

Reconciliation of work and family life - statistics

Statistics Explained

Data extracted in September 2019.

No update foreseen since data are based on an adhoc module.

" Almost 90 million people in the EU have care responsibilities for children. "

" More than 12 million people in the EU take care of ill, elderly and/or disabled relatives. "

Population with care responsibilities, 2018

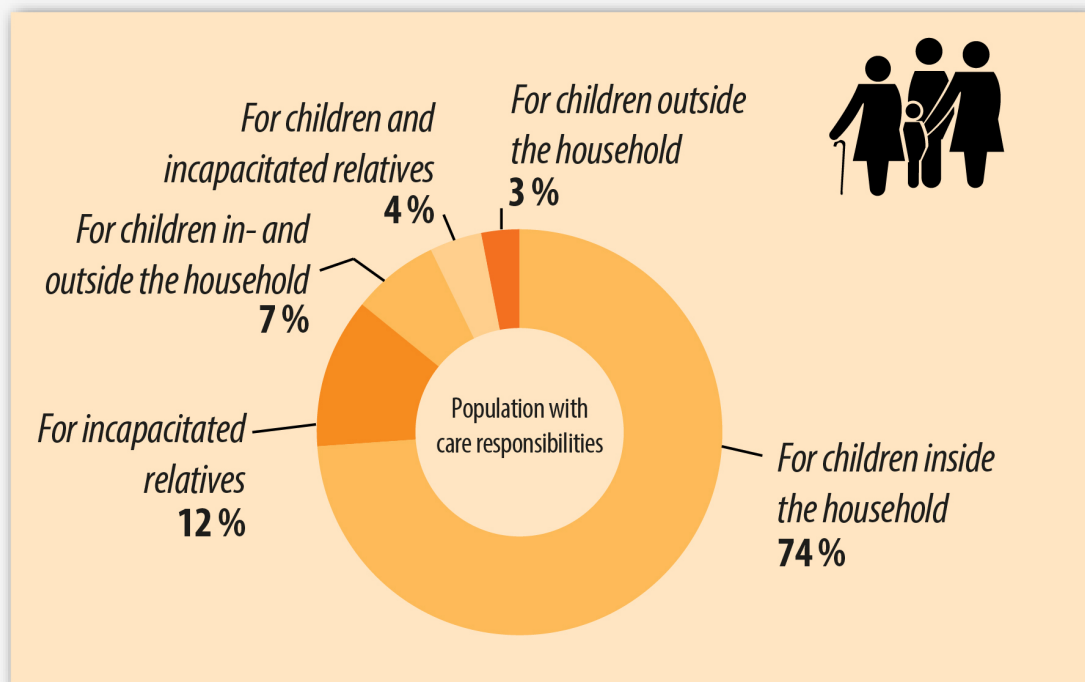
EU population aged 18-64
308 million persons

66 %

No care responsibilities
202 million persons

34 %

Care responsibilities
106 million persons



ec.europa.eu/eurostat 

Over 300 million people of the residents in the [European Union](#) (EU-28) are in the age group 18-64 years. Out of this population, about one third have care responsibilities. This equals to around 100 million people who care for children younger than 15 years and/or incapacitated (ill, elderly and/or disabled) relatives of 15 years and more. In contrast, around 200 million persons in the EU have no care responsibilities at all. Of all men and women who have care responsibilities, the majority (74 %) takes care of children (aged younger than 15 years) who live inside the same household. On the other hand, 3 % of the caring population take care of children that live outside the household, and 7 % take care of several children where some are living inside and some others outside the household. There is also a share of people who take care of both children and incapacitated relatives: 4 %. Finally, the share of carers who have only care responsibilities for incapacitated relatives amounts to 12 %.

Background

The EU has a longstanding commitment to promote work-life balance. This has resulted in targets that are set to improve the provision of childcare and thereby addressing the work-life balance challenges faced by parents and caregivers. In order to monitor and further investigate progress in this area, the [EU Labour Force Survey \(EU-LFS\)](#) module on [reconciliation between work and family life](#) was implemented in 2018.

The overall aim of this article is to investigate who are the people in Europe that have care responsibilities for young children and/or incapacitated relatives and what they did or have done to reconcile their job and care responsibilities. To be more exact, the module aims at answering the following questions:

- (i) In the EU, who has care responsibilities for young children (under 15 years of age) and/or incapacitated relatives (15 years and older) and who has not?
- (ii) What are the characteristics of EU-28 inhabitants with care responsibilities?
- (iii) Do persons, having childcare responsibilities, use professional childcare services and if not, why do they not use them?
- (iv) What are the effects of childcare responsibilities on people's employment?
- (v) What is the amount of flexibility at work to reconcile between work and family life?
- (vi) To what extent persons have (had) career breaks in order to reconcile their work and care responsibilities?

One in three in the EU had care responsibilities in 2018

In 2018, one in three persons in the European Union (EU-28) aged 18-64 years had care responsibilities (34.4 % compared with 65.6 % who had no care responsibilities at all). The group with care responsibilities looks as follows: 28.9 % are solely responsible for care of children younger than 15 years old, 4.1 % only take care of incapacitated relatives aged 15 years and more, and less than 2 % of the EU-28 population care for both young children and incapacitated relatives (see Figure 1).

Care responsibilities of persons aged 18-64 by country, EU-28, 2018 (%)

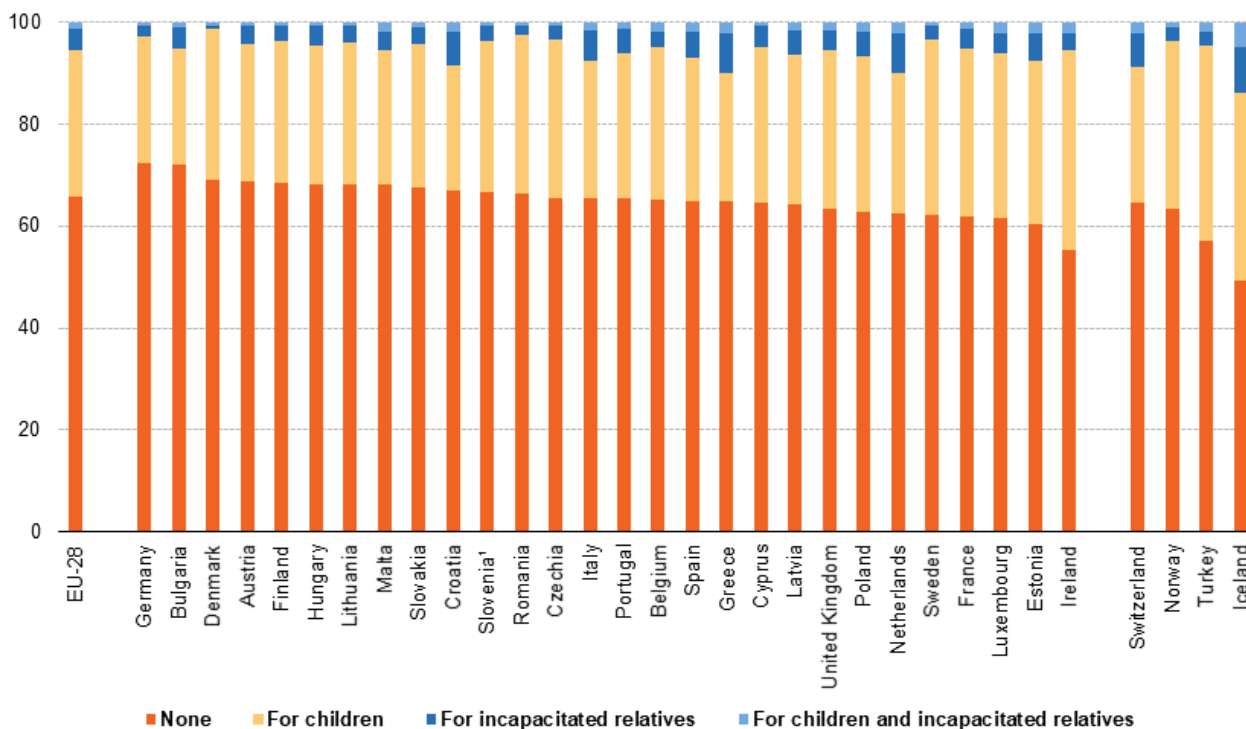


Figure 1: Care responsibilities of persons aged 18-64 by country, EU-28, 2018 (%) Source: Eurostat (lfso_18cresls)

Across Europe there are marked differences between countries, with the highest share of people without care responsibilities in Germany (72.4 %) and the lowest share in Ireland (55.2 %). Similarly, 39.2 % of the Irish population have childcare responsibilities compared to 24.8 % in Germany. By contrast, the share of persons aged 18-64 years, with care responsibilities of incapacitated relatives is the highest in Greece, the Netherlands and Croatia (7.4 % on average) and the lowest in Denmark (less than 1 %).

At EU-28 level, those with no care responsibilities are mainly men, young people aged 18-24 years, persons outside the labour force and people without any children (see Figure 2). Childcare responsibilities are more widespread for persons aged 35-44, those who are employed, people with a high education level, single adults with children and especially couples with children. Women, persons of 45 years and more, people outside the labour force, and persons living in a household without children tend to have mainly care responsibilities for incapacitated relatives. For all care responsibilities, it does not matter if the care is given to persons in- or outside the same household or both.

Care responsibilities by population group, 18-64 years, EU-28, 2018 (%)

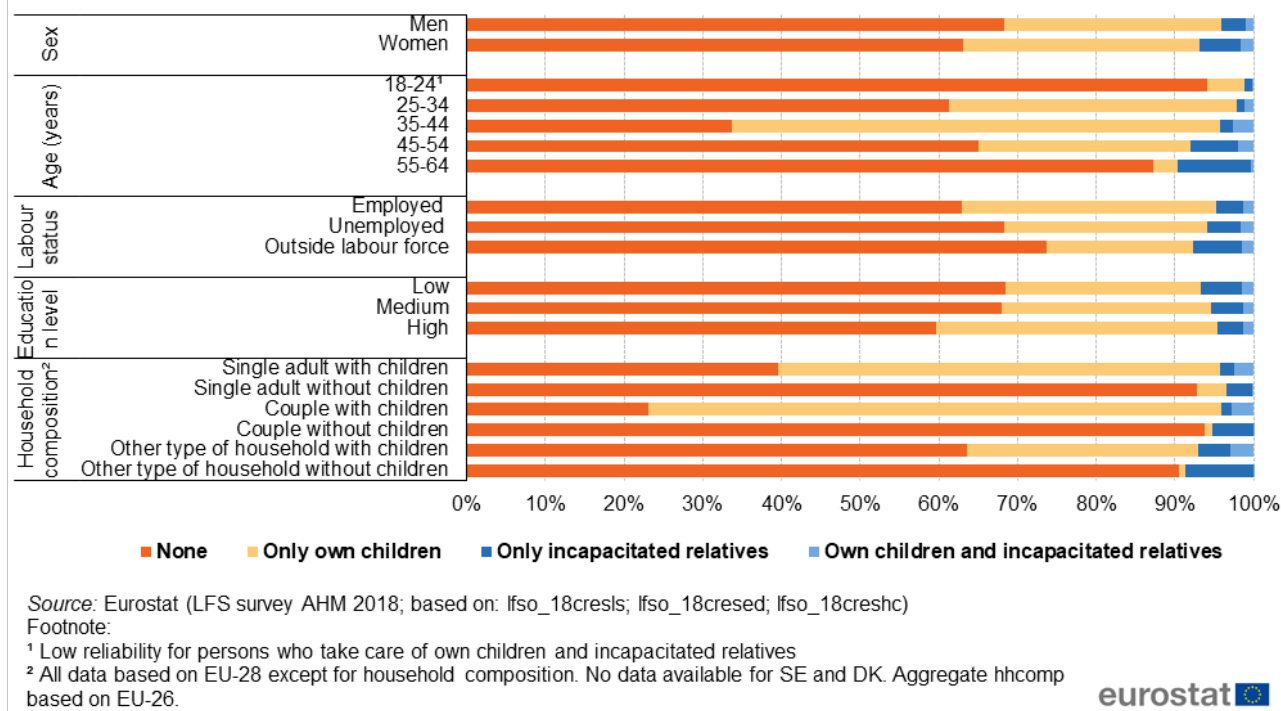


Figure 2: Care responsibilities by population group, 18-64 years, EU-28, 2018 (%) Source: Eurostat (ifso_18cresls) (ifso_18cresed) (ifso_18creshc)

Characteristics of child caregivers

In the following sections, the characteristics of caregivers, who are only responsible for the care of children, are discussed. These persons have indicated not having care responsibilities for other persons than their own or their partner's children.

