



Household level determinants of labour market participation

Research note no. 7/2016

Erhan Özdemir and Terry Ward

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Abstract

The purpose of this Research Note is to explore the possibility of using Labour Force Survey data to examine the influence of household circumstances on the labour market participation of two groups, women aged 18-54 and men and women aged 55-64, who are at or nearing retirement age in EU Member States. More particularly, its aim is to consider the 'reason' variables in the LFS, which indicate why people are not economically active or why they work part-time instead of full-time and the link between these variables and the household situation of the people in the two groups. In doing so, it distinguishes between women with a young child and others, those living alone, those sharing a household with someone in employment and those living in households where the others are not in work.

Introduction

This Research Note is an exploratory one. Its purpose is to examine the extent to which it is possible on the basis of data from the European Labour Force Survey (LFS) to throw light on the influence of household circumstances on individual behaviour and, in particular, on participation in the labour market and, if individuals do not participate, on the reasons why. Such an examination accordingly can demonstrate the importance, or otherwise of the inclusion of 'behavioural', or 'reason', variables in the survey – which provide information on the reasons why respondents are, for example, not working or employed in part-time jobs – and being able to link these with household-level variables.

There are two groups of people examined. The main focus is on women of child-bearing age (which is taken here as 18-54, the age range over which women typically have children) with a child under 6, who are still much more affected in their employment behaviour by caring responsibilities than men despite the trend towards more equality over recent decades¹. The specific focus is on two issues. The first is whether and how far their decision on whether to work or not is affected by having young children – and the need to care for them – as well as by the extent to which other members of the household are in work and therefore are bringing income from employment into the household. The second is how far the need to care for children leads them to work part-time rather than full-time.

The second group examined are older people who are at or near the normal age of retirement, here taken as 55-64, for whom the interest is in how far their decision to withdraw from the labour market is affected by their household circumstances – whether they live alone or with someone else – by whether or not, in particular, others in the household are in employment or have also retired.

These two groups, and the issues indicated above, are examined in turn below. It should be noted that the data are examined for the two years 2014-2015 combined in order to increase the number of observations and, accordingly, to reduce the possibility of reliability problems because the number is too small to be necessarily representative of the group in question². The issue of the sample size of the LFS is a general one which tends to affect any detailed analysis of the data. It is particularly relevant in this case when there is a need to examine a sub-group of people whose differ not only in their household circumstances but also in terms of the particular reasons given for their inactivity or part-time working.

It should also be noted that a good deal of attention is focused on the education level of the people concerned as this is an important determinant, as shown below, of whether they are likely to be in employment or not as well as whether they work part-time rather than full-time. It also tends to reflect their relative level of earnings, both actual and potential, as well as the type of job that they do, which themselves can be important determinants of whether they choose to work or not. Data on earnings are available in the LFS only in the form of deciles of monthly take-home pay, which do not allow identification of the extent of differences in earnings or aggregation of the pay of people living together. They, therefore, severely limit the extent to which it is possible to examine the influence of household income on employment decisions.

Women aged 18-54

The analysis begins with some well-known facts about the rates of economic activity and of part-time working among women with young children relative to those without – i.e. the women concerned are more likely to be economically inactive and to work part-time than

¹ The choice of the age range of 18-54 is slightly arbitrary but given that the focus is on children aged under 6, focusing on a slightly different age range is unlikely to affect the results significantly.

² In practice, there is some overlap between the people covered in the two years since the LFS collects data from respondents for 5 consecutive quarters on a rolling basis, so that half the respondents covered in 2014 will also be covered in 2015.

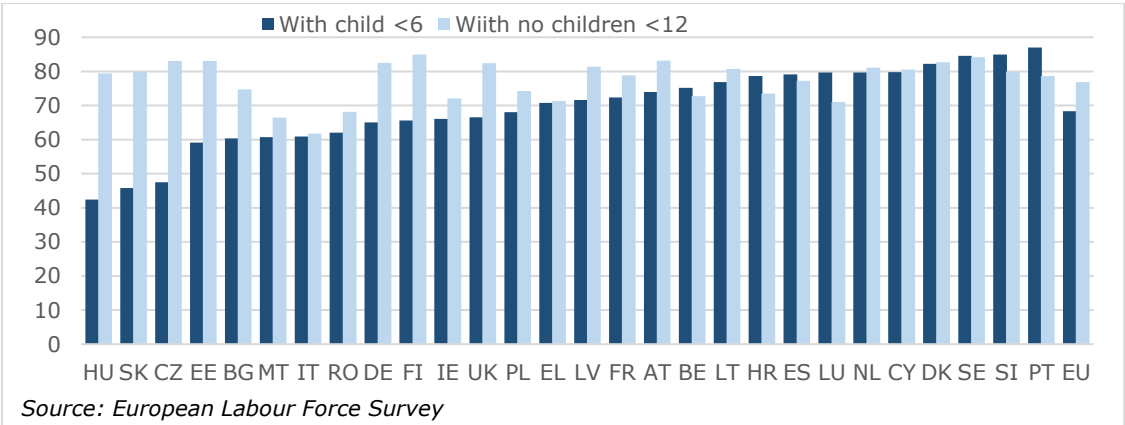
others. This is in order to set the scene for the main analysis as well as to set out the situation according to the latest data and to demonstrate that the well-known facts do not hold for all EU Member States.

Economic activity among women with young children

Women with young children are, for the most part, less likely to be economically active than those without. But this is not universally the case across the EU. On average, 68% of women across the EU aged 18-54 with a child under 6 were either employed or unemployed (in the sense of actively seeking work) in 2014-2015, as compared with 77% of those without children (here defined as having no children under the age of 12) (Figure 1). The difference was particularly large in Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, where less than half of women with young children were economically active and where the norm is for women to stay at home to look after children for the first few years. The difference was also large in Estonia, Bulgaria, Germany, Finland and the UK, suggesting either a preference among many mothers to take care of their children themselves when very young or a lack of suitable childcare facilities (this issue is pursued below).

In 6 countries, on the other hand – Belgium, Spain, Luxembourg, Portugal, Croatia and Slovenia – a larger proportion of women with young children were economically active than those without, while in another 6 (Sweden, Denmark, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Greece and Italy), there was very little difference between the two.

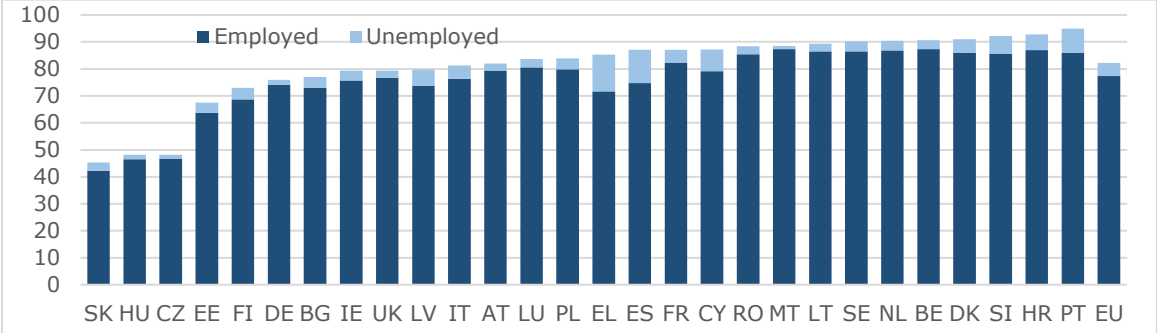
Figure 1 Proportion of women aged 18-54 with and without children who were economically active in EU Member States, 2014-2015 (% of each group)



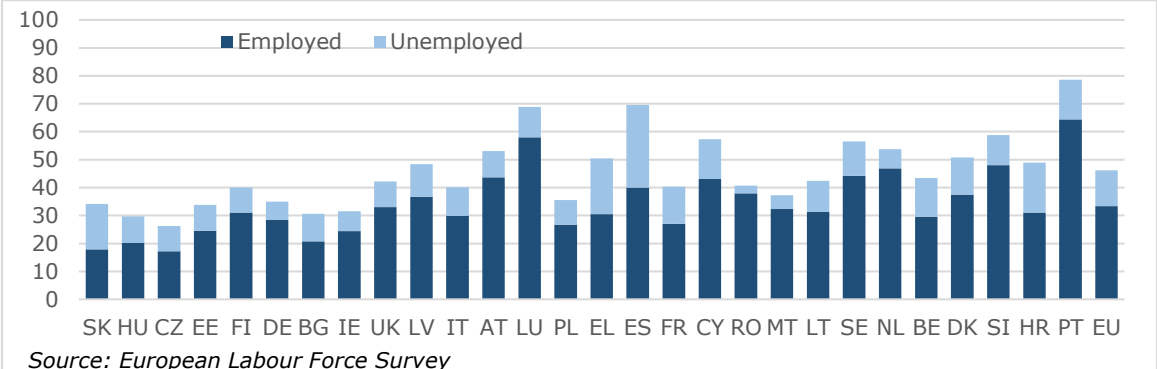
Women are more likely to be economically active if they have a higher rather than a lower level of education (e.g. tertiary rather than upper secondary) and this is especially so for those with young children. The proportion of the latter who are economically active, therefore, is particularly small for those with only basic schooling, averaging less than half (46%) across the EU in 2014-2015, whereas for those with tertiary education, the proportion was over 80% (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Proportion of women aged 18-54 with children under 6 and with tertiary education and only basic schooling who were economically active in EU Member States, 2014-2015 (% of each group)

Women with tertiary education



Women with only basic schooling



Source: European Labour Force Survey

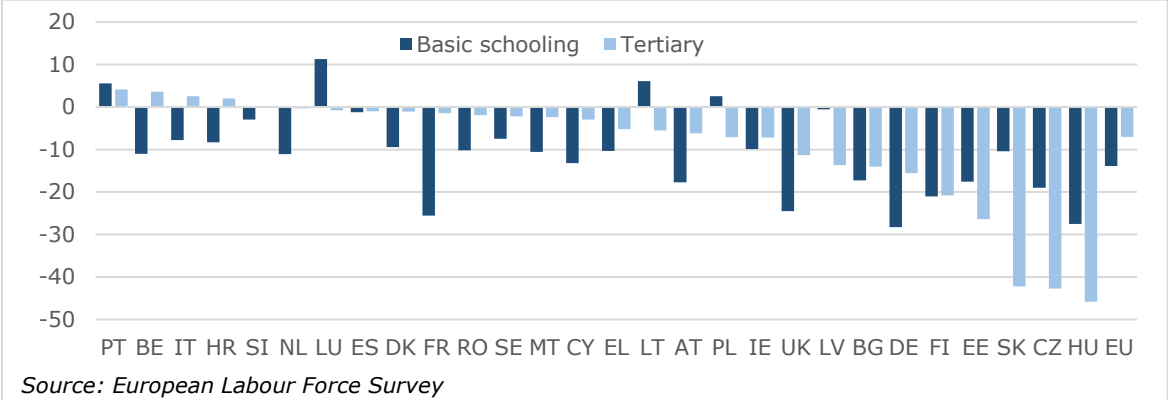
However, for women with tertiary education, the rate of economic activity varied from over 90% in Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark but also Slovenia, Croatia and Portugal, to less than half in Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, though apart from these three countries, there were only 4 others where it was much less than 80% – Estonia, Finland, Germany and Bulgaria. Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, therefore, stand out as displaying a much greater tendency for women to stay at home to look after very young children – in practice up to the age of 3³ – than in other countries, irrespective of their education level, reflecting the social norm to do so.

For women with only basic schooling, there was only one country, Portugal, where the proportion economically active was close to 80% and only two others – Spain and Luxembourg – where it was over 60%. In most countries, less than half of women with young children and with this level of education were economically active and in Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic as well as Estonia, Bulgaria and Ireland, only around a third or less.

It is evident that the effect of differences in education level on the tendency for women with young children to be economically active varies across countries. In most countries, however, having a child reduces the tendency and, in most cases, by more for those with only basic schooling than for those with tertiary education. The main exceptions are Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, where in each case, the proportion of women with young women with a young child and tertiary education who were economically active was over 40 percentage points less than for those with no children (Figure 3).

³ Very few women with children up to three in these three countries are in paid employment.

Figure 3 Difference in the proportion of women aged 18-54 with tertiary education and only basic schooling who were economically active: those with children under 6 minus those with no children under 12, 2014-2015 (%-point difference)



In sum, having children tends to reduce economic activity among women and more for the low-educated ones than for those with tertiary education who in any case are more likely to be economically active. This reflects the higher earnings power of more highly-educated women who, accordingly, tend to be more able to afford childcare⁴. In countries where there is little difference between the activity rates of women with and without young children and where rates for women with only basic schooling are relatively high, most especially Spain and Portugal, children in many cases are cared for by relatives or friends, especially grandparents⁵.

The extent to which the need to care for children is an explanation for the lower rates of economic activity for women in the 18-54 age group and how far a lack of suitable childcare facilities is an underlying factor is explored below on the basis of the 'reason' variables in the LFS (specifically the SEEKREAS and NEEDCARE variables) after examining the extent to which they tend to work part-time instead of full-time.

Part-time working among women with young children

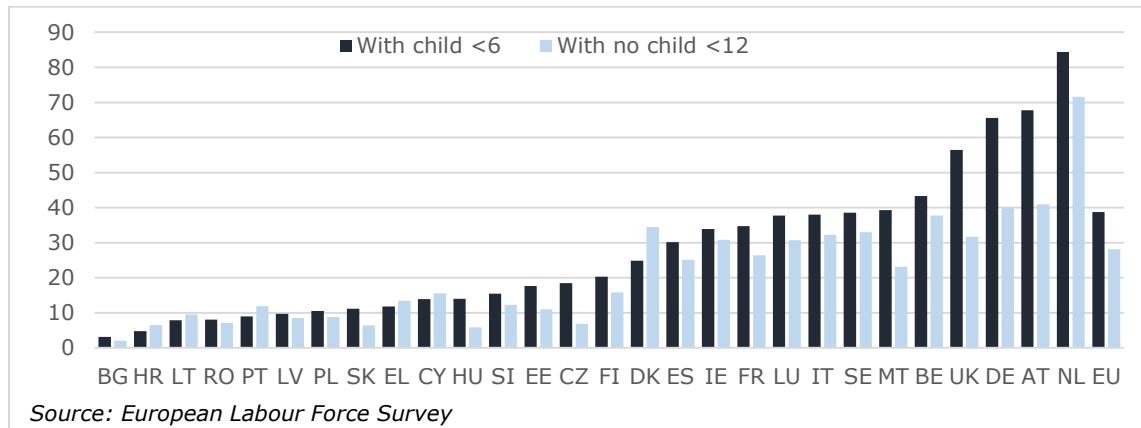
Women in employment with young children are not only less likely to be employed than those with no children but they are also less likely to work full-time. In 2014-2015, 28% of women aged 18-54 in employment and without children worked part-time across the EU whereas the figure for those with children under 6 was 39%. Only in 6 countries (Croatia, Lithuania, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus and Denmark) – most of them with relatively few women employed part-time whether with children or without – was the proportion of women employed working part-time smaller for those with young children than for those without. The proportion working part-time was much larger for those with children than for those without (over 25 percentage points larger) in the UK, Germany and Austria. In the UK and Germany, this goes together with a relatively large difference in the rate of activity between the two groups of women (in Austria, it is also larger than average but

⁴ The net take-home pay of women in this age group with tertiary education was, on average, in 2015 2 deciles higher than for those with upper secondary education and 3 deciles higher than for those with only basic schooling, according to the LFS. Only in three countries, Italy, the Netherlands and Austria was the former difference less than 1.5 deciles and only in one country, Austria, was the latter difference less than 2 deciles.

⁵ See, for example, Karen Glaser, Debora Price, Eloi Ribe Montserrat, Giorgio di Gessa and Anthea Tinker, *Grandparenting in Europe*. <https://www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/EU-report-summary.pdf>, which reports that: 'In Portugal, Spain, Italy and Romania, where welfare payments to parents and mothers at home are limited and there is little formal childcare and few opportunities for mothers to work part-time, grandparents provide a great deal of intensive childcare for their grandchildren.' (p.3)

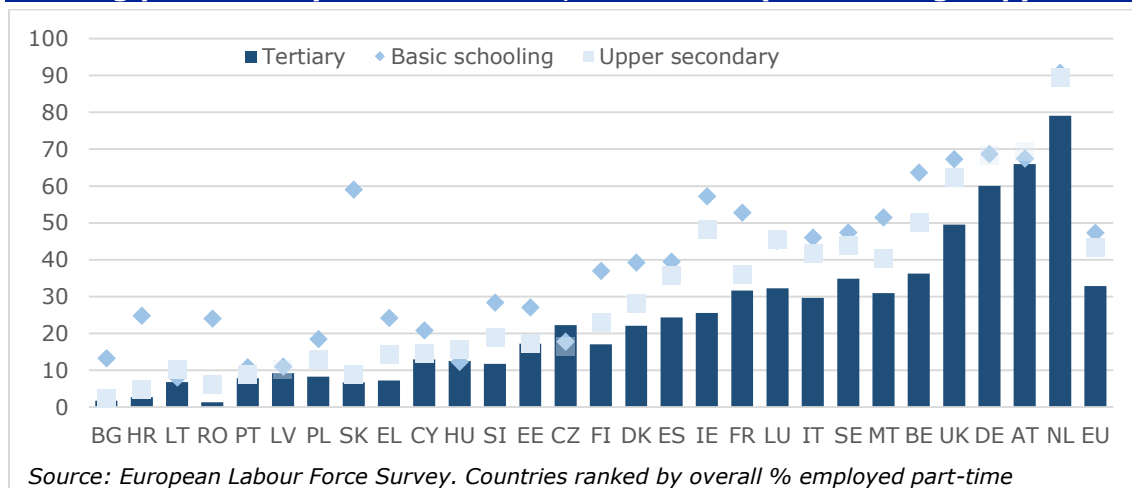
only slightly so), reinforcing the possibility of there being a shortage of affordable childcare in the two countries⁶. How far this is the case in reality is examined below.

Figure 4 Proportion of women employed aged 18-54 with a child under 6 and with no child under 12 who worked part-time, 2014-2015



Just as in the case of the rate of economic activity among women with children and those without, there is a marked tendency for part-time working to be more prevalent among women with children if they have basic schooling than if they have a higher level of education. This almost certainly reflects their lower earnings and the greater difficulty that they therefore have to cover the costs of childcare for a full working day. On average across the EU, 47% of women with a young child and only basic schooling who were in work were employed part-time in 2014-2015 as opposed to 33% of those with tertiary education (Figure 5). There was only one country, the Czech Republic, where part-time working was more prevalent among women with tertiary education than among those with only basic schooling, though in Hungary, the proportion working part-time was similar for the two groups.

Figure 5 Proportion of women aged 18-54 in employment with a child under 6 working part-time by education level, 2014-2015 (% of each group)



⁶ There is a great deal of evidence on the high costs of childcare in the UK deterring women with young children from working at all or working part-time. For example, the Family and Childcare Trust's '2016 Childcare survey' (<https://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/childcare-survey-2016-0>) reported that the median cost of childcare for a child under 2 and another aged 3-4 was 28% of household disposable income in 2016, implying that for many women, it was not worthwhile working or working only part-time. In Germany, there has been a legal obligation since 2013 for local authorities to provide childcare facilities for every child over one-year old, but a number of reports have pointed to the low quality of many of the facilities (see, for example, Gabriel Schoyerer & Nina Weimann-Sandig, 'Family day care in Germany: the gap between vision and reality', *Journal of Early Childhood Education Research*, Vol. 4, No.1, 2015).

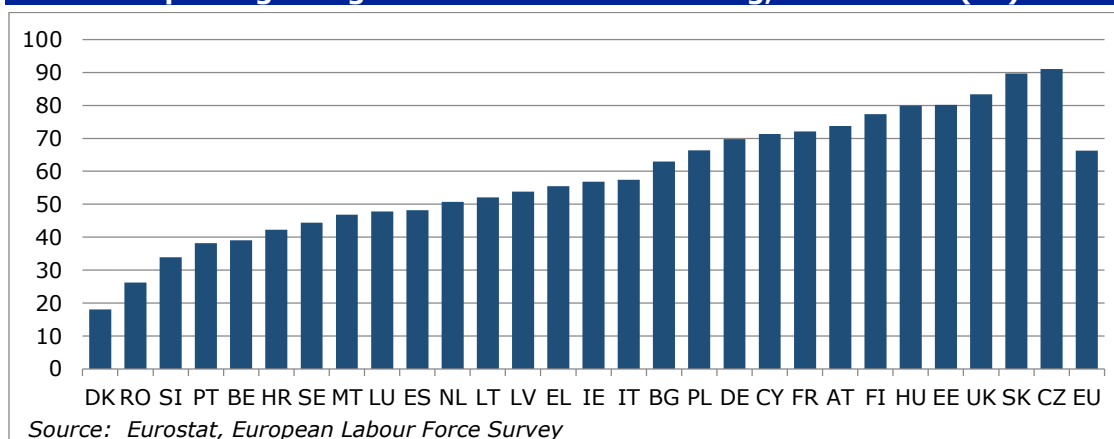
In general the difference in the extent of part-time working between those with upper secondary education and those with a lower education level was smaller than in the case of the tertiary educated, but there are only three countries – Lithuania, Hungary and Austria – where the extent was larger among women with upper secondary education than among those with only basic schooling.

