

RESEARCH

Labour market situation of female employees in 4 different EU member states

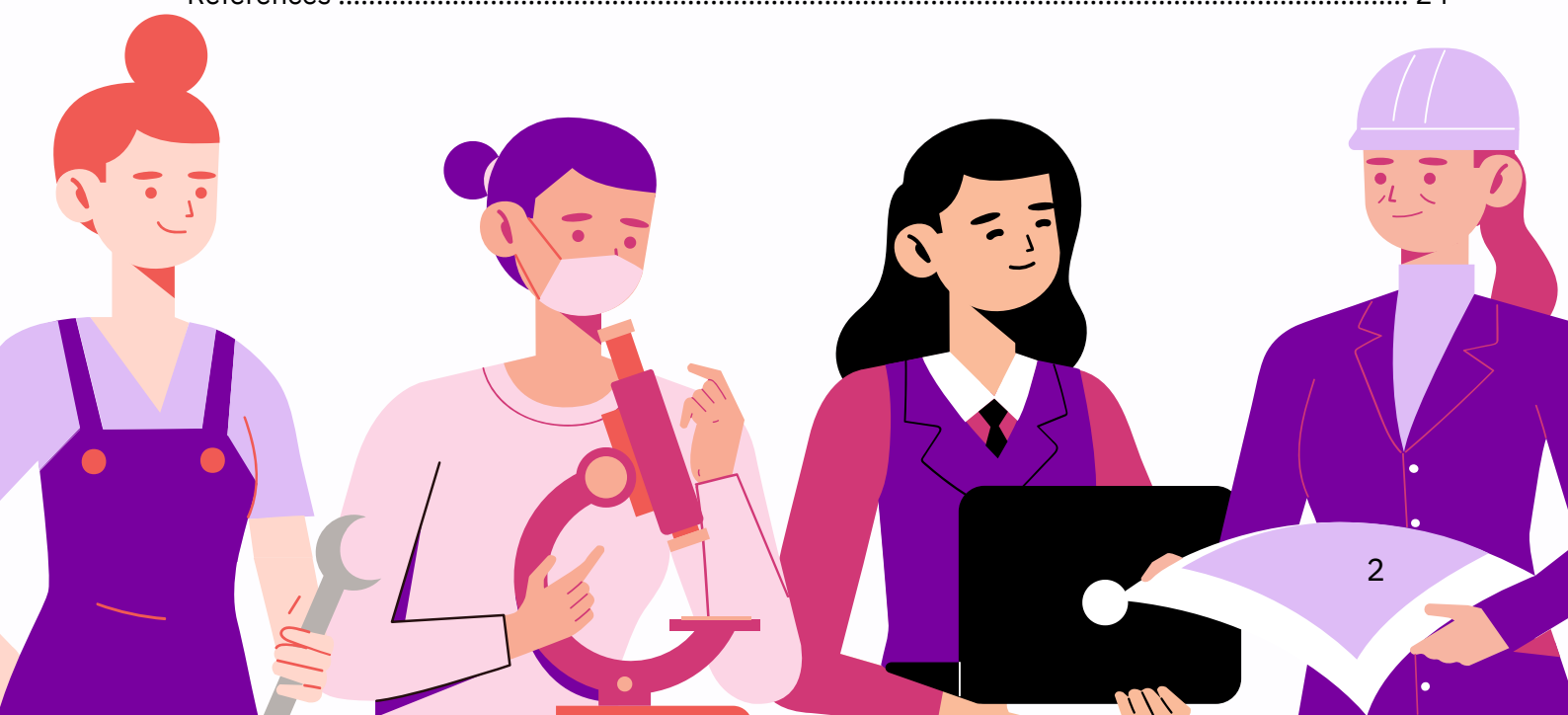
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MODERN LADY TALK



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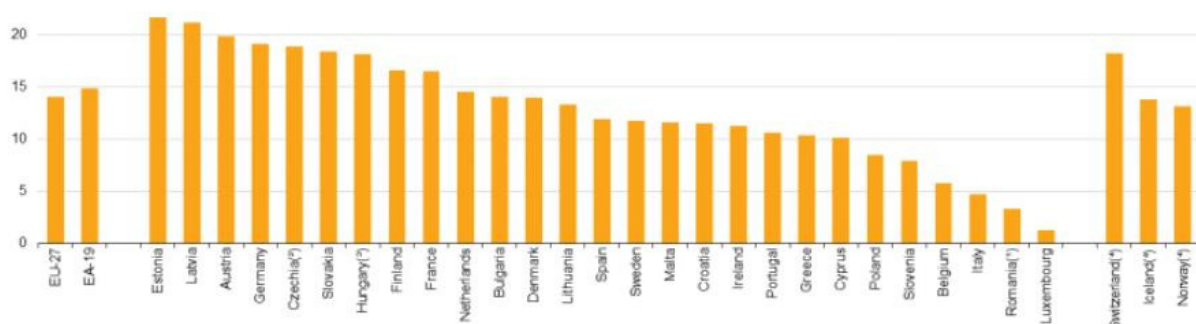
1. Introduction and research goals

According to the European Commission's public data women in the EU are less present in the labour market than men. The gender employment gap stood at 11.7% in 2019, with 67.3 % of women across the EU being employed compared to 79% of men (EU-27 data).

The gender pay gap in the EU stands at 14.1% and has only changed minimally over the last decade. It means that women earn 14.1% on average less per hour than men. Women in the EU even earned 36.7% less than men overall in 2018. One of the reasons is the fact that on average women spend fewer hours in paid work than men: Whereas only 8% of men in the EU in 2019 worked part-time, almost a third of women across the EU (30.7 %) did so (European Commission, 2018b).

There are considerable differences between EU countries. The gender pay gap ranges from less than 5% in Luxembourg, Italy and Romania to more than 19% in Austria, Germany, Latvia and Estonia. In most countries, the gender pay gap is decreasing, whereas it is even growing in a few. To see the gender pay gap in more detail, see the following Figure (Figure 1.):

Figure 1. The unadjusted gender pay gap in EU-27 and three other countries including Switzerland, Iceland and Norway (2019). Source: Eurostat (2020)*



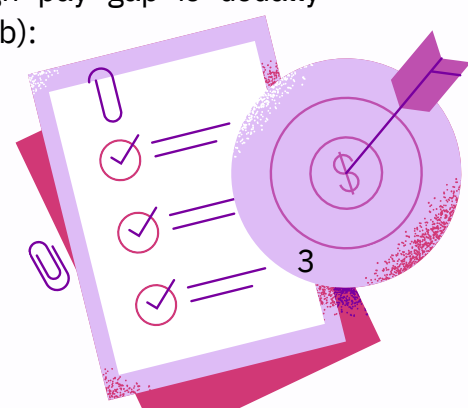
Note: For all the countries except Czechia and Iceland: data for enterprises employing 10 or more employees, NACE Rev. 2 B to S (-O); Czechia: data for enterprises employing 1 or more employees, NACE Rev. 2 B to S; Iceland: NACE Rev. 2 sections C to H, J, K, P, Q. Gender pay gap data for 2019 are provisional until benchmark figures, taken from the Structure of Earnings survey, become available in December 2024.

(*) Estimated data.
(*) Definition differs (see metadata)
(*) Break in series
(*) 2018 data.

**difference between average gross hourly earnings of male and female employees as % of male gross earnings*

However, a lower gender pay gap in certain countries does not automatically mean that women in general are better paid. A lower gender pay gap often occurs in countries with a lower employment rate of women. A high pay gap is usually characteristic of a labour market (European Commission, 2018b):

- in which women are more concentrated in low-paid sectors;
- in which a significant proportion of women work part-time.



In our short study we intend to focus on four member states in order to see some other aspects as well and to get a deeper insight to this important field (Hungary, Italy, Spain and The Netherlands). We deployed primary and secondary research techniques to get the results required.

2. Case-report: HUNGARY

The employment rate of women is still far below that of men (62.3% vs. 76.3%) and the consequences of COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated discrimination and gender inequality in the labour market.

Despite the downward trends in self-employment, in 2018 more men than women were self-employed in Hungary. Gender gaps happened to decrease due to the larger fall in the men's rates rather than the increasing trendline of the female rate. In fact, being self-employed can signal the presence of an entrepreneurial spirit or it might also indicate the precarious nature of employment contracts.

While the self-employed seek to benefit from greater autonomy and flexibility at work, at times like these, the self-employed might be among those most economically affected by the coronavirus.

Fear of failure and lack of business skills seems to be the significant deterrent for Hungarian women to open a business.

Hungarian women are much less likely than Hungarian men to believe they have sufficient skills for business creation (28.7% vs. 48.9%).

On the other hand, Hungarian women are more likely to have entrepreneurship aspirations than their EU peers.

We decided to conduct a survey to identify our target group and their preferences. 50 respondents took part in the survey. The main age groups were from 18 to 35+ years old. Female respondents were the majority. The next Figures (*Figure 2.* and *3.*) show us some basic characteristics of our respondents.



