labour market inclusion, particularly for migrant women and women facing multiple forms of discrimination.

Figure 9: FTE employment rate among the population aged 15–89, EU-27 (%)



NB: Groups under the dimensions of 'age' and 'education' sum to the overall population. For other groups, missing data and/or excluded groups are not fully comparable with the overall population. 'Education' includes people who have completed International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) levels 0–2 (low), ISCED level 3 or 4 (medium) or ISCED levels 5–8 (high). The family type definition is based on the relationships between the members of households. That is, a couple is defined as two adults living in the same household and declaring themselves to be in a relationship (whether married or not). Children are only those economically dependent household members (i.e. aged below 18, as of 2021; 18–24 in previous years) who are declared to be children or stepchildren of the couple or one parent (in single-parent households) and are not in employment or unemployment. For clarity of interpretation, the indicated family types strictly account for the aforementioned types of relationships and the socioeconomic status of children, excluding households with different compositions.
Non-EU-born: MT (n/a), BG, HR, PL and SI include only people born in Europe outside the EU. This is reflected in the 'foreign-born' figures.
Gap changes: Marked in green when the gap has decreased since 2019 by 1 pp or more; in red when it has increased since 2019 by 1 pp or more; and in yellow when it has increased or decreased by less than 1 pp.
Source: Authors' calculations based on European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS), 2024, and EU-SILC, 2024 (for disability), microdata.

2.3. Making parenthood compatible with employment

Gender inequalities in employment emerge across the life course, but the transition to parenthood remains one of the most decisive moments at which women's and men's labour market trajectories diverge (Kleven et al., 2019). Parenthood often marks the beginning of persistent differences in employment intensity, earnings and career progression, as women continue to assume a disproportionate share of unpaid care responsibilities. Whether short-term employment interruptions translate into long-term disadvantages depends largely on the institutional environment, particularly the design of parental leave systems and the availability of ECEC.

Parental leave policies play a central role in supporting employment continuity by allowing parents to temporarily withdraw from work while maintaining their attachment to the labour market. Well-designed leave schemes reduce long-term employment penalties associated with childbirth, facilitate re-entry and strengthen women's economic independence (Frodermann et al., 2023; Rossin-Slater, 2017). They also encourage fathers to take a more active role in childcare, contributing to a more equal distribution of unpaid care responsibilities and gradually challenging traditional gender roles (Tamm, 2019). Their effectiveness, however, depends not only on the generosity of leave entitlements but also on accessibility and integration with broader care and employment policies.

Eligibility rules for parental leave continue to favour standard employment relationships, leaving some parents with fragmented or non-standard careers less protected.

Across the EU, access to paid parental leave remains uneven because eligibility is still largely tied to standard employment relationships. In most Member States, entitlement depends on previous employment records and social security contributions, favouring workers with continuous and stable employment histories. Parents with interrupted, fragmented or less secure employment trajectories may face more restricted access to paid parental leave (EIGE, 2020b). While some countries provide dedicated benefit arrangements for self-employed workers, others offer more limited protection or link access to specific contribution requirements (EIGE, 2020b). Platform workers face additional uncertainty, as their entitlement may depend on their employment status and legal classification rather than on a clear statutory right (EIGE et al., 2023).

Similar challenges affect unemployed and economically inactive parents, as eligibility often depends on recent contribution histories and previous employment. This may particularly affect young labour market entrants, students and parents who have interrupted employment to provide unpaid care.

These inequalities are further reinforced for specific occupational groups. Domestic workers, for example, are covered by different regulatory frameworks in several Member States and may have more limited parental leave rights. In Italy, for example, domestic workers are explicitly excluded from parental leave entitlements, affecting a workforce largely composed of migrant women (OECD, 2023a). By contrast, a small number of countries, including Estonia, Slovenia, Finland and

Sweden, have adopted broader eligibility criteria based on residence or parenthood rather than on employment history, thereby extending protection to groups that would otherwise remain excluded.

Parental leave alone, however, cannot sustain continuous employment if parents lack access to affordable and high-quality childcare once leave ends. ECEC therefore forms another important pillar of work–life balance policies. Access to childcare varies widely across the EU in terms of accessibility, affordability and quality. In many Member States, publicly subsidised childcare is widely available only from around age three, while provision for younger children remains limited. Even where statutory entitlements exist, shortages of places and substantial regional disparities often restrict effective access (Serapioni, 2025).

Cost also remains an important barrier: 26 % of women, compared with 21 % of men, report being unable to afford formal childcare for children under six (EIGE, 2026e). Opening hours frequently fail to match full-time or non-standard working schedules, creating additional difficulties for parents working evenings, nights or weekends.

Gaps between parental leave and ECEC provision can disrupt employment continuity and contribute to persistent gender inequalities in the labour market.

The interaction between parental leave and childcare provision is therefore critical. Where paid leave ends before affordable and accessible childcare becomes available, families must bridge this 'care gap' themselves. In practice, women are considerably more likely than men to fill this gap by extending unpaid care, reducing working hours or moving into part-time employment (EIGE, 2026e; Eurostat, 2026e). These decisions often have long-lasting consequences, contributing to lower FTE employment rates, slower career progression, lower lifetime earnings and reduced pension entitlements. The evidence presented in Figure 9, showing the largest gender employment gaps among single parents and couples with children, illustrates how institutional gaps reinforce unequal labour market trajectories (EIGE, 2024d).

3. Domain of money

Economic gender inequalities remain significantly underestimated in Europe, particularly in the context of an ageing population and women's continued responsibility for unpaid care work. Although households are often treated as unified economic units, research shows that financial resources are not always fully pooled or shared equitably. This results in substantial intracouple economic inequalities, especially among married or cohabiting partners (Kapelle et al., 2025; Pahl, 1995). The assumption that household income is automatically shared obscures the personalised nature of money and the unequal access partners may have to financial resources (Bennett, 2013; Kapelle, 2025). Women remain consistently disadvantaged in terms of wealth, with gaps widening with age and the presence of children. Many women also take on the responsibility of making ends meet despite having less personal income (EIGE, 2024a).

Resource pooling can mitigate inequalities when one partner earns significantly less, typically the woman, and requires financial compensation for career breaks related to pregnancy or caregiving (Althaber et al., 2023). But pooling does not guarantee equality. When women contribute a smaller share of household income, they may be perceived as owning a smaller share of joint resources (Kapelle, 2025). As perceived ownership is closely tied to earned income, this dynamic can lead to unequal control over pooled money, with consequences for financially dependent partners (Burgoyne, 1990; EIGE, 2024a; Nyman, 2003). Women's economic dependency can also make it more difficult to leave abusive relationships, reinforcing vulnerabilities highlighted in the domain of violence.

Power imbalances may persist even when women out-earn their partners. Tichenor (2005) shows that women married to economically dependent husbands may compensate for the disruption of traditional gender roles by delegating financial decision-making authority to their partner. This suggests that men's power in marriage often endures even without economic dominance (Klesment et al., 2022; Tichenor, 2005).

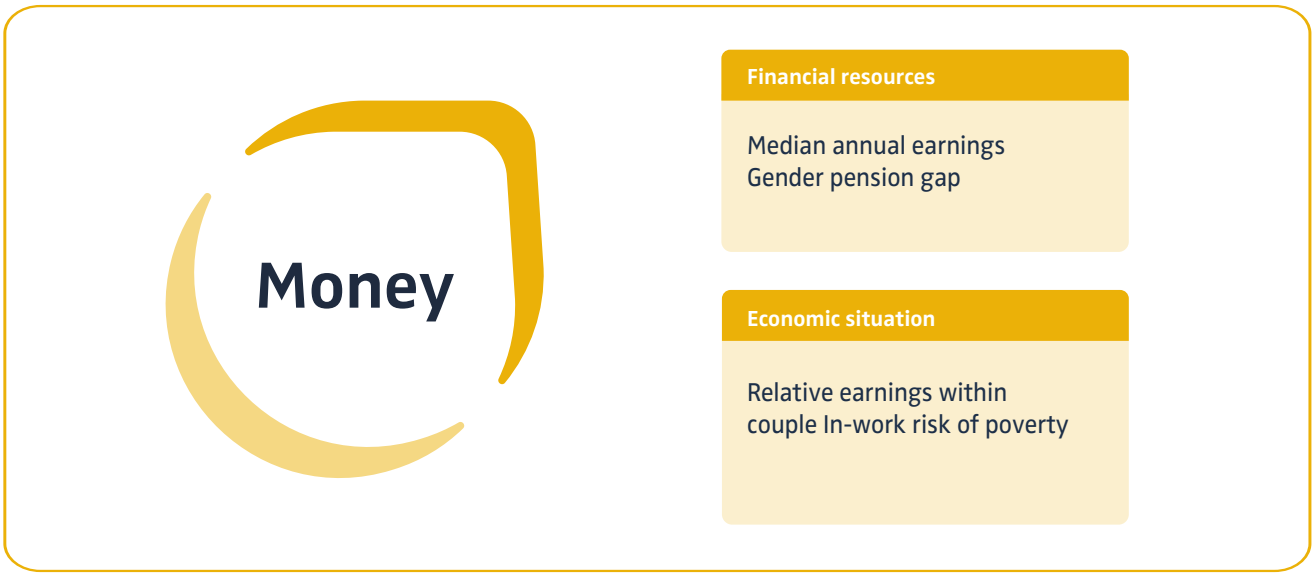
Inequalities in earnings within couples translate directly into pension and savings gaps (Kapelle, 2025). Women's lower earnings, interrupted careers and part-time work reduce their ability to accumulate long-term financial assets. Lower financial literacy further increases vulnerability, making women more likely to struggle with financial shocks (Bottazzi et al., 2023; EIGE, 2024a). Men are more likely to own individual real estate and hold risky financial assets, such as investment shares, that generate higher returns and are less easily shared within couples (Althaber et al., 2023; Darvas et al., 2025; European Commission: Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers et al., 2017). Women's lower earnings also mean fewer non-wage benefits, such as employer bonuses and performance incentives, along with employee stock and equity options that can be used to increase savings and investments (Kapelle, 2025).

These disparities intensify with age. Women receive significantly lower pension income due to part-time work, sectoral segregation and care-related career breaks (Kapelle, 2025). Mothers with dependent children are also disproportionately exposed to in-work poverty, affecting both their own and their children's well-being (European Parliament: Directorate-General for Internal Policies of the Union and Nieuwenhuis, 2020). As a result, women face heightened economic vulnerability in cases of widowhood, separation or divorce, undermining their autonomy, long-term financial security and overall well-being.

EU policy context

- The **2025 roadmap for women's rights** recognises that every woman has the right to equal pay for equal work or work of equal value and the right to be economically independent.
- The **2026–2030 gender equality strategy** emphasises that women and men in all their diversity should have equal opportunities to thrive and be economically independent, to be paid equally for work of equal value, to have equal access to finance and to receive fair pensions.
- The **Pay Transparency Directive** (Directive (EU) 2023/970) aims to combat pay discrimination and to close the gender pay gap through pay transparency. EU companies will be required to share information on salaries and take action if their gender pay gap exceeds 5 %.
- The **European Pillar of Social Rights** asserts the principle of equal pay for work of equal value and endeavours to address the gender pay gap. It sets an action plan to reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion for at least 15 million people by 2030 (compared with 2019), with a minimum of 5 million being children.
- The **2026 EU anti-poverty strategy** recognises that women in the EU are more exposed to the risk of poverty and social exclusion, particularly mothers with caregiving responsibilities and older women.
- The **2023 Council recommendation on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion** seeks to strengthen the safety nets for women and men by combining adequate income support with access to enabling and essential services for people who lack sufficient resources.
- The **Adequate Minimum Wage Directive** aims to ensure that workers earn enough to afford a decent standard of living, which can indirectly help reduce the gender pay gap, lift women out of poverty and improve their economic standing.

The domain of money analyses the key gender gaps in access to financial resources and economic situation.



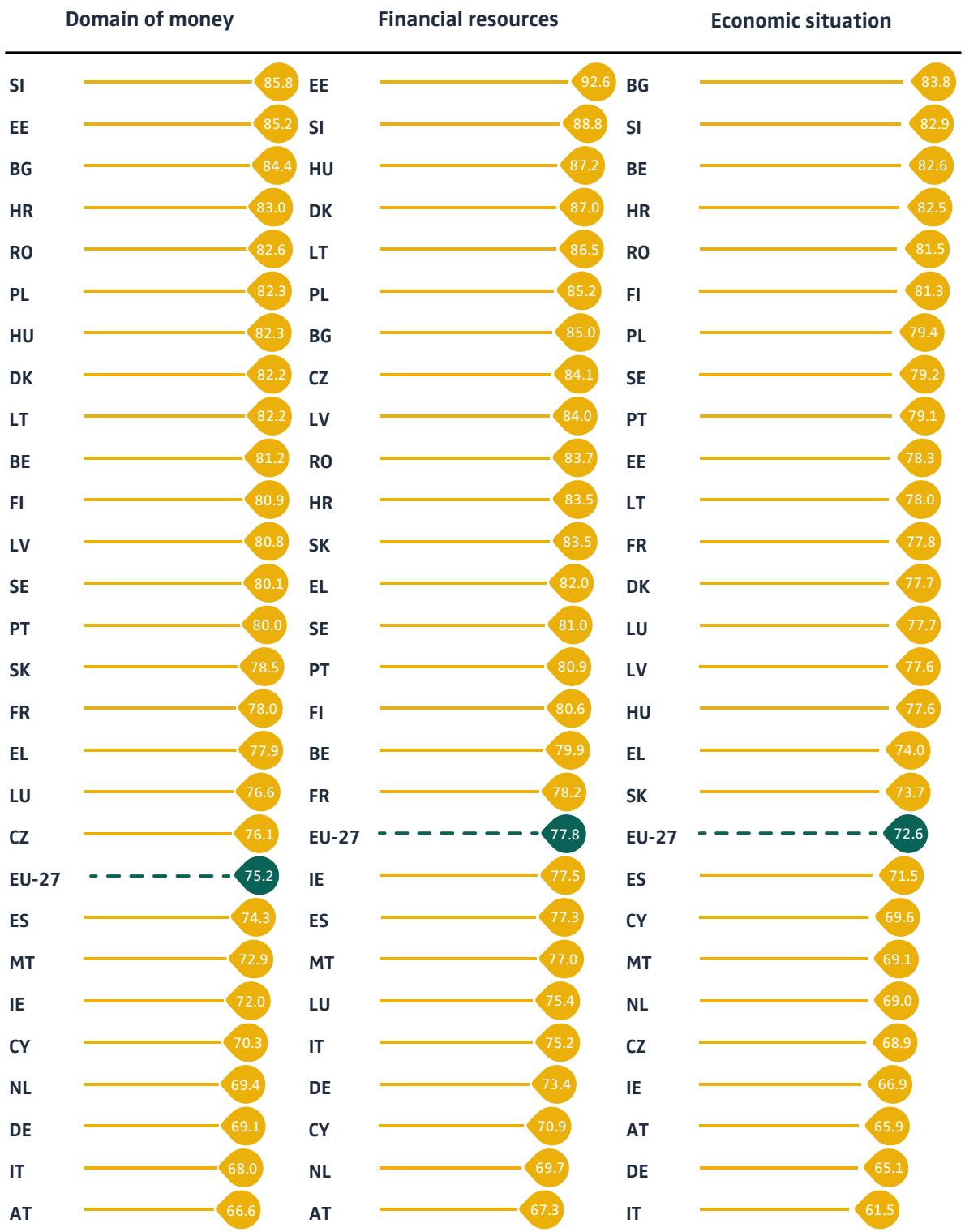
The subdomain of access to financial resources is captured through two main indicators. One looks at the median annual earnings of employed women and men based on EU-SILC data. The other focuses on the gender pension gap. It shows the percentage by which women's average pension income is higher or lower than that of men. Pension income includes old-age benefits, survivors' benefits and regular pensions from individual private plans.

The subdomain of economic situation covers two aspects: financial inequalities among couples (i.e. the earnings of an individual expressed as a percentage of their partner's earnings) and poverty risk despite having a job. The in-work at-risk-of-poverty rate refers to the percentage of employed or self-employed people at risk of poverty. This data is collected at the household level. However, robust estimation of gender differences requires measuring risk separately for individual women and men. The Index proposes a way to overcome data limitations and focuses on the in-work at-risk-of-poverty rate in single-adult and single-parent households, which helps reveal gender gaps.

3.1. Closing the earnings gap requires more than incremental change

With a score of 75.2, the domain of money ranks second on the Index. In comparison with the 2025 Index, there has been a minimal increase of only 0.6 points. Of the two subdomains, gender equality in access to financial resources, at 77.8 points, performs better than economic situation, at 72.6 points (Figure 10).

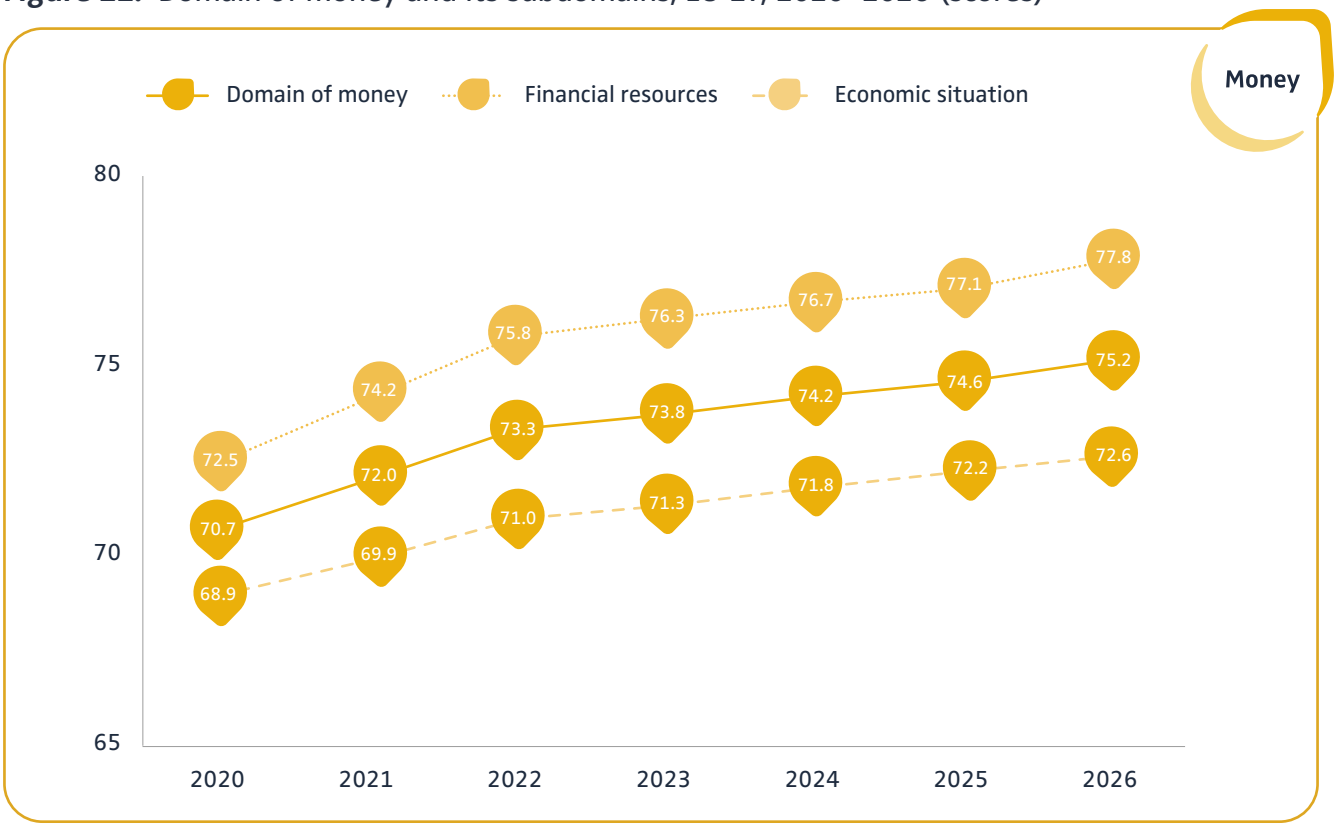
Figure 10: Domain of money and its subdomains, 2026 (scores)



NB: The full list of indicators, including the data sources, is presented in Annex 1.

Since 2020, both subdomains have showed an upward trend, particularly financial resources with a 5.3-point increase (Figure 11). Progress in economic situation has moved slower – a difference of only 3.7 points. In this context, significant inequalities can be observed in relative earnings between partners and the in-work risk of poverty between women and men in single-adult households.

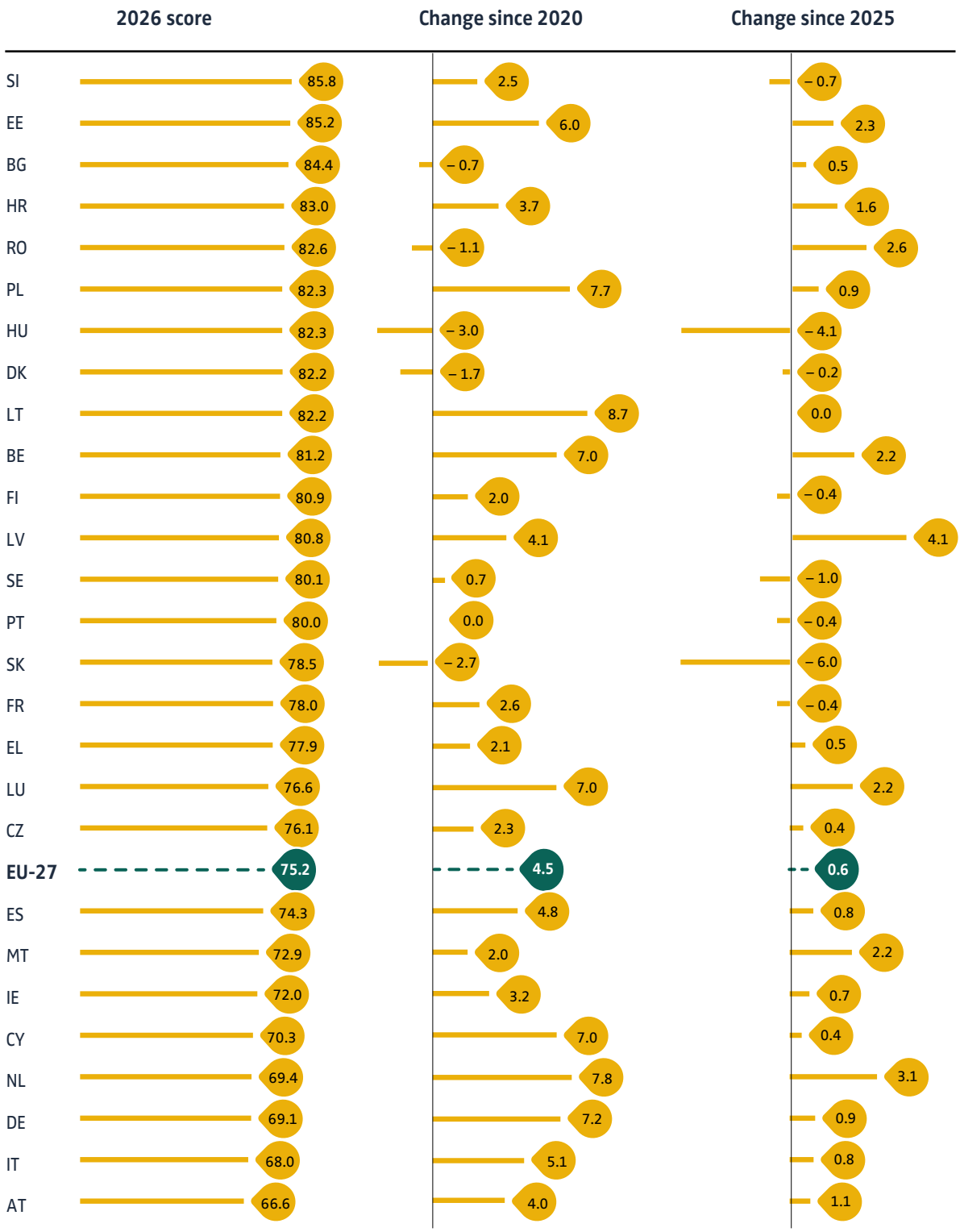
Figure 11: Domain of money and its subdomains, EU-27, 2020–2026 (scores)



Domain scores for the majority of Member States have increased since 2020, with 19 out of the 27 Member States scoring above the EU average of 75.2 (Figure 12). In the domain of money, Slovenia (85.8), Estonia (85.2) and Bulgaria (84.4) are the top-performing countries, while Austria (66.6), Italy (68.0) and Germany (69.1) score the lowest.

Since 2020, notable progress has been observed for Lithuania (+ 8.7), the Netherlands (+ 7.8) and Poland (+ 7.7). Compared with the previous Index, Slovakia (– 6.0), Hungary (– 4.1) and Sweden (– 1.0) have seen the biggest setbacks.

Figure 12: Domain of money and changes over time, 2026 (scores)



A closer look at the indicator of financial resources reveals that women in the EU earn 80 % of men's annual earnings (Table 3). Low earnings ratios are common in countries with a high prevalence of part-time work, such as the Netherlands, Austria and Germany, where women earn, respectively, 69 %, 70 % and 71 % of men's annual earnings.

The gender pension gap is compounded by women's shorter working hours and lower earning potential, resulting in a 24 % disparity in the EU. The largest gaps are observed in Malta (37 %), Austria (35 %) and Luxembourg (31 %), while the gaps are smallest in Estonia (3 %), Czechia (8 %) and Slovenia (10 %).

Earnings inequalities also occur within households. On average, men in the EU earn 47 % more than their partners. In Italy, Germany and Austria, where gaps are the most significant, men earn, respectively, 92 %, 81 % and 76 % more than their partners. This has considerable implications for the imbalanced dynamics of interpersonal relationships within households and is particularly disadvantageous for women.

Table 3: Indicators of the domain of money, EU-27

	Women	Men
Median annual earnings, 18- to 64-year-old employed population, 2025 (purchasing power standard)	25 525	32 079
Gender pension gap, age group 65 and above, 2025 (%)	24	
Median of the earnings ratio within couples, age group 18 - 64, 2025 (%)	73	147
In work at-risk-of-poverty rate in single-adult and single-parent households, 16-year-old and above employed population, 2025 (%)	16	13

NB: The full list of indicators, including the data sources, is presented in Annex 1.

Across the EU, 16 % of employed or self-employed women in single-adult and single-parent households are at risk of poverty, compared with 13 % of men (Table 3). At the national level, women are the most disadvantaged in Slovakia (24 %), Malta (22 %) and Italy (20 %). At the same time, Malta and Ireland are two notable cases in which the in-work at-risk-of-poverty rate for men exceeds that for women, at 31 % and 16 %, respectively.

The Index would benefit from individual-level data in order to capture gender differences in poverty more accurately. However, comparable EU-level data collected according to common standards is largely unavailable at the individual level, limiting the scope for fully disaggregated, gender-sensitive poverty measurement.

3.2. Multiple disadvantages may not allow women to escape poverty despite working

Women remain less likely to participate in the labour market and more likely to work fewer years and in more poorly paid jobs than men (see 'Domain of work'). Despite positive trends in recent years, gender differences in income and earnings from paid work are still persistent, with a structural impact on post-retirement income. The EU gender pension gap stands at 24 %, contributing to older women (65+) being at greater risk of poverty and social exclusion than older men (21 % versus 16 % in 2025). However, the gender gap in the risk of poverty and social exclusion exists at all ages, affecting young women and men particularly strongly (28 % versus 25 %) ([4]).

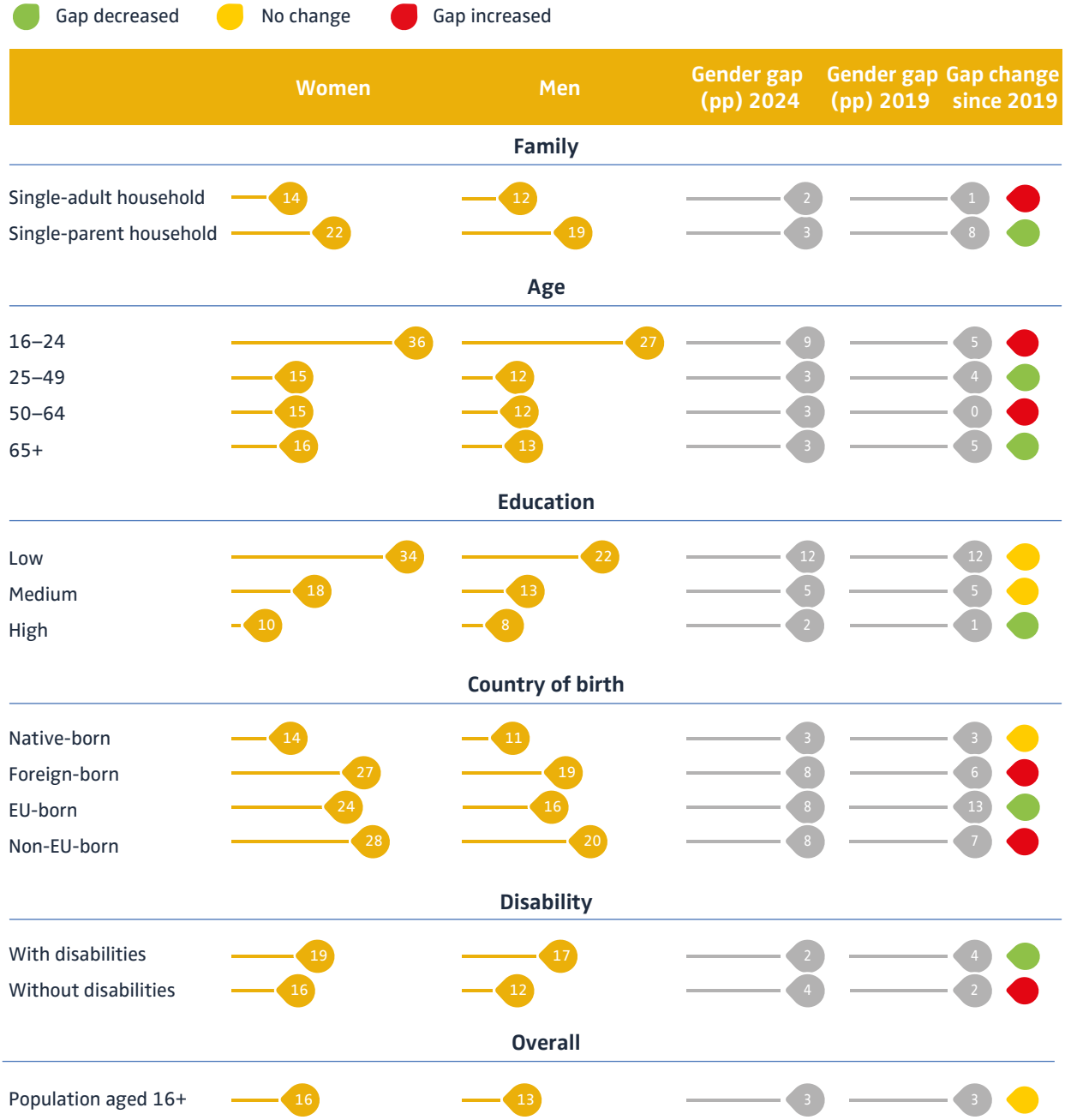
The higher risk of poverty goes hand in hand with multiple other inequalities faced by women. In addition to age, family composition, educational attainment, migrant status and disability status influence income disparities and risk of poverty ([5]).

To understand the risks and experiences of poverty from a gender perspective, the Index includes a more nuanced indicator considering the risk of poverty of single-adult and single-parent households (Figure 13). By focusing on single-adult households (single parents, older people or young people / students living alone), the indicator provides a more accurate assessment of economic vulnerability, which would otherwise go unnoticed.

([4]) Eurostat (ilc_peps01n).

([5]) **At risk of poverty or social exclusion** corresponds to the sum of people who are at risk of poverty, severely materially and socially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity. The **at-risk-of-poverty rate** is the share of people with an equivalised disposable income (after social transfer) below the at-risk-of-poverty **threshold**, which is set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers.

Figure 13: In-work at-risk-of-poverty rate in single-adult and single-parent households, population aged 16+, EU-27 (%)



NB: The indicator restricts the analysis to single-adult households and single-parent households. However, the family types are defined based on the relationships between the members. That is, a couple is defined as two adults living in the same household and declaring themselves to be in a relationship (whether married or not); 'children' refers to economically dependent household members (i.e. aged 24 and under) who are declared to be own/adopted children or stepchildren of the couple or of one parent (in the case of a single-parent household) and are not in employment or unemployment. For clarity of interpretation, the indicated family types strictly account for the aforementioned types of relationships and the socioeconomic status of children, excluding households with different compositions. Groups under the dimensions of 'age' and 'education' sum to the overall 'working population'; groups under other dimensions constitute partial coverage of the overall 'working population' due to missing data and/or excluded groups. 'Education' includes people who have completed ISCED levels 0–2 (low), ISCED level 3 or 4 (medium) or ISCED levels 5–8 (high). EU-born and non-EU-born are calculated based on 24 Member States; this excludes Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia.

Gap changes: Marked in green when the gap has decreased since 2019 by 1 pp or more; in red when it has increased since 2019 by 1 pp or more; and in yellow when it has increased or decreased by less than 1 pp.

Source: Authors' calculations based on EU-SILC, 2025.

In the EU, 16 % of employed women and 13 % of employed men living in single-adult households have insufficient household income to meet basic needs (see Section 3.1). Gender gaps in the in-work at-risk-of-poverty rate are especially pronounced among single parents. The presence of children increases the in-work at-risk-of-poverty rate by 22 % for single mothers compared with 19 % for single fathers living with children. Slovakia (40 %), Austria (36 %), Luxembourg (32 %), Bulgaria and Spain (30 % each) show the highest in-work at-risk-of-poverty rate for single mothers in the EU.

Young people (16–24) living alone (with or without children) are the most at-risk group for poverty when in employment, with more than 1 in 3 young women at risk, compared with more than 1 in 4 young men.

The level of education is an important driver affecting the in-work at-risk-of-poverty rate. Single women and single mothers with lower levels of education are particularly exposed to the risk of poverty while working (1 in 3, compared with less than 1 in 4 of men). People with a migrant background are also particularly affected when living alone or alone with children. More than 1 in 4 single women or single mothers with a migrant background are at risk of poverty if employed, compared with 1 in 5 men. Disability is also a factor increasing the risk of poverty of people living alone (with or without children), resulting in 19 % of women and 17 % of men being at risk.

Addressing poverty requires targeted interventions across all stages of the life course. Although each generation faces distinct challenges and therefore requires tailored measures to prevent and reduce poverty, an integrated approach that combines adequate income support with effective access to high-quality services is essential for people of all ages.

3.3. Well-designed parental leave policies can reduce mothers' financial insecurity

Across the EU, women's median wealth is estimated at only 62 % of men's. The largest gender gap in individualised income appears among those who are economically inactive due to family responsibilities, particularly affecting women (EIGE, 2024a). These inequalities intensify after the birth of a first child, when women's working hours and earnings decline sharply (Kleven et al., 2019). Over time, repeated career interruptions and reduced labour market attachment create a lasting state of financial insecurity that often continues into older age.

Evidence shows that paid parental leave combined with early paternal involvement can help counter these penalties. In Sweden, each month of fathers' leave increases mothers' earnings by 6.7 %, especially when fathers take leave outside holiday periods (Johansson, 2010). German 'daddy month' reforms similarly strengthened fathers' participation and

Career interruptions and reduced labour market attachment related to taking leave for childcare create a lasting state of financial insecurity that often continues into older age.

supported mothers' labour market return (Frodermann et al., 2023). Leave payment generosity strongly influences uptake, twice as much for fathers as for mothers (Robbins, 2024). French reforms that earmarked 6 to 12 non-transferable months for fathers shortened mothers' leave durations and supported faster re-entry (Périvier et al., 2023).

The Work–Life Balance Directive guarantees each parent at least two months of non-transferable and adequately paid leave, with the European Commission generally defining adequacy as at least 66 % of previous earnings ([6]). When fathers cannot take their reserved months, mothers absorb the full extent of caregiving, often with long-term economic consequences. Longitudinal evidence from Germany shows that women's individual poverty risk peaks one year after childbirth and remains elevated for up to five years, driven by leave length and delayed labour market return, while men's financial stability remains largely unchanged (Siegert, 2025).

Well-designed work–family reconciliation policies with inclusive eligibility criteria reduce the poverty risk for economically inactive single mothers and may benefit their labour market activity at a later stage.

The poverty risk due to prolonged parental leave is not distributed equally: women with a migration background and lower pre-birth earnings are more likely to follow vulnerable trajectories marked by persistent poverty and weak labour market attachment both before and after childbirth (Siegert, 2025). Single mothers face particularly high in-work poverty (European Parliament: Directorate-General for Internal Policies of the Union and Nieuwenhuis, 2020). Well-designed work–life balance policies can reduce these risks: inclusive eligibility criteria (for parental leave, access to services and flexible employment) and parental leave with flat-rate benefits, regardless of prior employment history, may support non-working mothers' labour market activity at a later stage (Bartova et al., 2022).

Several Member States increase leave attractiveness by treating parental leave allowances as tax-exempt, while others maintain full pension accrual during leave to prevent the 'child penalty' in retirement (Germany, Estonia, Portugal) (Blum et al., 2018; Dobrotić et al., 2025).

Childcare provision also shapes poverty trajectories. In countries with higher childcare expenditure, mothers experience slower increases in poverty over time, and gaps between partnered and single mothers narrow (Zagel et al., 2022). The provision of childcare thus functions as a social investment that disrupts long-term economic disadvantage (Zagel et al., 2022).

([6]) See footnote 2.

4. Domain of knowledge

Education and training are powerful drivers of gender equality, shaping life chances from early childhood and influencing employment, earnings, economic independence and well-being across the entire life course. Although women and men now achieve similar levels of educational attainment across the EU, differences in educational pathways continue to steer them towards unequal opportunities – first in school, then in the labour market. Recent EU initiatives, including the European education area, the union of skills strategy and the 2026–2030 gender equality strategy, recognise that closing these gaps is essential for Europe's future competitiveness.

Women are now far more likely than men to complete tertiary education, while men remain over-represented in vocational education and training. But attainment alone does not tell the full story. Boys and young men continue to leave education and training early at higher rates (OECD, 2024), and concerns are growing about the impact of misogynistic and other harmful online content on young people's attitudes and engagement with learning (Blower et al., 2025). At the same time, girls and young women still face gender stereotypes and experience lower confidence in certain digital skills despite strong academic performance (Encinas-Martín et al., 2023).

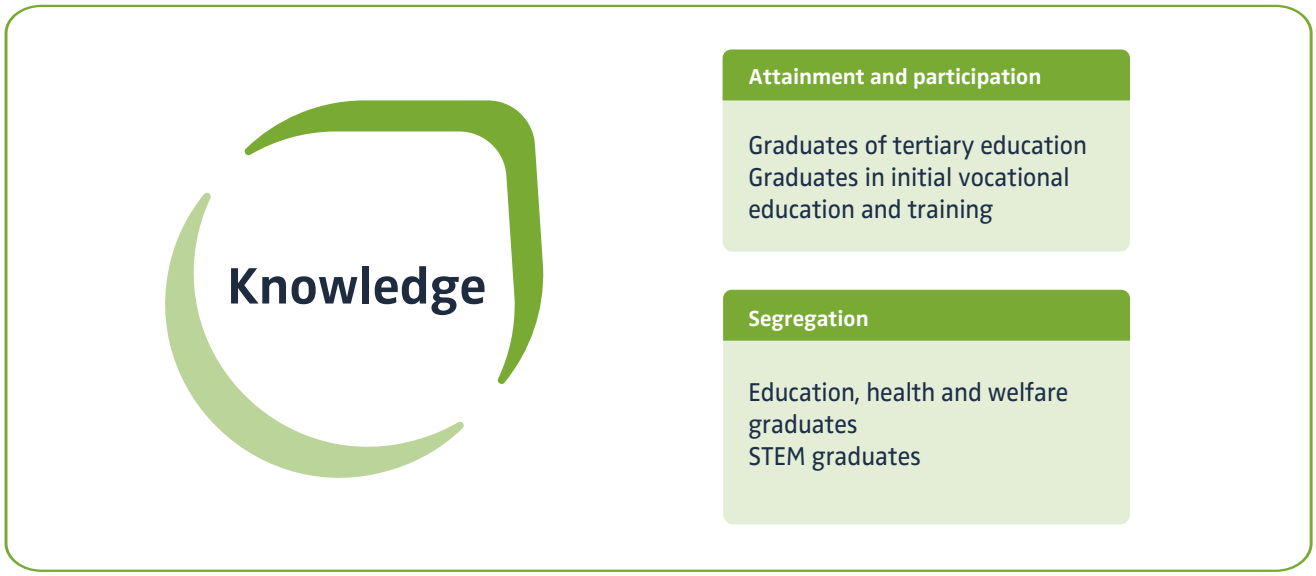
Even though girls and boys show similar competence in science and only small differences in mathematics (OECD, 2023c), they continue to make markedly different educational choices. These choices channel them into gender-segregated fields of study, reinforcing occupational segregation and shaping lifelong career trajectories. In a labour market marked by rapid technological change, skills shortages and demographic ageing, these divides shrink talent pools and weaken the EU's ability to respond to evolving workforce needs.

This edition of the Gender Equality Index highlights a crucial insight: the effects of parental leave policies extend well beyond employment outcomes. By shaping how caregiving responsibilities are shared, they also affect educational pathways, access to training and opportunities for lifelong learning. When caregiving falls disproportionately on women, their ability to pursue upskilling or reskilling is constrained, reinforcing gender gaps in emerging fields of green and digital transition.

EU policy context

- The **2026–2030 gender equality strategy** sets out measures to advance gender equality across all areas of life, including education. The strategy seeks to address gender stereotypes and occupational segregation by promoting girls' and women's participation in STEM education and careers, while also introducing a 'Boys in HEAL' approach to encourage more boys and men to study and work in health, education, administration and literacy (HEAL) and other care-related sectors.
- The **European education area** and the **2030 strategic framework for education and training** recognise gender equality as a key element of a cohesive and sustainable society. They aim to address gender gaps in education, challenge stereotypes and ensure equal access and outcomes for all by tackling gender-based violence, promoting diverse educational and career pathways and other measures.
- The **2021–2027 digital education action plan** and the **2025 union of skills strategy** foster women's participation in STEM studies and careers. Through initiatives such as the STEM education strategic plan and Girls Go STEM, the EU seeks to address persistent gender gaps in STEM and digital skills, challenge stereotypes and encourage more girls and women to pursue STEM and ICT studies and professions.

The domain of knowledge examines gender differences in educational attainment and participation, and educational choices.



The subdomain of attainment and participation is measured by two indicators. The first covers graduates (aged 30–34) of post-secondary technical and vocational courses, undergraduate and postgraduate programmes or equivalent programmes (bachelor, master, doctorate), representing the highest level of educational attainment. The second indicator looks at graduates (aged 25–34) of upper secondary initial vocational education and training (IVET).

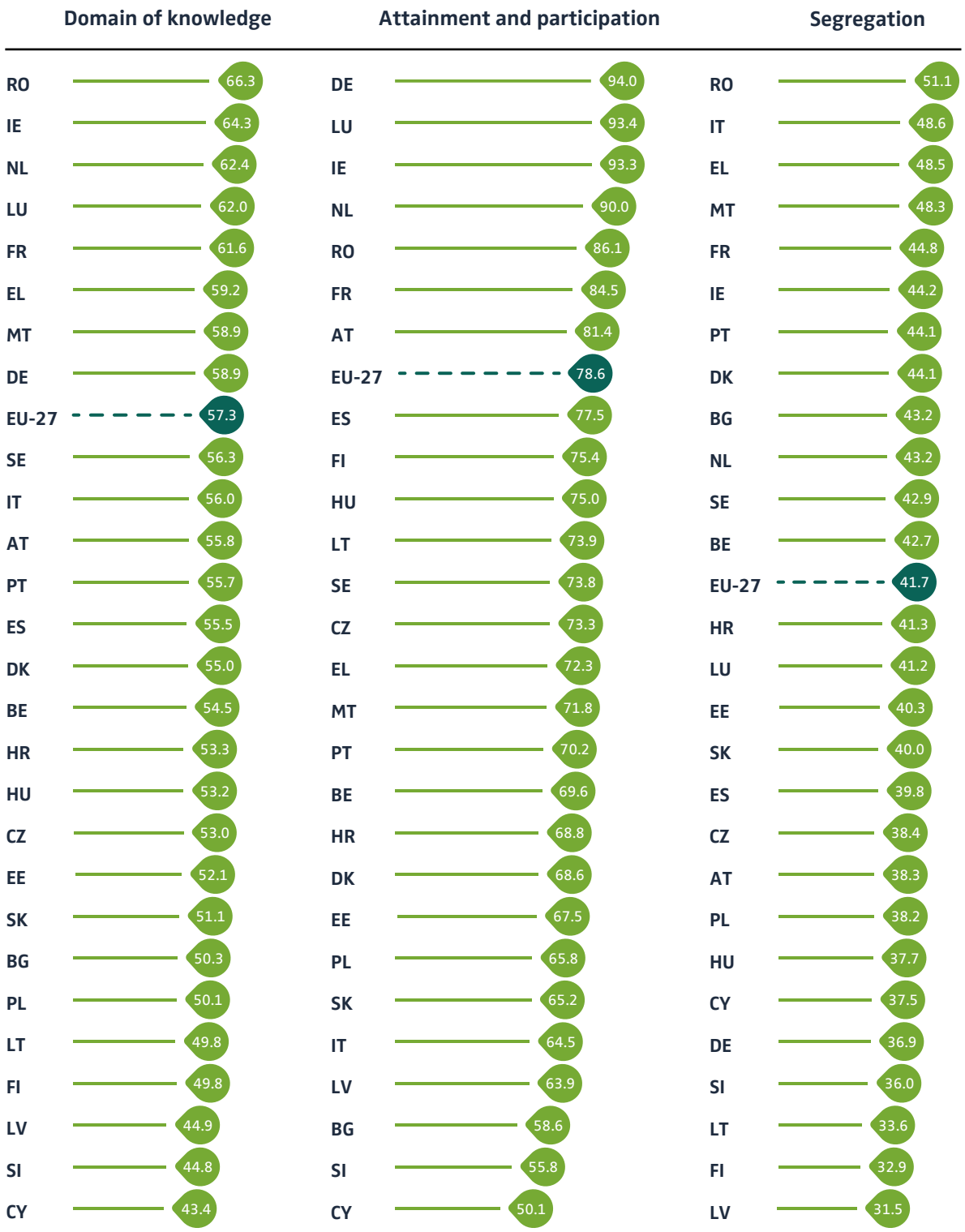
The subdomain of segregation concentrates on gender division in tertiary education, specifically in STEM, education, health and welfare (EHW), and humanities and arts. The focus on two distinct study areas, each dominated by either women or men, provides a more balanced and comprehensive view of gender segregation across educational disciplines.

4.1. Achievements grow, yet aspirations remain shaped by old stereotypes

With an EU-27 score of 57.3, the domain of knowledge ranks fifth on the Index. Member State scores vary considerably, ranging from 66.3 in Romania to 43.4 in Cyprus (Figure 14), highlighting substantial differences in gender equality outcomes in education across the EU.

The domain of knowledge continues to be characterised by a marked gap between its two subdomains. While attainment and participation record a relatively high score of 78.6 in the EU-27, segregation in education remains much lower, at 41.7, constraining overall progress in the domain. In attainment and participation, only seven Member States score above the EU average (Germany, Ireland, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria and Romania). Romania remains the only Member State with a score above 50 in segregation in education, while all other Member States score below this threshold, underlining the persistence of gendered educational choices across the EU.

Figure 14: Domain of knowledge and its subdomains, 2026 (scores)



NB: The full list of indicators, including the data sources, is presented in Annex 1.

Progress in the knowledge domain has remained slow and uneven in recent years. While the overall score improved modestly between 2020 and 2025, it remained virtually unchanged in 2026, reflecting the broader pattern of limited progress in the domain (Figure 15). The two subdomains have evolved differently since 2020. Attainment and participation have remained broadly stable at a relatively high level, showing some year-to-year fluctuations but little overall change. Segregation in education, by contrast, improved gradually between 2020 and 2024, but has shown little change since then.

Figure 15: Domain of knowledge and its subdomains, EU-27, 2020–2026 (scores)



The picture across Member States is mixed. Since 2020, several Member States have recorded notable gains; however, at the same time, almost half have seen their scores stagnate or decline, limiting overall progress at the EU level (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Domain of knowledge and changes over time, 2026 (scores)



A closer look at the individual knowledge indicators helps explain the trends observed in the subdomains and highlights substantial differences in education outcomes across countries (Table 4). Women and men continue to take different routes through education systems: women are more likely to pursue higher education pathways, while men remain more concentrated in vocational education and training. At the EU level, women aged 30–34 are 11 pp more likely than men to hold a tertiary degree, while men aged 25–34 are 7 pp more likely than women to graduate from IVET. Particularly large gender gaps in tertiary educational attainment are observed in Slovenia (28 pp), Estonia (24 pp) and Latvia (21 pp). Gender differences in IVET participation are also substantial in several Member States, exceeding 15 pp in Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia.

The differences in educational pathways are accompanied by pronounced gender segregation in different fields of study. Across the EU, three quarters of EHW graduates are women, while two thirds of STEM graduates are men. Nevertheless, several Member States are approaching a more balanced gender distribution in some fields. Women account for more than 40 % of STEM graduates in Estonia, Greece and Romania, while men represent around one third of EHW graduates in Belgium and Malta. At the same time, substantial imbalances persist in other Member States, with women accounting for less than 30 % of STEM graduates in Belgium, Germany, Spain, Hungary and Austria, and men making up less than one fifth of EHW graduates in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Finland.

Table 4: Indicators of the domain of knowledge, EU-27

	Women	Men
Tertiary graduates, age group 30–34, 2025 (%)	51	40
IVET graduates, age group 25–34, 2025 (%)	27	34
EHW graduates, ISCED 5–8, 2024 (%)	75	25
STEM graduates, ISCED 5–8, 2024 (%)	34	66

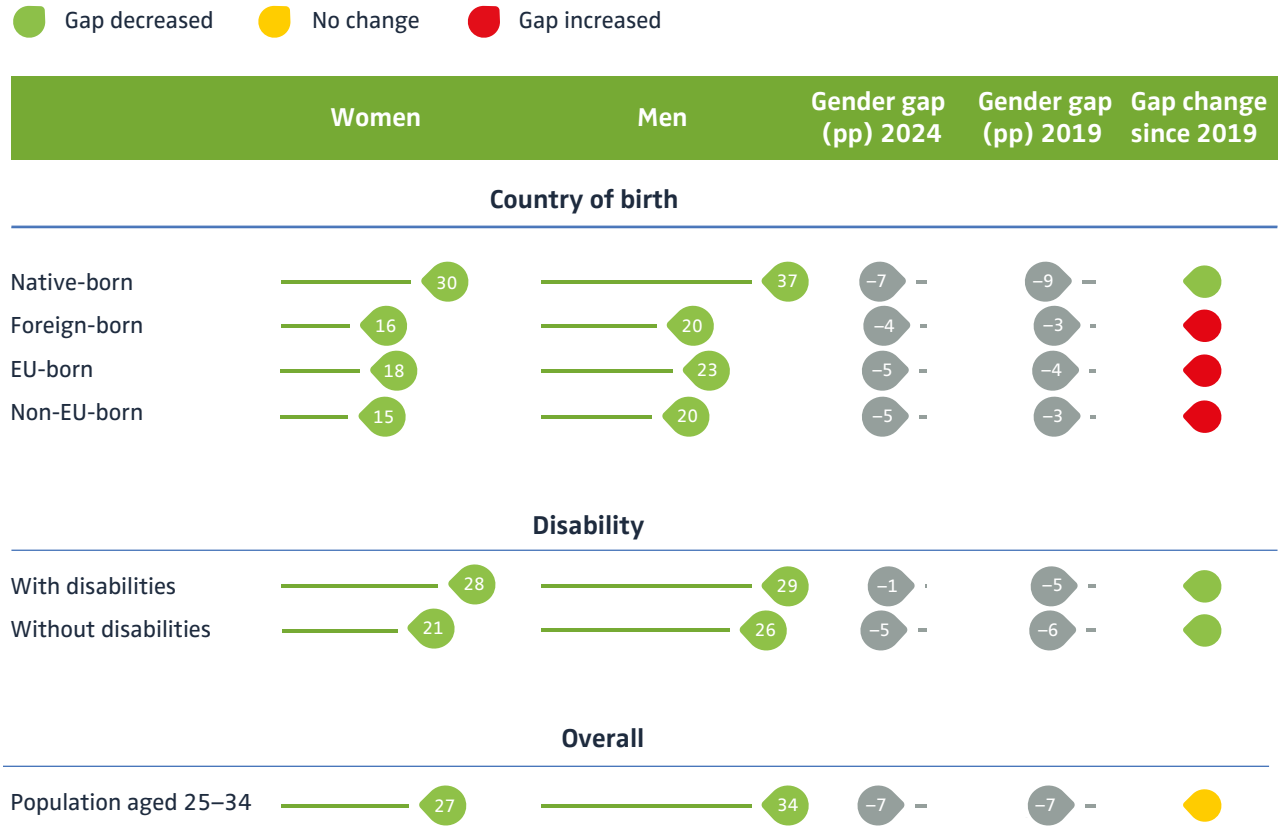
NB: The full list of indicators, including the data sources, is presented in Annex 1.

Educational segregation contributes directly to labour market segregation, influencing employment opportunities, earnings, career progression and economic security throughout the life course (EIGE, 2018). The under-representation of women in STEM fields limits the diversity of talent available in sectors that are critical for innovation, productivity and the EU's long-term competitiveness. At the same time, the limited participation of men in EHW fields constrains the labour supply in sectors that are essential for social resilience and that are facing growing workforce pressures due to population ageing, rising care needs and increasing demand for health and education services.

4.2. Beyond ability: how gender, migrant background and disability shape vocational education

IVET attainment varies not only by sex but also by other characteristics, such as birthplace and disability status (Figure 17). Both women and men born abroad are much less likely to hold an IVET qualification than their native-born peers. Foreign-born women have the lowest participation rate (16 %), compared with 30 % among native-born women. Men show a similar pattern, with rates ranging from 20 % among those born abroad to 37 % among native-born men. A range of factors affect migrant students' participation and completion of IVET programmes, including language barriers, discrimination, difficulties in recognising prior qualifications and limited social networks (Bell Sebastián et al., 2025).

Figure 17: Graduates in IVET among the population aged 25–34, EU-27 (%)



NB: Non-EU-born data is based on 26 Member States (data for Malta was not available). Data for Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland and Slovenia includes only those born in Europe but outside the EU.

Non-EU-born: MT (n/a), BG, HR, PL, SI include only people born in Europe outside the EU. This is reflected in the 'foreign-born' figures.

Gap changes: Marked in green when the gap has decreased since 2019 by 1 pp or more; in red when it has increased since 2019 by 1 pp or more; and in yellow when it has increased or decreased by less than 1 pp.

Disability: EU does not include IT and IE (microdata disaggregation for IVET not available).

Source: Authors' calculations based on EU-LFS, 2024, and EU-SILC, 2024 (disability), microdata.

By contrast, IVET attainment is more common among people with disabilities, especially women (28 %). However, this should be understood within the broader context of persistent educational inequalities experienced by people with disabilities. While vocational education serves as an important route to obtain qualifications and skills, people with disabilities remain under-represented in higher education (Eurostat, 2025a). They are also more likely to leave education and training early and face greater risks of labour market exclusion (Eurostat, 2025b).

4.3. Parental leave affects opportunities for educational attainment and lifelong learning

Parental leave does not just shape careers – it can also impact educational pathways and lifelong learning. When family formation coincides with early study years, the impact can be significant. A full year of maternity or parental leave during early adulthood has been shown to lower women's chances of completing higher education (Bates et al., 2023), especially in countries where support for combining studying and caregiving is limited. Since education strongly predicts labour market outcomes after childbirth, such educational disruptions may have long-term consequences. Among mothers with one child aged 0–6, employment reaches 84 % for those with tertiary education, compared with 68 % for those with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education (Eurostat, 2025c).

Accessible, affordable and high-quality childcare can support educational continuity and reduce the risk that parenthood leads to longer-term labour market disadvantages.

Strong family networks and policies can mitigate these effects. In particular, accessible, affordable, high-quality ECEC services can help parents balance study, work and caregiving, keeping educational trajectories on track and reducing the risk that parenthood becomes a long-term disadvantage (EIGE, 2021b).

Parents who are students may face difficulties accessing parental leave and benefits, as eligibility is frequently linked to employment history.

Parents who are students often face particular challenges. In many Member States, access to parental leave and benefits depends on employment status, tenure or prior social insurance contributions – criteria that most students simply cannot meet. As a result, they often miss out on earnings-related benefits available to working parents. Some countries have stepped in with targeted solutions: Hungary offers student-specific parental benefits, Denmark provides additional grants and Germany, Romania and Sweden allow students to access parental benefits under specific conditions. These measures help prevent childbirth from derailing education or forcing students to abandon their studies (see Chapter 9 for more details).

Longer periods of parental leave are associated with depreciation of work-related skills.

Parenthood also shapes lifelong learning. Longer parental leave can reduce opportunities for job-related training, particularly for mothers. In Germany, mothers participate in non-formal job-related training less often than childless women (30 % versus 38 %), while fathers' participation mirrors that of childless men (31 % versus 30 %) (Zoch, 2023b). Extended leave can also lead to skills depreciation: parents taking longer leave experience greater declines in work-related competencies than those taking shorter leave (Spitzer et al., 2024). Evidence from 19 Member States shows that each additional year of statutory parenting leave ([7]) is linked to a 3–5 % drop in mothers' work-relevant numeracy skills later in life, largely due to longer career breaks and reduced time in paid employment (Lemoine et al., 2025).

Yet supportive policies can mitigate these effects. Greater childcare availability reduces the 'training penalty' associated with motherhood by enabling earlier labour market return and continued skills development (Zoch, 2023a).

([7]) In the study, 'parenting leave' is used as an umbrella term that includes maternity leave, parental leave and leave reserved for co-parents.

5. Domain of time

Time is a key resource shaping opportunities for work, family life and participation in society. Its allocation is deeply gendered, reflecting persistent structural imbalances in unpaid household and caregiving activities.

Women continue to carry a disproportionate share of unpaid care and household work, spending more time than men on childcare and even larger amounts of time on domestic tasks. Gender gaps are also pronounced in long-term care, particularly among caregivers aged 45–64, who often juggle multiple care roles. As Europe's population ages, more individuals, especially women, face dual care responsibilities, providing both childcare and long-term care simultaneously. These overlapping demands create sustained time pressure throughout women's lives (EIGE, 2026e).

Overall, time use remains asymmetrical: women devote more hours to unpaid work, while men spend more time in paid employment. This imbalance constrains women's labour market participation, leading to reduced working hours, part-time employment and fragmented career trajectories. Over time, these patterns reinforce structural inequalities, including the gender pay and pension gaps (Goldin et al., 2024; Kleven et al., 2019). Time poverty also limits participation in civic and political life, reducing women's availability for community engagement, decision-making roles and broader structures of public influence.

Beyond work and public life, unequal time allocation affects restorative time – the time needed for rest, recovery and personal well-being (EIGE, 2026e). The sustained mental and emotional load of caregiving is linked to higher stress levels, reduced recovery time and poorer sleep outcomes among women. The gender sleep gap has long-term consequences for women's physical and mental health across the life course (Chao et al., 2023; Ruppanner et al., 2021).

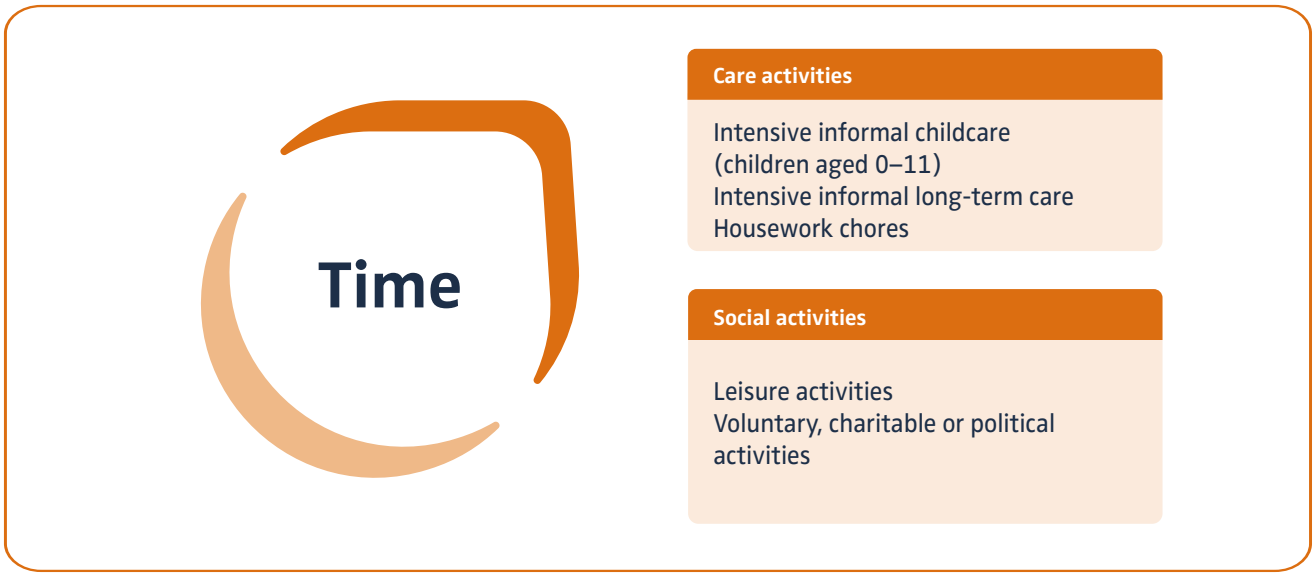
These inequalities are reinforced by persistent gender stereotypes about caregiving and labour market roles (Agerström et al., 2023). They also interact with structural factors such as gendered earnings differences. Decisions to reduce paid work after childbirth often reflect couples' relative earnings, which typically favour men, further entrenching unequal divisions of labour (OECD, 2025a). The limited availability and affordability of high-quality care services deepen these constraints, restricting a more balanced distribution of time within households (Narazani et al., 2025).

