

# Gender Equality and Quality of Life in Poland

A Survey Research Report

**Uniwersytet Jagielloński/Jagiellonian University**  
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[www.geq.socjologia.uj.edu.pl](http://www.geq.socjologia.uj.edu.pl)

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## About the project

The project *Gender equality and quality of life* – how gender equality can contribute to development in Europe. A study of Poland and Norway (GEQ) was carried out between 2013 and 2016 by the Institute of Sociology of the Jagiellonian University in cooperation with the Centre for Gender Research and the Institute of Health and Society of the University of Oslo, as well as the Jagiellonian University Medical College's Chair of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine. The research was funded by the Polish-Norwegian Research Programme operated by the National Centre for Research and Development under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014, in the framework of Project Contract No. Pol-Nor/200641/63/2013.

The goal of the GEQ project was to examine how gender equality impacts quality of life, as well as to investigate the role it plays in social development. We offered an approach that focused on the complex relations between gender equality in three domains of childhood, family and work lives and quality of life and satisfaction with one's health. The cultural and institutional conditions that help to shape these relations were also taken into account. The GEQ survey research, conducted in Poland in 2015, was inspired by the multidimensional model of gender equality measurement, developed at the University of Oslo's Centre for Gender Research.



The research encompassed various dimensions of gender equality. On the one hand, the project examined opinions of Polish men and women on issues of gender equality and family roles. On the other hand, it explored gender-equal practices regarding division of household duties, providing care, presence in the labour market, decision-making, and participation in both public and civic life. The distribution of both material and non-material resources between men and women was also taken into consideration. The results of this research allow us to formulate a diagnosis of the existing inequalities, underlining the importance of the structural, cultural and institutional determinants of gender equality. Furthermore, they make it possible to analyse the influence that gender equality has on the quality of life. The survey research was complemented by secondary data analysis, social policy analysis, and qualitative research including focus group interviews and media analysis. The use of this innovative approach, which combined qualitative research with a multidimensional quantitative study, constitutes a significant contribution to the efforts to create new theoretical and empirical frameworks that are capable of explaining the issues surrounding gender (in)equality. We hope that our results can spark further novel and more in-depth research on gender equality, eventually aiming at crafting more effective strategies and policies that aid the creation of a more egalitarian society. In this report, we present selected findings of the survey research conducted in 2015<sup>1</sup>.

## Research methodology

The survey research was conducted on a Poland-wide representative random sample of adult men and women (address sampling) and took place from 13 April to 20 May 2015. There was a total of 1501 respondents, and the response rate was 64%. The survey interviews were carried out with the use of Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) and the Computer Assisted Individual Interview (CAII), the latter employed for the questions on sensitive matters (e.g. violence).

1 For more information about the Project and its results, please visit [www.geq.socjologia.uj.edu.pl](http://www.geq.socjologia.uj.edu.pl).

## What is gender equality?

Gender equality (or equality between men and women) can be observed at many levels, from intimate and family relations, to local communities and the public sphere, to the state's policy and media discourse. Gender equality is understood as equal rights, equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in all spheres of life, including equal access to economic resources and power. As such, gender equality constitutes one of the basic conditions for the existence of a democratic and fair society. The importance of gender equality has been underscored in various European and international documents that were acknowledged and ratified by Poland (e.g. the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, the EU Treaty of 1992), and has a great significance for abiding by human rights, promoting economic growth, and respecting law and order. The Council of Europe defines gender equality in particularly broad terms, referring it to representation, full subjectivity, responsibility and participation of men and women in all spheres of public and private life. In Poland, both the equality of men and women and the ban on discrimination are included in the Constitution of Poland (Articles 32 and 33), the Labour Law and many other acts, such as the 20 April 2004 Act on promoting employment and labour market institutions, or the 3 December 2010 Act on the implementation of selected European Union regulations on equal treatment. In 2013, the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment prepared the National Action Programme for Equal Treatment for the Years 2013-2016, which sought to identify the goals and tools in the governmental policy regarding the equality of men and women.

## What is quality of life?

Quality of life is a subjective evaluation of one's own life situation, which needs to be analysed in a multidimensional manner. In the GEQ project, the quality of life of female and male respondents was examined with the use of a special instrument, namely the GESQOLS.<sup>2</sup> This tool was created for the purposes of the project and relied on a shortened version of the World Health Organization's scale for evaluating the quality of life, specifically the WHOQOL-BREF. The GESQOLS scale provides for evaluation of the quality of life of a respondent in the following six dimensions:

- Somatic – physical pain, fatigue, dependency on medical treatment
- Psychological – enjoying life, having sense of meaning in life, as well as the sense of safety, ability to concentrate, etc.
- Social – satisfaction with personal relationships and with support from family and friends, satisfaction with the frequency of contact with people important for the respondent
- Financial – having enough money for own needs, satisfaction with financial situation, optimism about the future
- Infrastructural – availability of information, opportunity for leisure activities, satisfaction with the condition of the respondent's living place and with the transport available
- General satisfaction – self-satisfaction, acceptance of own bodily appearance, with intimate life, sleep, ability to perform daily living activities

## What is social development?

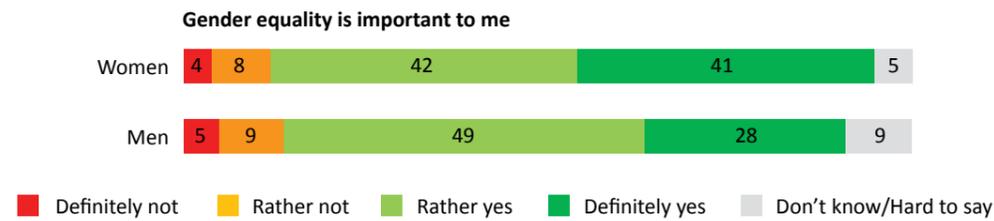
One of the foundational categories of our research was the notion of social development, understood as the process of increasing personal and institutional capacities of both male and female society members to mobilise and manage resources with the goal of improving the quality of life in accordance with their aspirations. This understanding differs from thinking about development as being reflected solely in the value of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). While GDP is a vital indicator, it overlooks the issues of the distribution of inequalities within a society. These particular types of inequalities include, for instance, gender inequality, which restricts the opportunities of many women with regard to leading their lives according to their expectations. The gender equality problem centres on the question about male-female power relations in the family, workplace, or public sphere.

2 The full name of this scale is Gender Equality Study Quality of Life Scale.

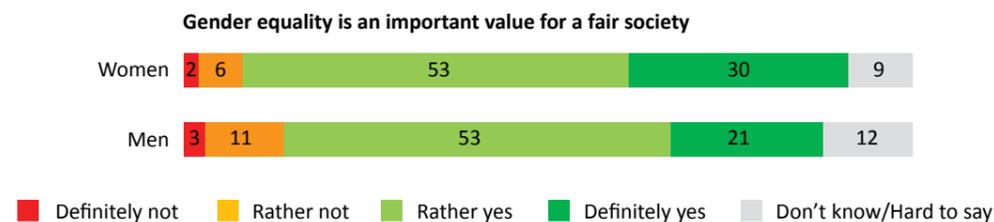
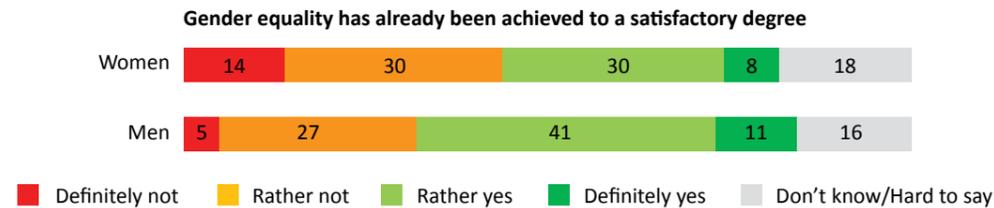
## Attitudes towards gender equality<sup>3</sup>

### Gender equality is an important value for 80% of Polish men and women

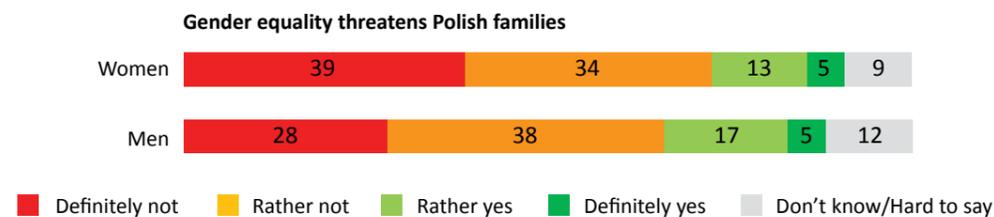
For the vast majority of Polish men and women, gender equality is a highly important value. Men were slightly less likely to agree with this statement, and more men than women had no opinion on the matter. Besides, a significant majority considered gender equality a “rather important” or a “definitely important” value.



The importance of gender equality is also confirmed in the view that this value is important for achieving a fair society. This opinion was shared by more than three quarters of the respondents. The proportion was slightly higher among women (83%) than men (74%). At the same time, one must note that there are divergent opinions regarding the actual realisation of gender equality in Polish society. Women are substantially less likely to agree with the statement that gender equality has already been achieved.



Notably, usually women more often manifest positive attitudes towards gender equality. Nevertheless, the majority of women (73%), as well as men (66%), did not agree with the statement that gender equality threatens the Polish family.



<sup>3</sup> All values given in the charts are provided in percentage value unless otherwise specified.

The majority of those surveyed share the opinion that gender equality will be achieved when the relationship between men and women is based on equality and mutual respect (84% of women and 78% of men), when women and men will have the same opportunities for finding work and being promoted (84% of women and 76% of men), and when men and women receive equal treatment by law (82% of women and 78% of men).



### Gender equality in childhood homes

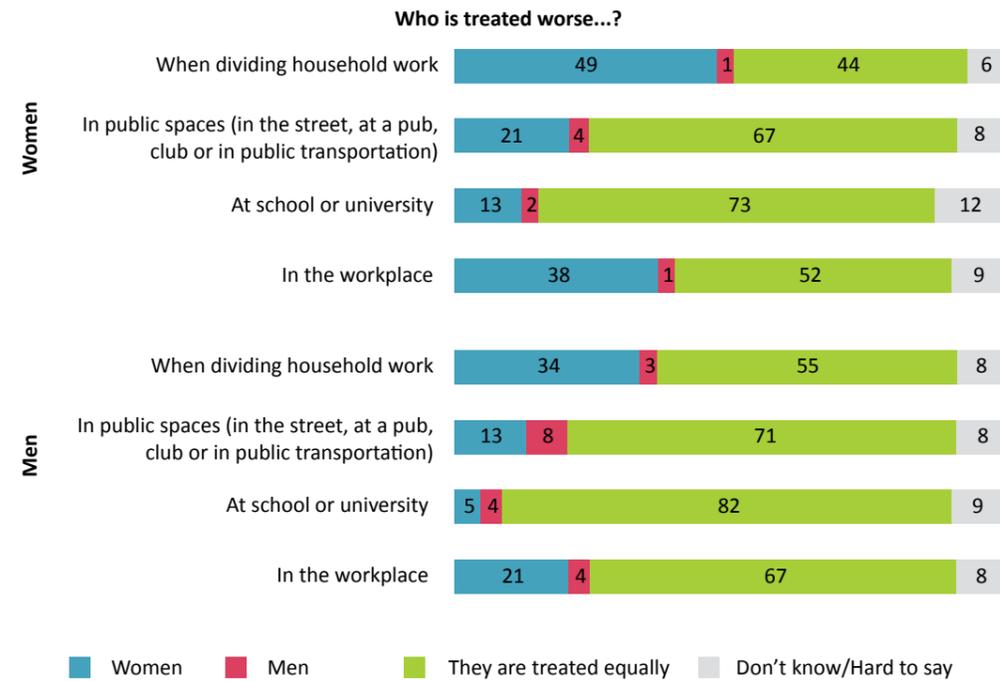
The Polish respondents underlined the importance of the family of origin in the process of shaping of one's attitudes toward gender equality. Among those declaring that gender equality is important, as many as over half of the respondents disclosed that they acquired this attitude during their childhood. One out of every three respondents understood that gender equality is an important matter in a marriage or a relationship. Other phases of life that affected the realisation that gender equality is an important issue included the time of schooling and university studies, the moment of becoming a parent, and the time of seeking work. Men were more likely to emphasise the role played by their childhood homes and the relationship they had with their partners. Conversely, women were more inclined to realise the importance of gender equality either when seeking work, or when becoming mothers.



