

MEN IN CARE (MIC):

CARING  
MASCULINITIES IN  
NORTH MACEDONIA

COUNTRY REPORT

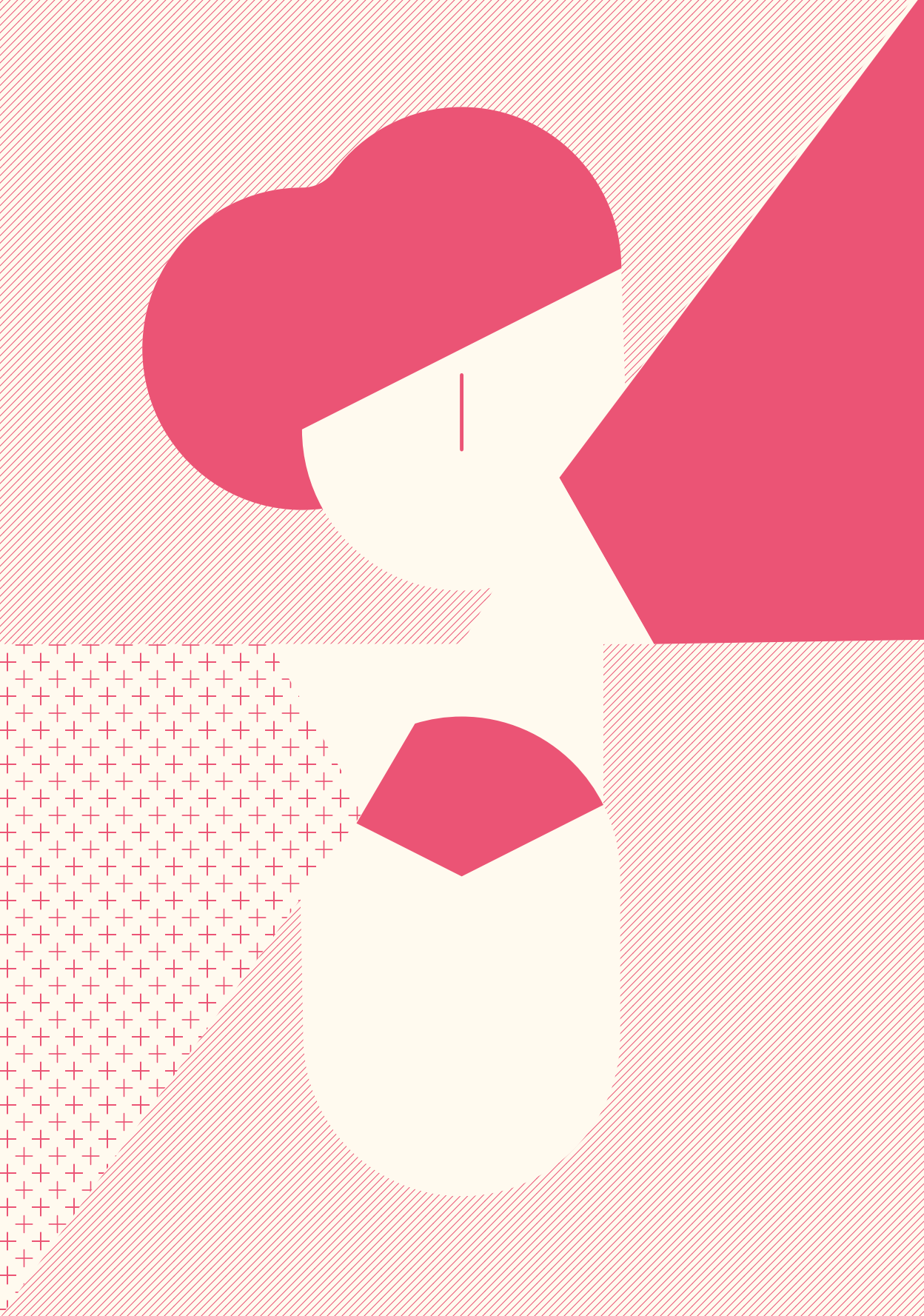
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Men in care



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# MEN IN CARE (MIC): CARING MASCULINITIES IN NORTH MACEDONIA COUNTRY REPORT

AUGUST, 2021

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This report has been written as part of the project Caring Masculinities in North Macedonia, commissioned by the Verein für Männer- und Geschlechterthemen Steiermark (Graz, Austria) and based on financial support from the Austrian Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection.

## About the MIC project

Men in Care is a European a 3-year project (March 2019-Feb 2022) of 12 national organizations (universities, social partners and NGOs) co-funded by the European Commission under the EaSI program (PROGRESS axis). **“Men in Care”** (MiC) aims to improve workplace conditions to promote men taking caring roles in seven countries (Austria, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Poland, Slovenia and Spain). MiC will assess how policies and workplace cultures can change to enable men to become more active in caring for children, elderly, partners, co-workers and friends. MiC partners are: National Distance Education University (project coordinator, Spain), Fundación 1 de Mayo (Spain), Verein für Männer- und Geschlechterthemen Steiermark (Austria), European Network for the Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence (Germany), University of Iceland, REFORM (Resources Centre for Men, Norway), Jagiellonian University (Poland), PLinEU (Poland), Diversity Hub (Poland), The Peace Institute (Slovenia), the Association of Employers of Slovenia and the Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia. [Fourteen associated organizations from seven countries also participate in the project.](#)<sup>1</sup>

As part of the project, Reactor – Research in Action, compiled the country report for North Macedonia, titled Men in Care (MIC): Caring Masculinities in North Macedonia.

