Men in care

WORKPLACE SUPPORT FOR CARING MASCULINITIES

Men in Care: *Workplace Support for Caring Masculinities.*

Country report. Iceland

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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.

TERMS OF USE

AUTORSHIP

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1. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

The present report[1] summarizes key findings on certain issues regarding gender equality in Iceland. The report is produced as part of the project Men in Care (MiC) where twelve national organisations from seven different European countries, aim at reducing barriers for men who want to become involved in caring activities. The MiC partner countries are Spain, Slovenia, Poland, Germany, Norway, Iceland, and Austria. MiC aims to improve workplace conditions to promote men taking caring roles and 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. Therefore, the project team conducted reports on the national contexts of each country. In the case of Iceland, the project is led by Professor Guðný Björk Eydal, Professor at the Faculty of Social Work and Ingólfur V. Gíslason Professor at the Department of Sociology, both at the University of Iceland. Ásdís Arnalds and Kolbeinn Stefánsson from the University of Iceland also participate in the project. The team from the University co-operates with ASÍ, the Icelandic Confederation of Labour and Maríanna Traustadóttir is presenting ASÍ in the project.

The first noticeable thing about Iceland is the lack of publicly available data on information relevant to Men in Care. To compensate we will attempt to provide as comprehensive as possible contextual information in this introduction and try to fill in the missing information with what relevant information is available even though it is not strictly comparable to the information provided for the other countries in the project.

Iceland has topped the World Economic Forum's Gender Equality Index every year since 2009. Iceland has certainly come a long way on many dimensions of gender equality, for instance in terms of political representation, women's employment, paternity leave—to name a few important achievements—but still many gender inequalities remain. As one indicator of gender equality, the International Social Survey from 2012 contains an item to tap male breadwinner views, a question whether people agree or disagree that it is a man's job to earn money and women's job to look after the home. Of the countries participating, Iceland had the second

[1] Data and analysis included in national reports will be updated when post-covid19 data are available.

highest proportion disagreeing with the statement (84%) and the second lowest agreeing with it (nearly 7%). There were of course some gender differences. Men were more likely than women to agree with the statement (8% compared to just over 5%) and women were more likely to disagree strongly (45% compared to 37%). The survey contains a number of items tapping views about women's employment, but sadly offers very little on views about men's involvement in housework or care. But in any case, the male breadwinner model seems to be quite marginal in Icelandic gender role attitude.

Icelandic society is clearly one in which employment plays a large role in people's lives. While this is more so for men than for women, men being more likely than women to have long working hours, to sometimes work asocial hours and to sometimes work from home, Icelandic women have an unusually high employment rate and have had for a long time. Despite a relatively small welfare system providing less public support than in the neighbouring countries in the north this development has been supported by different legislation, e.g. the legislation on gender equality and family policies also have aimed at providing both parents equal opportunities to earn and care for decades (Eydal and Gíslason, 2014). The childcare policies support the dual earner- dual carer model, parents have equal rights to paid parental leave 4 months each and two additional months that they can share as they like among themselves. Day care is provided mainly in preschools that are run by municipalities and parents only pay very modest fees for their children. Children usually start preschool at the age of 1-2 years (Eydal and Gíslason, 2020) and most usually mothers bridge the gap between paid parental leave and preschool (Arnalds, Eydal and Gíslason, 2013). Parents are also entitled to support when caring for a long-term ill child or children facing disabilities. However, there is hardly any public support to families that care for grown up family members and in general the issue of care is not visible in Icelandic politics or in societal debates.

The last thing to note is that, much like in most Western countries, fertility has been declining over recent decades, in particular in the period after the 2008 crisis. Fertility was over 2.0 until 2012 but has declined to 1.745 in 2019. Presumably, this should lead to a less demanding home life for a sizeable share of the population and the lowering rates are a reminder of the importance of providing enough care support to young parents.

2. GENDER GAPS IN EMPLOYMENT

There are a number of relevant facts to consider about employment in Iceland in the context of Men in care. Firstly, the employment rates of both men and women are very high. In 2018 89.5% of men and 83.2% of women of the same ages, 20 to 64, were in paid employment on average.[2] In addition Iceland also has the second largest share of employed persons working long hours (>=49 hours usually) as compared to the other European countries, with the proportion being 27.1% for men and 7.3% for women.[3] Iceland also had the highest share of employed people within the aforementioned age group that had a second job (10.7%), with 9.8% among men and 11.6% among women.[4] While Iceland does not stand out in terms of shift-work the percentage of employees working shifts rose after 2008, from 18.7%, to 24.8% in 2014 but has declined since and in 2018 it stood at 22.5% with the same rate for both men and women.

Iceland also does not stand out in terms of people who work asocial hours on a regular basis but the proportion that does so sometimes is rather high. 45.8% of Icelandic employed persons ages 20-64 sometimes work on Saturdays (50.6% of men; 40.4% of women), which was the second highest rate in Europe in 2018.[5] 39% of employed persons of the same age sometimes worked on Sundays (42.8% of men; 36.4% of women), which was the highest proportion in Europe by a considerable margin.[6] Lastly, 43.5% of employed persons ages 20-64 sometimes worked in the evening (47.9% of men; 38.4% of women), again the highest proportion in Europe in 2018. One more thing to note is that while Iceland does not stand out in terms of the proportion of employed persons who usually work from home it has a high proportion of employed persons ages 20-64 who sometimes work from home or 26.5% overall (27.7% for men; 25.1% for women), which was the second highest rate in Europe lead only by Sweden.

[2] https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsi_emp_a&lang=en
[3] https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsa_qoe_3a2&lang=en
[4] https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsa_e2ged&lang=en
[5] https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsa_ewpsat&lang=en
[6] https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsa_ewpsun&lang=en

What do these numbers signify besides? On the one hand long work hours impinge on leisure and care. Also, when work invades the home and our "private" time it has the same effect. It seems quite possible that at least some employees work overtime from home at asocial hours to get over their workload without receiving compensation. On the other hand, it may be indicative of Icelandic employers allowing their employees some flexibility to attend to non-job related matters such as care during normal business hours, allowing them to make up for time lost at work during evenings and weekends and from home. It also seems likely that work demands and flexibility will differ between men and women in the Icelandic labour marked in accordance with experience in other countries (Hofäcker and König, 2013; Kuo, Volling and Gonzalez, 2018).

The 2012 and 2015 modules of the ISSP, on Family and Changing Gender Roles and Work Orientation respectively, may shed some light on the issues at hand. Looking first at the ISSP from 2015 employed respondents were asked to express a preference over working hours, i.e. whether they wanted more hours and more pay, same hours and same pay, or shorter hours and less pay. 63.4% said they wanted the same hours and the same pay, 30.7% wanted longer hours and more pay while only 5.9% preferred shorter hours at the expense of their paycheck. Overall, this does not suggest that people in Iceland feel that working hours as such are too long. However, men are more likely to want longer hours for more pay (34% compared to 27%) while women are slightly more likely to be satisfied with their current hours/pay configuration or to express a preference for shorter hours and less pay. This may reflect the residual effects of male breadwinner views or a gendered division of labour in the household reflecting that there tend to be higher returns for men's additional labour than for women's, given the gender pay-gap.

Work can be demanding in other ways and the 2015 wave of the ISSP contains an item on how often people find their work stressful. In Iceland, some 39% find it often or always stressful (nearly 7% say always) while almost 17% say rarely or never. While 39% seems high, in comparison with the other countries participating in the ISSP that year Iceland in no way stands out in terms of the stressfulness of work. However, women are more likely than men to find work often or always stressful, 43% compared to 35%.

Just under 15% of people felt that their work interfered always or often with their family life and just over 58% felt that this was rarely or never the case. Once again Iceland does not particularly stand out in terms of either high or low frequency of the item in question. Men were somewhat more likely than women to report that work interfered always or often (16.6% compared to 12.6%) and women were more likely report that this was rarely or never the case (59.4% compared to 52.4%). This may be indicative that men's unsocial hours and homework is driven to a larger extent by work demands and less by flexibility than is the case for women, though it must be noted that the differences are rather small.

