

Disability statistics - access to education and training

Statistics Explained

Data extracted in: August 2025.

Planned article update: September 2027.

Highlights

In 2024, 6.4% of people aged 25 to 64 years in the EU with a severe disability had participated in education and training during the previous 4 weeks, compared with 15.4% for people without a disability.

In 2024, 44.2% of people aged 18 to 24 years in the EU with a severe disability were early leavers from education and training, compared with 8.0% for people without a disability.

In 2024, 54.7% of young people aged 15 to 29 years in the EU with a severe disability were neither in employment nor in education and training, compared with 10.0% for young people without a disability.

In 2024, 30.0% of people with a disability aged 25 to 34 years in the EU had a high level of educational attainment, compared with 45.9% for people without a disability.

This article provides recent statistics on the [education](#) and training of the population with disabilities in the [European Union \(EU\)](#), focusing on different aspects: participation in education and training, educational attainment, early leavers from education and training, young people neither in employment nor in education and training. The data come from the [EU Labour Force Survey \(EU LFS\)](#) and relate to the 2024 reference year; the survey covers people aged 15 years or over.

This article is one of a set of statistical articles on disability which forms part of the online publication [Disability statistics](#).

Disability is approximated according to the concept of global activity limitation, which is defined as self-assessment of own level of limitation – because of health problems – in carrying out usual activities, for at least the previous 6 months (that is, being limited or severely limited in an everyday activity that people usually do).

Participation in education and training

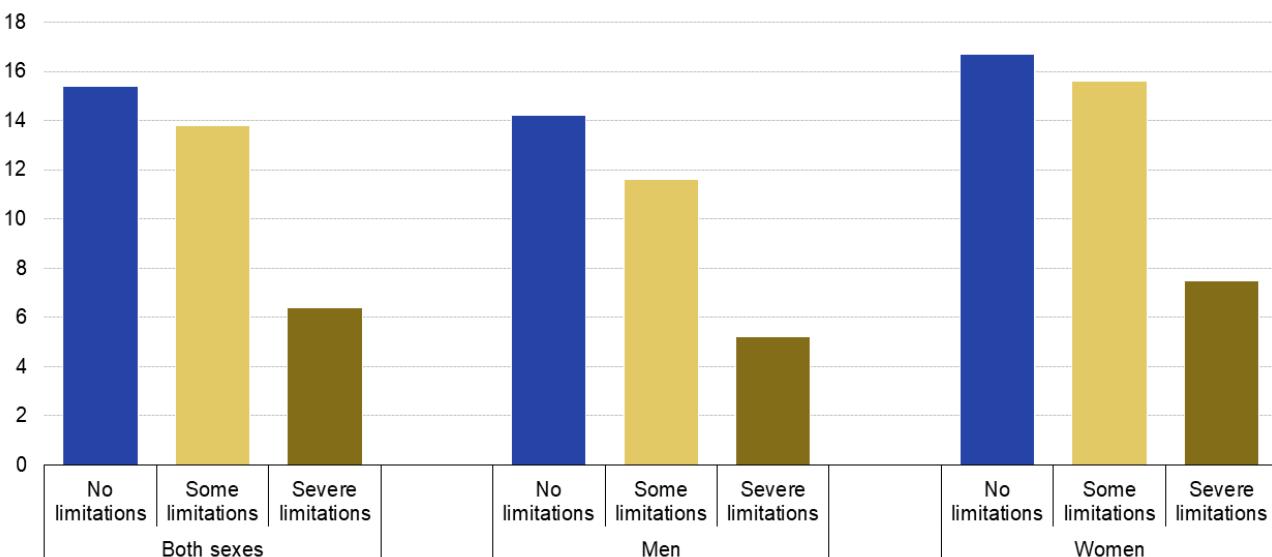
In 2024, 6.4% of people aged 25 to 64 years in the EU with a severe disability had participated in education and training during the previous 4 weeks

In the EU, 15.4% of people aged 25 to 64 years without a long-standing limitation in usual activities due to health problems (hereafter referred to as a disability) had participated in education and training during the previous 4 weeks. This share was lower for people with some disability (13.8%) and lower still for people with a severe disability (6.4%) – see Figure 1.

This pattern of a higher participation rate for people without a disability and a lower rate for people with a severe disability was observed both for men and for women. The gap between the participation rate for people without a

disability and people with some disability was larger for men (2.6 percentage points) than for women (1.1 percentage points). Regardless of the level of disability, women were more likely than men to have participated in education and training in the previous 4 weeks. The gender gap in 2024 was largest among people with some disability, as the participation rate was 4.0 percentage points higher for women (15.6%) than for men (11.6%).

Participation rate in education and training during the previous 4 weeks of people aged 25–64 years, by level of disability, EU, 2024
(%)



