



Social Protection Reform Project  
中国-欧盟社会保障改革项目

COMPONENT ONE

# **Main concerns with Gender Equality In Employment and Social Protection**

European Perspective

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**Relevant Acronyms**

Acronym	Description
EU	European Union
ILO	International Labour Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
MS	Member State
UN	United Nations

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## INTRODUCTION

### ELEVATOR PITCH

*“Women are more likely than men to work in the informal sector and to drop out of the labour force for a time, such as after childbirth, and to be impeded by social norms from working in the formal sector. This work pattern undermines productivity, increases women’s vulnerability to income shocks, and impairs their ability to save for old age.*

*Many developing countries have introduced social protection programs to protect poor people from social and economic risks, but despite women’s often greater need, the programs are generally less accessible to them than to men”<sup>1</sup>.*

Within the framework of the EU-China Social Protection Reform Project SPRP and with the support of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the inclusion of a gender perspective in China's employment and social protection reforms is considered a priority. The studies commissioned by the project, covering the Guangdong and Sichuan regions, provide a regional approach to how national economic measures can differentially affect women in terms of their employment status and social protection.

In order to compare the points of view between China and the European Union and also to observe the experience of European countries in this field, a European study presenting an overview of gender mainstreaming on social protection and employment was also conducted.

The objective of this report is to demonstrate that social protection or employment reform that takes into account gender differences in impacts is more effective in reducing social inequalities and strengthening social cohesion. Thus, examining how and why women's needs for social protection or employment differ from those of men leads to design appropriate programs.

The point of this report is to convince the political decision-maker to include a gender dimension in the policy choices regarding social protection and employment.

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<sup>1</sup> Social protection programs for women in developing countries. IZA World of Labor 2014, Liza A. Cameron, 2014, <https://consultations.worldbank.org/Data/hub/files/social-protection-programs-for-women-in-developing-countries-1.pdf>

Putting these topics in perspective with European experiences highlights how different European countries are promoting gender mainstreaming and develop innovative strategies to strengthen the impact of their social protection and employment policies.

In order to address the objectives of the report, we propose to present how social protection and employment may have a positive effect on reducing gender inequalities, and how a gender-neutral policy could, on the contrary, accentuate these inequalities.

In addition, we will support our comments introducing a European perspective, presenting the objectives set by the European Union to the Member States in the field of gender mainstreaming. We will present in this way examples of innovative policies in Member States that aim to reduce gender differences in access to social protection and employment.

## 1. Impact of Social Protection and Employment policies on gender equality

The starting point of this document is that women have a disadvantaged status compared to men from equivalent social groups in terms of employment opportunities, in the development of their professional careers and during the retirement age. They are also much more likely to be excluded from social protection strategies or at least benefit less from them.

### 1.1. *Gender: a factor in unequal access to social protection and employment*

The word "gender" is used to refer to the socially constructed roles that shape behaviours, activities, expectations and opportunities considered appropriate in a particular socio-cultural context for men and women. Gender also refers to the relationships between people and the distribution of power in these relationships<sup>2</sup>. Gender roles are highly variable and determined by other social, economic, political and cultural factors<sup>3</sup>. To reflect the way in which these roles and responsibilities are socially constructed, it requires an understanding of power relations between men and women in function of these different factors. In the same way, gender inequality is intersected by other forms of inequality between households and groups in society (religion, social class or ethnicity) and within the household (age, marital status and physical ability).

In the light of the above, let us review the definition of social protection to understand why social protection mechanisms are especially important to reduce women vulnerability to life shocks :

*“Social Protection is all public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalised; with the overall objective of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups”* (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004).

Social protection is therefore the set of measures that make it possible to reduce the impact that life accidents, throughout the life cycle, can have on individuals' standard of living or on their socio-professional integration.

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<sup>2</sup> WHO, 1998 <http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/gender>

<sup>3</sup> Gender and Social Protection, ODI, Cecilia Luttrell and Caroline Moser, 2004.

<https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/1686.pdf>



According to an ILO study, men and women tend to be affected differently by economic changes, globalization and demographic transitions<sup>4</sup>. Two types of risks can be distinguished:

- « Gender specific risks »: Men and women are exposed to different risks e.g. constraints resulting of biological roles such as pregnancy and childbirth.
- « Gender-imposed risks »: Men and women experience the same risk differently e.g. vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases, career interruption to care for children or elderly parents, increased risk of violence in the workplace, social and economic consequences of widowhood...

In addition to this, since the main part of social security programmes are formal, contributory and linked to employment status, this tends to affect women more negatively:

- when employed, women tend to earn less than men and work in the informal economy or in casual, temporary or part-time employment.
- with regard to unpaid work, time use statistics indicate that care work is largely performed by women (domestic work, childcare and care for dependent persons) without being formally recognised as work.
- women are strongly represented in employment sectors that are poorly protected by labour and social security legislation, such as domestic work and agriculture. As a result, many women are not able to contribute, and therefore benefit from these social insurance schemes.

Social protection and employment policies including gender perspective will have a major impact in minimizing the risks associated with women's roles as mothers, caregivers and workers.

Indeed, it is in these three roles of a woman's life that gendered social protection and employment policies could facilitate the reduction of poverty among women and their families, facilitate their sustainable integration into the labour market and by extension reduce poverty among women in their retirement age.

The justification for integrating gender into the design of social protection and employment policies is all the more justified by the international community's recognition of the necessity to design and implement social protection systems in accordance with the principle of social inclusion<sup>5</sup>, with particular emphasis on the need to include people in the informal economy (represented to a large extent by women). Affirmative action and

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<sup>4</sup> Gender Equality and the Extension of Social Protection, Sabates-Wheeler and Kabeer, International Labour Organization 2004,

[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Naila\\_Kabeer3/publication/228311556\\_Gender\\_Equality\\_and\\_the\\_Extension\\_of\\_Social\\_Protection/links/02e7e520365262fe56000000/Gender-Equality-and-the-Extension-of-Social-Protection.pdf?origin=publication\\_detail](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Naila_Kabeer3/publication/228311556_Gender_Equality_and_the_Extension_of_Social_Protection/links/02e7e520365262fe56000000/Gender-Equality-and-the-Extension-of-Social-Protection.pdf?origin=publication_detail)

<sup>5</sup> International Labour Organization, R202 - Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012

[https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:R202](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:R202)

other proactive measures should aim to reduce or eliminate conditions of discrimination and to combat stigmas and stereotypes. This includes ensuring non-discriminatory treatment and adopting proactive measures to enable those who suffer structural discrimination to enjoy their rights.

## *1.2. The impact of the neutrality illusion in Social Protection and Employment policies*

Any neutral public policy or measure that applies to unequal social situations has a reinforcing effect on inequality and gender invisibility. Considering that making a universal policy that does not take into account the specificities of the most vulnerable populations would be fairer for the entire population is, on a global point of view, erroneous. A universal policy would indeed target the whole population in the same way, but would be in definitive less effective because the most vulnerable part will have only a limited benefit from a measure they need most.

Political neutrality masks the risks and vulnerabilities that are specific to women and excludes an assessment of the underlying causes of exclusion. Therefore, by not tackling these causes, exclusion will not be significantly reduced. Policy makers are thus challenged to integrate the inclusion of women into their programs, in particular by refining eligibility criteria and targeting methods to ensure that their policies do not exclude or disadvantage women. In terms of social protection and employment, this neutrality may have negative consequences in particular with regard to targeting: for example, when a non-contributory pension system targets households, this is detrimental to women because it does not take into account the fact that women, especially older women, receive fewer resources than men, particularly because their working lives have been affected by wage inequality.

A well-targeted social policy and employment programmes must be gendered to be effective and to avoid perpetuation of lifelong gender inequalities.

In order to address the trend towards gender blindness, policy makers could accordingly:

- Carry out a detailed and gender-disaggregated analysis of women and men situation that assesses the vulnerability of both sexes as potential beneficiaries.

- Ensure that social protection programmes respect and recognize the role of women as caregivers without reinforcing patterns of discrimination and negative stereotypes. It is necessary to take into account the unrecognised work as such, which nevertheless affects women's professional careers.
- Establish accessible, gender-sensitive and good quality social services that take into account the obstacles faced by women in accessing these services.
- Ensure that all social protection or access to employment programmes do not disproportionately disadvantages women and that there are systems in place to address the "peripheral barriers" that can be experienced (care of children or vulnerable relatives, safe transport, etc.).
- Use the opportunity of designing new policies to build the capacity on gender equality of people who design and implement social and employment programmes at national and local levels, in order to reduce the propensity to be "gender blind".

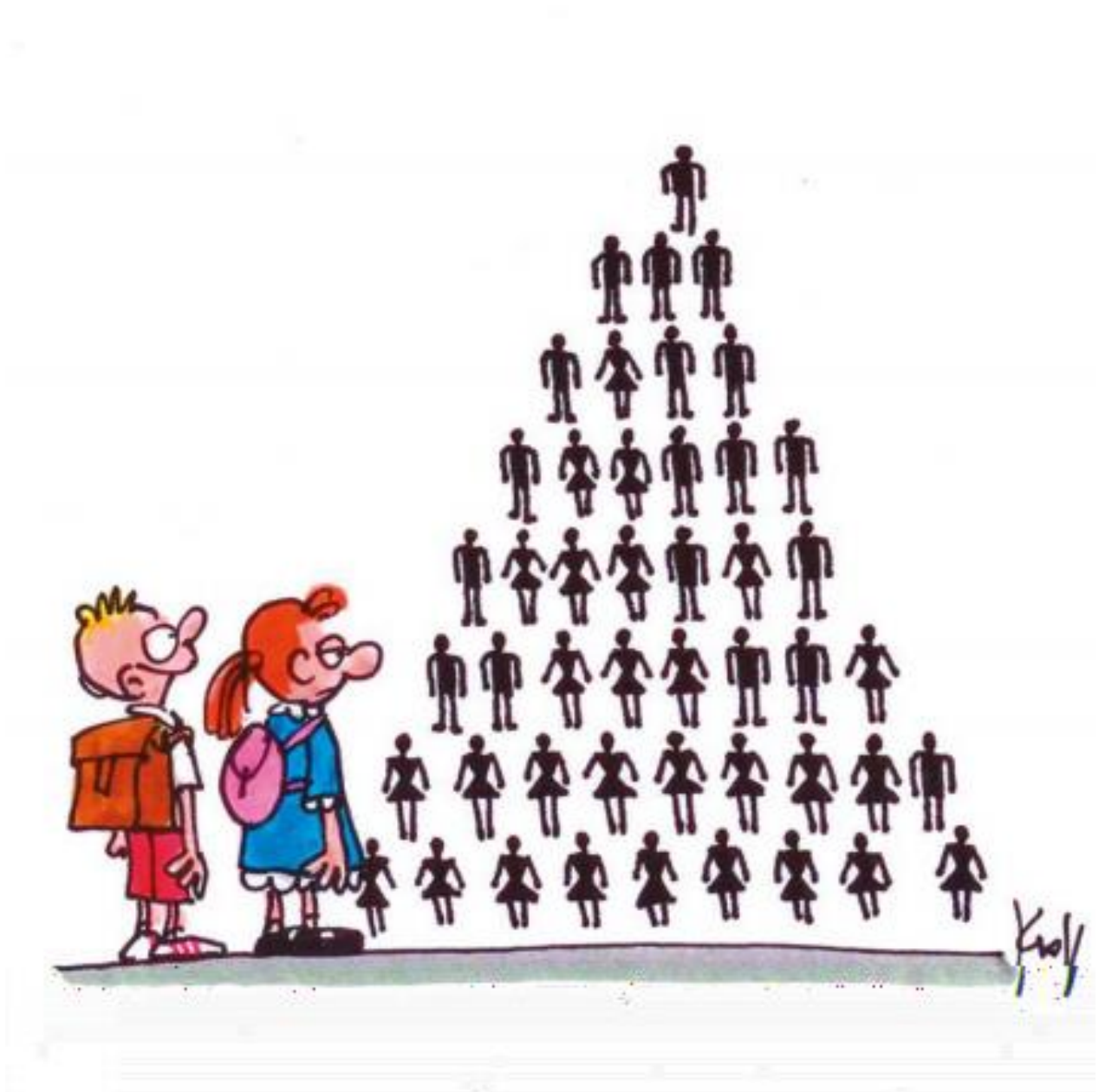
Finally, the risk of a gender-neutral policy would be to fail to highlight the vulnerable position of women in society with regard to their access to social protection and employment.