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<sup>1</sup> About the project. Available at: <https://www.men-in-care.eu/about>

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The present report summarizes key findings on the issue of gender equality in North Macedonia. Commissioned by the *Verein für Männer- und Geschlechterthemen Steiermark* (Graz, Austria) and based on funding of the *Austrian Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection*, the report is part of the project 'Caring Masculinities in North Macedonia'. It is a cooperation project of the EU project *Men in Care (MiC)*, a project of 26 national partners and affiliated organizations from 7 different European countries (plus ETUC), which aims to reduce barriers for men who want to become involved in caring activities. MiC aims to improve workplace conditions to promote men taking caring roles and will assess how policies and workplace cultures can change to enable men to become more active in caring for children, elderly, partners, co-workers and friends.

North Macedonia has adopted several laws and mechanisms to advance gender equality. The Law on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men obliges public institutions to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men and to integrate gender into their policies, strategies, and budgets through specific measures to reduce gender inequality. Despite significant legal changes, gender gaps and inequalities continue to exist across all levels. This is primarily due to the patriarchal societal discourse governing the diverse spheres of life, which was even furthered by state policies in the recent past.<sup>2</sup>

North Macedonia is characterized by a strong traditional model of division of gender roles. Men are generally considered to be the breadwinners and women are considered co-earners in the best-case scenario. This applies to both couples and singles, and in case of couples with children, women play a key role in childcare and upbringing. According to Eurostat statistics, women in the country represent the majority of the economically inactive population by large, i.e., around 45% of the employable women in the country are neither employed nor seeking for a job<sup>3</sup>. More than half of these employable women are not seeking employment due to family and/or caring responsibilities. On the other hand, only about 4 per cent of inactive men are not

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2 North Macedonia ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Optional Protocol in 1994. It signed the Council of Europe's (CoE) Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating violence against Women in 2011 but ratified it much later, in 2018. This long delay was primarily influenced by the rebuttal of the former ruling party, which refused to ratify the Istanbul Convention and for almost a decade promoted a strong 're-traditionalisation' of the society through unfavorable policies and public discourse.

3 When it comes to employable men, this share is 23% (more details provided at the end of this document)

seeking employment for the same reason. On a daily basis, men in the country spend as far as 18 times less time than women on household and care activities<sup>4</sup>. Meanwhile, the current legal framework in the country, despite being in amending process, still does not recognize shared parental leave that will guarantee both women and men the right to childcare in the early months of pregnancy leave.

The report is structured in four sections. The first part, or second chapter, gives a theoretical overview of the concept of care intertwined with gender identities, and the impact care responsibilities and gender roles have on women and men. It sets the starting framework arguing for the benefit of shared care responsibilities both for men and women. The third and fourth part provide significant and detailed data on existing gender gaps in North Macedonia in paid and unpaid work, respectively. The last part elaborates on the current legal framework of parental leave and the opportunities for introducing more gender sensitive policies that take men in the picture of care too.

## 2. UNPACKING CONCEPTS & DEFINITIONS

People's identities, behaviours and experiences are shaped by social practices built on certain ideologies. Gender identities and gendered practices are part of these. This section is aiming to unfold theoretically some gender roles and social expectations of performing them, construction of (normative) sexualities, and beliefs of what is a 'good' and aspiring behaviour while focusing on men and the burden for both women and men arising from all these practices and ideologies.

There are many accounts for what constitutes normative masculinity and what are the expectations of men, especially in a globalized neoliberal economy such as the present one (Connell 2005, Cornwall, Edström and Greig 2011, Cornwall 2016, Edström et al. 2019). While normative masculinity is not the most common practice by men and changes within context, it is what society expects men to enact. This is what Raewyn Connell defines as hegemonic masculinity, drawing on the Gramscian understanding of hegemony as practices by the ruling not by form of tyranny but by (unconscious) consent (Connell 2005, Gramsci, Forgacs ed. 2000). Hence, both men and women tend to conform to those practices in order to fulfil certain

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<sup>4</sup> See more data and sources in the following sections and the annex.



expectations that build their gender identities. For example, hegemonic masculinities build on certain ideas such as expectations for men to have the breadwinning role in the family, or the notion of men as risk-takers, or men as entrepreneurs, or men as ‘the stronger gender’, i.e. socially accepted stereotypes of gender roles. Recent analyses show men expressing anxiety, depression and frustration over not being able to fulfil these roles in modern and transitional economies (Walker, Cornwall ed. 2016, Edström et al. 2019). If not addressed properly, in a vicious circle, these anxieties often fall on the back of women. Tithi Bhattacharya notes how failures to fulfil the expected role of the ‘man figure’ as a provider furthers the violence towards women (2013).

Such notions are deeply rooted in the prevailing norms and widely accepted in North Macedonia hence, when men fail to perform their breadwinning role, it can become critical and result in increased gender inequalities and harmful practices or side-effects, such as rise in gender-based violence, alcohol consumption, even suicide. Such harmful behaviours, although more commonly practiced by men, negatively influence both men and women. Unfortunately, there are no national studies focusing on men that would, for example, show this impact based on casualization. However, there is a rather robust OSCE led study on Safety and Wellbeing of Women that reveals some traits of more common violent behaviour among male partners who are less educated and/or part of economically struggling households.<sup>6</sup> Other studies also show that the perceived lost control over the normative masculinity prescribed to men often results in substance abuse and violent behaviour (Bhattacharya 2013, Edström et al. 2019, Petkovska 2016). A short study on an eastern town in North Macedonia with a very strong traditional patriarchal environment and a specific case of women as main breadwinners, dominated by the fact that it is a textile industry centre, confirms these assumptions more closely within the local community. (Petkovska 2016).

