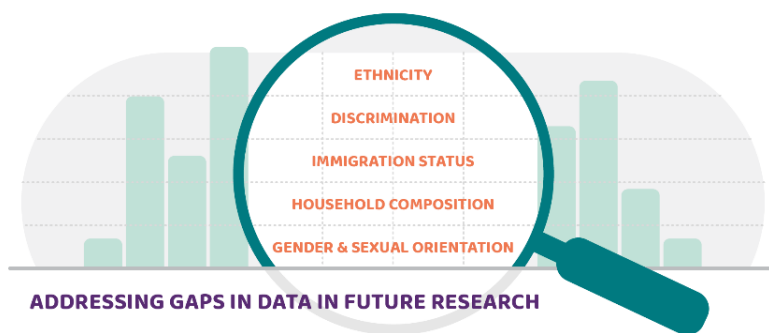**RESISTIRÉ**
Reducing gendered inequalities
caused by COVID-19 policies

More Intersectional Data

Recommendations for policymakers to mitigate the gendered impacts of Covid-19 based on RESISTIRÉ findings

The RESISTIRÉ project examines inequalities using a gender+ approach, which includes the application of a gender perspective in the quantitative and qualitative analyses of other socioeconomic differences. The European datasets that were used over the course of three research cycles of the project provided an opportunity to explore relevant indicators and the unequal experience of different groups during the pandemic. While our data analysis was able to identify and highlight some existing and worsening inequalities, it was often challenging to undertake an intersectional, gender+ approach because of a lack of more accurately representative European-level data.

ETHNICITY

DISCRIMINATION

IMMIGRATION STATUS

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

GENDER & SEXUAL ORIENTATION

ADDRESSING GAPS IN DATA IN FUTURE RESEARCH

Intersectional analysis presents a unique opportunity for researchers and institutions to understand how the social and demographic attributes of an individual affect their wellbeing. Moreover, it can be a powerful tool for understanding the underlying structural inequalities that maintain and propagate social inequalities. While these have been amply described in the literature as central to understanding inequalities, they are rarely quantified. However, better and more accurate modelling methodologies have allowed researchers to obtain a more precise understanding of these determinants of wellbeing and should be a catalyst for expanding and improving the data that large-scale surveys collect and make available for researchers to conduct further investigations.

> ## **Recommendations**

Develop a common European framework for the collection of sociodemographic data

SYSTEMICALLY IMPROVING DATA COLLECTION

European-level surveys should all include similar sociodemographic variables so that researchers can analyse data more granularly. European institutions have been reluctant to collect data beyond basic sex and socioeconomic characteristics, arguing that doing so can compromise the privacy of respondents. However, there are examples of data collection that have been successful in collecting such data – and in some cases even more sensitive data – without compromising the privacy of users as detailed in the work published by the National Academy of Sciences regarding data collection on gender and sexuality. European data institutions and surveys should find a common ground and consider the necessary steps to safeguard the rights of interviewees, while also collecting more detailed information about their ethnic background, gender identity, and migration status. These can be key to understanding how discrimination affects the health and wellbeing of the European population, which goes well beyond sex and economic differences.

Systematically collect and report data on sex and gender identity
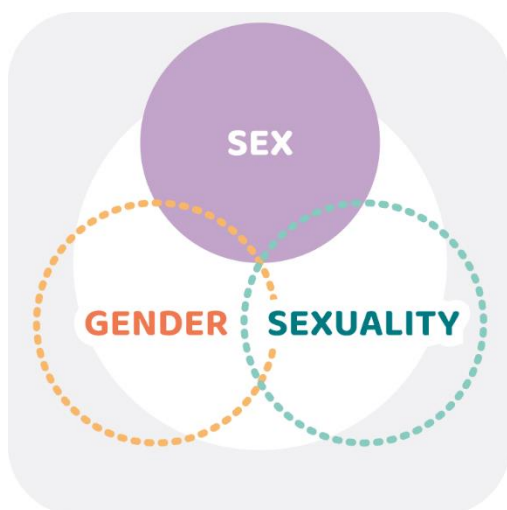
The collection of gender data is a necessary step forward towards enabling wider and more inclusive representation. However, there is an ongoing debate regarding what methods to use to collect information about sex at birth and about how an individual identifies their gender. Some advocate the use of two questions, one asking about sex registered at birth, and a second about current gender identity. Others recommend the use of a third question on alignment between sex at birth and current gender identity as a measure of cis-status. Some North American large-scale surveys such as the National Health Interview Survey and the Canadian population census are good examples of successful investigations of the sex, gender, and sexuality of respondents.

