

Malta in the 2021 Global Gender Gap Report

The first Global Gender Gap Report was published in 2006. The scope of this Report was to encourage dialogue, amongst the public and private sectors as well as cross-country comparisons, to serve as a tool by which stakeholders would be guided in closing the existing gender gaps. It is through the continuous assessment of the drivers of gender disparities, which are presented in the Report, that support towards the need for closing the gender gaps as well as encouragement towards the need for more research on policies and practices which promote change, is provided.

The Global Gender Gap Report 2021, published in March, presents the measure of gender-based gaps in the following four (4) key dimensions: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment. In addition to the key dimensions, the 2021 Report also includes new data which is focused on emerging and concerning trends in the labour market, as well as data on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on economic gender gaps.

The Report measures gaps between women and men and the progress made with respect to the gender gap. Gaps are best tracked by the scores obtained by the country rather than rankings, since the latter depend on the scores obtained by other countries as well rather than the performance of the particular country.

Overall and on a global level, Malta has progressively ranked at the 84th place out of 156 countries, as opposed to ranking at the 108th place out of 144 countries in 2016.

Malta has been showing steady progress with respect to the **Economic Participation and Opportunity** dimension and the indicators categorised, particularly: labour force participation rate; wage equality for similar work; estimated earned income; legislators, senior officials and managers; and professional and technical workers. This is the result of the implementation of various measures developed to empower more women to enter or remain in employment including free childcare, the breakfast club, Klabb 3-16, tapering of benefits, and in-work benefits.

The scores under the **Health and Survival** dimension have remained the same for the indicator *sex ratio at birth*; however, have decreased with respect to the *healthy life expectancy* indicator as the gap between the life expectancy of women and men is narrowing.

Progress has been made in the **Political Empowerment** dimension, since scoring with regards to *Women in Parliament*, and *Women in Ministerial Positions* has increased slightly. To further this

progress, the Maltese Parliament in April 2021 approved, through a cross party agreement, the gender corrective mechanism legislation that will increase the number of women in parliament in the approaching general election.

With respect to the **Educational Attainment** dimension, Malta has once again ranked first in all the indicators.

Moreover, the Report also gives a global overview of the effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the labour market, especially with respect to the gender gaps. Scarring in the labour market due to COVID-19 has mainly resulted from employment losses and reduced labour force participation, predominantly experienced by women. Additionally, the dynamics of the labour market have also shifted and particularly affected global industries due to changes in consumer demands and challenges for industries that could not resort to remote working; low-wage jobs; and the most vulnerable workers.

Worldwide the ‘double-shift’ way of living caused by the pandemic, especially in households with children, was more likely to be carried by women. This has led women to reduce their working hours which negatively impacted and reversed their gains with respect to entry into leadership positions; and increased their likelihood of dropping out from the labour market completely. Data in the Report suggests that access to care provision, alongside flexible work arrangements, encourage and enable women and their participation in the labour market. It is very crucial that recovery policies and measures reflect hindrances which women face when participating in or wanting to enter/re-enter the formal economy, particularly due to care responsibilities of both children and other dependents.

Apart from gender gaps in the labour market as a result of informal care work, emerging labour market trends, particularly due to the adoption of new technologies (Cloud Computing, Engineering, and Data and AI), will also pose challenges for the future of gender parity due to an increase in occupational gender segregation. For instance, women only make up 14% of the Cloud Computing workforce; 20% in engineering; and 32% in Data and AI. Additionally, and to the detriment of women’s advancement in the labour market, while also taking into consideration the ever-changing world of work, it is less likely for women to make an ambitious job switch in comparison to men.

In conclusion and looking ahead, it is important that a gender-equal recovery is undertaken. This could be done by means of: (1) investing in the care sector and for equitable access to care leave for women and men; (2) developing policies and measures which tackle occupational segregation; (3) developing

and implementing mid-career reskilling policies; and (4) encouraging managerial practices which are sound and unbiased in hiring and promotion practices.

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) takes note of both the progress made and challenges that remain with respect to gender equality in Malta as published in the 2021 Global Gender Gap Report. The NCPE continues to raise awareness on these issues and looks forward to the introduction of pro-active measures to address the existing gender gaps in the Maltese society.

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) can be contacted on: 2295 7850 or equality@gov.mt or our Facebook page.

15th June 2021