

Education and training statistics at regional level

Statistics Explained

Data extracted in May 2025.

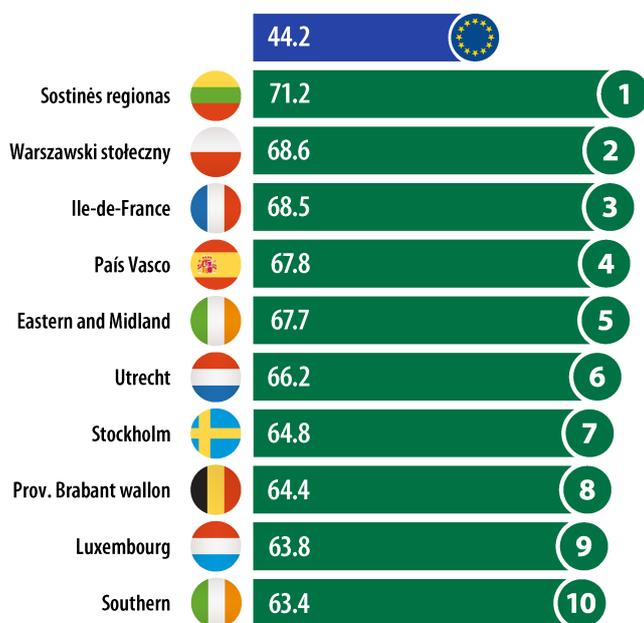
Planned article update: September 2026.

This article forms part of the [Eurostat regional yearbook – 2025](#), an annual [flagship publication](#). It provides a detailed picture relating to a broad range of statistical topics across the regions of the EU, EFTA and candidate countries.

Highlights

In 2024, more than 90.0% of the people aged 20 to 24 years had at least an upper secondary education qualification across every region of Ireland and Croatia; by contrast, the German region of Lüneburg recorded the lowest share, at 59.2%.

In 2024, 47.0% of the EU population aged 25 to 64 years participated in education and training during the 12 months prior to the survey; the Swedish capital region of Stockholm recorded the highest regional share, at 64.0%.



(% of people aged 25–34 years, by NUTS 2 regions, 2024)
 Note: Mayotte (FRY5) and Åland (FI20), not available.
 Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_ifse_04)



Source: Eurostat (edat_ifse_04)

Alongside the provision of health care, public expenditure on education is often considered 1 of the most important investments that can be made in people. Education has the potential to drive socioeconomic development forward: this is particularly the case in a globalised world, where a highly skilled workforce can be an advantage in terms of productivity, innovation and competitiveness.

Education and training play a vital role in the economic and social strategies of the EU. In February 2021, a [Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond \(2021-2030\)](#) (2021/C 66/01) was adopted. It sets out several policy targets for the [European Education Area](#) that are designed to remove barriers to learning and improve access to quality education for all. Several of these targets are referred to within this chapter.

EU policymakers place considerable emphasis on skills development and lifelong learning as essential drivers of competitiveness, innovation and social inclusion. Through a broad set of policies, they seek to equip people with the skills needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving [labour market](#). These efforts focus on increasing participation in education and training, addressing skills mismatches and promoting equal opportunities. They also support progress towards 2 of the EU's key social targets under the [European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](#): ensuring that, by 2030, at least 60% of adults participate in training every year, and that the employment rate rises reaches at least 78%.

The infographic above presents data for the 10 NUTS level 2 regions across the EU with the highest shares of

people aged 25 to 34 years who have a tertiary level of educational attainment. In 2024, several of the highest shares were recorded in capital regions. For example, 71.2% in Sostinės regionas (Lithuania), 68.6% in Warszawski stołeczny (Poland) and 68.5% in Ile-de-France (France).

This chapter presents data following the common progression of pupils and students through different levels of the education system (according to the [International standard classification of education \(ISCED\)](#) ; see box for more details), before looking at educational attainment levels, the transition from education into work and adult education and training. Administrative data on the participation of pupils and students in various levels of education generally refer to 2023, while the latest information from other datasets (surveys) generally concerns 2024.

In 2023, there were an estimated 94.5 million pupils and students enrolled across the EU in all levels of education from pre-primary to tertiary (as covered by ISCED levels 02 to 8); this estimate is based on the latest information available.

More about the data: classifying education levels

As national education systems vary in terms of structure and curricular content, statistics on education and training are compiled according to the international standard classification of education (ISCED). This is the reference classification for organising formal education programmes and related qualifications by education levels and fields into internationally agreed categories.

The most recent version of the ISCED classification – [ISCED 2011](#) – was adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in November 2011 and identifies the following levels of education:

- early childhood education – ISCED level 0
 - early childhood educational development – ISCED level 01
 - pre-primary education – ISCED level 02
- primary education – ISCED level 1
- lower secondary education – ISCED level 2
- upper secondary education – ISCED level 3
- post-secondary non-tertiary education – ISCED level 4
- short-cycle tertiary education – ISCED level 5
- bachelor's or equivalent level – ISCED level 6
- master's or equivalent level – ISCED level 7
- doctoral (PhD) or equivalent level – ISCED level 8.

School attendance is compulsory – at least for primary and lower secondary education – across all of the EU countries.

Young people who have successfully completed lower secondary education may enter upper secondary education (ISCED level 3), when they generally have to choose certain subjects or specialisations to study, alongside their future education and/or career paths. Upper secondary (or intermediate) education typically ends in the EU when students are aged 17 or 18 years. These programmes are designed primarily to prepare students so that they may continue their studies at a tertiary level (general programmes), or to provide them with skills and competencies that are relevant for a specific occupation or trade (vocational programmes).

The term 'tertiary education' is used to refer to ISCED levels 5 to 8. It builds on secondary education, providing learning activities at a higher level of complexity. This level of higher education – provided by universities and other tertiary educational institutions – can play an important role in society, fostering innovation, while increasing economic development and growth.

Enrolments

Participation rates in early childhood education

Research has shown that early experiences of children often play a critical role in their long-term development. Early childhood education and care programmes, which are intentionally designed to support children's cognitive, language, physical and socio-emotional development, are considered as educational in the ISCED classification (ISCED level 0, early childhood education)¹.

Early childhood education programmes are typically designed to introduce young children to organised instruction outside of the family context. Programmes have an intentional education component and target children below the age of entry into primary education (ISCED level 1). Early childhood education programmes constitute the 1st level of education and training systems and play a key role in redressing 'unequal' life chances, tackling inequalities by preventing the formation of early skills gaps.

More about the data: statistics on early childhood education and care

Within the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond, a key policy target concerns the share of young children – between 3 years of age and the starting age of compulsory primary education – who participate in early childhood education and care. Eurostat data on early childhood education (ISCED level 0) are used to measure progress towards the goal of having at least 96% of children in this age group participating in early childhood education and care by 2030².

Within this section, regional statistics presented for Germany relate to NUTS level 1 regions, while national data are presented for the Netherlands.

Based on the latest available data, there were an estimated 15.7 million children (of any age) enrolled in early childhood education across the EU in 2023 (data for Belgium, Greece, Malta and Portugal only cover pre-primary education). **Map 1** shows a more detailed picture for 193 NUTS level 2 regions, it covers pupils between the age of 3 and the starting age of compulsory education at primary level. While the participation rate in early childhood education averaged 94.0% across the whole of the EU, there were considerable differences in regional rates. The highest rates were generally recorded in the westernmost regions of the EU and lower rates across most eastern regions. Capital regions had higher than average participation rates in some EU countries (for example, Ireland, Hungary and Poland), whereas in others they recorded lower than average rates (for example, Italy, Romania or Sweden).

In 2023, there were 19 regions across the EU where practically every child (100.0%) between the age of 3 years and the age for starting compulsory primary education participated in early childhood education

By 2023, the share of children between the age of 3 years and the age for starting compulsory primary education participating in early childhood education had already reached the EU's strategic target of 96.0% in almost half of all EU regions for which data are available (94 out of 193 regions); these regions are shaded using 3 different tones of teal in **Map 1**. The 94 regions that had already met or surpassed the target were concentrated across regions from Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Hungary, Poland and Sweden. Additionally, 2 regions from each of Denmark and Portugal, and single region from Ireland, Lithuania and Austria had also reached the policy target of 96.0%; this was also the case in Luxembourg. At the top end of the distribution, 19 regions in the EU had participation rates of almost 100.0% (as shown by the darkest shade of teal). More than half of these 19 regions were concentrated in France (10 regions), with a further 5 regions in neighbouring Belgium.

¹At this age, learning activities are very different to the traditional methods adopted within the context of compulsory schooling, and – most of the time – take place alongside / as part of caring activities (in other words, supervision, nutrition and health). According to ISCED, programmes providing only childcare – without a sufficient set of purposeful learning activities – are not classified as early childhood education.

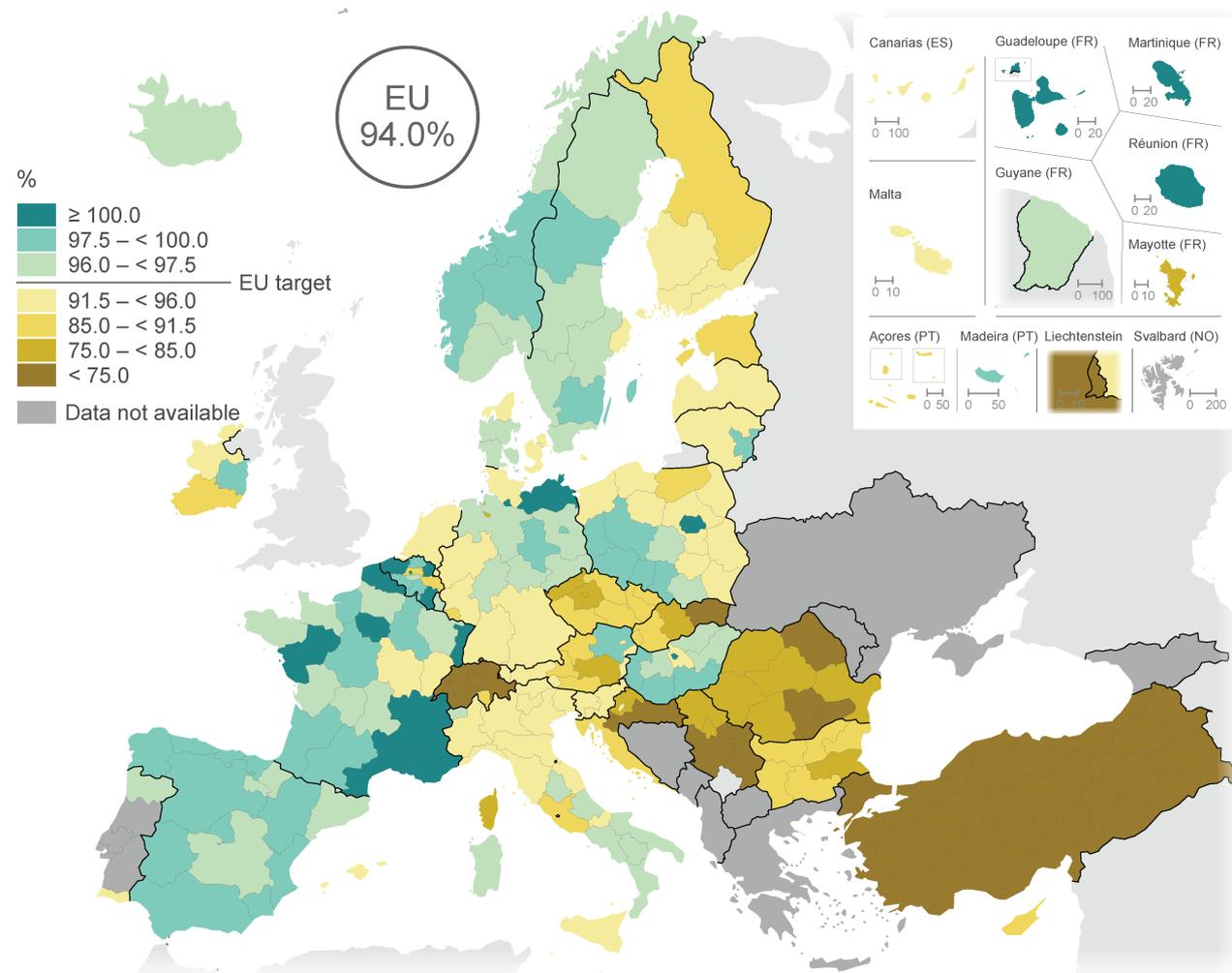
²It should be noted that the wording of the EU target is for participation in 'early childhood education and care' and not 'early childhood education'. Early childhood education and care refers to any regulated arrangement for children from birth to compulsory primary school age, regardless of the programme content, whereas early childhood education refers specifically to ISCED programmes. The former encompasses not only early childhood education but also programmes which do not meet the minimum requirements to be classified as such (for example, childcare only programmes). Although the EU target is for participation in early childhood education and care, the Regulation stipulates that Eurostat's data on participation rates in early childhood education will be used to measure progress towards this target. This means that, in practice, the EU target for participation in early childhood education and care programmes concerns only those programmes which meet criteria to be classified as early childhood education. For more details on the difference between these 2 terms, please consult an article on [early childhood education statistics](#).

