

Background

A Eurobarometer survey on gender equality shows that Europeans consider closing the gender pay gap is a top priority in tackling inequality between women and men, along with confronting violence against women. 82% of Europeans think that urgent action should be taken to tackle the gender pay gap. Meanwhile, 62% of respondents consider gender inequality to be widespread in their country. 66% also said the situation has improved over the past decade.

Thanks to EU and national legislation on equal pay, cases of direct discrimination – differences in pay between men and women doing exactly the same job – have fallen. But the pay gap goes far beyond this: it reflects ongoing discrimination and inequality in the labour market as a whole which, in practice, mainly affects women.

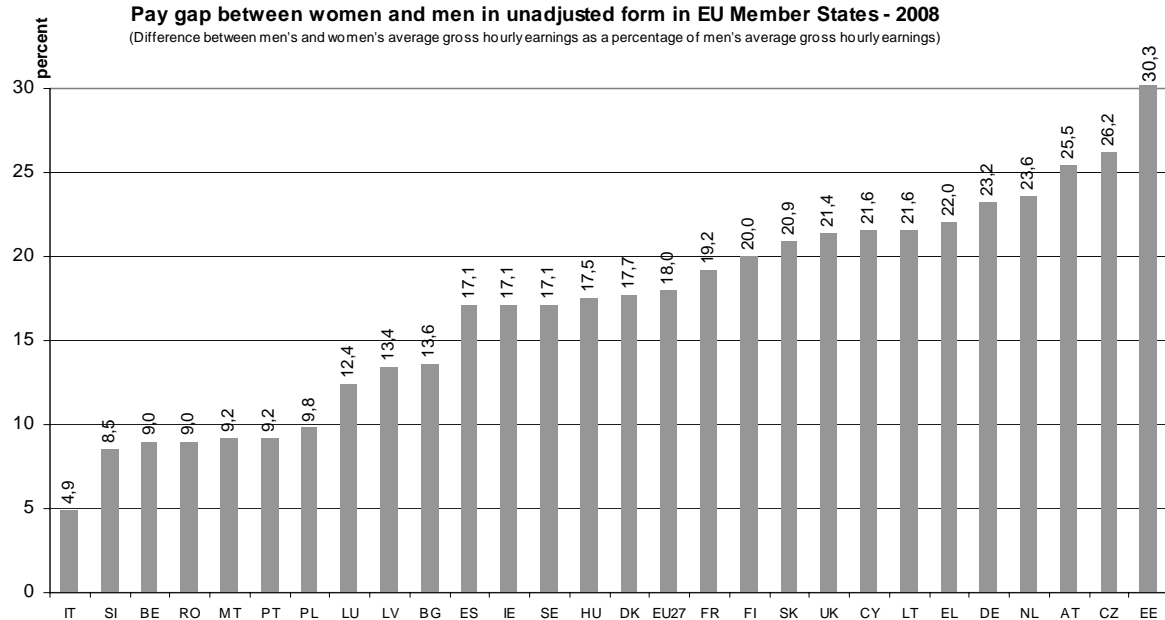
The effect of the gender pay gap on lifetime earnings means that women will also have lower pensions. As a result, women are more affected than men by persistent and extreme poverty: 22% of women aged 65 and over are at risk of poverty compared to 16% of men.

Awareness-raising activities are essential to inform employers, employees and stakeholders why there is still a gender pay gap and how we can reduce it. The Commission is therefore launching the second phase of an EU-wide information campaign with actions decentralised across the 27 EU Member States. A new online gender pay gap calculator will allow employees and employers to visualise the gender pay gap.

ANNEX

How big is the pay gap in different Member States?

