

Latvia



Women in decision-making: **1/5**
Socio-economic position of women: **2/5**
Violence against women: **1.25/5**

Highlights

23%

of women in parliament and 29% senior ministers

26%

women on boards of largest companies

17.6%

gender pay gap



gender gap in full time employment rates

16%

of infants under 3 and 64% of those between 3 and school-age in formal childcare



no shelters places for women victims of violence

Abortion is available on demand free of charge

TRENDS:



The representation of women in decision-making in Latvia has recently been boosted by a number of appointments of women to ministerial positions (women are 29% of senior ministers) and to corporate boards of administration (26% women). In the EU, only Finland scores higher than Latvia in terms of women on boards.

The Latvian government has introduced free cancer-screening for breast and cervical cancer, and in 2010 made the HPV vaccine available to girls aged 12-14 years.



Pressure is increasing on women's associations due to the withdrawal of external funding from Latvia and the lack of any structural funding to civil society by the State.

Declining birthrates combined with a conservative backlash have led to consideration in Latvia of a reform of the legislation regarding the rights of the Child to include a provision for the protection of rights 'from the moment of conception'.

UNDERSTANDING LATVIA

On many measures, Latvia scores comparatively well in relation to gender equality. In decision-making, women are 35.75% of municipal councilors for example, and 26% of board members in private companies. Almost as many women as men work full-time.

However, many of Latvia's gender equality laws and policies remain unimplemented and gender stereotypes are strong. According to surveys, most Latvians think women should be housewives, take care of the children and do the shopping. They also believe men should be the bread-winners of the family; they should not bear responsibilities in the home and should never express their emotions.

These attitudes translate into a heavy burden on women for unpaid domestic responsibilities, in a context of poor state services. Only 10% of dependent elderly persons receive formal care. 16% of infants under 3, and 64% of those between 3 and school-age, are in formal childcare.

Gender stereotypes also permeate the labour market, where 6,985 women and 8 men work at the preschool level.

There are no shelters for women victims of violence in Latvia, despite the fact that 39% of people know a woman victim of domestic violence in their family or friendship circle, and 47% know a victim in their immediate neighbourhood.¹ The high levels of violence against women are coupled by widespread tolerance for the offence, with only 66% of people saying it is unacceptable and should always be punishable by law.

¹ Special Eurobarometer 344 - 2010