



WORICA

Women inclusion and empowerment
through collage art

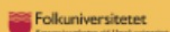
WORICA

National Gender Equality and Inclusion Report

France

Prepared by Brûlant·e·s

January 2026



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About this report

Women inclusion and empowerment through collage art.

This national report was prepared by **Brûlant·e·s** as part of **WORICA – Women inclusion and empowerment through collage art**, an Erasmus+ adult-education partnership (project 2025-1-SE01-KA220-ADU-000350853) bringing together Folkuniversitetet (Sweden), Brûlant·e·s (France), CEIPES ETS (Italy), Fractals – Art Education (Spain), ÖJAB (Austria) and SOFFA – Social Fashion Factory (Greece).

Six national reports – one for each partner country – map the legal and policy framework for gender equality, women’s rights and protection mechanisms, social inclusion measures, key indicators, main challenges, a national glossary, a practical “how-to” guide and useful resources. Together they form the evidence base of the **WORICA EU Gender Equality Handbook** and inform the Collage Art and Inclusion Learning Programme and the Women Empowerment Shows.

The information reflects the situation in **France** at the date of completion (January 2026). Laws, services and contact details change; readers are encouraged to verify current information with the authorities and organisations listed in the Useful Resources section. In an emergency, always contact the national emergency services.

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1. General Information

Country: France

Partner Organisation: Brûlant·e·s

Date of Completion: Jan 29, 2026

Contact Person: Seungjoo Bae, co-director of Brûlant·e·s

2. National Legal and Policy Framework

The advancement of women's rights in France represents a gradual shift from legal subordination to constitutional equality. This evolution spans over two centuries and reflects changes not only in laws but also in political thought, social structure, and cultural norms. The French legal framework regarding gender equality has moved from restricting women's autonomy, particularly within marriage, to recognising their rights as citizens, workers, and individuals.

2.1. Key Laws on Gender Equality

The modern legal framework of gender in France began with the Napoleonic Civil Code of 1804, which placed married women under their husbands' legal authority and denied them economic and legal independence. This code shaped later social and legal norms, embedding women's exclusion from political, economic, and family life. Yet resistance emerged early: in 1791, Olympe de Gouges declared that women are born free and equal in rights, laying an intellectual foundation for future reforms¹.

Education was the first domain of legal change. The Falloux Laws (1850) required primary schools for girls, followed by access to higher education in 1880 and compulsory education for both sexes in 1882. These reforms established women's recognition as learners and future workers.

Economic autonomy followed. The 1907 law gave married women control over their earnings, challenging their enforced dependency. The 1909 maternity leave law introduced state protection of women's employment. Later, the 1972 Equal Pay Law and the 1983 Roudy Law strengthened workplace equality and prohibited gender discrimination. These measures built a cumulative framework for financial independence and professional protection.

Political rights came later. Women gained the right to vote and stand for election in 1944, participated in elections in 1945, and the 1946 Constitution formally enshrined gender equality. Crucially, this constitution made equality a legal obligation of the state, paving the way for the establishment of institutional mechanisms, such as the Secretary of State for Women's Rights in 1974.

From the 1970s onward, reforms focused on personal autonomy. Divorce reform in 1975 established equal rights to exit marriage. Abortion legalisation and its social security coverage (1975–1982) secured reproductive rights. Together, these laws redefined women legally as individual citizens rather than solely wives or mothers.

The final phase addressed physical safety and dignity. Laws against domestic violence and sexual harassment were introduced in 1992 and strengthened in 2012. In 2006, the marriage age was equalised for both sexes, ending a rule unchanged since 1804. These reforms reflect a shift from formal equality to lived equality, recognising gender-based violence as a violation of fundamental rights.

Overall, women’s rights in France followed a coherent legal trajectory: education enabled access to knowledge, economic reforms reduced dependency, political rights institutionalised equality, personal rights secured autonomy, and protective laws safeguarded dignity. However, despite strong legal frameworks, many immigrant women still face intersecting inequalities linked to gender, migration status, and socio-economic vulnerability, showing that legal equality does not always result in substantive equality in the labour market.

2.2. National Strategies and Action Plans

France has implemented several national strategies and action plans aimed at promoting gender equality and fostering inclusive policies across all sectors of society. The Gender Equality Strategy “Stratégie nationale pour l’égalité entre les femmes et les hommes” provides a comprehensive framework for reducing gender disparities in employment, wages, education, health, and political participation. The strategy outlines concrete objectives such as closing the gender pay gap, increasing women’s representation in leadership positions, preventing gender-based violence, and improving work-life balance through better parental leave and flexible work arrangements.

Action plans are regularly updated and often include measurable targets, awareness-raising campaigns, and dedicated funding to support programs for women’s empowerment. Examples include programs to increase women’s participation in STEM fields, initiatives to combat workplace harassment, and support for women entrepreneurs. While these strategies and action plans demonstrate France’s commitment to gender equality at the policy level, challenges remain in translating formal frameworks into concrete improvements for all women, particularly those facing compounded disadvantages such as immigrant women or women from socioeconomically marginalised backgrounds.