In **Map 1** , the regions with participation rates below the strategic target of 96.0% are shaded using different golden tones. In 2023, the share of young children participating in early childhood education was less than 85.0% in 20 out of the 193 regions for which data are available. These regions, with relatively low participation rates (as shown by the darkest shades of gold) were concentrated in eastern EU countries, including all 8 regions of Romania, 3 regions in Czechia, 2 regions from each of Croatia and Slovakia and a single region from Bulgaria. This group also included the French island regions of Mayotte and Corse, the German region of Bremen and the Austrian region of Steiermark.



Participation rates in early childhood education

(%, by NUTS 2 regions, 2023)



Note: pupils participating in early childhood education from age 3 years to the starting age of compulsory education at primary level, as a share of the population of the corresponding age. Germany: NUTS level 1. The Netherlands: national data. Liechtenstein and Türkiye: 2022.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: educ_uoe_enra22)

Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © OpenStreetMap
Cartography: Eurostat – IMAGE, 07/2025

Map 1: Participation rates in early childhood education Source: Eurostat (educ_uoe_enra22)

Participation in tertiary education

The number of people enrolling in tertiary education across the EU has risen in recent decades, reflecting several factors, such as:

- demographic patterns

- changes in labour force participation (particularly for women)
- increased demand from employers for tertiary education qualifications (for jobs that previously required a secondary level of education)
- an increased awareness of the benefits of tertiary education
- access to student finance, scholarships and other benefits
- different patterns of learning mobility (within and from outside of the EU)
- an increased demand for longer tertiary education (such as the extension from a bachelor's degree to master's or doctoral (PhD) studies)
- an increasing share of adults participating in [lifelong learning](#) .

There were 18.8 million tertiary education students enrolled across the EU in 2023

There were approximately 18.8 million students enrolled in the EU's tertiary education institutions in 2023. As such, tertiary students accounted for almost 1 in 5 (19.6%) of the total number of pupils and students enrolled within the EU's education system. A majority of the students enrolled in the tertiary education sector were female (54.8% of the total).

In 2023, 11.2 million EU students were enrolled in bachelor's programmes. This figure was approximately twice as high as the count of students enrolled in master's programmes (5.5 million). The other 2 types of tertiary programmes had fewer students: 1.4 million enrolled in short-cycle programmes (either academic or vocational) and 0.7 million in doctoral programmes. As noted above, females made up the majority of students enrolled in tertiary education. This gender gap was particularly apparent among students studying for a master's degree (where 58.3% were female) and somewhat smaller among students studying for a bachelor's degree (where 54.1% were female). By contrast, males accounted for a small majority of the students pursuing a short-cycle tertiary education qualification (50.5%) and a doctoral degree (also 50.5%).

Unsurprisingly, the highest numbers of tertiary students were recorded in urban regions from some of the most populous EU countries. The German region of Nordrhein-Westfalen (805 000) and the French capital region of Ile-de-France (771 000) were the only regions within the EU to record more than 0.5 million tertiary students enrolled in 2023. After Nordrhein-Westfalen and Ile-de-France, 13 regions had between 250 000 and 500 000 tertiary students enrolled:

- 4 regions from Spain – Comunidad de Madrid, Cataluña, Andalucía and Comunitat Valenciana
- 3 regions from Germany – Bayern, Baden-Württemberg and Hessen (all NUTS level 1)
- 3 regions from Italy – Lombardia, Lazio and Campania
- the capital regions of Attiki in Greece and Warszawski stołeczny in Poland
- the French region of Rhône-Alpes.

Figure 1 shows the proportion of all tertiary students enrolled in short-cycle, bachelor's, master's or doctoral degrees. Each national education system has its own specific characteristics, with a particular offer of fields or levels of education. This may explain why some regions have no students enrolled for short-cycle tertiary education qualifications or for a master's or doctoral (PhD) degree, as these educational levels may not be offered. In such cases, the shares of students enrolled in other types of tertiary education may be higher than elsewhere. For example, in the Finnish region of Åland, a bachelor's degree was the only form of tertiary education available and therefore accounted for 100.0% of students enrolled in tertiary education.

In 2023, 7.5% of all tertiary students in the EU were enrolled to study for a short-cycle tertiary education qualification; the share was somewhat higher among male short-cycle students (8.3% of all male tertiary students) than it was for female short-cycle students (6.7% of all female tertiary students). The westernmost Austrian region of Vorarlberg was the only NUTS level 2 region to report more than half of its tertiary students were enrolled to follow a short-cycle tertiary education course, with a 57.6% share. There were also relatively high shares of tertiary students following short-cycle courses in several (other) regions of Austria and in several regions of France and Spain.

There were 11.2 million students across the EU enrolled to study for a bachelor's education in 2023, a majority of

them were female – 6.0 million compared with 5.1 million male students. Together, these students enrolled to study for a bachelor's education made up 59.4% of all tertiary education students, with a higher relative share for male students (60.4% of all male students enrolled in tertiary education) compared with female students (58.6% of all female students enrolled in tertiary education). Among NUTS level 2 regions, there were 6 regions where more than 9 out of every 10 tertiary students followed a bachelor's education in 2023: the Finnish region of Åland, as noted above, the southern Belgian region of Prov. Luxembourg and 4 Greek regions, namely, Sterea Elláda, Ipeiros, Dytiki Makedonia and Kriti. The highest numbers of tertiary students studying for a bachelor's degree were concentrated in Nordrhein-Westfalen (494 000; NUTS level 1), followed by the French, Spanish and Greek capital regions of Ile-de-France (329 000), Comunidad de Madrid (258 000) and Attiki (247 000).

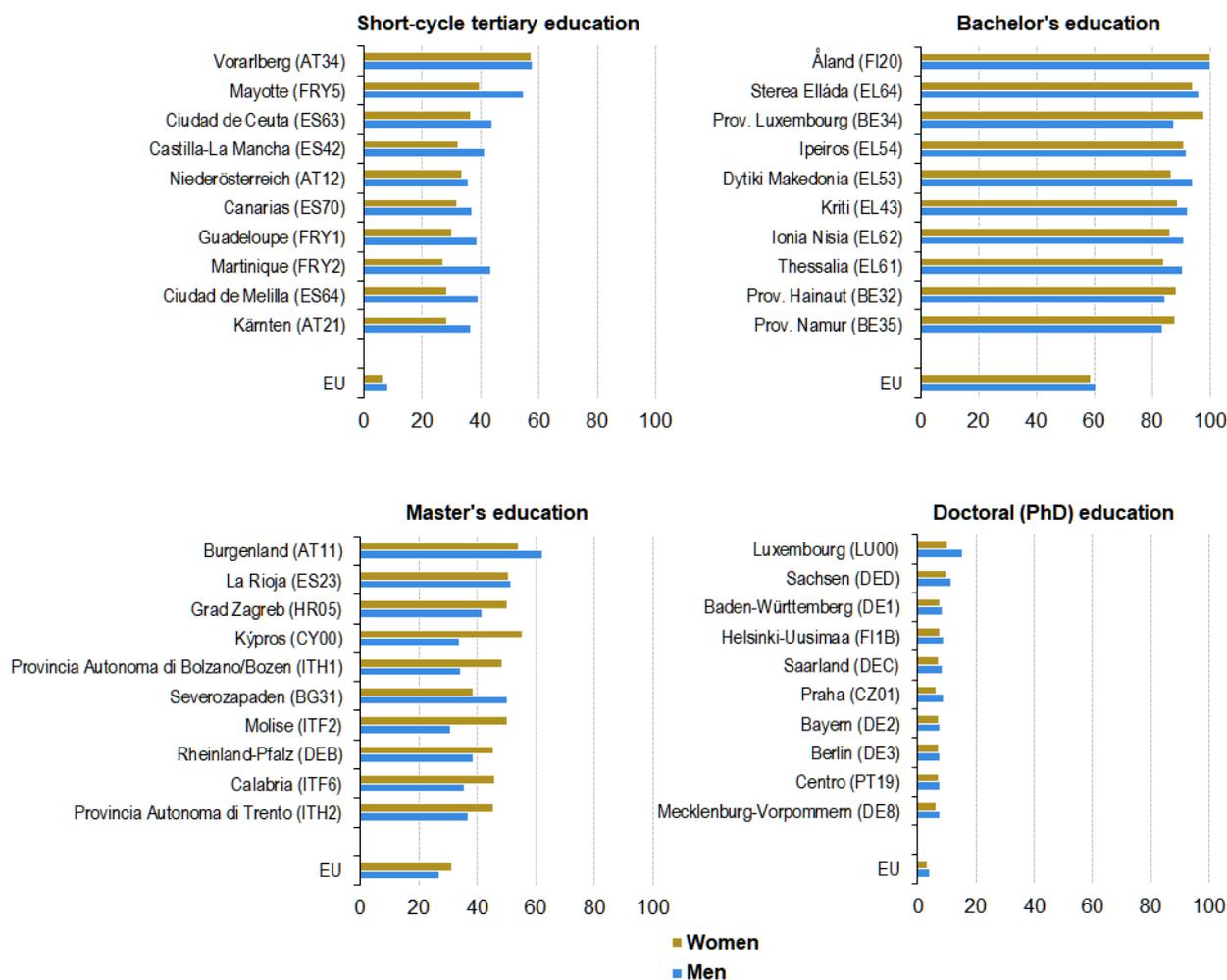
Of the 5.5 million students enrolled to study for a master's education across the EU in 2023, 3.2 million were female and 2.3 million were male. This equated to 29.3% of all tertiary students, with a higher share among females (31.2% of all females enrolled to study for a tertiary education were master's students) than among males (27.0%). The largest numbers of students studying for a master's degree were in Ile-de-France (314 000; just 16 000 fewer than were studying for a bachelor's degree in the French capital region) and 2 German regions (both NUTS level 1) – Nordrhein-Westfalen (271 000) and Bayern (172 000). Burgenland in eastern Austria (58.2%) and La Rioja in northern Spain (51.0%) were the only NUTS level 2 regions to report a majority of their tertiary students were enrolled to study for a master's education.