The fact that a gender-neutral policy doesn't highlight the root causes of inequality between men and women means that the reproduction process of these inequalities throughout the life cycle and then over several generations will remain the same.

It also masks the link between several vulnerability factors, particularly with regard to poverty among older people, which is partly due to occupational and wage inequalities between women and men. A better analysis of the causes of inequality over the working life, as well as a better appreciation of women's economic and social contribution, would contribute to reducing pension gaps.

Finally, it is necessary to encourage the development of research and statistics on the subject in order to guide the decision-maker on observed situations and reduce the tendency to develop gender-neutral policies. The decision-maker will thus be able to use these statistics in information campaigns to disseminate to the population in order to ease the public's acceptance of the paradigm shift.

## 2. European innovative experiences of gendered social protection and employment policies



Source: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2\\_gender\\_equality\\_cartoon.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2_gender_equality_cartoon.pdf)

## 2.1. *The European strategy for gender equality*

### 2.2. *A protective legislative and legal framework*

Equality between men and women is one of the European Union's objectives. Over time, legislation, jurisprudence and amendments to the Treaties have helped to strengthen this principle and its application in the Union.

The principle that men and women should receive equal pay for equal work is established in the European Treaties since 1957 (now enshrined in Article 157 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)). Article 153 TFEU allows the EU to act in a wider field of equal opportunities and equal treatment in employment and occupation, and in this context, Article 157 TFEU allows for positive actions to strengthen women's position. In addition, Article 19 TFEU also allows the adoption of legislation to combat all forms of discrimination, including gender based discrimination. Legislative acts against trafficking in human beings, in particular women and children, have been adopted under Articles 79 and 83 of the TFEU, while the "Rights, Equality and Citizenship" programme finances, in particular, measures that contribute to the eradication of violence against women, under Article 168 of the TFEU.

Later on, various decisions of the European Court of Justice reinforced the important role of the EU in promoting gender equality.

One example is the Defrenne II judgment of 8 April 1976 (Case 43/75<sup>6</sup>): the Court recognised the direct effect of the principle of equal pay for men and women, and held that this principle applies not only to the action of public authorities but also to all conventions regulating paid work.

On 25 September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted its resolution on the post-2015 development agenda entitled "Transforming our world: the sustainable development agenda to 2030". The European Union wished to negotiate its own objectives, adding 9 own objectives to those set by the UN, including the recognition and valuation of unpaid care. In addition to these own objectives, there is also an explicit commitment to gender mainstreaming of all sustainable development goals, targets and indicators.

Later on 2015, the Commission published its Strategic Commitment for Gender Equality 2016-2019 with the following five priority areas<sup>7</sup>:

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<sup>6</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A61975CJ0043>

<sup>7</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/eu-policy/strategic-engagement-gender-equality-2016-2019\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/eu-policy/strategic-engagement-gender-equality-2016-2019_en)

- increasing women's participation in the labour market and equal economic independence;
- reducing pay, income and retirement gaps between men and women and thus reducing women's poverty;
- promoting equality between women and men in decision-making;
- fight against gender-based violence, as well as protecting and assisting victims;
- promoting gender equality and women's rights around the world.

These objectives that the EU establishes to strengthen equality between women and men complement the social dimension that the EU wishes to reinforce. In a post-economic crisis context characterised by the rise of populism in many European countries, the Europe 2020 strategy aims to ensure "inclusive growth" with a high employment rate and a reduction in the number of people living in poverty or at risk of social exclusion. These different strategies - social and gender mainstreaming - go hand in hand as one cannot be effective without the other.

### 2.2.1. A plurality of visions of gender mainstreaming among EU Member States

Gender mainstreaming can be defined as follows:

*“Gender mainstreaming is a process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, so that the gender perspective becomes an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes. It encompasses the ability to anticipate the potentially differential impact of policy actions on women and men as well as the ability to design policy actions that are not “gender-blind”, but “gender-sensitive”. Policy actions are gender-sensitive if they recognise the potentially different interests and needs of women and men based on their potentially different social experiences, opportunities, roles and resources.”<sup>8</sup>*

If all Member States must fully embrace the fundamental principle of equality between women and men and are expected to monitor the transposition, implementation and enforcement of EU legislation in this area in their national legislation, gender mainstreaming is not uniformly interpreted by all Member States. Indeed, when we talk about Europe, we tend to visualise at first sight the historical members of the EU who share a common heritage and history, but among the 27 Member States there are also Eastern European countries from the former Soviet bloc, Scandinavian countries, Mediterranean basin countries, etc. All these countries

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<sup>8</sup> Gender equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship: Final report to the MCM 2012, Meeting of the OECD Council at Ministerial Level. Paris, 23-24 May 2012. <http://www.oecd.org/employment/50423364.pdf>

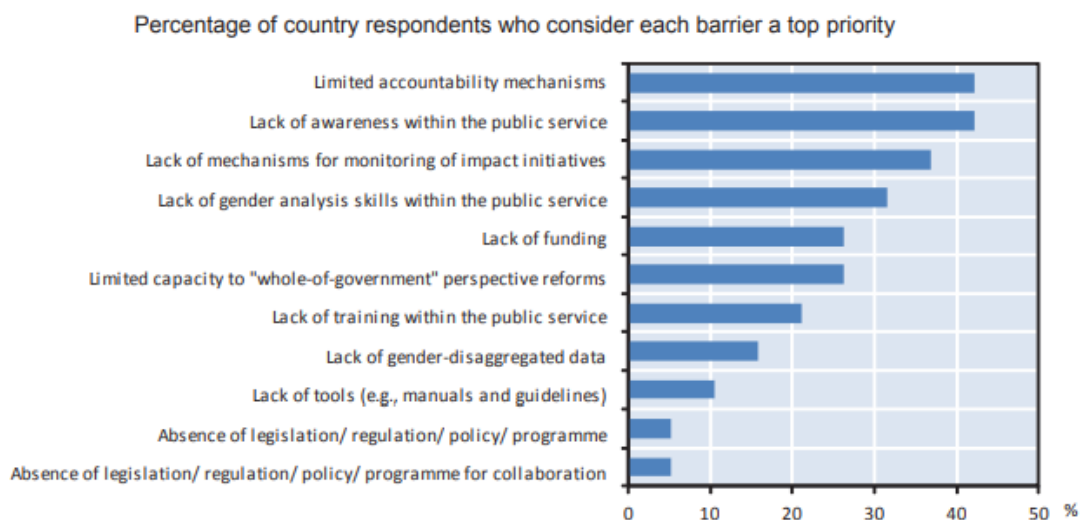
have different cultural, linguistic, religious and political legacies, which explains why it is difficult to talk about a single European vision for tackling gender inequalities.

Thus, despite the obligation to transpose measures to reduce gender inequality into their national legislation, the form in which this is done explains why the results are not uniform.

It is accepted that the Gender mainstreaming strategy is effective when a clear and transparent organizational infrastructure is established with a clear focus on gender equality. But States choose to give it more or less strength: for example

- it is supported by legislation in Denmark, Germany, the United Kingdom;
- It is established as a general policy principle: (Or formulated as a general policy principle) in Sweden, France, the Netherlands;
- Or it is the subject of an autonomous ministry, responsible for nationally coordinating the national mainstreaming policy, as in Luxembourg.

However, for many European countries, gender mainstreaming remains difficult due to different barriers as shown in this OECD study:



Source: OECD (2011d), Survey on National Gender Frameworks, Gender Public Policies and Leadership

However, despite these barriers considered by States, European citizens seem increasingly inclined to reduce the gaps between men and women.



A barometer survey ordered by the European Commission<sup>9</sup> thus reveals the expectations of European citizens in terms of gender equality. This Eurobarometer survey aims to measure Europeans' perception of gender inequalities in their countries, to measure the extent of these inequalities or to find out whether the situation has improved or deteriorated over the past ten years:

- 94% of Europeans agree that gender equality is a fundamental right, with barely no difference in the responses by women and men (95% women and 93% men). This opinion is most widespread in long-standing member countries (Spain, Sweden, Portugal, the Netherlands), and is least widespread in countries that later joined the EU or with a more distant cultural heritage from the founding countries (Poland and Lithuania with 46% and 39% respectively to agree)
- Three quarters of respondents (76 %) think that tackling inequality between men and women should be an EU priority.
- Around nine in ten (91 %) agree that tackling inequality between men and women is necessary to creating a fairer society.
- 68% disagree that “women are less willing than men to make a career for themselves”; 66% disagree that “a father must put his career ahead of looking after his young child”.
- Europeans believe that women are more likely than men to experience inequalities in each of six population groups: working parents with young children (women 49% vs. men 5%); single parents (50% vs. 10%); elderly people (24% vs. 6%); young people (23% vs. 6%); migrants (26% vs. 8%) and people with disabilities (11% vs. 4%)
- Europeans are most likely to mention “changing men’s and boy’s attitudes towards caring activities” (41%) and “increasing flexible work arrangements” (40%) as the most effective ways to increase the amount of time spent by men on caring activities. This is followed by ensuring men are not discriminated against if they take leave to care for dependents (35%); and making childcare more accessible (31%)

Attitudes towards equality are evolving, but today’s younger generation is not immune to gender stereotypes and disparities:

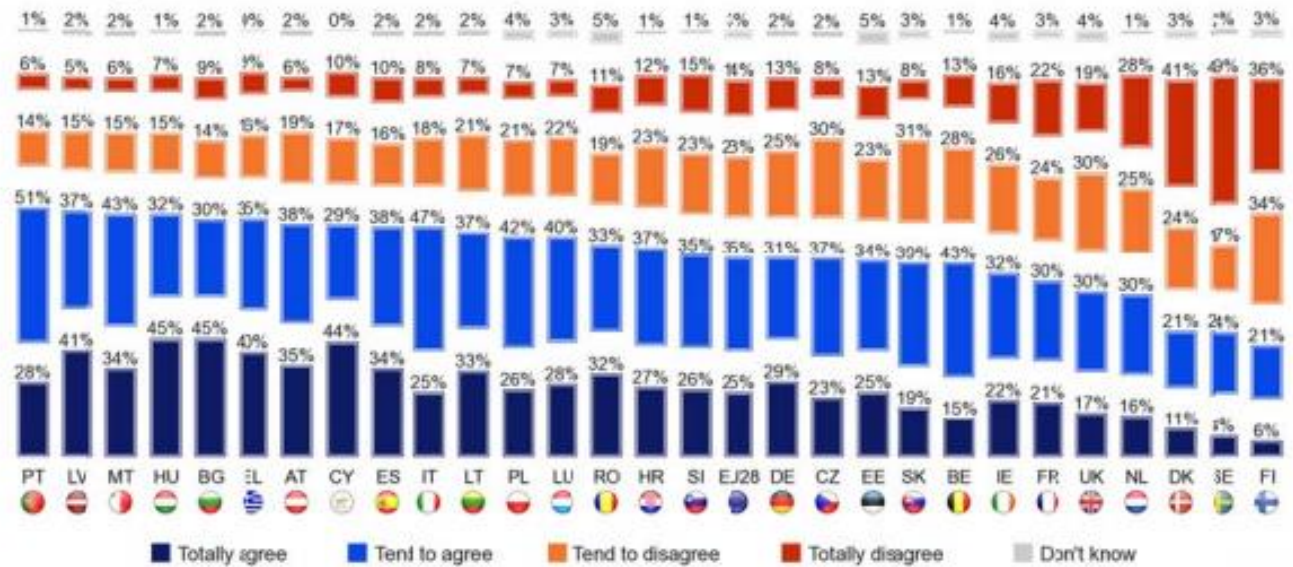
- Over a third of Europeans (36%) disagree that men should work more in the childcare industry
- 50% agree that men are less competent performing household tasks
- 60% of Europeans agree that family life suffers when the mother has a full-time job (see below the detailed answers by EU country)

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<sup>9</sup> Special Eurobarometer 428 GENDER EQUALITY REPORT, March 2015, [https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/eurobarometer\\_report\\_2015\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/eurobarometer_report_2015_en.pdf)

QB1.1. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

All in all family life suffers when the mother has a full time job



10

This very detailed survey shows us that despite the progress made in Europe, with an increasing employment rate for women, there is still a lot to be done, particularly to fight stereotypes and break the glass ceiling.

