

# State of the World's Fathers Ireland



Men's  
Development  
Network

treoir



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# Foreword

**Fathers want to care for their children. This is one of the key findings from the Irish data gathered as part of the global research, The State of the World's Fathers. This comes as no surprise to those of us who work with fathers. Another key finding is that most mothers also want fathers to take up a greater caring role in their children's lives. However, women are still responsible for the vast majority of care of their children even though over 80% of the men in this research felt they shared caring responsibilities equally with their partners. Equality in care remains one of the missing pieces for women's equality and therefore a more equal society. In this sphere, equality for women will only be achieved if care is shared equally among men and women.**

The perceptions of how much men care for children compared to how their partners perceive their caring role makes for interesting reading. Fathers may think they do more than they do or share care equally with the other parent however, the caring roles are still gendered, and housework is mainly the domain of women. Notwithstanding this, it is clear from this research that men and women want to share the care of their children and believe doing so is one of the most important jobs they can do in their lives. This must include the sharing of domestic duties too.

The research is a timely reminder that things are changing in relation to how we care for our children. Parents from an older generation have seen attitudes to care change positively in their lifetime. Patriarchal, sexist attitudes to gendered roles in the home are reducing as the majority of participants in this research demonstrated. However, while we now have more men as primary carers, women still take on the vast majority of care. This research would indicate that men want to see this change as much as women and that antiquated gendered notions of care and household duties are no longer acceptable to both men and women.

This year the Irish government have made a commitment to having a referendum on care and will propose removing sexist language from Article 41.2 of the Irish constitution. This article currently

states: In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved. The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home.

There have been many calls since the Constitution was enacted to abolish this provision. The National Women's Council of Ireland have highlighted that 'If passed, removing this provision will bring significant change. It would recognise the reality of women's lives and ambitions in modern Irish society and the importance of care for all of society'. This research shows that men desire that change too and that it needs to be delivered in partnership with women.

The Men's Development Network and Treoir collaborated on the Irish aspect of this global research. We are delighted to work together on what is a timely contribution to forthcoming discussions on a constitutional referendum on Article 41.2. For both organisations this work confirms what we encounter on a daily basis, that many fathers want to be active in caring for their children, that they want to take time out from their careers or work part time and be considered as "a go to" person if their child needs a parent during the working day. While legislation to enable this has improved such as paternity leave, parental leave and blended working more policy and legislative initiatives are needed alongside public discourse and the continuing shift in attitudes.

We welcome this research and are delighted that we have Irish specific data that can be compared to the global study, that is showing that there is a strong desire to break down the patriarchal systems that have created inequalities for women, and by default an unequal and unhealthy society.

We invite you to read this research and join the growing impetus to create a more equal and just society where fathers and mothers are co-authors of a more enlightened approach to the delivery of care to our children.

**Damien Peelo**  
CEO, Treoir

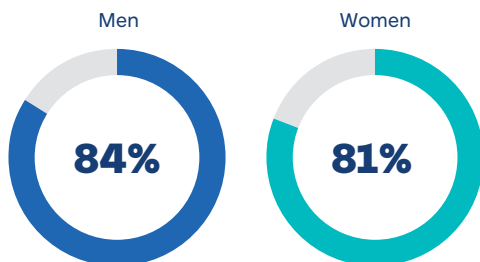
**Seán Cooke**  
CEO, Men's Development Network

# Executive Summary

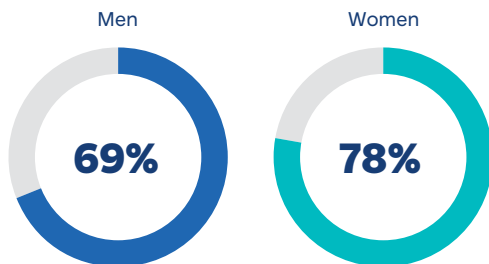
**This research is part of a larger project entitled 'State of the World's Fathers' which has run every 2 years since 2015. This is the first time Irish data has been included in the data. Globally this round of the survey was answered by 12,511 people in 17 countries.**

There were 507 respondents in the Irish sample, 232 men, 267 women and a further eight who identified as 'other' under the gender categorisation. All participants were aged between 25 and 65.

It found that caring for children brought joy to parents with 84% of men and 81% of women saying that it was the most important thing they had done in their lives.



Over two-thirds of men and three-quarters of women surveyed said would give up career opportunities to care for children. 69% of men and 78% of women stated that they would be prepared to work part-time to care for their children.



Two-thirds of men and 80% of women surveyed disagreed with statements around patriarchal gender attitudes relating to care and roles of men and women in the home.

Men are taking their care and household responsibilities seriously with 82% stating that they share caring responsibilities equally and 86% stating that they feel as responsible for care work as their partners.

Despite this, they still lag significantly behind women on hours spent and on average women spend one hour and 18 minutes more per day on care and housework than men do.

Assuming constancy of effort across the seven days of the week this would mean that women spend an extra 9.1 hours per week than men doing the activities associated with the day to day running of the house.

Paid caring leave is recognised by the majority of both men and women as being of benefit to themselves, to their partners, to their children and to their careers.

Despite this 37% of men and 20% of women said that they would not take such leave were it to be available.