Childcare mainly covered by persons aged 35-44 years, employed persons and couples with children

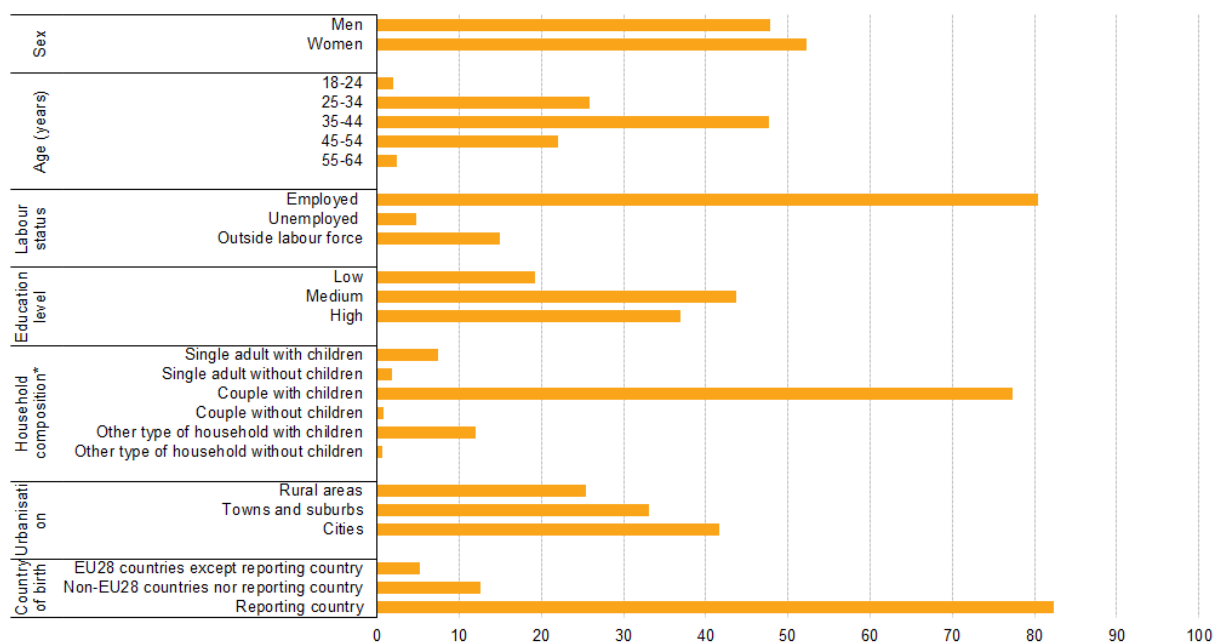
Almost 90 million people in the EU-28 have only care responsibilities for children that are younger than 15 years (see Figure 3). Women tend to have more childcare responsibilities with 52.2 % in comparison to 47.8 % of men. In addition, persons aged 35-44 years make the group with the highest share of child carers with 47.7 %, followed by persons aged 25-34 and 45-54 (25.9 % and 22.1 % respectively). The majority (80.4 %) are employed, while 4.7 % are unemployed and 14.9 % are outside the labour force. The relatively big size of the latter group may indicate that one in ten persons are mothers or fathers that took the decision to stay at home for caring.

Figure 3. Persons aged 18-64 with only childcare responsibilities by population group, EU-28, 2018

Persons with only childcare responsibilities by population group (N)



Share of persons with only childcare responsibilities by population group (%)



Footnote: All data based on EU-28 except for household composition. No data available for SE and DK. Aggregate hhcomp based on EU-26.

Source: Eurostat (ifso_18cresls; ifso_18cresed; ifso_18creshc; ifso_18cresdu; ifso_18cresnat)



Figure 3: Persons aged 18-64 with only childcare responsibilities by population group, EU-28, 2018. Source: Eurostat (ifso_18cresls) (ifso_18cresed) (ifso_18creshc) (ifso_18cresdu) (ifso_18cresnat)

Around 40 % of caregivers of children have either a medium or a high education level, while one in five persons achieved a low education level. Clearly, couples with children account for the majority that is involved in childcare: 77.3 % which represents more than 66 million persons in the EU-28. The other part is covered by single adults with children and other types of private households with children, which together account for almost 20 % of the

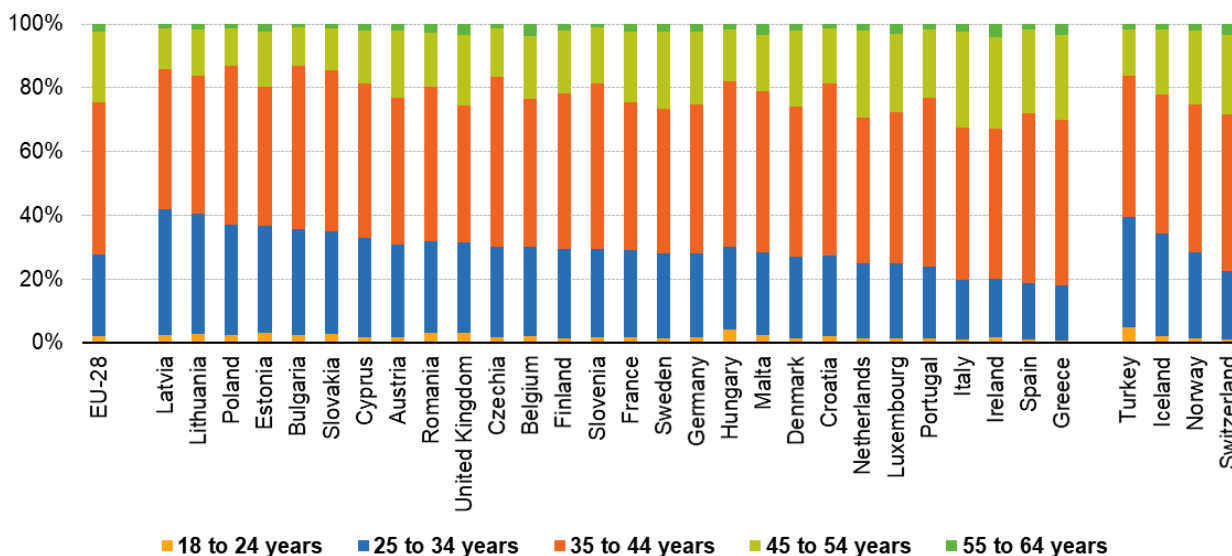
population. This equals to more than 16 million persons. In 2018, persons with childcare responsibilities lived mainly in cities and less in rural areas: 41.6 % compared with 25.4 %, while one third lived in towns and suburbs. Among the 269 million native born, more than 70 million (27.3 %) had care responsibilities compared with almost 16 million of the 42 million (36.5 %) persons born in a foreign country.

Child caregivers are mainly in the age group 35-44 years

Fathers and mothers in the 28 EU Member States who take care of children younger than 15 years old, are mainly in the age of 35-44 years (47.7 %). However, one in four parents aged 25-34 and one in five aged 45-54 also have care responsibilities for children. The other age groups (18-24 and 55-64) have childcare responsibilities to a much lesser extent.

Figure 4 shows that there are large differences between Member States. This is mainly shown by the differences within the age groups 25-34 and 45-54: e.g. in Latvia and Lithuania, 39.3 % and 37.7 % respectively of persons aged 25-34 take care of younger children, compared with between 17 % and 19 % in Italy, Ireland, Spain and Greece. With respect to the older age group (45-54 years), the shares ranged between 29.9 % in Italy and 28.5 % in Ireland and 12.1 % in Bulgaria and 12.7 % in Latvia.

Only childcare responsibilities by age, EU-28, 2018 (%)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ifso_18cresls)



Figure 4: Only childcare responsibilities by age, EU-28, 2018 (%) Source: Eurostat (Ifso_18cresls)

Overall, childcare responsibilities are mainly covered by the EU-28 population in the age group of 35-44, with the highest shares found in Croatia (54.0 %), Portugal (53.2 %), Spain and Czechia (both 53.1 %), and the lowest shares in Latvia (44.1 %), Estonia (43.6 %), Lithuania (43.4 %) and the United Kingdom (42.8 %).

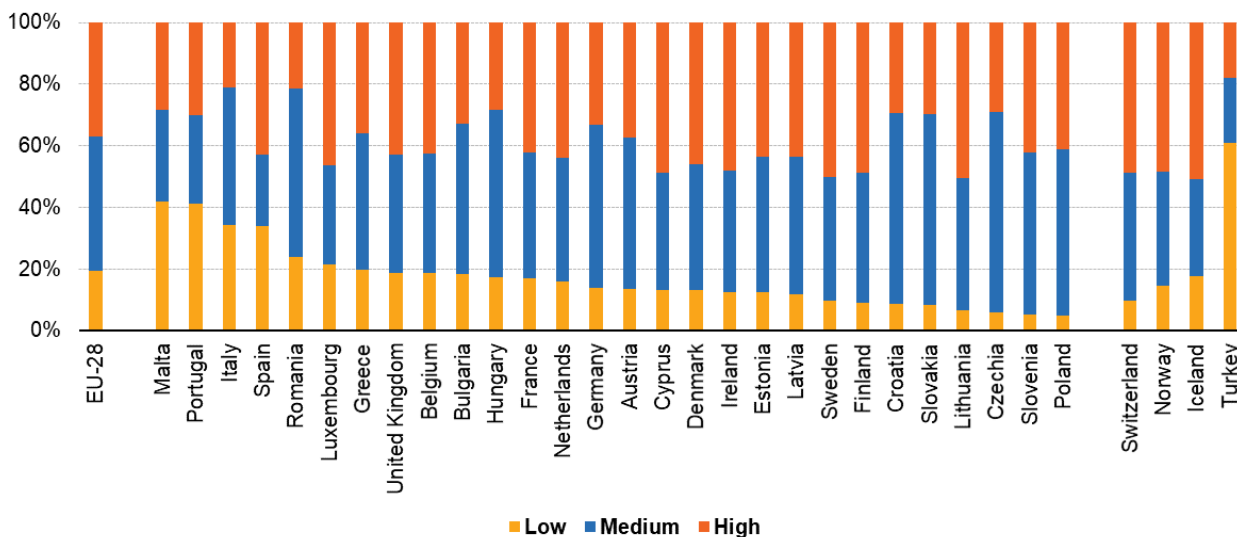
In the countries outside EU-28, Turkey has the highest share of persons in the age of 18-24 years that take care of children with almost 5 %. The EFTA-countries have comparable numbers for all age groups reflecting the average of EU-28.

More than half of EU parents have a medium or high education level

Figure 5 shows that in i.e. Malta, Portugal, Italy and Spain, between 34 % and 42 % of persons with childcare responsibilities, have a low educational attainment level in comparison between 5 and 10 % in Sweden, Finland,

Croatia, Slovakia, Lithuania, Czechia, Slovenia and Poland. Nevertheless, the majority of parents in the EU Member States are mainly medium and highly educated. Czechia, Croatia and Slovakia have the highest share of child caregivers with a medium attainment level: between 62 % and 65 % compared with 23.3 % in Spain. Furthermore, half of fathers and mothers in Lithuania and Sweden are highly educated, compared with 21.3 % of parents in Romania and Italy. In contrast, in Turkey, the majority of parents have a low educational attainment level (61.0 %) and only one in five have a medium or high education level.

