

Employment and Social Developments in Europe

Egalitarian, traditional or neither? Gender attitudes towards work across EU Member States

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Egalitarian, traditional or neither? Gender attitudes towards work across EU Member States

Written by Jakub Caisl

Abstract

This paper provides a detailed mapping of gender attitudes towards work across the European Union. Using latent class analysis, the paper shows that most of the EU population supports gender equality in the labour market and within households. A third has mixed attitudes, holding egalitarian beliefs in some areas only, and the remaining tenth has traditional views that fully support the male-breadwinner model. The aggregate picture should not obscure considerable geographical variation - while egalitarian attitudes are widespread in some Member States (notably in northern EU), they are much less common in others. The attitudes also vary across population groups, with egalitarian beliefs considerably less common among those without tertiary education and on low incomes (especially if they are men), as well as those with right-wing preferences and religious beliefs.

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1. Introduction

Over the last two decades, EU labour market became more gender equal in several ways. Women's employment continued catching up with men's, as did their hourly wages and overall earnings, which resulted in declines in corresponding gender gaps.¹ These gaps narrowed especially among those without substantial caring responsibilities. Considerable gender differences remain in career trajectories of parents due to negative impacts of motherhood on employment, which have long-lasting consequences for women's earnings, promotions and pensions.² Women are still underrepresented in key decision-making posts, but the share of women in these jobs grew both in the world of business and in politics.³ In contrast, most occupations remain gender segregated, with few changes over time (largely linked to slight improvements in women's representation in certain jobs, for example in science, technology, engineering and mathematics).⁴

The shift towards more gender-balanced division of unpaid work within households was less pronounced. Women in the EU spend less time on housework, and to some extent on care for children and older persons, than they did in the past. This mostly reflects an overall decrease in time spent on these activities within households rather than an increased involvement of men.⁵ Thus, women still take on a lion's share of care and household work at home, which limits the time they can dedicate to their paid jobs and leaves them with heavier workloads when both paid and unpaid work is added up.⁶ Overall, the progress towards gender equality is stronger in the domain of paid work than in the domain of unpaid work and leisure activities according to the European Gender Equality Index.⁷

These trends were also accompanied by changes in attitudes to the roles of women and men (also referred to as gender attitudes) in the labour market and within households. More than 60 % of the EU population consider it normal for mothers of young children to work and agree that women's career ambitions are not secondary to their family responsibilities, while men are no longer thought of as the sole providers for the family. These more egalitarian attitudes were in minority prior to 2000s in the EU. In contrast, attitudes towards sharing of family responsibilities and household chores within households have seen less change. Less than a half of people in the EU consider sharing household chores as important for partnership and marriage.8

Large differences remain across EU Member States both in women's labour market outcomes and in gender attitudes towards work.9 In fact, these attitudes and outcomes often

¹ (European Commission, 2024a); (Bettio, 2017)

² (European Commission, 2024b); (Kleven, Landais, & Leite-Mariante, 2023); (EIGE, 2024)

³ (EIGE, 2023)

⁴ (European Commission, 2023); (Eurofound and European Commission Joint Research Centre, 2021); (EIGE, 2018)

⁵ (European Commission, 2024a)

⁶ (Bettio, 2017); (Hochschild & Machung, 2012)

⁷ (EIGE, 2023)

⁸ (European Commission, 2024a)

⁹ (European Commission, 2024a); (Begall, Grunow, & Buchler, 2023); (Knight & Brinton, 2017)

seem linked together. For example, in northern Member States with high levels of gender equality in the world of work, notably Denmark, Finland and Sweden, over two thirds (in some case as much as 80%) of people share egalitarian gender attitudes towards work. In contrast, in some central and eastern European countries (such as Bulgaria, Czechia, Poland, Romania or Slovakia), lower levels of gender equality are accompanied by mixed attitudes, where egalitarian beliefs regarding some aspects of women's and men's lives tend to co-exist with traditionalist beliefs regarding others.

A wealth of research highlights that traditional gender attitudes hinder women's labour market participation and tend to be associated with larger gender gaps in labour market outcomes.¹⁰ This has important implications for EU policy because gender equality in the labour market (and beyond) is a key principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights, a strategic EU policy initiative aiming to ensure that fundamental rights of citizens are upheld in the EU. The 2021 action plan implementing the Pillar outlined the ambition to halve the gender employment gap by 2030 as a part of efforts to reach the EU employment target, implying a reduction in the EU-level gap from 10.9 percentage points (peps) in 2021 to 5.5 pps in 2030. The EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 highlights gender stereotypes as a crucial challenge to overcome when striving for gender equality in the EU labour market.

This paper adds to previous research by providing a comprehensive mapping of gender attitudes across EU Member States and different segments of EU population based on the newest available data from the European Values Study. The next section provides an overview of previous research on gender attitudes towards work and outlines in more detail how this paper adds to earlier findings. This is followed by a description of the data used in this research and its methodology. Finally, we present key empirical results of the analysis and provide a short discussion of their policy implications.

2. Previous research on gender attitudes towards work

Previous quantitative research on prevalence of different gender attitudes towards work usually relies on large-scale surveys exploring values held by respondents. These surveys¹¹ explore gender attitudes by asking respondents to agree or disagree with a battery of statements regarding women and men in the labour market and within households. While the content of these surveys varies, they tend to cover normative statements about different roles women and men (should or are better placed to) undertake, the distribution of paid and unpaid work within households, the consequences of working motherhood for family life, and about acceptance of privileged treatment of men in the labour market (also referred to as male privilege, including, for example, granting men a priority access to scarce jobs). 12

¹⁰ (Fortin, 2005); (Bertrand, Kamenica, & Pan, 2015); (Blau, Kahn, Liu, & Papps, 2013); (Moriconi & Rodriguez-Planas, 2021); (Olivetti, Patacchini, & Zenou, 2020); (Guetto, Luijkx, Scherer, & Stefani, 2015); (Lietzmann & Frodermann, 2023); (Lippmann, Georgieff, Alexandre, & Senik, 2020)

¹¹ E.g. European Values Study; World Values Study; Eurobarometer surveys dedicated to gender equality related topics; survey on gender gaps in unpaid care, individual and social activities carried out by the European Institute for Gender Equality; or national surveys such as the General Social Survey in the US. In this context, it is also important to highlight an upcoming Eurobarometer survey on gender attitudes in the EU, whose results are planned to be published in the autumn of 2024.

