

Trends in women's 'solo' or freelance self-employment 2003- 2019



Definitions



Solo self-employed:

‘where people work on their own business on their own account’ (OECD, 2019)

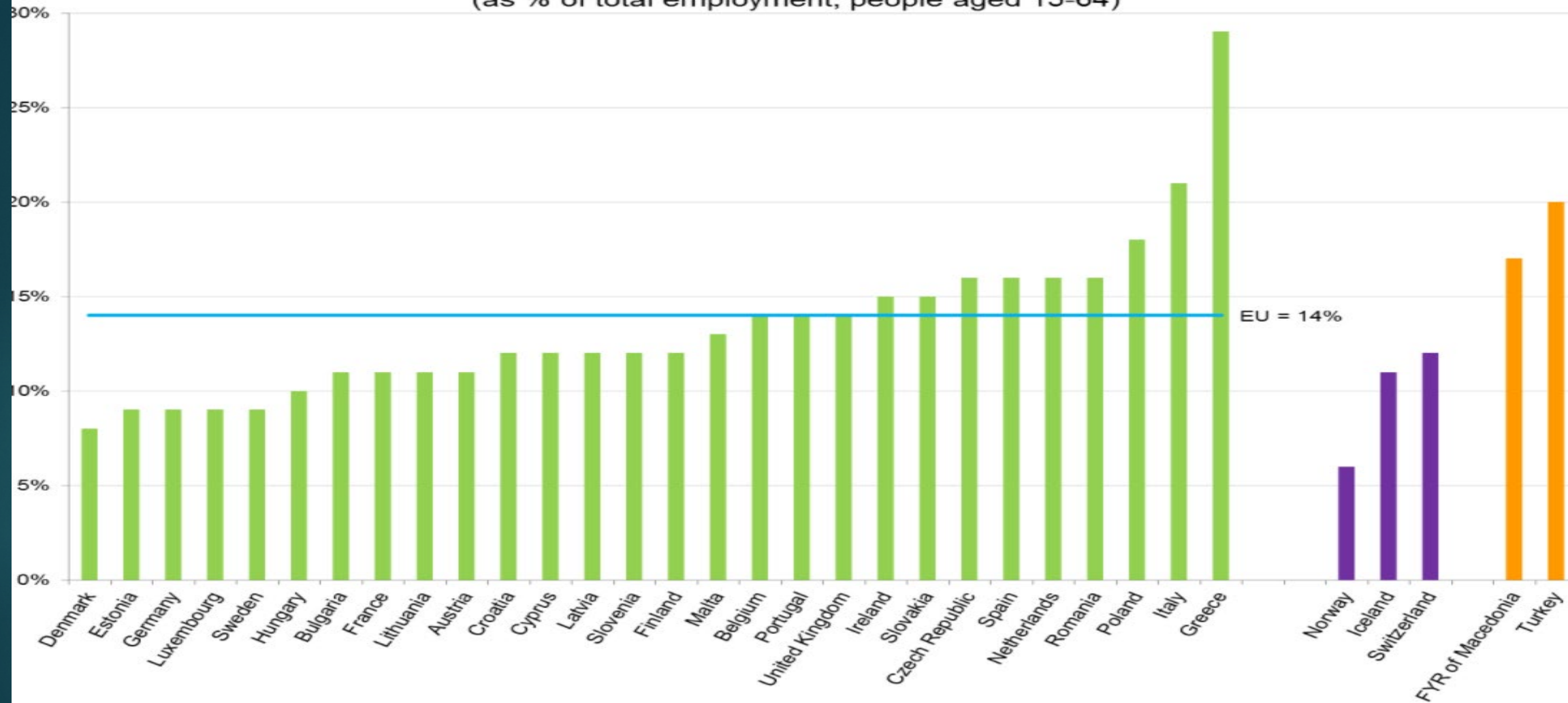
‘those who work in their own business, professional practice or farm for the purpose of earning a profit and who employ no other persons’ (Eurofound, 2017).