Only childcare responsibilities by education level, EU-28, 2018 (%)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ifso_18cresed)



Figure 5: Only childcare responsibilities by education level, EU-28, 2018 (%) Source: Eurostat (ifso_18cresed)

Use of professional childcare services

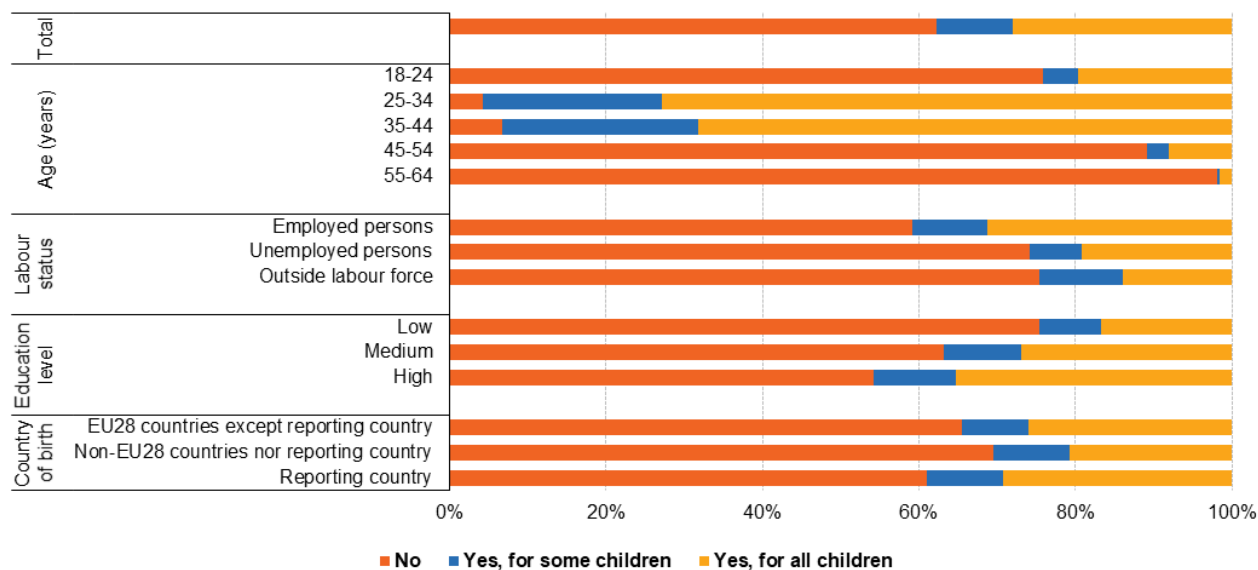
In the previous sections, the focus was on persons who only had care responsibilities for children younger than 15 years old. The patterns described above do not change if people who have both care responsibilities for children and for incapacitated relatives, are added to the analysis. By contrast, in this section, in order to provide a thorough and reliable analysis regarding the use of professional childcare services, all persons with childcare responsibilities are included, i.e. persons that only take care of children and those who take care of both children and incapacitated relatives.

Main users of professional childcare services

Figure 6 shows that the majority of persons responsible for the care of children, do not use professional childcare services at all: 62.3 % in comparison to 37.7 % who do use professional care for some or all children.

In addition, it highlights that parents aged 25-44, who take care of children, are the main users of professional childcare services in EU-28 in 2018. A quarter of the parents within this age group use childcare services for some children, all the rest use them for all children. Just a minority of parents aged 25-44, less than 11 % do not use any professional childcare service at all.

Use of professional childcare services by population with childcare responsibilities, EU-28, 2018 (%)



Source: Eurostat (LFS survey AHM 2018; based on: ifso_18cusels; ifso_18cuseed; ifso_18cusecb)

eurostat

Figure 6: Use of professional childcare services by population with childcare responsibilities, EU-28, 2018 (%) Source: Eurostat (ifso_18cusels) (ifso_18cuseed) (ifso_18cusecb)

Around 40 % of employed parents use professional care for all or some children in comparison to one in four persons who are unemployed or outside the labour force. Furthermore, unemployed persons and people outside the labour force are most likely not to use professional childcare services: around 75 % compared with 59.1 % of employed persons.

45.7 % of caring parents with a high education level use professional childcare services for some or all children compared with 36.8 % and 24.5 % for the medium and low-educated parents. The low-educated population with childcare responsibilities consequently tends to use less professional care.

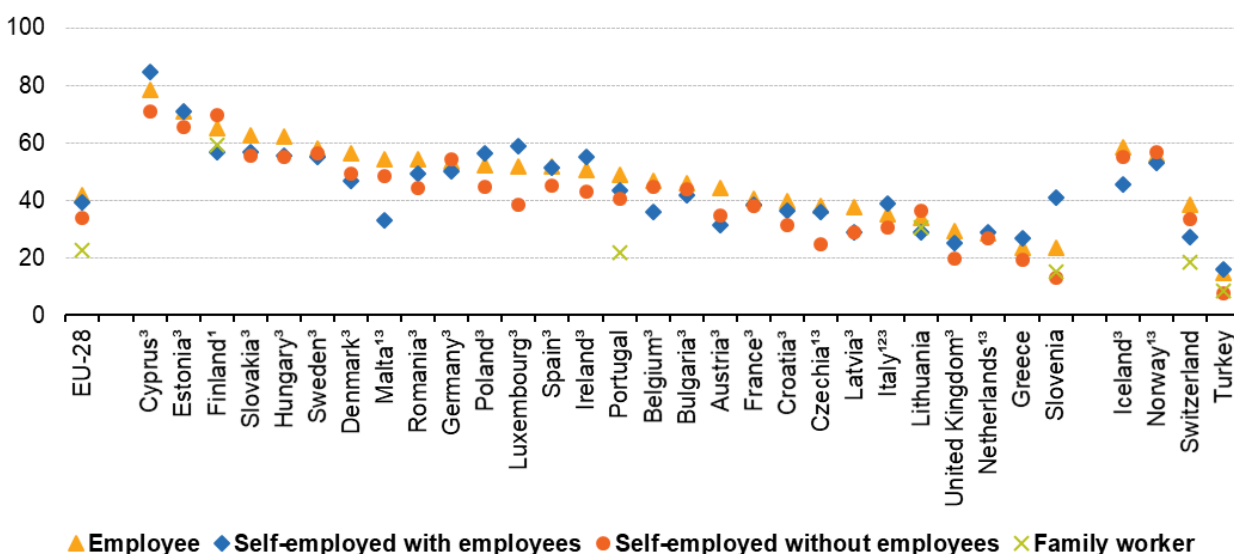
Persons born in the reporting country tend to use more professional childcare, while people born in another country than the reporting country use less professional childcare for the children they are responsible for, on average 67.6 % versus 61.1 %. Persons who were born in a country outside EU-28, have the highest tendency of not using professional childcare services.

Cyprus has the highest share in use of professional childcare services

Overall, the fact that someone is an employee or self-employed with/without employees, does not affect the extent of the use of professional childcare services. Around 40 % of employees and self-employed persons (with/without employees) in the EU-28 use professional childcare services for some or all children. However, this is only the case for one in five family workers. The use of professional childcare by status in employment varies highly across countries.

As shown in Figure 7, in Cyprus, professional childcare services is used by the majority of self-employed with employees: 84.5 % compared with 78.4 % and 71.1 % of employees and self-employed without employees. On the other hand, Slovenian self-employed with employees account for 40.9 % of users of professional childcare for some or all children in contrast to 23.3 % of employees and 13.2 % of self-employed without employees.

Share of persons aged 18-64 years who use professional childcare services for some or all children by professional status, EU-28, 2018 (%)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: Ifso_18cuseps)

Footnote:

¹ Low reliability for self-employed with employees

² Low reliability for self-employed without employees

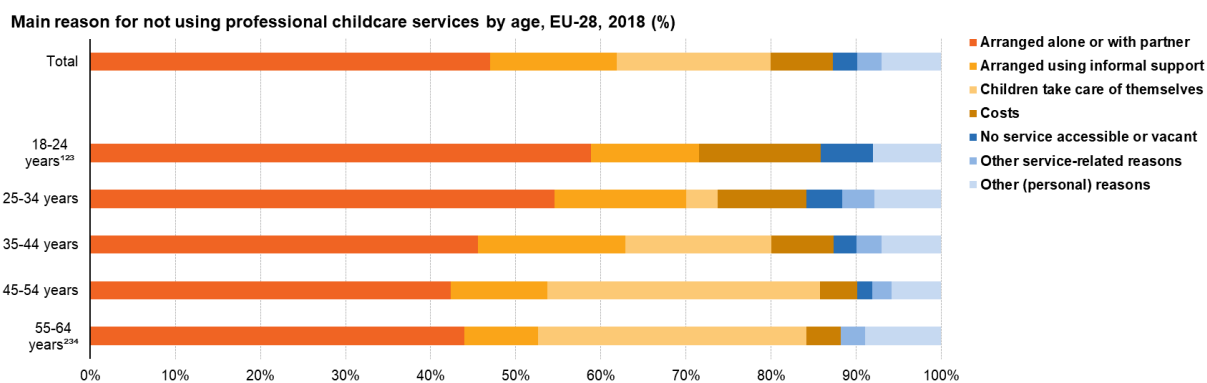
³ Very low reliability for family worker



Figure 7: Share of persons aged 18-64 who use professional childcare services for some or all children by professional status (%) Source: Eurostat (Ifso_18cuseps)

Main reason for not using professional childcare: care arranged alone, with partner or other informal support

As mentioned before, the majority of the EU-28 inhabitants aged 18-64 with childcare responsibilities do not use any professional childcare services. In this case, the question arises how parents of the 28 EU Member States do arrange their childcare responsibilities. From Figure 8 it is clear that the majority of those who do not use any professional childcare, have arranged childcare alone or with partner (47.0 %) or with the help of informal support, e.g. grandparents (14.9 %). In 18.1 % of the cases, children are able to take care of themselves. Around 7 % mention costs or other (personal) reasons, a minority of 2.9 % mention service-related issues.



Source: Eurostat (ifso_18cobs)

Footnote:

¹ Very low reliability for children take care of themselves

² (Very) low reliability for no service accessible or vacant

³ (Very) low reliability for other service-related reasons

⁴ Low reliability for costs

eurostat

Figure 8: Main reason for not using professional childcare services by age, EU-28, 2018 (%) Source: Eurostat (ifso_18cobs)

As shown previously in Figure 6, three in four persons aged 18-24 years with childcare responsibilities do not use any professional care services. The main reason given by this age group is that they have arranged childcare alone or with partner (58.8 %) or by using other informal help (12.7 %). The third most important reason is costs related, i.e. the service is too expensive (14.3 %). These three most important reasons also apply to persons in the age group of 25-34 years.

Persons aged 35-44 year have children that are supposed to be able to take care of themselves. While almost half of this group still mentions that care is arranged alone or with the partner, 17.2 % say it is arranged with the help of others or that children can take care of themselves (also 17.2 %). This last mentioned reason becomes even more important for persons with childcare responsibilities aged 45-64 years old.

Care for incapacitated relatives

This paragraph focusses on persons who only take care of incapacitated relatives of 15 years and older. Here, it is unknown if the relatives who are being taken care of, are living inside or outside the household.

