



SHE FIGURES 2024

The road to gender equality in R&I

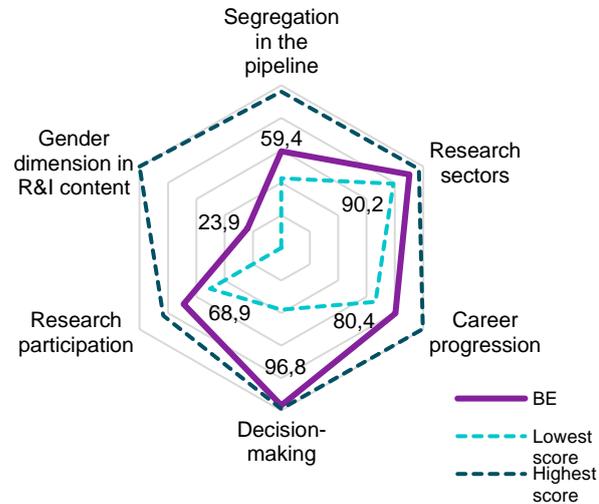


Belgium

She Figures Index 2024

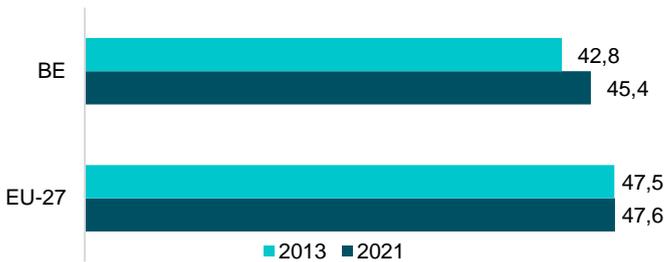
The She Figures Index is a tool to measure the extent to which European Union (EU) Member States have achieved gender equality in the European Research Area (ERA). It draws on She Figures indicators across six dimensions: segregation in the pipeline, research sectors, career progression, decision-making, research participation, and incorporating a gender dimension in research and innovation (R&I) content (GDRIC).

A score of between 0 and 100 is assigned to each dimension, as well as an overall score. A score of 100 denotes that gender equality has been fully achieved. Among the Member States, Belgium ranks 19th overall, with a score of 69.9. The breakdown indicates moderate scores on the dimensions of research participation (12th) and research sectors (17th), a relatively high score on decision-making (3rd), and lower scores on GDRIC (20th), career progression (23rd), and segregation in the pipeline (25th).



Pool of graduate talent

Figure 1: Proportion (%) of women among Doctoral graduates (ISCED 8), 2013 and 2021



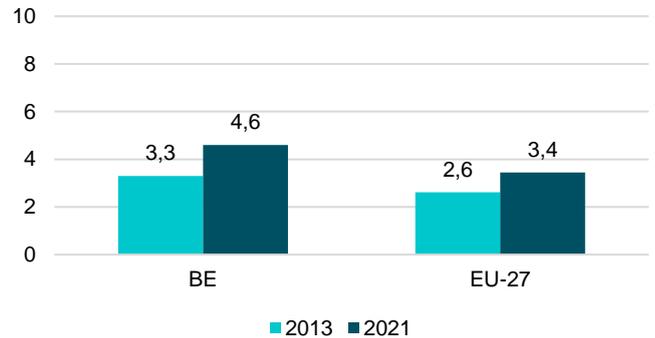
Notes: ISCED 8 = International Standard Classification of Education, Doctoral level or equivalent.
Source: Eurostat – Education Statistics (online data code: educ_uoe_grad02); Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Graduates by field).

Findings from She Figures 2024 show that **women account for 45 % of Doctoral graduates in Belgium** based on 2021 data, compared to 43 % in 2013. While this proportion stands below the EU average of 48 %, **the country's ranking among EU Member States has improved** over the years. Across the 27 Member States (EU-27), Belgium has the 22nd highest proportion of women among Doctoral graduates based on 2021 data, compared to holding the 25th highest position in 2013.



