

Research note

Gender equality and the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Acknowledgements

The authors of this research note are members of the research and statistics team of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) – Davide Barbieri, Jakub Caisl, Giulia Lanfredi, Blandine Mollard, Julia Ochmann, Vytautas Peciukonis, Dr Jolanta Reingardė, Dr Lina Salanauskaitė and Dr Laurène Thil – and the research team of the Istituto per la ricerca sociale (IRS) – Dr Flavia Pesce, Prof Manuela Samek Lodovici, Nicoletta Torchio (IRS) and Professor Dr Pascale Vielle (Université catholique de Louvain and IRS). Special thanks go to the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Anna Collins Falk (Swedish Gender Equality Agency and a member of

EIGE's Experts' Forum), the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions and the European Commission's Gender Equality Unit at the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers for their highly relevant peer review and feedback. Many thanks also go to Eurostat for data support, to Gráinne Murphy (Milieu Consulting) for her editorial support and to other colleagues at EIGE for their feedback and administrative support. Important contributions to the analysis were also made by the other team members of the IRS: Dr Serena Drufuca, Elena Ferrari and Nicola Orlando. The research was coordinated by Dr Lina Salanauskaitė.

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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2021

Print ISBN 978-92-9482-829-3 doi:10.2839/071987 MH-09-21-078-EN-C

PDF ISBN 978-92-9482-828-6 doi:10.2839/29540 MH-09-21-078-EN-N

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EU Member State codes

BE	Belgium
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CZ	Czechia
DK	Denmark
DE	Germany
EE	Estonia
IE	Ireland
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FR	France
HR	Croatia
IT	Italy
CY	Cyprus
LV	Latvia
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
HU	Hungary
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands
AT	Austria
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
FI	Finland
SE	Sweden
EU-27	27 EU Member States

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Introduction

The year 2020 will be remembered as the year of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, with two distinct waves of different intensities and timings across countries. The first wave hit the European Union between mid February and the end of June and was characterised by stay-at-home orders and physical distancing measures in most countries. The associated lockdown measures resulted in a significant reduction in total employment in the 27 Member States (EU-27) compared with 2019.

The slowing of the pandemic in summer 2020 led many countries to relax their containment measures; however, many sectors and jobs – such as those related to tourism and culture (accommodation, catering, entertainment and recreation, transport, travel agencies, etc.) – did not fully recover because of limitations on transnational mobility and social distancing. As a result, the sectors and occupations most or least affected by the COVID-19 crisis fluctuated according to the peaks of the pandemic and the different response measures implemented by national governments. The short-lived recovery in summer 2020 ended in the autumn, when a second wave of the pandemic began.

The COVID-19 health crisis has had strong repercussions for the EU labour market, despite the employment and income support measures adopted. The outbreak has also highlighted the importance of providing workers with essential services, such as healthcare, ICT and utilities, education and emergency services (including support services for victims of domestic violence) (ILO, 2020a). The European Institute for Gender Equality's (EIGE) analysis ⁽¹⁾ shows that women are over-represented in many of these essential jobs.

The COVID-19 pandemic context has highlighted several gender-specific labour market impacts, such as the large gender segregation in 'essential' and 'non-essential' sectors and occupations, gender differences in telework opportunities, and non-gender-neutral implications of increased unpaid care work. The closure of schools and other care facilities during the pandemic has further complicated the reconciliation of paid work and care responsibilities for many workers, especially women with children. Although outside the scope of this study, a spike in gender-based violence has also been evident. Many of the factors that trigger or perpetuate violence against women and girls have been amplified by the preventive confinement measures, deteriorating socioeconomic situation and job losses.

In the absence of a gender equality perspective in short-term emergency and long-term reconstruction measures, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic risk maintaining or even furthering pre-existing gender inequalities and rolling back the progress achieved to date. This study aims to provide a more detailed and timely picture of the short-term and long-term gender equality challenges faced by the EU as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, focusing on (1) the labour market situation; (2) working arrangements and incomes; (3) the impact on gender roles and the work-life balance of workers; and (4) the role of employment-supporting factors and recovery measures, in particular from a work-life balance perspective.

The study was carried out at the request of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU. It aims to contribute to important future policy decisions in support of the gender equality goals of the EU recovery process.

(1) EIGE, 'Covid-19 and gender equality'.

1. Labour market situation

1.1 Gender differences in labour market trends up to quarter 3 of 2020

The start of the pandemic led to large declines in employment for both women and men, but employment rebounded more strongly for men than for women in summer 2020.

Following 5 years of growth at EU level, employment has declined for both women and men in all EU Member States since the start of the COVID-19 crisis (see Figure 13 in

the annex). Despite the implementation of support measures, between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020 the number of women employed (aged 15–64 years) decreased by 2.2 million (2.4 % decrease) and the number of men employed (aged 15–64 years) decreased by 2.6 million (2.4 % decrease) (Table 1). The partial recovery in summer 2020 (Q3) resulted in more men than women re-entering the labour market, with 1.4 million jobs taken up by men and only 0.7 million jobs taken up by women. These statistics indicate **a trend towards longer-lasting crisis effects for women than for men.**

Table 1. Evolution of employment by sex and age (EU-27)

Age (years)	Women		Men		Women		Men	
	Employment (millions) Q2 2020	Employment change (%) Q2 2019 to Q2 2020	Employment (millions) Q2 2020	Employment change (%) Q2 2019 to Q2 2020	Employment (millions) Q3 2020	Employment change (%) Q2 2020 to Q3 2020	Employment (millions) Q3 2020	Employment change (%) Q2 2020 to Q3 2020
15–24	6.3	– 10.4	7.7	– 9.0	6.6	+ 5.3	8.1	+ 6.4
25–49	53.0	– 3.0	61.9	– 3.2	53.1	+ 0.3	62.3	+ 0.7
50–64	28.5	+ 0.7	33.0	+ 0.8	28.7	+ 0.7	33.5	+ 1.4
15–64	87.8	– 2.4	102.5	– 2.4	88.5	+ 0.8	103.9	+ 1.4

NB: Employment change (%) over the period $([t + 1] - t)/t$.

Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data ([lfsq_egan](#)).

Employment losses and gains varied substantially between different age groups of women and men (Table 1). **Young people – especially young women – lost disproportionately more jobs during the first COVID-19 wave**, while those aged 50+ were comparatively sheltered from employment losses. Women aged 25–49 had the lowest chance of obtaining a job during the recovery period in summer 2020. In this age group, fewer than 170 000 jobs were gained by women (0.3 % increase) compared with about 440 000 jobs gained by men (0.7 % increase).

Overall, the employment dynamics throughout 2020 point to a major short-term impact

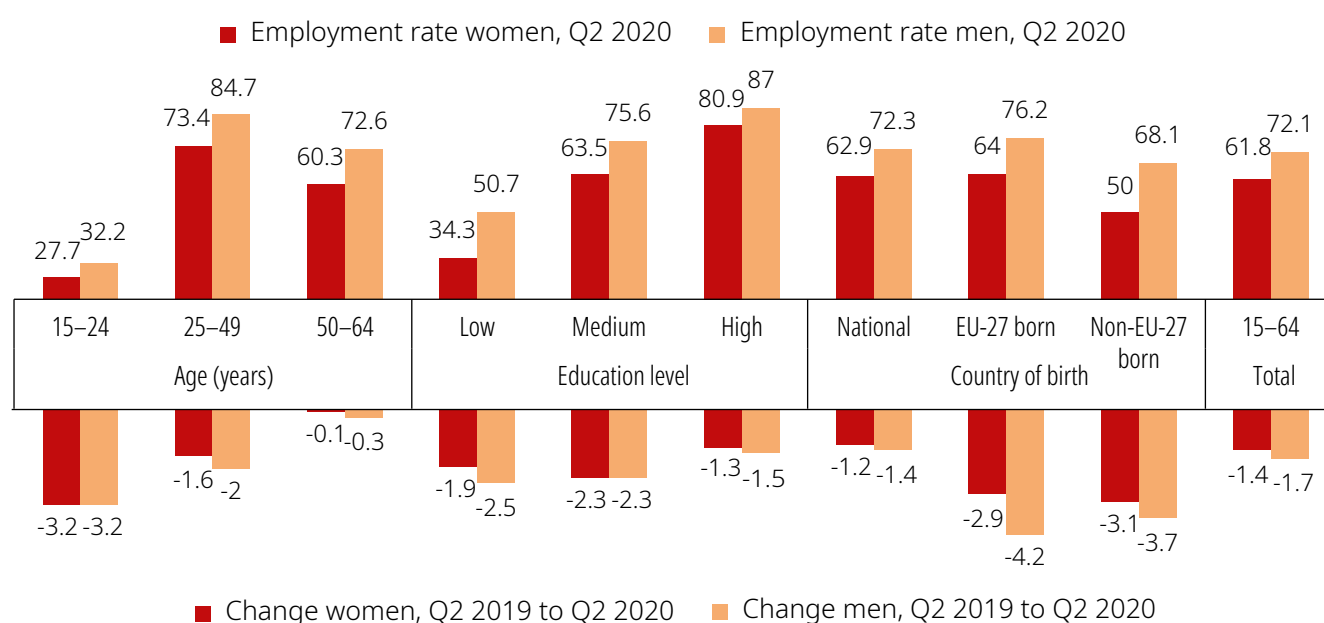
for almost all in spring 2020, with potentially **long-lasting 'scarring' effects, particularly on the careers of women.** Entering the labour market during a recession can negatively affect young people's labour market outcomes for a decade or more (ILO, 2020b). This is particularly concerning for the current generation of younger women. Their limited job opportunities at graduation, in addition to likely future – even if temporary – detachment from the labour market because of disproportionate shouldering of childcare duties (Hershbein, 2012; Choi et al., 2020), implies that they will take far longer career breaks and suffer increased earnings 'penalties' compared with their male peers.

Young, low-educated and migrant women have been left especially far behind in the labour market

Figure 1 shows that the decline in employment rate during the first pandemic wave was severe not only for young people, but also for **those with lower educational attainment and those born either in a non-EU country or in another EU Member State**. The decline in employment for those closest to the margins of the labour market (primarily young, low-educated and migrant women) is of particular concern, especially given that the long-term effects of the pandemic (economic consequences, cultural and gender norms) are still unfolding.

The employment rate of **migrant women** (those born in a non-EU country) decreased to 50 %, eradicating decades-long gains. Although foreign-born men also suffered a large drop in employment during the first wave, around 68 % were still in employment in Q2 2020, pointing to a wide gender employment gap among foreign-born workers. Migrant women account for the vast majority of workers in occupations such as health professionals, cleaners and helpers (in activities of households as employers) and personal care workers (Fasani and Mazza, 2020). These workers tend to be low paid, often have several jobs to increase their working hours and income, and are more likely to be employed in undeclared work, under temporary arrangements and in occupations that cannot be performed from home (Foley and Piper, 2020).

Figure 1. Employment rates (%) in Q2 2020 (*) and changes (percentage points) between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020 by sex and age, education and country of birth (EU-27)



(*) The employment rate is the percentage of employed people in relation to the total population of the same group.

Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data ([lfsq_ergaed](#); [lfsq_ergacob](#)).

The initial employment shock impacted countries differently but women have been most affected

In all EU Member States, the first wave of the COVID-19 crisis had a negative impact on

employment rates of men and women, although the magnitude of that **impact varied substantially** ⁽²⁾. Spain, Bulgaria and Ireland saw the largest impacts on both women's and men's employment, with twice the average reduction observed in the EU (Figure 2). In Italy, Malta and

⁽²⁾ See Table 6 in the annex for further country-level information on employment rates of women and men (aged 15-24 and 15-64 years) in summer 2020.

Poland, large reductions in employment have widened existing gender gaps. In Bulgaria, the COVID-19 crisis hit young women in particular (aged 20–24), with only 26.4 % in employment in Q2 2020, a 6.4 percentage point reduction compared with Q2 2019. Young Bulgarian men fared comparatively better, with 39.3 % in employment in Q2 2020, a 6 percentage point reduction compared with Q2 2019. Conversely, the decline in employment between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020 was much larger for men than for women in Luxembourg and Austria (Figure 2).

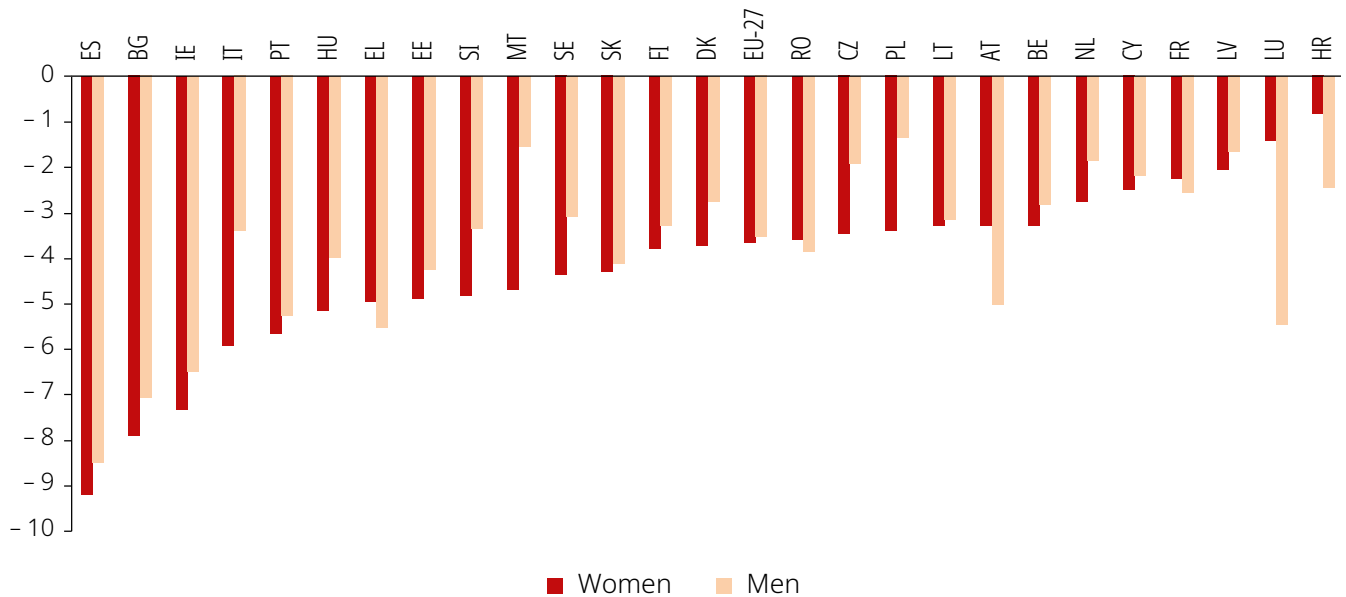
During the first pandemic wave, total working hours in paid jobs fell more sharply for women than for men

Across the EU, the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic was generally accompanied by a wide range of national wage supplementa-

tion / replacement schemes, short-time working schemes and even freezes on job terminations (IT) to reduce the immediate employment impacts ⁽³⁾. Eurostat data show that **absences from work more than doubled in Q2 2020** compared with the same period in 2019, for both women and men aged 20–64 (from 9 % to 19 % for women and from 6 % to 14 % for men), mainly because of a **substantial increase in temporary lay-offs**, but also for ‘other reasons’, including **maternity leave and parental leave**, which accounted for 6 % of employed women and 3 % of employed men ⁽⁴⁾. Analysing the developments in total hours worked throughout this period thus provides complementary measures of fluctuations in labour input as well as labour demand.

Figure 3 shows the change in the index of total actual hours worked ⁽⁵⁾ in the main job for women and men aged 20–64 between Q2

Figure 2. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment in Q2 2020 (*) by sex and country (% , 15+ years, EU-27)



(*) Impact in Q2 2020 calculated as the percentage change in the number of people employed in Q2 2020 compared with Q2 2019, minus the average annual growth rate of employment registered between Q2 2014 and Q2 2019. Q2 2020 data for DE are not available. Source: Authors’ calculations based on Eurostat data (lfsq_egacob).

⁽³⁾ For example, according to data published by Eurostat, the total number of corresponding hours not worked, authorised by a government support scheme or used by local units in April 2020, amounted to 140 million in Belgium, 841 million in France and 305 million in Italy.

⁽⁴⁾ Authors’ calculations based on Eurostat data (lfsi_abs_q; lfsq_egacob).

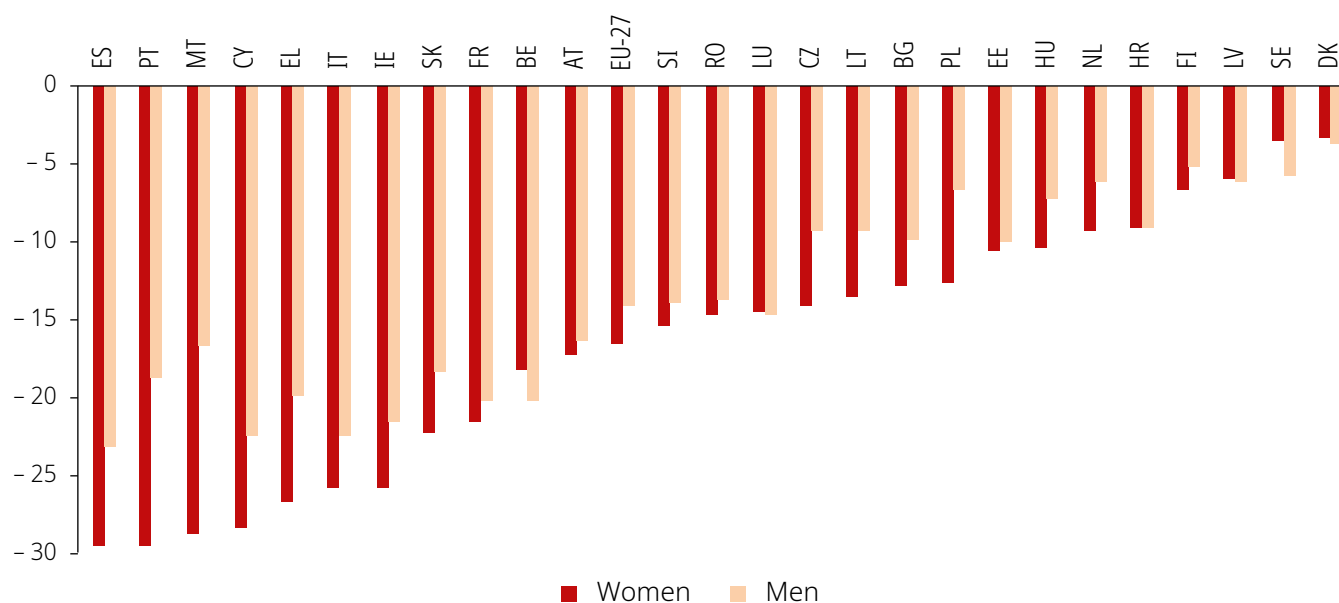
⁽⁵⁾ Total actual hours worked in the main job are the total actual hours worked by all employees and self-employed people in their main occupation during the quarter. Data are indexed to be equal to 100 in 2006 in order to compare between countries. People temporarily absent from work (still considered employed) influence the value of the index.

2019 and Q2 2020. At EU level, **the number of total actual hours worked decreased sharply for both women and men** during the first wave of the pandemic, with **a stronger decline among women (- 16.6 index points) than men (- 14.2 index points)**. The overall labour market effect of the first lockdown period – accounting not only for jobs lost, as indicated above, but also for changes in the total number of hours worked in the main job – was much more negative for women than for men.

These decreases in the index of total actual hours worked for women and men are the highest since at least 2006 (see Figure 14 in the annex) and are even higher than those registered after the 2008 crisis (the index dropped by 5.7 index points for women and 9.5 index points for men between Q2 2008 and Q1 2013). In almost all EU Member States for which data are available, the decrease was more pronounced for women than for men, with the gender gap in the reduction of total hours worked being particularly high in Portugal and Malta, at around 11 index points.

Women remaining in employment had a smaller reduction in weekly working hours than men, reflecting the fact that the crisis amplified workloads in a number of essential jobs. The average number of actual weekly working hours in the main job ⁽⁶⁾ decreased for men from 38.5 hours in Q2 2019 to 37.2 hours in Q2 2020 (- 1.3 hours), whereas the decrease for women was smaller – from 32.8 hours in Q2 2019 to 32 hours in Q2 2020 (- 0.8 hours). The effect of this reduction on income is highly sensitive not only to existing social protection arrangements for women and men (see Section 4.1) but also to the increased workload in a number of essential jobs. At EU level, for example, the average number of actual weekly hours of work declined by only 0.1 hours for women and 0.3 hours for men employed in human health and social work activities. In six Member States (DK, IE, ES, CY, SI, FI), the average number of actual weekly hours in the main job increased for women in Q2 2020 compared with Q2 2019, with a small increase in hours noted for men in only two of these Member States (DK, CY).

Figure 3. Change in index of total actual hours worked in the main job between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020 by country and sex (index points, 20–64 years, EU-27)



NB: Index of total actual hours worked in the main job (2006 = 100); seasonally adjusted data. Data for DE are not available.
Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data ([lfsi_ahw_q](#)).

⁽⁶⁾ Eurostat ([lfsq_ewhan2](#)).

During Q3 2020, the numbers of hours worked rebounded somewhat for employed women and men in the EU Member States, although the levels lagged behind those of Q3 2019. At EU level, for men, the average number of weekly hours of work in the main job was 39 hours in Q3 2020 compared with 39.7 hours in Q3 2019. For women, the average number of weekly hours of work in the main job in Q3 2020 reached almost the same level as in the previous year (33.6 and 33.9 hours, respectively). This recovery was accompanied by a large increase in the number of job advertisements posted online (almost 8 million, only 2 % below 2019 levels). However, the recovery turned out to be rather short-lived, as the second COVID-19 wave and new lockdown measures sent the labour market into decline again in late 2020 (Cedefop, 2020a).

