What can explain the under-representation of women in sciences? And how does this imbalance vary across different fields of science? These are the questions this report attempts to address. The analysis is based on data published in recent years, allowing us to identify some of the factors influencing the gender balance in scientific careers. Although the proportion of female researchers varies considerably across different fields of science, several factors, both structural and cultural, may explain such differences. The report aims to shed light on these factors and to provide suggestions for addressing gender disparities in scientific careers.

The picture is vastly different in science and engineering. Between 2002 and 2006, men outnumbered women in engineering and manufacturing by 3 percentage points. Proportion of women in the EU-27 for total employment, tertiary educated and employed as professionals or technicians now outnumber their male counterparts by 2 percentage points.

In the EU, the share of women graduating at PhD level stood at 40% in 2006. This is consistent with recent figures, which are based on data from Eurostat and Eurostat (education) for 2006. The proportion of women in all fields of science is generally lower than the proportion of men. However, the background for these figures is that the gender gap is significant for all scientific fields.

Although the proportion of female researchers varies considerably across different fields of science, several factors, both structural and cultural, may explain such differences. The report aims to shed light on these factors and to provide suggestions for addressing gender disparities in scientific careers.
In the EU-27 the proportion of women in grade A academic positions stood at 39% in 2007. This represents an moderate improvement over 2002, when gender imbalance was still observed in many countries.

The Glass Ceiling Index (GCI) is an indicator that measures the existence, influence and severity of the glass ceiling. It compares the proportion of women in Grade A positions to the proportion of women in academic grade B+C, indicating the opportunity (or lack of it) for women to move up the hierarchical structure in their profession. The GCI scores the existence of a glass ceiling, but is not a measure of the incidence of glass ceilings. The GCI is calculated as the ratio between the proportion of women in Grade A and the proportion of women in grades B+C, indicating the opportunity or lack of it for women to move up the hierarchical structure in their profession.

The distribution of Grade A staff across age groups by sex indicates that, unlike older persons and females, younger age groups are relatively younger than men.

The Proportion of female Heads of Institutions in the HES, 2007

Women comprise less than 20% of Heads of HES in all countries. In all other countries, the share of female heads of HES ranges between 19% and 51%.

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The Under-representation of women on boards and at the head of higher education institutions reflects their difficulty to influence the design and implementation of the research agenda. The gender gap in leadership could be one of the causes of the perpetuated gender imbalance in sciences.

The share of women on boards of universities relates to the opportunity for women to move up the hierarchical structure in their profession.

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Data unavailable:

2003: PT, NO; 2000: EL, IL.

2004


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