

Working conditions

# Women in management: Underrepresented and overstretched?



**When citing this report, please use the following wording:**

Eurofound (2018), *Women in management: Underrepresented and overstretched?*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

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**Luxembourg:** Publications Office of the European Union

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**Print:** ISBN: 978-92-897-1733-5 ISSN: 2599-8110 doi:10.2806/46617 TJ-AR-18-001-EN-C

**PDF:** ISBN: 978-92-897-1735-9 ISSN: 2599-8153 doi:10.2806/258320 TJ-AR-18-001-EN-N

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# Introduction

In this, the second decade of the 21st century, gender inequality remains a defining characteristic of European labour markets. Despite rising participation in the labour force, women's careers remain concentrated in specific jobs and economic sectors; moreover, their career mobility and advancement through the ranks into management remain limited.

Looking at the differences between women and men in management positions is essential for understanding the labour market and working conditions. Managers are a specific group of workers. They are strategically placed, having the role and latitude to shape practices and policies in the workplace. This position gives them a twofold role: contributing to the success of the organisation while also guarding the well-being of their subordinates. The underrepresentation of women in strategic positions undoubtedly has repercussions on work and the labour market.

The limited presence of women in management roles in European workplaces despite years of gender equality policy illustrates the magnitude of the challenge and highlights the need for more concerted effort and comprehensive long-term strategies to drive change. While the numbers of female managers have steadily increased in the past decade or so, management is still mostly a man's game. Fortunately, there are signs that certain conditions of work do facilitate greater gender equality in management and offer hope for dismantling the barriers that limit the progress of working women.

This policy brief focuses on women who have overcome the barriers and advanced into management. It aims to assess whether women, once they have reached a managerial role, continue to encounter obstacles that their male counterparts do not face. Do women and men experience the managerial function differently? And does this difference help explain why women are underrepresented in management? Does the curse of the glass ceiling extend its grip to women in management?



## Policy context

### The curse of the glass ceiling

A long-standing and familiar line of reasoning advanced to explain women's underrepresentation in management is based on stereotypes of the female character. According to these explanations, women are 'not up to' occupying management positions; they are either considered 'unreliable' – not sufficiently committed to work and disposed to prioritise family demands – or 'made of the "wrong stuff" for leadership positions' (Smith et al, 2012, p. 1). In the Special Eurobarometer poll on gender equality conducted in 2017, 35% of respondents said that men are more ambitious than women. In some Member States, this figure rose above 50%.

An alternative line of reasoning emphasises the obstacles facing women in the labour market as an explanation for their low representation in management positions. The situation is still best expressed by the most familiar metaphor, the 'glass ceiling', coined in the late 1970s. Forty years later, it is still recognised as 'the unseen, yet unbreakable barrier that keeps women from rising to the upper rung of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements' (Mishra, 2014,

p. 67). Its dual nature – being both invisible and impenetrable – makes it particularly difficult for women to combat and for societies to address.

Empirical evidence bears out the presence of the glass ceiling, establishing that the scarcity of female managers is not so much down to the putative attributes of the female character but is the combined result of wide-ranging social and cultural factors. These include, for instance, cultural norms, insufficient formal care infrastructure, the unequal distribution of care responsibilities and unpaid work at home between men and women, the belief in a limited pool of female workers available for management positions, and the lack of female role models in senior positions. There is also the systematic male co-option and 'homosociality' practices of corporations – 'a non-sexual men's preference for other men' – which is manifested, for instance, through the recruiting processes of managing directors in Sweden (Holgersson, 2012). This, too, perpetuates the patterns of male dominance in the workplace. Data from the European Institute for Gender Equality shows that women accounted for just 25% of board members in the largest publicly listed

companies registered in the EU in 2017, although the situation varies significantly between EU Member States.

Research on women who do break through the glass ceiling and attain positions of leadership suggests that their experiences often differ from those of male managers. Women are more likely to occupy precarious leadership positions that have a higher risk of failure – either because they are appointed to lead an organisation or team that is in crisis or because they are not given the resources and support needed for success (Ryan and Haslam, 2005). The term ‘glass cliff’ has been coined to describe this situation where female managers are at a high risk of failing in their management role.

## EU campaign for gender equality

Since its inception, the EU has been at the forefront of advancing gender equality, at times pushing and pulling reluctant Member States along this path. The first step was taken in 1957, when the EU established the principle of equal pay through Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome. Since then, several policies have paved the way towards the goal of equality. Tools of various shapes have been deployed in this endeavour, including hard and soft legal measures – from peer reviews and open methods of coordination to directives and recommendations. But some inequalities have proved tenacious. In its 2017 action plan to tackle the gender pay gap, the European Commission noted:

*In each sector and each occupation, women are less likely to be promoted and to get management responsibilities. Actions are therefore needed to improve gender balance in decision-making and to ensure gender equality at all levels.*

(European Commission, 2017b, p. 8)

Strand 3 of the eight main strands of action, entitled ‘Breaking the glass ceiling: initiatives to combat vertical segregation’, commits the Commission to supporting practices improving gender balance in decision-making processes and positions across sectors.