^{12 (}Davis, Greenstein, & N., 2009)

Earlier studies often measured gender attitudes through indicators whose values ranged from traditional to egalitarian.¹³ In this measurement framework, traditional attitudes comprise a range of beliefs that underpin the different roles of women and men hold in the labour market, within the household, and in the society more broadly. A typical person with such attitudes would believe women and men to be essentially different in at least some of their traits, such as women being better at taking care of children or men having better leadership skills. They would therefore think women and men should have different roles in the society that reflect these traits (notably that women should be the primary care providers at home, whereas men should work to financially provide for the family) and they would support male privilege in the labour market. In contrast, egalitarians would reject statements about essential differences between women and disapprove of statements that prescribe gendered division of roles within the household or support male privilege.

While empirical research usually found progress from traditional towards more egalitarian values in Europe, it also showed that there are other attitudes that blend egalitarian with traditional views. 14 One study found that, between 1990 and 2010, the proportion of egalitarians among the population of European OECD countries grew from about a fourth to more than a third, while the share of traditionalists declined from more than a third to something less than a tenth. 15 More recent analysis across the whole EU indicates that the share of egalitarian opinions likely continued to grow into the 2010s. 16 At the same time, these studies highlight that sizeable parts of the population do not fit into fully traditional or fully egalitarian categories, nor can they be considered as simply progressing from one to the other (e.g. moderate traditionalists or egalitarians). Rather, there is evidence of gender attitudes in which both egalitarian and traditional views co-exist.

Firstly, individuals may have different views of gender equality in the public sphere of paid employment and in the private sphere of the family.¹⁷ These spheres are closely interrelated but work and family have distinct meanings for individuals, which can lead to differences in attitudes in private and public life. For instance, some parenting approaches emphasise the necessity of parental, typically maternal, intensive involvement in children's lives to support the children's development.¹⁸ This may lead to negative perceptions of mothers with young children who work (full-time), especially where working arrangements, family-related leaves, and work-life balance policies provide limited flexibility to combine work with raising children. Yet, these parenting approaches can be compatible with broader support for gender equality in the labour market to the extent this does not interfere with children's needs and may even demand certain degree of sharing of caring responsibilities among parents.

Secondly, gender essentialism offers another frame in which egalitarian and nonegalitarian views may co-exist. Essentialists who regard women and men as fundamentally different in some of their traits may still hold some gender egalitarian attitudes (resulting in what

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ (Begall, Grunow, & Buchler, 2023); (Knight & Brinton, 2017); (Coron, 2023); (Grunow, Begall, & Buchler, 2018). For similar evidence for the US, see (Scarborough, Sin, & Risman, 2019); (Scarborough, Pepin, Lambouths III, Kwon, & Monasterio, 2021)

^{15 (}Knight & Brinton, 2017)

¹⁶ (European Commission, 2024a)

¹⁷ (Scarborough, Sin, & Risman, 2019); (Pepin & Cotter, 2018)

¹⁸ (Hays, 1996)

some previous research called 'essentialist egalitarianism').¹⁹ For example, one may believe over-representation of men in leadership positions is justified because one perceives men to have, on average, better leadership skills than women. Yet, the same person may agree that women and men with equal skills should have equal employment opportunities. Similarly, essentialists may consider women to be particularly well-suited for caregiving but think women and men equally capable of performing (most of) other types of work in the labour market.

Finally, tensions between liberalism emphasising freedom of choice and prescriptive behavioural norms can transcend the traditional-egalitarian binary.²⁰ Even people who consider women and men to have similar traits may stop short of supporting prescriptive statements which claim, for example, that both partners should contribute to household income or that unpaid work should be shared within households. This is because of the prescriptive nature of such norms, which may violate deeply held beliefs about individual freedom of choice.

In Europe around 2010, between 40% and 60% of people held beliefs that blended the egalitarian with the traditional.²¹ The following attitudes were the most common: mixing essentialist beliefs in particular importance of family and home for women with support for mother's participation in the labour market; supporting working motherhood but emphasising that this is contested by the need for mothers' presence at home for young children's well-being; and blending support for maternal employment with emphasis on freedom of choice between earning and housewife roles for women.

This paper enriches findings from previous research focusing on Europe in important ways. As in previous research, the main goal is to map distinct types of gender attitudes towards work in Europe, but our analysis focuses specifically on the EU and its Member States. The key added value lies in using the newest wave of pan-European value surveys (covering years 2017 to 2021) that have not yet been explored in similar analysis to the best of our knowledge. This data allows us to update previous research (usually focusing on periods until 2010) and explore new dimensions of gender attitudes that have not been explored in European contexts, notably with respect to attitudes towards female and male leadership.

3. Data used

This research relies on data collected through the latest (2017-2021) wave of the European Value Study (EVS). This is a large-scale survey that collects harmonised data on attitudes (and selected characteristics of respondents) across European countries primarily through face-to-face interviews. The EVS data covers 21 EU Member States,²³ with effective sample sizes of 1200 respondents for countries with population over two million and 1000 respondents for those below this limit. The survey relies on random sampling to ensure full

^{19 (}Cotter, Hermsen, & Vanneman, 2011); (Charles & Grusky, 2004)

²⁰ (Knight & Brinton, 2017)

²¹ (Begall, Grunow, & Buchler, 2023) (Knight & Brinton, 2017)

²² Except for (Coron, 2023), but this study uses a different research methodology based on factor analysis rather than latent class analysis.