Participation in science and technology occupations

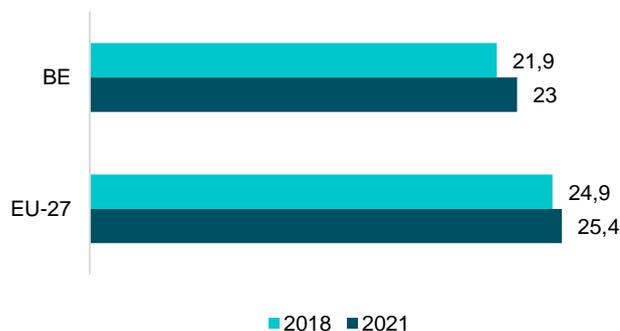
Figure 2: Proportion (%) of women scientists and engineers among total labour force, 2013 and 2021



Notes: Break in time series for 2021 BE and EU-27 data. S&Es = scientists and engineers.
Source: Eurostat – Human resources in science and technology (online data code: hrst_st_ncat) and Eurostat Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) – Active population by sex, age and citizenship (online data code: ifsa_agan).

In Belgium, **women scientists and engineers comprise 4.6 % of the labour market**, based on 2021 data. Compared to other Member States, Belgium has the seventh highest proportion of women scientists and engineers among its total labour force.

Figure 3: Proportion (%) of women among self-employed S&Es and ICT professionals, 2018 and 2021



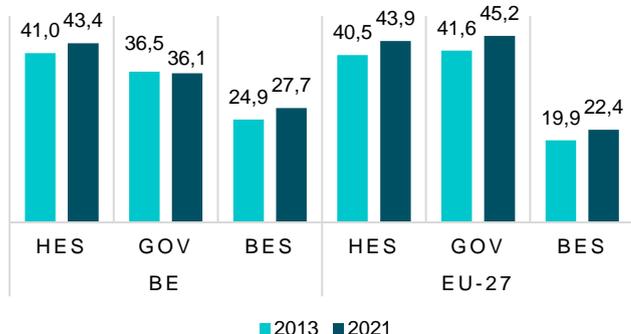
Notes: Break in time series for 2021 BE and EU-27 data. ICT = information and communications technology
Source: EU-LFS Annual Average Quarterly data.

Data from She Figures 2024 show that **women make up less than one-quarter (23 %) of self-employed S&Es and ICT professionals in Belgium**. While this is a slight improvement on 2018 (22 %), further efforts are needed to ensure that women and men have equal opportunities to participate in science & engineering and ICT occupations as self-employed professionals. Across 22 Member States with available data, Belgium ranks 14th in terms of the share of self-employed women in this field, compared to 15th out of 24 Member States in She Figures 2021.



Labour market participation as researchers

Figure 4: Proportion (%) of women among researchers, by sector of the economy, 2013 and 2021



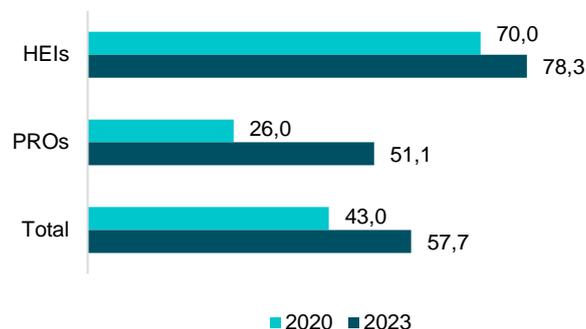
Notes: HES = higher education sector; GOV = government sector; BES = business enterprise sector; EU-27 data for 2021 are estimated. Break in time series for 2021 BE BES data.
Source: Eurostat – Research and development statistics (online data code: rd_p_persocc) and OECD-Research and development (R&D) personnel by sector and function.

Gender balance is not achieved among researchers in Belgium's labour market. She Figures 2024 indicates that **women comprise 34 % of researchers in the country**, in line with the EU-27 average. Significant disparities emerge across sectors. While women account for nearly half (43 %) of researchers in Belgium's higher education sector (HES), they comprise roughly one-third (36 %) of researchers in the government sector (GOV), and approximately one-quarter (28 %) of researchers in the business enterprise sector (BES).



Working conditions of researchers

Figure 5: Proportion (%) of research organisations taking actions or measures towards gender equality, by type of organisation, 2020 and 2023



Notes: HEI = higher education institution; PRO = public research organisation.
Source: Web-scraping of institutional websites of HEIs and other PROs using SerpAPI, informed by ETER, Cordis and input from the national Statistical Correspondents of EU Member States and countries associated with Horizon Europe.

Between 2020 and 2023, the proportion of research organisations in Belgium with information on their websites about their actions towards gender equality increased significantly, from 43 % to 58 %.