The European-level social partner organisations, too, have devised actions to advance gender equality. Several sectoral social partner organisations – in the local and regional government sector and the railway sector, for example – have taken steps to develop awareness and promote change. The European cross-industry social partner organisations have committed themselves to ‘promoting gender equality actions at the national level’ through biannual joint work programmes or specific frameworks of action.

## What is this policy brief about?

Clearly and consistently over time, analysis of data from Eurofound’s European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) shows the existence of gender issues at management level. Data from the various survey waves prove just how dramatically slow progress has been towards higher numbers of women in management positions. The data also highlight how being a manager qualitatively differs for women compared to their male counterparts.

This policy brief looks at the latest data on women in management from the 2015 EWCS. It begins by clarifying the meaning of manager and identifies the different roles that exist under this banner. It looks at how management breaks down along gender lines according to type of manager, country, sector, company ownership, and the characteristics of reporting staff. It then turns to job quality, asking whether the working conditions of managers are better than those of non-managers and whether they are similar for women and men. Finally, it probes whether manager status influences men’s and women’s well-being differently and looks the experience of spillovers between work and personal life.



# Key findings

- Men outnumber women in management positions by two to one in the EU. The Member States with the best gender balance in management are Lithuania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Latvia, where over 40% of managers are women, more than 5 percentage points above the EU average.
- Women are underrepresented as managers in almost all economic sectors. Management is most gender-balanced in the public sector, although men dominate here too.
- The experience of management often varies depending on the type of manager one is; the study identifies three types:
  - the supervising manager, who has high-level operational responsibilities as well as subordinates to supervise
  - the non-supervising manager, who also has high-level operational responsibilities but does not supervise staff
  - the supervisor, who supervises staff but lacks high-level operational responsibilities.
- Women are best represented among non-supervising managers, making up 41% of this group.
- Among managers who supervise staff, women are more likely than men to be managing other women, younger workers and workers on non-standard contracts.
- The job quality of managers of all types is better than that of non-managers. Managers score better in five out of the seven dimensions of job quality identified by Eurofound, the exceptions being work intensity and working time quality.
- Female supervisors and supervising managers report greater work intensity than their male counterparts; female non-supervising managers report less, however.
- Power within the management tier is unequal between male and female managers. Among supervisors and non-supervising managers, men have greater leverage in organisational decision-making than women in the same type of role; but among supervising managers, women report having more influence than men.
- Managers generally report a higher level of subjective well-being than non-managers. However, it seems to be important that the function combines title and authority, recognition and power. Well-being levels are lower if one of these elements is missing. The absence of the recognised designation of manager – one key attribute of authority – seems to be of greater concern for women. Lacking a supervisory function seems to cause bigger problems for men.
- Women generally report more negative spillovers between work and family life than men. This holds true for managers as well: female managers report higher tensions between work and non-working life.
- Female supervising managers seem to be able to combine work and family responsibilities better than female supervisors and non-supervising managers. They less frequently report that family responsibilities take away from time on the job. They also spend fewer hours on average on unpaid work, probably because they can afford to outsource housekeeping and caring duties.



## Exploring the evidence

### What is a manager?

A manager is ‘an individual who is in charge of a certain group of tasks, or a certain subset of a company’, often having a ‘staff of people who report to him or her’, according to the online BusinessDictionary. Moreover, the manager acts as a bridge between senior management and employees, translating higher-level strategies and goals into operating plans that drive the business. The manager is also frequently depicted as being squeezed in the middle, being simultaneously ‘accountable to senior executives for performance and to front-line employees for guidance, motivation and support’ (The Balance Careers, 2018).

Given the variety of managerial functions, a single characterisation of managers is difficult to pin down. To identify managers from among all respondents to the EWCS, this study first considered two features of the job:

- the job title and content, based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO), which categorises occupations according to common tasks and duties undertaken in a job; it designates as managers those who ‘plan, direct, coordinate and evaluate’ an organisation's activities (ILO, 2012, p. 87)

- the supervision of staff, which recognises a hierarchical dimension to the role.

The EWCS gathers data on both these dimensions of respondents’ employment. Each person’s job title and job content are collected and coded using the ISCO classification. Respondents are also asked if they are responsible for the supervision of any subordinates at work, ‘for whom pay increases, bonuses or promotion, depend directly on you’.

Combining answers to these questions yields two groups of workers.

**The non-manager**, who has no managerial responsibilities according to the ISCO categories and no supervisory role.

**The supervising manager**, who simultaneously has high-level operational duties and a supervisory function; this role encompasses the traditional features of the manager job, combining responsibility and recognition.

However, two other roles with managerial features are apparent, illustrating the need to recognise diversity within the concept of manager.

**The non-supervising manager**: what is commonly assumed to be the main characteristic of managers – having

subordinates to manage – is not consistently present. As Table 1 shows, more than one in three (39%) who fit the ISCO category of manager do not supervise anyone at work.

**The supervisor:** an individual who manages subordinates but who does not have the title and decision-making powers of a manager; 14% of workers who are not classified as managers report having supervisory duties.