2.3. Competent Authorities and Equality Bodies

In France, several public institutions are responsible for promoting gender equality and protecting women’s rights, each with specific roles and limitations. The Ministry for Gender Equality develops national policies, coordinates inter-ministerial programs, and oversees the implementation of laws on women’s rights, employment, education, and political representation. However, it has limited direct enforcement power in private organisations, and individual discrimination cases are handled by other bodies.

The Défenseur des droits is an independent authority that receives and investigates complaints of discrimination or harassment, provides legal guidance, mediates disputes, and may refer cases to the courts. The High Council for Gender Equality serves as an advisory body, producing reports and recommendations for the government and parliament on gender equality in economic, social, and political life.

The Labour Inspectorate²³ plays a key role in enforcing workplace equality. It monitors compliance with equal pay laws, the prevention of gender discrimination in recruitment and promotion, the implementation of the Gender Equality Index in companies with over 50 employees, and protection against sexual harassment. It also safeguards maternity and parental leave rights⁴, acting as an essential mechanism for detecting and correcting workplace violations.

Finally, local authorities and NGOs provide education, advocacy, legal assistance, and social services that help women access employment, training, and information about their rights.

Together, these institutions form a multi-layered equality framework. Yet enforcement remains uneven, and structural barriers persist, particularly for immigrant women and those facing multiple forms of disadvantage, showing that strong legal structures do not always guarantee equality in practice.

2.4. National Referral Mechanism for the Protection of Human Trafficking Victims

Human trafficking remains a serious human rights violation in France, primarily affecting vulnerable groups such as children, migrants, socially disadvantaged individuals, and persons with disabilities. According to the 2024 report of the Interministerial Mission for the Protection of Women Against Violence and the Fight Against Human Trafficking (Miprof), 7,285 victims of trafficking and exploitation were identified. Among the 4,823 victims supported by associations, 89% were women, and 86% had been subjected to sexual exploitation. These figures show that women are disproportionately affected and that sexual exploitation remains the dominant form of trafficking in France.

Earlier data from 2022⁵ confirm this trend: among nearly 3,000 victims assisted by associations, 82% were women. Of these, 76% were sexually exploited, 15% subjected to forced labour, and smaller numbers forced into criminal activity or begging. This demonstrates the persistent overrepresentation of women among trafficking victims.

The third national action plan against human trafficking (2013)⁶ established two main objectives: first, to protect all citizens, minors and adults, French or migrant, from violations of human dignity caused by trafficking and exploitation; and second, to strengthen criminal justice efforts to dismantle and prosecute trafficking networks, including transnational ones.

Overall, national data confirm that women, whether French or foreign, are the primary victims of human trafficking in France, particularly in severe forms such as sexual exploitation.

3. Women's Rights and Protection Mechanisms

3.1. Rights Guaranteed by National Legislation

French law guarantees equal treatment between women and men in employment and prohibits discrimination based on sex, pregnancy, maternity, or family situation (Labour Code, Articles L.1132-1 and L.1142-1 et seq.).

Key rights include:

- **Equal pay and treatment:** Discrimination in pay, promotion, training, classification, or working conditions for equal work or work of equal value is prohibited.
- **Protection against harassment:** Employees are protected from sexist behaviour and sexual or gender-based harassment (Article L.1142-2-1).
- **Maternity leave:** Fully paid leave of 16 weeks for the first or second child (6 prenatal + 10 postnatal), extended to 26 weeks for a third child and 34 weeks for twins. Compensation is paid by Social Security (up to nearly full salary, capped at the Social Security ceiling).
- **Paternity and childcare leave:** 25 days plus 3 mandatory birth days (32 days for multiple births), paid by Social Security and taken within six months of birth.
- **Parental leave:** Up to three years, unpaid or partially compensated, shareable between parents or taken as reduced working hours.
- **Birth leave (from 2026):** A new paid leave of up to two months per parent will complement existing maternity, paternity, and parental leave schemes.
- **Protection against dismissal:** Absolute protection during pregnancy, parental leave, and ten weeks after childbirth, except in cases of serious misconduct or unavoidable economic dismissal.
- **Additional protections:** Workplace adjustments during pregnancy, limits on night work in certain cases, and breastfeeding breaks.

3.2. Complaint and Redress Mechanisms

Complaint and redress mechanisms are formal procedures that allow individuals to report harmful conduct and seek remedies. In the context of violence against women, they address physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence, as well as exploitation, neglect, and harassment.

International frameworks established by the United Nations and the Council of Europe set global standards and guide national legislation. In France, these instruments influence law-making, monitoring, and public policy evaluation, reinforcing national mechanisms and ensuring compliance with international human rights obligations.

3.2.1. International Mechanisms

- **OHCHR Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women**

Mandated by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur monitors gender-based violence worldwide. The mandate is grounded in international legal instruments, notably the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, which defines such violence as a human rights violation and calls for effective prevention, investigation, punishment, and redress.

- **International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November)**

This global observance raises awareness, mobilises political commitment, and encourages states to strengthen national complaint and redress mechanisms to combat violence against women.

3.2.2. National Framework in France

France adopts a multi-dimensional approach combining legal reforms, institutional mechanisms, victim support services, and prevention strategies.

Reporting and complaint mechanisms

Victims may file a formal complaint (*plainte*) or a statement (*main courante*) with police or the gendarmerie. To reduce barriers to reporting, complaints can also be filed in hospitals with support from trained medical and social professionals. Online reporting platforms further facilitate access for victims facing fear, stigma, or mobility constraints.