Lastly, employed respondents in the 2015 ISSP were asked how difficult it would be for them to get time off during work hours. Iceland ranked fourth out of 36 in terms of ease of getting time off with just under 80% of employed respondents saying it was not too difficult or not difficult at all. Men were much less likely to have difficulties getting time off, which is most likely explicable in terms of women being more likely to be in service or care jobs where their presence at their place of employment at given times is a key component of their job.

Unfortunately, there is no data on employment by family circumstances available for Iceland from the European Labour Force Survey on the Eurostat website. Statistics Iceland, however, provided us with data by enriching their labour force survey with data from the National Registry that allowed them to construct family types for respondents comparable to that used by the other contributions to this project.

Figure 3 brings out how children affect the employment rates of men and women differently. The first thing to note about employment rates is that women's employment rates are below those of men regardless of household type. The differences are smallest for childless households, 1,8 percentage points. For men the lowest employment rate is in childless households with very small or negligible differences in employment rates of men living in households with children of different ages. For women the employment rate is about the same, about 85%, whether they are childless or whether the youngest child in the home is 1-2 years old. It is slightly higher for women with their youngest children in other age groups, or around 88%.

As for changes over time, the employment rate of childless men declined after 2007 thorugh and 2009 and rose very slowly up until 2014, then rose sharply between 2014 and 2016 before declining slightly again in 2017 (Figure 1). As for men with children of different ages we also see declining employment rates in the years around and after the onset of the Great Recession though the duration and extent of decline varies somewhat between groups. Thus, the longest declines were for fathers with young children, between 2008 and 2011 for those with their youngest less than one year old and 2007 and 2010 for those with 1-2-year-old children. Father's with children under the age of one stand out in terms of the size of their drop-in employment by 7.1 percentage points, whereas fathers whose youngest children are in other age groups declined in employment by around 4%. Employment rates rose again for all groups, though the timing and the extent of recovery varied somewhat between groups though by 2017 there were very small differences between them, as noted above.

Employment rates for childless women (figure 2) declined between 2008 and 2014, by 7.2 percentage points, before rising sharply by 7 percentage points between 2014 and 2016. Interestingly the employment rates rose more swiftly for women with children than for men in the same situation. For all groups, the decline was only for two years, occurring between 2007 and 2009 except for women whose youngest child was one or two years old, for whom the decline occurred between 2008 and 2010. The decline was similar, between eight and nine percent, for all groups whose youngest child was under the age of six but somewhat less, or of 5.6 percentage

points, for women with youngest children between the ages of six and twelve years old. Thus, not only is the pattern with regards to children's ages different for men and women but women with children also saw larger declines in employment rates than men with children, though the opposite holds for people without children.

Figures 4 and 5 show the employment rates of men and women respectively by the age of their youngest child and their level of education. There are no discernible differences between levels of education for men though in 2007 the employment rates seem slightly higher for fathers of 1-2-year olds than for those with infants. Employment rates are also higher for all groups in 2017 than they were in 2007.

There are clearer patterns when it comes to women. Employment rates rise with education. Thus, in 2017 91.3% of women with tertiary education and children under the age of one were employed compared to 81.3% of women with only lower secondary level education. For mothers of children ages one and two 89.6% of those with tertiary education were employed compared to 69% among those who had only completed lower secondary education. The rates are quite similar for women with secondary and tertiary education regardless of whether their youngest is under one or one to two years old. Interestingly women with lower secondary education have lower employment rates when their children are 1-2 years old than when they are younger than that. It seems plausible that this can be attributed to the care-gap in Iceland, i.e. the period between the end of paid parental leave and the beginning of preschool (Arnalds, Eydal and Gíslason, 2013; Farstad, 2014; Ingólfsdóttir and Gíslason, 2016). Also, employment rates of women at all levels of education rise between 2007 and 2017 regardless of their children's ages with the exception of women with children ages one and two, where it declines slightly.

Figure 6 shows the average number of paid hours of work by gender and the age of youngest child. A few things stand out. Firstly, men work longer hours than women regardless of year or age of children. However, the gap has narrowed mostly on account of a reduction of men's working hours between 2007 and 2017. The reduction in men's hours holds regardless of youngest child's age though it is largest for fathers of children under the age of one, some 5.7 hours per week. Also, while the number of hours tend to rise for women with the rising age of their youngest child in both 2007 and 2017 this was not the case for men in 2007 though by 2017 men's working hours have begun to exhibit a slight gradient related to the youngest child's age.

Inactivity rates tend to be rather low in Iceland (Figure 7). They declined substantially for women between 2007 and 2017, from 15.9% to 11.1%, but rose slightly for men over the same period, from 5.6 to 6.2 percent. Inactivity rates are higher for women than for men at all levels of education while also declining for both with rising education. As for changes between 2007 and 2017 the inactivity rates rose for both men and for women with only primary education, though more so for the former than for the latter (7.8 ppts. for men and 3.3 ppts. for women). With regards to upper secondary education the inactivity rate was about the same for men in 2017 as in

2007 but had declined for women by 5.3 ppts. The inactivity rate declined for both men and women with tertiary level education, by 3.1 ppts. for women and by 2.8 ppts. for men.

Interestingly family reasons do not appear to play a big role when it comes to inactivity. Among men next to none of them gave family reasons for inactivity in 2007 and none did in 2017. While inactivity for family reasons is more prevalent among women it is still rather low and declined a great deal between 2007 and 2017 even if the inactivity rate rose among women between these two points in time.

Lastly, looking at the gender pay gap (Figure 9) by age we see that it narrowed between 2007 and 2017 for all age groups, disappearing for under 25 year olds, declining by 12.8 percentage points for 35-44 year olds, 10.4 percentage points for 25 to 35 year olds, 9.1 percentage points for 55 to 64 years olds but only by 4.6 percentage points for the age group 45 to 54.

In June 2017 the Icelandic parliament passed an amendment to the legislation on Gender Equality (Lög um jafnan rétt og jafna stöður karla og kvenna nr. 10/20017) requiring employers with 25 employees or more to acquire an external certification of their wage-setting procedures, that wages were determined in the same way for both men and women such that no unjustifiable differences in pay between men and women belonging to the same occupational classification would result.. In order to get the certification, the companies have to meet the requirements of the Standard ÍST 85, Equal Wage Management System. Equal pay certification under the Standard ÍST 85 is designed to confirm that when decisions on wage are taken, they are based only on relevant consideration.

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

In the case of Icelandic care policies, paid parental leave and publicly subsidised day care for children under the age of 6 years and care facilities after school for younger children in elementary schools are the most important factor in making it possible for both parents to earn and care.

The Icelandic paid parental leave is known for its gender equal approach. In the year 2000 it was decided that each parent should be entitled to three months individual non-transferable paid parental leave and in addition they would have three months that they could decide for themselves how to divide. The flexibility is high, and the parents can decide for themselves how to divide the leave, and if to use part time or full time, and they are even free to be on leave simultaneously if they like. They can use their entitlements up to the age of two of their children. A Parental Leave Fund financed by insurance levy pays working parents 80% of their income up to a certain limit. Other parents receive a lump sum benefit. In 2020 the leave was extended to 10 months (4+4+2) and 2 additional months will be added in 2021.

As it turns out there is no comparative data available for Iceland on absence from work due to parental leave, as can be found for some of the other countries participating in Men in Care. However, it is somewhat doubtful that statistics on absence from work due to parental leave in a given reference weeks is particularly informative. Statistics Iceland publishes data on the average number of days on leave taken. These are presented in figure 12.