**Table 1: Categorisation of workers according to managerial status and supervisory responsibilities**

Job content (ISCO-08)	Supervisory role?	
	No	Yes
Non-manager	87%	14%
Manager	39%	62%

**Note:** Percentages are rounded and hence do not add up to 100%.

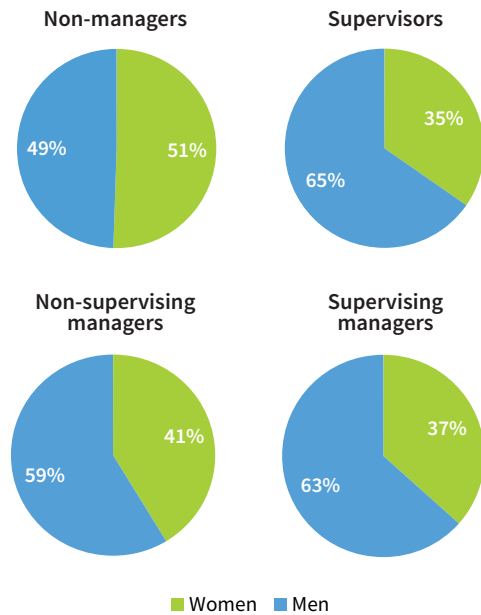
## Gender imbalances in the management tier

### By manager type

Around 80% of the workforce are non-managers, with almost the same proportion of women (51%) and men (49%). But men are over-represented in all three of the manager types, with almost twice as many men in management positions as women (Figure 1).

Supervisor is the most common managerial role held by both sexes – 16% of male and 9% of female workers occupy this category – and has the greatest gender gap, at 30 percentage points. Women are best represented in the non-supervising manager type. At the same time, this group is the smallest of all manager types – less than 2% of all working women occupy such a role – so the extent to which generalisable conclusions can be drawn from findings on it may be limited.

**Figure 1: Managerial status by gender, all workers, EU, 2015**



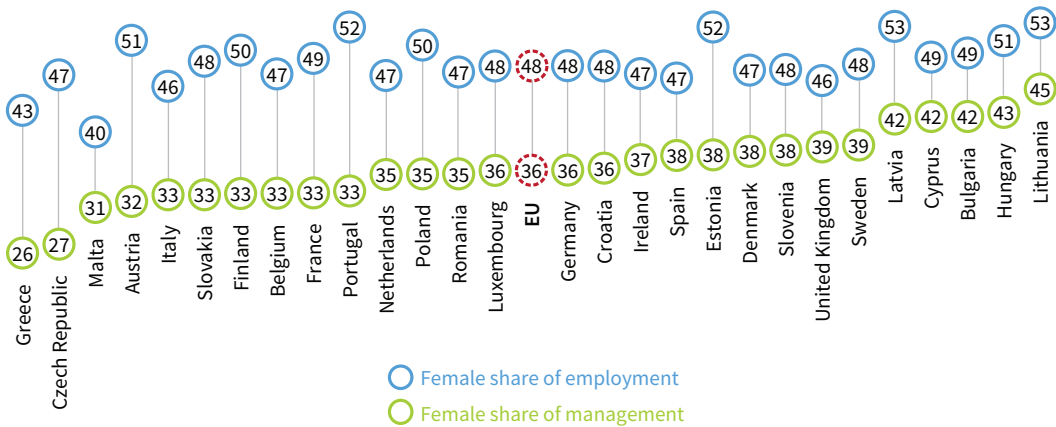
### By country

On average, women make up 36% of all managers in Europe. Some of the newer Member States lead the way in terms of the equal representation of men and women both in labour markets and in management. Figure 2 shows the female share of management (any of the three types – supervisors, non-supervising managers and supervising managers) in each of the Member States.

The chart shows big differences, with around 20 percentage points between Greece at the low end and Lithuania at the high end. Little more than a quarter of all managers in Greece and the Czech Republic are women, whereas in Lithuania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Latvia, women account for over 40% of managers, more than 5 percentage points above the EU average.



**Figure 2: Comparison of the female share of employment (%) with the female share of management (%), EU Member States, 2015**



**Note:** The female share of employment is the proportion of women among all people in employment; the female share of management is the proportion of women among all managers.

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Looking at the female share of workers in employment adds a further dimension to this picture. While just over a third of managers in the EU are women, women constitute nearly half (48%) of all people with a job. Malta, a country in which women account for 40% of all workers, also lags behind the EU average for female presence at management level (31%). And although Portugal may have an even gender distribution in the workforce as a

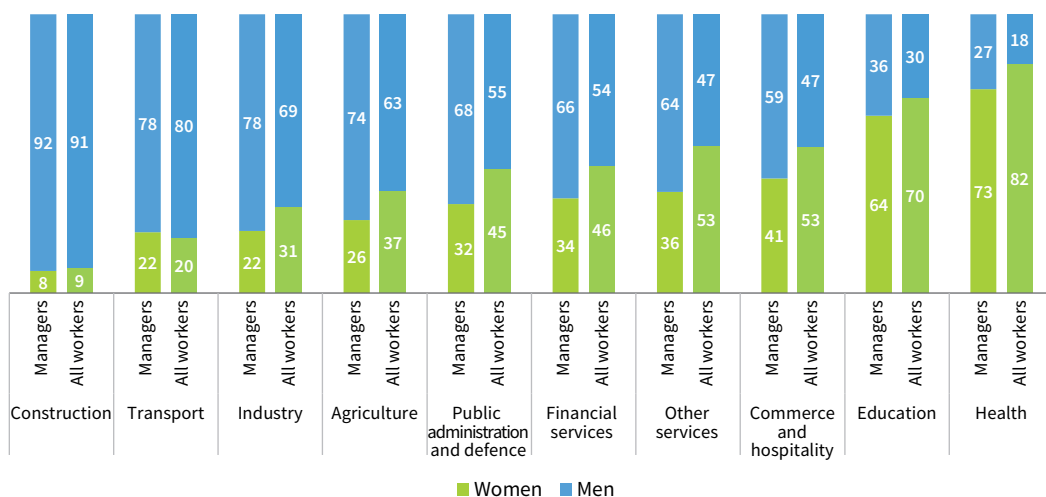
whole, only 33% of managers are women – one of the largest gaps in the EU.