Through the Work–Life Balance Directive and the 2026–2030 gender equality strategy, the EU aims to rebalance care by increasing fathers' involvement, especially during the transition to parenthood when gendered patterns are formed. Parental leave is a key lever: even short periods of paternal leave have lasting effects on fathers' engagement in childcare and housework (Tamm, 2019). Expanding fathers' uptake of leave and their access to flexible working arrangements is therefore central to reducing gender inequalities in time use.

EU policy context

- The **European Pillar of Social Rights** provides a solid basis for work–life balance improvements. It sets the principle for parents and carers to have the right to suitable leave, flexible working arrangements and access to care services.
- The **Work–Life Balance Directive** is designed to enhance families' access to leave and flexible working arrangements, facilitating women's labour market participation and a fairer distribution of unpaid care responsibilities.
- The **European care strategy** seeks to ensure access to quality, affordable and accessible care services, and to improve working conditions and recognition for professional and informal carers. It focuses on strengthening care systems, supporting families and promoting gender equality in formal and informal care. The strategy was followed by the adoption of **two Council recommendations** on ECEC and access to affordable high-quality long-term care.
- The **2026–2030 gender equality strategy** aims to reduce gender inequalities in unpaid care and time use by promoting fathers' uptake of parental leave and flexible working arrangements, while also addressing insufficient access to affordable, high-quality childcare and long-term care services as key structural barriers to women's labour market participation.
- The **European Care Deal**, planned for 2027, introduces a more integrated framework for EU care policy by bringing together existing initiatives on childcare, long-term care and work–life balance into a more coherent policy approach. It places stronger emphasis on system-wide investment in care infrastructure and workforce conditions, with the aim of addressing structural constraints on women's labour market participation and promoting a more equal distribution of unpaid care between women and men.

The domain of time tackles these key challenges by tracking the gender imbalances in caregiving and social activities and highlighting their repercussions.



The subdomain of care activities is based on three key indicators. Informal care of children below 12 years old looks at intensive care involving at least 35 weekly hours, including weekends. The informal long-term care ([8]) indicator captures care for at least 20 weekly hours by carers aged 45–64. The third indicator examines who does housework – cooking, cleaning, laundry – every day.

When fathers take parental leave, it often leads to a more equal sharing of housework and childcare, an effect that continues long after the leave period has ended (Eerola et al., 2022; Tamm, 2019).

The subdomain of social activities looks at the percentage of individuals engaged in leisure pursuits (e.g. cultural activities, holidays, hobbies) for more than eight hours a week, and voluntary, charitable or political activities ([9]) at least once a week.

The stability of the time domain over recent years mainly reflects the underlying data sources and their update frequency. The domain relies primarily on indicators derived from EIGE's 2024 CARE Survey (Survey of Gender Gaps in Unpaid Care, Individual and Social Activities), supplemented by a single indicator on long-term care provision from Eurostat's European Health Interview Survey (EHIS). Since this data is not collected on an annual basis, the domain scores have remained unchanged since 2020.

5.1. Time inequality persists in how women and men care and socialise

With a score of 65.0, the domain of time ranks fourth on the 2026 Gender Equality Index. Most Member States are clustered around the EU average, but scores range from 81.1 in Denmark to 54.7 in Cyprus (Figure 18).

The care activities subdomain scores 57.1 on average across the EU, indicating persistent gender inequalities in the distribution of care responsibilities. However, scores vary substantially between Member States, showing considerable differences in national patterns of care provision. By contrast, the social activities subdomain reaches a higher average EU-27 score of 74.1 and displays comparatively smaller differences across countries.

([8]) Informal long-term care refers to the provision of care or assistance to one or more people suffering from age-related problems, a chronic health condition or infirmity, at least once a week.

([9]) Volunteering refers to unpaid activities where someone gives their time to help a not-for-profit organisation or an individual to whom they are not related. Volunteering includes being engaged in cultural, educational, sporting or charitable activities, such as distributing food, teaching, providing medical support, caring for animals, engaging in art and music, doing environmental work, supporting fundraising, and making or collecting donations. Political activities refer to running or helping a political campaign, distributing campaign materials, signing a petition, protesting, contacting officials, etc.

Figure 18: Domain of time and its subdomains, 2026 (scores)



NB: The full list of indicators, including the data sources, is presented in Annex 1.

The indicators provide a more nuanced understanding of how gender differences in the use of time are structured across the subdomains of care and social activities (Table 5). Overall, they show that women remain more heavily involved in unpaid care and domestic work than men, while men report higher participation than women in leisure and civic activities. However, the magnitude of these differences varies considerably across Member States and activity types.

Table 5: Indicators of the domain of time, EU-27

	Women	Men
Informal childcare (for children aged 0–11) for more than 35 hours a week, age group 16–74, 2024 (%)	41	20
Informal long-term care for more than 20 hours a week, age group 45–64, 2019 (%)	20	13
Housework chores (cooking, cleaning, laundry) every day, age group 16–74, 2024 (%)	59	33
Leisure activities (e.g. cultural activities, holidays, hobbies) for at least 8 hours per week, age group 16–74, 2024 (%)	30	43
Voluntary, charitable or political activities at least 1 day per week, age group 16–74, 2024 (%)	13	17

NB: The full list of indicators, including the data sources, is presented in Annex 1.

In informal childcare, 41 % of women, compared with 20 % of men, report providing childcare for more than 35 hours per week, corresponding to an EU gender gap of 21 pp. Country-level differences are substantial: the gap reaches 31 pp in Austria, followed by Finland (30 pp), Poland (29 pp) and Cyprus (28 pp). Denmark stands out as the only Member State without a gender gap in intensive childcare provision, showing that a more equal distribution of caretaking responsibilities is possible.

A similar but slightly less pronounced pattern is visible in long-term care. At the EU level, 20 % of women and 13 % of men report providing informal long-term care for more than 20 hours per week, corresponding to a gender gap of 7 pp. Differences across Member States remain significant, with the largest gaps observed in Croatia (17 pp), Portugal (16 pp) and Ireland (15 pp). By contrast, in Denmark, a slightly larger share of men provide long-term care, with a gap of – 1 pp. No measurable gender difference is observed in Belgium, illustrating the diversity of gendered care patterns across the EU.

Gender differences are particularly pronounced in housework activities, which remain the most unevenly distributed indicator within the domain of time. Across the EU, 59 % of women report cooking, cleaning and doing laundry daily, compared with 33 % of men. The largest disparities are observed in Cyprus (39 pp), Croatia (38 pp), Greece (37 pp) and Italy (37 pp), whereas Denmark records the smallest difference (13 pp).

The high allocation of women's time to care activities is also partly reflected in gender differences in social activities. In leisure activities, 43 % of men and 30 % of women report spending at least 8 hours per week on cultural activities, holidays or hobbies, corresponding to a gender gap of – 13 pp. Country-level variation is again substantial: the gap is largest in Finland (– 18 pp), while it is relatively small in Bulgaria (– 7 pp). A similar pattern is observed for voluntary, charitable or political activities. At the EU level, 17 % of men and 13 % of women report participating in such activities at least once per week, corresponding to a gender gap of – 4 pp. The largest gap is observed in Finland (– 11 pp), while in Croatia and Bulgaria the gap is close to zero or slightly reversed (2 pp and 5 pp, respectively).

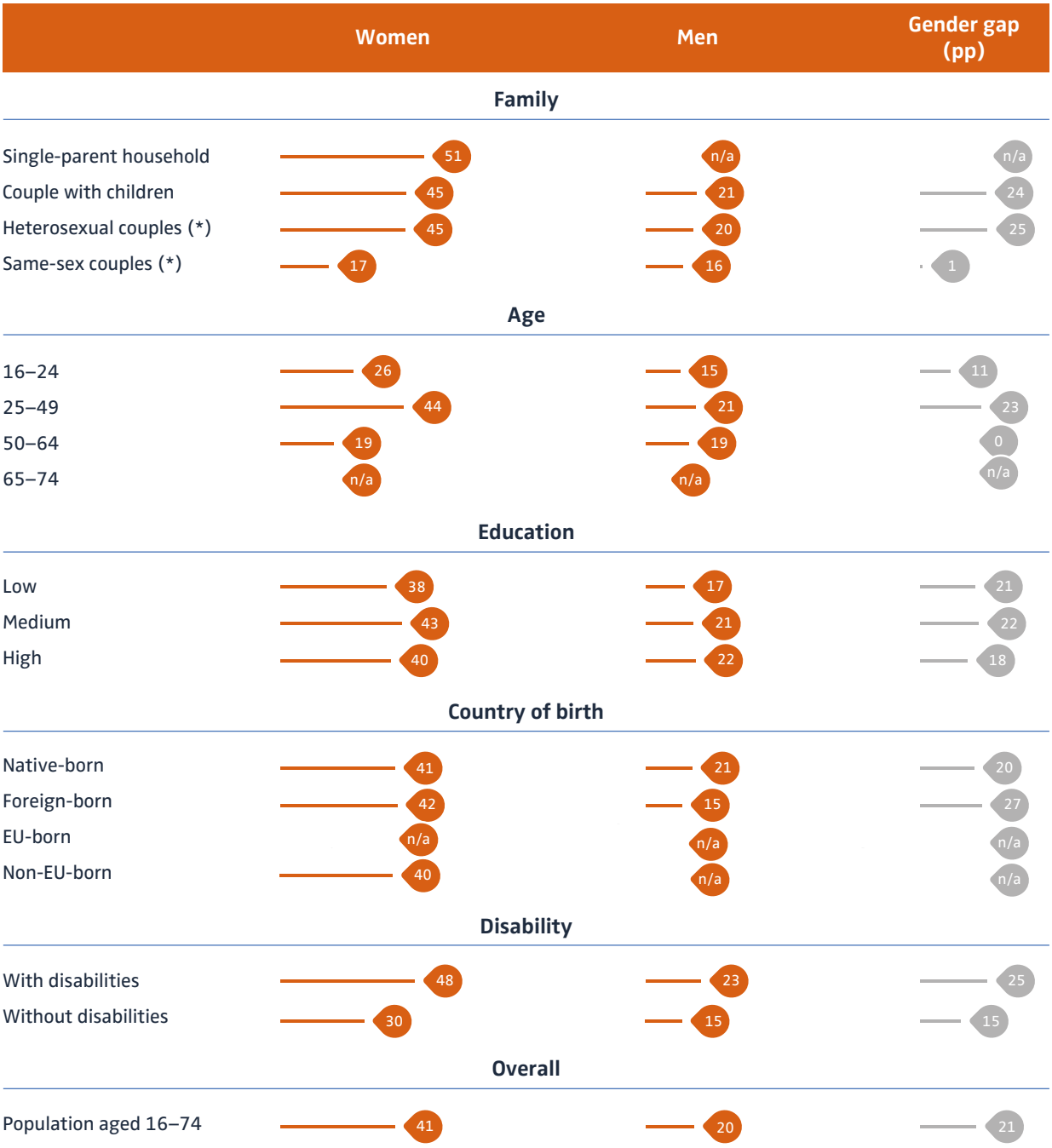
Taken together, the indicators highlight that gender differences in time use are not uniform across the EU but vary substantially depending on the type of activity and national context. The most persistent and pronounced inequalities remain concentrated in unpaid care and housework (Table 5).

5.2. Gender norms shape the unequal distribution of intensive childcare

Caring for young children remains one of the most gendered forms of time use in the EU. Among parents of children under 12, women are twice as likely as men to provide highly time-intensive childcare – more than 35 hours per week. This imbalance shows how strongly women remain positioned as primary caregivers, with wide-ranging consequences for their participation in paid work, leisure and public life. Women are more likely to reduce their working hours or stop working altogether due to care responsibilities, face work–life balance conflicts and have less leisure time (EIGE, 2023a, 2026f).

Caregiving patterns are also shaped by family composition, age, education, disability status and migration status (Figure 19). Among couples with children, the gender gap in providing highly time-intensive childcare reaches 24 pp, confirming that inequalities remain pronounced even within shared household settings. Differences between heterosexual and same-sex couples are particularly evident: 45 % of women in heterosexual couples provide more than 35 hours of childcare weekly, compared with 17 % of women in same-sex couples. This suggests that unequal childcare is not simply driven by the presence of two parents – it is connected to gender norms and expectations within relationships.

Figure 19: Share of women and men providing care to their own children aged 0–11 for more than 35 hours per week in 2024, population aged 16–74, EU-27 (%)



NB: 'Education' includes people who have completed ISCED levels 0–2 (low), ISCED level 3 or 4 (medium) or ISCED levels 5–8 (high). Family type definition is based on certain household's members. A couple is defined as two adults living in the same household and declaring themselves to be in a relationship (whether married or not). Other adults in the household are excluded from the definition. For clarity of interpretation, the indicated family types exclude households with a different composition. The sample size for men in single-parent households was too low to report on.

(*) Heterosexual couples and same-sex couples are based on the variable gender identity (not the variable sex at birth). Gender identity was the only question asked of both the respondent (Q_80) and their partner (as declared by the respondent, Q_15). Answer options non-binary / in another way / prefer not to answer for both variables are included in the analysis as 'other'. However, the sample size of the merged answer options does not allow reliable calculations.

Source: EIGE, CARE Survey, 2024.

Among highly educated parents, the gender difference in intensive childcare is smaller, yet twice as many women as men still provide more than 35 hours of care per week. This shows that education alone cannot overcome the structural and normative drivers of unequal care.

Disability markedly amplifies gender inequalities in intensive childcare. Almost half of women with disabilities provide more than 35 hours of childcare per week, compared with almost one fourth of men with disabilities. By contrast, among people without disabilities, the gender gap is 10 pp lower. This highlights the compounded disadvantage faced by women with disabilities, who may simultaneously be affected by gendered expectations around care and by disability-related barriers.

Taken together, these patterns show that not only is intensive childcare unevenly distributed between women and men, but it is also impacted by social positioning. Addressing gender inequalities in time use therefore requires policies that go beyond promoting shared care in couples. It demands addressing the structural conditions and gendered norms that continue to position women, especially those facing additional vulnerabilities, as primary caregivers.

5.3. Parental leave can support a more equal sharing of care responsibilities, but uptake remains strongly gendered

Well-designed parental leave policies are one of the most powerful levers for supporting a more equal sharing of care responsibilities and helping parents balance paid work and family responsibilities. Across the EU, most parental leave schemes now formally include flexible arrangements, allowing leave to be taken in blocks, on a part-time basis or in combination with reduced working hours. Such flexibility can support a smoother return to work, enabling a gradual reintegration rather than a sudden return to fulltime employment. However, the extent of this flexibility is far from uniform. While some countries allow for leave to be split into short periods and taken day by day (Estonia) or in fractions (Belgium, Cyprus, Sweden), others restrict access to benefits if parents engage in part-time work during leave (Bulgaria, Ireland, France, Malta, Romania).

Despite these options, the uptake of parental leave remains strongly gendered. Women make far greater use of flexible arrangements, while men often take only their minimum entitlement (EIGE, 2024d). This risks reinforcing existing inequalities, as flexible leave may end up accommodating women's continued responsibility for care (European Parliament: Directorate-General for Internal Policies of the Union, Hofman et al., 2020). The consequences are visible in the labour market: 18 % of women, compared with 12 % of men, reduce their working hours to balance care and employment (EIGE, 2026e). Women also report more frequent difficulties combining paid work with unpaid care, highlighting persistent imbalances.

The design of parental leave policies plays a decisive role in shaping uptake (Ziegler et al., 2023). Several Member States now use financial incentives to encourage fathers' participation, such as extending paid leave when both parents take a minimum share or offering partnership bonuses when leave is more equally divided. These measures show promise in encouraging fathers towards greater involvement.

Well-designed parental leave schemes, including incentives for fathers and inclusive eligibility rules, can promote a more equal sharing of care responsibilities.

However, not all families have equal access to parental leave and related incentives. Single parents may be excluded from incentives that require both parents to take leave, although some countries compensate with extended individual entitlements or higher benefit rates. Same-sex couples face additional barriers: access to parental leave often depends on the legal recognition of parenthood, and in several Member States the non-biological or non-gestational parent struggles to obtain legal status. This can limit or prevent access to leave, leaving care responsibilities with the legally recognised parent regardless of the actual caregiving arrangements (Evertsson et al., 2020).

Overall, parental leave policies hold significant potential to support a more equal sharing of care responsibilities, but their impact depends on both policy design and actual uptake. Achieving gender equality in time use therefore requires flexible leave arrangements, targeted incentives, inclusive eligibility rules and social norms that encourage all parents to take an active role in caregiving.

6. Domain of power

Women in the EU remain under-represented in economic, social and political decision-making, and the environment in which they participate has grown increasingly hostile. Rising political polarisation, surges in disinformation (Casero-Ripollés et al., 2025), declining media freedom (Reporters Without Borders, 2026a) and algorithmic amplification have led to a visibly brutal public discourse (Graeff, n.d.; Imbush, 2025; Overton, 2025; Ozturk et al., 2025). Against the backdrop of geopolitical tensions, armed conflicts, economic uncertainty and populist mobilisation, political communication has become more adversarial and emotionally charged (Kantola et al., 2021; Ozturk et al., 2025). Instead of deliberation, debate increasingly relies on incendiary soundbites and provocative memes (Al Afnan, 2025) alongside dehumanisation, personal attacks and hateful, racist or sexist rhetoric. This normalisation of brutality often spills into calls for real-world violence (Bryant, 2026; Overton, 2025; Reporters Without Borders, 2026b).

In this context, women in elected or public-facing roles face disproportionate and deeply gendered hostility (Bardall et al., 2020; Daniele et al., 2023; EIGE, 2025d; Håkansson, 2021; Kantola et al., 2024). Violence against women in politics, both online and offline, has far-reaching adverse effects on women's political involvement, such as reduced political participation, not standing for re-election or leaving office prematurely (Coessens, n.d.; Daniele et al., 2023; EIGE, 2022; Vandeleene et al., 2025). Evidence from the Netherlands also shows that such violence discourages young women's political aspirations (De Jong et al., 2025), particularly among women with migrant backgrounds, who may withdraw from political activities or choose low-visibility roles. The result is a loss of political talent and long-term representational costs.

The pattern of increasingly toxic and violent behaviour has been driven by online trolls, hate groups and far-right extremism. In October 2025, after only five months in office, the Swedish Centre Party leader Anna-Karin Hatt resigned due to a significant number of threats and persistent harassment (Bryant, 2026). Her predecessor, Annie Lööf, stepped down in 2022 after attending an event where another speaker was fatally stabbed (Gelin, 2025).

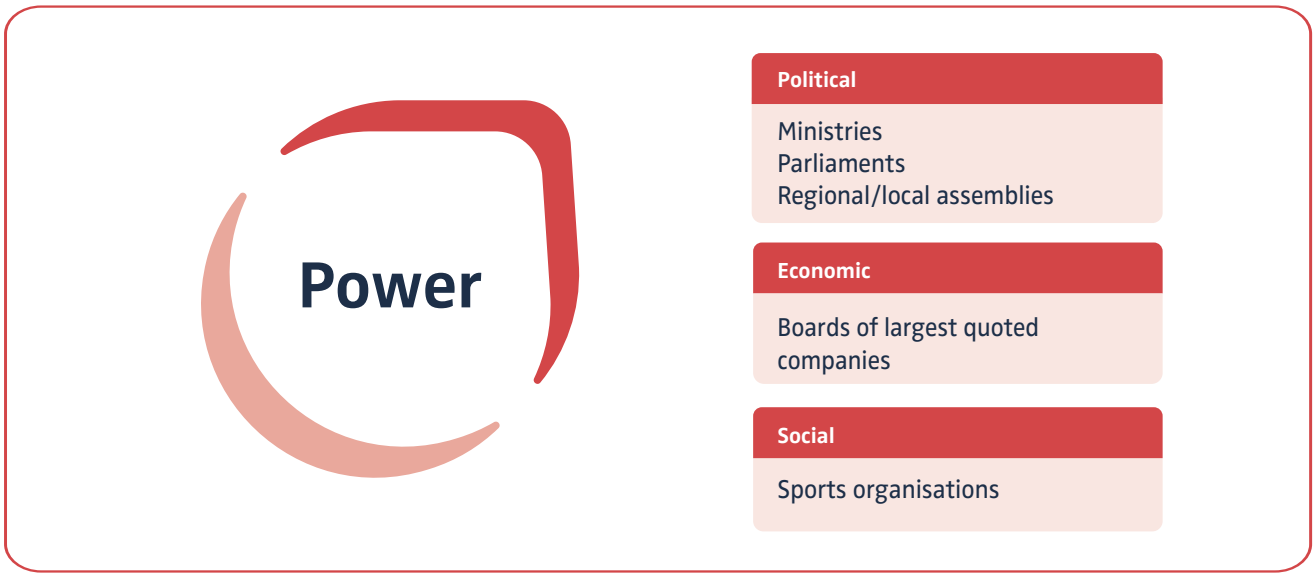
At the EU level, political violence is recognised as a major threat to democracy and a serious violation of fundamental rights. Ensuring that women can fully and safely participate in politics is a priority of gender equality policies. Following the EU's ratification of the Istanbul Convention, the EU committed to integrating a gender perspective into all measures in order to prevent violence against women, prosecute perpetrators and protect victims.

Achieving gender equality in decision-making also requires enabling elected officials to combine a political career and family life, with access to family leave being essential. Unlike standard employees, elected officials are not guaranteed access to family leave. Legal frameworks and practical arrangements vary depending on the institution and the Member State. In the European Parliament, the right to maternity and parental leave is enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. However, such provisions generally do not extend to parliamentarians as the individual and non-transferable mandate takes precedence over fundamental rights.

EU policy context

- The **2026–2030 gender equality strategy** sets a priority to ensure equal participation in decision-making across all sectors – political, economic and social. It recognises the importance of women leadership in culture, sports and civil society, and promotes an intersectional perspective to understand and tackle specific inequalities. The strategy also includes strengthened action to prevent violence against women in politics.
- The **2025 European democracy shield** aims to safeguard the integrity of elections and of the information space and tackle disinformation, including AI-generated and manipulated content.
- The **2025 European Media Freedom Act** seeks to ensure and protect media pluralism and safeguard the independence of public service media. It establishes rules for the protection of journalists from threats, violence and abusive lawsuits.
- The **2025 roadmap for women's rights** establishes a forward-looking agenda to strengthen gender equality across all spheres of life, with political participation at its core. It acknowledges that women's equal representation and leadership enable more stable and resilient democracies.
- The revised **statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations** was adopted by the Council of the European Union in November 2025. It requires political parties and foundations to reach gender balance in their governing bodies by the next European Parliament's elections. It also calls on them to adopt mechanisms to promote gender balance at all levels, along with internal protocols to prevent and address sexual harassment.
- The **directive on improving the gender balance among directors of listed companies** (Directive (EU) 2022/2381) is a key step in tackling the under-representation of women in corporate management and improving transparency in board member selection. To meet the requirements of the directive, the boards of the largest companies must ensure that at least 40 % of non-executive director positions are held by each gender, or that at least 33 % of all director positions are held by each gender, by 30 June 2026.
- The **2024–2027 EU work plan for sport** seeks to advance gender equality in sports governance, including by increasing women's representation in decision-making bodies of sports organisations and reinforcing the monitoring of gender balance in sports leadership.

The domain of power deals with these challenges by focusing on gender inequalities in the highest decision-making bodies of key political institutions, largest companies and sports organisations in the EU.



The first subdomain of political power uses three indicators: the proportions of women and men as government ministers (junior and senior ministers), as parliamentarians and in regional and/or local assemblies.

The subdomain of economic power explores the gender composition of the boards of the largest quoted companies in each country. Meanwhile, the subdomain of social power examines the gender breakdown of the highest decision-making bodies of the 10 most popular Olympic sports organisations in each country.

6.1. Progress is steady but gender parity in political representation seems a distant future

The domain of power remains the EU's most challenging frontier for gender equality. Despite a rise from 40.5 to 42.9 points since last year, it continues to rank lowest on the Gender Equality Index 2026.

Among the three subdomains, social power shows the strongest momentum. Its score went up to 33.5 points, a notable 5.1-point increase since last year driven by more women entering leadership roles in national Olympic sports organisations. Economic power also continues its upward trajectory, reaching 51.7 points, reflecting steady improvements in women's representation on company boards. In contrast, political power – historically the slowest mover – has declined for the first time, dropping 1.8 points to 45.5. This reversal signals renewed fragility in women's political leadership across the EU (Figure 20).

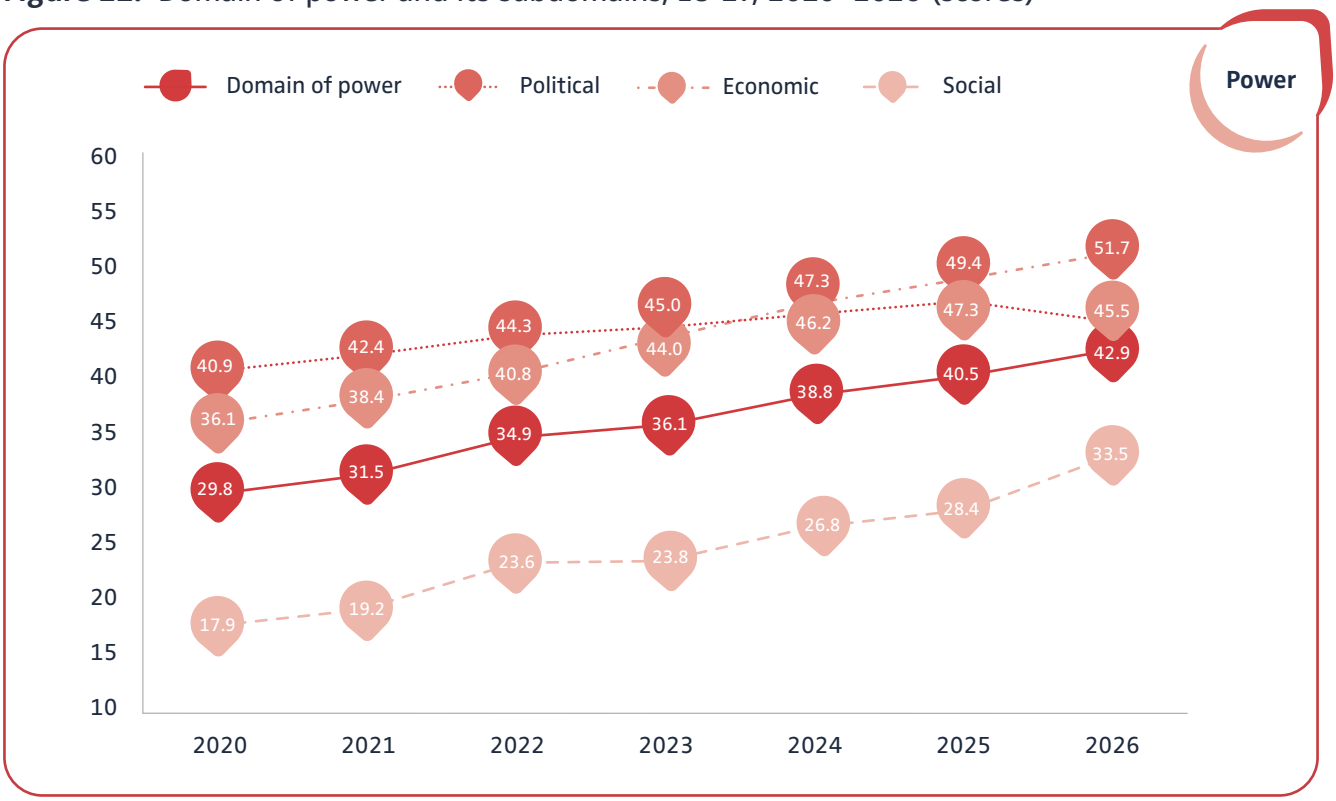
Figure 20: Domain of power and its subdomains, 2026 (scores)



NB: The full list of indicators, including the data sources, is presented in Annex 1.

Looking at longer-term trends, the domain of power has gained 13.1 points since the 2020 Index, largely due to advances of around 15.5 points in both economic and social power (Figure 21). These improvements stem from structural changes: binding quotas on corporate boards, targeted interventions in sports governance and stronger monitoring frameworks. The domain of power remains one of the most influential contributors to the overall Index score.

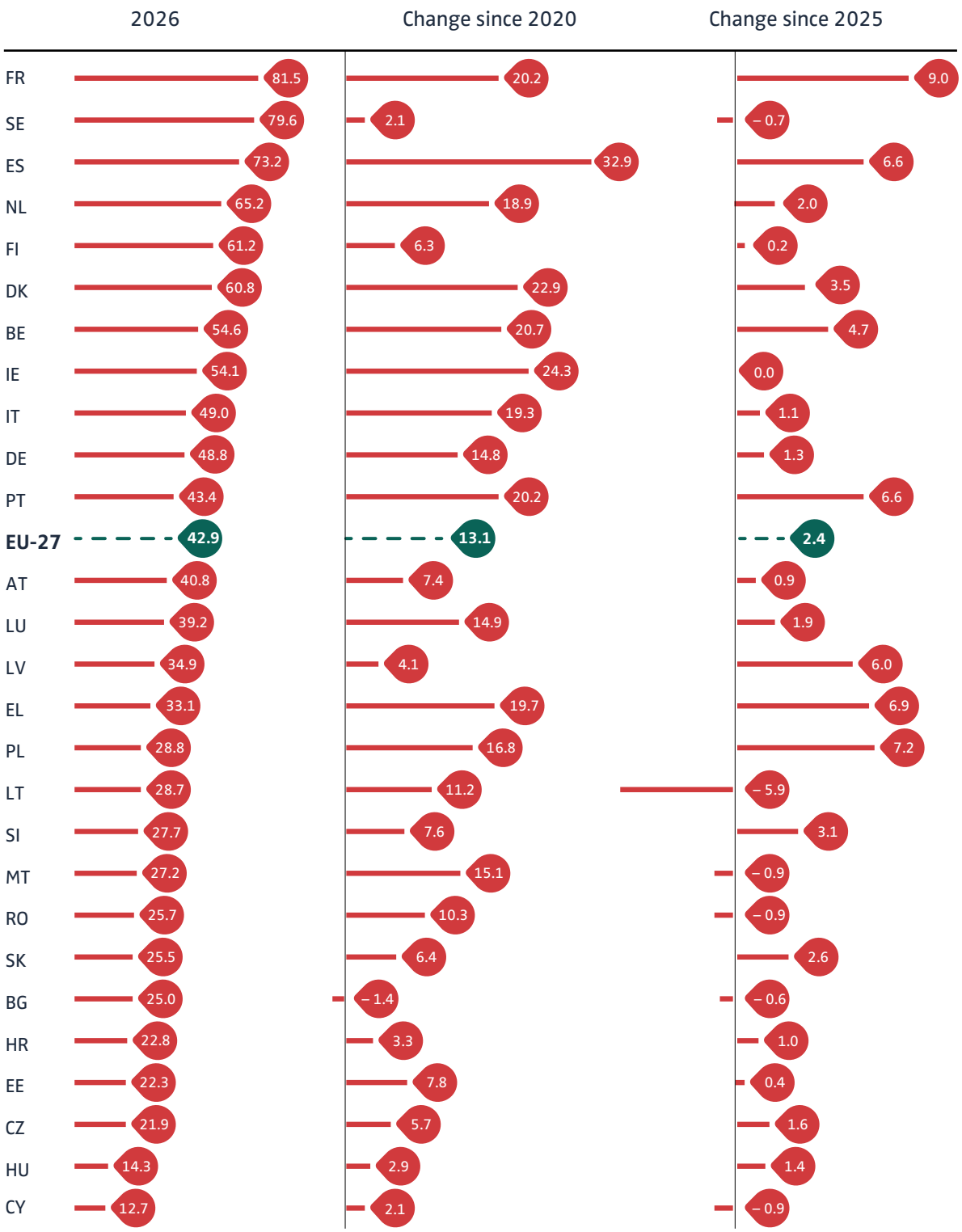
Figure 21: Domain of power and its subdomains, EU-27, 2010–2026 (scores)



Yet, progress is far from evenly distributed. The EU landscape is marked by striking disparities. France leads with 81.5 points, followed by Sweden, Spain and the Netherlands. At the opposite end, Cyprus scores just 12.7 points, with Hungary, Czechia and Estonia close behind. Overall, 15 out of the 27 Member States score below 40 points, underscoring how deeply entrenched gender imbalances remain in decision-making.

Some countries have made impressive strides. France (+ 9.0), Poland (+ 7.2) and Greece (+ 6.9) recorded the strongest year-on-year improvements. Others have slipped backwards: Cyprus, Malta and Romania saw small declines, while Lithuania experienced the sharpest setback (– 5.9 points) (Figure 22).

Figure 22: Domain of power and changes over time, 2026 (scores)



Gender balance in political decision-making remains a work in progress. In comparison with the previous year, the share of women ministers across the EU fell by 2.8 pp, leaving women at 32 % of ministerial posts (Table 6). Some Member States ([10]) saw dramatic drops – Belgium (– 28.3 pp) ([11]), Romania (– 19.3 pp), Bulgaria (– 7.8 pp) and the Netherlands (– 7.8 pp). Only Finland surpassed gender parity with 62 % women ministers, while France maintains a 50/50 balance, closely followed by Sweden (48 %), Austria (48 %) and Germany (44 %). The share of members of parliament (MPs) (33 %) and the share of members of regional assemblies (32 %) have not changed since the previous Index.

Economic power tells a more hopeful story. The Gender Balance on Corporate Boards Directive, to be implemented by 30 June 2026, requires at least 40 % of each gender among non-executive directors or 33 % among all directors. EIGE's indicator on gender balance on company boards ([12]) shows that, across the EU, women now hold 36 % of board seats (Table 6). Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Spain, France, Italy and the Netherlands have already reached the 40 % threshold, largely due to strong legislative quotas. Yet, Bulgaria, Estonia, Cyprus, Hungary and Malta still report fewer than 20 % of members being women on company boards.

Table 6: Indicators of the domain of power, EU-27

	Women	Men
Ministers, 2025 (%)	32	68
Members of Parliament, 2025 (%)	33	67
Members of regional/local assemblies, 2025 (%)	32	68
Members of boards in the largest quoted companies, 2025 (%)	36	65
Members of the highest decision-making body of the 10 most popular national Olympic sports organisations, 2025 (%)	26	74

NB: The full list of indicators, including the data sources, is presented in Annex 1.

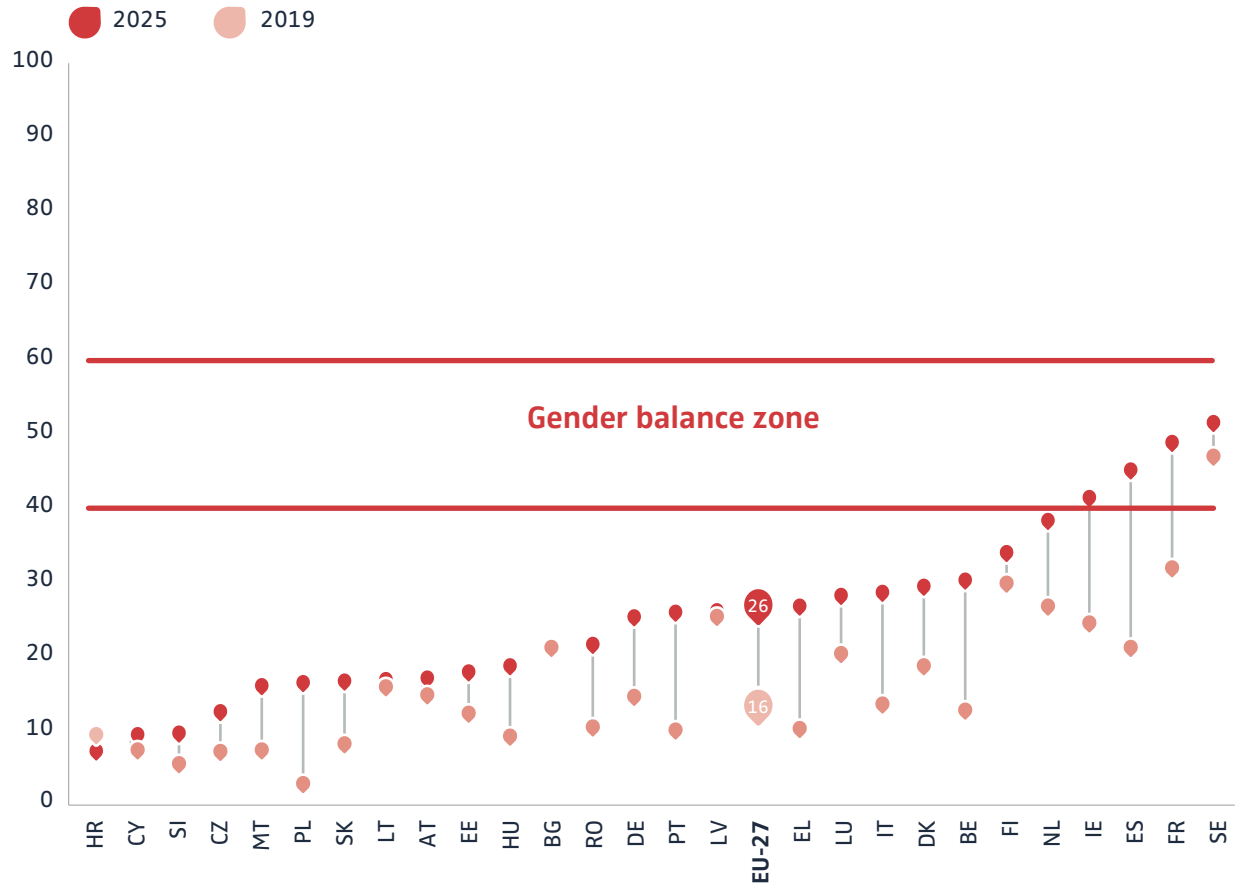
Social power, despite being the lowest-scoring subdomain, is undergoing one of the most dynamic transformations. The election of Kirsty Coventry as the first woman president of the International Olympic Committee in 2025, together with the first gender-equal Olympics, held in Paris in 2024, made headlines. These milestones constitute some of the most visible parts of a marked, albeit slow, trend towards the greater representation of women in sports (Adriaanse, 2024; EIGE, 2015; European Commission, 2022; Markula et al., 2024).

([10]) Country-level data can be accessed through EIGE's Gender Statistics Database on women and men in decision-making (WMID).
([11]) Since the beginning of 2025, Belgium's new government, led by Prime Minister Bart de Wever (New Flemish Alliance), has not appointed any state secretaries (junior ministers). Out of 15 appointed ministers, only 4 are women.
([12]) The Index indicator on gender balance in largest listed companies published by EIGE is not yet fully aligned with the scope and definitions of the Directive on Gender Balance on Corporate Boards. EIGE's data covers a sample of the largest listed companies in the EU, including small and medium-sized enterprises, where relevant. The directive applies to all publicly listed companies in the EU, excluding small and medium-sized enterprises.

Yet, visibility will take time to reach parity: women still account for only 26 % of sports decision-makers in the EU (Figure 23), below the 30 % 'critical mass' needed to shift group dynamics and enable meaningful participation (Markula et al., 2024). Sweden is the only country with gender balance (51 % women), followed close by France (49 %), Spain (45 %) and Ireland (41 %) (Figure 23). Cyprus (9 %), Slovenia (9 %) and Croatia (7 %) remain far from parity.

Since 2019, representation has increased in nearly all Member States, with Spain (+ 24 pp) and Belgium (+ 18 pp), and France, Greece and Ireland (+ 17 pp each) showing the strongest gains. At the EU level, women's share in sports leadership has risen by 10 pp since 2019.

Figure 23: Share of women members of the highest decision-making bodies of national Olympic sports organisations, 2025 (%)



Source: EIGE, Gender Statistics Database, WMID; see Annex 1.

International sports governance mirrors the EU pattern: progress is evident, but gender balance remains a long way off. Across 70 international sports federations, women held 21.3 % of board seats in 2021 – a 10 pp increase over a decade (Adriaanse, 2024). In the 30 Summer Olympic federations, which include some of the most popular sports globally such as football, tennis, rugby, basketball, athletics and cycling, women represent 32 % of members of the highest decision-making bodies and only five federations are headed by women in 2026 (SIGA, 2026) ([13]).

6.2. More data needed to identify and tackle compounded barriers to political leadership

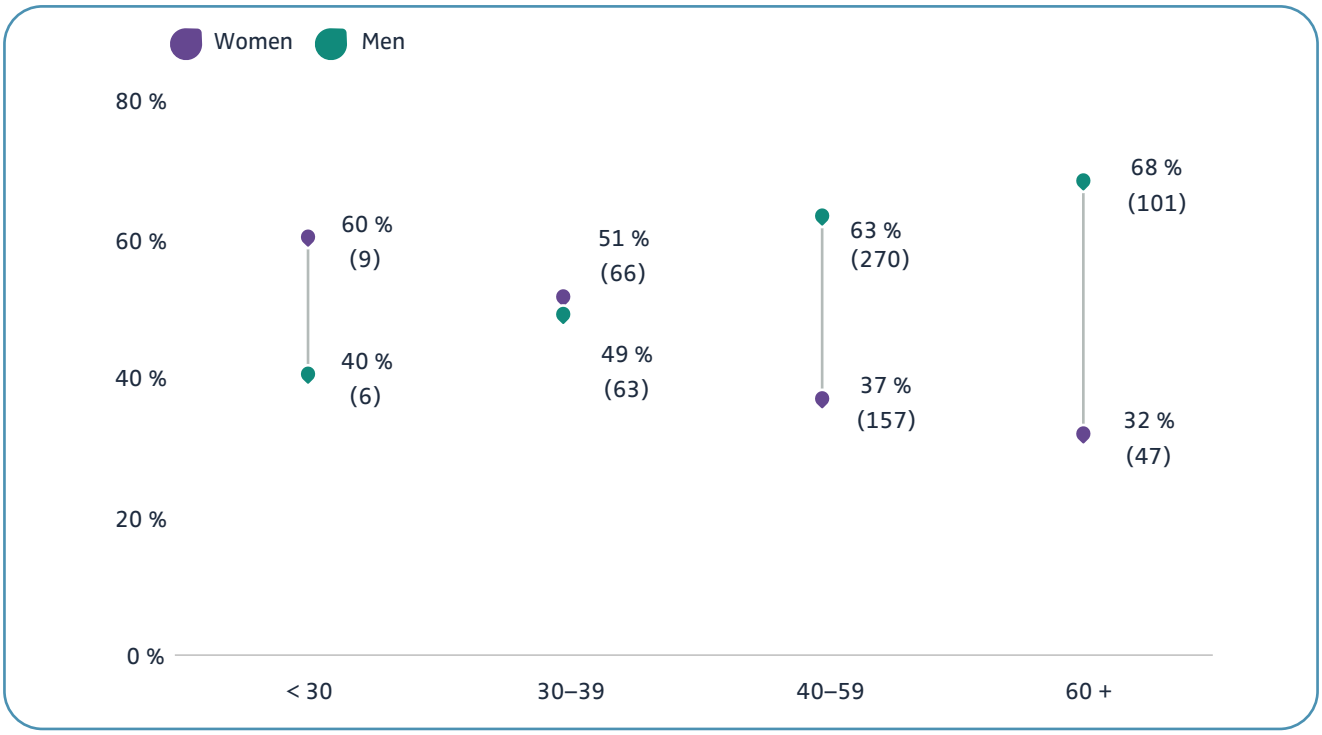
Despite undeniable progress on women's representation in all fields of decision-making, research highlights that exercising leadership positions still comes at high personal costs to women, especially in politics (Chikwe et al., 2024; Håkansson, 2021; Kjøller et al., 2025). Barriers to leadership are even higher and harder to take down for women who differ from the dominant group in terms of age, ethnicity or disability (Abulbasal et al., 2024; Breslin et al., 2017; Daldrop et al., 2023; Kantola et al., 2023).

An intersectional lens is therefore essential: structural obstacles do not affect all women and men equally. Yet, data on gender and intersecting inequalities remains scarce. The domain of power is the only domain without intersectional indicators (EIGE, 2017b, 2019, 2025b, 2025e). Efforts are under way to expand data collection on political decision-making beyond sex. In 2025, EIGE assessed the feasibility of collecting data for 11 variables for political entities at the local, regional, national and EU levels ([14]). Five variables – age, education, degree of urbanisation, country of birth, and income/assets – appear most feasible ([15]). Yet, such data collection is still far from realised. As of 2023, only three parliaments in the EU publish biographical information about the level or field of education of their members. Eleven Member States publish the age of parliamentarians ([16]), but often without linking it to gender (EIGE, 2024b).

An analysis of incoming Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) by gender and age shows that men's over-representation in the European Parliament increases with age (Figure 24). While, overall, men make up 61 % of all MEPs, this share reaches 63 % among MEPs aged 40–59, the largest age group in the European Parliament, and 68 % among MEPs aged 60 and over.

([13]) This includes female presidents, chief executive officers and/or secretary generals.
([14]) Entities in the politics domains of EIGE's WMID database include: the European Parliament, national parliaments, regional assemblies, local councils, the European Commission, national governments, regional executives, major political parties in national parliaments, political groups in the European Parliament and EU advisory committees. Overall, for the EU-27 and European Economic Area (EEA) countries, it covered over 1 151 000 positions.
([15]) Feasibility study on applying an intersectional approach to WMID data collection within the domain of politics, 2025, unpublished.
([16]) This is the case for at least one chamber of parliament in Belgium, Croatia, Italy, Lithuania, Hungary, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Finland and Sweden.

Figure 24: Share of women and men MEPs, by age group, November 2024, EU-27 (%)



Source: EIGE's calculations.

Male MEPs are, on average, three years older than female MEPs (51.1 versus 48.2 years). In over 10 EU Member States, women elected to the European Parliament are five or more years younger than their male colleagues. The age of MEPs is often an indication of their endurance in parliament (having held several terms), which, in turn, is associated with higher influence, broader political networks and access to more prestigious decision-making roles. Research shows that women in parliament tend to be at a significant disadvantage across these three measures of political seniority (Muriaas et al., 2024).

Disability, racial or ethnic origin, religion or beliefs, sexual orientation and family type pose the greatest challenges for data collection due to data sensitivity, small sample sizes, a lack of unified definitions or the requirement of self-identification. These variables are those most likely to shape individuals' advantages and disadvantages (Debusscher et al., 2025), constitute grounds for discrimination and lead to severe under-representation (European Network Against Racism, 2024; Kantola et al., 2023).

Analysis from the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) estimates that during the 9th European Parliament mandate (2019–2024), 39 out of 874 MEPs (22 women and 17 men), or about 4.5 %, identified as belonging to a racialised minority ([17]) (Magazzini et al., 2024, p. 16). While women as a group still face structural obstacles to accessing positions of power and influence,

([17]) Nine out of the 39 MEPs identified by ENAR as belonging to a racialised minority were elected by the United Kingdom. Therefore, they left the European Parliament following the official withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Parliament at the end of January 2020 (Magazzini et al., 2024, p. 17).

women from ethnic minorities are at a particular disadvantage. The lack of data based on racial or ethnic identity obscures intersecting inequalities and hinders efforts to address them.

6.3. Most parliamentarians cannot access family leave: a few countries are leading change

Parliamentary rules, infrastructure and expectations regarding parliamentarians' performance have long been shaped by traditional notions of masculinity and full-time dedication to work, which often fail to account for caregiving responsibilities (EIGE, 2024b; Franceschet et al., 2026). Where physical presence is a mandatory requirement and is vital to gaining positions of power for parliamentarians, increasing women's participation requires reforms that accommodate parents' needs.

Although the European Parliament is often perceived as a family-friendly institution due to its provision of daycare facilities and kindergartens in selected locations (Frech, 2025; Frech et al., 2024; Kantola et al., 2019), research suggests that further efforts are required to establish fairer practices and family leave entitlements that enable MEPs to balance work and care responsibilities. Interviews with MEPs show that, while bringing a (young) child to plenary sessions is formally permitted, it is generally considered inappropriate (Frech et al., 2024).

In September 2010, Italian MEP Licia Ronzulli made international headlines when she brought her six-week-old daughter to a plenary session while voting on proposals to strengthen women's employment rights (Rettmann, 2010). Her gesture highlighted the challenges faced by working mothers and illustrated how formal rules alone may be insufficient to support politicians with caregiving responsibilities.

Physical presence is a strategic asset in gaining positions of power, which often requires long working days, late meetings and informal networking.

The culture of extensive workload and long working hours in Brussels makes it challenging to manage care duties alongside parliamentary work, particularly for younger women MEPs (Kantola et al., 2019). Fathers, including those with young children, generally report having fewer difficulties balancing family and parliamentary responsibilities, thereby perceiving reforms as 'less urgent' (Frech et al., 2024). Many MEPs with children also face the difficult choice of relocating their families or undertaking frequent travel between their home and Brussels, placing considerable strain on family life (Frech et al., 2024).

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that alternative working arrangements are possible. Temporary measures allowing online meetings and remote voting showed that parliamentary duties can be exercised more flexibly, helping MEPs with young children reconcile work and family responsibilities (Frech et al., 2024).

Evidence from German MEPs between 1999 and 2019 further highlights the gendered nature of political careers. Women MEPs faced challenges associated with the motherhood penalty and potential barriers to leadership roles. Compared with their male counterparts, they were more likely to have fewer children, while women with leadership experience were more likely to remain unmarried (Frech, 2025).

A significant step towards greater institutional support was taken in early 2026, when the European Parliament approved a revision of the EU Electoral Act, enabling women MEPs to delegate their voting rights for up to three months before and six months after childbirth (European Parliament Press Service, 2026). The reform, initiated by European Parliament President Roberta Metsola, aims to promote gender equality, work–life balance and political representation. Once formally adopted by the Council and ratified by all Member States, it will mark the first explicit maternity-related entitlement for MEPs. However, the reform remains limited in scope, as it applies only to maternity leave and does not apply to other family-related absences.

MEPs will be able to delegate their voting rights for up to three months before and six months after giving birth.

At the national level, MPs are expected to be available at any time to carry out their duties, as no official regulations regarding working hours have been found in any national parliament (EIGE, 2024b). Therefore, formal family leave entitlements for elected officials remain relatively uncommon, although some good practices exist. In Sweden, MPs are entitled to parental leave following the birth or adoption of a child and may receive a parental benefit supplement if they are eligible for parental benefits under the Social Insurance Code (Sveriges Riksdag, 2022). In Belgium, MPs are entitled to the same family leave standards as those established in labour legislation, and absences related to family leave do not affect their pay (Aperçu Des Principaux Éléments Du Statut de Membre de La Chambre Des Représentants, 2026, p. 8; Vandeleene, 2025). These provisions apply at the national and regional levels, and a draft bill is being discussed to extend such entitlement to the municipal level ([18]) (Jurisprudence Du Bureau et de La Conférence Des Présidents Règles Interprétatives, 2026, p. 4).

Other countries have also taken steps to accommodate parliamentarians with caregiving responsibilities. In Ireland, a temporary arrangement enabling the Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee, to take six months of paid maternity leave in 2021 spearheaded the introduction of maternity leave for members of the Oireachtas (parliament) and local councillors (Galligan, 2025). In Estonia, MPs may suspend their mandate for a minimum of three months to care for a child under the age of three (Riigi Teataja, 2025).

In contrast, several Member States continue to rely on indirect or informal arrangements due to the absence of formal maternity and parental leave provisions for MPs. In Luxembourg, MPs are not formally entitled to maternity or parental leave and cannot be temporarily replaced, although they may delegate their vote during maternity-related absences (Javel, 2025). In France, maternity leave

([18]) A draft bill was introduced in June 2026 in the Wallonia Parliament to this effect. The proposal is available at the following page: https://nautilus.parlement-wallon.be/Archives/2025_2026/DECRET/605_1.pdf.

is handled through an informal practice that permits pregnant MPs to be excused from their duties without sanction (European Parliamentary Research Service et al., 2025). In Romania, MPs who take time off after childbirth must do so under sick leave provisions because no separate maternity leave entitlement exists (European Parliamentary Research Service et al., 2025).

Belgium and Sweden have formal parental leave entitlements for MPs, while Estonia and Ireland have provisions for maternity leave, and Luxembourg allows for proxy voting. In France, pregnant MPs may be excused from duties through an informal practice.

While support for working families is widely recognised as a policy priority, changes to institutions and policies facilitating the political careers of women and mothers have fallen behind (Bittner et al., 2017). Research from the United Kingdom shows that voters generally favour candidates who are parents, even those who take parental leave, and do not penalise women politicians with children (Campbell et al., 2018; Smith, 2025). On the contrary, women MPs who take parental leave may benefit from a positive bias among voters (Smith, 2025).

While family-related leave at the EU level is beginning to take shape with the revision of the EU Electoral Act, national examples such as Belgium and Sweden demonstrate that parental leave entitlements for parliamentarians can be achieved. It is vital for parliaments to embrace family-friendly practices, as they play a crucial role in the recruitment and retention of women in politics.

7. Domain of health

Health is a cornerstone of gender equality and a fundamental condition for full participation in society. Although people across the EU are living longer and enjoying more years in good health, significant and persistent health inequalities remain. Recent crises have placed unprecedented pressure on people's physical and mental well-being. The geopolitical instability, Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, climate change, the energy crisis and the rising cost of living have created a complex landscape of health challenges. These pressures are felt most acutely by those already in vulnerable situations, widening existing inequalities.

Gender norms shape health throughout the life course, influencing health behaviours, exposure to risks, access to healthcare and the way symptoms and needs are recognised and addressed by health professionals. Women consistently report poorer physical and mental health than men, reflecting the cumulative effects of caregiving responsibilities, economic inequalities, experiences of gender-based violence and lifelong gendered expectations.

At the same time, harmful stereotypes of masculinity seriously undermine men's health and well-being. Social expectations that encourage risk-taking while discouraging caring often lead men to adopt unhealthy behaviours, such as excessive alcohol consumption, smoking, violence or reckless driving, at the same time making them less likely to seek professional support (EIGE, 2021a; WHO, 2021). Consequently, men are diagnosed with and treated for depression less frequently than women, despite being almost four times more likely to die by suicide (Eurostat, 2024). Traditional gender norms have also historically discouraged men's involvement in childcare, undermining father–child bonding, parental partnership and the quality of caregiving.

Health outcomes are shaped by far more than gender alone. Social and economic conditions, living environments, social support networks, access to leave and care services all influence people's opportunities to live healthy lives. Although women generally live longer than men, they spend a greater share of their lives in poorer health, in particular women with disabilities or lower education, older women or migrant women, highlighting the persistent gap between longevity and quality of life.

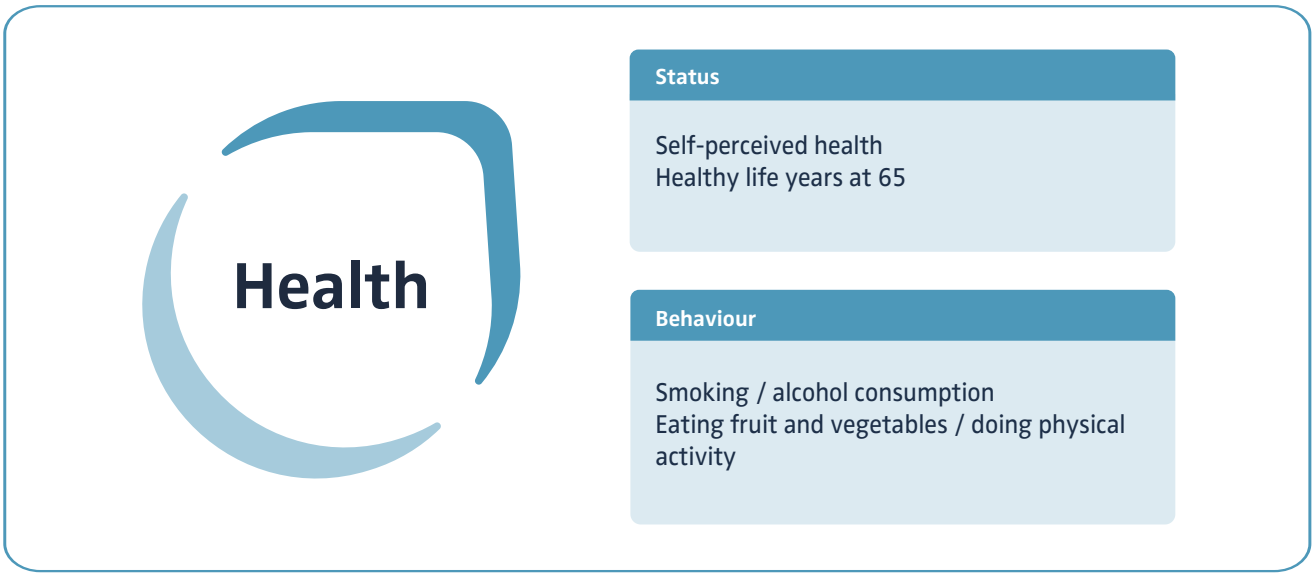
The transition to parenthood and the take-up of parental leave – this report's thematic focus – is a pivotal stage in the life course, with lasting consequences for the health and well-being of parents and children alike. Well-designed parental leave policies can improve physical and mental health, strengthen early parent–child bonding and promote a more equal sharing of care responsibilities.

Building gender-responsive family support and healthcare systems is therefore essential for promoting health and well-being. Good health not only enhances individual well-being but also enables people to participate fully in education, employment, caregiving or decision-making – all areas across Index domains. Addressing gender inequalities in health is therefore both a public health imperative and a prerequisite for achieving gender equality in the EU.

EU policy context

- The **2025 roadmap for women's rights** recognises that gender equality cannot be achieved without health equality, making the highest standards of physical and mental health a cornerstone of its long-term vision.
- The **2026–2030 gender equality strategy** aims to strengthen gender mainstreaming in all health-related initiatives, including EU-funded health research, clinical trials and the training of health professionals. It also seeks to advance women's access to sexual and reproductive health and rights and to strengthen the evidence base in this area.
- The **2021–2027 EU4health programme** is the EU's most ambitious health initiative to respond to long-term systemic challenges and to make health systems more innovative, resilient, prepared for future challenges, gender-responsive and inclusive.
- The Commission's **2023 communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health** highlights gender as a critical social determinant of mental health. It recognises that women in the EU are disproportionately affected by mental health challenges and calls for structural action to address the root causes of inequalities – including gender-based violence and persistent gender pay and care gaps – which is essential to improving individual and societal well-being.

The domain of health addresses these challenges by focusing on gender inequalities in health status and behaviour.



Health status is measured using two indicators: self-perceived health as **good** or **very good**; and healthy life years as a percentage of the total life expectancy of people aged 65. Health behaviour captures gender differences in harmful or beneficial health practices, for example heavy drinking or smoking, and physical activity or a healthy diet.

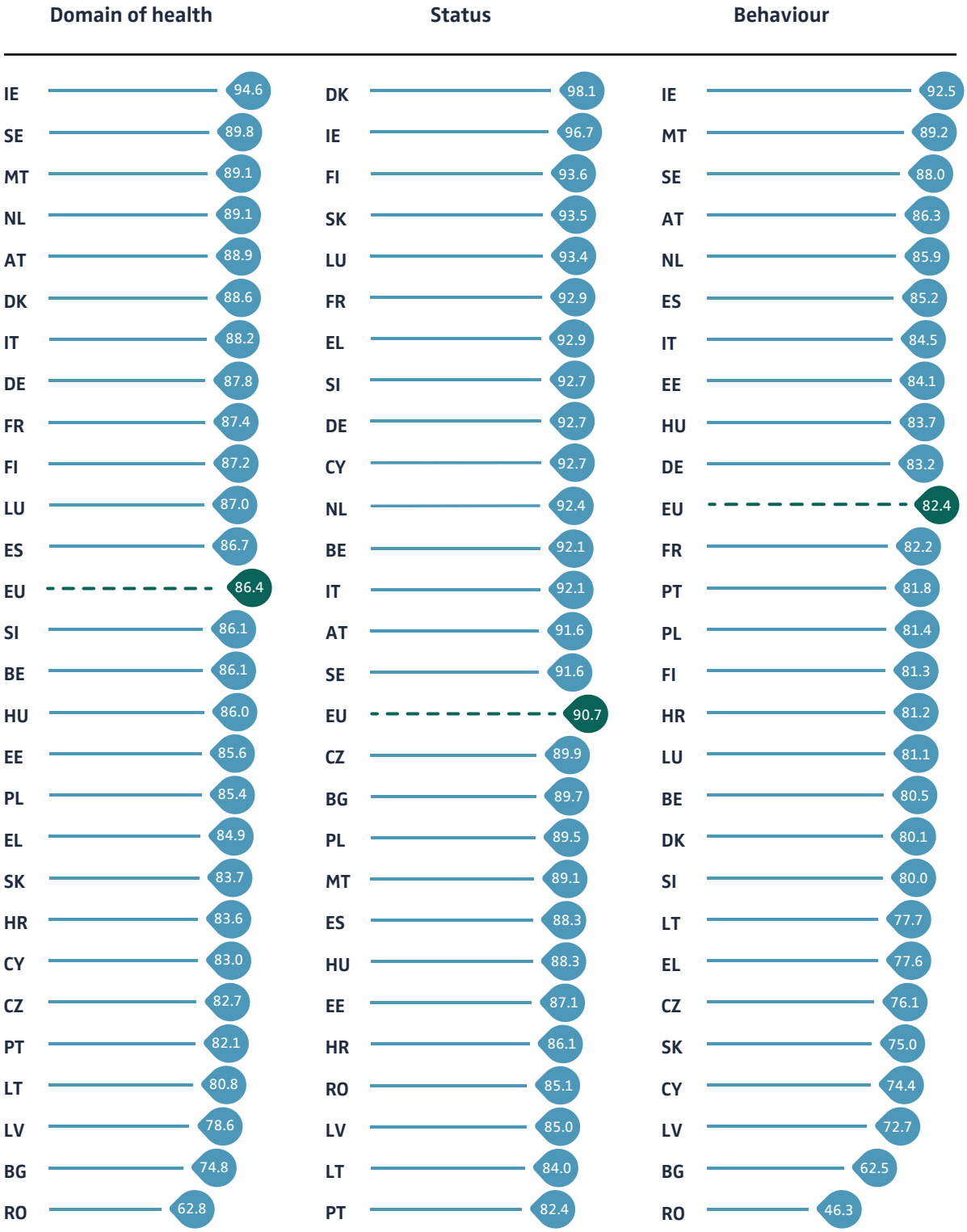
7.1. Racing ahead but not there yet: the domain of health calls for the highest standards of physical and mental health

The health domain leads the areas of the Gender Equality Index, with an EU-27 score of 86 points (Figure 25). Within this domain, health status stands at 90.7, while health behaviour follows at 82.4 points.