The figures on days on parental leave is more informative. By 2003 the system had fully matured, granting three months of leave to each parent and further three months the parents can divide among themselves as they see fit. As figure 12 shows mother tend to take the lion share of the shared parental leave with their number of days being fairly stable throughout the period under observation. For fathers we see a sharp increase in the number of days for fathers of children born in 2001 to 2003 as men's entitlements expanded. The number of days taken by fathers remained fairly stable around 100 between 2003 and 2009 but declined after that, due to the financial crisis, settling at just under 90 days. The declining take up of paternity leave among

fathers has been linked to cuts in economic compensation during parental leave after the onset of the financial crisis (Eydal and Gíslason 2014) but interestingly the take up rate of fathers with low incomes who were less affected by the cuts declined as well (Ministry of Welfare 2016), which may indicate some weakening of the normative legitimacy of paternal leave though decline in take up of paternity leave is far from proportional to the severity of the cuts to the parental leave system.

After the paid parental leave most families experience a gap in regard to care support, as already mentioned, until the children can be enrolled into preschool. This gap is usually bridged by the mothers, but private child minders and grandparents are also helpful. There is no legal right to preschool, but municipalities are responsible for providing such services. Usually children are enrolled between the age of 1-2. Municipalities also run after school care for children from 6-9 years which is important for working parents.

Part-time work can function as a way to reduce work-life conflicts, with one or both breadwinners in dual breadwinner households taking a part-time job to be better able to balance work and family life, although in practice it is rarely both doing part-time jobs and in most cases it is women opting for part-time work (Fagan, O'Reilly and Rubery, 2017). This is very much the case in Iceland, where no employed men gave family reasons for working part-time in 2007 and only some 0.3% in 2017 (Figure 10). Women were more likely than men to give family as a reason for working part-time, though the proportion declined between 2007 and 2017, from 8.1% to 5.4% of those employed. The gap between women ages 25-49 and 50-64 is also noticeable. In 2017 7.8% of employed women in the younger groups gave family as a reason for working part-time but only 0.8% of women in the older group. This may indicate that while there is some accommodation of work-life balance issues with regards to parenthood there may be less scope for accommodation of such issues when it comes to taking care of elderly parents.

Looking at part-time employment on account of family reasons by employment status a couple of things stand out (Figure 11). Firstly, in 2007 part-time work on account of family reasons was more prevalent among employees than among the self-employed among women ages 25-49. By 2017 this had turned around with part-time employment for family reasons being more prevalent among the self-employed. The second thing that stands out is that in 2017 some 15% of self-employed men ages 25-49 worked part-time for family reasons whereas ten years before none did.

It is difficult to interpret disaggregation by sector of activity (2.1.3) in Iceland due to the small numbers on some sectors, especially when there is further disaggregation as is here by sex and age. Because of this the discussion here will be limited to the younger age group, i.e. men and women ages 25-49 years old. For women of the aforementioned age Human Health and Social Work Activities and Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing stand out with high rates of part-timers on account of family reasons. For most other sectors the proportion is between seven and just over eight percent. However, the proportion is much lower for women in Public Administration,

Administrative and Support Service Activities, and Financial and Insurance Activities. For men ages 25-49 only Human Health and Social Work Activities exceeds 2%.

4. GENDER GAPS IN CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK

Sadly, Iceland has not yet participated in the European Time Use Survey and can therefore not offer any data comparable to the reported by some of the other MiC participants. As unsatisfactory as it may be, we can however get a broad outline of the situation in Iceland with regards to the division of unpaid household work from the 2012 wave of the International Social Survey. While time use data would be preferable as well as having a time series we must make do.

The 2012 wave of the International Social Survey asks respondents to estimate the weekly hours normally spent on household work and on taking care of family members. The analysis is limited to men and women with children in their households. Based on this data it can be estimated that in 2012 men in Iceland spent on average 8.4 hours on household work and 14.9 hours on caring for family members, a total of 23.3 hours. In comparison, women in Iceland spent 12.8 hours on household work and 28 hours on caring for family members, a total of 40.8 hours (Figure 14).

Expressing the gap in terms of men's hours as a proportion of women's (Figure 15) we see that men contributed on average 57% of women's hours on unpaid household work and family care, which places Iceland near the middle of the distribution of European countries that participated in the ISSP in that year. This, however, masks differences between household work and family care. The division of household work is somewhat more equal than the division of family care. Men's hours on housework amounted to 65.5% of women's hours on average, which was the fifth most equal division among European countries, whereas men's hours on family care were only 53.2% of women's hours, which placed Iceland in the lower end of the European distribution. Thus, it seems that men's inclusion in care lagged behind men's contribution to household work.

It is worthwhile to examine the difference between families with children and families with toddlers since toddlers tend to involve increased workload in terms of both care and household work (Bradbury, 2008). This is very much the case in Iceland. Men in Iceland with toddlers in the household contributed on average 9.3 hours of housework per week and 25 hours on family care in 2012, which is 10.7% more time on housework than men with children in the household in general and 67.8% more

on family care. Women in Iceland with toddlers in the household contributed on average 15.2 hours of housework per week and 45 hours on family care, which is 18.7% more on household work and 60.7% more on family care than women with children in the household in general. As for the gender gap the overall gap remains the same but widens somewhat for household work and narrows for family care. Thus, men in Iceland seem to become more involved in family care when their children are young though they fall behind as the children grow older. This may indicate an underlying view that caring for family members is more of a woman's task though men contribute more during family intensive phases of the lifecycle.

Fathers' participation in care of their children has increased constantly from 2000 and onward, or since the legislation on equal rights of both parents to paid parental leave was enacted.

Repeated surveys among parents of their first-borns on how they have divided the care of their children during the first three years after birth show clearly how fathers increase their share in care, not only during the paid parental leave but also after that (Eydal and Gíslason, 2014). There are few studies on the gender division of other types of care and in general there is a need for more comprehensive knowledge of the long-term care provided by families and friends.

As already pointed out above, there are very few policies that address the need for support to families due to care obligations and tasks that are not related to care of young children. Parents of children with long term illness and disability do receive some support but the few studies conducted among parents show that there is a big need for increase in holistic services and support (e.g. Ingvarsdóttir and Sigurðardóttir, 2015). In 2018 Eurostat[7] ran an ad hoc module to the European Labour Force Survey on reconciliation between work and family life. The module contained questions on whether people provided informal care on regular basis, either for children or elderly or disabled relatives. The results indicated that Iceland has the highest proportion of its population providing care of the latter kind. Provision of care to elderly or disabled relatives increased with age and was more prevalent among women with the gender gap widening with age.

[7] https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfso_18cresls&lang=en

5. INCREASE OF MEN IN CARE

Many of the issues to be addressed in this section have been covered—in so far as possible in light of limited data—in the preceding section. Consequently, the discussion in this section will be limited to men employed in care occupations and men wanting to work less.

Overall men accounted for just over one in ten care workers in Iceland in 2017 though the proportions varied from one occupation to the next. Men's share was particularly low among nursing and midwifery professionals and associates (3% in both) but higher among primary and preschool schoolteachers (10.7%), personal care workers in health services (11.8%), and childcare workers and teachers' aides (14%). Despite very high employment rates among women the Icelandic labour market remains highly gender segregated (Bettio and Verashchagina, 2009) with women bearing most of the burden of emotionally and physically taxing care work.

As for men who want to reduce their work hours, we know that having children tends to reduce women's activity in the labour market while the obverse tends to hold for men. Furthermore, there is evidence that the transition to parenthood is associated with a shift towards more traditional perspectives on gender roles (Perales, Jarallah and Baxter, 2018). On the one hand children require care and increase household work, which may lead to preferences for working less. On the other hand, children entail expenses which may lead to preferences for more work and higher income. The work intensity of children tends to be greater the younger they are while child related expenditures tend to rise as children grow (Bradbury, 2008). Thus we might expect men with toddlers in the home to prefer fewer hours while men with children in the household in general would prefer longer hours and more pay, though gender roles and the gendered division of labour will likely mediate the relationship between circumstances and preferences. Indeed, the pattern of preferences differs between countries, according to the 2015 wave of the International Social Survey.