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5 According to the Ministry of Interior’s official statistics, 94% of all perpetrators of domestic violence are male (last publicly available data - from 2017)

6 Conclusion derived from respondent’s partner characteristics (psychological violence is more commonly indicated by women whose partners do not have any formal education (66%) than on average (42%). In contrast, this figure drops to 34% among women whose partners have tertiary education. The same is also true for physical violence, both since the age of 15 (15% of those whose partners have no formal education versus 6% of those whose partners have at least primary education) and in the 12 months prior to the survey (7% versus 2%). Taken from the OSCE-led Survey on Violence Against Women: North Macedonia - Results Report (May 2019). Available at: <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/419264>

All this constitutes the notion of toxic masculinity, i.e. the embodiment of patriarchal practices that shape boys' and men's lives and harm the majority of women and men but serve the status quo of the patriarchal and neoliberal system. One way to address these issues is to turn to the concept of care and improve work-life balance both for women and men.

The concept of care itself is a list of wide-ranging feelings and activities, such as caring for a person physically or emotionally, or caring for the environment, or caring about oneself, etc. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), "care is at the hearth of humanity, as all human beings are dependent on care to survive and thrive" (2018, 5). However, even though it can have such a wide understanding, the concept is deeply gendered. This arises mainly because of two understandings: (1) care is usually connected to care *for/of someone* instead of also including care *for/of something*, and (2) care has been historically related to women and the expectations about their role and responsibilities both in the household and in the society generally.

Care activities and responsibilities are largely divided in two domains: *direct care*, such as that for children, elderly or nursing an ill partner, and *indirect care*, such as cooking, cleaning, grocery, and shopping.<sup>7</sup> No matter the relation, these activities are all **work** that can be paid or unpaid (ILO 2018). The majority of care work on a world-scale is performed by women, especially unpaid care work (ILO 2018, Oxfam 2020). This influences on shaking balances in women's lives as often they are taking the double burden of having both paid job and unpaid care work. This brings about discussions of the concept of work-life balance.

As the terminology itself suggests, work-life balance means an ideal equilibrium between time spent on work and time spent on leisure and rest. Taking into account that work comprises not only of paid work, but women also disproportionately spend more of their time working on paid and unpaid care activities and men working in recognized professional paid field activities. This leaves both men and women short on balancing their lives and dedicating their time reasonably on jobs, family, fun and rest. Such shortages and imbalances can influence one's happiness and health.

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7 As defined by ILO (for more details see ILO's publication: Care Work and Care Jobs for The Future of Decent Work (executive summary available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/--dgreports/--dcomm/--publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_633166.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/--dgreports/--dcomm/--publ/documents/publication/wcms_633166.pdf)

When it comes to balancing responsibilities among parents within a local context, a recent study by Reactor<sup>8</sup> focusing on experiences and attitudes relating to distance learning in primary and secondary schools confirms that women, i.e. mothers/female guardians were by far the primary caregivers for their children while the schools were closed (due to the pandemic with COVID-19). There are two indicators substantiating this disbalance: (1) the general gender structure of the respondents (88% were female, and target respondents were selected based on the criterion: the family member who generally spends most of their time with the child/children) and (2) the fact that over one third of all the male respondents who spent most of their time with the child/children (12% at total) still replied that their partner/wife devoted most of her time to learning and working with the child/children (while only 6% of the female respondents said it was mainly done by their partner/husband)<sup>9</sup>. A study on the influence of COVID-19 on men and women in the country, further elaborates and confirms that the pandemic has significantly increased the hours that women spend performing unpaid domestic work and caring for children, with the exception of buying and purchasing groceries. The increase in time spent on caring activities and domestic work is greater among those who are married/cohabitating and have children. (Bashevaska, Luchsinger Sidhu 2020)

Another, EU report dealing with the gender pay gap, focuses on the valuation and distribution of paid work and unpaid care work, and strongly recommends a sooner change of the idea that caring is a women's responsibility within the household and that it is done for free, especially because of the momentous impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the care sector. (EIGE 2020)<sup>10</sup>

Although there are no studies focusing on men and masculinity to delve deeper into these aspects, the mentioned examples provide enough evidence that we need a two-fold approach that tackles the uneven sharing of care work if we want a more gender-equal society. Firstly, we need changes at the household level, where the sharing of care tasks between women and men

8 Conducted for UNICEF, during the summer 2020. Full report is not publicly available, information included here is shared with consent.

9 Based on direct answers to the question: Of all the persons involved in helping with school obligations, who was the one who devoted most of their time on learning and working with the child/children? (See Figure 10 in the Annex section)

10 A report prepared by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) at the request of the German Presidency and dealing with the gender pay gap (see end-document references for a direct link). It also uses data from the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS), which has also been conducted in North Macedonia since 2010. Due to COVID-19 the last wave of this survey was terminated (fieldwork halted in May 2020 will be repeated in 2021, data will be published by the end of 2022). More information at: <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/2021/european-working-conditions-survey-2021>

becomes the norm and secondly, we need accessible and affordable professional care services that can help tackle the rising care needs expected in the EU, as the population ages. (EIGE 2020)

Thus, state and private policies should navigate towards creating working environments that promote and support work-life balance initiatives. Such initiatives can include establishing childcare facilities on the office's premises, flexible working arrangements, dual parental leave, affordable, safe and available public transport, accessible leisure, sport and fun centres, etc. This can significantly improve the quality of life of people and their contribution to society and work.