Support and emergency services

The national hotline 3919 provides free, confidential, 24/7 listening, information, and referral to shelters, social services, and legal assistance. Emergency and long-term accommodation are available for women and children fleeing violence, in cooperation with local authorities and civil society organisations.

3.3. Legal Protection and Access to Justice

French law provides key protection and redress measures, including:

- **Protection orders**, issued by family judges to ensure rapid safety measures, such as removal of the perpetrator and prohibition of contact.
- **Téléphone Grave Danger (TGD)**, an emergency alert device for women at high risk of serious violence.
- **Legal aid**, enabling victims with limited financial resources to access justice.
- **Maisons de la justice et du droit**, present in cities, providing free legal information and assistance by appointment.

These mechanisms aim to ensure victim protection and accountability of perpetrators.

3.4. Awareness and Prevention Measures

France conducts national awareness campaigns on violence against women, including drug-facilitated sexual violence. These initiatives improve public awareness, professional training,

and early detection and response systems. (for more information, go to Useful resources, section 9)

4. Social Inclusion Measures

France mainstreams gender equality in integration policies and provides targeted support for migrant women, who face higher unemployment and multiple barriers to labour market access.

The **Contrat d'Intégration Républicaine (CIR)** requires civic and French-language training, with a target level of B1 by 2026. It includes modules on gender equality, women's rights, and violence prevention. To facilitate participation, priority childcare is provided for newly arrived, unemployed, or low-skilled migrant women. According to OFII (2025), over 50% of participating women reach A1 level, with many continuing toward B1.

The **AGIR Programme** (Global and Individualised Accompaniment for Refugees), launched in 2021 and expanded after 2023, provides personalised support in employment, housing, vocational training, and recognition of prior experience (VAE). It now supports up to 30,000 beneficiaries annually, around 40% of whom are women, with particularly positive outcomes for single women and mothers (OECD 2025).

The **Action Plan for the Employment of Foreign Women** addresses key barriers such as childcare, non-recognition of foreign qualifications, and gender stereotypes. Measures include mentorship, vocational training, and rapid registration with France Travail, contributing to a reduction of non-EU unemployment to 12.3% in 2024.

France's implementation of the **Istanbul Convention** further strengthens inclusion for women facing intersecting vulnerabilities. Under the **Plan Égalité 2023–2027**, actions include 24/7 multilingual access to the 3919 helpline, tailored services for women with disabilities or language barriers, and increased funding for specialist support organisations.

Targeted strategies also address specific vulnerable groups⁷. The **National Roma Strategy 2020–2030**⁸ focuses on low-skilled Roma women through permanent housing, vocational training, healthcare access, and measures against employment discrimination. The **National Plan against Racism and Discrimination 2023–2026** includes 80 actions targeting intersecting discrimination, with over 60% of integration measures incorporating gender objectives.

Overall, these policies reflect France's commitment to inclusive integration. However, persistent structural barriers continue to limit full labour market participation for many migrant women.

4.1. Available Support Services (Training, Psychological Support, Shelters, Childcare)

Support services for migrant and refugee women in France are delivered by public institutions (OFII, DIAN), non-governmental organisations (France Terre d'Asile, Médecins Sans Frontières,

Red Cross, IRAP Europe), and local authorities, ensuring multilingual, local, and often free access. The 2021 EMN report highlighted good practices such as comprehensive employment support and rights-awareness programs for women victims of violence.

The **OEPRE project** (Opening Schools to Parents for Children's Success) provides free French-language and civic training through school-based workshops. Around 85% of participants are migrant mothers, often low-skilled and caring for children. The program is being expanded to rural areas in 2025–2026 to improve geographical access.

The **AMAL project** (France Terre d'Asile) combines French courses with childcare, psychological support for trauma and gender-based violence, and education on women's rights. Digital modules were strengthened in 2024–2025 to reach vulnerable women in remote or disadvantaged urban areas.

MSF offers day centres and support groups for migrant and refugee women experiencing PTSD, depression, and trauma linked to violence or displacement. Capacity is being reinforced through new National Reference Centres for Psychological Trauma (CN2R), operational from 2025.

CADA (asylum-seeker reception centres) and CPH (temporary accommodation centres) provide emergency housing, social assistance, and reintegration support. Since 2024–2025, additional places have been reserved for single mothers and women with children, reflecting gender-based vulnerability priorities.

Free childcare is provided during CIR language courses, ASL classes, and association-led integration programs. Local integration contracts (CTAIR) prioritise unemployed and low-skilled migrant women, with reinforced measures since 2025 to address involuntary part-time employment.

The Red Cross delivers mobile support in camps and marginalised areas. IRAP Europe provides legal assistance on migration status and violence-related cases. National hotlines such as **3919** (violence against women) and multilingual information services like **Watizat** facilitate access to rights and protection.