## 2.3. European measures for Gender Equality in Social protection

*“Care work, both paid and unpaid, is at the heart of humanity and our societies. Economies depend on care work to survive and thrive. Across the world, women and girls are performing more than three-quarters of the total amount of unpaid care work and two thirds of care workers are women. Demographic, socio-economic and environmental transformations are increasing the demand for care workers, who are often trapped in low quality jobs. If not addressed properly, current deficits in care work and its quality will create a severe and unsustainable global care crisis and further increase gender inequalities in the world of work<sup>11</sup>”.*

Among the issues of social protection, we voluntarily choose to focus this part on Gender equality on Social protection only on care mechanisms. Being at the heart of gender inequalities, the inequitable distribution of the care burden between men and women has an impact on several aspects of a women's life-cycle and by extension on a country's economy.

<sup>10</sup> Page 18: [https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/eurobarometer\\_report\\_2015\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/eurobarometer_report_2015_en.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work / International Labour Office – Geneva: ILO, 2018. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_633135.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_633135.pdf)

### 2.3.1. Overall observation

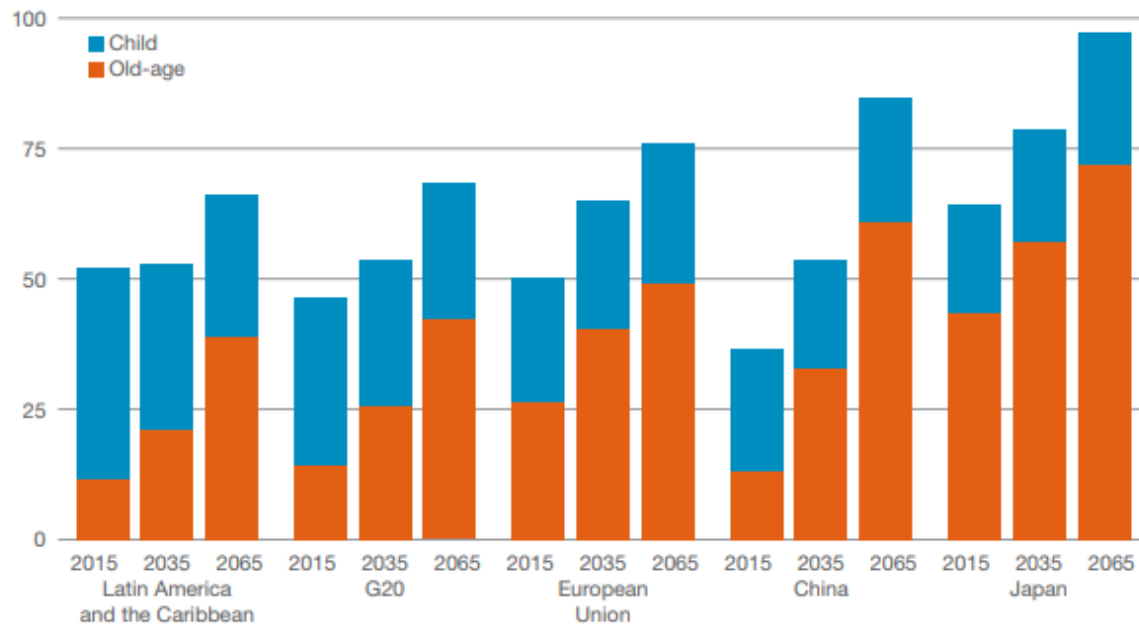
The stereotypical view of society is based on the conception that caring for children, the elderly, people with disabilities, or simply housekeeping, is above all a female responsibility. This conception then leads to an unequal distribution between men and women, according to what society expects from each of them: the man will work to feed his family, and the woman will take care of the family. On the other hand, despite the integration of women into the labour market, the distribution of household tasks and care activities for relatives and children is not yet fully balanced. An unequal distribution of care and household activities partly explains why women are constrained in their professional careers. It is estimated that a woman and a man, with the same level of education, have potentially the same chances of accessing a job, but at the birth of the first child or in the event of the illness of a family member, a woman's career tends to be interrupted. This never completely compensates the gap with respect to a man's career, which will then have repercussions on the possible wage evolution (salary or responsibility increase). These wage gaps, due to the burden of care activities, then continue to have negative repercussions at retirement age since women's pensions are lower than those of men.

The explosion of the private care market, to make it easier for women to work while having a family, leads in turn to negative causes if it is not regulated by the public authorities: indeed it leads to a "care chain", since to allow women to work, other women accept to care for their children and their relatives. However, it can be seen that in professional environments over-represented by women, wages and working conditions tend to be very low.

Nevertheless, as shown in this figure below, as the population in many regions is ageing, there is an urgent need to address the reduction of gender inequalities in care. Indeed, with the ageing of the population and the fact that women are living longer, not only will young people have more elderly relatives in need of care, but older women will also continue to suffer the consequences of gender inequalities in social protection and employment.

## A growing share of elderly in the population

Old-age and child dependency ratio, selected countries and groups, 2015–2065 (%)



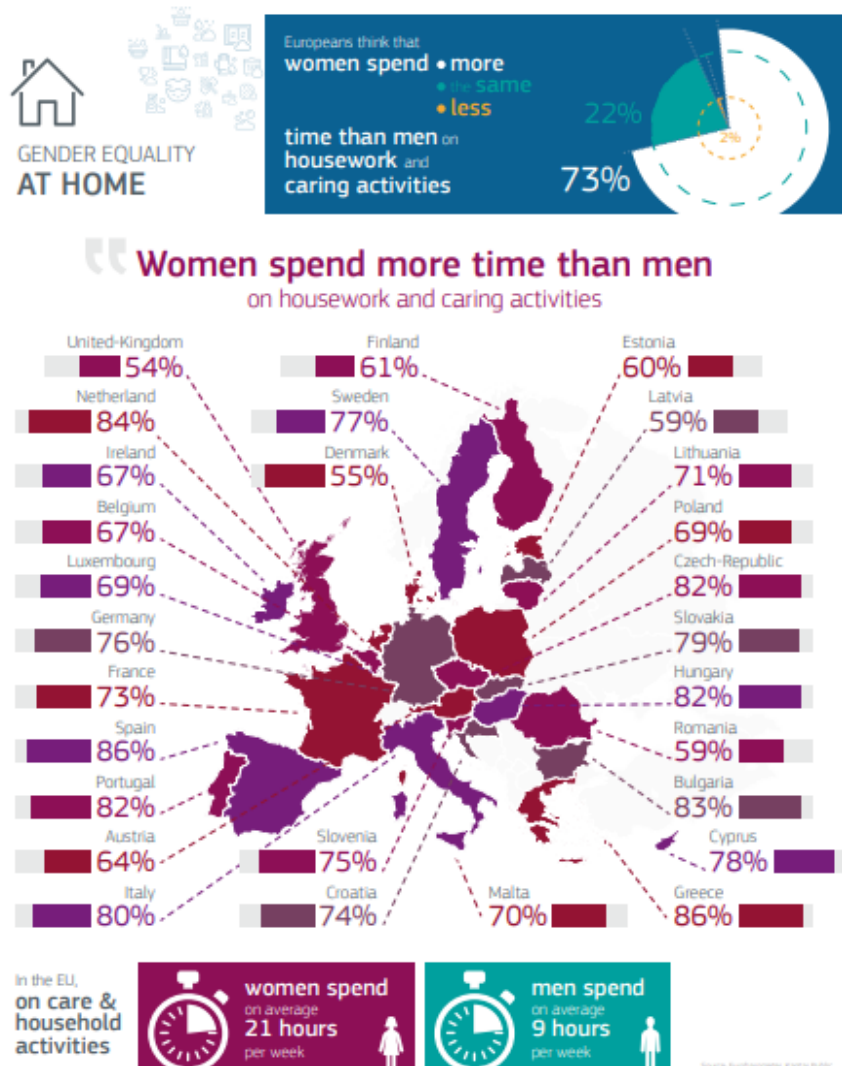
Note: Weighted regional average. Old-age dependency ratio is the ratio of population 65+ per 100 population 15–64 and child dependency ratio is the ratio of population 0–14 per 100 population 15–64.

Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2015). World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision, DVD edition.

Given all the consequences and ramifications that care can have, it is very important for political authorities to address this problem in order to significantly reduce inequalities between men and women, but also between women themselves (care chain), and to lift many households out of poverty.

The following data show the unequal repartition in housework and care activities between men and women in the different EU countries<sup>12</sup>:

<sup>12</sup> “What Europeans have to say about gender equality”, DG Justice, Gender equality fact sheet [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/ebs\\_465\\_infographic\\_gender\\_equality.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/ebs_465_infographic_gender_equality.pdf)



In all the countries surveyed, the division of tasks is unequal and some countries with significant unequal rates are countries that legislate in terms of reducing gender inequalities and are traditionally seen as egalitarian countries (Sweden, the Netherlands, Finland, France, Spain, and Germany).

This figure is interesting because it suggests that despite programmes that encourage gender equality and laws that punish discrimination, it would appear that the roots of inequality are persistent.

To support our statement that it is necessary to deepen the action against gender inequalities in care, and to review the reasons that lead to inequalities despite an apparently advantageous legislative framework, we choose to study the case of the Nordic countries and France with regard to parental leave rights and childcare services for young children

