

Men in care

WORKPLACE SUPPORT FOR CARING MASCULINITIES

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



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

1.1. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY¹

A challenge for the welfare states in Europe is the increasing care burden the aging population entail. Who will be responsible for this extra work in the households and in the care professions? How will the total care burden be shared amongst the citizens of different genders, class positions and ages?

Norway is a welfare state with a large universal welfare system. The work-family reconciliation policies are generous and tailored to the two most used family models: 1) Dual earner/Dual carer, and 2) Full time earner, part time carer/ Part time earner, full time carer.

In Norway rates of employments of both women and men are high, and the gender difference is low. Having care responsibilities for children has limited effect on Norwegian mother's employment status. The flip coin of women's high employment is part time work. 41 percent women aged 20-66 and 19 percent men worked part time in 2018 (Statistics Norway).

The Norwegian care sector can be characterised as large, as 31 of 100 employed women worked in the most common care professions in 2017. In contrast to this, only 6 of 100 men are employed in the care sector. Many of the occupations in the care sector are considered low status, associated with part-time cultures and lower wages than comparable traditionally male-dominated occupations.

The gendered workforce and women's high levels of part time work are two major explanations for the gender pay gap. The Norwegian gender pay gap is 14,0 percent and is thus close to the European average, 14,8 percent (Eurostat, data from 2018).

Surveys show slow overall positive developments. From 2006-2016 Mothers of children aged 0-17 increased their actual working hours, narrowing the gender gap (Sandvik, 2017). And fathers have increased their daily care work. The time use survey show that from 1980-2010 fathers of children (0-6) increased their daily care work with 32 minutes, narrowing the gap in unpaid care work.

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

The positive developments are in are tune with the intention of the national gender equality policies. From 2003 the state has prioritized accessible and affordable day care services, and have gradually extended the non-transferable paternity leave to 15 weeks in 2018. The take up rate is high, but few fathers take more days than the quota. The perceived risk at the workplace for losing responsibility, tasks, and future career opportunities, is a major obstacle (Kitterød et. al 2017). Measures targeting employers and gender cultures workplaces are therefore important supplements to state policies.

1.2. GENDER GAPS IN EMPLOYMENT

1.2.1. Gender gaps in employment

In Norway rates of employments of both women and men are high. There has been a decrease in employment for both genders, between 2007 and 2017, but the employment rate of men has decreased more than that of women, thus lowering the overall gender gap in employment. Still, the overall gender gap is considerable. The average employment rate of fathers aged 25-49 with youngest child 6-12 years is 90 percent. The employment rate of mothers in the same category is 81 percent. Having children aged 0-2 years old decreases mother's employment by 5-10 percent, but fathers' employments goes down just 1 percent on average. (See Figures 1, 2 and 3)

The drop in women's employment rates corresponds with the parental leave period and the period before most children start up in day care. Care for infants and one-year-olds seems to have a cost for many women's employment.

Beyond the first two years of the child, there is not much difference in women's overall employment rates. Neither does having a child. Actually, women aged 25-49 years with children aged 6-12 consistently have a slightly higher employment rate than that of women without children. (See *Figure 1*). This finding is supported in another recent statistical survey by C. Sundt (2019). She found that women aged 20-53 years with children under 15 years had a slightly higher employment rate compared to other women. The state provides accessible and affordable day care of quality. In their second year of life most children in Norway start going to daycare, and at 2 years of age 84 percent do so (Statistics Norway, 2019). This combined with low national unemployment rates is one of the reasons why the differences in women's employment are between women with children under 2 years of age and the rest. Whereas, for most of the other countries in this study there is a major difference in employment between women and women without children. In Austria, Germany, Poland, Slovenia, and Spain childless women are considerably more often employed compared to mothers aged 25-49 with children aged 0-12.

For men, not having children is correlated to lower employment rates, and the gap in employment rates between men with and without children is growing. 84 percent of men aged 25-49 without children was employed in 2007. In 2017 the

percentage had sunk to 78 percent. The corresponding employment rates of men with youngest child aged 6-12 years was 93 percent in 2007 and 90 percent in 2017. The employment gap between men with and without children are between 11 and 13 percent. We do not see this employment gap in the other European countries that are part of this study.

Unemployment rates have been low in Norway, but higher for people of migrant background, especially for migrants with low education levels. When comparing employment levels for mothers and fathers with lower secondary education, the gender gap is sizable, 76 percent for fathers and 38 percent for mothers with a child below one year old in 2017. Even if men of lower level of education have a higher employment rate, we see the education gap in employment growing for both genders. (See figures 4 and 5)

The measurements of economical inactivity mirror this picture. Levels of economic inactivity have increased especially for women and men at a lower educational level. Overall 11,7 percent of men and 16,3 percent of the women aged 25-49 years was categorised as economically inactive in 2017. 25,6 percent of the men and 38,4 percent of the women with secondary education or less was characterized as economically inactive (See Table 6)

1.2.2. Is participation in work life influenced by having (young) children?

Very few potential workers, caring for children or family members report this as an explanation for their inactivity. 0 per cent of men and 0,9 percent of women aged 25-49 who are inactive in the labour market cite family as an explanation (See figure 5). It is only Iceland of the partner countries in this project where a lower proportion reports this as an explanation.

As mentioned, after infancy and the second year of the child's life, the caring responsibility does not have any overall negative influence on the overall employment of women in Norway. But does it have an influence on how many hours women and men work weekly?

1.2.3. Gender gaps in work hours

As mentioned, the gender gap in employment is relatively small in Norway, but many women work part-time². The gender gap in work time and part time work is substantial. In 2018 the average actual working time of women aged 20-66 was 31,8 hours and men's was 37,5 percent.

There is a large gap between men's and women's actual working hours, but working hours are to a small extent affected by being a parent and the child's age. (See table 7 and figure 6) From 2006 to 2016, the average actual working time of fathers were reduced while mothers was increased. Mothers where the youngest children were aged 0-17 years increased their working hours by over an hour to 32,4 and men reduced their working hours by over an hour to 38,8. (Sandvik, 2017)

The high proportion of women in Norway who work part-time is one of the largest contributions to the gender pay gap and pension gap in Norway.

1.2.4. Gender pay and pension gap

The Norwegian gender pay gap is 14,0 percent and close to the European average, which is 14,8 percent (Eurostat, data from 2018). Women's part time work, gendered workforce, and skewed gender distributions in top positions in the labour market are major explanations. But still there is a part of the gender pay gap that remains unexplained.

Although more women work full-time now than before, part-time is still widespread among women and is an important source of annual salary differences between women and men. Controlling for part time work, the CORE – Centre for Research on Gender Equality in Norway finds that 40 percent of the wage gap can be explained by the gendered workforce (Institute for social research, 2018; Wagner et.al. 2020).

Another major explanation for the gender pay gap is the skewed gender distribution in top positions in the labour market. This is usually where salaries peak, thus where the gender pay gap is the greatest.

Norwegian and international research shows that when couples get children, women to a greater extent than men choose so-called family-friendly jobs, and work less to spend more time at home. This contributes to different wage developments during the careers of women and men. Consistently with other

² In Norway the regular work hours is limited to 37-40 hours per week. Any work agreement that constitutes less hours than this is considered part-time. And on the contrary, working for more than 37-40 hours per week is considered working overtime

countries in this study, the Norwegian gender pay gap increases with age. (See figure 7, Gender pay gap, Eurostat 2017 data)

The gender pay gap is also mirrored in the economic situation of pensioners in Norway. The annual income of men aged 61 and older was 1,5 times that of women's in 2017. Although gross income for both sexes aged 61 and more have increased significantly over the past 10 to 20 years, the gender gap has narrowed only marginally. (Sandvik, 2019)

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

The most used arrangements provided by the state or the legislation to balance work and care commitments in Norway is; the parental leave scheme, cash for care arrangement for caring for children between 1 and 2 years old, and sick-days for children fully compensated by employer. (We will go into more detail about the usage and gendered distribution of the parental leave scheme under 1.4 *Gender gaps in care and domestic work*).

Beyond this, reduced working hours or part time work is used to balance job and care commitments, especially for women. In 2018 41 percent women aged 20-66 and 19 percent men worked part time (Statistics Norway). Part-time is more common in female-dominated sectors and care professions, and has a clear class component. Women with lower education are more often in part-time work over a longer period. This is not the case for men. (NOU 2012:15)

However, the explanation workers give for working part-time is seldom care for children or the elderly. Just 3,2 percent of employed women and 0,1 percent men in Norway aged 25-49 years' report that they work with a part-time contract due to family reasons (looking after children or incapacitated adults) (see figure 8). The gap between the genders in usage of part time for family reasons are still large.

Other studies confirm this picture, that in Norway, caring for children is to a small extent a reason for women having reduced working hours. On direct questions, "childcare" is usually far down the list of "main cause of part time". A new review of labour force surveys shows that women without children work part-time just as often as women with children (Sundt, 2019).

From 2007 till 2017 employed women aged 25-49 reporting usage of reduced working hours for family reasons have lowered by a half from, 9,9 to 4,3 percent (See *Figure 8*). This positive change can partly be explained by the increase of available, as well as affordable, public day-care.

Another explanation for women with children working full time could also lie in the type of work that is becoming more common for women Norway, E.g. flexible hours and being able to combine work with care responsibilities.

However, not everyone has professions that are easily combined with care obligations. In the labour force survey of 2018, 29 percent of part-time working mothers stated that caring for children has led to a reduction in working hours. An important part of this is related to shift work and rotation work, especially common in the care sector, where many women work. (Sundt, 2019)

Women aged 25-49 who are self-employed stands out in this context. They are significantly less likely to work part-time to care for family, compared to women who are employed. In this age group, we estimate that it is usually the care of own children that will be the task. For men, there is another group that stands out. Men aged 50-64 who are self-employed work more often part-time to care for family, compared to employed men in the same age group. This is normally the age at which one's own partner or parents may need extra care (See figure 9).

1.3.1. Reduced hours as a formal right

To reduce working hours for reasons relating to "age, health, social or welfare" is a formal right according to the Working Environment Act, and if possibly to return to full time position at a later point in time. A survey (Øistad, Seip and Jensen, 2014) reveals that only a few people use this right. 3-4 per cent of employees in nursing and care have reduced working hours due to health, social or welfare reasons.

1.4. GENDER GAPS IN CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK

In this section gender gaps in care and domestic work are described with time use surveys published every decade by Statistics Norway. Statistics Norway operates with six subcategories of domestic work³: care work, construction and repairs in the household; purchases of goods and services, other domestic work – and travel in connection with domestic work.

1.4.1. Gender gap in domestic work and care work

In 2010 women (16-74) spent slightly less than four hours, while men spent three hours per day on domestic work. Men did 79 percent domestic work compared to that of women. The overall gap in domestic work between the genders in Norway has been reduced and is somewhat smaller compared to most countries in Europe. Compared to 1980 women in 2010 used on average an hour less and men used on average half an hour more time on unpaid domestic work. Still, the gender gap in housework prevail across all age groups. (Waage, 2012).

Partly the reduction of the gender gap in domestic work can be explained by mens increased *care work*. On average women aged 16-74 spent 37 minutes and

³ Statistics Norway operates with six subcategories of domestic work: 1) Housework; which includes cooking, washing dishes, cleaning, cleaning, washing and caring for clothes and the like. 2) Care work; which includes active care for children or adults in need of help. These are periods where participants note that care, care or other assistance is the most important activity in a given time interval. 3) Construction and repairs; which includes care of the garden, care of pets, renovation, repairs and maintenance. 4) Purchases of goods and services; which include purchases of goods, visits to doctors, visits to other public offices and the like. 5) Other domestic work; which includes other work that is performed unpaid for one's own or others' household. 6) Travel in connection with domestic work; which mainly includes travel related to purchasing and other errands.

men spent 31 minutes daily on unpaid care work (Waage, 2012). Men did 84 percent *care work* compared to that of women.

1.4.2. Gender gap in domestic work between parents of small children

Kitteroed (2012) have analysed the time use of parents with children aged 0-6 years from 1980-2010. The analysis reveals that the gender gap in domestic work in this period has narrowed considerable. In 2010 the fathers used an average of 4 hours and 29 minutes per day on housework and care, and this is about 1½ hour more than in 1980. The increase is distributed over the entire period, but has been most marked from 2000-2010. (see figure 10).

The increase in the fathers' domestic work is divided into several activities. The clearest increase is in care work, where in 2010 fathers on average used more than ½ hours per day more than fathers in 1980, and about 20 minutes more per day than fathers in the year 2000 (see figures 10-13). Fathers also did more regular housework than before.

Part of the explanation for reduced gender gap is mother's reduction in domestic work. Mothers reduced the time spent on housework and care work from just under 7 hours per day in 1980 to just under 6 hours per day in 2010. As for women in general, the sharp decline is due to a decline spent on ordinary housework in general, and not in care work itself. (see figure 10 and 11 and table 9).

Kitteroed's (2012) analysis of the parent's time use reveal a parallel reduction of the gender gap in parents' income generating work. Fathers spends less time on income generation work and mothers spend more. Married / cohabiting mothers with children 0-6 years spent an average of 1½ hour per day on income-generating work in 1980, while mothers in 2010 spent 3 hours and 10 minutes per day, which is approximately 22 hours per week. (See figure 15)

Fathers in Norway do significantly more domestic work compared to fathers of children under 6 in other countries in this study. Albeit, the pattern is the same for all countries, all household chores except construction and repairs are more often done by women (see figure 12 and 13)

A striking difference is the amount of work on "construction and repairs" that is done by fathers in Norway. Acquiring and renovating your own home is closely linked with the phase when the couples have children. It seems that this work is more elaborate and time consuming for couples and fathers in Norway.

1.4.3. Is there a gender gap in care work also in the elderly population?

How much care work do older people do? After 67 years of age most people are full time pensioners and may have more time to provide help to other households. After 67 years of age, or even earlier, there is also a higher probability for the person or the partner to suffer a chronic illness that will need care. Here, after 45 years of age, the time use study from 2010 shows that there is hardly any gender gap in care work. (And there is not any gender gap in care work prior to 24 years of age.) *The gender gap in care is connected to the age when the majority in the population care for young children.*

In the age group 67-74 years of age men use slightly more time for care work than their women counterparts (Waage, 2012, visualized by Bufdir.no, see figure 14). Persons in the age group 67-74, often pensioners, provide more often informal help to other households than persons in other age groups, and men more than women. On average men in this age group use 23 minutes and women 12 minutes providing help to other households. (Waage, 2012)

However, surveys of the municipal care for elderly gives us a broader understanding. Berge et.al. (2014) finds that municipalities are much less likely to offer help when the elderly person has a daughter than a son. This has a large cost for some of the daughters. To provide comprehensive care for parents, reduces likelihood to be in employed work. To provide care to sick parents as such is do not. The survey illustrates the interplay and dilemmas between gendered unpaid private care and paid gendered/ethnified public care.

1.4.4. Men just as often experience the “tidsklemma”

The Norwegian concept “tidsklemma” that can be translated to the time squeeze or the time conflict, emerged as a social debate at the start of 2000s and has been ongoing since. “Tidsklemma” is commonly understood as the ongoing struggle, especially for parents, to combine occupational work, household chores, leisure time activities etc., without getting totally exhausted and overstressed. Although the debate has focused mostly on working mothers with small children several Norwegian surveys show that it is just as big or bigger a problem for fathers with small children. This should not be as surprising as the time use studies above show the total time used by fathers and mothers for occupational and household work is just as long. Asked, “do your demands at work often interfere with your home life or family life”, 15 percent of men reported often or always, and 14 percent of women reported the same. (Statistics Norway 2019, Livingconditionssurvey)

1.5. INCREASE OF MEN IN CARE

As can be seen from the time-use surveys presented in the previous part, men have significantly increased their share of housework and care work since 1980, while women have significantly increased their share of professional work (figures 14 and 15). Men's increase in house and care work can partly be explained as a change in value and culture; a desire for more equal and egalitarian relationships with partners and own children (Holter et.al. 2009). This is not just a western and European change. Researchers on men and masculinities describe this as a global change (Barker & Peacock 2012). With the father's quota in particular, gender equality policy that aim to promote men and caring have been put into action, primarily in Europe and especially in the Nordic countries, enabling men to put their more egalitarian values into action.

