

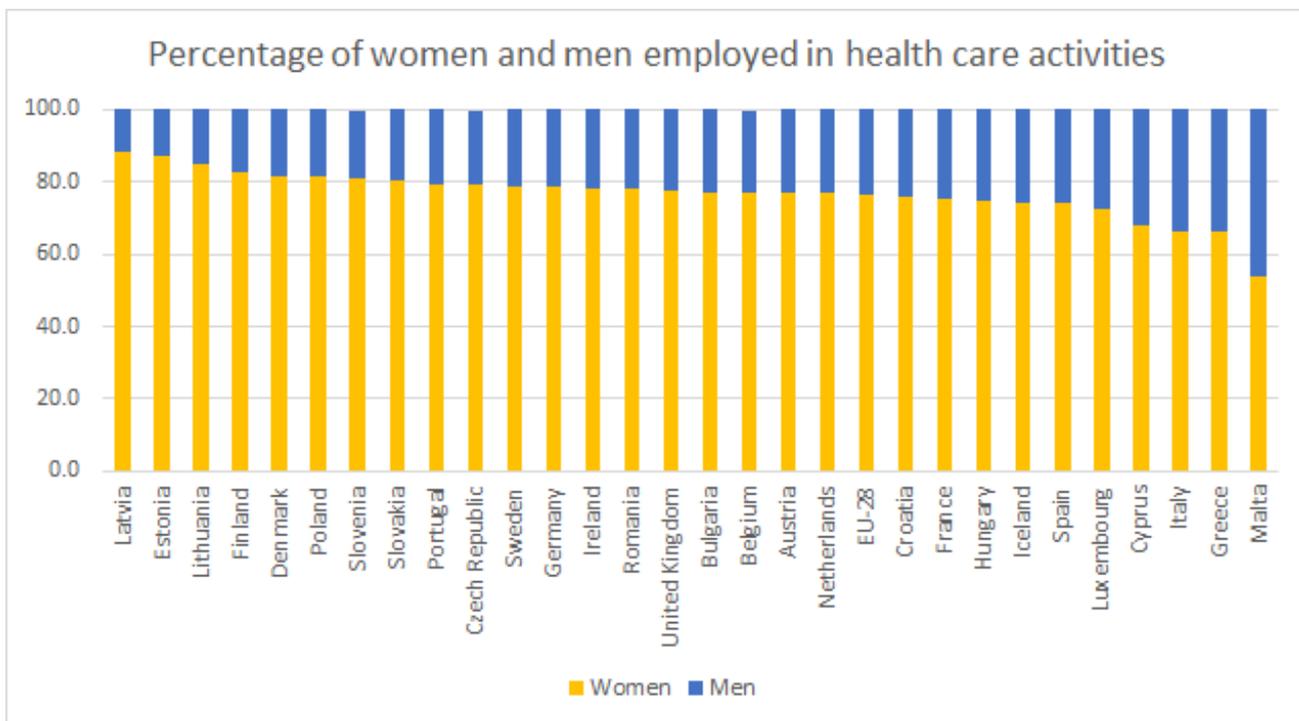
# Frontline workers



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The healthcare sector is facing unprecedented pressure. Healthcare workers are at the frontline of the Covid-19 pandemic and they are working around the clock, putting themselves and their families at risk to care for patients.

Although both women and men working in this sector are exposed to the virus, women are potentially more at risk of infection because they make up the majority (76 %) of healthcare workers<sup>[1]</sup> in the EU.



Source: EIGE, [Gender Statistics Database](#)

The care sector is also highly affected. Workers in this field are potentially exposing themselves or the people they work with to the virus. The proportion of women is very high in care occupations. Forthcoming research from EIGE has found that about 76 % of the 49 million care workers<sup>[2]</sup> in the EU are women. These figures are probably underestimated due to the large share of undeclared employment, especially in the domestic care sector.

Women make up:

- 93 % of child care workers and teachers' aides
- 86 % of personal care workers in health services<sup>[3]</sup>
- 95 % of domestic cleaners and helpers<sup>[4]</sup>

These professions are some of the most undervalued, and under-paid jobs in the EU. When it comes to providing formal long-term care in people's homes<sup>[5]</sup>, it is estimated that 4.5 million out of 5.5 million workers in the EU are women<sup>[6]</sup>.

Carers provide different types of care depending on their qualifications and job functions. They might be providers of nursing care and carry out basic medical services. They could be personal carers, helping people to eat, bathe or dress. Or they could be domestic workers carrying out tasks such as cooking and cleaning.

Most of the workers providing home-based professional care to older people and people with disabilities are women. Across the EU, it's estimated that of these 1.8 million carers, about 83% of them are women<sup>[7]</sup>.

There are also several other people working in essential jobs that require contact with others, such as supermarket cashiers, who face greater exposure during the Covid-19 pandemic. Women are especially affected as they make up 82 % of all cashiers in the EU<sup>[8]</sup>.



Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey (2018)

## What policymakers need to know

Gender mainstreaming in crisis situations is crucial to ensure that the different experiences faced by women and men are recognised and addressed. It is important to take into account the following:

- Gender segregation in the labour market leads to different levels of exposure to Covid-19 for women and men.
- Increased challenges to occupational health and well-being of women in caring professions need to be recognised.
- Caring professions are among the most underpaid jobs in the EU.
- It is crucial to consult women and have gender-balance in decision-making during crisis situations.

## For more information

[EIGE's Gender Statistics Database](#)

Stay tuned for EIGE's forthcoming report on gender equality and long-term care at home, due

to be published end May 2020.

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## Endnotes

[1] Eurostat's [NACE rev. 2 classification](#) defines healthcare activities as 'the provision of health and social work activities. Activities include a wide range of activities, starting from health care provided by trained medical professionals in hospitals and other facilities, over residential care activities that still involve a degree of health care activities to social work activities without any involvement of health care professionals.'

[2] This includes child care workers and teachers' aides, personal care workers in health service and domestic cleaners and helpers.

[3] This includes those working in home-based settings or in institutions.

[4] Eurostat, Labour Force Survey 2018.

[5] These workers come under the economic sector category of 'social work activities without accommodation' according to the NACE 88 category. For more information see [statistical classification of economic activities in the European Community](#).

[6] Eurostat, Labour Force Survey 2018 (Ifsa\_egan22d).

[7] EIGE's calculations based on Eurostat Labour Force Survey 2018.

[8] Ibid.

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## Metadata

TOPICS: [Health](#)