



Blurring boundaries of care work? The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on care work and women's employment in Ireland

Alicja Bobek, Caitriona Delaney and Sara Clavero

10th Annual NERI Labour Market Conference
14 April 2022
Quin School, University College Dublin



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 101015990





Summary

INTRODUCTION – COVID, GENDER, EMPLOYMENT AND CARE:

- RESISTIRE Project: an overview
- Female employment and care in Ireland: pre-COVID context
- Gender, work and care in Ireland: pre-pandemic context

(POST)COVID-19 CARE AND EMPLOYMENT IN IRELAND

- Focus on childcare: before and during COVID-19
- Who looks after those children? Childcare and female employment

Consortium



➤➤ RESISTIRÉ at a glance



24 months



**10 partners from
9 European countries**



**Research activities
in EU27, Serbia,
Turkey, the UK,
and Iceland**



**A participatory
approach based
on co-creation**

Expected Outcomes



**A new
research agenda**



Advocacy



**Policy
recommendations**



**Launch of
pilot actions**

Gender, work and care in Ireland

➤ GENDER, CARE AND FEMALE EMPLOYMENT IN IRELAND

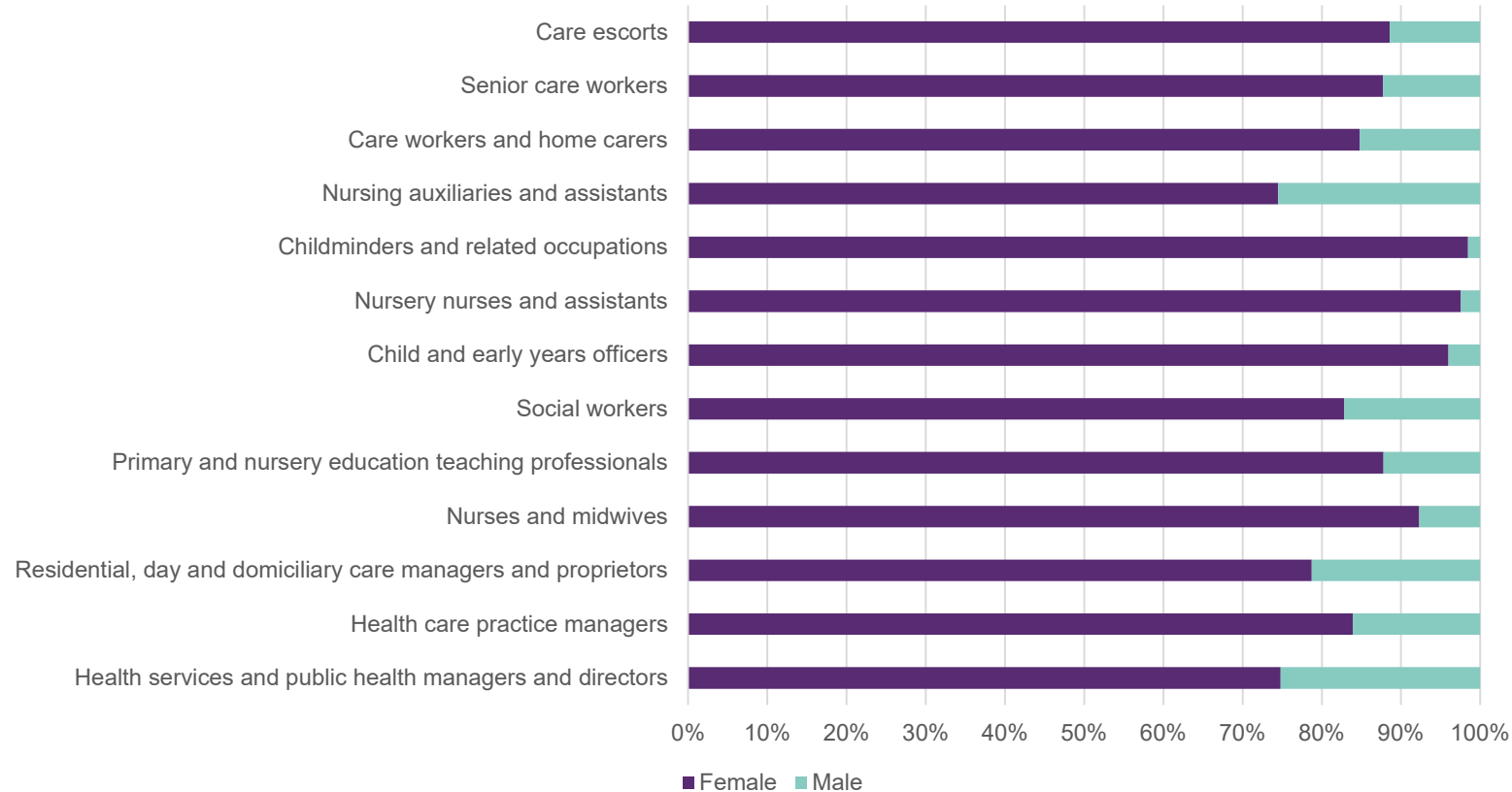
- Rapid growth of female employment from 1980 onwards: importance of the legislative changes (e.g., marriage bar removal), tax and welfare reforms, move towards services AND shifts in the normative gender culture (e.g., O'Sullivan, 2012)
- Persistent occupational segregation and vertical segregation (e.g., Russell et al., 2009; 2010); over-representation of women in low paid sectors, 'female' jobs, and part-time employment