A challenge for the welfare states and households in Europe and Norway is the increasing care burden the aging population entail. Who will be responsible for this extra work in the households and in the care professions? How will the total care burden be shared amongst the citizens of different genders, class positions and ages? A development in an egalitarian direction will require that men's share of housework and care work continues to increase, and that welfare state policies are tailored in a way that support such a development.

Even though the Nordic countries and Norway have been forerunners in this respect, the welfare state researchers Gunn Elisabeth Birkelund and Trond Pedersen states in a review article that "The welfare state is gender conservative in the sense that a number of welfare schemes strengthen the mother-child relationship. (...) The woman-friendly policies of state-feminism has underpinned motherhood and has not promoted fathers as caregivers with the same strength." (Birkelund & Pedersen, 2005:148-149, Our translation)

1.5.1. Parental leave scheme and the father's quota

In 1993 a new and improved parental leave scheme was introduced in Norway. The scheme provided (working) parents with a total of 42 weeks paid leave including 4 weeks non-transferable paid leave for fathers. This was named the father's quota. In the following years, the length of the father's quota was

gradually extended⁴. In 2018 total length of paid leave was extended to 49 weeks, and the father's quota (or the quota for the for same sex parent) was extended to 15 weeks. To stretch the leave to 59 weeks with an 80 percent monthly coverage, is a much-used option in the scheme. The non-transferable father's quota is then 19 weeks⁵.

The general pattern is that a large majority of the men use the whole father's quota and that the mother "takes" all the rest of the leave, also the paid leave days that are open for sharing. This was the pattern when the father's quota was 4 weeks and now that the quota is 15 weeks it is still the pattern. The policy of extending the fathers quota have in this fashion quadrupled fathers share of the paid leave. The distribution is still very skewed, see figure 15.

A survey of men fathering children in 2011 showed that 66 per cent of the men used the father's quota or more days, 20 percent used less or nothing of the father's quota. 13 percent of the fathers was not eligible (see figure 16) (Kitterød et. al 2017, Institute for social research, 2018). Register data of newer date show a slightly higher take up rate. 71 percent of the men who fathered children in 2013 and 2014⁶ used the father's quota or more days paid leave. (Statistics Norway 2018)

The fathers' quota is well established in most workplaces and across occupations sectors and industries. The father's quota is popular with men and women becoming parents: 89 per cent of the fathers and 83 per cent of the mothers are for the father's quota (Schou 2019). Still, for different reasons a few men do not take use of the (entire) fathers' quota, typically men without a university degree, among those with low or very high income, and fathers born abroad. Self-employed people also have slightly lower take up rates than employees. The most important reasons men state for not using days with paid parental leave is the perceived risk associated with work: Perceived risk of losing goodwill, especially if you are new to the job. Risk of losing responsibility, tasks, and future career opportunities. This fear is expressed by men regardless of class position. Another important reason is misunderstandings and troubles with the rules and regulations of the parental leave scheme, which is considered complicated. (Kitterød et. al 2017, Institute for social research, 2018)

⁴ Length of father's quota by year: 1993: 4 weeks, 2005: 5 weeks, 2006: 6 weeks, 2009: 10 weeks, 2011: 12 weeks, 2013: 14 weeks, 2014: 10 weeks, and 2018: 15 weeks.

⁵ For more details read the annual report from Norway to the International network on leave policies and research: leavenetwork.org

⁶ Take up rates of the father's quota is calculated based on everyone who became a father in the specified years, regardless of whether they were eligible or not. The calculations are based on take out the three years following the birth. For a visualization of pic up rates of over time go to:

https://bufdir.no/Statistikk_og_analyse/Kjonnslikestilling/Familie_og_kjonn/Velferdsordninger_for_familier/Uttak_av_foreldrepermisjon/

In line with the challenge of the increasing care burden and an aging population, the goal with the father's quota have been to increase fathers care work – to cause a more balanced distribution of care and professional work between parents. However, research on the introduction and extensions of the father's quota has not succeeded in finding clear effects. One possible explanation is that the father's quota primarily has an effect in combination with other welfare policies such as accessible and affordable day care. The father's quota may also have had a significant contribution to long term societal attitudes about gender and care, and the contributions of these attitudes changes are difficult to measure in quasi-experimental designs. In qualitative studies we find that fathers who have taken a long parental leave narrate a shift in perspective and self-perception. Fathers often describe the dedicated time with their children as valuable and that it has been a privilege to learn to be better acquainted with their child, to take independent responsibility at home, and that they gained more self-confidence as fathers as well as a better understanding of the mother's situation. Many fathers express the need to form an independent bond with the child in it's first year of life. Early attachment appears to be an important part of the contemporary fathers' role in Norway. (Kitterød & Halrynjo, 2019)

1.5.2. Men in professional care work

Norway has very high levels of employment in the care sector, compared to the other countries taking part in MiC. 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)

This care workforce is extremely gendered in Norway. 31 of 100 employed women worked in the most common care professions in 2017. In contrast just 6 of 100 employed men worked in these care professions; nurses, specialist nurses, primary school teachers, early childhood teachers, childcare workers, teachers' aides, and care workers in health services (See figure 18).

Many of the occupations in the care sector are considered low status, have pronounced part-time cultures and lower wages than comparable traditionally male-dominated occupations. Women gain more from going into male dominated occupations than the other way around. (Reisel & Brekke 2013)

Still, since 2011 there have been a small increase in men working in these occupations. 4,3 out of 100 employed men worked in these care occupations in 2011. In care occupations that require an university degree there have been a reduction of men, and in the care occupations that do not require formal education or vocational training there have been a considerable increase in number and percentage of men (See figure 17).

A large proportion of care work in municipalities that do not require vocational training is carried out by people with an immigrant background, and here the percentage of men is higher. For men with migrant background, the care professions can represent an opportunity for class advancement and a secure income.

Let us take a step back and ask; who does the professional care work and how are they compensated? The "burden" is gendered but it is also ethnified. In 2017, 17 per cent of the work in municipal care services was carried out by people who had immigrated to Norway (Claus, 2018). An increasingly complex pattern of segregation emerges in care sector and between the care sector and other sectors. Gender, class positions, geography and immigrant background are significant factors. In her interview study Julia Orupabo (2016) points out that health education may also be perceived by immigrants as an entry for inclusion in the work life. For youth with a minority background, "safe" educational choices are not only connected to labour market demand, but also whether a certain job is seen as "open" to minoritized people.

1.5.3. Men and caring for the local environment (Volunteer work)

Many men participate in voluntary work⁷ in the local community and in organizations, a good part of which is related to their own children's leisure activities. There are no longer differences in the total number of women and men who participate in voluntary work, but of those who participate in it men tend to spend more time on it than women. Of people who spent more than 10 hours a month on voluntary work, 19 per cent were men and 17 per cent were women in 2017. (Fladmoe et.al. 2018).

⁷ Types of Volunteer work used by Fladmoe et.al.: a) Sports and sports, b) Charities, local groups and the local community, c) Hobbies, leisure, outdoor activities and social associations, d) Arts and culture, corps and choir, e) Housing associations and housing associations, f) g) Education, training and research, h) Religion and outlook on life, including the Church of Norway, i) Trade, industry and trade unions, j) Health, care and rescue work, k) Social services and substance abuse care, l) International exchange, emergency aid, assistance and human rights work, m) Nature- , environmental and animal protection, n) Political parties, o) Rights, support and abstinence work and p) Other areas

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

Norwegian workplaces can facilitate and support male carers in a number of ways. Firstly, employees need to be able to take time off from work, to care for children, frail elderly, their partners or even themselves. We will in the following account for the most common, non-mandatory work-life balance measures for companies/employers in Norway.

- > **Give salary during fathers leave after birth:** In line with collective agreements, most companies offer fathers 14 days of paid leave after birth. At the same time, pay is not mandatory by law, during these 14 days of leave (Working Environment Act, 2005).
- > **Different incentives for men to use the parental leave.** Some companies provide incentives to encourage fathers to use the whole (state) paternity leave of 15 weeks or to also uptake some of the 16 weeks of shared parental leave. Corporate members of the trade union Finans Norge (eng: Finance Norway), raise the wage of male employees who take up 5 months or more, of parental leave. A small company in western Norway encourage their male employees who take up more than the assigned paternity leave, by paying for 1 extra week of leave.
- > **Top of the state-limit in pay** - the government offers paid parental leave for fathers, at least 15 weeks per year in 2019, but only up to a certain pay level (around EUR 60 000). Some companies offer to cover the gap between the governmental pay, and the actual salary of the father. This can also be considered an equality-measure, as men, statistically, earn more than their female partners, causing many women to take up more of the parental leave than their male partners, to avoid losing money.
- > **Pay 100 % salary for paternity leave.** To lengthen the parental leave a much used option for couples is to stretch the total leave period with 80 percent coverage. The length of the paternity leave is then 19 weeks with 80 percent salary. Some companies top of this pay to 100 %.
- > **Paid leave of absence:** for attending meetings in schools, day care or other institutions on behalf of your child is not a mandatory measure for

employers but is still quite common (Altinn, 2018). An example is paid leave to attend the child's first days in kindergarten or school.

- > **Flex time:** allows employees to have flexible work hours, and match their work hours with family and care obligations.
- > **Spatial flexibility:** in line with the ever-evolving technology, workers are sometimes offered to work in remote locations, to attend meetings by using Skype, Microsoft Teams or other technical solutions. This allows employers with care obligations to combine work and care for sick children or frail elderlys, and to save time by not commuting back and forth to work.
- > **Schedule norms/rules:** Some companies have strict policies or a culture for scheduling inhouse meetings. Assuring that no meetings are scheduled before or after a specifically defined "core office hour", thus making it possible for employees with care responsibilities to plan their work in line with their family needs. A usual "core" timeframe for meetings can for example be between the hours of 09-15.
- > **Keeping employers on parental/sick leave up to date/informed/involved:** Keeping employers on leave up to date on scheduled salary negotiations, important seminars and social gatherings in the workplace is an active way of making employees feel included, as opposed to feeling "punished" for engaging in care activities over time.
- > **Hiring a substitute for employees on parental leave** – Hiring a substitute to do the work of the employee on leave, is not only a measure that will "get work done". It also sends a signal to the employee that his work will not "pile up" while he is away, nor will it be left to his co-workers to fulfil. This is especially of essence in Norway, where the parental leave is divided in three parts, 15 weeks for the mother, 15 weeks for the other parent, and 15 weeks to be decided by each family. Knowing that the work will get done, and that your co-workers will not suffer in your absence, will quite possibly be of importance with regard to taking up more of the parental leave than the designated 15 weeks.
- > **Reducing workload for employees with reduced work-hours.** An often reported consequence of reduced work-hours is less time to fulfil the same amount of work, and for less pay. Some employers are vigilant to this pitfall, and makes sure that the workload is reduced accordingly, when employees reduce their working hours.
- > **Adjusting shift-hours** to fit with the opening hours of kindergartens and schools, so that fathers can participate in the family life before/after work.
- > **Avoiding the notion of "key personnel"** by enabling more people to carry out the tasks that are critical to the operations of the company. This can make the organizations less vulnerable to absenteeism, and make it easier for employees to be away from work, for example, if family obligations should require it.

- > **Making work life balance an integral part of the annual appraisal conversation**
- > **Policy of “preferred shifts”.** The employees are given more say in the shifts assigned to them, hereby making it easier to have a good work/life balance.
- > **6-hour work day.** Reducing work hours in physically challenging professions, like working in factories. In the dairy factory Tine in Heimdal (Norway), this measure resulted in a reduction in sick leave, as well as increase in productivity. At the same time, it allowed workers to be more present with their families, as well as having a more healthy sleeping rhythm, since the shifts were shorter and were moved to day and evening (Olberg, 2008).

Except from these rather concrete measures, we also would like to underline the importance of the general work culture in each workplace, with respect to men and care responsibilities. Men working in traditionally male dominated workplaces often meet expectations of great work effort and continuous availability, as well as negative attitudes towards taking (long) leaves to take care of children. This is also the case in Norway. Some men report that their employer have offered to “buy” them out of their care obligations, like paternity leave and sick days with children, leaving the care work to their (often female) partners. This is worrying for several reasons.

Some studies show that the cultural environment in workplaces sometimes favour female employees in caring roles, making it hard for male employees to display a caring form of masculinity at work (Nordberg, 2019). The Norwegian report «Bærekraftige familier – Likestilte livslop» also shows that some work places foster a “Hero Culture” (nor: heltekultur), where constant availability is rewarded, and that an important measure for development is to “take down” these heroes in the work place, and create a culture where balance between work and life is encouraged by both the management and other workers (Rasmussen, Klethagen & Svare, 2010).

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2.

**BEST PRACTICES IN NORWEGIAN
COMPANIES**

2.1. Introduction

2.1.1. Welfare regime and context for gender egalitarian work life balance in Norway

The Norwegian welfare state, both federal and local, has the primary responsibility for the welfare of its citizens. This includes the right to receive social security, universal health care and education systems. The Norwegian welfare state is mainly financed by taxes and duties paid by its inhabitants and is based on a high employment rate amongst all population groups able to work. But, as mentioned in the previous country context report of Norway, the gender gap in employment is considerable, especially for women and men with children. For instance, in 2017 the average employment rate of fathers aged 25-49 with youngest child 6-12 years is 90 percent. The employment rate of mothers in same category is 81 percent.

The Norwegian labour market is quite divided by demographic factors like gender, education, age and ethnicity, with women being more likely to work in the public sector, and men in the private sector. There exists a substantial gender divide in care professions like nursing, teaching and care for frail and sick elderly patients.

Common measures for achieving Work life balance (WLB) in Norway consists of a combination of obligatory state funded and subsidized programmes like parental leave, sick days with children, as well as unpaid parental leave and non-statutory incentives that usually varies between workplaces. Affordable childcare (kindergarten and after school programmes for children up until 4th grade) is also a prioritized measure, and most children start attending state funded kindergartens or in their second year of life, with a relatively low cost for parents (the pay is also regulated to accommodate low income families).

The Norwegian MiC team has conducted interviews with stakeholders like The Ministry of Foreign Relations and the Norwegian Seamen's Directorate as well as a large trade union and asked about the WLB situation for men and women, barriers, and some possible drivers of change, and has gotten the following answers:

- > Men's situation when it comes to paternity leave is not equal to women's, as state funded paternity leave is only feasible when the mother (or co-parent) is in "activity" outside the home (meaning work, studies etc). This is not true for the state funded maternity leave.
- > Fathers' leave the first 14 days after birth is a right, but not necessarily paid, especially in small sized companies with weak bonds to trade unions and collective agreements. (This right to leave at birth is additional to men's right to parental leave and the non-transferable paternity leave.)
- > Men's actual take-up of paternity leave each year always follows the number of available non-transferable paternity leave, a number that has been subjected to a political debate for many years, thus changing after every election of government. From the onset the non-transferable paternity leave has increased, though currently political parties in parliament now are divided, not in the length of the paternity leave, but to have it or not.
- > Most medium sized and large companies have policies to ensure gender equality seen from a perspective of women. Perspectives on the roles of men in the policies is missing.

2.1.2. Methodological remarks

The MiC project is based on a qualitative method, using the technique of personal, semi-structured topic-based interviews. The data material in this project therefore consists of interviews conducted with male employees within three large companies, as well as some of their partners. This methodological strategy was considered appropriate because we were looking to gain insight in the thoughts and experiences of the male employees themselves, about the WLB situation in their workplace.

In recruiting the three companies, we established some inclusion criteria. With regard to one of our objects in question, to obtain information about good practices, we were targeting companies with a good "reputation" on subjects like equality in the company, especially with regards to non-mandatory measures and incentives to improve WLB in the workplace. We were initially open to recruit both small, medium, and large sized companies, but found it challenging to identify small and medium sized companies with an active WLB focus and goals to improve the WLB situation also for male workers.

We also opted to recruit companies with a fairly high percentage of male workers, as one of the objectives in our project was to interview men who actually used WLB measures. A high number of male workers was also considered favourable when analysing possible gender dynamics and norms often related to masculine environments.

