

GENDER EQUALITY IN SLOVENIA



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The Equal Opportunities Department at the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities obtained funds from the EEA Financial Mechanism Programme and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism Programme 2009-2014 for the project, **Towards Equalizing Power Relations between Women and Men** (2013–2016)¹. The project partner was the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS).

The **overall aim** of the project is to increase understanding of equal/unequal power relations between women and men in order to identify adequate responses to imbalances that persist in a gender-based power structure in society and inequalities between women and men in various areas, particularly in reconciliation of professional and private life, and the balanced representation of women and men in decision-making positions in business and politics.

This publication is an integrated report of a qualitative and quantitative survey conducted by SINUS, Germany, on behalf of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Slovenia.

More information about the project can be found at www.mddsz.gov.si (tab Areas of Work/ Equal Opportunities) and on the project's website, www.uravnotezenost.si.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background, objectives and methodology of the study

The Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Slovenia is currently implementing a pre-defined project entitled "Towards Equalizing Power Relations between Women and Men". The overall aim of the project is to better understand equal and unequal power relations between women and men, in order to identify adequate responses to persistent imbalances in gender-based power structures in Slovenian society.

One of the project objectives is to enhance the ability to monitor changes in men's and women's behavior, attitudes and perceptions regarding selected gender equality issues in Slovenia, with specific focus on the participation of women in economic and political decision-making and the issue of work-life balance. In order to recognize priorities for designing future gender equality policies and measures, it is necessary to gain a holistic understanding of current attitudes, perceptions and behaviors regarding gender equality, as well as an understanding of how these factors distinguish different segments of society. In order to gain insights into these factors and develop a standardized monitoring instrument to evaluate social changes over time among the Slovenian population, the Ministry commissioned the SINUS Institute to carry out a two-phase survey combining qualitative and quantitative methods.

Field work for the qualitative phase took place in December 2015. A total of six 2.5-hour focus groups consisting of eight participants each were conducted in Ljubljana and Maribor. The quota was one male and one female focus group per pre-defined age bracket (18-29 years, 30-49 years and 50+ years). Care was taken to ensure an even distribution of urban and rural respondents, as well as an even educational mix in all groups. In the run-up to the focus groups, all respondents were asked to fill in a "homework booklet" entitled "The ideal man and the ideal woman".

For the quantitative survey, 1.500 computer-assisted telephone interviews were conducted in March and April 2016, targeting similarly pre-defined demographic segments representative of the Slovenian population in gender, age, region and educational level. The interviews lasted between 25 and 30 minutes. A more detailed description of the sample will follow in chapter 2.

Integrating the Sinus-Meta-Milieu-Model into the representative survey allowed for an even more in-depth understanding of different mentality patterns. This is particularly important for the tailored communication of political measures. A short description of this approach follows.

1.2. The Sinus-Milieus® and Sinus-Meta-Milieus®

The Sinus-Milieus® are the result of more than three decades of social science research. The SINUS method of identifying target groups is derived from ethno-anthropology and based on the analysis of everyday life within modern societies. The analysis thus embraces both fundamental values and everyday attitudes (towards work, family, leisure, consumption, etc.). Sinus-Milieus® designate groups of individuals who live, think and feel in similar ways. By turning the focus of attention to the individual and his/her whole life and social environment, the SINUS model offers more information and better decision-making support than conventional target-group approaches. Differences in lifestyles are often more significant for the everyday life reality of people than differences in socio-economic living circumstances. The SINUS model

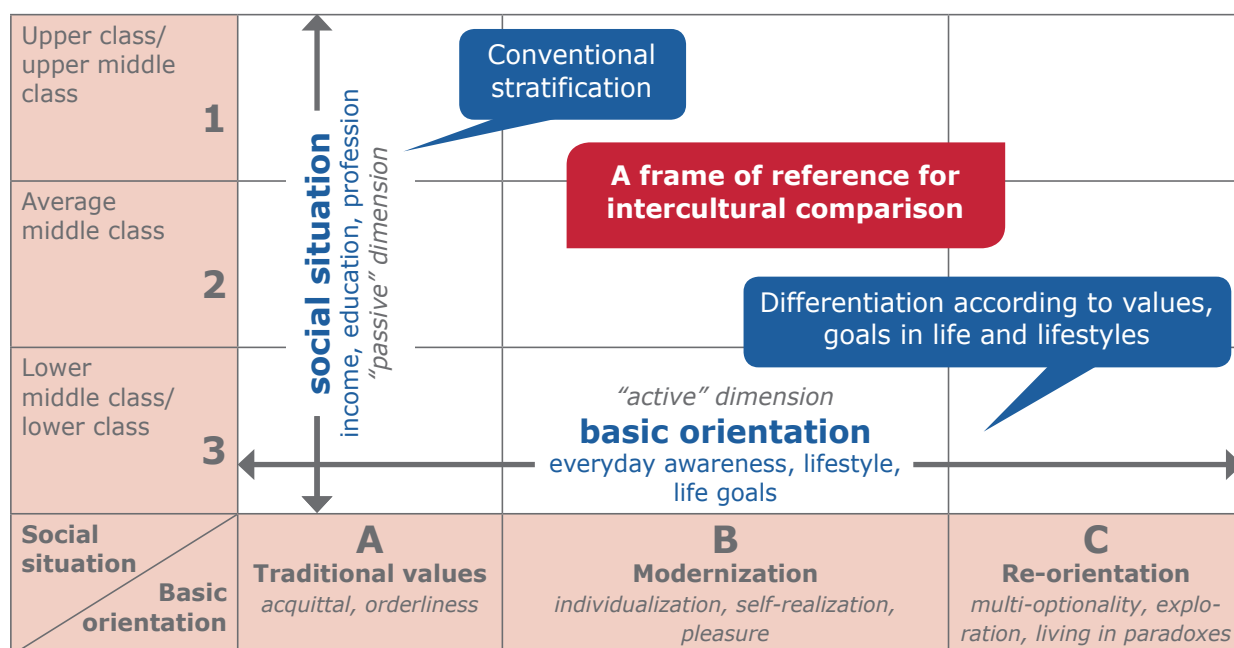
primarily takes into account the dimension of basic values, lifestyles and aesthetic preferences, while also referring to the dimension of social status. Contrary to lifestyle typologies that do a relatively quick job of classifying changing surface phenomena, the SINUS-Milieu model focuses more on registering the underlying structures of social differentiation. Nevertheless, it is not a rigid system; rather, it moves in tune with social change, with which it is constantly brought into line via model updates. The boundaries between the milieus are fluid as well. The very nature of social reality means that everyday life-worlds (apparently) cannot be strictly delimited according to, say, income or school qualifications, as is the case with social classes. We refer to this as the indeterminacy principle of everyday reality. An integral part of the milieu concept is the fact that there are areas of contact and transition between the milieus.

In the late 1980s, the SINUS-Institute began to transfer its everyday life-world and milieu research – which had proven so successful in Germany – to neighboring European countries. In the 1990s, this transfer was extended to Eastern and Central European countries undergoing post-communist transformation.

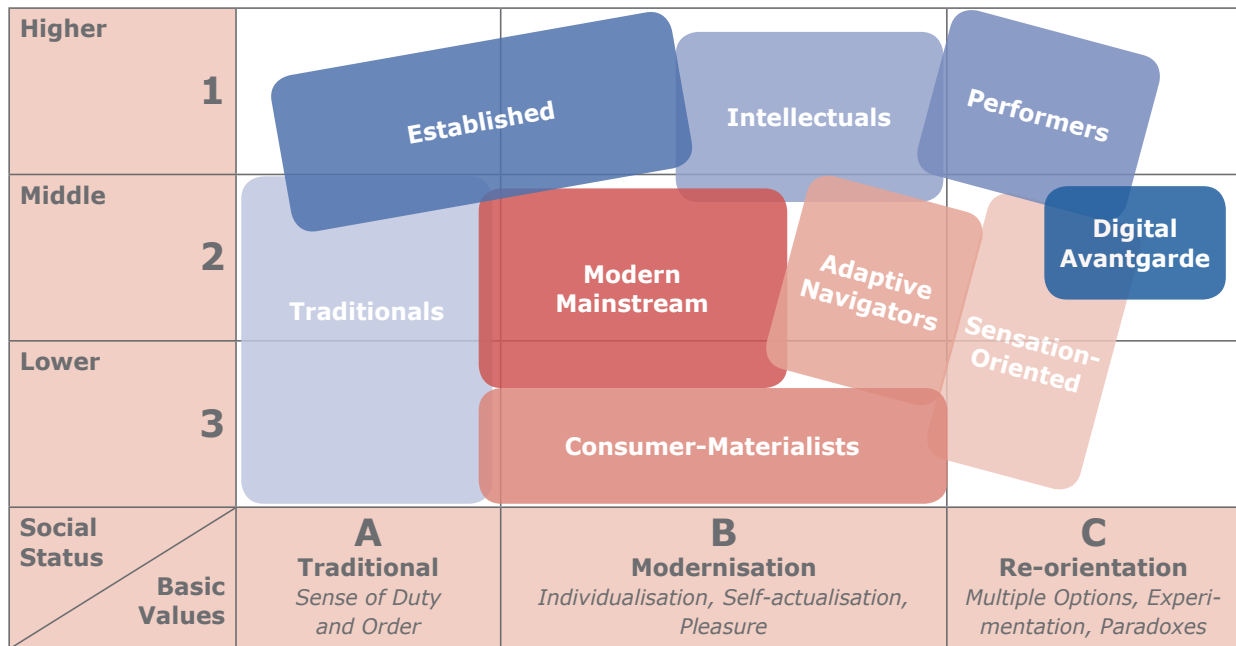
It was clear to SINUS from the beginning that in international comparative research, findings gained from one country cannot be transferred to other countries without close inspection. The initial aim has always been to understand the specific, historically evolved everyday life cultures of every single country by applying integrated methodological standards, and then to detect common features and differences between countries via systematic inter-cultural comparison. Starting from the specific results for each country, it quickly became apparent that “groups of like-minded people” did exist across national borders, and that common basic orientations, values and lifestyles could be identified. Furthermore, more often than not, people from different countries but comparable milieus had more in common with each other than with fellow countrymen from different milieus. This fact led to the identification of broad, multi-national everyday life segments – which we call “Meta-Milieus”. At first, a valid model for established markets (primarily but not exclusively in Europe and North America) was developed, followed by a comparable model for emerging markets (predominantly in Southern Asia and Central and South America). Today, Meta-Milieus are available for over 30 countries worldwide.

The positioning model

Two dimensions of social diversity and differentiation



Sinus-Meta-Milieus® in established markets



1.3. Research questions

The survey focused on the following research issues:

Equal opportunities and equal rights

- What do women and men understand by gender equality / equality of opportunities? What is the significance of this topic? Are men and women interested in it?
- How do they perceive the status quo of gender equality / equality of opportunities? Do they have any goals and visions pertaining to it?
- Which measures that have been taken to promote equal opportunities of women and men over the past years are known, and which of these measures are approved of?
- Who is seen capable of and responsible for establishing equal opportunities of women and men?
- What do women and men wish for the future?

Images of gender roles

- What kind of gender ideals prevail?
- How are responsibilities for household tasks assigned and divided?
- Who is responsible for child-rearing and educational tasks, and/or for taking parental leave?
- Which is the preferred way of living as regards family status and division of labor? Is the current way of living also the desired way of living?
- Have there been any changes in role attributions over time?

Reconciliation of job and family and job re-entry

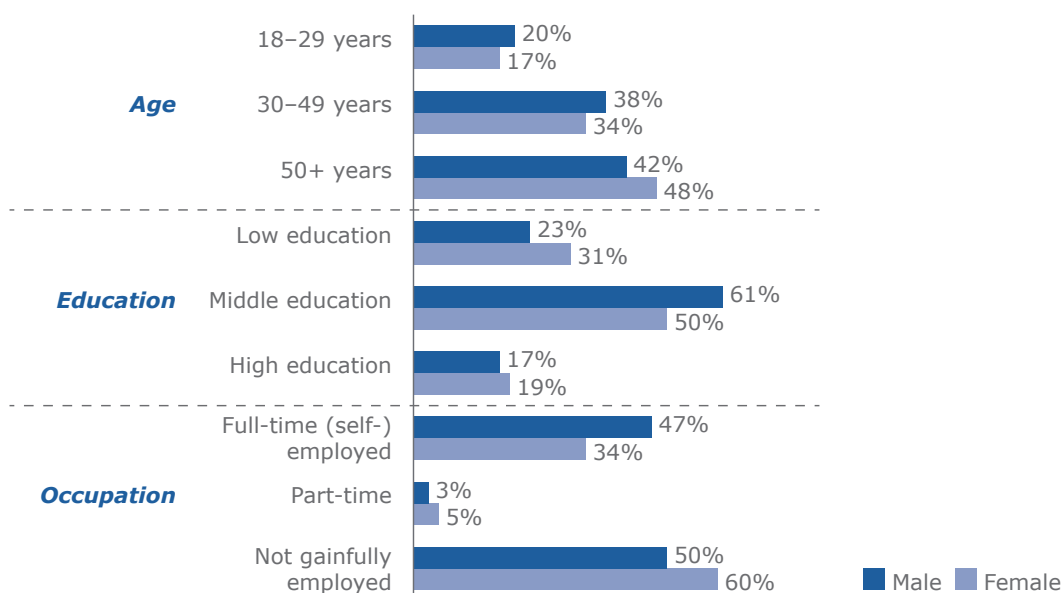
- What does having a child mean in professional life? What about the work-life-balance? What are the implications of job re-entry? Which career opportunities exist for parents?
- What are the leading opinions about the gainful employment of women and men?

Equal opportunities in professional life

- What do women and men expect and demand of working life?
- What perceptions exist regarding the demands and consequences for women and men who take on executive positions?
- How is involvement in politics perceived?

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE

2.1. Sociodemographic characteristics



The quantitative survey's sample depicts the Slovenian total population of 18 years and older (in April 2016) representatively in terms of gender, age and level of education. These sociodemographic characteristics have been proven to be weighty factors in regard to behavior and attitudes. Therefore, a sample should match a society's sociodemographic distribution in order to be a good index of public opinion.

In addition to gender, the respondents are separated according to age and level of education, so that diverging views between these demographic groups can be analyzed.

In the study at hand, men make up 49% and women 51% of respondents. The respondents are split into three age groups: The youngest group includes young adults between 18 and 29 years of age (19% of the sample). The mid-age group is comprised of 30 to 49-year-olds (36% of all respondents). Men and women who are at least 50 years old are pooled in the oldest age group (45% of the sample). With regard to the highest completed level of education, respondents are divided into three further groups. The less-educated group (27% of the sample) completed elementary school alone, or did not finish any kind of school. The moderately-educated group (55% of the sample) includes "Dve- ali triletna poklicna srednja" and "Stiri- ali petletna srednja sola". The highly-educated group (18% of the sample) is defined as "Visja alivisoka sola, 1. bolonjska stopnja" or "Fakulteta, 2. bolonjska stopnja, znanstveni magisterij, doktorat".

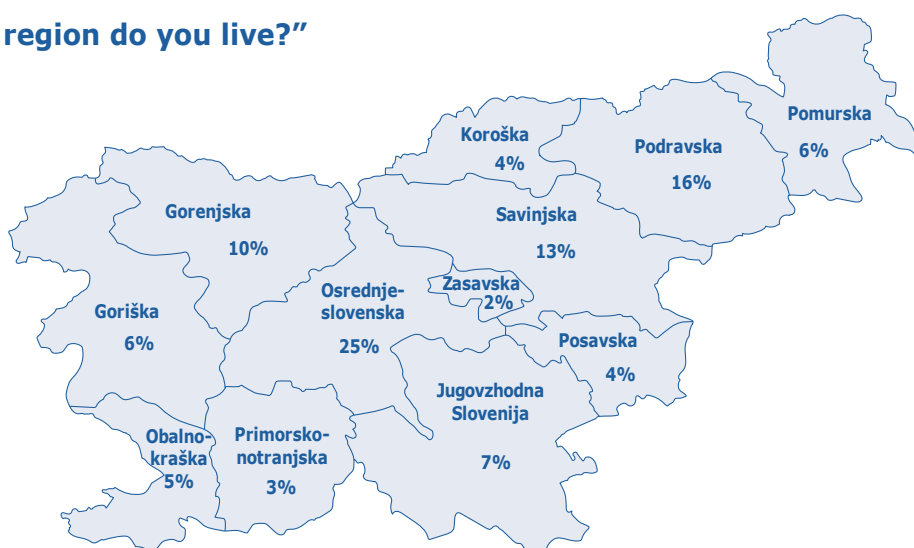
Next to the standard sociodemographic information demonstrated above, the following additional factors are taken into account due to their relevance for the topic of gender equality: Community size, working situation, household size, housing situation and SINUS-Meta-Milieus.

The sample shows a large rural population: 57% live in villages of up to 2.000 inhabitants, 15% live in towns with a population of 2.000 to 10.000, and 27 % live in towns or cities with

more than 10.000 inhabitants. More than half of the sample is not gainfully employed (55 %). Another 41% of the sample is employed (or self-employed) full time, while only 4% work part-time. Full-time employment correlates strongly with the demographic characteristics gender, age and education: Only 34% of women are full-time (self-) employed, whereas 47% of the men are. The age group of 30- to 49-year-olds has the highest percentage of full time workers, 75%. In contrast, 36% of the youngest group and 14% of the oldest group work full time. Full employment is a matter of education: more than twice as many highly-educated respondents (60%) than less-educated respondents (27%) are fully employed.