5. Key Indicators and Data

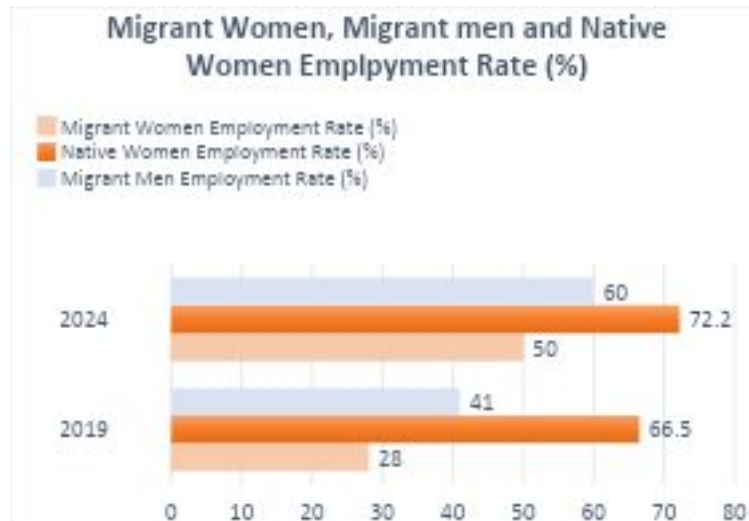
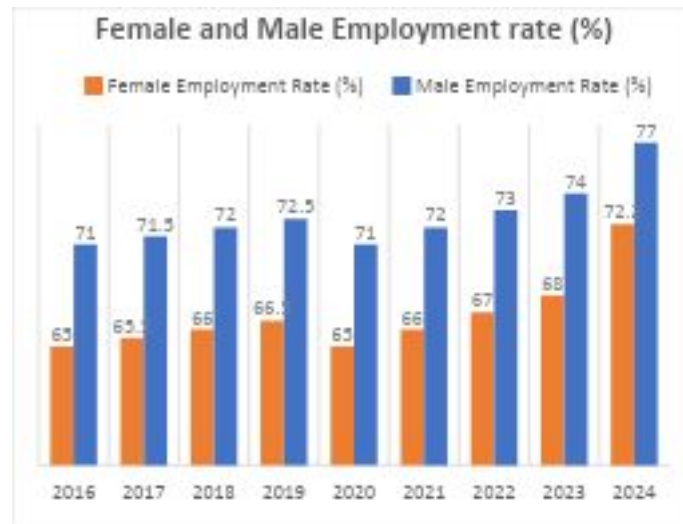
5.1. Female Employment Rate

Female employment in France continues to rise. In December 2024, the employment rate of women aged 15–64 reached **72.2%**, the highest level on record (7% point increase since 2016), which places France above the EU average. Progress has been supported by work–life balance policies and labour market integration programmes such as the **CIR** and **AGIR**.

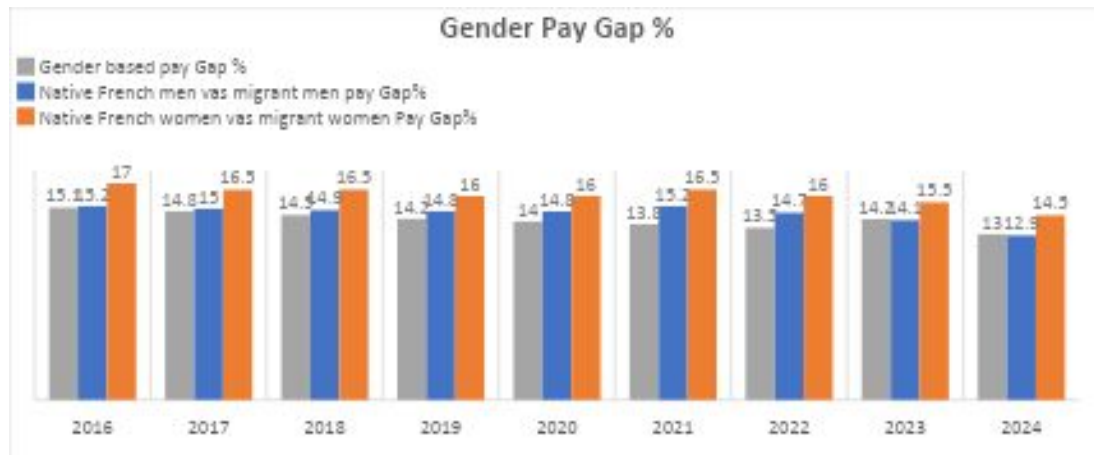
However, gains remain uneven. **Migrant women**, particularly from non-EU countries, experience lower labour market participation, higher unemployment, and frequent involuntary part-time work. As many migrate through family reunification, their labour market integration is often delayed, widening the employment gap despite overall national progress.

Significant inequalities also affect women facing intersecting vulnerabilities. Only **39% of persons with recognised disabilities** are employed, compared to **68% of the general population**, while companies meet just **3.5% of the legal 6% quota** for employing disabled workers. Women with disabilities are over-represented in low-paid or part-time jobs and face discrimination in recruitment and career progression.

Overall, while France has reduced the general gender employment gap, persistent structural barriers continue to limit access to stable and equal employment for migrant women, women with disabilities, and gender-diverse individuals.