In 2023, the 717 000 doctoral or equivalent students enrolled across the EU were distributed relatively evenly between the sexes, with 362 000 male and 355 000 female students. Doctoral students made up 3.8% of all tertiary students in the EU, with a higher share of male tertiary education students enrolled to study for a doctoral degree (4.3%), while the corresponding share among females was 3.4%. Across EU regions, Luxembourg (12.7%) and the eastern German region of Sachsen (10.7%; NUTS level 1) were the only regions to report that more than 1 in 10 tertiary students followed a doctoral education. The next highest shares were recorded for the Finnish capital region of Helsinki-Uusimaa (8.1%), 4 more German regions (NUTS level 1) – Baden-Württemberg (8.1%), Saarland (7.7%), Bayern and Berlin (both 7.4%) – and the Czech capital region of Praha (also 7.4%). The highest numbers of students studying for a doctoral degree were recorded in 3 German regions (NUTS level 1): Nordrhein-Westfalen (41 000), Bayern (33 000) and Baden-Württemberg (32 000).



Students enrolled in tertiary education

(% of female/male tertiary students in each level of tertiary education, by NUTS 2 regions, 2023)



Note: the figure shows the 10 EU regions with the highest shares (ranked on the average share for both sexes).

Germany: NUTS level 1. Subject to data availability.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: educ_uoe_enrt06)

eurostat

Figure 1: Students enrolled in tertiary education Source: Eurostat (educ_uoe_enrt06)

Educational attainment

A basic level of education is desirable for all, as it provides the opportunity to participate in economic and social life. Nevertheless, people with higher levels of educational attainment generally tend to experience a wider range of job opportunities, higher levels of income and tend to be more satisfied with life, while they usually have a lower likelihood of being unemployed.

More about the data: educational attainment

Educational attainment is measured by looking at the highest level of education – based on the ISCED classification – that an individual has successfully completed. These statistics pertain to the highest level of attainment reached prior to the moment of the survey interview. Note that some people in the target age range might:

- still be studying (for a higher level of education)
- have completed their highest level of education in a different region from where they were living at the time of the survey.

People with at least an upper secondary education qualification

The strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021 to 2030) includes a complementary indicator that measures progress in relation to educational attainment: it is defined as the share of people aged 20 to 24 years with at least an intermediate (or upper secondary) level of educational attainment. The target is that by 2030 at least 90% of young people should meet this criterion.

Almost 1 in 3 regions across the EU have already reached the EU's target of 90.0%

In 2024, 84.3% of people in the EU aged 20 to 24 years had attained at least an intermediate level of education (in other words, they had at least an upper secondary level of educational attainment as defined by ISCED levels 3 to 8). This latest figure marks a steady rise over the past 2 decades, up from 76.8% in 2002 when the time series began. The upward development was relatively consistent, with the only pauses occurring in 2009 (no change) and in 2022, when a sharp fall in Germany affected the overall EU average.

Map 2 shows information about the share of people aged 20 to 24 years with at least an intermediate level of education. In 2024, some 31% of EU regions – 75 out of 242 NUTS level 2 regions for which data are available – had already reached or exceeded the EU's target of 90.0%; they are coloured in the 3 different shades of teal. These 75 regions were particularly concentrated in (northern) Belgium, Czechia, Ireland, Greece, Croatia, Poland and Slovakia, where a large proportion of regions reported upwards of 90.0% of people aged 20 to 24 years with at least an intermediate level of education.

At the top end of the distribution, there were 25 NUTS level 2 regions where the share of people aged 20 to 24 years with at least an intermediate level of educational attainment was 94.0% or higher in 2024 (as shown by the darkest shade of teal). This group included:

- all 3 regions in Ireland
- all 4 regions of Croatia
- 9 out of 13 regions in Greece, including the capital region of Attiki
- 4 out of 17 regions in Poland
- the capital regions of Yugozapaden (Bulgaria), Praha (Czechia), Sostinės regionas (Lithuania) and Bratislavský kraj (Slovakia)
- Alsace in eastern France.

In 2024, the highest proportions of young people aged 20 to 24 years who had attained at least an intermediate level of education were found in the western Greek region of Dytiki Elláda (99.7%) and the Croatian capital region of Grad Zagreb (99.2%).

At the other end of the range, 25 NUTS level 2 regions reported that, in 2024, fewer than 71.5% of all young people aged 20 to 24 years had attained at least an intermediate level of education (as shown by the darkest shade of gold in **Map 2**). Germany accounted for a majority (17) of these regions, most of which were clustered in the northern half of the country. The remainder of this group was composed of 4 regions from Spain (including the 2 autonomous cities), together with single regions from Denmark, France, Portugal and Romania.

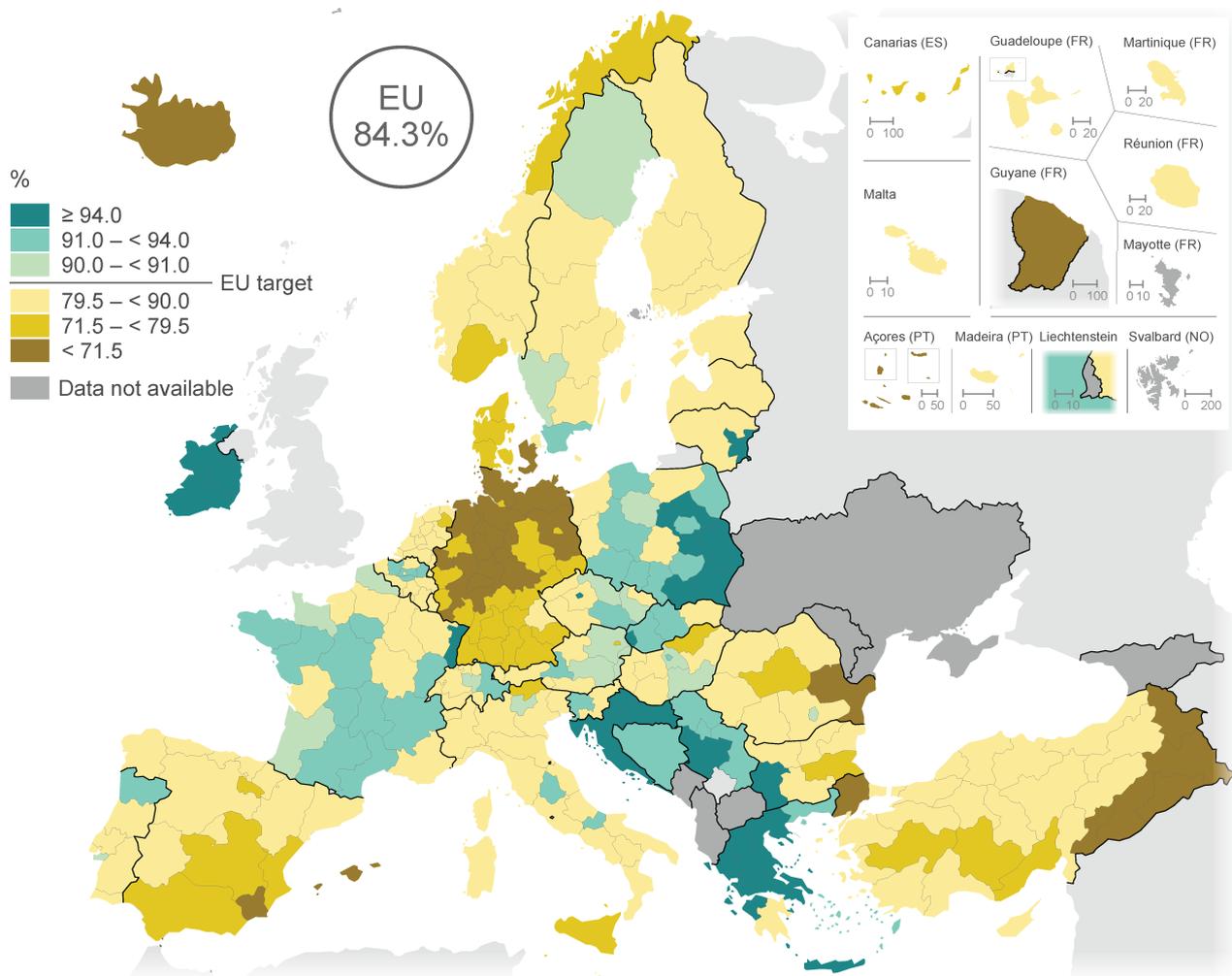
In 2024, the northern German region of Lüneburg (59.2%) recorded the lowest share of young people aged 20 to 24 years who had attained at least an intermediate level of educational attainment. It was the only region across the EU where this share was below 60.0%. The next lowest levels

were observed in the French outermost region of Guyane (62.3%) and the central German region of Gießen (63.3%).



Educational attainment – at least upper secondary

(% of people aged 20–24 years, by NUTS 2 regions, 2024)



Note: ISCED levels 3–8. Bosnia and Herzegovina: 2023. Prov. Vlaams-Brabant (BE24), Trier (DEB2), Ciudad de Ceuta (ES63), Ciudad de Melilla (ES64) and Corse (FRM0): low reliability.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_ifse_04)

Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © OpenStreetMap
Cartography: Eurostat – IMAGE, 07/2025

Map 2: Educational attainment – at least upper secondary Source: Eurostat (edat_ifse_04)

People with a tertiary level of educational attainment

Map 3 shows the regional distribution of tertiary educational attainment in 2024 (in other words, a higher level of educational attainment, as defined by ISCED levels 5 to 8). The data refer to people aged 25 to 34 years, by which age the vast majority of the population have completed their education. The strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021 to 2030) includes an EU-wide target: by 2030, at least 45% of people aged 25 to 34 years should have attained a tertiary level of education.

More than 1 in 3 EU regions have already reached the policy goal for tertiary educational attainment

In 2024, 44.2% of the EU population aged 25 to 34 years had a tertiary level of educational attainment; some people within this age group might still be studying. Of the 242 NUTS level 2 regions for which data are available, 84 had already reached or surpassed the EU's policy target of 45.0% (as shown by 3 shades of teal in **Map 3**).

At the top end of the distribution, 25 regions reported that at least 57.5% of young people aged 25 to 34 years had attained a tertiary level of education in 2024. These regions attract highly qualified individuals, creating significant 'pull effects' due to the diverse educational, employment, and social opportunities they offer. This group included several capital regions and economic hubs, often marked by high-quality universities and a focus on research and innovation. It comprised:

- the capital regions of Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Spain, France, Lithuania, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia and Sweden
- 6 additional regions from Spain, clustered in the north (with specialisations in, among other activities, advanced manufacturing and automotive industries)
- both remaining regions of Ireland (pharmaceuticals, life sciences and electronics)
- Utrecht and Groningen in the Netherlands (high-tech industries and green technologies)
- Prov. Brabant Wallon in Belgium (knowledge-intensive industries)
- Midi-Pyrénées in France (aerospace)
- Cyprus and Luxembourg.