Freelance (4 criteria)

- A high degree of autonomy
- Payment by task
- Short term relationships with clients
- Take on business risk

(European Forum of Independent Professionals)

Proportion of self-employed (as % of total employment, people aged 15-64)



Self-employment in the EU

- ▶ Solo self-employment as a proportion of overall self-employment is growing in the EU (from 66% to 71% 2002-2017)
- ▶ Female self-employment rate 9.6% labour force (OECD, 2019)
- ▶ Women make up 44 per cent of professional self-employed and 43 of 'freelancers' in the EU in 2012 (European Commission, 2014)
- ▶ The proportion of overall self-employment that is 'solo' or without employees and that which is part-time has also increased, with women more likely than men to be in these categories (European Commission, 2014).
- ▶ Solo part-time self-employment most likely to be 'precarious' (Vosko and Zukewich, 2006; Eurofound, 2013)

Self-employment in Ireland: composition

2003

Self-employed
employers: **45%**



2019

Self-employed
employers: **30%**

Solo self-
employed: **55%**



Solo self-
employed: **70%**

Ireland: policy and cultural context

- Women have primary responsibility for unpaid childcare and domestic work (Russell and McGinty, 2008; Loftus, 2009; Fine-Davis, 2011)
- Expensive and often inadequate childcare options (OECD, 2016)
- Demand for flexible working arrangements not meeting supply
- High rates of part-time work for women
- Self-employment presented as solution to work-life balance issues & promoted in EU & national policy

Is self-employment the way forward for women?