5.2. Gender Pay Gap



Despite rising female employment, gender pay disparities persist in France. In 2023, the **unadjusted gender pay gap** in the private sector stood at 22.2%, meaning women earned substantially less than men when differences in working hours are not considered. When calculated in **full-time equivalent**, the gap narrows to 14.2%, reflecting slow but steady progress since 2016. After accounting for job position, sector, and experience, the **remaining adjusted gap** is 3.8%, showing that much of the inequality stems from structural labour market segmentation rather than direct wage discrimination. The gap increases with age and is especially pronounced in high-paying sectors such as finance. **Migrant women** face even wider pay disparities due to their concentration in low-wage, feminised sectors and part-time work, limiting income security and career advancement.

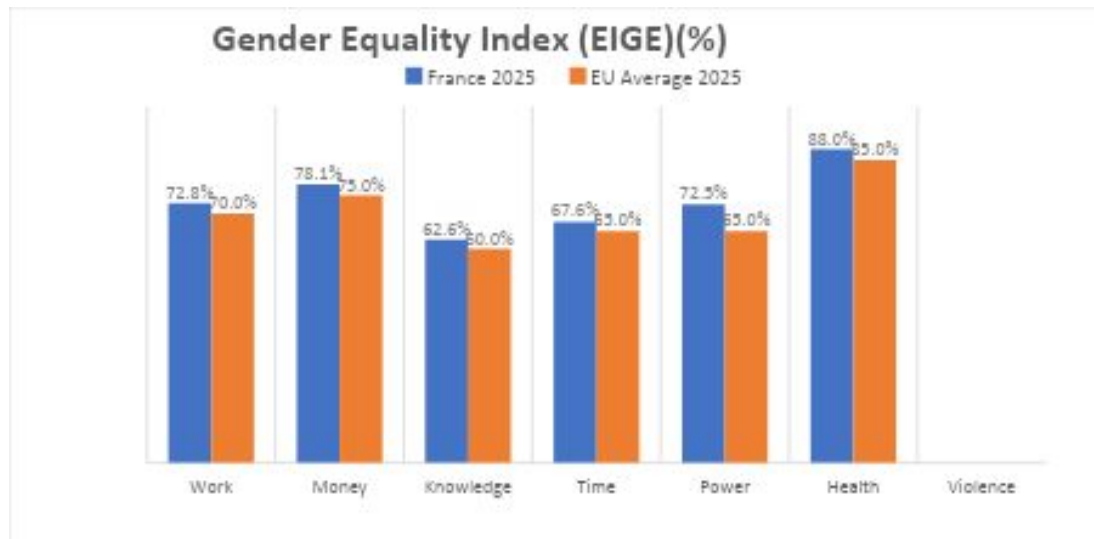
5.3. Labour Market Participation Rate

Women's labour force participation in France has increased steadily over the past decade. In 2024, the participation rate for women aged 15 and over reached 51.7%, while participation among working-age women (15–64) rose to **around 71.6% by mid-2025**. These levels place France above the EU average and reflect sustained progress since 2016, supported by employment and integration policies promoting female economic activity.

Despite these gains, gender gaps persist. Men continue to participate at higher rates, resulting in a **participation gap of approximately 8–10 percentage points**. Although unemployment rates between women and men have largely converged, differences remain in labour force attachment, particularly in inactivity and part-time participation.

Migrant women face additional barriers. Their participation rates remain significantly lower than those of native-born women due to family-related migration pathways, limited recognition of qualifications, language barriers, and concentration in specific sectors. While modest improvements have occurred since 2020, regional disparities persist, underscoring the need for targeted territorial employment and integration measures.

5.4. Gender Equality Index (EIGE)



France scores 73.4 out of 100 on the 2025 Gender Equality Index, ranking second in the European Union and well above the EU average. This reflects strong long-term progress since 2010, particularly in health, income, employment, and decision-making power. However, persistent gaps remain in work-life balance and unpaid care responsibilities, as well as in the area of violence against women. While France performs well overall, migrant women benefit less from these gains due to ongoing integration barriers. At the current pace, full gender equality in the EU remains several decades away.

6. Main Challenges

6.1. Economic Barriers

Despite legal and policy advances, not all women in France benefit equally. Differences within the female population—between native-born women and those with immigrant backgrounds—reflect disparities in rights, opportunities, and protections shaped by social origin, migration status, language, and culture⁹.

Economic disadvantages of immigrant women are well-documented. OECD (2025)¹⁰ Data show that immigrant workers earn 28% less than native-born workers¹¹ upon entering employment, even after controlling for age and gender. This gap is partly due to concentration in low-paid sectors such as cleaning, hospitality, and personal services, and partly to language barriers, non-recognition of foreign qualifications, and discriminatory hiring practices.

According to the Observatoire des inégalités (2025), immigrant households have a standard of living 24% lower on average, with half living on less than €1,505 per month. Wage disparities persist across generations: children of immigrants—especially women whose parents were born in Africa—earn on average €267 less per month than native-born peers.

Structural barriers also affect employment conditions. The CEDAW report (2024) highlights higher rates of part-time and precarious work, limited career progression, and intersecting discrimination based on gender, origin, and language.

6.2. Gender Stereotypes and Norms

Migration to France has increasingly been feminised: women accounted for about 40% of immigrants in the 1930s and over **52% today**¹². Despite this, migrant women remain largely invisible in public discourse, policy design, and labour market strategies. Persistent gendered and cultural stereotypes frame them as passive dependents, victims, or burdens, creating barriers to employment, social services, healthcare, and civic participation.