# Introduction



'Today's family is neither more nor less perfect than that of yesterday; it is different because circumstances are different. It is more complex because the environment in which it exists is more complex and that is all' (Durkheim 1978 [1888] p. 218).

The quote above comes from French sociologist Emile Durkheim 135 years ago, yet his words continue to be just as relevant today. Social change is constant and has profound influences on the organisation of the economy, society, culture and broader social life in general. This constant fluidity and changeability of social life has had particularly strong influences on the family and the processes and practices of care and social reproduction.

This study is part of a larger global survey which was carried out across 13 countries and aimed to examine attitudes around care, fatherhood, and the gendered division of household labour. It looked at attitudes to care as well as practical issues such as the availability and desirability of paternity leave and care leave. It also looked at how care interacts with work in the formal labour market and how structural factors are influential in the practices of delivering care. This report will look specifically at the data gathered which relates to childcare and fatherhood.

We see the equitable sharing of household and caring responsibilities as a fundamental facet of the move towards gender equality. Much like charity, gender equality begins at home, yet at present women do more of the housework and a higher proportion of the caring work than men. Research by the Economic and Social Research Institute (2019) tells us that women spend more than twice as much time caring and more than twice the amount of time on housework than men do. This, however, is not the way it must be, our findings suggest that everyone sees the benefits of a more equitable division of childcare and housework. The vast majority of our respondents saw caring for their children as being the most enjoyable and important thing in their lives. They saw it as being worth giving up career opportunities for, and similarly reported in large numbers that they would be prepared to work part-time to care for their children. As such it is apparent that more needs to be done to encourage men to take up a larger proportion of care work in the home. This includes actions to normalise the taking of care leave from work, actions to increase paid paternity leave and the taking of concerted actions to teach young people about the value and benefits of care.

**Today's family is neither more nor less perfect than that of yesterday; it is different because circumstances are different. It is more complex because the environment in which it exists is more complex and that is all.**

**–Émile Durkheim**

# What Does Care Mean?



**The word care is one which covers a broad spectrum of activities carried out by a diverse range of people under a wide variety of circumstances. We all have a relational and shifting identification with care, over the course of our lives we will care for others and be cared for. Similarly care is not always a one-way activity and instead can be reciprocal. Care is delivered formally and informally, sometimes in exchange for money, and more frequently as part of relations of kinship.**

Care is an inevitability; it is woven deep into the fabric of our existence as we will all give and receive care at numerous points in our lives. When we care for our children, we do not do so in the expectation that we will be paid and instead act in terms of altruism and love. In doing this we benefit from the bonds of love and affection that are the essence of humanity. Yet despite this there is a financial value associated with care as time spent caring is time that can't be spent working or earning money and so there are tangible costs which are borne by carers. As the majority of care is carried out by women it is they who most often pay these costs in terms of their career their pay and their pensions. Care work which is predominantly done by women in the private domain of the home has historically allowed men to exercise control in the public realms of commerce, politics and wider culture.

Care work is also fundamentally undervalued. Where care is carried out in return for money it is frequently for low wages. The provision of care has become an industry in and of itself where profits are extracted from the processes

of meeting people's most basic and intrinsic needs. The Care Collective write of how the communal bonds of care have slowly been replaced by 'individualised notions of resilience, wellness and self-improvement, promoted through a ballooning 'self-care' industry which relegates care to something we are supposed to buy for ourselves on a personal basis' (2020, p. 2). In these terms care becomes just another commodity as people need to pay others to care for their children or elderly relatives. Yet this can engender profound inequalities as care can be expensive and so unaffordable for many.

**Care is an inevitability;  
it is woven deep into the  
fabric of our existence**

Care is fundamental to the working of all societies, a briefing paper published by Oxfam in 2020 estimated the global monetary value of unpaid care at \$10.8 trillion annually. In the UK the Institute for Public Policy Research places the annual figure for unpaid household and care work there at £451 billion. These figures are based solely on wage rates and do not take account of other network effects which give further monetary value to the practice of care. These monetary gifts of free care are described by Beverley Skeggs as being crucial to capital and the economy as in their absence there would be 'significant problems and costs reproducing, servicing and sustaining the future, present and ex-workforce' (Skeggs 2014, p. 12).

# Some Historical Context

Irish society has seen seismic social change since the 1950's as it has moved from being an insular inward-looking country to one of the most globalised in the world. Living standards have increased exponentially with life expectancy rising from 66 in 1950 to an average of 81 for men and 84 for women in 2022. With some periodic exceptions outward migration from Ireland has fallen drastically and Ireland has moved to being a country of significant inward migration. Levels of education among the population have seen similar increases with Ireland having one of the most educated populations in the European Union. There have also been fundamental changes in the composition of the formal labour market particularly regarding the inclusion of women. The number of women engaged in formal employment has more than quadrupled since the 1960's. In 1966 there were 289,144 women in formal employment, the most recent Labour Force Survey Data for Quarter 4 of 2022 tells us that there were 1,198,000 women in formal employment. While these changes are welcome it must also be noted that women are far more likely than men to be in part-time employment with 381,000 females and 174,000 males in part-time work. Similarly, the latest figures reported by Deloitte Ireland in May 2023 show a median gender pay gap of 10.2% and women are far less likely than men to be in positions of leadership or seniority. Women are thus participating in the labour market from a position of disadvantage and one of the main reasons for this is the unequitable distribution of care and housework. To answer the question as to how this has happened, we must take a brief historical look at the role of women in Ireland.