Women have been exposed to longer-lasting unemployment, with an ensuing widening of the gender gap

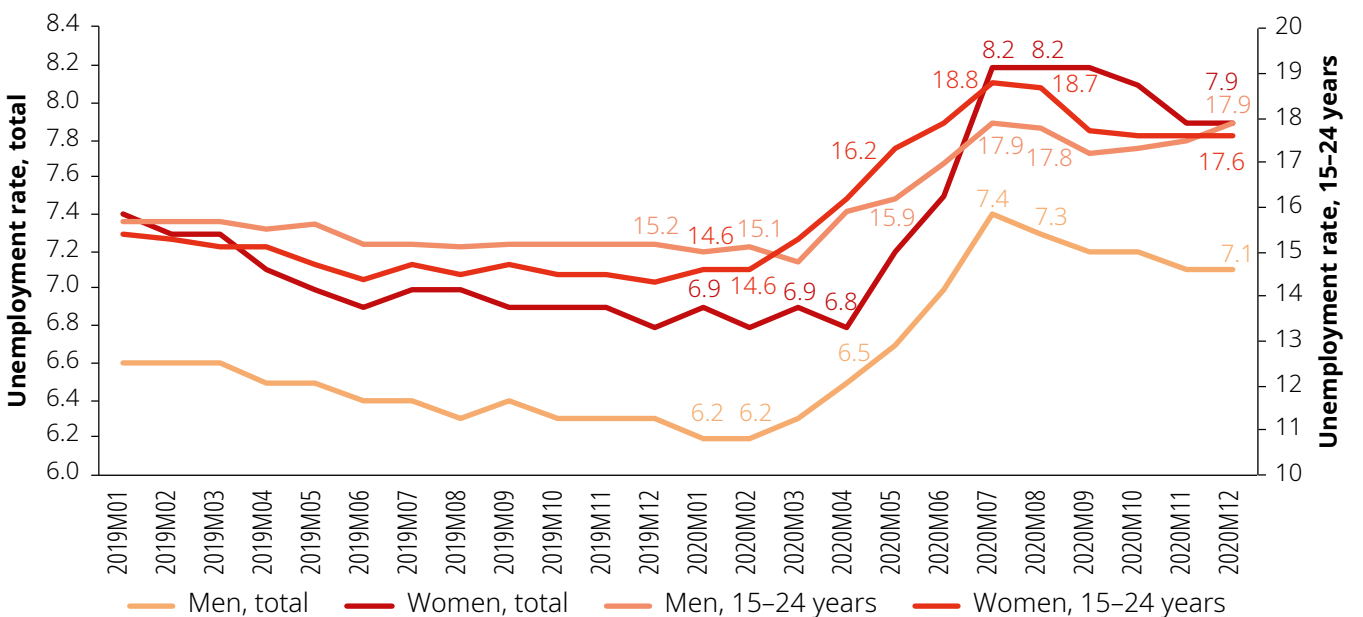
Although the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis are still unfolding, monthly unemployment data for 2019 and 2020 (Figure 4) show **an increasing gender gap in unemployment rates, to the**

detriment of women. While the unemployment rate for men peaked in July 2020 and has since registered a steady decline, the unemployment rate for women increased at a faster rate than that for men from April 2020 until September 2020, declining only slightly towards the end of 2020. The gender gap in the unemployment rate thus increased from 0.3 percentage points in April 2020 to 0.8 percentage points in December 2020.

Youth unemployment rates raise particular concerns. Despite the recovery in employment in summer 2020, the unemployment rate for young women reached almost 19 %, while that for young men was close to 18 %. Subsequent improvements were short-lived, with the unemployment rate for young men returning to the previously observed summer peak by the end of 2020, and improvements in the unemployment rate for young women stalling as well.

Eurostat quarterly data not only confirm that the increase in unemployment was particularly high for young women (+ 3.9 percentage points) and young men (+ 3 percentage points) in EU Member States during Q3 2020 compared with Q3 2019, but also show that other groups experienced cumulative disadvantages. **Unemploy-**

Figure 4. Harmonised unemployment rates by sex and age (% , monthly data 2019–2020, EU-27)



NB: Harmonised unemployment rates (seasonally adjusted data, not calendar adjusted); percentage of the active population. The left axis shows the scale of total unemployment and the right axis shows the scale of youth unemployment (15–24 years).

Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (ei_lmhr_m).

ment rates increased significantly for women aged 15–74 (+ 3.2 percentage points) and **men born in a non-EU country** (+ 3 percentage points) ⁽⁷⁾, as well as **low-educated women and men** (+ 1.8 percentage points for women and + 1.3 percentage points for men) ⁽⁸⁾.

Across the EU, the largest increases in unemployment between Q3 2019 and Q3 2020 were registered in Lithuania (+ 3.7 percentage points for women) and Estonia (+ 4.3 percentage points for men). Developments in Spain are also of concern: with an increase of + 2.5 percentage points, the unemployment rate for women aged 15–64 reached 18.5 % in summer 2020. Unemployment in Greece was quite stable, although the unemployment rate for women was nevertheless around 20 % during Q3 2020 ⁽⁹⁾.

Unemployment rates might have been even higher were it not for the introduction of government employment support measures and **a substantial move into inactivity**. More than 4.3 million Europeans (2.2 million women and 2.1 million men) moved from unemployment into inactivity ⁽¹⁰⁾ during the first wave of the pandemic (Q2 2020). This is a much higher share than in 2019 ⁽¹¹⁾: **36 % of unemployed women and 32 % of unemployed men (Q1 2020) became inactive during the first quarters of 2020**, compared with 25 % of women and 19 % of men in 2019. **Unemployed women tended to move into inactivity more often than unemployed men in the majority (17 out of 23) of EU Member States** for which data were available (see Figure 15 in the annex). This led to a major increase in the inactive share of the EU population, predominantly associated with an increase in the number of people willing to work but not seeking employment. In Q2 2020, the number of women aged 15–64 willing to work but not seeking employment reached 9.7 mil-

lion (+ 2.8 million compared with Q2 2019) and the number of men aged 15–64 willing to work but not seeking employment reached 7.1 million (+ 2.4 million) ⁽¹²⁾.

As a result of the increased flows out of the labour market, inactivity rates in a number of countries increased substantially, especially for women. In Italy, the inactivity rate for women aged 15–64 reached 47 % at the start of the COVID-19 crisis (compared with 28 % of men), while in Greece and Romania it exceeded 40 %; these rates did not improve much during the recovery in summer 2020 (Figure 5). In a number of countries, such as Greece, Italy, Hungary, Malta and Romania, the gender gap in inactivity rates between women and men was higher than 15 percentage points during summer 2020.

The partial recovery of the EU labour market in Q3 2020 showed some reverse flows, from inactivity back to unemployment, particularly among women. A record high of 2.7 million women and 2.4 million men moved into unemployment from inactivity during summer 2020 ⁽¹³⁾ (Eurostat, 2020a). Aside from signalling women's wish to stay active in the labour market, this may point to **bigger barriers for women to finding gainful employment** ⁽¹⁴⁾.

Fewer job opportunities, especially for women with care responsibilities

Although in recent years, women's labour market participation has been steadily increasing (EIGE, 2020a), in 2019 the gender gap in activity rates remained high (11 percentage points for the 15–64 years age group) and the COVID-19 crisis is likely to widen the gap still further ⁽¹⁵⁾. Even pre pandemic, childcare and family responsibilities were among the main reasons for women's

⁽⁷⁾ Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (*lfsq_urgacob*).

⁽⁸⁾ Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (*lfsq_urgaed*).

⁽⁹⁾ Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (*lfsq_urgacob*).

⁽¹⁰⁾ Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (*lfsi_long_q*); seasonally adjusted data. Data for Germany and Malta are not available.

⁽¹¹⁾ Data for Germany and Malta are not available or are unreliable.

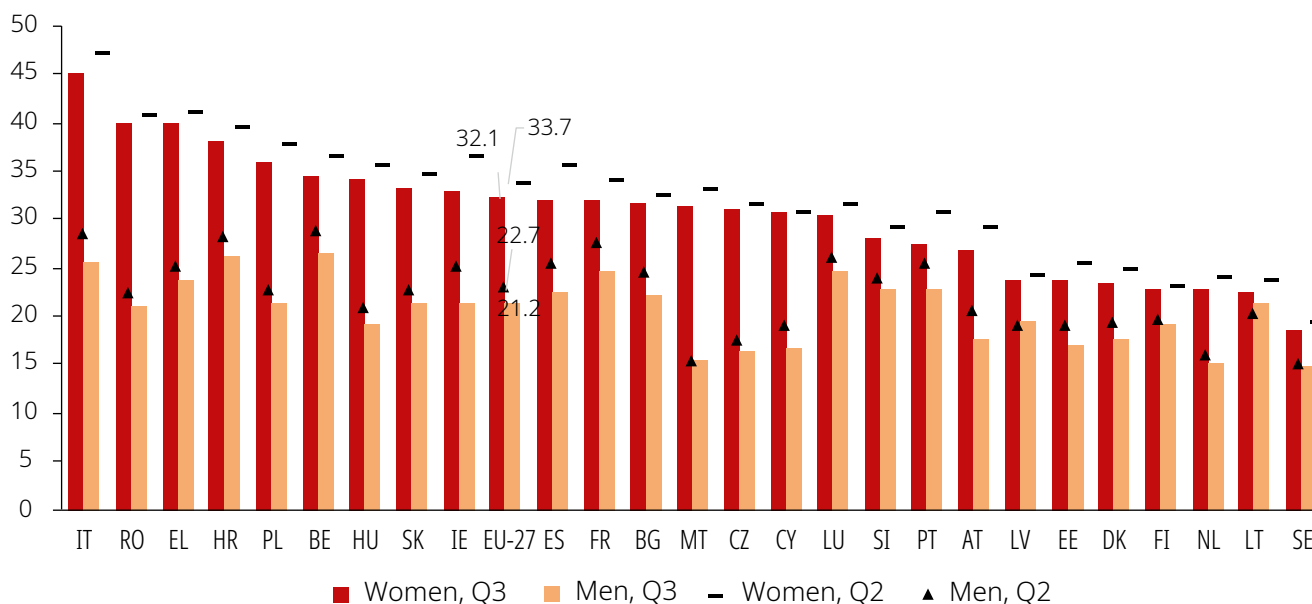
⁽¹²⁾ Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (*lfsq_igaww*).

⁽¹³⁾ Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (*lfsi_long_q*); seasonally adjusted data. Data for Germany and Malta are not available.

⁽¹⁴⁾ See Table 7 in the annex for further country-level information on changes in unemployment rates between Q2 and Q3 2020.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (*lfsa_argacob*).

Figure 5. Inactive population as a percentage of the total population of the same age in Q2 and Q3 2020 by sex and country (% , 15–64 years, EU-27)



NB: Data for DE are not available.

Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (lfsq_ipga).

inactivity. In the EU-27 in 2019, **more than half (53 %) (16)** of women aged 25–49 outside the labour force indicated that **looking after children or incapacitated adults or other personal or family responsibilities was the main reason for not seeking employment**, while only 8 % of inactive men reported that this was their main reason for not looking for a job (17).

One of the main features of the COVID-19 crisis is the increased burden of care responsibilities in private households, as well as partial government support to accommodate the need to stay at home. Indicators such as labour market slack (18) are therefore useful for highlighting work–life balance tensions. In 2019, across the EU-27, the labour market slack indicator was higher for women than for men, irrespective of age. More specifically, **more women than men were underemployed part-time workers** (i.e. part-time workers who wish to work more) and **were available to work but not currently**

seeking work (e.g. because of care constraints) (Figure 6).

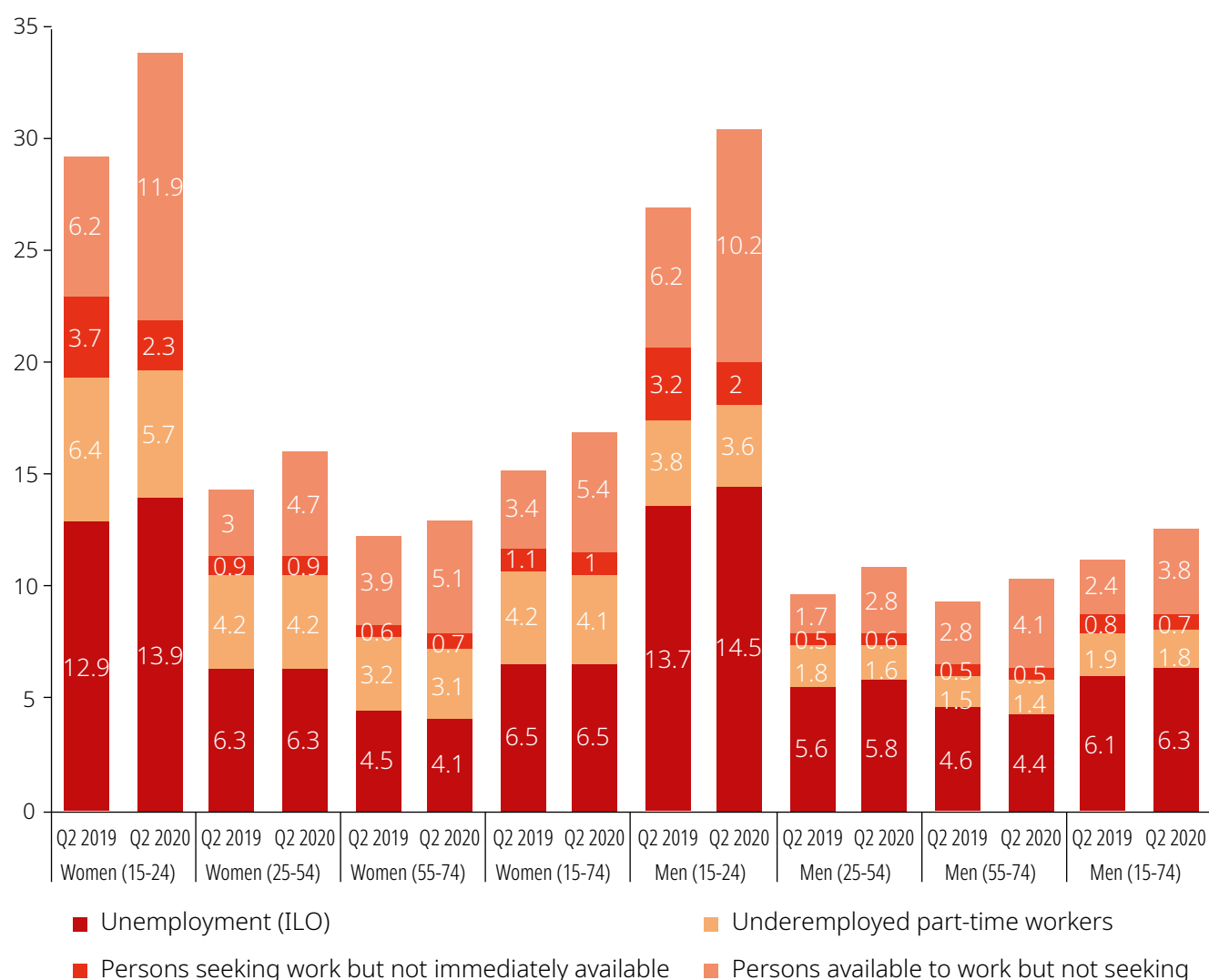
According to Eurostat data, at EU-27 level, between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020, the **unmet demand for employment** increased by 1.7 percentage points for women and by 1.5 percentage points for men aged 15–74, **reaching 17 % for women and 12.6 % for men** (see Figure 16 in the annex). There are significant differences between EU Member States, however. In Spain, for example, about 30.8 % of women (compared with 21.3 % of men) indicated an unmet demand for employment in Q2 2020. Overall, for both women and men, most of the increase in unmet demand for employment during the COVID-19 crisis has resulted from 'people being available to work but not searching for employment'. The increase in unmet demand for employment was particularly high among women (+ 4.5 percentage points) and men (+ 3.7 percentage points) aged 15–24 when comparing Q2 2020 and Q2 2019.

(16) There is wide variation across EU-27 countries, e.g. from 11 % in Denmark to 77–78 % in Czechia and Poland.

(17) Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (lfsa_igar).

(18) Labour market slack measures the unmet demand for employment in an extended labour force. In addition to employed and unemployed people (ILO definitions), the extended labour force includes people conventionally considered outside the labour force – people available to work but not searching for employment and people searching for work but not immediately available.

Figure 6. Labour market slack as a percentage of the extended labour force in Q2 2019 and Q2 2020 by sex and age (% , EU-27)



NB: Labour market slack refers to the sum of all unmet demands for employment, with each component expressed as a percentage of the extended labour force; seasonally adjusted data.

Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data ([lfsi_sla_q](#)).

The recovery in Q3 2020 affected the shares of women and men aged 15–74 facing an unmet demand for employment; these shares declined slightly compared with Q2 2020 (–0.2 percentage points for both sexes) but remained higher than pre-COVID-19 levels⁽¹⁹⁾. In some EU Member States, the unmet demand for employment continued to grow in

Q3, for instance in Luxembourg and Lithuania for women (+ 2 and + 1.7 percentage points, respectively) and in Estonia and Cyprus for men (+ 2.5 and + 1.2 percentage points, respectively), although the gender gap in the unmet demand for employment remained equal to or lower than that registered in Q2 2020 in all EU Member States.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data ([lfsi_sla_q](#)); seasonally adjusted data. See also Figure 16 in the annex.

1.2 Most affected sectors and forms of employment

Higher employment losses in non-essential sectors with no possibility of teleworking and subsequent effects on women

In the EU-27 in Q2 2020, the **most negatively affected sector in terms of employment was the accommodation and food service sector**. This sector is characterised by a large share of temporary workers (22 %) and part-time workers (30 %) and a higher than average share of young workers (15–24 years) (18 %) and foreign-born workers (12 %) (see Table 9 in the annex). **The decrease in employment was higher for women (–21 %) than for men (–18 %)**, while the reduction in hours worked in the main job was higher for men (–12 %) than for women (–10 %) (Table 2). Bulgaria registered the largest employment contraction in the accommodation and food service sector (–36 % for

women and –33 % for men) ⁽²⁰⁾. In some countries, this sector is also characterised by a high rate of undeclared work, especially among women. For instance, in Malta, seasonal or part-time employment attracts a significant number of students to undeclared work, while a proportion of formally inactive women also work in this sector (European Commission, 2017).

Domestic and care services in households have also been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (activities of households as employers), with an 18 % decline in the numbers of both men and women employed in this sector between Q2 2020 and Q2 2019. Although this sector represents only 1 % of total employment in the EU-27, it is **strongly dominated by women** (89 % of all those employed), with a higher than average share of non-standard work (60 % work part-time and 18 % are on temporary contracts) and foreign-born workers (28 %).

⁽²⁰⁾ Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (lfsq_egan2).

Table 2. Employment in Q2 2019 and percentage change in employment and in average actual weekly hours of work in the main job between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020 by economic sector (15+ years, EU-27)

Economic sector	Employment and share of women in 2019Q2			Percentage change between 2019Q2 and 2020Q2					
				Employment			Average number of actual weekly hours of work in main job		
	Employed (000)	%	Share of women	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men
I - Accommodation and food service activities	9 610	5	54	-19.3	-20.6	-17.8	-11	-10	-12
T - Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use	2 249	1.1	89	-18	-18	-19	3	4	-4
R - Arts, entertainment and recreation	3 302	2	48	-6	-5	-8	-8	-7	-9
N - Administrative and support service activities	8 348	4	49	-10	-10	-10	-3	-5	-3
H - Transportation and storage	10 599	5	22	-6	-3	-7	-4	-3	-4
G - Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	27 556	14	49	-5	-3	-6	-4	-3	-5
F - Construction	13 424	7	10	-6	-6	-6	-3	-3	-3
C - Manufacturing	32 536	16	30	-1	-2	0	-3	-3	-3
M - Professional, scientific and technical activities	10 934	5	49	1	1	1	-5	-5	-6
A - Agriculture, forestry and fishing	8 752	4	34	-2	-3	-1	-1	-2	-1
P - Education	14 594	7	72	-1	-1	1	-2	-2	-1
L - Real estate activities	1 587	1	52	6	4	9	-7	-7	-8
(D-E) Utilities*	3 053	2	23	0	-2	0	0	0	-1
Q - Human health and social work activities	21 317	11	78	0	0	2	0	0	-1
S - Other service activities	4 873	2	66	6	-1	18	-4	-6	-4
K - Financial and insurance activities	5 301	3	53	3	3	4	-1	-1	-2
O - Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	13 636	7	48	4	7	2	0	-1	1
J - Information and communication	6 237	3	30	8	8	8	-2	-2	-2
Total economic sectors	200 103	100	45.9	-2.4	-2.4	-2.4	-2.8	-2.4	-3.4

(*) 'Utilities' includes sectors D – Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply, and E – Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities. The average number of actual weekly hours of work in the main job for the sector 'Utilities' was calculated as the unweighted average of the numbers of actual weekly hours registered in economic sectors D and E.

NB: Economic sectors are ranked according to the labour change for women and men (i.e. $0.5 \times$ employment change + $0.5 \times$ hours change). Economic sectors that represent less than 1 % of total EU-27 employment are not reported (i.e. B – Mining and quarrying; U – Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies).

Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data ([lfsq_egan2](#); [lfsq_ewhan](#)).

When further disaggregated by sector (Table 3), the largest employment losses in absolute numbers in the EU-27 in Q2 2020 were registered in the food service activities, retail trade and accommodation sectors ⁽²¹⁾. In the **food service activities sector**, the decline in employment amounted to 1.3 million people, of whom more than 700 000 were women. Women's relative weight in this sector's employment losses (56 %) was higher than the share of women in the sector's workforce (52 %). Significant job losses were also observed in the **retail trade sector** (-661 000), with women accounting for 57 % of the total employment losses. This was a particularly large reduction in jobs typically available to women, given their declining employment levels in this sector in recent years. In the **accommodation sector**, there were 556 000 job losses, with women accounting for 62 %.