➤ GENDER AND CARE IN IRELAND

- Reliance on family members (usually women) and limited involvement of public finances (e.g., Barry, 2010; Hanly and Sherin, 2017)
- Traditional low state investment in childcare (Horgan et al., 2014); childcare distinguished from early education (Hayes, 2010); Reliance on private care providers and community sector (Russell et al., 2019); women's care for young children (O'Sullivan, 2012); Early Childhood Care and Education (2010): 'almost universal' access but only for limited time and age group (Murphy, 2015); National Childcare Scheme: universal/means tested.

Occupational segregation: care and 'female' dominated jobs in Ireland

Care jobs and gender in Ireland (2016)

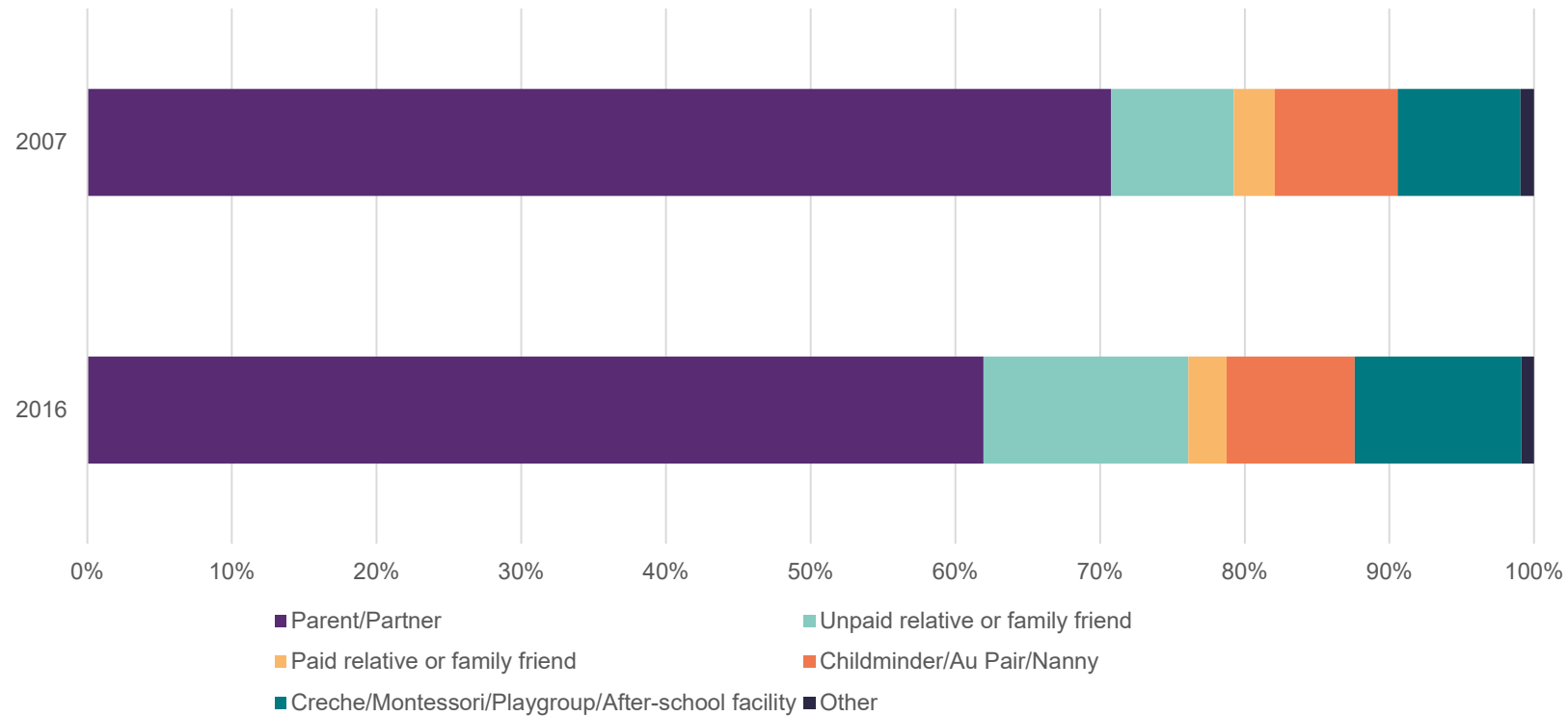


(Selected) types of care available in Ireland:

	Healthcare	Early Years Education	Residential care	Early Years Childcare	At-home formal Care	Nannies/ babysitters	Family carers	Family members informal	Parents/ guardians
Formal setting?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Payment for the provider	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Salary for carers	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes but can be precarious	Yes but can be precarious	Usually precarious	No (state payment)	No	State payment during certain leaves
Contract for carer	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/No	No	No	No	No
State support	Yes	Yes	Partial	Partial	Partial	No	Partial	No	Partial

Childcare in Ireland: parents, relatives, childminders and creches

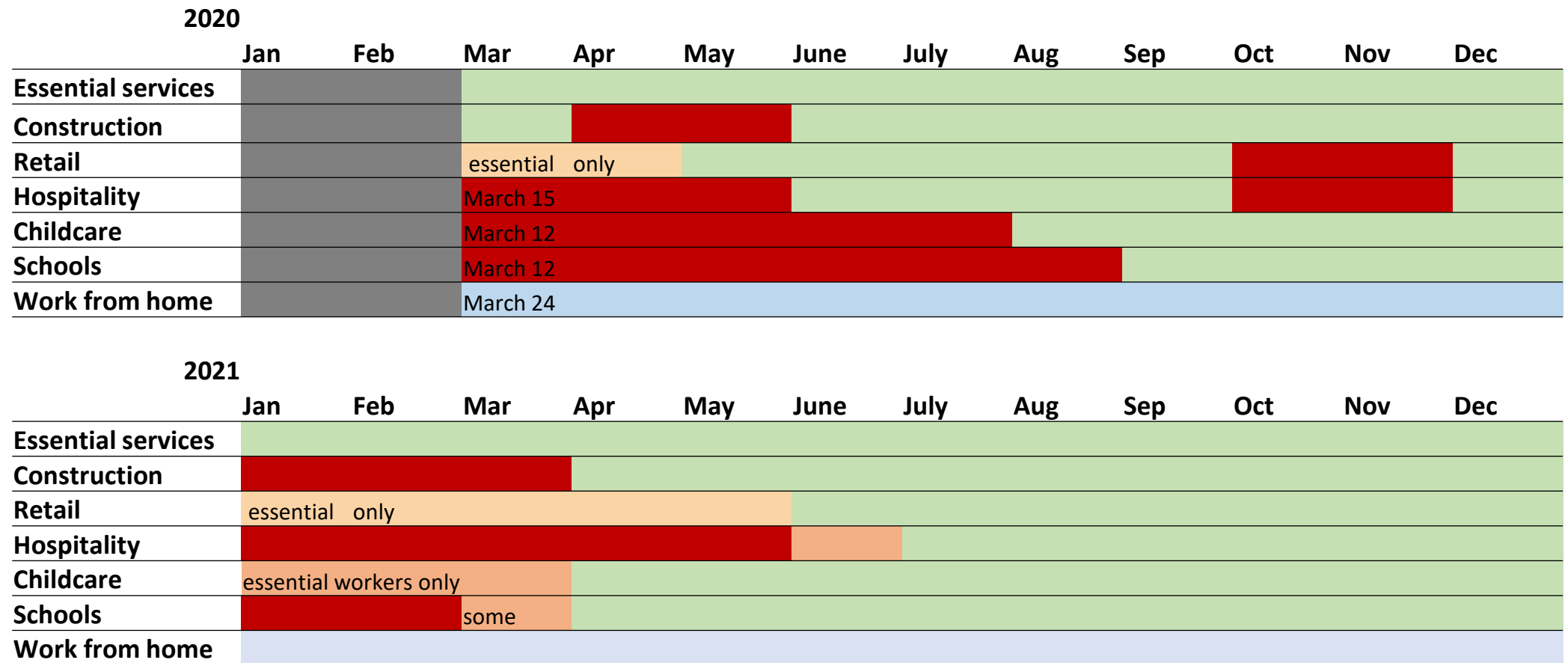
Forms of childcare in Ireland: percentage of children under 12 (2007 and 2016)



Types of leave, uptake and employers' top-ups

Leave	Who is entitled	How long	Paid?	Employers' top-up	Uptake
Maternity leave	Female employees	26 weeks paid + 16 weeks unpaid	Yes €250 basic	Public sector: 100% Private sector: 60%	Public sector: 100% Private sector: 92%
Adoptive leave	One parent of the adoptive couple (or a parent adopting alone)	24 weeks + 16 weeks unpaid	Yes €250 basic		
Paternity leave	New parents of children under 6 months (usually the father)	2 weeks	Yes €250 basic	Public sector: 100% Private sector: 46%	Public sector: 100% Private sector: 51%
Parental leave	Parents and guardians of children under 12	26 weeks	NO		
Parent's leave	Parents of children under 2 years of age/adopted child during the first 2 years of placement	5 weeks from April 2021, increasing to 7 weeks in July 2022	Yes €250 basic		

COVID-19 lockdowns in Ireland: 2020 and 2021





Irish government policies during COVID-19: care and unpaid work

➤ WHAT WAS NOT ADDRESSED?