Figure 2. Gender distribution of the Hungarian respondents. *Source:* own elaboration based on our primary research

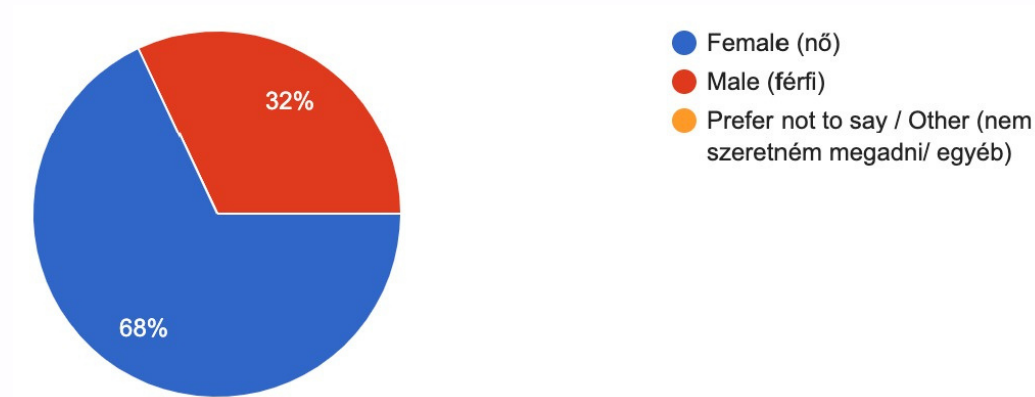
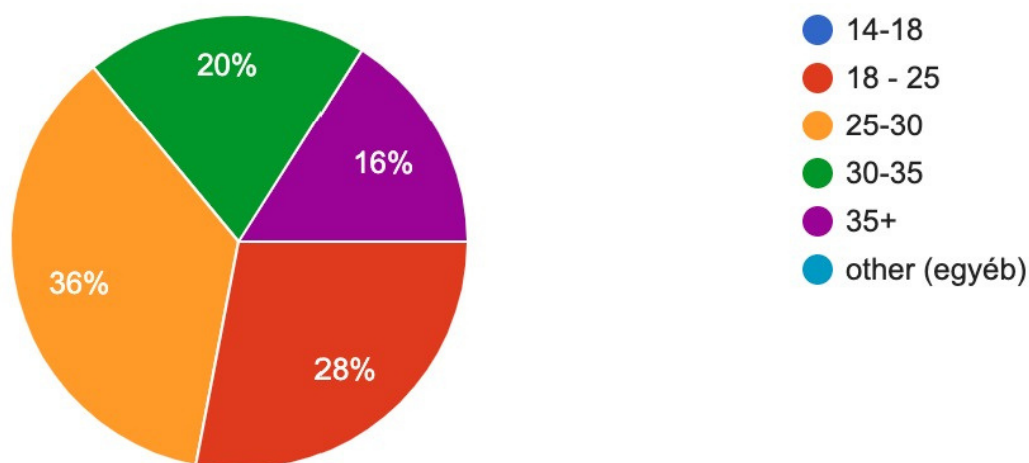


Figure 3. Age distribution of the Hungarian respondents. *Source:* own elaboration based on our primary research



We asked if they knew the meaning of entrepreneurship and its features. The majority answered Yes, but 12% answered No. The 12% comes from the 25-35 years old cohort.

We wanted to know how it is perceived on the problem of *women in entrepreneurship* and we asked who they think this topic is relevant in current society. The majority answered that they perceive the problem is very important. 20% think it is important but not the priority, and 4% think otherwise (see Figure 4.).



Figure 4. Opinions and perceived priorities on *women in entrepreneurship* issues. Source own elaboration based on our primary research

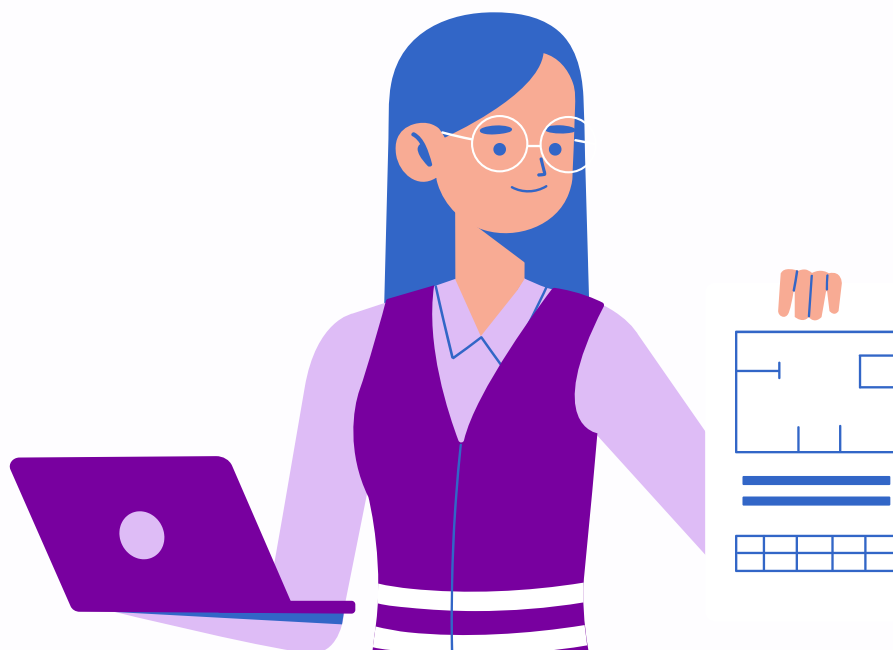


The respondents come from different fields of study: international relations, cultural anthropology, economics, early childhood education, cultural heritage, bioengineering, business communication (management), tourism and hospitality, graphic design, environmental engineer, artisanship, psychology, and work: project writer, startups, manager, interior designer, youth work, graphic, project manager, human resources, teachers, organizational developer.

For the last two questions we received many different answers. Regarding the dream jobs we went from curator of an art gallery to a graphic designer. List is long but there are some more examples: project manager, interior designer, economist, marketing and advertising specialist, psychologist or teacher as well.

At the last question we asked which professional field/s they would like to know more about.

There were some really interesting topics but please see below the list of choices: politicians, project writers, project coordinators, music industry actors, employees in the field of hospitality, art & culture, communication, business administration, network analysis; veterinarian, animator, children book illustrator, artist, marketing expert, finance specialist, investment, startups, entrepreneurs, restaurant management, UX researcher, and even people are interested in the world of an influencer.

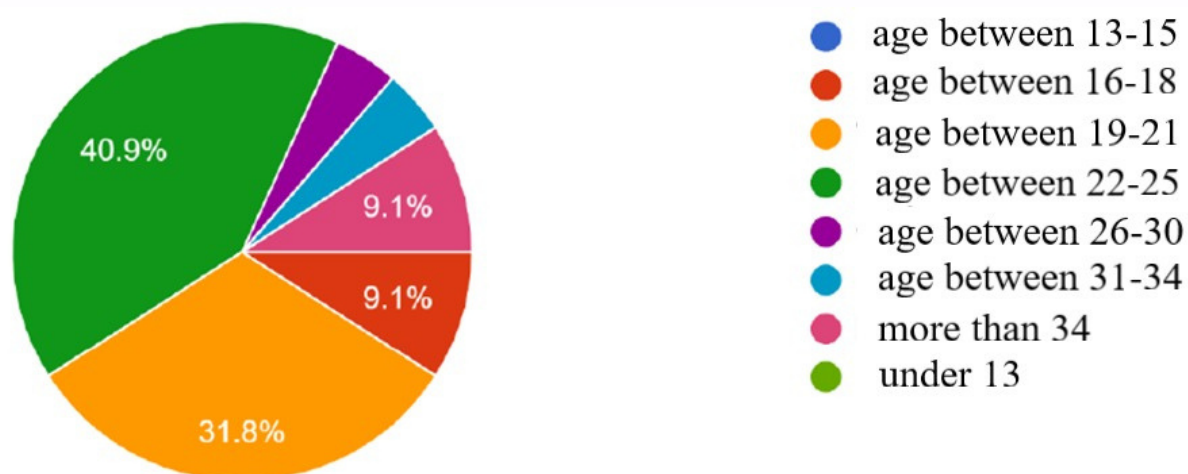


3. Case-report: ITALY

Our survey focuses on a target group at a NUTS2 level region in Italy: Calabria.