Strong gender segregation in the labour market explains the different employment losses seen for women and men during the pandemic. During the first lockdown period, **job losses were highly concentrated in highly feminised sectors** such as the retail, accommodation, residential care activities, activities of households as employers of domestic personnel and apparel manufacturing sectors. **In these sectors** (Statis-

tical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community (NACE) two-digit level), **the number of women employed decreased by 1.5 million across the EU (close to 40 % of all job losses among women)**. In contrast, men experienced the largest employment losses in male-dominated sectors more severely affected by the COVID-19 crisis, such as the construction and wholesale trade sectors.

In Q3 2020, many sectors experienced an increase in employment compared to the previous quarter, though employment recovery was modest and uneven. Most sectors hardest hit in Q2 also did not fully recover in Q3, especially if compared to a year ago. For example, employment was still much lower, especially for women, in such sectors as **accommodation and food services** (-16 %), **domestic work** (-13 %), **administrative and support service** (-12 %) or **arts, entertainment and recreation** (-5 %) (see Table 10 in the annex). Among the top 10 sectors that experienced the largest employment gains in Q2 2020, summer did not bring on additional gains, with few exceptions being public administration and defence or computer programming (see Table 12 in the annex). Across the last two fields, employment increases in summer 2020 mainly benefited men.

⁽²¹⁾ See Table 11 in the annex for further information.

Table 3. The 10 economic sectors with the largest employment losses between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020 (NACE two-digit level, EU-27)

Sector (NACE two-digit level)	Employment change (thousands) Q2 2019 to Q2 2020			Job losses Q2 2020: share of women (%)	Share of women 2019 (%)	Employment change (thousands) Q2 2018 to Q2 2019		
	Total	Men	Women			Total	Men	Women
I56 – Food and beverage service activities	- 1 301	- 573	- 729	56	52	50	- 19	68
G47 – Retail trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles	- 661	- 284	- 376	57	62	- 120	40	- 160
I55 – Accommodation	- 556	- 212	- 344	62	61	- 58	- 14	- 44
F41 – Construction of buildings	- 430	- 375	- 55	13	9	78	61	17
N81 – Services to buildings and landscape activities	- 416	- 167	- 249	60	55	71	35	36
T97 – Activities of households as employers of domestic personnel	- 413	- 49	- 364	88	89	- 33	8	- 40
Q87 – Residential care activities	- 405	- 109	- 296	73	81	119	16	103
G46 – Wholesale trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles	- 362	- 294	- 68	19	34	51	- 13	64
H52 – Warehousing and support activities for transportation	- 359	- 300	- 59	16	25	22	- 8	30
F43 – Specialised construction activities	- 318	- 331	13	- 4	9	109	106	3
Employment loss in 10 divisions with largest employment losses (A)	- 5 220	- 2 693	- 2 527	48	46.7	288	213	75
Total employment loss in divisions with employment reductions (B)	- 8 489	- 4 875	- 3 614	43		- 1 040	- 508	- 532
Share of employment losses in top 10 divisions: (A)/(B) (%)	61	55	70			-	-	-

NB: Employment loss refers to the observed reduction in employment in the respective economic activity (i.e. employment change between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020); for a comparison of trends, employment changes between Q2 2018 and Q2 2019 are provided in the last three columns of the table. The fourth column of data reports the share of women among the total employment losses registered for the different economic activities. The fifth column of data reports the share of women registered in the economic activity in 2019. For men, the ranking does not include T98 – Undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of private households for own use. For women, the ranking does not include A03 – Fishing and aquaculture; B06 – Extraction of crude petroleum and natural gas; B07 – Mining of metal ores; B09 – Mining support service activities; C12 – Manufacture of tobacco products; and E39 – Remediation activities and other waste management. Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data ([lfsq_egan2](#); [lfsq_egan22d](#)).

Fragile signs of more women choosing male-dominated jobs, such as in ICT

During the first wave of the pandemic, employment rates increased in some sectors compared with Q2 2019 (Table 4). Increases were mainly seen in ICT-related activities, public administration, and social work activities without accommodation. In most of these sectors, employment had grown in the previous year (from Q2 2018 to Q2 2019) but at a lower rate. The significant employment growth in ICT-related activities was a result of the increased use of telework, e-commerce, online schooling and other public e-services during the pandemic.

The breakdown of employment growth in ICT-related activities in Q2 2020 shows that the employment share of women is increasing. For instance, in computer programming, consultancy and related activities, the employment share of women was only 23 % in 2019;

this increased to 28 % in Q2 2020. Similarly, the breakdown of employment growth in the female-dominated sector of social work activities without accommodation shows an increase in men's employment that is almost as large as the increase in women's employment. An employment increase (mainly for men) was also registered for other personal service activities⁽²²⁾. As most of the activities included in this economic sector were halted during Q2 2020 (e.g. hairdressing and beauty treatments, physical well-being activities), this observed increase in employment may be related to a growth in jobs in funeral services and related activities.

At EU level, in Q3 2020, employment in the public administration, ICT and personal service activities sectors increased compared with Q2 2020, reflecting the growing demand for digital services (see also Table 12 in the annex for further information).

⁽²²⁾ Other personal activities include, for example, washing and (dry-)cleaning of textile and fur products, hairdressing and other beauty treatments, funeral and related activities, physical well-being activities and a range of other personal service activities.

Table 4. The 10 economic sectors with the largest employment increases between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020 (NACE two-digit level, EU-27)

Sector (NACE two-digit level)	Employment change (thousands) Q2 2019 to Q2 2020			Job growth Q2 2020: share of women (%)	Share of women 2019 (%)	Employment change (thousands) Q2 2018 to Q2 2019		
	Total	Men	Women			Total	Men	Women
O84 – Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	587	145	441	75	48	21	-25	47
J62 – Computer programming, consultancy and related activities	573	412	161	28	23	262	193	69
Q88 – Social work activities without accommodation	348	134	214	62	83	20	-37	58
S96 – Other personal service activities	200	185	14	7	77	66	11	55
K65 – Insurance, reinsurance and pension funding, except compulsory social security	175	88	87	50	57	-49	-17	-31
J61 – Telecommunications	174	148	26	15	32	10	8	2
C27 – Manufacture of electrical equipment	158	132	26	16	33	-13	-32	20
C32 – Other manufacturing	109	87	22	21	43	24	3	21
C21 – Manufacture of basic pharmaceutical products and pharmaceutical preparations	107	63	43	41	48	33	10	23
L68 – Real estate activities	101	72	29	29	51	11	-32	43
Employment growth in 10 divisions with largest employment increases (A)	2 532	1 467	1 065	42	52.5	386	80	306
Total employment growth in divisions with employment increases (B)	3 599	2 287	1 312	36		2 916	1 402	1 508
Share of employment growth in top 10 divisions: (A)/(B) (%)	70	64	81			13	6	20

Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data ([lfsq_egan22d](#)).

Part-time jobs losses were particularly high among women

In the first COVID-19 wave, **the pandemic and related containment measures had the greatest impact on temporary, self-employed and part-time workers, who are mainly women** (see Table 8 in the annex) (EIGE, 2020a). In 2019, in the EU, women (aged 15–64) were slightly more likely than men to be employed on a temporary contract (15.5 % and 14.5 %, respectively) ⁽²³⁾ and considerably more likely to be employed part-time (29.9 % and 8.4 %, respectively) ⁽²⁴⁾. Between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020 in the EU-27, more than 4.2 million temporary workers aged 15–64 lost their jobs, along with almost 1.6 million part-time workers.

Women (aged 15–64) accounted for a significant number of the job losses: the number of female temporary workers declined by more than 2 million and the number of female part-time workers by 1.1 million, with **women accounting for 69.5 %** of the job losses registered among part-time workers (their employment share in Q2 2019 was 75.2 %) and 48.4 % of the losses registered among temporary workers (their employment share in Q2 2019 was 50 %) (Table 5). Many other precarious jobs have also been affected. For example, in June 2020 in Germany, mini-jobs ⁽²⁵⁾ declined by 850 000 compared with a year earlier, with a slightly higher decline for women than for men (Grabka et al., 2020).

Table 5. Employment change between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020, by form of employment and sex (15–64 years, EU-27)

Type of work	Employment change (thousands) Q2 2019 to Q2 2020			Employment change (%) Q2 2019 to Q2 2020			Job losses Q2 2020: share of women (%)
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	
Part-time	- 1 469	- 512	- 958	- 4.1	- 5.7	- 3.5	65.2
Temporary	- 4 401	- 2 255	- 2 146	- 17.4	- 17.8	- 17	48.8
Self-employed	- 602	- 385	- 217	- 2.3	- 2.2	- 2.5	36.1

Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (lfsq_epgaed; lfsq_etgaed; lfsq_esgaed).

The gender gap in part-time work is particularly high for parents, with women citing caring for children or other family members as the main reason for working part-time. In the EU-27 in 2019, one in three women with children (33.1 %; aged 25–49) worked part-time, compared with only 5 % of men of the same age with children ⁽²⁶⁾. **Among lone parents with children under 12** (85 % of whom were women in 2019) ⁽²⁷⁾, **women are at a higher risk of losing their job and income because of being employed on a temporary contract**. Of all lone

parents in the EU in 2019 (aged 15–64), 13.6 % of women and 7.4 % of men were employed on a temporary contract ⁽²⁸⁾.

Gender divide in self-employment underlies women's job losses in the most affected sectors and results in a higher risk of women contracting the virus

The economic sectors most affected by forced closures and social distancing (e.g. the tourism

⁽²³⁾ Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (lfsa_etpgacob).

⁽²⁴⁾ Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (lfsa_eppga). Part-time working is particularly widespread among women aged 15–64 in the Netherlands (75.2 % of total employment); it ranges between 40 % and 50 % in Belgium, Germany and Austria.

⁽²⁵⁾ Mini-jobs are a form of part-time employment in Germany. The scheme is coordinated by Minijob-Zentrale and is primarily targeted at the employment of domestic household workers, such as cleaners or gardeners.

⁽²⁶⁾ This increases to 36.5 % for women with one or more children whose youngest child is aged under 5 years – Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (lfst_hhpstechi).

⁽²⁷⁾ Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (lfst_hhaceday); calculated for single adults aged 15+ with dependent children (aged 0–11 years).

⁽²⁸⁾ Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (lfst_hhtemty).

and accommodation, culture and retail trade sectors) are characterised by a high share of self-employed workers. In 2019, more than one third of self-employed people in the EU-27 worked in **accommodation and food service activities, arts and entertainment, construction and wholesale and retail trade** (27 % of women and 40 % of men). Self-employed workers are at risk of being disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 crisis, as they are less likely to have access to social protection systems (e.g. sickness benefit, unemployment benefit, paid or sick leave, and maternity or parental leave) (Eurofound, 2020a; OECD, 2020a).

Although self-employment is less common among women than among men (9.5 % and 16.7 % of all workers, respectively) and women represent only one third (32.6 %) of all entrepreneurs in the EU-27 ⁽²⁹⁾, **self-employed women tend to operate in less profitable sectors than men, such as in health and social services, and personal and domestic services** (European Commission and OECD, 2016), **with workers in these sectors also being at higher risk of contracting the virus**. In the EU-27 in Q2 2020, the number of self-employed people declined by more than half a million compared with Q2 2019 (– 356 000 men and – 185 000 women) (Table 5).

Growing gender equality concerns within the cultural and creative sectors, which have been particularly hard hit by the COVID-19 crisis

Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, artistic and cultural events have been postponed or cancelled throughout Europe. This has had large negative effects for a considerable share of the EU workforce (Box 1). Along with the tourism sector, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has identified the arts, entertainment and recreation sectors among the sectors most impacted by the containment measures (OECD, 2020b) and most likely to experience long-term negative impacts

of the crisis (ECF, 2020). At the same time, these sectors have played a major positive role amid the crisis – moving content online for free, mitigating feelings of isolation and contributing to people’s mental and emotional well-being (ECF, 2020).

Box 1. Cultural and creative sectors workforce

In 2019, **7.4 million people** across the EU-27 were involved in cultural activities or had a cultural occupation – this corresponds to **3.7 % of people employed** within the whole EU-27 economy. Women accounted for 47.7 % of cultural employment, compared with 45.9 % in the total economy. The Baltic Member States recorded the highest female shares of cultural employment, with a peak of 65 % in Latvia, 61 % in Lithuania and 59 % in Estonia. By contrast, the lowest shares of women were recorded in three southern countries – Spain and Italy (each at 43 %) and Malta (42 %) (Eurostat, 2020b).

The cultural sector is characterised by a fragmented and precarious workforce, with a high prevalence of part-time contracts, on-demand and project-based agreements, small enterprises and microenterprises, freelancers and independent contractors (ILO, 2020c). While these work arrangements offer independence and flexibility, they also create challenges in terms of access to healthcare or social security, such as paid sick leave, maternity leave and parental leave. This problem has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as the **employment and income support measures implemented in response to the crisis are not all accessible to non-standard forms of work** (OECD, 2020b). People employed in the cultural and creative sectors are also often not captured by official statistics, which has led to the impact of the pandemic and the importance of the sector itself being underestimated.

⁽²⁹⁾ Authors’ calculations based on Eurostat data (lfsa_esgacob; lfsa_egaed; lfsa_egan).

Men in the cultural and creative sectors tend to be in charge of more commercially prominent cultural institutions, even in sectors where they are outnumbered by women, replicating patterns of **vertical segregation** and ‘**glass escalators**’⁽³⁰⁾. This leaves **women working in these sectors more vulnerable to shocks such as the COVID-19 crisis**, as well as posing an even greater threat to inclusion and workforce diversity within these sectors (Eikhof, 2020).

Workers in the informal economy are likely to suffer disproportionately from the adverse effects of the COVID-19 crisis

The sectors most impacted by the COVID-19 crisis are also those with a high incidence of undeclared jobs⁽³¹⁾. **Workers in informal employment often lack employment and social protection and have poor access to healthcare services or income support** in case of sickness or lockdown; in addition, many **cannot work remotely** (ILO, 2020d). According to a 2020 Special Eurobarometer report, **the personal service sector** (including childcare, care for the elderly and cleaning services) **was the sector most frequently mentioned by those carrying out undeclared work** in the EU-27 in 2019 (27 %), followed by construction (19 %) and hospitality (16 %) (European Commission, 2020a).

Sectoral gender segregation meant that men were much more likely than women to have carried out undeclared work in the construction sector (30 % and 3 %, respectively), while **women were more likely than men to have carried out undeclared work in personal services** (47 % and 13 %, respectively) and **in the hospitality sector** (22 % and 13 %, respectively). Women were more likely than men to have worked undeclared as babysitters (28 % versus 4 % of men) and waitresses (21 % versus 10 % of men), while men were more likely to have carried out undeclared repairs or renovation work (32 % versus 5 % of women). Compared with the

2013 Eurobarometer survey, the proportion of respondents carrying out undeclared work who mentioned providing assistance for a dependent or elderly person increased by 7 percentage points (from 3 % to 10 %).

1.3 Working in essential occupations during the COVID-19 crisis

Most EU Member States imposed lockdown measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, which included movement and travel restrictions and temporary suspension of economic activities, with the exception of jobs deemed ‘critical’, ‘essential’ or ‘key’ by national governments. This included jobs in the health and care sector, victim support services, education, the agro-industrial sector, supermarkets, pharmacies and banks. Most workers in these sectors (including self-employed people) continued to attend work physically during periods of lockdown.

Higher risk of COVID-19 infection for essential workers, especially in care sectors

Workers in essential occupations, especially those that require physical contact and close social interaction, are at the greatest risk of contracting COVID-19. Estimates for Italy (INPS, 2020), for example, show that keeping essential sectors open contributed to about one third of COVID-19 cases recorded between 22 March and 4 May 2020⁽³²⁾. Poulkias and Branca (2020) analysed the risk of infection for essential workers and deemed it very high or high for health professionals, personal care workers, personal service workers (including travel attendants and transport conductors), food preparation workers, drivers, cleaners and helpers, agricultural workers and security workers (police officers, prison guards, etc.).

⁽³⁰⁾ Based on Williams (1992), the ‘glass escalator’ refers to the way that men are put on a fast track to advanced positions when entering female-dominated occupations.

⁽³¹⁾ See, for example, Eurofound, ‘[All aboard: hauling undeclared workers onto the pandemic rescue boats](#)’.

⁽³²⁾ Deaths of essential workers are estimated to account for 13 % of the deaths recorded in this period.

The heavy toll on healthcare and domestic workers increases further

During the pandemic, **working conditions for healthcare workers have worsened considerably, with longer working hours and additional difficulties in reconciling work and family life** (Shmerling, 2020). National labour authorities in Portugal reported healthcare workers being denied their parental rights in the workplace (ILO, 2020d). In Italy, female healthcare workers in high-risks units were more likely than their male colleagues to report increased working hours and the need for psychological support (Felice et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 crisis has **negatively affected the psychological well-being of healthcare workers, especially women**. Stress, anxiety and depressive symptoms are among the effects observed among health professionals, with women showing more negative psycho-

logical health outcomes than men (Coto et al., 2020; Crimia and Carlucci, 2020; Shreffler et al., 2020). Evidence also shows that the pandemic has exacerbated violence against, harassment of and stigmatisation of health workers (Devi, 2020).

Domestic workers are not only at increased risk of contracting the virus (they often work with children and the elderly and are not always provided with adequate personal protective equipment (PPE)); **many were also dismissed during the lockdowns** implemented in response to the first COVID-19 wave (Table 2), often losing their accommodation (if live-in domestic workers) and work permits as a result. In this context, migrant women have faced additional vulnerabilities, such as increased workloads without extra pay or compensation and pressure to stay overnight in their workplaces to lower the risk of exposure during commuting (Foley and Piper, 2020).

2. Working arrangements (with a focus on teleworking) and incomes

2.1 Telework and teleworkability in the EU before and after the COVID-19 pandemic

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of workers in the EU have begun to work from home. **Telework is not a new working arrangement, but it creates new challenges and opportunities for gender equality.** Workers able to telework during the COVID-19 crisis have been more likely to remain in employment and to work the same or similar working hours as before the crisis and have been less likely to suffer a decline in income.

Although telework can offer workers unprecedented temporal (time) and spatial (location) flexibility, greater autonomy, an improved work-life balance and reduced commuting times, it can also lead to longer working hours, increased intensity of work, higher stress levels, blurred boundaries between work and private life and a greater sense of isolation and loneliness, which, in turn, may adversely affect workers' mental health and well-being (Mann and Holdsworth, 2003). Women with care responsibilities may be particularly affected by both the positive and the negative effects of telework. For example, teleworking may support work-life balance but may also reduce the professional visibility of women and their career prospects.

Gender differences in the use of telework before the COVID-19 pandemic related to gender roles and work-life balance needs

Before the pandemic, men represented a greater share of workers with telework / ICT mobile work arrangements ⁽³³⁾ (54 % compared with 46 % for women). The **share of women was higher in home-based telework** (57 %), however, suggesting that gender roles and work-life balance needs are important in shaping gender differences in types and frequency of telework. For example, **working from home was more common in households with children, especially among lone parents.** In the EU-27 in 2019, the share of people working from home was 14.3 % for women and 14.4 % for men. This share was higher in households with children (15.7 % for women and 15.9 % for men), reaching 17.3 % for lone women and 25.3 % for lone men with children ⁽³⁴⁾. The share of women and men working from home increased strongly with number of children, reaching 21.4 % for women and 19.1 % for men with three children or more. Having children under 12 years of age increased the share of women and men working from home by around 2–2.5 percentage points ⁽³⁵⁾.

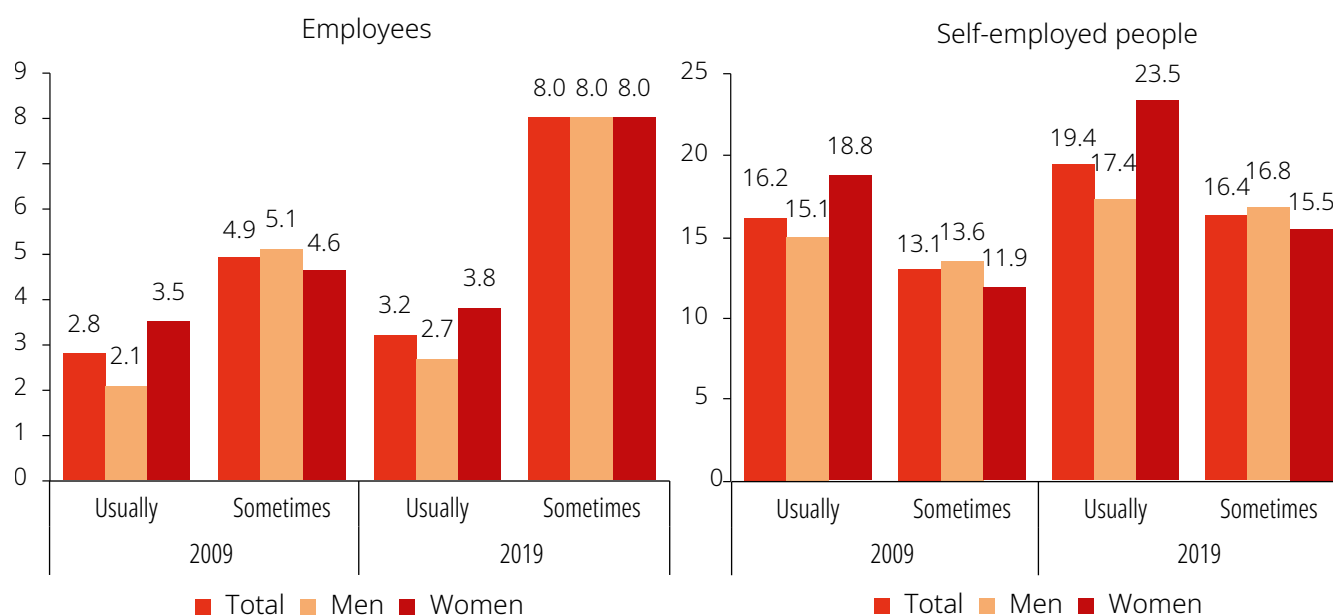
In 2019, around 8 % of employees worked from home at least some of the time. However, only

⁽³³⁾ Workers with telework / ICT mobile work arrangements include those who (1) work with ICT 'all of the time' or 'almost all of the time' and (2) work at one or more locations other than their employer's premises 'at least several times a month'. A distinction is made between workers who work mainly from home (regular home-based teleworkers) and mobile workers (Eurofound, 2017).