Prior to the selection of companies, we used our network, a national trade union in the finance sector, as well associated organisations in MIC-project

(#SheGotThis, The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud and Likestill Arbeidsliv) in our research for suitable companies to recruit.

We studied the three following (anonymized) organisations:

1. EnergyCo – is a large energy and chemical company with its main production in Norway. 30 percent of the employees are women and 70 percent are men.
2. FinanceCo – Is one of the bigger bank and insurance companies in Norway with its main office in Oslo. Half of its employees are men and half are women.
3. LifestyleCo– is an international company and a big employer in Norway. This company produces and sells furniture, clothing, and consumer products. We recruited informants from the Norwegian head office with about 100 employees (40 percent men).

We initially conducted interviews with five experts from the three selected companies. The experts within each company also functioned as “door openers”, and facilitators for us, and helped us to make contact with the male employees. They send out an email to all employees with information on the project, what it would mean for them to participate as informants in Men in Care, and how to come into contact with us. Luckily, we had conducted all interviews with male employees before the Covid 19 situation hit Norway. In the three companies, we interviewed a total of 21 male employees.

Our informants can be described as men between the age of 33-64, with a high education level, with steady and full-time employment, some also in management positions within their company. All of the male interviewees had majority ethnic background, although some had migrated from other western countries. With regards to their family situation, most men had small children, while some also had sick parents, children with disabilities or health problems themselves. 20 of the employees was in relationships with a woman, some were also divorced, and in their second marriage. One of the employees was in a relationship with a man.

We found our group of informants to be diverse, both in their care situation and with respect to their use (and need!) of WLB measures (see profiles in tables 6, 7 & 8).

	AGE	CHILDREN & AGE	FAMILY SITUATION	CARE OF OTHER	OCCUPATION	MOST IMPORTANT WLB MEASURE	USE OF PARENTAL LEAVE	SELF-REPORTED SHARE OF HOUSE & CARE
6	39	9, 12	with partner	no	Section manager	Flexible work hours, home office	Full fathers leave	
5	51	8, 9, 11	with partner	child with special needs	Section manager	Flexible start/end of the workday	Full fathers leave + 18 months unpaid leave	partner does more
4	39	4	with partner	relative with special needs	Designer	Flexible start/end of the workday	Full fathers leave	50-50
50	45	2	with partner	sick father	Section director	Flexible work hours, home office, telework to reduce travel	6 months	
46	41	5	with partner	no	Section manager	Flexible work hours, compressed work hours, telework to reduce travel	6 months	40-60

Table 1. Profile of men interviewed, by ID: *LifestyleCo*.

	AGE	CHILDREN & AGE	FAMILY SITUATION	CARE OF OTHER	OCCUPATION	MOST IMPORTANT WLB MEASURE	USE OF PARENTAL LEAVE	SELF-REPORTED SHARE OF HOUSE & CARE WORK
7	42	2, 6 & 7	with partner	no	Support manager in investment banking	Flexible work hours, home office	Full fathers leave	40-60
8	37	1, 4	with partner	no	Trader in investment banking	Compressed workday, flexible start/end of workday	Full fathers leave	
54	40	4	with partner	no	Senior adviser in human tech	Flexible work hours, use of inhouse coach	Full fathers leave	50-50
52	42	3, 5	with partner	no	Senior adviser in sales	Flexible work hours, home office some mornings	Full fathers leave	50-50
53	33	6 months	with partner	no	System developer	Telework to reduce travel	Full fathers leave planned	
63	42	3, 8, 9	with partner	sick father	Leader in communication	Flexible work hours	Full fathers leave	50-50
15	45	2 & 4	with partner	no	Leader in investment banking	Leave of absence	5 months	

Table 2. Profile of men interviewed, by ID: *FinanceCo*.

	AGE	CHILDREN & AGE	FAMILY SITUATION	CARE OF OTHER	OCCUPATION	MOST IMPORTANT WLB MEASURE	USE OF PARENTAL LEAVE	SELF-REPORTED SHARE OF HOUSE & CARE WORK
12	42	2 & 4	with partner	no	Leading engineer	Flexible work hours, home office	Full fathers leave	50-50
11	48	10, 14, 16	with partner	no	Leading engineer	Flexible work hours, home office	Full fathers leave	50-50
10	64	25, 26, 28	with Partner	when his partner was sick	Engineer, task manager	Reduced working hours, Flexible work hours, telework to reduce travel		
55 /56	41	6, 8	with partner	sick partner	Specialist engineer	Flexible work hours, telework, off work every other Friday	Full fathers leave	he does more
9	47	11, 13, 13, 15	with partner	child with special needs	Project engineer	Flexible work hours, home office, telework	Full fathers leave	
59	35	6 month 2 & 4	with partner	no	Specialist engineer	Reduced working hours to 90%	Full fathers leave	50-50
57	49	8, 10	with partner	no	Engineer	Flexible work hours, home office, telework	Not in Norway at the time	
58	52	18	with partner	no	Specialist engineer	Flexible work hours, telework to reduce travel	Full fathers leave	50-50
62	48	5,7 & 11	with partner	no	Specialist engineer	Flexible work hours	Full fathers leave	50-50

Table 3. Profile of men interviewed, by ID: *EnergyCo*.

When interviewing the male employees, they were also requested to ask their partners to participate in the project. 8 partners were interviewed, the lower number of partner interviews was partly due to the outbreak of Covid 19 pandemic, but also because some of the female partners did not find time or interest to partake in the study. All of the interviews with experts, and most of the interviews with men, were done face to face in their workplace, except for 6 done

by video conference. This was because these 6 men were stationed in other parts of the country. Most of the partner interviews were done by video conference, because of the Covid 19 situation.

Since the vast majority of the male informants were interviewed just before the corona-lockdown, we contacted everyone for two follow-up questions; (1) How has the corona situation affected how you balance work and your care responsibilities? (2) The distribution of care work between you and your partner after March 12 is: Unchanged, My partner takes a bigger share / I take a bigger share. We received responses from 15 of the 21 male employees and 4 of their partners.

All interviewees were informed, prior to the interview, about the object of the study and signed a written consent form. We ensured confidentiality, and anonymization of all data gathered in this study. We conducted the interviews using the pre-established interview script (translated to Norwegian), recording all the interviews for later transcription and analysis. Most interviews were 60-90 minutes long. Field work was initiated in January 2020, and the last interviews with partners were finished in August 2020.

2.2. Company summaries

Table 9 summarises our main data on the three companies analysed. To avoid disclosing the identities of the companies the names, number of employees have been changed. For the same reason we have rounded the percentages of women and men in the companies.

The companies in this study were all selected because of an outspoken focus on women in management, gender equality, diversity or WLB. All of the companies have measures specific for their company context, to promote the welfare of their employees.

	LifestyleCo	FinanceCo	EnergyCo
NUMBER OF STAFF CA	100 ¹	3000	3500
WOMEN - MEN	60 – 40	50 – 50	30 – 70
LEADING POSITIONS WOMEN- MEN			
LEVEL 1 / CEO	100 – 0	100 – 0	0 – 100
LEVEL 2	40 – 60	50 – 50	30 – 70
LEVEL 3	50 – 50	40 – 60	50 – 50
COMPANY BOARD	20 – 80	40 – 60	40 – 60
PART TIME WORK 1-35 HOURS %	0,03 % ²	6 %	3 %
% WOMEN	0,5 %	9 %	7 %
% MEN	0 %	4 %	1 %

Table 4. Companies' summary. Notes: ¹The national headquarters of LifestyleCo was part of the study and is referred to in the statistics. ²Some sections of the headquarters might have worked reduced hours for a shorter period of time without being part of this statistics.

Company 1: EnergyCo

EnergyCo is a large energy and chemical company with its main production in Norway. The company has activity in other countries, and they are a major supplier in their field. They are a large employer and recruiter in professions like engineering. When the recession hit Norway in 2008, they were strongly affected by the international crisis, and had to dismiss thousands of employees, most of them men. The gender distribution is now 70 percent men, and 30 percent women, with a more equal gender distribution among the lower leading positions. Only 3 percent of employees are employed part-time, but this goes for 7 percent of women employees.

Company 2: FinanceCo

FinanceCo is one of the bigger bank and insurance companies in Norway. FinanceCo offers a full range of financial and insurance services, including loans, savings, advisory services and pension products for retail and corporate customers. Half of its employees are men and half are women. The gender distribution in the middle and lower levels of management is skewed, with approximately 60 percent male managers. 6 percent of the total staff have part time contracts, many of which are women. 9 percent of women employees have part time contracts.

The company is outspoken about inclusion, equality and diversity, and considers these topics as one of their responsibilities in the community in which they are present.

Company 3: LifestyleCo

LifestyleCo– is an international company with a comparable number of employees in Norway as FinanceCo and EnergyCo. This company produces and sells furniture, clothing and consumer products. We recruited informants from the Norwegian head office with about 100 employees (40 percent men). Head office works with areas like HR, office and service functions, recruitment, salaries and accounting. Men are more present in the higher leading positions, and women in middle and lower management, albeit the Norwegian CEO is a woman.

Diversity, inclusion, and equality are considered key values in this company. Just before taking part of the study the head office had undergone an organisational

process, with no fixed office spaces and increased opportunity for flexible working hours and telework.

2.3. Comparative analysis I: 3-phase-model

2.3.1. EnergyCo: phase 2 (Medium stage)

EnergyCo has a high share of male employees men, and the average age of employees is high. They have long term strategies to increase the numbers of young women in their workforce, like economic support to STEM-education, to recruit more women. To support diversity and inclusion, they have created (voluntary) social support groups and networks within the company for women, LHBTQI-people and a forum for employees with disabilities.

Even though the company is outspoken on values like diversity, equality and inclusion, both the expert we interviewed, and our male informants spoke of a “macho culture” within the organization, especially amongst the older employees: “Its not my employer’s fault that I have a house that need redecorating, said one of the informants about a particular stressful period of his life. He also works from 07-17 every day, as well as some weekends and evenings. His work schedule was, according to himself, only possible because of his wife “sacrificing” her own career as a teacher.

Many departments of EnergyCo have an more even share of male employees than the average 30/70 in the organization as a total, and this was noted by many of the informants.

Another challenge related to managing WLB is the company’s presence all other countries, meaning that different time-zones must be considered when scheduling meetings. This affects employees because meetings sometimes need to be held (digitally) very early in the morning, or late at night. Some informants did in fact point to this as practical, as they could wake up early, maybe 5-6 o’clock, meet with colleagues on their computer from home, and then participate in the morning routines with their family, and come into the office a bit later than other colleagues.

Many of the informants stress the habit and need of meetings and interaction with other actors who reside in other parts of the country or in Europe. This especially applies to situations where collaboration with other departments in the

organization or colleagues at other locations is needed, like follow-up of partners, contract writing with suppliers, construction, securing of installations. A significant proportion of the collaboration has shifted from physical meetings that require travel to video meetings and the use of technical solutions. The extent to which further collaboration should be transferred to video meetings and correspondingly to reduce travel activity was described by the informants as an ongoing discussion.

Even though parts of this large organisation is quite advanced with regards to WLB, we still note that the possibility to use WLB measures like uptake of the fathers quota is limited in certain areas of the company. For instance platform workers do not always take their leave in one "chunk", but spread it out over a larger period of time, mostly between rotating shifts on the platform. As one informant put it: "I did take out parental leave with all of my children, but my wife had to take extra leave as I had to work in the States during my leave". His partner on the other hand, confirms that his job has some times been an obstacle for er own professional progression: "I have a job where there are actually opportunities to travel a lot, and selfishly I would like to do it more, but have been given a number of such assignments I have also had to say no to. And it has been a bit difficult, because I wanted to do those assignments".

To conclude, EnergyCo has a male dominated culture and macho environments in parts of the organization, as well as a limited focus on equality from a male perspective on WLB. This leaves this company with some challenges and potential improvement points to be able to advance into a more WLB-friendly company for male carers.

2.3.2. LifestyleCo: phase 2 (Medium stage)

Our field work was done in the Head Office, with 100 employees, most of them with higher education, and with office work being the common work form. The rest of the workers in the company has rotating shifts in the stores, storage, transport and logistics, but these perspectives were not included in this study.

LifestyleCo consider itself strongly driven by values, especially in terms of gender equality, diversity, religious freedom, LHBQTQI-friendliness and sustainability. Explaining their situation, choices etc. in their everyday work life the interviewees actively and casually quoted sentences from the company values. However, gender equality was mostly perceived as something that had to do with women, thus would the company focus their work towards gender equality on hiring women in leading positions and evening out a skewed gender distribution in high level professions and manager teams dominated by men. Some parts of the organization with a majority of women were thus not considered to have an unequal gender distribution, and therefore they did not focus on increasing the representation of male workers in that part of the organization. The same could be said about male dominated branches with so-called "unskilled" professions, for example storage work. It should be noted that the experts, after being made

aware of this paradox, did in fact point out that they deemed this inconsistency in equality work as problematic, and that they would put more focus on these issues in the future.

The company promotes WLB measures like parental leave and unpaid leave to take care of children, also for male workers. Interviewees report that most men at the head office take up no more than the father's quota, although three of the male interviewees did report that they took up significantly longer leave. One male employee took out a total of 18 months of leave, and when asked about the process with his employer requesting such a long leave, he said: "to talk about leave with the leader and such, and to get it through, and to be able to talk about it openly to colleagues, as well as to come back again (from leave) in such a good way, it was done in an incredibly good way".

Work time-flexibility and telework is in principle limited (at least before the Covid-pandemic) to special occasions when workers are in need of flexible hours (like waiting for a plumber at home or taking sick leave with children), and most of the work gets done in the office. The Covid-19 pandemic has made changes to the flexibility in the company, and most of the office work now gets done at home.

One of the experts in LifestyleCo advocates for open dialog in the organization for all employees WLB. All employees must be seen as 24-hour people.

"[...] And we must have dialogue and openness, which makes it possible to talk about WLB. I am always stating that all employees are 24-hour people, and I cheer every time I hear that someone is pregnant. It is the individual's responsibility to bring it up, and to self-manage. This is something we keep in mind in recruitment. The person must have values that correspond to LifestyleCo. If one wants to work 24 hours a day, and does not have a collectivistic mindset, it is OK. There's not necessarily something wrong with that, but then we are not the right place to work."

Though open dialog is about WLB and limitations against overwork is a value, male interviewees report that their or other men's care commitments or family life most often was not talked about in their everyday work life. This could sometimes result in some expectations towards the men in the company to work at "odd" hours, in the evening or in vacations. One of the partners of an informant said specifically that his partners "company should have fewer long meetings" and that the male employee sometimes was "called to meetings at five o'clock, which makes it a necessary for us to organize extra so that we can pick up in the kindergarten, and that it would have been best if it could have been avoided".

Albeit, there is consensus that there is a supportive culture and few elbows in the company.

2.3.3. FinanceCo: phase 2 (medium stage)

FinanceCo is known to make significance for gender parity in management as part of its social responsibility and overall business plan, to deliver banking and insurance products for both women and men in society and promote gender justice. Although FinanceCo has improved the gender balance in management and has just as many men and women employed, this is not the case within the whole organization. Many departments have a skewed gender distribution, departments such as HR, private banking and insurance have a low proportion of men, while departments that work with the financial markets have a low proportion of women.

FinanceCo welfare measures and WLB measures are comprehensive and universal, and many of these apply to, or are adapted for employees in offices abroad, where such measures do not exist. All employees are offered 20 weeks of paid parental leave, also employees in offices abroad, and that is regardless of whether you have children yourself or through adoption. Information and knowledge of these measures online and the HR department is also accessible.

There is an awareness of the diversity and wellbeing for all employees regardless of ethnicity and sexual orientation. There has been an ongoing discussion and criticism of the demand for continuous accessibility in the finance sector, especially trading, which excludes women and is associated with hegemonic masculine norms. Beyond this discussion, masculinity and men are not addressed in welfare and WLB policies. Like Norwegian work life as such fathers in FinanceCo follow the norm and use the 15 weeks parental leave and the mother picks up the remaining leave days, possibly with some exceptions of certain employees employed in trading and finance, and employees abroad, shortening and not using the leave.