Despite the active role played by women in the Irish Revolution, successive governments in the nascent Irish state passed laws and regulations which severely curtailed the rights and roles of women in the public and civic sphere. Bunreacht Na hÉireann includes in Article 41.2 provisions which recognise the women's life and duties in the home and endeavors to ensure their protection. The Marriage Bar which was formally in place

between the years of 1924 to 1973 legally required women to retire from their civil service jobs after marriage. While there was a legal Bar in the civil service Foley notes the 'deep cultural influence' (Foley 2022, p. 61) of the marriage bar as it was widely observed in other spheres of employment such as teaching and banking. The rationale for the Marriage Bar was that at a time of economic stagnation with fewer jobs to go around it was men as heads of the family who were prioritised for work while women stayed home and looked after the domestic realm. In these terms the male breadwinner was paid a family wage. The male breadwinner model enforced a gender separation where men were predominantly the ones who went out to the formal workplace and women stayed at home to care for children and to look after domestic duties.



There were a range of laws enacted in the early years of the Irish Republic which served to legally enforce this exclusion of women from public and civic life. The 1925 Civil Service Regulation Bill precluded women from applying for certain jobs in the Civil Service, The Juries Bill 1927 formally excluded women from sitting on Juries. The Conditions of Employment Act 1936 restricted where women could work by giving the Minister for Industry and Commerce the power to limit the number of women employed in any industry and to limit the types of industry that could employ women. The same act prohibited women from doing industrial work between the hours of 10pm and 8 am. Many of the inequalities evident today spring from these and many other historical injustices which were enacted upon women.



# Outcomes of Care Inequality

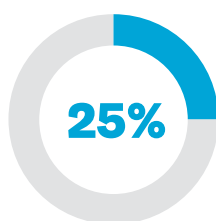
We have already noted some of the long-term outcomes of gender inequality particularly those which relate to gender pay gaps and equality in working conditions. A further feature of the poor distribution of care is that of gender inequalities in public life. The European Institute for Gender Equality gives an annual report which scores EU member states to see how far they are from reaching gender equality. The index uses a scale of 1 to 100 where 1 denotes total inequality and 100 denotes full equality. The scores are compiled based on metrics in 6 core domains namely:

- **Work**
- **Money**
- **Knowledge**
- **Time**
- **Power**
- **Health**

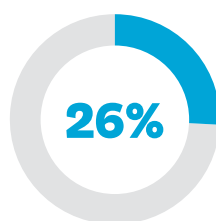
The most recent report from 2021 showed that Ireland ranks highly overall in gender equality with a creditable score of 73.1 which places it 7th overall and 5.1 points above the EU average

of 68. Despite this relatively high position overall the area where Ireland scores particularly low is that of equality of access to power and political decision making with women accounting for a mere 26% of ministers, 27% of members of parliament and 25% share of regional assemblies. McGing and White note how the selection process for picking electoral candidates 'favours well-networked individuals, usually with local political experience and a history of party activism' (2012, p. 10) while also noting how, due to the 'persistent sexual division of care in Irish society women are less likely to possess these types of capital to the same extent as men' (2012, p. 5). A report by the National Council of Women in Ireland (2019) noted how access to childcare was a significant barrier for the participation of women in electoral politics while noting that such barriers were not as significant for male candidates.

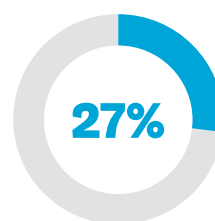
Women's 'implicit and explicit caring responsibilities' (Hanlon 2018, p. 43) give many hidden advantages to men in the labour market, politics and other areas of public life. Yet at the same time this advantage given to men in the public sphere can be seen in some ways as a disadvantage in the private domain of home and family life.



Women in Regional Assemblies



Women as Ministers



Women Members of Parliament

**Ireland scores particularly low in equality of access to power and political decision making for women.**

# Fatherhood



## We have already seen how the designation of the responsibility of care to women has a strong historical and normative basis and we have seen above how this contributed to their relegation from the public and civic sphere.

Conversely the creation of masculinity in terms of being the breadwinner or provider has often acted to exclude men from the valuable and emotionally rewarding practices of care within their own families. In this way historical normative dimensions around care have created a form of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2005) which is focused more on the provision of material goods for the family rather than love and care. Connell (1995) speaks of the 'patriarchal dividend' where men benefit from the patriarchal structures even if they don't agree with or adhere to them. In care terms however Bailey reconsiders this and writes of the 'patriarchal deficit' where broader structures serve to exclude and marginalise fathers as 'structural influences of employment and culturally dominant essentialist ideas about gender place men who are fathers in an ambiguous position' (Bailey 2014, p. 2). This ambiguous position is one where men are expected to be providers and to be successful at work while simultaneously being loving, engaged, and involved fathers. Often the ability to be able to put the desired amount of time into fatherhood and care is curtailed by responsibilities in work and fathers cannot put as much time into their families as they would like as they must negotiate with and balance the competing demands of work and family life.