### 3. GENDER GAPS IN PAID WORK

Compared to the European Union (EU) member states and neighbouring Western Balkan countries, North Macedonia has one of the lowest employment rates and one of the highest gender employment gaps (Eurostat 2019a). The employment rates of men and women in North Macedonia show a slow, non-steady growth in the last decade, but the gender gap in employment is constantly high (Eurostat 2019b) (Figure 1). Last available data indicate that the gender employment gap in North Macedonia is 19.7 percentage points<sup>11</sup> (p.p.) while the EU average (EU-27) is 12.1 p.p (ibid).

Confirming the intersectionality of gender inequalities, the employment gap among rural men and women in North Macedonia grows to 26.4 p.p.(State Statistical Office 2020a). On the other hand, the gap in employment narrows among men and women with higher educational attainment (4 p.p. among those with tertiary education), suggesting that formal education is a significant buffer against gender-based discrimination. However, simultaneously affirming that women “need to work harder” to be given a chance for paid employment (Figure 2). In fact, on average, employed women are more educated than employed men, implying that women need to fulfil higher standards to obtain a paid job (Figure 3). Similar discriminatory pattern can be concluded by the activity rate inequalities.

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11 This is the gender employment gap among men and women aged 15-64. SDG 5 indicator tracks the gender employment gap among men and women aged 20-64 which in North Macedonia is 21.3 p.p. and it is almost twice as high compared to the EU average (EU-27 = 11.8 p.p.).

The socio-economic inequalities between men and women can also be discerned from the vertical and horizontal gender-based seclusion on the labour market. Men are 100% of CEOs and 75% of executives in North Macedonia's publicly listed companies (EIGE 2020). More generally, men are 73.3% of employers and 78% of the self-employed while women predominate only among the unpaid family workers (State Statistical Office 2020b). Analysing the inequalities horizontally, the occupational segregation suggests that women are overrepresented in precarious, low-paid industries such as the textile, leather and garment industry where 80% of the employed are women (State Statistical Office 2019).

Both vertical and horizontal disproportions contribute to the rise of gender pay and pension gaps. According to the rankings of the Gender Equality Index, in the domain of money, which measures gender inequalities in financial resources and economic situation, North Macedonia has the third lowest ranking compared to all EU member states (Bashevskva 2019). The last official data on gender pay gap for North Macedonia is for 2014, suggesting unadjusted gender gap in earnings of 9.1 p.p., but independent research based on official data demonstrates a larger gap of about 18-19 p.p. (Petreski and Mojsoska-Blazevski 2015). More intriguingly, the research shows that when adjusted for personal and labour market characteristics (such as education and work experience) the gender gap instead of decreasing, further rises suggesting that inequalities in earnings reflect a persistent gender-based discrimination on the labour market. North Macedonia lacks official data on gender gap in pensions, but men have significantly longer duration of working life on average, compared to women (37.5 years for men versus 25.5 years for women) (Eurostat 2018).

Being part of the labour force, women in North Macedonia face deeply engrained discrimination, summarized in large and persistent gender gaps in employment and earnings and an entrenched seclusion on lower working positions and in low-paid industries. But a large share of women in North Macedonia are entirely left out of the labour force and are considered to be economically inactive (Figure 4) (Eurostat 2020a). Nearly half, i.e., 45.2% of the working age women are neither employed nor unemployed, meaning they are not registered as active job seekers. The difference in participation in the labor force between men and women in North Macedonia is 22.5 p.p. which is twice as high compared the EU average (EU-27 = 11.8 p.p.) (ibid). Again the gender gap in participation declines with educational attainment (Figure 5) and rises among rural men and women (29.1 p.p) (State Statistical Office 2020a), affirming the previous conclusion of multi-layered inequalities.

Nearly half of the working age population of women are left out of the labour market, categorized as inactive. This inevitably poses the question what the reasons are for such state of affairs. According to the official statistics, 51.9% of the inactive population of women (aged 15-64) are not seeking employment because of family/caring responsibilities (Figure 6). In comparison, only 3.8% of inactive men are not seeking employment for the same reason (Eurostat 2019c). The striking difference is once again a firm confirmation of the still persistent traditional divide that casts women as exclusively responsible for family duties, performing the “invisible” unpaid labour of caring, while (their) men are “the providers”, doing the paid work, with prospects of career and social security benefits. The contingency of the caring/family responsibilities as reason of inactivity is clearly present on EU level also, but the divide is comparably less striking although still salient with 26% of inactive women not seeking employment compared to 3.3% of men who are inactive for family/caring responsibilities (ibid).

Among the inactive population of working age women, 55% are registered by the official state statistic as “housewives” – a category that it is persistently and hundred per cent represented by women and a category that in the official state statistical nomenclature exists only as a “feminative” (State Statistical Office 2020c). These women shoulder the burden of household work; however, their labour of care is not financially compensated trapping them in economic dependency and facing the risk of economic violence. Since these women are not registered as actively looking for employment, they are left without unemployment benefits and without pension benefits on the long run.

