

# Tertiary educational attainment by sex (sdg\_04\_20)

ESMS Indicator Profile (ESMS-IP)  
Compiling agency: Eurostat, the  
statistical office of the European Union

## Eurostat metadata

### Reference metadata

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## Eurostat Quality Profile

<a href="#">4.5. Source data</a>	ESS (EU-LFS)
<a href="#">5.1. Frequency of dissemination</a>	Every year
<a href="#">5.2. Timeliness</a>	T+1 year
<a href="#">6.1. Reference area</a>	All EU MS
<a href="#">6.2. Comparability - geographical</a>	All EU MS
<a href="#">6.3. Coverage - Time</a>	> 10 years
<a href="#">6.4. Comparability - over time</a>	< 3 data points

Description of Eurostat quality grading system under the following [link](#).

For any question on data and metadata, please contact: [Eurostat user support](#)

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## 1. Contact [Top](#)

<b>1.1. Contact organisation</b>	Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union
<b>1.2. Contact organisation unit</b>	E2: Environmental statistics and accounts; sustainable development
<b>1.5. Contact mail address</b>	e-mail contact : <a href="mailto:ESTAT-SDG-MONITORING@ec.europa.eu">ESTAT-SDG-MONITORING@ec.europa.eu</a>

## 2. Metadata update [Top](#)

<b>2.1. Metadata last certified</b>	28/05/2024
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<b>2.2. Metadata last posted</b>	28/05/2024
<b>2.3. Metadata last update</b>	28/05/2024

### 3. Relevance

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The indicator is part of the EU Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicator set. It is used to monitor progress towards SDG 4 on quality education and SDG 5 on gender equality, which are embedded in the European Commission's Priorities under 'A Europe fit for a digital age', 'An economy that works for people' and 'Promoting our European way of life'.

SDG 4 seeks to ensure access to equitable and quality education through all stages of life, from early childhood education and care, through primary and secondary schooling, to technical, vocational training and tertiary education. SDG 5 aims at achieving gender equality by, among other things, ending all forms of discrimination, violence, and any harmful practices against women and girls in the public and private spheres.

The Council of the European Union on 26 February 2021 adopted the [Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond \(2021–2030\)](#), a framework that addresses five strategic priorities: (1) Improving quality, equity, inclusion and success for all in education and training; (2) Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality for all; (3) Enhancing competences and motivation in the education profession; (4) Reinforcing European higher education; and (5) Supporting green and digital transitions in and through education and training.

The [Council Resolution](#) sets the EU-level target for the share of early leavers from education and training as measured by this SDG indicator to be less than 9% by 2030. Furthermore, the indicator is included as main indicator in the Social Scoreboard for the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#).

Education and training are key drivers for growth and jobs as they help to improve employability, productivity, innovation and competitiveness. Continuing education after the basic level is important because people with higher qualifications are more likely to be employed and less likely to face poverty in a knowledge-based economy. People with a low level of education may not only face greater difficulties in the labour market but also have a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion.

### 4. Statistical Indicator

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#### 4.1. Data description

The indicator measures the share of the population aged 25-34 who have successfully completed tertiary studies (e.g. at university or a higher technical institution). Tertiary educational attainment refers to [ISCED](#) (International Standard Classification of Education) 2011 levels 5–8 for data from 2014 onwards and to ISCED 1997 levels 5–6 for data up to 2013. The indicator is based on the EU [Labour Force Survey](#) (EU-LFS).

#### 4.2. Unit of measure

% of the population aged 25-34

#### 4.3. Reference Period

Calendar year

#### 4.4. Accuracy - overall

The indicator is produced according to the high-level quality standards of European Statistics. Details on accuracy can be found in the metadata of the source datasets (see link to related metadata).

<b>4.5. Source data</b>
<b>ESS (EU-LFS)</b> Data source: European Statistical System (ESS); EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) Data provider: Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, based on data reported by the countries.

<b>5. Frequency and Timeliness of dissemination</b> <a href="#">Top</a>
<b>5.1. Frequency of dissemination</b>
<b>Every year</b> The indicator is updated annually in April. Complete and updated ESS data release information can be accessed via <a href="#">Eurostat release calendar</a> .
<b>5.2. Timeliness</b>
<b>T+1 year</b> New data points are disseminated within one year after the reference year.

<b>6. Coverage and comparability</b> <a href="#">Top</a>
<b>6.1. Reference area</b>
<b>All EU MS</b> Data are presented for all EU Member States plus Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Türkiye.
<b>6.2. Comparability - geographical</b>
<b>All EU MS</b> Data are comparable between all EU Member States respectively other presented countries.
<b>6.3. Coverage - Time</b>
<b>&gt; 10 years</b> Presented times series starts in 2000; the EU aggregate is reported since 2002.
<b>6.4. Comparability - over time</b>
<b>&lt; 3 data points</b> Length of comparable time series without methodological break is less than 3 data points. Break in time series in 2021 was due to the entry into force of the <a href="#">Integrated European Social Statistics Framework Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2019/1700)</a> and is fully detailed in the Eurostat dedicated article <a href="#">LFS – correction for breaks in time series</a> . Break in series in 2014 was due to the introduction of the ISCED 2011 classification, where educational attainment is coded according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). Data up to 2013 are based on ISCED 1997, as from 2014 ISCED 2011 is applied. Time series for lower secondary education are comparable over time for all available countries except Estonia. The level shift break in Estonia is due to the reclassification of a programme that can last between 6 months and 3.5 years: the qualification acquired upon successful completion of 'vocational courses based on basic education' is allocated in ISCED 2011 to ISCED level 2; under ISCED 1997 this was reported as level 3.

<b>7. Accessibility and clarity</b> <a href="#">Top</a>
<b>7.1. Dissemination format - Publications</b>

Analysis of the indicator is presented in Eurostat's annual monitoring report on Sustainable development in the EU (progress towards SDGs in the EU context).

#### 7.2. Dissemination format - online database

see tables [sdg\\_04\\_20](#)

#### 7.3. Dissemination format - other

Eurostat dedicated section on SDGs: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/overview>

### 8. Comment

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### Related metadata

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[edat1\\_esms](#) - Educational attainment level and transition from education to work (based on EU-LFS)

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