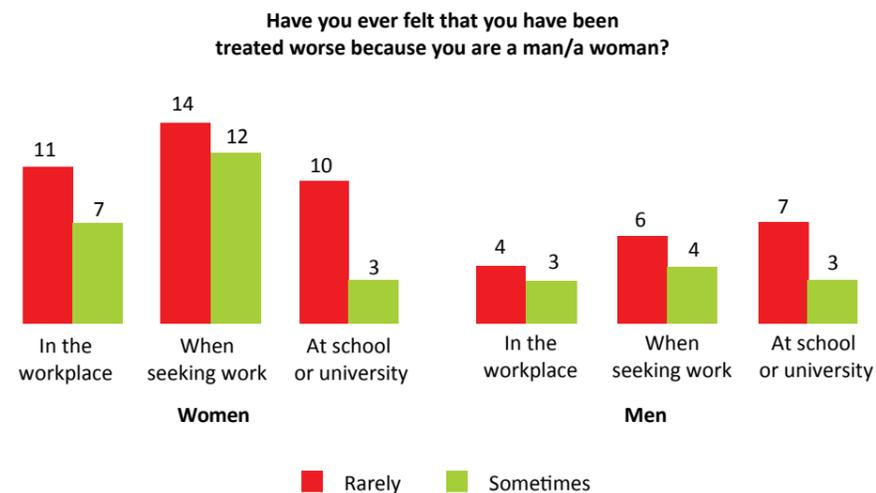
## The experience of discrimination in the public sphere

### Women are more commonly discriminated against when seeking work and in the workplace

The majority of the respondents claimed that men and women are treated equally in the public sphere as well as in the education system – at school or university. However, worse treatment of women in the workplace was noted both by men and by women. Simultaneously, the female respondents were far more likely to point to the workplace and the public sphere as the spaces where discrimination against women occurs.



Almost three times as many women as men have experienced gender discrimination when looking for a job. Similarly, twice as many women have experienced discriminatory treatment in the workplace.

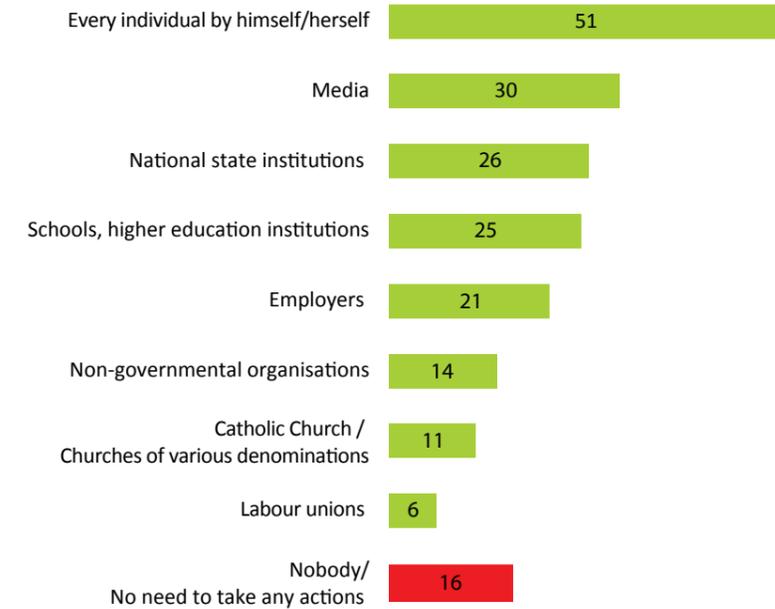


## The state's responsibilities in achieving gender equality

### Personal responsibility for gender equality

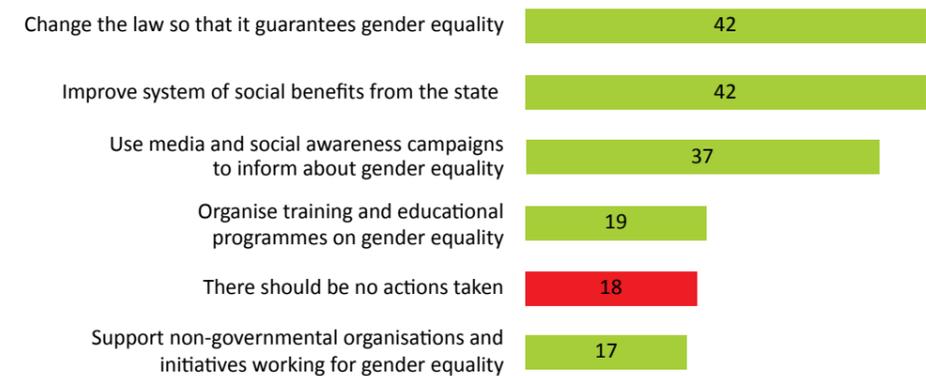
Polish men and women primarily perceive gender equality as an area of individual responsibility. More than half of the respondents believe that men and women should personally engage in efforts towards achieving it. Among the institutions that Poles would like to see as particularly active in this area, one should note the media, public institutions and educational entities. One in five respondents underlined the importance of employers' engagement. At the same time, some respondents see no need for any action in this field.

### Who should engage in activities that promote gender equality?



Regarding the specific actions towards promoting equality between men and women that should be undertaken by public institutions, the respondents indicated changing the law so that it guarantees gender equality, introducing better social support and promoting gender equality in the media. A fifth of all respondents support educational programs that tackle gender equality and issue their support to non-governmental organisations (NGO's) operating in this area. One out of every six respondents states that public institutions should not engage in any gender equality-relevant activities.

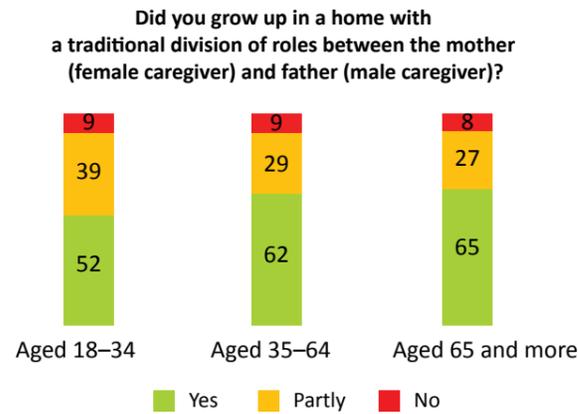
### What should be done by public institutions for gender equality to be achieved?



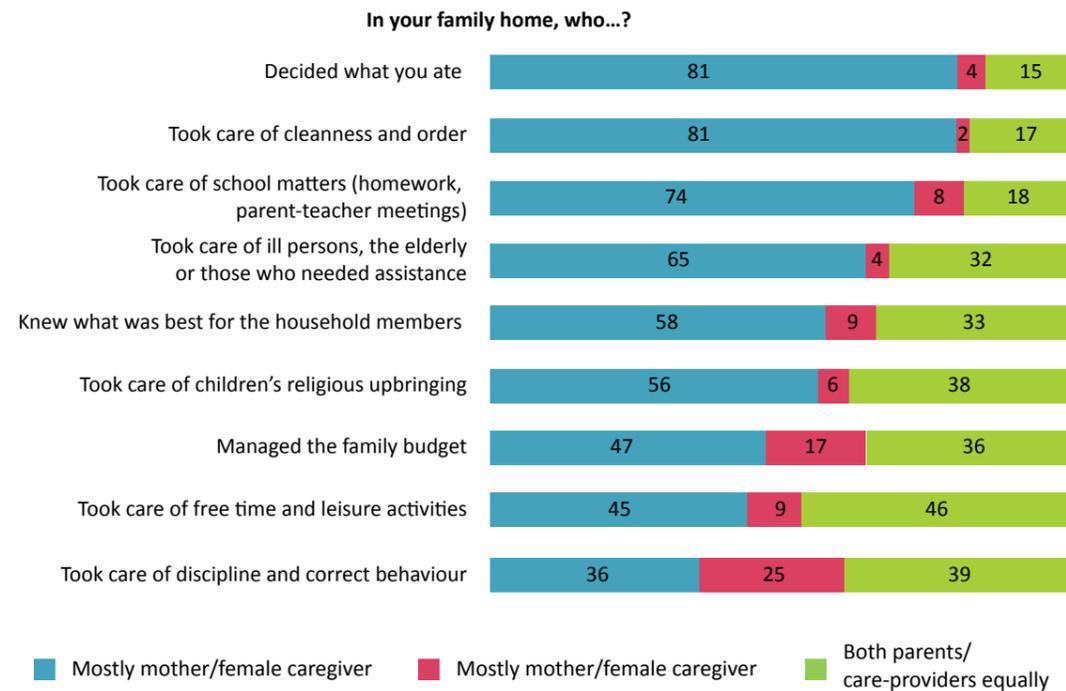
## Childhood experience of gender equality

### Dominance of a traditional division of gender roles in the family of origin

The research demonstrated that more than half of the Polish men and women surveyed were raised in families with a traditional division of gender roles between the parents or main care-providers. This means that in their homes it was primarily the woman who was responsible for home-making and caring for children, while the man was responsible for the financial stability of the family. It is worth noting that an intergenerational change could be observed, in the sense that the younger a respondent group, the less frequent the declaration of the traditional division of roles and duties. In addition, the traditional model was less common in families where mothers/female caregivers attained either high-school or higher education level, as well as in those families where mothers/female caregivers worked professionally or on a farm.

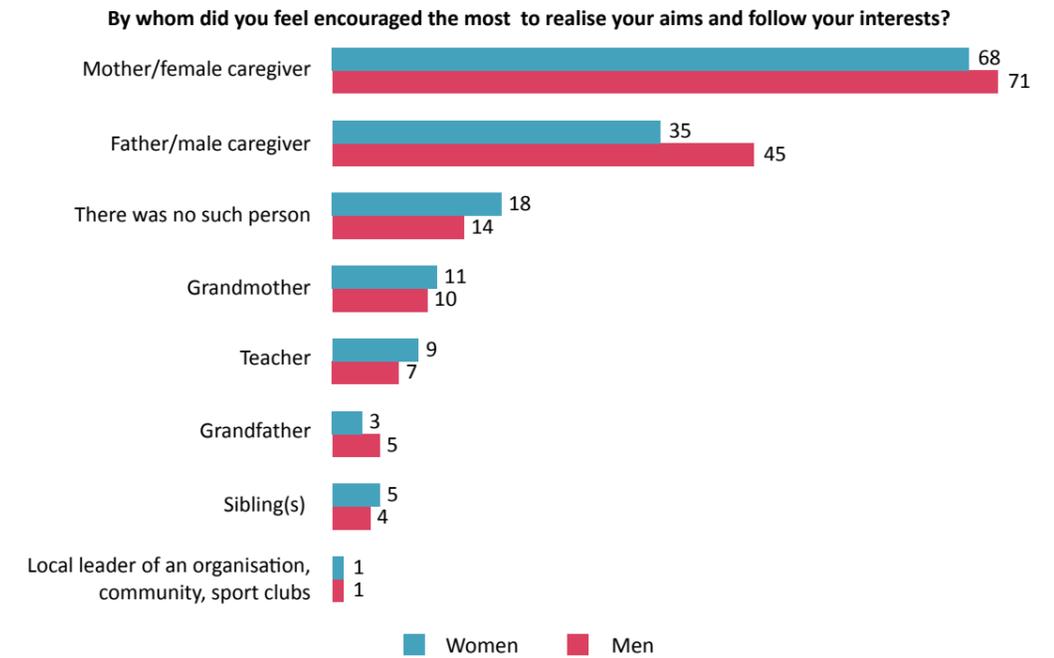


Although the division of roles in the family is beginning to change, it is still mostly the woman who is seen as responsible for the organisation of the family life. More than half of the respondents attested to the conviction that the mother/female care-provider is the one who knows best what is good for the family/household members. In the respondents' childhood homes in the families of origin, the mothers/female caregivers decided on meals, took care of school matters, and ensured cleanliness and order. They were also responsible for the children's religious upbringing and took care of other people that needed help.