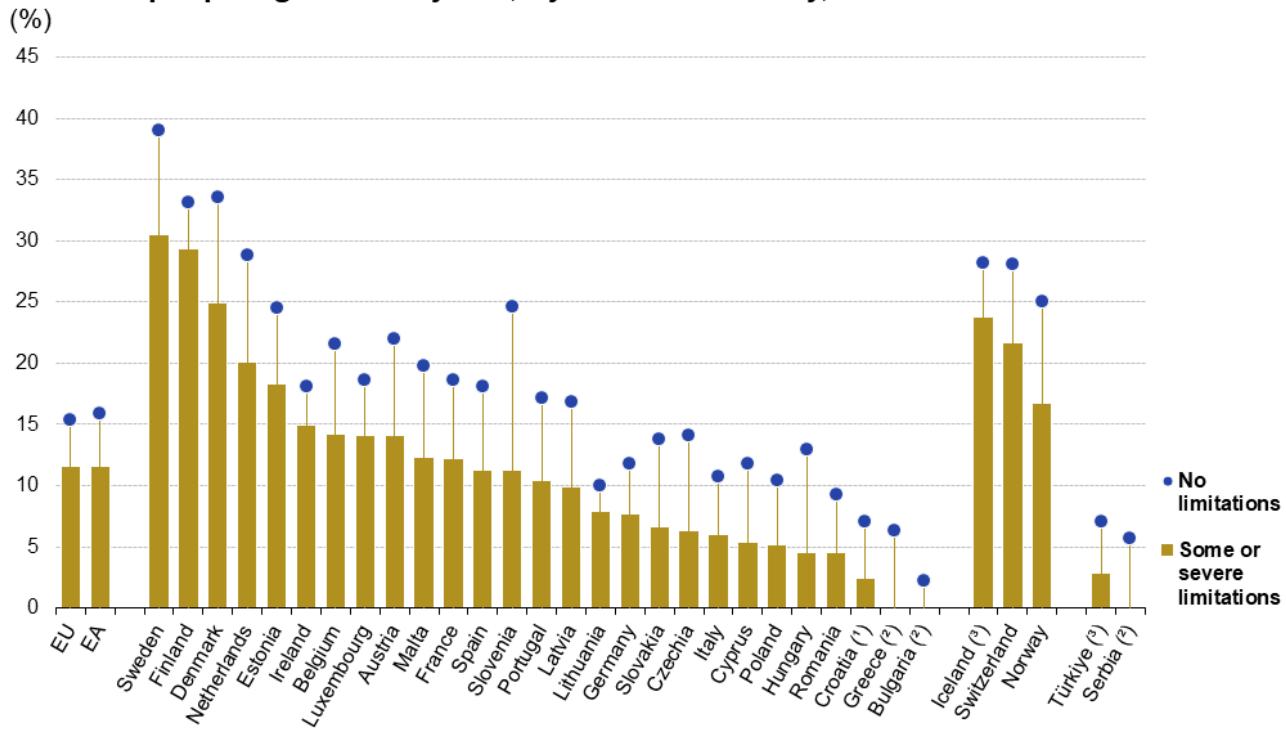
Source: Eurostat (online data code: [trng_lfs_16](#))

eurostat 

Figure 1: Participation rate in education and training during the previous 4 weeks of people aged 25–64 years, by level of disability, EU, 2024 Source: Eurostat ([trng_lfs_16](#))

Among people aged 25 to 64 years with a disability, the highest participation rates in 2024 were in the Nordic EU countries: 30.5% in Sweden, 29.3% in Finland and 24.9% in Denmark; these rates were all at least double the EU average (11.6%) – see Figure 2. The lowest participation rate among people with a disability was observed in Croatia (2.4%). The disability gap for the participation rate was 3.8 percentage points in the EU (rates of 15.4% for people without a disability and 11.6% for people with a disability). This gap ranged from 2.1 percentage points in Lithuania and 3.2 percentage points in Ireland to 13.3 percentage points in Slovenia.

Participation rate in education and training during the previous 4 weeks of people aged 25–64 years, by level of disability, 2024



(¹) Some or severe limitations: low reliability.

(²) Some or severe limitations: not published for reasons of low reliability.

(³) 2022.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: trng_lfs_16)

eurostat

Figure 2: Participation rate in education and training during the previous 4 weeks of people aged 25–64 years, by level of disability, 2024 Source: Eurostat (trng_lfs_16)

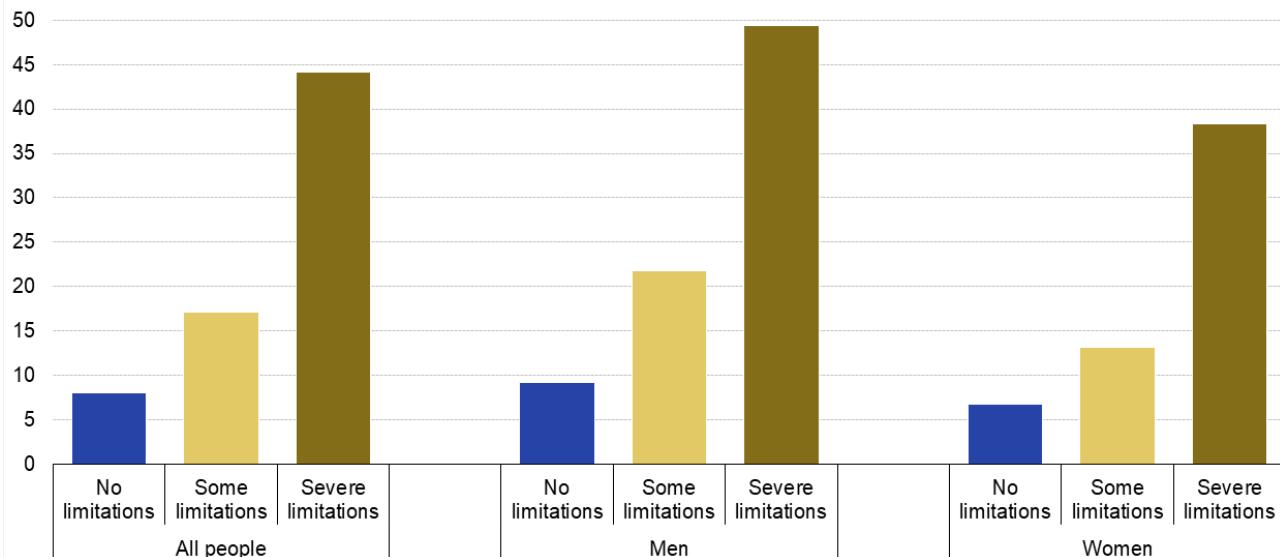
Early leavers from education and training

In 2024, 44.2% of people aged 18 to 24 years in the EU with a severe disability were early school leavers

In the EU, 8.0% of people aged 18 to 24 years without a disability were [early leavers from education and training](#). This share was higher for young people with some disability (17.1%) and higher still for young people with a severe disability (44.2%) – see Figure 3.