### By sector

A look at the proportions of men and women in different economic sectors paints a clear picture of the gendered boundaries that stratify labour markets (Figure 3).

Firstly, with regard to the distribution of male and female workers across sectors, vastly more

**Figure 3: Gender division in economic sectors (%), comparing managers and all workers, EU, 2015**



**Note:** For each sector, two columns are presented to illustrate the gender divide: the proportion of managers and the total proportion of workers in that sector, split by gender.

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men than women work in construction, transport, industry and agriculture, while women predominate in education and health.

Secondly, in almost every sector, women are underrepresented in management, in the sense that their total share of the workforce in any sector is greater than their representation in management positions. For example, in health, 82% of all workers but 73% of the managers are women. The only sector where women are slightly over-represented as managers, in relation to their overall share of the workforce, is in transport, where 20% of the total workforce and 22% of managers are women.

Another way to look at this is to analyse what percentage of the total female workforce works in a sector and compare this to the percentage of female managers working in the sector. Interestingly, and counter-intuitively, the share of all women working in a sector does not seem to affect the share of female managers in the sector. Even though almost 20% of all female workers work in the health sector, for instance, only 18% of female managers do so. The gap in education is even bigger: 12% of all female workers work in this sector, but only 9% of all female managers are found here.

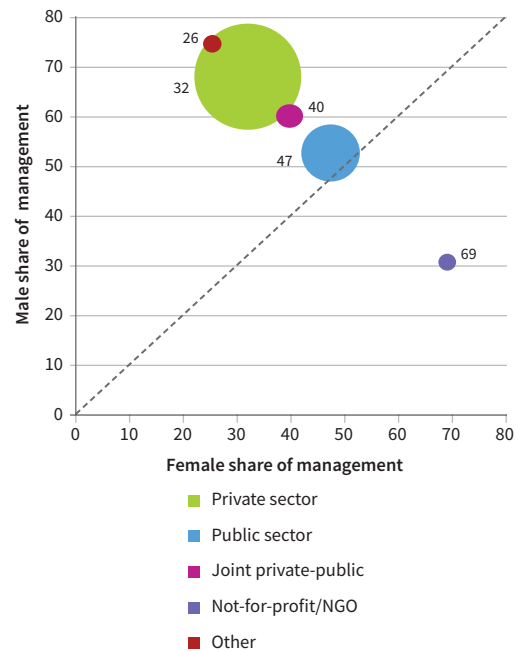
Looking at the different types of managerial roles identified earlier, there is a strong concentration of female non-supervising managers in commerce and hospitality, with 40% of this group employed in this sector. A further 25% work in the 'other services' sector – a broad category including professional services, entertainment and communication activities. Female supervising managers are more evenly distributed across sectors. Women are more likely to be supervising managers when working in public administration and defence, financial services, transport, commerce and hospitality, and industry (relative to the overall share of female workers in these sectors). But in sectors that are highly feminised – such as education, health and other services – a significant under-representation of women as supervising managers exists.

Public administration is one of the few sectors offering more opportunities to women who seek to pursue a career in the traditional manager role: 11% of all female supervising managers work in public administration, while the sector accounts for only 5% of all female workers (managers and non-managers). However, taking all three types of managerial positions together, female managers are underrepresented also in this sector compared to their share of overall employment.

### By company ownership

Women are underrepresented in management in both public and private companies, but opportunities are better for them in the public sector (Figure 4). Companies in the not-for-profit/NGO category are the only ones where women comprise the majority of managers.

Figure 4: Percentage of managers by gender and company ownership, EU, 2015



**Note:** The size of each bubble represents the relative size of the ownership type, the private sector being the largest. Percentages to the side of these bubbles refer to the proportion of women in that sector. The dotted line signifies the line of 'gender equality' or a balanced representation of men and women in management across ownership types.

## By characteristics of reporting staff

Looking at management from the perspective of non-managers, a third of the European workforce has a female boss. More than half (51%) of women are managed by another woman, whereas just 15% of men report having a female boss. In addition, women are more likely to be managing younger workers (under the age of 35) than other age groups, as well as workers who have part-time or fixed-term contracts, or no contract at all.

### Summing-up

While the proportion of workers with a female boss has increased continuously from 24% in 2000 to 34% in 2015, indicating that more women may be reaching managerial positions than in the past, a gender breakdown of management numbers suggests that it still greatly helps to be a man. This holds true even for sectors where the number of women is proportionally greater than the number of men, such as health and education. Women's best chances of being a manager are in not-for-profit/NGO companies.

