

# Men in care

WORKPLACE SUPPORT FOR CARING MASCULINITIES

## Men in Care: *Workplace Support for Caring Masculinities.* Country report. Spain



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Men in Care. Workplace support for caring masculinities | Action grant VS-2018-0417



This report has received financial support from the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation "EaSI" (2014-2020). The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Commission.

## ABOUT MiC PROJECT

Men in Care is a European 3-year project (March 2019-Feb 2022) of 12 national organizations (universities, social partners and NGOs) co-funded by the European Commission under the EaSI program (PROGRESS axis). Men in Care (MiC) aims to improve workplace conditions to promote men taking caring roles in seven countries (Austria, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Poland, Slovenia and Spain). MiC will assess how policies and workplace cultures can change to enable men to become more active in caring for children, elderly, partners, co-workers and friends. MiC partners are: National Distance Education University (project coordinator, Spain), Fundación 1 de Mayo (Spain), Verein für Männer- und Geschlechterthemen Steiermark (Austria), European Network for the Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence (Germany), University of Iceland, REFORM (Resources Centre for Men, Norway), Jagiellonian University (Poland), PLinEU (Poland), Diversity Hub (Poland), The Peace Institute (Slovenia), the Association of Employers of Slovenia and the Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia.

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# 1.

## COUNTRY CONTEXT

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## 1.1. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

This report<sup>1</sup> describes the evolution of women's and men's participation in paid and unpaid work in Spain assessing positive trends and persisting gender inequalities. Different indicators and regulations on work and care are studied for the period between 2007 and 2018. The objective is twofold. First, we describe how gender inequalities in work-life balance (WLB) have evolved and, second, how men have increased their participation in caring for others. Care is understood as encompassing emotional support, showing affection, providing attention to a partner's needs, children's needs, and the needs of the elderly, work colleagues and other family members. We focus on employment and companies' possibilities to foster gender equality in WLB.

Spain has been characterised as a Mediterranean welfare state according to Esping-Andersen's classic taxonomy, with families playing a prominent role in the provision of care. However, rapid social change is enabling Spain and other countries to catch up with countries which used to have more egalitarian gender regimes, at least in some dimensions of gender equality, as this report will show (sections 1.4-1.6).

In fact, late family formation and lowest-low fertility (Esping-Andersen, 2013) define Spanish demography nowadays. Spanish young people have particular difficulties to enter the labour market. Women with children under three experience also particular obstacles in a labour market with a high presence of long, non-standard work schedules, typical of a service economy with an important presence of leisure and tourism related economic activities. In Spain, employer oriented workplace flexibility is much more developed than the employee oriented one, research has shown (Chung & Tijdens, 2013) which is a clear obstacle for WLB. At the same time, only 40% of babies and toddlers are participating in formal education (while, in contrast, participation for children aged 3-6 is almost universal).

In fact, cross-country comparisons have shown that in Spain the gender gap lies not so much on working hours but on employment participation (Boeckmann, Misra, & Budig, 2014). While both female and male employment rates are the lowest among the seven countries participating in MiC (53,4 and 63,4 respectively in 2019), the gender gap is also the highest.

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<sup>1</sup> Data and analysis included in national reports will be updated when post-covid19 data are available.

However, many gender gaps are closing, to a great extent due to legislative reform. Two very important milestones were the Law against Gender Violence (2004) and the Law on Gender Equality (2007). More recently, in 2019, a gender neutral, non-transferable birth leave has replaced maternity and paternity leaves (although its complete implementation will happen in 2021 as it will be seen in section 1.3 of this report).

In fact, Spain ranks first in the European Gender Equality Index 2019 (EIGE 2019) from all the EU countries participating in MiC project (followed by Slovenia, Germany, Austria and Poland, in this order). Its overall score is 70.1, with specific scores ranging from 62 (power) to 90.1 (health)<sup>2</sup>. Although the first egalitarian government took place more than a decade ago, women still have a low presence in private company boards, as less than one out of four members of boards in largest quoted companies, supervisory board or board of directors are women (EIGE 2019). However, power is the domain with the highest increase since 2005 (+16.1 points), and according to EIGE, in the period 2005-2017 Spain is 'progressing towards gender equality at a faster pace than other EU Member States'.

In Spain the gender gap in employment of young childless adults aged 25 to 49 has nearly disappeared. This good news is obscured by a persisting high gender gap in employment rates and employment intensity of mothers compared to fathers of children below age 13, because most mothers perform more unpaid work than fathers, which hinders their (full) participation in employment. This is particularly true for women with lower and upper secondary education. Women with a university degree are more often in full time jobs and have long-term contracts. On the contrary, part-time work for family reasons is more used by women in the lowest income deciles. Thus, the gender gap in pensions is also higher for less educated women, because pensions are based on previous contributions to social security.

Men do rarely work part-time for family reasons or use their entitlement to reduced work hours, whereas they have significantly increased their use of fully paid paternity leave. In 2018, 80% of employed fathers had used their entitlement to paternity leave (an average of 30 days) and the gender gap in take up of leave among employees has fallen from 17 to 8 percentage points (pp). Gender gaps have also diminished in housework, in time caring for small children and in men working in some education and health occupations. Ever more men are aware of the importance of sharing housework for a successful marriage or partnership, believe in the ability of fathers to look after children in similar ways to mothers, and they are concerned with the living conditions of elderly, sick and disabled people. In addition, in couples of elderly people, men already contribute to their spouse's care as much as women.

To promote WLB without harming women's life chances, more men have to step into care activities, and companies and the society can create incentives for gender

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<sup>2</sup> The domain of health measures gender equality in three health -related aspects: health status, health behaviour and access to health services.

equality. According to recent research, men use those WLB measures that do not decrease their income, such as fully paid paternity leave, flexitime, tight time schedules and remote work. Many companies can implement these measures and governments can improve well paid leaves of absence and the offer of quality care service for small and elderly dependents.

## 1.2. GENDER GAPS IN EMPLOYMENT

In Spain gender gaps in employment and economic inactivity rates have decreased from 2007 to 2017.

**Figure 1** reveals that for childless people aged 25 to 49 years female and male employment rates have become very similar. In 2007, 77% of childless women in this age bracket were employed compared to 85% of their male counterparts, and these rates have fallen 4 and 10 pp respectively in 2017 due to the large male employment loss during the economic and financial crisis (2008-2013). So, after the crisis female and male childless adults under age 50 show very similar employment rates. Yet, family formation produces gender inequality among parents, because mothers' average employment rates compared to childless women, fall by around 9 to 17 pp depending on the age of the youngest child, while fathers' rates increase by around 9 pp (Figure 1). So, motherhood continues to reinforce female unemployment and economic inactivity. As displayed in Figure 3, economic inactivity rates are much higher among women aged 25 to 49 (16%) than men (7%), despite a decrease of the overall female inactivity rate of this age group by 8 pp since 2007. Is the higher inactivity rate of women related to them taking care for children or other dependents more often? Effectively in 2017, when men and women aged 25 to 64 were asked if they wanted to work, only 0.3% of men compared to 3.7% of women said they were not seeking work in the reference week due to family reasons (looking after children or disabled adults, Figure 4).

These average gender inequalities in labour force participation hide important differences across women by level of educational attainment, as shown by Figure 2,3 & 4. In 2017, women with lower secondary education or less are not seeking work for family reasons more frequently (5%) than women with upper secondary or third level education (4 or 2%), they show higher inactivity rates (26% compared to 17 or 10%), and consequently lower proportions in employment when having children below age 3 (36% versus 60 or 74%). Also, low educated fathers have increasing difficulties in entering the labour force in 2017 compared to 2007, but their employment rates double their female counterparts'. Among fathers with lower secondary education or less and a child below the age of 3, 77% were employed compared to 93% of their counterparts with third level education. Consequently, participation in the labour force has become increasingly difficult for around two third of mothers with lower

secondary education or less and for nearly one third of fathers with the equivalent level of education. Different reasons may explain the low participation of the less educated mothers in the labour force. First, there are general barriers to find a job and more job rotation with unemployment periods among lower educated people; second, for these women quitting a job does not entail high earning losses when having small children, because of comparatively low salaries and the difficulties to outsource childcare under these income conditions.

The gender gaps in labour force participation and in employment intensity have consequences for women's present income and future pensions. The average unadjusted gender pay gap in Spain increases with age. In 2016 it reached 9% for people from 25 to 34 years and increased up to 23% for those aged 55 to 64 (Figure 5). In comparison to other European countries, the gap in Spain is in a middle position, since Germany, Austria, Iceland and Norway have larger gaps, while Poland and Slovenia have similar or smaller ones. In addition, the gaps have decreased since 2007, mainly due to the increase of women's educational achievements. Contrary to other countries like Germany, the gender pay gaps in Spain are smaller the higher the educational attainment and the occupational level (Anghel, Conde-Ruiz, & Marra de Artíñano, 2019).

For retired people in 2016 the pension gap amounted to 33,8% for people aged 65 to 79 (European Commission, 2018), because of lower female wages in many sectors, many retired women had interrupted their employment trajectories, had worked part-time or had changed to jobs paid less in order to be able to balance work with life responsibilities (Burkevica, Humbert, Oetke, & Paats, 2015). In addition to these individual employment patterns, also the more or less redistributive design of national pension systems contributes to gender inequalities in women's annual net retirement income when aged 65-70. However, pensions systems are not (totally) dependent on the working history, because they have either a universal or means-tested part, which reduces the motherhood penalty for retired women. The most redistributive pension systems in MiC countries are found in Austria and Poland, followed by Spain and the less redistributive in Germany (Möhring, 2018).

### 1.3. ARRANGEMENTS TO COPE WITH WORK-LIFE BALANCE ACROSS THE LIFE COURSE

Not only labour force participation, but also employment patterns, weekly work hours and part-time work differ by gender and motherhood status. Average weekly paid work hours of mothers are always below average paid work hours of fathers (Figure 6). Although, this gender gap has diminished, because fathers' average work hours have decreased from 42-43 a week in 2007 to 40 hours in 2017. When the child is aged below one, average mothers' work hours amount to 31 a week, while for men it is 40. As soon as the child reaches age one, mothers increase their average working hours to 33 a week, which is still 7 hours less than fathers' average. In Spain, part-time work covers 7% of employed men and 24% of employed women aged 25-49 and it is mainly involuntary, which means most part-timers cannot find the full-time job they prefer (71.2% of part-time working men and 52.4% of respective women). Yet, 28% of female part-timers use it to care for children, ill, disabled or old adults against 5% of men (Spanish labour force survey, 2<sup>nd</sup> trimester, 2019). Of all employed women aged 25-49, 4.4% in 2007 and 3.2% in 2017 worked part-time for family reasons, while their male counterparts nearly never choose to do so (Figure 7). There are no important differences by professional status (Figure 8) or sector of activity (Figure 10) for family related part-time work, but this work arrangement is found more often among the lowest individual income deciles (Figure 9). A longitudinal analysis with data for 2005-2015 on people aged 16 to 45 who had a child during these years, shows that one year before giving birth around 15% of employed women had a part-time job, whereas two years after delivery this percentage had doubled to 30%. Male part-time incidence in this study reaches 5% and it did not change when becoming father (Fernández Kranz, 2018). Thus, to be able to care for a small child mothers reduce their work intensity as measured in hours and in part-time work.

In addition to the possibility to work part-time, a statutory right to reduce work hours to care for a frail elderly relative or for a small child without pay compensation was introduced as an individual entitlement in 1999 (see Table 1). Since 2013 the latter entitlement can be used until the child reaches age 12, it includes a job guarantee and the right to pass to full-time again (Ley 39/99). The reduction can take between one-eighth and one-half of the standard work week – which in the case of a full-time job (40 hours) would imply a range of 20-35 hours per week. Employees may decide, within their usual work schedule, the extent and period of the working time reduction (Moss, 2010). Reduction of work hours to care for a small child is more used by women with long-term contracts compared to those with a fix-term job. Among the

former, 21% of all entitled mothers, with children below 12, reduced their work hours in 2015, but only 1% of corresponding fathers (Fernández Kranz, 2018).

As previously seen, it is the arrival of the first child that leads to a significant withdrawal from employment or reduction of female participation. This is related to various factors, on one hand, to gender stereotypes, segregation of women into jobs with lower salaries and inequality of income within couples (Cebrián & Moreno, 2018). On the other hand, public policies in Spain reinforce these factors through an unequal design of maternity and paternity leave. Since 1989, employed women have been granted a maternity leave allowance of 100% of the previous wage for 16 weeks, while men were granted only two days of leave paid by employers until 2006. Since 1999, fathers can also use up to 10 weeks of the voluntary maternity leave, if the mother transfers him right. The first important reform to promote fathers' use of paternity leave was implemented by a social-democratic government in March 2007, through the Spanish Law on Gender Equality. A non-transferable two-week paternity leave and a 100% wage replacement level with a ceiling at 4004 € a month was introduced. The leave should have been extended to one month in 2009, but it was postponed year after year because of budget restrictions. Thus, the gender gap in entitlement to a paid birth leave, i.e. maternity versus paternity leave, has been 16 weeks versus 2 weeks for a decade (2007-2016). Finally, paternity leave was enlarged to four fully-paid weeks in 2017 and to five in 2018 (see Table 1). Since April 1st, 2019, father's leave has been extended to eight weeks and breastfeeding leave has become an individual entitlement. Paternity leave has been increased to fully-paid 12 weeks in 2020 and it is planned to increase to 16 weeks in 2021 (Real Decreto-ley 6/2019). If this law is implemented in 2021 the gender gap in the entitlement to an individual, fully paid and non-transferable birth leave<sup>3</sup> will be closed.

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<sup>3</sup> Indeed the terms *paternity* and *maternity* leave have been suppressed in the new law.



	TYPE OF ENTITLEMENT	TRANSFER-ABILITY	WHEN AND HOW LONG	PAYMENT LEVEL	FINANCING ENTITY
<b>PARENTAL LEAVE*</b>	Individual based on contributions to social insurance	No	6 weeks immediately after birth, 10 weeks on a flexible basis (< 1 year)	100% of wage topped at 4.070€/month (**)	Social security insurance
<b>'INFANT CARE' LEAVE (PREVIOUS BREASTFEEDING LEAVE)*</b>	Both parents	No	Daily or weekly use (ca. 2 weeks) until baby is 9 months.	100% of wage	Employer (Social Security insurance pays from 9 to 12 months in case both parents take the leave the same way)
<b>LEAVE FOR CARE</b>	Individual	No	Until child is 3 years old or for two years to care for a dependent adult	Unpaid	None/ Partly, Social security contributions in case of care of child. Job is reserved up to 18 months.
<b>REDUCED WORK HOURS</b>	Employee entitlement (with care responsibilities)	No	Children under 12 or disabled and dependent adults. Reduction from 1/8 to 1/2 of work week	Unpaid	None / Partly, Social security contributions in case of care of child

Table 1. Spanish Statutory Care Leaves, 2021. Notes: Leaves are rights regulated in Workers and Public Employees Statutes, and allowances are regulated in Social Security Law. Other care-related measures are (Meil, Lapuerta, & Escobedo, 2018): leave to care for seriously ill children or time off for the care of seriously ill relatives (2-3 days depending on sector). \*These leaves have been substantially modified by Real Decreto-ley 6/2019. Paternity and maternity leave have been merged into one parental leave (*Permiso por Nacimiento y Cuidado del menor*). While maternity leave was already similar to current parental leave, paternity leave has been modified substantially from its creation in 2007. Its length was two weeks from 2007 to 2016, four weeks in 2017, five weeks in 2018, eight weeks in 2019, twelve in 2020 and 16 weeks, equal to the original maternity leave, in 2021.



**\*\* In 2018, last data available, average gross salary was 2001 €/month. The 90th percentile was 3615 €/month (3259 for women and 3935 for men). Parental leave was topped at 3,804 €/month in 2018 (Castellanos, 2019; INE 2020, Encuesta Annual de Estructura salarial 2018)**

After maternity leave, there is the possibility to take breast-feeding leave, which until 2018 has been a family entitlement that could be used on a daily or weekly basis, as to enlarge maternity or paternity leave by around two to four weeks depending on collective agreements. As this leave is paid by employer, no data on its use is available. Afterwards, a statutory parental leave can be asked for, which guarantees return to the same job for one year, but this leave is unpaid. This fact leads to a strong gender gap in uptake, because men only use well paid leaves, as shown by international research (Castro-García & Pazos-Moran, 2016). In 2007, only 2,327 men had taken parental leave to care for a child or for a frail elderly relative and their number increased to 5,199 in 2017, whereas respectively 16 and 10 times more women used it (Figure 11).