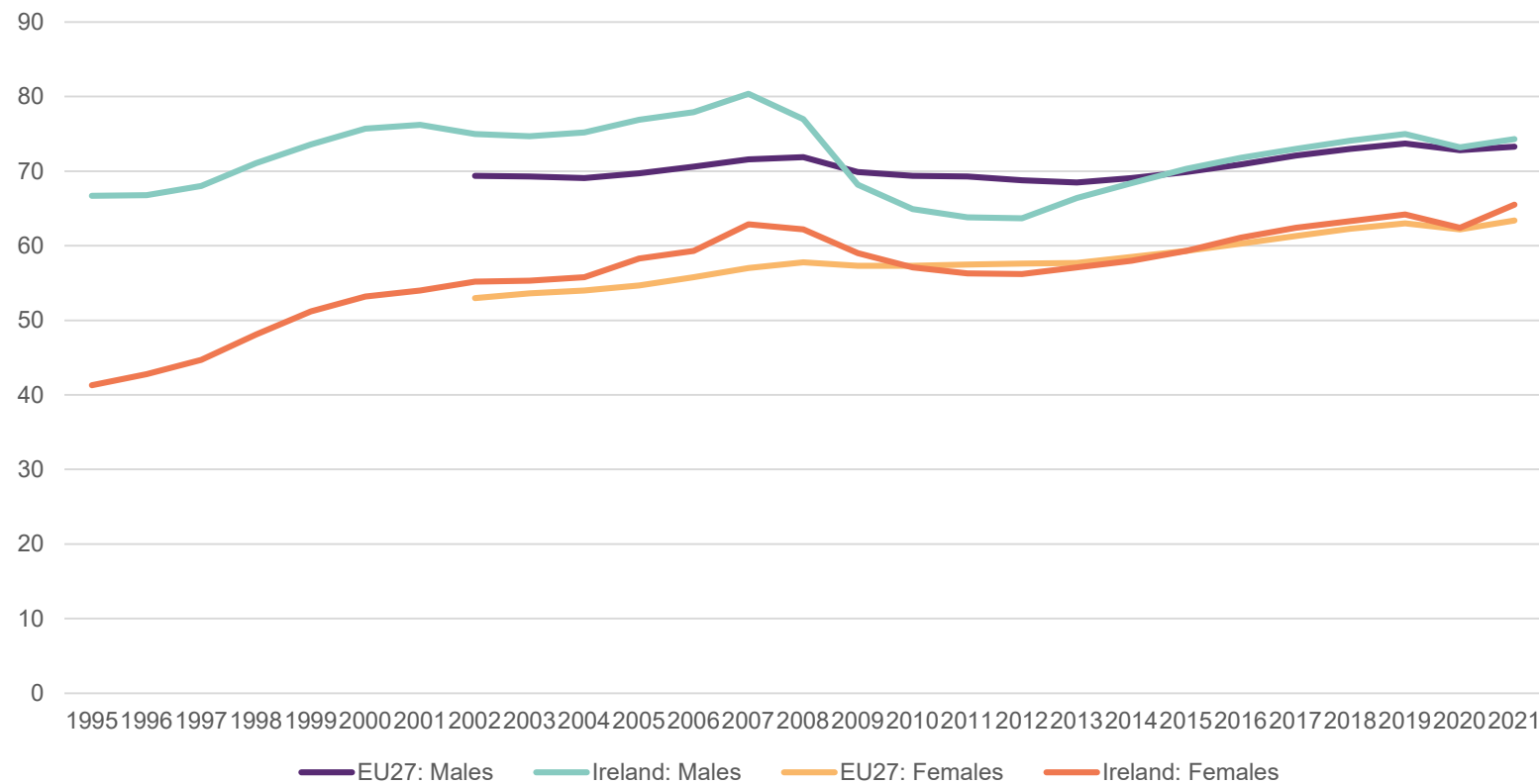
- Childcare: extended closure in 2020; 'essential' workers only in 2021; no coverage for school-age children
- Financial support for the formal childcare sector, but increased restrictions/regulations and limited services for working parents

➤ THE GENDER DIMENSION OF WORK AND CARE?