²³ Excluding Belgium, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Malta, Luxembourg.

coverage of the target population (persons aged 18 years and older living in private households). Focusing on working age population (aged 20 to 64) within the 21 EU Member States, the total sample amounts to 23,910 respondents. Data is weighted by EVS sampling weights and weights that correct for population size of the countries.

Several EVS questions exploring gender attitudes were used in the analysis, covering views on women's and men's roles in the private sphere of the family and in the public sphere of paid work and politics (Table 1).²⁴ The questions take the form of statements for which respondents indicate whether they agree or disagree.²⁵ These statements cover essentialist beliefs about women and men (identifying specific traits or preferences particular to either women or men); norms prescribing who (men or women) should carry out which roles in private and public spheres; the perceived importance of mother's caregiving roles for child and family well-being; and labour market privilege of men (in terms of rights to scarce jobs). Egalitarian attitudes are expressed by disagreement with a given statement that goes against egalitarian values. Throughout this paper we consistently report on the proportion of people giving egalitarian response (i.e. rejecting non-egalitarian statements). The response rates to these questions were high, which led to the decision to avoid imputing answers to missing observations.

Table 1: EVS questions on gender attitudes and distribution of responses

Question (agree/disagree)	# observations in the sample	% of egalitarian responses (disagree)
Q1. When a mother works for pay, the children suffer	23,362	67.5
Q2. A job is alright but what most women really want is a home and children	22,491	61.8
Q3. All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job	23,328	59.5
Q4. A man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family	23,477	78.0
Q5. On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do	22,859	83.4
Q6. On the whole, men make better business executives than women do	22,946	85.8
Q7. When jobs are scarce, men have more right to a job than women	23,653	74.1

Note: Covers 21 EU Member States included in the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS. Response shares are weighted by sampling and population weights.

Source: Own calculations based on the microdata from the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS.

²⁴ Beyond these questions, the EVS also asks about agreement/disagreement with the following statement: 'A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl'. However, in the EU Member States this is a highly uncommon opinion (only about 5% agree) and thus is not used in analysis due to very limited response variation.

²⁵ More specifically, respondents are asked whether they agree strongly, agree, disagree or disagree strongly. For the purposes of this paper, we collapse strong agreement and agreement into a single 'agree' category. The same goes for disagreement.

While the latest wave of the EVS covers important aspects of gender attitudes towards work, its coverage is not exhaustive. Notably, attitudes regarding equal sharing of unpaid work within the household (including male involvement) and regarding gendered perceptions of different types of work (such as nursing or engineering) are not covered in much detail. The set of questions on gender attitudes changed considerably across different waves of the EVS, which prevents extending our analysis to previous waves of the survey.

4. Measuring gender attitudes towards work

Mapping a diverse range of gender attitudes requires an analytical approach capable of identifying distinct sets of beliefs that may combine egalitarian views on some but traditional views on other issues. This makes unidimensional approaches based on aggregation of responses across survey questions into a single measure of attitudes unsuitable. For example, measuring attitudes by calculating the share of egalitarian responses across several survey items can place an individual somewhere on the traditional-egalitarian axis, but it can't account for more complex combinations of these views, in which attitudes vary from question to question.

This paper relies on latent class analysis (LCA), a statistical technique that clusters respondents into distinct categories (often called classes, hence the name) based on observed patterns of their survey responses. This is then assumed to imply that people in the same category share some underlying, latent association.²⁶ LCA is more person-centred than other similar statistical techniques (such as factor or cluster analysis), allowing for assigning each respondent to a specific attitude category. It estimates discrete latent classes based on a set of categorical variables (e.g. yes/no, agree/disagree items), which makes it particularly suitable for our analysis based on (dis)agreement with several EVS survey items.

The basic specification of an LCA model which identifies T classes (captured by latent variable X) based on categorical responses to k survey questions can be expressed as follows:

$$P(Y = y) = \sum_{t} P(X = t) P(Y = y | X = t).$$

In this equation, \mathbf{Y} denotes a vector containing the full set of possible responses to the k questions used to construct the LCA model, and \mathbf{y} stands for a particular pattern of responses to these questions. P(X=t) is the probability of belonging to a latent class t (values ranging from 1 to T) and $P(\mathbf{Y}=\mathbf{y}|X=t)$ is the probability of having a response pattern \mathbf{y} conditional on belonging to class t. This model can be used to obtain posterior probabilities of belonging to a class t based on a response pattern \mathbf{y} , and to assign these probabilities to each survey respondent based on their response pattern. Class membership can then be assigned to each respondent based on these probabilities.

The LCA modelling in this paper is based on responses to the seven EVS questions listed in Table 1.27 The implementation of the LCA analysis proceeds as follows: firstly, we use

²⁶ For more details, see (Vermunt & Magidson, 2004).

²⁷ Alternative specifications of the model with more parsimonious selection of variables yielded broadly comparable results, as shown in technical annex.

the LCA to identify the optimal number of gender attitude types (classes) into which respondents should be clustered; secondly, we estimate posterior probabilities of different attitude types in the optimal model and analyse how responses to EVS questions vary across these types; and finally we analyse the covariates of attitude type membership. The analysis is implemented in Stata using a homogenous model that assumes modelling parameters (e.g. intercepts and slopes) to be constant across countries.

Testing the LCA model specifications with two up to six gender attitude types highlights best performance for the four-type model. The choice of appropriate number of types is informed by assessing the model fit and the importance of adding further types for interpreting results.²⁸ Comparing model fit statistics (Bayesian information criterion and Akaike information criterion) identifies the solution with four gender attitude types as the best model fit (see annex). Furthermore, having more than four attitude types does not change their principal interpretation, but rather leads to the introduction of intermediate types.