Why Mothers Are Freelancing Rather Than Returning To Permanent Jobs

Mothers of invention mind their own business

Chart A. Numbers in Self-employment 2003-2019

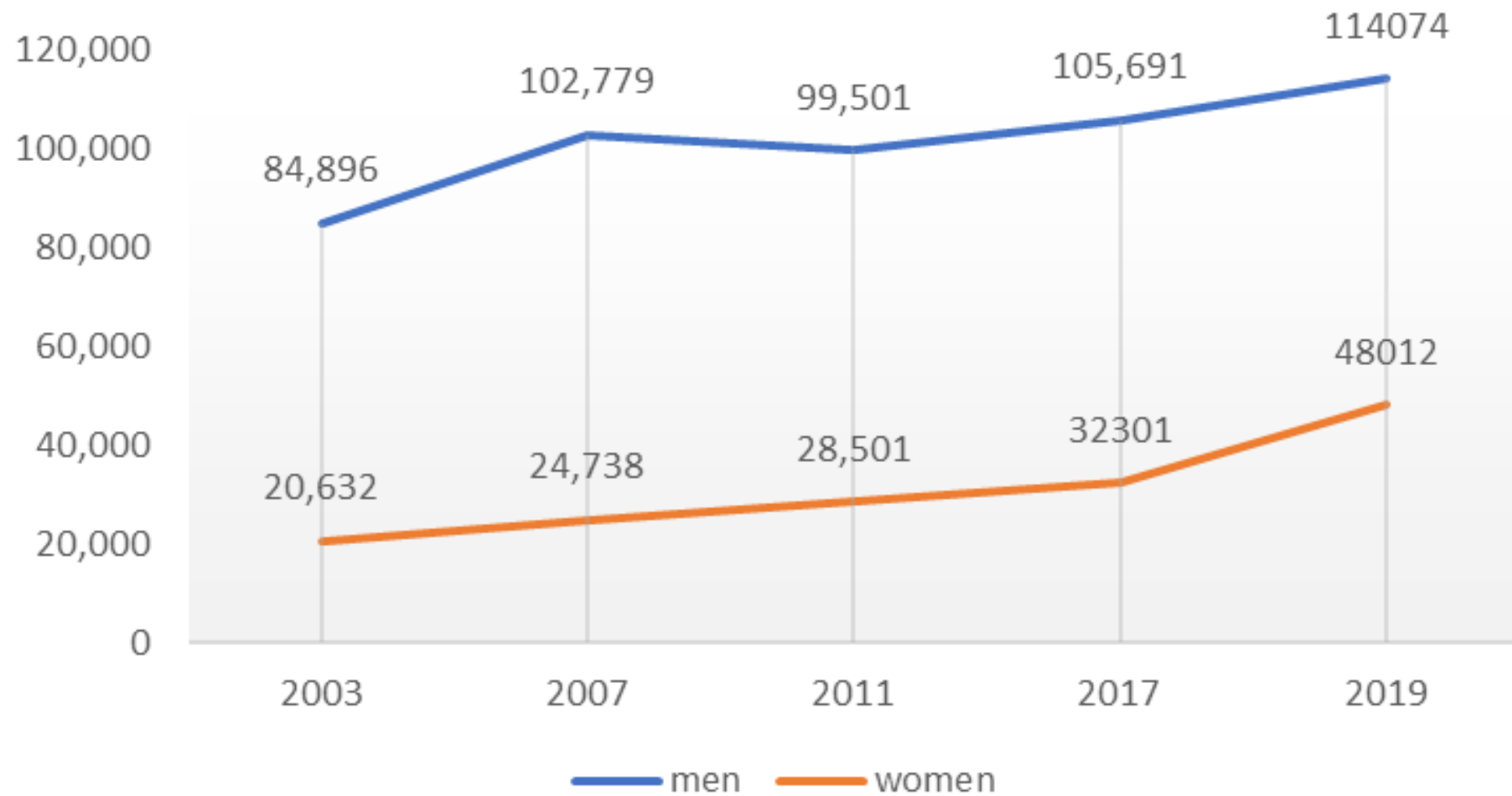


Chart B. Self-employment gender composition

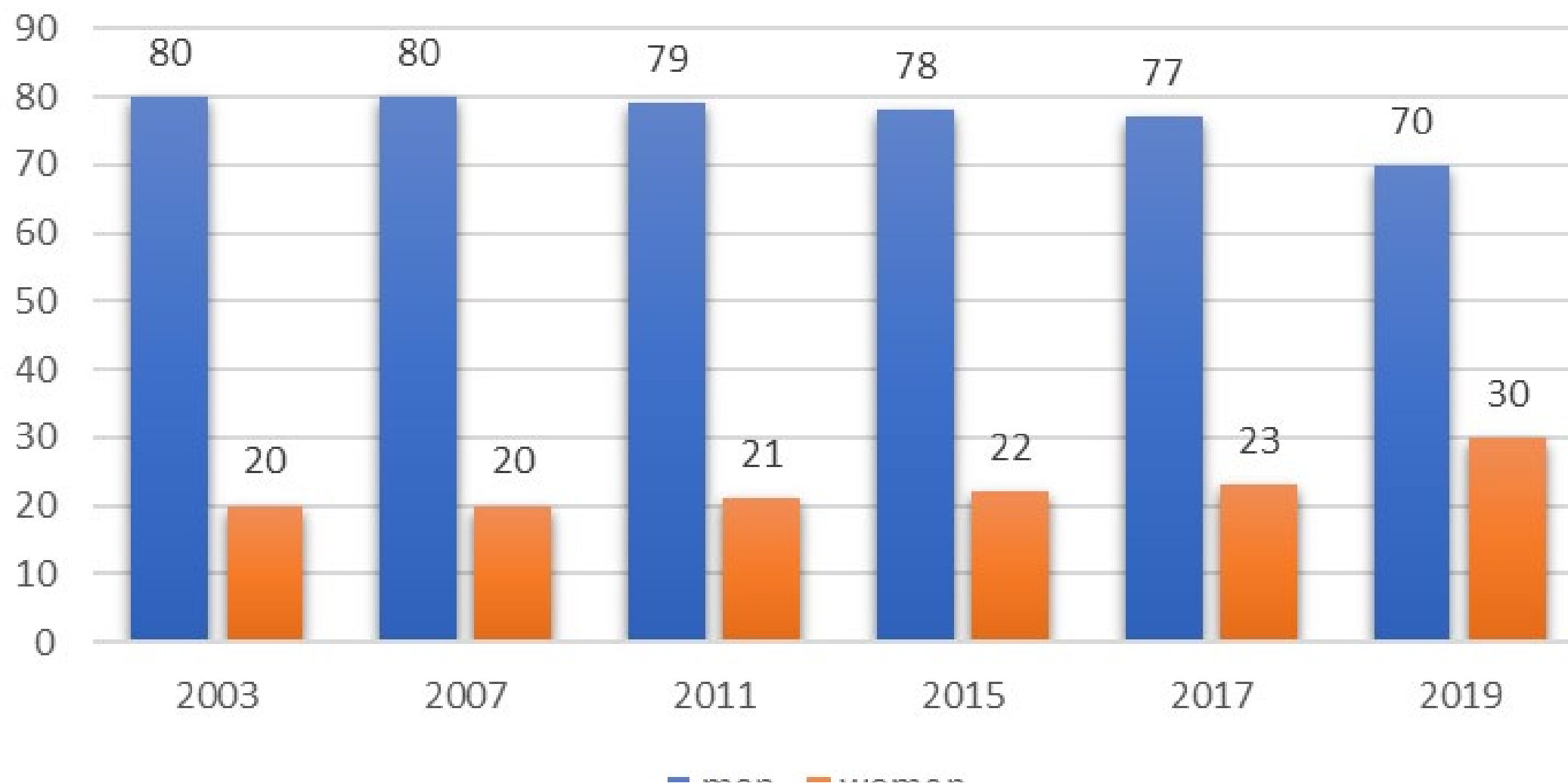
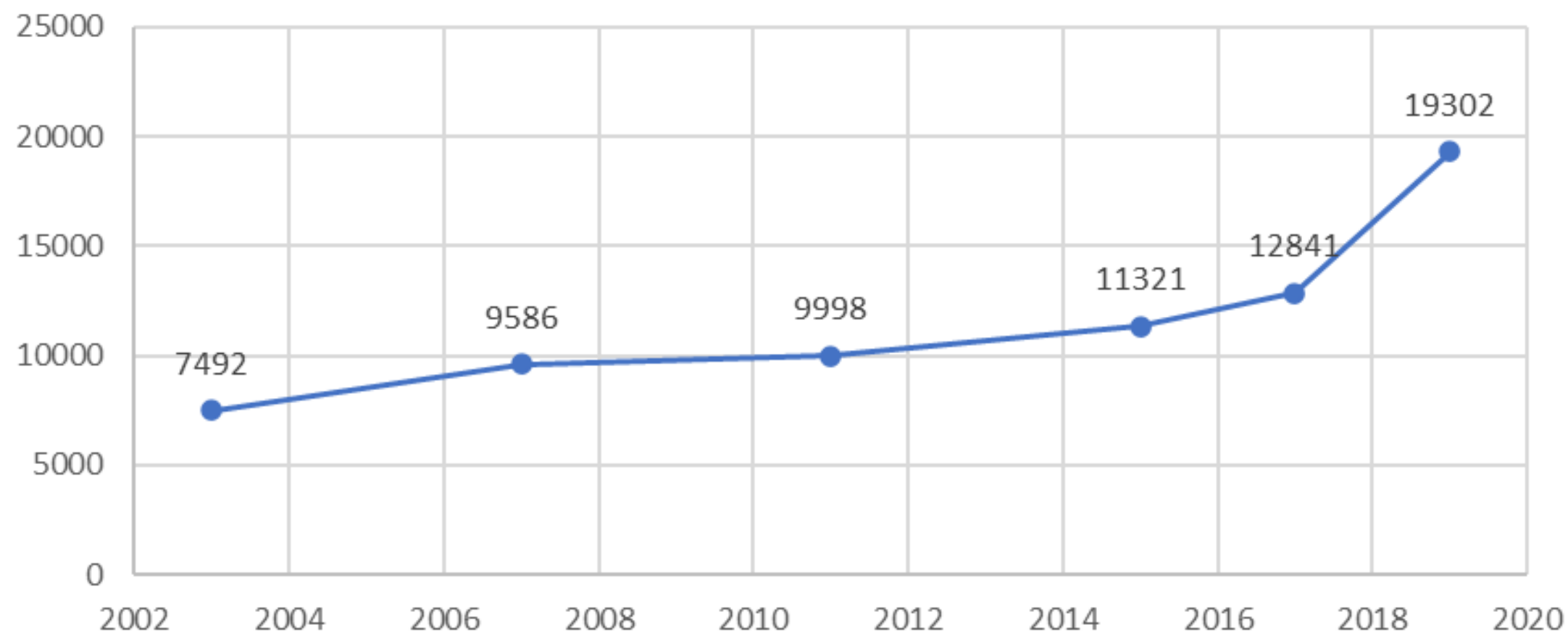