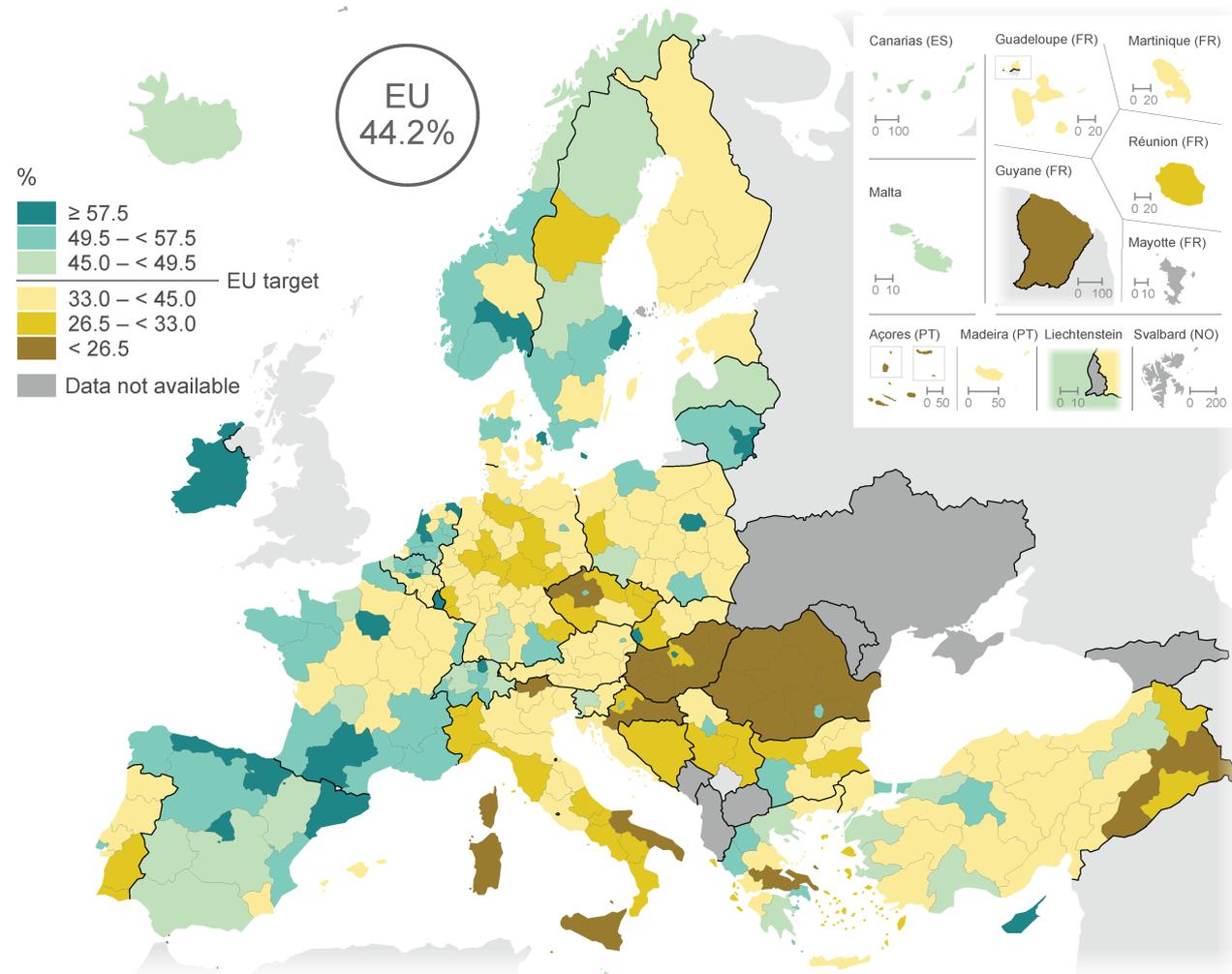
At the bottom end of the distribution, 24 NUTS level 2 regions reported that fewer than 26.5% of all people aged 25 to 34 years had attained a tertiary level of educational attainment in 2024 (as shown by the darkest shade of gold in **Map 3**). These regions were primarily rural or geographically remote/isolated, often characterised by relatively large agricultural sectors and limited opportunities for highly skilled employment. In several regions, vocational education plays a dominant role, with young people entering the labour market via apprenticeships or training schemes, rather than through a tertiary education qualification. This group of 24 regions was mainly concentrated in eastern and southern EU countries and included:

- 7 out of the 8 regions in Romania, the exception being București-Ilfov (the capital region)
- 6 out of the 8 regions in Hungary, the exceptions being Budapest (the capital region) and the surrounding region of Pest
- 4 regions in Italy – including the islands of Sicilia and Sardegna
- 2 regions from Czechia – Severozápad and Střední Čechy
- 2 regions from France – including the island region of Corse and the outermost region of Guyane
- 3 other regions from across the EU – Sterea Elláda in Greece, Panonska Hrvatska in Croatia, the island region of Região Autónoma dos Açores in Portugal.



Educational attainment – tertiary

(% of people aged 25–34 years, by NUTS 2 regions, 2024)



Note: ISCED levels 5–8. Bosnia and Herzegovina: 2023. Prov. Vlaams-Brabant (BE24), Trier (DEB2), Ciudad de Ceuta (ES63), Ciudad de Melilla (ES64), Corse (FRM0) and Região Autónoma dos Açores (PT20): low reliability. Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_ifse_04)

Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © OpenStreetMap
Cartography: Eurostat – IMAGE, 07/2025

Map 3: Educational attainment – tertiary Source: Eurostat (edat_ifse_04)

In 2024, the highest share of people aged 25 to 34 years with a tertiary level of educational attainment was recorded in the Lithuanian capital region of Sostinės regionas, at 71.2%

Figure 2 provides more detail for those EU regions with the highest and lowest shares of people having a tertiary level of educational attainment. In 2024, there were 5 NUTS level 2 regions that reported more than 2 out of 3 people aged 25 to 34 years having attained a tertiary level of educational attainment. Most of these were capital

regions – the only exception being the northern Spanish region of País Vasco (67.8%) – the others were:

- Sostinės regionas in Lithuania (71.2%)
- Warszawski stołeczny in Poland (68.6%)
- Ile-de-France in France (68.5%)
- Eastern and Midland in Ireland (67.7%).

In 2024, Romania accounted for 6 out of the 7 regions across the EU with the lowest shares of tertiary educational attainment among people aged 25 to 34 years. Sud-Muntenia had the lowest share (15.3%), followed by Sud-Est (15.8%) and Sud-Vest Oltenia (17.1%). The only region from outside this group was Severozápad in Czechia, where 19.1% of people aged 25 to 34 years had attained a tertiary level of educational attainment.

Figure 2 extends the analysis of tertiary educational attainment by providing information by sex. As was the case for the total population, the Lithuanian capital region of Sostinės regionas had the highest share of women aged 25 to 34 years having attained a tertiary level of educational attainment, at 79.0% in 2024. However, the pattern for men was different, with the northern Spanish region of País Vasco having the highest share, with 66.6% of men in this age group having attained a tertiary level of education.

Among the EU regions with the highest shares of people aged 25 to 34 years with a tertiary level of educational attainment in 2024, 7 regions featured in the top 10 both for women and for men. However:

- Dytiki Makedonia (northern-western Greece), Southern (Ireland) and Budapest (the capital region of Hungary) were only present within the top 10 regions for women
- País Vasco (northern Spain), Luxembourg and Noord-Holland (the capital region of the Netherlands) were only present within the top 10 regions for men.

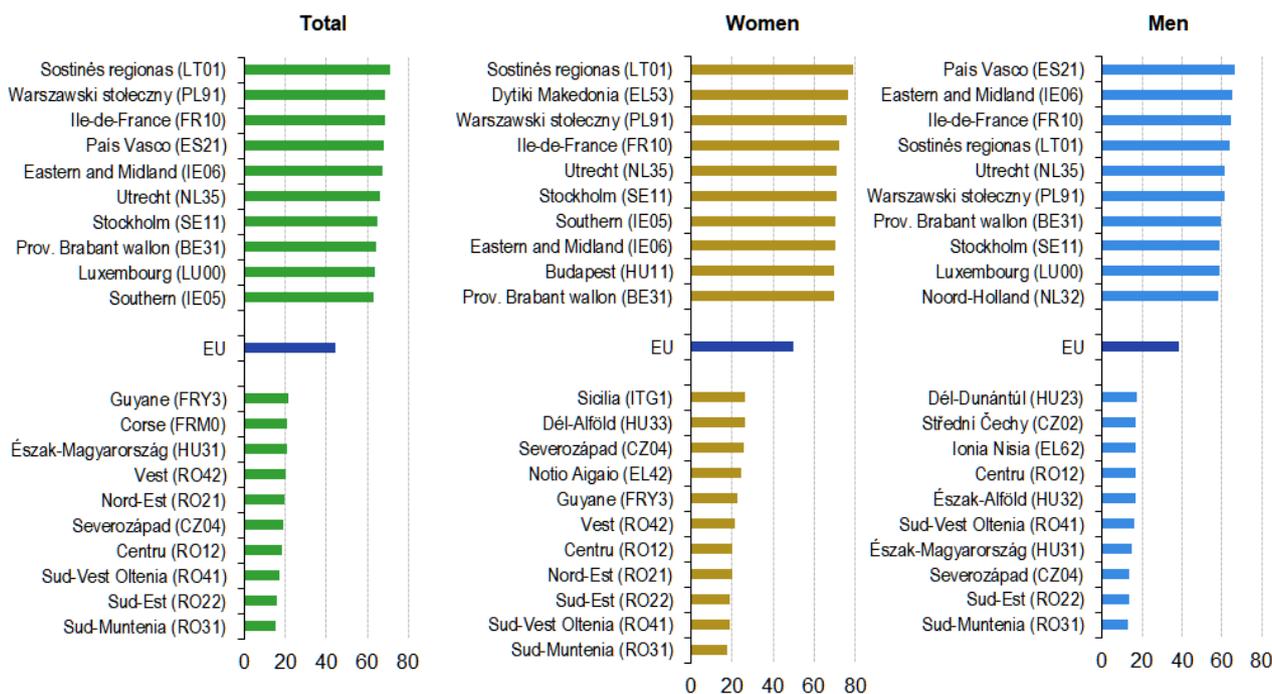
Across the EU, approximately half of all women aged 25 to 34 years had a tertiary level of educational attainment

In 2024, the EU's tertiary education gender attainment gap for people aged 25 to 34 years was 11.2 percentage points. Approximately half (49.9%) of all women in this age group had attained a tertiary level of education, considerably higher than the corresponding share for men (38.7%). The largest gender attainment gaps – with higher shares for women – were observed in the Greek regions of Dytiki Makedonia (51.2 percentage points) and Ipeiros (33.7 points), followed by the central Polish region of Świętokrzyskie (30.2 points). At the opposite end of the distribution, only 4 regions across the EU had a gender attainment gap with a higher share for men. The largest of these was in the Greek region of Notio Aigaio, where the share for men was 4.4 percentage points higher than for women, followed by the German regions of Chemnitz (2.7 points), Tübingen (1.3 points) and Bremen (0.6 points).