Our survey – published on Google Drive and promoted through our Facebook page, mailing and WhatsApp direct contacts – showed a good gender balance (54.5% males and 45.5% females). The age distribution shows a predominance of respondents aged between 22 and 25 years old (40.9%), while the second largest group is aged between 19 and 21 (31.8%); therefore, more than 70% of the respondents were between 19 and 25 years of age. Please, check the figure hereunder to get the full picture (*Figure 5.*)

Figure 5. Age distribution of survey respondents. *Source:* own elaboration based on our primary research



3.1 Our survey is composed of three questions

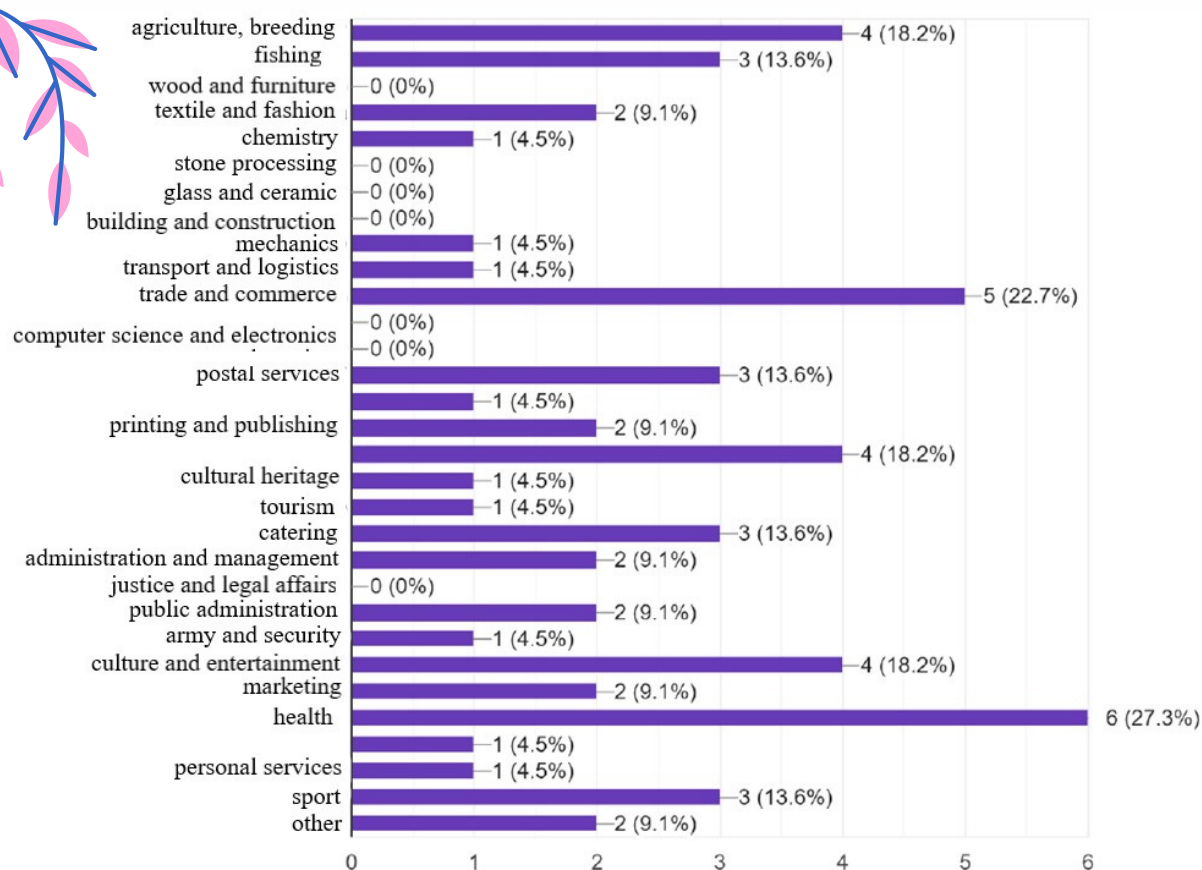
1. *In which sector would you like to work in the future?* The list of options is based on the “Atlas of job and qualifications” managed by the Istituto Nazionale per l’Analisi delle Politiche Pubbliche and specifically on the priority economic professional sectors (INAPP, 2021). In total, there are 31 different options and the following were the most voted:

- Health services (27.3%)
- Commerce (22.7%)
- Agriculture, breeding and fishing (18.2%)
- Education and Training (18.2%)
- Culture and entertainment (18.2%).

Please, check *Figure 6.* in the next page to get an overview of all responses.



Figure 6. Distribution of survey respondents according to their field of interest (Question No. 1.). Source: own elaboration based on our primary research



2. The second question is *What would you ask a professional who works in your favourite field?* Here the most voted options are:

- How much he/she likes his/her job (54.5%)
- If it's easy to make a career (31.8%)
- How much does she earn (22.7%).

3. While the following have been the most voted options to the last question, which is: *What would you like to ask from these "successful young women" or listen to in our podcast?*

- How she started and how easy has been to start (59.1%)
- Why she started (36.4%)
- How much does she earn (18.2%).

3.2 Women employment in the local/regional market

First of all, it should be outlined that in our region there is a huge unemployment: in 2019, the unemployment rate among people aged 15-74 in Calabria was 21 %, the ninth highest figure

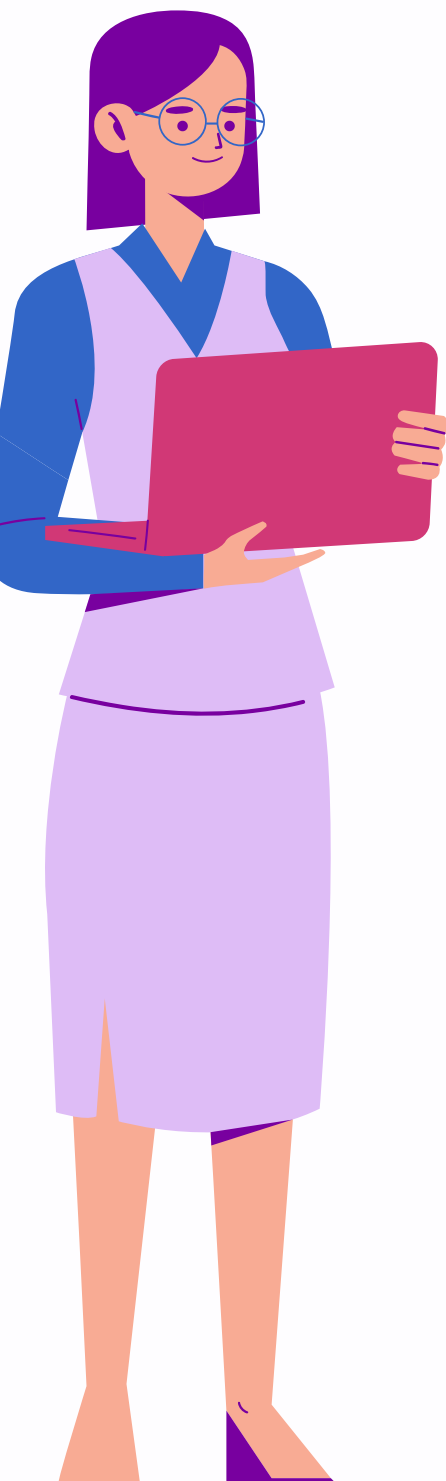
among European regions, while the employment rate stood at 42.0 % and 17 percentage points below the national rate (EURES, 2020).

In addition, the gap by gender, already higher than the Italian average, continued to widen. In 2018 the male employment rate in Calabria was 53.8%, compared to a 30.3% rate of female employment (ISTAT, 2021). It is also worth looking at the national situation, that in the III trimester of 2020 showed a 67% rate for male employment and a 48.8% for females (ISTAT, 2020).

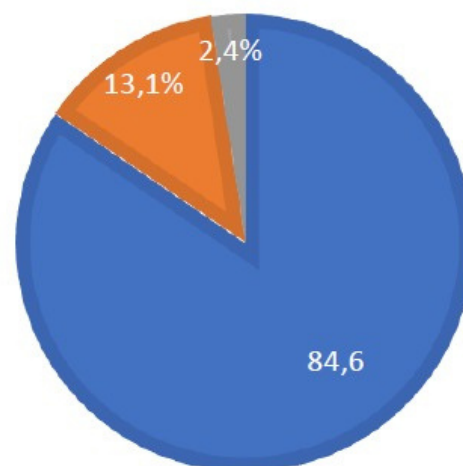
To conclude, it is evident that for women it is harder to find a job, in Calabria as well as in Italy.

While looking at the different sectors, we have the following data in relation to the distribution of female employment in Italy (OECD, 2021)(see *Figure 7*):

Figure 7. Sectoral distribution of female employment in Italy. Source: own elaboration based on OECD (2021)



■ Services ■ Industry ■ Agriculture



The services sector is undoubtedly the first one, which includes at least these two big groups, as per the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) classification:

- Public Administration, Community, Social and other Services and Activities
- Trade, Transportation, Accommodation and Food, and Business and Administrative Services. Indeed, the International Labour Organisation describes that in 2019 the distribution of employment per gender in Italy in the aforementioned sector groups was the following (ILOSTAT, 2021):
- Public administration, community, social and other services and activities: Female 64%, Male 36%;

- Trade, transportation, accommodation and food, and business and administrative services: Female 42%, Male 58%.

Therefore, we can conclude that women in Italy are employed the most in the following sectors:

- Education and training;
- Health services;
- Accommodation and food.

The same sectors are those in which women can reach higher positions and consequently get higher salaries.

4. Case-report: SPAIN

The classification of female/male-dominated sectors in brief: construction, energy, and transport are male-dominated sectors, while health, education, and other service activities are female-dominated.

Women in the Spanish labour market have experienced a remarkable transformation over the past couple of decades. Two of the most important achievements have taken place in education and employment. Women's qualifications are now higher than males', and the decline in the gender employment gap has been among the highest in OECD countries.

Spain has one of the highest percentages of female managers in companies, Spanish women hold 22% of management positions (only slightly fewer than the world average).

Besides that, neither the distribution of employment across occupations nor the quality of employment have improved. The share of women in temporary employment has not fallen and women have a higher probability of receiving low wages.

At a rate of 16.13% in 2020, Spain was one of the countries with the highest unemployment rates in the European Union. Women also continued to have a much higher unemployment rate than men (see *Table 1.*)

Table 1. Different unemployment rates in Spain (2020). *Source:* Eurostat (2021)

	2020
Unemployment Rate	16.2%
Male unemployment	14.2%
Female unemployment	18.4%
Unemployment less than 25 years	40.7%

4.1 How to measure labour market inequalities

The inequality between men and women in the labour market can be measured in various forms.