⁽³⁴⁾ Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data ([lfst_hhwahty](#)).

⁽³⁵⁾ Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data ([lfst_hhwahchi](#)).

Figure 7. Shares of employees and self-employed people working from home as a percentage of total employment in 2009 and 2019 by sex (% , 20–64 years, EU-27)



NB: The percentages refer to the share of people who 'usually work from home' and 'sometimes work at home'.

Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat and EU-LFS data ([lfsa_ehomp](#)).

3.2 % of employees worked from home regularly, a share that had remained quite stable since 2009 and was slightly higher for women than for men. Working from home was more widespread among self-employed workers than employees, especially among self-employed women, who routinely used teleworking (Figure 7).

A higher share of women in teleworkable occupations

The **degree of job teleworkability** is a proxy for the probability of teleworking. Estimates of the shares of workers employed in sectors and occupations where a physical presence is not essential vary from 20 % to 37 % (Boeri et al., 2020; Sostero et al., 2020). Teleworkability is higher in ICT and knowledge-intensive sectors, and for high-skilled workers generally. Telework is more widespread in countries where knowledge and ICT-intensive service sectors account for a larger share of total employment (e.g. NL, FI, SE) ⁽³⁶⁾. While the employment of women in the ICT sector remains relatively low (Table 4),

the **share of women in teleworkable occupations is estimated to be much higher than the share of men (45 % compared with 30 %)** (Sostero et al., 2020). The gender difference in teleworkability relates in part to patterns of vertical and horizontal segregation, with men over-represented in sectors with limited teleworkability potential (e.g. agriculture, mining, manufacturing and construction) and women over-represented in occupations with a lower share of physical handling tasks (e.g. office-based, secretarial and administrative occupations).

Pandemic teleworking may have helped women to keep their jobs

A higher degree of teleworkability does not necessarily translate into the actual adoption of telework or home-based work. While most estimates of the share of EU workers in teleworkable occupations were around 20–40 % in the pre-pandemic period (depending on the study), in 2018, only 15 % were effectively teleworking at least once a week ⁽³⁷⁾. The COVID-19

⁽³⁶⁾ Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data ([isoc_iw_hem](#)).

⁽³⁷⁾ Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data ([isoc_iw_hem](#)).

pandemic and the ensuing confinement measures accelerated the adoption of teleworking modalities (ILO, 2020a), although significant differences remain across industries and occupations, as well as across EU Member States.

According to the first wave of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) e-survey 'Living, working and COVID-19', conducted during the first lockdown period in April and May 2020, 38.6 % of women and 34.9 % of men in the EU-27 started to work from home as a result of the pandemic. The increase was particularly high among young women (49 %) and young men (38 %) aged 18–34. Even after the first lockdown period, the share of people working from home remained high in the EU. The second wave of the Eurofound e-survey was conducted in June / July 2020 and found that **over 50 % of women and 46 % of men were still working from home at least some of the time** ⁽³⁸⁾.

The use of teleworking varies considerably between Member States, which, in part, explains the different effects of the COVID-19 crisis on women and men. According to Fana et al. (2020), in Greece, Spain and Italy and, to some extent, Poland, the significantly higher prevalence of women in the sectors that were closed as a result of the pandemic was not compensated by a higher presence in the essential and teleworkable sectors, suggesting a significant gender imbalance in the impact of the crisis. Conversely, in Germany and France, women are significantly more prevalent in the essential and teleworkable sectors.

Figure 8 illustrates the cross-country correlations observed between the pre-pandemic use of teleworking and employment changes between Q4 2019 and Q3 2020 for employees in the Member States. It shows a weak positive correlation for female employees and no correlation for male employees, probably because of a greater distribution of teleworkable occu-

pations among women. This suggests that, **in countries where the share of female employees usually working from home before the pandemic was higher, there was a correspondingly lower decline in women's employment** between Q4 2019 and Q3 2020. For men, this relationship was absent.

2.2 Telework and the gender digital divide

The increased use of telework during the pandemic has shown companies the **potential of a digital workforce**, with increased exposure to digital technologies prompting companies to revise their traditional work organisation, production and delivery methods (Cedefop, 2020b).

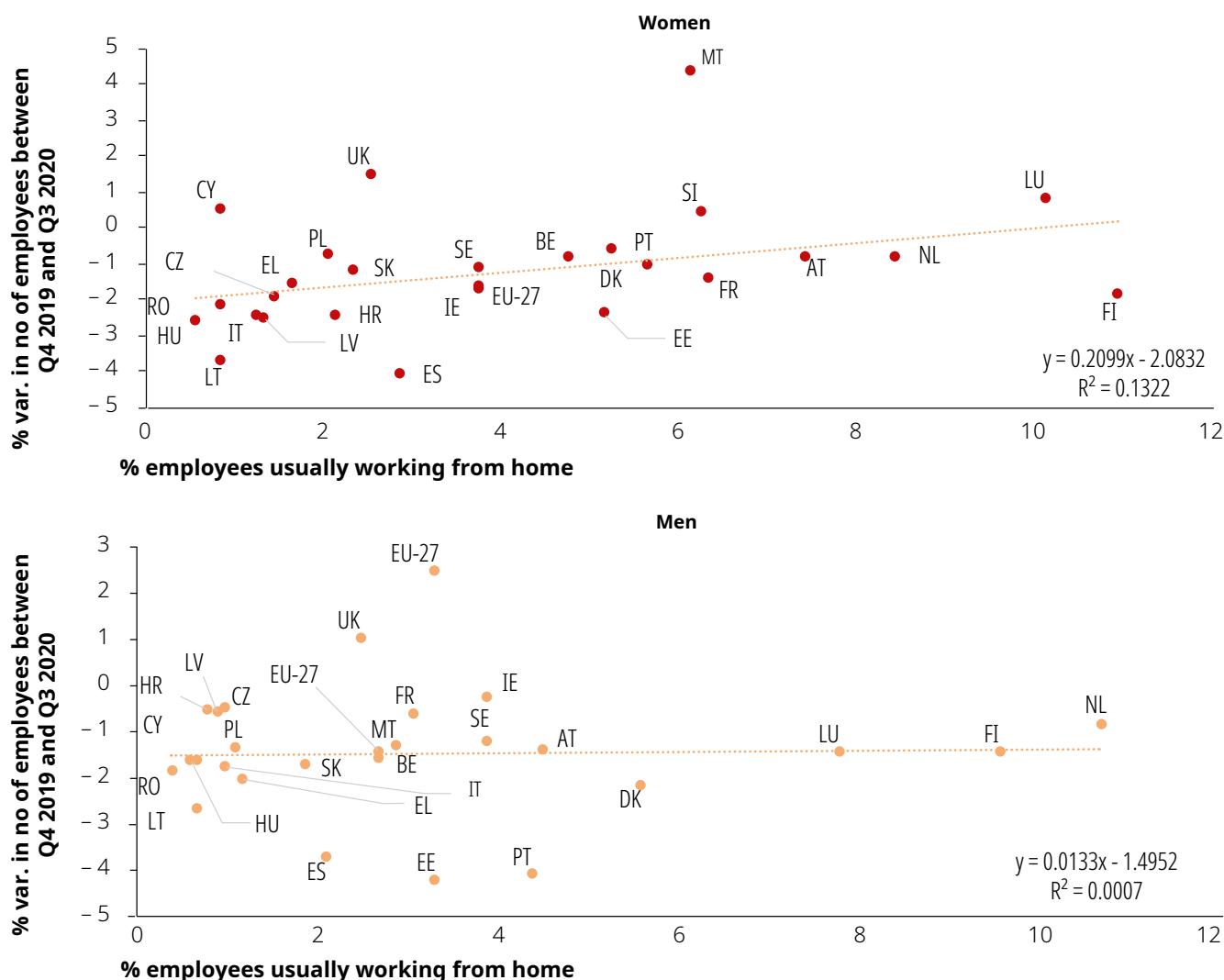
It is anticipated, however, that this trend **may create a new divide between those who can telework and those who cannot** (JRC, 2020). As shown by Milasi et al. (2020a) and underlined by the European Commission (2020b), the benefits of telework **may not be available to the unskilled or untrained** (OECD, 2016), especially workers in manual occupations or those with low levels of digital skills, who are among the lowest paid in the workforce. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has extended teleworking to more workers, including those not previously teleworking, many workers remain excluded from it.

Gender divide in digital skills widens with higher level of skills and age

Workers with strong digital skills are better positioned to respond to the demands of remote working during the current crisis and in the future. As women, on average, have less access, less exposure and less experience with digital technologies than men (OECD, 2019), they are less able to participate equally in an increasingly digital society and are potentially disadvantaged when working remotely (OECD,

⁽³⁸⁾ The two waves of the survey are not fully comparable. The first wave of the survey does not provide data on people working from home (as in the second wave) but only on the share of people who started working from home as result of the pandemic and on the frequency of working from home before the pandemic. By contrast, the second wave provides data on people working from home but not on the share of people working from home as a result of the pandemic.

Figure 8. Cross-country correlation between the percentage variation in number of employees between Q4 2019 and Q3 2020 and the percentage of employees usually working from home in 2019 by sex (15+ years, EU-27)



Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data ([lfsa_ehomp](#); [lfsq_eegais](#)).

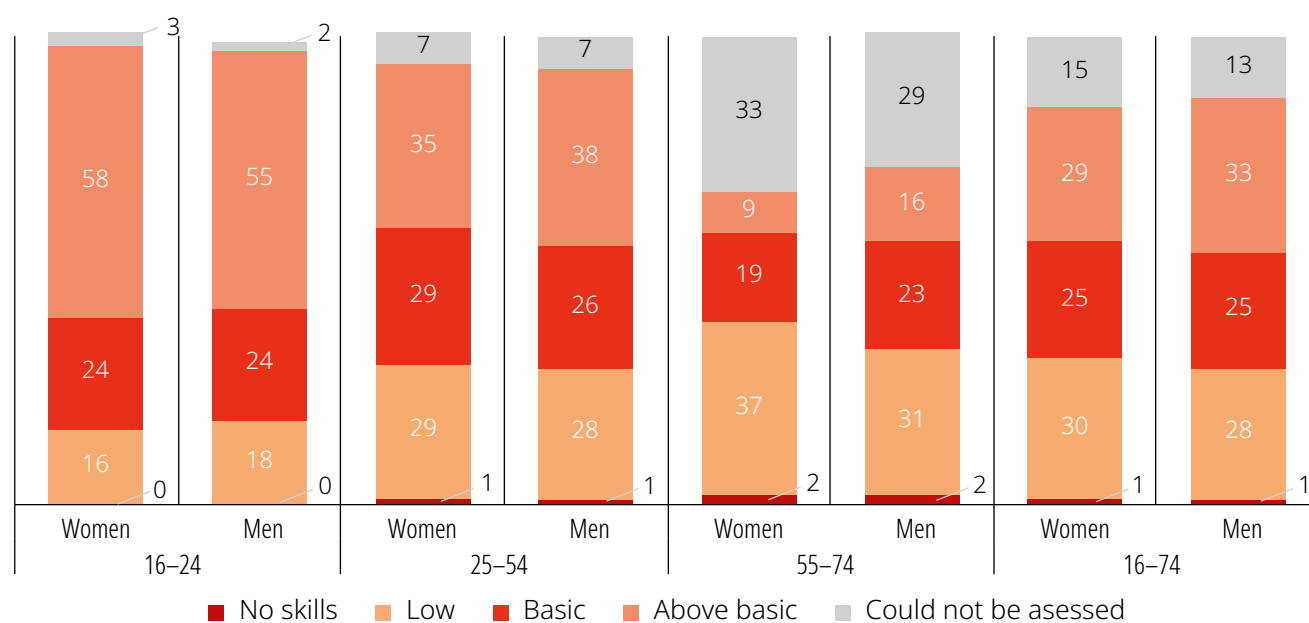
2020c). Fewer women than men have access to the internet and women are also less likely to participate in ICT-related education and employment (EIGE, 2016a, 2020b).

Equal access to ICT is not itself sufficient to close the digital gender divide; women need the knowledge and resources to translate access into effective use (HRBDT, 2017). The **digital literacy gap** is manifested in the lack of basic technological skills, which impede access to and use of ICT. A study published by Accenture (2017) identified **the gender divide in digital skills as one of the main factors affecting the**

gender pay gap and the ability to break the glass ceiling.

Figure 9 shows that **the gender gap increases when considering above-basic digital skills and for older ages**. The average **gender gap in digital skills is largely accounted for by older women**, with the gap disappearing or even reversing among younger generations (EIGE, 2020b). Indeed, **more girls than boys under 24 years of age have advanced digital skills** and there is **no gender gap among those aged 25–54**. A gender gap of 7 percentage points does emerge among people aged over 54 years, however ⁽³⁹⁾.

⁽³⁹⁾ Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data ([isoc_sk_dskl_i](#)).

Figure 9. Levels of digital skills of individuals in 2019 by sex and age group (% , EU-27)

NB: Digital skills are measured in relation to activities performed across four domains of digital competencies: information, communication, problem-solving and software skills. Individuals with an 'above basic' level of skills display this level of skills in all four domains; individuals with a 'basic' level of skills have a 'basic' level of skills in at least one of the four domains; individuals with a 'low' level of skills have 'no skills' in one to three of the four domains; and individuals with 'no skills' did not perform any activities across all four domains, despite declaring having used the internet at least once during the last 3 months. Digital skills could not be assessed for those individuals who have not used the internet in the last 3 months. For this figure, EIGE used numerical data that had been rounded to no decimal places by Eurostat and therefore the percentages might not sum to 100 %.

Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data ([isoc_sk_dskl_i](#)).

Gender differences in the use of digital platforms may increase during the COVID-19 crisis

While data on platform work in the EU are incomplete, difficult to compare and vary substantially by country, estimates from up to 2020 suggested that about 10 % of the EU population have ever provided some services via platforms and that platform work constituted the main employment activity for around 2 % of the population (EIGE, 2020b). The COVID-19 crisis is accelerating the creation of digital platforms for remote work and independent work, offering an important opportunity for some women to benefit from the work flexibility offered by such platforms, especially in the case of freelance remote workers, digitally delivered ser-

vices (such as software development, design or sales) and marketing (Madgavkar et al., 2020). However, **women are still under-represented in platform work in general** (both online and on-site), as **its employment structure follows the patterns of gender segregation in the broader economy** (EIGE, 2020b). Women also tend to only partially benefit from the opportunities offered by labour platforms⁽⁴⁰⁾, service platforms and online market platforms, because of sex-based discrimination and bias against female sellers⁽⁴¹⁾ and freelancers⁽⁴²⁾.

Although little information is available on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the platform economy, early studies underline the potential negative consequences in terms of job losses, lower wages and reduced work oppor-

⁽⁴⁰⁾ For an exhaustive discussion of digital labour platforms, see Brancati et al. (2019).

⁽⁴¹⁾ Kricheli-Katz and Regev (2016) found that women earn 20 % less when selling identical new products on eBay. They also found that auction prices for used objects are 3 % lower for female sellers.

⁽⁴²⁾ A survey by Hyperwallet (2017) showed that 33 % of women work online under a pseudonym or have a user name that does not reveal their gender, in an attempt to avoid discrimination. Of these, 72 % choose to work under a gender-neutral name to maintain anonymity.

tunities (Moulds, 2020). These findings are confirmed in a forthcoming EIGE report on platform work (EIGE, forthcoming), based on a survey of platform workers ($n = 4\,932$) carried out in 10 Member States (DK, ES, FR, LV, NL, PL, RO, SI, SK, FI) in November and December 2020.

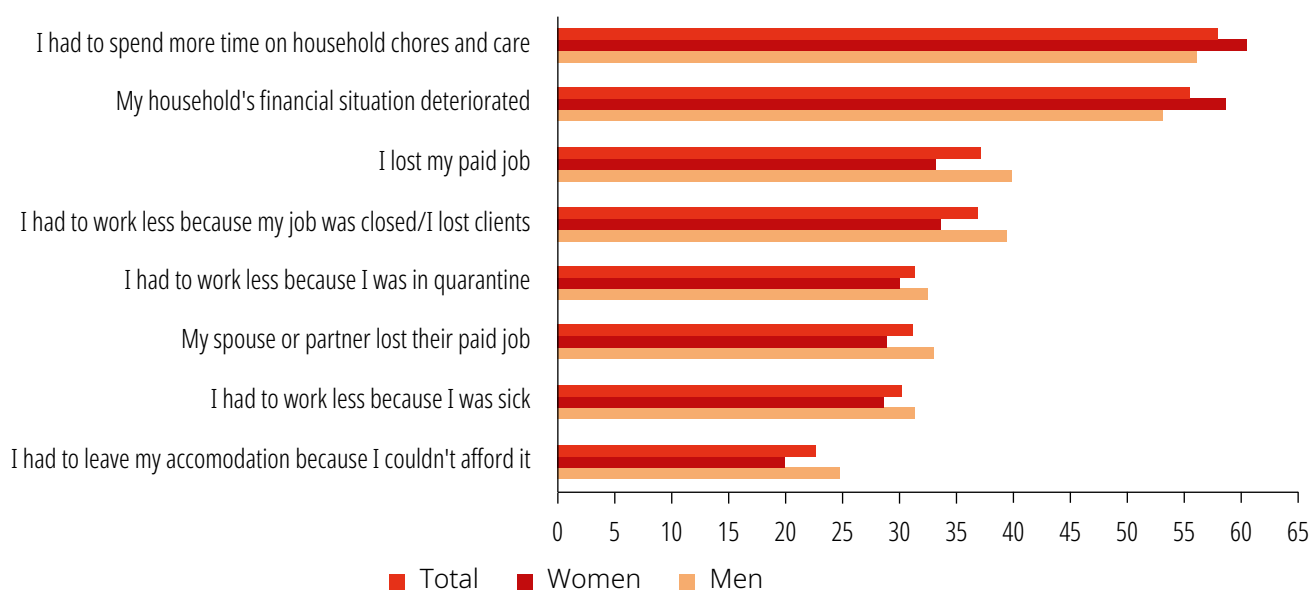
Of the online platform workers surveyed (i.e. those whose work is web-based and provided remotely), 20 % started working on online platforms in 2019 and 18 % in 2020. Women represented 50 % of online platform workers who joined in 2019 and 52 % of those who joined in 2020. The most prevalent types of web-based remote services provided by women were clerical and data-entry tasks (e.g. customer service, data entry, transcription) and writing and translation work (e.g. article writing, copywriting, proofreading, translation). Men more often provided micro tasks (e.g. object classification, tagging, content review, undertaking online surveys, providing website feedback).

The COVID-19 pandemic and related policy measures (e.g. lockdowns, quarantine, closures of businesses and schools) appear to **have**

strongly and negatively impacted the lives of the online platform workers surveyed. For these people, online platform work served as an important source of income during the turbulent times: almost half (48 %) of those who lost their usual job because of the pandemic started or restarted work via online platforms and another 31 % increased the number of hours worked via platforms. Overall, more than one third (37 %) of online platform workers lost their usual job because of the pandemic, at a rate of 40 % for men and 33 % for women (Figure 10). Looking into the household situations of online platform workers, more men than women indicated that their partner lost their job during the pandemic.

The flexibility inherent in platform work has made it an accessible source of income during the economic downturn, but has not protected workers from experiencing a deteriorating financial situation, pointing to the precarious income situation of many platform workers. According to the survey, women (59 %) were more likely than men (53 %) to say that their household's financial situation had dete-

Figure 10. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on online platform workers in 2020 (% , 16-54 years)



NB: Weighted results; percentages are calculated in relation to all platform workers performing tasks online ($n = 3\,865$). The relevant survey question was 'Since March 2020, have you experienced any of the following situations because of the COVID-19 pandemic or related policy measures (e.g. lockdowns, quarantine, closures of businesses and schools, etc.)?'; some answer options have been shortened for readability.

Source: EIGE (forthcoming).

riorated. Nonetheless, more men (25 %) than women (20 %) working on online platforms had to leave their accommodation because they could no longer afford it.