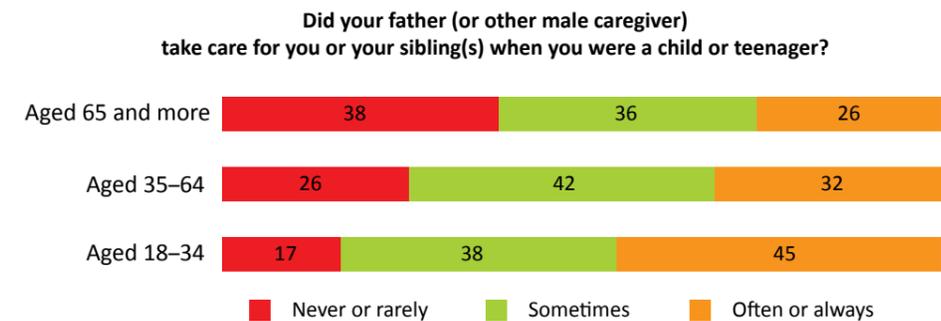
### The mother as the most important person supporting and encouraging children's development

The majority of respondents pointed to their mother as the person who encouraged them to fulfil their goals and broaden their interests during childhood. The indication applied to fathers less frequently, equally for female and male respondents. However, the engagement of fathers in the process of motivating development is clearly increasing for the younger generations. The number of respondents indicating that there was no encouraging person at all decreases with subsequent generations. In fewer than 1 in 10 cases, a teacher was indicated as the person motivating children to develop their interests.



### Growing engagement of fathers in childcare

An active fathering attitude impacts the attitudes of sons: the more a father (or other main male caregiver) was engaged in running the household and caring for children, the more likely the sons are to repeat this pattern in their adult lives. While half of the Polish respondents indicated that their father or other main male caregiver was engaged in preparing meals and cleaning the house, as many as three quarters of the respondents declared that he took care of them or their siblings. The research shows that with each subsequent generation, fathers are more engaged in the private/family sphere. The younger the respondents, the greater the engagement of the father or the main male caregiver. For the youngest respondent group, almost every other father often or always took part in childcare. Men's engagement in the household chores and caring for children was also higher for families with working mothers.

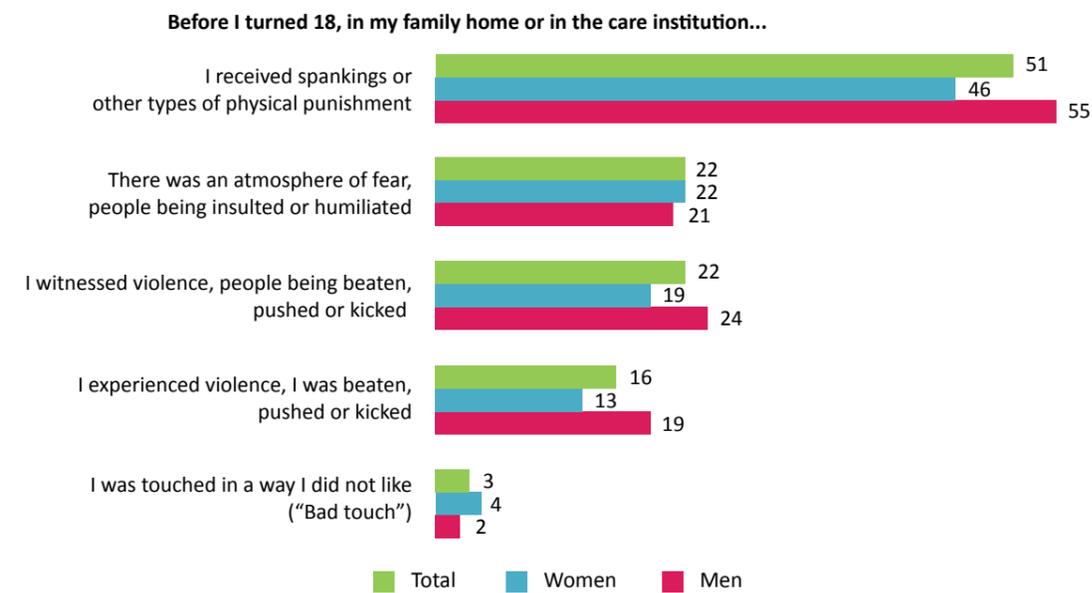


## Violence experienced in childhood and quality of life

### Experiences of violence

When growing up, as many as half of the respondents experienced spankings or other types of corporal punishment before turning 18, which applies both to those raised at home and to those in care institutions (note, however, that only 6 respondents grew up in care homes). Boys were more likely than girls to experience this form of violence.

Every fifth respondent admitted that their family home was marked by an atmosphere of fear, including incidents of being humiliated or insulted. More than 20% of the respondents declared that they witnessed domestic violence (beating, pushing, kicking) in their family, and almost the same proportion experienced violence of this kind. Again, compared to female respondents, men revealed more such experiences from childhood. A fraction amounting to 3% of the respondents disclosed having been victims of sexual violence against children. In this respect, women were more likely to experience sexual violence before they turned 18. It is important to note that experiencing violence in childhood is tied to well-being and health in adult life.



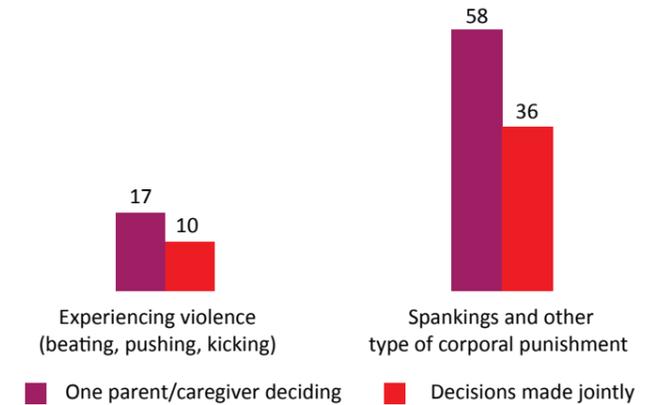
At home, it was mostly the father or male caregiver who carried out corporal punishment (67%), with the mother or female caregiver indicated by 37% of respondents. Corporal punishment for sons was more likely to be performed by the father, while when mothers punished their daughters more often than their sons. Fathers were the perpetrators of violence towards their sons and daughters (54%). Mothers were much less likely to be perpetrators and, if they were, directed violence more often at their daughters.



### Less violence in egalitarian families

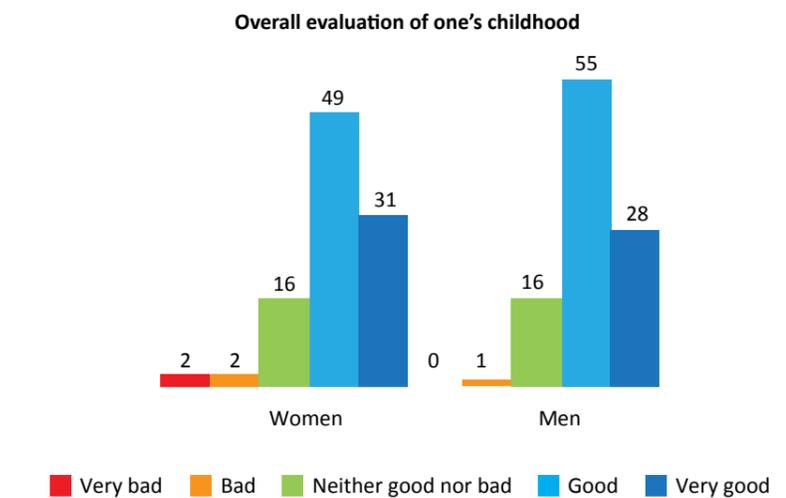
Domestic violence was less common in families when decisions were made together, by both parents or both caregivers. There was also a discrepancy regarding spankings and other forms of corporal punishment: more than half of the respondents received them in the homes with one parent/caregiver making decisions alone, with almost twice as few respondents in this category for the families where decisions were made jointly by both parents/caregivers.

**Experience of violence in the families where decisions were made together compared to those with one parent deciding**



### The more egalitarian a family, the higher the appreciation of one's childhood

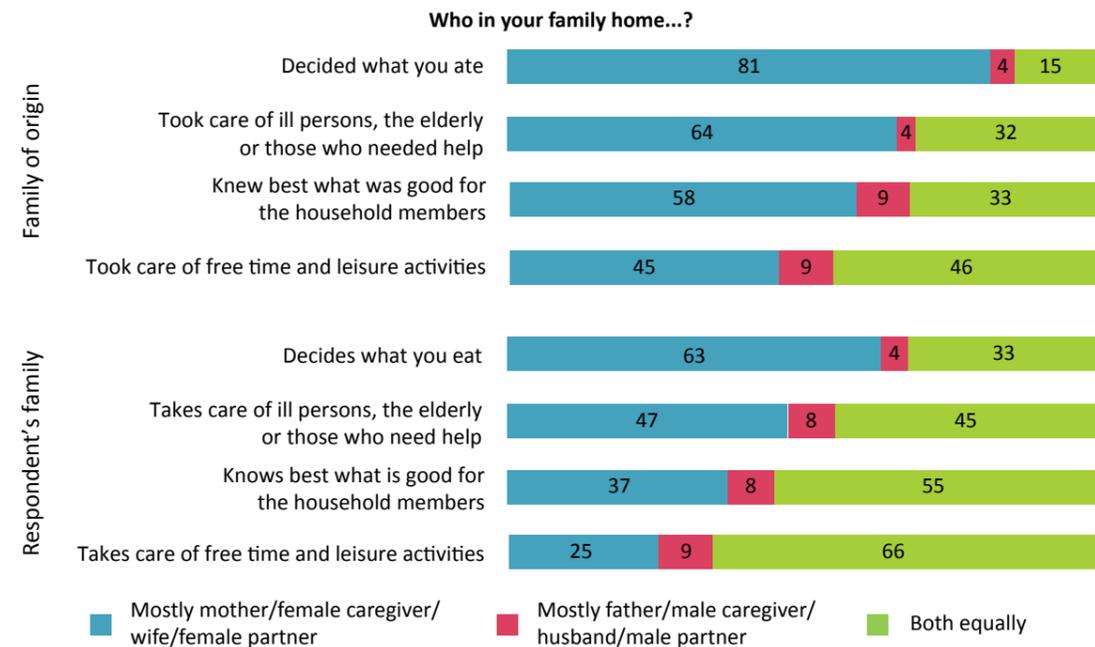
The majority of respondents evaluated their childhoods as "Good" (51%) or "Very good" (30%). The markers were slightly higher for men. Women and men from homes with a decision-making model involving both parents/caregivers deciding together generally appreciated their childhoods better.



## Gender equality in families

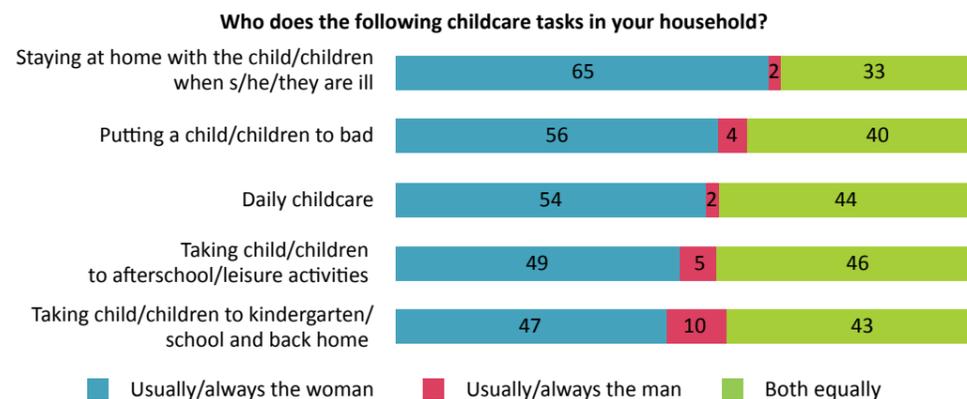
### Intergenerational change towards more egalitarian division of duties and responsibilities

The survey results indicate a high involvement of women in unpaid work. A family life does not exist without the household labour of women, which means that the majority of the organisational, order-making and childrearing work is done by women under the *managerial patriarchy*<sup>4</sup> model. However, changes across generations are clearly evident. As much as the families of origin (i.e. families in which the respondents grew up) were characterised by dominant female work and presence (in caring, deciding on what meals are to be had and when, recognising the needs of the family members, etc.), families of procreation (i.e. families that the respondents started as adults) were much more frequently based on partnership. In the latter context, the respondents stated that the partners fulfil the abovementioned duties and tasks together, also sharing responsibility. The task that is more prevalent in terms of being completed together is organisation and spending free time and leisure.



