

Equal opportunities in employment for women and men

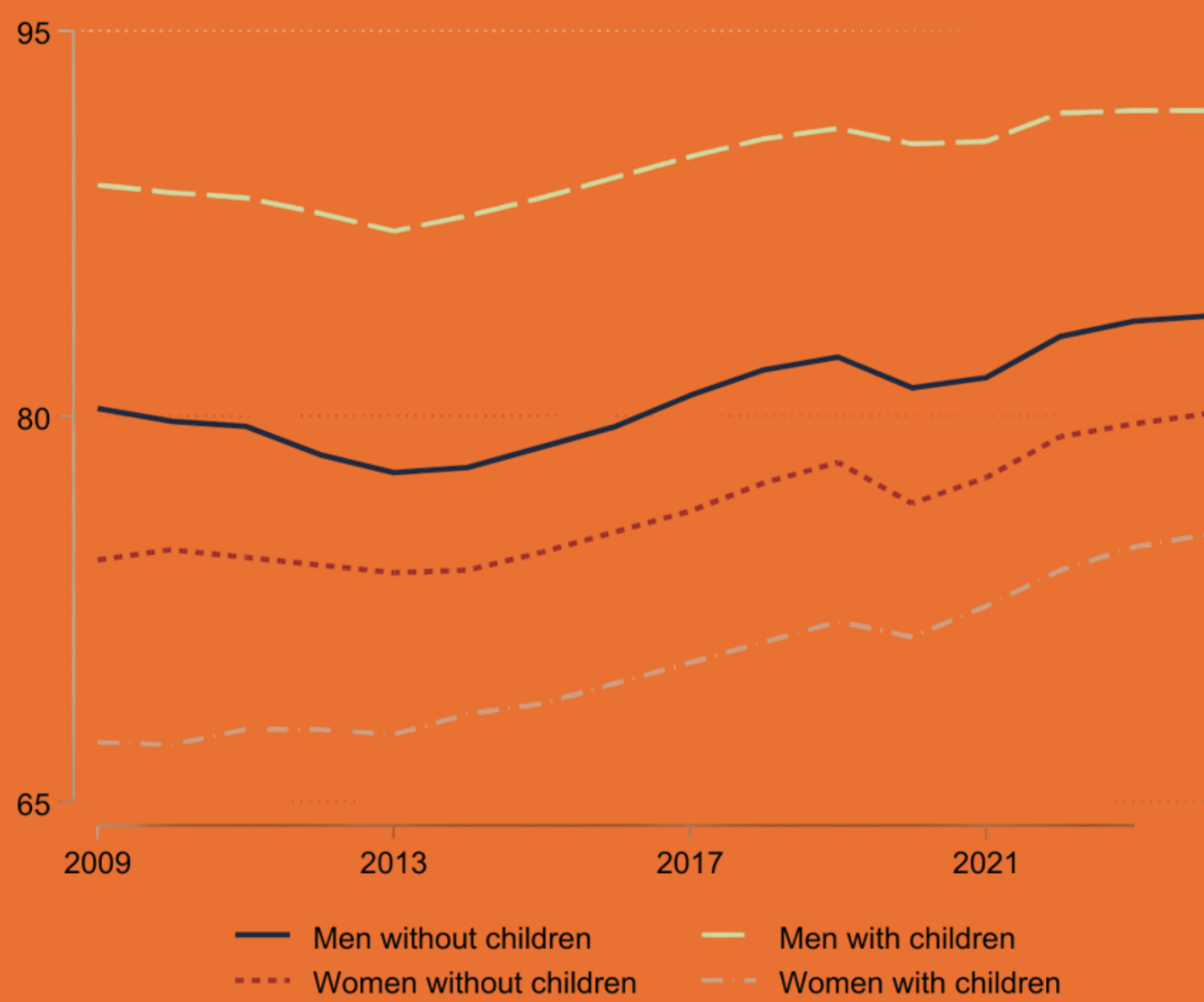


PATHS2INCLUDE



Parental gender employment gap

Employment rate by gender and parenthood status (based on EU-LFS data)



The parental employment gap persists in Europe:

- **Motherhood penalty:** Women's employment is negatively affected by parenthood
- **Fatherhood premium:** Fathers' employment remains stable or even increases
- **Gaps in evidence** on the causes of these patterns persist

Barriers and opportunities for gender equal labour markets

Impact of gender norms on parents' labour market patterns

There is a gradual move towards more progressive gender norms in the EU, but traditional views persist.

Progressive gender norms lead to:

For **mothers:**

- Higher rates of part-time and remote work
- More flexibility to balance work and childcare

For **fathers:**

- Less disadvantages in the labour market (e.g., underemployment)
- More advantages (e.g., being a supervisor)

Regional differences: Nordic countries have more egalitarian gender norms and the smallest employment gaps compared to Central and Eastern Europe.

→ Progressive gender norms lead to **positive outcomes** for both women and men.

Remote work supports women's labour market inclusion

The rise in remote work after the COVID-19 pandemic led to:

- An increased likelihood of mothers being **employed full-time**, which led to a decreased **employment gap** between women with and without children by 25%
- An increase in **working hours**
- An increase in **desired working hours**, which led to a closed gap between women with and without children's desired working hours

Impact varies by **children's age** and household circumstances.

→ Remote work helps **ease time constraints** for mothers which can support their labour market inclusion.

Why does it matter?

Mothers are more often working part-time or in lower-skilled roles which leads to long-term **disadvantages** in income, career progression, and retirement.

Fathers may miss out on the emotional and developmental benefits of active caregiving.

Gender equality in the labour market matters for **child well-being:** economically, socially, and developmentally. When mothers and fathers have equal access to good jobs, fair pay, and supportive working conditions, children benefit in multiple, measurable ways.

The EU has agreed on a target of halving the gender employment gap (compared to 2019) by 2030. **Key European frameworks focus on gender equality:** EU Roadmap for Women's rights, Gender Equality Strategy 2026-2030, European Pillar of Social Rights.

How can we promote gender equal labour markets?

- **Family-friendly workplaces**, by expanding flexible work arrangements such as remote work, to sustain mothers' employment after childbirth and reduce the motherhood penalty.
- Access to affordable childcare and gender-equal parental leave policies that encourage more **equal sharing of care responsibilities**.
- Actively challenge **gender stereotypes** and norms around caregiving and work, by supporting both fathers who choose to be more involved at home and mothers who seek full-time leadership positions.
- **Diverse role models** in awareness campaigns, media, education, and workplaces to accelerate the normalisation of non-traditional roles.
- **Organisational measures** against discrimination in hiring mothers.
- **Tailored policies at the regional level**, as cultural attitudes vary significantly between and within countries.
- **Further research** into gender norms and employment, the effects of remote work on other career outcomes, such as wage growth, promotion rates, or job mobility and whether differences across skill levels and sectors exist, as well as on mental health and well-being of parents.



Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

PATHS2INCLUDE is a 3-year research project funded by Horizon Europe that investigates the multi-dimensional aspects of discrimination, policies that could reduce inequalities and promote social inclusion in European labour markets and risk factors of vulnerability that may arise in the future of work. The research focuses on three key labour-market processes: recruitment; career paths; and early exit from working life, giving particular attention to labour-market participation at the intersection of gender, ethnicity, age, health, disability and care responsibilities.