

On the occasion of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, 17 October

# Gender Poverty Gap in Portugal

Carlos Farinha Rodrigues

According to the most recent data from the EU-SILC (2024), based on 2023 income, around 978,000 women were living in monetary poverty in Portugal. The poverty rate among women reached 17.6%, which is 2.2 percentage points higher than that of men and one percentage point above the national average. In relative terms, women accounted for 52% of the population living in poverty. The Gender Poverty Gap (GPG) — that is, the ratio between the female and male poverty rates — stood at 1.14, a figure higher than the European Union average (1.09).

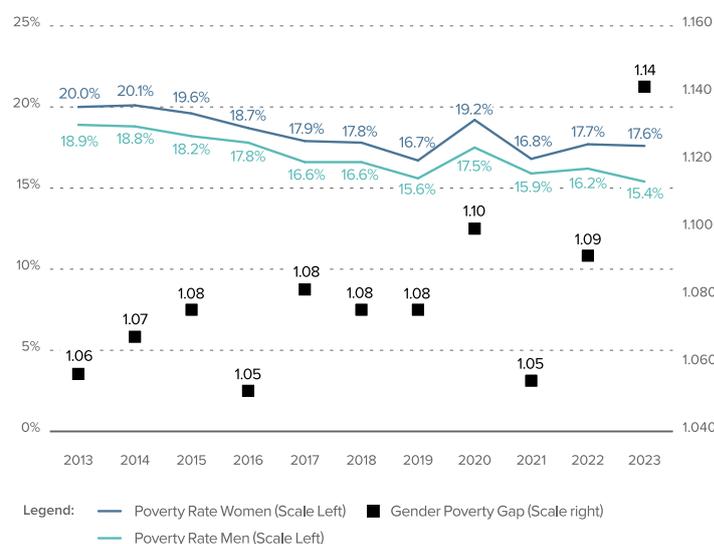
These results highlight the important role of gender in the structure of poverty in Portugal, although they should be interpreted with caution. The methodology used by Statistics Portugal (INE) and Eurostat to construct poverty indicators is based on equivalised household income, assuming an equal sharing of resources among all household members. This assumption tends to underestimate women’s precarious living conditions, especially in families where asymmetries in resource distribution persist.

A clear indication of this underestimation can be drawn from the EU-SILC itself: when comparing

the poverty rates of women and men living alone — and therefore not affected by the assumption of equal resource sharing — the GPG rises to 1.23.

An analysis of the temporal evolution of poverty by gender (Figure 1) shows that over the past decade, the poverty rate for women has been consistently higher than that for men. Furthermore, there has been a progressive worsening of the GPG, especially in recent years. In 2023, the indicator reached its highest level since the beginning of the EU-SILC series in 2003.

Figure 1 - Evolution of the Poverty Rate by Gender and the Gender Poverty Gap

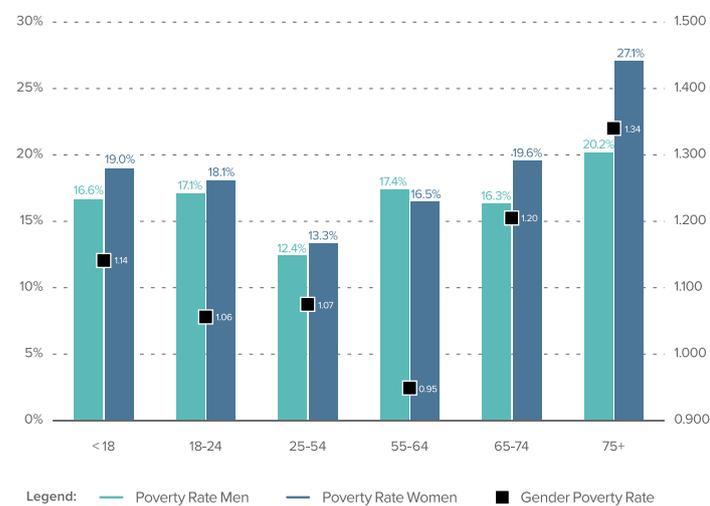


Source: Elaborated from the EU-SILC (2014–2024)

The incidence of poverty across the life cycle (Figure 2) shows that gender disparities are most pronounced among the elderly population. In the age groups 65–74 years and, even more markedly, 75 years and over, the GPG exceeds 1.2.

Significant differences in old-age pension amounts, particularly among the oldest cohorts, partly explain this inequality: on average, men’s pensions are about one-third higher than women’s (EU-SILC, 2024).

Figure 2 - Poverty Rate by Gender and Age Group (2023)



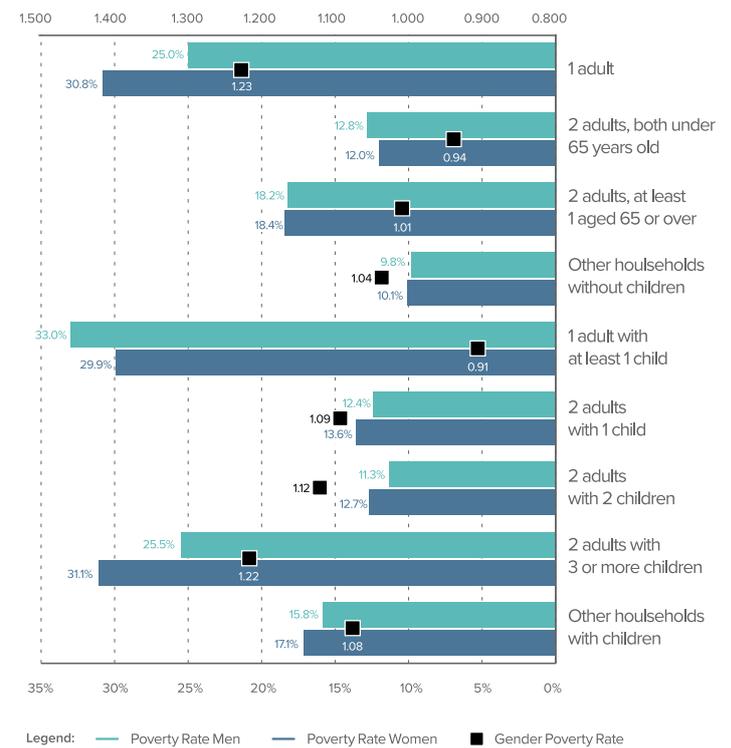
Source: Elaborated from the EU-SILC (2024)