A universal thinking about WLB that includes male employees appears to be unevenly implemented in the organisation. The overall picture from the study is that many of the informants tell of good and supportive dialogues with their closest leader, and find good adaptations, but the needs and dilemmas is not something that is shared with colleagues but is individual and kept to themselves.

“In one department, it's not a problem that you come a little later one morning because of an event, for instance that the kid has injured itself or something like that. So, there is a lot of understanding in some departments, but in other departments it may be different because there are male leaders who are 55 who have never been home with the children. But there are differences

here too, some have been at home with the children, while others have not and think that the wife is at home to take care of children and of everything else at home as well, and that the job of the man is to work and earn money, and they do not have the same understanding.” Expert

The biggest obstacle for men to use the WLB measures is a lack of cultural support, a consensus that it is okay to use the measures. Top management has not sent out a clear signal. Pioneers, men, and women exist, but role models in top management using WLB are in short supply.

2.3.4. Discussion of results, context & care in the organization

The three companies analysed are large companies that are leading in each of their sectors, finance, energy, and lifestyle/design. Adjectives as competitive, attractive places to work and well paid, can also be used.

The men interviewed worked in varied levels of the companies, mostly in office positions in middle management or specialist functions. Many worked in the areas of management, administration and leadership and had regular job schedules. Some of which demand increased presence in periods or project phases; product launch, advertising and sales, media watch, and construction; and a few worked in areas that needed a continued presence daily; for example to follow marked movements. Many have elaborate travel and meeting schedules, both nationally and internationally, for some many meetings are scheduled outside ordinary work hours because of international time differences or not to conflict with pre-scheduled company activities and meetings in ordinary work hours.

Structure / result

Firstly, let it be noted that the male interviewees gave multifaceted descriptions of adaptations to work and live. Most describe it as an ongoing and never-ending struggle, partly because of a vast number of tasks and responsibilities in the home sphere, with children to be delivered and collected from kindergarten, school, activities, birthday parties and so on, as well as a sometimes overwhelming feeling of responsibility for the workload in the professional sphere. Many informants gave reports of periods of overwork that was harmful for health or family life, in previous or current positions. Yet, a few reported that it was no great hardship for them to reconcile work and care commitments.

As mentioned, most of the interviewed male employees had small children, or had a special caring responsibility for a sick partner, parent or had serious health

issues (or combinations). An overall result from all three companies is the self-reports that almost all have 50-50 share care and household work, including repairs, maintenance etc. with partners. Though, this is self-reported and subjective, and their partners' accounts may differ.

All three companies have comprehensive programs for WLB that surpass what is laid down in legislation and collective bargaining. The male interviewees do not exhaust the provided measures, especially not the WLB measures that are intended to significantly reduce workload.

Most male interviewees (who were eligible) in the three companies used the whole non-transferable paternity leave, but just three of them took a longer leave, all of which was employed at the LifestyleCo head office. The most popular and appreciated WLB measure is flexible work hours. These were used by all, most often to come in later or/and leave earlier in the workday to follow to school/kindergarten or to collect in school/kindergarten and make dinner. Work from home part of the day or in evenings, night to catch up lost time, or added work hours was also a much-used measure. There were interviewees in all three companies who described periods of overwork and difficulties to set limits for work, and where this overwork had been harmful for their health or their family life. However, the way they described this overtime was somewhat different in the different organizations. In EnergyCo many adapted their workday and meetings to time zones in other countries. Some had to travel to follow up international projects (this option has of course changed a lot since the outbreak of the pandemic, forcing most informants to utilize technical solutions to talk to their international partners and colleagues). In LifestyleCo we noted that the technical solutions were already a common measure in most meetings. This was a valued aspect of the company culture for many informants, as it allowed them to work from home even pre corona. It could however have a down side, as employees staying at home with sick children would have "no excuse" to not participate in meetings, even though sick leave is expected to be a valid reason of leave.

Gendered subculture

The work environment in EnergyCo was described in adjectives of hardiness and independence and this made it more difficult to bring up personal struggles. In the FinanceCo and LifestyleCo we did not receive this kind of description, but we received a description of striving for excellence and to be dutiful and "good girls" (most often used to describe women). This corresponds well with other findings. In everyday conversations in the workplace, male colleagues seldom share experiences from their own private lives or challenges related to reconciling work and family. However, there were exceptions, LifestyleCo it seems that the omnipresence of corporate values and a dominance of female colleagues who share such stories gives a greater opening for the men in this context.

Many of the interviewees talked about, especially in FinanceCo and LifestyleCo, supportive and understating dialogues with their leaders about WLB-challenges, contrasting descriptions of a work environment dominated by masculine silence and achievement-oriented logic. And no one seems to think that the outtake of paternity leave (now 15 weeks) would have a harmful effect on their own or colleges work prospects.

Most men in LifestyleCo and FinanceCo have a dialog with their leaders about WLB-challenges. However, for the most part in the work environments few do so and nor do their male colleagues. FinanceCo and LifestyleCo are champions in their work to increase numbers of women in management, and children and family is openly discussed as an obstacle towards this goal. Women lose out or will not pay the price if they do not have the opportunity to be careers for children is the general sentiment, or if this burden is accommodated in the organizations. That this also applies to men with care commitments, and that men may also lose out, have not yet been included in the discussion, and men in top management have not yet set a clear signal for instance by taking a stand against their own overwork, or to take a paternity leave beyond the 15 week norm.

2.4. Comparative analysis II

2.4.1. Supportive factors enabling men's taking up of unpaid care tasks

Working structures (staff composition, time and spatial structures, work conduct etc.)

Staff composition with regards to gender varied across the companies participating in the study. The head office of LifestyleCo employed about 40 percent men, FinanceCo had an overall equal gender distribution with stereotypical male/female division in the type of work being performed by men and women, whereas EnergyCo employed about 70 percent men, with typical male dominated departments like logistics, industrial sectors, platform work, transport etc. All companies were value driven and promoted gender equality and inclusion. Female representation in managing roles is overall considered important for matters concerning equality. However, the notion of gender equality also in lower level parts of the organization, usually with a large dominance of male workers (like storage work, platform work etc), was not always in focus, thus making WLB-measures typically associated with care less attainable for male workers in male dominated areas of the company.

The most common work-life balance measures used, in addition to paternity leave, across all companies were related to more time flexibility and spatial flexibility. Flexible working hours ("flex time") and digital solutions that decrease the necessity of physical presence and travel were also reported as the most important WLB-measures for the male employees themselves. Other common flexibility measures were being able to work from home and keeping meetings in "core hours" (usually between 09:00 and 15:00). An interesting finding was that some workers that had more flexible work saw this as a sign of trust from their employer. Likewise, when one employee in EnergyCo reported that working from home was not an option given in his department, he felt that this had to do with a lack of trust from his manager. Sensitive information and security risk were a challenge presented by management against home office and telework. The employee felt that the actual reason was lack of trust in the employee, rather than security.

Another WLB measure that men often take up is “moving day” (paid leave when workers move into a new house). Unpaid leave for is more uncommon, both with regards to unpaid leave to take care of sick relatives, as well as reduced working hours or unpaid parental leave. Interviewees are very much aware many of the generous WLB they are entitled to laid down by own management, collective agreements and in national legislation. It is something that they are entitled to and do not originate from the good will of the manager or employer.

In all three companies it was commonly expected that fathers as well as mothers picking up and delivering in day care and taking a share in daily household chores. The basic level concept of WLB, like time flexibility and meetings within core hours of the day, is commonly adopted in most sectors in Norway and universally implemented for all employees. There are exceptions due to sector and type of work, albeit the norm is that meetings are not scheduled outside core hours, often between 9:00 and 15:00, and most mothers and fathers of children use core hours to “flex” to fetch and deliver to kindergarten/school.

Company cultures (also hegemonic mind-sets, social environment etc.)

Gendered expectations towards the use of WLB measures were present in all companies, especially related to the uptake of parental leave. Discussions related to company policies on equality, meaning the male perspective on care work, were mostly a “new” and “exciting” perspective for these companies, making men’s possibility to take up a caring role a mere positive “side effect” of the companies general work towards recruiting women by creating a more WLB friendly workplace for women.

In all companies, the general perception was that taking the “father quota” of parental leave was normative for male workers. This quota is designed to give a strong incentive for male workers and couples in general to use paternity leave by making the family lose these paid weeks if the father does not use them.

The male interviewees considering using WLB measures to partake in care work was observant and sensitive towards signals from leaders and colleagues’ use and attitudes toward WLB measures. Leaders who challenge traditional gender roles and encourage male care work, especially if those leaders were men, made it easier for our informants to picture themselves in caring roles.

Making family care and WLB a normal conversation topic in everyday settings also directed at and initiated by men lowers the bar for bringing up challenges, recent life changes, and the work-life balance in general for men. Some interviewees did not see the importance of WLB as a standardized item in the annual appraisal conversation, but rather emphasized the importance of having a leader that was easy to approach when challenges arose. For others, it was

important that management approached them with questions on WLB for example during the annual appraisal conversation.

Having a company culture based on humanitarian values made the interviewees feel safe and trusted enough to use the WLB measures the company provided. In practical terms, this meant being understanding when male employees had to arrive late or leave early, or had sudden changes in the time schedule to take care of children, being able to delegate tasks when employees are absent, not being punished career wise after a longer leave of absence, being encouraged to take care of personal needs, getting compensatory absence for overtime, and in general being able to have an open dialog around WLB measures. The idea of being “in it together” was prominent in the most advanced WLB company (LifestyleCo) and was less prevalent in departments with a strong competitive culture. Interviewees from companies with less competitive cultures also seemed to feel more trust and job security from their employer, making longer leaves of absence seem less risky.

Leadership: style/type of management, the role of managers

The organizational culture and behaviour of leaders and managers were often stressed as important by the interviewees. Managers and leaders are in a strong position to create a positive culture for male caring roles and the use of WLB measures without penalties. They can lead by example, by communicating personal use of WLB measures and the prioritization of family life. In general, leaders are in position to make adjustments to accommodate a better WLB situation, and are obligated to treat the information he/she retains from the workers with confidentiality.

However, upper management and leaders can be past the life phase of having young children, this can make it more difficult to show a caring role by example. Male workers still appreciated that management is conscious about their life at home, and their obligations to take care of children and that this is explicitly stated as acceptable or even positive. The interviewees also appreciated leaders that were able to see when they were overworked and stepped in and gave the situation attention. Whether this pressure comes from the competitive work culture or competitive work cultures attract people with competitive traits, leaders can still make an effort to have an open dialogue on workloads and risks of burnout. From the interviews, particularly vulnerable periods for men were when they had young children, serious health issues in close family, during a moving period, and during construction work in the home. The latter might be related to the division of maintenance tasks in the home, which is more often men’s responsibility (see context report on Norway).

Other relevant players and networks (gender equality representatives, working group on WLB, HR department, HR development group, D&I network etc.)

We stress the importance of easy and quick access to WLB information on company websites or employee web, as many informants had little knowledge about measures and possibilities for them in their own company. This especially goes for some informants from FinanceCo. HR personnel and gender equality experts in managing roles, and with actual “power” to assess company culture and implement measures is key in many organizations who would like to improve gender balance, WLB and promote caring masculinities. Most important seems the role of the gender equality experts when they are in close to the workers and the situation they are assessing. The experts in LifestyleCo worked close to everyone in Head Office, and therefore had a good overview of the situation and WLB challenges in this part of the organisation, while the rest of the company, with stores all over Norway, were more distant and not easy to keep up with.

Implementation of official regulations

Norwegian law states that paternity leave is a universal right for all male workers, and that this leave is non-transferable. The law also states that parents have the right to take out unpaid leave for one year directly after their parental leave, or reduce their working hours if needed, except in cases where this is of great inconvenience for the employer. The company will in this case be required to lead evidence to prove their situation and need to keep their employee at work.

Role models within companies

Most of our informants stressed the positive consequences male and female role models had for them as caring men. Male managers with children of their own were seen as more understanding, and when these managers themselves took out long leaves to do care work for their family, it was perceived as door openers also for our informants working on the lower levels of the organization. The same went for female leaders and role models, the male informants felt that a company that focused on female representation, supporting WLB measures and being family friendly for the women employed, also had some positive effects for themselves as fathers and caretakers, even though measures and company culture did not emphasize men in their communication.

“It’s a very good culture, the former leaders also cared about that, but with the current generation shift it might be getting even better because more of them are in the same situation and have an even larger focus on WLB. More key positions are taken by younger people, with more focus on it. We might even talk more about it during lunch now.” Male middle-management, leader, FinanceCo

Several of the informants were themselves in leadership positions and said that they wanted to lead by example for their employees. For example, go early to

pick up the child at school, avoid meetings outside of core time, avoid sending emails that require answers in the evenings.

Other factors

The Norwegian interviewees mostly stressed that it was the (ever changing) number of weeks in the fathers quota that was the common denominator when they decided how long their leave was to be, when their child was born/adopted. Some also explained that they would use some weeks of paid vacation to stretch their leave, especially in cases where they did not yet secure their child a spot in kindergarten, but it was mostly their partners who took unpaid leave in these cases, due to difference in salaries. Male workers taking unpaid leave was not very common in this study, mostly because families choose the parent with the highest income to work which most often are men.

2.4.2. Barriers against men's taking up of unpaid care tasks

Working structures (staff composition, time and spatial structures, work conduct etc.)

Although flexibility measures were prominent and highly appreciated in all companies it is not without costs. When you use flexible work hours, you often need to catch up lost work time working some weekdays evenings at the home office. Some workers had bad experiences originating from this arrangement, working into the evening and night with negative impact on their mental health, and their personal relationships. Two had experienced anxiety attacks as a result of overworking, while others mentioned sleeping badly, being irritable, unpleasant, or not mentally present at home. One male worker at FinanceCo who said he for a period of time "almost worked himself to death", had related to the in-house coach's use of the term "the limitless work market" to describe his situation. He directly related these experiences to his flexible working hours and spatial flexibility, saying he was not able to limit his own workload by saying "no" to tasks, and instead worked overtime and in the evenings. Several other workers also seemed to be taking this extra "third shift" in the evenings. As such, although flexibility can be a positive WLB measure, it also comes with the downside of invisible work. Leaders having to manage and evaluate workers on results only. Working out of office can also become a barrier to noticing overworked employees, establishing a good relationship to the workers, and bringing up WLB in everyday settings. Additionally, some workers felt that it was hard to catch up on evening meetings if they missed them, making it difficult to decline participation even when they had the option.

Flexible work hours were in all three companies part of a larger organizational setup, with open and free seating to save office space. There will inevitably be downsides or trade-offs to this organizational setup. Noise and disturbance can make it difficult to concentrate, and employees may miss having their own office space, and to organize a compressed workday can be more challenging.

All three companies had, as we understood, a matrix organisation. This meant that each employee reported to different leaders. Several of the male interviewees reported that none of their leaders had the overview of their entire workload, and this could easily mean that they overworked themselves, and required more self-organization.

Although most male interviewees denied that the common lack of a substitute or successor during longer leaves of absence, in particular the 15 weeks paternity leave, and reduced working hours were a problem or an obstacle for them to take up more leave or longer parental leave, some also pointed out that colleagues on long leave often resulted in a significant increase of workload for the remaining workers: "Right now, after becoming a leader, with one on sick-leave and another one on temporary leave, we've only been two out of four at work, I've worked a lot. This sometimes means working several hours extra in the evening. The guy on temporary leave just came back after five months without a substitute." (Male leader, FinanceCo). Consequently, workers might hesitate to take a leave of absence for care work out of a sense of obligation to the team or feelings of guilt, and ensuring that men on leave would not risk that their colleagues would increase their workload could be a supportive factor towards taking up more leave for men. In cases where the men did in fact experience support and that their employer relieved them from their workload when they were on parental leave (as some informants in LifestyleCo reported), they also described a high degree of trust and loyalty to their workplace.

Company cultures (also hegemonic mind-sets, social environment etc.)