This pattern of a lower share of early leavers among young people without a disability and a higher share among young people with a severe disability was observed both for men and for women. The gap between the share of early leavers for young people without a disability and young people with some disability was larger for men (12.6 percentage points) than for women (6.5 percentage points). Regardless of the level of disability, women were less likely than men to be early leavers. The gender gap in 2024 was largest among young people with a severe disability, as the share of early leavers was 11.1 percentage points higher for men (49.4%) than for women (38.3%).

Share of early leavers from education and training among people aged 18–24 years, by level of disability, EU, 2024
(%)



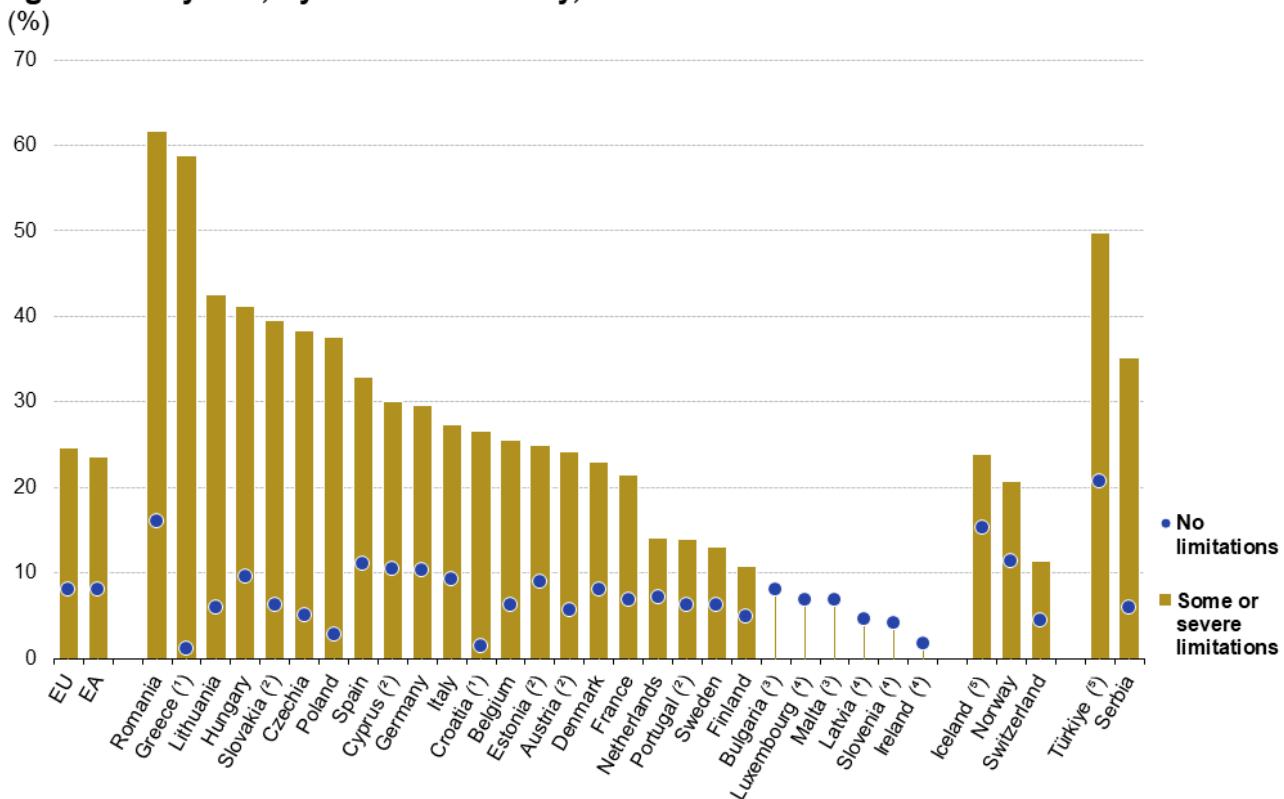
Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_lfse_40)

eurostat

Figure 3: Share of early leavers from education and training among people aged 18–24 years, by level of disability, EU, 2024 Source: Eurostat (edat_lfse_40)

Among young people with a disability, by far the highest shares of early leavers in 2024 were in Romania (61.6%) and Greece (58.8%), both of which had shares that were more than double the EU average (24.6%) – see Figure 4. The lowest shares of early leavers among young people with a disability were observed in Finland (10.7%), Sweden (13.1%), Portugal (14.0%) and the Netherlands (14.1%). The disability gap for the share of early leavers was 16.6 percentage points in the EU (24.6% of young people with a disability were early leavers, compared with 8.0% of people without a disability). This gap ranged from 5.8 percentage points in Finland to 45.5 percentage points in Romania and 57.6 percentage points in Greece.

Share of early leavers from education and training among people aged 18–24 years, by level of disability, 2024



(1) Low reliability.