These normative forms of breadwinner masculinity can serve to become an obstacle in building intimate relationships with children or other family members as the very features of loving relationships such as displaying emotions

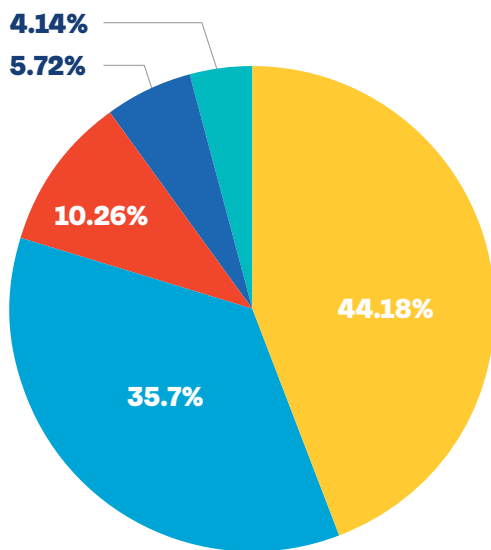
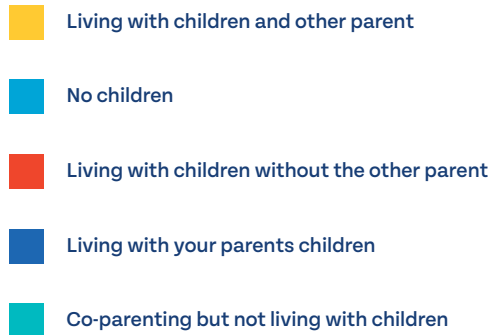
or physical closeness are traits which some types of masculinity act to repress. Research in the Irish context by Hanlon (2012) described how men defined primary caring roles as being unnatural or abnormal for men and thus caring is frequently excluded as a characteristic of acceptable masculine identities.

Sveva Magaraggia writes of how care 'holds the potential for a transformation of intimacy in father-child relationships' (2012, p. 81) and of how this transformation holds the potential for the re-evaluation of the work of social reproduction. She describes how identities are forged in everyday practices and how the meaningful inclusion of fathers in such practices of care holds the potential for a 'transformation of the prescriptive character of socially validated and rewarded aspirations' (2012, p. 88). Being involved in the quotidian activities of care and fatherhood offers the potential for an opening up of the symbolic order and a questioning, re-evaluation and legitimisation of different forms of masculinities. Such newly validated masculinities should be those which are centred on an ethics of love and care.

The unequal distribution of care between the genders means that both the burdens and the benefits are unfairly divided. The equitable division of care and housework would mean that women's involvement in the public sphere would be on a more equal footing but at the same time it would also mean that men and their families would benefit from them taking a more active role in day to day practices of care.

# Sample & Methodology

## Family Composition %



**This survey is part of a larger project entitled ‘State of the World’s Fathers’ which is run in conjunction with Equipundo. The survey has run every 2 years since 2015 and this is its 5th iteration. Globally this round of the survey was answered by 12,511 people in 17 countries namely Argentina, Canada, Rwanda, South Africa, Portugal, Spain, Lebanon, Turkey, China, Mexico, Sweden USA Chile, Croatia, Australia, and India. This is the first time that the study had been run in Ireland and the surveys were carried out via telephone in December 2022.**

For the Irish sample there were 507 respondents 232 men, 267 women and a further 8 who identified as ‘other’ under the gender categorisation. Of the 507 respondents surveyed 326 reported having children, with the breakdown being 156 women and 167 men and 3 other gender participants who had children. All participants were aged between 25 and 65 with approximately 70% of participants aged between 25 and 44. Approximately 35% of participants were aged between 25 and 34, a further 35% were aged between 35 and 44. 20% of the sample were aged 45 to 50 and approximately 10% were aged 55 to 65.

35.7% of our sample did not have children while 44.18% had children and were living with them and the other parent. The remaining 20% of participants had children with 10.26% living with the children but not with the other parent, 4.14% were co-parenting but not living with their children, and the remaining 5.72% were living with their partners children. The composition of the sample means that we have captured a range of family types and living situations.

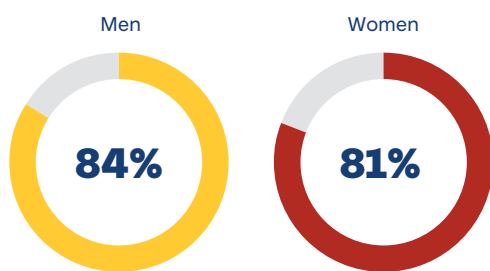
**The survey has run every 2 years since 2015 and this is its 5th iteration. Globally this round of the survey was answered by 12,511 people in 17 countries.**

# Attitudes to Care

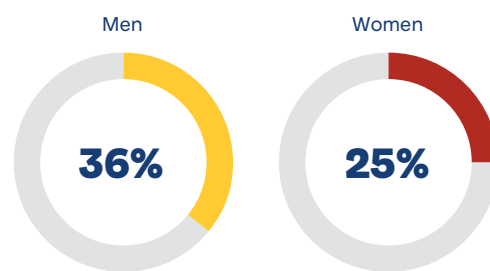
**There was a high value placed on caring for children by our participants. The graph below shows the percentage of those who agreed with each of the statements. Questions were asked in a Likert Scale format where respondents were asked whether they strongly agree, agree, slightly agree, strongly disagree, disagree, slightly disagree or rather not say. For ease of presentation the data presented here is an amalgamation of those who agreed in any way with the statements.**

Both males and females described caring for children as being one of the most enjoyable things in their lives with 84% of male respondents and 81% of female respondents agreeing with this statement. At the same time however a quarter of female respondents and 36% of male respondents describe caring for their children as more exhausting than enjoyable.