The pandemic has further negatively impacted both female and male online platform workers, albeit in somewhat different ways. According to the survey, men were significantly more likely to have to take leave or time off from paid work because of sickness, having to quarantine or having to self-isolate. Women had to spend more time than men on household chores and duties; overall, the survey shows that, at the time of data collection, women spent on average 25 hours a week on household work and caring for children or other family members, compared with 20 hours a week for men. The burden of housework and caring was even heavier for platform workers with children and

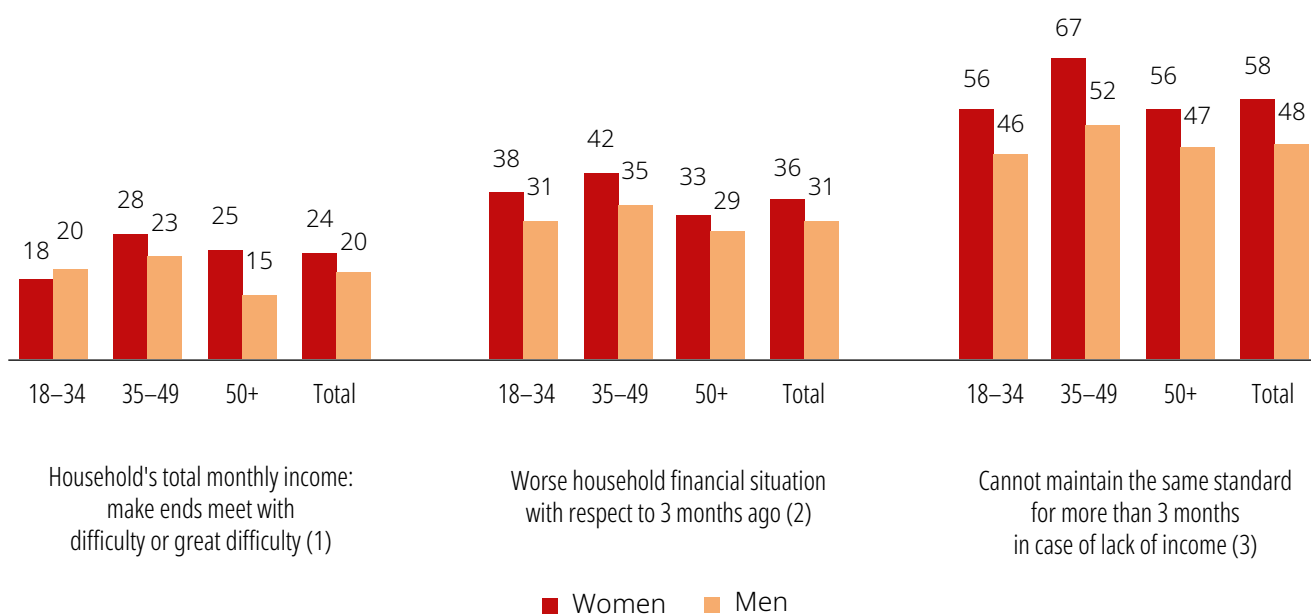
foreign-born, older and less educated platform workers. This reflects a substantial increase in time spent on household chores and care for both women and men – one of the major effects of the COVID-19 crisis related to personal lives, economic well-being and work–life balance.

2.3 Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on income

The COVID-19 crisis has sharply increased financial fragility and poverty risks, especially among women

Even before the outbreak of the pandemic, the risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU-27 was higher for women than for men ⁽⁴³⁾, and the COVID-19 crisis is likely to aggravate the situation.

Figure 11. Financial situation of households during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic (July 2020) by sex and age (% , EU-27)



NB: (1) Percentages responding 'with difficulty' or 'with great difficulty' to the question, 'A household may have different sources of income and more than one household member may contribute to it. Thinking of your household's total monthly income: is your household able to make ends meet?'; (2) percentages responding 'worse' to the question, 'When you compare the financial situation of your household 3 months ago and now would you say it has become better, worse or remained the same?'; (3) percentages responding 'no savings' or 'less than 3 months' to the question, 'If your household would not receive any income, how long would your household be able to maintain the same standard of living using savings?'

Source: Eurofound, [Living, working and COVID-19 dataset](#) (second wave, July 2020).

⁽⁴³⁾ Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (ilc_peps01).

The e-survey conducted by Eurofound in July 2020 showed that **women were more at risk of financial fragility than men**, with 58 % of women (compared with 48 % of men) reporting that they would not be able to maintain the same standard of living for more than 3 months and 36 % (compared with 31 % of men) being in a worse financial situation than in the previous 3 months (Figure 11). Similarly, 24 % of women and 20 % of men found it difficult to make ends meet, compared with 16 % of women and 14 % of men in that position in 2016 ⁽⁴⁴⁾.

National studies indicate different income effects of the COVID-19 crisis on workers with different employment statuses. A German study showed that the self-employed were much more likely to suffer income losses during the COVID-19 crisis than employees. **Among the self-employed, women were 35 % more likely to experience income losses than men**, as women are disproportionately working in sectors more severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (Graeber et al., 2020).

Gender gaps in income losses during the COVID-19 crisis might impact future gender gaps in pension entitlements. According to Eurostat (2020c), in 2018, women aged over 65 received a pension that was on average 30 % lower than that of men. No data are available for 2020 to assess the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on the gender pay gap, which averaged 14.1 % in the EU-27 in 2018 (latest data available) ⁽⁴⁵⁾. Nonetheless, apart from the longer-lasting effects of the crisis on women than on men, the pandemic is also affecting work prospects for those who have retained their jobs. For example, almost 60 % of women reported that a promotion or pay rise was unlikely in the near future (Sukces Pisany Szminka Foundation,

2020). As employment is the most important source of individual and household income, low pay and low career prospects are barriers to achieving equal economic independence for women and men and can lead to higher risks of household poverty and social exclusion (EIGE, 2016b).

The poorest households with children, especially those with lone mothers, have been hit hardest by crisis

According to early estimates, even with income support measures, the spring lockdown is expected to have reduced EU households' disposable income by 3.6 % in 2020, with the **poorest households being most severely hit** (Almeida et al., 2020). The **risk of poverty is also higher for households with children**. In 2019, across the EU-27, 69.4 % of people living in households with a very low work intensity ⁽⁴⁶⁾ and dependent children were at risk of poverty compared with 55 % of people living in similar households but without children (Eurostat, 2020c). The highest risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU-27 (40.3 %) was recorded among lone parents ⁽⁴⁷⁾ (Eurostat, 2020c).

The closure of schools and childcare services further impaired the employment opportunities of parents, especially mothers, and increased the risk of poverty among households with dependent children. Data from Eurofound's COVID-19 e-survey show that households with children struggled to make ends meet much more than households without children (Mascherini and Bisello, 2020). The pandemic is also likely to increase the poverty risk and material deprivation of lone mothers and their children.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ EU-28 average from Eurofound's 2016 European quality of life survey (EQLS 2016). Share of people responding 'with difficulty' or 'with great difficulty' to the question (Q88), 'A household may have different sources of income and more than one household member may contribute to it. Thinking of your household's total monthly income: is your household able to make ends meet?'

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (tesem180). The unadjusted gender pay gap represents the difference between average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees and average gross hourly earnings of female paid employees as a percentage of average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ People who live in a household with a very low work intensity are defined as those who live in a household where, on average, the working-age adults work less than or equal to 20 % of their potential working time in a year.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Individuals aged less than 18 years or aged 18–24 years if economically inactive and living with at least one parent.

The type of income support received by women compared with men reflects their different positions in the labour market, as well as women's disproportionate burden of care duties. In Italy, women represented 79 % of applicants for the specific COVID-19 parental leave introduced in

March 2020 ⁽⁴⁸⁾ and 68 % of applicants for the babysitting bonus (INPS, 2020). In Portugal, women represented more than 80 % of beneficiaries of wage replacement schemes for parents whose children's schools had closed (ILO, 2020d).

⁽⁴⁸⁾ To address the problems created by the suspension of childcare services and educational activities in schools, the Cura Italia decree introduced a specific COVID-19 parental leave or the possibility of using a monetary bonus for assistance and the supervision of minors (the 'babysitting bonus').

3. Gender roles

Before the COVID-19 crisis, employed women in the EU spent about 3.9 hours per day on unpaid care ⁽⁴⁹⁾ whereas employed men spent 2.6 hours (EIGE, 2021). The gender gap was higher among families with children and for women in precarious employment. Women are still largely expected to provide unpaid care to a greater extent than men, even within dual-earning families (Kan, 2011; ILO, 2018). **Women are thus more likely to be engaged in supplementing care work as a result of the closures of and restrictions in care services during the pandemic.** As a result, the COVID-19 crisis is likely to aggravate gender inequalities in unpaid care (Blasko et al., 2020), reinforce traditional gender roles and derail the modest progress achieved so far (EIGE, 2020b).

School closures and a reduction in the supply of childcare and other care services during lockdown may explain the further decline in the already low employment rates for women (aged 25–49), as **women with care responsibilities tend to adapt to the lack of childcare services by reducing their working hours or even (temporarily) giving up paid work** (Blasko et al., 2020). According to the first wave of Eurofound's COVID-19 e-survey, carried out in April and May 2020 ⁽⁵⁰⁾, on average in the EU-27, less than 4 % of women and men were able to get support from a service provider, institution or organisation if they needed help looking after their children, while one in four (25 %) could not get help from anybody.

The resulting impact may affect women's well-being and longer-term labour market prospects. Reducing working hours or temporarily quitting work in order to look after children after the closure of schools, care for older family members or carry out housework, without external support, can impose long-term adverse effects on women's labour market outcomes in

terms of wage penalties, lower social protection and lower pension contributions.

3.1 Impact on the unpaid care burden and living conditions of working parents

Women are shouldering the brunt of unpaid care, although men's contributions have increased

The first wave of the pandemic saw women spend more hours than men on unpaid care: caring for and educating children/grandchildren (12.6 hours per week, compared with 7.8 hours for men), caring for older people or family members with disabilities (4.5 hours per week, compared with 2.8 hours for men) and cooking and housework (18.6 hours per week, compared with 12.1 hours per week for men) (Figure 12). Data from the second wave of the Eurofound e-survey 'Living, working and COVID-19' were collected in July 2020; this coincided with a major reopening of schools and/or the summer holiday period and may have resulted in the difficulties faced by parents and the time spent on education of children between March and May 2020 being underestimated. The data are also averages across those surveyed, meaning that some groups will have had much higher unpaid workloads (e.g. parents) and some much lower.

Comparing the average hours per week spent on unpaid care activities by women and men obtained from the two surveys highlights the gendered impact of the pandemic on unpaid care. Although the comparison should be considered with caution, because of the different questions asked, samples and data collection methods used, it shows that, on average, in the EU-27 the **pandemic has increased both women's and men's unpaid care activities,**

⁽⁴⁹⁾ Unpaid care in this context is defined as childcare, long-term care and housework.

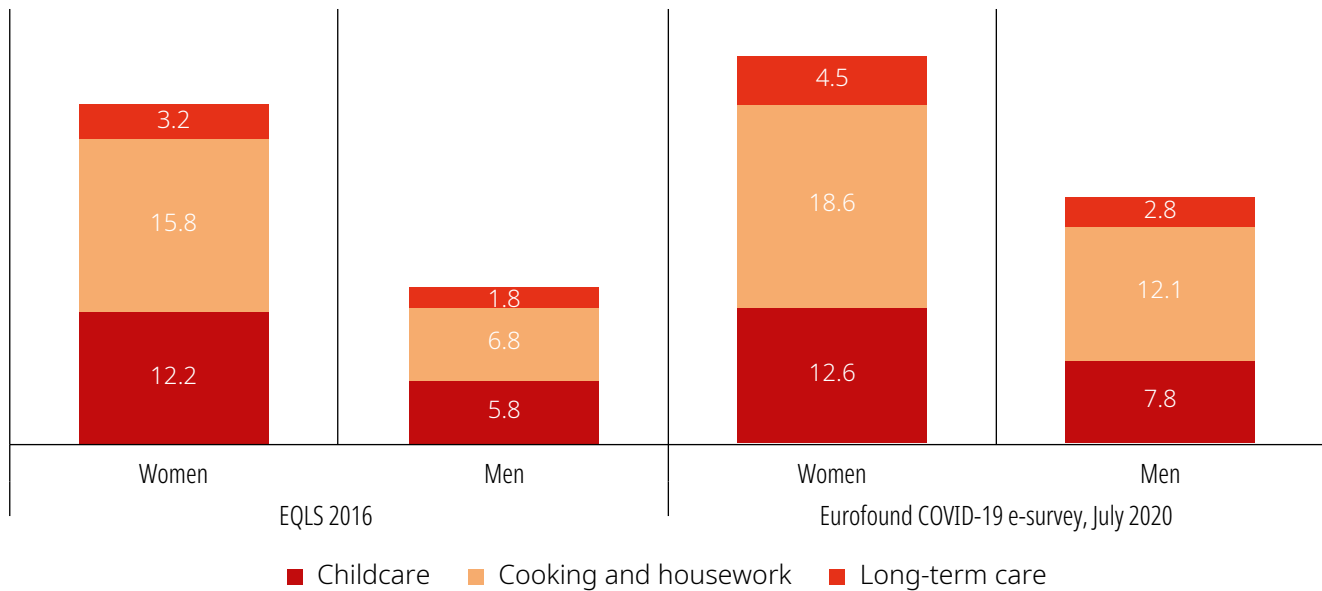
⁽⁵⁰⁾ Eurofound, [Living, working and COVID-19 dataset](#).

although women continue to bear the brunt of unpaid care. The largest increase in time spent on unpaid care for men was for cooking and housework, increasing to 12.1 hours per week on average during the first wave of the pandemic compared with 6.8 hours in 2016 (Figure 12).

The factors contributing to the growth of unpaid care include the decrease in **informal help received from grandparents** because of mobility restrictions and social distancing, especially in Member States with a high reliance on grandparents' support for childcare (BG, EL, HR, IT, CY, MT, RO) ⁽⁵¹⁾. Similarly, COVID-19 restrictions have affected workers' ability to access hired personal care and domestic workers, with high numbers of migrant care and domestic workers (mostly women) returning to their home countries ahead of border closures (Zacharenko, 2020).

National research shows similar trends. In Belgium, data collected through time diaries show that working women and men, particularly parents and lone mothers with children, experienced increased time pressure during the lockdown compared with the latest available time use data from 2013 (Mullens and Verbeylen, 2020). Evidence also shows that, during the lockdown periods, **fathers working from home generally tended to share the care workload more than before**, especially in families where only the father stopped working while the mother was employed in essential occupations (Andrew et al., 2020, Sevilla and Smith, 2020). In Germany, men with low and medium levels of education spent more time with their children than they did before the onset of the crisis (Kreyenfeld et al., 2020). Similarly, in Italy, men whose partners continued to work at their usual workplace spent more time on housework than before the pandemic (Del Boca et al., 2020).

Figure 12. Time spent by women and men on unpaid care activities in 2016 and July 2020 (hours per week, 18+ years, EU-27)



NB: COVID-19 e-survey dataset (second wave, July 2020): ‘Last month, on average, how many hours per week were you involved in any of the following activities outside of paid work?’; EQLS microdata (2016): Q43 – ‘On average, how many hours per week are you involved in any of the following activities outside of paid work?’: (A) caring for and/or educating your children (under 18 years old) and/or caring for and/or educating your grandchildren; (B) caring for family members with disabilities or infirm family members, neighbours or friends (under 75 years old and over 75 years old); (C) cooking and/or housework. Comparison between the two surveys should be considered with caution because of the different questions asked, samples and data collection methods used.

Source: Eurofound, [Living, working and COVID-19 dataset](#) (2020); EQLS microdata (2016).

⁽⁵¹⁾ According to EQLS 2016 data, grandparents provide the main type of childcare in half to two thirds of households in several southern and south-eastern European countries (Eurofound, 2017).

Whether or not the increased participation of men in childcare and domestic work will prompt **lasting changes in household arrangements and a redistribution of care is uncertain**. Andrew et al. (2020) suggest that the lockdown shock on family dynamics may have started new processes, leading to renewed arrangements, gender roles and attitudes. While historical events may initiate such changes, other authors suggest caution, as outcomes are uncertain (Boll and Schüller, 2020). The increased uptake of caring duties by fathers might still reflect a gendered specialisation in unpaid care work. According to Farré et al. (2020), during the first lockdown, the increased share of care by fathers was largely attributable to increased time spent on grocery shopping, which was the only allowable reason to leave the house during lockdown.

Closure of schools and social distancing measures increased the scope of unpaid work

The closure of schools and childcare services during the COVID-19 crisis has increased the childcare burden and created new unpaid jobs (e.g. homeschooling), especially for working parents. Before the pandemic, employed women with childcare responsibilities (in the EU-27 and the United Kingdom) spent about 23 hours per week on childcare, compared with 19 hours per week for men (EIGE, 2021).

According to the second wave of the Eurofound COVID-19 e-survey (July 2020) ⁽⁵²⁾, **employed women with children under 12 spent around 54 hours per week on childcare, compared with 32 hours for employed men** (Eurofound, 2020a). Similar results are reported in national data. In Germany, an online survey conducted by the Institute for Employment Research of the Federal Employment Agency in June 2020 showed that, although the proportion of men involved in childcare increased significantly during the pandemic, women still shouldered the greater part of childcare and housework (Globisch and Osiander, 2020). During the spring

2020 lockdown, women with young children (aged 0–5 years) faced the biggest challenges in balancing work and family in Italy (Del Boca et al., 2020), Spain (Farré et al., 2020) and the United Kingdom (Collins et al., 2020) many have changed their work hours to meet these growing demands. In this study, we use panel data from the US Current Population Survey to examine changes in mothers' and fathers' work hours from February through April 2020, the period of time prior to the widespread COVID-19 outbreak in the United States and through its first peak. Using person-level fixed effects models, we find that mothers with young children have reduced their work hours four to five times more than fathers. Consequently, the gender gap in work hours has grown by 20–50 per cent. These findings indicate yet another negative consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the challenges it poses to women's work hours and that also recorded most of the labour market exits among women and workers with low levels of education. Similarly, in France, a survey undertaken during the strictest phase of the spring 2020 lockdown showed that one in three women left their job to provide unpaid childcare and housework, compared with one in four men (Lambert et al., 2020).

Lone mothers are particularly exposed to the negative consequences of school closures and disruption in access to childcare because of lower financial resources and the impossibility of sharing care demands (Alon et al., 2020). Data from 2016 show that, even before the pandemic, 42 % of lone parents in the EU had difficulties in affording childcare services ⁽⁵³⁾. Low-wage working women with children were less likely than higher-wage women to use childcare services and more likely to rely on relatives and other types of less formal childcare arrangements (EIGE, 2021). The pressure to respond to increased care duties during the COVID-19 pandemic by reducing employment has likely been severe for lone mothers with children (Blasko et al., 2020).

⁽⁵²⁾ The first wave of the Eurofound e-survey in April 2020 did not collect data on the number of hours spent on childcare.

⁽⁵³⁾ Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (ilc_ats03).

Women in the EU have been more engaged in supporting their children with online schooling during the pandemic and are more dissatisfied with this type of schooling than their partners. In Portugal, for instance, 77.5 % of women helped their children aged under 16 with homework, compared with only 41.3 % of men ⁽⁵⁴⁾.

The COVID-19 crisis has increased the burden of women caring for older family members and people with disabilities

The closures of daily care services for people with disabilities and the mobility restrictions on personal carers with irregular jobs (largely migrant women) have increased the burden on carers at home. Workers employed in essential occupations, particularly women with care responsibilities for older family members and people with disabilities, face additional difficulties.

As shown in Figure 12, **the first lockdown period saw women spend 4.5 hours per week on average caring for their older family members or relatives with disabilities, compared with 2.8 hours for men**. The EQLS 2016 showed that, previously, women spent on average 3.2 hours a week providing this type of care, compared with 1.8 hours for men.

Even before the pandemic, **about 29 % of EU households reported an unmet need for professional home care services**, with large differences between countries (from 12 % in Sweden to more than 60 % in Greece and Portugal; EIGE, 2019). Insufficient care infrastructure pushes women to fill in care gaps (Folbre and Bittman, 2004; Saraceno, 2008; Henz, 2009, 2010; Luppi et al., 2019). In 2018, over 10 million workers in the EU-28 (6 million of whom were women) had care responsibilities for relatives in need of care (aged 15 years and older), equivalent to 6 % of women and 4 % of men in employment (EIGE, 2021). In many Member States, the unavailabil-

ity and/or high costs of formal long-term care services (either home based or in institutions) has resulted in an increasing role for domestic workers, often migrant women employed irregularly who provide long-term care at home (Spasova et al., 2018; Eurofound, 2020b).

3.2 Telework and work-life balance

Pandemic teleworking has placed work-life balance under pressure, especially for women

Before the pandemic, the lack of accessible, affordable and good-quality care services and the disproportionate amount of time spent on care activities made it difficult for women to achieve a good work-life balance (European Commission, 2018; EIGE, 2021). The COVID-19 crisis has aggravated this situation. The Eurofound e-survey on COVID-19 (2020a) found a general deterioration in work-life balance among EU workers during the first wave of the pandemic compared with the situation described in Eurofound's 2015 European working conditions survey (EWCS 2015) ⁽⁵⁵⁾.

In the context of the pandemic, combining work and family life was more challenging for women than for men, especially with the reopening of economic activities in June / July 2020. Across the EU-27, employed women were more likely than employed men to find it difficult to concentrate on their job (8 % of women and less than 5 % of men) or to give due time to work (6.5 % of women and 3 % of men). Similarly, job-related duties during the pandemic had more negative repercussions for housework for women than for men. Nearly every third woman (31 %) indicated feeling too tired after work to carry out some of the household tasks that needed to be done, compared with around

⁽⁵⁴⁾ Preliminary findings of a survey carried out by the Observatory for Education Policies and Professional Development of the University of Coimbra.

⁽⁵⁵⁾ Comparison of the results from the two surveys should be undertaken with caution because the two samples are not the same. In addition, in the COVID-19 e-survey, the timescale of the questions was amended: respondents were asked to report on the situation in the last 2 weeks, instead of the past 12 months, as considered in the EWCS 2015.

26 % of men ⁽⁵⁶⁾. About 21 % of both women and men responded that their job prevented them from giving their family the time they wanted, a 10 percentage point increase since 2015.

National surveys have confirmed that women's work-life balance has deteriorated more during the COVID-19 crisis than that of men, especially for mothers. In Germany, in May and June 2020 ⁽⁵⁷⁾, the life satisfaction of mothers with children under 16 was significantly lower than that of fathers, whereas life satisfaction was higher and similar between mothers and fathers in 2018 (Huebener et al., 2020). Similarly, in Spain, a July 2020 survey of its research staff ⁽⁵⁸⁾ by the Women and Science Unit of the Ministry of Science and Innovation (Ministerio de ciencia e innovación, 2020) found that 71 % of working mothers of children under 18 and 64 % of fathers found it stressful to achieve their expected results at work.