(2) Some or severe limitations: low reliability.

(3) Some or severe limitations: not published for reasons of low reliability.

(4) No limitations: low reliability. Some or severe limitations: not published for reasons of low reliability.

(5) 2022.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_ifse_40)

eurostat

Figure 4: Share of early leavers from education and training among people aged 18–24 years, by level of disability, 2024 Source: Eurostat (edat_ifse_40)

Young people aged 15 to 29 years neither in employment nor in education and training

In 2024, 54.7% of people aged 15 to 29 years in the EU with a severe disability were neither in employment nor in education and training

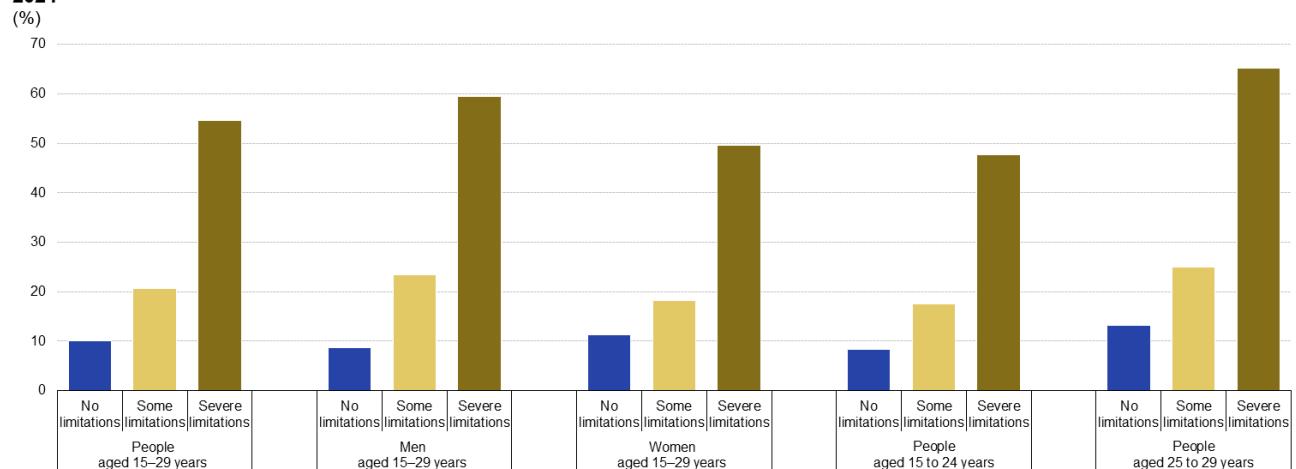
In the EU, 10.0% of people aged 15 to 29 years without a disability were neither in employment nor in education and training. This share was higher for young people with some disability (20.6%) and higher still for young people with a severe disability (54.7%) – see Figure 5.

This pattern of a lower share of young people who were neither in employment nor in education and training for young people without a disability and a higher share for young people with a severe disability was observed both for men and for women. The gap between the shares for young people without a disability and young people with some disability was larger for men (14.8 percentage points) than for women (7.0 percentage points). For young people without a disability, women were more likely than men to be neither in employment nor in education and training. For both levels of disability – some and severe – the reverse was observed, with higher shares for men. In absolute terms, the gender gap in 2024 was largest among young people with a severe disability, as the share of young people who were neither in employment nor in education and training was 9.9 percentage points higher for young men (59.5%) than for young women (49.6%).

The pattern of a lower share of young people who were neither in employment nor in education and training for young people without a disability and a higher share for young people with a severe disability was observed for both

age groups in 2024: people aged 15 to 24 years and people aged 25 to 29 years. The gap between the share of young people who were neither in employment nor in education and training for young people without a disability and young people with some disability was 9.2 percentage points for people aged 15 to 24 years and 11.8 percentage points for people aged 25 to 29 years. Regardless of the level of disability, people aged 15 to 24 years were less likely to be neither in employment nor in education and training, while the shares for people aged 25 to 29 years were higher. The age gap was largest for young people with a severe disability, where the share of young people who were neither in employment nor in education and training was 65.2% among people aged 25 to 29 years, compared with 47.7% for people aged 15 to 24 years.

Share of young people neither in employment nor in education and training, by level of disability, EU, 2024



