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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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Caring Masculinities at Work: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives across Europe

Caring fathers in Europe: Toward universal caregiver families?

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Abstract

Increasingly, men are challenging the assumption that care is a feminine task and are involving themselves in childcare and the care of dependent adults. However, this does not necessarily have consequences for their work, as they very rarely make costly adaptations in their working lives. In this study, we propose a definition of *a man in care* (MIC) as a working father who, in order to meet care needs, has adapted his working life in a way that potentially entails a financial penalty. We analyze the prevalence of men in care among men living with children below the age of 15 across the EU-27 plus Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, and the UK using recent representative data (the European Labour Survey and its 2018 ad hoc *module* on work-life balance). We find that although the number of men engaging in costly work adaptations is still very low when compared to their female counterparts, the characteristics of these men can be clearly outlined: they have a non-manual occupation (managers excluded), they have temporary contracts or are self-employed, they are partnered to women who hold jobs of 40 or more hours a week and have a high educational attainment, and they work in family-friendly companies. Also, at the context level, the prevalence of MIC is clearly related to gender equality and values. However, we do not

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find evidence of any country having reached the *universal caregiver model* proposed by Nancy Fraser, including those with more advanced gender and welfare regimes.

KEYWORDS

social structure, sociology of family, sociology of work

1 | INTRODUCTION

Most men in Europe are primarily breadwinners and care for others subsidiarily, while women more often quit their jobs or reduce their working hours to fulfill the role of primary caregivers of dependent children or elderly relatives (Eurofound, 2018; Sánchez-Mira & O'Reilly, 2019).¹ If they do not do either of these, women must balance a full-time job with care responsibilities; in fact, the proportion of families with children below age 12 where both adults work full-time is increasing. In 2019, the proportion of families with two parents working full-time ranged from 10% to 63% in the EU-28, depending on the prevalence of mothers' part-time work (Eurostat, 2021b). Both men and women can be "caring parents" if they work shorter full-time hours, can use parental leave, and institutional care and education services are sufficient to cover their children's care needs. However, when access to adequate services is difficult, women tend to limit themselves professionally or make costly work adaptations more often than men do. In general, women aged 25–59 are still the primary caregivers, even if in most European countries from 1965 until 2012, their male counterparts have increased the time they spend on care and domestic work (Sullivan, 2019). Is this trend toward increasing paternal involvement pushing European families toward being universal caregiver families? Does public policy development favor egalitarian division of work within families?

Work life balance (WLB) and gender equality are two political objectives of the European Pillar of Social Rights for 2030 (EC, 2021) and the European Directive on Work-Life Balance (2019/1158). These documents aim to promote these objectives through equal sharing of care and work responsibilities. In this analysis, we posit that the model of the universal caregiver family, where women and men both provide care and economic resources (Fraser, 1994), should be the theoretical reference for assessing if WLB measures favor gender equality in the division of work. If men are to become caregivers to the same extent as women, they must also be able and willing to adapt their work conditions to provide that care. Other solutions could be either Fraser's caregiver parity model, where only women reduce their paid work but are publicly supported in their care work, or the universal breadwinner model. The former pushes women into gender-segregated jobs in the secondary labor market segment, penalizes them economically and leaves care work socially undervalued, while the latter relies on externalization of care to other women (paid or unpaid), which produces either gender or social inequalities. The latter becomes visible in the expansion of global care chains that deny immigrant women the right to care for their own children (Weir, 2005). In addition, not all care work can be externalized or not in adequate ways, for example, when children become ill or high-quality care services are not accessible. Moreover, the benefits of both parents' involvement in children's lives are more and more appreciated, and fathers increasingly *want* to be more involved in childcare (Flaquer et al., 2020).

We acknowledge that some primary caregivers may not need to make costly work adaptations because they can take advantage of very "family-friendly" work conditions. However, this is limited to a small group of employed parents enjoying high earnings in workplaces with short full-time hours (32–35 h a week), enabling them to combine their jobs with care/school hours for an adequate WLB. As long as the average weekly working hours for fathers are 40 h or above in most European countries (Eurofound, 2018; Fernández-Lozano & Jurado-Guerrero, 2021),² we assume that in order to pursue a universal caregiver model men must undertake costly work adaptations in similar ways to women. To our knowledge, this is the first cross-national comparison of the determinants of fathers making costly job adaptations for care reasons.

The objective of this article is to offer European evidence on fathers who make costly work adaptations to care for their children below the age of 15. The article is based on the European Labour Force Survey (EU LFS) of 2018. By costly work adaptations, we mean those which may entail economic or professional penalties; in particular, working fewer hours, performing less-demanding tasks, changing jobs to facilitate WLB, or working part-time to care for children.³ We expand on the extensive research on fathers' use of parental leave into the next phase of the family cycle, where more permanent and structural changes may happen. Throughout the article, we will refer to fathers who make any of these work adaptations as men in care (MIC) or "caring fathers".

2 | THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Men who undertake job changes to adapt to care needs have not often been studied by social scientists, mostly because these men are still rare in our societies. In the EU-28, 17% of female workers aged 25–49 had reduced working time for family reasons, while this percentage amounted to only 3% in the case of their male counterparts (Eurostat, 2018). In consequence, the study of MIC has more frequently adopted a qualitative perspective, for example, exploring how flexibility measures interact with male identity (Borgkvist et al., 2018). Hegemonic models of masculinity still influence fathering and men's expectation of being primarily responsible for financial provision (Miller, 2011), but men are increasingly getting involved in care, and this has led scholars to coin the concept of caring masculinities (Elliott, 2016; Scambor et al., 2014). Changes toward caring masculinities require men to give up the power and privileges conferred by hegemonic masculinities, and to develop empathy, reciprocal communication, and a connection to emotional aspects of human relations. This perspective overlaps with Fraser's (1994) contention that we need to change the idea of ourselves as independent workers and people toward a perception of ourselves as relational caregivers. This requires a political shift from a citizenship based on the male breadwinner to a model based on the female caregiver. At the microlevel, couples may undo hegemonic masculinity when they aim at a dual earner-carer family; for instance, using parental leave equally (Peukert, 2019), but even fathers who are primary caregivers relate themselves to the expectations of hegemonic masculinity and tend to integrate caregiving with economic providing, community work or training for returning to a job (Hunter et al., 2017). Undoing gender, and striving toward caring masculinities, requires men and women to overcome diverse cultural and material barriers of the gender structure and of gendered social processes, at individual, interactional, and contextual level (Risman, 2017). Top executives must organize workplaces differently, abandoning the image of employees as "ideal workers" who have no care responsibilities other than economic provision (Acker, 2006). In addition, more wide-reaching political and economic transformations toward a Global Universal Caregiver are needed (Weir, 2005).

Giving up the privileged position of only focusing on paid work has costs. Rudman and Mescher (2013) showed how men who use flexibility measures at their work may suffer a double penalty, as they deviate from both the "ideal worker" norm by reducing their work involvement and the "ideal man norm" by assuming traditionally female commitments. The former may affect both genders, as found in some experiments showing a penalty in job promotion associated with working reduced hours (35 vs. 40/45 h) and working regularly from home (two days a week) (Fernández-Lozano et al., 2019). Using US representative, longitudinal data from 1984 to 2006, Coltrane et al. (2013) also concluded that in terms of earnings' loss, the "flexibility stigma" (workplace penalty associated with using flexibility measures) would actually be gender neutral, that is, when men make work adaptations they suffer a similar earnings penalty to women.

Who are the men that opt for costly work adaptations despite potential penalization? This not only depends on men's beliefs and their interaction with their female partner, but also on the organizational culture and inequality regime of their workplaces (Acker, 2006). These cannot be considered in this quantitative analysis, except for the idea that regular workers may have more power to confront the ideal of the unencumbered male worker. Some organizations are becoming aware of gender inequalities and are implementing family-friendly WLB measures that directly address men and try not to generate new inequalities among "committed workers" and those unworthy of promotion or wage increase (Acker, 2006).