## 4. GENDER GAPS IN UNPAID WORK

The gendered access to paid employment emanates from and it is reversely mirrored within the unequal division of the unpaid labour of care. Women and girls across the world, on average are performing more than three-quarters of the total amount of unpaid care or 75% of the total hours spent on domestic work, cleaning, cooking and caregiving for children, elderly and others in need of support and care (Charmes 2019). The billions of hours of work dedicated to caring services, although vital for our survival and thriving, are unrecognized by the mainstream economy, and thus are unvalued and unpaid. But the free labour of care is not free because it costs women. Disproportionally sharing the workload of domestic care services, women are either both time poor and struggling to balance professional with family responsibilities or are fully withdrawn in

the sphere of the “private” performing the domestic duties without access to formal employment and the resulting benefits such as paid career and social security.

On average women in North Macedonia perform 72.5% of the total unpaid care work, while men’s contribution barely exceeds one fourth of the total workload (ibid) (Figure 8). On a daily basis, compared to men, women spend 18 times more time on washing dishes, 12 times more time on cleaning, 9 times more time on cooking and 3 times more time on childcare (State Statistical Office 2015).

The official statistics for North Macedonia produced with Time-use Surveys, which analyse how people use their time on a daily basis, confirm the stereotypical pattern of gendered division, showing that on average men spend more time on paid work (employment), while women devote more time on unpaid care work (ibid). In one working day, on average 70.9% of the time spend on work for men is compensated with payment while only 37.6% of women’s time spend on work is paid (Charmes 2019) (Figure 9). Consequentially, 29.1% of the time spend on work is unpaid for men, while women on average spend 62.4% of the working time on unpaid labour (ibid). When considering the time spent on both paid and unpaid work, it is obvious that the working day of women is on average longer – to be precise 22.9%<sup>12</sup> longer than the working day of men, but unfortunately the domestic labour of care is left out of the nomenclature of the formal economy.

If the unpaid care work of women in North Macedonia is valued at a minimum wage, it would have a monetary value of 1,917,895,508 €<sup>13</sup>, which is 17.18% of the gross domestic product (GDP) of North Macedonia for 2019<sup>14</sup>. Domestic services consist 89.7% of that work, 9.8% is devoted on caregiving services and 0.4% on community services (volunteer work, helping other households etc.). Taken all this in consideration, it is time to finally recognize the value of unpaid care and start to care about the informal economy of care.

Target 5.4 of the fifth Sustainable Development Goal is defined as “Recognize and value unpaid

12 The calculation is based on data provided in Charmes, J. 2019. The Unpaid Care Work and the Labour Market. An analysis of time use data based on the latest World Compilation of Time-use Surveys. International Labour Office – Geneva: ILO, 2019. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3824AoA>

13 The calculations are made according to the methodology elaborated in Revollo E., P. 2020. Time to Care: Unpaid and underpaid care work and the global inequality crisis. Methodology note. DOI: 10.21201/2020.5419

14 The nominal value for North Macedonia’s GDP for 2019 is taken from the Ministry of Finance of North Macedonia. Macroeconomic indicators (March 2020). Available at: <https://finance.gov.mk/mk/node/401>

care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.” (United Nations, 2015, 18). Although some changes have been made to increase the availability of public care services, the data for North Macedonia show that only 8.8% of children aged less than 3 years are in formal childcare whereas the EU average (EU-27) is 34.7% (Eurostat 2020b). The new and reformed Law on Social Protection defines social protection schemes through which the holders of the informal care economy could professionalize their services and receive cash-for-care transfers if they register as authorized service providers, but the impact of these reforms has yet to be assessed (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 104/19, 146/19 and 275/19).

## 5. MEN IN CARE.

### PARENTAL AND PATERNAL LEAVE POLICY

Current legislative framework in North Macedonia allows up to maximum seven days of leave from work for fathers upon birth or adoption of child/children (Official Gazette of Republic of Macedonia, No. 27/2016). However, according to the Law on Labour Relations this leave is not considered as paternity leave but as leave related to family matters (Official Gazette of Republic of Macedonia, No. 27/2016). Furthermore, unlike the maternity leave which is fully covered by the Health Insurance Fund of North Macedonia, the leave designated to new fathers is covered by the employers and the possibility to use up to seven days paid leave depends on the collective work agreements signed in different industries and sectors.

Maternity leave for mothers is nine months (or up to 15 months for more than one child or newborn) fully covered by the Health Insurance Fund (100% of women’s monthly salary) (Official Gazette of Republic of Macedonia, No. 27/2016). Additionally, maternity leave can be prolonged with additional leave of unpaid three months that can be used divided in three separate periods or at once until the child is three years old. It is important to be noted that maternity leave benefits are granted only for employed women under permanent or fixed-term employment contracts.