(1) One is the *gender pay gap*, which means – focusing on Spain – that women on average earn 23% less than men.

(2) Second is the *amount of time dedicated to non-remunerated work*. Women in Spain spend almost double the amount of time on unpaid work as men.

(3) Third can be the *gender overall earnings gap*. It is the difference between the average annual earnings between women and men. It takes into account three types of disadvantages women face:

- lower hourly earnings;
- working fewer hours in paid jobs; and
- lower employment rates (for example when interrupting a career to take care of children or relatives).

The gender overall earnings gap in Spain stands at 35.7 % (while the average gender overall earnings gap in the EU is 39.6 %).

Some of the factors that contribute to the gender pay gap in Spain and in the EU are as follows:

Please, note that the figures listed below represent the average values of the EU. However, the factors and their effects can be observed in every member state.

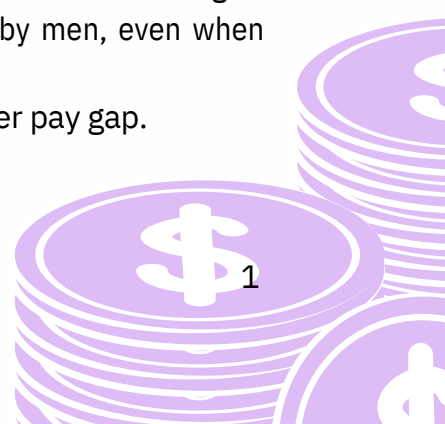
Management and supervisory positions are overwhelmingly held by men (already discussed, see above). Within each sector men are more often promoted than women, and paid better as a consequence. This trend culminates at the very top, where amongst CEOs 6.3 % are women.

Women take charge of important unpaid tasks, such as household work and caring for children or relatives on a far larger scale than men do. Working men spend on average 9 hours per week on unpaid care and household activities, while working women spend 22 hours – that's almost 4 hours every day. In the labour market this is reflected by the fact that more than 1 in 3 women reduce their paid hours to part-time, while only 1 in 10 men do the same.

Women tend to *spend periods off the labour market* more often than men. These career interruptions not only influence hourly pay, but also impact future earnings and pensions.

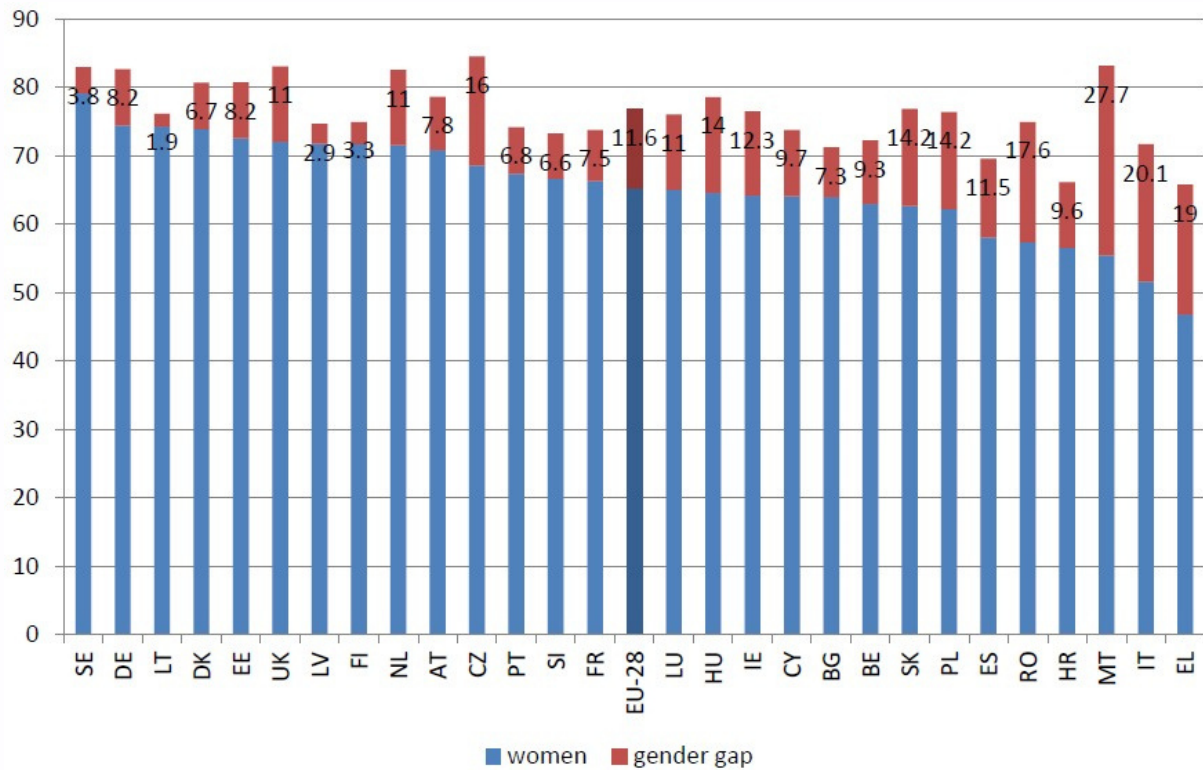
Segregation in education and in the labour market; this means that in some sectors and occupations, women tend to be overrepresented, while in others men are overrepresented. In some countries, occupations predominantly carried out by women, such as teaching or sales, offer lower wages than occupations predominantly carried out by men, even when the same level of experience and education is needed.

Pay discrimination, while illegal, continues to contribute to the gender pay gap.



(4) Fourth is the *gender employment gap*. To see the exact situation regarding member states and Spain, the following figure (Figure 8.) show us a more detailed picture.

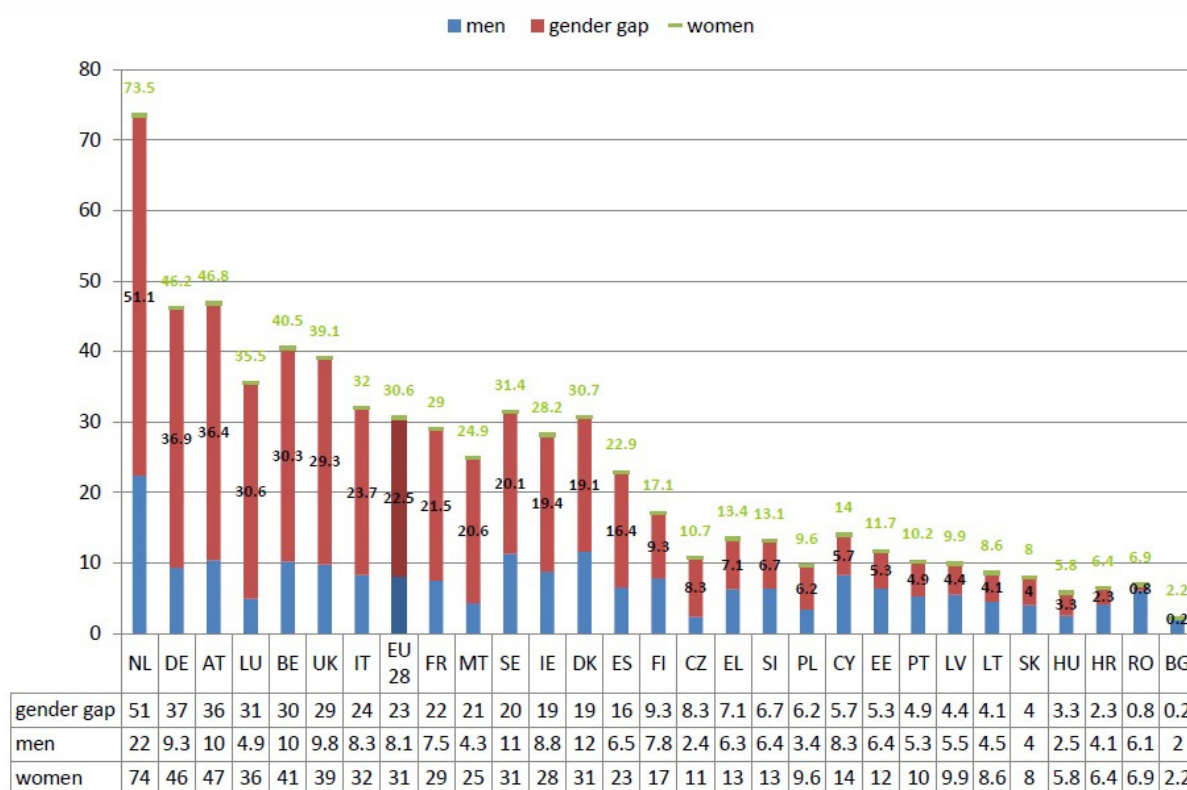
Figure 8. Women employment rate and gender employment gap, 20-64, per Member State (2016). Source: European Commission (2018a)



Considering part-time employment the following structure can be seen in the EU (see Figure 9.)