Men in traditionally more feminized occupations (such as clerical workers) have been found, on one hand, to be more involved in *solo* routine childcare—that is, physical care and supervision of children done without the support of other caregivers (Fernandez-Lozano, 2019)—and, on the other, to perceive fewer obstacles to reducing work hours for family reasons (Fernandez-Lozano, 2018). So, it is proposed that fathers are more likely to make costly work adaptations to care for their children when their working environment provides incentives to do so without excessive (material or symbolic) penalty, that is, when:

- H 1.1** *They have stable labor conditions (i.e., a permanent contract) or are self-employed (since they have more leeway to organize their work).*
- H 1.2** *They work in non-manual occupations at medium-high levels, which are less subject to patriarchal norms about the “ideal worker” compared to managers and blue-collar workers.*
- H 1.3** *Their company allows for flexible working hours, because this may indicate a friendly context for work life balance.*

In addition to individual and organizational factors related to the labor market, men make their decision in a wider context, within their family context. We assume that theoretical perspectives used to explain the gender division of care are also useful for explaining fathers' likelihood of opting for work adaptations for care reasons. Regarding family dynamics, the male's *gender ideology* may impact their decision to make costly work adaptations (Evertsson, 2014; Nitsche & Grunow, 2018), but unfortunately it cannot be measured with the EULFS database. From the perspective of an economic rationale, it is not only the opportunity cost to men but also the relative distribution of income within the couple that is considered. If the man's work adaptations are less costly than those of his partner, they may go for it, according to the *comparative advantage approach* (Becker, 1981). The partners' relative human capital can be approximated by a comparison of their educational levels.

Also, the *time availability* of mothers has been found to influence fathers' involvement in care in different European countries (Gracia & Esping-Andersen, 2015). So, the type of participation by mothers in the labor market is related to fathers' involvement in childcare, although the strength of this relationship varies for different settings (O'Brien & Shemilt, 2003; Rizavi & Sofer, 2010). Specifically, in Spain and Iceland, the hours in a mother's working week 2 years after childbirth are positively related to the father's involvement (Arnalds et al., 2021; Fernández-Cornejo et al., 2018). However, the association between mothers' working hours and fathers' involvement in childcare was significant only for Spain compared to Iceland, Denmark, and the United Kingdom (Arnalds et al., 2021; Gracia & Esping-Andersen, 2015). In effect, our analysis shows that the influence of mothers' time availability depends on the country context.

According to *household bargaining theory* (Lundberg & Pollak, 1996; Sen, 1990), the relative difference in income within the couple may influence their respective bargaining power and, thus, the couple's division of care. The higher the mother's bargaining power through higher income, the higher the likelihood that the father adapts his work conditions for caring purposes, but it also depends on the gender ideology of both partners. Mothers' relative income level increases fathers' participation in childcare when she or both members of the couple hold egalitarian gender beliefs (Nitsche & Grunow, 2018). Due to the lack of adequate income data, in our analysis, we use women's educational level as a proxy for mothers' relative income. Education may also capture gender attitudes depending on the rest of covariates in statistical models (see discussion in Nitsche & Grunow, 2018). We use the match of educational levels within couples as an approximation of bargaining capacities.

Thus, based on comparative advantage, time availability, and bargaining theories, we propose that *men make costly work adaptations when their partners have high relative resources and low time availability*. More specifically, men make work adaptations when:

- H 2.1** *Their partners work, especially if full-time and working extra hours (i.e., working more than 40 h per week).*
- H 2.2** *Their partners have a higher educational level than they do.*

Different institutional contexts also offer very different opportunities for parents aiming to be universal caregiver families. Some welfare regimes aim at gender-equal WLB through their social and employment policies, while others

promote a gendered WLB through market solutions and/or policies based on the caregiver parity model/modified male breadwinner family⁴ (Ciccia & Bleijenbergh, 2014; Gornick & Meyers, 2008). The offer of private childcare services and more generous WLB policies has increased across welfare regimes in the last decades, but institutional solutions still remain divergent (Brennan et al., 2012; Ferragina & Seeleib-Kaiser, 2015). Policies are not the only drivers of different WLB solutions; employment regimes are also crucial. Together, they create the grounds for different family models at country level: dual earners full-time, dual earners mixed, multiple modes, and polarized family models (Sánchez-Mira & O'Reilly, 2019). To understand why, in some national contexts, more men in general make costly work adaptations in order to care of their children, two institutional factors seem relevant: gender norms and public interventions to reduce gender inequalities. Prevailing gender norms influence the division of paid work within families with children (Hipp & Leuze, 2015) and the national design of policies on leave influence fathers' use of time to care (Castro-García & Pazos-Moran, 2016; Windwehr et al., 2021). More generally, countries with smaller gender gaps in education, employment, and public life also show higher male participation in unpaid work (Altintas & Sullivan, 2017; Sullivan, 2019). Thus, we propose that *the context influences the probability of a father opting for costly work adaptations, more specifically:*

H 3.1 *The higher the societal gender equality, the higher the likelihood of being a MIC.*

H 3.2 *The higher the prevalence of traditional values, the lower the likelihood of being a MIC.*

The inclusion of these macro-level variables also seeks to determine whether the stated hypotheses on individual, company, and couple level hold irrespective of the context. We state that in societies where gender equality is greater or traditional values are less prevalent, the likelihood of making costly work adaptations will be more evenly distributed across fathers:

H 3.3 *The greater the societal gender equality, the less individual characteristics, partner characteristics, and flexible working hours in companies matter for being MIC.*

H 3.4 *The less traditional a society is, the less individual characteristics, partner characteristics, and flexibility in firms matter for being MIC.*

3 | MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data are taken from the 2018 *European Union Labour Force Survey* (EULFS) ad hoc module on reconciliation of work and family life. This module contains a series of questions relating to caring responsibilities, flexibility in employment, and career breaks. The module is linked to the fixed part of the EULFS, so the database also contains the usual EULFS variables.

The selected sample consists of men with caring responsibilities for their own or their partner's children under age 15. The *dependent variable* is having made any costly adaptation at current work to care for children. By costly adaptation, we mean having entered into one of these situations: (1) Having reduced working hours, (2) performing less-demanding tasks, (3) having changed job or company to make childcare easier, (4) working part-time to take care of children.⁵

We discard as costly adaptations other alternatives included in the ad hoc module, such as a job change to increase income, taking family leave, and the "other" category. The first normally entails longer working hours or more workload, which is at odds with investing more in care. To take leave may entail different penalties, depending on national regulations on wage replacement. In some countries, using leave requires a strong commitment to care, while in others many fathers take well-paid and (short) leave without income penalty (Fernández-Lozano & Jurado-Guerrero, 2021). Finally, the category of "other measures" does not include the same adaptations across countries: in some cases, it includes only time-flexibility and in others, additional measures.

It has to be noticed that the work adaptation refers to the current job, and the decision may have been taken at the time of the interview or some time before 2018, because the children in the sample of people being analyzed range in age from birth to 14 years. We assume that fathers who chose to use costly work adaptations to care, differ in a structural way from others, particularly in terms of educational and occupational attainment and/or gender attitudes. So, their educational level and occupational situation in 2018 is most probably very similar to the years when their last-born child was younger, though changes may have occurred with respect to their job or couple situation (break-down, new partner). This must be kept in mind when reflecting upon the results.

The independent variables are those reflected in Table 1, which also contains descriptive statistics. Some variables, such as those on men's female partners, are not available for all countries. This is the case for Switzerland, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Luxembourg, and Sweden. For Norway, we do have information on partners, but not on the age of the youngest child. Thus, two files are used throughout the article: one for men, which includes information from the 31 EULFS ad hoc module countries; and another file that includes the information on men's partners, which is necessary to test the second set of hypotheses. In this second file, there are 24 countries (all except the seven mentioned above). Table 1 contains the descriptive statistics for both files.

In total, the file containing information on men only has 80,109 cases, and that for couples has 63,937 cases. The lower number of cases in the second file is due to the fact that the countries mentioned above are excluded from the analysis and to instances of missing data on some variables related to partners in the other countries. Despite these missing cases, the proportion of MIC within each country in both files is quite similar, as shown in Table 1. The overall proportion between one file and the other drops from 6.4% to 5.3% because countries that do not provide partner information have a higher MIC rate, especially the Nordic countries and Switzerland.