- No recognition of unpaid work and increased care needs regardless of employment status
- Frontline workers: 4 months of no childcare => unpaid leave; work from home with no support for the working parents (despite the evidence that mothers' work affected significantly)
- Further disruptions => evidence of women working part/time or not going back to work

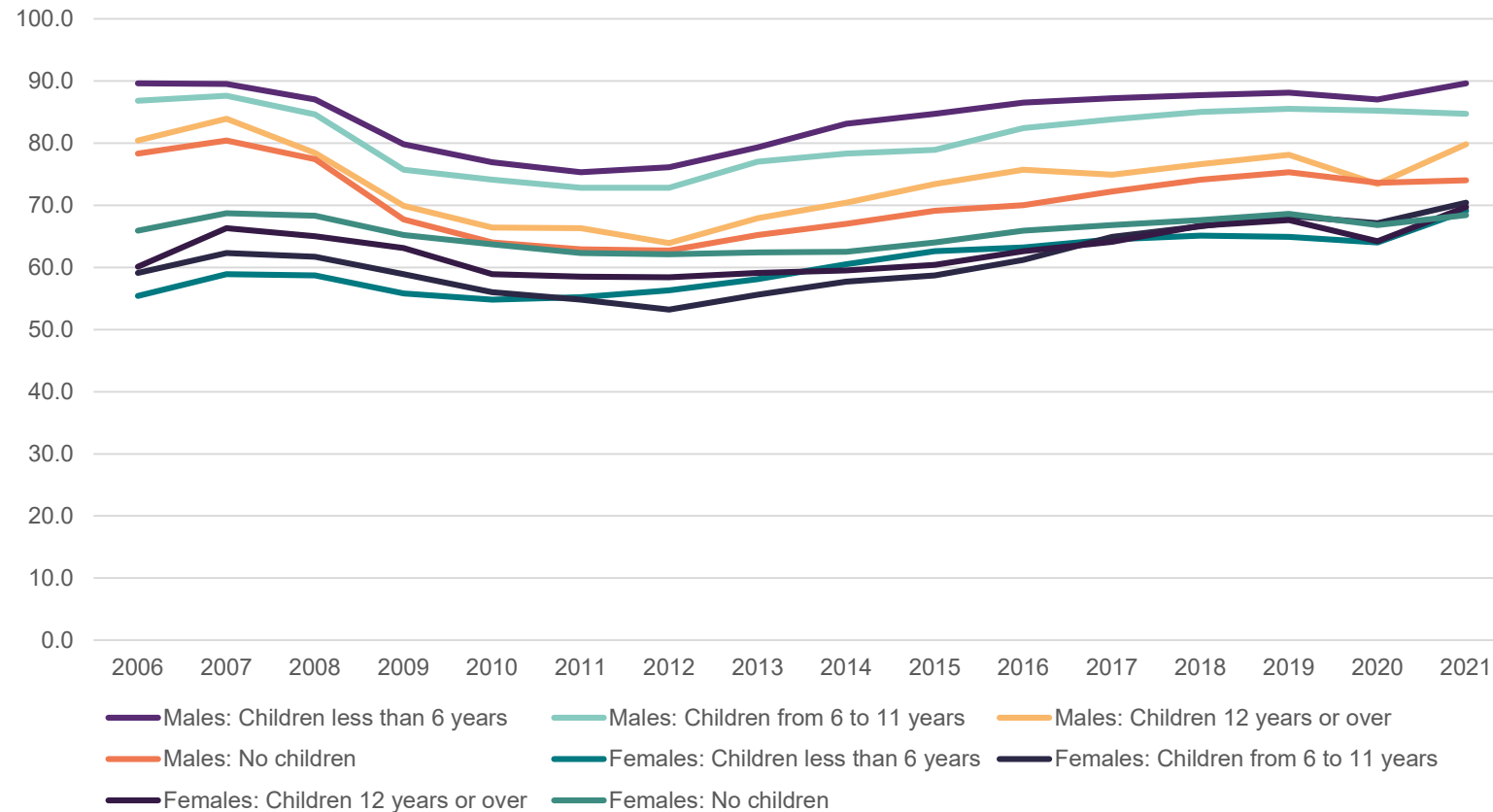
Employment rates, EU27 and Ireland

Employment rates, male and female, EU27 (2002-2021) and Ireland (1995-2021)



COVID-19 and employment: parenthood as an important factor?