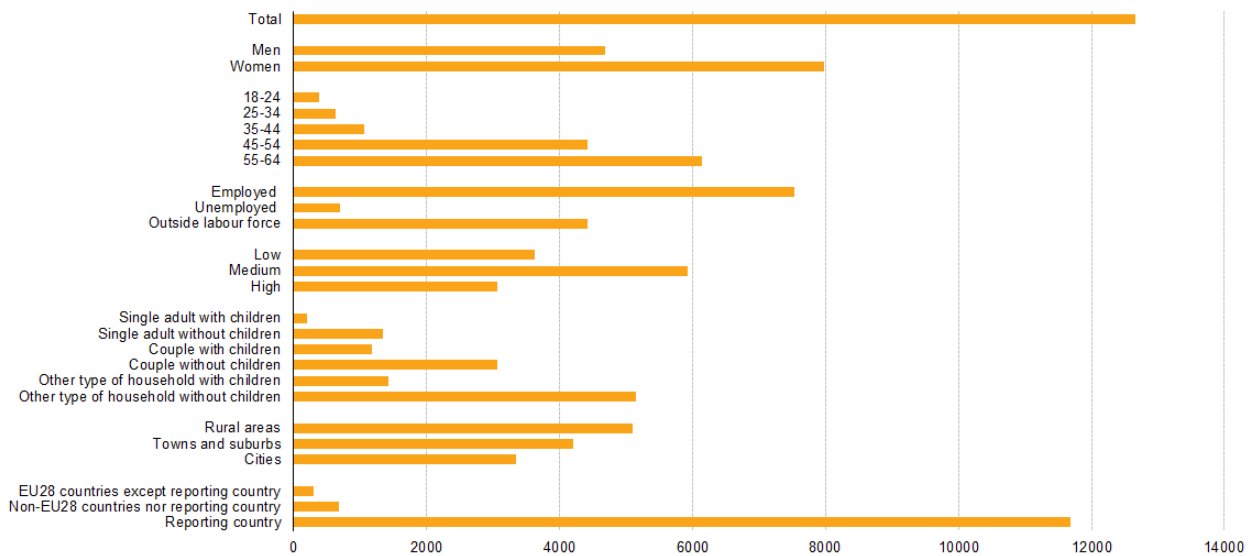
More than 12 million persons in the EU Member States, without childcare responsibilities, take care of incapacitated relatives

More than 12 million persons in the EU-28 have care responsibilities only for incapacitated relatives aged 15 years and more (see Figure 1). These people look after or provide help to the partner or relatives in need of care because they are sick, elderly or disabled. Disabled children from the age of 15 are counted as relatives as well. As discussed at the beginning of this article, among the EU Member States, Greece (8.0 %), the Netherlands (7.7 %) and Croatia (6.5 %) show the highest share of people with care responsibilities for incapacitated relatives compared with 0.7 % in Denmark (see Figure 1).

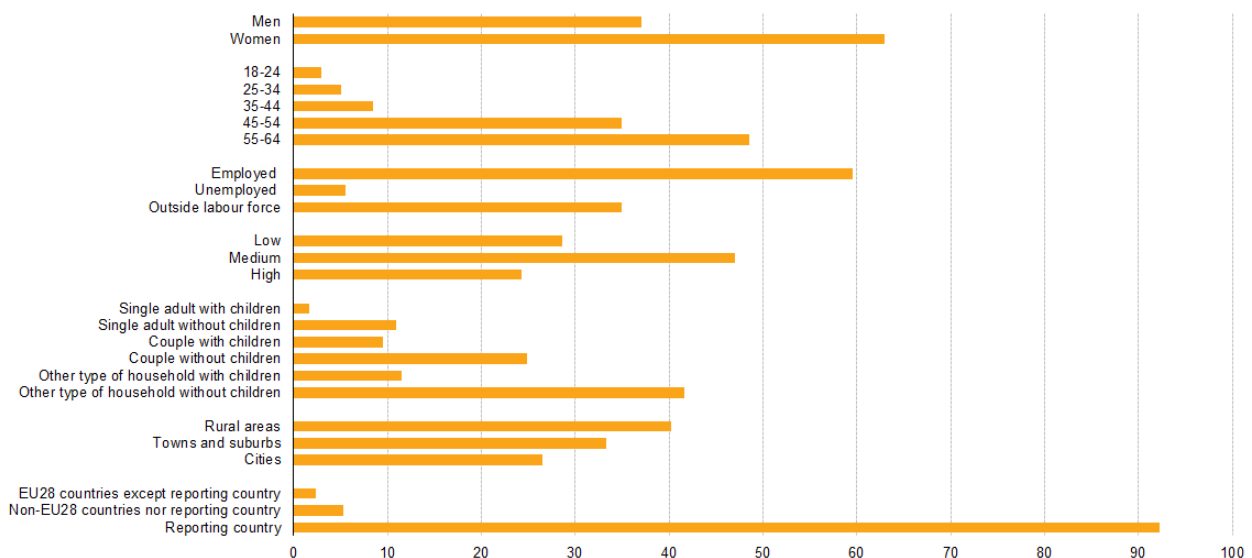
As shown in Figure 9, mostly women provide care for incapacitated relatives: 63.0 % in contrast to 37.0 % of men. In addition, more care givers to incapacitated relatives are present in the older age groups: 48.5 % and 35.0 % in the age groups of 55-64 and 45-54 compared with 5.5 % for the age group 18-44 years. Furthermore, persons with care responsibilities for incapacitated relatives are mainly educated at medium level: 47.0 % versus 28.7 % and 24.3 % of caregivers with a low or high education level.

Figure 9. Care for incapacitated relatives by population group, 18-64 years, EU-28, 2018

Persons with only care responsibilities for incapacitated relatives by population group (N)



Share of persons with only care responsibilities for incapacitated relatives by population group (%)



Footnote: All data based on EU-28 except for household composition. No data available for SE and DK. Aggregate hhcomp based on EU-26.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: ifso_18cresls; ifso_18cresed; ifso_18creshc; ifso_18cresdu; ifso_18cresnat)

Figure 9: Care for incapacitated relatives by population group, 18-64 years, EU-28, 2018. Source: Eurostat (ifso_18cresls) (ifso_18cresed) (ifso_18creshc) (ifso_18cresdu) (ifso_18cresnat)

Couples without children, but also other household types without any children, are the main caregivers of incapacitated relatives: 24.8 % and 41.6 % respectively against around 11 % of couples and other household types with children present in the household. Single persons without children contribute more often to the care of incapacitated relatives: 10.9 % compared with 1.7 % of single persons with children in the household. The more rural, the higher the chance that the person takes care of incapacitated relatives. About one in four caregivers live in cities, one third live in towns or suburbs and 40.3 % live in rural areas. Moreover, the majority of caregivers are born in the reporting country: 92.3 % in comparison to 7.7 % born in a foreign country.

Minor impact on employment for people taking care of incapacitated relatives only

Persons who are in employment or with a previous work experience were asked if they had not worked for at least a month to take care of ill, elderly or disabled relatives from the age of 15 and if they had reduced their working time

for at least a month to care for them. In the EU-28, most people (59.4 %) mentioned that they had never care responsibilities, followed by 36.5 % that had no work interruption at all nor reduced working time. Only a minority of 4.2 % did interrupt work or reduced working time in employment history to take care of ill, elderly or disabled relatives.

Women reduce working time or interrupt work more than men

Of the EU-28 population that have said that, during their current or previous employment, they have reduced working time or interrupted work for more than one month due to care responsibilities for ill, elderly and/or disabled relatives, there is a gap of 3.3 percentage points between men and women: 5.9 % for women against 2.5 % for men. The largest gap was found in Bulgaria (6.8 p.p.) and the smallest in Cyprus (1.1 p.p.), with women making more often changes at their work than men do.

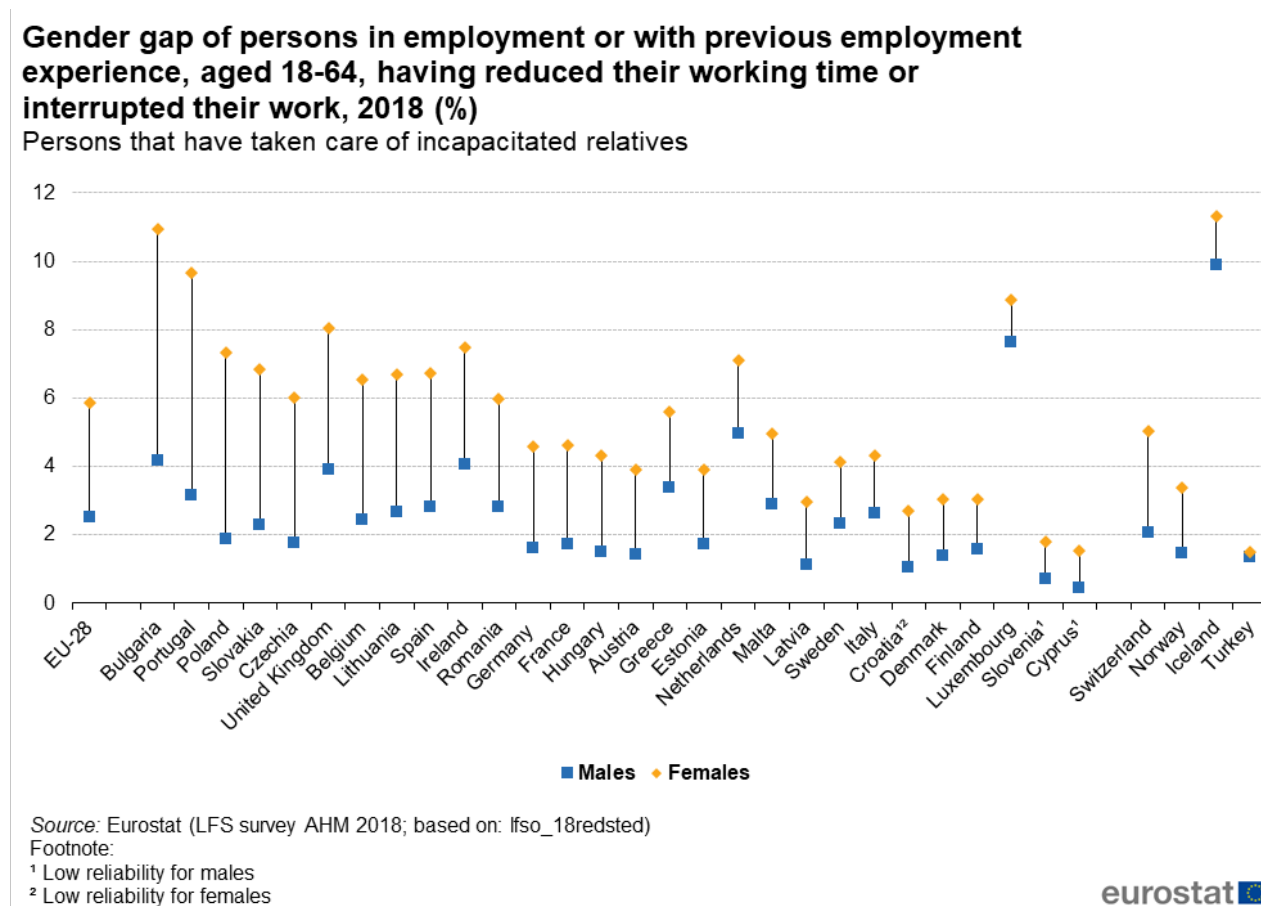


Figure 10: Gender gap of persons in employment or with previous employment experience aged 18-64, having reduced their working time or interrupted their work by sex, 2018 (%) Source: Eurostat (Ifso_18redsted)

Childcare responsibilities effect work arrangements

This section will focus on persons having childcare responsibilities, in particular on the effect of childcare responsibilities on employment.