An extended LCA model with covariates is used to assess the effect of respondent characteristics on the probability of belonging to a specific attitude type. The base LCA model is extended by several respondent characteristics from the EVS (relying on the so-called 'one-step approach'),29 including information on individual's sex, age group, marital status, having child(ren), employment status, attained level of education, income bracket, religious affiliation, political views and the size of settlements respondents live in.30 We used only observations that provided full information on these characteristics, which considerably reduces the sample size (to 13,433 observations). However, the probability and interpretation of attitude types in this extended model remain very similar to the original LCA model, which means that the analysis links closely to our original results. As a robustness check, we also apply an alternative methodology (simple, uncorrected three-step approach) to analyse drivers of attitudes that yields similar results (see annex).

5. Gender attitudes towards work at FU level

Four distinct types of gender attitudes towards work are common among the EU working age population: 1) egalitarian 2) public-sphere egalitarian 3) public-sphere traditional 4) traditional. Their prevalence (Figure 1), and the typical views associated with them (Figure 2), are analysed below.

Over a half (55%) of the EU working age population has egalitarian gender attitudes, supporting flexible gender roles while rejecting essentialist beliefs about innate differences between women and men. Nearly all egalitarians reject rigid distribution of gender roles between men (as earners) and women (as homemakers). More than 85% of egalitarians do not see mothers' paid work as a severe challenge to the well-being of their children or families, while a similar proportion disagrees with essentialist statements that frame women as

²⁸ (Vermunt & Magidson, 2004); (Sinha, Calfee, & Delucchi, 2021); (Weller, Bowen, & Faubert, 2020)

²⁹ For discussion of different LCA approaches to modelling with covariates, see (Vermunt, 2010); (Bakk, Tekle, & Vermunt, 2013)

³⁰ For exact definition of covariates, see annex.

primarily interested in home and children rather than work. Pretty much all egalitarians see women and men as equally competent leaders in business and politics. Nine in ten support equal rights of women and men to jobs in times of crisis. Overall, this group can be considered broadly similar in attitudes to egalitarians identified in previous research in the European context,³¹ though comparability is limited by changes in attitudes surveyed in the EVS over time.

About a quarter of the EU population supports gender equality in the public sphere of paid work and politics, while considering mothers' role as crucial for both women's identity and family well-being. More than three quarters of public-sphere egalitarians think family life and/or young children suffer if mothers are employed full-time. About two thirds support women's employment (and associated earning), but a similar proportion also thinks that women's identity ultimately revolves around children and home. By contrast, almost everybody in this group believes women to be equally competent leaders in business and politics as men, and more than two thirds support equal rights of women and men to jobs. Overall, the beliefs held by people in this group are consistent with beliefs associated with parental approaches that emphasize the importance of mother's presence at home for children's development.³²

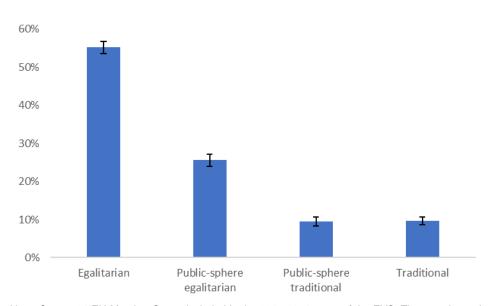


Figure 1: Estimated probability of gender-attitude types among working age population, EU

Note: Covers 21 EU Member States included in the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS. The error bars give the 95% confidence intervals around estimated values.

Source: Own calculations based on the microdata from the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS.

Public-sphere traditionalists (about 10% of EU population) combine beliefs in male work privilege with limited concerns about negative consequences of working motherhood for family well-being. More than two in three in this group think that men make for better leaders in business and politics, while one in two also support privileged rights of men to jobs. This can be to some extent linked to attitudes towards women's involvement in the family – about a half of public-sphere traditionalists think women ultimately care more about family life than paid work, and a third thinks that women's primary job is to take care of the home and children. Yet, only a

³¹ (Begall, Grunow, & Buchler, 2023); (Knight & Brinton, 2017)

^{32 (}Hays, 1996)

minority in this group considers working motherhood as a negative influence on child and family wellbeing. This suggests that male privilege in the labour market is linked to essentialist beliefs about men having some advantageous qualities in this respect (and, to some extent, about women's innate preference for the home), rather than concerns about working motherhood.

Finally, about one in ten people in the EU have traditional gender attitudes, supporting male privilege in the labour market and considering women as primarily responsible for unpaid work at home. A typical person in this group would agree with all the statements presented in Table 1 above, expressing opposite attitudes compared to the egalitarian group.

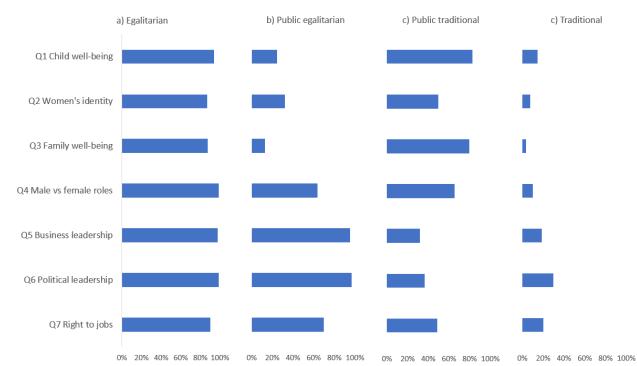


Figure 2: Probability of egalitarian response by gender attitude type, EU

Note: Covers 21 EU Member States included in the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS. Source: Own calculations based on the microdata from the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS.

6. Gender attitudes towards work at Member State level

Analysing gender attitudes at EU level misses out on their diversity across Member States. The probability of a person having a certain set of attitudes varies considerably across different parts of the EU, as can be seen from Figure 3 below.

Fully egalitarian attitudes dominate in northern EU. In all three Nordic Member States, egalitarians account for about 80% of the total population. Most of the remaining people have mixed attitudes that combine egalitarian with traditional beliefs. Traditionalists are rare to find in these countries, accounting for less than 5% of their population.