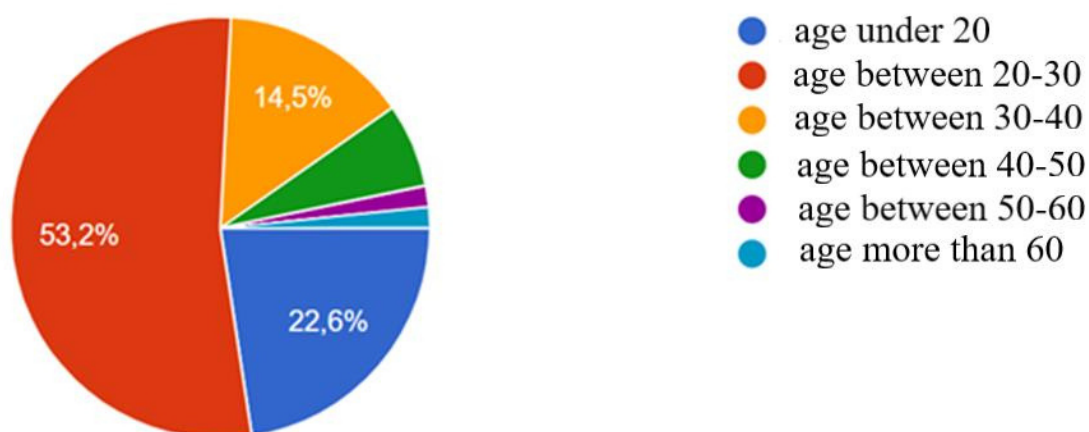
Figure 9 . Share of part-time to total employment by gender, 20-64, per Member State (2017 Q3). Source: European Commission (2018a)



4.2 Survey analysis

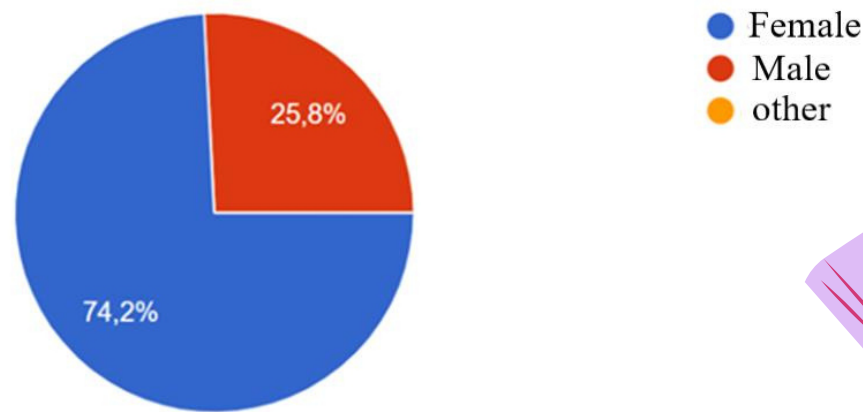
By age: more than 70% of the answers came from younger generations (22,6% less than 20 years old and 53,2% from 20- to 30-year-old). The following figure depicts the age distribution (see Figure 10.).

Figure 10. Age distribution of our respondents in Spain. Source: own elaboration



Regarding the gender distribution: we had answers by gender at 74.2% women and 25.8% male. Surprisingly we had no answers to any other gender (see *Figure 11.*).

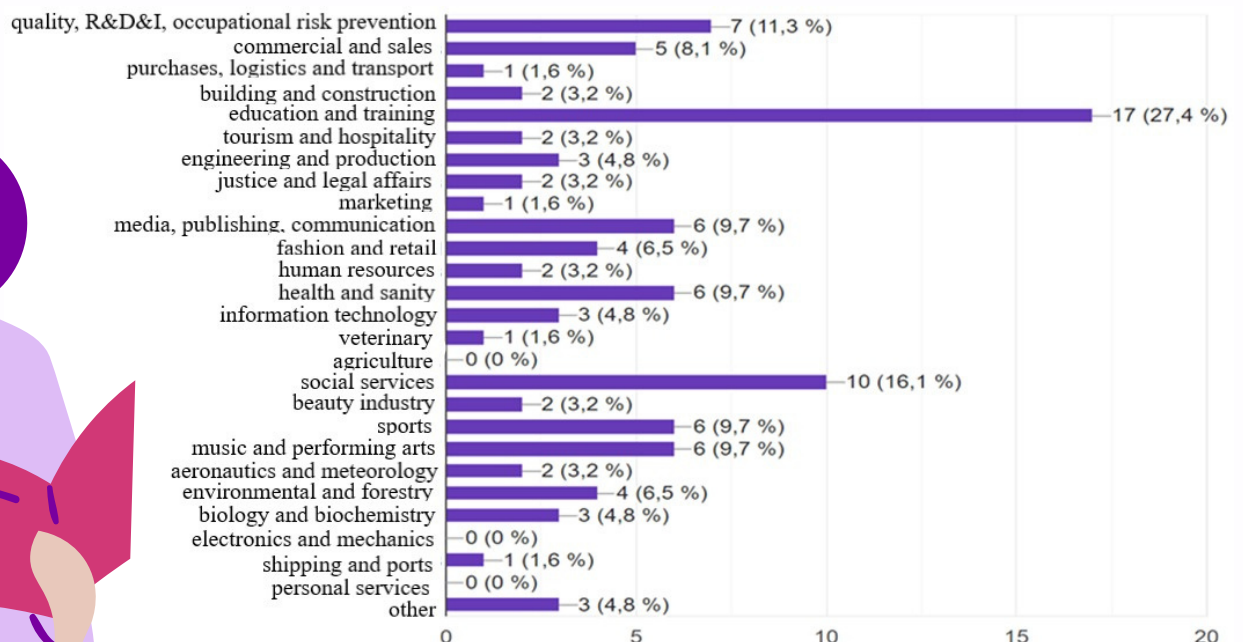
Figure 11. Gender distribution of our respondents in Spain. *Source:* own elaboration




4.2.1 Sectors of interest

When it comes to labour by sector our survey shows the highest rate 27.4 % for education and training followed by social services at 16.1%. For the entire distribution see the next figure (*Figure 12.*).

Figure 12. Distribution of our respondents according to sector preference. *Source:* own elaboration





4.2.2 Questions

We addressed two questions to the crowd:

-What would you like to listen to in our podcast?

→ *We had a large variety of answers but can highlight several related to happiness in life vs happiness at work*

-What would you like to ask our Pod Casters?

→ *Many of the answers are related to work-family balance, gender pay and regrets/choices in life*




5. Case-report: The NETHERLANDS



5.1 Historical aspects

Until the 1970s, the Netherlands had a very low labour force participation rate for women (32% in 1977) compared to other Western countries, such as Sweden (70%) and Denmark (65%) [see Euwals et al. (2011)]. By 2007, this picture had completely changed. Today, the labour force participation rate of Dutch women is among the highest in the Western world with 75.8% according to the OECD (2018). This rapid growth of the female labour force resulted in substantial economic prosperity that could not have been reached solely by population growth. Several researchers, such as Van Ewijk et al. (2006), even believe that with the aging population, a high labour force participation rate of women contributes to the fiscal sustainability of the welfare state.

Female labour force participation rates by 5-year-of-birth cohorts and age (in %) are presented in *Figure 13*. One can read the graph as follows: following one cohort line provides information about the age- and period effects on a given cohort, while studying the vertical difference between lines tells us something about period and cohort effects for a given age. For example, it is interesting to see that for the older cohorts, labeled as 1926, 1931, 1936 and 1941, the participation rates steeply decrease from age 55 onwards. The large positive vertical difference between the younger cohorts and these older cohorts can be partly attributed to cohort effects and partly attributed to period effects, *i.e.* changing eligibility conditions regarding early retirement in the Netherlands. A series of policy changes, starting in 1997 for civil servant jobs and ending with a law completely abolishing favorable fiscal conditions for early retirement in 2005, is clearly visible in *Figure 13*. Note that in 1997 when these changes commenced, people in the 1936 cohort group were between 59 and 63 years old, while respondents in the 1946 group were between 49 and 53 years old.