## - The parental leave controversy in Nordic Countries

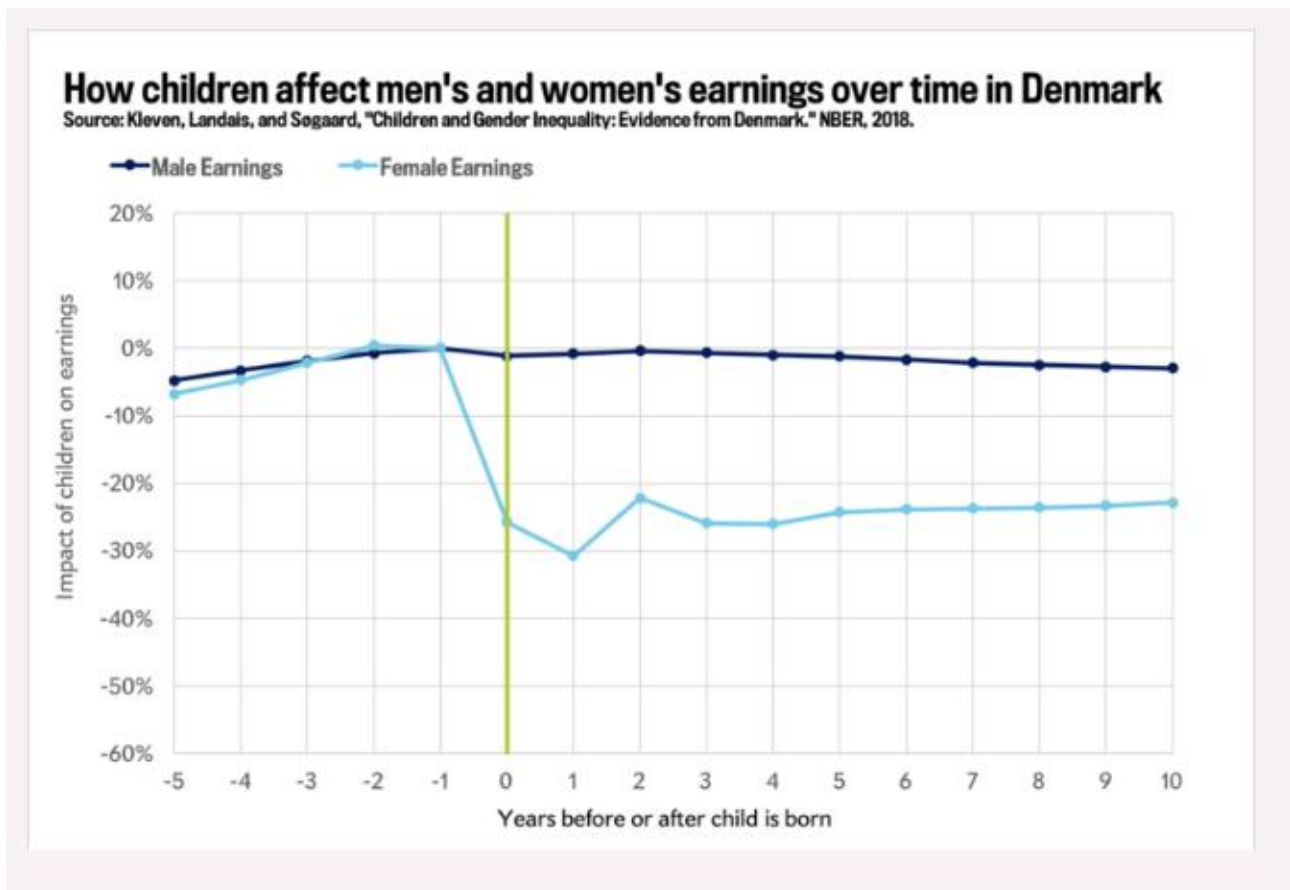
The "Nordic model" is based on a shared history of countries and few class differences, a context in which strong social citizenship and a system of democratic governance have emerged. To ensure its sustainability, governments are reshaping it in small touches rather than through major reforms.

By Nordic country, we will limit this section to the examples of Denmark and Sweden, which have many similarities. The social protection objectives in these two countries are clear and form a coherent whole: maintaining a high level of cohesion by limiting social inequalities, promoting gender equality in the family and on the labour market, ensuring the well-being of children from an early age, and providing access to employment for all. Because one of the main current challenges is to ensure that a generous social protection system, based on the principle of universality, is maintained without damaging the competitiveness of companies. Family policy, based on a redistribution from people without children to families with children, has two objectives: to ensure the well-being of all children and to promote gender equality in the labour market and in the family by offering parents, regardless of their income, the opportunity to be in employment.

Thus, with this generous policy, the Nordic countries regularly appear to be the "avant-garde" of gender equality and care sharing. But recent studies show parentality affects differently men and women career and continue to impact negatively wage gaps and career advancement. Indeed, a study conducted by three economists from the National Bureau of Economic, shows that in Denmark, despite a very generous policy of inequalities between women and men at work due to childbirth persist or have even worsened since the 1980s<sup>13</sup>. In 1980, Danish women earned 18% less overall than men because of the impact of children on their careers. In 2013, they earned 20% less. Thus, even if factors of inequality tend to reduce, those related to the arrival of a child and care-giving do not disappear.

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<sup>13</sup> "Children and Gender Inequality: Evidence from Denmark", Henrik Kleven Camille Landais, Jakob Egholt, January 2018, <https://www.nber.org/papers/w24219.pdf>



A 2013 study of Swedish couples published in the Journal of Labor Economics found that in the first 15 years after childbirth, the wage gap between men and women increases by 32%<sup>14</sup>.

#### - The French model of childcare

The French model for family policy is rooted upon a deliberately pro-birth policy since the end of WW II. This policy was initially designed to help in « repopulating » France. It has become a policy instrument to help in the insertion of women into the labour market. The various child- or elderly-care options seem to ease gender equality achievement.

However, despite these generous tools, there are significant gaps between the participation rates of women and men depending on whether or not they have a child. Thus, the gap is moderately high between women and men without children (67.5% and 74.7% respectively). It is more important when the first child arrives (81.6% and 96.7%). He dropped out when the second child arrived (66% versus 96.4%). It remains high even when both children are over three years of age (86.5% and 95.2%).

<sup>14</sup> "Parenthood and the Gender gap in pay", Journal of Labor Economics, Volume 34, Number 3, July 2016.  
<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/684851>



With the arrival of the third child, the participation rate for women is less than half that of men (41.1% compared to 93.8%). The difference persists even when children are over three years old (74.3% and 93.4%)<sup>15</sup>.

This raises questions about why women slow down their careers to take full-time maternity leave:

According to the 2013 results of the National Observatory for Early Childhood, beyond the desire to care for their children, the reasons for using full-time maternity leave or even withdrawal from the labour market mentioned by the women interviewed are as follows:

- the cost of childcare, for 33% of the women consulted;
- the lack of nearby childcare facilities for 17% of these women;
- incompatibility between working hours and those of the reception service, for 17% of them.

The French public system is therefore not fully able to respond to parents' needs. Considering the price charged by private care facilities, many families therefore choose that the wife / the mother will stop her occupation pending children reaching the age for compulsory education in the public sector.

### 2.3.2. Renewing current care services:

The following is a typology of women's employment patterns in European countries, associated with early childhood care and attention, listed in the table below.

	<b>Dominant professional structure of couples</b>	<b>Dominant reception or care arrangements</b>	<b>Incentive to take parental leave</b>
Nordic countries (Norway, Finland)	Dual-active couple working full time	State intervention in favour of formal childcare facilities, particularly collective ones	Long leave after childbirth is not favoured
Central and Eastern European countries	Intermediate employment rates for women and part-time work very poorly developed	Childcare facilities are relatively underdeveloped	Long leave granted to women after childbirth: women withdraw from the labour market for up to three years

<sup>15</sup> Information report of the French Senate, "Modes of care for young children: an issue of equality between women and men", 2014-2015 [http://www.senat.fr/rap/r14-473/r14-473\\_mono.html](http://www.senat.fr/rap/r14-473/r14-473_mono.html)



Continental and Anglo-Saxon countries	Traditional model of the "Mr. breadwinner" amended by women's part-time work	Diversity (formal and informal care) in relation to diversified forms of employment for women	
Mediterranean countries ((with disparities, e.g. Portugal holds a special place)	Traditional model of "Mr. Earner" where women do not work and men work full time	Child cared for by mother and use of informal custody (by family/friends/neighbours...)	Limited maternity/parental leave

Faced with the slow progress in reducing pay inequalities due to unequal sharing in care activities, many European countries have chosen to develop new policies to encourage or force better gender sharing:

## To encourage men to take paternity leave:

- **Sweden:** « use it or lose it »: Sweden provides for a maximum of 480 days of parental leave for each child. In the first 390 days, parents are paid almost 80% of their salary. This parental leave is financed by taxes. 90 of these 480 days are reserved for each parent. The time can be taken until the child reaches the age of eight.t. If the father doesn't take these 90 days, they will lose it since it's now non-transferable to the mother.

- **Portugal:** In 2015, the government introduced "gender-neutral parental leave". Maternity leave" has been replaced by "initial parental leave" and "paternity leave"; and optional parental leave for fathers has been replaced by "parental leave for fathers only" which gives the right to a "sharing bonus" when the leave is taken by the father. Both parents benefit from flexibility in use of the parental leave, after the obligatory six weeks (42 calendar days) that the mother has to take immediately after birth.

## To improve care sector and make it more affordable:

- **UK:** to ensure the cost of childcare are no longer a work barrier, the UK government is doubling the number of hours of free childcare available to working parents of three and four year olds from 15 hours per week to 30 hours. The aim is to make childcare more affordable and to enable parents to work, or to work more if they choose to do so. Research shows that the expansion of publicly funded childcare in the UK from 2000 to 2008 increased the employment rate of mothers whose youngest child was three years old by about 3 %, equivalent to about 12,000 more mothers in work.

**Norway, Finland:** The idea is to facilitate the flexibility of parents, whether during parental leave by reducing it and thus allowing the parent to work a few days from home, or to establish a better work-life balance. This is the case in Norway or Finland, which facilitate the "Flexible parental leave arrangements", such as part-

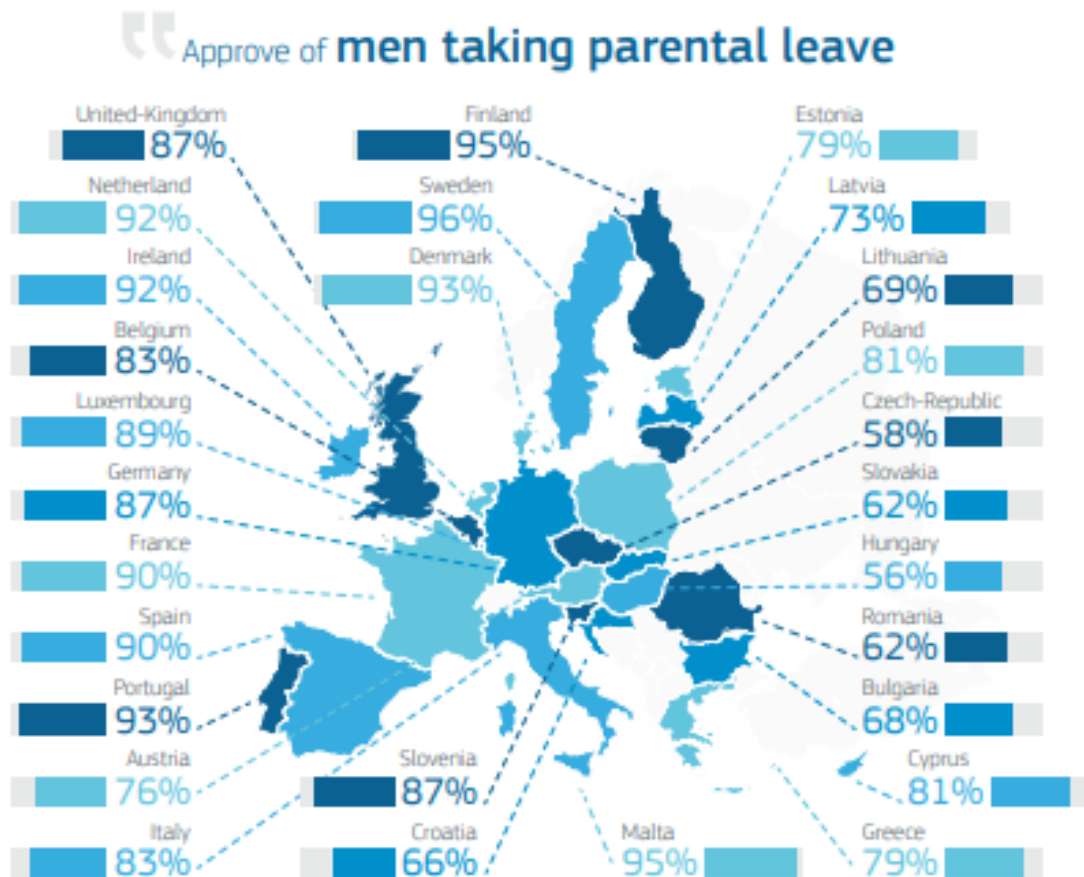
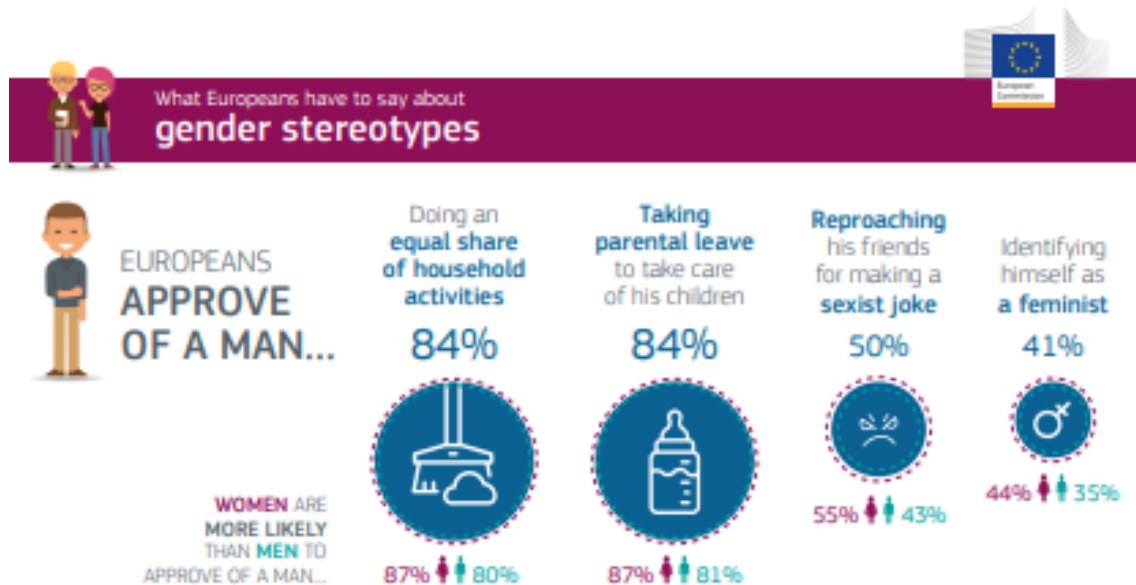
time leave or leave in several separate blocks over different years, which has had the effect of boosting the take-up of leave benefits by men. Thus in Norway, about a quarter of eligible fathers choose to take their father's quota on a part-time basis. In Finland, parents can take partial leave and work part-time; parents who opt to take partial leave can do so during an additional three years.