Withdrawal from the work force for caring reasons

The concern here is to examine the extent to which the tendency for women to withdraw from the work force when they have young children is due, first, to either their desire or the need to care for them and, secondly, to the lack of suitable and affordable care services which are available.

Overall around two-thirds of women aged 18-54 with a child under 6 in the EU in 2014-2015 who were inactive reported being so because of looking after a child or adult (the two are combined in the LFS) (Figure 12). This implies that a third were inactive for other reasons, mainly because of other family or personal responsibilities, being in education or training or being ill or incapacitated.

Figure 12 Proportion of economically inactive women aged 18-54 with a child under 6 reporting being inactive because of caring, 2014-2015 (%)



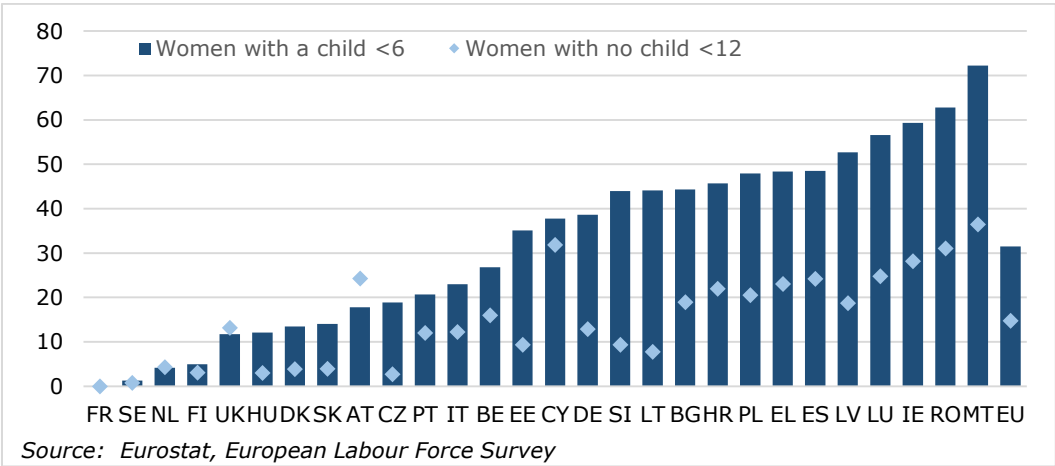
The proportion reporting caring to be the main reason, however, varied markedly across countries from just under 20% in Denmark and just over a quarter in Romania to around 80% in Estonia and Hungary, almost 85% in the UK and around 90% in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. In Denmark, the main reason is being in education or training (which is also a major reason in Sweden), in Romania, other family or personal responsibilities, which is reported by over 45% of all women who were inactive in this age group with a young child. The latter is an important reason in a number of other countries as well, including Ireland, Spain, Croatia and Latvia (in each of which it accounts for around a quarter of those in this group who were inactive), Luxembourg and Slovenia (where it accounts for almost 30%) and Malta (where the figure is nearly 40%). In the other countries where the proportion reporting being inactive because of caring was also relatively low, Portugal and Belgium, being ill or incapacitated and in education or training as well as other family or personal responsibilities were important reasons.

This raises the question of the link between family or personal responsibilities and caring responsibilities and whether the former would be present without there being a need to care for a young child. It raises a further question relating to the differentiation in the LFS between the two questions and the need to try to ensure that there is no confusion between the two, that the question (under the SEEKREAS variable) on 'family or personal responsibilities' is clearly understood to exclude those who are inactive because of 'looking after children or incapacitated adults'. Some indication of the extent of the possible confusion can be gained by comparing the proportion of women with a child under 6 reporting being inactive because of family or personal responsibilities with that for women with no children under 12 but sharing a household with at least one other adult (in order

to exclude the relatively large number of women living alone whose family responsibilities are likely to be less). Among the latter, 15% reported being inactive for this reason, if those reporting caring for a child or adult are excluded (these accounted for 11% of the total inactive). This is much less than for women with a young child (32%), suggesting perhaps that there is a link between family or personal responsibilities and having a young child. It might imply in turn that the proportion reporting such responsibilities should be taken into account when assessing the relative number of women inactive for caring reasons, especially if the proportion is substantially larger for women with a young child than for those without.

This is the case in a number of countries, particularly in Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Luxembourg, Ireland, Romania and Malta, where in each case the difference was more than 30 percentage points in 2014-2015, and only to a slightly lesser extent in Estonia, Germany, Bulgaria, Poland and Greece, where the proportion is over 25% (Figure 13). On the other hand, there is least reason to take such women into account in France, Sweden, the UK and Austria, where either there is little difference in the proportion reporting being inactive because of family and personal responsibilities between women with and without young children or the latter is larger than the former.

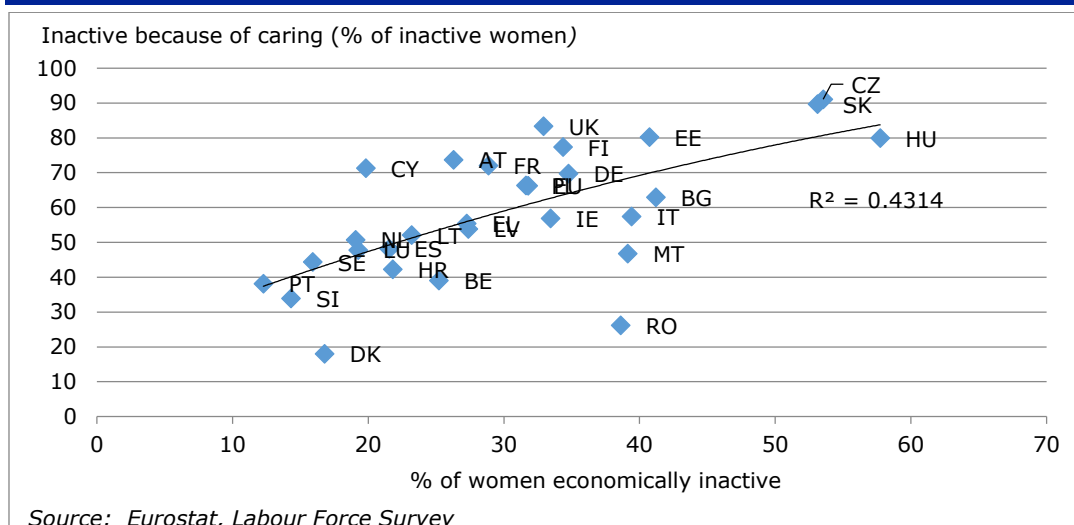
Figure 13 Proportion of women aged 18-54 with a child under 6 and without a child under 12 reporting being inactive because of family or personal responsibilities, 2014-2015 (% of women inactive excluding those inactive for caring reasons)



In the remainder of the analysis, women reporting that family or personal responsibilities are the main reason for their inactivity are left out of account, primarily because it is difficult to include them or to decide how many of them are affected in their ability or willingness to be economically active by having young children (they are not asked in the survey, for example, about the effect on their labour force participation of the availability of care services, for example).

There is some tendency for the proportion of women who were economically inactive reporting caring to be the reason for this to vary with the relative number who were inactive, for the proportion to be larger the larger the number of women who were inactive (Figure 14). It was largest of all, therefore, in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, the two countries along with Hungary which have the largest proportion of women with young children inactive. It was smallest of all in Denmark, which has among the smallest proportions of women who were inactive, and well below average in Slovenia and Portugal where equally very few women are inactive. At the same time, the relative number of women who were inactive because of caring was smaller than in the latter two countries in Romania where an above average proportion of women were inactive. In general, however, caring responsibilities were the main reason for women with a young child being inactive across the EU and most especially so in the countries where a relatively large number among such women were inactive.

Figure 14 Proportion of women aged 18-54 with a child under 6 inactive because of caring in relation to the proportion of women economically inactive, 2014-2015



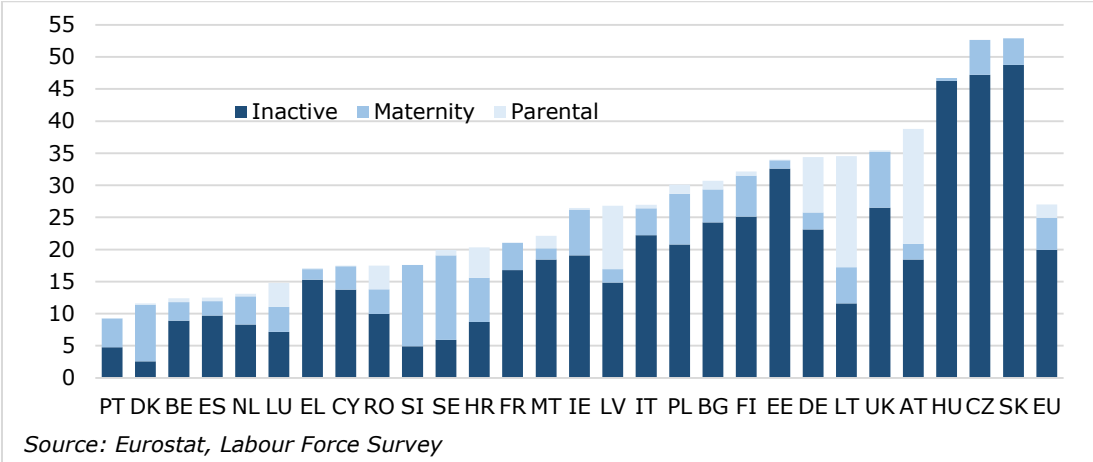
Women not in work because of caring

There is a further aspect which needs to be taken into account when considering the extent of inactivity among women with young children. This is the relative number of women who are not in work at any particular time despite having a job because they are on maternity or parental leave. (This, it should be noted, comes from the NOWKREAS variable which provides valuable information on the reasons why people are not working even though they are formally counted as being employed.) Such leave may often be of short duration but in some countries for many women it can last for two or three years. The number concerned varies substantially across the EU depending on the possibilities which exist for women with babies and young children under the social protection system, under collective agreements or under arrangements made with individual employers. In countries where the possibilities for taking leave of absence from work while retaining a job, and often continuing to receive a wage or salary, are relatively extensive and generous, it is likely that women will opt for this rather than becoming economically inactive for a time. Accordingly, in the countries concerned it is likely to depress the number recorded as being inactive relative to countries where the provisions for leave are more limited and, therefore, to provide at least part of the explanation of the variation across countries in the extent of withdrawal from the work force of women with young children noted above.

In the EU as a whole, some 5% of women with a child under 6 in 2014-2015 were on maternity leave and a further 2% on parental leave⁷. These add to the 20% of the women in this age group with young children who were inactive in 2014-2015 because of caring for children (or adults), implying that around 27% of the women concerned were neither working nor looking for a job for caring reasons (Figure 15).

⁷ These are responses to the NOWKREAS variable, specifically those answering that they were not working because of 'maternity leave' and 'parental leave'. In practice, the distinction between the two may not be clear-cut. In most countries, parental leave, where it exists, comes into play after entitlement to maternity leave comes to an end, but in some countries, such as Denmark or Sweden, there is a single scheme which covers both types of leave, so the division between the two is somewhat arbitrary. There are also men on parental leave as well as women in many countries, but the numbers are relatively small.

Figure 15 Proportion of women aged 20-54 with a child under 6 who are inactive because of looking after children or on maternity or parental leave, 2014-15 (%)



The overall proportion of women in question varies in a somewhat different way across countries than the proportion of women who are inactive taken alone, reflecting the marked difference in the extent of absence from work because of being on maternity or parental leave. In both the Czech Republic and Slovakia, taking account of the women on such leave pushes up the relative number out of work in 2014-2015 to over 50%, while in Hungary, it increases it only marginally. In Austria and Lithuania, where the proportion of women on leave is larger than in any other country at over 20% of women in the age group in both cases, it pushes up the overall proportion from being below the EU average to well above. In both the UK and Germany, it increases the overall proportion to even further above the EU average and in Latvia, Croatia, Sweden, Slovenia and Denmark, it raises it closer to the EU average, in the latter four countries, most of the women concerned being on leave rather than being inactive.

On the other hand, taking account of women on leave increases the proportion of those not in work by less than average in Portugal, Belgium, Spain, the Netherlands, Greece and Cyprus, where leave provisions seem to be more limited, so pushing the overall proportion even further below the EU average. Accordingly, in the former four countries, as in Denmark, less than 15% of women in the age group with young children were not in work because of caring in 2014-2015.

Women not in work because of caring by education level

There is a marked difference in the extent to which women withdraw from paid work because of caring reasons between those with different levels of education. As indicated above, women with tertiary education are less likely to become economically inactive when they have young children than those with lower education levels, but, on the other hand, they are more likely to take maternity or parental leave. In 2014-2015, only 12% of women with tertiary education and a child under 6 were inactive in the EU for caring reasons as against 32% of those with only basic schooling (Table 1). At the same time, 10% of them were on maternity or parental leave as opposed to just 2% of the latter.

The same pattern is evident for all Member States, with the exception of Slovakia where a larger proportion of women with tertiary education were inactive because of caring than for those with only basic schooling. In the EU as a whole, the overall proportion of women effectively absent from the work force is smaller for those with tertiary education than for those with lower education levels. In three countries, however – Denmark, Romania and Slovenia – a much larger proportion of women with tertiary education were on maternity or parental leave than those with lower education levels. The effect of taking account of these is to increase the proportion of women with tertiary education not in work above that for those with only basic schooling in these three countries. In another two – Luxembourg and Sweden – the effect is to increase the proportion to much the same level. In all of

these countries, as well as in another 8, there were more women with tertiary education not working because of being on caring leave than were inactive because of caring. In all of these 8 countries, as well as generally, the effect is to narrow the difference in the overall proportion of women not working between those with different levels of education.

Table 1 Proportion of women aged 20-54 with a child under 6 on maternity or parental leave or inactive because of caring by education level, 2014-2015 (% of each group)

	Inactive because of caring			Maternity+parental leave			Total caring		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
BE	22.2	8.6	3.3	1.4	3.5	4.3	23.6	12.1	7.6
BG	33.0	24.6	18.0	1.5	7.6	8.2	34.5	32.2	26.2
CZ	60.6	44.5	48.8	1.0	4.9	7.7	61.6	49.4	56.5
DK	6.0	3.1	1.7	2.4	9.6	10.0	8.4	12.7	11.7
DE	39.6	21.0	16.8	3.0	12.0	15.0	42.7	33.0	31.8
EE	47.7	34.3	27.8	0.2	1.1	1.9	47.9	35.4	29.7
IE	38.4	24.0	11.7	0.9	5.1	10.3	39.3	29.1	22.0
EL	24.2	17.7	7.8	0.1	1.3	3.4	24.4	18.9	11.2
ES	13.5	9.7	7.0	1.3	2.1	4.3	14.7	11.7	11.3
FR	41.4	17.5	7.1	1.5	3.5	6.0	42.9	21.0	13.1
HR	19.5	9.2	4.4	3.8	11.6	14.1	23.2	20.9	18.5
IT	34.4	21.5	9.9	1.8	4.6	8.3	36.3	26.1	18.2
CY	31.6	16.8	8.9	0.0	2.5	5.1	31.6	19.2	14.0
LV	26.0	15.3	12.2	5.7	9.2	15.8	31.6	24.6	27.9
LT	24.5	17.0	6.1	16.3	16.7	28.2	40.8	33.8	34.3
LU	7.5	10.1	5.5	4.1	8.9	7.9	11.7	19.0	13.4
HU	50.1	45.1	45.6	0.0	0.4	0.8	50.2	45.5	46.4
MT	29.5	14.1	4.6	1.2	3.9	7.7	30.6	18.0	12.3
NL	16.8	9.1	4.4	1.8	4.3	6.4	18.6	13.4	10.7
AT	32.9	17.8	12.6	8.5	20.7	25.4	41.4	38.5	38.0
PL	32.9	26.9	12.1	2.2	6.7	13.4	35.1	33.5	25.5
PT	7.6	4.7	2.1	2.8	5.0	5.9	10.4	9.6	8.0
RO	12.9	10.1	5.9	1.5	7.9	14.6	14.4	18.0	20.4
SI	13.6	6.2	2.5	3.3	9.2	17.2	16.9	15.5	19.6
SK	49.8	46.5	52.7	0.1	3.4	7.1	50.0	50.0	59.8
FI	37.1	26.5	21.9	3.8	6.5	8.0	40.9	33.0	29.9
SE	16.4	5.4	4.1	3.8	12.9	16.8	20.2	18.3	20.9
UK	47.3	27.1	16.3	2.7	8.8	11.9	50.0	35.9	28.3
EU	31.7	21.5	12.2	2.1	7.0	9.7	33.7	28.5	21.9

Note: 'Low' education is lower secondary education or below, 'medium' is upper secondary education and 'high' is tertiary. The figures highlighted in darker grey denote countries where the total proportion not in work because of caring is larger for the tertiary-educated than for those with only basic schooling. The figures highlighted in lighter grey denote countries where there is little difference in the proportion between the two groups.

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey

Women with caring responsibilities by household circumstances

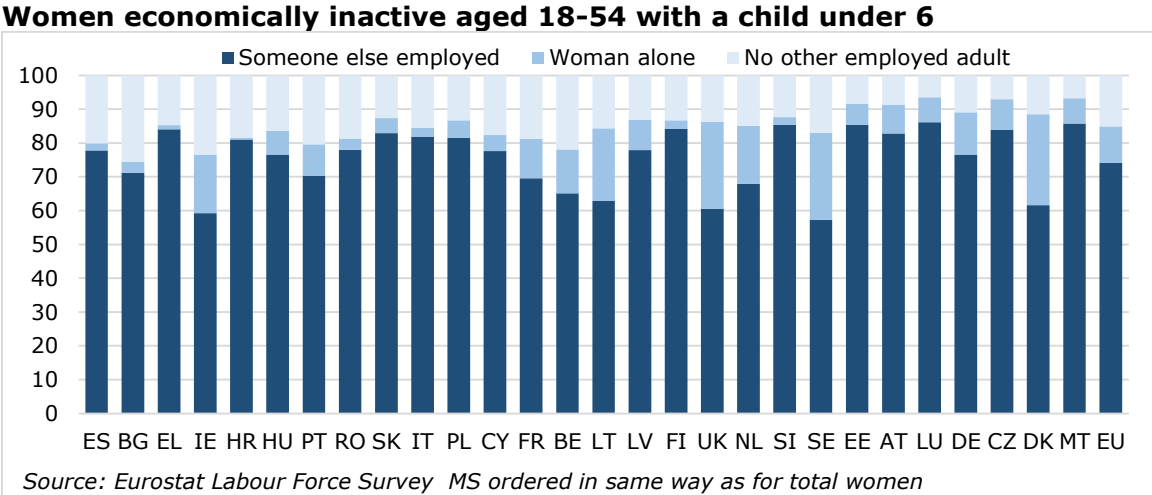
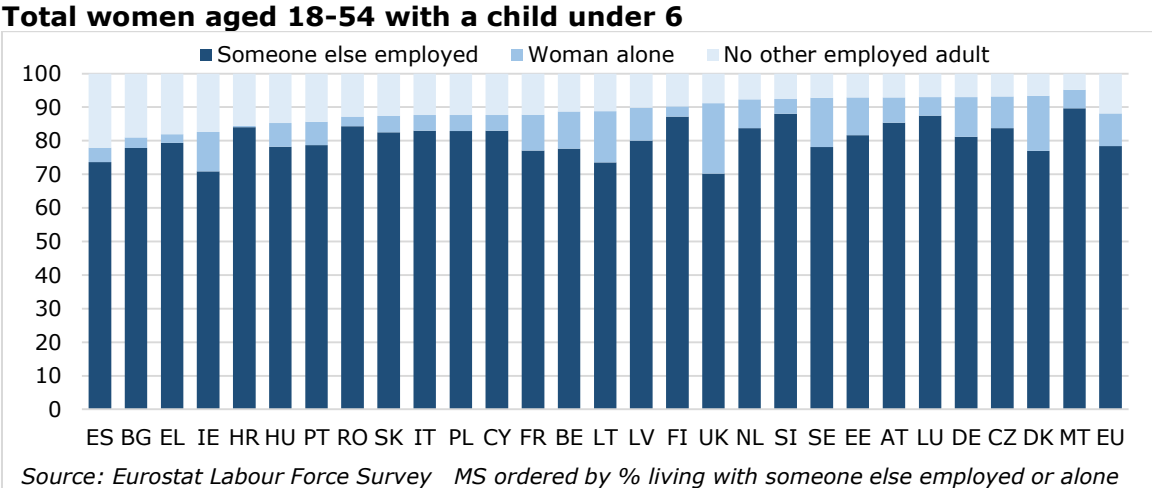
The great majority of women with a child under 6, including both those employed and those not working, live in a household where someone else is in work and therefore bringing in income from employment. Overall in the EU, around 78% of the women concerned lived in such a household in 2014-2015, the proportion varying from 90% in Malta to around 70% in Ireland and the UK (Figure 16). A further 10% lived alone, the proportion varying more widely from 21% in the UK and 17% in Denmark to less than 3% in Greece and Romania and to under 1% in Croatia. This leaves 12% of women in the EU who shared a household where no-one else was employed. The proportion was only around 5% in Malta but over 15% in Croatia, Ireland, Greece and Bulgaria and over 20% in Spain,

all of these, apart from Bulgaria, countries which were particularly hard hit by the crisis with high levels of unemployment.