In most western Member States, egalitarians also account for majority of the population, though their share is lower than in Nordic countries. Egalitarians account for about two

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thirds of the population in all western countries except Austria, where they account for about half. Public sphere egalitarians account for about 20% to 30% of the population, highlighting that widespread egalitarian attitudes in the domain of paid work do not always translate into similar views in the private sphere of the family due to perceived negative consequences of working motherhood for family well-being.

While southern and western Member States are alike on aggregate, gender attitudes vary considerably from country to country in the south. In Spain, full egalitarians account for nearly 80% of the population, as in the Nordic countries. In Croatia, Slovenia, and Portugal, about a half are egalitarian and about 30% are public egalitarian, resembling patterns seen in western countries. In Italy, both egalitarians and public egalitarians account for about 40% of the population (with traditionalists comprising further 15%), a pattern that is somewhere between those usually observed in western and central EU.

Gender attitudes are more fragmented in central Member States. In central Europe, egalitarians tend to comprise slightly larger shares of the population (between 35% and 40%) than other views, except in Slovakia where they account for less than three in ten people. Each other attitude type accounts for at least 15% of the population³³ – this is the case even for traditionalists and public traditionalists, who are much less common in northern, western, and southern EU.

In eastern EU, population tends to be rather evenly divided across all gender-attitude types, each type accounting for at least a fifth of people living in these countries. The only exception to this pattern is Estonia, where egalitarians account for about half of the population, followed by 20% each for public egalitarians and public traditionalists, and about 10% for traditionalists.

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³³ Except for public traditionalists in Poland, who only account for 13% of people living there.

Nordic Member States 100% 100% 100% 80% 60% 80% 80% 60% 60% 40% 40% 40% 20% 20% 20% 096 0% Western Member States 100% 100% 100% NL 80% 80% 80% 80% 60% 60% 60% 60% 40% 40% 40% 40% 20% 20% 20% 20% Southern Member States 100% 100% 100% 100% 100% 80% 80% 60% 60% 40% 60% 40% 60% 60% 40% 40% 40% 20% 20% 20% 20% Central Member States 100% 100% 100% 80% 100% ΗU SK 80% 80% 80% 60% 60% 60% 60% 40% 40% 40% 20% **Eastern Member States** 100% 80% 100% 100% 100% 100% EE LT LV RO 80% 80% 80% 80% 60% 60% 60% 60% 60% 40% 40% 40% 40% 40%

Figure 3: Estimated probability of gender attitudes among working age population by EU Member State

Note: Covers 21 EU Member States included in the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS. Source: Own calculations based on the microdata from the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS.

7. Demographic and socio-economic drivers of gender attitudes

Certain gender attitudes are associated with distinct individual and socio-economic backgrounds. Figure 4 highlights that women account for a slight majority of egalitarians and public egalitarians (over 55%) whereas men do so for traditionalists and public traditionalists (around 60%). While young people aged 20 to 34 account for a higher share of egalitarians (34%) than public egalitarians and traditionalists (25% and 28% respectively), they also constitute more than a third of public traditionalists (35%). Compared to other groups, more traditionalists and public egalitarians (60 to 70%) tend to have children, which may help explain their somewhat lower employment rates (close to 65%). In other respects, the most marked differences can be observed between egalitarians and other attitude types: higher share of egalitarians are tertiary educated (40%), whereas lower shares are religious³⁴ (less than a half) or have right wing political preferences³⁵ (around 15%).

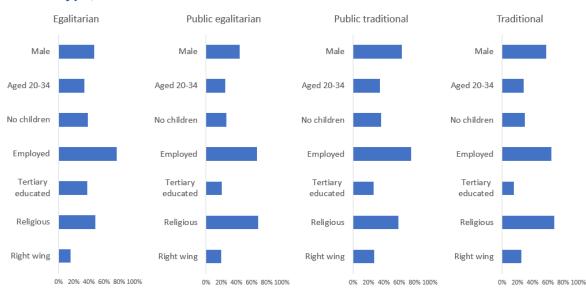


Figure 4: Shares of people with certain socio-economic characteristics by gender attitude type, EU

Note: Covers 21 EU Member States included in the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS. Source: Own calculations based on the microdata from the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS.

While such descriptive findings are suggestive, robust measurement of differences in respondent characteristics by attitude type requires including these characteristics into the LCA model. This allows for estimating their effects on the probability of belonging to different gender attitude types, as presented in Table 2 and described below.

Egalitarians are somewhat more likely to comprise employed, childless women, and considerably more likely to have high earnings, tertiary education and left-leaning, non-religious worldviews. Men are about 9 pps less likely to belong to this group than to other gender attitude types, while employed people and people without children are,

³⁴ We consider as religious those EVS respondents who responded 'a religious person' to the following survey question: 'Independently of whether you go to church or not, would you say you are ...' (other response options are 'not a religious person' and 'a convinced atheist').

³⁵ In the EVS, respondents are asked to assess their political preferences on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 stands for 'the left' and 10 for the 'right'. In the context of this study, we define those who place themselves between 1 and 3 as left-wing, between 4 and 7 as centrist, and between 8 and 10 as right-wing.

respectively, 5pps and 6pps more likely to belong. Those with tertiary education (+20 pps) and high incomes (+13 pps) have particularly high probability of belonging to this type, way higher than for any other attitude group. In contrast, those with right-wing political preferences or religious worldviews are rare among egalitarians (-21 pps and -24 pps respectively) compared to others. Interestingly, young people are not more likely to be egalitarian than other age groups once other individual characteristics are controlled for.

Public egalitarians are more likely to be religious, have children, live in rural settings, and have lower educational attainment and incomes. Religious people are particularly likely to belong to this group (+11 pps) while those with tertiary education are underrepresented (-13 pps). People with children and those living in rural areas are also more likely to belong (around +5 pps each) while employed people are less likely to be public egalitarians (-4 pps). The combination of religiosity, larger families with children and rural settings corresponds with the emphasis this group places on the importance of maternal presence at home for family and children's well-being.