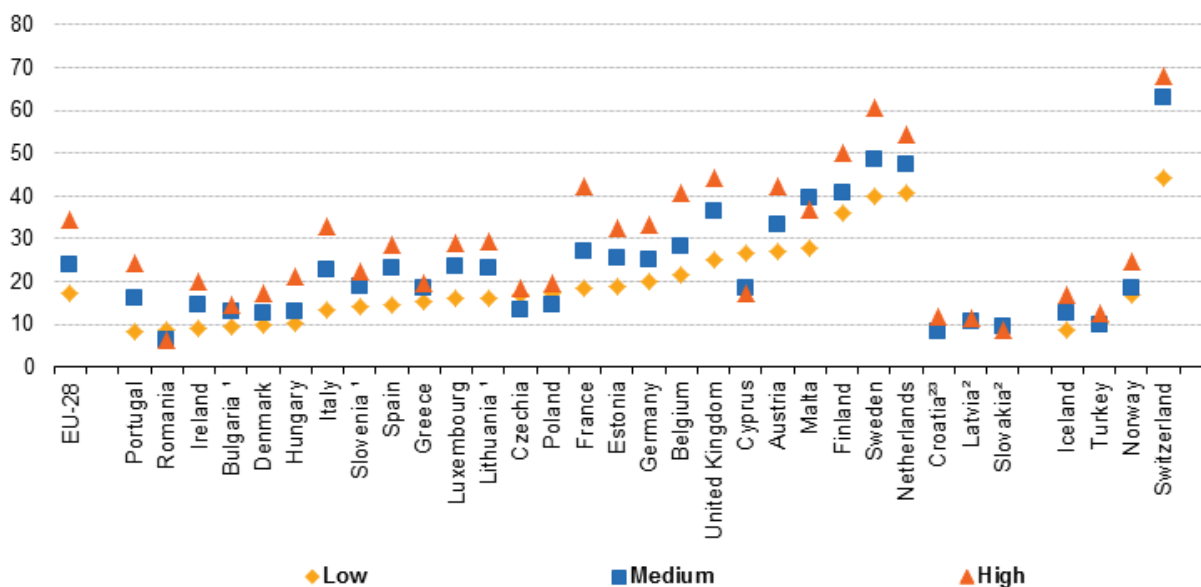
82 % of the persons having reduced their working hours to facilitate childcare responsibilities were women

In 2018, in the EU-28, 27.1 % of the employed persons aged 18-64 adapted their work to facilitate childcare responsibilities. Figure 11 presents the share of persons in employment who adapted their work to facilitate childcare responsibilities by educational attainment. At EU level, employed persons with a high level of education (34.3 %) tend to adapt their work more than those with a low level of education (17.1 %). The same trend can be observed in all EU Member States except in Romania (8.7 % for low level of education versus 6.5 % for high level of

education), Cyprus (26.8 % vs. 17.3 %), Malta (39.4 % for medium level of education vs. 37 % for high level of education) and Slovakia (9.6 % vs. 8.7 %). In these countries persons with low or medium level of education tend to adapt their work more than those having a high level of education.

The share of employed persons having adapted their work to facilitate childcare responsibilities vary considerably across EU Member States, ranging from 6.4 % in Romania (medium level of education) to 60.5 % in Sweden (high level of education).

Share of persons in employment who adapted their work to facilitate childcare responsibilities by educational attainment level, 2018 (%).



Source: Eurostat LFS Survey

Footnote:

¹ Low reliability for Low level of education

² Due to Very low reliability value for Low level of education is not shown

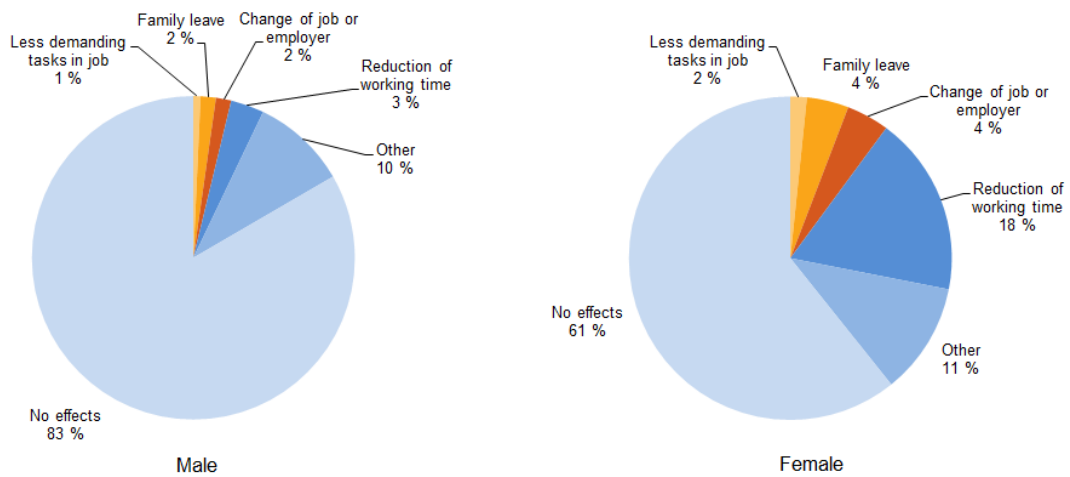
³ Low reliability for Medium and High level of education

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Figure 11: Share of persons aged 18-64 in employment who adapted their work to facilitate childcare responsibilities by educational attainment level, 2018 (%) Source: Eurostat (Ifso_18ceffed)

Figure 12 presents the main change male and female employed persons applied to their work to facilitate childcare responsibilities. In EU, the vast majority of men (83 %) and women (61 %), aged 18-64 years old, having childcare responsibilities, reported that care responsibilities had no effect on their current employment. However, a large gap (22 percentage points) is visible between sexes, women reporting childcare having more effect on their work than men. The main way respondents adapted their employment was reduction of working time: 18 % of women had reduced their working time while this number is 6 times smaller for men: 3 %. This was followed by change of job or employer (2 % for men and 4 % for women).

Persons in employment with childcare responsibilities by effect on employment and Sex, EU-28, 2018 (%)



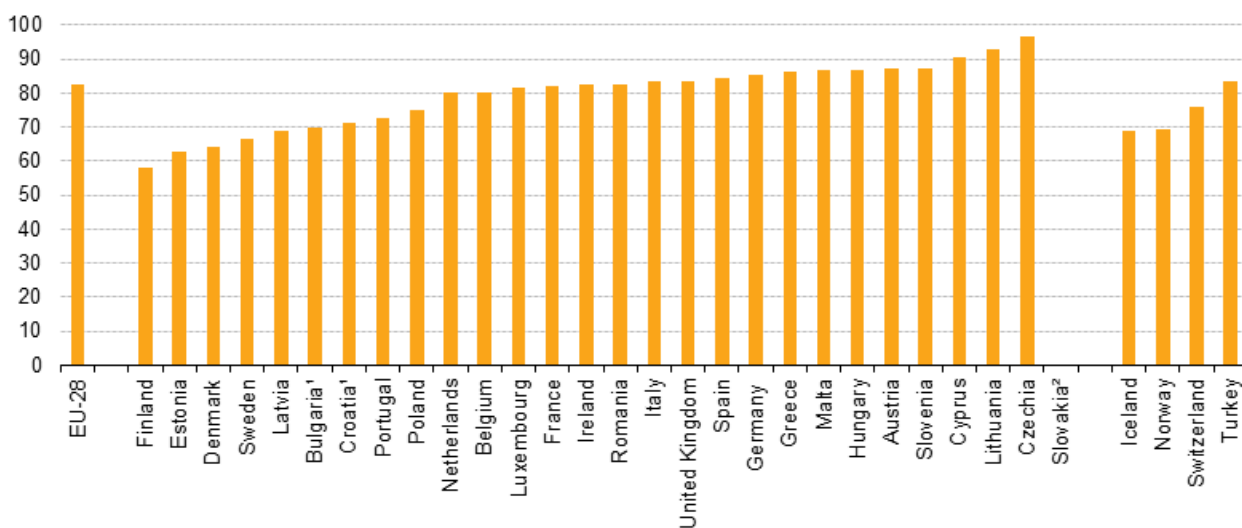
Source: Eurostat (online data code: lfso_18ceffed)



Figure 12: Persons in employment with childcare responsibilities by effect on employment and sex, EU-28, 2018 (%) Source: Eurostat (lfso_18ceffed)

In the EU, in 2018, 82 % of persons having reduced their working hours to facilitate childcare responsibilities were women (see Figure 13). This rate is largely above 50 % in all Member States. The largest share of women having reduced their working time was reported in Czechia (96.8 %), i.e. in other words in Czechia only 3.2 % of the persons having reduced their working time were men. In 18 EU Member States, more than 80 % of persons having reduced their working time for childcare reasons were women. However, in **Nordic countries**, men tend to reduce their working time more to facilitate childcare responsibilities: the share of women is (only) equal to 58.1 % in Finland (the lowest proportion), followed by Estonia (62.7 %), Denmark (64.0 %) and Sweden (66.8 %).

Women, aged 18-64, having reduced their working hours to facilitate childcare responsibilities (% of persons having reduce their working hours to facilitate childcare responsibilities)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: lfso_18ceffed)

Footnote:

¹ Low reliability

² Due to Very Low reliability value is not shown



Figure 13: Women, aged 18-64, having reduced their working hours to facilitate childcare responsibilities (% of persons having reduce their working hours to facilitate childcare responsibilities) (%) Source: Eurostat (lfso_18ceffed)

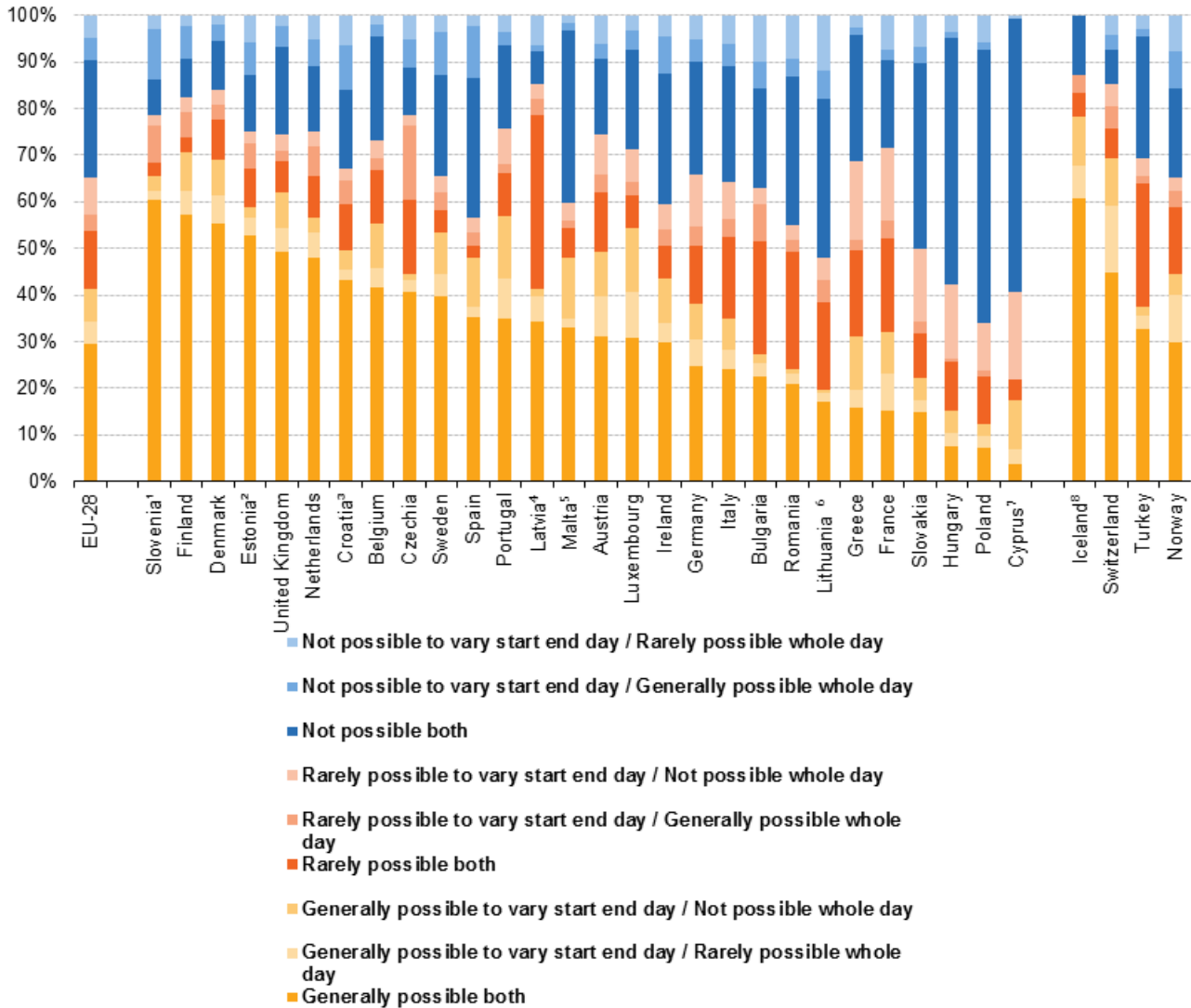
One third of the employees has possibility to use flexibility of work arrangements for care

Figures 14 and 15 only concern employees having childcare responsibilities. In order to assess the flexibility of work arrangement, a new variable has been created based on two questions: Is it possible to vary the start or end of the working day for care reasons ? Is it possible to arrange working time to take at least one full day off for care reasons without using annual leave ?

