



National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza



National Commission for the Promotion of Equality

Perceptions and Attitudes of Women and Men in Malta towards work-life balance with a specific focus on family size

Prof. Anna Borg + Dr. Maja Miljanic Brinkworth
+ Pro. Liberato Camilleri

7th March 2024



National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

Aims of the study

- **The broad aims of this study are to find out:**
 1. whether women and men of childbearing age are interested in having (more) children.
 2. to identify what are the main factors that hinder or encourage women and men to have (more) children.
 3. to identify which challenges are faced by women and men when reconciling work and child-care responsibilities.
 4. To identify which services or measures would support women and men to have more children.





National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

Methodology - Sampling, Data Collection and Analysis

- 600 net responses from residents from Malta and Gozo, (Maltese or Maltese married/partnered to/with non-Maltese) who had completed 18 years to 39 years and had no children, or at most had one child
- Stratified random sampling to obtain a representative sample of the 18-39 population in terms of gender, age and education.
- The data was collected by a contracted research company between 20th November 2023 -5th January 2024 using computer-aided telephone interviewing (CATI) software.
- The data were analysed using SPSS noting frequencies of replies which were presented through graphs with cross tabulations of selected frequencies.





Profile of Respondents

- 48.6 % Females +51.4% Males respondents
- 81.9% Females + 84.1% Males are employed or self employed.
- 59.1%Females + 72% Males work in the private sector.
- 65.8% Females + 96.5% Males work at least 40 hours and over
- 43.9% Females + 39.9% Males have a tertiary or post graduate level of education.

National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza





National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

Dr. Maja Miljanic Brinkworth

Will answer Aim 1 and 2 of the study:

1. whether women and men of childbearing age are interested in having (more) children.
2. to identify what are the main factors that hinder or encourage women and men to have (more) children.





National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza



Aim 3

- **To identify which challenges are faced by women and men when reconciling work and child-care responsibilities.**



National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

What helps or hinders paid work + family?

- **Family policies supporting work and parenthood, and a more equal division of domestic work between the couple, tend to increase fertility rates** (Wesolowski & Ferrarini,2018; García-Manglano, Nollenberger & Sevilla Sanz, 2014).
- **Mutual intentionality between partners** is requisite for the conception of a child, however the **intentions of women exert a comparatively greater impact on the determination to pursue additional offspring beyond the first** (Duvander, Fahlén, Brandén and Ohlsson-Wijk,2020).
- If the household's **financial situation is considered to be negative**, the **reproductive uncertainty increases** (Testa and Basten ,2014).





Findings : Fulfilling family responsibilities

National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

67.6% of women and 58.6% of men found it difficult to fulfill their family responsibilities at times or frequently.

More women than men seem to be struggling.

Table 36: (Q4 A)

		Sex of the respondent			
		Male	Female	Total	
It has been difficult for me to fulfil my family responsibilities	Frequently	Count	27	40	67
		Percentage	10.8%	17.8%	14.1%
	Sometimes	Count	120	112	232
		Percentage	47.8%	49.8%	48.7%
	Never	Count	104	73	177
		Percentage	41.4%	32.4%	37.2%
Total	Count	251	225	476	





Findings : Agreeing in Principle on equal roles when it comes to the caring of children

- Nearly everyone agrees (**96.5%**) that both parents should **contribute to looking after/bringing up the child.**
- Is this reflected by what actually happens on the ground?**

Table 63:

			Sex of respondent		
			Male	Female	Total
Both men and women should contribute to looking after/bringing up the child	Agree	Count	290	281	571
		Percentage	94.8%	98.3%	96.5%
	Neither agree nor disagree	Count	10	1	11
		Percentage	3.3%	0.3%	1.9%
	Disagree	Count	0	0	0
		Percentage	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I don't know	Count	6	4	10	
	Percentage	2.0%	1.4%	1.7%	
Total	Count		306	286	592

National Commission for the Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza





Findings : Agreeing in Principle on equal roles– But in reality there is a dissonance

National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

Only 1% of the men
take on most of the
work in relation to the
care of the children.

A sizeable portion
(32.7%) **who claim to**
take equal care
between partners –
more males report
they are doing

Table 49:

		Sex of respondent			
		Male	Female	Total	
If you are in a relationship, who does most of the work in relation to the care for children, if any?	Me	Count	3	137	140
		Percentage	1.0%	46.6%	23.3%
	My partner	Count	64	4	68
		Percentage	20.9%	1.4%	11.3%
	Equally	Count	111	85	196
		Percentage	36.3%	28.9%	32.7%
No children in the family	Count	128	68	196	
	Percentage	41.8%	23.1%	32.7%	
Total	Count	306	294	600	





National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza



Findings: What is the impact of unequal sharing of care burdens on decisions to have a child?

Nearly half of the **female respondents (46.1%)** indicated that **they can be influenced by an imbalance in care in their decisions to have a child or another child.**

Younger cohorts more likely to say so.

Table 50:

		Sex of respondent			
		Male	Female	Total	
If there is an imbalance, does this influence your decision to have a child or another child?	Yes	Count	17	70	87
		Percentage	24.6%	46.1%	39.4%
	No	Count	52	82	134
		Percentage	75.4%	53.9%	60.6%
Total		Count	69	152	221



Findings : Who is doing the work when it comes to house work (cooking, cleaning, ironing)

National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

Only **5%** of males indicated they do most of the **house-work** (cooking, cleaning, ironing).

Does this impact on childbearing decisions?



Table 51:

			Sex of respondent		
			Male	Female	Total
If you are in a relationship, who does most of the house work (cooking, cleaning, ironing)	Me	Count	17	134	151
		Percentage	5.9%	51.5%	27.5%
	My partner	Count	66	8	74
		Percentage	22.8%	3.1%	13.5%
	Equally	Count	207	118	325
		Percentage	71.4%	45.4%	59.1%
Total	Count	290	260	550	



Findings: What is the impact of unequal sharing housework (cooking, cleaning and ironing)

National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

Nearly half of the women (46.9%) can be influenced by an imbalance in housework.

Fewer men are impacted by the unequal sharing of housework.

Table 52:

		Sex of respondent			
		Male	Female	Total	
If there is an imbalance, does this influence your decision to have a child or another child?	Yes	Count	26	69	95
		Percentage	32.1%	46.9%	41.7%
No	Count	55	78	133	
	Percentage	67.9%	53.1%	58.3%	
Total	Count	81	147	228	





National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza



Aim 4

- **To identify which services or measures would support women and men to have more children.**



National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

Findings : Which services or measures would support women and men to have more children

In order to answer this question, we looked at the adequacy of current family policies **in the private sector** in relation to:

- **Maternity Leave – duration and payment level**
- **Paternity Leave - duration**
- **Parental Leave – duration, payment level and awareness level**
- **Leave for parents when their children are sick- is there a need for such leave?**





Findings : Maternity Leave

Only 17% of respondents believe that maternity leave as it currently is, is sufficient duration wise **(4 months)**

83% of women want maternity leave to increase to at least 6 months.

More than a third of women (32.5%) want maternity leave to **increase to 1 year**

Table 40:

		Sex of respondent			
		Male	Female	Total	
In your opinion, how long should maternity leave (18 weeks for mothers only) be?	14+4 weeks – as it currently is	Count	119	47	166
		Percentage	39.9%	17.0%	28.9%
	Increase to 6 months	Count	94	111	205
		Percentage	31.5%	40.1%	35.7%
	Increase to 9 months	Count	16	29	45
		Percentage	5.4%	10.5%	7.8%
	Increase to 12 months	Count	69	90	159
		Percentage	23.2%	32.5%	27.7%
Total		Count	298	277	575

National Commission for the Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza





Findings : Pay replacement level if Maternity Leave is extended

Over half of female respondents (52.7%) believe **Maternity Leave should be fully paid if extended**

This study shows that both **duration and compensation level** of such leave are important.

Table 41:

		Sex of respondent			
		Male	Female	Total	
Should such extended maternity leave be granted, what should the payment level for mothers be?	Fully paid	Count	110	144	254
		Percentage	37.0%	52.7%	44.6%
	Partly paid at 80% of the current salary	Count	81	58	139
		Percentage	27.3%	21.2%	24.4%
	Partly paid at 50% of the current salary	Count	22	31	53
		Percentage	7.4%	11.4%	9.3%
Should be left as it is now	Count	84	40	124	
	Percentage	28.3%	14.7%	21.8%	
Total	Count	297	273	570	

National Commission for the Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza





Findings : Paternity Leave – Duration

National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

Nearly **three quarters of all the respondents (72.2%)** believe that the current **10 days fully paid** leave for the father are **NOT enough**

Table 42:

		Sex of respondent			
		Male	Female	Total	
Are 2 weeks fully paid paternity leave (10 days for fathers only) sufficient for fathers?	Yes	Count	89	72	161
		Percentage	29.9%	25.6%	27.8%
	No	Count	209	209	418
		Percentage	70.1%	74.4%	72.2%
Total		Count	298	281	579





Findings : Paternity Leave – Duration

Majority of **Male and female** respondents (61.4%) **want at least one month of Paternity Leave.**

More than a quarter of men (26.7%) want this leave to extend to at least 3 months.

Table 43:

		Sex of respondent			
		Male	Female	Total	
If not, how long should fully paid paternity leave be?	1 month	Count	152	131	283
		Percentage	63.3%	59.3%	61.4%
3 months		Count	64	53	117
		Percentage	26.7%	24.0%	25.4%
6 months		Count	19	22	41
		Percentage	7.9%	10.0%	8.9%
Longer than 6 months		Count	5	15	20
		Percentage	2.1%	6.8%	4.3%
Total		Count	240	221	461

National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza





Findings : Parental Leave – Knowing their right to such leave

National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

Nearly half of the female respondents (47%) **were not aware** that both parents have a right to parental leave.

Table 44:

			Sex of respondent		
			Male	Female	Total
Are you aware that both parents in Malta have the right to 4 months of parental leave each?	Yes	Count	202	149	351
		Percentage	66.9%	52.7%	60.0%
	No	Count	100	134	234
		Percentage	33.1%	47.3%	40.0%
Total	Count	302	283	585	





National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

Findings : Parental Leave – Duration is it enough as is?

65.4% of women and 56% of men want a **longer parental leave** period of at least 6 months.

Nearly a quarter of women want parental leave to extend to 12 months

Table 45:

		Sex of respondent			
		Male	Female	Total	
How long should paid parental leave be?	4 months (as it is)	Count	127	95	222
		Percentage	43.9%	34.7%	39.4%
	6 months	Count	112	97	209
		Percentage	38.8%	35.4%	37.1%
	9 months	Count	14	21	35
		Percentage	4.8%	7.7%	6.2%
	12 months	Count	36	61	97
		Percentage	12.5%	22.3%	17.2%
Total	Count	289	274	563	





Findings : Parental Leave – Current replacement level offered

National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

Only 10% of respondents think it is enough as is (around 23 Euros).

Close to 90% do not deem it to be sufficient

Table 46:

		Sex of respondent			
		Male	Female	Total	
Do you think the daily payment rate of €23 Euro is sufficient during parental leave?	Yes	Count	31	29	60
		Percentage	10.7%	10.6%	10.7%
	No	Count	259	244	503
		Percentage	89.3%	89.4%	89.3%
Total		Count	290	273	563





Findings : Leave for parents when their children are sick

Nearly **90% of all respondents** suggest that there should be specific leave for parents when their children are sick.

Table 47:

			Sex of respondent		
			Male	Female	Total
Should there be specific leave for parents when their children are sick?	Yes	Count	270	253	523
		Percentage	90.3%	89.4%	89.9%
	No	Count	29	30	59
		Percentage	9.7%	10.6%	10.1%
Total		Count	299	283	582

National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza





National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

Findings : Leave for parents when their children are sick – Suggested duration

Vast majority (**75.3%**) want **at least 10 days of leave for when their children are sick.**

Over a third (**36.4%**) want at least **15 days or more.**

Table 48:

			Sex of respondent		
			Male	Female	Total
How long should this leave be each year?	5 days	Count	80	52	132
		Percentage	29.2%	19.9%	24.7%
	10 days	Count	122	86	208
		Percentage	44.5%	33.0%	38.9%
	15 days	Count	35	61	96
		Percentage	12.8%	23.4%	17.9%
Longer than 15 days	Count	37	62	99	
	Percentage	13.5%	23.8%	18.5%	
Total		Count	274	261	535





Flexible Working Arrangements – Working remotely

National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

- How important it is to be able to work remotely?
- Nearly 90% of workers believe it is important or moderately important.

Table 34:

		Sex of the respondent			
		Male	Female	Total	
Working from home or remotely	Important	Count	147	132	279
		Percentage	66.5%	72.1%	69.1%
	Moderately important	Count	51	31	82
		Percentage	23.1%	16.9%	20.3%
	Not important	Count	23	20	43
		Percentage	10.4%	10.9%	10.6%
Total	Count	221	183	404	





Flexible Working Arrangements – Working remotely

National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

- Does your employer allow working from home?
- The majority (55.5%) said yes.
- A sizeable proportion (38.5) said no.

Table 31:

		Sex of the respondent			
		Male	Female	Total	
Does your employer allow working from home or remotely?	Yes	Count	150	117	267
		Percentage	60.0%	50.6%	55.5%
	No	Count	82	103	185
		Percentage	32.8%	44.6%	38.5%
	Don't know	Count	18	11	29
		Percentage	7.2%	4.8%	6.0%
Total	Count	250	231	481	





Flexible Working Arrangements - Flexing your starting and finishing time

- How important it is to be able to flex your starting and finishing time?
- 83% of total respondents think it is important.
- Only 3% think otherwise.

Table 33:

		Sex of the respondent			
		Male	Female	Total	
Flexible starting and finishing time	Important	Count	184	163	347
		Percentage	81.4%	86.7%	83.8%
	Moderately important	Count	32	22	54
		Percentage	14.2%	11.7%	13.0%
	Not important	Count	10	3	13
		Percentage	4.4%	1.6%	3.1%
Total	Count	226	188	414	

National Commission for the Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza





Flexible Working Arrangements - Flexing your starting and finishing time

- Does your employer allow flexible starting and finishing time?

- Nearly three quarters replied in the positive (74%).

- This suggests that the majority of employers are adapting and changing

Table 30:

		Sex of the respondent			
		Male	Female	Total	
Does your employer allow flexible starting and finishing time?	Yes	Count	193	168	361
		Percentage	76.3%	71.5%	74.0%
	No	Count	44	55	99
		Percentage	17.4%	23.4%	20.3%
	Don't know	Count	16	12	28
		Percentage	6.3%	5.1%	5.7%
Total	Count	253	235	488	

National Commission for the Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza





National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

Findings : Qualitative – What would make it easier to have another child while keeping your job?

- 1. Financial Issues (19.7%)** - better pay, higher income, having some money in the bank.
- 2. More Flexibility at Work (13.6%)** – including the ability to work from home and flexible hours.
- 3. I don't know (13.1%)**
- 4. Nothing (12.6%)** - It is impossible, I don't want more children.
- 5. Time related factors (11.8%)** – hours of work, need for more free time.





National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

Findings : Qualitative – What else would help you have the number of children you want?

- 1. Financial Issues (48.3%)** - stable income, better pay, higher income, having some money in the bank.
- 2. Nothing (13.6%)** – I don't want more children, I have all the children that I want
- 3. Time related factors (12.8%)** – need for more free time, fewer hours of work, more time for the family.
- 4. Partner Issues (9.4%)** – more support, sharing of work, better communication.
- 5. I don't know (7.6%)**





National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

Reflections – What did the study reveal that we did not know?

1. More than half of the 18-39 year olds **are struggling to fulfill their family responsibilities** – Many more women than men are **feeling the struggle**.
- 2. **The bigger caring gaps**, with women bearing most of the care responsibilities (which were confirmed by this study) **are not cost neutral** – and **have an impact on the perceptions of women and men in Malta towards family size**





National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

Reflections – What did the study reveal that we did not know?

3. That **Maternity and Paternity Leave** are not considered to be adequate in terms of their duration (too short).
4. That **Parental Leave** is not considered to be adequate in terms of its **duration and compensation level**.
3. That there is **strong call for leave for parents when their children are sick**.





National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

Policy Recommendations

- Revision of all the family related leaves (**maternity, paternity, parental**) in terms of their **duration to better support working parents.**
- Revision of the **compensation level** in relation to **Parental Leave to try and reduce the caring gaps and encourage better sharing between the two parents**
- A clear need to introduce a new leave for parents when their **children are sick (good duration + well compensated).**





National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

Reflections – Policy Recommendations

- Need for an **educational campaign in schools** at all levels on the importance of **gender equality between girls/boys and women/men.**
- Need for **well funded, sustained awareness campaigns** to challenge **traditional gender roles especially in the family** and to **encourage men to share the caring roles + housework** with their partner in order to **reduce the gaps** between women and men.
- **Need to raise awareness on the rights that women and men have in relation to family leaves and to encourage their take up, especially by men**





National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

Reflections – Policy Recommendations

- More education on financial literacy.
- Ensure that all policies, measures and schemes are gender mainstreamed to focus on the specific needs of women and men in supporting them to have another child.
- Addressing the gender pay gap and gendered precarious work for safeguarding equal economic independence between women and men.
- Strengthen work life balance to ensure that women can participate in life-long learning when necessary, in order to progress in their career.





National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

Il-Kummissjoni Nazzjonali għall-
Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza



THANK YOU

National Commission for the Promotion of Equality

Gattard House, National Road -Blata I-Bajda HMR 9010

Tel:2276 8200

Email: equality@gov.mt

Website: ncpe.gov.mt