Compared with other domains, health shows the smallest variation of scores across Member States. National scores range from 94.6 points in Ireland to 62.8 points in Romania. The widest disparity appears in health-enhancing and high-risk behaviours, where the distance between the highest-scoring country (Ireland) and the lowest-scoring country (Romania) reaches 46.2 points – a reminder that habits, attitudes and preventive care still vary significantly across the EU.

These results demonstrate that, while gender equality in some areas of health is well advanced across Europe, significant opportunities remain to address inequalities in health status and health-related behaviours and ensure more equitable outcomes for all.

Figure 25: Domain of health and its subdomains, 2026 (scores)

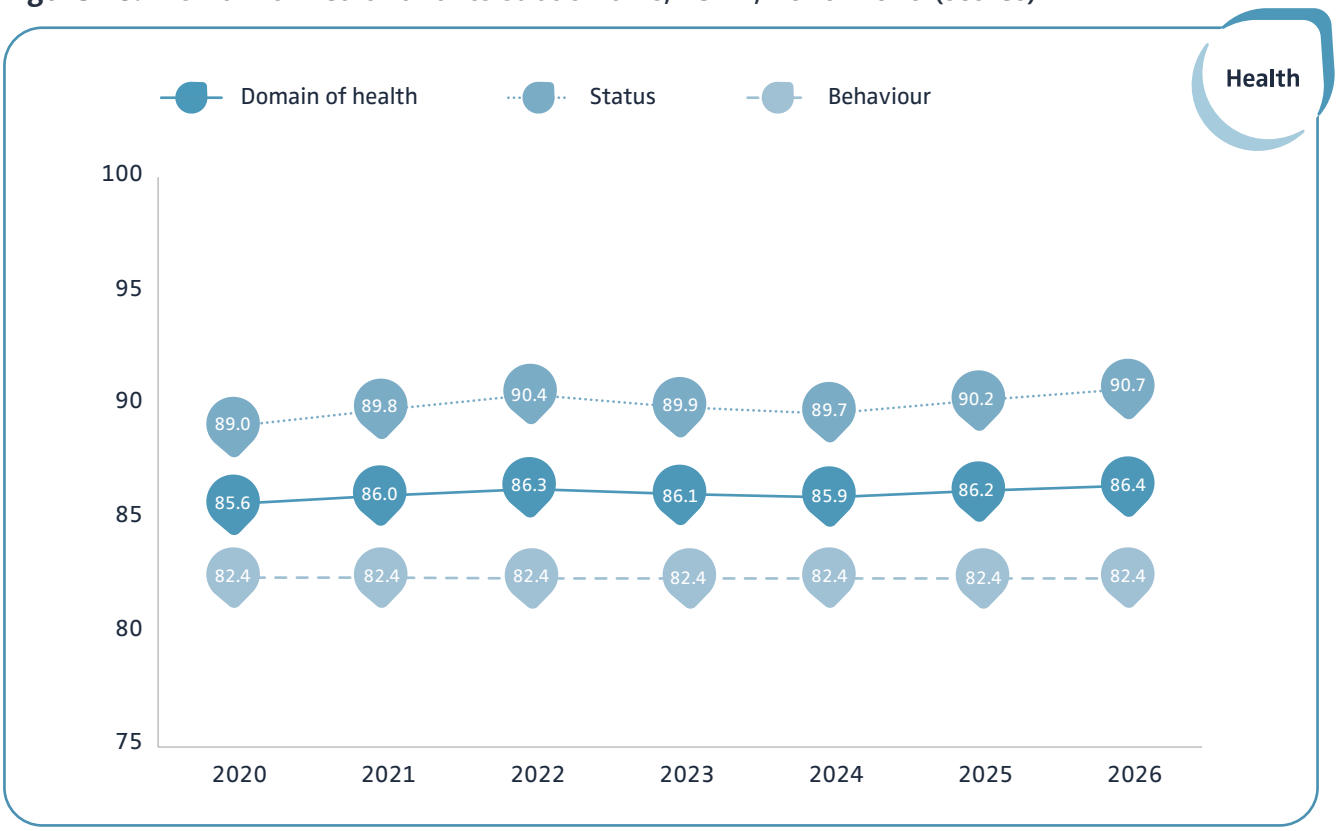


NB: The full list of indicators, including the data sources, is presented in Annex 1.

Despite starting from a relatively high baseline, progress in the health domain has nearly flatlined (Figure 26). Since 2020, the overall score has inched forward by only 0.8 points, and the health status subdomain by 1.7 points – a stark contrast to the gains, albeit modest, seen across other domains. This stagnation reflects the enduring health consequences of ongoing crises and uncertainty, which continue to weigh disproportionately on women and men in different ways.

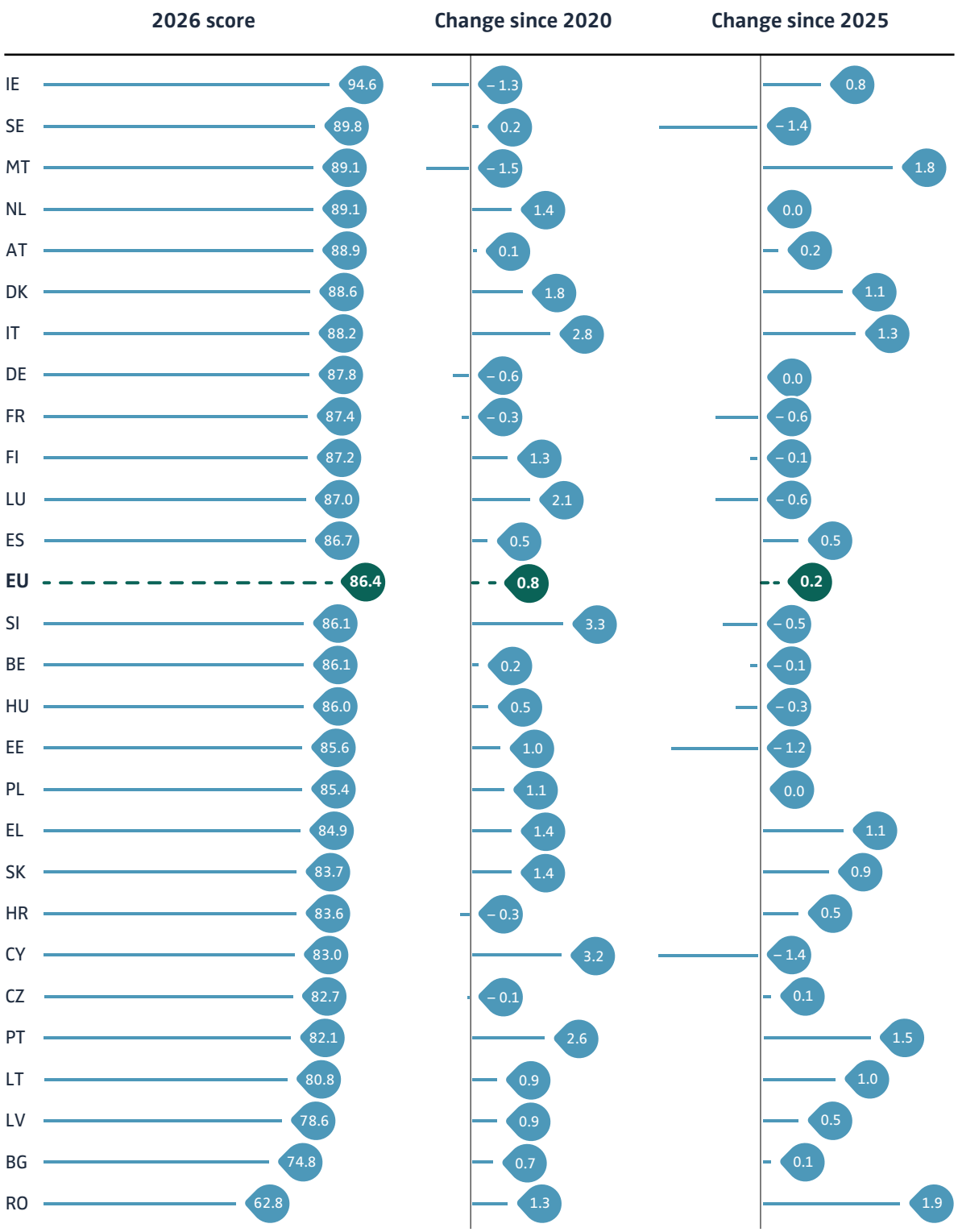
Meanwhile, due to the six-year data collection cycle, the health behaviour subdomain cannot be updated annually and therefore retains the same score as in 2020. Nevertheless, it offers great room for improvement. It captures gender differences in smoking and alcohol consumption, healthy eating habits and time for physical activity. Benchmarked against World Health Organization (WHO) standards, these indicators show that health-enhancing or high-risk behaviours are not just personal choices – they are gendered choices, influenced by the environments in which women and men live, work and care. Addressing these underlying drivers could unlock substantial gains and reinvigorate the progress towards greater health equality.

Figure 26: Domain of health and its subdomains, EU-27, 2020–2026 (scores)



Since 2020, Slovenia and Cyprus have led the way in narrowing gender gaps in health, recording the largest gains in this domain, with gains of 3.3 and 3.2 points, respectively (Figure 27). These advances were driven mainly by smaller gender gaps in self-perceived health (rated as **good** or **very good**) and in healthy life years remaining at age 65. However, both countries experienced a setback over the past year.

Figure 27: Domain of health and changes over time, 2026 (scores)



Not all countries, however, have followed the upward trend. Since 2020, Malta and Ireland have recorded modest declines, with their scores falling by 1.5 and 1.3 points, respectively. In both countries, the decrease was driven by widening gender gaps in self-perceived health and remaining healthy life years at age 65. Over the last year, Malta has shown signs of return to a positive trajectory. Across most other Member States, little has changed since 2020. Together, these mixed developments help explain why the EU's overall health score has largely stagnated over the past five years.

The slow pace of progress in many countries reflects enduring gender disparities in health status and health behaviours, likely impacted by unequal engagement in preventive care, different abilities to cope with multiple, evolving crises, and persistent inequalities in access to healthcare.

As in other domains, a closer look at health indicators reveals the bigger picture (Table 7). In 2025, 65 % of women and 71 % of men in the EU rated their health as **good** or **very good**, compared with 66 % of women and 71 % of men in 2020. While these figures suggest little overall change, they mask substantial differences across Member States.

Ireland reports the highest levels of self-perceived health – 79 % of women and 80 % of men describe their health as **good** or **very good** – closely followed by Malta and Greece. By contrast, fewer than half of women and men in Latvia and Lithuania report being in good or very good health. Gender gaps are also pronounced, with women reporting worse health than men in 25 Member States, with the widest gaps observed in Latvia (10 pp), followed by Romania (9 pp) and Lithuania (8 pp).

Table 7: Indicators of the domain of health, EU-27

	Women	Men
Self-perceived health, good or very good, age group 16 and above, 2025 (%)	65	71
Healthy life years at 65 as percentage of the total life expectancy, age group 65 and above, 2024 (%)	48	54
People who don't smoke and are not involved in harmful drinking, age group 16 and above, 2019 (%)	73	56
People doing physical activities and/or consuming fruit and vegetables, age group 16 and above, 2019 (%)	38	43

NB: The full list of indicators, including the data sources, is presented in Annex 1.

Living longer does not necessarily mean living healthier. Although women generally outlive men, they spend a smaller share of their later years in good health. Across the EU, women at 65 can expect to live around 48 % of their remaining years in good health, compared with 54 % for men.

Differences between countries are striking. In Sweden and Bulgaria, women at the age of 65 can expect to spend over 60 % of their remaining years in good health, compared with over 20 % in Latvia and Slovakia. For men, Bulgaria leads with 75 %, whereas Latvia and Slovakia record the lowest shares (26 % and 28 %, respectively). The largest gender gaps in healthy life years, favouring men, are observed in Portugal (12 pp) and Spain (10 pp).

Health behaviours reveal some of the greatest gender disparities. Men are more likely than women to engage in health-promoting behaviours, while women are considerably more likely to avoid health-risk behaviours. In the EU, 43 % of men and 38 % of women met the WHO recommendations for regular physical activity and fruit and vegetable consumption. The gender gap reverses in health-risk behaviours – 73 % of women, compared with 56 % of men, neither smoked nor drank alcohol excessively.

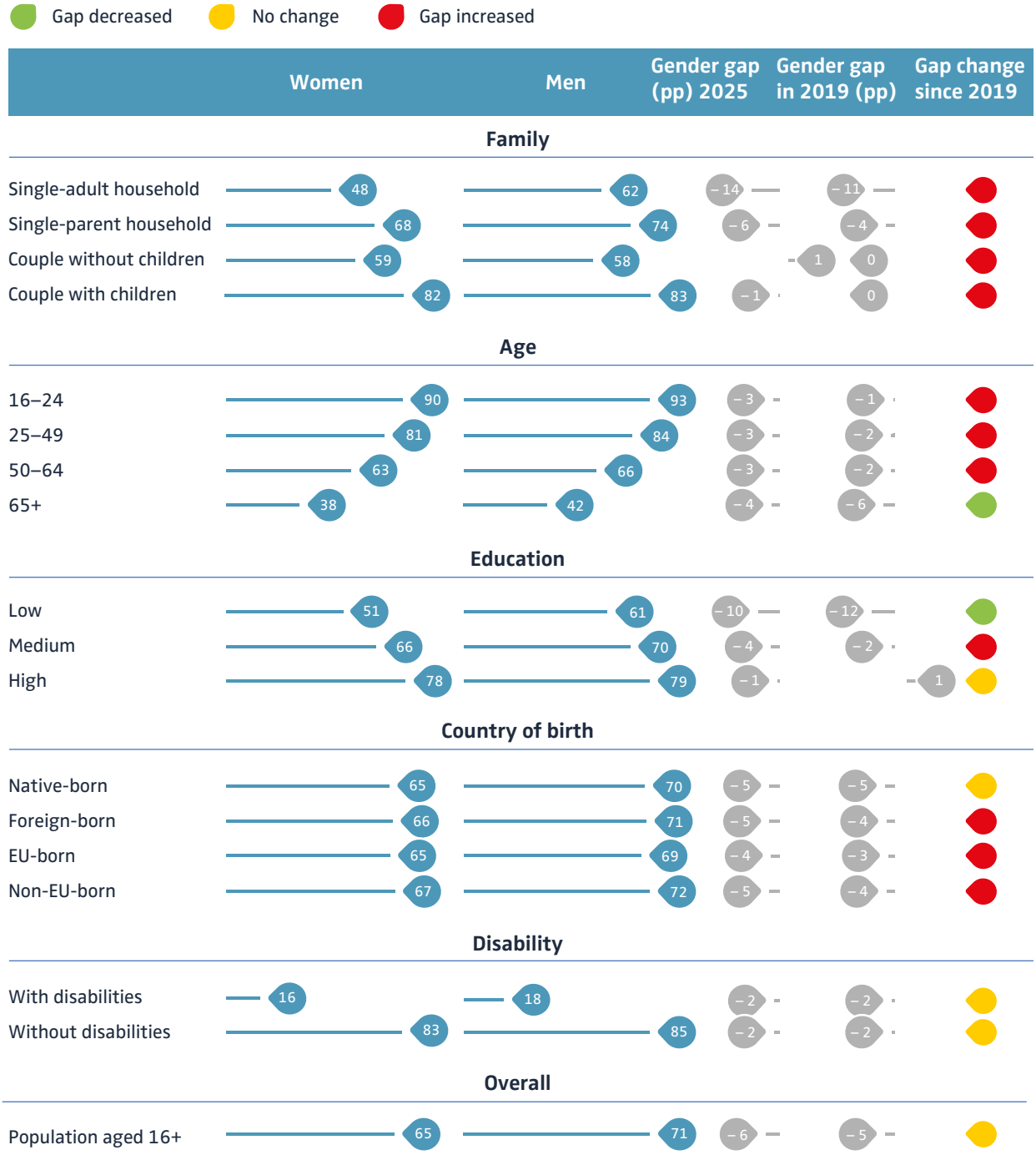
These patterns reflect more than individual lifestyle choices. Gender norms and expectations play a powerful role in shaping health experiences and behaviours and influencing how people access care, how they are treated by health professionals and how their symptoms and needs are perceived (WHO, 2021). Traditional ideas of masculinity can encourage behaviours such as smoking, excessive drinking, violence and risk-taking, while also discouraging men from expressing emotional distress or seeking support (EIGE, 2025i). For some men, these behaviours become coping mechanisms or ways to conform to prevailing social expectations of masculinity. Addressing these inequalities therefore requires more than promoting healthier lifestyles. It also calls for gender-sensitive healthcare that challenges harmful stereotypes, reduces stigma around men's emotional expression and encourages help-seeking behaviours.

7.2. When gender and other social factors meet health: who is left behind?

Gender and other social characteristics together shape how people experience health and well-being. Gender interacts with factors such as age, disability, education, family structure, migration background, employment and income, creating different health experiences for different groups of people. These overlapping social and economic circumstances often compound gender inequalities in health.

Across the EU, women are consistently less likely than men to describe their health as **good** or **very good**. Women who tend to face the most serious disadvantages are women with disabilities, older women (aged 65 and over) and women with lower levels of education (Figure 28).

Figure 28: Self-perceived health among the population aged 16+, EU-27 (%)



NB: This analysis includes different-sex-couple and same-sex-couple households. Groups under dimensions of 'age' and 'education' sum to the overall 'working population'; groups under other dimensions constitute a partial coverage of the overall 'working population' due to missing data and/or excluded groups. 'Education' includes people who have completed ISCED levels 0–2 (low), ISCED level 3 or 4 (medium) or ISCED levels 5–8 (high). Family types are defined based on the relationships between the members. That is, a couple is defined as two adults living in the same household and declaring themselves to be in a relationship (whether married or not); 'children' refer to economically dependent household members (i.e. aged below 24) who are declared to be own/adopted children or stepchildren of the couple or of a single parent (in the case of a one-parent household) and are not in employment or unemployment. For clarity of interpretation, the indicated family types strictly account for the aforementioned types of relationships and the socioeconomic status of children, excluding households with different compositions.

EU-born and non-EU-born are calculated based on 24 Member States; this excludes Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia.

Gap changes: Marked in green when the gap has decreased since 2019 by 1 pp or more; in red when it has increased since 2019 by 1 pp or more; and in yellow when it has increased or decreased by less than 1 pp.

Source: Authors' calculations based on EU-SILC, 2025, microdata.

Disability remains one of the strongest predictors of poor self-rated health. In the EU, only a small proportion of people with disabilities report positive health, with rates four to five times lower than among people without disabilities. This highlights the combined effect of poorer underlying health and the social, economic and environmental barriers that people with disabilities face daily.

Family circumstances also matter. Fewer than half of single women report good health, compared with nearly two thirds of single men. Differences between countries are evident, with particularly large gender gaps observed in Romania (28 pp) and in Greece, Cyprus and Slovakia (25 pp each). Among single parents, health inequalities vary considerably: the Netherlands records the widest gap to the disadvantage of single mothers (27 pp), while in Ireland, Croatia and Poland, single fathers report poorer health than single mothers (25 pp, 13 pp and 13 pp, respectively).

Education is one of the strongest foundations of good health, shaping access to healthcare, employment, income and the living conditions that sustain well-being (EIGE, 2021a). Around 80 % of highly educated women and men report good health, whereas positive health perceptions fall sharply among people with lower education levels. Women with lower educational attainment are especially disadvantaged, with some of the largest gender gaps observed in Slovenia (19 pp) and Hungary (18 pp).

Lower education often leads to weaker labour market attachment and lower income, both critical determinants of health. People in paid employment are far more likely to report good health than those who are unemployed or outside the labour market, and job quality matters: insecure or temporary work is linked to poorer physical and mental health, while good working conditions and career prospects support well-being and help narrow gender health gaps (Gerdes et al., 2026; Hajat et al., 2024; Jaydarifard et al., 2023).

Income further shapes health by enabling access to nutritious food, safe housing, quality care and healthier lifestyles. At the same time, good health supports employment and higher earnings by enabling people to remain economically active. These dynamics are especially consequential for older women, whose financial security reflects lifelong inequalities – lower earnings, interrupted careers and unequal caregiving roles – making income and welfare systems decisive for their health in later life (EIGE, 2024a).

Overall, health inequalities arise from the interaction of multiple social determinants rather than from a single factor. Addressing these inequalities requires policies that recognise how gender intersects with other social factors to shape people's opportunities for healthy lives.

7.3. Health begins with dedicating time to care

Parental leave is widely recognised as one of the most effective policies for advancing health and gender equality. By offering protected time off for both parents, well-designed leave schemes improve the health and well-being of parents and children alike, while also supporting a more equitable sharing of care responsibilities and narrowing gender gaps in the labour market (EIGE, 2020b).

The health challenges of parental leave span the entire transition to parenthood. Mental health vulnerabilities often emerge long before parental leave begins and are influenced by a combination of clinical, social and structural factors. Pregnancy complications, including physical, hormonal and psychological challenges, increase the risk of depression and anxiety during pregnancy and can have lasting consequences well into the postpartum period (Roberts et al., 2025). The mental health challenges before pregnancy can also interrupt education and employment, weakening labour market attachment and, in turn, negatively affecting income-related leave benefits (Heshmati et al., 2025). As a result, women facing the greatest health challenges before childbirth may receive the least financial protection when they become parents.

Unplanned or coerced pregnancies may also disrupt women's education and employment, making it more difficult to satisfy the work history requirements that determine eligibility for more generous parental leave benefits.

Well-paid parental leave is a critical window for protecting the mental health of parents and ensuring the well-being of children. While maternity leave primarily enables mothers to recover from the physical demands of pregnancy and childbirth, parental leave together with adequate income support during this period provide the time and security needed to bond with a child and adjust to parenthood. These benefits extend beyond caregiving, contributing to better mental health, particularly for parents facing social and economic disadvantages, including those with lower incomes and lower levels of education, and single parents (Courtin et al., 2023).

Yet, many parents do not receive the support they need. Migrant women, for example, are less likely to be screened for postnatal depression and, when identified, are less likely to receive appropriate follow-up care (Marti-Castaner et al., 2022). Language barriers, cultural differences and limited awareness of postnatal mental health conditions can further delay access to support. Evidence from Finland highlights the consequences of unmet needs: mothers who consistently lacked social support during the postpartum period were almost five times more likely to experience depression (Kieseppä et al., 2026).

Postpartum depression affects at least 1 in 10 mothers and can have lasting consequences if left untreated (Wang et al., 2021). Beyond reducing women's well-being, it can hinder their ability to return to work and affect their long-term economic security and career prospects (Karl et al., 2020). Its impact also extends to the entire family. Maternal depression weakens parent–child bonding, reduces the quality of caregiving and creates strain within partnerships (Federica et al., 2023; Johansson et al., 2020). In more severe cases, unaddressed distress may develop into parental burnout, characterised by overwhelming exhaustion and emotional distancing from one's child, increasing the risks of child neglect, family violence and even suicidal thoughts (Mikolajczak et al., 2023).

The design of parental leave policies can make a meaningful difference. Evidence from Sweden shows that more generous parental leave benefits are associated with better maternal mental health, including lower use of antidepressants and anti-anxiety medication and fewer contacts with specialist mental health services after childbirth (Heshmati et al., 2023). These findings underline that the effectiveness of parental leave depends not only on its duration but also on its accessibility and financial adequacy. Well-designed leave schemes, combined with timely mental health support, are therefore essential investments in the health and well-being of parents, children and families.

Mothers receiving only basic flat-rate benefits face substantially poorer mental health outcomes, with particularly significant disadvantages among young mothers and women with a migrant background (Heshmati et al., 2025).

8. Domain of violence

Violence against women remains to this day one of the most enduring obstacles to gender equality. The fact that women experience violence is a stark reminder that gender equality has not yet been achieved. Today, digital technologies and generative AI are amplifying existing forms of violence and creating new risks at an unprecedented scale. Cyberviolence, especially image-based abuse and cyber harassment, has become a routine part of everyday life for many adolescent girls (EIGE, 2026c).

Online spaces are becoming hotspots for political polarisation, divisiveness and misogynistic content. Thousands of men participate in online groups that share tips on how to sedate and sexually abuse their female partner ([19]), while social media algorithms expose boys and young men to growing volumes of misogynistic and extremist content promoted by manosphere influencers (EIGE, 2025d).

Against this concerning backdrop, the past decade has seen significant progress in tackling violence against women at the societal and political levels across the EU (EIGE, 2025a, 2025d). In the wake of the #MeToo movement, the reporting of violence against women to the police has increased substantially (EIGE, 2025d, 2026a). This trend reflects greater public awareness of the seriousness of violence against women and declining tolerance for such behaviour, especially among young women (EIGE, 2025a).

Strengthening legislative frameworks has also played a critical role. Across Europe, countries have expanded the legal recognition of different forms of violence and strengthened the protection of victims. Among these developments, the adoption of consent-based definitions of rape, grounded in the principle that 'only yes means yes', represents a significant step towards aligning national legislation with Article 36 of the Istanbul Convention ([20]). EIGE's analysis of administrative data on various forms of violence against women has shown that consent-based legislation is critical in addressing the systemic under-reporting of violence against women (EIGE, 2026a).

Reflecting the fact that over half of Member States have consent-based legislation on rape ([21]), in April 2026, the Parliament called on the Commission to adopt an EU-wide definition of rape based on lack of consent, thus paving the way for a unified criminalisation of rape in the EU.

([19]) The 'online rape academy' was uncovered by a journalistic investigation by US-based network CNN in March 2026. It consists of a global online platform, on which over 20 000 users shared tutorials, tips and methods on how to sexually abuse women and avoid detection, often abusing women while unconscious or sedated. The platform garnered over 62 million views. The full account is available at the following page: https://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2026/03/world/expose-rape-assault-online-vis-intl/index.html.

([20]) Article 36 of the Istanbul Convention defines consent to be 'given voluntarily as the result of the person's free will assessed in the context of the surrounding circumstances'. In line with the Istanbul Convention, the legal definition of rape should reflect an emphasis on consent.

([21]) Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden. In many other Member States, for a crime to be considered rape, 'the law still requires coercion, the use of force or threats of force to have been used – or the inability to defend oneself' (Amnesty International, 2020).

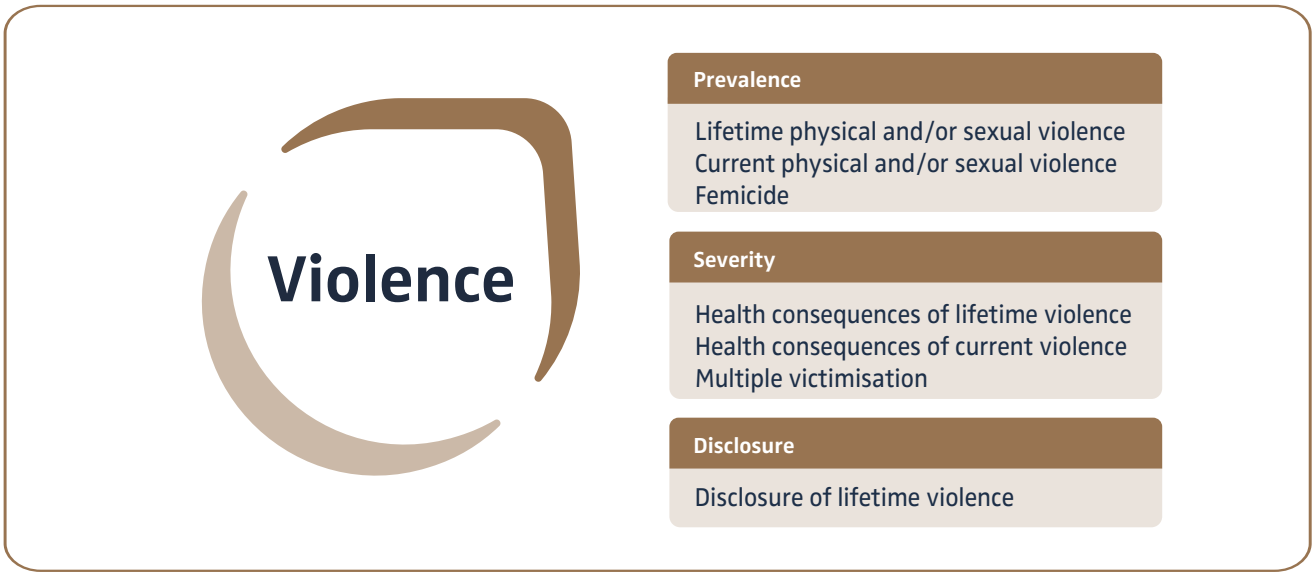
Efforts to strengthen responses to the most extreme forms of violence against women have also intensified. A growing number of Member States, including Belgium, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus and Malta, have introduced measures to better monitor and criminalise femicide (EIGE, 2026a, p. 67). Most recently, in 2026, Romania also adopted a law on femicide. Spain is regarded as a leader in this area due to its comprehensive system for recording, classifying and analysing femicide cases as a way to inform and improve prevention.

EU policy context

- In 2023, the EU became a party to the Council of Europe **Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence**, also known as the Istanbul Convention. It is now legally bound to prevent and combat violence against women in areas of judicial cooperation in criminal matters, asylum and *non-refoulement*, and through public administration (funding, policy and legislative measures).
- The **directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence** (the VAW Directive) (Directive (EU) 2024/1385) lays the foundation for more coherent protection and prevention standards. It seeks to strengthen criminal responses to violence against women, improve protection and access to justice for victims, support prevention and coordination within and among countries and reinforce specialised support services.
- The **2026–2030 gender equality strategy** includes a strong focus on combating gender-based violence, including cyberviolence. It prioritises supporting Member States in transposing the VAW Directive, especially regarding cyberviolence, domestic violence and femicide. It also focuses on the EU response to cyberviolence, especially image-based abuse and deepfakes. The strategy also includes strengthening action to prevent violence against women in politics.
- The revised **directive on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims** (Directive (EU) 2024/1712) covers additional forms of exploitation such as forced marriage, illegal adoption and surrogacy. It requires Member States to ensure training for professionals and specialised victim support adopt a gender-sensitive approach.
- The **EU Victims Right Directive** (Directive (EU) 2026/1472), amending Directive 2012/29/EU, brings several key improvements for victims of crime. In particular, Member States should establish helplines, facilitate reporting by victims and third parties, provide legal aid and compensation and strengthen support services, including for victims of sexual violence and for children, who must have access to age-appropriate, child-friendly support.
- The **2022 Digital Services Act** seeks to address online harms by strengthening accountability mechanisms for online platforms and by tackling illegal content online, including forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence, online harassment and cyberviolence.

The domain of violence is an essential part of the Gender Equality Index but differs from other domains in several ways. Although it does not measure gender gaps, it includes a set of indicators on the extent of violence against women that form the composite measure ([22]). It also includes an indicator on femicide, usually defined as 'the killing of a woman or girl because of her gender'.

([22]) Femicide, although part of the domain of violence as the most severe form of violence against women, could not be included in the current calculations of the composite measure due to lack of EU-wide official comparable data.



This score synthesises the complexity of the extent of violence against women into an easy-to-understand metric. It captures the prevalence of violence, its severity and impact on women's lives, and women's readiness to disclose their experiences (EIGE, 2020a, 2024d, 2025f).

Unlike the general score of the Gender Equality Index, where a higher score denotes a country's closeness to achieving equality between women and men in all areas, the composite measure of violence against women takes the opposite approach. This means that the higher the composite score, the more serious the phenomenon of violence against women in a country, reflecting its prevalence, severity and under-reporting.

Using a scale of 1 to 100, the metric illustrates where Member States are situated against two extremes: '1' represents the non-existence of violence; '100' signifies that violence against women is highly prevalent, extremely severe and undisclosed. Since the willingness of respondents to disclose and discuss their experiences of violence varies depending on different circumstances, it is important to note that the score of the domain and subdomains of violence accounts for disclosed violence and not the true extent of violence in each country.

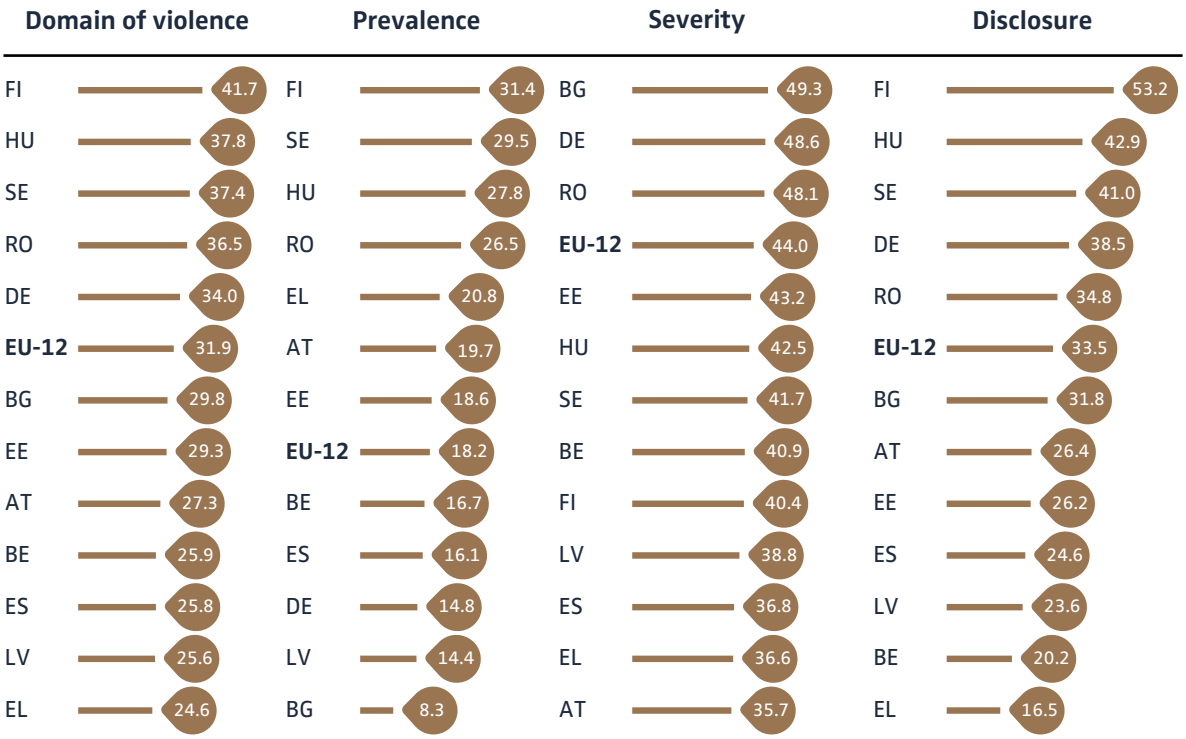
8.1. Data on violence against women is only the tip of the iceberg

The score for the domain of violence was last updated in 2025, drawing on data from the EU Gender-based Violence (EU-GBV) Survey, wave 2021 ([23]). Due to data limitations, scores for the domain and subdomains could be calculated for only 12 Member States (EIGE, 2025a, 2025c).

([23]) The EU-GBV Survey (wave 2021) includes results covering the 27 Member States. In total, the estimated EU average results are based on data collected from 114 023 women (aged 18–74) across the EU. The data collection took place between September 2020 and March 2024. Eurostat coordinated the data collection in 18 Member States, and the national statistical authorities of these Member States carried out the survey. Italy agreed to share the data from its national survey to provide comparable data for the main indicators. For the remaining eight Member States, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and EIGE took responsibility for the data collection following the Eurostat methodological manual. More details on the survey methodology are available at the following page: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/gbv_sims.htm.

The overall scores for the composite measure of violence range from 24.6 for Greece to 41.7 for Bulgaria, with an EU-12 average of 31.9 (Figure 29). The severity and disclosure subdomains show the highest scores, contributing most to the overall EU score. Together, they show that violence against women in these Member States is widespread, severe and under-reported.

Figure 29: Domain of violence and its subdomains, 2026 (scores)



Source: Authors' calculations based on EU-GBV Survey data, wave 2021.

The prevalence subdomain score stands at 18.2, with large differences between countries. Scores range from 8.3 in Bulgaria to 31.4 in Finland. Higher scores indicate a greater extent of disclosed violence. Following Bulgaria, at the lower end are Latvia (14.4), Germany (14.8) and Spain (16.1). At the higher end, after Finland, are Sweden (29.5), Hungary (27.8) and Romania (26.5).

The severity subdomain captures the intensity of violence experienced by women, including health consequences of physical and/or sexual violence (since age 15 or in the past 12 months) and multiple victimisation. The EU-12 score is 44 points, ranging from 35.7 in Austria to 49.3 in Bulgaria.

The disclosure subdomain measures the percentage of women who experienced physical and/or sexual violence in the past 12 months but did not tell anyone about the most serious incident. The higher the score, the less likely women are to discuss their experiences of violence with institutions or individuals. In other words, higher scores indicate greater silence and underestimation of violence. The EU-12 score is 33.5, ranging from 16.5 in Greece to 53.2 in Finland.

Table 8: Indicators of the domain of violence among 18- to 74-year-old respondents, EU-27

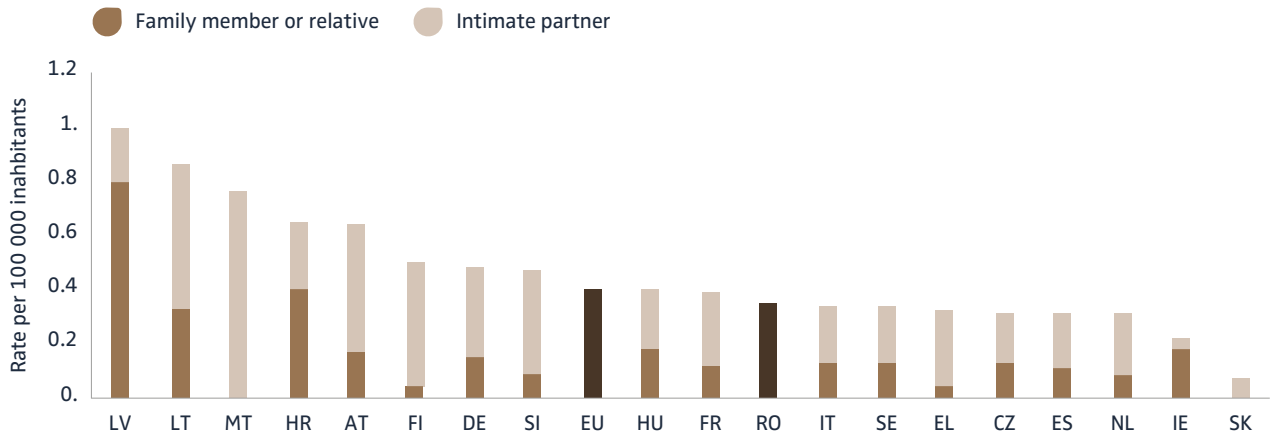
	Women
Lifetime physical and/or sexual violence (%)	31
Current physical and/or sexual violence (%)	3
Health consequences of lifetime physical and/or sexual violence (%)	57
Health consequences of current physical and/or sexual violence (%)	37
Physical and/or sexual violence from several types of perpetrators (%)	31
Lifetime physical and/or sexual violence that was not reported to anyone (%)	31

Source: Authors' calculations based on EU-GBV Survey data, 2021 wave.

Looking more closely at the indicators reveals the broader reality (Table 8). At the EU level, 57 % of women report health consequences from physical or sexual violence, ranging from 39 % in the Netherlands to 76 % in Cyprus. In addition, 31 % of victims experienced violence from more than one category of perpetrator, meaning that violence has occurred across multiple contexts in their lives.

The femicide indicator draws on Eurostat data on women victims of intentional homicide by a family member or an intimate partner (Figure 30). Over the past few years, the number of Member States publishing this data has increased (EIGE, 2017a, 2025c, 2025a). In 2024, across the 20 countries with available data, around 4 women per 1 million inhabitants were killed, most often by a current or former intimate partner.

Figure 30: Women victims of intentional homicide by a family member, relative or intimate partner in 2024 (rate per 100 000 inhabitants)



NB: Data for the EU and for RO not disaggregated by perpetrators. Data for Finland from 2023.

Source: Eurostat (crim_hom_vrel).

While this measure of femicide is most comparable across countries, it captures only part of the picture. Many femicides are misclassified because victim–perpetrator relationships are not systematically recorded (EIGE, 2026a). This indicator also excludes girls and women killed by other perpetrators in contexts of sexual, political or criminal violence (EIGE, 2023b). Feminist scholars and civil-society organisations argue that current measurements reflect only a fraction of female deaths resulting from men's violence (Walklate et al., 2023). They advocate for femicide data to include suicides of women experiencing intimate partner violence or coercive control, along with deaths from harmful practices and from neglect (Henry et al., 2022; Iglesias Otero, 2025; Walklate et al., 2023).

The approach implemented in Spain since 2021 represents an attempt to record, collect and analyse data on femicide in a comprehensive way by establishing five different types of femicide ([24]). This classification allows the collection of extensive data on specific circumstances in order to understand if and how protective measures have failed, to inform prevention and to prevent future cases.

Finally, because femicide remains heavily under-reported, grassroots initiatives across Europe are working to document cases and make visible the true magnitude of lives lost to gender-based violence ([25]).

8.2. Every third female victim experiences violence from different perpetrators

In addition to health consequences, multiple victimisation is a key dimension of severity measured by the violence domain. It captures whether women experience violence in several realms of their lives and across different types of relationships (EIGE, 2017a).

Survey data shows that most women in the EU who have experienced sexual and/or physical violence reported harm from one type of perpetrator (69 %) ([26]). However, about 31 % have been victimised by several categories of perpetrators. This share varies widely across Member States, from 15 % in Poland to 52 % in Sweden. This information adds important depth to prevalence data, highlighting that almost one third of women experience violence in multiple contexts, such as intimate partnership, public spaces or workplaces.

([24]) Since 2021, Spain classifies femicide cases into five different categories: (i) intimate partner femicide (the murder of a woman by a current or former partner); (ii) family femicide (the murder of a woman by a male family member, including those referred to as honour killings); (iii) sexual femicide (murder linked to sexual violence, such as trafficking or female genital mutilation); (iv) social femicide (murder after a non-sexual assault by a non-family, non-partnered man (e.g. a stranger, colleague, neighbour)); and (v) vicarious femicide (the murder of a woman as a tool to harm another woman).

([25]) Some examples include Stop Femicide in Belgium, Spasena in Bulgaria, Inter Orga Féminicides in France, Non Una di Meno in Italy, Femicidio.Net in Spain and the European Observatory on Femicide at the European level.

([26]) In the context of the EU-GBV Survey (2021 wave), respondents were asked about the three types of perpetrators: (1) current partner, (2) former partner(s) and (3) non-partner(s). Type of perpetrators of non-partner violence include: relative(s), friend(s), supervisor(s), other person(s) with authority, other(s) known, stranger(s) or other person(s). For more information, please refer to the reference metadata available at the following page: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/gbv_sims.htm.

Multiple victimisation also underscores how experiences of violence can increase vulnerability to further harm later in life. Survivors of sexual violence often describe a lasting sense of danger especially when violence occurred in childhood (Matos et al., 2014, p. 74). Regression analysis based on data from the EU-GBV Survey, 2021 wave, shows that women who experienced sexual and/or physical abuse as children face a much higher risk of sexual violence as adults compared with women who did not. Physical and emotional abuse by parents doubles the risk of sexual violence in adulthood. Sexual abuse in childhood increases the risk of intimate partner violence threefold, and violence from non-partners fourfold (FRA et al., 2026). These findings align with broader research (Bradel et al., 2019; Finkelhor et al., 2007; Walker et al., 2019).

Only about one in seven victims reaches out to the police ([27]), and most do not report their experiences to the authorities (FRA et al., 2026). In cases of rape, the most common reason for not reporting to the police is embarrassment or self-blame (49.9 %) (FRA et al., 2026, p. 78). Public attitudes that blame victims, especially in cases of sexual violence, remain widespread in the EU, particularly among young men (EIGE, 2025a). These attitudes, along with persistent myths, create significant obstacles to reporting and disclosing violence. Survivors who have experienced multiple incidents of sexual violence often describe facing additional scrutiny, disbelief and judgement when they share their experiences.

Multiple victimisation is therefore a crucial, yet often minimised and under-studied element in understanding and addressing violence against women (Bradel et al., 2019; Matos et al., 2014; Walker et al., 2019). Recognising how violence spans relationships and settings is essential for designing victim-centred strategies and support services that respond to women's real experiences.

8.3. Well-paid parental leave can act as a protective factor against intimate partner violence

Mothering and gender-based violence frequently co-occur because women face the highest risk of violence during their reproductive years (Mantler et al., 2024). Although the risk of intimate partner violence tends to dip during pregnancy and the postpartum period, it often rises again in the years that follow (Bergvall et al., 2024). Data from the EU-GBV Survey shows that violence beginning during pregnancy is relatively rare (1.3 % with current partners, based on a low number of responses; 1.5 % with former partners). More commonly, existing patterns of violence either continue or decrease during pregnancy (FRA et al., 2026).

Women who experience intimate partner violence are also at heightened risk of reproductive coercion and abuse. This includes behaviours such as pregnancy pressure, sabotaging contraception or controlling the outcome of a pregnancy, which frequently co-occur with broader patterns of coercive control (Grace et al., 2023; Spearman et al., 2025). These behaviours can lead to unwanted

([27]) According to the EU-GBV Survey, about 13.9 % of women victims of sexual and/or physical violence in the EU contacted the police and 20.5 % reached out to social or health services (FRA et al., 2026).

or unplanned pregnancies, with downstream health consequences including poor pregnancy outcomes, sexually transmitted infections and psychological trauma (Spearman et al., 2025).

Domestic violence during pregnancy and the postpartum period, precisely when parental leave takes place, is linked to severe health issues, including maternal death, preterm birth, low birth weight and postpartum depression (Howard et al., 2013). Beyond physical harm, violence can also lead to social isolation and a lack of autonomy, which can prevent mothers from accessing essential healthcare (Mantler et al., 2024).

Women's financial and economic independence is a protective factor against the risk of intimate partner violence.

Financial and economic dependence is a documented risk factor for domestic and intimate partner violence (European Commission, 2021). EU-GBV Survey data shows that, on average, 8 % of ever-partnered women report their partner or partners forbidding them to work or controlling family finances and excessively controlling their expenses (EIGE, 2024a). Well-paid parental leave can mitigate the income loss associated with childbirth, providing a stable benefit stream during a period of high expenses (Anderberg et al., 2025). For some women, this financial security may reduce dependence on an abusive partner, potentially empowering them to escape escalating situations without the immediate fear of losing their job or livelihood (D'Inverno et al., 2018).

Parental leave policies that encourage fathers' participation can also challenge the gender norms that underpin gender-based violence (D'Inverno et al., 2018). Evidence from a 2002 Danish parental leave reform found that extending fully paid parental leave significantly reduced the incidence of intimate partner violence in the four years following childbirth, with the strongest effects among mothers with lower educational attainment (Anderberg et al., 2025). This suggests that well-designed parental leave policies can play a meaningful role in both reducing women's vulnerability and shifting social norms that contribute to violence.

9. Parental leave in the EU: eligibility, policy synergies and encouraging shared care

Parental leave gives parents the right to step away from paid work to care for a young child after maternity leave ends. It is central to the EU's gender equality agenda. More than a workplace entitlement that protects a parent's job during their absence, parental leave also sends a wider message about care: whether raising children is seen as a shared responsibility between women and men, or as work that falls mainly to mothers.

When parental leave is poorly paid, difficult to access or designed around the idea of a single-breadwinner family, it can deepen, rather than reduce, inequalities in unpaid care. This continues to hold many women back from fully participating in the labour market across the EU (EIGE, 2026b). While all EU Member States now provide statutory parental leave, these schemes differ greatly in how long leave lasts, how well it is paid, who is eligible and how easily both parents can use it.

The adoption of the Work–Life Balance Directive marked a turning point. It strengthened individual, non-transferable leave entitlements for both parents and introduced, for the first time, a requirement that at least two months of parental leave per parent must be paid at an adequate level. This measure is intended to create an incentive for fathers to take up their share. Its goals reach beyond labour market equality alone: the Work–Life Balance Directive also aims to help parents and carers achieve a better work–life balance, while supporting a fairer sharing of care responsibilities between women and men.

Member States had until August 2022 to transpose the directive's main provisions, and until August 2024 for the payment provisions. All Member States have now formally transposed the directive; nonetheless, significant implementation gaps remain. Only 10 Member States combine non-transferable leave with adequate payment, and 13 still provide compensation below the 66 % wage replacement threshold that the Commission considers adequate (European Commission: Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers et al., 2024). With the transposition phase now complete, the focus of analysis is shifting from what Member States were required to do to what has actually changed, and for whom.

Before the Work–Life Balance Directive was adopted in 2019, EIGE carried out a foundational study on eligibility for parental leave. The study mapped eligibility rules across the then EU-28, estimated the share of parents who would qualify for parental leave using 2016 EU-LFS and EU-SILC data, and identified the groups most often left out (EIGE, 2020b). Employment-related conditions, restrictions on self-employed parents and the exclusion of same-sex couples were the main drivers of ineligibility, and these exclusions fell hardest on women, younger workers and people in precarious jobs.

The present report returns to these questions with an updated framework, an expanded scope and 2024 data. It is organised around three thematic strands, each addressing a distinct part of the picture.

- The first strand looks at how parental leave systems are designed, focusing on the features that either encourage or discourage fathers and other household members from sharing leave. Evidence consistently shows that most fathers do not use their full entitlement. Whether they take leave depends on several factors working together, including how well the leave is paid, whether it is reserved specifically for fathers or can be transferred to the other parent, and whether a dedicated 'father's quota' is in place. Even when these conditions are met, deep-rooted gender norms and workplace cultures can still stand in the way, reinforcing the idea that caregiving is mainly a mother's responsibility (de la Porte et al., 2023; Eerola et al., 2022b; Eurofound, 2019; Huebener et al., 2024).
- The second strand estimates how many (potential) working parents are actually eligible for parental leave across the EU, replicating and updating the 2019 microsimulation with 2024 data.
- The third strand looks at the synergies and gaps between parental leave and ECEC. The two policy areas function as a continuum: parental leave covers a child's first months, and ECEC picks up where it ends. Where the two are poorly aligned – for example, where leave ends before an affordable childcare place becomes available – parents, and mothers in particular, are left to bridge the gap themselves, often by reducing or leaving paid work. Understanding this coherence is essential to a joined-up approach to work–life balance.

9.1. Parental leave policies in the EU

This chapter examines eligibility conditions for the statutory parental leave policies across all 27 EU Member States as of March 2026, structural elements of parental leave and benefit payments.

Under the Work–Life Balance Directive, every Member State must provide each parent with at least four months of parental leave, of which at least two months are non-transferable between parents. The directive defines parental leave as time off work to care for a child up to a certain age, which may be set nationally but cannot exceed eight years, distinguishing it from maternity leave. It establishes parental leave as an individual right for each parent.

For this analysis, the selected parental leave policy in each country is the gender-neutral policy that follows immediately after maternity or paternity leave and applies when children are very young. This separates it from maternity leave, which is granted to mothers or primary caregivers before or around childbirth, and from paternity leave, which is granted to fathers or secondary caregivers. Table 9 summarises the selected policies.

Table 9: Parental leave and benefit payment policies in the EU (March 2026)

Member State	Name of parental leave (original language)	Name of parental leave benefit (original language)	Total leave duration available to family (in months)	Total benefit payment duration (in months per family)
AT	*Elternkarenz*	*Kinderbetreuungsgeld*	24	35.4 (flat-rate); 14.2 (earnings-based)
BE	*Congé parental / Ouderschapsverlof*	*Uitkering ouderschapsverlof / Allocation congé parental*	8	8
BG ([28])	*Отпуск за отглеждане на дете до 2-годишна възраст*	*Обезщетение за отглеждане на дете до 2-годишна възраст*	12	12
CY	*Γονική άδεια*	*Επίδομα γονικής άδειας*	9	4
CZ	*Rodičovská dovolená*	*Rodičovský příspěvek*	36	36
DE	*Elternzeit*	*Elterngeld*	36	12 + 2 months if both parents participate
DK	*Forældreorlov*	*Barselsdagpenge*	16	9
EE	*Vanemapuhkus*	*Vanemahüvitis*	36	17 (for mothers without prior maternity benefit; otherwise 15.8)
EL	*Γονική άδεια*	*Επίδομα γονικής άδειας* (ΔΥΠΑ)	8 (private) 60 (public, individual) / 120 (public, both parents)	4
ES ([29])	*Permiso por nacimiento y cuidado del menor*	*Subsidio por nacimiento y cuidado del menor*	9.5	9.5 (earnings-based), 1.5 (flat-rate)
FI	*Vanhempainvapaa*	*Vanhempainpäiväraha*	13.3	13.3
FR	*Congé parental d'éducation*	*Prestation partagée d'éducation de l'enfant* (PreParE)	36	12
HR	*Roditeljski dopust*	*Naknada plaće / Novčana naknada*	8	8
HU	*Szülői szabadság*	*Gyermekgondozási díj* (GYED) / *Gyermekgondozást segítő ellátás* (GYES)	36	36 (flat-rate), 24 (earnings-based)

([28]) Bulgaria has a substantial maternity leave (and accompanying earnings-related benefit) running from birth until the child is approximately 12 months old (410 days total, of which 45 are taken before birth). Parental leave and its flat-rate benefit start only after that, from 12 months until the child turns 2.

([29]) In Spain, the scheme formally corresponding to the analytical definition (*permiso parental*, 8 weeks, unpaid) was introduced in June 2023 solely to achieve nominal compliance with the Work–Life Balance Directive and has negligible real-world uptake; accordingly, this study instead reports the *permiso por nacimiento y cuidado del menor* (19 weeks, 100 % earnings replacement), which constitutes the primary, practically relevant, gender-neutral leave entitlement for Spanish parents.

Member State	Name of parental leave (original language)	Name of parental leave benefit (original language)	Total leave duration available to family (in months)	Total benefit payment duration (in months per family)
IE ([30])	Parent's leave / parental leave	Parent's benefit	16.2	4.2
IT	*Congedo Parentale*	*Indennità per congedo parentale* (Istituto Nazionale della Previdenza Sociale)	10 or 11 if father takes at least 3	9
LT	*Vaiko priežiūros atostogos*	*Vaiko priežiūros išmoka*	36	24
LU	*Congé parental*	*Indemnité de congé parental*	12	12
LV	*Bērna kopšanas atvaļinājums*	*Vecāku pabalsts*	36	19
MT	The Work–Life Balance for Parents and Carers Regulations, 2022	Parental leave allowance	8 (private) 24 (public)	4
NL	*Ouderschapsverlof*	*Ouderschapsverlofuitkering* (UWV)	13	4.5
PL	*Urlop rodzicielski*	*Zasiłek macierzyński*	10.25	10.25
PT	*Licença parental inicial / Licença parental complementar*	*Subsídio parental inicial / Subsídio parental alargado*	12	12
RO	*Concediu pentru creșterea copiilor*	*Indemnizație lunară pentru creșterea copiilor*	24	24
SE	*Föräldraledighet*	*Föräldrapenning*	18	16
SI	*Starševski dopust*	*Starševsko nadomestilo*	10.7	10.7
SK ([31])	*Rodičovská dovolenka*	*Rodičovský príspevok / Materské*	36	36

NB: Duration figures refer to a single birth, first-born child, and do not include extensions available for multiple births, single parents, or disability-related entitlements. Where duration is expressed in weeks or days, figures have been converted to months on the basis of four weeks per month. Statutory parental leave and associated benefit or payment durations refer to the entitlements provided for under national legislation.

Source: 21st International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research (2025), validated by national experts.

([30]) Ireland has two separate parental leave schemes: parental leave (since 1998), which gives each parent up to 26 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave, usable any time until the child turns 12, and parent's leave and benefit (introduced in 2019), which gives each parent up to 9 weeks of paid leave, usable before the child turns 2. Both can be taken by the same parent, bringing the combined total to 35 weeks. However, only the parent's leave scheme comes with a payment, receiving which depends on meeting social insurance contribution requirements.

([31]) In Slovakia, fathers' primary paid entitlement during parental leave is the *Materské* (maternity benefit), available on a non-transferable basis for 28 weeks. The flat-rate *Rodičovský príspevok* (parental allowance) follows or supplements this, running until the child's third birthday.

Throughout this report, a distinction is drawn between two elements: **eligibility for parental leave**, meaning the statutory right to take time away from work while keeping one's job, and **eligibility for the associated benefit or payment**, meaning the financial compensation received during that leave.

In some national frameworks, the two are presented together, and the policy often treats them as a single package. Eligibility for leave and eligibility for the benefit are set by the same conditions, administered under the same rules and apply to the same population of parents. A parent who meets the requirements gains access to both; a parent who does not is excluded from both. This report refers to these as **integrated systems** (Figure 31).

In many other Member States, the right to take parental leave and the right to receive a benefit during that leave are governed separately. The right to leave is usually set out in labour law and linked to employment status and length of service. The right to a benefit is often regulated through social security legislation and may depend on different conditions, such as contribution history, insurance coverage or residence status. As a result, the same parent may be entitled to leave but not to payment. A worker who has not accumulated sufficient social security contributions may be legally entitled to take the leave but receive no payment during it. Conversely, a parent who is self-employed, inactive or officially unemployed may qualify for a universal flat-rate benefit but have no right to job protection, because there is no employment contract to protect. This report refers to these as **separated systems**.

Figure 31: Classification of parental leave and benefit models (March 2026)



Source: Research conducted by national experts for the present study.

Even when a parent meets eligibility requirements and qualifies for a benefit, payment arrangements differ across Member States. Countries define the allowance amount and terms of payment in different ways ([32]), creating cross-national variation in how parental leave and related benefits are linked. It affects who can access support and on what terms. Across the EU, parental leave benefits broadly take two forms (Table 10).

([32]) In accordance with national circumstances, such as national law, collective agreements or practice, and taking into account the powers delegated to the social partners (Article 8 of the Work–Life Balance Directive).

Table 10: Parental leave benefit types (March 2026)

	AT	BE	BG	CY	CZ	DE	DK	EE	EL	ES	FI	FR	HR	HU
Earnings-based	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
Flat-rate	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	IE	**IT**	**LT**	**LU**	**LV**	**MT**	**NL**	**PL**	**PT**	**RO**	**SE**	**SI**	**SK**	
Earnings-based		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Flat-rate	✓					✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	

NB: For France, not earnings-linked, but the amount varies by working-time arrangement: the PreParE (*Prestation partagée de l'éducation de l'enfant*) benefit varies by degree of work reduction (full suspension = EUR 56/month; ≤ 50 % working time = EUR 294/month; 50–80 % = EUR 170/month); for Sweden, earnings-based (77.6 % of earnings) for 195 days for those who qualify, the remaining 45 days at a flat rate of SEK 180/day even for those on the income-related track, parents with no qualifying income or earnings below a threshold receive a flat rate of SEK 250/day for all 240 days; for Slovakia, parental allowance (until child turns 3) is flat-rate at EUR 500.10/month (or EUR 364.80 for those who did not receive maternity benefit), but maternity benefit (28 weeks) is earnings-based at 75 % of average earnings, the two benefits run consecutively.

Source: Research conducted by national experts for the present study.

Earnings-based benefits, the more common arrangement, replace a proportion of the individual parent's pre-leave earnings ([33]). Replacement rates vary across countries, but systems generally apply both a floor (protecting parents with low earnings) and a ceiling (capping payments for high earners). Because entitlement and payment level are calculated against individual prior earnings and employment history, parents with weak or interrupted labour market attachment may receive a low payment or fail to qualify at all. Conversely, partial replacement rates mean the higher-earning parent loses the most income by taking leave, making it costliest for the parent best placed to take it.

Flat-rate benefits pay a fixed amount unconnected to prior earnings. Some flat-rate systems are fully conditional on employment. For example, Belgium, Ireland and Malta require prior employment for a designated amount of time, which excludes unemployed and economically inactive parents. The parental leave benefit received by parents is a fixed amount with no broader access than an earnings-based scheme. France's PreParE presents a further variation: it resembles a flat-rate benefit but requires sufficient prior pension insurance contributions, effectively making previous employment a condition of receipt (Service Public, 2026).

However, most flat-rate benefits exist within mixed systems where parents without enough earnings or prior contributions receive a flat-rate fallback, while those who qualify receive an earnings-related amount instead. Sometimes this fallback is a separate, named benefit; other times the same split happens within a single law. For example, Poland applies the separate-benefit version: *świadczenie rodzicielskie* is a standalone fallback alongside the earnings-based *zasiłek macierzyński* (70 %, or 81.5 % with advance declaration). Hungary works similarly but sequentially:

([33]) Throughout the report, 'earnings' is used as the general term, as most schemes calculate benefits as a percentage of the claimant's prior wage from employment. Some Member States instead reference net income (e.g. Germany's *Elterngeld*, which is means-tested against net monthly income and calculated on net rather than gross earnings), and self-employed claimants are often assessed on taxable income rather than earnings, given the absence of a wage to reference.