Figure 11 also shows the number of people having received a birth allowance by social security at the year before paternity leave implementation (2007), one year after and when it was enlarged to four weeks (2017). We first observe that fewer women received a maternity allowance over time, which is in relation to the decrease of the number of births from 492,527 to 391,930 in this ten-year period. Second, when paternity leave was introduced in 2007 fewer fathers compared to mothers used it, but in 2017 the same number of fathers and mothers use their entitlement. This proves the success of the Spanish paternity leave design, because it combines all elements that increase male take up. It is an individual and non-transferable right, and the birth allowance paid by social security compensates previous wage at 100%. Unfortunately, social security statistics do not provide information on take up rates, that is, on allowance receiver in relation to employees entitled to maternity and paternity leave.

LFS provide some relative measures, because it asks people who did not work in the previous week for the reasons, amongst which “use of birth/childcare/other family-related leave” is a possible answer<sup>4</sup>. Figure 12 shows that women take up leaves much more often than men. This gender gap has decreased as men’s male entitlement to paternity leave has increased over time, even if it is still large. In 2017, the proportion of female employees with children below age one who did not work during the reference week due to maternity or care leave was eight times higher than the corresponding proportion of men, while in 2007 this ratio was of 17. This gender gap is even higher among the self-employed (in 2017 the female proportion was 14 times higher than the male rate and in 2007 the female proportion was 54 times higher). A

<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, the characteristics of the LFS prevent identifying all parents who use this leave, because the field work of the survey is carried out over 13 weeks, while paternity leave lasted two weeks until 2016 and four weeks since 2017. This implies that LFS may find fathers who are not using a leave during the observation period, although they may have used it before or after the observation window. This limitation prevents us from measuring the precise number of fathers using paternity leave. However, the data allows to distinguish which parents took leave to a greater or lesser extent compared to others.

recent study combining social security and LFS data shows that an average of 66-70% of employed fathers with a child below three months old made use of paternity leave the during the economic crisis (2008- 2013), and then uptake increased to 80%, especially with enlargement of the leave to 4-5 weeks (2017-18) (Jurado-Guerrero & Muñoz-Comet, 2020).

As shown in Table 1, WLB measures to care for a sick family member or a frail elderly relative is possible through a leave, which can be used up to two years and with the guarantee of returning to the job, or through reducing working hours up to 50% of the work week with the corresponding decrease of salary. There is no limit of time in the entitlement to reduced work hours to care for a frail or sick family members.

## 1.4. GENDER GAPS IN CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK

In 2010, most women and men aged 25-64 in Spain participated in household and family care related activities: 95-97 per cent of women and 77-79 of men (the slight inter-gender variation is due to age: younger men and older women participate more). From 2000 onwards there is a clear trend to close this gender gap, mainly due to the increase in men's participation (in around 6-7 pp) for the group analysed. In 2010, however, women still spent on average 4.5-5 daily hours on these activities, while men spent around 2 hours, which means 2,25-2,5 times more female time (Eurostat, 2019). More recent data for 2015 show that employed women spend on average 1,5 more time than men on cooking and housework, and 1,3 on caring for and/or educating their children or grandchildren (EIGE, 2019)<sup>5</sup>. Differences are large when looking at the rates of employed people who care informally for elderly or people with a chronic illness, because of 13.5% of employed women do care versus 8.9% of employed men ([National Health Survey](#), Spanish National Statistics Institute, 2017). An even larger gender gap appears among people who receive a public benefit to care for a dependent relative, because 89% are women (data from [IMERSO. Institute of the elderly and social services](#)). However, in 2015 employed women and men who took care for elderly/disabled relatives daily spent very similar time (2.7 average hours per day in the case of women and 2.6 hours in the case of men) (EIGE, 2019).

The following domestic activities have been analysed in this section: food management, dish washing, cleaning dwelling, household upkeep, laundry, ironing, construction and repairs and household management and help family member. For all of them, except for construction and repairs, participation rates and time spent (as an average for all population irrespective of their participation in the activity) is higher for women than for men, all aged 25 to 64 (Figure 13). However, those men who participate in household upkeep (around 19 per cent in 2010) spend more time than women who also do this activity (around 34-35 per cent depending on age).

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<sup>5</sup> It must be remembered that the 2003 and 2010 data come from the European Time Use Surveys, which ask respondent to record in detail the time invested into different activities in contrast with stylized questions (which ask people to report on the *average* time invested in one activity), as the 2015 data coming from the Eurofound European Working Conditions Survey. For this reason, we prefer to use the 2010 for the more detailed descriptions.

There is a clear trend to close the gender gap in almost all activities, especially with respect to participation rates: compared to 2000, in 2010 there are more men who do all “feminine” tasks, except for food management. On the contrary, there are fewer women who do all those tasks, except for household management and helping family members. Both men and women from age 25 to 44 have decreased their participation rate in food management, probably due to a growing trend among young workers to consume pre-cooked food or eat in restaurants. With respect to time spent, there is also a trend to close the gender gap, but in some activities, while more men participate, the time they spend in the activity is lower (e.g. ironing). Both men and women have increased time spent in household upkeep, while participation rates have increased for men and decreased for women.

With respect to people living in a couple and with at least one child under 18 years old, two more activities have been considered: general childcare and teaching, reading and talking with children. The picture in this case is similar to the previous one for the general population. According to the most recent time use data (2010), participation rates, time spent and participation time (average time spent by those who participate in the activity) were higher for women than for men in all activities considered, excepting for construction and repairs (the three indicators were higher for men) and for participation time in household upkeep (fewer men than women participate but they spend more time). Participation time was also higher for men than for women in the case of teaching, reading and talking with child for those whose youngest child is 7-17 years old. On average, in couples with a child under age 6, women spent 3 hours and 17 minutes more than men in all household and family care activities (6:18 hours vs 3:01 hours). In couples whose youngest child is between 7 and 17 years old, the difference is slightly lower, around 3 hours (from 2 to 5 hours). Despite persisting gender gaps in time spent in housework and caring for children, disabled and elderly, men have increased their participation in unpaid work. The objective of this report is not only to assess the extent of gender gaps in paid and unpaid work, but also to describe the positive trends in caring masculinities. The next section focuses on how men perceive the need and their capacity to care, and how they are becoming more engaged in care activities, including self-care (Scambor et al., 2014).

## 1.5. INCREASE OF MEN IN CARE

Europe will live an increase in the demand of care work in coming decades, derived from the needs of people aged 65 or older (Durán, 2018), so men will necessarily have to increase their contribution to both formal and informal care work. Men's increasing participation in care related tasks benefits their environment but especially them, "including improved physical, mental, and sexual health and reduced risk-taking" (van der Gaag, Heilman, Gupta, Nembhard, & Barker, 2019, p.9). There are several reasons why men are incorporating themselves to care work. First, there is an obvious social demand fostered by many men themselves, who are willing to take care of the others in a similar way as women do. Second, there is a growing concern among men and women about the care demands of an ageing society (see Figure 14). Third, due to a general change in values and attitudes, the role of new fathers and other male caregivers is increasingly visible and socially valued. Most men agree that fathers are as well suited to look after children as mothers (see Figure 15). In a similar percentage, Spanish young men overwhelmingly prefer a model of family in which both members of the couple share paid and unpaid work, including care work, in an egalitarian way (see Figure 16). Most men and women are also conscious now that marital stability strongly depends on egalitarian arrangements: only around 9 per cent of men consider today that sharing household chores is not very important for a successful partnership, while in 1981 up to 40 per cent agreed with this idea (see Figure 16). There are also demographic reasons for the increase in male caregivers due to an ageing population. In Spanish households formed by couples older than 64, men already contribute to their spouse's care as much as women, and by the age of 80 there are more male than female caregivers within couples (Pérez & Abellán, 2018). Men provide now around one third of all personal care provided to dependent adults and children in Spain. Most male caregivers (57 per cent) are younger than 65 years old. In most cases, the person receiving care is a woman older than 64 (ibidem).

In the case of parents with children in preschool age, fathers have increased their participation in housework and family care, especially in dishwashing and household upkeep on one hand, and in general childcare and teaching, reading and talking activities with children below age six, on the other hand (see Figure 17). What are the factors that drive more fathers into family work? With respect to childcare, recent quantitative evidence (Fernandez-Lozano, 2019) shows the characteristics of fathers who share routine childcare in a more egalitarian way with their spouse, among couples with at least one child under 13 years old: earning less than she does, not

having a traditionally masculine job (such as manager or blue collar worker), having available time (especially after 5 p.m.), and, particularly, being partnered with a woman who is not available after 5 p.m. due to paid work. Although gender egalitarian attitudes cannot be directly measured with the data used (time use data), it could not be confirmed that fathers with a University degree, supposed to have more egalitarian attitudes, shared routine childcare in a more egalitarian way than fathers with primary or secondary education.

With respect to unpaid work, the gender gap, while still considerable, seems to be closing. Some recent studies that have analysed macro-level patterns and institutional factors (Altintas & Sullivan, 2017; Sullivan, Billari, & Altintas, 2014) have shown that in Southern European countries the process of social diffusion of less traditional gender behaviours seems to be particularly rapid and therefore these countries may be catching up with countries with more egalitarian gender regimes (such as central or northern European countries). Qualitative studies in Spain (Domínguez-Folgueras, Jurado-Guerrero, & Botia-Morillas, 2017) have identified some of the variables that, at the couple level, may be influencing a more egalitarian division of routine domestic work after parenthood: flexible standards on housework, men's proactive attitudes toward domestic involvement, men's schedule flexibility and women's greater participation in paid work.

The increase of men in care has another dimension, which is the male presence in care professions. The International Labour Organization (ILO) considers all occupations in the "health and social work" and "education" sectors as "forming part of the care workforce" (ILO, 2018). According to this organization, Spain has mid to high levels of employment in the care sector, with a significant proportion of domestic workers within it. However, not all care occupations have an equal presence of men. In education, for example, men tend to be less present in the lower levels or in the health sector there are also proportionally many more male doctors than male nurses. In general, the proportion of male workers in typical care occupations remains stable at around 2% between 2011 and 2017. In contrast, out of every 100 women working, 14 did so in these occupations in 2011 (13 in 2017). Yet, the proportion of male workers has slightly increased in some of these occupations while in some others it has decreased, as shown in Figure 18. In addition, to these figures, men working in nursing homes have also increased somewhat from 16.6% of all workers in these establishments in 2009 to 17.2% in 2019. The low male presence in care occupation is not in line with attitudes about it. For instance, around 75 per cent of the Spanish population 'totally agree' or 'tend to agree' that men should work more in childcare sectors, only below the Swedish, Finish and Danish percentage and 6 pp above the percentage in 2009 (European Commission, 2015).

Caring masculinities include not only care for others but also care for one-self. Currently men display higher risk-taking behaviour than women, as shown by different gender rates of traffic accidents, accidents at the workplace, suicides, smoking, alcohol and drug consumption, sex-related diseases and risky behaviour in sports. Related to these men have higher rates of premature deaths, and consequently

a lower life expectancy. The lower self-care of men is more evident in less privileged socio-economic groups, but research relates scarce male self-care also to gendered socialisation and hegemonic masculine identity designing men as hard, tough, strong and invulnerable “boys” (Scambor et al., 2014). Some explorative research on the relationship between gender-equality and indicators of male health and wellbeing at context level shows that increasing gender equality may increase men’s wellbeing (Holter, 2014). In Spain, some statistics on the evolution of men’s health indicators positively correlate with the increasing gender equality in paid and unpaid work in Spain. Age-adjusted rates of accidents show a decrease of men involved from 2008 to 2015 and a decline of the gender gap (Ministerio de Sanidad, Servicios Sociales e Igualdad, 2017). Less men smoked daily in 2017 compared to 2014, and the gender gap of daily smokers also diminished in most age groups. Women’s life expectancy is higher than men’s, but in the last decades this gender gap has diminished, from 6.9 years of difference in favour of women in 1998 to 5.4 years in 2017 (INE, 2019). Men’s infection with HIV has also diminished in the last years as well as the gender gap (Centro Nacional de Epidemiología, 2018). We do not know the driving forces behind this positive evolution of men’s health indicators. It may be related to an increased self-care of men, a more effective legislation to prevent traffic accidents, the prohibition of smoking in public places, better prevention campaigns or a mix of different drivers. However, the promotion of caring masculinities has the potential to increase male self-care and well-being.



## 1.6. HOW CAN WORKPLACES SUPPORT CARING MASCULINITIES ACROSS THE LIFE COURSE

Different studies have shown how support from companies is crucial to narrow the gap between men's theoretical access to work-life balance measures and their actual access (Fernandez-Cornejo et al., 2020; Belope-Nguema et al., 2018). Workplaces can support caring masculinities by providing time of absence from work to use it to care for significant others, be it children, frail elderly, the partner or others. Employees need time off from work to care for dependents. Employers sometimes tend to offer services instead of time, such as an additional health insurance, childcare services, meals or a company car. These measures mainly reinforce the male breadwinner identity and do not promote caring masculinities. Therefore, we focus on five different formal policies that offer time of absence or support an individual use of work time in accordance to care needs. In Spain such time measures are either regulated by the state, by companies or are a combination of both (see section 1.3 for legal provisions on WLB):

- > **Leaves of absence** to care for small children and flexleave to leave the workplace for part of the day for personal or family reasons.
- > **Tight time schedules**, which concentrate working hours in one part of the day, normally the morning hours.
- > **Flextime** allowing for variable time to start and end the workday in accordance with work and family needs.
- > **Spatial flexibility** to save on commuting time through teleworking.
- > **Schedule control**, which is understood to be the ability to determine when one works as well as where and how many hours.

Section 1.2 and research on the use of WLB in Spanish companies (Fernández Cornejo et al, 2018) showed that there is a strong gender imbalance in the use of part-time work, the statutory right to reduce work hours and unpaid parental leave. Gender differences are smaller for paid leave take-up, for time flexibility in work schedules and for tight time schedules (see Table 2).



	WOMEN	MEN	GENDER GAP
<b>MATERNITY AND PATERNITY LEAVE*</b>	For each 100 mothers	101 fathers take it up	small
<b>LEAVE FOR CARE**</b>	Mothers of child <15: 10%	Fathers of child <15: 1.3%	large
<b>STATUTORY WORK REDUCTION TO CARE FOR A CHILD</b>	Mothers of child <15: 21%	Fathers of child <15: 3%	large
<b>TIGHT TIME SCHEDULE***</b>	Mothers of child <13 in dual earner couples: 16%	Fathers of child <13 in dual earner couples: 11%	small
<b>CHANGE OF STARTING AND ENDING WORKDAY</b>	Mothers of child <15: 5.6%	Fathers of child <15: 5.3%	small
<b>REGULAR TELEWORK</b>	4.2% of workers	4.3% of workers	None

Table 2. Gendered Use of Time and Place Policies in Spain, 2018. Source: own elaboration (based on the [LFS special module on work-life balance, 2018](#) and Fernández-Lozano, 2018). \*Replaced in 2019 by *parental leave*. \*\*Also referred to sometimes as *unpaid parental leave* (*excedencias no remuneradas*). \*\*\*Data for 2010. A 'tight-time schedule' is here a work schedule comprising 30-40 weekly hours, with no work performed between 5 p.m. and 7 a.m. the next day, or on weekends.

According to two qualitative studies based on three discussion groups with involved fathers in large companies, public sector workplaces and small businesses (Jurado-Guerrero, Monferrer, Botía, & Abril, 2018) and on 11 small companies studied through interviews to 11 Human Resources Directors and 21 fathers (Abril Morales, Monferrer, Jurado-Guerrero, Botía-Morillas, & Bogino-Larrambeber, 2020), companies can favour caring masculinities in three general ways.

First, for the care of small pre-school children, it is important to promote the use of the non-transferable and 100% paid paternity leave, and the breastfeeding leave. Second, for the care of school-aged children companies should offer work schedules that are complementary to school opening hours, particularly important for one-parent families. These are possibilities to opt for a tight time schedule and flextime for starting and ending work to enable taking turns with the partner in picking up children

from school. Third, companies can also offer measures to balance work and care in case of illness of dependents or school holidays, such as occasional telework, flexible days for leave of absence for personal needs or care services at the workplace for holidays.