Provide harmonised indicators that can be used by researcher to analyse inequalities

Some European surveys offer a rich set of socioeconomic variables; however, these require complex manipulation and the combination of multiple indicators in order to make them comparable across countries, leaving much room for interpretation and error to researchers. Income data collection with EU-SILC data, for example, is disaggregated into many smaller components, which all have different interpretations according to each country's welfare and taxation systems, making comparisons based on income between individuals at the European level very difficult and prone to error. This type of data should be presented also in a standardised, comparable format, as this would make intersectional analysis much easier and more accessible.

HARMONISED INDICATORS TO BETTER ANALYSE INEQUALITIES

Promote intersectional analysis within official European statistics

Understanding the intersectionality of the factors that affect the health and wellbeing of the population is fundamental for truly designing policies that can address systematic inequalities. As of now, Eurostat does not offer any interpretation of its indicators intersectionally (e.g. by presenting outcomes or indicators using intersectional groups), but doing this would facilitate a better understanding of the cumulative disadvantages experienced by vulnerable groups and would encourage researchers to conduct similar analyses.

Promote, strengthen, and innovate the use of Statistical Disclosure Control (SDC) at a wider European level

Statistical confidentiality and privacy are the fundamental rights of every person living in Europe and rank among the central values of the European Statistics Code of Practice. SDC systems help ensure the data protection of every survey respondent and anonymity in

MAINTAINING STATISTICAL CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY OF RESPONDENTS

their answers and give data providers control over who has access to sensitive data. They are also an important tool for monitoring how databases are used and the research and development that they contribute to. The European Union has [a Centre of Excellence on Statistical Disclosure Control](#) that plays the fundamental role of constantly updating protocols and ensuring the correct usage of data as well as privacy protection. Researchers should be comfortable with these systems and regularly trained on their importance and usage.

› Insights from RESISTIRÉ

Sexism, racism, xenophobia, and gender discrimination affect individuals' everyday lives, mental health, and wellbeing, determining both their access to services and their community engagement. While these systemic inequalities determine socioeconomic and health inequalities, few direct observations based on survey data have been made at the European level to show how different, more complex sociodemographic attributes contribute to inequalities in the experiences of everyday lives. The gender+ approach introduced by RESISTIRÉ aims to highlight the intersections between gender and various socioeconomic attributes in an effort to understand and monitor the inequalities that emerged (or that were worsened) as a result of the public health emergency created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the most important findings that surfaced from an analysis of the project's quantitative data is that there is a lack of surveys that offer data on gender and sexual orientation, discrimination, ethnicity, and immigration status across Europe. Such data are necessary for future research at the European level that can inform the design of evidence-based inclusive policies with the potential to address inequities. Major European datasets such as EU-SILC and LFS collect information on sex (largely reflecting a biological understanding of sex, as opposed to socially constructed gender), however information about gender identity and sexuality is completely lacking.

Reluctance to collect these data has been primarily justified by the need to ensure the privacy of respondents and to protect them from any form of discrimination. However, this also risks overlooking the experience of these groups and creating a significant knowledge gap in terms of identifying intersectional inequalities and subsequently developing relevant policy responses.

