

# Living conditions and quality of life in the EU



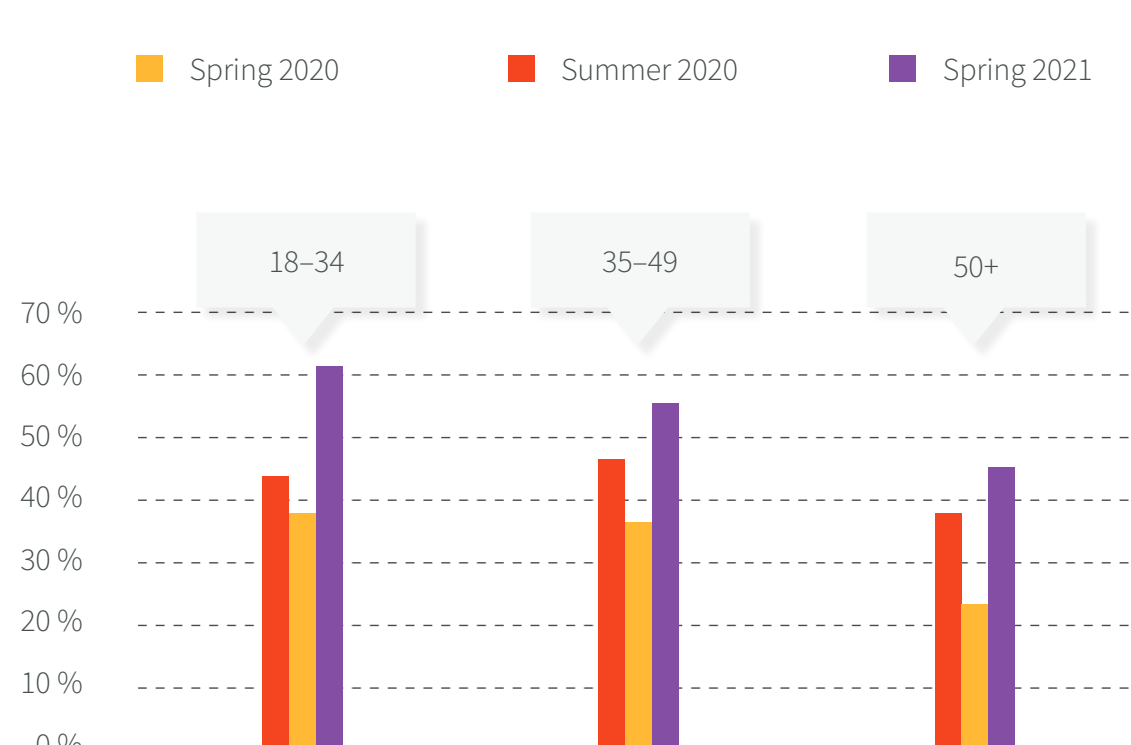
Improving living conditions and quality of life focuses on issues such as work–life balance, gender equality, provision of care and the quality of public services.

## Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on different groups

Mental well-being declined during the pandemic, but especially among **young people** and those who have lost their jobs.

Proportion of respondents at risk of depression by age

Findings in spring 2021 show nearly two-thirds of 18–34-year-olds are at risk of depression