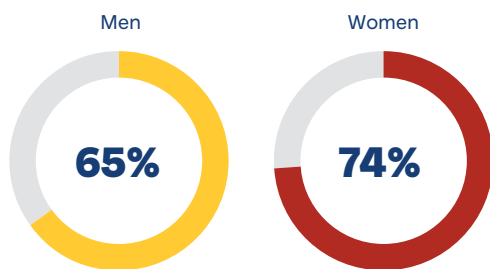
This demonstrates the complexity and ambivalence people can display towards parental care work, it shows how caring for children while being enjoyable is also hard work. It is worth noting however that men are 11% more likely to see this as being the case. Women were 9% more likely to agree that caring for children is worth giving up career opportunities for and 9% more likely to consider working part-time to care for their children. It is at the same time worth noting that the number of fathers who were prepared to work part-time or give up career opportunities is so high with approximately two-thirds of male participants agreeing with these statements. These attitudes to care show that while it is difficult and tiring for many it is a source of great joy for the majority. Care for children is also viewed by most participants as being more valuable than career or work with approximately two-thirds of men and three-quarters of women surveyed agreeing with these sentiments.



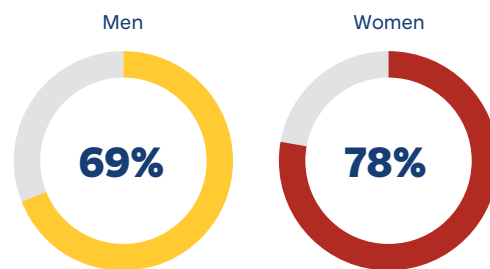
Caring for my children is one of the most enjoyable things in my life



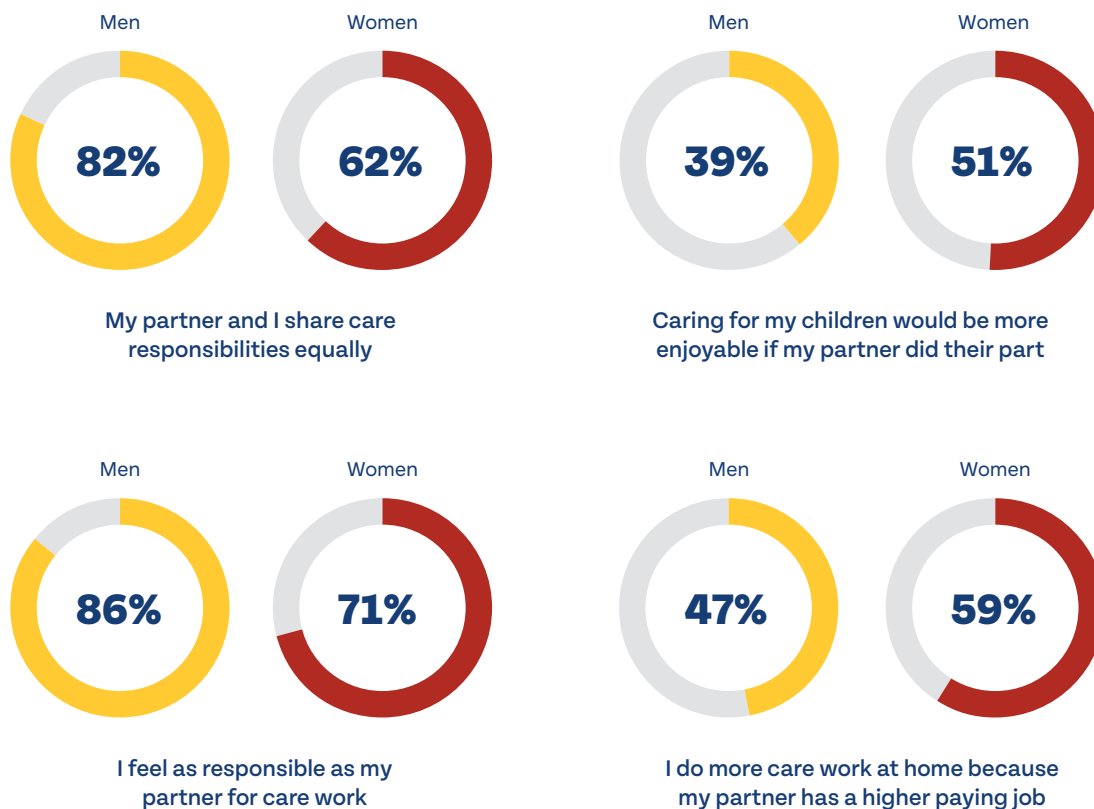
Caring for my children is more exhausting than enjoyable



Caring for my children is worth giving up some career opportunities for



I would consider working part-time for my child

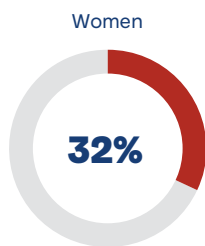
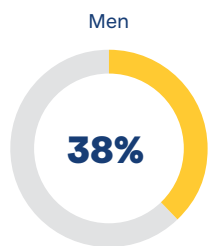


The next set of questions examined participants opinions around the sharing of childcare, there are notable disparities between men and women in the answers to the first statement ‘my partner and I share care responsibilities equally’ with 82% of men and 62% of women agreeing with this. The difference of 20% here is perhaps demonstrative of how men possibly over-estimate the amount of care work they do as well as the extent to which these responsibilities are shared. There is a similar difference between how men and women responded to the statement ‘I feel as responsible as my partner for care work’ with 86% of men and 71% of women agreeing with this statement.