Historically, migration narratives positioned men as economic actors and women as accompanying family members. As a result, migrant women's qualifications, aspirations, and autonomy are often under-recognised¹³. Stereotypes portraying them primarily as wives or mothers reduce access to professional training, employment counselling, and leadership opportunities, reinforcing dependency and unequal power relations.

Migrant women are disproportionately concentrated in low-paid sectors such as domestic work, cleaning, caregiving, and hospitality. Even highly educated women face “deskilling” due to unrecognised qualifications. Language requirements, accent discrimination, and cultural biases further restrict professional integration. Intersectional discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, and migration status compounds these challenges, limiting access to employment, housing, and institutional trust.

LGBTQ+ women also confront entrenched gender norms. They are often depicted as overly sexualized, unfeminine, or unsuitable for traditional roles like motherhood, and remain underrepresented in media and public life. Over **53% of lesbian or bisexual women** in France report experiencing at least one form of discrimination or hostile behaviour in their careers due to sexual orientation¹⁴. Hostile conduct includes mocking, rejection, harassment, and outing by colleagues or superiors.

Indirect discrimination and entrenched stereotypes further shape professional experiences. According to the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights' LGBTIQ Survey, **18% of lesbian women** reported discrimination in employment in the previous year¹⁵, and **45% of LGBTI respondents** conceal their sexual orientation at work. These figures reveal that lesbophobic stereotypes and subtle exclusionary practices continue to limit equality in employment, healthcare, education, and daily life, undermining LGBTQ+ women's inclusion and enjoyment of equal rights.

6.3. Access to Care, Health Services, Education and Employment

Despite overall progress in gender equality, women in France continue to face persistent disparities, which are amplified in rural areas, where roughly one-third of French women (about 11 million) live.

Women generally outperform men in education, with **55–58% of tertiary graduates** being women and higher baccalaureate success rates, yet they remain underrepresented in STEM

and selective tracks. Women consult general practitioners more often but face barriers to specialised reproductive, mental, and preventive care, despite higher life expectancy.

Rural women experience a “**malus rural du genre**”; geographic isolation, poor transport, scarce local services, and heavier household responsibilities increase the time, cost, and effort required to access healthcare. Key findings from a 2025 report by the Institute Terram and the Association Rura¹⁶ (5,000 surveys; ~100 interviews): Rural women bear most logistical costs for distant services, leading to delayed care and higher abandonment rates, and Health outcomes are worse: delayed diagnoses¹⁷ (endometriosis exceeding the national 7-year average), higher vulnerability to intimate partner violence (**47% of feminicides occur in rural areas**), and doubled self-harm hospitalisations among young rural women. Access to abortion and gynaecological services is limited in “medical deserts,” affecting over **20% of rural zones**.

Rural girls perform well in secondary education but have reduced access to higher or specialised programs due to distance and limited local offerings.

Employment for rural women lags behind that of men (**66% vs. 71% nationally**), with higher rates of involuntary part-time work, persistent wage gaps (**14–15%**), and elevated poverty, particularly among single mothers¹⁸.

Rural women are underrepresented in local governance (**~20% of rural mayors**), constrained by mobility and care responsibilities.

Migrant and disabled rural women face compounded barriers—language, discrimination, administrative hurdles, and physical inaccessibility—further limiting employment (~39%) and service uptake.

Expanded rural **CIDFF centres** (support on violence, rights, and employment), **France 2030** programs for women’s ICT training, €1.5 million in rural equality projects, and the **2023–2027**¹⁹ **Interministerial Equality Plan** target isolated territories with “aller-vers” approaches.

Implementation gaps persist, highlighting the need for **intersectional, locally adapted policies**; improved transport, telemedicine, accessible services, and inclusive decision-making to ensure equitable outcomes, especially for the most vulnerable rural women.

6.4. Societal Demands and Advocacy Positions

French society increasingly demands an end to everyday sexism across workplaces, media, public discourse, and digital spaces. As noted in the main challenges section, and according to recent findings from the **Haut Conseil à l’Égalité entre les femmes et les hommes (HCE)**, key priorities identified in the 2025 report include: eliminating gender stereotypes from early childhood and strengthening media regulation; closing persistent gender wage gaps and addressing women’s underrepresentation in leadership positions; implementing equitable parental leave, expanding childcare services, and promoting flexible work arrangements to redistribute care responsibilities; and strengthening comprehensive protection against gender-based violence (GBV), including additional shelters, specialized training for law enforcement, and preventive measures.

Beyond institutional policies, NGOs, feminist movements, trade unions, and grassroots organisations advocate for structural transformation that goes beyond legal compliance.

Key Advocacy Areas and Actors in France:

1. Support for victims of gender-based violence (GBV): Provision of shelters, legal aid, and psychosocial support, Training and awareness for law enforcement and social services.
Key Organisations : Femmes Solidaires, Ni Putes Ni Soumises, Collectif National pour les Droits des Femmes (CNDFF).
1. Educational and awareness initiatives: Anti-stereotyping programs starting from early childhood and adolescence.
Organisations: Planning Familial, Mix-Cité, Centre Hubertine Auclert.
1. Information and resource centres: Support, guidance, and information for women on rights and services.
Organisations : CIDFF (Centres d'Information sur les Droits des Femmes et des Familles), Centre Hubertine Auclert (Île-de-France).