In more general terms, these studies conclude with three principles for the design of policies to enable men to have time and flexibility to care for their significant others, and to reduce the gender bias of family support measures in the public and private sectors. First, policies should be conceptualized as supporting WLB for all employees, not only for those with small children because the reduction of work-family conflict is in general positively correlated with employee wellbeing, health and productivity. This also prevents feelings of comparative disadvantage of those without present care needs. Second, the aim should be to give employees control over their work schedules, and if this is not possible, then family support measures should not stigmatize and penalize those benefiting from them. This is only possible if men and women take equally advantage of them. Measures that do not ensure that personal income is sufficiently replaced, such as unpaid parental leave or statutory work hours' reduction, are widely refused by men and thus stigmatize women, who are more often prone to accept current or future penalizations. Additionally, the unequal duration of statutory maternity and paternity leaves is an important barrier to gender equity. In essence, measures enabling WLB should be formally designed for all employees and avoid the unintended creation of flexibility stigmas that result in penalizations. In addition to these WLB measures, much work remains to be done to change gendered organizational cultures (Jurado-Guerrero et al., 2018).

In a study of small businesses that offered best practices for WLB without gender bias, these not only offered the listed measures and followed the mentioned design principles, but they also had organizational cultures and a leadership that supported the use of time measures. Leaders open to transformations and practising dialogue with employees were identified as an essential element to understand why some companies in different economic sectors, with a varying range of customer service modalities, and in a varying situation of scarcity of labour force, have implemented measures that foster caring masculinities. Their organizational cultures displayed a tandem of commitment and trust, which may be more easily to reach in small companies, whereas in larger businesses this may need a higher degree of formalization in collective agreements. Leaders were open to these best practices for various reasons. Some needed to balance work and family themselves and wanted for their employees the same. In other cases, after having experienced the negative effects of high workloads and excessive orientation to work on her or his own health, leaders understood better the positive effects of WLB for their company. Also, gender egalitarian attitudes were drivers of best organizational cultures (Abril Morales et al., 2020).

In middle-to large companies, trade unions play a very important role in promoting WLB through two instruments, gender equality plans and collective agreements. From 2007 to 2018 companies with 250 employees or more had the obligation to

evaluate gender gaps within the company and to propose a plan to overcome gender inequalities. Since April 2019 companies from 50 employees onwards also must establish gender equality plans (Real Decreto-ley 6/2019). Workers' representatives and trade unions have been involved in designing, negotiating and monitoring of these plans, which in some cases became part of collective agreements. The latter have a binding character, whereas the commitment to the first are not always well monitored. The Spanish Ministry of Labour created a certificate of Equality in the Company (*Distintivo de Igualdad en la Empresa*), which distinguish outstanding companies in their efforts in promoting gender equality, reaching out to 148 certified companies in 2019 (<http://www.igualdadenlaempresa.es/redEmpresas/distintivo/home.htm>).

Collective agreements cover mostly salary and working time issues at company or sector level, but now they also have to establish protocols on how to handle demands for adaption of work place for WLB, because the above-mentioned Royal Decree (Real Decreto-ley 6/2019) includes now the right of employees to ask the employer to adapt the duration and distribution of their workday (article 8), the organization of working time and the place of work to comply with the right to balance family and work life. In case of parenthood, employees have the right to ask for work adaptations until the child's 12<sup>th</sup> birthday. The criteria for implementing these adaptations must be established in collective agreements guaranteeing neither direct nor indirect discrimination by gender. Meanwhile employers have a maximum of one month to come to bilateral agreement with the demanding employee.

Last, the 4<sup>th</sup> General agreement for collective bargaining (ANC, 2018-2020) establishes the goal of achieving progressively a minimum annual salary of 14,000€ in each new collective agreement. Having an adequate salary is a pre-condition for achieving a WLB in a labour market context with an increasing number of working poor. The estimations made by the trade union CCOO show that the last increase of the gross minimum wage (SMI) from 735.9 to 900€ in 14 annual payments in 2019 will benefit more women (58%) than men (42%) (Gabinete Económico de Comisiones Obreras, 2019).

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## 1.8. APPENDIX: CONTEXT FIGURES AND TABLES

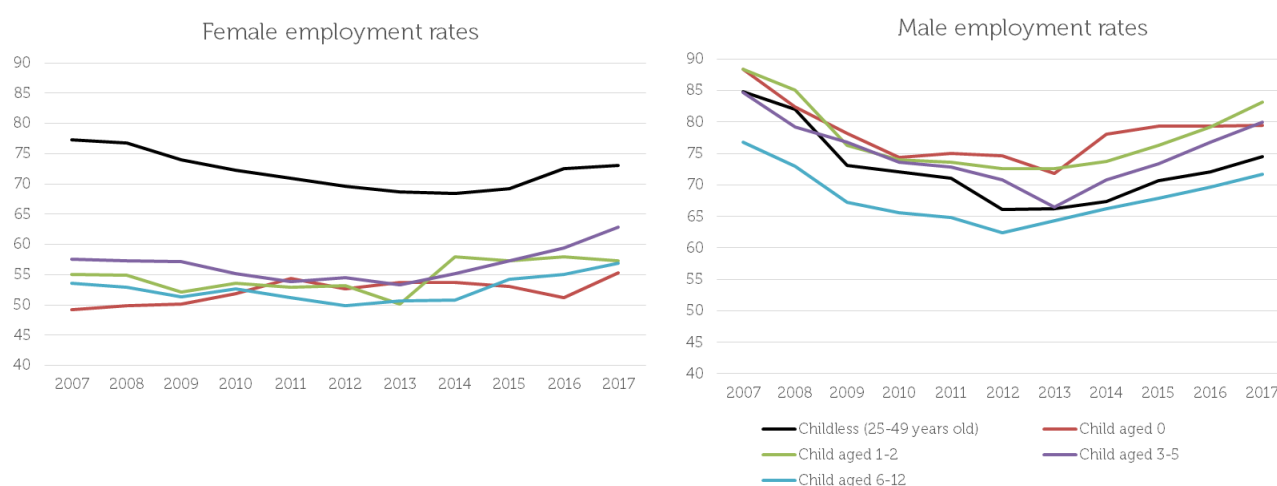


Figure 1. Employment rates by gender and age of youngest child, 2007-2017.  
 Source: EU-LFS Microdata.



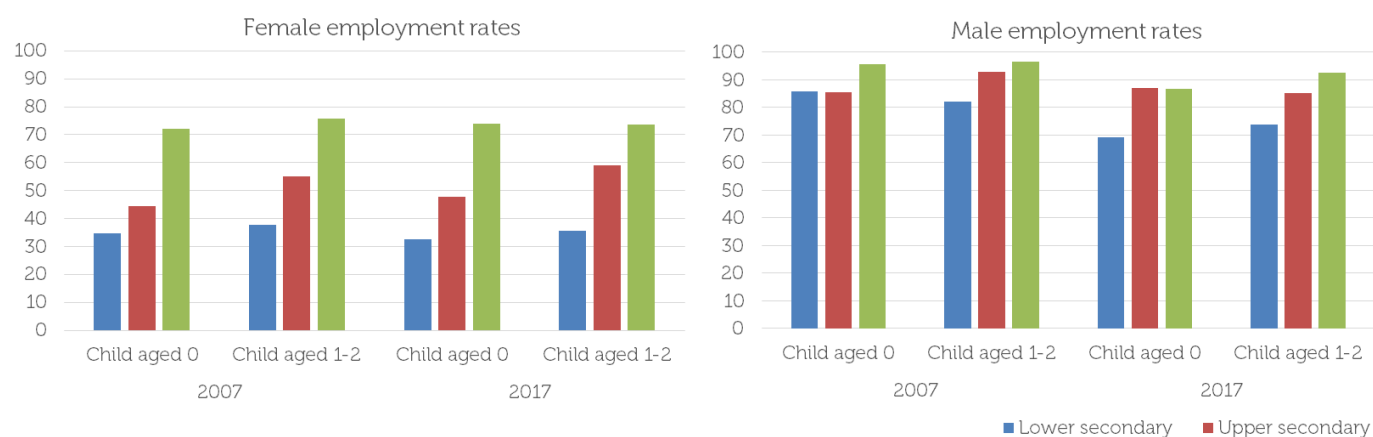


Figure 2. Employment rates by gender, education and age of youngest child, 2007-2017.  
Source: EU-LFS Microdata.

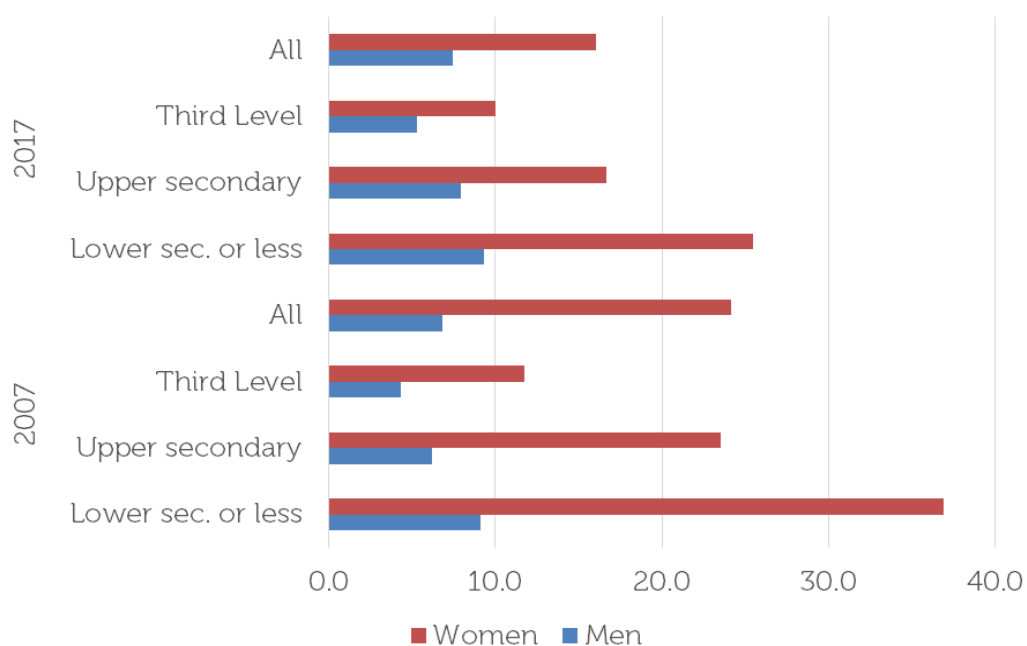


Figure 3. Economic inactivity rates by gender and education, people aged 25-49 years, 2007/2017. Source: EU-LFS Microdata.

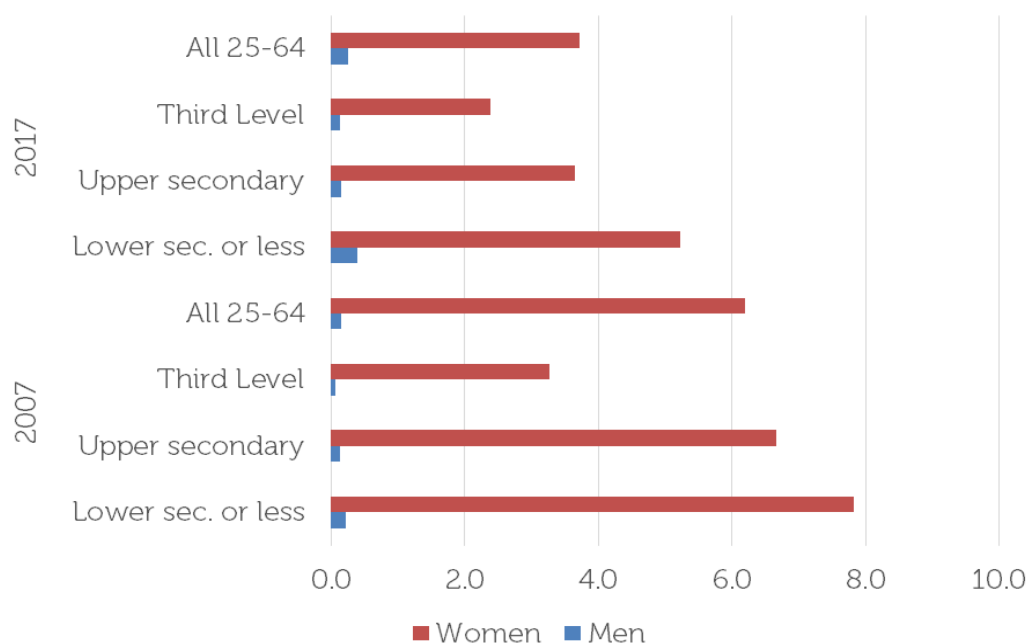


Figure 4. Proportion of people aged 25-64 who are inactive due to family reasons, 2007/2017. Source: EU-LFS Microdata.

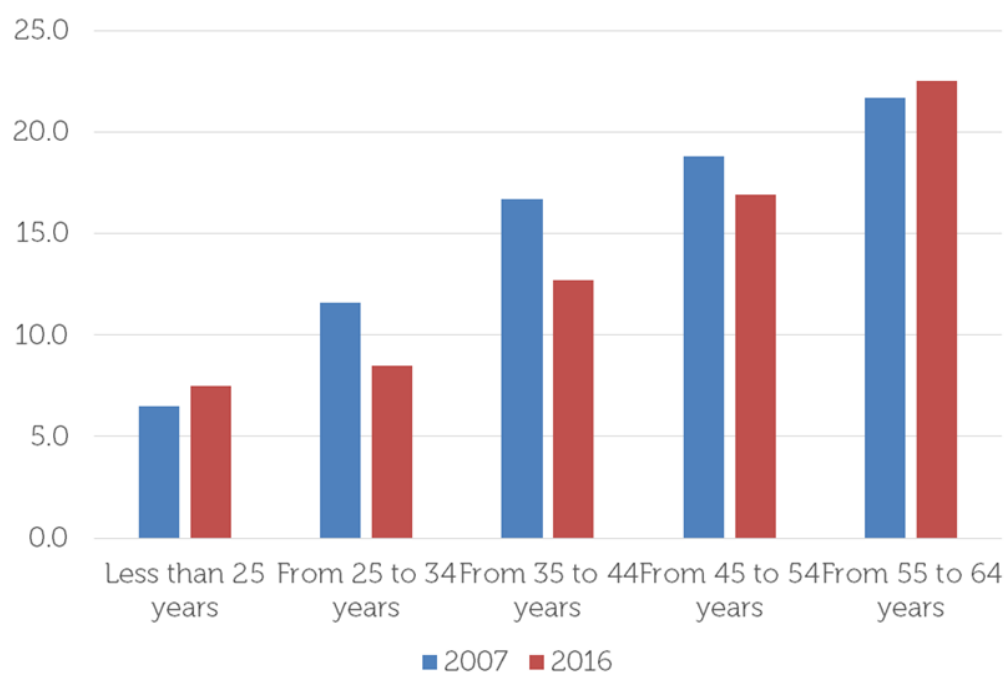


Figure 5. Gender pay gap in unadjusted form by age 2007/2016. Source: Eurostat database earn\_gr\_gpgr2ag..

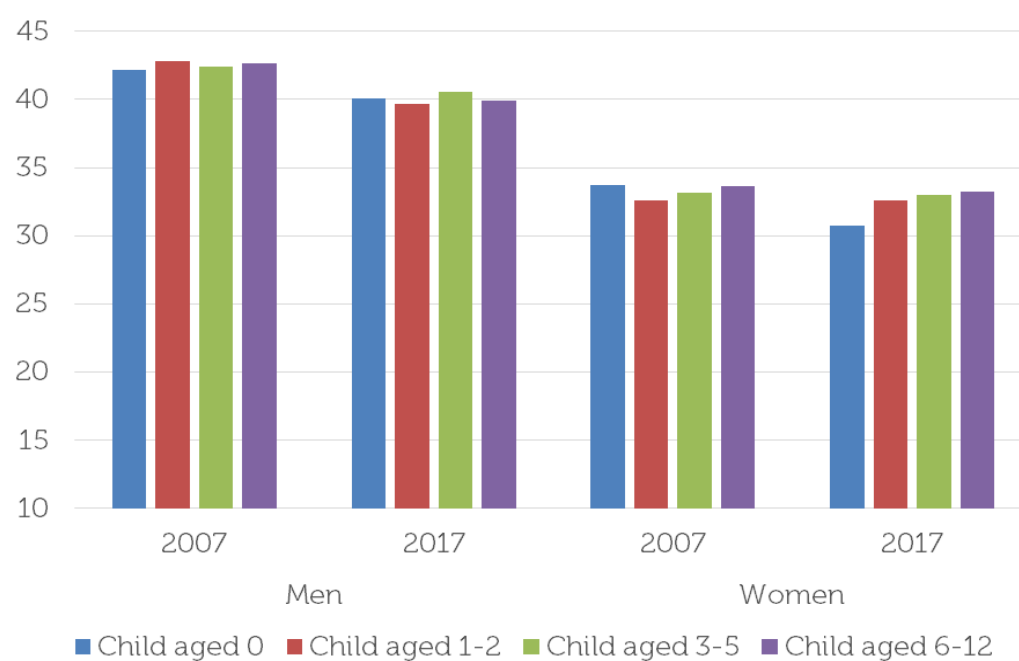


Figure 6. Weekly paid work hours of parents by gender and age of youngest child, 2007/2017. Source: EU-LFS Microdata.