As for Iceland only 4.3% of men preferred shorter hours and lower pay in 2015 (figure 16), which places Iceland slightly below the middle of the distribution of European countries that participated in the ISSP that year. The proportion for men with toddlers in the household was slightly higher (5.4%) while the proportion for men with children in the household in general was much lower, or 1.5%. Thus, Icelandic men do not seem inclined to reduce their paid employment regardless of family circumstances

6. HOW CAN WORKPLACES SUPPORT *CARING MASCULINITIES* ACROSS THE LIFE COURSE

In the first instance it seems that Icelandic employers are quite accommodating in terms of flexibility. What evidence exists does not suggest that work-life balance is at the forefront of employees' minds and the high proportion of people who sometimes work unsocial hours and sometimes work from home may be indicative of that employers are quite open allowing workers some leeway in terms of where and when work gets done, as long as it gets done.

It also seems that the gendered division of labour in Iceland is far from equal and that in particular men lag behind in terms of their contribution to family care. Yet men in Iceland show very little interest in reducing their working hours, at least if it means less pay. Even though in Iceland women are far more likely than men to work part-time on account of family reasons (men in Iceland rarely do) it is in fact a rare occurrence for either of the sexes. However, the Icelandic labour unions have recently put a shorter work week at the forefront of their agenda, and some small steps were taken in that direction in last general labour market agreements. The employer associations, however, are less than enthusiastic. Even so, a shorter work week might contribute to raising men's contribution to informal care if only by freeing up time.

Another issue that touches on collective bargaining, is entitlements to take time off from work to care for family members, relatives or even friends. Currently Icelandic employees are allowed a leave of absence for a certain number of days per year to take care of their children when they fall ill. This entitlement could be expanded to include others, e.g. replacing sick leave on account of children/ or adding on to that with "family days/leave" which employees could use for a range of family matters including caring for elderly or infirm relatives.

Every company and institution employing 25 or more workers in Iceland is legally obligated to have a policy on gender equality and many emphasise their family friendliness in order to make the workplace more attractive to prospective employees (Lög um jafnan rétt og jafna stöðu karla og kvenna nr. 10/2017). Of course, what precisely counts as family friendly in Iceland is debatable in light of high employment rates of both sexes, high proportion of men with long work hours and apparent disinterest among Icelandic workers to reduce work hours or work part-time to

accommodate other aspects of their lives if it means losing income though it seems very likely that preference for work hours are driven more by need for income than solely by an overly strong work ethic. It is also an open question whether and to what extent employer policies on gender equality and work-life balance are implemented in practice.

There are few studies on the importance of work life balance for employers and the productivity of their companies in Iceland but the literature shows clearly how important it is and many Icelandic companies have promoted family friendly policies, but usually it addresses first and foremost parents of young children. Promoting evidence to employers that caring masculinities and good work-life balance benefits not only their employees but that some of those benefits transfer on to the employer to the extent that they offset whatever disadvantages the employers perceive, may be of paramount interest. In short, if caring men with a healthy work-life balance can be shown to be more productive, more loyal workers, employers may be inclined to engage seriously with these issues.

On the other hand, it may also be that employees in Iceland must also be convinced about the value of caring masculinities and work-life balance. There are some barriers at the societal level. Iceland is very expensive and highly consumerist. These create strong work incentives. At the same time there are gaps in the care support to parents of young children, thus the support to full labour market participation of both parents of young children is somewhat ambivalent and public support to families that provide long term care or care support for their members is hardly existing. Thus, we need a better understanding of this contradiction in this otherwise gender egalitarian country and how it interacts with factors such as the gender wage gap to produce the gendered patterns we observe in employment, housework and care (both formal and informal). Also, as mentioned above, care, aside from child-care- has received relatively little attention in Icelandic debates and putting care, broadly speaking, on the agenda may be a necessary first step to affect change.

It is apparent that the state has an important role to play. For instance, the Icelandic legislation on parental leave is widely regarded as among the most gender egalitarian in the world. Research indicates that getting men involved in the care of their children during infancy can have long-term effects on their involvement with the care of their children (Arnalds, Eydal and Gíslason, 2013; Duvander and Jans, 2009; Eydal and Gíslason, 2008; Tanaka and Waldfogel, 2007).

It is clear that employers play an important role in promoting care and work-life balance to their employees. For one thing, for men to prioritise care it must be clear to them that they will not have to shoulder unacceptable costs in the workplace for doing so. While employer policies on gender equality and work-life balance are undoubtedly an important signal to employees much of the signalling takes place on the floor, from immediate supervisors and co-workers. Employees may be more attuned to such signals as they are more immediate and in any case, costs of caring are accrued on the floor rather than in vaguely worded policy documents.

Thus it seems that to promote men's involvement in care, employers must engage seriously with the issue, to move beyond general policy documents to actively promoting and encouraging caring masculinities in practice in such a way that it becomes a normal part of the workplace culture and thus affecting signals and practices on the floor. Where do Icelandic workplaces stand with regards to this? We simply do not know. The evidence, however, suggests that men's involvement in care needs to be raised in Iceland. Thus, the next step, of paramount importance, is to collect evidence on employee experiences with employers, supervisors and co-workers when it comes to caring for their families, relatives and friends.

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APPENDIX: FIGURES AND TABLES

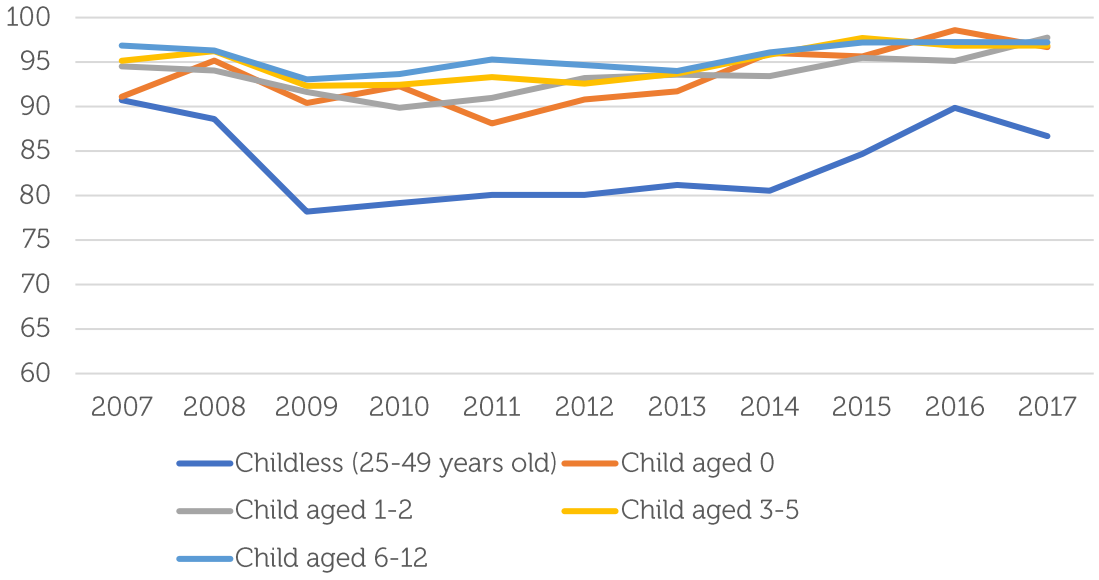

Figure 1. Male employment rates by age of youngest child, 2007-2017. Source: Source: EU-LFS Microdata