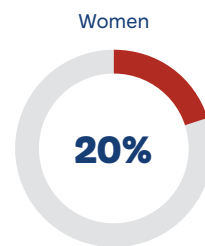
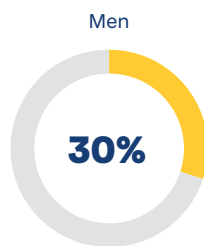
The third statement respondents were asked to respond to is ‘caring for my children would be more enjoyable if my partner did their part’. Here 39% of men and 51% of women agreed which suggests that a significant number of women feel that their partner could do more. The final statement of this set is ‘I do more care work at home because my partner has a higher paying job. Unsurprisingly given the fact of gender pay gaps and the gender inequality in labour markets discussed above there are more women (59%) who agree with this than men (47%).

**Both males and females described caring for children as being one of the most enjoyable things in their lives with 84% of male respondents and 81% of female respondents agreeing with this statement.**

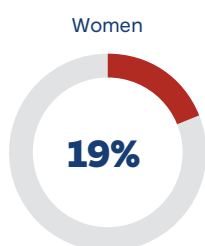
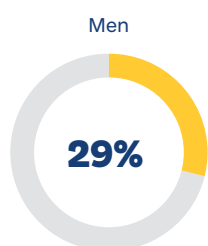
# Gendered Attitudes to Care



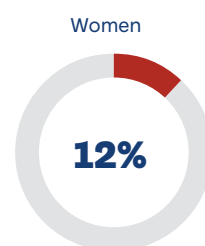
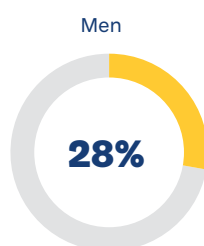
Women who participate in politics or leadership positions cannot also be good wives



Changing nappies, giving kids a bath and feeding kids are mother's responsibilities



Boys should not be taught to sew, cook, clean or take care of their siblings



A man should have the final word on any decisions in the household

**The next set of questions relate to attitudes around gender roles in the home. These questions aimed to measure the extent to which participants agreed with norms which underpin attitudes to gender and roles within the household.**

The first statement aimed at testing agreement with the patriarchal view that women who are wives or mothers must focus on these roles within the home above all else. 38% of men and 32% of women agreed with the statement 'women who participate in politics or leadership positions cannot also be good wives'. Unsurprisingly this statement elicited strong feelings from women with 31% of them disagreeing strongly with the statement whereas 19% of males strongly disagreed. The next statement aimed to test whether certain aspects of childcare were seen as being specifically women's work and it concerned the role of women in carrying out specified childcare tasks. 30% of men and 20% of women agreed with the statement that 'changing nappies, giving kids a bath and feeding kids are a mother's responsibility'. The next statement aimed to examine gendered attitudes to child socialisation, 29% of men and 19% of women agreed with the statement that boys should not be taught to cook, clean or take care of their siblings'. People who agree with this statement are

expressing the view that boys should be raised in a particular way which does not include teaching them about the importance of participating in care and looking after others. Men were 10% more likely than women to agree with this statement which once again shows how men are behind their female counterparts when it comes to underlying ideas around care work and gender equality. The last question in this set aimed to test adherence to the notion that the man is in charge in the home and by extension this question tests the desirability among respondents for an egalitarian marriage. 28% of men and 12% of women agreed with the statement 'a man should have the final word on any decisions in the household' meaning that men were more than twice as likely to agree. 60% of women and 30% of men strongly disagreed with this statement making it twice as likely that women would display strong feelings against it. While a large majority of respondents rejected the patriarchal views expressed by these statements there is still a group of approximately a third of men polled who expressed agreement with them. On average for these 4 statements about 1 in every 5 women agreed with them. This shows again that while most men are aware of and reject patriarchal views on the role of women in the home there are still more men on average than women who hold these views.