GYED (*Gyermekgondozási díj*) is earnings-related (70 % of earnings, requiring prior insurance contributions) and covers the first two years for insured parents; GYES (*Gyermekgondozást segítő ellátás*) is flat-rate and residence-based, covering the third year for everyone, and is also the only benefit available throughout for parents who never qualified for GYED. Germany's *Elterngeld* benefit pays a flat minimum to parents without prior earnings and an earnings-related amount to those with a work history. In Portugal, the social parental benefit is available to parents without a contributory history, but only where household income falls below a defined threshold, making it a targeted safety net rather than a universal scheme.

The design of parental leave benefits and the level of payment shape both who takes leave and for how long. Flat-rate and low-value benefits discourage take-up, especially among fathers and higher earners, while earnings-related and more generous benefits encourage longer and more equal use of leave. For example, in Austria parents can choose between a flat-rate childcare benefit account and a shorter income-related benefit that pays 80 % of prior earnings. Evidence shows that parents with lower education are both more likely to choose the flat-rate option and, once enrolled, use it for longer. Higher earners, regardless of education, are more likely to choose the income-related scheme (Lorenz et al., 2022).

The adequacy of benefit also matters for take-up. Estonia provides a 100 % earnings replacement rate, and after a 2018 reform increased flexibility and payment thresholds, the share of fathers receiving parental leave benefits doubled from 8 % to 16 % in just three years (OECD, 2022). In contrast, research in Ireland ties low take-up among fathers to the flat-rate benefit, which replaces only about 36 % of the average net wage (Keane et al., 2025; Köppe, 2023).

The Work–Life Balance Directive requires Member States to pay the minimum non-transferable period of parental leave at an adequate level, but it leaves each country to decide about it (Article 8(3); recital 31). The European Commission's transposition report defines adequate payment as income replacement of at least 66 % of previous earnings, or a flat-rate equivalent to 66 % of the national average monthly earnings (Dobrotić et al., 2025; European Commission: Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers et al., 2024). Table 11 shows how Member States compare against this threshold. Section 9.1.2 further examines payment adequacy across the EU and its relationship with fathers' take-up of parental leave.

Table 11: Payment adequacy of parental leave benefits in the EU (March 2026)

Category	Payment adequacy	Member States
Inadequate	Flat-rate too low (< 66 % of national average earnings)	BE, BG, CZ, IE, EL, FR, MT
	Percentage too low (earnings-based < 66 %)	IT: 80 % (1st month), 60 % (2nd month), 30 % (remainder) LV: 60 % (13 months) or 43.75 % (19 months)
	Partially adequate	AT (*): flat-rate track < 66 %; HU (GYES): universal flat-rate of ~ EUR 73/month < 66 %; LT (**): 60 % (18-month option) or 45 %/30 % (24-month option); SK (***): flat-rate EUR 365–500/month < 66 %
Adequate	Earnings-based ≥ 66 % or flat-rate ≥ 66 % of national average earnings	DK (*****), DE (****), EE, ES, HR, CY, LT: 2 non-transferable months, LU, HU (GYED): earnings-based at 70 %, capped at twice the minimum wage, NL, AT: earnings-based, 80 % of net earnings, PL, PT, RO, SI, FI, SE

NB: Figures are reported on a gross basis by default, as per the national reporting standard. DE, IE, HR and AT are reported net, as net is the national standard for these countries.

(*) AT: parents choose between the earnings-based *Einkommensabhängiges Kinderbetreuungsgeld* (80 % of net earnings) and the flat-rate *Kinderbetreuungsgeldkonto* (lump sum spread over chosen period, often below 66 %). The two schemes are mutually exclusive; (**) LT: because Lithuanian parental benefits are calculated on net insured earnings and are themselves exempt from social insurance contributions, the corresponding net replacement rates are substantially higher, approximately 77 % under the 18-month option and 58 % then 38 % under the 24-month option; (***) SK: the parental allowance (EUR 500/month or EUR 365/month) is a flat-rate benefit below the 66 % threshold. The preceding maternity benefit (75 % of earnings) is adequate but is a separate entitlement; (****) DE: *Elterngeld* pays 65 % of prior net earnings with a progressive uplift for low earners. Therefore, it is included in the 'adequate' category; (*****) DK: 100 % of previous earnings, but capped at a weekly maximum of DKK 5 085 (~ EUR 680). For employees earning above this cap, the effective replacement rate falls below 66 % of the national average earnings. Full replacement is common via collective agreements, but not a statutory entitlement. As Table 10 shows, most Member States provide benefits that meet the 66 % adequacy threshold, whether through earnings-based replacement or a sufficiently generous flat-rate equivalent. However, adequacy is less consistent among countries operating flat-rate systems, where payment levels frequently fall below the threshold once measured against national average earnings. For earnings-based systems, the statutory replacement rate tells only part of the story: where payment ceilings are set low, higher earners may receive a benefit that represents a considerably smaller share of their actual income, regardless of the nominal rate, which can deter the higher earner (most often the father) from taking leave (see Section 9.1.2).

Source: The transposition of the Work–Life Balance Directive in EU Member States review by the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers and Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (European Commission: Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers et al., 2024), along with research conducted by national experts for the present study.

9.1.1. Eligibility conditions across the EU

Eligibility for parental leave and benefits is widening in the EU, but remains conditional. Most parents in standard employment qualify, while the self-employed, people in non-standard or platform work and those outside employment continue to face systematic barriers. Eligibility is determined by multiple, layered criteria. Building on EIGE's 2019 typology (EIGE, 2020c), this report expands the framework to better capture recent developments, including the growth of non-standard employment, advances and remaining gaps in recognising diverse family forms, and the often overlooked dimension of citizenship and residence conditions. Figure 32 presents the updated typology of eligibility conditions across all three dimensions.

Figure 32: Typology of eligibility conditions for parental leave and/or benefits in Member States

Conditions related to employment / labour market situation

- Economic activity status (employed, unemployed, inactive)
- Duration of contract (time with current employer)
- Social insurance contribution record
- Type of employment (employee, self-employed, non-standard)
- Economic sector

Conditions related to family/household situation

- Heterosexual couples
- Female same-sex couples
- Male same-sex couples
- Single parents
- Adoptive parents
- Non-resident parents
- Other caregivers (grandparents, guardians, cohabiting partners of biological parent)

Conditions related to citizenship status

- Nationals
- EU/EEA nationals
- Non-EU/EEA/third-country nationals
- Refugees
- Asylum seekers
- Individuals under the Temporary Protection Directive

Note: Eligibility conditions across all 27 Member States were documented by researchers specialising in family policies in each Member State.

Employment-related eligibility

Economic activity status – whether a person is employed, unemployed or inactive – is the main gateway to parental leave in most countries

In most Member States, a parent must be an employee to have a statutory right to parental leave. This reflects the traditional design of parental leave as an employment-based social right. Parents with standard employment contracts are usually covered, while those outside the standard employment may not be (EIGE, 2020b, 2020c).

Minimum employment periods and **minimum social insurance contribution periods** are another common eligibility filter (see further in Annex 4). The Work–Life Balance Directive allows Member States to require up to one year of prior employment as a condition for parental leave. Most Member States do not require parents to have worked for the same employer for a minimum period to be eligible for parental leave. Where this condition exists, it ranges from 6 months in Cyprus to 12 months in Belgium, Greece, France, Luxembourg, Malta and Romania.

Similarly, most Member States do not make parental benefit entitlement dependent on a minimum period of prior social insurance contributions. However, several set thresholds of around 6 months, such as Croatia and Portugal for earnings-based benefits, or 12 months, such as Bulgaria, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Romania. A few countries, including Spain and France, apply more complex rules linked to the parent's age or the child's birth order.

In contribution-based systems, parents may remain eligible when they change employers, if social insurance contributions continue without gaps. Tenure requirements typically mandate a minimum period of employment with the same employer. This can exclude parents with interrupted employment histories or those who are new to the labour market. These rules can disproportionately affect younger parents and those in precarious employment.

For **unemployed and economically inactive** parents, the issue is not parental leave itself, but whether they qualify for a benefit. Eligibility varies widely across countries and hinges primarily on recent social insurance contributions. Most systems require proof of contributions within a specific period before the childbirth, such as 30 days in Poland, 6 months in France, or 12 months in Estonia, Lithuania and Romania. This design can disadvantage women who stepped away from the labour market before their current pregnancy, whether to raise a previous child or for any other reason.

There are important exceptions. Some countries offer universal or residence-based benefit options that do not require previous employment (Czechia, Germany, Latvia, Hungary, Austria, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden). In Portugal, parental benefit temporarily replaces unemployment benefit for parents who are already receiving it. In Romania, months spent as a registered unemployed person receiving benefits count towards the 12-month earnings threshold.

Workers on fixed-term contracts formally qualify, but need to navigate how to meet the requirements in practice

Regarding the **type of contract** (temporary/permanent, part-time/full-time), all countries formally cover part-time workers and workers on fixed-term contracts under parental leave laws. However, there is a practical gap between leave entitlements and job protection rights: while workers on fixed-term contracts typically retain eligibility for parental leave benefits based on their employment status at the time of pregnancy or birth (often paid by the state via social insurance systems that continue regardless of contract expiration), the right to return to employment becomes irrelevant if the fixed-term contract ends during or before the leave period, since there is no job to return to.

For part-time workers, a few countries set explicit minimum hours thresholds that may limit eligibility. Luxembourg requires workers to work at least 10 hours a week to qualify for parental leave. Denmark requires at least 160 hours of work in the 4 months before leave, including at least 40 hours per month in 3 of those months, to qualify for benefits. In Romania, a month counts towards the 12-month qualifying period only if the parent worked at least half-time.

Self-employed parents depend on benefit access, not job-protected leave

For **self-employed** parents, formal leave entitlement works differently from that of employees. Because there is no employer relationship to suspend, access depends mainly on whether the parent qualifies for a parental allowance under the relevant social insurance scheme. Most Member States now extend benefits to self-employed parents, and some also provide similar leave protections – a statutory right that goes beyond a cash payment and allow parents to step back temporarily from their business or professional activity (see Table 39 in Annex 4).

Spain is a good example: self-employed parents have a statutory right to suspend their professional activity temporarily after birth or adoption, together with a partial exemption from social security contributions during that period ([34]). Since 2019, France has granted self-employed parents the same duration of parental leave allowance as employees, provided they can show that they have partly or fully suspended their professional activity and have completed the required pension contribution quarters (Dobrotić et al., 2025a). In countries with universal benefit payments, self-employed parents are automatically eligible. Elsewhere, access depends on whether they have maintained social insurance contributions under conditions broadly comparable to those applying to employees.

Non-standard workers face both legal exclusion and practical eligibility barriers to accessing parental leave and benefits

Non-standard workers, including those on temporary or fixed-term contracts, those on zero-hour contracts, seasonal workers and temporary agency workers, can be excluded from parental leave both in law and in practice. In Belgium, Greece, Malta and the Netherlands, statutory parental leave is legally restricted to employees only (Dobrotić et al., 2025a). Practical exclusion arises when eligibility rules are difficult for workers with fragmented or unstable employment to meet. Platform workers, zero-hour contract workers and those in short-term jobs may struggle to meet minimum employment or service length requirements. As a result, many precarious workers face a difficult choice: stop working without job protection or income support, or forgo leave altogether.

Certain contract types fall entirely outside parental leave entitlements, especially seasonal work. In Czechia and Poland, for instance, workers engaged under civil-law agreements, such as Czechia's *Dohoda o provedení práce* (agreement on performance of work) and *Dohoda o pracovní činnost* (agreement on work activity) or Poland's *umowa zlecenie* (contract of mandate) and *umowa o dzieło* (contract for specific work), are not eligible for parental leave because entitlement depends on having a formal employment contract rather than a contractual relationship governed by civil law. By contrast, seasonal workers with a standard employment contract are eligible on the same terms as other employees.

Platform workers (e.g. Uber drivers, Deliveroo riders, TaskRabbit workers) are often classified as self-employed, although some countries classify them as employees and their legal status remains

([34]) Ley 20/2007, de 11 de julio, del Estatuto del trabajo autónomo, https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/2007/BOE-A-2007-13409-consolidado.pdf.

disputed in many jurisdictions. The EU Platform Work Directive requires Member States to recognise platform workers as employees when platforms exercise control over their work ([35]). Their access to parental leave therefore depends mainly on legal classification and the specific contractual arrangement with the platform, rather than on the type of work they perform. Table 40 in Annex 4 summarises national approaches to platform worker coverage.

Students are covered mainly through universal or dedicated schemes

Students who become parents typically have little or no employment history and have rarely paid sufficient social insurance contributions to qualify for earnings-related benefits. Some countries have introduced dedicated schemes to address this gap (Table 12). In countries with universal or residence-based benefits (Czechia, Germany, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Slovakia, Finland), students are covered on the same terms as everyone else. In Denmark, students receiving state study grants are entitled to nine months of additional grant support upon childbirth (12 months for single parents), under the State Educational Grant and Loan Scheme (Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science, n.d.). In Estonia and Latvia, there is a statutory right to academic leave for childcare purposes.

Table 12: Dedicated parental leave provisions for students in selected Member States

DE	Students are eligible for parental benefit (*Elterngeld*) provided they meet the standard conditions of caring for the child themselves, living in the same household and not engaging in more than 32 hours of paid work per week. Study is not counted as employment for this purpose (Nagel, 2025). Students with no prior earnings receive the minimum basic *Elterngeld* amount, while those who worked alongside their studies can receive an earnings-related benefit.
HU	Introduced a dedicated student-specific benefit (*diplomás* GYED), which provides parental benefit coverage to higher education students who would not qualify for the standard, employment-based GYED. It is paid at a flat rate of 70 % of the statutory minimum wage for undergraduate students and 70 % of the guaranteed minimum wage for those in master's or doctoral programmes (Pénzcentrum, 2025). Eligibility is based on recent enrolment at a state-recognised higher education institution. Additional requirements include Hungarian or other EEA citizenship and registered residence in Hungary at the time of the child's birth.
RO	Full-time pupils and students at all levels of education are entitled to both leave time and parental indemnity (Government Emergency Ordinance No 111/2010, 2010). In the absence of prior earnings, they receive the minimum indemnity. Students may choose to suspend their study contract and take leave full-time, or return to classes while on leave, with higher education institutions requiring attendance at 75 % of seminars, allowing both to be combined.
SE	Parents can receive parental benefit (*föräldrapenning*) if they stay at home with the child instead of working, seeking work or studying. Unemployed or studying parents can draw benefits for all days of the week when they interrupt or pause their studies to care for the child (Försäkringskassan, 2025).

([35]) Directive (EU) 2024/2831 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2024 on improving working conditions in platform work (OJ L, 2024/2831, 11.11.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/2831/oj).

Some occupational groups are left outside standard employment-based eligibility rules for parental leave

Some occupational groups fall outside standard employment law because their relationship with the state or employer is not based on an ordinary employment contract. Elected representatives, for example, hold a public mandate, while military personnel and judges are covered by specific statutory or constitutional rules linked to public service or judicial independence. As a result, their leave and benefit entitlements are governed by sector-specific regimes rather than the general Labour Code, with different implications across countries (Table 13).

Table 13: Eligibility conditions for parental leave policies for workers in specific fields

Members of parliament	Elected representatives at the national level hold a mandate rather than an employment contract and therefore fall outside standard parental leave law; how countries handle this gap varies considerably. • Estonia allows MPs and municipal councillors to apply for mandate suspension for child-rearing purposes, but for no shorter than three months (Riigi Teataja, 2025). • Ireland extended maternity leave to members of the Oireachtas and local councillors (Maternity Protection, Employment Equality and Preservation of Certain Records Act 2024); however, MPs, senators and ministers are not eligible for paternity or parental leave (Government of Ireland, 2025). • In Latvia, MPs may temporarily relinquish their mandate for the duration of childcare leave, with the next candidate from the election list invited to fill the seat in the interim. • In France, a 2022 legislative proposal to allow MPs welcoming a child to be temporarily replaced by their substitute (*suppléant*) has not been adopted to date (de Belleville, 2026). • In Luxembourg, MPs are not entitled to maternity or parental leave, and pregnant MPs cannot be formally replaced by another candidate. Existing provisions allow MPs to vote by proxy during childbirth-related absence, and pregnant women may be replaced by group colleagues in parliamentary committees; a new statute under development by the chamber administration could introduce broader substitution rights (Javel, 2025).
Military personnel	Armed forces members in most countries access parental leave through dedicated military statutes rather than the Labour Code; entitlement is broadly equivalent in duration, but operational requirements can delay or interrupt it. • In Portugal, leave rights may be formally suspended for service members on active campaign, at sea, in aircraft or on temporary missions abroad; rights are deferred rather than lost once the constraining circumstance ends (Decree-Law 90/2015, Art. 102). Where two military parents are involved, suspension cannot be imposed on both simultaneously. • In Cyprus, the military hierarchy retains legal authority to postpone or recall leave on grounds of operational readiness and service needs (National Guard Law 2011, Arts 11 and 39(3)). Conscripts receive only a 15-day entitlement; permanent staff are covered on standard terms. • In France, military parental leave is available as of right under the Code de la défense (Art. L4138-14), requires no prior seniority, and lasts until the child turns three, but is unpaid, with benefit access conditional on meeting the general PreParE eligibility criteria. • In Luxembourg, voluntary soldiers are explicitly granted parental leave aligned with the Labour Code (Law of 7 August 2023, Art. 89); the applicable regime for career military personnel is less clearly codified.

Judges and magistrates	Judicial officers are not covered by the Labour Code but typically access equivalent entitlements through judicial service statutes, with leave available as of right and job protection maintained. • In France, magistrates may take parental leave as of right until the child turns three under Ordonnance No 58-1270 of 22 December 1958; the leave is unpaid, but certain periods count toward career advancement and pension rights. • In Cyprus, judges are explicitly excluded from parental leave entirely, being classified as constitutional officers rather than employees under the Work–Life Balance Law of 2022 (Administration of Justice Law 1964).
Domestic workers	All Member States treat declared domestic workers as eligible on the same terms as other employees, with one notable exception: • in Italy, they are explicitly excluded from parental leave under Legislative Decree No 151/2001 and are not covered by the general employee-based regime.

Taken together, these occupational gaps concentrate in a specific pattern: national parliaments and the armed forces are among the professions where men remain most over-represented across the EU. Women hold only 33 % of national parliamentary seats EU-wide (Table 6), and account for just 13 % of armed forces personnel, with their representation falling to around 11 % among the highest officer ranks (EIGE, 2026d). In these fields, the absence of a statutory leave entitlement, or the discretion to defer it on operational grounds (e.g. active deployment, service at sea or a mission abroad), removes one of the few formal levers that might otherwise support men in taking leave. This reinforces gendered caregiving norms in sectors where cultural change is already difficult. It also disadvantages women who work in these fields. Without a guaranteed entitlement, they must negotiate leave informally or rely on discretion, adding another barrier to career progression in sectors where they are already under-represented.

Overall, the conditions examined in this subsection show that parental leave is an employment-based right in most Member States, so that access narrows along a gradient of labour market attachment. Standard employees are generally covered, while self-employed parents are often excluded from job-protected leave, even if many can access benefits separately through mandatory or voluntary social insurance. Non-standard and platform workers face practical barriers to both leave and benefit entitlement. Parents outside employment can usually access support only where benefits are based on residence rather than employment or contribution history. The recurring pattern is that eligibility tracks the strength and continuity of a parent's labour market position rather than the fact of becoming a parent. This structurally disadvantages women, younger parents, students and those in precarious work.

Family- and household-related eligibility conditions

Parental leave eligibility also depends on family structure and the legal relationship between the parent and the child. This includes whether the parent is a biological or adoptive parent, whether parents are in a couple (including the gender composition of a couple), whether the child is raised by a single parent and whether other caregiving arrangements are recognised. Table 14 summarises the eligibility of these different groups of parents. While parental leave is intended to be gender-neutral in principle, national laws differ in how far they recognise diverse family forms.

Table 14: Eligibility for parental leave policies according to family/individual situation (March 2026)

	Adoptive parents		Single parents		Female same-sex parents		Male same-sex parents	
	Leave entitlement	Benefit	Leave entitlement	Benefit	Leave entitlement	Benefit	Leave entitlement	Benefit
BE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
BG	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
CZ	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
DK	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
DE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
IE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EL	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
ES	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FR	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
HR	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
IT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
CY	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
LV	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
LT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
LU	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
HU	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
MT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
NL	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
AT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PL	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
PT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
RO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
SI	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SK	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
FI	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Adoptive parents are eligible on similar terms, sometimes with longer entitlements

Adoptive parents are generally entitled to parental leave and related benefits under the same eligibility criteria as biological parents, starting from the date the child is placed with the family. In some Member States, however, adoption-specific rules provide additional or differently structured support to reflect the circumstances of adoption. These differences do not necessarily disadvantage adoptive families. In Slovakia, for example, biological parents may take parental leave until the child turns three, while adoptive parents receive three years of leave from the date of adoption and may receive the parental allowance until the child's sixth birthday. In Finland, adoptive parents are entitled to leave for two years from the date the child is taken into care until turning 18.

Single parents are equally eligible, often receiving compensatory entitlement or benefits

For **single parents**, the relevant policy question is whether they receive additional entitlements to compensate for the fact that they cannot benefit from provisions designed to encourage leave-sharing between two parents. In several Member States, specific rules provide either extended leave duration or higher benefit levels to offset this disadvantage. In Spain, single parents are entitled to 32 weeks of parental leave, compared to 19 weeks for coupled parents, effectively consolidating a two-parent entitlement into a single-carer entitlement. In Lithuania, the compensation is provided through payment: single parents receive two additional months of benefit on top of their own non-transferable quota, giving them four months paid at 100 % of wages. In Bulgaria and Slovenia, single parents may, under specific conditions, access the full leave entitlement that would otherwise be divided between two parents. France similarly allows a single parent raising a child alone to use the other parent's share of certain benefits (Dobrotić et al., 2025b). Across these systems, the principle is similar: leave schemes designed around two-parent households can disadvantage single parents unless compensatory measures are built in.

Same-sex couples' access to leave depends on legal parenthood, not on the leave rules themselves

In the EU, the ability of **same-sex couples** to access parental leave and related benefits depends on an initial and more fundamental step: whether both partners can be legally recognised as the child's parents. Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden have progressively expanded routes to parenthood for same-sex couples through second-parent adoption, recognition at birth for children conceived with identifiable donors or automatic parenthood rules for co-mothers (Evertsson et al., 2020; Government Offices of Sweden, 2025; Laursen, 2024). These reforms have sought to align legal parenthood with family leave entitlements, although complexities remain, particularly for male couples relying on surrogacy abroad, which is often unregulated or restricted and may delay legal parenthood and thus access to parental leave (Evertsson et al., 2020).

In countries where same-sex couples cannot jointly be the legal parents of a child, only one partner (the biological or gestational parent) will have the legal entitlement to parental leave and benefits. In Bulgaria, Cyprus, Lithuania, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, neither female nor male same-sex couples are eligible for leave. These countries either do not legally recognise same-sex partnerships

(Bulgaria, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia) or, where registered partnerships exist (Cyprus, Hungary), do not provide a legal route for the non-biological or non-gestational partner to establish parenthood through adoption or any equivalent mechanism. In all these cases, the exclusion operates entirely at the level of family law: parental leave legislation is formally gender-neutral, but since the second partner can never acquire the legal parenthood status that triggers eligibility, they are excluded in practice.

Recent developments illustrate how Member States are navigating these complexities, but they also reveal substantial differences in how female and male lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, intersex and queer partners are affected by restrictive legal parenthood rules. In jurisdictions where only the gestational mother is automatically recognised as a legal parent, female couples may be able to secure co-mother recognition through established second-parent adoption or assisted-reproduction pathways. Sweden in 2022 introduced the new rule for foreign national same-sex female couples: under certain conditions, a woman who is or has been married to the child's mother is automatically recognised as the child's parent (Government Offices of Sweden, 2025).

If neither of the partners is a biological father, male same-sex couples often face more limited routes to legal parenthood. In most Member States, surrogacy remains legally unregulated, meaning that arrangements may still occur but often without clear pathways to establish parenthood or to enforce the terms of the agreement. Some Member States explicitly prohibited the practice (e.g. Belgium, Germany, France), while some (Ireland, Greece, Cyprus, Portugal) adopted legislation permitting altruistic surrogacy ([36]) (de Groot, 2025). Adoption can offer a pathway to parenthood for male same-sex couples, although it may be insufficient or unattractive for those who wish to have a genetic link to their child (Teschlade, 2024). In about half of Member States, second-parent or stepchild adoption is now available to same-sex couples, but this route typically requires post-birth legal procedures (ILGA Europe, 2025).

Access to parental leave for other carers is narrow and conditional

Parental leave is generally granted to the child's legal parents: the birth mother and recognised father, or the adoptive parent or parents. In some Member States, access to parental leave benefits also depends on whether the parent lives in the same household as the child. Germany, Austria and Romania, for example, make co-residence an explicit condition for benefit entitlement (Dobrotić et al., 2025a). Where such rules apply, they assume a co-resident family model and may limit access to benefit for separated or divorced parents (Zilincikova et al., 2023).

([36]) A surrogacy arrangement where the intending parent(s) pay the surrogate nothing or, more usually, only for her 'reasonable expenses' associated with the surrogacy. No financial remuneration beyond this is paid to the surrogate (de Groot, 2025).

Table 15: Eligibility conditions for parental leave policies for individuals other than the biological parents (March 2026)

	Grandparents		Guardians		Cohabiting partners of the biological parent	
	Leave entitlement	Benefit	Leave entitlement	Benefit	Leave entitlement	Benefit
BE	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
BG	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
CZ	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
DK	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
DE	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
EE	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
IE	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
EL	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
ES	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
FR	No	No	No	No	No	No
HR	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
IT	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
CY	No	No	No	No	No	No
LV	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
LT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
LU	No	No	No	No	No	No
HU	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
MT	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
NL	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
AT	No	No	No	No	No	No
PL	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
PT	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
RO	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
SI	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
SK	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
FI	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

A few Member States allow grandparents to use parental leave in specific circumstances (Denmark, Lithuania, Hungary, Slovenia, Sweden) (Table 15). In most cases, this reflects narrowly defined 'trigger conditions' rather than a general recognition of grandparents as independently leave-entitled carers (Table 16).

Table 16: Eligibility conditions for parental leave policies for relatives other than the parents or guardians

BG	It is allowed to transfer unused leave to any of the child's grandparents when a single parent or guardian's child has both parents deceased.
DK	A grandparent or parent's sibling may receive the transferable 13-week portion of leave, but only where the claimant is a single parent and the grandparent can demonstrate a parental-like relationship to the child as a 'social parent.'
HU	GYED (earnings-based benefit) can be taken by non-pensioner grandparents who undertake the care and upbringing of the child while parents are working. Only one grandparent may claim GYED at a time, though they may do so for multiple grandchildren simultaneously if applicable. The benefit amount remains the same as it would be for parents (Hungarian State Treasury, 2025). GYES (universal) is available to grandparents from the child's first to third birthday, provided the child is cared for in the grandparent's own home and parents' consent (Hungarian State Treasury, 2023).
SI	Grandparent eligibility is restricted to cases where the mother is under 18 and is an apprentice, pupil, or student; the grandparent must be insured for parental protection and parental consent is required.
SE	Grandparent entitlement as such is not provided, but it is allowed for parents to transfer days to a grandparent, provided the recipient independently meets the residence and social insurance criteria for the parental benefit scheme.

The situation is different when a grandparent, another relative or a non-family member has been formally recognised as the child's **legal guardian**. In such cases, entitlement is recognised in a wider range of Member States (Table 15). A separate category concerns **cohabiting partners of a biological parent**: people who live with and help raise a child but have no legal parental status and are not in a formally recognised partnership with the biological parent. Their access to parental leave varies across Member States and depends on how national law defines eligibility to the leave entitlement (Table 15 and Table 17).

Table 17: Eligibility conditions for parental leave policies for the cohabiting partners of the biological parents

BE	In a female same-sex couples where the biological father has not acknowledged the child, the mother's partner can be eligible as co-mother but only if she can prove she has been registered at the same address continuously for three years preceding the birth.
DK	A cohabiting partner is eligible only if there is a single biological parent – that is, the entitlement applies as a substitute for the absent second parent, not as a standalone right. The partner must also qualify as a 'social parent' with a parental-like relationship to the child.
NL	Cohabiting partners are eligible for the paid leave portion, but must co-reside with the child and take the paid leave within one year of the child entering the household. If no legal recognition of parental responsibility exists, only a capped nine-week paid allowance is available (rather than full parental entitlement).
FI	Partners are not independently eligible, but an eligible parent can transfer up to 63 days to a cohabiting partner, provided the partner is themselves insured under the Health Insurance Act. The entitlement flows through the parent, not the relationship itself.

Across family and household conditions, the key finding is that parental leave law is formally gender-neutral, but access to leave depends on whether national family law recognises the parent–child relationship. Adoptive and single parents are generally covered, often with compensatory entitlements, whereas same-sex couples remain excluded in several Member States not by leave rules but because the non-biological parent may have no route to joint legal parenthood. Access for grandparents, legal guardians and cohabiting partners is, with few exceptions, narrow and usually linked to specific eligibility conditions.

Citizenship and residence-related eligibility conditions

Finally, eligibility terms often depend on residency status, length of stay in a country, citizenship or immigration status (Table 18). Such rules can limit access for migrants, foreign residents and especially asylum seekers or recent immigrants (Duvander et al., 2023). Migrant groups are also highly diverse: return migrants, cross-border workers, refugees, labour migrants and family migrants may each face distinct legal and practical barriers to parental leave and related benefits.

Table 18: Parental leave policies based on residence-related conditions (March 2026)

	Other EU/EEA citizens		Non-EU/EEA citizens		Refugees		Asylum seekers		Individuals under Temporary Protection Directive	
	Leave	Benefit	Leave	Benefit	Leave	Benefit	Leave	Benefit	Leave	Benefit
BE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
BG	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
CZ	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
DK	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
DE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
EE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
IE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EL	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
ES	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FR	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
HR	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
IT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
CY	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
LV	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
LT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
LU	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
HU	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
MT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
NL	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
AT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
PL	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
RO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SI	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SK	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
FI	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
SE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

EU citizens who relocate or work across borders are covered by EU social security coordination mechanisms, but national eligibility gaps remain

For **EU citizens** who relocate to another Member State or work across borders, parental leave eligibility is governed by a multilevel regulatory framework. Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems sets the framework for cross-border situations. It assigns each mobile worker to a single competent Member State and requires that previous periods of insurance, work or residence in other countries are taken into account ([37]). It also ensures that people covered by a Member State's legislation are treated in the same way as that country's nationals, and that certain cash benefits can generally be received while living in another country. In practice, gaps tend to arise not from the coordination rules but from the national conditions they leave in place, such as minimum contribution or tenure requirements that workers with short or interrupted cross-border careers may struggle to meet.

Further complexity arises in deciding which country's legislation applies and whether parental leave is treated as a social security benefit covered by EU coordination rules or as a labour law entitlement under national competence. Germany, for example, explicitly entitles nationals of EU Member States to parental allowance on the same terms as German nationals if they live or work in Germany (Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community et al., 2021).

However, since Member States categorise parental leave and benefits differently, cross-border workers may remain without access to leave and related benefits in either country. In the Netherlands–Belgium border region, for instance, some cross-border workers receive no parental benefit, since Belgium treats the benefit as linked to labour law, while the Netherlands classifies it as a social security matter under EU coordination rules (Schakelpunt Border Barriers Flanders-Netherlands, 2025).

The 2016 European Commission's proposal to revise Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 sought to improve the coordination of family benefits, including proposals to treat child-raising allowances as an individual right of each parent rather than a household-level entitlement ([38]). This would help reduce situations where cross-border parents lose support because countries classify the same benefit differently. Negotiations were lengthy and politically contentious (Business Europe et al., 2025). In April 2026, the Council and Parliament reached a provisional agreement on the revised rules, which was subsequently endorsed, pending formal adoption by both institutions (Council of the European Union, 2026b).

([37]) Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the coordination of social security systems (OJ L 166, 30.4.2004, p. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2004/883/oj).

([38]) Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems and Regulation (EC) No 987/2009 laying down the procedure for Implementing Regulation (EC) No 883/2004, COM(2016) 815 final of 13 December 2016, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52016PC0815.

Non-EU nationals formally qualify on same terms citizens, but residency thresholds slow real access

Non-EU/EEA nationals are generally eligible for parental leave and benefits if they lawfully live and work in the country and meet the same employment or contribution conditions as citizens. In practice, eligibility is usually linked to legal employment status rather than nationality.

Access can become limited when residence permits take a long time to obtain or when national rules require continuous residence, employment or insurance records. In Croatia, for example, two specific leave types – parental exemption from work and parental care for the child – require three or five years of continuous residence as a long-term or permanent resident (European Commission, 2025b). Because non-EU nationals usually begin on temporary permits and may remain in that status for up to five years before qualifying for long-term residence, the effective waiting period can stretch to 8 to 10 years. This creates a practical barrier that does not apply in the same way to nationals or EU citizens. Germany also requires at least six months of residence and a valid right to stay before parental leave or benefits can be accessed. However, bilateral agreements with Türkiye, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia allow nationals of these countries to access certain family benefits even with tolerated stay status (*Duldung*), bypassing standard residence-permit requirements (Flüchtlingsrat Niedersachsen e.V., n.d.).

Refugees are largely eligible for parental leave and benefits, while asylum seekers' eligibility often diverges

Eligibility rules are particularly complex for **refugees and asylum seekers**, who may face additional barriers to both labour market access and social benefits (Duvander et al., 2023). Formally recognised refugees are eligible across Member States on the same terms as other parents, provided they meet standard employment and/or contribution requirements. Recognition of refugee status effectively gives access to the labour market and social security systems broadly comparable to that of nationals.

For asylum seekers, the main barrier is access to work. Many Member States restrict employment while the asylum decision is pending and grant work permits only after a waiting period, commonly six months in Ireland, France, the Netherlands and Slovakia, or three months in Latvia. Even once work is permitted, asylum seekers often have too short an employment or contribution history to qualify for earnings-related parental benefits. Barriers may also arise in systems with flat-rate or universal allowances. Czechia and Slovakia explicitly exclude asylum seekers from parental allowance, while Latvia excludes them from state family benefits regardless of employment status. This means that an asylum seeker may, in theory, have access to job-protected leave but no accompanying financial support.

Beneficiaries of temporary protection constitute a distinct case, since their status is granted immediately and collectively on arrival, without the individual assessment required for asylum seekers ([39]). This usually gives them more secure access to parental leave because they can work from the outset under the same rules on pay, social security and employment conditions as nationals. Once employed, they can therefore access parental leave and related benefits on the same terms as other workers, without the work permit delays that often affect asylum seekers. This more favourable position is time-limited, however: temporary protection for people fleeing Ukraine currently runs until March 2028, after which beneficiaries will need to move to another legal status to retain their eligibility (Council of the European Union, 2026a).

9.1.2. Policy design elements promoting shared uptake

Parental leave in the EU has developed within a wider framework of employment law, gender equality policy and social policy coordination. Within this framework, increasing fathers' take-up has become a clear policy goal. Rather than relying on a single measure, EU and national reforms have used a combination of design features, such as non-transferable leave, payment levels and eligibility rules. This section explains how these features have evolved and why they matter for fathers' use of parental leave.

At the EU level, this evolution can be seen across three successive directives: Directive 96/34/EC, Directive 2010/18/EU and the 2019 Work–Life Balance Directive (Figure 33). Over time, the EU framework has shifted from setting a minimum leave duration while leaving most design choices to national discretion, towards a model in which non-transferability of leave and benefit payment were progressively strengthened and, under the Work–Life Balance Directive, made mandatory.

Figure 33: Stipulation on parental leave in EU-level proposals and directives

	Directive 96/34/EC	Directive 2010/18/EU	Directive (EU) 2019/1158 (Work–Life Balance Directive)
Duration of parental leave	≥ 3 months	≥ 4 months	≥ 4 months
Payment	Left to national discretion	Left to national discretion	Mandatory
Non-transferable leave	In principle	1 month (unpaid)	2 months (paid)
Flexibility in use	Optional (left to national discretion)	Optional (left to national discretion)	Mandatory

([39]) Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and having the effect of introducing temporary protection (OJ L 71, 4.3.2022, p. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2022/382/oj).

Figure 34: Stipulation on parental leave in the Work–Life Balance Directive

Work–Life Balance Directive (2019)	
Article 5	• A minimum entitlement to four months of parental leave is provided per parent, of which at least two months must be non-transferable. • Member States shall ensure that two months of parental leave cannot be transferred. • Member States can require a specific period of employment, not longer than a year, for parents to be eligible. • Workers have the right to request flexible uptake of parental leave. • Member States shall assess the need for the conditions of access to and the detailed arrangements for parental leave to be adapted to the needs of adoptive parents, parents with a disability and parents with children with a disability or a long-term illness.
Article 8	• Payment or allowance shall be defined by the Member State or the social partners and shall be set in such a way as to facilitate the take-up of parental leave by both parents.
Article 11	• Workers are protected from discrimination and dismissal on the grounds that they have applied for, or have taken, family-related leave or flexible working arrangements.

At the Member State level, these design instruments have been implemented in different ways, as summarised in Table 41. The rest of this section examines the evidence for which features are most effective in encouraging parents to share leave more equally.

The benefit amount is one of the most decisive factors in encouraging fathers' uptake of parental leave

In comparative leave research, leave is usually considered **well paid** when benefits replace at least 66 % of previous earnings. This benchmark comes from the European Commission's employment guidelines monitoring framework and is also used by the International Leave Network for cross-national comparison (Koslowski et al., 2022). However, earlier research suggests that higher wage replacement – full pay, or at least 80 % of previous earnings – is especially important for encouraging take-up, particularly among fathers (Karu et al., 2018; Koslowski et al., 2022; Raub et al., 2018). The Work–Life Balance Directive does not set a numerical minimum. Article 8(3) of the directive only requires payment or allowance to be set at a level that facilitates take-up by both parents, leaving Member States to define adequacy in practice.

Table 19 presents payment rates for the non-transferable months across Member States, illustrating the degree to which current national arrangements meet, exceed or fall short of this benchmark.

Table 19: Benefit pay during parental leave based on income-replacement level (March 2026)

Income replacement lower than 66 %	Income replacement between 66 % and 80 %	Income replacement between 80 % and 90 %	Full or almost full income replacement (90–100 %)
BE, BG, CZ, DK, IE, EL, ES (f), FR, HR (f)(*), IT (e (*))(**), LV, LT (e (*))(***), HU (f), MT, AT (f), PT (e (*))(****), SK	DE, IT (e (*)), CY, LT (e (*)), LU (*****), HU (e), NL, AT (e), PL (e (*))(******), FI (e (*)), SE (e (*))(*******)	PL (e (*)), PT (e (*)), RO, FI (e (*)), SE (e (*))	EE, ES (e (*)), HR (e), PT (e (*)), SI

For Member States appearing more than one time:
e – earnings-based
f – flat-rate
e (*) – earnings-based, but for a designated period or other terms (see footnote)

NB: Payment is considered 'adequate' when it reaches the 66 % threshold: for earnings-based systems, 66 % of the worker's previous earnings (with any ceiling covering 66 % of national average earnings); for flat-rate systems, 66 % of the country's average monthly earnings. Income-replacement bands were established as follows: below 66 %, as the conventional 'well-paid' threshold discussed in Section 9.1.2; 66–80 %, for countries that meet the threshold; and, above that, two further bands (80–90 % and 90–100 %) to distinguish countries approaching full or nearly full replacement and those with high but not nearly full replacement rates.

(*) HR: The earnings-based scheme pays 100 % of previous earnings (ceiling EUR 3 001.80/month) for the first six months (or eight months in certain cases). Extended leave beyond this period is compensated at a flat rate.

(**) IT: Compensation follows a sliding structure: up to one month at 80 %, up to one additional month at 60 %, and the remaining non-transferable months at 30 %. The 66–80 % band covers approximately the first two months; the remainder falls below 66 %.

(***) LT: The individually non-transferable period (two months) is paid at 78 %, placing it in the 66–80 % band. The remaining leave falls below 66 %: 60 % under the 18-month option, or 45 % (first 12 months) then 30 % (remaining 12 months) under the 24-month option.

(****) PT: Multiple replacement rates coexist depending on the duration option and sharing conditions. 100 % applies to the 120-day option, fathers-only mandatory/optional leave, and multiple-birth/hospitalisation/prematurity supplements. 80–83–90 % applies to the 150-day and 180-day options (sharing conditions required). Extended parental leave is paid at 30–40 % (or 20 % part-time).

(*****) LU: For low- and middle-income earners the effective replacement rate may approach 100 % of average income. However, due to the statutory ceiling, higher earners may receive substantially less than 66 % of their previous earnings. The classification reflects the predominant outcome for typical earners.

(******) PL: Standard option: 70 % replacement rate. Upfront application option: 81.5 % rate if a joint maternity + parental leave of 52 weeks is declared in advance (80–90 % band); fathers taking leave during these first 52 weeks also receive 81.5 %.

(*******) SE: The statutory rate of 77.6 % (for 195 days) falls in the 66–80 % band. Collective agreements frequently top up benefits to 90 % or above, placing many parents in the 80–90 % band in practice.

Source: National-level research.

The level of compensation is one of the strongest factors shaping fathers' take-up of parental leave (Duvander et al., 2023; Geisler et al., 2019; Rocha, 2020). France's 2015 reform illustrates this clearly: reserving a long period of 6–12 months for fathers had little effect when benefits were low, increasing fathers' participation by less than 1 pp ([40]) (Périvier et al., 2023). Evidence from 2018 EU-LFS data covering 16 161 dual-earner couples in 23 Member States also shows that payment adequacy is, on average, twice as strongly associated with fathers' leave take-up as with mothers' take-up (Robbins, 2024). Full compensation at 100 % of previous earnings removes the most direct financial barrier to leave-taking. However, payment alone is not enough: without

([40]) In France, the parental leave benefit (PreParE) amounts to only EUR 456.06 per month for a full-time worker (roughly one third of the net minimum wage), or EUR 745.50 for families with three or more children (PreParE *majorée*) (Service Public, 2026). For fathers, whose average salary in the private sector was EUR 2 900 in 2023, the standard PreParE benefit represents merely 15 % of their typical earnings, marking a crucial income loss that makes leave-taking economically untenable for most families (Périvier et al., 2023).

a reserved entitlement or incentives for shared uptake, families may still default to mothers taking most or all the leave while fathers remain in paid work.

Non-transferable part of parental leave increases fathers' take-up only if well paid

The Work–Life Balance Directive guarantees at least two months of parental leave reserved specifically for the father, on a non-transferable basis. For fathers, however, earmarking alone is not enough. Research shows that reserved leave increases fathers' use only when it is also well paid (Karu et al., 2018).

Parental leave in Ireland, introduced to meet the directive's non-transferable requirement, is paid at a flat rate, replacing only about one third of fathers' previous earnings. In its first two years, only around one quarter of eligible fathers used it, compared with two thirds of eligible mothers (Keane et al., 2025). Leave is most effective when it is both reserved for fathers and adequately compensated (Björk Eydal et al., 2018; Høgholm Jørgensen et al., 2024). When these conditions are met, fathers are more likely to take leave and to share childcare more equally afterwards (Eerola et al., 2022b; Haas et al., 2011).

By 2018, one third of Member States had already reserved part of parental leave for fathers (European Commission: Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion et al., 2018) and many have demonstrated the positive effect of this combination.

- Sweden was an early pioneer. In 1995, it reserved four weeks of parental leave exclusively for fathers and compensated this period at 75–80 % of previous earnings. Fathers' use of parental leave rose sharply, from 3 % to 60 % (Gorjón et al., 2024).
- Estonia shows a similar pattern. In 2017, 9 % of fathers used parental leave. After reforms linked to the Work–Life Balance Directive, take-up of shared parental benefit stabilised at around 20 %. Two design features appear important: a non-transferable period for fathers and full earnings replacement at 100 %. A 2026 reform allowing parents to earn income without reducing the benefit may increase fathers' take-up further (Republic of Estonia Social Insurance Board, n.d.; Statistikaamet, 2025).

Across the EU, high earners are less likely to take parental leave when benefits are capped and no top-up compensates for income above the ceiling. In Croatia, leave is paid at 100 % of wages, but the ceiling is around EUR 3 000 per month in the first year (Moja socijalna sigurnost, 2026). In Luxembourg, the ceiling is around EUR 4 300/month, affecting mainly earners well above the median (Inspection du Travail et des Mines, 2026). Research from Luxembourg shows that fathers facing the largest income loss because of the cap were significantly less likely to take leave (Zhelyazkova, 2013). Iceland shows a similar pattern: after the fiscal crisis reduced the monthly cap from ISK 535 700 to ISK 300 000 between 2008 and 2010, fathers' leave use fell sharply while mothers' leave lengthened (Sigurdardottir et al., 2018). In Sweden, high-earning fathers whose income above the statutory ceiling was topped up by a collective agreement took substantially more leave than equally high-earning fathers without such top-up (Duvander et al., 2024).

The bonus months, additional months of paid leave given only when both parents each take a minimum share, has also proved to be an incentive for increasing fathers' uptake. However, the long-term impact is mixed.

- In Portugal, the 2009 sharing bonus – an extra 30 days when both parents share leave – led to a sharp rise in fathers' participation. The number of fathers taking at least one month of leave increased from 596 in 2008 to more than 24 000 in 2017. By 2024, almost 42 % of initial parental leave used this sharing bonus (Dobrotić et al., 2025a; Wall et al., 2018).
- In Germany, around 80 % of fathers who use the two paid bonus months do not take any additional leave (Rocha, 2020). This suggests that bonus months can successfully encourage fathers to take some leave, but may also set a ceiling on their involvement.
- Austria introduced a partnership bonus in 2017 for parents who split childcare benefit claims roughly 50/50 or 60/40. Since then, it has been claimed in just over 1 % of cases on average, far below ministerial expectations (Austrian Court of Audit, 2024).

Overall, bonus months are effective at bringing fathers into the parental leave system, but they often encourage only the minimum leave needed to unlock the bonus. As a policy tool, bonus months are therefore more useful for raising initial participation, than for promoting longer, more equal sharing of leave.

Beyond the leave payment itself, social security credits protect against a long-term pension penalty that falls mainly on mothers

Some parental leave systems protect parents' social security records while they are away from paid work. This can happen either by exempting parents from paying contributions during leave or by having the state cover those contributions on their behalf.

Because leave is still taken predominantly by mothers, this measure has a limited impact on promoting shared care. Instead, it serves more as a safeguard against the long-term earnings and pension penalty that mostly falls on women. The Work–Life Balance Directive also warns that long periods of reduced working hours can lower overall social security contributions and weaken future pension entitlements ([41]). It is thus important that financial support and social protection for carers compensate for temporary absence from paid work without discouraging labour market participation.

Across Member States, this protection generally takes two forms.

- In Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia and Slovakia, the state pays social security or pension contributions on the parent's behalf during leave, as if the parent were still working. Depending on the country, this may cover health insurance, pension, disability or unemployment insurance.

([41]) See footnote 2.

- In Czechia, Slovenia and Finland, no contributions are paid during leave, but the period still counts towards the pension record. This may happen through a recognised substitute insurance period, child-rearing pension credits or continued pension accrual regardless of previous employment status.

Tax treatment is another way to improve the real value of parental leave benefits. If a benefit is tax-exempt, the gross and net replacement rates are equivalent. If it is taxed or subject to social security contributions, the net amount may be lower than the stated replacement rate suggests. Existing evidence does not show that tax treatment alone drives fathers' take-up. What matters most is still the level of payment and whether it is linked to previous earnings. However, tax rules affect net adequacy, and net adequacy determines whether leave is financially viable, especially for the higher-earning parent.

Promotional campaigns can further reinforce, but not replace, the financial and design incentives that drive fathers' uptake

Fathers' low uptake of parental leave is not only a matter of policy design. It is also shaped by everyday social and workplace realities, including employer attitudes, workplace culture and wider norms around caregiving, masculinity and breadwinning (explored further in Section 7.4). Even when leave is generous and well paid, these informal and culturally rooted barriers can significantly suppress fathers' uptake. This is why statutory reforms must be supported by broader, society-wide measures.

Alongside financial incentives and statutory reforms, local governments and civil society have introduced non-formal initiatives to promote a more equal sharing of care and encourage men to take parental leave. Awareness campaigns form part of a broader holistic approach to fathers' uptake, complementing adequate pay and well-designed incentives (OECD, 2025b). These initiatives vary across Member States, including national media and public information campaigns, employer guidance and grassroots or non-governmental-organisation-led events, often run in partnership between government bodies, employers' associations and civil society (see Box 1).

Box 1: Examples of non-formal measures to promote shared parental leave by the national governments and civil society

PL	**'Równi w domu – równi w pracy' ['Equal at Home – Equal at Work'] (2023–ongoing):** Led by the Share the Care Foundation in cooperation with the Polish Social Insurance Institution (Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych (ZUS)) and under the patronage of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy. Launched to accompany the introduction of the non-transferable nine-week father quota under the Work–Life Balance Directive, the campaign targets both parents and employers through media outreach, employer education on correct implementation of the new leave regulations, expert conferences and practical guides, including dedicated guides for fathers and mothers published in 2026.
HR	**'Fathers, It's a Big Mistake Not to Take Leave!' (2024):** A national campaign implemented by the Central State Office for Demography and Youth in partnership with the Croatian Employers' Association, explicitly targeting fathers' use of parental leave entitlements and promoting more equal sharing of caregiving responsibilities.
FR	**#RevoyezLesCongés ['Reform parental leave'] (2020):** Campaign by civil-society organisation Parents & Féministes explicitly calling for reform of the parental leave compensation framework and framing low replacement rates and unequal leave design as structural barriers to fathers' uptake. Launched alongside government consultations on the '1000 First Days of the Child' initiative, it targeted the policy framework shaping fathers' participation in parental leave.

Employers can also encourage men's use of parental leave by making it easier and more financially viable to take. The most common measure is a salary top-up that bridges the gap between the statutory benefit and the employee's actual earnings. Some companies also extend support to family types that may be excluded from public schemes, such as same-sex couples (Box 2).

Box 2: Examples of non-formal measures to promote shared parental leave uptake from the private sector

LT	**Vinted global top-up policy:** The Lithuania-founded online marketplace introduced a global employer-funded top-up ensuring 100 % salary replacement: 20 weeks for primary caregivers and 10 weeks for secondary caregivers, covering the gap with state benefits. The policy explicitly covers all family types, including same-sex couples, addressing a gap in Lithuanian law where one parent may not be legally recognised and therefore be ineligible for public parental benefits.
LU	**A&O Shearman salary top-up:** The law firm introduced a wage top-up during parental leave (covering the gap between the statutory allowance and employees' actual salary), applying equally to all parents, but with an explicit goal of encouraging fathers. Prior to the measure very few male employees took parental leave, whereas following its introduction uptake increased significantly among both men and women.

9.1.3. Take-up of parental leave across the EU

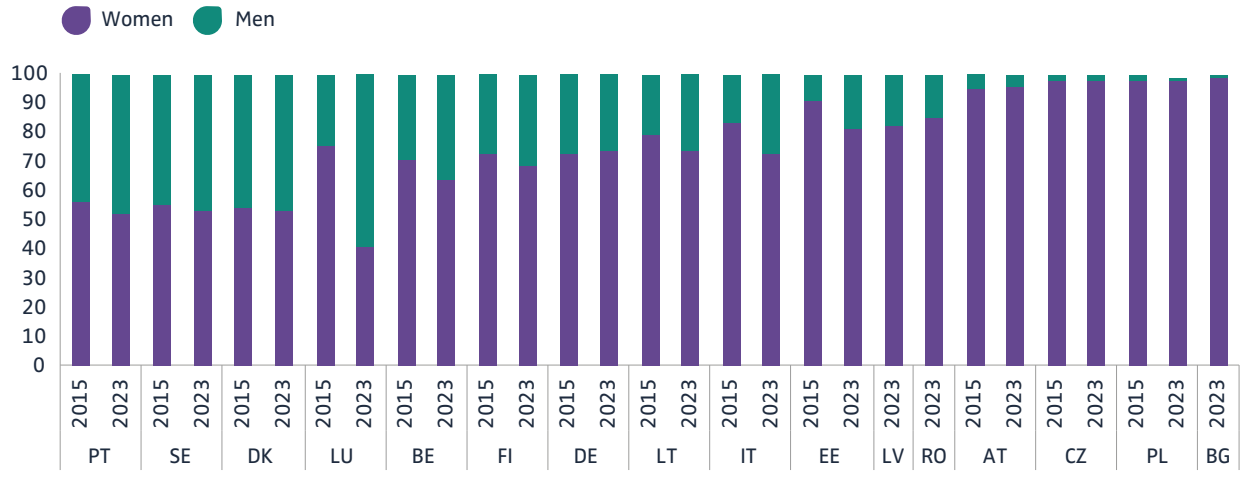
A key reason for strengthening parental leave policies is to enable more mothers to return to work if they wish and to encourage more fathers to take on caregiving responsibilities. More equal leave-sharing also has wider benefits: evidence links fathers' leave-taking to stronger father–child

relationships, a fairer division of unpaid care within households and better well-being for parents and children (Eerola et al., 2022a; Huerta et al., 2014; Lidbeck et al., 2021). Tracking parental leave uptake rates by gender is, thus, a key indicator of policy success in promoting shared parenting.

Across the EU, however, parental leave uptake remains highly gendered. In most countries, mothers still take the vast majority of leave and spend much longer on parental leave than fathers – four times longer in Germany and Sweden, and 10 times longer in Denmark (Eurofound, 2019). Overall, women account for 74 % of parental leave users or benefit recipients EU-wide, compared with 26 % for men (EIGE, 2024d). A few countries stand out: in Denmark, Portugal and Sweden, men make up close to 45 % of parental benefit recipients (Figure 35). On the other end, fathers' take-up of leave has historically been low in central and eastern Europe, partly due to low benefit levels and persistent gender stereotypes about mothers as primary caregivers.

Comparing 2023 data with 2015 data shows that most countries show relatively stable patterns in parental leave uptake by gender. Women's share generally remains above 70 %, while men's uptake has increased gradually (Figure 35). Luxembourg is a notable exception. There men's uptake rose from around 24 % in 2015 to 59 % in 2023, following a major 2016 reform that made parental leave more attractive to fathers through greater flexibility and improved benefit structures ([42]) (Uzunalioglu et al., 2021).

Figure 35: Share of recipients/users of publicly administered parental leave benefits or publicly administered paid parental leave (%), 2015 and 2023 (or latest year available)



NB: DK, PT and SE do not make a distinction between the different leaves, and therefore their numbers also include users of maternity and paternity leave. For BE and CZ, data is an average of users/recipients in each month of the given year. For LU, data refers to recipients of the first (right after birth) and second parental leave (before sixth birthday). For EE, data refers to recipients of shared parental benefits (*jagatav vanemahüvitis*). For FI, data refers to recipients of the sharable parental allowance plus the paternity allowance after the parental allowance period. For DE, data includes both recipients of *Elterngeld* and *ElterngeldPlus*. PL and FI latest data for 2021; DK latest data for 2022. Data for 2015 for BG, LV and RO is not available.

Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Family Database, 'PF2.2: Use of childbirth-related leave', OECD calculations based on information from national statistical offices and ministries and an OECD questionnaire to national authorities; International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research 2024 and 2025 (for BG, LV and RO).

([42]) The reform enabled parents to choose between full-time, part-time and split leave arrangements, take leave simultaneously, and use leave until the child turns six. The flat-rate payment of EUR 1 778 per month was replaced with a benefit system based on a share of previous earnings.

Even where parental leave uptake rises, it remains socially stratified

Comparable EU data on parental leave uptake by income, employment type or migration status remains limited, creating an important blind spot in monitoring leave policies (Reimer et al., 2026). Available evidence suggests that actual uptake follows many of the same divides as formal eligibility. Parents with lower income, weaker job security or uncertain prospects after leave are less likely to use their entitlements (OECD, 2025b).

This particularly concerns fathers: when they cannot afford to take their non-transferable months, mothers often absorb the full caregiving, with lasting economic consequences. In Germany, for example, research following partnered women for eight years after a first birth shows that women's individual poverty risk peaks one year after childbirth and remains high for up to five years. This is driven mainly by the length of parental leave and the timing of return to work, while men's financial stability remains largely unchanged (Siegert, 2025).

Migrant parents generally experience slower returns to work after childbirth than native-born parents, driven in large part by weaker labour market attachment before childbirth and by parental leave systems that tie eligibility, or the level of benefit, to prior employment or social insurance contributions (Mikolai et al., 2025; Milewski et al., 2023). Evidence from Finland and Sweden shows lower leave take-up among migrant fathers than native-born fathers, although the gap narrows as time since migration and labour market attachment increase (Mussino et al., 2018). A similar pattern is found among migrant mothers in Belgium, where lower uptake is mainly explained by more precarious and less continuous employment histories that make it harder to meet eligibility thresholds (Kil et al., 2018).

Parental leave reforms demonstrate a tangible impact on uptake among fathers

Country-level administrative data for 2023–2025, where available, shows a clear pattern: fathers' take-up increases with non-transferable and well-paid leave quotas for fathers, as discussed in Section 2.2. The strongest gains are found in countries that introduced earmarked leave with income replacement in response to the Work–Life Balance Directive (Box 3).

Box 3: Countries with positive effects of parental leave reforms on shared childcare

DK	As a result of Denmark's 2022 reform, which reserved 11 weeks of paid leave exclusively for fathers, men's take-up of leave longer than 2 weeks rose from 48 % in 2019 to 86 % in 2023, and average paternal leave duration nearly doubled from 40 days in 2021 to 72 days in 2024 (Danmarks Statistik, 2025).
SI	Slovenia, after introducing non-transferable quotas under the Work–Life Balance Directive, recorded a rise in fathers using non-transferable days from 23 % of live births in 2023 to 63 % in 2024 ([44]).
LV	In Latvia, the introduction of a 62-day non-transferable quota led to a 300 % surge in monthly male participation: from an average of 122 men/month in 2023 to 481/month in 2024. Fathers' share of all parental benefit recipients hit a historic peak of 24 % in 2024. There is also an emerging flexibility pattern: fathers increasingly split the quota into smaller fragments, suggesting they are adapting it to career continuity concerns (Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2025).
FI	Finland, which restructured its leave system to be fully symmetrical and gender-neutral in 2022, shows an upward trend, with men's share of parental allowance days rising from 11 % in 2019 to 21 % in 2024 and 23 % by September 2025 (Social Insurance Institution of Finland, 2025).
LU	In Luxembourg, following the 2016 reform making leave fully individual and non-transferable (combined with earnings-related pay), men became the majority of parental leave beneficiaries: 59 % in both 2023 and 2024. Male beneficiaries grew steadily from 5 802 (2020) to 8 046 (2024) (Caisse pour l'avenir des enfants, 2024).

Other countries show more gradual increases, usually where paid leave entitlements for fathers have been newly introduced or substantially expanded, even if the leave is not fully non-transferable (Box 4).

Box 4: Member States with moderate effects of parental leave reforms on shared childcare

IT	Italy saw men's share of private sector parental leave beneficiaries rise from approximately 21 % in 2021 to 30 % in 2024, with the steepest jump occurring immediately after the Work–Life Balance Directive transposition in August 2022 (Istituto Nazionale Previdenza Sociale, 2025).
PL	Poland registered a significant increase in absolute terms: from around 1 % of fathers taking parental leave before 2023 to 12 % in 2024 and 17 % in 2025, driven by the introduction of a nine-week non-transferable entitlement (ZUS, 2026). However, fathers still take an average of only 47 days, falling short even of that entitlement (ZUS, 2025).
PT	Portugal's longer-run trend (fathers' shared leave rising from 39 % of births in 2019 to 48 % in 2023) reflects a decade of incremental reform rather than a single policy shock, and take-up has begun to plateau just below parity (CITE, 2025).

([43]) Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (Slovenia), unpublished data provided directly by the ministry.

Low take-up persists where benefits are low, family entitlements are transferable and social expectations about mothers as the main caregivers are strong. In Bulgaria fathers accounted for only 1 % of childcare leave beneficiaries in both 2023 and 2024. Although a two-month non-transferable entitlement for fathers has existed since 2022, following transposition of the Work–Life Balance Directive, it is paid at a low flat rate of EUR 460 per month, below 66 % of average earnings. At the time of writing, no official take-up data was available for this specific entitlement, as published figures still referred to the older transferable childcare benefit (NSSI, 2025). In Czechia, no non-transferable entitlement has been introduced, and fathers' take-up remains very low, at 2 % in 2023 with only a marginal increase in 2024 (Czech Statistical Office, 2025). In Slovakia, transposition remains incomplete, and women accounted for approximately 96–97 % of parental allowance recipients in both 2023 and 2024 (Slovakian Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, 2026) ([44]).

Data gaps and inconsistent sex disaggregation make it difficult to monitor parental leave uptake by gender

Monitoring parental leave uptake by gender remains difficult because data is often missing or insufficiently detailed. In at least 13 of the 27 Member States, data on fathers' parental leave take-up is either unavailable, not disaggregated by sex, or published only as absolute claimant counts from which take-up rates cannot be derived. Part-time leave further complicates comparison since a father taking one day of leave per week may be counted as a leave user for several months. As a result, cross-country comparisons remain unreliable and conclusions about behavioural change must be interpreted with caution.

It is therefore important to look not only at whether fathers take leave, but also at how long they take it. Leave duration reveals the real extent of gender inequality in care responsibilities. In Germany, mothers who had a child in 2024 planned to take 14.8 months of leave on average, compared with 3.8 months for fathers (Dobrotić et al., 2025). In Italy, women used around 6.7 times more parental leave days than men in 2023 (Istituto Nazionale Previdenza Sociale, 2025). This pattern shows that cultural expectations and income considerations still push fathers towards short leave, while mothers take most of it (Gorjón et al., 2024; Robbins, 2024).

Workplace pressure and entrenched societal norms discourage fathers from taking parental leave, even where policy design is encouraging

Across the EU, fathers in couples with children consistently report wanting to work around two fewer hours per week than they actually do (Eurofound et al., 2017). Evidence from Germany shows that many fathers would like to reduce their working hours but feel unable to do so, with workplace conditions acting as a major barrier (Bernhardt et al., 2020).