The current Law on Labor Relations grants the direct right to parental leave only to mothers (maternity leave), while fathers are able to use parental leave only through their employed



partners (the mothers) in case when mothers are not able to use the leave (e.g. in case of mother's death) or are willingly giving up on their right to use the full 9 months of parental leave and transfer that right to the father (Official Gazette of Republic of Macedonia, No. 27/2016, Article 167). These provisions on parental leave in the current legislative framework do not fully recognize the right to parental leave for both mothers and fathers, grant the primary parental role to the mothers, and limit the opportunity for paternity leave granted to fathers as their own right that is clearly distinguished and not derived from the right to parental leave of the mothers. Furthermore, current legislation does not provide opportunity for shared models of parental leave, which would consider the role of both parents in the care and raising of the children and would enable sharing and combination of the parental, paternity and maternity leave according to the needs of the parents, both mothers and fathers.<sup>15</sup>

The current legislative framework does not support country's strategic goals for advancement of gender equality stipulated in the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2013-2020 (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2013) and it is not in line with the recommendations of the international ratified declarations and conventions such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women – CEDAW (UN 1979), Beijing Declaration and Platform for action (UN 1995), Agenda 2030 (UN 2015), and the International Labour Organisation recommendations on the need for recognition of maternity, paternity and parental leave as three separate rights granted for both parents (Addati et al. 2014). Furthermore, as an EU candidate country, North Macedonia is expected to harmonize the legislative framework with the EU acquis, taking into considerations the new EU Directive 2019/1155 on work-life balance for parents and carers (Official Journal of the EU 2019). Finally, the Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report for the country prepared by the CEDAW Committee in 2018 highlight the need for improvement of the current legislation by introducing mandatory parental leave and promotion of the role of men as fathers and carers (CEDAW, 2018).

Since 2018, positive developments in terms of legislative changes and improvements have been announced by the relevant ministers (previous and current) of the Ministry of labour and social policy, the responsible ministry for labour policies and gender equality. The new Law on labour relations has been in a prolonged process of drafting and consultations with different

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15 Apart from the strong traditional model of division of gender roles, the unfavourable legal environment could also have a significant impact on the low percentage of men parents/guardians taking up their right to parental leave. Available data reveal that the percentage of men's share/take-up rate of parental leave is 0.6%, as opposed to the high 99.4% for women.

stakeholders (primarily trade unions, employers' organisations, representatives from civil society organisations working on labour rights and other stakeholders), promising positive changes in terms of parental leave by introduction of paternity leave for fathers and opportunity for shared parental leave models for parents.

## 6. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✔ The impact care responsibilities and gender roles have on women and men is strong and there are powerful arguments for the benefit of shared care responsibilities for both men and women.
- ✔ Immediate changes in national legislation need to be advocated and laws need to better recognize shared parental leave that will guarantee both women and men the right to childcare in the early months of pregnancy leave. The Government needs to introduce more gender sensitive policies that take men in the picture of care too.
- ✔ State and private policies should navigate towards creating working environments that promote and support work-life balance initiatives. Such initiatives can include establishing childcare facilities on the office's premises, flexible working arrangements, dual parental leave, affordable, safe, and available public transport, accessible leisure, sport and fun centres, etc. This can significantly improve the quality of life of people and their contribution to society and work.
- ✔ Improving workplace conditions to promote men taking caring roles and changing policies and workplace cultures to enable men to become more active in caring must happen alongside effective shifts in the overall societal norms related to gender and the prevailing notion that care is a feminine concept. Only by succeeding in shifting the norms and beliefs (through education curricula, preschool programmes, raising awareness through well-tailored and wide-reaching public campaigns...) we can alleviate the strong traditional model of division of gender roles that prevents men to feel at home in the care domains.

## 7. REFERENCES

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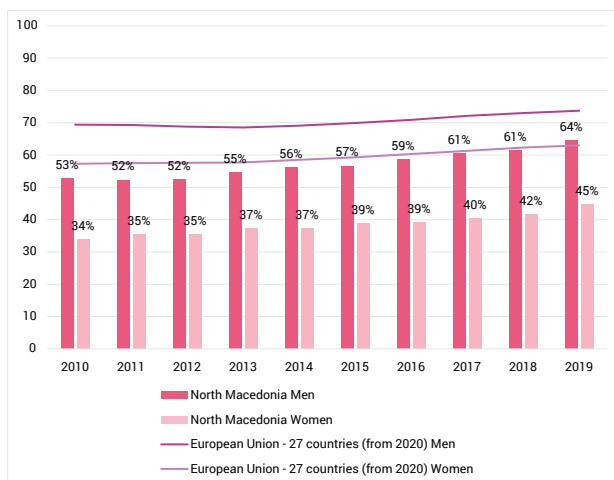
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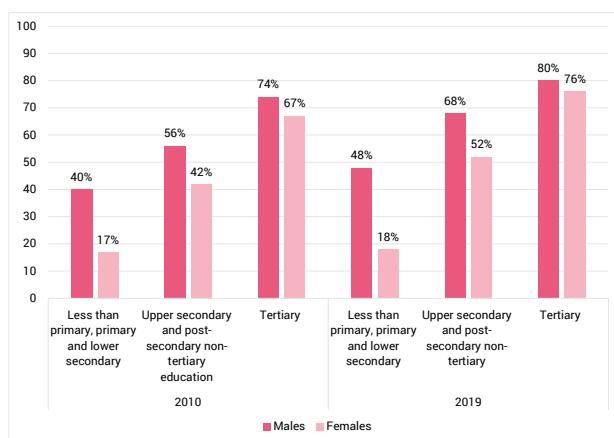
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## 8. ANNEX