# Who cares? How much time is spent caring by task

		IRELAND						
	Child Physical Care	Child Emotional Care	Person w/ Disabilities Overall Care	Elders Emotional Care	Elders Physical Care	House Cleaning	House Food	House Logistics
Fathers	3.2	2.8	3.8	3.8	3.4	2.1	2.0	1.9
Mothers	3.4	3.0	3.6	2.7	2.2	2.6	2.4	1.5

**Care is difficult to measure and as such is not frequently enumerated in official statistics with the outcome being that it is typically undercounted and by extension undervalued. Caring and housework do not usually have public prominence because it is work which is predominantly carried out behind the scenes of public life in the private realm of the home. As care work is unpaid there are no requirements to count the hours completed and so it leaves no records of hours carried out or taxes paid.**

We asked a series of questions which related to time spent daily on specified tasks and the graph above displays averages of what was reported on each task according to gender. Methodologically speaking this survey is not a time use survey where participants are given a 24-hour period and fill in each activity carried out over the 24 hours along with the time spent doing it. Instead for this survey we rely on participants self-reporting the amount of time they spend on each task on a daily basis so there is a possibility of participants over or underestimating the amount of time they spend on each task. At first glance it is clear that our participants seem to have a reported much more equitable split of duties in the home than is apparent in many studies of this type. Men report spending more time on average than women caring for both physical and emotional needs of elderly relatives and they reported spending more time looking after persons with disabilities. They also report spending more time than women doing the logistical work associated with planning family life. With regard to men reporting spending more

time than women looking after elderly relatives and persons with disabilities this could be explained by the composition of the sample where more men than women polled had elderly relatives or people with disabilities that needed care.

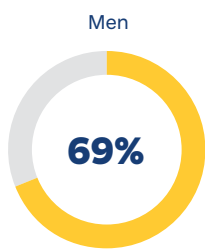
While we have noted above the tendency for men to perhaps overstate the amount of caring and housework that they do it is immediately noticeable that men report on average a similar number of hours doing many tasks as their female counterparts. Despite the similarities reported, once we drill down into the figures the cumulative effects of the differences become apparent. Women reported spending on average 12 minutes daily more than men on the physical care of their children and a further 12 minutes daily on the emotional care of their children. Women reported spending 30 minutes a day more than men cleaning the house and 24 minutes per day more than men taking care of the household food needs. Cumulatively this means that women spend 1 hour and 18 minutes more per day on care and housework than men do and this assuming constancy of effort across the 7 days of the week this would mean that women spend an extra 9.1 hours per week than men doing the activities associated with the day to day running of the house. In comparison to men this equates to considerably more than an extra working day per week that women spend on the day to day tasks of running the household, assuming a 4 week month it equates to a day and a half extra per month that women spend on care of children, housework and feeding the household.

# Paternity Leave

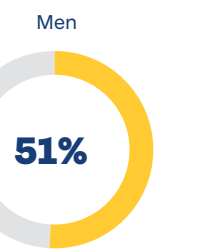
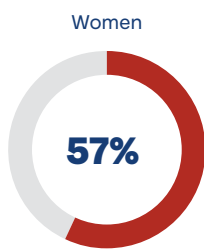
Previous State of the World's Fathers research carried out in the Nordic countries found that despite difficulties in establishing direct lines of cause-and-effect, fathers taking longer paternity leave is associated with a number of benefits including better relationships with their partners, greater satisfaction with their role as a parent and even higher levels of life satisfaction. Using Korean data Kramer et al (2019) find that there is a positive association between father's life satisfaction, job satisfaction and the taking of paternity leave. They further report a positive association between taking paternity leave and positive, beneficial outcomes for fathers, mothers, and society as a whole. In the US context Knoester et al (2019) describe a positive association between the length of paternity leave taken and the engagement and responsibility of fathers up to 1 year after the birth of their child. They similarly note that higher paternal involvement particularly among the cohort of non-resident fathers could be encouraged by an expansion of paternity leave. Other studies in both the European and US context describe how paternity leave can be influential in helping to reduce the likelihood of parental separation as it

acts to alleviate parental conflict while increasing relationship satisfaction particularly for mothers (Newkirk et al 2017; Schober 2012).

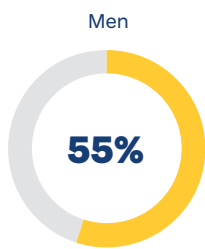
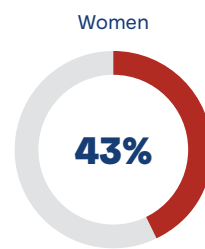
Ireland is a relative newcomer in terms of paid parental and paternity leave as it was one of the last European countries to introduce it in September 2016. At present the leave entitles fathers who have paid the requisite number of PRSI contributions to 2 weeks at a rate of €262 per week to be taken in the first 6 months after the birth of the child. The Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) found that the average take home pay for private sector workers in 2020 was €642 which was 2 and a half times the value of paternity leave. While some organisations offer a top up payment for paternity and parental leave so recipients do not lose out on wages many don't. Survey evidence from Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) claims that a mere 46% of companies offer salary top ups for paternity leave. While all public service employees receive top up payments for paternity leave there is variation in the private sector with small to medium sized enterprises (SME's) far less likely to offer the payments.