We found that in general, WLB beyond the fathers quota less normative for men and can be harder to bring up to management or leaders. Some still feel that it is more expected and understandable when women prioritize family life than when men do so.

Men in competitive work environments put a lot of pressure on themselves. Making an effort to please and do one job in many areas of life to is often attributed to women and described as "good girl syndrome", but in the interviews men bring up this term to describe themselves and other male workers.

The use of flexible working hours and telework/home office requires significant self-management, and this can be challenging to set limits for when the work is to be done. Several of the employees across the three companies said that they

themselves want to regulate when they should work from home, and they did not want to have to ask this in advance. Some perceived the need to ask as a lack of trust, or the leader's need for control and micromanage. This contrasts with the dominant narrative of the informants that when they come to their leader with WLB-related challenges, they do in fact come up with good solutions.

These stories, about the leader's lack of trust on the one hand and the problem - solving leader on the other, are not necessarily incompatible. There may be talk of different informants.

Extensive use of WLB measures that require self-management probably requires a more active and open dialogue between leader and employee.

The employee has a need to be helpful to the employer, but also to develop his professional self, and not to be replaced or bypassed by a colleague. In such a context, one worker in EnergyCo noted that using substitutes can be perceived as a threat and have the potential to reduce feelings of job security. "[...] sharing knowledge can be difficult, because you feel like you lose some of your uniqueness and indispensability. So, it can be difficult to facilitate for others to take over your job when you're not here, because you feel like you can be replaced before you have to. It's probably unfounded, but there is a problem of insecurity there."

As such, companies that want to encourage the use of WLB measures for men need to establish cultures of trust, where employees are not afraid of being penalized or replaced by using the measures the company provides.

Gender culture/gendered substructures - e.g. expectations towards men and women etc.

Companies with a strong emphasis on work-life balance and gender equality might still not focus on men in particular. For example, an HR worker in LifestyleCo said: "We do not focus on men in particular, we have a lot in order, but we haven't focused on it... For example, I'm working on a pregnancy brochure right now, but just realized that it also should be directed at men after this became a focus. Consciousness is key." A more explicit focus on men as caretakers as well as women could make it easier for men to use WLB measures or bring up WLB related issues to their employer.

Several men spoke of experiences of periods of work that were so stressful that it affected their mental health and family life. One male worker in EnergyCo connected this to the "good girl syndrome" that is often talked about in Norwegian press about women trying to be perfect in all areas of life, and he felt that it was taboo for men to express the same thing. As this company was described as having more of a "macho culture", it can be harder for workers to bring up personal struggles, in the fear that it will be perceived as personal

weakness or failure. As one worker in the company put it: "I don't experience it as a masculinity culture where you can't say anything. Then maybe it has more to do with a masculine trait about me not wanting to be a bother".

One of the male informants in a management position, said that prioritizing children and family was one of his key values and central part of his everyday life, e.g. to deliver children in the kindergarten a few days a week. He was not prepared to sacrifice for his career. However, at a meeting after the interview where WLB was a topic, he had trouble with being open to the group of employees about the significance of a WLB balance for men and himself. This can be an example of a lack of speak up culture, where especially men feel uneasy to be open and private in front of other men about own care arrangement and one's wellbeing.

Promoting a speak up culture, openness towards discussing care arrangement and one's wellbeing can be seen as an important context for men engagement in care. As the role of the manager here is important and much is based on their attitudes, the access to some solutions/measures may be still person-dependent.

Leadership: style/type of management, the role of managers

Most informants had positive experiences with leaders when they were in vulnerable periods, but there were exceptions. Some of the things that were mentioned as barriers to their WLB were leaders that did not see that they were overworked and communicated very high expectations. This could be particularly challenging in combination with a lack of open WLB dialogue between leaders and employees. The male worker below did not think he was the only reason it was hard to bring up WLB issues:

"I could tell my former leader anything, unrestricted, and that was OK. But the one I have now[...] there's a job focus all the time. It's probably possible to talk to her about these things as well, but I don't get the feeling she would say "go take care of your family, and we'll finish the rest", although it would probably be fine".

As such, leaders and management that normalize WLB issues and bring up the topic regularly to their employees can make a big difference to the cultural environment in the company. In the same vein, having an open dialogue about expectations and helping employees set limits for sufficient work can help take this matter further.

Role models within companies

Most of the male informants stressed that role models could easily "ruin" the culture for a healthy WLB, by for example appearing as "heroes" who sacrificed everything for their job, or on the opposite, improve the WLB culture for the

whole team, by actively and openly talking about family obligations, and prioritizing family when needed.

Implementation of official regulations

Some of the more attractive positions on the market, in terms of salary and status, get payment both in form of a salary and bonus. These bonuses can be based on individual results, result of the department or subdepartment, and your total presence the last year in the company. For the employees in the FinanceCo, this bonus could be up to 50 percent of their total income. If the employees take a longer period of absence, for example for paternity leave, they will not get the extra bonus, making it a monetary incentive to forgo paternity leave or family leave. The Gender Equality Act paragraph 3 (Likestillingsloven § 3) prohibits direct and indirect discrimination based on gender, which could include monetary punishments for using one's legal right to paternity leave. The Norwegian Commission for Equality and Discrimination (Likestillings- og diskrimineringsombudet) has however judged in previous cases that the bonus arrangement is exempt from this law when it is an extra monetary incentive, above salaries, to achieve good results and for key personnel to be present in the company. Although this exemption also includes female workers' bonuses, more men are in positions with bonus arrangements, making it a barrier for men in particular to take family leave. Some of the interviewees stated that they would prefer a higher fixed salary to bonus. They felt that the job performance in their departments was difficult to put into a bonus arrangement.

Reducing one's own working hours was seen by the majority of employees as undesirable for handling one's own or the family's WLB, and the one employee who had used this measure did not think it had worked optimally, and emphasized that he had not had his workload reduced correspondingly. He and his wife had reduced their positions to 90 percent due to small children that needed extra care. His experience was that he just ended up with less time to do the same amount of work, with less pay. Instead, they were considering that he would go up to 100 percent again, and she would go down to 80 percent work time.

Some employees, however, describe situations where they had experienced psychological, physical or occupational burnout, due to overtime and excessive workload, and was forced to report themselves sick, either part time or full time. One of the employees said that he still had the same workload, when he was on partial sick leave due to overworking. It's worth noting that by graded sick-leave, the state compensates the salary for the hours of the week that the person is not working up to about € 55,000 a year (600,000 NOK). Some employees explained that men for this reason would rather take out a certain percentage sick-leave rather than reducing working hours. Another explanation may be that some male employees do not limit their workload until they become ill and therefore forced to do so.

Other factors

Several of the men mentioned factors leading to a very stressful period for them at work e.g., moving, construction work, a sick parent, etc. Some of the men also mentioned that a particularly stressful period in life was when their partner had a stressful period (e.g., problematic pregnancy, changing jobs, etc.). As such, it is important for managers to be flexible in terms of what WLB measures might be needed over time for employees.

2.5. Care during the COVID-19 pandemic

The Norwegian Government made an early effort to suppress the spread of covid-19 on March 12th, two weeks after the first documented case of the virus in Norway and with approx. 600 cases nationwide. The Government closed non-critical businesses and institutions where people regularly come in contact with each other and recommended working from home for everyone else. This also meant closing kindergartens and schools, and many people had full time childcare at home during working hours. To ease the situation, the sick-days for children a parent can take were doubled (normally 10 days) and the employer only had to pay for the three first days rather than the usual 10 days.

The companies did have hardware and software in place before the crisis, at least to the degree that little was needed to get it in place, also for most of the more advanced functional functions and systems, especially in EnergyCo and FinanceCo. Therefore, in a relatively short amount of time, the employees were able to do remote work from their home office. The same applies to Norwegian working life in general, with no reduction in productivity. We also expect that remote work and telework will be increased on a permanent basis.

Overall, it seems as though fathers took up more care work at home during these months of shut down. The change was particularly noticeable in the more masculinized company (EnergyCo). This seems to be due to a larger gender gap in care work before covid-19. For example, one employee said he had increased the amount of the care work he did at home from 10 percent to 30 percent compared to his wife. This change could be situational in which the extra demands of childcare could only be solved by a more equal distribution of chores. The change could also be caused by structural factors, meaning that this company could have been further behind on WLB measures before covid-19 and had to implement more solutions to meet the needs of the organization. The male workers seemed divided on how working from home had impacted them. Some felt that they had become closer to their children or learned more about their life, whereas others felt the work had gotten in the way of spending "quality time" with their children.

During the shutdown, some employers in Norway encouraged workers with children to divide the work and care 50/50 with their partner, which meant a 50 percent reduction in working hours, whereas others did not. The different experiences the fathers reported could be due to different expectations from employers that facilitated or limited family time. Several people mentioned that the boundaries between work and leisure became blurry. They lacked concentration and found the work more demanding. It is likely that this was more the case for workers where work expectations, from themselves or the employer, were not reduced. Female partners had positive experiences of the family being together during the day, like more flexibility, partner being more home, and less stressful mornings. In summary, both male workers and their partners experienced the added flexibility and working from home as positive, but the challenges of separating work and family life were exaggerated during this time, making the situation very demanding for those with high workloads.

2.6. Good practices

WLB measures related to making time and space more flexible were the most appreciated and useful for employees. Specifically, male workers appreciated opportunities to use **flexible working hours, working from home, telework to reduce travel, and compressed workdays** to balance their work and family life. Many couples had an ideal goal of 50/50 distribution of delivering and picking up the children, which meant coming in to work late or leaving early. It should be noted that some employees had at times felt overwhelmed from not having clear boundaries for their work, which is a risk when working hours are not clear and management have less insight into workers' workday (i.e., when they work from home). As such, these measures might work best when leaders and management can set clear boundaries and expectations for employees to follow.

In a similar vein, reduced working hours was a lot less used as a WLB measure, and the workers that had tried it were not completely satisfied due to still having high workloads. A good practice can be to tell employees of **alternatives to reduced working hours** when leaders and management cannot reduce their tasks or expect lower quality in their work. This is relevant for employees in key positions and employees with especially independent roles within the company.

Aside from specific WLB measures, male workers that were the most satisfied with the company's efforts to support WLB measures spoke of an **"open culture" in which WLB was frequently mentioned** and they were met with support and understanding for home-related issues. The workers seemed to take pride in the company's focus on gender equality, for example by hiring **HR positions for diversity**, and being a leader in the business on equality and inclusion. As such, even focusing on gender equality for women, for example by hiring more women in top positions, seemed to signal an acceptance for male care work. However, some employees also missed a more **explicit focus on masculinities and men's part in equality efforts and explicit inclusion of men in the concepts of care**, which was not prominent in any of the companies.

A strong emphasis was placed on **management's role as role models** for WLB measures for men (and women) in the company. Simple actions such as **leaving early** to pick up children from daycare, **setting off time in the work calendar** for care work, or on occasion **bringing the children to work** were noticed and appreciated by employees. Leaders and management also have a lot of influence

on company culture and creating a culture for the “open” dialogues presented above. Some of the interviewed leaders also mentioned being conscious of the influence their actions had on other men in the department. A new, younger management with younger children in one department facilitated the use of WLB measures. Also female leaders that prioritized children were seen as impactful. The strong impact of these behaviours are both due to employees seeing family priorities as acceptable, but also as not being penalized.

Male workers saw it as the **norm to use the non-transferable father's quota**. How long this quota is has varied with every political shift in Government. As such, how long the quota is defined in legal terms seems to have the strongest influence on men's decision of how much parental leave to take. Thus, the father's quota has proven to be an effective means to advance men in care.

2.7. Recommendations and ideas for action in WS3

2.7.1. Recommendations for improvement of existing measures

- > Companies should integrate a WLB perspective on their policies, especially by training managers and lower level leaders in their potential as role models, their possibility to contribute to model learning and the effect of a positive WLB environment for the company and their employees.
- > Companies should always have at least one question about their employees WLB-situation in the annual appraisal conversation, preferably formulated as an open question like: "How do you think your job here has matched your obligations at home the past year?", as well as "Is there anything we can do to accommodate the needs you have with regards to family reconciliation or care work in your home?".
- > Monitor takeout rate of paternity leave across departments and managerial levels, and actively use the result to stimulate a higher takeout rate. The minimum norm is adopted in most departments of the companies: Fathers take the 15 weeks non-transferable paternity leave and the 34 weeks remaining paid leave is used by the mother. Employers should encourage and make policies for a more equal share of parental leave beyond this minimum norm.
- > Positive or well-meant initiatives like a company coach or self-management courses should be assessed, to make sure they do not essentially place the whole WLB burden on the employee themselves, but gives them the means to address potential systemic or cultural deficits in the company, when this is appropriate and needed.
- > Yearly employee-surveys on work environments should include questions on WLB and "hero-culture" (see contextual analysis). These surveys should also scrutinize and adapt the design of the organisations, so that leaders are in position to have the overview of the total workload of the employees.

2.7.2. Recommendations for new measures/actions to be implemented

- > Companies should promote a 'speak up' culture, openness towards discussing care arrangement and one's wellbeing. Because of norms of masculinities, some men, especially in relation to other men in the workplace, may feel uneasy to speak up themselves. For such an effort to work the men in management must be committed, lowering the threshold to be open for male employees.
- > Companies should strive to make gender neutral WLB material to promote company measures on their websites/employee-net. Especially topics like paternity-leave and leave to take care of sick relatives should be described, also with gender neutral use of photos, icons, language and so forth, as well as a LHBTQI-friendly language.
- > When employees are planning a take out on parental leave, we advise management to openly approach their employee in a designated meeting, to discuss his leave, how long it will be, how/if he would like his employer to reach out or contact him during his leave (e.g for outings with the team, social gatherings etc), and to make a plan for his workload when he is on leave. And consider the workload plan for his team.
- > Time flexibility, as well as possibilities for telework (when possible) should be communicated as an option, and management should model this themselves. Increased use of home office and telework have possible downsides that need to be contracted. Blurred lines between work-time and leisure-time and invisible overwork may require other models and routines and communication between leaders and employees and between colleagues.
- > Employees who choose to reduce their working hours to reconcile with family needs should be relieved from some of their assignments, so that their workload does not stay the same after the reduction of working hours. This can be achieved through dialogue and a good clarification of expectations and should be expected by every manager who handles employee-contact.
- > To promote caring masculinities companies should design their own company specific WLB plan for male employees to ensure that they take out their parental leave, as well as a plan for how to train management in creating a safe and positive company culture on WLB-issues, especially for men.
- > Most interviewees in the material had higher education and/or higher positions in the three selected companies. Overall, it seems as though one of the largest obstacles for their care work is potential negative consequences to their career if they are not present or not doing enough work. Companies can look into the possibilities of creating opportunities for

"Daddy tracks" for men with young children, in which needed flexibility or other WLB measures does not compromise prestige or advancement in career positions more than necessary.

2.7.3. Recommendations for further studies / trainings

- > Monitor actual takeout rate on paternity leave across both private and public sector, as well as unpaid leave for men.
- > Research on male dominated sectors with a high probability of buying out male employees from parental leave, like the Military, offshore companies, the seafaring industry etc, and how to find solutions for facilitating parental leave for fathers.
- > Research on well-being, attachment and WLB in families where one of the parents has shift work or has a substantial load of work-related travels away from the family.
- > Research on the significance of WLB for employees in relation to increasing female representation in male dominated sectors.
- > Research on men's overwork and hidden extra work in the evenings and at nights. What is driving men's overwork at the expense of their own health and family life, and what are the motives for keeping it hidden or elevating it as "heroic"? What are the organisational preconditions?
- > Training in companies and workplaces to raise awareness about the importance of a male perspective in the company's work on gender issues, plans and measures.
- > Revision of the Norwegian discrimination law that allows companies to deny bonus to employees in parental leave.

2.8. Reflection of the results

Which main aspects or insights are most important regarding the Norwegian situation and the organizations in the study?