National feminist mobilisations, including the feminist strike on 8 March 2025 (Grève Féministe collective), on the occasion of International Women's Rights Day, highlight unpaid care work, wage disparities, childcare shortages, and opposition to far-right gender backlash. These actions often bring together broad coalitions of civil society actors.

Major trade unions, including CFDT, CGT, and Solidaires, call for stricter enforcement of pay equity laws, wage transparency (including full implementation of the EU Pay Transparency Directive), sectoral equality agreements, bans on imposed part-time work, and stronger protections for women in precarious employment or affected by caregiving responsibilities. They also emphasise the urgent need to revalue feminised sectors such as education, care, and cleaning, alongside stronger social protection systems.

Autre Cercle, founded in 1997, is a non-profit dedicated to LGBTQ+ inclusion in the workplace, helping employees of all sexual orientations and gender identities work without discrimination. It supports employers through training, consulting, workshops, and guides, and its LGBTQ+ engagement chart allows organisations to formally commit to inclusive practices. The association also runs awareness campaigns, networking events, and research initiatives, documenting challenges and promoting best practices, while fostering respect, equity, and cultural change in professional environments across France.

7. Glossary

7.1. Gender-based and Sexual Violence

Sexism (n.): A system of beliefs, norms, and power relations that assigns unequal value and opportunities based on sex or gender. It operates through social practices, institutions, and

laws, producing discrimination. Manifestations include sexist jokes, exclusion from professions, unequal pay, or biased policies. Sexism intersects with racism, classism, ableism, and LGBTQ+-phobia.

Sexist (adj./n.): An act, statement, behaviour, or practice that expresses or reinforces sexism. It can be discriminatory remarks, stereotypes, biased decisions, or exclusionary rules. Sexist behaviour normalises inequality and affects all genders, especially where multiple forms of discrimination intersect.

Sexual Harassment: Any unwanted verbal, non-verbal, or physical behaviour of a sexual nature that violates dignity or creates a hostile environment. Examples include sexual jokes, comments on appearance, intrusive questions, unwanted advances, or non-consensual touching. It affects women, men, and non-binary people and often intersects with other forms of discrimination.

Sexual Assault: Any sexual act imposed without free and informed consent, including forced sexual acts, unwanted touching, or coercion. It is a serious violation of bodily autonomy and dignity, affecting people of all genders and often rooted in structural sexism.

7.2. Parity

Equality in Economic, Social, and Political Spheres: Equal access, participation, and representation for all individuals, regardless of gender, in education, employment, decision-making, and public life. It entails equal opportunities, pay, legal protection, and influence. Structural sexism and discriminatory practices are major barriers. Parity benefits women, men, and non-binary people and is essential for human rights and inclusive development.

7.3. Sexual / Gendered Division of Labour

The social and cultural organisation of work based on gender, assigning specific tasks or professions to women or men. It includes unequal domestic work, care responsibilities, and restricted access to paid employment or leadership roles. This division limits economic independence, reinforces stereotypes, and affects all genders.

7.4. Wage Inequality / Pay Gap

Differences in earnings between individuals or groups performing comparable work, often due to gender, race, class, or other social factors rather than qualifications or performance. Manifestations include lower salaries for women and marginalised groups, unequal promotion access, and undervaluation of feminised sectors. Wage gaps limit economic independence and reinforce social hierarchies.

7.5. Occupational / Professional Downgrading

When individuals work in positions below their qualifications, skills, or experience. Often caused by structural barriers, discrimination, or unrecognised foreign credentials. Migrant women are disproportionately affected, limiting career progression, economic independence, and social mobility. Intersects with sexism, racism, and class-based discrimination.

7.6. Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a framework for understanding how multiple social categories, such as gender, race, and class, interact to produce overlapping and compounded forms of discrimination and disadvantages. Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, it highlights that experiences of inequality cannot be understood by looking at a single category in isolation. For example, migrant women may face simultaneous barriers due to sexism, racism, and class-based marginalisation. Intersectionality affects all genders but emphasises how marginalised groups experience multiple layers of oppression.

8. How to Recognise and Address Gender Discrimination in France

8.1. Recognising Discrimination

Definition: Gender discrimination is any distinction, exclusion, or restriction based on sex or gender that impairs equal rights (French Penal Code, Article 225-1; CEDAW).

Types of Discrimination:

1. **Direct Discrimination:** Explicit unfavourable treatment due to gender:
 - Refusal of promotion, hiring, or training based on stereotypes (maternity assumptions).
 - Dismissal, demotion, or reduced responsibilities linked to pregnancy/maternity leave.
 - Sexual harassment or sexist remarks create a hostile environment.
 - Unequal pay for equal or similar work.
1. **Indirect Discrimination:** Policies or rules that appear neutral but disproportionately affect one gender:
 - Job criteria penalising caregivers or part-time workers.
 - Unequal access to training due to structural requirements.
 - Housing, credit, or public service rules affecting women more than men.
1. **Systemic Discrimination:** Embedded barriers in institutions or social norms:
 - Intersectional discrimination (migrant women or women with disabilities).
 - Male-dominated workplaces or educational cultures favouring informal networks.
 - Gendered social norms limit women's representation in leadership, politics, or certain sectors.