**France:** A report from the National Assembly suggested that lowering the school age could allow schools to welcome children as young as 2 years old, in a simpler way than at present. This possibility would allow families to save on childcare costs, which are very expensive when they are not in public facilities.

These political decisions are driven by a change in mentalities among European citizens who want to change family models more and fight stereotypes as shown below <sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Factsheet - Causes of unequal pay between men and women 06 March 2018  
[https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/ebs\\_465\\_infographic\\_gender\\_stereotypes.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/ebs_465_infographic_gender_stereotypes.pdf)



Source: Eurobarometer, Kantar Public

## 2.4. European experience in tackling gender inequality in Employment

*“In the aftermath of the Great Recession, there is now an urgent need to focus on the economic case and on how changes in the labour market might provide better economic opportunities for both men and women.(...) It is true that many countries around the world have made significant progress towards gender equality in education in recent decades. Today girls outperform boys in some areas of education and are less likely to drop out of school than boys. But, the glass is still half-full: women continue to earn less than men, are less likely to make it to the top of the career ladder, and are more likely to end their lives in poverty<sup>17</sup>”*

### 2.4.1. Overall observation

During the economic crisis, unemployment rose sharply in almost all European countries, for both men and women. However, across the EU as a whole, the female employment rate reached its highest level ever in 2014 (64%), while male employment (75%) has not yet returned to its pre-crisis level<sup>18</sup>. As a result, more and more families are becoming financially dependent on women's work, which on the one hand is a good thing because it reflects the fact that women are more decision-makers in their families, but it suggests that if wage and career development gaps are not reduced, more families fall into economic vulnerability.

Thus, in a 2014 recommendation, the European Commission affirmed its commitment to strengthen the principle of equal pay for men and women, and to help EU countries find the right approach to ending wage discrimination and the gender pay gap. This objective of reducing the wage gap should be understood as a comprehensive strategy aimed at reducing the different and complex causes that underlie gender inequality at work such as:

- stereotypes
- difficult conciliation between personal and professional life
- pay discrimination
- segregation in the labour market which is rooted in girls' educational guidance

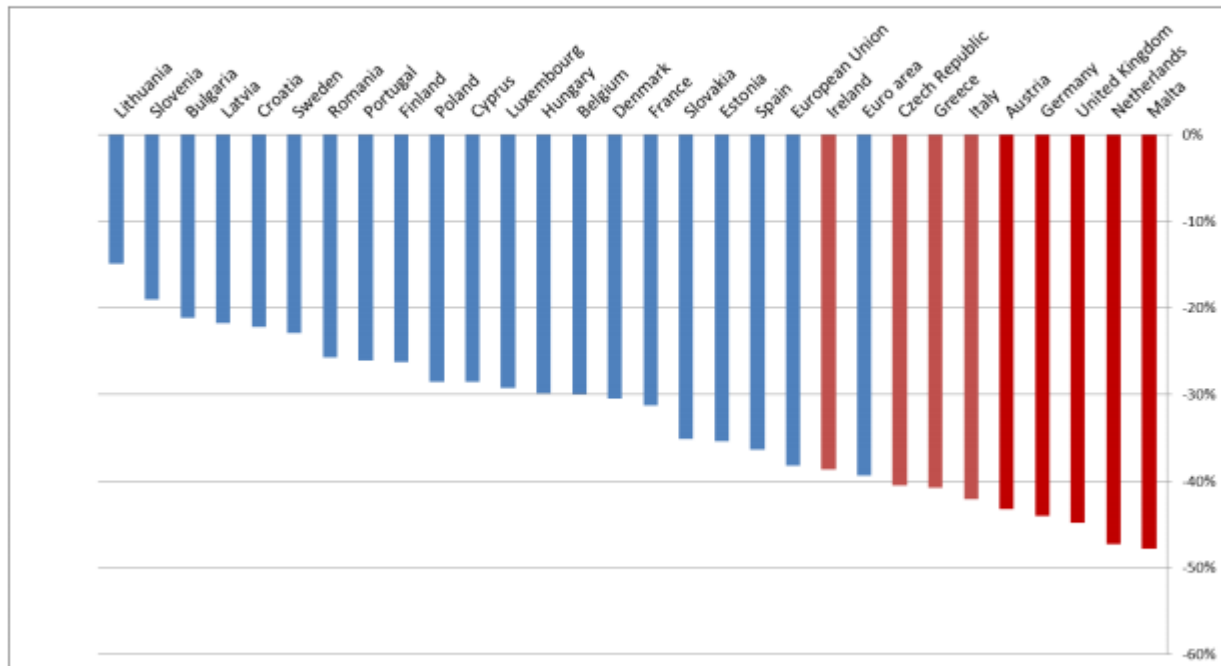
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<sup>17</sup> Gender equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship: Final report to the MCM 2012, Meeting of the OECD Council at Ministerial Level. Paris, 23-24 May 2012. <http://www.oecd.org/employment/50423364.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> EU Commission strategic engagement for Gender equality, 2016-2019, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/strategic\\_engagement\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/strategic_engagement_en.pdf)

Thus, today the gender overall earnings gap vary between the European member states:

## Gender Overall Earnings Gap %



<sup>19</sup> Source: Gender pay gap, Policy Framework, European Commission, 2017

Gender pay gap is a consequence of the ongoing discrimination and inequalities in the labour market, reflected in particular in the fact that:

- the majority of part-time jobs are still occupied by women;
- some professions remain typical female jobs and low-paid such as care activities;
- few women are in decision-making bodies of large scale companies;
- few women are union president;

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.etuc.org/sites/default/files/event/file/2018-06/12%20June%202018%20-%20Karen%20Vandekerckhove%20-%20The%20EU%20Action%20Plan%202017-2019.pdf>

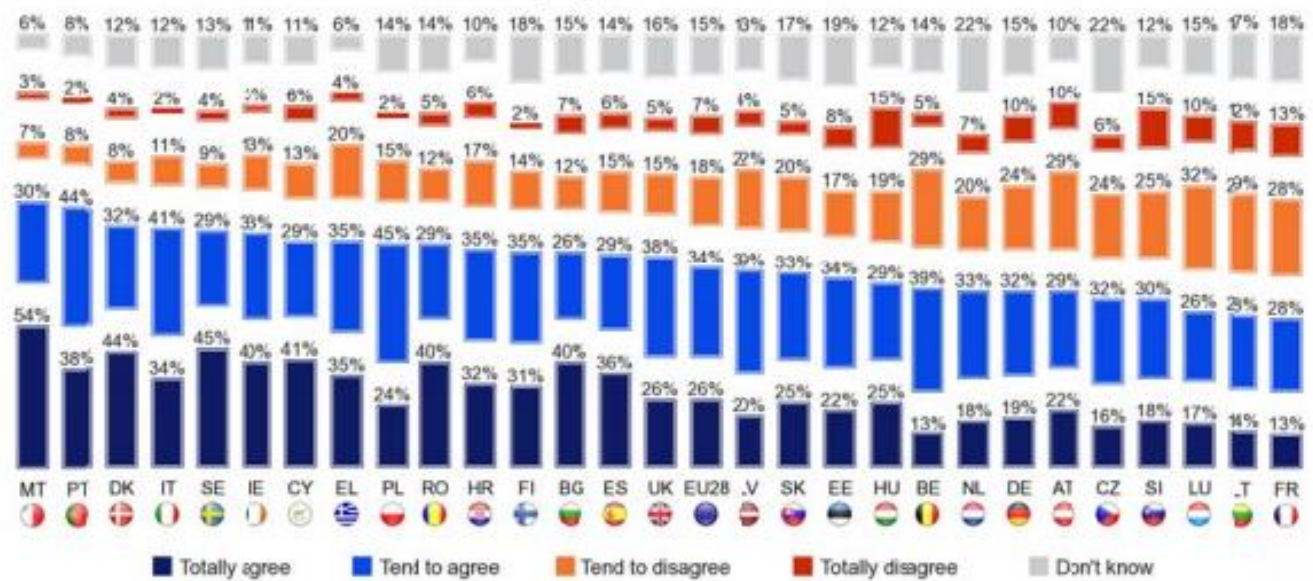
- majority of informal sector workers are women.

Yet, the majority of European citizens surveyed said that better integration of women into the labour market would promote economic growth<sup>20</sup>

The benefits for the European economies of a significant reduction in the wage gap between women and men are demonstrated:

QB11.3. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

If there are more women on the labour market, the economy will grow



<sup>20</sup> Page 36: [https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/eurobarometer\\_report\\_2015\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/eurobarometer_report_2015_en.pdf)

## The benefits of moving to full gender equality in 2030 selected examples

Full gender equality in 2030 at Member States level					
	Current GDP billions Eur	No change in gender equality GDP 2030 (A)	Full gender equality GDP 2030 (B)	% gain (B-A)/A	Total increase in government revenue billions Eur
European Union	14,531	17,547	19,594	12%	815
Czech Republic	170	242	288	19%	16
Germany	3,042	3,596	3,916	9%	129
Estonia	21	31	36	17%	2
France	2,195	2,834	2,988	5%	73
Italy	1,655	1,973	2,203	12%	98
Netherlands	687	946	1,028	9%	32



<sup>21</sup> Source: *Gender pay gap, Policy Framework, European Commission, 2017*

It's in order to assist Member States in reducing the pay gap between women and men and to ensure the full application of the principle of equal pay for women and men, that the Commission adopted in November 2017 the "EU Action Plan 2017-2019: Tackling the pay gap between men and women", with 8 main field of action:

1. Improving the application of the equal pay principle
2. Combating segregation in occupations and sectors
3. Breaking the glass ceiling: that blocks women's access to managerial and decision-making positions.  
These managerial positions are generally better paid.
4. Tackling the care inequality and facilitate work-life balance
5. Better valorising women's skills, efforts and responsibilities
6. Uncovering inequalities and stereotypes
7. Alerting and informing about the gender pay gap
8. Enhancing partnerships to tackle the gender pay gap

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.etuc.org/sites/default/files/event/file/2018-06/12%20June%202018%20-%20Karen%20Vandekerckhove%20-%20The%20EU%20Action%20Plan%202017-2019.pdf>



## 2.4.2. European experiences to tackle professional gender inequality

On the basis of Community strategies to reduce pay inequalities, Member States have developed innovative policies to try to accelerate the gender process.