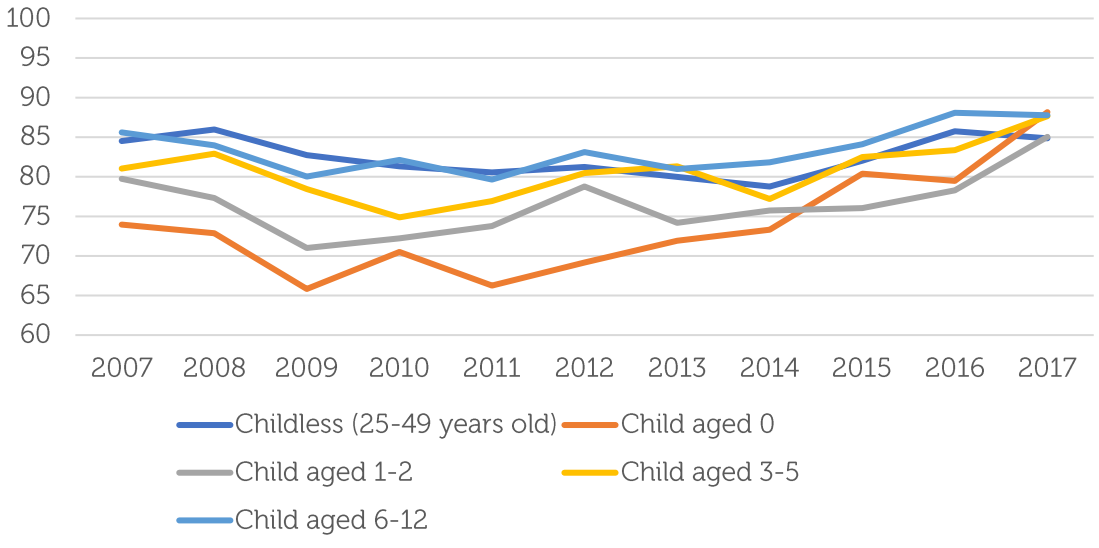

Figure 2. Female employment rates by age of youngest child, 2007-2017. Source: Source: EU-LFS Microdata

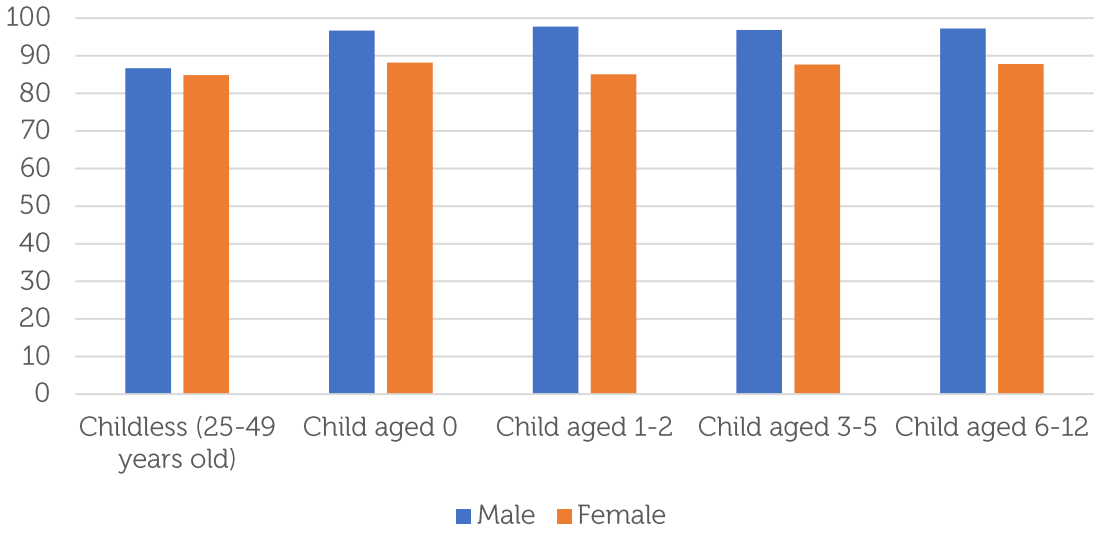

Figure 3. Female and male employment rates by age of youngest child, 2017. Source: Source: EU-LFS Microdata

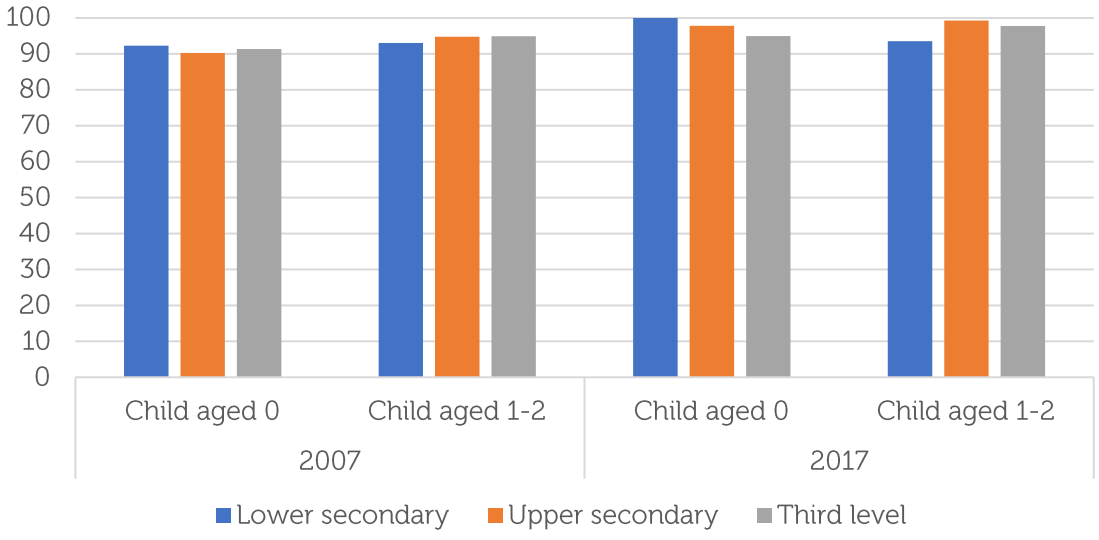

Figure 4. Employment rates of men by education and age of youngest child, 2007-2017. Source: EU-LFS Microdata

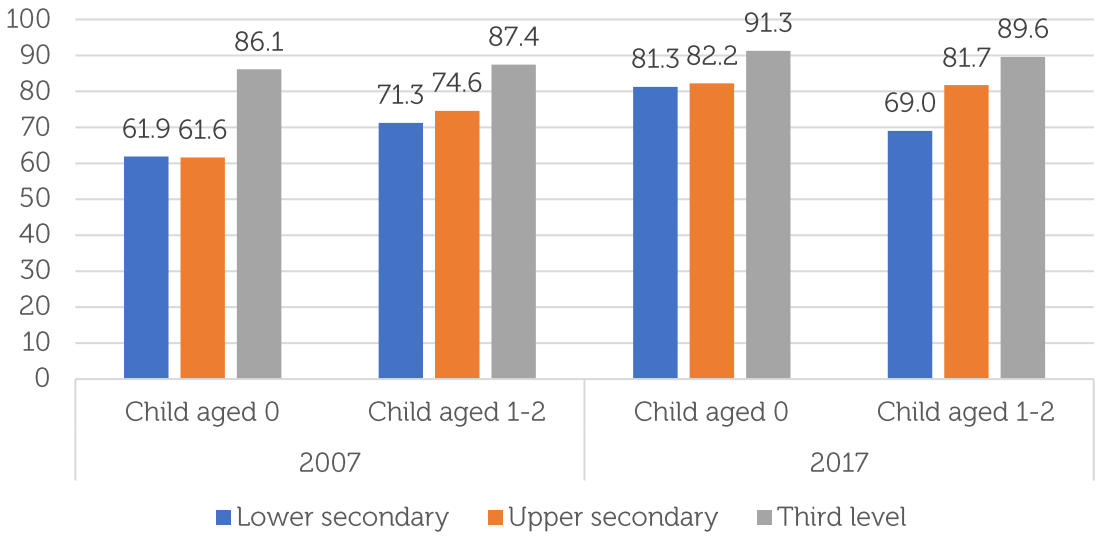

Figure 5. Employment rates of women by education and age of youngest child, 2007-2017. Source: EU-LFS Microdata