Telework has the potential to improve work-life balance and support the employment of carers, women and men

Under normal circumstances, the main benefits of teleworking include reduced commuting time and a better work-life balance (ILO, 2020a). It provides the opportunity for a more flexible schedule for workers with children. **As care and household responsibilities are not equally distributed, women tend to value flexible work schedules and limited commuting times more than men** (Mas and Pallais, 2017; Le Barbanchon et al., 2021), and may be more positively affected by the opportunity to work from home. Before the pandemic, for example, women working from home reported slightly better work-life balance outcomes than men (Eurofound, 2017). However, this positive effect may be counterbalanced by **the risk of reinforcing gender roles, making telework a highly feminised alternative to office-based work.**

Increased flexibility in working hours may incentivise **higher levels of employment for women with children**, as well as **uptake of care responsibilities for men with children**. For example, in Germany, working from home was observed to somewhat **reduce the gender gap in working hours and monthly earnings**, primarily because teleworking women with children were able to increase their working hours more than those without a telework option (Arntz et al., 2019). The overall effect of teleworking on the gender pay gap is uncertain, however, and, inter alia, depends not only on potential changes for women but also on potential changes for men. For example, home-based telework arrangements are noted to relate to the increased gender wage gap in Italy (Bonacini et al., 2020) and Austria (Beno, 2019).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, teleworking has supported business and work continuity and a relative shift in the distribution of care duties, especially in those households where women continued to work as usual (e.g. in essential jobs) and partners had to contribute to care tasks more than in the past (ILO, 2020a; OECD, 2020c). However, the widespread adoption of telework has coincided with an increase in women's unpaid work, largely because of the closure of schools and the move to online schooling.

Telework holds important risks, especially for female workers

The ultimate effect of telework on the working and living conditions of both women and men depends on many factors, including the regulatory framework, the prevailing gendered culture of the division of labour in the household, companies' organisational culture and practices, and the provision of accessible and affordable care services (ILO, 2020a).

Teleworking from home may result in an increase in household workload, particularly

⁽⁵⁶⁾ In the EWCS 2015, the incidence of those feeling too tired after work was similar for women and men, at around 20 %.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ Results based on 10 048 interviews in the COMPASS survey, carried out between 1 May and 21 June 2020. The survey involved 250–350 people entitled to vote in Germany every day.

⁽⁵⁸⁾ The online survey on the gender impact of the first lockdown (March–June 2020) on work-life balance was conducted between 2 and 17 July 2020, with 1 556 responses obtained.

for women and lone parents, as they typically have to shoulder care for family members and domestic chores in addition to paid employment (ILO, 2020a; OECD, 2020c). Mascherini and Bisello (2020) compared teleworking women and men and found that the biggest gender divide relates to family duties preventing workers from giving time to their job (reported by 10 % of women and 7 % of men). The percentages were much higher and the gap even wider for parents of small children – **32 % of women and 22 % of men reported that family duties prevented them from giving time to their jobs**. Similar differences were recorded for difficulties concentrating on the job because of family and being too tired after work to do domestic chores.

When care responsibilities are not shared equally, the productivity of teleworking women – especially those with children – may be at risk, because of constant interruptions, the additional workload and the mental health burden of working from home (Blasko et al., 2020). Women with small children (aged 1–5 years) have indicated that they experience higher reductions in working hours than men, as children tend to disrupt mothers more than fathers: **during the lockdown periods, mothers reported having been interrupted 50 % more often than fathers** (Andrew et al., 2020). This reflects the impact of gender stereotypes about women’s and men’s roles in child-rearing. If no improvements occur, even with teleworking, these factors may affect women’s employment disproportionately, potentially exposing them to higher job insecurity in the long term (Collins et al., 2020).

Although teleworking provides the flexibility to combine work and life duties, the increased burden in terms of unpaid care and domestic work, which mostly falls on women, and women’s greater isolation and invisibility compared with male colleagues working in the workplace, may **have negative effects**

on women’s career progression (Guyot and Sawhill, 2020; Hupkau and Victoria, 2020). A new study of employees at a US technology services company found that extensive telecommuting is associated with fewer promotions and lower pay growth (Golden and Eddleston, 2020). Telework may particularly affect the **salaries and career progression of women with children**. Under the structural pressure of managing care as a priority over paid work, more women than men are put into a situation of accepting a lower salary in return for working from home (Mas and Pal-lais, 2017). This comes not only with the associated lower employment opportunities, but also with reduced access to social protection (Rubery and Tavora, 2020).

Telework can increase **work intensity**. The literature ⁽⁵⁹⁾ on the use of ICT within and outside employers’ premises indicates that, while ICT enables greater autonomy, it also leads to higher levels of work intensity (Eurofound, 2019), with potential risks of workaholism, burnout syndrome and a sense of loneliness (Lablaw, 2020). The increase in work intensity includes a risk of **blurring boundaries between paid work and private life** (Eurofound, 2017). For this reason, policymakers and social partners are paying increased attention to the **‘right to disconnect’** and to the avoidance of invasive management surveillance and monitoring practices.

Overall, the preliminary evidence shows that COVID-19-related stress may affect **the mental well-being of women more than men, especially women with young children**. According to the first wave of the Eurofound COVID-19 e-survey (April 2020), women with children aged 11 or younger were more likely than men to feel tense (23 % versus 19 %), lonely (14 % versus 6 %) and/or depressed (14 % versus 9 %). The pattern also holds true for women and men with children aged 12–17, although the differences are narrower.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ Eurofound (2020b) provided a list of factors identified by previous research (Green, 2006; Derks and Bakker, 2010; Kelliher and Anderson, 2010; Grant et al., 2013) as contributing to the increased intensity of telework / ICT mobile work: work process monitoring; permanent connectivity; interruptions; ‘social exchange’ between employers and employees; corporate or managerial culture, personal ethics or ambition; information overload; and email overload.

Flexible working arrangements and care services can promote gender equality more than teleworking alone

Flexible working arrangements enable workers to decide how to distribute their working hours and where to work ⁽⁶⁰⁾. Empirical research in the field of organisational studies and work-life balance (Allen et al., 2013; Lomazzi et al., 2018; van der Lippe and Lippényi, 2018) surprisingly little empirical evidence supports that it decreases work-family conflict. In this paper we examine the role of a supportive organizational context in making working from home facilitate the combination of work and family. Specifically, we address to what extent perceptions of managerial support, ideal worker culture, as well as the number of colleagues working from home influence how working from home relates to work-family conflict. By providing insight in the role of the organizational context, we move beyond existing research in its individualistic focus on the experience of the work-family interface. We explicitly address gender differences since women experience more work-family conflict than men. We use a unique, multilevel organizational survey, the European Sustainable Workforce Survey conducted in 259 organizations, 869 teams and 11,011 employees in nine countries (Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom **shows that flexible working time supports and promotes gender equality more than teleworking alone**. It allows workers to arrange their working hours according to the needs of the ‘family rush hour’, when many demands overlap (Craig and Churchill, 2020). This option, unlike telework, keeps a physical separation between the domains of private life and work, making it easier for working parents to manage their responsibilities. However, while working flexibly can help to balance work with caring activities to some extent, **it can also reinforce the traditional division of caring responsibilities within the family** (Chung and van der Lippe, 2018; EIGE, 2020a).

While the pandemic has revealed to employers that teleworking is possible (and cost-effective) and could be extended in the future, the **implications for gender equality are unclear if flexitime is not also provided along with flexibility in the workplace**. To date, few national studies have investigated the gender equality implications of telework for work-life balance during the pandemic. Studies in Australia (Craig and Churchill, 2020), the United Kingdom (Andrew et al., 2020) and the United States (Alon et al., 2020; Collins et al., 2020; Power, 2020) both during the downturn and the subsequent recovery. Compared to “regular” recessions, which affect men’s employment more severely than women’s employment, the employment drop related to social distancing measures has a large impact on sectors with high female employment shares. In addition, closures of schools and daycare centers have massively increased child care needs, which has a particularly large impact on working mothers. The effects of the crisis on working mothers are likely to be persistent, due to high returns to experience in the labor market. Beyond the immediate crisis, there are opposing forces which may ultimately promote gender equality in the labor market. First, businesses are rapidly adopting flexible work arrangements, which are likely to persist. Second, there are also many fathers who now have to take primary responsibility for child care, which may erode social norms that currently lead to a lopsided distribution of the division of labor in house work and child and day care closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic have increased caregiving responsibilities for working parents. As a result, many have changed their work hours to meet these growing demands. In this study, we use panel data from the US Current Population Survey to examine changes in mothers’ and fathers’ work hours from February through April 2020, the period of time prior to the widespread COVID-19 outbreak in the United States and through its first peak. Using person-level fixed effects models, we find that mothers with young children have reduced their work hours four to five times more than

⁽⁶⁰⁾ The concept of flexibility in the place of work relates to the possibility of working away from the employer’s premises, such as at home or at a teleworking centre or other location. Flexitime is when an organisation offers its employees the flexibility to start and finish work at times that suit their transport arrangements, family responsibilities, etc.

fathers. Consequently, the gender gap in work hours has grown by 20–50 per cent. These findings indicate yet another negative consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the challenges it poses to women’s work hours and women were already doing most of the world’s unpaid care work prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, emerging research suggests that the crisis and its subsequent shutdown response have resulted in a dramatic increase in this burden. It is likely that the negative impacts for women and families will last for years without proactive interventions. What we commonly refer to as “the economy” would not function without the (often unrecognized and in the EU Member States (chiefly in Germany, Spain and Italy; Boll and Schüller, 2020; Del Boca et al., 2020; Farré et al., 2020) we use a sample of 2,145 heterosexual couples with children below age 13 to investigate the paternal involvement in domestic childcare and the relation of the underlying mechanisms to the two job-related “Covid-19 factors” systemic relevance (SR have focused on the impact of COVID-19 closures and telework arrangements on care work (especially on women’s childcare arrangements).

The need for family-friendly policies and company practices – especially in the context of COVID-19 – has been highlighted by the United Nations Children’s Fund (Unicef and ILO, 2020). It stressed the need to (1) apply time flexibility in teleworking, allowing working parents to

work at the time and in the place most convenient for them; (2) agree on priority tasks to support workers to be as productive as possible, given their care and family responsibilities; and (3) ensure that all supervisors adopt a flexible approach in cases of teleworking.

Alon et al. (2020) underlined that increasing the use of telework without **improving supportive care infrastructures** (e.g. child and long-term care services) is likely to increase the work and care burdens, especially on women. The provision of supportive care infrastructures should thus be strengthened, including company-provided childcare services (ÖSB Consulting, 2020⁽⁶¹⁾). Finally, access and institutional support for the take-up of parental and other family-related leave should be incentivised among men to reduce the current gender gap and the expectations and pressure on women.

The key role of affordable and accessible childcare and home-based long-term care services (in combination with telework) has been made clear during the COVID-19 crisis. Teleworking has failed to solve the problem of the increased care burden on women with the closure of schools and childcare facilities and the overall reductions in access to care services in many Member States. Teleworking parents in these circumstances are dependent on their employer’s understanding (Rubery and Tavora, 2020)⁽⁶²⁾ and risk losing their jobs.

⁽⁶¹⁾ This report includes a list of Member States’ good practices in respect of gender equality aspects of work and care in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁽⁶²⁾ The authors stress that, in a significant number of countries (BG, FR, MT, AT, PT, RO), not being able to work from home was an eligibility condition for parental leave.

4. Recovery measures and factors supporting employment

4.1 Factors supporting employment, recovery measures and work-life balance

The unequal sharing of domestic and care tasks within the household is one of the main causes of gender inequality. This section identifies and compares a set of policies/measures adopted during the pandemic that are directly or indirectly connected to work-life balance and the organisation of care duties between women and men.

Identification of relevant policies

Research has shown that, historically, reconciliation policies have tended towards either the 'complementarity' of male (labour market) and female (family) roles or a better sharing of tasks between women and men in each of the two spheres (Orloff, 1996; Vielle, 2001; Lewis, 2002). Current EU policies promote the task-sharing model, which is the only model conducive to full gender equality. This objective is reflected in Directive (EU) 2019/1158 on work-life balance for parents and carers and the EU gender equality strategy 2020–2025, which seeks to promote women's labour force participation, equal pay, greater economic independence for women, and gender-equal parenting and care.

Policy responses to work-life balance mobilise several levers acting on the distribution of time (working time, family commitments) and the accompanying financial resources:

- social protection that allows compensation for withdrawals from the labour market in case of eventualities linked to 'care',
- labour law (care leave, protection against dismissal),
- care services at home or outside the home (outsourcing of care tasks),
- working time arrangements,
- organisational practices and culture combating gender stereotypes and discriminatory norms in the workplace.

The fine-tuning of each measure and the measures in combination determine their adequacy in terms of gender equality. Policies that are consistent with a gender-equal 'task-sharing' approach (Vielle, 2001) correctly identify that different eventualities compel workers to reduce or abandon their professional activity for reasons of care (e.g. leave to care for children of different ages or other family members in need of care) and are designed to promote both women's participation in the labour market (e.g. by providing childcare facilities, local services or domestic help) and men's family involvement (e.g. through paternity leave, well-paid parental leave, or non-transferable or split parental leave).

Prior to the pandemic, policies were designed based on the model of workers working outside the home while their children attend school. Policies focused on the situation of parents with young children up to a certain age and, later, on care tasks related to older people or other family members in need of care.

The pandemic has disrupted this model because of:

- the adoption of containment measures, which has led to:
 - children being homeschooled full-time or part-time,

- the closure of care facilities,
- of certain categories of workers moving to home-based work (e.g. many women in the service sector),
- other categories of workers employed in essential services being obliged to work outside the home despite lockdown (including in the health sector, which employs a large majority of women);
- changes in the amount and nature of household and care tasks, that is:
 - an increase in childcare responsibilities,
 - the removal of traditional informal childcare support systems through family and friends, who were discouraged (especially grandparents) from providing support,
 - an increase in care responsibilities for family members sick with COVID-19,
 - an increase in the volume of usual household tasks (laundry, cleaning, shopping, cooking, tidying, etc.),
 - changes in the nature of care tasks (home-schooling);
- carers who are sick with COVID-19 being unable to care for children and other family members in need of care.

In this context – and pointing to the placing of care at the centre of inclusive labour markets not being a priority – the majority of the 500 measures recorded in the Eurofound COVID-19 EU PolicyWatch database (April 2020) targeted keeping businesses afloat (35 %), protecting incomes beyond short-time work measures (20 %) and protecting employment (13 %) (Eurofound, 2020c).

Lockdown measures directly and indirectly determine the work–life balance of workers.

As public health measures, the epidemiological effectiveness of their modalities (whether or not to close schools and care services; identification of essential services, etc.) has been discussed and evaluated in prophylactic terms. Measures also evolved significantly during the second wave of the pandemic and continue to be subject to adaptation. Concerns about work–life balance in relation to lockdown measures have occurred only on a secondary basis and in terms of economic impact (the closure of schools hindering the professional activity of parents, for example) rather than in terms of support for parenting or promotion of gender equality⁽⁶³⁾. However, the impact of lockdown measures in this regard cannot be underestimated and needs to be considered in different countries.

The analysis here focuses on workers with caring responsibilities. The adoption of lockdown measures resulted in the following common situations: (1) some workers had to combine home-based work with an increase and change in the nature of care tasks; (2) some workers had to pursue work outside the home, in essential services, for instance, while their children or other family members in need of care were home alone; (3) some workers were sick, and even hospitalised, and were unable to care for their children or other family members at home. In the first two cases, combined with the absence of support measures, workers – many more of whom were women – were forced to take annual and/or unpaid leave or to resign.

While some policies may have an indirect impact on the work–life balance of parents and carers (e.g. the ability of the education system to adapt to distance learning, the quality of online courses and student supervision), this study focuses on **measures that directly or indirectly aimed to address the issue of work–life balance in this particular situation** (paying special attention to the self-employed, workers in precarious employment, domestic workers and lone parents), such as measures addressing:

⁽⁶³⁾ ILO, 'COVID-19 and the world of work, country policy responses'; World Health Organization, 'Corona disease (COVID-19) outbreak, country information'.

- the closure of schools and childcare institutions versus the opening of certain care structures;
- other solutions for the externalisation of care tasks;
- home-based work (seen in many countries as a 'response' to the closure of schools and childcare facilities);
- labour law (working time arrangements, protection against dismissal linked to care responsibilities);
- leave (partially subsidised special leave entitlements and family leave entitlements compensated by the state, but usually with benefit of less than 100 % of regular pay);
- social security (extra top-up of benefits for parents, etc.).

Although the impacts of these policy measures on task sharing between women and men need to be further explored, preliminary evidence and observations suggest the following.

- In the absence of specific policies, and even though the volume of domestic and care tasks has increased for all, the distribution of care tasks between women and men will not substantially change.
- The sharing of household and care tasks between women and men depends on the specific situation of a household: two parents working as usual; two parents working from home; only one parent – a woman – working from home; only one parent – a man – working from home; lone-parent family.
- Although the closure of childcare services may be determined by public health considerations during the pandemic, solutions for externalisation of care are always more favourable for women, as they make women

less dependent on negotiations within the household.

- 'New' home tasks, such as homeschooling, are more likely to be carried out by women. The policy measures addressing this specific aspect have a bigger impact on women's work-life balance.
- Lone parents (primarily mothers) have found themselves in particularly complicated situations, especially when they themselves have become ill.
- If formal care services are open, professional carers – usually women – may be under pressure with respect to their own work-life balance. Therefore, a work-life balance solution for service users can, in turn, worsen the situation of service providers.

Preliminary overview of national policies during the pandemic

An **initial inventory of measures adopted in all EU Member States in response to the first wave of the pandemic** (February–July 2020) was primarily extracted from the World Health Organization (especially for social distancing measures: home-based work, closure of childcare facilities and schools), ILO and Eurofound (for specific reconciliation measures) databases⁽⁶⁴⁾. The Eurofound report on teleworking regulations during the pandemic also provided a useful resource (Eurofound, 2020c). The analysis of these measures faces several limitations. The quality of the information depends on the rigour and consistency of the national correspondents (with certain gaps or even contradictions between databases). In addition, the databases do not systematically integrate the gender dimension; for instance, the information available on the take-up of specific measures is not disaggregated by sex. Job protection during the pandemic, especially when a worker is absent from work for reasons related to care work (or schooling), is an important factor in

⁽⁶⁴⁾ World Health Organization, 'Corona disease (COVID-19) outbreak, country information'; ILO, 'COVID-19 and the world of work, country policy responses'; Eurofound, *Living, working and COVID-19 dataset*.

gender equality but is rarely captured in databases. The databases are organised ‘measure by measure’, making it difficult to grasp how Member States developed their global COVID-19 work–life balance policy and how special measures relate to one another. In order to fully comprehend the situation of workers, it is necessary to analyse each of these specific measures against the background of existing policies.

Closure of schools and childcare institutions was widespread across EU Member States

During the first wave of the pandemic, all Member States except Sweden **closed schools and childcare facilities** ⁽⁶⁵⁾. The duration of closure varied but in most cases lasted from mid March to May 2020, when most countries gradually reopened childcare facilities and then schools. In many countries, some care facilities remained available for the children of workers in essential services and in other specific situations (e.g. for children of lone parents in Germany or children in vulnerable situations or with disabilities in Slovenia). Several Member States made provisions for local or regional authorities to strengthen home care and home help services.

Shift to telework to mitigate the impact of school closures had a profound impact on work–life balance

The closure of schools was accompanied by **encouragement to work from home**, except for those working in essential services and/or jobs that cannot be carried out at home. Whether compulsory or not, statutory, standard or at the employer’s initiative, this varied throughout the first wave of the pandemic and from country to country. Generally, in addition to prophylactic or business continuity considerations, **home-based work is conceived, implicitly or explicitly, as a care solution in response to the closure of educational or care facilities** (Eurofound, 2020d).

However, home-based work is difficult to combine with homeschooling of children or the care of young children or other family members. This preliminary overview identified **a dearth of measures directly addressing the specific problems of work–life balance (e.g. homeschooling) among people working from home**. On the contrary, in some countries, ‘special leave’ was available only for workers with no care solutions and explicitly excluded home-based workers (FR, CY, LT, LU), who, as a consequence, were pushed to use their annual leave or unpaid leave or even to resign. The pandemic revealed an acute need to address the specific situation of home-based workers through work–life balance measures adapted to their situation. For many parents, especially women, the work that is normally provided by childcare facilities or schools fell on their shoulders. This additional burden was not compensated, in terms of either direct social security benefits or social security contributions, despite sometimes leading to a loss of income.

Flexible working time arrangements were taken up as public health measures and were designed to promote social distancing on public transport or in the workplace, to support enterprises in difficulty (collective reduction of working time) or to reinforce essential services (flexible use of overtime in Belgium and Austria). Such measures **cannot a priori be considered favourable to work–life balance**. In fact, they may even hinder it. It is therefore necessary to examine on a case-by-case basis whether working time arrangements take place within a regulatory framework, in a sectoral or company social dialogue, or are dependent on bilateral negotiation with the employer, as well as whether they are recognised as a right for the worker or an occasional occurrence.

Special leave is not always sensitive to the different working arrangements and family situations of workers

Similar to working time arrangements, **measures relating to leave do not always support the worker’s work–life balance**. In order to

⁽⁶⁵⁾ ILO, ‘COVID-19 and the world of work, country policy responses’.

support business activity, in response to the pandemic, many workers were forced to take annual leave or were put on leave with possible compensation. Other workers, particularly those in essential services, were prohibited from taking leave or could do so only with special authorisation from their employer. Bulgarian legislation provides for the right of workers to use their paid annual leave or unpaid leave to meet their care needs and subjects that right to more restrictive conditions for men than for women. Employers are obliged to give parental leave only to mothers and lone fathers, reinforcing women's role as primary carers. Greece provides 4 days of parental leave, one of which must be taken as annual leave.