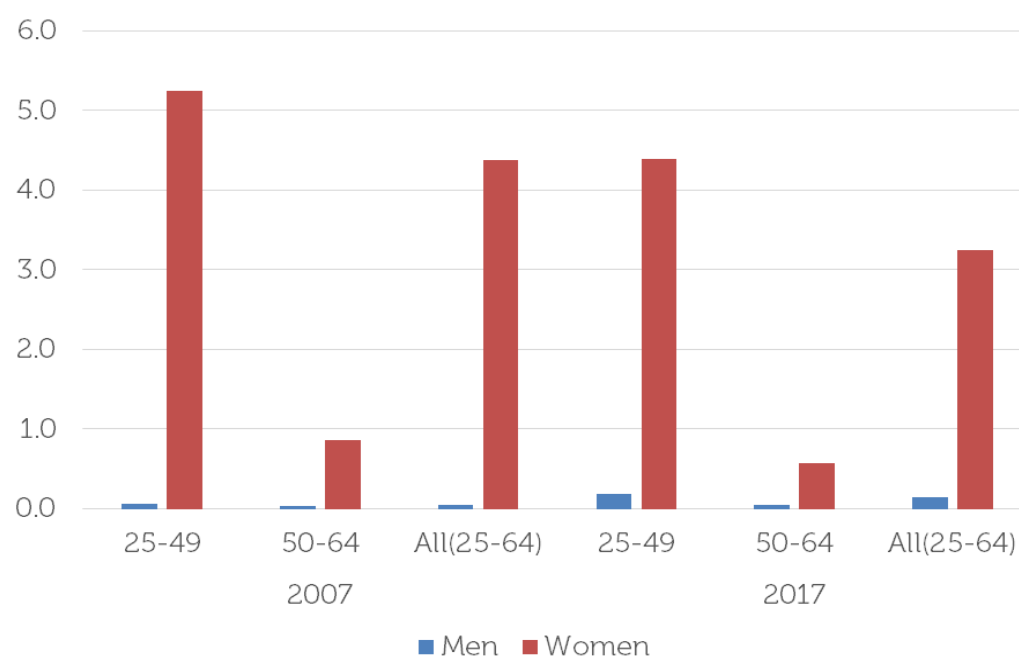


Figure 7. Percentage of employed people in part-time work for family reasons, by age and gender, 2007/2017. Source: EU-LFS Microdata.

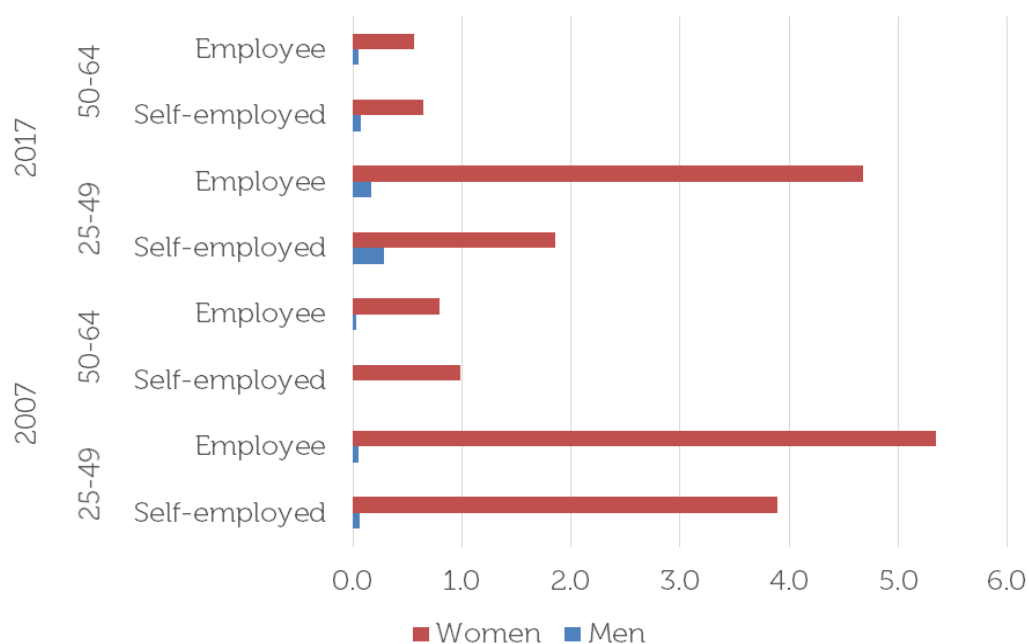


Figure 8. Percentage of employed people in part-time work for family reasons by age, professional status and gender, 2007/2017. Source: EU-LFS Microdata.

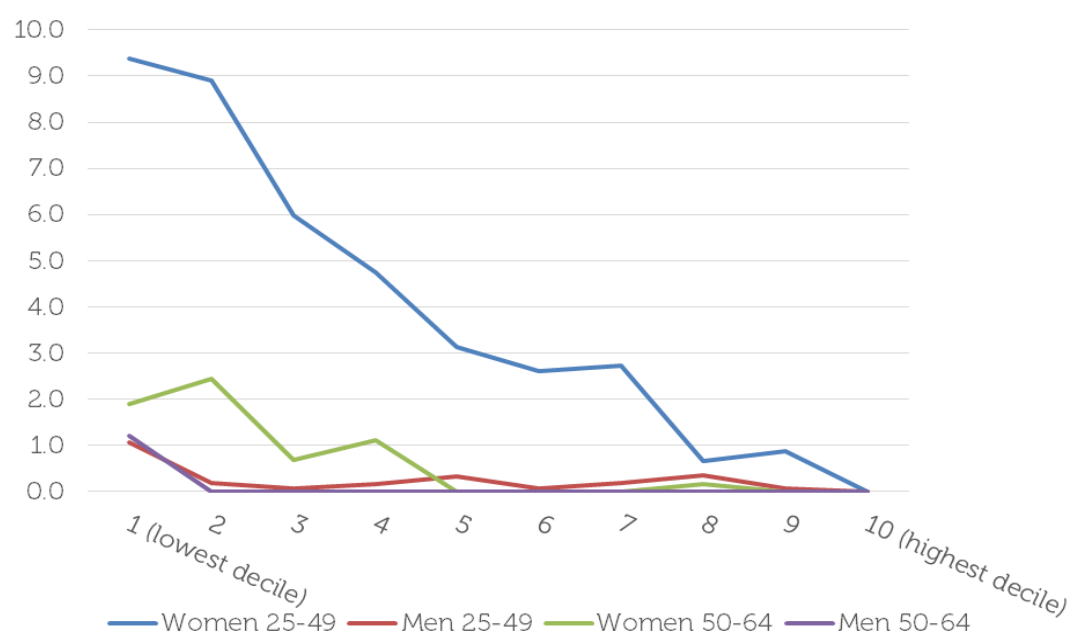


Figure 9. Percentage of employed people in part-time work for family reasons by age, income decile and gender, 2007/2017. Source: EU-LFS Microdata.

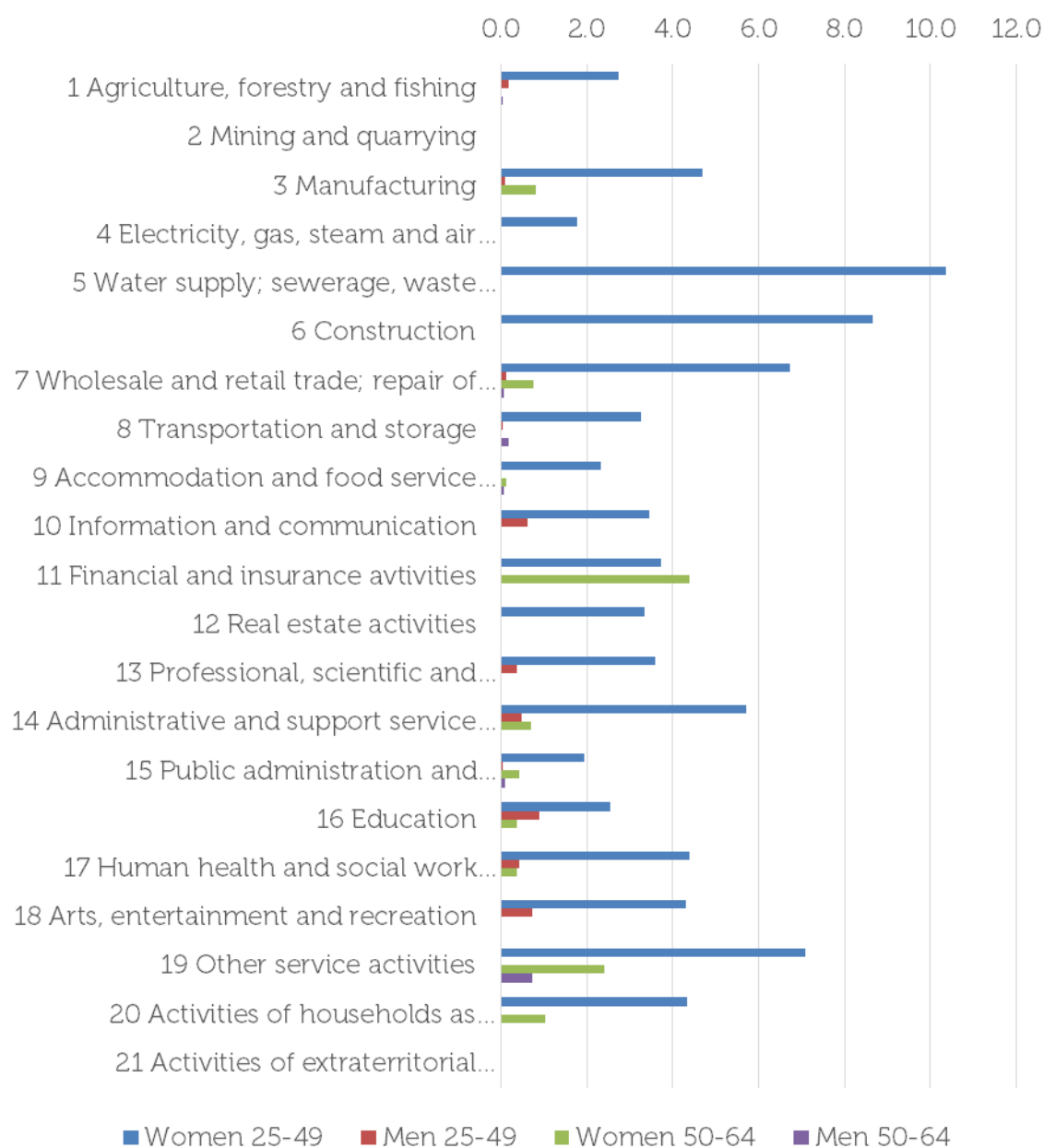


Figure 10. Percentage of employed people in part-time work for family reasons by age, economic sector and gender, 2017. Source: EU-LFS Microdata.

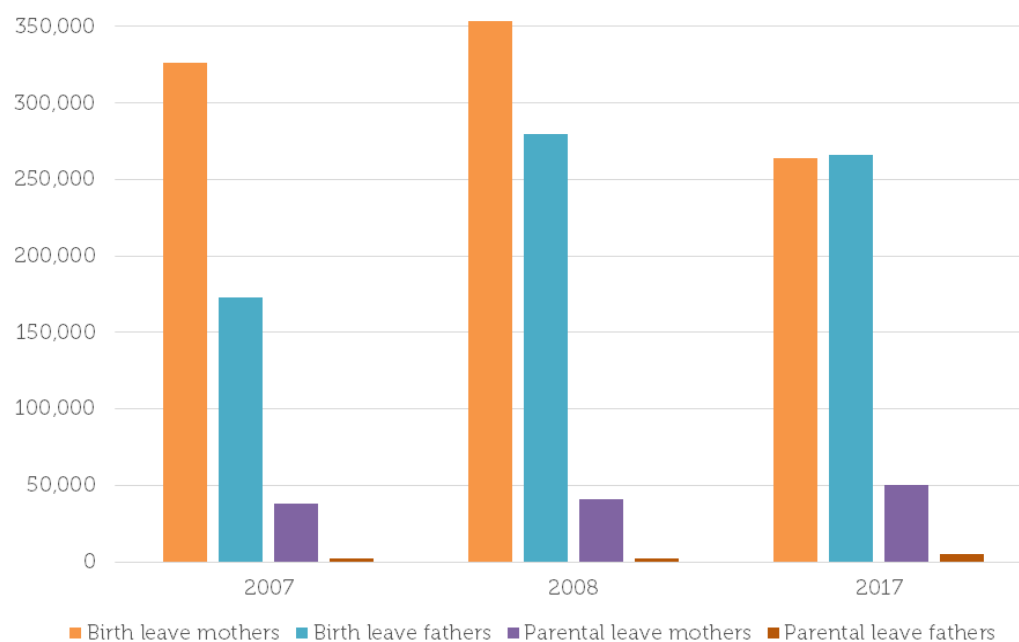


Figure 11. Birth and parental leave allowance receiver by gender, Spain 2007/08/17.

Source:

Social

Security

(<http://www.mitramiss.gob.es/es/estadisticas/contenidos/anuario.htm>)



Figure 12. Gender gaps (female take up /male take up) in use of birth/childcare/other family-related leave, by professional status, 2007/2017.

Notes: The gap is influenced by the respective length of the leave. Source: EU-LFS Microdata.

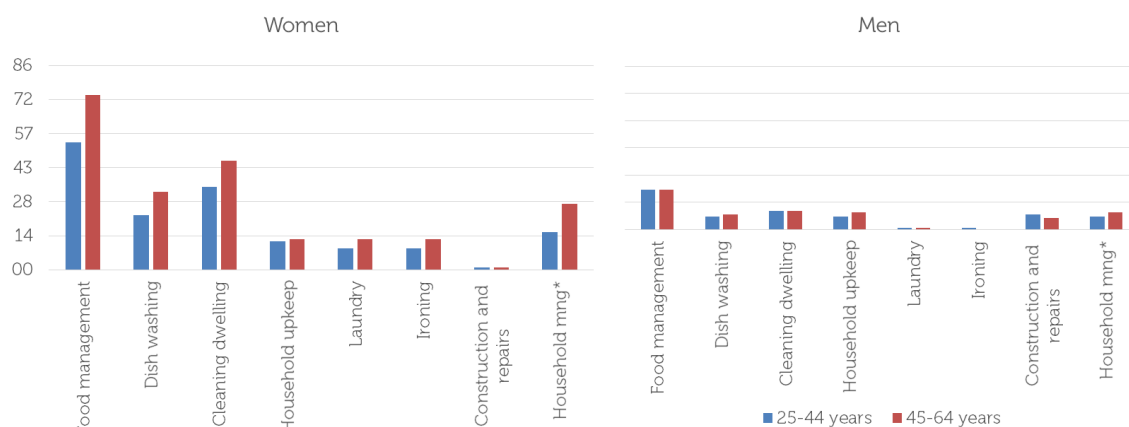


Figure 13. Average daily minutes spent by Spanish population in different domestic activities by gender and age (not participating people included). \*Household management and helping family members. Source: Spanish Time Use Survey, 2010.