([44]) Slovak fathers separately draw on a non-transferable, better-paid maternity benefit (75 % of previous earnings, up to seven months), the uptake of which reached an estimated 53–64 % of fathers by 2023, meaning the gendered pattern is far less stark once both benefit types are counted.

Lack of employer support, fear of career consequences and workplace culture act as powerful deterrents. Workplace norms that reward long hours and constant availability discourage fathers from using parental leave (Zumbyte et al., 2024). Men may fear being judged as less committed or face retaliation such as missed pay rises or even dismissal (Eurofound, 2015). As a result, even when fathers have a well-paid legal entitlement and protection against discrimination or dismissal, workplace culture can still limit take-up.

Although some literature refers to a 'fatherhood wage bonus' – fathers earning more than childless men – recent evidence suggests that this is largely driven by selection rather than fatherhood itself. Panel data research using longitudinal data from Finland, Germany and the United Kingdom finds little robust evidence of a fatherhood wage premium once individual earnings trajectories are accounted for. Instead, higher-earning men are more likely to become fathers in the first place (Icardi et al., 2022). A study based on UK and German panel data reaches the same conclusion (Mari, 2019).

In fact, fathers who step down from continuous full-time work by taking leave may face a career penalty that scales directly with the amount of leave they take. A Swedish study using population-wide administrative earnings data spanning six decades finds that fathers' earnings penalties increase with the amount of parental leave taken relative to other fathers, ranging from almost zero among those taking no leave to over 10 % lower earnings among those in the highest leave-taking group. This pattern is descriptive rather than causal, but it highlights the potential career costs fathers may face when they take longer leave (Sundberg, 2024).

A further barrier lies in how employers manage fathers' relatively short leave periods. Qualitative research with employers in Luxembourg shows that, in sectors and companies where fathers' take-up is traditionally low, employers often try to minimise the cost of a father's absence by negotiating the timing or form of leave rather than arranging replacement cover (Amjahad et al., 2023). Because fathers' non-transferable leave is often limited to a few weeks or months, employers tend to cope by steering employees towards more informal, part-time or fragmented leave-taking (Valentova et al., 2025).

Workplace norms can change when fathers' leave-taking becomes more visible. Evidence from Norway shows that a father is around 11 pp more likely to take paternity leave if a co-worker has recently done so, and 15 pp more likely if a brother has. These effects appear to work partly because peers provide information about how employers are likely to respond, and they can reinforce each other over time (Dahl et al., 2014). Take-up also varies with organisational context. Fathers in larger organisations and in the public sector, where formal procedures and cover arrangements are more established, tend to take leave more readily than those in small firms, where arranging cover and concerns about job security weigh more heavily (Geisler et al., 2019).

Traditional gender norms discourage fathers from taking leave and uphold unequal caregiving expectations

The workplace pressures discussed above are closely linked to broader beliefs about gender roles in caregiving. These beliefs shape how fathers view parental leave and how colleagues and employers respond when they take it. Deeply rooted norms can limit the effect of even relatively generous benefits (Gorjón et al., 2024). This means that removing financial disincentives alone is unlikely to close the gender gap unless the underlying norms also shift.

Survey evidence shows that even when fathers' leave would make financial sense, social expectations do not clearly support this choice. Only one in two respondents in the EU agree that fathers should give up work if they earn less than their partners to look after the children (EIGE, 2025e). Stigma around caregiving is also strongly shaped by the national context. Around 17 % of women and 21 % of men think that when a father takes parental leave, it shows a lack of career ambition, ranging from just 3 % in the Netherlands to 41 % in Slovakia (EIGE, 2025e).

Because this stigma is shared by both women and men, it creates a real social cost for fathers who take leave. In many central and eastern European countries, for example, long parental leave is still seen as the norm for mothers, while men's leave-taking remains rare (Eurofound, 2019). At the same time, most Europeans recognise the personal value of fathers' leave: 81 % agree that taking parental leave is enriching for a father (EIGE, 2025e). The barrier, therefore, is not a belief that leave is bad for fathers, but concern about how others, especially colleagues and employers, will interpret the decision (European Commission: Directorate-General for Communication, 2024).

These attitudes are reinforced by persistent stereotypes about caregiving competence. Almost half of Europeans believe that men are naturally less competent at housework, rising to more than 60 % in Bulgaria, Italy, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia (EIGE, 2025e). In several countries, including Czechia, Latvia and Portugal, women are even more likely than men to hold this view, suggesting that such stereotypes are internalised across genders.

A similar pattern holds for decision-making: 24 % of men and 16 % of women still believe men should have the final say in family decisions, with the gap widest in Bulgaria, Estonia, Croatia, Latvia and Austria (EIGE, 2025e). Taken together, these findings mirror the same assumptions that operate in the workplace, where involved fathers are often seen as deviating from professional norms rather than fulfilling a legitimate caregiving role (Grau-Grau et al., 2024).

9.2. Who is eligible? A microsimulation of statutory coverage

To estimate how many potential parents would be eligible for parental leave across the EU, this report uses a static microsimulation approach. Country-specific parental leave eligibility rules were applied to representative survey data to assess whether individuals would qualify for leave if they had a newborn child at the time of observation. The analysis focuses on formal eligibility rather than actual take-up, showing which groups of parents can, or cannot, access parental leave.

9.2.1. Methodology

The **simulation population** consists of all individuals aged 20 to 49, referred to here as 'hypothetical parents'. The analysis builds on the baseline established by EIGE in 2019, which used 2016 microdata and a comparable microsimulation approach to estimate parental leave eligibility across EU Member States (EIGE, 2020b). This baseline makes it possible to assess, in broad terms, how eligibility has changed over the past decade. However, the present study introduces several methodological refinements that improve analytical precision but affect comparability with the 2019 results. The most important changes are summarised below.

- **Separate estimates for leave and benefit eligibility.** This study distinguishes between eligibility for job-protected parental leave and eligibility for the parental leave benefit. The 2019 study reported a single combined eligibility figure, so the headline rates are not directly comparable. In integrated systems, where leave and benefit conditions are identical, this distinction has little practical effect. In separated systems, however, benefit eligibility may be broader than leave eligibility because financial support can extend to people who are not employed (Figure 31). Comparisons with the 2019 estimates should therefore be interpreted with caution.
- **Refinement of the coding of eligibility conditions.** The earlier study used economic status as reported at the time of the survey interview. In this study, December of the income reference period is treated as the hypothetical month of birth, ensuring that current economic status and the reconstructed work history are consistent with each other. As a result, some differences between the two studies may reflect improved measurement rather than actual policy change.

The microsimulation uses two **EU-wide comparative surveys**, the EU-LFS and the EU-SILC, both of which were used in EIGE's 2019 study.

For each country, the dataset was selected according to the eligibility conditions being simulated. Where entitlement depends on recent continuous employment, the EU-LFS is used as the main source. Where eligibility depends on work history over one to four years before childbirth, the EU-SILC panel file is used because it allows monthly employment trajectories to be reconstructed.

Italy is treated separately and uses EU-SILC cross-sectional data because of its specific eligibility rules. In Belgium and Greece, where rules differ between public and private sector employees, estimates from both datasets are averaged. For the nine countries where the selected dataset differs from the 2019 study, all countries were coded across all three data files (i.e. EU-LFS, EU-SILC cross-sectional and EU-SILC panel data files), so that comparable estimates could be produced.

As in the 2019 study, the analysis covers people aged 20 to 49 – the age range most associated with childbirth and high labour market participation. Individuals are included regardless of whether they are parents or employed. This makes it possible to assess how eligibility rules affect people with different employment status, including those who are unemployed, economically inactive or in non-standard work. It also avoids the selection bias that would arise if the analysis included only

parents, since parenthood may positively correlate with economic activity and consequently eligibility for parental leave.

The simulation models the full set of eligibility conditions identified in 27 Member States ([45]). These include current economic status, work history, social insurance contributions over country-specific reference periods, residence and citizenship status, minimum working hours, and the public/private sector distinction, where relevant. Eligibility rules were sourced from country-level policy mapping carried out by national experts ([46]).

A further aim of the microsimulation was to identify the main reasons why individuals are ineligible. Because of data limitations, the analysis focuses mainly on economic activity and residence status. Although same-sex couples face different eligibility restrictions across Member States, this factor could not be included as a reason for ineligibility because sample sizes in the microdata were too small.

9.2.2. Overall eligibility for parental leave and benefits

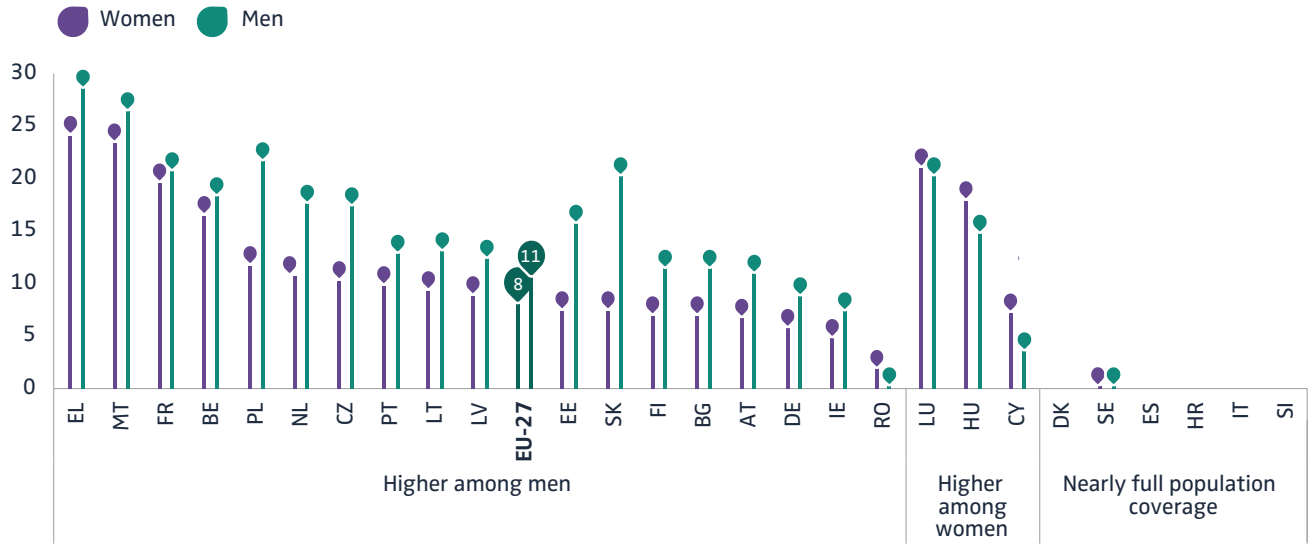
Among employed people, 8 % of women and 11 % of men in the EU would not be eligible for parental leave

Six Member States (Denmark, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Slovenia and Sweden) provide near-universal parental leave coverage for employed people. By contrast, Belgium, Greece, France, Malta, Luxembourg and Hungary have the highest ineligibility rates, with more than 15 % of both women and men in employment not entitled to parental leave (Figure 36). A common reason is the requirement in these countries to have around 12 months of continuous employment with the same employer before becoming eligible. This rule excludes many parents in fixed-term, seasonal or recently started jobs. In Greece, France and Malta, self-employed workers are also excluded from statutory parental leave, a gap that is especially significant in Greece, where self-employment accounts for the highest share of total employment in the EU (Eurostat, 2026b). In most Member States, employed men are slightly more likely than employed women to be ineligible, although the opposite pattern is found in Cyprus, Luxembourg and Hungary.

([45]) To assess the sensitivity of estimates to dataset choice, the microsimulation was run in parallel across all three data files for all 27 Member States. Where estimates converge across datasets, this strengthens confidence in the robustness of the results. Where they diverge, this often points to a specific source of bias; in particular, the EU-LFS tends to underestimate eligibility for people with broken or discontinuous work histories, since it can only track continuous employment with a single employer. This cross-dataset comparison is reported alongside the main results.

([46]) This differs from the approach used in the 2019 EIGE study, which pre-populated policy templates using the Leave Network Annual Reviews and then asked country representatives to validate them. By reversing this process and inviting the national experts to lead the coding rather than reviewing pre-filled templates, the present study is better positioned to capture nuances in how eligibility conditions are designed and applied in practice. At the same time, this shift means that differences in results across the two studies may partly reflect differences in how conditions were interpreted or coded, independently of any actual policy change.

Figure 36: Percentage of employed women and men (aged 20–49) not eligible for statutory parental leave, 2024



NB: 'EU-27' represents the weighted average. Member States are grouped by size of gender eligibility gap: 'higher ineligibility' refers to a gender gap higher than 1 pp; within the groups, Member States are sorted in descending order. RO (men) is nearly full eligibility.

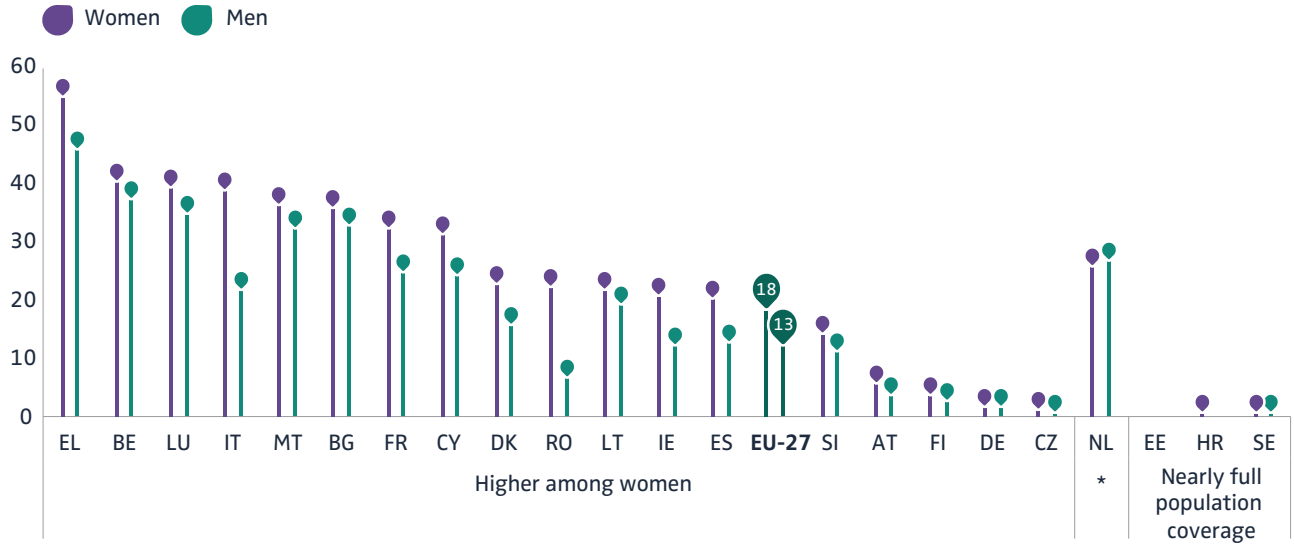
Source: Authors' calculations, EU-LFS and EU-SILC.

Without employment or recent social contribution history, 18 % of women and 13 % of men would not receive parental leave benefit payment

Eligibility for parental leave benefits differs from eligibility for leave itself. Parents outside formal employment, or without a recent work history, still need income support during the first one to two years after childbirth. Several Member States – Estonia, Croatia, Latvia, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Sweden – provide universal or near-universal benefit coverage through schemes that are not tied to employment or social insurance contributions (Figure 37). Elsewhere, however, the pattern is similar to leave entitlement: Belgium, Greece and Luxembourg record the highest ineligibility rates among all potential parents, with Greece standing out at 55 % for women.

Unemployment and undeclared work affect benefit eligibility directly. They add to the restrictions already found among employed parents. For example, continuous-tenure requirements with the same employer can exclude people in non-standard work, including platform workers and those on fixed-term or seasonal contracts. Self-employed workers remain excluded from statutory leave in Greece, France and Malta, but in some countries they may still access benefits if they meet social contribution requirements, including Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Ireland, France, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Finland.

Figure 37: Percentage of all women and men (aged 20–49) not eligible for statutory parental leave benefits, 2024



NB: (*) means 'Higher among men'. 'EU-27' represents the weighted average. Member States are grouped by size of gender eligibility gap: 'higher ineligibility' refers to a gender gap higher than 1 pp; within the groups, Member States are sorted in descending order. LV, HU, PL, PT and SK are not presented due to full eligibility.

Source: Authors' calculations, EU-LFS and EU-SILC.

The gender pattern for benefit eligibility differs from the pattern for leave entitlement shown in Figure 36. Among employed people, men were more often ineligible for parental leave. Among all potential parents, women are more likely to be excluded from benefit payment. This likely reflects women's higher rates of unemployment and inactivity, often linked to caregiving and career breaks, which leave them without the recent employment record required for eligibility (EIGE, 2025b). Italy shows the widest gender gap: 39 % of women are ineligible for benefit, compared with 22 % of men. This is consistent with Italy having the EU's widest gender employment gap, at 19 pp in 2025, and the lowest women's employment rate in the EU, at 60 % (Eurostat, 2026d, 2026a).

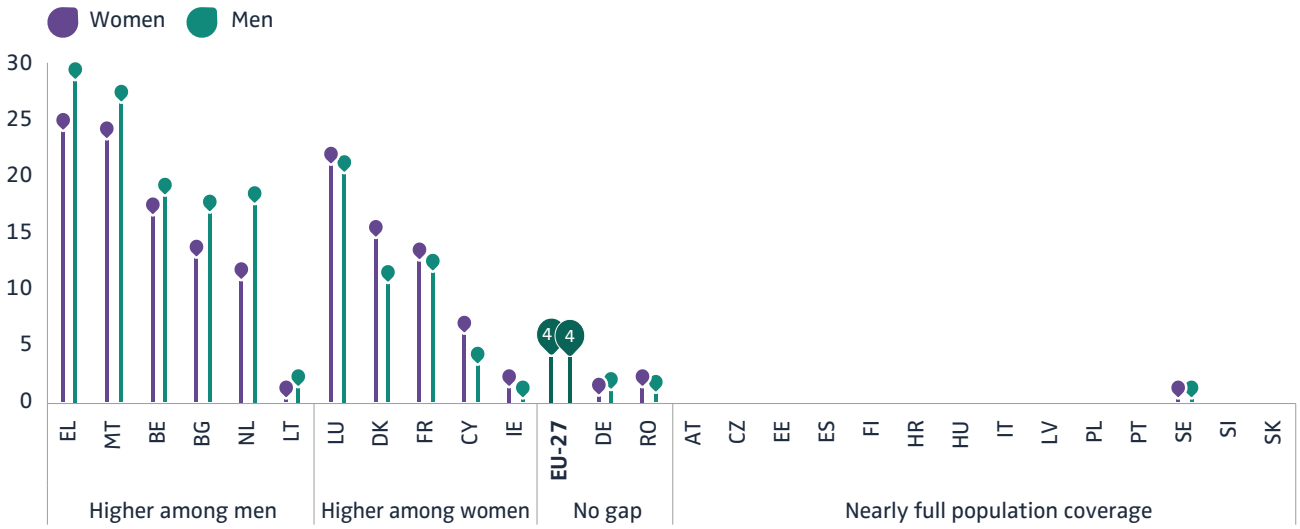
Among employed parents, only 4 % of women and men would not qualify for parental leave benefits

In most Member States, employed parents have close to universal benefit coverage: the EU-27 weighted average stands at 4 % ineligibility for both women and men (Figure 38). However, some employed parents remain excluded if they do not have sufficient contribution history in the relevant reference period, including those in short-tenure, recently started or certain non-standard jobs.

Greece and Malta require 12 months with the same employer and exclude self-employed workers outright, as discussed in relation to Figure 35. Luxembourg also applies a strict 12-month continuity requirement (minimum 10 hours/week, employer-independent, and extending to the self-employed through mandatory social insurance). Its comparatively high ineligibility therefore

reflects the share of workers who have not yet accumulated a full year of continuous social security affiliation, which is consistent with Luxembourg's highly mobile labour market (Labor Market and Education Unit, 2026).

Figure 38: Percentage of employed women and men (aged 20–49) not eligible for statutory parental leave benefits, 2024



NB: 'EU-27' represents the weighted average. Member States are grouped by size of gender eligibility gap: 'higher ineligibility' refers to a gender gap higher than 1 pp; 'no gap' refers to a gender gap from – 1 to 1 pp; within the groups, Member States are sorted in descending order. LT (women) is nearly full eligibility.

Source: Authors' calculations, EU-LFS and EU-SILC.

Gender differences in ineligibility are generally small across the EU. The Netherlands is a notable exception, with ineligibility at 18 % for men and 11 % for women. This gap may be linked to self-employment, which is excluded from both leave and payment eligibility under the Dutch scheme and is somewhat more common among men than women (13 % compared with 10 %), together with related categories, such as director-major shareholders, who have reduced payment eligibility and are more commonly men (Beusch et al., 2020; Eurostat, 2026f).

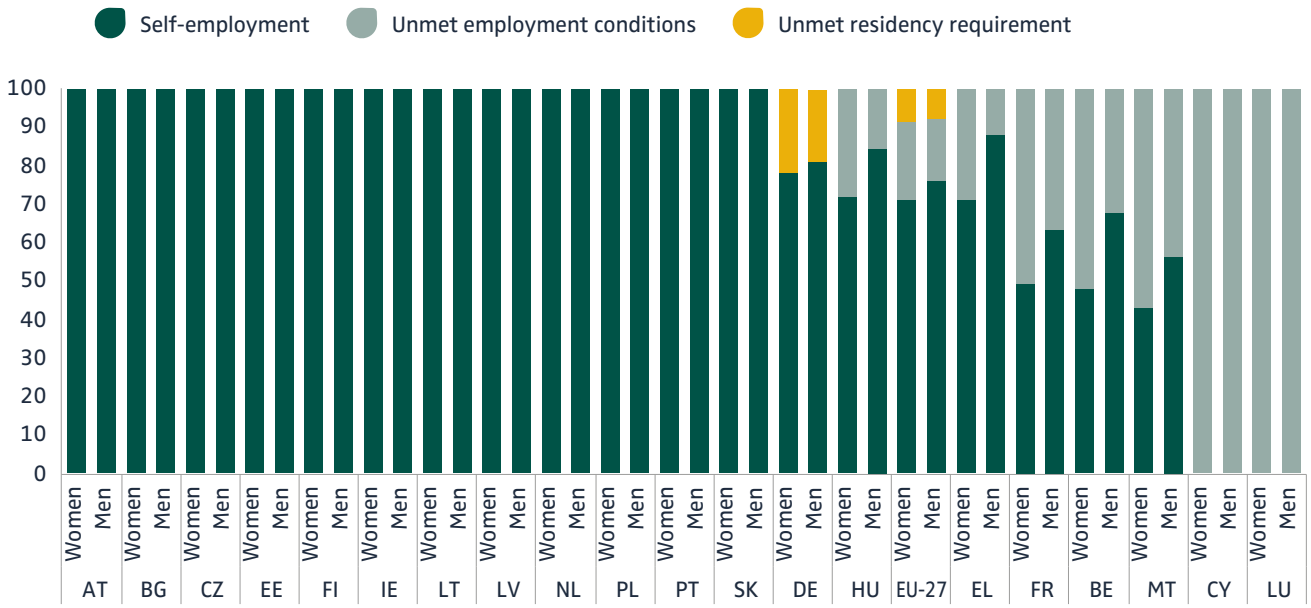
9.2.3. Reasons behind ineligibility

Self-employment and unmet employment conditions are the main reasons parents fall outside the parental leave system

Among employed parents who are not eligible for statutory parental leave, self-employment is the main reason in most Member States (Figure 39). Cyprus and Luxembourg are exceptions: self-employed parents are covered by the statutory scheme, so ineligibility is instead driven by unmet employment conditions, such as minimum insurance, contribution or tenure requirements tied to the current employer. In Germany, self-employment explains part of ineligibility, while the remaining cases are linked to the requirement to hold a residence permit for non-EU nationals that gives the right to work.

In countries where several ineligibility conditions for take-up of leave exist, men are more often excluded because they are self-employed, while women are more often excluded because they do not meet strict employment-based conditions.

Figure 39: Percentage of employed women and men (aged 20–49) not eligible for statutory parental leave, by reason for ineligibility, 2024



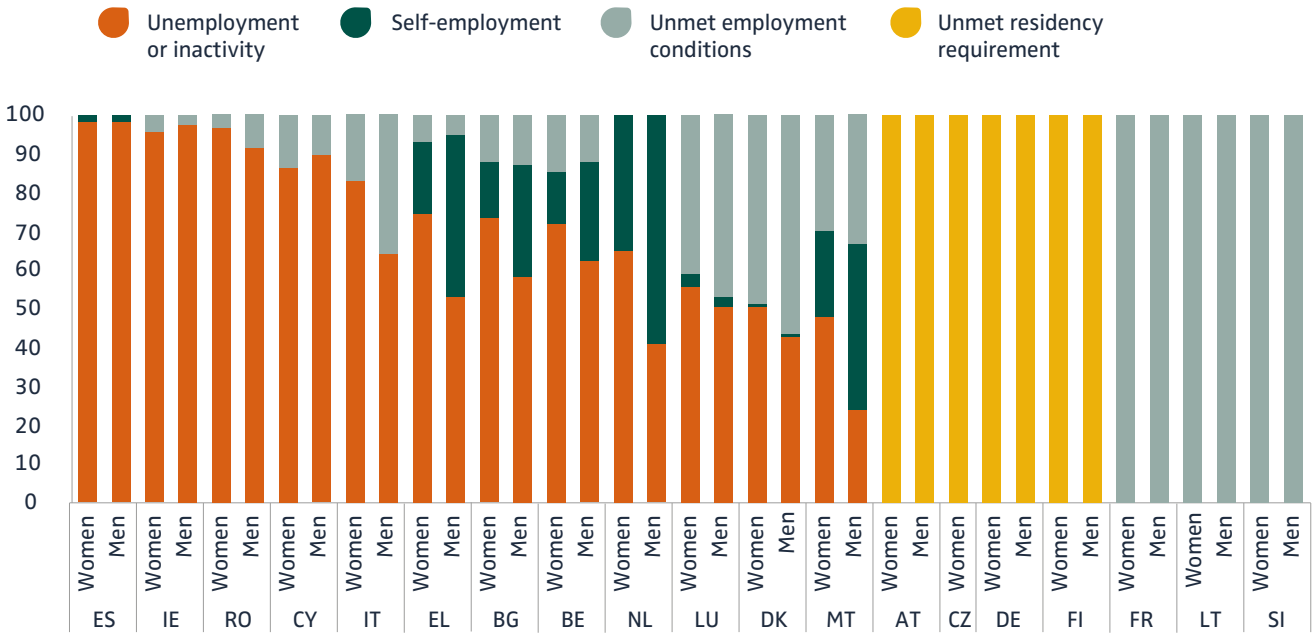
NB: 'EU-27' represents the weighted average. DK, ES, HR, IT and SI not included due to full eligibility. RO and SE not reported due to the small sample size ($n < 20$).

Source: Authors' calculations, EU-LFS and EU-SILC.

Residence rules keep some parents excluded from leave benefits, but unemployment or inactivity remain the bigger barriers

The reasons for ineligibility for benefit payment look markedly different across countries (Figure 40). In Spain, Ireland, Romania and Cyprus, exclusion is driven almost entirely by unemployment and inactivity, showing that access to parental leave benefit remains closely tied to employment status and offers limited support to parents outside work. In the Netherlands, Greece, Malta, Belgium and Bulgaria access to benefits for self-employed parents remains limited. In Austria, Czechia, Germany and Finland, residency requirements appear as the only barrier to eligibility. This should not be read as a broad restriction: these countries already provide near-universal access to parental leave benefits, so residence requirements affect only a small share of parents.

Figure 40: Percentage of all women and men (aged 20–49) not eligible for statutory parental leave benefits, by reason for ineligibility, 2024

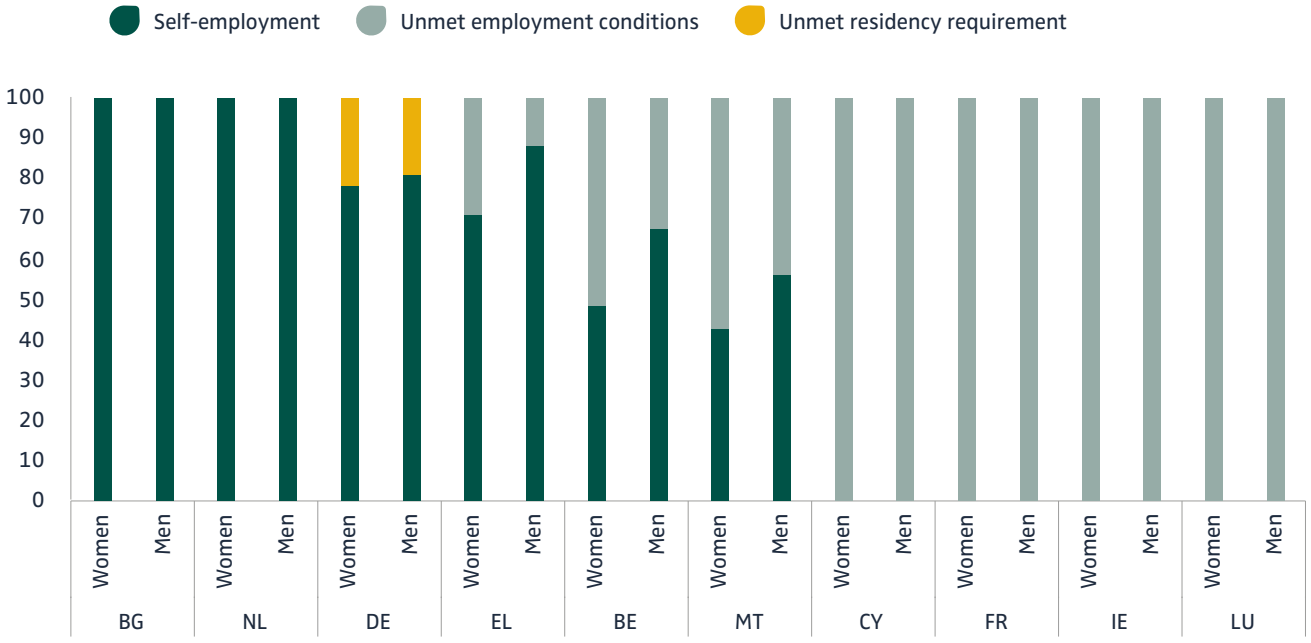


NB: SE, HR (women) and CZ (men) are not reported due to a very small sample size ($n < 20$); SK, PT, PL, LV, HU, HR and EE are not included because these Member States have nearly 100 % eligibility rates. 'EU-27' average was excluded due to the results being unrepresentative as the figure covers only the subset of Member States with a non-negligible ineligible population to decompose by reason, excluding countries with near-full eligibility and unmet employment conditions and unmet residency requirements will be conflated.

Source: Authors' calculations, EU-LFS and EU-SILC.

Employed parents are much less likely to be ineligible for parental leave benefit than the general population, as most ineligibility stems from unemployment or inactivity. Consequently, only a small number of Member States have a sufficiently large share of employed parents who are ineligible to leave benefit to allow a breakdown by reason (Figure 41). In Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Germany, Greece, Belgium and Malta, self-employment is the main reason. In Cyprus, France, Ireland and Luxembourg ineligibility is driven by unmet employment conditions or insurance contributions, typically affecting recent labour market entrants or those with interrupted work histories.

Figure 41: Percentage of employed women and men (aged 20–49) not eligible for statutory parental leave benefits, by reason for ineligibility, 2024



NB: CZ, DK, EE, ES, HR, IT, LV, HU, AT, PL, PT, SI, SK and FI not reported because these Member States have nearly 100 % eligibility rates. LT, RO and SE (women and men) not reported due to low reliability due to small sample size ($n < 20$). CY (men) 'Unmet employment conditions' value reported with low reliability but based on small sample size ($n < 50$). 'EU-27' average was excluded due to the results being unrepresentative as the figure covers only the subset of Member States with a non-negligible ineligible population to decompose by reason, excluding countries with near-full eligibility and unmet employment conditions and unmet residency requirements will be conflated.

Source: Authors' calculations, EU-LFS and EU-SILC.

9.2.4. Eligibility by sector

Agricultural workers are most likely to miss out on parental leave

Eligibility gaps vary by occupation and sector, affecting both parental leave entitlement and benefit access. In several Member States, agricultural workers face the largest shortfalls in parental leave eligibility, especially in Poland, where 86 % of women and 83 % of men are not eligible, Finland (58 % and 54 %) and Austria (55 % and 66 %) (Figure 42). High levels of self-employment, seasonal work and irregular employment in agriculture make it harder for parents to meet standard eligibility conditions. Similar challenges are observed in the construction sector, particularly among men, with at least 40 % ineligible in Slovakia (46 %), Czechia (41 %) and the Netherlands (40 %). Eligibility gaps are generally much smaller in industry and public and non-market services, where stable employment relationships are more common. These findings suggest that access to parental leave remains uneven across labour market sectors, with workers in sectors characterised by more irregular or non-standard employment arrangements being most at risk of exclusion.

Figure 42: Percentage of employed women and men (aged 20–49) not eligible for statutory parental leave, by sector, 2024

Country	Sex	Agriculture	Industry	Construction	Market services	Public and non-market services	Other services
AT	Women	55	2	7	6	5	23
	Men	66	3	11	14	4	21
BG	Women	20	3	11	7	2	32
	Men	25	4	14	12	5	26
CZ	Women	14	2	14	14	3	53
	Men	31	5	41	23	3	35
DE	Women	20	3	5	6	4	20
	Men	34	3	14	11	5	19
DK	Women	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Men	0	0	0	0	0	0
EE	Women	4	4	12	8	2	34
	Men	29	6	26	18	2	22
ES	Women	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Men	0	0	0	0	0	0
FI	Women	58	3	12	7	3	31
	Men	54	4	22	11	4	24
HR	Women	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Men	0	0	0	0	0	0
IT	Women	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Men	0	0	0	0	0	0
LU	Women	:	22	25	23	19	15
	Men	0	20	20	20	23	17
LV	Women	23	5	:	7	2	43
	Men	33	7	17	13	0	23
MT	Women	:	10	:	24	17	47
	Men	:	12	39	30	16	29
NL	Women	18	5	10	12	8	35
	Men	41	7	40	17	9	41
PL	Women	86	3	15	11	5	31
	Men	83	6	33	24	7	25
PT	Women	18	4	7	10	6	36
	Men	24	6	20	14	4	33
SE	Women	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Men	0	0	0	0	0	0
SK	Women	16	4	10	10	2	37
	Men	21	11	46	19	5	45

NB: Data unavailable for BE, IE, EL, FR, CY, LT, HU, RO and SI because their eligibility estimates rely (fully or, for BE and EL, partly) on the EU-SILC panel dataset, which does not contain the sector variable needed for this breakdown. Data is of low reliability due to small sample size for women in BG (construction), women in EE (agriculture and construction), women in FI (agriculture and construction), men in LU (agriculture, industry and construction), women in LV (agriculture) and men in LV (other services). Data not included due to very small sample size ($n < 20$) for women in LU (agriculture), women in LV (construction), women and men in MT (agriculture), women (construction).

Source: Authors' calculations, EU-LFS and EU-SILC.

Workers in certain sectors may not have access to leave benefits

The picture for benefit ineligibility is more varied than for leave entitlement and reveals an important distinction (Figure 43). In countries with universal or residence-based benefit schemes, agricultural workers who are not entitled to leave may still receive a benefit. This explains why Austria, Poland and Finland show full benefit coverage in agriculture, despite leave-eligibility gaps shown in Figure 42. In other countries, such as Bulgaria, Malta or the Netherlands, contribution-based benefit rules exclude some agricultural workers even when they qualify for leave. In Malta, the share of women agricultural workers who are not eligible for benefits is particularly high compared with the share of men. Benefit ineligibility is noticeably high for men in construction and market services in Luxembourg. In the Netherlands and Malta, a lot more men than women are not eligible for leave benefits in construction. In most other sectors both leave and benefit coverage are close to universal.

Figure 43: Percentage of employed women and men (aged 20–49) not eligible for statutory parental leave benefits, by sector, 2024

Country	Sex	Agriculture	Industry	Construction	Market services	Public and non-market services	Other services
BG	Women	44	7	19	13	7	38
	Men	41	8	19	17	9	29
DK	Women	23	13	17	15	13	21
	Men	5	7	9	10	12	14
DE	Women	0	1	1	1	0	0
	Men	0	1	1	1	1	1
LU	Women	18	22	25	23	19	15
	Men	0	20	20	20	23	17
MT	Women	79	10	8	24	17	47
	Men	44	12	39	30	16	29
NL	Women	18	5	10	12	8	35
	Men	41	7	40	17	9	41

NB: In CZ, EE, ES, HR, IT, LV, AT, PL, PT, SK, FI and SE, all employed parents (women and men) would be eligible for the parental leave benefit. Data unavailable for BE, IE, EL, FR, CY, LT, HU, RO and SI because their eligibility estimates rely (fully or, for BE and EL, partly) on the EU-SILC panel dataset, which does not contain the sector variable needed for this breakdown.

Source: Authors' calculations, EU-LFS and EU-SILC.

9.2.5. Eligibility by age

Younger parents face the highest risk of not meeting eligibility requirements for parental leave

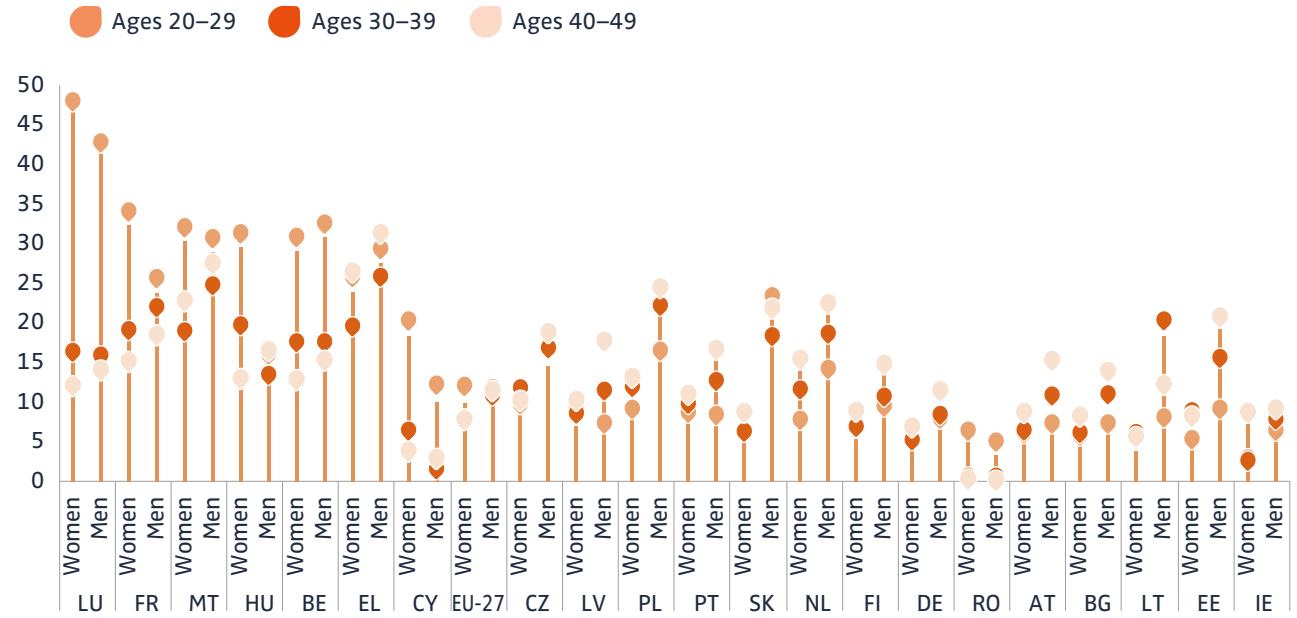
Age is not a formal eligibility criterion for parental leave in any Member State; rather, it is examined because it stands in for how long and how continuously a person has been in work. Eligibility conditions such as minimum work history or accumulated social insurance contributions take time to build up. Younger adults may therefore face greater barriers, as they are more likely to still be in education, work on temporary contracts or be in the early stages of their careers.

Among parents in active employment, age-related eligibility patterns vary by country and sex (Figure 44). At the EU-27 level, ineligibility remains fairly stable for employed women, at around 8–10 % across age groups. For employed men, it increases slightly with age, from 9 % among those aged 20–29 to 11 % among those aged 30–49. Luxembourg stands out. Among employed people in their 20s, an estimated 46 % of women and 40 % of men are ineligible, most likely because of strict tenure requirements. These rates fall sharply among older workers, suggesting that more continuous employment improves access to parental leave over time.

In several other Member States, including Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland and Portugal, ineligibility tends to be higher among older employed workers. For men, this may partly reflect higher levels of self-employment with age: across the EU, 15 % of employed men aged 25–49 were self-employed in 2022, rising to 21 % among those aged 50–64. Among women, the increase was smaller, from 9 % to 11 % over the same age bands (Eurostat, 2023). For women, higher ineligibility at older ages may also reflect employment history gaps linked to earlier periods of economic inactivity.

In Hungary, employed women in their 20s are roughly twice as likely as men of the same age to be ineligible. By contrast, in Czechia, the Netherlands, Poland and Slovakia, young employed men show somewhat higher ineligibility rates than young employed women, possibly reflecting employment patterns in sectors with shorter or less stable contracts.

Figure 44: Percentage of employed women and men not eligible for statutory parental leave, by age group, 2024



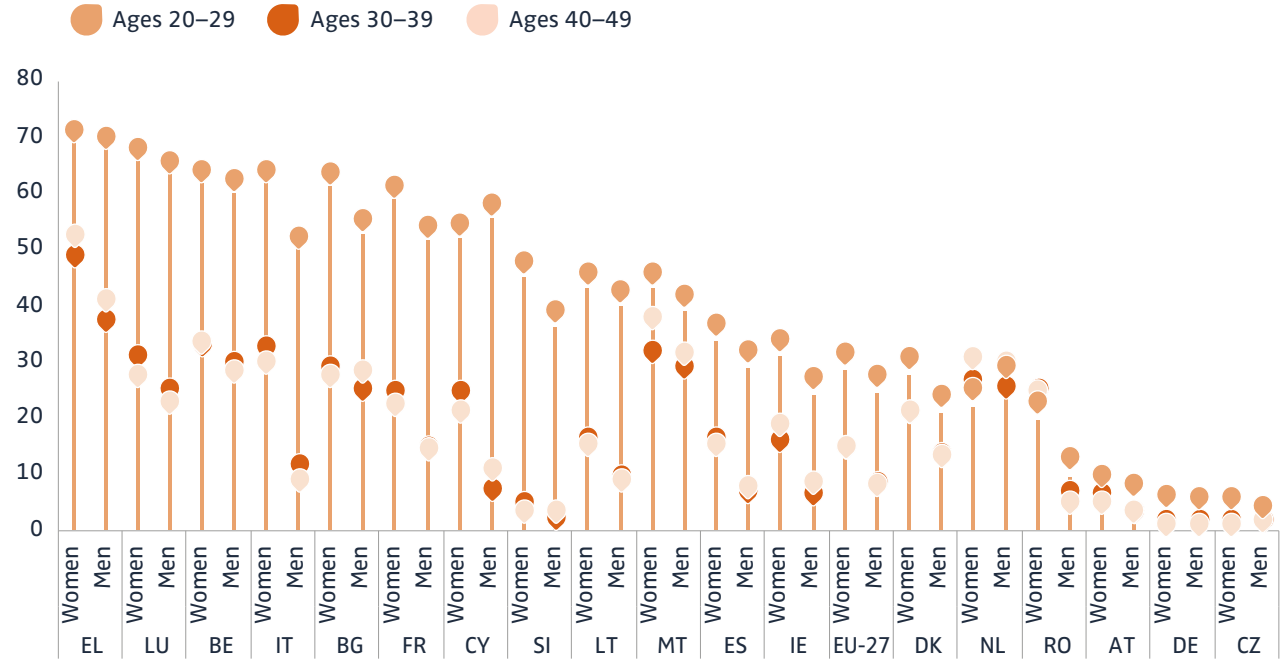
NB: Values show the percentage of employed women and men eligible for statutory parental leave. Each age group is the population-weighted average of its two 5-year bands (e.g. 20–29 = weighted mean of 20–24 and 25–29). The EU-27 row is population-weighted across all Member States. Missing data for 30–34 and 45–49 age groups weight for LT. Data is of low reliability for women and men aged 20–24 in LT. SE, DK, ES, HR, IT and SI are not included because these Member States have nearly 100 % eligibility rates.

Source: Authors' calculations, EU-LFS and EU-SILC.

Ineligibility for the leave benefit affects youngest parents most and is consistently higher for women than men

Ineligibility for the parental leave benefit follows a markedly different age pattern than ineligibility for leave itself (Figure 44). Across Member States, the youngest adults aged 20–29 are consistently the most likely to be excluded from benefit payments. This suggests that benefit rules, often based on contribution history or minimum employment periods, are difficult to meet at the start of a working life. The pattern is particularly striking in Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, France, Italy, Cyprus and Luxembourg, where over 40 % of both women and men aged 20–29 are ineligible for parental leave benefits. Across all age groups, women are consistently more likely than men to be ineligible for benefit, underlining how weaker or interrupted labour market attachment limits access to financial support during leave.

Figure 45: Percentage of all women and men not eligible for the statutory parental leave benefit, by age group, 2024



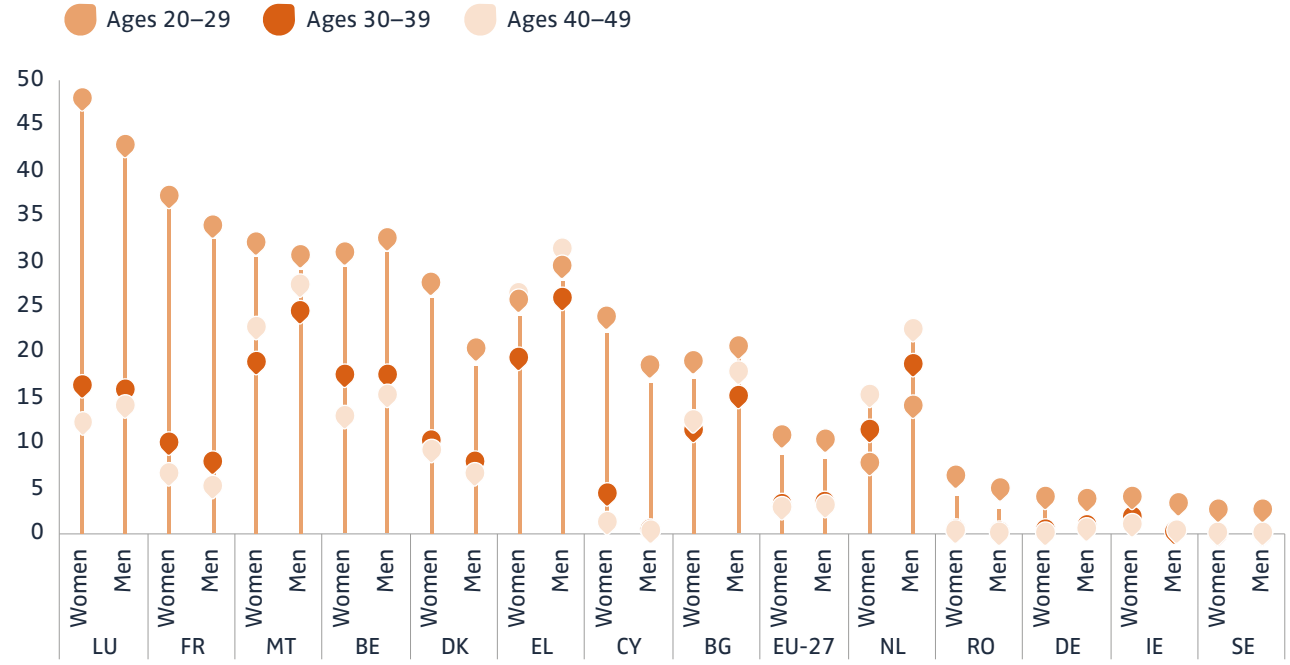
NB: Each age group is the population-weighted average of its two 5-year bands (e.g. 20–29 = weighted mean of 20–24 and 25–29). The EU-27 row is weighted by population across all Member States. SE, EE, FI, HR, LV, PL, PT and SK are not included because these Member States have nearly 100 % eligibility rates.

Source: Authors' calculations, EU-LFS and EU-SILC.

For employed parents, benefits eligibility is hardest to meet early in a working career

In many Member States, employed parents are fully covered by parental leave benefits. Across the countries where this is not the case (Figure 46), parents in their twenties face the greatest difficulty qualifying for benefit payments, while differences between those in their thirties and forties are much smaller. This age pattern is significant: the point at which eligibility improves broadly coincides with the EU-27 average age of women at first childbirth, 29.9 years in 2024 (Eurostat, 2026g). This suggests that access to parental leave benefits may be closely linked to when people feel financially and institutionally secure enough to become parents for the first time.

Figure 46: Percentage of employed women and men not eligible for statutory parental leave benefit, by age group, 2024



NB: Each age group is the population-weighted average of its two 5-year bands (e.g. 20–29 = weighted mean of 20–24 and 25–29). The EU-27 row is weighted by population across all Member States. SE, AT, CZ, EE, ES, FI, HR, IT, LV, PL, SI and SK are not included because these Member States have nearly 100 % eligibility rates.

Source: Authors' calculations, EU-LFS and EU-SILC.

9.2.6. Eligibility rates and policy change over time

The Work–Life Balance Directive set a clear direction for national parental leave reforms. As discussed in Section 9.1.3, reforms introduced during transposition have had a measurable impact on higher leave take-up by men.

However, the directive focused mainly on how leave is structured and compensated, rather than on expanding the range of workers and parents who can access it. On parental leave specifically, the directive allows Member States to maintain employment-based access conditions of up to one year, showing that universal eligibility was not among its objectives (Article 5 of the Work–Life Balance Directive).

This section examines whether the policy changes introduced between 2018 and 2024 meaningfully expanded access to parental leave across the EU. For this reason, countries are grouped according to how comparable their data is over time. Annex 4 Table 42 provides the full country-by-country comparison, including notes on relevant policy changes and flagging where methodological differences limit direct comparison. This section presents selected examples.

- In **Spain**, reforms introduced in 2025 and early 2026, as part of the transposition of the Work–Life Balance Directive, extended paid parental leave to self-employed parents under Ley

20/2007 (Article 4.3g). Given Spain's high share of self-employed workers, the reform significantly widened access and is clearly reflected in eligibility rates, which increased from 90 % to 100 % for women and from 83 % to 100 % for men.

- In **Cyprus**, Law 216(I)/2022 introduced paid parental leave for the first time, replacing a system in which parental leave was unpaid. The new entitlement, adopted as part of the transposition of the Work–Life Balance Directive, made access conditional on 12 months of insured employment within the previous 24 months (Social Insurance Law, Article 41A(2)). It opened access to self-employed parents registered under the social insurance scheme who meet contribution requirements. Further amendments of November 2024 extended benefit duration for second and subsequent children. Together, these reforms increased eligibility for paid leave, from 79 % to 93 % for women and from 76 % to 96 % for men.
- In **Ireland**, the Parent's Leave and Benefit Act 2019 created Ireland's first paid parental leave scheme, building on a system that had offered only unpaid leave since 1998. Initially set at two weeks per parent, the entitlement was gradually expanded to nine weeks by 2024. Reforms also widened coverage to children up to age two, non-biological cohabiting partners in adoption contexts and parents of children born through surrogacy. These successive changes substantially increased eligibility from 76 % to 95 % for women and from 67 % to 93 % for men.
- In several countries, policy changes were important, but eligibility rates cannot be compared directly with 2016 because the microsimulation method changed substantially for those cases.

In several countries, policy developments were noteworthy, but eligibility rates cannot be directly compared with EIGE's 2019 estimates due to methodological changes, which affected these countries.

- **Croatia's** reforms gradually revised the social insurance thresholds for receiving the full earnings-related parental benefit. Amendments to the Maternity and Parental Support Act first reduced the required insurance period in 2020 from 12 months of continuous insurance, or 18 months with interruptions, to 9 months continuous or 12 months with interruptions within the preceding 24 months. Further amendments in 2023 relaxed the threshold again, to 6 months continuous insurance or 9 months with interruptions. These changes widened access to the full earnings-related benefit, especially for employed and self-employed parents with shorter or more fragmented work histories who might otherwise have received only the lower flat-rate fallback.
- **Poland's** transposition of the Work–Life Balance Directive made an important structural change to fathers' access to parental leave. Before the reform, a father's right to parental leave depended on whether the mother was employed or insured. The 2023 amendments to the Labour Code and Social Insurance Act removed this condition, giving fathers an autonomous individual right to leave regardless of the mother's employment status.

Overall, these trends show uneven progress since 2019, shaped by deliberate eligibility expansions, often related to the transposition of the Work–Life Balance Directive, stronger labour market attachment among the working age parents and, in some cases, methodological differences between 2019 and 2026 estimates rather than actual policy change.

9.3. Parental leave and early childcare services: synergies and gaps

The link between parental leave and ECEC is a crucial gender equality lever: when families face a period with neither paid leave nor a guaranteed care place, mothers are more likely to reduce working hours, postpone their return to work or leave employment altogether, with long-term effects on earnings, career progression and pension entitlements (EIGE, 2024d). National parental leave systems therefore need to prevent gaps between the end of leave entitlement and the start of ECEC entitlement.

This section examines how leave and ECEC systems align across Member States, where gaps remain, and what these gaps mean for gender equality and work–life balance. Universal access to ECEC is pursued in the EU through distinct, yet sometimes overlapping, legislative mechanisms: legal entitlement and compulsory attendance (Box 5).

Box 5: Universal access to ECEC: legal mechanisms

Legal entitlement	Compulsory ECEC
Public authorities must provide an ECEC place for every child within a defined age range when parents request one. Its main purpose is to support parents' participation in the labour market by ensuring that childcare is available and that families have a choice. Fees may still apply, but they are usually subsidised to keep costs low for families. This provision is optional and parents are not obligated to enrol their child.	A mandate requiring all children within a specified age range to attend an ECEC setting. Public authorities are therefore required to ensure enough places for children covered by the obligation. This model supports children's socialisation and helps prepare them for compulsory primary education. Compulsory ECEC is generally free of charge for all children.

Source: Barcelona targets for 2030; European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, 2025.

A legal entitlement to ECEC exists in 16 EU Member States, and ECEC attendance is compulsory in 21. In several Member States, both a legal entitlement (usually for younger children) and compulsory ECEC (for older children, often aged five or six) exist concurrently (European Commission et al., 2025). For many Member States, ECEC is primarily viewed and implemented as an educational function for older children rather than a universal social investment that can support parents' continuous employment from the earliest months of a child's life.

The renewed Barcelona targets, set under the 2022 European care strategy, aim for formal childcare access by 2030 for at least 45 % of children under three and 96 % of children from age three to school age ([47]). Many Member States, however, still fall short, especially for children under three, the age group most closely linked to the end of parental leave. To close this gap, countries

([47]) Council recommendation of 8 December 2022 on early childhood education and care: The Barcelona targets for 2030 (OJ C 484, 20.12.2022, p. 1, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=oj:JOC_2022_484_R_0001).

generally follow one of three approaches: extending childcare provision to younger children, lengthening parental leave or combining both approaches.

9.3.1. Many families experience a gap when neither well-paid parental leave nor guaranteed access to early childhood education and care services available

In the EU, only six Member States (Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden) do not have an 'ECEC gap' between well-paid parental leave and publicly subsidised childcare (European Commission et al., 2025). It is measured as the difference between the maximum duration of well-paid leave and the age at which children gain a universal right to ECEC (European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture et al., 2024).

When parental leave ends before a guaranteed ECEC place is available, families can be pushed into difficult choices: extending leave, reducing working hours or leaving the labour market altogether. As Section 9.1 shows, the share of leave that is well paid varies widely across Member States, so the length and cost of the ECEC gap depend on which parent's leave a family can draw on. Where only a flat-rate or low-paid period of leave is available, mothers are more likely to take it, as families often cannot afford for the higher-earning parent to lose income without putting the household budget under pressure (Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union, 2022).

Figure 47 presents an overview of the ECEC gap across Member States. It shows how the period from birth to age seven is covered by well-paid childcare leave, other legal leave entitlement, legal entitlement to an ECEC place, compulsory ECEC and compulsory primary education, and where families are left with neither well-paid leave nor a guaranteed childcare place ([48]).

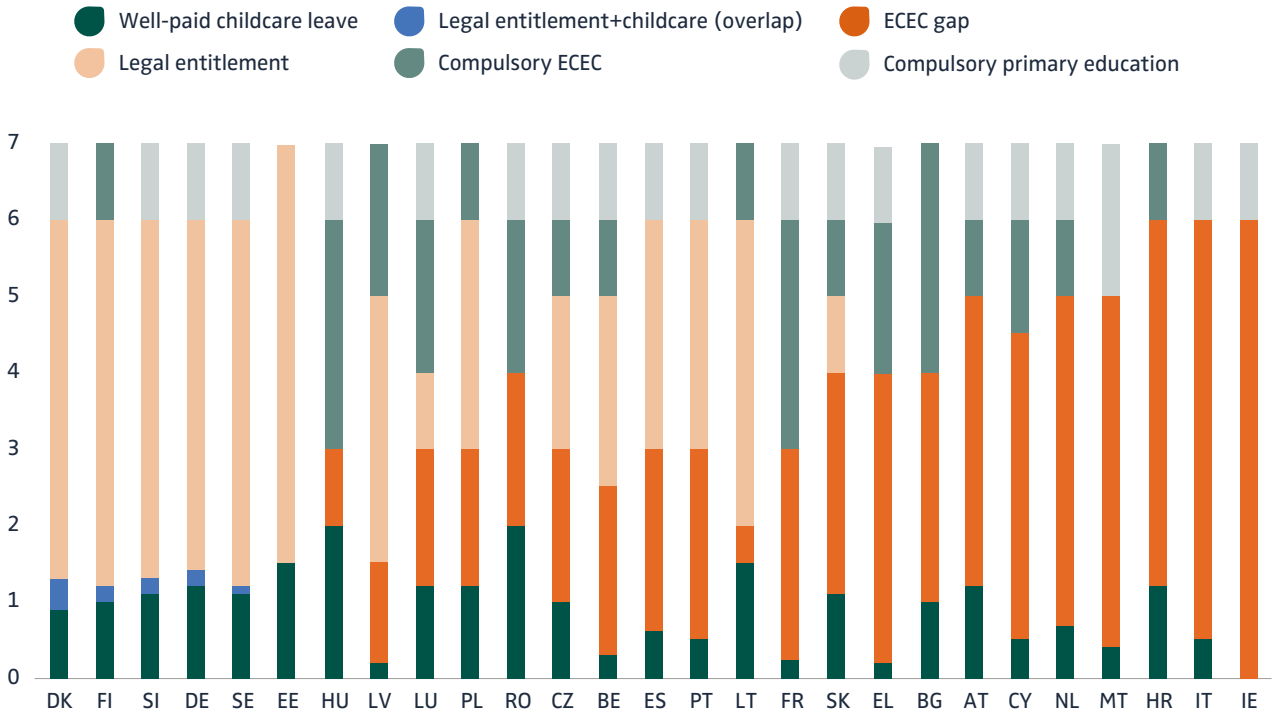
Among the six countries without ECEC gaps, several even have some overlap (Denmark, Germany, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden), during which parents are still entitled to parental leave while publicly subsidised ECEC is already guaranteed (European Commission et al., 2025). Ireland and Italy have some of the biggest gaps in the EU, often lasting around five years. In Ireland, families have no legal entitlement to ECEC ([49]) and public spending on ECEC is very low – less than 0.3 % of gross domestic product in 2021 (European Commission et al., 2025). In Italy, well-paid leave covers the five months of maternity leave (*congedo di maternità*) paid at 80–100 % of earnings and one more month of parental leave (*congedo parentale*) paid at 80 %. Afterwards parental leave pay falls to 60 % for one month and then to 30 % for the remaining period. With no legal entitlement to ECEC, this leaves many families facing a long and costly care gap ([50]).

([48]) While the ECEC programme provides 15 hours of free ECEC per week for children from age two years and eight months, it is not a statutory right, and the government only aims to introduce a legal entitlement by 2028 (Dobrotić et al., 2025a). Although there is no legal entitlement to an ECEC place in Italy, children aged three to six are in practice covered by the widespread pre-primary school system, in which participation exceeds 85 %; no equivalent de facto coverage exists for children under three (Serapioni, 2025).

([49]) While the ECEC programme provides 15 hours of free ECEC per week for children from age two years and eight months, it is not a statutory right, and the government only aims to introduce a legal entitlement by 2028 (Dobrotić et al., 2025a).

([50]) Although there is no legal entitlement to an ECEC place in Italy, children aged three to six are in practice covered by the widespread pre-primary school system, in which participation exceeds 85 %; no equivalent de facto coverage exists for children under three (Serapioni, 2025).

Figure 47: Gap between childcare leave and ECEC place guarantee, EU-27, 2024/2025 (in years)



NB: 'Well-paid leave' is defined as leave compensated with an earnings-related payment equivalent to 66 % of earnings or above. The measure combines maternity, paternity, and parental leave, and reflects the continuous well-paid period achievable from birth if leave is taken full-time, in one uninterrupted period, by one or both parents in sequence.

Source: Eurydice, 2025, updated based on national data collection as part of the present study.

9.3.2. Access to early childhood education and care services remains constrained for a quarter of parents despite formal provision

ECEC systems support children and families effectively only when four conditions are met: **availability, accessibility, affordability and quality** (Corti et al., 2023). The care gap is therefore not only about how long families wait for a place. Even when services are formally available, families may still face a real access gap if services are too far away, especially in rural or remote areas, if quality is insufficient, or if opening hours do not match parents' working time (European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture et al., 2024; Thissen et al., 2023). At the EU level, 38 % of children under three and 93 % of children from age three to school age attend ECEC, still below the 2030 Barcelona targets of 45 % and 96 % respectively (European Commission et al., 2025). However, around a quarter of parents report unmet needs for such services (25 % of women and 26 % of men) (EIGE, 2026b).