About 20 countries introduced some of the following measures in response to the pandemic: special care leave (BE, BG, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FR, IT, CY, LT, LU, MT, AT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, FI, SE), a lump sum per child for extra costs related to the pandemic, independent of leave (IT, PT), and compensation for loss of earnings because of having to carry out care work (DE, EE, LV). These measures are either ad hoc measures or resulted from the adaptation of existing schemes (e.g. sickness leave for France, time credit in Belgium, parental leave in several countries). The duration of special leave varies greatly (e.g. 4 days in Greece, including 1 day of annual leave; 27 days in Italy; up to 60 days in Lithuania). The possibility of taking special leave for care-related reasons sometimes requires special authorisation from an employer (BE, CY, AT, FI) and, if rejected, may force a parent – usually the mother – to resign. Lone parents may experience constraints related to leaves to an even greater extent.

Homeschooling of children requires significant attention from parents (even for children in secondary education) but this was not always taken into consideration in the design of measures focused on leave. Generally, leave is provided for parents of children aged up to 12 years. In some countries, leave is not available for parents of children aged over 8 years (PL). Age limits may not be applicable for children with special needs (BE, CY, PT) or adults with disabilities (SK).

Most countries opted for 'special' measures for all workers, regardless of their status (e.g. solutions that envisage social security benefits as independent of specific leave), with occasional specific solutions for self-employed and domestic workers. **However, this did not fully take into account the different working patterns and family situations of workers.** To address this diversity, some countries proposed a range of measures for parents. For instance, Italian workers can choose between parental leave or a lump sum for care or babysitting. The lump sum is paid only for declared work and is higher for nursing care, which provides minimum protection to the carer (usually a woman). The granting of a benefit to compensate for the loss of earnings may help to cover specific situations but unless it is associated with protection against dismissal it does not appear to be a sufficient solution to keep employees in the labour market.

Men's take-up of special family leave is usually impacted by the level of compensation and whether compensation is provided by the state or the employer, which varies greatly across the EU (Koslowski et al., 2016). This can also evolve over time. In Austria, compensation has developed from being highly conditional (consent of the employer, no other solutions, worker not indispensable, etc.) to being an unconditional right, and from partial payment by the employer against reimbursement by public funds to full payment by the state. Rubery and Tavora (2020) suggested that comparing compensation for special family leave with compensation paid in job retention schemes provides a good indicator of the value that governments placed on care work and schooling during the pandemic. They found that compensation for care tasks in Germany, Greece, France, Cyprus and Austria (in the first wave) and Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal and Romania was equal to – or even higher than (AT and FR in the first wave) – compensation paid in job retention schemes.

Other aspects may have an impact in terms of gender equality. The requirement for one parent to take leave at a time may be conducive to the wider use of leave by men. In Belgium, where parental leave can be taken only on

a part-time basis, employees can reduce their working time by up to 50 % and ensure full-time care only if both parents take leave. In Italy, each parent is entitled to 15 days' leave and parents are encouraged to alternate so that care can be provided for a total of 30 days. The higher rate of compensation for lone parents (BE, CY) can be considered a positive measure. On the other hand, the double duration of leave for lone parents (DE), usually women, may reinforce gender stereotypes and discrimination in the labour market. The gender impact of different leave provisions needs to be assessed further, taking into account different family situations and employment arrangements.

4.2 Gender balance of COVID-19 crisis management

Gender-sensitive COVID-19 crisis management requires the mainstreaming of gender in the design and implementation of emergency and recovery policy responses, including gender analysis, gender impact assessment, the collection of sex-disaggregated data and the development of gender indicators in all sectors. At the same time, it is essential that gender skills and expertise are promoted – ensuring gender balance in decision-making processes in relation to the prevention of and response to COVID-19 in all countries can strengthen governments' responses to the pandemic (OECD, 2020d). Unless gender mainstreaming is implemented, policy responses to the COVID-19 outbreak may exacerbate existing systemic gender inequalities and/or contribute to gender 'pushback movements'.

The benefits of a gender balance in COVID-19 crisis management extend beyond the immediate consequences of the emergency to the longer-term implications of the pandemic for gender equality. However, 25 years after the landmark Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, politics remains overwhelmingly the domain of men. The COVID-19 crisis means that

women's absence from political decision-making is now having a direct impact on people's lives.

Alongside research showing that countries led by women have fought the pandemic most effectively ⁽⁶⁶⁾, a recent study has critically assessed the gender gap in task forces organised to prevent, monitor and mitigate COVID-19, emphasising the exclusion of gender-diverse voices (van Daalen et al., 2020). Covering 87 UN member states, the study showed that a mere 3.5 % of the 115 COVID-19 decision-making and expert task forces identified had gender parity in their membership, with the majority of members being men in 85.2 % of cases.

Box 2 summarises the situation in some EU Member States up to July 2020.

Box 2. Gender balance in COVID-19 crisis management structures in some EU Member States

Belgium. The Scientific Committee for Coronavirus is composed of 13 people, six of whom are women.

Estonia. The Research Council for COVID-19 Control is composed of five people. Three are women, one of whom is the head of the Research Council. The Emergency Government Committee is composed of 10 members, only one of whom is a woman.

Ireland. The National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHET) is made up of 35 people, 15 of whom are women. The Expert Advisory Group monitors and reviews national and international research and developments in relation to COVID-19 and provides expert advice to the NPHET, the Health Service Executive and others as appropriate. It is composed of 27 people, 12 of whom are women.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ See World Economic Forum (2020), which ranks countries in terms of their gender equality performance, i.e. measuring gender parity in relation to the participation of women and men in society and the opportunities available to each gender in terms of access to health, education and employment, among others.

Greece. The Commission for the Management of Emergency Events due to Infectious Diseases is composed of 26 people, eight of whom are women.

Spain. The Scientific Technical Committee COVID-19 is made up of seven people, three of whom are women.

France. The Scientific Committee for Coronavirus is made up of 13 people, three of whom are women.

Italy. The COVID-19 Technical Scientific Committee was initially entirely composed of 20 men. After several protests by female deputies and senators and civil society, in May 2020 the committee integrated six women. In April 2020, the Minister for Equal Opportunities and Family established the task force 'Women for a New Renaissance' comprising 12 women from academia, public administration and business. Its aim is to make proposals and recommendations for the post-COVID-19 social, cultural and economic recovery.

Lithuania. The government's COVID-19 Response Committee is made up of one woman and 11 men.

Luxembourg. The Advisory Council to accompany the measures agreed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic is made up of eight people, three of whom are women.

Hungary. The Coronavirus Task Force is made up of 15 people, one of whom is a woman.

Austria. The Coronavirus Task Force comprises 27 people, 10 from relevant ministries and 17 experts. There is an equal share of women and men (five each) among the representatives from the min-

istries, compared with only five women among the 17 experts.

Portugal. The Task force for operationalisation and implementation of measures for prevention and control of infection with new coronavirus – COVID-19 is made up of 76 people, 44 of whom are women.

Finland. The COVID-19 Working group on essential work-related travel and other traffic is composed of 18 members, 11 of whom are women, one of whom is the head of the group. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has appointed a working group to strengthen the rights of the child and the well-being of children and families in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The information gathered by the working group will be used in the preparation of the national child strategy to assess the realisation of the rights of the child during the state of emergency. The working group is made up of six members, three women and three men.

Sweden. The Swedish government is a self-declared explicitly feminist government and measures are in place to ensure gender-equal representation on all committees, commissions of inquiry and boards of government. The Division for Gender Equality must approve all appointments for state secretaries. If gender balance cannot be achieved, an explanatory memorandum must be submitted, subject to the approval of the Division for Gender Equality. In June 2020, a commission of inquiry was appointed to evaluate the measures taken by the government and municipalities during the COVID-19 pandemic. All proposed measures must be assessed from a gender equality perspective. The composition of the membership of the commission is gender equal.

Source: van Daalen et al. (2020); authors' desk research (July 2020).

Conclusions

The COVID-19 crisis is revealing longer-lasting adverse socioeconomic effects for women than for men

The sharp and unprecedented decline in the total number of working hours during **the first wave of the pandemic was more pronounced for women** than for men, showing the major cumulative effect of losses on the labour market and the shrinking hours of work for those who kept their jobs. Young, low-educated and migrant women faced an even harsher socioeconomic reality.

Young people, especially young women, lost disproportionately more jobs during the first wave of the pandemic. Employment generally decreased by 2.4 % but fell by more than 10 % for young women and by more than 9 % for young men. These jobs represented the first steps into the labour market and student jobs, allowing people to combine work and study and make their first contributions to the social security system. Previous crises have shown that entering the labour market during a recession can negatively affect young people's labour market outcomes for a decade or more. This is a particular concern for the current generation of younger women, whose limited job opportunities at graduation, combined with forthcoming detachment from the labour market because of caring duties, will pave the way for earnings 'penalties' now and in the future.

The decline in employment rates has also been severe for low-educated and foreign-born people, mostly women (born either in a non-EU country or in another EU Member State). The employment rate for women born in a non-EU country, for example, dropped to 50 %, eradicating decades-long gains. Migrant women carry out a large share of crisis-declared 'essential jobs', including in healthcare, agriculture and food processing.

The initial pandemic and containment measures strongly impacted self-employed, temporary, part-time and informal workers. Women are disproportionately represented among these non-standard forms of work, accounting for 69 % of the losses registered among part-time workers aged 15–64, for example. The sectors most impacted by the COVID-19 crisis are also those with a high incidence of undeclared jobs. For example, the **accommodation and food services sector, with a 54 % share of female workers, registered the largest decline in employment** during Q2 2020 compared with Q2 2019, with the impact more pronounced for women (–21 %) than for men (–17 %). Estimates for undeclared work are highest in the hospitality sector, with women more likely to be in such arrangements (22 % of women compared with 13 % of men).

Women's employment losses were concentrated in highly feminised and the hardest-hit sectors, such as the retail, accommodation, residential care activities, activities of households as employers of domestic personnel and apparel manufacturing sectors. Across these sectors, the number of women employed decreased by 1.5 million across the EU (or close to 40 % of the entire employment reduction of 3.8 million among women). **Men encountered the largest employment losses in male-dominated sectors** more severely affected by the COVID-19 crisis, such as the construction and wholesale trade sectors. The hardest-hit sectors during the first COVID-19 wave, such as the accommodation and food service, domestic work, administrative and support service, and arts and entertainment sectors, continued with reduced levels of employment in Q3 2020, especially compared with the recovery in the rest of the economy.

The economic recovery observed in summer 2020 presented major hurdles for women

in relation to returning to the labour market. During Q3 2020, overall, employment increased by 0.8 % for women compared with 1.4 % for men, with the lowest growth observed for women aged 25–49 (0.3 % compared with 0.7 % for men). The COVID-19 crisis has not only increased care duties, but also made women's participation in the labour market even more fragile. The shallow recovery, especially among women, indicates that the socioeconomic impact of the crisis might last much longer for women than for men.

The share of unpaid work is a major determinant of who is losing most in the COVID-19 crisis

The unpaid care burden increased for both women and men during the first wave of the pandemic, although women continued to bear the brunt of the caring responsibilities. The closure of schools, the reduction in childcare and closure of childcare and other care services, and other confinement measures placed **women with caring responsibilities under particular strain in terms of finding gainful employment and career prospects.** Most healthcare workers are women and they often faced serious challenges in balancing work and private life, accompanied by an increased risk of contracting the virus and negative psychological effects or even episodes of violence.

A heightened share of care duties saw more employed women than employed men facing difficulties in concentrating on their job or giving due time to work. The decrease in informal help from grandparents and domestic workers because of mobility restrictions and social distancing exacerbated the difficulties faced by parents and people with other care responsibilities. **Women's higher withdrawal from the labour market may be one of the major consequences of the crisis management-induced shock to care arrangements.** This shows that the COVID-19 pandemic may reinforce traditional gender roles within the pri-

vate sphere and damage women's long-term labour market prospects.

The acceleration of the use of telework had a profound impact on the working and living conditions of workers, with potential positive and negative effects, especially for women with care responsibilities. Generally, the crisis demonstrated that **paid employment – whether in teleworking mode or not – is possible only within the limits of available time outside care duties.** In addition, telework during the pandemic may have led to longer working hours, an increased intensity of work, higher stress levels, blurred boundaries between work and home life, and a greater sense of isolation and loneliness, which may adversely affect workers' mental health and well-being.

Digital transformation of economies opens up new prospects for gender equality, but may well exacerbate long-standing inequalities

The pandemic revealed a new form of labour market inequality defined by the degree of teleworkability within jobs and occupations, and workers' capacity to telework (depending on their digital skills and available space, internet access and equipment at home). Although the COVID-19 confinement measures contributed to the spread of teleworking among mid- and low-skilled white-collar occupations, teleworking remains more widespread among high-skilled and educated workers, those employed in the service sector, those living in cities, young people and women. **The spread of telework also revealed new challenges to and opportunities for gender equality.** The preliminary evidence shows a **higher share of women than men engaged in teleworkable occupations,** which may have helped many women to remain in employment during the pandemic. However, if telework is seen more as an option for women with caring duties, **there is a major risk of reinforcing gender roles and making telework a highly feminised alternative to office-based work.**

Despite the major gender segregation in the labour market, the economic stronghold of the digital economy, public administration and social work may have seen the erosion of several stereotypes that discourage women or men to enter these jobs. The crisis has demonstrated **fragile signs of the usual patterns of gender segregation being broken down**. In the male-dominated ICT sector, women accounted for a somewhat higher share of new employment than in the previous year. Men accounted for the vast majority of the employment increase in the female-dominated personal service sector.

The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated gender gaps in financial fragility and poverty risk, with 58 % of women reporting not being able to maintain the same standard of living for more than 3 months (compared with 48 % of men) and 36 % being in a worse financial situation than in the previous 3 months (compared with 31 % of men). The COVID-19 crisis has accelerated digitalisation, such as an increase in digital platforms for remote and independent work, offering some the opportunity to access additional income during the crisis. Nonetheless, the ability to work on online platforms did not save people from financial distress, with 59 % of online platform working women and 53 % of online platform working men indicating that their household financial situation had deteriorated during the pandemic. The risk of poverty has always been higher in households with children, but increased childcare duties during lockdown are likely to have had an adverse effect on maintaining employment – and thus pay and career prospects – for working mothers, particularly lone mothers. Emerging crisis statistics show that the shares of women and men struggling to make ends meet were higher for parents than for households without children.

Emerging gender equality effects of the COVID-19 crisis should be foregrounded in forthcoming recovery and resilience measures

Work-life balance policies are usually based on the model of workers working outside the home

while their children attend school. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted this model because the adoption of containment measures has led to homeschooling, the closure of care facilities, an increase in home-based work and changes to the amount and nature of household and care tasks. Measures introduced in response to the crisis, although primarily linked to public health considerations, have been designed and assessed mainly from an economic perspective. **Concerns about work-life balance in relation to lockdown measures have occurred only on a secondary basis and in terms of their economic impact** (e.g. how the closure of childcare services impacts parents' professional activity) rather than in terms of support for parenting or equal sharing of caring duties.

Gender equality considerations should be part of the estimation of the potential economic and social impacts of the pandemic when designing containment and recovery measures. Neglect of gender inequalities in unpaid care and new challenges related to work-life balance as major hurdles for women's employment have been shown to have not only major short-term effects, but also numerous and unfolding long-term effects for women. The COVID-19 crisis clearly demonstrates that some measures introduced to support parents needed more effective policy design. For example, special leave or the adaptation of existing parental leave schemes during the crisis did not consider the different working patterns or family situations of workers and carers. This study also identified the dearth of measures directly addressing the specific problems of work-life balance (e.g. homeschooling) among people working from home.

Policy responses to the COVID19 outbreak need to address the different socioeconomic impacts of the crisis on women and men and alleviate the very unequal short-term and long-lasting effects. It is therefore **essential to mainstream gender in the design and implementation of emergency and recovery policy responses**. Gender skills and expertise should be promoted among those responsible for crisis management. National gender

equality bodies should work with the national structures responsible for COVID-19 recovery efforts to ensure that gender mainstreaming tools, such as gender impact assessments and gender budgeting, are used throughout the recovery. **Ensuring gender balance in decision-making processes in relation to the prevention of and response to COVID19 in**

all countries can strengthen governments' responses to the pandemic. The long-lasting gender equality consequences may, in fact, reflect the fact that only 3.5 % of the 115 COVID-19 decision-making and expert task forces identified had gender parity in their membership, with the majority of members being men in 85.2 % of cases.

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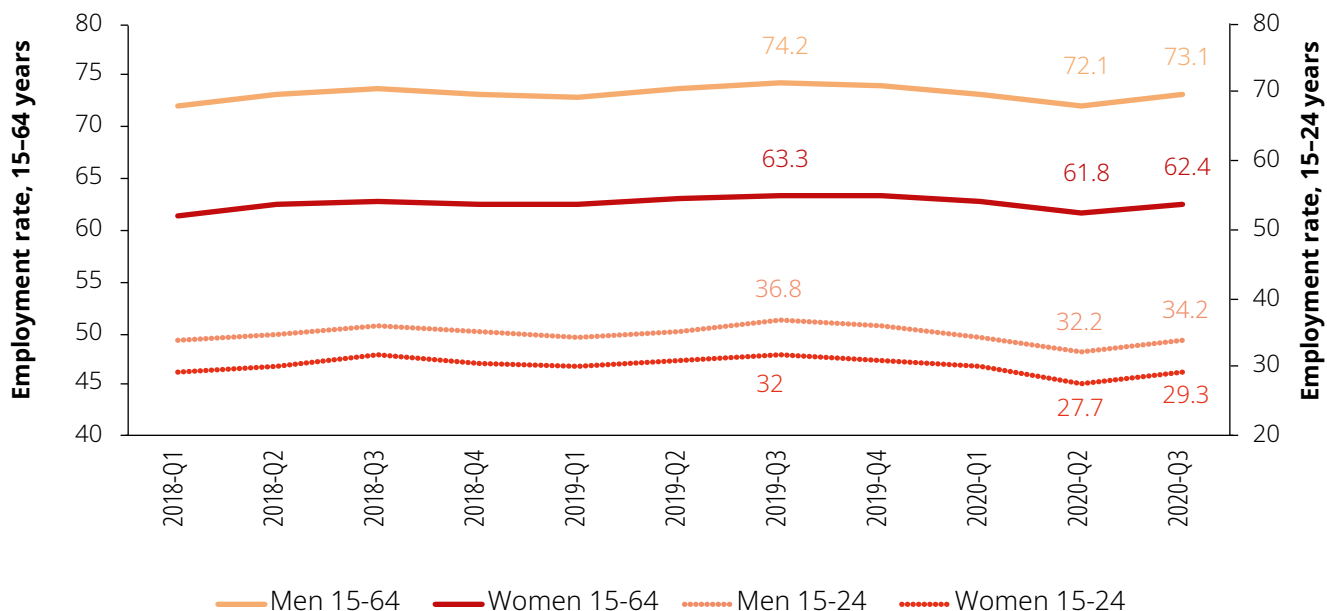
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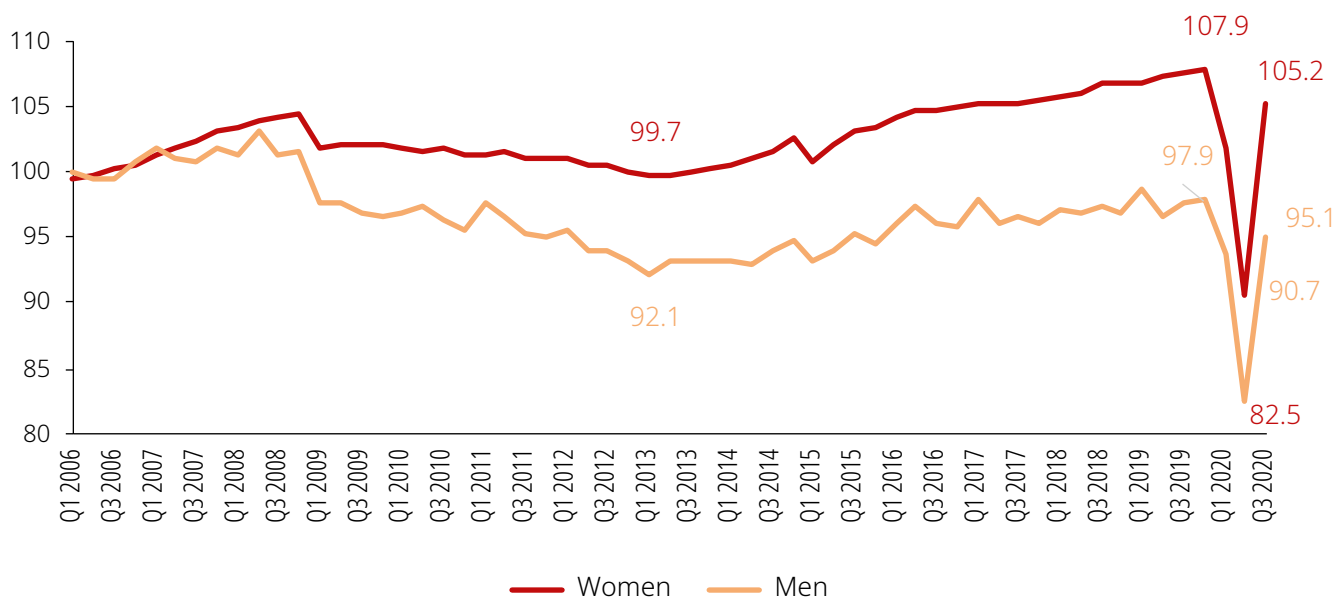
Annex

Figure 13. Evolution of employment rates from Q1 2018 to Q3 2020 by sex and age (% , EU-27)



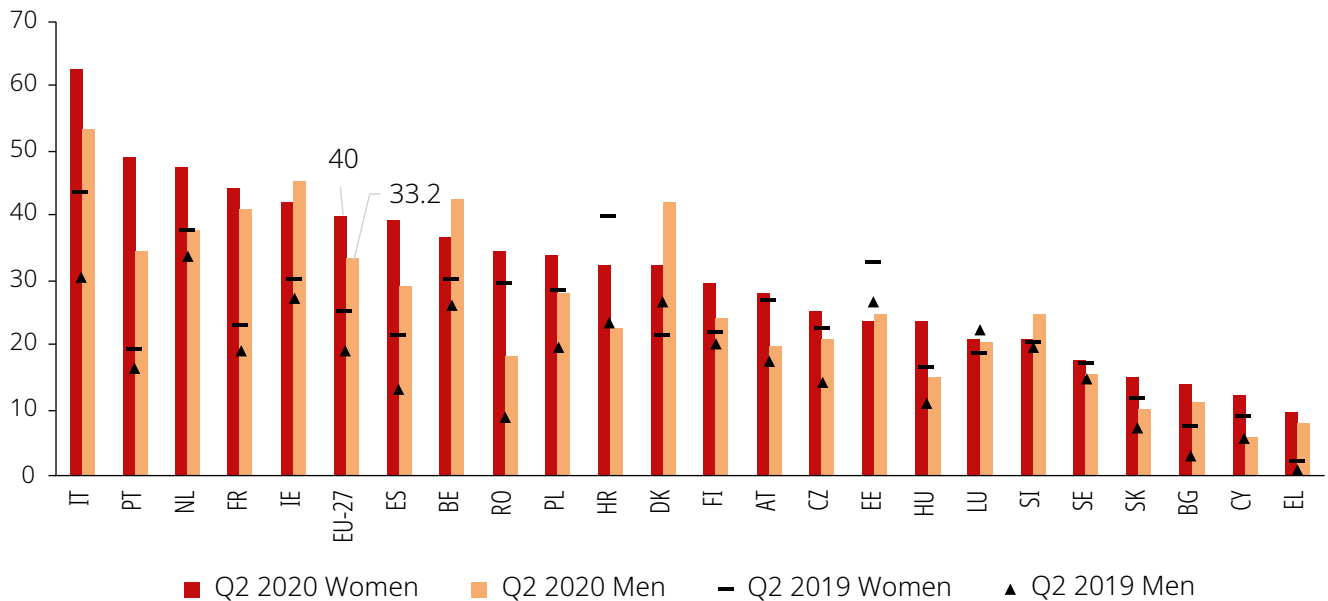
Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (lfsq_ergacob).