Table 2: Marginal effects of covariates on probability of belonging to a gender attitude type, EU

			Public	Public	
	Comparison group	Egalitarian	egalitarian	traditional	Traditionalist
Men	Women	-0.092**	-0.02	0.061**	0.051**
Aged 35-49	Aged 20-34	0.031	0.02	-0.057**	0.006
Aged 49-64	Aged 20-34	0.006	0.032	-0.052**	0.014
No children	At least one child	0.06**	-0.054**	-0.006	0.001
Employed	Out of employment	0.048**	-0.044*	0.01	-0.014
Secondary educated	At most lower-	0.035	-0.019	0.042**	-0.059**
Tertiary educated	secondary educated	0.206**	-0.136**	0.029	-0.099**
Middle income	Low income	0.068**	-0.029	-0.018	-0.02*
High Income	Low income	0.127**	-0.066**	-0.014	-0.048**
City	Small town/village	0.053**	-0.039**	-0.003	-0.011
Large city	Smail town/village	0.089**	-0.059**	-0.007	-0.023
Religious	Non-religious	-0.213**	0.113**	0.032**	0.068**
Politics - centre	Politics - left	-0.092**	0.041*	0.068**	-0.016
Politics - right	Politics - left	-0.242**	0.017	0.196**	0.029

Note: Covers 19 EU Member States included in the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS. No income data available for Portugal, and no settlement size data available for Netherlands. These countries are excluded from analysis. ** statistical significance with p-value below 0.01 * statistical significance with p-value below 0.05

Source: Own calculations based on the microdata from the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS.

Public traditionalists are more probable to be young men and most probable out of all attitude types to have right-wing voting preferences. Men are about 6pp more likely to belong to this group than women, while middle and older aged people are less likely to do so (about -5 pps). People with right-wing preferences are much more common among public traditionalists than those with left-wing preferences (by about 20pp), a pattern that clearly distinguishes public traditionalists from other attitude types.

Traditionalist attitudes are more common among men, people with lower educational attainment and incomes, and those with religious beliefs. Those who achieved (at most) lower-secondary education are about 10 pps more likley to be traditionalist than those with tertiary education. Other drivers of traditionalism tend to increase the likelihood of belonging by between 5 to 7 pps. Perhaps more surprisingly, there is no evidence of higher probability of traditional attitudes among older people or those with right-wing preferences once other individual characteristics are controlled for.

While certain demographic and socio-economic factors are significantly linked to having specific types of gender attitudes, their importance should not be overstated. Overall, the variables covered by the analysis in this section tend to account only for a limited share of variation in gender-attitude types. This suggests that other factors not captured by the EVS data, either at individual or at societal levels (e.g. parental

backgrounds, access to certain services, or influence of work cultures), may be of crucial importance.

8. Concluding remarks

This paper shows a broad support for gender equality among the EU population. More than half of people support gender equality both in the labour market and within households. A further third has mixed attitudes, holding egalitarian beliefs in some areas only. Notably, some consider women's presence at home as essential for well-being of children and families, while others think differences in innate traits of women and men justify at least some inequalities in both paid and unpaid work. About a tenth of population has traditional views that fully support the male-breadwinner model, where men are responsible for earning money and women care for children and the household. Overall, this points towards the importance of specific policies for promoting egalitarian attitudes, such as broadening childcare provision, promoting flexible sharing of family responsibilities by parents, and combatting gender stereotypes.

Egalitarian attitudes are widespread in some Member States, but much less common in others. In Nordic countries, more than 80% are gender egalitarian while in western and southern states, this proportion ranges from 40 to 60%. Egalitarians account for considerably smaller shares of population in central and eastern Europe (typically between 20 to 30%). Mixed attitudes are the most common there, accounting for 30 to 50% of people. Fully traditional beliefs account for about one in four persons in several of these countries.

The variation in attitudes across countries reflects national inequalities in distribution of paid and unpaid work. Egalitarian attitudes are correlated with gender employment, childcare and housework gaps among parents – on average, the higher the share of egalitarian beliefs in a country, the lower the gender gaps. This correlation does not imply causation and its strength is reduced by the fact that there are many other factors at play than just attitudes. Nevertheless, recent empirical research shows more egalitarian attitudes lead to lower gender gaps in employment and potentially in other labour market outcomes as well.

Support for gender equality varies not just by country, but also by different population groups, suggesting that efforts to promote egalitarian beliefs may benefit from targeting. Egalitarian attitudes are much less common among those without tertiary education and on low incomes (especially if they are men), as well as those with right wing and religious beliefs. Religious beliefs are the only factor robustly associated with higher likelihood of traditional and mixed attitudes. Other characteristics influence the likelihood of some traditional or mixed attitudes, but not others. Interestingly, neither age nor right wing preferences increase the probability of fully-traditionalist attitudes. Younger men with rightwing preferences are however more likely to believe that at least some gender inequalities in the world of paid work are justified.

Looking forward, research on gender attitudes towards work would benefit from considering a broader set of beliefs. Notably, it would be interesting to consider more nuanced views on equal sharing of unpaid work within the household (including male involvement) and on gendered perceptions of certain types of work (such as nursing or engineering). Unfortunately, these are out of scope of our research due to limitations of the data used. Further research on impacts of different attitude types on labour market outcomes is also important to identify casual links and to shed more light on how hypothetical attitudes reported via surveys influence real-life decisions.