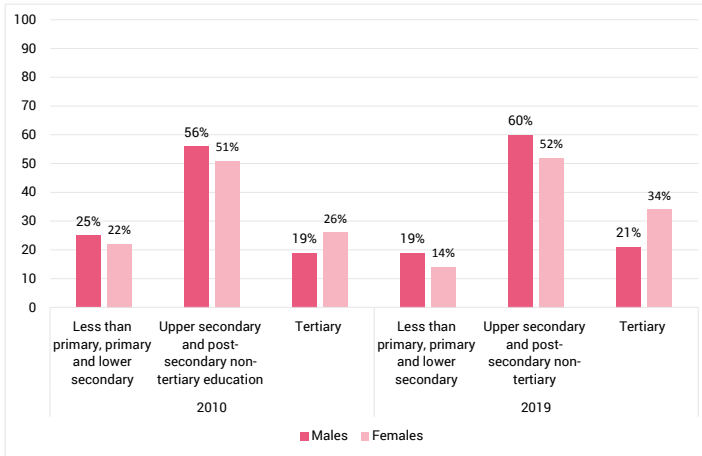
**Figure 1. Employment rates by gender in North Macedonia and the European Union (EU-27). 2010-2019.**

Source: Eurostat, Age class from 15 to 64 years.



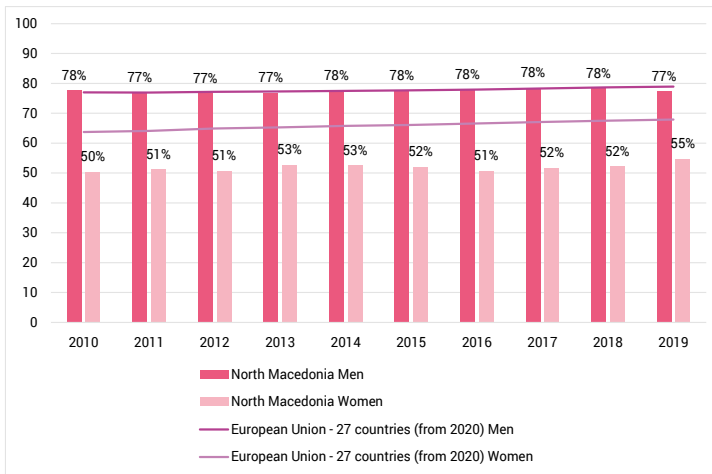
**Figure 2. Employment rates by gender and educational attainment level in North Macedonia, 2010 and 2019.**

Source: Eurostat, Age class from 15 to 64 years.



**Figure 3. Employed men and women by educational attainment, 2010 and 2019.**

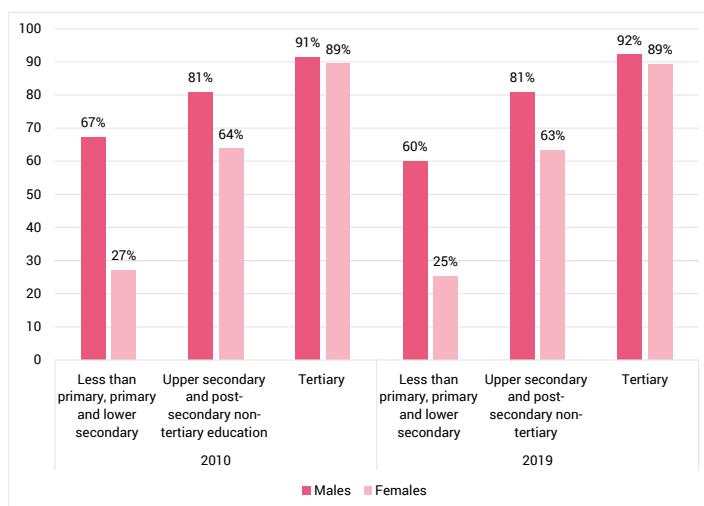
Source: Calculations of the percentages are made based on the dataset on Employment by sex, age and educational attainment level (1 000), Eurostat.



**Figure 4. Activity rates by gender in North Macedonia and the European Union (EU-27), 2010-2019**

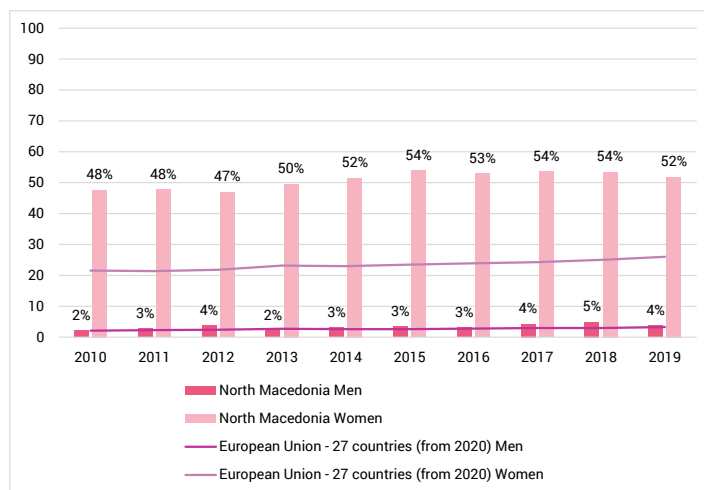
Source: Eurostat, Age class from 15 to 64 years.