Table 1 shows the categories for each variable. It is worth mentioning that the occupation comes from the one-digit International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) and that, after previous analyses, the categories previously covering clerical, services, and sales workers and those previously covering plant and machine operators and elementary occupations have been merged into two respective categories. In the couples' file, the variable relating to educational matching distinguishes between highly educated homogamy, in the case of both partners having tertiary education, and medium and low homogamy. It also includes the categories of hypergamy (he has a higher educational level) and hypogamy (she has a higher educational level). Furthermore, and again after testing several models by dividing the variable into different categories, the hours worked in paid employment of the man's partner have been divided into the following categories: working more than 40 h, equal to or less than 40 h, and not working in paid employment. In the couples' file, the age of the youngest child living in the household has also been included to control for different care demands, which has been shown to influence WLB (Craig & Sawrikar, 2009).

The first macro variable comes from the 2020 Global Gender Gap Index produced by the World Economic Forum. Data were collected in 2018 for 153 countries. This indicator synthesizes four sub-indices relating to economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. On a scale of 0–100, the higher the index, the smaller the gender gap. The average for the 153 countries is 67 and for the EULFS countries it is 75, with a maximum of 88 for Iceland and a minimum of 68 for Hungary (World Economic Forum, 2019).

The second macro variable concerns traditional values. These values are operationalized through the 2020 European Values Study, with data collected in 2017. Specifically, this variable reflects the proportion of individuals who agree or strongly agree with the following statement: *family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job*. The average for the sample across all EULFS countries is 36%, with a maximum of 57% for Italy and a minimum of 8% for Finland.

The following section shows first the descriptive results and then the multivariate analyses. For the multivariate analyses, the technique used is logit regression; the coefficients presented in the tables are the average marginal effects, which allow comparison of the coefficients of different models for this type of regression (Mood, 2010). In some models, the countries analyzed have been introduced as dummy variables. In others, interactions have been carried out between the independent variables and each of the macro variables, in order to find out whether the effect of the independent variables differs according to the context variables.

TABLE 1 Independent variables, descriptive statistics and % of men in care.

Countries	Men data file		For comparative purposes			Partners' data file		Men's data file		Partners' data file				
	n	% men in care ^a	% women in care ^a	Global Gender Gap index	Tradit. attitudes index	n	% men in care ^a	n	% men in care ^a	n	% men in care ^a			
						Flexible hours in the firm to care								
Austria	2789	3.5	8.3	0.744	54.4	2615	4.1	7.9	25,881	32.3	8.4	18,393	28.7	6.9
Belgium	3542	4.4	10.6	0.750		3226	5.0	10.3	50,516	63.1	5.7	42,809	67.0	4.9
Bulgaria	1677	2.1	1.5	0.727	55.1	1598	2.5	1.5	3711	4.6	3.0	2735	4.3	3.0
Switzerland	1179	1.5	23.5	0.779		-			80,108	100		63,937	100	
Cyprus	825	1	3.0	0.692		796	1.2	3.0						
Czechia	2960	3.7	1.3	0.706	37.6	2807	4.4	0.9		Occupation				
Germany	1827	2.3	5.7	0.787	41.7	1713	2.7	5.7	1087	1.4	2.5	952	1.5	2.2
Denmark	2028	2.5	4.5	0.782	13.3	-			7187	9.0	6.7	5653	8.8	5.5
Estonia	1347	1.7	8.1	18.2	33.9	1175	1.8	7.9	14,955	18.7	9.9	10,766	16.8	8.2
Spain	7082	8.8	4.5	0.795	24.9	6710	10.5	4.3	12,036	15.0	6.8	9224	14.4	5.8
Finland	1702	2.1	14.9	0.832	7.8	-			11,868	14.8	7.1	9619	15	6.0
France	6422	8	5.9	0.781	28.7	5857	9.2	5.7	3081	3.8	3.9	2618	4.1	3.3
Greece	3442	4.3	3.4	0.701		3361	5.3	3.4	15,206	19.0	4.2	12,693	19.9	3.4
Croatia	572	0.7	1.4	0.720	31.3	528	0.8	1.5	14,504	18.1	4.6	12,288	19.2	4.1
Hungary	1863	2.3	1.5	0.677	43.1	1809	2.8	1.5	184	0.2	5.7	124	0.2	6.2
Ireland	2940	3.7	3.6	0.798		2729	4.3	3.4	80,108	100		63,637	100	

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

	Men data file			For comparative purposes			Partners' data file			Men's data file			Partners' data file		
	n	% men in care ^a	% women in care ^a	Global Gender Gap index	Tradit. attitudes index	n	% men in care ^a	n	% men in care ^a	n	% men in care ^a	n	% men in care ^a	n	% men in care ^a
Iceland	436	0.5	19.4	0.877	13.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Italy	9750	12.2	5.3	0.707	56.7	9200	14.4	5.1	5.1	Type of contract	5382	6.7	7.4	4427	6.9
Lithuania	913	1.1	2.7	0.745	56.5	824	1.3	1.5	1.5	Fixed-term contract	59,165	73.9	5.7	46,303	72.4
Luxembourg	664	0.8	6.2	0.745	56.5	-	-	-	-	Permanent	15,536	19.4	8.5	13,207	20.7
Latvia	593	0.7	3.1	11.1	11.1	520	0.8	3.4	3.4	Not salaried	25	0	22.9	-	-
Malta	842	1.1	5.7	34.0	0.693	750	1.2	5.3	5.3	Missing	80,108	100	-	63,937	100
Netherlands	2446	3.1	21.3	77.9	0.736	1309	2	21.6	21.6	Total	-	-	-	-	-
Norway	2547	3.2	8.2	22.1	0.842	13.6	-	-	-	Variables related to men's partner	-	-	-	-	-
Poland	3348	4.2	3.7	13.6	0.736	41.8	2787	4.4	3.7	Homogamy high education	-	-	-	-	-
Portugal	2600	3.2	3.6	9.1	0.744	38.0	2431	3.8	3.6	Educational homogamy	-	-	-	-	-
Romania	2947	3.7	1.2	7.8	0.724	41.2	2802	4.4	1.2	Homogamy low-medium education	16,093	25.2	7.9	-	-
Sweden	1701	2.1	14.5	31.4	0.820	51.7	-	-	-	Homogamy high education	23,144	36.2	3.6	-	-
Slovenia	1333	1.7	2.9	10.1	0.743	43.0	1219	1.9	3.0	She has more education (hypogamy)	15,876	24.8	5.7	-	-
Slovakia	1436	1.8	2.7	13.7	0.718	37.9	1360	2.1	2.5	He has more education (hypergammy)	8632	13.5	4.3	-	-
UK	6356	7.9	9.1	54.3	0.767	25.8	5813	9.1	8.6	Missing	192	0.3	3.2	-	-
Total	80,109	100	6.4	34.0	-	63,937	100	5.3	5.3	Total	63,937	100	-	63,937	100

TABLE 1 (Continued)

	Men data file		For comparative purposes		Partners' data file		Men's data file		Partners' data file		
	n	% men in care ^a	% women in care ^a	Global Gender Gap index	Tradit. attitudes index	n	% men in care ^a	n	% men in care ^a	n	% men in care ^a
Gender gap index (0–100)											
Average	75.3					75.4				41,609	65.1
SD	4.1					3.4				4183	6.5
Minimum	67.7					67.7				17,888	28
Maximum	87.7					84.2				257	0.4
										63,937	100
Hours worked (men's partner)											
≤40											
>40											
Does not work											
Missing											
Total											
Age youngest child											
0–2						37					
3–5						11.2					
6–8						13.6					
9–11						56.7					
12–14											
Missing											
Total											
Average	35.9									16,723	26.2
SD	14.3									13,178	20.6
Minimum	7.8									12,010	18.8
Maximum	56.7									11,035	17.3
										10,308	16.1
										689	1.1
										63,937	100

^a% of men and women in care has been calculated with weighted data and refers to people having used any of the costly work adaptations that we have defined. Shaded countries are those for which there is information for the men's partner.

4 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 | Caring fathers in Europe: A very minority phenomenon

Figure 1 presents the proportion of men with dependent children under 15 and who have made costly job adjustments to care for them in their current job. The black bars represent the percentages for each country; the red and light bars represent the marginal coefficients of multivariate analyses taking into account other variables. First of all, it should be underlined that fathers who make costly work adaptations (MIC) are a minority phenomenon right across Europe. The proportion of MIC is 6.4% from all fathers with children under the age of 15, compared to 34% of women with children under the age of 15 who made costly job adjustments⁶ (Table 1).