Educational attainment – tertiary

(% of people aged 25–34 years, by sex and NUTS 2 regions, 2024)



Note: ISCED levels 5–8. The figure shows those EU regions with the highest and lowest shares of tertiary educational attainment among people aged 25–34 years. The rankings include more than 10 regions if several regions have identical values. Corse (FRM0): low reliability for total. Guyane (FRY3): low reliability for women. Ionía Nisia (EL62): low reliability for men. Mayotte (FRY5) and Åland (FI20): not available. Trier (DEB2) and Corse (FRM0): not available for women and men. Valle d’Aosta/Vallée d’Aoste (ITC2) and Região Autónoma dos Açores (PT20): not available for men.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_lfse_04)

eurostat

Figure 2: Educational attainment – tertiary Source: Eurostat (edat_lfse_04)

Transition from education to work

When students complete their studies, several barriers can restrict their transition into the labour market. These include a lack of relevant work experience, insufficient skills, limited job opportunities in the region where they reside or high unemployment levels during an economic downturn. The penultimate section of this chapter provides an insight into the situation of young people aged 18 to 24 years as they seek to move from education into work.

Early leavers from education and training

Within the EU, education policy seeks to ensure that everyone (irrespective of age) has the skills, knowledge and capabilities to develop their careers. The transition from education into work may prove particularly difficult for people with low levels of literacy and numeracy, those who leave education at an early age, and people coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. A particular area of concern is the proportion of [early leavers from education and training](#). They are defined here as individuals aged 18 to 24 years who have at most a lower secondary level of

educational attainment (ISCED levels 0 to 2) and who were not engaged in any further education and training (during the 4 weeks preceding the [European Union labour force survey \(EU-LFS\)](#)). This indicator is 1 of 7 key targets outlined in the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021 to 2030); the EU has set a goal to reduce the proportion of early leavers to less than 9% by 2030.

Within the EU, the share of young people who were early leavers from education and training was 9.3% in 2024

Over the past 2 decades, the proportion of early leavers from education and training aged 18 to 24 years has steadily declined across the EU. Starting from 16.9% in 2002 (the 1st year of the time series), the share of early leavers fell each year until 2017, reaching 10.5%. Although the rate remained unchanged in 2018, it resumed its downward path during the subsequent 6 years. By 2024, 9.3% of young people in the EU had at most a lower secondary level of educational attainment and were not engaged in any further education and training; as such, the latest rate was within 0.3 percentage points of the policy target set for 2030.

Within the EU, the number and share of early leavers from education and training is influenced by a range of factors, including geography and sex.

- Spatially, the share of early leavers tends to be higher in sparsely populated regions and former industrial heartlands. This may be linked, among other reasons, to limited educational opportunities and weak local labour markets, which discourage young people from staying (longer) in education and training, while acting as a 'push factor' encouraging those with higher levels of educational attainment to seek opportunities elsewhere.
- Gender differences also play a considerable role, with young men generally more likely to leave education and training earlier than young women. This contrasts with the pattern observed above, whereby young women were far more likely than young men to have a tertiary level of educational attainment. In 2024, 10.9% of young men in the EU were early leavers, 3.2 percentage points higher than the share for young women, at 7.7%.

More than half of all regions had attained the EU's policy target for early leavers

In 2024, more than half (94 out of 180) of the NUTS level 2 regions for which data are available had a share of early leavers from education and training below the 9.0% policy target (as shown by 3 shades of teal in **Map 4**). These 94 regions were spread across much of the EU. Subject to data availability – with some countries only reporting at NUTS level 1 and others with partial coverage due to relatively low data reliability – they included:

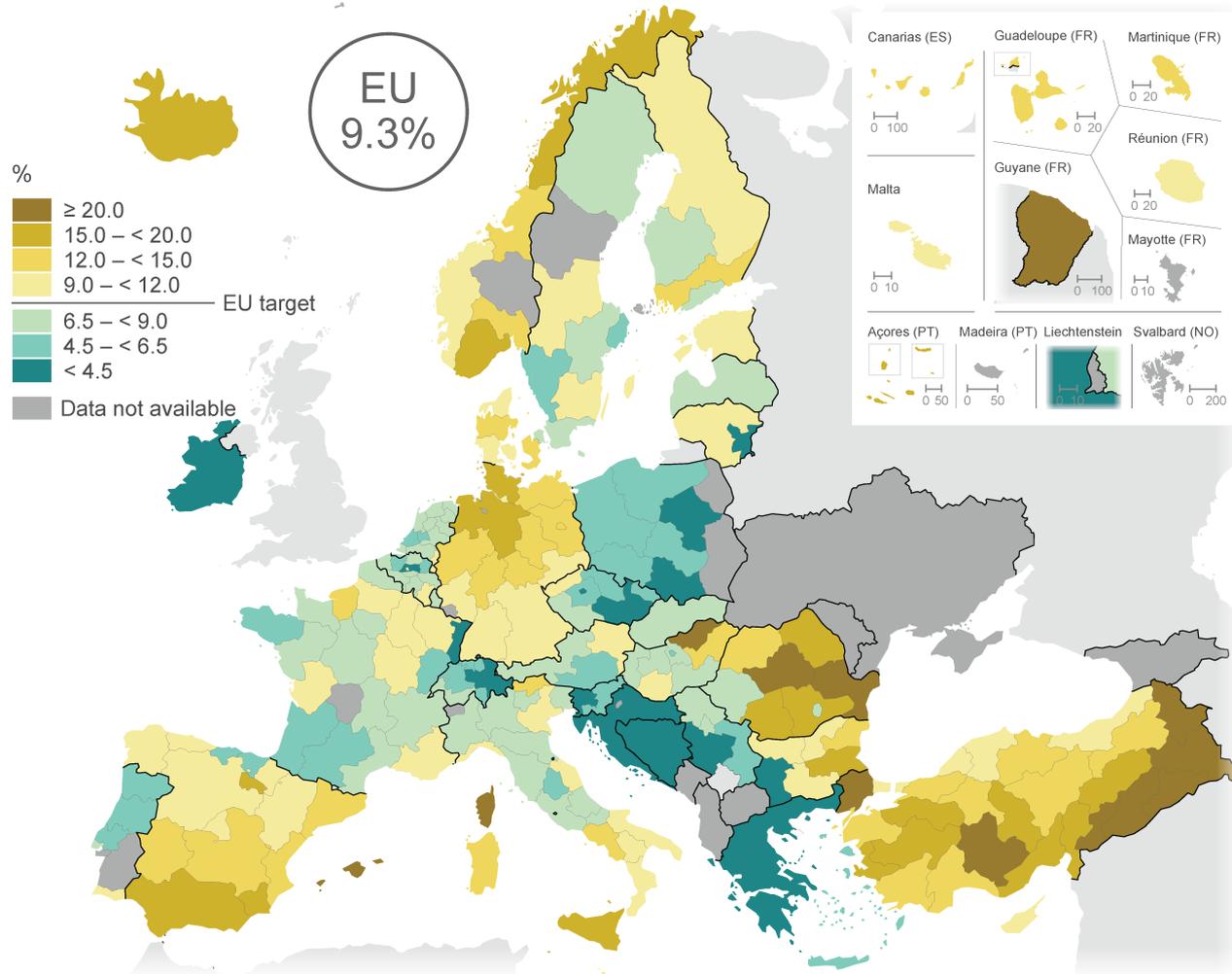
- every region of Greece, Croatia, Poland and Slovenia
- all but 1 region in Czechia, the Netherlands and Austria
- as well as Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg and Slovakia.

At the other end of the range, 18 NUTS level 2 regions had a share of early leavers from education and training of at least 15.0% in 2024, as shown by the 2 darkest shades of gold in **Map 4** . This group included 5 regions from each of Spain and Romania and was characterised by sparsely populated, island and/or peripheral regions; it is likely that a disproportionately high share of students from island and/or peripheral regions have to leave home if they wish to follow a particular course or programme, leaving behind a higher concentration of early leavers.



Early leavers from education and training

(% of people aged 18–24 years, by NUTS 2 regions, 2024)



Note: Germany, Greece, Austria and Poland, NUTS level 1. Ireland and Slovakia: national data. Corse (FRM0), Guadeloupe (FRY1), Martinique (FRY2) and Bosnia and Herzegovina: 2023. Molise (ITF2) and Övre Norrland (SE33): 2022. Includes data with low reliability (too many regions to document). Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_ifse_16)

Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © OpenStreetMap
Cartography: Eurostat – IMAGE, 07/2025

Map 4: Early leavers from education and training Source: Eurostat (edat_ifse_16)

In 2024, there were 8 regions across the EU where the share of young people who were early leavers from education and training was below 3.0%

Figure 3 highlights the NUTS level 2 regions with the highest and lowest shares of early leavers from education and training in 2024. At the top of the distribution, the French outermost region of Guyane reported the highest share, with 29.4% of young people aged 18 to 24 years classified as early leavers. Other regions with rates above

20.0% included:

- Sud-Est and Centru (Romania)
- Ciudad de Melilla and Illes Balears (Spain)
- Észak-Magyarország (Hungary)
- Corse (France).

By contrast, at the lower end of the distribution, there were 8 NUTS level 2 regions where, in 2024, the share of early leavers from education and training was below 3.0%. The lowest shares were recorded in:

- Praha, the capital region of Czechia (1.3%)
- Jadranska Hrvatska and Panonska Hrvatska in Croatia (1.5% and 2.4%, respectively)
- Voreia Elláda and Attiki in Greece (2.4% and 2.8%, respectively)
- Jihovýchod in Czechia (2.7%)
- Ireland (2.8%)
- Yuzhnyy, the capital region of Bulgaria (2.9%).

Figure 3 extends the analysis of early leavers from education and training, providing information by sex. As was the case for young people in general, the French outermost region of Guyane had the highest share of early leavers among young men aged 18 to 24 years, at 35.7% in 2024. However, the pattern for young women was different, as the Romanian region of Sud-Est had the highest share, at 30.3%. A closer analysis of the data for the 10 EU regions with the highest shares of early leavers reveals that:

- Sud-Muntenia, Sud-Vest Oltenia, Nord-Vest (all Romania), Severoiztochen (Bulgaria) and Észak-Alföld (Hungary) were only present among the top 10 regions for young women
- Ciudad de Melilla, Illes Balears, La Rioja and Andalucía (all Spain) were only present among the top 10 regions for young men.

In 2024, the lowest shares of early leavers from education and training among young women aged 18 to 24 years were recorded in the Greek regions of Voreia Elláda (1.4%) and Kentriki Elláda (2.1%), followed by the Czech region of Jihovýchod (2.4%). Among young men, the lowest rates were recorded in the Croatian region of Jadranska Hrvatska (2.2%), Praha in Czechia (2.3%) and Attiki in Greece (2.8%).

In more than 4 out of 5 regions across the EU, the share of early leavers from education and training was higher among young men than young women in 2024

More than 1 in 10 young men aged 18 to 24 years across the EU (10.9% in 2024) were early leavers from education and training, compared with 7.7% of young women in the same age group; this resulted in a gender gap of 3.2 percentage points. A similar pattern was observed across most EU regions: among the 115 regions for which data are available, 94 reported a higher share of early leavers among young men (than young women). The largest regional gender gaps for this indicator were recorded in Spain:

- in Illes Balears, the share of young men who were early leavers was 16.0 percentage points higher than for young women
- in La Rioja, the gap was 13.7 points
- the only other region in the EU with a double-digit gender gap was the French outermost region of Guyane, where the rate for young men was 11.3 points higher than that for young women.