European analysis of cross-national surveys

Our analysis was able to successfully disaggregate inequalities in experiences of the pandemic by key determinants of health and wellbeing:

In the first cycle, the quantitative review primarily looked at the available data and scoped the possibility of analysing outcomes by sex and socioeconomic status, focusing mainly on educational level and income quintiles. We were able to observe some pre-existing inequalities that worsened the situation of some people entering the period of social and economic uncertainty created by the pandemic. While we accounted for sex and socioeconomic status, we were unable to disaggregate observations any further owing to the lack of data on other dimensions such as gender identity, ethnicity, and migration status.

In the second cycle, our quantitative analysis focused on understanding better the experiences of groups (young/old people, single parents, LGBTQI+, migrants/refugees) who were deemed more socially vulnerable during the public health emergency, owing to the limited information

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC DATA

SEXUAL ORIENTATION
DISCRIMINATION
IMMIGRATION STATUS
HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION
ETHNIC BACKGROUND
GENDER IDENTITY
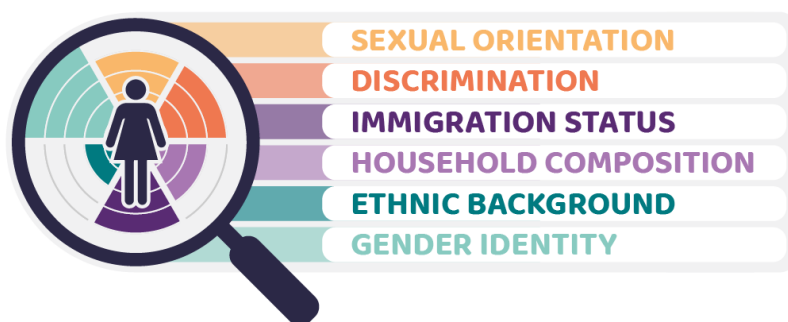
available about their experiences, the well-known barriers they face in accessing services, and the social discrimination they are exposed to daily. While our analysis was able to look at various indicators for each interest group selected, we did not combine interest groups' attributes (such as migration status and household composition). This is mainly because of our methodological approach, which envisioned a more descriptive report, rather than an intersectional analysis.

In the third research cycle, we tried to better achieve our aim of performing a gender+ analysis by comparing the experiences of different intersectional groups, which we created by combining sex and educational level. Compared to our previous reports, this analysis was able to apply this intersectionality across all survey items, exploring and observing the different experiences of each group compared to one reference group across different time periods. However, the analysis did not allow any further disaggregation beyond binary sex and educational level because of a lack of available data on other sociodemographic dimensions (such as migration status) and because of the small sample size when it is disaggregated by any additional indicators (such as age)

Part of the quantitative work package also envisioned collaborations with various European researchers to further explore national Rapid Assessment Surveys (RAS), which gave us more intersectional, gender+ insights into the experience of people during the pandemic. Seven collaborations were undertaken, and these resulted in new research activities that incorporated a gender+ perspective by adding or modifying collected indicators to address the research agenda of RESISTIRÉ. Furthermore, additional gender+ analysis was conducted on existing RAS data to provide new insights obtained through an intersectional lens. These observations cannot be considered representative of the wider European population since they mostly focus on national samples. However, they contributed to the development of good

methodological practices and enriched the pool of secondary data that can be utilised in the future to examine the impact of COVID-19 from a gender+ perspective.

While the evidence reviewed by the quantitative work package of this project was able to put into the spotlight some aspects of the unequal impact of the pandemic and its restrictive measures in Europe, detailed, large-scale intersectional analysis was not possible beyond some basic sociodemographic factors and sex differences. This was primarily hindered by the fact that data disaggregation at the European level remains largely based on education and sex. Importantly, there seems to be no clear standardisation at the European level, forcing the choice of a dataset to be largely based on the disaggregation available, rather than on the topic of investigation.