Technical annex

Latent class model selection

Selecting optimal latent class modelling solution requires analysis of model fit and posterior class membership probabilities.³⁶ Four-class model is the most parsimonious specification with adequate data fit. More parsimonious models that provide better data fit are preferred solutions and can be identified via comparisons of model fit statistics, including the Bayesian information criterion (BIC) and the Akaike information criterion (AIC). The BIC is the most common choice because it both assesses goodness of fit and rewards parsimony by penalising using additional parameters in the modelling. For both criteria, lower values indicate better fit. Comparing latent class solutions ranging from one to six classes, BIC drops sharply with each additional class up to the four-class solution (Figure A1). Adding classes beyond the four-class solution does not change the BIC value much, indicating no further substantial improvement in the model fit. Same conclusions hold when using the AIC.

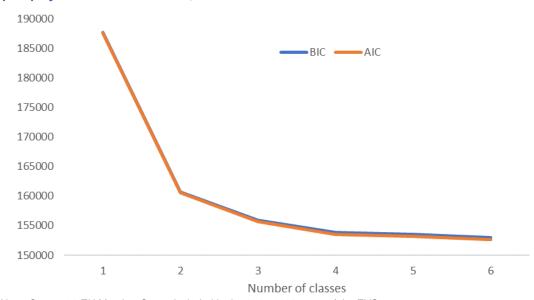


Figure A1: Bayesian information criterion (BIC) and Akaike information criterion (AIC) by number of classes, EU

Note: Covers 21 EU Member States included in the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS. Source: Own calculations based on the microdata from the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS.

The four-class model assigns respondents to classes with sufficient level of accuracy for robust analysis. In general, the higher the average posterior membership probability the model reaches for each latent class, the higher the accuracy with which the model predicts class membership. The average posterior probabilities of class membership exceed 0.8 for each of the four classes identified by the model, while the shares of observations with posterior membership probabilities lower than 0.5 are small (less than 10% of observations in each class). This is usually considered as an acceptable level of accuracy.³⁷ For models with more than four classes, some of the average class membership probabilities fall below 0.8, a threshold identified in other research as a potential cause for concern.³⁸

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³⁶ (Vermunt & Magidson, 2004); (Sinha, Calfee, & Delucchi, 2021); (Weller, Bowen, & Faubert, 2020)

^{37 (}Weller, Bowen, & Faubert, 2020)

^{38 (}Weller, Bowen, & Faubert, 2020)

Table A1: Mean posterior probabilities of membership by class, EU

			Standard		
	# observations	Mean	deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Egalitarian	12,888	0.934	0.105	0.341	0.994
Public egalitarian	5,530	0.837	0.153	0.299	0.989
Public traditional	2,763	0.827	0.176	0.315	0.997
Traditional	2,703	0.856	0.164	0.367	0.995

Note: Covers 21 EU Member States included in the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS. Source: Own calculations based on the microdata from the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS.

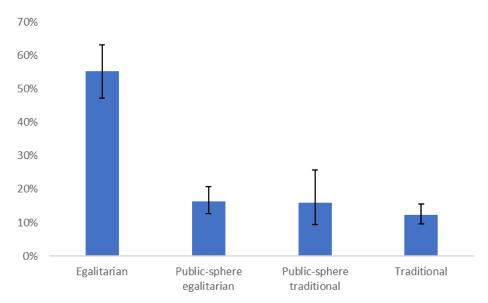
The four-class LCA model used in this paper is based on seven EVS items listed in Table 1, although using a more restricted set of items leads to similar results. A restricted model was tested to account for the fact that the survey items on child and family well-being, and leadership in work and politics, are correlated (correlation coefficient above 0.5 in Table A2). To account for this, the 'All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job' and 'On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do' survey items were dropped from the list of questions used to identify the latent classes. The resulting four-class solution from this restricted model (see Figures A2 and A3) is broadly similar to the main results reported in this paper, identifying similar (though less clear-cut) gender attitude types that account for comparable shares of the population at EU level. Note however that the restricted model has lower accuracy in assigning classes, as shown by the considerably larger confidence intervals in Figure A2.

Table A2: Correlation across EVS survey items, EU

	Q1.	Q2.	Q3.	Q4.	Q5.	Q6.	Q7.
Q1. When a mother works	1.000						
Q2. A job is alright	0.392	1.000					
Q3. Family life suffers	0.579	0.422	1.000				
Q4. A man's job is to earn	0.395	0.457	0.413	1.000			
Q5. Men make better political	0.198	0.283	0.208	0.405	1.000		
Q6. Men make better business	0.167	0.241	0.173	0.346	0.596	1.000	
Q7. When jobs are scarce	0.241	0.309	0.248	0.401	0.349	0.345	1.000

Note: Covers 21 EU Member States included in the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS. Source: Own calculations based on the microdata from the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS.

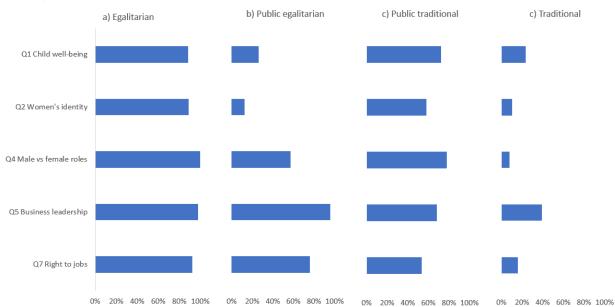
Figure A2: Estimated probability of gender attitude types among EU working age population (restricted model), EU



Note: Covers 21 EU Member States included in the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS. The error bars give the 95% confidence intervals around estimated values. No income data available for Portugal, and no settlement size data available for Netherlands. These countries are excluded from the analysis.

Source: Own calculations based on the microdata from the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS.

Figure A3: Probability of egalitarian response by gender attitude type (restricted model), EU



Note: Covers 21 EU Member States included in the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS. Source: Own calculations based on the microdata from the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS.

LCA model with covariates

Table A3 lists respondent characteristics introduced in the LCA modelling with covariates in order to assess their impact on class membership. For all the characteristics, the table details the dummy variables used to measure them and provides their mean values for: a) the full EVS respondent sample for the 21 EU Member States covered by analysis; and b) the sample used in the LCA analysis with covariates where no observations are missing for any of these variables, leaving a total of 13,505 observations. The means of these two samples are similar for all covariates, indicating no serious concerns about sample selection issues.