The figures are slightly different for women with the same characteristics (i.e. in the same age group and with a young child) who were economically inactive. Overall in the EU and in most Member States, fewer of the women concerned lived with someone who was employed (74%), while more lived in a household where none of the others were in work (15%) and slightly more lived alone (11%).

The pattern of differences, however, was by no means uniform across the EU. In Spain and Estonia, more of the inactive shared a household with someone in employment. In Ireland, Belgium, Lithuania, the UK, the Netherlands, Sweden and Finland, a much smaller proportion of them did (10 percentage points or smaller in the first three countries, over 15 percentage points smaller in the last three). In all of them, significantly more of the women lived in households where no-one else was employed, in all of them, except Belgium, many more of the women lived alone.

Figure 16 Division of women aged 18-54 with a child under 6 by employment status of others in the household, 2014-2015 (%)



For the large majority of women to be able to be in employment, or at least in full-time employment, access to some form of childcare is, therefore, likely to be necessary. This may also be the case even for those sharing a household with others who are not in work since they may be actively looking for a job or have an incapacity which prevents them looking after children.

In practice, women with a young child are more likely to be economically inactive if they share a household with someone not in work than if someone else in the household is in

employment, which is the opposite of what might be expected. Overall in the EU in 2014-2015, there were more women among those living in a household with no-one employed who were inactive because of caring reasons (24%) than among those living with someone in work (19%) (Table 2). There were only 5 Member States (Estonia, Greece, Spain, Luxembourg and Slovakia) where the proportion for the latter group was significantly larger than for the former (defined as being over 2 percentage points more) and in most of the other countries, it was smaller. It would be instructive, though beyond the scope of the present study (but it is possible to do from the LFS data on the SEEKREAS variable), to examine the reasons why the other people in the household were not in work, to the extent that they were inactive rather than unemployed. This might throw light on why there is more of a tendency for women to be inactive if they live in a household with other people not working than if they live in one where someone is employed.

On the other hand, women sharing a household where someone was in work were more likely to be on maternity or parental leave than those living in a household where no-one was employed. The overall proportion on leave of those in the former group was twice the proportion of those in the latter and there were no Member States in which the latter proportion was significantly larger than the former, though in 10 countries, there was little difference between the two.

As in the case of the education level, the higher figures for those on leave among women sharing a household with someone in work offset the lower figures for those who were inactive because of caring. They result in the overall proportion of women in such households who are not in work or actively looking for work being little different on average from that for those living in a household with no-one in work. In only 7 Member States do the data accord with expectations, in the sense of the proportion not in work being larger for women living with someone employed than for those sharing a household with others not in work. In 7 others, however, the proportion for the two groups was not significantly different. Accordingly, in 14 Member States – half the total number – the data are at odds with what might be expected, in that the proportion of women who were not in work and who were living with someone in work was smaller than for those sharing a household with those not in employment.

In the case of women with a young child living alone, they are also less likely to be inactive than those living in a household with no-one employed. There were only three Member States in 2014-2015 – Ireland, Malta and Poland – where the relative number who were inactive because of caring reasons was higher than for the latter and in most of the others, it was smaller. However, they are slightly more likely to be on maternity or parental leave. The proportion concerned was larger in 6 countries and smaller only in one (Luxembourg), though in the rest there was no significant difference between the two (i.e. the difference was less than 2 percentage points).

Overall, women living alone, like those sharing a household with someone employed, are less likely to be not working or looking for a job than those living in a household with no-one in work. In 2014-2015, there were 18 Member States in which the number concerned was smaller among those living alone than among the latter group and only four (Bulgaria, Ireland, Croatia and Malta) where the reverse was the case.

Table 2 Proportion of women aged 20-54 with a child under 6 inactive because of caring or on maternity or parental leave by employment status of others in household, 2014 -2015 (% of each group)

	Inactive because of caring			Maternity+parental leave			Total caring		
	Living alone	Living in h-hold with no-one in work	Living in h-hold with someone in work	Living alone	Living in h-hold with no-one in work	Living in h-hold with someone in work	Living alone	Living in h-hold with no-one in work	Living in h-hold with someone in work
BE	6.5	16.5	8.1	1.2	1.8	4.1	7.6	18.3	12.2
BG	32.8	31.7	22.3	13.3	2.0	7.0	46.2	33.7	29.3
CZ	42.8	54.8	47.2	1.7	2.9	6.1	44.6	57.8	53.3
DK	2.9	5.4	2.8	7.0	3.2	4.0	10.0	8.6	6.9
DE	21.1	34.9	22.3	5.8	5.7	12.5	26.9	40.5	34.9
EE	19.6	29.8	34.5	0.0	0.3	1.7	19.6	30.1	36.2
IE	32.1	24.3	16.6	2.9	3.6	8.5	35.0	27.9	25.2
EL	8.5	11.5	16.1	0.8	0.9	2.0	9.4	12.4	18.1
ES	3.5	7.7	10.6	2.9	1.6	3.1	6.4	9.3	13.7
FR	20.4	29.1	14.4	1.5	3.5	4.8	22.0	32.5	19.2
HR	8.2	11.5	8.3	18.3	11.2	11.6	26.5	22.6	19.9
IT	13.2	24.8	22.4	5.0	2.7	5.0	18.2	27.5	27.4
CY	16.4	21.5	12.5	1.4	2.6	4.1	17.8	24.1	16.5
LV	11.5	13.7	15.3	8.7	8.3	12.8	20.2	22.1	28.1
LT	12.5	19.0	10.4	14.5	16.5	25.4	27.1	35.5	35.8
LU	2.9	2.5	7.6	4.0	7.0	7.3	6.9	9.5	14.9
HU	37.1	46.1	47.0	0.2	0.0	0.5	37.3	46.1	47.5
MT	36.9	28.0	16.4	3.8	0.0	4.0	40.7	28.0	20.4
NL	6.5	15.6	8.3	0.7	2.3	5.3	7.2	17.9	13.7
AT	13.6	32.4	17.5	14.9	12.5	21.5	28.5	44.9	39.0
PL	24.5	21.5	20.5	6.5	7.9	9.7	31.0	29.4	30.2
PT	3.4	5.2	4.8	3.7	3.8	4.7	7.2	9.0	9.5
RO	9.1	13.3	9.5	2.9	4.8	8.0	12.0	18.1	17.6
SI	3.7	9.6	4.6	10.4	5.0	13.4	14.1	14.6	18.0
SK	45.3	44.3	49.4	2.3	1.3	4.6	47.6	45.6	54.1
FI	15.2	25.5	25.5	3.3	5.0	7.4	18.5	30.5	32.9
SE	7.5	14.7	5.2	5.3	5.9	16.0	12.8	20.6	21.2
UK	32.6	35.9	24.0	4.4	4.2	10.6	37.0	40.1	34.5
EU	22.7	23.8	19.0	4.2	3.9	7.8	26.9	27.7	26.8

Note: Figures in italics are uncertain because of small sample size. Darker shaded figures denote instances where the proportion for those sharing a household with someone in work is larger than that for those living with no-one employed. The lighter shaded figures denote instances where there is little difference between the two.

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey

Household circumstances of women by education level

The above findings owe much to the education levels of the women living in the different household circumstances in terms of the employment status of others in the household. In practice, in all of the countries in 2014-2015, a larger proportion of women with young child living in households where no-one else was in work had only basic schooling than in the case of those sharing a household with others in employment. In many cases, the difference was substantial (Table 3). This reflects the tendency for people to live with others with a similar level of education. Accordingly, the people that women with only basic schooling were sharing a household with were also likely to have this level of education and, consequently, to be more likely than average to be not working.

Table 3 Proportion of women aged 18-54 with a child under 6 according to the employment status of others in the household by education level, 2014-2015

	% with basic schooling			% with tertiary education		
	Living alone	No-one else employed in household	Someone else employed in household	Living alone	No-one else employed in household	Someone else employed in household
BE	35.4	42.3	15.0	29.1	20.8	51.0
BG	24.8	61.6	16.0	32.6	12.1	38.3
CZ	17.4	36.6	6.2	18.7	15.1	33.5
DK	21.6	19.2	5.9	40.4	49.3	65.5
DE	30.7	44.5	14.1	13.8	15.4	29.4
EE	13.1	28.1	9.6	43.4	23.3	47.2
IE	25.5	25.7	6.3	25.7	30.1	59.2
EL	13.7	29.6	16.2	35.1	27.1	37.3
ES	37.5	54.5	27.1	41.4	22.5	49.7
FR	30.1	34.5	12.0	26.4	23.8	48.8
HR	0.0	21.0	8.8	22.6	19.4	33.4
IT	28.0	48.7	25.8	25.3	12.2	27.2
CY	20.0	17.0	9.1	40.6	37.9	62.0
LV	13.6	16.4	9.6	42.5	32.1	47.6
LT	10.4	17.1	7.0	48.3	25.4	58.2
LU	24.1	31.3	15.3	38.2	38.2	56.0
HU	23.0	54.9	16.7	20.3	11.7	34.5
MT	68.6	73.1	41.4	16.5	9.9	29.3
NL	32.7	33.1	13.8	21.0	22.4	45.9
AT	21.1	37.3	14.3	25.3	19.5	36.4
PL	11.9	13.5	6.2	30.5	31.2	45.5
PT	43.5	55.3	33.3	32.3	22.0	36.7
RO	26.2	50.1	28.4	28.2	11.6	24.3
SI	7.4	23.6	6.6	46.5	33.2	49.8
SK	15.7	45.9	8.5	21.1	15.9	31.5
FI	21.2	22.9	9.4	33.0	35.9	54.2
SE	26.4	34.9	7.6	38.4	38.4	60.0
UK	31.2	39.1	13.9	19.7	20.4	48.4
EU	28.8	40.4	15.9	23.8	21.0	41.3

Note: Dark shading in the first column denotes figures which are less than average for women in the age group with a child under 6 in the country. Dark shading in the fourth column denotes figures which are higher than average for women in the age group with a child under 6 in the country. Light shading in both columns denotes figures which are not significantly different from average (i.e. less 2 percentage points different).

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey

Equally, for the same reason, a smaller proportion of women sharing a household with someone not in work had tertiary education than in the case of those living in a household where someone was in employment. A relatively large proportion of the people they were sharing with were, therefore, also likely to have tertiary education and to be more likely to be employed as a result.

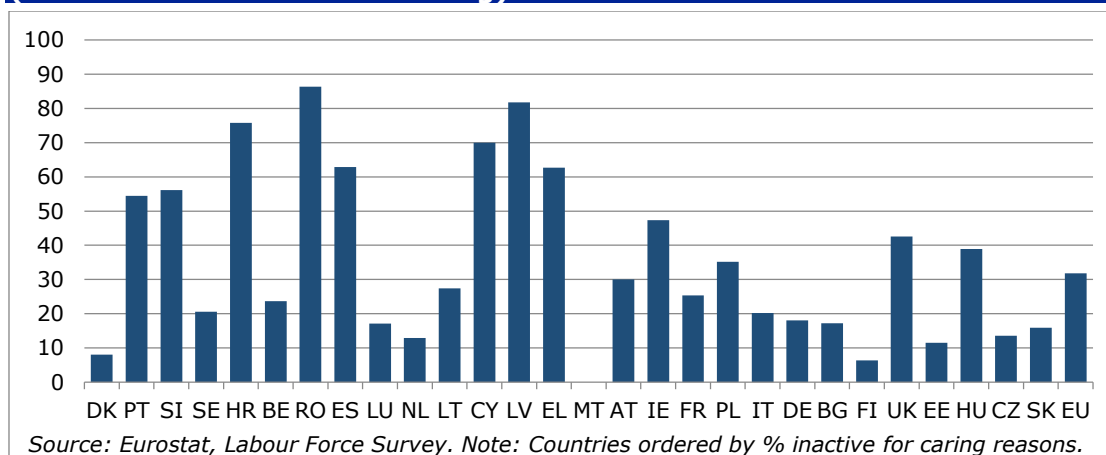
At the same time, a smaller proportion of women with a young child living alone had tertiary education than average (there were only 6 Member States where this was not the case and only one where the proportion with tertiary education was larger). By the same token a larger proportion in most cases had only basic schooling (there were 8 Member States where this was not so and only three where the proportion with only basic schooling was smaller). Although, therefore, such women may have a need for childcare in order to be in paid work, in most Member States, their relatively low level of education implies that they

might find it relatively difficult both to find employment and to obtain a job which provides an adequate level of income to cover the costs of childcare⁸.

Women inactive because of a lack of care services

Perhaps unexpectedly, only a minority of women who were inactive for caring reasons reported a lack of suitable or affordable care services as the reason for not being in the work force (i.e. in responses to the NEEDCARE variable). The majority reported that the availability of care services did not influence their decision not to be in employment or actively to seek work. In 2014-2015, less than a third of women with a child under 6 reported the lack of such services to be the reason for their inactivity (Figure 17 in which countries are ordered from right to left in terms of the proportion of women in the age group who are inactive because of caring). Again the figures vary substantially, from 85% of women inactive for caring reasons in Romania and 80% in Latvia to less than 10% in Denmark and Finland and zero in Malta. How these figures represent the reality in the different countries is an issue deserving further investigation (such as, for example, through a special module of the LFS which asks about childcare in more detail and, in particular, distinguishes between the availability of care, its affordability and its quality).

Figure 17 Proportion of women aged 18-54 with a child under 6 reporting a lack of available or affordable care services as the reason for inactivity, 2014-2015 (% of inactive because of caring)



There is some tendency (as is evident in Figure 17) for the proportion reporting a lack of suitable care services to be larger in countries where the relative number of women in the age group who were inactive for caring reasons was lowest and to be smaller where the number was highest, but the tendency is relatively weak (the correlation coefficient is only 0.33). Nevertheless, in most of the countries where the relative number of women inactive because of caring for children or adults was highest, the proportion reporting the lack of suitable care services to be the reason for this was well below average. This was particularly the case in Slovakia and the Czech Republic where the proportion inactive for caring reasons was largest of all. In Hungary, however, where the proportion inactive because of caring was only slightly smaller, the relative number reporting a lack of suitable care services was above average, though still below 40%, and in the UK, where the proportion inactive because of caring was also relatively large, it was only just over 40%.

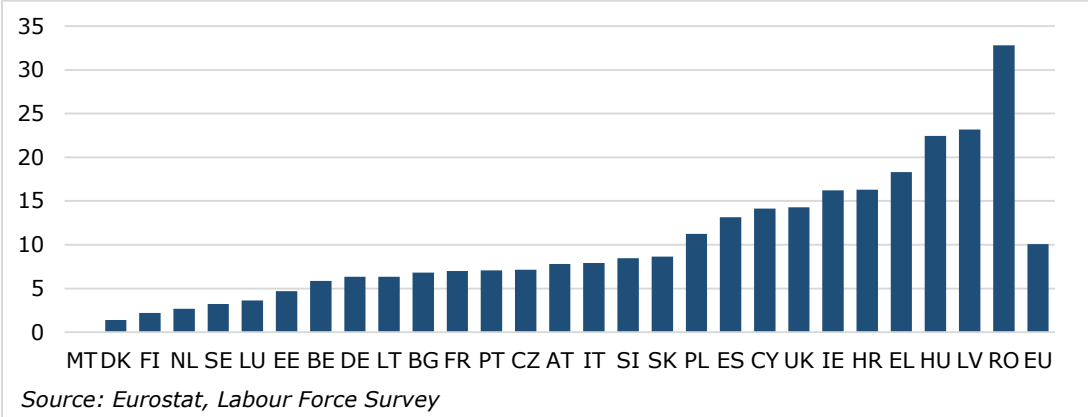
Indeed, in all the countries where the proportion of women inactive because of caring was above average, the relative number reporting a lack of suitable care services to be the reason for this was below half. In these countries, therefore, the implication seems to be that the majority of women who withdraw from the work force to look after young children do so out of choice, or perhaps because it is the norm in the country in question, rather than because no suitable and affordable care facilities are available. How far this represents

⁸ See above for the relationship between education level and earnings.

the reality, as noted above, deserves further investigation given the lack of affordability and dissatisfaction with the quality of care that is reported in some of the countries where the proportion of women ostensibly not working because of a lack of suitable care services is relatively small.

At the same time, it is still the case, on the basis of the responses to the LFS question, that in a number of countries a significant number of women of working age are economically inactive because of the lack of availability of care services. In the EU as a whole, some 10% of women in the age group with a child under 6 (around 2.6 million) were inactive for this reason in 2014-2015 (Figure 18).

Figure 18 Proportion of women aged 18-54 with a child under 6 economically inactive because of a lack of suitable care services, 2014-2015 (%)



In Romania, around a third of such women (close to 300,000) were not economically active for this reason, while in both Hungary and Latvia, the figure was around a quarter and in Greece, almost 20%. Although the proportion was smaller in the other countries, at only around 15% or less, the numbers concerned were still significant – around 575,000 in the UK, 375,000 in Spain, over 250,000 in France and Poland and over 200,000 in Germany. This implies that there is considerable scope, therefore, for increasing the participation rate of women in the work force in many countries through expanding the provision of childcare facilities or reducing their cost. (As indicated above, the NEEDCARE variable does not at present allow the two to be distinguished, which it is important for policy reasons to be able to do.)

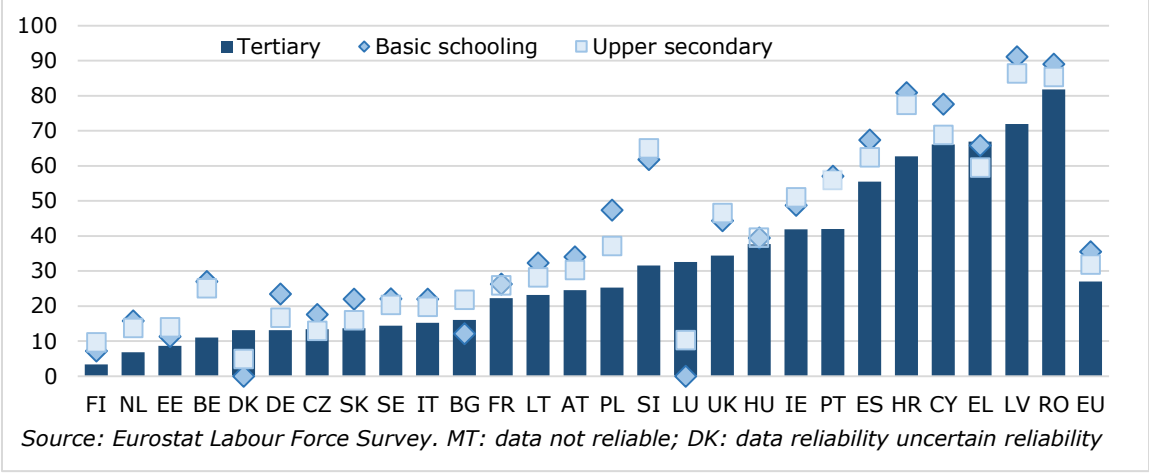
Women inactive because of a lack of care services by education level

The number of women who report being economically inactive because of a lack of suitable and affordable care services tends to be higher among those with relatively low levels of education than among those with higher levels, suggesting that affordability issues play a role in their decision not to work. The difference, however, in many countries is relatively small. In 2014-2015, 36% of women in the EU with young children and with only basic schooling who were inactive reported a lack of suitable care services as the main reason for their inactivity as against 32% of those with upper secondary education and 27% of the tertiary-educated (Figure 19).

In only three countries (Bulgaria, Denmark and Luxembourg) was the proportion reporting being inactive because of a lack of suitable care services smaller for those with only basic schooling than for those with tertiary education, though in Greece, it was much the same. The difference was particularly wide in Poland, Slovenia, Croatia and Latvia (around 20 percentage points or more) and it was also significant (10 percentage points or more in Belgium, Germany, Austria, the UK, Portugal, Spain and Cyprus). In these countries especially, therefore, the indications are that the affordability of childcare is an important issue, making it more difficult for women with young children to work if they have a relatively low level of education and, accordingly, low earnings-capacity. At the same time,

in most countries, the affordability, or suitability, of care services does not seem to be the main reason for women with young children not being economically active, even among those with only basic schooling.