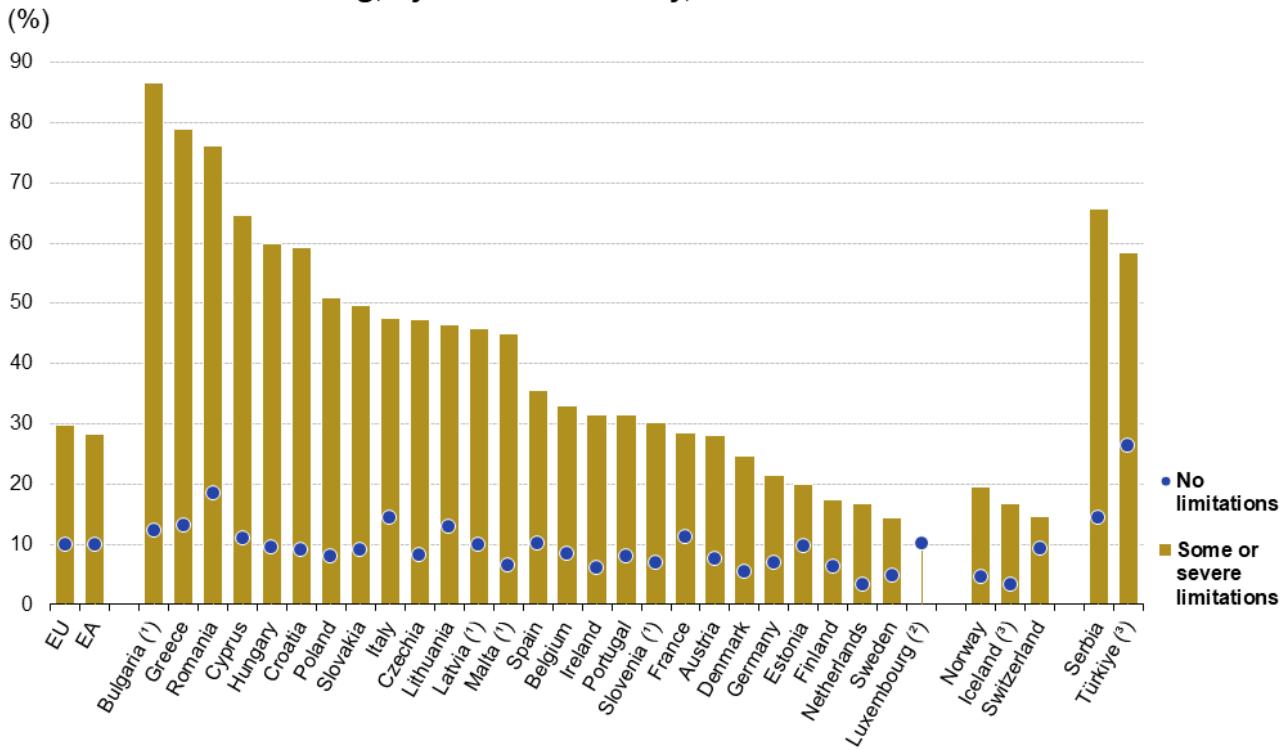
Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_lfse_39)

eurostat

Figure 5: Share of young people neither in employment nor in education and training, by level of disability, EU, 2024 Source: Eurostat (edat_lfse_39)

Among young people with a disability, by far the highest shares of young people who were neither in employment nor in education and training in 2024 were in Bulgaria (86.6%), Greece (79.0%), Romania (76.1%) and Cyprus (64.5%), all of which had shares that were more than double the EU average (29.8%) – see Figure 6. The lowest shares of young people who were neither in employment nor in education and training among young people with a disability were observed in Sweden (14.5%), the Netherlands (16.7%) and Finland (17.3%). The disability gap for the share of young people who were neither in employment nor in education and training was 19.8 percentage points in the EU (29.8% of young people with a disability were neither in employment nor in education and training, compared with 10.0% of young people without a disability). This gap ranged from 9.6 percentage points in Sweden to 65.8 percentage points in Greece and 74.4 percentage points in Bulgaria.

Share of young people aged 15–29 years neither in employment nor in education and training, by level of disability, 2024



(¹) Some or severe limitations: low reliability.

(²) Some or severe limitations: not published for reasons of low reliability.

(³) 2022.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_ifse_39)

eurostat

Figure 6: Share of young people aged 15–29 years neither in employment nor in education and training, by level of disability, 2024 Source: Eurostat (edat_ifse_39)

Educational attainment

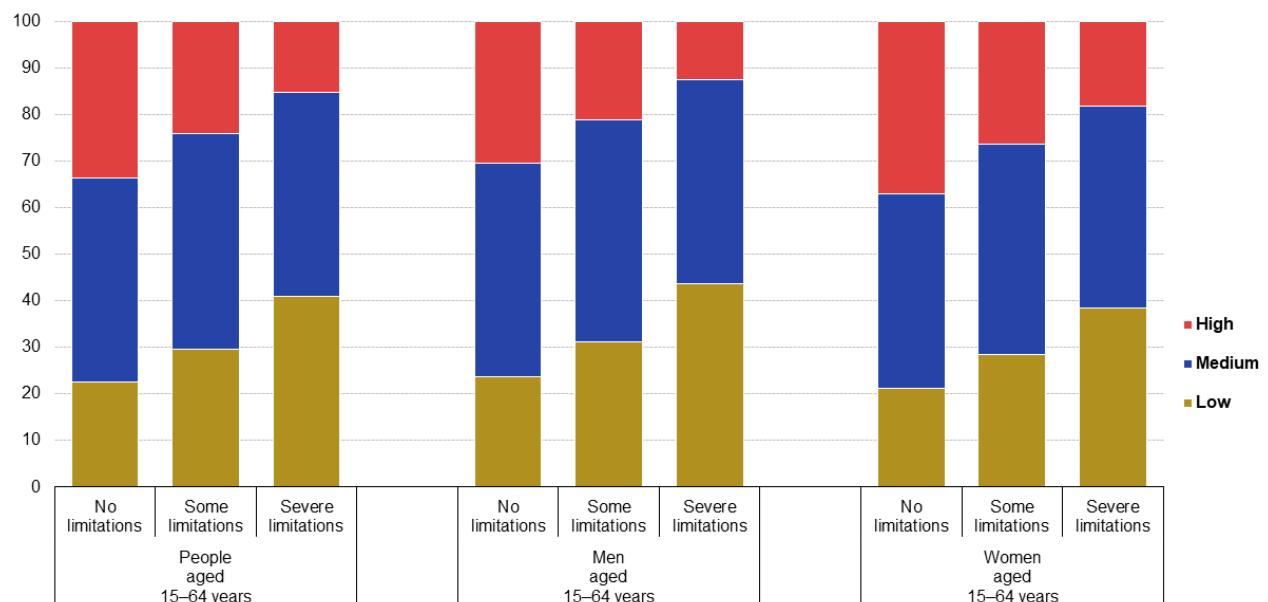
In 2024, 15.3% of people aged 15 to 64 years in the EU with a severe disability had a high level of educational attainment