Countries that have more recently joined the European Union, or countries that had a low level of professional integration of women, are largely those with the most visible results (Greece, Lithuania, Romania, Poland, among others). However, the countries that initiated these policies more than a decade ago are now developing programmes to go further and reach sectors that seemed distant from labour issues, such as primary education (UK, Spain, and Norway).

Innovative measures have been taken on the following subjects:

Minimum wage legislation: this policy, which imposes a minimum wage, allows the lowest wages to be raised in the traditionally lowest-paid and protected professions. To the extent that women are the majority of workers in low-paid and protected professions, women have benefited from these measures. In that order, Lithuania increased significantly the level of pay in low-paid jobs over-represented by women (in particular service jobs).

Sanction wage inequalities:

France: In 2012, the French government tightened up existing sanctions against companies with more than 50 employees that do not comply with their gender equality obligations. Large companies (300 or more employees) must negotiate an action plan with the unions; others (50 or more employees) must at least define an action plan and send it to the public services for control. Sanctions may include a prohibition on competing in public tenders.

Mandatory bargaining on equal pay:

Luxembourg, France

These measures require employers and unions to include in their annual wage negotiations wage increases and vigilance regarding gender-related wage gaps. This has increased trade union awareness of the fight for gender equality and strengthens women's representation in trade unions.

Provide data on wages: Sweden, Austria, Italy, and France



Public or private companies must publish their compensation data for their employees under a different timetable depending on the countries applying this measure. Some companies now appreciate this publicity as part of their corporate social responsibility and are happy to do so.

Reconciliation policy: Austria, Slovenia, Denmark, France

As presented in the section on burden sharing, it is a question of developing new formulas to promote a better balance between personal and professional life. This requires above all the development of new technologies that promote the "flexi office", or in other words the ability to work from anywhere. This opportunity now attracts young start-ups who attract young managers who value a new way of working.

Combat Gender stereotypes in education: Spain, Norway

The only way to change mentality is to work from childhood, or at least from youth. Spain and Norway have fully understood this exercise by integrating courses related to the fight against gender stereotypes and professional equality into training curricula from secondary school onwards and then into vocational training. Programmes are also being developed to promote the integration of girls into scientific, technological and IT fields that train them for jobs in which women are now a very small minority.

Analyse and eliminate gender pay gap: Germany

The German ministry of family affairs, senior citizens, women and youth adapted the Swiss model of a pay calculator and audit system, call Logib. The German model named "Logib-D" is a pay calculator to identify the gender pay gap in a company's pay structure. It also assists human resources in analysing and eliminating the gender pay gap if there is any. Logib-D identifies the factors that determine the wage gap between men and women, where women and men share the same employment characteristics. The tool is an easy-to-use software package that is suitable for companies with 50 or more employees.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Closing the gender gaps in social protection and employment is not an easy task, it requires a strong government's intervention to introduce policy capable to tackle deep-seated social norms and gender stereotypes. This requires a multifaceted approach, in order to understand the roots of gender discriminations and to develop gender-sensitive actions.

Analysis of the formal and informal legal framework is necessary to identify actions where the policy maker must intervene to either revise an existing measure that discriminates against women or introduce a new one to end a given traditional situation in which the public authority did not usually intervene.

Political action is needed to combat discriminatory behaviour, promote community mobilisation, increase awareness and empowerment initiatives in order to change discriminatory attitudes, social norms and practices, through for example, media campaigns.

A comprehensive social protection systems and an effective employment policy must be gender-responsive in order to:

- ensure they do not further exacerbate gender inequality and that they
- promote gender equality in both wellbeing outcomes and access to social protection. To effectively address gender inequality, they need to be well-coordinated with related rights and services.

European countries have diverse strategies to tackle gender social and professional inequalities, because there is no single solution with identical measures replicable in all regions. It is necessary to rely on regional and local specificities to identify the main sources of discrimination and to tackle them efficiently. The role played by the European Union in setting a general direction is nevertheless essential, insofar as it obliges or challenges Member States to invent new methods to combat gender inequalities in their countries.

However, if the EU's objective is to achieve a similar employment rate for men and women in employment in 2020 and, therefore, to significantly reduce the causes of gender gap in employment, it is necessary to further coordinate efforts at Community level to facilitate women's labour-market participation.

Women's increasing participation in the labour market will be achieved through a new way of working, which will make it easier to balance caring and professional responsibilities. That being said, this demonstrates the extent to which employment and social protection are linked, since improving the social protection system promotes women's integration into employment, reduces gender inequalities, and vice versa. However,

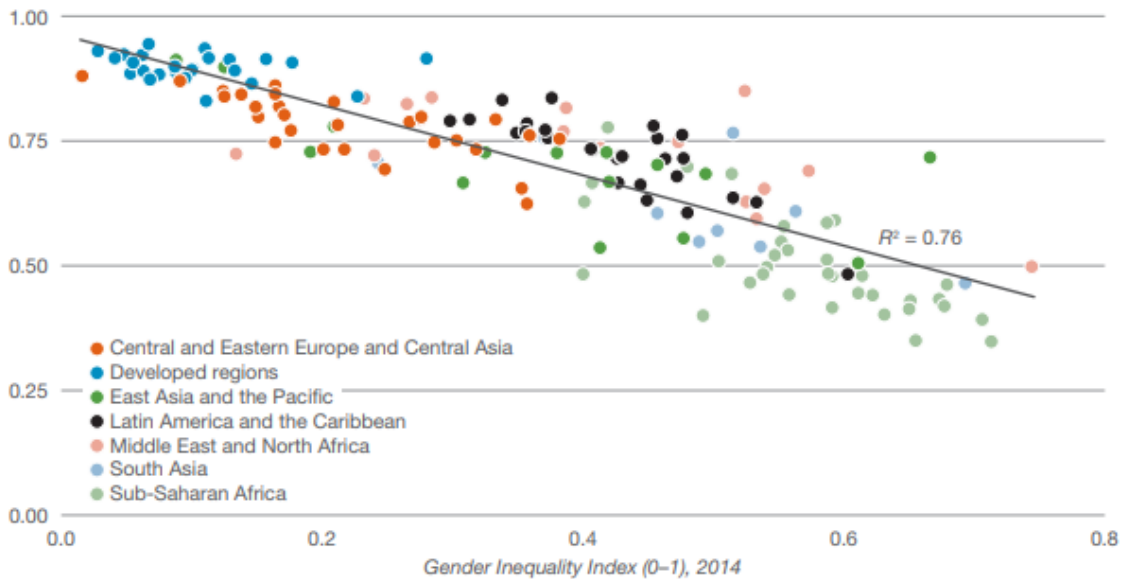
policies, however important they may be, will not be as effective without significant work in educating the younger generations, both to tackle gender stereotypes and prevent them from reoccurring with new generations, but also because these new generations entering the labour market will be sensitized to the new technologies. However, if girls are not educated in new technologies now, this generation will not be able to integrate into tomorrow's economy and gender inequalities will still persist. This will then have social repercussions, given the social challenges we will all have to face, such as the ageing of the population and the increasing need for care, we must then reduce inequality between men and women as soon as possible to promote the emergence of an inclusive society.

## ANNEX

**Figure 1**

## Gender equality is associated with human development

Human Development Index (0–1), 2014

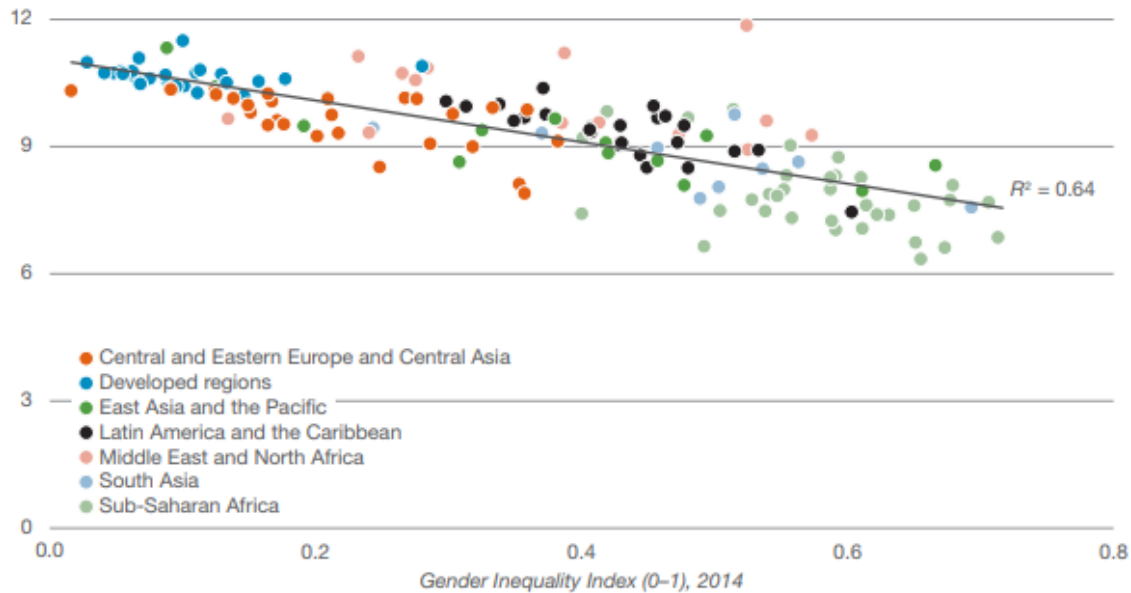


Source: United Nations Development Programme 2015 Human Development Report.

Figure 2

## Gender equality is associated with higher income per capita

Log GDP per capita (PPP), 2014

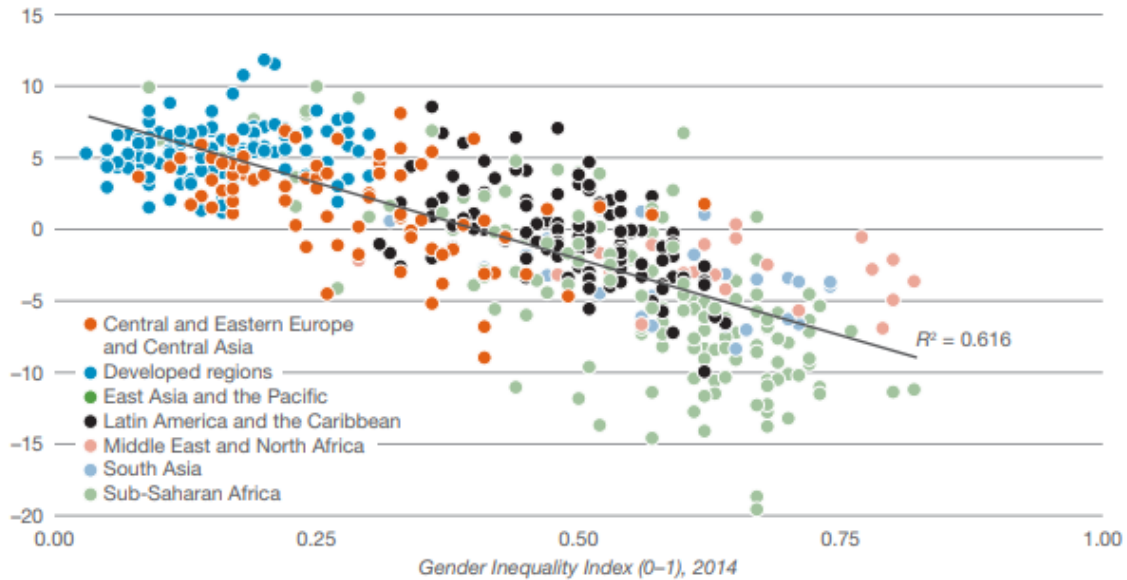


Source: Development Indicators 2015 and United Nations Development Programme 2015 Human Development Report.