Women are underrepresented in all three types of managerial roles. They are best represented among non-supervising managers, positions where the job involves operational decision-making but not the management of staff.

Regarding supervisory roles, the fact that these differ for men and women with regard to the contract type, age and employment status of subordinates is likely to perpetuate the segregated nature of the labour market.

## The managerial experience

Does the experience of management differ according to the type of manager you are – a supervisor, a supervising manager or a non-supervising manager? And how does the experience of being a manager compare between men and women? To answer these questions, this section looks into the working conditions and job quality of male and female managers. Three key effects are examined:

**The impact of being a manager:** The differences in certain aspects of the job that are experienced by managers compared with non-managers.

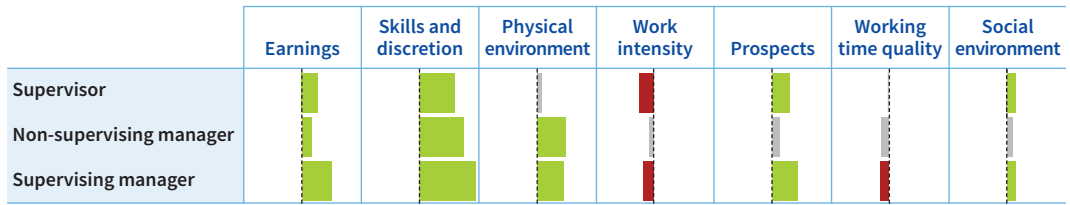
**The impact of being a woman:** The differences in certain aspects of the job experienced by women compared with men, irrespective of their managerial position.

**The combined impact:** The effect of being both a woman and a manager on certain aspects of the job.

### Job quality

Eurofound's research has assessed workers' experience of their working conditions and working life through the lens of job quality and has identified seven dimensions of job quality: earnings, skills and discretion, physical environment, work intensity, prospects, working time quality and the social environment. (For a fuller description of these dimensions, see Eurofound (2017).) These dimensions of job quality are based on aspects of work that have an independent influence, positive or negative, on health and well-being.

**Figure 5: Differences in dimensions of job quality related to manager type, EU, 2015**



**Note:** The bars in the figure represent the relative association between each dimension of job quality and being a woman (compared with a man). Positive – or good – associations are coloured green and negative are in red, while those that are statistically insignificant ( $p$  value > 0.05) are in grey.

### The difference being a manager makes

Analysing the EWCS data on the seven dimensions confirms that bosses have it better than their subordinates – this is to say that managers of all types score better than non-managers in most aspects of job quality. The exceptions are work intensity and working time quality (Figure 5).

This finding is in line with other research and common beliefs. The price for being a manager is longer working hours and greater work intensity (having to work fast, to tight deadlines, with more emotional demands and many factors dictating the pace of one’s work). On the flip side, the reward goes beyond better pay cheques; it also encompasses more autonomy, the power to influence change in the organisation, opportunities to grow and develop one’s skills, as well as better job security and career prospects. Broadly speaking, supervising managers have the best scores on the job quality dimensions.

### The difference being a woman makes

Job quality clearly differs between women and men (Figure 6). Female workers, on average, have lower earnings, less influence and use of their skills, as well as greater work intensity when compared with men. Conversely, women

enjoy a better physical environment, less risk to their health and safety, and better working time quality, while there are no differences between men and women on social environment and career prospects.

### The difference being a woman and a manager makes

Turning to the experience of being both a woman and a manager, the analysis shows that this has an impact on work intensity. As Figure 7 illustrates, managers report higher work intensity than non-managers, and women report higher work intensity than men, with one clear exception: female non-supervising managers experience lower work intensity than all other groups of workers.

### Advantages unevenly shared

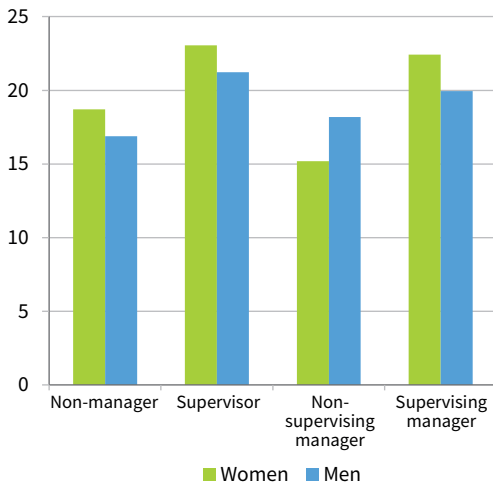
While being a manager is more advantageous than being a non-manager, the advantages are not evenly bestowed between male and female managers in the same position. For example, compared to subordinates, managers (of all three types) have more influence on organisational decision-making in that they have more of a say in the choice of their work colleagues, have more scope to apply their own ideas at work, and have more influence on

**Figure 6: Differences in dimensions of job quality related to being a woman, EU, 2015**



**Note:** The bars in the figure represent the relative association between each dimension of job quality and being a woman (compared with a man). Positive – or good – associations are coloured green and negative are in red, while those that are statistically insignificant ( $p$  value > 0.05) are in grey.