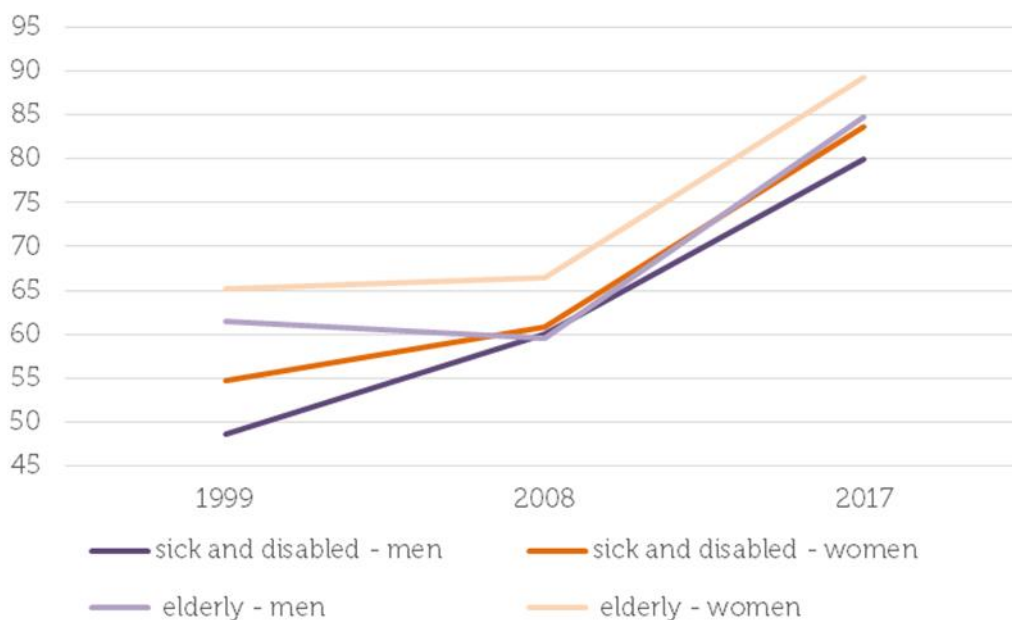


Figure 14. Percentage of men and women who feel "much" or "very much" concerned with the living conditions of elderly and sick and disabled people in their countries. Source: European Value Survey (EVS) 1999, 2008 and 2017: Spain.

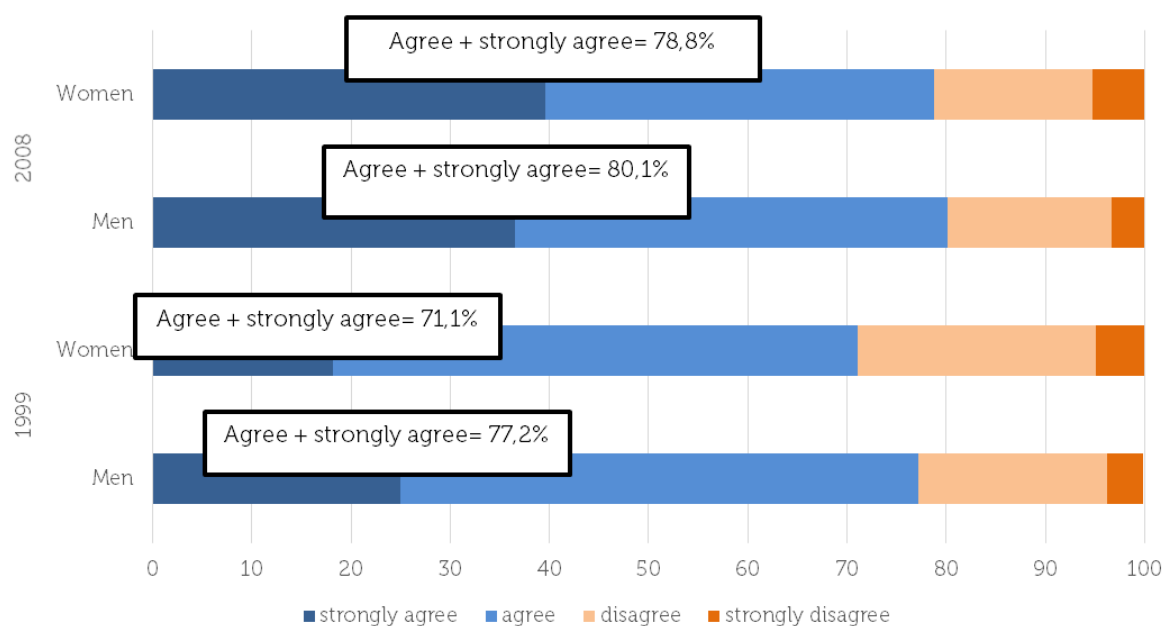


Figure 15. Percentage of people who agree/disagree with the statement "In general, fathers are as well suited to look after their children as mothers". Source: European Value Survey (EVS) 2008 and 1999: Spain.

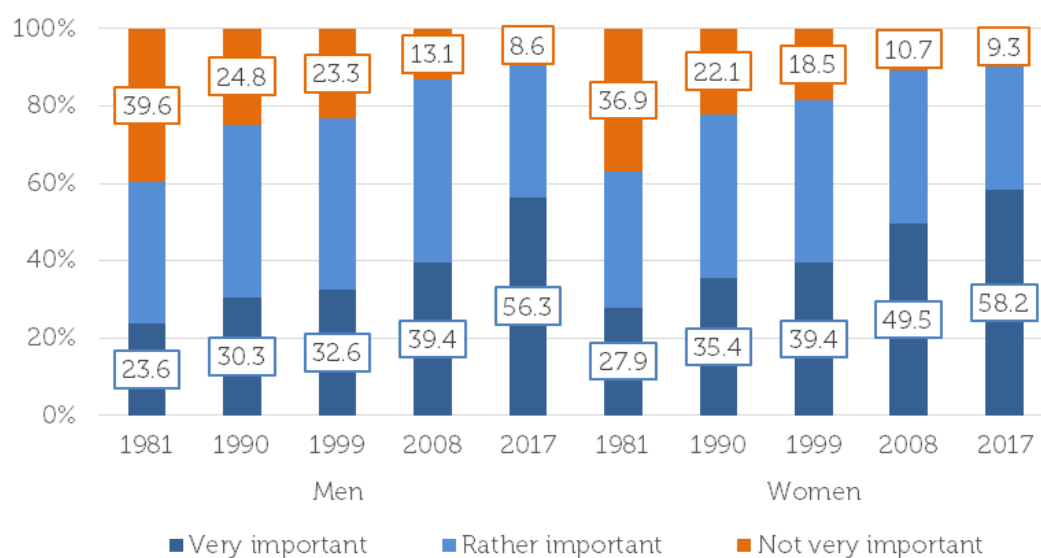


Figure 16. Opinion about importance of sharing household chores for a successful marriage or partnership. Source: European Value Survey (EVS) 1981, 1990, 1999, 2008 and 2017: Spain.



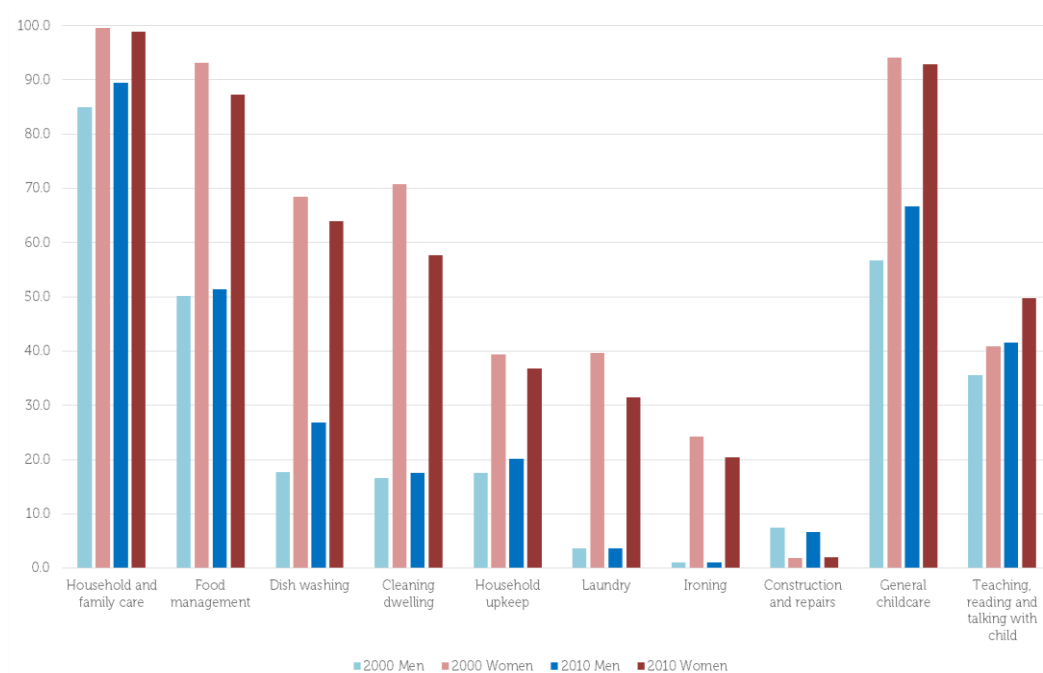


Figure 17. Participation rates in domestic and care related activities, people in a couple with youngest child less than 6 years old. Source: Spanish Time Use Survey, 2003 and 2010, Eurostat.

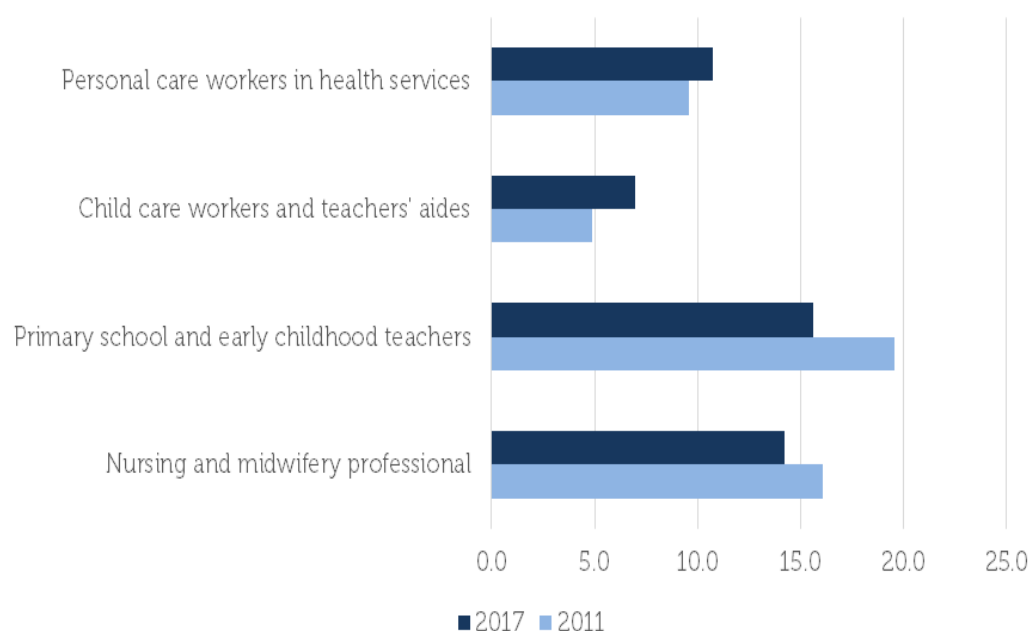


Figure 18. Percentage of male workers within each occupation. Source: EU-LFS Microdata.

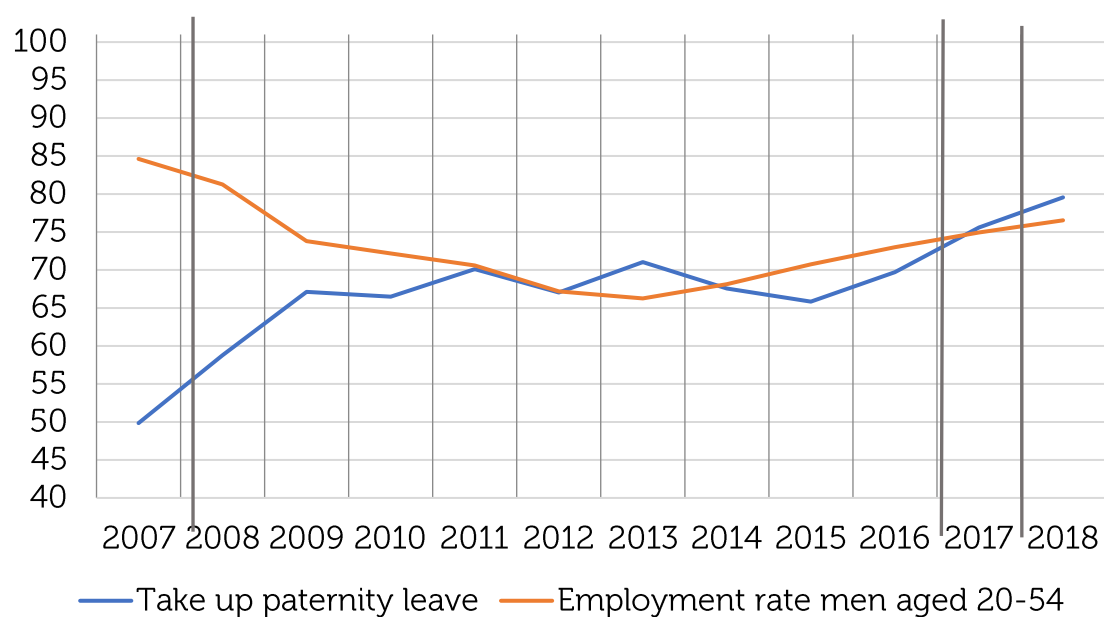


Figure 19. Take up rates of paternity leave (employed fathers 20-49 years) and male employment, 2007-2018. Source: Microdata of Spanish Labour Force Survey, 2007-2018 and Social Security data.

# 2.

## BEST PRACTICES IN SPANISH COMPANIES

Paco Abril Morales, Cristina Castellanos-Serrano, Teresa Jurado-Guerrero.

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## 2.1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This organisational analysis was conducted in five companies evidencing some good practice for gender-equal work life balance (WLB). Figure 20 shows the factors that influence the promotion of caring masculinities in these case studies.

We have focused on companies' WLB policies, but statutory policies are also relevant in enabling men to take up care activities. Gender stereotypes influence women and men outside and within companies, as does the offer of services and the availability of other family members to care for children or frail elderly people. Within companies, collective agreements, and less so equality plans, are the reference points for men's knowledge and perception of entitlement to WLB measures. The employment conditions, especially the type of work contract and the type of work area, make the use of some measures possible ('tight time' work schedules<sup>6</sup> in administrative occupations) while others are perceived to be impossible (morning shift in occupations with rotating time schedules) or as penalizing in different ways (loss of job when using parental leave in fixed-term jobs). The organizational culture of companies is key to enabling caring masculinities, in particular how leadership at different levels manages diverse WLB needs and how co-workers, in particular other men, react to demands to adapt working conditions to care responsibilities. Directors, Human Resources staff, supervisors and workers' councils' representatives have the capacity to decide and manage how to facilitate WLB for all employees and to include gender experts in decision making. In addition, information, communication, training and awareness raising is very important for changing gender stereotypes and promoting men's uptake of measures without penalty (loss of wage, of opportunities for training and of promotion opportunities).