Good examples of available disaggregation at the European level

The investigation of the wider determinants of health and wellbeing in society is based first and foremost on directly observing the individuals and communities that might be more at risk of discrimination, a given outcome, or hindered in their everyday lives because of their gender, sex, ethnicity, or income. The European Union has long been committed to monitoring and tackling social inequalities and it uses large-scale multi-country surveys as its prime tool of population observation.

The European Union Income and Living Conditions survey (EU-SILC) is perhaps the most well-known and long-standing of these, and this offers detailed information regarding many aspects of an individual's life, including income, sex at birth, and migration status. These characteristics proved to be useful within the scope of our research - for example, migration status could be observed by combining two questions asked (country of birth and country of residence). While this offers some drawbacks (the interpretation of the migration status of the respondents is left to the researcher), it represents the best measurement available to allow us to differentiate the experience between people born in the EU and those who were not.

Eurofound's 'Living, working and COVID-19' e-survey was the most used source for the quantitative analysis, as it had a good sample population, its datasets are easily accessible, and they were published quickly after their collection. This is in part because the survey was structured and administered online, making the data collection process much faster and cheaper, especially during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. It also gave Eurofound the opportunity to continue their data collection despite the movement restrictions imposed by governments, making the survey particularly useful for our purpose. Amongst the most interesting aspects related to this dataset was the gender options it offered, adding a third response ('in another way') for respondents to select other than male or female. This allowed us to observe differences between three gender groups, even if the number of people who chose this gender option was generally low in every wave analysed. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first attempt to add an additional option (beyond the usual binary choice

between male and female) to a European survey of this magnitude, offering strong hopes for the future.
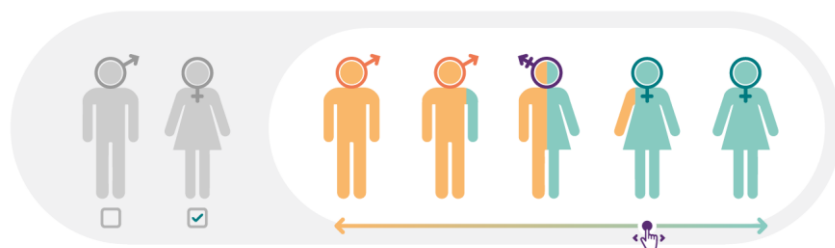
ENABLING MORE INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION

Finally, the scope of one of the RAS collaborations is especially promising for future research on gender, sexuality, and sex at the cross-national level. The TransCare COVID-19 survey was developed by a team of researchers (Andreas Koehler, Timo Nieder and Joz Motmans) in cooperation with local healthcare providers and community members and distributed in 80 countries across Europe. It focused on transgender individuals' access to healthcare during the pandemic. The web-based survey was first developed in German and, in cooperation with 23 community organisations, was translated into 26 other languages, collecting 5,267 responses. This represents a successful example of data collection on gender and sex on a European scale, offering a glimpse of what more representative survey data can look like for future research

About RESISTIRÉ

This factsheet is based on data collected in RESISTIRÉ's third research cycle, which ran from December 2022 to February 2023. In this research, 30 national researchers worked with the consortium to map policies, societal responses, and qualitative and quantitative indicators relating to the pandemic in EU-27 countries (except Malta), along with Iceland, the UK, Serbia, and Turkey. This research activity was accompanied by workshops and interviews with gender equality experts whose input informed the main findings from expert consultations.

RESISTIRÉ is an EU-funded Horizon 2020 project, the aim of which is to 1) understand the impact of COVID-19 policy responses on behavioural, social, and economic inequalities in the EU-27 (except Malta), Serbia, Turkey, Iceland, and the UK on the basis of a conceptual gender+ framework, and 2) design, devise, and pilot policy solutions and social innovations to be deployed by policymakers, stakeholders, and actors in different policy domains.

Find out more about the project and discover all other outputs at https://resistire-project.eu.

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Acknowledgement and Disclaimer

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