Figure 3

## Gender equality is associated with faster economic growth

GDP per capita average growth (%), 1990–2010



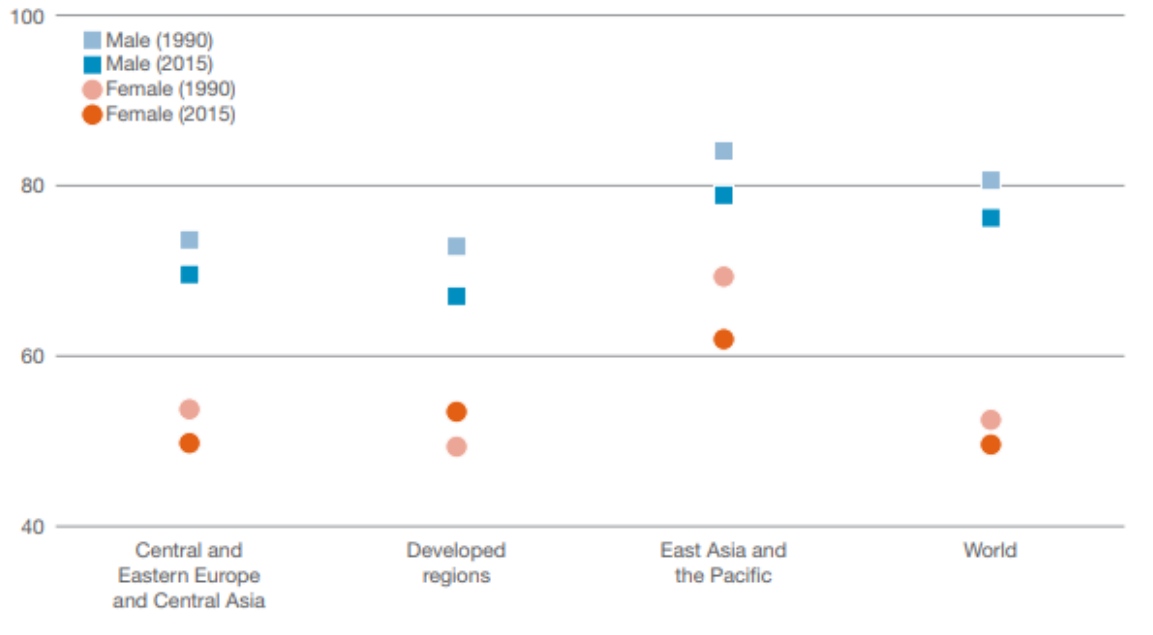
Note: GDP per capita growth was regressed on initial income to control for convergence. Years range from 1990 to 2010.

Source: Development Indicators 2015, IMF staff estimates, and United Nations Development Programme 2015 Human Development Report.

**Figure 4**

## Male and female rates of labour force participation have declined since 1990

*Trends in male and female labour force participation rates (age 15+), global and selected regions, 1990 and 2015 (%)*



Note: Weighted regional average. 180 countries are included.

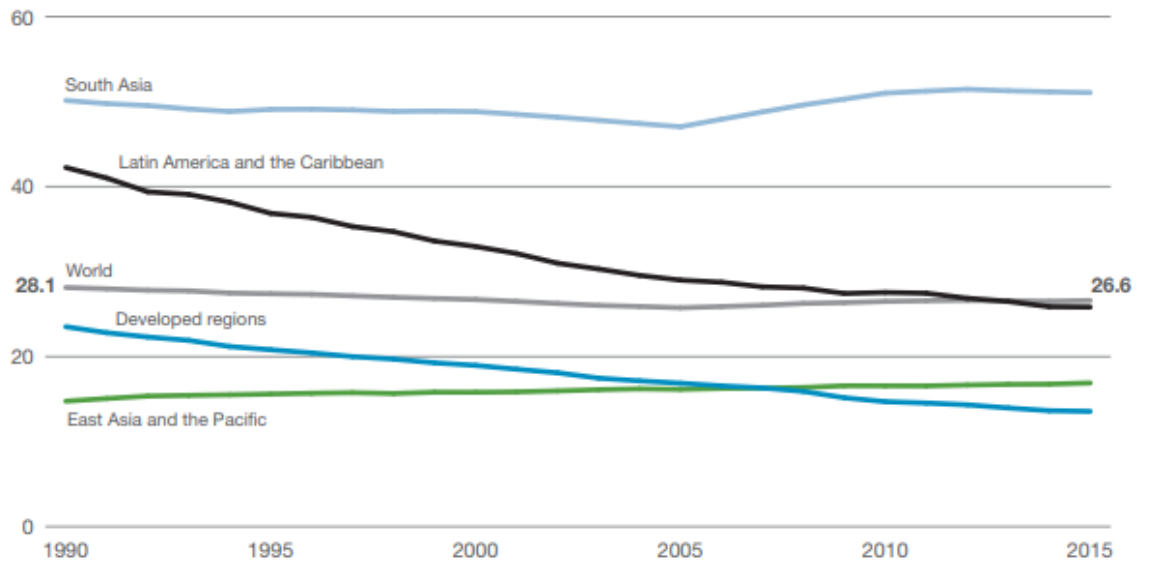
Source: International Labour Organization Key Indicators of the Labour Market 2015 (table 1A).



**Figure 5**

## The global gender gap in labour force participation rates has narrowed slightly, with regional variation

*Trends in the labour force participation gender gap (age 15+), globally and by region, 1990–2015 (%)*



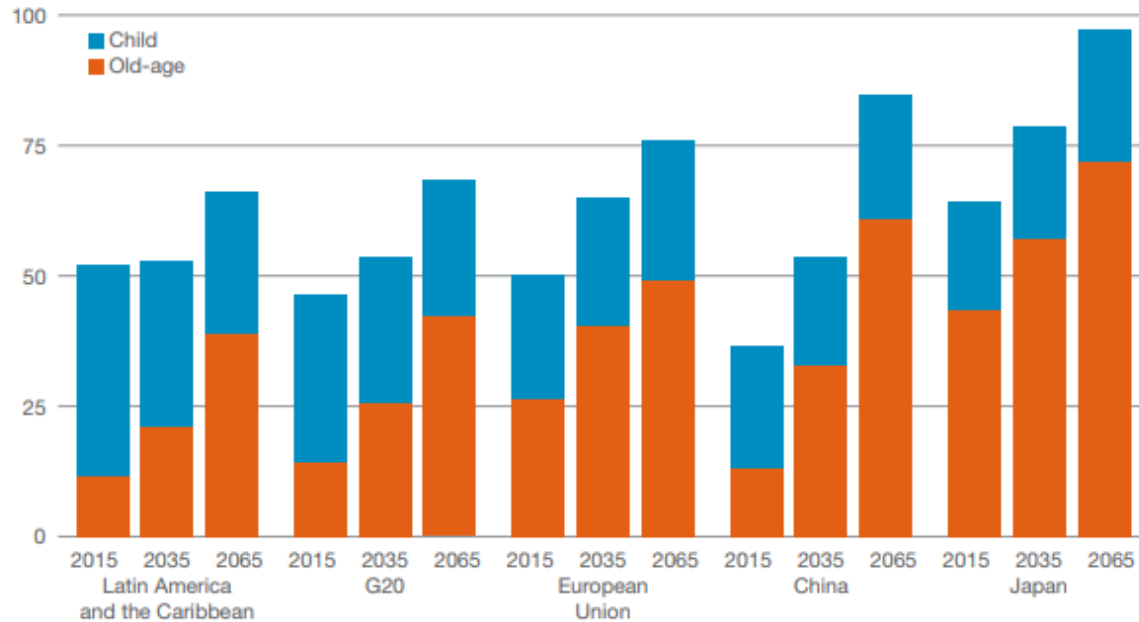
*Note:* Weighted regional average. 180 countries are included. Gender gap is the difference between male and female.

*Source:* International Labour Organization Key Indicators of the Labour Market 2015 (table 1A).

Figure 6

## A growing share of elderly in the population

Old-age and child dependency ratio, selected countries and groups, 2015–2065 (%)



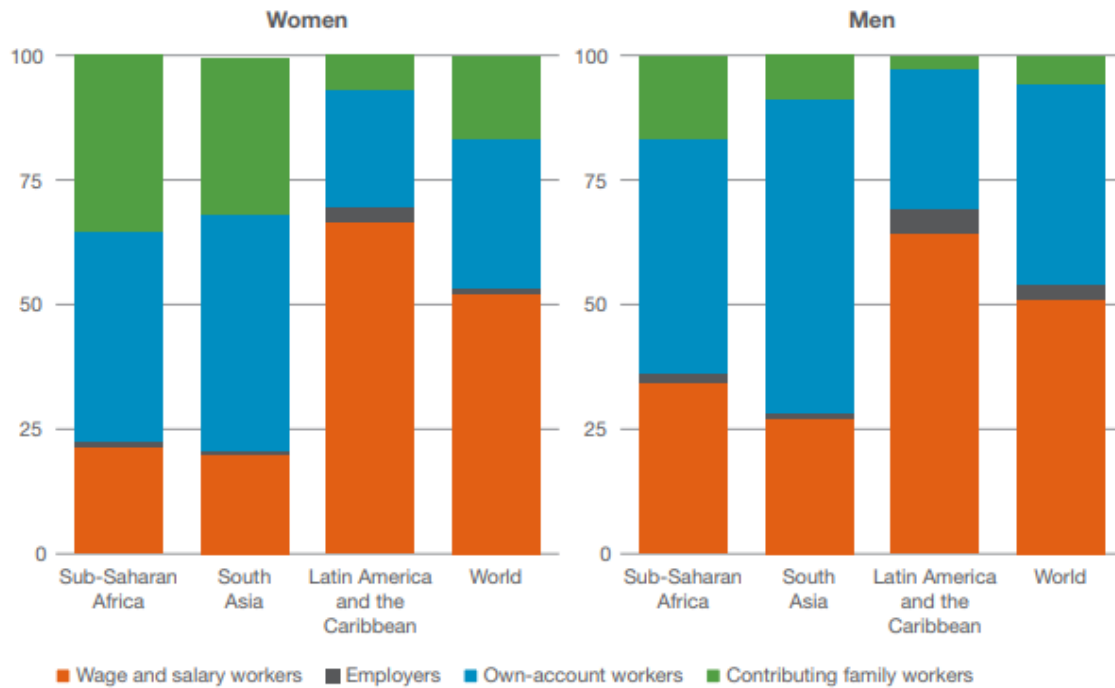
Note: Weighted regional average. Old-age dependency ratio is the ratio of population 65+ per 100 population 15–64 and child dependency ratio is the ratio of population 0–14 per 100 population 15–64.

Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2015). World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision, DVD edition.

**Figure 7**

## The share of women in wage and salary work varies hugely across regions

*Distribution of employment by status in employment, by sex and region, 2015 (%)*



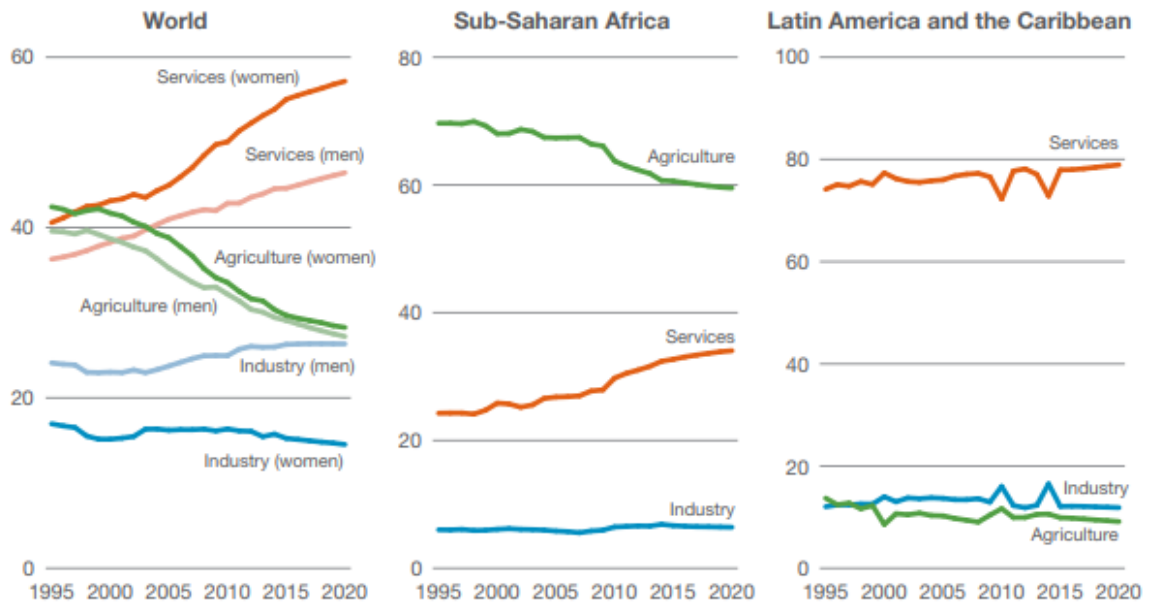
Note: South Asia is equivalent to Southern Asia in ILO KILM's regional groups.