The analysis by household type also highlights significant asymmetries. As expected, and for the reasons outlined above, single-person households exhibit the highest GPG. High values of this indicator are also observed in extended families with three or more children.

In general, there is a positive association between the level of poverty and the GPG — the groups most exposed to poverty are also those where gender disparities are most pronounced.

The only exception occurs in single-parent households with a high level of poverty but a GPG below one. This can be explained by the fact that the vast majority of these poor households are composed of a woman with children.

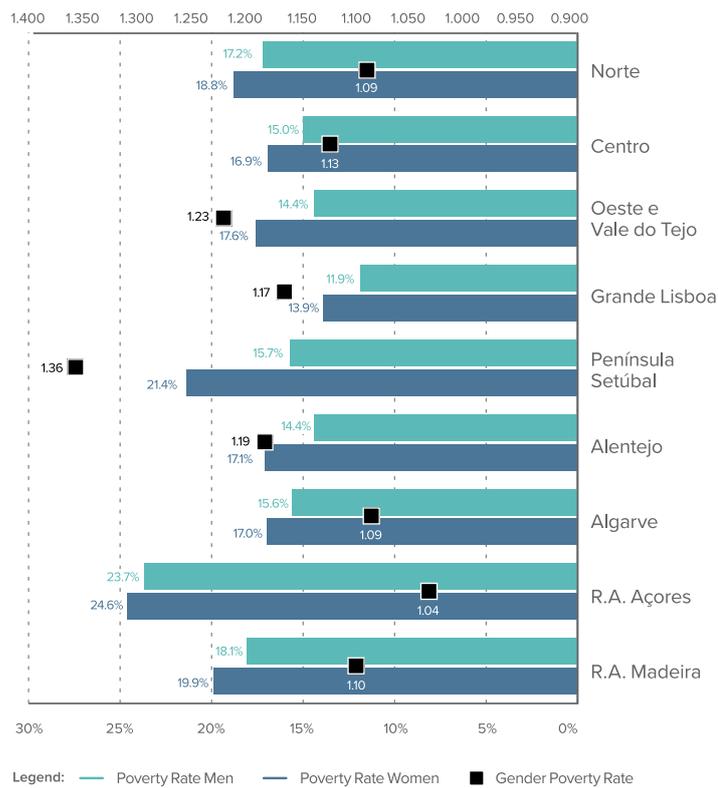
Figure 3 - Poverty rate by Gender and Type of Household (2023)



Source: Elaborated from the EU-SILC (2024)

The regional analysis confirms the prevalence of female poverty across the entire national territory. In all regions, the poverty rate among women exceeds that of men, with the Setúbal Peninsula standing out, as it not only shows the highest poverty rate on the mainland but also the highest GPG (1.36).

Figure 4 - Poverty Rate by Gender and Region (2023)



Source: Elaborated from the EU-SILC (2024)

However, gender inequalities are not limited to monetary poverty. The European statistical system uses the composite indicator “At-Risk-of-Poverty or Social Exclusion” (AROPE), which combines three dimensions: monetary poverty, severe material and social deprivation, and low work intensity among those under 65. In virtually all of these dimensions, women are at a disadvantage.

Regarding material and social deprivation, the levels recorded among women are one percentage point higher than those of men, reflecting persistent inequalities in access to essential goods and services. Concerning work intensity, the EU-SILC 2024 does not identify significant gender differences.

Finally, the At-Risk-of-Poverty or Social Exclusion rate, the main indicator used by the European Union to monitor the 2030 Strategy, clearly highlights gender differences. The female rate (20.9%) is 2.5 percentage points higher than the male rate (18.4%), showing that any effective public policy to combat poverty and social exclusion must necessarily integrate a gender perspective.

Table 1 – At-Risk-of-Poverty or Social Exclusion Indicators by Gender – Portugal (2023/24)

	Men	Women	Total
Poverty Rate	15.4 %	17.6 %	16.6 %
Severe Material and Social Deprivation	3.8 %	4.8 %	4.3 %
Low Work Intensity	4.8 %	4.8 %	4.8 %
Poverty Rate or Social Exclusion	18.4 %	20.9 %	19.7 %

Source: Elaborated from the EU-SILC (2024)

The Gender, Work and Power Observatory provides regular information on the situation of women and men in the workplace. Created under the scope of the ISEG Research Unit's Policy Lab, this infrastructure seeks to contribute to an informed public debate on these issues, as well as to the qualification and evaluation of public policies. The aim is to place scientific knowledge at the service of social change in order to promote the full and equal participation of women and men in public and private life, the full realisation of citizenship, the deepening of social justice and the sustainable development of Portuguese society. Coordination: Sara Falcão Casaca (Scientific Director), Maria João Guedes, Ricardo Alcobia Rodrigues and Susana Ramalho Marques. Contact: [observatorio.genero@iseg.ulisboa.pt](mailto:observatorio.genero@iseg.ulisboa.pt)

The Observatory is funded by national funds through the FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P., under Project UID/06522/2025.