

Cyprus



Women in decision-making: **0.42/5**

Socio-economic position of women: **1.28/5**

Violence against women: **1.25/5**

Highlights

11%

women in parliament

4%

women on boards of the largest companies

21%

gender pay gap

47.5%

of women over 65 are at risk-of-poverty

9%

of dependent elderly persons receive formal care

0.14

shelters places for women victims of violence per 10,000 inhabitants

Limited access to abortion

TRENDS:



The 2012 Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU set tackling violence against women as a priority. Increased awareness has led to a dramatic rise in the reported rates of all forms of violence against women in the last decade. In terms of deliverables, there have been a number of policy changes to address human trafficking and the adoption of a National Action Plan in 2010.

Action has also been taken to address the gender pay gap, which stands at 21%, by means of a 3-year EU funded programme.

Progress has further been made regarding family planning and education on sexual and reproductive health, with a new health education curriculum seeing the light in 2012 and targeting children from the age of 5.



Setbacks are noticeable in terms of women in decision-making. Following parliament and local elections in 2011, the presence of women decreased from 14.3% in the previous legislature to 10.7%. At present, only Hungary and Malta score worse than Cyprus for women in parliament (11%).

UNDERSTANDING CYPRUS

Women's political participation in Cyprus is increasing, but from a very low point and only slowly, without the aid of legal measures. Enduring stereotypes and patriarchal structures within political parties, the media and society at large hamper women's participation.

Cyprus has the highest at-risk-of-poverty rate for elderly women (and men) across the EU. 91% of the dependent elderly do not receive any formal care; the burden of care falls largely on women family members. In addition, childcare as a formal social welfare provision is a relatively new concept in Cyprus. Informal arrangements continue to prevail with family (mostly grandmothers) playing the primary role in the provision of care. Maternity leave is short (16 weeks) and parental leave is unpaid.

Violence against women is viewed through the restrictive prism of "family violence", disguising structural gender inequalities and preventing the establishment of specialised services. The number of calls to domestic violence helplines more than doubled from 551 cases in 2001 to 1320 in 2011.¹ During this period, 80% of callers were women. Reporting rates for rape and sexual violence are also on the increase, jumping between 1990-1996 by 361% and between 2000-2003 by 195%. Cyprus has one of the lowest conviction rates for all forms of violence against women in Europe.

Provisions for women's sexual and reproductive health and rights are limited in Cyprus. There is a strong lack of choice, accessibility and affordability of contraception. Abortion is prohibited except in cases of serious hazard to mother or child. Abortion services are not provided at state hospitals.

¹ Association for the Prevention and Handling of Domestic Violence (SPAVO)