In relation to drivers of caring masculinities and gender equality, we can list:

- > The 15 weeks non-transferable paternity leave is normalized. It is first and foremost with this measure that men's WLB is written into the organization's policies. This measure has been further improved in two of the companies. The fact that there is an ongoing political debate about removing the non-transferable paternity all together in the name of "free choice" is thus worrying.
- > In all three organizations, an expectation was expressed that fathers, on an equal footing with mothers, pick up and bring to kindergarten/school, and an expectation that the employer offers flexible working hours if this is compatible with the content of the work. This reflects a culture of fathering in Norway that is widespread.
- > Departments or sub-departments where there is a culture of openness, where WLB is openly discussed by management and employees. We found examples of this in the most advanced companies. In LifestyleCo, it seemed to be related to value-based management.
- > A driver for men's WLB, though it could have been stronger, is the link to the work to promote women in management. There is an established understanding that to become leaders most women will not want to opt out the opportunity to be caregivers for their children. In some contexts, this understanding is extended to include parents as such and fathers.

Persisting barriers for the development of caring masculinities we can list are:

- > Support for the notion that WLB is an individualized problem and which each individual man must find out on his own, possibly in consultation with his immediate manager. That WLB is not part of an everyday conversation and is not addressed as a structural challenge.

- > Gender stereotypes, that men should be independent, self-sufficient, fix themselves, not bother others and keep their privacy to themselves.
- > Managerial lack of overview and attention to (male) employees' hidden overwork, often in the evenings and nights, and the potential costs associated with this overwork. A new norm with increased use of home office and telework (after the corona) can make it a bigger problem. For an increased number of employees, may experience difficulties in setting boundaries between work and leisure time, and not to overwork.
- > Replacement of the standard Norwegian annual appraisal conversation. In this annual conversation between leader and employee the focus is on the working environment, what the individual needs to be a good employee, and what the employer can do to make it a good place to work for the individual. In departments in EnergyCo and internationally oriented organizations it is becoming more common to replace this conversation with a performance-oriented interview.
- > Bonus schemes that exclude employees who are on leave. Employee presence all or large parts of the year is often a precondition.

APPENDIX: FIGURES AND TABLES

Women, Norway, aged 25-49 years					
Year	Childless	Child aged 0	Child aged 1-2	Child aged 3-5	Child aged 6-12
Year					
2007	83	75	78	83	85
2008	83	82	80	83	85
2009	80	77	74	83	86
2010	79	72	79	82	87
2011	79	72	78	84	85
2012	79	73	76	79	84
2013	80	76	75	84	83
2014	79	70	73	82	85
2015	79	71	75	77	84
2016	81	76	77	78	82
2017	80	71	76	82	81
Men, Norway, aged 25-49 years					
Year	Childless	Child aged 0	Child aged 1-2	Child aged 3-5	Child aged 6-12
2007	84	95	97	94	93
2008	83	97	93	94	92
2009	81	93	93	93	92
2010	80	92	94	92	92
2011	80	93	94	93	91
2012	81	94	93	91	92
2013	78	95	95	91	91
2014	78	90	93	90	90
2015	78	86	91	87	93
2016	79	86	88	90	89
2017	78	90	89	91	90

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

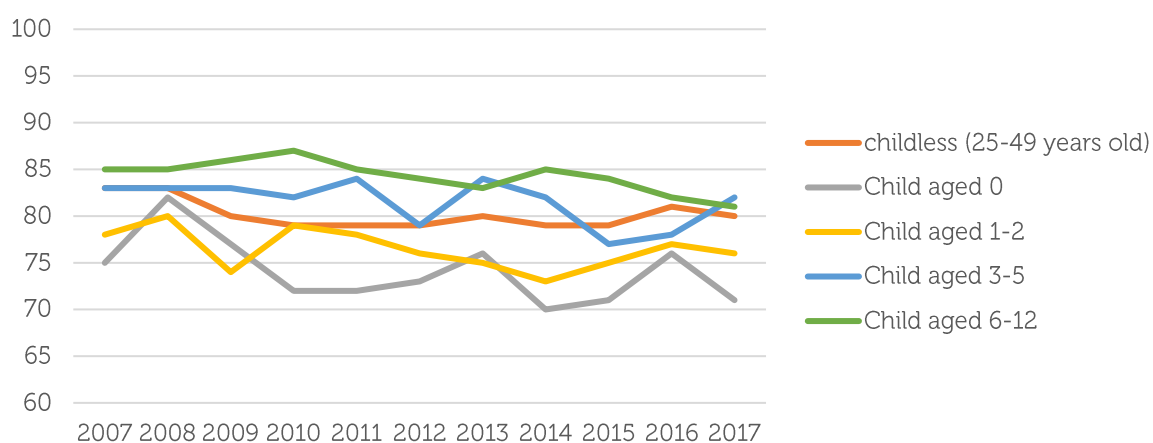


Figure 1. Employment rates of women by youngest child age, 2007-2017. Source: EU-LFS Microdata

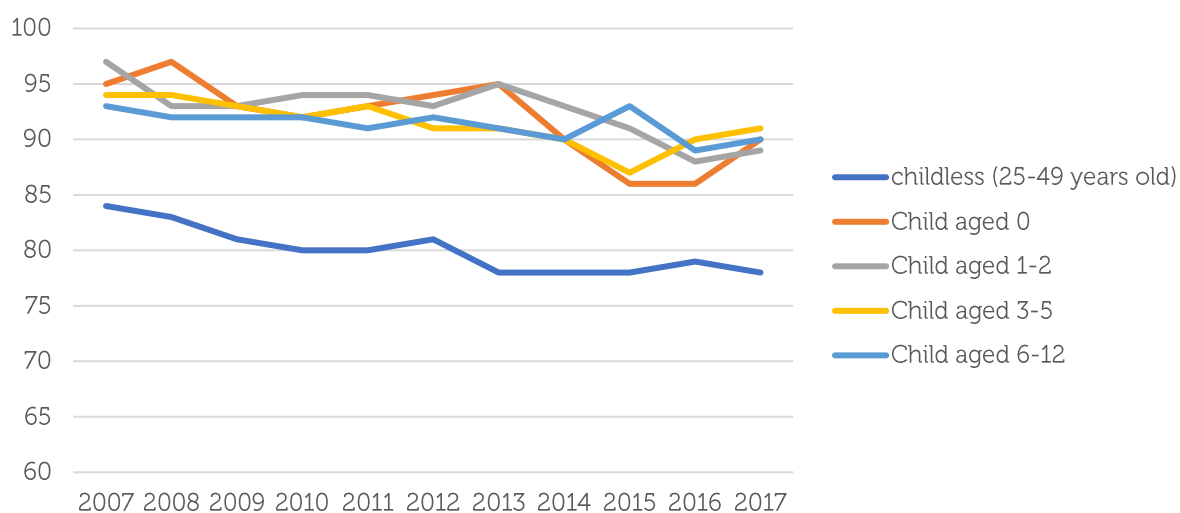


Figure 2. Employment rates of men by youngest child age, 2007-2017. Source: EU-LFS Microdata

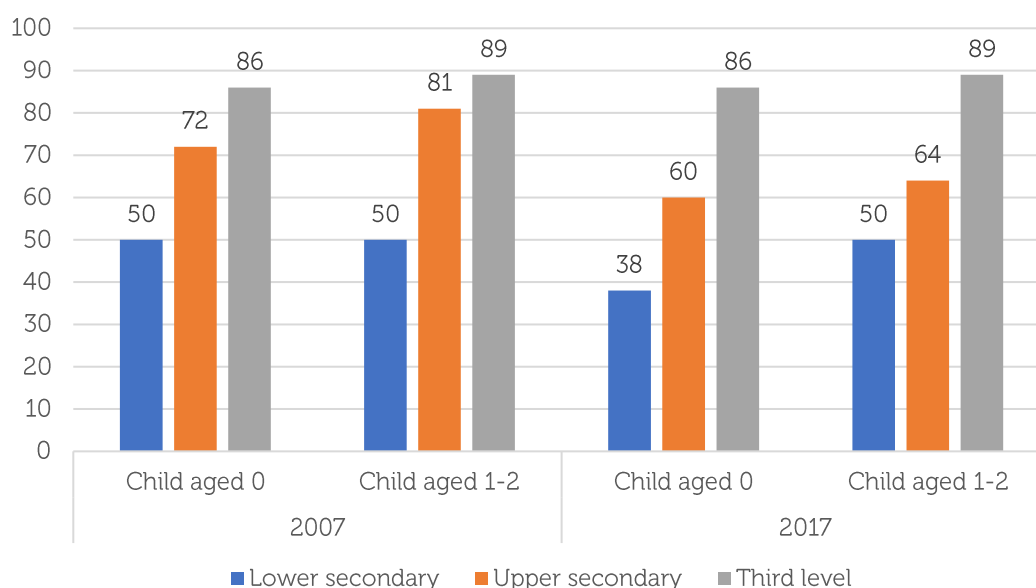


Figure 3. Employment rates of women by youngest child age and educational level, 2007-2017. Source: EU-LFS Microdata

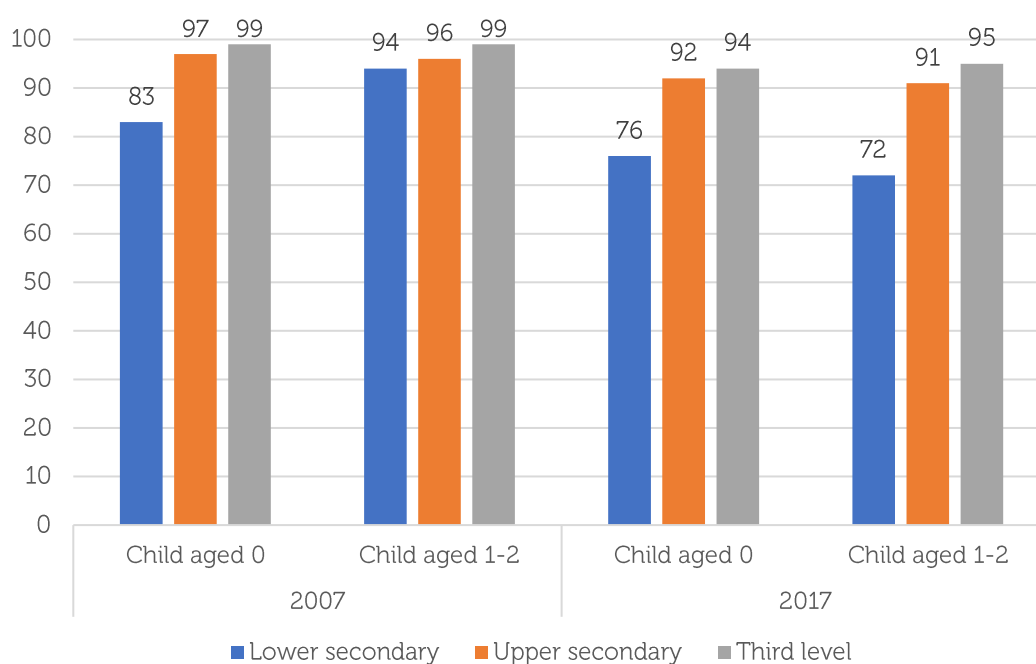


Figure 4. Employment rates of men by youngest child age and educational level, 2007-2017. Source: EU-LFS Microdata

	2007			2017				
	Lower sec. or less	Upper secondary	Third Level	All	Lower sec. or less	Upper secondary	Third Level	All
Men	18,1	7,5	4,1	8,7	25,6	10,1	6,9	11,7
Women	32,7	14,2	8,5	15,6	38,4	19,8	7,8	16,3

Table 6. Inactivity rates for women and men aged 25-49 by educational level, 2007-2017. Source: EU-LFS Microdata

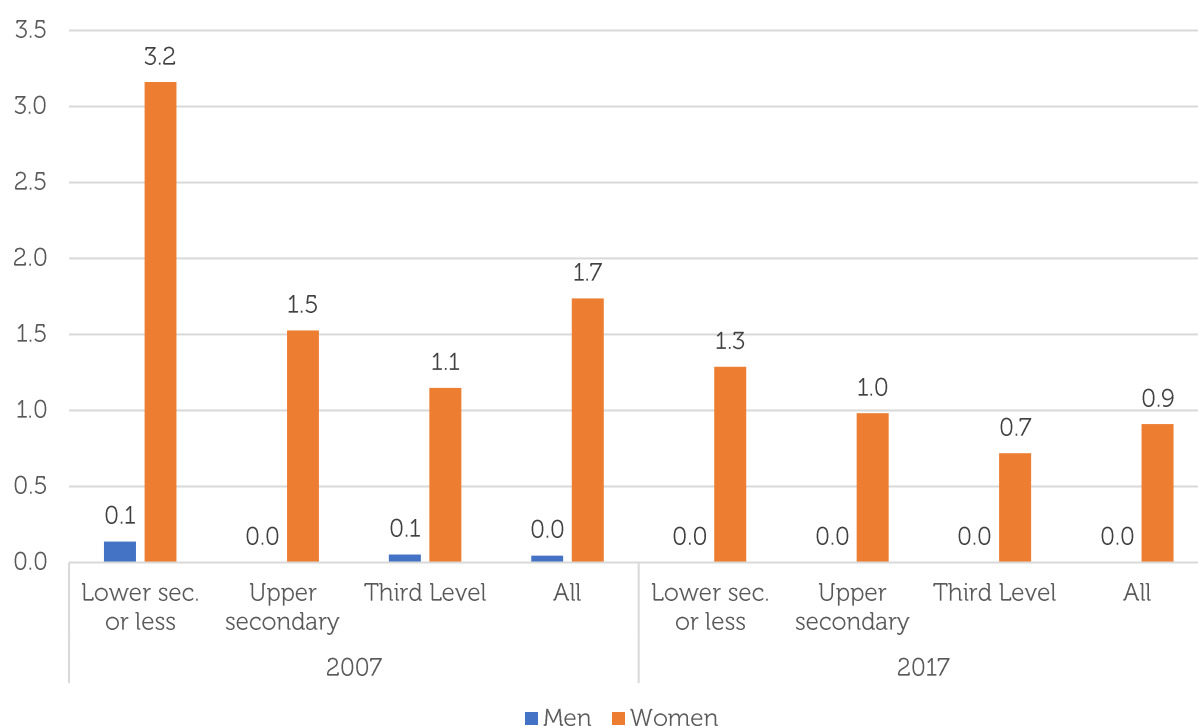


Figure 5. Inactivity rates for family reasons by gender and educational level, 2007-2017. Source: EU-LFS Microdata

	0-17 years	0-1 years	2-3 years	4-5 years	6-9 år years	10-12 years	13-17 years
Fathers 2006	40,00	39,50	39,60	38,60	40,30	41,20	40,50
Fathers 2016	38,80	37,70	38,00	40,20	39,40	37,90	39,60
Mothers 2006	31,30	28,10	29,60	30,80	31,30	32,80	33,00
Mothers 2016	32,40	30,20	32,00	31,70	32,30	32,10	34,10

Table 7. Actual work hours of mothers and fathers by age of youngest child 2006/2016. Source: Arbeidskraftundersøkelsen. Statistisk Sentralbyrå & Sandvik (2017)