8.2. Steps to Address Gender Discrimination

French law prohibits discrimination across employment, education, housing, public services, and social protection. Key steps include:

Step 1: Evidence Collection

- Document dates, facts, communications, witness details, and relevant records (emails, evaluations, service documents).
- Evidence is crucial to support claims and shift the burden of proof in legal proceedings.

Step 2: Internal Reporting & Preventive Obligations

- **Workplace:** Report to employer, HR, référent (companies ≥250 employees), or CSE.
- **Public Sector / Education:** Report to the school administration or academic inspector.
- **Housing/Public Services:** Report to landlord, housing association, or administration (préfecture).
- Use written reports (registered mail/email) to ensure documentation.
- Internal steps are often expected before external legal action.

Step 3: Access Free Specialised Support

Défenseur des droits: Evaluates cases, guides individuals, and can intervene in court.

Other structures:

- **Fédération Nationale Solidarité Femmes** (3919 hotlines for GBV)
- **CIDFF** (women's rights information)
- **Labour Inspectorate** (workplace discrimination)
- Victime support associations (*France Victimes*, *France Terre d'Asile* for migrants)

Migrant women may face intersectional barriers (residence permits, language, fear of deportation). Specialised support ensures protection under international standards (Istanbul Convention).

Step 4: Formal Recourse

1. **Criminal Route:**
 - File a complaint with the police or gendarmerie, online, or through the prosecutor.
 - Prescription: 6 years from the act (or last act in continuous cases).
 - Sanctions: Up to 3 years imprisonment, €45,000 fine (higher for aggravating factors).
1. **Civil / Labour / Administrative Route:**
 - **Employment:** Conseil de prud'hommes (labour court; free, no mandatory lawyer).
 - **Non-employment:** Civil or administrative courts for disputes in housing, education, or public services.
 - Prescription: 5 years from awareness of discrimination (or last act).
 - Remedies: Compensation, reinstatement, promotion, cessation orders, or annulment of decisions.

Witnesses of discrimination or violence should support victims, document incidents, and refer them to appropriate authorities. Resolution usually begins with mediation or conciliation; unresolved cases may lead to investigations, hearings, financial compensation, criminal sanctions, or institutional adjustments. Legal aid is available for low-income claimants. Prompt action and proper documentation are essential, especially for intersectional vulnerable groups like migrant women.

8.3. Local Resources and Contacts

- **National discrimination help line:** via Défenseur des droits (Details above)
- **Gender-based violence support:** 3919 (Violence Femmes Info – free, anonymous)
- **Local delegates:** Search “délégué Défenseur des droits [your city/department]”
 - Example: In Lyon (Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region), contact the regional delegation or use national tools
- **Official guidance:** [Ministry for Gender Equality](#)

Tip: Act as soon as possible to preserve evidence and meet deadlines. Consulting a **lawyer or association early** is recommended for complex cases.

9. Useful Resources

9.1. Official Documents and Policies

- Key Figures: Towards Real Gender Equality in France (2023 Edition)
https://www.egalite-femmes-hommes.gouv.fr/sites/efh/files/2024-04/Chiffres-cles-de-legalite-2022_ed2023_vEN.pdf
- France’s International Strategy for a Feminist Foreign Policy (2025–2030)
<https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/feminist-diplomacy/france-s-international-strategy-for-a-feminist-foreign-policy-2025-2030>
- Interministerial Plan for Equality between Women and Men (2023–2027)
https://www.egalite-femmes-hommes.gouv.fr/sites/efh/files/2023-03/Plan_interministeriel_pour_l_egalite_entre_les_femmes_et_les_hommes_2023-2027_2.pdf

9.2. National Equality Bodies

- Delegated Ministry for Gender Equality and the Fight against Discrimination <https://www.egalite-femmes-hommes.gouv.fr/>
- High Council for Equality between Women and Men (HCE) (Haut Conseil à l’Égalité entre les femmes et les hommes) <https://www.haut-conseil-egalite.gouv.fr/>
- Defender of Rights (Défenseur des droits) <https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/>

9.3. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

- Fédération Nationale Solidarité Femmes (FNSF) – Support for victims of gender-based violence <https://solidaritefemmes.org/>
- Fondation des Femmes – Advocacy and funding for women's rights initiatives <https://fondationdesfemmes.org/>
- En avant toute(s) – Focus on youth engagement and prevention of gender-based violence <https://enavanttoutes.fr/>
- Women for Women France – Support for foreign-born victims of domestic abuse <https://www.womenforwomenfrance.org/>
- Equipop – Women's health and rights in France and West Africa <https://equipop.org/>

9.4. Support Centres and Services

- Violence Femmes Info / Emergency Shelter Services – Women's shelters across France: Access (National Helpline for Victims of Violence) 3919 – Free, anonymous, multilingual support
- SOS Viols Femmes (Collectif Féministe Contre le Viol) 0800 05 95 95 – Free rape and sexual assault crises help line
- La Maison des Femmes – Comprehensive medical, psychological, social, and legal support for women victims of violence (There are 29 women's centres in various cities across France.) [Trouver une maison - La Maison des Femmes](#)
- SOS Mariage Forcé – Support for force marriage victimes. Contact via Voix de Femmes. <https://voixdefemmes.org/>

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