

Still today, gender is a defining factor in the EU labour market that divides the workforce. This leads to the untapped potential of talent, unmet aspirations and lost opportunities for women, men and society at large. In all EU Member States, men dominate specific fields such as engineering and technology but are not present in others, such as teaching and care work. Out of the 20 largest occupations in the EU, only five have a gender-balanced workforce (at least 40% of one gender).

Gender divisions in the labour market extend to the distribution of leadership positions, career advancement possibilities, allocation of job tasks or income.

Gender segregation creates and reinforces gender inequalities in and beyond the world of work. It affects the EU economy by making the labour market less competitive and harder for companies to fill high-demand positions in IT and engineering. Segregation also creates differences in pay, higher risk of poverty and lower economic independence for women. The reasons behind this segregation are complex and cannot be explained by one single factor. A gendered division across study fields, combined with gender stereotypes or insufficient work-life balance options, come together to create the conditions for gender segregation.



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What is gender segregation?

It happens when women or men dominate a certain work or study field. For example, women in arts and humanities and men in construction and technology.

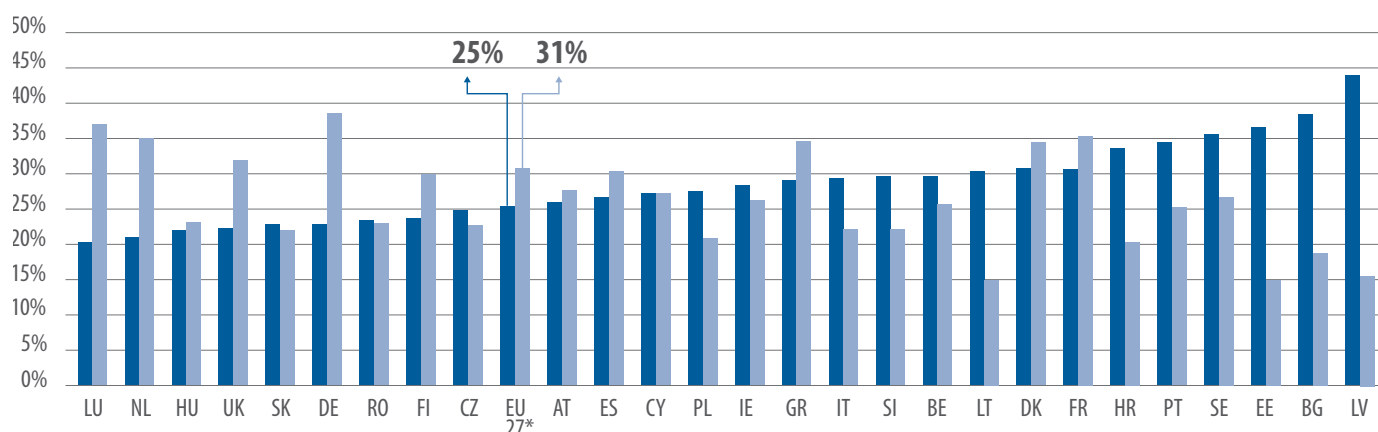
Search for more terms related to gender segregation in EIGE's Glossary and Thesaurus: <http://eige.europa.eu/rdc/thesaurus>

Little change in the past decade

In the Education, Health and Welfare (EHW) sector, there are fewer men than ten years ago (30% in 2004 and 26% in 2014). Across Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) occupations, the share of women has only increased by one percent, from 13% to 14% over the same time. Segregation reaches different levels across the Member States, showing that progress is possible.

In 2013-2014, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Portugal had the most balanced STEM workforce, while in Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Austria, segregation was highest. Across EHW occupations, gender segregation was lowest in Greece, Italy and Luxembourg but highest in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Figure 1. Share of women among science and engineering professionals - Share of men among teaching professionals



Note: * There are no data for Malta due to lack of comparable occupation data.

Sources: EU-LFS, calculations based on 2013-2014 microdata.