Source: International Labour Organization Key Indicators of the Labour Market Table R3 (accessed July 2016).

Figure 8

## Women's paid work is shifting from agriculture to services

Share of employment, by sector and region, 1995–2020 (%)



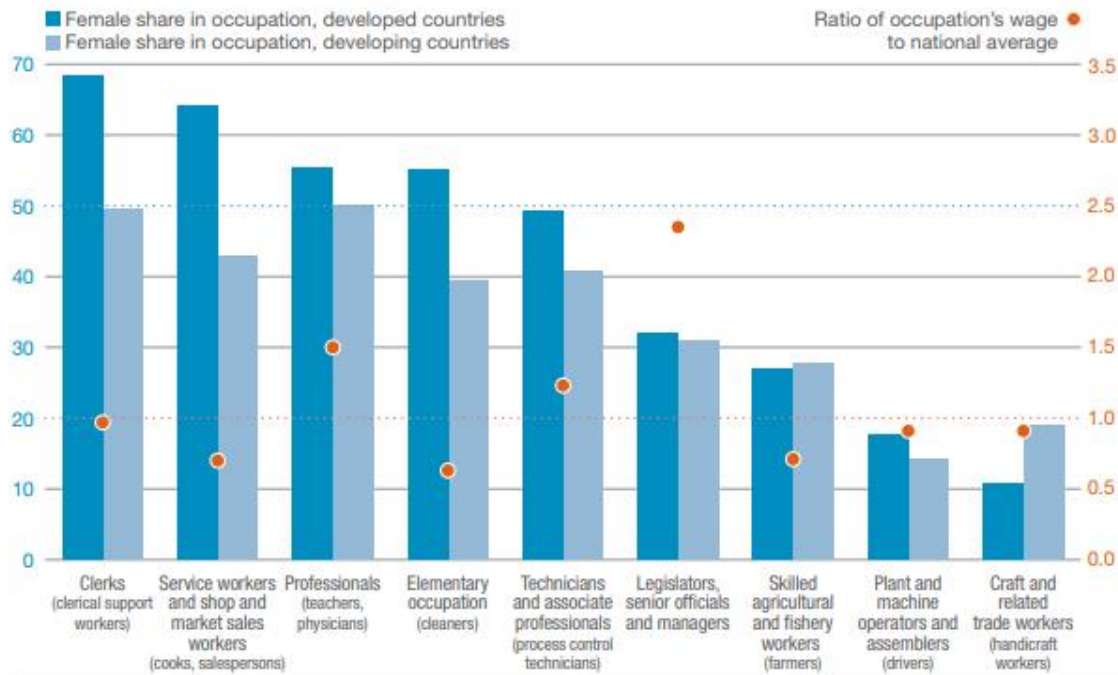
Note: Weighted regional average.

Source: International Labour Organization Key Indicators of the Labour Market 2015 (table R4).

Figure 9

## Women tend to be overrepresented in low-paying occupations

Female share in occupations (%) and wage ratio by occupations, latest year 2008–2015



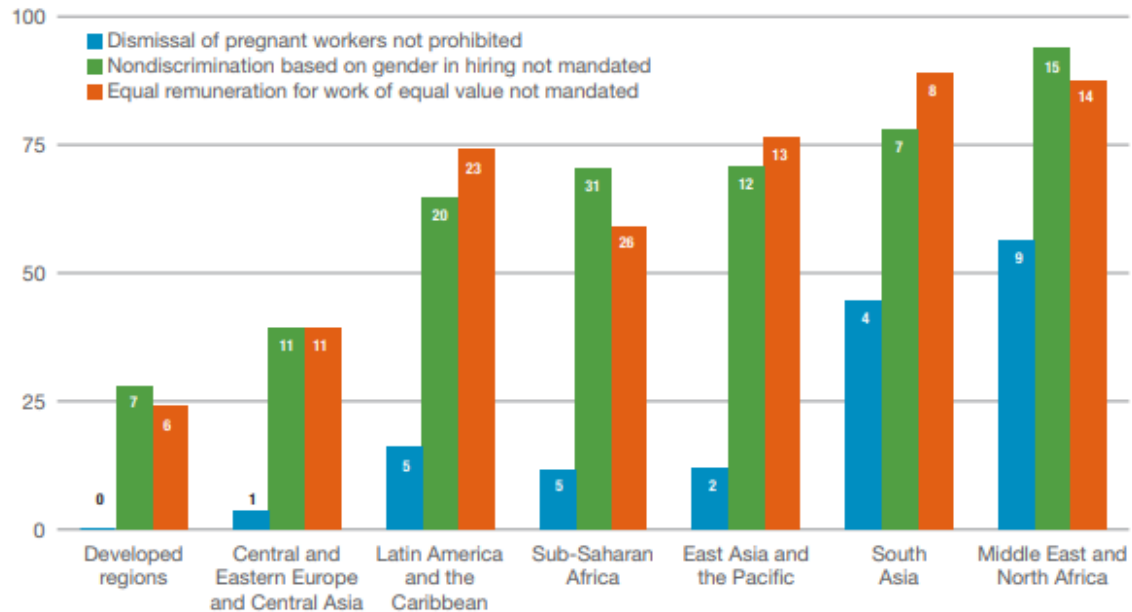
Note: Data available for 43 countries. Data for occupational share is most recent available (2008–2014) and data on average wage is most recent available (2010–2015). Figures are not weighted by population. Only data based on ISCO-08 and ISCO-88 classifications are included.

Source: International Labour Organization ILOSTAT database, International Labour Organization Key Indicators of the Labour Market database and EUROSTAT, Structure of Earning Survey 2010.

Figure 10

## Too many countries do not legally guarantee nondiscrimination in hiring or equal remuneration for work of equal value

Share of countries that do not prohibit key types of work discrimination against women by region, 2015 (%)

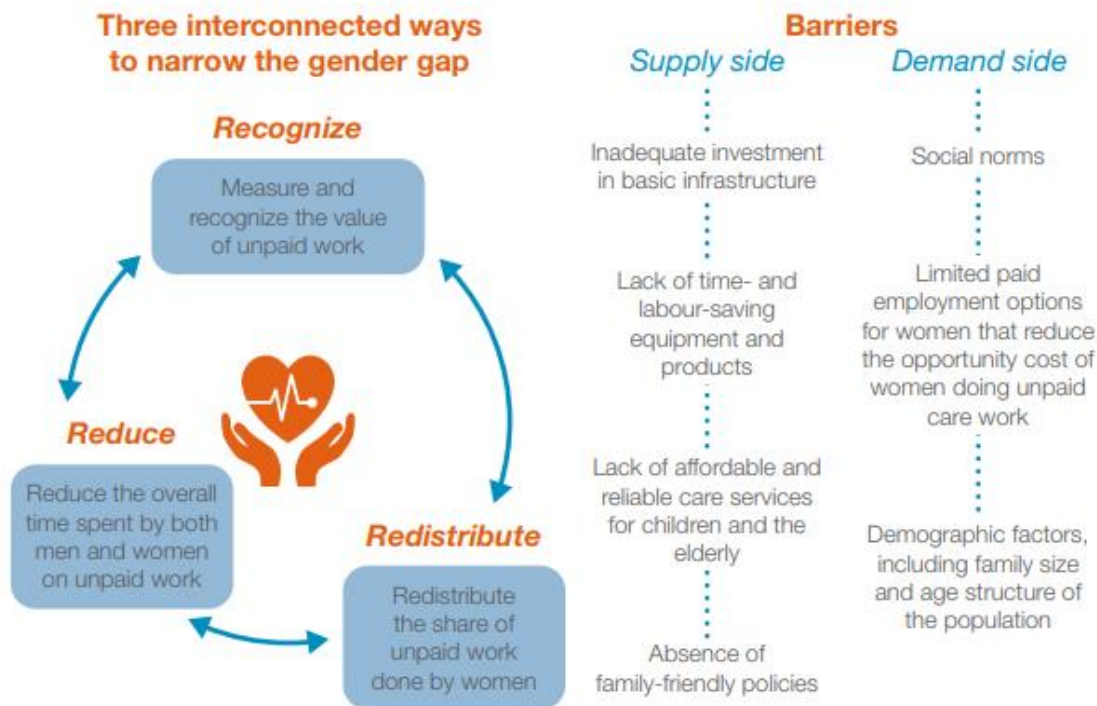


Note: 170 countries are included. Figures on bars are numbers of countries.

Source: Women, Business and the Law database, 2016.

Figure 11

## Barriers to tackling gender gaps in unpaid care work through the three “R”s

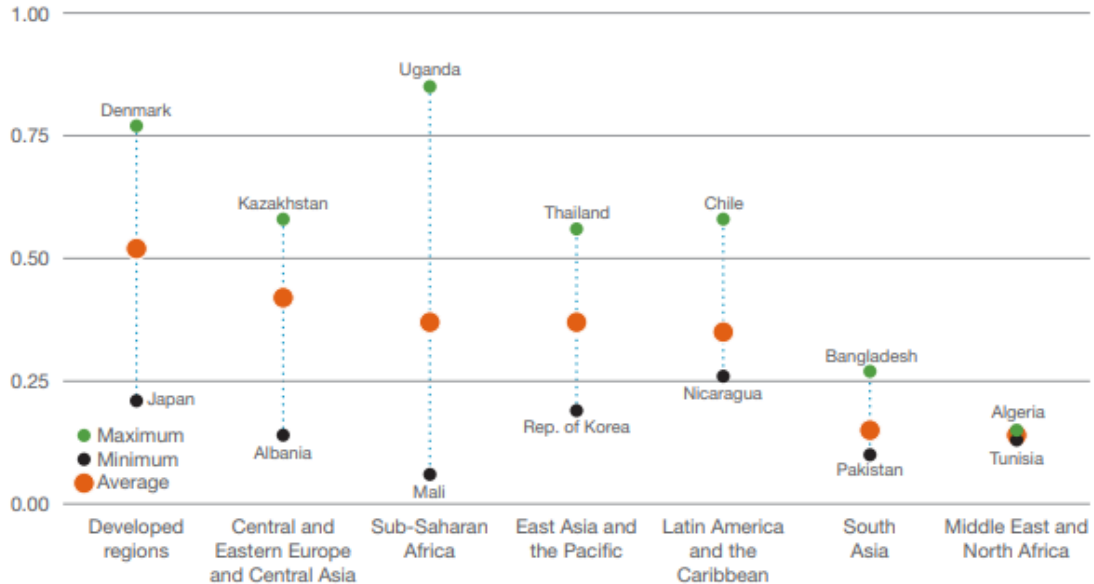


Source: McKinsey Global Institute analysis. Anna Fáth and Mark Blackden, "Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction: Unpaid Care Work", October 2009, UNDP Policy Brief.

Figure 12

## Across regions, men do one-half to less than one-fifth of the unpaid care work that women do

Male-female ratio of unpaid care work, regional averages and high and low country performers by region, 2014



Note: Unweighted regional average. 69 countries are included.

Source: OECD Gender, Institutions and Development Database 2014.