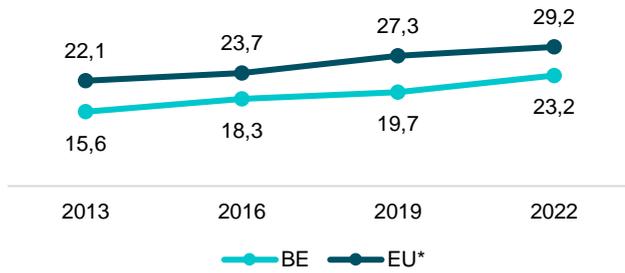
This information is more commonly showcased on the websites of higher education institutions (HEIs) than public research organisations (PROs). In 2023, while 78 % of HEIs' websites described actions to advance gender equality, roughly half of PROs (51 %) did so. However, notable progress was observed among PROs between 2020 and 2023, with the proportion of PROs featuring this information on their websites increasing by 25 percentage points (pp) during that time.

There are **no requirements for Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) at national or regional level**, but some actions have been undertaken to tackle gender-based violence in research institutions. The Wallonia-Brussels Federation (the French-speaking Community) shared a communication with HEIs, reiterating the responsibility of research institutions in cases of gender-based violence, describing the applicable laws relating to gender-based violence, and presenting the support services available for victims ⁽ⁱ⁾.



Career advancement and participation in decision-making

Figure 6: Proportion (%) of women among Grade A positions, 2013, 2016, 2019 and 2022

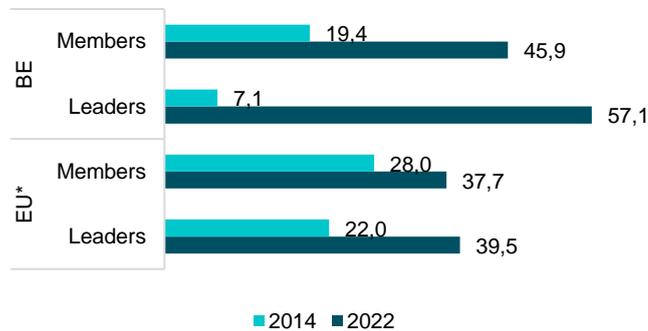


Notes: *EU-level data for 2019 and 2022 refer to the EU-27, while data for 2013 refer to the EU-28 (EU-27 plus the United Kingdom (UK)); data for Belgium's French-speaking community in 2022 refer to 2019, while data for Belgium's French-speaking community in 2019 refer to 2016. Grade A: The single highest grade/post at which research is normally conducted within the institutional or corporate system.

Source: Women in Science (WiS) database, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation - T1_questionnaires.

Opportunities for career advancement for women researchers in academia have improved over the past decade. Between 2013 and 2022, **the proportion of women researchers holding Grade A positions increased from 16 % to 23 %**. However, **women are overrepresented in lower academic positions** in Belgium and across the EU.

Figure 7: Proportion (%) of women on boards of research organisations (members and leaders), 2014 and 2022

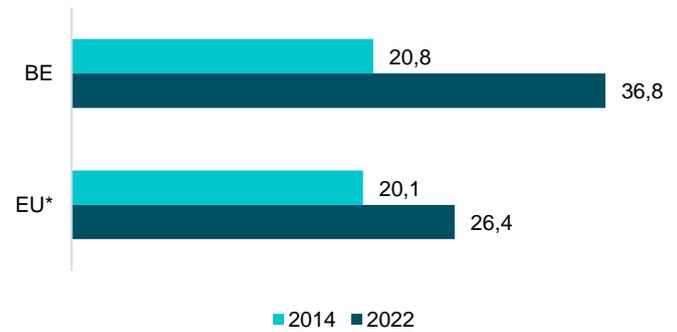


Notes: 2022: Data unavailable for BE(FL). *EU average value relates to EU-28 for 2014 and EU-27 for 2022.

Source: WiS database, DG Research and Innovation - T5 & T6_questionnaires.

Significant progress has been achieved in improving women's access to leadership and decision-making positions within the past decade. Findings from She Figures 2024 illustrate that **women in Belgium comprise over half of board leaders (57 %) and nearly half of board members (46 %)**, surpassing the EU average for both positions. This is a **substantial improvement from 2014**, where women accounted for only 7 % of board leaders and 19 % of board members.

Figure 8: Proportion (%) of women among heads of institutions in HES, 2014 and 2022



Notes: BE data for 2014 refer to 2013; data for BE = BE(FL) + BE(FR). *EU average value relates to EU-28 for 2014 and EU-27 for 2022.

Source: WiS database, DG Research and Innovation - T7_questionnaires.

The proportion of women as heads of institutions in the higher education sector (HES) in Belgium has improved.

