The Gender Equality Index is a unique measurement tool that synthesises the complexity of gender equality into a user-friendly and easy-to-understand measure. Based on the EU policy framework, it assists the monitoring of progress in gender equality across the European Union over time.

The Gender Equality Index consists of six core domains (work, money, knowledge, time, power and health) and two satellite domains (violence and intersecting inequalities). The Gender Equality Index assigns scores for Member States between 1 for total inequality and 100 for full equality. It measures gender gaps between women and men as well as takes into account the country context and the different levels of achievement of Member States in various areas. A high overall score reflects both small (or absent) gender gaps and a good situation for all (e.g. high involvement of both women and men in employment).

The Gender Equality Index 2015 measures how far (or close) the EU and its Member States were from achieving gender equality in 2005, 2010 and 2012 (1). It provides results for each domain and subdomain. It also presents the first attempt to calculate a composite measure for violence against women.

Progress in gender equality in Malta since 2005

With an increase of 3.4 points, Malta reached the score of 46.8 out of 100 in 2012. However, despite this progress, it remains behind the EU-28 average. The greatest challenges remain in the unequal division of time spent in care, domestic tasks and social activities. In this area, the inequalities between women and men increased not only in the distribution of care work but also in women and men’s access to leisure, sporting or voluntary activities, with important consequences on the work–life balance of women. After a significant drop in 2010, in 2012 the number of women in decision-making positions returned to its previous level. No progress is visible over the long term and compelling imbalances remain in the domain of power.

The domain of work shows important signs of progress, with an increase in women’s level of full-time employment, although gender gaps remain significant. The domain of money progressed due to an improvement of the overall situation for both women and men in terms of access to financial resources, rather than to a reduction of gender gaps. Progress in the domain of knowledge reflects the improvement of access to education for both women and men in Malta as well as the reduction of gender gaps. The gender equality score in the domain of health is high, showing good gender balance in access to services and overall health status. However, important differences in health-related behaviours of women and men will be added to the Gender Equality Index in the future to provide a more complete picture of gender equality in health.

(1) The Gender Equality Index is based on the data of Eurostat (EU labour force survey, structure of earnings survey, EU statistics on income and living conditions, demographic statistics), Unesco/Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/Eurostat questionnaires on educational statistics, Eurofound’s European working conditions survey, the Commission’s database on women and men in decision-making, and the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights’s (FRA) violence against women survey.
Scores in the domain of work have increased significantly since 2005 as the situation visibly improved for women. However, gender gaps remain wide.

Women’s employment rate increased significantly from 25% in 2005 to 32% in 2012 (full-time equivalent), which led to a reduction of the gender gap. When part-time work is also considered, women’s employment rate climbs to 47%. However, it remains far below the Europe 2020 target, which aims to have 75% of the adult population (aged 20-64) in employment, and also well below the current employment rate for men (set as 79%). While men still have a significantly longer working life, women’s working life has been extended by on average 5.6 years since 2005.

The subdomain of segregation and quality of work also shows significant progress brought about by the improvement of working conditions, particularly of women workers. The share of women being able to take an hour or two off during working hours has increased significantly since 2005, which led to a significant decrease of the gender gap. However, the gender-segregated labour market remains a reality for both women and men in Malta. There were three times more women working in education, human health and social work activities in 2012 (32% compared to 11% of men).

Scores in the domain of money increased by 17.1 points from 2005 to 2012. Progress in this domain is largely driven by the overall improvement in access to financial resources for both women and men (mean monthly earnings have almost tripled since 2005).

Although the score is high in this domain, women face bigger challenges in accessing financial resources. They earn less than men and have a lower income, including pensions. In Malta, the absolute gender gaps in earnings and income have widened since 2005.

This domain aims to grasp the inequalities in the distribution of financial resources between women and men. This remains challenging since the income and poverty indicators are calculated at the household level: the economic situation of women and men living in the same household is presumed to be equal and therefore nearly no gender differences are visible in poverty and household income levels. Measurement of the availability of resources at the individual level would thus provide more gender-sensitive information and depict a more realistic situation in income sharing between family members.
Unlike the EU-28 average, the score in the domain of knowledge increased in Malta. Although the situation of the overall population improved and the gender gaps shrank, Malta is still well below the EU-28 average.

The progress of the score is mainly due to the increased share of tertiary education graduates with almost no gender gap. However, study fields remain segregated, with more than half of women tertiary students concentrated in education, health and welfare, humanities and the arts, fields traditionally seen as ‘feminine’ (while only 32 % of men students are in these fields). Gender segregation at all levels in education leads to occupational segregation and subsequently impacts on the future career options of both women and men.