Chart C. Numbers of self-employed women with children under 15



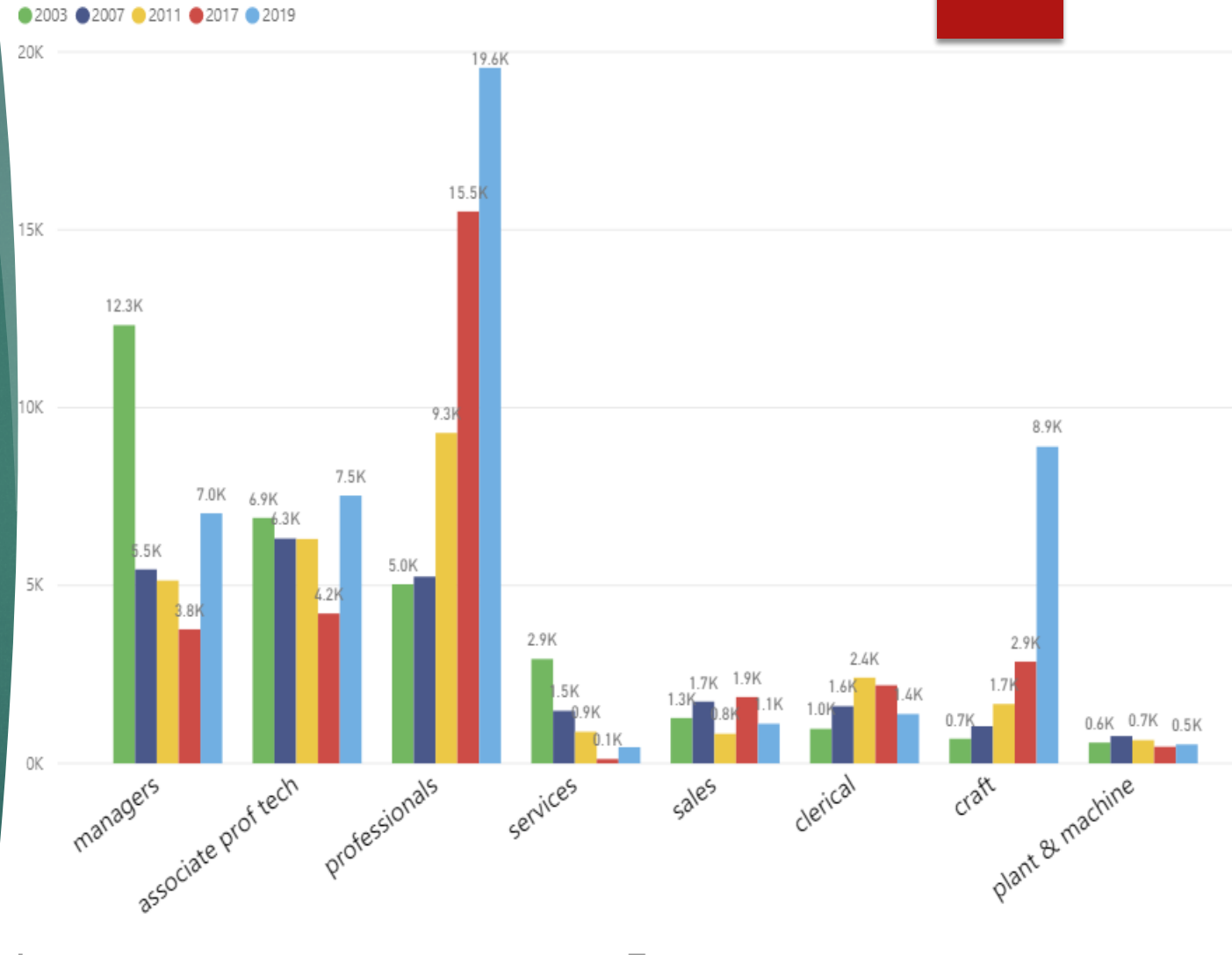
Profile of self-employed women: changes over time 2003-2019

	2003 n499	2007 n475	2011 n358	2017 n263	2019 n339
Household					
Couple no children	23	21	30	25	23
Couple with children	50	62	47	48	47
Single	20	13	16	14	18
Human Capital					
Degree level/postgrad education	54	54	62	61	60
Professional/manager	80	73	73	74	73
Work/labour					
Part-time	38	38	42	47	44
Atypical hours	73	69	68	61	70
Work from home	61	42	58	47	62
Caring reasons for p/t	n/a	18	19	41	34
Personal/family	n/a	58	38	27	38
Wants full time hours	n/a	3	15	12	9
Industry/manufacturing	7	9	8	8	8
Services	37	28	31	21	24
Prof/science/finance	29	31	31	34	31
Health/education/social	12	14	11	11	16
Other sector	14	18	18	25	20
Source: Labour Force Survey 2003, 2011, 2017 and 2019 sample weights applied					

Occupation

- Fourfold increase in the numbers of self-employed women in professional occupations between 2003-2019
- Increase in solo self-employment in associate professional/technical between 2017-2019
- Decrease in the numbers of self-employed managers
- Some increase in skilled craft occupation