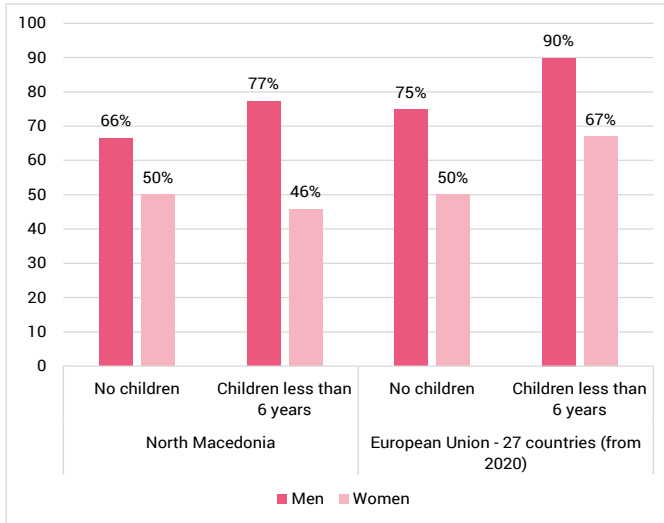
**Figure 5. Activity rates by gender and educational attainment level in North Macedonia, 2010 and 2019.**

Source: Eurostat, Age class from 15 to 64 years.



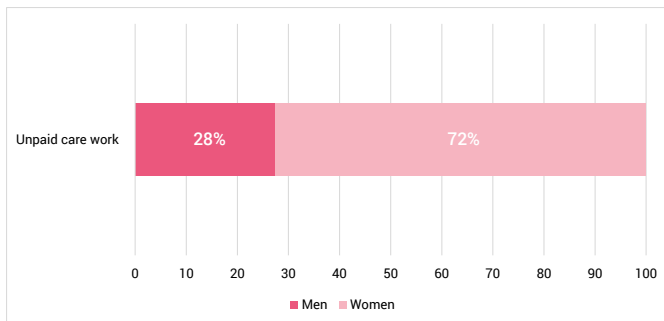
**Figure 6. Inactive population not seeking employment because of family/caring responsibilities, by gender, in North Macedonia and the European Union (EU-27), 2010-2019.**

Source: Eurostat, Age class from 15 to 64 years.



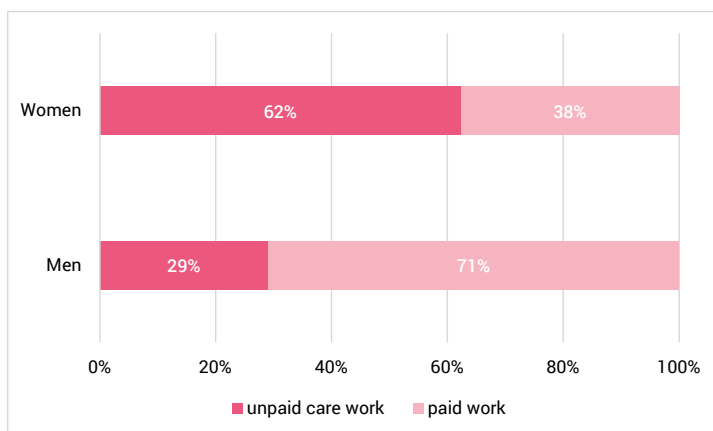
**Figure 7. Employment rate by gender and age of youngest child (%) in North Macedonia and the European Union (EU-27), 2019**

Source: Eurostat, Age class from 15 to 64 years.



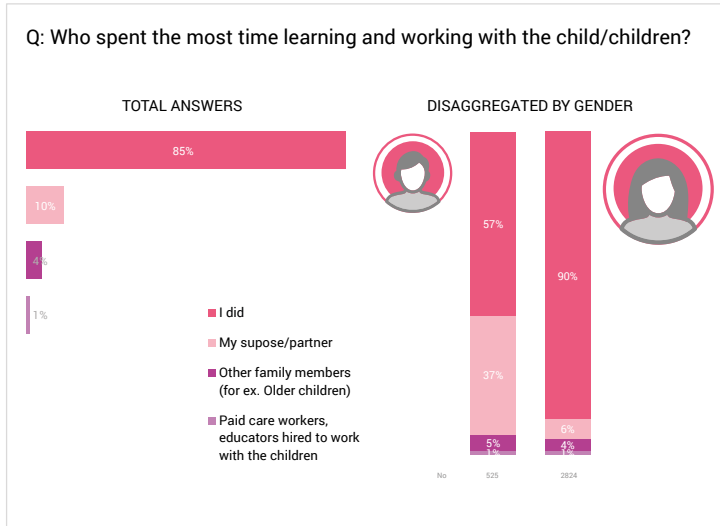
**Figure 8. Women's and men's share of total unpaid care work, 2014/2015**

Source: Charmes, J. (2019). The Unpaid Care Work and the Labour Market. An analysis of time use data based on the latest World Compilation of Time-use Surveys. International Labour Office – Geneva: ILO, 2019. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3824AoA>. The author's calculations are based on data in State Statistical Office (2015). Time use survey, 2014/2015.



**Figure 9. Share of unpaid care work and paid work in total women's and men's work, 2014/2015**

Source: Charmes, J. (2019). The Unpaid Care Work and the Labour Market. An analysis of time use data based on the latest World Compilation of Time-use Surveys. International Labour Office – Geneva: ILO, 2019. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3824AoA>. The author's calculations are based on data in State Statistical Office (2015). Time use survey, 2014/2015



**Figure 10. Experiences and attitudes relating to distance learning: balancing responsibilities.**

Source: UNICEF Skopje (2020). Experiences and Attitudes Relating to Distance Learning During the Pandemic with COVID-19. An online survey conducted by Reactor – Research in Action for UNICEF Skopje Office (not publicly available at the time of finalising this report). Database with answers from parents of primary school children, total number of answers, N=3394