However, among MIC, some groups of countries can be distinguished. Switzerland and the Netherlands stand out with 23% and 21%, respectively, followed by Finland and Sweden, with proportions close to 15%. These are followed by countries with proportions above the average, with rates between 11% and 7%, such as Belgium, the United Kingdom, Austria, Norway, Estonia, and Iceland.

A large group of countries show rates of caring men between 6% and 4%, including some large countries, such as France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the Nordic Denmark. Some Southern European countries, such as Portugal and Greece, along with Ireland and almost all Eastern European countries, are below 4%. At the bottom, we find almost all Eastern European countries with very low MIC rates; but at the top, we find countries belonging to both the conservative welfare regime and most of the social democratic regime. In the middle-upper part, we find the United Kingdom belonging to the liberal regime.

The red and light bars show the MIC proportions for the countries calculated from various regression analyses, which take into account some factors that may affect the likelihood of being a MIC (see footnote of Figure 1). The fact

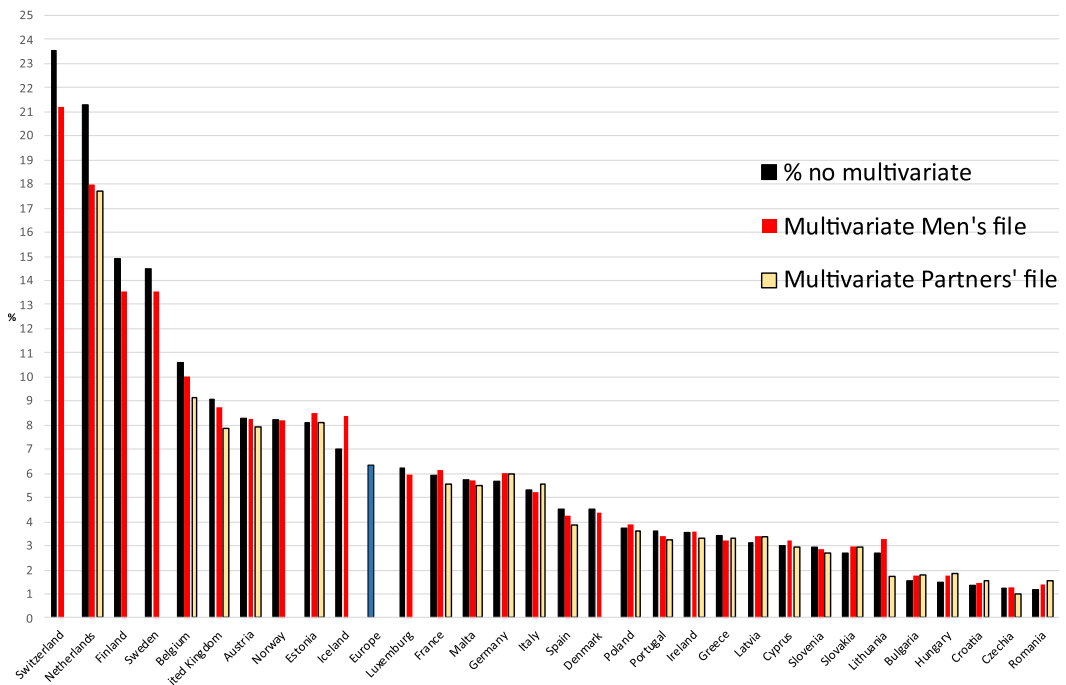


FIGURE 1 Fathers making costly work adaptations by country (%). Multivariate men's file: controlling by occupation, flexible hours in the firm, and type of contract. Partners' file: controlling by occupation, flexible hours in the firm, type of contract, hours worked by men's partner, relative educational resources, and age of youngest child.

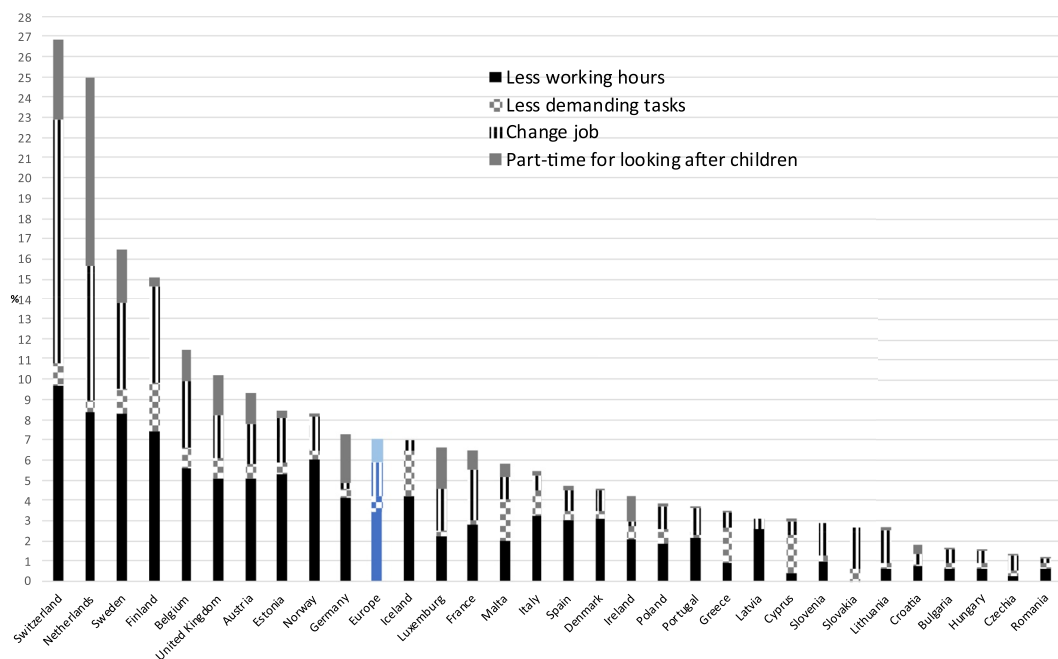


FIGURE 2 Types of MIC adaptations by country. Descriptive results, not controlling for other variables.

that the bars differ little from the percentages calculated without these multivariate analyses indicates that the differences between countries are not due to compositional effects of the variables introduced in the analyses (occupation, flexible hours in the firm, type of contract, hours worked by men's partner, relative educational resources, and age of youngest child). In other words, cross-country differences in MIC are not explained by the occupational structures of each country, nor by the different proportions of workers under one contract or another, nor by differences in the proportions of workers in firms with flexitime. Neither do couple variables, such as educational matching, hours worked by the partner, or the age of the children explain most of the differences between countries. Thus, country differences may be related to institutional and cultural contexts.

Let us take a closer look at the types of costly work adaptations (Figure 2). The percentages are higher than in Figure 1 because some men have made more than one adaptation. The most common adaptation for all the countries (see Figure 2) is working fewer hours (3.5%), followed by changing jobs to facilitate work-life balance (1.7%), working part-time to take care of children (1.1%), and having opted for less demanding tasks (0.7%). These figures contrast with those for women, calculated from the same database (figures not shown). Most mothers opted for working less: 21% of women with dependent children under 15 work part-time to care for their children and 18% work fewer hours; 4.5% have changed jobs, and 2% have chosen to do less-demanding tasks within their job.

As can be seen in Figure 2, the weight of each of these adaptations varies from country to country. If we focus on countries with a higher proportion of MIC, switching jobs is important among the Swiss, and among the Dutch, it is working part-time. In larger countries, such as the UK, Germany, Spain, and Italy, those working fewer hours predominate. In France, on the other hand, the relative proportion of MIC who changed jobs to facilitate compatibility between family and work is notable.

4.2 | The likelihood of having chosen a costly work adaptation in order to provide care

To determine whether the hypotheses are fulfilled, it is useful to refer to Table 1, which presents the descriptive analyses, and to Table 2, which presents the results of the multivariate analyses, which show whether the relation-

TABLE 2 Logit.