Figure 19 Proportion of women aged 18-54 with a child under 6 reporting a lack of available or affordable care services as the reason for inactivity by education level, 2014-2015 (% of inactive because of caring in each group)



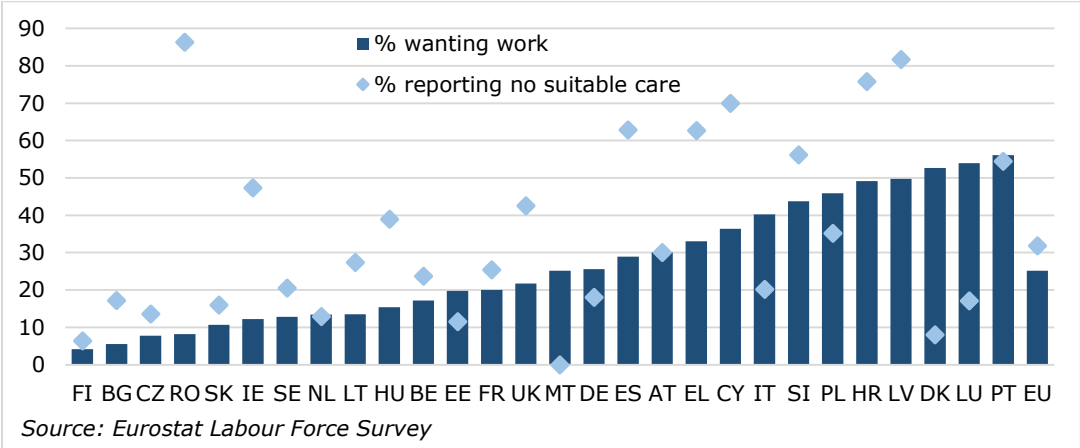
Women inactive who would like to work

The WANTWORK variable in the LFS potentially enables a further insight to be gained into the extent to which a lack of suitable care services prevents women with young children to be in employment. In principle, the fact that women with young children are not working and looking after them because of a lack of suitable care services ought to imply that they would take up employment if suitable care services were both available and affordable. In practice, this is not the case, which raises question about the interpretation of the responses to the WANTWORK variable and its usefulness, particularly as it is often used to indicate the size of the potential work force in the EU.

First, only a relatively small minority of those who were economically inactive for caring reasons reported that they would like to have work despite not actively seeking a job. Overall, only a quarter of the women in this situation in the EU reported wanting to work in 2014-2015 as against almost a third who reported being inactive because of a lack of suitable care services (Figure 20).

In some countries, however, there is a close relationship between the proportion of the inactive wanting to work and the proportion reporting a lack of suitable care as the reason for not actively seeking work. This is the case, in particular, in the Netherlands, Austria and Portugal and to a slightly lesser extent in Finland. In these countries, therefore, the response to the WANTWORK variable are consistent with those to the NEEDCARE variable – the women reporting a lack of suitable care services as the reason for not looking for work would in most cases like to work (though see below in the case of the Netherlands where those reporting positively to the NEEDCARE variable are shown not to be the same as those reporting to the WANTWORK variable).

Figure 20 Proportion of women aged 18-54 with a child under 6 inactive because of caring reporting wanting to work and no suitable care services, 2014-2015 (%)

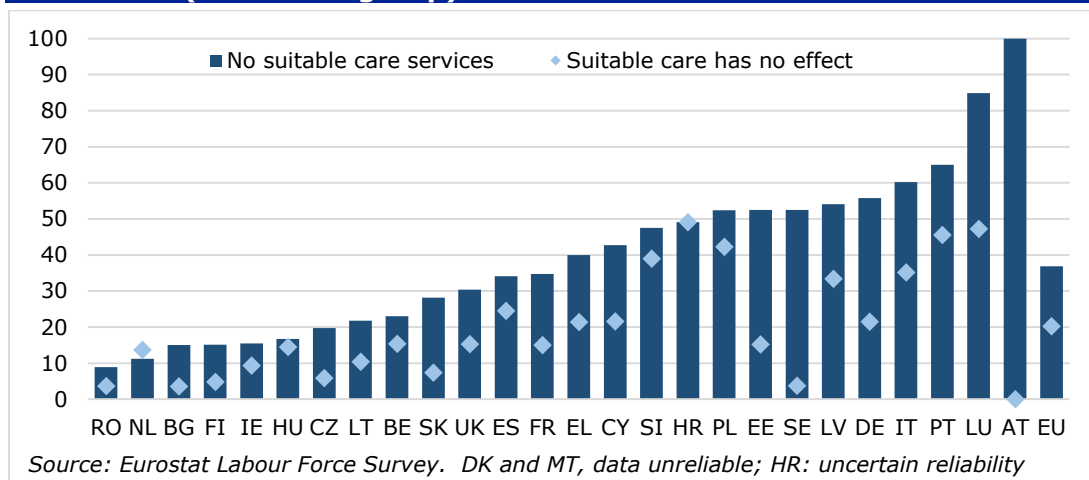


In other countries, on the other hand, the two diverge markedly. This is especially the case in Romania, where the proportion wanting to work among those who were inactive for caring reasons was among the smallest in the EU in 2014-2015, while the proportion who were inactive because of no suitable care being available was the largest. In Denmark, conversely, the proportion wanting to work was among the largest but the proportion inactive because of a lack of suitable care was among the smallest. In many countries (8 overall in addition to Romania, including, for example, Bulgaria, Ireland, Hungary, the UK and Spain), the proportion of women inactive because of caring who reported they would like to have work was only half or less of the proportion inactive because of a lack of suitable care services. In others, on the other hand (including Estonia, Italy and Luxembourg as well as Denmark), the proportion was twice or more the proportion inactive because of a lack of such services.

Overall, therefore, there is an apparent lack of consistency between the two responses, which might reflect the way in which the questions in the survey are interpreted which it is important to investigate further in order to better understand the reason for the inconsistency and to do something about it. 'Would like to have work', therefore, might in some cases express a vague wish rather than a tangible one. In other cases, a lack of suitable care services might deter women from responding positively to the question since, in practice, such a lack means that they are unable to work even though they might wish to. In other words, the question does not make it clear whether responses should be given on the assumption that constraints on being able to work, such as suitable care services not being available, were removed or not. Whatever the underlying reason for the divergence between the two sets of responses, it suggests that action needs to be taken in order to ensure that the responses to the WANTWORK variable have a clear-cut meaning which is the same across countries, which does not seem to be the case at present.

This conclusion is reinforced by the results of examining directly the proportion of women with a young child who report being inactive because of a lack of suitable care services who also report wanting to work despite not actively looking for as job. In the EU in 2014-2015, only 37% of the women concerned stated that they would like to work (Figure 21). The proportion was over half in only 9 Member States and over 60% only in three of these (Portugal, Luxembourg and Austria, in the last of which it was 100%, indicating a consistency between the two variables which is not present elsewhere).

Figure 21 Proportion of women aged 18-54 with a child under 6 who are inactive reporting wanting to work by availability of suitable care services, 2014-2015 (% of each group)

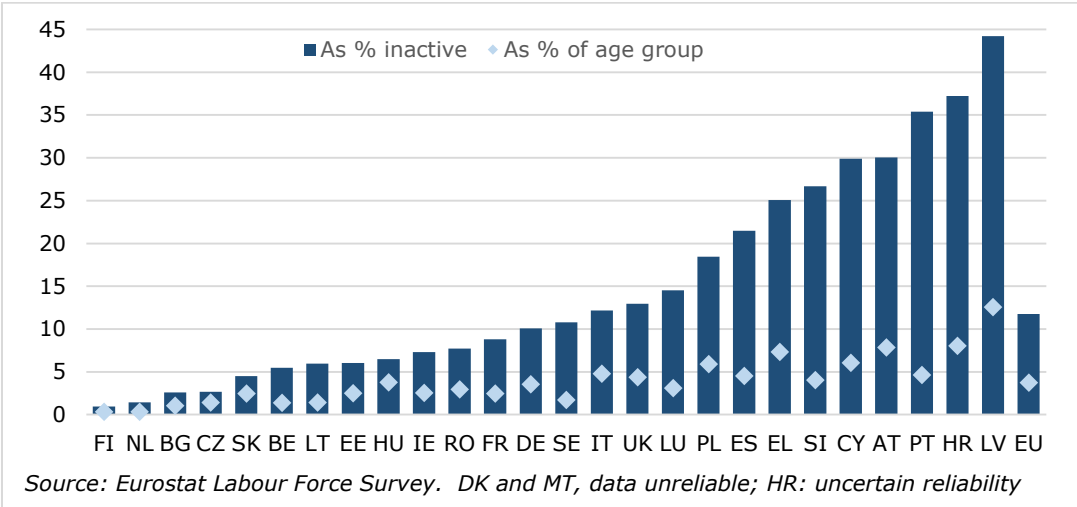


The proportion, however, was at least larger than among those who reported that the availability of suitable care services had no effect on their decision not to work or actively to seek a job, in nearly all countries, in most of them, markedly so. (Austria and Sweden are the most prominent examples, in each of which few or no women reported wanting to work among those for whom the lack of care services is stated not to affect their decision not to work.) In the Netherlands, on the other hand, slightly more women among those reporting that the availability of care services did not affect their decision not to be economically active reported wanting to work than among those for whom it had an effect and in Hungary and Croatia, there was little or no difference between the two. This clearly suggests that there is an inconsistency in the responses to the two variables, or at least that in a number of countries the responses to the WANTWORK variable have little to do with the availability of suitable childcare and that there are other reasons why women with young children who are economically inactive are not looking for work.

To put these results into further perspective, the number of women reporting that they would like to work among those who were inactive because of caring for children and a lack of suitable care services represented only a small proportion of the total women aged 18-54 who were inactive in the age group in 2014-2015. In the EU as a whole, the proportion amounted to 12% of the total inactive and just under 4% of all women with young children in the age group, which is small but still significant in terms of absolute numbers (Figure 22). In Latvia, however, the proportion was close to 45% of women who were inactive and in Portugal and Croatia, over 35%, though it was over 25% in only another three countries, Slovenia, Cyprus and Austria, and over 15% in only a further three, Poland, Spain and Greece.

The need for care services to increase the participation of women with young children in the work force – or at least to give them a genuine choice over whether to participate or not – therefore, seems to be particularly acute in a number of the EU13 countries and in the southern EU Member States, as well as Austria. But even here, the number who want to work among those inactive because of a lack of suitable care services amounted to less than 10% of women in the age group with a child under 6 in all of the countries except Latvia and above 6% in only three of the others (Greece, Austria and Croatia).

Figure 22 Proportion of women aged 18-54 with a child under 6 who are inactive because of caring and a lack of suitable care service who want to work, 2014-2015 (% of all women inactive with a young child and % of all women with a young child in age group)

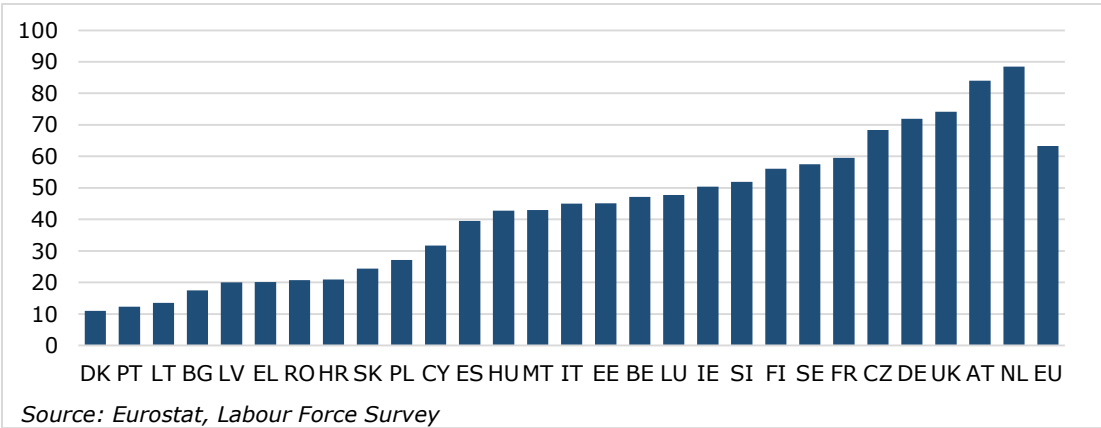


Part-time working for caring reasons

As indicated at the outset, women with young children are more likely not only to be economically inactive than their counterparts without children but, if they are employed, to work part-time rather than full-time.

The majority of the women with young children working part-time do so because of the need to look after them or adults requiring care ((the two are not separately distinguished in the LFS, but it can be assumed that the former need predominates for women in this age group). Across the EU as a whole, almost two-thirds (63%) of the women in part-time employment with children under 6 reported this to be the case in 2014-2015 (Figure 23).

Figure 23 Proportion of women aged 18-54 with a child under 6 and employed part-time reporting the need to care for children or adults as the reason for working part-time, 2014-2015 (% of those employed part-time)

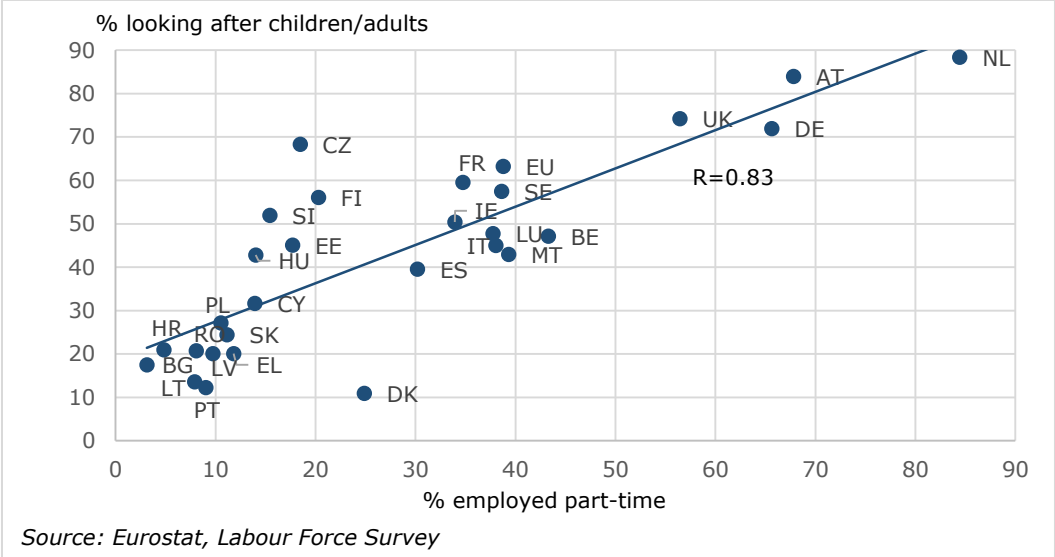


However, there is a marked variation between countries in the proportion concerned. In most of them, less than half of women with a young child who were employed part-time reported this as the reason and in 10 Member States, only around a quarter or less did so.

These countries – the main exception is Denmark – are predominantly ones in which a relatively small proportion of women worked part-time. Equally, the countries in which a relatively large share of women employed part-time did so because of caring reasons were in nearly all cases ones in which a relatively large proportion of women were in part-time jobs, the main exception in this case being the Czech Republic.

Indeed, there is a close relationship between the extent of part-time working among women with young children and the proportion in such jobs reporting caring for children or adults to be the reason (Figure 24, which shows a correlation co-efficient between the two of 0.83).

Figure 24 Proportion of women aged 18-54 with a child under 6 and in part-time work reporting the need to care for children or adults as the reason relative to proportion employed part-time, 2014-2015

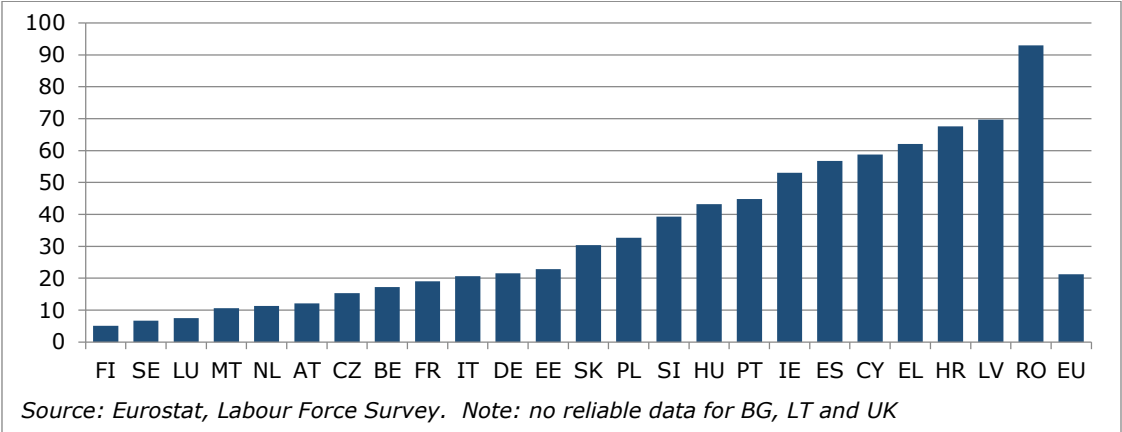


Whereas in countries in which a relatively large number of women are in part-time employment, the main reason for working part-time among such women is the need to look after children (or adults in need of care), in those where a relatively small number are in part-time jobs, other reasons tend to be more important. Prominent among these reasons is the inability to find a full-time job, implying that part-time work in these countries is not really a choice for many women but is forced on them by a lack of suitable full-time jobs. In Bulgaria, Greece and Portugal, almost 60% of women employed part-time reported this to be the reason, in Cyprus, around 55% did so, in Spain and Italy, around 45% and in Romania, over 40%. In these countries, therefore, the preference among women with young children is for full-time employment, reflecting the relatively low income levels of those concerned in many of the countries, the implication being that there was the possibility of finding other means of providing care for their children if they were unable to provide it themselves.

Women working part-time because of a lack of suitable care services

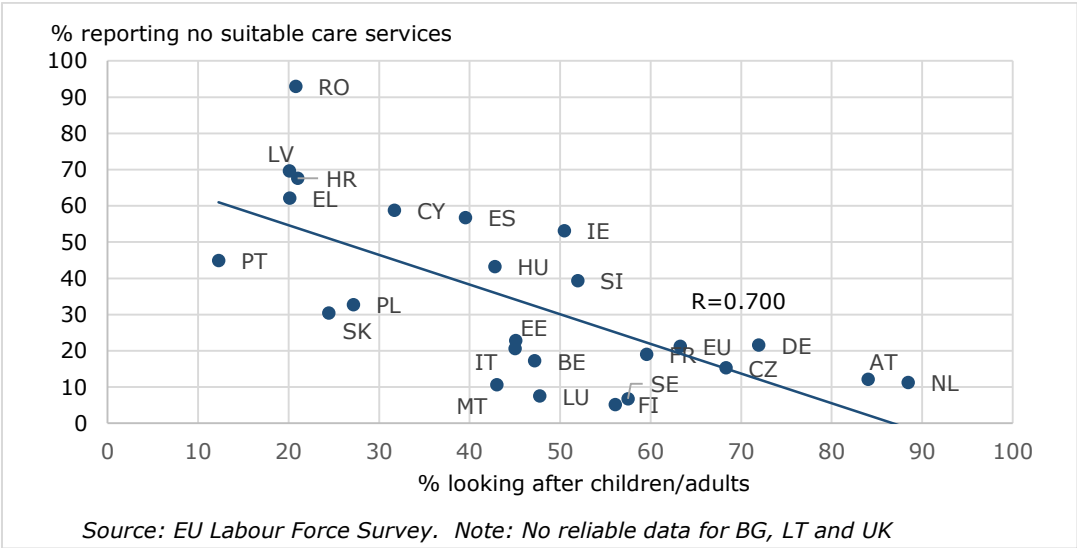
In practice, according to the LFS, only a small proportion of women with young children who were employed part-time in order to look after them did so because of the lack of suitable or affordable childcare facilities – or, more specifically, relatively few of the women working part-time reported this to be the reason. Across the EU as a whole in 2014-2015, the proportion was only just over 20%. This, however, was by no means the case in all Member States. Over 90% in Romania reported a lack of care services to be the reason for them working part-time, close to 70% in both Croatia and Latvia, around 60% in Cyprus and Greece and over 50% in Ireland (Figure 25).