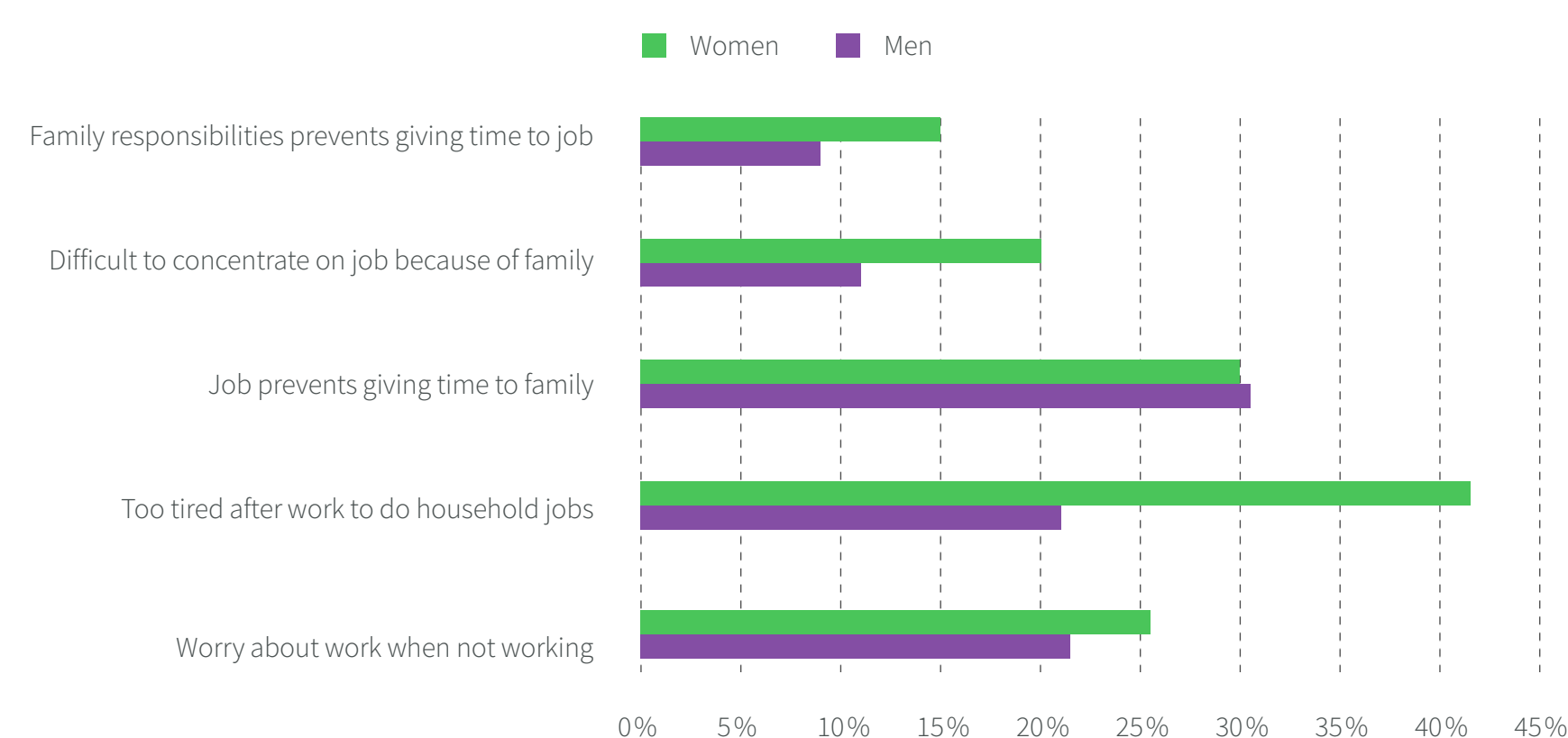


Source: Eurofound, *Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey*

While young women had the worst level of mental well-being during the pandemic, the highest increase in loneliness was among older women.

COVID-19 has exacerbated **gender roles**, risking decades of progress. Compared to men, during the pandemic, women have been disproportionately impacted by care responsibilities, poor work–life balance and financial insecurity.

Percentage of women and men with young children experiencing work–life conflicts



Source: Eurofound, *Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey*, Spring 2021  
Note: Data represent respondents who answered 'Always' or 'Most of the time'.

## Quality of public services

As existing inequalities widen due to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups, addressing the challenges and ensuring the well-being of citizens remain key priorities for the EU.

Public services play a central role in enhancing quality of life and responding to the challenges brought about by the pandemic in terms of quality, access and affordability.



Ratings for the quality of public services for individual Member States are available in the 'Countries' section of Eurofound's website.  
<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/country>

## Provision of care

The provision of care services is a key component of social protection, improving quality of life and access to education and employment for EU citizens.

As the population ages in the EU, more long-term care provision – with greater flexibility – will be necessary. Available home care and assistance will be critical, especially in those EU Member States where income is lowest.

However, **cost is the main barrier** for almost half (49%) of those with unmet professional home care needs.

Prompt access to primary healthcare, and to home and community care, can prevent the escalation of long-term care problems through early intervention and monitoring of changing needs.

Access to healthcare is an increasing challenge for many Europeans.

Over **20% of respondents** were unable to access some form of medical care examination or treatment during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Source: Eurofound, *Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey*

### Spotlight on long-term care sector



In the EU, the long-term care workforce grew by one-third from 2009 to 2019 to reach 6.3 million, but shortages remain.



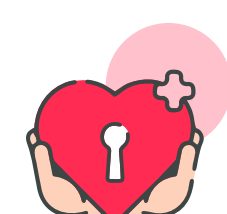
More older workers (38% aged 50+ versus 33% in the entire workforce in 2019)



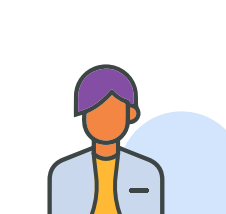
Larger increase in the proportion of workers aged 50+ in the sector than among all workers since 2009 (+10 percentage points versus 7 percentage points)



Largely female workforce 81%



Large gaps in access to long-term care, especially in lowest income countries



44 million frequent informal carers for older or disabled relatives/friends



Social services workers earn 21% less than the average national hourly earnings

Receiving and providing care became increasingly complicated during the pandemic, and will remain a growing challenge.



## Improving living conditions and quality of life in the EU



Balance the mutually reinforcing goals of economic growth and better well-being



Improve the quality of public services



Ensure prompt access to primary healthcare and make long-term care more flexible, with more home care arrangements



Translate the principles set out in the European Pillar of Social Rights into action.