■ Science and engineering professionals ■ Teaching professionals

Qualifications and work do not always match

Gender segregation in the labour market is partly a result of women and men choosing different study fields at school. For those who study in fields atypical for their gender, the transition from study to work is not always straightforward. For example, women who graduate from STEM subjects have less chance of getting a first job matching their qualifications, compared to their men peers. Every second man who graduated from STEM tertiary studies found a job in a related field in 2014. However, this only applied to every third woman with the same education.

In the EHW field, men have a somewhat harder time than women finding a first job that matches their qualifications.

Around 57% of tertiary women graduates from EHW in the EU found a job matching their education in 2014, whereas this was the case for 52% of men with the same education.

Even after getting the first job, gender stereotypes remain relevant. Women who studied STEM are more likely than men to move away from STEM jobs, despite good growth prospects and a shortage of specialists in the sector. This is known as the 'leaky pipeline' syndrome that sees women abandoning their chosen field of work, for reasons such as a lack of career progression or work-life balance challenges. Overall, twice as many women in the EU with tertiary STEM education end up working as teaching professionals, compared to men.

Persisting pay gap

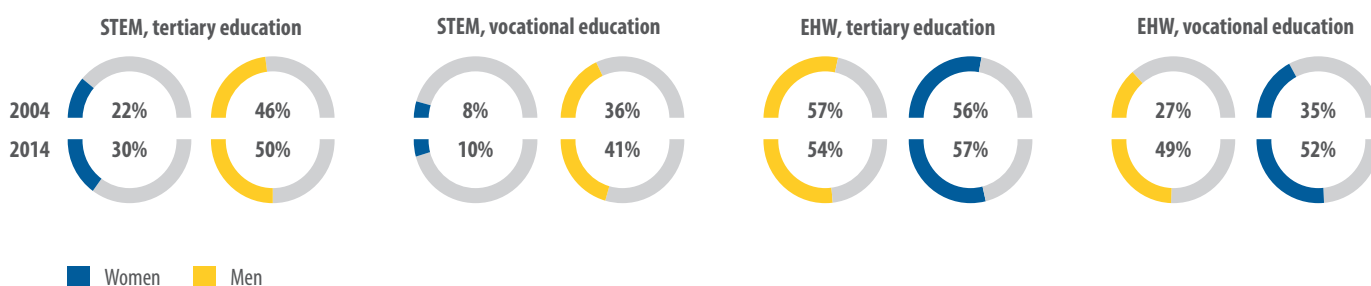
Over the last decade, there has been no clear reduction in the gender pay gap. In some countries, the gap has even increased. This highlights the paradox of increasing women's employment but at the cost of a disproportionate entry into low-quality and low-paid jobs. The pay gap persists due to numerous differences in the ways women and men participate in the labour market - from occupational segregation to an uneven distribution of senior positions or intensity of work. On one hand, women tend to dominate industries with lower pay and status, such as education and social work, but even in these sectors, men tend to earn more. On the other hand, women who work in the men dominated science and technology-related sectors, often have less access to more prestigious and innovative technical roles, which negatively affects their career progression.

The pay gap also reinforces gender segregation. For example, men may be discouraged from taking up women-dominated occupations, which generally pay less than jobs in STEM. An improved pay could therefore act as a strong incentive for men to overcome stereotypes and move into EHW occupations.



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Figure 2. Share of women and men with jobs matching their study field



Note: There are no data for Malta due to lack of comparable occupation data.
Sources: EU-LFS, calculations based on 2013-2014 microdata.

STEM = Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
EHW = Education, health and welfare

Why is this happening?

Gender stereotypes - the biggest culprit

Throughout our lives we often face social pressure from parents, peers or teachers to conform to traditional gender expectations that influence subject and career choices. Gender stereotypes discourage people from choosing and staying in professions that are atypical for their gender. For example, prejudices about men's ability and suitability to work in education or personal care are largely responsible for occupational gender segregation.

Working conditions limit work-life balance

The ease of combining work and family life differs between the STEM and EHW field. Having children is still noted as a barrier to women's chances of working and progressing in the STEM field, which is not the case for men overall. It also seems to be less of a problem for women in the EHW field.

Women in STEM work longer hours than women in other occupations. This is due to existing working cultures in men dominated occupations where part-time work is not really encouraged and accepted. Men's average working hours are generally longer than women's in every occupation, but they work even longer hours in male-dominated occupations, such as science and engineering.