	(Model1)	(M2)	(M3)	(M4)	(M5)	(M6)
	Men's file	Men's file	Men's file	Partners' file	Partners' file	Partners' file
VARIABLES	all 31 countries (controlled by countries)	31 countries	24 countries	24 countries (controlled by countries)	24 countries m2	18 countries m3
Occupation						
Professionals (ref.)						
Armed forces	-0.0493*** (0.00888)	-0.0607*** (0.00824)	-0.0644*** (0.00873)	-0.0353*** (0.00821)	-0.0412*** (0.00803)	-0.0428*** (0.00864)
Managers	-0.0293*** (0.00494)	-0.0333*** (0.00526)	-0.0357*** (0.00564)	-0.0185*** (0.00512)	-0.0206*** (0.00543)	-0.0222*** (0.00582)
Technicians and associate profess.	-0.0172*** (0.00461)	-0.0243*** (0.00479)	-0.0261*** (0.00512)	-0.00595 (0.00503)	-0.0104** (0.00524)	-0.0108* (0.00560)
Clerical and services and sales workers	-0.00911* (0.00489)	-0.0189*** (0.00496)	-0.0205*** (0.00535)	0.00185 (0.00547)	-0.00407 (0.00565)	-0.00481 (0.00608)
Skilled agricultural	-0.0475*** (0.00550)	-0.0619*** (0.00505)	-0.0660*** (0.00534)	-0.0288*** (0.00615)	-0.0399*** (0.00567)	-0.0421*** (0.00598)
Craft and trade workers	-0.0404*** (0.00405)	-0.0500*** (0.00418)	-0.0540*** (0.00450)	-0.0234*** (0.00473)	-0.0293*** (0.00497)	-0.0317*** (0.00528)
Plant and machine oper. and elem occup.	-0.0304*** (0.00448)	-0.0414*** (0.00456)	-0.0449*** (0.00489)	-0.00991* (0.00535)	-0.0165*** (0.00561)	-0.0178*** (0.00595)
Missing	-0.0424*** (0.0122)	-0.0359** (0.0168)	-0.0385** (0.0169)	-0.0157 (0.0152)	-0.00162 (0.0224)	-0.00195 (0.0229)
Flexible hours in the firm to care (No = ref.)						
Yes	0.0176*** (0.00355)	0.0322*** (0.00359)	0.0338*** (0.00387)	0.0159*** (0.00386)	0.0243*** (0.00387)	0.0237*** (0.00415)
Missing	-0.0210*** (0.00600)	-0.0200*** (0.00557)	-0.0187*** (0.00585)	-0.0128* (0.00655)	-0.00977 (0.00666)	-0.00839 (0.00696)
Type of contract						
Permanent (ref.)						
Fixed-term	0.0309*** (0.00729)	0.0271*** (0.00683)	0.0287*** (0.00725)	0.0314*** (0.00770)	0.0275*** (0.00723)	0.0287*** (0.00764)
Not salariat	0.0469*** (0.00467)	0.0550*** (0.00493)	0.0563*** (0.00524)	0.0395*** (0.00462)	0.0448*** (0.00485)	0.0468*** (0.00521)
Variables related to men's partner						
Hours worked in the job						
≤40 (ref.)						
>40				0.0162** (0.00669)	0.0179*** (0.00672)	0.0163** (0.00729)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

	(Model1)	(M2)	(M3)	(M4)	(M5)	(M6)
	Men's file	Men's file	Men's file	Partners' file	Partners' file	Partners' file
VARIABLES	all 31 countries (controlled by countries)	31 countries	24 countries	24 countries (controlled by countries)	24 countries m2	18 countries m3
She has not a job				-0.0189*** (0.00264)	-0.0201*** (0.00263)	-0.0197*** (0.00282)
Missing				-0.0150 (0.0200)	-0.0194 (0.0177)	-0.0220 (0.0172)
Educational homogeneity						
She has more education (ref.)						
Homogamy high level (both tertiary)				0.00929** (0.00452)	0.00537 (0.00459)	0.00540 (0.00489)
Homogamy low and medium level				-0.0114*** (0.00362)	-0.0144*** (0.00362)	-0.0149*** (0.00385)
He has more education				-0.0130*** (0.00413)	-0.0129*** (0.00422)	-0.0131*** (0.00445)
Missing				-0.0290** (0.0124)	-0.0269* (0.0150)	-0.0262 (0.0172)
Age of youngest child						
0-2 (ref.)						
3-5				0.00323 (0.00422)	0.00155 (0.00429)	0.00206 (0.00455)
6-8				-0.0114*** (0.00397)	-0.01388*** (0.00401)	-0.01323*** (0.00426)
9-11				-0.0141*** (0.00405)	-0.01699*** (0.00407)	-0.01670*** (0.00433)
12-high				-0.0318*** (0.00375)	-0.034129*** (0.00380)	-0.03416*** (0.00406)
Missing				-0.0239** (0.0105)	-0.01942 (0.01194)	-0.02124* (0.0127)
Gender gap index (gender equality)		0.00365*** (0.000302)			0.00155*** (0.000385)	
Traditional values			-0.000582*** (9.59e-05)			-0.000333*** (0.000123)
Observations	80,083	80,083	67,243	63,937	63,937	52,555

Note: Dependent variable: having made a costly job adjustment to care for children under 15. Average marginal effects. Models 1 and 4 also control for countries. Marginal effects related to countries are plotted in Figure 1 (second and thirds bars).

ship between the dependent variable and a given independent variable is robust, holding the other independent variables constant. The results of the multivariate analyses are presented through the average marginal effects (AME), which are very easy to interpret. For example, the AME -0.049 for the armed forces in model 1 of Table 2 means that the likelihood of a father working in the armed forces being a MIC is 4.9% points lower than that of the reference category, in this case, non-blue-collar higher professionals. The results are presented below, ordered by the hypotheses.

Our first hypothesis states that fathers make costly work adaptations when they have stable labor conditions, because penalties such as job loss are less risky, or when they are self-employed, because they have more leeway to organize their work (H 1.1.). The first part of this hypothesis with respect to the stability of the job is rejected. The descriptive data indicate that temporary workers have a slightly higher propensity to be MIC (rounded off, 7% compared to 6%) and multivariate analyses even widen this gap. To hold a temporary job may have different meanings across countries, in some it may be related to a lower work devotion and relatively high wages.⁷ A German study is in line with our results, because it shows that fathers with temporary contracts share more parental leave and spend more time in childcare compared to permanent employees (Reimer, 2017). The second part of our hypothesis is confirmed, because self-employed workers are the most likely to be MIC (8.5%), also in the multivariate analyses.⁸ Thus, it can be said that, all over Europe, fathers make costly job adjustments to a greater extent if they are their own bosses or if they changed their job and became self-employed to have more choices.

We also posit that fathers make costly work adaptations when working in non-manual occupations of medium-high levels that are less subject to patriarchal norms about the "ideal worker" compared to managers and blue-collar workers (H 1.2.). Our analysis confirms this hypothesis. The descriptive data show that 10% of higher professionals (not managers) are MIC; they are followed by mid-level professionals, and clerical, service, and sales workers, with figures of around 7%, in line with Fernández-Lozano's findings (2018). Blue-collar workers have rates of around 4%. The different models of the multivariate analysis confirm the results of the descriptive analysis, although the gaps are smaller between some categories controlling for the rest of the variables (see Table 2).

The company level is also thought to have an influence, because fathers will be more likely to do costly work adaptations in family-friendly workplaces, which we approximate with workers having the possibility of using flexible working hours in their company (H 1.3.). The data also confirm this hypothesis, because 8.4% of those working in flexible workplaces have undertaken some costly work adaptation, compared to 5.7% in non-flexible workplaces. Holding all other measured variables constant confirms this hypothesis. And this adds to previous findings (Fernández-Cornejo et al., 2016, 2018), suggesting that family-friendly workplaces are relevant in encouraging men to adapt their work to their care responsibilities.

When fathers live in a partnership, their partners' work situation is also thought to influence their decisions to make costly work adaptations. Fathers will be more likely to be MIC when their partners work full-time, especially if women work extra hours (H 2.1.), and this is confirmed. The percentages in Table 1 indicate that the proportion of MIC whose partner works in paid employment for more than 40 h is 8.3%, while the proportion of those with partners working 40 h or less is only 5.8%. Fathers seldom adapt their work when their female partners are not in paid employment (3.5%). The multivariate analyses (Table 2, models 4, 5, and 6), maintain these statistically significant differences, although the gaps reduce somewhat. Thus, the mother's working hours influence not only the type and level of the father's involvement in childcare (Fernandez-Cornejo et al., 2016, 2018; Raley et al., 2012), but also the use of mechanisms or measures that make it possible (either parental leave or the costly work adaptations defined here).