Availability: formal entitlements to early childhood education and care services are not always aligned with the real capacity of staff and specialist support across regions

Across the EU, the shortage of ECEC is most acute for children under three, the stage when access matters most for early development and for parents' ability to return to work. Only Denmark, Estonia, Malta, the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden currently meet demand for this age group, while unmet

demand in the final year before primary school is relatively small, at around 3 pp EU-wide (European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture et al., 2024).

These gaps are also uneven within countries. In Belgium, Czechia, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Austria, Romania and Slovakia, unmet demand clusters in specific regions or reflects a clear rural–urban divide (European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture et al., 2024). Germany guarantees a childcare place from around 12 months of age and is classified as having no ECEC gap, yet actual participation among children under three was 35 % in 2020, well below parents' expressed need of 49 % (European Commission et al., 2025).

Half of all children with disabilities in the EU receive no formal ECEC, relying solely on their parents. This leaves families, especially mothers, carrying the full weight of care when parental leave ends. The European Commission has called on Member States to make ECEC genuinely inclusive by ensuring staff have the right skills or by hiring specialist support to meet individual needs ([51]).

Across EU education systems, the main way to improve access is through additional or specialised staff and smaller group sizes (European Commission et al., 2025). But this depends on the specialists actually being available. In Estonia's Harju county, the most populous region surrounding Tallinn, for example, special educational needs groups face the most severe staffing shortages of any ECEC category, creating an even deeper gap than the general shortage of nursery places (Harju County Association of Local Governments, 2023). When specialist support is missing or delayed, parents of children with disabilities may have no viable route into formal childcare when parental leave ends, effectively extending the care gap indefinitely.

Quality: staff shortages and oversized groups can undermine the quality of care even where places are available

Staff shortages are one of the biggest pressures on ECEC across the EU, shaping both access and quality. Typical ratios for children under three range from three to eight children per staff member. Typical group sizes range from about 12–16 children at age two to 23–25 children at age four, yet many settings struggle to meet these standards (European Commission et al., 2025). High staff turnover deepens the problem: young children need stable, trusting relationships, and staff teams rely on continuity to collaborate and improve practice (OECD, 2025c).

Under-resourced settings and workforce gaps are widespread, although the causes differ across countries. ECEC workers, despite their essential role, often face low pay and precarious conditions, discouraging retention and weakening service quality (Eurofound et al., 2025). In Croatia, nursery groups routinely exceed legal limits by four to eight children, sometimes reaching double the maximum group size (Matković et al, 2020). In Belgium, EU monitoring highlights staff shortages as a core accessibility barrier, and Brussels's regional analysis treats workforce constraints as a central factor determining whether families can realistically secure a place (European Commission, 2025a).

([51]) See footnote 50.

Accessibility: restricted hours, seasonal closures and territorial disparities limit early childhood education and care service's capacity to support full-time employment among parents

Even when ECEC places exist, **restricted opening hours and seasonal gaps** may not match real working schedules of parents. The Barcelona Council Recommendation calls on Member States to provide complementary care before and after standard ECEC hours, recognising that parents need time to commute and that childcare must cover a full working day to be genuinely compatible with employment ([52]).

Yet practice falls short. Even in countries offering the most generous free provision for the youngest children, free hours typically reach only 20 per week, and many Member States offer no free hours for children under three (European Commission et al., 2025). When services close early, shut down for weeks in summer or simply do not cover a full working week, parents – especially mothers – reduce their working time or take unpaid leave to fill the gap. Lithuania's way to address the gaps is to cover ECEC costs for 20 hours (4 hours per day) and subsidise most of the cost of any additional hour; parents pay small daily fees for attendance beyond four hours a day alongside charges for meals and educational materials (Serapioni, 2025).

Territorial disparities compound these challenges. The Barcelona Recommendation calls for balanced ECEC coverage across urban and rural areas, affluent and disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and outermost regions ([53]). Sparsely populated rural and remote areas are most commonly disadvantaged, but densely populated areas with a large or growing child population can face comparable capacity pressure from the demand side.

Remote rural areas in Belgium, Italy, Austria and Romania face unmet demand due to sparse populations and long travel distances. A rural–urban divide in provision is reported in Czechia, Greece, Latvia and Lithuania (European Commission et al., 2025). In Italy the national coverage for children aged two or younger averages around 32 %, but drops sharply in southern regions (Mezzogiorno) and islands (Istat, 2025). Slovakia shows the opposite trend; its most acute shortages are concentrated in Bratislava, demonstrating that rapidly growing cities can experience capacity pressure just as intensely as remote rural areas (Tomečková, 2023).

Affordability: early childhood education and care services remain least affordable for the lower-income families who stand to benefit from them most

Across the EU, cost remains one of the most powerful barriers preventing families, especially those who would benefit most, from accessing ECEC. Around 13 % of parents do not use childcare because of cost, and another 11 % face moderate or serious difficulty affording it. Among households at risk of poverty, these shares more than double, rising to 28 % and 27 % respectively (Eurostat, 2016).

([52]) See footnote 50.
([53]) See footnote 50.

In France, only 5 % of children under three from the lowest income quintile attend ECEC (*établissements d'accueil du jeune enfant*) compared with 22 % from the highest. More broadly, just 24 % of families below the poverty threshold use any formal childcare for a child under three, compared with 52 % of families overall (Alberola et al., 2023). Belgium shows a similar pattern: participation among children under three at risk of poverty or social exclusion stands at 20 %, compared with 59 % for children not at risk (European Commission, 2025a). These figures show that families who stand to gain the most from affordable childcare are the ones most likely to be priced out of it.

Cost, however, is rarely the only obstacle. Administrative barriers and limited awareness of entitlements often compound financial exclusion, particularly for families already at the margins of the system. In Bulgaria, parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds frequently lack information about available services, while the lack of a declared address or health insurance can effectively exclude families from formal ECEC even when entitlements nominally exist (Kirov et al., 2023). In Belgium, childcare governance is devolved to communities and regions, meaning that closing participation gaps for children with disabilities, children in poverty, and children from migrant backgrounds requires coordinated action within each region rather than a single national or EU-level measure (EASPD, 2024).

A further affordability-adjacent barrier emerges when subsidy eligibility is conditional on parents already being in work. In principle, linking childcare subsidies to employment aims to remove cost as a barrier to labour market participation. In practice, it can create a circular trap when eligibility for the subsidy is itself **conditional on being already employed**. In the Netherlands, childcare subsidies for children under three require both parents to be working or studying, excluding inactive parents entirely (Basker, n.d.).

A related access constraint operates not through subsidy eligibility but through the rationing of scarce ECEC places. In Italy, many municipalities prioritise ECEC places for children of full-time working parents, disadvantaging families where parents work part-time, have non-standard schedules, are in training, or are currently unemployed (Penna, 2026). Ireland's national childcare scheme takes a more graduated approach, offering 20 subsidised hours per week to inactive parents compared with 45 hours for those in employment, education or training (Department of Children, Disability and Equality, 2026). Even this softer model still makes employment status the gatekeeper for support, leaving parents who are out of work precisely because they cannot afford childcare with only limited subsidised hours to transition into employment.

9.3.3. Emerging solutions to close the gaps

The effectiveness of parental leave and ECEC ultimately hinges on sequencing. When well-paid parental leave covers the period before guaranteed, affordable childcare begins, the two systems reinforce each other. Where gaps exist, it is typically mothers who absorb them through extended or unpaid leave, reinforcing the very patterns of unequal care distribution that both the Work–Life Balance Directive and ECEC policy are designed to redress (Serapioni, 2025). Poor leave benefits and missing childcare at the end of leave also weaken incentives for fathers to take up leave (Huebener et al., 2024), while grandparents are frequently drawn in to bridge gaps, reducing their own labour

market participation and long-term economic security (Zanasi et al., 2023). Closing the ECEC gap is therefore inseparable from parental leave design: aligned systems amplify gender equality or compound inequalities when they are not.

Member States have responded to the gap between parental leave and ECEC access in different ways. The most common response has been lowering the age at which statutory ECEC entitlement begins. Recent examples include Greece extending compulsory pre-primary education to age four from 2020–2021 (Eurydice, 2025), Slovakia guaranteeing kindergarten places from age three from September 2025 (and age four from 2024) (Eurydice, 2023), and Lithuania phasing in universal entitlement from age four in 2023, age three in 2024 and age two in 2025 (Eurydice, 2024b).

A second strand focuses on expanding physical capacity through capital investment, often supported by EU funds. Italy is using national recovery and resilience plan funds under Mission 4 to increase nursery provision (FIRSTonline, 2022), while Croatia's recovery and resilience plan investments have raised enrolment for nursery-age children from 24 % in 2018–2019 to 35 % in 2024–2025 (Dobrotić et al., 2025).

A third approach tackles affordability directly. Bulgaria abolished parental fees for public nurseries and kindergartens from April 2022 (Eurydice, 2026). Finland has repeatedly revised its fee structure to reduce or eliminate charges for lower-income families (Eurydice, 2024a). Flanders' multi-year master plan explicitly targets the three pillars of places, price and personnel (Opgroeien, 2025).

Across these interventions, however, fewer countries address the practical conditions that determine whether ECEC is compatible with full-time employment: opening hours, staffing levels and quality standards. Nor do most treat the transition between paid leave and childcare access as a deliberate sequencing challenge rather than two separate policy domains. Where these gaps persist, it is disproportionately mothers who adjust, whether by extending leave, reducing working hours or exiting employment, reinforcing the gendered distribution of care that parental leave reform is intended to redress.

Conclusions

EU progress towards gender equality is moving forward, but the pace is slowing. With the Gender Equality Index at 64.5, annual gains have dipped below one point since 2020 – a sign that the momentum built over the past decade is losing strength. This year also marks a symbolic shift. France – a new top-performing country – ends Sweden's long-standing leadership and shows how quickly the landscape can change when progress accelerates.

Much of the recent improvement comes from stronger gender balance in decision-making, now the main engine driving the Index upward. But this success also exposes a growing imbalance: other domains are advancing far more slowly, creating pressure points that could hold back overall progress if left unaddressed.

Domain of work: breaking barriers beyond participation

While women's employment is steadily growing in the EU, true gender equality at work remains out of reach. Women remain concentrated in part-time jobs, undervalued sectors, and lower-paid positions, while leadership pipelines continue to lag. These inequalities are not evenly distributed: parents of young children, migrant women, and those with lower education face the steepest obstacles. The large employment gap between mothers and fathers shows how unequal unpaid care remains one of the strongest brakes on women's economic independence.

At the policy level, the findings reinforce the priorities of the 2026–2030 gender equality strategy, the roadmap for women's rights, and the European Pillar of Social Rights action plan, all of which call for dismantling labour market segregation and strengthening women's economic autonomy. They also highlight the importance of the Work–Life Balance Directive, the European care strategy and the Barcelona targets, which aim to remove care-related barriers to employment. Finally, women's persistent under-representation in ICT jobs underscores the urgency of the 2030 Digital Decade policy programme, ensuring that digital and green transitions leave no one behind.

Looking ahead, progress will depend not just on getting more women into the labour market, but on improving the quality, sustainability and inclusiveness of jobs. Advancing gender equality at work requires coordinated action across employment, care, education and digital policies. Only by tackling these structural inequalities, through an intersectional lens, can the EU ensure that equal access to work and sharing of care finally translates into equal opportunities, conditions and outcomes.

Domain of money: where inequality compounds across a lifetime

Women's financial inequality in the EU is shaped by a lifetime of lower earnings, interrupted careers and unequal care responsibilities. Women earn only 80 % of men's annual earnings, and within households, men out-earn their partners by 47 %. These disparities accumulate over decades, leaving women with a 24 % gender pension gap and an acute risk of poverty in later life. The pattern is clear: gender gaps in caregiving, working time and pay lock many women into long-term financial insecurity (EIGE, 2024a).

Parents – especially mothers – continue to face barriers to labour market participation, most notably due to limited access to affordable, high-quality ECEC and long-term care services. In-work poverty is a growing concern, particularly for women living alone, older women and lone mothers, who often struggle despite being employed.

EU policy priorities reflect the urgency of closing these gaps. The 2026 EU anti-poverty strategy adopts a life-course approach to tackling poverty through targeted measures across all age groups, including initiatives to reduce in-work poverty and support labour market inclusion. At the same time, the gender equality strategy underscores the need to close both the gender pay gap and the gender pension gap.

The most effective path forward is clear: promoting and enabling women's employment through inclusive and well-paid parental leave, accessible and affordable care services, and flexible working arrangements. These policies not only strengthen women's financial independence but also reduce poverty risks for families and older people, ensuring that equality in access to work finally leads to fair and dignified returns.

Domain of knowledge: a landscape of potential still unfulfilled

Gender equality in education has advanced significantly, yet the educational pathways women and men choose remain stubbornly gendered, limiting both individual potential and the EU's ability to compete in a rapidly changing world. Women now outpace men in tertiary educational attainment, yet men remain more likely to pursue vocational education and training. Across the EU, women continue to be steered away from science, technology and engineering, while men remain under-represented in health, education and welfare. This entrenched segregation drains talent from critical sectors facing acute labour shortages, exacerbates skills gaps, and weakens the EU's capacity to meet the demands of the digital and green transitions and navigate demographic pressures.

The gender equality strategy places these challenges at the centre of its agenda: dismantling stereotypes, widening educational choices, and ensuring that girls and boys can pursue any field without bias. Boosting girls' participation in STEM and attracting more boys into EHW is not only a matter of fairness, but also a strategic imperative for expanding the EU's talent pool and strengthening long-term competitiveness.

The domain of knowledge also exposes deeper inequalities. Foreign-born women and men are less likely to hold vocational qualifications or have their qualifications recognised, and people with disabilities continue to face systemic barriers to educational attainment. These intersecting inequalities underscore the need for inclusive, high-quality education systems that respond to the diverse needs of learners. Only then can the EU fully harness its human capital to foster sustainable economic growth, social cohesion and long-term resilience.

Domain of time: balancing care to balance equality

Time is critical and precious resource. The union of equality depends on how time is shared and today women still carry the heaviest load of unpaid care. Across the EU, they spend far more hours on childcare, long-term care and domestic tasks, limiting their time for paid work, civic life and self-care. These gaps vary across countries, but the pattern is unmistakable: outdated gender norms and institutional arrangements continue to shape who cares, who works and who has time.

The EU has placed care at the centre of its equality agenda through the Work–Life Balance Directive, the EU care strategy and the gender equality strategy. They aim to rebalance care through more inclusive family leave, flexible working arrangements and stronger care services. Crucially, evidence shows that, when fathers take parental leave, care patterns shift, making adequate financial compensation, non-transferable leave entitlements and supportive workplace cultures essential. At the same time, expanding access to affordable, high-quality childcare and long-term care is vital to free up women's time and enable broader participation in economic and social life.

Lasting progress requires both investing in care systems and normative change. Parental leave and strong care infrastructure can only deliver real equality when they work alongside efforts challenging the deep-rooted expectations about who should care. When policies empower equal leave uptake and societies challenge outdated gender roles, care becomes a shared responsibility rather than a primary responsibility for women only. This dual shift is essential for recognising care as a cornerstone of equality and closing the EU's time gaps.

Domain of power: the hardest frontier of equality

Gender equality in power remains the EU's greatest challenge, even if it shows the fastest improvement. Women have made visible gains in political, economic and social leadership, yet decision-making spaces across the EU still fall far short of parity. Progress is uneven, fragile and deeply shaped by national contexts. Where change has happened, in corporate boards or sports governance, it has come with political will, monitoring and targeted measures working together.

Today's leadership landscape is shifting in ways that create new challenges. Political polarisation, online harassment, disinformation and gender-based violence increasingly target women in public roles, threatening their participation and retention in political life. Achieving equality in

decision-making is therefore not just about numbers, it is about ensuring women can lead safely, effectively and on equal terms.

The EU now has a strong policy toolbox. The Gender Balance on Corporate Boards Directive, the gender equality strategy, the revised rules on European political parties and foundations, the European democracy shield and the European Media Freedom Act can accelerate change, but only if implemented with ambition and accountability.

Better evidence will be essential. Without intersectional data on age, ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic background and other factors, many barriers to power will remain invisible and unaddressed. Institutions must also evolve. Family-friendly working cultures and parental leave entitlements for elected representatives can help ensure caregiving does not derail political careers.

Power is the domain where breakthroughs matter most, and where gaps carry the greatest weight. Strengthening women's leadership is not only symbolic, but also an investment in more representative, resilient and democratic societies. Europe's future depends on who gets to shape it.

Domain of health: building healthier lives through gender equality

Good health is both a foundation and an outcome of gender equality. Although people are living longer, deep and persistent health inequalities shape who truly benefits from increased longevity. Progress in the health domain has nearly flatlined, while disparities in health status, healthy life years and health-related behaviours are still unresolved.

Gender norms steer women and men into unequal risks, unequal care and unequal opportunities to live healthy lives. Women consistently report poorer physical and mental health, reflecting the cumulative effects of unpaid care, economic inequality, gender-based violence, and unequal access to healthcare. Women with disabilities, older women and women with lower education spend far more of their lives in poor health, exposing the persistent divide between longevity and quality of life. Men, meanwhile, face the consequences of harmful masculinity norms that reward risk-taking and discourage seeking help, leading to higher rates of substance use, violence and suicide. These are socially constructed inequalities, not biological inevitabilities.

The transition to parenthood is a pivotal stage with lasting consequences for parents' and children's health and well-being. Gender-equal parental leave strengthens early bonding with a child and the mental health of parents, supports fathers' involvement in caregiving and promotes a more equal distribution of unpaid care across life. Investing in gender-equal parenting is therefore an investment in healthier societies.

Achieving better health outcomes requires embedding a gender perspective across health policies, research and healthcare, while addressing broader social determinants of health. As recognised in the roadmap for women's rights and the gender equality strategy, advancing gender equality and

health equality must go hand in hand to ensure everyone can live longer, healthier and more fulfilling lives.

Domain of violence: when harms adapt faster than protection

Violence against women remains one of the EU's most urgent and enduring gender equality challenges, and emerging technologies are amplifying its reach. Cyberviolence, image-based abuse, misogynistic online ecosystems and AI-enabled harms are exposing girls and young women to new forms of risk, even as traditional violence continues to affect women throughout their lives. The evidence shows a stark reality: violence is widespread, severe and often invisible, with many women never reporting their experiences and nearly one third facing violence from more than one perpetrator. This cumulative, lifelong victimisation underscores the depth of the problem.

At the same time, stronger legislation, increased reporting, growing recognition of consent-based definitions of rape and enhanced EU policy action to prevent and combat violence against women mark meaningful progress. Looking ahead, the implementation of the VAW Directive, the revised Victims' Rights Directive, the Istanbul Convention and the Digital Services Act offer a powerful opportunity to strengthen prevention, protection, access to justice and accountability – both offline and online. The gender equality strategy reinforces this momentum by prioritising efforts to address cyberviolence, image-based abuse and violence against women in politics.

Progress will depend on more than laws. The EU needs better data, stronger monitoring of femicide and emerging forms of cyberviolence, and sustained investment in prevention, protection, specialised support, economic empowerment and rejection of harmful gender norms. Making freedom from gender-based violence a lived reality remains a prerequisite for achieving gender equality across all domains of life.

Parental leave can only drive gender equality when fathers are fully part of the equation

Parental leave is one of the EU's principal levers for tackling the unequal distribution of unpaid care between women and men, and with it the gender gaps in employment, pay and pensions that this imbalance sustains. Its contribution to gender equality is conditional, however, on design. When leave is poorly paid, hard to access or built around the assumption of a single breadwinner, it reinforces the very patterns it is meant to change.

The Work–Life Balance Directive has set a clear direction for reform, and its transposition has already delivered real, if uneven, progress. The most consistent gains concern fathers' participation. In several Member States that introduced non-transferable, adequately paid leave reserved for fathers, men's take-up rose rapidly within just a few years. A few countries now come close to a more balanced division of leave between parents, showing how quickly behaviour shifts when policy removes financial and structural barriers.

Transposition has widened entitlements in several respects: some countries introduced paid parental leave for the first time; others extended eligibility to self-employed parents, established an autonomous right to leave for fathers that no longer depends on the mother's employment status or raised payment levels for at least part of the leave.

These developments show that the directive's core features – non-transferable entitlements of at least two months combined with adequate payment – are not merely technical details. Where they are fully implemented, parental leave becomes more than a social benefit – it becomes a catalyst for lasting cultural change, supporting gender equality at home, in the economy and across public life.

Well-paid and non-transferable leave shifts fathers' behaviour at scale

Comparative evidence reveals a clear hierarchy in policy design that works best for gender equality. Above all, payment level is decisive. Fathers take leave when their reserved period is paid at or close to previous earnings. When it is poorly paid, even well-designed entitlements go largely unused. Adequate payment is therefore the foundation on which all other design features rest.

Non-transferability – earmarking months exclusively for fathers on a use-it-or-lose-it basis – is a significant driver of uptake, but it works mainly in combination with adequate payment rather than on its own. Bonus or 'partnership' months reliably raise the share of fathers taking some leave, although they can also create a low ceiling on duration of leave.

Other measures play a supportive role. Social security credits, flexible uptake options and awareness campaigns help parents use their entitlements, but they cannot compensate for low payment or transferability design.

Turning these levers into lasting change also depends on factors beyond statute. Workplace cultures and gender norms still too often frame caregiving as a maternal responsibility, shaping how families use the leave available to them. This is why social partners and civil-society actors matter alongside legislative reform: they can help ensure that fathers' leave is not only available but genuinely viable.

These design lessons align directly with the priorities of the 2026–2030 gender equality strategy and the European care strategy, both of which place equal sharing of care at the centre of stronger families and economies.

Overall, 1 in 10 working parents are not eligible for parental leave, and 1 in 6 would not receive a benefit payment

Despite formal transposition of the Work–Life Balance Directive, access to parental leave has widened only marginally, and substantial eligibility gaps persist. On average across the EU-27, 11 % of women and 8 % of men in employment would not qualify for parental leave under the current

rules. Exclusion remains concentrated among the same groups identified before the directive: the self-employed, platform workers and others in non-standard employment, who are far more likely to miss contribution or employment duration requirements.

A central analytical contribution of this study is the systematic distinction between eligibility for leave and eligibility for the benefit that accompanies it. These two dimensions do not move together. Parents in precarious or interrupted employment, migrants without sufficient contribution history or asylum seekers are least able to absorb income loss. For them, benefit access, not job protection, determines whether leave can be taken at all. Among the overall population, including those without employment or recent social contribution history, 18 % of women and 13 % of men would not receive any benefit payment during a parental leave period.

These gaps matter for the EU policy framework. The Work–Life Balance Directive deliberately left employment-based access conditions intact. Closing them is therefore a matter for national policy design and for the broader commitments to inclusion set out in the European Pillar of Social Rights and the gender equality strategy.

The missing link: access to early childhood education and care determines parental leave equality

Finally, the equality gains of parental leave depend on what happens when it ends. Across the EU, only a handful of Member States closed a gap between the end of well-paid leave and a guaranteed place in affordable childcare. In most countries, families must bridge a period in which neither adequate income support nor a secured ECEC place is available, and it is overwhelmingly mothers who absorb this gap through extended or unpaid leave or by leaving employment altogether.

Even where formal provision exists, access frequently breaks down in practice along four dimensions: availability, accessibility, affordability and quality. Places and staff fall short of statutory entitlements; opening hours and term-time gaps are incompatible with full-time work; costs stratify access by income; provision varies widely by region; and quality suffers where staffing and standards are stretched. As a result, around a quarter of parents of young children across the EU report unmet needs for formal childcare.

Closing these gaps is inseparable from effective leave design and sits squarely within the EU policy framework. The Barcelona targets, renewed under the European care strategy, set the benchmark for provision. Meeting them is a precondition for parental leave to deliver its intended gender equality returns rather than displacing care onto mothers.

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Annexes

Annex 1. List of indicators of the Gender Equality Index

Table 20: Gender Equality Index 2026 – list of indicators

Domain	Sub-domain	*n*	Indicator	Description	Source	Index 2020	Index 2021	Index 2022	Index 2023	Index 2024	Index 2025	Index 2026
Work	Participation	1	FTE employment rate (%, 15–89)	The FTE employment rate is a unit to measure employed persons in a way that makes them comparable even though they may work a different number of hours per week. The unit is obtained by comparing an employee's average number of hours worked to the average number of hours worked by a full-time worker. A full-time worker is therefore counted as one FTE, while a part-time worker gets a score in proportion to the hours she or he works. For example, a part-time worker employed for 20 hours a week where full-time work consists of 40 hours, is counted as 0.5 FTE.	Eurostat, EU-LFS, EIGE's calculation with microdata	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
		2	Duration of working life (years, 15+ population)	The duration of working life indicator measures the number of years a person aged 15 is expected to be active in the labour market throughout his/her life.	Eurostat, EU-LFS, (lfsi_dwl_a)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
	Segregation and quality of work	3	ICT specialists (%, 15–74)	Share of women and men employed as ICT specialists.	Eurostat, (isoc_sks_itsps)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
		4	Managers (%, 15–74)	Share of women and men in managerial positions (International Standard Classification of Occupations major group 1).	Eurostat, (lfsa_egais)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
		5	Low-paid workers (%, 16+)	Percentage of employed population receiving two thirds or less of the national median employee income, which covers gross employee cash or near cash income, gross non-cash employee income and employers' social insurance contributions.	Eurostat, EU-SILC, EIGE's calculation with microdata	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025

Domain	Sub-domain	*n*	Indicator	Description	Source	Index 2020	Index 2021	Index 2022	Index 2023	Index 2024	Index 2025	Index 2026
Money	Financial resources	6	Median earnings (PPS, %, 18–64 employed population)	Median annual earnings of the 18–64 population in employment, computed as the median of gross employee cash or near cash income, gross non-cash employee income and cash benefits from self-employment.	Eurostat, EU-SILC, EIGE's calculation with microdata	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
		7	Gender pension gap (%, 65+)	The gender pension gap is the difference between the average gross pension received by men and the average gross pension received by women, expressed as a percentage of men's average pension. It excludes zero pensions, meaning that it is computed with those respondents that have at least one positive income value in gross terms in the pension income variables (old age benefits, survivors' benefits and regular pensions from individual private plans). It shows the percentage by which women's average pension income is higher or lower than that of men.	Eurostat, EU-SILC, (ilc_pnp13)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
	Economic situation	8	Median partner earnings ratio (%, 18–64)	Median of the annual earnings expressed as a percentage of a partner's earnings for coupled women and men in employment and of working age, by EU Member State (%, 18–64, 2024). Earnings are computed as the median of gross employee cash or near cash income, gross non-cash employee income and cash benefits from self-employment.	Eurostat, EU-SILC, EIGE's calculation with microdata	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
		9	In work at-poverty-risk rate of adults in single-adult or single-parent households (%, 16+ employed population)	In work at-poverty-risk rate is the percentage of employed persons who are at risk of poverty, meaning that their disposable household income (after social transfers) is below 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income.	Eurostat, EU-SILC, EIGE's calculation with microdata	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025

Domain	Sub-domain	*n*	Indicator	Description	Source	Index 2020	Index 2021	Index 2022	Index 2023	Index 2024	Index 2025	Index 2026
Knowledge	Attainment and participation	10	Tertiary graduates (%, 30–34)	Percentage of the population aged 30–34 who have successfully completed tertiary studies as the highest level of education attained in ISCED 5 (Short-cycle tertiary) often begins after upper secondary education, while levels 6 (Bachelor's or equivalent), 7 (Master's or equivalent), and 8 (Doctoral or equivalent) level (ED5–8)	Eurostat, EU-LFS, (edat_lfse_03)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
		11	IVET graduates (%, 25–34)	Percentage of the population aged 25–34 who have successfully completed IVET studies as the highest level of education attained in ISCED 3 – Upper secondary education and 4 – Post-secondary non-tertiary education (ED3_4VOC). IVET is meant to acquire skills and competences leading to a specific occupation or job.	Eurostat, EU-LFS, (edat_lfse_03)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
	Segregation	12	Graduated in tertiary education in EHW, humanities and art (tertiary students) (%)	Share of graduates in: F01 – Education, F02 – Arts and humanities and F09 – Health and welfare, in ISCED 5–8 levels of education out of total graduates. Note on the age: In ISCED levels 5–8, which covers tertiary education, the typical age range for students is generally from 18 or 19 years old onwards. In particular, ISCED 5 (Short-cycle tertiary) often begins after upper secondary education, while levels 6 (Bachelor's or equivalent), 7 (Master's or equivalent), and 8 (Doctoral or equivalent) typically follow. Many students in ISCED levels 6–8 are in their early to mid-twenties and beyond, with some pursuing advanced degrees or doctoral studies later in life. There might be also people entering tertiary education at different points in their lives, and some may return for further studies later.	Eurostat, Education statistics, (educ_uoe_grad02)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
		13	Graduated in tertiary education in STEM (tertiary students) (%)	Share of graduates in F05 – Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics, F06 – Information and communication technologies and F07 – Engineering, manufacturing and construction in ISCED 5–8 levels of education out of total graduates. Note on the age: In ISCED levels 5–8, which covers tertiary education, the typical age range for students is generally from 18 or 19 years old onwards. In particular, ISCED 5 (Short-cycle tertiary) often begins after upper secondary education, while levels 6 (Bachelor's or equivalent), 7 (Master's or equivalent), and 8 (Doctoral or equivalent) typically follow. Many students in ISCED levels 6–8 are in their early to mid-twenties and beyond, with some pursuing advanced degrees or doctoral studies later in life. There might be also people entering tertiary education at different points in their lives, and some may return for further studies later.	Eurostat, Education statistics, (educ_uoe_grad02)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024

Domain	Sub-domain	*n*	Indicator	Description	Source	Index 2020	Index 2021	Index 2022	Index 2023	Index 2024	Index 2025	Index 2026
Time	Care activities	14	Informal childcare (0–11) for more than 35 weekly hours (%, 16–74)	Percentage of respondents providing care to their own children aged 0–11 for more than 35 hours per week (e.g. more than 5 hours per day). The question asks about the number of hours spent providing childcare to their own children (aged 0–11) in a typical week. Childcare includes personal care, assistance with school tasks, managing children's activities, leisure, supervision, and emotional support.	EIGE's survey on unpaid care, EIGE's calculation with microdata	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024
		15	Informal long-term care for more than 20 hours per week (%, 45–64)	Percentage of long-term carers providing care or assistance for more than 20 hours per week. Informal long-term care refers to care or assistance to one or more persons suffering from some age problem, chronic health condition or infirmity, at least once a week.	Eurostat, EHIS. European Commission (2025), *The EU monitoring framework on the Council recommendation on access to affordable high-quality long-term care*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019
		16	Housework chores (cooking, cleaning, laundry) every day, age group (%, 16–74)	Percentage of respondents doing housework chores (cooking, cleaning, laundry) every day.	EIGE's survey on unpaid care, EIGE's calculation with microdata	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024
	Social activities	17	Hours spent on leisure activities per week (%, 16–74)	Percentage of respondents spending more than 8 hours per week on leisure activities (e.g. cultural activities, holidays, hobbies), excluding sports.	EIGE's survey on unpaid care, EIGE's calculation with microdata	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024
		18	Voluntary, charitable or political activities at least once per week (%, 16–74)	Percentage of respondents involved in voluntary, charitable or political activities at least once per week. Volunteering refers to unpaid activity where someone gives their time to help a not-for-profit organisation or an individual who they are not related to. Volunteering includes being engaged in cultural, educational, sporting, charitable activities, distributing food, teaching, medical support, animal care, art and music, environmental work, support fundraising, donations, etc. Political activities refer to running or helping a political campaign, distributing campaign material, signing a petition, protesting, contacting officials, etc.	EIGE's survey on unpaid care, EIGE's calculation with microdata	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024	2024

Domain	Sub-domain	*n*	Indicator	Description	Source	Index 2020	Index 2021	Index 2022	Index 2023	Index 2024	Index 2025	Index 2026
Power	Political	19	Share of ministers (%)	Share of ministers (senior and junior ministers) (annual average of quarterly data).	EIGE, Gender Statistics Database, WMID	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
		20	Share of MPs (%)	Share of members of the national parliaments (both houses) (annual average of quarterly data).	EIGE, Gender Statistics Database, WMID	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
		21	Share of members of regional assemblies (%)	Share of members of regional assemblies. If regional assemblies do not exist in the country, local-level politics are included (BG, EE, IE, CY, LT, LU, MT, SI) (yearly data).	EIGE, Gender Statistics Database, WMID	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
	Economic	22	Share of members of boards in largest quoted companies (%)	Share of members of boards in largest quoted companies (annual average of biannual data).	EIGE, Gender Statistics Database, WMID	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
	Social	23	Share of members of highest decision-making body of the national Olympic most popular sport organisations (%)	Share of members of highest decision-making body of the 10 most popular national Olympic sport organisations (yearly data).	EIGE, Gender Statistics Database, WMID	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Health	Status	24	Self-perceived health, good or very good (%, 16+)	Percentage of 16+ population assessing their health as 'Very good' or 'Good' out of total.	Eurostat, EU-SILC, (hlth_silc_01)	2019	2020 (IT: 2019)	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
		25	Healthy life years at 65 in percentage of the total life expectancy (%, 65+)	Healthy life years measures the number of remaining years that a person of specific age is expected to live without any severe or moderate health problems. Life expectancy at a certain age is the mean additional number of years that a person of that age can expect to live.	Eurostat, (hlth_hlye)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023 (LU: 2022)	2024 (LU: 2022)
	Behaviour	26	People who don't smoke and are not involved in harmful drinking (%, 16+)	Percentage of people who are not involved in risk behaviour (i.e. don't smoke and are not involved in heavy episodic drinking).	Eurostat, EHIS. Eurostat calculations according to EIGE's request	2019 (FI: 2014)	2019 (FI: 2014)	2019 (FI: 2014)	2019 (FI: 2014)	2019 (FI: 2014)	2019 (FI: 2014)	2019 (FI: 2014)
		27	People doing physical activities and/or consuming fruits and vegetables (%, 16+)	Percentage of people who are physically active at least 150 minutes per week and/or consume at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day.	Eurostat, EHIS. Eurostat calculations according to EIGE's request	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019

Annex 2. Gender Equality Index scores

Table 21: Gender Equality Index scores, ranks and changes in score by EU Member State

Member State	Scores (points)							Change in score		Ranks						
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2026–2020	2026–2025	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
EU-27	**58.9**	**60.0**	**61.6**	**62.0**	**63.0**	**63.6**	**64.5**	**5.6**	**0.9**	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
BE	62.2	63.7	68.4	67.6	67.6	68.7	70.1	7.9	1.4	7	7	4	6	7	7	6
BG	59.1	59.0	58.9	58.4	59.0	58.1	58.4	– 0.7	0.3	9	13	14	15	17	17	22
CZ	50.9	50.5	52.0	51.5	52.5	53.4	54.3	3.4	0.9	24	26	25	25	25	25	25
DK	66.6	67.8	69.5	70.4	71.2	71.8	73.0	6.4	1.2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
DE	58.2	59.2	61.6	63.7	64.3	63.2	63.9	5.7	0.7	12	11	9	9	9	11	11
EE	53.9	53.8	57.1	56.9	57.4	59.5	60.2	6.3	0.7	19	20	18	17	20	15	15
IE	61.2	61.5	63.0	64.4	67.3	69.2	69.4	8.2	0.2	8	8	8	8	8	6	7
EL	50.1	51.3	53.4	54.5	55.3	57.3	60.0	9.9	2.7	25	23	22	23	23	21	16
ES	64.4	65.8	67.2	67.4	69.5	71.0	72.6	8.2	1.6	5	5	5	7	5	4	4
FR	69.4	70.3	71.4	72.1	72.6	73.5	74.8	5.4	1.3	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
HR	55.8	56.9	58.0	58.0	59.3	57.3	58.4	2.6	1.1	17	15	15	16	15	22	21
IT	56.0	58.0	61.5	62.0	61.7	62.2	62.7	6.7	0.5	16	14	10	12	12	12	12
CY	43.8	45.7	46.7	45.6	47.1	47.6	46.7	2.9	– 0.9	27	27	27	27	27	27	27
LV	57.0	56.6	54.7	54.7	57.2	56.7	59.5	2.5	2.8	13	16	21	21	22	24	19
LT	52.5	53.9	57.3	59.7	61.0	61.0	59.5	7.0	– 1.5	20	19	16	14	13	14	18
LU	56.6	59.2	60.1	62.1	63.0	63.9	64.7	8.1	0.8	14	12	13	11	11	9	10
HU	50.9	51.2	51.4	50.6	51.2	52.3	53.6	2.7	1.3	23	24	26	26	26	26	26
MT	49.8	50.6	52.7	54.7	59.1	58.7	59.6	9.8	0.9	26	25	24	22	16	16	17
NL	63.8	64.6	66.1	68.9	69.6	69.5	70.7	6.9	1.2	6	6	7	4	4	5	5
AT	58.6	59.3	60.8	60.5	60.5	61.2	61.9	3.3	0.7	10	10	12	13	14	13	13
PL	51.3	52.0	57.2	56.5	57.8	58.0	61.1	9.8	3.1	22	22	17	18	18	19	14
PT	58.3	59.3	61.0	62.3	63.5	63.5	65.7	7.4	2.2	11	9	11	10	10	10	9
RO	52.2	52.1	52.9	52.9	55.0	57.1	57.6	5.4	0.5	21	21	23	24	24	23	24
SI	56.1	54.9	55.1	55.7	57.2	58.1	59.4	3.3	1.3	15	18	20	20	21	18	20
SK	55.1	55.5	56.1	56.4	57.8	57.5	58.2	3.1	0.7	18	17	19	19	19	20	23
FI	65.9	66.1	67.0	67.8	68.8	68.4	68.3	2.4	– 0.1	4	4	6	5	6	8	8
SE	71.9	72.3	72.0	72.7	72.9	73.7	73.6	1.7	– 0.1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2

Table 22: Gender Equality Index 2026 – domains (scores and ranks)

Member State	Scores (points)							Ranks						
	Index	Work	Money	Knowledge	Time	Power	Health	Index	Work	Money	Knowledge	Time	Power	Health
EU-27	64.5	70.7	75.2	57.3	65.0	42.9	86.4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
BE	70.1	71.5	81.2	54.5	76.3	54.6	86.1	6	17	10	15	2	7	14
BG	58.4	78.8	84.4	50.3	65.2	25.0	74.8	22	2	3	21	12	22	26
CZ	54.3	65.9	76.1	53.0	57.6	21.9	82.7	25	23	19	18	24	25	22
DK	73.0	71.8	82.2	55.0	81.1	60.8	88.6	3	16	8	14	1	6	6
DE	63.9	65.3	69.1	58.9	61.2	48.8	87.8	11	24	25	8	19	10	8
EE	60.2	77.6	85.2	52.1	74.4	22.3	85.6	15	4	2	19	4	24	16
IE	69.4	73.3	72.0	64.3	66.3	54.1	94.6	7	14	22	2	11	8	1
EL	60.0	68.8	77.9	59.2	56.0	33.1	84.9	16	20	17	6	26	15	18
ES	72.6	71.3	74.3	55.5	74.1	73.2	86.7	4	18	20	13	5	3	12
FR	74.8	73.1	78.0	61.5	67.6	81.5	87.4	1	15	16	5	9	1	9
HR	58.4	71.1	83.0	53.3	69.6	22.8	83.6	21	19	4	16	6	23	20
IT	62.7	63.2	68.0	56.0	59.4	49.0	88.2	12	27	26	10	21	9	7
CY	46.7	65.1	70.3	43.4	54.7	12.7	83.0	27	25	23	27	27	27	21
LV	59.5	77.2	80.8	44.9	57.2	34.9	78.6	19	5	12	25	25	14	25
LT	59.5	75.5	82.2	49.8	63.3	28.7	80.8	18	10	9	23	16	17	24
LU	64.7	68.1	76.6	62.0	68.9	39.2	87.0	10	22	18	4	7	13	11
HU	53.6	75.5	82.3	53.2	64.6	14.3	86.0	26	9	7	17	13	26	15
MT	59.6	77.6	72.9	58.9	60.6	27.2	89.1	17	3	21	7	20	19	3
NL	70.7	65.0	69.4	62.4	74.8	65.2	89.1	5	26	24	3	3	4	4
AT	61.9	68.2	66.6	55.8	63.3	40.8	88.9	13	21	27	11	17	12	5
PL	61.1	76.0	82.3	50.1	68.7	28.8	85.4	14	7	6	22	8	16	17
PT	65.7	75.7	80.0	55.7	67.0	43.4	82.1	9	8	14	12	10	11	23
RO	57.6	73.5	82.6	66.3	61.5	25.7	62.8	24	12	5	1	18	20	27
SI	59.4	75.0	85.8	44.8	63.4	27.7	86.1	20	11	1	26	15	18	13
SK	58.2	73.4	78.5	51.1	64.5	25.5	83.7	23	13	15	20	14	21	19
FI	68.3	76.7	80.9	49.8	59.1	61.2	87.2	8	6	11	24	22	5	10
SE	73.6	81.0	80.1	56.3	58.7	79.6	89.8	2	1	13	9	23	2	2

Table 23: Gender Equality Index 2025 – domains (scores and ranks)

Member State	Scores (points)							Ranks						
	Index	Work	Money	Knowledge	Time	Power	Health	Index	Work	Money	Knowledge	Time	Power	Health
EU-27	63.6	69.9	74.6	57.4	65.0	40.5	86.2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
BE	68.7	70.2	79.0	56.3	76.3	49.9	86.2	7	16	14	10	2	8	15
BG	58.1	78.9	83.9	47.3	65.2	25.6	74.7	17	2	4	24	12	19	26
CZ	53.4	65.2	75.7	52.9	57.6	20.3	82.6	25	24	18	16	24	25	22
DK	71.8	70.2	82.4	55.3	81.1	57.3	87.5	3	17	6	13	1	6	8
DE	63.2	63.9	68.2	58.9	61.2	47.5	87.8	11	26	24	6	19	10	6
EE	59.5	76.6	82.9	50.7	74.4	21.9	86.8	15	5	5	20	4	22	12
IE	69.2	73.7	71.3	63.6	66.3	54.1	93.8	6	10	21	2	11	7	1
EL	57.3	69.3	77.4	58.7	56.0	26.2	83.8	21	19	16	7	26	18	19
ES	71.0	70.1	73.5	55.7	74.1	66.6	86.2	4	18	20	11	5	3	16
FR	73.5	73.0	78.4	62.5	67.6	72.5	88.0	2	13	15	3	9	2	5
HR	57.3	69.2	81.4	51.9	69.6	21.8	83.1	22	20	9	17	6	23	20
IT	62.2	62.6	67.2	56.8	59.4	47.9	86.9	12	27	25	9	21	9	11
CY	47.6	65.5	69.9	44.4	54.7	13.6	84.4	27	23	23	26	27	26	18
LV	56.7	77.3	76.7	43.5	57.2	28.9	78.1	24	3	17	27	25	15	25
LT	61.0	74.5	82.2	47.4	63.3	34.6	79.8	14	8	7	23	16	14	24
LU	63.9	68.8	74.4	61.9	68.9	37.3	87.6	9	21	19	5	7	12	7
HU	52.3	73.4	86.4	49.9	64.6	12.9	86.3	26	11	2	21	13	27	14
MT	58.7	72.8	70.7	58.1	60.6	28.1	87.3	16	14	22	8	20	16	9
NL	69.5	64.2	66.3	62.1	74.8	63.2	89.1	5	25	26	4	3	4	3
AT	61.2	67.8	65.5	54.2	63.3	39.9	88.7	13	22	27	15	17	11	4
PL	58.0	75.7	81.4	50.9	68.7	21.6	85.4	19	6	8	19	8	24	17
PT	63.5	75.2	80.4	55.5	67.0	36.8	80.6	10	7	12	12	10	13	23
RO	57.1	73.1	80.0	64.1	61.5	26.6	60.9	23	12	13	1	18	17	27
SI	58.1	74.0	86.5	45.0	63.4	24.6	86.6	18	9	1	25	15	20	13
SK	57.5	71.9	84.5	51.0	64.5	22.9	82.8	20	15	3	18	14	21	21
FI	68.4	76.9	81.3	49.8	59.1	61.0	87.3	8	4	10	22	22	5	10
SE	73.7	80.6	81.1	54.6	58.7	80.3	91.2	1	1	11	14	23	1	2

Table 24: Gender Equality Index 2020 – domains (scores and ranks)

Member State	Scores (points)							Ranks						
	Index	Work	Money	Knowledge	Time	Power	Health	Index	Work	Money	Knowledge	Time	Power	Health
EU-27	58.9	67.2	70.7	55.6	65.0	29.8	85.6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
BE	62.2	66.7	74.2	52.7	76.3	33.9	85.9	7	19	16	18	2	8	10
BG	59.1	78.8	85.1	50.7	65.2	26.4	74.1	9	1	2	21	12	13	26
CZ	50.9	62.8	73.8	54.3	57.6	16.2	82.8	24	22	17	14	24	20	20
DK	66.6	69.9	83.9	54.7	81.1	37.9	86.8	3	13	3	13	1	6	8
DE	58.2	61.2	61.9	59.8	61.2	34.0	88.4	12	25	26	5	19	7	5
EE	53.9	74.1	79.2	49.0	74.4	14.5	84.6	19	7	10	22	4	22	15
IE	61.2	70.2	68.8	62.2	66.3	29.8	95.9	8	12	22	2	11	11	1
EL	50.1	66.8	75.8	58.5	56.0	13.4	83.5	25	18	13	8	26	23	18
ES	64.4	68.1	69.5	59.9	74.1	40.3	86.2	5	16	21	4	5	5	9
FR	69.4	69.0	75.4	57.5	67.6	61.3	87.7	2	14	14	10	9	2	7
HR	55.8	67.5	79.3	52.3	69.6	19.5	83.9	17	17	9	19	6	17	17
IT	56.0	61.2	62.9	57.7	59.4	29.7	85.4	16	26	24	9	21	12	13
CY	43.8	62.4	63.3	43.5	54.7	10.6	79.8	27	24	23	26	27	27	23
LV	57.0	77.9	76.7	41.3	57.2	30.8	77.7	13	2	12	27	25	10	25
LT	52.5	75.0	73.5	45.4	63.3	17.5	79.9	20	6	18	25	16	19	22
LU	56.6	62.8	69.6	57.0	68.9	24.3	84.9	14	23	20	11	7	14	14
HU	50.9	70.3	85.3	51.6	64.6	11.4	85.5	23	11	1	20	13	26	12
MT	49.8	65.2	70.9	58.7	60.6	12.1	90.6	26	20	19	7	20	24	2
NL	63.8	59.8	61.6	61.4	74.8	46.3	87.7	6	27	27	3	3	4	6
AT	58.6	64.6	62.6	56.3	63.3	33.4	88.8	10	21	25	12	17	9	4
PL	51.3	73.9	74.6	54.2	68.7	12.0	84.3	22	8	15	15	8	25	16
PT	58.3	72.6	80.0	58.8	67.0	23.2	79.5	11	9	7	6	10	15	24
RO	52.2	72.2	83.7	66.0	61.5	15.4	61.5	21	10	4	1	18	21	27
SI	56.1	76.8	83.3	48.3	63.4	20.1	82.8	15	4	5	23	15	16	19
SK	55.1	68.7	81.2	53.3	64.5	19.1	82.3	18	15	6	16	14	18	21
FI	65.9	75.8	78.9	47.0	59.1	54.9	85.9	4	5	11	24	22	3	11
SE	71.9	76.9	79.4	52.9	58.7	77.5	89.6	1	3	8	17	23	1	3

Table 25: Gender Equality Index 2026 – domains and subdomains (scores and ranks)

Member State	Scores (points)																		
	Index	Work	Participation	Segregation and quality of work	Money	Financial resources	Economic situation	Knowledge	Attainment and participation	Segregation	Time	Care activities	Social activities	Power	Political	Economic	Social	Health	Status	Behaviour
EU-27	64.5	70.7	82.6	60.5	75.2	77.8	72.6	57.3	78.6	41.7	65.0	57.1	74.1	42.9	45.5	51.7	33.5	86.4	90.7	82.4
BE	70.1	71.5	83.4	61.3	81.2	79.9	82.6	54.5	69.6	42.7	76.3	70.5	82.6	54.6	65.7	60.5	40.9	86.1	92.1	80.5
BG	58.4	78.8	86.2	72.0	84.4	85.0	83.8	50.3	58.6	43.2	65.2	55.6	76.4	25.0	33.7	19.1	24.2	74.8	89.7	62.5
CZ	54.3	65.9	81.6	53.2	76.1	84.1	68.9	53.0	73.3	38.4	57.6	42.8	77.6	21.9	21.9	36.5	13.2	82.7	89.9	76.1
DK	73.0	71.8	86.4	59.7	82.2	87.0	77.7	55.0	68.6	44.1	81.1	84.6	77.6	60.8	74.2	75.7	40.0	88.6	98.1	80.1
DE	63.9	65.3	82.4	51.7	69.1	73.4	65.1	58.9	94.0	36.9	61.2	49.7	75.3	48.8	57.1	63.8	31.9	87.8	92.7	83.2
EE	60.2	77.6	92.0	65.4	85.2	92.6	78.3	52.1	67.5	40.3	74.4	67.2	82.4	22.3	40.3	14.9	18.6	85.6	87.1	84.1
IE	69.4	73.3	83.5	64.4	72.0	77.5	66.9	64.3	93.3	44.2	66.3	55.5	79.4	54.1	35.8	66.2	66.8	94.6	96.7	92.5
EL	60.0	68.8	75.1	63.0	77.9	82.0	74.0	59.2	72.3	48.5	56.0	43.9	71.6	33.1	28.3	37.5	34.1	84.9	92.9	77.6
ES	72.6	71.3	84.4	60.2	74.3	77.3	71.5	55.5	77.5	39.8	74.1	68.9	79.6	73.2	76.1	67.1	76.7	86.7	88.3	85.2
FR	74.8	73.1	88.4	60.4	78.0	78.2	77.8	61.5	84.5	44.8	67.6	65.3	69.9	81.5	77.4	81.0	86.3	87.4	92.9	82.2
HR	58.4	71.1	88.0	57.4	83.0	83.5	82.5	53.3	68.8	41.3	69.6	61.1	79.3	22.8	36.9	43.2	7.4	83.6	86.1	81.2
IT	62.7	63.2	69.6	57.4	68.0	75.2	61.5	56.0	64.5	48.6	59.4	51.9	67.9	49.0	41.5	76.2	37.1	88.2	92.1	84.5
CY	46.7	65.1	85.4	49.7	70.3	70.9	69.6	43.4	50.1	37.5	54.7	42.6	70.2	12.7	19.9	10.8	9.5	83.0	92.7	74.4
LV	59.5	77.2	90.3	66.0	80.8	84.0	77.6	44.9	63.9	31.5	57.2	48.6	67.3	34.9	37.5	39.5	28.7	78.6	85.0	72.7
LT	59.5	75.5	90.7	62.9	82.2	86.5	78.0	49.8	73.9	33.6	63.3	60.3	66.5	28.7	42.6	32.0	17.3	80.8	84.0	77.7
LU	64.7	68.1	88.5	52.4	76.6	75.4	77.7	62.0	93.4	41.2	68.9	55.7	85.3	39.2	50.1	31.0	38.8	87.0	93.4	81.1
HU	53.6	75.5	86.2	66.2	82.3	87.2	77.6	53.2	75.0	37.7	64.6	51.8	80.5	14.3	11.4	12.4	20.5	86.0	88.3	83.7
MT	59.6	77.6	79.7	75.6	72.9	77.0	69.1	58.9	71.8	48.3	60.6	54.2	67.8	27.2	39.6	24.1	21.1	89.1	89.1	89.2
NL	70.7	65.0	82.8	51.0	69.4	69.7	69.0	62.4	90.0	43.2	74.8	69.6	80.5	65.2	61.8	75.2	59.7	89.1	92.4	85.9
AT	61.9	68.2	81.7	57.0	66.6	67.3	65.9	55.8	81.4	38.3	63.3	53.2	75.3	40.8	65.4	54.2	19.1	88.9	91.6	86.3
PL	61.1	76.0	83.0	69.5	82.3	85.2	79.4	50.1	65.8	38.2	68.7	64.3	73.5	28.8	40.0	34.4	17.3	85.4	89.5	81.4
PT	65.7	75.7	90.2	63.5	80.0	80.9	79.1	55.7	70.2	44.1	67.0	54.5	82.4	43.4	52.7	50.7	30.7	82.1	82.4	81.8
RO	57.6	73.5	75.2	71.9	82.6	83.7	81.5	66.3	86.1	51.1	61.5	50.9	74.2	25.7	21.9	30.8	25.1	62.8	85.1	46.3
SI	59.4	75.0	88.0	63.8	85.8	88.8	82.9	44.8	55.8	36.0	63.4	55.2	72.9	27.7	51.4	40.7	10.2	86.1	92.7	80.0
SK	58.2	73.4	86.1	62.5	78.5	83.5	73.7	51.1	65.2	40.0	64.5	53.3	78.0	25.5	22.0	40.9	18.3	83.7	93.5	75.0
FI	68.3	76.7	93.5	62.9	80.9	80.6	81.3	49.8	75.4	32.9	59.1	64.3	54.4	61.2	75.9	61.4	49.1	87.2	93.6	81.3
SE	73.6	81.0	91.7	71.5	80.1	81.0	79.2	56.3	73.8	42.9	58.7	56.7	60.6	79.6	87.4	60.3	95.7	89.8	91.6	88.0

Member State	Rank																			
	Index	Work	Participation	Segregation and quality of work	Money	Financial resources	Economic situation	Knowledge	Attainment and participation	Segregation	Time	Care activities	Social activities	Power	Political	Economic	Social	Health	Status	Behaviour
EU-27	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
BE	6	17	18	16	10	17	3	15	17	12	2	2	2	7	6	9	7	14	12	17
BG	22	2	12	2	3	7	1	21	25	9	12	13	13	22	21	24	16	26	17	26
CZ	25	23	23	23	19	8	23	18	13	18	24	26	12	25	24	18	24	22	16	22
DK	3	16	11	19	8	4	13	14	19	8	1	1	11	6	5	3	8	6	1	18
DE	11	24	21	25	25	24	26	8	1	23	19	23	15	10	9	7	12	8	9	10
EE	15	4	2	8	2	1	10	19	20	15	4	5	3	24	15	25	20	16	22	8
IE	7	14	17	9	22	19	24	2	3	6	11	14	8	8	20	6	4	1	2	1
EL	16	20	26	12	17	13	17	6	14	3	26	25	19	15	22	17	11	18	7	21
ES	4	18	16	18	20	20	19	13	8	17	5	4	7	3	3	5	3	12	20	6
FR	1	15	8	17	16	18	12	5	6	5	9	6	21	1	2	1	2	9	6	11
HR	21	19	10	21	4	11	4	16	18	13	6	9	9	23	19	13	27	20	23	15
IT	12	27	27	20	26	23	27	10	23	2	21	20	22	9	14	2	10	7	13	7
CY	27	25	15	27	23	25	20	27	27	22	27	27	20	27	26	27	26	21	10	24
LV	19	5	5	7	12	9	15	25	24	27	25	24	24	14	18	16	14	25	25	25
LT	18	10	4	14	9	5	11	23	11	25	16	10	25	17	13	20	22	24	26	20
LU	10	22	7	24	18	22	14	4	2	14	7	12	1	13	12	21	9	11	5	16
HU	26	9	13	6	7	3	16	17	10	21	13	21	5	26	27	26	18	15	21	9
MT	17	3	24	1	21	21	21	7	15	4	20	17	23	19	17	23	17	3	19	2
NL	5	26	20	26	24	26	22	3	4	10	3	3	6	4	8	4	5	4	11	5
AT	13	21	22	22	27	27	25	11	7	19	17	19	14	12	7	11	19	5	14	4
PL	14	7	19	5	6	6	7	22	21	20	8	8	17	16	16	19	23	17	18	13
PT	9	8	6	11	14	15	9	12	16	7	10	16	4	11	10	12	13	23	27	12
RO	24	12	25	3	5	10	5	1	5	1	18	22	16	20	25	22	15	27	24	27
SI	20	11	9	10	1	2	2	26	26	24	15	15	18	18	11	15	25	13	8	19
SK	23	13	14	15	15	12	18	20	22	16	14	18	10	21	23	14	21	19	4	23
FI	8	6	1	13	11	16	6	24	9	26	22	7	27	5	4	8	6	10	3	14
SE	2	1	3	4	13	14	8	9	12	11	23	11	26	2	1	10	1	2	15	3

Table 26: Gender Equality Index for the domain of work and its subdomains, 2020–2026 (scores and ranks)

Member State	Score (points)																				
	Domain of work							Participation							Segregation and quality of work						
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
EU-27	**67.2**	**68.1**	**69.1**	**69.4**	**69.8**	**69.9**	**70.7**	**79.6**	**79.9**	**80.5**	**81.2**	**82.1**	**82.1**	**82.6**	**56.7**	**58.0**	**59.3**	**59.3**	**59.5**	**59.5**	**60.5**
BE	66.7	68.3	70.6	70.7	70.3	70.2	71.5	81.9	81.9	83.2	83.0	83.6	83.6	83.4	54.4	56.9	59.9	60.2	59.2	59.1	61.3
BG	78.8	80.1	78.3	79.1	80.5	78.9	78.8	86.0	85.4	85.8	85.3	86.3	86.3	86.2	72.1	75.1	71.6	73.3	75.1	72.2	72.0
CZ	62.8	63.0	63.9	63.5	65.4	65.2	65.9	79.0	78.7	78.7	78.9	79.6	79.6	81.6	50.0	50.4	51.8	51.0	53.5	53.4	53.2
DK	69.9	71.4	70.2	70.8	71.9	70.2	71.8	86.2	86.4	86.4	87.7	87.5	87.5	86.4	56.6	59.0	57.0	57.1	58.6	56.4	59.7
DE	61.2	62.1	64.0	63.6	64.0	63.9	65.3	79.9	80.4	80.9	81.1	81.9	81.9	82.4	47.0	48.0	50.6	49.9	50.3	49.9	51.7
EE	74.1	74.1	76.6	75.9	73.3	76.6	77.6	87.8	87.7	90.0	89.7	89.7	89.7	92.0	62.6	62.5	65.3	64.3	59.7	65.4	65.4
IE	70.2	70.4	71.6	71.0	72.1	73.7	73.3	78.8	78.7	80.1	81.0	81.9	81.9	83.5	62.5	63.0	64.0	62.3	63.4	66.3	64.4
EL	66.8	69.4	67.8	69.1	68.3	69.3	68.8	72.2	72.8	73.3	72.6	74.0	74.0	75.1	61.8	66.2	62.7	65.7	63.8	64.8	63.0
ES	68.1	69.4	68.7	68.9	69.9	70.1	71.3	79.7	80.6	81.4	81.9	83.2	83.2	84.4	58.3	59.8	57.9	58.0	59.2	59.0	60.2
FR	69.0	69.8	71.5	72.8	72.9	73.0	73.1	85.3	86.1	86.9	87.6	88.0	88.0	88.4	55.8	56.6	58.9	60.5	60.3	60.6	60.4
HR	67.5	67.0	67.8	62.8	65.0	69.2	71.1	82.8	82.0	82.7	84.1	87.4	87.4	88.0	55.0	54.7	55.6	46.9	49.6	54.8	57.4
IT	61.2	61.5	62.5	62.2	62.6	62.6	63.2	67.8	67.3	67.8	68.5	69.0	69.0	69.6	55.3	56.2	57.6	56.6	57.0	56.7	57.4
CY	62.4	63.0	60.7	63.8	67.0	65.5	65.1	83.7	81.4	81.1	83.2	86.3	86.3	85.4	46.6	48.7	45.5	48.9	52.7	49.6	49.7
LV	77.9	78.3	77.5	76.2	75.8	77.3	77.2	90.6	90.0	90.3	90.4	91.0	91.0	90.3	67.0	68.0	66.6	64.3	62.9	65.7	66.0
LT	75.0	75.2	74.3	74.4	73.9	74.5	75.5	91.4	91.9	91.2	91.1	92.4	92.4	90.7	61.5	61.5	60.5	60.8	58.9	60.1	62.9
LU	62.8	64.8	62.8	65.7	65.1	68.8	68.1	83.0	84.3	85.0	85.9	86.4	86.4	88.5	47.5	49.9	46.3	50.2	49.0	54.8	52.4
HU	70.3	70.0	68.7	71.0	71.7	73.4	75.5	78.1	77.9	81.1	83.7	85.3	85.3	86.2	63.3	62.9	58.1	60.2	60.9	63.2	66.2
MT	65.2	63.4	69.2	71.1	71.0	72.8	77.6	70.6	71.8	73.6	77.0	78.3	78.3	79.7	60.2	55.9	65.0	65.7	64.5	67.7	75.6
NL	59.8	60.1	61.3	63.8	64.4	64.2	65.0	77.1	78.4	79.3	82.3	82.9	82.9	82.8	46.4	46.1	47.4	49.5	50.2	49.7	51.0
AT	64.6	64.9	66.9	65.3	66.5	67.8	68.2	78.9	79.5	80.1	79.6	81.3	81.3	81.7	52.9	53.0	55.9	53.6	55.0	56.5	57.0
PL	73.9	74.4	75.0	75.6	76.1	75.7	76.0	79.0	78.6	79.6	80.8	82.5	82.5	83.0	69.2	70.5	70.7	70.8	70.8	69.4	69.5
PT	72.6	72.0	74.0	74.6	73.8	75.2	75.7	88.2	88.2	89.4	89.6	89.9	89.9	90.2	59.7	58.8	61.3	62.1	60.6	62.9	63.5
RO	72.2	73.9	74.7	70.8	72.4	73.1	73.5	76.3	75.9	73.9	73.7	74.9	74.9	75.2	68.4	71.9	75.6	68.0	70.5	71.3	71.9
SI	76.8	76.3	72.3	73.5	73.2	74.0	75.0	86.9	87.9	88.0	87.9	87.7	87.7	88.0	67.8	66.2	59.5	61.5	61.2	62.4	63.8
SK	68.7	71.0	71.6	73.5	71.6	71.9	73.4	80.2	81.2	83.7	87.0	87.3	87.3	86.1	58.8	62.1	61.3	62.2	58.8	59.2	62.5
FI	75.8	76.8	76.2	76.1	77.9	76.9	76.7	91.8	91.6	91.7	92.9	94.4	94.4	93.5	62.7	64.4	63.4	62.4	64.9	62.7	62.9
SE	76.9	78.2	78.9	78.9	79.9	80.6	81.0	92.0	91.3	91.0	90.2	91.5	91.5	91.7	64.3	66.9	68.4	69.0	70.4	71.1	71.5