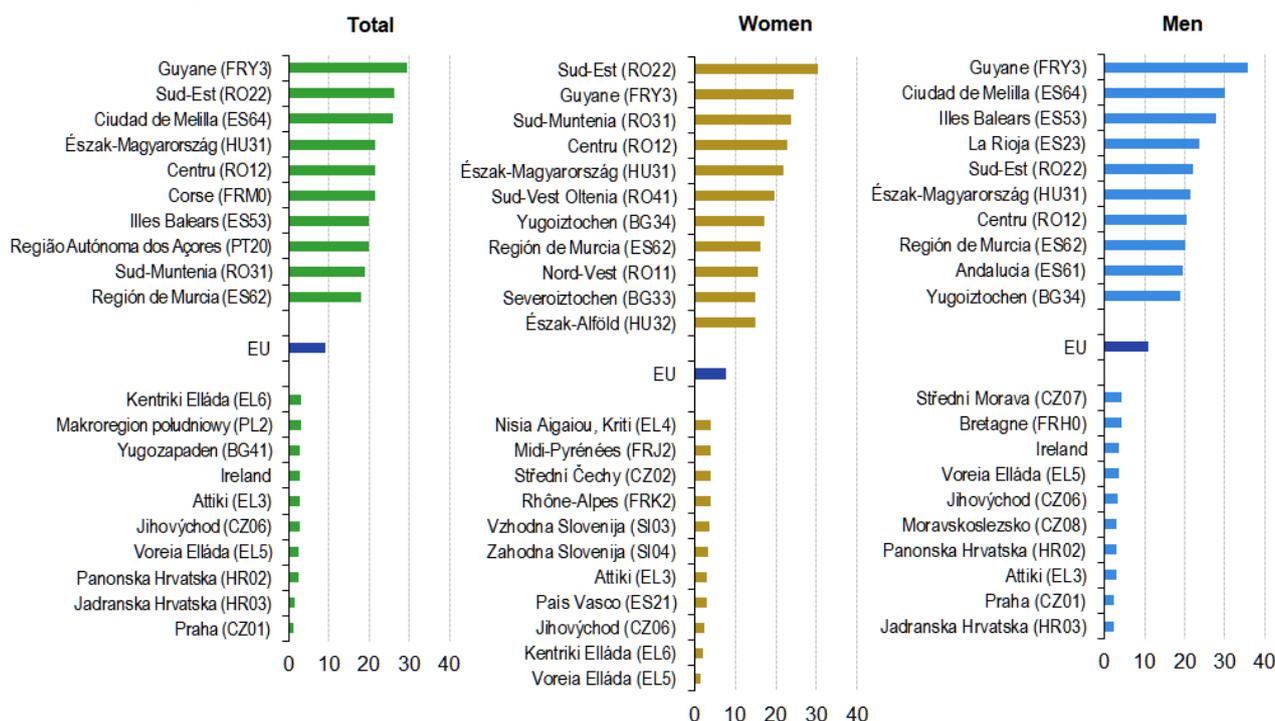
Among the 21 EU regions where, in 2024, the share of early leavers from education and training was higher for young women than for young men, the largest gender gaps were recorded in Romania:

- in Sud-Muntenia, the rate for young women was 9.5 percentage points higher than for young men
- in Sud-Est, the gender gap was 8.1 points
- the next largest gap was observed in the Czech region of Severozápad, where the rate for young women was 6.2 points higher than that for young men.



Early leavers from education and training

(% of people aged 18–24 years, by sex and NUTS 2 regions, 2024)



Note: the figure shows, subject to availability, those EU regions with the highest and lowest shares of early school leavers from education and training aged 18–24 years. The rankings include more than 10 regions if several regions have identical values. Germany, Greece, Austria and Poland: NUTS level 1. Ireland and Slovakia: national data. Corse (FRM0): 2023. Includes data with low reliability (too many regions to document).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_lfse_16)

eurostat

Figure 3: Early leavers from education and training Source: Eurostat (edat_lfse_16)

Map 5 presents data for NUTS level 2 regions across the EU, highlighting the relationship between the share of early leavers from education and training and the risk of poverty. By combining these 2 indicators, the map affirms that the share of early leavers is a leading factor in increasing the risk of poverty (in other words, these 2 indicators are positively correlated). Education is considered an important determinant of labour market outcomes, as people who leave education and training early typically lack the skills and qualifications needed for stable, well-paid jobs. EU policies and academic research have focused on how to reduce the share of early leavers as it is considered a root cause of poverty and social exclusion.

In 2024, there were several regions across the EU where at least 12.0% of people were early leavers from education and training, while at least 20.0% of people were at risk of poverty (as shown by the darkest shade in the map). Some of the highest shares/rates for both indicators were recorded in:

- the eastern Bulgarian regions of Severoiztochen and Yugoiztochen
- a number of southern and eastern Spanish mainland regions including Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura, Comunitat Valenciana, Andalucía and Región de Murcia, as well as the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla, and the island region of Canarias

- the French outermost regions of Guadeloupe, Martinique and Guyane
- the southern Italian region of Campania and the island regions of Sicilia and Sardegna
- the eastern Hungarian regions of Észak-Magyarország and Észak-Alföld
- the Portuguese island region of Região Autónoma dos Açores
- the eastern and southern Romanian regions of Nord-Est, Sud-Est and Sud-Vest Oltenia.

By contrast, at the other end of the spectrum, several regions highlight the importance that sustained investment in education and training may bring, driving stronger labour market integration, higher skills levels and better social outcomes. In 2024, the following regions (shown in the lightest shade) had low proportions of early leavers from education and training (below 10.0%) and low shares of people at risk of poverty (below 6.5%):

- the northern Belgian regions of Prov. Limburg, Prov. Oost-Vlaanderen and Prov. Vlaams-Brabant
- the Czech regions of Praha (the capital), Střední Čechy, Severovýchod and Jihovýchod
- the northern Spanish region of País Vasco
- the Hungarian capital region of Budapest.

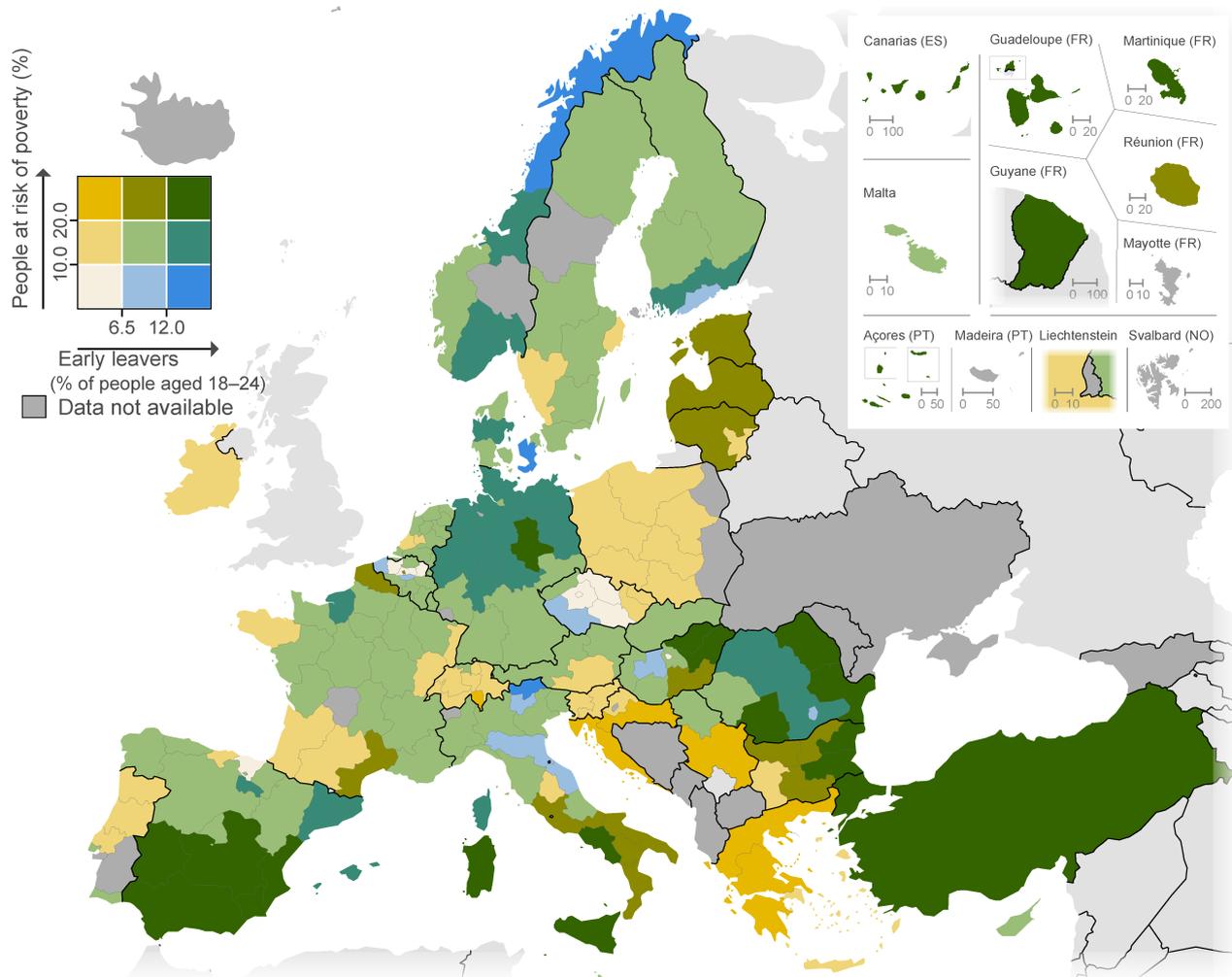
Although there is a positive link between the share of early leavers from education and training and the risk of poverty, the strength of this relationship varies across EU regions. While education may serve as a protective factor against the risk of poverty, it does not always guarantee lower poverty rates. Likewise, local labour market conditions, the quality of jobs and/or social policies may have a stronger influence on poverty outcomes than the share of early leavers from education and training.

- For example, several regions in Greece (NUTS level 1), the south of France and Croatia exhibited relatively low shares of early leavers in 2024, yet their at-risk-of-poverty rates remained above the EU average; a similar pattern was observed in Latvia and Luxembourg.
- By contrast, several regions in the EU, including every region of Denmark (except for the capital region of Hovedstaden), a majority of the regions in Germany (NUTS level 1) and several regions predominantly in northern and central Spain, reported higher than average shares of early leavers, alongside a lower than average risk of poverty.



Early leavers and people at risk of poverty

(by NUTS 2 regions, 2024)



Note: EU, 9.3% for early leavers from education and training. EU, 16.2% for people at risk of poverty. Greece, Austria, Poland and Serbia: NUTS level 1. Ireland, Slovakia and Türkiye: national data. Switzerland and Serbia: 2023. Source: Eurostat (online data codes: edat_ifse_16, ilc_li41 and ilc_li02)

Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © OpenStreetMap
Cartography: Eurostat – IMAGE, 06/2025

Map 5: Early leavers and people at risk of poverty Source: Eurostat (ilc_li41), (edat_ifse_16) and (ilc_li02)

Adult education and training

Lifelong learning plays a crucial role in expanding a person's knowledge, abilities and qualifications, whether for personal growth, social engagement, or career development. As the demands of the labour market evolve, there is a growing need for workers to refine their existing skills and acquire new ones – either to adapt within their current

professions or to explore new career paths. Technological progress, particularly in areas like artificial intelligence, is expected to render some jobs obsolete, making continuous upskilling more essential than ever.

The strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021 to 2030) sets a specific EU policy target in this area. By 2025, the EU aims to have at least 47% of people aged 25 to 64 years participating (during the previous 12 months) in adult learning. This target was revised in June 2021 following its inclusion as 1 of the EU 2030 social targets within the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan. The revised goal is for at least 60% of people aged 25 to 64 years to participate in education and training every year by 2030.