Finally, fathers make costly work adaptations when their partners have a higher educational level (H 2.2.). The analyses show that couples in which both partners have a high level of education have the highest percentage of MIC (7.9%), followed by those in which she has a higher level of education than the man (5.7%); on the contrary, if the man has more education, the percentage drops to 4.3%, and if the couples have the same level, but with secondary or primary education, the proportion drops to 3.6%. The multivariate analyses (models 4, 5, and 6) greatly reduce

the distances between the types of couples with respect to their relationship with the dependent variable. When macro variables are introduced, the differences between couples with high homogamy and those in which the female partner has more education are almost canceled out. Thus, it seems that mothers with high educational levels in absolute or relative terms compared to their partners may effectively be more successful in pushing fathers toward a higher involvement in care. Thus, it is not only a result of mothers' *comparative advantage*. It may be that a higher work attachment of mothers with tertiary education is pushing their partners toward more care and/or egalitarian gender beliefs are more prevalent among them (Nitsche & Grunow, 2018). These families can also better afford work adaptations because they may have higher incomes.

In sum, we can confirm that male work adaptations to care depend on individual, couple, and company level factors. Fathers choose costly work adaptations in very low proportions, but they do so more often if they are in occupations as mid to higher-level professionals, and clerical, services, and sales workers; they have temporary contracts or are self-employed; are partnered with women who have jobs with long hours, and with a higher level of education than the fathers and/or a tertiary education; and if their workplaces offer time flexibility. Fathers whose youngest child is below the age of six are more often driven to practice a costly work adaptation. This maybe a generational effect or reflect the difficulties in externalizing care for very small children. If we had individual measures on attitudes, we would obtain a better picture of caring fathers. Instead, we use the country context to account for attitudinal drivers.

To test if smaller societal gender gaps and more gender egalitarian attitudes on average promote caring fathers, the above-mentioned two context variables have been introduced into the models (H 3.1 and 3.2). The results of the multivariate models indicate that, indeed, the higher the Global Gender Gap Index, the higher the probability of being an MIC (models 2 and 5, Table 2); and the lower the *traditional attitudes index* (*family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job*), the higher the probability of being a MIC (models 3 and 6). In order to facilitate the interpretation, the probabilities have been calculated according to models 2 and 3 from men's file and plotted in Figure 3. The effect of societal gender equality is remarkable: holding all other variables constant, the difference in the likelihood of being a MIC in countries with high gender equality is around 12 points of percentage; while in places with lower equality, the probability is 3 points. The average traditionalism of countries shows a much smaller effect. As can be seen on the right-hand side of Figure 3, the probability of being a MIC in less traditional societies is around 8%, while it is around 5% in more traditional societies. Probably, this is related to the fact that there are no national gender cultures but various subcultures. Since caring fathers is a minority phenomenon, it can be limited to subcultures, as shown by the similarity of involved fathers in Northern and Southern countries (Altintas & Sullivan, 2017). In sum, hypotheses 3.1 and 3.2 are confirmed.

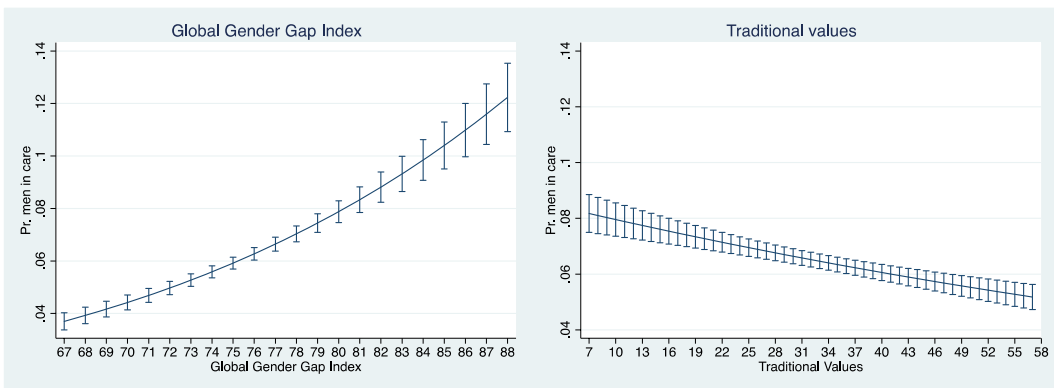


FIGURE 3 Likelihood of being a caring father by gender equality and traditional attitudes. Other variables included in the model: flexible hours in the firm, type of contract, and occupation. Note that a higher score in the Gender gap index reflects a higher level of equality.

4.3 | Do the drivers of costly work adaptations change depending on societies' gender context?

Let us recall hypotheses 3.3 and 3.4. The greater the gender equality or the less traditional a society is, the less important individual, partner, and companies' characteristics are for being a caring father, because men do not need to swim against a strong mainstream. In order to test these hypotheses, interactions were made between the two context indicators and the other independent variables, controlling for the non-interacting variables in each model. In order to summarize the findings and facilitate interpretation, the results are presented only for the significant interactions and in figures which represent the calculated probabilities (marginal effects). We only plot the results for the largest effects but refer to all significant results.

According to the models, a first significant interaction is that of the Global Gender Gap Index with blue-collar occupations. Figure 4 compares the likelihood of being a MIC for higher professionals and craft and trade workers, on the one hand, and plant, machine operators, and elementary occupations, on the other. The figure reveals three facts. The higher the Global Gender Gap Index, the higher the probability of being a MIC, and professionals are more likely to be a MIC than blue-collar and elementary occupations. The differences between professionals and the other two occupations decrease in countries with a high degree of gender equality (the curves are coming together). That is, occupation matters a little less for being a caring father the higher the Global Gender Gap Index. The same emerges if the *traditional attitudes index* is interacted, because in less traditional societies, there are very small or no significant differences between higher professionals and the other groups of occupations.

The next significant interaction is between belonging to a company with flexible working hours and the Global Gender Gap Index. In this case, the interaction effect is very modest, but also significant. As Figure 5 shows, the differences between those who work in "family-friendly" companies and the rest are slightly smaller in places where the index is higher. The model with the second macro variable also shows no significant differences across workplaces in less traditional societies.

Figure 6 shows that the distance between permanent, temporary, and non-salaried workers decreases as a society becomes more egalitarian. In those places with a higher Global Gender Gap Index, there is no difference among employees between having one type of contract, and the likelihood of permanent workers being MICS approximates the self-employed.

The last significant interaction is found between the Global Gender Gap Index and relative resources within couples in the smaller 24-countries data file, none Nordic (Figure 7). In the less egalitarian countries, higher relative or absolute resources of mothers (high homogamy or her being more educated) do not change the likelihood of their

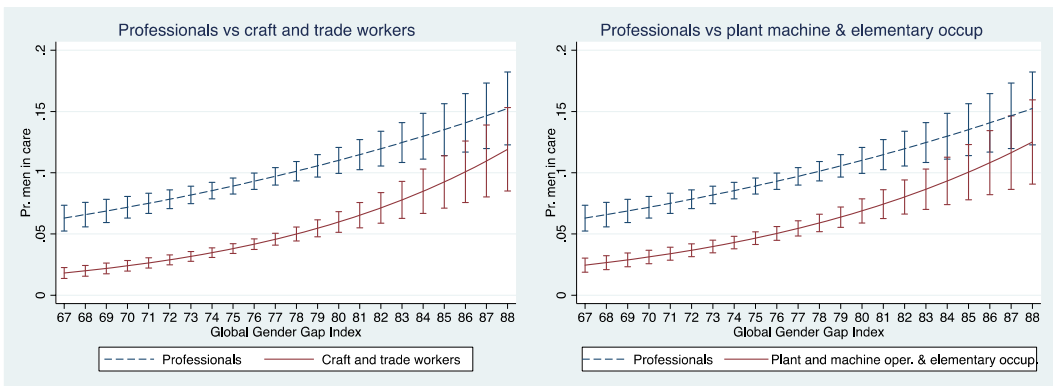


FIGURE 4 Interaction Global Gender Gap index × occupations (marginal effects). Other variables included in the model (men data file): flexible hours in the firm to care and type of contract. Note that a higher score in the Gender gap index reflects a higher level of equality.