**Figure 7: Work intensity by gender and managerial status, EU, 2015**



**Note:** Work intensity is measured on a 0–100 scale: lower values for work intensity represent ‘better’ working conditions, with workers exposed to fewer demands.

important decisions on the job. This is to be expected; such responsibilities are typically associated with management. At the same time, female and male managers do not equally enjoy this increased authority and responsibility. Among supervisors and non-supervising managers, men’s latitude and leverage in each of these activities exceeds those of women in the same type of role. By contrast, among supervising managers, it is women who have more influence in these areas.

Women may have to pay a price for acquiring more authority. In terms of their physical environment, women generally are at less physical risk on the job than men. However, as they reach management positions, this advantage shrinks. For instance, female non-supervising and supervising managers report having to lift and carry heavy loads on the job to almost the same extent as men in these positions – the advantage of being a woman is cancelled out for female managers. This finding holds when the analysis takes account of the sector, meaning that it applies as much in public administration as in sectors typically associated with increased physical risk such as construction and health.

Female supervisors face a different disadvantage. Compared to the other two types of managerial positions, they have less control over their speed or rate of work. And, more often than other female employees, they miss recovery periods between working days – in other words, they reported back to the job less than 11 hours after the end of one working day, at least once in the month previous to the survey.

### Summing-up

These results point to specific areas – most notably with regard to influence and decision-making – where the advantages of being a manager are not fully experienced by some categories of female managers. For them, the ‘management effect’ that should bring higher levels of autonomy and authority does not materialise to the same extent as for their male counterparts. For other areas of job quality – exposure to certain physical risks was identified here – female managers have the same level of exposure to risk as male managers. This means that the ‘gender effect’, which in this case favours women, is cancelled out.

The differences in work intensity between the three types of managerial functions are greater for women than for men, and female supervisors experience the greatest work intensity among all categories of male and female managers and non-managers. At the same time, female non-supervising managers achieve better scores on work intensity, not only compared to men in the same role but also compared to male and female non-managers.

## Does being a manager affect one’s personal life?

### Well-being

Generally speaking, people in work are happier than those who do not work. The European Quality of Life Survey confirms that having a job is associated with higher levels of life



satisfaction and happiness (Eurofound, 2017). Still, work can have both positive and negative effects on people’s well-being. The EWCS incorporates the World Health Organisation’s well-being index (WHO-5), which scores well-being from 1 to 100, where a high score is associated with a good level of psychological well-being.

Managers generally report a higher level of subjective well-being than non-managers (Figure 8). However, there are exceptions, specifically male non-supervising managers, who report the lowest level of well-being among all workers. In addition, female supervisors report the same level of well-being as female non-managers. These two results could be related to the difficulty of being a manager without having one of the defining features of the job. In the case of women, being a supervisor without having the operational responsibilities of the role – one key attribute of authority – seems to be of greater concern. Lacking a supervising function – being a non-supervising manager – seems to cause bigger problems for men.

**Figure 8: Well-being by gender and managerial position, EU, 2015**



**Note:** Subjective well-being is measured on a 0–100 scale: higher values represent ‘better’ working conditions.

## Work–family conflicts

Working life and private life inevitably impact on each other, and one dimension will sometimes spill over into the other – such as when people take work home with them. This can lead to work–family conflicts, which are associated with individual health problems, as well as having broader consequences for workers, their families and the organisations they work for. The EWCS measures spillover from work into family life by asking respondents whether they have:

- kept worrying about work when they are not at work
- felt too tired after work to do some of the household jobs
- found that work prevented them from giving time to their family.

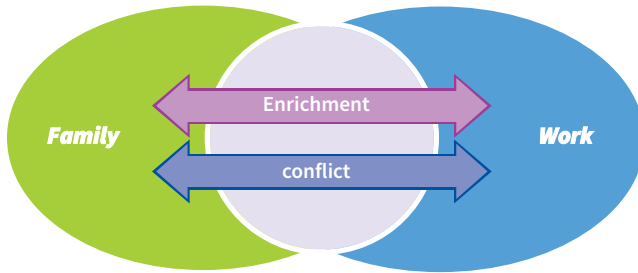
It measures spillover from family life into work by asking whether respondents have:

- found it difficult to concentrate on the job because of family responsibilities
- found that family responsibilities prevented them from giving time to the job.

It is well established that women generally experience more negative spillovers in both directions than men. Women more frequently than men report that they feel too tired after work to do housework. Slightly more women than men find it difficult to concentrate on their job because of their family responsibilities and find that their family responsibilities have prevented them from giving time to their job.

Being a manager has an effect as well. More managers, both men and women, report worrying about work when not working than non-managers. Supervisors are more likely to report spillovers in both directions: family issues distracting from time on the job and vice versa. Supervising managers more often experience a loss of family time because of their job.