Table A3: Covariates used in LCA analysis and their means, EU

		# observations	Mean (full	Mean (covariate
Respondent characteristic	Dummy for	(full sample)	sample)	sample)
Sex	Male	23,910	45%	47%
Age	Age 20-34 (omitted)	23,910	27%	26%
	Age 35-49	23,910	34%	35%
	Age 50-64	23,910	38%	39%
Chidren	No children	23,730	32%	31%
	Employed (including self-employed,	23,506	73%	76%
Employment status	regardless of working hours)			
Education attainment	Up to lower-secondary (ISCED 0-2, omitted)	23,740	16%	12%
	Secondary (ISCED 3-4)	23,740	50%	51%
	Tertiary (ISCED 5-8)	23,740	35%	36%
Income level	Low income tercile (omitted)	19,714	28%	25%
	Middle income tercile	19,714	33%	33%
	High income tercile	19,714	39%	42%
Settlement size	Under 20,000 habitants (omitted)	21,111	48%	47%
	20,000 to 500,000 habitants	21,111	38%	39%
	500,000+ habitants	21,111	14%	14%
Religion	Religious	22,907	58%	57%
Voting preferences	Left-wing (1-3 on a left-right scale, omitted)	19,532	19%	18%
	Centre (4-7)	19,532	63%	63%
	Right-wing (8-10)	19,532	19%	19%

Note: Covers 21 EU Member States included in the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS. No income data available for Portugal, and no settlement size data available for Netherlands.

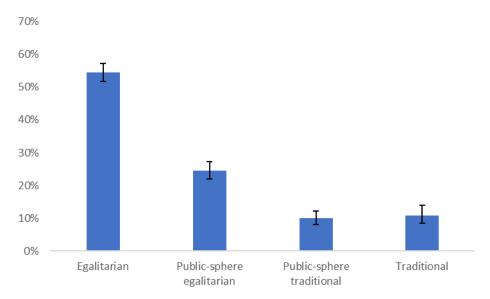
Source: Own calculations based on the microdata from the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS.

The covariate analysis was implemented in a one-step approach,³⁹ that is by adding the covariates directly to the four-class LCA base model. This can pose challenges in cases where adding covariates changes the original class structure or its interpretation. This was not an issue here because the classes resulting from the model with covariates had nearly identical probability and interpretation as in the base model without covariates (Figures A4 and A5). Thus, the effects of covariates on class membership can be interpreted as closely linked to the classes identified through the base model without covariates.

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³⁹ See e.g. (Vermunt, 2010) or (Bakk, Tekle, & Vermunt, 2013) for a more detailed description for the one-step approach.

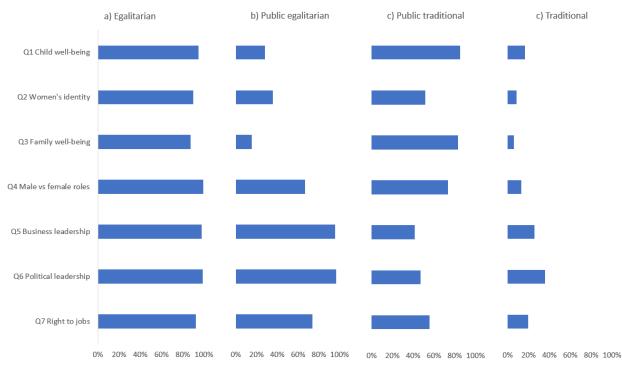
Figure A4: Estimated probability of gender attitude types among EU working age population (with covariates), EU



Note: Covers 19 EU Member States included in the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS. The error bars give the 95% confidence intervals around estimated values.

Source: Own calculations based on the microdata from the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS.

Figure A5: Probability of egalitarian response by gender attitude type (with covariates), EU



Note: Covers 19 EU Member States included in the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS. The error bars give the 95% confidence intervals around estimated values.

Source: Own calculations based on the microdata from the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS.

Simple regression analysis of posterior probabilities of class membership from the base LCA model was performed as a robustness check of the one-step covariate analysis. For each class, an OLS regression was performed with the posterior probability of class membership as a dependent variable and a set of respondents' characteristics listed in Table A3 as independent variables. The results from these regressions are reported in Table A4. The estimated effect direction and significance are in line with the results from the one-step LCA covariate analysis reported in Table A4. The effect size tends to be

lower than in the LCA modelling with covariates, though in most cases the differences are modest.

Table A4: Marginal effects of respondent characteristics on posterior probability of belonging to a class (OLS regression), EU

		Public	Public	
	Egalitarian	egalitarian	traditional	Traditionalist
Male	-0.073**	-0.006	0.042**	0.037**
Aged 35-49	0.022	0.01	-0.036**	0.003
Aged 49-64	-0.001	0.023	-0.033**	0.01
No children	0.045**	-0.041**	-0.002	-0.002
Employed	0.042**	-0.035**	0.005	-0.012
Secondary educated	0.065**	-0.027	0.02**	-0.057**
Tertiary educated	0.197**	-0.11**	0.003	-0.09**
Middle income	0.057**	-0.025	-0.01	-0.022*
High Income	0.102**	-0.055**	-0.007	-0.039**
City	0.046**	-0.031**	-0.005	-0.009
Large city	0.073**	-0.049**	-0.01	-0.014
Religious	-0.168**	0.091**	0.023**	0.054**
Politics - centre	-0.058**	0.031**	0.03**	-0.003
Politics - right	-0.164**	0.04*	0.079**	0.045**

Note: Covers 19 EU Member States included in the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS. No income data available for Portugal, and no settlement size data available for Netherlands. These countries are excluded from analysis. ** statistical significance with p-value below 0.01 * statistical significance with p-value below 0.05

Source: Own calculations based on the microdata from the 2017-2021 wave of the EVS.

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