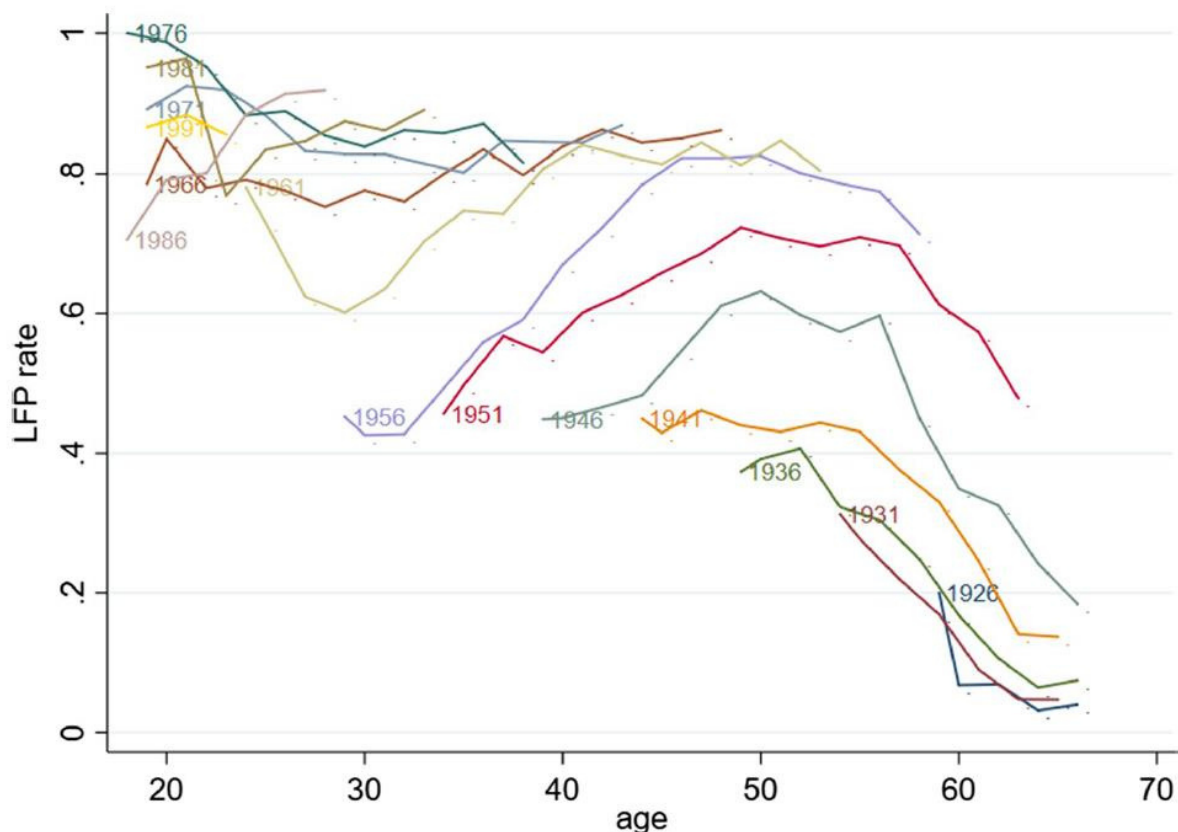
We can also see that for all cohorts the labour force participation is rather constant between age 45 and 50. This finding provides prima-facie evidence for our prime working age hypothesis which we presented in the introduction. Furthermore, we can also observe a dip in the labour

force participation rates around age 30 (especially for the 1961 cohort). A possible explanation is that in the past a considerable fraction of women temporarily stopped working once they got their first child.

However, this ‘child valley’ in the labour force participation rate has almost completely disappeared for the younger generations. So, there could be differences in the age effects between different cohorts (Nientker – Alessie, 2019).

Figure 13. Female participation rates by age and cohort. Note: cohorts in 5-year groups, from cohorts born in 1989-1993 labeled as 1991 to cohorts born in 1924-1928 labeled as 1926.

Source: Nientker – Alessie (2019)



5.2 Recent trends and benchmarking

Netherlands: Female labour force participation rate, 1990-2019 (see *Figure 14. and 15.*): For that indicator, we provide data for the Netherlands from 1990 to 2019. The average value for the Netherlands during that period was 53.74 % with a minimum of 43.05 % in 1990 and a maximum of 59 % in 2019. The latest value from 2019 is 59%. For comparison, the world average in 2019 based on 181 countries is 51.96 %. See the global rankings for that indicator or use the country comparator to compare trends over time.

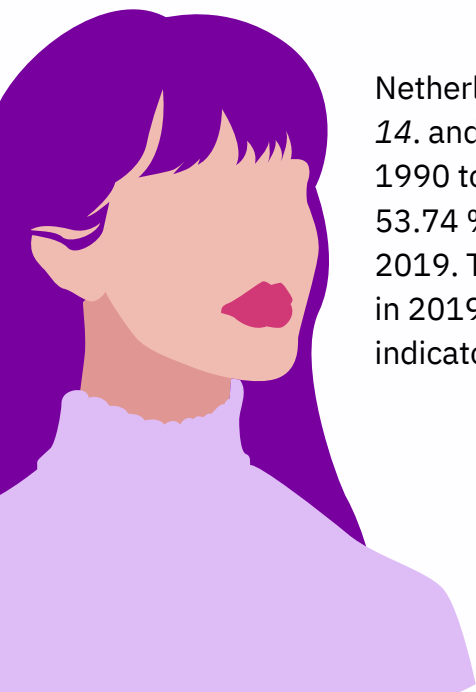


Figure 14. Female labour force participation rates in Netherlands (2012-2019). Source: The Global Economy (2019a)

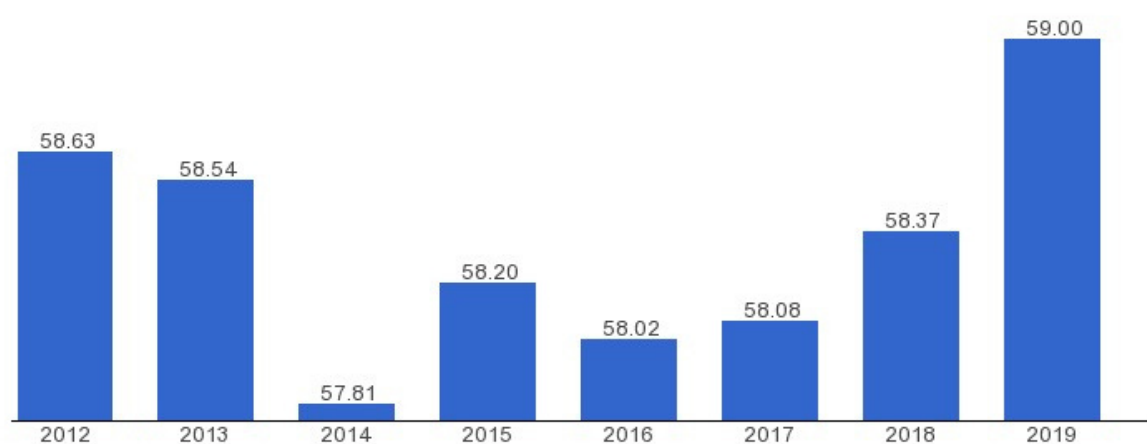
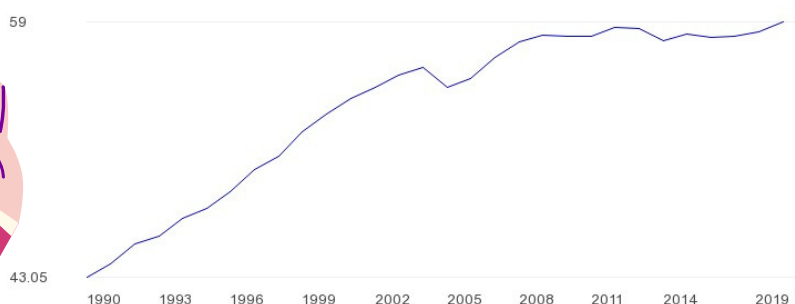
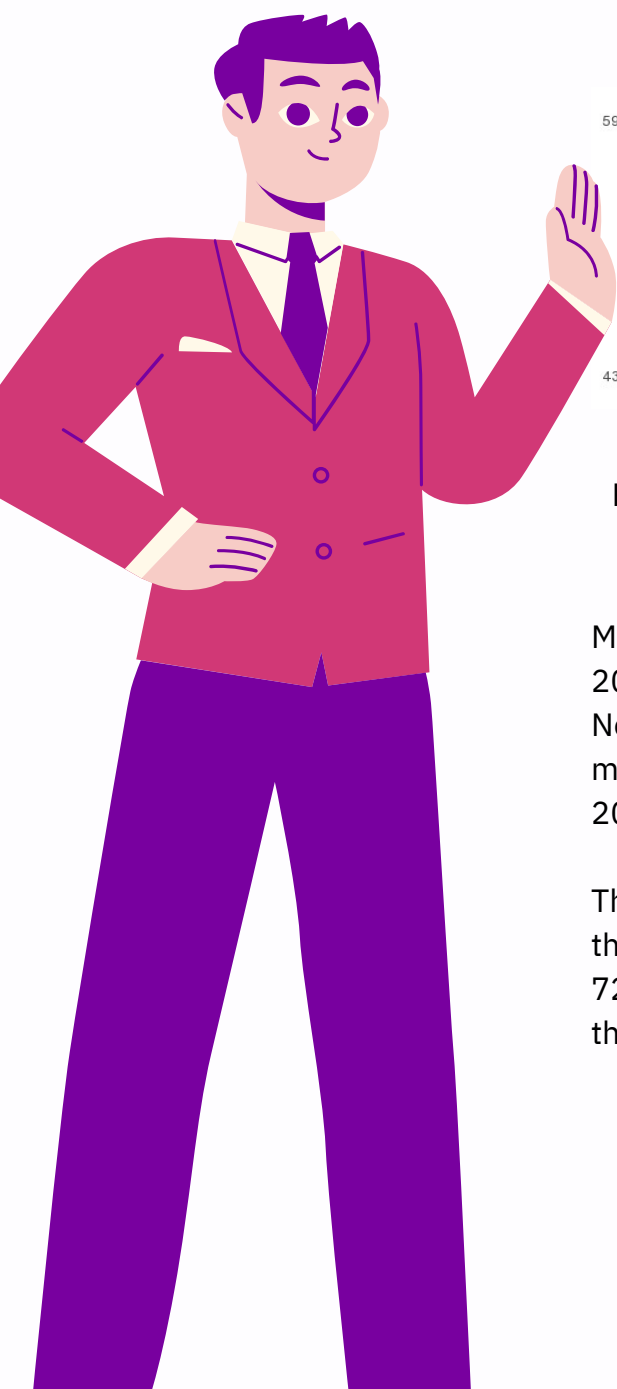


Figure 15. Female labour force participation rates in Netherlands (1990-2019). Source: The Global Economy (2019a)



For benchmarking – Male labour force participation rates

Male labour force participation rate for the period 1990-2019 (see Figure 16. and 17.). The average value for the Netherlands during that period was 70.99 % with a minimum of 69.21 % in 2017 and a maximum of 73.6 % in 2002.