More about the data: adult participation in education and training

In order to give an appropriate measure of participation in adult learning, the reference period for the indicator is the last 12 months, in other words, the indicator reflects participation in training activities across a whole year. Until 2021, the adult education survey (AES) was the only source of data for adult participation in learning in the last 12 months. However, as the AES only takes place every 6 years, variables were introduced into the EU labour force survey (EU-LFS) to collect data every 2 years (starting in 2022). The aim of this was to enable more frequent analysis of initiatives related to employment and skills policies, including at the regional level, as the AES does not provide a regional breakdown due to the relatively low sample size. For more information on differences between data available from EU-LFS and AES see [Participation in education and training during the last 12 months – differences between data available from two sources](#).

This edition of the *Eurostat regional yearbook* marks the 1st time that regional statistics using this longer recall period have been published.

The EU's adult participation rate for education and training was 28.1% in 2024

According to the EU-LFS, in 2024, more than 1 in 4 (28.1%) adults aged 25 to 64 years across the EU participated in education and training during the 12 months prior to the survey. This figure was 3.1 percentage points higher than in 2022 (the only other reference year for which comparable data are available, as the data collection exercise is biennial). Among the 234 NUTS level 2 regions for which data are available, more than 3 out of 4 reported an increase between 2022 and 2024 in their adult participation rates for education and training.

Map 6 shows adult participation rates in education and training for 2024. These rates were relatively evenly distributed across the EU, as just over half of all NUTS level 2 regions for which data are available (126 out of 243 regions) recorded rates below the EU average of 28.1%. The regional distribution was relatively homogeneous within individual EU countries, partly reflecting national rather than regional education and training initiatives.

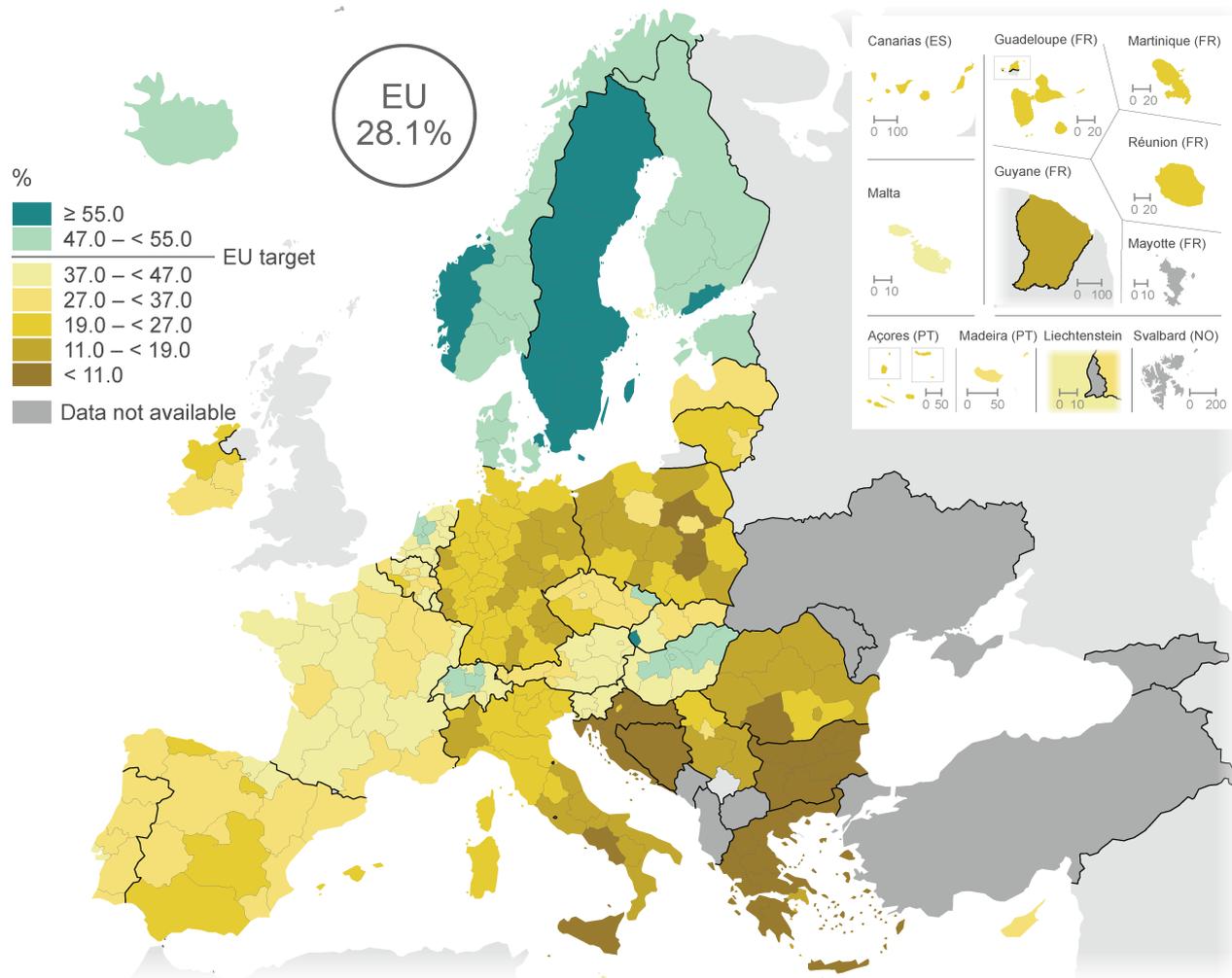
- Every region of Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Croatia, Italy and Romania reported a rate that was below the EU average; this was also the case in Latvia.
- Every region of Denmark, Hungary, the Netherlands, Austria, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden reported a rate that was above the EU average; this was also the case for Estonia, Cyprus, Luxembourg and Malta.

In 2024, Sweden recorded some of the highest adult participation rates in education and training, as every region reported a rate above 55.0% (as shown by the darkest shade of teal in **Map 6**). By contrast, participation rates were below 11.0% in every region of Bulgaria (as shown by the darkest shade of gold; note the latest information for Severen tsentralen refers to 2022). Similarly low rates were recorded across Greece and Croatia, where, apart from the capital regions of Attiki and Grad Zagreb, all other regions had rates below 11.0%.



Participation rate in education and training

(% of people aged 25–64 years, by NUTS 2 regions, 2024)



Note: participation during the 12 months prior to the survey. Severen tsentralen (BG32), Iceland and Bosnia and Herzegovina: 2022. Includes data with low reliability (too many regions to document). Source: Eurostat (online data code: trng_ifse_22)

Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © OpenStreetMap
Cartography: Eurostat – IMAGE, 07/2025

Map 6: Participation rate in education and training Source: Eurostat (trng_ifse_22)

Swedish regions have particularly high adult participation rates in education and training

Figure 4 provides a more detailed analysis of participation rates in education and training in 2024. It confirms that some of the highest rates among adults aged 25 to 64 years were observed in Sweden:

- a peak of 64.0% was recorded in the capital region of Stockholm

- all 8 regions of Sweden ranked among the 10 EU regions with the highest rates
- the top 10 was completed by 2 other capital regions – Bratislavský kraj (Slovakia) and Hovedstaden (Denmark).

In 2024, the 10 regions with the lowest adult participation rates in education and training were concentrated in south-eastern Europe, with 5 regions from each of Bulgaria and Greece. The lowest rates were recorded in the Bulgarian region of Yuzhen tsentralen (2.2%) and the Greek region of Sterea Elláda (2.7%).

A closer inspection of participation rates in education and training for men and women aged 25 to 64 years reveals that in 2024:

- the Swedish capital region of Stockholm recorded the highest rate among women (69.7%)
- the Slovak capital region of Bratislavský kraj had the highest rate among men (65.0%)
- the 10 highest participation rates for women included every region of Sweden, along with the Danish and Finnish capital regions of Hovedstaden and Helsinki-Uusimaa
- the 10 highest participation rates for men were also relatively uniform – leaving aside Bratislavský kraj, they were regions exclusively located in either Sweden or Hungary
- the lowest participation rates – for both women and men – were recorded in the Bulgarian region of Yuzhen tsentralen, 2.2% and 2.3%, respectively.

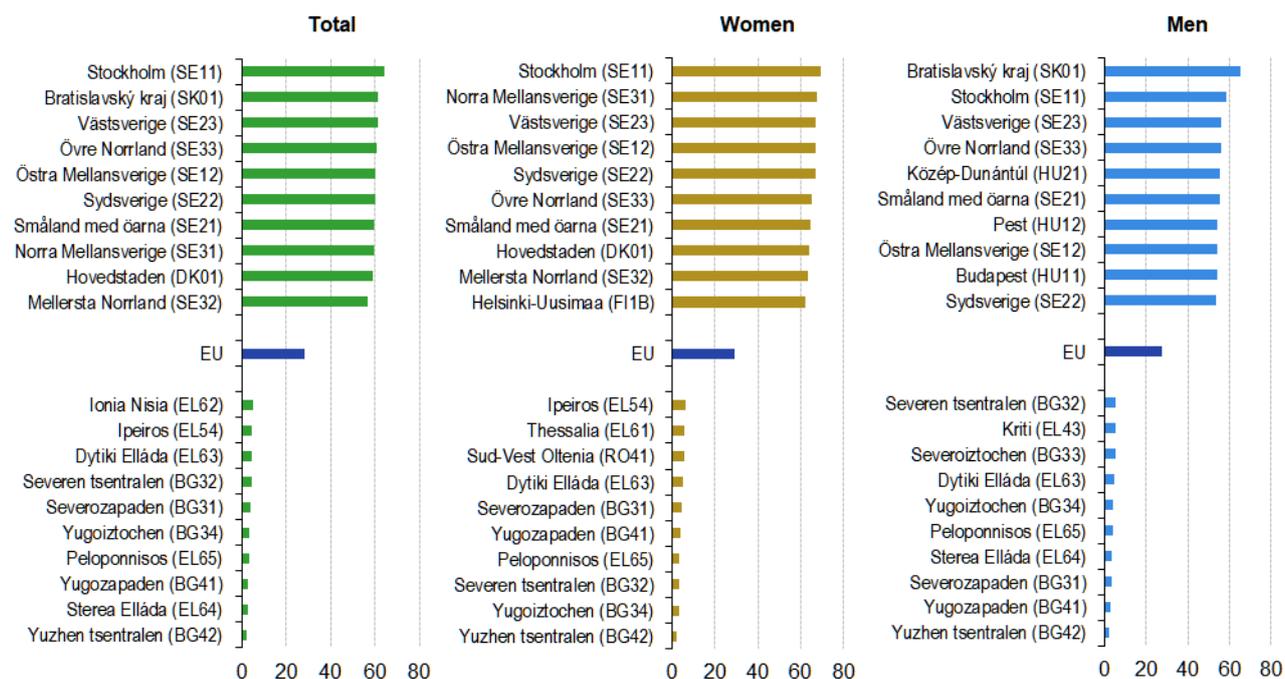
In 2024, the EU participation rate in education and training among women aged 25 to 64 years was 29.0%, which was 1.7 percentage points higher than the corresponding rate for men (27.3%). This gender gap – with women having higher participation rates than men – was apparent in approximately 2 out of 3 regions across the EU. Several Nordic and Baltic regions had particularly wide gender gaps (in favour of women); this pattern was also observed in Comunidad Foral de Navarra (Spain).