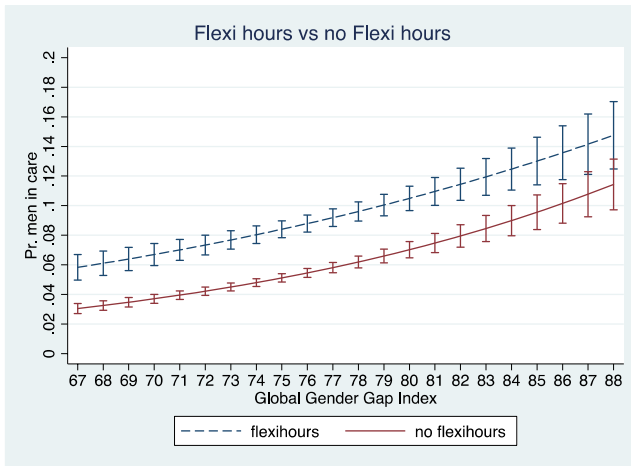


FIGURE 5 Interaction Global Gender Gap Index × flexible hours in the firm (marginal effects). Other variables included in the model (men data file): occupation and type of contract. Note that a higher score in the Gender gap index reflects a higher level of equality.

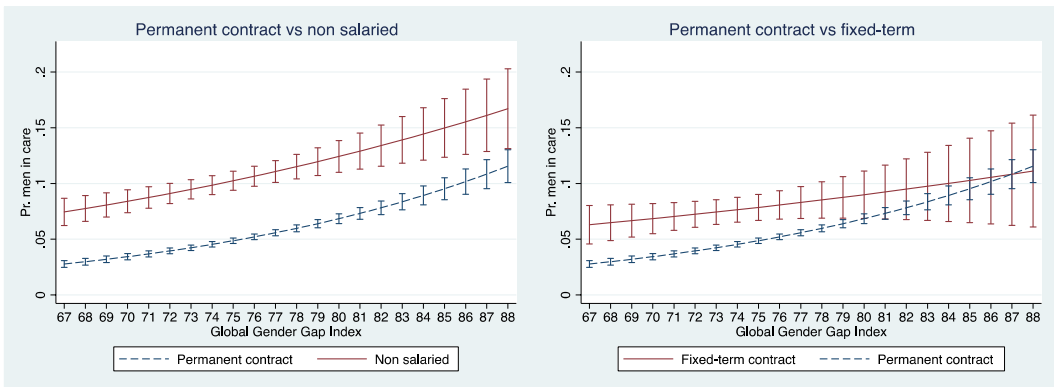


FIGURE 6 Interaction Global Gender Gap index × type of contract (marginal effects). Other variables included in the model (men data file): flexible hours in the firm to care and occupation. Note that a higher score in the Gender gap index reflects a higher level of equality.

partners becoming a caring father, because there are no significant differences (very large and intersecting intervals at the left hand). In countries with an average value on the Global Gender Gap Index, women's higher educational resources can push some fathers to adapt their work. Unfortunately, we do not know if the mothers' resources become less important in the most gender egalitarian countries, because partners' information is not provided. The findings and the lack of data for the Nordic countries do not allow us to confirm or falsify our hypothesis. In addition, we find an unexpected result in more traditional societies for couples where the man has a higher educational level as compared to both having low-medium level, because in these contexts, fathers with a higher relative education (mainly tertiary education) make more costly work adaptations compared to fathers in couples where both have medium-low education. Because we include fathers' occupations (approximation of individual income) in the models, male education may indicate male gender attitudes (Nitsche & Grunow, 2018). So, male gender egalitarian attitudes may be an important driver of MIC in less egalitarian settings, but further research is needed to shed more light on this.

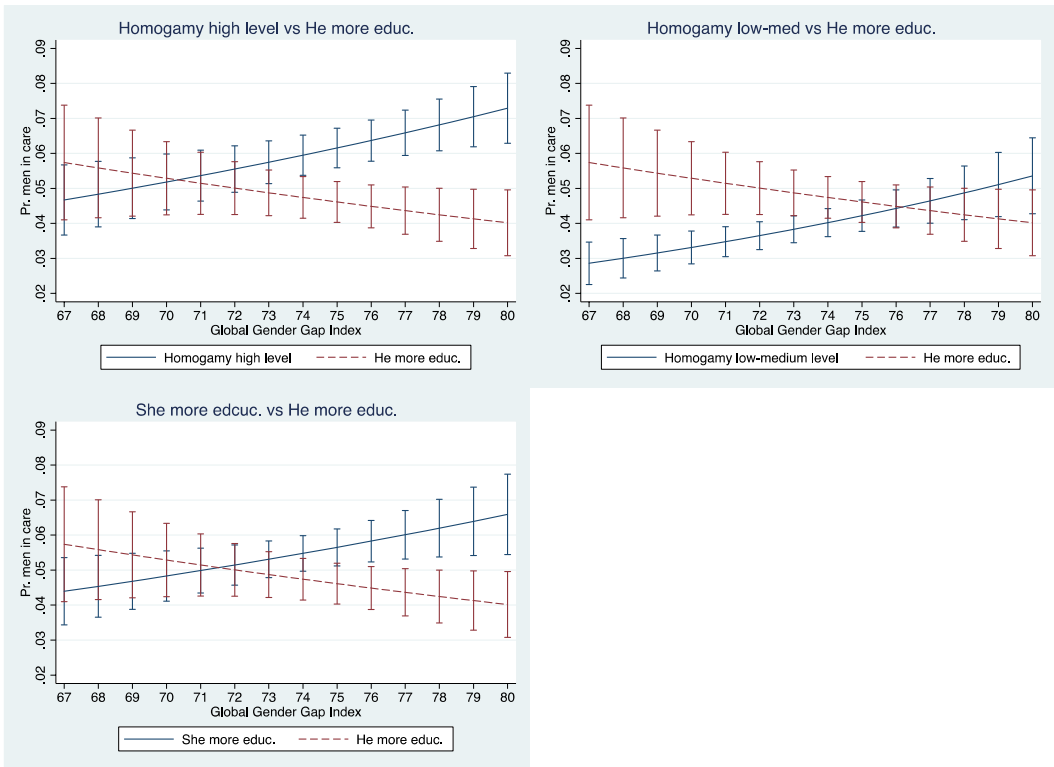


FIGURE 7 Interaction Global Gender Gap Index × educational matching (marginal effects). Other variables included in the model (partners' data file): occupation, flexible hours in the firm to care, type of contract, hours worked by women, and age of children. Note that a higher score in the Gender gap index reflects a higher level of equality.

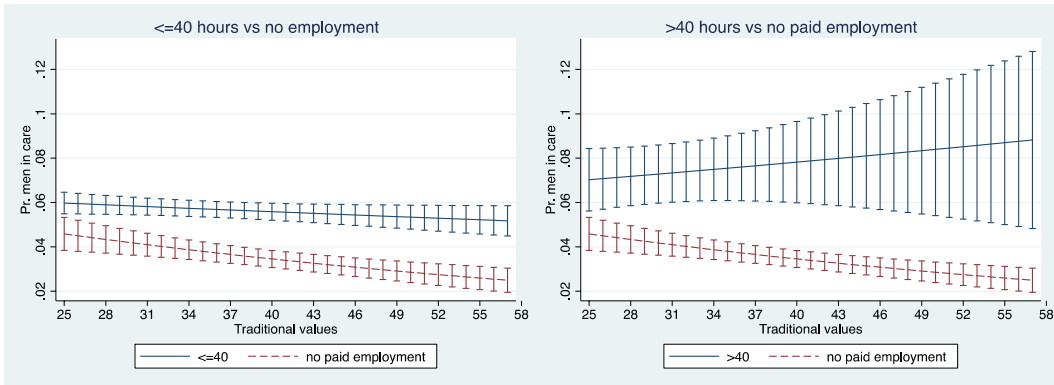


FIGURE 8 Interaction traditional attitudes × hours in paid work of partners (marginal effects). Other variables included in the model: flexible hours in the firm to care, type of contract, educational homogamy, and age of the youngest child.