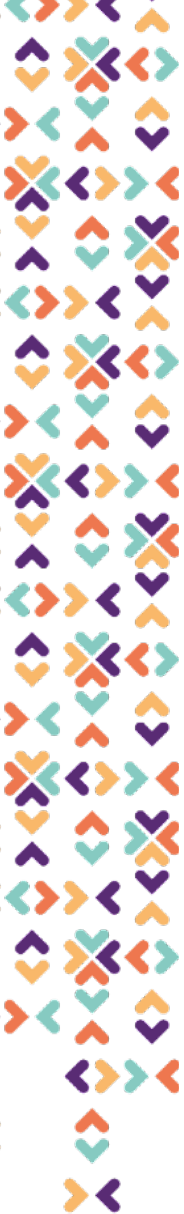
Employment and children in Ireland, males and females (2006-2021)



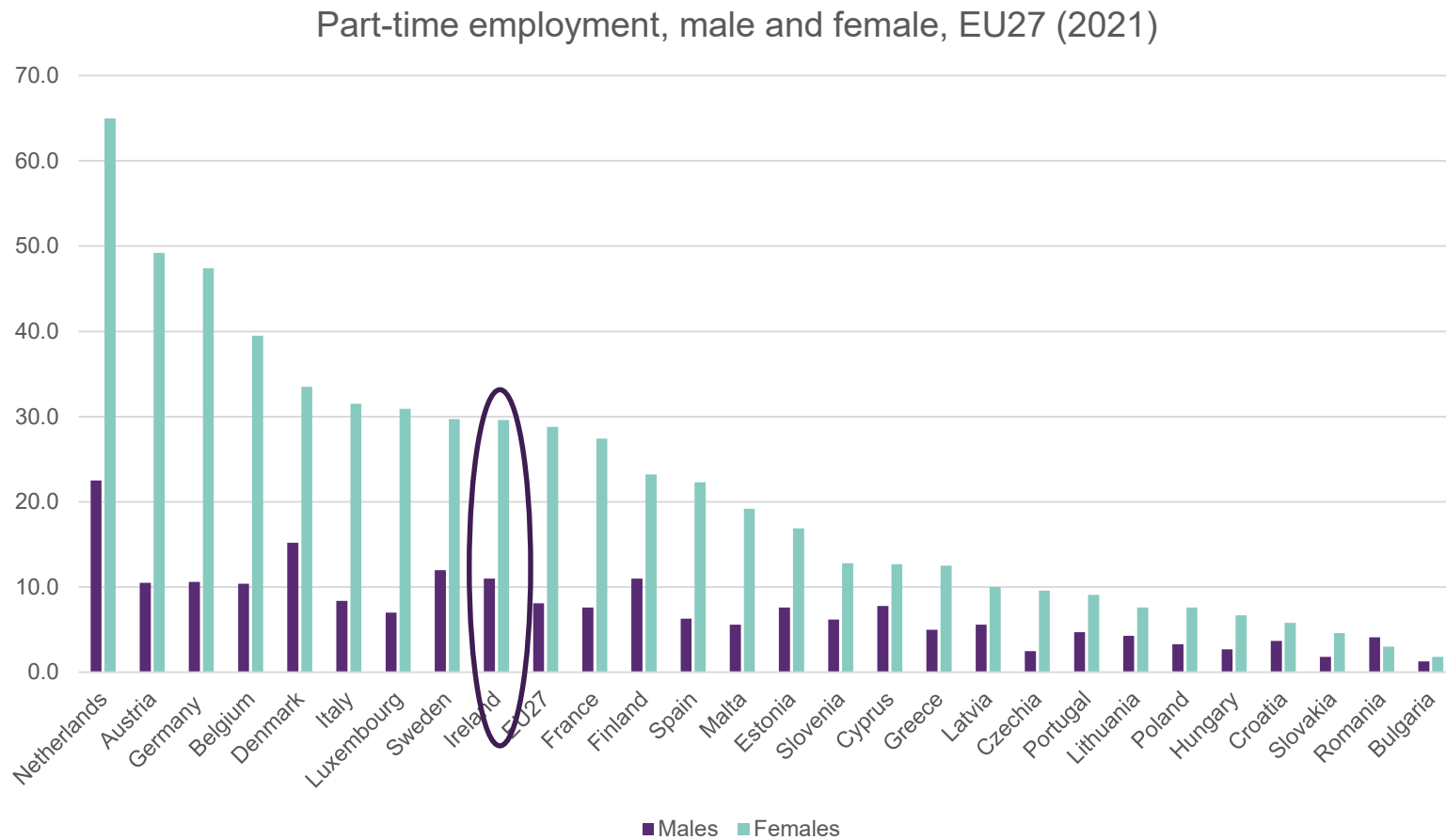
Female employment and children: EU27

Female employment rates all children and youngest child under 6 years old:
EU27 (2021)