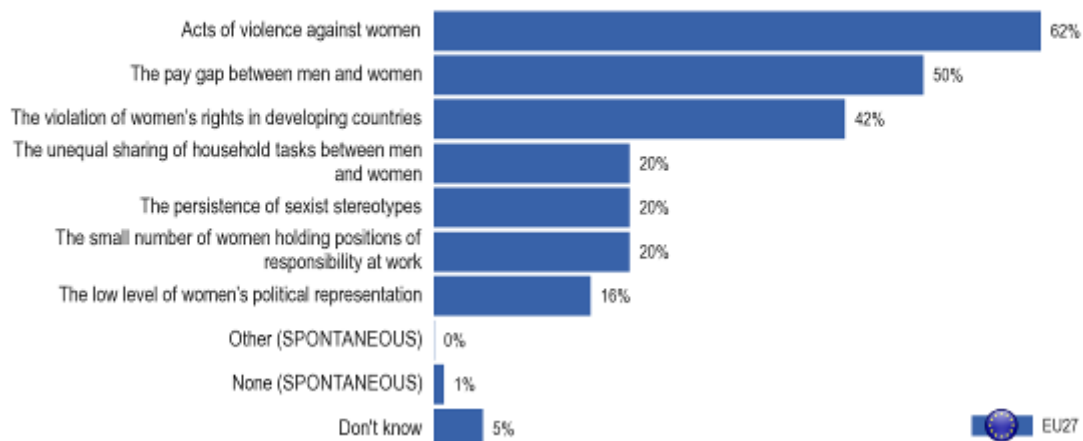
Measured as the "relative difference in average gross hourly earnings between women and men," the gender pay gap is estimated to be 18% in the EU as a whole (see graph below).



Source: Eurostat. Structure of Earnings Survey 2006 and national sources (2008) for yearly SES-comparable estimates. Provisional data for EU27, FR, ES and CY. Exception to the reference year: 2007 data for IE, DK, NL and EE.

Areas for prioritisation in the field of gender equality

QC16. Here is a list of the areas where gender inequalities are apparent. In your opinion, in which of these areas should action be taken as a matter of priority?

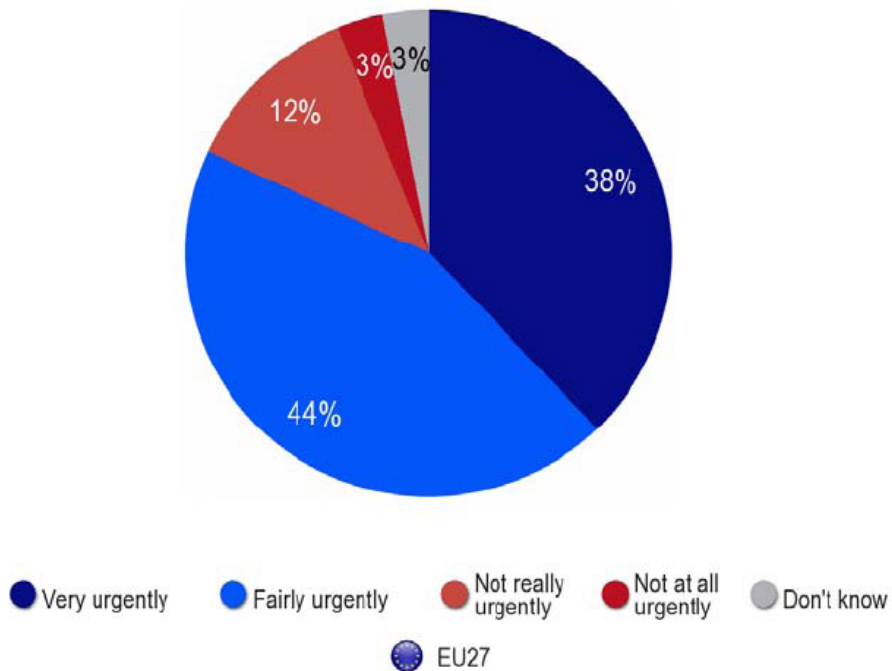


SPECIAL EUROBAROMETER 326 : "GENDER EQUALITY IN THE EU IN 2009

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_special_en.htm

Urgency in addressing the pay gap

QC5. In the European Union women earn on average 17% less than men (that is what is known as the pay gap between men and women). In general, do you think that this issue should be dealt with by the European Union ...?



Measures to address the gender pay gap

QC6. In your opinion, which of the following measures should be taken as a matter of priority to reduce the pay gap between men and women?