Member State	Rank																				
	Domain of work							Participation							Segregation and quality of work						
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
EU-27	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
BE	19	18	14	17	17	16	17	14	13	13	16	16	16	18	21	17	14	17	15	17	16
BG	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	9	10	10	12	14	14	12	1	1	2	1	1	1	2
CZ	22	23	23	25	22	24	23	18	20	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	22	22	24	23
DK	13	11	15	16	13	17	16	8	8	9	8	9	9	11	17	15	20	19	19	21	19
DE	25	25	22	24	26	26	24	16	17	18	19	20	20	21	25	26	24	24	24	25	25
EE	7	8	4	5	8	5	4	6	7	5	5	6	6	2	9	11	6	7	14	8	8
IE	12	13	12	13	12	10	14	21	19	20	20	21	21	17	10	9	8	10	8	6	9
EL	18	17	19	18	19	19	20	25	25	26	26	26	26	26	11	6	10	5	7	9	12
ES	16	16	17	19	18	18	18	17	16	15	18	17	17	16	16	14	18	18	16	18	18
FR	14	15	13	11	10	13	15	10	9	8	9	7	7	8	18	18	16	15	13	14	17
HR	17	19	20	26	24	20	19	13	12	14	13	10	10	10	20	21	22	27	26	22	21
IT	26	26	25	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	19	19	19	20	20	19	20
CY	24	24	27	23	20	23	25	11	14	16	15	13	13	15	26	25	27	26	23	27	27
LV	2	2	3	3	5	3	5	4	4	4	3	4	4	5	5	4	5	8	9	7	7
LT	6	6	8	8	6	8	10	3	1	2	2	2	2	4	12	13	13	14	17	15	14
LU	23	21	24	20	23	21	22	12	11	11	11	12	12	7	24	24	26	23	27	23	24
HU	11	14	18	14	14	11	9	22	23	17	14	15	15	13	7	10	17	16	11	10	6
MT	20	22	16	12	16	14	3	26	26	25	24	24	24	24	13	20	7	6	6	5	1
NL	27	27	26	22	25	25	26	23	22	22	17	18	18	20	27	27	25	25	25	26	26
AT	21	20	21	21	21	22	21	20	18	19	22	22	22	22	22	22	21	21	21	20	22
PL	8	7	6	6	4	6	7	19	21	21	21	19	19	19	2	3	3	2	2	4	5
PT	9	10	9	7	7	7	8	5	5	6	6	5	5	6	14	16	12	12	12	11	11
RO	10	9	7	15	11	12	12	24	24	24	25	25	25	25	3	2	1	4	3	2	3
SI	4	5	10	10	9	9	11	7	6	7	7	8	8	9	4	7	15	13	10	13	10
SK	15	12	11	9	15	15	13	15	15	12	10	11	11	14	15	12	11	11	18	16	15
FI	5	4	5	4	3	4	6	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	8	8	9	9	5	12	13
SE	3	3	1	2	2	1	1	1	3	3	4	3	3	3	6	5	4	3	4	3	4

Table 27: Gender Equality Index for the domain of money and its subdomains, 2020–2026 (scores and ranks)

Member State	Score (points)																				
	Domain of money							Financial resources							Economic situation						
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
EU-27	**70.7**	**72.0**	**73.3**	**73.8**	**74.2**	**74.6**	**75.2**	**72.5**	**74.2**	**75.8**	**76.3**	**76.7**	**77.1**	**77.8**	**68.9**	**69.9**	**71.0**	**71.3**	**71.8**	**72.2**	**72.6**
BE	74.2	75.6	79.4	79.6	80.0	79.0	81.2	74.0	74.1	79.1	78.8	78.7	76.8	79.9	74.4	77.3	79.7	80.3	81.3	81.2	82.6
BG	85.1	82.4	80.7	82.8	85.5	83.9	84.4	84.5	83.8	83.0	81.6	86.0	84.1	85.0	85.7	81.1	78.5	84.1	85.0	83.6	83.8
CZ	73.8	74.3	75.5	74.1	75.4	75.7	76.1	80.8	81.0	82.5	82.1	83.0	84.0	84.1	67.4	68.1	69.0	67.0	68.5	68.3	68.9
DK	83.9	82.4	82.8	83.3	82.3	82.4	82.2	88.3	89.8	89.0	90.0	89.0	84.5	87.0	79.7	75.7	77.0	77.2	76.2	80.4	77.7
DE	61.9	63.9	65.5	67.3	68.1	68.2	69.1	63.6	66.9	68.6	70.9	71.7	72.3	73.4	60.3	61.1	62.5	63.9	64.7	64.3	65.1
EE	79.2	79.2	80.1	80.0	79.3	82.9	85.2	88.1	91.3	89.8	89.4	88.2	89.9	92.6	71.2	68.7	71.5	71.5	71.4	76.5	78.3
IE	68.8	70.3	69.9	70.8	69.7	71.3	72.0	71.9	73.3	73.1	73.7	72.3	72.4	77.5	65.9	67.5	66.9	68.1	67.2	70.3	66.9
EL	75.8	75.1	76.7	76.0	76.2	77.4	77.9	77.9	78.9	79.3	79.3	79.5	81.9	82.0	73.7	71.5	74.2	72.8	73.1	73.1	74.0
ES	69.5	71.1	70.4	71.6	73.1	73.5	74.3	73.2	74.4	74.2	74.9	76.7	75.8	77.3	66.0	68.0	66.8	68.4	69.7	71.3	71.5
FR	75.4	76.8	76.9	76.8	77.3	78.4	78.0	74.4	75.1	75.8	75.7	77.1	78.4	78.2	76.5	78.6	78.0	78.0	77.5	78.5	77.8
HR	79.3	76.1	78.1	82.4	78.5	81.4	83.0	75.3	71.5	76.4	79.0	78.1	81.2	83.5	83.6	80.9	79.7	86.0	78.9	81.5	82.5
IT	62.9	64.5	65.7	67.2	67.7	67.2	68.0	72.4	72.8	74.4	75.7	75.8	75.4	75.2	54.7	57.2	58.0	59.7	60.4	59.8	61.5
CY	63.3	69.1	68.4	68.0	71.0	69.9	70.3	65.8	67.5	70.5	69.2	72.1	70.8	70.9	60.9	70.7	66.4	66.8	70.0	69.0	69.6
LV	76.7	78.4	74.5	75.0	78.8	76.7	80.8	81.6	84.0	79.3	79.3	81.6	80.5	84.0	72.0	73.1	70.1	71.0	76.0	73.1	77.6
LT	73.5	75.9	76.7	78.4	84.6	82.2	82.2	79.2	83.5	82.5	84.2	87.3	86.0	86.5	68.2	69.0	71.3	73.1	81.9	78.7	78.0
LU	69.6	71.5	72.2	71.3	73.8	74.4	76.6	64.8	68.8	72.2	68.4	71.3	73.3	75.4	74.7	74.2	72.3	74.3	76.4	75.4	77.7
HU	85.3	83.8	82.2	84.9	86.9	86.4	82.3	89.6	89.8	86.7	92.0	89.1	89.2	87.2	81.3	78.1	77.8	78.4	84.8	83.7	77.6
MT	70.9	68.9	68.6	70.0	71.9	70.7	72.9	75.7	74.2	72.1	72.2	72.7	75.6	77.0	66.5	64.0	65.2	67.8	71.0	66.1	69.1
NL	61.6	62.5	63.6	65.0	66.8	66.3	69.4	60.9	62.8	63.5	63.6	65.4	65.8	69.7	62.3	62.3	63.8	66.4	68.1	66.7	69.0
AT	62.6	64.3	64.7	64.4	65.5	65.5	66.6	63.6	65.8	65.6	66.2	66.2	65.8	67.3	61.6	62.9	63.8	62.7	64.8	65.1	65.9
PL	74.6	75.9	79.6	80.5	80.2	81.4	82.3	79.3	80.4	83.6	86.0	83.7	86.9	85.2	70.1	71.7	75.7	75.3	76.9	76.3	79.4
PT	80.0	81.4	81.1	82.8	82.7	80.4	80.0	77.5	78.3	80.3	81.5	79.0	79.7	80.9	82.6	84.6	81.9	84.1	86.5	81.1	79.1
RO	83.7	81.7	79.1	79.8	81.0	80.0	82.6	85.2	84.8	85.1	85.1	88.0	84.1	83.7	82.2	78.7	73.5	74.9	74.6	76.1	81.5
SI	83.3	84.3	84.2	85.1	86.1	86.5	85.8	85.0	86.0	88.6	89.0	88.2	89.6	88.8	81.7	82.7	80.1	81.3	84.0	83.4	82.9
SK	81.2	82.9	81.3	84.0	86.9	84.5	78.5	85.3	86.5	86.1	88.8	88.9	88.6	83.5	77.4	79.4	76.8	79.4	85.1	80.6	73.7
FI	78.9	80.5	79.6	79.9	80.1	81.3	80.9	79.3	81.1	81.4	81.1	80.0	81.4	80.6	78.5	79.9	77.8	78.7	80.2	81.2	81.3
SE	79.4	78.6	78.8	78.5	78.9	81.1	80.1	78.1	78.1	79.6	80.4	79.7	81.2	81.0	80.8	79.0	77.9	76.6	78.1	80.9	79.2

Member State	Rank																				
	Domain of money							Financial resources							Economic situation						
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
EU-27	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
BE	16	16	10	12	11	14	10	19	19	16	17	16	18	17	13	11	4	5	7	6	3
BG	2	5	6	5	4	4	3	7	8	8	10	8	9	7	1	3	5	3	3	2	1
CZ	17	18	17	18	18	18	19	9	11	9	9	10	10	8	19	20	19	22	22	22	23
DK	3	4	2	4	7	6	8	2	3	2	2	2	7	4	8	12	10	10	14	10	13
DE	26	26	25	24	24	24	25	25	25	25	23	24	24	24	26	26	26	25	26	26	26
EE	10	9	7	9	12	5	2	3	1	1	3	5	1	1	16	19	16	17	18	13	10
IE	22	21	21	21	23	21	22	22	20	21	21	22	23	19	22	22	20	20	24	20	24
EL	13	17	15	16	17	16	17	14	13	14	14	14	11	13	14	16	13	16	17	18	17
ES	21	20	20	19	20	20	20	20	17	20	20	19	19	20	21	21	21	19	21	19	19
FR	14	12	14	15	16	15	16	18	16	18	18	18	17	18	11	9	6	9	11	12	12
HR	9	13	13	7	15	9	4	17	22	17	16	17	14	11	2	4	3	1	9	4	4
IT	24	24	24	25	25	25	26	21	21	19	19	20	21	23	27	27	27	27	27	27	27
CY	23	22	23	23	22	23	23	23	24	24	24	23	25	25	25	17	22	23	20	21	20
LV	12	11	18	17	14	17	12	8	7	15	15	11	15	9	15	14	18	18	15	17	15
LT	18	14	16	14	5	7	9	12	9	10	8	7	6	5	18	18	17	15	6	11	11
LU	20	19	19	20	19	19	18	24	23	22	25	25	22	22	12	13	15	14	13	16	14
HU	1	2	3	2	2	2	7	1	2	4	1	1	3	3	6	10	8	8	4	1	16
MT	19	23	22	22	21	22	21	16	18	23	22	21	20	21	20	23	23	21	19	24	21
NL	27	27	27	26	26	26	24	27	27	27	27	27	26	26	23	25	25	24	23	23	22
AT	25	25	26	27	27	27	27	26	26	26	26	26	27	27	24	24	24	26	25	25	25
PL	15	15	9	8	9	8	6	10	12	7	6	9	5	6	17	15	12	12	12	14	7
PT	7	7	5	6	6	12	14	15	14	12	11	15	16	15	3	1	1	2	1	7	9
RO	4	6	11	11	8	13	5	5	6	6	7	6	8	10	4	8	14	13	16	15	5
SI	5	1	1	1	3	1	1	6	5	3	4	4	2	2	5	2	2	4	5	3	2
SK	6	3	4	3	1	3	15	4	4	5	5	3	4	12	10	6	11	6	2	9	18
FI	11	8	8	10	10	10	11	11	10	11	12	12	12	16	9	5	9	7	8	5	6
SE	8	10	12	13	13	11	13	13	15	13	13	13	13	14	7	7	7	11	10	8	8

Table 28: Gender Equality Index for the domain of knowledge and its subdomains, 2020–2026 (scores and ranks)

Member State	Score (points)																				
	Domain of knowledge							Attainment and participation							Segregation						
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
EU-27	**55.6**	**56.8**	**56.8**	**56.8**	**57.1**	**57.4**	**57.3**	**78.3**	**78.5**	**78.1**	**77.8**	**78.2**	**78.7**	**78.6**	**39.4**	**41.1**	**41.3**	**41.5**	**41.8**	**41.8**	**41.7**
BE	52.7	52.6	54.0	53.2	53.0	56.3	54.5	70.4	69.4	72.4	70.3	69.9	75.7	69.6	39.4	39.9	40.4	40.3	40.2	41.9	42.7
BG	50.7	50.1	50.1	51.0	49.4	47.3	50.3	57.0	56.7	58.2	60.1	58.5	54.9	58.6	45.1	44.2	43.2	43.4	41.7	40.8	43.2
CZ	54.3	53.9	50.8	52.1	52.9	52.9	53.0	75.2	74.1	64.2	67.9	71.0	69.2	73.3	39.2	39.2	40.2	39.9	39.5	40.5	38.4
DK	54.7	56.3	54.1	53.6	53.0	55.3	55.0	69.5	73.2	69.3	65.4	65.4	70.1	68.6	43.1	43.3	42.3	44.0	43.0	43.6	44.1
DE	59.8	58.8	58.8	59.2	59.3	58.9	58.9	98.2	99.1	97.5	96.6	96.6	95.6	94.0	36.4	34.9	35.4	36.3	36.4	36.3	36.9
EE	49.0	49.2	49.8	49.8	50.5	50.7	52.1	61.4	62.5	60.8	67.4	62.8	66.0	67.5	39.0	38.8	40.7	36.7	40.6	39.0	40.3
IE	62.2	61.1	62.2	63.5	64.0	63.6	64.3	89.6	88.4	92.5	93.5	91.6	92.2	93.3	43.2	42.3	41.8	43.2	44.8	43.8	44.2
EL	58.5	62.0	63.6	61.2	59.5	58.7	59.2	73.2	80.9	82.0	78.0	74.1	72.3	72.3	46.7	47.5	49.3	48.0	47.7	47.7	48.5
ES	59.9	58.9	59.1	57.7	57.6	55.7	55.5	86.2	85.1	84.4	81.9	80.7	78.5	77.5	41.7	40.8	41.3	40.7	41.1	39.5	39.8
FR	57.5	58.7	57.3	58.7	60.1	62.5	61.5	79.9	84.0	80.4	82.6	83.2	86.8	84.5	41.4	41.0	40.9	41.8	43.5	45.1	44.8
HR	52.3	53.2	53.9	52.4	53.1	51.9	53.3	65.6	68.7	69.9	65.3	66.8	62.4	68.8	41.7	41.2	41.6	42.1	42.1	43.3	41.3
IT	57.7	56.7	56.8	56.3	56.2	56.8	56.0	66.2	64.3	64.6	64.7	64.8	65.3	64.5	50.2	50.1	49.9	48.9	48.8	49.3	48.6
CY	43.5	45.3	45.0	42.5	41.5	44.4	43.4	50.4	55.8	54.1	52.6	49.5	50.1	50.1	37.6	36.7	37.4	34.3	34.8	39.4	37.5
LV	41.3	42.5	42.2	43.6	43.6	43.5	44.9	60.3	63.0	65.9	65.0	62.6	62.6	63.9	28.3	28.7	27.0	29.2	30.3	30.2	31.5
LT	45.4	45.6	47.9	48.4	47.6	47.4	49.8	60.3	64.8	69.1	72.9	65.9	70.5	73.9	34.1	32.1	33.1	32.2	34.3	31.9	33.6
LU	57.0	60.0	59.6	61.4	62.8	61.9	62.0	91.2	87.5	85.4	89.1	87.9	84.7	93.4	35.6	41.1	41.6	42.3	44.9	45.2	41.2
HU	51.6	50.0	50.1	48.7	49.1	49.9	53.2	70.1	68.0	68.0	66.2	66.8	69.6	75.0	38.0	36.8	36.9	35.9	36.0	35.8	37.7
MT	58.7	58.8	54.8	57.7	62.0	58.1	58.9	71.5	80.6	74.7	89.0	81.7	71.8	71.8	48.2	42.9	40.1	37.4	47.1	47.0	48.3
NL	61.4	61.2	61.3	62.9	62.1	62.1	62.4	87.9	86.4	87.1	90.4	89.5	88.4	90.0	42.9	43.4	43.2	43.8	43.1	43.6	43.2
AT	56.3	55.5	55.8	55.5	55.5	54.2	55.8	82.9	81.5	85.6	81.9	81.4	76.9	81.4	38.2	37.8	36.3	37.6	37.8	38.3	38.3
PL	54.2	53.3	54.4	53.3	51.7	50.9	50.1	64.2	62.7	65.5	64.7	63.6	65.2	65.8	45.8	45.3	45.1	44.0	42.1	39.7	38.2
PT	58.8	56.9	55.8	58.0	59.7	55.5	55.7	73.6	71.7	69.3	72.1	77.6	68.5	70.2	47.0	45.1	44.9	46.7	45.9	45.0	44.1
RO	66.0	65.1	64.5	64.1	62.8	64.1	66.3	76.7	78.8	80.7	80.9	77.1	80.7	86.1	56.8	53.9	51.6	50.7	51.1	50.9	51.1
SI	48.3	47.6	46.3	46.3	45.7	45.0	44.8	61.0	63.0	59.4	61.0	58.6	56.8	55.8	38.2	35.9	36.1	35.2	35.6	35.6	36.0
SK	53.3	51.3	49.7	48.5	50.9	51.0	51.1	68.7	63.8	58.7	58.4	64.7	63.2	65.2	41.3	41.3	42.0	40.3	40.1	41.1	40.0
FI	47.0	47.5	50.2	50.2	49.8	49.8	49.8	72.9	73.3	76.8	79.0	75.4	75.3	75.4	30.3	30.8	32.8	31.9	32.9	33.0	32.9
SE	52.9	50.9	51.5	53.3	54.4	54.6	56.3	69.3	63.4	63.3	67.8	70.2	70.5	73.8	40.3	40.8	41.8	41.9	42.1	42.3	42.9

Member State	Rank																				
	Domain of knowledge							Attainment and participation							Segregation						
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
EU-27	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
BE	18	17	15	16	16	10	15	14	15	12	14	15	9	17	16	17	17	16	17	13	12
BG	21	20	20	19	22	24	21	26	26	26	25	26	26	25	7	6	7	8	14	15	9
CZ	14	14	18	18	17	16	18	9	11	21	15	13	17	13	17	18	18	17	19	16	18
DK	13	12	14	13	15	13	14	16	13	15	19	19	15	19	9	8	8	5	10	10	8
DE	5	7	7	6	9	6	8	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	23	24	24	21	21	22	23
EE	22	22	22	21	20	20	19	22	25	23	17	23	19	20	18	19	16	20	16	20	15
IE	2	4	3	2	1	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	8	10	10	9	7	8	6
EL	8	2	2	5	8	7	6	11	8	7	11	12	11	14	5	3	3	3	3	3	3
ES	4	6	6	9	10	11	13	5	5	6	8	8	7	8	11	16	14	14	15	18	17
FR	10	9	8	7	6	3	5	7	6	9	6	5	4	6	13	14	15	13	8	6	5
HR	19	16	16	17	14	17	16	20	16	13	20	16	24	18	12	12	13	11	11	11	13
IT	9	11	9	11	11	9	10	19	19	20	22	20	20	23	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
CY	26	26	26	27	27	26	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	22	22	20	24	24	19	22
LV	27	27	27	26	26	27	25	25	22	18	21	24	23	24	27	27	27	27	27	27	27
LT	25	25	24	24	24	23	23	24	18	16	12	18	14	11	25	25	25	25	25	26	25
LU	11	5	5	4	3	5	4	2	3	5	4	4	5	2	24	13	12	10	6	5	14
HU	20	21	21	22	23	21	17	15	17	17	18	17	16	10	21	21	21	22	22	23	21
MT	7	8	12	10	5	8	7	13	9	11	5	6	12	15	3	9	19	19	4	4	4
NL	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	10	7	6	7	9	9	10
AT	12	13	11	12	12	15	11	6	7	4	7	7	8	7	19	20	22	18	20	21	19
PL	15	15	13	14	18	19	22	21	24	19	23	22	21	21	6	4	4	6	13	17	20
PT	6	10	10	8	7	12	12	10	14	14	13	9	18	16	4	5	5	4	5	7	7
RO	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	8	10	8	9	10	6	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
SI	23	23	25	25	25	25	26	23	23	24	24	25	25	26	20	23	23	23	23	24	24
SK	16	18	23	23	19	18	20	18	20	25	26	21	22	22	14	11	9	15	18	14	16
FI	24	24	19	20	21	22	24	12	12	10	10	11	10	9	26	26	26	26	26	25	26
SE	17	19	17	15	13	14	9	17	21	22	16	14	13	12	15	15	11	12	12	12	11

Table 29: Gender Equality Index for the domain of time and its subdomains, 2020–2026 (scores and ranks)

Member State	Score (points)																				
	Domain of time							Care activities							Social activities						
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
EU-27	**65.0**	**65.0**	**65.0**	**65.0**	**65.0**	**65.0**	**65.0**	**57.1**	**57.1**	**57.1**	**57.1**	**57.1**	**57.1**	**57.1**	**74.1**	**74.1**	**74.1**	**74.1**	**74.1**	**74.1**	**74.1**
BE	76.3	76.3	76.3	76.3	76.3	76.3	76.3	70.5	70.5	70.5	70.5	70.5	70.5	70.5	82.6	82.6	82.6	82.6	82.6	82.6	82.6
BG	65.2	65.2	65.2	65.2	65.2	65.2	65.2	55.6	55.6	55.6	55.6	55.6	55.6	55.6	76.4	76.4	76.4	76.4	76.4	76.4	76.4
CZ	57.6	57.6	57.6	57.6	57.6	57.6	57.6	42.8	42.8	42.8	42.8	42.8	42.8	42.8	77.6	77.6	77.6	77.6	77.6	77.6	77.6
DK	81.1	81.1	81.1	81.1	81.1	81.1	81.1	84.6	84.6	84.6	84.6	84.6	84.6	84.6	77.6	77.6	77.6	77.6	77.6	77.6	77.6
DE	61.2	61.2	61.2	61.2	61.2	61.2	61.2	49.7	49.7	49.7	49.7	49.7	49.7	49.7	75.3	75.3	75.3	75.3	75.3	75.3	75.3
EE	74.4	74.4	74.4	74.4	74.4	74.4	74.4	67.2	67.2	67.2	67.2	67.2	67.2	67.2	82.4	82.4	82.4	82.4	82.4	82.4	82.4
IE	66.3	66.3	66.3	66.3	66.3	66.3	66.3	55.5	55.5	55.5	55.5	55.5	55.5	55.5	79.4	79.4	79.4	79.4	79.4	79.4	79.4
EL	56.0	56.0	56.0	56.0	56.0	56.0	56.0	43.9	43.9	43.9	43.9	43.9	43.9	43.9	71.6	71.6	71.6	71.6	71.6	71.6	71.6
ES	74.1	74.1	74.1	74.1	74.1	74.1	74.1	68.9	68.9	68.9	68.9	68.9	68.9	68.9	79.6	79.6	79.6	79.6	79.6	79.6	79.6
FR	67.6	67.6	67.6	67.6	67.6	67.6	67.6	65.3	65.3	65.3	65.3	65.3	65.3	65.3	69.9	69.9	69.9	69.9	69.9	69.9	69.9
HR	69.6	69.6	69.6	69.6	69.6	69.6	69.6	61.1	61.1	61.1	61.1	61.1	61.1	61.1	79.3	79.3	79.3	79.3	79.3	79.3	79.3
IT	59.4	59.4	59.4	59.4	59.4	59.4	59.4	51.9	51.9	51.9	51.9	51.9	51.9	51.9	67.9	67.9	67.9	67.9	67.9	67.9	67.9
CY	54.7	54.7	54.7	54.7	54.7	54.7	54.7	42.6	42.6	42.6	42.6	42.6	42.6	42.6	70.2	70.2	70.2	70.2	70.2	70.2	70.2
LV	57.2	57.2	57.2	57.2	57.2	57.2	57.2	48.6	48.6	48.6	48.6	48.6	48.6	48.6	67.3	67.3	67.3	67.3	67.3	67.3	67.3
LT	63.3	63.3	63.3	63.3	63.3	63.3	63.3	60.3	60.3	60.3	60.3	60.3	60.3	60.3	66.5	66.5	66.5	66.5	66.5	66.5	66.5
LU	68.9	68.9	68.9	68.9	68.9	68.9	68.9	55.7	55.7	55.7	55.7	55.7	55.7	55.7	85.3	85.3	85.3	85.3	85.3	85.3	85.3
HU	64.6	64.6	64.6	64.6	64.6	64.6	64.6	51.8	51.8	51.8	51.8	51.8	51.8	51.8	80.5	80.5	80.5	80.5	80.5	80.5	80.5
MT	60.6	60.6	60.6	60.6	60.6	60.6	60.6	54.2	54.2	54.2	54.2	54.2	54.2	54.2	67.8	67.8	67.8	67.8	67.8	67.8	67.8
NL	74.8	74.8	74.8	74.8	74.8	74.8	74.8	69.6	69.6	69.6	69.6	69.6	69.6	69.6	80.5	80.5	80.5	80.5	80.5	80.5	80.5
AT	63.3	63.3	63.3	63.3	63.3	63.3	63.3	53.2	53.2	53.2	53.2	53.2	53.2	53.2	75.3	75.3	75.3	75.3	75.3	75.3	75.3
PL	68.7	68.7	68.7	68.7	68.7	68.7	68.7	64.3	64.3	64.3	64.3	64.3	64.3	64.3	73.5	73.5	73.5	73.5	73.5	73.5	73.5
PT	67.0	67.0	67.0	67.0	67.0	67.0	67.0	54.5	54.5	54.5	54.5	54.5	54.5	54.5	82.4	82.4	82.4	82.4	82.4	82.4	82.4
RO	61.5	61.5	61.5	61.5	61.5	61.5	61.5	50.9	50.9	50.9	50.9	50.9	50.9	50.9	74.2	74.2	74.2	74.2	74.2	74.2	74.2
SI	63.4	63.4	63.4	63.4	63.4	63.4	63.4	55.2	55.2	55.2	55.2	55.2	55.2	55.2	72.9	72.9	72.9	72.9	72.9	72.9	72.9
SK	64.5	64.5	64.5	64.5	64.5	64.5	64.5	53.3	53.3	53.3	53.3	53.3	53.3	53.3	78.0	78.0	78.0	78.0	78.0	78.0	78.0
FI	59.1	59.1	59.1	59.1	59.1	59.1	59.1	64.3	64.3	64.3	64.3	64.3	64.3	64.3	54.4	54.4	54.4	54.4	54.4	54.4	54.4
SE	58.7	58.7	58.7	58.7	58.7	58.7	58.7	56.7	56.7	56.7	56.7	56.7	56.7	56.7	60.6	60.6	60.6	60.6	60.6	60.6	60.6

Member State	Rank																				
	Domain of time							Care activities							Social activities						
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
EU-27	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
BE	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
BG	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
CZ	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	26	26	26	26	26	26	26	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
DK	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
DE	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
EE	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
IE	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
EL	26	26	26	26	26	26	26	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	19	19	19	19	19	19	19
ES	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
FR	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	21	21	21	21	21	21	21
HR	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
IT	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	22	22	22	22	22	22	22
CY	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
LV	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24
LT	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
LU	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
HU	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
MT	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
NL	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
AT	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
PL	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
PT	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
RO	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	16	16	16	16	16	16	16
SI	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
SK	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
FI	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	27	27	27	27	27	27	27
SE	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	26	26	26	26	26	26	26

Table 30: Gender Equality Index for the domain of power and its subdomains, 2020–2026 (scores and ranks)

Member State	Score (points)																										
	Domain of power							Political							Economic							Social						
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
EU-27	**29.8**	**31.5**	**34.9**	**36.1**	**38.8**	**40.5**	**42.9**	**40.9**	**42.4**	**44.3**	**45.0**	**46.2**	**47.3**	**45.5**	**36.1**	**38.4**	**40.8**	**44.0**	**47.3**	**49.4**	**51.7**	**17.9**	**19.2**	**23.6**	**23.8**	**26.8**	**28.4**	**33.5**
BE	33.9	37.0	49.5	47.7	47.6	49.9	54.6	56.3	66.0	80.6	80.4	76.2	79.6	65.7	51.6	57.2	58.8	59.2	61.3	58.0	60.5	13.5	13.5	25.6	22.8	23.1	26.9	40.9
BG	26.4	26.8	27.7	25.3	25.7	25.6	25.0	40.9	42.7	39.4	39.0	38.2	38.9	33.7	18.8	16.2	19.3	17.0	20.9	19.8	19.1	23.9	27.8	27.9	24.4	21.4	21.8	24.2
CZ	16.2	15.5	18.3	17.4	18.5	20.3	21.9	28.1	29.5	29.8	24.3	23.4	21.7	21.9	21.4	20.8	24.8	26.3	28.8	35.3	36.5	7.0	6.0	8.3	8.3	9.3	10.9	13.2
DK	37.9	40.7	47.9	51.8	55.8	57.3	60.8	59.5	58.7	58.1	70.5	76.1	74.9	74.2	41.9	49.2	51.5	64.8	70.3	72.5	75.7	21.8	23.3	36.8	30.5	32.4	34.7	40.0
DE	34.0	36.0	42.6	49.6	52.1	47.5	48.8	49.6	51.2	52.2	64.6	63.8	63.5	57.1	50.4	54.4	53.5	55.9	59.2	61.9	63.8	15.8	16.7	27.6	33.7	37.6	27.3	31.9
EE	14.5	14.2	18.2	18.1	19.7	21.9	22.3	31.0	27.8	47.1	45.4	43.5	45.9	40.3	8.4	8.4	8.7	9.0	10.8	13.9	14.9	11.6	12.2	14.7	14.4	16.3	16.5	18.6
IE	29.8	30.6	34.0	37.9	48.1	54.1	54.1	28.6	31.8	34.2	34.3	36.2	36.2	35.8	30.5	36.8	40.4	48.2	55.6	66.1	66.2	30.5	24.4	28.5	33.0	55.2	66.0	66.8
EL	13.4	14.2	17.3	19.8	21.9	26.2	33.1	22.6	20.6	22.3	22.1	24.7	30.6	28.3	10.5	13.5	20.5	28.9	32.4	35.3	37.5	10.2	10.3	11.4	12.1	13.2	16.6	34.1
ES	40.3	43.9	50.4	51.1	58.4	66.6	73.2	81.0	77.2	76.8	76.1	79.9	77.7	76.1	32.4	37.3	43.8	51.3	58.9	65.7	67.1	24.9	29.3	38.0	34.2	42.4	58.0	76.7
FR	61.3	63.0	68.3	70.0	70.7	72.5	81.5	74.6	76.4	80.7	77.6	76.2	79.7	77.4	73.7	74.6	75.0	76.9	77.8	81.7	81.0	42.0	43.8	52.6	57.5	59.5	58.6	86.3
HR	19.5	22.2	23.6	24.8	27.5	21.8	22.8	26.9	31.0	39.7	40.2	37.0	35.0	36.9	30.9	33.0	31.9	35.2	42.1	33.3	43.2	9.0	10.7	10.4	10.8	13.4	8.9	7.4
IT	29.7	35.2	46.1	47.8	46.1	47.9	49.0	35.0	42.1	49.9	47.5	39.2	41.2	41.5	53.0	56.2	59.8	66.3	70.9	74.3	76.2	14.1	18.4	32.9	34.7	35.1	35.9	37.1
CY	10.6	11.8	13.8	11.9	13.3	13.6	12.7	18.7	20.1	23.0	18.9	21.3	19.9	19.9	9.1	10.6	11.2	10.3	10.4	11.2	10.8	7.1	7.8	10.1	8.6	10.6	11.4	9.5
LV	30.8	28.6	25.3	24.8	30.4	28.9	34.9	30.8	26.5	24.1	26.8	35.1	37.6	37.5	34.3	30.8	23.9	20.1	25.4	28.5	39.5	27.6	28.8	28.3	28.5	31.5	22.7	28.7
LT	17.5	19.4	26.5	30.8	32.5	34.6	28.7	31.5	33.5	44.4	44.6	46.6	48.5	42.6	11.2	12.5	21.9	26.2	28.4	33.4	32.0	15.4	17.6	19.1	25.1	26.0	25.6	17.3
LU	24.3	27.6	30.6	35.1	36.1	37.3	39.2	36.8	41.1	42.3	48.0	47.8	49.5	50.1	15.5	20.2	26.8	31.0	31.5	30.3	31.0	25.0	25.3	25.4	28.9	31.1	34.8	38.8
HU	11.4	12.3	12.9	11.5	11.7	12.9	14.3	12.1	14.6	17.0	13.4	11.7	10.9	11.4	14.2	11.6	10.2	10.5	10.8	10.6	12.4	8.7	10.8	12.5	10.7	12.8	18.3	20.5
MT	12.1	13.9	17.1	19.4	27.3	28.1	27.2	19.8	21.0	23.5	32.1	36.5	36.1	39.6	11.1	12.1	12.7	19.1	22.3	23.2	24.1	7.9	10.6	16.7	11.9	24.9	26.4	21.1
NL	46.3	48.8	52.5	60.9	63.8	63.2	65.2	58.6	61.7	61.6	65.5	72.7	67.9	61.8	48.8	52.4	57.8	66.5	67.8	70.5	75.2	34.7	36.0	40.7	51.7	52.7	52.8	59.7
AT	33.4	34.8	38.3	38.5	37.4	39.9	40.8	58.5	69.5	67.4	70.0	66.0	66.4	65.4	39.9	41.8	47.0	47.9	48.1	50.6	54.2	16.1	14.5	17.7	17.0	16.5	18.8	19.1
PL	12.0	12.6	19.8	18.4	21.4	21.6	28.8	29.3	31.3	30.7	30.2	30.8	37.2	40.0	25.4	26.9	28.8	30.0	33.3	27.9	34.4	2.3	2.4	8.8	6.9	9.6	9.7	17.3
PT	23.2	25.6	29.8	31.2	34.8	36.8	43.4	46.7	50.4	48.2	48.4	51.3	50.3	52.7	28.7	30.3	37.0	42.4	45.4	47.4	50.7	9.3	11.0	14.9	14.8	18.0	21.0	30.7
RO	15.4	15.3	16.9	17.9	22.0	26.6	25.7	24.9	21.6	18.3	17.2	22.7	29.2	21.9	13.8	13.9	18.9	19.4	24.5	30.4	30.8	10.6	12.0	14.0	17.2	19.1	21.3	25.1
SI	20.1	17.9	18.8	19.6	22.6	24.6	27.7	42.9	36.6	36.7	43.8	52.9	54.3	51.4	34.8	28.4	28.1	31.0	29.4	32.4	40.7	5.4	5.5	6.4	5.6	7.4	8.4	10.2
SK	19.1	19.8	21.8	21.4	23.4	22.9	25.5	22.4	22.2	22.4	22.3	23.1	20.9	22.0	39.0	37.8	33.2	39.2	31.2	31.7	40.9	8.0	9.2	13.9	11.2	17.8	18.1	18.3
FI	54.9	53.4	55.7	59.2	63.9	61.0	61.2	82.6	79.4	81.4	90.0	79.4	78.4	75.9	50.0	51.1	51.2	54.9	60.2	59.0	61.4	40.0	37.5	41.4	42.1	54.7	49.1	49.1
SE	77.5	81.1	77.1	81.0	78.5	80.3	79.6	90.3	91.8	92.3	93.0	88.5	88.3	87.4	59.3	62.1	60.6	57.1	57.3	60.2	60.3	87.0	93.6	82.0	99.9	95.5	97.6	95.7

Member State	Rank																												
	Domain of power							Political							Economic							Social								
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
EU-27	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
BE	8	7	6	9	9	8	7	8	6	4	3	5	3	6	4	3	4	5	5	10	9	15	15	12	14	14	11	7
BG	13	14	14	15	18	19	22	12	11	16	17	16	16	21	19	20	22	24	24	24	24	9	7	10	13	15	15	16
CZ	20	20	21	25	25	25	25	20	19	20	22	23	24	24	18	18	18	19	19	13	18	25	25	26	25	26	24	24
DK	6	6	7	5	6	6	6	5	8	8	6	6	6	5	8	8	7	4	3	3	3	10	10	6	9	9	9	8
DE	7	8	9	7	7	10	10	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	5	5	6	7	7	7	7	12	13	11	7	7	10	12
EE	22	23	22	23	24	22	24	16	20	12	13	14	14	15	27	27	27	27	25	25	25	16	16	18	18	20	22	20
IE	11	11	11	11	8	7	8	19	16	18	18	19	19	20	15	12	11	10	10	5	6	5	9	8	8	3	2	4
EL	23	22	23	19	22	18	15	23	25	25	24	22	22	22	25	22	21	18	15	14	17	18	22	22	19	22	21	11
ES	5	5	5	6	5	3	3	3	3	5	5	2	5	3	13	11	10	9	8	6	5	8	5	5	6	6	4	3
FR	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	4	4	3	4	4	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	2
HR	17	16	17	16	16	23	23	21	18	15	16	17	21	19	14	13	14	14	13	16	13	20	20	23	22	21	26	27
IT	12	9	8	8	10	9	9	14	12	10	12	15	15	14	3	4	3	3	2	2	2	14	11	7	5	8	7	10
CY	27	27	26	26	26	26	27	26	26	23	25	26	26	26	26	26	25	26	27	26	27	24	24	24	24	24	23	26
LV	10	12	16	17	15	15	14	17	21	21	21	20	17	18	12	14	19	21	21	21	16	6	6	9	11	10	14	14
LT	19	18	15	14	14	14	17	15	15	13	14	13	13	13	23	23	20	20	20	15	20	13	12	14	12	12	13	22
LU	14	13	12	12	12	12	13	13	13	14	11	12	12	12	20	19	17	15	16	20	21	7	8	13	10	11	8	9
HU	26	26	27	27	27	27	26	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	21	25	26	25	26	27	26	21	19	21	23	23	19	18
MT	24	24	24	21	17	16	19	25	24	22	19	18	20	17	24	24	24	23	23	23	23	23	21	16	20	13	12	17
NL	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	6	7	7	8	7	7	8	7	6	5	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	5	5	5
AT	9	10	10	10	11	11	12	7	5	6	7	8	8	7	9	9	9	11	11	11	11	11	14	15	16	19	18	19
PL	25	25	19	22	23	24	16	18	17	19	20	21	18	16	17	17	15	17	14	22	19	27	27	25	26	25	25	23
PT	15	15	13	13	13	13	11	10	10	11	10	11	11	10	16	15	12	12	12	12	12	19	18	17	17	17	17	13
RO	21	21	25	24	21	17	20	22	23	26	26	25	23	25	22	21	23	22	22	19	22	17	17	19	15	16	16	15
SI	16	19	20	20	20	20	18	11	14	17	15	10	10	11	11	16	16	16	18	17	15	26	26	27	27	27	27	25
SK	18	17	18	18	19	21	21	24	22	24	23	24	25	23	10	10	13	13	17	18	14	22	23	20	21	18	20	21
FI	3	3	3	4	3	5	5	2	2	2	2	3	4	4	6	7	8	8	6	9	8	3	3	3	4	4	6	6
SE	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	6	9	8	10	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Table 31: Gender Equality Index for the domain of health and its subdomains, 2020–2026 (scores and ranks)

Member State	Score (points)																				
	Domain of health							Status							Behaviour						
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
EU-27	**85.6**	**86.0**	**86.3**	**86.1**	**85.9**	**86.2**	**86.4**	**89.0**	**89.8**	**90.4**	**89.9**	**89.7**	**90.2**	**90.7**	**82.4**	**82.4**	**82.4**	**82.4**	**82.4**	**82.4**	**82.4**
BE	85.9	85.7	85.8	84.8	84.7	86.2	86.1	91.7	91.2	91.4	89.4	89.2	92.3	92.1	80.5	80.5	80.5	80.5	80.5	80.5	80.5
BG	74.1	74.4	74.2	74.2	75.0	74.7	74.8	87.8	88.5	88.1	88.1	90.0	89.2	89.7	62.5	62.5	62.5	62.5	62.5	62.5	62.5
CZ	82.8	82.5	83.3	83.7	82.6	82.6	82.7	90.1	89.4	91.2	92.1	89.7	89.8	89.9	76.1	76.1	76.1	76.1	76.1	76.1	76.1
DK	86.8	87.8	88.4	86.7	86.1	87.5	88.6	94.2	96.3	97.6	94.0	92.5	95.5	98.1	80.1	80.1	80.1	80.1	80.1	80.1	80.1
DE	88.4	89.0	88.6	88.8	87.2	87.8	87.8	94.0	95.2	94.4	94.8	91.4	92.8	92.7	83.2	83.2	83.2	83.2	83.2	83.2	83.2
EE	84.6	85.9	88.2	87.9	86.5	86.8	85.6	85.2	87.9	92.6	91.9	88.9	89.7	87.1	84.1	84.1	84.1	84.1	84.1	84.1	84.1
IE	95.9	94.5	95.4	94.4	94.6	93.8	94.6	99.4	96.6	98.4	96.3	96.7	95.2	96.7	92.5	92.5	92.5	92.5	92.5	92.5	92.5
EL	83.5	83.3	84.1	83.9	84.3	83.8	84.9	89.8	89.5	91.1	90.6	91.6	90.4	92.9	77.6	77.6	77.6	77.6	77.6	77.6	77.6
ES	86.2	86.3	86.1	85.5	86.0	86.2	86.7	87.2	87.4	87.1	85.9	86.9	87.2	88.3	85.2	85.2	85.2	85.2	85.2	85.2	85.2
FR	87.7	87.7	88.2	87.4	88.1	88.0	87.4	93.5	93.5	94.5	92.8	94.5	94.2	92.9	82.2	82.2	82.2	82.2	82.2	82.2	82.2
HR	83.9	85.5	85.8	83.5	85.9	83.1	83.6	86.8	90.1	90.7	85.9	91.0	85.0	86.1	81.2	81.2	81.2	81.2	81.2	81.2	81.2
IT	85.4	85.8	87.3	86.8	86.4	86.9	88.2	86.4	87.2	90.2	89.2	88.4	89.5	92.1	84.5	84.5	84.5	84.5	84.5	84.5	84.5
CY	79.8	80.4	81.6	83.2	83.0	84.4	83.0	85.6	86.9	89.5	93.0	92.5	95.7	92.7	74.4	74.4	74.4	74.4	74.4	74.4	74.4
LV	77.7	76.9	76.6	77.4	77.1	78.1	78.6	83.0	81.2	80.6	82.4	81.8	83.9	85.0	72.7	72.7	72.7	72.7	72.7	72.7	72.7
LT	79.9	79.4	79.5	82.7	83.7	79.8	80.8	82.2	81.2	81.3	87.9	90.1	82.0	84.0	77.7	77.7	77.7	77.7	77.7	77.7	77.7
LU	84.9	87.0	87.4	87.0	87.5	87.6	87.0	88.8	93.3	94.2	93.3	94.4	94.5	93.4	81.1	81.1	81.1	81.1	81.1	81.1	81.1
HU	85.5	86.2	86.1	85.8	86.4	86.3	86.0	87.3	88.7	88.5	88.0	89.1	88.9	88.3	83.7	83.7	83.7	83.7	83.7	83.7	83.7
MT	90.6	90.7	89.9	89.1	89.2	87.3	89.1	91.9	92.3	90.7	89.1	89.3	85.5	89.1	89.2	89.2	89.2	89.2	89.2	89.2	89.2
NL	87.7	87.4	89.0	89.4	88.0	89.1	89.1	89.5	89.0	92.3	92.9	90.1	92.5	92.4	85.9	85.9	85.9	85.9	85.9	85.9	85.9
AT	88.8	89.1	89.8	89.1	88.6	88.7	88.9	91.3	92.0	93.4	91.9	91.0	91.1	91.6	86.3	86.3	86.3	86.3	86.3	86.3	86.3
PL	84.3	85.3	85.1	85.2	85.0	85.4	85.4	87.2	89.3	88.9	89.1	88.7	89.6	89.5	81.4	81.4	81.4	81.4	81.4	81.4	81.4
PT	79.5	80.2	79.9	81.4	80.0	80.6	82.1	77.3	78.7	78.0	81.0	78.3	79.4	82.4	81.8	81.8	81.8	81.8	81.8	81.8	81.8
RO	61.5	62.2	62.7	61.8	61.1	60.9	62.8	81.7	83.5	85.0	82.5	80.5	80.1	85.1	46.3	46.3	46.3	46.3	46.3	46.3	46.3
SI	82.8	83.6	87.0	85.7	86.8	86.6	86.1	85.7	87.3	94.6	91.9	94.1	93.8	92.7	80.0	80.0	80.0	80.0	80.0	80.0	80.0
SK	82.3	80.2	79.8	80.5	80.8	82.8	83.7	90.4	85.8	84.9	86.4	87.1	91.3	93.5	75.0	75.0	75.0	75.0	75.0	75.0	75.0
FI	85.9	86.7	87.4	87.4	85.9	87.3	87.2	90.7	92.5	94.0	94.0	90.8	93.8	93.6	81.3	81.3	81.3	81.3	81.3	81.3	81.3
SE	89.6	90.1	91.1	89.9	91.1	91.2	89.8	91.2	92.3	94.3	91.8	94.3	94.4	91.6	88.0	88.0	88.0	88.0	88.0	88.0	88.0

Member State	Rank																				
	Domain of health							Status							Behaviour						
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
EU-27	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
BE	10	15	17	17	18	15	14	6	10	12	15	18	11	12	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
BG	26	26	26	26	26	26	26	15	17	21	19	15	19	17	26	26	26	26	26	26	26
CZ	20	20	20	19	22	22	22	11	13	13	9	16	15	16	22	22	22	22	22	22	22
DK	8	6	7	12	13	8	6	2	2	2	3	7	2	1	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
DE	5	5	6	6	8	6	8	3	3	5	2	9	9	9	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
EE	15	13	8	7	10	12	16	23	18	10	12	20	16	22	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
IE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
EL	18	19	19	18	19	19	18	12	12	14	14	8	14	7	21	21	21	21	21	21	21
ES	9	11	14	15	14	16	12	18	19	22	23	24	21	20	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
FR	7	7	9	9	5	5	9	4	4	4	8	2	6	6	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
HR	17	16	16	20	15	20	20	19	11	15	24	10	23	23	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
IT	13	14	12	11	11	11	7	20	21	17	16	22	18	13	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
CY	23	21	21	21	21	18	21	22	22	18	6	6	1	10	24	24	24	24	24	24	24
LV	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	24	25	26	26	25	24	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
LT	22	24	24	22	20	24	24	25	26	25	21	13	25	26	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
LU	14	9	10	10	7	7	11	14	5	7	5	3	4	5	16	16	16	16	16	16	16
HU	12	12	15	13	12	14	15	16	16	20	20	19	20	21	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
MT	2	2	3	4	3	9	3	5	8	16	18	17	22	19	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
NL	6	8	5	3	6	3	4	13	15	11	7	14	10	11	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
AT	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	7	9	9	10	11	13	14	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
PL	16	17	18	16	17	17	17	17	14	19	17	21	17	18	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
PT	24	22	22	23	24	23	23	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
RO	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	26	24	23	25	26	26	24	27	27	27	27	27	27	27
SI	19	18	13	14	9	13	13	21	20	3	11	5	7	8	19	19	19	19	19	19	19
SK	21	23	23	24	23	21	19	10	23	24	22	23	12	4	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
FI	11	10	11	8	16	10	10	9	6	8	4	12	8	3	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
SE	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	8	7	6	13	4	5	15	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

Annex 3. Gender Equality Index 2026: breakdown by indicators

Table 32: Indicators of the domain of work

Member State	Participation								Segregation and quality of work							
	FTE employment (%, 15–89)				Duration of working life (years)				ICT specialists (%, 15–74)		Managers (%, 15–74)		Low-paid workers (%, 16+)			
	Women	Men	Total	Gap	Women	Men	Total	Gap	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Total	Gap
EU-27	**44.4**	**58.7**	**51.2**	**– 15**	**35.4**	**39.5**	**37.5**	**– 5**	**19.5**	**80.5**	**36.0**	**64.0**	**36.9**	**29.3**	**32.8**	**8**
BE	42.0	54.3	47.8	– 12	33.7	37.6	35.7	– 4	17.6	82.4	37.2	62.8	34.8	30.6	32.6	4
BG	47.5	59.7	53.2	– 12	33.3	35.9	34.6	– 3	25.0	75.0	41.6	58.4	35.6	36.9	36.3	– 1
CZ	49.7	66.6	57.8	– 17	35.7	40.3	38.1	– 4	12.9	87.1	30.4	69.6	34.2	28.8	31.3	5
DK	49.3	60.4	54.7	– 11	40.6	44.5	42.6	– 4	21.1	78.9	32.4	67.6	27.1	23.3	25.1	4
DE	44.2	60.8	52.2	– 17	38.5	41.8	40.2	– 3	20.0	80.0	30.4	69.6	41.8	25.6	33.1	16
EE	56.3	65.6	60.6	– 10	41.8	41.1	41.5	1	22.5	77.5	43.1	56.9	33.8	28.3	31.1	6
IE	51.1	64.2	57.3	– 13	37.9	43.4	40.7	– 5	22.0	78.0	39.2	60.8	38.2	31.2	34.4	7
EL	39.5	58.4	48.6	– 18	31.8	38.5	35.3	– 7	17.0	83.0	32.8	67.2	34.3	33.7	34.0	0
ES	44.3	57.1	50.5	– 13	35.1	38.5	36.8	– 4	19.5	80.5	36.2	63.8	37.6	29.1	33.0	9
FR	45.5	54.7	49.8	– 9	36.2	38.7	37.5	– 3	19.6	80.4	39.1	60.9	36.3	28.0	32.1	8
HR	46.6	56.2	51.2	– 9	33.8	36.3	35.1	– 2	18.4	81.6	32.4	67.6	37.8	33.3	35.4	5
IT	33.9	53.7	43.4	– 20	28.4	37.3	33.0	– 9	16.6	83.4	28.7	71.3	45.3	40.1	42.3	5
CY	54.8	65.5	59.9	– 11	36.7	42.1	39.5	– 5	20.1	79.9	26.1	73.9	38.3	23.9	30.8	14
LV	52.8	63.6	57.7	– 11	38.6	37.7	38.1	1	25.9	74.1	43.8	56.2	36.3	28.0	32.4	8
LT	54.3	64.1	58.9	– 10	39.3	38.0	38.6	1	22.5	77.5	38.7	61.3	37.6	34.8	36.2	3
LU	52.8	61.3	56.9	– 8	33.8	37.2	35.6	– 3	20.0	80.0	27.6 (e)	72.4	40.5	30.3	35.1	11
HU	52.3	64.9	58.3	– 13	35.8	39.0	37.5	– 3	15.0	85.0	41.7	58.3	27.9	26.7	27.2	1
MT	52.8	71.0	62.5	– 18	35.9	42.2	39.2	– 6	17.1	82.9	40.8	59.2	30.6	32.2	31.6	– 1
NL	46.9	63.1	54.3	– 16	41.9	45.9	44.0	– 4	19.6	80.4	30.1	69.9	43.6	27.6	35.2	16
AT	42.7	59.5	50.7	– 17	37.4	40.8	39.1	– 4	19.7	80.3	37.3	62.7	43.6	28.0	35.1	16
PL	48.5	63.4	55.6	– 14	33.9	37.9	35.9	– 4	16.6	83.4	42.7	57.3	28.1	29.0	28.6	– 1
PT	51.3	60.6	55.6	– 10	38.9	40.6	39.7	– 2	22.3	77.7	39.2	60.8	25.0	20.9	23.0	4
RO	40.5	58.2	49.1	– 17	29.1	36.0	32.7	– 7	27.8	72.2	32.4	67.6	23.3	22.5	22.8	0
SI	49.3	60.2	54.7	– 11	36.1	38.3	37.2	– 2	19.0	81.0	36.2	63.8	26.1	23.3	24.6	3
SK	51.8	63.9	57.6	– 12	34.4	37.8	36.1	– 4	15.5	84.5	36.9	63.1	42.2	42.3	42.3	0
FI	49.1	55.3	52.0	– 6	39.7	40.4	40.1	0	24.3	75.7	35.7	64.3	25.3	22.0	23.6	3
SE	54.5	61.7	58.0	– 7	42.3	44.5	43.4	– 3	24.6	75.4	44.5	55.5	27.4	20.1	23.6	7
	Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS, 2024. EIGE's calculation				*Source:* Eurostat, EU-LFS, (lfsi_dwl_a), 2025				*Source:* Eurostat, (isoc_sks_itsps), 2025		*Source:* Eurostat, EU-LFS, (lfsa_egais), 2025 LU: Women, EIGE estimation		*Source:* Eurostat, EU-SILC, EIGE's calculation with microdata, 2025 (LT: provisional)			

Table 33: Indicators of the domain of money

Member State	Financial resources					Economic situation						
	Median earnings (PPS, %, 18–64 employed population)				Gender pension gap (%, 65+)	Median partner earnings ratio (%, 18–64)			In-work poverty of adults in single or single-parent households (%, 16+ employed population)			
	Women	Men	Total	Gap	Gap	Women	Men	Gap	Women	Men	Total	Gap
EU-27	**25 525**	**32 079**	**28 806**	**– 6 554**	**23.9**	**73**	**147**	**– 74**	**16**	**13**	**14.3**	**3**
BE	37 239	43 122	40 253	– 5 883	26.6	84.2	123.7	– 40	10.1	7.4	8.7	3
BG	15 981	18 277	17 054	– 2 296	17.5	85.6	122.0	– 36	17.4	19.5	18.6	– 3
CZ	19 064	24 961	22 129	– 5 897	8.2	69.3	151.1	– 82	14.4	6.9	10.8	7
DK	43 098	50 891	47 182	– 7 793	10.7	75.8	135.8	– 60	12.4	12.1	12.2	0
DE	32 333	45 551	39 145	– 13 218	24.2	61.9	181.3	– 119	15.9	12.5	14.1	3
EE	19 649	22 331	20 785	– 2 682	2.7	79.2	133.3	– 54	16.7	18.9	17.7	– 2
IE	26 320	33 498	30 492	– 7 178	23.5	63.4	160.9	– 98	10.8	15.8	13.2	– 5
EL	17 819	20 713	19 069	– 2 894	22.1	75.5	149.9	– 74	11.3	9.2	10.1	2
ES	22 567	27 584	25 297	– 5 017	27.3	73.0	145.9	– 73	19.2	13.1	15.9	6
FR	27 228	32 830	29 764	– 5 602	26.6	81.5	131.3	– 49	18.4	12.8	15.7	5
HR	20 144	23 378	21 859	– 3 234	19.1	87.2	122.6	– 36	17.3	12.0	14.6	5
IT	25 072	31 473	28 996	– 6 401	29.2	58.9	192.0	– 133	20.3	13.7	16.5	6
CY	20 639	29 127	24 940	– 8 488	29.0	68.5	152.2	– 83	16.2	11.1	13.3	5
LV	20 369	24 842	22 284	– 4 473	14.0	74.7	131.3	– 56	15.9	14.6	15.4	1
LT	24 753	29 697	26 898	– 4 944	10.3	78.8	130.7	– 52	10.6	14.4	12.4	– 3
LU	42 778	52 126	47 809	– 9 348	31.2	79.8	130.6	– 51	17.1	12.1	14.4	5
HU	15 698	17 230	16 606	– 1 532	16.7	78.4	136.3	– 58	15.1	13.1	14.1	2
MT	25 151	27 731	26 792	– 2 580	36.6	73.0	145.7	– 73	22.0	31.4	28.6	– 9
NL	33 366	48 437	40 891	– 15 071	29.5	65.2	158.9	– 94	15.1	12.5	13.7	2
AT	32 761	47 072	40 470	– 14 311	35.0	63.4	175.7	– 113	18.4	14.8	16.4	3
PL	22 731	25 777	24 045	– 3 046	17.7	78.1	128.5	– 51	9.5	11.3	10.3	– 1
PT	15 858	18 987	17 305	– 3 129	21.8	80.8	129.7	– 49	17.4	13.9	16.0	3
RO	21 766	24 616	23 503	– 2 850	21.1	81.7	127.6	– 46	8.4	9.4	9.0	– 1
SI	27 252	31 099	29 225	– 3 847	10.1	85.6	125.2	– 39	18.4	20.4	19.6	– 2
SK	16 513	20 869	18 614	– 4 356	12.1	80.0	132.6	– 53	24.1	12.8	19.6	11
FI	31 456	37 554	34 336	– 6 098	22.6	82.3	128.7	– 47	6.5	7.7	7.1	– 1
SE	30 710	36 193	33 483	– 5 483	22.8	78.9	131.0	– 52	12.1	13.7	13.0	– 2
	Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC, EIGE's calculation with microdata, 2025 (LT: provisional)				*Source:* Eurostat, EU-SILC, (ilc_pnp13), 2025	*Source:* Eurostat, EU-SILC, EIGE's calculation with microdata, 2025 (LT: provisional)			*Source:* Eurostat, EU-SILC, EIGE's calculation with microdata, 2025 (LT: provisional)			

Table 34: Indicators of the domain of knowledge

Member State	Attainment and participation								Segregation			
	Tertiary graduates (%, 30–34)				IVET graduates (%, 25–34)				Graduated in tertiary education in EHW, humanities and art (tertiary students) (%)		Graduated in tertiary education in STEM (tertiary students) (%)	
	Women	Men	Total	Gap	Women	Men	Total	Gap	Women	Men	Women	Men
EU-27	**51.1**	**40.3**	**45.6**	**11**	**26.8**	**34.2**	**30.6**	**– 7**	**74.6**	**25.4**	**33.6**	**66.4**
BE	60.1	45.8	53.0	14	18.9	30.0	24.5	– 11	71.2	28.8	28.4	71.6
BG	49.8	35.3	42.4	15	13.3	28.7	21.2	– 16	77.0	23.0	38.0	62.0
CZ	44.4	31.5	37.9	12	44.6	59.0	52.0	– 14	78.1	21.9	34.1	65.9
DK	64.9	47.9	56.3	17	15.7	24.8	20.3	– 9	74.6	25.4	36.4	63.6
DE	46.3	41.7	43.9	4	37.9	38.7	38.3	– 1	74.8	25.2	28.7	71.3
EE	58.1	34.0	45.6	24	23.0	30.1	26.6	– 7	81.4	18.6	41.5	58.5
IE	72.3	65.3	68.8	7	10.4	10.8	10.6	– 1	74.5	25.5	36.4	63.6
EL	51.4	35.7	43.2	15	17.2	22.9	20.2	– 6	75.3	24.7	41.7	58.3
ES	57.6	45.4	51.4	13	8.6	11.3	10.0	– 2	72.2	27.8	27.5	72.5
FR	58.5	50.8	54.7	8	23.5	28.6	26.0	– 5	72.4	27.6	34.0	66.0
HR	55.1	35.9	45.0	19	41.3	57.0	49.6	– 16	78.4	21.6	38.1	61.9
IT	37.3	23.9	30.4	13	27.8	42.8	35.5	– 15	73.5	26.5	39.5	60.5
CY	75.0	56.7	65.4	18	3.6	14.6	9.4	– 11	79.7	20.3	34.2	65.8
LV	59.2	38.0	48.3	21	17.8	28.0	23.0	– 10	84.2	15.8	34.2	65.8
LT	68.7	55.5	61.8	13	15.0	22.4	18.9	– 7	81.1	18.9	31.7	68.3
LU	70.0	65.5	67.7	4	19.2	20.6	19.9	– 2	74.9	25.1	33.5	66.5
HU	39.1	28.4	33.6	11	36.4	47.0	41.8	– 11	75.2	24.8	28.7	71.3
MT	54.9	40.2	46.4	15	13.3	18.9	16.5	– 6	69.2	30.8	33.1	66.9
NL	59.7	52.5	56.1	7	25.7	27.9	26.8	– 2	73.8	26.2	34.2	65.8
AT	49.0	40.0	44.4	9	33.3	41.0	37.2	– 8	74.2	25.8	29.2	70.8
PL	57.3	39.7	48.3	17	26.7	42.9	35.0	– 16	81.6	18.4	39.0	61.0
PT	49.7	33.8	41.7	16	17.9	24.7	21.4	– 7	74.4	25.6	35.9	64.1
RO	24.4	21.0	22.6	3	48.1	55.9	52.1	– 8	73.3	26.7	41.7	58.3
SI	57.5	30.1	42.9	28	31.6	53.3	43.1	– 21	79.3	20.7	33.0	67.0
SK	44.4	27.1	35.6	17	39.8	57.3	48.7	– 17	75.9	24.1	32.1	67.9
FI	48.3	35.0	41.6	13	32.4	41.4	37.0	– 9	82.7	17.3	34.1	65.9
SE	62.8	50.2	56.4	13	16.9	25.0	21.1	– 8	77.7	22.3	38.8	61.2
	Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS, (edat_lfse_03), 2025				*Source:* Eurostat, EU-LFS, (edat_lfse_03), 2025				*Source:* Eurostat, Education statistics (educ_uoe_grad02), 2024		*Source:* Eurostat, Education statistics (educ_uoe_grad02), 2024	

Table 35: Indicators of the domain of time

Member State	Care activities												Social activities							
	Informal childcare (0–11) for more than 35 hours per week (%, 16–74)				Informal long-term care for more than 20 hours per week (%, 45–64)				Housework chores (cooking, cleaning, laundry) every day (%, 16–74)				Hours spent on leisure activities per week (%, 16–74)				Voluntary, charitable or political activities at least once per week (%, 16–74)			
	Women	Men	Total	Gap	Women	Men	Total	Gap	Women	Men	Total	Gap	Women	Men	Total	Gap	Women	Men	Total	Gap
EU-27	**40.8**	**20.1**	**31.4**	**21**	**19.9**	**13.0**	**17.1**	**7**	**58.6**	**33.3**	**46.1**	**26**	**30.4**	**42.9**	**36.7**	**– 13.0**	**13.0**	**17**	**15**	**– 4**
BE	29.8	19.7	24.8	10	9.5	10.4	9.9	0	50.3	27.1	38.7	23	33.6	42.7	38.2	– 9.0	16.8	19	18	– 2
BG	41.0	19.5	32.3	21	26.7	18.0	23.0	9	60.6	31.4	46.3	30	30.6	37.6	34.2	– 7.0	16.8	12	14	5
CZ	45.1	17.7	33.0	27	13.4	5.8	10.7	7	53.7	24.6	39.3	29	32.1	44.7	38.5	– 13.0	10.3	12	11	– 2
DK	19.7	19.5	19.6	0	3.7	4.6	4.1	– 1	48.8	36.3	42.6	13	30.7	40.4	35.6	– 9.0	19.8	25	22	– 5
DE	38.0	17.9	28.6	20	14.1	5.9	10.5	8	55.2	33.3	44.2	22	36.2	50.4	43.4	– 14.0	15.6	20	18	– 4
EE	31.4	16.4	24.2	15	20.3	15.6	18.2	4	53.0	38.5	46.0	14	29.2	41.0	35.0	– 12.0	14.2	15	15	– 1
IE	51.3	26.3	41.0	25	37.2	21.1	29.8	16	60.5	35.3	48.1	26	30.3	38.5	34.4	– 9.0	13.0	16	15	– 3
EL	37.0	15.1	27.0	22	25.8	12.1	19.8	14	64.9	28.4	47.0	37	21.3	31.2	26.2	– 10.0	13.7	18	16	– 4
ES	55.9	29.3	43.1	27	44.5	39.7	42.7	5	59.4	38.7	49.2	20	34.9	47.3	41.0	– 12.0	12.1	14	13	– 2
FR	21.1	13.4	17.5	8	8.0	5.4	6.9	3	60.9	39.5	50.5	21	26.5	37.7	32.0	– 11.0	15.3	22	19	– 7
HR	37.7	33.1	35.5	5	38.0	20.7	31.5	17	65.3	26.6	46.3	38	32.0	41.8	36.9	– 10.0	14.2	12	13	2
IT	41.4	15.9	30.5	25	31.2	23.3	28.1	8	64.9	27.7	46.6	37	28.0	41.6	34.8	– 14.0	9.5	14	12	– 4
CY	42.8	14.8	30.6	28	9.2	5.1	7.7	4	62.5	23.8	43.7	39	15.8	25.4	20.5	– 9.0	12.2	16	14	– 4
LV	41.1	15.3	30.5	26	18.1	10.3	14.9	8	56.0	28.8	43.0	27	28.0	40.5	34.0	– 13.0	9.3	14	12	– 5
LT	37.2	25.1	31.9	12	21.7	12.5	18.6	9	59.7	33.4	47.1	27	32.3	43.9	37.9	– 12.0	6.8	12	9	– 5
LU	24.3 (u)	10.9 (u)	16.6	13	9.0	6.0	7.6	3	38.2	21.3	29.6	17	43.8	60.4	52.4	– 16.0	18.2	18	18	0
HU	47.0	22.5	36.4	24	12.5	7.9	10.8	5	48.4	21.4	35.0	27	29.5	40.2	34.9	– 10.0	10.4	12	11	– 2
MT	37 (u)	14.4 (u)	24.7	23	24.4	18.4	22.1	6	52.5	25.2	38.0	28	43.5	59.2	52.1	– 15.0	13.8	22	18	– 8
NL	49.0	25.5	37.8	23	8.7	8.3	8.6	1	52.3	32.0	42.1	20	38.0	49.1	43.6	– 11.0	15.8	19	17	– 3
AT	51.7	21.3	38.3	31	15.1	9.9	13.1	5	54.7	28.9	41.9	26	34.0	46.2	40.1	– 12.0	13.0	17	15	– 4
PL	53.7	25.3	41.7	29	26.0	23.2	24.9	3	58.2	32.8	45.8	25	26.3	38.2	32.2	– 12.0	10.6	14	12	– 3
PT	28.3	13.5	22.0	14	31.6	15.5	26.3	16	66.3	44.3	55.8	22	21.3	31.1	26.0	– 10.0	10.0	10	10	0
RO	46.4	22.0	37.0	24	22.2	12.9	18.9	9	61.4	29.0	45.4	32	24.8	37.8	31.4	– 13.0	10.8	13	12	– 2
SI	45.6	20.9	33.5	25	20.4	14.0	17.6	6	65.9	33.7	49.4	32	25.8	38.8	32.5	– 13.0	13.6	17	15	– 3
SK	44.7	24.0	36.1	21	31.8	18.7	26.3	13	57.4	27.1	42.4	30	26.1	41.5	33.8	– 16.0	12.5	13	13	0
FI	53.2	23.3	37.8	30	6.1	4.9	5.6	1	46.4	31.9	39.2	14	27.8	46.1	37.0	– 18.0	10.2	21	16	– 11
SE	41.7	22.9	32.0	19	22.5	9.9	17.9	13	60.4	43.1	51.7	17	26.2	43.1	34.9	– 17.0	8.6	14	11	– 5
	Source: EIGE's CARE Survey, 2024; EIGE's calculation. u: low reliability				*Source:* Eurostat, EHIS, 2019; European Commission (2025), *The EU monitoring framework on the Council recommendation on access to affordable high-quality long-term care*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.				*Source:* EIGE's CARE Survey, 2024; EIGE's calculation.				*Source:* EIGE's CARE Survey, 2024; EIGE's calculation.				*Source:* EIGE's CARE Survey, 2024; EIGE's calculation.			