In a context of rapid technological change and transformation of the labour market, lifelong learning is an area of crucial importance for both women and men. While the percentage of women participating in lifelong learning has increased slightly since 2005, men’s rate of participation has declined (decreasing from 14 % in 2005 to 12 % in 2012).

Out of all the domains, the score in time has decreased the most since 2005 (by 10.6 points). This shows that the greatest challenge persists in the way time is allocated to different activities among women and men.

Women are still disproportionately in charge of care and domestic activities. 65 % of women compared to only 17 % of men did cooking and housework every day for at least 1 hour, a situation that has deteriorated since 2005. Inequality in time sharing at home usually affects how much time is spent in social activities, as shown by the fact that men are twice as likely as women to participate in sporting, cultural or leisure activities outside the home. In addition, a significant drop was visible in women and men’s participation in voluntary or charitable activities (which decreased from 16 % to 12 %).

Personal time spent on caring responsibilities has a major impact on women’s employment opportunities and economic independence. The findings reaffirm the importance of better work–life balance measures for women and men, such as an adequate supply of affordable and high-quality care services for children and other dependants, flexible working arrangements, and encouraging men to take more responsibility for household activities and childcare (e.g. parental leave).
Malta’s lowest score in the Gender Equality Index is for the domain of power: the country is only slightly more than one quarter of the way towards gender equality, and there has been almost no sign of progress since 2005.

In 2012, women were still much under-represented in the government (14 %), the parliament (9 %) and the regional assemblies (21 %). Women’s access to power structures in decision-making is a crucial part of eliminating gender inequalities.

Women’s under-representation also persists in the economic sphere. Only 3 out of 13 members of the key decision-making bodies of the central bank were women and women represent only 4 % of the board members of the country’s largest companies. As economic power remains largely in the hands of men, broader public debate and awareness raising are needed to change the corporate culture. Long working hours and physical presence at work, combined with traditional masculine leadership styles and a lack of transparency in recruitment and promotion practices, advantage men and reinforce gender inequalities.

Health is directly linked not only to personal, social and economic well-being, but also to human dignity and physical integrity. Currently, the index reflects two aspects: health status and access to services. In this regard, women and men in Malta and more broadly in the EU are doing relatively well and the gender inequalities are limited.

The score for the domain of health remained stable in Malta, with slight improvements in terms of the status of both women and men. However, while women live longer than men, the number of years lived in a healthy condition is similar for women and men, showing that the challenges faced by women and men in relation to health differ. Access to health structures improved slightly, as is reflected by a decrease in the number of people in need of medical or dental examinations.

Gender inequalities in this domain might be underestimated, as the measurement does not currently include differences in health-related behaviours due to an unavailability of suitable indicators and data. The behaviours and lifestyles of women and men differ according to the prevalence of traditional gender roles; therefore, it is very important to capture the gender-related behavioural differences behind inequalities in health.
Building on FRA’s violence against women survey and Eurobarometer data, the Gender Equality Index 2015 proposes a possible composite measure of violence against women. It also analyses attitudes towards violence against women, awareness levels and trust in police and justice institutions. The analysis shows that in those countries where the scores in the Gender Equality Index are higher, women are more likely to disclose violence. In Malta the level of disclosed violence against women is lower than the EU-28 average. In 2010, 41% of the population was aware of at least one case of domestic violence, 2.2% of the population considers violence against women acceptable while only 43% and 68% of the population has trust in the justice system and the police respectively.

The commitment of the EU and its Member States to eradicate violence against women needs to be supported by regular collection of systematic, comparable and harmonised data.

It is imperative to recognise that women and men are not homogeneous groups. The domain of intersecting inequalities considers how gender intersects with other aspects that may influence women’s and men’s life experiences. The report analyses and compares gender gaps in employment in two age groups (15-54 and 55-64), between foreign and national-born workers and finally between lone parents and single people without children.

In Malta, older workers (55-64 years) are vulnerable as they have lower access to employment than younger workers (15-54 years). The gender gap among older workers is wider than among younger ones, with only 16% of older women workers in employment in comparison with 52% of older men workers (a rate similar to that of younger women). The gender gap in employment between lone parents is significantly wider than for single people without children. This has a specific impact on the poverty level of lone mothers.

The next update of the Gender Equality Index will focus on intersecting inequalities in more detail.
The Gender Equality Index 2015

For the first time in the European Union, the Gender Equality Index builds a time series to monitor gender equality across several years. Results show that Malta is not yet halfway towards the gender equality landmark, leaving significant room for improvement. In order to reach gender equality in Malta and the EU-28, a more targeted and holistic approach to gender equality is needed.

Unique features and benefits of the Gender Equality Index

The Gender Equality Index:

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