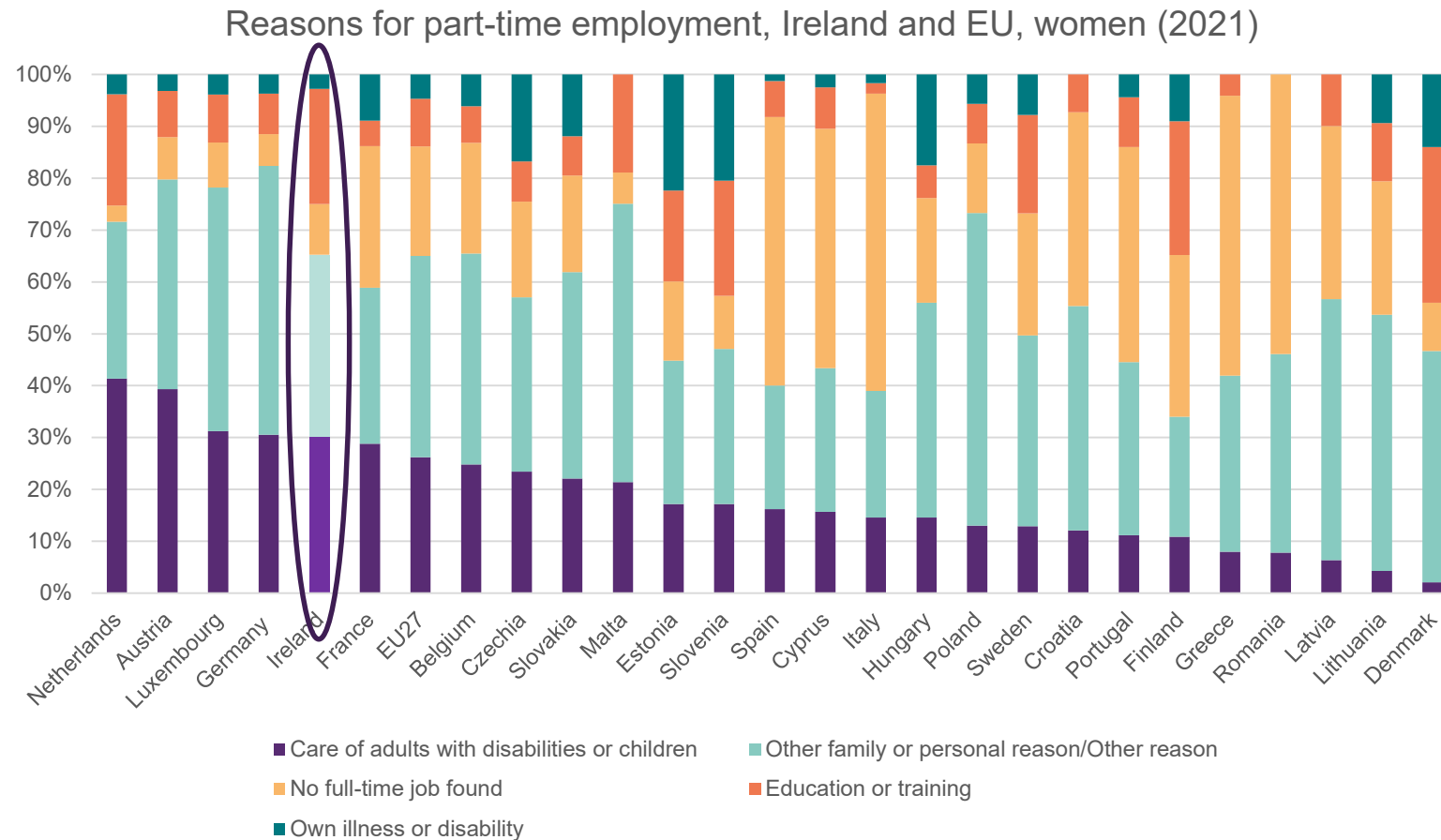




Part-time female employment: EU27



Part-time employment and reasons for part-time work



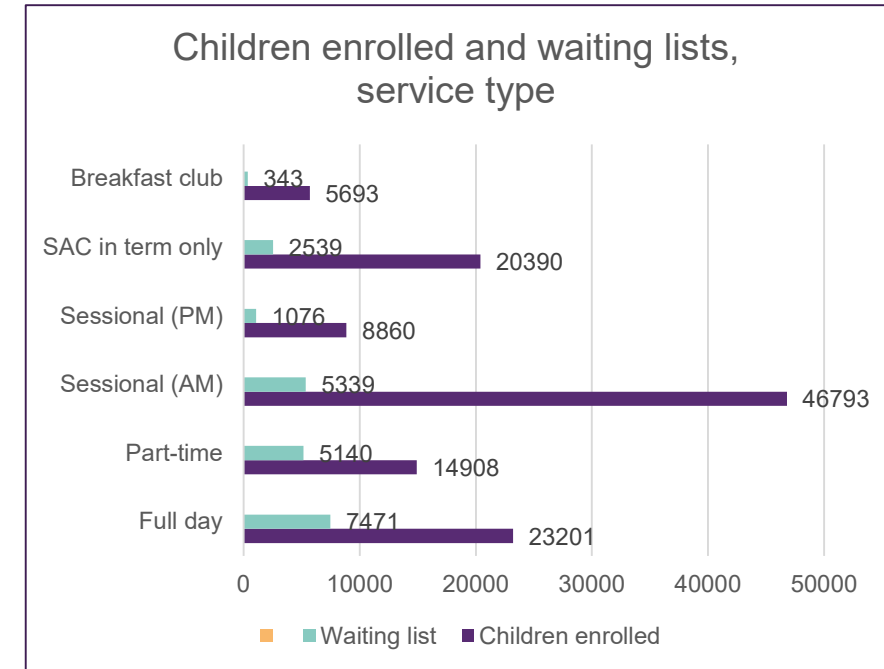
Part-time employment and children



Childcare in Ireland: number of children by age and service type



	Number of services	Percentage of services
Up to 1 year	383	15%
1-2 years	683	27%
2-3 years	1416	56%
3-4 years	2300	91%
4-5 years	2127	84%



	Extrapolated			
	2017/2018	2018/2019	2020/2021	% change
Up to 3 years	36,775	38,718	31,451	-19%
3 years to 6 years	136,269	132,412	125,979	-5%

The future of childcare: work from home?

➤ NATIONAL RESILANCE AND RECOVERY PLAN: WORK AND CARE

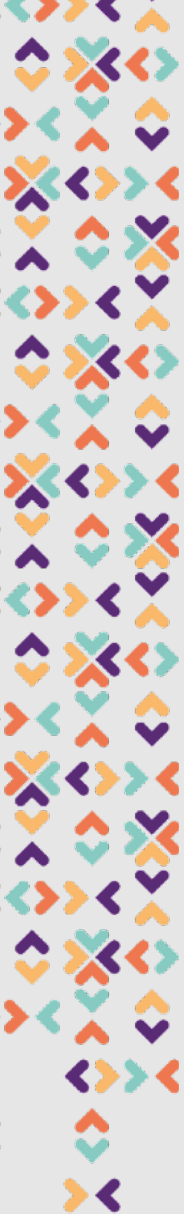
- **Green economy** and **digital economy** as the priorities of the **Irish NRRP plan**
- Overall: **(child)care barely addressed**, despite more funding promised for the sector/parents
- The promise of **flexible working arrangements** (home working and hybrid work)

➤ POST-COVID-19 IRELAND, WORK FROM HOME AND CARE

- **The cultural context:** care remains as a 'female' domain; no acknowledgement of the informal forms of care; limited discussion beyond the need to improve the childcare sector
- Assumption that **work from home equals time for providing care?**

➤ BUT...

Work from home, gender and children				
Youngest child's age:		2019	2020	2021
Less than 6 years	Males	22.4	34.6	43.4
	Females	17.7	31.7	36.9
From 6 to 11 years	Males	27.5	34.8	41.3
	Females	21.4	34.2	40.9
12 years or over	Males	22.5	30.3	34.6