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<sup>6</sup> In using the term 'tight-time' schedule we refer to a work schedule which concentrates work hours within the core business hours (e.g. from 8-9 a.m. to 3-4 p.m.). This is referred to in Spanish as "jornada intensiva" or "jornada continua" as opposed to "jornada partida" (split-shift), characterized by a long lunch break and work ending late in the evening

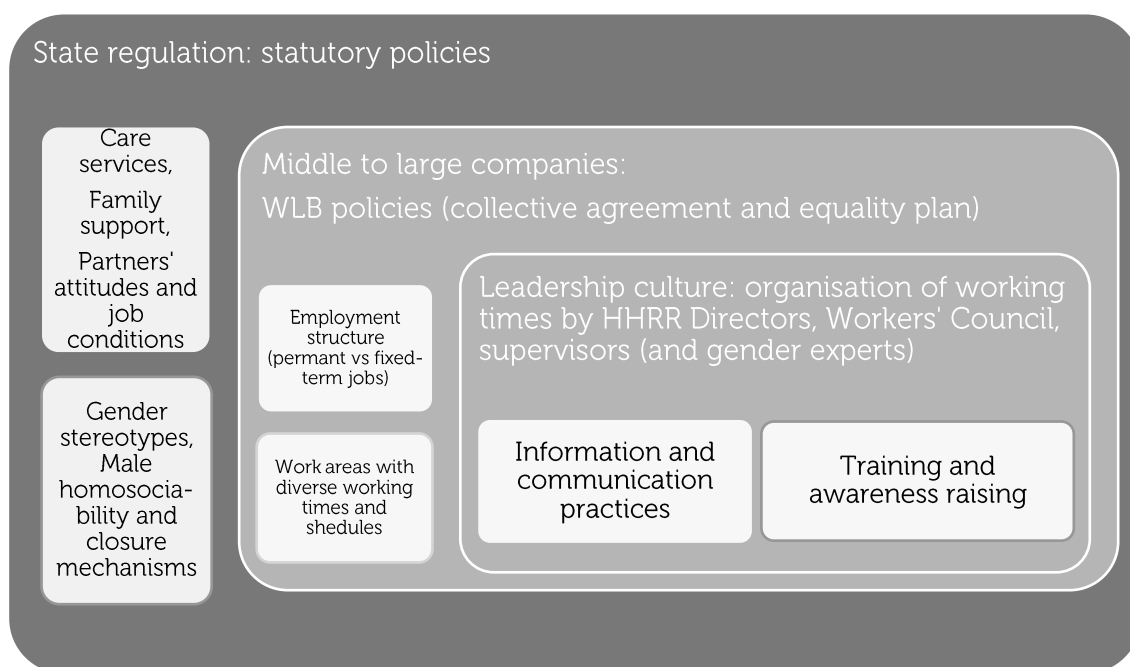


Figure 20. Factors and barriers in the promotion of caring masculinities.

The policies that promote caring masculinities are a mix of statutory rights offered by the Spanish Workers' Statute and policies agreed upon in collective agreements or individual company measures (see Figure 21). Options for part-time work and the statutory entitlement to reduce working hours for WLB are seldom used by men, which excludes them from best practice.

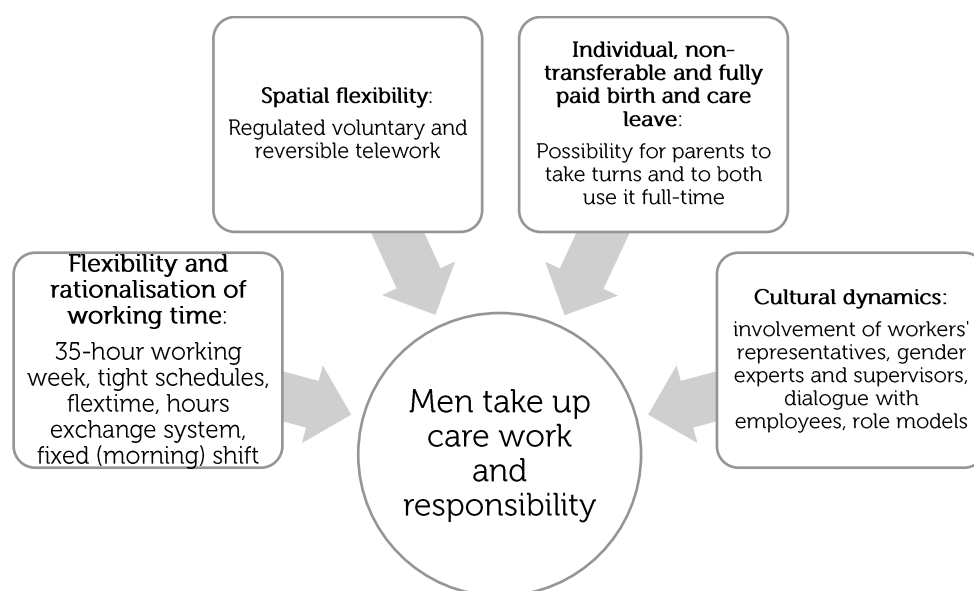


Figure 21. Public and company' policies for promoting gender equal WLB

## 2.2. INTRODUCTION

This organizational analysis is based on five case studies of companies which display some good practice in involving men in personal and familial care activities. We aim to show the Work Life Balance (WLB) practices which exist in medium–large companies in different sectors and which are used by men to care for their children, their partners, elderly relatives or themselves.

In the first chapter of this report (context analysis) we showed the evolution of overall gender inequality in employment and the family, and present an overview of statutory policies since 2007. Here it suffices to remember some key elements of the Spanish welfare regime. The Spanish welfare regime is characterized by an employment-based social security with universal health service and education systems. The labour market is segmented into ‘insiders’ with stable jobs and ‘outsiders’ with precarious employment trajectories (many women, young people and immigrants). Work life balance is achieved through a combination of means-tested public and subsidized private care services for children and for frail elderly people. These services show limited coverage and generosity, and they are complemented by statutory leave of absence (paid maternity, paternity and breastfeeding leave, and unpaid parental leave), and by a few family cash benefits and tax reductions of comparatively low generosity.

Before the Spanish MiC team approached companies to seek their participation as cases for the organizational study, we conducted six interviews with stakeholders from networks of innovative companies, employers’ organisations and trade unions to get their opinions on the drivers of change for achieving an inclusive WLB. We can summarise their ideas according to those stakeholders who were closer to employers and those closer to trade union sides. **Representatives of employers** stated that multinational companies and companies in high benefit sectors or with an intensive use of technologies and knowledge do promote diversity and WLB (more days of paternity leave, more flexibility with time, working hours accounts, support for reducing the working day). They considered improvements in management and in quality assurance as equally important drivers, as well as the increase in the number of female directors, thought to be more flexible because they had their own WLB needs. Globalisation may have promoted more horizontal and democratic leadership, which responds favourably to people from the Millennial generation asking for a more flexible use of working time. Finally, the cultural change began when women entered employment in great numbers in the 1980s and the first WLB measures were

introduced, albeit with an exclusive focus on women. Later legal reforms expanded policies to address men becoming involved in childcare.

**Trade union representatives** underlined legal reforms as drivers of gender equality, such as those decided in March 2019: the expansion of paternity leave, the extension of equality plans to companies with 50 or more employees with clear instructions about diagnosis and inclusion of trade union representatives, the compulsory wage register by gender, with details on wage supplements, the right of workers with children up to the age of 12 to ask for their daily work schedule to be adapted, and the external wage audits in companies. The 2008 economic crisis and the difficulties in increasing wages in public administrations led to agreement on reintroducing the 35-hour week. Since then, many municipal and some regional administrations have retained a 35-hour week.

With respect to **barriers** that prevent advances in WLB and caring masculinities, stakeholders mentioned that companies/departments that produce material goods have more difficulty in using time flexibility due to shift work, and personal services cannot offer telework. Very competitive companies, such as consultancies, were considered to have strong hetero-patriarchal cultures. They perceived male leaders as showing strong prejudices against WLB, leading them to focus on the potential negative consequences of measures, for example increasing inequalities across the workforce and employees working less or turning out poorer work. The same culture of heteropatriarchy also influences many women, who see caring for others as *their* obligation, and many men, who think that these issues are not *their* responsibility. Men are considered to care only when a family need arises, but not out of a general sense of responsibility and they still fear colleagues' negative reactions. Besides these gender stereotypes, women are overrepresented in low paid jobs, so it is also economically rational for many couples that the women use more WLB provision than their male partners. Concerning the right to adapt working conditions to family needs in companies' departments that have shift schedules for operational reasons, it was stated that a change of shift should not become a right. Surprisingly, legal requirements were not always fulfilled, e.g., many public administrations have not (effectively) implemented equality plans. The 2008 recession had a negative impact on employees, for instance the reduction of staff in public administrations led to very high workloads. The transformation of maternity and paternity leave into a new and equal birth leave was criticised in some of its details, such as (1) the obligation for fathers and mothers to take birth leave simultaneously, reducing flexibility in caring for children, (2) the week-by-week use of leave, making it difficult for companies to organise, and (3) the fact of the lack of public support for employing substitutes before the worker goes on leave.

The **role of trade unions and employers' organizations** in promoting gender-equal WLB was controversial. One stakeholder would prefer not to have a workers' council, because this implies a logic of confrontation, preferring instead bilateral conversations with employees. Others consider workers' councils should be promoters of WLB because through collective agreements (CA) they introduce

measures that are for the whole staff). Traditionally CA have been led by male trade union representatives, which may be less interested in WLB and gender equality: *'We don't want to have equality plans decided by women and CA by men. If WLB and co-responsibility are included only in equality plans these become second-class bargaining'*. The national employers' association was not in favour of the extension of paternity leave, while some trade unions train their representatives in promoting men' involvement in care. Some stakeholders stated that WLB measures should not be the result of legal reforms but of the collective bargaining of social partners, in order to be able to take account of the particularities of different economic sectors.



## 2.3. METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS

The qualitative methodological strategy chosen has been developed through personal interview technique and organisational document review. The interviews with different actors within the companies that are used as case studies were based on a script of topics.

The first selection criterion for organisations was the size: large organisations with at least 250 employees. The research team had carried out a similar study in Spain focusing on small and medium sized companies in 2018-2019 (Abril et al., 2020). Large companies usually cover more diverse areas, work positions and schedules, allowing a comparison of the implementation of work-life balance measures in different departments within the same company. Our objective was to analyse work-life balance measures and men's access to these measures in different jobs, in production, management and administration areas and in staff with different schedules, rotating shifts, fixed hours, etc.

The second criterion was that male employees took advantage of WLB measures, so companies with a generally high proportion of men on their staff were included. This also allowed for the analysis of gender dynamics and masculinity in companies.

Our third selection criterion was egregious implementation of work-life balance measures. Additionally, diversity of economic sectors and ownership (private and public) sectors was considered in selecting the companies.

We chose to focus our research on three of the most important industrial and economic centres in Spain: Barcelona, Madrid and Bilbao.

Six stakeholders were interviewed prior to the companies being selected. The aim was threefold: to publicise the ongoing research, to test the topics we wanted to address and to obtain contacts to access companies meeting the previous criteria. Among these stakeholders were two trade union leaders, the head of social security and equality within an employers' association, the head of the human resources forum of a regional employers' organisation and two experts on gender and time use policies in companies. The interviews were held in Barcelona, Madrid and Bilbao. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, except for one conducted by video conference.

The selection process for companies was based on two public networks which promote WLB in companies and new social use of time in Spain. The personal networks of the research team and the contacts provided by the stakeholders were also used. We studied five organisations: a local public administration and one of its municipal companies offering public services; a private association dedicated to insurance (vehicle, travel, home, etc.); a multinational company in the metal sector; a semi-public company dedicated to transport; and, finally, a semi-public mutual insurance company (supervised by the Ministry of Social Security) Once companies were selected, we contacted and conducted a first interview with 14 experts from the five companies (see profiles in table 3).

COMPANY	EXPERTS IN THE COMPANY	MEN	PARTNERS
Co1  (Public administration and public service company)	Responsible for promoting WLB and gender equality	P1_1	
	Responsible for Labour Relations		
	Human Resources and Manager of public enterprise		
	Representative of trade-union of public transport company		
	Gender Expert in a public company		
Co2  (private association dedicated to insurance)	Responsible for diversity and labour relations	P2_1; P2_2; P2_3; P2_4; P2_5	
	Manager of telephone assistance		
Co3  (Multinational metal company)	Responsible for labour relations/HHRR, spokesman of equality commission	P3_1; P3_2; P3_3	PA3_1; PA3_2
	Equality Board and Union representative		
	Financial Director		
Co4  (semi-public transport company)	Human Capital Director	P4_1; P4_2; P4_3	
	Responsible for Work Life Balance		
Co5  (Semi-public insurance company)	Director of Regional delegation	P5_1; P5_2	PA5_1; PA5_2
	Gender Equality board		
TOTAL	14	14	4

Table 3. Summary of interviews conducted

These experts select and facilitated contact with men who used some work-life balance measures. In Company1, the covid-19 and organizational problems made it difficult to access more male employees. In the end, in the five companies, we interviewed 14 men. According to previous studies that have used the same methodology (Abril; Romero, 2005; 2008; Abril et al., 2020) the profile of the men usually corresponded to men with a high level of education, those in management and in jobs in the knowledge economy who live with women who are more job-oriented and have higher incomes. This time the profile was more diverse, in terms of educational level, occupation and partner's labour situation and income. This diversity is also reflected in the reasons that they have taken up WLB measures. Childcare predominates, but there are also men who were caring or had cared for elderly or sick relatives or were looking after their own health. Therefore, in parallel with legislative advances and the implementation of work-life balance measures in a greater number of companies, we also find a greater diversity among men who take advantage of work-life balance measures (see profiles in table 4)

ORG. ID	MAN ID	AGE	FAMILY SITUATION	CHILDREN & AGE	CARE OF OTHER	EDUCATION LEVEL	OCCUPATION	WLB MEASURES USED	HIS SHARE OF TOTAL INCOME
Co1	P1_1	45	with partner	2 (3 years and less than 1 year)	no	AVT	Technician (operational department)	shift change	25-49
Co2	P2_1	48	with partner	2 (15, 12 years)	no	AVT	Phone Assistance operator	reduction in working time	60-100
	P2_2	33	with partner	1(6 months)	no	AVT	Phone assistance supervisor	8 weeks paternity leave	60-100
	P2_3	52	with partner	2 (10, 8 years)	no	AVT	Mechanic	Shift change	60-100
	P2_4	42	with partner	1 (9months )	no	University degree	Travel assistance supervisor	paternity leave + flextime	60-100
	P2_5	37	with partner	1 (3 years)	no	CSE	Administrative	Reduction in working time + leave of absence	25-49
Co3	P3_1	39	with partner	2 (8, 4 years)	no	AVT	Industrial maintenance mechanic	shift change	60-100
	P3_2	34	with partner	2 (7,4 years)	no	AVT	Industrial maintenance mechanic	shift change	60-100
	P3_3	62	widowed	2 (42, 38 years)	his wife before she died	CSE	Sales manager	Full telework (more than 6 months)	60-100
Co4	P4_1	46	with partner	2 (5 years, 12 years)	no	University degree	RRHH administration	intensive journey; flextime	50-59
	P4_2	47	with partner	1 (8 months)	no	University degree	Security manager	8 weeks parental leave	60-100

	P4_3	44	single	no	Mother	AVT	Metro station supervisor	reduction in working time	not applicable
Co5	P5_1	40	with partner	2 (5 years, 4 months)	no	University degree	Computer assistance provider	9 weeks paternity leave	25-49
	P5_2	37	with partner	2 (2 years, 4 months)	no	AVT	Computer assistance provider	9 weeks paternity leave	60-100

**Table 4. Profile of the men interviewed. Notes: \*AVT (Advanced Vocational Training); \*CSE (Compulsory Secondary Education)**

During the interviews with men, an interview with their partners was requested. Only four female partners could be interviewed. Most did not want to participate, or they did not answer our request.

Of the 32 interviews conducted with experts, employed men and their partners, eight of them were done by video conference because of covid-19 and the lockdown in Spain. The remaining 24 interviews were conducted face-to-face, at the interviewees' workplaces or at their homes (in the case of partners).

Before conducting the interviews, the interviewees were informed of the research objective and asked to sign an informed consent form that ensured confidentiality in data and information treatment. With their consent, interviews were conducted using the MiC interview script which dealt with different issues related to work life balance in the company and at home. The interviews, approximately 60 minutes long, were recorded for subsequent content analysis. The field work started in February 2020 and ended in September of the same year. Afterwards, some of the experts interviewed were contacted for clarification and triangulation.

## 2.4. COMPANY SUMMARIES

Table 5 summarises the main data on the companies analysed, as well as their specific main work life balance measures, without considering statutory policies (maternity, paternity, parental leave and working hours reduction, see context analysis). These measures may be offered by each company, most often in agreement with the trade union representatives and written down in formal collective agreements or in other types of internal written documents. In the case studies analysed, companies offer additional paternity/maternity leave, flextime, tight time schedule, the possibility of accumulating working hours and translating them to free time later, leave of absence for different personal/family reasons, teleworking, formal and informal shift changes, and a sabbatical year.