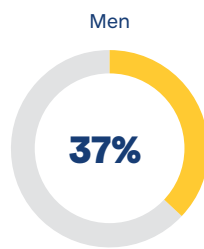
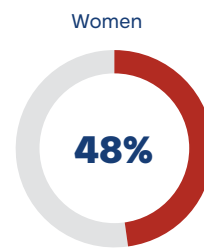
Care leave for me would benefit my partner and my children



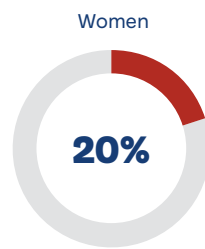
Extra care leave for me would be beneficial for my career/earnings



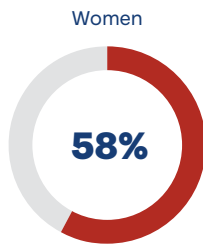
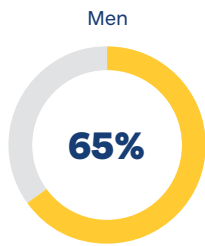
Extra paid care for me would be beneficial for my partners career/earnings



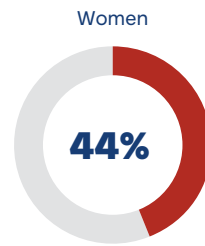
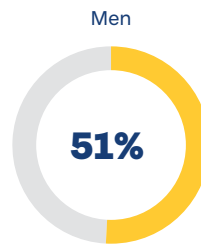
If I could take paid care leave I wouldn't make use of it



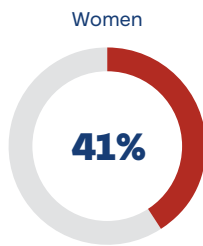
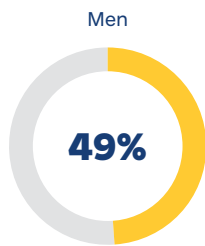




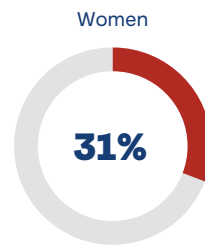
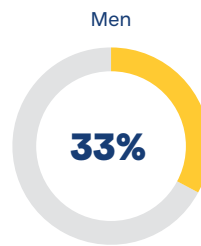
It would be beneficial for my partner and my children if my partner was able to take paid care



Extra care leave for my partner would be beneficial for my career/earnings



Extra paid care for my partner would be beneficial for my partners career/earnings



If my partner could take paid care leave they wouldn't make use of it

As such there are notable inequalities in the take up of paternity leave which are very likely in many cases to coincide with the willingness or ability of the employer to pay the top up. Given the large disparity between average earnings and paternity leave payments it is perhaps unsurprising that take up of the benefit is low with a 2020 analysis paper from IGEES stating that an estimated 1 in 2 eligible people in private sector employment availed of the scheme. Similarly Köppe describes 'socio-demographic inequalities that are associated with take up of paid paternity leave, in particular the occupational segregation of employer top-ups' (2023, p. 2). Given these facts the IGEES paper concludes that 'the scheme does not address the existing disparity in leave entitlements or the low uptake in the rate of paternity leave. As such it is unlikely to support families in the more equal sharing of care responsibilities or address women's underrepresentation in the labour market (Newman & Ryan 2020, p. 3).

We asked participants a series of questions relating to the potential benefits of extra paid care leave for both them and for their partners and children. The first set of questions as displayed above relate to the benefits of the respondent getting extra paid care leave. As is evident from the graphs men are more likely to see how them taking extra paid leave would benefit others with over two-thirds of men stating that it would benefit their partner and

children. Approximately half of men surveyed thought that extra care leave for them would be beneficial for the earnings of their partners and their own earnings. Despite the acknowledged benefits of taking extra paid paternity leave 37% of men agreed with the statement that they would not make use of it were it to be available. This means that a mere 63% of men would take paid leave if it were available to them. There is a notable gender disparity for this statement as women almost half as likely to agree with the statement that if they could get longer paid leave they would not use it.

**63% of men would take paid leave if it were available to them**

The second set of questions around care leave asked participants about the effects of extra paid care leave for their partners. Once again paid care leave was seen by both men and women as being beneficial for their children with approximately 2 thirds of both men and women agreeing with this statement. There are close similarities between men and women regarding the belief that their partner would not take longer paid care leave if it were available.

# Conclusion



**This report has shown that care for children is seen by both men and women as being one of the most important and valued features of their lives. We have shown how patriarchal attitudes regarding gender roles in the home are on the wane with the majority of our respondents rejecting them.**

Men are also taking a larger share of the responsibilities of caring and housework although there are still large gaps with women on average spending 9.1 hours per week more than men doing day to day household activities of caring cooking and cleaning.

In the interests of gender equality, it is imperative that housework and caring is spread equally between men and women. We contend that inequalities in other areas of life such as in the labour market, politics and the public sphere in general can be significantly ameliorated by a more equitable sharing of housework and care.

This is meant in no way to blame men for not doing their share. Gender inequalities are rigid and stubborn, they are copper fastened and held in place by beliefs and attitudes around gender roles. We have seen how these beliefs are changing and how most men and women reject these aspects of patriarchal gender norms. As well as this it is evident that there is a need for increased flexibility of working arrangements for both men and women to facilitate an equitable sharing of housework and caring responsibilities. Structural change is necessary if we are to close the gender gap on work and care done in the home. Such change includes the availability of care leave and the extension of paid parental leave.





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### **State of the World's Fathers Ireland**

This study is part of a larger global survey which was carried out across 13 countries and aimed to examine attitudes around care, fatherhood, and the gendered division of household labour. It looked at attitudes to care as well as practical issues such as the availability and desirability of paternity leave and care leave. It also looked at how care interacts with work in the formal labour market and how structural factors are influential in the practices of delivering care. This report will look specifically at the data gathered which relates to childcare and fatherhood.



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