	Females	18.6	28.9	37.5



RESISTIRÉ
Reducing gendered inequalities caused by COVID-19 policies

Improving national responses to gender-based violence: Lessons from the pandemic crisis
Recommendations to national policymakers to mitigate the gendered impacts of Covid-19, based on RESISTIRÉ findings.
20 December 2021
resistire-project.eu

Amnesia, the side-effect of decades of work to combat intersectional gender-based violence during the crisis!
Policy recommendations to national policymakers to mitigate the gendered impacts of Covid-19, based on RESISTIRÉ findings.
20 December 2021
resistire-project.eu

Reinforcing EU law to combat Gender-based violence through the Istanbul Convention
Recommendations to national policymakers to mitigate the gendered impacts of Covid-19, based on RESISTIRÉ findings.
20 December 2021
resistire-project.eu

Gender Equality Plans should be mandatory for hospitals
RESISTIRÉ recommendations to policymakers to mitigate the gendered impacts of Covid-19, based on RESISTIRÉ findings.
20 December 2021
resistire-project.eu

Telework as a Double-edged Sword: Risks and Opportunities
Recommendations to policymakers and employers to mitigate the gendered impacts of Covid-19, based on RESISTIRÉ findings.
20 December 2021
resistire-project.eu

Recommendations to reduce the gendered impact of Covid-19 policies in 8 FACTSHEETS

Thank you!

<https://resistire-project.eu>

Twitter: @resistire_eu

LinkedIn: Resistiré



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 101015990



RESISTIRÉ