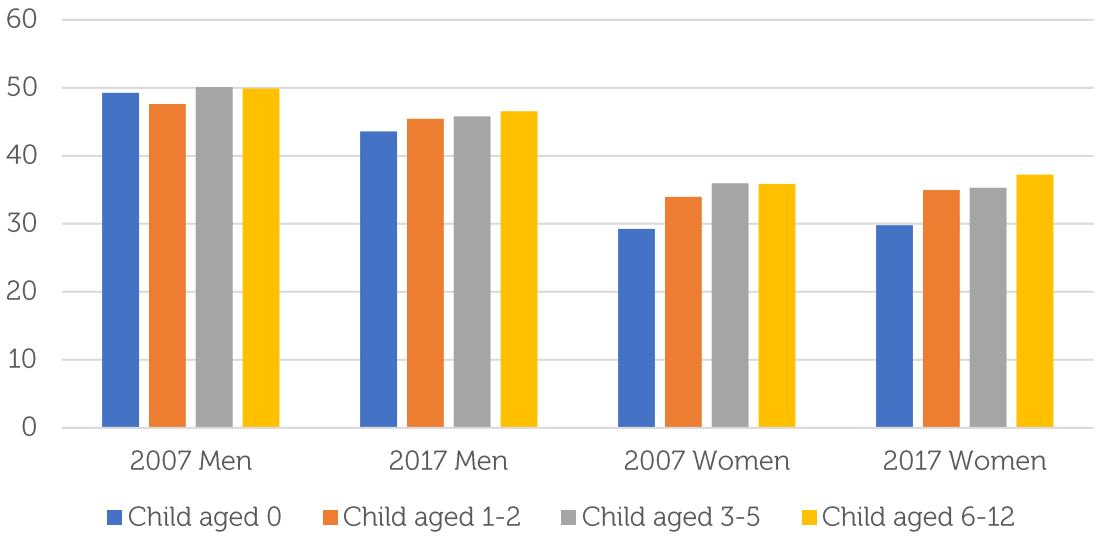

Figure 6. Average weekly paid hours of work by gender and age of youngest child, 2007-2017. Source: Statistics Iceland

Figure 7. Inactivity rates people aged 25-49 by education level, 2007-2017. Source: EU-LFS Microdata

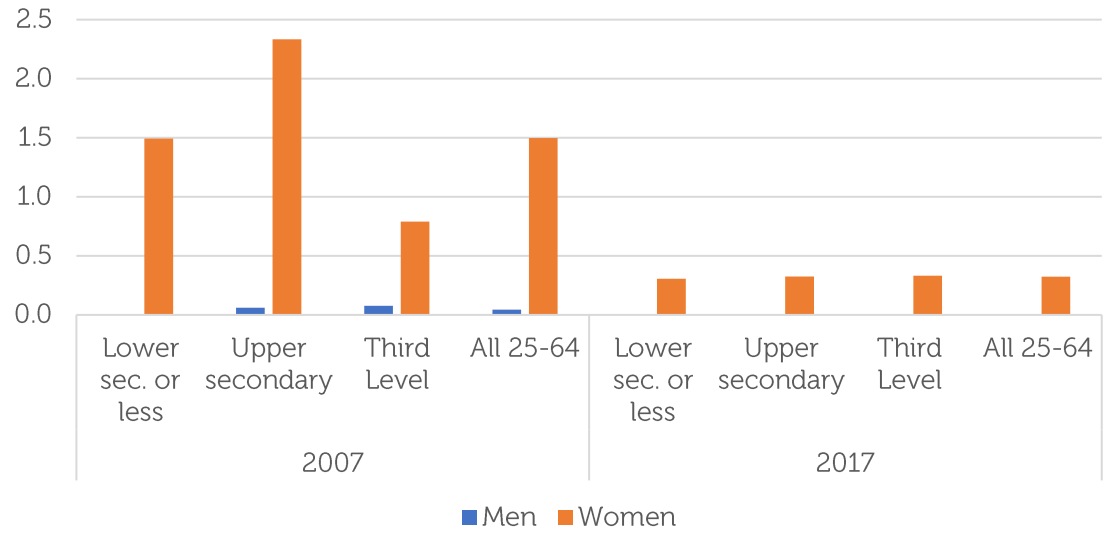

Figure 8. Percentage of people aged 25-64 inactive for family reasons, 2007-2017. Source: EU-LFS Microdata

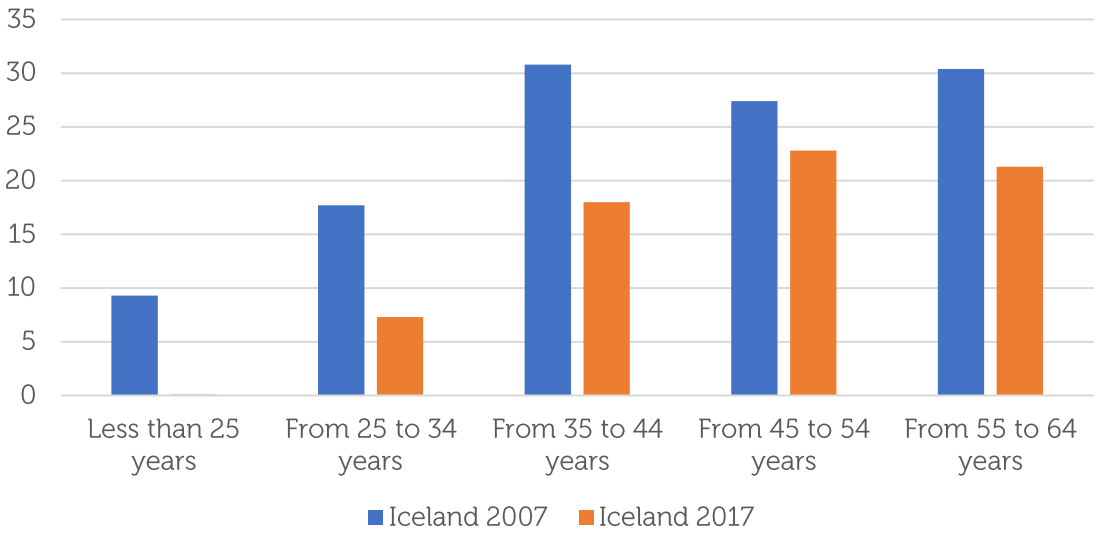

Figure 9. Unadjusted gender pay gap by age, 2007-2017. Source: EU-LFS Microdata

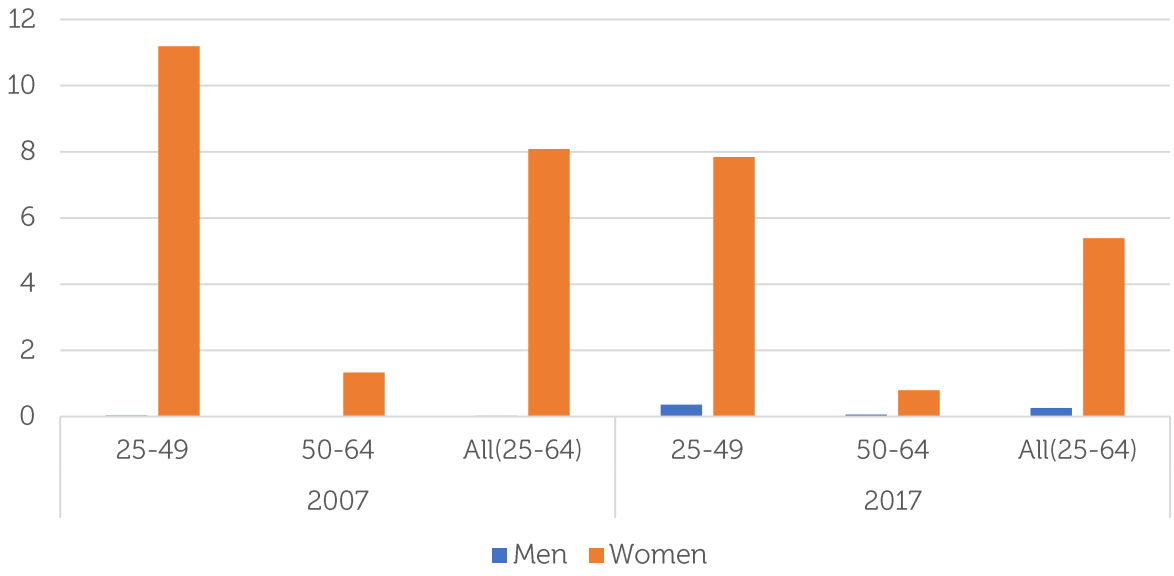

Figure 10. Percentage of employed people who work part-time work for family reasons by age and gender. Source: EU-LFS Microdata