Figure 25 Proportion of women aged 18-54 with a child under 6 working part-time because suitable or affordable childcare services not available, 2014-2015 (% of women working part-time because of caring reasons)



In most of the countries where the proportion was relatively large, few women worked part-time for caring reasons and there is some tendency for the relative number reporting a lack of suitable or affordable care facilities to decline as the proportion employed part-time because of caring for children (or adults) increases (Figure 26).

Figure 26 Proportion of women aged 18-54 with a child under 6 and employed part-time reporting a lack of suitable or affordable care services relative to the proportion working part-time because of caring for children or adults, EU Member States, 2014-2015 (% of each group)

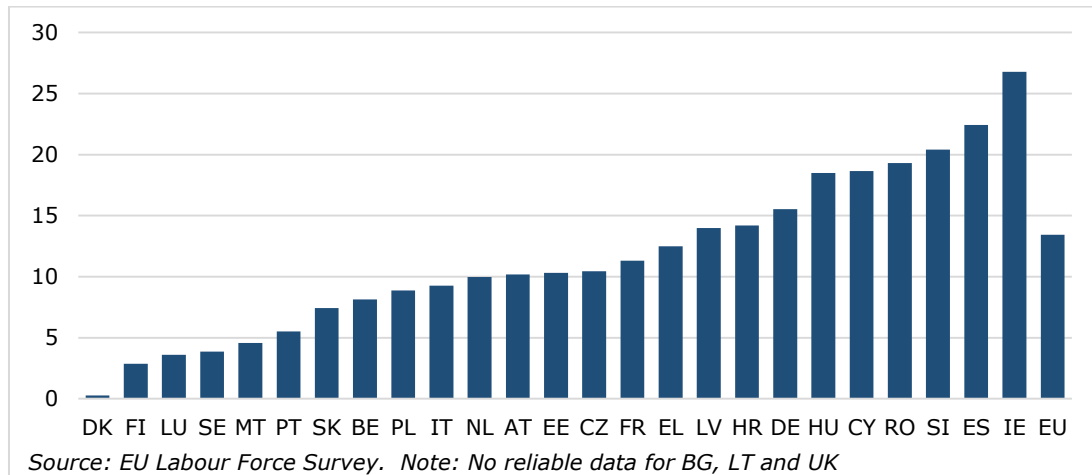


This is not necessarily what would be expected. It implies that most of the women in part-time work because of caring for their children in the countries where the proportion concerned is relatively large are doing so out of choice and not because there are no suitable childcare facilities available or they cannot afford them. If the responses are valid and there is no misunderstanding about the question or misreporting, this has clear policy implications since it means that simply providing more affordable childcare services in countries where a relatively large number of women with young children work part-time would have only a relatively small effect on the proportions concerned. It would have a larger effect in other countries, but in these countries, there are fewer women working part-time who stand to be affected.

Nevertheless, the implication is that around 13% of women in the EU in 2014-2015 who were employed part-time did not work full-time because of a lack of suitable care services, with the proportion rising to over 25% in Ireland and over 20% in Slovenia and Spain,

while in Hungary, Cyprus and Hungary, it was just under 20% (Figure 27). On the other hand, in Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, Sweden and Malta, the proportion was under 5% of women with young children working part-time.

Figure 27 Proportion of women age 18-54 with a child under 6 employed part-time because of a lack of suitable or affordable care services, 2014-2015 (% of those employed part-time)



The NEEDCARE variable in the LFS, therefore, provides an important insight into the availability of care services in EU Member States and the extent to which a lack of suitable or affordable services affects the decision of women as to whether to work part-time rather than full-time.

Women working part-time for caring reasons by household circumstances

Women in the age group 18-54 with a young child are more likely to work part-time because of the need to care for children either if their spouse or partner is employed – or more, generally if someone else in the household is in work – or if they live alone than those who live in a household where no-one else is in work. This is in line with what might be expected given the potential help with childcare that other(s) in the household might be able to provide if they are not in employment. At the same time, as seen above, those living in households with no-one else in work tend to have relatively low levels of education and, accordingly, relatively low earnings capacity which is likely to put a premium on working full-time. The same applies to women living alone, but in this case, there is no-one else in the household to assist with childcare.

In the EU as a whole, almost two-thirds of women employed part-time sharing a household with someone else in employment worked part-time for caring reasons in 2014-2015, or 16% of all those in such households (Table 4 in which, except for those sharing a household with someone employed, the number of observations is too small to be reliable in many countries).

At the same time, just over 60% of women working part-time and living alone with a young child were not in a full-time job because of caring, or around 15% of all women living alone with a child under 6.

These figures compare with under 40% of those working part-time living in a household with no-one else employed, or just 5% of all women with a young child in households of this kind. There are no Member States in which the proportion working part-time was larger than in households where someone else was in employment and only one, France, in which it was larger than for women living alone.

Table 4 Women aged 18-54 with a child under 6 in part-time employment because of caring for children or adults, 2014-2015

	Woman only adult	No-one else employed	At least one other person employed	Woman only adult	No-one else employed	At least one other person employed
	<i>% of women in part-time work</i>			<i>% of women aged 18-54 with child</i>		
BE	39.9	34.3	48.8	8.0	5.6	16.0
CZ	70.9		69.3	5.7		5.7
DK	14.4	<i>12.3</i>	15.1	2.3	<i>2.3</i>	2.9
DE	70.4	54.5	72.7	23.6	9.4	31.5
EE			43.4			4.0
IE	53.1	36.2	52.0	10.8	6.3	10.9
EL		<i>9.8</i>	22.2		<i>0.6</i>	1.3
ES	33.2	19.8	43.3	6.5	2.6	8.2
FR	33.8	43.4	63.8	5.8	6.4	15.4
HR			<i>21.4</i>			<i>0.7</i>
IT	37.9	23.4	47.8	8.4	3.4	10.0
CY			35.5			3.2
LV			22.2			1.5
LT			12.9			<i>0.7</i>
LU			49.3			14.0
HU			41.6			2.3
MT			43.4			10.5
NL	78.7	63.0	89.9	34.0	22.2	59.8
AT	86.0	73.7	84.5	39.8	22.2	41.2
PL	25.4	20.4	28.2	<i>1.8</i>	1.3	1.8
PT			12.3			0.8
RO			21.4			1.1
SI	49.7		52.4	5.9		6.2
SK			27.4			1.2
FI			58.0			7.3
SE	54.8	32.6	58.8	16.5	5.5	18.5
UK	71.4	55.5	75.7	21.2	10.0	28.4
EU	60.8	38.4	65.1	14.5	5.0	16.2

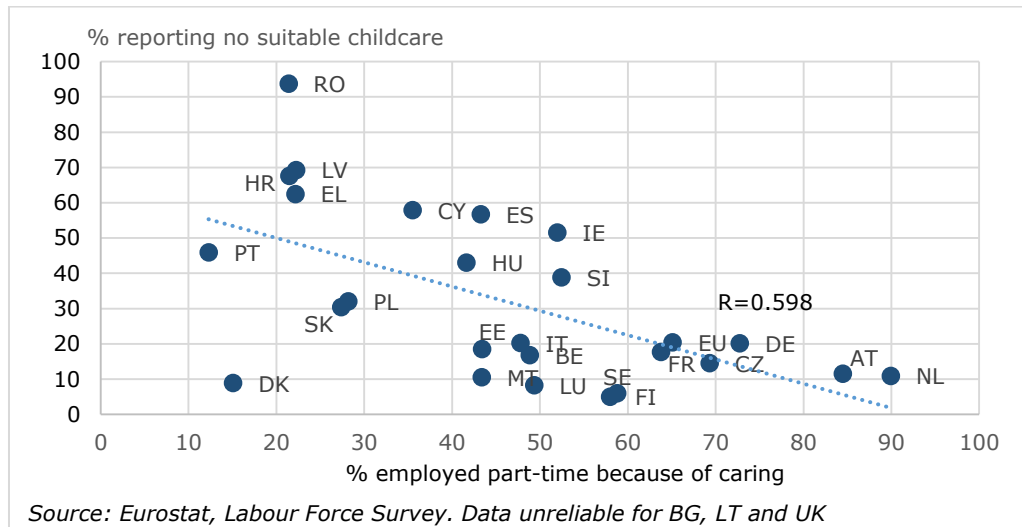
Notes: Blanks denote data not reliable; Figures in italics denote uncertain reliability because of small sample size.
Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey

Accordingly, women are less likely to work part-time if they live in a household where no-one else is employed and for those that do, other reasons in many cases are more important than the need to care for children. These reasons include, in particular, an inability to find a full-time job, especially in Spain, Italy (in both of which just over 70% of women in a part-time job who had a young child and lived in a household with no-one else in work reported this to be the reason), Portugal (where the figure was almost 80%) and Greece (where it was around 90%).

If the analysis is restricted to women living in households with someone else in work – for whom the need for care services seems especially important – there remains a relationship between the proportion of women working part-time for caring reasons and the proportion among these reporting a lack of suitable or affordable care services (Figure 28). It is slightly less strong, however, than for all women (the correlation coefficient is 0.60 rather than 0.70), though the EU average proportion of those working part-time reporting a lack of suitable care services is much the same (20% as against 21%). The relative number reporting a lack of suitable care services tends, therefore, to be small in countries where the proportion of women working part-time because of caring for children or adults is relatively large – in the Netherlands, Austria and Germany, in particular. Conversely, it is relatively large in Greece, Croatia, Latvia and Romania where the proportion working part-time for caring reasons is relatively small. Denmark, however, continues to stand out as a

country where part-time working for caring reasons is also small but where relatively few of the women concerned report a lack of suitable care services.

Figure 28 Proportion of women aged 18-54 with a child under 6, living with someone in work and employed part-time reporting a lack of suitable or affordable care services relative to the proportion working part-time because of caring for children or adults, EU Member States, 2014-2015 (% of each group)

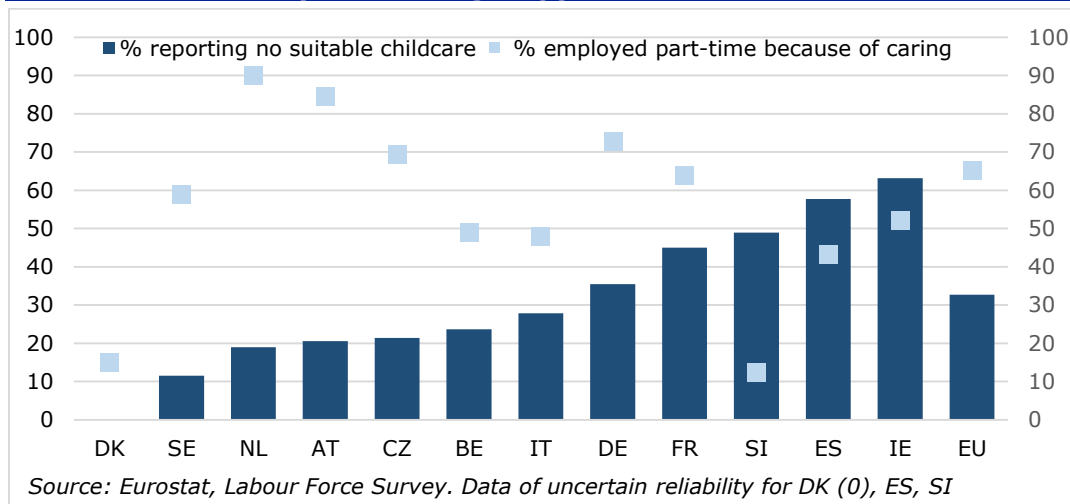


This, therefore, reinforces the implication that providing more and better childcare may not lead to a much larger proportion of women with young children working full-time instead of part-time in countries where part-time employment is widespread among the women concerned. Nevertheless, the absolute numbers who potentially would be affected are still significant in many cases, amounting, for example, to around 200,000 women in Germany.

For women with young children living alone, the relative number working part-time because of caring who report a lack of care services as the reason for not working full-time is larger than for those sharing a household with someone in employment (almost a third as against 20%). Moreover, this was the case in all the countries for which the data are reasonably reliable, apart from Denmark and Spain (in the last of which the proportions were much the same). There is also less of an inverse relationship with the overall proportion working part-time for caring reasons (Figure 29, though there are relatively few countries where the number of observations is sufficient for inclusion in the analysis).

It is still the case, however, that there were only two Member States, Spain and Ireland, where the proportion of women employed part-time because of caring reporting a lack of care services as the reason for doing so was over half. In the others, apart from France and Slovenia, it was less than 40%.

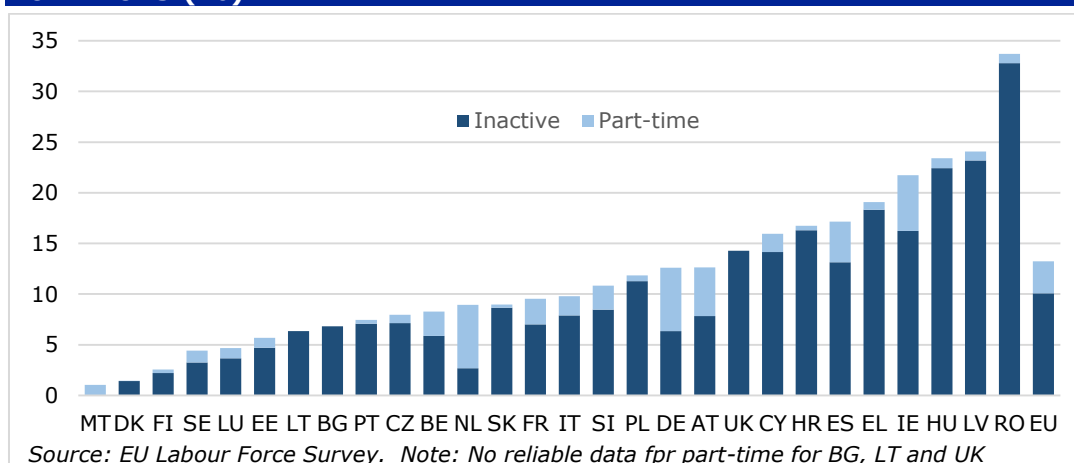
Figure 29 Proportion of women aged 18-54 with a child under 6 and living alone and working part-time who report a lack of suitable or affordable care services relative to the proportion working part-time because of caring for children or adults, 2014-2015 (% of each group)



Women not in work or working part-time because of a lack of childcare

To put the figures into perspective, the above findings can be considered together with those for women not part of the work force because of a lack of childcare to obtain an indication of the scale of the issue. The implication of the above analysis is that around 3% of women in the age group in the EU with a young child were working part-time because of a lack of suitable care services. If combined with the findings further above for women who were economically inactive, this implies that, in 2014-2015, some 13% of women with a young child were either not in work at all or working part-time rather than full-time because suitable or affordable care facilities were not available (Figure 30). In absolute terms, this means that close to 3.5 million women across the EU were affected in their employment decisions by a lack of access to suitable care services. The overall proportion was just over a third in Romania, over 20% in Ireland, Hungary and Latvia and over 15% in Cyprus, Croatia, Spain and Greece. These countries, therefore, are the ones where a lack of suitable childcare services seems most acute and has most effect on the employment behaviour of women with young children.

Figure 30 Proportion of women aged 18-54 with a child under 6 inactive or working part-time because of a lack of suitable or affordable care services, 2014-2015 (%)



At the same time, the proportion in the UK, where data are not available for women working part-time reporting on childcare services, was almost certainly well over the 15% figure relating to those who were inactive only, given that over 25% of women in the age group

with a young child worked part-time because of caring reasons. If the proportion doing so because of a lack of suitable care services was the same as for those who were inactive, it would add around 10 percentage points to the figure and even if the proportion were half this, it would increase the overall proportion to 20% (or around 1 million women).

At the other extreme, in Malta, Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Luxembourg, less than 5% of women in the age group with a young child were either inactive or worked part-time because of a lack of suitable care services.

Older people aged 55-64

Economic activity among older people

As in the case of women with young children, older people aged 55-64, i.e. nearing the official age of retirement in most EU countries States, are more likely to be economic active the higher the level of education they have. Unlike in the case of women with children, however, this is universally so in all Member States. In other words, education levels have more effect on whether men and women nearing retirement age are employed or not than they do in the case of women with children. In the EU as a whole, therefore, in 2014-2015, 70% of those aged 55-64 were in employment and a further 3% were unemployed, whereas only 38% of those with only basic schooling were employed and just over 5% were unemployed (Figure 31). Accordingly, the relative number who were economically active was 30 percentage points less than for the tertiary educated. The activity rate of those with upper secondary education (not shown in the Figure) was midway between the two at 58%.

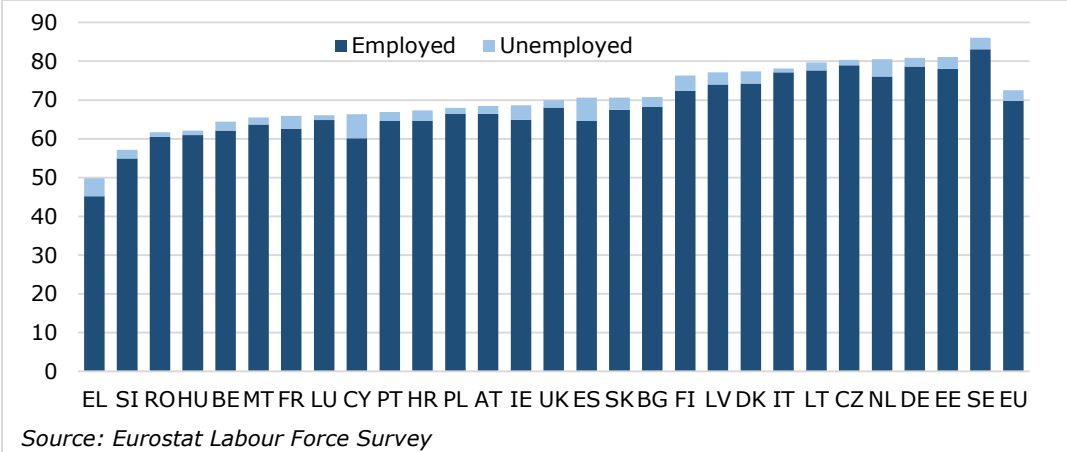
The activity rate of men and women in this age group with tertiary education varied markedly across the EU, from 86% in Sweden and over 80% in the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Germany and Estonia to only just over 60% in Romania and Hungary, 55% in Slovenia and 50% in Greece. This to some extent reflects the official age of retirement, which is 62-63 in the last three countries and 60 for women in Romania.

In all countries, the rate was higher than for those with only basic schooling, in most cases, substantially so. Only in Sweden was the activity rate for those with this level of education above 60% and only in another 6 countries was it above 50%, in most of them only slightly, while the rate was below 30% in Hungary, Croatia and Poland and below 35% in another 7 countries. The latter include the Czech Republic and Lithuania, which have among the highest rates for those with tertiary education. Accordingly, there is little uniformity in the difference between the two rates and only a weak correlation between them, which implies that, since the official retirement age applies to everyone irrespective of their education level, other factors apart from this determine the relative number of people who are economically active in this age group.

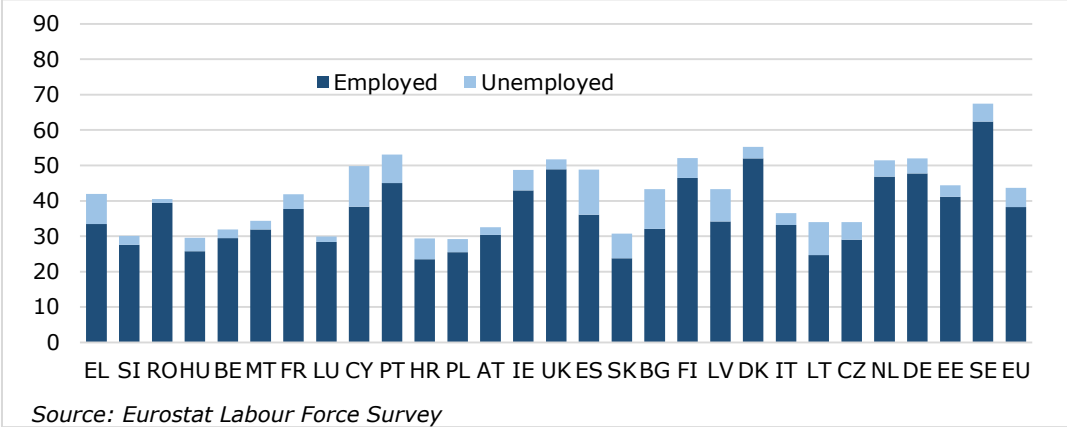
In all countries too, the activity rate for those with upper secondary education was lower than for those with tertiary education and higher than those with only basic schooling, though again the difference in both cases varied. In all countries too, the same pattern of differences was evident for men and women, though the rates were lower for women in almost all Member States – the two exceptions are Lithuania and Finland where the rate for women with tertiary education was slightly higher than for men – especially for those with only basic schooling. The activity rate for men with tertiary education in the EU was on average 11 percentage points higher than for women, while for men with only basic schooling, it was 18 percentage points higher and for those with upper secondary education, 13 percentage points. The implication is that there is a bigger difference between those with tertiary education and those with only basic schooling for women than for men – 31 percentage points overall (as against 24 percentage points for men), 54 percentage points in Lithuania (as against 39 percentage points) and 47-48 percentage points in the Czech Republic and Italy (as against 34 percentage points).