In the EU, 33.6% of people aged 15 to 64 years without a disability had a high level of educational attainment, in other words, tertiary education. This share was lower for people with some disability (23.9%) and lower still for people with a severe disability (15.3%) – see Figure 7. The shares of people with a medium level of educational attainment were quite similar when analysed by level of disability, ranging from 43.7% for people with a severe disability, through 43.9% for people without a disability to 46.4% for people with some disability. Consequently, the reverse pattern was observed for people with a low level of educational attainment compared with those with a high level: this share was lowest for people without a disability (22.5%), higher for people with some disability (29.6%) and highest for people with a severe disability (41.0%).

This pattern of i) little variation in the share of people with a medium level of educational attainment ii) more people without a disability having a high level of educational attainment along with fewer having a low level iii) more people with a severe disability having a low level of educational attainment along with fewer having a high level, was observed both for young men and for young women. The gap between the shares for people without a disability and people with some disability was similar for young men and for young women for each of the 3 levels of educational attainment. Regardless of the level of disability, young women were more likely than young men to have a high level of educational attainment and less likely to have a low level of educational attainment. The gender gaps in 2024 were largest among people who had a high level of educational attainment: for people with some disability, the share who had a high level of educational attainment was 5.2 percentage points higher for young women (26.3%) than for young men (21.1%); for people with a severe disability, the share who had a high level of educational attainment was 5.7 percentage points higher for young women (18.1%) than for young men (12.4%).

Distribution of educational attainment, by level of disability and sex, EU, 2024

(%)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_ifs_9920)

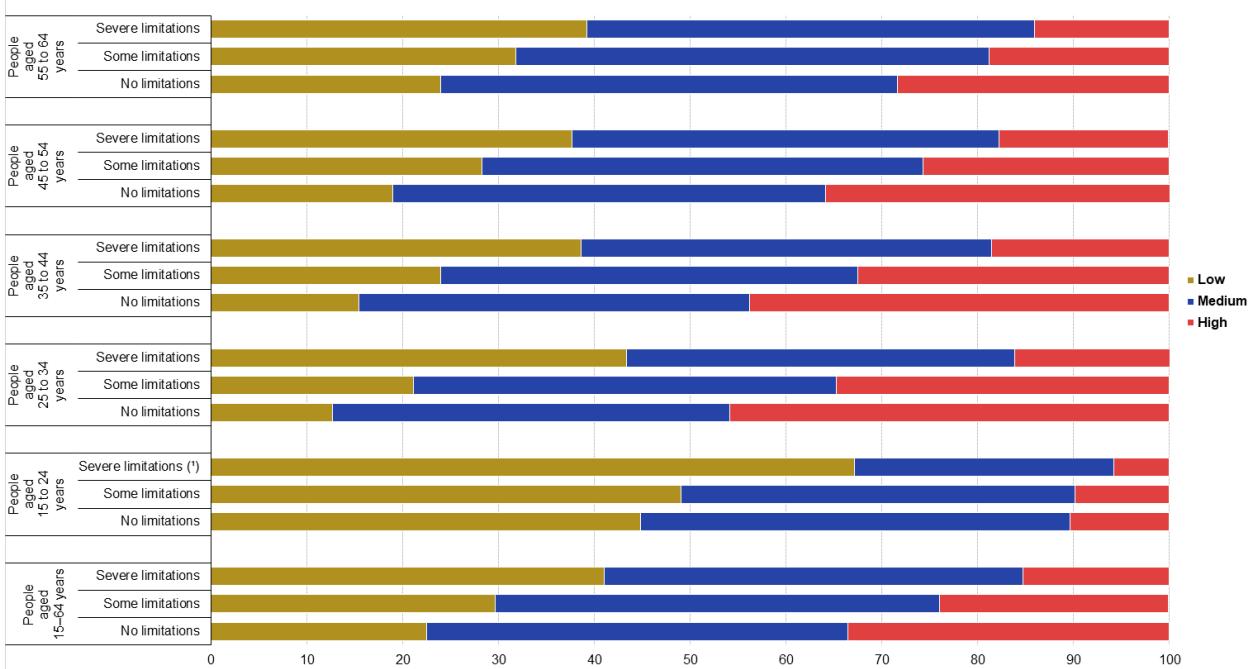
eurostat

Figure 7: Distribution of educational attainment, by level of disability and sex, EU, 2024 Source: Eurostat (edat_ifs_9920)

Equally, a similar pattern was observed for each of the 10-year age groups shown in Figure 8 when analysed by level of disability: there was little variation in the share of people with a medium level of educational attainment; more people without a disability had a high level of educational attainment while fewer had a low level; more people with a severe disability had a low level of educational attainment while fewer had a high level.

For each of the 3 levels of educational attainment, the gap between the shares for people without a disability and people with some disability was similar for all the groups from 25 to 34 years up to 55 to 64 years. For the youngest age group (people aged 15 to 24 years), this disability gap was relatively small for the shares of people with low or high levels of educational attainment. Focusing on the age groups from 25 to 34 years upwards (by when initial education has generally been completed), regardless of the level of disability younger people were generally more likely than older people to have a high level of educational attainment and generally less likely to have a low level of educational attainment. There were a few exceptions, such as the share of people with a severe disability who had a high level of education being larger for people aged 35 to 44 years (18.6%) than for people aged 25 to 34 years (16.3%).