Figure 14 shows how employees perceived the possibility to use working time flexibility and whole days off to facilitate care responsibilities. In 2018, 29.4 % of the employees in the EU-28 declared that it is generally possible for them to use time flexibility at work and to take whole days off for care. Differences can be observed among EU Member States: the highest percentage of employees having possibilities for both was observed in Slovenia (60.4 %), Finland (57.1 %) and Denmark (55.1 %), while the lowest rates were recorded in Hungary (7.5 %), Poland (7.3 %) and Cyprus (3.8 %). On the other hand, 1 in 4 employees (25.2 %) said it is not possible for them to use time flexibility or to take whole day off for care. This trend varies among countries. The percentage of those replying that none of these two is possible ranges from 6.9 % in Latvia and 7.7 % in Slovenia to 58.6 % in Poland and 58.7 % in Cyprus.

Taking into account those who replied that at least one of these two is generally possible, the rate of employees having flexibility possibilities goes up to 70.2 % at EU level, and the rate is higher than 50 % in all Member States.

Employees by their perceived possibility to use time flexibility and taking whole days off to facilitate care responsibilities, 2018 (%).



Source: Eurostat LFS Survey

Footnote:

¹ Low reliability for Generally possible to vary start end day / Not possible whole day, Generally possible to vary start end day / Rarely possible whole day, Not possible to vary start end day / Rarely possible whole day, Rarely possible both and Rarely possible to vary start end day / Not possible whole day.

² Low reliability for Generally possible to vary start end day / Not possible whole day and Rarely possible to vary start end day / Not possible whole day.

³ Low reliability for Generally possible to vary start end day / Not possible whole day, Generally possible to vary start end day / Rarely possible whole day, Not possible to vary start end day / Rarely possible whole day, Rarely possible to vary start end day / Generally possible whole day and Rarely possible to vary start end day / Not possible whole day.

⁴ Low reliability for 'Not possible to vary start end day / Generally possible whole day'.

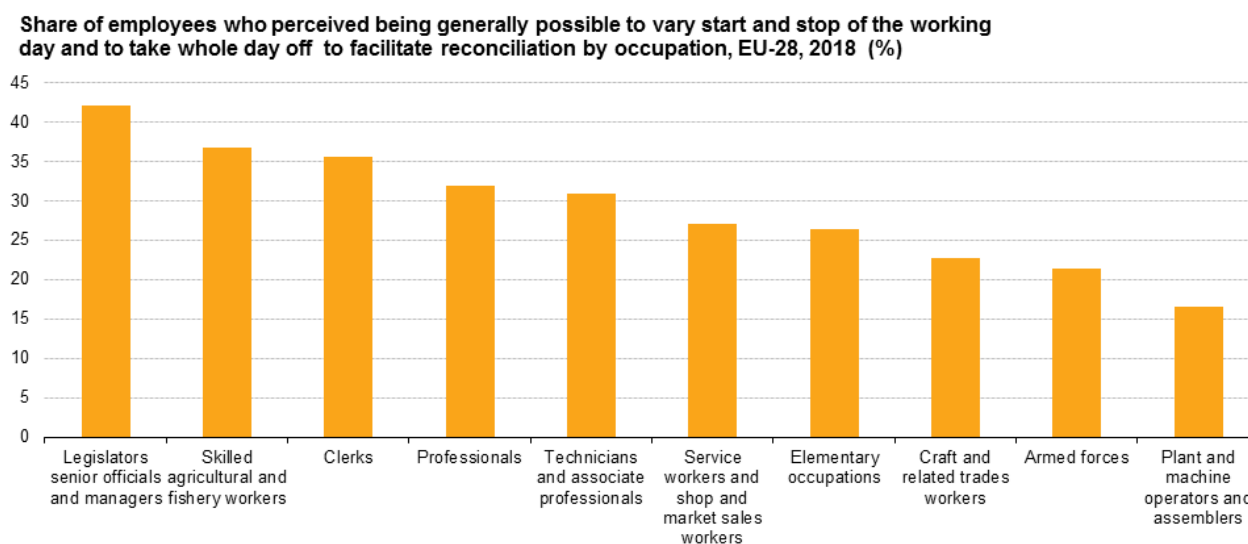
⁵ Low reliability for 'Generally possible to vary start end day / Rarely possible whole day', 'Not possible to vary start end day / Generally possible whole day', 'Not possible to vary start end day / Rarely possible whole day' and 'Rarely possible to vary start end day / Generally possible whole day'.

⁶ Low reliability for 'Generally possible to vary start end day / Not possible whole day'

⁷ Low reliability for 'Not possible to vary start end day / Rarely possible whole day'. Due to very low reliability values for 'Not possible to vary start end day / Generally possible whole day' and 'Rarely possible to vary start end day / Generally possible whole day' are not shown.

⁸ Due to very low reliability values for 'Not possible to vary start end day / Generally possible whole day', 'Not possible to vary start end day / Rarely possible whole day' and 'Rarely possible to vary start end day / Not possible whole day' are not shown.

The share of employees who perceived that it is generally possible to use time flexibility and to take the whole day off for care is shown in Figure 15 by occupation. The occupation correlates with flexibility at work. At EU level, large differences are visible between occupation groups. 42 % of employees working as legislators, senior officials and managers and having care responsibilities reported that it is generally possible for them to vary start/end of working day and to take whole day off for care. 36.8 % of skilled agricultural and fishery workers reported being generally flexible at work. On the other hand, this rate goes down to 21.4 % for those working in the armed forces followed by 16.5 % for those working as plant and machine operators and assemblers.



Source: Eurostat LFS Survey

eurostat

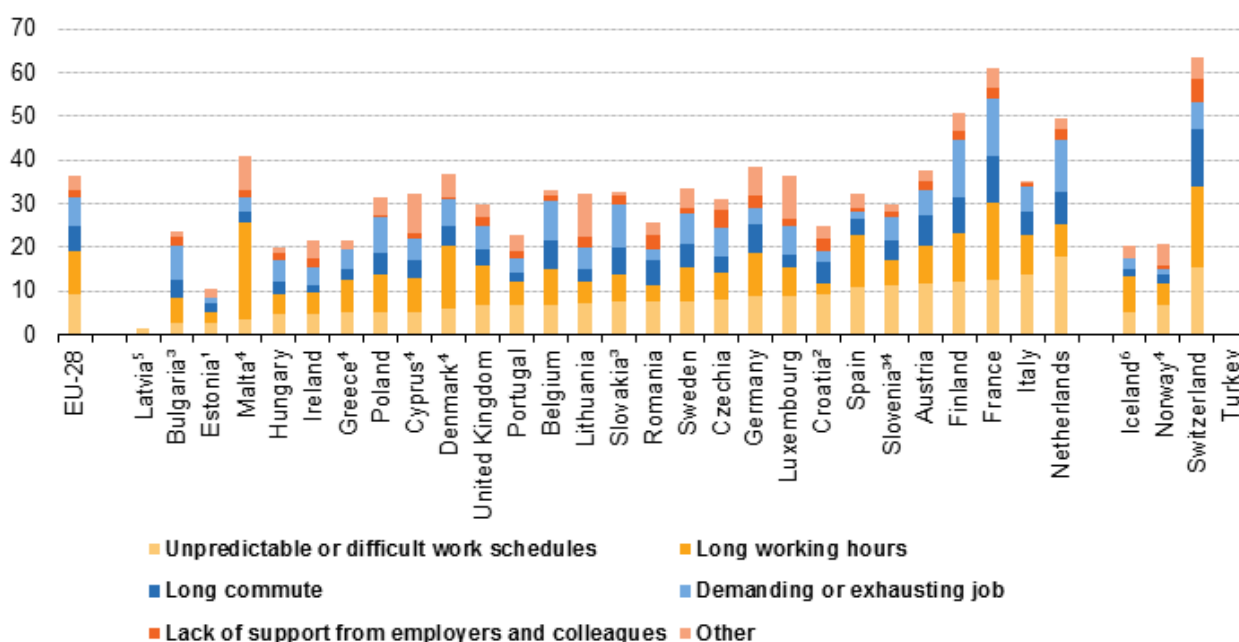
Figure 15: Share of employees who perceived being generally possible to vary start and stop of the working day and for taking whole day off to facilitate reconciliation, EU-28, 2018. (%) Source: Eurostat LFS Survey

A majority of Europeans have no obstacle at work for reconciliation

Figures 16 and 17 present employed persons with care responsibilities by main obstacle at work for reconciliation in 2018. Figure 16 focuses on those having obstacles at work for reconciliation. Figure 17 shows the share of those reporting having no obstacle. Consequently, the percentages in Figures 16 and 17 sum to 100 %, except for cases which are not shown due to very low reliability values.

In 2018, 36.6 % of employed persons with care responsibilities in the EU-28 reported that there is something about their main job that makes it difficult to reconcile with their care responsibilities (see Figure 16). This percentage varies among countries from 5.5 % in Latvia to 61.2 % in France. Employed persons in the EU-28 reported several difficulties for reconciliation: long working hours (9.9 %), unpredictable or difficult work schedules (9.4 %), demanding or exhausting job (6.6 %), long commute (5.6 %) and lack of support from employers and colleagues (1.8 %). In thirteen EU Member States, 'unpredictable or difficult work schedules' was the main difficulty mentioned for reconciliation. The largest share of employed persons reporting this difficulty was declared in the Netherlands (18.1 %), followed by Italy (13.7 %) and France (12.8 %). For nine countries the main difficulty reported was 'long working hours', with the highest share in Malta (21.9 %). 'Demanding or exhausting job' is the main reason reported in five countries: Finland (12.8 %), Slovakia (9.9 %), Belgium (9.1 %), Bulgaria (8.1 %) and Hungary (4.8 %). It is interesting to note that 'lack of support from employers and colleagues' is hardly mentioned by the respondents with a maximum percentage of 4.0 % in Czechia.

Persons in employment with care responsibilities by main obstacle at work for reconciliation, 2018 (%)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: lfso_18wobsed)

Footnote:

¹ Low reliability for Demanding or exhausting job, Due to very low reliability value for Lack of support is not shown

² Low reliability for all values except 'Unpredictable or difficult work schedules'

³ Low reliability for 'other'

⁴ Low reliability for 'Lack of support from employers and colleagues'

⁵ Low reliability for 'Unpredictable or difficult work schedules', Due to very low reliability others values are not shown.