ID ORG.	NUMBER OF STAFF CA	% OF MEN IN COMPANY	% WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT	MEN USING WLB MEASURE	WOMEN USING WLB MEASURE	MAIN WLB MEASURES
Co1	619 Equality Plan and CA at company level	47.5%	46%	n/a	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tight time schedule and flextime (in work at offices)</li> <li>- Option of working different number of hours each day</li> <li>- Extension of fully paid paternity leave by 1 week</li> <li>- 10 paid days for personal needs</li> <li>- Various paid leaves for different personal reasons</li> <li>- 2 free weekends a month in rotating shifts</li> </ul>
Co2	1451	37%	20%	202	279	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flextime &amp; tight time schedule of the working day in central services</li> <li>- Hours exchange system</li> <li>- Formal and informal shift changes</li> <li>- Teleworking</li> </ul>
Co3	1000 Written agreement	52%	44%	0 <sup>(1)</sup>	100 <sup>(1)</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flextime for all employees in offices and supervisors in factory</li> <li>- 1 day telework all employees in offices</li> <li>- Formal and informal shift changes</li> </ul>
Co4	781 CA at company level	68.5%	30%	64 <sup>(2)</sup>	96 <sup>(2)</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intensive working day in the morning and flexibility of entry and exit (obligatory from 9.00 to 14.00)</li> <li>- a causal workday reduction</li> <li>- hours exchange system</li> <li>- paid leave to go to the doctor or to accompany family members</li> <li>- Sabbatical years with 80% of salary if part of it has been deducted in the previous five years</li> </ul>
Co5	715	34%	50%	n/a	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tight time schedule in the morning and flextime</li> <li>- Extension of paternity leave by 1 week</li> <li>- Various leaves for family reasons (school meetings, children's festivals, etc.)</li> </ul>

Table 5. Company summaries. Notes: WLB measures could be working hours reduction, leave of absence, telework and/or flextime. CA: collective agreement. (1) Only work reduction & leave of absence. (2) Only work reduction.



### Company 1:

Company 1 is a commercial company totally owned by the local administration. It offers diverse public services to the citizens. In 2019, Company 1 employed 619 workers, 400 permanent staff (51% men) and the rest were temporary (60% women and 40% men). Recently they had passed a collective agreement with several measures promoting WLB not only to women but also to men.

### Company 2:

Company 2 was founded in 1906, but is today a private non-profit association. Located within the people services sector, it is a multiactivity insurance company. The central headquarters are in a town centre, where the central offices and the telephone assistance and commercial sales platforms are found. The manual workers are located in adjacent buildings. They also have some offices at street level, in some towns, where they sell insurance policies and carry out training.

This company had 1448 employees in 2018, 37% of whom were men, and 90% of employees were permanently employed. Company 2 is a feminized company with a high rate of segregation according to work activity. The call centre platforms are mainly women, while the manual workers are all men. There are only approximately 20% of management positions occupied by women. Its business has a high season of about four–five months (in summer and winter holidays) and a low season the rest of the year. Moreover, they have different work schedules according to the area: split shifts and tight, non-rotating schedules.

### Company 3:

Company 3 is a multinational in the industrial sector with three different business areas. It has about 500 employees in production located in a factory on the outskirts and 500 employees in administration, sales and marketing located in the central offices, in the town centre. There is almost no part-time work and 90% of staff are permanently employed. It is a family company whose stock belongs mainly to the family. The family invests in the long term and wants to retain ownership of the company. One of the company's objectives has been to increase the number of women in all areas of the company. The proportion of management positions occupied by women increased from 28.40% in 2008 to 44% in 2020.

### Company 4:

Company 4 manages the transport in a metropolitan area. The company's roots go back to the last century and today it is a mixed company that depends on the local and regional administrations. Its labour conditions are determined by the railway's collective agreement. The company is divided into three main areas: administration and management, operation of the transport lines, where most employees are, and

the maintenance area. Of the staff, 80% work in rotating shifts that are assigned annually and shift changes are allowed weekly. The remaining employees can choose between a tight morning schedule or a split shift (in summer, all the staff work a tight shift). On 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019, Company 4 had 781 employees, 68.5% of whom were men.

The urban transport sector is characterised by being very male-dominated. Women have been incorporated progressively in areas such as management (where they currently are 30% of the total), administration and human resources. However, in the technical area dedicated to construction and maintenance, 99% of the 199 employees are men.

### Company 5:

Company 5 is a non-profit association of companies that collaborates with Social Security and covers accidents at work. It provides health and economic benefits, e.g. unemployment benefit for self-employed people. The company was founded in 1990 and it also has a hospital. Currently it has 31 offices throughout a single region, where they provide health services and other insurance services linked to Social Security. It had 715 employees on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019, 34% of whom were men.

The staff is distributed between medical personnel (doctors, nurses, physiotherapists) and administrative and technical personnel (lawyers, human resources management, computer technicians, etc.). Of the staff, 88% are permanent employees. The Management Committee is gender balanced. Ninety-nine percent of the staff work a tight morning or afternoon schedule. The administrative staff have a morning schedule, linked to social security and public administration working hours. The health department works fixed morning and afternoon shifts, and the 24-hour trauma centre works in shifts.

## 2.5. SUPPORTIVE FACTORS, AND BARRIERS TO MEN TAKING UP UNPAID CARE TASKS

This section analyses which factors in companies promote the co-responsible involvement of men in care, as well as the barriers we have detected that are an obstacle to the promotion of caring masculinities. We have taken into account the structural and substructural aspects of the organizations, such as the organizational culture and the gender culture, the leaderships and other agents that promote or hinder men's access to WLB.

### 2.5.1. Working structures

The staff composition of the companies analysed shows that the percentage of women ranges between 30 and 70%. There are companies from traditionally very male dominated sectors, such as transport and industrial sectors, but there are departments of human resources and gender policy aiming to increase the number of women. At a general level, one could say that it is more difficult and there are more barriers to WLB in those companies having less diversity, i.e. male-dominated companies, both in terms of staff and management. Success in achieving gender balance has been unequal in different organisations, departments and levels of responsibility, but the impact of **more women on the staff, especially in management positions**, has been noticed as one factor relevant for easing the implementation, access and use of WLB measures in general.

Human Resources Departments are more inclined to introduce **flexible working hours and morning shifts or tight schedules** – some WLB measures widely used by men when available – in office work, but this is more difficult in areas involved in producing goods. On the one hand, this is because the patriarchal culture and a traditional vision of gender is more present. On the other hand, operational work, either at factories, transport routes or cultural and gathering spots, is generally organised by rotating shifts and without flexible entry and exit hours. However, Company 4 supports flexibility in changing shifts by implementing an informal technological system among workers that has proved to be successful, even in a very traditional and male-dominated sector. Yet, it is an open question whether this system allows for a regular coordination of parents' working hours with children's school hours.

Behaviour at work is usually modelled by the **formal structures** of the organisations. Among them, the collective agreement applied in each organisation has a strong impact, as workers usually consider their labour rights as something they can take for granted, at least when they are permanent workers and job stability is not in doubt. **Formal WLB measures recognised in collective agreements**, for example flexible entry and exit time, morning or tight time schedule and paid leave for different WLB reasons, seems to be the most important framework for supporting men in taking up unpaid care tasks. All the organisations analysed reflect this in both an affirmative and a negative way. Where collective agreements **or other written agreements** include WLB measures for all the staff, and they do not entail a reduction in income, generally men use them. In contrast, when WLB measures are not specifically included in their collective agreements, such as the change of shift due to WLB reasons allowed by the law RD 6/2019, or teleworking, not regulated until September 2020 by the law RDL 28/2020, they are not generally used by men in these organisations. Changes in shifts have happened in these organisations as exceptional cases, but most men cannot access them.

The other face of the coin is the degree of **job stability** perceived in the organisation, which directly relates to aspects such as percentage of permanent staff, being a public organisation, etc. In order to use the WLB measures recognised in the collective agreements and actively play a caring role, normally male workers must feel secure in their employment and be confident that there will be no penalty incurred in using them.

Another relevant element is that some companies additionally subcontract staff through **temporary employment agencies**. These are usually companies that have production peaks throughout the year. The conditions for these employees are worse, and they do not have access to the WLB benefits of the companies.

### 2.5.2. Gender culture/gendered substructures

Nevertheless, the existence of a wide set of WLB measures recognised in collective agreements or written documents has not been enough to change gender culture and gender substructures in the organisations. In some organisations, WLB measures are considered as labour rights not directly related to gender issues. **Different expectations towards men and women** are still broadly present in these organisations, although some departments or groups have made more progress towards gender equality. In contrast, other organisations present the WLB measures as a way of putting into practice their **organisational strategies**, either to change the gender substructure, or to retain talent. WLB measures can be used and presented as a tool to compensate for low salaries. And yet, on the other hand, having high salaries allows some men to reduce their working hours for WLB purposes. However, men's use of part-time working as a WLB strategy is seen as exceptional in one organisation (Company 4) in comparison with the rest of the organisations analysed and with the Spanish context in general (see 'Country Context' in this report). Therefore, the level

of salaries and job stability in particular, as well as relevant working structures, seem key to supporting men's uptake of unpaid care tasks.

### 2.5.3. Company cultures

Different cultural factors in the organisations, particularly those entailing a high level of job security regardless of the use of WLB measures, contribute to developing a company culture where there is less expectation of traditional gender roles and/or where WLB measures are used more widely among men. Interviewees highlighted that in the social environment of a public organisation where job security is assumed, there is an assumption that using labour rights is the 'normal thing to do in sectors where collective agreements include relevant WLB measures and **collective bargaining** is highly relevant for working conditions. **Innovation, positive ideas about non-monetary compensation such as encouraging the use of WLB measures to retain talent and workers**, and support for cultural change in organisations are factors found in those organisations with a particular **commitment to gender equality** and WLB measures.

Thus, even in sectors where the hegemonic mindset is dominant and not especially aware of gender issues, feeling 'secure' in the labour market, whether in the public or private sector, helps to develop a **culture of accepting men's caring roles**. Some of the interviewees talked about reciprocity and commitment, showing a more traditional mindset. The workers give to the company the best of themselves and the company responds by taking care of their needs. Male interviewees who have a caring role but who present contradictory or ambivalent messages regarding care and the use of WLB measures show a higher commitment to their caring role when the organisation formally and actively supports and promotes the caring role of their male workers.

### 2.5.4. Leadership

Managers and leaders can be important shapers of an environment where male caring roles and the use of WLB measures are seen as positive and to be encouraged, or at least, not to be penalised. **Managers and leaders** who are able to **create organisational structures supporting gender equality and measures supporting men as carers**, even if they subsequently leave the organisation, contribute to creating an environment where making use of WLB measures is more likely. Gender leaders and HR managers can contribute significantly, especially when gender equality and HR policies collaborate to **support the use of WLB measures and gender awareness**. When **awareness raising and communication** is fluid and periodic, more men assume that they can use WLB measures and male caring roles become more integrated in the organisational dynamics. Examples are the company putting information about WLB measures on the intranet or emailing all employees a catalogue outlining all the measures available in the company.

Even in organisations where some WLB and gender measures are not formally applied, female and male managers and leaders who show an open mind and awareness of WLB and gender issues are able to create an environment where men take up caring roles more readily, even using informal WLB adjustments. Some male workers express the **idea that women are more sensitive to WLB and gender topics**, regardless of other circumstances, while others see that this openness can come from both sexes.

On the opposite side of the coin, the barriers that have been highlighted in some of the companies analysed are linked to the technocratic and hegemonic mentality of some leaders. Specifically, leaders of management committees were mentioned who did not understand the need to implement measures related to equality and WLB. Among the most senior leaders, there is still the idea that WLB is detrimental to promotion and career development. For example, in Company 2, men working in central services have more difficulty in benefitting from WLB measures because they are physically closer to these hetero-patriarchally minded managers who act as a 'brake'.

As mentioned above, one of the main problems has to do with the **traditional mentality in relation to gender roles that persists among some leaders**. For example, in one company there was a supervisor, now retired, who told his employees that men were now 'sissies', that he did not understand this 'fashion' of men taking care of their children, describing it as 'a woman's thing'. This supervisor put many obstacles in the way of people altering schedules because of care needs. Everything changed when a woman with small children was hired to fill his position and made it much easier to reconcile work and family life.

Intermediate leaders or supervisors also appear to create barriers. In this case, the fear of comparisons causing grievances among colleagues was mentioned. For example, some supervisors were reluctant to provide better working hours or facilities for employees who needed to take care of their children in case it created problems with other employees who did not have these needs, but who also wanted better working hours. The **complexity of diversity management** also generates certain resistance. In some cases, they prefer the 'one size fits all' approach to managing diversity of needs than a more complex management style that adjusts different schedules and personal demands. This is found in areas where work is done on a rotating shift basis. Also, elements of male corporatism have been found among some supervisors (homosociability). If one of them does not facilitate work-life balance measures, the other supervisors, at the same level, do not contradict him even if they do not agree.



### 2.5.5. Other relevant players and networks

The **worker representatives' level of commitment to gender and WLB issues** is a key factor if supportive measures are to be included in the collective bargaining process and be part of the resulting collective agreement. In some companies there is evidence that when the processes involved in determining rules and measures are not reflected in the collective agreements, the measures are not readily or widely taken up. This has been the case in Spain with adapting shift patterns for WLB purposes, despite this being a statutory right. The worker representatives can support or hinder the implementation of WLB and gender measures.

**Gender equality experts with a formal role** are key to supporting WLB and gender measures in a formal and systematic way, including policies to support men as carers. For example, in support of men in this role, some organisations have introduced an extra week of paternity leave in their collective agreements. When gender experts **work in group, either in a gender equality unit or an HR department**, or work together to introduce innovative measures, their positive influence is deeper and wider. Their enabling role in promoting gender equality and WLB through measures that are collectively bargained has also been demonstrated in some organisations.

### 2.5.6. Implementation of recent reforms for gender equality and WLB

The 2007 Gender Equality Act (LO 3/2007) changed the general legal framework supporting gender equality and WLB measures and encouraged male carer roles. Building on this trend, Spanish law RD 6/2019 introduced two measures into the Workers Statute that could further encourage men to adopt caring roles: (1) a national regulation to implement a **16-week fully paid and non-transferable paternity leave equal to maternity leave**, which will be fully implemented in January 2021, and (2) a **right to adapt working patterns for reasons of WLB** (change of working hours, shift, telework, etc.), pointing out that if the procedure is not directly defined in the collective bargaining agreements, the employer must respond to the worker within one month, either approving the change, proposing another solution or explaining the reasons for the negative answer, e.g. the needs of the business.

The first changes meant that a male worker could have leave for eight weeks in 2019, 12 weeks in 2020 and 16 in 2021. However, the extra weeks previously approved in several organisations, together with the debate around the reform and the wide social support for it, made it easier for some men to take advantage of the long paternity leave. In contrast, however, most organisations did not positively and systematically manage the demand to alter shifts in a way that supports both male and female caring roles, even in organisations where informal systems for changing shifts were already in place. The changes in shifts seem to depend more on having a good relationship with superiors, or the whole department or team having a good understanding of the individual situation.

### 2.5.7. Role models within companies

**Male role models in management positions who have communicated their use of WLB measures**, such as an extended paternity leave, are seen as relevant for changing gender stereotypes and attitudes among those who are ambivalent, and to enlarging the number of men taking up caring roles.

Others speak of **female role models** who lead a cohesive team in which WLB and gender issues are managed in a collaborative and constructive way. These managers can act as role models for other more traditional managers who, because of difficulties in **managing the diverse WLB needs of their teams**, do not act on gender and WLB issues beyond what is strictly or normatively required. Reflecting on these experiences can help to change organisational cultures towards becoming organisations that are more supportive of men in caring roles.

On the other hand, some managers act as **negative role models**. We have found some employees with responsibilities (middle managers) who are very employment oriented and who put their job before their family responsibilities. Even in the case of companies that do not have any kind of obstacle to WLB, this type of man limits himself due to 'job responsibilities'. He can serve as a bad example for employees who have care needs and do not dare ask for support because their supervisors may query their sense of responsibility for the work that needs to be done.

### 2.5.8. Other factors

A fluid, proactive and periodic **internal communication explaining the WLB measures** and encouraging men to use them, as well as pointing out the relevance of co-responsibility and of men in caring roles has proved useful.

**Company recruitment and internal promotion policies linked to women's access to jobs and positions where they are underrepresented** are measures that increase diversity in companies and favour an openness to implementing WLB.

**Gender equality and WLB training** for managers and employees has also been proven to change some behaviours and the dynamics in some departments or organisations, by easing a change in their culture in which caring men are more integrated.

There are also external supportive factors, such as the size of the town, the support – or lack of it – from family members and the work flexibility and care commitments of men's partners. Sometimes, the lack of other alternatives to taking care responsibility encourages men to use the available WLB measures and to develop their caring roles, integrating the positive aspects of caring roles in doing so.