Figure 31 Proportion of those aged 55-64 with tertiary education and only basic schooling employed and unemployed, 2014-2015 (& of each group)

Tertiary-educated



Those with only basic schooling

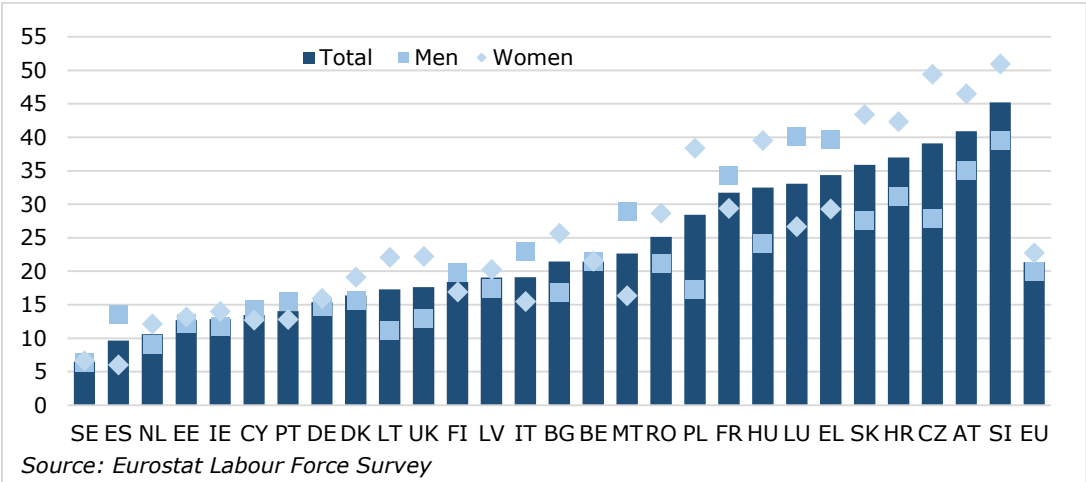


Retirement among those aged 55-64

Only just under half (49%) of the men and women aged 55-64 in the EU recorded as being inactive reported being retired from working in 2014-2015, more of the men (56%) than of the women (45%). The rest were ill or disabled (21%), inactive because of personal or family responsibilities (7%), believed that no work was available (6%) or were inactive for an unspecified reason (13%). Only 3% were caring for a child or adult. The figures were slightly different for men and women, with a larger share of men reporting being ill or disabled (27% as against 18%) and many more women citing personal or family responsibilities (11% as against only 2%). Although more women than men reported caring for a child or adult, the proportion remained small (4% as opposed to 1%). The same proportion of both (6%) considered that no work was available.

The relative number of the inactive reporting being retired (according to the SEEKREAS variable) varies markedly across countries, from close to 75% in Slovenia and Slovakia, nearly 80% in Austria and over 90% in the Czech Republic to around 30% or just above in Sweden, the Netherlands, Cyprus and Ireland and only just over 20% in Spain. Combining these with the extent of inactivity among the age group indicates that while some 21% of those aged 55-64 reported being retired in the EU 2014-2015, the proportion varied from 45% in Slovenia and just over 40% in Austria to only around 10% in Spain and just 7% in Sweden (Figure 33).

Figure 33 Proportion of those aged 55-64 reporting being retired in 2014-2015 (%)



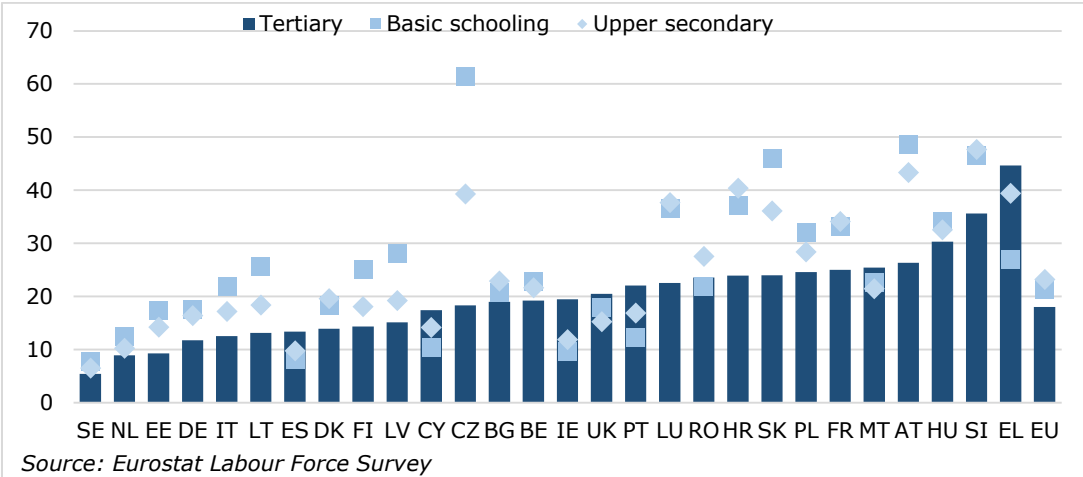
There was some tendency for more women to report being retired than men, reflecting their earlier official retirement age in a number of countries. This was especially the case in countries where the overall rate of retirement was high, such as Slovenia, Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Conversely, more men were retired than women in Greece and Luxembourg, where the overall rate was also relatively high, though these were two of only 6 countries – the other being Malta, France, Italy and Spain – where the retirement rate for men was higher than that of women.

The rate of retirement also varied between those with different levels of education, with a larger share of the inactive with tertiary education reporting being retired (66% on average in the EU) than those with lower levels (59% of those with upper secondary education and just 38% with basic schooling). The shares were fairly uniformly larger for men than for women, so that the difference between those with different education levels was similar. The counterpart to a smaller share of the inactive with only basic schooling being retired is that many more of them reported being ill or disabled – almost a third (32%) of the total who were inactive – and a belief that no work was available (8%) than in the case of those with higher levels of education (only 15% of the tertiary educated among the inactive reported being ill or disabled and just 3% that no work was available).

However, if account is taken of the differing proportions of those with different levels of education who were inactive, a somewhat different picture emerges. In particular, there is much less of a difference in the proportion of those aged 55-64 reporting being retired. In the EU as a whole, the difference was only 3 percentage points between those with tertiary education and those with only basic schooling (though 5 percentage points between the former and those with upper secondary education) (Figure 34). The difference was concentrated among men – there were 7 percentage points between those with tertiary education and those with only basic schooling – while for women, the retirement rate was the same for the tertiary-educated as for the low-educated (the rate for the upper secondary-educated was 5 percentage points higher than both).

The EU average, however, conceals wide differences between countries, with the rate of retirement among the tertiary educated being lower than those with lower levels of education in most countries and substantially lower in Slovenia, Austria, Luxembourg and, most especially, the Czech Republic. On the other hand, the rate was higher for the tertiary educated in Greece, Malta, Portugal, the UK, Ireland, Cyprus and Spain. In Greece, Malta, Portugal, Cyprus and Spain – i.e. the southern Member States – this is predominantly due to the retirement rate for women with tertiary education being much higher than that for those with lower education, while for men there is only a small difference. In Ireland, the difference is much the same for men and women, while in the UK, it is entirely the result of retirement among tertiary-educated men being higher than for those with lower education – for women, the rates are the same.

Figure 34 Proportion of those aged 55-64 reporting being retired by education level, 2014-2015 (% of each group)



In the countries where the retirement rate in the age group is much higher for those with lower education levels, this is due in most countries to both men and women with only basic schooling having relatively high rates. The main exception is Luxembourg, where it is predominantly the result of low-educated men having high rates, while for women, the rates are similar to those with higher education.

Retirement by household circumstances

It might be expected that people in the 55-64 age group would be more likely to be employed if their spouse or partner were not working in order to bring earnings from employment into the household. In practice, this is not the case and both men and women in the age group are more likely to be in employment if the person, or people, they share the household with are also in employment. Accordingly, there is some tendency for people at or approaching the official age of retirement to be retired if their spouse or partner is not working and to continue to be in the work force if they are working.

In 2014-2015, therefore, some 31% of those aged 55-64 in the EU who were living with someone not in employment were retired as against 15% of those living in a household where the other person was in work (Table 5).

This difference is evident in all Member States without exception and is particularly large (over 20 percentage points) in the Czech Republic (where it is over 30 percentage points) Denmark, France, Hungary, Austria, Slovenia, Slovakia and the UK.

It is the case too that the relative number who are retired among those living alone is also less than those sharing a household where no-one else is in work in all countries. At the same time, it is higher than for those sharing a household with no-one else is in work.

Much the same pattern is evident for men and women considered separately. In all Member States, both men and women living in a household with no-one else in work are more likely to be retired than those sharing a household with someone else in employment. In nearly all Member States too, men and women living alone are more likely to be retired than those sharing a household with no-one else in work but less likely to be retired than those sharing a household with someone else in work. The only exceptions are Greece and Cyprus, where men living alone are less likely to be retired than those living with someone in employment, Cyprus, where this is the case for men, and Greece, Croatia and Luxembourg, where in each case, women living alone are more likely to be retired than those sharing a household with someone else, whether they are in work or not.

Table 5 Proportion of those aged 55-64 reporting being retired by household circumstances, 2014-2015

	Living alone	Living in household with no-one else employed	Living in household with someone else employed
BE	21.2	30.1	13.3
BG	24.6	30.7	14.7
CZ	42.0	56.8	25.8
DK	16.2	31.6	10.0
DE	15.4	27.6	9.3
EE	12.5	18.4	10.0
IE	15.2	17.5	9.5
EL	35.3	38.3	29.5
ES	10.9	12.5	7.2
FR	29.4	43.0	22.0
HR	40.6	43.0	32.2
IT	17.6	23.5	16.3
CY	11.5	21.1	8.8
LV	19.9	25.6	15.7
LT	21.6	25.1	10.8
LU	37.7	39.4	25.1
HU	35.2	44.3	23.5
MT	26.2	32.0	17.5
NL	7.8	20.0	6.4
AT	48.5	55.1	28.3
PL	30.8	35.7	22.3
PT	12.7	19.2	11.2
RO	30.1	34.4	18.3
SI	46.4	57.0	35.8
SK	36.8	50.8	26.7
FI	18.9	29.0	11.6
SE	5.6	13.9	4.2
UK	16.4	31.4	11.2
EU	21.0	31.2	15.0

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey

In sum, therefore, it seems that men and women aged 55-64, if they retire, tend to do so together rather than one remaining in employment to help support the other through their earnings, which might imply that the pensions received are sufficient to provide such support. Equally, it might be that spending retirement time together outweighs any financial incentive there may be for one of the two to remain in paid employment. Whatever the reason, it emphasises the importance of being able to examine responses to the SEEKREAS question in the LFS at household level.

Household circumstances of those aged 55-64 by education level

Those aged 55-64 living in a household with someone else employed, as in the case of women with young children, are more likely to have tertiary education than those living in a household with no-one else employed or living alone and less likely to have only basic schooling (Table 6). Accordingly, in most countries, as seen above, this in itself is likely to reduce the relative number in retirement.

The only exceptions are Malta, Romania and the UK, where the proportion with tertiary education sharing a household with someone else in employment was much the same in 2014-2015 as for those sharing a household with no-one else in work, and Greece, Slovenia and Romania again, where the proportion of those with only basic schooling sharing a household with someone else in work was little different from those living in a household

with no-one else in work. Except for Slovenia, as also seen above, these are all countries where the proportion with tertiary education who were retired was either larger than for those with only basic schooling or much the same.

Those living alone were less likely than average to have tertiary education in most countries but also more likely in many cases to have only basic schooling (in 10 of the countries, while in another 12, there was little difference from the average).

Table 6 Proportion of those aged 55-64 with tertiary education and basic schooling by household circumstances, 2014-2015

	% with tertiary education			% with basic schooling		
	Living alone	Living with no-one else employed	Living with someone else employed	Living alone	Living with no-one else employed	Living with someone else employed
BE	24.9	21.6	32.3	43.3	45.6	33.7
BG	23.4	19.9	25.5	24.9	31.1	18.3
CZ	14.2	9.7	17.4	15.6	15.2	9.5
DK	31.8	28.6	33.6	27.1	27.2	23.6
DE	24.1	21.2	28.3	16.5	17.1	11.6
EE	36.2	28.4	38.7	8.9	11.2	5.9
IE	25.8	22.4	27.4	45.3	45.2	34.8
EL	22.5	18.6	22.4	43.0	50.1	49.9
ES	27.6	17.6	24.9	52.4	66.1	56.1
FR	23.6	17.8	24.8	36.4	40.2	32.0
HR	16.2	13.3	16.8	33.1	33.4	25.9
IT	16.4	9.1	13.5	48.4	61.3	48.8
CY	26.0	21.7	26.6	37.6	45.9	37.7
LV	27.2	18.3	25.3	9.6	11.7	8.3
LT	25.6	23.3	33.0	8.3	7.7	3.6
LU	29.8	25.2	33.0	30.0	31.6	27.6
HU	17.9	14.1	18.9	24.2	25.7	19.7
MT	9.8	9.3	9.3	76.7	77.1	73.4
NL	28.1	22.9	30.6	32.4	40.6	30.4
AT	20.9	16.0	25.5	23.5	27.4	22.1
PL	18.0	11.0	14.5	16.9	17.0	13.7
PT	18.5	10.2	13.4	68.4	80.4	75.4
RO	9.5	7.9	9.4	39.9	35.1	36.9
SI	18.1	16.1	20.2	25.8	24.1	23.8
SK	15.8	10.7	15.0	15.4	18.3	12.7
FI	29.5	30.2	39.4	26.0	26.2	19.4
SE	26.3	30.4	33.2	27.2	28.3	20.7
UK	31.2	31.6	33.0	33.6	33.2	27.5
EU	23.5	17.3	23.4	31.2	38.5	29.7

Note: The dark shaded figures denote instances where the proportion living alone with either tertiary education or only basic schooling is larger than average. The light-shaded figures denote instances where there is an insignificant difference with the average.

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey

The effect of household circumstances on retirement

The implication is that the tendency observed above for those sharing a household with no-one else in work to be more likely to be retired than those living with someone in work may reflect the differences in education levels rather than any tendency for people to retire at the same time as their spouse or partner. In other words, since education levels have an important influence on whether people aged 55-64 are retired or not (as indicated above) and since people living together tend to have similar levels of education, someone with basic schooling is both disproportionately likely to be retired and to live with someone who is also more likely than others to be retired. To distinguish between the effect of

education levels on retirement from the effect of household circumstances – i.e. whether a person lives with someone who is also not in work or not – it is possible to run a logit regression with retirement among those aged 55-64 as the dependent variable and education level and household circumstances along with gender as the independent variables.

The results indicate that, as implied above, the odds of men in the age group being retired in 2014-2015 were significantly less in 10 Member States (taking a level of significance of at least 5%), 9 of which are EU13 countries (the other is the UK) (Table 7).

Table 7 Logit regression of the relationship between the % of those aged 55-64 who are inactive because of being retired and gender, education level and household circumstances, 2014-2015 (Odds ratios)

	Intercept	Male	Basic schooling	Upper secondary	Living alone	Living with no-one employed
BE	0.138***	1.103	1.132	1.139	1.619**	2.756***
BG	0.187***	0.662**	0.945	1.177	1.850**	2.413***
CZ	0.178***	0.464**	6.052***	2.939***	1.802*	3.415***
DK	0.093***	0.727	1.558	1.817*	1.455	3.318***
DE	0.075***	1.092	1.386	1.401	1.702**	3.652***
EE	0.054***	0.905	3.138***	2.117**	1.325	2.194**
IE	0.179***	0.839	0.418***	0.567**	1.774**	2.236***
EL	0.456***	1.632**	0.447***	0.808	1.437*	1.651**
ES	0.066***	2.329***	0.558**	0.672*	1.677**	2.024***
FR	0.165***	1.364	1.377	1.434	1.736**	2.739***
HR	0.299***	0.624***	1.655**	2.148***	1.658**	1.747***
IT	0.082***	1.667**	1.994***	1.471*	1.127	1.500**
CY	0.100***	1.329	0.560**	0.757	1.631	3.040***
LV	0.131***	0.742	2.343**	1.440	1.370	1.868**
LT	0.115***	0.462**	2.095**	1.437	2.135**	2.695***
LU	0.045***	1.659**	3.107***	3.193***	5.166***	2.838***
HU	0.384***	0.458***	1.003	1.072	1.698**	2.538***
MT	0.150***	2.155**	0.900	0.946	1.510	2.124**
NL	0.062***	0.652*	1.187	1.063	1.274	4.000***
AT	0.261***	0.746*	2.308***	1.886***	2.268***	2.970***
PL	0.345***	0.342***	1.419*	1.248	1.410	1.992**
PT	0.168***	1.316	0.515***	0.750	1.325	2.136***
RO	0.272***	0.644**	0.876	1.249	2.025***	2.330***
SI	0.440***	0.658**	1.739**	1.840**	1.559**	2.181***
SK	0.239***	0.622**	2.580***	1.800**	1.653*	2.925***
FI	0.086***	1.463*	1.740*	1.199	1.887**	3.045***
SE	0.038***	1.041	1.503	1.331	0.994	3.804***
UK	0.186***	0.560**	0.708	0.754	1.511*	3.879***
EU	0.150***	0.894*	1.109	1.330***	1.513***	2.560***

Note: ***=significant at 0.1% level; **=significant at 5% level; *=significant at 10% level.

The reference variables are Being a woman rather than a man, Having tertiary education and Living with someone employed.

Source: Eurostat Labour Force Survey and own calculations.

The odds were also less at the EU level, as well as in the Netherlands and Austria, but the level of significance is relatively low (10%). Conversely, the reverse was the case in Greece, Spain, Italy, Luxembourg and Malta, in all of which the odds of being retired were significantly greater for men than for women. (It was also the case in Finland, but the difference is less significant).

The odds of someone being retired were greater as well if they had only basic schooling as opposed to tertiary education in 10 countries (where the level of significance was again at least 5%), including in particular, Estonia and Luxembourg, where the odds were over

three times greater than for someone with tertiary education, and the Czech Republic, where they were 6 times greater. On the other hand, the odds were much less for someone with only basic schooling in Ireland, Spain, Greece and Cyprus. In Ireland too, someone with upper secondary education had lower odds of being retired than someone with tertiary education, but this is the only country for which the difference is significant at the 5% level. Conversely, in 7 countries, including in particular the Czech Republic, Estonia and Luxembourg again together with Croatia, as well as in the EU overall, the odds of being retired were greater than for someone with tertiary qualifications.

The most striking result is that the odds of someone being retired are greater for those living with someone who is not in work than for those sharing a household with someone in employment in all countries without exception, the level of significance being at least 5% in all cases and 0.1% in most. Even taking explicit account of the influence of differing education levels, therefore, people are more likely to be retired if their spouse or partner is not working than if they are in employment. This is especially the case in Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK, where the odds of being retired are over 3.5 times greater for a man or woman if they share a household with someone who is not employed than if they do so with someone in work. (It should be noted that it is assumed here that the 'other' person in the household not working is also retired, which could – and should – be checked by examining their response to the SEEKREAS question⁹.)

The odds of being retired are also greater for people living alone than for those sharing a household with someone employed. This is the case both in the EU overall and in 14 of the 28 Member States, in which the difference is significant at the 5% level at a minimum, and in another 5 where the difference is significant at the 10% level. There are no countries in which the reverse applies. On the other hand, in all cases where the difference is significant, the odds of being retired are less than in respect of those sharing a household with someone not in work. It is not clear why these two tendencies should obtain, given that they are evident even after taking account of differences in education levels between those living alone and those living in the other two types of household.

Reasons for those aged 55-64 leaving employment

To complement the above analysis, it is also possible on the basis of the 'reason' variables in the LFS to examine the question of whether those sharing a household with someone else tend to leave work to retire at the same time – specifically, in this case, on the basis of responses to the LEAVREAS variable. This indicates that the reasons for those who are economically inactive in the 55-64 age group leaving their previous employment are consistent with the findings above in relation to their reasons for not looking for work. Excluding those who reported leaving employment because they were made redundant, were dismissed, their fixed term job came to an end or their business failed (who overall accounted for just under 20% of the total inactive) – i.e. those who were obliged to leave their previous employment for economic reasons – almost 70% of those inactive in the age group in 2014-2015 left employment to go into retirement, while another 20% left because they became ill or disabled. Less than 2% left because of caring reasons. As in the case of the reasons for not looking for work, the proportion of the age group going into retirement was larger for those living with someone not in work than for those sharing a household with someone in work. This was the case both in the EU overall, where there was a difference of 20 percentage points between the two groups, and in all Member States without exception (Table 8).