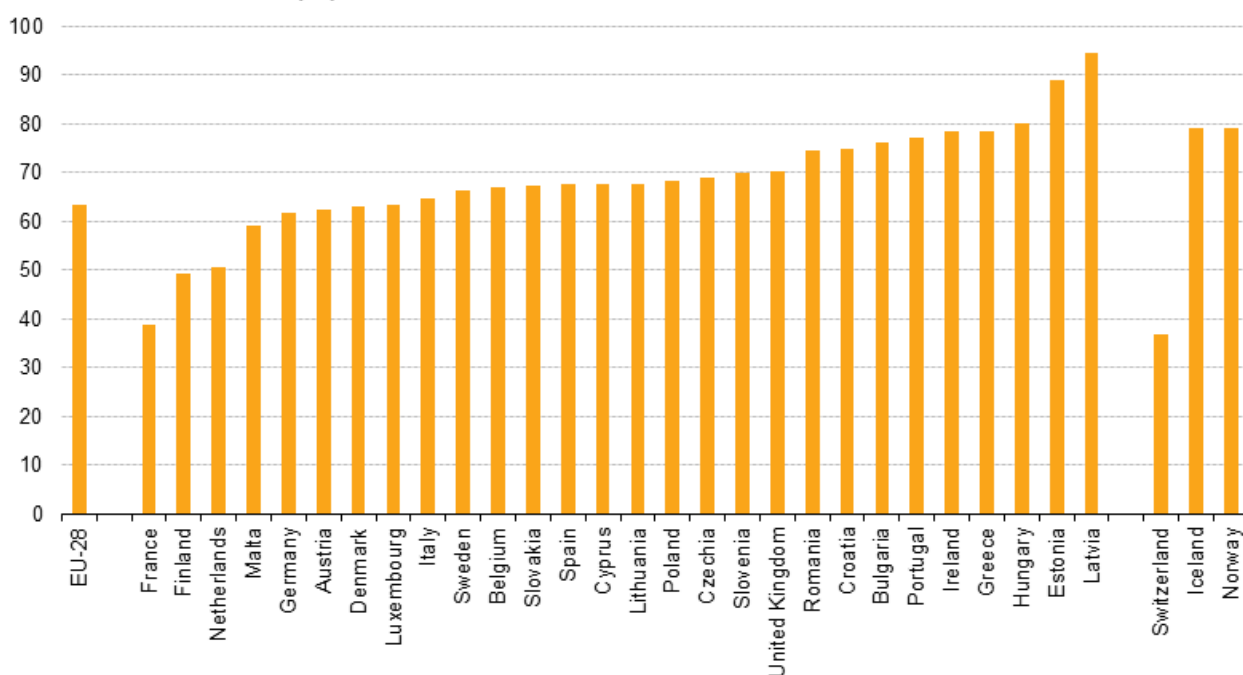
⁶ Low reliability for 'Lack of support from employers and colleagues'

eurostat

Figure 16: Persons in employment with care responsibilities by main obstacle at work for reconciliation, 2018. (%) Source: Eurostat (lfso_18wobsed)

However, the majority of the respondents do not have any obstacle at work for reconciliation (see Figure 17). In the EU-28, in 2018, 63.4 % of persons in employment with care responsibilities had no obstacle at work for reconciliation. In 2018, there was a difference of around 55 percentage points between the country with the highest and the country with the lowest 'no obstacle' rate. Persons have the most facility to conciliate work and care responsibilities in Latvia (94.5 %) and the least in France (38.8 %).

Share of persons in employment with care responsibilities WITHOUT obstacle at work for reconciliation (%)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ifso_18wobsed)



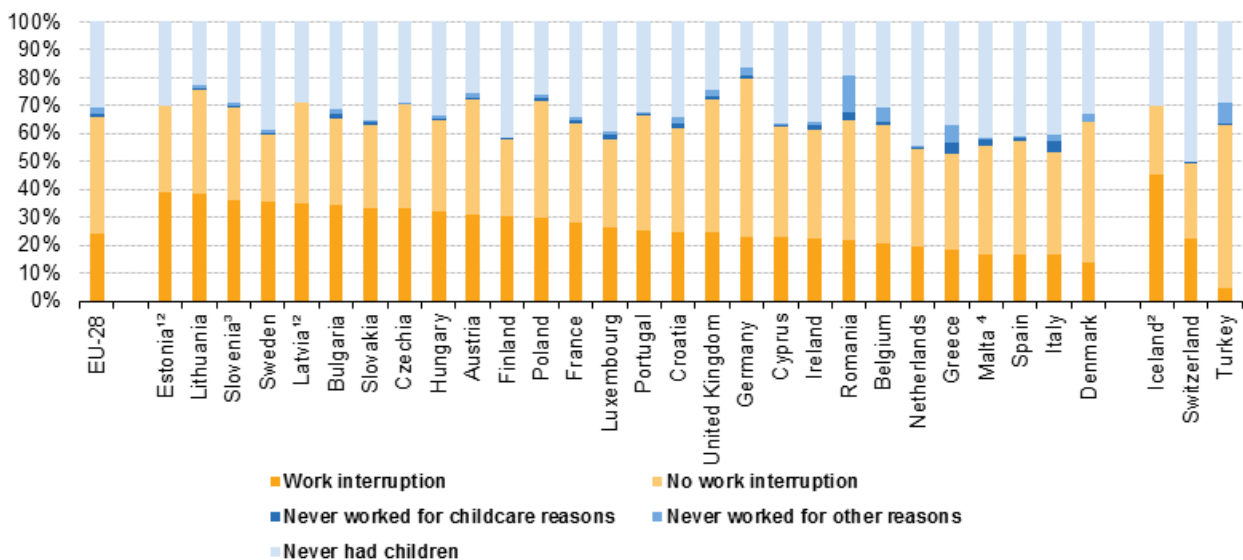
Figure 17: Share of persons in employment with care responsibilities WITHOUT obstacle at work for reconciliation, 2018. (%) Source: Eurostat (ifso_18wobsed)

Career break for childcare

Almost 1 in 4 persons in employment or with previous employment interrupted their career to take care of children

Figure 18 identifies persons aged 18 to 64 years, who have interrupted their employment for at least one month to take care for children during their course of life. In 2018, in EU-28, 24.1 % of the population in employment or with previous employment had a work interruption, while 41.7 % of the population had no work interruption. Estonia is the country having the highest share of persons with a work interruption for childcare reasons (38.7 %). Quite the opposite, in Denmark, only 14.0 % of the respondents had work interruption. Moreover, in Germany 56.8 % and in Denmark 50.0 % of the respondents had no work interruption at all. Almost a third of the EU respondents never had children.

Population in employment or with previous employment by effects of childcare on employment, 2018 (%)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: lfso_18stwked)

Footnote:

¹ Due to very low reliability value for Never worked for childcare reasons is not shown

² Due to very low reliability value for Never worked for other reasons

³ Low reliability for Never worked for childcare reasons

⁴ Low reliability for Never worked for other reasons

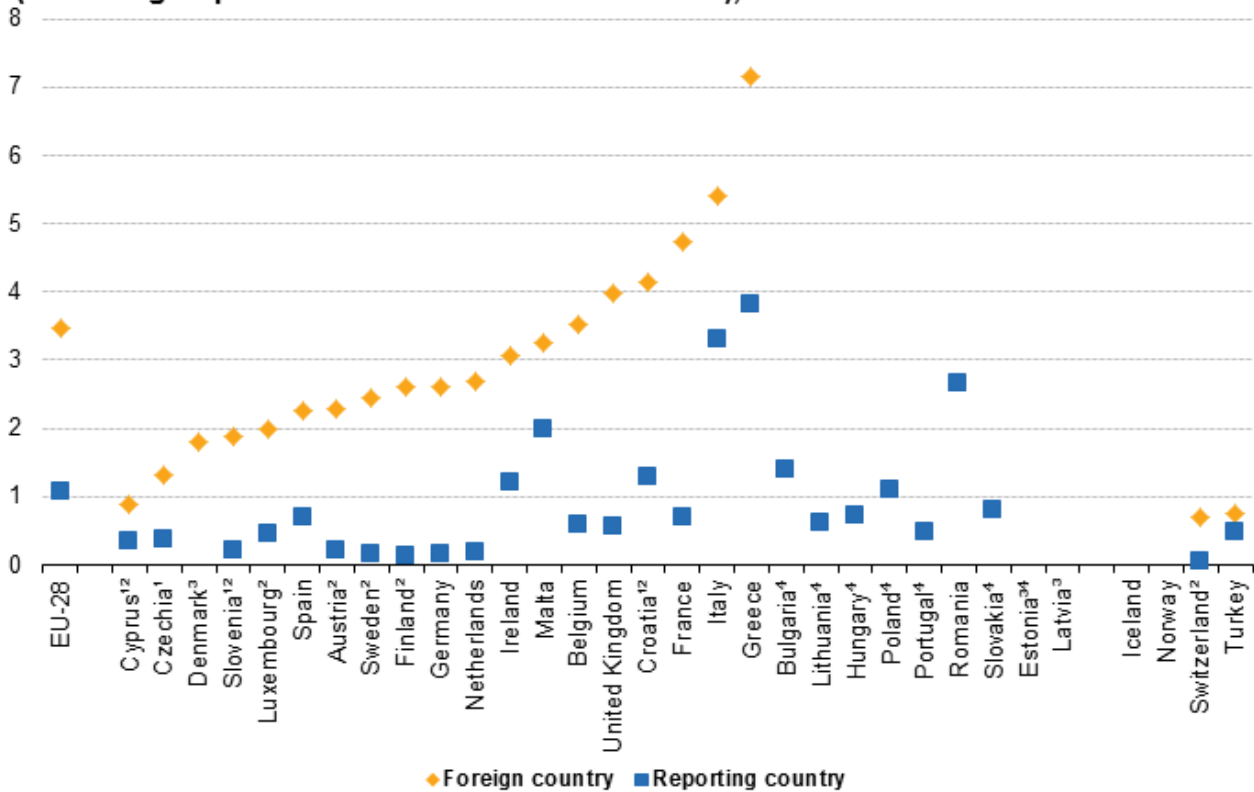
eurostat

Figure 18: Population in employment or with previous employment by effects of childcare on employment, 2018. (%) Source: Eurostat (lfso_18stwked)

Foreign-born tend to never work for childcare reasons three times more than native-born

A clear pattern is visible in Figure 19: persons born in a foreign country are more likely to never work for childcare reasons than those born in the country where they are living (reporting country). In the EU-28, in 2018, 3.5 % of the foreign-borns, aged 18-64, never worked for childcare reasons. This share goes down to 1.1 % (three times less) for the native-borns. The share of persons who never worked for childcare reasons is always below 5 % except for the foreign-born living in Italy (5.4 %) and Greece (7.2 %). The gap between the two groups is the largest in France (4.0 p.p.), the United Kingdom (3.4 p.p.) and Greece (3.3 p.p.). In seventeen EU Member States, less than 1 % of the native-borns reported having never worked for childcare reasons. Among EU Member States, this percentage is always higher than 1 % for foreign-born, except in Cyprus.

**Share of persons aged 18-64 who never worked for childcare reasons
(% of the group of the concerned countries of birth), 2018.**



Source: Eurostat (lfsa_18stwkcb)

Footnote:

¹ Low reliability for Foreign country

² Low reliability for Reporting country

³ Due to very low reliability Reporting country is not shown

⁴ Due to very low reliability Foreign country is not shown

Figure 19: Share of persons aged 18-64 who never worked for childcare reasons (% of the group of the concerned countries of birth), 2018. (%) Source: Eurostat (lfsa_18stwkcb)

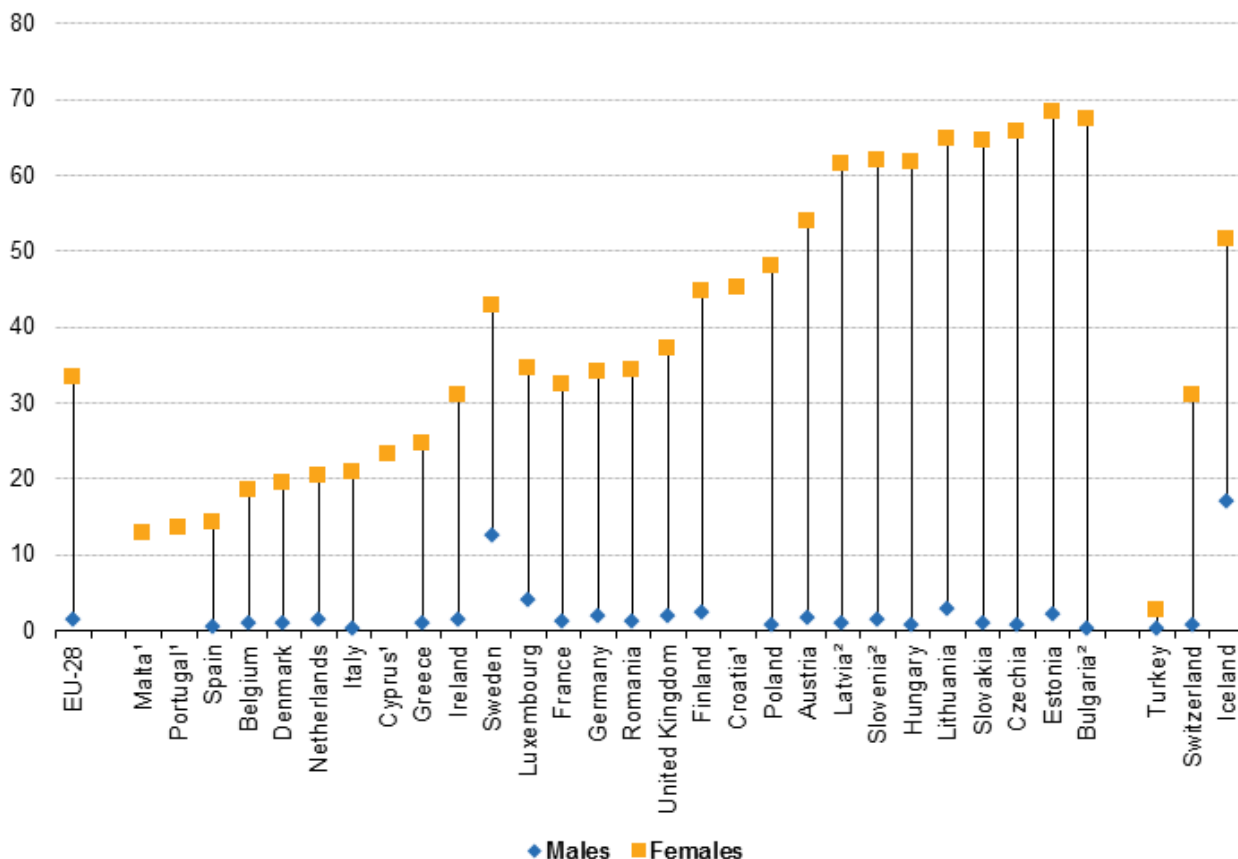
Gender gap exists for the work interruption

Figure 20 shows the share of persons aged 18-64 (in employment or with previous employment) with a work interruption (of more than 6 months) for childcare reasons by sex. A clear pattern is visible: whatever the country, the share of women is always higher than the share of men. In the EU-28, in 2018, a third of employed women had a work interruption for childcare reasons. On the contrary, this percentage for men is at 1.3 %.

The vertical length of the black line for each country indicates the difference between the indicator of men and women (i.e. the gender gap). So, the longer the line between the values of men and women in the corresponding year, the larger the gender gap. The situation varies among countries in term of gender gap and also regarding the share of persons with a career break. In Malta, 12.7 % of women had a work interruption for childcare reasons whereas this percentage amounted to 68.2 % in Estonia. The share of men who took a career break for childcare reasons is below 4.1 % in all EU Member States, except Sweden. Indeed, 12.5 % of the Swedish men did not work for at least 6 months to take care of their children. This share is also high in Iceland (17.0 %). Regarding the gender gap, it also varies a lot among

countries: from 13.6 percentage points in Spain, 17.6 p.p. in Belgium to 66.2 p.p. in Estonia and 66.9 p.p. in Bulgaria.

Share of persons in employment or with previous employment experience, aged 18-64 with a work interruption (more than 6 months) for childcare reasons by sex, 2018 (%).



Source: Eurostat LFS Survey

Footnote:

¹ Due to Very low reliability value for Males is not shown

² Low reliability for Males



Figure 20: Share of persons in employment or with previous employment experience, aged 18-64 with a work interruption (more than 6 months) for childcare reasons by sex, 2018 (%) Source: Eurostat Labour Force Survey

Conclusions

Overall, one in three inhabitants of EU-28 have care responsibilities, in particular for children. Persons in the age group of 35-44 years, employed persons and couples with children mainly take care of childcare. The majority of parents have a medium or high level education and they live mainly in cities, towns or suburbs. Most of the child carers are born in the reporting country.

The main users of professional childcare services are parents in the age of 25-44 years; one in five of the employed parents use it compared to one in four for the unemployed or for the persons outside the labour force. Persons born in the reporting country tend to use more professional childcare, while people born in another country than the

reporting country use less professional childcare for the children they are responsible for. The main reason for not using professional childcare services is that the care has been arranged alone, with the partner or with the help of other informal support.

More than 12 million persons look after or provide help to the partner or relatives (aged 15 or more) in need of care because they are sick, elderly or disabled. Care is mainly covered by women, by persons aged 45 years and more, by persons with medium educational level, and by people without children in the household. The care givers tend to live more in towns, suburbs or other rural areas, not in cities. Furthermore, the majority of persons taking care of incapacitated relatives have neither reduced their working time, nor had a career break of more than one month in order to reconcile work and care responsibilities.

As regards the care for children, the majority of the persons having reduced their working hours to facilitate childcare responsibilities are women, and the reduction of working time increases with the education level. The perception of employees regarding the possibility to use working time flexibility and whole days off to facilitate care responsibilities varies among countries and among occupation groups. At EU level, a third of the employees think that it is possible to use working time flexibility and whole days off to facilitate care responsibilities, while a quarter thinks that it is not possible at all. The majority of the respondents do not have obstacle at work for reconciliation. For those who have obstacles, it is mainly due to long working hours or unpredictable or difficult work schedules. In addition, a quarter of respondents had a work interruption of at least one month for childcare reasons. On the other hand, persons born in a foreign country are more inclined to never work for childcare reasons than those born in the country where they are living (reporting country). Finally, a big gender gap exists for the work interruption: more women have interrupted their career for childcare reasons than men in all EU countries.

Source data for tables and graphs

- [Final_figures_AHM2018](#)

Data sources

Source: The [European Union Labour Force Survey](#) (EU-LFS) is a large sample, quarterly survey providing results for the population in private households in the EU, EFTA and the candidate countries. Conscripts in military or community service are not included in the results.

Reference period and coverage: Results are obtained during the whole year (annually or quarterly). More detailed information can be found in the assessment report.

Target population: the target population of this ad-hoc module is persons in employment who have care responsibilities for children at one side and/or for incapacitated relatives at the other side.

Definitions: The concepts and definitions used in the survey follow the guidelines of the [International Labour Organisation](#). Employment covers persons aged 15 years and over (16 and over in Spain, Italy and the United Kingdom, 15-74 years in Estonia, Latvia, Hungary, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark, and 16-74 years in Iceland), living in private households, who during the reference week performed work, even for just one hour, for pay, profit or family gain, or were not at work but had a job or business from which they were temporarily absent, for example because of illness, holidays, industrial dispute or education and training. The LFS employment concept differs from national accounts domestic employment, as the latter sets no limit on age or type of household, and also includes the non-resident population contributing to GDP and conscripts in military or community service.

Population with childcare responsibilities includes those with care responsibilities for own or partner's children up to 14 years of age. People having own or partner's children living in their household are automatically considered as having childcare responsibilities.

Professional childcare services comprise all forms of care organised by private or public structures like the so called center based pre-schools, nursery schools (which normally are assigned to ISCED level 0), day care centres, crèches or after school centres. Also included is organised family care or care by professional childminders arranged with an intermediate service or directly employed by the family. The care can take place in the household, at the carer's home or at a facility. Organised services are included irrespective of direct payments by the parents (could e. g. be subsidised by the state or the employer). Childminders that are engaged directly by the parents have

to be paid to be seen as a professional service. Professional means that the childminder is undertaking his/her job as a real profession (with an own registered business) not as side-activity that provides some extra money.

Population with care responsibilities for incapacitated relatives are defined as people who look after or provide help to the partner or relatives (from the age of 15) in need of care because they are sick, elderly or disabled. This also includes the relatives of the spouse/cohabiting partner and is irrespective of whether they live in the same household or not.

Context

The EU has a long-standing commitment to promoting work-life balance. Minimum standards in this field are set out through Directives on maternity leave and parental leave. The EU has likewise set targets to improve the provision of childcare with the so-called [Barcelona Objectives](#), and Country-Specific Recommendations in the area of work-life balance have also been issued in the European Semester 2016. In the work programme of 2016, the Commission has set out plans to develop an initiative addressing the work-life balance challenges faced by parents and carers. In addition, it aims to monitor the challenges of work-life balance and to progress in this area. Therefore, it is essential to have improved data collection. The [Commission Regulation 0318/2013](#) has been established to implement an ad-hoc module on reconciliation between work and family life. The [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 1397/2014](#) specifies and describes the areas of specialized information ('ad-hoc sub-modules') to be included in ad-hoc module on reconciliation between work and family life.

The subject of the module of 2018 was already covered in 2005 and 2010 and has been developed to provide insight on how people from 18 up until 64 years old can reconcile work and family life. From 2021, the LFS will be implemented under a new legal framework, the IESS (Integrated European Social Statistics) Regulation. In this context, the module on reconciliation of work and family life will be repeated every eight years from 2025.

The legal basis for the 2018 module on reconciliation between work and family life is the [Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2236/2016](#) of 12 December 2016. This means that EU Member States and EFTA countries were obliged to carry out the survey and send micro data to Eurostat. In addition, Turkey has also implemented the survey.

In the context of investigating the balance between work and family life of the European population, employment statistics are of high importance. Employment statistics are at the heart of many EU policies. The [European employment strategy](#) (EES) was launched at the Luxembourg jobs summit in November 1997 and was revamped in 2005 to align the EU's employment strategy more closely to a set of revised Lisbon objectives, and in July 2008, employment policy guidelines for the period 2008–2010 were updated. In March 2010, the European Commission launched the [Europe 2020 strategy](#) for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth; this was formally adopted by the European Council in June 2010. The European Council agreed on five headline targets, the first being to raise the employment rate for women and men aged 20 to 64 years old to 75 % by 2020. EU Member States may set their own national targets in the light of these headline targets and draw up national reform programmes that include the actions they aim to undertake in order to implement the strategy.

The implementation of the strategy might be achieved, at least in part, through the promotion of flexible working conditions — for example, part-time work or work from home — which are thought to stimulate labour participation. Among others, initiatives that may encourage more people to enter the labour market include improvements in the availability of childcare facilities, providing more opportunities for lifelong learning, or facilitating job mobility. Central to this theme is the issue of 'flexicurity': policies that simultaneously address the flexibility of labour markets, work organisation and labour relations, while taking into account the reconciliation of work and private life, employment security and social protection. In line with the Europe 2020 strategy, the EES encourages measures to help meet three headline targets by 2020, namely, for:

- 75 % of people aged 20 to 64 to be in work;
- rates of early school leaving to be reduced below 10 %, and for at least 40 % of 30 to 34-year-olds to have completed tertiary education;
- at least 20 million fewer people to be in or at-risk-of-poverty and social exclusion.

Employment and social policies are also the main fields of interest of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), which is

about delivering new and more effective rights for citizens. It has three main categories: (1) Equal opportunities and access to the labour market; (2) Fair working conditions; (3) Social protection and inclusion.

In particular, today's more flexible working arrangements provide new job opportunities especially for the young but can potentially give rise to new precariousness and inequalities.

Other articles

- [All articles on the labour market](#)
- [EU labour force survey](#)

Publications

- [European Union Labour force survey - selection of electronic articles \(Statistics Explained\)](#)

Main tables

- [LFS ad-hoc modules](#)

Database

- [Employment and unemployment \(LFS\)](#)

Dedicated section

- [Labour market including Labour force Survey \(LFS\)](#)

Methodology

- [Statistical working papers / Manuals and guidelines](#)