### Childcare is a female domain, lower participation of fathers

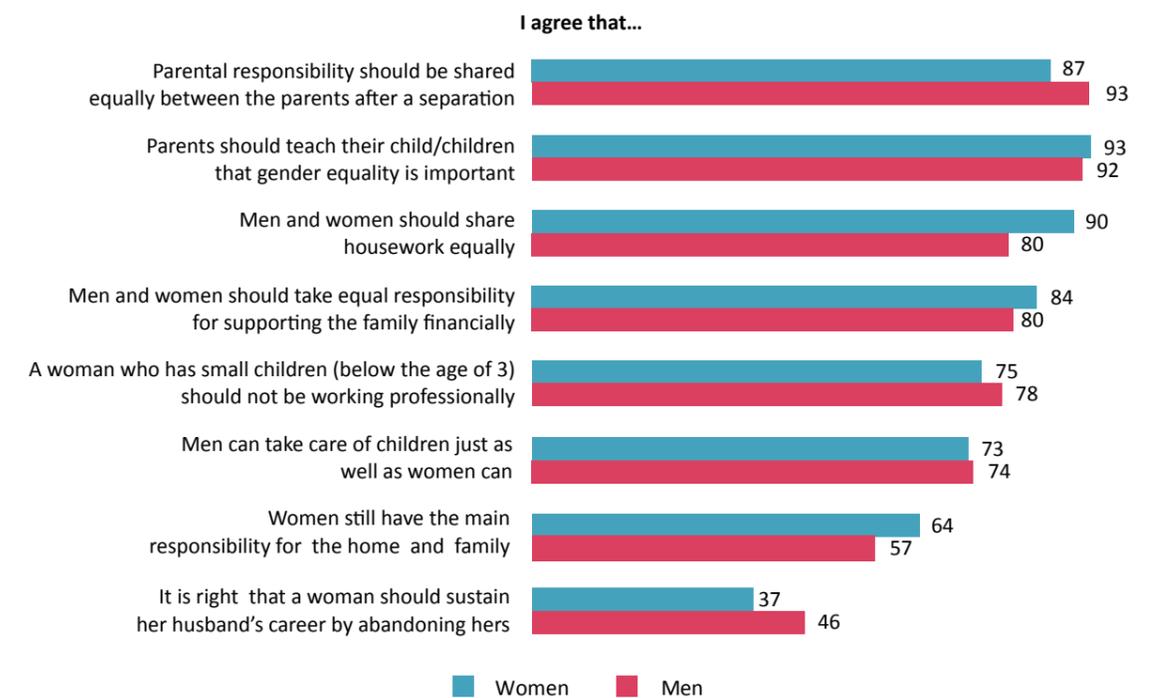
The views of respondents with children requiring parents' care point to a continuing pattern of childcare, which is not based on an equal division of care work. An even split of caring duties is only observed in 40% of families. At the same time, in the remaining families the involvement of mothers in the process of child raising is significantly higher than for fathers. This applies to both daily and routine caring tasks, and the more sporadic duties like caring for a sick child, which is almost always or usually carried out by women in this type of families.



<sup>4</sup> This notion refers to women taking over control and managing family matters.

### Discrepancy between attitudes and practices – where are we headed?

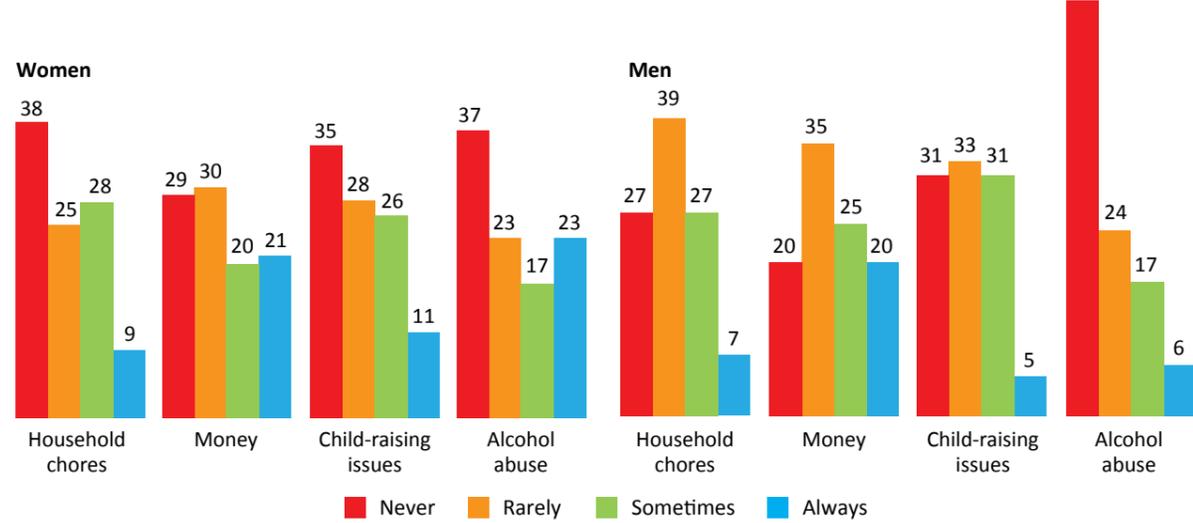
A considerable majority of the respondents manifest opinions attesting the importance of gender equality in the family. However, sharing certain views occurs for men and women to a different degree. It is certainly noteworthy that 93% of women and 92% of men state quite firmly that gender equality is an important enough value to be transferred onto the children in families. Responsibility for the family, children and home should be shared equally according to the majority of the respondents. At the same time, as many as 70% of those surveyed believe that women who have small children should not be working. Both men and women are also quite optimistic about men's abilities to care for children – more than 70% of respondents (both men and women) declared that men are as good carers as women. The breadwinner family model – i.e. there is one main provider – did not prove popular among the respondents – 84% men and 80% women believe that responsibility for the financial stability of the family should be divided evenly. Almost two thirds of women and 46% of men did not agree with the statement that women should give up their careers in order to support the professional development of their husband or partner. Nevertheless, as many as 64% of the women retained the conviction about the key role of the woman in a family. They declared that they were the ones with the ultimate responsibility for the home and the family.



### Relationships are seen as harmonious. It is more common for the conflicts that plagued one's past relationships to be highlighted.

The majority of the survey respondents who are currently in relationships have described their unions as harmonious. As many as one third of both male and female respondents indicated an absence of conflicts. However, it could be observed that the women were slightly more open regarding disclosure of information about disagreements, including those stemming from financial issues. Compared to those currently in a relationship, respondents referring to their past partners were much more likely to admit that those past relationships were marked by conflicts. The main reasons behind the disagreements included the division of household labour, abuse of alcohol and other substances, parenting, and material/financial matters. It was most prevalent for women to indicate the past problems of their partners being linked predominantly with alcohol and substance abuse.

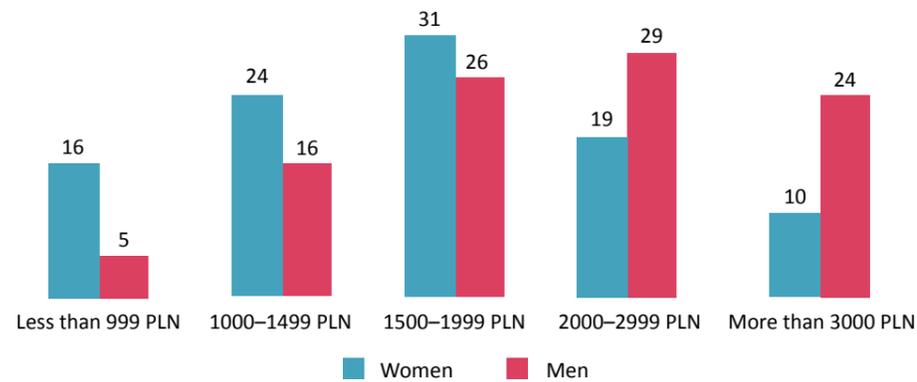
Which of the following issues constituted a source of conflict and tension in your past relationship?



**The gender pay gap – women having lower incomes than men**

Among the respondents, the dominant family model entails both the man and the woman being employed. In 64% of the couples, both partners work. However, the family declared income was mostly low. As many as 66% of the women earned less than 2000 PLN, while this was the situation for almost half of the men. Especially for the women, a certain “salary void” can be observed as far as receiving the remuneration close to that of the country’s average is concerned. Only one in every ten women participating in the survey had an income approximate to the Polish average. The “gender gap” phenomenon could be observed in the respondents’ families, since in more than half of the cases the men earned more than the women, and only 35% of the respondents indicated that the earnings of male and female partners in their family are at comparable levels. It is worth to mention that in Poland the minimal wage (netto) was 1286 zł in 2015.

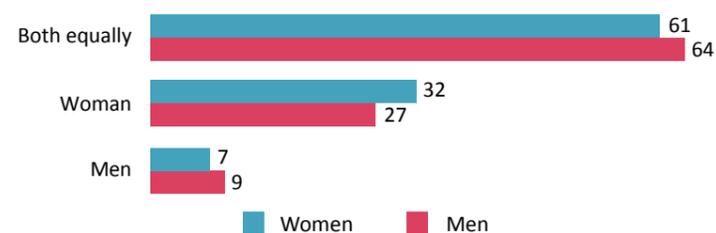
Net income of a man and a woman in a relationship



**Uneven income – shared budget**

Despite the fact that women have lower income than men, the surveyed couples declared a “communitarian” model of managing financial resources. The income inequalities did not translate into a domination of one of the partners with regard to a family budget’s management. Simultaneously, in almost one in three families this responsibility is bestowed upon the woman, while only 8% of the couples relay this duty solely to the man.

Who is responsible for the family budget?

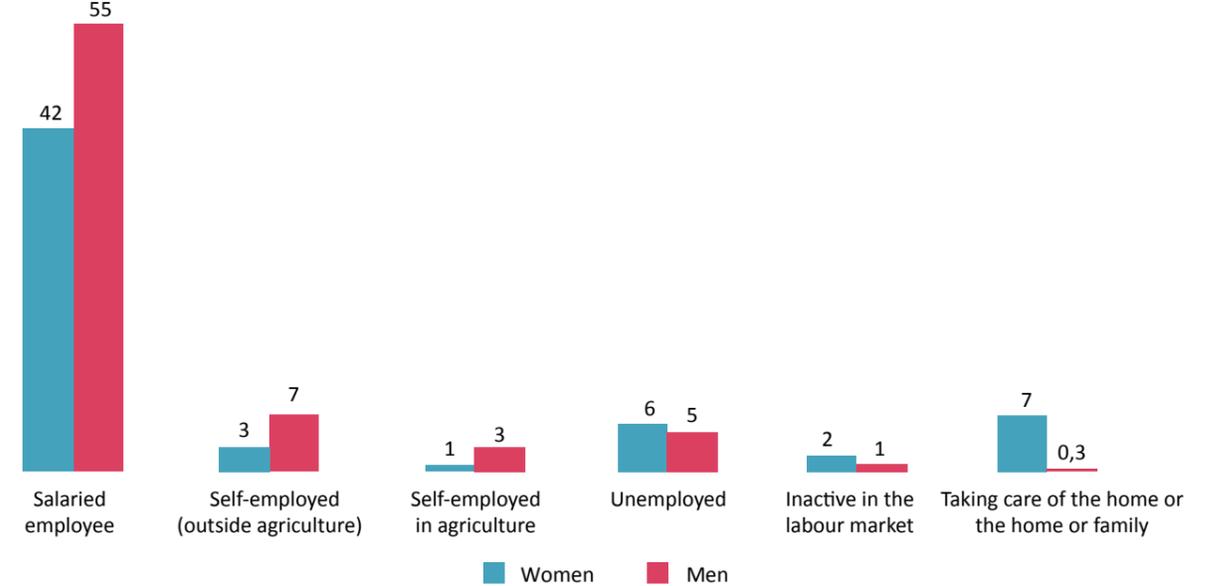


**Gender equality in the labour market**

**Still fewer women in employment**

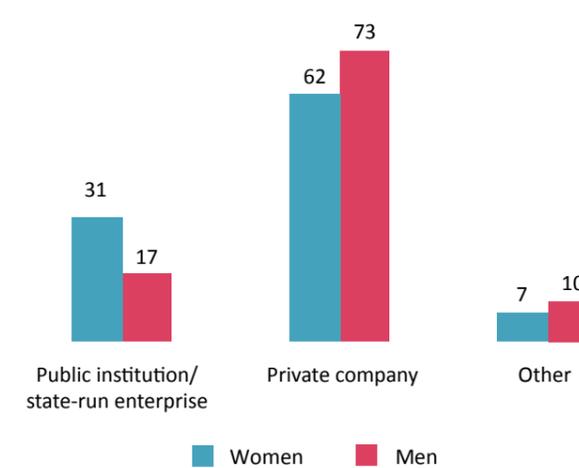
The proportion of women active in the labour market is lower compared to men. Fewer women are employed in salaried positions; the percentage is also lower for self-employed women outside of the agriculture sector. Men more often manage the work of others (15% of male managers, versus 10% of female ones). There are also more women than men in unemployment or remaining professionally inactive. There are still more women than men who declare that they do not work due to taking care of their home and family.