Distribution of educational attainment, by level of disability and age class, EU, 2024
(%)



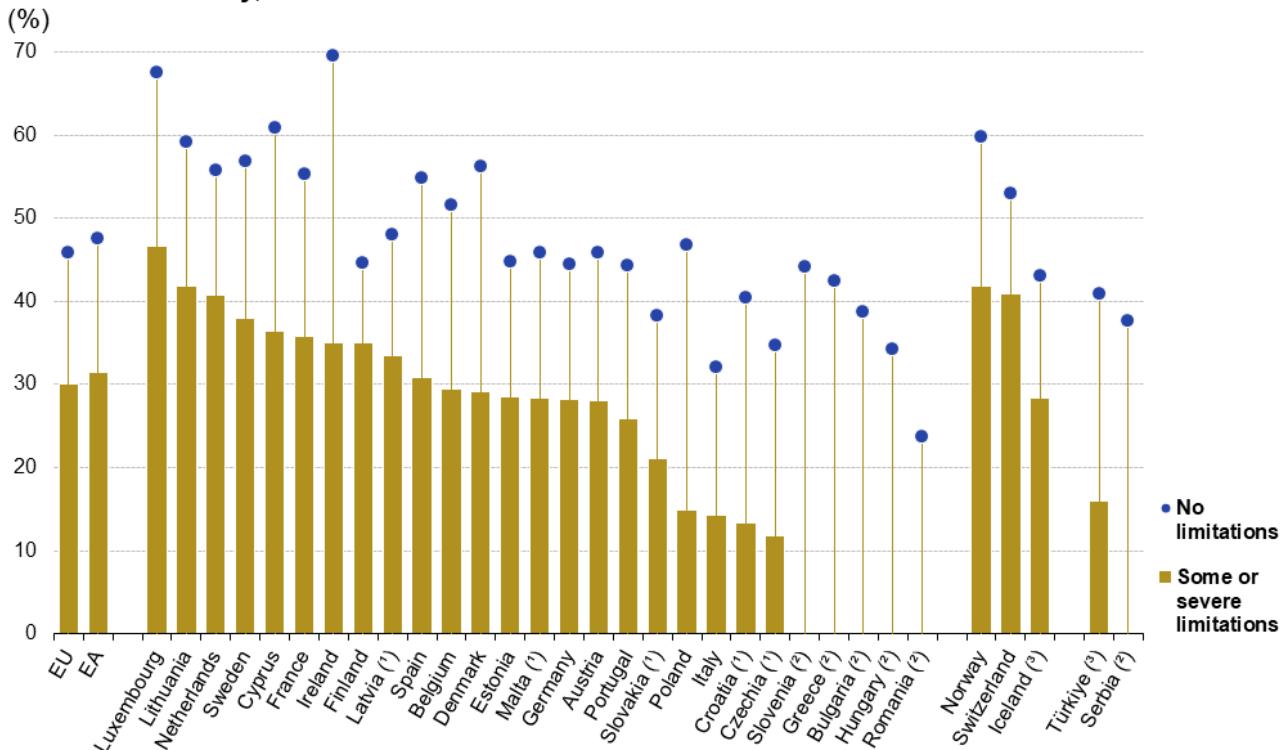
(*) High educational attainment: low reliability.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_ifs_9920)

eurostat

Figure 8: Distribution of educational attainment, by level of disability and age class, EU, 2024 Source: Eurostat (edat_ifs_9920)

Among people with a disability, the highest shares of people aged 25 to 34 years who had a high level of educational attainment in 2024 were in Luxembourg (46.6%), Lithuania (41.9%) and the Netherlands (40.7%); these rates were all more than 10.0 percentage points higher than the EU average (30.0%) – see Figure 9. The lowest share of people who had a high level of educational attainment among people with a disability was observed in Czechia (11.8%). The disability gap for the share of people who had a high level of educational attainment was 15.9 percentage points in the EU (shares of 30.0% for people with a disability and 45.9% for people without a disability). This gap ranged from 9.6 percentage points in Finland to 31.9 percentage points in Poland and 34.6 percentage points in Ireland.

Tertiary educational attainment among people aged 25–34 years, by level of disability, 2024



(¹) Some or severe limitations: low reliability.

(²) Some or severe limitations: not published for reasons of low reliability.

(³) 2022.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_lfs_9920)

eurostat

Figure 9: Tertiary educational attainment among people aged 25–34 years, by level of disability, 2024 Source: Eurostat (edat_lfs_9920)

Source data for tables and graphs

- Disability statistics – access to education and training: tables and figures

Data sources

The EU labour force survey (EU LFS) is the largest European household sample survey providing quarterly and annual results on labour participation of people aged 15 and over as well as on persons outside the labour force. It covers residents in private households. Although focused on the labour market, the EU LFS also provides statistics on education. The LFS is documented in this [background article](#) which provides information on the scope of the data, its legal basis, the methodology employed, as well as related concepts and definitions.

Disability is measured with a variable assessing the limitations people have experienced – because of health problems – in carrying out usual activities (for at least the previous 6 months); the resulting measure is called the global activity limitation indicator (GALI).

Classification of education levels

The [International standard classification of education \(ISCED\)](#) is the basis for international education statistics, describing different levels of education; it was first developed in 1976 by [UNESCO](#) and revised in 1997 and again in 2011. [ISCED 2011](#) differentiates 9 levels of education: early childhood education (level 0); primary education (level 1); lower secondary education (level 2); upper secondary education (level 3); post-secondary non-tertiary education (level 4); short-cycle tertiary education (level 5); bachelor's or equivalent level (level 6); master's or equivalent level (level 7); doctoral or equivalent level (level 8).