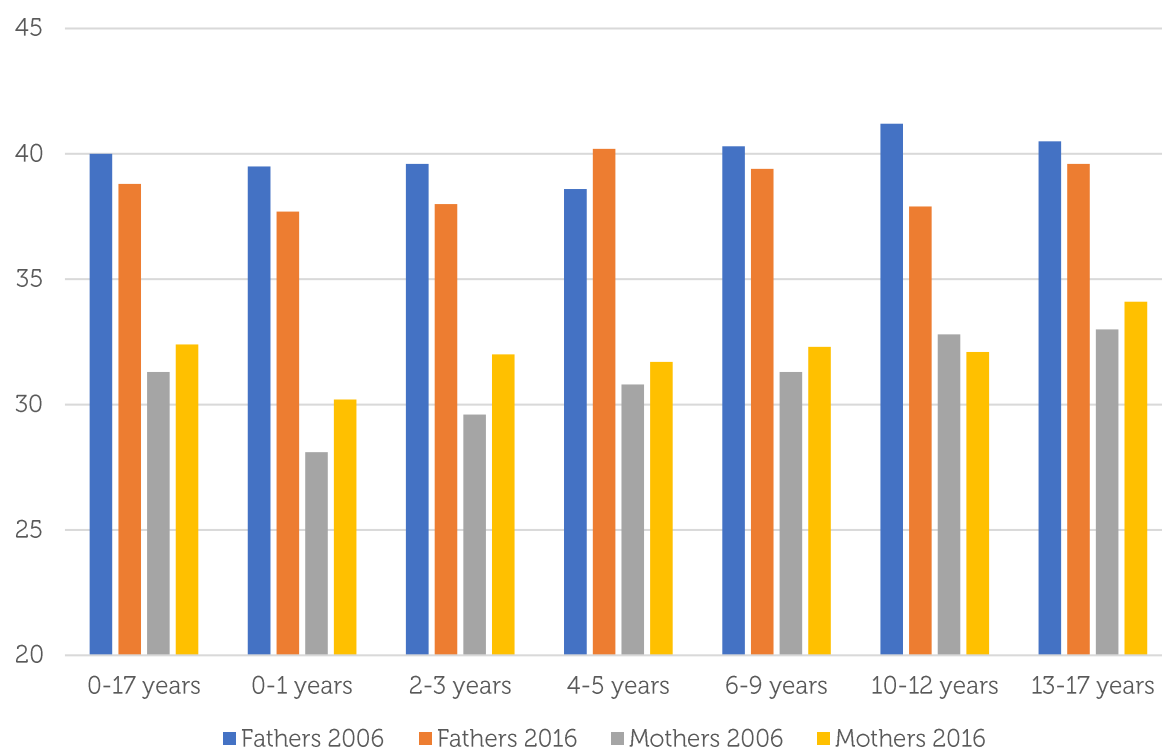


Figure 6. Actual work hours of mothers and fathers by age of youngest child 2006/2016. Source: Arbeidskraftundersøkelsen. Statistisk Sentralbyrå & Sandvik (2017)

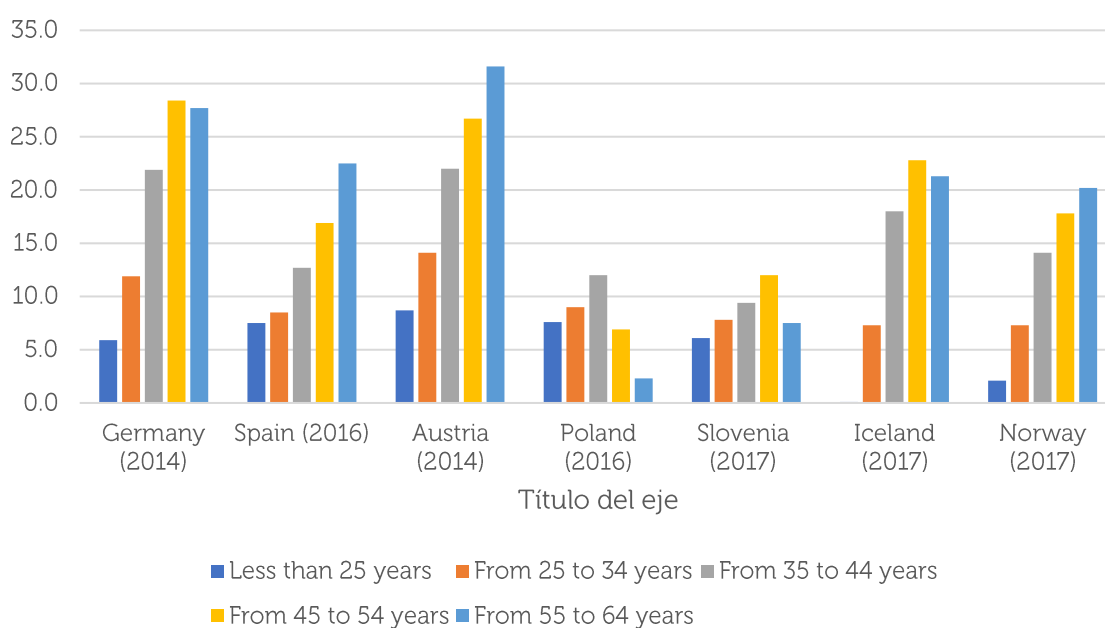


Figure 7. Gender pay gap (%) by age and country, unadjusted. Source: EU-LFS Microdata



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

	2007				2017			
	25-49		50-64		25-49		50-64	
	Self-employed	Employee	Self-employed	Employee	Self-employed	Employee	Self-employed	Employee
Men	0,2	0,2	0,0	0,1	0,0	0,2	0,7	0,1
Women	9,2	9,9	4,2	1,1	2,3	4,4	1,0	0,9

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

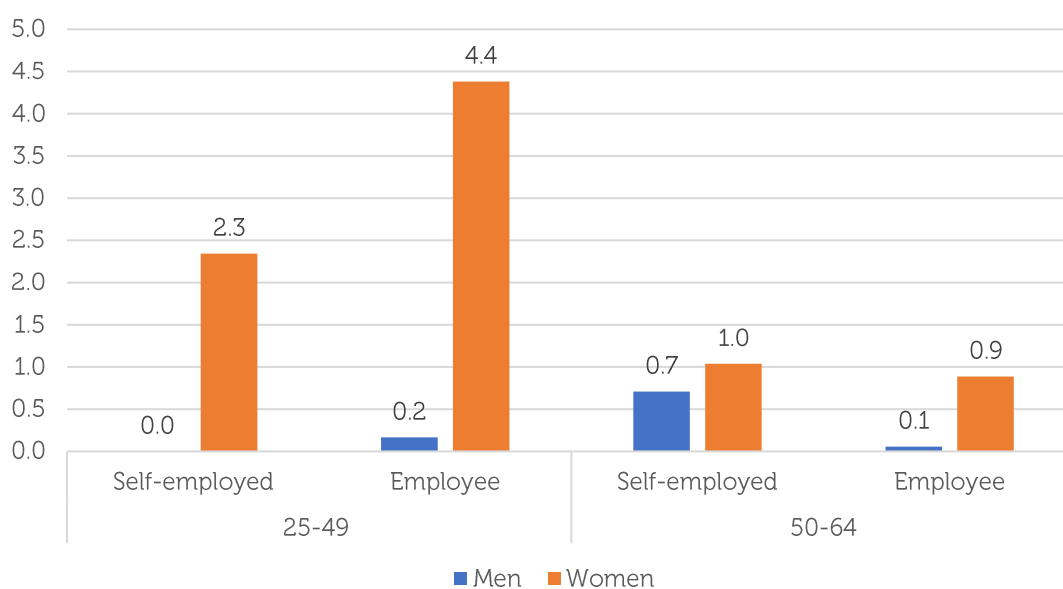


Figure 9. Percentage of employed people who work part-time for family reasons, by gender, age group and professional status, 2017. Source: EU-LFS Microdata

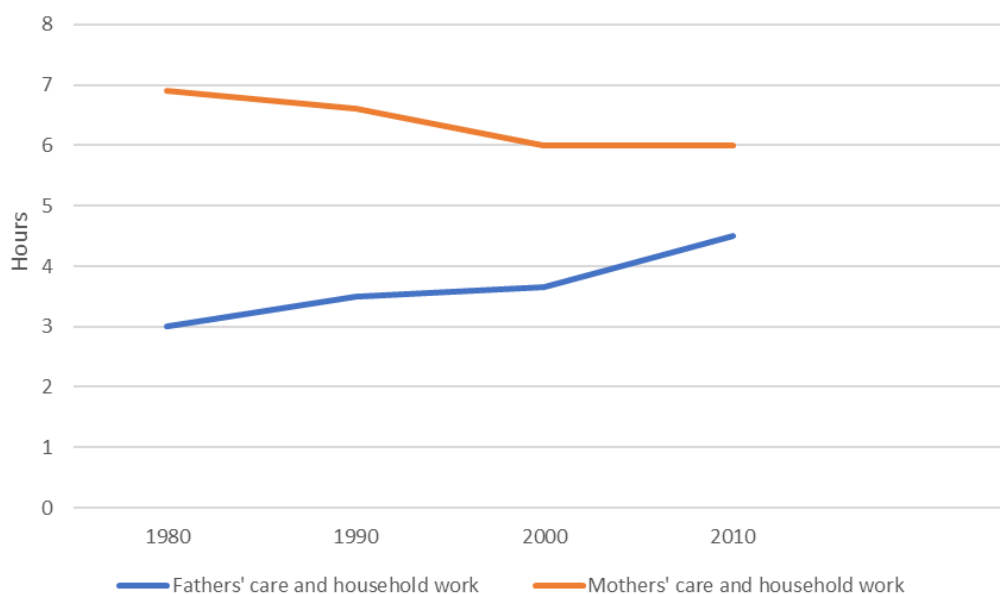


Figure 10. Average daily hours spent on care and domestic work among married / cohabiting mothers and fathers with children 0-6 years. 1980-2010. Source: Time use studies 1980-2010, Statistics Norway.

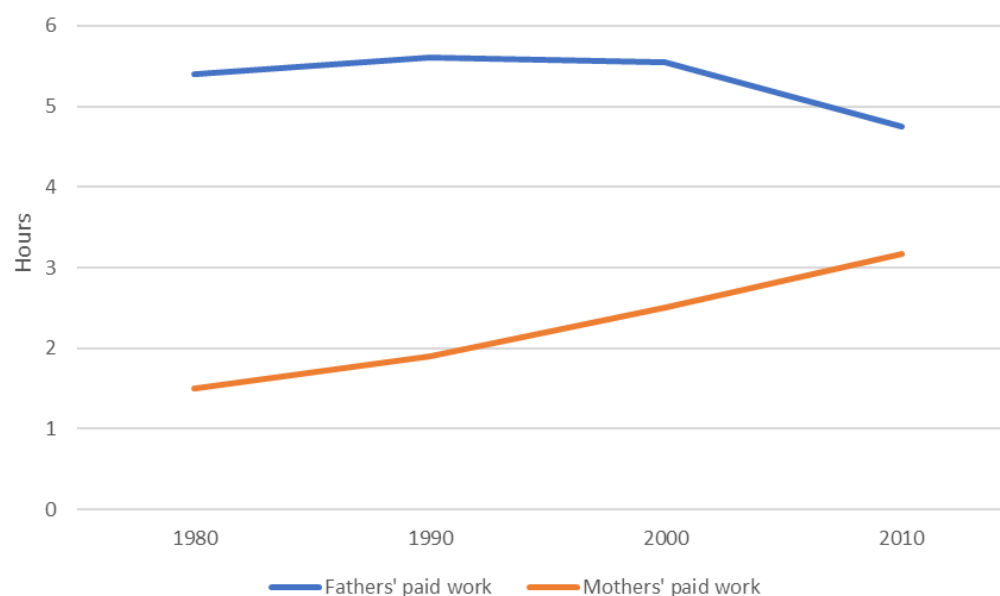


Figure 11. Average daily hours spent on paid work among married / cohabiting mothers and fathers with children 0-6 years, 1980-2010 Source: Time use studies 1980-2010, Statistics Norway.

	1980	1990	2000	2010
Mothers				
Housework	3:24	2:36	2:06	2:00
Construction and repairs	0:12	0:13	0:13	0:12
Care work	2:30	2:56	2:25	2:34
Purchase of goods and services	0:30	0:27	0:28	0:33
Other types of household work	0:06	0:08	0:14	0:09
Transport in connection to domestic work	0:12	0:16	0:26	0:29
Number of observations	632	594	492	538
Fathers				
Housework	0:42	0:42	0:53	1:06
Construction and repairs	0:36	0:35	0:38	0:45
Care work	1:06	1:31	1:17	1:38
Purchase of goods and services	0:18	0:17	0:19	0:21
Other types of domestic work	0:12	0:13	0:09	0:10
Transport in connection to domestic work	0:06	0:12	0:21	0:30
Number of observations	602	492	483	522

Table 9. Daily average time (hh:mm) used for different types of domestic work among married / cohabiting mothers and fathers with children aged 0-6, 1980-2010. Source: Time use studies 1980-2010, Statistics Norway.

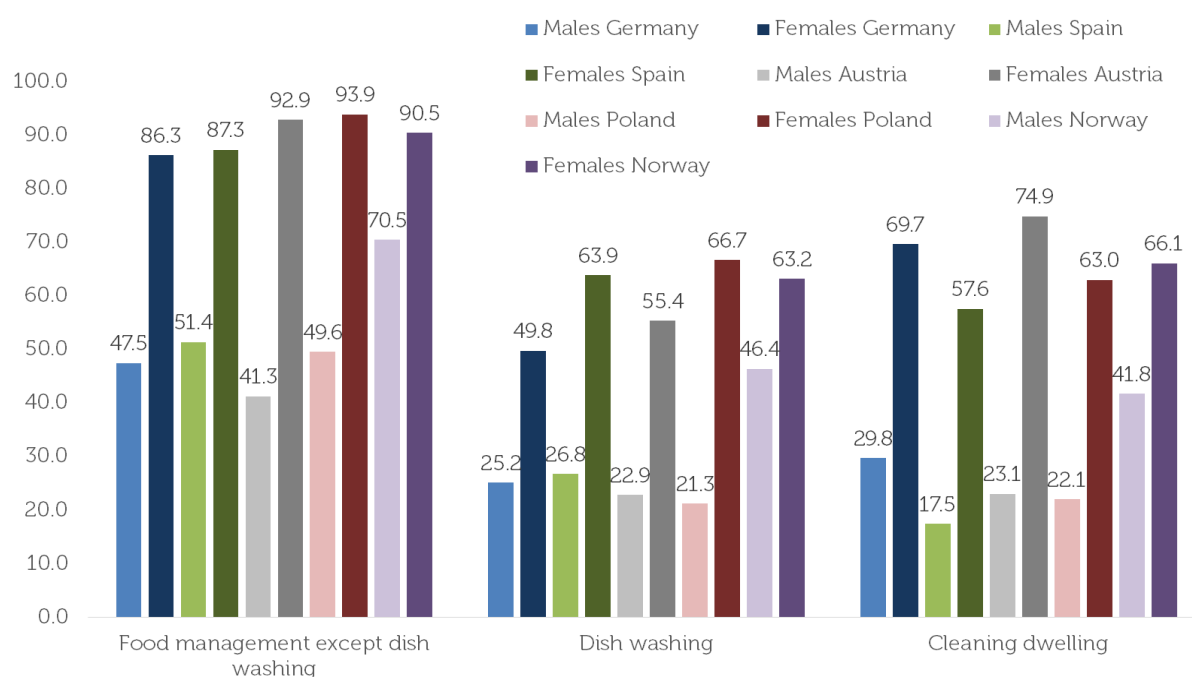


Figure 12. Participation in household chores by women and men in couples, with children under 6 years, 2010. Source: Time Use Survey, 2010, Eurostat.

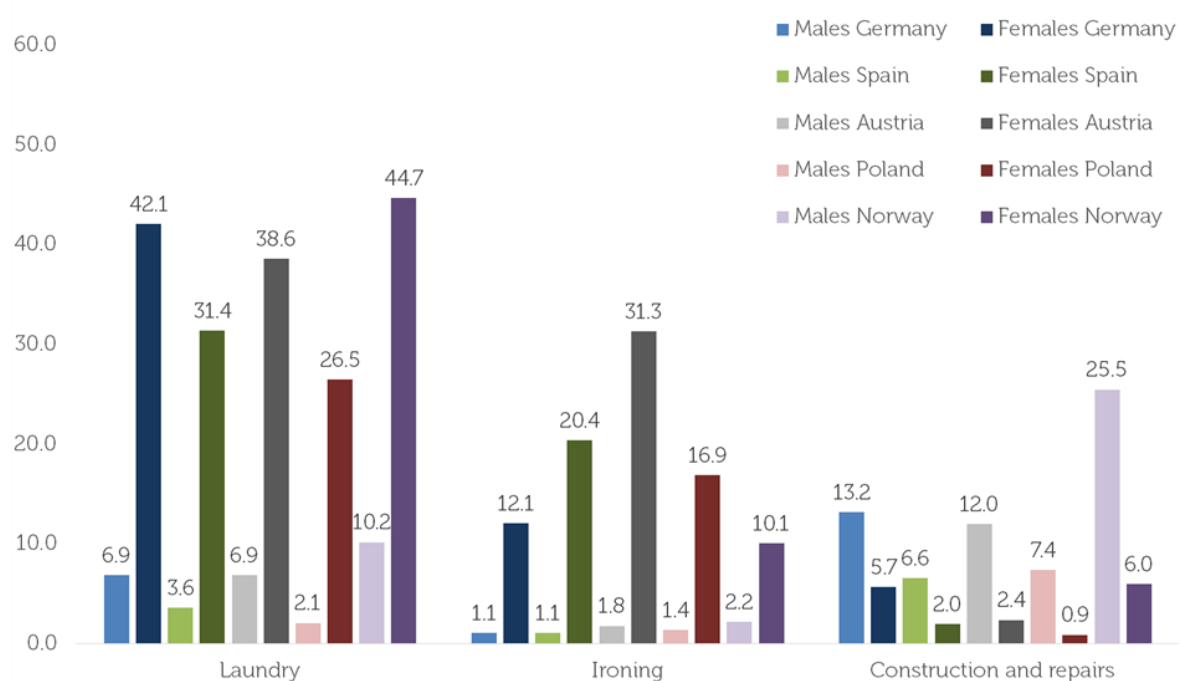


Figure 13. Participation in household chores by women and men in couples, with children under 6 years, 2010. Source: Time Use Survey, 2010, Eurostat.