This happens at the cost of men being generally less engaged in caring responsibilities and household activities. This also implies that a lack of flexible working opportunities for men not only limits their own choices to care for their dependents but also makes it harder for women to equally participate in employment.

Work-life balance provisions for women and men, such as parental or care leave, formal care services and flexible work arrangements would help promote work-life balance for both. More transparent procedures for hiring and promotion could also reduce bias against women who want to work in STEM occupations.



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How to tackle occupational gender segregation?

Put policies in place

Eradicating gender segregation is crucial for creating a more flexible labour market and fostering smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Several EU initiatives are in place to address it:

- Europe 2020 Strategy**
 for growth and jobs requires Member States to strengthen education and training for women, especially in sectors where they are underrepresented.
- 2015 Joint Report**
 by the Council and the Commission on the progress of the Education and Training 2020 strategy sets new priorities for 2020, including tackling the gender gap in education and promoting more gender-balanced choices in education.
- European Pact for Gender Equality 2010-2020**
 aims to reduce gender segregation in the labour market by eliminating gender stereotypes and promoting gender equality in education, training and the workplace.
- European Pillar of Social Rights**
 reconfirms the EU's commitment to gender equality in all areas, including participation in the labour market, terms and conditions of employment, career progression and equal pay for work of equal value. The 'New Start' initiative has been proposed as one of the ways to deliver on the Pillar and it aims to enhance work-life balance for parents and carers.

Challenge stereotypes early on

Addressing gender stereotypes early on in the school system can encourage young women and men to aspire to non-traditional jobs. Member States should address gender stereotypes through informal and formal education from a very early age by providing gender sensitive teacher training. Career guidance should counteract gender prejudices so that young people can think freely and make decisions that allow them to choose the work they want and lead dignified lives.

Allow more flexibility and encourage links between school and business

Too often education systems direct students onto a certain educational path for a specific job. Providing opportunities to students to change their core subjects more freely would widen their career choices.

Evidence shows that learning STEM is more effective when linked to economic, environmental and social challenges, arts and design, and when its relevance for daily life can be demonstrated. Merging STEM subjects with the arts and humanities (STE(A)M) can be a step towards more flexible, less segregated study options.

Building closer links between schools and real-life experience in the workplace could also enable broader occupational choices for girls and boys. Businesses could play a more prominent role in challenging negative and misleading perceptions of STEM or EHW careers by being more involved in education at all levels and providing a context for studies and positive role models.

EIGE's research on the economic benefits of gender equality shows that narrowing the gender gap in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education will lead to economic growth. It will create more jobs (up to 1.2 million by 2050) and increased GDP over the long-term (up to 820 billion EUR by 2050).



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Build closer links between schools and real-life experience in the workplace

Where to find more from EIGE?

Gender Statistics Database - find comparable data on segregation from all Member States

Gender Mainstreaming Platform - under the policy area 'employment' learn more about the gender divided workforce

Resource and Documentation Centre - there are over 1000 resources on the topic. Find them using the keyword search.

EIGE regularly produces reports reviewing different areas of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), as requested by the presidencies of the Council of the European Union. This fact sheet is based on the forthcoming report "Gender segregation in education, training and the labour market" prepared at the request of the Estonian Presidency (2017). It explores the progress in overcoming educational and occupational gender segregation in the EU. The report reveals what factors support or hinder segregation in education and the labour market. It also looks at what policies exist to address the issue at EU and Member State levels.

Other recent reports include:

- Economic benefits of gender equality in the EU (2017)
- Gender, skills and precarious work in the EU (2017)
- Poverty, gender and intersecting inequalities (2016)

You can explore all of EIGE's previous BPfA reports and publications at <http://eige.europa.eu/monitoring-the-bpfa>

European Institute for Gender Equality

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is the EU knowledge centre on gender equality. EIGE supports policymakers and all relevant institutions in their efforts to make equality between women and men a reality for all Europeans by providing them with specific expertise and comparable and reliable data on gender equality in Europe.

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