Participation

The EU LFS also collects information about adult participation in formal or non-formal education and training during the 4 weeks prior to the survey. The denominator used for the share consists of the total population of the same age group, excluding people who didn't answer the questions about participation in education and training.

Early leavers

Early leavers are defined as individuals aged 18 to 24 who have completed at most a lower secondary education and were not in further education or training.

- The numerator of the indicator refers to people aged 18 to 24 who meet the following 2 conditions: (a) the highest level of education or training they have completed is ISCED 2011 levels 0, 1 or 2 (ISCED 1997 levels 0, 1, 2 or 3C short); and (b) they have not received any education or training (in other words neither formal nor non-formal) in the 4 weeks preceding the survey.
- The denominator is the total population of the same age group, excluding respondents who did not answer the questions 'highest level of education or training successfully completed' and 'participation in education and training'.

Young people neither in employment nor in education and training

The share of young people neither in employment nor in education or training is an indicator measuring the proportion of a given subpopulation (for example, an age group) who are not employed and not involved in any further education or training. The definition is as follows.

- The numerator of the indicator refers to people meeting 2 conditions:
 - they are not employed – in other words, they are unemployed or outside the labour force
 - they have not received any (formal or non-formal) education or training in the 4 weeks preceding the survey.
- The denominator is the total population of the same age group, excluding non-response to the question about 'participation in regular (formal) education and training' in the EU LFS.

Educational attainment

Educational attainment is a term commonly used to refer to the highest level of education that an individual has successfully completed. In this article, data on educational attainment are presented for 3 aggregates of educational attainment:

- low – less than primary, primary and lower secondary education (ISCED levels 0 to 2)
- medium – upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED levels 3 and 4)
- high – tertiary education (ISCED levels 5 to 8).

Context

Disability statistics are used to measure the impact and effectiveness of EU policy aimed at ensuring equal rights for people with disabilities. The EU has adopted several strategies aimed at improving the lives of people with disabilities:

- by reducing discrimination and inequalities
- by providing support to enjoy fully their human rights, fundamental freedoms and EU rights on an equal basis with others.

In light of this, the [2021–30 EU Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities](#) sets EU objectives and priority actions in several areas, such as accessibility, citizens' rights, quality of life, equal access and non-discrimination, and the promotion of the rights of people with disabilities. To find out more, please visit the [webpage on the monitoring framework for the objectives and actions of this strategy](#).

To ensure sound monitoring and reporting of this topic, the European Commission is reinforcing the collection of data on the situation of people with disabilities in areas where knowledge gaps have been identified.

Within the [European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](#), one of the [EU 2030 social targets](#) concerns adult education and training. Its goal is for the share of adults aged 25 to 64 years participating in education and training every year to reach at least 60% by 2030. Note that indicator is based on a recall period of a year; the recall period for the indicator shown in this article is 4 weeks.

The EU is also a signatory of the [United Nations \(UN\) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#).

Given the broad nature of the UN Convention and the EU's disability strategy, policy issues related to disability concern the social integration of people with disabilities in all aspects of life. The functional status of people needs to be taken into account in many policy areas, such as health, social protection, housing, transport, culture, education and employment. Policy development in these areas can benefit from reliable data on the functional status of the population.

Adults with a low level of educational attainment and a lack of skills are more likely to earn lower than average wages and be more vulnerable to the precarious nature of the labour market. Consequently, access to education and training is particularly important for people with a disability. The EU is in the process of building a [European Education Area](#), designed to provide quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning for all, as enshrined within the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#).

View this article online at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Disability_statistics_%26_Access_to_education_and_training

Explore further

Other articles

Online publications

- [Disability statistics](#)
- [Education and training in the EU – facts and figures](#)
- [EU labour force survey statistics](#)
- [EU labour force survey – methodological publication](#)

Database

- [Disability \(dsb\)](#), see

Access to education and training (dsb_educ)

Thematic section

- [Disability](#)
- [Labour market](#)

Publications

- [Key figures on European living conditions – 2024 edition](#)
- [Equality statistics in the European Union – 2024 edition](#)

Methodology

Disability

- [Disability statistics introduced](#)
- [Global activity limitation indicator \(GALI\) implementation guidelines](#)

Labour force

- [EU labour force survey](#) – methodological publication
- [LFS series – detailed annual survey results \(lfsa\)](#) (ESMS metadata file – lfsa_esms)

External links

Health

- [European Commission – Directorate-General for Health and Public Safety – Public health](#) , see
 - [Summary of Regulation \(EU\) 2021/522](#)
- [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/522 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 March 2021 establishing a Programme for the Union's action in the field of health \('EU4Health Programme'\) for the period 2021–2027](#)

Disability

- [European Commission – Persons with disabilities](#) , see
 - [European disability expertise](#)
 - [European disability strategy 2010–2020](#)
 - [Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021–2030](#)
- [United Nations – Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#)
- [World Health Organization – International classification of functioning, disability and health \(ICF\)](#)
- [OECD – health and work](#) , see
 - [Disability, work and Inclusion](#)

Education and training

- [European Commission – Education and Training – European education area](#) , see
 - [Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond \(2021–30\)](#)
- [European Commission – Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion – European skills agenda](#)
- [UNESCO Institute for Statistics \(UIS\)](#) , see
 - [International standard classification of education \(ISCED 2011\)](#)