Table 36: Indicators of the domain of power

Member State	Political						Economic		Social	
	Share of ministers (%)		Share of MPs (%)		Share of members of regional assemblies (%)		Share of members of boards in largest quoted companies, supervisory board or board of directors (%)		Share of members of highest decision-making body of the national Olympic sport organisations (%)	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
EU	**32.3**	**67.7**	**33.3**	**66.7**	**32.3**	**67.7**	**35.5**	**64.5**	**26.3**	**73.7**
BE	26.7	73.3	44.2	55.8	47.3	52.7	38.7	61.3	29.9	70.1
BG	28.6	71.4	25.1	74.9	28.0	72.0	17.5	82.5	21.1	78.9
CZ	7.4	92.6	25.7	74.3	21.3	78.7	27.9	72.1	12.2	87.8
DK	36.0	64.0	44.7	55.3	47.8	52.2	43.8	56.2	29.1	70.9
DE	44.4	55.6	32.7	67.3	33.4	66.6	40.0	60.0	25.0	75.0
EE	35.8	64.2	29.7	70.3	28.9	71.1	14.6	85.4	17.6	82.4
IE	23.7	76.3	30.1	69.9	27.4	72.6	40.8	59.2	41.0	59.0
EL	20.6	79.4	23.4	76.6	25.0	75.0	28.4	71.6	26.5	73.5
ES	42.5	57.5	43.3	56.7	47.8	52.2	41.5	58.5	44.8	55.2
FR	49.7	50.3	36.8	63.2	49.0	51.0	46.9	53.1	48.5	51.5
HR	18.7	81.3	33.8	66.2	30.8	69.2	31.6	68.4	7.3	92.7
IT	30.0	70.0	34.0	66.0	27.3	72.7	44.7	55.3	28.2	71.8
CY	16.7	83.3	14.3	85.7	20.8	79.2	10.2	89.8	9.1	90.9
LV	38.9	61.1	34.3	65.8	17.0	83.0	32.3	67.7	25.8	74.2
LT	36.0	64.0	28.4	71.6	33.3	66.7	26.7	73.3	16.5	83.5
LU	33.3	66.7	35.0	65.0	31.6	68.4	23.6	76.4	27.9	72.1
HU	0.0	100.0	15.5	84.5	16.2	83.8	12.0	88.0	18.4	81.6
MT	20.0	80.0	28.8	71.2	27.7	72.3	17.4	82.6	15.6	84.4
NL	36.4	63.6	39.8	60.2	40.0	60.0	43.5	56.5	37.9	62.1
AT	47.6	52.4	37.6	62.4	35.4	64.6	36.2	63.8	16.7	83.3
PL	30.2	69.8	29.3	70.7	32.0	68.0	27.4	72.6	16.0	84.0
PT	39.6	60.4	35.9	64.1	35.6	64.4	36.2	63.8	25.6	74.4
RO	10.7	89.3	22.0	78.0	23.4	76.6	24.9	75.1	21.3	78.7
SI	37.3	62.7	30.2	69.8	33.8	66.2	28.9	71.1	9.2	90.8
SK	16.4	83.6	23.2	76.8	17.1	82.9	30.4	69.6	16.3	83.7
FI	61.7	38.3	45.8	54.3	45.9	54.1	38.8	61.2	33.7	66.3
SE	47.9	52.1	44.3	55.7	47.6	52.4	37.6	62.4	51.1	48.9
	Source: EIGE, Gender Statistics Database, WMID, 2025 (annual average of quarterly data) National governments (all ministers: junior ministers and senior ministers ministers). EIGE's calculation		*Source:* EIGE, Gender Statistics Database, WMID, 2025 (annual average of quarterly data) National parliaments (both houses). EIGE's calculation		*Source:* EIGE, Gender Statistics Database, WMID, 2025 BG, EE, IE, CY, LT, LU, MT, SI: local level is used. EIGE's calculation		*Source:* EIGE, Gender Statistics Database, WMID, 2025 (annual average of biannual data)		*Source:* EIGE, Gender Statistics Database, WMID, 2025	

Table 37: Indicators of the domain of health

Member State	Status								Behaviour							
	Self-perceived health, good or very good (%, 16+)				Healthy life years at 65 in percentage of the total life expectancy (%, 65+)				Population who don't smoke and are not involved in harmful drinking (%, 16+)				Population doing physical activities and/or consuming fruits and vegetables (%, 16+)			
	Women	Men	Total	Gap	Women	Men	Total	Gap	Women	Men	Total	Gap	Women	Men	Total	Gap
EU	**65.4**	**70.5**	**67.9**	**– 6**	**48.2**	**54.4**	**50.9**	**– 6**	**72.7**	**55.6**	**64.6**	**17**	**37.6**	**42.6**	**40.0**	**– 5**
BE	71.0	76.9	73.9	– 6	55.1	60.0	57.3	– 5	71.8	50.9	61.6	21	37.0	41.1	38.9	– 4
BG	61.2	68.4	64.6	– 7	67.4	75.0	70.6	– 8	69.6	47.4	59.1	23	11.3	19.8	15.3	– 9
CZ	64.8	69.0	66.8	– 4	39.7	46.2	42.3	– 6	69.6	50.4	60.2	20	26.7	33.4	30.0	– 6
DK	68.5	69.0	68.8	0	55.3	57.1	56.0	– 2	61.5	43.0	52.4	19	66.1	59.7	62.9	6
DE	63.7	67.1	65.4	– 3	41.6	46.0	43.4	– 4	61.0	43.5	52.4	17	51.8	54.6	53.2	– 3
EE	55.6	60.3	57.8	– 4	37.1	45.2	39.6	– 8	78.5	54.7	67.5	24	34.5	35.1	34.8	0
IE	78.6	80.3	79.4	– 1	57.2	59.9	58.5	– 3	69.0	59.3	64.2	10	55.9	55.4	55.7	1
EL	75.9	80.9	78.3	– 5	47.9	52.1	49.8	– 4	75.9	58.8	67.8	17	24.5	31.5	27.9	– 7
ES	67.3	72.9	70.0	– 6	52.8	62.6	56.9	– 10	78.5	69.3	74.0	10	38.2	46.6	42.3	– 9
FR	62.2	67.6	64.8	– 6	48.7	51.9	50.0	– 3	72.3	55.5	64.3	16	38.2	43.5	40.7	– 6
HR	66.0	71.1	68.5	– 5	33.9	42.7	37.5	– 9	70.5	55.2	64.0	16	25.2	29.9	27.2	– 5
IT	71.3	76.1	73.6	– 5	58.8	65.0	61.4	– 6	80.3	68.7	74.8	11	24.8	29.8	27.2	– 5
CY	75.0	74.9	75.0	0	35.9	42.0	38.7	– 6	84.1	59.8	72.3	24	24.4	31.4	27.8	– 7
LV	43.8	53.7	48.1	– 10	22.9	25.9	23.9	– 3	79.4	49.5	66.1	29	22.7	27.4	24.8	– 4
LT	45.5	54.0	49.2	– 8	46.0	54.9	48.9	– 9	82.4	51.7	68.4	30	31.2	33.7	32.3	– 3
LU	73.1	75.1	74.1	– 2	44.1	49.3	46.8	– 5	67.2	46.5	56.8	20	49.1	52.8	51.0	– 4
HU	61.4	67.6	64.4	– 7	42.3	49.3	45.0	– 7	71.9	56.6	64.6	15	34.6	38.9	36.6	– 4
MT	75.5	81.6	78.8	– 6	55.1	64.3	58.6	– 9	73.5	58.2	65.6	16	21.7	21.9	21.8	0
NL	66.9	70.2	68.6	– 3	45.9	51.3	48.3	– 5	75.5	57.5	66.6	18	70.7	73.9	72.3	– 3
AT	66.8	70.4	68.5	– 3	42.6	48.2	45.2	– 5	70.7	56.1	63.6	15	44.5	47.7	46.0	– 3
PL	61.2	67.9	64.2	– 7	47.8	53.8	50.1	– 6	75.9	55.6	67.8	20	24.3	27.1	25.5	– 3
PT	49.2	56.4	52.6	– 7	41.6	53.6	46.5	– 12	83.0	62.0	73.3	21	26.3	29.7	27.9	– 4
RO	69.0	77.8	73.2	– 9	36.9	45.3	40.3	– 8	73.0	35.2	54.8	38	6.2	14.0	10.0	– 8
SI	60.8	65.9	63.3	– 5	56.9	61.1	58.6	– 4	68.1	54.0	61.1	14	31.3	38.8	35.1	– 8
SK	65.2	71.4	68.2	– 6	26.5	27.7	26.9	– 1	76.5	56.2	66.7	21	31.0	40.6	35.7	– 10
FI	66.3	67.9	67.1	– 2	45.0	50.2	46.8	– 5	69.9	45.7	58.4	24	75.1	72.9	74.1	2
SE	62.4	66.8	64.6	– 5	63.4	70.6	66.7	– 8	80.3	64.9	72.6	15	60.3	57.4	58.8	3
	Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC, (hlth_silc_01), 2025				*Source:* Eurostat, Mortality data, (hlth_hlye), 2024 (LU: 2022)				*Source:* Eurostat, EHIS, 2019 (FI: 2014) Eurostat calculations				*Source:* Eurostat, EHIS, 2019 Eurostat calculations			

Annex 4. Annexes for the parental leave thematic focus

Table 38: Eligibility conditions for parental leave policies for employees (March 2026)

Member State	Employee			
	Parental leave entitlement		Parental benefit entitlement	
	Eligible	Conditions related to the length of service	Eligible	Conditions related to social insurance contributions
BE	Yes	Private: ≥ 12 months within the preceding 15 months with the same employer Public: conditions differ by administrative level (federal, regional, local)	Yes	None
BG	Yes	None	Yes	≥ 12 months of maternity/general sickness insurance
CZ	Yes	None	Yes	None
DK	Yes	None	Yes	≥ 160 hours of employment in the last 4 months and ≥ 40 hours per month for at least 3 of those months
DE	Yes	None	Yes	None
EE	Yes	None	Yes	None
IE	Yes	None	Yes	≥ 12 months continuous or 39 weeks in the second-last contribution year, or 26 weeks each in the second and third last contribution years
EL	Yes	≥ 12 months with the same employer (continuous or cumulative)	Yes	None
ES	Yes	None	Yes	Age-graduated social security contribution requirement: • under 21 – no minimum; • 21–25 – ≥ 90 days within 7 years or ≥ 180 days total; • 26+ – ≥ 180 days within 7 years or ≥ 360 days total
FR	Yes	≥ 12 months with the same employer	Yes	8 validated pension insurance quarters within the reference period: 2 years for the 1st child; 4 years for the 2nd; 5 years for the 3rd or subsequent child
HR	Yes	None	Yes	Earnings-based: ≥ 6 months of continuous health insurance, or ≥ 9 months with interruptions, in the 2 years before leave. Flat-rate: none
IT	Yes	None	Yes	Standard employees: no minimum contribution period; entitlement derives from compulsory Istituto Nazionale della Previdenza Sociale (INPS) enrolment. Gestione Separata workers: ≥ 1 month of contributions in the 12 months preceding the qualifying period

Member State	Employee			
	Parental leave entitlement		Parental benefit entitlement	
	Eligible	Conditions related to the length of service	Eligible	Conditions related to social insurance contributions
CY	Yes	≥ 6 months (continuous, same employer)	Yes	≥ 12 months of paid or credited social insurance contributions within the previous 24 months
LV	Yes	None	Yes	Earnings-based: 3 months of social insurance contributions in the last 6 months or 6 months of social insurance contributions in the last 24 months. Flat-rate: none
LT	Yes	None	Yes	≥ 12 months of maternity social insurance in the 24 months preceding leave
LU (*)	Yes	≥ 12 months of continuous Luxembourg social security affiliation (automatic with employment), minimum 10 working hours per week	Yes	≥ 12 months of continuous Luxembourg social security affiliation
HU	Yes	None	Yes	GYED (earnings-based): 365 days insured in the 2 years preceding birth. GYES (flat-rate): none
MT (*)	Yes	≥ 12 months with the same or successive employer	Yes	None
NL (*)	Yes	None	Yes	None (benefit is linked to employee insurance (UWV))
AT	Yes	None	Yes	Two parallel benefit tracks: (a) Flat-rate KBGG (Kinderbetreuungsgeldgesetz – Childcare Benefit Act): none (b) Earnings-based EKG: 182 days of insured employment in the 6 calendar months immediately before birth
PL	Yes	None	Yes	≥ 30 days of ZUS maternity insurance coverage
PT	Yes	None	Yes	≥ 6 months of social security contributions
RO (*)	Yes	12 months of income-generating activity within the 24 months preceding birth	Yes	≥ 12 months of social security contributions
SI	Yes	None	Yes	Earnings-based: ≥ 12 months during the last 3 years Flat-rate: none
SK	Yes	None	Yes	Earnings-based: ≥ 270 days of sickness insurance contributions within the 2 years before starting leave Flat-rate: none
FI	Yes	None	Yes	None
SE	Yes	None	Yes	None

NB: (*) marks countries that have an integrated parental leave design, where a parent who meets the eligibility requirements for parental leave becomes eligible for benefits as well; see also Figure 1.

Table 39: Eligibility conditions for parental leave policies for self-employed workers (March 2026)

Member State	Self-employed			
	Parental leave entitlement		Parental benefit entitlement	
	Eligible	Terms	Eligible	Conditions
BE	No	—	No	Excluded from the employee parental leave benefit scheme; a separate INAMI (Institut National d'Assurance Maladie-Invalidité – National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance) interruption benefit is available under different conditions
BG	No	—	Yes	≥ 12 months of voluntary sickness/maternity insurance contributions
CZ	No	—	Yes	Universal (no social insurance required)
DK	Yes	Same leave entitlement as employees	Yes	≥ 6 months self-employed at least half normal weekly hours within last 12 months
DE	No	—	Yes	Universal (no social insurance required) Earnings-based: conditional on having been self-employed at least half of normal weekly hours within at least 6 of the last 12 months; must not exceed 32 hours/week
EE	No	—	Yes	Mandatory social tax (*sotsiaalmaks*) paid; benefit calculated on individually registered social tax
IE	No	—	Yes	≥ 52 weeks of mandatory Class S social insurance contributions (or voluntary minimum contribution of EUR 650 if below EUR 5 000 annual profit threshold)
EL	No	—	No	—
ES	No	Right to temporary suspension of professional activity (not identical to employment-based leave but legally recognised)	Yes	Mandatory social insurance; same age-graduated contribution conditions as employees
FR	No	—	Yes	≥ 8 validated pension insurance quarters within reference period (2 years for first child, 4 years for second, 5 years for third+); mandatory social insurance
HR	Yes	Same duration as employees (company owners, sole proprietors); individual contractors fall under lesser 'parental exemption from work' track ([54])	Yes	≥ 6 months of continuous (or 9 months with interruptions) mandatory social insurance within last 2 years Individual contractors: Croatian nationality/long-term residency ≥ 3 years + registered with unemployment office + health insurance
IT ([55])	No	—	Yes	*Lavoratori autonomi*: contributions paid in the month immediately preceding the claim + mandatory INPS registration; *Gestione Separata*: ≥ 1 month of contributions in the 12 months preceding the qualifying period + mandatory INPS registration

([54]) 8 months total for a couple, while parental exemption from work lasts only 6 months (the 2 transferable months do not exist in that track).
([55]) Italy's social security system distinguishes between traditional self-employed workers (*lavoratori autonomi*, such as artisans, traders, and farmers) who contribute to dedicated INPS funds for their professional category, and a separate scheme called *Gestione Separata*, created in 1995 to cover newer forms of independent work (e.g. freelancers, consultants and project-based workers) who do not belong to any traditional occupational fund.

Member State	Self-employed			
	Parental leave entitlement		Parental benefit entitlement	
	Eligible	Terms	Eligible	Conditions
CY	Yes	Defined parental period of 8–14 weeks, depending on number of children	Yes	≥ 12 months of paid or credited social insurance contributions within the previous 24 months
LV	No	—	Yes	≥ 3 months of mandatory social insurance within last 6 months, or ≥ 6 months within last 24 months
LT	No	—	Yes	≥ 12 months of mandatory maternity social insurance within the 24 months before entitlement arises
LU	Yes	Same statutory scheme as employees; operationally: must interrupt/reduce professional activity	Yes	≥ 12 continuous months of mandatory Luxembourg social security affiliation immediately preceding start of leave
HU	No	—	Yes	GYES: universal (no contributions required); GYED: ≥ 365 days of mandatory social insurance within 2 years before birth
MT	No	—	No	—
NL	No	—	No	—
AT	No	—	Yes	Flat-rate KBGG: universal (no social insurance required). Earnings-based EKG: 182 days of SVS (self-employed social insurance) coverage in the 6 months before birth
PL	No	—	Yes	Voluntary ZUS sickness insurance with minimum 90-day continuous self-employed status; without voluntary ZUS, only the universal flat-rate benefit is accessible
PT	No	— May arrange temporary third-party performance of activity during the parental period only	Yes	≥ 6 civil months with income registration (same as employees); adaptations: (1) leave condition substituted by impediment to work; (2) contributory situation must be regularised at date of recognition
RO	Yes	Self-employed may formally suspend business activity	Yes	≥ 12 months of income with mandatory health insurance and old-age pension contributions within 24 months before birth
SI	Yes	Same leave entitlement as employees	Yes	Must be covered by mandatory Parental Protection Insurance on the day before leave start
SK	No	—	Yes	Parental allowance: universal (no social insurance required)
FI	No	—	Yes	Universal residence-based benefit
SE	Yes	Same leave entitlement as employees	Yes	Self-employed contribute via mandatory *egenavgift* equivalent to employee social security contributions. Income ≥ SEK 250/day for 240 days before expected birth for earnings-related benefit; otherwise flat-rate (SEK 250/day) — no minimum contribution period

Table 40: Eligibility conditions for parental leave policies for platform workers (March 2026)

Member State	Platform workers				
	Possible classification for eligibility				Notes
	No	Yes (as self-employed)	Yes (if on employment contract)	Universal benefit	
BE	✓	—	—	—	Around all platform workers operate are exempt from social security contributions but excluded from both the employee and self-employed benefit schemes.
BG	—	✓	—	—	Benefit accessible via voluntary social insurance; same 12-month cumulative insurance threshold as other self-employed workers.
CZ	—	✓	—	✓ *Parental allowance (rodičovský příspěvek)*	Parental allowance is universal, accessible regardless of classification or contribution history.
DK	—	✓	✓	—	In practice most are classified as self-employed. Each track requires meeting its own recent employment threshold: employees need at least 160 hours in the last 4 months; self-employed need at least half of normal working hours for at least 6 months in the last 12 months.
DE	—	✓	✓	✓ *Parental allowance (Elterngeld)*	Parental allowance is available to all residents with childcare responsibility regardless of employment status. Income-related calculation applies to self-employed income; maximum 32 working hours per week during receipt.
EE	—	✓	—	—	Structured as business-to-business contracts; treated as self-employed. Benefit calculated on declared social tax paid during the 21-month reference period.
IE	—	✓	✓	—	Self-employed track requires voluntary Pay-Related Social Insurance contribution (minimum EUR 650/year). In practice mostly self-employed or disputed; classification challenged in courts.
EL	—	—	✓	—	Platform workers under dependent employment (Article 69, Law 4808/2021) are treated as employees. If self-employed: excluded.
ES	—	✓	✓	—	Benefit accessible to all platform workers regardless of classification, under the same social security contribution conditions. Delivery workers are presumed employees under Law 12/2021 ('Riders Law').
FR	—	✓	—	—	Generally treated as self-employed micro-entrepreneurs. Shared parental education benefit (PreParE) accessible if prior pension insurance quarters are met.
HR	—	✓	✓	—	Classification determines which benefit track applies: earnings-related parental benefit (100 % of prior salary, requires 6 or 9 months of health insurance in the preceding 2 years) or flat-rate parental allowance.

Member State	Platform workers				
	Possible classification for eligibility				Notes
	No	Yes (as self-employed)	Yes (if on employment contract)	Universal benefit	
IT	—	✓	✓	—	Self-employed track (INPS): up to 3 months of benefit within the child's first year; professional activity must be suspended during payment. Employee track: standard entitlement via compulsory INPS enrolment.
CY	—	✓	✓	—	In practice mostly disputed. Self-employed track requires registration with the social insurance scheme and 12 months of paid or credited contributions within the previous 24 months.
LV	—	✓	✓	—	Most pay self-employed social insurance (State Social Insurance Agency – Valsts sociālās apdrošināšanas aģentūra, mandatory state social insurance contributions). Both tracks require the 3-month or 6-month social insurance contribution threshold.
LT	—	✓	—	—	Operate under civil-law contracts; treated as self-employed. Benefit requires 12 months of maternity social insurance record in the preceding 24 months.
LU	—	✓	✓	—	Classification determines track (employee or self-employed); both require 12 months of continuous Luxembourg social security affiliation immediately before leave. In practice mostly disputed.
HU	—	✓	✓	✓ *Childcare allowance (GYES)*	GYES (flat-rate) is universal. GYED (earnings-based) additionally requires 365 days of insurance in the 2 years preceding birth.
MT	—	—	✓	—	Delivery workers classified as employees by statute (Digital Platform Delivery Wages Order 2023). It is the only Member State with a sector-specific statutory classification.
NL	—	—	✓	—	Courts have classified specific platforms (Uber, Deliveroo) as employers. If self-employed: excluded from the Work and Care Act (Wet arbeid en zorg) benefit, no self-employed benefit track.
AT	—	✓	✓	✓ *Flat-rate childcare allowance (Kinderbetreuungs-geld Konto)*	In practice mostly disputed. Flat-rate childcare allowance available to all residents regardless of classification. Income-related childcare allowance additionally requires 182 days of prior insured employment.
PL	—	✓	—	✓ *Universal parental benefit (świadczenie rodzicielskie)*	Universal parental benefit accessible regardless of classification or contribution history. Self-employed benefit track requires voluntary ZUS sickness insurance with a minimum of 90 continuous days.
PT	—	✓	✓	—	Rebuttable employment presumption (Labour Code Article 12-A, 2023) where the platform controls key working conditions. Solidarity subsystem social parental benefit available as a fallback if the 6-month contribution threshold is not met.

Member State	Platform workers				
	Possible classification for eligibility				Notes
	No	Yes (as self-employed)	Yes (if on employment contract)	Universal benefit	
RO	—	✓	—	—	Treated as self-employed. Benefit requires mandatory health and old-age pension insurance contributions and a 12-month income threshold in the preceding 24 months.
SI	—	✓	—	—	Classified as self-employed under Parental Protection Insurance. Benefit accessible if insurance coverage was in place on the day before the leave starts.
SK	—	✓	—	✓ *Parental allowance (rodičovský príspevok)*	Parental allowance is universal and residence-based.
FI	—	—	—	✓ *Parental allowance (Kela)*	Accessible to all residents insured under the Health Insurance Act.
SE	—	✓	✓	—	Both tracks require meeting the respective recent income threshold (income above SEK 250 per day for 240 days).

NB: Where both 'Yes (as self-employed)' and 'Yes (if on employment contract)' are ticked, legal classification is disputed or case by case; the predominant default in practice is indicated in the Notes column. 'Universal benefit' means eligibility is not contingent on employment status or platform classification; all parents meeting the relevant residence or minimum conditions qualify.

Table 41: Parental leave policy design elements encouraging shared uptake

A) Non-transferable parental leave quota Parental leave months are individually reserved for each parent and must be either used or lost.	
A1. Minimum standard (two non-transferable months)	AT, BG, DE, HR,· LT, MT, PL, RO,· SI,· LV (62 days – borderline)
A2. Higher-than-minimum standards (more than two non-transferable months)	BE: 4 months DK: 77 days (~ 2.6 months) EL: 4 months (2 paid + 2 unpaid) ES: 19 weeks (~ 4.4 months) FI: 97 working days (~ 16 weeks) FR: up to 36 months per parent (low-paid flat rate, below 66 % adequacy threshold) IE: 44 weeks total (9 paid + 35 unpaid) IT: 3 months per parent LU: 4 or 6 months NL: 26 weeks total (9 paid + 17 unpaid) PT: mandatory mother-only (42 + 30 days) + father-only (28 + 7 days) blocks, plus up to 3 months 'complementary parental leave' per parent SE: 90 days
B) Bonus or 'partnership months' Additional paid leave or financial bonus if both parents/father claim(s) a minimum share of leave.	
B1. Leave extended if both parents use minimum share	DE: The standard 12 months of paid parental benefit (*Elterngeld*) is extended to 14 months if both parents each take at least 2 months of leave (2 partner months, or *Vätermonate*). Additionally, each parent can receive up to 4 further months of *ElterngeldPlus* as a partnership bonus if they work part-time simultaneously (24–32 hours/week).
B2. Leave extended if father takes minimum period	IT: The total family entitlement of 10 months is extended to 11 months if the father takes at least 3 months of leave (the 'father's bonus month' is explicitly designed to incentivise fathers' take-up).
B3. Additional payment/bonus based on sharing	AT: If parents share their childcare benefit at a minimum ratio of 40:60 and each parent has received the benefit for at least 124 days, each parent is entitled to a *Partnerschaftsbonus* of EUR 500 (total EUR 1 000 per family) (KBGG).
C) Pay during parental leave above the well-paid threshold Payment during the leave, based on income before the leave, above 66 % of earnings (see Table 17).	
C1. 80–85 % income replacement (capped)	RO: 85 % of the average net earnings during the last 12 months of the 2 years before the birth of the child, with a cap of RON 8 500/month (Emergency Ordinance 111/2010). AT: Income-related childcare benefit (*Einkommensabhängiges Kinderbetreuungsgeld*) refunds 80 % of net income in the previous 6 months, up to a maximum of EUR 2 400/month, for 365 days (or 426 days if both parents share).
C2. 100 % income replacement (capped)	EE: 100 % of average earnings (subject to social tax) paid to parents for 475 calendar days (shared parental benefit), with a cap of EUR 3 806.10/month as of 1 January 2026 (Family Benefits Act, Chapter 3). NB: The previous cap (until end of 2025) was higher (approximately EUR 5 256/month at three times average salary); the current report reflects the 2026 figure.

D) Flexibility of use Parents can take leave as part-time or in separate blocks, allowing for better work–life balance integration.	
D1. Part-time leave with extended duration	DE: Parents can choose *ElterngeldPlus*, which allows them to work part-time (up to 32 hours/week) while receiving a reduced monthly benefit spread over twice the standard period (1 month of *Basiselterngeld* converts to 2 months of *ElterngeldPlus*). The partnership bonus allows an additional 4 months of *ElterngeldPlus* each if both parents work part-time simultaneously (24–32 hours/week) (BEEG §§ 4–4b).
D2. Variable intensity options	SE: Parental leave benefit days can be taken at full-time, three-quarter time, half-time, one-quarter time, or one-eighth time, allowing parents to shorten working days by a fraction while extending the overall leave period (Föräldraledighetslagen § 6; Socialförsäkringsbalken Chapter 12).
D3. Block-based/split leave	Most Member States allow parental leave to be taken in separate blocks rather than as one continuous period. PL: Following transposition of the WLB Directive in 2023, parental leave can be taken in up to 5 separate parts, and both parents can take leave simultaneously.
E) Legal protection for leave takers The Work–Life Balance Directive establishes the baseline for these protections, requiring Member States to ensure workers are protected against dismissal and adverse treatment for exercising their rights to parental leave or flexible working arrangements.	
E1. Protection from dismissal during leave period (and from request)	PL: The Labour Code (Kodeks pracy, Arts 177–178), as amended to align with the WLB Directive, prohibits termination of employment from the date an employee submits a request for parental leave, childcare leave, or a reduction in working time, until the leave or arrangement ends. LU: Protection against dismissal begins 2 months and 1 day before the start of first parental leave, and 4 months and 1 day before the start of second parental leave (Labour Code, Art. L.234-46, as amended by the Law of 15 August 2023).
E2. Protection against reprisals with financial penalties for employers	LU: The Law of 15 August 2023 (transposing the WLB Directive) amended the Labour Code to reinforce protection against unfavourable treatment of workers who request or take parental leave. Employers must provide written justification when refusing part-time or fractioned leave. Specific financial penalty amounts are set in the Labour Code for violations (Labour Code, Arts L.234-47 and L.234-48).
F) Take-up of leave beyond parents Provisions allowing individuals other than biological or adoptive parents to use parental leave entitlements, expanding the care network and providing additional flexibility	
F1. Grandparents eligible (see also Table 13 and Table 14)	LT: Grandparents (and other relatives actually raising the child) are eligible for the parental leave allowance if they meet the standard contribution requirement (at least 12 months of maternity social insurance within the last 24 months). However, grandparents cannot use the non-transferable months (Law on Sickness and Maternity Social Insurance, Art. 22, as amended by Law XIV-1190). SE: Parents can transfer up to 45 parental benefit days to a person who meets the eligibility requirements for sick pay under the Swedish Insurance Code (including grandparents). Written permission from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency is required (Socialförsäkringsbalken, Chapter 12, § 17b, in force from 1 July 2024). DK, HU, SI: Grandparents are also eligible according to the Household and Residence Matrix.
F2. Guardians and other legal carers (see also Table 13)	LT: Guardians who obtained legal guardianship status are eligible for parental leave and the allowance on the same terms as parents, including the non-transferable months (Labour Code, Art. 134; Law on Sickness and Maternity Social Insurance, Art. 5, as amended by Law XIV-2323). DE: Guardians with legal caregiving responsibility are eligible for parental leave (*Elternzeit*) and, conditionally, for parental benefit (*Elterngeld*) on the same terms as parents (BEEG §§ 1, 15). BE, BG, CZ, DK, EE, EL, ES, HU, FI, HR, IT, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK: Guardians are also eligible according to the Household and Residence Matrix (see Table 13).
F3. Cohabiting partners of the biological parent	SE: Parents may transfer up to 45 benefit days to any person who meets the eligibility requirements under the Swedish Insurance Code and has written permission from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency – including cohabiting partners (Socialförsäkringsbalken, Chapter 12, §§ 17a–17b). BE, DK, EE, FI, IE, LV, NL, PT, SK: Cohabiting partners of the biological parent are eligible for both parental leave and parental benefit, according to the Household and Residence Matrix (see Table 15).

Table 42: Policy change analysis and comparison of eligibility rates between 2016 and 2024

Member State	Parental leave, employed population 2016		Parental leave, employed population 2024				Parental benefit, all 2024		Policy change impact on eligibility	Policy changes affecting eligibility (2018–2026)
	Women	Men	Women		Men		Women	Men		
Broadly comparable Same dataset used in both studies; same variable approach for economic status; no major differences in self-employed coding.										
AT	93 %	89 %	93 %	+ 0.7 pp	89 %	+ 0.6 pp	94 %	96 %	No relevant policy change	No reforms affecting who qualifies for leave.
DE	100 %	100 %	94 %	– 5.5 pp	91 %	– 8.7 pp	98 %	99 %	No relevant policy change	No reforms affecting who qualifies for leave or benefit. The 2024–2025 lowering of the income ceiling for *Elterngeld* applies to a small high-earning minority and does not affect the general population of eligible parents.
EE	94 %	87 %	93 %	– 0.8 pp	84 %	– 2.8 pp	100 %	100 %	Modest eligibility-relevant change	From 1 July 2020: father's parental benefit extended from 10 working days to 30 calendar days as an individual, non-transferable entitlement (use it or lose it). Family Benefits Act reform (effective 1 April 2022, WLB (*) transposition): restructured parental benefit into discrete mother's, father's, shared and adoptive-parent benefit categories; formalised shared parental benefit at 475 calendar days with flexible daily-unit planning and simultaneous use up to 60 days. The reform also explicitly decoupled the legal right to job-protected leave from the financial right to benefit: parents can receive benefit without formally taking leave – this did not expand the pool eligible for job-protected leave, but makes the benefit accessible regardless of employment status (at base rate of EUR 886 for those without contributions). From 1 January 2026: additional earnings no longer reduce the shared parental benefit, removing a financial disincentive particularly relevant for higher-earning fathers.
MT	76 %	69 %	77 %	+ 0.8 pp	74 %	+ 4.2 pp	63 %	68 %	No relevant policy change	No reforms affecting who qualifies for leave. L.N. 201 of 2022 (Work–Life Balance for Parents and Carers Regulations, 2022) maintained the employee-only framework requiring 12 months' continuous employment with the same employer; self-employed explicitly excluded from both leave and benefit throughout.
NL	89 %	84 %	89 %	+ 0.2 pp	82 %	– 1.3 pp	74 %	73 %	No relevant policy change	No reforms affecting who qualifies for leave or benefit.

Member State	Parental leave, employed population 2016		Parental leave, employed population 2024				Parental benefit, all 2024		Policy change impact on eligibility	Policy changes affecting eligibility (2018–2026)
	Women	Men	Women		Men		Women	Men		
Comparable with caveats Same or similar dataset, but with some variable-level differences (e.g. switch between PL031 and PL211L for economic status, absence of PL160, or differences in self-employed coding). Comparisons are possible but should be interpreted with caution.										
BE	83 %	77 %	84 %	+ 0.5 pp	82 %	+ 4.7 pp	59 %	63 %	Modest eligibility-relevant change	2022 Royal Decree (WLB transposition): previous periods of temporary agency work with the same employer now count in full toward the 12-month seniority requirement for leave eligibility, regardless of the reason for the agency posting. Previously, only agency work assigned specifically for integration-into-employment purposes counted. This marginally widened the eligible pool for temporary agency workers.
BG	79 %	83 %	93 %	+ 14.5 pp	89 %	+ 5.7 pp	64 %	67 %	Substantive eligibility-relevant change	Labour Code amendment (Art. 164B, effective 1 August 2022, WLB transposition): introduced a new, individual and non-transferable 2-month parental leave entitlement specifically for fathers (including adoptive fathers) of children up to age 8, accompanied by a social security benefit. This is structurally significant: under the pre-existing system, fathers had no autonomous right to the main parental leave (Art. 164 LC), their access depended entirely on the mother's consent to transfer her entitlement. The 2022 reform created a distinct, father-specific leave right outside the transferable system.
CZ	100 %	100 %	90 %	– 10.1 pp	83 %	– 17.2 pp	99 %	100 %	No relevant policy change	No reforms affecting who qualifies for leave or benefit. The parental allowance (*rodičovský příspěvek*) is a universal non-contributory benefit.
DK	95 %	97 %	100 %	+ 5.4 pp	100 %	+ 3.1 pp	77 %	84 %	Modest eligibility-relevant change	Parental Leave Act 2022 (WLB transposition): introduced 9 non-transferable weeks per parent, with self-employed parents explicitly exempt from the non-transferability rules. The minimum hours threshold for benefit eligibility (at least 160 hours of employment within the previous 4 months, with at least 40 hours/month for at least 3 of those months) was formalised as part of the new act. NB: The –17.8/–13.4 pp drop reflects a coding difference between the two studies: the 2019 study treated employment status as the primary eligibility criterion for leave, while the 2026 study applied the benefit payment threshold (160 hours of work in the 4 preceding months, at least 40 hours/month for 3 of those months) to the leave eligibility variable, capturing a real but previously uncoded restriction that disproportionately excludes part-time workers.

Member State	Parental leave, employed population 2016		Parental leave, employed population 2024				Parental benefit, all 2024		Policy change impact on eligibility	Policy changes affecting eligibility (2018–2026)
	Women	Men	Women		Men		Women	Men		
EL	72 %	65 %	76 %	+ 4.0 pp	72 %	+ 6.9 pp	45 %	54 %	Substantive eligibility-relevant change	Law 4808/2021 (WLB transposition): introduced paid parental leave in Greece for the first time (previously unpaid) and codified a 1-year continuous employment requirement with the same employer (Art. 28). While the leave had technically existed before, payment conditioned on tenure effectively created a new, stricter eligibility tier for the benefit. Self-employed parents remain explicitly excluded from the 4-month paid leave; unemployed and inactive individuals remain excluded throughout. Law 5089/2024 formally extended eligibility to same-sex couples.
ES	90 %	83 %	100 %	+ 10.5 pp	100 %	+ 17.1 pp	80 %	87 %	Substantive eligibility-relevant change	July 2025 / January 2026 reform (WLB transposition, Royal Legislative Decree amending Arts 48.4–48.5 of the Labour Code and Arts 177–182 of the General Social Security Law): increased paid parental leave from 16 to 19 weeks; and self-employed parents became explicitly eligible for paid leave via Ley 20/2007, Art. 4.3g (previously excluded).
FI	100 %	100 %	93 %	– 6.9 pp	89 %	– 11.3 pp	100 %	100 %	Modest eligibility-relevant change	2017 reform (HE 232/2016, Health Insurance Act change 13.1.2017/6): same-sex partners of birth mothers were explicitly granted the same entitlements as fathers. 2019 reform (HE 206/2018): single mothers without a second eligible parent gained an extended allowance period equivalent to the paternity quota (54 days). NB: The drop in eligibility reflects Finland's separated system being more precisely applied in the present study: parental leave eligibility is restricted to employees, while benefit eligibility remains near-universal; the previous study applied the broader benefit rules to both.
HU	90 %	95 %	82 %	– 8.0 pp	85 %	– 9.6 pp	100 %	100 %	Modest eligibility-relevant change	Act LXXIV of 2022 (effective 1 January 2023, WLB transposition): introduced 44 days of additional paid parental leave for employed parents with a child under three who have at least 1 year of employment with their current employer. This added a new employment-conditioned leave type but left the main GYED (365-day insurance requirement) and GYES (universal flat rate, no employment condition) eligibility criteria unchanged.

Member State	Parental leave, employed population 2016		Parental leave, employed population 2024				Parental benefit, all 2024		Policy change impact on eligibility	Policy changes affecting eligibility (2018–2026)
	Women	Men	Women		Men		Women	Men		
IT	91 %	86 %	100 %	+ 8.6 pp	100 %	+ 14.3 pp	61 %	78 %	Modest eligibility-relevant change	Legislative Decree No 105/2022 (WLB transposition) and subsequent INPS administrative clarification: explicitly confirmed that fathers can take parental leave regardless of the mother's employment status; previously, access for fathers was in practice more restricted and often contingent on the mother being employed or self-employed. Domestic workers remain explicitly excluded under Legislative Decree No 151/2001.
LT	93 %	97 %	91 %	– 2.3 pp	87 %	– 9.8 pp	78 %	81 %	Modest eligibility-relevant change	Law No. XIII– 832 (December 2017): clarified eligibility rules for non-standard workers (athletes, performers, copyright-contract workers and the self-employed), linking allowance entitlement to whether sickness and maternity social insurance contributions were actually paid, and making proportional calculation where contributions were below minimum wage. Law No. XIV– 2230 (November 2023): ensured that the parental leave allowance continues to be paid even if the recipient loses social insurance coverage while already receiving it, removing a source of disruption particularly affecting workers with unstable employment. The core 12-month insurance record requirement (in last 24 months) for benefit eligibility was unchanged.
PL	100 %	100 %	89 %	– 11.5 pp	78 %	– 21.6 pp	100 %	100 %	Substantive eligibility-relevant change	2023 WLB transposition (amendments to the Labour Code and Social Insurance Act) decoupled fathers' right to parental leave from the mother's employment or insurance status: before 2023, fathers could only access parental leave if the mother was employed or insured under the social insurance system. This structural change directly and substantially expanded the population of fathers eligible for parental leave. NB: The drop in eligibility for leave reflects two limitations of the present study: the microsimulation cannot link partners, making the 2023 reform's expansion of fathers' access invisible in the data, and the stricter employment-only coding for leave excludes self-employed parents, who appear instead in the near-universal benefit eligibility.
RO	99 %	99 %	99 %	– 0.2 pp	99 %	+ 0.2 pp	78 %	93 %	No relevant policy change	Emergency Ordinance No 164/2022 (WLB transposition, effective 2023): extended the non-transferable 'other parent' quota from 1 to 2 months, explicitly included the paid accommodation period as an eligibility period for adoptive parents and allowed recipients to retain earnings up to 8× the minimum indemnity per calendar year while on leave. The core eligibility requirement was unchanged.

Member State	Parental leave, employed population 2016		Parental leave, employed population 2024				Parental benefit, all 2024		Policy change impact on eligibility	Policy changes affecting eligibility (2018–2026)
	Women	Men	Women		Men		Women	Men		
SE	100 %	100 %	100 %	0.0 pp	100 %	– 0.1 pp	100 %	100 %	Modest eligibility-relevant change	2021 reform (WLB transposition, Social Insurance Code amendment): the presumption of parenthood was extended to women married to or registered as partners of a birth mother, granting them parental leave and benefit rights automatically at birth, which is a direct eligibility expansion for this group. 2023 reform: up to 45 benefit days can be transferred to a third party (e.g. grandparents). Core eligibility remains residence-based (insured under the Social Insurance Code, no employment or contribution requirement). NB: The drop reflects Sweden's separated system being more precisely applied in the present study: parental leave eligibility is restricted to employed and self-employed, while benefit eligibility remains near-universal (residence-based); the previous study applied the broader benefit rules.
SI	100 %	100 %	100 %	0.0 pp	100 %	0.0 pp	86 %	89 %	Modest eligibility-relevant change	ZSDP-1B (2018): introduced 30 days of parental leave for adoptive parents of a child who has completed the first grade of primary school and is under. ZSDP-1C (2019, effective 2020): extended parental leave eligibility to relatives granted parental care and to foster parents; raised minimum income compensation to the basic minimum income level (effective 2021). ZSDP-1F (2022, effective April 2023, WLB transposition): extended leave from 130 to 160 calendar days per parent, of which 60 are non-transferable. The core eligibility requirement (Parental Protection Insurance coverage on the day before leave starts, covering employees, self-employed, temporary agency workers and unemployment benefit recipients) was unchanged.
SK	100 %	100 %	93 %	– 7.2 pp	80 %	– 20.2 pp	100 %	100 %	No relevant policy change	No reforms affecting who qualifies for leave.
Low comparability Dataset switched between 2019 and 2026 (e.g. EU-LFS to EU-SILC or vice versa), and/or combined with substantive variable-level changes. Apparent changes in eligibility rates may largely reflect methodological artefacts rather than genuine shifts.										
CY	79 %	76 %	93 %	+ 14.3 pp	96 %	+ 20.2 pp	69 %	76 %	Substantive eligibility-relevant change	Law 216(I)/2022 (WLB transposition): introduced paid parental leave allowance in Cyprus for the first time (previously entirely unpaid), establishing benefit eligibility conditions of 12 months of insured employment within the previous 24 months (Social Insurance Law, Art. 41A(2)); self-employed parents registered under the social insurance scheme and meeting the contribution requirement are also eligible. November 2024 amendments increased paid benefit duration for higher-order births (8→10 weeks for second child, 8→12 weeks for third).

Member State	Parental leave, employed population		Parental leave, employed population				Parental benefit, all		Policy change impact on eligibility	Policy changes affecting eligibility (2018–2026)
	2016		2024				2024			
	Women	Men	Women		Men		Women	Men		
FR	82 %	84 %	81 %	– 1.4 pp	79 %	– 4.4 pp	67 %	75 %	Modest eligibility-relevant change	Loi No 2023-171 du 9 mars 2023 (Art. 18, amending Code du travail, Art. L1225-47): changed the date at which the 1-year seniority requirement for parental leave is assessed: from the child's date of birth to the date of the formal request for leave. Parents who had not completed 1 year with their employer at the birth can now qualify once they reach the threshold and make a formal request. Previously, those who did not meet the requirement at birth were definitively excluded even if they reached 1 year of service shortly thereafter. This represents a marginal eligibility expansion, particularly benefiting parents in shorter-tenure employment.
HR	100 %	100 %	100 %	0.0 pp	100 %	0.0 pp	100 %	100 %	Substantive eligibility-relevant change	A series of amendments to the Maternity and Parental Support Act relaxed the social insurance period required for earnings-related parental benefit: • NN 37/20 (April 2020): reduced from 12 months continuous / 18 months with interruptions to 9 months / 12 months within 24 months. • NN 152/22 (January 2023): further reduced to 6 months continuous / 9 months with interruptions within 2 years. These successive relaxations meaningfully expanded the pool of (self-)employed parents qualifying for the full earnings-related benefit.
IE	76 %	67 %	95 %	+ 19.3 pp	93 %	+ 25.4 pp	17 %	21 %	Substantive eligibility-relevant change	Family Leave and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2021 (effective 1 April 2021): extended age of eligible children from under 1 to under 2 years; explicitly extended eligibility to non-biological cohabiting partners in adoption contexts. Parent's Leave and Benefit Act 2019 (Commencement) Order 2022 (effective 1 July 2022): parents whose children were received via surrogacy became eligible. Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2024 (effective 1 October 2024): raised the voluntary minimum contribution rate for self-employed from EUR 500 to EUR 650/year for parent's benefit eligibility.
LU	88 %	94 %	79 %	– 8.5 pp	80 %	– 14.1 pp	61 %	65 %	Modest eligibility-relevant change	Loi du 23 décembre 2022 (effective 1 January 2023): removed the requirement that a parent must be affiliated to Luxembourg social security at the time of the child's birth or adoption placement. Under the new rule, parents who fulfil the general affiliation conditions (12 months of continuous social security affiliation immediately preceding the start of leave, with no interruption exceeding 7 days, and active professional activity at time of leave) can now qualify even if they were not affiliated at birth. This directly expanded the eligible pool, particularly relevant for parents who were not yet in the Luxembourg labour market when the child was born, including cross-border workers who entered Luxembourg employment after the birth.

Member State	Parental leave, employed population 2016		Parental leave, employed population 2024				Parental benefit, all 2024		Policy change impact on eligibility	Policy changes affecting eligibility (2018–2026)
	Women	Men	Women		Men		Women	Men		
LV	91 %	96 %	91 %	+ 0.3 pp	88 %	– 8.0 pp	100 %	100 %	Modest eligibility-relevant change	2022 Labour Law / Law on Maternity and Sickness Insurance amendments (WLB transposition): expanded parental leave eligibility to a person designated by the mother (other than the father) if paternity is not established, following a Constitutional Court ruling (Case No 2019-33-01). A 2026 rule change allows both employees and self-employed parents to continue working and receive 75 % of their parental benefit, reducing the labour market disincentive.
PT	97 %	97 %	90 %	– 6.6 pp	87 %	– 10.3 pp	100 %	100 %	No relevant policy change	No reforms affecting core eligibility criteria for leave or benefit.
EU-27	92 %	90 %	92 %	– 0.1 pp	89 %	– 1.0 pp	100 %	100 %		

NB: Countries are grouped into three comparability categories based on the degree of methodological consistency between the two studies:

- broadly comparable countries share the same data source and eligibility coding approach across both studies;
- comparable with caveats countries differ on one or more methodological dimensions, such as a dataset switch or a refinement in how eligibility conditions are coded, that may affect the magnitude but not the direction of change;
- low comparability countries present multiple simultaneous methodological differences that make direct numerical comparison unreliable.

Policy change impact is assessed separately and classified as substantive where reforms introduced a new eligible group or removed a structural barrier to access, and as modest where changes marginally widened eligibility within an existing framework, for instance by relaxing a contribution threshold or clarifying an existing right.

(*) WLB refers to the Work–Life Balance Directive throughout the table.

Annex 5. Gender Equality Index: conceptual and measurement frameworks at a glance

The Gender Equality Index is a unique measurement tool that condenses the complexity of gender equality as a multidimensional concept into a user-friendly and easily interpretable measure. Its computation builds on the internationally recognised methodology for constructing composite indicators, developed by the OECD and the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (OECD et al., 2008).

The development of a conceptual framework was the first step in defining the structure of the Gender Equality Index and identifying what should be measured. Based on this framework, the measurement model was designed, which included selecting indicators to capture the theoretically defined concepts, creating a metric to calculate gender gaps and developing the methodology to aggregate results at the subdomain, domain and overall Index levels, both for each Member State and for the EU as a whole.

The Index was first launched in 2013 (EIGE, 2013, 2017c). In 2025, it underwent an in-depth review that followed the same methodological steps as those originally applied. These steps are summarised in this annex and will be described in detail in a forthcoming methodological report. To ensure comparability over time, past values have been recalculated according to the updated methodology, resulting in a single, internally consistent time series. The previous series has been discontinued and will no longer be updated. Consequently, values within the new series are directly comparable (e.g. 2025 versus recalculated 2020), while comparisons with scores and rankings published under the old methodology are not valid.

Conceptual framework

The selection of domains for the Gender Equality Index was informed by in-depth reviews of key gender equality policy documents at both the EU and international levels, theoretical frameworks of equality, relevant academic literature and consultations with EIGE's stakeholders. The Index is composed of six core domains – work, money, knowledge, time, power and health – combined into a single measure. In addition, two supplementary domains, intersecting inequalities and violence, are conceptually linked to gender equality but are excluded from the core Index, as they capture phenomena that apply only to specific groups of the population. This is the case, for instance, with gender-based violence against women, or with gender gaps among particular population groups, such as people with disabilities or single parents. Each domain is further divided into subdomains.

Work. The experiences of women and men in the labour market remain markedly different. Women are less likely to participate in paid employment and more likely to work part-time than men (EIGE, 2021b). They are also concentrated in sectors such as education and health, while remaining under-represented in science, technology and engineering. The domain also addresses the quality of work, highlighting that women are disproportionately employed in non-standard or precarious jobs. Such positions typically offer fewer training and promotion opportunities, reinforcing patterns of occupational segregation (EIGE, 2018).

Money. This domain captures differences in financial resources and economic situations between women and men. Financial resources include earnings and other income sources, such as pensions. Women generally have lower incomes than men, which undermines their financial independence and increases their risk of poverty across the life course (EIGE, 2019b, 2024a).

Knowledge. Gender gaps in education have shifted over time. Today, young women are more likely than young men to complete upper secondary education and to graduate from university. Nevertheless, patterns of segregation remain entrenched: women continue to be under-represented in STEM fields, while men are under-represented in health, education and welfare studies (EIGE, 2018). These divisions perpetuate unequal opportunities in the labour market.

Time. This domain examines how women and men allocate time between paid work, care and social activities. Although women's participation in the labour market has increased substantially, this has not been matched by men's greater involvement in unpaid care (EIGE, 2021b). Reductions in gender gaps in unpaid care largely reflect women doing less, not men doing more. As a result, women face fewer opportunities to engage in other activities, such as cultural, civic or social participation.

Power. Gender equality is significantly shaped by women's limited presence in decision-making. Large disparities remain across political institutions, corporate boards and civil-society organisations, leading to what has been described as a democratic deficit in the EU (EIGE, 2024c, 2025c). The under-representation of women in leadership across both political and economic spheres undermines balanced participation in decision-making processes.

Health. Differences in health status and behaviour between women and men are shaped by both biological and social factors. Women generally live longer than men, but they spend fewer years in good health. Men, meanwhile, face greater risks of violent death, road accidents, smoking, alcohol consumption and unsafe sexual practices. These differences highlight the need to consider gender both as a determinant of health outcomes and as a factor shaping behaviours (EIGE, 2021a; WHO, 2021).

Intersecting inequalities. This additional domain acknowledges that women and men are not homogeneous groups. It examines how characteristics such as age, race, family status, education, disability or migration background intersect with gender to shape inequalities (EIGE, 2019a). For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, young women and men, as well as single parents, predominantly mothers, were among the groups most severely affected by job losses (EIGE, 2022b). Although crucial, this domain is excluded from the final Index score due to its specific nature.

Violence. The second additional domain addresses gender-based violence against women. Conceptually, violence represents the most extreme expression of structural gender inequalities, rooted in disparities across work, health, money, power, education and care. Statistically, it differs from the core domains: while they compare the situations of women and men, the violence domain focuses solely on women's experiences. The goal is therefore not to measure gender gaps but to

monitor the phenomenon of violence against women and support its eradication. The full measurement framework of violence against women is presented in the 2017 Gender Equality Index. The measurement framework of violence against women (EIGE, 2017b) and steps taken to update the composite measure of violence in 2024 are described in Annex 5 of the Index report (EIGE, 2025a).

Measurement framework

The calculation of the Gender Equality Index follows a structured process consisting of the following main steps.

Step 1: selection of indicators

Indicators are chosen to populate the six conceptually defined core domains, based on theoretical foundations and a review of harmonised statistical sources available at the EU level. The current Index is composed of 27 outcome-based, individual-level indicators. These are organised into 13 subdomains, which are in turn grouped into the six core domains of the Index (Annex 1).

Step 2: processing indicators

Once selected, indicators are standardised to ensure they measure gender equality in a consistent manner. All indicators must be expressed in a positive direction, meaning that higher values indicate greater gender equality and movement towards EU targets or a desirable situation ([56]).

Moreover, all indicators are expressed in relative terms, using the closest reference population to allow comparability across populations of different sizes and structures ([57]).

Step 3: calculating the gender gap metric

The Index measures gender gaps by comparing the relative positions of women and men in a symmetrical way. A disadvantage for women (e.g. lower earnings) is treated in the same way as a disadvantage for men (e.g. lower attainment in tertiary education). The gender gap is calculated as follows:

$$\text{gender gap} = \begin{cases} \dfrac{\text{men} - \text{women}}{\text{men}} & \text{if women} \leq \text{men} \\ \dfrac{\text{women} - \text{men}}{\text{women}} & \text{if women} > \text{men} \end{cases}$$

([56]) For example, variables measuring 'participation in tertiary education' or 'healthy life years' have a positive direction, as it is desirable to increase educational attainment or to live a long and healthy life. By contrast, the variable measuring 'being at risk of in-work poverty' implies a negative sign or interpretation, which means that, for the Index, the indicator was reversed to 'not being at risk of in-work poverty'.

([57]) For example, the indicator measuring the share of members of national parliaments was calculated as the percentage of women in parliaments among the population in each Member State aged 18 years and older (closest reference population).

An equivalent formulation is:

$$\text{gender gap} = 1 - \frac{\min(\text{women}, \text{men})}{\max(\text{women}, \text{men})}$$

The resulting values are bounded between 0 and 1, where 0 represents full equality and 1 represents maximum inequality. For interpretability, the values are reversed by taking the complement, so that 1 represents full equality and 0 represents full inequality.

Step 4: aggregating at the subdomain, domain and Index levels

In the final step, gender gaps are aggregated according to the Index structure. Within each subdomain, the arithmetic mean of the gaps is calculated with equal weights, producing a subdomain score. Subdomains are then aggregated at the domain level using the geometric mean, again with equal weights. Finally, the six domain scores are aggregated into the overall Gender Equality Index using a weighted geometric mean.

Domain weights are derived using the analytic hierarchy process (**Table 43**), a structured method based on expert judgement. Experts compare the importance of each domain with every other domain in pairs (e.g. 'is work more important than health, and by how much?'). These comparisons are organised into a matrix and processed into a consistent set of weights. This ensures that the final weights are both transparent and systematically derived, reflecting expert knowledge and policy priorities.

Table 43: Mean experts' weights used for the Gender Equality Index (rounded)

Work	Money	Knowledge	Time	Power	Health
0.16	0.18	0.13	0.19	0.18	0.16

The Gender Equality Index takes a value of 0–100, where a value of 100 represents complete gender equality and 0 represents full gender inequality. Its formulation is:

$$I_i^t = \prod_{d=1}^{6} \left\{ \prod_{s=1}^{ns_d} \left[\sum_{v=1}^{n_s} \frac{\Gamma(X_{ivt})}{n_s} \right]^{\frac{1}{ns_d}} \right\}^{w_{AHP_d}}$$

$i = 1,\ldots,27$
$d = 1,\ldots,6$
$s = 1,\ldots,13$
$v = 1, \ldots, 27$
n_s = number of indicators in the subdomains
ns_d = number of subdomains in the domain d
$w_{AHP_d} \in [0,1]$

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