The latest value from 2019 is 69.61 %. For comparison, the world average in 2019 based on 181 countries is 72.17 %. See the global rankings for that indicator or use the country comparator to compare trends over time.

Figure 16. Male labour force participation rates in Netherlands (2012-2019). Source : The Global Economy (2019b)

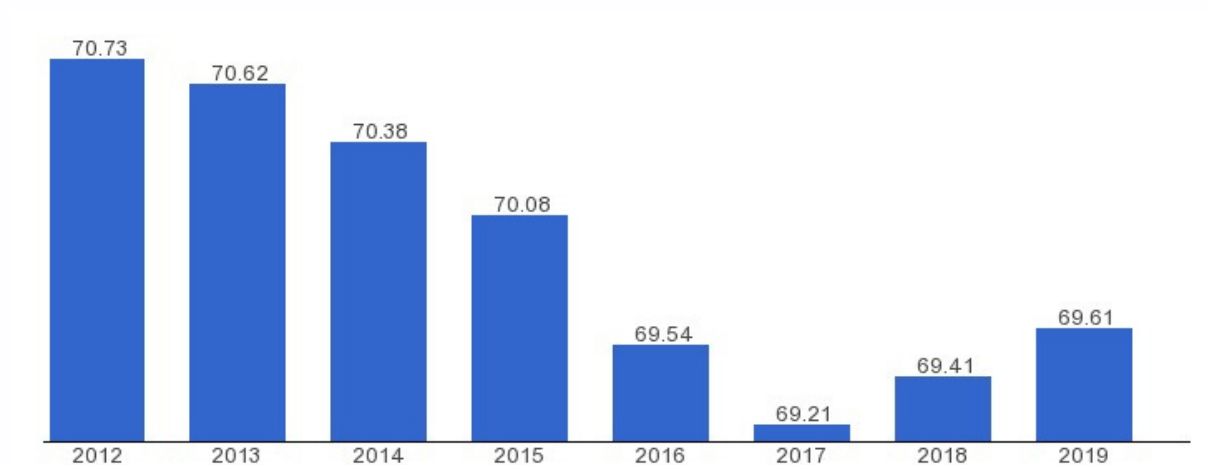
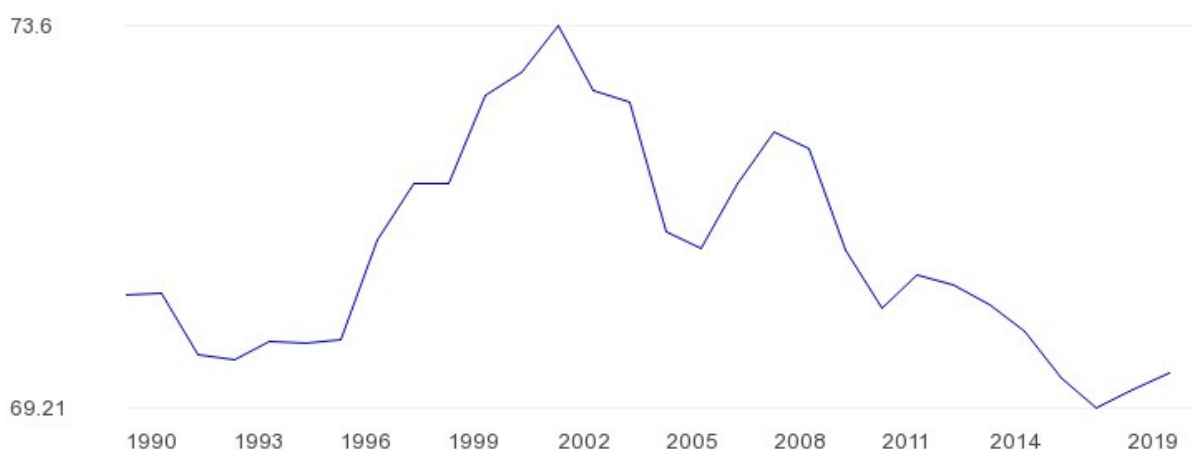


Figure 17. Male labour force participation rates in Netherlands (1990-2019) Source: The Global Economy (2019b)




5.3 Focusing on female workforce

According to a report published by Statistics Netherlands (CBS) and the Social and Cultural Planning Office (SCP), the economic position of women in the Netherlands has improved:

women work more hours and are more financially independent in 2019 compared to 2018. As a result, the Netherlands has risen from sixth place to fifth place in the EU rankings for gender equality (Expatica, 2021; Séveno, 2020).

CBS SCP Emancipation Monitor 2020

The Emancipation Monitor is published every two years and is a collaboration between CBS and SCP. The 2020 publication is the 11th edition of the report and shows that the difference



between the economic independence of women and men in the Netherlands narrowed in 2019. Last year, almost 64 percent of women were financially independent compared to 81 percent of men. In 2017, only 61 percent of women were financially independent – this marks the largest increase seen in the Netherlands in 12 years.

The report also shows that between 2017 and 2019 more women started working in the Netherlands (73 percent versus 76 percent) and that the average working hours of women increased by over half an hour to 28,5 hours per week. Men work an average of almost 39 hours a week.

The figures released by CBS/SCP also prove that, in the years since the last economic crisis, women in the Netherlands have rapidly become more financially independent as they close the gap between men and women in the labour market. In spite of this, however, the gap between the two sexes when it comes to carrying out domestic tasks remains large.

5.3.1 Different career goals and priorities for men and women

The research found that most women who work part-time stated they wanted to work more hours, as long as their hours could be adjusted to adapt and fit their lifestyle/commitments (e.g. childcare). The research also found that, while on the whole women and men find paid work equally important, women are generally less focused on career advancement.

Furthermore, women said that they prefer not to work full-time, in order to ensure that they have time to focus on other aspects of their lives. 68 per cent of women preferred working part-time to full time, whereas less than half of men feel the same way. Only seven percent of women who work part-time would prefer to work a 35-hour week if they could. In the Netherlands, it seems that part-time work for women has become an obvious lifestyle choice.

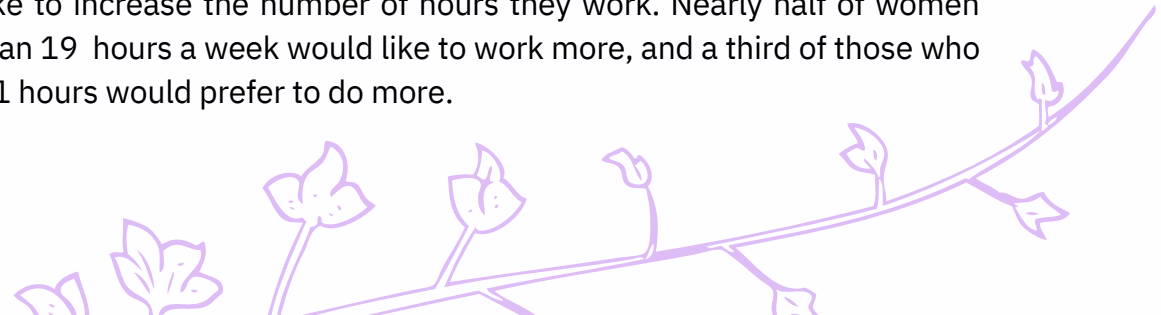
While the majority of men feel they inevitably have to work for a living, only a third of women have the same feeling. So in Dutch families, the traditional model is still dominant. Men work full time and develop their careers, while women bring in extra money with a part-time job, and don't see their career as a priority.

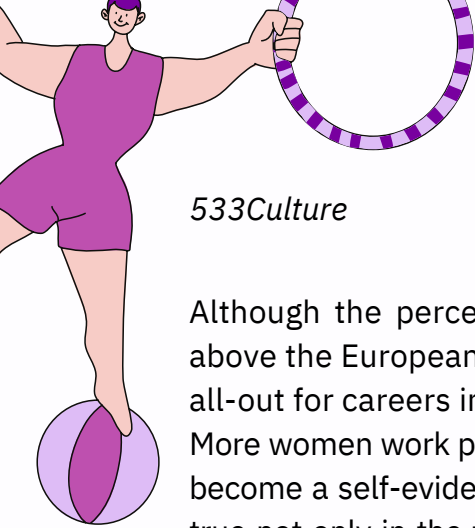
5.3.2 Traditional

Are Dutch women locked into a traditional model that leaves them at a disadvantage? Most women, both with and without children, say working part-time is their own lifestyle choice.

Many say they experience the financial freedom they have to work part-time as a luxury. They enjoy having the time not only to fulfil a traditional role taking care of the children but also to spend time on hobbies and social contacts.

The report shows that only seven per cent of women in part-time jobs would rather be working full time. However, the figure is much higher for younger women. And many women would like to increase the number of hours they work. Nearly half of women who work less than 19 hours a week would like to work more, and a third of those who work less than 11 hours would prefer to do more.





533Culture

Although the percentage of women who work in the Netherlands is comfortably above the European average, as this report shows, this doesn't mean they are going all-out for careers in full-time jobs.