Figure 9: Work–family spillovers

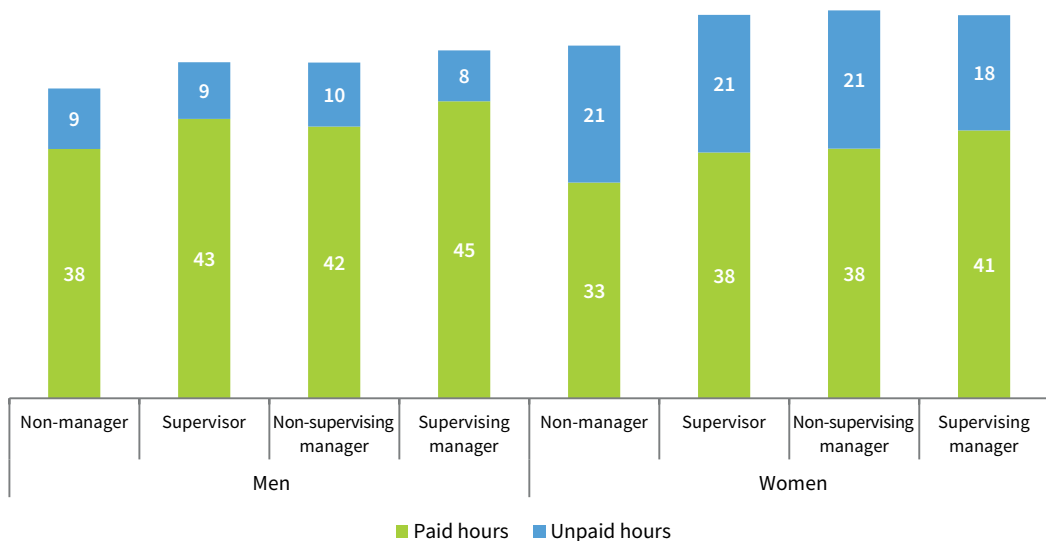


Compared to their male counterparts, female supervisors report higher tensions between working and non-working life: more than other categories, this group say they have less family time than desired, worry about work when not working and are too tired after work to do housework. Among female managers, differences between the three types also exist with regard to family responsibilities taking away from time on the job; female supervising managers report this problem less often compared to the two other types.

### Paid and unpaid work

If, as the saying goes, ‘behind every successful man, there is a great woman’, then who is behind every female manager? Looking at the combined hours of paid and unpaid work, it seems that the answer is no one. Women generally work longer hours than men when paid work and unpaid work (such as housework and childcare) are considered, but they work fewer hours than men when only paid work is taken into account (Figure 10). This difference does not disappear for women

Figure 10: Hours spent weekly on paid and unpaid work, by gender and manager status, EU, 2015



**Table 2: Manager status by gender and household composition, all workers, EU, 2015**

	Women – household type					Total
	Single, no children, no others	Single parent, no others	Couple, no children, no others	Couple with children, no others	Household with others	
Supervisor	10%	11%	27%	50%	2%	100%
Non-supervising manager	15%	13%	27%	45%	1%	100%
Supervising manager	14%	8%	31%	44%	3%	100%
Manager subtotal	11%	10%	28%	48%	2%	100%
Non-manager	13%	12%	25%	48%	3%	100%
Total: All workers	13%	12%	25%	48%	3%	100%
	Men – household type					Total
	Single, no children, no others	Single parent, no others	Couple, no children, no others	Couple with children, no others	Household with others	
Supervisor	11%	3%	31%	53%	3%	100%
Non-supervising manager	13%	6%	33%	46%	3%	100%
Supervising manager	11%	4%	25%	59%	2%	100%
Manager subtotal	11%	4%	30%	53%	2%	100%
Non-manager	17%	6%	26%	49%	3%	100%
Total: All workers	15%	5%	27%	50%	3%	100%

Note: 'Others' are dependent adults

in management positions. The exception is female supervising managers, who spend on average fewer working hours on unpaid work than other types of female managers and non-managers (but still more than men). One possible explanation is that they can afford to outsource housekeeping and caring duties, often to another woman.

### Household types

Do managers live in households with a different composition of adults and children than non-managers? Are there differences between managers depending on whether they are male or female? Table 2 shows the distribution of women and men by managerial

status across household types. The distribution of women by managerial position across household types largely corresponds to the overall share of women living in those households. This is almost the same for men.

Female and male managers are more likely to be in a couple than single. Being in a couple without children seems to favour having a managerial job; for both men and women, the percentage of managers in this household type is higher than the overall share of workers in this category – 28% versus 25% for women and 30% versus 27% for men. Conversely, single parents and individuals living in households with others are less likely to be managers.

There are a couple of notable differences between female and male managers relating to household composition.

- Single men without children or dependents are less likely to be managers than their female counterparts: while the proportion of male workers in this category is greater than the proportion of female workers (15% versus 13%, respectively), the proportion of managers is the same for both sexes, 11%. This could be a reflection of the fact that this category includes an increasing number of highly qualified young women who compete for managerial positions and are, in this case, not disadvantaged by considerations of care responsibilities or household duties.
- Men in couples with children are more likely to be supervising managers (59%) or supervisors (53%) compared to the overall share of male workers (50%); the corresponding proportions of female supervising managers (44%) and supervisors (50%) are lower. Given that 48% of female workers live in a couple without children, women are clearly less likely to be supervising managers when living with children but more likely to be supervisors.

## Summing-up

Managers have a higher level of well-being at work than non-managers. This is especially true for supervising managers, who benefit from having an acknowledged managerial role, recognition and power. At the same time, female managers do not have the same levels of well-being as their male counterparts in the same types of job, except in the case of non-supervising managers.