Labour market situation<sup>5</sup>



Public institutions and state-run enterprises employ twice as many women as men. Conversely, the private sector is dominated by men (73 vs 62 %).

Main places of work

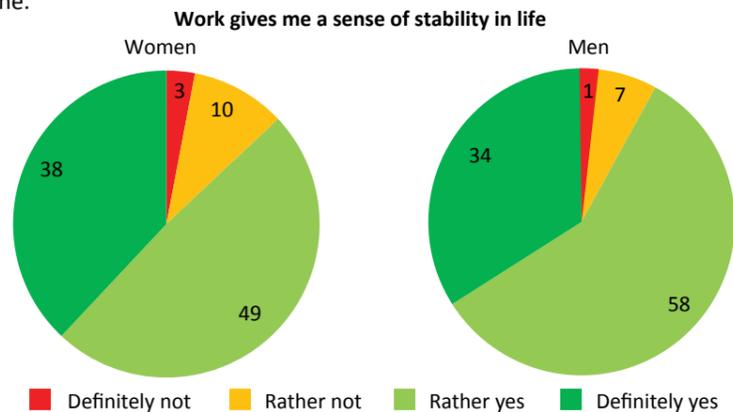


<sup>5</sup> The situation of the labour market was examined using a multiple-choice question formula. The chart only presents the selected options, depicting the situation of men and women in the labour market.

### Work as a source of stability in life

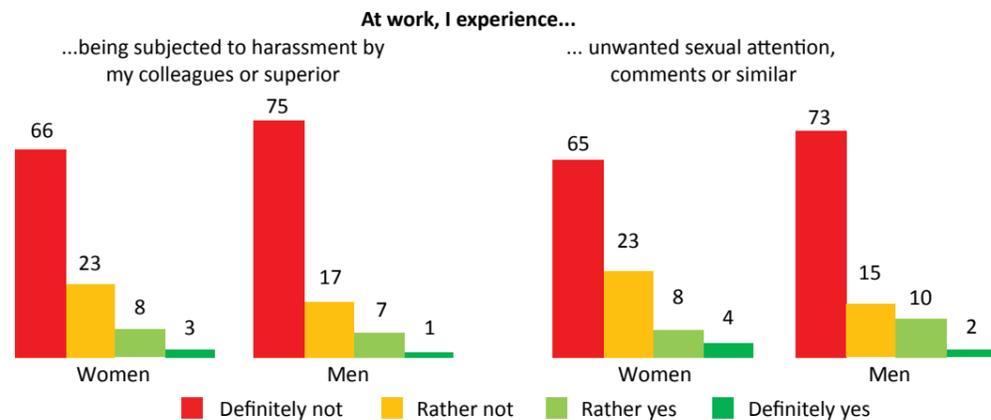
In the opinion of both men and women, work secures a sense of stability in life. The vast majority of the respondents, namely 90%, agreed with this statement, including 36% who “Definitely agree”. Support for this statement was more typical for men (92%) compared to women (87%), yet it was women who more often chose the stronger (“Definitely agree”) option.

The sense of stability in life depends on the type of a work contract that one has. The highest sense of stability derived from work can be observed among those with permanent employment contracts. The results differ with regard to the lowest level of work-induced stability, which was observed for the self-employed in the case of men, and – as far as women were concerned – temporary/specific-task contracts, internships/voluntary work, as well as working with no contract in the grey zone.



### Women suffering from more discrimination in the workplace

The female respondents fell victim to bullying and sexual harassment in the workplace. Eleven percent of women and 8% of men surveyed admitted to being ridiculed, humiliated, intimidated or ignored by colleagues or bosses at work. While the same number of men and women (12%) experienced sexual harassment in the workplace, the female respondents were more likely to choose the “definitely yes” option.



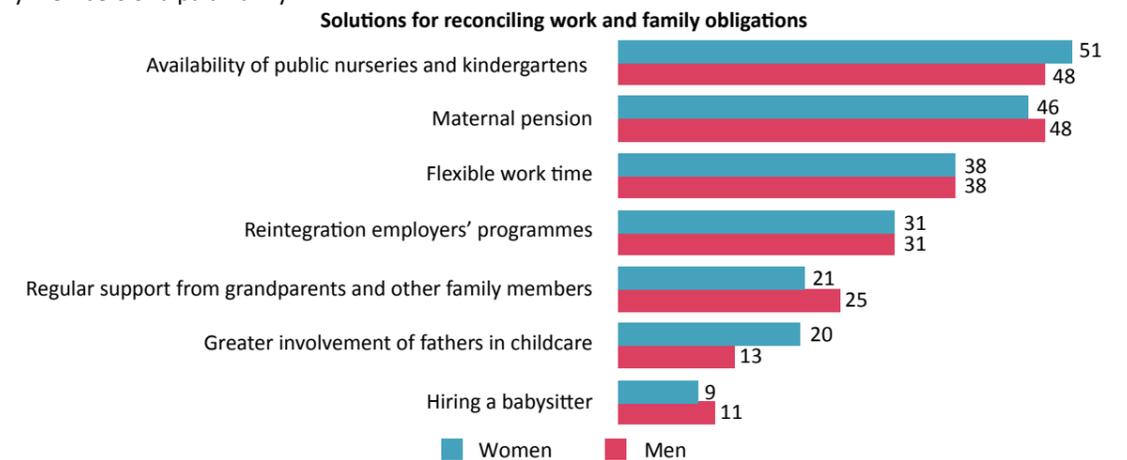
### Reconciling work and family obligations

Both men (53%) and women (49%) acknowledge that either their employer or their boss expects them to be available in their free time. The frequency of selecting this statement was higher for those working in the private sector. The results demonstrate the negative phenomenon of the blurred boundaries between work and family/personal life.

The men and women evaluated some of the solutions that support the task of reconciling work and family roles. Availability of public kindergartens and the *maternal wage*<sup>6</sup>, were selected by most respondents, while flexible work time and reintegration employers’ programmes were selected less frequently. It should be noted that the increased participation of fathers in childcare was chosen by only 16% of respondents.

<sup>6</sup> The maternal wage is a payment received by a mother for providing childcare during the time between the end of the paid maternity leave and the time when her child starts to attend kindergarten.

Women more often pointed to the vital role played by the public kindergarten and more prominent involvement of fathers, while men supported the significance of the maternal wage, as well as assistance from grandparents, other family members or a paid nanny.



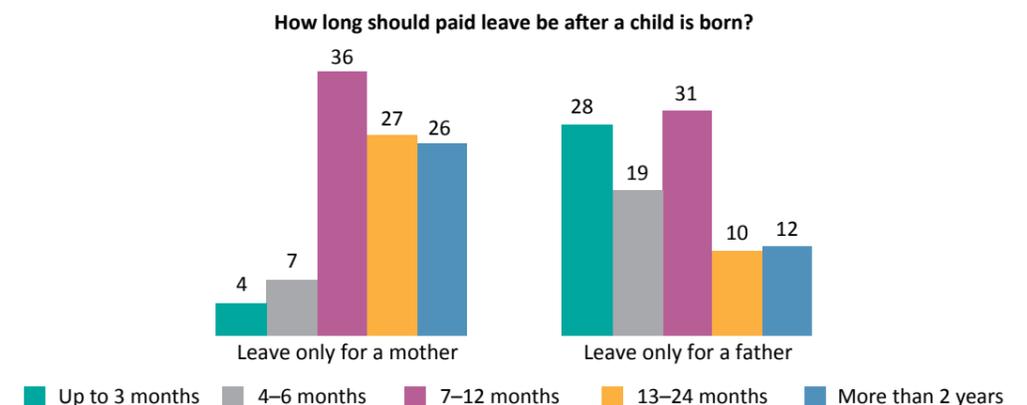
### Parental leave mostly used by mothers

The leave periods dedicated to taking care of a newborn and small child are primarily used by mothers. Among the respondents with children, it was the mother who went on maternity leave in the majority of families (70%). In as many as 28% of the surveyed families, neither parent took maternity leave, which was caused by the fact that the women were not entitled to it due to the fact that they did not work professionally, being on annuity pension, or having worked in a farmstead. In a marginal number of cases (around 2%), either the father or both parents used their maternity leave. The situation was similar as far as taking unpaid extended childcare leave (Pl. *wychowawczy*) was concerned. In this respect, almost half of the women used it, and the leave was not taken at all in half of the families. Again, in extremely few cases the father or both parents took advantage of this leave scheme.

Fathers declare a desire to use leave for taking care for children in the event that it is solely dedicated to them. Looking at the fathers who had children born after the introduction of paternity leave in 2010 (2 weeks non-transferable leave), one notes that 37% of the men (61 fathers from 167 families) took advantage of this leave. The main reasons for not taking the paternity leave included not having a right to do so and not wanting a break at work.

### Involving fathers in caring for newborn babies

More than 60% of Polish men and women believe that parental leave should be used primarily by a mother while one in three respondents declares that it should be more or less evenly distributed between the parents. Ninety percent of the respondents agreed with the statement that a father should always have the right to individual parental leave, regardless of the labour market situation of the child’s mother. However, the Polish survey participants on the one hand expressed the opinion that paid leave after having a child should be much longer for a mother, in fact lasting more than a year. On the other hand, they believed that paternal leave should be shorter and take fathers away from work for a period generally shorter than one year. A relatively high proportion of the respondents limit this period even further, arguing that leave to be taken exclusively by fathers should last no longer than three months.

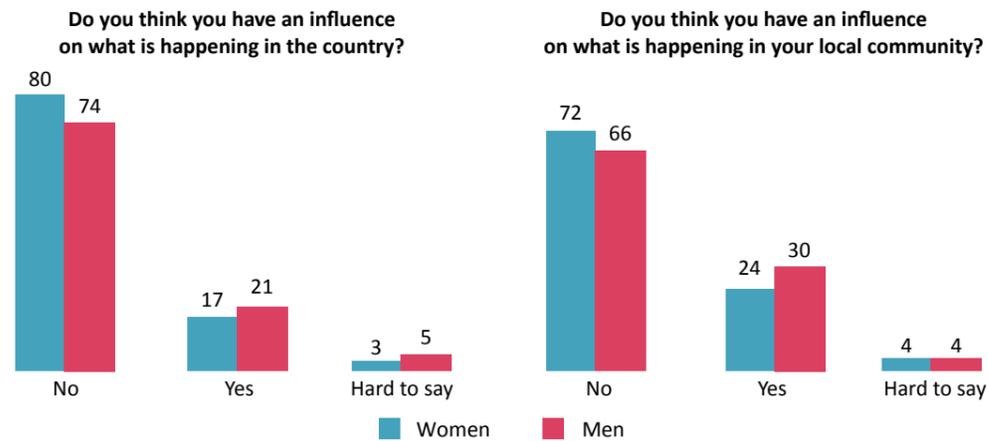


## Agency and civic participation

It is not only satisfaction with our relationships or a chance at professional fulfilment, health or financial safety that contribute to one's quality of life. Equally important is the broader social context and individual agency, which means a conviction that one's opinion matters and a belief that one can influence what is happening in one's place of residence and country/society. This decides on whether one engages in any action in the situations when one wants to effect a change, express objections, or pursue an idea that can help improve the current state of affairs.

### Lack of a sense of agency with regard to influencing the future of the local and national communities

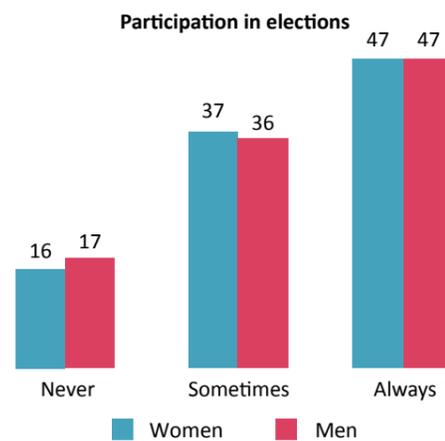
A clear majority of the respondents feel that they have neither any influence on the community they live in, nor any impact on the future of the country. This conviction, which is dangerous from a social cohesion standpoint, is shared by close to 80% of the survey participants. In this respect, the differences between men and women are small. Slightly more women feel disempowered when it comes to deciding on national matters (80% of women as compared to 74% of men).



The opinions about one's influence on the local community are slightly more optimistic. The differences between the male and female respondents remain small, though they deserve to be noted. Specifically, women again more often (72% as compared to 66% among men) feel that they have no influence on the course of events.

### Voting as the main expression of civic engagement

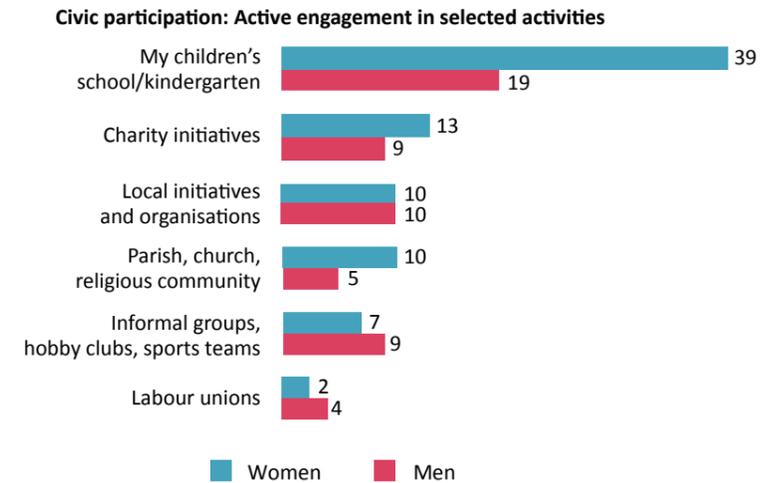
Taking part in elections remains the most frequent expression of engagement in civil society. Voting in local, national and European elections is declared by nearly 84% of respondents. Becoming a candidate in the national parliamentary elections, meaning the use of one's passive electoral right, was considered by 2% of Poles. A slightly bigger fraction – 6% – had pondered running for local government.



### Low levels of civic participation

The outlook is far less optimistic when it comes to participation in various types of civic action, for example voluntary work, drafting and signing petitions, partaking in citizens' consultations, or taking action in one's neighbourhood community. Less than 10% of the respondents state that they engage in these kinds of activities.

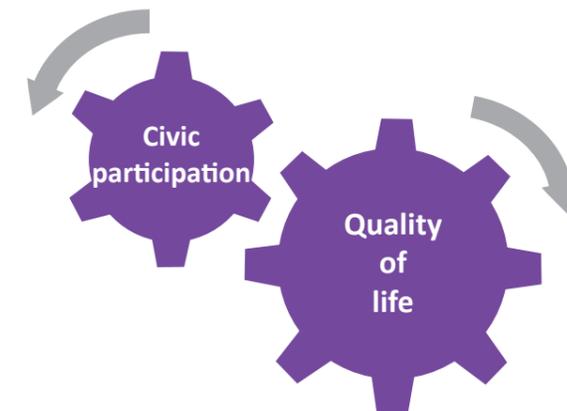
One sphere with a much higher social activity is participation in activities organised at the kindergartens and schools attended by the respondents' children. As many as 39% of all mothers and 19% of fathers have taken part in such events.



It is worth noting the two issues characteristic of the group of those active in civil society. First, the men who actively contribute to handling various household obligations and chores are more likely to also engage in public actions.



Secondly, as for the women, an interesting relationship between the quality of life and their social participation can be observed. An attitude of being active in civil society, which is tied to a potential positive social change, can be linked to a better quality of life.



## Experiencing violence in intimate partnerships

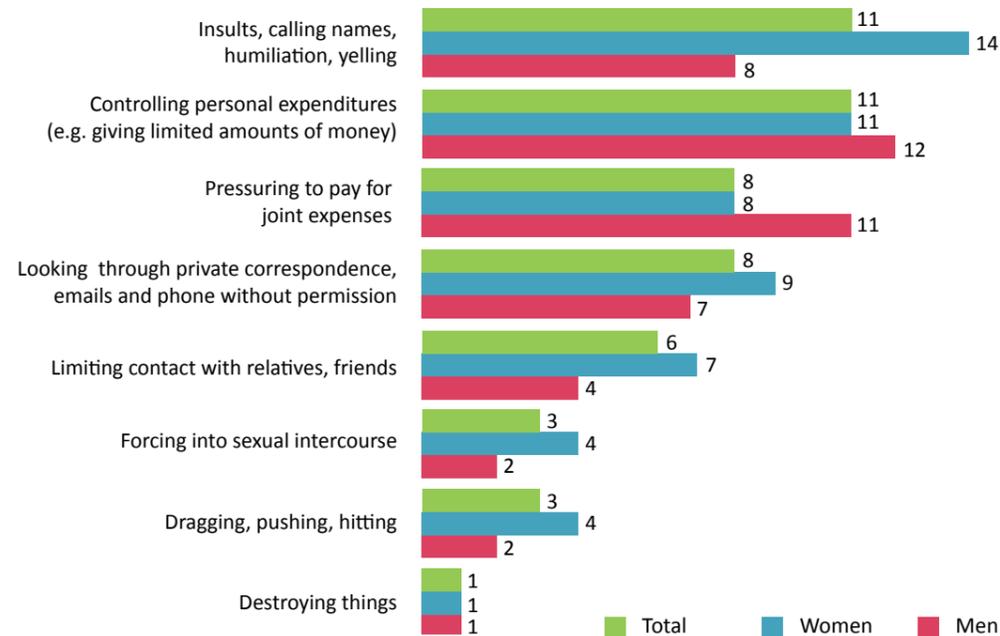
### Polish women and men rarely admit to violence in their current relationship

The study probed for experiences of different forms of violence:

- Physical violence (e.g. being dragged, pushed or hit)
- Psychological violence (e.g. insulting a partner, calling them names, limiting their social contacts, controlling personal correspondence, destroying their possessions)
- Economic violence (e.g. restricting personal spending, forcing a partner to pay for shared expenses)
- Sexual violence (e.g. forcing a partner into sexual intercourse).

Violent behaviours towards a partner were examined for the last twelve months of a relationship. The survey also enquired about experiences of violence in the respondents' previous intimate relationships. Asked about the experiences of violence in their current relationship, the vast majority of respondents (circa 75%) answered that they have not been victims of any of the kinds of violence mentioned. The highest prevalence of refusal to answer a question was observed for the sexual violence question. Among those affected by violence, the women primarily indicated being insulted, humiliated or called names by their partner. The second most prominent indication entailed a partner restricting their personal spending. The men also pointed to these two forms of violence as the most common; however, their ranking order was reversed (i.e. their most common experience of violence was having personal spending restricted by their partners).

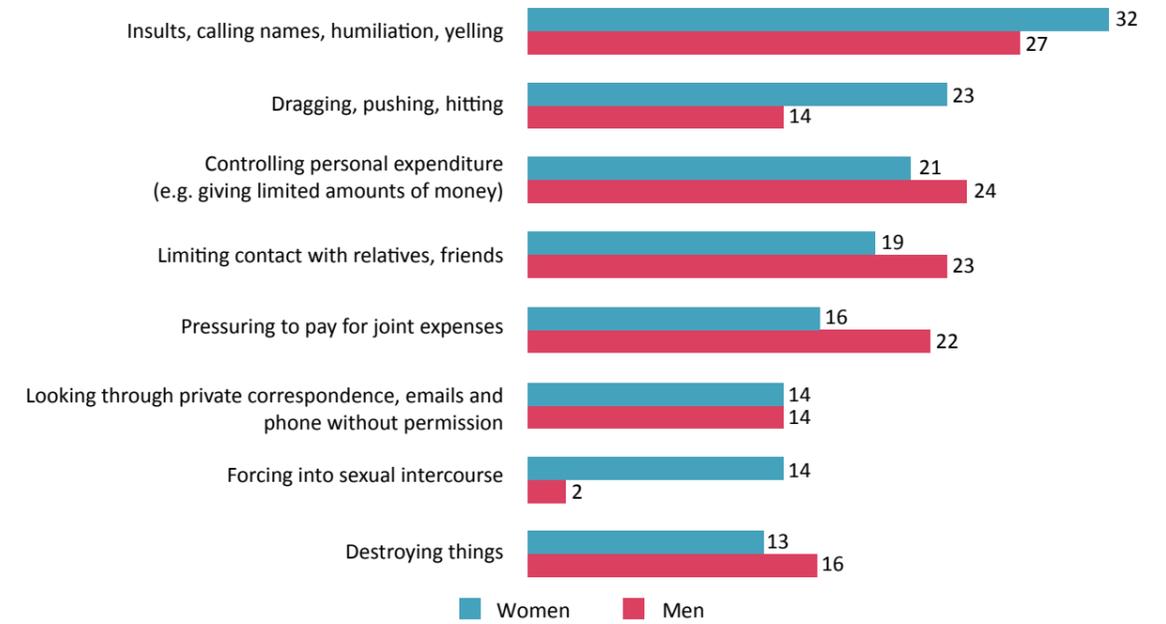
**Disclosures regarding different forms of intimate partner violence in the last 12 months. The chart does not show frequencies, and covers instances of violence from current partners only.**



### More frequent disclosure of violence in past relationships

While as many as 75% of all respondents stated that there was no violence in their current relationships, the proportion of those who have not experienced any violence in previous intimate partnerships was much lower, coming to 56%. The questions about forcing sexual intercourse, insulting and calling names yielded the most refusals to answer. It is important to bring attention to the fact that women were less willing than men to discuss violence in their past relationships. In four of the eight kinds of violence identified above, the number of those indicating certain experiences was higher for men than for women (though the difference between men and women is rather small in these cases). Among the female respondents, the more frequent instances of violence included being insulted, called names, humiliated and yelled at. Physical violence (being dragged, pushed or hit) was next, followed by economic violence (restriction of spending). The women were seven times more likely to disclose having been forced to have sexual intercourse. Conversely, the men stated being victims of economic violence (being given certain amounts of money and being pressured to pay for shared expenses), and experiencing limitation of one's contacts with family members, friends and acquaintances.

**Indications of different types of violence in intimate partnerships. The chart illustrates the situation in past relationships/violent behaviours of an ex-partner**



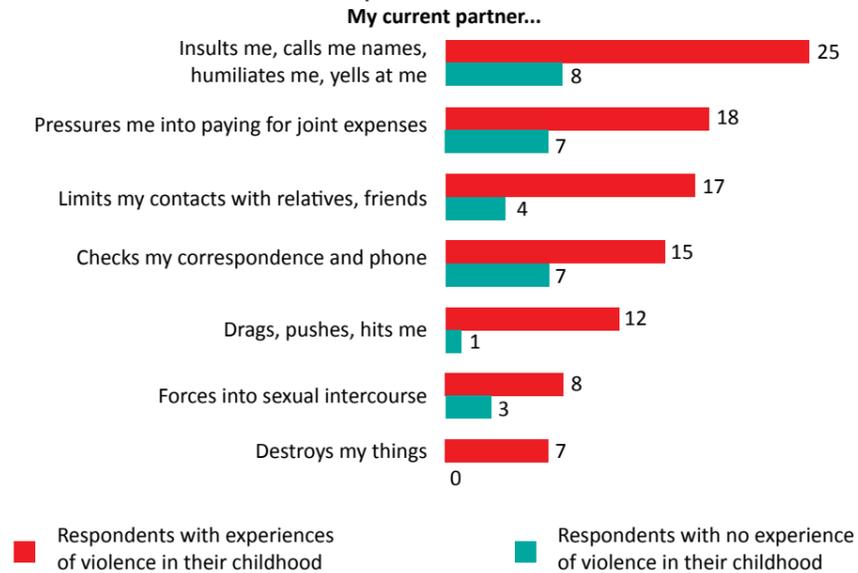
### Experiences of childhood violence increase the risk of being a victim of intimate partner violence

The research results demonstrate that having experienced violence prior to turning 18 considerably increased the risk of becoming a victim of intimate partner violence in the current adult relationship. This applied not only to punishing a child by spanking, which continues to be wrongly perceived by Polish society as something that should not be classified as violence, but also to experiencing being dragged, hit, or sexually abused. The people who received corporal punishment and declared that they had experienced other forms of violence in their childhood and early youth (before becoming legally adult at 18) were more likely to fall victim to intimate partner violence at present. They were more commonly insulted, humiliated, and called names. Moreover, their economic freedom was restricted, and their behaviours were much more commonly checked without their consent (e.g. the partner checking their correspondence or monitoring phone contacts).

**Experiencing corporal punishment in childhood and intimate partner violence in adulthood. My current partner...**

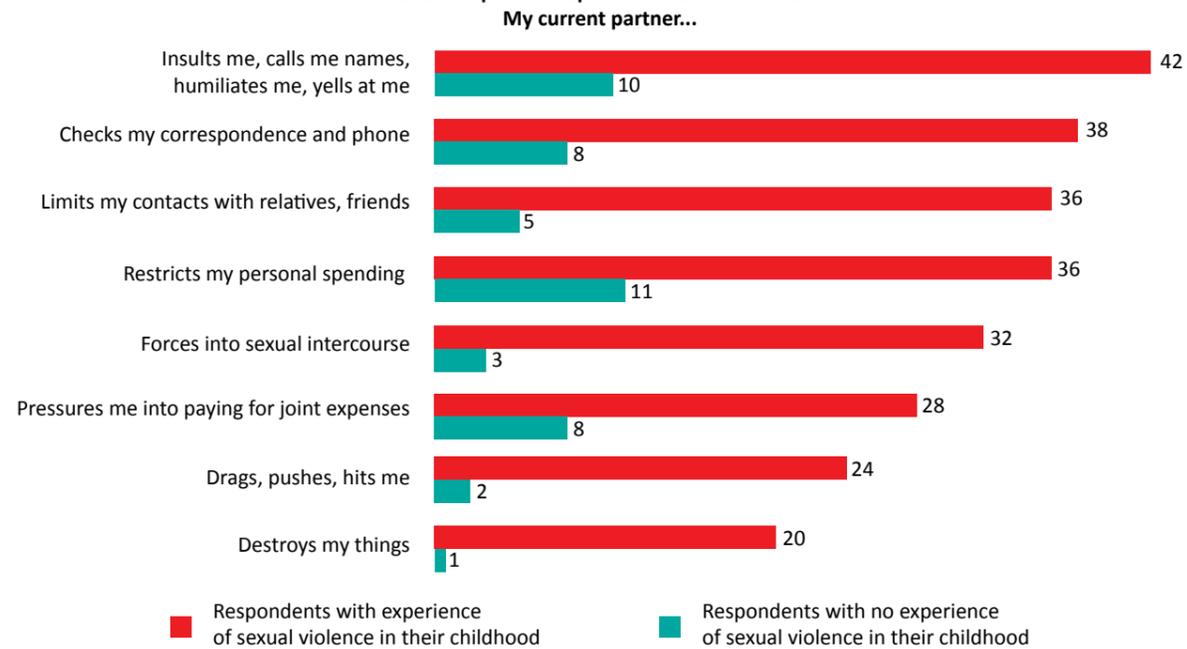


**Being dragged, hit or pushed in childhood and intimate partner violence in adulthood.**



The people exposed to sexual abuse as children appear to be in “a circle of violence” in their present adult relationships. All forms of violence more frequently affect such respondents in their adulthood.

**Sexual violence in childhood and intimate partnership violence in adulthood.**



The probability of experiencing various types of intimate partner violence in a current adult relationship increases not only for respondents who were victims of violence, but also for those who just witnessed violence in their childhood and grew up in a home (or a care institution) with an atmosphere of fear. The observed regularity (relationship of being a victim of violence in childhood and being a victim of intimate partner violence in adulthood) also applies to previous adult relationships.

**Violence strongly impacts quality of life, particularly for women**

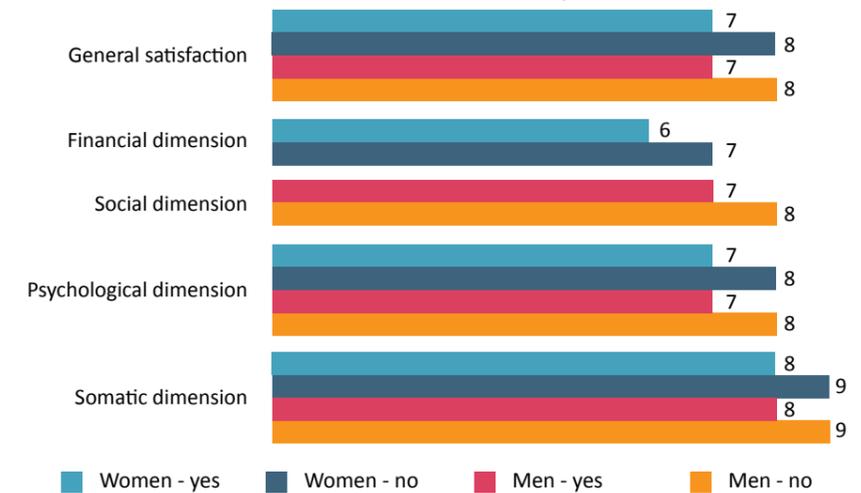
The project sought to examine the influence of experiencing different kinds of violence in an intimate partnership on the quality of life of those surveyed. The study demonstrated that each of the analysed forms of violence has decreased the respondents’ quality of life in at least two out of six of the dimensions taken into account.

**Impact of the current intimate partner violence on the quality of life through a gender lens**

The chart presented below shows the influence of the violence upon the victims’ quality of life, dividing the respondents into male and female categories. The numbers given next to the bars signify the median value, meaning the middle rank received scored by all male and female respondents who experienced a given kind of violence. **A higher score (median value) translates into a higher quality of life.** The charts only incorporate statistically significant results.

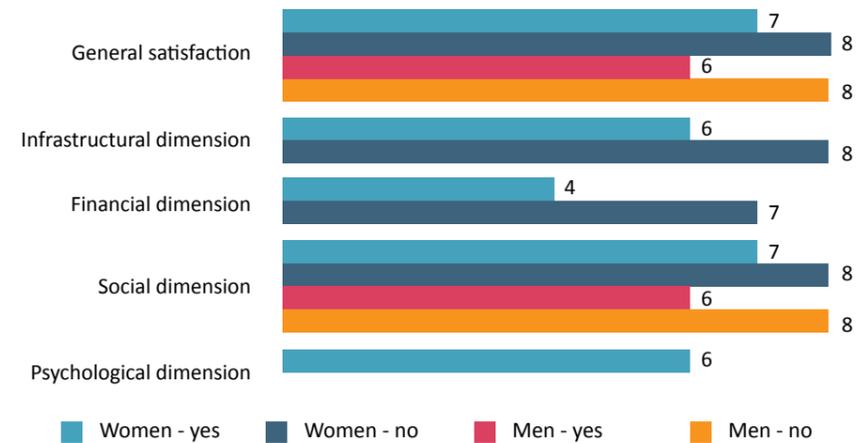
Experiences of psychological violence decreased the quality of life of both men and women in several dimensions, namely the somatic, psychological, and that of overall satisfaction. It further diminished the scores in the social aspect for the men and financial dimension for the women.

**Impact on quality of life dimensions when my partner insults me, calls me names, humiliates me, yells at me...**



Experiencing physical violence (being dragged, pushed, hit) has negatively impacted the quality of life of the men and the women in the social dimension, as well as diminishing the levels of their overall sense of satisfaction. What is more, women who were victims of violence scored worse on the scale measuring psychological, financial and infrastructural dimensions of their quality of life. For men, however, this correlation was not observed. Physical violence did not impact the somatic dimension of the quality of life, for either the men or the women.

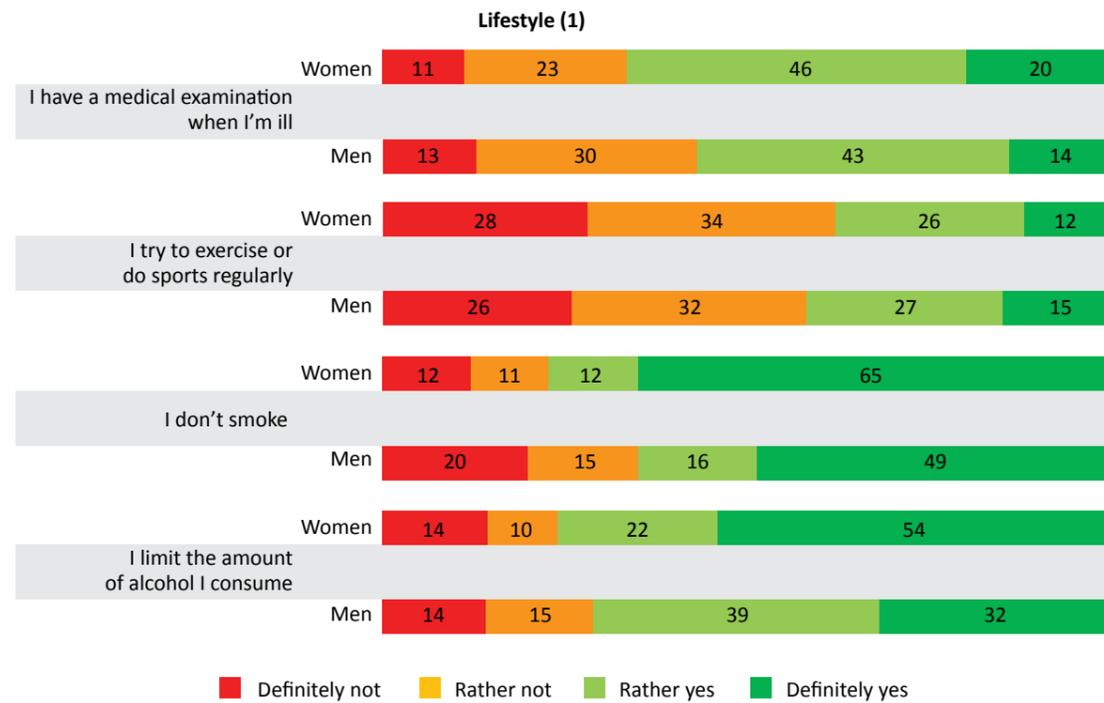
**Impact on quality of life dimensions when my partner drags me, pushes me, hits me ....**



## Lifestyle and health

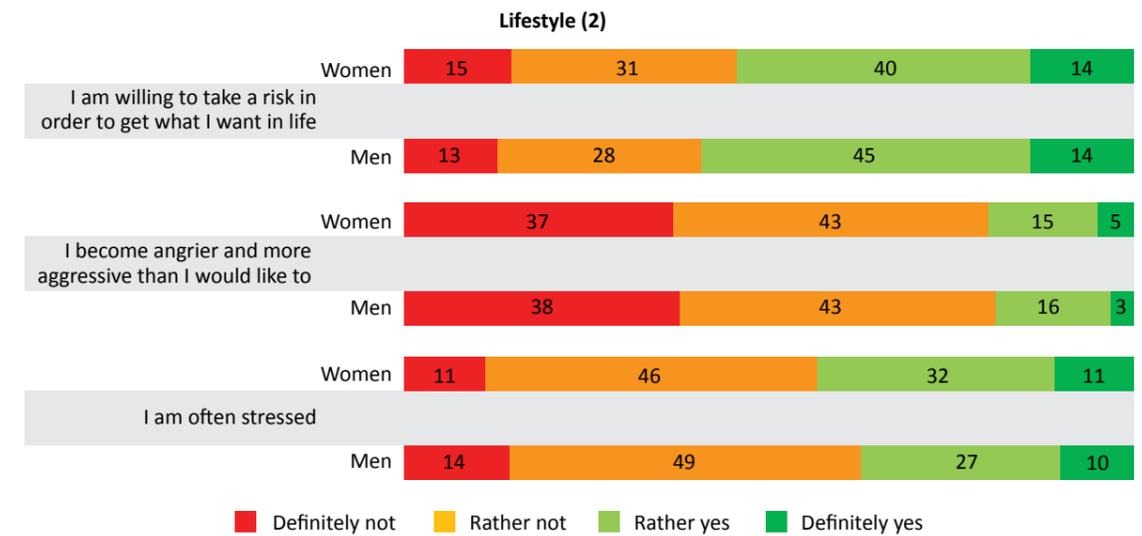
### Slight differences regarding health-related behaviours of men and women

The research highlights certain differences in health-related behaviours between men and women. Analysis of all positive (“Definitely yes” plus “Rather yes”) answers to the question about limiting alcohol consumption yielded the result that almost three quarters of the male respondents and slightly more than three quarters of the female respondents avoid excessive alcohol consumption. As regards the question probing the avoidance of cigarette smoking, the analysis suggested almost the same proportion of non-smoking women (the “definitely not” and “rather not” answers), yet it also pointed to a 6% lower number of men avoiding cigarettes. This means that smoking is more prevalent among men. There is a slight gender difference with regard to the regular instances of doing sports, although it is important to note that more than half of the respondents (both male and female) fail to engage in any regular physical activity. An immediate consultation with a doctor after noticing worrying symptoms of illness was typically exhibited by women.



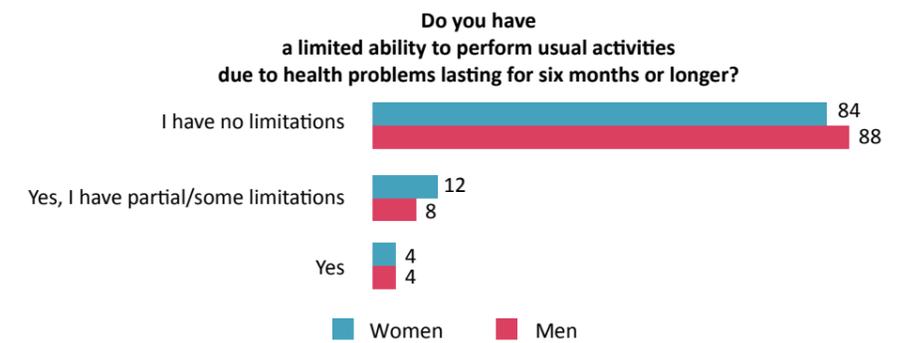
### Men and women are similarly stressed and aggressive

It is slightly more common for women to declare that they often feel stressed. According to the collected responses, the respondents of both genders do not seem to differ with regard to the level of aggressiveness. Men are slightly more likely than women to take a risk in order to get what they want.

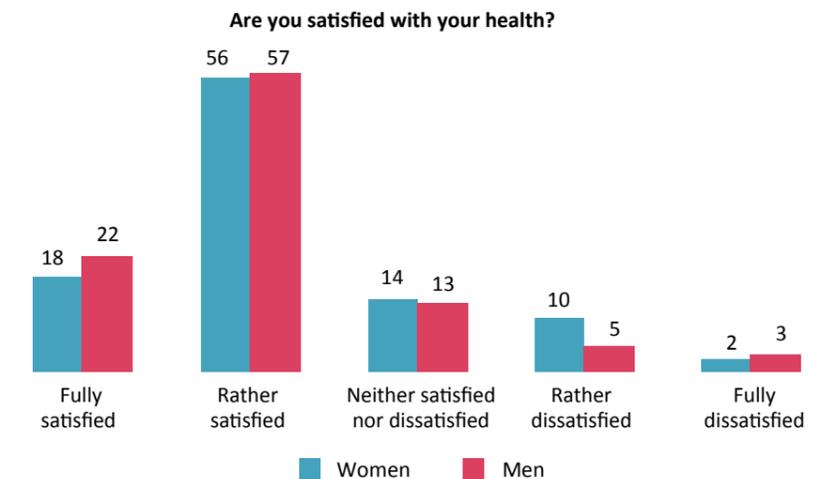


### Slight gender differences in self-evaluations of one's health status and quality of life

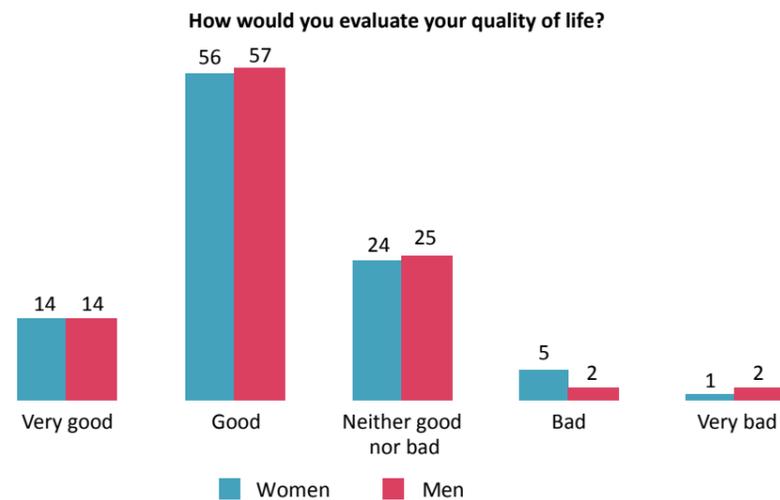
Asked about any health problems or limitations that affected their daily functioning and lasted six months or longer, the majority of respondents said they had no such problems. Partial limitations were noted by a higher proportion of women than men, which means that the female population is characterised by a slightly worse functional status.



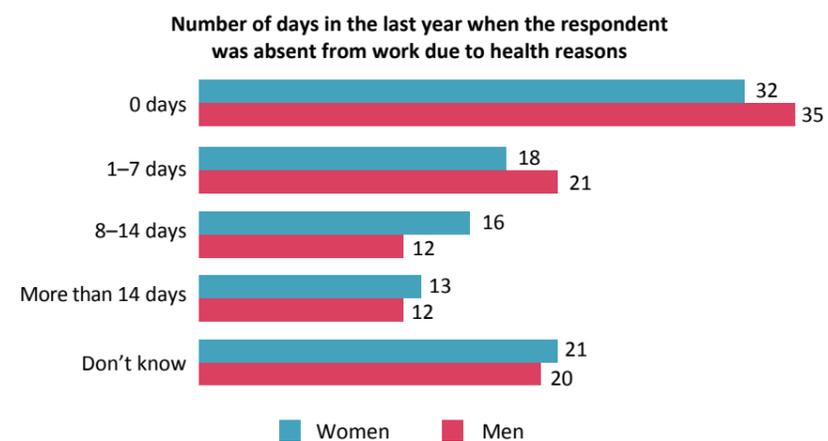
Similarly, only minor gender differences were found when the respondents were asked to evaluate their health condition and to report on their quality of life. The responses indicating being “Somewhat satisfied” and “Fully satisfied” were chosen most frequently, though men were slightly more likely than women to choose these options. For both men and women, the majority of the respondents underscored that they are either “Somewhat satisfied” or “Rather satisfied” with their health.



Both men and women usually evaluated their quality of life as good. However, the “Neither good nor bad” option was the second most chosen option. The “Very good” response was the third most common. The evaluations pointing to “Bad” and “Very bad” were rare. Note that the women were slightly more likely to choose the first option, while the men chose the latter.



Applying a gender perspective to the analysis of the work absences in the last year of employment once again shows that there are no significant differences between men and women. The respondents were most likely to state that they have not missed a single day at work, with slightly more indications among men. A higher proportion of women also admitted longer work absences (ranging from 8 to 14 days and those longer than 14 days).



## Summary

The majority of Polish men and women declare that gender equality is not only an important value for them, but also a crucial factor for building a fair society. It is more common for women to disagree with the statement that equality has already been achieved in Poland. It is similarly more prevalent for the female respondents to take note of the numerous examples of the worse treatment of women in the public sphere. Moreover, there is also a higher number of women disclosing experiences of discrimination when seeking work and in the workplace. Both men and women point to the labour market as the key area of gender inequality.

Gender equality as a value was something that many respondents had grown up with in their homes and families of origin, making it – expectedly – something that should not be perceived as a threat to families. On the one hand, the respondents see gender equality as a responsibility of each individual, meaning that every person should live their daily life by its standards. On the other hand, according to the men and women surveyed, other entities that should be engaged in the activities promoting gender equality include media, public institutions, schools and employers. In order to achieve equality between men and women, public institutions need to take action, for example by changing the law so that it guarantees gender equality, introducing better state-issued social support, as well as promoting gender equality in the media.

The GEQ study showed that the private sphere remains the domain of women, though the engagement of men is growing with each generation. The organisation of family life is still primarily a female responsibility, as women decide on family meals and school matters, as well as cleaning and caring for those needing help. The so-called “managerial matriarchy”, meaning that women take over control and the management of family matters, appears to be a persistent model of family life patterns. However, it should be noted that it renders the process of democratisation of families more difficult. Nevertheless, the research finds that the involvement of men in the family sphere, including childcare, increases together with women taking on professional careers. What is more, egalitarian family models in the family of origin have usually translated into men that tended to mirror them in their adult life. While most couples exhibit a dual-breadwinner model (meaning that both the man and the woman in a couple are employed), the men still continue to have a considerably higher income than women. Achieving economic equality of men and women is hindered by this imbalanced division of income. Therefore, it can be inferred that a declared sharing of management of a domestic budget is a certain indicator of the democratisation processes in families. As a result, financial resources do not seem to constitute the basis for a gendered hierarchy in relationships. At the same time, however, women participate in the labour market to a lesser degree. Furthermore, the terms of their employment are inferior, as they more frequently than men admitted to having been a victim of bullying and sexual harassment in the workplace. Similarly, women were more likely to underscore that having a permanent job contract plays an important role for a feeling of stability in one’s life.

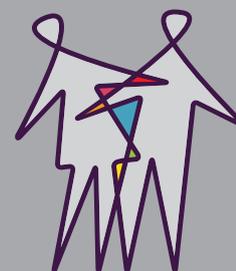
Periods of leave allowing parents to care for newborn babies and small children are predominantly taken by women. Fathers declare the desire to benefit from paternal leave as long as it is granted solely to them. In order to be able to better reconcile work and family/childcare duties, the respondents would primarily expect the state’s support. Of lesser importance are the solutions offered by employers and assistance from family members. Despite the fact that respondents with children were more likely to engage in various activities in their children’s schools, this activism did not translate into any noticeable involvement across other areas of civil society. Thus, the research results do not confirm the phenomenon of politicised motherhood and fatherhood.

Polish families declare a uniquely harmonious nature of their relationships, which are free of any major conflicts. Most of the disclosed problems refer to past relationships. The respondents’ current partnerships rarely point to experiences linked to intimate partner violence, and are idealised. Those who had past experiences of being in relationships marked by violence were three times as likely to also reveal that violence marks their present union. The instances of psychological and economic violence were most commonly observed, and having experienced violence in childhood signified an increased risk of being a victim of an act of intimate partner violence. As many as half of the respondents indicated that they were given corporal punishment as children, more often men than women. Some forms of violence in childhood did not affect the quality of life for men. Conversely, each type of violence had decreased the quality of life

for women. Being a victim of a psychological/emotional violence (insults, name-calling, humiliation, etc.) perpetrated by a partner, and experiencing physical violence (dragging, hitting, pushing) have diminished the women's quality of life.

The findings show only a slight gendered difference with regard to the lifestyle, self-evaluation of one's health and quality of life, as well as absences from work. Compared to men, women had a slightly higher health awareness

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