

# Still a huge gap between the sexes, researchers report

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

It is common knowledge that despite significant efforts to reduce the education and employment gap between the sexes, the issue remains unresolved. Women still earn less than men, and are still a minority in political decision-making and senior management positions. Women also form the majority of the unemployed, and perform most of the part-time

and unpaid jobs. In the latest data published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, a four-year Structure of Earnings Survey produced detailed information on the distribution of earnings in the EU. Perhaps one of the most startling facts to come to light is the news that one out of every six employees in the EU-27 was a low-wage earner in 2010.

Low-wage earners among [employees](#) amounted to 17.0 % in 2010 in the EU-27, and varied between Member States. The highest percentages were observed in Latvia (27.8 %), Lithuania (27.2 %), Romania (25.6 %), Poland (24.2 %) and Estonia (23.8 %), and the lowest in Sweden (2.5 %), Finland (5.9%), France (6.1 %), Belgium (6.4 %) and Denmark (7.7 %).

But the survey concluded that it was women who were more likely to be a low-wage earner: 21 % of female employees compared with 13.3 % of male employees.

Large differences were also seen between men and women in terms of levels of education and types of contract. Education, of course, plays a significant role in employment. The lower the level, the higher the likelihood of being a low-wage earner. In the survey, 29.0 % of employees with a low [education level](#) were low-wage earners, compared with 19.3 % of those with a medium level, and 5.8 % of those with a higher level. More than half of employees with a low level of education in Germany (54.6 %) and Slovakia (51.5 %) were low-wage earners, and almost half in Romania (49.4 %).

The type of employment contract was also seen to have an impact. In the EU-27 in 2010, 31.3 % of employees with a contract of limited duration were low-wage earners, compared with 15.7 % for those with an indefinite contract. In all Member States, except Estonia and Cyprus, the pattern was the same. The largest proportions of low-wage earners

among employees with a contract of limited duration were observed in the Netherlands (47.9 %), Poland (42.5 %), Germany (38.0 %), Bulgaria (36.9 %), Hungary and the United Kingdom (both 36.4 %).

But the European Commission are looking to turn the tide with a number of initiatives. The Youth Employment Package guarantees every young person will receive a quality offer of employment or training within four months of leaving school, or of being unemployed. And Europe 2020, the EU's growth strategy, includes an agenda for new skills and jobs, aiming to help people gain the right skills for future jobs, and to overhaul EU employment legislation.

**More information:** For more information, please visit:

European Commission - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion  
[ec.europa.eu/social/home.jsp?langId=en](http://ec.europa.eu/social/home.jsp?langId=en)

EU Youth Strategy  
[ec.europa.eu/youth/news/latest... yment-figures\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/latest... yment-figures_en.htm)

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