Reaching an equilibrium between professional and personal commitments is more difficult for women and for managers: managers and female managers in particular experience more work–family conflicts. The attempt to combine work and family life leads to female managers working longer paid and unpaid hours than both female non-managers and male managers.

These findings raise the question of whether paying a higher price in terms of work–family conflict while not reaping the same benefits in terms of increased well-being diminishes the attractiveness of managerial jobs for women. If the answer is yes, it may at least partially explain why fewer women strive for managerial careers.



## Policy pointers

This policy brief highlights several issues: the persistence of gender imbalances in the management tier, differences in the managerial experience of men and women, the diversity of job quality and well-being at work generally, and the cumulated effects of these on a person's working life experience. A range of actions and policies by different actors could help to address the current challenges.

### **Addressing underrepresentation of women in management**

The obvious answer for addressing gender imbalances in management is to recruit more female managers. However, this is not as straightforward as it may seem. One aspect is stimulating interest in and willingness to take on the challenges of a managerial function. For this to happen, girls and young female workers need role models to guide them. Their interest in developing their professional potential needs to be actively encouraged and supported. Findings from the EWCS show that the public sector and especially the non-profit sector have a higher share of female managers than private companies. This indicates that these sectors devise practices to create opportunities for women to develop their

careers. Sharing experiences and knowledge of these measures could help to inspire and stimulate change in companies across the economy.

### **Improving job quality for men and women in managerial positions**

Being a manager is challenging for women as well as for men. To increase the attractiveness of the function, job quality for all managers needs to be improved. Though managers generally score higher than non-managers on most dimensions of job quality, working time quality is lower and work intensity higher. Linked to this are difficulties in achieving a satisfactory work-life balance. Addressing the working time and work-life balance needs of managers increases the attractiveness of management roles; it also makes working as a manager more sustainable. Poorer working time quality as a result of longer working hours could be a deterrent to taking on managerial responsibility, especially for women. Not only do female managers work more paid hours than female non-managers, their unpaid work remains at high levels, meaning that they work the longest combined hours when compared with male workers in general and female non-managers.



### Offering flexible working

Balancing work and non-work commitments requires flexibility on the part of employers. The EWCS shows that the possibility of taking an hour or two off on short notice to deal with unforeseen family or personal issues is a key factor for achieving a good work–life balance. Companies have wide room for manoeuvre to implement working time arrangements that address the needs for flexible working and, according to the 2013 European Company Survey, the majority of European companies offer some form of flexibility. In leadership roles, however, a stigma can be attached to making use of the opportunities offered. Lack of presence in the office can be interpreted as lack of commitment. Interestingly, according to Eurofound’s report *Discrimination against men at work: Experiences in five countries*, the feeling of being penalised for taking leave to care for children or other dependants or working reduced hours is one of the main reasons for men feeling discriminated against in the workplace. This points to the need to address gender stereotypes persisting in workplaces and in our societies.

### Achieving a more equal sharing of paid work and care commitments

Differences between women and men at work are underpinned by cultural norms that, based on gender stereotypes, continue to influence societal institutions, family and work. The difference that the presence of children in a household has on the career paths of mothers and fathers illustrates this point. Action is required to encourage a more equal sharing of unpaid work between men and women. Role models demonstrating that combining work and care is desirable and achievable, in management as well as non-management positions, can give an important signal to subordinates and peers alike. Sensitisation is also required of workers’ and management representatives who, through social dialogue, can have an important influence not only on company policies but also on company culture. Individual example, company culture and company policies have to be combined with

the provision of an affordable and high-quality care infrastructure if the objective of a more equal sharing of work and care responsibilities among men and women is to be achieved.

### Strengthening European-level commitments

European-level initiatives play an important role. Action by the European Commission not only on the gender pay gap but more broadly in the area of gender equality and work–life balance aims to support Member States in developing policies and action plans. The European-level social partner organisations at both cross-industry and sectoral levels are important actors in devising and supporting strategies at national level. The role of collective bargaining in addressing gender equality at work and work–life balance for both men and women has to be recognised and supported.

### Addressing the challenges linked to ‘the future of work’

Recent developments in the world of work have also led to changes in the role of management and the demands on the function. Beyond traditional top-down decision-making and routine task supervision, more engaged and collaborative models of leadership have developed. At the same time, some of the traditional functions of management (hiring, evaluation, pay reviews, supervision and coordination) may now be carried out by different organisational entities. The impact of these developments on occupational advancement and gender equality in European companies needs to be understood. Also, new forms of employment need to be examined for their potential to enhance or diminish gender segregation. For example, the nature and organisation of jobs in the ‘platform economy’ could reinforce some gender stereotypes and segregation in labour markets. In the current discussion around the gender blindness of certain algorithms, the risk of bias and therefore of a perpetuation of gender stereotypes is highlighted. If unaddressed, this could lead to the persistence of gender segregation even in the new age economy.



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Despite years of gender equality legislation, men outnumber women in management positions by two to one. While structural barriers continue to impede women's career advancement, women themselves may be deterred from becoming managers if they perceive that it would have a negative impact on their working and personal lives. What is the experience of women in management roles and how can their underrepresentation in management be addressed? These are the questions this policy brief seeks to answer by looking at the job quality of managers, both female and male, and the impact a management job has on personal life.

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