Figure 14. Index of total actual hours worked in the main job from Q1 2006 to Q3 2020 by sex (index points, 15+ years, EU-27)



Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (lfsi_ahw_q); seasonally adjusted not calendar-adjusted data.

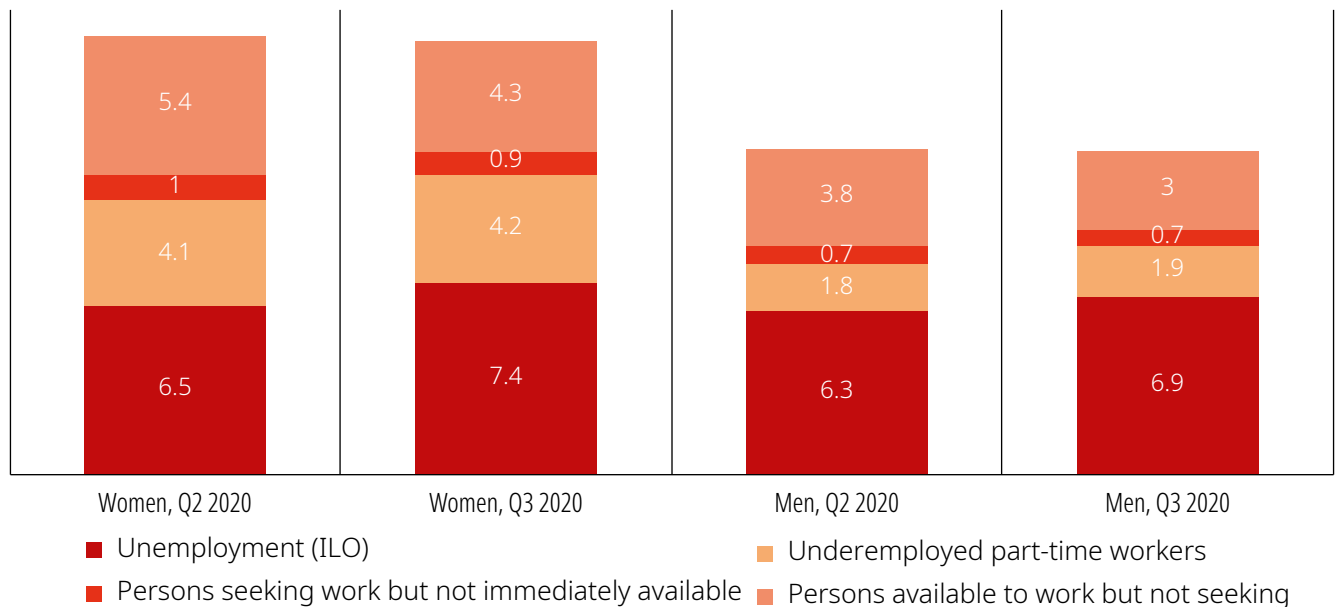
Figure 15. Share of unemployed people in the first quarter moving to inactivity in the second quarter in 2019 and 2020 by country and sex (% , 15–74 years, EU-27)



NB: Unemployed people are all those aged 15–74 years (16–74 years in ES and IT) who were not employed during the reference week, who had actively sought work during the previous 4 weeks and who were ready to begin working immediately or within 2 weeks. Data for LV and LT are not included as they are unreliable; data for DE and MT are unavailable.

Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data ([lfsi_long_q](#)).

Figure 16. Labour market slack as a percentage of the extended labour force in Q2 2020 and Q3 2020 by sex (% , 15+ years, EU-27)



Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data ([lfsi_slal_q](#)); seasonally adjusted data.

Table 6. Changes in employment rates of women and men by age group and country (percentage points, EU-27)

	Women (15-24)		Men (15-24)	
	Change between Q2 2020 and Q3 2020	Change between Q3 2019 and Q3 2020	Change between Q2 2020 and Q3 2020	Change between Q3 2019 and Q3 2020
IE	6.7	-3.2	4.9	-6.0
AT	5.2	-1.2	5.6	-1.5
FI	4.8	-0.7	-2.1	-6.2
SI	4.6	-6	7.6	-7.1
MT	4.3	-2.3	2.7	-5.4
SE	4	-5.9	1.9	-7.2
BG	3.8	-4.2	1.5	-4.5
BE	3.6	-3.8	4.5	-2.4
EE	3.5	-6	-1.2	-7.5
ES	2.8	-4.7	2.9	-5.6
NL	2.6	-3.1	0.5	-5.0
LU	2.4	-1.1	4.5	-6.6
FR	2.1	-1.8	4.0	0.1
CY	2.1	-0.4	0.8	-2.9
IT	1.9	-2.3	1.0	-1.5
HU	1.9	-0.4	2.8	-1.8
LT	1.8	-8.1	-1.7	-6.3
EU-27	1.6	-2.7	2.0	-2.6
DK	1.4	-1.3	0.7	-2.5
SK	1.4	-1	0.0	-3.3
PT	1.3	-5.3	-0.3	-8.5
HR	1.1	-6.6	2.8	-1.5
EL	0.8	-1.6	1.4	0.1
CZ	0	-6.5	2.4	0.0
RO	-0.7	-1.3	1.1	-0.7
PL	-1.2	-5.4	1.1	-4.6

	Women (15–64)		Men (15–64)	
	Change between Q2 2020 and Q3 2020	Change between Q3 2019 and Q3 2020	Change between Q2 2020 and Q3 2020	Change between Q3 2019 and Q3 2020
AT	2.2	-0.4	2.6	-1.2
MT	1.9	3.2	-0.4	-2.3
BG	1.8	-1.5	2.7	-2.1
IE	1.7	-1.8	2.2	-2
EE	1.6	-1.7	1.4	-3.6
ES	1.5	-2.6	1.9	-2.9
HU	1.4	-0.3	1.6	0.2
PL	1.3	0.1	1	0.1
PT	1.2	-1	0.6	-3.5
SE	1.1	-1.7	0.3	-2.6
SI	1.1	-1	0.6	-1.4
HR	1	-1.3	0.6	1.1
EL	0.9	-0.1	1.6	-0.7
FI	0.9	-1.4	1.1	-1.1
BE	0.8	-0.7	0.8	-0.8
EU-27	0.6	-0.9	1	-1.1
SK	0.6	-0.9	0.7	-1.2
DK	0.6	-1.2	0.4	-1.2
RO	0.5	-0.5	1.3	-0.8
NL	0.4	-0.7	0.2	-1.1
FR	0.3	-0.3	1.1	-0.1
IT	0.1	-1.6	0.9	-1.2
CZ	-0.1	-1.5	0.7	-0.3
LT	-0.3	-2.6	-1.2	-2.5
LV	-0.3	-1.3	0.5	-1.7
LU	-0.6	0.1	0.6	-2
CY	-1.5	-1.1	1.1	-1.3

NB: NB: Data for DE are not available.

Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data ([lfsq_ergacob](#)).

Table 7. Changes in unemployment rates of women and men by country (percentage points, 15–64 years, EU-27)

	Women		Men	
	Change between Q2 2020 and Q3 2020	Change between Q3 2019 and Q3 2020	Change between Q2 2020 and Q3 2020	Change between Q3 2019 and Q3 2020
BG	-1.3	0.8	-0.9	1.5
FI	-1.2	1.8	-1.3	1.7
SE	-0.4	1.9	-0.5	2.4
HU	-0.3	1	-0.2	1
MT	-0.1	0.5	0.3	1.2
RO	-0.1	1.6	-0.2	1.3
SI	0	0.9	-0.1	-0.1
EE	0.1	3.1	0.5	4.3
EL	0.2	-0.5	-1.1	0.1
AT	0.3	1.4	-0.1	1.3
PL	0.5	0.3	-0.1	0.2
HR	0.6	1.9	1.4	1.7
CZ	0.8	0.8	0.3	0.7
LV	0.8	2.3	-1.3	2.6
NL	0.8	1.4	0.3	0.9
SK	1.1	1.6	0.2	1.2
DK	1.1	1.5	1.4	1.4
EU-27	1.2	1.2	0.6	1
LT	1.5	3.7	0.1	3
ES	1.7	2.5	0.3	2.2
BE	1.7	1.2	1.4	1.1
CY	2	0.2	1	2.7
PT	2.5	1.1	2.2	2.3
LU	2.5	2.8	0.8	1.4
FR	2.6	0.7	1.8	0.5
IE	2.6	2.7	1.6	1.3
IT	3	1.3	1.8	0.7

NB: Data for DE are not available.

Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data ([lfsq_urgacob](#)).

Table 8. Percentage change in employment between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020 by sector, type of employment and sex, and share of women in 2019 by sector and type of employment (15+ years, EU-27)

Sectors (NACE one-digit level)	Temporary employment			Part-time employment			Self-employment		
	% change between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020		Share of women 2019 (%)	% change between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020		Share of women 2019 (%)	% change between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020		Share of women 2019 (%)
	Men	Women		Men	Women		Men	Women	
A – Agriculture, forestry and fishing	- 8	- 6	30	- 1	- 2	50	- 1	- 8	29
C – Manufacturing	- 21	- 25	33	6	- 1	67	2	- 4	22
F – Construction	- 25	- 20	7	- 9	- 6	43	- 3	- 16	4
G – Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	- 18	- 18	54	- 2	- 4	75	- 8	- 5	32
H – Transportation and storage	- 25	- 31	25	- 17	- 6	47	- 3	- 6	9
I – Accommodation and food service activities	- 40	- 45	56	- 25	- 25	67	- 9	- 9	40
J – Information and communication	- 8	- 2	36	4	11	54	2	4	18
K – Financial and insurance activities	- 9	- 18	60	16	9	82	- 4	- 12	25
L – Real estate activities	0	- 18	55	26	10	67	12	14	36
M – Professional, scientific and technical activities	- 14	- 12	55	2	0	70	1	3	37
N – Administrative and support service activities	- 20	- 23	50	- 14	- 12	73	- 10	- 2	35
O – Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	- 6	- 2	52	- 7	16	80	:	:	43
P – Education	- 6	- 6	69	- 8	0	78	- 4	- 6	56
Q – Human health and social work activities	8	- 8	78	1	- 2	88	7	- 1	62
R – Arts, entertainment and recreation	- 32	- 23	48	- 14	- 5	58	0	- 4	40
S – Other service activities	4	- 15	67	15	3	80	13	4	69
T – Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use	- 27	- 25	88	- 13	- 20	92	:	- 17	81
Total	- 18	- 17	50	- 5	- 3	73	- 2	- 3	32

NB: Sectors B, D, E and U are not included because data are unreliable or not available; '—', data unavailable.

Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (lfsq_etgan2; lfsq_epgan2; lfsq_esgan2; lfsa_epgan2; lfsa_etgan2; lfsa_esgan2).

Table 9. Percentage change in employment and hours worked in the main job between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020 by sector, share of workers in 2019 by characteristics, and distribution of employment across sectors in 2019 by characteristics (15+ years, EU-27)

Sectors (NACE one-digit level)	% change between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020			Share in 2019 (%)						Distribution in 2019 (%)							
	Employment (A)	Hours worked main job (B)	Composite indicator	Temporary work	Part-time	Self-employment	Women	Young people (15-24)	Migrants (*)	Part-time		Temporary work		Self-employment		Young people (15-24)	
	lfsq_egan2 (1dg)	lfsq_ewhan2 (1dg)	0.5 x A + 0.5 x B	lfsa_etgan2	lfsa_epgan2	lfsa_esgan2	lfsa_egan2	lfsa_egan2	OECD	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
I - Accommodation and food service activities	- 19	- 11	- 15	22	30	16	54	18	12	7	9	9	7	7	5	13	9
U - Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies	- 19	- 1	- 10	20	9	1	53	1	45	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
T - Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services- producing activities of households for own use	- 18	3	- 8	18	60	4	89	3	28	4	1	3	0	1	0	1	0
R - Arts, entertainment and recreation	- 6	- 8	- 7	20	33	25	48	13	6	2	4	3	3	4	3	3	3
N - Administrative and support service activities	- 10	- 3	- 7	16	31	11	49	7	7	7	7	5	5	4	3	4	4
H - Transportation and storage	- 6	- 4	- 5	11	11	9	22	6	5	2	6	2	7	1	5	2	6
G - Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	- 5	- 4	- 5	12	21	16	49	11	5	16	14	14	12	16	16	22	18
F - Construction	- 6	- 3	- 5	12	7	24	10	8	8	2	6	1	12	1	16	1	11
E - Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	- 4	- 1	- 3	11	8	3	22	4	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
C - Manufacturing	- 1	- 3	- 2	11	8	6	30	7	6	6	8	9	19	5	8	9	21

M - Professional, scientific and technical activities	1	- 5	- 2	8	18	32	48	6	7	5	6	4	3	14	12	5	3
A - Agriculture, forestry and fishing	- 2	- 1	- 2	11	18	52	34	7	4	3	8	2	5	14	17	2	5
P - Education	- 1	- 2	- 1	17	25	5	72	5	5	10	8	13	6	4	2	6	3
L - Real estate activities	6	- 7	0	8	21	26	51	5	7	1	1	1	0	2	1	1	0
Q - Human health and social work activities	0	0	0	14	32	9	78	6	6	21	8	18	5	13	4	15	3
S - Other service activities	6	- 4	1	12	30	30	67	8	6	4	3	3	2	11	2	4	1
B - Mining and quarrying	5	- 4	1	7	2	2	13	5	3	:	:	0	0	:	0	:	0
K - Financial and insurance activities	3	- 1	1	6	14	11	53	5	4	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	1
O - Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	4	0	2	12	13	0	48	4	3	5	3	7	6	0	0	4	4
D - Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	5	0	2	7	7	2	25	5	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
J - Information and communication	8	- 2	3	9	13	15	30	7	5	1	3	2	3	2	4	2	3
Total	- 2.4	- 2.8	- 2.6	13	16	14	46	8	6	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

(*) OECD data on foreign-born employees are not available for all EU-27 countries and for all 21 NACE one-digit sectors. Foreign-born data were calculated based on information from the following countries: BE, CZ, DK, IE, EL, ES, IT, LU, HU, NL, AT, PL, PT, SK, FI, SE. Data for the following sectors are aggregated: (D;E), (H;J), (L;M;N) and (R;S). As it is not possible to rank sectors while using such an aggregation, the values provided for these sectors represent the average value of the sector aggregation group. For instance, for sector R – Arts, entertainment and recreation (and S – Other service activities), the value reported refers to the average value of the aggregate (R;S). “:”, data unavailable; grey shading, low reliability.

Source: Authors’ calculations based on Eurostat data (lfsq_epgan2; lfsq_egn2;lfsq_ewhan2;lfsa_etgan2;lfsa_etgan2; lfsa_esgan2); OECD dataset.

Table 10. Changes in employment by sex and sector (EU-27)

Sector (NACE one- digit level)	Total		Women		Men	
	% change 2020 (Q2 to Q3)	% change Q3 (2019 to 2020)	% change 2020 (Q2 to Q3)	% change Q3 (2019 to 2020)	% change 2020 (Q2 to Q3)	% change Q3 (2019 to 2020)
I – Accommodation and food service activities	9	-15	9	-16	10	-14
T – Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use	5	-12	5	-13	9	-1
N – Administrative and support service activities	1	-11	-1	-12	3	-9
R – Arts, entertainment and recreation	2	-6	1	-5	2	-6
H – Transportation and storage	2	-5	-2	-7	3	-5
U – Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies	9	-4	5	-10	14	1
F – Construction	3	-4	2	-5	3	-4
G – Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	2	-4	2	-1	1	-6
A – Agriculture, forestry and fishing	0	-2	-1	-3	0	-2
C – Manufacturing	0	-2	0	-3	0	-1
Q – Human health and social work activities	0	-1	1	-1	-1	0
M – Professional, scientific and technical activities	-1	-1	0	0	-1	-1
P – Education	-3	0	-3	-1	-3	3
B – Mining and quarrying	0	1	1	8	0	0
E – Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	6	2	3	-5	7	4
K – Financial and insurance activities	0	3	0	4	-1	2
O – Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	2	6	1	7	3	5
L – Real estate activities	0	7	3	6	-4	8
S – Other service activities	2	8	4	4	-2	16
J – Information and communication	1	10	0	6	2	11
D – Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	5	10	8	16	4	8
Total – all NACE activities	1	-2	1	-2	1	-2

Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (lfsq_egan2).

Table 11. The 10 economic sectors with the largest employment losses between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020 and trends in Q3 2020 (EU-27)

Sector (NACE two-digit level)	Employment change (thousands) Q2 2019 to Q2 2020			Employment change thousands Q2 2020 to Q3 2020			Employment change (thousands) Q3 2019 to Q3 2020		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
I56 – Food and beverage service activities	- 1 301	- 573	- 729	431	231	200	- 1 039	- 478	- 562
G47 – Retail trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles	- 661	- 284	- 376	410	131	280	- 340	- 192	- 148
I55 – Accommodation	- 556	- 212	- 344	283	118	165	- 519	- 193	- 326
F41 – Construction of buildings	- 430	- 375	- 55	175	171	4	- 360	- 294	- 65
N81 – Services to buildings and landscape activities	- 416	- 167	- 249	66	36	31	- 424	- 183	- 242
T97 – Activities of households as employers of domestic personnel	- 413	- 49	- 364	96	22	74	- 249	- 1	- 248
Q87 – Residential care activities	- 405	- 109	- 296	- 13	- 5	- 8	- 520	- 115	- 405
G46 – Wholesale trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles	- 362	- 294	- 68	- 34	- 31	- 4	- 376	- 352	- 24
H52 – Warehousing and support activities for transportation	- 359	- 300	- 59	141	131	10	- 304	- 221	- 83
F43 – Specialised construction activities	- 318	- 331	13	231	205	26	- 120	- 151	31

NB: For men, the ranking does not include the following: T98 – Undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of private households for own use. For women, the ranking does not include the following: A03 – Fishing and aquaculture; B06 – Extraction of crude petroleum and natural gas; B07 – Mining of metal ores; B09 – Mining support service activities; C12 – Manufacture of tobacco products; and E39 – Remediation activities and other waste management.

Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (lfsq_egan2).

Table 12. The 10 economic sectors with the largest employment increases between Q2 2020 and Q2 2019 and trends in Q3 2020 (NACE two-digit level, EU-27)

Sector (NACE two-digit level)	Employment change (thousands) Q2 2019 to Q2 2020			Employment change thousands Q2 2020 to Q3 2020			Employment change (thousands) Q3 2019 to Q3 2020		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
O84 – Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	587	145	441	230	181	0	828	371	458
J62 – Computer programming, consultancy and related activities	573	412	161	94	73	49	605	454	151
Q88 – Social work activities without accommodation	348	134	214	-25	20	21	318	132	186
S96 – Other personal service activities	200	185	14	88	0	-44	281	156	125
K65 – Insurance, reinsurance and pension funding, except compulsory social security	175	88	87	-14	4	88	175	98	77
J61 – Telecommunications	174	148	26	-24	-16	-18	180	154	26
C27 – Manufacture of electrical equipment	158	132	26	-51	-30	-8	106	96	10
C32 – Other manufacturing	109	87	22	-1	8	-22	124	100	24
C21 – Manufacture of basic pharmaceutical products and pharmaceutical preparations	107	63	43	-16	-19	-8	64	31	32
L68 – Real estate activities	101	72	29	-23	-42	3	105	52	53

NB: For men, the ranking does not include the following: T98 – Undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of private households for own use. For women, the ranking does not include the following: A03 – Fishing and aquaculture; B06 – Extraction of crude petroleum and natural gas; B07 – Mining of metal ores; B09 – Mining support service activities; C12 – Manufacture of tobacco products; and E39 – Remediation activities and other waste management.

Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data (lfsq_egan2).

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