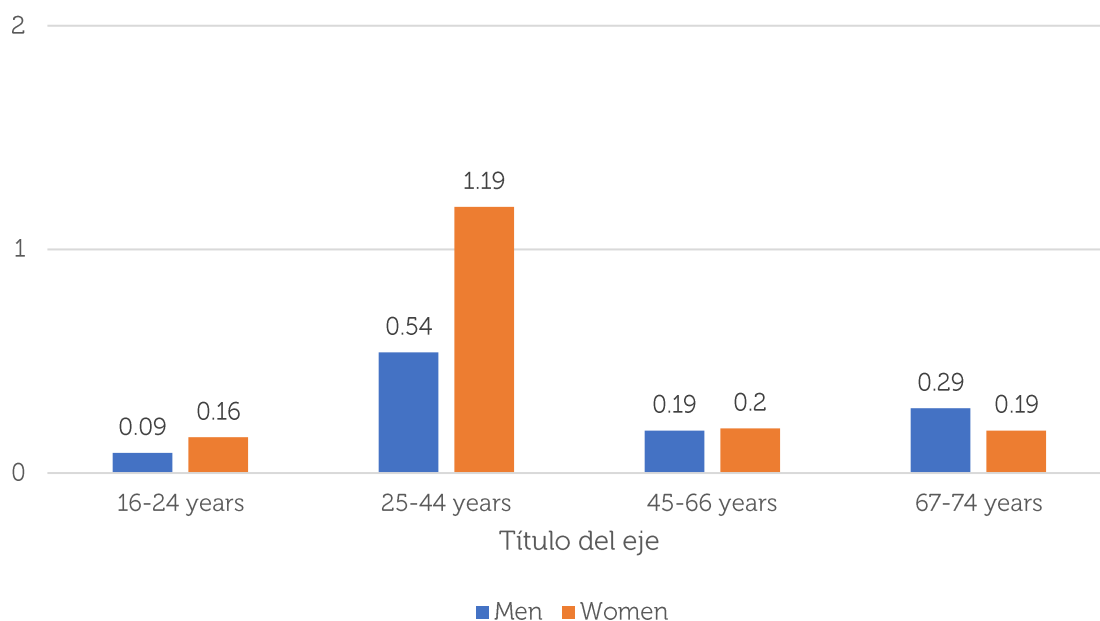


Figure 14. Daily average hours used for care work by gender and age group, 2010. Source: Time use studies 1980-2010, Statistics Norway / Bufetat.no

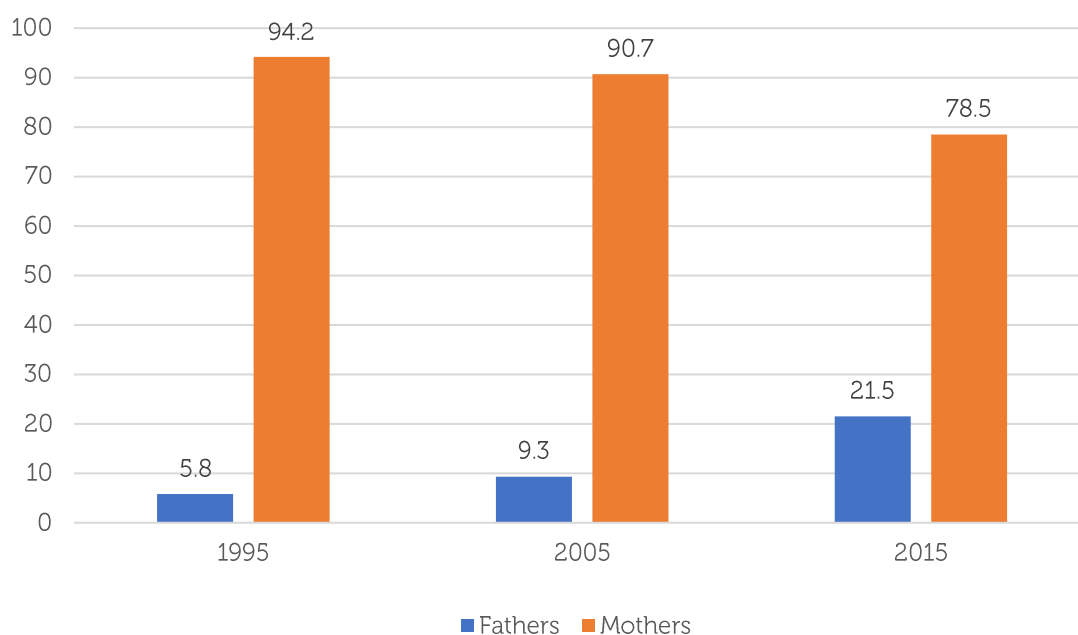


Figure 15. Percentage of all paid parental leave days taken by fathers and mothers, 1995/2005/2015. Source: NOU 2017:6 Offentlig støtte til barnefamiliene

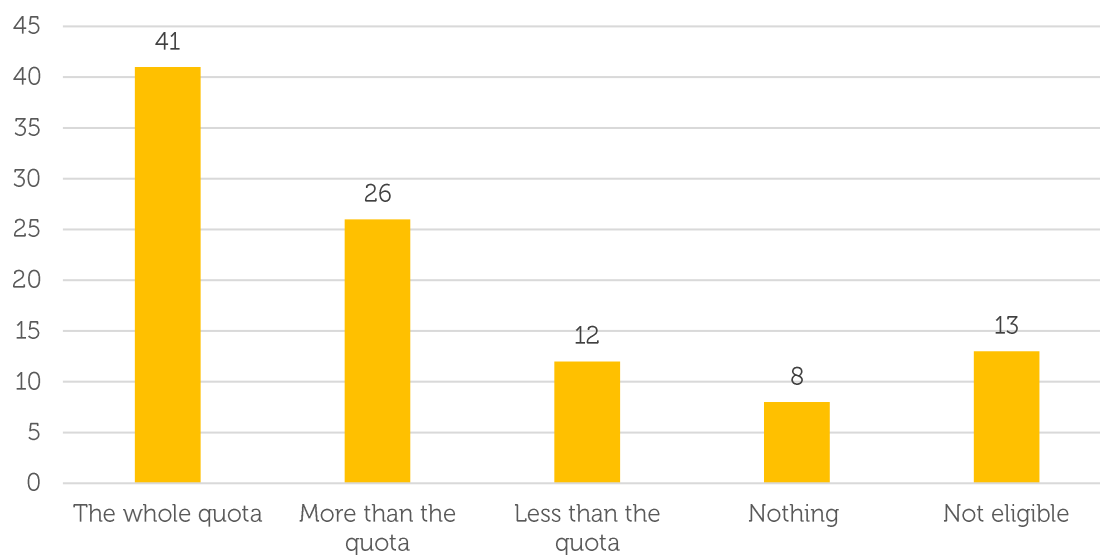


Figure 16. Uptake of the father's quota (%) amongst men who fathered children in Norway in 2011. Source: CORE-factsheet and Kitterød R. H., Halrynjo, S. & Østbakken, K. M. (2017): Pappaperm? Fedre som ikke tar fedrekvote – hvor mange, hvem og hvorfor?

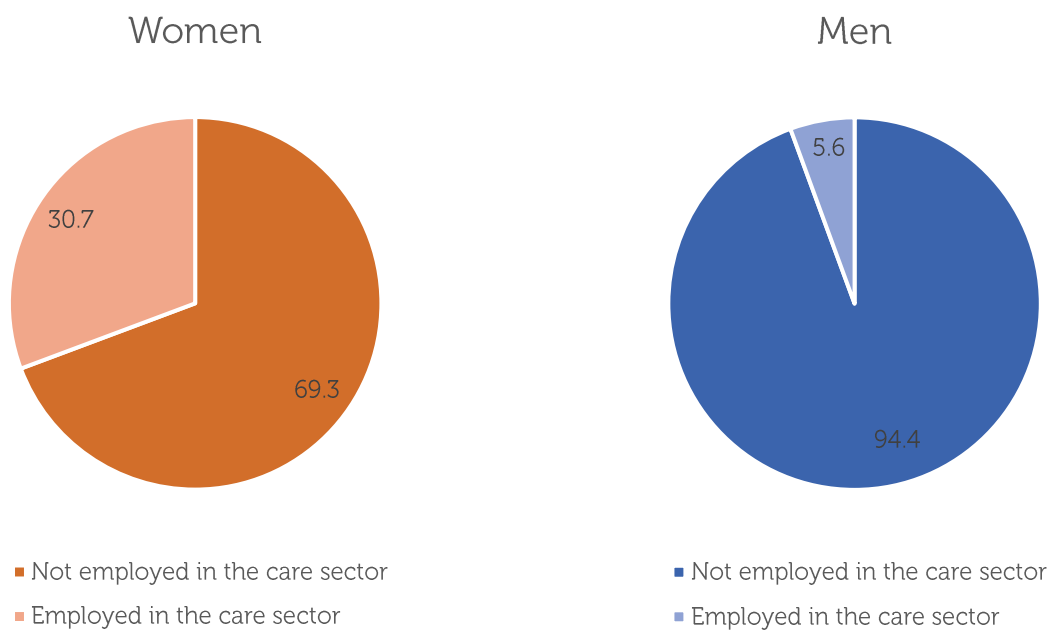


Figure 17. Percentage of people employed in care occupations in Norway, 2017. Note: Care occupations is defined as employed as Nursing and specialist nurses, Primary school and early childhood teachers, Childcare workers and teachers' aides or Care workers in health services. Source: EU-LFS Microdata.

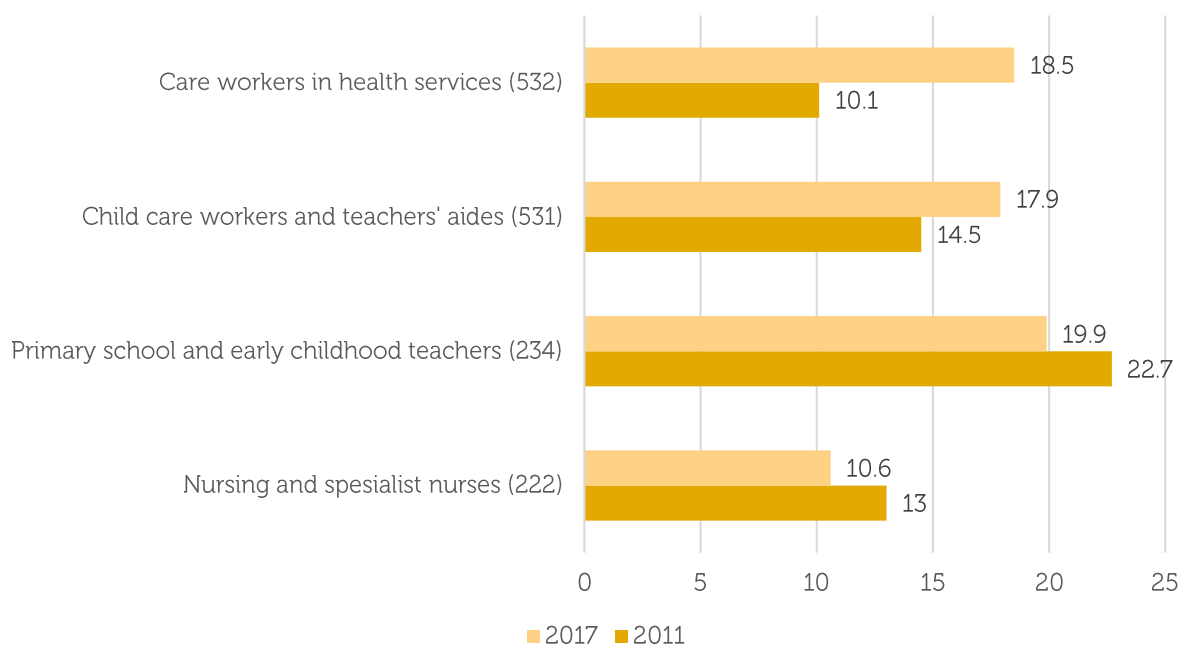


Figure 18. Percentage of men among employees in different care professions in Norway 2011/2017. Source: EU-LFS Microdata

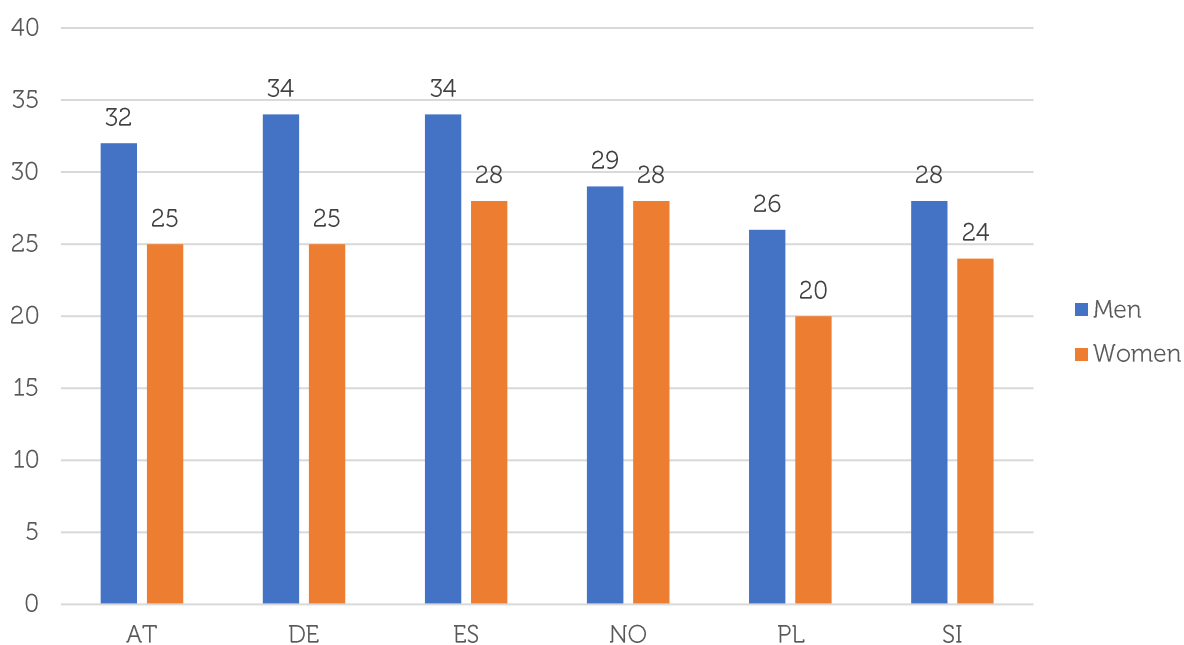


Figure 19. Percentage of working people who would like to work less than currently, by gender. Source: Eurofound, European Working Conditions Survey, 2015.