- The largest gender gap, favouring women, occurred in the Swedish region of Norra Mellansverige (15.7 percentage points difference), followed by Estonia (13.7 points) and another Swedish region, Sydsverige (13.0%).
- The largest gender gap favouring men occurred in the Hungarian region of Közép-Dunántúl (where the participation rate for men was 7.6 points higher than that for women), followed by Bratislavský kraj (7.2 points) and another Hungarian region, Észak-Magyarország (6.0 points).



Participation rate in education and training

(% of people aged 25–64 years having participated during the 12 months prior to the survey, by sex and NUTS 2 regions, 2024)



Note: the figure shows those EU regions with the highest and lowest shares of people aged 25–64 years participating in education and training during the 12 months prior to the survey. Severen tsentralen (BG32): 2022. Severozapaden (BG31), Severen tsentralen (BG32), Ipeiros (EL54), Ionia Nisia (EL62) and Stereia Elláda (EL64): low reliability.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_lfse_22)

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Figure 4: Participation rate in education and training Source: Eurostat (edat_lfse_22)

Source data for figures and maps

- [Download Excel file](#)

Data sources

As the structure of education systems varies from between EU countries, a framework for assembling, compiling and presenting regional, national and international education statistics is a prerequisite for the comparability of data – this is provided by the international standard classification of education (ISCED). ISCED 2011 was adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in November 2011 and is used as the basis for the statistics presented here.

Most EU education statistics are collected as part of a jointly administered exercise that involves the [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#) (UNESCO-IUIS), the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](#) (OECD) and Eurostat, referred to as the UOE data collection exercise. This exercise is based on administrative sources, with data compiled by education ministries or national statistical authorities. Reference periods are the calendar year for

data on expenditure and the school/academic year (classified to the calendar year in which the school/academic year finishes) for all non-financial data.

Eurostat collects data for regional enrolments separately. These statistics include information on the numbers of pupils/students enrolled by age, sex and ISCED level, at NUTS level 2. Their legal basis, from school year 2012/13 is [Commission Regulation \(EU\) No 912/2013 concerning the production and development of statistics on education and lifelong learning, as regards statistics on education and training systems](#) .

The EU's labour force survey (EU-LFS) provides regional education statistics about the population's level of educational attainment, the number of early leavers from education and training, the employment rates of recent young graduates, as well as adult participation in education and training. It covers the population of individuals aged 15 years or over living in private households; information for each new reference year is made available in the spring of the following year.

EU-LFS data up to 2013 are based on ISCED 1997, while data from 2014 onwards are based on ISCED 2011. Data are generally comparable over this time period, although there are breaks in series for Estonia and Austria due to level shifts resulting from the reclassification of programmes spanning different ISCED levels.

Indicator definitions

Participation in early childhood education

For the purpose of this publication, the participation rate in early childhood education is defined as the share of children aged between 3 years and the age when compulsory education at the primary level starts; more detailed information on the starting ages for compulsory education and for compulsory primary education is provided in this [annex](#) . The starting age of primary education is before the age of compulsory education in some countries, while in other countries compulsory education starts at the pre-primary level (in other words, it may be compulsory to attend early childhood programmes for a year or more before the start of primary education).

Students enrolled in tertiary education

Tertiary education is defined as ISCED levels 5 to 8. It builds on secondary education, providing learning activities in specialised fields of study. Tertiary education comprises short-cycle tertiary education (ISCED level 5), bachelor's or equivalent (ISCED level 6), master's or equivalent (ISCED level 7) and doctoral (PhD) or equivalent (ISCED level 8) education. For the first 3 of these, students generally need to have successfully completed an upper secondary programme, while those wishing to study for a doctorate generally need to have completed a master's programme.

The number of students in tertiary education may reflect capacities and policies for the development of particular educational levels, but is also linked to qualification requirements, subject choice and/or job opportunities. As students grow older and education becomes more specialised, student mobility generally increases. As such, international flows of students may have a considerable impact on the share/number of students enrolled.

Educational attainment

Educational attainment is a term commonly used to refer to the highest level of education that an individual has successfully completed. The strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021 to 2030) introduced 2 targets.

- The share of early leavers from education and training (defined as people aged 18 to 24 years with no more than a lower secondary education and no longer in education or training) should be less than 9% by 2030. This target is supplemented by a complementary indicator, namely, that the share of people aged 20 to 24 years with at least an upper secondary (or intermediate) level of educational attainment should be at least 90% by 2030.
- The share of people aged 25 to 34 years with a tertiary level of educational attainment should be at least 45% by 2030.

Early leavers from education and training

The indicator of early leavers is derived from the EU labour force survey. It is defined as the share of the population

aged 18 to 24 years with no more than a lower secondary level of educational attainment who are no longer in education or training. The strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021 to 2030) introduced a target for the share of early leavers from education and training, whereby this should be less than 9% in the EU by 2030.

Participation rates of adults aged 25 to 64 years in education and training

The target population for adult learning statistics refers to people aged 25 to 64 years. These statistics concern adult participation in formal and non-formal education and training during the 12 months prior to the survey interview. Data are collected through the EU's labour force survey. The denominator used for the ratio consists of the total population of the same age group, excluding those who did not answer the questions about participation in education and training.

Within the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, 1 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: prior to this edition of the *Eurostat Regional Yearbook*, statistics on adult participation in education and training were based on a 4-week recall period prior to the survey. From reference year 2022 onwards, labour force survey statistics are also collected – on a biennial basis – using a 12-month recall period.

Context

Each of the EU countries is responsible for its own education and training policy. However, the EU supports national actions and helps address common education and training challenges through what is known as the [open method of coordination](#). Indeed, the EU provides a policy forum for discussing topical issues (for example, ageing societies, the skills deficit or global competition) and also provides EU countries with an opportunity to exchange best practices. Within this context, the European Commission has presented a wide range of initiatives for developing education and training in the EU, such as improving key competences (for example, literacy, language skills, digital skills and entrepreneurship), making better use of digital technology for teaching and learning, and developing mutual recognition of diplomas.

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. In February 2021, a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021 to 2030) (2021/C 66/01) was adopted.

As a means of monitoring progress, a series of reference levels (or benchmarks) for average EU performance in education and training have been agreed. These 7 EU-level targets should support monitoring strategic education and training priorities during the period 2021 to 2030:

- the share of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15%, by 2030
- the share of low-achieving students (in their 8th year of schooling) in computer and information literacy should be less than 15%, by 2030
- at least 96% of children between 3 years old and the starting age for compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education and care by 2030
- the share of early leavers aged 18 to 24 years from education and training should be less than 9% by 2030
- the share of adults aged 25 to 34 years with a tertiary level of educational attainment should be at least 45% by 2030
- the share of recent graduates from vocational education and training benefiting from exposure to work-based learning during their studies should be at least 60% by 2025
- at least 47% of adults aged 25 to 64 years should have participated in learning during the previous 12 months by 2025; this target was subsequently extended as part of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, with the new target to have at least 60% of adults participating in education and training every year by 2030.

A mid-term review of the European Education Area was conducted during 2023, providing an opportunity to assess progress and identify ongoing and emerging challenges. This process involved consultation, dialogue and shared reflection with a range of stakeholders and concluded that the priority areas for future work include:

- implementing initiatives across Europe as well as nationally and locally
- advancing equity and inclusion across all sectors of education and training
- strengthening education for active citizenship, including [European citizenship education](#)
- supporting the [teaching profession](#) by addressing teacher shortages as well as promoting professional development and mobility opportunities.
- expanding access to [digital education and skills development for all](#)
- removing the remaining barriers to the [automatic recognition of qualifications](#)
- making a [joint European degree](#) a reality.

The European Commission launched the Erasmus programme 38 years ago. At the end of 2020, political leaders agreed on the [Erasmus+ programme](#) for 2021 to 2027. The programme supports education and training in the EU by offering mobility and cooperation opportunities in higher education, vocational education and training, school education, adult education, youth and sport. It has a budget of € 26.2 billion and prioritises social inclusion, the green and digital transitions, and young people's participation in democratic life. Altogether, the Erasmus and Erasmus+ programmes have enabled more than 14 million people to study, work or volunteer abroad.

This article forms part of Eurostat's annual flagship publication, the [Eurostat regional yearbook](#) .

You can explore the maps interactively using Eurostat's [Statistical Atlas](#) .

Footnotes

Explore further

Other articles

- [Education and training in the EU – facts and figures](#) (online publication)

Database

- [Regional statistics by NUTS classification \(reg\)](#) , see

Regional education statistics (reg_educ)

Regional education statistics – ISCED 2011 (reg_educ_11)

- [Education and training \(educ\)](#) , see

Participation in education and training (educ_part)

Pupils and students – enrolments (educ_uoe_enr)

Early childhood education and primary education (educ_uoe_enrp)

Tertiary education (educ_uoe_enrt)

All education levels (educ_uoe_enra)

Adult learning – last 12 months, LFS (trng_lfs_12m)

Education and training outcomes (educ_outc)

Educational attainment level (edat)

Population by educational attainment level (edat1)

Transition from education to work (edatt)

Early leavers from education and training (edatt1)

Thematic section

- [Education and training](#)
- [Regions and cities](#)

Publications

General link

- [Education and training publications](#)

Paper and PDF publications

- [Eurostat regional yearbook – 2025 edition](#)

News articles

- [A quarter of young people employed while in education](#)
- [Almost 9% of EU graduates in 2022 studied abroad](#)
- [In focus: women in master's and PhD studies in the EU](#)
- [High rates of formal childcare participation in the EU](#)
- [More internet users turn to online learning in 2024](#)
- [New data on healthcare and education services' accessibility](#)
- [Drop in youths neither working nor studying](#)

Online publications

- [Regions in Europe – 2025 interactive edition](#)
- [Rural Europe – online publication](#)
- [Urban Europe – online publication](#)

Visualisation

- [Eurostat statistical atlas \(Chapter 3\)](#)
- [Regional statistics illustrated](#)

Methodology

Manuals and further methodological information

- [Dedicated section on education and training: methodology](#)
- [EU labour force survey \(LFS\)](#)
- [EU labour force survey – new methodology from 2021 onwards](#)
- [Methodological manual on territorial typologies](#)
- [Regions in the European Union Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics \(NUTS\) – 2024 edition](#)

Metadata

- [Regional education statistics](#) (ESMS metadata file – reg_educ_esms)
- [Participation in education and training \(based on EU-LFS\)](#) (ESMS metadata file – trng_lfs_4w_esms)
- [Educational attainment level and transition from education to work \(based on EU-LFS\)](#) (ESMS metadata file – edat1_esms)

External links

- [Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond \(2021–30\)](#)
- [European Commission – EACEA – Eurydice – Description of national education systems](#)
- [European Commission – Education and Training – Digital education action plan \(2021–27\)](#)
- [European Commission – Education and Training – European education area](#) , see
 - [Adult learning initiatives](#)
 - [Early childhood education and care initiatives](#)
 - [Higher education initiatives](#)
 - [School education initiatives](#)
- [European Commission – Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion – European skills agenda](#)
- [European Commission – Regional Policy – Education and training](#)
- [International standard classification of education \(ISCED 2011\)](#)
- [UNESCO-UIS website](#)

Selected datasets

- [Regional statistics \(t_reg\)](#) , see

Regional education statistics (t_reg_educ)

- [Education and training \(t_educ\)](#) , see

Participation in education and training (t_educ_part)

Education and training outcomes (t_educ_outc)