According to She Figures 2024, 37 % of heads of institutions in HES are women, compared to 21 % in 2014. In 2014, Belgium's performance closely mirrored the EU average, with approximately 21% representation. However, by 2022, Belgium has surpassed the EU average, with a higher proportion of women among heads of institutions in HES, standing at 37% compared to the EU's 27%.

This progress is facilitated by a 2012 Decree by the Flemish government setting targets for women's participation in public universities' decision-making bodies (ii). The Decree stipulates that a maximum of two-thirds of decision-making bodies may be of the same sex.



R&I output

Figure 9: Research funding success rate differences (pp) between women and men, 2017 and 2022



Notes: Data for BE = BE(FL) + BE(FR); a positive difference means that men have a higher success rate. *EU-level data for 2017 refer to the EU-28, while EU-level data for 2022 refers to the EU-27.

Source: WiS database, DG Research and Innovation - T3_questionnaires.

Men tend to have a higher success rate in securing research funding. However, between 2017 and 2022, the success rate for women applicants increased from 27% to 30%, compared to a rise from 30% to 33% for men applicants.

Although men are more likely to secure research funding, the **gap in the research funding success rates between women and men decreased**, from 3.2 percentage points (pp) in 2017 to 3.0 pp in 2022.

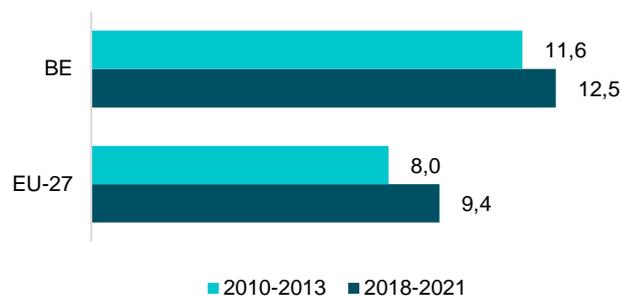
Figure 10: Average proportion (%) of women among authors on publications in all fields of R&D, 2013-2017 and 2018-2022



Notes: R&D = research and development.
Source: Scopus.

On average, **women in Belgium comprise 32 % of authors of publications in all fields of R&D** based on 2018-2022 data, compared to 29 % in 2013-2017. This is slightly below the EU-27 average (34 % in 2018-2022). Among the EU-27 Member States, Belgium had the 19th highest proportion of women among authors of publications during this period.

Figure 11: Proportion (%) of women among inventors, 2010-2013 and 2018-2021



Source: Computed by using European patent applications (kind codes A1 and A2) in PATSTAT.

Women are significantly underrepresented among inventors on patent applications in Belgium and in the EU more broadly. Data from 2018 to 2021 show that, on average, women hold only 13 % of inventorships in Belgium, and only 9.4 % in the EU. Despite the low proportion of women inventors in Belgium, the country ranks 8th among EU-27 Member States in terms of the highest percentage of women inventors.

Overall, She Figures 2024 highlights notable progress in Belgium towards improving women's opportunities in leadership and decision-making positions in R&I. 2022 data shows that Belgium performed above the EU average in the proportion of women leaders and members of boards of research organisations (Figure 7), as well as the proportion of women among heads of institutions in the higher education sector (HES) (Figure 8). Significant efforts have also been made by research institutions to improve gender equality through the adoption of GEPs (Figure 5), based on publicly available information on their websites. However, further efforts are needed to increase the proportion of women among researchers in GOV and BES (Figure 4), to ensure that women have equal opportunities for career advancement in academic positions (Figure 6), and to ensure that women have equal success in accessing research funding (Figure 9).

About She Figures 2024

Gender equality – in all areas of life, and specifically within R&I – is a priority for the EU. She Figures is one of the flagship publications of DG Research and Innovation. Produced every three years, it presents comparable statistics on the state of gender equality in R&I across Europe. The publication provides data for more than 100 indicators to support the European Commission's policy initiatives promoting gender equality in R&I and the ERA. The chapters follow the 'chronological journey' of women and men, from graduating from Doctoral education to participation in the labour market and in decision-making roles. The publication also considers women's and men's relative working conditions and R&I outputs.

Gender Equality in Research and Innovation

[Explore She Figures 2024 interactive report](#) and [Gender equality in research and innovation](#)

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(i) Wallonia-Brussels Federation, Circular: Prevention and fight against harassment and sexual violence within higher education establishments, 2021, https://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/48826_000.pdf

(ii) Flemish Government, Decree modifying the administrative organisation of the University of Antwerp and Hasselt University, 2012.