On the other hand, during the interviews some people mentioned barriers that arise from an attempt to avoid grievances among other workers. There is a fear of



unfavourable comparisons being made with colleagues who are availing themselves of WLB measures. In the case of rotating shifts, if one employee gets the morning shift (the best one for the purposes of balancing work and family life) it means that the others have to do more afternoon shifts (the worst one for work-life balance).

Cultural stereotypes that persist in society have also been highlighted as factors that can limit men's access to care roles. They point out that these barriers are external to the company, and belong to society or to a mental attitude possessed by some individuals.

## 2.6. GOOD PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis carried out among the companies, we have grouped the good practices and recommendations under four headings: policies related to time flexibility and the organisation of working hours, spatial flexibility, paternity leave and cultural dynamics within the organisation which favour the use of WLB measures to promote the role of men as carers.

Some of these good practices are regulated by labour legislation and affect all workers, but it has been considered appropriate to highlight them, as they may be interesting for other European countries that do not have this regulation. Others are specific to companies and form part of their equality and WLB policies.

### 2.6.1. Flexibility of time and rationalisation of working hours

Based on the fieldwork carried out in the companies studied, we can affirm that flexibility of time and rationalisation of working hours are the measures for which companies are most willing to opt because they do not usually involve any great economic cost or pose much difficulty in organizing schedules. Working time flexibility measures are for all staff, men and women, but they are especially useful for encouraging male caring roles when they do not imply a reduction in salary. In Spain, WLB measures involving salary reductions, such as reduced working hours, are not very popular among employed men. Gender pay gap is usually considered a relevant factor for this, although gender stereotypes and other reasons are relevant. When a family considers a reduction in working hours to address family care needs, it is usually the family member with the lowest income, and usually the woman, who reduces their working hours. Therefore, working time flexibility measures that do not involve a reduction in pay are of interest to men. In this sense, the **35-hour working week** (or less) is seen as highly supportive of WLB and of male caring roles structurally.

Other measures involving shortening the time spent away from home and combining work hours with school hours, such **unbroken shifts**, **morning shifts**, **reduction in lunch time**, also greatly facilitate WLB. In Spain, companies traditionally take a one to two-hour lunch break. This means that the working day is extended until late and is out of step with school hours. These schedules are designed around a family model of male provider and female caregiver. Increasingly, society demands a rationalisation of working and school hours designed around a family model of two providers and carers. Some companies are already responding to these demands and include the possibility of adjusting schedules to meet the current needs of their employees, through tighter timetables. For example, one of the companies analysed had compacted the working day by reducing the two hours they had for lunch to between 30 minutes and one hour. This has led to WLB changes in the company by rationalising schedules and adjusting them to school hours, thereby enabling employees, including men, to take advantage of WLB measures and take joint responsibility for care.

The diversity of employees and personal and care needs is another element being incorporated into the design of equality policies and WLB measures in companies. In this sense, one of the most appreciated and useful measures for employees has to do with personal management of schedules and working times (**flextime**). More and more companies offer **flexibility in entering and leaving work**. This flexibility can range from a 1-hour margin to the possibility of half a working day. It is true that these measures are more possible in those jobs where the employee has some control and autonomy over the work. In all the companies analysed, in the areas of administration, marketing, finance and human resources, flexible time has been incorporated as good practice.

Other measures that promote flexibility on a less typical basis when unforeseen or irregular events happen, and which help significantly with WLB, are permitting a certain degree of freedom to accumulate working hours over the week, the month or the year and allowing this time to be used for personal purposes when needed (**hours exchange system**) and offering paid leave, either as **days of free disposal** throughout the year and/or as other formal leave for WLB reasons (care of ill relatives, educational purposes, etc.).

As we have seen in the analysis of the companies, flexibility and achieving WLB are more difficult in those areas of production or customer service where shifts are worked, especially **rotating shifts**. Change of shift for WLB reasons allowed by law **RD 6/2019** has improved the situation a little. In our study, three men working in two different companies could change to a fixed shift, adjusted to suit their care needs. However, companies can reject this change by demonstrating that it is not possible for logistical and operational requirements. In addition to the possibility that such decisions could be made arbitrarily, these changes could generate comparative grievances between colleagues who must take on the less attractive shifts. This is a measure that is granted, if it is unlikely to generate much conflict and if there is a willingness to reorganize the work on the part of supervisors. Good practice happens

when the organisation answers positively or provides a useful alternative proposal, or, when in denying the request, provides real organisational or economic reasoning.

One of the companies analysed allows workers to reduce or eliminate all shifts that do not allow WLB, but with a consequent reduction in wages. In this company, in contrast to what happens in general in Spain, a high percentage of men reduce their shifts, and therefore their working hours, accepting the consequent reduction in salary. This may be related to wages in this company being above the average for the sector and above wages in general in Spain. The men interviewed in this company point out that the wage loss resulting from the reduction in working hours does not affect the family economy excessively and many men use this WLB measure. In general, in companies with shift work, the criterion taken into account for the change of shift is seniority. The people who have been working for the longest time have priority in choosing shifts when there are vacancies, especially the morning shift which is the most desirable because it makes WLB easier.

## 2.6.2. Spatial flexibility

The implementation of telework in the companies analysed is uneven. Three of the companies offered the possibility of occasional teleworking in certain areas, either more or less regulated, or total teleworking due to exceptional personal circumstances. The other two did not contemplate this as a possibility and even expressed some opposition.

The covid-19 pandemic has meant a general acceleration in Spain of the digitalisation of companies and the implementation of telework. In September a law regulating distance work was approved (**Royal Decree-Law 28/2020 of 22 September on distance work**). This regulation defines telework as a voluntary and reversible work adaptation, of at least two telework days per week, where some initial costs have to be paid by the employer (computer, phone) and continuous costs have to be shared, the details of which have to be agreed by the individual companies (electricity, wifi and other shared costs). Interestingly, teleworkers must agree with the employer on a schedule, but this must include flextime, which is good news for WLB.

In the companies studied where telework was not possible previously, the pandemic has forced its implementation. This has been timely, as some companies are contemplating the implementation of telework on a regular basis after restrictions are lifted. For example, one of the companies has set up a commission to work on this issue and include telework into the next collective agreement.

In relation to the men interviewed, the majority expressed the view that telework is a good option for balancing work and family life, since it saves time on journeys from home to work and allows work schedules to be better adjusted to care needs. Gender experts pointed out the need to frame telework in a way that it does not produce a gender bias but is used equally by men and women. The reality, however, has revealed some difficulties, as for example, the difficulty of disconnecting when

working from home. Another aspect is that the presence of children while teleworking (for example, due to quarantine or schools being closed) makes WLB more difficult. Some men felt stressed by this situation. In addition, when space and furniture conditions are not adequate because the house is small, for example, it becomes even more complicated. One of the men interviewed explained that he had to work in the dining room at home because he had no other space to telework.

A good practice and recommendation on telework is that companies negotiate with works councils and include the conditions for regulating telework in their collective agreements. Telework should not be a cost-saving measure by companies but a voluntary measure available to employees to improve WLB.

### 2.6.3. Equal paternity and maternity leave

Until 2007, fathers in Spain only had statutory birth leave of two to four days, paid by the company. Then, a 13-day fully paid paternity leave was introduced within Social Security provision. In 2017 this was extended to 28 days and since 2019 it has been extended every year until it is equal to maternity leave. In 2021 both parents had 16 weeks of leave with an individual and non-transferable entitlement and full wage replacement. The first six weeks are compulsory, full-time, after the birth, adoption or fostering of the child. The remaining 10 weeks are voluntary and may be taken either full-time or part-time, in agreement with the company, during the first 12 months of the child's life.

When paternity leave was only two weeks or a month, some of companies analysed were already extending it by one or two extra weeks as a WLB measure to encourage co-responsibility of men. This was one of the most important WLB measures aimed at men.

Therefore, regarding measures specifically designed for men, **long and fully paid non-transferable paternity leave** is a successful practice in the organisations analysed. As it is a right of fathers, enshrined in law, there are fewer barriers faced by men in taking advantage of this WLB measure. Even among managers and supervisors it is a widely accepted measure, as the interviews demonstrated. There is a greater involvement of men in the care of their children when they have taken a long paternity leave. We found that couples organise themselves more so that they can take care of their children by themselves for as long as possible. Some fathers in the companies studied took the voluntary weeks of paternity leave when their partner had finished her maternity leave. Sometimes they combined it with breastfeeding leave, to which they are also entitled, and sometimes added weeks of holiday or the extra weeks offered by some companies. This meant that for a period of more than two months they had taken care of their children by themselves and became more involved in caring for their children both during the leave and afterwards.

Although it is one of the most advanced paternity leaves in the world, there are two aspects that could be improved to achieve greater gender equality. On the one hand,

it is compulsory for both parents to take their leave at the same time for the first six weeks. This simultaneous use of the first six weeks reduces the possibility of couples being able to take turns in care, to extend the maximum time they will be with the baby before they start work. Secondly, the worker's right to take full-time leave has vanished as they have to negotiate it with the employer. This can have the effect of some fathers taking leave simultaneously with the mother and thus becoming a helper instead of a co-responsible carer similar to the mother. In this regard, it may be good practice for companies not to hinder but to encourage fathers to take the voluntary 10 weeks of full-time paternity leave and to encourage them to take paternity leave after their partner's maternity leave ends so that they can take turns caring.

## 2.6.4. Cultural dynamics

The success of work-life balance measures is linked to the **involvement of worker representatives** (collective bargaining) and to the integration of policies on equality and work-life balance into human resources policies. Moreover, the active involvement of management in promoting or supporting WLB and gender equality policies enables faster and deeper changes in the organisational culture and in the greater uptake of WLB measures by men. In this sense, periodically using communication tools to reaffirm the organisation's strategy and the **support of managers and supervisors for WLB and gender equality** issues is a useful practice. Disseminating information about the existence of WLB measures and promoting their use, together with reflection on male caring roles, and the relevance of co-responsibility across companies provides crucial assistance in changing culture. Raising awareness of gender and WLB issues promotes a culture where men use WLB measures and develop their caring roles. **Training** on gender issues benefits WLB and diversity management, especially for supervisors, managers, HHRR staff and worker representatives, and is relevant as a first step in involving them in supporting the measures needed in each organisation. Sometimes, **training and/or awareness raising** for general staff or some specific departments can help to exemplify what can be done to start changing stereotypes and gendered behaviours within the organisation. For example, there is the case of the initiative 'days without schools'. These are workshops about gender issues for children when they do not have school, but their parents have to work. The implementation of this initiative arose out of personal need and pushed the company to participate, with a bottom-up strategy. Afterwards, the company incorporated it, made it succeed and involved male workers.

**Listening to workers** and their needs is another useful measure for supporting WLB and gender equality. Involvement of workers in the design and evaluation of any measures through survey, focus groups and their work councils. Changes are usually made step by step, starting with the more popular measures which are also feasible for the organisation and can provide a successful starting or advancing point.



## 2.7. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The '[work changes gender](#)' project (2002-2004), developed a methodology in relation to WLB and the involvement of men, identifying three different phases for organisations. In the first phase, changes are individual and isolated, and men who use WLB measures feel alone and stigmatized. In the second phase, conditions are more mixed, and more men become involved. In the third, the organization actively address all genders – gender equality is a cross-cutting issue –, and men and women are more actively creating new standards. At that time, of the four Spanish organisations analysed, two were in phase 1, one in transition to phase 2 and a third approaching phase 3. Therefore, in Spain at that time, WLB for men was a new issue (Holter et al, 2005). Fifteen years later, using the same methodology, out of the five organisations analysed, three are in phase 2, one approaching phase 3 and another one already in phase 3. At a general level, this indicates that the issue of men and work-life balance is present on the institutional agenda and in an increasing number of organisations. For social and political changes see the 'Country context' chapter.

The five companies analysed are large companies, with more than 500 employees, and from different sectors, such as the industry, health, services to people, public services and transport. All of them have different areas, production, management and administration, with different types of work schedules (tight time schedule, split schedule, rotating shifts, fixed shifts). This shows that it is possible to implement measures for WLB in different types of companies, areas and timetables. However, it is also true that it is easier to implement in offices and in the area of administration than in factories with production lines and rotating shifts or in direct 24-hour customer services.

In our case, the companies that have made the most progress in WLB, including where it concerns men, share a series of characteristics. These are companies that have integrated WLB measures solidly in their human resources policies. In Company 1 and Company 4, measures are part of collective bargaining, and have therefore become employees' rights. In Company 5 and Company 3, there is a commitment from management to support work-life balance measures that also include men, for

example by extending the number of weeks of paternity leave beyond what is provided by law.

The most problematic cases are companies where equality policies and equality commissions operate outside Human Resources, as is the case with Company 1. Or there is greater management resistance to the implementation of work-life balance measures t, which is the case with Company 2. Although in this company, the creation of a diversity department linked to the Department of Management of People (HHRR) has been key to promoting equality and work-life balance policies.

In all the companies analysed, an effort has been made in recent years to include women in areas in which they were under-represented, including positions of responsibility. Three of the five companies have achieved or are approaching parity in positions of responsibility (Company 1, Company 3, Company 5), while Company 4, a very masculinized company, has achieved a representation of women in proportion to the number of women in the company, 30%. In Company 2, a very feminized company, however, only 20% of management positions are held by women. In our case studies, parity, the access of women to positions of responsibility or the presence of certain transformative leaders have been key factors in promoting policies of equality and reconciliation of work and family life. Leadership, in fact, is either a key element in promoting the implementation of measures or an obstacle to be overcome, in the case of both intermediate supervisors, mainly men, and top managers with a very technocratic vision of work and life. Such resistance has been encountered, to a greater or lesser extent, in Company 1, Company 2, Company 3 and Company 4.

Another common aspect of the organisations analysed is that changes have partly occurred as a reaction to employee demands, particularly the demands of younger employees with a different view of work, time and gender relations from previous generations. Legislative changes, such as changes in paternity leave to 12 weeks in 2020 and 16 weeks in 2021, and the statutory right to ask for a work adaptation for reasons of work-life balance have also mobilised companies towards equality and a better WLB.

In general, it is still women who mostly avail themselves of measures to balance work and family life. The companies with a greater number of men involved in care are those where access to measures is easy, where there are no labour penalties for promotion, or where the WLB measures do not lead to a reduction in salary (due to reduction in working hours) or do not challenge the family economy because the salaries in the company are high, or above average (Company 4). Finally, it should be noted that in some cases it is men who limit themselves. Gender stereotypes and mandates continue to play against the greater involvement of men in caring.

Some **conflicts and difficulties for achieving WLB** were observed that can be addressed within companies and discussed among experts to find satisfying solutions.



First, at the end of 1980s, Spain created the professional category of gender experts, whose employment in public administrations and companies grew, especially in 2004 and 2007/8, but they are not systematically integrated into Human Resources Departments, and often their opinion is not taken into account in personnel or training policies. This is also the case within trade unions and workers' councils where their expertise is not always appreciated. Dialogue across companies' key actors in WLB, i.e., representatives from the level of directors, trade unions and supervisors, should include companies' gender experts. In many companies, collective agreements do not integrate gender mainstreaming and co-responsible WLB measures. When equality plans exist, this could be easily resolved by including them into collective agreements with the addition of one sentence stating so.

Second, workers' councils and Human Resources Directors have frequently been unable to find solutions to adapting shifts for employees with care needs. It seems that social closure mechanisms in male dominated operational departments and workers' councils often lead to two criteria of justice for establishing the distribution for both fixed and rotating shifts, and neither of these considers care needs: distribution according to seniority or all employees have to do all shifts. The most desirable shifts, normally in the morning, could be distributed according to WLB needs. It might be explained that people have different needs according to their family situation and life cycle stage. These needs are not fixed but change in the course of life. A person may, for example, need a morning shift while his/her child is in compulsory school. At the end of this period, they could free the morning shift for some other coworker with care needs. Other employees, because of their age or needs, may prefer an afternoon or night shift (better paid). Because of recent changes in the law, HR and trade union representatives must reconsider the principles behind the distribution of shifts. The MiC project could try to provide ideas for the management of this diversity.

Third, there are some indications that fathers might feel pressure to take new birth and care leave in one period following the birth, without being able to take turns with the mother, or might be urged to use the second period as part-time leave or in separate weeks coinciding with periods of lower activity, preventing the baby from being cared for by the father. Thus, the final implementation in January 2021 may be accompanied by information and awareness-raising campaigns in the companies that aim to inform workers about the possibilities that the new leave arrangements offer for fathers who want to facilitate the mothers' return to employment by taking over the baby's care.

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