⁹ The intention is to examine the responses of all members of a household to the SEEKREAS question, as well as to the other 'reason' questions in future work.

Table 8 Proportion of those aged 55-64 and economically inactive who left their previous employment because of retirement or illness or disability, 2014-2015

	% retired			% ill or disabled		
	Living alone	Living with no-one in work	Living with some-one in work	Living alone	Living with no-one in work	Living with some-one in work
BE	21.9	33.0	16.0	15.3	9.2	7.2
BG	37.4	46.5	23.5	5.8	7.7	6.3
CZ	38.9	54.5	23.4	6.0	5.2	4.2
DK	22.2	38.4	12.2	13.9	7.2	5.3
DE	13.2	26.3	9.5	13.3	12.1	7.9
EE	13.5	20.4	12.3	16.3	19.8	10.2
IE	23.8	30.7	19.6	16.5	13.6	8.6
EL	54.7	60.1	43.1	2.8	2.7	1.9
ES	19.8	26.9	18.5	16.4	16.7	13.7
FR	36.3	49.5	27.5	6.0	6.2	4.4
HR	49.3	59.0	43.8	5.0	2.1	1.4
IT	36.6	51.5	37.3	4.0	4.2	3.4
CY	26.5	31.6	18.4	10.5	9.7	7.9
LV	21.5	27.4	17.2	11.3	9.1	9.1
LT	23.4	29.4	12.1	11.1	13.0	8.9
LU	42.9	52.0	39.7	8.8	9.4	4.1
HU	47.6	57.7	32.8	9.2	8.6	7.2
MT	39.1	54.8	43.3	11.8	7.7	6.8
NL	10.9	26.8	9.9	22.8	10.2	9.1
AT	40.2	49.3	25.4	13.6	12.3	8.6
PL	38.8	44.3	29.1	16.4	14.4	11.6
PT	18.4	25.8	16.2	16.0	18.5	13.4
RO	52.9	65.7	37.1	7.0	8.3	7.3
SI	60.1	70.1	46.3	4.5	2.1	1.8
SK	43.9	54.7	30.7	7.4	6.9	7.5
FI	20.0	25.5	11.1	16.9	14.1	8.6
UK	20.7	35.2	12.9	13.1	9.5	5.5
EU	27.7	41.7	22.0	10.7	9.3	7.1

Note: No data for SE. Light-shaded figures denote instances where there is no significant difference between those living in a household with someone employed and those living in ones with no-one else employed.

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey

It was also the case in all countries that those in the age group living alone were less likely to have left employment to go into retirement than those living with someone not in work and in nearly all countries more likely to have done so than those living with someone in work.

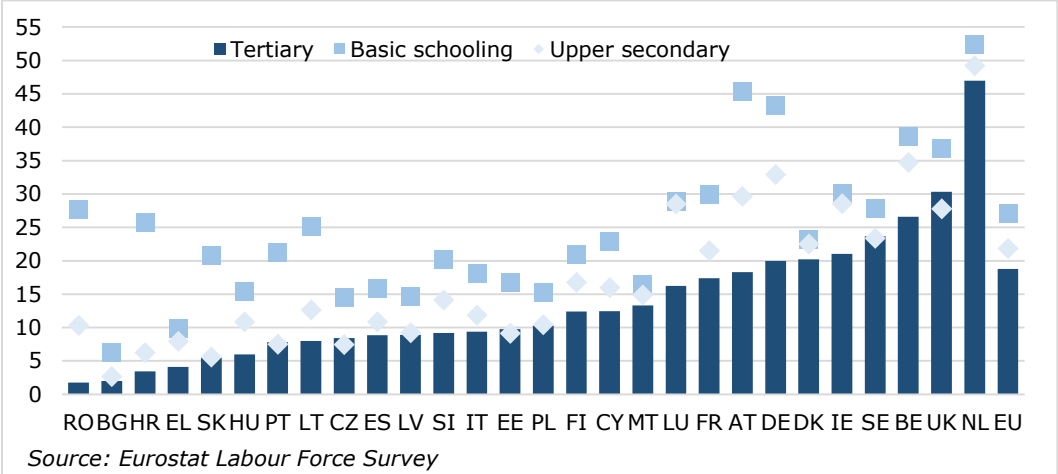
It is equally the case in most countries that those in the age group sharing a household with someone in work are less likely to have left employment because they were ill or disabled than if they lived in a household where no-one else was in work, though in 13 of the 27 countries (there are no data for Sweden), there was no significant difference between the two groups. On the other hand, the proportion of those living alone who were no longer working and had left their employment because of illness or disability was either larger than for the two other groups or much the same. Only in two countries, Estonia and Portugal was the proportion smaller.

Part-time working among older people

Part-time working by education level

Those aged 55-64 are not only more likely to be employed than those with lower levels of education but they are also more likely to be employed full-time. In 2014-2015, 19% of those in this age group in the EU with tertiary education who were in work were employed part-time as opposed to 22% of those with upper secondary education and 27% of those with only basic schooling (Figure 32). This pattern of difference was again evident in most Member States, though while the extent of part-time working among the tertiary-educated was less than among those with only basic schooling in all cases, there were 9 countries where it was much the same as for those with upper secondary education. Equally, the extent was less for those with upper secondary education than for those with basic schooling in all countries apart from 5 where it was similar. It is, therefore, important to take explicit account of differences in education level when considering the relative number of people in this age group working part-time, the reasons for this and their household circumstances.

Figure 32 Proportion of those aged 55-64 in employment working part-time by education level, 2014-2015 (% of each group in employment)



The overall scale of part-time working, however, varied markedly across countries, from close to 50% of those in employment in the Netherlands and just over 30% in the UK, Belgium and Germany to only 7-8% in the Czech Republic, Greece and Slovakia and just 3% in Bulgaria.

While the extent of part-time working among women in all countries was greater for those with tertiary education than for those with only basic schooling, for men, there were two countries – the Netherlands and the UK – in which the reverse was the case and another 6 – the Czech Republic, Spain, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta and Sweden – in which the extent was little different.

The overall scale, of course, was higher among women than men in all countries, reaching 82% in the Netherlands (as against 25% for men) and 50% or just above in Belgium (17% for men), Germany (11%), Austria (13%) and the UK (16%).

Education level by household circumstance

As indicated above, those aged 55-64 are more likely to have tertiary education if they share a household with someone in employment than if they live with someone who is not in work and less likely to have only basic schooling. Equally, those living alone are less likely than average to have tertiary education in most countries and more likely to have only basic schooling. These overall figures, however, conceal significant differences between men and women for those living alone.

For both men and women living with someone in employment, the proportion with tertiary education was in nearly all cases larger than for those sharing a household with someone not in employment and in the other cases, it was much the same (Table 9).

Table 9 Proportion of men and women aged 55-64 with tertiary education by household circumstances, 2014-2015 (%)

	Men			Women		
	Living alone	Living with no-one employed	Living with someone employed	Living alone	Living with no-one employed	Living with someone employed
BE	24.1	23.8	32.0	25.5	19.7	32.7
BG	15.1	13.9	21.7	30.0	24.2	29.7
CZ	16.1	11.9	19.6	12.8	8.1	14.9
DK	27.3	20.7	30.2	35.6	34.6	37.2
DE	26.0	28.4	34.5	22.4	16.3	21.0
EE	20.1	22.9	33.2	44.6	32.7	44.4
IE	19.1	22.8	28.5	31.9	22.0	26.3
EL	27.4	24.9	24.9	19.6	13.7	19.4
ES	26.7	20.7	29.1	28.5	14.9	20.7
FR	20.5	20.3	23.9	25.8	15.9	25.9
HR	13.7	14.2	17.1	18.1	12.5	16.4
IT	16.1	9.7	14.1	16.7	8.5	12.8
CY	28.8	24.6	29.2	24.8	19.1	23.6
LV	23.3	14.9	20.7	29.1	20.9	29.4
LT	19.6	17.5	28.2	29.3	27.5	37.5
LU	34.9	32.7	37.3	24.8	18.2	27.8
HU	13.6	13.3	19.4	20.6	14.8	18.4
MT	9.7	10.6	11.2	9.8	7.9	7.6
NL	29.4	27.8	35.5	27.0	18.5	25.2
AT	24.4	21.8	30.0	18.1	11.7	20.0
PL	14.1	11.0	13.3	20.1	11.0	15.6
PT	15.5	8.8	12.5	20.2	11.4	14.4
RO	8.5	8.8	11.6	10.1	7.0	7.2
SI	11.3	15.0	18.1	24.0	17.0	23.0
SK	13.6	12.7	17.1	17.0	9.0	12.7
FI	21.6	27.7	35.5	35.9	31.9	44.5
SE	20.8	25.5	27.8	31.8	33.5	39.9
UK	29.4	33.1	33.8	32.6	30.1	32.3
EU	22.5	19.4	25.3	24.3	15.6	21.4

Note: Dark-shaded figures denote instances where the proportion is larger than average; light-shaded figures denote instances where it is much the same.

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey

In the case of men living alone, however, the proportion with tertiary education was smaller than average in 2014-2015 in half the countries and in another 10, it was not significantly different from average. There were only 4 countries, therefore - Greece, Italy, Lithuania and Portugal - where it was larger than average. In the case of women living alone, on the other hand, the situation was almost the reverse. There were only three countries (Lithuania, Finland and Sweden) where the proportion with tertiary education was smaller than average and 17 where it was larger, leaving 8 where it was much the same.

The relative number of men and women living alone with only basic schooling is in line with this picture. While a smaller proportion than average of women living alone had only basic schooling in half the countries and in the other half, the proportion was much the same as average, for men, there were only three countries where the proportion was

smaller than average and in all but another three, it was larger than average (see Table A.2 in the Annex).

Part-time working by household circumstances

It might be expected that people's household circumstances would tend to influence whether they work full-time or part-time. In particular, more of those living in a household where no-one else is in work would be expected to work full-time if only to generate more income than those living with someone in employment. On the other hand, it might be that they are more likely to need to care for the other person in the household who might not be working because of illness or disability. This, of course, would be indicated by the responses of the person concerned to the SEEKREAS question in the LFS¹⁰. Equally, as indicated above, the men and women concerned are more likely to have a relatively low level of education and so be more likely to have a part-time job.

Those living alone might also be expected to be more likely to work full-time than those sharing a household with someone in work, though again their level of education, especially in the case of men, might suggest the opposite.

In practice, men living in a household where no-one else was employed were, if they were in work, more rather than less likely to work part-time in the EU in 2014-2015 than those living with someone in employment. There are only two Member States, Croatia and Romania, where this was not the case and in neither of them does the education level of those living in such households seem to provide an explanation. In the majority of the other countries, however, the proportion working part-time was not much different in the two kinds of household (less than 2 percentage points) (Table 10).

In the case of women, there were just three Member States, Croatia and Romania again as well as Cyprus, where the proportion of those employed working part-time was smaller in respect of those living with someone not in work than for those whose sharing a household with someone in employment. In this case, among the rest, there were slightly more countries (13 of the 25) where the proportion working part-time was larger than for the latter group than where it was much the same. The general picture for both men and women is broadly in line with what might be expected given the lower level of education of those living in a household with no-one else in employment in most countries.

In the case of men living alone, the proportion of those in employment working part-time was larger than average (rather than smaller) in all but 6 countries, in all of which the proportion was little different from the average. This might reflect the relatively smaller number of men with tertiary education and the relatively large number with only basic schooling among this group. On the other hand, all 4 of the countries with a higher than average number of men with tertiary education among those living alone – Greece, Italy, Latvia and Portugal – still had a larger proportion of men than average working part-time (the three southern countries also had a smaller number of men than average with only basic schooling).

In the case of women living alone, there are only two countries where the proportion of those employed working part-time was larger than average (the Czech Republic and Hungary) and in the majority of the rest (14 of the 26), the proportion was smaller. This again is in line with the fact that, in most countries, women in this age group living alone have a higher level of education than average.

¹⁰ Subsequent analysis indicates, for example, that around 3% of those aged 50 and over were inactive in the EU because of caring reasons and lived with someone who reported being inactive because of being ill or disabled in response to the SEEKREAS question.

Table 10 Proportion of men and women aged 55-64 employed part-time by household circumstances, 2014-2015 (% of those employed in each group)

	Men			Women		
	Living alone	Living with no-one else employed	Living with someone employed	Living alone	Living with no-one else employed	Living with someone employed
BE	20.4	17.0	16.3	45.5	57.5	52.3
BG	3.0	3.6	1.8	3.7	5.5	3.1
CZ	7.0	5.4	4.0	15.4	13.6	11.4
DK	14.1	14.9	7.9	31.2	34.5	34.2
DE	16.1	11.0	9.3	40.7	53.7	56.1
EE	11.5	5.4	6.2	13.3	12.1	10.9
IE	20.7	15.1	12.6	36.9	46.5	44.4
EL	9.2	5.1	4.6	8.9	13.7	11.7
ES	5.6	5.1	4.9	16.9	24.6	22.6
FR	14.9	13.3	9.1	30.8	38.4	33.6
HR	17.1	4.6	7.5	5.3	9.4	13.9
IT	9.2	7.3	6.4	23.1	22.7	24.0
CY	23.1	12.3	14.2	20.6	18.6	23.0
LV	8.1	7.5	6.1	11.8	13.0	10.9
LT	13.0	8.6	5.9	13.6	17.5	13.1
LU	6.9	10.5	9.3	34.1	46.3	44.6
HU	9.1	9.5	5.8	17.9	17.4	11.6
MT	12.8	10.8	6.5	31.6	36.3	37.1
NL	37.1	24.0	23.1	71.4	83.6	84.5
AT	14.5	14.2	12.6	39.7	51.3	52.6
PL	11.6	8.0	6.7	16.7	15.1	15.5
PT	17.5	16.4	12.5	23.1	21.5	20.5
RO	19.3	8.8	11.8	20.2	12.5	21.1
SI	13.0	11.2	10.2	19.3	17.1	18.5
SK	11.5	5.6	3.2	11.6	11.2	8.6
FI	14.9	19.9	10.7	19.1	20.8	15.9
SE	17.1	16.3	11.8	32.8	39.2	35.7
UK	18.1	18.7	13.9	42.5	54.4	49.5
EU	15.2	11.2	9.6	32.6	36.6	37.2

Note: Dark-shaded figures for women living alone denote instances where the proportion working part-time is larger than average; light-shaded figures for both men and women living alone denote instances where the proportion is much the same as average. Dark-shaded figures for those living with someone employed denote instances where the proportion working part-time is larger than for those living in a household with no-one else employed; light-shaded figures for those living with someone employed denote instances where the proportion working part-time is much the same as for those living in a household with no-one else employed.

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey.

The reasons for men and women aged 55-64 working part-time

Men and women working part-time reluctantly

Some 60% of men and around just over 65% of women in the EU who worked part-time in 2014-2015 reported doing so for family, personal or unspecified reasons (mostly the last), other than because they were caring for an adult or child. The next most common reason cited was an inability to find a full-time job, which was reported to be the main reason by 25% of men working part-time and just over 20% of women. This means that just under 3% of all men in the age group who were in employment were obliged to work part-time because of a lack of full-time jobs and just under 8% of all women in employment.

For both men and women, the proportion working part-time out of necessity rather than choice varied between their household circumstances and goes some way to explaining the unexpected differences in the extent of part-time working of those living alone or in households where no-one else was in work. Among men in the age group, 3% of those in employment in the EU living in a household where the other person (or persons) was not in work were employed part-time because they were unable to find a full-time job as opposed to 2% sharing a household with someone in work¹¹ (Table 11). There were only two countries, Cyprus and the Netherlands, where the proportion was less for those living with someone not in employment than for those living with someone in work. In Ireland, almost 10% of those in employment who lived with someone not in work were employed part-time but would have preferred a full-time job, in Cyprus, the proportion was around 7% (despite it being less than for those living with someone employed) and in Italy, close to 5%. In all three countries, this represents over 60% of all those working part-time in such households.

For men living alone, those working part-time because of being unable to find a full-time job averaged over 4% of those in employment in the EU, more than those living in the other two types of household. Only in Spain was the proportion smaller than average and in Ireland and Cyprus, it was as large as 13-14% of all men employed living alone (again over 60% of those living alone and working part-time), while in Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Romania, it amounted to 6-8% (around two-thirds of those living alone and working part-time in Italy, only 17% in the Netherlands and around 40% in the other three countries).

In the case of women, the proportion of those in employment living in a household with no-one else in work who worked part-time but would have preferred a full-time job was larger than for those living with someone employed or much the same in all countries apart from Luxembourg, Malta, Romania and Sweden. In Spain and France, the proportion was 15-16% of those employed living in such households (60% of all those in such households employed part-time in the former, 40% in the latter) and in Ireland, Italy and Cyprus, 12-13% (around 60% of those employed part-time in the last two but under 30% in Ireland).

For women living alone, the proportion of those in employment working part-time reluctantly was greater than average or much the same as average in all countries apart from Spain. In Ireland and Italy, the proportion amounted to 15-16% of all women living alone and in work (70% of those working part-time in the latter, though only 40% in the former) and in France, Cyprus and Portugal, 12-13% (40% in the first, over 60% in the second and over 50% in the last).

¹¹ Interestingly, subsequent research shows that in the case of most of those working part-time because of being unable to find a full-time job and living with someone who themselves were employed part-time, the reason for the other person working part-time was also because of an inability to find a full-time job.

Table 11 Proportion of men and women aged 55-64 working part-time because of being unable to find a full-time job, 2014-2015 (% of those employed in each group)

	Men			Women		
	Living alone	No-one else employed	Someone else employed	Living alone	No-one else employed	Someone else employed
BE	2.2	0.6	0.3	4.4	2.9	1.5
BG			<i>0.9</i>		<i>3.0</i>	<i>2.1</i>
CZ	0.4	0.4	0.3	2.0	1.6	1.7
DK	2.4	1.2	0.9	6.6	5.4	4.6
DE	4.5	2.2	1.5	9.6	8.1	6.8
EE	<i>1.2</i>		1.0	4.4	2.8	1.7
IE	13.4	9.6	6.9	14.8	13.0	10.4
EL	5.8	3.7	1.9	6.5	7.1	5.2
ES	1.8	2.8	2.3	10.7	14.8	11.6
FR	5.4	4.3	2.2	12.8	15.7	11.6
HR	2.7	<i>0.4</i>	0.9		<i>0.6</i>	0.5
IT	6.1	4.7	3.9	16.2	13.1	11.3
CY	<i>14.0</i>	6.8	9.2	<i>13.0</i>	11.9	10.8
LV		<i>4.0</i>	1.6	4.9	5.4	3.8
LT	3.9		1.5	5.6	6.3	3.4
LU		<i>0.4</i>	0.7	2.3	2.5	5.1
HU	2.0	2.3	1.3	2.4	2.9	2.4
MT		2.8	1.2	6.4	1.5	4.1
NL	6.5	2.1	2.9	10.1	5.2	4.8
AT	3.0	1.4	1.2	5.9	5.2	4.7
PL	4.1	1.8	1.0	2.8	2.6	2.1
PT	7.1	3.1	2.5	11.9	10.3	6.5
RO	7.9	4.3	3.6	4.1	2.6	3.6
SI	<i>0.6</i>	<i>0.7</i>	0.2	<i>0.7</i>	1.2	0.2
SK	4.3	1.4	0.7	1.4	2.5	1.6
FI	6.0	3.8	1.8	4.9	3.9	3.8
SE	3.3	2.6	1.6	7.3	5.1	6.1
UK	3.9	3.4	2.3	6.5	5.2	4.4
EU	4.4	3.1	2.1	9.0	8.9	6.5

Note: Missing figures indicate data not reliable. Figures in italics indicate data of uncertain reliability

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey

Women working part-time because of caring

Relatively few of those aged 55-64 reported working part-time because of caring for an adult or child, though as would be expected many more women than men did so. In 2014-2015, only just over 2% of men working part-time in the EU gave this as the reason, only just over 0.2% of all those in employment and around only 10% of the proportion for women. The proportion was largest in the UK, but even here it amounted to less than 1% of men in employment in the age group. The focus here, therefore, is on women working part-time who gave caring as the reason.

Overall, just over 2% of women in the EU in employment worked part-time for caring reasons. Perhaps unexpectedly, the proportion was slightly larger for women sharing a household with someone employed than for those living in one where no-one else was in work and there were no Member States where the proportion was significantly smaller (Table 12). Nevertheless, the proportion was still very small in all Member States even for the former group of women, so perhaps too much should not be read into this.