More women work part time here than in any other European country. It seems to have become a self-evident part of Dutch culture for women to work only part time. This is true not only in the family – where women still do much more of the housework than men do – but also in the workplace.

The Social and Cultural Planning Office puts the situation down to government policy in the 1980s. In an attempt to encourage women to enter the labour market, the government stimulated part-time work. As a result, part-time workers enjoy better pay and conditions here than they do for example in Britain, Germany or France.

And if you're looking for a suitable part-time job, it's easier here to find one. But the side effect seems to be that Dutch women tend to settle for a traditional role and don't choose to develop their careers.

5.3.4 Balance

Ronald Plasterk, the minister responsible for equal rights, is reportedly shocked by the report's findings, as is Pia Dijkstra, who heads a government taskforce set up to enable part-time workers to increase the number of hours they work.

She points the finger at employers, who appear not to be doing enough to enable women to work more, and to help employees balance home life with a career. They could do more by allowing people more chance to control their own working hours, says Pia Dijkstra.

"The balance between private life and work needs to become easier for both women and men. Flexibility is the main thing."

Unless there is a cultural change, it seems women in the Netherlands will apparently go on opting for free time or childcare and housework, while men steam ahead with their careers (Expatica, 2021; Séveno, 2020).

5.3.5 The gender pay gap in the Netherlands

In spite of the progress made, the report also shows that the difference in hourly wages for women and men has remained unchanged since 2017. Furthermore, figures published by CBS in November revealed that the gender pay gap in the Netherlands barely changed between 2016 and 2018.

Since 2008, the CBS has noted a trend-based decline in the wage gap, but that progress has been extremely slow. According to chief economist Peter Hein van Mulligen: "If you continued this trend, it would take another 25 years for the difference to disappear."



6 The Netherlands vs. other EU countries

The progress made by the Netherlands in this area has seen the country rise from sixth place to fifth place in the Gender Equality Index 2020 published by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). The Netherlands achieved an above-average score of 74.1, with Finland (74.7), France (75.1), Denmark (77.4), and Sweden (83.8) achieving the best scores.

In comparison to other EU countries, women in the Netherlands tend to work part-time, and there are relatively few women in managerial positions. But the difference between the number of hours dedicated to domestic tasks by women and men in the Netherlands is relatively low compared to other EU countries.

In the 2020 Gender Gap Index published by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2019, the Netherlands came in 38th place – 11 positions lower than in 2018. The WEF is yet to publish their 2021 index (Expatica, 2021; Séveno, 2020).

5.3.7 Government actions

More women in work The government does not oblige women to work - the choice is up to the individual. However, the government wants to make it easier for men and women to combine work with care responsibilities. It is also important for women to understand the financial risks of not being economically independent. After all, getting divorced or having an unemployed partner can have major financial consequences.

Increasing opportunities for low-skilled women: Many low-skilled women do not have paid work. The government has signed agreements with municipal authorities to encourage low-skilled women without jobs or benefits to discover their talents. The aim is to give them greater self-confidence in looking for work or training.

People who struggle with reading and writing have more difficulty finding a job. Functional illiteracy is still very common, also among women. The Foundation for Reading and Writing is currently tackling illiteracy among adults in the Netherlands.

More women in top posts: Research has shown that diversity in top executive positions boosts corporate results. The government, therefore, wants more women to be promoted to senior positions. Furthermore, as of 1 January 2013, management and supervisory boards must consist of at least 30% women and 30% men. This legal target will be valid until 2020. The government is also taking action to have more women in senior positions (including management) in the central government (Government of the Netherlands, 2020).

5.4 Dutch women and employment issues in ICT sector

There's a shortage of IT professionals in the Netherlands, but the skills gap can be bridged by attracting further women to the sector (Loohuis, 2021).



Last year, the number of female ICT staff in the Netherlands grew significantly faster than the number of men opting for a job in the sector.

The number of women in the Dutch ICT sector has been low for years, while the demand for ICT professionals remains high. An increase in the participation of women in the sector is strengthening the Netherlands' leading position in the field of ICT and innovation.

It's this success that has generated a great need for professionals with ICT skills. But the Dutch education system is having difficulty keeping up with the labour market demand, and shortages in important areas are causing significant problems. As a result of the Covid-19 crisis, the need for digital skills has increased further.

To help fill these skills gaps, a national action plan, known as the Human Capital Agenda ICT, (HCA ICT) has received €80m for the next four years, which will see an extra 36,000 potential ICT professionals created.

According to research by HCA ICT partner CA-ICT, which supports the funding of training, female ICT staff enrolment is increasing annually, but the absolute number still lags far behind the number of men. Currently, just under 82% of Dutch ICT professionals are male. Given the enormous demand for ICT professionals in the Netherlands, it is a problem that half of the Dutch working population ignore the profession.

But this appears to be changing. HCA-ICT figures show that last year, the number of female ICT professionals grew by 6,5%, while the number of male ICT professionals increased by only 1.7%.

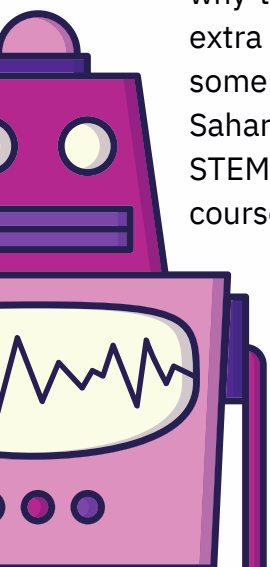
"It's good news that the influx of female ICT workers is increasing," said Lotte de Bruijn, ambassador for the Human Capital Agenda ICT. "But to close the gap, growth must accelerate further in the coming years. This will ensure a more representative and inclusive sector and is also important to solve the urgent shortage of ICT talent."

5.4.1 Diversity

In the Netherlands, some 542,000 people work as ICT staff, 6% of the workforce, and Dutch women seem to be grasping the opportunities of digitisation, which benefits the diversity in the ICT labour market.

One of the objectives of the HCA ICT is to make the ICT sector more inclusive. That is why the budget will be invested in training, retraining or further educating 36,000 extra people within four years. The bodies behind the action plan want to involve some 4,000 extra Dutch companies in this.

Sahar Yadegari, director of VHTO, the Dutch expertise centre for gender diversity in STEM and IT, is pleased with the increase in the number of women enrolled in IT courses and into the ICT labour market.



“This increase is the result of the joint efforts of various parties, including the education sector and the professional field, to enthuse girls about ICT. It is all these efforts together that make the difference

The intake of both men and women in ICT courses in the Netherlands has increased in recent years, but there are still almost six times as many men as women starting an ICT course. However, female intake has increased considerably faster than male intake in the past decade.

In the period between 2009 and 2019, the number of women starting an ICT course rose by 178%, compared to an increase of 84% for men.

What is striking is that, over the past 10 years, the number of computer science or ICT courses, for pupils to choose in the upper grades of secondary schools, has declined. “In 2008-2009, 60% of schools offered computer science as an elective subject, in the 2018-2019 school year this was only 47%,” said Yadegari (Loohuis, 2021).

5.5 The gender pay gap in the Netherlands

The gender pay gap is the difference in average gross hourly wage between men and women across the economy. In the Netherlands, the gender pay gap stands at 15.6 % (the average gender pay gap in the EU is 16.2 %).

The *gender overall earnings gap* is the difference between the average annual earnings between women and men. It takes into account three types of disadvantages women face:

- lower hourly earnings,
- working fewer hours in paid jobs, and
- lower employment rates (for example when interrupting a career to take care of children or relatives).

The gender overall earnings gap in the Netherlands stands at 47.5 % (the average gender overall earnings gap in the EU is 39.6 %) (European Commission, 2018d).

Gender pay gap still narrowing in 2019

In 2019, the wage gap between men and women narrowed further in the Netherlands. Women’s average gross hourly earnings were 14 percent lower than men’s. This percentage is becoming smaller every year. Today, Statistics Netherlands (CBS) released a publication on the 2019 labour market. It not only focuses on the difference between average hourly wages, as is customary but also looks at other ways of measuring the gender pay gap. Based on the average or median net hourly wage, it turns out that women are even better off than men.

In 2019, women’s average annual earnings – including special bonuses – were 38 percent lower than men’s. Two-thirds of the wage difference can be explained by the fact that women work fewer hours. Male salary workers spend an average of 33 hours per week at their jobs, while their female peers work an average of 25 hours per week. The difference in hourly earnings is therefore much smaller: average hourly wages of women were 14 percent lower than those of men’s.



The 14-percent gap can be explained as well; by the different composition in the groups of male and female employees, for example. This further adjustment for background characteristics has not been applied in this analysis.

Average hourly pay gap shrinking

Over time, the difference in average hourly wages has become progressively minor. One factor is that, nowadays, female workers are higher educated than their male counterparts. This is most commonly the case among employees under the age of 45. One decade ago, the age threshold was still 35 years. Partly as a result of this, the average hourly wage gap between men and women has decreased from 20 to 14 percent in the span of a decade. As of 1995, the gender wage gap has become narrower, by 0.5 percentage points per year (CBS, 2020).

6. Some concluding remarks

In the European Union and in the analyzed countries relevant inequalities can be observed regarding the female employees and their status or possibilities in line with their labour market activities.

However, in recent years some encouraging trends can be observed. Of course, we still have a long way to go to eliminate these inequalities.

We also strive to help women successfully integrate and participate in the labour market with our innovative solutions.

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