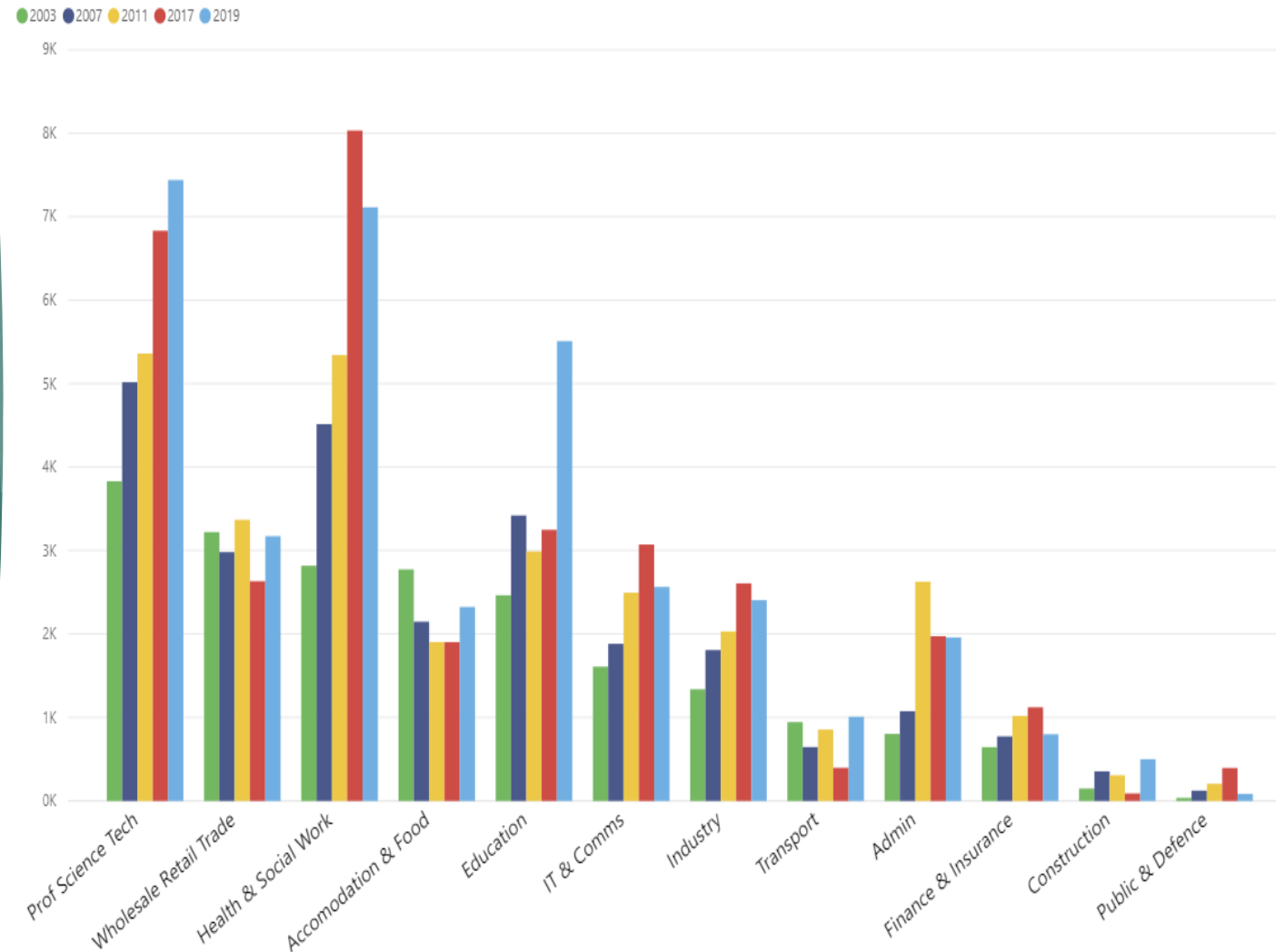
Self-employed women: Occupation 2003-2019



Sector

- Numbers of solo self-employed women in on professional science and technology sectors doubled between 2003 and 2019
- Numbers in health sectors increased fourfold between 2003 and 2017
- Numbers of solo self-employed women in education doubled

Self-employed women: sector 2003-2019



Main findings

- ▶ Increase in the numbers of women in solo self-employment or 'freelance' work in Ireland in recent years
- ▶ An additional 5000 women with children under 15 took up solo self-employment between 2015 and 2019, an increase of 72%
- ▶ Significant narrowing of the gender gap in participation
- ▶ Women more likely to be in part-time self-employment than men (and wage-and-salaried workers) at 44%
- ▶ Increases in numbers and proportions of self-employed women in professional level occupations and in health, education and professional sectors of the economy
- ▶ Some evidence to support the hypothesis that highly educated, professional women turning to freelance self-employment

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