Table 12 Proportion of women aged 55-64 working part-time because of caring for adults or children, 2014-2015 (% of those employed in each group)

	Caring for adults or children		
	Living alone	No-one else employed	Someone else employed
BE	1.7	3.2	4.5
BG		<i>0.7</i>	<i>0.0</i>
CZ	0.0	0.1	0.2
DK	0.1	0.1	0.4
DE	1.3	2.8	2.5
EE	0.0	0.8	0.1
IE	0.7	3.5	4.0
EL	0.0	0.0	0.2
ES	0.4	0.7	0.6
FR	1.3	2.3	2.0
HR		<i>0.7</i>	0.2
IT	0.4	1.5	2.0
CY	<i>0.0</i>	0.9	1.3
LV	0.0	0.7	0.0
LT	0.0	<i>0.7</i>	0.2
LU	1.9	0.5	3.3
HU	0.1	0.5	0.4
MT	<i>0.7</i>	0.6	0.9
NL	3.0	5.1	7.1
AT	0.9	1.5	2.4
PL	0.1	0.2	0.3
PT	0.7	1.6	0.9
RO	0.1	0.2	0.3
SI	<i>0.3</i>	0.1	0.0
SK	0.0	0.4	0.3
FI	0.3	0.4	0.2
SE	0.2	0.7	0.5
UK	4.7	7.0	7.4
EU	1.4	2.2	2.6

Note: Missing figures indicate data not reliable. Figures in italics indicate data of uncertain reliability

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey

The proportion for those living with someone employed was largest in the Netherlands and the UK, where over 7% of women in work worked part-time because of caring (though in the former, this was only just over 8% of the women in such households working part-time and in the latter, 15%), over twice the proportion in any other country, apart from Belgium and Ireland. Indeed, in most countries, the proportion was less than 1% of those living alone who were in work.

As would be expected, for women living alone in employment, the proportion is smaller than average in nearly all countries – where it is not, it little different from average. Nevertheless, the proportion of women living alone and in employment who worked part-time because of caring amounted to 3% in the Netherlands and close to 5% in the UK (11% of those employed part-time in the latter but only 4% in the former). In all the other countries, however, the proportion was less than 2% of those in work living alone and again in most countries, less than 1%.

Although the number of observations is too small in most countries to give a reliable indication, the data suggest that for the great majority of women working part-time for caring reasons, the non-availability of suitable and affordable care services was not a factor influencing their decision not to work. In the EU overall in 2014-2015, such non-availability was a factor for less than 20% of those working part-time because of caring for an adult

or child, with little variation according to household circumstances. In the Netherlands, where the relative number working part-time because of caring was, with the UK, the highest in the EU, less than 10% of the women concerned reported a lack of care services as an underlying reason. (For the UK, the number of observations is too small to be reliable.) Among the countries for which the data are reasonably reliable, the proportion of women employed part-time for caring reasons and reporting a lack of care services was over half only in Spain (around two-thirds) and elsewhere over 40% only in Portugal. In both cases, however, few women worked part-time because of caring (around 1% of those employed in the latter, less than 1% in the former).

Concluding remarks

A central aim of the above analysis was to examine how far it is possible to use the 'reason' variables in the LFS to throw light on the influence of household circumstances on the employment behaviour of women aged 18-54 and older people aged 55-64, who are at or near the official age of retirement in Member States. The results demonstrate the value of these variables in providing an insight into why a significant number of the men and women in question are not economically active, working part-time instead of full-time or not in work at the time of the survey, even though they have a job, and into the link between the reasons concerned and the household situation of the men and women in question.

The findings demonstrate the importance of the reason variables in providing additional information to the 'factual' variables which is essential for the formulation and assessment of policy. In particular, in the case of women with young children, they show that, across the EU as a whole, some two-thirds of them who are not economically active are not looking for work because of caring, while one-third are inactive for other reasons. The relative proportions vary markedly between countries, to some extent in line with the relative number who are inactive.

They also show that the proportion of women who report being inactive because of personal or family responsibilities rather than because of caring tends to be much larger for those with a young child than for those with no child under 12. This suggests a possible need to take account of these when assessing the effect of having children on a woman's participation in economic activity. It also suggests that there is a need to examine the suggested responses to the SEEKREAS question in order to try to minimise the extent of overlap between those reporting personal or family responsibilities as the reason for being inactive and those reporting caring reasons.

They indicate in addition that a significant number of women in some countries are not in work at any given time because of being on maternity or parental leave, in some cases, more than the number who are economically inactive. The women concerned arguably need to be taken explicitly into account when comparing the proportion who are economically inactive across countries, since in those countries where the possibility of taking leave of absence from work is more limited, women may have little choice but to withdraw from the work force if they wish to care for their children. This has significant policy implications. It implies, for example, that extending maternity or parental leave in countries where it is, at present, relatively limited might not result in fewer women being in work at any point in time but simply in fewer of them not being inactive – i.e. it would in some degree lead to a shift from women being recorded as being in the work force to them being in employment (and so in the work force) but still not working.

Such withdrawal seems to be related to household circumstances, in the sense that there is a widespread tendency for women who live in households where the other people are not in work to be more likely to be economically inactive for caring reasons than those living with someone in work. This is contrary to what might be expected, given that the others in the household might be thought to be able to provide the childcare needed. It reflects, to some extent, however, their generally lower level of education. In particular, given the tendency for people living together to have the same education level and for the rate of employment to be related inversely to education, those with only basic schooling

are disproportionately likely to be inactive and to live with someone who is also not in work.

Contrary to what might be expected too, and again demonstrating the importance of the 'reason' variables in the LFS – in this case the NEEDCARE variable – only a minority of women across the EU who are inactive because of caring report the non-availability of suitable or affordable care services as the underlying reason for having withdrawn from the work force. The relative numbers differ markedly across the EU, tending to some extent to vary inversely with the proportion of women inactive because of caring – i.e. the proportion tends to be smaller in countries where a relatively large number of women report caring as the reason for their inactivity. Nevertheless, even in these countries, they represent a significant proportion of women with young children. On average, therefore, around 10% of women aged 18-54 with a child under 6, or some 2.6 million, were not economically active in the EU because of a lack of suitable care services.

This may, however, understate the numbers involved to the extent that the NEEDCARE question in the LFS is restricted to those reporting being inactive because of caring. It is not asked to those who report personal or family responsibilities as the reason for inactivity, who, as indicated above, represent a much larger proportion of women with young children than women without, even excluding those living alone. It may also understate the need for care services as such to the extent that it is not asked to those in employment working full-time (or the unemployed) who might equally make use of care services if they were available and affordable. They might, therefore, for example, have had to adapt their working arrangements to overcome a lack of such services, which might entail, say, working unsocial hours or in a less preferred and suitable job. Or it might entail using informal childcare which could be less beneficial for the child in the sense of preparing them for school. Accordingly, there is a strong case for extending the coverage of the NEEDCARE question in the survey.

Even on the basis of the restricted coverage of the question, the responses to it imply that there is a great deal of scope for increasing the participation of women in the work force by expanding the provision of suitable and affordable care facilities. Moreover, the fact that in many countries, a relatively large number of women with only basic schooling and, accordingly, relatively low earnings capacity, report being inactive because of a lack of care services points to affordability being an issue. Nevertheless, there is a question over how far the NEEDCARE variable, even for the restricted group to whom the question is asked, captures the full number who are not working because suitable care services are not available. To some extent, this might be because availability and affordability are conflated into a single question which might result in the affordability aspect being neglected by respondents, while the quality aspect of care, which might be as important to parents as the cost, is only covered implicitly by the word 'suitable'.

At the same time, surprisingly, only a minority of women who reported being inactive because of the non-availability of suitable care services expressed a wish to work. This raises a question-mark over the consistency of the responses to the survey and the interpretation of the 'WANTWORK' variable, which is often used to indicate the size of the potential or effective work force (i.e. the number of people inactive reporting a wish to work is added to the official definition of the work force of those employed plus those unemployed). If the responses to the WANTWORK question are taken at face value, the implication seems to be that while a significant number of the women who are not economically active because of caring report a lack of suitable care services as a reason for not working, many of those concerned do not want to work. They may report not wanting to, however, precisely because suitable care services are not available and, accordingly, they have to look after their children and so whether they want to work or not is immaterial.

There seems, therefore, to be a major issue with the WANTWORK question, assuming, of course, that the NEEDCARE question is eliciting valid responses. In particular, the WANTWORK question does not make clear whether respondents should assume or not that whatever constraints exist on them not working are removed. It seems to be the case that

in some countries, Austria being the prime example, women make this assumption since all those reporting being inactive because of a lack of suitable care services also report wanting to work. But in many countries, there is little relationship between the two responses and it seems that those replying are not assuming that constraints are removed. This implies that there is an inconsistency across countries between the meaning of the data collected by the WANTWORK variable and the way that they should be interpreted. There is an urgent need, therefore, to clarify what is meant by the question and what assumptions respondents should make when answering it.

The FTPTREAS variable indicates that a significant proportion of the women with young children who are in employment work part-time for caring reasons. This is particularly so in countries where part-time employment is prevalent, whereas in those where it is not, many women working part-time do so because they cannot find a full-time job.

The FTPTREAS variable also indicates that more women with young children work part-time for caring reasons if they live in households where someone else is employed or if they live alone, in both cases where there is likely to be an absence of others in the household to look after children if they were to work full-time.

As in the case of women who are inactive, however, only a minority of those employed part-time because of caring report a lack of suitable care services as the underlying reason, again the proportion being larger the smaller the proportion of women working part-time for caring reasons. The implication is that most of the women in the EU working part-time would not work full-time if suitable care services were available, though again it is open to question how far the NEEDCARE variable is picking up all of those affected by the lack of suitable care services. This is an issue which deserves further investigation.

There is also a case, as with the SEEKREAS variable, for extending the coverage of the question to those reporting other reasons than caring for working part-time, such as, in particular, personal or family responsibilities. Nevertheless, even with the restricted coverage, the proportion of women with children reporting a lack of suitable care services as the reason for working part-time is significant in a number of countries, especially for women living alone.

Overall in the EU, the results of the analysis imply that some 13% of women aged 18-54 with a child under 6, close to 3.5 million in total, would either become economically active or work full-time rather than part-time if suitable and affordable care services were available, the proportion rising to above 20% in Ireland, Hungary and Latvia and around a third in Romania.

In the case of those aged 55-64, the 'SEEKREAS' variable in the LFS (why those not in work are not actively seeking employment) shows that only around half of men and women recorded as being economically inactive are retired and, therefore, in most cases permanently out of the work force. Linking the variable to their household circumstances, it also shows that both men and women are more likely to be retired if their spouse or partner is also retired. This to some extent reflects the education levels of the people concerned, in that retirement tends to be less prevalent among those with tertiary education than among those with lower education levels and people living together tend to have a similar level of education. Nevertheless, even allowing explicitly for this, a relationship is still evident between the proportion of men and women retired and those living in a household where no-one is in work. The implication is, therefore, that people living together tend to a significant extent to retire together.

Equally, and consistently with this, people in the age group are more likely to leave their job and go into retirement if they share a household with someone who is also not working. As in the case of the reasons reported by people for being inactive, few of those leaving their jobs do so for caring reasons – because of the need to care for an adult or a child. In 2014-2015, less than 3% of women in the EU who were no longer working left their jobs in order to take care of someone, a similar proportion to that reporting being inactive for this reason.

Most men and women aged 55-64 in employment and working part-time report doing so either for personal or family reasons or for reasons that are not specified. Contrary to what might be expected, the relative number of men and women in the age group employed part-time among those in work tends to be higher for those living in households with no-one else in work than for those living with someone in employment. It is also higher, equally unexpectedly, among those living alone.

The FTPTREAS variable, however, gives an insight into the reason for these findings. It shows that a significant number of the men and women working part-time report do so because of being unable to find a full-time job, which goes some way to explaining the pattern of part-time working across the different types of household. This was the case in 2014-2015 for close to 10% of men in employment living in a household where no-one else was employed in Ireland and 13-14% for men living alone in Ireland and Cyprus, while for women, it amounted to 15-16% in Spain and France for those living in the former type of household and to the same in Ireland and Italy for those living alone.

Again few of those aged 55-64 seem to work part-time because of the need to care for someone. Even among women, the proportion was only just over 2% of all those employed. Unexpectedly, the proportion was in most cases larger for women sharing a household with someone employed than for those living in household with no-one in work, where it might be thought both that the other person concerned would be the one in need of care and, therefore, not working and that need for full-time earnings would be more pressing. Only in the Netherlands and the UK, however, was the proportion in each case over 5% and in all other countries apart from Belgium and Ireland, it was less than 4% – under 1% in most cases. Even in these countries, only a small minority of the women concerned reported a lack of suitable and affordable care services as a reason for working part-time.

A primary conclusion from the above analysis is that the 'reason' variables are a vitally important part of the LFS. They provide an insight into why people are not working and why they work part-time instead of full-time, which is crucial to throw light on policy issues, such as, in the case of women with children, the need for care services and their availability at an affordable cost or the extent to which those nearing retirement age who are inactive have withdrawn from the work force.

It is equally important that these variables are available at the household level, or more specifically, for all members of a household so that it is possible to relate the reason for a particular situation reported by one member (such as the reason for not working and not looking for work) to that reported by others in the household¹². This provides the opportunity to examine, for example, the extent to which people tend to retire together (and, accordingly, become dependent on income from pensions) or how far one person in a household is taking care of another who is ill or disabled (such as a women taking care of her husband or partner) and is not working or working only part-time as a result. Such questions which have significant policy implications can only be answered if the reason variables concerned (in this case, SEEKREAS and FTPTREAS) are available for both of the people in question.

Similarly, the availability of data for the NEEDCARE variable enables the analysis to be extended to cover the issue of the availability of suitable care services and how far the lack of these is a reason for people having to look after their partners in need of care themselves and so are either unable to work or can only work part-time.

At the same time, it is important that the data collected by means of the 'reason' questions are as reliable as possible and indicate the situation of respondents as it is in reality. As highlighted above, there is a question-mark over the NEEDCARE and WANTWORK variables in this respect in a number of countries, while there is an equally important issue over the

¹² This is relevant in the LFS, in particular, to those countries which collect data on an individual rather than a household basis, such as Denmark or Sweden, where there is proposal to adopt household sub-sampling as a way of reducing the effort involved in carrying out the survey.

overlap between certain specified responses to the SEEKREAS and FPTREAS variables, which can lead to problems of inconsistency as regards the data collected for different countries. This applies, in particular, to caring for children or adults and personal or family responsibilities as reasons for inactivity or part-time working. At present, as demonstrated here, it is by no means certain that there is a clear distinction between the two and that some of those identifying personal or family responsibilities as the reason are not also caring for children or adults. The same applies to some extent to the 'other' category, to those indicating non-specified reasons for their employment status, which in some countries accounts for a substantial proportion of responses.

There is a need, therefore, to try to ensure consistency over the replies to the 'reason' questions across countries, which means that clear and well-defined instructions need to be given to those carrying out the survey about how to categorise particular situations, especially those where there is more than one reason for a person's employment status. There is also a need to ensure that those categorised as 'other' in the responses to these questions are kept to a minimum and that every effort is made to include the people concerned under one of the specified categories.

Both are important not only to maximise the degree of comparability between countries but also because the 'caring' response is used as a filter in respect of the NEEDCARE question. If the 'caring' response does not capture all of those for whom the need to care for someone is a significant reason for their inactivity or part-time working, then the NEEDCARE variable will tend to understate the number of people for whom a lack of suitable care services is a reason for them not being in employment or in a full-time job. This is why, as argued above, there is a case for extending the NEEDCARE variable to cover other people in addition to those reporting caring as a reason for their employment situation.

Finally, it is relevant to note that the above analysis has been compelled to use education attainment levels as a proxy for earnings and earnings potential since data on earnings are not included in the LFS at present, except in the form of deciles of take-home pay. These indicate whether someone has higher monthly pay than someone else but not the extent of the difference. Nor can they be added together to show the aggregate earnings of people living in the same household.

Accordingly, it is not possible from LFS data to identify household income and the effect of this on the employment decisions of household members. This is a significant weakness of the LFS at present, and its usefulness for policy analysis would be enhanced markedly by the inclusion of data on both earnings in monetary form and household income. It is appreciated, however, that the latter is fraught with difficulty and would require serious effort to produce figures that are anywhere near reliable. The former, on the other hand, ought not to be a major problem, especially if it is done only in approximate terms, which would be sufficient for most purposes.

Annex**Table A.1 Proportion of men and women aged 55-64 reporting being retired by household circumstances, 2014-2015**

	Men			Women		
	Living alone	Living with no-one else employed	Living with someone else employed	Living alone	Living with no-one else employed	Living with someone else employed
BE	17.0	31.7	14.9	24.6	28.7	11.5
BG	16.9	24.7	12.9	30.9	34.9	16.7
CZ	32.5	43.3	17.9	48.6	67.2	34.9
DK	15.7	26.0	8.7	16.7	35.9	11.5
DE	14.6	25.9	10.8	16.0	28.9	7.7
EE	12.4	15.8	10.4	12.6	20.4	9.5
IE	13.8	14.8	9.3	16.4	20.3	9.7
EL	31.0	48.4	33.2	37.9	30.1	24.7
ES	12.0	17.3	11.1	10.0	8.3	3.2
FR	29.4	47.9	26.0	29.4	39.3	16.7
HR	28.5	40.0	26.5	49.7	45.6	38.2
IT	18.3	28.1	20.7	17.0	19.4	11.7
CY	9.6	21.7	10.5	12.3	20.6	6.9
LV	19.1	22.8	14.7	20.3	27.8	16.5
LT	13.9	18.1	6.9	26.3	30.2	14.5
LU	40.6	51.4	33.0	34.9	30.4	18.0
HU	23.7	36.4	17.5	42.3	50.1	29.8
MT	29.4	36.4	24.9	22.8	27.1	10.5
NL	8.4	16.0	5.7	7.4	23.7	7.2
AT	39.6	51.4	25.3	55.4	57.9	32.1
PL	13.0	23.6	13.4	40.5	47.0	30.9
PT	14.1	20.9	12.6	12.0	17.7	9.8
RO	21.7	31.4	15.2	35.8	37.1	21.3
SI	39.8	53.5	31.2	52.1	59.9	41.8
SK	25.9	42.4	20.1	42.9	57.7	33.7
FI	23.0	32.4	13.2	15.7	26.7	9.5
SE	6.4	12.3	4.4	4.9	14.8	3.9
UK	12.2	23.2	8.2	19.7	39.0	14.3
EU	17.8	29.9	14.9	23.4	32.3	15.1

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey

Table A.2 Proportion of men and women aged 55-64 with only basic schooling by household circumstances (%)

	Men			Women		
	Living alone	Living with no-one employed	Living with someone employed	Living alone	Living with no-one employed	Living with someone employed
BE	44.8	44.0	33.8	42.1	47.0	33.6
BG	30.5	35.7	18.4	20.4	27.9	18.2
CZ	9.6	8.1	3.7	19.8	20.7	16.1
DK	27.5	25.4	22.9	26.7	28.5	24.4
DE	14.3	11.9	7.9	18.5	20.7	16.1
EE	13.8	12.6	7.0	6.4	10.2	4.7
IE	56.4	45.8	36.5	35.3	44.6	33.3
EL	45.0	46.3	49.5	41.9	53.1	50.5
ES	54.6	62.5	52.2	50.5	69.4	60.0
FR	35.6	34.2	28.9	37.0	44.7	36.0
HR	32.0	25.9	17.5	34.0	39.7	34.7
IT	48.0	59.2	47.2	48.7	63.2	50.6
CY	30.2	43.2	33.6	40.5	48.4	42.4
LV	15.1	12.8	9.9	7.0	10.9	6.8
LT	13.2	8.7	3.5	5.4	7.0	3.8
LU	23.3	24.1	24.3	36.6	38.4	31.6
HU	22.7	18.8	13.8	25.1	30.8	26.0
MT	80.6	75.7	68.9	72.4	78.7	77.7
NL	30.7	32.7	24.9	33.9	47.9	36.4
AT	17.7	18.0	13.9	27.9	34.3	32.2
PL	20.8	14.8	12.2	14.8	19.0	15.2
PT	69.8	80.7	74.9	67.6	80.2	75.9
RO	36.9	27.1	26.5	41.9	42.2	46.8
SI	26.1	19.0	18.9	25.5	28.2	30.1
SK	14.1	13.5	8.5	16.2	22.3	17.1
FI	31.4	30.6	21.9	21.7	23.2	15.9
SE	27.6	24.9	20.7	26.8	30.5	20.7
UK	31.3	26.7	22.4	35.5	39.3	32.9
EU	30.5	34.6	26.0	31.6	41.7	33.8

Note: Darker-shaded figures for those living alone denote instances where the proportion with basic schooling is less than average and for those living with someone employed, where it is larger than for those living in a household with no-one else employed. Lighter-shaded figures for those living alone denote instances where the proportion is not significantly different from average and for those living with someone employed where it is not significantly different from that for those living in a household with no-one else employed.

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey