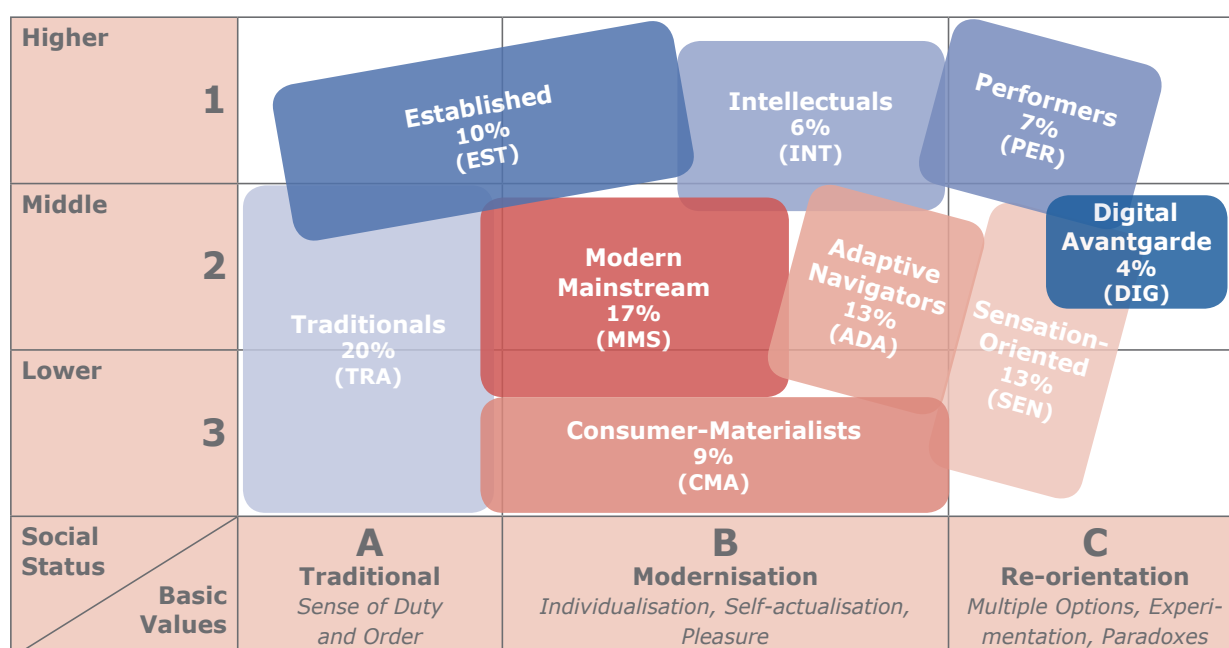
Household size is tied to age: Older people live alone more often than younger people (24% of 50+ year-olds, versus 9% of 18- to 29-year-olds). In total, about one in six respondents live alone (16%), 28% live in a household with two people, 41% with 3 to 4 people and 14% live in a household with more than 5 people. A very high percentage of young adults (18 to 29 years) live with their parents: 62%.

"In which region do you live?"



2.2. Milieu structure

Sinus-Meta-Milieus® in established markets



Established (EST): 10%

This milieu aspires to performance and leadership. The Established are very conscious of their social status. Exclusive tastes and connoisseurship are used for self-assertion and to achieve distinction from other groups in society. Representatives of this milieu maintain conservative values and role models.

In Slovenia, slightly more Established are male (54%) than female (46%). They are older than the Slovenian average: Only 9% are 18 to 29 years old, whereas 19% of the total population fall into this age group. Compared to other groups, Established are very well-educated. Only 5% of this group fall into the less-educated category.

Intellectuals (INT): 6%

Intellectuals are characterized by liberal and pluralistic values. They seek self-actualization and personal development. The representatives' goals are more "post-material" than material. They strive for a successful academic education or a healthy work-life balance with enough spare time to pursue cultural and intellectual interests.

Intellectuals have the highest percentage of highly-educated individuals of all Meta-Milieus in Slovenia: 37%. In average they are slightly younger than the total population. Men and women make up about 50% each.

Performers (PER): 7%

Men and women of this milieu are focused on self-determination. They want to live an intensive lifestyle, which for them means success in their professional lives and fun in their private lives: Work hard – live exclusive.

In Slovenia, the Performers are the second-best-educated milieu. They are also the second youngest milieu, with 18- to 29-year-olds comprising 30%. Slightly more Performers are female than male.

Digital Avantgarde (DIG): 4%

Representatives of this milieu are non-conformists with creative and individualistic lifestyles. They are often found in urban "scenes" with international connections. Freedom and independence are of great importance to the Digital Avantgarde. They are pioneers in the field of digital media.

72% of the Slovenian Digital Avantgarde are male – the highest percentage of all milieus. They are also the youngest group, with almost two thirds under the age of 30 (63%). Their educational level is close to the Slovenian average.

Adaptive Navigators (ADA): 13%

Individuals of this milieu are characterized as loyal, reliable, flexible and security-driven. They are achievement-oriented and particularly pragmatic and adaptive to their surroundings. Adaptive Navigators are well organized and do not like to leave things to chance. Adaptive Navigators build their life around their family, although friends (often long-term) also play an important role.

Only 10% of Adaptive Navigators are highly-educated (total population: 18%). They are marginally younger than the total population.

Modern Mainstream (MMS): 17%

Individuals of this milieu are looking for harmony and private happiness. Family, relatives, friends, comfort and pleasure are the most important factors in life for them. They are striving for social belonging and material security. They react defensive towards societal changes.

In Slovenia, people of this group are slightly more likely to be male. The Modern Mainstream is younger than the average.

Traditionals (TRA): 20%

The Traditionals are security-seeking and status-quo-oriented. They rigidly stick to traditional values like sacrifice, duty and order. Representatives of this milieu are modest, honest and down to earth. They feel that they are “the ordinary people” in society.

Slovenian Traditionals are more often women (65%). They are older than the Slovenian average (67 % are 50 years and older, versus 45% in average). Furthermore, they are less educated than the rest of the Slovenian population (42% are less-educated, versus 27% in average). This milieu has the highest percentage of less-educated people.

Consumer-Materialists (CMA): 9%

Consumer Materialists focus on materialistic and hedonistic goals. They are striving to “keep up” with society, but are in fact often socially disadvantaged and uprooted, and sometimes precarious. Their basic orientation is reactive. Fear and resentments are typical. They are also described as narrow-minded, solidary, protective and tough.

In Slovenia more females than males belong to this milieu (54%), and they are older than the average population (52% are 50 years and older, versus 45% in average).

Sensation-Oriented (SEN): 13%

People who belong to this group are always looking for fun, thrills, action and entertainment. Their behavior is rather unconventional and rebellious. They are living for today, here and now. They have a tendency to escape reality. Independence, spontaneity and trendiness are characteristics that describe people of this group perfectly.

Sensation-Oriented individuals are more likely to be male (55%). As to education and age, they are very close to the Slovenian average.

3. SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

Both women and men are familiar with the term “equal opportunities of women and men”, even though their definitions of what is meant by this term differ slightly. Women, and younger as well as highly-educated women in particular, are more likely than other groups to associate specific aspects of the labor market and family life with equal opportunities. This reflects the importance and consequence of these aspects for women in today’s society. Aspects of family, children or home-related equality are mentioned infrequently and by older women in particular; for many men, such aspects do not seem to come to mind at all. This again is a clear sign that the domestic sphere – though highly important as regards equal opportunities and equality in partnerships – is perceived as disconnected from equality issues, or at least does not spontaneously recall them to either gender.

Interest in the issue of equal opportunities is widespread, with men in the so-called “rush hour of life” (aged 30-49) and young women expressing particular concern. The existence of “formal equal rights” is hardly questioned at all, but women (and those aged 30-49 years in particular) are far more skeptical than men as to whether they have really attained equal prospects and chances (i.e., “substantive equality”). Most men believe that the issue of equal opportunities has been generally resolved, at least on a theoretical level. In practice, one area perceived by both genders as still being in particular need of improvement is the implementation of existing laws and regulations to ensure equal opportunities.

Whereas women and men alike stress that equal opportunities and equal-rights-related issues affect both genders, a majority agree that inequality mostly affects women. Women in particular believe that improving equal opportunities entails improving the situation of women, not of men, whereas a considerable number of men feel that men’s perspectives and needs are not sufficiently taken into consideration. Consequently, the view that measures to be taken will sometimes call for sacrifices by men is supported by women (and the oldest group in particular) more often than by men. Here, like in many other instances, the youngest age group (both male and female) seems to see the least necessity to take action. By comparison, young men and women are the most convinced that equal opportunities presently exist, and have the strongest belief that they will overcome obstacles by themselves – i.e., that they themselves will change things for the better.

This being said, most current measures to promote equal opportunities of women and men are widely known and approved of by men and women alike, with the youngest women and men being the least aware of such measures. Only gender quotas still cause dispute. In politics, this is due to general mistrust in politicians and politics. In the economy, the issue of women in leading positions provokes a multitude of attitudes and pro & con arguments, most of them connected to gendered role images and attributions of responsibility over the household and child-rearing. The intensity of how measures are promoted differentiates between genders and age groups: While young women in particular believe that the current level of promotion is reasonable, most men would wish for a less intense promotion.

Both women and men, and the highly-educated in particular, see nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) as by far as the most relevant players in overcoming gender inequality, but question their success to date. Companies seem to be ascribed little official role in initiating

measures, and their actual performance in equal opportunity issues is judged as rather poor. The figures show that most women and men believe that politics and the state have done a fair job in launching measures and regulations to promote equal opportunities, with the oldest men and women in particular crediting the state for its leading role in promoting gender equality. However, neither gender holds the state responsible for initiating new measures. Rather, they believe that the implementation and enforcement of extant measures require more attention and effort. Women themselves are attributed responsibility for establishing equal opportunities especially by young women and men, while men are relieved of responsibility by most men and women – and the oldest age group in particular.

The real crux of the matter regarding equal opportunities lies in sharing responsibilities in partnerships. Though the vast majority of women and men call for male and female partners to engage in almost all matters equally (with women even more strongly doing so than men, and the oldest age group even more than the youngest), reality draws a different picture.

Most women and men claim to desire an equal-partner relationship in which male and female partners share breadwinning and household/child-rearing duties (with young men and the less-educated being slightly less convinced of this model), and indeed claim to live in such relationships themselves. However, this perception only holds true where paid employment is concerned. While most women and men seem to perceive gainful employment of women as normal and desirable (and often necessary), there is a strong gender bias in the distribution of household chores and child-raising tasks in Slovenian families, with women engaging in these duties far more than men. Men admit that such a bias exists, but they ascribe themselves a bigger role in doing household chores than women perceive them to have. Young men and women, often still single and/or living with their parents, frequently assign their mothers main responsibility. When men do help, household tasks are often assigned based on perceived physical ability, preferences and tradition, even though a majority of both genders state that there should not be “men’s” or “women’s” jobs. However, men (with the older as well as the less-educated in particular) are far more often in favor of gendered distribution of jobs than women.

This bias in the distribution of household chores results from a still-dominant role ascription that holds women primarily responsible for household and child-raising matters – a view shared especially by older women and men as well as the less-educated. Even though the younger generation (men and women alike) tries to get away from such preset role definitions, most women and men still attribute women higher social competencies, and regard the ideal woman as an “all-rounder” who handles the household, children and paid work in equal measure. By contrast, there is no flexible, truly equal-opportunities-oriented male ideal with a critical view toward stereotypical norms of manhood; for men in particular, the male ideal revolves around rather stereotypical concepts of manhood, ranging from macho to gentlemanly. Still, more and more women are calling for more support, and perceive that equal opportunities can only be achieved if men engage more in household and child-raising duties. This is in line with the finding that an increasing number of women find non-traditional features likeable in men: For instance, empathy and a willingness to take care of the family by doing more than being a provider. On the other hand, many men (especially in the middle age group) are slightly at a loss as to familiar and well-defined male roles in society today.

Role attributions also affect the reconciliation of job and family. Most men and women are at odds with the reconciliation of job and family, but the majority of women feel that they are even more severely affected. In contrast, men (and the older women) perceive little difference between the situation of men and women in this regard. However, most women and men expect women to make more efforts to reconcile job and family (staying at home after a child is born, reducing working hours, taking sick leave). Even though stronger efforts by men are increasingly welcomed and called for in this regard (especially by women, and the youngest age

group of both genders), the factual pressure of reconciling work with family still falls primarily upon mothers. Consequently, it is no surprise that most female and male respondents agree that men should lighten the load for their working partners (with the youngest women and men seeing the least need, and fewer respondents stating a need for the opposite). Childcare facilities can help, too, and both genders believe that they should be better adjusted to the needs of working women, while also recognizing that they cannot substitute for parental, and particularly motherly, care – a view shared by older women and men in particular. It is interesting to note at this point that far more men than women perceive the absence of fathers at home as problematic. In general, young women and men are more self-confident regarding the successful reconciliation of job and family than older (and more experienced) people, and more often expect equal efforts of both genders. However, when put to the test, disillusionment caused by factual (and emotional) adversities gains ground, provoking a degree of “re-traditionalization” – or, alternately, leading some young people (men in particular) to consider postponing or foregoing parenthood.

Male and female respondents by vast majority agree that having children can put one’s job at risk or lead to a career setback, especially for women, with the less-educated as well as the older men and women being particularly sensitive to this subject. Labor market conditions, still-dominant role ascriptions and the focus on alleged biological limitations counteract the promotion of equal opportunities. Though it is commonly acknowledged that both partners should share family responsibilities after parental leave, it is mainly women who find themselves in the situation of having to shoulder most responsibilities. Slovenian employers supposedly show little understanding of men who want to engage more in family responsibilities.

Respondents of both genders regard work as an essential part of life that is important for self-esteem and psychological wellbeing. Therefore, giving up professional life is no alternative for the vast majority of women, nor do most of their partners expect them to regard it as such. Advancement to top positions, however, is still predominantly a male domain where equal opportunities lag behind – a condition of which women are particularly aware, but men also concede. That men could have problems to advance to top positions is perceived by a strong minority of the oldest age group (men and women alike) and the less-educated. It is also commonly believed that women have to give up more in order to reach top positions, owing largely to the above-mentioned role ascriptions and self-concepts. Still, women are expected (and expect themselves) to take on “a leading role” in many areas in the future, a concept which some men, and the older and less-educated in particular, are not at ease with at present.

The solution currently available and preferred by women – especially, but not exclusively – is “mixed teams” in all areas of life, private or public. On the private level, women and young men in particular see parents (and particularly mothers) as responsible for bringing up a new generation of people with a more open attitude towards role models. For them, upbringing and social environment determine outlook on equality issues. Additionally, the majority of women and men regardless of age want neither men nor women to dominate. Consensus holds that everyone should be offered equal opportunities to take on and live out any role according to personal preferences. This being said, “equal” does not mean “the same”; there is no call for “equalization” in the sense of realizing a “single gender society”.

At present, the Meta-Milieu perspective is more important for the communication of measures than for their development

In the survey, milieu-specific deviation from the gender perspective was often small or unsystematic. However, there are some general findings: The term “equal opportunities” is well-known in all milieus. At least 60% of respondents in all groups are personally interested in the topic. The young and modern milieus in particular (Performer, Digital Avantgarde and Adaptive Navigator), but also the Intellectuals, are supportive of measures promoting equal opportuni-

ties. Traditionals and Consumer-Materialists are the least supportive, but even in these milieus support reaches three quarters. The assessment of the current situation in terms of gender equality varies between the milieus. While about two thirds of Adaptive Navigators believe that men and women have the same rights, prospects and opportunities, only half of the Traditionals feel that way. Because of their traditional role concepts, Traditionals in general display the most distant attitude towards gender equality. Although they report a high degree of current gender inequality in comparison with other milieus, they perceive no need for the equality-promotion measures under assessment (although gender-based differences of opinion do appear within the milieu).

4. WOMEN

4.1 Equal opportunities and equal rights: understanding, interest, perceived status quo, assessment of measures

The term “equal opportunities of women and men” is widely known among women

Almost all women appear to have heard the term “equal opportunities of women and men” before (total: 92%), with no significant differences between the discrete age groups. Though the term is significantly better known among highly-educated women (99%), the majority of the less-educated are also familiar with it (87%).

Young women in particular associate specific aspects of the labor market with equal opportunities, whereas older women also think of family life

When asked what they spontaneously associate with the term “equal opportunities of women and men”, about half of the women (44%) mention equality, equal rights or equal duties in general, followed by equality related to work, employment and payment (29%), gender-related equality (16%) and aspects of family, children or home-related equality (10%).

For the youngest women (18-29 years) in particular, equality related to work, employment and payment seems to come to mind more often (33%). This suggests that these women perceive these areas as especially important and/or problematic at their current stage of life. Highly-educated women share this view (44%).

Women aged 30 to 49 years seem to define “equal opportunities” less as gender-related equality (12%) and more as a general concept of equal rights and duties (49%).

Women aged 50 years or older are more inclined than younger and middle-aged women to spontaneously establish a connection between the term “equal opportunities” and aspects of family, children or home-related equality (12%). This group of women also have comparatively greater difficulty associating anything in particular with the term (9%), as do less-educated women (11%).

The issue of equal opportunities of women and men is relevant and interesting, especially to young women

Equal opportunities of women and men is a topic that is of interest to the broad majority of women (total: 68% very interested or interested), with the young women in particular displaying a very high level of interest (18% very interested). In total, only a small percentage of the women are absolutely disinterested in this issue (8% not at all interested), regardless of age or educational background. However, the medium-educated show less overall interest than the highly-educated (medium level of education: 65% very interested or interested; high education: 74% very interested or interested).

It is clear to most women that the issue of equal opportunities addresses mainly the improvement of the situation of women, not of men

A broad majority of the women believe that equal rights issues affect both genders in principle, but also recognize that the issue of (establishing) equal opportunities primarily addresses the disadvantage of women. Therefore, over half of the women affirm that in order to attain true equality of opportunities for women, men will have to learn to give up some things (total: 58% agreement). One-fourth of the sample group is even fully convinced of it.

This view is shared by the oldest age group in particular (64% agreement; 29% full agreement). It seems that especially women of this generation have personally experienced or witnessed advantages that men have *qua* gender.

The group of youngest women see the least need for men to “give up something” (41% agreement) – i.e., for themselves to “take something from” (achieve a comparative advantage over) men. Of this group, 29% even reject this view entirely. But that does not mean that they see men at a disadvantage. Quite the contrary: About 75% of the women in this age group disagree that discussions of equal opportunity should focus more strongly on the disadvantages of men. Indeed, this is an opinion shared by all women regardless of age or educational background.

Young women are far less familiar with existing measures to promote equal opportunities than the age group 50+

Women are widely familiar with different measures taken to narrow the gender inequality gap, with the best-known measure being the possibility of mothers and fathers sharing parental leave and sick leave for the child (total: 92%). Almost all women have also heard of the prohibition against violent men affiliating with women who have been victims of domestic violence (total: 90%). Free contraceptives and decision-making as to birth control are known to 87% of all women. The other measures surveyed, while less universally known, were still familiar to a strong majority of 77%.

However, there is a considerable age gap: While 96% of the age cohort 50+ are familiar with the possibility of mothers and fathers sharing parental leave and sick leave for the child, only 78% of the youngest age group state that they have heard of it. Likewise, 95% of the women aged 50+ know about the protection of female victims of domestic violence and 91% about free contraceptives; among the young women, the percentages are 75% and 76% respectively. But the age gap is even more dramatic when it comes to the introduction of quotas to promote the participation of women in politics: 89% of the older women and only 53% of the youngest women have heard of this measure. Similarly, 82% of the oldest age cohort know about regulations designed to mitigate discrimination in job interviews, whereas only 57% of the youngest women are familiar with them. Young female focus group participants also display a general unawareness of such measures. This supports the survey findings, suggesting that the communication of relevant measures has at least partially missed this important target group.

Most of the measures to promote equal opportunities of women and men are widely approved of by women. Only gender quotas still cause some dispute

Women are not only generally interested in the topic “equal opportunities of women and men”; the broad majority of them (over all age and educational groups) also consider past and present measures to promote equal opportunities of women and men as important and good (total: 82% agreement).

Women also show very little disapproval of all measures mentioned (between 82% and 90% approval). The measures meet with least approval by young women aged 18-29 – but even in this group, all the measures are appreciated by a vast majority. Remaining skepticism within this group may result from the overall perception that there is little need for state authorities to promote such measures any longer.

The most controversial topic seems to be the introduction of quotas to promote participation of woman in politics. Approximately a third of the youngest group (18-29-year-olds) seems to perceive it as unnecessary – be it because they are against quotas and think that women should and will make it by themselves, or because of their general lack of interest in politics. This finding is supported by the qualitative survey, in which the issue of quotas provoked the most controversy between supporters and opponents, with quotas for women in executive po-

sitions being more topical than quotas for women in politics. A more detailed view on women in executive positions will follow in the chapters on the reconciliation of job and family and equal opportunities in professional life. As to women in politics, women in the qualitative phase of this study discussed and judged less on the basis of gender than on the basis of a general mistrust towards politics and politicians, or argued on the grounds of competence. However, most respondents agree that there should be more women in politics, especially respondents in 30-49-year-old group. They also note cases proving that women can be successful politicians.

Aren't they supposed to be looking for competence and the greater good? Not for gender quotas? (female focus group 18-29)

INT: What do you think about women in politics? R5: They never do any good. R6: And men supposedly do? R5: No, they don't either. So it's not really about gender, because it's the same old crap all the time. (female focus group 18-29)

See, I remember a recent case in Domžale; last year, I think. Brita Bilač [former track and field athlete] was running for mayor. I don't have anything against her, she used to be a very good athlete, but does she have what it takes to be mayor? And this is only one case, there are lots of cases like her. (female focus group 18-29)

I've seen some progress in politics in that regard. I'm thinking about the quotas they've introduced for positions in politics. Gender equality is now greater than it was in the recent past. (female focus group 30-49)

Merkel is a good example of a successful woman in politics. (female focus group 30-49)

But in my opinion, women in politics are active and practical. Those men just keep debating and debating to no end until they die. That's my opinion. And they don't get anything done, the men. So more women in politics are ok. (female focus group 50+)

Politics is not a female matter by default, because a woman is practical and hard-working – I can't afford talking about something for three months and not have anything to show for it in the end. (female focus group 50+)

Women in the so-called “rush hour of life” are especially inclined to perceive that they still lack the same prospects and opportunities as men

Though most women regardless of age claim that women have the same rights as men in Slovenia today (57% agreement), only 20% are fully convinced of it. Given the fact that equal rights are constitutionally-mandated, these figures are quite alarming. Moreover, a majority (52%) claims that prospects and opportunities for women are not equal to those of men. Here, women aged 30-49 years are particularly skeptical (60%).

It is analytically relevant that the age group 30-49 years: 1. boasts the highest rate of (full) employment (68%); and 2. is most likely to live in households with 3 or more people (80%). This particular segment's identification of unequal opportunities supports the findings from the qualitative focus groups, in which female participants regardless of age agree that inequality still prevails: 1. on the job market, and 2. in the attribution of household and childcare tasks.

Yeah, let me say, with regard to equal opportunities, it's not true we don't have them, it's just that we have them up to a certain degree. When it comes to job and family, to top positions, equal treatment is off the table. (female focus group 18-29)

But I think we should have equal rights first and foremost in micro-economy, equal rights to get a job. Unfortunately, things are different in practice in Slovenia, as there are huge differences between men and women. (female focus group 30-49)

We'd have less responsibilities, less work, more time to rest – couch time after work. [...] We'd have more leisure activities and less household chores. (female focus group 30-49)

If we were men: We'd be tractor drivers, electricians and construction workers. We'd spend less time on our families and more time on ourselves and our friends. We'd rely heavily on our partners to take care of things at home. We'd own an expensive sports car, a Doberman and maybe even a mistress. We'd be CEOs of some company or politicians. (female focus group 30-49)

Female respondents are polarized as to whether measures to promote equal opportunities should be more or less intensive. However, young women and the highly-educated in particular believe the current level of promotion to be reasonable

Again, though the measures to promote equal opportunities of women and men are all widely accepted, about half of the women think that people overshoot the mark when trying to establish equal opportunities (49% agreement). Segments that disagree with this statement are the youngest age group (58% disagreement and 29% total disagreement) and the highly-educated (55% disagreement and 26% total disagreement). In general, assessments of overshooting the mark can be interpreted as criticism of ideologically-led discussions on the issue; among the young and the highly-educated, such assessments can be interpreted as a call for a more matter-of-fact approach.

Many women see NGOs as the most relevant player in overcoming gender inequality, whereas politics and the state as well as companies are rarely mentioned; the oldest generation seems to be slightly at a loss as to this issue

Asked who should do something to establish equal opportunities of women and men, women have a clear answer: NGOs (total: 45%). However, there is a strong education bias here: It is foremost the highly-educated who hold NGOs responsible to work against gender inequality (67%). The educationally-disadvantaged differ significantly in opinion (33%). Likewise, only 37% of the women aged 50+ hold NGOs responsible. Indeed, this age group finds it comparatively difficult to attribute responsibility in general: 16% of them don't know who should do something about equal opportunities of men and women, and another 8% believes that nobody is responsible.

About one third of all women agree that women themselves are (also) responsible for establishing equal opportunities of women and men (32%). This is believed more strongly by the younger respondents (39%) and the mid-agers (33%) than by the cohort aged 50+ (28%).

You know, in the end, women need to fight for their own rights themselves. (female focus group 30-49)

It's the women themselves who have to do something about it. (female focus group 18-29)

A much smaller percentage of female respondents hold men responsible for overcoming unequal opportunities (17%). The younger age brackets differ significantly from the oldest one, ascribing higher responsibility to men when it comes to establishing equal opportunities (18-29 years: 21%; 30-49 years: 20%; 50+ years: 13%). Whether the generally rather low ascription of responsibility to men is due to an overall disillusionment or to a perceived lack of potential for actions cannot be determined at this point.

Comparatively smaller percentages of women identify politics and the state (total: 16%) and the economy and companies (total: 15%) as key institutions for leveling gender opportunities. Here, the opinions of the middle and oldest age groups appear as inverse: more women aged 30-49 years assign responsibility to companies and the economy (18%) than to politics and the state (13%), whereas more women aged 50+ assign responsibility to politics and the state (18%) than to the companies and the economy (13%).

Most women consider the state by far as the most successful protagonist in promoting gender equality

When asked which of these protagonists have achieved success in promoting gender equality, the women draw a different picture. Even though many think that NGOs should be the most active, only a few believe that they are actually successful with this task (total: 29%). Politics and the state are considered more successful players in promoting equal opportunities (total: 62%), even though far fewer women expect the government to take (further) action.

Here again, women aged 50+ seem to judge political and state efforts more favorably than women aged 18-29 (64% vs. 55%). The economy and companies also outperform expectations; however, less than a third of all women think that they successfully contribute to gender equality (29%), with the youngest women again being more optimistic (34%) than the oldest (25%). Both these findings and the qualitative survey suggest that the younger age brackets in particular do not call for substantial new measures or laws to fight inequality, but rather for better implementation of existing measures in society and the economy. Which is to say, they believe that too many loopholes exist, and that it is difficult to enforce existing rights.

The laws governing this matter are quite alright – they did a good job with that. But practice is something completely different. And once you have a job, it's different in another way. People will go to great lengths just to keep their job and are willing to take a lot of beating. We really don't have many best practice examples. Injustices keep happening and people don't exercise their rights often enough, despite the laws being in their favor. Unfortunately, they just don't use the legal options available to them. (female focus group 18-29)

This matter plays a crucial role, starting with the bias and violations that happen in job interviews. They ask if you have a family, whether you plan on having children, how old are you, etc. They shouldn't ask those questions, but they do. I see women having more problems here. (female focus group 18-29)

You're given a statutory right to stay at home until your child turns 3, not to work night shifts and weekends – and I haven't used that right. That's the way it is working in a hospital; you either accept the terms of the job, or you don't have a job. (female focus group 18-29)

The first thing to do is to make sure men and women are equally valued at work, because that's still not the case in a lot of jobs. If the position of work is equal in terms of complexity, the salary should be the same as well. Employers must comply with the law in that regard. And the ministry should clamp down on the employers to make it happen. (female focus group 50+)

Young women are much more confident that men and women themselves are successful in improving gender opportunities

It is striking that the youngest age group (18-29 years old) is much more convinced than the oldest age group (50 years and older) that both women and men themselves are successfully doing something to contribute to gender equality. Within the youngest group, 40% of women attest to women's own successful efforts, and 39% to men's successful efforts. By contrast, within the oldest group, only 29% of women attest to women's successful efforts, and 24% to men's. This is supported by the findings from the qualitative research. Here, younger women explicitly claim that responsibility for equal opportunities lies with the two genders, and especially with the individual person – they also claim that their own generation has already achieved a lot, and will achieve even more in the future.

It's first and foremost the responsibility of each individual to take care of himself. (female focus group 18-29)

There's a general rule in place: if you don't do it yourself, nobody will do it for you. (female focus group 18-29)

We as the people ourselves have to change our mentality. We still have a very conservative outlook on this. We need to be open and accept changes in this field, and things will get better. (female focus group 30-49)

I do think there's been major progress in this field, and our liberal and progressive mentality is the reason. (female focus group 18-29)

4.2. Role images and gender ideals

Women, and the older age groups in particular, call for both partners equally sharing all responsibilities in partnerships

When asked about spheres and tasks in partnerships, an overwhelming majority of women consider them as something (ideally) being up to men and women alike. This extends from earning and dividing the family income to deciding on family matters, taking on care duties and keeping social contacts. There are only a few areas in which appreciable numbers of female respondents attribute responsibility to only one of the genders: Approximately one third state that women are primarily responsible for household and childcare duties like going on parental leave (32%), taking care of the household (32%), taking sick leave for children (27%) and taking care of contraception (27%). This reflects both the social status quo and the persistence of traditional self-images, while diversifying their possible social effects: For instance, women's acceptance of (more) responsibility for taking care of contraception may also have contributed to the reported high acceptance of free contraceptives and birth control decision-making (all women: 88% approval). On the other hand, a significant number of women still hold men more responsible for dealing with public authorities (22%). And it is striking to see: While most women think that earning the family income is up to women and men alike (90%), 9% of the women still ascribe this task solely to men, whereas only 1% ascribe it solely to women.

This being said, there are noteworthy differences between the age groups. The older age brackets (with the women aged 50+ years in particular) ascribe mutual responsibility far more often than the youngest age group (exceptions: taking sick leave for children, distributing the money on hand and taking care of the household, about equal agreement across all groups). In contrast, the youngest age bracket (18-29 years) is slightly more likely than the oldest to ascribe men greater responsibility in all of the areas explored.

As to educational background, the less-educated seem to place less emphasis on both genders being responsible than the highly-educated, but a very broad majority of them still agrees.

Women are especially liked for (traditional) soft skills. Performance and career orientation find favor with young women in particular

When it comes to talents and traits, a broad majority of women find it very likeable when women have child caring, family and other social competencies (soft skills). This is in line with the statement that the most important task of a woman is to be a good mother and housekeeper (71% agreement, 35% full agreement). This view is particularly shared by the oldest age group (50+: 81% agreement, 46% full agreement) and those with lower education (85% agreement, 53% full agreement). Younger women (18-29: 61% agreement, 22% full agreement, 30-49: 64% agreement, 27% full agreement) and the highly-educated (53% agreement, 17% full agreement) are less convinced of it, but agree by majority. The outward appearance of femininity is more valued by young women (very likeable: 75%) than by the mid-aged and older women (very likeable: 54% and 53% respectively). Hard skills like effectiveness and persistence, professional competence and leadership qualities are also appreciated in women by the majority of female respondents (very likeable: 66%, 61% and 54%). This being said, age differentials are visible: For instance, 65% of the youngest age group (18-29) fully appreciate performan-

ce and career orientation in their fellow women, as opposed to 35% of female respondents in total. Adventurousness also seems to be a character trait which young women find much more attractive than the oldest age group (18-29: 42% very likeable; 50+: 16% very likeable). But adventurousness doesn't mean taking liberties with loyalty and sexual faithfulness: 78% of all women and an overwhelming 85% of young women find sexual faithfulness very likeable in a woman. Finally, while female respondents don't seem to place a high priority on women being technically well-versed, 42% still find it very likeable.

Statements from the focus groups support these findings as to preferred character traits.

Caring, understanding, and independent as well. Honest, confident, faithful, respect herself and others, and a model mommy. (female focus group 18-29)

She knows what she wants, she has her own goals and follows them, she doesn't care about the opinions of others, she's confident, compassionate, understanding and decisive. She manages to coordinate her private and professional life. She likes to do new things and she likes change. She's trying to find options and solutions in any issue or difficult situation, she's persistent, sticks to her principles, and is generally a brave woman. (female focus group 18-29)

Women definitely need to be independent and strong, because they have to face lots of tests, besides dealing with men, of course. A woman needs to be romantic as well, but first and foremost, she needs to be a good mother. (female focus group 30-49)

She's highly intelligent in terms of social and emotional intelligence. (female focus group 30-49)

Not only men can or should do technical stuff. See, if I assemble a closet by myself, I'm more independent and more valued at the same time. (female focus group 30-49)

Many women find non-traditional features of men attractive

Female respondents appreciate soft skills most highly in men as well. A vast majority of women show great sympathy for men displaying character traits and talents like loving care for children (very likeable: 85%), taking good care of the family (very likeable: 84%), sexual faithfulness (very likeable: 77%), settling disputes (very likeable: 73%), helping others (very likeable: 70%), being able to fit in (very likeable: 63%), tenderness (very likeable: 58%), empathy (very likeable: 55%) or showing feelings (very likeable: 53%). They also appreciate it when men pay attention to work-life balance (very likeable: 63%).

As for hard skills, most female respondents highly appreciate a man who shows the ability to face conflicts and effectiveness & persistence (69% and 66% respectively). However, female respondents consider professional competence as well as leadership qualities slightly less likeable in a man than in a woman (very likeable: 52% in men vs. 61% in women and 47% in men vs. 54% in women respectively). Young women are most skeptical as to male leadership qualities (18-29: 33% very likeable), the oldest age group and the less-educated like it most (very likeable: 55% and 58% respectively). Women find technical capabilities a much more attractive feature in men than in fellow women (in men: 64% very likeable; in women: 42% very likeable). Comparable to the findings for femininity in women, masculinity in men is favored most by the youngest women: 50% of all women, but 61% of the 18-29-year-olds find it very likeable.

In the qualitative survey, many women express a classical dilemma: They wish for "new features" in men (understanding, attentive, taking up more responsibility in household and child rearing), yet believe that men should not become entirely feminized. Some women would like to be protected by strong men, while others enjoy the power gained e.g. from personal financial independence and oppose it explicitly to the "typical male role" of providing for the family.

That might work to a certain extent, but you don't want a man to become a "real woman". A man needs to be a man. (female focus group 50+)

I'm talking about men who know how to protect us and whom we feel safe with. But they need to be good lovers and listeners as well. Still men need to have that certain edge that makes them strong. (female focus group 30-49)

Being financially independent is important. But what's important to me at this stage in life is that the man is a family man, is able to listen to my wishes and needs, able to react to those in the most appropriate manner, able to set common goals with me and build on that. It's important we are equals in everything, including when it comes to bringing in money. (female focus group 18-29)

But a woman needs to take care of her career [just like a man], because that way she can take care of her own independence, and financial stability, both for her and her family. (female focus group 30-49)

On one hand, we women want to be independent and equal, but on the other hand, we want men to protect us. (female focus group 30-49)

From the point of view of women, involvement in politics, superiority and subordination are the least likeable character traits in both genders

Female respondents find political activity dislikeable in both men and women. But this assessment applies more strongly to men than women: 42% of all female respondents agree that involvement in politics is totally dislikeable in a man (totally dislikeable/rather dislikeable: 76%), with the youngest age group being particularly skeptical (totally dislikeable: 51%). In contrast, 21% agree that it is absolutely dislikeable in a woman (totally dislikeable/rather dislikeable: 49%), with 54% of the mid-aged women adopting a (rather) negative attitude.

Interest in politics is valued and liked a little better, but here too, 55% of female respondents find it somewhat or totally unappealing in a man. Female respondents have a less pronounced dislike of interest in politics in fellow women: 41% don't like it, with 51% of the middle age group and only 34% of the oldest women assessing it that way.

Educational background seems to be non-determinative when it comes to the assessment of interest and involvement in politics.

The qualitative survey clarifies how negative assessments of political interest and involvement as character traits strongly reflect a general disillusionment and mistrust in current politics and politicians.

Politicians do everything solo; they do what they like, not what they should. They don't care about the people and are only good at squeezing the last euro cent out of everything and everyone, whenever they can. To me, politics and the people involved in it are horrible. (female focus group 18-29)

We mentioned that honesty and trust are important – I don't trust any politician. They are not to be trusted by definition. (female focus group 50+)

The notion that women should take on a subordinate role is rejected by 67% of all women – with the 30-49-year-olds opposing subordination most strongly (74%). Here, educational background differentiates as well: Women with less education seem to be less critical of female subordination than the highly-educated (less-educated: 57% rejection, highly-educated: 84% rejection). Similarly, 68% of all women and 76% of the highly-educated find a subordinate attitude unappealing in a man. This means that almost one third of female respondents accept partnerships in which one partner is subordinate. Interestingly, however, these respondents approve in equal measure of relationships in which either the male partner or the female partner is dominant.

Two people can get along only if they're equal, in terms of one not being subordinate to the other. Partnership is natural then. (female focus group 30-49)

Similar to subordination, superiority as a character trait is rather disliked (62% of all women dislike it in a man, 51% in a woman). However, young women are far less critical when their fellow women act out superiority (38% dislike), finding superiority more difficult to accept in a man (64% dislike).

Findings from the female focus groups suggest: The ideal woman is an "all-rounder". In addition, there is no flexible, truly equal-opportunities-oriented male ideal with a critical view toward stereotypical concepts of manhood

Part of the qualitative study was the exploration of male and female gender ideals. This serves as background information for understanding how gender roles are internalized and role expectations develop.

Women in the focus group up to 29 years have a multi-dimensional male ideal with many stereotypical facets. Their ideal man is a family man and ambitious, has gentleman qualities and is adventurous, and is educated and athletic. Their female ideal is that of a strong, assertive, self-confident, independent, equal-opportunities-oriented woman with some traditional facets (housekeeping qualities). This corresponds with their male peers' perception of the ideal woman handling both job and family. Finally, education is a dominant aspect for both men and women in this peer group.

The women aged 30 to 49 years entertain a stereotypical male ideal which is supplemented by social competencies: A man who is physically assertive, a bit authoritarian, yet fair and willing to do his share in housekeeping and child raising. Unlike the men in this age bracket, who focus on their own (male) appearance and display interest in "possession" and sex, these women wish for support and partnership and a partner who doesn't "cling" to them. All in all, they appear rather disillusioned with men: For them, the "ideal man" does not exist. The female ideal is that of the "all-rounder" again, combining and reconciling traditional requirements (domestic qualities, soft skills, well-groomed, romantic) with self-assurance and performer qualities (financial independence, flexibility, success).

The female focus group aged 50+ years has a rather traditional male ideal ("A man should be like a tree you can lean on"), augmented by social competencies. The perfect man should both be assertive and successful in his job and a family man taking up some responsibility for household chores and child rearing. Unlike the male cohort, these women still set great store by physical appearance, but "soft facets" (kind, generous, attentive, respectful) are gaining in importance. All in all, they, too, entertain a male ideal of a gentleman, not of a performing macho. The female ideal again is that of an "all-rounder" reconciling the traditional requirements of being a good-looking good mother and housekeeper with success, independence, education and self-assurance.

4.3. Ways of living

Most women live the way they want to with regard to their current family and partner constellation.

The preceding findings on the assignment of spheres and tasks in partnerships suggest that women think that spheres and tasks are ideally shared by both partners. But how do they actually live? When asked what partnership model best reflects their current and most-favored living situations, the great majority of female respondents regardless of age and educational background choose the equal partners model (88%). But only 64% of the women currently live

in a family and partner constellation in which both partners actually spend around the same amounts of time working and taking care of the household and children. Not surprisingly, the youngest women are most likely to be single (24% vs. 12% of all women), and comparatively least likely to live in an equal partnership (55%). The secondary wage earner model – with the man working and earning more and the woman taking care of household and children – is also not uncommon for women in Slovenia (10%), but is considered less desirable (6%). It is very likely that most women living as singles or in secondary wage earner constellations still aspire to a life in an equal partnership. All other models are rarely lived today and even less aspired to. In particular, the career model and models defining the woman as the main or single breadwinner are not widely considered desirable.

In the qualitative study, these findings are widely supported. Many of the women either claim that they live in an equal partner model, or at least show clear preference for it. Some young women, however, also voice preference for the career model or believe that family and career are not reconcilable, while many other women stigmatize people pursuing their careers as egoists who shouldn't have children. As to the other models, women of all focus groups in particular oppose the classic (male) single breadwinner model. These women perceive the ideal woman as equal to men and an "all-rounder" who reconciles traditional demands on women with self-confidence and performer qualities like flexibility and career success. Among older women in particular who reject the male single breadwinner model, half appear to have experienced broken marriages and the necessity of being able to take care of themselves. Some of the older women also state that marriage is a situation in which a certain degree of "inequality" is almost inevitable (cf. self-ascribed role images). They are not in favor of abolishing marriage, but do believe that without it, equality will increase because everyone will have to do everything for him-/herself. Some female focus group participants report inverted single or main breadwinner models (meaning that the woman is the partner earning all or most of the family income), but state with a few exceptions that this model tends to cause problems because it clashes with men's prevailing self-concepts and social expectations. Some have experienced that men can't take it if their partners earn more and/or are more highly-educated, whereas women usually tolerate it as a situation normalized over the centuries. In their perception, the male ego defines itself via income and uses finances as a way of executing power, i.e. it determines the power structures within a relationship.

In my view, the first model [equal partner model] is the most acceptable. It allows the family to live well and the partners to be equal. There are no complaints of one bringing in more than the other. (female focus group 30-49)

In a family where both parents focus on their careers children definitely suffer. These parents "buy" their children, thinking they can compensate with money for not being around. I think the equal partner model is best. Both parents having a job, not over-pushing their careers, and having enough time for the family and children. If you can't do that, it's better not to have them [children]. By deciding to focus solely on your career you're leaving the kids behind. (female focus group 50+)

By being less financially dependent on men, women are gaining power, becoming stronger and more courageous. We have the guts to do more, which leads to men losing their role. (female focus group 30-49)

But I noticed that a woman making more money is harder for a male ego to swallow. Men don't like to compare themselves to women in those situations. But he let me know it when I earned less than him. (female focus group 30-49)

My mother has been earning more than my father for quite some time now. My father has a low and unsteady income and he's constantly nervous and bitter about it. [...] They're both miserable and it hurts my mum to see dad unhappy. She never said anything to him about him contributing less to the family budget and her paying off all the loans and the leasing, but it doesn't matter. There's always this horrible tension between them. (female focus group 30-49)

A friend of mine and her partner, he's been unemployed for the past 5 years now, they have a child. And he's horribly stigmatized, not only in terms of their relationship in the sense of "why don't you get a job", but in society as well in the sense of "what kind of a man are you". It's horrible. There's absolutely nothing wrong with him, he just can't get a job. And they both feel horrible about it. However, if it were a woman [who's unemployed], and I know a few, nobody would be asking "what kind of woman is she". (female focus group 18-29)

[In 10 or 20 years] There will be more unmarried couples, marriages will decline. As a result, equality will rise. (female focus group 50+)

There is a strong gender bias in the distribution of household chores in Slovenian families. And female respondents state: Women are clearly at a disadvantage

To cross-check that respondents' understanding of "a life in an equal partnership" means that both partners also distribute household chores more or less evenly, we asked who does most of the chores in their households. In contrast to the alleged ideal of living in an equal partnership, the factual distribution of household chores clearly shows that this area is predominantly handled by the women. 83% of all women and fully 92% of the oldest age group say that it is mainly them who cope with the household chores, and only very few attribute primary responsibility to their partner (3%), mother, or mother-in-law (8%).

When asked who does most of the household chores, the youngest women (age 18-29) differ drastically (as expected) from the mid-agers and the generation 50+. This is because many of them (48%) still live with their parents. Unsurprisingly, then, 37% of them report that their mother does most of the household chores.

Older women receive the least help with household chores

Of those women who claim that they do most household chores themselves (83%), 39% state that nobody helps them, with women age 50 and older in particular voicing this opinion (50%). Women who get help with household chores rely predominantly upon their (marriage) partner (especially women aged 30-49 years), and sometimes upon their children (again mainly the mid-aged women) or their mother (-in-law) (women aged 18-29 in particular). Considering that 64% of all women claim to live in an equal partnership, it is interesting to note that only 18% of the women getting help with household chores always receive help from their partner.

Among women who receive assistance with childcare, a majority make daily or almost-daily use of child daycare facilities and kindergartens, while one third make use of off-time care at school. Grandparents and (marriage) partners are drawn upon at least once per week.

The qualitative survey suggests more strongly than the quantitative survey that young families rely heavily on grandparents to help out with child care. Many women of all age groups, and the younger ones in particular, also demand that the state provide affordable childcare facilities to support families – and make it clear that by doing so, the state would be supporting women.

If it weren't for my parents who look after my child so, so many times... (female focus group 18-29)

I didn't have a job immediately after I got off maternity leave. But after I did get a job, it was really hard on me. But I told myself "you need to put in 8 hours of work, and the kid will have to spend 8 hours at the kindergarten". But the grandmother helped me out a lot. (female focus group 18-29)

With regard to my husband, this is far more difficult, because his schedule is just so rigid. If it weren't for our moms, and they really do help out a lot, it would be really, really difficult. (female focus group 18-29)

Costs of taking care of the child – brutally high. It's no longer comparable to what it was like when we were little. I'm looking at the kindergarten bill month after month and it gives me the creeps. And I'm quite well-off. How can people with lower incomes afford that? Or single mothers? (female focus group 18-29)

What we demand of politics and the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities to promote equal opportunities? 1. Better childcare 2. More realistic allocation of kindergarten costs – don't just look at family income, but at expenditure as well. (female focus group 18-29)

Kindergartens are important; there are enough of them, but they are not exactly cheap. And after you add up all the expenses, I can fully understand why young women decide against having a family. As I said, looking at my daughter, she's 30 years old, which means I could already be a grandmother by now. (female focus group 50+)

The even distribution of household chores doesn't seem to be a dominant parameter for the evaluation of life in an equal partnership for women

In spite of the uneven distribution of household chores, the vast majority of women believe that equal opportunities exist in their partnerships (82%), which is consistent with their reported ideal of living in an equal partnership model (see above in this chapter). This discrepancy is also consistent with respondents' tendency not to mention the equal distribution of domestic labor when asked for a spontaneous definition of "equal opportunities" (chapter 4.1.). When asked whether their partnerships are equal, the 30-49-year-olds tend to agree slightly more than the age group 50+ (30-49: 86%; 50+: 79%). The figures for full agreement back the perception: Older women have a more skeptical view to the issue than younger ones (50+: 47% full agreement; 18-29: 61% full agreement). However, the majority of women do perceive equal opportunities as existing within their partnership, and do claim that they live in an equal partner model. This means that they define equality in a partnership based on broader parameters than the question of who does household chores – especially against the backdrop of the role images described above.

Gainful employment of women is perceived as desirable und normal by most women

A very important parameter in this context is the gainful employment of both partners. The survey clearly shows, for instance, that female respondents do not per se question or find fault with women working: 89% think that a partnership benefits from both partners working, with little divergence between age and educational groups. Correspondingly, a vast majority of 90% believe that it is in equal measure a woman's and a man's duty to contribute to the family income. The qualitative survey also supports these finding (further details on equal opportunities in professional life will be discussed in chapter 4.6.).

Female respondents by majority reject a priori distribution of male and female jobs. Attribution of tasks in the household depends on physical ability and preferences – yet still to some extent on tradition as well

Most women reject a gender-specific distribution of particular tasks in a partnership. Only 32% believe that men should be doing "men's jobs" and women doing "women's jobs" (cf. the attribution of spheres and tasks in a partnership to both genders). The less-educated (42%) approve more often than the highly-educated (25%), women aged 50+ (36%) more often than mid-aged women (26%), and people in rural areas (37%) more often than those in bigger cities (24%). Findings from the qualitative survey suggest that the definition of "men's work" and "women's work" is above all tied to biological aspects, assigning men tasks which require high physical strength. In addition, the extent to which men are relieved of household tasks qua gender varies according to generation and living area: The older, less-educated and further south the population fraction, the more traditional the attribution.

My parents' family was more traditional, so my mom took care of everything at home. My partner and I, we split work more evenly. He prepares a meal or two sometimes and helps out with other things. (female focus group 18-29)

There are jobs in a household a woman can't do. We won't be looking for some equality in jobs that are too physically demanding. (female focus group 50+)

Inequality in household chores is completely logical. Women are usually not able to do hard manual labor. (female focus group 30-49)

My family comes from the south, and in the south the woman is in charge of all household chores and that's still deeply rooted in their society. I think my generation grew out of that already. At least I think so; my partner and I sorted these things out very well in our relationship. (female focus group 18-29)

All in all, women perceive few factual barriers to male participation in household chores. Only 17% of all women believe that men are not fit for them. And again, the mid-aged, the highly-educated and women living in bigger cities oppose this view more strongly than the older, the less-educated and inhabitants of rural areas. In the focus groups, some women even place responsibility with men's mothers and wives for the degree to which men themselves participate in household tasks. In their perception, women educate "the following generation", so their way of bringing up children has significant influence on their role images. This is in line with many women's perception that equal opportunities in family life is a "private matter" where no official measures can promote equality – only increase awareness and establish favorable framework conditions. Female respondents also state that women should not discourage their partners or interfere with their handling of tasks; instead, both partners should agree on the assignment of tasks.

You shouldn't divide tasks according to whether they're female or male tasks. And it's even better if you're able to establish that pattern in your own family. Our problem is that my husband doesn't know how to cook and he simply doesn't cook. Fine, don't cook, but you will do other things. And he does other things – the dishes, vacuum the house, everything. And that's perfectly fine. We managed to compromise that way. Too often women make the mistake of saying "why do you keep sticking your nose in my work", or "look at the way you did this or that". You need to let your man do things his own way. (female focus group 18-29)

There's nothing wrong with a man changing diapers, doing some ironing, doing laundry or cooking a meal. Men used to be ashamed of that and men who did that were ridiculed by society. Nowadays, these things are far more liberal and it's no shame for a man to do household chores. (female focus group 30-49)

I think upbringing depends on the mother. This should be the mission of the mothers. They shouldn't do everything for and instead of their children, but rather teach children these things. Mothers can be an especially big influence on boys. That way it makes me, as a mother, responsible for the behavior and future actions of my children. (female focus group 30-49)

I have a 26-year old brother and I'm not sure he knows how many buttons there are on the [washing] machine. He used to live alone when he was abroad, but once he got back to perusing the Mommy service, he got the 24-hour VIP treatment, and he still does. (female focus group 18-29)

Women tend not to enforce their own wishes within their partnerships and families. The older the respondents, the higher priority is given to the notion of compromise

A majority of the female respondents feel that they often subordinate their own wishes in favor of their partner or their family (58% agreement). The youngest group (18-29: 41%) are less inclined to compromise than the oldest age group (63%). However, this does not mean that the majority of women feel that they have to abandon planning and dreaming: 55% of them

disagree with the assertion that “there is little scope left for personal plans and wishes”. The younger (77%) disagree far more than the older (47%), the highly-educated (65%) more than the less-educated (44%), and the inhabitants of bigger cities (64%) more than inhabitants of rural areas (52%). In general and in spite of all perceived compromises, congruence of personal wishes and family life seems to be substantial – especially among younger women.

4.4. Reconciliation of job and family

Most women feel strongly at odds with the reconciliation of job and family, with older women in particular seeing it as a problem for men as well

During both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study, we asked respondents for their opinions on various statements regarding the gainful employment of women and men and the reconciliation of job and family. Our survey results clearly show that women are very concerned with these issues. This is also reflected in the group discussions conducted during the qualitative phase of the study.

Independent of age, a vast majority of female respondents agree that the reconciliation of job and family is difficult for women (83%), with the less-educated being even more skeptical than the highly-educated (89% vs. 79%). The broad majority also agree that combining both realms is a conflict for men (though to a far lesser extent: 68%). This opinion is more prevalent among older women aged 50+ (75%) and those with lower education (81%).

This being said, the broad majority of women still believe that even if one partner earns a good income, it is not an option for the other partner to remain unemployed. Only 31% state that when the male partner has a good income, the female partner need not work. Young women are much less likely than older women to feel this way (13% vs. 34%), and the highly-educated less likely than the less-educated (16% vs. 44%). We can deduce that many less-educated women associate “work” (or at least their own particular labor) primarily with financial need, whereas highly-educated women would seek out work for its immaterial benefits even if their financial needs were already met (cf. chapter 4.6.). Interestingly, this trend holds when the genders are inverted: 18% of all women state that when the female partner earns a high salary, the male partner need not work, with less-educated women agreeing far more often (23%) than highly-educated women (15%).

In the focus groups, too, women confirm that they prefer to remain employed even if their partner is financially very well off – or at the most, that they prefer to remain at home for a limited time, as when taking parental leave. Furthermore, many women perceive a problem in only one person earning the family income (cf. 4.3. on ways of living), because it causes a serious asymmetry in the family power structure and risks alienating the partners.

I think it's best if the roles of both parents are as equal as possible. If one of the parents spends the majority of his or her time at home while the other is earning money, it will lead to problems sooner or later. After a certain number of years, the partner bringing home money will have established dominance over the other, and neither will have a realistic picture of what the other does anymore. (female focus group 50+)

Most women want to have a family and take on all the responsibilities that come along with it. But a woman needs to take care of her career as well, because that way she can take care of her own independence, and financial stability, both for her and her family. (female focus group 30-49)

You're always going to have to give in, if you're in a dependent relationship. You're subordinated and you can't defend your opinion. There's nothing for you to do but agree. (female focus group 30-49)

You can only have equal rights if you're financially independent. We are all equal under the law, but real equality can only be achieved through financial independence. (female focus group 50+)

This conviction is dominant enough to be widely approved, despite the fact that many women also believe that their partners' jobs can cause their partnerships to suffer.

Women are polarized on the issue whether either partner's job causes a partnership to suffer. Older women perceive more problems than the younger ones

50% of all women agree that partnership suffers because of the job of the *male partner*, 47% disagree, and 3% don't know. Older women are significantly more critical here than younger women (50+: 58%; 18-29: 34%).

52% state that partnership suffers because of the job of the *female partner*. Again, the older women perceive more problems than the younger ones (50+: 61%; 18-29: 34%).

Younger women are more self-confident about the successful reconciliation of job and family, and more often expect equal efforts of both genders. A majority, however, still expect more of women than of men

Nearly all women (more or less regardless of age and education) agree that new mothers should stay home during the first months after the child is born (97%). Far fewer women (79%) think that the father should do so, with the youngest age group voicing this opinion more strongly than the oldest (18-29: 87%, 50+: 71%).

In line with this, most women expect mothers to reduce their working hours as long as their children are small (80%). The generation 50+ agrees to this more strongly than the youngest age group (50+: 87%, 18-29: 63%), while the less-educated agree more strongly than the highly-educated (high education: 58%, low education: 87%). Interestingly, a broad majority of women – particularly those in the "rush hour of life" – also believe that fathers should work less while their children are small (all women: 63%, women 30-49: 70%).

In the qualitative survey, the younger age group in particular emphasizes the need for both genders to engage in childrearing and to share its potentially adverse career consequences. However, both younger and older women report that as soon as a child is born, gender roles sometimes revert to a more traditional pattern. For older female participants in the qualitative survey, as well as for young mothers, it is the female partner who ultimately feels most responsible for child-raising. Thus, it falls upon them to negotiate reconciling job and family. Most welcome measures like being able to reduce their working hours, while others rely heavily on support from others in order to be able to keep up with a full workload.

I think it would only be correct for the father to use up part of the maternity leave. This should be a rule, because it would have very positive effects on the development of the child later on. (female focus group 18-29)

By law, you're entitled to adjusted, shorter working hours if you ask for it. I didn't force the issue at work, because I told myself I'm going to try and hit the ground running as much as I can. But you do need support, because the child will pick up various illnesses in the kindergarten. The first two years were very critical. Thank God my parents were there to help me – if it weren't for them, it would be horrible. I'd spent lots of time on sick leave if it weren't for my parents. (female focus group 18-29)

A good option for new mothers is being eligible for a shorter, 6-hour workday after coming back after one year of maternity leave. This is some kind of compromise alleviating the short maternity leave. (female focus group 30-49)

As far as I can see, things are much better now, there are new rules now giving women the right to shorter working time. A lot of them use that right. (female focus group 50+)

More than half of the women are of the opinion that after a child is born, the mother is left without personal time (57%). Women over the age of 50 agree with this far more strongly than the younger groups (18-29: 47%, 30-49: 50%, 50+: 65%). Indeed, it is clear to most women

that child-raising affects the leisure time of the mother more adversely than the leisure time of the father. Whereas the majority agree that the mother's leisure time suffers, only 23% say that the father is also left without time for himself, with the older (33%) and less-educated (40%) agreeing more strongly.

In the qualitative survey, women across all age groups stress that men have more and women less leisure time because of family duties.

Perhaps having a family is more important to women and we give up a lot of things because of that, either consciously or subconsciously. (female focus group 50+)

As a man, taking care of the family would come second – I'd have a totally different outlook on that. (female focus group 50+)

Men have more time for themselves, more leisure time, they go for a beer with their friends after work and that one beer can often last until it's dark. (female focus group 50+)

Coordinating time is a problem for me, because my husband keeps a three-shift schedule. I always have to make sure I'm at home because of the child. I either work or take care of the child. (female focus group 18-29)

Men have less responsibilities, less work, more time to rest – couch time after work. [...] They have more leisure activities and less child-raising duties. (female focus group 30-49)

A vast majority of women call for men to lighten the load for their working partners, especially the (experienced) age cohort 50+

Knowing that household chores are mainly done by women and that mothers must cut their leisure time when the children are small, 85% of all women agree that men should lighten their working partners' load. Young women see less need for support than older women (18-29: 65%, 50+: 91%). However, we can judge from the qualitative findings that this attitude is modified as soon as a child is born, and the need for support becomes more pressing.

It's crucial to have your partner support you in your career then. (female focus group 18-29)

Partners of women in leading positions should be allowed to work shorter hours. (female focus group 30-49)

Far fewer women express the opinion that women should lighten the load for their working partners (41%), with the older approving more strongly than the younger (18-29: 32%, 50+: 47%), and the less-educated more strongly than the highly-educated (low education: 53%, high education: 24%).

In the qualitative survey, many women regardless of age identify social and psychological barriers that prevent men from lightening the load for their working partners, and call for more support.

Of course it is more difficult for women – women have to organize and coordinate their private life and their professional life. Men just kind of weasel out of it and no one blames them for it. The fact that parent-teacher meetings are most often attended by moms gives you a good idea of how it is. But men should support their wives. (female focus group 30-49)

The idea behind it was for the man to take paternity leave in order to allow the woman to keep her job. (female focus group 18-29)

Paternity leave should be made mandatory for men. Men wouldn't think of it in a hundred years, let alone use it. Having it mandatory would be nice because they couldn't get away from nursing the child. They couldn't say or do anything when we told them "Look, here's the baby, now take it. And be careful!" (female focus group 30-49)

We expect our partners to support us, but that's not always the case. A partner is sometimes not ready to offer the support you need, and then you're on your own. (female focus group 18-29)

Women perceive that the factual pressure of reconciling job and family is mainly on the mothers

Even though most women agree that the mother should stay at home after the baby is born, and that new mothers should reduce their working hours, it is striking that women regardless of age and educational background also agree for the most part (86%) that women are under more pressure than ever to invest all of their time and energy in their jobs. By contrast, 68% of all women state that men are under increasing job pressure, with 77% of the older women and only 59% of the mid-aged women supporting this opinion. We can conclude that the pressure of reconciling family life with the demands of a difficult job market and economic situation is seen to fall mainly upon mothers.

If we woke up as men, the pressure on us would definitely be much lower. (female focus group 18-29)

In the qualitative survey, this interpretation is supported by many women. They blame the economic system and the job market for the pressure imposed on parents (and particularly on mothers), and suggest that the successful reconciliation of job and family often depends upon the goodwill and attitude of employers. In addition, some women complain that their families and society at large treat their professional necessities and career involvement differently than those of men.

It used to be easier. We kept a different schedule – leaving early in the morning and coming back earlier in the afternoon. We had more time for our families. And we weren't as tired because the work wasn't nearly as demanding and extensive as it is today. We carried a much lesser burden. Today, they have us doing very difficult jobs and, since nobody is hiring and people are retiring, the workload is steadily increasing. We often have to work overtime and Saturdays as well. And the work schedule is not kind to us. We're under a lot of pressure all the time. (female focus group 30-49)

The work schedule is usually very unfriendly for families with small children. (female focus group 30-49)

In our family, life revolves around the work schedule of my husband and that's why it's all the more important that I work regular hours, since I have to take care of everything. (female focus group 30-49)

I have to coordinate on the daily as well. I coordinate on the job every day. Luckily my boss is very understanding of my situation. But my colleagues and I coordinate our schedules and always try to adjust to one another. (female focus group 18-29)

All you need to do now is to find an employer who would be willing to let you work shorter hours. (female focus group 50+)

When a woman takes a business trip it's very noticeable. But if a man takes a business trip, nobody blinks an eye. Not only that. You hear accusations. I hear my family asking "why is she giving the company everything she's got; why isn't she at home with us". (female focus group 30-49)

That the working world puts more pressure than ever on men and women is especially noted by the generation 50+. Here, the youngest women seem to be more "resilient" or show more self-confidence about their ability to cope with challenges in the work sphere – however, their convictions often haven't been put to the test yet.

Women voice a strong wish for childcare facilities better adapted to the needs of working mothers

Most women (82%) agree that it is necessary for childcare facilities to be (even) better adapted to the needs of working mothers. Again, the youngest women don't see the need for support as clearly as the older ones (18-29: 73%, 30-49: 78%, 50+: 87%). Regardless of age, the

majority of women also think that childcare facilities should be adapted to the needs of working fathers (albeit to a less preponderant degree).

Full-time childcare can't completely compensate for lack of either parent's presence – an opinion advanced by older women in particular

Pressure on women is also confirmed by the belief that mothers who spend insufficient time at home are responsible for their children's misbehavior – which is shared by 59% of women. The generation 50+ express this belief particularly strongly (50+: 69%, 30-49: 56%, 18-29: 42%). Obviously the oldest age bracket holds women to a more restrictive moral standard – an interpretation supported by the finding that 53% of the generation 50+ think that many women are going to work to escape their household duties. Younger women are far less likely to agree with this view (18-29: 25%, 30-49: 32%).

This being said, social misbehavior of children due to lack of parental presence is seen as due in equal measure to fathers spending insufficient time at home. This point of view is expressed by 62% of the women, and again the older women support this interpretation more strongly than the younger ones (50+: 69%, 30-49: 56%, 18-29: 53%). Women are also highly critical of men who use their job to escape household duties, albeit presumably based on practical rather than abstract moral grounds (50+: 58%, 30-49: 50%, 18-29: 41%).

The qualitative survey supports the conclusion that women would like both parents to put in time at home with their children, even though the notion of the mother being *particularly* important to the children still runs strong.

I remember my mom working different shifts as well and I was really hard on us kids back then. We were all alone, little kids, my dad was not around because he often came home late, and we were totally screwed. I didn't want to do the same thing to my kids. (female focus group 50+)

The child needs his mommy the most during the first months and years. This is very important for the development of the child. His mommy has the most to give during that period. (female focus group 30-49)

4.5. Job re-entry

Most women are convinced that having children can put one's job at risk or lead to a career setback

The vast majority of female respondents agree that it is difficult for women to decide whether to have children, because they are afraid to lose their job (90%), with the less-educated being particularly sensitive to the subject (94%). Accordingly, the broad majority (88%) state that women should not decide to have children before obtaining secure (full-time) employment. This view is supported by women regardless of age or educational background.

In addition, 72% of the Slovenian women assume that women have fewer career opportunities after parental leave. This opinion is predominantly expressed by older women (50+: 78%, 30-49: 70%, 18-29: 60%) and the less-educated (low education: 79%, high education: 64%).

The qualitative findings suggest that in spite of the existing laws, women experience severe disadvantages because of potential or actual pregnancy, as well as because of the tacit expectation that they will take maternity leave and sick leave for their children's benefit. Accordingly, many women postpone having a child until they can establish a secure financial situation and/or a secure job. For working women, a secure situation is also necessary to afford the cost of external childcare.

I've experienced it myself. I got asked all those questions in a job interview, including whether I plan on taking sick leave at any time, and if I have a babysitter or someone else at home to look after my child. Men don't get these questions. (female focus group 18-29)

Money is the main reason with me as well for postponing having a family. I run a small business, I have unsteady income and it's up to my partner to ensure that stability. We've now decided to pursue our careers and wait with having a child until things settle. (female focus group 18-29)

Every young woman will rather think three times before deciding on a child. How much a child, and childcare, cost – you better think three times. And in the end you put off having a child and wait until you start earning more. (female focus group 18-29)

A person definitely needs a steady job before he or she can even start to consider having kids. [...] In today's reality people get a job when they're close to 40. Old, in other words. And if you do manage to get a job earlier, it's hard to coordinate it with parenthood. A child is definitely a burden for the career. (female focus group 50+)

It is (allegedly) common sense that both partners share family responsibilities after parental leave, yet in the end women feel that they (have to) get involved more than men

Women believe unanimously and without reservation that family responsibilities need to be shared when one partner re-enters the workplace (99% agreement). This opinion is shared regardless of age or education, and it corresponds to the attribution of spheres and tasks in the chapter on role images. However, as demonstrated in the chapter on ways of living, there is a strong gender bias in the factual distribution of household chores in Slovenian families. A plurality of women in the qualitative focus groups also self-critically observe that they burden themselves too much of own volition – albeit out of sheer necessity.

It's crucial to have your partner support you in your career. It's much easier to grow as a team. (female focus group 18-29)

But we do that to ourselves! The actions we take lead to us shouldering more work and responsibilities than we are able to handle. (female focus group 30-49)

Let's talk about burn-out syndrome for a moment. Who suffers most from it? Women. Not men. Why? Because we overexpose ourselves. But if we didn't overexpose ourselves, nothing would ever get done! (female focus group 30-49)

Women don't expect employers to show understanding of men who want to engage more in family responsibilities

80% of female respondents assume that employers will fail to understand men who would like to reduce their working hours, take leave for their sick children or share parental leave in order to share family duties. This view crosses age and education differences, and is supported in the qualitative survey as well. Some women also report that whoever takes sick leave (regardless of gender) will suffer financial setbacks because of it, and that this further disinclines men from doing so.

The question is whether the employers are willing to accept that. (female focus group 18-29)

What happens most commonly in Slovenia is that somebody taking sick leave will get it deducted from the pay-check. (female focus group 18-29)

4.6. Equal opportunities in professional life

For most women, work is an essential part of life, and is important for self-esteem and psychological wellbeing

As the findings from the statements on gainful employment, the preference for the equal partnership model and the qualitative survey show, working / having a job is important to men

and women alike in Slovenia. Besides work being a financial necessity, women report that it is a source of satisfaction, appreciation, self-actualization and fulfilment. Many women claim that work means freedom, equality, equal footing and power. They want to “move something”, and expect personal growth, inner strength and confidence from work. Particularly (but not exclusively) for younger women, personal advancement is a strong motivation, and these women try to set new goals for themselves.

Thank God I'm back on the job, because I had absolutely no life when I was on maternity leave. I now come home from work pretty tired, and yet full of energy, and that allows me to continue working. It means a lot to me to have my own life and a partner who gives me room to breathe (female focus group 18-29).

I need to have my own life as well. Work. Be financially independent. Move something. (female focus group 18-29).

I think work means financial independence. It denotes a certain freedom and equality to all of us. Being independent, you don't have that feeling of inferiority, of being indebted to someone all time. Financial independence does give you a certain power. (female focus group 30-49).

I'm unemployed and I'm mostly dependent on my partner, even though I contribute a lot at home in terms of the family being able to survive. But that's not the same. (female focus group 30-49)

The job is not bad. The problem is there's no chance for promotion. (female focus group 18-29)

Advancement is motivation. (female focus group 18-29)

I like being creative, and after I've conquered something, I want new and bigger things. (female focus group 18-29)

They say that work makes the person; work is both a right and a virtue. Being unemployed, you just feel so useless to society. (female focus group 18-29)

It's a source of great satisfaction for me to be able to go to work happy, to love what I do and feel good working there. But I'm seeing less and less of that, and quite often people do nothing but suffer at work. (female focus group 18-29)

I like going to work because I get to meet other people there, talk to them. It gives me a different kind of energy. (female focus group 50+)

Yeah, it's nice to be home for a couple of months – I know what I felt like when I was on maternity leave. You're thinking to yourself "Oh, this is nice, I'm at home", but after a while you realize it's not that nice. (female focus group 18-29).

You can only have equal rights if you're financially independent. We are all equal under the law, but real equality can only be achieved through financial independence. (female focus group 50+)

Advancement to top positions, however, is still perceived as far more difficult for women than for men by female respondents

How do Slovenians perceive the prospects and chances of women advancing in professional life? Women and men at the outset of their careers are judged to have roughly equivalent prospects, although female respondents are a little more skeptical about the prospects of women. However, when asked which gender finds it difficult to attain executive positions, about 78% of female respondents (regardless of age or education) answer that it is difficult for women. By contrast, only 30% believe that it is difficult for men, with the older age group (40%) and the less-educated (45%) agreeing more strongly than the youngest age group (11%) and the highly-educated (16%).

Female participants in the qualitative survey are in principle of the opinion that men and women are equally fit for executive positions, and that women should have the same chances of advancing. However, in the course of the focus groups, various more controversial arguments and at-

titudes (pro and con) arise. For instance, many participants are clearly in favor of equality in the abstract, yet uphold familiar stereotypes as to why women have a hard time making it to the top. Some female participants assert that women have to work harder to get to the top, and must constantly prove themselves, but are thus more enduring and better skilled. They attribute women better “soft skills” (empathy, sense of responsibility), but also admit that these skills make women vulnerable to anachronistic role ascriptions and the perceived need to reconcile work and family. Other female participants are skeptical because of familiar stereotypes: They believe that women are not willing to take risks, or need predefined structures; they suspect women of getting promoted for reasons other than competence (especially in the public sector); they complain about the alleged cattiness of women. Some feel deep regret that although women are in fact equal to men, they are not treated as such, and that equality must thus be protected by law. Other women believe that if women rise to top positions in either the economy or politics, they will do so at the expense of the family, or feel uneasy because of traditional role ascriptions. Still others criticize female bosses’ “manly behavior” as inappropriate for women. The bottom line, however, is that in the end only qualification and competence can and will convince women that a given candidate is fit for a position of power, regardless of gender; and their preferred concept is the mixed team.

Women have it harder when it comes to top positions. Being caring and responsible towards our families is a real hindrance for us. We want to leave work earlier, we have more obligations; we’re more family-oriented, we can get pregnant – all of these are hindrances. (female focus group 18-29)

Women in leading positions “kick ass” harder than men, because they need to prove themselves more as women. They are less merciful, less willing to take compromises and far more intent on proving themselves. They can be more successful in taking decisions because they tend to address issues from various perspectives. They often have a broader spectre of knowledge and skills. In addition to higher basic intelligence, they usually have higher social and emotional intelligence than men as well. That’s why decisions taken by women are often much better than those of men. (female focus group 30-49)

Leading/executive positions definitely require more absolute dedication. I don’t know if a woman could be as successful here as a man. (female focus group 50+)

Nowadays they try to regulate these things by force, by legislation. But this only leads to less competent women taking advantage of regulations. Unfortunately. (female focus group 30-49)

Look, just as it wasn’t good to have the men dominate, it wouldn’t be good to have women dominate either. A mixed community is the most appropriate and healthiest. (female focus group 30-49)

It’s much easier as a team. (female focus group 18-29)

I couldn’t care less whether my boss is male or female. What’s important to me is that my boss is more experienced and has better knowledge of the line of work I do. It’s important to me that I’m able to turn to him or her for guidance when I have troubles at work, and he or she can show me the way. I’m only interested in professional abilities of a person, not gender. (female focus group 50+)

Many female respondents are convinced that women have to give up more in order to reach top positions than men

Corresponding to role images and the widespread belief that women are more attached to family life than men, 86% of female respondents (more or less regardless of age and educational background) believe that women have to give up many aspects of their private lives when they rise to executive positions. In contrast, 62% believe that men in executive positions make personal sacrifices, with less agreement among the youngest age group (48%) and more agreement among the less-educated (76%).

Again, the qualitative survey discloses that from the point of view of women, both personal attachments and gendered ascriptions of domestic duties pose potential barriers or deterrents to women.

I know that if I ever had the chance to get such a job, I'd have to leave my family behind, I wouldn't have any time for my family, and that's why I don't even think about having a job like that. My family needs me at home and then to have them call me at work, for example, no way. If you decide on having a family, you should really decide on having a family. (female focus group 50+)

But maybe the problem is that women don't take advantage of these quotas even when they are there, because we tend to hold back too much. Why? We're holding back because of the responsibility we feel towards our families. We're afraid our families are going to suffer. (female focus group 30-49)

I'm all for women getting more involved in top positions. But before that you need to set the record straight at home, split family duties in a manner that allows both the husband and wife equal opportunities. (female focus group 50+)

5. MEN

5.1. Equal opportunities and equal rights: understanding, interest, perceived status quo, assessment of measures

Most men have heard the term “equal opportunities of women and men,” but young men are comparatively less familiar

Even though almost all men appear to have heard the term “equal opportunities of women and men” before (total: 93%), 14 % of the youngest age group (18-29 years) claim that they are not familiar with this term. While the term is significantly better known among highly-educated men (99%), the majority of the less-educated are also familiar with it (86%).

Men don’t spontaneously think of family life when asked to consider equal opportunities

Men’s spontaneous associations with the term “equal opportunities of women and men” mainly revolve around equality, equal rights or equal duties in general (50%), followed by equality related to work, employment and payment (20%) and gender-related equality (15%). Aspects of family, children or home-related equality seem to occur to only 5% of all men.

The youngest men (18-29 years) focus on equality, equal rights or equal duties in general (55%). In contrast, only 1% of them associate aspects of family, children or home-related equality with equal opportunities. Such aspects may be too alien to young men’s current personal circumstances, or they may simply not associate them with the issue at hand.

Not surprisingly, men aged 30 to 49 years in particular associate equal opportunities with equality related to work, employment and payment (24%). Compared to other groups, relatively few spontaneously consider gender-related equality (11%).

Within the oldest age group, comparatively fewer men consider equality, equal rights or equal duties in the context of equal opportunities (45%). However, gender-related equality is mentioned more frequently in this age cohort than in the middle-aged or youngest cohorts (13% and 11%, respectively). Finally, like the corresponding female age group, these men have the greatest difficulties associating anything in particular with the term (12%).

The issue of equal opportunities of women and men is relevant and interesting to male respondents, especially mid-agers

Equal opportunities of women and men is a topic that is of interest to two-thirds of all men (total: 66% very interested or interested), with the age cohort 30-49 displaying particularly high interest (15% very interested, 75% very interested or interested).

Young men are indecisive and display the most “extreme” attitudes towards the issue: About half are either interested or disinterested; 17% are very interested; and 15% are not interested at all.

In total, only a small percentage of men are absolutely disinterested in this issue (9% not at all interested). However, there is a strong educational bias: The less-educated show less overall interest than the highly-educated (less-educated: 14% not interested at all and 54% very interested or interested; highly- educated: 3% not interested at all and 78% very interested or interested).

Most men believe that the issue of equal opportunities has been generally resolved, at least on a theoretical level. A third feel that men's perspectives and needs are not sufficiently taken into consideration

A broad majority of the men believe that women possess equal rights today (68%); a third of them are even fully convinced of it. It is particularly the youngest age cohort which offers this opinion (72% agreement), both in the quantitative and the qualitative survey.

I think it [gender inequality] is a myth that is no longer relevant in Slovenia. Especially among the young. I think we're quite equal already. (male focus group 18-29)

Physical differences are likely here to stay, but women, in terms of equality, equal opportunity, equal rights, are equal to men. (male focus group 18-29)

Still, over half of the men affirm that the topic "equal opportunities" refers to overcoming disadvantages for women, and that in order to attain true equality of opportunities for women, men will have to learn to give up some things (total: 56% agreement). This view is shared by the oldest age group in particular (60% agreement), who may be most aware of internalized behavior patterns and everyday life realities. The youngest group of men see the least need for men to "give up something" (50% agreement) – an attitude in line with their perception of equal rights as currently existing.

Similar to the evaluation of equal rights, most men regardless of age are of the opinion that prospects and opportunities for women in Slovenia are equal to those of men (62% agreement). Only the highly-educated are a little more skeptical (52% agreement).

Contrary to the majority opinion, a significant number of men think that discussions of equal opportunity should focus more strongly on the problems or disadvantages facing men (32% agreement). In the qualitative survey, men aged 30 to 49 years in particular express concern about focusing too much on women. Some are even afraid of an impending "feminization" of society – of "equalization" in the sense of gender-identity – and respond by strategically de-emphasizing the disadvantage of women. Some men also complain about discrimination toward men in family courts, because they perceive that mothers are always given custody of the child after a divorce.

Our group, educated men, we don't have any rights whatsoever in this country, all we do is hand out rights to others. And all of this just because it is assumed that we already have everything we could possibly have and we therefore have something to give. (male focus group 30-49)

I've said it before; we're getting to be a single-gender society. That's definitely not good for a species in nature. (male focus group 30-49)

Differences are not encouraged, no gender-specific advantages are being explored. (male focus group 30-49)

Everything is being feminized now. For one, the state is promoting it – more so than any non-government group. (male focus group 30-49)

Single mothers far outnumber single fathers, that's because of the mental state of society that always supports the mother. The court always supports the mothers. (male focus group 50+)

Older and middle-aged men are well-aware of existing measures to promote equal opportunities, while younger men are comparatively less aware

The different measures taken to mitigate gender inequality are well-known to men, with the best-known measure being the prohibition against violent men affiliating with women who have been victims of domestic violence (total: 81%), closely followed by the possibility of mothers

and fathers sharing parental leave and sick leave for the child (80%). The next-best-known measures are quotas for women in politics, free contraceptives, and women's right to make birth control decisions (71%). The least familiar measures are rules regulating job interviews (68%) – this suggests that such rules do not profoundly affect men in professional life.

However, in keeping with the findings for women, there is a dramatic age gap. The age cohort 50+ is by far more familiar with all measures than the younger cohorts, in particular the age cohort 18-29. For instance, 95% of the older men vs. 54% of the youngest know about the possibility of mothers and fathers sharing parental leave and sick leave for the child, 94% vs. 65% know about the protection of female victims of domestic violence, and 88% vs. 36% know about the introduction of quotas to promote participation of women in politics. Similar discrepancies appear when it comes to free contraceptives and job interview rules. In addition, there seems to be an educational bias: On average, the highly-educated are more familiar with the measures than the less-educated by a margin of 10-20% (exception: free contraceptives). On the whole, young men's low awareness of equal-rights-related measures suggests that such measures do not impact them personally, and further suggests that they have not yet witnessed a need for improved measures due to difficulties facing their (female) partners.

None of the measures to promote equal opportunities of women and men meet with substantial disapproval by male respondents

Notwithstanding the different awareness of specific measures, the broad majority of men (over all age and educational groups) consider past and present measures to promote equal opportunities of women and men as important and good (total: 83% agreement). However, a noticeable age gap does exist: 77% of the oldest cohort support this position, as compared to an overwhelming 89% of the youngest cohort.

All measures which were referred to in the survey are welcomed by most men (between 74% and 85% approval). Asking about general vs. specific measures revealed an interesting pattern: men aged 18-29 display high esteem for "measures in general" tempered with skepticism toward specific measures, while men aged 50+ welcome specific measures while displaying skepticism toward "measures in general." This again may be explained by differences between abstract evaluation and concrete experiences and proximity to real (personal) life.

Again, the most controversial assessed topic seems to be the introduction of quotas to promote the participation of woman in politics, with young men in particular being highly skeptical (cf. female groups). In the qualitative survey, the subject caused an emotional debate in all focus groups, generating a conglomerate of opinions based on personal experience and preferences, general mistrust towards politics and politicians, and the accentuation of competence. Some men, especially in the 30-49-year-old group, also sought to legitimize their general dislike of quotas by identifying them as impractical and unmerited.

I don't think quality has anything to do with gender, but rather who are the people involved in politics. There aren't any people from our generation in politics. So, the focus shouldn't be on quotas for women. (male focus group 18-29)

It's not about the number or percentage, it's about the quality of people. You could have 20 women and 5 men and it could be a catastrophe or vice-versa. (male focus group 18-29)

I think quotas are idiotic. Equal rights. Quotas. Then we should have quotas everywhere – with electricians, construction people, the ones chopping down trees with chainsaws. Everywhere. Equality either goes for all of us or none. If the quota for the government is to have 5 female ministers, what will happen if we can't get it done? Are we going to shut down the government or what? (male focus group 30-49)

As I said, if it only lasts for a certain trial period, then yes. But these things will happen regardless of quotas. If women are interested, if they prove capable, they will advance. (male focus group 30-49)

Not this "it must be a female minister" nonsense. Have a poll of 10 male and 10 female candidates and have the best, the most capable rise to the top, instead of having fixed quotas with no regard for quality. (male focus group 30-49)

A majority of men would prefer a less intense promotion of equal opportunities measures

In spite of the general approval of the measures to promote equal opportunities of women and men, more than half of the men think that people tend to overshoot the mark when trying to establish equal opportunities (57% agreement), with the youngest age group agreeing least (48% agreement). The qualitative survey suggests that this skepticism stems from many men believing that the discussion is too one-sided and that other problems are more pressing. In addition, the opinions voiced during the focus groups point toward profound insecurity among many men with regard to defining their own role and position in contemporary society. Some men even express a diffuse fear of "women taking over".

First we said that every ministry, and especially this one, should be aware that equality goes both ways. For both men and women. There's no need to push women's rights so much. (male focus group 30-49)

I think they should do something to make it easier for all of us. I think there are bigger problems than gender inequality. (male focus group 18-29)

Society didn't need any help bringing women to where they are today. Introducing quotas or other measures is not the best way to do it. By doing that you're forcing something society may not be yet ready for. (male focus group 50+)

I do see it as alarming. This is a very specific moment in evolution – men always had equal rights, but as soon as women get the upper hand, when we're no longer a match for them physically, that's when the women will take over. (male focus group 30-49)

Thinking over a longer period of time, 100 years or more, and if intellect prevails, women will have an advantage over men. If the machines are going to take over more and more men's jobs, including warfare, what are men going to be left with? (male focus group 30-49)

Men, like women, see NGOs as the most relevant players in overcoming gender inequality; politics and the state as well as companies are rarely mentioned

Asked who should do something to establish equal opportunities of women and men, the majority of men concur with women in nominating NGOs (total: 45%). Again, there is a strong education bias on this question: While 58% of the highly-educated hold NGOs responsible to work against gender inequality, only 37% of the less-educated do so. Likewise, more men aged 50 years or older believe that NGOs should do something (50%) than men in the younger age brackets.

Male respondents are less likely than female respondents to hold women responsible for establishing equal opportunities: Only 29% of all men share this opinion, with younger respondents more likely to agree (35%) than the cohorts aged 30-49 (33%) and 50+ (23%).

Male respondents are even less likely to hold other men responsible (total: 18%). The younger age brackets differ significantly from the oldest bracket, ascribing higher responsibility to fellow men (18-29 years: 23%; 30-49 years: 24%; 50+ years: 11%). Interestingly, 27% of the less-educated also believe that they and their fellows should assume responsibility. This being said, the vast majority of men still relieve themselves of responsibility.

Most men do not perceive either politics and the state or the economy and companies as key institutions for leveling gender opportunities (total: 21% and 19%, respectively); however, 31% of the youngest group ascribe a baseline responsibility to politics and the state.

Older men in particular assign the state the leading role in promoting gender equality. Some young men seem to feel caught on the wrong foot

As with female respondents, a discrepancy appears between male respondents' belief that NGOs should be the most active player in realizing equal opportunities and their assessment of current outcomes, with only 25% stating that NGOs have been successful to date. In contrast, a sound majority hold politics and the state to have been successful so far (60%), without necessarily expecting them to take further action. Here again, men aged 50+ seem to judge the efforts taken by politics and the state more favorably than men aged 18-29 (67% vs. 48%). On the whole, the youngest age cohort displays the highest uncertainty regarding whom to credit with success in promoting equal opportunities (13%).

The economy and companies are considered more successful than expected, but their performance is still perceived as rather poor.

Young and mid-aged men ascribe higher performance to individuals than to many institutions

The younger age cohorts in particular credit women with successfully doing something to contribute to gender equality (40% of the mid-aged men and 39% of the youngest, as opposed to 28% of the oldest). These cohorts are also more likely to credit their fellow men with successful efforts (31% of mid-aged and youngest brackets, as opposed to 23% of the oldest). The qualitative focus groups reinforce this finding, with the youngest group of men expressing confidence in the transformative capacity of their own generation, and of women in particular.

I think women do get into this more often than men. I guess it's a subconscious thing, seeing that women always had to fight for their rights while men didn't. (male focus group 18-29)

With regard to differences between men and women, I do agree that it's going to change once new generations take over. [...] And our generation has changed many things already. (male focus group 18-29)

Older people, coming from some forsaken village in the midst of the Pohorje hills, definitely have a different outlook on certain things than the younger generation, from those who live in the city, are educated and keep steady jobs. But things are changing in the village as well, as people tend to be educated better nowadays. (male focus group 18-29)

5.2. Role images and gender ideals

Most men, and the oldest in particular, call for both partners equally sharing responsibilities in partnerships

Between 64% and 91% of male respondents consider all spheres and tasks in partnerships as ideally shared between male and female partners. Like for female respondents, this extends from taking on care duties to earning and dividing the family income, deciding on family matters, and keeping social contacts. There are, however, a few areas in which male respondents, like female respondents, attribute more responsibility to women: Going on parental leave (28% of all men), taking care of the household (25%), taking sick leave for children (23%), and taking care of contraception (22%). Here again, traditional role ascriptions are brought to bear. However, the percentage of male respondents who ascribe women more responsibility these spheres is always lower than the percentage of female respondents who do so. Again as with female respondents, some male respondents (25%) ascribe the task of dealing with public

authorities primarily to men. Likewise, whereas 87% of male respondents think that earning the family income is up to women and men alike, 12% still ascribe this task solely to men, with almost no male respondents ascribing it solely to women.

This being said, there are again considerable differences between the age groups. The oldest age group ascribes mutual responsibility far more often than the younger age groups (exception: dealing with public authorities). In contrast, the younger age cohorts tend to consider men more responsible for all aspects explored than the oldest age group.

As to educational background, while a very broad majority of the less-educated agree that both genders should share responsibilities, they do seem to place less emphasis on this.

Women are especially liked for (traditional) soft skills, but also for their looks by male respondents. Hard skills are generally accepted, but not given top priority

Regarding women's talents and traits, a broad majority of male respondents highly favor childrearing, family and other social competencies (soft skills). This again is in line with the statement that the most important task of a woman is to be a good mother and housekeeper (66% agreement, 35% full agreement). This view is particularly shared by the oldest age group (50+: 74% agreement, 44% full agreement). Young men are less convinced, but a majority still agree (55% agreement, 22% full agreement). However, it is striking that fewer male respondents than female respondents attribute this role to women, be it because of political correctness or of changed mentality patterns. The outward appearance of femininity is a very important feature for men (very likeable: 65%). Young men value it even more than the mid-aged and older men (18-29: 76% very likeable; 30-49: 71% very likeable; 50+: 55% very likeable). Hard skills like consequence and persistence, professional competence and leadership qualities aren't favored as highly as the soft skills (very likeable: 55%, 44% and 41%), but a vast majority of men still find them likeable (93%, 87% and 87%). Surprisingly, of the various age cohorts, young men (18-29) seem to entertain the most skeptical attitude towards professional competence and leadership qualities in women (very likeable: 29% and 27% respectively). On the other hand, 53% of the youngest group fully appreciate performance and career-orientation in women, as opposed to 33% of male respondents in total. A woman being technically well-versed doesn't seem highly attractive to men, with less than one third finding it very likeable. Like their female counterparts, young men are more likely to perceive adventurousness to be a very likeable character trait in a woman (18-29: 50%; 30-34: 27%; 50+: 25%). But again, adventurousness does not comprise promiscuity: men aged 30-49 in particular find sexual faithfulness very likeable in a woman (81%), with broad agreement from the youngest age group (70%) and the oldest one (75%).

Personally, I like the woman to be a woman and the man to be a man. And I'm not saying that the woman should stay at home, cook and do the dishes, those kind of things. But I do like for a woman to be feminine instead of acting like a man. (male focus group 50+)

Seeing that we want to form a family and are expecting a child, it's important to me that the child comes first for the woman. I have to know that she will be a responsible mother. (male focus group 18-29)

Appearance is important. (male focus group 18-29)

Able to adapt to various circumstances, open to different opinions, compassionate towards people. (male focus group 18-29)

Intelligent, responsible, reasonable, independent, a good mother, being able to listen. (male focus group 30-49)

She should be faithful to her partner – that's very important. (male focus group 30-49)

Faithful, hardworking, smart and good looking. (male focus group 50+)

Male respondents appreciate both non-traditional and traditional character traits in other men. In general, there are no dramatic peaks in the assessment

In men, too, soft skills are appreciated well by all male respondents, with the oldest giving greater weight than the youngest to loving care for children and taking care of the family. This again may be due to current life circumstances. But it is interesting to notice that comparing the genders, far more female respondents than male respondents show great sympathy for men displaying character traits and talents like loving care for children, taking good care of the family, settling disputes, helping others, being able to fit in, tenderness, empathy or showing feelings.

As to the hard skills, more male respondents find them very likeable in their fellow men than in women (consequence and persistence: 59% vs. 55%, professional competence 48% vs. 44% and leadership qualities 44% vs. 41%). Technical capabilities, too, are perceived as a much more attractive feature in men than in women (in men: 62% very likeable; in women: 31% very likeable). Unlike the majority of female respondents' very positive assessment of femininity in women, masculinity in men is highly appreciated by less than half of the male respondents: 43% of all men and 49% of the men aged 30-49 years find it very likeable.

In the qualitative survey, some men (especially from the age group 30-49) seem to perceive a substantial gap between their internalized (traditional) concept of manhood and society's expectations and norms today. But in general, the perceptions voiced in the focus groups don't differ significantly from the quantitative findings.

Intelligent, sure of himself, protective of his family, his home and his country. Faithful when he's in a relationship, funny, strict, a bit possessive. Determined, knows what he wants, needs to respect his partner and his children. But these are things they want to sweep under the rug with this equality nonsense. (male focus group 30-49)

A man should have all the things that are almost forbidden nowadays: He should be strong, solid, proud, handsome, the man of the house. (male focus group 30-49)

Head of the family, responsible, leaves the upbringing of kids to his wife, but still remains active as a father. (male focus group 30-49)

Sense of humor. What is important is to have an open mind, be able to talk things over, accept criticism. (male focus group 18-29)

Taking care of the family, good sense of humor, able to make the right move in a difficult situation, able to prioritize his life, a successful businessman and ambitious. (male focus group 18-29)

Good looking, can do it all, willing to listen to his wife, practical ... (male focus group 50+)

Intelligent so you can talk to him, a good sense of humor, able to joke around a bit, well-groomed, responsible, honest, attentive. (male focus group 50+)

Involvement in politics, subordination and superiority are assessed as the least likeable traits in both men and women, with the older men being the least skeptical as regards interest and involvement in politics

Involvement in politics is a feature most men dislike both in fellow men and in women: 61% of all men (and 70% of the 30-49-year-olds) agree that involvement in politics is dislikable in a man, while 57% of the men (77% of the 18-29-year-olds and only 49% of the men aged 50+) perceive it as dislikable in a woman.

Interest in politics comes across rather badly as well, especially in women. Of all male respondents, 53% find interest in politics unappealing in a woman; as with female respondents, the youngest cohort is more critical than the oldest (dislike: 71% vs. 39%). Overall disapproval of interest in politics in fellow men is less pronounced: 49% of all men don't like it, with 56% of the men aged 30-49 and only 42% of the age cohort 50+ assessing it that way. The oldest

age group seems to be the least skeptical towards political involvement and interest by both genders, which may be due to their personal experience of participation in the transformation of their political system.

As seen for the female respondents, the educational background seems to be non-determinative when it comes to the assessment of interest and involvement in politics.

The qualitative survey again proves how disillusioned especially younger and mid-aged men are as regards current politics and politicians, and how their disillusionment rubs off on their assessment of political interest and involvement.

I'm interested in politics in general – but right now, Slovene politics is just really depressing. It would be better not to get into Slovene politics at all. (male focus group 18-29)

That's just because we've had it with politics and we're convinced it's nothing but a big fat lie and we don't want to get our hands dirty. (male focus group 30-49)

Approximately 64% of all men – regardless of age – reject the notion that women should take on a subordinate role. Only the educational background differentiates (slightly): Men with less education seem to be less critical of female subordination than the highly-educated (less-educated: 58% rejection, highly-educated: 69% rejection). Similarly, 61% of all men and 67% of the oldest age cohort find a subordinate attitude unappealing in fellow men; however, 50% of the youngest men (18-29) apparently have no problem with it. In total, 36-39% of all men find it rather appealing when one partner is subordinate in a partnership, regardless of the gender factor.

What's important to me is to have a partner who is not docile and obedient, but someone who has a strong opinion. Even if it's different from mine. At the same time, I don't want my partner henpecking me and for her to always hold the reins in her hands. I like someone who has a different way of thought; it makes everything much more interesting. (male focus group 18-29)

What I find important in my girlfriend is that she has her own opinion which is different than mine, that she is able to voice her opinion, give arguments, defend her position since this allows me to see things from a different perspective. (male focus group 18-29)

Similar to subordination, superiority as a character trait is generally disliked by male respondents: 54% dislike it in a woman, 48% in a man. Young men aged 18-29 seem to find it least disturbing when a man acts out superiority (only 36% dislike) – which seems somewhat at odds with half of their age cohort's positive disposition toward men taking on a subordinate role. The majority of men aged 50+ find superiority difficult to accept both in a woman (59% dislike) and in a man (51%).

Again, the qualitative survey suggests: To most men, the ideal woman is an “all-rounder” with strong traditional caring competencies. The male ideal revolves around rather stereotypical concepts of manhood, ranging from macho to gentlemanly

The young men (up to 29 years) keep a stereotypical female role model, with some modern elements added. Their ideal is the “all-rounder”, a woman who combines good looks, self-confident behavior, (professional) success, flexibility, and education with pragmatism and family orientation. Their male ideal is more one-dimensional than this female ideal. One notices a rather hegemonic staging of manhood: Always master of the situation, one step ahead, athletic and assertive. There is hardly any addition of “typically female facets” to this picture. As a result, a stereotypical affirmative male ideal of the “lifestyle macho” prevails: Confident, strong, successful, and muscular. For these young men, empowerment is foremost. Neither gender ideal allows for the perception of “standing by personal weaknesses and shortcomings” as “strength of character”. Finally, education is a dominant aspect for both men and women in this peer group.

In the middle age bracket (30-49 years), men have strongly heteronormative gender role ideals (*"a man should be a man, and a woman a woman"*). They generally entertain rather traditional role models. The female ideal consists of a narrow, stereotypical-affirmative ideal of the beautiful, attractive woman complemented by caring aspects. Unlike the younger men, these men have very contradictory expectations of women: On the one hand, a woman should be desirous and wild, yet at the same time well-behaved, domestic and down-to-earth, a good mother and housekeeper. Career orientation for women – though mentioned – is less pronounced. As for the male ideal, it presents itself as a stereotypical-traditional one augmented by social competencies: The classical strong and assertive protector and provider, embracing some caring attitudes in daily life. As with the younger male group, the ideal visualized in the homework books is David Beckham, but here the chosen picture is rougher. All in all, the men aged 30 to 49 years seem to have a more explicit picture of the "ideal man" than the "ideal woman". Group discussions yield the impression that this may be because men see their male role models disappearing in today's society, and strongly need to express their anxieties through an ideal projection of masculinity.

For the men aged 50 or older, the criteria for the female ideal are ambiguous: Today, the ideal is either a fantasy person (i.e., a stereotypical, rather traditional female ideal of the good-looking and well-groomed mother and wife, a housekeeper who is also intelligent with a good sense of humor) or – more realistically – an approximation of this ideal with less prominent physical aspects. Here, the focus is more on character traits promoting a harmonious coexistence, like considerateness and mutual understanding. The male ideal is multi-dimensional with many stereotypical facets. These men aspire to a gentlemanly rather than a macho ideal (intelligent, responsible, attentive, faithful, well-groomed, sense of humor, practical, smart).

5.3. Ways of living

Most men live the way they want to with regard to their current family and partner constellation.

Just like their female counterparts, Slovenian men find the model of equal partners without a doubt the most desirable one (82%), with the young men (75%) and the less-educated (77%) being slightly less convinced of this model. But again, not all of these men perceive that they currently live in a family and partner constellation in which both partners spend approximately the same amount of time working and taking care of the household (and possibly children) (60%). Even though equal partnerships predominate, there is still a significant number of men who currently live a single life (18%). Comparable to the findings for young women, the youngest men, too, are most likely to be single (39%) and least likely to live in an equal partnership (37%). However, all men regardless of age and educational background agree that life as a single is not something to be aspired to. The secondary wage earner model – with the man working and earning more and the woman taking care of household and children – is not uncommon (8%), but not particularly desirable (5%). And again, all other models are rarely lived today and even less aspired to. In particular, models defining the woman as the main or single breadwinner find no favor with men, while the career model only meets with approval by some young men.

Again, the qualitative study supports these findings. Many of the men either claim that they live in an equal partner model, or at least show a clear preference for it. Some young men also voice preference for the career model, and agree with those who believe that people pursuing their career shouldn't have children. Reversed roles in the single or main breadwinner models (meaning that the woman is the one earning all or most of the family income) are reported in the male focus groups as well, but with a few exceptions, men feel very uncomfortable with it.

Yeah, it was the same with us as long we both had a job. Now that I haven't had any money of my own for quite some time, she's the one with her own money, her own expenses, and I stand in the corner like some... It just feels so wrong. (male focus group 30-49)

The stereotypes is that a man should make more than a woman. And if you don't make more, you feel ashamed afterwards. (male focus group 50+)

Most people feel it's important to keep their jobs or to at least one partner keeping a regular, full-time job. At the same time, it's important to develop your career. I can't see myself focusing on kids right now. I know I'm going to make a great uncle, but I don't see myself, nor do I have the wish for, having children of my own. (male focus group 18-29)

My ex-girlfriend was the same as I am and it was clear as day we were both putting our careers first and nothing of this [family] is going to come of it. We probably wouldn't make great parents either. As egocentric as it may sound, it's good to come to terms with your priorities. We were most often discussing business rather than family. (male focus group 18-29)

Men admit that there is a gender bias in the distribution of household chores in Slovenian families, but they ascribe themselves a bigger role than women perceive them to have

Again, when asked who does most of the chores in their households, the alleged ideal of living in an equal partnership is sidelined by the factual distribution of household chores: 49% of the men (with 60% of the mid-aged men and 55% of the older ones) agree that it is mainly their (female) partner. But 27 % also report that they themselves do most of the household chores. Seeing that only 14% of the men are living in a single household, it becomes obvious that men and women differ quite strongly in their perception of who does most of the duties at home. Men ascribe themselves a bigger role in the actual distribution of household chores than women perceive them to have.

When asked who does most of the household chores, the younger men (age 18-29) – just like the younger women – differ drastically from the mid-agers and the generation 50+. An overwhelming majority of the young men (71%) still live with their parents, and 59% of them assign their mother responsibility for most of the household chores. And a surprising 11% of the youngest men don't know or feel unable to judge who does most things at home.

About 15% of all men claim that they receive no help with household chores from other people

Of those men who claim that they do most household chores themselves (27%), 55% state that nobody helps them. Again, it is mainly people age 50 and older (58%) who state that they have to do everything themselves. Those men who get help with household chores rely predominantly upon their (marriage) partner (35% of whom always help), and sometimes upon their children or mother (-in-law).

Among men who receive assistance with childcare, the vast majority make daily or almost-daily use of child daycare facilities and kindergartens. (Marriage) partners are drawn upon several times per week and grandparents at least once per week, as are off-time care programs at schools.

The qualitative survey again suggests more strongly than the quantitative survey that young men (in particular, but not exclusively) rely heavily on grandparents to help out with child care, and when they can't receive help from the older generation, it is perceived as a major drawback. In addition, men of all age groups demand that the state offer affordable childcare facilities to support families.

I'm also counting on getting a hand from my parents. They did well with me and I would trust them with my child. Not all the time, of course, but when there's no other possibility. (male focus group 18-29)

If kindergarten is not an option, then you can't make it without their [the grandparents] help. (male focus group 18-29)

Another problem is that we no longer live in large families, like back in the day when the grandparents gave you a hand. Our children's children will be grown up by the time we retire. (male focus group 30-49)

Next thing, free school, and I mean actually free for everything. I can tell you from my own experience that it's not free. With three kids, had we not known this in advance, we'd be shocked out of our socks every September. (male focus group 30-49)

Again: Even distribution of household chores doesn't seem to be the dominant parameter for the evaluation of life in an equal partnership

Like it has been said for women: In spite of the uneven distribution of household chores, a vast majority of men believe that equal opportunities exist in their partnerships (89%), which is consistent with their reported ideal of living in an equal partnership model. This discrepancy is also consistent with men's tendency to blend out the equal distribution of domestic labor when asked for a spontaneous definition of "equal opportunities" (chapter 5.1.). When asked whether their partnerships are equal, men tend to agree slightly more than women (men: 89%; women: 82%), and the 30-49-year-old men more often than the men aged 50+ (30-49: 93%; 50+: 87%). The figures for full agreement back the perception that men and women have a slightly different view on the subject: 64% of the men and "only" 53% of the women are fully convinced that equal opportunities exist in their partnership. So, a majority of men perceive equal opportunities as existing within their partnership, and claim that they live in an equal partner model – which means that they don't define equality in a partnership by the question of who does household chores.

Men find little fault with the gainful employment of women

As discussed in the chapter on women, a very important parameter in the context of equality in a partnership is the gainful employment of both partners. And again, the figures of the survey show: Women working is not per se a controversial topic for men. Almost 90% of them think that a partnership benefits from both partners working, with little divergence between age and educational groups. Correspondingly, a vast majority of men (87%) believe that it is in equal measure a woman's and a man's duty to contribute to the family income. The qualitative survey also supports these finding (further details on equal opportunities in professional life will be discussed in chapter 5.6.).

A considerable number of men still perceive that men and women are destined for certain jobs in family life – predominantly depending on physical ability and tradition

The majority of men reject a gender-specific distribution of single tasks in a partnership. Only 40% believe that men should be doing "men's jobs" and women doing "women's jobs" (cf. the attribution of spheres and tasks in a partnership to both genders). However, men are more often in favor of gendered distributions of labor than women (32%), and the less-educated men (42%) more often than the highly-educated men (32%). Findings from the qualitative survey suggest that the definition of "men's work" and "women's work" is above all tied to biological aspects, believing that women are unable to cope with physically demanding jobs. In addition, male respondents confirm the finding that the extent to which men are relieved of household tasks qua gender varies according to generation and living area: The older and further south the population fraction, the more traditional the attribution.

There are things that are very specific because women are physically not capable of doing them. (male focus group 50+)

I think it differs from generation to generation. My dad is from Southern Serbia and he kept a clear distinction: A man is a man, and a woman is only good to do work around the house. That's how it was in the old days, 50 years ago. In all likelihood there are still people around who think that way, but they are rare. You get less of that with younger generations. (male focus group 30-49)

It's just a general expectation to have certain tasks divided between men and women. Personally, I think that both men and women are able to do everything. I do everything by myself and I don't feel any less manly about it. I'm surprised that this question is still relevant in society. (male focus group 18-29)

Take, for example, my ex mother-in-law, the mother of my ex. She is divorced as well and after the divorce I often heard her say "I'd like to see that other woman cook and do laundry for him". As if her only role was to cook and do laundry. It's interesting how people assign those roles to themselves, roles that are often demeaning. It seems she was brought up that way. And I mentioned this to her once, but it didn't have much effect. (male focus group 18-29)

All in all, very few men are opposed to male participation in household chores: Only 19% of them believe that men are not fit for them. And again, the youngest (10%), the highly-educated (10%) and inhabitants of bigger cities (9%) support this view far less than the older age brackets (21% and 22% respectively), the less-educated (22%) and inhabitants of rural areas (27%). In the focus groups, young men in particular perceive the way people are brought up as being decisive for their role images. Some men state that tasks should be assigned on the grounds of preference, not of gender.

Why should a man be forced to do something he's not good at? The same goes for women; why should they be forced to do things they are unable or unwilling to do? (male focus group 18-29)

I like things neat and tidy, so I keep everything proper. Not in the sense of "wax the floor 'til you see your reflection", but the living room has to be the living room – no underwear lying around, no socks lying around. And she does most of the cooking. That's the way we split it up. (male focus group 18-29)

I never made any difference between men and women in the sense of "a woman belongs in the kitchen and the man is a mechanic". I think that type of perception is wrong. I grew up in a non-conservative environment and am therefore not used to stereotypes and molds. I do know, however, some people who think differently, but this largely depends on one's upbringing. (male focus group 18-29)

Men perceive themselves as strongly compromising for the sake of their partner and the family without feeling at odds with it

Many men feel that they often subordinate their own wishes in favor of their partner or their family (69% agreement), which is significantly higher than the percentage of women (58%) reporting that they make compromises. The youngest group of men (18-29: 61%) are less inclined to compromise than both older age groups (71%). However, this does not mean that that partnership or having a family is equated with the end of personal ambitions: 63% of all men disagree with the assertion that "there is little scope left for personal plans and wishes". Again, the younger (74%) disagree more than the oldest (55%), the highly-educated (71%) more than the medium- and less-educated (60% and 66% respectively), and the inhabitants of bigger cities (72%) more than inhabitants of rural areas (56%). It seems that men tend to focus on harmony and consensus instead of confrontation and assertion, and apparently find sufficient points of accordance in their partnerships/family life.

5.4. Reconciliation of job and family

Male respondents perceive themselves to be just as much at odds with the reconciliation of job and family as women are

Just like their female counterparts, Slovenian men are very concerned with the issues of gainful employment of women and men and the reconciliation of job and family. This is also reflected in the group discussions conducted during the qualitative phase of the study.

Most men agree that the reconciliation of job and family is difficult for women (77%), with the young men being slightly less pessimistic (66%). But almost as many men also believe that combining both realms is a conflict for men (75%). This opinion is more prevalent among older men (50+) and those with lower education.

This being said, the broad majority of men also believe that even if one partner earns a good income, it is not an option for the other partner to remain unemployed: Only 36% state that when the male partner has a good income, the female partner need not work, while 24% state that when the female partner earns a high salary, the male partner need not work. The highly-educated support this opinion the least (13%).

In the focus groups, men confirm that they prefer to remain employed even if their partner is financially very well off – or at the most, that they prefer to remain at home for a limited time, as when taking parental leave (cf. the previously mentioned self-perception of men as substantial breadwinner in a partnership). As for their partners, most men would neither expect nor appreciate their giving up working.

Her [the woman's] attitude is especially important in these types of situations. I wouldn't want to stay at home if she made a good living. It's a matter of pride, among other things. (male focus group 30-49)

I'd be worried if she refused to work after maternity leave. I don't think we could stay together long. But if she had a top-level job and a stellar career, I wouldn't mind being on paternity leave for the time being. (male focus group 18-29)

Corresponding to women's perception, the conviction that both partners should be gainfully employed is dominant enough to be widely approved, despite the fact that many men also believe that jobs can cause partnerships to suffer.

Men consider their own jobs to be a threat to partnerships more often than women's jobs

About 62% of all men regardless of age or educational background agree that partnership suffers because of the job of the *male partner*.

In contrast, 46% believe that partnership suffers because of the job of the *female partner*, with only about one third of the younger men and the highly-educated agreeing (18-29: 30%, high education: 34%).

Most men expect efforts of both genders to reconcile job and family, but women are still held more responsible. Young men are more self-confident than older men that they will cope, or strike family off the list (for the time being)

96% of all men (more or less regardless of age and education) agree that new mothers should stay home during the first months after the child is born, but "only" 72% think that the father should do so. Here, the youngest age group agrees slightly more strongly than the oldest (18-29: 76%, 50+: 70%). However, this also means that men taking parental leave is – at least on a theoretical level – a widely accepted measure.

Most men also expect mothers to reduce their working hours as long as their children are small (78%). The generation 50+ agrees with this more strongly than the youngest age group (50+:

89%, 18-29: 63%). But interestingly, regardless of age and education, the majority of men also believe that fathers should work less while their children are small (68%).

In the qualitative survey, the younger age group in particular emphasizes the need for both genders to engage in childrearing and to share its career consequences. However, as soon as a child is born, the young men find themselves in a dilemma: The self-imposed demand to help their partners with child-raising conflicts with their career ambitions. These men do not automatically assign child-raising duties to their partner, nor claim that it is the sole responsibility of the female partner to compromise and reduce her working hours in order to reconcile work and family. However, they also cannot see themselves making sacrifices (yet). The older men perceive that in most cases both partners need to work for financial reasons, but also prefer for parents to take care of children themselves, and (subconsciously) assign women a higher responsibility of reconciling of job and family. Most men welcome measures like women being able to reduce their working hours, while others rely heavily on support from others in order to be able to keep up with a full workload.

Of course I will try to get involved, the child needs a father after all. (male focus group 18-29)

I have another year of school left and after that I intend to focus on watching my child grow. Spend time with him, work with him, show him how things are done. (male focus group 18-29)

Having to take care of the child, it's good to have a partner and to have grandparents at hand, if needed. (male focus group 18-29)

It's important to develop your career. I can't see myself focusing on kids right now. (male focus group 18-29)

She is going back to work. And she'll keep a job that will allow her to take the child with her to the office. (male focus group 18-29)

A woman can stay active on her job and has an easier time leaving the child in the kindergarten if only for those couple of hours. (male focus group 50+)

I would give new mothers, and women who plan to be mothers, the right to stay at home for one year and then have them work, let's say, 2 hours or at least shorter hours for the next 3 years. That would be good for them and the children. And the family as well. (male focus group 50+)

About half of male respondents are of the opinion that after a child is born, the mother is left without personal time (49%). Men over the age of 50 agree with this far more strongly than the younger groups (18-29: 40%, 30-49: 46%, 50+: 58%), but men in general agree less than their female counterparts that women are left without personal time. However, it is clear to most men that child-raising affects the leisure time of the mother more adversely than the leisure time of the father, with 32% saying that the father is also left without time for himself. Here, the less-educated agree particularly strongly (38%).

In the focus groups, young men in particular are either convinced that having a child can be reconciled with the other aspects of life after all, or declare that they will do without children (cf. chapter 5.3. on ways of living).

A child changes a lot of things. But I do believe that if the two [parents] are normal, a child can't change every single thing; life should go on as it did before. I'm 28 now and I definitely want to do other things and not solely focus on the baby. (male focus group 18-29)

A majority of men agree that they should lighten the load for their working partners

Accepting that household chores are mainly done by women and that mothers cut their leisure time more often than men when the children are still small, most men agree that men should

lighten their working partners' load (80%). Just like the young women, young men see less need for this than older men (18-29: 58%, 50+: 88%).

Far fewer men express the opinion that women should lighten the load for their working partners (45%), with the 30-49-year-old men agreeing the least (38%).

Men perceive the pressure of reconciling job and family as affecting both genders

Most men agree that the mother should stay at home after the baby is born, and that they should reduce their working hours. But they also agree for the most part (73%) that women are under more pressure than ever to invest all their time and energy in their jobs, with the oldest age cohort expressing this point of view more strongly than the younger ones (50+: 81%, 30-49+: 69%; 18-29: 65%). Yet 70% of the men also advance the opinion that men are under increasing job pressure, and as stated above, most men expect their fellows to put in more time in child-raising (reduce working hours, take parental leave). Which is to say, men perceive the reconciliation of family life with the demands of a difficult job market and economic situation as something that affects women and themselves alike.

In the qualitative survey, this interpretation is supported by many men. They – even more than their female counterparts – blame the economic system and the job market for the pressure imposed on both parents, and place less of an emphasis on the conditions facing mothers than the female focus groups.

There isn't an ideal arrangement. It's hard to coordinate time because of the income. You're giving up something in private life in any case. (male focus group 18-29)

I don't think you really have a choice on the work schedule. If you want a job you have to take what they give you. (male focus group 30-49)

The problem is when both parents have a really tough tempo at work so they're both very busy. The kids usually have it pretty rough then. (male focus group 50+)

One of the parents should be able to work only mornings so that the kids are not left alone and can have at least one parent watch over them in the afternoon. (male focus group 30-49)

The youngest men (just like their female counterparts) more often expect to be able to cope with challenges arising from the work sphere – the generation 50+ is more disillusioned.

I feel it's important to be able to turn off the business switch. When it's getting late in the day, let's say, five o'clock, business is closed for the day. If I get a phone call – it can wait until tomorrow. It's already important now and will only get more important once the baby is here. (male focus group 18-29)

Nowadays people don't know what's going to happen tomorrow, where they'll have to move to for a job, to be able to survive. I think it's totally hard for them today to have a family. (male focus group 50+)

There is a strong wish for childcare facilities better adapted to the needs of working mothers voiced by male respondents

Most men (78%) agree that it is necessary for childcare facilities to be (even) better adapted to the needs of working mothers. Again, the youngest men don't see the need for support as clearly as the older ones (18-29: 68%, 30-49: 82%, 50+: 81%). Regardless of age and education, the majority of men also think that childcare facilities should be adapted to the needs of working fathers, but this perception is less pronounced.

Most men hold absent fathers primarily to blame for children's social misbehavior. They further believe that public institutions can't compensate for a lack of parental involvement

48% of men (vs. 59% of women) believe that women who spend insufficient time at home are responsible for their children's misbehavior. The generation 50+ express this belief particularly strongly (50+: 63%, 30-49: 45%, 18-29: 26%). As to childcare and child-raising, this indicates 1. the oldest age bracket holds women to a more restrictive and traditional moral standard and 2. the youngest age bracket is comparatively willing to relieve women of the handed-down responsibility of "stay-at-home motherhood". Similarly, 40% of the male generation 50+ think that many women are going to work to escape their household duties, a view that is rarely shared by younger male Slovenians (18-29: 29%, 30-49: 24%).

However, men who are worried about child misbehavior due to lack of parental presence show comparatively more concern over the problem of *fathers* spending insufficient time at home. This concern is expressed by 71% of all men (18-29: 65%, 30-49: 72%; 50+: 74%). We can conclude that men retain a notion of being primarily responsible for authoritarian pedagogical measures toward children. The qualitative survey supports this conclusion – although respondents' answers to the question "who should lay down the law in a family" provide a more nuanced image, with 90% of Slovenians responding that discipline is in equal measure a woman's and a man's duty.

My view of the father role is a bit different, coming from my father. Kids can always trick moms into letting them do anything, but when my father put his foot down, that was it. I see myself the same way – the mother is going to give the child everything he or she wants. But sometimes you need to do the right thing, not the thing that would make the child happiest. (male focus group 18-29)

Unless family is given more importance, and I'm not talking about what the church was babbling about in terms of the referendum, but we have to bear in mind that the environment in which a child is raised, up to until he's 7 years old or so, is very important. I think the kindergartens of today aren't the best option. A lot of misbehavior comes from that. (male focus group 30-49).

Well, what is then the decisive factor in shaping the child's character? I still think it's a result of upbringing in the child's earliest stages – you have what you made. Besides, the less than stellar care and school system does some damage as well. (male focus group 18-29)

As part of my folklore dance group I've taken part in many school workshops during the past 3 years. And I look at these kids, they're all a product of modern upbringing and career-driven partnership relations. Especially in urban areas, since we spoke about the differences between the cities and the villages. It's horrible. I don't want my kids to end up that way. (male focus group 18-29)

A strong minority of approximately 40% of all men, regardless of age or educational background, share the self-critical belief that men go to work to escape their household duties.

5.5. Job re-entry

Most men perceive how a woman's choice to have children can put her job at risk or lead to a career setback

Even though male respondents agree less strongly than female respondents, most still perceive that it is difficult for women to decide whether to have children, because they are afraid to lose their job (84%), with the oldest and most experienced age cohort being especially understanding (50+: 90%; 30-49: 81%; 18-29: 78%). This leads to a majority (80%) believing that women should not decide to have children before obtaining secure (full-time) employment. Older men in particular express this belief (18-29: 74%, 30-49: 76%, 50+: 86%).

Far fewer male (62%) than female respondents (72%) assume that women have fewer career opportunities after parental leave, but a broad majority still perceive it to be a problem. Again,

mainly older men express this opinion (50+: 74%, 30-49: 56%, 18-29: 50%), as well as the less-educated (low education: 68%, high education: 51%).

The qualitative findings suggest that many men have witnessed women (including their own partners) facing severe disadvantages because of potential or actual pregnancy, even though legal regulations try to prevent it. They recognize that employers often expect women to take maternity leave and sick leave for their children's benefit, and therefore are reluctant to hire women or offer them job prospects. In men's opinion, employers circumvent existing laws and women get a raw deal – even though the business rationale behind it is understood (without necessarily being approved of).

I've seen the following scenario in numerous environments: As soon as a woman gets pregnant, it's as if she no longer exists. Even if she's been with the company for many years, as soon as her belly starts to show, she's gone. It's all too common for women – as soon as they're pregnant, they can kiss their jobs goodbye for several years. (male focus group 18-29)

We have a law, pregnant women can't be fired. But this is exactly the reason young women, who could potentially get pregnant, don't get hired at all. The level of protection for pregnant women is the same as with disabled people or senior employees, 50+ years old. That's why private companies are reluctant to hire women who will most likely get pregnant. (male focus group 18-29)

This is why women are scared to get pregnant. They get an internship and are promised a contract extension. And during that time they are scared to get pregnant. (male focus group 18-29)

My brother's girlfriend is a classic example: She got a job at a pharmacy and it's a job she really wanted. They extended her through May, but she has a clause in her contract forbidding her from getting pregnant. R8: I don't think this is legal. R1: Either way, if there is such a clause or isn't, they give it to you straight – orally – that pregnancy is not desired. (male focus group 18-29)

I read somewhere that women don't have any privileges in getting a job because they have kids. But this is kind of normal or at least reasonable, judging from a business perspective. It does make a difference if you're going to hire a woman at the stage of life when she's not yet married or doesn't have children yet, when she's going to go on sick leave more often, etc. Someone with a small group of employees is well aware that if a woman is going on sick leave or maternity leave without him trying to prevent it, he'll have to look for a replacement. You're going to look at your staff shrinking day-by-day only for so long and, especially if we're talking about a small staff, you'll start paying attention to who you're hiring. This type of equality does not exist. It's there in principle, but not in practice. (male focus group 50+)

Men agree that both partners should share family responsibilities after parental leave – in theory

Men – just like women – are absolutely convinced that family responsibilities need to be shared when one partner re-enters the workplace (98%). This opinion again corresponds to the attribution of spheres and task, but it also demonstrates the discrepancy between theoretical consensus and implementation in real life, wherein women are the ones taking on most household duties. "Sharing responsibilities" seems a matter strongly in need of re-definition and re-adjustment.

Employers are blamed for not complying with official regulations when it comes to men taking parental leave or sick leave for children

Most men voice the opinion that employers will fail to understand men who would like to reduce their working hours, take leave for their sick children or share parental leave in order to share family duties, with the youngest age cohort (often still without child) being the least skeptical (18-29: 72%; 30-49: 81%; 50+: 79%). This view is strongly supported in the qualitative survey as well.

If you tell your boss at work "Listen, I have to stay home because my kid is sick", you'll get the answer "What, you don't have a wife?" or "Doesn't the child have a mother?". (male focus group 50+)

Nobody is asking why it's the mothers, roughly 90% of them, who take sick leave when the child is sick, why not the fathers. Why? I don't know. Maybe it's because employers wouldn't accept anything else. (male focus group 50+)

5.6. Equal opportunities in professional life

For men, work is a tacitly-understood yet essential part of life

Working / having a job is as important to men as to women in Slovenia, as the findings from the statements on gainful employment, the preference for the equal partnership model and the qualitative survey show. For most male participants in the qualitative survey, career and job represent an essential, yet tacitly "understood" part of life, and often aren't mentioned explicitly. When men do explicitly mention work, they predominantly associate it with money and self-esteem, and sometimes with personal interests and talents. As for their (female) partners, most men acknowledge both their contribution to the household income and the self-esteem and scope for action they derive from gainful employment.

My girl wants to go back to work after her maternity leave as well. She wants to maintain an active lifestyle and not turn into a full-time mommy. (male focus group 18-29)

Most male respondents believe that women find it more difficult to advance to top positions than men

Men believe even more strongly than women that the general prospects for women and men are rather equal at the outset of their careers. But again, when asked which gender finds it difficult to attain executive positions, 62% of the men answer that it is difficult for women (a smaller percentage than of female respondents). Only 33% of all men believe that it is difficult for men, with the older age group (39%) and the less-educated (38%) agreeing more strongly than the youngest age group (21%) and the highly-educated (16%).

In the qualitative survey, men, just like their female counterparts, hold the opinion that in principle men and women are equally fit for executive positions, and that women should have the same chances of advancing. However, similar disputations arise as in the female focus groups, with approximately the same pro and con arguments submitted (cf. chapter 4.6.). For instance, young men express surprise that and sadness that there still seems to be a need to enforce equal opportunities for women in executive positions, while older men admit that their traditional role models make it hard for them to be unbiased. But again, only qualification and competence can and will convince men that women are fit for positions of power, even though a minority of men claim that due to their personal experience nothing will convince them of women being the better leaders.

That's just sad – it's the same thing as with disabled people. It's wrong. Women are not disabled. They're our equals. It's sad we need a law to make it happen. (male focus group 18-29)

A relative of mine, he's married and his wife is the owner and CEO of a company he works for. When talking about equality and equal rights we all support the wife, at least in principle, but I wouldn't want to be in his shoes. Never mind equality – just think for a moment, she's the owner and CEO of the company and he's an employee of hers. I wouldn't want to be him. See, this is where I get conservative, old-fashioned. (male focus group 50+)

Historically speaking, women were [at a disadvantage], they didn't have the right to vote or they were kept at home and took care of the children. But is it really in the best interest of the country to have women's equality in leading positions when this may ruin families? (male focus group 30-49)

I wouldn't call any gender differences here. You have good people, you have bastards, you have good bosses, capable and incapable people, tough people...men and women are equal here. Evenly divided. There's just less of them [women]. The sample size is a bit lower, that's all. (male focus group 50+)

The time for "should be" has passed – they have the same opportunities. If they prove they are capable, they can be leaders... (male focus group 30-49)

Most men concede that women have to give up more in order to reach top positions. As a consequence, they often attribute underrepresentation of women in top positions to lack of interest or to traditional female role ascriptions

Corresponding to role images and the widespread belief that women are more attached to family life than men, 77% of all male respondents believe that women have to give up many aspects of their private lives when they rise to executive positions (as compared to 87% of female respondents). Again, older men are convinced of this more strongly than younger ones (age group 50+: 82%; age group 18-29: 67%). Regardless of age, male respondents perceive less men in executive positions as sacrificing than their female counterparts (60%), with the less-educated agreeing most strongly (66%).

Again, the qualitative survey discloses that both personal attachments and the gendered ascription of domestic duties pose a potential barrier or deterrent to women. However, the notion of men having to give up just as much also finds strong support in the focus groups, as does the belief that in the final instance women sometimes simply lack the needed ambition.

They had a harder time making it to the top. Either that or they weren't ready. On average, a woman has more responsibilities at home than a man. (male focus group 50+)

I think, right now, they might even have more opportunities to make it to the top. If they only show the proper interest, they will make it. (male focus group 30-49)

I think a man has to sacrifice something as well, if he wants to get into a leading position. Everything has a price. It should be the same way for women. (male focus group 30-49)

Through the Norway Grants and EEA Grants, Norway contributes to reducing social and economic disparities and to strengthening bilateral relationships with beneficiary countries in Europe. Norway cooperates closely with the European Union through the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA).

For the period 2009-14, Norway's contribution is € 1.7 billion. Grants are available for non-governmental organisations, research and academic institutions, and the public and private sectors in twelve newest EU member States, Greece, Portugal and Spain. There is broad cooperation with Norwegian entities, and activities may be implemented until 2016.

Key areas of support are environmental protection and climate change, research and scholarships, civil society, health and children, gender equality, justice and cultural heritage.

More information on the Norwegian Financial Mechanism Programme 2009–2014 is available at www.norwaygrants.si and www.norwaygrants.org.



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