Finally, Figure 8 represents one significant (moderate) interaction between the *traditional gender attitudes index* and the hours worked in paid employment by the partner. If the woman does not work in paid employment, compared to the employed, the probability of her partner being a MIC is lower, and much more so in a traditional

society. The time availability hypothesis is a key driver, which is in line with previous comparative research (Gracia & Esping-Andersen, 2015).

Taking the results as a whole, it can be said that in countries with lower gender gaps in different societal institutions, fathers adapt their jobs more to care, independently of their occupation, type of contract, or workplace context. Similarly, in countries with lower average traditional attitudes, the partner's employment situation matters less.

5 | CONCLUSIONS

This comparative analysis contributes to previous research in a twofold way. First, we study the costly work adaptations made by fathers so that they have more time to care, and this therefore expands into the next phase of the family cycle, the extensive research on fathers' use of parental leave. These adaptations beyond the period of birth leave include a reduction in working hours and a change of job or tasks to enable caring for children below the age of 15. We consider these adaptations to bear important immediate and longer-term penalties (wage loss and flexibility stigma). Little quantitative research exists on caring men because it is a minority phenomenon. Second, we draw on a rich module of the European Labour Force Survey from 2018 that includes 31 countries for comparison. This large data set allows study of the country context and provides rich evidence for policy recommendations.

Our analysis has three limitations. The first is the absence of information on the gender attitudes of fathers and mothers, which matters, but we do not have sufficient knowledge of how they interact with other drivers. Second, we could not study families that depart from the heteronormative set of a two-person family made up of a woman and a man due to the small sample of same-sex couples and multigenerational families and the absence of more detailed information on gender. The third is inherent in cross-sectional analyses, such as not knowing when exactly the fathers made the adaptations and the direction of causality. A longitudinal analysis would allow us to know how work-life balance evolves throughout the family cycle. To our knowledge, such dynamic and comprehensive comparative survey data do not yet exist, so we believe that our evidence is an important first step in understanding the probability of men adapting jobs to become caregivers in similar ways to women.

Are European families moving toward being universal caregiver families? The answer is no, because we are still very far away from men adapting their jobs for caring purposes in similar ways to women, at least among families with small children. In 2018, an average of 6.4% of fathers had undertaken a costly work adaptation in the 31 European countries, compared to 34% of mothers, and they did it especially when their children were below the age of six. Do the trends point to a social change in which men increase their caregiving? At the individual and organizational levels of the gender structure, we find pioneers in professional occupations among the self-employed and in more family-friendly workplaces. Also, our results confirm the relevance of *bargaining and time availability theories* because partners' time availability and relative resources seem to push men into caregiving. Contrary to the *comparative advantage approach*, we find that fathers are also more likely to opt for costly work adaptations in highly educated homogamous families. With respect to the cultural factors of change, we could only study the role of gender ideology at a contextual level and find that lower gender gaps and more egalitarian values increase the proportions of caring fathers. In addition, in the most gender egalitarian Nordic countries, caring fathers are found across more occupations, in different work relations and workplaces, and even in couples where mothers' time availability is relatively high. So, have Nordic countries reached universal caregiver families and other countries must catch up? Again, no, because the average percentage of caring men in Nordic countries is 9.8% (with large internal differences) compared to 21.6% for caring women, so they cannot be considered the models to follow. Being a caring father is comparatively more diffused there, but fathers' participation in childcare began to stagnate in 2000–2010 in Nordic countries (Altintas & Sullivan, 2017).

If the aim is to deliver through universal caregiver families, a WLB all over Europe that is without gender and social class bias, what can we recommend based on our evidence? In line with Rubery's (2015) thought experiment on the policy framework for such families, we advocate for different employment and social policies within a wider

shift in our political economy that include changing employer practices, guaranteeing high minimum wages, and access to care services. If institutions do not become more gender egalitarian, then people have to swim against the mainstream, and this will only be possible for a minority of well-earning professional men in family-friendly workplaces or self-employment who are partnered with women having high absolute and relative resources. Most probably, these caring men will then suffer from a flexibility stigma because they are a minority and break with prevailing organizational, institutional, and cultural expectations. As Fraser (1994) mentioned briefly, employers need to consider all workers as caregivers, all would then have a shorter working week, and workers would have access to care services. We agree on the need for more collective solutions to deliver two collective goods: well nurtured and cared for children, and gender-egalitarian family relations. Would less costly work adaptations, such as flexible hours, occasional remote work or family-friendly shifts, be sufficient? Such WLB measures are insufficient as long as men in full-time employment in Europe work, on average, 40 h or more per week, a pattern that is incompatible with school hours and the needs of small children. Costly work adaptations such as reducing work hours and wages accordingly can only be a solution for people living in rich countries, as the highest figures of MIC in Switzerland and the Netherlands suggest. To expect large numbers of men to work reduced hours with a corresponding reduction in wages is unrealistic because of hegemonic masculinity expectations, and the figures for females also show that mothers are reluctant or cannot afford to undertake costly work adaptations in large numbers, except in rich countries. Finally, better leave policies are also a very important part of the overall change needed and are key for men to move toward caring masculinities. We know from research on parental leave that fathers use it across the board only if 80%–100% of their wages are replaced, and there is no low ceiling on this, as shown by evidence from Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Slovenia, and Spain.

Thus, our policy recommendation is to broaden the time for care in general, to allow for better and more care for children and the elderly, and for partners, through public incentives and regulations, to have a shorter working week without a reduction in salary. A general reduction in working hours may have the additional advantage of enabling WLB for all employed people, so that people can better take care of themselves and not just their loved ones.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from Eurostat (more information in <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-labour-force-survey>).

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ There are data limits to study gender norms beyond the heteronormative binary schema. So, this article focuses on people self-classified as men, with or without a partner classified as women and with children under 15. We acknowledge the reification of gender-binariness when using this secondary data set. Same-sex couples and people self-identifying as another gender challenge some theoretical perspectives and underline the importance of gender norms and doing gender in the analysis of the division of work in couples (Evertsson et al., 2021). Yet, there is no possibility to compare heterosexual and same-sex couples in this study as the EU LFS only includes 52 couples of men in the sample and only two gender options were given.
- ² Few fathers, in a handful of countries, work short hours. For instance, men's part-time work at family formation age (25–49) increased due the economic recession in 2008 in most EU countries, but then decreased again. Only five countries

show an increasing trend since 2000 and have reached the level of 10% of employed men working part-time in 2020: the Netherlands (21%), Switzerland (18%), Norway (12%), Sweden (11%) and Denmark (10%) (Eurostat, 2022). Not all of them are fathers or do it for care reasons.

- 3 Other types of work adaptations are less likely to generate penalties, such as flexible working hours without wage reduction, occasional teleworking and short, well-paid leave periods, because these workers continue receiving their usual wages and most of the time are physically available at the workplace.
- 4 Gornick and Meyers use the term “dual earner/female part-time caregiver model”, and Ciccía and Bleijenbergh the “one-and-a-half breadwinner model”. We use the theoretical concept of Fraser and the empirical label “modified male breadwinner family”. All refer to families where the man continues to be the main provider, the woman has a part-time job or works short hours, and she is the primary caregiver.
- 5 In this case, the category also includes care for elderly dependents, and it is not possible to disentangle them from children. Since the sample is composed of parents with children under 15 years of age, we assume that the vast majority of those included in this category work part-time to care for children.
- 6 The female average may seem low, but it is not for countries such as the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, and the United Kingdom, where mothers working part-time is very common. These countries have comparatively high salaries due to their position in the international division of work, which makes the reduction in working time less costly for families.
- 7 In previous models with some selected countries, the positive temporary effect appears for countries with low national rates of temporary jobs, such as Austria and the United Kingdom, while it is absent in Spain and Poland, with high rates. Interestingly, in the former countries 33%–44% of employees with a contract of limited duration and aged 25 years or over were professionals in 2018 as compared to 15%–16% in the latter (Eurostat, 2021a), which shows that the income situation of temporary employees varies across Europe.
- 8 To be self-employed is positively linked to MIC in all countries in the previous models.

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