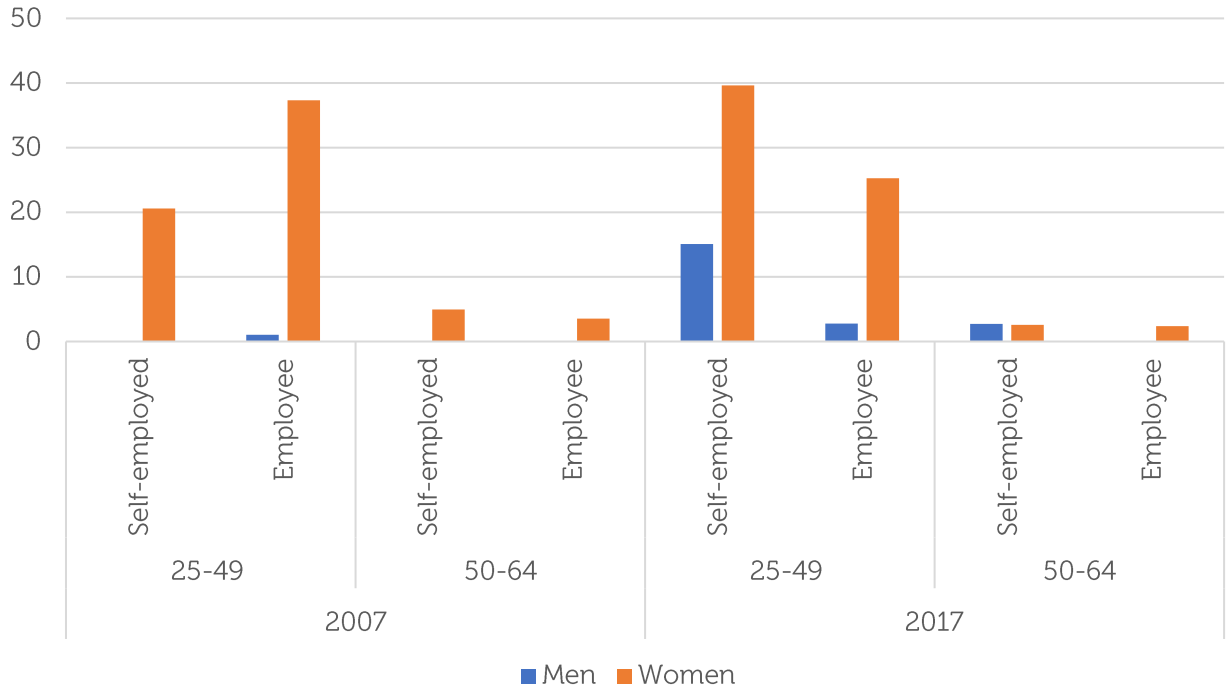

Figure 11. Percentage of people working part time for family reasons by gender, age group and professional status, 2007-2017. Source: EU-LFS Microdata

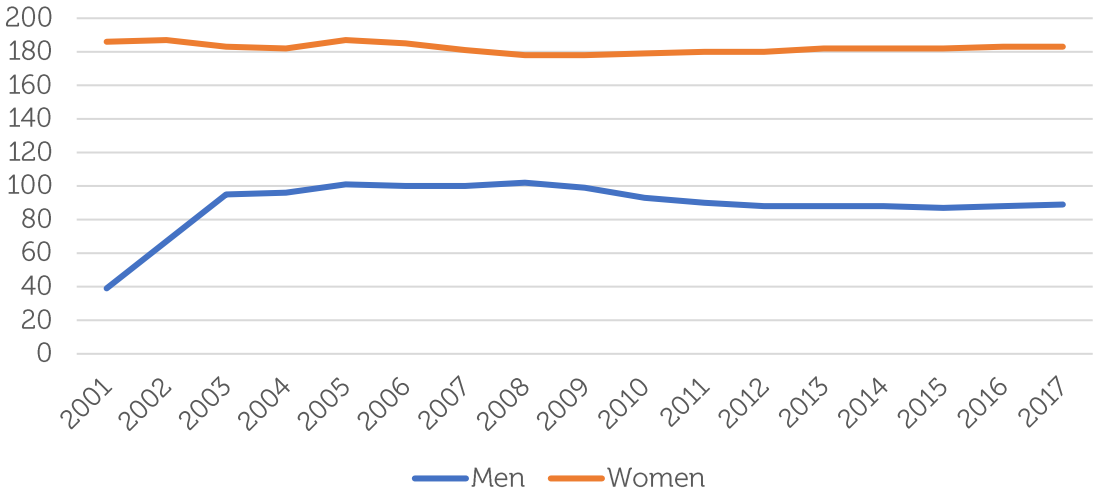

Figure 12. Average number of days of parental leave by sex. Source: Statistics Iceland

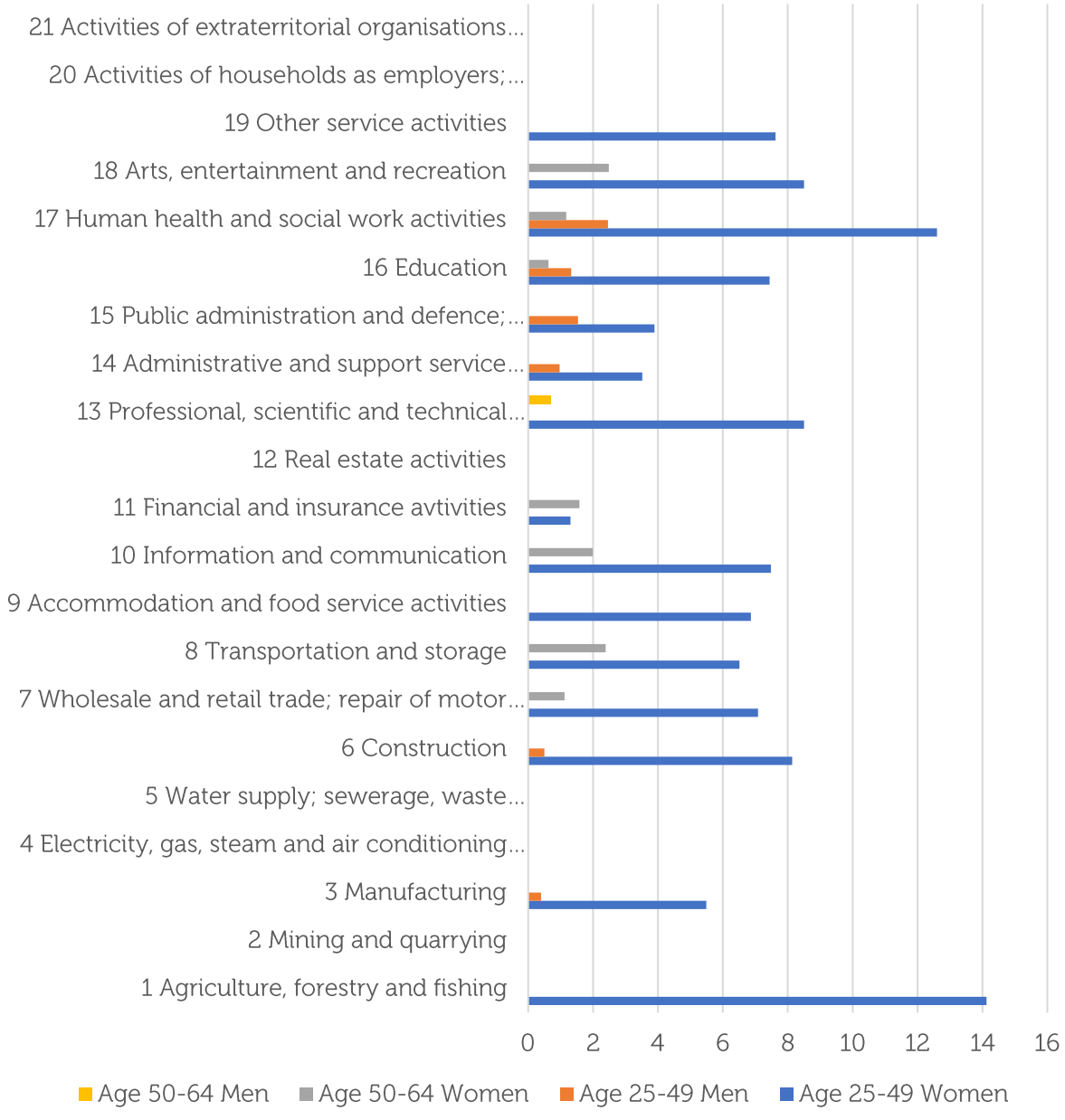

Figure 13. Part-time work for family reasons, by gender, age group and sector of activity, 2017. Source: EU-LFS Microdata

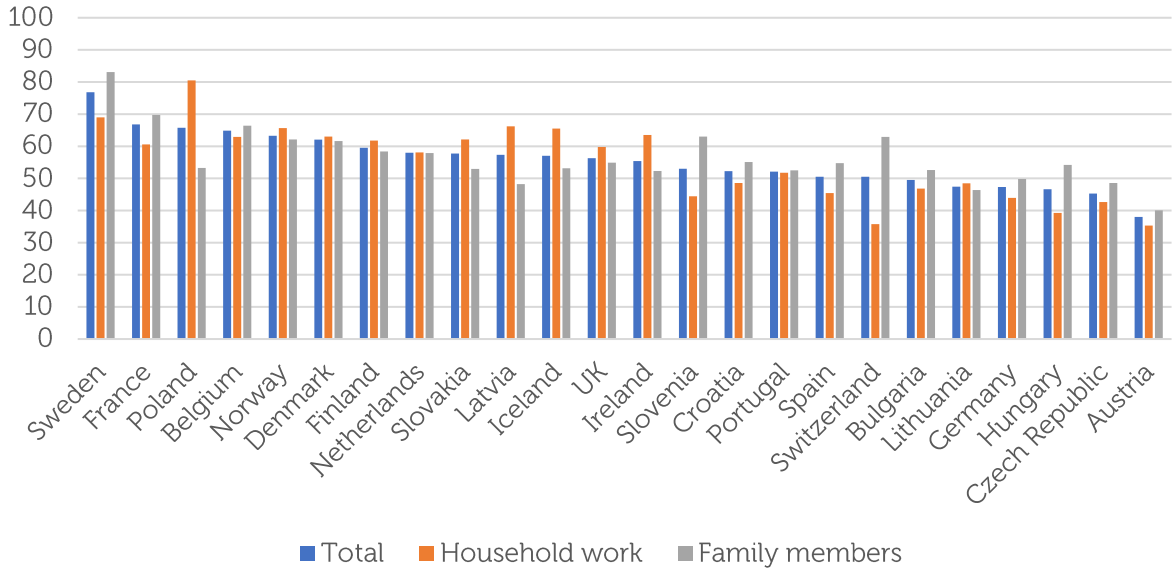

Figure 14. Men's weekly hours of household work and caring for family members as % of women's hours in 2012. Source: International Social Survey, 2012.

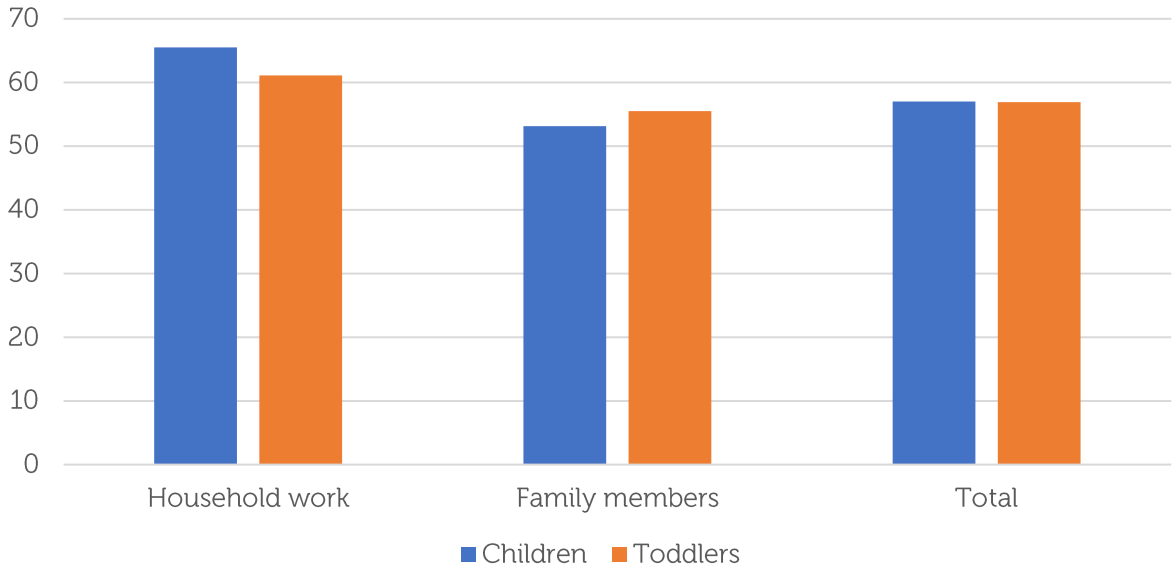

Figure 15. Men's contribution to household work and family care as % of women's contribution, families with children and with toddlers, 2012. Source: International Social Survey, 2012.

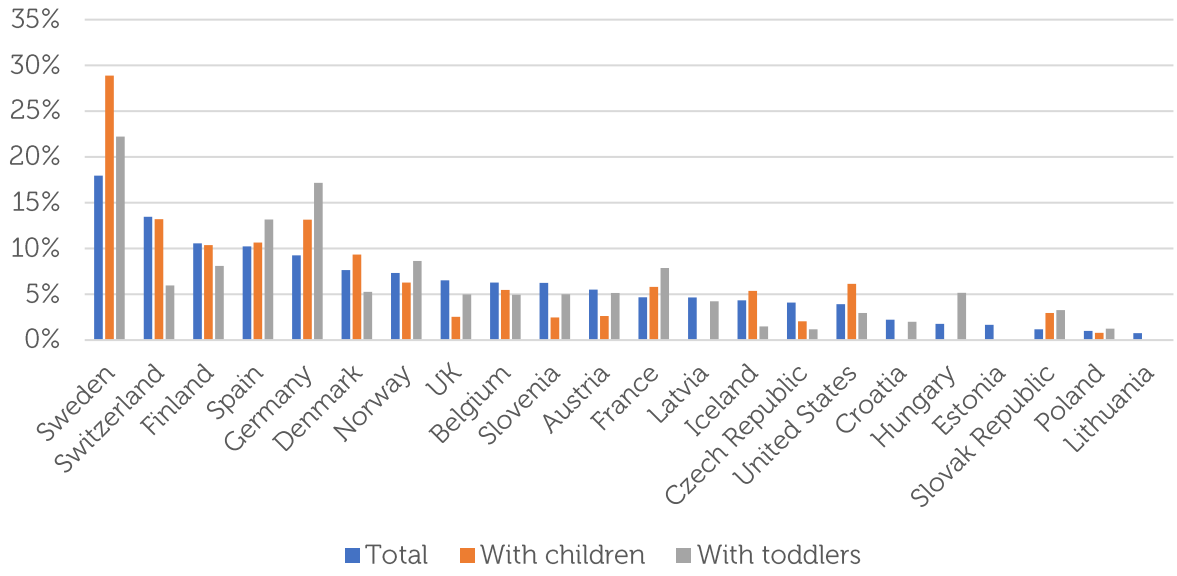

Figure 16. Proportion of men who would like to work fewer hours even if it meant earning less, by family circumstances, 2015. Source: International Social Survey, 2015.